

SIXTIMES

SPRING 2025



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SIX

BUILDING FUTURES NOW

REAL-WORLD LEARNING THROUGH PACKER PATHWAYS AND CAPS

At South St. Paul Public Schools, students don't have to wait until after graduation to start building their futures. From preschool through 12th grade, Packer Pathways helps students discover their passions, connect them to real-world opportunities, and prepare them for life after graduation, whether that's college, career, or both.

One powerful example is the **TriDistrict CAPS (Center for Advanced Professional Studies)** program, part of the **Packer Pathways** experience. CAPS is a real-world learning program for juniors and seniors in South St. Paul. Through CAPS, students explore careers, gain professional skills, and earn real-world experience all before graduation.

Programs offered through CAPS include:

-  **Business and Entrepreneurship**
-  **Computer Science and Information Technology**
-  **Environment, Food, and Agriculture**
-  **Healthcare Careers and Medicine**
-  **Transportation Business and Trades**
-  **Urban Education**

Earn college credit. Get real-world experience. Launch your future.

Learn more at sspps.org/academics/ccr

Are you a local business that wants to partner with CAPS?

Contact Program Director Ben Kusch at bkusch@tridistrictce.org

WHAT IS TRIDISTRICT CAPS?

CAPS is an innovative, career-focused initiative that connects high school students with professional experiences in fields like healthcare, business, education, and IT. Through hands-on learning, mentorship, and partnerships with local industries, students develop essential skills, earn college credit, and gain a clearer vision for their future careers.



It's a really good opportunity. I don't think I would be where I am today if it wasn't for CAPS.

-Maverick, Grade 12



It's a great way to figure out what you want to do and get real experience before graduating.

-Mariana, Grade 12



FORGING THEIR OWN PATH: STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

MAVERICK – TRANSPORTATION AND TRADES

For Maverick, a senior at South St. Paul High School, learning never looked like sitting at a traditional desk. It looked like tool carts, light switches, and a full-time job before graduation.

He joined the **Transportation and Trades Pathway** through CAPS, exploring hands-on trades and completing an internship at North American Trailer in Inver Grove Heights. Today, he works there full-time. "It taught us trade and life skills, things you don't always learn sitting at a desk," he says. "It helps prepare you for the real world."

MARIANA – HEALTHCARE CAREERS AND MEDICINE

For Mariana, another SSPHS senior, learning means scrubbing dental tools, organizing instruments, and earning college credit in the **Healthcare Careers and Medicine Pathway**.

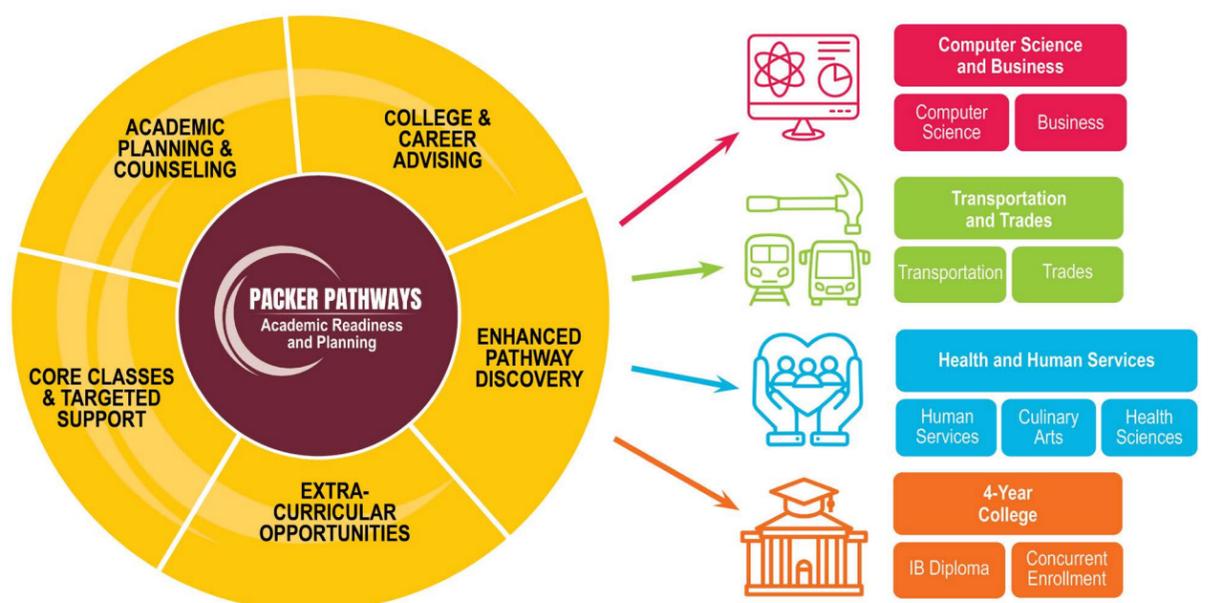
Through her internship at Horton Orthodontics, she works as a sterilization technician gaining real experience in a dental clinic while confirming her future path to become a dental hygienist. Her advice for other students? "Apply! There are so many opportunities to learn and meet new people."

