



PROVIDING DIRECTION FOR  
OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP



BWP

**Saint Paul Public Schools Superintendent Search**

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

**October 8, 2024**

*Dr. Kevin Castner | Steve Griesbach | Jane Berenz  
Dr. Johnnie Thomas | Dr. Michael Thomas*

# Table of Contents

I. Community Engagement Objectives.....3

II. Summary of Community Engagement Activities .....3

III. Quantitative Community Survey Responses and Groups: Common Themes...6-10

III. Draft Leadership Profile.....10-13

IV. Final Comments.....13

V. Qualitative Feedback: Open Public Forums and Focus Groups (Appendix A).14-43

VI. Quantitative Community Survey Results – English, Spanish, Hmong, Karen,  
Somali (Appendix B) .....44

VII. Student Survey Results (Appendix C) .....44

VIII. Special Report Parental Advisory Councils.....44-62  
and Bilingual Families (Appendix D)

## I. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the perceived strengths and challenges of Saint Paul Public Schools.
2. To identify desired qualities and characteristics of the next superintendent.
3. To build community understanding and support for the superintendent search process.
4. To ensure the broadest possible community participation in the superintendent search process.

## II. SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The BWP search team conducted an extensive Community Engagement Process that invited participation from Saint Paul Public School employees, students, and the Saint Paul community. The process consisted of an online survey and numerous meetings with constituent groups.

On October 6 and 7, the search team facilitated discussions that included 41 small individual in-person and Zoom group discussions, individual interviews, and 2 in-person and 2 virtual community forums. In addition, there were 2 in-person and 2 virtual community forums in Spanish, Hmong, Karen, and Somali. Sessions were held with school board members, central office administrators and staff, school staff groups, students, and members of the community. (Attachment 1)

Over 310 individuals participated in these sessions. In addition, the Family Community Engagement Team had 312 Language/Affinity Group individuals participate. (Appendix D).

We received 11 emails.

The online survey, *Finding a Leader for Our Future*, was designed and posted on the school system website. The survey was available beginning September 23 and closed on October 2, 2024. There are 2,829 completed surveys – 2,086 parents, 944 staff and 120 students. (See Appendix 2/3 which includes surveys completed in English (2,586), Spanish (155), Hmong (30), Karen (44) and Somali (11) and student responses (120).

This multifaceted approach to community engagement reflects the Saint Paul School Board's commitment to seeking input from students, employees, and members of the community. The process has yielded significant thought-provoking responses that provide clear guidance as the search process proceeds.

### III. QUANTITATIVE COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Below are the three highest-rated responses to each of the five non-demographic questions from the online survey, *Finding a Leader for Our Future*. Preliminary data were gleaned from over 2,829 responses and Attachment 2 contains the survey results.

- A. Survey Question #1 *requested responders to select the three most significant strengths of Saint Paul Public Schools* from the following list: Classroom instruction that reflects the students' cultures and backgrounds, educational options and programs, Effective leadership, Effective parent partnerships, Excellent teachers and staff, Financial management, High expectations for all students, Modern school facilities, Safe and welcoming school environments, Student support services, Technology, and Transportation. The top three results were:
1. Excellent teachers and staff – 60%
  2. Educational options and programs – 46%
  3. Classroom instruction that reflects the students' culture and backgrounds – 38
  4. Safe and welcoming school environment – 34%
- B. Survey Question #2 *requested responders to select the three important skills you would like to see in a superintendent* from the following list: The ability to advance academic achievement and sustain the cultures, languages, and experiences of students, Leadership skills using a collaborative decision-making style, financial skills, organizational skills, listening skills to receive and effectively act upon feedback, Equity leadership skills to deepen strategic recruitment of high quality, diverse teachers and staff, Community building skills to create strong relationships with students, staff, and families, and Public relations skills to recognize the appropriate communication needs of the district. The three top results were:
1. Community-building skills to create strong relationships with students, staff and families – 56%
  2. Ability to advance academic achievement and sustain the cultures, languages, and experiences of students – 53%
  3. Listening skills to receive and effectively act upon feedback – 47%
  4. Leadership skills using a collaborative decision-making style – 44%
- C. Survey Question #3 *requested responders to select the three most important characteristics you would like a superintendent to exhibit* from the following list: Commitment to the community, Empathy, Integrity, Innovative, Conflict management, Change agent, Team builder, Consistency, Peacemaker, Strategic vision, and Equity leadership.

The three top results were:

1. Commitment to community – 54%
2. Integrity– 49%
3. Strategic vision – 41%

D. Survey Question #4 requested responders to indicate whether you believe the item is either extremely important, important, or not important in the new superintendent from the following list: Doctorate degree, Experience as a superintendent with a proven record of success, Experience as a superintendent in a district of similar size, Experience as a superintendent in a district with similar demographics, Experience as an assistant superintendent, Experience as a district level administrator, Experience as a principal, Experience as a classroom teacher, Experience in budgeting, finance, and fiscal stewardship, Experience in hiring personnel, Experience in developing instruction, Experience in facility construction and management, Experience in technology, Experience in advancing racial equity with demonstrated success, Experience in strategic planning, Experience in improving student academic outcomes. The top three results were:

1. Experience in improving student academic outcomes - 98%
2. Experience in budgeting, finance, and fiscal stewardship – 95%
3. Experience in strategic planning– 95%
4. Experience as a superintendent with a proven record of success and Experience as a classroom teacher – 92%

E. Experience as a superintendent with a proven record of success and Experience as a classroom teacher – 92% Survey Question #5 requested responders to select what they consider to be the three most important issues or concerns facing the district in the next five years from the following list: Building stronger community relationships, Developing curriculum to reflect the student demographics, Addressing enrollment growth/decline, Facilities upkeep/improvement, Building safe school environments, Stabilizing public school funding, Programs that provide post-graduation career and college readiness, Personnel which reflect high-quality, diverse teachers and staff, and Technology. The top three results were:

1. Building safe school environments– 57%
2. Stabilizing public school funding and Addressing enrollment growth/decline – 48%
3. Addressing enrollment growth/decline – 46%
4. High-quality and diverse teachers and staff – 44%

## IV. QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK FROM OPEN PUBLIC FORUMS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Listed below are the responses collected from the interviews, small group meetings and community Forums. Each session was structured to receive feedback related to three questions:

**What do you see as the strengths of Saint Paul Public Schools?**

**What are the greatest challenges in Saint Paul Public Schools?**

**What qualities, characteristics, and experiences does the next superintendent of Saint Paul Public Schools need to possess and demonstrate?**

Below are the three questions and “prominent responses” received from each session. Responses were deemed to be “prominent” when they were expressed multiple times during the sessions and/or when they were considered uniquely relevant and insightful. For organizational purposes, the “prominent responses” are organized using the relevant top-rated categories on the Community Survey.

### A. Question 1 (Q1 – Strengths) – WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE GREATEST STRENGTHS OF SAINT PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Prominent responses” from the Community Engagement Sessions include:

1. Excellent, teachers and staff (60%)
  - Strong staff dedicated to SPPS
  - Staff are dedicated and come and stay in the school district as former students
  - Diversity of students, parents and community
  - District’s commitment to providing diverse programs and services to support all students and families
2. Educational options and programs - (46%)
  - Created career pathways for students to be successful after high school
  - Credit recovery programs and adaptive curriculum to support students
  - All-day PK programs
  - A wide range of programs welcome and serve students from various cultural, linguistic, and learning backgrounds
3. Classroom instruction that reflects the students’ cultures and backgrounds (38%)
  - Culturally specific/affirming programs
  - Different school sites specialize in different language immersion programs
  - Educational choices for students and families
4. Safe and welcoming school environments (34%)

A national leader in SEL and trauma-informed practices  
Hall monitors school support liaisons help students feel safe and try and support the students

*Additional comments:*

Addressing diversity – have created specific positions

Diversity of students and families

A rich diversity of students and families – immigrant communities honored at the district and site level

**B. Question 2 (Q 5 – Important issues)– WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE GREATEST CHALLENGES FACED BY SAINT PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOLS?**

Prominent responses from the Community Engagement Sessions include:

1. Building safe school environments (57%)
  - Every student deserves to feel safe at school
  - School discipline problems
  - Some students don't feel safe when there are lockdowns and fights
  - Drugs in the school and some students bring weapons to school
  - Address concerns to ensure the physical and emotional safety of students
2. Stabilizing public school funding (48%)
  - Budget cuts
  - Need to increase operating revenue
  - Right-sizing the school district – how do we do more with less in addressing bureaucratic inefficiencies
3. Addressing enrollment growth/decline (46%)
  - Maintaining and growing enrollment
  - Compete better with charter schools
  - Better market the district
4. High-quality and diverse teachers and staff (44%)
  - Teacher demographics to match the student population
  - Budget cuts have resulted in loss of good staff
  - Hiring process is challenging
  - Staff shortages – especially in special education

*Additional comments:*

Experience working with union



Work with staff and union leadership to develop collaborative systems that bridge gaps and build mutual understanding

**C. Question 3 – WHAT QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS DOES THE NEXT SUPERINTENDENT NEED TO POSSESS AND DEMONSTRATE?**

\*\*\*Please note that Survey Questions 2, 3, and 4 relate to the qualities and characteristics of the next superintendent and there is some degree of overlap in listing prominent responses.

