

# THE SUN PRAIRIE EXPERIENCE



Escanee este código QR para leer esta publicación en español.

A Community  
Newsletter

## SPRING 2025 IN THIS ISSUE

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

### Culture of Educational Excellence | 4-9

- State Report Cards – 4
- Business & Education Partnership Programs – 4
- Reading Curriculum – 5
- Accessible Playgrounds – 6
- Reality Rocks – 6
- Teddy's Place at PPA – 7
- National Blue Ribbon School – 8
- MSAN Conference – 9
- Black History Month – 9

### Culture of Engagement and Inclusion | 10-13

- Staff Wellness – 10
- Grow Your Own – 10
- Staff Spotlight – 11
- Staff Awards – 11
- Chamber of Commerce Connections – 12
- Empty Bowls – 12
- Family Engagement – 12
- Community Schools – 13

### Culture of Operational Excellence | 14-15

- Collaboration on Outdoor Classroom & City Well – 14
- Historic Enrollment Growth – 14
- Nutrition Team – 15
- Referendum Gratitude – 15

## IMPROVING RESULTS FOR ELEMENTARY READING

Learn more about the new elementary English language arts curriculum, the modifications made, and how it is helping students learn how to read. | Page 5

### STAY CONNECTED



Sun Prairie Area  
School District  
Futures depend on us...every child, every day.





## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Hello, everyone,

I have been thinking about the concept of optimism recently. For me, a sense of optimism isn't a passive state of mind. It requires active engagement—nurturing hope, cultivating resilience, and consistently seeking opportunities for growth, even in the face of turbulence, and especially when encouraging optimism in others. As we have passed the midpoint of the school year, I am intentionally optimistic and excited about the days, months, and weeks ahead of us in the Sun Prairie Area School District. While the first semester has presented its challenges, our extraordinary staff, strong and adaptive leadership, and stubborn commitments to our students and to our Mission and Vision have guided us through. These are the very attributes that make me optimistic for our second semester. I am hopeful for continuing positive growth, for engaging staff and parents/caregivers as we plan and improve, and for working with and serving our community. Indeed, with optimism, shared vision, and collaboration, we will continue to work toward our Mission of Every Child, Every Day, and toward safe environments, engaging learning experiences, and positive school climates across all of the 15 school campuses that make up our remarkable School District.

With appreciation,

**Dr. Brad Saron**, Superintendent

**ENROLL  
NOW!**



### We are making plans for staffing classrooms next year.

If you have a new neighbor or friend or know of a family who has moved to Sun Prairie recently, please encourage them to enroll their child(ren) as soon as possible for the 2025–2026 school year. Learn more about the enrollment process by clicking the **ENROLLMENT** icon on the District home page.

### Vision

Recognized as a high-performing district of choice that reflects the cultures of our diverse community.

### Mission

Inspire and prepare every child, every day, by providing relevant, engaging, and innovative learning experiences in and out of the classroom.

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Sun Prairie Area School District (SPASD) aspires to be a recognized educational leader, empowered by the diverse community we serve. By providing relevant, engaging, and innovative learning experiences in and out of the classroom, we aim to help every child become the best version of themselves.

As we continue to work toward our goals, we need to ensure that our strategic direction keeps up with our community's diverse needs and priorities. Our strategic pillars organize this newsletter.

### Our Commitment to Equity and Excellence through Continuous Improvement

#### Culture of Educational Excellence

##### Student Experiences Goal

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

##### Student Learning Environment Goal

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

#### Culture of Engagement and Inclusion

##### Community of Exceptional & Diverse Educators & Staff Goal

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

##### Communications & Community Engagement Goal

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

#### Culture of Operational Excellence

##### Finance Goal

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

##### Facilities Goal

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

## FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dear Sun Prairie Community,

The Board of Education has two main priorities guiding this year's work: improve the quality of Board Meetings and continue to clarify community expectations through the Policy Review Cycle.

### Board Meetings

Open public meetings are a key strategy to ensure that the community has transparent access to the Board's work. This includes monthly monitoring reports to ensure the accountability of the Superintendent, as well as the fiscal management of taxpayer dollars. Improvements this year include:

- **Increased focus on Student Results**—Data is disaggregated by student demographics, school site, and District department.
- **Increased focus on long-term fiscal stability**—We are grateful that the community supported the referendum in November and that we can now plan accordingly through at least the 2028–2029 school year.
- **Improved access**—The public comment section has been moved closer to the start of the agenda, and community members can now register online in advance.

### Board Policies

The Operational Expectation policies define the Board's standards to evaluate the management of the District. In collaboration with our Community Voices group, the Board has drafted significant revisions this year regarding:

- **Communication**—Clarifying expectations for stronger two-way communication and engagement with the community, streamlining the Board's appeals procedure, and improving communication between the Board and the Superintendent.
- **Finance**—Updating the Financial Planning, Financial Administration, and Asset Protection policies, most notably acknowledging the need for cybersecurity insurance and ensuring the opportunity for more proactive community input on purchases exceeding \$250,000.

### Board Stability

As you may know, the Board experienced two unexpected vacancies during the last election cycle. We have just welcomed two new community members to join in our work, and we are very excited to reestablish the stability of our team. Our Board members remain committed to accomplishing the priorities we have set for the year, and we are all dedicated to serving Every Child, Every Day.

