

SIX TIMES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 6

STRONG SCHOOLS = STRONG COMMUNITIES
WINTER 2018



Join us in our social circles!



Minnesota's First K-12
IB World Schools District

South St. Paul
Public Schools



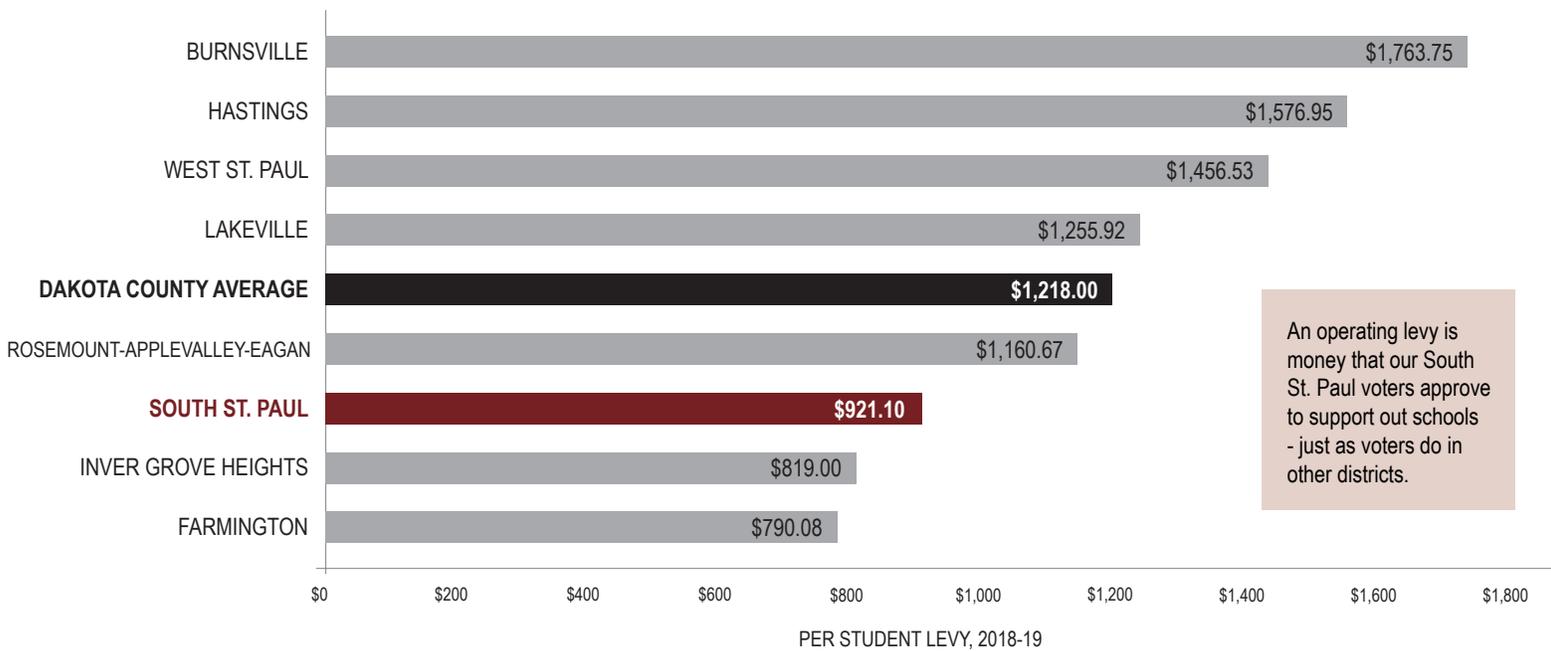
THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR SCHOOLS!

Thanks to overwhelming voter support in November, South St. Paul Schools will receive additional local funding for its schools, staff and students. This funding will help the district retain quality teaching staff, fund programs to help students who struggle academically, operate the schools and minimize future budget cuts. Voters also renewed our technology levy, which supports technology for teaching and learning.

