



Sun Prairie Area
School District

Futures depend on us...every child, every day.



Our Six Years of
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

2016–2021 Strategic Plan

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Sun Prairie Area School District

Futures depend on us...every child, every day.

Dear Sun Prairie Community,

Over the last six years, the Sun Prairie Area School District has worked to develop our mission and vision through our strategic plan. While we still have progress to make, we have achieved many goals to evolve and improve for our community and the children and families we serve.



We are beyond proud of the work we have done. We thank our staff, who serve and love our students every single day, for making it possible for us to achieve the goals we set for ourselves six years ago.

What makes the Sun Prairie Area School District stand apart is the fact that we recognize that we can always be better and constantly work to provide more opportunities for our students to succeed. While our work is nowhere near done, today we are asking you to celebrate our success with us. On behalf of the Board of Education, we thank you for taking the time to recognize our growth and for your support as we continue to develop our next strategic plan.

Every Child, Every Day,

Brad Saron, *Superintendent*

Stephanie Leonard-Witte, *Assistant Superintendent for Teaching, Learning & Equity*

Janet Rosseter, *Assistant Superintendent for Operations*





Left to right: Tom Weber, Alwyn Foster, Caren Diedrich, Bryn Horton, Carol Sue Albright, Dave Hoekstra, Steve Schroeder, Sarah Rhoads and Carson Schmoltd.

Dear SPASD Community,

It goes without saying that the past two years have been difficult and that we have all been changed in some way by the pandemic. That includes the Sun Prairie Area School District. Closing schools, teaching and learning via Zoom and Google, masking, and missing major milestone events like prom, athletic events, and drama performances in front of live audiences are just a few of the challenges our students, staff, and caregivers faced. Yet, we are persevering. Our community of learners did all they could to work through many obstacles and to make sure learning, although perhaps a bit different, was happening.

While dealing with the pandemic has been challenging, your school district has been hard at work seeking ways to continually improve. You will see in this report the areas we have focused on: teaching and learning, workforce, community engagement, and facilities and operations. These are the four pillars of our strategic plan, with the foundational thread of continuous improvement. We are in the midst of refreshing our strategic plan so that the work of improvement continues. There is no end to the work of always trying to get better. There are always areas to improve, and your school district has embraced this journey to make the SPASD the best it can be.

On behalf of the Board of Education, thank you for reading this report. We do not take your support for granted.

In service of Every Child, Every Day,

Steve Schroeder, *President*
Board of Education



Six Years of Continuous Improvement

HOW IT ALL BEGAN



Six years ago, the Sun Prairie Area School District School Board and Superintendent Tim Culver sought to find our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) in order to begin the work to continuously improve and intentionally focus on addressing the weaknesses and threats. After nearly sixty conversations with several groups of stakeholders, including staff, students, caregivers, and community members, the **SWOT** analysis was completed, and a strategic plan was developed. For the past six years, we have used this information and feedback to continue improving to become the best district we can be.

Themes that emerged from the SWOT analysis



- Families wanted more school involvement
- Curriculum was not updated to Common Core standards
- No equity plan was in place
- Communication with families and community was lacking (no social media)
- No long-range facilities plan
- Outdated safety plan
- Lack of competitive pay for teachers
- No one-to-one technology plan
- School nutrition quality
- Lack of staff development
- Weak summer school program
- Secondary scheduling concerns
- Lack of staff diversity
- School funding
- Capital maintenance needed on elementary schools

Six Years of Continuous Improvement

THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision

Recognized as a high performing district of choice that reflects the cultures of our diverse community.

Mission

Inspire and prepare every child, every day, by providing relevant, engaging and innovative learning experiences in and out of the classroom.

In our efforts to address the findings of our SWOT analysis and to be intentional in directing our resources, we created our first-ever strategic plan. This in-depth plan shows how our goals, which are sorted by our “pillars,” allow us to accomplish our mission and vision. We used evidence-based quantitative and qualitative methods to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of service delivery processes in classrooms, schools, and the District toward the pursuit of better service and outcomes for all students.

Teaching & Learning Goal

All students surpass their annual academic growth targets and graduate ready for success.

Workforce Focus Goal

Proactively recruit, retain and engage talent that reflects and is responsive to our diverse community.

Community Engagement Goal

Excel in how we serve all stakeholders and build relationships with families, community members, and businesses that promote positive outcomes for students.

Facilities & Operations Goal

Use district resources effectively and efficiently. Facilities and services meet the needs of our diverse and growing student population and community.