Prominent responses Qualities (Survey question 2 – 3 most important skills) and from the Community Engagement Sessions follow:

1. Community-building skills to create strong relationships with students, staff and families (56%)
    - Visibility in the schools and community
    - Works well with a diverse community in a culturally responsive way
    - A bridge builder to the greater Saint Paul community
    - Will seek out student voices
  
  2. Ability to advance academic achievement and sustain the cultures, languages, and experiences of students – 53%
    - Proven track record of being able to transform a school district and closing the achievement gap
    - Proven record of improving student outcomes, closing achievement gaps and expanding equitable opportunities to create impactful learning for all students
  
  3. Listening skills to receive and effectively act upon feedback– 47%
    - Able to have tough conversations and still maintain a relationship
    - Listens to administrators view what to start, stop, and continue through an equity lens
  
  4. Leadership skills using a collaborative decision-making style – 44%
    - Will work collaboratively with stakeholders
    - Partnership builder
    - Invites people to weigh in on decisions so there will be more buy-in
    - Approachable with the ability to build authentic relationships
- Additional comments:*
- Politically savvy
  - Able to speak to issues and advocate for Saint Paul Public Schools
  - Experience and skills to navigate the political landscape and build strong partnerships with all agencies



**D. Prominent responses Characteristics (Survey question 3 – 3 most important characteristics) from the Community Engagement Sessions follow:**

1. Commitment to the community– 54%
  - Someone who is going to stick around
  - Will become an integral part of the community and be visible throughout schools and community
  - Will respect the history and build upon unique history and culture
  
2. Integrity (49%)
  - Honesty, transparent, humble, authentic
  - Courage to stand up for what’s right for children
  - Open to learning and able to admit “I don’t know”
  - Enormous amount of integrity
  
3. Strategic vision – 41%
  - Forward thinking about instruction with focus on student achievement
  - Visionary with an equity lens to support all students
  - Strategic planner

*Additional comments:*

- Experience working with and partnering with Union
- Will stay the course in making student-centered decisions and won’t give in to political pressures from the Board, city officials and critics

**E. Prominent responses (Survey question 4 – Extremely important/Important) from the Community Engagement Sessions follow:**

1. Experience in improving student academic outcomes - (98 %)
  - Can enact equity measures needed so all students can succeed and improve student performance – close achievement gaps
  - Expand equitable opportunities to help all students receive support to be successful
  
2. Experience in budgeting, finance and fiscal stewardship - (95%)
  - Experience in resource management
  - Strong understanding of finance
  - Can make tough financial decisions
  
3. Experience in strategic planning – 95%
  - Experience in creating a strategic plan with the community as part of its development
  - Strategic leader who consistently applies the district strategic plan, mission, and vision as a guide for decision-making
  - Someone who can “rock” a strategic plan

4. Experience as a superintendent with a proven record of success and Experience as a classroom teacher - (92%)  
Boots on the ground as a classroom teacher  
Experience leading a school district with similar size and urban complexity

## V. COMMON THEMES ACROSS SURVEY RESPONSES TO

- A. **QUESTION 2** – Three most important leadership skills you would like a superintendent to have
- B. **QUESTION 3** – Three most important characteristics you would like a superintendent to exhibit
- C. **QUESTION 4** – Indicate whether you believe it is extremely important/important in the new superintendent
- D. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GROUP RESPONSES TO** What Qualities and Characteristics Does the Next Superintendent Need to Possess and Demonstrate?

## VI. DRAFT LEADERSHIP PROFILE 2024

The Saint Paul Public Schools Leadership Profile is built on data collected through:

- Individual interviews with members of the Board of Education;
- Focus groups with staff, administrators, union leadership, Parent Advisory Councils, students, and community partners;
- In-person and online open forums conducted in English, Hmong, Karen, Somali, and Spanish; and an
- Online survey open to all members of the SPPS community.

BWP consultants analyzed the data and what emerged were criteria that describe the skills, experiences, knowledge, and personal qualities that your community believes are essential for your next superintendent.

The DRAFT Leadership Profile suggests that the next SPPS superintendent must be able to build upon the district's strengths and address its challenges. To do so, this leader must bring to the position personal qualities and values that will support the building of relationships across the school district and cultivate partnerships with community groups to better serve students.

### **SPPS Strengths to Build On**

- **Diverse Programs and Services:** SPPS is recognized for its inclusive approach to diversity, offering a wide range of programs that welcome and serve students from various cultural, linguistic, and learning backgrounds.
- **Student Support:** SPPS schools are committed to providing support systems to ensure student success and promote physical and mental well-being.
- **Community Pride:** St. Paul residents' pride in their community is a valuable asset to the district. SPPS employees include many former students and residents who choose to live in St. Paul.
- **Partnerships:** The district has a strong network of partnerships with local businesses and organizations to enhance student opportunities and resources. These community partners are committed to offering services to bridge gaps and support students.
- **Committed Staff:** Staff members are dedicated and hard-working. They have the best interests of students in their hearts.
- **Diversity:** SPPS reflects the diversity of St. Paul. This diversity is a strength and enriches the lives of students and residents. The diversity of the community and schools is valued by families.

### **SPPS Challenges to Address**

- **School/District Collaboration:** There is a strong sense that schools are siloed, lacking connection to one another and the district as a whole. The next leader will need to work with principals and administrators to take steps to bring greater coherence to the curriculum, instructional practices, and policy and procedure implementation.
- **Facilities:** The superintendent will need to optimize district facilities in alignment with enrollment changes and address ongoing challenges in maintaining and upgrading school infrastructure to ensure equity across buildings.
- **Budget and Finances:** Facing financial constraints and the need for strategic budgeting, the superintendent must have a solid understanding of financial management and the ability to make difficult decisions that prioritize student success.
- **Enrollment:** Declining enrollment is a critical issue. The superintendent will need to implement strategies to attract new students and retain existing ones, ensuring resource allocation matches enrollment needs.
- **Staff Diversity and Cultural Competency:** SPPS needs a superintendent who can increase the diversity of the staff and administration to better reflect the students the school district serves. All SPPS employees must be prepared to support culturally competent schools, classrooms, and instruction.
- **Labor Relations:** After a teacher strike, there are lingering trust issues between staff and the administration. The next superintendent must work with staff and union leadership to

develop collaborative systems and transparent practices that bridge gaps and build mutual understanding.

- **School Safety:** Every child deserves to feel safe at school. The superintendent needs to address concerns to create schools to ensure the physical and emotional safety of students.

### Essential Leadership Qualities

- **Instructional Leader:** Possesses a strong instructional background with a proven record of improving student outcomes, closing achievement gaps, expanding equitable opportunities, including career readiness, and empowering educators to create impactful, data-driven learning for all students.
- **Culturally Competent:** The next superintendent must be deeply committed to cultural understanding and equity, capable of leading initiatives that promote a culture of inclusivity and respect for all students and staff.
- **Equity Advocate:** A leader who advances equity initiatives, ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, has access to high-quality education and equal opportunities for success. Their focus should be on addressing inequalities, eliminating barriers, and combating racism across policies, programs, services, and curricula.
- **Trust Builder:** Building trust at all levels of the organization—staff, unions, families, and the broader community- is key. The next superintendent must foster an environment of transparency and mutual respect.
- **Relationship Builder:** The ideal candidate will have an approachable personality, connecting effortlessly with all stakeholders, from board members and community leaders to staff and students. Building authentic relationships will be central to their success.
- **Experienced in Similar Districts:** Experience working in a district with similar demographics, challenges, and strengths to SPPS is essential. The superintendent must understand the unique needs of diverse urban school districts and be prepared to bring innovative solutions.
- **Communicator:** Demonstrates strong interpersonal skills, a visible presence, and the ability to listen to and engage effectively with diverse groups. The superintendent should be adept at handling difficult conversations while maintaining strong relationships.
- **Politically Skilled:** Experience and skills to navigate the political landscape, fostering strong partnerships with government officials, school board members, school employees, and community organizations.
- **Committed:** The community wants a superintendent who seeks to “get to know” St. Paul. Actions and decisions need to respect the history of the city and build upon its unique history and culture.

The recommended draft Leadership Profile describes the qualities, characteristics, experiences, and skills the next Superintendent of Saint Paul Public Schools must demonstrate and possess. This document helps clarify the type of leader who is the best match and fit to lead Saint Paul Public Schools forward.

## VII. FINAL COMMENTS

The BWP search team members have learned much about the Saint Paul School System and community and were very impressed with the willingness of participants to share candidly. The team enjoyed meeting key community, school, and district leaders. We found the staff to be capable and dedicated. We were pleased to hear about the variety of program offerings, especially the amount of technology available to faculty and students. We are hopeful that the next superintendent will take full advantage of community support and resources. The team will use the approved Leadership Profile to actively engage in the recruitment stage of the search process for selecting your next leader.

# Appendix A

## Interview and Focus Group Feedback Transcriptions

### Board Interviews – 7

#### What are the greatest strengths of SPPS?

- East African-focused school
- School leaders have been developed from within and are effective with our community and population
- Partnerships with the University of St. Thomas, particularly with under-represented population
- Homegrown feeling to the school district - many people who live here went to school in SPPS
- Language access programs - immersion programs to meet the needs of students
- Addressing diversity - created specific positions (using ESSER Funds),
- Partnerships with community organizations so that the materials are relevant to the students who go there
- Placing long-term investments to address challenges
- Community loyalty to its schools
- Diversity that is represented in our student body and their cultures
- District embraces its community - people grow up here and return to work in their schools
- Diversity of families and students
- Good programs around career readiness
- Good Board of Education - diverse - age and ethnic backgrounds – but share values
- St. Paul has a desire to run specific programs that are research-based and attract committed professionals – language, IB, AVID
- St. Paul is doing something unique and learning about it
- St. Paul is working hard to attract enrollment and make the school district a choice
- Educator quality is very high, attracts talent and retains talent
- Equity and cultural representation are present in the classroom with authenticity
- St. Paul is the largest small city in the country—the neighborhood feels with unique cultures and characteristics
- Families who are connected to SPPS, generations who attended the schools and therefore have ownership of the schools and school districts
- Culturally specific/affirming programs
- Higher pay for teachers
- Good front-line staff
- Staff who emerges from the community is a plus (8 or 10 of us who worked at Humbolt were graduates of the school)
- How we welcome immigrants to our school district
- Innovative practices in how to care for immigrants and build practices

- Investing in public infrastructure
- School district has incredible potential as a school district and city
- Community loyalty to the schools
- Charter schools
- Embrace diversity

### **What do you see as the greatest challenges facing SPPS?**

- Literacy performance, especially as disaggregated by race, economic level, language
- Facilities
- New finance team
- Budget cuts and adjustments to the new financial parameters
- More buildings than we need - what will be our direction with them
- Enrollment stabilized, but probably at a floor
- Envision - may need to close additional buildings
- Raising expectations for all students
- Need some anti-racist training
- Bringing all of the cultures into our classrooms and leveraging it for success
- Changing some teacher perspectives and updating their instructional methodology (changing beliefs and mindsets) - teachers are stuck
- Teacher demographics match to student demographics
- Maintaining enrollment/growing enrollment
- Meeting the needs of all of our students and families, especially with equity and belonging
- Cultural competence for staff
- More education around life skills - financial literacy
- We don't listen to each other and sometimes talk down to people we do not agree with
- Funding
- Inherited a culture of distrust—we can't trust information or engagement because that would alter the plan we have developed (Central office) and at the school level there is a feeling that the central office is always judging us
- Safety and how we approach it—SRO vs. district-developed program that focuses on relationships vs. enforcement - funding and techniques
- Developing more “wrap around” services for immigrants—collaborating with city and county services
- How do we use our facilities more efficiently and effectively
- Air conditioning all schools—equity among the buildings



- Distrust within the community—some residents are choosing our schools and others are not (only 60% of the eligible students choose SPPS)
- Improving engagement and communication to improve decision-making
- Improving the marketing of the SPPS
- Finding ways to engage neighborhoods/communities is shaping their schools and serving their needs
- Differentiating funding for schools
- Working with the Union

