

NORTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Office of the Superintendent
Memorandum

TO: Members of the Board of Education
FROM: Matthew Hillmann, Ed.D., Superintendent
RE: Table File Items for the October 27, 2025, Regular School Board Meeting

6. Items for Discussion and Reports

- b. Review of the State of the District. Each year, Superintendent Hillmann shares with the Northfield Chamber of Commerce and Northfield Rotary the state of the district. He will review that presentation with the board. He will also review the district's Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) results. The presentation and narrative are attached.

7. Consent Agenda

c. Personnel Items.

i. Appointments

4. Reed Hagberg, Softball/Basketball Official with Community Education/Recreation for 4 hours/week, effective 11/9/2025-5/31/2026. \$30/game.
5. Neil Hardie, Community School Site Assistant at Spring Creek for up to 10 hours/week effective 11/3/2025-5/14/2026. Step 2, \$19.37/hour.
6. Miles Poole, Instructor Assistant & Swim Assistant with Community Education/Recreation for 4 hours/week, effective 11/9/2025-5/31/2026. Step 2, \$15.28/hour.

ii. Increase/Decrease/Change in Assignment

10. Adam Danielson, Instructional Coach and Associate Interim Principal at Bridgewater, extend Associate Interim Principal role through 11/10/2025. \$225/day stipend for a total of \$1,350 in additional salary.
11. Amy Merritt, Substitute Special Education EA/PCA for 6.75 hours/day at Bridgewater, change to regular employee Special Education EA/PCA effective 10/1/2025. Step 4, \$23.51/hour.
12. Jenna Schlatter, 1.0 FTE Grade 6 Teacher at the Middle School, add Community School Licensed Teacher up to 8 hours/week effective 10/29/2025-5/14/2026. \$40/hour.
13. Brigitte Tisdale, .8 FTE Title I Teacher at Greenvale Park, add .15 FTE Title I Teacher at St. Dominic School for a total of .95 FTE, effective 10/27/2025-6/10/2026.
14. Justine Voronkova, Special Education EA/PCA for 6.75 hours/day at the High School, change to 4.0 hours/day at the High School and 3.0 hours/day at Bridgewater for a total of 7.0 hours/day, effective 10/21/2025.

iii. Leave of Absence

1. Sarah Marohl, Educational Assistant at Greenvale Park, leave of absence beginning 11/17/2025 through approximately 2/20/2026.
2. Ryan Sweeney, Technology Specialist at the Middle School, FMLA leave of absence beginning 10/23/2025-11/7/2025.

- e. Grant Application. Director of Community Education Erin Bailey requests school board approval for \$600,000 from the Minnesota Department of Education for a grant to support the Northfield Community School initiative at Greenvale Park Elementary. This amount would cover the full grant period of February 1, 2026 to June 30, 2029. The Northfield Community School initiative will dramatically expand out-of-school time programming. It will increase the number of Greenvale Park students and alumni who can access the free out-of-school time programming by offering after school programming four days per week, evening programming twice per week, programming during school breaks, and expanded summer programming.

2025 State of the District

Matt Hillmann, Ed.D., Superintendent
Oct. 27, 2025



Executive Summary: The superintendent makes an annual presentation at a Northfield Chamber of Commerce luncheon and at a regular Rotary meeting. This state of the district presentation is a combination of those presentations and includes an update on the district's MCA and Advanced Placement results.

The Strategic Plan

- The district is deeply committed to its [strategic plan](#). We center our vision to prepare **every** student for lifelong success by developing critical thinkers who are curious and ready to engage in our society.
- We use the strategic commitments as the lens in decision-making.
- Our strategic plan does not just “hang on a wall.” It “walks our halls.”
- Clarity of vision and values is crucial for developing and maintaining highly effective organizations.

Reimagining Northfield High School

- The district's voters overwhelmingly approved all three bond referendum questions in 2024 to reimagine Northfield High School.
- Progress continues toward the final project design. Updates are available on the [district's website](#), including an [animated walkthrough](#) of the design.
- The district sold the first \$39 million of bonds at a lower interest rate than the pre-referendum projection. This reduced interest rate saves taxpayers \$8 million in interest payments.
- We remain grateful to Carleton College for its \$2 million donation toward the project. We have received the entire donation, with the second million dollars being transferred to the district last week. As we've stated many times, it is highly unusual for such a prestigious private college to make such a significant investment in a public school facility project.

School Safety

- The district prioritizes student and staff safety through prevention, security features at each facility, and the use of the [I Love U Guys Foundation standard response protocol](#). Administrators and staff were trained to use the SRP this summer.
- The superintendent makes an annual school safety presentation to the board. [This year's report can be found here.](#)
- The district is grateful to St. Olaf College, which has agreed to serve as the district's final reunification site in the event a school needs to be evacuated.

