

SIX TIMES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 6

SOUTH ST PAUL STATE OF THE DISTRICT | FEBRUARY 2017



Join us in our social circles!



Minnesota's First K-12
IB World Schools District

South St. Paul
Public Schools



WORKING TOGETHER

TO MAKE OUR

COMMUNITY STRONGER

PARTNERING WITH SECOND HARVEST HEARTLAND TO PROVIDE FREE FOOD FOR OUR FAMILIES

In the fall of 2016, SSPPS partnered with Second Harvest Heartland to provide a 13-pound box of free food each month to interested families at our elementary schools. These boxes contain healthy dry foods such as vegetables, soup, juice, pasta, cereal and more.

This program provides food for everyone, no matter the family's situation, meaning there are no income guidelines or demographics required!

ANGEL FUND: HELPING FAMILIES PAY FOR SCHOOL MEALS

School meals help students sustain the energy they need to be successful in the classroom. Though nothing should stand in the way of a child's access to a nutritious meal, many families who are experiencing financial difficulties cannot afford to keep money in their student's school lunch account.

SSPPS created an Angel Fund where families and community members are invited to donate to the Angel Fund to help a student in need pay for a school meal.

PARTNERING WITH OTHER RESOURCES TO PROVIDE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

SSPPS partnered with the Jacob Wetterling Resource Center (JWRC) to provide support and resources to our community. Alison Feigh, Program Manager at the JWRC and Gundersen National Child Protection Training Center, was invited to present to our families and community members.

She presented on what we can do to make things better and brighter for all youth, and how we can help create safer childhoods.

GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Under guidance from our teachers, South St. Paul students have shown what it's like to be IB students by helping others who are in need throughout the holidays. These are a few examples of our students' actions:



- Kaposia Student Council partnered with local organizations to provide holiday gifts and books for families who cannot afford them.
- SSP Boys' Hockey team partnered with Neighbors Inc to adopt a family and provide them with gifts and necessities.
- Kids' Choice organized *Shop, Ship & Share* where students collected personal items, gifts and handwritten letters to support Minnesota troops serving overseas.
- Community Learning Center students and staff packed foods for Feed My Starving Children.
- Lincoln Center collected donations to help fill the food shelves at Neighbors Inc for families in need.

Facts about our families, fairness and funding

We are highlighting some key facts about our families, fairness and funding to provide context for challenges we face.



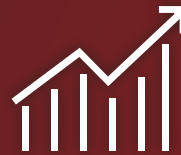
STRONG SCHOOLS = STRONG COMMUNITY

We are committed to making decisions that strengthen our schools, our students and our staff. Our vision is to prepare each and every student for their next step:

- Preschool Ready
- Kindergarten Ready
- On Track in Third Grade
- High School Ready
- Career & College Ready

However...

Achieving our vision is increasingly challenging because:



State funding is not keeping pace with increasing educational costs, nor with inflation



We have the lowest local property tax support for our schools in Dakota County



Our state property tax system penalizes South St. Paul for having low levels of commercial property

- meaning our homeowners pay more than our neighbors to support schools



We have the highest level of family poverty in Dakota County

FAMILIES

Our Enrollment is Strong

The word is out! South St. Paul is a great place to live and to raise a family. Families move here and others open enroll here because of the quality of our education, offered in a small town environment where everyone knows your name.

SOUTH ST. PAUL ENROLLMENT

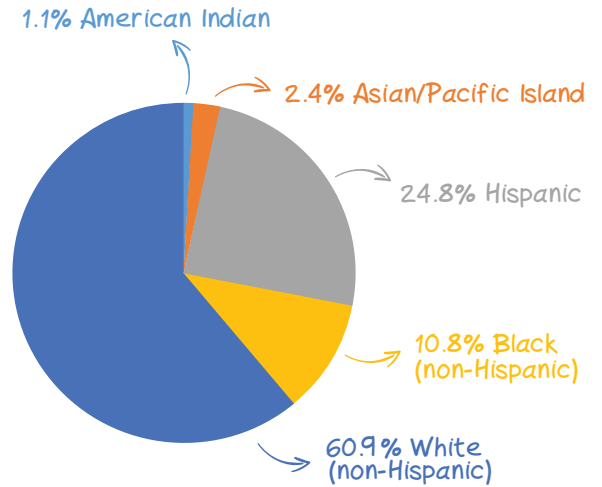


We are Rich in Diversity

We have a wonderfully diverse student body, which mirrors the world students will enter when they graduate.

