



SPPS American Rescue Plan (ARP) Year in Review

January 2023

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I. Overview

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) has presented school districts across the country with an incredible opportunity. Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) received \$207 million to be used over three years for COVID-19 response efforts and to address long-term student outcomes that have been impacted by the pandemic.

SPPS is committed to providing sustainable resources to schools and students, improving teaching and learning, and ensuring a safe return to school for all students and staff. In the coming months and years, supporting students will mean investing in not only their education, but in their human potential to be resilient, adaptive, courageous and successful. These funds present an opportunity for SPPS to be innovative, try new things, and prepare our students for the future, while supporting our staff in providing effective instruction, social-emotional learning, health and wellness support, and addressing academic and enrichment gaps within our communities.

To determine the best use of these funds, SPPS reassessed its [SPPS Achieves strategic plan](#), recommitting to the plan's long-term student outcomes and initiatives as the foundation for improving achievement for all students. We engaged the community in a thorough needs assessment, represented by 11,000 responses, that confirmed our strategic plan is on the right track and gave us additional insight into students, schools, staff and family and community needs directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Internally, we formed a cross-functional workgroup to create a process and determine how best to use these funds to meet our district's needs.

Superintendent Joe Gothard emphasizes that SPPS has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve student outcomes with federal funding from the American Rescue Plan. "We believe the strategies we are proposing will help us reach our goals as a district, and we are committed to monitoring their progress and making necessary adjustments to ensure **every dollar is being spent to equitably meet the needs of our students, families, staff and community at large.**"

II. Federal Requirements

The American Rescue Plan (ARP), also known as Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III), provides funding to K-12 school districts and institutions of higher education to reopen safely for in-person learning and address students' needs. Funding is reserved to be used from March 2020 to September 30, 2024. Within these parameters, SPPS is targeting the following four priorities:

1. Safely reopen schools for all students
2. Address pre-and post-pandemic unfinished learning
3. Build lasting, equitable systems of teaching and learning
4. Support student and staff social emotional needs on returning to full on-site learning

School districts are required to reserve 20% of their funds to address learning loss caused by the pandemic. This includes providing extended day, extended year, summer school and evidence-based interventions to respond to students' social, emotional and academic needs.

Some options for how the remaining 80% of funds may be used include:

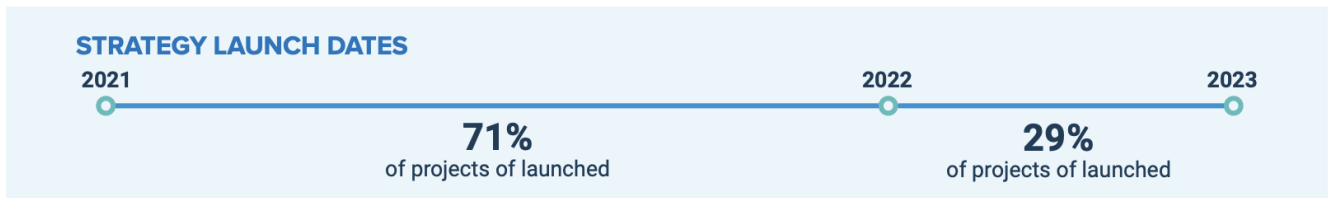
- Purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean, improve ventilation systems
- Providing mental health services and supports
- Addressing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student groups
- Activities allowed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Elementary and Secondary Education Act and other federal programs

III. SPPS Planning Process

SPPS decisions about allocating ARP funds are based on our strategic plan, SPPS Achieves, and community input collected through an extensive needs assessment. Information about the needs assessment and ARP planning structure and timeline can be found in the [ARP Spending Brief from January 2022](#).

IV. 2021-22 Highlights

In fall 2021, SPPS safely reopened and returned for in-person instruction. With the support of ESSER I and ESSER II funding that went to health staff, personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and other COVID-19 related supplies, SPPS was able to remain open all year. In October 2021, SPPS submitted our final ARP budget and plan to the Minnesota Department of Education, and it was approved in late November. In January 2022, we launched the 56 unique ARP strategies outlined in our approved budget and plan.