The 80/90/100 Framework for School Continuous Improvement

- The 80/90/100 framework aims to inspire staff and drive school continuous improvement.
- Sets metrics for 80% of students demonstrating academic proficiency, 90% reaching SEL proficiency, and 100% safety and growth.
- Centers the district's vision and strategic commitments.
- Focuses on planning. As President Eisenhower said, “Plans are worthless, but planning is indispensable.”

- Most importantly, it has a relentless focus on changing adult actions to improve student outcomes.
- It seeks to build instructional resiliency when facing the inevitable challenges associated with student learning.
- The framework is intended to provide clarity for staff. By simplifying school improvement plans and creating a memorable rallying cry, we aim to instill a can-do mindset that focuses on both proficiency and growth.
- Mindset is powerful. If we can instill confidence that 80% academic proficiency is achievable, we would likely catapult into the top five places for statewide academic measures.

2025 MCA Results and Advanced Placement performance

- The district continues to rate favorably within the state context.
 - The district ranked 23rd out of 325 school districts that tested ten or more students in reading. This is the 93rd percentile in Minnesota.
 - The district ranked 36th out of 325 school districts for all students that tested ten or more students in mathematics. This is the 89th percentile in Minnesota.
 - The district ranked 23rd out of 322 school districts for all students that tested ten or more students in science. This is the 93rd percentile in Minnesota.
- While the district's ranking in the state is strong, there were year-over-year decreases in proficiency across 10 of the 14 grade levels. This is likely due to a concept called the "implementation dip" described by education researcher Michael Fullan. A Claude artificial intelligence summary says this about the implementation dip:

During the implementation dip, schools often experience a temporary decline in test scores as educators and students adjust to new instructional practices or curriculum changes. This phenomenon occurs because teachers are learning new strategies while simultaneously trying to maintain student achievement, creating a period where performance may initially decrease before improvement occurs.

The district is working to implement new high-quality instructional materials and practices in both elementary reading and mathematics. Lead indicators, such as screening assessments and classroom observations, are providing confidence that these results are associated with an implementation dip.

- The first MCA-IV was administered for science in 2025. Shifts in statewide tests prevent year-over-year comparison. Additionally, it is typical to see lower proficiency rates in the first year of a new assessment as new state standards are implemented.
- Grade 10 reading is a bright spot with a more than 12 percent increase in proficiency. This was likely influenced by incentivizing the assessment.
- Once again, district students performed well on Advanced Placement examinations. Three hundred forty-two students took 567 AP tests, with 78% earning a score of three or higher. Typically, a score of three or higher can earn college credit.
- Additionally, the district continues to grow successful programs like agriculture education that offer students more hands on experience that helps prepare them for lifelong success.

Fiscal Responsibility

- The district continues to demonstrate its commitment to fiscal stewardship. Declining enrollment due to lower birth rates and low housing inventory, chronic state underfunding, unfunded mandates, and inflationary pressures prompted the district to lead a priority based budget reduction process in 2025.
- More than 80 people involved were involved in the process that resulted in \$5.8 million in reductions.

Northfield Public Schools
2025 MCA Results with State Context - All Students

Grade	Subject	2025 Proficiency Rate	Northfield Proficiency Change from 2024	State Proficiency Change from 2024	Percent of Districts (01) with lower 2025 Proficiency Rate (testing 10+ students)	Percent of Northfield Students Testing
	Above State Proficiency Rate		Increase Decrease	Increase Decrease		At/Above State Participation Rate
3	Reading	59.30%	-3.80%	-0.40%	83%	99.6%
	Math	70.70%	-2.40%	-0.80%	73%	99.2%
4	Reading	59.00%	-2.20%	-1.80%	80%	98%
	Math	73.20%	+3.50%	-1.10%	81%	98.8%
5	Reading	70.60%	-0.30%	-0.40%	85%	97.2%
	Math	58.40%	-1.40%	-1.20%	86%	97.9%
	Science*	37.50%			89%	97.9%
6	Reading	67.60%	-0.40%	-0.50%	85%	99%
	Math	49.00%	-0.30%	-0.30%	77%	98.6%
7	Reading	60.80%	+5.90%	+0.70%	91%	97.9%
	Math	56.60%	-0.40%	+0.80%	86%	97.2%
8	Reading	53.60%	-4.90%	+3.20%	83%	96.3%
	Math	66.30%	+0.50%	+0.90%	95%	96.7%
	Science	24.60%			94%	97.1%
10	Reading	63.60%	+12.50%	+1.40%	86%	97%
	Science	46.80%			79%	94.4%
11	Math	48.70%	-2.20%	+0.20%	85%	86.2%

2025 State of the District Review



VISION

We prepare **every** student for lifelong success by developing critical thinkers who are curious and ready to engage in our society.

