

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS





Strengthening schools inside and out.

Dear Community,

For schools to deliver lasting success, they need strong internal foundations and external support. Our work continues to focus on ensuring schools have great leadership, effective teaching, and school-centered strategies, while shaping the broader conditions that allow schools to thrive.

On this journey, one priority has become increasingly clear: literacy is fundamental to school and student success. Ensuring students read on grade level by third grade is a critical milestone on the path to 10,000 students attending great schools by 2030. Since launching the Minnesota Literacy Coalition, we've seen targeted literacy efforts strengthen schools, improve student achievement, and increase momentum for long-term success. That's why we're focused on early literacy – strengthening instruction through high-quality materials, training educators in the Science of Reading, and shifting how we teach foundational skills in grades K-2.

To hold ourselves accountable, we're setting a bold new goal by 2030: 80% of third graders in our portfolio (Good to Great) schools will meet or exceed grade-level literacy expectations. This new literacy goal does not replace our commitment to expanding the number of students in excellent schools – it reinforces it. By aligning our efforts, we're creating a powerful foundation for growth and excellence in Minneapolis schools.

In partnership,

Jennifer Stern

CEO

Stanton W. Alleyne

Board Chair

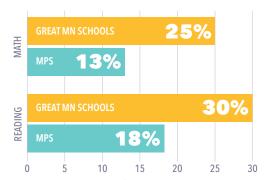
The path to our 2030 vision.

BY GROWING THE NUMBER of high-quality district, charter and independent schools in Minneapolis,

and CREATING THE CONDITIONS they need to succeed,

WE AIM TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT CAN THRIVE.

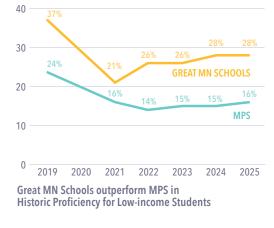
IN 2025, WE SAW IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT OUTCOMES:



Great MN Schools outperform MPS in 2025 MCA Proficiency For Low-income Students

WE ARE HELPING TO CLOSE THE OPPORTUNITY GAP:

Low-income students at our schools are achieving proficiency at nearly double the rate of their peers elsewhere in the district.



ALONGSIDE OUR PARTNERS, WE WILL BUILD A STRONGER, MORE EQUITABLE EDUCATION **SYSTEM THAT PREPARES ALL STUDENTS** FOR LIFELONG SUCCESS.

Our progress.

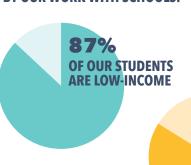


100% OF SCHOOLS WE SUPPORT

OUTPERFORM SIMILAR OPTIONS.

9.000+

STUDENTS ARE DIRECTLY IMPACTED BY OUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS.



CONSISTENT STUDENT ATTENDANCE NEARLY 20% HIGHER THAN PEER SCHOOLS.

71% OF OUR SCHOOLS

SAW THEIR LOW INCOME 3RD GRADERS OUTPERFORM PEERS IN DISTRICT SCHOOLS.

57% OF OUR SCHOOLS MOVED STUDENTS OUT OF THE LOWEST READING LEVEL, COMPARED TO 51% DISTRICT-WIDE.

84% **OF OUR STUDENTS ARE PEOPLE OF COLOR**



[My portfolio director's] wealth of knowledge about the funding process, the resources available, and how they could best serve our specific institution made all the difference!

~ Zindy Mooney Principal Cristo Rev Jesuit High School

2.500+ FAMILIES MOBILIZED

to impact education through Great MN Schools partners.

91% OF FAMILES

take direct action to benefit their child(ren) after accessing our tools.

39,200 TOOLS & RESOURCES

distributed to Minneapolis families.

13 NEW LEADERS CATALYZED THROUGH CHANGEMAKERS, GROWING OUR



LITERACY FAMILY TOOLKIT DISTRIBUTION **INCREASED BY 3X.**

92 ORGANIZATIONS

ARE REPRESENTED IN THE MINNESOTA LITERACY COALITION.

of Schools

Using the grade-level and reading books really opened our eyes. We liked them, and they were easy to use – but they also helped us realize how far behind our daughter is in reading. English is her second language, and she needs more support. Now we're actively looking for resources to help her catch up and feel confident.

