

NSPRA's 2018 National School Communication Awards Entry Form
GOLD MEDALLION AWARDS ENTRY

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District/school/organization: Stillwater Area Public Schools

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Title of entry: ***Get to Know the "New" Stillwater Area Public Schools***

Number of PR/Communication staff: 3.5 FTE

Type of School/Organization Submitting Entry (Check one)

- School district: Under 3,000 students
- School district: 3,001-10,000 students**
- School district: 10,001-25,000 students
- School district: Over 25,000 students
- State County Office of Education
- Private/Charter school or individual public school
- VoTech center/Community college
- Education association
- Education service agency/Intermediate Unit/BOCES
- Business partner/Agency/Consultant (working with any listed)

Entry Category (Check one)

- Comprehensive, Strategic, Year-Round Communication Programs**
- Public Engagement/Parental Involvement
- Bond/Finance Campaign
- Crisis Communication
- Special Communication Projects/Campaigns
- Marketing Communication
- Specify topic: _____

Please consider this entry for a Golden Achievement Award.



Gold Medallion Award Entry
Comprehensive, Strategic, Year-Round Communication Program
Get to Know the “New” Stillwater Area Public Schools

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Synopsis:

Stillwater Area Public Schools underwent big changes between the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school year. Several elementary schools were closed. Attendance boundaries were changed. Grade configuration changes were made to create preK-grade 5 elementary schools, 6-8 middle schools and a 9-12 high school. More than 200 of the district’s 500 teachers and hundreds of support staff moved to different buildings. Thousands of students also shifted between schools. In addition, major construction and remodeling projects were completed, an elementary Spanish immersion program was started and a new elementary school opened in the southern part of the district.

In preparing for the start of the 2017-2018 school year district staff were intentional in supporting students, families and staff through the many transitions. District leaders recognized that the vast amount of change, some of which was controversial and divisive, had made a profound impact on the entire community. A concerted effort was developed to help the community move past the difficult decisions and see the benefits of the changes happening in the district.

The communications team worked closely with other administrators to create a two-part communications strategy.

- **Phase 1: Warm Welcomes. New Beginnings**
The first part focused on successfully transitioning students, staff and families to new school buildings. The goal of this work was to: *Ensure students, families and staff feel connected with and welcome in their new school communities.* Planning for this work began in the winter of 2016-2017. Communication with targeted audiences was primarily focused from March 2017 through the first weeks of the new school year in August/September 2017.
- **Phase 2: Getting to Know the “New” Stillwater Area Public Schools**
The second phase of the strategy was designed to help re-connect the community to its schools and remind residents of all the reasons they could be proud to be a pony! This part of the campaign began in Fall 2017 and was designed to gather momentum throughout the 2017-2018 school year. Tactics and strategies were focused on two main goals: (1) *Enhance the school district’s image with positive, personal stories of success;* (2) *Promote the school district’s brand and desirability within the community.*

Background:

After years of declining enrollment, the district that was once serving nearly 10,000 students was serving just 8,300. While communities in the southern portion of the very long and skinny district are growing, enrollment in central and northern elementary schools has been on the decline for years. This imbalance caused a variety of financial challenges, but the real issue concerning district leaders was that it created vastly different learning experiences for elementary students depending on where they lived. Schools in the south, which had its most diverse learners, faced overcrowding and large class sizes while schools in the north were under capacity, had small class sizes, and few support staff.

A bond referendum had been passed by voters in May 2015 that was designed to allow for grade reconfigurations in the school district. The bond paid for a major addition and remodeling at the high school to make room for ninth grade students, as well as other building projects to support the new 6-8 middle schools and preK-grade 5 elementary schools. It also funded construction of a new elementary school in the growing southern portion of the district.

Knowing grade configuration would result in boundary changes and other disruptions to the system, district leaders decided to also address the need to address capacity issues across the district. During the winter of 2016, administration determined that now was the time to address the inequities in learning and developed a proposal called BOLD, Building Opportunities to Learn and Discover. With a split 4-3 vote in March 2016, the school board approved the plan to close three of its elementary schools at the start of the 2017-2018 school year in order to better utilize resources, balance class sizes, and increase support for ALL students.

