



IT TAKES A VALLEY

**A Report To
Our Community**



Stillwater
AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dear Shareholders,

Stillwater Area Public Schools is remarkable because of the diverse individuals from 18 different communities coming together for one common goal. We all want the very best for our children. We want them to be happy and healthy. We want them to feel safe and valued. We want them to be curious and engaged, always striving to learn more and dig deeper. We want them to be successful no matter where their journey will take them. And together, we're doing just that!

We're very proud to release this year's shareholders' report, which celebrates the many people in our community who are helping to meet the needs of students in our schools. Through unique partnerships, individual efforts and large-scale initiatives, these people are making a positive difference in the lives of our students.

We hope these stories both inform you and inspire you. Together we're doing amazing work, but there is so much more to be done. Students carry more than the weight of a backpack on their shoulders. They're dealing with things like anxiety, trauma, social pressure, homelessness, food insecurity, family issues, substance abuse and countless other struggles. Our schools cannot solve these problems alone. We need your creativity, brainpower and continued support to ensure we can meet the needs of students both now and into the future.

I invite you to read through this report and become engaged in conversations with us. Share your thoughts and ideas online at comments@stillwaterschools.org.

In Partnership,


Denise Pontrelli, Superintendent



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18 communities. One district.

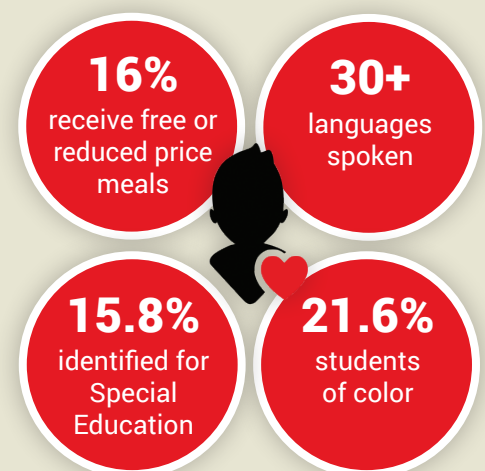
Our students come to us from many different communities and a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. After many years of stable to declining enrollment, growth in the southern part of the district is expected to bring many new students into our schools.

Get to know our students



7 of 10 students living within our boundaries attend a district school

Based on 2020 Minnesota Department of Education report card





Pony Success Stories from 2018-2019 School Year:

- 511 SAHS students earned a 3.75 grade point average and above. 96 of those students earned a perfect unweighted GPA of 4.0.
- Four students were named 2019 National Merit Scholarship Finalists. They were among just 15,000 seniors in the nation to earn the recognition.
- In 2018-2019 our high school athletes won two state championships (boys soccer and mountain biking), finished second in state in three sports (girls basketball, gymnastics and wrestling) and three were named individual state champions (boys diving, wrestling and golf).
- The high school's performance of HAMLUCHE was voted Best Play and Best Technical Production at the International Festival Fringe in Edinburgh, Scotland.
- The Pony Express newspaper earned the 2018 George H. Gallup award. Stillwater is one of only 10 schools from across the country and the only school in the state of Minnesota to receive this high honor.
- The high school's speech and debate team ranked among the top 10 percent of schools nationwide. The team was named to the National Speech & Debate Association's prestigious 100 Club based on competitive and service related activities.

