

Monthly Committee of the Whole Board Meeting

Duluth Public Schools, ISD 709

Agenda

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

District Services Center

709 Portia Johnson Dr.

Duluth, MN 55811

4:30 PM

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **ROLL CALL**

3. **AGENDA ITEMS**

A. Strategic Plan Alignment

1) Advancing Equity

a. District Analytics Strategy Discussion

2

b. Check and Connect

13

2) Supporting Every Student

a. Social Studies Curriculum Review & Adoption

14

b. Artificial Intelligence Project Update

21

3) Improving Systems

a. ALC Compliance Report and Next Steps

39

B. Teaching, Learning, and Equity Board Summary Report

1) Intra-City Student Council

50

C. Budget Update

1) Updated Fiscal Year 2026-27 Preliminary Budget

54

D. Other

4. **ADJOURN**

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: May 5, 2026

Topic: District Analytics

Presenter(s): Ray Queener

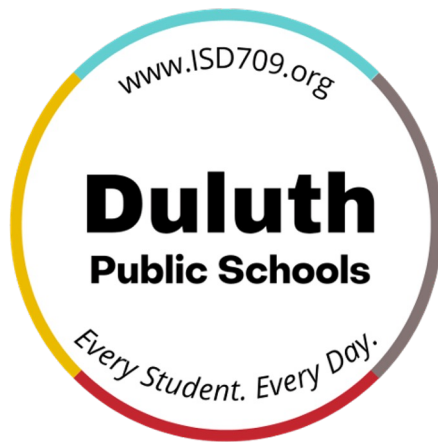
Attachment: Yes

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

We are presenting a summary of the demographics study that was conducted by Teamworks. This study is an overview of our growth, projections and enrollment and should be used by the district to strategically consider space and facilities issues for our schools and community.

This Requires School Board Approval :

No



**SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE OF
THE WHOLE MEETING**

MAY 05, 2026

DISTRICT ANALYTICS STRATEGY DISCUSSION

Demographic · Housing · Enrollment · Market Share

PREPARED BY TEAMWORKS | EDUCATION LEADERSHIP SOLUTIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Realities that must drive every strategic planning conversation

94,884

District Population

+1.4% since 2010

-26.4%

Resident Birth Decline

1,070 → 788 births (2010–2025)

-5.9%

K–12 Enrollment Decline

8,906 → 8,384 (2010–2026)

67.3%

Overall Market Share

Elementary lowest at 63.3%

+8.6%

Combined 10-yr Projection

Development + market share

32.7%

Students Choosing Non-DPS

Private, charter, open enroll

Strategic Bottom Line: Declining births and aging housing stock are structural — they cannot be reversed. Market share is the one variable entirely within district control. A focused market share strategy, alone, has the potential to more than offset every enrollment loss of the past 15 years.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS



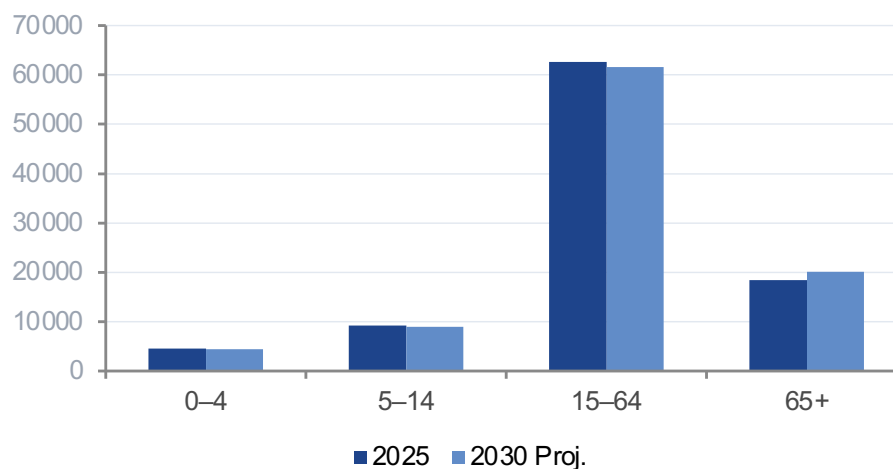
AGE TRENDS — A Community Growing Older

- 65+ cohort: +47.4% since 2010 — fastest-growing segment
- 65+ projected to reach 21.2% of population by 2030
- 0–4 year olds: -11.7% since 2010; projected -2.5% more by 2030
- 5–14 year olds: -0.5% since 2010; projected -3.4% by 2030
- Median age 37.4 today → rising to 38.7 by 2030

RACE & ETHNICITY — Slow But Steady Diversification

- White population: 84.1% (2025), down from 89.9% in 2010
- BIPOC population grew +56.5% (2010–2025): 8.6% → 13.3%
- Hispanic population grew +69.1% (2010–2025): 1.5% → 2.5%
- Student body: White 75.4% | Multi-Racial 10.7% | Black 4.7% | Hispanic 4.4%

POPULATION BY AGE GROUP (2025 vs. 2030 Projected)



INCOME SNAPSHOT

Median HH income: \$67,361 (2025) → \$72,940 by 2030 | Student HH median: \$84,048
43% of student families live in households below \$75K | Free/Reduced Lunch: 37.7% | SPED: 22.4%

BIRTH TRENDS — THE UPSTREAM ENROLLMENT SIGNAL



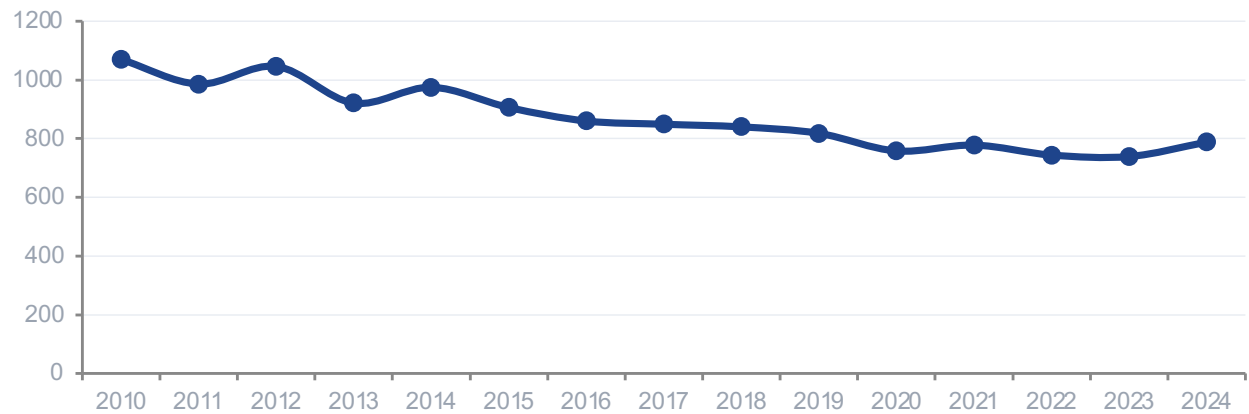
-26.4%

Resident births since 2010
1,070 → 788

Regional Context

Surrounding district births
also declined -15.1%.
This is a regional trend.

