Stillwater Area Public Schools

Expect More.

District Focus 2026–27: DELIVERY YEAR

From Transformation To Implementation

Presented to the School Board
Aug. 25, 2026

2026–27 =
The Delivery Year

Several years of design, restructuring, construction and financial discipline converge in one school year.

The question is no longer whether the district has a plan.

It is whether the district can execute with discipline and consistency.

From Decision To Design To Delivery

The next chapter is measured by the quality of implementation

2024–25
DECIDE

- Bond work accelerates
- Budget and benefit redesign
- High school schedule design
- Organizational choices clarified

2025–26
DESIGN

- $4.6M ongoing reductions
- K–5 literacy and science model
- Leadership reorganization
- Boundaries and transportation reset

2026–27
DELIVER

- Open two schools
- Launch SAHS schedule
- Modernize core systems
- Create a consistent experience

Strong Platform. Real Pressure

The district is better positioned than it was a year ago, but the implementation bar is higher

STRENGTHS

- Facilities coming online
- Balanced operating budget
- Instructional momentum
- Leadership capacity

PRESSURES

- Enrollment competition
- Rising costs and mandates
- Implementation capacity
- Discipline and trust

We’re stronger than a year ago, with more to deliver and less room for drift.

Six Directions. One Implementation System

This is the 2026–27 implementation frame for the district's stated priorities.

#1: Open the Future

New schools and SAHS schedule

#2: Strengthen Teaching & Learning

Engagement, math, literacy and alignment

#3: Create the Experience

Students, families and employees

#4: Modernize Operations

Business systems, phones, transportation and tech

#5: Sustain the District

Finance, enrollment and strategic planning

#6: Build Capacity

Leadership, feedback loops and succession

One Execution System

Each direction is managed through the same four disciplines.

NAMED OWNERS → DEFINED EVIDENCE → REGULAR CHECKPOINTS → CORRECTIVE ACTION

Named owners. Defined evidence. Regular checkpoints. Corrective action.

#1: Open the Future

Two public-facing launches define the first part of the year and student, family and staff experiences must be monitored.

NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Lake Elmo and Bayport

Capacity, boundaries, culture, service and community confidence.

SAHS SCHEDULE

Redesigned high school schedule

Access, flexibility, opportunity, support and retention.

These launches must be judged by the experience they create, not only by whether they open on time.

Open the Future: Evidence Cadence

Early evidence should reveal launch quality, service performance and emerging risk.

FIRST 30 DAYS

Openings, route performance and family confidence.

FIRST 90 DAYS

Access, schedule corrections and communication.

BOARD TRIGGER

Safety, opening, payroll/access or sustained service risk.

The first 30 days establish implementation credibility.

#2: Strengthen Teaching and Learning

Coherence across curriculum, coaching, assessment, professional learning and student support.

Reading
Improved from 2025 to 2026

Math
Generally stable

41%
High school course failures down since 2022

1.9%
F grades at the high school level

Keep student learning, not individual initiatives, at the center.

Teaching and Learning: 2026–27 Evidence

Implementation evidence should connect directly to student learning.

EVIDENCE

- Student engagement and action plans
- K–12 math pilot, selection and milestones
- Literacy + READ Act implementation and progress
- Aligned observation, feedback and coaching

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE ROUTINE

Name	See	Support	Act	Adjust

The initiative is not the outcome. Better student learning is the outcome.

#3: Create the Stillwater Experience

The experience is strategy made visible, and each standard needs a measure across schools and departments.

STUDENTS:

SAFE. CHALLENGED. KNOWN.

- Belonging and trusted-adult connection
- Academic challenge and support
- Attendance and discipline patterns

FAMILIES:

WELCOMED. INFORMED. CONFIDENT.

- Communication clarity and timeliness
- Issue-response and closure time
- Recommendation and retention feedback

Employees and Enrollment

A consistent employee experience supports a consistent student and family experience.

EMPLOYEES:
VALUED. SUPPORTED. CLEAR.

- Priority and role clarity
- Access to support and feedback
- Retention and leadership-pipeline indicators

ENROLLMENT LENS

Awareness → Welcome → Deliver → Communicate → Recommend

Marketing creates awareness. Programs, service and relationships earn enrollment.

#4: Modernize Operations

Reliable systems protect instructional time, employee confidence and family trust.

Design → Validate → Test + train → **Launch**

BUSINESS SYSTEM TRANSITION
Governance, process mapping, data validation, controls, training and contingency.

PHONES
Districtwide communication reliability.

TRANSPORTATION
Route reliability, efficiency and communication.

TECHNOLOGY + DATA
Networks, classroom tools, parent resources and decision-ready information.

Board trigger: a missed readiness checkpoint or a launch risk to payroll, safety, access or instructional continuity.

#5: Sustain the District

Fiscal discipline protects student opportunity and long-term stability.

OPERATING BUDGET

Standard: Remain within board-approved budget

Evidence: Monthly variance and forecast changes

FUND BALANCE

Standard: Strive for policy in tight fiscal environment

Evidence: Quarterly projection and assumptions

STRUCTURAL ALIGNMENT

Standard: Realize recurring savings and revenue assumptions

Evidence: Savings realization and material variance

The Board should monitor guardrails, not just activities.

Sustain the District: Early Correction

Enrollment, staffing and long-range planning require timely evidence and decisions.

