



SPPS 2026-27 Budget Engagement Summary

Introduction

Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) is committed to gathering community feedback around future budget decisions as we work to create a budget that reflects the priorities of the students, families and staff we serve. SPPS engaged with our community about their budget priorities through surveys and a budget meeting in December 2025-January 2026. The results from this engagement will help shape budget decisions for 2026-27 (fiscal year 2027).

Engagement Opportunities

SPPS parents/guardians, staff, and students in grades 6-12 were encouraged to complete online surveys about their budget priorities. A community budget meeting was held on December 11, 2025, with a presentation on the budget process followed by small-group discussions on how SPPS can be more effective and welcoming for students and families.

Activity	Participants	Date
Family Survey	1,059 parents/guardians	December 11, 2025-January 16, 2026
Staff Survey	1,401 staff	December 11, 2025-January 16, 2026
Student Survey	3,467 students in grades 6-12	January 5-16, 2026
Community Meeting	86 parents, community members and staff	December 11, 2025
TOTAL	6,013 participants	

Survey Results

Evaluating Community Values

SPPS identified three community priorities in 2023-24 that have guided budget decisions for the past two fiscal years. Survey respondents were asked if they believe these values should remain SPPS's top priorities.

Community Value	Percent of respondents who believe this value should remain a top priority for SPPS		
	Students	Parents/ Guardians	Staff
Increasing a sense of belonging and safety in our school communities	94%	91%	93%
Ensuring students are respected and reflected in their curriculum and classrooms	91%	82%	87%
Prioritizing literacy instruction to ensure that all students can read and create a foundation of success in school and in life	90%	97%	96%

Most respondents believe these community values should remain top priorities for SPPS. There is slightly lower support from parents/guardians for the value of “ensuring students are respected and reflected in their curriculum and classroom.”

Additional Priorities

Survey respondents were asked which other areas (in addition to the community values in Question 1) they believe SPPS should prioritize when making budget decisions for FY27. Respondents could select up to three options.

Highest Rankings			
	Students	Parents/ Guardians	Staff
Arts and music	•	•	•
Mental health support for students		•	•
Required course offerings		•	•
Building maintenance and updates	•		•
College and career readiness	•		
Language and culture programs	•	•	

On average, respondents showed the strongest support for arts and music, mental health support for students, and required course offerings (in order). Within these, parents/guardians showed stronger support than other groups for arts and music and required course offerings, whereas staff showed stronger support for mental health support for students. Among students, the two highest ranking options were arts and music, and college and career readiness.

Lower-ranked categories included physical education and health, hiring staff who reflect the student population, extracurricular activities, technology and online learning tools, transportation, professional learning for staff, and “other,” with an option to write a short answer.

What Is Most Important in Students’ Education Right Now

Students, parents/guardians and staff were asked the open-ended question: “What is most important in your/your child’s/your students’ education right now?”

Most Common Themes		
Students	Parents/Guardians	Staff
• Grades, GPA or general academic success (65% of responses) • General learning and understanding of content • Core subjects • Facilities, operations, and physical spaces • College preparation • Teaching and teachers • Specific non-core subjects	• Core academic areas or subjects • Staff traits, supports or staffing levels • School culture, climate and belonging • Safety and security • Social emotional learning (SEL) and character development • Rigorous and engaging academics • Electives, the arts and well-rounded education	• Safety and security • Student mental health and supports • Behavior and accountability • Basic or foundational literacy and math skills or instruction • Operations and facilities

Prioritizing General Fund Categories

Survey respondents were asked which General Fund categories they believed SPPS should prioritize when making additional budget decisions, after all required and essential expenses are funded. Respondents ranked the five categories of SPPS’s General Fund from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important). *The General Fund categories are based on the Minnesota Department of Education’s Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS).*

Ranking from 1 (Most Important) to 5 (Least Important)			
General Fund Categories	Students	Parents/ Guardians	Staff
School and classroom instruction	2	1	1
School support services (includes counselors, social workers, instructional support services, special education, security and transportation)	1	2	2

Operations and maintenance (includes utilities, facilities maintenance and equipment)	5	3	3
District support services (includes departments such as human resources, finance and technology)	3	4	4
Administration (includes the Board of Education, superintendent and principals)	4	5	5

Staff and families placed all five categories in the same order. Students placed school support services (1st) and administration (4th). Students also showed greater variation in their opinions than the other two groups.

Communication Preferences

Parents/guardians and staff were asked how they prefer to receive communication and updates about the 2026-27 budget. Respondents could select as many options as they wanted. A strong majority of respondents indicated they would like email updates. Other popular options included the district website and district information sessions. Parents/guardians were also interested in information being distributed at PTO/PTA meetings and parent-teacher conferences.

Comments on Budget Process

Parents/guardians and staff were asked if they had any questions or comments about the SPPS budgeting process.

Most Common Comments	
Parents/Guardians	Staff
• Transparency and communication • Technology and 1:1 iPads • Administration size and costs • Class size and staffing levels • Academic rigor and core instruction	• Advocating to support teachers and EAs/TAs • Fiscal responsibility and long-term planning • Community involvement • Safety and security • Staff and class sizes • Transparency and accountability • Operations and buildings

Parent/guardian comments focused most strongly on a desire for more open, timely and accessible information about the budgeting process. Parents also showed concern about the educational value of technology and student iPads, the cost of maintaining them, and the impact of screen time on learning.

The most common theme among staff comments was advocating to support teachers and EAs/TAs, such as providing adequate materials and curriculum, improving teacher pay and benefits, ensuring manageable caseloads and workloads, and student behavior support. Many staff also discussed fiscal responsibility and long-term planning, often requesting reductions in the number and/or pay of non-student-facing positions.

Community Meeting Summary

About 86 parents/guardians, community members and staff participated in the community budget meeting on December 11, 2025. Small group discussions were conducted in English, Karen, Somali and Spanish.

Group discussions were guided by the following questions:

- What would help your child learn more effectively at school?
- What would help your child feel more welcomed or comfortable at school?
- What can SPPS do to make families feel more welcomed, included and informed?

Most Common Themes

- Smaller class sizes and staffing
- Extended learning opportunities, tutoring or academic support
- Communication and family outreach
- Building a welcoming climate and student sense of belonging

Participants frequently advocated for reduced class sizes and higher staff-to-student ratios. They also discussed the impact of high-quality teachers, and some mentioned professional development or training. Families placed value in after-school programs, tutoring and academic supports, but discussed the challenges of participation without district-provided transportation. Supporting the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) groups, family and cultural liaisons, and parent groups were discussed to help families feel more connected and informed.

For more details, read the full [budget engagement report](#). For the latest updates about the 2026-27 budget, visit spps.org/fy27budget.