PACKER PATHWAYS

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS FOR EVERY STUDENT

TriDistrict CAPS is one of many opportunities that help SSPPS students explore their interests, build real-world skills, and plan for life beyond high school. At South St. Paul High School, students benefit from personalized experiences aligned with a variety of academic and career pathways, such as Career and Technical Education, that empower them to navigate their futures with confidence. **Packer Pathways** create opportunities for our students to explore, engage, and gives them choices in their future both here at SSPPS and beyond.

<https://www.sspps.org/academics/packer-pathway>



STAY CONNECTED!

EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO SUCCEED THROUGH HANDS-ON EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

SSP STUDENTS PITCH BIG BUSINESS IDEAS

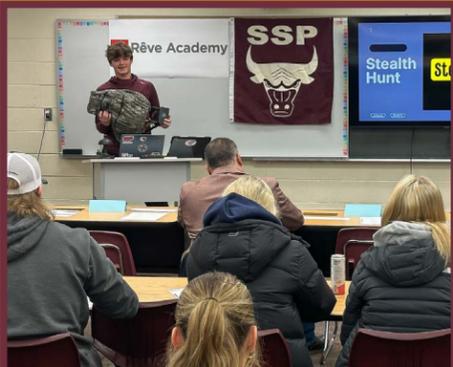
South St. Paul High School Business students and TriDistrict CAPS participants recently pitched their business ideas for:

- \$500 startup grants
- Mentorship from business leaders
- Up to six college credits through Inver Hills Community College
- Micro-internships for all students to refine ideas
- “Entrepreneur in Residence” titles awarded to one business at each event

Partnering with Rêve Academy, students presented their concepts to local leaders, school staff, and industry professionals during two pitch events with SSP students.

Every student walked away with valuable experience and support. Visit our website for a summary of the students’ business concepts:

www.sspps.org/headlines



SSP Sophomore, Michal F, presents his winning idea, StealthHunt. An ergonomic bag that makes it easier for bow hunters to access their arrows.

STUDENTS TAKE ON CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Students in the TriDistrict CAPS Healthcare Careers program are turning research into action. They addressed chronic absenteeism from a student perspective.

Through interviews, surveys, and conversations with peers, staff, and public health experts, students uncovered key barriers to attendance, including:

- Mental health challenges
- Lack of sleep
- Transportation issues
- Low student engagement

After identifying these issues, students brainstormed real, student-centered solutions and shared their findings with Dakota County Public Health and district leaders, using their voices to advocate for change in their schools. Read the full story at:

www.sspps.org/headlines



CAPS students explain their research and solutions to school leaders in small groups

MIDDLE SCHOOL PARTNERS WITH GOAL GETTERS ACADEMY

At South St. Paul Middle School, student success means more than just grades, it’s about building confidence, leadership, and a vision for the future. That’s why, in spring 2024, the school partnered with Goal Getters Academy, an innovative program designed to empower students by nurturing leadership, resilience, and academic excellence.