DISTRICT BIRTH TREND (2010–11 to 2024–25)



STEEPEST DECLINES

Myers-Wilkins: -50.0%
Congdon: -46.4%
Piedmont: -45.8%
Laura MacArthur: -45.2%

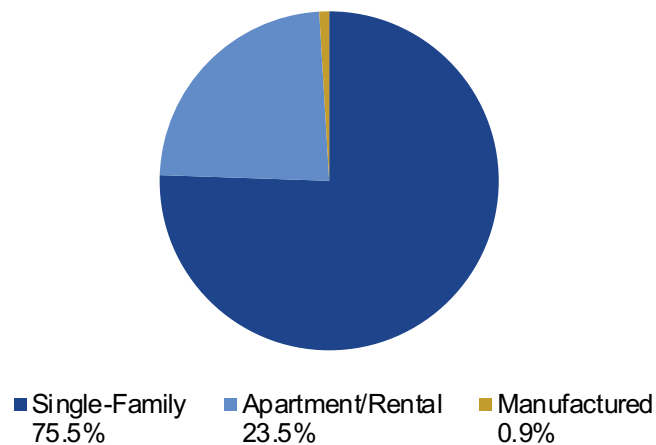
GROWTH AREAS

Lakewood: +75.8%
Homecroft: +9.5%
Lowell: +9.3%

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS & STUDENT YIELD



HOUSING STOCK COMPOSITION



\$296K

Avg. Home Value

Single-family

75%

Built Pre-1970

Aging housing stock

91%

Students in SFR

Over 7,300 K–12 students

STUDENT YIELD PER HOUSING UNIT

- Single-Family: 0.24 students/unit
- Apartment/Rental: 0.07 students/unit
- Manufactured Home: 0.20 students/unit
- Yield rates must be embedded in all capacity planning as new development is approved

HOME SALES TRENDS & STRATEGIC CONTEXT

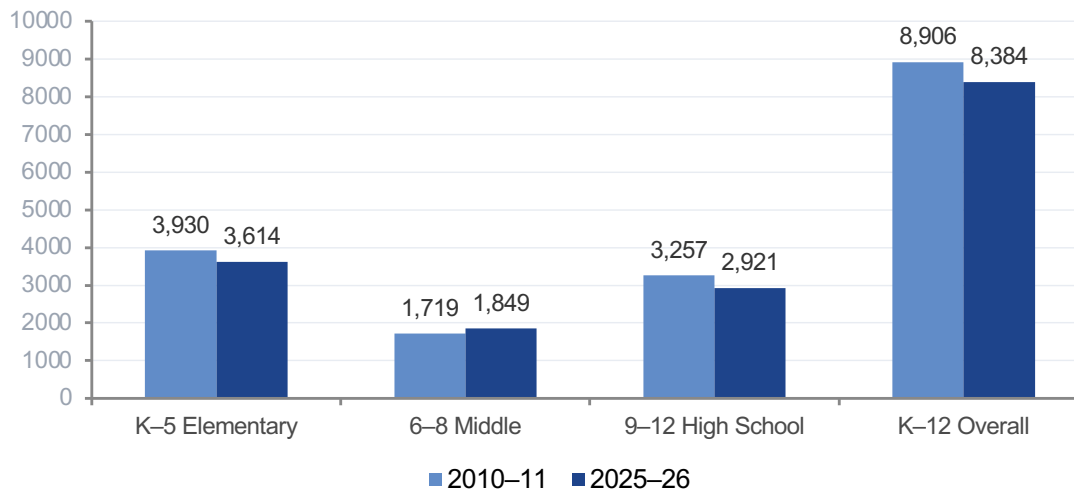
- 3,823 sales since 2020 | avg. price \$122,749
- District-wide price growth: +13.3% since 2010
- Highest growth: Lakewood (+76.6%), Laura MacArthur (+40.3%), Stowe (+32.5%)
- Only decline: Lester Park (-10.7%)
- Aging stock limits organic family attraction through resale market

Strategic Implication: This is a maintenance housing environment, not a growth engine. Target recruitment in Lakewood, Lowell, and other appreciation zones.

HISTORICAL ENROLLMENT TRENDS



K-12 ENROLLMENT: 2010-11 vs. 2025-26



-8.0%
Elementary (K-5)
3,930 → 3,614

+7.6%
Middle (6-8)
1,719 → 1,849

-10.3%
High School (9-12)
3,257 → 2,921

COHORT SURVIVAL RATES (K-12 AVG: 102.1%)

- Elementary 98.0% | Middle 99.5% | High School 108.3%
- High school cohort > 100% signals strong retention and/or inbound transfers

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE (2025-26)

- 84% of all K-12 students attend their neighborhood school
- Elementary 77.7% | Middle 94.0% | High School 85.4%

MARKET SHARE ANALYSIS — WHERE STUDENTS ARE GOING



67.3%

Overall K–12 Market Share

63.3%

Elementary (K–5)

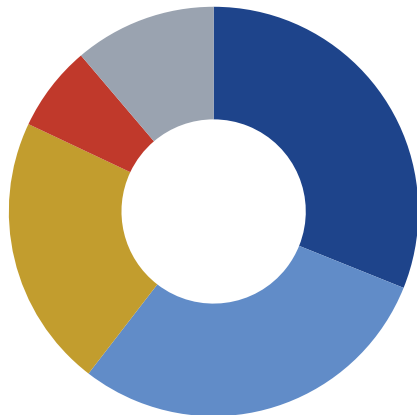
65.7%

Middle (6–8)

74.5%

High School (9–12)

WHERE THE OTHER 32.7% ARE GOING



- Private (10.2%)
- Charter (9.6%)
- Open Enroll Out (7.1%)
- Homeschool (2.2%)
- Other (3.6%)

TOP DESTINATIONS — PRIVATE & CHARTER

- Diocese of Duluth: 597 (49.1% of private) | Marshall: 269 (22.1%)
- North Star Academy: 483 (42.0% of charter) | Harbor City: 205 (17.8%)
- Raleigh Primary: 170 (14.9%) | North Shore: 169 (14.7%)

OPEN ENROLLMENT — OUT & IN

- Open Enroll OUT: 844 students | Proctor: 44.9% | Hermantown: 19.9%
- Open Enroll IN: 341 students (4.1% of enrollment)
- Inbound: Lake Superior 33.3% | Proctor 32.1% | Hermantown 22.5%

Strategic Implication: Market share is the most controllable enrollment lever. The district has real regional draw (341 inbound). Strengthening program offerings, communication, and community trust are the highest-leverage actions available.

MARKET SHARE MODELING — THE ACHIEVABLE OPPORTUNITY



+1,219

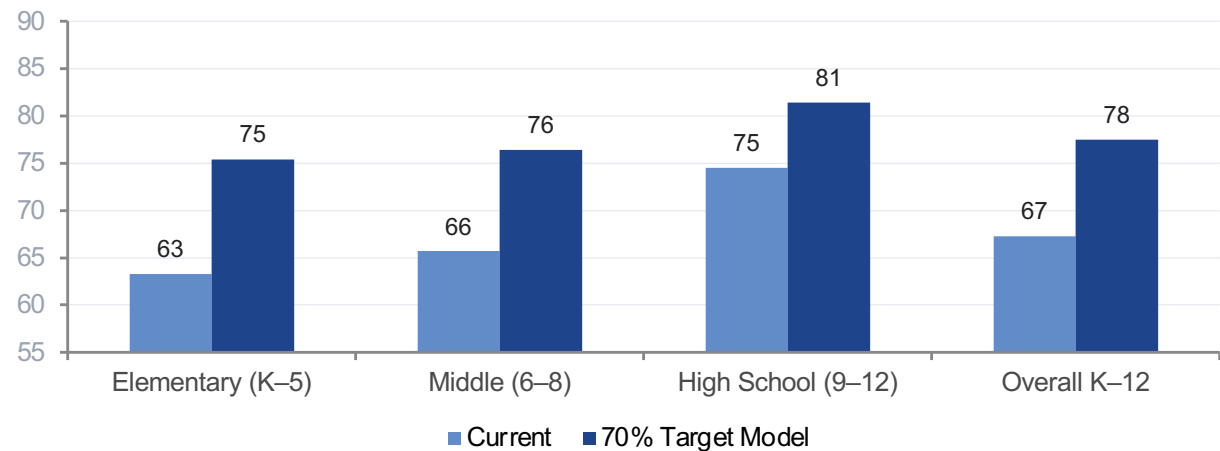
additional students

if the district reaches a
70% market share floor
across all block groups

Resulting overall share: 77.5%

*This is not a passive outcome — it requires
program investment, strategic
communications, and intentional community
engagement.*