ENROLLMENT + STAFFING

Standard: Adjust staffing and revenue assumptions early

Evidence: Opening enrollment, MARSS and FTE updates

LONG-RANGE PLANNING

Standard: Use scenarios to identify corrective action early

Evidence: Updated multi-year forecast and decisions

2025 financial control: independent audit completed on time with no findings.

#6: Build Leadership Capacity

Strong implementation depends on feedback, principal support, teacher leadership and succession depth.

SUPERINTENDENT EMPLOYEE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Surface implementation barriers and propose solutions.

Board evidence: Themes, actions and issues closed.

SUPERINTENDENT IN RESIDENCE

Use structured site-based listening to identify districtwide patterns.

Board evidence: Patterns and resulting decisions.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Build mentorship, licensure pathways, succession and role readiness.

Board evidence: Pipeline, vacancies and continuity plans.

CROSS-DISTRICT COLLABORATION

Share practice, solve problems and reduce silos.

Board evidence: Common routines and resolved barriers.

Capacity is built before pressure reveals the gaps.

Three Active Risks

Transparent reporting should name the risk, mitigation and threshold for board attention.

ACTIVE	**OPENING COMPLEXITY**	Launch teams, punch-list review, route communication, rapid response	**Safety, opening or sustained family service is threatened**
ACTIVE	**FINANCIAL + ENROLLMENT PRESSURE**	Quarterly reporting, PBB and multi-year scenarios	**Material variance emerges from budget or fund balance expectations**
ACTIVE	**SYSTEMS TRANSITION**	Data validation, controls, testing, training and contingency	**Readiness checkpoint missed or payroll/access/continuity at risk**

Two Watch Risks

These conditions require sustained follow-up before they become active threats.

IMPLEMENTATION FATIGUE

Mitigation: Clear priorities, realistic pacing, targeted support and communication

Threshold: Cross-site confusion, delay or capacity breakdown persists

DISCIPLINE + EXPERIENCE

Mitigation: Consistent definitions, site review, intervention and follow-through

Threshold: Incidents remain elevated or concentrated

Name early. Report clearly. Adjust quickly.

Learning, Experience and Enrollment

Each update connects baseline, annual standard, status and next evidence point.

LEARNING

Baseline: Reading improved; math stable; HS failures down 41%.

Annual standard: Continue gains, strengthen math and course access.

Next evidence: Fall baseline

EXPERIENCE

Baseline: 89% low-risk SAEBRS; engagement baseline not yet established.

Annual standard: Establish baseline, report actions, repeat in spring.

Next evidence: Winter

ENROLLMENT

Baseline: 8,461 total; PK–12 up .01%.

Annual standard: Meet or exceed projection and improve retention evidence.

Next evidence: Ongoing watch

Finance and Operations

One scorecard should stay visible throughout the year.

FINANCE

Baseline: Preliminary budget balanced; $5.7M pressures offset.

Annual standard: Remain on budget, within policy and aligned to forecast.

Next evidence: Quarterly

OPERATIONS

Baseline: Two schools on schedule/budget; two tier transportation model; Business system preparation for transition

Annual standard: Stable launches, reliable service and timely issue closure.

Next evidence: 30 days

Fall: launch evidence | Winter: midyear adjustment | Spring: outcomes and next-cycle decisions

What the Board Can Do to Help

Governance is not managing the launch. Governance keeps the right questions in front of the system.

1: SET DIRECTION

Keep the district anchored in student outcomes and long-term sustainability.

2: MONITOR PROGRESS

Ask questions that reveal risk, evidence and corrective action early.

3: PROTECT FOCUS

Avoid initiative drift and keep attention on the highest-value work.

4: BUILD TRUST

Communicate transparency, confidence and shared responsibility.

The Board's value is direction, monitoring, focus and trust.

Four Questions for Every Update

Each question should lead to evidence, implications and a clear next step.

WHAT EVIDENCE HAS CHANGED?

WHAT RISK IS EMERGING?

WHAT CORRECTIVE ACTION IS UNDERWAY?

WHAT DECISION IS NEEDED NEXT?

Study Session Roadmap: September - January

One focused governance conversation each month, tied to evidence, implications and Board direction.

SEP | First 30 Days
Openings, schedule, transportation, family confidence

OCT | Teaching + Learning
Baseline and course offerings

NOV | Findings + Priorities
SPED/compensatory findings, health insurance, legislative priorities

JAN | Financial Outlook
Guardrails and implications, Fiscal forecast/Levy discussion

Each session ends with evidence reviewed, implications, Board direction and next checkpoint.

Study Session Roadmap: February - June

The second half of the year moves from resource alignment to year-end direction.

FEB | Resource Alignment
2027–28 resource alignment and priority-based budgeting

MAR | Student Experience
Engagement, SAEBRS, FastBridge

APR | Enrollment
Enrollment and family choice

MAY | Leadership Capacity
Leadership capacity and organizational health

JUN | Year-End Scorecard
Year-end scorecard and Board direction

Evidence reviewed. Implications named. Board direction set. Next checkpoint scheduled.

Success by June 2027

- Achievement trends continue upward
- Students have stronger course and program opportunities
- Lake Elmo and Bayport stabilize quickly
- Students, families and employees experience a consistent standard
- Budget discipline and enrollment work strengthen the future
- Community sees competence, transparency and follow-through

STILLWATER AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The next chapter will be measured by outcomes, confidence and trust.

Great schools are intentionally led, measured honestly and improved continuously.