56
UNIQUE STRATEGIES

STRATEGY COMPONENTS¹



Direct services for students (32)



Operations and facilities (17)



Procurement of materials (13)

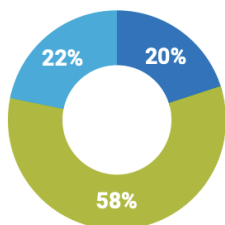


Capacity building for staff (30)



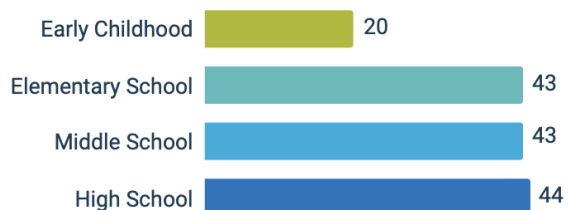
Direct services for families (13)

NEW, ENHANCEMENT OR CONTINUATION



- Continuation of an existing SPPS strategy/program/service
- Enhancement to existing SPPS strategy/program/service
- New strategy

STRATEGIES BY GRADE LEVEL²



¹Several strategies encompass multiple components | ²Includes districtwide strategies that touch multiple grade levels

Full launch of all strategies was complicated due to ongoing challenges associated with the pandemic. However, between January and June 2022, several key themes emerged:

Theme 1: Investments are impacting schools

Our COVID-19 relief investments have facilitated direct student services that otherwise would not have been possible without the funds. We launched a reading support initiative called What I Need Now (WINN) using ESSER II funds. Through WINN, 60 reading teachers and 12 coaches were hired to support students in grades K-2 and 6-8. Many other strategies were successfully implemented across the district, including hiring an additional 10 school counselors to meet students’ social emotional needs, expanding after-school programming to all middle schools, and offering internships and certificates to high school students.

Theme 2: Investments are addressing the needs outlined in the needs assessment

In 2021, a thorough needs assessment was conducted that generated over 11,000 responses to understand student, family and community needs coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Physical and social emotional safety were areas that surfaced in the needs assessment. These were prioritized and addressed through investments such as additional support staff, disinfectant and personal protective equipment. Another key need identified in the assessment was diversifying SPPS staff. Through ARP funds, a new team in Human Resources was formed to focus on recruitment and retention of staff of color.

Theme 3: Working toward public transparency through new reporting tools

With support of ARP, SPPS’ Innovation Office was launched to provide implementation and progress monitoring support. They worked with the Office of Research, Evaluation and Assessment (REA); the Office of Business and Financial Affairs; and the Office of Title I Federal Programs Office to support strategy leaders in establishing clear rationales, project plans and data collection plans. Together, they launched a website where detailed information is public for each strategic strategy. Lastly, practices were put in place to launch data dashboards in FY2023.

Total Spend

	SPPS Allocation	FY21 Spending	FY22 Spending	FY23 Projected Spending	Spending Timeline
Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER)	\$2.3 million	\$1.6 million	\$750,000	-	3/15/20-9/30/22
Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF)	\$12.3 million	\$12.3 million	-	-	7/1/20-12/30/20
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER I)	\$19.9 million	\$6.8 million	\$13 million	\$100,000	3/13/20-9/30/22
ESSER II	\$92.1 million	-	\$43.3 million	\$48.8 million	7/1/20-9/30-23
American Rescue Plan (ARP / ESSER III)	\$206.9 million	-	\$24.6 million	\$73.8 million	3/15/20-9/30/24

Updated 10/1/22

V. SPSS ARP Strategies and Allocations

In FY22, SPSS spent a total of \$24,629,588 in ARP/ESSER III funds. This number is lower than what was budgeted and anticipated due to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. In addition, the expenditures for some strategies were shifted from ESSER III to ESSER II in order to meet federal requirements to spend down those funds. Per federal requirements, SPSS has prioritized spending ESSER II funds, which expire September 2023, before spending down ARP/ESSER III funds that expire in September 2024. The remaining ESSER III funding for FY23 and FY24 is \$182,232,880. In 2021-22, \$1,030,392 was spent for indirect costs that covered administrative expenses.

