

THE SUN PRAIRIE EXPERIENCE

A Community
Newsletter

SPRING 2024 IN THIS ISSUE

See our Strategic Framework in action and learn more about the work of SPASD staff and students and our community partnerships.

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Sun Prairie Area
School District

Futures depend on us...every child, every day.

STAY CONNECTED

 Sun Prairie Schools

 sunprairieschooldistrict

 Sun Prairie Area School District

 Sun Prairie Area School District

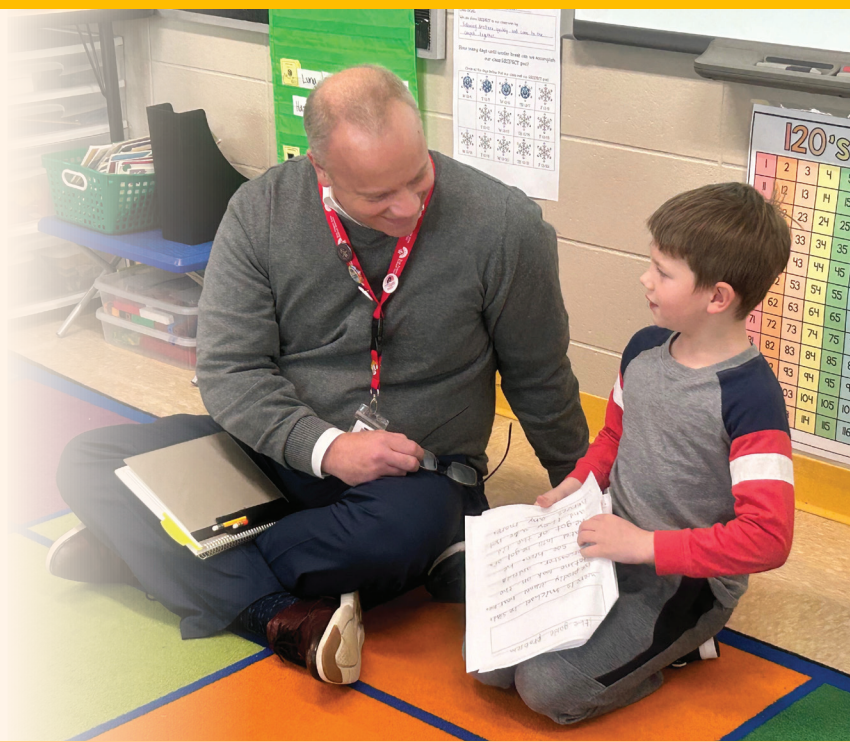
FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

I am continuously overcome with pride by the collaborative accomplishments and collective achievements of the students, adults, parents and caregivers, and community that comprise the Sun Prairie Area School District. We are blessed with a School Board that leads our District with coherence and focus. Our staff works with dedication and dignity as they care for and support our students. Just as the SPASD Core Values and Commitments state, the diversity of this great School District is an asset and our strength. You will see this in the pages of this newsletter. We are having a great year! No year is without challenges and emotional tests of resilience, but the stability of our Strategic Framework and our diligence in living out our vision and mission in all of our school communities are what allow us to press ahead and stay focused on our calling to serve Every Child, Every Day.

In partnership,



Dr. Brad Saron, Superintendent



We are making plans for staffing classrooms next year.

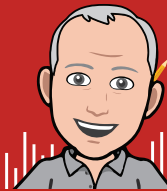
If you have a new neighbor or friend, or if you know of a family who has moved to Sun Prairie recently, please encourage them to enroll their child(ren) as soon as possible for the 2024–2025 school year. Learn more about the enrollment process by clicking on the ENROLLMENT icon on the District homepage.

ENROLL NOW!



Do you want to learn more about the School District? Listen to our 30-minute podcasts at your leisure. Superintendent Saron hosts guest speakers who are doing great things in our District.

**SUN PRAIRIE SCHOOL DISTRICT
HOMEROOM
PODCAST
WITH BRAD SARON**



A FOCUS ON STUDENT RESULTS

The Board of Education holds the District accountable for achieving exceptional outcomes for our students.

The Sun Prairie Area School District is driven by a community-based mission and vision defined by our Board of Education. Our unwavering dedication to achieving exceptional outcomes for our students is encapsulated in our **School Board's**

Student Results Policies (SRs), serving as the guiding principles for organizational excellence. The Board developed these policies in alignment with the community expectations expressed in the Strategic Framework.

SR 3 STUDENT PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

By focusing on the needs of the whole child through a culture of care, Students will:

- Gain the necessary social, emotional, and life skills to be successful in our school community and beyond.
- Be future-focused and skilled in long-range goal setting for their education, college, careers, and life.
- Participate in activities and experiences, in and out of the classroom, that prepare them to engage and thrive in our diverse community.

SR 2 STUDENT ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Through high expectations, culturally responsive teaching, relevant, rigorous, engaging, and innovative learning experiences, in and out of the classroom,

Students will:

- Make reasonable progress each year toward being literate and numerate across academic disciplines.
- Gain the necessary academic non-cognitive skills to be prepared for college, career, and life readiness.
- Be able to demonstrate mastery of content knowledge, skills, and competencies through multiple opportunities and assessments.
- Achieve academic growth with a focus on improving academic outcomes for students experiencing significantly lower rates of success.

FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dear Sun Prairie Community,

The Sun Prairie Board of Education is honored to serve our community by leading and directing the affairs of the District through policy development and accountability to Board expectations. All of the Board's work is grounded in our commitment to our mission, vision, values, and equity statement. In order to model the continuous improvement we expect to see throughout our system, we are reviewing and revising our policies. We would like to take this opportunity to share some of our most current work with you.