~ Minneapolis parent







U.S. News and World Report ranked Hennepin Schools Lower Campus (K-4)

AMONG THE BEST ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS in the U.S.

for Public and Charter Schools in 2025.

We're supporting promising schools on a Good to Great journey by providing planning support, multi-year implementation funding, and strategic interventions.

FROM PLAN TO PROGRESS: HENNEPIN SCHOOLS' LITERACY WORK PAYS OFF IN STUDENT GROWTH

Hennepin Schools has been working with Great MN Schools since 2018.

Hennepin Schools identified the need "to design and execute an integrated literacy plan that meets the needs of their emergent bilingual students" as a key priority in their refreshed strategic plan.

They demonstrate commitment to this goal through ongoing training, clear instructional alignment, and schoolwide culture. The school provides phonics support and

monitors progress to ensure instruction is data-driven and aligned with best practices. Additional English Language Learner and intervention staff offer targeted support. Teachers are also completing state-required LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) training, which is already influencing classroom practice.

Their commitment to excellence has led to an important milestone – 80% of Kindergarten students have mastered uppercase and lowercase letters and can count orally to 30. And 80% of students tested have mastered letter sounds, a critical step toward reading success.

OUR GOOD TO GREAT SCHOOLS:

- Cristo Rey Jesuit High School
- Global Academy
- Hennepin Schools
- Hope Academy
- New City School
 New Millennium Academ
- New Millennium AcademyNortheast College Prep
- Prodeo Academy (Network of 6 schools)

SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN GMS OFFERINGS:

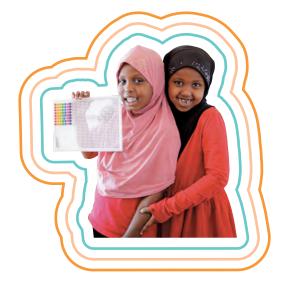
- Agamim Classical Academy
- Ascension Catholic School
- Exploration High School
- Friendship Academy of the Arts
- Hiawatha Academies
- Partnership Academy
- Risen Christ Catholic School
- St. Paul John II Catholic School
- Sojourner Truth Academy
- Venture Academy
- Wildflower Montessori Schools

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES TO UNLOCK STUDENT GROWTH

When New City saw national data from Learning Heroes showing that nearly 90% of families believe their child is on grade level—when in reality, only about 30% are—they felt a moral imperative to act.

Families deserve to know how their children are truly doing in school—and how to help. That conviction deepened during our family engagement cohort led by Learning Heroes, where a presentation from fellow portfolio school Prodeo Academy offered a way forward: transparent data-sharing. Inspired by this approach, New City crafted a new plan to share student data with families and engage them in more targeted, actionable support at home.

Instead of shielding families from troubling data, they equipped teachers to engage them in understanding it. Teachers were trained to share benchmark iReady data clearly and compassionately, using scripts and modeling to prepare for meaningful conversations during fall conferences. Every student received personalized learning goals, specifically focusing on improving math proficiency rates. Families were then asked to commit to 45 minutes of iReady math practice at home each week, which can lead to 40% greater growth.



To ensure families stayed informed and supported, New City sent tailored email updates every three weeks with progress snapshots, encouragement, and simple action steps. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Families expressed relief and gratitude for finally understanding where their child stood – and exactly how to help.

What began as an effort to help families clearly understand how their child is doing in relation to grade-level expectations has grown into something deeper: a culture of shared responsibility, where families are trusted, informed partners in student learning.

We're cultivating highly effective leaders: A case study from transition to traction.

In 2023, New Millennium Academy faced a period of significant transition.

The unexpected departure of the school's former leader, combined with turnover of multiple board members, left the school at a crossroads.

After a thorough search, New Millenium Academy named Thomas Thao executive director in early 2024. A familiar and trusted leader, Thomas had previously served as an assistant principal, principal and vice president of academics, and interim executive director. At the outset, a top priority was to rebuild the school's board of directors. He partnered with new Board Chair Laura Lee McGovern, former chief of staff for



the respected Uncommon Schools network, introduced to him through Great MN Schools. Together, this experienced leadership team laid the foundation for stronger oversight and a more resilient future.