In an effort to align the district’s strategic initiatives, the ARP strategies were categorized using the SPSS Achieves [focus areas](#). These focus areas include: College and Career Readiness, Effective and Culturally Responsive Instruction, Family and Community Engagement, Positive School and District Culture, Program Evaluation and Resource Allocation, Safe Schools, and Systemic Equity. The following pages include brief summaries of each focus area, FY22 spend for each ARP strategy and several project highlights that celebrate successes from 2021-22.

Program Evaluation & Resource Allocation



SPSS has invested a portion of ARP funding into monitoring and support for internal departments/ARP strategy owners to ensure that ARP strategies are implemented effectively and that ongoing data collection is shared with key stakeholders. This includes hiring Innovation Office staff and ARP research analysts, training school board members and determining direct funding to schools. [View more information about each Program Evaluation & Resource Allocation ARP strategy.](#)

Strategy Name	Fiscal Year 22 Spent
Direct Funding to Schools	\$0
School Board Training	\$0
Innovation Office & ARP Research Analysts	\$403,392
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	\$403,392

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:

Innovation Office

The SPSS Innovation Office was formed in 2021 to provide training and support to district staff in implementing ARP-funded strategies and other strategic projects. The Innovation Office team, in partnership with the Office of Federal Programs and the Office of Research, Evaluation and Analytics (REA), established a monitoring system to ensure funds are being used appropriately and have a positive impact on student outcomes. This process involves:

- Outlining and defining strategy purpose, activities and desired outcomes
- Tracking spending
- Tracking project task completion
- Tracking outcome indicators
- Collecting supporting documentation to demonstrate the progression of work
- Reviewing the work taking place in various teams to facilitate gathering multiple perspectives on the efficacy of the strategies

College & Career Readiness



SPPS is committed to helping students prepare for life after school. The district is using ARP funds to invest in college- and career-related curriculum as well as summer and after-school programming to increase student engagement and prepare students for post-secondary education and career opportunities. [View more information about each College & Career Readiness ARP strategy.](#)

Strategy Name	Fiscal Year 22 Spent
“Check and Connect” Special Education Program	\$0
Internships and Certifications for High School Students (Earn As You Learn)	\$94,061
EDL Plus (EDL and Summer School Improvements)	\$78,239
Career Centers and Curriculum at Every High School	\$49,136
After School Program for All Middle Schools (Flipside)	\$512,268
Career Integration	\$0
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	\$733,704

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:

Flipside: After-School Program for All Middle Schools



Flipside is an SPPS Community Education program that provides enrichment opportunities for middle school students to address unfinished learning, build friendships and help students feel a sense of belonging at school. During the 2021-22 school year, Flipside expanded after-school programming from six schools to all 15 SPPS middle schools. Flipside faced hiring challenges to fully staff new sites, with internal staff stepping in to support when sites were short-staffed. Additional staff members were hired, onboarded and trained to implement and support the new Flipside locations.

Each Flipside site has customized programs based on the students’ interests and needs within the school community. Of the students who have participated in Flipside, 93% come from communities that were most impacted by the pandemic (73% people of color, 4% homeless, 55% free-reduced lunch). At the end of the 2021-22 program, Flipside surveyed students and learned that 94% of those surveyed reported having a positive experience at Flipside; 85% felt supported by adults in their program; 78% reported making new friends; 83% learned about career options and their college and life passions. When parents were surveyed, 85% reported that their child’s sense of belonging at school improved after participating in Flipside.

