Final Feedback on B.I.G.G. Survey Summary of Results

Highlights

- The reading and mathematics goals had the highest percentage of respondents who thought the goal was good but with revisions (37% and 39% respectively).
- The college and career readiness and civics goals had the highest percentage of participants that indicated the goal was good and didn't need any changes (82% and 78% respectively).
- The restorative practices goal had the highest percentage of respondents indicating the goal was bad and it should be discarded at 17%.
- When asked about additional goals, respondents voiced concern regarding the low expectations and rigor of the identified goals. They also wanted to better understand how the goals were going to be reached, both in implementation supports as well as funding for those supports.
- Respondents propose several additional goals, including improving staff and parent satisfaction, enhancing discipline strategies, and increasing access to arts, music, languages, and advanced coursework. They recommend specific goals for student groups, including early childhood education, special education, and high-achieving students. Many respondents emphasize the importance of expanding extracurricular opportunities to boost student engagement and prevent students from leaving SPPS for districts offering more of these options.

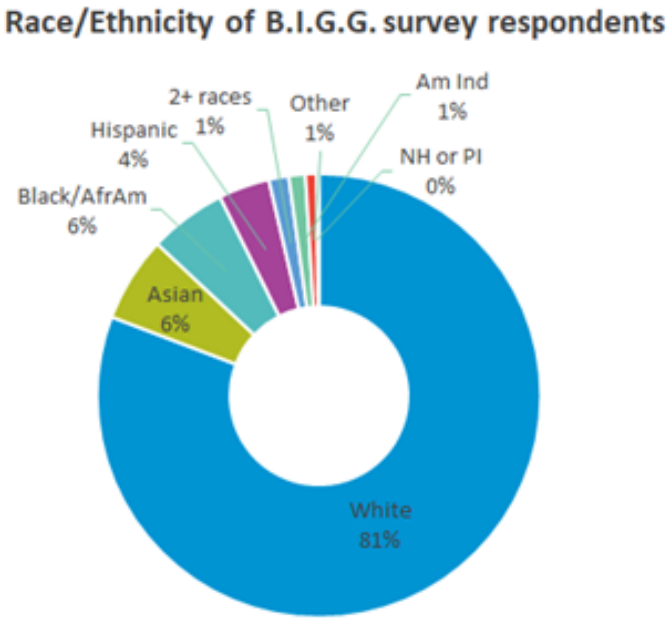
Introduction

The Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) School Board sought final input on the goals established for their Board-Initiated Goals Governance. To gather this feedback, parents, families, community members, educators, administrators, and district staff were invited to share their opinions. The survey link was shared via email, the Bridge, the Principal's Playbook, among others.

Survey logistics and respondent demographics

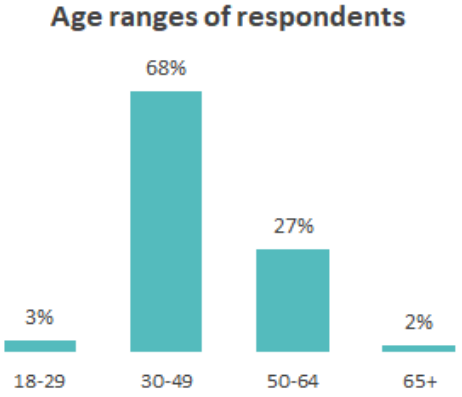
The survey was available, initially, from February 24th to February 28th, 2025. The survey remained open until March 27th to accommodate individuals who may not have initially heard about it, as well as those who participated in additional School Board focus groups and wished to complete the survey. A total of 1,720 surveys were included in the results. The survey was available in five languages, with nearly all responses (98.8%) completed in English. A small number of surveys were completed in Spanish (0.9%, 16 surveys), Karen (2 surveys), and one survey each in Hmong and Somali.

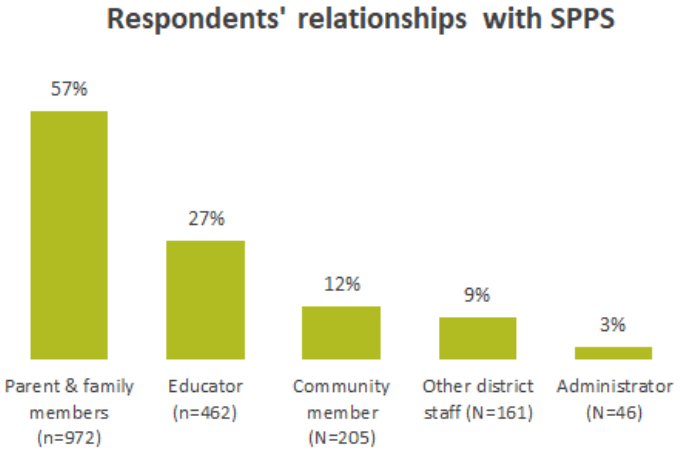
Among those who reported their race/ethnicity, 81% identified as White, while the remaining 19% were Asian (8%), Black/African American (6%), Hispanic (4%), American Indian (1%), two or more races (1%), other (1%), and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (<1%).