To further support a smooth transition, Great MN Schools provided Thomas ongoing one-on-one executive coaching and engaged Bellwether to facilitate the creation of New Millenium's second Good to Great strategic plan. The resulting plan outlined four strategic priorities:

- 1. Leverage engaging data-driven instruction
- 2. Strengthen school culture
- 3. Deepen family engagement
- 4. Ensure financial and operational stability

Given Thomas's deep understanding of the school and his existing partnership with Great MN Schools, the school leadership team was able to quickly pivot from planning to implementation within the same school year.

The strong start is a testament to what's possible when schools are supported with the right leaders, partnerships, and planning.



Executive Director,

New Millennium Academy

One of the most powerful moments in our partnership came when Thomas made the courageous decision to streamline his action towards accomplishing his Good to Great plan and center it entirely on the development of his Instructional Leadership Team.

Because of the trust between us, and his confidence in the process, he was able to step back, weigh what mattered most, and arrive at a place of clarity: that everything flows from strong teaching and learning. That kind of focus sets great leaders apart.

Rochelle Van Dijk
 Vice President Schools
 Great MN Schools



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Changemakers is a great example of BIG talk. This is a unique opportunity to dive into the deep end together, ask the tough questions, and think big and bold about what is possible.

~ Jake Loesch Citizens League

ENSURING SCHOOLS HAVE THE SUPPORT, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT NEEDED FOR LASTING SUCCESS.



Together with our partners, supporters and advocates, Great MN Schools is building a movement to change the lives of our children through education.

~ Kyle Parsons Vice President of Community Engagement Great MN Schools

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

- Ayada Leads
- Centro Tyrone Guzman
- Lead the Way MN
- Little Earth Residents Association
- MN Zej Zog
- Northside Achievement Zone
- Phyllis Wheatley Community Center
- Pillsbury United Communities
- Urban Ventures
- Way to Grow



We're building a powerful, diverse coalition of stakeholders influencing education policy and decisions.

CHANGEMAKERS: MOBILIZING CIVIC LEADERS FOR EDUCATION EQUITY

For our city to thrive, we need today's business and civic leaders committed to pushing for change in K-12 education now.

Changemakers Twin Cities, a new program Great MN Schools launched this year, brings together a group of civic leaders who understand that a thriving city is dependent on a high-quality public school system. Sessions included visits to schools

and conversations with local and national education experts to identify what makes education challenging in the Twin Cities.

By participating in this program, 13 of the Twin Cities' top business, social, and policy sector leaders deepened their understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the K-12 education system. At the program's completion, each Changemaker was asked to leverage their position to catalyze change in the education ecosystem.

PARTNERING TO SHARE RESOURCES AND RAISE VOICES

By building on the trusted relationships nurtured over time, we've been able to partner with community organizations to transform awareness into action.

Rather than funding one-off activities, we aligned grant partnerships around five key priorities:

- 1. Minneapolis Public Schools Engagement
- 2. Innovation Zones
- 3. Absenteeism
- 4. Family Tools and Resources
- 5. Literacy

Grantees hosted conversations, ran family focus groups, shared critical tools like our Minneapolis School Finder and MN Family Standards Guides, and helped families access and engage with resources like the Minneapolis School Finder Fair.

Together, we co-created a voter guide for the School Board election, listened to families share what's driving attendance challenges, and helped caregivers better understand academic expectations.

With our grantees, we do more than "engage" families, we partner with them to shape the future of education in Minneapolis. ■



We foster a data-driven culture of accountability to improve school quality while ensuring families have the information and access they need to make empowered education choices.

SCHOOL FAIR

At our Minneapolis **School Fair**, over 500 families connected directly with school representatives to find a fit for their child.

87% OF FAMILIES

said that the School Fair helped them identify the right fit for their child. **89%** said it was time well spent.

% 99% O

who used it said the Literary Guide helped them better understand how students learn to read.

LITERACY GUIDE

Our newest resource, the Literacy Guide,

become a powerful tool that is now in the

is already having a strong impact. It has

hands of over 1,300 families.

85% FOUND IT EASY TO USE.

We're taking our tools further, launching a new

DIGITAL RESOURCE STORE.

Families now can more easily understand if their child is on grade level and better support their child's learning.

Whether it's choosing the right school, supporting learning at home, or engaging in local elections, more families than ever are equipped to make informed decisions and take meaningful action.

SCHOOL BOARD VOTER CAMPAIGN

During election season, we ensured families had information on **MPS school board** candidates to make informed choices at the ballot box.

The campaign reached over

145,000 PEOPLE

and drove more than **5**_**000**

direct engagements.

