



SIXTIMES

The Official Newsletter of SSD 6

Fall 2025

Welcome Back Students!

We're excited to have students back in our buildings for the 2025-26 school year!



Learning and Growth Update

Supporting Student Success

South St. Paul Public Schools recently reviewed state accountability data, which helps district leaders track long-term trends and identify areas for improvement. In addition to state testing, the district also monitors attendance, course progress, and other real-time indicators to guide decisions.

Attendance: A Key Focus

Improving student attendance is a key focus for the 2025–26 school year. Since 2021–22, SSPPS attendance has improved at nearly twice the state rate. The district aims to raise average monthly attendance from 67.34% to 70% by 2026. Efforts include a new grant-funded Attendance and Student Engagement Specialist, expanded communication with families, partnerships with Dakota County, and updates to the district's attendance policy.

State Assessments (MCAs/MTAs)

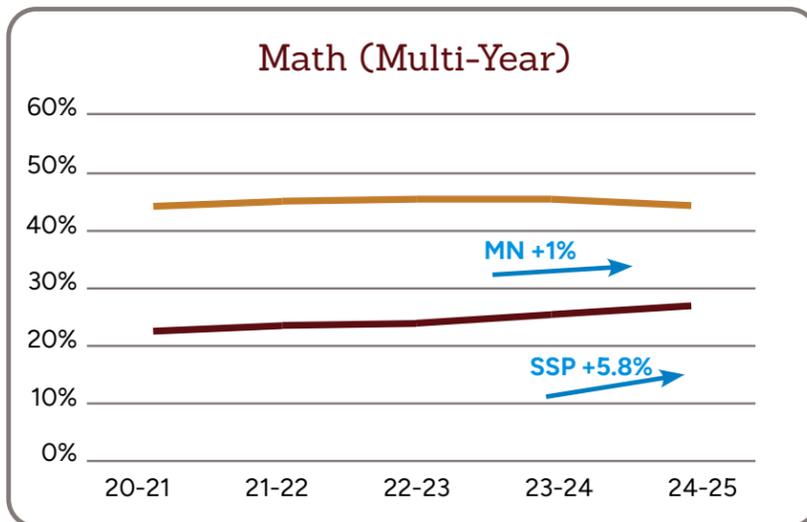
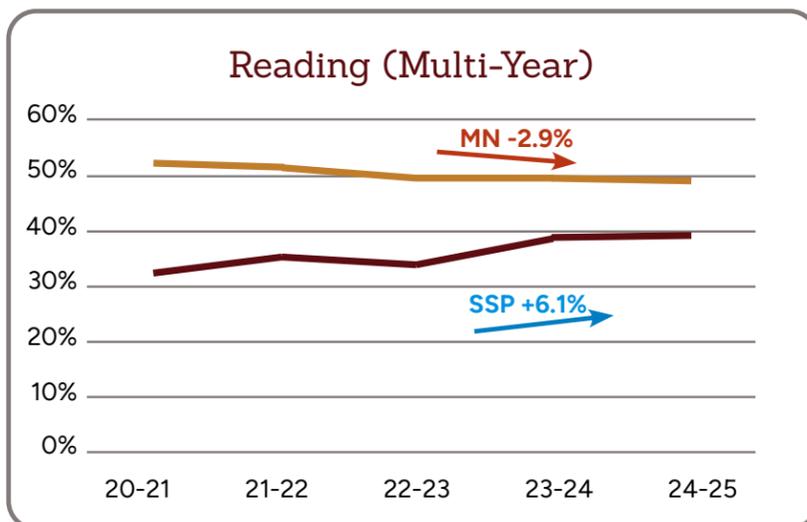
Despite statewide declines, SSPPS has seen multi-year growth in both reading and math proficiency on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments. To build on this progress, the district is expanding literacy programs, strengthening interventions, and supporting teachers with professional development and co-teaching strategies, particularly for English Language Learners.

Graduation Rates

Graduation rates declined in 2024, reflecting statewide trends. SSPPS is working to reverse this through grade checks, early intervention for struggling students, expanded credit recovery, and instructional coaching to support teachers.

Looking Ahead

SSPPS will continue to build on areas of growth while addressing challenges head-on. By focusing on attendance, academic achievement, and student support, the district is taking intentional steps to ensure every learner has the opportunity to succeed.



