

# School Pages

Spring 2023-24



*A Message from Superintendent Eric Melbye*

## School funding remains a challenge for foreseeable future

One of the most challenging aspects of managing a large school district is balancing limited funding with annually increasing expenses, while continuing to meet student, parent and staff expectations of a high quality educational experience and facilities.

We are extremely thankful for the education funding approved last year by Minnesota lawmakers. However, the funding came with new mandates, programs and requirements and increased costs. Many of the new requirements have limited categorical funding which cannot be used in our general fund. Others are not funded or have limited funding which sunsets soon.

Funding shortages, declining enrollment and the end of federal pandemic relief funds all contribute to projected budget shortfalls for the foreseeable future. We will reduce our 2024-25 operational budget by \$4.4 million, the first round of expected reductions in a multi-year Right Sizing the Budget (RSB) process.

Budget adjustments for the 2024-25 school year were formally adopted by the School Board last month. Initial reductions were identified with input from principals and site leaders, and revised following input from bargaining unit leaders and staff feedback.

**The district is urging lawmakers to address ongoing funding shortfalls.**

The detailed adjustments can be found on page 2 and on our website at [bit.ly/bps-rsb](https://bit.ly/bps-rsb).

In any budget adjustment process, the district works hard to minimize the impact to classrooms. However, with enrollment trending downward, reductions to staff are unavoidable. If elementary enrollment continues to drop as projected, further adjustments to staff and facilities will be needed to balance the budget in the coming years.

The School Board Legislative Committee and Bloomington Public Schools Advocacy Council are urging state lawmakers to address ongoing funding shortfalls. District leaders and committee members recently hosted Rep. Steve Elkins (50B) and Rep. Nathan Coulter (51B), pictured above, on a tour of special education and English language learner classrooms, two examples of underfunded areas included in the School Board's 2024 Legislative Priorities. See the full list at [bit.ly/bps-legpriority24](https://bit.ly/bps-legpriority24).

We encourage parents, caregivers and community members to join us in advocating for increased educational investment to address the challenges facing the educational system and ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education.

## Does class size matter?

When school districts enact reductions to balance their operating budgets, a common concern is increasing class sizes and what it means for academic success.

While there is evidence to suggest smaller class sizes have certain benefits, it's important to consider a range of factors when assessing the significance of class size, including teacher quality, instructional practices, and student demographics.

A Brightworks class size survey released in February shows that of 29 school districts in the metro area, Bloomington Public Schools has the sixth lowest average class size at 25.5 students, nearly two students below the regional average of 27.3 students per class.

The district has the second lowest average class size for elementary and middle schools at 20.2 and 24.2 students per class, respectively. Both are well below the regional averages of 23 and 27.9, respectively. High school class sizes are 28.6 students per class, slightly above the average of 28.2.

Research shows the effects of class size on academic outcomes are clearest in kindergarten and first grade. Beyond those first years, the impact of class size on achievement is relatively similar between elementary and secondary grades when comparing class sizes of 20 and 40, suggesting class sizes in that range make little difference on achievement, especially at the secondary level.

Even with this research, we believe the minimal increases to our staffing ratios support our Strategic Plan goals of maximizing equitable resources while making sure we have the fiscal means of hiring and retaining a high quality workforce.

# State of the Schools

## Right Sizing the Budget

### 2024-25 BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS APPROVED TARGET: \$4.4 MILLION

#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS TOTAL: \$1.4M

DESCRIPTION	FTE*	SAVINGS	IMPLICATIONS
Grades 1-3 staffing ratio increase 1.0 Grades 4-5 staffing ratio increase 0.5	3.60	\$450,000	Gr. 1-3 Ratio = 27.5 Gr. 4-5 Ratio = 29.5
New Code Academy	2.0	\$250,000	Combine multi-age/grades
Staffing	5.0	\$625,000	Non-classroom teachers