The need for the BOLD proposal was supported by significant evidence gathered from demographic studies, county-wide growth trends, a comprehensive strategic planning process, a community-led Facility Use plan, and district enrollment data.

The decision to close schools, however, was not popular with the entire community. An organized group of citizens formed in the spring of 2016. The group filed several lawsuits against the district, questioning the legality of the closures as well as alleging board members violated open meeting laws and accusing an individual board member and district staff member of having conflicts of interest. During this time the district was the subject of negative posts on social media and the source of negative stories in local media. After more than a year of court battles, all of the lawsuits were dismissed or decided in the district's favor. The district's reputation was tarnished, however, and trust and satisfaction with the public schools took a significant hit.

The district's main strategy through this time was to keep focused on the needs of our students. Leaders responded to misinformation when it could, though this ability was limited due to ongoing litigation. Ultimately, leaders determined the best way to combat the negative fallout from unpopular decisions was to ensure the transition went smoothly for students and families, and that the results promised by school consolidation were realized.

Research:

Barriers/Solutions Conversations: Beginning in September of 2015 meetings were held with school board members, district administrators and all district staff to discuss barriers that have kept the district from being successful, and begin to create solutions to address those barriers. Similar conversations were held in small groups with community leaders and business owners, and PTO/PTA leaders. Additionally, two Community Conversations and two online forums were held with community members. During these conversations, concerns about class size, lack of resources, and inequities in learning were brought forward. This information was important to the leadership team as it reflected back on why the decision to close schools was initially made, and developed priorities and key messages to help the district move forward post-school closure.

Community Survey: A formal, random sample phone survey was conducted in February 2016 to measure the community's perceptions related to possible school closure. More than 570 residents, representing a demographic cross-section of the district, were randomly selected to take part in the survey. See [survey results](#).

- Overall, the survey revealed that the community was divided on the issue of school closures. This was most pronounced among parents, with 43 percent of those surveyed stating they supported or strongly supported school closure and 53 percent stating they opposed or strongly opposed it. The remaining respondents were unsure.
- Of all respondents (both parents and non-parents) who stated they did not support school closure, the top reasons included concerns of not having an elementary school in the north and closing high-achieving buildings. Losing neighborhood schools and concerns about the process and timing of the recommendation were also raised.
- Of those who responded in support of the proposal, cost savings were cited among the top reasons. Specifically, they stated that the ability to reinvest cost savings into programs and learning opportunities, address capacity concerns, and minimize future budget reductions were compelling reasons to support school closure and the BOLD plan.

Results from the survey helped district leaders understand the perspectives of families and were instrumental in developing priorities and talking points for the transition planning.

Focus Groups: In February 2016 three independently facilitated focus groups were held for the purpose of convening stakeholder voices from across the district. The participants were asked to share their personal experiences with the district and perspectives on the BOLD proposal, which was the impetus for school consolidation. See the [executive summary](#). The focus group data provided district leaders with insights on what people valued about the district, and what they identified as the risks and benefits of school closure. All of this information was utilized by district leaders in the formation of priorities and messaging for the transition process.

Thoughtexchange: In September 2016 district leaders engaged the community in an online conversation about the challenges and opportunities facing our schools. Using the Thoughtexchange

software program, district leaders reached out to parents, staff and community members. The district even purchased voter file information in an attempt to reach the nearly 80 percent of residents without students in its schools. Participants were asked to share their thoughts on what they appreciated about the district, what needed to improve, and what questions they have. More than 3,450 residents participated and administration was surprised to find that school closures were not the major concern on participants' minds at the time. Participants listed a wide range of concerns and priorities - some of which aligned perfectly with the reasons why school consolidation happened in the first place. The data provided by Thoughtexchange provided district leaders with insights on what people valued about the district, and helped provide key messages and insights for future planning.

StoryWall Activity: More than 200 people, including board members, staff and community members, took part in a StoryWall Activity between December 2016 and February 2017. Participants worked together to create timelines stretching back to 1996 and identified the key events - both internal and external - that have shaped our district's culture and experience. The activity was designed to create a collective understanding of the many factors that have influenced decision-making in the past, and will continue to impact present and future decisions. Data and insights gathered from the storywall helped to provide key messages and insights to district leaders.