CURRENT MARKET SHARE vs. 70% TARGET



+672

Elementary Gain

K-5 block groups

+293

Middle Gain

6-8 block groups

+254

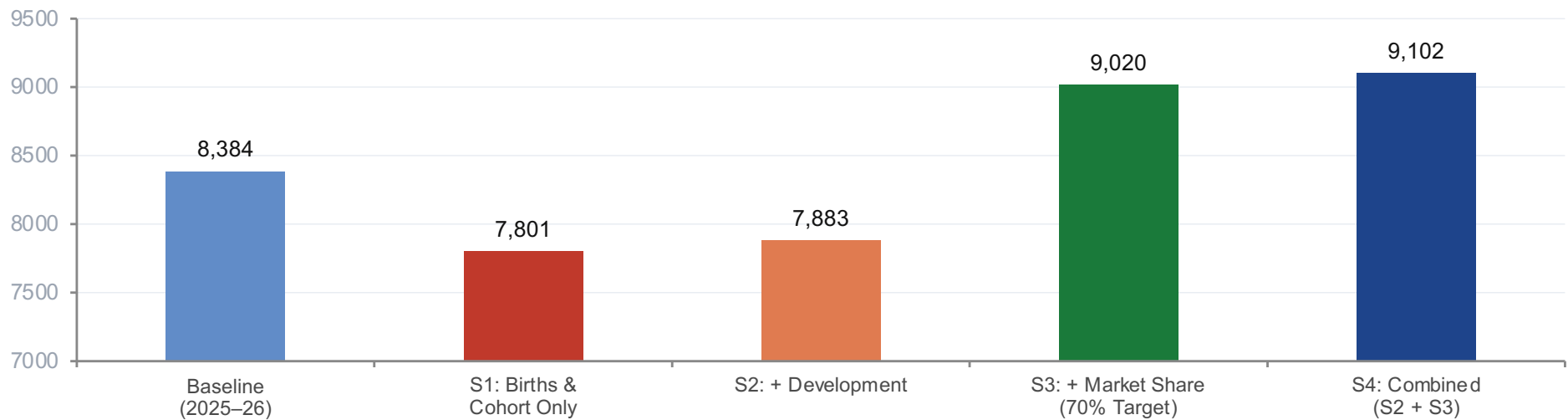
High School Gain

9-12 block groups

10-YEAR ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS — FOUR SCENARIOS



K–12 TOTAL ENROLLMENT: 2025–26 BASELINE vs. PROJECTED 2035 SCENARIOS



7,801

S1: Births & Cohort

-7.0%

7,883

S2: + Development

-6.0%

9,020

S3: + Market Share

+7.6%

9,102

S4: Combined

+8.6%

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

What the data demands from leadership



01

MARKET SHARE RECOVERY

Develop a comprehensive plan to move from 67.3% to 75%+ market share. Identify the specific block groups, grade levels, and competitor alternatives where the district has the most recovery opportunity.

02

BIRTH ZONE STRATEGY

Differentiate capacity, staffing, and programming strategy by attendance area based on birth trends. Growth areas (Lakewood, Lowell, Homecroft) need different investments than areas with 45–50% birth declines.

03

FAMILY RECRUITMENT

Create a proactive family attraction strategy focused on neighborhoods with home price appreciation. This is the one lever that can supplement market share gains with new-resident enrollment.

04

PROGRAM DIFFERENTIATION

Understand why 1,150 resident students choose charter schools and 1,217 choose private schools. Close the program gap and communicate the district's unique value proposition more effectively.

05

CAPACITY PLANNING

Facility utilization data is pending the capacity study. When results arrive, integrate them directly with these projection scenarios — especially the -7% base case — to guide right-sizing decisions.

06

DECIDE WHICH FUTURE TO BUILD

The data presents four scenarios — from -7% to +8.6% over 10 years. The district's future is not fixed. Leadership must choose which scenario to plan and resource toward, then build backward from that goal.

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: 5/5/26

Topic: Check & Connect

Presenter(s): Sarah Laulunen

Attachment: Verbal Presentation

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

Check & Connect will be providing the “Story Behind the Statistics”. We will have a panel discussion with students, caregivers, staff and MDE about how C&C has truly helped support the “family”.

This Requires School Board Approval : No

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: May 5th, 2026

Topic: K-12 Social Studies Adoption

Presenter(s): Brenda Spartz, Jen Larva, Susan Schmidt, London Goode

Attachment: [Slides](#)

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

The Social Studies Committees have completed the process of researching and reviewing instructional resources for adoption to meet the new MN Social Studies Standards. The committee is asking for approval from the school board to make the purchase of materials to help meet compliance of the new state standards starting next year.

This Requires School Board Approval : yes

Social Studies Curriculum Review & Adoption

May Committee of the Whole

Brenda Spartz, Jen Larva, London Goode, Susan Schmidt



Major Shifts in the New Social Studies Standards

- **Increased use of inquiry process**
 - Students will be expected to ask questions, investigate problems and explore topics while teachers support their ability to do this
- **Focus on disciplinary literacy skills**
 - Students will be expected to read, write, speak, perform, and think critically as well as learn the content to master standards
- **Addition of Ethnic Studies strand in all grade levels**
 - K-12 standards that focus on the experience and perspective of people of color in our country and around the world
- **Kindergarten-8th grade interdisciplinary model**
 - The K-8 standards now center around a grade-level themes instead of social studies disciplines (history, economics, etc.)



Social Studies Curriculum Adoption Process

- 2022-2023
 - K-12 Committee analyzed the new standards to learn about changes
- 2023-2024
 - K-12 Committee conducted needs assessment with staff, students, and community members
 - [List of priorities](#) from needs assessment
- 2024-2025
 - K-5 Committee reviewed available social studies resources using [Instructional Resources Evaluation Form](#) and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Form](#)
 - K-6 Committee began revising written curriculum to meet new standards
- 2025-2026
 - K-5 Committee is currently piloted [Studies Weekly](#) and [Exploring Social Studies: Minnesota](#)
 - 6-12 Committee made recommendations for changes to course catalog
 - Provided professional development on new Social Studies standards for teaching staff
 - Teacher committees are revising written curriculum to meet new standards
 - Obtained feedback from District Advisory Committee
- 2026-2027
 - Implementation of 2021 Minnesota Social Studies Standards



Social Studies Curriculum Selection

- K-5 Social Studies Committee Selected [Exploring Social Studies: Minnesota](#)
 - Higher ratings in all categories, especially planning, instruction, assessment, culturally responsive instruction, and social justice
 - Full alignment to the MN Social Studies Standards, including all ethnic studies standards
 - Easier for teachers to implement in limited time
 - Less expensive than other options
 - Publishers consulted with representative from Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- 6th Grade Continued Yearly Purchase of Northern Lights
 - Reasons and benefits



Adoption Cost

- Exploring Social Studies: MN (K-5): \$244,989.35*
- Northern Lights (6th Grade): \$9,500
- Total Cost: **\$254,489.35**

*The cost for Exploring Social Studies: MN is a one-time purchase until the next adoption. No yearly consumables or subscription fees are necessary.



