Envision SPPS: East African Culture and Language Workgroup

Report on Findings

Date report submitted: June 20, 2023

I. WORKGROUP MEMBER NAMES, ROLES AND/OR TITLES, ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

WORKGROUP MEMBERS

Internal to SPPS:

1. Jackie Turner, Chief of Staff, Chief of Operations and Administration
2. Mohamed Abdurahman, counselor, American Indian Magnet
3. Dana Abrams, Director, SPPS Family Engagement and Community Partnerships
4. Abdisalam Adam, AP, Highland Park High School
5. Khadra Ali, teachers, Highwood Hills
6. Mohamed Hadi, SPPS Family Engagement and Community Partnerships
7. Ubah Jama, JJ Hill
8. Halla Henderson, Director, SPPS Board of Education
9. Dr. Fatima Lawson, Principal, Highwood Hills
10. Yasmin Muridi, EA - Somali, Highwood Hills
11. Zahra Nooh, SPPS, Multilingual Learning
12. Negasi Tesfai, Highland Park Sr., EA for Tigrinya
13. Jayne Williams, Director, Student Placement Center

External to SPPS:

14. Amina Abdullahi, parent and community engagement
15. Mahmud Kanyare; parent and community mobilizer

Technical Assistance:

14. Lynn Brun, consultant, technical assistance/communications
15. David Dudycha, consultant, data analysis

WORKGROUP ADVISORS

1. Multilingual Learning/Immersion/World Languages:
   - Sarah Schmidt de Carranza, Executive Director, Office of Multilingual Learning
   - Megan Budke, Immersion, Indigenous, & World Language Coordinator, Office of Teaching & Learning
2. Curriculum and Instruction:
   - Jodi Danielson, Director, Schools and Learning
   - Maijue Lochungvu, Assistant Director, Office of Teaching and Learning
3. Early Learning
   - Lori Erickson, Assistant Director, Office of Early Learning
4. Family Engagement and Community Partnerships:
   - Dana Abrams, Director, SPPS

II. MEETING DATES AND TIMES (see meeting notes)

1. February 15, 3:30-4:30 p.m., regular meeting
2. March 1, 3:30-4:30 p.m., regular meeting
3. March 15, 3:30-4:30 p.m., regular meeting
4. March 29, 3:30-4:30 p.m., regular meeting
5. April 12, 3:30-6:15 p.m., in-person retreat
6. April 26, 3:30-5:00 p.m., regular meeting
7. May 2, 8:00-9:30 p.m., recruitment subgroup
8. May 10, 3:30-5:00 p.m., recruitment subgroup
9. May 17, 3:30-5:30 p.m., recruitment subgroup
10. May 24, 3:30-5:00 p.m., regular meeting
11. May 31, 3:30-5:30 p.m., recruitment subgroup

III. WORKGROUP PURPOSE STATEMENT

Determine how SPPS can provide a well-rounded and sustainable PK-8 program focused on East African language(s) and culture(s).

IV. ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES (FINDINGS)

1. **What is an ideal size for an PreK-8 East African program to ensure students receive a well-rounded education (facilities are at capacity)?**
   - 750+ is ideal for PreK-8 program:

Pre-K x 2 sections x 20/section = 60
Kindgarten x 3 section x 24/section = 72
1st grade x 3 sections x 25/section = 75
2nd grade x 3 sections x 25/section = 75
3rd grade x 3 sections x 25/section = 75
4th grade x 3 sections x 28/section = 84
5th grade x 3 sections x 28/section = 84
6th grade x 3 sections x 34/section = 102
7th grade x 3 sections x 34/section = 102
8th grade x 3 sections x 34/section = 102
TOTAL: 763

- A minimum of 251-450 students are needed for a PreK-5 program:

  Pre-K x 2 sections x 20/section = 40
  Kindgarten x 2 section x 24/section = 48
  1st grade x 2 sections x 25/section = 50
  2nd grade x 1 section x 25/section = 25
  3rd grade x 1 section x 25/section = 25
  4th grade x 1 section x 28/section = 28
  5th grade x 1 section x 28/section = 28
  TOTAL: 244