Reaching Out, Reaching Up: THE 2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION

We prepare every student for lifelong success by developing critical thinkers who are curious and ready to engage in our society.

BENCHMARKS

1 All children are ready for kindergarten .	2 All students are connected to the community .	3 All students are at grade level in reading and mathematics by the end of third and sixth grades.
4 All students exhibit physical, social and emotional well-being .	5 All students have a connection with a caring adult beyond their parents as they transition to middle school.	6 All students have interests, goals and a vision for the future by the end of eighth grade.
7 All students graduate from high school with a plan to reach their full potential.	8 All employees report satisfaction in the workplace.	9 All parents report satisfaction with their children's educational experience.
10 The district maintains 14% of its annual expenditures in its unassigned fund balance to ensure financial stability .	11 Community education provides relevant and accessible learning opportunities for all residents.	Note: The first seven benchmarks are aligned with the language identified by Northfield's previous strategic vision statement and all community representatives committed to helping Northfield reach its vision goals.



STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS



People

We prioritize the engagement, satisfaction, and support of every student, staff member, and family.



Learner Outcomes

We prepare every student to be academically and socially ready to choose their preferred pathway after high school graduation.



Equity

We ensure that every child has a fair opportunity to reach their full potential.



Communication

We communicate effectively and transparently with all stakeholders.



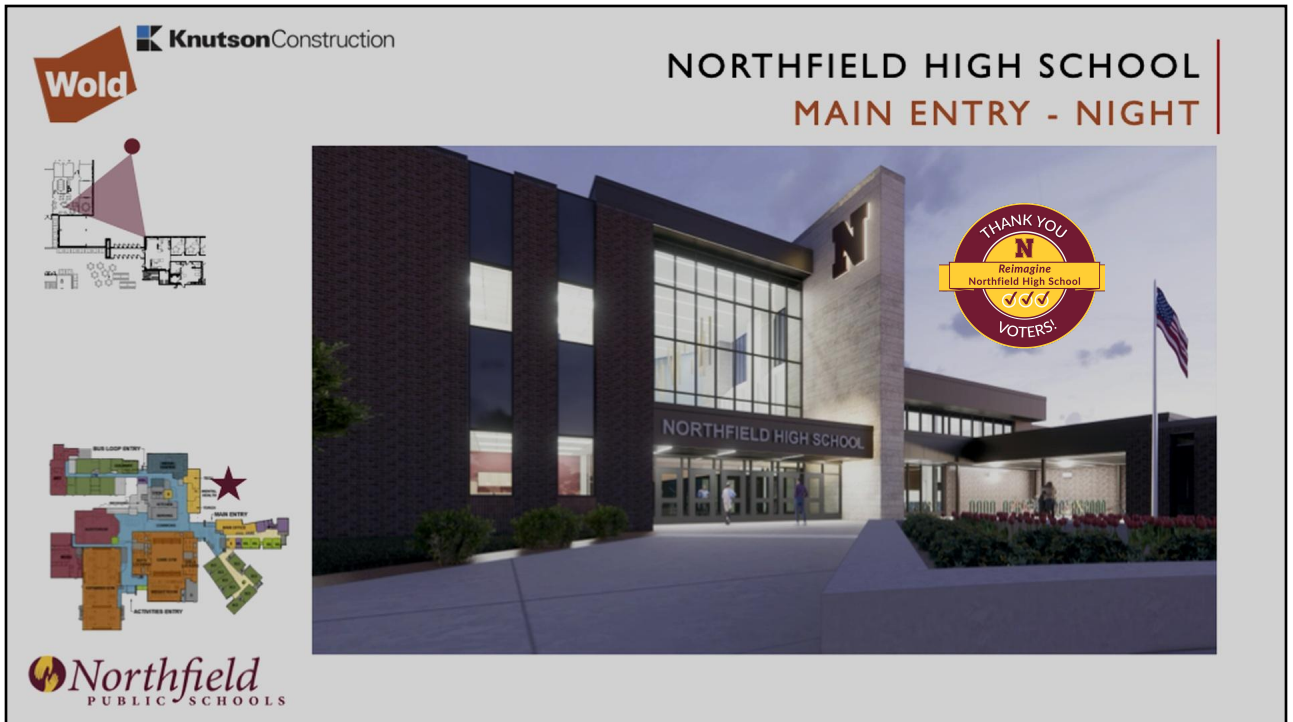
Stewardship

We responsibly manage our personnel, finances, property, time and environmental impact.



Partnerships

We seek community partnerships that accelerate student achievement of district benchmarks.