Analysis/Planning:

Based on data gathered during the research process, district leaders began to develop a plan for moving the district forward. The superintendent and her cabinet, made up of 12 directors, created a transition plan to support students, families and staff. Principals from each of the district's schools were also involved in the planning process. Each director helped to oversee a specific portion of the work - from planning the logistics of moving people and materials between buildings to working with principals to plan welcome events and activities in their schools. The role of the communications and marketing team, in collaboration with cabinet members, was to develop a comprehensive communications and marketing campaign designed to help residents "Get to Know" their new school district.

When planning for the "Get to Know" campaign the following measurable objectives were defined for each goal:

Goal	Measurable Objective	Metrics
<i>Promote the school district's brand and desirability within the community</i>	District capture rate for 2017-2018 will be maintained at the 2016-2017 rate +/- 3%	Enrollment data
<i>Ensure students, families and staff feel connected with and welcome in their new school communities</i>	At least 65% of parents will rate the transition to new school communities as good or very good on a parent transition survey	Transition parent survey
<i>Enhance the school district's image with positive, personal stories of success</i>	Positive media coverage will increase by 20% from the previous year	Meltwater analytics

Phase 1: Warm Welcomes. New Beginnings

Several transition teams were created to manage the details of the largest movement of students, staff and materials in the district’s history. Teams included a middle school transition team of staff and parents who developed a middle school philosophy, programming and transition activities; a high school transition team of staff, students and parents charged with developing programming and transition activities; and a Logistical Transition Team which developed a comprehensive plan to guide the movement of people and things this summer. The logistics team focused solely on teacher and staff movement within and between buildings, as well as coordinating the move of equipment, supplies and classroom materials. *See the Logistical Transition Team [timeline](#).*

A communications plan was also developed for spring 2017 to design special communications and events to warmly welcome students, families and staff to their new school communities at the start of the 2017-2018 school year.

Schools	Activity	Responsible	Date	Audience	Budget
ALL	Welcome letter from principal	Elementary and middle school principals/ Carissa	First week April	All boundary change families include PreK	\$0
ALL	Invitation postcard	Communications	Mail April 21	Everyone in attendance area, include PreK	\$1,200 postage
MIDDLE	Middle School Tour Field Trip	Middle school principals	May 17, 18, 19	Current 5th and 6th grade students	Transportation budget
MIDDLE	Middle School “Friday Night Live”	Community Ed/ Middle school staff		Current 5th and 6th grade students	CommEd budget
ALL	Group Guided Tours - <i>Each building to identify two dates for tours</i>	All principals	May	New families include PreK	\$0
ALL	Concerts, field days, book fairs, special events	All principals	Varies	Everyone in attendance area	\$0
ELEM	PTO welcome event(s)	PTO/Principal	Varies	Everyone in attendance area	PTO budgets
ELEM	Open Houses at Closing Schools	PTO/School Staff	TBD	All-school alumni, neighbors	PTO budgets

Phase 2: Getting to Know the “New” Stillwater Area Public Schools

With students in place in their new buildings at the start of the 2017-2018 school year, the district moved into the second phase of its plan, which was to work to enhance the district’s reputation and generate community pride in its schools. *See the full Communications and Marketing plan in Appendix A.*

In addition to a strategic and comprehensive media (print and online) program, the plan also included a variety of in-person events and activities to bring the community together in celebration of its students and its schools. These included:

- **Summer Tuesdays:** School principals and district administrators manned a booth during Summer Tuesdays, which is a community marketplace held on six Tuesdays in July and August 2017. They spoke with residents, helped students write thank-you notes to teachers and handed out Pony Pride “temporary” tattoos, stickers and informational materials about the district.
- **Lumberjack Parade:** Dozens of students and staff walked in the community parade in July 2017. The students wore their Pony gear and represented various clubs, activities and sports with banners and signs. Marchers handed out Pony stickers and temporary tattoos, as well as event calendars and other goodies.
- **Pony Homecoming Carnival:** This fun, family-friendly event was designed to bring our entire community together – from Woodbury all the way to Marine – and celebrate what it means to be a Stillwater Pony. The first-ever homecoming carnival featured traditional carnival games and activities, as well as booths showcasing various student groups and community vendors. It brought together current students, alumni, community members, business owners and anyone else who bleeds Pony red!

Communication:

See samples of work in Appendix B.