ABSENTEEISM: CENTERING FAMILY VOICE

Absenteeism is one of the most urgent and overlooked barriers to student success. Schools and families need to work together to ensure kids are in school and learning.

In Minneapolis, just 63% of students attended school consistently in 2023, compared to 81% in 2019. This data is dire for students from marginalized backgrounds, who are chronically absent nearly half of the time (47%). While school and ecosystem leaders are examining root causes and solutions, their research has not been grounded in family voice.

To understand parent and guardian perspectives on absenteeism, Great MN Schools partnered with eight community organizations to conduct focus groups with Minneapolis families, involving more than 130 participants, most of whom self-identified as low income and/or Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). The goal was to gather, analyze, and share qualitative data to ensure that families' perspectives were meaningfully included in the broader absenteeism conversation.

What we learned:

Participants identified key attendance barriers, including unclear sick policies, transportation challenges, and a lack of belonging due to mental health struggles, school climate concerns, and cultural disconnection. Additionally, many caregivers underestimated how often their children missed school, highlighting the need for improved communication between families and schools.

What we can do:

School and legislative efforts to reduce absenteeism have focused on structural solutions such as data tracking, truancy policy, and school-based interventions. While these efforts are crucial, these focus groups demonstrate the importance of highlighting family engagement in absenteeism solutions. Strengthening school-family communication, ensuring students have strong relationships in school, and addressing systemic barriers such as transportation and mental health support will be essential in reducing chronic absenteeism.



Just 63% of students attended school consistently in 2023, compared to 81% in 2019.

READ OUR FULL REPORT.

Scan the code below.



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There's a reason we focus so much

on literacy – it touches everything else.

And now, it finally feels unified and

Director of K5 Academics and

~ Carmen-Grace Poppert

Elementary School

90% OF

STUDENTS

from Risen Christ Academy

in the intervention period.

I had a great time collaborating with

other leaders and sharing thoughts

Minneapolis Public Schools

with such amazing partners.

~ Kelly Rothberg

K-5 Literacy Lead

showed growth in skills

Risen Christ Acadamy

purposeful.

of all students learning to read. **LITERACY BOTH IN AND**

At Great MN Schools, we know that literacy is more than a classroom priorityit's a community imperative.

That's why we, along with Minneapolis Public Schools and STAND UP Justice, launched the Minnesota Literacy Coalition (MLC), a growing network of more than 90 educators, advocates, and champions working to ensure every student becomes a confident, capable reader.

Now in its second year, the coalition is accelerating efforts to improve literacy outcomes by supporting high-quality instruction, expanding access and resources for families, and advancing system-level change. The comprehensive effort included three key components: a second Literacy Leaders Cohort with sessions for school leaders to support Read Act implementation, piloting high quality summer school literacy instruction with select Minneapolis Public Schools, and a learning walk in New Orleans to see first-hand how they improved reading scores from 50th to 16th in the nation.

This year, the coalition partnered with ANet, a national leader in instruction, to deliver the second Literacy Leaders Cohort-a hands-on learning experience for 17 literacy specialists, instructional coaches, and school leaders. Through virtual sessions and individualized coaching, participants gained practical tools to make immediate improvements in early literacy instruction.

Educators left the cohort not just inspired – but equipped. For Carmen-Grace Poppert, Director of K-5 Academics and Elementary School at Risen Christ Academy, the cohort changed how she thinks about data. Progress monitoring became a regular practice and Risen Christ developed a formal Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

The shift in thinking didn't stop with one teacher—it rippled across the entire school community, shaping how everyone showed up for students.

Reading, once siloed within English Language Arts (ELA), became a school-wide focus. Teachers began weaving science and social studies themes into ELA and Spanish Language Arts

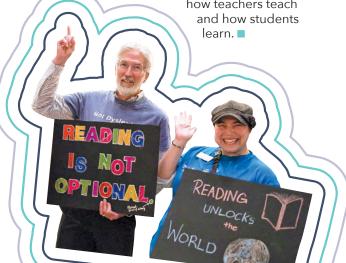
blocks, hitting multiple standards in a single, meaningful lesson. Teachers began to feel more confident - asking harder questions, differentiating more effectively, and creating space for students to engage in literacy in ways that felt joyful and empowering.