The majority of respondents (68%) were in the 30-49 age range, followed by 27% aged 50-64. Three percent were between 18-27 years old, and 2% were aged 65 or older.

Respondents were asked to identify their relationship with SPPS. Many who selected "family member" also identified as a "parent," so these two categories were merged to ensure accurate representation. Of the total respondents, 57% were parents or family members of SPPS students, 39% were SPPS staff (27% educators, 9% other district staff, and 3% administrators), and 12% were community members. Note that the percentages do not add up to 100% because participants could select multiple relationships with the district.





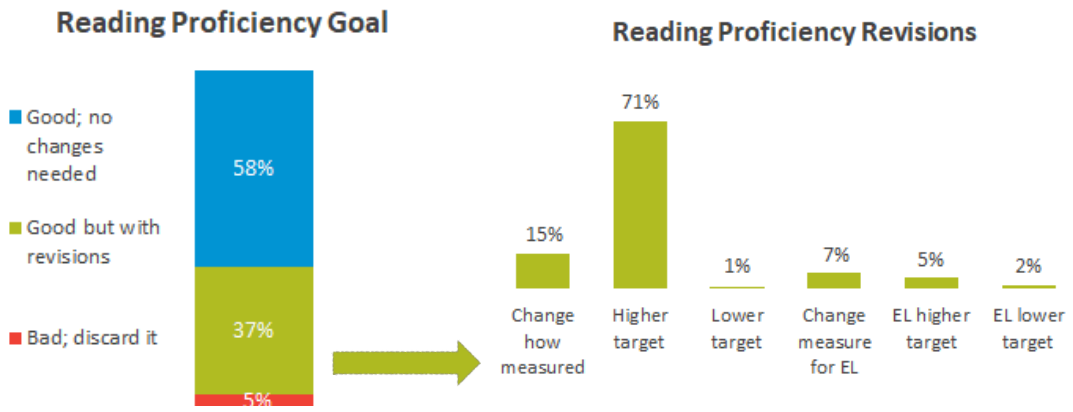
Student Outcome and Programmatic Goals Results

Participants in the SPPS community were asked to evaluate each of the eight proposed goals by selecting one of the following options: a) good; no changes needed, b) good but with revisions, or c) bad; discard it. For those who selected "good but with revisions," a follow-up question asked what revision they wanted to see: a) change how the goal is measured, b) the goal should be higher, or c) the goal should be lower. Below are the goals, survey results for each question, and selected open-ended comments that offer additional context.

Student Outcome Goals

Reading Proficiency

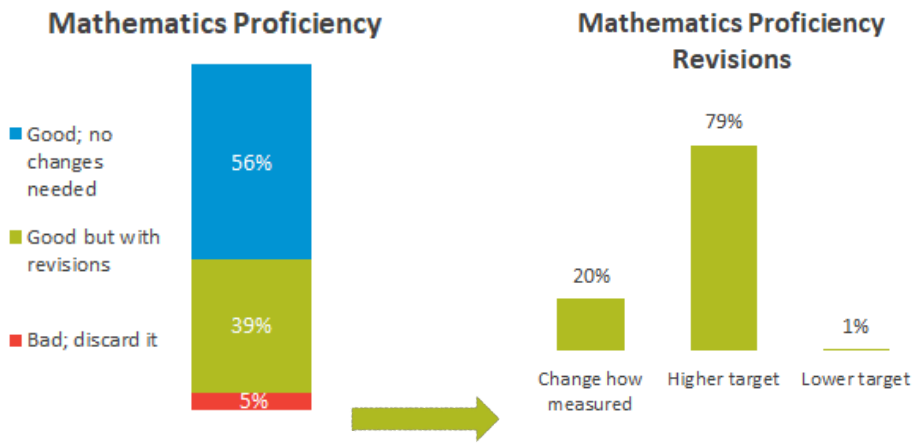
The percentage of SPPS students who are proficient in reading will increase from 34% in 2024 to 40% by 2029; the percentage of SPPS students learning English as a second language who are proficient in reading will increase from 7% in 2024 to 15% by 2029, as measured by the Minnesota Comprehensive Reading Assessments.