While our locally approved per-student funding is still in the bottom half of school districts in our area – and below the Dakota County average – we are so grateful that our community recognized that ***Strong Schools = Strong Communities.***



DAKOTA COUNTY SCHOOLS 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.



FIGHTING AN UNFAIR TAX SYSTEM

One of the State's primary Constitutional responsibilities is to support a "general and uniform system of public schools." But when residents of one school district pay 2-3 times more in local property taxes to raise the same amount of school revenue as residents of another district, something is wrong. **Our current tax system results in exactly that type of inequity.**

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.*



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 students.*



In short, 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.

For the past few years, we have asked the Legislature to fix this problem by passing "referendum equalization" – which means the state would pay a greater portion of referendum revenue currently covered by local property taxpayers. This would level the funding playing field across school districts and provide tax relief in low property wealth districts like South St. Paul.

Now that residents have approved a school operating levy increase, we need the state to pay its fair share by changing the unfair tax system. If the state approved equalization, we could ask our voters to approve more funding for schools with no increase in taxes – meaning more money for kids at no additional cost to residents. Equalization is a bipartisan issue, benefitting large and small districts both in the metro area and in greater Minnesota. Equalization creates only winners, no losers.

JOIN THE TEAM

If you would like to join the team being formed to help advocate for a fairer school funding system at the Legislature, please contact Superintendent Dave Webb at dave.webb@sspps.org or (651) 457-9465.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR PROPERTY TAX STATEMENT

It is property tax season and we thought it would be helpful to highlight a few things about the South St. Paul Public Schools portion of your property tax statements.

DAKOTA COUNTY MANAGES THE PROPERTY TAX SYSTEM

Dakota County administers the property tax system for all government jurisdictions that levy within Dakota County. The three primary jurisdictions for South St. Paul residents are South St. Paul Public Schools, the City of South St. Paul and Dakota County.

In addition, Dakota County is responsible for calculating the market value of each property within the County. Every property owner will receive an annual Value Notice in March, which will be the basis for the following year's tax calculations.

TAX STATEMENTS ARE MAILED TO YOU FROM DAKOTA COUNTY TWICE A YEAR:

1. November 2017: The Proposed Taxes 2018 Statement was mailed from Dakota County in November and indicates what you have paid in taxes for the current year (2017 column) as well as what your anticipated taxes will be for the following year (proposed 2018 column).

Note: The levy increase that was passed by voters at the November 2017 election is not included in your November Proposed Taxes 2018 statement from Dakota County. This increase will be calculated into your March statement from the county (see below).

2. March 2018: The 2018 Property Tax Statement you will receive from Dakota County in March will have the final taxes listed and the unknowns (such as school election calculations) from the November statement are now calculated into this final tax statement.

WHY DO MY PROPERTY TAXES CHANGE FROM YEAR TO YEAR?

Property tax amounts can change from year to year for a variety of reasons. The most common reason is the value of your property changes. Dakota County calculates the value of all South St. Paul properties each year, so an increase or decrease in property values in South St. Paul will have an impact on your property taxes. In addition, changes in State law and/or any voter-approved referendums could also affect the school district portion of your property taxes. The city, county and other non-school jurisdictions all set their own levies, so questions should be directed to them.

SCHOOL DISTRICT TAXES ARE SEPARATED INTO TWO CATEGORIES ON YOUR TAX STATEMENT

1. Voter Approved Levies – includes the district's operating levy, technology (capital projects) levy, and voter-approved building bonds.

2. Local Levies – consists of other school district levies allowed by State law. Examples of these levies include: safe schools levy, long-term facilities maintenance levy and community education levy.

STRONG SCHOOLS = STRONG COMMUNITIES



With the challenges we face, the District continues to develop partnerships to help stretch our dollars and support our families.

FOOD + YOU DISTRIBUTION

SSPPS partnered with Second Harvest to provide free food each month to families with children enrolled at our schools, with no income guidelines. Foods include cereal, rice, pasta, peanut butter, soup, fresh fruits, vegetables and more. Second Harvest has served over 1,000 South St. Paul students and their families this fall and winter! Visit www.sspps.org/foodcalendar for more information on local food distribution resources.