Governance Culture

This collection of policies defines the role of our Board in leading the strategic, long-term direction of the District. We spent a great deal of time reviewing and updating these policies this year. Two notable highlights of our work include:

- drafting a new policy on **Communication and Collaboration with Our Community** based on feedback from our Community Voices group
- building our capacity to lead through participation in professional learning through Govern for Impact and using that enhanced learning and understanding to guide the development of our Policy Revision cycle

Student Results

The ultimate goal of our School District and our work is to ensure that all of our students graduate with the strengths, skills, and academic preparation necessary for personal growth and success for the betterment of the community. Last spring, the Board revised and unanimously approved updated policies. Over the past months, the administrative team has worked to develop new monitoring reports aligned with our updated policies to answer the question: **What does success look like?** Drafts of these new reports will soon be presented to the Board for approval.

Operational Expectations/Results

Did you know that approximately 85% of the District's budget is allocated to staffing? The Board has undertaken a **Direct Inspection of Human Resources** processes to inform the development and revision of our Operational Expectations and Results Policies moving forward.

On behalf of the Board of Education, thank you for taking the time to read this update. We are honored to represent our community and to uphold our promise to serve Every Child, Every Day.

Diana McFarland

Diana McFarland, President, Board of Education



School Board Members (left to right):

Isabella Roberts, Bryn Horton, Alwyn Foster, Eli Gillitzer, Katey Kamoku, Diana McFarland, Latoya Holiday, Jojo Knauss, Lisa Goldsberry, Mrinank Panda, Dr. Steve Schroeder
Not Pictured: Sophie Yttri

WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Please consider applying for our next cycle of **Community Voices for Our Future!** More information is available here:



Why did I receive this newsletter? The Board has expressed a specific expectation that the District share information with our community. We are proud to highlight the work being done by our staff and students. While this publication is available online, it has a broader reach if we send it to all homes in our District. We utilize bulk mailing, which is a more cost-effective way for us to reach our whole community, including those who do not currently have students in our schools, than if we used targeted mailing.



REMINDER TO VOTE TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2024

Two School Board seats are up for election this spring. Current School Board members **Alwyn Foster** and **Bryn Horton** will seek reelection. **Albert Chen** and **Teran Peterson** will also be on the ballot.



STUDENT EXPERIENCES GOAL

Educational experiences in Sun Prairie will be rigorous and aligned to standards. Exceptional experiences include student goal setting, active student participation in their learning, and multiple opportunities and means to demonstrate their learning.

DID YOU KNOW WE OFFER HALF-DAY 4-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN?



We are now enrolling for **2024–2025**. Any child who is 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2024, can register.

www.sunprairieschools.org/sp4k/enroll



OUR COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMMING WAS RANKED AMONG THE BEST IN THE NATION BY U. S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT!

We are so proud of our amazing staff for the hard work they do every day to support students, provide them with opportunities like nowhere else, and help them be their best selves. We are proud of our students for working hard to succeed in and out of the classroom, and we are grateful to our community for the support that makes this possible. (This ranking is based on 2021–2022 school year data.)

ADOPT-A-CLASS

The Business and Education Partnership pairs business leaders with schools to support students.

The Sun Prairie Business and Education Partnership (BEP)

believes in the power of bringing together the educational systems in Sun Prairie and area business leaders to help students build skills to become more employable and competitive in the job market. From providing reading buddies in elementary schools to volunteering at the high school for our financial literacy event, BEP members continue to give back to the schools and community through their programs. Check out the new BEP website (spbep.org). The **Adopt-a-Class program**, organized by the BEP, brings business members into our fourth- and seventh-grade classrooms to teach in 30-minute, hands-on lessons about “soft skills” that businesses often desire in their employees.



Two Horizon alumni participate in Adopt-a-Class at their old school.

Superintendent Saron is also participating in Adopt-a-Class this year. He has been matched with a fourth-grade classroom at Northside and a seventh-grade classroom at Patrick Marsh. At Northside, he led a lesson on the importance of kindness, reading the book *We're All Wonders*, and having the students create pennants to show why they choose kindness.

YOU ARE INVITED

Join us for a viewing of the film *The Right to Read*.

We are hosting a viewing of the film ***The Right to Read*** and would love for you to join us. This film tells the important stories of an activist, a teacher, and two American families working hard to make sure our youngest generation can read well, which is crucial for their future success.

Film summary: “When a child cannot read, their chances of facing tough challenges—like going to jail, being homeless, or not finding a job—increase. That’s why Kareem Weaver, an activist with the NAACP in Oakland, California, thinks that making sure kids can read is one of the most important civil rights issues today. He believes that if we can’t read the ballot, even winning the right to vote doesn’t help us much. Kareem has noticed that the reading scores in his community are not good, so he has taken action by starting a petition to demand better reading instruction from the Oakland Unified School District.”

Because the film is a bit long, we are splitting the event into two parts. At each viewing, we’ll show 45 minutes of the film, followed by a group discussion. **The two-part event will take place on Thursday, March 7, and Thursday, March 21, at 6:00 p.m., in room 200 at the Professional Learning Center, located at 220 Kroncke Drive. Childcare services will be available during the event.**

EL FUTURO ES BILINGÜE

The future is bilingual with Dual-Language Immersion.

The new **Dual-Language Immersion (DLI) program** in the Sun Prairie Area School District is off to a great start! Currently, the DLI program features four kindergarten classes, each with 15 students. Two of these classes are located at Northside Elementary, and two are located at Westside Elementary. Additionally, Spanish-speaking families at Creekside Elementary and Royal Oaks Elementary, and beginning this fall at Eastside Elementary, can enroll their children in this innovative program. It's a unique opportunity for students to embark on a bilingual journey from an early age.