2. **Based on the enrollment trend for East African students in Saint Paul (specifically by grade level and by school) what does that tell us about the needs for an East African program?**

   Whether there is enough program interest among families and enough children to sustain a viable program is key to warranting opening a new program. Both census and SPPS data show there is a sizeable East African population living across the city of Saint Paul and nearby suburbs (open enrollment), which provides validation there are sufficient numbers of children to open and sustainably maintain a PreK-8 program at SPPS:

   i. Census block data from 2019 show there were approximately **403 children born** in Saint Paul of East African descent (see first map below). Note: The 403 number is most likely a modest representation of actual births of East African mothers as database sources only record public births and not the total private, public and residents in other states; approximately 57% of the total births are public only. Additionally, there are significant numbers (see second map below).

   ii. Across the district, there are approximately **162 PK-K applicants** for SY23-24 that are identified as being of East African descent (see third map below).

iii. There are approximately **2,552 PK-12** SPPS East African student distribution as identified by home language (see fourth map below). East African home languages identified by SPPS include Afar, Amharic, Oromoiffa, Somali, Swahili, Tigriya, Tigre (Bilen not listed as SPPS has no student as of this writing); see table below for grade specific distribution by home language.

iv. In examining the enrollment demographics of local charter schools with a high concentration of East African students, there are approximately **3,863 K-12 students.** This alone indicates that programs serving East African families are in high demand locally.

3. Considering the data, how do we build a viable East African program in SPPS?

With sufficient market share and program demand established through the data analysis, the other considerations to methodically building a viable East African program includes curriculum development. Determining to what extent the program curriculum can be developed that can practically integrate the range of East African countries* and languages** (as represented by the concentration represented in the metro area). Additionally, the curriculum will take several years to fully develop in order to meet state academic standards. Scaling up to a middle grades program will also take several years.

As outlined below, the East African language and culture program components will be phased in over time by starting with an enrichment-based curriculum and then transitioning to integration-based curriculum. (There are discussions about the long-term development of a language immersion focus, but that remains undetermined and will require several years of planning and analysis.)

Phasing in program:

- **Phase 1 - SY23-24:** PreK-5 staff reflects East African families and students, classroom Enrichment (community partners, residencies, etc.).
- **Phase 2 - SY24-26:** PreK-5 with Specialist Enrichment (# is dependent on enrollment; ideas include East African culture class, East African art, East African performing arts, physical education).
- **Phase 3 - SY26-27:** PreK-5 with Integration of Culture and Language (phase in by grade level or content).

(***East African countries are:** Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda; most common language groups are: Amharic, Somali, Swahili, Tigriya, Oromiffa, Tigre, Afar. ****Most common languages spoken:** Somali, Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, Arabic, and Swahili.)

4. **What factors need to be considered to sustain a citywide K-8 magnet program? Or should the program start as a regional program?**