**What knowledge, skills, experiences, and personal qualities does the next superintendent of SPPS need to possess and demonstrate?**

- Led a school district with similar size and urban complexity
- Understands how to communicate with diverse communities
- Desire for cultural competency or at least willingness to learn
- A bridge builder to the greater St. Paul community
- Dig into the weeds to
- Knows how to rebuild relationships with Union
- Able to rethink and redefine the relationship with the Board as it evolves and players change
- Able to navigate and support the central office and buildings as they work through the anxiety of change
- Will need to do a new strategic plan and how to engage with the community in the development of it
- Can define what equity looks like in our buildings, measure it, and institutionalize it
- Understands locally what is going on but can bring some objectivity
- Can enact the equity measures needed so all children can succeed the performance
- Courage to move the needle around equity and stand on what they believe in (black and brown students can achieve)
- Calm and cool demeanor and can send positive energy into space
- Knows and understands a multi-cultural community and respects it (foot baths for Muslim students)
- Skills needed to do the job, but may not necessarily have been a superintendent
- Preference would have experience as a superintendent
- Values diversity
- High level of cultural competency
- Values authentic community engagement
- Able to manage teams well
- Understand power dynamics and how they affect teams and work and can balance it
- Respectful and respect others no matter what their position is
- Engaging, with a nice personality
- Listen to others, different stakeholders, and meet them on their terms
- Work collaboratively

- Treats people well
- Builds trust in immediate circle, trains for it, and the circle builds it, too
- Builds up relationships with the leaders and the community
- Prioritize good actions and good relationships over the presentation or how good you look
- Strong administrators - understand how it all works, not one size fits all
- Build relationships with site leaders - make sure that things go well
- Not afraid to joke about themselves - good sense of humor and relaxed with the Board members
- Be collaborative with the Board and others, and participate in training with the Board
- At ease with people
- Willing to roll up their sleeves and be boots on the ground—providing coaching in the moment (when a student was stabbed in a building, the superintendent would be in the building with the principal)
- Visible presence
- Disconnects between the central office and the school buildings
- Provides answers to questions that the Board is seeking-budget questions (How many teachers were cut? How many teachers were cut?) - improving reporting structures
- Extend our legislative agenda
- Understands St. Paul as a community
- Experience (Assistant or Associate may be ok but has demonstrated growth and improvement in previous position)
- Someone who can “rock” a strategic plan
- Can re-establish trust with building principals down
- Experience working with and partnering with Union

## Elementary, Middle, and High School Principals – 51

### Strengths

- Leadership in SPPS is diverse
- Focus on equity
- Strong pride
- Networking among colleagues
- Multiple supports for students to be successful
- Opening the Afro-Centric School
- Rich history in the community
- Collaboration and Administrative Support from principals to principals
- Strong group of Administrators
- Richness of Diversity of staff and students
- Robust PD for principals
- Work has been focused and centralized due to stable leadership
- Different immersion programs

- Created pathways for students to be successful after high school
- Clear curriculum alignment
- Equity support-
- Parent advisory and academies for our different ethnic groups- childcare for the parent academies and advisory councils
- Support for the students who speak a different language than English at the site and district office
- Different school sites specialize in different languages- Hmong, Karen
- Hiring teachers who can speak multiple languages
- Diverse staff
- Culturally relevant instruction and language
- St. Paul Community embraces the schools.
- Unique security apparatus at the district level and mobile patrols
- Relationships with the different city agencies, including police
- Resources for families and students- homeless is providing transportation and internet
- Multiple supports for students to be successful. (3X)
- Opening the Afro-Centric School
- Rich history in the community
- Collaboration and Administrative Support from principals to principals
- A strong group of Administrators
- Richness of Diversity of staff and students
- Robust PD for principals
- Work has been focused and centralized due to stable leadership
- Different immersion programs
- Created pathways for students to be successful after high school ● Clear curriculum alignment

### **Challenges**

- Declining enrollment – stabilizing enrollment
- Charter Schools competition
- Continued support for equity
- Not supported by upper management
- Principals not at the table for important issues
- Uptick in violence
- Limited support to address socio-emotional issues
- Allocation of resources
- Principal burnout
- Too many silos make it hard to receive proper support in building

- Check on the people - don't treat us like robots
- It is hard to staff specialized programs such as immersion schools
- Human Resource timelines for hiring.
- Constraints built into the teacher contract-teacher union influence on lack of accountability
- Contractual agreements match district policy
- Work still needs to be done to interrupt systemic racism
- More alignment between district office departments- they know what each department is doing and ask building leaders
- Non-school Based Staff- 9/30/24 5 people
- Communication is not timely, consistent, or transparent
- Lack of communication in departments and across departments (2x)
- Families don't have enough information or rationale as to why different decisions are made
- Paralysis in decision-making- too slow
- Unequitable facilities- i.e., air conditioning and safety features
- A more proactive approach to student attendance
- Increase multilingual support in school's hallways
- Need more student support liaisons at schools
- Loss of enrollment to charter schools
- More follow-up with students needed
- Transportation with schools- City Metro buses are considered unsafe by parents, so they go to Charter schools where they can get a school bus for student transportation.
- More presence of St. Paul District office staff, including the superintendent, in all classrooms, not just hand-picked ones.
- More accountability for teachers- achievement gap
- It is hard to staff specialized programs such as immersion schools
- Human Resource timelines for hiring.
- Constraints built into the teacher contract-teacher union influence on lack of accountability
- Contractual agreements match district policy
- Work still needs to be done to interrupt systemic racism
- More alignment between district office departments- they know what each department is doing and ask building leaders

### **Characteristics and qualities desired:**

- Personable
- Engage people
- Humility
- Deep understanding of large urban district
- Visible

- Flexible
- Open to learning
- Experience in resource management
- Experience breaking down silos
- Will always put students first
- Works well with the site leaders
- A fresh set of eyes
- Funding to support program implementation at the building
- Able to sustain and build leaders, especially leaders of color
- Consistency
- Listens to administrators' views of what to start, stop, and continue through an equity lens ● Works with HR to put administrators in a good position to hire in the spring.
- Ability to work with the board - addressing different agendas
- Understand administrators and students of color have additional barriers to overcome
- Able to have tough conversations and still maintain the relationship
- Experience/ability right size the district facilities and enrollment
- Understands the political landscape of the Twin Cities
- Face of the district that can counter the negative perception of the district
- Has a vision and plan to break down silos, bridge communication across the district
- Have emotional intelligence
- Balance of different skills
- Lead equity work
- Able to work with teacher union
- Collaboratively work with different stakeholders
- Interpersonal skills through being visible- having conversations with many different people.
- Non-school Based Staff- 9/30/24 5 people
- Understands focusing on mental health and student behaviors.
- Supporting staff mental health
- Stay the course for student-centered solutions- don't give in to political pressure from school board members, city officials, and critics- not a puppet.
- Open to working with the security team and modernizing the security tools needed.
- Support financial help for childcare learning academies.
- Culturally open-minded
- Tools to increase student enrollment
- Advocate at the state legislator for SPPS
- Equity lens with athletics- equal opportunity access across the different schools
- Able to connect with parents and seek feedback

- Visible
- Works well with the site leaders
- A fresh set of eyes
- Funding to support program implementation at the building
- Able to sustain and build leaders, especially leaders of color
- Consistency
- Listens to administrators' views of what to start, stop, and continue through an equity lens
- Works with HR to put administrators in a good position to hire in the spring.
- Ability to work with the board - addressing different agendas
- Understand administrators and students of color have additional barriers to overcome
- Able to have tough conversations and still maintain the relationship
- Experience/ability right size the district facilities and enrollment
- Understands the political landscape of the Twin Cities
- Face of the district that can counter the negative perception of the district
- Has a vision and plan to break down silos, bridge communication across the district
- Have emotional intelligence
- Balance of different skills
- Lead equity work
- Able to work with teacher union
- Collaboratively work with different stakeholders
- Interpersonal skills through being visible- having conversations with many different people.

## District Office Administration – 11

### What are the greatest strengths of SPPS?

- Diversity of the school district-both staff and students
- Good leaders,
- Caring people
- Efforts to improve Tier 1 instructions - pedagogy and curriculum
- Passion and advocacy across staff, community, and elected officials - people care deeply about things

- Strength of our unions
- Choice offerings and vast, and developed after listening to the community—recognizing the ethnic and nationalities of the community - giving families what they want
- Embracing project management to push through complex projects while engaging with the community and outcomes - more awareness of how our work impacts staff, families, and students
- Strong engagement with community organizations - partnerships, 3m, Bellwin Conservancy for nature center
- Leaders willing to look at problems differently, not just the way we've always done it
- Strong staff dedication to SPPS
- Small, niche, community schools
- Academics and schools are one department (more unification on the teaching and learning side)
- National leader on SEL and trauma-informed practices

**What do you see as the greatest challenges facing SPPS?**

- Facilities make it difficult to have “economies of scale”
- Right-sizing the school district - how do we do more with less - functional capacity
- How do we do “strategic abandonment”- when do we stop doing something
- Asked to be all things to all people (even for small groups or small schools) spreads things thin
- Competition for students with charters and
- Contractual requirements around class size that hamstring decisions
- Advocacy can sometimes lead to some less efficient/effective decisions “if you show up and make a ruckus, you'll get your way”
- Budget challenges and declining enrollment
- Need to improve outcomes for students
- Spend a lot of time addressing distractions
- Evolving student and parent dynamics that impact how we serve and who we serve racially, culturally, linguistically, sexually
- Board can be micromanaging and prevent systemic work

**What knowledge, skills, experiences, and personal qualities does the next superintendent of SPPS need to possess and demonstrate?**

- Thick-skinned
- Resilience, can take the shots for the staff
- Compassion - love for other people
- Calm
- Healing—listen, understand and trust
- Compassionate
- Politically savvy—be able to speak to the issues and advocate
- Not a wrecking ball—willing to listen to the staff



- Modeling strength through curiosity, clarity, integrity, and inquiry
- What he said, he was going to follow through with
- Respect the expertise of others
- Experience
- Someone who is going to stick around
- Strong understanding of school finance - cannot continue to deficit spend
- Someone who can make tough financial decisions

## District Leaders - 21

### Strengths

- Staff are dedicated and come and stay in the school district, many were former students
- Diversity
- Educational choices for students and families
- A big city/small town with lots of connectedness
- Access to programming for students and families
- Supports life-long learning—providing opportunities to grow
- School district is recognized as a leader in the state (dual language, East African school, assistive technology)
- Parent community values education
- Responsive to individuals and their needs

### Challenges

- Value for education
- Sustaining efforts to completion
- Too many initiatives
- Financial issues
- Connection between buildings and the central office
- Low referendum level—need to increase operating revenue