This helps our students grow up to be global citizens, ready for a growing and changing world.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

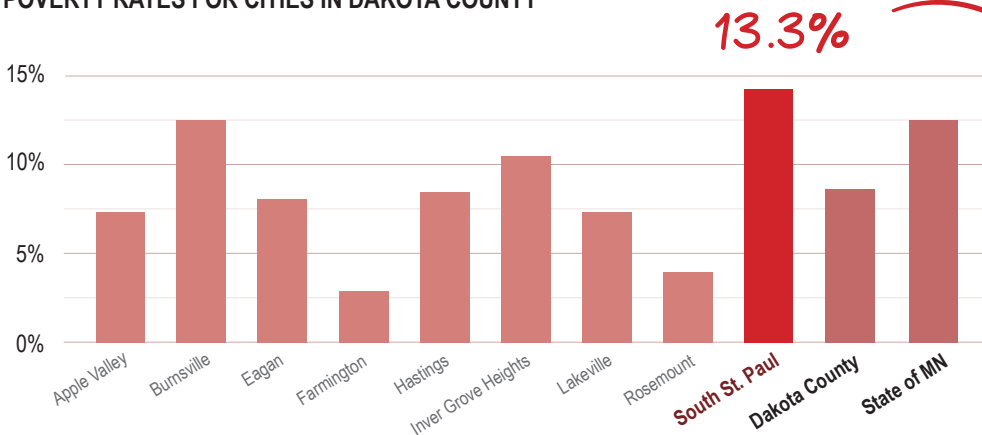


Our Families Have Increasing Needs

Our community, like many, is seeing increasing levels of poverty. In fact, South St. Paul has the highest level of poverty in Dakota County.

We offer free breakfast and lunch programs to those who qualify, along with other supports, to help students succeed in school. More needs require more resources. With more funding, we could increase our programs and outreach to help families in need.

POVERTY RATES FOR CITIES IN DAKOTA COUNTY



47.5%

ALMOST HALF OF OUR STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR FREE/REDUCED MEALS

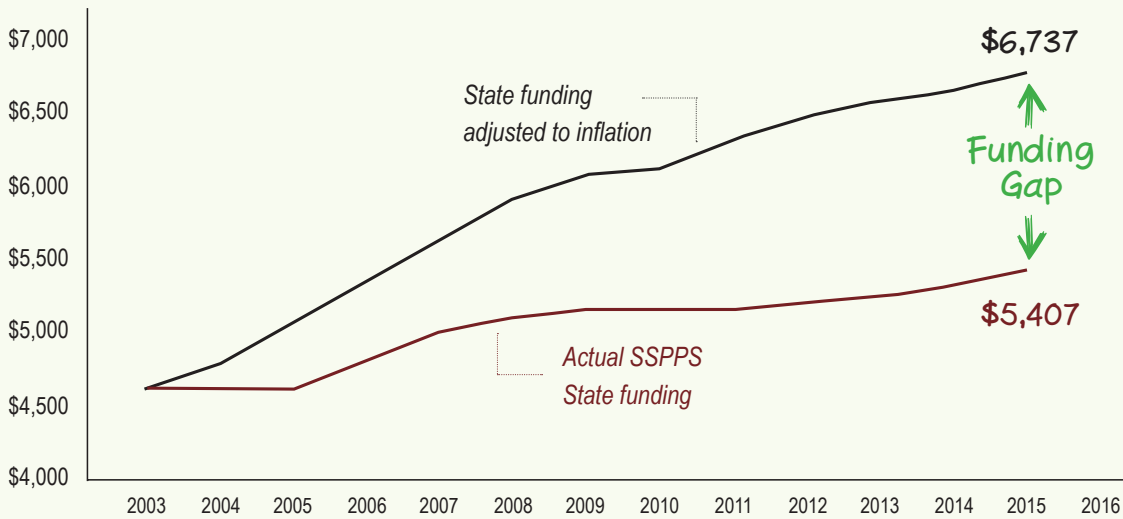
South St. Paul has the **highest level of poverty** in Dakota County

FUNDING

While we are growing in both student numbers and student needs, the state of Minnesota is not keeping up its end of the bargain. Most of our funding comes from the state – but state funding is not even keeping pace with inflation.