- Ticket to your new school [postcards](#) sent to all families in April 2017 inviting them to events/activities at their new school. Seven unique postcards were created and mailed - one for each school community.
- School profiles (created Spring 2017), highlighting each building and the programming and opportunities that make them unique. Ten unique profiles were created, one for each of the districts elementary and secondary schools, and were distributed during school tours and other transition events. Access a copy of each school’s profile [online](#).
- [Getting Ready for Middle School](#), overview of our new middle school program. Given to parents spring 2017 and in January 2018 to help prepare and register for the coming year.
- [Pony Possibilities postcard](#), sent to all incoming ninth graders to invite them to a special event prior to registration. Pony Possibilities Night featured a presentation and overview of the school, as well as an Academic and Activities Fair highlighting the courses and co-curriculars available for students at the high school.

- Expanding Pony Possibilities communications, overview of changes ([physical](#) and [programmatic](#)) for our new 9-12 high school. Provided to families, and made available for the community, in Spring 2017.
- [Smooth transition website](#), created in Spring 2017 to provide families with information for the transitions in 2017-2018.
- Get To Know Stillwater Area Public Schools [mailier](#). Sent to all of the district's residents in August 2017, prior to the start of the new school year.
- Fulfilling the Promises of Bond 2015 [mailier](#). Sent to all of the district's residents in September 2017 to outline the many changes made, and promises kept, from the bond that financed grade configuration changes.
- Community Connections Fall 2017 newsletter, "[Warm Welcomes, New Beginnings.](#)" Mailed to all of the district's residents in October 2017. Highlighted successful transition to the new school year.
- Get To Know the New Stillwater Area Public Schools (#PonyPride) [video](#). Additional supporting videos were also developed to showcase Stillwater area students and staff.
- [Shareholders Report](#), mailed to all district residents in February 2018. Highlighted the many new initiatives and programs in place across the district and celebrated Pony Pride.
- Realtor packets, shared with local realtors and developers. Packet includes district and school profiles as well as additional resources and information about our district.
- New Family packets, similar to Realtor Packet, with district information and school profiles for the schools within a new families' attendance area.
- [Facebook](#) ad campaign in spring 2018, designed to raise awareness and build support for Stillwater Area Public Schools.

Evaluation:

Navigating Change Family survey

As part of 2017 fall parent/teacher conferences, families were asked to share their experiences with school staff by completing the Navigating Change Family Survey. Nearly 500 respondents, representing all of the district's schools, provided their feedback:

- 72 percent of respondents rated the transition as good or very good.
- 14 percent of respondents rated the transition as not good or not good at all.
- When asked what has been the most positive experience, 25 percent of respondents credited teachers and staff with helping make the transition smooth.
- When asked what has been the most challenging, 19 percent of respondents stated they had not experienced challenges.
- Of the concerns that were shared through the survey, bussing issues were the most frequently mentioned. It's important to note that bussing concerns are not a result of the transition, but occurred due to driver shortages and normal beginning-of-the-year operational issues.

Enrollment data

Following the decision to close schools, many families threatened to leave the school district. The mass exodus predicted, however, was not fully realized.

- The district's capture rate declined slightly from 72.6 percent in 2016-2017 to 71.7 percent in 2017-2018.
- The first day of school (August 2017) brought 8,328 students in grades K-12+ to the school district.
 - This is a decline of just 73 students from October of the previous year, despite the incoming class of kindergarten students being 87 students smaller than last year's graduating class.
 - While the district did lose more than 100 elementary students in the transition, it gained students at the middle and high school level resulting in stable enrollment districtwide.

Social Media

- As of March 2018, the #Pony Pride video generated 17,000 views and more than 45 shares on Facebook.
- The number of people giving 1 star reviews on Facebook sharply declined during the 2017-2018 school year. By March 2018, the number of 1 star reviews and 5 star reviews were nearly balanced - for an overall rating of nearly 3 stars.

Media coverage

The number of positive news stories about the district has significantly increased in the past year (based on Meltwater analytics):

- From January 2016 to January 2017 there were 194 news stories about Stillwater Area Public Schools. Of those 22 were positive, 30 were negative and 142 were neutral.
- From January 2017 to January 2018 there were 251 news stories about Stillwater Area Public Schools. Of those, 160 were positive, 16 were negative and 75 were neutral.

