

YOU BELONG HERE



2023-24

COMMUNITY
REPORT


Dear Racine community,

It is with great joy that I present our 2023-24 report to the community as it is such an exciting time to be in the Racine Unified School District. We have great deal of positive news to share through new academic data that demonstrates some exciting progress.

Our district report card is up 2.4 points showing we're headed in the right direction. In fact, congratulations are in order for several schools that increased their scores more than five points:



Case High School increased **11.5 points**
Julian Thomas Elementary increased **8.1 points**
Olympia Brown Elementary increased **5.1 points**
Schulte Elementary increased **8.5 points**
Starbuck IB Middle School increased **10.6 points**



One of the reasons our report card score increased is due to excellent growth scores in third grade reading. As a district we saw **44% growth in proficiency** - this is double the growth of any other district in the state! I'm also happy to report our graduation rate is increasing.

We're also seeing improved Attendance. So far this school year, students have missed 20,000 fewer days of school. That's a LOT of classroom time and we know it's going to impact student achievement. **Thank you for your help in making sure your child is in school every day.**

Since 2009, RUSD's graduation rate has climbed by 16.7%, now standing at 83.7%*



*Number to be certified by Wisconsin DPI in March 2024.

Our community goal is to ensure that students and staff know that we value them showing up every day.

#YouBelongHere means that when you walk through our doors that you are valued. Attendance is one of many factors that impact our state report card results, but we know that increasing daily attendance and reducing chronic absenteeism are pivotal in increasing our scores on assessments, improve graduation rates and lead to college and career readiness for our students. Since our attendance and graduation rate are closely linked, we know that a goal of 90% attendance gets us closer to our 5-year strategic plan goal of 86% graduation.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Soren Gajewski". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Soren Gajewski
Interim Superintendent

WHO WE ARE

U.S. News & World Report
Best High School



Walden III was named one of U.S. News & World Report's Best High Schools in the Country this year (and several years prior)!



16,154 students | 3,379 staff

Inspiring Educator of the Year



Case High School Culinary Arts teacher Erika Buskirk was honored with the Inspiring Teacher Award at TMJ4's Positively Milwaukee Awards.



Communicator of the Year



RUSD Chief of Communication and Community Engagement Stacy Tapp was named the Wisconsin School Public Relations Association's 2023 Mary Pat Pfeil School Communicator of the Year.

Outstanding Gifted Coordinators



RUSD Gifted & Advanced Coordinators Michelle Burch and Nikki Radcliffe received the 2023 Outstanding Gifted Coordinator Award from the Wisconsin Association of Talented & Gifted.



Board of Education

Jane Barbian, President | Ally Docksey, Vice President
Scott Coey, Treasurer | Brian O'Connell, Clerk
April Harris | Nikki Fisher | Julie McKenna
Theresa Villar | Sarah Walker Cleaveland



Photo courtesy of Michael Steinbach - Bach Photography

STEAM

RUSD is proud to offer a dedicated STEAM - science, technology, engineering, arts and math - school at Red Apple Elementary. That school will soon be a K-8 in a brand new building opening fall 2025. In addition, the District has dedicated makerspaces in most elementary and K-8 schools, allowing students to think critically, problem solve and get creative. These skills are valuable in any future career!

Early Literacy Initiative

RUSD was ahead of the curve when the District implemented a curriculum aligned to the Science of Reading in the 2021-22 school year. Since then, all principals and teachers have been trained and are able to identify students in need of extra support earlier. The result? The District's early literacy assessments are stronger, there are fewer students in need of intensive interventions and 3rd grade reading Forward exam scores are up significantly.

POINTS OF

PRIDE



Advanced Academics

From our K-12 International Baccalaureate (IB) program to our Advanced Placement (AP) offerings, RUSD has several opportunities for college-bound students to take academically challenging courses to earn college credit, saving time and money and stand out to college admissions departments.

Dual Language Program

The Dual Language Program, offered in seven RUSD schools, begins in 4K and students have the opportunity to continue through eighth grade. The program helps students develop language proficiency and literacy in both English and Spanish. Coming soon, RUSD will offer the Seal of Biliteracy at all high schools.

Award Winning Fine Arts Program

RUSD is proud to offer award-winning fine arts programs at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Our offerings include band, Suzuki strings, orchestra, jazz band, marching band, show, swing and madrigal choir, music theory, high voices, low voices, 2D, 3D and mixed media art, drama, plays, musicals and dance.