*Diana McFarland*

**Diana McFarland**, President, Board of Education



### School Board Members (left to right):

Jojo Knauss, Ella Miller, Reagan Loomis, Devin Willis, Isabella Roberts, Diana McFarland, Bryn Horton, Latoya Holiday, Katey Kamoku, Dr. Steve Schroeder, Colleen Uhlenkamp, Dr. Steve Urso

## WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

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



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

## REMINDER TO VOTE TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2025

Four School Board seats are up for election this spring. Names on the ballot (alphabetically) will include: **Amanda Davis, Melissa Grayson, Diana McFarland, Steve Schroeder, Isaac Sung, and Colleen Uhlenkamp.**



**STUDENT EXPERIENCES GOAL**

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

**A CLOSER LOOK AT STATE REPORT CARDS**

*Learn more about the District's performance on one of the state's performance measures.*

Each year, we share the **state report cards** with our parents and caregivers. These report cards, created by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), show how well our schools and District are doing. The goal is to use this information to celebrate what is going well and to find ways to improve.

We are proud that our District continues to do well, especially since we are serving more students who face challenges like poverty and housing instability.

Here is a quick look at this year's results:

- As a District, we are above the state average in English language arts (ELA), math, third-grade ELA, graduation rates, and ELA growth.
- We are below the state average in math growth and chronic absenteeism.
- We are above the state average in advanced coursework, students earning industry-recognized credentials, and work-based learning.

Both Sun Prairie East and Sun Prairie West High Schools exceeded state expectations and scored 100 for ELA growth. **These schools are in the top 20% of all high schools in Wisconsin.**

Our middle schools are doing well in ELA but need improvement in math and math growth.

At our elementary schools, we are making progress, but we know we still have work to do to make sure every student is doing their best.

State report cards focus on four areas:

1. **Achievement**—how well students do in ELA and math on state tests
2. **Growth**—how much students improve in ELA and math from one year to the next
3. **Target-Group Outcomes**—how well students with the lowest test scores are doing
4. **On Track to Graduation**—how well students are progressing toward graduation

The scores are combined to give each school an overall rating from 0 to 100. Schools are then placed in one of five categories, based on their scores.

You can view the full report cards for our District and schools by scanning the QR code or by visiting the DPI website at [dpi.wi.gov](http://dpi.wi.gov).

**BUSINESS & EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP**

*The Sun Prairie Business & Education Partnership (BEP) connects local leaders with classrooms.*

**FIRST-GRADE CLASSROOM PARTNERS**

**Sun Prairie BEP Classroom Partners** interact with and read to first graders once a month. This reading program allows BEP members to interact with students and to sponsor books for a classroom (\$125 from each partner, \$125+ covered by BEP), providing each student a book to take home every month from September to May. Every SPASD and Sacred Hearts first-grade classroom has had a BEP Classroom Partner since 2006.

**ADOPT-A-CLASS**

In its second year, **the Adopt-a-Class program** pairs Sun Prairie BEP members with fourth-grade classrooms for six hands-on sessions annually. Each 30-minute lesson focuses on “soft skills” that are highly valued by businesses, such as goal setting, conflict resolution, teamwork, and more. Through this initiative this school year, 572 students are gaining valuable skills for their future success.



If you are interested in partnering with either of these programs for the 2025–2026 school year, please contact **Betsy Butler** at [betsy.butler@spbep.org](mailto:betsy.butler@spbep.org).



# CKLA CURRICULUM UPDATES

The new English language arts curriculum is in place and is improving elementary reading results.

We are excited to introduce the Amplify **Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) 2.0 curriculum** in our elementary schools (grades 4K–5). This curriculum is based on the latest research about how children learn to read and helps support literacy development.

## What is CKLA 2.0?

CKLA 2.0 is a comprehensive program that focuses on teaching decoding (sounding out words) and comprehension (understanding what is read). It is grounded in the Science of Reading, which emphasizes the importance of phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension to build strong readers.

## Key Features

- **Phonics and word recognition:** Teaches how to decode words through phonics and sound patterns
- **Vocabulary building:** Expands vocabulary through rich, content-based reading
- **Comprehension strategies:** Develops critical thinking and reading comprehension
- **Spiral review:** Revisits concepts with increasing complexity to reinforce learning

## How can you help at home?

- **Read together every day:** Make reading part of your routine and choose books your child enjoys.
- **Support phonics:** Practice letter sounds and sound out words together.
- **Talk, talk, talk:** Encourage conversations to expand vocabulary.
- **Build vocabulary:** Introduce new words during reading and conversation.
- **Create a print-rich environment:** Keep books and written materials accessible.
- **Encourage independence:** Let your child choose books and read on their own.
- **Be patient and positive:** Celebrate progress, even if it is small.
- **Stay in touch with teachers:** Communicate with teachers to track your child's progress.

## Changes Made to the Curriculum

We have made thoughtful changes to the curriculum to ensure that it is **culturally responsive** and **developmentally appropriate** for all students:

- **Culturally responsive content:** The curriculum now includes more diverse perspectives and ensures that children see themselves reflected in the stories and characters they read about. This helps them develop empathy and understand different cultures. Aspects of the curriculum that do not meet the District's expectations for cultural responsiveness have been edited or removed.
- **Developmentally appropriate adjustments:** The curriculum has been fine-tuned for younger learners. It includes age-appropriate texts, interactive activities, and more opportunities for hands-on learning to make reading fun and engaging.

These changes help make the learning experience more inclusive and relevant for every child, and they ensure that students receive the best possible support as they develop strong reading skills.