Foundational Thread : A Culture of Continuous Improvement

Use evidence-based quantitative and qualitative methods to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of service delivery processes in classrooms, schools and the district toward the pursuit of better service and outcomes for all students.



Teaching & Learning Pillar

ALL STUDENTS SURPASS THEIR ANNUAL ACADEMIC GROWTH TARGETS & GRADUATE READY FOR SUCCESS

Curriculum & Our Classrooms

- Special Education in the District has expanded the capacity of our schools to meet the needs of every child through a strengths-based, collaborative, and inclusive way of being.
- Even with tight budgets, the District has been able to maintain our small class sizes.
- A Curriculum Renewal and Design Process has been implemented to decide what teaching materials to use. Our staff review curriculum and instructional materials on a six-year cycle to ensure that our students have an exceptional learning experience that is aligned to state and national standards.
- We now offer 28 AP (Advanced Placement) courses to our students. Both Cardinal Heights Upper Middle School and Sun Prairie High School have been recognized by the Wisconsin Advanced Placement Advisory Council (WAPAC) for our students' participation and performance on the 2020 College Board Advanced Placement Exams.
- High school students have the opportunity to participate in the ACCEL Academy. This program represents the collaboration of education, business, and community, providing students with a unique, immersive experience, resulting in highly-skilled, adaptable, global innovators and leaders.
- AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is a middle school through post-secondary college readiness system designed to increase school-wide learning and performance for students. We have expanded this program to over 500 students and have received national recognition for its excellence.
- Both Token Springs and Meadow View Elementary Schools are configured into eight-room "ecosystems" to accommodate multiple grade levels and teaching styles.
- E-House is a student-centered learning community at Cardinal Heights Upper Middle School, where digital-age learners develop the skills and dispositions to be future-ready adults.
- Reality Rocks is a learning opportunity for our students, played like the game *Life*. Over 650 students in Economics classes (required for graduation) move from booth to booth (staffed by community partners) to make purchases like housing, insurance, groceries, child care, pets, etc. while keeping track of their income and expenses.
- The STEM Academy is a dual-enrollment program where high school students interested in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Math (STEM) take a full-time schedule of college classes at Madison College during 11th and 12th grade. Our first class of STEM students graduated in 2021.
- We offer one of the most robust summer school programs in the state of Wisconsin that includes busing.
- We have changed our middle school math curriculum, resulting in Algebra being taught to all eighth graders.
- We implemented block scheduling at the secondary level.
- We fully implemented the Social Emotional Learning Curriculum, which provides students with tools in the areas of emotion management and situational awareness, and skills for learning/academic achievement.



Technology

- Every student in grades K-12 is equipped with either an iPad or a Chromebook.
- Digital Citizenship is required training for students to learn and understand how our electronic devices work and how to use them responsibly, safely, and ethically. Computer programming is also accessible to all students in the Sun Prairie Area School District.
- The emergence of COVID-19 and the shift to at-home learning resulted in accelerating the Board's plan to provide every student with a personal school-issued device. Using existing technology funds and CARES Act funding, the District was able to purchase 1,800 iPads for primary grade students, 800 laptops for all of our teachers, and Chromebooks for many students and instructional assistants. The District was also able to provide 300 webcams and 200 document cameras to assist in delivering content from teachers' homes and classrooms to students at home. The technology department opened its help-desk service to all students and families, providing an essential service to everyone served by our District. Additionally, nearly 200 wireless hotspots were distributed to students to ensure connectivity to learning resources and experiences throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we transitioned to online learning for all students at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. In April of 2021, we were able to provide students the option to come to school up to four days a week.
- The 2021-22 school year brought students back in person 5 days a week with an in-house virtual option.