Process & Engagement

**SAVED
\$8 MILLION
IN INTEREST**



First Bid Sale



Thanks, Carleton!



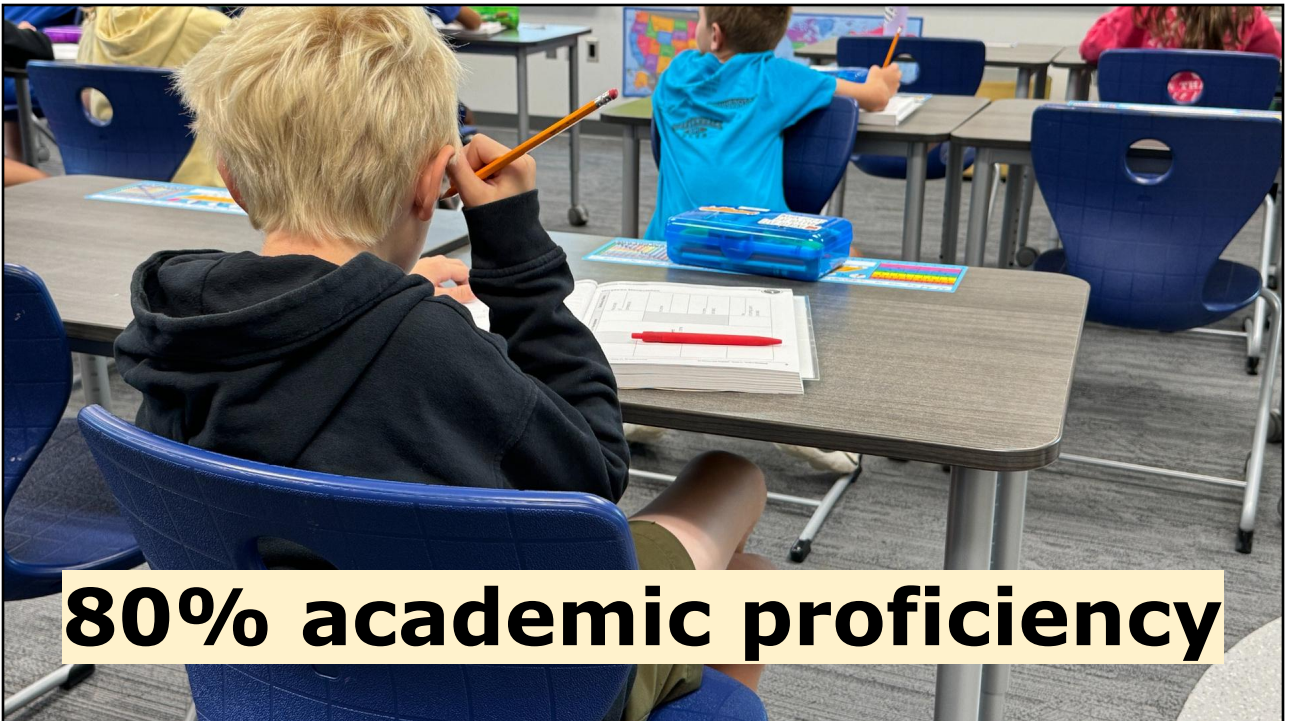
School safety



Thanks, St. Olaf!



80/90/100 Framework



80% academic proficiency

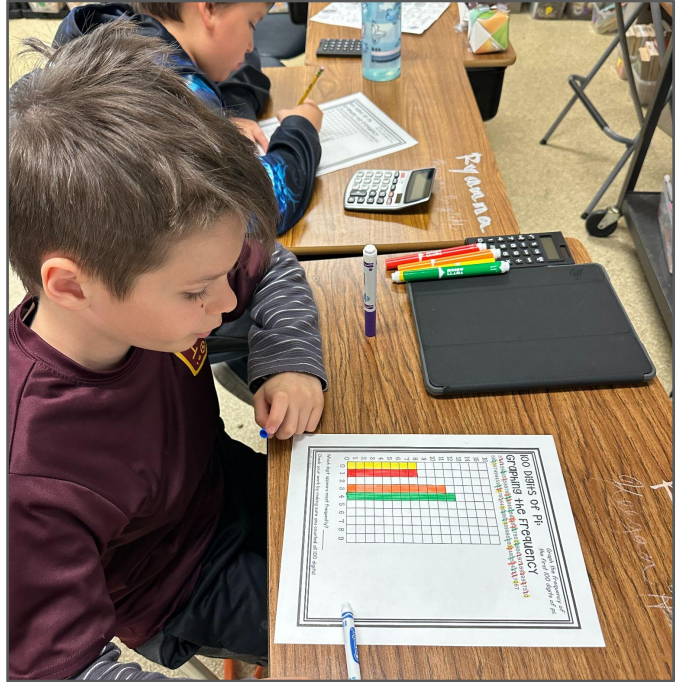


**90%
SEL proficiency**



100% Growth & 100% Feeling Safe

What would
80%
academic
proficiency
mean for us?