### Characteristics and desired skills:

- Build relationships and connections with the community
- Positive vision
- Forward thinking about instruction and high quality options
- Student focus on achievement
- Student focus on equity

- Advocate for academic rigor
- Integrity
- Thick-skinned
- Follows through and gets things done
- Celebrates successes
- Racial equity leadership and can talk about their own equity journey
- Balance academics with belonging work
- Open to learning and able to admit, “I don’t know”
- Leads with relationships
- Communicator
- Able to say no when necessary
- Data sensitive around student achievement and enrollment
- Can take a stand when needed

Experience with organized labor Inquisitive

## SELT: Superintendent’s Executive Leadership Team/Interim Superintendent – 6

### What are the greatest strengths of SPPS?

- Capitol City School District
- Partnerships with county, city, parks - natural and authentic
- Most elected officials send their children to our schools – mayor, governor
- Ethnic/racial diversity of students, staff, and community (languages, cultures)
- Good place to go through the “challenges”
- Innovatively focused, forward-thinking
- Some of the brightest people I know work here
- Senior leadership team is stellar
- Academic programming–career pathways and making school relevant
- Portfolio of choices
- Thoughtful and pushing for more
- Moving past silos in schools
- Embrace who are community is and program for them (languages –Ojibwa, Dakota, Karin, Hmong)
- Choices for students and families
- Culturally responsive programming
- Diversity of students

- Programming we provide

**What do you see as the greatest challenges facing SPPS?**

- Student outcomes
- Teachers have too many options and choices – too many opt-ins, no integrity and viability in the implementation of ideas
- Not spending enough time on instruction - leadership, Board, etc.
- St. Paul is a community that demands yes - having to say no is very difficult
- Alignment
- Complexity of \$1 billion organization

The contract that has a number of provisions that may limit innovation

Trying to distinguish between what is student-centered and what is adult-centered Setting expectations – who owns the data?

**What knowledge, skills, experiences, and personal qualities does the next superintendent of SPPS need to possess and demonstrate?**

- Proven track record of being able to transform a school district and closing the opportunity gaps
- Able to manage up the Board and help them understand the difference between governance and operations
- Experience working with very difficult union leadership
- A visionary
- Can attract talent
- Must read the contract with teachers
- Would like to see local candidates - outsiders don't do so well here
- A willingness to make the tough decisions that may cost them their job
- Will take the time to build relationships before making the tough decisions
- Be ok with strong personalities
- Accepting how that Board wants to engage - adaptive is sharing power
- Understand the need for information and value the structures that support and maintain the collection and maintenance of data and know how to use them
- Network with a large variety of folks to benefit the district
- Understands how to be in the community, establish partnerships, and network
- Not be a transactional leader—" not an open door yes"

- A advocate for equity - race, gender, language, and be courageous about it in conversation - arms open, holding it as a value and strength rather than weaponizing
- Extrovert - connect with people easily
- Visible in schools and had relationships with students – Dr. G was mentoring everyone, and everyone knew him
- Knows how to build credibility
- Active part of the council with Great City Schools and see the benefits of participation and can convince the Board of that value
- Can prioritize and have a laser focus on those priorities
- Someone who can make difficult decisions and stick with them in the face of a lot of criticism
- Fundraising skills and making connections to bring in additional revenue streams
- Courage
- Data-driven decision-maker
- Working with the Board to have a primary focus on student performance v. community engagement

### **Community Forums (In person/Virtual) – Hazel Park Prep Academy, Como Park Senior HS – Virtual -25/In person 17 - 42**

#### **Strengths:**

- Neighborhood schools
- Great School Board focus on community engagement
- Strong hard-working working and dedicated staff
- Students are amazing
- Range of diverse students
- How the district honors bilingual students/families
- Supportive programs and choices are given to support the different needs of students
- Choices for students and parents
- Diversity – racial/cultural in schools
- Quality teachers
- Alternative education (Montessori Education)
- Relationships within schools
- Sense of community is strong

#### **Challenges:**

- Retention of staff, loss of teachers
- Concern with recent budget cuts that have impacted the schools – music/Arts
- Adequate funding for the schools
- Lack of transparency in the district
- Low expectations
- Portrait of a SPPS graduate does not exist
- Communication in crisis situations
- Concern with 360
- Parents feel left out of conversations on issues that impact them
- Providing enough support for teachers to be successful
- Concern with large class size
- Disparity in quality of school buildings – some do not have air conditioning
- Disproportionate suspensions to students of color
- Enrollment challenges – loss of students to charter schools
- The district needs to improve communication
- Students still struggling after COVID
- Need more recess time for elementary students
- Teachers need more support with student behavioral issues
- Need more parental involvement
- Concern with SPED services and meeting the needs of IEPs
- District needs to improve community engagement • Families leaving the district

### **Characteristics and qualities desired:**

- Ability to work with the Union – as mutual partners
- Values increased mental health support for students and staff
- Will make changes to improve the district
- Invested in Saint Paul
- Academic scholar
- Backbone to stand up in the face of behavior challenges
- Experience with data and improving test scores
- Experience in organizational restructuring
- Understanding of quality Montessori Education at the state and local level
- Present
- Empathy
- Understand anti-racist paradigms and their impact on today's educational environment

- Will continue equity focus across the district
- Student-centered
- Authentic
- Engages in anti-racist practices
- Ability to develop a strategic plan/vision that will move us forward
- Humble
- Experience as a teacher
- Collaborative
- Wants to be an integral part of the community – be visible
- Will value the Arts
- Will address safety issues
- Kind
- Will hold people accountable for consistency of practices across division
- Someone parents can relate to
- Previous experience in a large diverse district
- Integrity
- Honest
- Approachable
- Experience as a classroom teacher – boots on the ground
- Will guide us to the future
- Will put equity in the forefront
- Can earn their confidence in working with the Board in moving the district forward
- Understands finance and can address our financial issues
- Strategic planner
- Visionary
- Good communicator

## **Community Forums (In person/Virtual) – Hazel Park Prep Academy, Como Park Senior HS- Spanish, Hmong, Karen, Somali**

### **Appendix D**

## Students – Harding Senior, Washington Tech Magnet, Como Park Senior, Highland Park Senior, Humbolt, OWL - 79

### Strengths:

- Many options for students to choose from – multiple programs
- Many resources for all students - college prep programs and non-college programs
- Have college classes in schools
- Career pathways
- Like a sense of community in our school
- Appreciate diversity of faculty
- Diversity – good to know so many different people
- Good teachers, teachers care
- Many resources – AVID Program, Naval ROTC, Upward Bound, AP classes, IB classes
- Expression and encouragement of different cultures
- Many clubs, cultural clubs, athletic programs
- Good support from Guidance counselors – College Fairs
- Hall monitors/School Support Liaisons help students feel safe and try to support
- Hall monitors are positive
- Credit Recovery program, academic support
- All kids get F/R

### Challenges:

- Don't feel safe when there are lockdowns/ fights
- Drugs in schools
- Dress code issues
- Concern with lack of discipline – kids in the hall that don't care about class
- Want more communication when discipline issues arise
- Improve bathrooms
- Concern with bus transportation
- Change having students having to pay for sports
- Concern that some classes have been cut
- Need stricter and more consistent phone policy – but understand phones are tools for learning not a distraction



- Don't want to lose Excel classes
- Some kids bring weapons to school
- Demographics in top-level classes do not reflect the school
- Some kids can just walk into school
- Concern with kids skipping class
- 9<sup>th</sup> graders are out of control
- Would like to see an equally distributed budget – some schools get more
- Some classes too big – large class size
- District cuts resulted in us losing 2 great teachers
- Better support for students who are struggling

### **Characteristics and qualities desired:**

- Relatable to students
- Will seek out student voices
- #1 priority should be the success of all students
- Good listener
- Will take action and deliver on promises
- Ability to make things work for all students
- Will make the district better – will push for progress
- Someone we can look up to
- Experience as a teacher
- Honest
- Help get us more options for lunch
- Will support the Arts, academics and athletics
- Visible in schools
- Understands equity and that some schools need different things
- Charismatic
- Comes with a good track record
- Understands there are multiple solutions addressing problems/issues
- Understanding of finance
- Want to know Superintendent
- Equity in support for all students
- Support a greater variety of internships beyond STEM
- Open-minded
- Better support for students with IEPs

- Someone who can understand kids
- Help with school safety and making us feel safe - and have fewer fights
- Would like a younger Superintendent who can relate to us
- Will be out and about and be part of our community
- Progressive

## **Trades/Facilities/Teaching and Learning/EOS Staff, Nutrition Services/Clerks and Technical Employees – 35**

### **Strengths:**

- Diversity
- Organizationally strong
- Vibrant community
- Community wants good schools
- Competitive salaries
- Desire/sense of wanting to improve and do better
- Committed teachers and staff, dedicated teachers
- Credit recovery programs and adaptive curriculum to support students
- New literacy program
- Many program opportunities for students
- Resiliency

### **Issues/challenges/concerns:**

- Safety and security – fights in schools
- Funding
- Loss of ESSER \$
- Literacy and math scores are too low – must improve
- Enrollment challenges and challenges of combining schools
- Tension in working with Unions
- Losing students to charter schools
- Competition with charter schools
- Budget cuts and loss of staff
- Finding balance in how to honor cultures and have an integrated system

**Characteristics and qualities desired:**

- Empathy
- Decisive
- Compassion
- Previous successful experience in comparable district
- Understanding of facilities
- Experience working with unions
- Ability to work with School Board
- Ability to earn trust
- Thoughtful decision maker
- Understands the importance of a team approach
- Ability to make tough decisions in a respectful way
- Can create a vision that will evolve and improve the district
- Ability to create and implement a strategic plan
- Ability to work with Unions
- Strong instructional background
- Welcoming
- Innovative
- Understanding the social-emotional needs of both students and staff
- Will get to know and be visible in the community
- Ability to strong team together and hold people accountable
- Sees the big picture
- Understands technology
- Strong listening and communication skills

**Teachers/EAs/Other School-based Staff, Clerks and Technical Employees – 11****Strengths:**

- Huge diversity
- Innovation
- Proud staff (teachers)
- Critical Ethnic Studies
- Staff live in the community

- Equity/inclusion work
- Committed staff
- High-quality teachers and staff
- PD opportunities done in-house
- Focus on equity
- School choice programs
- All-day PK programs

**Challenges:**

- Discipline procedures
- Opportunity gap
- Recess for elementary students
- Staff voice is missing
- Equity needs to be embedded in every conversation
- Large class sizes
- Strict hierarchy impedes open communication
- Poor communication
- Teacher union v. administration
- HR challenges