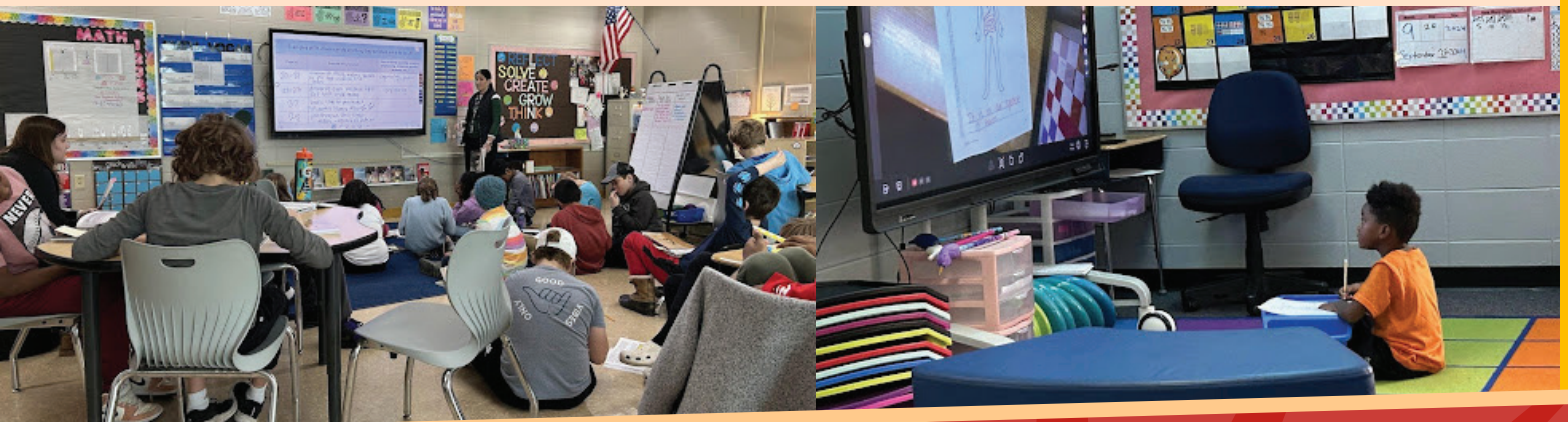
**By using the CKLA 2.0 curriculum, we are giving our students the tools they need to become confident, capable readers.**

# did you know?

Through our universal screening tool, we have noticed encouraging **growth in reading skills for our kindergarten and first-grade students** from spring 2023 to spring 2024. This is a great early sign that students are making progress as they move through our school system.

**K-1 READING SCORES:**

SPRING 2023    SPRING 2024  
**48%**    **57%**





## PLAYGROUNDS FOR ALL ABILITIES

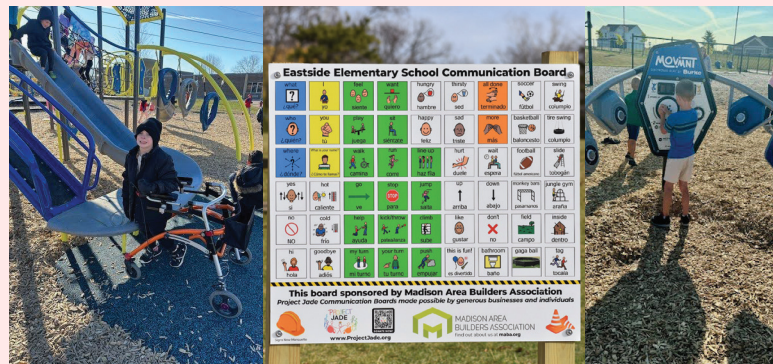
*The District is installing accessible playgrounds to accommodate students with mobility challenges.*

For years, teachers, physical therapists, and families have envisioned **playgrounds that truly accommodate students with mobility challenges**. Thanks to the hard work of the Facilities and Grounds Team and the Physical Therapy Team, that vision has now come to life in our District. New accessible playgrounds at Eastside Elementary and Token Springs Elementary are setting a standard for inclusivity. At Eastside, the Slide 360 playset with ramp access and poured-in-place surface ensures that all students can enjoy the play area. Similarly, the Token Springs playground features the Slide 360 playset and a MOVMT-inclusive panel game, creating spaces that engage students of all abilities.

In addition to the playground upgrades, communication boards have been installed on all elementary and middle school playgrounds to provide essential support for our nonverbal students. These boards allow students to express themselves and engage more fully with their peers and surroundings, giving them an important tool to communicate and participate in play. We are grateful to our Speech and Language Therapy Team for their vision, the Facilities and Grounds Team for their hard work in

bringing this initiative to life, and the Madison Area Builders Association and Project Jade for their generous donations that made this possible.

Preliminary plans for accessible playgrounds at our other elementary schools are underway. These initiatives are about more than just physical upgrades—they reflect our commitment to creating a community where every child can play, communicate, and grow. We are proud of the impact these additions are already having, and we look forward to seeing how they continue to make a difference for our students and their families.



The **Sun Prairie Adapted Sports League** was honored to receive the **Zimbrick Honda GameChanger of the Month** award this past fall. This program offers students with special needs the opportunity to shine in sports, earn varsity letters, and experience the power of teamwork, inclusion, and perseverance. An adapted sports league is essential in creating a more inclusive community, giving every athlete the chance to succeed and feel valued. Thank you to the coaches, athletes, and families for inspiring us all with your dedication and spirit.



## PREPARING FOR REALITY

*Students and community partners come together for Reality Rocks.*

**Reality Rocks** was a hit for our eleventh graders. Students from Sun Prairie East and Sun Prairie West participated in a financial literacy simulation, getting a taste of managing real-world decisions. This was also Prairie Phoenix Academy's

first time hosting their own Reality Rocks in their building. We are thankful to our incredible staff and community partners for making this hands-on experience possible.







## STUDENT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT GOAL

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

## MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS

*Our students have opportunities to nurture their talents and express themselves musically like nowhere else.*

### SUN PRAIRIE WEST MUSICAL: SEUSSICAL THE MUSICAL

The fall Sun Prairie West musical, *Seussical the Musical*, is getting noticed. Many of our students from this production have been nominated for the Jerry Awards. The Jerrys, one of Wisconsin's high school musical awards programs, encourages, recognizes, and honors excellence in high school musical theater. The award ceremony will take place in June.