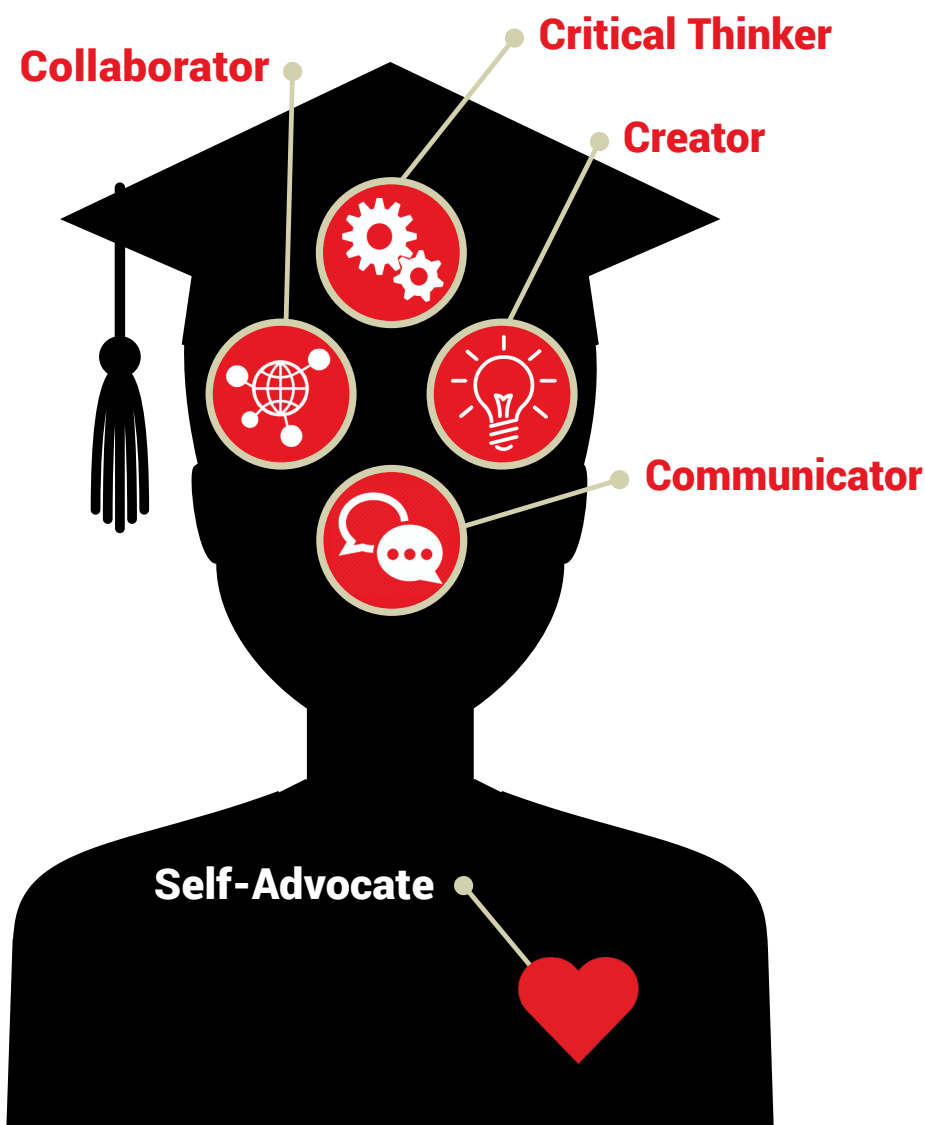
It Takes **EDUCATORS**

We have some of the very best teachers and support staff around. Just ask our community! In a recent community survey, respondents gave high ratings to the quality of education in the district, and strongly endorsed its teachers, curriculum, programming and classroom education. 90% of respondents gave teachers a positive job performance rating, and 87% rated the quality of our schools as good or excellent. (Source: 2019 Residential Survey)

And it's no wonder. Our students perform well - earning local, national and even international recognition in academics, arts and athletics. Our staff are also consistently honored with awards, and many of our programs have been identified as models for other districts across the country.

Portrait of a Stillwater Graduate

As part of our strategic plan, our staff has made a commitment to work along with the community to create students who are communicators, collaborators, critical thinkers, creators and self-advocates. Learn more about our plan at stillwaterschools.org/stratplan1821.





It Takes **VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers keep media centers stocked and kids reading

Over the past several months, a small group of community members have spent hours of their time volunteering in the Stonebridge and Rutherford elementary school media centers. Each week the volunteers restock the library shelves with hundreds of books, assist in checking out other books, and work with students to find materials on bookshelves. They also spend time reading one-on-one with kindergarten and first grade students and helping them practice their literacy skills.

Over the years, budget cuts and changes in programming and state standards have had an impact on media centers in the district. Media specialists have become few and far between and those that remain split their time between two or even three buildings. With their limited time in each school being focused on instructing students, there is very little time left for reading with students, checking in books or restocking the shelves.

A team of staff members identified the issues that arise because of short staffing in the media centers and developed a solution for elementary schools that involved reaching out to the community for help. The Stillwater Sunrise Rotary Club heard of the need and the volunteer program was born. Though it has been piloted at just two schools this year, the hope is that additional volunteers can be recruited and the program might grow to more of the district's elementary schools in the coming years.