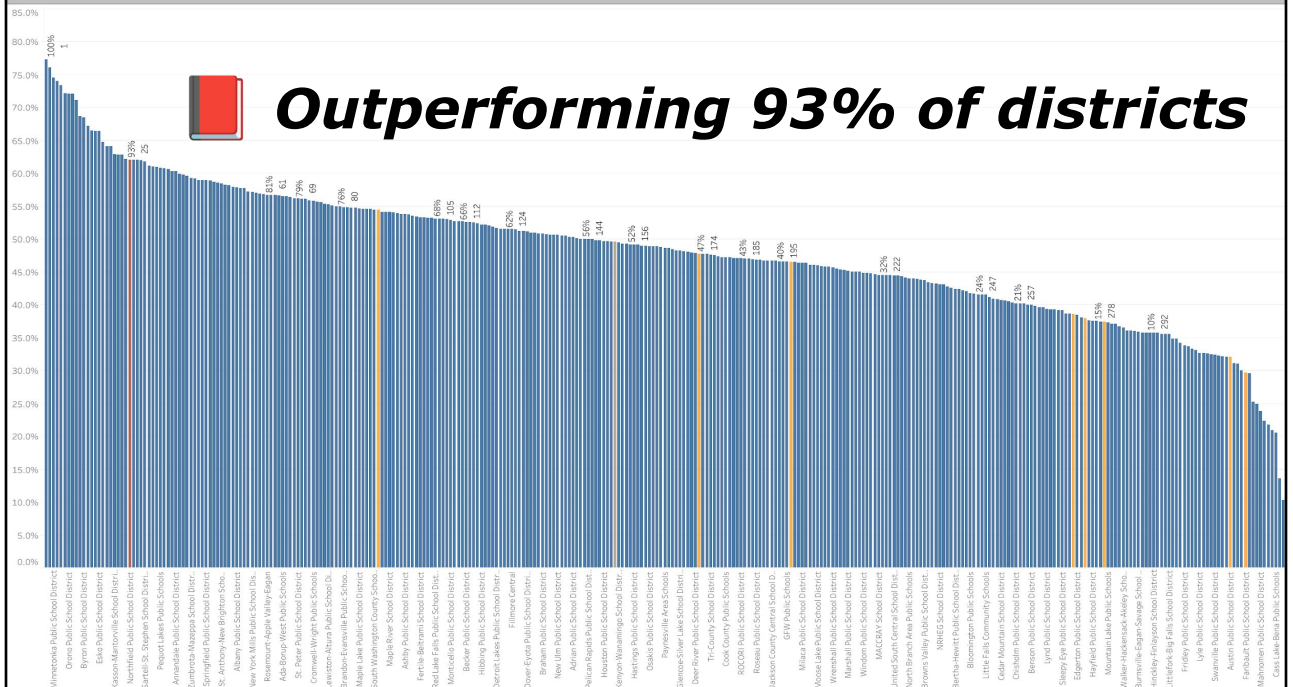


Top five
school districts
in the state



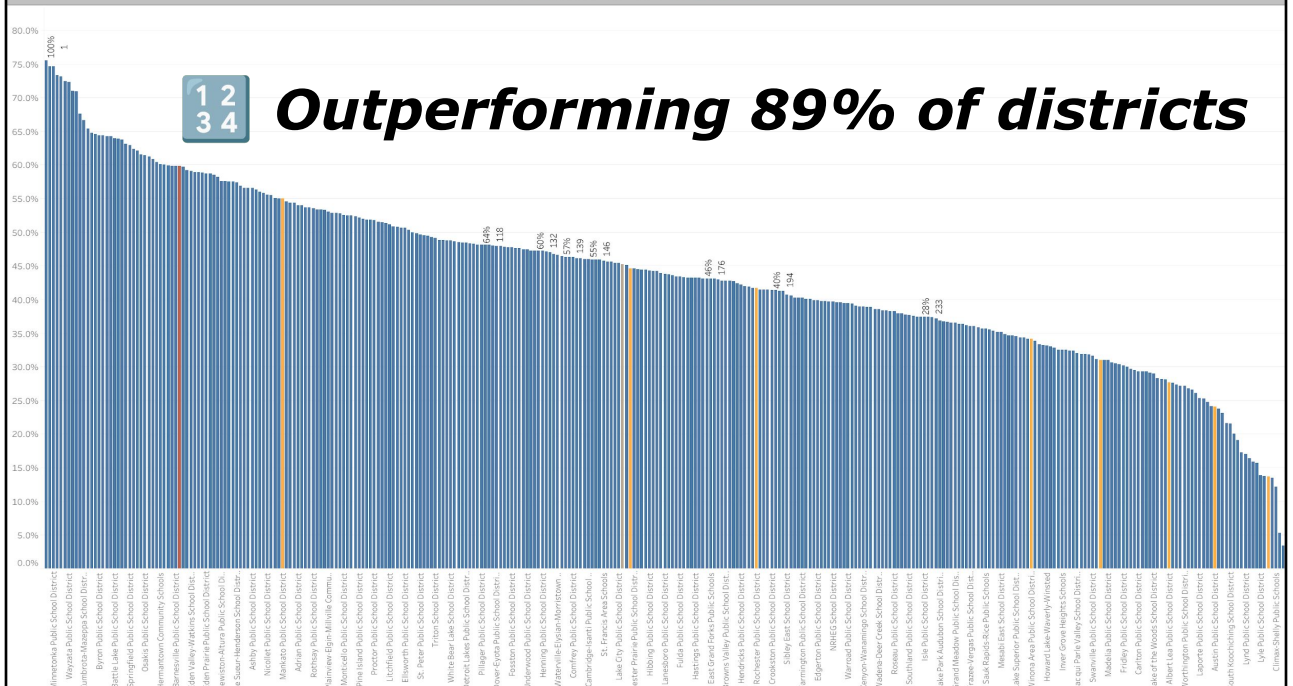