### SUN PRAIRIE EAST MUSICAL: BIG FISH

Sun Prairie East's winter production of *Big Fish* was a huge success, bringing to life a magical story of family, dreams, and unforgettable moments. Congratulations to our talented cast, crew, and everyone involved for making this performance truly special.



The combined Sun Prairie High School choirs were once again featured on NBC 15's "Sounds of the Season" broadcast, which aired on December 24th and 25th.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Exciting events are happening in our schools this spring. The community is welcome to attend.

#### SP WEST PLAY: MURDER'S IN THE HEIR

THURS.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.
MARCH 6	MARCH 7	MARCH 8	MARCH 9
7:00 P.M.	7:00 P.M.	7:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.

#### SP EAST PLAY: RADIUM GIRLS

THURS.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.
MAY 1	MAY 2	MAY 3	MAY 4
7:00 P.M.	7:00 P.M.	7:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.

**ALL-CITY CHOIR FESTIVAL:** SP West, Monday, March 10, 7:00 p.m.

**BAND-O-RAMA:** SP East, Monday, April 7, 7:00 p.m.

**ALL-CITY ORCHESTRA CONCERT:** SP East, Thursday, April 17, 7:30 p.m.

**SOUND OF SUN PRAIRIE IN MEMORIAL DAY PARADE:** Monday, May 26

## A NEW RESOURCE FOR SCHOOL-AGED PARENTS

*Grand Opening of Teddy's Place at Prairie Phoenix Academy*

We are happy to announce the grand opening of **Teddy's Place at Prairie Phoenix Academy** (PPA), a new childcare facility supporting school-aged parents in our community. This initiative, a collaborative effort by PPA, Teddy's Place, and the Sun Prairie Area School District, offers on-site childcare and a Parenting 101 curriculum to help school-aged parents balance education with caregiving. By providing both childcare and educational support, Teddy's Place at Prairie Phoenix Academy focuses on empowering young parents to thrive personally and academically.

Thank you to our District leaders and community partners for making this resource possible, including Teddy's Place Director Sharlot Bogart, the Sun Prairie Area School District Board of Education, the Sun Prairie Education Foundation, the Sun Prairie Business & Education Partnership, our Teaching, Learning, and Equity Team, our Operations Team, and our outstanding partners at Bray Architects and J. H. Findorff & Son.





## CELEBRATE SMILES

A mobile dental program has been supporting SPASD students.

**Celebrate Smiles** is a mobile dental program that has been providing preventative and restorative care to students in Sun Prairie and Madison schools for over 20 years. For the past 10 years, they have been a trusted partner in our District, offering dental services to students at C. H. Bird, Creekside, Northside, and Westside Elementary schools. The program provides dental sealants, fluoride varnish, cleanings, and restorative care as needed, helping prevent

tooth decay, reduce classroom time lost to dental pain, and support overall academic performance. Celebrate Smiles alternates years between bringing a fully mobile unit and providing in-school screenings and treatments. This is a valuable resource for students who may not have access to regular dental care. Celebrate Smiles selects schools based on the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch.

### 2022-2023

A total of  
**142**

students received Care Mobile services or a recheck.

**17**

students received restorative services.

**50**

students received sealants.

### 2023-2024

A total of  
**172**

students received Care Mobile services or a recheck.

**18**

students received restorative services.

**51**

students received sealants.

## NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED EXCELLENCE

Eastside Elementary has been named a 2024 National Blue Ribbon School.

Eastside Elementary has been honored as a **2024 National Blue Ribbon School** for both Exemplary High Performance and Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing! Representing Eastside at the ceremony in Washington, D.C., were Principal Craig Coulthart, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Nick Reichhoff, and cross-categorical teacher Anna Nikolay.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools program acknowledges public and private elementary, middle, and high schools across the nation for their exemplary performance. Eastside Elementary was recognized by U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cordona in the 2024 cohort for excelling in academic performance and making significant strides in closing achievement gaps among different student groups. Principal Coulthart shared that this award reflects the hard work of Eastside's students, families, and staff.



## COMPLETING A CHAPTER

The class composite wall from Sun Prairie High School has been completed.

The **class composite wall** from Sun Prairie High School, located on the historic Hilltop Campus, has been completed. This wall celebrates over a century of graduates from the Sun Prairie Area School District, beginning with the Class of 1886 and ending with the Class of 2022. It honors the legacy of students who have walked the halls of Sun Prairie High School, many of whom attended the historic Hilltop Campus.

As the District grew throughout the years, so did the need for additional schools, leading to the opening of Sun Prairie East and Sun Prairie West High Schools in 2022. Starting with the Class of 2023, class composites for Sun Prairie East High School and Sun Prairie West High School are located in their respective buildings. Prairie Phoenix Academy also displays photos celebrating its graduates. Additionally, all class composites are available for viewing on the Sun Prairie Area School District website.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the community members, including the McBurney family, whose generosity made this wall possible. Thank you for helping us honor the legacy of Sun Prairie graduates.