800 Laptops
for our teachers



**200
Wireless
Hotspots**
for some students



**300
Webcams**
for some students
and teachers



1,800 iPads
for primary
grade students

Teaching & Learning Pillar

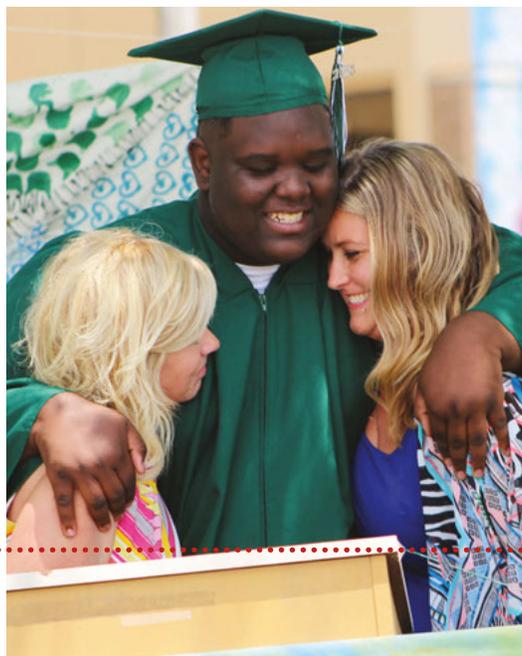
ALL STUDENTS SURPASS THEIR ANNUAL ACADEMIC GROWTH TARGETS & GRADUATE READY FOR SUCCESS

Equity

- We have been working with the Pacific Educational Group (PEG) as part of our strategic goal to eliminate the opportunity gap for students of color through racial equity.
 - ◇ **DELT** (District Equity Leadership Team) includes the superintendent, the assistant superintendents, and District Support Center administrators, and **LEADS** (site and District administrators, program managers, and administrative support staff) - engaging in deep interracial dialogue and addressing persistent racial disparities.
 - ◇ Equity Teams or “E-Teams” consisting of 7–10 staff members were formed at each of our school sites. These teams are committed to creating an equitable learning environment for all students.
- We have seen an increase in the number of students of color who are enrolled in at least one AP course. AP courses allow students to challenge themselves with college-level courses in high school. Upon successful completion of an AP course, students earn college credits, potentially saving them and their families thousands of dollars in college tuition.

AP Exams from 2017 to 2020:

- We increased our Asian student enrollment by 7.5%.
- We increased our Black/African American enrollment by 58%.
- We increased our Hispanic/Latino enrollment by 42%.
- We increased our 2 or More Races enrollment by 65%.
- Our students of color have the opportunity to participate in a robotics camp called Color-Coded.
- In January of 2020, 18 of our 11th-grade students traveled to Tennessee to visit three historically Black colleges and universities.
- Hired a Director of Systemic Equity & Inclusion.



Workforce Focus Pillar

PROACTIVELY RECRUIT, RETAIN, & ENGAGE TALENT THAT REFLECTS & IS RESPONSIVE TO OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Hiring Talented Staff

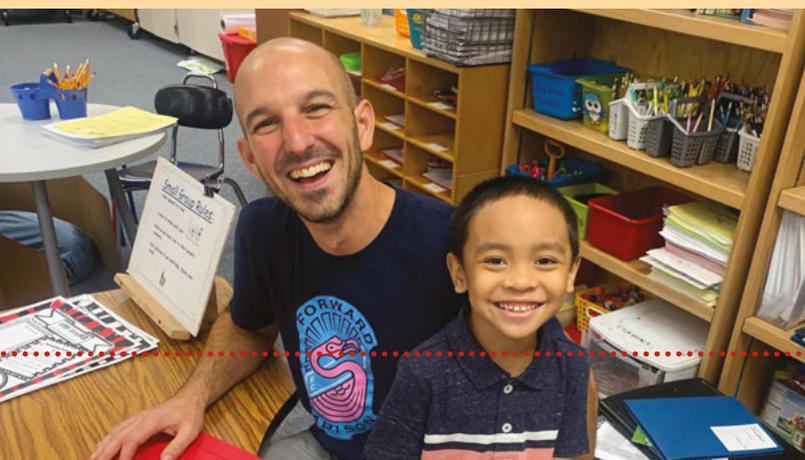
- We implemented Frontline Central in conjunction with Frontline Recruiting and Hiring to create a more streamlined approach to onboarding new employees and supporting our current employees by using a more efficient online platform to complete various processes (i.e., licensing, personal leave).
- Committees consisting of community members, staff, students, and caregivers are utilized in the hiring process. We are continuing to refine how hiring committees are informed of best practices in their role of providing input and feedback in the hiring process.
- The School Board approved handbook language addressing the inequities in amounts and flexibilities within Paid Time Off (PTO), especially regarding PTO within our Support Staff employee group.
- We implemented weekly staff newsletters that provide important information for our staff members.

Growing Our Staff

- We offer some of the best professional development in the state.
- The Grow Your Own program expanded flexibility for our current staff allowing them to choose from a number of colleges, universities, or other certification granting institutions to take classes toward a certification. We currently have 10 staff members participating.