#### MIDDLE SCHOOLS TOTAL: \$0.93M

DESCRIPTION	FTE*	SAVINGS	IMPLICATIONS
Staffing	4.75	\$595,000	Non-classroom teachers
Controllable budgets (non-staffing expenses)	N/A	\$24,000	\$8,000 per middle school
New Code Academy	2.5	\$310,000	Enrollment decline

#### HIGH SCHOOLS TOTAL: \$1.1M

DESCRIPTION	FTE*	SAVINGS	IMPLICATIONS
Staffing ratio increase 1.0 (not class size)	4.0	\$500,000	Ratio = 28.65
Staffing	3.68	\$460,000	Non-classroom teachers
End co-teaching	1.0	\$125,000	

#### EDUCATIONAL SERVICES CENTER (DISTRICT ADMIN) TOTAL: \$1.0M

DESCRIPTION	FTE*	SAVINGS	IMPLICATIONS
District Admin/Cabinet	1.0	\$200,000	Community Education reorganization
District Admin/CTE & Perkins	1.0	\$150,000	Retirement
Learning & Teaching staffing	2.0	\$225,000	Elimination of two positions
Controllable budgets (non-staffing expenses)	N/A	\$80,000	Consultants, contracts, supplies, equipment
Operational Shifts	N/A	\$350,000	Tech/Security Levy, Long-term Facility Maintenance (LTFM)

#### ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL IMPACTS TOTAL: \$4.63M

DESCRIPTION	FTE*	SAVINGS	IMPLICATIONS
ESSER	41.2	\$2.67M	ESSER funded mental health staff; staved off budget reductions for past 3 years
Enrollment	8.1	\$1.0M	Enrollment declines have significant compounding impacts on district revenue
Title 1	5.52	\$0.69M	Disbursement of Title funds
Integration	2.16	\$0.27M	Adjustments to balance budget

\*FTE is based on a licensed employee's salaries and benefits

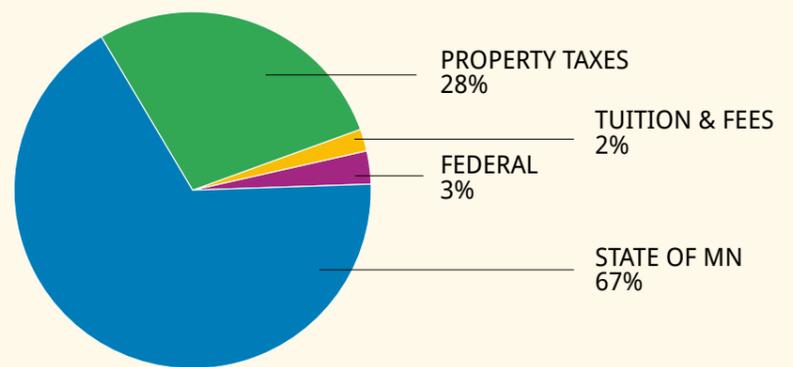
## Understanding School Finance

When headlines tout "historic state funding for schools," it can be difficult to understand why we find ourselves needing to right size our budget. School finance in general can be complex. One thing to know is that state funding goes into our General Fund, one of many buckets used to run our schools and district. This is the fund that needs right-sizing.

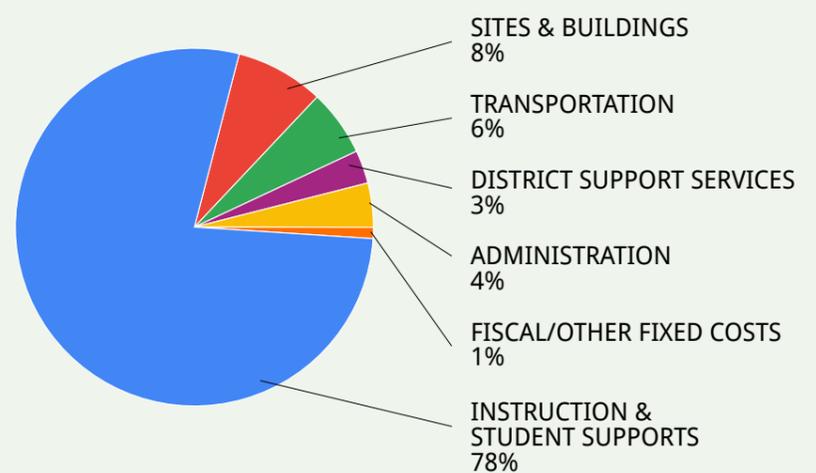
The District also has other funds from property taxes and referendums that are required to be used for specific purposes. Dollars in these funds stay in their buckets and cannot be moved or mixed into the General Fund to balance the budget.