"I am so happy to be able to help the librarian and I'm very pleased to be able to work in the library as well," said Lynda Halbert, a volunteer and former school teacher. "But there is nothing more moving than to see the smiles on the faces of the students I've been able to connect with. I know it is important for the student to be reading the letters and words, but for me, I am reading their faces for that big smile."

It's About Our Kids

Volunteers are helping us create good COMMUNICATORS who:



- Express themselves effectively in both written and oral communications
- Listen actively to others
- Show cultural understanding and global awareness when engaging with others
- Treat others with kindness and respect



Want to help in our media centers?

Contact David Waldschmidt with the Stillwater Sunrise Rotary at dwalsch42@gmail.com.

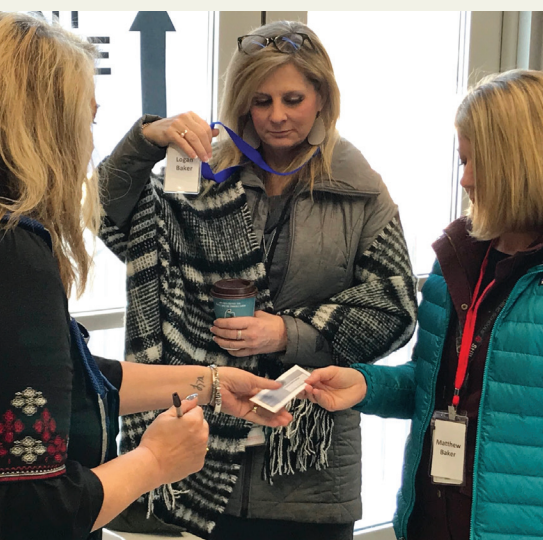


It Takes **PROTECTORS**

Community comes together to enhance school safety

Keeping students safe in our schools takes an army of caring adults from across our community. We're proud to partner with our local emergency responders, as well as Washington County's Emergency Management staff, and countless other individuals and organizations to enhance security within our schools.

We spend considerable time and energy each year working with local law enforcement to review school emergency plans, train staff, practice safety drills with students and increase security in our buildings. We're also working with Washington County to conduct safety audits of our facilities, train our staff, and address mental health concerns in our community.



Keeping kids safe takes a plan and practice

Our district is one of the first in the state to design and test a process to reunify students with their parents/guardians in the event a large-scale emergency ever occurs.

We've partnered with Washington County's emergency management team and local emergency responders to develop the plan, and have held several training exercises - varying in complexity - to test the system.

It's About Our Kids

Protectors are helping us create strong COLLABORATORS who:



- Build strong relationships
- Work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams
- Seek out diverse ideas and perspectives
- Value the individual contributions made by each team member

Resource officer recognized for work with kids

Oak-Land Middle School resource officer Deputy Dani Erickson was named Minnesota Juvenile Officer of the Year (MNJOA). The award is given to an outstanding police officer who specializes in working with youth. Principal Andy Fields was also recognized by the MNJOA with the group's civilian honor, the Pam Taschuk Outstanding Service Award.





Want to find out more

Contact Amy Jaynes with Shepherd of the Valley at ajaynes@sov.church

It's About Our Kids

We're teaching our students to be **CRITICAL THINKERS** who:



- Show empathy for others
- Solve complex problems
- Discern accurate, relevant information
- Reason effectively to make sound judgments and decisions

Community comes together for kids

Students enter local classrooms every day with big worries, stress, anxiety, trauma and fears that can make learning a challenge. Many teachers and school staff also struggle under the weight of the burdens facing their students.

So how can our community help support our students, families and school staff? That's the question a group of community members and educators are asking as they discuss the needs of students across the district.

Shepherd of the Valley Church in Afton is one of several faith communities that have approached the district to ask how it can help support children and youth in our schools. The focus is on service, not religion. The discussions have revolved around the needs of our schools and the resources of the congregation and how the two might intersect.

Several work groups have formed around the question, "How might we be able to work together to provide families with access to things like transportation and basic needs such as food and housing." The teams are also considering ways to support mental health and build positive relationships with youth through mentoring and personal connections. Their hope is that other organizations and faith groups will join in their "Love Our Schools" initiative by adopting local schools in their area.