**Characteristics and qualities desired:**

- Building relationships
- Being present in all of the schools
- Humble
- Person of color or have lived in a community similar to SPSS
- Strong commitment to diversity and equity
- Visible
- Budget experience
- Visionary – will bring fresh ideas
- Connected to the community
- Ability to make changes
- Ability to listen

- Ability to hold people accountable
- Visibility in the schools – not just superintendent but also SELT
- Will determine what works and what does not work and make changes
- Empathy
- Ability to work with the teacher union
- Ability to work with the School Board

## SPFE Leadership - 14

### Strengths:

- Diversity
- Many excellent dedicated teachers and staff

### Challenges:

- Adequate funding
- Bloated central office staff
- Building improved trust between central office and stakeholders
- Improve case load support for SPED

### Characteristics and qualities desired:

- Will examine what works and what doesn't work and more forward
- Transparency
- Experience in building partnerships
- Will hold staff accountable
- Collaborative style – with all stakeholders
- Excellent communicator – with all stakeholders
- Values the Arts
- Invested in CTE
- Authentic
- Ability to genuinely work with the Union
- Views educators in the schools as partners

## Non-School Based Staff – 11

### Strengths

- Students
- Staff
- Attention and responsiveness to diverse groups and families
- Veteran staff who are dedicated to the district
- Variety of schools and programs
- St. Paul is a special community and makes connections with the community
- Graduates choose to live in the community and work in the schools
- Districts make efforts to develop connections with the community
- Partnerships with community organizations that support the schools - Hiring from within
- Support staff to further their professional development
- Races and cultures in the community are reflected in the staff
- Strong community
- Equity support-
- Parent advisory and academies for our different ethnic groups
- -childcare for the parent academies and advisory councils
- Support for the students who speak a different language than English At the site and district office
- Different school sites specialize in different languages-
- Hiring teachers who can speak multiple languages
- Diverse staff
- Culturally relevant instruction and language
- St. Paul Community embraces the schools.
- Unique security apparatus at the district level and mobile patrols
- Relationships with the different city agencies, including police
- Resources for families and students- homeless is providing transportation and internet

### Challenges

- Retaining staff - does the school district provide enough time resources, and training to support the staff

- Seeing initiatives through to implementation with fidelity
- Communication is not timely, consistent, or transparent
- Lack of communication in departments and across departments (2x)
- Families don't have enough information or rationale as to why different decisions are made
- Paralysis in decision-making- too slow
- Unequitable facilities- i.e., air conditioning and safety features
- A more proactive approach to student attendance
- Increase multilingual support in school's hallways
- Need more student support liaisons at schools
- Loss of enrollment to charter schools
- More follow-up with students needed
- Transportation with schools- City Metro buses are considered unsafe by parents, so they go to Charter schools where they can get a school bus for student transportation.
- More presence of St. Paul District office staff, including the superintendent, in all classrooms, not just hand-picked ones.
- More accountability for teachers- achievement gap

**Characteristics and qualities desired:**

- Understands focusing on mental health and student behaviors.
- Supporting staff mental health
- Stay the course for student-centered solutions- don't give in to political pressure from school board members, city officials, and critics- not a puppet.
- Open to working with the security team and modernizing the security tools needed.
- Support financial help for childcare learning academies.
- Culturally open-minded
- Tools to increase student enrollment
- Advocate at the state legislator for SPPS
- Equity lens with athletics- equal opportunity access across the different schools
- Able to connect with parents and seek feedback
- Visible



## All Staff Open Session - 10

### Strengths

- The people—staff, families, students—committed to SPPS
- Collaboration - intentional efforts to learn and get better at supporting students, staff, and schools
- Commitment to looking at the whole child and each child's needs
- Flexibility—ability to pivot to serve students
- Staff experiences and longevity
- Multilingual programs
- Strong speech and language pathology system with reasonable caseload caps
- Staff is well-compensated
- Well-organized SLP department
- District -owned communication devices
- Staff is dedicated and largely effective in their work with students
- Student diversity
- Commitment of families to St. Paul
- Desire at the district level to streamline curriculum and initiatives
- Teachers have a fair amount of autonomy

### Challenges

- Some inequities across buildings with facilities
- Communication—how do we connect and listen to people and explain how a decision was reached
- Transparency
- Districts, departments, and schools are in silos
- Accountability—making certain that decisions/initiatives are implemented
- Culture of fear—people cannot speak their truths without fear of retaliation
- Consistency and focus
- Communication—get the message out clearly, too much like a “telephone game”
- Clarifying what is important to accomplish and what is reasonable to accomplish
- Staff shortages, especially in special education

- Too much time is spent by teachers collecting data and not enough time using these data to guide instruction
- Disenrollment
- Harder to motivate students, seem to lack intrinsic motivation and self-regulation
- Test score
- Lack of trust between classrooms and the district administration (less at the building level)
- The hiring process is challenging.
- The department seems to not move it along with any sense of urgency
- Lack of clarity and transparency around staffing and budgeting

**Characteristics and qualities desired:**

- Listens first and then communicates their thought process
- Open
- Empathetic
- Transparent
- Good communicator
- Acknowledges the issues and seeks input from staff on how best to proceed
- Makes actions match words
- Accessible—able to have a conversation, not an “untouchable”
- Clear communicator—set up clear protocols
- Works well with a diverse community in a culturally responsive way
- Charismatic
- Direct in answering questions
- Someone who can learn about SPPS
- Authentic
- If from out of state, there will be a Minnesota learning curve
- Be visible in the schools
- Builds relationships
- Good at looking a large, complex systems to identify limiting factors
- Focus on student outcomes—every day, week, year, and at graduation
- Focuses on students and their needs
- Able to build trust with family and staff
- Expertise in curriculum and instruction

## Teachers/EA - 16

### Strengths

- Neighborhood schools that are hubs for the community
- School Board–focused on engagement, asking tough questions
- Diversity of programs offered to students
- Staff–hard-working (working their tails off) and dedicated
- Quality and variety of schools
- Students
- Programs and supports for students–interpreters

### Challenges

- Providing enough support for teachers
- Retention of staff
- Budget cuts are impacting programs - music and arts, students
- Lack of transparency–budget cuts are a confusing process with lots of finger-pointing
- Communication
- Student focus
- Decline in enrollment
- Follow through on committee recommendations

### Characteristics and desired skills:

- Outsider who can bring new insights and perspectives
- Partnership builder
- Engaging
- Listener
- Able to think outside the box to solve problems
- Values the mental health of students
- Willing to have tough conversations with the union to settle the contract
- Invests and commits to the community
- Communicate with all – teachers and parents
- A strategic leader who consistently applies the district’s strategic plan, mission, and vision to decision-making
- Familiar with desegregation practices
- Authentic–can make an authentic apology when mistakes are made
- Engages in anti-racist practices
- Collaborator
- Humble

- Past teaching experience
- Someone who wants to learn about our community
- Invites people to weigh in on decisions so that there is more buy-in

## Community Partners - 18

### Strengths:

- Educators committed to students
- Students and their leadership
- Building leadership–principals
- Literacy initiative
- Provides a lot of different schools for different types of students and families–choice
- Student access to lots of extra-curricular programs
- Language opportunities for students
- Good communication with partners
- Adapting the schools to give families what they want
- Rich diversity of students and families- immigrant communities honored at the district and site level. (4)
- Involvement of people in the parent advisory committees that advise the school board
- The district is located in a thriving city
- Close collaboration between city and school district
- St. Paul Community embraces the schools. The community has passed numerous referendums.
- Residents and alumni are proud of the district  
The City Council and Mayor committed to education and prioritized it  
The mayor and superintendent have had a good relationship in the past. The city wants to know how we can help and partner with the district  
Flexibility between the different school sites when working with school partners
- Students have many options - Innovative programs, including culture-specific magnet schools that are helping stabilize enrollment.
- Commitment to holistic education
- Terrific teachers and staff (2)
- Educators and Students- a commitment to their students and the student's leadership
- Size of the district
- Great relationships with the College and Career office
- Concurrent enrollment is going well for students
- A collaborative plan with a college for an AA degree in high schools

- Community partners have a great relationship with the district (2)-Share student data to support the work
- Flexibility between the different school sites when working with school partners
- Students have many options - Innovative programs, including culture-specific magnet schools that are helping stabilize enrollment.
- Commitment to holistic education
- Terrific teachers and staff (2)
- Educators and Students- a commitment to their students and the student's leadership
- Size of the district
- Great relationships with the College and Career office
- Concurrent enrollment is going well for students
- A collaborative plan with a college for an AA degree in high schools
- Community partners have a great relationship with the district (2)-Share student data to support the work

## Challenges:

- Turf issues with community partners
- Finances - not enough revenue
- The budgeting process lacked transparency
  - Use of facilities for community partners—not a clear process and some barriers
  - Athletic department funding
  - Access to athletic programs for some students
  - Segregation between special education and general education students
- Schools are siloed—no real district feel
- Relationship between schools and the police department—needs to be repaired
- Communication
- Library serves are not fully funded
- Enrollment consistency across the district—some classes are too large and others are under-enrolled
- There is a lack of collaboration between city libraries and the school district regarding the new literacy program.
- Exodus of students out of St. Paul- lost 5400 students since 2017. The largest decline was from the African American and Asian communities.
- Lack of personalized learning across the district- some examples of it occurring. I.e 1:1 assessment before school starts
- Communication is not timely, consistent, or transparent
- District not always taking advantage of outside funds available
- Problems with truancy and attendance-finding students that have fallen through the cracks
- Gang violence in the community
- Youth and families requiring mental health support
- Not taking advantage of the Minnesota Student Survey
- Need more opportunities for students to receive post-secondary credits in high schools, including the trades.
- Families struggling to make ends meet for day-to-day needs. - food/stable housing. Lack of transportation for out-of-school day activities and non-school days, including summer
- Relationship with teacher's union- need a positive relationship, but there are limits to teacher compensation when the contract increase is higher than state funding allocation,
- Low staff morale
- Facilities- conditions both functionality and cleanliness
- All students are not held to high expectations- rigor is lacking
- Internal communication between staff members- the right doesn't know what the left is doing

- Fiscal problems with the loss of COVID dollars

### **Characteristics and desired skills:**

- Fiscally responsible—able to balance the budget
  - Able to determine priorities and balance competing interests
  - Visible
  - Makes local connections
  - Supportive of community partnerships
  - Experience in a context similar to SPPS
  - Community focus—sees schools as a part of a larger community where community partners complement the work of schools.
  - Address bureaucratic inefficiencies
  - Collaborate with the teachers' union—put “bad blood” behind them
  - Recruit more teachers and administrators to build staff diversity
  - Experience in diverse school districts and understanding diversity in the community
  - Community-minded focus
  - Committed to building on the strengths and not the weaknesses of the district
  - Help students earn post-secondary training- college credit and the trades
  - Understand the value of community schools
  - Work with community partners in schools to support students-
  - Bring financial transparency to the district- working within systems and protocols for funds secured through outside agencies and state funding.
  - Enormous amount of integrity
  - Aware of data and what is working to help students.
  - Superintendent - not designee to serve on community boards
  - Look for ways to make things happen- not a deficit mindset
  - An innovator
  - Finds value in community mentors in the schools
  - Career pathways for all students- working with local employees
  - Effective Communicator- is transparent with information and the ability to articulate a clear vision and district priorities
  - Can make tough decisions
- Accessible to parents and community members
- Build capacity in leaders
  - Can pay attention to the details without losing the bigger picture

