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Strategic Investment:

A SWOT Analysis of High School
Opportunities on School and District

School Board Meeting

Oct. 21, 2025



Strategic Investment

Definition:

A deliberate choice to direct limited resources toward an initiative that strengthens our district's long-term success — improving student outcomes, protecting revenue, and advancing our mission — even when budgets are tight.





Current Situation

- District's general fund balance in 2023-24 = 1.1%
 - 2024-25 results are pending
- High school has had a 6 period schedule for approximately 20 years
- High school is planning to switch to a modified 7 period schedule for 2026-27

Tonight's Agenda

- SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) analysis of the current situation at SAHS
- Potential impact of a schedule change on district
- Recommendation to increase staffing for 2026-27 to meet requirements of expanded schedule



Strengths: 6 Period Schedule

- Consistent pacing and simple daily routine
- Daily contact between staff and students
- Incremental chunk learning
- Less overall workload and homework
- Easier master schedule management
- Provides for some core electives
- Fiscally the cheapest schedule to operate, as elective options are limited, so less staff is needed.



Weaknesses: 6 Period Schedule

- Limited elective opportunities
- Students do not have the opportunity to study any area in depth
- Limited flexibility for remediation and intervention
- Difficult to provide structured support blocks without disrupting core courses
- By meeting daily, staff can feel pressure to move quickly through material
- Common planning/collaboration time for staff is limited



Opportunities: 7 Period Modified Schedule

- Course access
- Access to College & Career Pathways and in-depth learning opportunities
- Instructional depth
- Fewer daily courses reduce stress
- Stronger staff/student relationships
- School climate
- Innovation
- Intervention and mental health



Opportunities with New Schedule

- Student Retention: Expanded dual credit options
- Create strong community partnership with local industry (internships, mentorships, and capstone projects)
- Opens eligibility for additional grants (Perkins, etc.)
- District Positioning:
 - Enhanced reputation as a comprehensive College and Career Ready district
 - Expanded Pathways sets the district apart from many local peer districts