She's more than just a bus driver

Kate Thomas never thought she'd spend her retirement years behind the wheel of a big yellow bus. But after a year of driving students to school and home again, she says there is nowhere else she'd rather be.

The retired college professor has found her new calling - being a warm and welcoming face for children as they begin and end their school day.

Professor Kate, as the students on her bus call her, does more than just drive the bus. She has created a safe and caring environment where kids feel comfortable accepting a hug, sharing a story and even asking for help. She takes time to find out what students were interested in, and has purchased books, journals, and activities matching those interests to keep them busy on their ride. Some students even spend their time sketching pictures or writing messages to Kate in their journals and handing them back to her as they leave each day.

"She sets the entire tone for our students' day," said Chris Hoefflerle, a paraprofessional at Lake Elmo Elementary. "She's making an incredible difference in the lives of our kids."



It Takes **COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Students are hooked on real-world learning

Students in the Fish and Wildlife class at Stillwater Area High School are getting real-world experience with trout and trout streams through the support of a variety of community partnerships.

Through the Minnesota Trout in the Classroom project and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), students are learning hands-on about trout embryology, growth and development, nutrition, and water quality. They have been raising rainbow trout fertilized eggs since December. Once the fish are fingerling size this spring they will be released into Brown's Creek as part of the MN DNR's management plan.

Volunteers from Minnesota Trout Unlimited brought fresh samples of aquatic organisms into the classroom to give students hands-on experience with identifying common macroinvertebrates. Students have also participated in a field trip to Brown's Creek. Staff from the Washington Conservation Service and the Brown's Creek Watershed District assisted students as they collected samples of macroinvertebrates and other data to evaluate the stream water quality for trout habitat.

Local professionals help students explore career possibilities

A dentist, an attorney and a social entrepreneur walk into a school. No, it's not the opening line of a joke. It's just a few of the volunteers who visited Oak-Land Middle School as part of its first-ever career exploration event.

Nearly 50 volunteers representing local businesses and organizations visited with eighth grade students to share information about their professional careers. The volunteers talked about their own school experiences, their interests and passions, and their journey in selecting a career. The Stillwater Area Community Foundation sponsored the event and helped recruit the volunteers.

The event helped kick off the launch of the district's new Pathways & Possibilities program, which is designed to help students understand their strengths, find their passions and consider what life might look like for them in the future.

Our Community Partners

Some of our partners include: 3M • Andersen Windows • Associated Eye Clinic • Canvas Health • Century College • Northeast Metro 916 • Community Thread • Dia Sorin • Family Means • Greater Stillwater Area Chamber of Commerce • Huntington Learning Center • Islam Resource Center • Kraus-Anderson • Lakeview Hospital • NAPAC • Shepherd of the Valley Church • St. Croix Valley Rec Center • Stillwater Noon Rotary • Stillwater Sunrise Rotary • StoryArk • The Partnership Plan • Twin Cities Orthopedic • United Way Washington County East • Valley Outreach • Washington County • Watermark Church • Woodbury Area Chamber of Commerce • Youth Advantage • Youth Service Bureau • Zephyr Theater