FREE DENTAL

This is the second year Kaposia Education Center is partnering with Children's Dental Services (CDS) to provide on-site dental care to our students at school. CDS is dedicated to improving the oral health of children from families with low incomes by providing accessible treatment and education to our diverse community.

Last year, CDS provided assessment and restorative services to 16 students. Please contact Kaposia at (651) 451-9260 for details.

WINTER GEAR EXCHANGE

Our District hosts a Winter Gear Exchange program every December where South St. Paul families could trade outgrown winter clothing to prepare for the winter season. Hundreds of jackets, boots, snow pants, hats and mittens were collected and given to families in need.

Our District partners with local organizations to help provide resources to our families and community. Visit www.sspps.org/communitysupport for more information.

SAFE PLACE YOUTH PROGRAM

Luther Memorial Church partnered with the school district to provide a safe environment for our students during non-school days.

MR. OTTO'S WAY

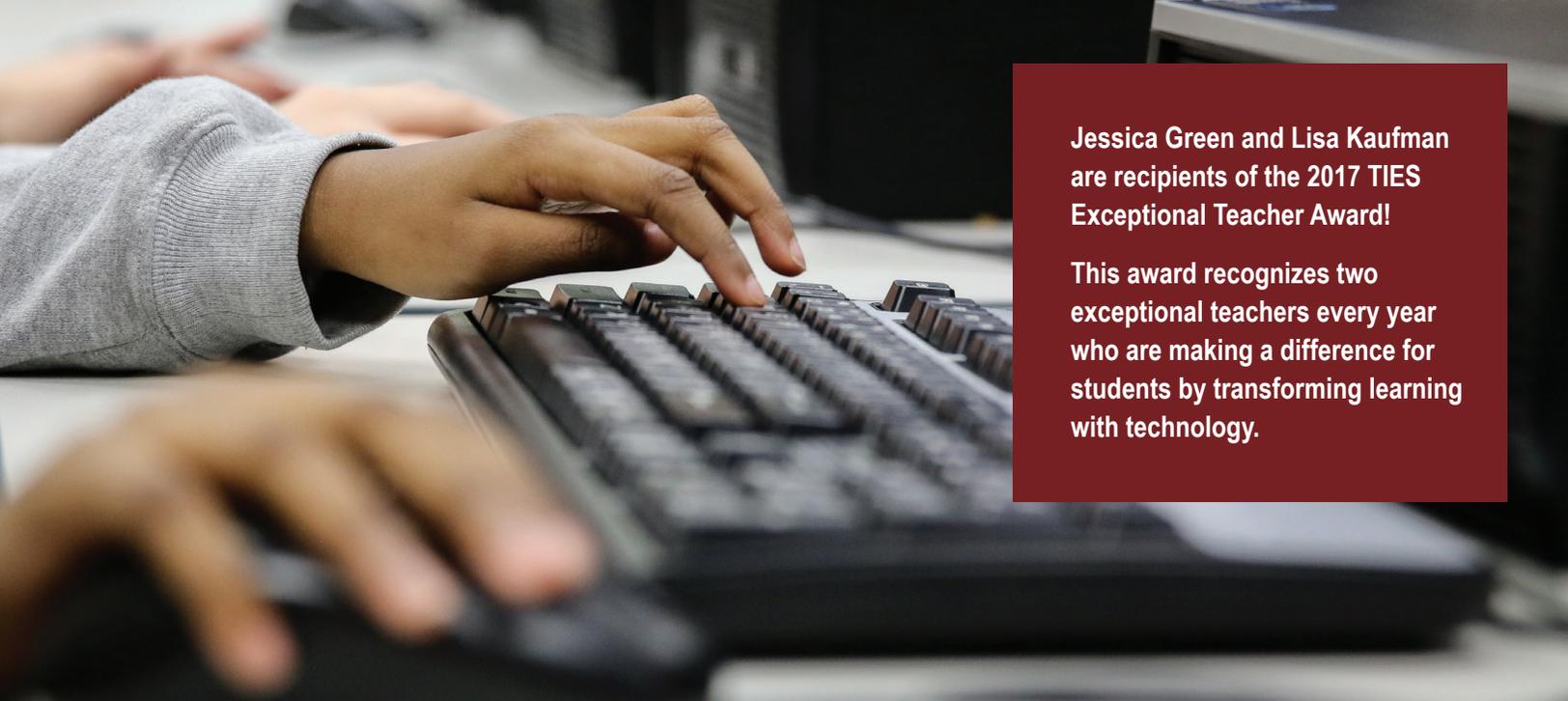
Mr. Otto's Way is a fund created in memory of Wayne Otto who served the children and families of South St. Paul as a teacher, principal and leader for 33 years. This fund provides elementary age children in need with new school items such as clothes, shoes or warm winter wear, so that every child can focus on the joy of learning.