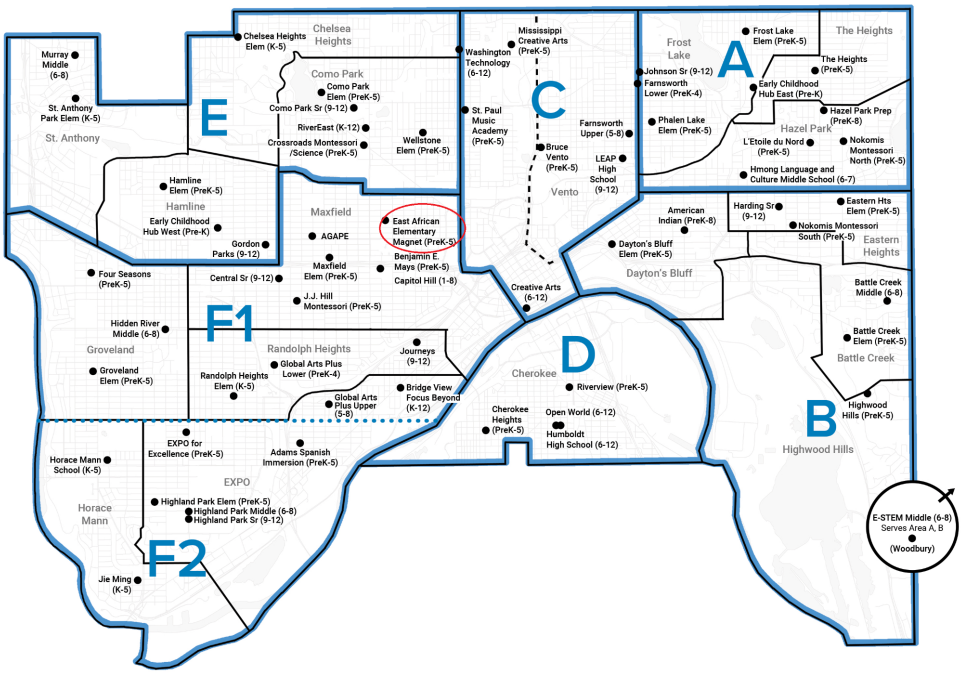
   Beyond whether there are sufficient numbers of students to sustain a program long term, two key factors informed the conclusion that a regional magnet that is centrally located is preferable to a citywide magnet:

   a. **The broad population distribution of East African families and children across Saint Paul:** Based on data analysis, the distribution of East African families and children in Saint Paul is fairly even across the city. The one exception is Area D which has far lower numbers of East African families. This broad distribution of students not only warrants the program's magnet status, but also informs the site's centralized location in the city at the former Jackson Elementary (437 Edmund Ave. W.)--see map below with the East African program circled in red.

   b. **The potential adverse impact on other SPPS schools:** To avoid depleting enrollment at schools with lower enrollment, analysis examined which schools might be most vulnerable to losing students to a new program. Specifically, Highwood Hills Elementary in Area B has a higher representation of East African students and has been working to build up its lower enrollment to a sustainable number that can afford to provide a more well-rounded educational program. In the past year, Highwood Hills has succeeded to increase its K-5 enrollment from 175 in SY21-22 to 192 in SY22-23 with projected enrollment in SY23-24 being 182. Highwood Hills is also one of six SPPS schools that has received funding in SY23-24 to use toward marketing to build enrollment; in addition, Highwood Hills has received an additional 20 PreK seats through a Head Start partnership that raises there overall PreK capacity to 40 seats which will help to build a student pipeline to increase K-5 enrollment.

With these two key factors in mind, the attendance areas serving the East African program will be limited to Areas A, C, E, F1, F2. Areas B and D will be considered out of area to receive transportation unless significant numbers of **non-SPPS students** (e.g., attending charters, private schools or are home schooled) from these areas show specific interest in enrolling in the East African program but would not otherwise consider attending another SPPS school.

The centralized location of the East African Elementary School:



5. **Which program features that charters provide attract and retain East African families and students?**

   The ability for families and students to feel comfortable and be reassured that school staff will be able to speak their home language or understand their cultural values and practices is a key theme that has repeatedly emerged over the years in meetings with families, committees, and exit surveys. The ability for families and students to "see themselves" reflected among school leaders and staff provides cultural validation and reassurance that goes a long way toward providing a welcoming, culturally-responsive school community--and as several studies have determined, this also positively impacts students' academic achievement.

6. **Understanding how middle schools function, what suggestions might you offer to make the program more attractive and engaging at the secondary level? Would K-8 be a desirable option? If offered, would you choose a K-8 model for your child? Why or why not?**

   While stand-alone 6-8 middle school programs are better able to offer more robust program offerings than those embedded in a PreK-8 school due to greater resources provided by a higher number of students, other features provided by PreK-8 programs are highly desired by East African families. In particular, East African families have repeatedly expressed the importance of having their older and younger children attend the same school so the older ones can help care for their younger siblings, especially when navigating to and from bus stops and after school when parents may still be working.

While the long-term vision for the East Africa program is to provide a PreK-8 program, it was determined that at least initially, it is more feasible to open with grades PreK-5 and grow the program over the years to add grades 6 through 8.