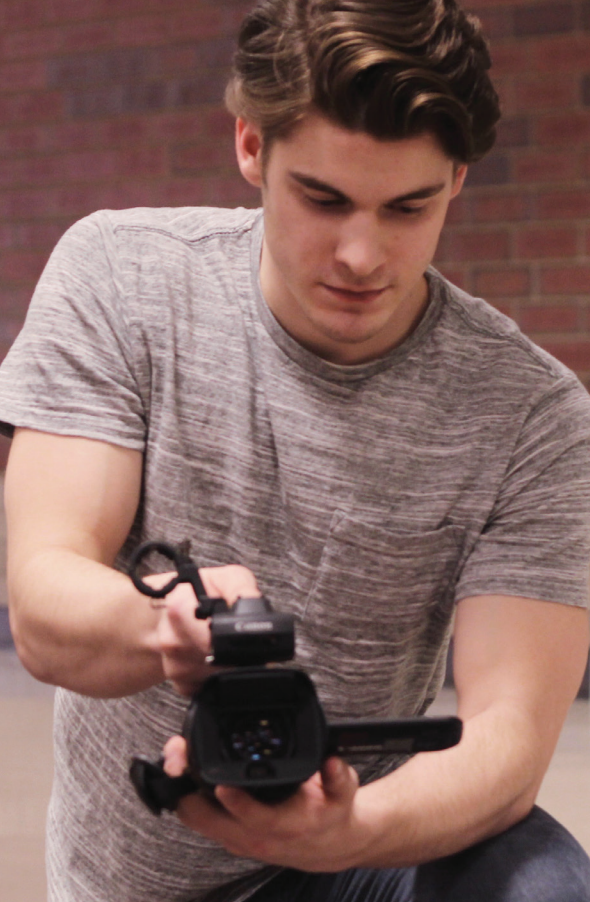


It's About Our Kids

Community partners are helping us develop **CREATORS** who are:



- Courageous, takes risks and learns from failure
- Open minded and responsive to new and diverse perspectives
- Flexible and can adapt to new environments and situations
- Considerate of ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts



It Takes **PASSION**

Student finds his passion in a different kind of class

Making movies is Noah Chlebeck's passion. In fact, the high school senior spends much of his free time either behind a camera or at a computer editing his work. He has already been accepted to Columbia University's film school and will begin classes there in the fall.

But just a couple of years ago, he was a confused and stressed out freshman with no idea what his future would hold. Until he found video production and a teacher by the name of Debbie Drew.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do and wound up being stressed out," Chlebeck said. "But I found my passion and knew what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I want to be in the movie making business."

Chlebeck is one of dozens of students who have enrolled in Cutaway Productions, a student-run video production company operating out of Stillwater Area High School. As part of the class, students learn how to write, produce, direct, shoot and edit videos - from documentaries to advertisements. Students get real-life experience by working with actual clients in the community to create videos promoting their businesses, products or services. Under the guidance of Drew, a former movie maker herself, the students get a first-hand look at careers and opportunities in the field of video production.

It's About Our Kids

We're teaching our students to be
SELF-ADVOCATES who:



- Remain curious and love to learn new things
- Understand personal strength and areas for growth
- Are motivated and confident
- Follow their passions and interests

"The kids in this class are so talented," Drew said. "They are so much more creative and talented than I ever was. When you give them the opportunities, it's so much fun to just sit back and see what they can create."



PREPARING FOR COLLEGE



PREPARING FOR WORK



PREPARING FOR LIFE

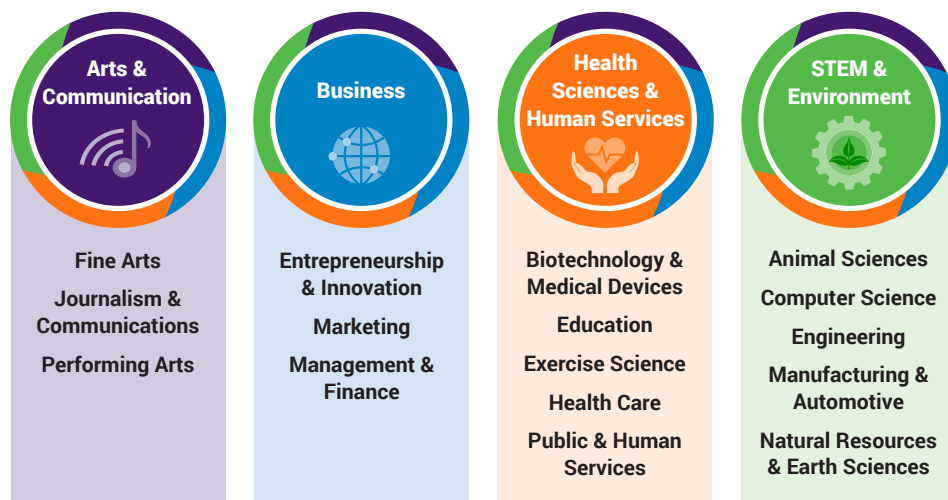
WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED!

Relevant experiences should be the norm for all of our students. That's why we're excited to introduce our new career exploration program:

PATHWAYS & POSSIBILITIES

Officially coming to Stillwater Area High School in 2020-2021, Pathways & Possibilities is designed to help students understand their strengths, find their passions and consider what life might look like for them in the future. Students will be given a variety of opportunities throughout their educational career to better understand their career options, experience hands-on learning in a variety of areas and leave high school with marketable skills.