Contact Information



Brenda Spartz

Elementary Education
Director
brenda.spartz@isd709.org

Jen Larva

Secondary Education
Director
jen.larva@isd709.org

Dr. Dale Uselman

MTSS / Curriculum & Instruction
Coordinator
dale.uselman@isd709.org

Julie Stauber

MTSS / Curriculum & Instruction
Coordinator
julie.stauber@isd709.org

London Goode

Elementary Social Studies
Content Specialist
london.goode@isd709.org

Susan Schmidt

Secondary Social Studies
Content Specialist
susan.schmidt@isd709.org

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: May 5, 2026

Topic: Artificial Intelligence Project Update

Presenter(s): Greg Krueger and Jen Larva

Attachment:  AI Rollout Update for COW May 5, 2026

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

This presentation will update the board on the efforts for stakeholder engagement , including Thought Exchange survey results and future direction related to Artificial Intelligence.

This Requires School Board Approval : No

AI Rollout Update

May 5, 2026

Feedback considered

- Meeting held with University of Minnesota–Duluth professors
- School board listening sessions
- Student survey
- District Advisory Committee March meeting
- Results from secondary teacher survey following professional development

Specific feedback from District Advisory Committee

- Career readiness is important, employers seeking AI skills in candidates and expecting employees to leverage AI
- There is still much uncertainty about AI and its impact on student development
- Concerns about cheating and redesigning instructional approach
- Shift in pedagogy for how to assess student knowledge
- Preparing students for their future is key work of district

Feedback from high school student Thought Exchange

- Environmental impact needs to be considered
- Concerns surrounding ethics and cheating
- Many participants suggest we should use AI sparingly, with a desire to retain a substantial human-driven component of education
- Concerns about teachers use of AI, curricular content generated by AI, and varying quality of generated content
- District needs to consider impacts on mental health

Feedback from high school student Thought Exchange

- Students see how AI can be used as a tutor
- AI helps locate sources for research
- AI helps explain content in ways students understand, in different ways than their teacher
- Can support learning when used responsibly

Excerpts from student Thought Exchange

- “I think generative A.I. is very harmful and dangerous to our environment”
- “I feel like making sure the human/AI balance in submitted work and it's importance is reinforced”
- “I believe that AI does not belong in schools unless all ethical issues are addressed”
- “It can support learning when used responsibly”

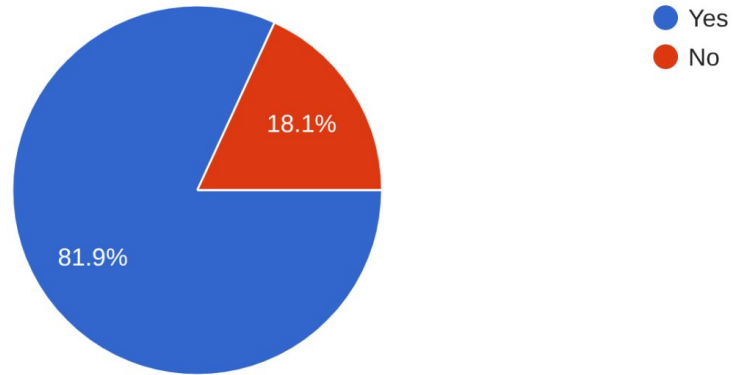
Excerpts from student Thought Exchange

- “[AI] Helps me learn how to do things and give me new ways to figure things out that might help me more than what I was taught previously.”
- “AI...takes away from interpersonal relationships between students with their peers and their teachers.”
- “We need to teach people how to responsibly use it”
- “If we want to learn something it will teach us how to learn it”
- “Using AI to boost what you already know or give you ideas on how to start a project is a good use. It allows us to expand our knowledge and learn things that we wouldn't have normally.”

Information from the Staff Survey

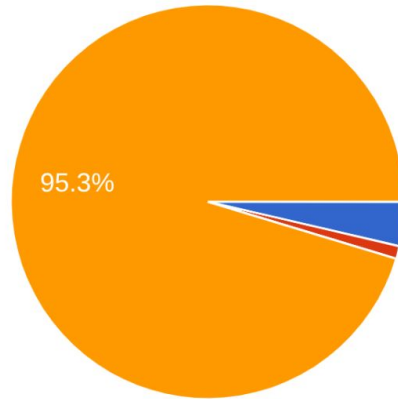
Have you seen or heard evidence that students have used AI on assignments and called it their own work?

193 responses



Once granted Gemini access, when are students allowed to use AI tools? (Select the best answer)

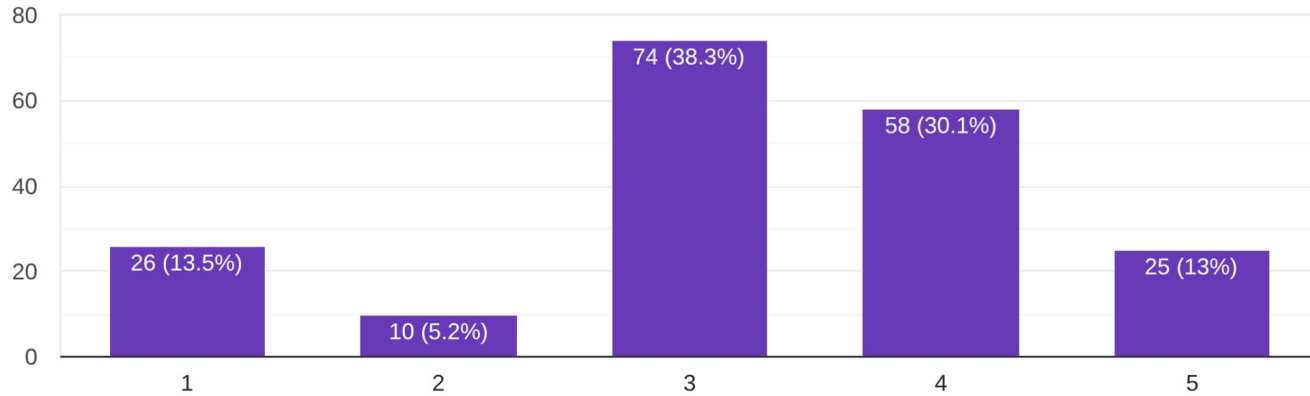
193 responses



- At any time, for any purpose.
- Only for personal use, outside of schoolwork and never on district devices.
- Only when explicitly permitted by a teacher for a specific assignment.

Rate your agreement: The Common Language Tool will help me have conversations with students about their ethical use of AI in my class or with my students.

193 responses



Common Language Tool

Can I Use AI on This Assignment?