Facilities Update Planning for Success

South St. Paul Public Schools is committed to ensuring safe, supportive, and welcoming learning spaces for every student and staff member. In 2022, the district conducted a comprehensive review of all school buildings. That study identified approximately \$150 million in deferred maintenance needs across our aging facilities, including heating and ventilation systems, roofing, and other infrastructure that is well past its expected lifespan.

Building on that work, the district formed a Facilities Task Force in 2024 made up of staff, families, and community members. Over several months, the group toured schools, reviewed data, and identified key priorities. Their priorities highlighted both essential maintenance needs and updates to aging spaces, such as athletic facilities and locker rooms.

District leaders are now reviewing the committee's recommendations to help shape a long-term plan for maintaining and improving our schools. Our goal is to ensure that South St. Paul schools remain safe, supportive, and welcoming places for students, staff, and the community for generations to come.

Did You Know?

Construction on our current high school began in 1911. It was originally built as a Junior High for the growing number of 7-10 grade students.



Lincoln Center Elementary Named a 2025–26 Minnesota School of Excellence

Lincoln Center Elementary has been recognized as a 2025–26 Minnesota School of Excellence by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA).

This honor is given to a select group of schools across Minnesota that exemplify strong leadership, student learning, teacher collaboration, community engagement, and continuous growth.

STAY CONNECTED!



The Evolution of Education

Serving the Whole Community



Learning at Every Stage of Life

When many of us think back to our own school days, the image is often simple. We'd walk or take the bus to school, attend class, eat lunch, and head home. The school's role was largely academic. But today, public education looks very different.

Over the past several decades, the role of schools has expanded in meaningful ways. This evolution reflects the growing and shifting needs of our students, families, and community. At South St. Paul Public Schools, lifelong learning isn't just a belief, it's a commitment. From our earliest learners to the active adults in our community, we're here for every learner, at every stage of life.

Whether you are a student in one of our schools, a parent or caregiver, a lifelong learner, or a neighbor without school-aged children, our schools are here for you.



Lifelong Learning

Education doesn't stop when the school day ends or when students graduate. Our Community Education program offers a wide variety of classes and experiences designed to meet the interests and needs of our entire community:

- **Health and wellness** classes like yoga, aquatics, and strength training
- **Parent-child sessions** that build early learning and connection
- **Creative workshops** in cooking, crafting, writing, and photography
- **Technology classes** for adults building confidence with digital tools
- **Youth enrichment** through summer camps, driver's ed, and job skills development

These programs reflect our community of being engaged, curious, and committed to growing together.



Our Schools Are Your Schools

You don't need to have a child enrolled in school to be part of our story. Maybe you've taken a class, attended a concert, volunteered for an event, or benefited from a community resource. Maybe you're simply proud to live in a community where schools go beyond textbooks to serve people.

However you connect, we hope you see yourself in our schools. Because you belong here.

Beyond the Classroom

In today's world, education includes so much more than academics. At SSPPS, we support the whole child and the whole family. That means:

- **Nutritious meals** including school breakfasts and lunches to keep students focused and energized
- **Community food access** through free Take 'n Bake meals (in partnership with Kitchen Coalition), monthly healthy food distributions at Kaposia with Open Door Pantry, affordable groceries at Central Square via Fare for All, and weekend meal support for students at all schools through Every Meal
- **Winter clothing assistance** through a partnership with the Educational Foundation to provide coats, boots, and cold-weather gear for students who need it
- **On-site health services** such as immunization and dental care clinics
- **Mental health support** from school counselors, social workers, and psychologists
- **College and career readiness** through guest speakers, hands-on training, and career exploration events

This is not just support. It's a strategy. By reducing barriers and responding to real needs, we help our students arrive each day ready to learn and grow.



Meeting the Needs of a Changing World

As the world has changed, so have our responsibilities. Today's schools must manage:

- **Technology integration** with 1:1 student devices, digital learning tools, and evolving classroom technology
- **Safety and emergency preparedness** including drills, secure entry systems, and student support strategies
- **Respect and belonging** by honoring each student's background and identity, and creating welcoming environments
- **Community voice** through opportunities for students, staff, families, and residents to help shape our schools

Each of these areas plays a role in creating schools that are inclusive, supportive, and future-ready.

What's Next?

