

2026-27

Early Learning Family Handbook

South St. Paul Public Schools

Table of Contents

Welcome to the 2026-27 School Year 3
- About SSPPS
- Important Dates
- Student Success Pledge

Early Learning Information 5
- Important Phone Numbers
- Early Learning Office
- Preschool Tuition
- Early Childhood Screening

Attendance 6
- Parent Procedures
- School Procedures

Drop-Off/Pick-Up information 7
- Kaposia Procedures
- Lincoln Procedures
- Drop-off/Pick-Up Safety
- Late Pick-Up
- Bus Information
- ECFE Arrival

Academics 8
- Packer Pathways
- Concious Discipline
- Preschool Curriculum
- Special Education Services
- Educational Legal Notifications

Student/Family Support 10
- Cultural Liaisons/Translation/Interpretation
- Counselors, Social Workers, Psychologists
- HELPme App

Enrollment 11
- Open Enrollment
- Kindergarten Enrollment

School Safety & Security 12
- Standard Safety Protocols
- Communicating Emergencies
- Emergency Drills
- Emergency School Closings

Family Communications 13
- Website
- Newsletters
- Social Media
- ParentSquare
- Peachjar
- Calendars
- Student Information

Health Services 15
- Immunizations
- Illness
- Health and Wellness Guidelines
- Health and Safety Legal Notifications

Educational Benefits/Food and Nutrition 18

Family Involvement 19
- Parent Advocacy Groups
- Partnerships
- Volunteers and Chaperones

Preschool Guidelines 19
- Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook
- Assessments/Conferences/Report Cards
- Birthdays, Invitations, Holidays
- Clothing
- Do Not Bring to School
- Field Trips
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Parent Custoday/Restricted Access
- Snacks
- Student Information Release
- Toileting
- Toy Safety
- Visitors

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Guidelines 22
- Attendance
- Cell Phone Policy
- Chid Care Providers
- Dress
- Early Learning Advisory Council
- Family Library
- Lap Infants
- Photographs/Videos
- Registration Priority
- Snacks
- Stay-and-Play Cards

SSP Community Education 23

District Directory and School Board 24

Translated Handbooks

The 2026-27 Family Handbook is available in Spanish on the district website at sspps.org/resources/school-year/handbooks or from your school office.

El manual para la familia 2026-27 está disponible en español en la página de internet del distrito en: sspps.org/resources/school-year/handbooks

Welcome to the 2026-27 School Year

SSPPS Families and Staff,

Welcome to the 2026-27 school year! As we come together to support our students, staff, and community, I am filled with pride and optimism for what lies ahead. At the end of last school year and over the summer, South St. Paul Public Schools adopted a new strategic plan that will guide our work through 2030. Centered on our mission to Engage, Educate, Empower, the plan focuses on fostering academic growth, supporting staff excellence, cultivating inclusive opportunities, and living out our core values of Pride, Respect, Resilience, Integrity, Collaboration, and Equity.

Our goal with this Family Handbook is to enhance communication between school and home, improve understanding of district policies and procedures, and ensure consistent implementation across all schools. It serves as a centralized resource for key district information for all SSPPS families. In addition to this handbook, we provide a separate Student Rights & Responsibilities Handbook, which outlines student behavior expectations and consequences. This important resource will be reviewed with students at the start of the school year and is also available for families to read online at sspps.org/handbooks.

As you and your student prepare for the first days of school, I encourage you to take time to review the information in this handbook. It includes important updates, forms, and resources, as well as ways for you to get involved in our school community. Thank you for being a valued part of the Packer family. Together, we are building a welcoming and empowering educational environment for every student.



Regards,
Brian Zambreno, Ed.D.
Superintendent, South St. Paul Public Schools

District Mission and Core Values

Mission

Engage, Educate, Empower!

