



SIXTIMES

The Official Newsletter of Special School District No. 6



SPRING 2023

COUNSELORS HELP PREPARE STUDENTS TO LEARN

SSPPS Licensed School Counselors help students' academic success with lessons around mind/body regulation, social emotional learning, organizational skills, and college and career readiness.

LEARNING ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

At each level, students learn different ways to keep their academics and school work organized. At the elementary level, they focus on developing organizational skills and academic planning. Starting in grade four, all students receive a daily planner. Teachers work with students on writing their daily work in the planner and keeping their lessons organized. The organizational skills they work on go hand-in-hand with lessons they do on goal-setting: the fundamentals of setting a goal and completing it before moving on to the next.

The middle school recently introduced electronic planners to all students to help them stay focused, on track, and continuing to practice goal-setting. Electronic planners are helpful in alleviating problems like leaving your planner at home or losing it. At the high school level, students practice the skills introduced to them in elementary and middle school and learn accountability. This better prepares them for life after high school in their career or college journeys.

BEING MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY READY TO LEARN

Being mentally and physically ready to learn is the biggest support school counselors give at the elementary level. Knowing how to regulate their minds and bodies better prepares students to be attentive and ready to learn in the classroom. Learning these skills at a young age will help students throughout their academic journey. Along with



mindfulness and self-regulation, the elementary school counselors also work with students on their listening skills. They learn how paying attention and listening includes using your eyes, ears, body, and mind to help you focus. The elementary counselors say when you set that foundation, it's the building block for all the other lessons.

In middle and high school, students continue to practice the foundations learned in elementary school. They work one-on-one with students who may be struggling by helping them stay on top of school work. The counselors use positive reinforcement when students do well, such as good news phone calls home. They'll continue to check in with the students to monitor grades and help them set goals.

CAREER AND COLLEGE READINESS

Most people may not realize career and college readiness begins in elementary school. Teachers and staff expose students to career and college vocabulary at a young age by talking about where they went to college and their experiences. The school counselors work with students on making links between their likes, dislikes, and what they're good at, then explore what type of jobs and careers match those. The counselors say starting the thought process of what you're good at and what you can do helps students develop their dreams as they get older.



Middle and high school is where more of the career and college focus comes into play. The school counselors use a program called Xello to help students begin their journey. With Xello, students learn to make informed decisions about their post-secondary education options. They can take a matchmaker survey that helps them see what career choices fit their personality and interests. They can then explore the many careers by learning about the job details, hear stories from people who work in that field, and explore what education is required and where that education is offered.

In high school, the school counselors also help students make their post-secondary plans. On top of career exploration they focus on post-secondary education options, which include everything from 3 month certifications to doctorate programs. They help students navigate all of the nuances that go along with their post-secondary journey such as the financial and time aspects. Both high school counselors say their goal is to help students feel as prepared as possible for their next steps in life.

RECEIVING SUPPORT

Students can receive help in a number of ways. Families can ask the school to have their student sit down with a counselor, the student can advocate for themselves, or the school can suggest students visit a counselor if they believe the counselor can help. Sometimes this includes helping a student with test taking, or more detailed organizational and goal-setting work. If you think your student would benefit from working with a school counselor, reach out to your student's teacher.

ELEVATING STUDENT VOICES

As a part of its strategic vision, the School Board and district leaders have made it a priority to increase opportunities to include stakeholder voices in their work. One of the most important voices is that of our students. Here are two new opportunities we are excited to share.

SUPERINTENDENT STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The South St. Paul Superintendent's Student Advisory Council (SSAC) is a unique opportunity for Superintendent Zambreno to engage in meaningful dialogue with a diverse team of student voices from each of our schools. This work plays a critical role in improving the overall experiences in our schools while providing two-way communication between our students and district leaders. At the council's session in May, the Nutrition Services leaders created a special lunch menu with various food samples for the students to taste and provide feedback for possible future school meal items. We look forward to continuing the Superintendent Student Advisory Council for the 2023-24 school year.