If state funding had kept up with inflation, we would have received an additional \$5 million last year to spend on our students' educational needs.

STATE BASIC GENERAL EDUCATION FUNDING PER STUDENT



FUNDING GAP:

State funding for SSPPS has not kept up with inflation.

Additional funds are needed to maintain and expand critical educational programs.

OPERATING LEVY COMPARISON

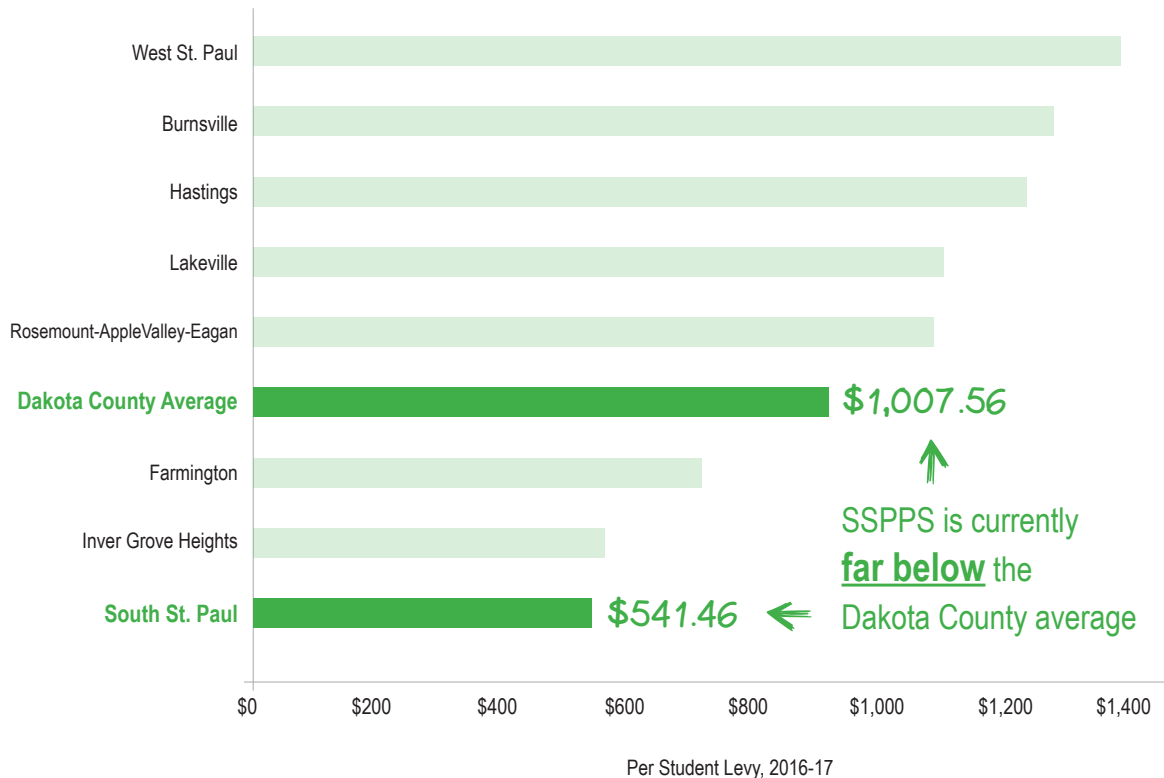
An operating levy is money that our South St. Paul voters approve to support our schools – just as voters do in other districts.

Locally, our funding is at the bottom compared to other Dakota County schools.

We get much less per student in locally approved funding than the county average.

That lack of funding adds up, and makes it harder for us to achieve our vision.

DAKOTA COUNTY SCHOOLS OPERATING LEVY COMPARISON



SSPPS is currently **far below** the Dakota County average

FAIRNESS

One reason our local funding is lower than others is an unfair property tax system. The state property tax system penalizes our community for having more residential property than commercial property.

Unfair School Tax System West St. Paul receives 2.5x more than South St. Paul

For example, if a WSP homeowner pays \$10 in school taxes, the WSP school district gets enough money to buy a whole pizza - or more services for their students.