During a typical school day, children in the DLI program spend half their time learning in Spanish and the other half learning in English. This approach not only helps students become fluent in both languages but also nurtures cultural understanding and appreciation. But this program isn't just about language. It aligns with the District's mission and vision in providing equitable outcomes for all students. It is a crucial part of the District's commitment to supporting Spanish-speaking multilingual

learners. With a 50/50 split between Spanish and English instruction, this program is powerful in bridging the language gap. Because roughly half of the students in the program are primarily Spanish-speaking and roughly half are primarily English-speaking, students learn a great deal from one another as well as from their two-person team of teachers.

The DLI program is set to expand, adding a new grade level each year. Next year, it will include both kindergarten and first grade. This means more students will have the opportunity to unlock the "superpower" of speaking two languages, as one enthusiastic student shared with their parents. Learning two languages isn't just a skill; it's a unique gift that opens doors to diverse cultures and opportunities.

More information about the 2024–2025 DLI program application process will be available for families soon. We thank our staff, families, and community for supporting this innovative learning experience and opportunity for students to become global citizens.



Small, caring groups of educators, like our **Math Steering Committee**, work to continuously improve our curriculum for students.



SP East ProStart students attended a **Career & Industry EXPO** at American Family Field in Milwaukee to explore careers in the food industry. Thank you to our teachers and staff for helping to provide this student experience and helping to prepare our students for college and careers!



Students from SP West represented Sun Prairie at the annual **UW-Whitewater Creative Writing Festival** in November. They met and learned from fellow writers to improve their skills. Congrats to Julianne and Amelia for earning special recognition for their writing! A huge thanks to the teachers for making this learning experience possible.

did you know?



Our music departments' concerts are amazing! You can watch the playback on the "Sun Prairie Presents" YouTube channel. You can also see live streams of concerts and performances at our Sun Prairie Performing Arts Centers. Be sure to check out the upcoming schedule of performances. www.youtube.com/@sunprairiepresents





STUDENT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT GOAL

The educational environment establishes the conditions where every child feels welcome and able to succeed. In order to create the necessary conditions for learning, educators create spaces where the classroom community accepts and supports the development of all students as people, where learning partnerships thrive between students and adults, and where there is an established culture of care.

BUILDING ELEMENTARY LITERACY FOUNDATIONS

How do we choose elementary English Language Arts resources?

The **English Language Arts Steering Committee** is in year three of the Curriculum Renewal and Design Process. This group of over 50 educators has been working to decide which new English Language Arts resources best align with our style of teaching, good ratings from EdReports, fairness and inclusivity, a focus on the science of reading, and good knowledge content. The elementary team is currently exploring four different resources: Amplify CKLA, EL Education, Into Reading, and Wonders.

Here's what the English Language Arts Steering Committee has done and is continuing to do throughout the year to make their decision:

August–December 2023:

- created the criteria for reviewing the materials
- made a list of resources to review
- started the review process and narrowed down the options
- listened to presentations from the companies that produce the resources
- asked for quotes and more information
- looked at the data and further narrowed down the options

December 2023–May 2024:

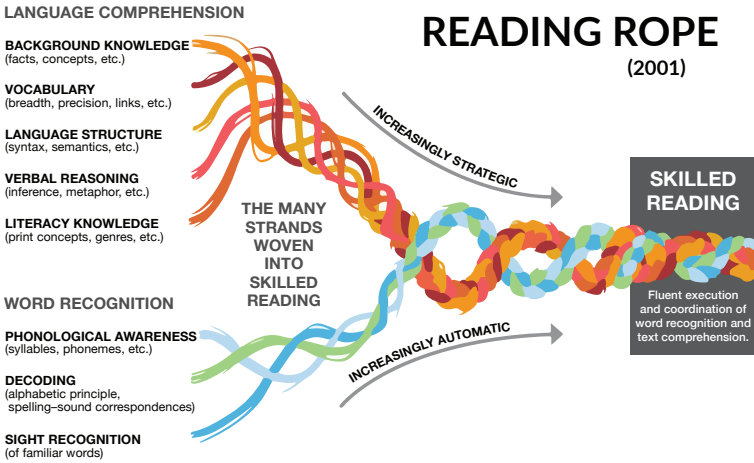
- agree on evaluating the resources and how to go about evaluating them
- use tools like the Great Lakes Equity Tool and a Core Literacy Evaluation tool to analyze the resources
- explore the resources closely, examining at least two units for each
- talk to school districts already using these resources, ask for data, and interview the people who produce the resources
- review all the information and data gathered and narrow the options even more
- make the final decision on which resources to use

March–June 2024:

- hold professional development sessions for teachers and educators as preparation for using the chosen resources

As you can see, we are taking our time to thoroughly evaluate and select the best English Language Arts resources for our schools. We want to ensure we choose resources that will help our students learn the most effectively.

SCARBOROUGH'S READING ROPE (2001)



The committee has strategically leveraged Scarborough's Reading Rope to tailor curriculum for our teachers. This method addresses the multifaceted aspects of reading to deliver content aligned with our instructional goals and fosters a dynamic learning environment that accommodates diverse learning styles and abilities.

How do our educators develop curriculum?

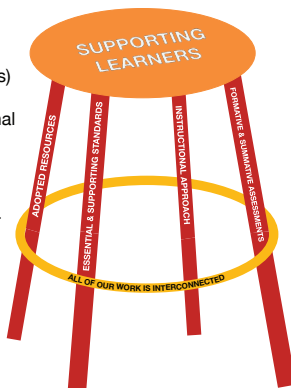
Our educators use a four-legged stool as a metaphor for building a system to support the learner.

- Leg 1** – Essential and Supporting Standards for the Content Area
- Leg 2** – Formative and Summative Assessments
- Leg 3** – Adopted Resources (i.e. instructional materials)
- Leg 4** – Instructional Approach (i.e. SPASD Instructional Framework and Practice Profiles)

The legs are adjustable, not one-size-fits-all, but also not adjusted too far so that the stool doesn't work.