Writing 	Project 	Building Understanding 	Planning/ Organization 	Creativity 
☐ Topic/Genre Selection	☐ Brainstorm	☐ Explain a topic	☐ Breakdown tasks	☐ Idea generation
☐ Outline	☐ Plan	☐ Tutor	☐ Timeline development	☐ Image generation
☐ Research	☐ Research	☐ Give examples/ non-examples	☐ Organize and Summarize	☐ Media generation
☐ Grammar/Spell Check	☐ Creation	☐ Review		
☐ Draft	☐ Feedback	☐ Level Text		
☐ Feedback	☐ Speech or Discussion	☐ Summarize Reading		
☐ Revise	☐ Slide Creation			

✓ YES

✗ NO

Students are responsible for ensuring that all work reflects their own thinking, learning, and creativity. If unsure, students should ask for clarification before using any AI tool. Students may not use artificial intelligence tools, unless the teacher has given explicit permission and AI generated content is properly cited when applicable.

Misuse of AI is a form of academic dishonesty and may result in consequences.

Syllabus Statement

Students are responsible for ensuring that all work reflects their own thinking, learning, and creativity. If unsure, students should ask for clarification before using any AI tool. Students may not use artificial intelligence tools, unless the teacher has given explicit permission and AI generated content is properly cited when applicable. Misuse of AI is a form of academic dishonesty and may result in consequences.

Summary of what we've heard

- District should focus on intentional use of AI
- Seeking AI use be isolated to purposeful lessons
- Concerns about equity of access
- Environmental considerations
- Perceived overuse of technology, desire to limit screen time
- Potential for decline of critical thinking skills
- Societal experiment with undetermined results
- Ability to tutor students and enhance learning, help learn in new ways

Next steps

- Continued focus on building staff capacity and student readiness as we begin school in fall
- No student AI rollout date planned at this time
- Messaging to parents about district's plan and efforts
- William Grube (K-12 AI trainer) coming onsite to train teachers September 1
- Improvements to District AI website within Digital Innovation department
- Continue examining research around AI use and student learning & development
- Engage with AI Champions and peer districts
- Engage with student groups

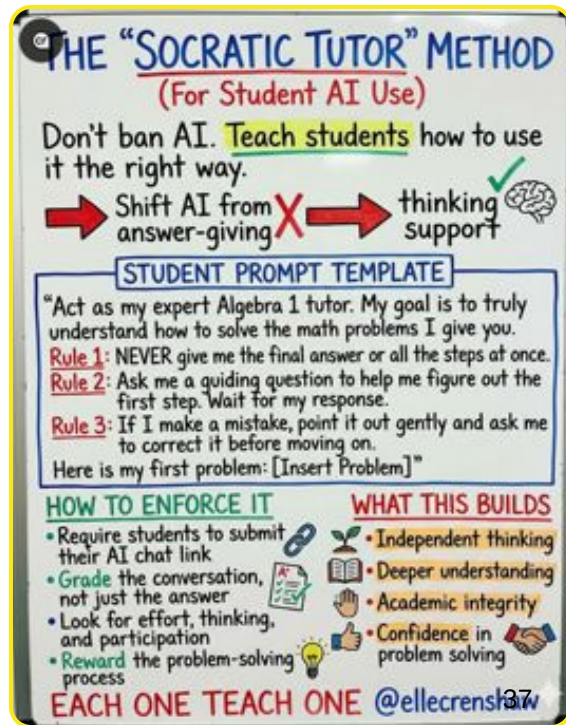
Student and staff preparation

- Student lesson had been completed before February
- District Office AI training held in February
- Principal AI trainings held in March
- Continued work with AI in department meetings
- Contracting with Gruvy Education for next fall
- Continued student training

Key Messaging for Our Community

Why We Are Implementing AI

- **Preparing Students for the Future:** Employers are seeking AI-literate candidates. Fluency in these tools is becoming a vital skill for future career efficiency.
- **Deepening Critical Thinking:** When used appropriately, AI helps students gain a deeper understanding and encourages independent thinking.
- **Empowering Educators:** AI acts as an assistant, helping teachers with administrative tasks like standard alignment. This gives them more time for direct student interaction.
- **Proactive Response:** We are addressing the reality of AI usage in society; strict detection is no longer a viable sole strategy.



Questions?

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: May 5, 2026

Topic: ALC Compliance Report and Next Steps

Presenter(s): Jen Larva

Attachment:  Duluth review report with findings_April 20 2026.pdf

 MDE_Action_Plan_Final.xlsx

 Response to MDE

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

This report updates the board on the MDE ALC desk review finding and sanctions., the prepared response for MDE, and Corrective Action plan.

This Requires School Board Approval : No



Minnesota Department of Education
400 NE Stinson Blvd.
Minneapolis, MN 55413

April 20, 2026

Nathan Glockle
Area Learning Center
Duluth Public School District
11 Superior Street, Ste 450
Duluth, MN 55802-2013

Greetings,

As stated in the August 25, 2025, letter to the district, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), through the Career and College Success Division, initiated monitoring of the district's Area Learning Center (ALC) programs to review compliance with all applicable state statutes to ensure the programs maintain approved status. This review has gathered information regarding the statutory obligations of the ALC under Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 123A.05 to 123A.08 - State Approved Alternative Programs, 124D.68 - Graduation Incentives, and 124D.128 - Learning Year Program. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 123A.09, confers the authority of the commissioner of education to designate and approve that state-approved alternative programs (SAAPs) are meeting the provisions under sections 123A.05 to 123A.08.

The review is in response to the district's use of a Google form that indicated students could complete a short submission to be in attendance for independent study. This letter is a response to the documents submitted with findings and recommendations. Please find attached a monitoring report and statutory references.

In January 2026, MDE expanded monitoring request based on initial review of the documents provided in the first portion of the desk review and additional information received by Duluth Public School District regarding program design for the ALC including student schedule, teacher instructional time, and comprehensive programming.

MDE would like to take this opportunity to thank you and staff members of Duluth Public School District for their cooperation and assistance during the review process. If you have any questions regarding the enclosed information, please do not hesitate to contact MDE.AlternativeLearning@state.mn.us.

Sincerely,

Christy Irrgang
Alternative Education Specialist

CC: Eric Billiet, Supervisor, Career and College Success Division
Sally Reynolds, Director, Career and COLlege Success Division
Anthony Bonds, Assistant Superintendent, Duluth Public School District

Equal Opportunity Employer

Monitoring Report

Summary of Monitoring Process

MDE staff who participated in the monitoring process include Christy Irrgang, Eric Billiet, and Sally Reynolds of Career and College Success Division. Documents necessary for monitoring, including a list of students enrolled in independent study (IS) for fiscal year (FY) 2023 and FY 2024 and teacher schedules, licenses, and file folder numbers if providing IS instruction for FY 2023 and FY 2024, were requested by September 26, 2025. The district submitted the documents in part on September 11, 2025. On November 18, 2025, MDE indicated that continual learning plans (CLP) for each student participating in IS programming for FY 2023 and FY 2024 were needed to proceed with the desk review, and that the complete documents were needed by December 5. On December 22, 2025, MDE requested clarification if the documents submitted included complete records of the requested documents. Following several clarification emails between MDE and the district, MDE indicated that the district needed to submit evidence of the full requirements of the continual learning plans. This request was fulfilled in part by January 5, 2026, and the information is missing some required elements of the CLP.