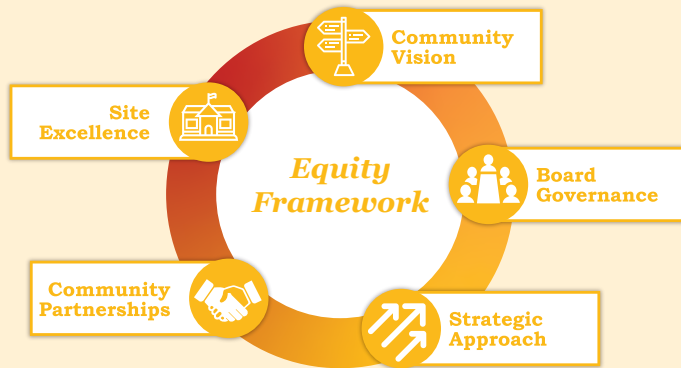
We are incredibly proud of **Don'ye** from Sun Prairie East High School for representing our District on the **Dane County Executive Forum** podcast. As treasurer of SP East's Black Student Union and president of the Multicultural Student Achievement Network, Don'ye was selected for a special panel organized by the 100 Black Men of Madison's Democracy Project and the Urban League of Greater Madison. She had the opportunity to engage with Wisconsin State Senator Melissa Agard and Dane County Supervisor Dana Pellebon, discussing local leadership and civic engagement.



"Hearing the two keynote speakers give inspiring speeches about empowering women has motivated me to want to do more, not only in my community but also in my school." — **DON'YE**



# OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY



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

We celebrated Indigenous Peoples' Day and Native American Heritage Month with a feast in partnership with the **First Nations Intertribal Community of Sun Prairie**. We are grateful to the elders who shared their stories and wisdom, the artists who shared their gifts, and the many people who shared their culture and heritage in a way that provided an immersive learning experience for all who attended.



## LEAVING A LEGACY

Sun Prairie students attended the **Multicultural Student Achievement Network Student Conference**.

Sun Prairie students attended the **Multicultural Student Achievement Network (MSAN) Student Conference** this past November in Lansing, Michigan. The conference theme was "Leave Our Legacy." Students from several states convened to learn, connect, be heard, and discuss ways to change communities for the better. A Prairie Phoenix Academy student shared a poem that captivated the crowd. Many students, staff, sponsors, and volunteers helped make this experience possible for students from Sun Prairie and beyond.



Westside Elementary and Northside Elementary hosted a **Hispanic and Latino Family Night**. Hundreds of families enjoyed dinner from food trucks, exciting games, music, and dancing, all celebrating Hispanic and Latino culture.



## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Our theme for this year is "Black Dreams Matter."



Our District's Black History Month 2025 theme, "**Black Dreams Matter**," powerfully connects to the national theme of "African Americans and Labor," emphasizing the link between Black aspirations and contributions, struggles, and resilience in labor history. Labor has been a path to education, economic stability, and social mobility, playing a key role in liberation and agency, from enslaved workers seeking freedom to today's fight for workplace equity. Despite systemic barriers like wage gaps and limited opportunities, Black laborers persist, driving innovation and cultural contributions that enrich society. Recognizing "Black Dreams Matter" honors Black labor as a courageous pursuit of hope, justice, and progress.

Black History Month will be filled with activities and events. Check the District's Facebook page to see event photos. Some of the events include:

- The **Soul Food Dinner** on Friday, February 21st, 5:00–7:00 p.m., at Sun Prairie East High School. Dinner will be catered by Melly Mels, and Werk Dance Group will perform.
- The **Dream Big Vision Board** event on Wednesday, February 26th, 4:30–6:30 p.m., at the District Support Center.

The District's first-ever **Hmong Family Welcome Back Night** was a success. Several hundred people attended this event, which offered delicious food, music, activities, and a resource fair that provided District and community information for our Hmong families.



Our staff proudly took part in the vibrant citywide **Multicultural Fair**, engaging with the community to share valuable information and resources. It was an opportunity to connect, celebrate diversity, and contribute to building a stronger, more informed community.



**COMMUNITY OF EXCEPTIONAL AND DIVERSE EDUCATORS AND STAFF GOAL**  
Strive to proactively recruit, retain, and engage diverse and exceptional talent.

## NATIONAL LEADER IN STAFF WELLNESS

Our District continues to set the standard for employee wellness, combining innovative programs, exceptional care, and national recognition to solidify its leadership in workplace well-being.



### Thriving On-site Wellness Clinic

Our District's on-site Employee Wellness Clinic remains a cornerstone of our commitment to accessible, high-quality care for staff and their families. With an average **90% fill rate** for its behavioral health coach and clinical providers, the clinic has delivered nearly **\$800,000 in annual claims avoidance savings**. Notably, 100% of patients rated their visits as "good" or "very good."

### Innovative Wellness Programs

SPASD's Wellness Department continues to empower employees to thrive both personally and professionally through programs such as:

- Motivating monthly challenges, targeting various wellness dimensions
- Free weekly classes, such as water aerobics
- Exclusive access to premium wellness platforms such as Headspace for mindfulness and ELEVATE for financial wellness
- Creative special events, including bouquet-making, charcuterie workshops, and pumpkin painting
- The REALiving Employee Achievement Program, offering free counseling, coaching sessions, webinars, and resources

These initiatives reflect SPASD's holistic approach to supporting employees' physical, mental, and social well-being.

### Nationally Recognized Excellence

In September 2024, SPASD earned the prestigious Platinum Award from the Wellness Council of America for the second time, reaffirming the District's status as **one of the nation's healthiest workplaces**. As one of only nine organizations nationwide to receive this honor, SPASD continues to exemplify excellence in employee wellness.

### Thought Leadership in Wellness

This recognition extends to the national stage, where Wellness Coordinator Karyn Richmond and SPASD leaders will present groundbreaking strategies for workplace wellness at the National Association of School Superintendents conference in March 2025.

With its forward-thinking approach and steadfast commitment to employee care, SPASD continues to set the standard for creating thriving, healthy workplaces.



## GROWING OUR OWN

*The District provides support for employees as they grow into professional educators.*

**The Grow Your Own program** is an initiative aimed at helping SPASD staff advance their careers in education, whether working as teachers, counselors, social workers, or in other related fields. Designed to provide financial assistance and flexibility, the program supports participants as they simultaneously work and pursue their educational goals.