With the ring—all of our work is interconnected—each leg shares strength with the other legs.

If we are not attaining desired outcomes, we examine all four legs of the stool to determine what needs adjustment to get better results.



VACCINE CLINIC

In October, our District hosted a free vaccine clinic for families, to ensure that students are current on their vaccinations. This clinic had a great impact in reaching families from a wide variety of backgrounds, including some with limited access to healthcare.

We vaccinated 149 people.

64 no insurance 33 Badgercare 52 with insurance



GETTING OFF TO A STRONG START

SPASD supports early intervention for our youngest learners, starting at age 3.



Early childhood (birth to age 5) is a critical period for brain development. Interventions during this time can have a significant impact on a child's lifelong outcomes.



Early intervention helps identify and address developmental delays or disabilities, maximizing the chances of overcoming challenges and achieving developmental milestones.



Early childhood programs often focus on fostering social and emotional well-being, helping children build relationships, express emotions, and develop a positive sense of self.



Research suggests that children who receive early intervention services are more likely to succeed in school, develop better social skills, and have improved long-term outcomes in education and employment.

Early intervention services are a part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This federal civil rights law ensures that school districts identify and provide early intervention special education services to children with disabilities. In Sun Prairie, evaluations and services for children ages 3 and 4 (pre-kindergarten) are provided by the Sun Prairie Area School District Early Childhood Department.

Sun Prairie Area School District Early Childhood Special Education is a team of early childhood special education teachers, special education assistants, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and a school social worker in the role of our early childhood developmental specialist. Coordinated under the umbrella of "Early Learning" by our Student Services Program Manager and 4K Program Supervisor, this team supports the special education needs of children beginning at age 3 through 4K, until they reach their kindergarten year.

Our team conducts special education evaluations free of charge to families who are concerned about the development of their children. Strategies and recommendations for parents and caregivers are provided, whether children are eligible or not. A range of inclusive placement options are available if children are found to have special education needs. Our department is projected to provide a record number of approximately 165 evaluations this year, with a three-year average of 143 evaluations completed. Of the evaluations completed, 149 children have qualified for and are currently receiving early childhood special education services in our District.

We believe the best place for children with disabilities to learn and play is alongside their peers. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction agrees (<https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/early-childhood>). For this reason, the Early Childhood Special Education team strives to offer a range of meaningful, inclusive options for children with disabilities before they reach 4K. These include supporting children in their natural childcare or preschool environment, partnering with existing community programs (Parks and Recreation's Little Otters and Tiny Terrapins and Prairie Athletic Club's Little Cardinals Swim Time), and supporting children in the home when appropriate. In addition, we offer speech therapy groups, which are provided at our Early Learning Resource Center within Token Springs Elementary. Evolving from our desire to provide meaningful and inclusive special education services, Early Childhood Special Education also partners with Community Schools to offer free playgroups for all young children in the community to learn and play together! Programs are offered at Creekside Elementary, C. H. Bird Elementary, and Our Savior's Lutheran Church in partnership with Northside Elementary. Registration information is available on the District website.

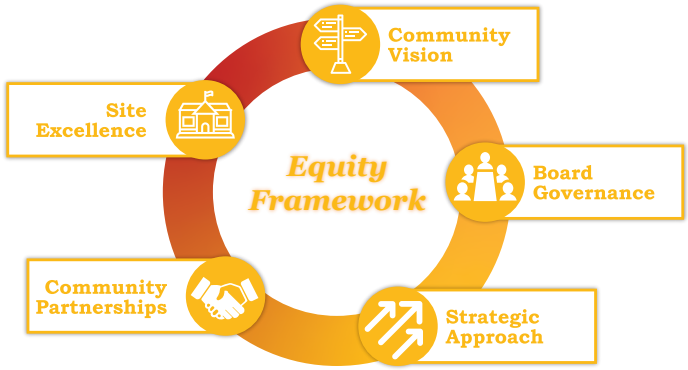
149 children ages 3–5 receiving special education service in the District as of January 1, 2024

65 of those in Early Childhood–pre-4K

84 of those in 4K



OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY



The **SPASD Equity Framework** details and informs our equity work to help all students succeed. We continue to use our Equity Framework to guide how we apply strategies in a systematic manner across our departments and schools for authentic equity transformation. The Equity Framework informs the District scorecard, from which fixed strategies cascade to department and site scorecards that include the systemic action steps for equity. Visit our website to learn more: www.sunprairieschools.org/district/equity

A CLOSER LOOK AT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN EDUCATION

Fostering a culture of care with a focus on community and relationship building

We are in year 3 of phasing in **Restorative Justice in Education** across the District. This school year kicked off with full implementation of Restorative Justice in Education at all middle and high schools and three elementary schools (Westside, C. H. Bird, and Meadow View).

Restorative Justice in Education fosters a culture of care in schools that focuses on community and relationship building. When fully implemented with fidelity, it can result in increased academic achievement and decreased student suspensions and expulsions. This is especially true among students of color, who are more likely to experience exclusionary discipline practices.

Restorative Justice teams work collaboratively with administration, teachers, students, and families to change the trajectory of our students who would otherwise be more susceptible to suspension or expulsion, while also increasing all students' sense of safety and belonging in school.

Our schools that have fully implemented Restorative Justice in Education have Restorative Justice teams and dedicated Restorative Justice coach(es) who serve as the building's process lead.

Our District goal is to have all 15 sites fully implement Restorative Justice in Education by the beginning of the 2025–2026 school year.



School staff with Dr. Linda Henderson from RJ Ed at a **Restorative Justice in Education Training session**.



Dr. Michael Morgan, Director of Systemic Equity & Inclusion, leads a forum during Restorative Justice in Education training.