Community Engagement:

- Approximately 2,000 people attended the district's first-ever homecoming carnival in September 2017.
- More than 70 students and staff marched in the Lumberjack Parade in July 2017.
- Hundreds of students, parents and community members visited with school leaders at the district's booth during Summer Tuesdays.
- More than 2,000 district residents participated in community engagement activities between May 2017 and January 2018 (both online and in person) surrounding the development of the district's next strategic plan.

Community Satisfaction survey

A formal, random-sample community satisfaction survey is planned for Fall 2018 to measure attitudes and perceptions about the school district. Data from this survey will be compared to results from previous satisfaction surveys, which are conducted every few years.

Appendix

- Appendix A: Communications and Marketing Plan
- Appendix B: Sample Communication Pieces

Appendix A: Communications and Marketing Plan

	Goal statement	Area of Focus		Metrics		
Goal #1	<i>Ensuring students, families and staff feel connected with and welcome in their new school communities</i>	Parent/ Customer Satisfaction		Satisfaction survey; Exit interviews; Google analytics; capture rate		
Goal #2	<i>Enhancing the school district's image with positive, personal stories of success</i>	Reputation Management		Facebook analytics, Meltwater; Google analytics		
Goal #3	<i>Promoting the school district's brand and desirability within the community</i>	Branding/ Pony Pride		Satisfaction survey; Enrollment report		
Project	Task: Create targeted recruitment efforts at key enrollment periods	Audience	Team	Timeline	Vehicle	Goal
Get To Know	Send Get To Know Schools mailing to district residents	Community/ prospect fam	C. Keister	Dec 8	postcard	3
Get To Know	Mail enrollment packet to all prospective K families	Incoming K	C. Freichels	Nov 16	packet	3
Get To Know	Mail enrollment packet to all prospective preK families	Incoming PreK	C. Freichels	Dec 4	packet	3
Get To Know	Mail postcard to all prospective middle school (6-8) families	Incoming middle	C. Keister	Dec	postcard	3
Get To Know	Create middle school registration materials	Incoming middle	Team/L&I	Dec		3
Get To Know	Mail Pony Possibilities postcard to all prospective 9-12 families	Incoming high	C. Freichels	Dec	postcard	3
Get To Know	Create high school registration materials	Incoming high	Team/L&I	Dec		3
Get To Know	School tours for incoming kindergarten and preK families	Prospect parents	Schools	Dec	mailing	2
Get To Know	Develop Facebook advertising campaign around reputation/Pony Pride with monthly ads	Community	C. Freichels	Nov/April	online	2
Get To Know	Develop Google advertising campaign around enrollment (2x/yr)	Prospect parents	T. Johnson	Nov/April	online	2
Get To Know	Meet with local realtors to share information about our schools, and provide resources for them to share with families moving into the district.	Prospect parents	T. Johnson	Nov/April	Welcome packet	2

Get To Know	Social media and video posts highlighting district staff	Community	Team	Ongoing		2
Get To Know	Social media posts highlighting successes of alumni, students	Community	C. Freichels	Ongoing	online	3
Get To Know	Send welcome cards to new families as they enroll in district schools, include coupon code for PonyPride.org	Parents	Sam Johnson	Ongoing	welcome card	1
Get To Know	Stillwater Showcase: tours, special events featuring each school and highlighting programs	Community/ prospective families	Comm/ L&I	Spring 2018		3
Get To Know	Conduct "Roadshow Tour" to present state of district to community organizations	community	Comm/Supt	ongoing	presentation	2
Get To Know	Teacher Outreach Provide postcards to elementary teachers to send a "welcome" note to new students at start of year.	Parents	Principals/ teachers	Aug 2017	postcards	1
Get To Know	Connect with local organizations/community groups and attend meetings to share information, build relationships	Community	Directors	ongoing		3
Project	Task: Partner with the community to expand Pony Pride	Audience	Team	Timeline	Vehicle	Goal
Pony Pride	Develop a campaign (in partnership with Chamber of Commerce) to encourage local businesses to show Pony Pride	Community	C. Freichels/ C. Keister	Spring 2018	Pony Pride posters, stickers, flags	3
Pony Pride	Develop #PonyPride selfie stations around the district	Community	C. Freichels	Spring 2018		3
Pony Pride	Generate a social media campaign around #PonyPride	Community	C. Freichels	Ongoing	#PonyPride	3
Pony Pride	Pitch one positive story to TV, metro newspaper each month	Community	C. Keister	ongoing		2
Pony Pride	Promote the district at community events, including Summer Tuesdays and Lumberjack Days.	Community	C. Freichels	Summer		3
Pony Pride	Mail "Future Pony" onsies to all babies born in the district	Prospective families	ECFC	Ongoing	onsies	3
Pony Pride	Give a book to all children screened through ECFC with Pony Pride messaging	Prospective families	ECFC	Ongoing	books	3
Pony Pride	Publish Alumni newsletters to keep alumni engaged in district	Alumni	C. Freichels	quarterly	govDelivery	3
Pony Pride	Send birthday cards to all 1-5 year olds in the district	Prospective families	S. Johnson	onling	birthday cards	3