Another powerful component of this year's Literacy Leaders Cohort was the ongoing support from an ANet coach, who offered personalized feedback and accountability to ensure participants moved beyond learning to meaningful implementation. One especially impactful tool shared by ANet was the data action plan tracker, which Debbie Harris, K-5 Curriculum Coordinator at Hope Academy, brought back to her team. Using this tool, teachers analyzed recent student test data to identify those needing additional support; set clear, measurable goals; and engaged in an 8-week cycle of targeted interventions, progress monitoring, and reflection.

The results were real. "In our final meeting, our teachers realized they were seeing measurable growth in a short time-many for the first time," says Poppert. Ninety percent of students showed growth in skills in the intervention period. Teachers saw firsthand how a few intentional minutes each week could make a tangible difference. These practices were easily translated to other subjects as well. In third grade math, students struggling with number lines were targeted for focused support. The result? The classroom proficiency rate for number line skills in the intervention period went from 18% to 58%-a 40% point growth in proficiency.

Thanks to the Literacy Leaders Cohort – and the coaching, support, and accountability it provided - these schools aren't just making changes; they're building lasting

systems that transform how teachers teach learn.



Jennifer Stern Chief Executive Officer

Javaris Bradford Senior Manager of Community Engagement

Morgan Brown Portfolio Director

Karn Engelsgjerd

Our team.

Senior Director of External Affairs

Bjorn Grina-Shay Development Manager

Hamdi Husein Manager of Literacy

Aleia Johnson Outreach Coordinator and Civic Bridger

Bailey Johnson

Senior Manager of Communications

Sheilah Kavaney Senior Director of Operations

La Lee Lo Senior Manager of Data and Community Tools

Joe Loye Operations Coordinator

Melissa Long Director of Literacy

Zuli Morales

Community Engagement Manager

Kyle Parsons Vice President of Community Engagement

Heidi Reed Portfolio Director

Rochelle Van Dijk Vice President of Schools



Our board.

Stan Alleyne, *Chair* | CEO/Co-founder of Alleyne, Matlock & Associates

Becky Erdahl, Vice Chair Carolyn Foundation

Al Fan, Treasurer | Founding ED, MN Comeback and Charter School Partners

Tad Piper, Investment Chair | Piper Sandler (retired); Piper Family Fund

Habon Abdulle | Ayada Leads

Rob Albright | Albright Family Foundation; Alternative Strategy Advisers

Julie Baker | Community Volunteer

Rosita Balch | Hennepin County

Sarah Clyne+ | EquaSpace

Simone Hardeman-Jones GreenLight Fund Twin Cities

Ann Johnson* Northside Achievement Zone

leesha McKinzie Collins*+ Greater MSP Partnership

Alberto Monserrate | NewPublica

Adair Mosley | GroundBreak Coalition

Michael O'Connell* | Church of the Ascension & The Basilica of Saint Mary (retired)

Jose Pacas+ | The Constellation Fund

Jose Perez+ Good Trouble

Pat Ryan* | Ryan Companies

Sondra Samuels

Northside Achievement Zone

Phil Soran | Compellent Technologies (retired); Xiotech (retired); Soran Foundation

Ben Whitney | Former U.S. Ambassador to Norway (retired)

OUR ADVISORY COUNCIL

- Laura Bohlander
- Christine Empanger
- Beth Finch
- Flor Trevino Frey
- Aretha Green-Rupert
- Wendy Lovell-Smith • Kathleen MacLennan
- Jane McDonald Black
- Daniel Sellers
- Margie Soran
- Chris Smith
- DeSeandrea Sheppheard



*Investment Committee, +Community Engagement



Our funders.

THANK YOU FOR FUELING OUR MISSION, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SCHOOLS.

Habon Abdulle Albright Family Foundation Stan Alleyne Anderson Family Fund Anonymous Julie & Doug Baker, Jr. Foundation Rosita Balch **Betty Borman** Brandenborg Family Foundation Carlson Family Foundation Carolyn Foundation Ciresi Walburn Foundation for Children Sarah Clyne Constellation Fund John Cowles

Alberto Monserrate David and Leni Moore Dana & Mathias Mortenson Adair Mosley Nazarian Family Trust J. Thomas and Janet Rajala Nelson Fund Michael J. O'Connell & Susan F. Hayes Charitable Fund Oak Grove Foundation Lizzie & Kyle Parsons Gretchen Piper & E. Scott Rosenbaum Family Fund Tad & Cindy Piper Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation Prospect Creek Foundation





WE ARE PROUD TO RECEIVE

SUPPORT AND VALIDATION

CONSTELLATION FUND.

by Constellation estimates that

Good to Great program delivers

FOR EVERY \$1

A RETURN OF \$4

An independent analysis

INVESTED.