These charts show how most of our revenue comes from the State of Minnesota and how even after a generous boost, funding is still lagging behind inflation.

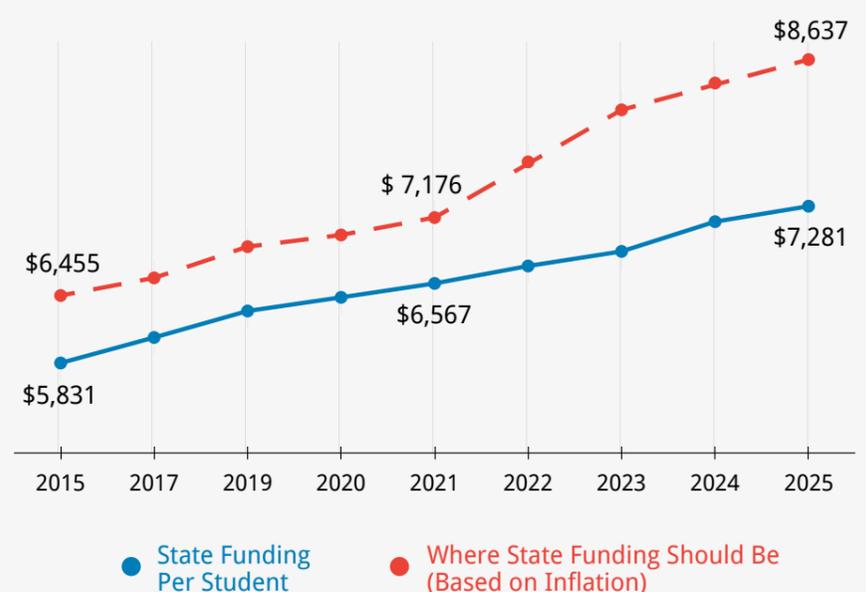
#### 2024-25 GENERAL FUND REVENUES



#### 2024-25 GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES



#### STATE FUNDING PER STUDENT COMPARED TO INFLATION



# Preparing Students for a World with AI

In a world increasingly shaped by technology, it is essential for students to understand one of the latest technological breakthroughs: generative artificial intelligence (AI). With a simple text prompt, AI can generate and summarize ideas, write content, and create images.

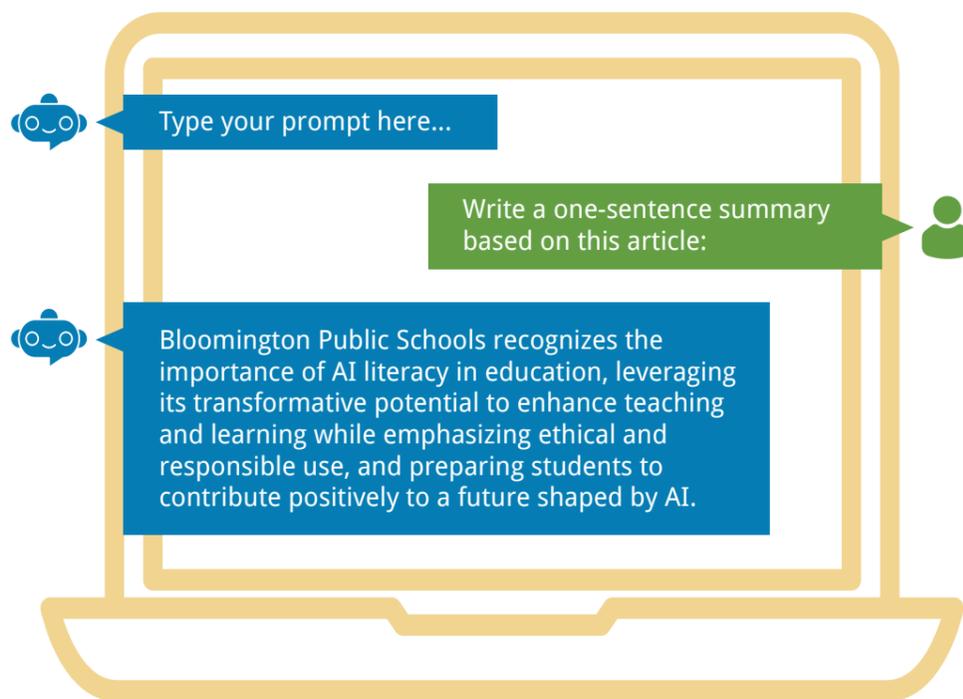
As Minnesota's leader in K-12 computer science education, our goal is to equip students with the skills to safely and ethically understand and use this tool.