Pony Pride	Promote ponypride.org, virtual pony storefront	Community/ families/ alumni	Comm	ongoing		3
Pony Pride	Expand Pony Pride by hosting the first-ever Pony Homecoming Carnival at Stillwater Area High School.	Community/ alumni	Homecoming Committee	Sept 10-16		3
Pony Pride	Design and sell an "official" homecoming 2017 t-shirt	Community/	Homecoming Committee	Sept 2017	tshirts	3
Pony Pride	Host special events to celebrate the opening of Brookview Elementary and the Pony Activity Center, and the grand re-opening of the high school.	Community	Comm	BV: Sept 12; SAHS/PAC: Sept 15		3
Project	Task: Enhance the customer experience	Audience	Team	Timeline	Vehicle	Goal
Service	Conduct exit interviews to gather data on why families are leaving the district	Parents	C. Keister	Ongoing	exit interview	1
Service	Conduct a customer satisfaction survey	Parents	C. Keister	Spring 2018	survey	1
Service	Hold Thoughtexchange online conversation 2x/yr to gather community feedback	Parents/ community	Board/Comm	fall/spring	Thoughtexch ange	1
Service	Hold Community Conversations on specific topics to invite residents to share ideas/offer feedback.	Parents/ community	Board/Comm	ongoing		1
Service	Provide relationship/service training for front line staff	Staff	C. Keister	Spring 2018		1
Service	Streamline communication vehicles, and provide support to teachers, to enhance school-to-home communications.	Parents	Comm/L&I	Spring 2018		1
Service	Create Let's Talk videos, website to support and educate parents of middle school students	Parents	Comm/ CommEd	monthly	video, online	1
Service	Meet quarterly with PTO/PTA leadership	Parents	Comm/ CommEd	Quarterly		1
Service	Meet quarterly with Superintendent's Community Advisory Committee	Community	Supt/ Comm	Quarterly		1
Service	Meet with Superintendent's Student Advisory	Students	Supt/ Comm	Quarterly		1
Service	Work with district leaders to continue efforts to welcome and transition staff and students to new buildings.	Parents	Principals/ Comm	Fall 2017		1
Service	Launch new website calendaring system to make it easier for families to navigate school and activity calendars	Parents/ community	T. Johnson	Aug 2017		1

Service	Launch GoPonies.org website for student activities/athletics	Parents/ community	T. Johnson	Aug 2017		1
Service	Create We Care website with mental health resources for families	Parents	Comm/L&I	Aug 2017	online	1
Service	Engage staff and the community in a strategic planning process	staff/parents / community	Comm/L&I	Spring 2018		1

Appendix B: Sample Communication Pieces

Pony Possibilities Night - Facebook event post



Ticket to your new school postcard

You Are Invited

LAKE ELMO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

We invite your entire family to see Lake Elmo in action. Visit the school, meet other families, and connect with new friends. Join us for any or all of the following events and activities.


May 11	Kindergarten Spring Sing (gym) 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
May 18	Grade 3-5 Field Day (Call for specific times)
May 18	Art Fair and PTA Book Fair at 6:30 p.m.
May 18	Grade K-2 Field Day (Call for specific times)
May 24	Band, Orchestra and Choir concert at 1 p.m.
May 30	Student Variety Show at 6:15 p.m.

stillwaterschools.org/lakeelmo



ADMIT ONE FAMILY

**Get to Know
LAKE ELMO**



What's new at Lake Elmo next year?

