

 PLAYWORKS

# IMPACT REPORT

2025-  
2026



PLAYWORKS  
MINNESOTA

# A YEAR THAT CLARIFIED WHAT MATTERS

This year asked a great deal of many of our school communities.

Minnesota schools entered 2025–26 already navigating challenges around attendance, mental health, behavior, engagement, and staff capacity. Then, for many communities, Operation Metro Surge brought a layer of fear, uncertainty, and disruption.



**Belonging, connection, joy, and agency are not extras.**  
They are what makes learning possible.

At Playworks, we see this every day in the moments when a child is invited in, works through conflict, takes responsibility, or realizes they can shape what happens around them.

**Young people are not just part of a school community.**  
They shape it.

This year strengthened that belief, and as a new school year begins, it is shaping what we believe is possible next.

**WITH GRATITUDE,**

**The Playworks Minnesota Team**

## OUR REACH. OUR VISION.

A Minnesota where every child knows they **belong** — and every young person knows they can **shape the world around them**.

That vision is taking shape across our growing Minnesota network.

**25,000+**

STUDENTS

**1,000+**

YOUTH LEADERS

**50+**

SCHOOLS & PARTNERS



Across that growing network, **young people are helping shape** what belonging looks like in their own schools.

## SUPER PHOOJ YWG

### *The Power of a Friend*

When nearly every fourth grader at Txuj Ci Hmong Language & Culture – Lower Campus, a St. Paul Public Schools school, wanted the chance to lead, the school found a way to say yes.

With so many fourth graders eager to lead, Txuj Ci created a second team to build friendships through play with younger students in autism and early childhood special education classrooms. They called themselves **Super Phooj Ywg—Super Friends**.

Throughout the year, the fourth graders met younger students before recess, introduced games, played alongside them, and adapted activities so more students could participate.



**“What happens on the playground comes into the classroom too.”**  
— Principal May Lee Xiong

**They were discovering they could shape the world around them — and help create a school where more students felt they belonged.**

They learned to notice what others needed, adapt, invite them in, and build new friendships. Soon, other students followed their lead, joining students from the autism classrooms in play, and those connections carried beyond the playground into the school day.

**At Txuj Ci, they even gave it a name.**

**SUPER PHOOJ YWG**

***Super Friends.***

# WHAT CARRIES FORWARD

## SHE KEPT PLAYING.

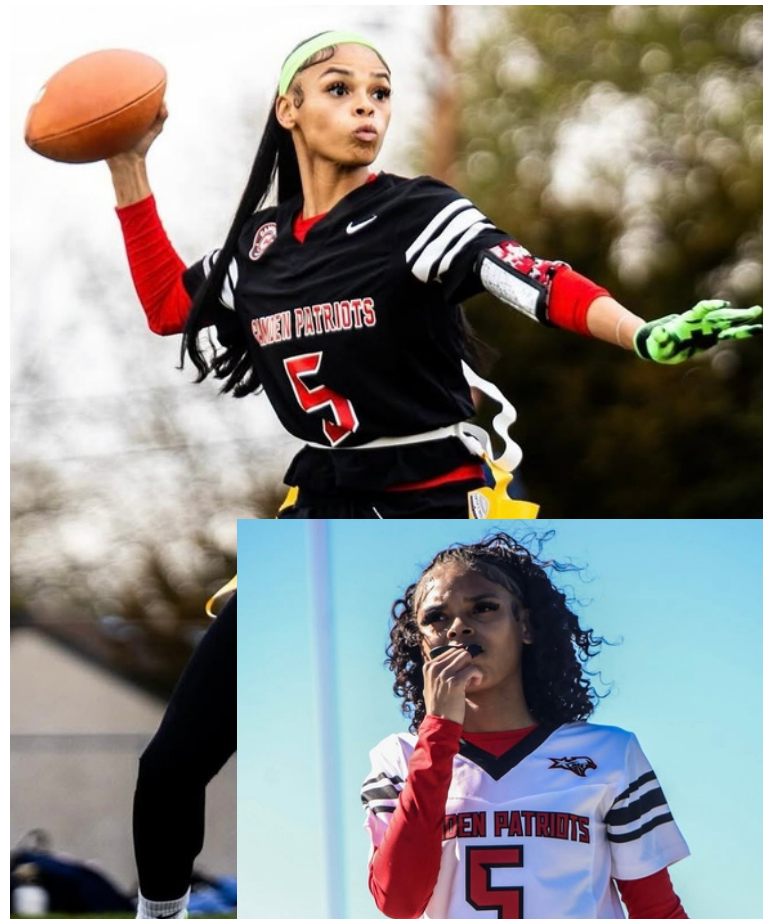
### *Kaylynn's path to college flag football*

In elementary school, **Kaylynn didn't see herself as an athlete.** Sports felt too competitive, too costly, and simply not for her.

Through Playworks, sports and games were simply part of her school day. She had chances to try, learn, and play without first seeing herself as an athlete.

**She could just join in.**

The opportunity was there. She kept choosing it. **This fall, Kaylynn will play flag football at the College of Saint Benedict**



**“She sees herself as an athlete.**  
We both say we owe that to Playworks.”  
— Lania, Kaylynn's mom

# THE EVIDENCE

## Everyday moments create big impact.

### STANFORD + MATHEMATICA

A randomized controlled trial found **less bullying** and exclusion, greater **feelings of safety**, **more physical activity**, and **34% less time transitioning** back to learning.

### UC BERKELEY

A study of 4,361 elementary schools found that schools with Playworks had **significantly lower chronic absenteeism**.

### MN EDUCATORS REPORT

**95%** Stronger belonging

**91%** Motivation to attend school

**89%** Fewer physical & verbal conflicts

**92%** Youth Leaders lead beyond recess



[EXPLORE 17 PUBLISHED STUDIES ON PLAYWORKS →](#)

# THE OPPORTUNITY

**Every kid deserves this.**

**25,000** Minnesota students is meaningful.  
It's nowhere near enough.



What would change if every child knew they belonged — and every young person knew they could shape the world around them?

**REACHING EVERY KID WILL TAKE MORE THAN PLAYWORKS.**

It will take schools, communities, partners, and people willing to invest in what young people are capable of and help create far more opportunities for them to experience it.

**LET'S BUILD WHAT'S NEXT →**

# OUR PARTNERS

To the schools, communities, funders, and partners who invest in young people and what they are capable of, thank you.

\$100,000+



\$25,000–\$99,999



\$10,000–\$24,999



GORELICK - BROADDUS  
FAMILY FUND



Lilly Endowment Inc.  
A private foundation since 1937

PEYER FAMILY



\$1,000–\$9,999

ChangeX  
EideCom  
Elmer and Eleanor  
Andersen Foundation

Goodrich Family Fund  
Lillian Wright & C Emil Berglund  
Minneapolis Health Department

NBC Sports Next  
Players Health  
Sunrise Banks

More young people belonging, leading, and shaping what comes next.

# OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Playworks Minnesota recognizes we are one part of a broader ecosystem supporting youth across our state. We cannot do this work alone, and we are proud to partner alongside organizations that share our commitment to belonging, leadership, and joy for every child.



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