Overall District Distribution

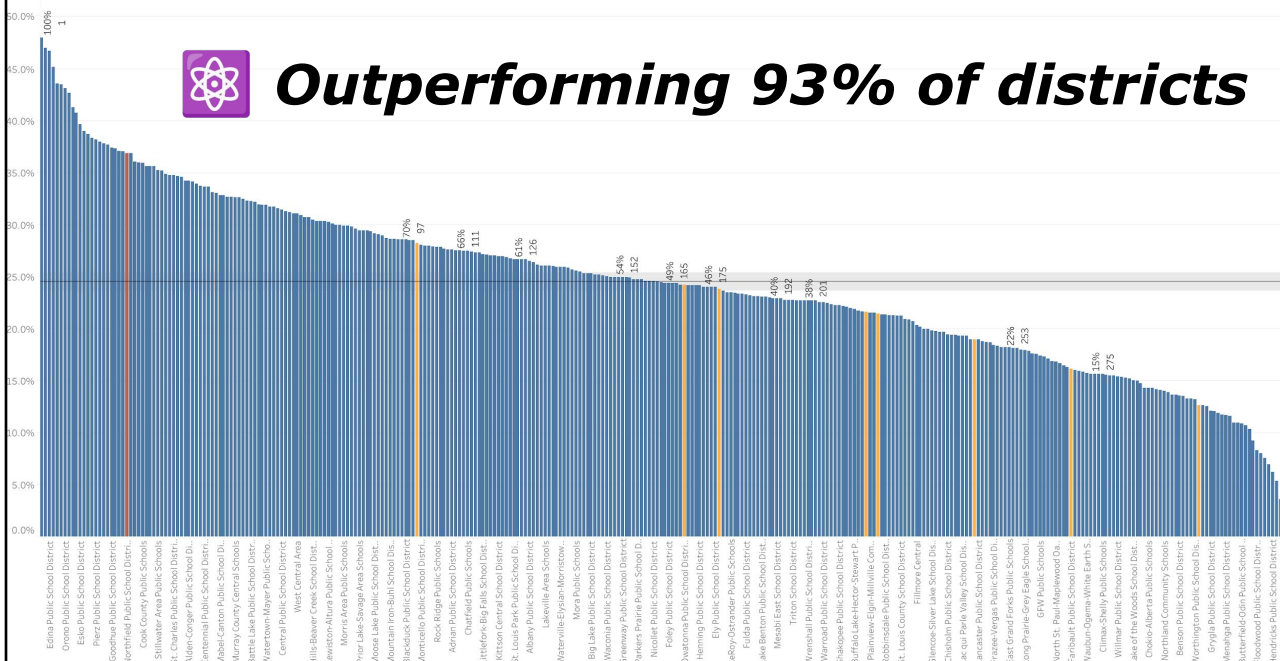
Subject: **Reading** Grade: **All** Student Group: **All students**