Through a combination of classroom lessons and weekly small-group sessions, students are given space to explore their goals, reflect on their strengths, and map out personal paths to success. These small groups are intentionally formed based on positive peer relationships, creating a safe, supportive environment where students can dream big and build each other up.



Key program features:

- Weekly small-group sessions focused on leadership, goal-setting, and self-reflection
- Student groups formed based on supportive peer relationships
- Selection process using input from teachers, families, and data from attendance, academics, and social-emotional screenings
- Targeted support for students who will benefit most

The program began with 62 students during its first year, made possible through generous support from the South St. Paul Educational Foundation. Building on that strong foundation, and with early signs of academic growth, the school secured additional funding through the State of Minnesota. This year, 79 students in grades 6–8 are taking part, and the school hopes to keep growing the opportunity for even more students in the future.

Early results show promising impact:

- 92% of participants demonstrated consistent academic progress
- 30% showed measurable improvement in academic performance

SSP Middle School hopes to continue expanding this impactful initiative. When students believe in themselves and their potential, there’s no limit to what they can achieve.

“ I feel connected and accepted. I’ve learned how to communicate about things that matter to me. -Marciana, Grade 8 ”

“ I have learned social skills, how to stay calm, and how to make new friends. -Takaree, Grade 8 ”

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY



Kaposia Students are Fighting Cancer Like Ninja Warriors!

More than three years ago, Kaposia students decided to raise money for more and new ninja warrior equipment in the gymnasium in honor of their friend who passed away from cancer. Since then, students have continued raising money to put towards new equipment. This new equipment is used to host ninja and gymnastics after school camps to raise money for community members in the district whose lives have been impacted by cancer. This year, students raised money to support three Kaposia families currently battling cancer.



Using Creativity to Help Fight Hunger

The Lincoln Center Student Ambassadors (student council) partnered with the City of SSP to decorate bags for Knowlan’s Supermarket to promote the SSP 55075 Food Drive. Lincoln Center also hosted their own food drive in March. The students gathered more than 330 pounds of non-perishable food items for Neighbors, Inc. to help feed families in our community.

Building Bridges with Bingo

Students from the Comunidad de Latinos Unidos (CDLU) Affinity Group at SSP Secondary brought smiles to the residents of the SSP Nan McKay High-Rise during a lively game of Bingo! CDLU members proudly represented SSP as they built connections and shared joyful moments with the residents. CDLU is just one of the many Packer groups that visit our local high-rises to spread Packer Pride with our South St. Paul community.



Thank You Students, Staff, Families, and SSP!

Because of your dedication to our schools, our community delivered hundreds of postcards to our legislators asking them to reconsider recent changes that have SSPPS facing a \$1.5 million reduction in compensatory revenue for 2025-26. The postcard shows how important school funding is to our South St. Paul community! Thank you for advocating for our students.



SUPPORT SOUTH ST. PAUL STUDENTS—FIX COMPENSATORY FUNDING!
Recent legislative changes have unintentionally cut \$1.5 million from our schools in 55075—equivalent to losing 15 teachers or 30 educational support professionals in a small, high-need district. This funding is ESSENTIAL to provide the academic support and mental health services for our most vulnerable students.
We need a legislative fix to ensure all students get the support they deserve.
Please act now to restore compensatory funding!

Name: _____
Message (optional): _____

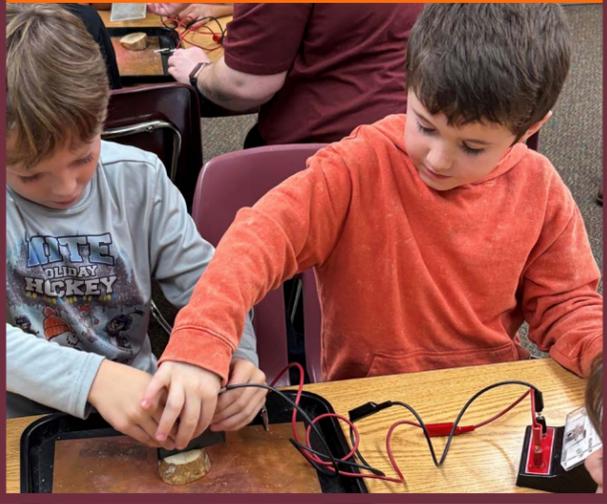
Thank you for standing with students in 55075!
Every Student Counts. Every Dollar Matters. Please Restore Compensatory Funding!