Compensation

- In our efforts to recruit and retain the best teachers possible, we implemented the Professional Educators Compensation Plan. Our educator salaries are now at, or in some cases exceeding, the Dane County average.
- Each employee group has an established Compensation Committee, that meets on a regular basis to create a consistent discussion around compensation and benefits in an effort to recruit, hire, and retain the staff required to meet the needs of our students.
- The Support Staff Compensation Committee as well as the Administrative Support Compensation Committee each created a structure modeled after the Professional Educator framework to provide consistent yearly wage adjustment that takes into consideration both professional growth/goal setting as well as inflationary increases in order to be competitive with the local labor market.



Workforce Focus Pillar

PROACTIVELY RECRUIT, RETAIN, & ENGAGE TALENT THAT REFLECTS & IS RESPONSIVE TO OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Diversity

- Affinity groups for our employees of color meet on a regular basis. These groups are creating structures of communication with District leadership, resulting in tangible actions by the District.
- Our Human Resources team aligned our practices with the strategic goals of recruiting and hiring high-quality employees that reflect the community of Sun Prairie.



Wellness

- The City of Sun Prairie and the Sun Prairie Area School District are collaborating with SSM Health to provide healthcare options for our employees and their families with the opening of a new dedicated wellness clinic.
- Our Staff Wellness Committee continues to work diligently to provide engaging wellness activities and opportunities for our staff and their family members, while continuously building and strengthening our supportive community partnerships.
- We aggressively bid a 5-year rate hold from our health insurance provider for our HMO Plan, which saved the District \$600,000.



**Saved
\$600,000**



Community Engagement Pillar

EXCEL IN HOW WE SERVE ALL STAKEHOLDERS & BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES, COMMUNITY MEMBERS & BUSINESSES THAT PROMOTE POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

Community Involvement

- We increased our communication with our community in various ways, including expanding our website, creating a mobile app, growing our social media presence, and creating and sending print materials, including calendars, newsletters, and annual reports.
- The Parent Leadership Council (PLC) is made up of members from each of our schools' School Community Organizations (SCOs). This group meets monthly to collaborate on ideas and share learning. The PLC is also proud to offer support materials for our families to check out and facilitate conversations to work toward continued learning to support family leadership and equity.



A School Naming & Mascot Committee was formed to engage the community, staff, and students in the process of naming Central Heights Middle School and choosing the mascot for Sun Prairie West High School.

- The Secondary Boundary and Bell Time Task Force (SBBTTF) began its work in September 2020. The citizen-based group consisted of School District staff, students, and residents that served in an advisory capacity to the administration and School Board.
- The Student Behavior & Bullying Task Force was formed to create a safe learning environment and a culture that is respectful and conducive to effective learning. The task force advised the School Board and District administration regarding improvements that allow the District to achieve the goals associated with its vision and mission.

Secondary Boundary and Bell Task Force.



Community Engagement Pillar

EXCEL IN HOW WE SERVE ALL STAKEHOLDERS & BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES, COMMUNITY MEMBERS & BUSINESSES THAT PROMOTE POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

Community Schools



We added three Community School sites: Patrick Marsh Middle School, Northside Elementary School, and C. H. Bird Elementary School.



We have partnered with the Sun Prairie Food Pantry and local faith leaders to ensure that no child or family is hungry. Each of the Community Schools has a school-based pantry and clothing closet that is available to the community.



Our 21st-Century Community Learning Center (CLC) grant-funded programs at Westside Elementary are providing before- and after-school opportunities to almost 200 youth. Program offerings include Kids Achieve Together, Service Learning, Sports Club, and Mindfulness Club.

Facilities & Operations Pillar

**USE DISTRICT RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY & EFFICIENTLY.
FACILITIES & SERVICES MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR DIVERSE & GROWING
STUDENT POPULATION & COMMUNITY.**

School Nutrition

- No student will be turned away from breakfast or lunch due to a lack of funds in their lunch account.
- The School Nutrition Program is offering a more diverse menu from different cultural backgrounds.
- Lunch and breakfast menus include more healthy options, such as daily salad bars at all schools, so that students can incorporate more healthy fresh fruits and vegetables into their diet.
- Every school has a fruit bowl in the front office, making snacks available to any student who needs a snack during the school day.
- We distributed meal boxes, which included seven days of both breakfast and lunch, to children 18 years of age and under in our community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The District examined and implemented best practices to mitigate infection during the COVID-19 public health emergency to keep students, staff, and families safe.
- We implemented Visitor Management Systems, the security system that accurately identify individuals who come to our buildings, at all of our fourteen schools. Visitors have to present a valid government-issued ID as they enter the building.