Engage. Educate. Empower.

As we look to the future, we are proud to introduce our new mission: Engage. Educate. Empower.

This guiding phrase will be at the center of our new Strategic Plan. It defines how we connect with learners, shape meaningful learning experiences, and prepare our community for a future full of opportunity. You'll hear more about this work in the coming weeks. Just know it reflects everything we believe about our schools and the community we serve.

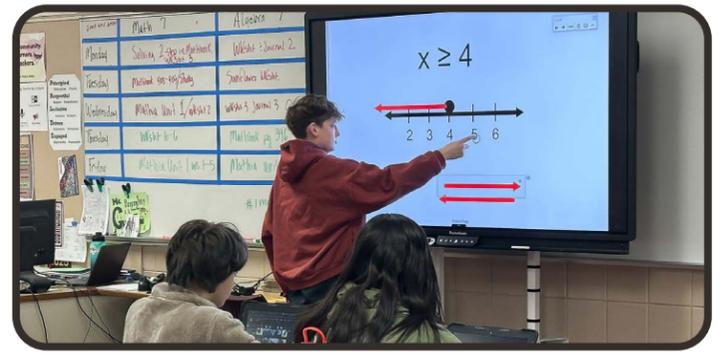
Bringing Learning to Life in SSP Classrooms

South St. Paul Public Schools are stepping into the future with the addition of Promethean Boards. Promethean Boards are an innovative blend of computer, tablet, and interactive whiteboard. These tools are already transforming classrooms by making lessons more engaging, interactive, and flexible.

At Kaposia, 2nd-grade teacher Megan Frantzen uses the board to bring her phonics curriculum to life, giving students hands-on opportunities to learn. A class favorite? A digital spinning wheel that randomly selects students to solve problems, making learning fun and exciting.

Over at SSP Middle School, math teacher Jon Gustafson is also seeing the impact. He loves how easily the board integrates with his existing tools and how it encourages students to get out of their seats and interact with the material in new ways.

Thanks to strong teacher feedback and guidance from the District Technology Advisory Team, all elementary classrooms as well as middle and high school science classrooms have Promethean Boards for the 2025-26 school year.



Learning in the Fresh Air

This summer, Lincoln Center built a new kind of classroom, one without walls. Funded through a grant from the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) via Dakota County, the new outdoor classroom will give students and teachers a dedicated space to connect with nature while learning in hands-on, meaningful ways.

Outdoor classrooms have been shown to boost student focus, reduce stress, and promote physical and mental well-being. They also offer unique opportunities to explore science, writing, art, and more in real-world settings. At Lincoln, this new space will feature seating, shade, and natural elements designed to support both instruction and exploration.

Lincoln isn't the first South St. Paul school to embrace the benefits of learning outdoors. Kaposia Education Center has had an outdoor classroom in place for the past few years. Staff and students continue to expand and enhance the space, incorporating new features and ideas to make outdoor learning a regular part of the school day.

From story time under the trees to science lessons in the garden, outdoor classrooms are helping SSP students build curiosity, creativity, and a deeper connection to the world around them.

New College and Career Readiness Pathway

The TriDistrict CAPS (Center for Advanced Professional Studies) program is expanding with a brand-new pathway: "Cultivating our Future: Natural Resources, Sustainability, and Food Systems." This hands-on, interdisciplinary course explores the connections between food systems, sustainability, natural resources, and community health, through the lens of soil, air, and water chemistry. Students will dig into the science of growing food, managing resources responsibly, and designing sustainable solutions that support a thriving future.

This year also brings an exciting change for the Healthcare and Medicine Careers Pathway, which now has a new home in South St. Paul. The program is settling into the first floor of the SSP Education Building on 19th Ave N, while the upper floors remain home to Community Learning Center students. It's a great opportunity to have CAPS students deepening their knowledge and career exploration right here in our community.

Through TriDistrict CAPS, students from South St. Paul, Simley, and Two Rivers High Schools gain real-world experience, explore career fields, and develop the skills to carry them into life after graduation, whether their next step is college, the workforce, or the military. No matter the path, students are preparing to make a lasting impact, starting close to home.



A Note from Superintendent Zambreno

As we begin another school year, I want to extend a warm welcome to our students, staff, families, and community. Each new year brings opportunities to grow, celebrate, and continue building on the strong foundation of Packer Pride that makes South St. Paul such a special place.