SEL Programming

Our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programming is second to none. RUSD is proud to offer seven School-Based Mental Health Clinics in partnership with Children's Wisconsin, dedicated support staff, including social workers, youth advocates and community connectors who are ready to help students in any situation, and daily dedicated time to promote well-being and practice mindfulness.

Advanced Career & Technical Training

Our Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs offer a variety of opportunities for students to enter the workforce after graduation. We are a leader in the state when it comes to giving our students real world experiences. RUSD is roughly 10 percent higher than the state average for students completing dual credit courses and students earning industry recognized credentials. In addition, we have more than 220 students currently in youth apprenticeships and internships.

Our educational offerings are diverse and so is our student body.

This is part of the reason #YouBelongHere.



OPTIMIZING RESOURCES

RUSD, like many other school districts across Wisconsin, is facing a major budget shortfall. In fiscal year 2024-25, it's forecast that RUSD will have a \$34 million deficit due to a number of factors, including ESSER (COVID relief) money going away, increased labor costs and decreasing enrollment. However, the biggest reasons for the shortfall are the per pupil aid provided by the state and revenue caps not keeping up with inflation for more than a decade.

School Year	Class of 2023 Grade	Combined resource change (revenue limits + per pupil aid)	Amount behind inflation	Context notes
2009-10	4K	\$200	\$75	First year revenue limit increases were decoupled from inflation
2010-11	5K	\$200	\$156	Act 10
2011-12	1st	\$-554	\$998	Revenue limits and state aid cut in 2011-13 budget
2013-14	3rd	\$100	\$1,395	Statewide voucher program established
2015-16	5th	\$0	\$1,856	Sharp rise in referendum questions and dollars statewide
2019-20	9th	\$263	\$2,365	COVID-19 Pandemic
2020-21	10th	\$179	\$2,520	Inflation rapidly increases
2021-22	11th	\$0	\$2,863	Revenue limits are frozen, no increases for two years
2022-23	12th	\$0	\$3,235	2nd year of frozen revenue limits, inflation at record highs

Sources: 1.9.23 Legislative Fiscal Bureau Memo re: Revenue Limit Per Pupil Adjustment Indexed to Inflation; DPI Summary of 2023 Act 19 for K-12 School Aids; WASBO Calculations

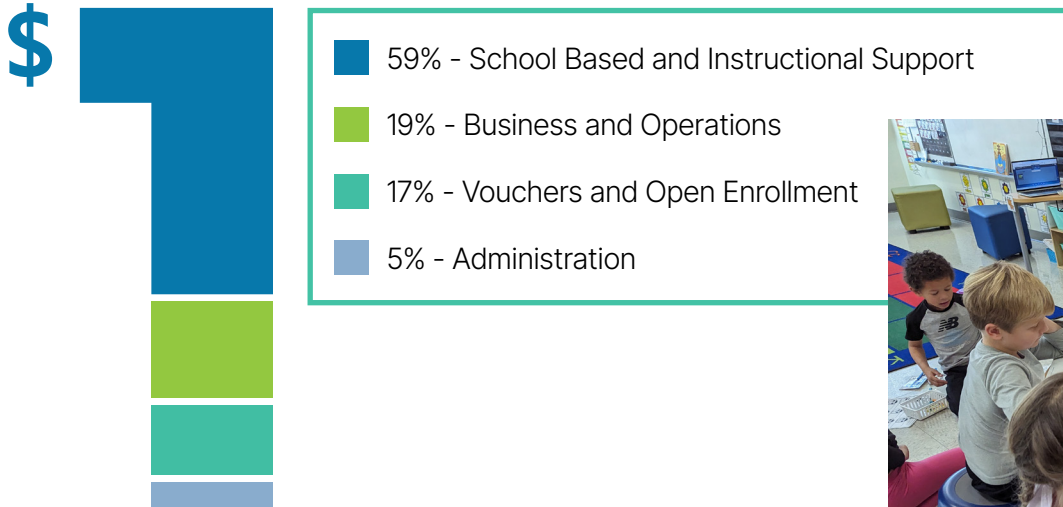
Unfortunately, the District is faced with making very difficult cuts. That's why Interim Superintendent Soren Gajewski has been hosting budget town halls with our families, community partners, taxpayers, staff and others to get their input on what matters most to them, while keeping our students at the forefront of every decision and aligning spending to our 2027 strategic plan.