In January 2025, the district reached out to school finance for technical assistance on reporting a four-day week and instructional time that would be labeled as “Outreach” in the SIS and count for instructional time, to bring the total instructional minutes for the day to 510. As a result of that question, additional conversation occurred between MDE staff, district student accounting staff, and district program staff. The result of this conversation indicated the need for additional information from the district in an expansion of the monitoring. MDE sent a letter on January 26 requesting, from the ALC programming in FY 2024 and FY 2025, transcripts, teacher and student schedules, enrollment procedures, and course catalog. The documents were requested by February 27, 2026. The district completed the request by February 6, 2026.

Elements Reviewed

Critical Element I — Organization and Administration

Sub Element	Status	Statute / Rule / Guidance
The ALC must have received approval from MDE to operate as a SAAP. The ALC must be a site on MDE-ORG. "Site" means a separate facility. A program within a facility or within a district, such as a “school within a school” is a separate ALC site once the school board recognizes it as a site.	☐ In Compliance ☒ Partial Compliance w/recommendations ☐ Not in compliance w/ findings	Minn. Stat. 123A.09 Minn. Stat. 123B.04 subd. 1 Minn. Stat. 124D.128, subd. 2

Sub Element	Status	Statute / Rule / Guidance
The ALC provides comprehensive educational services to enrolled secondary students throughout the entire year, including a daytime program for both high school and middle level.	☐ In Compliance ☒ Partial Compliance w/recommendations ☐ Not in compliance w/ findings	Minn. Stat. 123A.05, subd. 1(b) Minn. Stat. 123A.06, subd. 3 Minn. Stat. 124D.128
The ALC must develop and maintain a separate record system that permits identification of membership attributable to students participating in the program. The record system and identification must ensure that the program will not have the effect of increasing the total average daily membership attributable to an individual student as a result of a learning year program. The record system must include the date the student originally enrolled in a learning year program, the student's grade level, the date of each grade promotion, the average daily membership generated in each grade level, the number of credits or standards earned, and the number needed to graduate.	☐ In Compliance ☐ Partial Compliance w/recommendations ☒ Not in compliance w/ findings	Minn. Stat. 124D.128, subd. 2

The following compliance issues were found.

- Online instruction is being implemented in a manner that does not align with statutory requirements or MDE guidance for state-approved alternative programs.
 - There is a lack of clarity on the attendance expectations and how records are kept to reflect the attendance policies and procedures.
- The ALC is operating on a four-day instructional week without receiving approval for a flexible learning year.
- The district does not follow IS requirements.
 - Enrollment records cannot blend between seat based and IS instruction in one record.
 - Students should not be required to complete a certain amount of “contact hours” to pass the class. They should be awarded credit when they pass and marked for attendance and membership per the [Independent Study Membership Hours Calculation for State-Approved Alternative Programs](#).
 - IS is blended into the school day schedule, and there is a lack of clarity on how the district is differentiating between these enrollment records and documented time and effort of teachers.
- Course catalog does not include some of the courses for which teachers are assigned to teach.
 - Student transcripts reflect IS courses that are not included in the annual IS report.

- The district's recordkeeping system does not clearly identify student enrollment by course or instructional activity, nor does it demonstrate how average daily membership is generated and connected to coursework.
 - Teacher schedules are insufficiently documented to support instructional delivery and membership claims.
 - In some cases, students took 13 or more courses over a year in IS, and further data would be needed to analyze student schedules, MARSS record and ADM generated, and teacher instruction and attendance.

Critical Element II — Admissions

Sub Element	Status	Statute / Rule / Guidance
A continual learning plan must be developed at least annually for each student with the participation of the student, parent or guardian, teachers, and other staff; each participant must sign and date the plan. The plan must specify the learning experiences that must occur during the entire fiscal year and are necessary for grade progression or, for secondary students, graduation. The CLP must include: • the student's learning objectives and experiences, including courses or credits the student plans to complete each year and, for a secondary student, the graduation requirements the student must complete; • the assessment measurements used to evaluate a student's objectives; • requirements for grade level or other appropriate progression; and • for students generating more than one average daily membership in a given grade, an indication of which objectives were unmet.	☐ In Compliance ☐ Partial Compliance w/recommendations ☒ Not in compliance w/ findings	Minn. Stat. 124D.128, subd. 3 Minn Stat. 126C.05, subd. 15

The following compliance issues were found.

- The district was unable to provide valid, compliant CLPs for enrolled students.
 - CLPs did not meet statutory requirements for annual development, participant involvement, signatures, or required content elements.
 - The district submitted the forms but not the completed CLPs with graduation requirements and courses. Clarification was sought on the completion of the records but the district was unable to

provide signed copies of the completed CLPs. In some cases it appears the referral form serves as the CLP.

Critical Element III – Programming

Sub Element	Status	Statute / Rule / Guidance
Districts providing online instruction in the ALC must meet the requirements of the online and digital instruction act and all SAAP statutes.	☐ In Compliance ☐ Partial Compliance w/recommendations ☒ Not in compliance w/ findings	Online Instruction in State-Approved Alternative Programs
Persons providing instruction are appropriately licensed with a Minnesota teaching license in the field and grade level being taught.	☐ In Compliance ☐ Partial Compliance w/recommendations ☒ Not in compliance w/ findings	Minn. Stat. 120A.22, subd. 10

The following compliance issues were found.

- Student instructional modality (seat-based, IS, or online instruction), schedules, and teacher contact time are not consistently or clearly documented across CLPs and teacher schedules.
- Instruction is provided in subject areas without appropriately licensed staff. Specifically, there is no licensed teacher assigned for chemistry instruction, and instruction in health, physical education, and music is provided by individuals without appropriate licensure.
- Teacher contact time was counted when students fill out a Google form, which does not meet the requirements for attendance for membership in independent study.

Next Steps

1. The district's ALC will be reclassified as an alternative learning program starting July 1, 2026. The targeted services programs will be closed as of July 1, 2026. The independent study approval will be discontinued as of July 1, 2026.
2. The district must complete a full ALC application process, independent study application process, and targeted services application process.
3. Within thirty (30) days of receipt of this letter, the district must submit an action plan addressing compliance issues listed above. The plan should include specific steps, responsible staff, timelines for implementation, and evidence the district will provide to MDE to verify completion of tasks.

Failure to submit the required information and corrective action plan within the stated timelines may result in continued noncompliance and could place the program's approval status at risk for fiscal year 2027.

Written Response

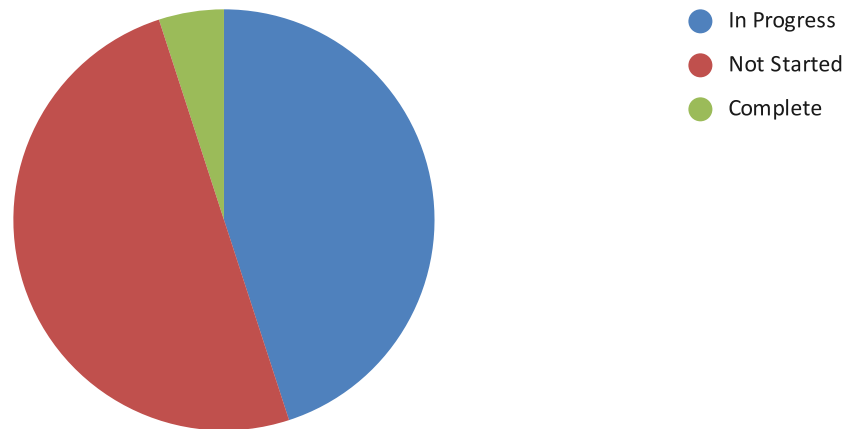
A response to this letter shall be directed towards MDE.AlternativeLearning@state.mn.us within 30 days of the letter's receipt indicating the action plan to complete the above items. The district is able to request a meeting with MDE within 30 days to receive any guidance on writing the action plan. We appreciate the time and effort to participate in this review process and look forward to continued partnership in supporting your program.