Secure Entrances & Safety Upgrades

- We were awarded two large safety grants from the Department of Justice in July and October of 2018. Between the two grants, the District received more than \$750,000 in funds, allowing us to further our current efforts to increase safety and security throughout the District.
- The Secondary School Planning Committee was created to explore ideas about how to serve a growing enrollment and our community's high expectations for student achievement and opportunity for all students. Through this space planning process, we solved space issues for 15+ years.
- The District has invested in furniture and equipment to reduce accessibility barriers for students and staff.

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Facilities & Operations Pillar

**USE DISTRICT RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY & EFFICIENTLY.
FACILITIES & SERVICES MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR DIVERSE & GROWING
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Investment in Our Facilities (continued)

- We invested in geothermal heating and cooling in the five newest school buildings (soon to be six) when Sun Prairie West High School opens in the fall of 2022. This, coupled with equipment and operational upgrades at our existing buildings, allows us to continually use less energy overall than we did even 15 years ago, despite adding over 750,000 square feet since then.
- We celebrated the opening of Token Springs Elementary School and Meadow View Elementary School in the fall of 2018. The design of these schools was centered around Sun Prairie being a global community that supports diversity.
- We invested in school branding. Each school now has its name and district logo at the front entrance.
- We completed the renovation of the Bank of Sun Prairie Stadium at Ashley Field. The ADA-accessible stadium includes seating for over 4,000 people. The community's investment in this project will provide opportunities to host school events and other community events in the space.
- The 2016 referendum included money for upgrades at the oldest elementary schools, which went toward new classroom furniture. Students were excited to have upgraded tables, chairs, stools, bookshelves, lockers, and more.
- Conserved funds from the 2016 referendum were reinvested into the District's oldest elementary schools to move toward better facility equity across the District.

Finances

- We've added to our District's fund balance in the past five years, reducing the need to short-term borrow, which reduces the amount of interest expense the District pays.
- We implemented strategic budgeting to maximize our ability to meet students' learning needs and increase operational efficiency and effectiveness.
- In the past 10 years, we saved \$10,000,000 in interest costs due to the refinancing of outstanding bonds.
- We boosted employee compensation to be competitive with Dane County comparables.
- The COVID-19 pandemic required a significant technology investment to ensure that technology access was not a barrier to student learning.
- We've maintained our bond rating to keep interest costs low for borrowed funds.

Athletics & Activities

- Sun Prairie High School offers over 65 clubs and 68 sports teams. Over 70% of our high school students are involved in clubs, and over 57% are involved in one or more sport.



Six Years of Continuous Improvement

NEXT STEPS IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Your District, Your Voice

Our Future is Bright



GET INVOLVED

Sun Prairie Area School District aspires to be a recognized leader in education, empowered by the diverse community we serve. By providing relevant, engaging, and innovative learning experiences in and out of the classroom, we aim to help every child become the best version of themselves.

As we continue to work toward our goals, we need to ensure that our strategic direction is keeping up with our community's diverse needs and priorities. Throughout November 2021, we engaged students, families, and community members in dialogue about our strategic direction. This engagement initiative will help SPASD refine and refresh our current strategic plan's value statements and pillars/goals. Engagement included Relational Interviews, Two-Question Tuesdays over four weeks, a survey, and two different Ideas Fairs. The results from all of the engagement will be summarized by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research through UW-Madison.

Watch our website this spring for the launch of our new strategic plan.

Thank you to those who participated in this process.

CONTACT US



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School District

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-  YouTube: [Sun Prairie School District](https://www.youtube.com/SunPrairieSchoolDistrict)

A group of students in athletic gear, including tank tops with 'STATE' and 'SUN PRAIRIE' logos, are celebrating on a field. They are hugging and cheering, with some raising their arms. The background shows a crowd of spectators in bleachers.

The Sun Prairie Area School District could not be more proud of all the work that has been done over the past six years to bring our strategic plan to life. Read more about the progress and our bright future.

No student may be discriminated against in any school programs, activities or in facilities usage because of the student's sex (gender identity, gender expression and non-conformity to gender role stereotypes), color, religion, profession or demonstration of belief or nonbelief, race, national origin (including limited English proficiency), ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, homelessness status, sexual orientation, age or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability. Harassment is a form of discrimination and shall not be tolerated in the district. It is the responsibility of administrators, staff members and all students to ensure that student discrimination or harassment does not occur.