WELCOMING DIVERSE VOICES

Introducing the Department of Systemic Equity and Inclusion–Community of Practice

The District's Department of Systemic Equity and Inclusion kicked off 2024 by hosting the first monthly meeting with the **Department of Systemic Equity and Inclusion–Community of Practice (DSEI–CP)**. We welcomed diverse voices and new perspectives from parents and caregivers who expressed feeling unseen and undervalued in our school system and community, engaging in meaningful conversations on topics that matter to them and impact their children's educational experience. It was exciting to share

space with a diverse group of caring parents and caregivers representing the demographics of our students.

We look forward to continuing to meet with the group as we work to increase transparency and strengthen the partnership between the school community and our most marginalized parents and caregivers.



HBCU TOUR

In November, fifty of our Black Student Union Scholars from SP East, SP West, and Prairie Phoenix Academy went on a **Tour of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)**, visiting schools in Indiana, Ohio, Maryland, DC, North Carolina, and West Virginia. Thank you to all who donated and helped make this trip possible for our scholars.



GROWING THE CEOs OF TOMORROW

A community partnership helps provide students opportunities to develop their entrepreneurial talents.

At a recent School Board meeting, Dr. Michael Morgan (Director of Systemic Equity and Inclusion), Nikole Sconiers (Principal of Prairie Phoenix Academy), Jamie Racine (Community Schools Coordinator), Dr. Sarah Chaja-Clardy (Director of Secondary Teaching, Learning, and Equity), and Dr. Roxie Hentz (Executive Director of CEOs of Tomorrow, Inc.) presented an update on our **District's partnership with the CEOs of Tomorrow**. They were joined by two students involved with the program.

The CEOs of Tomorrow program started in 2016. Its goal is to inspire young people to discover their entrepreneurial talents and to use them to make the world a better place. Engaging, hands-on activities help kids learn important life skills and make a positive impact while also earning money.

At Prairie Phoenix Academy, the CEOs of Tomorrow program has been active for several years. Students there have learned how to start and run their own businesses, like Phoenix Bangin' Sauces and Hugga Mugga Café. The program helped students test and improve their products, create marketing plans, and learn how to manage a business. CEOs of Tomorrow has also been part of the after-school program at Westside Elementary through Sun Prairie Community Schools.

This year, our partnership is growing. We are offering students at SP East and SP West the chance to learn outside of regular school hours while earning high school and Madison College credit.



PREPARING FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Black History Month will be filled with activities and events. Check the District's Facebook page to see event photos. Events open to the community include the Soul Food Dinner on February 23 and the 50 Years of Hip-Hop Decade Gallery Walk on February 27. More information about these events and our in-school events is available on our District website. sunprairieschools.org/district/equity/bhm



SUN PRAIRIE HOSTS THE MSAN STUDENT CONFERENCE

Students from several states gathered for the Multicultural Student Achievement Network event.

In November, Sun Prairie hosted the **Multicultural Student Achievement Network (MSAN) Student Conference**. Students from several states convened to learn, connect, be heard, and discuss ways to change their communities for the better. The conference theme this year was "You

Belong Here," inspired by murals painted on a shelter in Sun Prairie's Sheehan Park. Thank you to all the students, staff, sponsors, volunteers, and everyone else who helped make this experience possible for students from Sun Prairie and beyond.



CELEBRATING HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Meadow View Otters celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with SP West Wolves & SP East Cardinals.

Meadow View fifth-graders celebrated **Hispanic Heritage Month** by visiting SP West, where the SP East Hispanic Student Union and the SP West Latinx Club hosted a celebration that included learning music, dancing, and enjoying

candies from Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia. The fifth-graders helped the SP West Latinx Club and the SP West ProStart cooking class prepare delicious Hispanic dishes. It was a great learning experience for the

Meadow View Otters and a wonderful opportunity for our SP East Cardinals and SP West Wolves to share their knowledge and talents!





COMMUNITY OF EXCEPTIONAL AND DIVERSE EDUCATORS AND STAFF GOAL

Strive to proactively recruit, retain, and engage diverse and exceptional talent.

PROMOTING STAFF WELLNESS

Our staff best support the learning and wellness of our students when they themselves are supported in their own wellness.

Our **Employee Wellness Clinic** continues to thrive at the onsite location on the Historic Hilltop Campus. Our staff and their family members can visit the Employee Wellness Clinic to receive accessible and affordable care. The top wellness request from staff was behavioral health support. We added a full-time Behavioral Health Coach at our Employee Wellness Clinic this year, which is a free service for all employees and their family members. The clinic hosted special events, including an open house and flu vaccination clinic, where over 700 vaccinations were administered. Utilization of the clinic continues to be high, averaging a 90% fill rate. Our financial return on investment for the clinic, rolling for 12 months due to claims avoidance, is \$959,097.



Our Wellness Department continues to expand **wellness offerings and opportunities** based on the wants and needs of our employees:

- Motivating Monthly Challenges addressing the various dimensions of wellness
- free access to ELEVATE, a financial wellness platform with over 200 modules (sponsored by the Bank of Sun Prairie)
- free weekly fitness classes, including water aerobics
- free access to Headspace, a premium mindfulness app
- adult orthodontia coverage added in 2024
- free special events, such as self-defense training offered by Touchstone Karate
- REALiving Employee Achievement Program: In addition to providing employees and their families with free counseling and coaching sessions, our EAP offers wellness resources, webinars, and a wide array of online resources and forums.

✓ **100%**
OF PATIENTS STATED THE LIKELIHOOD THEY WOULD RECOMMEND THE DISTRICT'S EMPLOYEE WELLNESS CLINIC TO OTHERS WAS GOOD / VERY GOOD.



EXCELLENCE IN WELLNESS

The District continues to be recognized by WELCOA.