Effective & Culturally Responsive Instruction



SPPS is investing nearly 44% of its ARP funds in high-quality, data-driven academic strategies to support students who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, including Black and American Indian students, English language learners, and students in special education. These strategies include improving students' core math and reading skills, educational technology investments, professional development for teachers, and investments to ensure all students have access to a well-rounded education. [View more information about each Effective & Culturally Responsive Instruction ARP strategy.](#)

Strategy Name	Fiscal Year 22 Spent
Early Childhood Autism Support	\$5,979
Culturally Responsive Instruction (CRI)	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
K-8 Core Math Instruction (WINN)	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
K-8 Core Literacy Instruction (WINN)	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
Coordinating High School Schedules & Grading	\$96,844
Special Education Recovery Services	\$275,133
High School Credit Recovery Support	\$105,608
Digital Tools	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
Well-Rounded Education Program	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
Instructional Design for Culturally Responsive Instruction (CRI)	\$0
Seal of Biliteracy Testing	\$13,411
Elementary Specialists and Job-Embedded Professional Development (JEPD)	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
Written Translation Training for Bilingual Educational Assistants	\$0
Training for Teachers Working with English Learners	\$25,167
Somali Educational Assistant	\$16,032
American Indian Curriculum Development	\$1,500
Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Assessment & Services	\$30,968
Equitable Middle School Career Experiences	\$4,624
Multilingual Learner Support	\$0
Strengthen Digital Learning Supports	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	\$575,266

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:

K-8 Math & Reading Core (WINN)

The What I Need Now (WINN) math and reading programs were created to support learning loss caused by the pandemic. The K-8 Core Math Instruction program provides targeted support to designated schools with their goals around math. During the 2021-22 school year, 92% of students in grades 3-5 who participated in Math WINN completed math review snapshots. These assessments provided data on how the program is doing and determine an implementation plan to move the practice forward districtwide.



The K-8 Literacy Instruction WINN program hired 69 licensed teachers and six teachers on special assignment (TOSAs) during the 2021-22 school year to accelerate and support student achievement through small group reading instruction. The six WINN TOSAs facilitated 60 hours of professional development on strategies to support literacy instruction. All K-8 schools administered FAST assessments three times during the year in order to measure reading growth. Nearly 20% of K-3 grade students received WINN support. Students who participated in WINN experienced strong progress on FAST. In 2nd and 3rd grades, students who received WINN instruction made more gains than students who did not receive WINN instruction.

Family & Community Engagement



Serving students and families doesn't fall solely on SPPS. That's why we're investing close to \$10 million of ARP funds with community partners who can enhance our services and provide enriching and educational experiences for St. Paul youth. We're also investing nearly \$1 million in communication services for families, with an emphasis on families whose home language is not English. [View more information about each Family & Community Engagement ARP strategy.](#)

Strategy Name	Fiscal Year 22 Spent
Full-Service Community Schools	\$ 0
Central Contact Center	\$ 0
Community Partnerships	\$142,511
Language Supports for Families	\$ 0
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	\$142,511

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:

Language Supports

The language supports strategy provides access to direct interpretation support in multiple languages through Language Line for all schools and programs in the district. These resources will help families feel more connected to their school and the district, and feel empowered to advocate on behalf of their students because of access to language support. During 2021-22, the strategy team started developing a toolkit for all SPPS staff to understand how to leverage language support resources. This toolkit helps staff determine which language support service to use and how to request services such as on-call interpreters, Language Line, an outside interpreter service and translation services. This work was completed using other funding through 2022.

Positive School & District Culture



Mental health and social emotional learning are key components of both student and staff well-being. After two years of interrupted learning and personal hardships, these needs are more pronounced than ever. SPPS is hiring social workers and increasing staff capacity to respond to trauma, adding counselors to schools with increased needs, and providing added wellness and mental health support for students and staff. [View more information about each Positive School & District Culture ARP strategy.](#)

Strategy Name	Fiscal Year 22 Spent
Early Childhood Mental Health Support	\$109,025
Mental Health and Wellness Support	\$65,996
Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Support	\$ 0
Counselors at Every School	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
Social Workers and Training for Responding to Trauma	\$170,677
American Indian Education Counselor (66A)	\$0
Emergency Management Staff	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
Increasing Attendance and Engagement	\$0
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	\$345,698

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:

Counselors at Every School

School counselors support students in their academic and social emotional growth. In 2022, SPPS counselors began working with students to create their Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) so they can set goals for their post-secondary learning and career options. The School Counseling department's goal of 80% of students in grades 3-12 starting a PLP in FY22 was nearly met with 76.55% of PLPs started.