Our community plays a vital role in this work, and I want to thank you for your ongoing support. Whether you are cheering on our students at a game, volunteering in our schools, participating in a Community Education class, or simply taking pride in calling South St. Paul home, you are an important part of our story.

In this issue of the SixTimes, you'll notice some exciting updates. We are proud to introduce a refreshed brand identity for South St. Paul Public Schools, one that blends tradition with a fresh, modern look. You'll also read about Lincoln Center's recognition as a Minnesota School of Excellence, updates on how we're

supporting student success through attendance and academic growth, new opportunities through our TriDistrict CAPS career pathways, and innovative learning spaces like outdoor classrooms and the use of Promethean Boards. In addition, you'll find highlights about how our schools continue to serve the whole community, from free Take 'n Bake meals to lifelong learning opportunities through Community Education.

South St. Paul Public Schools is here for every learner, at every stage of life. Even if you don't have students currently enrolled, I hope you see yourself in these pages. Our schools are your schools, and together, we will continue to engage, educate, and empower, now and for the future.



Dr. Brian Zambreno
SSPPS
Superintendent

Inside this Issue

• Learning and Growth Update

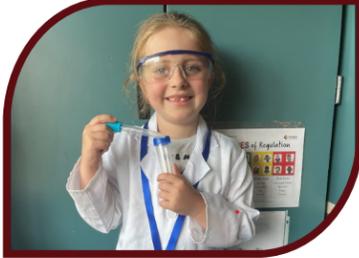
South St. Paul Public Schools is focused on improving attendance, academic achievement, and graduation rates. Targeted strategies and supports are helping ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed.

• The Evolution of Education

South St. Paul Public Schools is evolving to meet the needs of today's learners and community, supporting every stage of life through education, wellness, and connection. From early learning to adult classes, we're here to engage, educate, and empower our whole community.

• Career and College Exploration

The TriDistrict CAPS program is expanding with a new Sustainability and Food Systems pathway and a new South St. Paul home for Healthcare and Medicine Careers, giving students hands-on experience to prepare for future careers and make an impact in their community.



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South St. Paul Public Schools Community Newsletter

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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.

NEW LOOK!

We're excited to unveil the refreshed brand identity for South St. Paul Public Schools and the new look of the SixTimes!

South St. Paul Public Schools is proud to launch its refreshed brand identity shaped by input from staff, families, and the community. Our new brand identity aligns with our updated mission to engage, educate, and empower.

Through a series of listening sessions with coaches, staff, families, and our community, we learned a lot about how our community sees and connects with our current brand:

- Many shared that the apple logo felt outdated and generic
- Our athletic teams and activity groups were not using the bull mascot as much as we had thought
- There is deep pride in being South St. Paul, not to be confused with the south side of St. Paul
- Above all, Packer Pride continues to thrive

Over several months, we worked with stakeholders through multiple rounds of refinement. What emerged is an identity that blends the pride and traditions of our past with a fresh, contemporary style.

Why a Brand Refresh Now?

- **Protecting Our Identity:** Our previous logo raised potential copyright and trademark concerns. The refresh ensures a distinct look that is uniquely ours.
- **Ensuring Accessibility:** New ADA color standards take effect in 2026. Our updated palette is inclusive and compliant.

- **Staying Competitive:** A modern, consistent brand keeps SSPPS fresh and relevant for families, staff, and the broader community.
- **Owning Our Story:** We want a brand that truly reflects South St. Paul, something original that we can all take pride in.

Our refreshed visual identity blends tradition, pride, and creativity:

- **Colors:** Maroon and white remain, with gold added to honor our past and meet new ADA standards.
- **SSP Logo:** A modern design that emphasizes South St. Paul with a gold-accented "S" and subtle bull horn detail, offering flexibility across athletics, activities, and communications.
- **Bull Mascot:** A bold, updated logo that avoids copyright issues and gives our teams a strong, distinctive identity rooted in Packer Pride.

We've begun rolling out the new look with digital platforms, print materials, and new apparel. Larger items like signage and uniforms will be updated gradually during their natural replacement cycle.



SSP
South St. Paul
Public Schools



Building Community Through Shared Values

SSPPS and the City of SSP are united in a foundational set of core values reflecting the best of our Community!