As part of the pathways program, high school students select from elective courses organized into four areas - Arts & Communication, Business, Health Sciences & Human Services, and STEM & Environment. Each pathway will lead students through introductory classes all the way to advanced-level courses that could earn them college credit or an industry certification. Students may also have opportunities to connect with professionals in the community through job shadowing, mentorships, internships, extra-curricular activities and more.



Students are not required to declare a pathway, nor are they prevented from selecting courses in more than one pathway. It's all about giving them opportunities to explore the many possibilities that exist for them.

Share your expertise. Community partners needed!

We're looking for ways to extend learning beyond the classroom by connecting our students with professionals in our community.

Opportunities may include job shadowing, mentorships, internships and other career exploration experiences.



We've heard you!

"[The district should] expand the focus beyond just college/universities. It would be great to inform kids of ALL their options"

- staff member

"[Schools should] develop partnerships with local businesses to expose students to many career options"

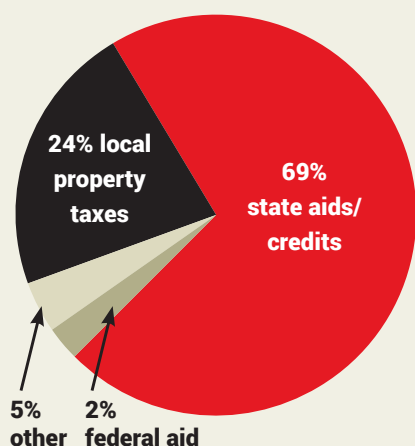
- community member

**Comments from May 2019
Thoughtexchange**



Want to help? Learn more at stillwaterschools.org/pathways

It Takes an **INVESTMENT**



Where our money comes from

In Minnesota, public schools are largely financed by the state. During the 2018-2019 school year Stillwater schools received 69% of its general fund revenue from state aid and credits. Local property owners also contribute to schools through local levies.

Source: 2018-2019 audited financials



Your money at work for kids

In 2013, district voters approved an operating levy to support learning in our schools. This levy will be expiring in 2021.

Information shared at that time stated the bulk of the levy dollars were going to be invested to provide financial stability for our district. A smaller portion, estimated to be about 15% of the total, would be invested in initiatives outlined in the Bridge to Excellence, the strategic plan in place from 2012-2018, and 3% of the levy was going to be used for school safety and security.



See the table below for an overview of how resources from this operating levy have been invested to meet the needs of our students.