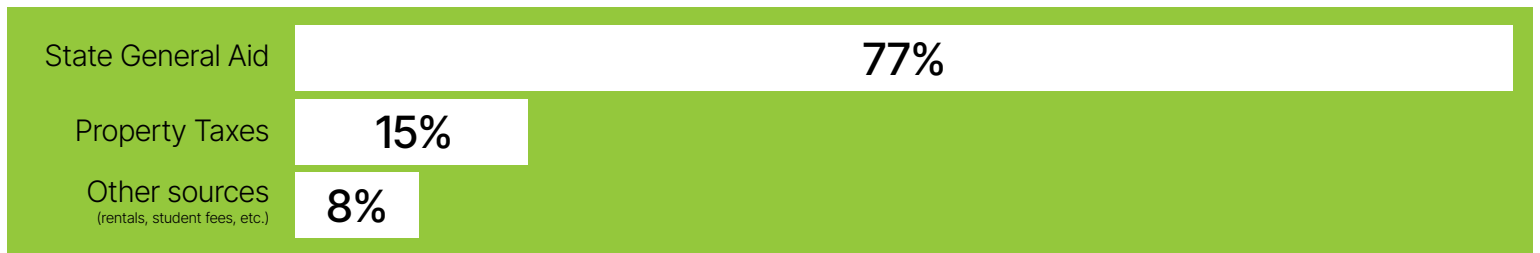
View our 2027 Strategic Plan here:



How Each Dollar is Spent

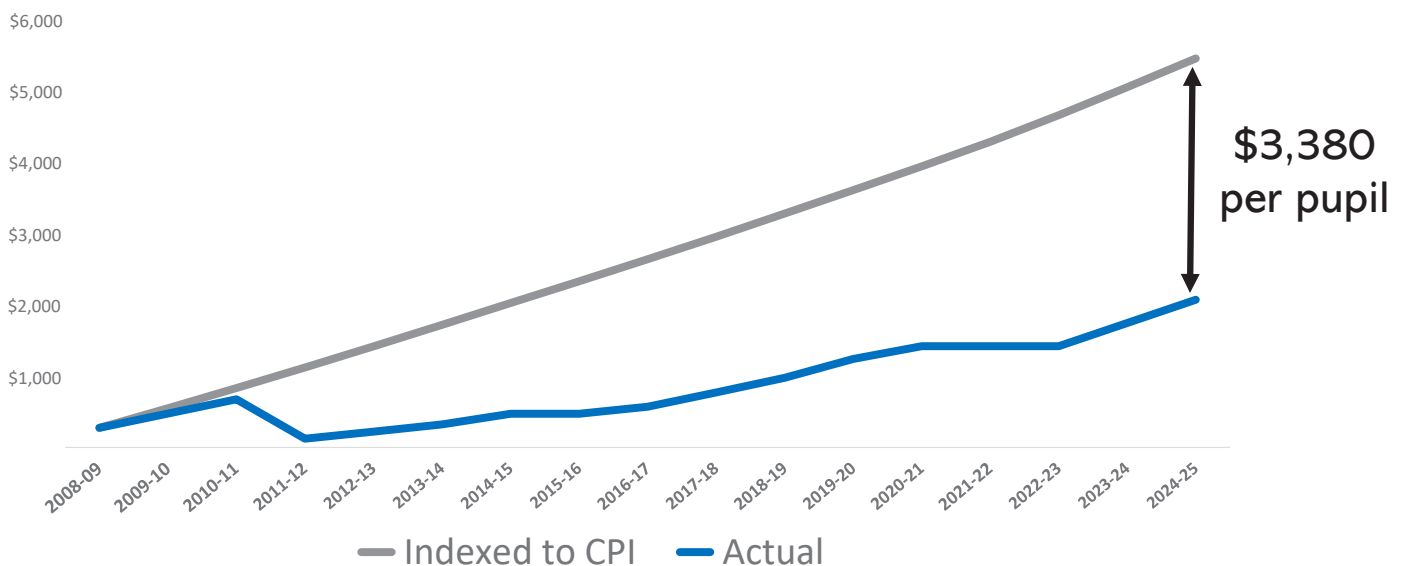


Sources of Revenue



The Growing Inflation Gap

General school district revenues per pupil lag inflation by more than \$3,300 since 2009



NEW SCHOOLS COMING SOON



Red Apple K-8 STEAM School: Opening Fall 2025

Research has shown that students with a STEAM education - Science Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math - have more college scholarship opportunities, more job opportunities and higher paying careers than those who go into non-STEAM fields. This brand new Red Apple K-8 school will be a hub for all things STEAM! The building itself is being constructed as a teaching tool for students. Red Apple will be one of the most innovative and desirable schools for any curious, hands-on student. Red Apple will begin offering sixth grade at its current location fall 2024.