Vision

Nurturing an inclusive Packer community of lifelong learners

Strategic Priorities		
Packer Performance *Fostering Growth and Achievement*	**Packer Pride** *Celebrating Core Values and Community*	**Packer Promise** *Cultivating Inclusive Opportunities for All*
• **Focus on Growth:** Cultivate an environment that encourages continuous improvement, academic success, and high performance. • **Support Staff Excellence:** Empower and support staff as they learn and collaborate to drive student achievement. • **Expand Opportunities:** Offer diverse academic and extracurricular experiences that inspire curiosity, critical thinking, and personal growth.	• **Align Actions with Core Values:** Ensure every decision and action reflects our commitment to our community values of Pride, Respect, Resilience, Integrity, Collaboration, and Equity. • **Promote District Strengths:** Showcase what makes our district unique and welcoming, attracting students, families, and staff. • **Celebrate and Promote Hard Work and Engagement:** Recognize and appreciate the dedication of students, families, staff, and community members in fostering a thriving and supportive educational environment.	• **Cultivate a Welcoming Environment:** Build a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning community where everyone feels valued and heard. • **Communicate Transparently:** Foster trust by delivering clear, consistent, and transparent communication that encourages engagement and strengthens relationships. • **Expand Pathways to Success:** Provide diverse opportunities for students to explore their academic and personal goals, unlocking their full potential for success in school, careers, and life. • **Foster Belonging:** Strengthen connections through shared experiences that create a sense of pride and belonging within our schools and community.

SSPPS Core Values

Pride
A welcoming, inclusive and supportive Packer community that honors and celebrates its rich history while collectively inspiring new traditions.

Respect
Recognizing and celebrating the goodness in oneself and others, seeing our differences as strengths and showing care and appreciation for people, property and the entire South St. Paul community.

Collaboration
Building community together through trust, hard work, innovation, and a shared commitment to building the South St. Paul that our community aspires to be.

Integrity
Being thoughtful, honest, transparent in our words, and actions, and accountable for our decisions.

Resilience
The courage to adapt, change and persevere when presented with challenges and opportunities.

Equity
A safe and supportive environment that provides opportunities for all to be seen, heard, and valued.



Important Dates

First Days of School
- Grades 1-5, 6, 9-12: Tues, Sept 1, 2026
- Grades K, 7-8: Wed, Sept 2, 2025
- 4-year-old Preschool: Thurs, Sept 3, 2025
- 3-year-old Preschool: Wed, Sept 9, 2025

Preschool Parent Meeting & Orientation
Lincoln Center and Kaposia Education Center

Thursday, August 27, 2026
8:00am-8:00pm

Friday, August 28, 2026
7:30-11:30 am

Individual meetings will be set up between each family and their student's teacher

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Open House
September 3, 2026, 4:00-6:00pm

Student Success Pledge

Families and schools are partners in education. We all need to work together to ensure that students gain the most from their school experience.

Students will
- Attend school on time every day.
- Respect themselves, their teachers and classmates, and be a cooperative learner.
- Give their best effort to school work and seek assistance when needed.
- Inform their parents/family about their school progress and other important information.

Families will
- Send students to school appropriately dressed, prepared to learn and on time every day.
- Provide a healthy home environment including adequate sleep, nutrition, and school supplies.
- Encourage and praise each student's learning efforts.
- Communicate with teachers and support their homework policies and classroom expectations.

Teachers will
- Have high expectations of success for all students.
- Provide a safe and positive learning environment.
- Teach and motivate students to the best of their abilities.
- Respect and address each student's individual needs and encourage individual talents.
- Communicate with parents regarding student progress and work cooperatively on student issues when needed.

Early Learning Information

Important Phone Numbers

SSP Early Learning Office	651-457-9418
Birth-to-three Early Intervention	651-306-3682
Early Intervention (3-6 years ECSE)	651-457-9481
Early Childhood Screening	651-306-3641
Community Education	651-306-3632
SSP School District Office	651-457-9400
Kaposia Education Center	651-451-9260
Kaposia Attendance	651-457-9422 or KECAttend@sspps.org
Lincoln Center	651-457-9426
Lincoln Attendance	651-457-9498 or LCAttend@sspps.org

Early Learning Office

Central Square Community Center
100 7th Ave North
Phone: (651) 457-9418
earlylearning.sspps.org

Community Education Director
Jeanne Zehnder
(651) 306-3634
jzehnder@sspps.org

Early Learning Coordinator
Kristen Sammartano Weeks
(651) 306-3642
ksammartanoweeks@sspps.org

Early Learning Admin Assistant
Lu Campbell
(651) 457-9418
lcampbell@sspps.org

Student Census Information

New to South St. Paul? Had a new baby? Please call SSP Schools to update your contact information! This helps us keep you informed about our programs, and important school information for your family! Call 651-457-9470 to update your SSP census information.