WEST ST. PAUL



SOUTH ST. PAUL

However... due to the unfair school funding law, if a SSP homeowner paid the same \$10 in school taxes, the SSP school district would only be able to buy about 40% of a pizza - thus less services for our students

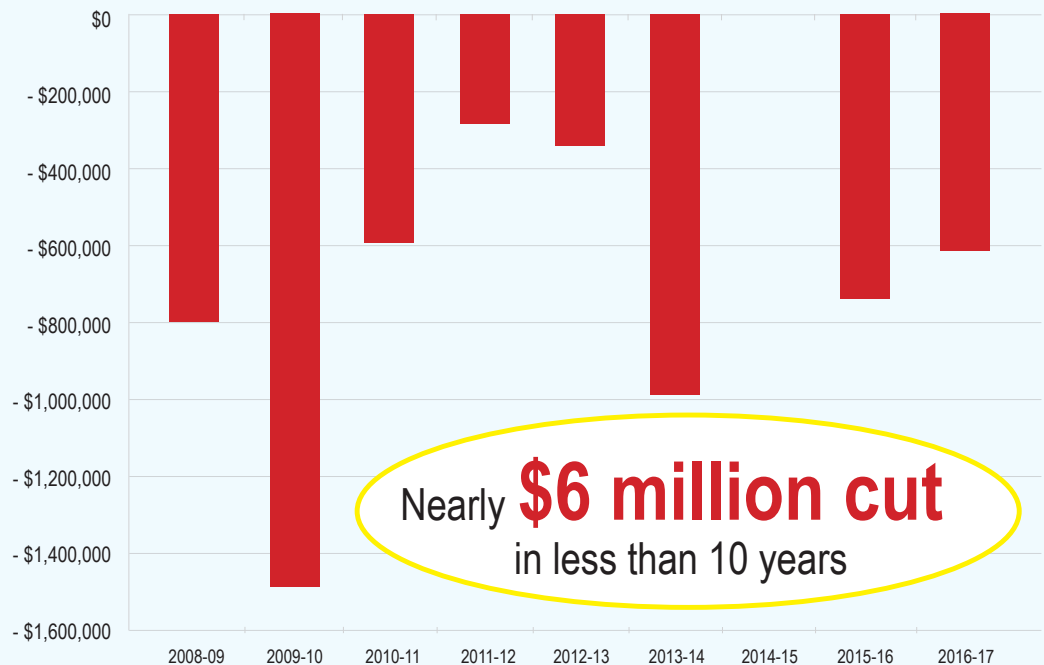
Because of these challenges, we've been forced to cut our budget almost every year - totaling nearly \$6 million in less than 10 years.

We've cut:

- teachers
- support staff
- administrative staff
- kindergarten assistants
- custodians
- district supply budgets
- school supply budgets
- maintenance staff and supplies
- curriculum budgets
- nursing services
- music program staff and more

We've also increased activities fees and summer program fees.

SOUTH ST. PAUL BUDGET REDUCTION HISTORY



We are down to the bone – and state and local funding is not keeping up with our needs.

OUR NEXT STEPS & HOW YOU CAN HELP



Contact your legislator

- Ask them to increase and equalize education funding
- School funding should not be determined by your zip code
- Invest in our kids because they are our future

Maximize resources

- Support existing partnerships and help identify new ones
- Help identify solutions for the families, fairness and funding needs we face as a community

Help share our story

- Tell others what you learned about our family, fairness and funding challenges
- Use your vote to elect state leaders who support school funding – and support our local funding requests

SOUTH ST. PAUL LEGISLATORS

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STATE OF THE DISTRICT

Families

Our enrollment is growing and we are proud to be rich in diversity at our schools. However, our families have increasing needs.

Funding

While we are growing in both student numbers and student needs, the state of Minnesota is not keeping up its end of the bargain.

Fairness

The state property tax penalizes our community for having more residential property than commercial property.

Next Steps

Learn how you can help us and share our story.



In this issue, we are highlighting some key facts about our families, fairness and funding to provide context for challenges we face.

More information is available on our website at www.sspps.org. A video presentation is also available online where Superintendent Webb explains more in depth about the State of the District.

Questions or comments? Please email us at sspdirect@sspps.org.