> "EL Student performance on ACCESS Language Acquisition tests. (This is the test that measures student language development growth yearly.)"
>
> "How are reading proficiency scores going to increase? What strategies are you planning to put in place? What does it mean to be "proficient"? What does proficiency look like for an ESL student versus a non-ESL student?"
>
> "The classroom teachers cannot do everything. Students deserve intense small group intervention support or none of the reading goals will be met."

Mathematics Proficiency

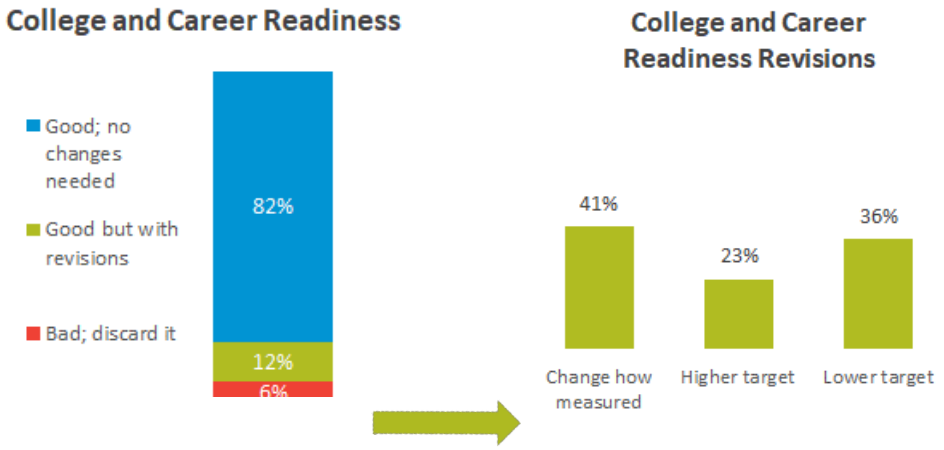
The percentage of SPPS students who are proficient in math will increase from 26% in 2024 to 31% by 2029, as measured by the Minnesota Comprehensive Mathematics Assessments.



> "The math goal does not specify by grade level - I think it should be a tiered goal so each grade level that takes MCAs is given a percentage growth goal."
>
> "To clarify for the Math goal. The MCAs 2029 will be based off the new standards and thus will be a new test that won't compare to the 2024's MCAs."

College and Career Readiness

The percentage of SPPS students who complete a career inventory before graduation will increase from 78% of students in 2024 to 99% of students in 2029.



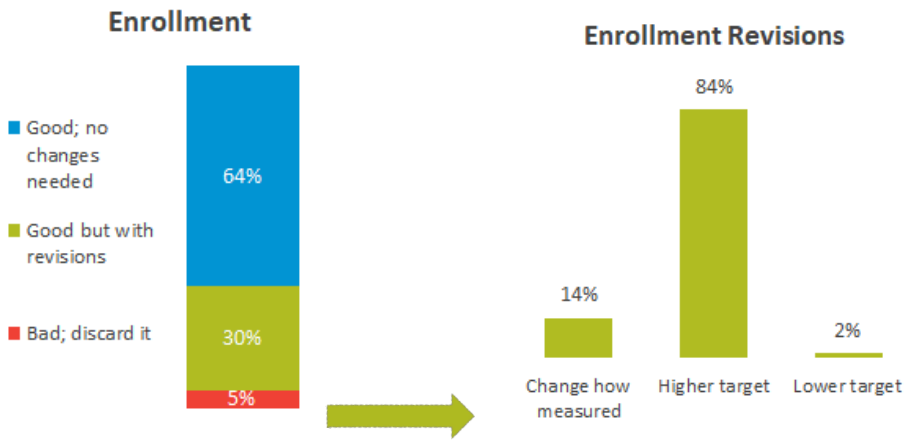
"Rather than focus on a career inventory, focus on every student having a PLP meeting with their school counselor (that could include an inventory but is not limited to such)."

"College and career goals should be aligned to other metrics that are more representative of opportunities/experiences. The current goal is too low of a bar and doesn't actually show any tangible skill change."

Programmatic Goals

Enrollment

The percentage of school-aged children who live in St. Paul and attend an SPPS school will increase from 60% in 2024 to 63% by 2029.