**DANIA  
CANNON**

One of the program's current participants is Dania, the District's Hispanic Family Liaison. "I've always told the students, 'You need to get better on purpose. This is for your education, for your future.' But one day, someone asked me, 'Dania, how can you tell the kids they need this for their future if you're not doing it yourself?'" That question was a turning point for her. "That day, I decided to apply. This is going to help me get better on purpose," she explains.

Dania is now in her second year of online studies at UW-Whitewater, where she is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Social Work with a minor in Spanish. Her education is helping her gain the tools and resources to better serve her families in the community.

Through programs like Grow Your Own, the District is not only helping individuals advance their careers but also investing in the betterment of the entire community. Dania's story is a powerful reminder that when we invest in our own future, we also invest in the futures of others.



# STAFF SPOTLIGHT

## CRAIG COULTHART EASTSIDE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL



## THANK YOU FOR 18 YEARS OF SERVICE!

After 18 years of dedication to Eastside Elementary School and 34 years in education, Craig Coulthart is preparing to retire at the end of this school year. Back in November, Principal Coulthart was honored to represent Eastside Elementary and the Sun Prairie Area School District by traveling to Washington, D.C., to claim the National Blue Ribbon Award for Exemplary High Performance and Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing. He believes that a major contributing factor to that success is the longevity of staff. Principal Coulthart shares that there are five staff members still at Eastside that he hired in his first year as principal.

Principal Coulthart reflects on his time at SPASD: "I am very proud of the fact that the Sun Prairie community has been supportive of District referendums. When I came to Sun Prairie, we only had five elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. We now have nine elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools."

He expresses his gratitude to the families for their support, ESCOs for everything they do, the dedicated staff, and of course the students. The students have always made him feel welcome by saying hello, putting up the Eagle Wings, and even letting Principal Coulthart be quarterback at recess.

"I will miss my Eastside family of 18 years. I will miss seeing the staff who care so much about our students, engaging with the students during the day and at Family Fun Nights, and seeing the tremendous support families give Eastside. The bottom line at Eastside is that we all do what we do for the success of our students. It will be very tough to leave the Eastside community."

The Sun Prairie Area School District thanks Principal Coulthart for his many years of leadership, care, and dedication. His final remarks are advice to future leaders and educators in this District: "Remember why you became an educator—to do what is best for students."

## CELEBRATING STAFF AWARDS

*We are proud to celebrate our award-winning staff who make our District like nowhere else!*



**Deb Harbort**, retired Athletics and Activities Administrative Associate, received the District 5 Gregory A. Smith Award at the Wisconsin Athletic Directors Association conference in November. Her dedication and hard work have been invaluable to the success of Sun Prairie athletics over the years.



**Sandee Ortiz**, a Health and Physical Education teacher at both Sun Prairie East and Sun Prairie West, was recently named SHAPE Midwest Teacher of the Year in Health Education. In 2022, she was Wisconsin's Health Teacher of the Year, and in 2023 she became SHAPE America's District President. Sandee is currently serving as President of the Wisconsin Health and Physical Education Association for 2024-2026.

Sandee has also contributed to the development of Physical Education Standards (2019) and has advocated for better funding for Health and Physical Education programs in Washington, D.C. As a Nationally Board Certified Teacher, Sandee has helped implement skill-based Health education in the Sun Prairie Area School District and continues leading efforts to provide students with meaningful Health education experiences.



**Kevin Splain**, District Sustainability and Energy Manager, was nominated for the Sustain Dane Live Forward Award. This award acknowledges changemakers and inclusive leaders who are locally promoting thriving sustainability, community healing, and resiliency. Kevin's work impacts one or more areas of holistic sustainability: a healthy environment, equity and social well-being, and a just economy.



The Sun Prairie Business & Education Partnership recently celebrated its 35th anniversary, marking the occasion by recognizing the outstanding contributions of education partners over the past year. Congratulations to **Theresa Wisden**, Executive Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching, Learning, and Equity, for her behind-the-scenes support of the Classroom Partners and Adopt-a-Class programs. **Sharlot Bogart** of Teddy's Place Childcare was also honored as an outstanding member for her unwavering dedication and significant impact, including her collaboration on the Prairie Phoenix Academy location of Teddy's Place.





## COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOAL

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



Several times a year, Dr. Saron hosts a coffee event in the community. This is a way for community members to have conversations with him and learn more about the progress of the District. **Our next event is Friday, March 14th, at 8:30 a.m., at the District Support Center.** Watch our District calendar and social media for other events.



The District recently had the pleasure of hosting the **Sun Prairie Chamber of Commerce Coffee Chat**. This event provided a fantastic opportunity for networking and strengthening relationships with chamber members and local business professionals.

## HOUSING INSECURITY did you know?

An estimated

# 216

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



## EMPTY BOWLS DINNER

*Sun Prairie West students work together for a good cause.*

Sun Prairie West students hosted their **annual Empty Bowls dinner**, raising \$1,000 for the Sunshine Place. This year was the biggest yet, with 227 attendees enjoying a delicious array of 11 homemade soups prepared by SP West's ProStart cooking students. The event also featured beautiful handmade bowls crafted by the Ceramics class, live music by Orchestra students, and support from Future Business Leaders of America students who helped with marketing and tours. The dinner doubled its fundraising efforts from last year.