SCHOOL BOARD STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Following an application and interview process this spring, we are excited to welcome Renata and Luis to serve as student representatives on the South St. Paul School Board for the 2023-24 school year. Through this unique leadership opportunity, Renata and Luis will serve as the liaison between the School Board and our students. They will attend Board meetings to share student perspectives and experiences on various topics to enhance the Board's understanding of student issues and how students experience their education.



STAY CONNECTED!



PATHWAY TO PACKER PROMISE

CREATING A SAFE, SUPPORTIVE, AND EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Pathway to Packer Promise outlines South St. Paul Public School's plans to address the academic achievement concerns. SSPPS leaders know something different needs to happen to change the trajectory of our academic outcomes. With only 24-37% of students meeting or exceeding grade level standards in math and reading, district leaders worked to identify what we could do differently to improve academic outcomes. This pathway includes the sunset of the PYP/MYP Programmes, additional academic opportunities at all levels, and the restructure of the district's academic and student support team.

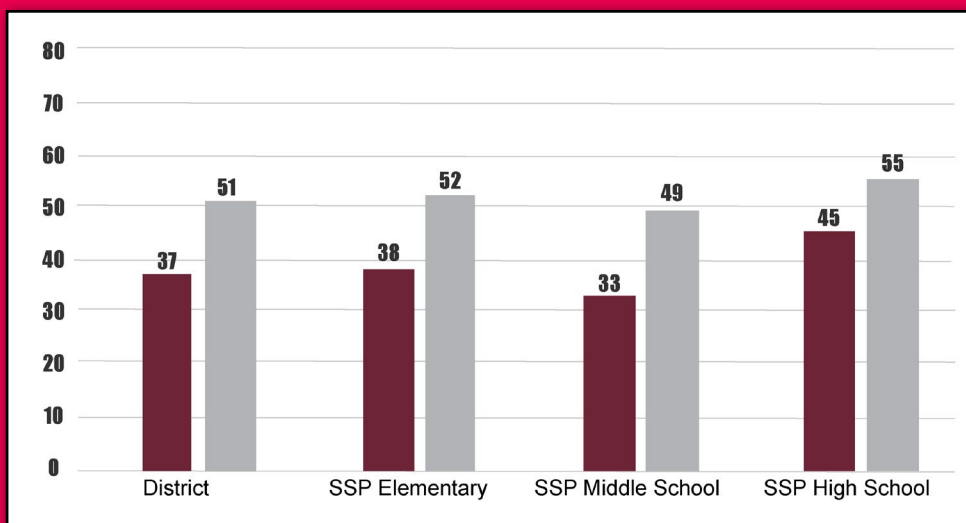
SUNSET OF PYP AND MYP

After reviewing numerous data points, the district has decided to begin phasing out the International Baccalaureate grades K-5 Primary Years Programme (PYP) and the grades 6-10 Middle Years Programme (MYP) during the 2023-24 school year. SSP High School will continue to offer the IB Diploma Programme for interested students in grades 11-12.

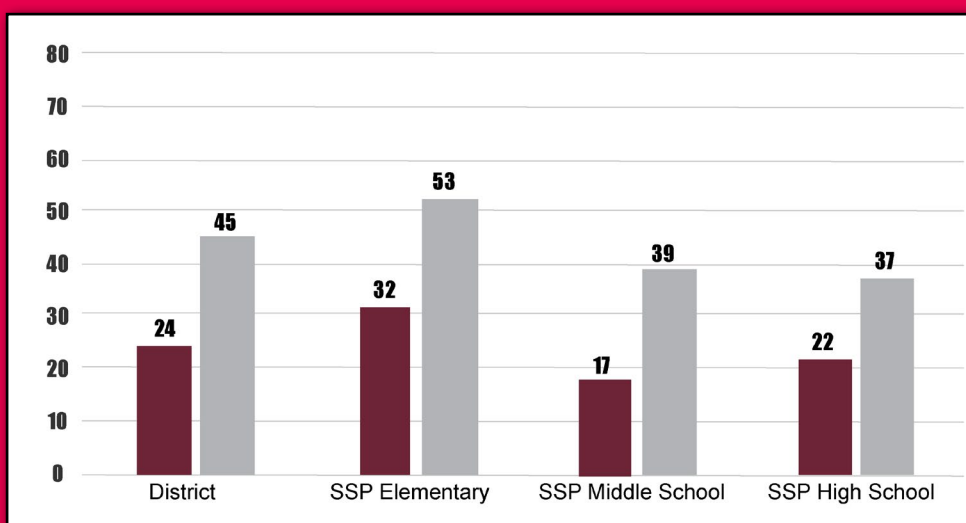
District leaders are working through what the sunset of the PYP and MYP will look like next school year. We are also beginning to explore academic systems that will provide us with a framework and strategies to improve achievement levels, but also:

- Challenge our students and provide opportunities for extension and enrichment
- Have intervention and support structures for students that are proactive and align with best practices
- Have more opportunities for exploration with multiple pathways toward career and college
- Make SSPPS a place where families want to come and stay

2021-22 READING PROFICIENCY



2021-22 MATH PROFICIENCY



ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING

While engaging with our students, staff, and families to develop the SSPPS Desired Daily Experiences, we learned our community would like to see additional programming opportunities for students in all grade levels. We have heard students would like more programming in the arts at the grade school level and more post-secondary opportunities for our high school students. Thanks to the generous support of our community, we have been able to explore this additional programming.

COLLEGE EXPLORATION

In addition to continuing the IB Diploma Programme for students in grades 11-12, South St. Paul High School is partnering with Inver Hills Community College to begin offering concurrent enrollment classes. Concurrent enrollment classes are college courses offered at SSP High School, taught by our high school teachers, that will generate both high school and college credit. These credits will be accepted at all public colleges and universities in Minnesota.

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CAREER EXPLORATION

The district is working to expand upon the current TriDistrict CAPS (Center for Advanced Professional Studies) programming by offering an Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Sustainability Pathway. This pathway is in the planning stages and will begin in the 2024-25 school year. This will be in addition to our current CAPS programming:

- Healthcare and Medicine
- Transportation Business and Technologies
- Business & Entrepreneurship
- Information Technology/Computer Science
- Urban Education- A concurrent enrollment course through a partnership with Metropolitan State University

The CAPS Program is a partnership between South St. Paul High School, Simley High School, and Two Rivers High School. By combining our resources, we are able to offer our students real-world, hands-on experience in their desired field of study. The TriDistrict CAPS program has grown the past five years from two pathways and 46 students to five pathways with 93 students.

INTRODUCTION TO TRADES

Students in grades 9 and 10 will have the chance to take the elective course Introduction to Trades. In this class students will be introduced to trades such as:

- Carpentry
- Plumbing
- Electrical

The students interested in trades courses will have additional opportunities in 11th and 12th grades through Intermediate District 917 and Dakota County Technical College. Courses will be offered in the areas of:

- Heavy Duty Trucks
- Total Auto Care
- Medical Careers

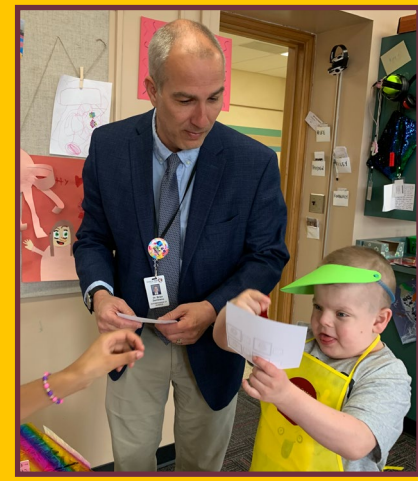
ELEMENTARY MUSIC CLASS

Starting next school year, band will be offered to all fifth grade students at both Kaposia and Lincoln as a part of their regular music class experience.