Overall District Distribution

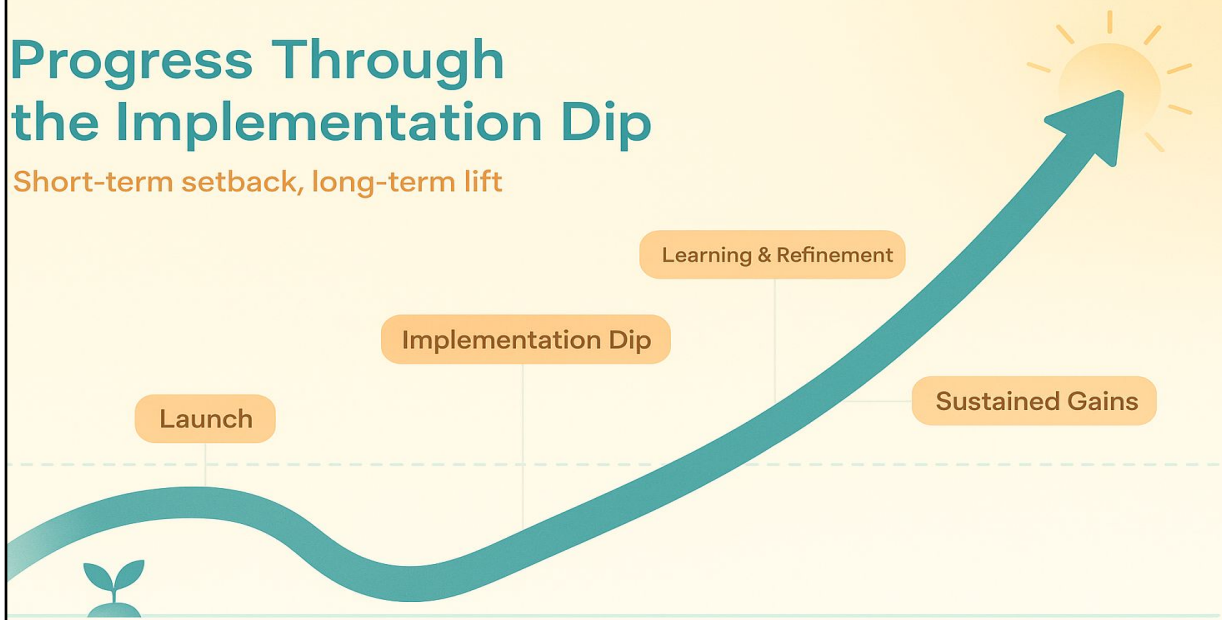
Subject: **MATH** Grade: **All** Student Group: **All students**