**Duluth Public Schools - Area Learning Center
Corrective Action Plan Dashboard**

Submitted to: Minnesota Department of Education
Prepared by: Jen Larva, Director of Secondary Education

Total Actions	20
In Progress	9
Not Started	10
Complete	1

Action Status Distribution



Duluth Public Schools

Official Response and Corrective Action Plan Submission

To: Minnesota Department of Education – Career and College Success Division

Attention: Christy Irrgang, Alternative Education Specialist

Date: April 30, 2026

Dear Ms. Irrgang,

On behalf of Duluth Public Schools, thank you for the comprehensive monitoring review of our Area Learning Center (ALC) programs and for the detailed feedback provided in your letter dated April 20, 2026. We appreciate the clarity of the findings and the opportunity to strengthen our systems to ensure full alignment with Minnesota statutes governing State-Approved Alternative Programs (SAAPs). We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to you and Eric Billiet for meeting with our team virtually on Thursday, April 23, to answer questions and provide additional guidance regarding the findings and next steps. We value this support and the collaborative approach taken by MDE, and we look forward to continuing this partnership as we move forward.

We submit this response and accompanying Corrective Action Plan with a clear commitment to bring all ALC programming into full statutory compliance while preserving high-quality, student-centered pathways to graduation. The district acknowledges the findings across the three critical elements of Organization and Administration, Admissions (Continual Learning Plans), and Programming (Instructional Delivery and Licensure). The review identified several systemic issues, including a lack of clarity and separation between instructional models, inconsistent and noncompliant recordkeeping and ADM reporting practices, incomplete and noncompliant Continual Learning Plans, and misalignment between course offerings, staffing, and licensure requirements. We recognize that these issues reflect system-level misalignment rather than isolated concerns and therefore require a comprehensive, system-level response.

Since the time of the review, there has been a change in site leadership, and responsibility for implementation of corrective actions now rests with district leadership under the supervision of the Director of Secondary Education. This transition provides an important opportunity to re-establish clear systems of accountability, align program design with statutory expectations, and strengthen oversight of alternative programming across the district. While we are building upon work already initiated, this plan reflects a district-led and sustainable approach to compliance moving forward.

The district's corrective actions are centered on three primary areas. First, we are undertaking a structural realignment of the ALC program to ensure clear separation of instructional models, including seat-based instruction (School 611) and independent study (School 616), supported by a compliant and well-documented master schedule aligned to learning year requirements. This includes the submission of a Flexible Learning Year application for a one-year extension and implementation of a redesigned master schedule for the 2026–27 school year to ensure accurate and transparent ADM generation tied directly to instructional delivery. Second, we are implementing statutorily compliant systems for Continual Learning Plans, Independent Study programming, and student recordkeeping. New CLP processes are being developed to ensure that plans are completed annually, include all required elements, and are

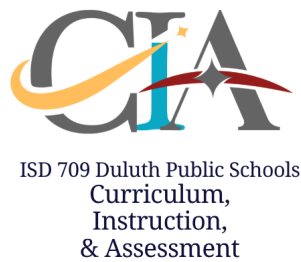
created collaboratively with students, families, and staff. Independent Study programming is being aligned to competency-based credit attainment with clearly documented teacher-student engagement, and student record systems are being redesigned to ensure alignment between enrollment, coursework, attendance, and ADM reporting. Third, we are ensuring the integrity of instruction by taking immediate steps to align all course offerings with appropriately licensed staff and to ensure that online and independent learning models meet state requirements for instructional quality and engagement. A full licensure audit is currently underway, and staffing adjustments will be completed prior to the 2026–27 school year.

We respectfully request continued guidance as we complete the reapplication process for ALC, Independent Study, and Targeted Services programming, ensure alignment with all statutory and program approval requirements, and implement sustainable systems that meet both compliance expectations and student needs. We value our partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education and are committed to working collaboratively throughout this process. We welcome the opportunity to continue dialogue with your team to review progress, receive feedback, and ensure alignment throughout implementation.

Duluth Public Schools is fully committed to ensuring that our alternative learning programs meet the highest standards of compliance, integrity, and student-centered practice. This Corrective Action Plan reflects not only our response to identified findings, but our commitment to building a stronger, more coherent system that supports all learners in achieving graduation and postsecondary success. Thank you for your partnership and continued support in this work.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Larva, Director of Secondary Education



Jennifer Larva, Ed.S.

Director of Secondary Education

☎ 218-336-8700 ext. 1007

✉ jennifer.larva@isd709.org

📍 709 Portia Johnson Drive
Duluth, Minnesota 55811

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: May 5, 2026

Topic: Intra-city Student Council (ICSC)

Presenter(s): Jen Larva

Attachment:  Board Summary Report: Intra-city student council

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

This report updates the board on ICSC progress.

This Requires School Board Approval : No

Board Summary Report: Intra-city Student Council

This report is designed for Department or Program Leaders to provide a concise, high-level overview of their area's status, activities, and future plans to the School Board.

Report Identification

Field	Information
Department/Program Name:	Secondary
Report Title:	Update on Intra-city Student Council
Report Leader:	Jen Larva
Date Submitted:	May 1, 2026
Date of Board Meeting:	May 5, 2026

Put Summary Report

I. Program Objectives & Goals (What are we trying to achieve?)

The Big Picture The Intra-City Student Council gives students from our high schools a direct way to talk to district leaders. Our goal is to make sure student perspectives are a regular part of how we make decisions.

Our Main Goals

- **Give Students a Voice:** Create a direct line for students to tell district leaders what is really happening in their schools.
- **Improve School Rules:** Let students give feedback on policies and programs before they are finalized.
- **Build Leadership Skills:** Help students from different backgrounds learn how to lead and work as a team.
- **Create a Better School Environment:** Make schools feel more inclusive and safe by listening to and acting on student concerns.

What We are Working on Right Now

- **Getting Started:** Moving from the planning stage to holding regular meetings (starting with the first group meeting on April 29).
- **Full Participation:** Making sure we have student representation
- **Setting a Routine:** Determining how meetings will run and how students will pick the topics they want to discuss.
- **Clear Communication:** Setting up a system (like a shared email and news updates) so the whole district knows what the council is working on.

II. Key Actions & Activities (What have we done recently?)

- **Action 1: Refined Program Design and Logistics.** While this project took longer to launch than originally intended, we used the "pause" to ensure the program would actually work for students. Early efforts included meeting with School Board Student Representatives to set a vision and create an application process. We then spent time restructuring the program to fit within the regular academic day and school calendar. This was a critical step to ensure that underclassmen could participate and that transportation needs were addressed so every student has a way to attend.
- **Action 2: Held the First Cross-City Meeting on April 29.** After navigating several scheduling conflicts on previous "Opportunity Days," we successfully brought students from the different sites together for the first time on April 29. It is important to note that because the planning phase was handled by district leadership and student board reps, the students currently on the council are now stepping into this new structure for the first time to begin their work.
- **Action 3: Transitioned Leadership to Schools.** With the first meeting complete, the project has been turned over to the high school principals who will work with their building staff to set agendas and

invite district participation. They will now lead the council's day-to-day activities, ensuring the work remains student-centered and grounded in each school building.