## ENGAGING WITH OUR DIVERSE STUDENTS & FAMILIES

*The District is committed to fostering meaningful two-way communication.*

The District is committed to fostering **meaningful two-way communication with our diverse students and families** through initiatives like the Latino and Hmong Family Advisory Groups. At a recent Latino Family Advisory Group meeting, parents engaged in discussions about the District's bullying prevention efforts, gaining a clear understanding of reporting processes and the support available for students and families. Parents were empowered to share this knowledge within their communities, strengthening collective efforts to address bullying. Similarly, the Hmong Caregiver Advisory Group meeting focused on enhancing Hmong representation within the District, with families sharing ideas to support students' leadership and academic success. To further empower Hmong students, the District launched Monthly Luncheon Meetings at SP East and SP West, where

students explore their identities, share experiences, and build leadership skills. These efforts are supported by our new Bilingual Family Liaisons, Dania Cannon and Jennifer Yang, who serve as vital connections to our Spanish- and Hmong-speaking families, ensuring cultural mediation and strong collaboration. Through these initiatives, the District continues to create inclusive spaces where every student can thrive.



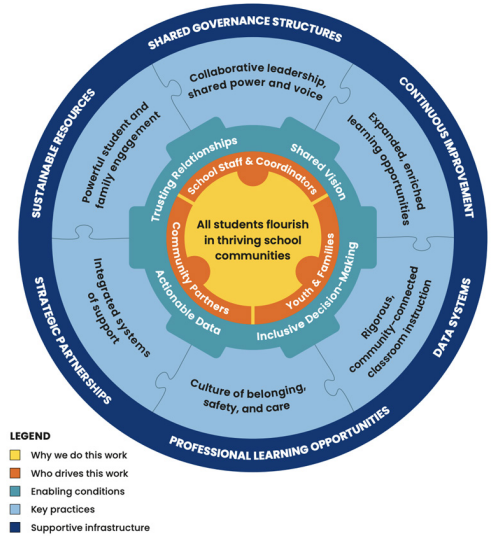


# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

**Sun Prairie Community Schools** transforms a school into a place where educators, local community members, families, and students work together to strengthen conditions for student learning and healthy development. Community Schools identify the root causes of challenges negatively

impacting students, and then organize in- and out-of-school resources, supports, and opportunities so that young people in our community thrive.

Our Community Schools are Northside, Creekside, Westside, and C. H. Bird; Prairie View, Patrick Marsh, and Central Heights; and Prairie Phoenix Academy.



Each of Sun Prairie's eight Community Schools sites has a full-time **site coordinator** on staff to coordinate in- and out-of-school resources, supports, and opportunities for students, staff, and families. This year, the team has focused on developing out-of-school programs to support students' sense of belonging and school attendance.



**100 Scholars Saturday School Program**, in partnership with 100 Black Men of Madison, Inc., provides four hours of academic support through small-group instruction for students from Northside Elementary and Creekside Elementary.



**Falcon Readers**, a program at Prairie View Middle School, connects middle school students with students from the Early Learning Playgroup (three- and four-year-olds) at Royal Oaks Elementary. This program supports on-time arrival for middle school students and their practice of foundational literacy skills.



Creekside Elementary and Westside Elementary are recipients of the **21st-Century Community Learning Center grant** that funds Monday–Thursday after-school programs at no cost to families.



Prairie View Middle School and Central Heights Middle School both offer **STEM Club** after school, led by University of Wisconsin–Madison students. This club offers hands-on, interactive STEM projects that students work on together. It also helps students learn about post-secondary education and career opportunities.



**All three middle schools** offer social spaces during after-school hours to provide free, safe spaces for students to connect socially, nurturing their sense of belonging, community, and connection with their school.



Prairie Phoenix Academy hosts regular **craft nights** for students, staff, and families to build connection through therapeutic art activities.





## FINANCE AND FACILITIES GOALS

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

## IN PARTNERSHIP TO CREATE INNOVATIVE LEARNING

The District and City of Sun Prairie are working together to create an outdoor classroom space.

Sun Prairie Utilities (SPU) and SPASD are working together on a plan to build **a city well and an outdoor classroom at Sun Prairie East**. The well will help the city meet future water demands, especially as the area around the school is expected to grow. Along with the well, SPU and SPASD are planning to add a pavilion and outdoor classroom space, which could be used for educational activities like prairie restoration. This partnership is a great example of the city and the District collaborating to benefit the community.



MSA



Our District's official enrollment at the Third Friday Count grew by **187 students**.

Since September, our District has grown by an additional **73 students**.



**TOTAL ENROLLMENT: 8,668 STUDENTS**

## SPASD IS GROWING

The District has more students than ever before.

The 2024–2025 school year brought us **our highest student enrollment numbers in the history of SPASD**. Our Third Friday Count in September showed that we have grown 187 students from last year. Another 73 students have enrolled in the District since the student count date, putting our total at **8,668 students**, which is 260 more than last year.

## USE OUR FACILITIES

Our District facilities are available for members of our community to use.

Our **District facilities** are community assets. We have made the process easier for our community to use and rent these spaces. Please visit our Facilities Calendar & Rental Facilities web page to see the facilities open for use and rental.



**Celebrating**  
**20 YEARS**  
2005-2025

[SunPrairieEducationFoundation.org](http://SunPrairieEducationFoundation.org)



We have been honored to be an integral part of inspiring kids and bringing educators' dreams to life in and out of the classroom! **YOU CAN HELP US REACH ANOTHER 20 YEARS!** Donate to one or all of our Honor Walls located at each high school and leave an inspiring message that invests in future generations.

Build a future with a legacy that lasts!



Regardless of which wall you choose, your donation supports all SPASD schools.

Find your banking **Sweet Spot.**

With five locations serving the Sun Prairie and Cottage Grove areas.