From a concerned: Staff member Family Community Member

South St. Paul
Public Schools

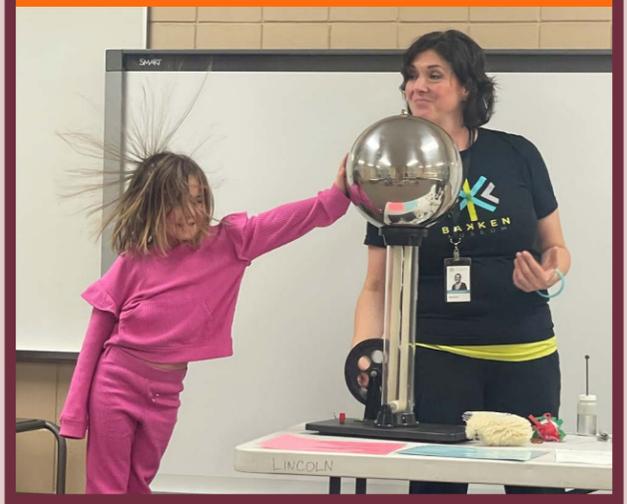
HANDS-ON EDUCATION AT ALL AGES

Lincoln 2nd graders used potatoes to generate electricity during their in-school field trip with the Bakken Museum.



High school biology students demonstrated their understanding of cell division by creating meiosis models out of sweet treats.

Lincoln kindergarteners explored magnetism through a fun hands-on, in-school workshop with the Bakken Museum.



Kaposia 4th graders created their own short stories about fictional animals and compiled them into a book.



6th graders practiced money management skills by running their own city at the annual field trip to BizTown.

High school psychology students made neuron models out of candy. They carefully placed the treats to represent each of the different parts.



PACKER PRIDE REFRESHED

STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

Over the past several months, South St. Paul Public Schools completed a comprehensive strategic planning process to guide our direction through 2030 ([click here to view it](#)). Grounded in community input and aligned with our values, the plan outlines priorities around student growth, staff support, belonging, and expanded opportunities. This work directly informs our current brand refresh, helping ensure our visual identity matches the bold vision we've created together. We look forward to sharing more this summer as we launch both our new strategic plan and refreshed brand identity.

A FRESH LOOK, THE SAME PACKER PRIDE

As part of the strategic plan work, South St. Paul Public Schools is refreshing its brand to better reflect who we are and where we're going. This involves small refinements to our logo, design elements, and overall visual identity across materials like our website, digital and print marketing, and other communication platforms.

WHAT'S A BRAND REFRESH?

A brand refresh is not the same as a rebrand. We're not changing our name, colors, or the pride that defines our Packer identity. Instead, it's more like a fresh coat of paint, it enhances the visual aspects of SSPPS while keeping what makes us special. The goal is to create a clearer, more consistent, and professional look across all of our district communications.

While we honor our traditions, we also want our brand to reflect the diversity, energy, and excellence of the students, staff, and families in our community today. This refresh will honor our past while welcoming and including everyone who is part of our future.



WHAT'S NEXT?

We're grateful to the staff and families who joined us on April 23 to provide valuable input on the brand refresh. Their feedback, along with insights from our strategic planning focus groups, is helping to guide the next steps in this process.

In the coming months, we'll be reviewing various design and messaging samples. Our refreshed brand, along with the launch of our new strategic plan, will be revealed during Back to School events later this summer.



