



A Note from Superintendent Zambreno

It is with great Packer Pride that I write to you and our entire community. These past several weeks have tested many in South St. Paul and the surrounding area, but I could not be more proud of how our staff, students, families, and community partners have rallied to support one another and ensure our schools remain welcoming, safe places of learning and opportunity. Throughout this period, we have remained grounded in our core values of Pride, Respect, Integrity, Resilience, Collaboration, and Equity and in our deep belief that every person has value. These principles guide us as we continue to pursue our mission to Engage, Educate, and Empower every learner.

As you read through this edition of the SixTimes, you'll find important information about our upcoming referendum. While we face new challenges, there is strong positive momentum across our schools. The funding we are asking for will help us uphold our legacy by investing in safety, security, and necessary facility maintenance. It will also ensure students and teachers have the tools they need to succeed, including modern learning technology and conducive learning spaces. If approved in May, we will invite the broader community in to help craft a long-range vision for our facilities and infrastructure with an eye toward our legacy of excellence.

When our community supported an increase in operating dollars, you invested in a future where every student could thrive, and that investment is delivering results. At a time when many districts across Minnesota saw declines in reading and math, SSPPS students made meaningful gains. We have maintained small class sizes to ensure personalized attention and expanded enriching opportunities such as instrumental music, advanced academics, and career and technical education. With a clear and transparent strategic plan now guiding our work, we have a strong vision that will position our students and staff for continued success in the years ahead.

On behalf of the students and staff in our special little district, I thank you for your ongoing support and we look forward to delivering on our promise to support the next generation of Packers.



Dr. Brian Zambreno
SSPPS
Superintendent



Technology in our District

In our Classrooms and Schools

Walk into any classroom at South St. Paul Public Schools and you will see students reading, writing, discussing, experimenting, and creating. You will also see technology thoughtfully woven into that learning. In today's classrooms, reliable technology is a regular part of how teachers deliver instruction and how students engage with their learning.

Technology is used to complement, not replace, face-to-face teaching and hands-on learning. Classroom instruction continues to include discussion, group work, direct teaching, and interactive activities, with technology serving as one of several tools available to support student learning.

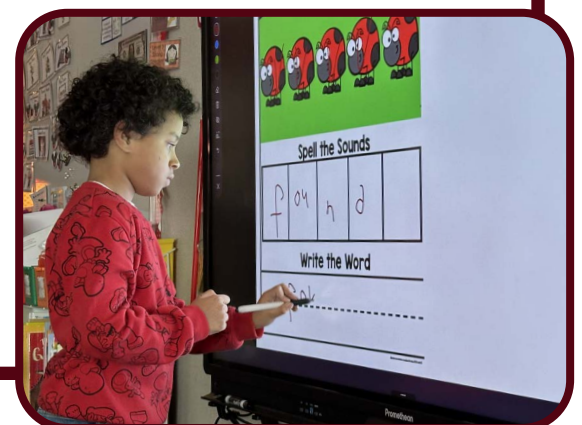
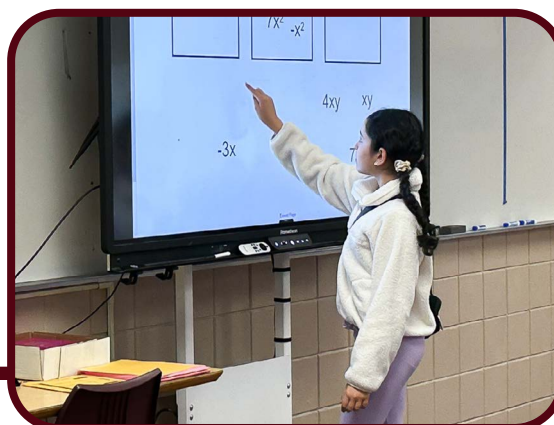
Promethean interactive displays are also being introduced in classrooms across the district. These large touchscreen boards support instruction in a variety of ways. Teachers can project lessons, model skills step by step, and display visuals, videos, or digital resources that enhance classroom learning. The boards also allow teachers and students to interact directly with content, such as solving math problems, annotating reading passages, or participating in shared activities as a group. This technology helps create more engaging lessons while supporting different learning styles and instructional approaches.