**BANK OF SUN PRAIRIE**  
The Right Balance.  
[banksunprairie.com](http://banksunprairie.com)

FDIC



# WHAT IS THE NUTRITION TEAM COOKING UP?

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



The SPASD School Nutrition Team is committed to providing nutritious and delicious meals that fuel students' growth and learning. We are excited to share some of the ways we are **improving our school meals program:**

## Fresh, Local Ingredients

We have partnered with local suppliers to bring fresh, seasonal produce to students. Additionally, each middle and high school has a hydroponic tower that provides fresh romaine lettuce for salads. We are also serving

more homemade roasted vegetables, like broccoli, squash, and green beans, while reducing processed foods.

## Diverse Menu Options

We are introducing new cultural dishes to expand students' palates, including seasoned Asian rice and homemade taco meat. We have also increased our vegetarian and vegan choices to include plant-based chicken nuggets, buffalo wings, and spicy black bean burgers.

## Educational Initiatives

We are meeting with students to share nutrition tips and to gather input on breakfast and lunch options. Students also participate in taste tests to provide feedback on new menu items.

Healthy eating is essential for a child's overall well-being. By providing them with nutritious and delicious meals, we are supporting students' academic success and future health.



**SCHOOL SAFETY**  
did you  
**know?**

**86%** of Sun Prairie students report  
**feeling safe** in our schools.



## THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY

The community's support of the 2024 Operating Referendum will help the District support our students, staff, and community.

The Sun Prairie Area School District would like to **thank the community for supporting our 2024 Operating Referendum.** Your vote of confidence in our District is a testament to the value you place on education, the care you have for our students and staff, and the vision you have for our community.

In addition to stabilizing the budget and addressing structural deficits, **we were able to give our Professional Educators a salary increase of \$3,400.** This brings our District above the Dane County average for educator pay and assists with our efforts to recruit and retain high-quality staff.

We are committed to being responsible stewards of your tax dollars and to ensuring that every investment benefits our students. We will continue to communicate how we are using referendum funds. Watch for updates soon about the expansion of some programming for our students.





# SUN PRAIRIE SCHOOL DISTRICT HOMEROOM PODCAST WITH BRAD SARON

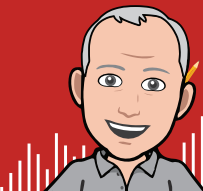


**LISTEN NOW**



Sun Prairie Area  
School District

501 S. Bird Street  
Sun Prairie, WI 53590



Join Dr. Saron as he hosts guests on the *Homeroom* podcast to help our community learn more about our staff and programs. The episodes are available on our “Homeroom with Brad Saron” web page or wherever you get your podcasts.

## WE ARE LISTENING

If you have questions, please contact us.

### DISTRICT SUPPORT CENTER

501 S. Bird Street, Sun Prairie, WI 53590  
608-834-6500 | [sunprairieschools.org](http://sunprairieschools.org)



**SUBMIT A  
QUESTION  
VIA THE  
DISTRICT  
WEBSITE**

## DISTRICT CONTACTS

### SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

**Dr. Brad Saron** 608-834-6502  
Superintendent

**Patti Lux Mlsna** 608-834-6562  
Director of Communications & Engagement

**Jamie Racine** 608-318-8109  
Community Schools Program Coordinator

### TEACHING, LEARNING & EQUITY

**Dr. Stephanie Leonard** 608-834-6516  
Asst. Supt. of Teaching, Learning & Equity

**Jennifer Apodaca** 608-834-6520  
Director of Student Services

**Janet Thomas** 608-834-6638  
Director of Student Services

**Dr. Curt Mould** 608-834-6531  
Director of Digital Media, Innovation & Strategy

**Bridget Kotarak** 608-834-6624  
Director of Student Policy & School Operations

**Dr. Sarah Chaja-Clardy** 608-834-6572  
Director of Secondary Teaching, Learning & Equity

**Rick Mueller** 608-834-6506  
Director of Elementary Teaching, Learning & Equity

**Dr. Michael Morgan** 608-834-6599  
Director of Systemic Equity & Inclusion

### OPERATIONS

**Dr. Nick Reichhoff** 608-834-6683  
Asst. Supt. of Operations

**Phil Frei** 608-834-6510  
Director of Business & Finance

**Rhonda Page** 608-834-6512  
Business Services Manager / Busing

**Dr. Chris Sadler** 608-834-6551  
Director of Human Resources

**Isabel Simonetti** 608-834-6522  
Employee Relations Manager

**Barb Waara** 608-834-6527  
Director of School Nutrition

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

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

## 2025 UPCOMING DATES

### FEBRUARY

- **Friday, February 28:** No School

### MARCH

- **Monday–Friday, March 24–28:** Spring Break

### APRIL

- **Tuesday, April 1:** Election Day
- **Tuesday, April 1:** SP4K–8 Summer School Registration Opens
- **Friday, April 18:** No School  
*May be used as a make-up day if we exceed 3 snow days this year.*

### MAY

- **Saturday, May 10:** Sun Prairie East Prom
- **Saturday, May 10:** Sun Prairie West Prom
- **Friday, May 23:** No School  
*May be used as a make-up day if we exceed 3 snow days this year.*
- **Monday, May 26:** No School

### JUNE

- **Thursday, June 5:** Last Day of School for SP4K
- **Thursday, June 12:** PPA Graduation: 1:00 p.m.
- **Thursday, June 12:** Last Day of School (K–12)

#### Dismissal Times:

Elementary Schools: 11:10 a.m.

Middle Schools: 12:05 p.m.

High Schools: 12:15 p.m.

Prairie Phoenix Academy: 11:50 a.m.

- **Friday, June 13:** SP East Graduation: 5:00 p.m.  
SP West Graduation: 7:30 p.m.
- **Wednesday, June 25:** First Day of Summer School

### JULY

- **Thursday, July 24:** Last Day of Summer School

### SEPTEMBER

- **Tuesday, September 2:** First Day of School (K–12)
- **Monday, September 8:** First Day of School for SP4K



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

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

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