Preschool is here to stay
After a successful first year of preK, we'll be welcoming even more four-year-olds for half-day and all-day preschool.

Spanish Immersion is coming
We'll be welcoming our first cohort of kindergarten students enrolled in a Spanish Immersion program.

Our boundaries are changing
Many families will be leaving Lake Elmo next year to attend Brookview Elementary. We'll also be welcoming new families from Andersen Elementary. We'll have the unique opportunity to blend the traditions and cultures of each school as we build a new community at Lake Elmo.





Stillwater Area Public Schools
Independent School District #834
1875 South Greeley Street
Stillwater, Minnesota 55082

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage PAID
Stillwater, MN
PERMIT #192


Spring Tours
Want to learn more about your school?
 Please join us for a tour. RSVP to 651.351.8700 for the date that works best for you.
 Tours are for adults only.
May 4 at 9:30 a.m.
May 18 at 2:00 p.m.
May 24 at 9:30 a.m.

District Profile - "Get To Know Stillwater Area Public Schools"
([click](#) to see full PDF)



GET TO KNOW

Stillwater Area Public Schools



Stillwater
AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

651.351.8340 | stillwaterschools.org



School profiles



**Get To Know
OAK-LAND**

820 Manning Ave. N. | Lake Elmo, MN 55042 | 651.351.8500 | stillwaterschools.org/olms
 Start Time: 7:50 a.m. | End Time: 2:20 p.m.
 Enrollment: 900 students



Oak-Land has transformed from a junior high to a middle school serving students in grades 6-8 with hands-on and engaging learning experiences. Students are encouraged to explore their interests and passions in each subject throughout the day. Middle school students have unique needs, and we're here to support them every step of the way as they transition into adolescence and adulthood.

Real-World Experiences




Personalized Learning




Caring Relationships




Learning is made more meaningful and engaging with:

- Integrated learning opportunities
- Hands-on projects
- Real-world problem solving
- Digital devices and technology
- Community experts
- 4Cs – Communication, Collaboration, Critical thinking, Creativity

Learning is personalized based on each student's strengths, passions and unique needs:

- Exploratory experiences
- Advisory programming
- Community service activities
- Project-based learning
- Clubs, activities, sports and more

Students get to know one another and develop meaningful relationships with staff through:

- Teaming of teachers and students
- Academic and wellness counseling
- Intervention teachers (English learners, math/reading support and more)
- Strong community partnerships

"I appreciate the content, as well as the fact that my children are allowed to progress at a faster rate than others in the same class. This keeps them motivated and engaged rather than dumbing down the lesson to a level which would not stimulate them. Also, it allows other children to progress at his/her pace rather than attempting to move at a pace beyond their ability."

– Comment from Thoughtexchange (Fall 2016)



**CURIOSITY
Thrives Here**

Oak-Land Offers Big Opportunities, Personalized



Learning opportunities

- Where Everyone Belongs (WEB) student mentor and anti-bullying program
- Student council and honor society
- Special education services
- Gifted/Talented clustering in core classes
- Award-winning choir, band and orchestra
- AVID (for study skills and college prep)
- Project Lead the Way (science, technology, engineering and math)
- Cultures and world languages
- Art and design
- Independent computer exploration
- Makerspace lab and video production studio
- Community service projects

Oak-Land is home to:

- The medically-complex district-wide cluster program

Activities for all

There is something for everyone to do before or after school - from music and drama to math club and robotics.

More than 63% of our students are involved in school activities

Support and assistance

As kids transition into adolescence and adulthood, they need more support than ever. Our staff includes administrators, a School Resource Officer, counselors and a variety of individuals to provide support.

We also partner with community resources to provide students with whatever they need to succeed - from mental health support to assistance with medical care, access to food and more.

Get Involved

Parents are encouraged to get involved in Oak-Land's PTA. The group meets monthly. See our school website for more information.

Our staff help make Oak-Land great!