The Sun Prairie Area School District continues to be recognized as **one of the nation's healthiest organizations** by the Wellness Council of America, maintaining our Platinum level status, the highest designation. The District is nationally recognized by the Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) for prioritizing the health and wellness of its employees and their families. WELCOA is one of the nation's most respected resources for building high-performing, healthy workplaces. The District's successful Wellness Department is considered a model of excellence for the industry. **Karyn Richmond**, Wellness Coordinator, presented "Best Practices in Workplace Wellness: Creating a Culture of Care" at the Wisconsin Association of School Boards Annual Conference in January and will present "Leadership Support as a Top Priority in Employee Well-Being" at the Association for Wisconsin School Administrators Middle & High School Principals Convention in February.



SP RISE & SHINE

Helping hourly employees to understand they are valued and to learn about professional development opportunities available to them

To ensure that we continue to have exceptional staff serving our students, we hosted **SP Rise & Shine for our new hourly employees**. This was an opportunity for new staff members to connect with one another while celebrating the impact they have in our District and learning about the professional development opportunities

available to them. Some highlights included a Veteran Employee Panel Discussion and an opportunity for employees to share feedback on their onboarding experience. Listen to the recent podcast featuring our Human Resources Manager, Kelli Bialkowski, to learn more about the hiring and onboarding process improvements.



LISTEN NOW!

GROW YOUR OWN

Supporting employees as they grow into professional educators

The **Grow Your Own program** was started in the 2017–2018 school year to grow highly skilled employees into positions such as teacher, counselor, social worker, and other roles that are difficult to fill in education. Besides helping candidates by providing tuition reimbursement (up to \$1,500 per semester), the program also allows candidates to keep their jobs, pay, and benefits while completing their student teaching and other requirements in their program of choice. The program has been very successful, and many of our employees have grown from support staff roles into professional educators.



Anna-Lisa Dahlgren, AP Human Geography teacher at SP West, was honored with the Distinguished Teaching Award by the National Council for Geographic Education.



Dia Yang, third-grade teacher at Token Springs, received the Outstanding Educator Award presented by WEAC. She was honored for this achievement at a Badger Basketball game in November.



We want to thank our friends at the **Sun Prairie Education Foundation** for the support they provide our educators and for the funding that makes their innovative ideas a reality for our students!

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

STACY DARGA
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
SITE COORDINATOR



A **Community Schools Site Coordinator** helps connect students and families with learning opportunities and community resources.

Westside Elementary Community Schools Coordinator, Stacy Darga, was not only featured in Second Harvest Foodbank's *Inside Scoop*; but was also recognized with NBC15's Be Like Mike Award for her work connecting families in need with food resources.

Mrs. Darga will be retiring at the end of this school year. We will be sad to see her go. Her impact over 13 years in our District has been amazing.



Rick Hudson, Prairie View school counselor, was awarded the Mary Gehrke-McAllister Leadership Award by the Wisconsin School Counselor Association.

RECENT GROW YOUR OWN GRADUATES



BENITO ALVARADO

4th-Grade Teacher
Northside Elementary

ALMAS BEGUM

Multilingual Teacher
C. H. Bird Elementary

RICHARD SHUMAKER

5th-Grade Teacher
Creekside Elementary

JOIN OUR TEAM • JOIN OUR TEAM • JOIN OUR TEAM • JOIN OUR TEAM • JOIN OUR TEAM

WE ARE HIRING!



We are seeking to diversify our workforce.

Visit our website (sunprairieschools.org) and click on the EMPLOYMENT icon on the right side of the page to learn more about how to apply.

APPLY TO BE A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER!

Inspire learning in Sun Prairie students while having the ability to set your own schedule! We are looking for Substitute Superheroes to join our team. Come join the Best Place to Work in Sun Prairie! Learn more about subbing in our District on our website.



COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOAL

Excel in how we collaborate and communicate with all careholders, and build relationships that promote positive outcomes for students.

CULTURE OF ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

COFFEE WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendent Saron hosts Coffee with the Superintendent several times a year.

Watch our Facebook page for upcoming events. Stop by with questions or just come learn a little more about our District.



REALITY ROCKS

Community partners help teach students important life lessons.

In January, the Business and Education Partnership hosted **Reality Rocks**, where 100 community partners and 550 students participated in this game-of-life simulation. It was amazing to watch our community work with our students as they moved around the stations, making fiscal decisions based on a researched career and salary.



220 volunteers came to **C. H. Bird** to pack 40,000 meals for children in Haiti. This amount of food will feed 200 children for a year. Thank you to all of the wonderful people who joined the effort to bring hope to Haiti. A huge shout out to Door Creek Church for partnering with Community Schools for this incredible event.



In the fall, the **Prairie View Student Leadership Team** volunteered at Second Harvest Foodbank.



NOVEMBER IS HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS MONTH
HOMELESSNESS IS DEFINED AS THOSE WHO "LACK A FIXED, REGULAR, AND ADEQUATE NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE."
HOMELESSNESS IS NOT ALWAYS VISIBLE
EVERY 100 STUDENTS EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS IN SUN PRAIRIE SCHOOLS EVERY YEAR
HOMELESSNESS IS A PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE. IT IS A CRISIS THAT AFFECTS ALL COMMUNITIES.

An estimated 163 students in our District have experienced homelessness this year. We are so thankful to our friends at Sunshine Place for the support they provide families in our community. If you need support, a list of community resources can be found on our website.

SUN PRAIRIE MOVES TOGETHER

Students, staff, and community take part in our pennant campaign.

We handed out **pennants** at both Homecoming parades. Our community, staff, and students continue to send us **photos reminding us that we move together as a community**. You can pick up pennants at the District Support Center, 501 S. Bird St. Send your photos to: socialmedia@sunprairieschools.org





APPLY BY APRIL 2!