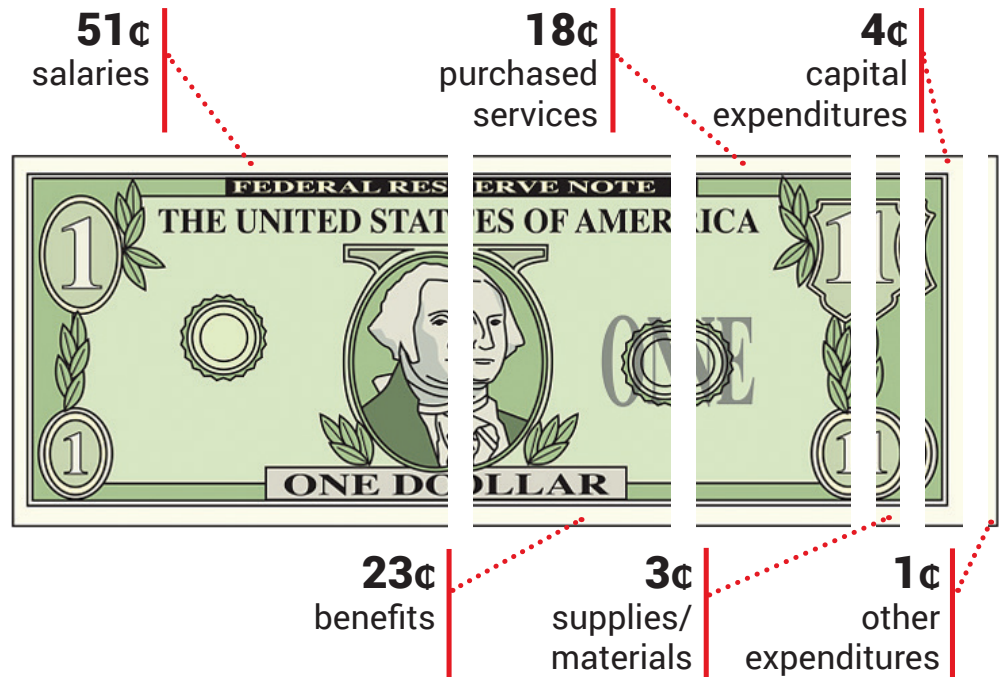
Levy 2013 Promises Fulfilled

Issue #1: Financial stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintained existing programs and class sizes Balanced the district's general fund budget
Issue #2: Bridge To Excellence (BtE) The BtE strategic plan focused on "addressing the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of each student"	Implemented the following programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middle school model WEB and Link Crew orientation programs and Ready, Set, Go Conferences Support for ninth grade students through their first year of high school and beyond (BARR program) Expanded access to student advocates, counselors, psychologists and other support staff Math and reading interventions to support struggling learners Amigos Unidas (Spanish Immersion) program Art teacher in every elementary school Instructional coaches to offer ongoing professional development and teacher training New teacher evaluation system Online and blended courses at the high school Pathways & Possibilities career exploration program
Issue #3: Safety & Security	Provided the following safety improvements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controlled access into school buildings Visitor management system Social emotional learning curriculum and training for staff Behavior interventions (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support/MTSS)

Where a dollar goes

We're committed to investing our limited resources in ways that benefit all of our students. As a service organization, the majority of money from our general fund is spent on people. We invest in outstanding employees who are focused on helping our students succeed.

Source: 2018-2019 audited financials



Voters may be asked to consider both an operating levy and a bond request. What's the difference?

LEVY = LEARNING

The existing operating levy is expiring. It pays for things needed to operate the district, like staff, books, materials and more. Without an operating levy in place, the district would lose approximately \$12 million in annual funding.

Our operating levy is expiring. New funds are needed

Did you know the existing operating levy, which was approved by voters in 2013, provides the district with about approximately \$12 million annually?

This operating levy will expire in 2021. The school board has said it will likely place an operating levy question on the ballot in November 2021. They could choose to simply renew the expiring levy at the same level, or consider asking for additional funding to support new initiatives.

Funds from local property taxes, including the existing operating levy, make up nearly 24% of the district's general fund. Without an operating levy in place, significant budget adjustments and programming changes would have to be made for the 2022-2023 school year.

BOND = BUILDING

Any new funding from a bond could be used to renovate or expand existing facilities, build new facilities or purchase land.

Potential bond could pay for new schools and improved facilities

A community group charged with studying the district's long-range facilities needs has recommended the school board ask voters for additional funding to make improvements to buildings across the district, as well as build new facilities in areas of growth.

The team developed its recommendation to address growth in the district and ensure all students have access to equitable, 21st-century learning spaces.

Among the team's top priorities were creating new space in the southern portion of the district including expanding Brookview Elementary School, tearing down the existing Lake Elmo Elementary School and building a new school at that site and constructing a new elementary school somewhere in Lake Elmo or Woodbury. The recommendation also included plans to remodel and/or expand existing schools across the district. The school board anticipates making a decision on the recommendation this spring. It is likely that a bond question would be on the ballot in 2021.

Learn more at stillwaterschools.org/facilities.



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OUR SCHOOLS CANNOT DO IT ALONE

Even on the best day, our schools rely on the efforts of many different people coming together to support our kids. Now, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's become even more clear that we're all in this together.

It Takes **EDUCATORS**

It Takes **VOLUNTEERS**

It Takes **PROTECTORS**

It Takes **COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

It Takes **HEART**

It Takes **PASSION**

It Takes an **INVESTMENT**



IT TAKES ALL OF YOU WORKING ALONGSIDE ALL OF US!

Learn more about the district's COVID-19 response and how you can help at stillwaterschools.org/COVID.

Want to be inspired?

Check out our "It Takes a Valley" video series at stillwaterschools.org/valley to see how we care for our kids. Then check out facebook.com/Stillwater834 to see examples of what that love looks like in action during this time when our kids aren't in school.

651.351.8340 | stillwaterschools.org



Si usted tiene alguna pregunta acerca de esta hoja informativa, por favor llame a la oficina de su escuela para hablar con un interprete.