Integrating AI into education requires collaborative engagement at the district, school, teacher and student level. AI can be a tool to enhance teaching and learning, not replace them. While it is capable of generating a full paper, students still need to use their critical thinking skills to fact check and eliminate biases in the content that AI creates.

AI can help teachers enhance educational experiences, but not diminish the invaluable human element.

As a school district, we are approaching this new and evolving technology with a thoughtful and proactive mindset, recognizing its potential to enhance educational outcomes while being mindful of the ethical, privacy, and equity considerations that accompany its implementation. Our work is built upon three guiding principles: setting expectations for safe, ethical and responsible use; preparing students with future ready AI-related skills; and using AI to grow cultural proficiency. By taking a holistic approach our teachers will begin to engage students in AI literacy skill development appropriate to each grade level.

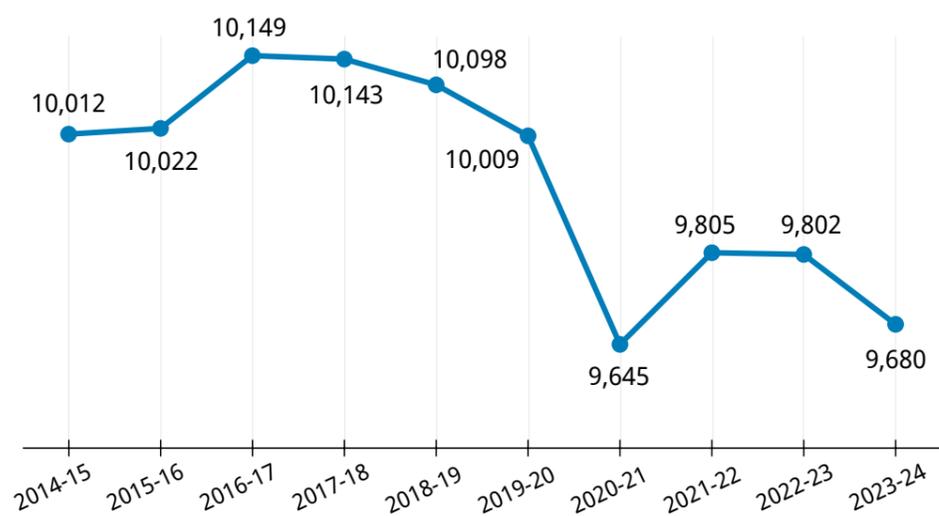
Bloomington schools are well-equipped to prepare students to navigate the opportunities and challenges presented by artificial intelligence and empower them to contribute positively to a future shaped by AI.



## What's Driving Enrollment Trends?

With a majority of funding tied to enrollment, projecting how many students will attend each school year is one of the biggest challenges in balancing school district budgets. The most recent district enrollment report highlights district demographics, enrollment by school and grade, and historical trends to help illustrate our changing enrollment over the past 10 years.