School Safety

Technology is also used to support school safety and security systems throughout the district. This includes online security measures that help protect district networks and student information, as well as building-based systems that support secure school operations.

Capital projects levy funding helps maintain and update technology systems that support both instruction and district operations. This may include network equipment, cybersecurity tools, communication systems, and building security technology such as cameras or secured entry systems.

Technology is one part of the overall systems schools use to support learning and maintain safe, secure environments for students and staff.



STAY CONNECTED!

Facility Needs and Long-Term Planning

2026 Building Bond and Capital Levy



Maintain Our Spaces That Make Learning Possible

For more than a century, South St. Paul Public Schools has been a source of Packer Pride and a cornerstone of our community. As our school buildings age and educational needs evolve, the district has been working with families, staff, and community members to create a thoughtful, long-term plan to care for and maintain our facilities.

On May 12, 2026, South St. Paul Public Schools will ask voters to consider two related ballot questions focused on facility stewardship and long-term financial planning:

- A **bond referendum** addressing the most critical facility needs, those necessary to keep our schools safe, functional, accessible, and welcoming for students, staff, families, and community members.
- A **capital projects levy** renewal that would continue to support ongoing safety, security, and technology needs.

These proposals are intentionally limited in scope and designed to work together. While the district has many long-term hopes for its facilities, the bond primarily focuses on essential repairs and updates and the levy renewal would continue existing funding. Together, they reflect a responsible approach to maintaining the buildings our community already owns, while being mindful of the community's financial capacity.

What is the School District Asking For?

Question 1

Building Bond Authorization

- Addresses the district's most critical facility needs as buildings and systems age
- Focuses on safety, accessibility, and essential building systems
- Supports repairs and updates to mechanical, electrical, plumbing, roofing, and safety systems
- Allows the district to reinvest in existing school buildings as the 2013 bond nears payoff

Question 2

Capital Projects Levy Renewal

- Renews the district's existing capital projects levy, which is scheduled to expire in 2029
- Continues funding for safety, security, and technology needs across the district
- Supports items such as security cameras, phone systems, technology infrastructure, and cybersecurity
- Including the renewal in this election helps avoid the cost of holding a separate election in future years
- Maintains the current levy rate, resulting in no tax increase

For this special election only- all voting will take place at the Lawshe Museum (130 3rd Ave N, SSP) across from SSP City Hall.

Estimated Market Value	Estimated Change in Taxes from 2026 to 2027	
	Annual	Monthly
Residential		
\$150,000	\$58	\$5
\$200,000	\$85	\$7
\$250,000	\$112	\$9
\$300,000 <i>Mean SSP home value</i>	\$139	\$12
\$400,000	\$193	\$16

A full breakdown of the tax impact by estimated home values along with commercial property tax breakdowns can be found by scanning the QR code or visit the Bond-Levy-2026 webpage.



Top Ten Things to Know

To help families and community members make an informed decision on the May 12 election, here are 10 important things to know about Questions 1 and 2.

- The district's 2013 bond is nearing payoff.**
Question 1 is timed to replace that expiring funding in a way that is mindful of taxpayer capacity.
- Most of the funding is already in place.**
The only new impact of Question 1 would be about \$12 more per month on average.
- South St. Paul schools have aging facilities and systems.**
Many building components are at or beyond their expected life and need replacement or repair.
- Facility needs total approximately \$150 million across the district.**
Currently, the district receives about \$1 million annually in capital funding, which is not enough to keep up with long-term aging infrastructure needs.
- Question 1 focuses on facility infrastructure improvements.**
This includes needs such as mechanical, plumbing, electrical systems, roofing, and fire and life safety updates.
- If approved, stakeholders will help shape the work.**
Staff, families, and community members will participate in focus groups and provide input.
- If approved, construction would occur in summer 2027.**
This minimizes disruption while students are not in session.
- Question 2 renews the district's existing Capital Projects Levy, scheduled to expire in 2029.**
Including it in this election avoids the cost of holding a separate future election.
- Question 2 continues funding for safety, security, and technology needs.**
This includes security cameras, building access systems, emergency communication tools, and cybersecurity improvements.
- Renewing the levy maintains the current levy rate.**
There would be no tax increase associated with Question 2.

Together, these questions address facility, safety, and technology needs while considering taxpayer impact.