Emails - 11

## Appendix B

English Survey Results – 2,5869

Spanish - 155

Hmong - 30

Somali - 11

Karen- 44

## Appendix C

Student Survey Results – 120

## Appendix D SPECIAL REPORT

### Superintendent Search – Special Report Parental Advisory Councils and Bilingual Families

#### I. Overall Attendance All Sessions: September 19 – October 1, 2024

Language /Affinity Group	In Person	Virtual	Combined
Parent Advisory Councils (All)	149	N/A	149
English	15	25	40
Hmong	10	3	13
Karen	37	13	50
Spanish	8	37	45
Somali	9	6	15
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>84</b>	
<b>Total Attendance</b>			<b>312</b>

#### II. Advisory Councils

- A. *American Indian Parent Advisory Council* – September 23  
**What are the best things happening in the SPPS?**



- Pretty happy – the first time I've gotten an email from my son's teacher. She was telling me he was struggling with focus, but we're talking with the sped teacher to find good support. Happy to have good parent-teacher engagement this year. Son is learning 7 grandfather teachings. So happy he's at American Indian Magnet.
- I don't have children in SPPS, but have been welcomed. American Indian is beautiful and welcoming.
- My child's science teacher when I was there hugged her and knows her.
- Sense of community at American Indian. I can't imagine working anywhere else. Singing and smudging - it's helping them be successful.
- I love the choice we have in SPPS. Wish my niece went to American Indian.
- I love the cultural support. Learning Lakota. Lots of choices. Whatever they want to learn and do. I encourage them 100%. Hard to find schools like that where you walk in and people are so excited to see them.
- Love the choices as well. My child loves art so it's great to have that be a choice.
- Staff turnover. More staff and teachers of color are needed.
- Student and staff behavior are both a challenge.
- Maintaining emotional intelligence during the day.
- Leaders and staff need to be coachable.
- Humility is needed.
- New curriculum being ignored.
- We don't need a country club leader. We need a leader and not a manager. Leadership that is relational - to staff, students, and families. That isn't afraid of being direct when dealing with conflicts with staff, students, and families.
- Cultural relevant leadership & high system change.
- Being innovative with solutions using new ideas and getting rid of old solutions. Highly emotionally intelligent.
- Need more mental health
- Allowing for different cultural practices - smudging, prayer. I think it's important to find leadership that's up to date on supporting those practices. Not afraid to be responsive and quick and not scared to make tough decisions. Multiple community events representing different cultures. Having a presence at community events. Students are free to be who they are. Seeing leadership at district and community events.
- Kids are in ECFE. 2 children at AIMS. Grew up in SPPS. Mom was ECFE teacher.
- Continuing to see the community that's being built - families choosing to be in SPPS. I still have my teachers from high school and elementary. We're so big but yet so small.
- Echo choices in SPPS. Something for everyone. Up until now, there has been space to express yourself however you identify. Not all districts are like that. Dr. Gothard was pretty responsive and things were addressed. Being available and approachable is very important. He showed up to all events which you don't always see.

- Cultural awareness, and cultural competence.
- Being out in the community. Big on community, and family. Approachable, showed up to events.
- Curriculum pushed with current times.
- Bringing trades back into schools. Many schools do not have a shop, autobody, wood shop, or bricklaying.
- Cultural awareness & responsiveness, transparent, responsive & available, shows up.
- Leadership
- With my son being online I feel like I've fallen out of the community a bit but still get invited to things. Have 2 little ones in Woodbury and here it's so different.
- Lack of understanding of the unique political identity of American Indians. We are more than a community group. Supports are federally mandated. Resistance to putting conversations in the right context. Not the same as LCD - our expectations are different based on sovereignty.
- Culturally relevant instructor, a leader who works with the community, someone with a vision that listens to the community
- Since COVID SPPS has been listening to families. See that in my new role. Leaders are hungry for what we can offer. Trying to listen and take action. Think this is a crucial time and leaders are listening. Looking to the community as experts. AIMS is finished and is open to the community.
- looking at data to drive future decisions.
- Being in a couple of staff roles that last few roles. Leadership is reaching out more to partners - used to have to fight for things.
- Shift at looking at data to drive district decision-making.
- Executive leaders want to come and see what we're doing.
- Not everyone knows what resources are available (like social workers).
- Cultural awareness/understanding. Be approachable.
- Understand our AI special issue/responsibility of sovereignty and TNEC
- Free and reduced lunch for all is important. The most positive thing that has happened in SPPS.
- Want the new superintendent to implement a curriculum that applies to current times.
- Bringing trades back.
- More technology preparation for entering the workplace.

### **What are the most important challenges facing the SPPS?**

- Violence.
- Yeah, that was the scariest thing when we had the shooting scare recently. School safety.

My son's school wasn't on the list, but it was still scary. Last year I had issues with my son and another student getting into it constantly. Luckily, we got it figured out. But I wasn't getting safety reports.

- Lack of funding. My son went to Stillwater and there was money all over. Schools seem to be doing best with what they have.
- Safety. It's the biggest thing. I'm scared to go out when it's dark out. Even little kids are doing things.
- Lack of cultural awareness
- Not enough school activities
- At Nokomis my niece has after-school activities but not transportation.
- Staff turnover.
- More staff and teachers of color are needed.
- Student and staff behavior are both a challenge.
- Maintaining emotional intelligence during the day.
- Leaders and staff need to be coachable.
- Humility is needed.
- New curriculum being ignored.
- Safety. Shooting at Washington. Communication - sometimes it is okay but sometimes the ball is dropped.
- Achievement by minority groups.
- Need more health resources
- Some teachers don't understand the culture books he's reading. Trying to coach children to advocate for themselves. I think it's been that way for a long time.
- Institutionalized racism. Affecting everything - why things haven't gotten better.
- Social media - kids with devices - affects how they learn at school. Especially affecting young kids.
- Lack of understanding of the unique political identity of American Indians. We are more than a community group. Supports are federally mandated. Resistance to putting conversations in the right context. Not the same as LCD - our expectations are different based on sovereignty.
- Not everyone knows what resources are available (like social workers).

**What skills, experiences, knowledge, and personal qualities the Board should be looking for in the next SPPS' superintendent?**

- Time ran short, so the group wrote their responses on paper. Equity and Inclusion
- Safety for students
- Equity & Inclusion, Safety for students
- Humility 2. Servant Leader. 3. Change Agent 4. Respectful

- Humility, kindness, see every employee as having valuable experience and input
- Community involvement, approachable, knowledge of the needs of American Indian students and families, continue the work to fully support our students
- Culturally aware, can implement better safety, will add more arts funding
- Approachable, in the community, knowledgeable of Indigenous law, political statutes
- We don't need a country club leader. We need a leader and not a manager. Leadership that is relational - to staff, students, and families. That isn't afraid of being direct when dealing with conflicts with staff, students, and families.
- Cultural relevant leadership & high system change. Being innovative with solutions and using new ideas and getting rid of old solutions. Highly emotionally intelligent.
- Cultural awareness, a cultural competence. Being out in the community. Big on community, and family.
- Approachable, showed up to events. Curriculum pushed with current times. Bringing trades back into schools.
- Many schools do not have shops, autobody, wood shops, bricklaying.
- Cultural awareness & responsiveness, transparent, responsive & available, shows up.

#### ***B. Somali Parent Advisory Council – September 18***

##### **What are the best things happening in the SPPS?**

- My kid goes to Highwood Hills -- it's so clean, there are welcoming teachers, and behavior is reinforced
- Proximity of school -- availability of Somali speakers in Highwood Hills
- Love it because of Focus Beyond and the services available for my daughter at Focus Beyond
- The new East African school. It reflects the culture and artifacts of my kids. It's also a public school and safe.
- One thing I would love is to have a Friday prayer space for my kids.
- Services we enjoy having at SPPS include a gym, swimming pool, and community outing.
- I like SPPS programs like Parent Academy. Also, parents have autonomy in deciding for their students, it is not the teacher or principles deciding for us. And we like this.
- My voice is respected. I feel empowered.

##### **What are the most important challenges facing in the SPPS?**

- Hire teachers who reflect the Somali culture
- The Highwood Hills building is old and hot. My kid has asthma and struggles with breathing. Teachers are also frustrated with the heat as it affects learning and teaching.
- School bus safety is a concern as some school buses failed safety ratings according to recent news coverages. We need bus aides to help with safety instead of relying on the driver for everything.

- Schools don't inform parents about their adolescent kids as they claim privacy concerns. We parents feel like we need full disclosure of our kids' experiences and encounters while in school -- we can't be kept in the dark.
- There are language issues during teacher-parent conferences. We find kids interpreting for parents due to a lack of interpreters available. Kids may not provide correct interpreting if the teacher is discussing academic or behavioral concerns.
- The promotion of LGBTQ materials in schools to our kids is a concern. We're not against students choosing their identity -- but we also say let each culture have their way of life. If schools should have any flags, it should be the American flag and not one group's flag. We brought our kids for academics, not for exposure to promotions of materials and symbols that go against their culture and religion.

**What skills, experiences, knowledge, and personal qualities the Board should be looking for in the next SPPS' superintendent?**

- They should find someone familiar with our culture and way of life.
- Someone spiritual.
- A leader who treats everyone and every culture with equality.
- An experienced educator with innovative thinking regarding curriculum design and content that is centered around academics instead of preaching non-cultural content such as LGBTQ contents
- A leader who prioritizes family values across cultures
- A leader who speaks or respects languages
- We need a leader who takes action so that our voices are heard.