### K-12 ENROLLMENT

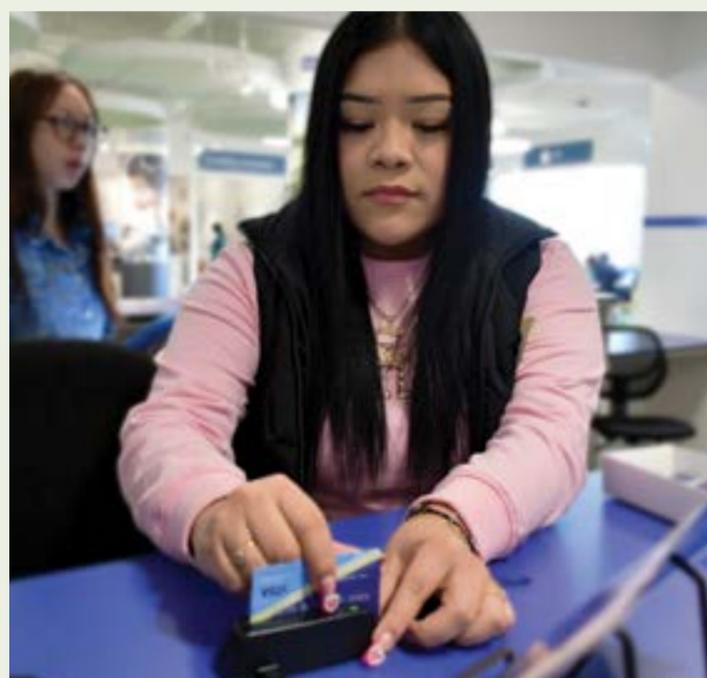


BPS enrollment is trending downward. An aging community, limited housing turnover or land for development, school choice and open enrollment are among the factors contributing to the decline.

Families from other communities choose Bloomington for our highly-regarded gifted and talented programs, computer science immersion program and New Code Academy online school. However, district open enrollment gains have been dropping slightly over the past five years, with a rise in charter school options drawing a growing number of Bloomington students out of the district.

While the district has no influence over community demographics or the housing market, we are investing in the future by expanding marketing strategies and community outreach to showcase our high quality academics and outstanding opportunities for students.

Students, alumni and the community are the best ambassadors. You can help by letting new families in your neighborhood know about our exceptional schools, early learning programs and preschools.



## Lessons in real life budgeting experience

Empowering students with the tools for financial literacy and responsible budgeting is not just about numbers; it's about setting the foundation for a secure future. Kennedy High School's AVID students embarked on a recent journey towards financial empowerment together with a field trip to the Junior Achievement Finance Park in St. Paul.

The 10th and 11th grade students were assigned an adult profile, complete with a job title, income level and number of children in their household. They rotated through interactive stations of real-life experiences from renting versus owning a home, responsible use of credit cards, investing, and costs for child care, utilities and vacations.

The students were then challenged to apply what they learned to create a monthly budget based on their assigned profile. With that budget in mind, students were led through an interactive shopping experience to make informed purchasing decisions.

Reflecting on their experiences, students learned valuable lessons from the challenges that come with unexpected situations. In a world where financial decisions impact every aspect of our lives, understanding how to manage money wisely is paramount.



Eight teachers are nominees for the 2024 Minnesota Teacher of the Year program: [bit.ly/bps-toy-nominee-24](https://bit.ly/bps-toy-nominee-24)

- **Meredith Aby-Keirstead**, Social Studies, KHS
- **Sarah Dallum**, 5th Grade, VVE
- **Jessica Hodgson**, Family Consumer Science, KHS
- **Susan Maxey**, Language Arts, KHS
- **Valerie Petersen**, Early Childhood Special Education, Southwood Center
- **Jeremy Storelee**, Social Studies, OGM
- **Sophie Werner**, Academic Behavioral Specialist, JHS
- **Kelly Yackel**, Art, KHS / New Code Academy

Senior **Johnny Kerwin** (JHS) is a finalist in the 2024 National Merit Scholarship Program. Kerwin earned a certificate of merit and is a candidate for a merit scholarship to be awarded this spring.  
[bit.ly/bps-natl-merit-final-24](https://bit.ly/bps-natl-merit-final-24)