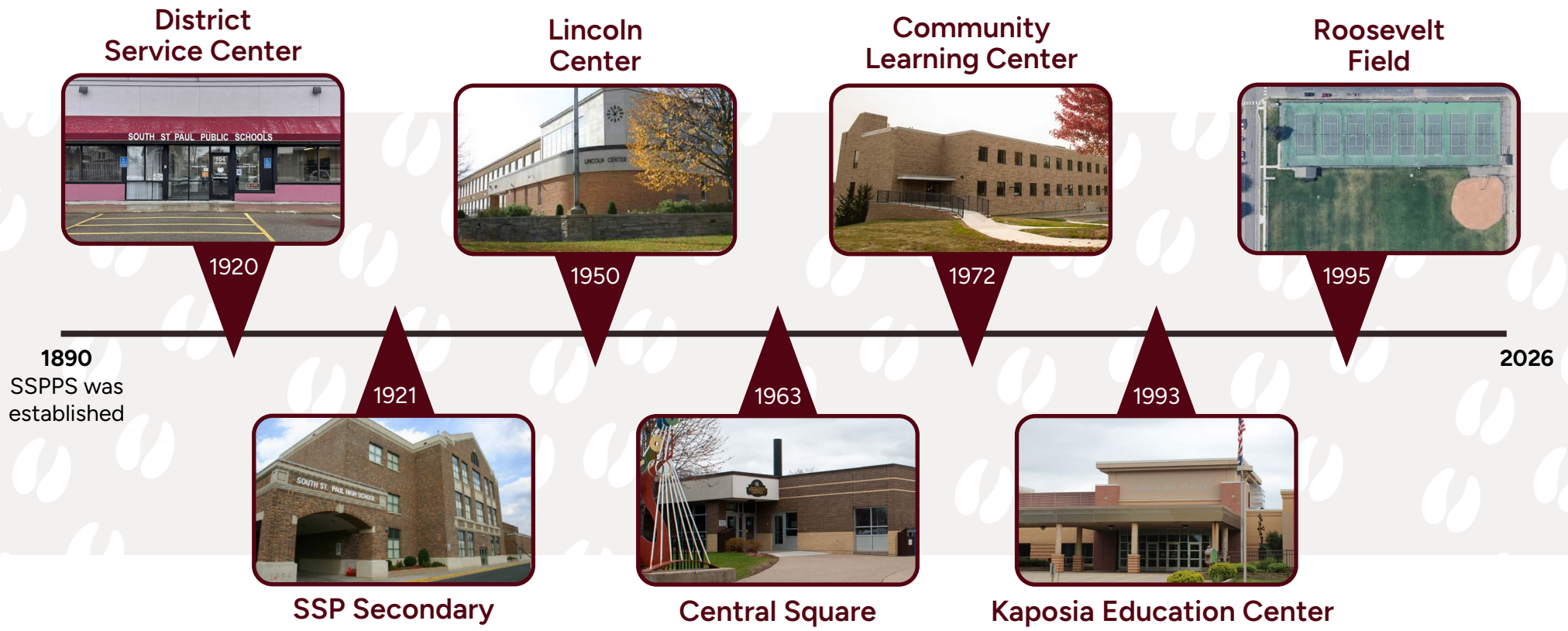
Why are we Asking Now?

As the district's 2013 bond nears payoff, Question 1 is timed to replace that expiring funding while remaining mindful of taxpayer capacity. Many school facilities and building systems are aging, with components at or beyond their expected life and in need of repair or replacement.

If approved, planning would take place in 2026 and would include opportunities for stakeholder input, with construction scheduled for summer 2027 to minimize disruption while students are not in session. Waiting until a later election would shift planning to 2027 and construction to 2028, which may affect timelines and overall project costs.

Our Schools and Facilities

These facilities serve thousands of students, staff, families, and community members each year and require ongoing investment to remain safe, functional, accessible, and welcoming.



The Reality of Maintaining Aging School Buildings

South St. Paul Public Schools is responsible for maintaining several aging school buildings, many of which are more than 70 to 100 years old. A comprehensive facilities review completed in 2022 identified more than \$150 million in deferred maintenance needs across the district.