70% of our teachers have a master's degree or higher

75% of our teachers have more than 10 years experience

90% of students believe teachers care about them (2015 Minnesota Student Survey)



Our students excel

94.6% of sixth graders said they feel safe in our school

17.2%
above state average in math proficiency

12.5%
above state average in reading proficiency

40%

of our students have a 3.5 grade point average or higher

on Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments



Stillwater
AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

stillwaterschools.org



Smooth Transitions website - ([Click](#) to view site)

The screenshot shows the website for Stillwater Area Public Schools. The header includes the district logo, contact information (District: 651.351.8340 | Fax: 651.351.8380 | email: 1875 Greeley Street South, Stillwater, MN 55062), and navigation links (Home, Our District, Schools, Academics & Activities, Parent & Student Resources, Calendars, Community Ed, Our Staff, Search). A secondary navigation bar shows the current path: District Home > Our District > 2017 Transitions.

District
1875 Greeley Street S.
Stillwater, MN 55082
Email us
Main: 651.351.8340
Fax: 651.351.8380

Our District
[Why Choose Stillwater?](#)
[Our Mission](#)
[World's Best Workforce](#)
[District Map](#)
[District News & E-News](#)
[District Policies \(NEW\)](#)
[Superintendent's Office](#)
[School Board](#)
[Referendum](#)
[ISD634 General Directory](#)
[Departments](#)
[Employment](#)
[Alumni](#)

2017 Transitions

We're making great big changes in Stillwater Area Public Schools for the start of the 2017-2018 school year - changes designed to bring even more opportunities to our students. We're encouraging students to explore their interests and passions, and we're providing them with more support and deeper relationships with our caring staff members than ever before.

Watch this site for more details on all that is being planned for next year as we gear up for the:

- Expansion of preschool to all elementary schools
- Opening of Brookview Elementary School in Woodbury
- Creation of 6-8 middle schools
- Moving of 9th graders to the high school
- Moving of GATE to Stillwater Middle School and expanding gifted and talented opportunities
- Shifting of attendance boundaries

Our planning is designed to:

- Support students academically, socially and emotionally
- Ensure welcoming environments
- Build connections between new and existing students, families and staff
- Provide timely and relevant information to families impacted by changes

BRIDGE 234 to excellence

Attendance Boundaries 2017-2018
New elementary and middle school boundaries were approved by the school board on May 12, 2016. The changes will take effect for the 2017-2018 school year.

Boundary Change FAQs
Find answers to the most frequently asked questions around the boundary changes.

Building 834 - Bond 2015 Construction Update
It's construction season! As part of the bond approved by voters in May 2015, we're improving learning spaces for students across the district.

Great Transitions Presentation (May 2016)

Stillwater BOLD
Big changes are coming as we change grade configuration and build new learning spaces.



COMMUNITYConnections

A newsletter for the stakeholders of Stillwater Area Public Schools

Fall 2017

Warm Welcomes NEW BEGINNINGS

Our children are doing well

"And how are the children?"

There is a proverb of the Masai tribe of Africa that says if the children are well, the community is well. A response of "all the children are well" means that life is good. It means that the daily struggles for existence do not preclude proper caring for their young.

I'm proud to say that in Stillwater Area Public Schools we are working hard to ensure "all the children are well."

In the wake of grade configuration changes, boundary adjustments and school closings, our focus has been on warmly welcoming families to their new school communities.

We know it hasn't been easy. Leaving schools they love to attend schools they do not know has been very difficult for some. Yet thanks to the efforts of many parents and staff, our students are adjusting well to their new learning environments.

That hasn't happened by accident. We've worked hard to ensure students were welcomed by their peers, and had time built in their day to connect with their teachers. This newsletter is filled with examples of how we've come together to provide students with a solid foundation on which to build a new beginning.

As a district serving nearly 8,400 students, it's no surprise that reactions to the changes experienced in our district have been mixed. But one thing remains clear - all of our schools continue to provide students with a loving environment where they can learn and grow.

We are grateful to our incredible community for keeping kids first in the midst of so much change.

Renise Pontrelli



1. New ninth and tenth grade students were welcomed to high school with cheers and high fives from upperclassman on the first day of school.
2. Kindergarten students at Rutherford made fast friends as the new year began.
3. WEB leaders made sure sixth graders felt comfortable in their new schools by helping to connect them with their peers.

Get more district news at stillwaterschools.org