**C. *Parents of African American Students Advisory Council***

**What are the best things happening in the SPPS?**

- Online school - ALL grade levels
- Different channels of communication - email, text, etc.
- Language Immersion - Spanish, French, etc.
- Parent engagement - involvement
- Adjusting to the needs of families
- After-school care/activities & transportation provided i.e. Discovery Club
- Free lunch provided
- Therapy Program - mental health via " Kofi " NOTE: not offered at all schools, chosen by principals at their discretion
- Parent Advisory Council
- Healthy meal and snack choices
- SPED Accommodations
- Montessori Schools
- Inclusivity
- IB World Offerings

**What are the most important challenges facing in the SPPS?**

- Eagerness to label or issue an IEP to a student
- Classroom size(s)
- The lack of interpersonal skills or training with regards to the teachers not adjusting properly to other cultures, families, students
- Teachers avoiding "difficult conversations" as they relate to students' grades or behavior/challenges or wins
- Not making use of Restorative Practice Coordinators
- Teachers/staff not being proactive with regard to any academic challenges a student may be experiencing address any challenges ahead of time especially academically speaking will avoid the almost intentional failure of a student
- Not encouraging parents to sign up for Parent Academy
- Inconsideration of parents who are handicapped in one way or another i.e. vision impaired
- On grade level or advanced students mixed with or in class with other students who may learn/comprehend at a slower pace
- The lack of diversity via the SPPS Teaching Staff; parents mentioned they would like to see teachers who will serve as great role models for the youth as well as teachers' students can identify with
- SCHOOLGY (?) was noted as not very user-friendly
- Teachers not providing syllabus to students/parents outlining the course of study/essential information for a student to be successful through the school year
- Not providing an influx of rigorous programs for those students who are academically advanced
- Keep parents in the "loop" about their student/child; parents welcome a phone call or verbal conversation regarding their student
- Lack of resources for parents who may not have the proper resources to ensure the child is properly taken care of; there was mention of students who may come to school with dirty clothing for example
- Request made or complaint about ALL correspondence - school announcements or grades for example sent electronically. Parents stated they would like the option to receive printed correspondence
- Diversity placement of students
- No Differentiation; lack of resources, planning time, support as it relates to classroom mgmt
- School lottery; Waitlist and slow communication
- Budget Cuts
- Prison Pipeline - Referrals
- Graduation rates
- Zone code i.e. Transportation
- Lack of honoring or celebrating African American students hosting festivals or celebrations

**What skills, experiences, knowledge, and personal qualities the Board should be looking for in the next SPPS' superintendent?**

- Cross Cultural Aware
- Attentive
- Approachable
- Observant
- Active - Listener
- Financially Literate
- Advocate for students, families, staff, children, and the community in general!
- A leader who will " Keep The Children " in mind and see to ensure they are healthy, happy, safe and functioning

**What skills, experiences, knowledge, and personal qualities the Board should be looking for in the next SPPS' superintendent?**

- Understand our community, our struggles, and the qualities we bring to the table. Someone who wants to hear our voices. A person who understands our community
- Someone that comes from our community, someone from Minnesota, someone from St Paul
- We need someone that understands diversity
- The next person should come and evaluate the gaps we are facing in St Paul.
- Someone very involved. Students would like to see someone who shares with the community
- Consistency, show up with everyone the same way.
- Superintendent Experience in leading a large and diverse district
- Fair superintendent
- Equality
- Supportive
- Person of color
- Knowledge about race, lived experiences, refugees, citizenship status
- Student-driven person

***D. Hmong Parent Advisory Council – September 19***

**What are the best things happening in the SPPS?**

- Providing transportation for high school students. When they took that away last year it was very hard for students
- Parent engagement and voices at the district level
- Choices in SPPS. There are different programs across the district. We have something for everyone starting from Pre-K to 12
- Food choices to be more diverse.
- Free lunch
- Food on Hmong Day specific for our students



- One of the best things in SPPS is the immersion programs. We are one of the best in the nation. Specifically, the Hmong Program
- Parent Academy Program is a good way to get parents involved
- Special Education services have been well-kept. It is a great thing happening in SPPS
- Since the breakup of Middle school, we now have more choices
- Pathways for students to join. Specifically, language programs. You can continue in the program until you graduate
- Racial Equity summit, shows how far we have come
- I like the Hmong Ethnic studies to be incorporated
- Every student in SPPS has an electronic library card. We have a library mobile truck that stops at the different schools
- Strong partnerships with the community
- Translations in the main languages that we have in the district. Communication to parents – by phone, email, text
- Different languages that we have in the district
- School board members are more diverse
- College in school at Washington. Critical thinking. Trio Program
- AVID is a great program that allows students to be more organized and learn about the process of attending college
- School communication to parents. I love to get updates via different means.

#### **What are the most important challenges facing in the SPPS?**

- Having students come together not segregated. Even though they go to school together, we still have a separation
- Karen and Black's community having issues with each other
- Improvement in parent involvement. Voices being heard. Some parents want to be involved but can not be part of it.
- SPPS READS, but a lot of students are having challenges to get motivated to read
- After our kids impacted COVID-19 Reading. Bringing everyone up to speed after COVID has been a challenge
- Representation in the district. More diversity in staffing, and administration, it would be nice to see more of that
- Media, safety of our students. shootings in schools. SPPS should find a way to find students into the safety perspective. More education and prevention. Mental health support for families and students
- Trust in schools regarding safety
- Challenges that we are facing. We don't come together enough to create trust and prevention. I have kids at all levels, all schools have different settings, systems, and cultures. There is no consistency in all SPPS schools. How we communicate and operate
- I was recently at an open house. The building was super-hot, which reminded me of how old the buildings are. Lighting, ventilation, etc. Buildings with no windows.



- Support in classrooms, some classes are overcrowded. The things that teachers have to deal with, sometimes they cannot teach.
- Lack of classroom support
- SPPS faces adequate funds to meet the student population and student's needs
- Support in buses, what happened to Bus aides?
- As a parent I face a lot of transitioning with the turnovers in schools
- No more recess for middle schoolers - leading to issues in the classroom, kids need time to take a break. Build environments where kids want to go there
- School shootings. My kid is scared to go to school. I would like to see more emotional support for students in school.
- Disciplinary actions for students. Especially posting things on social media. We are scared for the safety of our kids.
- Accountability, we don't do that enough. Specifically with school rumors and kids posting things online.
- Is recess included in the well-rounded student?
- Because kids in middle and high school don't get time to socialize we see more issues
- Resources that we provide during and after critical incidents and how we use partners for that
- Inconsistency between schools and partnerships. What is available for students
- Mental Health awareness and staff to deal with it

*E. Special Education Advisory Council – September 23*

**What are the best things happening in the SPPS?**

- Diversity of Population
- Reading, writing and phonics
- District Uses technology
- Getting 250 students out moving and trying new jobs
- Using city buses and safely returning to school
- Teach block system for kids to follow
- How the bomb threats were gotten under control and kids safe
- creative way SPPS is looking at getting diverse teaching staff (SUTR)
- Partnering with St Thomas to make teaching accessible
- Bringing teachers from the Philippines
- Diversity
- Early intervention program
- Do care about what parents say SEAC and all packs
- Technology
- School safety
- Early intervention program
- Diversity and Interpreters for all languages
- Thankful to SPPS
- Diversity

- Amazing teachers and parents, they show up
- The people
- Scope of SPPS's work
- Lots of Cultures
- Free Food
- Good handoffs (transitions)

**What are the most important challenges facing in the SPPS?**

- Shortage of teachers and staff (especially SPED)
- Disproportion services
- Declining enrollment (How to deal with that)
- Transitions only One school (Focus Beyond)
- Getting kids employed
- More kids being diagnosed with disabilities than not
- Not being helped after being diagnosed
- Retention of good teachers (support)
- scarcity of resources
- variation of schools (school choice is overwhelming)
- suspension rate of black SPED students
- Teacher Shortage
- Caregiver fatigue
- Budget (loss of music teacher at a music program)
- Music and arts are important
- Budget for extracurriculars
- Staffing
- Funding
- Services dilute as students age

**What skills, experiences, knowledge, and personal qualities the Board should be looking for in the next SPPS' superintendent?**

- Past teaching experience
- knows how a classroom runs
- Leadership
- Creative to grow funding and enrollment
- Teaching background
- Principal Background
- Early Childhood development
- Phonics
- Affable low-key
- Goal oriented
- SPED is not a place
- Students know the Supt
- Goal of what is expected to graduate with

- SPED is extra help
- Understand disabilities and non-disabilities
- Knows the teachers and the situation there in
- Need more teachers that care for the students (accountability)
- Willingness to work on partnerships and drive to do it
- Real understanding of SPED and what that means
- More access to working with PACs
- Believes in inclusion
- Creativity (Think outside the box)
- Real people person (willing and caring)
- Knows SPPS's current situation and what will they bring to make it better
- Priorities the teachers
- Classroom and Principal experiences
- Advocates for the teachers
- Real-world experience
- Classroom and principal experience that can connect with everyone in the system

F. *Gender and Sexual Diversity Parent Advisory Council* – September 18

**What are the best things happening in the SPPS?**

- Positive signage about pronoun use.
- Gender-neutral bathrooms
- Competent teachers
- teachers supporting students to be themselves; to be accepted at face value
- APTT
- Discovery Club Language programs
- Gender-inclusive books purchased by parents for teachers at parent's schools have been used
- inclusive classrooms and curriculum Focus on marginalized
- Family Tree Clinic's presentation to families REALLY good Supportive Environment at SPPS for diverse students' inclusive policies
- Positive community values
- Diversity programs
- Schools celebrating LGBTQ history
- Gender sexuality attendance clubs
- Dual Immersion
- Comfortable conversation about 2 moms at elementary school is a good sign.
- Students sharing, they appreciate and are passionate about inclusion and their specific group of friends being very inclusive
- Students coach creating an environment of support and inclusion, not team
- Moved to MN as it's a sanctuary state

- in our little corner of the district, you can be Muslim and proud, you can be Jewish and proud, you can be transgender, proud, gay, proud, like the basketball globally speaking.
- Gender inclusion policy and the fact that it's been copied by other districts.
- Allowing students to use the bathroom and sports that match their identity
- Having policies in place in the district supports people who aren't educated on diverse issues to catch up
- Competent teachers were incredible to my daughter
- It's been a nonissue about my daughter being transgender

**What are the most important challenges facing the SPPS?**

- High Communication and accountability
- Honesty
- Diversity
- Actively Listener
- Experience being a teacher knowledgeable- Quality
- Superintendent who will advocate for all schools. Trust
- Sup that everyone can trust and that will help everyone in the district.
- Some with lots of classroom experience
- Consult teachers more.
- Teachers know what issues are so it would be great for teachers' voices to be utilized
- Having a deep love for children and care for all the people which is their purpose and what drives them
- Be able to connect with them
- Ability to manage a crisis and cool under pressure
- Creative Problem solver
- Having people skills that bring out the best in people
- Create resources
- Someone to work and never give up
- Willing to support the vision whether you're a parent or staff
- Listening to ideas
- Connect with the people
- Put their money where their mouth is
- A clear statement of values & Demonstration of them. Echoed by others Supt should know what's in the Gender Inclusion policy
- Show who they are and what matters to them
- A willingness to learn what different communities are facing Listening to communities and trusting what they are saying as valid.