At the same time, the district receives approximately \$1 million annually in state funding for facility maintenance. This funding supports basic repairs and emergencies but is not sufficient to address large-scale or long-term needs. As buildings continue to age, the gap between available funding and actual facility needs continues to grow.

Without reinvestment, deferred maintenance does not go away. It increases the risk of system failures, safety concerns, and more costly emergency repairs over time.

Learn more on the website, scan the QR code or visit: www.sspps.org/newsroom/elections/bond-levy-2026



At current funding levels, the District cannot keep pace with the aging facility needs.

\$150+ Million
Deferred Maintenance Needs Identified
(based on comprehensive facilities review)

\$1 Million
Annual State Funding for Facility Maintenance
(supports basic repairs and emergencies)

Did You Know?

The first High School in South St. Paul was called Central High School and stood on the site of the current Central Square.

Top Left Picture- Central High School Illustration, 1909

Central was only a high school for a short time before it was repurposed as a grade school to accommodate the growing number of younger students.

Top Right Picture- Central School grade school students, 1923

Central School becoming a grade school opened the door for the current high school to be built adjacent to it in the early 1910's. The west side of SSP Secondary was built more than 100 years ago.

Bottom Picture- SSP High School (current building), 1963



District Receives Clean Audit, Reflecting Strong Financial Stewardship

South St. Paul Public Schools is proud to share that the district has received an unmodified, or "clean," audit opinion for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025. This is the highest level of assurance an independent auditor can provide and reflects the district's continued commitment to strong financial management and transparent reporting.

The audit was presented to the School Board on January 11, 2026, by Aaron Nielsen of LLB Carlson, the district's independent auditing firm. The review confirmed that South St. Paul Public Schools' financial statements are accurate, complete, and prepared in accordance with all required accounting standards.

Just as importantly, the audit found no instances of noncompliance with Minnesota laws or regulations, highlighting the district's careful attention to internal controls, accountability, and fiscal responsibility.

The presentation also reviewed key financial trends, including district revenues, expenditures, enrollment patterns, and fund balances. These indicators show responsible long-term planning.

As the district looks ahead to future needs, including the bond and capital projects levy proposal featured in this newsletter, this clean audit underscores that South St. Paul Public Schools remains committed to managing community resources wisely and maintaining strong financial oversight.



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JOIN THE PACKER FAMILY!

Enrollment for the 2026–27 school year is now open for all new students in grade levels, PreK–12!

SSPPS is a nurturing and inclusive Packer community of life-long learners. We look forward to engaging, educating, and empowering your student as they travel the pathway through school and life after graduation.

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South St. Paul Public Schools Community Newsletter

SIXTIMES

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WORK FOR SSPPS!

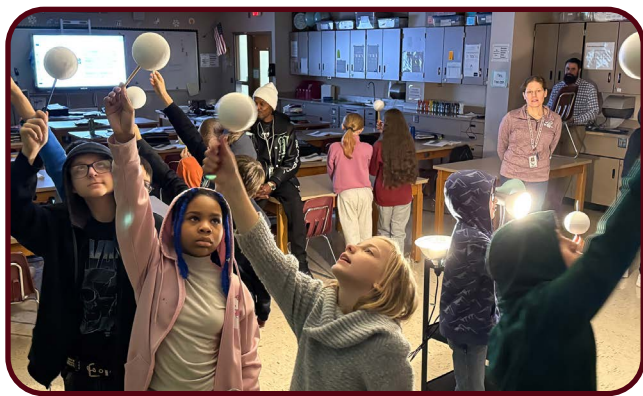
SSPPS is looking for great people to join our team. We're always hiring part-time, full-time, and seasonal employees with flexible day and evening hours. Scan the QR code to view current openings.



LEA LOS SIXTIMES EN ESPAÑOL

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

Bringing science to life while exploring the phases of the moon.



ENGAGE

Every learner through hands-on learning

Challenging young minds through our Gifted and Talented program with deeper, broader math exploration.



EDUCATE

Every learner in an inclusive Packer community

Empowering students to plan their future through weekly college and career visits.



EMPOWER!

Every learner to discover their interests and pursue their goals



Hands-on discovery comes to our classrooms through interactive, in-school field trips.



Exploring the laws of motion and seeing physics come to life.



Growing in confidence, connection, and responsible choices at the Middle School Courage Retreat.



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!