A YEAR OF MOMENTUM AND LOOKING AHEAD

A note from Superintendent Dr. Zambreno

As we wrap up another school year, I want to take a moment to thank all of you, our students, families, teachers, staff, and community who have contributed to a successful and meaningful year. It has been a year of growth, learning, and building connections. We are proud of the work we've done together.

This year, we made significant strides not only in our classrooms but also in shaping the future of our district. We launched our strategic planning process, taking important steps toward refining our vision for the district's future. We are also working on refreshing our branding to better reflect who we are and where we're headed. These efforts are helping to ensure that we continue building a destination district where everyone wants to live, work, play, and go to school.

Whether it's through new initiatives in our classrooms, ongoing efforts to close achievement gaps, or the continued focus on supporting the whole child, we are committed to helping every student reach their full potential.

Looking ahead, we're excited to carry the momentum of this year into the summer. District and school leaders will be working to strengthen our programs and put action steps in place to bring our strategic plan to life, ensuring we're ready for a strong start to the 2025-26 school year. We remain committed to making sure all students, staff, and families feel welcomed, supported, and equipped with the tools and resources they need to succeed.

We look forward to the continued work ahead and to what we can achieve together as we move into next year. Thank you for your partnership and dedication to our school community. Have a wonderful summer!



Dr. Brian Zambreno
SSPPS Superintendent

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- SETTING STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS**

A new SSP Middle School program, Goal Getters Academy, is helping students succeed through small group sessions on leadership, goal-setting, and personal growth. This year, students have shown better behavior and academic progress. Read more in this issue of SixTimes.

- FORGING THEIR OWN PATH**

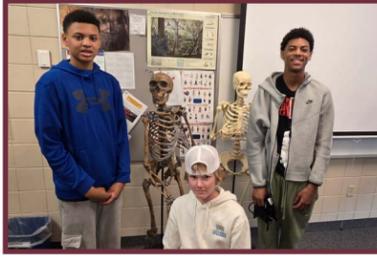
South St. Paul High School students share how programs like TriDistrict CAPS and Career & Technical Education are preparing them for the future. Read more about their inspiring journeys inside.

- PACKER PRIDE REFRESHED**

South St. Paul Public Schools is refreshing its brand to better reflect our community today while staying true to our proud Packer roots. Read more inside about where we are with the updated strategic plan and how that is playing into our refreshed brand.

- SPREADING PACKER PRIDE**

Inside read more about how SSPPS students are spreading Packer Pride throughout our South St. Paul Community.



South St. Paul Public Schools

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WORK FOR SSPPS!

SSPPS is looking for great people to join our team. We're always hiring part-time, full-time, and seasonal employees with flexible day and evening hours. Scan the QR code to view current openings.



LEA LOS SIXTIMES EN ESPAÑOL

Escanear aquí para leer una versión digital del Boletín Sixtimes de SSPPS en español.



KICK OFF TO FIRST SEASON OF GIRLS FLAG FOOTBALL

A NEW ERA OF PACKER PRIDE

What started as a four-team pilot last year has quickly grown into a statewide movement and South St. Paul is all in. This spring, SSPPS joined the fast-growing Minnesota Girls Flag Football league, becoming one of 55 teams to launch the sport in their schools. With support and funding from the Minnesota Vikings, the program hit the ground running.

“The response was incredible. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from both students and staff.” – Brady Krueger, Athletic Director

Nearly 50 girls signed up, allowing South St. Paul to form Varsity, JV, and B-Squad teams. Coaches and students alike have been energized by the enthusiasm and talent on the field.

“Everyone on the team is positive... I'm really excited to see how far we go with this.” – Allana, Senior Quarterback.

From tryouts and practices, to team-building and gameplay, the Packers are building more than just a team, they're helping shape the future of girls' athletics at SSP.

“We have a really good group of kids. They're respectful, hardworking, and really diverse in age, background, and skill level. They've come together quickly as a team.” – Head Coach Don Nihart

The season wraps with a state tournament on June 9.

[Click here](#) to read the full story and hear more from players and coaches.



BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH SHARED VALUES

SSPPS and the City of SSP have joined together to establish a foundational set of core values reflecting the best of our Community!