Have an idea to bring extraordinary learning to kids?
WE ARE HERE TO HELP!!

Our mission is to fund creative, out-of-the-box ideas that provide enriching hands-on learning experiences for Sun Prairie students. If your idea inspires curiosity, imagination and discovery in new and innovative ways, we encourage **ANYONE** wanting to help SPASD youth to **APPLY FOR A GRANT** today!



www.SunPrairieEducationFoundation.org

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



The Community Schools strategy transforms a school into a place where educators, local community members, families, and students

work together to strengthen conditions for student learning and healthy development. As partners, they organize in-school and out-of-school resources, supports, and opportunities to help young people thrive.

The Community Schools strategy is implemented at eight of Sun Prairie's fifteen schools: C. H. Bird Elementary, Creekside Elementary, Northside Elementary, Westside Elementary, Prairie Phoenix Academy, Central Heights Middle, Patrick Marsh Middle, and Prairie View Middle.

To hear more about the work Community Schools is doing, reach out to **Jamie Racine**, Sun Prairie Community Schools Program Coordinator, at **608-318-8109** or jlracin@sunprairieschools.org.

STUDENTS SUPPORTING STUDENTS

PPA students serve as tutors for Creekside students each week.

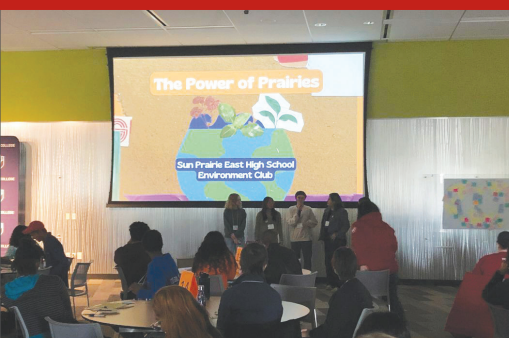
Prairie Phoenix Academy (PPA) students support the academic achievement of elementary students by serving as tutors every Thursday afternoon. This program matches elementary scholars from Creekside Elementary with PPA students. Staff provide games and activities that

support the skills the students are working on during the day. This service is a part of a workshop developed by PPA advisors to older help students earn credit toward graduation while also supporting the academic growth of younger students.

100 SCHOLARS

Creekside hosts a Saturday school program in partnership with 100 Black Men of Madison, Inc.

One of the key practices of Community Schools is to provide expanded and enriched learning opportunities for students and families. **100 Scholars is a K-5 Saturday school program hosted at Creekside Elementary in partnership with 100 Black Men of Madison, Inc.** This four-hour program starts with a community breakfast (families, students, and staff), followed by large-group and small-group instruction focused on strengthening math and reading skills as well as developing students as lifelong learners. Every program closes with a guest speaker who also reads a story to the students.



The **SP East Environment Club** presented at the Youth Climate Conference in Madison in November. They presented on the importance of prairies for the environment. They also shared some of their plans for a prairie restoration project for this spring.



The **Parent Leadership Council** meets monthly to work on putting their equity plan into action. This group comprises representatives from the School Community Organizations (SCOs) at our elementary and middle schools, District administrators, and principals.



We hosted a **Hmong Family Night** event for our Hmong families to come together. This was a chance to have some food and learn what the school experience is like for our Hmong students and their families.



FINANCE AND FACILITIES GOALS

Prioritize the investment of our resources to support the educational experiences in and out of the classroom, the student and staff physical environment, and the teams serving our organizational mission.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES & GROUNDS

Pete Woreck joined our District in November of 2023.



Pete Woreck brings 25 years of experience in public education, having served as a social studies teacher and associate principal in Beaver Dam before moving into the facilities role there in March of 2020. In his spare time, he volunteers with the Special Olympics and is active in his local VFW Post.

I am honored and humbled to join the Sun Prairie Area School District. Our team remains dedicated to the mission to provide healthy, clean, safe, and well-maintained physical environments for every student, staff, and community member every day.

ENROLLMENT AT A GLANCE

Our District's enrollment is volatile.



Our District's official enrollment at the third Friday count grew by **66 students**.

Since September, our District has grown by an additional **84 students**.



The official enrollment numbers used by the State of Wisconsin to determine school district funding come from the official count done on the third Friday in September. This means that any students who enroll in our schools after the third Friday in September are not included in the state's funding formula, and the District will not receive any additional funding to support these students. This year, our **enrollment has grown by 84 students since September.**

LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS

How do our two comprehensive high schools compare?

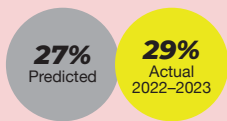
During the evaluation of secondary boundaries by the Secondary Boundary & Bell Time Task Force, the expectation was that the two high schools would exhibit an equitable

distribution of socioeconomic and racial diversity. **Here is a look at the enrollment statistics for the 2022–2023 school year:**



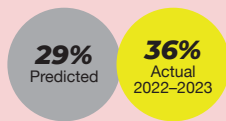
SUN PRAIRIE EAST HIGH SCHOOL

FREE & REDUCED LUNCH



Difference: **+2%**

STUDENTS OF COLOR

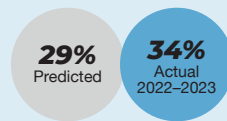


Difference: **+7%**



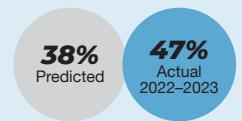
SUN PRAIRIE WEST HIGH SCHOOL

FREE & REDUCED LUNCH



Difference: **+5%**

STUDENTS OF COLOR



Difference: **+9%**

did you know?

We offer **digital tickets** through GoFan for all athletic events hosted at SP East and SP West. Purchase tickets in advance and show them at the door for immediate entry to the event. To get digital tickets, scan the QR code to the right for the school hosting the event you are attending.