Contact the South St. Paul Educational Foundation at (651) 457-9440 for more information.

360 COMMUNITIES

Family support workers are available at each school site to support our families in finding community resources that can help with the challenges of raising a family today. This includes everything from food and finances to getting connected with activities, volunteering, counseling and other specific needs based resources.

-  Donations or Partnership with outside organizations
-  No cost to district



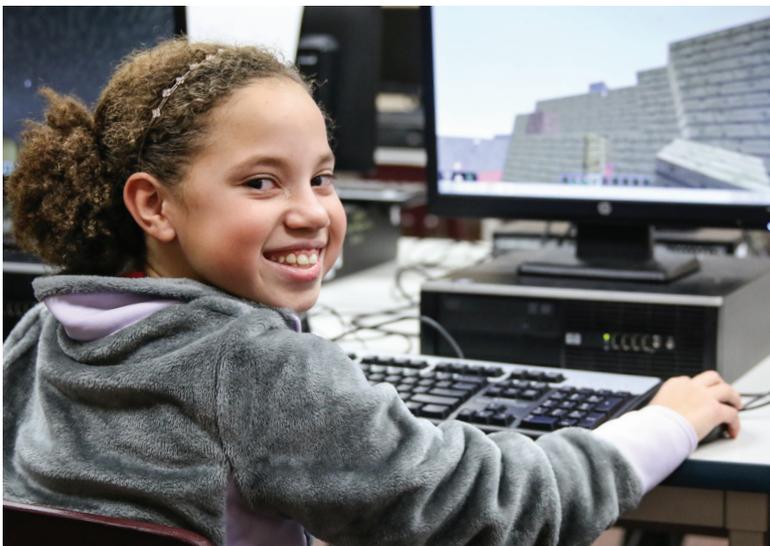
Jessica Green and Lisa Kaufman are recipients of the 2017 TIES Exceptional Teacher Award!

This award recognizes two exceptional teachers every year who are making a difference for students by transforming learning with technology.

OUR TEACHERS ARE USING TECHNOLOGY TO TRANSFORM STUDENT LEARNING

Jessica Green is a Special Education Teacher at Lincoln Center Elementary. Jessica uses the Google Read & Write extension every day to assist students with their writing and reading skills. For example, her students use the speech-to-text feature to help them with writing. This feature helps improve students' pronunciation skills and helps shift the focus from the physical act of writing to the expression of thoughts.

As they move past that level, Jessica encourages her students to work with the word prediction feature that offers suggestions for the current or next word as students type. This feature is very helpful to assist students with limited spelling skills, who are learning English as another language or even learning new vocabularies.



GOOGLE CLASSROOM

Jessica uses Google Classroom mostly in individualizing learning with students, especially when that student is either behaviorally or academically not matching other students. Students access their Google Drive daily and use it to send her daily writing and other assignments.

Jessica also uses a shared Google Doc to communicate with students who won't verbalize after an outburst or when they are truly upset, so when it is time to "talk" they have a shared document where she can ask or type questions and students can type their answers.