III. LIST OF DATA SOURCES

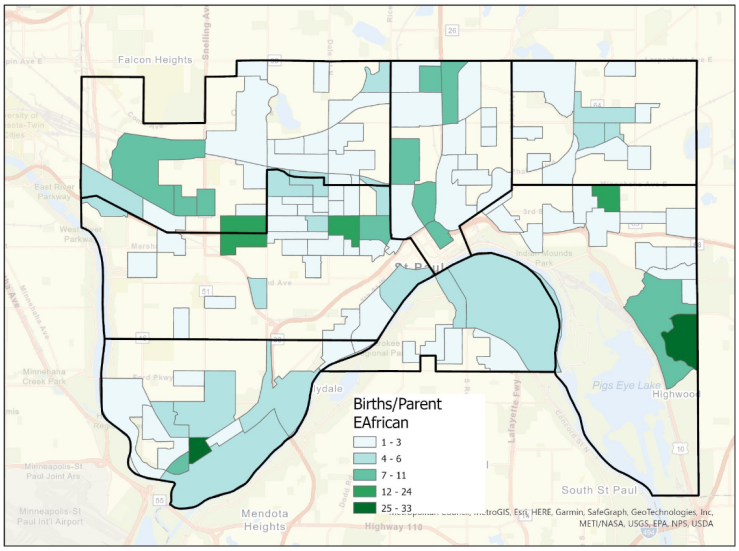
1. Census data of births by parents of East African descent in Saint Paul:

Births in 2019 with One or Both Parents from East Africa by Census Block Areas

MOTHER'S HOME COUNTRY	Count
SOMALIA	216
ETHIOPIA	150
KENYA	21
ERITREA	10
DJIBOUTI	3
SUDAN*	1
TANZANIA	1
UGANDA	1
TOTAL	**403**

* Father from E African Country Mother Not

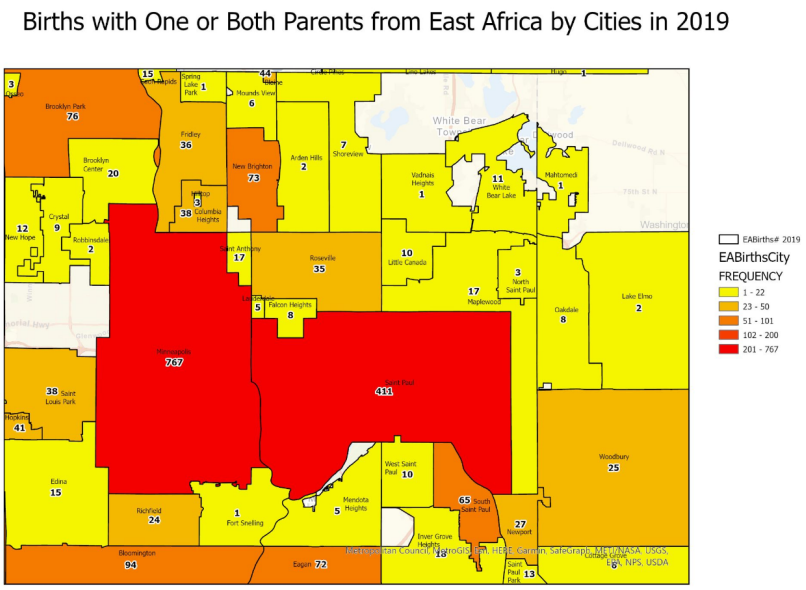
NOTE: Database **only records public births** and not the total private, public and residents in other states; **approximately 57% of the total births are public only**



Inspire students to think critically, pursue their dreams and change the world. 5

2. Births by parents of East African descent in metro area:

NOTE: Database **only records public births** and not the total private, public and residents in other states; **approximately 57% of the total births are public only**



Source: MN Department of Health- Public Births Only (approximately 57% of all births); 2020