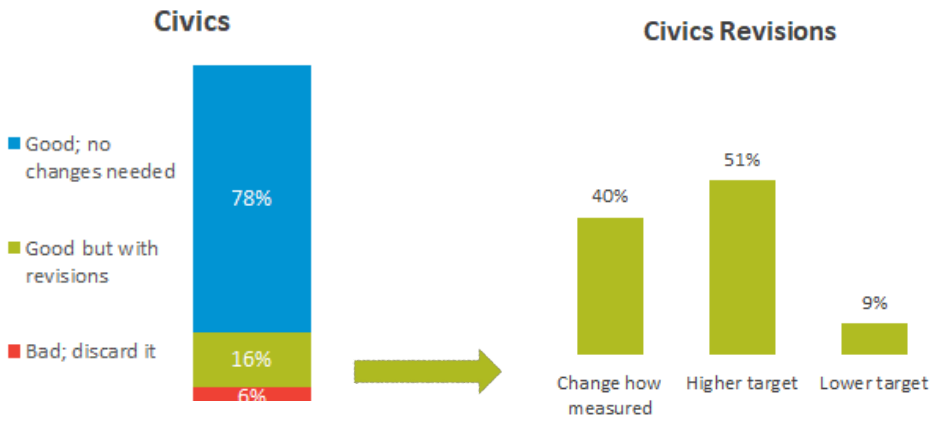


"I think the goal about enrollment should focus more on retention of current students and families."

"I would like to see a metric that measures satisfaction of parents and students with the offerings of the school. With the current federal-level drama it would be good to have a pulse on how this feels for the school as there is a risk for even lower enrollment."

Civics

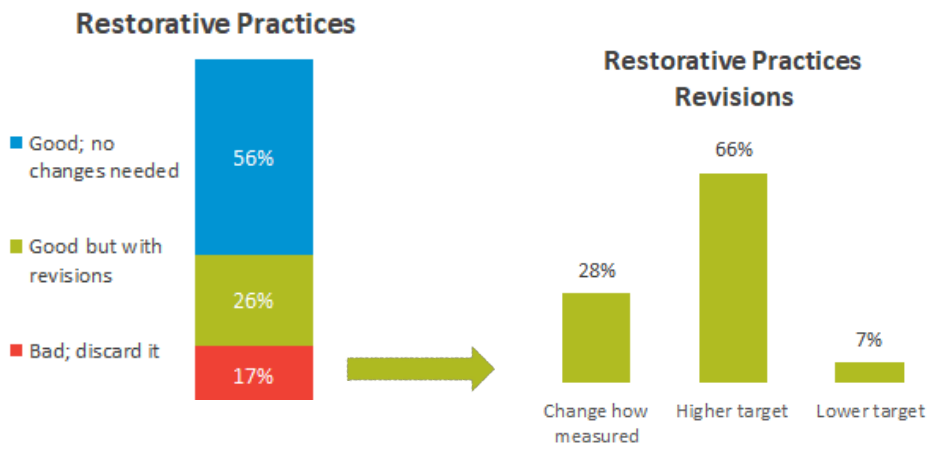
The percentage of SPPS students who receive a passing grade in Civics and/or U.S. Government will increase from 84% in 2024 to 90% in 2029.



> "For Civics— is it required for all schools? I would like to see Civics instructional time increased vs using "% that pass" civics."
>
> "There is concern that teachers are passing students but standards are lowered. Can the students answer basic civics questions?"

Restorative Practices

The number of schools fully implementing the Whole School Restorative Practices model will increase from 1 in 2024 to 8 by 2029.



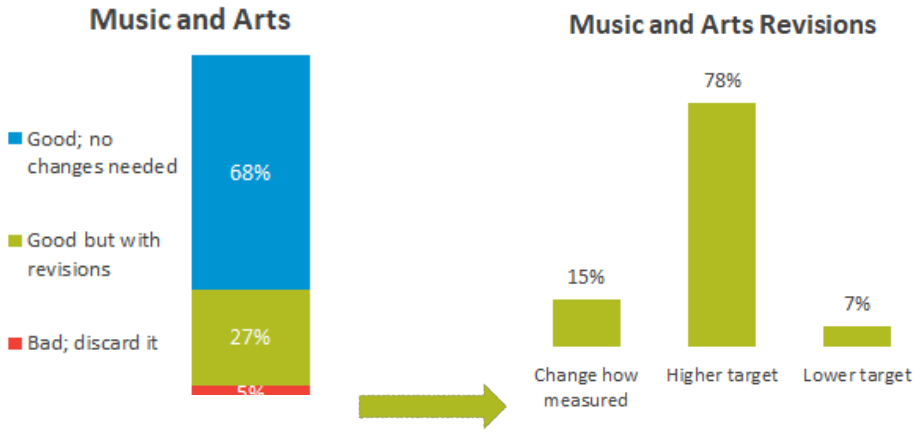
"…I'd like to see, at the very least, data showing that behaviors decrease and attendance increases with the implementation of restorative practices, to show the community that there is a correlation."