Preschool Tuition

Tuition is due by the 15th of each month, September through June. Invoices will be sent electronically on the 1st of each month. For the most current tuition information visit: earlylearning.sspps.org/about/preschool.

If tuition is a hardship for your family, please contact the Early Learning Office at 651-457-9418. Scholarships and sliding fee scale are available. No family will be denied preschool due to an inability to pay.

Mandatory Reporting

All staff are mandated reporters, and are required by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect.

Early Childhood Screening

We are excited to meet you and your family before your child starts school! Come in for a FREE, one-hour visit to learn about how your child is developing. The best time for your child to be screened is at 3 years of age.

To schedule your child's screening, visit earlylearning.sspps/org or call 651-306-3641.

Early childhood screening is required for all children attending SSP Community Preschool and for ALL children before kindergarten.

How it helps your child:

- Get their hearing, vision, height, and weight checked
- Find out more about how they play, communicate, and develop
- Go home with a free book

How it helps you:

- Learn about how your child is growing and developing
- Meet the friendly school staff in your district
- Go home with advice and support, and resources if needed
- We make a plan together to help your child be the best they can be

Attendance

Parents/guardians are to call the Attendance Line before school begins to report an absence (phone numbers one page 5).

Please leave the student's first and last name, teacher name/grade, reason for absence, and a name and phone number where you can be reached on the day of the absence. If you do not call the school or the school is unable to contact you regarding the absence, you must provide your son/daughter with a note when they return to school, verifying the absence. If your student will be gone (vacations, surgery etc.) or needs to leave for an appointment, please notify the attendance office ahead of time via a note or phone call to the attendance line.

While attendance in preschool is not mandatory, developing good and consistent attendance patterns is one of the most effective ways to make certain that children acquire the essential skills needed for success both in school and out of school. Our expectation is that students will be at preschool every school day if they are healthy. Chronic absenteeism may affect eligibility for early learning scholarships and free state-funded VPK preschool.

It is important for your preschooler to arrive at school on time for the beginning of the preschool day. Arriving partway through the morning is disruptive to your own child as well as the rest of their preschool class. We do understand that things sometimes arise that will cause a late arrival; if your child will be late, please contact your child's teacher or the early learning office (651-457-9418) to let them know.

If your child is consistently tardy or chronically absent, you may be asked to meet with the early learning coordinator to develop a plan for consistent attendance.

Excused Absences

The responsibility for excusing a child from school rests with the parent or guardian. The school reserves the right to accept or deny requests for excuses based on its policies.

Acceptable reasons for being absent as referenced in Student Attendance Policy 503:

- Illness (school may request doctor verification)
- Serious illness in the student's immediate family
- A death in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative
- Medical, dental, orthodontic, or counseling appointments (Please avoid school hours if possible)
- Religious instruction not to exceed three hours in any week
- Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc
- Religious holidays

The school will make reasonable efforts to accommodate any student who wishes to be excused from a curricular activity for a religious observance or American Indian cultural practice, observance, or ceremony.

Religious or Cultural Observances

The school will make reasonable efforts to accommodate any student who wishes to be excused from a curricular activity for a religious observance or American Indian cultural practice, observance, or ceremony.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences are those student absences which are not approved by the parent/guardian and/or school district.

Examples of absences that may be considered unexcused:

- Families taking students out of school on a consistent basis
- Any absence in which the student/parent failed to comply with any reporting requirements of the school district's attendance procedures
- Work at home
- Vacations with family (NOTE: Family vacations may be excused with prior arrangement.)
- Oversleeping
- Missing the bus
- Lack of transportation: Vehicle is not working.
- Loss of bus riding privileges
- Too cold, or weather related - If school is in session, students are expected to be at school
- Needed at home
- Medical, dental, orthodontic or counseling appointments that do not require a full-day absence

Drop-Off & Pick-Up Information

We are continuing to stagger our start and end times from both Kaposia and Lincoln Center (K-5) to allow for more distance and easier drop-off and pick-up for preschool families.

Kaposia Education Center

1125 1st Ave S, South St. Paul

Parents must walk your child to the teacher Outside Door 1 (main entrance) and door 2 at Kaposia to check in, and pick up your child from the teacher at the end of the day at the same door.