If you would like to donate an instrument, drop it off at one of our elementary school offices:

- Kaposia Education Center
1225 1st Ave South
- Lincoln Center
357 9th Ave North

With this exciting announcement of expanding Band into our elementary schools, we are conducting an Instrument Drive in which we invite families and our community to consider donating gently used instruments to the school district. In particular, we are looking for flutes, clarinets, trumpets, and trombones.



ACADEMIC AND STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

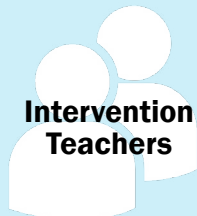
In addition to the redesign of our academic model and expansion of programming opportunities mentioned on the previous page, SSPPS is also restructuring the Department of Equity and Learning. This restructure is providing additional support for both students and staff by broadening the scope of our teams with specifically trained professionals to support both their academic and social-emotional needs. This proactive approach will help reduce barriers that affect a student's ability to learn. The approval of the levy on the ballot last fall, along with additional state funding dollars, allows us to continue maintaining low class sizes and invest in the following additional support for our students and staff:

- Social Workers at each main site
- School Psychologists at each main site
- 6th and 9th Grade Reading Intervention Teachers
- Elementary Intervention Teachers and classroom support
- Additional Elementary Student Support Assistants



Equity and Instructional Coaches

- Focus on racial equity
- Support teachers and administrators in improving instructional practices
- Help reduce/eliminate racial and economic achievement gaps for students



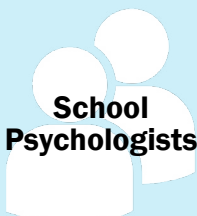
Intervention Teachers

- Help the student gain knowledge, skills, and concepts
- Work in a smaller group or one-on-one setting
- Assess the student's current academic level and develop a plan to meet their academic needs



School Social Workers

- Assist in addressing issues that contribute to achievement, social-emotional adjustment, and school attendance
- Intervene in problematic behaviors in early stages to address outside challenges that may be contributing to the problematic behavior



School Psychologists

- Lead of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model at each school, which is the framework schools nationwide use to intervene quickly with targeted supports for struggling students
- Ensure consistency across all levels of the system to meet each student's needs for academic and social-emotional success

WHAT'S NEXT?

Our next steps are to continue building out our Pathway to Packer Promise. It encompasses shifts to better support and meet the needs and interests of our students, families, and staff. A number of stakeholder involvement opportunities are underway to better learn what programming opportunities our families and students are interested in. We're also currently learning more about why families are choosing to stay or to leave our district. This information will be helpful for us to adapt and ensure we are meeting the needs of our SSP learning community.

We know our work does not stop here. We are thankful for the support from our community that is helping us move this work forward. We will continue to work hard and collaboratively to create a safe, supportive, and effective learning environment where our students, staff, and families can succeed.



A NOTE FROM SUPERINTENDENT DR. ZAMBRENO

As the 2022-2023 school year comes to a close, I am so excited about all that we have accomplished this year and the positive changes we set in place for next year. We started the year by engaging with our students, staff, and families to help envision the **Desired Daily Experience (DDE)** for each. This DDE will serve as a guidepost to steer our work in the coming weeks, months, and years ahead to ensure that SSPPS is a place where each individual feels seen, heard, and valued for the unique individual they are.

In the fall, our community graciously passed an operating referendum that has provided us with the resources needed to maintain class sizes and programming while also putting vision toward a brighter future for our students. The informational campaign for the referendum was "Packer Pride, Packer Promise." Now that we are on the other side of passing the referendum, we have been working hard to develop the **Pathway to Packer Promise** with the intention to deliver on our promise of providing a more holistic and innovative educational experience for our students. This includes the creation of more college credit-bearing courses at our secondary school, more opportunities for career exploration, and restoring instrumental music in our elementary schools. We have also worked hard to build out a comprehensive academic and student support team in each of our sites.