"To achieve the goal regarding Restorative Practices it seems like you would need people in those roles. However, RP recently received huge budget cuts and most of those positions were eliminated."

"For the RP goal specifically, I want to highlight that our building was a Restorative Practices school and the district cut our RP Coordinator position. None of our newest staff have been trained in RP since. To be a truly RP school, we need everyone on board and we need the coordinator position funded so we can continue to build with an expert on site. Because Restorative Practices hasn't been a priority from the top down to our building, we can't implement it as fully as we should/want to which is sad because I hear SPPS District Administrators talking about RP often. It feels like SPPS likes to say that they support RP (it sounds good), but they don't actually support proportionally in practice."

Music and Arts

The amount of the district funds dedicated to music and arts will increase from $243 per student in FY25 to $284 per student by FY29 as outlined in the SPPS district budget.

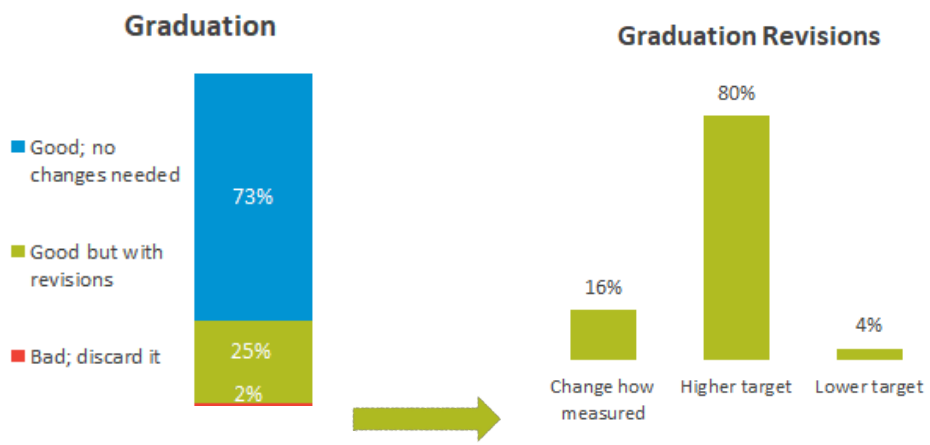


"In the music goal, instead of focusing on funding, focus on access to music and art experiences for all at every level."

"Are all students getting art and music? If each child has that much money set aside, why are we still seeing schools where this is missing."

Graduation

The percentage of SPPS students who graduate in 4 years will increase from 68% in 2023 to 78% in 2029; returning to pre-pandemic levels for all student groups.



> "I think it is important to think about students who are new to the country as well and how their graduation pathway may be different and longer. Is there a way to celebrate graduation rates even if it is not in 4 years but is the best fit for the student?"
>
> "We should focus less on graduation rates and more on making sure that the diploma students earn actually means something - and that it is a true indicator of what our graduates have learned and can actually do."

Additional Goals

The survey asked respondents, "Are there any goals you think we should add?" Responses ranged from suggesting improvements to the current goals as well as areas respondents would like the Board to consider. The ideas and suggestions were broad, but certain themes were identified. The data was coded into two different areas: feedback on achieving the current goals and suggestions for additional goals.

Feedback on the current goals – Rigor, measures, implementation, funding, accountability

Respondents expressed concerns about the lack of details on the cost and implementation of the goals, making it difficult to form a clear opinion. They emphasized the need for higher achievement targets, along with more information on the strategies and support required to reach these goals. There were concerns about the potential dilution of standards to meet these targets, as well as the need for clearer metrics to evaluate effectiveness. Some feedback highlighted insufficient funding for key initiatives, including Restorative Practices (RP). They advocated for targeted efforts and additional resources for underperforming schools and demographic groups, especially to address disparities among students of color. There was also

a call for clarity on how educators will be supported and what strategies or curricula will be used across the district. A sampling of comments include:

“It's hard to render an opinion on the goals when I don't know more details, including how expensive implementation will be now how the district hopes to accomplish the goal.”