- Students and families MUST use the sidewalks and cross with the patrols or crossing flags
- Parking Lot will be closed from 8:40-9:00 am and 3:25-3:45 pm to vehicles entering the parking lot or until all buses have dismissed

All Day Classes: Monday - Friday	9:10 am - 3:25 pm
AM Classes: Monday - Friday and Monday/Wednesday/Friday	9:10 – 11:45 am
PM Classes: Monday - Friday and Monday/Wednesday/Friday	12:50 - 3:25 m

Lincoln Center Elementary

357 9th Ave N, South St. Paul

Parents must walk your child to the teacher at Door 1 at Lincoln Center to check in, and pick up your child from the teacher at the end of the day at the same door.

There is no vehicle drop-off or pick-up of students allowed from the parking lots. Buses and parents of students with physical needs will be the only vehicles allowed in the parking lots before and after school.

All Day Classes: Monday - Friday	8:30 am - 2:45 pm
AM Classes: Monday - Friday and Monday/Wednesday/Friday	8:30 – 11:05 am
PM Classes: Monday - Friday and Monday/Wednesday/Friday	12:10 - 2:45 pm

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Safety

Children will only be released to adults (aged 18 or older) listed as an authorized pick-up person. Teachers may take a picture of family members for easy and efficient identification at the door.

Four-year-old preschoolers who ride the bus will be met at the bus by preschool staff. At the end of the day, preschoolers will be escorted to the gathering area for students who bus. If your child has an older sibling or neighbor who rides the same bus, the older student can pick up your preschooler from staff and escort them to the bus line.

Late Pick-Up

If a family member will be late for pick-up, please immediately notify the Early Learning Office at 651-457-9418. A staff member will remain with the child until picked up by a family member or emergency contact.

We understand that unexpected circumstances sometimes arise, so families are given a grace period of two late pickups. After the third late pickup, the Early Learning Coordinator will contact families to meet and develop a plan.

Bus Information

Your preschooler may ride the bus to/from school if your family qualifies for transportation and if your child has turned 4 years old by September 1. If you have questions about whether your family is eligible for transportation, call the Transportation Office at 651-457-9474. Bus service is available for drop-off only for the morning preschool session, or pick-up only for the afternoon preschool session.

Children must have a BUS PASS issued by the SSPPS School District Transportation Department to ride a bus. This pass should be visible to the driver in or attached to the child's backpack.
A parent/guardian must be at the bus stop to meet the preschool student when they get off of the bus. If no parent/guardian is at the stop, the preschooler will be returned to school, and a parent/guardian or approved emergency contact will be responsible for pick-up immediately.

ECFE Arrival

There is designated Early Learning parking on the west-side of the Kaposia Parking lot. Please use these spaces and enter through door #2 when attending Early Childhood Family Education classes. An ECFE staff member will be there to greet you. If you are arriving late and no staff are at the door, please call the ECFE classroom at 651-306-3637 to be let in.

Academics

Packer Pathways are dedicated to preparing each and every student for their future through high-quality, individualized programs, services, and personalized learning tailored to every stage of their educational journey. Covering early learning, elementary, middle, and high school, this comprehensive plan provides students with opportunities to explore real-world experiences, interactive discussions, guest speakers, enriching field trips, and flexible curriculum options, allowing students to fully engage with their learning paths. The development of the Pathway to Packer Promise is the result of extensive feedback from our stakeholders, ensuring it aligns with the collective goals and values of our learning community.

Exec. Director of Educational Services
Amy Winter
(651) 457-9416
amy.winter@sspps.org

Asst. Director of Educational Services
Natalie Tourtelotte
(651) 552-5563
ntourtelotte@sspps.org

Instruction & Achievement Coordinator
Scott Sundstrom
(651) 552-5595
ssundstrom@sspps.org

Packer Pathways

Our Mission with Packer Pathways is to ignite a passion in every learner to inquire, continuously improve, and engage in positively changing our world. Our mission with the Pathway to Packer Promise is to ignite a passion in every learner to inquire, continuously improve, and engage in positively changing our world. This plan is dedicated to preparing each and every student for their future through high-quality, individualized programs, services, and personalized learning tailored to every stage of their educational journey. Covering early learning, elementary, middle, and high school, this comprehensive plan provides students with opportunities to explore real-world experiences, interactive discussions, guest speakers, enriching field trips, and flexible curriculum options, allowing students to fully engage with their learning paths. The development of the Pathway to Packer Promise is the result of extensive feedback from our stakeholders, ensuring it aligns with the collective goals and values of our learning community.