GAME-BASED LEARNING

Jessica does a lot of game-based learning like Minecraft. For her students, she really focuses on social-emotional learning, being a community, exploring as a group and trying to build something together through communication and cooperation.

In her before-and-after-school Learning Academy groups, Jessica has students using Minecraft to focus on problem-solving, coding, electricity/circuits and creativity. Students also learn STEM and reading skills through this game, such as having to plan for allotments of materials for building.

TECHNOLOGY INCREASES LEARNING IN CLASSROOMS

Lisa Kaufman is a Science Teacher at South St. Paul Secondary. As a Chemistry Teacher, Lisa understands that her students will need practice of the skills required to understand a difficult topic.

In her old traditional classroom, students would take notes while she lectured, then go home with the practice that was usually on a worksheet. They struggled at home and had many questions that she was not able to answer until the next day. That was when her colleague and she decided to flip their chemistry classes. **Lisa started flipping the content and recording lectures so that students could watch/rewatch the lectures outside of classroom time.** Students were then able to expand learning time and receive additional support in the classroom and ask questions as needed. This use of technology with videos that she created and embedded in Moodle have made her a better teacher.

Once Lisa established her flipped classroom with videos on each topic, she was able to start using technology to increase her students' engagement. Since her students now do their practice in the classroom, she has been able to implement better, more interesting practice. They do more hands-on activities, online simulations, discussions, group work, and interactive online games, like Kahoot, PearDeck, Plickers and Nearpod.

Lisa has also been able to assess her students more efficiently and with more and quicker feedback using technology. After they study each learning target, students have a "test" in an online-based app called Moodle. They are able to reassess these until they have mastered the concept. This allows them to get feedback and correct their mistakes quickly. Lisa also uses the feedback from online games and through assignments in Google Classroom.

WHAT IS FLIPPED CLASSROOM?

Flipped classroom is an instructional strategy that reverses the traditional teaching methods that many of us remember from our school days.

In the traditional method, the teacher would spend the hour providing instruction in front of the class with the student taking notes and then doing their homework at home without additional support.

The new flipped classroom approach allows the teacher to prerecord the lesson for the student to watch at home. Students are able to replay the recorded lesson multiple times if necessary. Teachers are then able to use the classroom time to expand the learning that was in their video lesson and provide additional 1:1 support to students.



WINTER IS HERE!

Make sure you know how to get informed for any school delays, closing or early release.

Should a decision be made that will impact the regular school day, all delays in school openings, early dismissals or emergency cancellation of school, the information will be posted on the District's website and Facebook page, in addition to announcements being made on a list of news stations.

Visit www.sspps.org/schooldelays to learn more about information on school delay, closing and early release.

South St. Paul Public Schools

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CAREER AND COLLEGE READINESS



Last fall, South St. Paul Public Schools partnered with the ISD 197 (*West St. Paul, Mendota Heights, Eagan*) and the Inver Grove Heights school districts, to share resources and expand career and college readiness (CCR) pathways for all students.

This TriDistrict collaborative effort creates opportunities for students to explore different careers and learn about the many ways to earn college credits, degrees, or job-ready certifications while in high school.



NEW OPPORTUNITIES!

Our District is excited to be expanding CCR opportunities for South St. Paul students next fall!

We are partnering with over 10 local transportations/heavy equipment companies to offer a *Careers in Transportation Technologies program*, on-site at the North American Trailer in Inver Grove Heights. This is an excellent opportunity for students interested in business, entrepreneurship or a specific career within the transportation industry (*engineer, technician/mechanic, driver, sales, mobile or towing services, parts distribution, construction, etc.*).

We are also partnering with Twin Cities Orthopedics to offer a *Health-care Careers and Medicine program* at their site in Eagan. This program is great for students interested in business, healthcare administration or a specific career within the medical field (*doctor, nurse, veterinarian, emergency responder, lab technician, researcher, etc.*).

Both courses will be going into registration guide for the upcoming registration season. Stay tuned for more details!