“I want to ensure we keep rigor high, and do not lower expectations so more students pass.”

“The goals are very low and should be higher. What and how will you define success? There are funds and resources needed to determine whether if this is feasible. How do you find success?”

“These goals are all related to student achievement, which is great. What is the process to get to 'how' - as in, are there goals that relate to operational priorities to support student achievement, such as safety?”

“I think the goals are good, my feedback is more in reference to implementation to get to the goals. I support providing more funding/resources to groups and school that are not tracking/close to meeting goals. For example, if there are disparities in demographic groups or specific schools, I think there should be targeted efforts to bring those schools/students up to the desired levels. The disparities with students of color are pretty startling.”

“What is the district doing to help teachers teach students in order for these goals to be met? What curriculum, programs or strategies are common across the district to meet these goals?”

Additional areas of focus for goals

Respondents propose a range of additional goals for the School Board to improve student and staff success. Respondents suggest a goal about staff retention and teacher satisfaction. They also suggest a goal focused on family engagement and support, including dedicated funding for these efforts. Students' mental health and well-being are also identified, with recommendations for adequate staffing in mental health roles, professional development, and resources to create safe, engaging classrooms that foster a sense of belonging in students. Additionally, the feedback highlights the importance of balancing discipline strategies that support students while addressing behavioral issues, along with goals aimed at improving attendance.

Respondents offer suggestions to improve students’ school experiences. Respondents recommend increasing physical education, recess, and reducing screen time for younger students, particularly limiting iPad dependency and secondary school cell phone use. There is also a call for greater access to world languages, art, music, and advanced classes. Financial education and other life skills are suggested as important additions before students graduate. The need for fully staffing school libraries and creating equity in library collections across the district is suggested.

Finally, feedback highlights the importance of setting goals for specific student populations, such as increasing participation in early childhood programs, ensuring students with IEPs receive the services they need, and MLL students receive the support they need to be successful. There is a call for supporting high-achieving students by offering more opportunities and differentiated programs, including but not limited to, accelerated classes. A large number of

respondents stress the need for SPPS to prioritize extracurricular activities, including leadership, jobs, and sports, to boost student engagement and retention. A sampling of comments include:

“I think we should set goals regarding the number of teachers who feel supported (by administrators and other support roles) in an anonymous survey.”

“None of these student outcomes will be possible by keeping staffing levels what they are in schools. As a SPPS teacher, we need to aim high. The only way this can be met is to have more supports in schools for all students. We desperately need para support in schools, more SPED funding, more counselors and more social workers. Our kids bring such trauma with themselves to school that learning takes a backseat. Teachers cannot do it all alone. We must have more support.”

“BOE should be considering how to measure a sense of connection and belonging. This is the foundation for kids to do better with academics.”

“I would like to see a metric that measures satisfaction of parents and students with the offerings of the school.”

“How are you planning to address disruptive and disrespectful behavior at all levels beyond Restorative Practices? This is one of the main drivers behind students leaving or not attending in SPPS.”

“I would love to see a goal to increase the amount of time in PE for elementary (not just a rotation every few weeks for students) and also a goal that all middle school students get recess. I think we are missing out on huge benefits for physical and mental health as well as academic and learning outcomes because we keep our students so sedentary.”

“Increase access to world languages, art, and music for ALL students in the district.”

“The amount of the district funds dedicated to school libraries $0 per student in FY25 to $20 per student by FY29 as outlined in the SPPS district budget.”

“The Board of Education has stated that one of their priority areas is Early Childhood. I would like to see a goal around increasing the number of SPPS students who participate in a district ECFE or Pre-K program prior to beginning kindergarten.”

“Provide more (and meaningful) opportunities for students who are already doing well. It feels like they are forgotten, which dispirits parents, is a disservice to those students.”

“Active student engagement with school and positive relationships with multiple adults are both critical to student success. I suggest that the district should track the percentage of students who participate a district supported extracurricular activity, and actively work to increase that percentage. Could be any sport or club that happens outside of the school day. Perhaps this starts in grade 6? A bonus is that these activities also connect families to the school/district in a positive manner focused on student success.”

“Work toward partnering with recreation centers and youth sports organizations. (ie St. Paul Football club, Westside boosters, ICAA, community dance) to create a pipeline for athletes that want to stay in SPPS.”