**G. *Latino Consent Decree Parent Advisory Council***

- With the short time in this country, I believe the access to food and nutrition services for the children. The right to access meals
- There has been improvement in school security, including access to report bullying. A parent can also send a message and children do not feel single out or pressured to do it. Messages can be anonymous.
- I do not have all the details, but I like that SPPS is opening a school for East Africans to provide them with more support. I am aware of charter schools specializing in their own cultures. To prevent families from choosing schools outside the district, there is a need to consider having more schools like the East African school in SPPS.
- Receiving immediate information after a security incident is reported in the schools.
- Health support in the schools. Students who need a health plan because of health issues are being well taken care of by the nursing staff at the school. I value their concern and effort in writing up a plan and following the plan to support students to stay in school and care for their needs.
- Transportation - in my case, the school has an aide in the bus apart from the school bus driver and it is not a special ed bus. I consider this a great support and also gives confidence to families.
- Through the work of this group (LCD PAC), the district has employed more bilingual teachers and aides and it is important to continue supporting all PACs.
- I am happy to see that more parents are participating in this group (PAC-LCD) than teachers because it represents the voices of the parents.
- The increase of Hispanic culture and other cultures through the ethnic class in the schools. This class is offered throughout the grades and students can learn about all the cultures in SPPS.

### **What are the most important challenges facing the SPPS?**

- Security - implementing a security system that can detect firearms or weapons so those will not enter the school
- Fear of lawsuits prevents people from intervening and helping.
- Bullying in schools. Bullying in the bathrooms because those are not supervised areas, and my fear is that something might happen in the bathroom and my student might be caught up just for being there at the wrong time.
- At some of the schools, like Frost Lake, there is a concern about safety in the playground. The playground area is an open area to the public. No fences protect our students from anyone who might walk into the area without good intentions. I would like to see more fences (low fences ok) around the playground to provide a little more security.
- Supervision in the bathroom areas or renovation of bathrooms.
- Use of personal technology in schools. Measures to have less access to cell phones prevent students from checking on social media while in school.
- A space or designation area where students can leave their cell phones before entering in the classroom or leave them in their lockers or backpacks.

- Not all the school buildings are remodeled or renovated. There are still many areas too small for the number of students. School should be up to date from floor to ceiling and provide a better presentation y and space for students.
- Uniforms in middle schools. Consider having a stricter rule on acceptable clothing worn at school. If schools have strict rules, parents should reinforce them at home.
- In the end, uniforms are less costly for families. Students are not comparing fashion and brands.
- Nutrition - not enough options for students with allergies. There are times that students are eating only salad without any protein and I do not consider that it is enough for a child.

**What skills, experiences, knowledge, and personal qualities the Board should be looking for in the next SPPS' superintendent?**

- Open
- Inclusive - empathize with SPPS cultural groups
- Equity and equality for all students
- Human connection, kind, sensitive to the needs
- Compromise to the job and work hard for the benefit of every student.
- Have a background knowledge of the families SPPS serves, consistent with the effort to improve the achievement gap and bring new strategies that will support and help our students.
- Continue the reading focus that the school district has started. Learning how to read is freedom. We started a change and we do not want that change to be lost.
- Committed to the challenges and not to the monetary gain but to serving the community for wellness, safety, and challenges.
- Knowledge of SPPS structure, discipline, young (open to new technology usage in the classroom), and ready to start the work.
- Have experience in different educational positions from aide, teacher, and principal, to other leadership positions.
- Managing budget
- Not to show preference to one group and leave others behind.
- Focus on mental health support for students, teachers and families

**III. Community Forums**

**A. In-Person Community Forum – Hmong Only – Como Senior HS – October 1**

**What are the best things happening in the SPPS?**

- Special Education (IEP): Good services for students with IEPs, tailored to their needs.
- Interpreters: Providing interpreters for families is a valuable service in SPPS.
- Breakfast Options: Students like rice bowls for breakfast; condiments like sriracha sauce are a plus.

- Free Lunch: Essential for students, with more options that include foods from various cultures.

**What are the most important challenges facing in the SPPS?**

- Start Time Challenge: Early start times for younger kids and later times for older students create difficulties for families.
- SPPS should consider aligning start times so that older students begin earlier and younger students start later.
- Special Ed Support: Students with IEPs lack sufficient time with their teachers. They need more time to work with the same teacher to build familiarity and improve their success.
- Lack of Specialist Support (Elementary Level): There is insufficient support in the classroom for reading and math.
- With the end of COVID funding, SPPS lacks the resources to rehire teachers specifically for these subjects, which results in students not reading or doing math at grade level.
- Lack of Parent Involvement: Increase parent participation in activities and decision-making processes.

**What skills, experiences, knowledge, and personal qualities the Board should be looking for in the next SPPS' superintendent?**

- The next Superintendent should be someone with a genuine heart that wants to help everyone.
- Someone with strong skills and knowledge, and overall competence.
- Commitment to supporting all races, not just those similar to themselves.
- Equitable and fair in their approach.
- Someone willing to learn about the Hmong community and provide meaningful support.
- Able to relate to students, staff, and families at all levels, from elementary to high school to adults.
- Knowledgeable about reaching out to all communities with an inclusive character and respect for all.
- Supportive of teachers' knowledge, ideas, and vision, not just their educational background.

**B. In-Person Community Forum – Hmong Only – Hazel Park – September 30****What are the best things happening in the SPPS?**

- Hmong Programs – A good program for everyone.
- Communication – Providing translations in Hmong and other district languages.
- Multiple phone calls throughout the day to keep families updated.
- Transportation – Making do with what we have, but there's room for improvement. Yellow buses are back.
- Fire Safety – Fire drill practice in place.



- Representation – Good representation at every level/sector of the district, across the border.
- Language Programs – Investing in Spanish, Karen, and East African programs is beneficial.

**What are the most important challenges facing in the SPPS?**

- Translated Materials – Lacking scholarly books in middle schools.
- Safety – Given the increase in crimes and school incidents, we can do a better job.  
Transportation – there’s room for improvement. Inconsistent bus hours and insufficient pay
- Building – Buildings are outdated with no AC; students and staff suffer on hot days, and students want to leave the classrooms due to the heat.
- Enrollment Decline – Investigate the issue and find solutions to increase enrollment.
- Safety Challenge – A key issue is the unstructured time during school hours (passing periods, lunch, after school). Managing these spaces often falls to only a few staff members. We need to ensure safety both inside and outside school buildings. While it won't solve all problems, having police officers in schools allows for immediate assistance. We need to implement better safety measures across all school buildings to secure access and maintain consistency.
- Mental Health – Children are traumatized from the pandemic. We need to support their mental well-being to prevent further issues.
- Address social aspects, including bullying and social groups. Focus on rebuilding students’ social connections and provide resources and support in these areas. Many kids returned not knowing how to socialize, listen to a story, or engage with others, which has been a significant challenge post-COVID.
- Social Engagement – Provide opportunities for students to engage socially.

**What skills, experiences, knowledge, and personal qualities the Board should be looking for in the next SPPS’ superintendent?**

- Someone who understands the diverse community, its culture, and history.
- Someone knowledgeable to avoid culture shock.
- Someone who supports what parents are advocating for our students and our programs (e.g., Txuj Ci PreK-8) and can assist the community.
- Someone with experience leading a large school district such as SPPS.
- We need someone who treats everyone fairly and equally, focusing on inclusivity across all races.
- We want a student-driven superintendent who genuinely cares about all students, not just those who resemble them or are looking to build a resume.
- Someone experienced in working with diverse communities.
- Someone who is multilingual and possesses the skills necessary to fulfill all superintendent responsibilities.



- Someone who can help improve safety and enrollment. Emphasize accountability, skillsets, and knowledge, with a commitment to transparency to build trust.

**C. Virtual Community Forum – Hmong Only – Hazel Park – September 30**

**What are the best things happening in the SPPS?**

- Good educators create a safe environment for their students. My child often comes home saying they've had a good day, which brings me joy.
- Various communication methods for parents to share their feedback, including surveys, in-person meetings, and virtual options.  
Translation - It's great that we have someone centralized to do translation at the district
- Programs - Academic and language programs (like science and music) with lots of opportunities and resources.

**What are the most important challenges facing in the SPPS?**

- One of the challenges is to get parents to come out and share their concerns. We don't see enough parents and community members to come out to voice their concerns, and maybe they might feel like they're only one voice and their voices don't matter. We need to improve community outreach.
- There are limited staff and resources to support students with special needs. Some schools, like Txuj Ci Lower, don't have special education programs for autism and behavior management, and they lack the staff needed to help these students.  
We should also have someone at each school to do translation, whether part-time or full-time, as well as staff who reflect our families. This way, when families come to the school and speak Hmong, Karen, or Spanish, there are multiple staff available to help them feel welcome.
- We don't have enough funding to support our schools. Teachers often lack essential supplies.
- We need more funding to support schools and staff so teachers can focus on teaching and students can focus on learning.  
Engagement - Engagement feels one-sided right now. It should go both ways. The district often asks for what it needs, but when families reach out for help, it can be difficult for the district to listen and meet those needs. It needs to go both ways, it's very one-sided right now.
- District leadership presents another challenge for engagement. It often feels difficult for them to listen to parents and understand our kids' needs. Sometimes it seems they believe their education gives them a better understanding of our children. When we try to suggest what would work better or how issues could be resolved, it can be hard for the district to hear us. Right now, it feels especially challenging for them to listen to Hmong families.
- A lack of funding leads to staff layoffs every year, which is another issue we facing.
- Providing support to families about the system and how it works - Understanding how the system works such as the budget, superintendent search, and construction processes is a challenge for our families. By the time we learn about these issues or get a chance to voice

our concerns, it's often too late, as the district has already made decisions. This makes it difficult for us, especially when those decisions don't meet our needs, and we're told it's too late as the decision has already been made - everything happened behind the scenes.

**What skills, experiences, knowledge, and personal qualities the Board should be looking for in the next SPPS' superintendent?**

- The next superintendent needs to understand their role and the diverse community within the Saint Paul district.
- A candidate from the Midwest would be ideal.  
Someone who knows the district well is essential.
- Communication is key—building relationships with families as the biggest stakeholders is crucial.
- We need someone willing to listen, work with families, ask what's important to us, and attend our events to show support.
- The ideal candidate should have a strong background in education and connections to secure resources, including funding.
- It's important for them to know how to build a network of resources.
- Having a Hmong superintendent would be a great asset.
- They should understand cultural aspects and bring a fresh perspective to the district.
- Gender doesn't matter as long as they meet the qualifications and can work with everyone.