Take a 360° look at the new Red Apple's exterior in this video!



In April 2020, the Racine community voted to support a referendum to improve school facilities across the district for all students.

We can't wait to welcome you for a tour!



Keep up-to-date with the progress of all active and completed 2020 Referendum projects at rusd.org/milestones.



Schulte K-8: Opening Fall 2025

Work is underway on a brand-new Schulte K-8 School, but the expansion of the student body has already begun. The school welcomed its first sixth grade class this school year and will add its first seventh grade class in the 2024-25 school year. During their eighth-grade year, those students will be among the first to experience the new school's makerspaces, fitness center, dedicated tech ed, art, music and business spaces to align with the Middle School Academy model and so much more.



RUSD

REFRESH

Starbuck K-8 IB Campus: Opening Fall 2024

RUSD is excited to announce that Starbuck Middle School is being transformed into a K-8 International Baccalaureate (IB) Campus. A brand new elementary addition is being added to the campus to support the K-8 IB continuum, the middle school classrooms are all getting updates and the school is also getting a beautiful, new outdoor recreation space! All students attending this school will take part in the IB Primary Years Programme, which offers a challenging, inquiry-based learning experience, and the IB Middle Years Programme, which continues the challenging curriculum framework, adds exposure to a second language and prepares students for the IB Diploma Programme at Case High School.



Jerstad-Agerholm K-8: Grand Re-opening Fall 2024

When the remodeled Jerstad-Agerholm K-8 opens for the 2024-2025 school year, it will be like a brand new school. The renovated building will include a new elementary gym and commons, new library with devoted makerspace and a new fitness center. No classroom has gone untouched!



Olympia Brown K-8: Coming Fall 2025

Work on a middle school addition to Olympia Brown Elementary will begin this spring. The addition for 6th-8th graders will have the same light, bright feel of the elementary, a new gym and classrooms to support the CTE coursework of the Middle School Academies.



Julian Thomas Elementary: Complete!

Julian Thomas Elementary was the first school renovation to be completed! The school now has a new entrance and office space, additional classrooms, a renovated library and upgrades throughout every other space.



Hammes Field: Nearing Completion

The renovation of Hammes Field, which is open for use by all district sports, is nearly complete! The field has new turf, track, concession stand, ticket booth, scoreboard, bleachers and main building.