**Justin Lund**, a developmental adapted physical education (DAPE) teacher at Poplar Bridge Elementary School, is recognized as a Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) America Teacher of the Year for the organization's central district. Lund is one of 16 educators across the country to earn this recognition.  
[bit.ly/bps-shape-teacher-year](https://bit.ly/bps-shape-teacher-year)



**Renee Peacha** and **Alex Malecha** (JHS) and **Michelle Sarpong** and **Joseph Madsen** (KHS) are this year's Academics, Arts and Athletics Award (Triple 'A') nominees. High school seniors are selected for their participation in Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) sponsored arts and athletics while maintaining high academic standing. [bit.ly/bps-AAA-2024](https://bit.ly/bps-AAA-2024)

Jefferson junior **Anders Westanmo** placed fourth in the boys pursuit race at the state Nordic ski meet in Biwabik. Jefferson sophomore **Conor Sweeney** and senior **Ethan Ishaug** placed fifth in the boys team sprint. The boys team placed seventh overall at the state meet. Kennedy senior **Maddie Gray** earned All-State honors. [bit.ly/bps-nordski-state-24](https://bit.ly/bps-nordski-state-24)

**School Pages** is published by Bloomington Public Schools. It is printed and delivered by mail to 39,700 Bloomington households at a cost of 15 cents per copy to inform Bloomington residents about their public schools.

**Editor:** Rick J. Kaufman, APR, Executive Director of Community Relations

**Writers/Photos:** Kate Martin, Stephen Rydberg, Kelsie Passolt

**Bloomington School Board**

**Dawn Steigauf**, Chair  
**Matt Dymoke**, Vice Chair  
**Beth Beebe**, Clerk  
**Tom Bennett**, Treasurer

**Nelly Korman**, Director  
**Mia Olson**, Director  
**Heather Starks**, Director

Superintendent **Eric Melbye, Ed.D.**, Ex Officio

Kennedy senior **Kelsey Cruz Rojas** and sophomore **Noelia Fierro** competed in the state wrestling tournament, placing 3rd and 6th in their weight class respectively. They are the first Kennedy girls to ever place in state wrestling. Both athletes earned All-State honors.

Jefferson students involved in the one act play, **The Women of Troy**, won accolades before its debut to the public. The production won the Metro West Conference One Act Play Festival Championship in January. The students went on to perform three shows for the public and competed in the MSHSL section finals.



Jefferson's **competition cheer team** earned its eighth national championship title at the 2024 UCA National High School Cheerleading Championship, held Feb. 9-12 in Orlando, FL. The team placed first in the Small Varsity Game Day Division I competition for its fifth consecutive national championship.  
[bit.ly/jhs-cheer-champs-24](https://bit.ly/jhs-cheer-champs-24)

## In the Know

### School Safety Review

Bloomington Public Schools has vibrant school safety leadership teams with a number of security and emergency preparedness best practices in place, according to the initial findings of a comprehensive assessment by the National School Safety and Security Services (NSSSS). A security assessment was completed of each school and site housing students. A final report of observations and recommendations focused on evidence-based best practices will be released this spring.



### Chip in for Schools

The annual Chip in for Schools Golf Classic is Tuesday, July 30 at the Wilds Golf Club in Prior Lake. Tickets cover 18-holes of golf, cart, and a dinner and awards ceremony. Tournament proceeds help Bloomington students through the Education Foundation of Bloomington (EFB) program Children's Food for Thought, student success stipends, classroom innovation grants and scholarships. Save the date and register at [bit.ly/efb-24-chip-in](https://bit.ly/efb-24-chip-in).



### Summer Programs for All Ages

Registration is open for summer 2024 programs and Community Education classes, including options for youth and adult enrichment, driver's education, summer musical, Camp Invention and summer aquatics. Scan the code to view the catalog. [bit.ly/bps-summer-2024](https://bit.ly/bps-summer-2024)