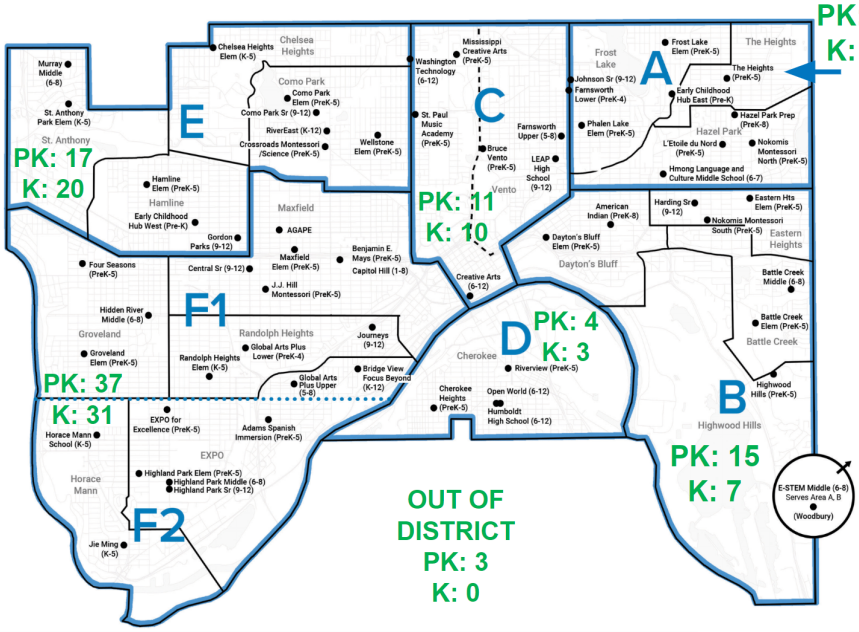
Inspire students to think critically, pursue

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3. SY23-24 PK-K applicants East African distribution by Attendance Area:

SY23-24 PK-K Applicants: East African SPPS student distribution:

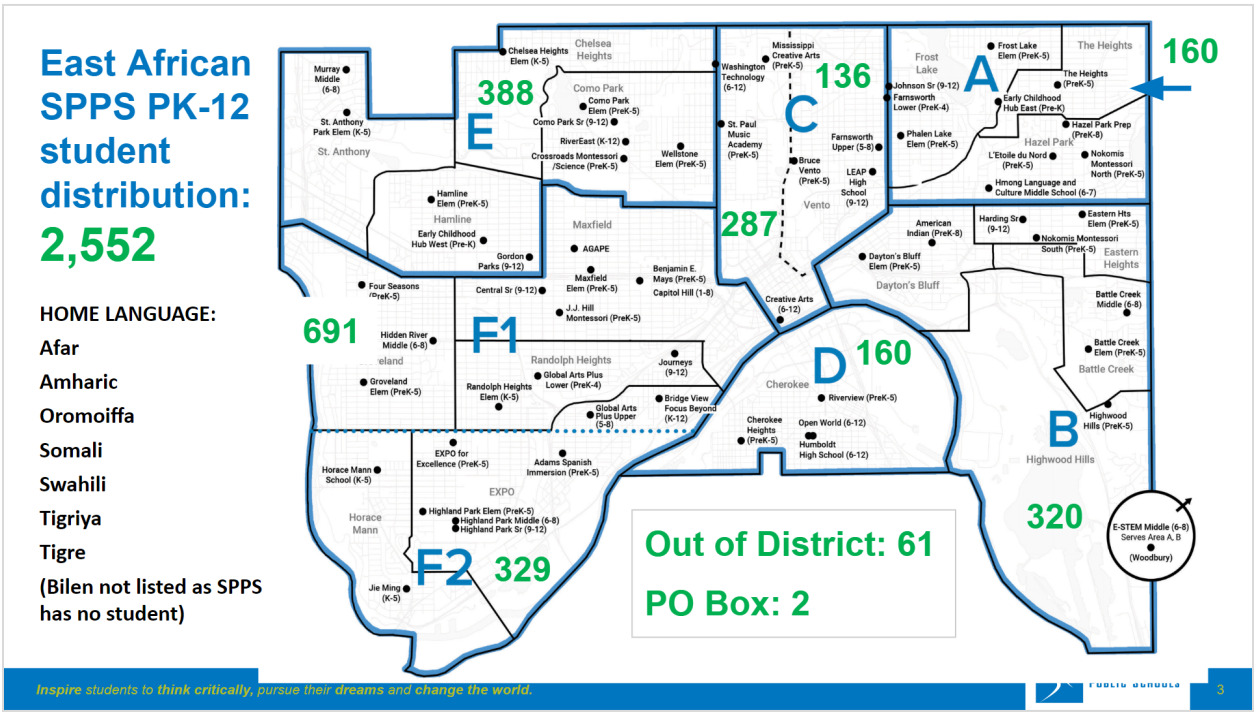
PK: 89
K: 73
Total: 162



Inspire students to think critically,

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4. **PreK-12 Attendance Area distribution of SPPS students based on East African home language:**



5. **PreK-12 distribution of SPPS students based on East African home language in table format:**

	GRADE - SAINT PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOLS (2019)																	
LANGUAGE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	EC	HK	KG	PA	PF	Total
Amharic	31	26	22	33	24	17	19	30	25	22	24	18	3	6	20		6	**326**
Somali	94	118	93	100	95	87	70	95	105	124	124	173	37	11	83	1	9	**1419**
Swahili	11	11	5	12	13	7	4	14	13	12	6	12			5		1	**126**
Tigriya	17	6	8	7	7	6	7	8	8	6	13	14	7	2	14		1	**131**
Oromoiffa	49	40	41	36	42	36	32	44	42	35	46	44	6	4	34	1	7	**539**
Tigre					2			1	3			1						**7**
Afar	1			1					1	1								**4**
	203	**201**	**169**	**189**	**183**	**153**	**132**	**192**	**197**	**200**	**213**	**262**	**53**	**23**	**156**	**2**	**24**	**2552**

6. **Charters in Saint Paul with substantial East African student body include:**

    1. Higher Ground Academy (2 sites) = K-12 enrollment: 1,060
    2. STEP Academy = K-12 enrollment: 620
    3. Midway Star Academy = K-8 enrollment: 399
    4. New Century School = PK-10; PK-8 enrollment: 432
    5. Math and Science Academy = K-12 enrollment: 456
    6. Quantum STEAM Academy = K-6 enrollment: 64
    7. Metro Schools College Prep (in Minneapolis) = K-12 enrolled: 832

    Total approximate enrollment at area charters: 3,863

7. **Studies on the benefits of culturally-responsive educational environments:**

    Does Culturally Relevant Teaching Work? An Examination From Student Perspectives

    Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain

    READY for RIGOR: A Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching

    What is the research on the effectiveness or impact of culturally responsive teaching practices on student outcomes?

IV. SUGGESTED PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND INDICATORS TO TRACK PROGRESS

A. **Market Share:** Ongoing monitoring of East African population trends will inform long-term program sustainability:
    - Number of PreK students (new SPPS students)
    - The number of K-5th grade students who transferred to the school from a non-SPPS school
    - The number of K-5th grade students who transferred to the school from an SPPS school
    - Shifts on program demand based on areas of the city/district attendance areas will inform regional versus citywide magnet status.

B. **Long-term Pathway Sustainability:** Monitoring student enrollment to determine if adding a middle grades 6-8 program is feasible and sustainable.

C. **Facility Utilization Index:** Well-rounded school programs consistently maintain 80-90% enrollment capacity in their buildings. Ideal building capacity factors in on program sustainability; enrollment below 70% capacity indicates underutilization and inefficient use of resources.

V. CONCLUSION

In consultation with SPPS' executive leadership, it was determined that the East African Elementary Magnet School would open up in fall of 2023 at 437 Edmund Ave. W. (formerly Jackson Elementary). The program will focus on the East African countries of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania,Uganda; and the most common languages spoken: Somali, Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, Arabic, and Swahili. The new school will serve grades PreK-5; how and when it would be best to add grades 6-8 is dependent on enrollment numbers in the upcoming school year.