III. Outcomes & Results (What was the impact?)

The launch of the Intra-City Student Council on April 29 was successful. Five students from East High School, accompanied by the MTSS coordinator, traveled to Denfeld High School to join 18 Denfeld students and the Student Government coordinator for an afternoon of collaboration. The energy in the room was positive as students broke into small groups to discuss why this council matters.

The most impactful result was the students' own realization that they are stronger together. They shared that a city-wide council gives them a "collective voice" that can actually reach district leadership and the School Board. Beyond just talking about policy, the students focused on community building. They noted that meeting peers from across town helps break down old stereotypes and turns the cross-town rivalry into a positive partnership.

By the end of the meeting, the impact was visible through a list of student-led ideas. They moved quickly from "getting to know each other" to brainstorming real projects, such as joint fundraising for local non-profits, friendly school-spirit competitions like city-wide medallion hunts, and winter community events. The meeting proved that when we provide the space, our students are eager to lead and connect across school boundaries.

IV. Next Steps & Future Focus (What is planned for the future?)

- **Next Step 1: Formalize the Communication Loop.** To ensure student voices reach the highest level of leadership, the communication link to the School Board will now come directly through each site's School Board Student Representative. They will be responsible for reporting on the council's progress, priorities, and recommendations.
- **Next Step 2: Summer Planning & Governance (August 2026).** In early August, students and staff partners will meet to finalize the council's structure for the new school year. This includes launching a formal application process to ensure balanced representation (10 students each from East, Denfeld, and the ALC) and establishing a bi-weekly meeting schedule that fits within the academic day to ensure all students can participate.
- **Future Focus Area: Service and Community Building.** A major highlight of the council's future work will be launching district-wide community-building initiatives. Students are planning joint service projects, such as fundraising for local non-profits, and "friendly rivalry" events—like city-wide medallion hunts and winter competitions—to break down barriers between schools and foster a unified district spirit.
- **Future Focus Area: Shift to Student-Led Design.** This project is officially "flipping" from district-led initiative to one that is student-designed and student-driven. Moving forward, district and school site leadership will serve as partners who provide support and resources only upon invitation from the students. This ensures the council's work is authentic to the students' own vision.

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: Tuesday, May 5, 2026

Topic: Updated Fiscal Year 2026-27 Preliminary Budget

Presenter(s): Simone Zunich, Executive Director of Finance & Business Services

Attachment: Yes - Fiscal Year 27 Budget Assumption - COW 05.05.26 Brief

Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

Simone Zunich will provide an update on the preliminary 2026-27 budget ahead of potential adoption in June.

This Requires School Board Approval :

In June, 2026



UPDATES TO FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 PRELIMINARY BUDGET FINANCIAL PLANNING & PROJECTIONS

Prepared by: Simone Zunich
Presented: COW Meeting, May 5, 2026

Updates since April 7, 2026 Committee of the Whole:

We have finalized three key adjustments to the preliminary FY27 budget:

- **Fuel Services:** Increased expenditure by **\$85,000** to stabilize transportation operations.
- **Title Grants:** Reconciled all Title funding streams to align with current federal award notices.
- **Special Education:** Updated the R&E revenue projection to **\$32,995,988.74**, based on the state's latest 4.13 calculator scenario.

Federal Programs Funding - District Portion

Year	Title I	Title II	Title III	Title IV	Title ID
2023-24	\$2,710,620	\$288,435	\$7,710	\$141,716	\$175,925
2024-25	\$2,812,634	\$360,002	\$7,656	\$180,256 Transferred to Title I	\$124,566
2025-26	\$2,852,008	\$265,580	\$9,291	\$165,280 Transferred to Title I	\$83,264
2026-27	\$2,354,409	\$233,274	\$8,617	\$150,758 Transferred to Title I	TBD

Student Enrollment & Basic Revenue

Average Daily Membership (ADM): Projected at **8,175** (Increase from 8,125 in FY 26).

Basic Formula Allowance: Projected at **2.69%** increase or \$7,682 per pupil

Levy Updates: Revenue updated based on Pay 25 and Pay 26 cycles.

Compensatory Aid: * Currently budgeted at **\$9,312,178** (based on MDE report).

Special Education Funding

FY 27 Revenue Projection: \$27,530,933.

FY 26 Revenue Revision: Updated to \$31,341,962.

Special Education General Fund Impact: * Currently accounts for **40%** of general fund programs.

- Setting 4 costs estimated between **\$500,000 – \$1,000,000**.

Personnel & Benefit Assumptions

Staff: 2.5% average rollover applied

Lane Changes: Budgeted at 1.8%

Insurance Premiums: 15% estimated increase projected for both **Health** and **Liability** insurance

New Mandatory Obligations (Analytics Objects):

- **Minnesota Family Medical Leave Act Paid Leave (MFMLA) (Obj 219):** 5%
- **Summer Unemployment (Obj 281):** 5%
- **Fund 02 (Food & Nutrition):** 5% for Obj 281

Facilities & Site-Specific Needs

Inflation Strategy: 2.26% inflation applied *only* to Capital Projects (per Fed Reserve 5-yr projection)

- *Note:* Purchased services and supplies held flat to FY 26 levels

First Street Additional Staffing:

- **1st St downtown:** \$350,000 (3.0 FTE)
- **Support:** \$150,000 (2 Custodians, 1 PT Clerical)
- *Note:* These assumptions may require further increases/decreases

Unfunded Mandates & Contract Reviews

READ Act: Lane change costs of approx. **\$650,000** for FY 26 and and \$1,200,000 for FY 27.

MFMLA: While state-funded, the district must absorb the cost of substitutes.

Summer Unemployment: Funded by state through the end of FY 27.

Efficiency Spotlight: * **Kelly Education:** Contracted costs were \$1.2M in FY 25.

- Analysis shows the district would pay ~33% more if handled internally; current contract represents a significant saving.

Financial Outlook & Risk Assessment

Spending Trends:

- FY 25 Overspend: **\$7,000,000**
- FY 26 Projected Overspend: **Minimum \$4,207,549**
- FY 27 Planned Budget Reductions: **\$4,000,000**

Key Concerns:

- Special Education cost volatility
- Risk of **Statutory Operating Debt (SOD)** due to general fund depletion

PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2026/2027 BUDGET

REVENUES		EXPENDITURES		Dollar Change
	Proposed FY 2027 Budget		Proposed FY 2027 Budget	
01 General Fund	\$154,322,705.00	01 General Fund	\$158,179,470.00	-\$3,856,765
02 Food Service	\$6,283,279.00	02 Food Service	\$6,365,884.00	-\$82,605
04 Community Service	\$7,983,518.00	04 Community Service	\$7,855,857.00	\$127,661
06 Construction		06 Construction		\$0
07 Debt Service	\$28,913,419.00	07 Debt Service	\$28,453,464.00	\$459,955
08 Trust	\$305,000.00	08 Trust	\$285,842.00	\$19,158
20 Internal Service	\$1,201,126.00	20 Internal Service	\$1,309,828.00	-\$108,702
79 Student Activities	\$523,886.00	79 Student Activities	\$438,705.00	\$85,181
Subtotal - Revenues	\$199,532,933.00	Subtotal - Expenditures	\$202,889,050.00	-\$3,356,117

Questions & Concerns?