STATE LACROSSE IN SUN PRAIRIE

The State Lacrosse Championship is coming to Sun Prairie this spring.

We are thrilled to join the WIAA to bring the **State Lacrosse Championships** to Bank of Sun Prairie Stadium at Ashley Field this spring. Our community and state-of-the-art stadium will be home to the lacrosse championships through 2026.

This year is the first year lacrosse is a WIAA-sanctioned sport with a tournament series for boys and girls. The inaugural championship games will be held June 8.

WHAT IS THE NUTRITION TEAM COOKING UP?

Our Nutrition Team continues to work together to improve meal offerings for our students.



On a recent professional development day, our **Nutrition Team** gathered at SP West to try their hand at some new recipes and equipment in the kitchen. They put together a “Cook’s Corner” event where the kitchen staff was split into four teams to divide and conquer a spread of new recipes for 2024. Some of these recipes included a new menu to honor Black History Month, along with some new and trendy entrée options.

The atmosphere of the kitchen was like a cooking competition straight from Food Network. Teams were competing to make the best sweet potato or

beans and rice dish to be featured on next month’s menu. However, the major difference between a competitive TV kitchen and our kitchen was the way our staff were able to collaborate and troubleshoot to complete all the recipes with ease.

After all the recipes were made, the Nutrition Team voted on which ones to include on the 2024 menu. Some votes were unanimous, such as the katsu chicken wrap, a team favorite. Other recipes, though fun to make, did not make the cut and were “chopped” from this year’s menu.



did you know?

The **SP West kitchen** was built to be our main lunch distribution facility. For example, if you were to walk into the kitchen at 7:30 a.m. on spaghetti day, you would see our staff hard at work boiling pasta for the entire District and preparing it to be shipped to all of our schools in time for lunch.



SP East and SP West Future Farmers of America (FFA) members attended the Mission/Impact conference in Green Bay in November. During this conference, students built their leadership skills by learning to define their mission statements, identify their strengths, and discover strategies to build their confidence. Additionally, SP East and SP West FFA members toured three agricultural producers across the state.



Missed attendance is more than a missed day! It is our belief that there is a clear and positive correlation between student learning and consistent, prompt attendance in class. Therefore, **learning requires regular attendance and effort!**

How can you help? It is our hope that parents and caregivers will support and encourage their students to have good attendance.



Members of the SP East and SP West Wind Ensembles took a field trip to listen to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s performance of “The Planets,” by Gustav Holst. They then visited UW–Whitewater to work with Dr. Glenn Hayes, a professor of music and the Director of Bands for the university.



Sun Prairie Area School District
501 S. Bird Street
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

We hope that *The Sun Prairie Experience* newsletter is a helpful resource for you to learn more about our District. We want to hear from you so we can continue to improve it! Please take a minute to scan the QR code and answer two questions for us about this year's newsletter.



SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

WE ARE LISTENING

If you have questions, please contact us.

DISTRICT SUPPORT CENTER

501 S. Bird Street, Sun Prairie, WI 53590
608-834-6500 | sunprairieschools.org



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Pete Woreck 608-834-6567
Director of Facilities & Grounds

Eric Nee 608-478-1724
Director of Athletics & Activities

2024 UPCOMING DATES

FEBRUARY

- **Friday, February 16:** No School

MARCH

- **Monday–Friday, March 25–29:** Spring Break

APRIL

- **Tuesday, April 2:** Election Day
- **Friday, April 12:** No School
May be used as a make-up day if we exceed 3 snow days this year.

MAY

- **Saturday, May 11:** Sun Prairie East Prom
- **Friday, May 17:** No School
May be used as a make-up day if we exceed 3 snow days this year.
- **Saturday, May 18:** Sun Prairie West Prom
- **Monday, May 27:** No School

JUNE

- **Thursday, June 6:** PPA Graduation: 1:00 p.m.
- **Friday, June 7:** Last Day of School (K–12)

Dismissal Times:

Elementary Schools: 11:10 a.m.

Middle Schools: 12:05 p.m.

High Schools: 12:15 p.m.

Prairie Phoenix Academy: 11:50 a.m.

- **Friday, June 7:** SP West Graduation: 5:00 p.m.
SP East Graduation: 7:30 p.m.
- **Monday, June 17:** First Day of Summer School



JULY

- **Thursday, July 18:** Last Day of Summer School

SEPTEMBER

- **Tuesday, September 3:** First Day of School (K–12)

No student may be unlawfully discriminated against in any school programs, activities or in facilities usage because of the student's sex (gender identity, gender expressions, and non-conformity to gender role stereotypes), color, religion, profession, or demonstration of belief or non-belief, race, national origin (including limited English proficiency), ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, homelessness status, sexual orientation, age, or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability. Harassment is a form of discrimination and shall not be tolerated in the District. It is the responsibility of administrators, staff members and all students to ensure that student discrimination or harassment does not occur. (SPASD District Policy JB)

The Sun Prairie Area School District ("District") does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of sex in any education program or activity that the District operates. Title IX's requirement not to discriminate in any education program or activity extends to cover, but is not limited to, District students, certain admissions processes, and District employment. To access the relevant policy and procedures you can go to the District's website. For inquiries regarding how Title IX and the federal Title IX regulations apply to the District please contact the District's Title IX Coordinator, (the Director of Student Policy & School Operations, 501 S. Bird Street, Sun Prairie, WI 53590, 608-834-6624 or by email at titelxcoordinator@sunprairieschools.org.)

The Sun Prairie Experience is published by the Sun Prairie Area School District. The District Support Center is located at 501 S. Bird Street, Sun Prairie, WI 53590. 608-834-6500
Visit the District website for more information: sunprairieschools.org