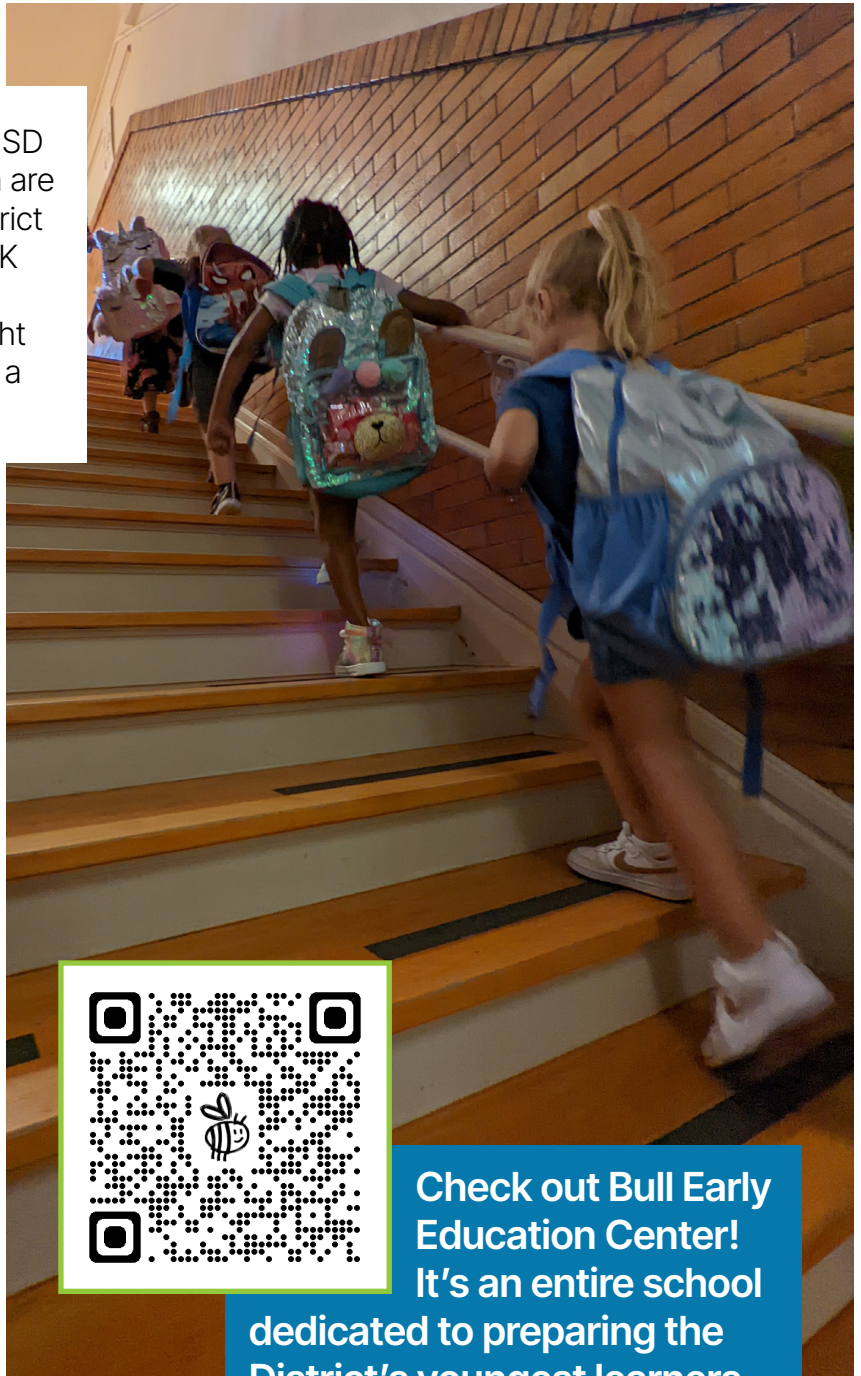
CALLING ALL KINDERGARTENERS

From the first day to graduation day, you belong here! Kindergarten is an exciting experience and serves as the foundation for a child's future. RUSD is proud to offer free, full-day kindergarten in diverse schools with innovative programs including dual language, Montessori and more!



These early years are about so much more than learning the A, B, C's! The skills children learn in 3K, 4K and 5K will help them learn how to read and write and develop the social and emotional skills they need to succeed.

For children not old enough for kindergarten, RUSD offers parents several options to ensure children are ready for school when the time comes! The District has 3K options, morning, afternoon or full-day 4K programs and a dedicated early learning center where structured, play-based curriculum is taught by award-winning, certified staff who help instill a love of learning from the get-go.



Check out Bull Early Education Center!
It's an entire school dedicated to preparing the District's youngest learners for kindergarten and getting parents engaged in their child's education.



Mark Your Calendar!

2024-25 enrollment opens in March at rusd.org!

In the meantime, we're here to help prepare your child for kindergarten and beyond! Check out rusd.org/raisingreaders for early literacy resources, including easy ways you can improve your child's literacy skills at home, such as simply talking with your child, reading books to them and pointing out letters wherever you are. New content is added often so check back regularly!



LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The Academies of Racine (AoR) are standing out to school districts, superintendents and educators locally, across the state and even nationally. This fall RUSD hosted 30 superintendents from across the country for the Ford Next Generation Learning (Ford NGL) Conference. Ford chose Racine to host so the superintendents, who all oversee schools using the Academy model, could learn more about the District's overwhelming community support, sustainability and more.



RUSD is recognized as one of the leading school districts in dual credit, industry certifications and youth apprenticeship opportunities. The success of the Academies is evidenced by the additional certifications the AoR earned from the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC) this past year, including two Academies being recognized as Models with Distinction - one of which achieved a perfect score.



Expanding on Success

The high school Academies are also leading the way for the middle School Academies. Now in their second year, the Academies at Jerstad-Agerholm, Mitchell and Gifford K-8 schools are already expanding. With new and updated career and technical course offerings, students have more opportunities to engage in technology that directly aligns to high school and in demand-careers in our community. The Middle School Advisory Council, made up of individuals in the non-profit and service-minded sectors, launched this year to help guide the direction of our middle schoolers' education.



See how the Academy model is providing more meaning for middle schoolers.



**YOU
BELONG
HERE**

**SEE FOR
YOURSELF**

With countless opportunities between 3K and 12th grade, the best way to see why your child belongs at RUSD is to visit us.



We would love to host your family for a school tour!

Contact a school to set up a tour
at rusd.org/schools or scan