Overall, the number of students who had contact with a school counselor for group or individual services was 19,931. Moving forward, there is a need to improve individualized student plans. During the 2021-22 school year, one-on-one meetings were paused to support the needs of students and their day-to-day work in schools. Counselors met with 3,240 (44.17%) students to set individual goals. The percent of students by grade level were 64.2% of 5th grade students, 33.26% of 8th grade students and 34.75% of 9th grade students. Counselors will be asked to prioritize these meetings in 2023.

Safe Schools



SPPS's investments in safely operating our schools are vital to ensuring the health and wellness of students and staff now and into the future. These strategies include improving ventilation systems, hiring additional staff for building cleaning and maintenance, more school nurses and security staff, incentives for bus drivers, and supplies including masks, personal protective equipment and foodservice equipment. [View more information about each Safe Schools ARP strategy.](#)

Strategy Name	Fiscal Year 22 Spent
Nutrition Services Staff	\$867,979
Bus Driver Recruitment and Retention	\$533,559
Custodial Staff	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
Facilities Staff	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
Indoor Air Quality Improvements (Filtration)	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
COVID-Related Food Service Supplies	\$423,838
School Health Staff	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
Technology Infrastructure Improvements	\$11,200 & ESSER II
Indoor Air Quality Improvements (Infrastructure)	\$345,527
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	FUNDED THROUGH ESSER II
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	\$2,182,102

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:

Bus Driver Recruitment and Retention

The school bus driver recruitment and retention incentive program was implemented during an extremely difficult time to recruit and retain school bus drivers. Colder weather and seasonal jobs have a big impact on retaining school bus drivers, and the ongoing effects of COVID-19 and workforce shortages provided additional challenges to recruit, hire and retain bus drivers to safely and efficiently transport students to and from school.

This strategy provided monetary incentives in the form of a bonus to drivers in an effort to alleviate the critical driver shortages. The program allowed for drivers to be assigned to open routes and increased the number of bus drivers so that district transportation staff no longer needed to cover routes on top of their regular duties.

At the start of the 2021-22 school year, SPPS had 168 of the 190 transportation routes covered. By spring break, all 190 routes were permanently covered, and ongoing evaluation and an increase in transportation staff allowed new routes to be added. In addition, after-school and activities transportation continued to successfully be covered and expanded, including adding Extended Day Learning (EDL) routes in the second semester of 2021-22.

Systemic Equity



Systemic equity is one of the primary pillars of the *SPPS Achieves* strategic plan. The district is using ARP funds to deliberately and strategically invest in programs and processes designed to make SPPS a more equitable place to learn and to work. The strategies detailed below include building a district equity plan and a concerted effort to recruit and retain more educators of color. [View more information about each Systemic Equity ARP strategy.](#)

Strategy Name	Fiscal Year 2022 Spent
Recruitment and Retention of Teachers of Color (\$155,155 + retention bonus \$19,043,307)	\$19,198,463
Recruitment and Retention of Teachers of Color	\$18,059
Equity Training for Staff	\$0
District Equity Plan	\$ 0
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	\$19,216,523

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:

Recruitment & Retention of Teachers of Color

During 2021-22, SPPS Human Resources and the Office of Teaching and Learning created a new team of employees to launch a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan with a focus on educators of color. This team was fully staffed by June 2022. In March 2022, the team worked with external consultant Education First to research strategies SPPS can use to better recruit and retain high-quality educators and implement processes to put these practices into action. At the end of the research phase, the team prioritized strategies to implement beginning in June 2022. These strategies include improving hiring processes, strengthening relationships with higher education institutions, expanding support for new educators, offering support for educators of color, and using data to strengthen recruitment and retention practices.

For more information about Saint Paul Public Schools' American Rescue Plan work, visit spps.org/ARP. The website is updated regularly with news stories, fiscal year spending, engagement opportunities and FAQs.