THROUGH THE

Great MN Schools'

David Winton Bell Foundation Davis & McConnell Fund Mary Dolan | Longview Foundation Becky Erdahl Beth & David Finch Eugene U. & Mary F. Frey Family Fund General Mills Foundation George Family Foundation **GHR** Foundation Simone Hardeman Jones JAB Foundation Bernadeia Johnson Kent & Janice Johnson Sarah Kies Sarah A. Kolar Steve Lear Jacqui Lloyd Cunningham LRE Foundation Kathleen & Dave MacLennan Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation Manitou Fund Polly N. McCrea Bill & Martha McLaughlin Miller Family Fund Minnesota Vikings Foundation Lucy Mitchell | Longview Foundation

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Relationships in action:

One funder's dedication to building systems that center the whole child.

Since 1959, The Carlson Family Foundation has been committed to building a future where all youth - especially youth of color-can realize their dreams and potential.

Great MN Schools has proudly partnered with The Carlson Family Foundation since our inception, aligned in our shared commitment to expand innovative, evidence-based models that strengthen relationships between students and adults to advance students' outcomes. Our partnership with The Carlson Family Foundation is deeply enriched by the leadership of Program Director Aretha Green-Rupert, whose ongoing engagement, support, and active involvement-including her role on our Advisory Council – reflects a shared commitment to advancing whole-child success for Minneapolis students.

A key Great MN Schools' initiative born from the Foundation's support was the launch of a learning series designed to help school teams embed whole-child-aligned improvement practices that center students' social, emotional, and academic development. In the past two years, 31 leaders from 10

schools have participated in the cohort. The cohort identified the need for more robust whole-child-aligned data systems and practices to better guide decision-making and action. In response, Great MN Schools and The Carlson Family Foundation launched a whole-child data systems pilot. Four schools engaged with Panorama, a dynamic, online platform that provides a complete picture of each student's academics, attendance, behavior, and social-emotional learning in one place.

Initial results are promising. Across all four pilot schools, leaders shared evidence of meaningful early outcomes-in how student support conversations are evolving, how interventions are tracked, and how social-emotional data is used.

The early results show what's possible when whole-child work is led with intention and embedded across a school's culture - not treated as a siloed initiative. Leadership championed the transformation and the shared belief that students thrive when surrounded by informed, compassionate adults. That insight is shaping the next evolution of our cohorts to include a deeper focus on leadership development to ensure school leaders have the mindsets, skills, coaching to sustain the changes as the tools and systems only work when strong leadership brings them to life. ■



It has been such a benefit! It makes my job a lot easier and the amount of data we have at our fingertips is a game changer.

~ Charise Powell Middle School Assistant Director Global Academy



TOTAL EXPENSES: \$5,784,020

of our budget went directly to working with schools, families, and communities to ensure that every child attends an excellent and equitable school.

ENABLING CONDITIONS (ACCOUNTABILITY, **STAFFING** COMMUNITY POWER) \$929,852 \$1,560,246 PROGRAM STAFFING **GENERAL & ADMINISTRATIVE** \$789,135

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You are making opportunity a reality for every child.

schools, leaders with the autonomy to lead effectively, empowered educators, engaged families, and a community that believes in the brilliance of every student.

From boosting student achievement and

From boosting student achievement and developing strong school leaders to equipping families with information and shaping education policy, our work is proving what's possible when schools are supported from the inside out.

At Great MN Schools, we know what it

takes to create lasting change-strong

But we cannot do this work alone.

Achieving our bold goals requires continued investment in what's working. It means deepening our commitment to early literacy, expanding access to great schools, and amplifying the voices of families and community members.

If you believe in the power of education to transform lives and lift communities – now is the time to act.

Your partnership fuels the momentum. Your investment turns potential into progress.

Together, we can ensure that more students not only learn to read but are inspired to lead.

Let's build a future where every student in Minneapolis has the opportunity to thrive.



Scan the code to donate.







We are moving, effective Nov. 1, 2025!

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