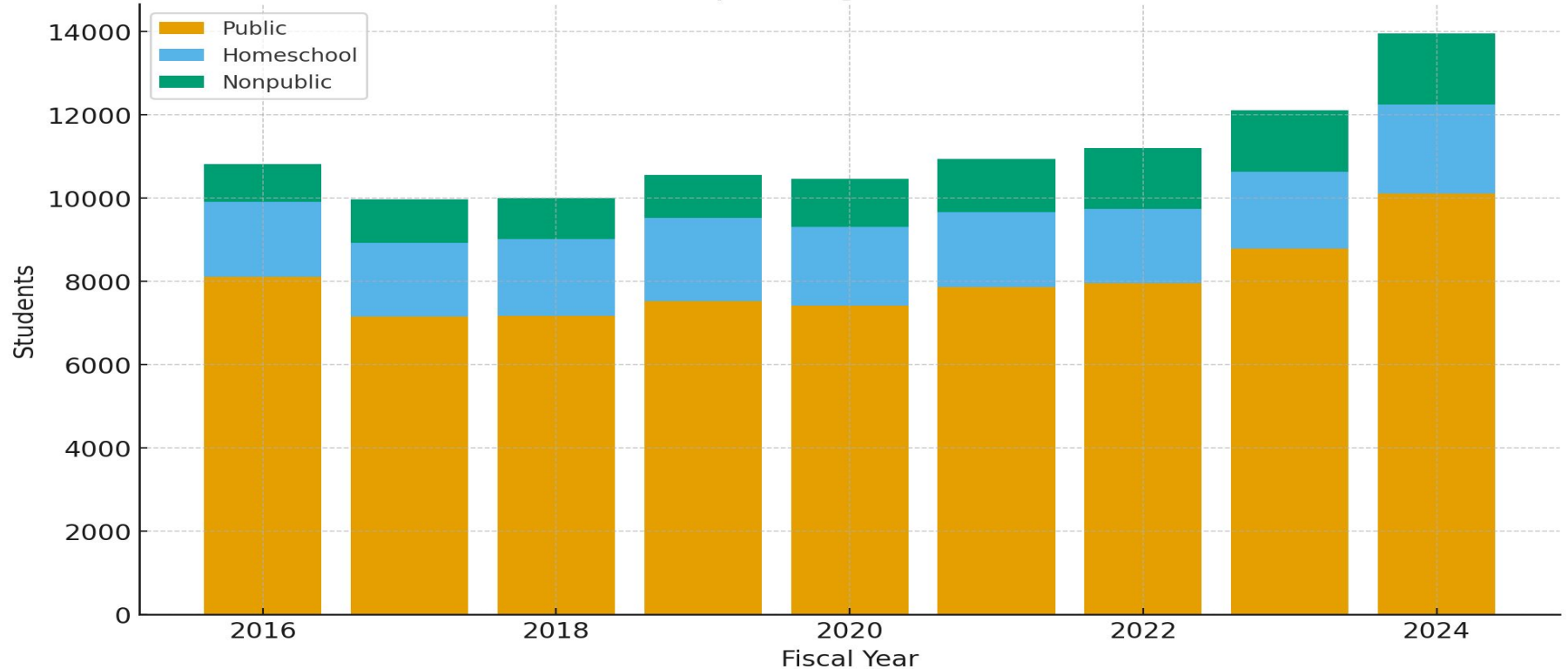
Threats to the District

- Post Secondary Education Options (PSEO)
- Online Learning
- Homeschooling
- Loss of students for other opportunities
- Uncertain future fiscal landscape



Statewide PSEO 2016-2025

Minnesota PSEO Participation by Student Type (FY2016–FY2024)
FY2025 pending official release



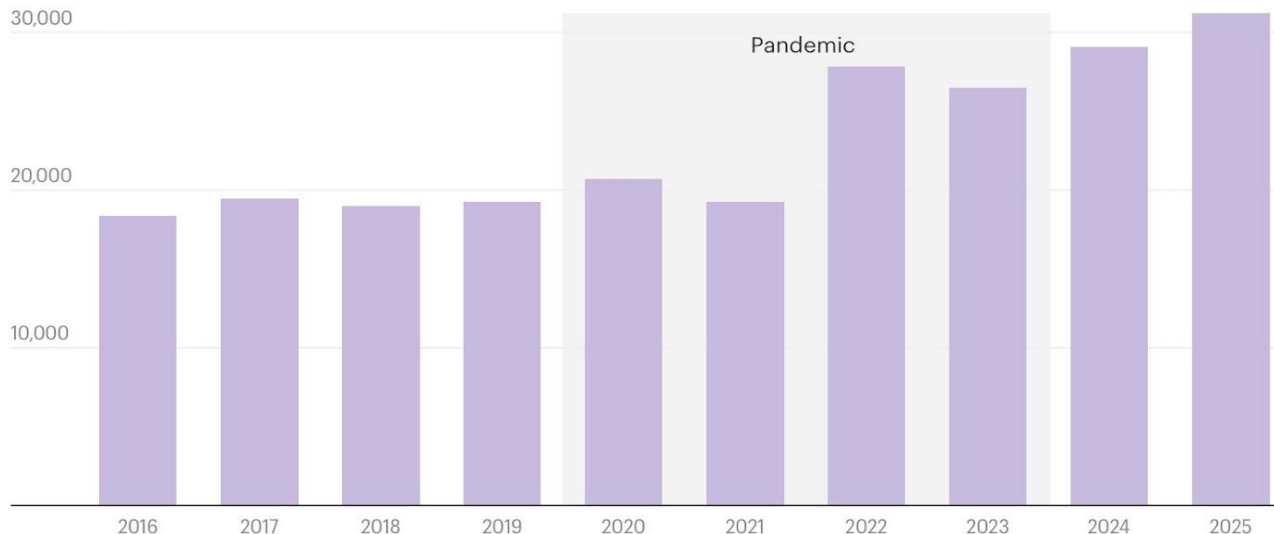


Home Schooling

Sharp increase in homeschooling

The number of Minnesota students being schooled at home is 50% larger than it was at the start of the pandemic.