As we look to next year, one of our goals is to elevate **student voice**. A year ago, as part of my entry plan, I met with multiple student groups and their feedback led to changes such as access to free feminine care products and improved health education at our secondary school. Over this current school year, we started a Superintendent's Student Advisory Council that has allowed us to engage in meaningful dialogue with a diverse team of student voices from each school. We are equally excited to announce the addition of two student representatives to our School Board for next school year. Our goal is to learn from them and to leverage their first-hand knowledge of the student experience to drive improvements.

With all this said, there just is not enough paper in this edition to call out all of the great work our staff and students have done this year. Each day I am impressed by what is possible in a community such as South St. Paul. We have more support for our schools than anywhere I have had the privilege to serve, and for that, I am so grateful to be a part of the SSPPS family. I look forward to our collective work to continue driving SSPPS forward and accomplish great things for the students, staff, and families of South St. Paul.



Dr. Brian Zambreno
SSPPS Superintendent



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PATHWAY TO PACKER PROMISE

• Pathway to Packer Promise

This spring district leaders brought forth a Pathway to Packer Promise plan to address the district's achievement concerns. Thanks to the generous support of our community in approving both operating levy questions last fall, we are excited to share the beginning of the Pathway to Packer Promise work that will:

- Take strides in addressing our achievement concerns
- Help us deliver the promise of investing additional funds in academic and mental health support
- Expand programming opportunities for students

While some shifts can be made relatively quickly, there are others that will be developed and implemented over time. Inside this edition of the SixTimes you will find a closer look at some of our initial work.

• School Counselors Help Students with Academic Success

Read more inside about how our SSPPS Licensed School Counselors help students' academic success with lessons around mind/body regulation, social-emotional learning, organizational skills, and college and career readiness.

• Elevating Student Voices

As a part of its strategic vision, the South St. Paul School Board and Superintendent Dr. Brian Zambreno have made it a priority to increase opportunities to include stakeholder voices in their work. One of the most important voices is that of our South St. Paul Public Schools students. More inside on how our students are having their voices heard.



South St. Paul Public Schools

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WORK FOR SSPPS!

SSPPS is always looking for great people to join our team. View our current openings by scanning the QR code or visit: www.sspps.org/departments/hr

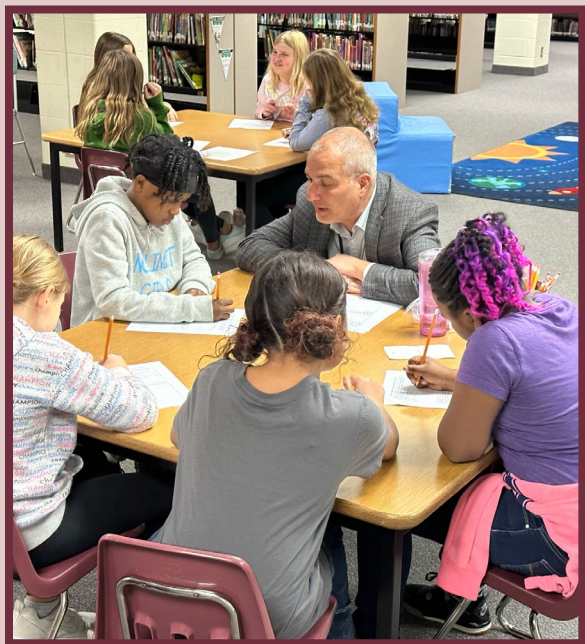


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SSPPS DESIRED DAILY EXPERIENCES

Last fall we engaged with our students, staff, and families to learn what each group wanted their Desired Daily Experience (DDE) to be at SSPPS. While we know we are not there yet in all of the identified areas, we are continuing to work hard to make necessary shifts that will better support and meet the needs and interests of our students, families and staff. Inside this SixTimes we will lay out the groundwork that has begun for us to meet our students', staffs', and family's expectations.

Scan or click on the QR code to watch a video on why Desired Daily Experiences are important to our student's success.