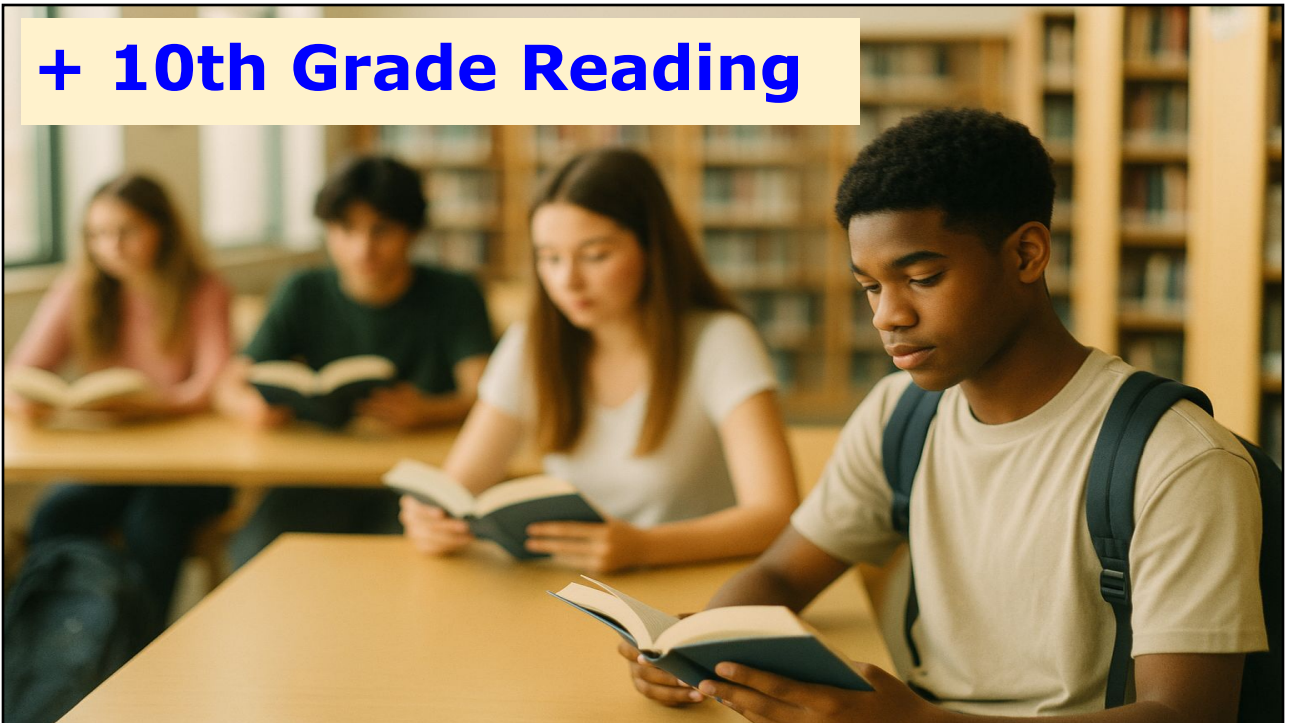


Progress Through the Implementation Dip

Short-term setback, long-term lift



+ 10th Grade Reading



+ Advanced Placement

342
STUDENTS

567
AP TESTS

78%
EARNING A
THREE OR
HIGHER



And...prepared for lifelong success



Fiscal Responsibility

Priority Based Budgeting

- Stewardship
- Over 80 people involved
- \$5.8m in reductions
- Lower birth rates, housing shortage, economic uncertainty
- Underfunded mandates
- Being responsible ≠ Fun



We've had joy...

...and pain

We acknowledge them
We celebrate the joys
We mourn the pain
and we say...

What's next?

The road ahead...



It is messy out there...



Some might feel like this...



Challenges are ahead

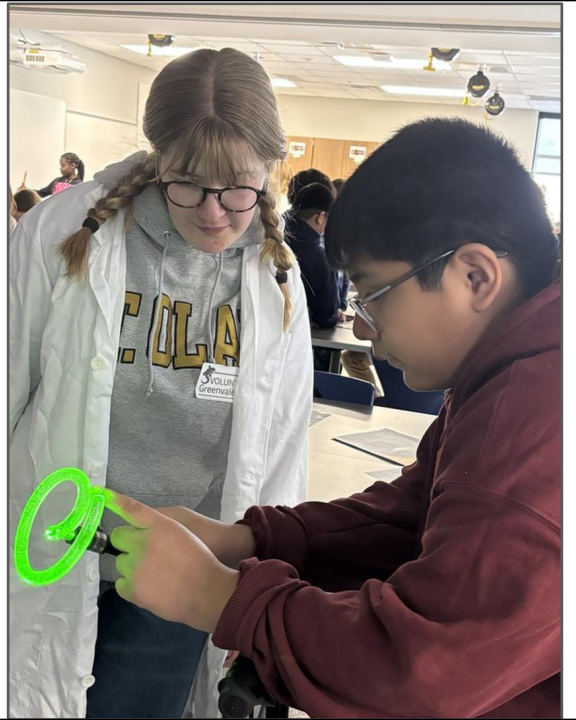


Joys are also ahead



Focus on what we can control

**A strong
public education
is essential for a
thriving democracy**



**We will
persevere**





Look *forward*



You should be proud



**Doing
good
things
for kids**



Grant Application Approval Form

October 27, 2025

Any proposal submitted to an external funding source that involves any entity within the Northfield Public Schools must be approved by the School Board before the proposal is submitted. This form will accompany all requests to the School Board and will be filed with the Grant Coordinator along with a copy of the completed grant proposal. All proposals must:

- Support the District's mission and goals.
- Be financially feasible and supported by all affected District departments or buildings.
- Demonstrate collaboration and commitment from the District if required.

Grant Proposal Information	
Project Title	Northfield Community Schools (Greenvale Park Elementary)
Project Period	From: February 1, 2026 To: June 30, 2029
Funding Source	Minnesota Department of Education
Application Deadline	October 24, 2025
List all Grant Applicants	Northfield Public Schools
School/Department	Northfield Community Education
Contact Person	Erin Bailey Phone No. 507-664-3652
Project Information	
Brief Proposal Description	The Greenvale Park Community School initiative serves students in grades K-12 attending Greenvale Park Elementary School or living in the Greenvale Park neighborhood in Northfield, Minnesota.
Project Goal (in one Sentence)	The Northfield Community School initiative will dramatically expand out-of-school-time programming. It will increase the number of Greenvale Park students and alumni who can access the free out-of-school time programming by offering after school programming four days per week, evening programming twice per week, programming during school breaks, and expanded summer programming.
List All Personnel Involved in Application	Erin Bailey, Amy McBroom, Janet Lewis Muth, Meliss Cavanaugh
Budget Information	
Amount Requested	\$600,000.00/for the full grant period
Matching Funds	
Source of Matching Funds	

Required Documents Attached: ☐ Completed Application ☐ Rough Draft ☐ Summary of Application



Project Initiator Signature



Building Principal or District Administrator
Signature

☐ Approved by the School Board ☐ Not Approved by the School Board Date _____