TOTAL HOMESCHOOLED STUDENTS BY ACADEMIC YEAR



Source: Minnesota Department of Education • Jeff Hargarten and Mark Boswell, The Minnesota Star Tribune



Online Learning Estimates

- 2022-23: 5% contraction of online learning post COVID state-wide
- 2023, 2024, 2025: 5% annual recovery growth as students returned online



Capture Rate

Current capture rate =
71% of resident students

Reflects growing regional landscape of
school choice, open enrollment, and
nontraditional learning options.





External Threats to the District

		Estimated Impact
Post- Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO)	1,888 courses <i>enrolled in 2024-25</i>	\$913,000
Online Learning	466 online courses <i>enrolled in 2024-25</i>	\$581,000
Homeschooling	419 students <i>in 2024-25</i>	\$3,135,000
District-Wide Capture Rate	1,940 ADM <i>resident students enrolled out of district (excludes online)</i>	\$14,513,000

Source: MDE's 2024-25 School ADM Report



Current Financial Reality

- Unfunded state mandates
- Legislation impacting revenue:
 - *Special education*
 - *Compensatory education*
- Inflation and rising costs
- Enrollment numbers

Unknowns:

- Fiscal Year 2025 audit results
- Final levy certification
- State/federal funding



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Board Discussion

- General thoughts on the concept?
- What guiding principles should we use when identifying strategic investments?
- What are the areas of greatest impact we want to protect, even in a tight budget?
- What opportunities does the administration foresee in developing operational efficiencies elsewhere?



Administrative Recommendation

Budget Priority:

Increase secondary staff at SAHS to provide more opportunities for students through a new high school schedule and the development of an online program



Rationale

Strategic staffing:

- Restores and grows enrollment by competing with neighboring districts and postsecondary options
- Broadens course availability (CTE, fine arts, world language, STEM, and dual-credit options)
- Provides equitable access for all students to advanced coursework, enrichment, and academic support within the extended schedule framework



Rationale

- Enables the district to fully develop new college and career pathways aligning with Minnesota's workforce priorities and community partnerships
- Ensures that these pathways are sustainable, credential-aligned, and connected to real-world experiences



Specific Opportunities for Students



- Expanded programming options
 - Electives, Pathways concentration, 9th grade seminar, certifications and credentials, intervention
- Expanded access to career-ready skills (AA degree, etc.)
- Online Learning Academy
- Expanded support for student well-being and mental health



Return on Investment: Families

- The AA degree (also called the Transfer Curriculum) consists of 60 college credits
 - **Potential savings of \$13,070 to \$24,360**
- Every concurrent enrollment course offered is guaranteed college credit to students
 - **Potential savings = \$872 to \$1,624 per course**

Century College = \$218/credit | U of M = \$406/credit





Measures of Effectiveness

Over a three year period measure:

- Shift from external PSEO to in-house college credit opportunities
- Increase in Stillwater online programming
- Increase in secondary capture rate
- Increase in enrollment
- Increase the # of internships and community partners



Next Steps

School Board:

- **Oct/Nov:** New course proposals
- **Nov:** Fiscal Forecast
- **Nov/Dec:** Graduation requirements
- **Feb - April:** Priority-Based Budgeting (allocate resources)

Priority-Based Budgeting (PBB) Framework



1. Plan and Prepare

- A. Partnerships
- B. Principles and Policies
- C. Analyze Student Learning
- D. Communication



2. Set Instructional Priorities

- A. SMARTER Goals
- B. Identify Root Cause
- C. Develop Priorities
- D. Select Priorities



3. Pay for Priorities

- A. Apply Cost Analysis
- B. Prioritize Expenditures



4. Implement Plan

- A. Strategic Financial Plan
- B. Plan of Action
- C. Allocate to School Sites
- D. Budget Document



5. Ensure Sustainability

- A. Implement and Evaluate

Prior to October

October - December

January - February

February - June

June and beyond



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