Conscious Discipline (CD)

CD is an innovative social-emotional learning and classroom management program with a proven track record of sustainable results. Focused in Early Learning, CD provides an array of behavior management strategies and classroom structures that teachers can use to turn everyday situations into learning opportunities. By integrating social-emotional learning, discipline and self-regulation, educators spend less time policing behavior and more time teaching vital life skills. This method eliminates the need for reward and punishment-style discipline and instead gives children a voice, empowering them with the ability and help to achieve behavioral goals, while also creating stronger communication within families.

Conscious Discipline techniques will be used when following the district's behavior response policies as outlined in the Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook.

Preschool Curriculum

SSP Community Preschool uses The Creative Curriculum, which incorporates the following developmental domains and learning experiences:

- **Social/Emotional Learning (SEL)** focuses on helping children gain knowledge about feelings and getting along with others. SEL is the process in which children are able to acknowledge and recognize the emotions of others, develop empathy, make good decisions, establish friendships, and handle challenges effectively.
- **Literacy and Math** are embedded in all daily activities in preschool, as well as intentional learning activities such as learning letter names and sounds, counting and pattern recognition, sorting by shape and size, and name-writing practice. Teachers use small groups to work on specific skill-building according to each child's needs.
- **Circle time** is a large group gathering where the class shares ideas, plans, and observations. Circle activities are designed to stimulate young children's thinking, enrich their social skills, and extend their attention spans.
- **Gross-motor activities** give children the opportunity to use their muscles--as well as their imaginations--as they engage in fun, healthy exercises, such as running, jumping, and climbing.
- **Fine-motor activities** help improve small-muscle development and hand-eye coordination, which are essential for pre-writing skills. Some common items found in the fine-motor/manipulative area include puzzles, beads and laces, pegboards, crayons, and scissors.

- **Art activities** help young children creatively express their thoughts and feelings. They help reinforce fine-motor skills and concept development in areas such as colors, shapes, and size relationships.
- **Dramatic-play** activities help children express themselves, practice life skills, improve social skills, increase self-esteem, build vocabulary, and solve problems.
- **Music activities** promote children's listening skills, creative expression, and social skills. In music, children can explore sound, volume, tempo, and rhythm.
- **Science activities** offer many hands-on opportunities for observation, exploration, investigation, prediction, and experimentation.
- **Sensory activities** allow children to experiment with textures and the properties of different substances. These activities also promote the development of other skills, such as math, science, and language.
- **Readalouds** are designed to help preschoolers develop an appreciation and love of reading, and also to improve vocabulary, comprehension skills, and attention span.
- **Every moment** is a learning opportunity in preschool. Young children's brains are forming new connections all the time. Conversations with staff and friends during mealtimes, observations made on the walk to the playground, and peer conflict resolution during free choice time provide organic opportunities for learning and growth, beyond planned learning activities.

Special Education Services

Children with disabilities are eligible for special education and related services from birth to age 21 as defined in federal law, P.L. 101-476, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Minnesota State Board of Education Rules, Chapter 3525.0200. Families can expect their referral to be processed by the Child Study team in a timely manner and according to due process requirements. Contact your building principal or the office of Student Services, at (651) 457-9496 for further information and assistance.

Educational Legal Notifications

Title I

As Title I schools, we must meet federal rules related to teacher qualifications as defined in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). These rules allow you to learn more about your child's teachers' training and credentials. We are happy to provide this information to you. At any time, parents/guardians have the right to:

- Request information on the qualifications of your student's teacher and whether or not the teacher received an emergency or conditional teaching certificate through which state qualifications were waived
- Know if your student is being taught for more than four consecutive weeks by a teacher not licensed in the area of instruction
- See progress reports for their student and the school
- Ask whether your child receives help from a paraprofessional and information about that paraprofessional's qualifications
- Ask for a meeting with your school's principal or student's teacher at anytime

504 Plans

Section 504 is part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 protects individuals from discrimination based upon their disability. The South St. Paul Schools, through its policies and practices, follows the nondiscriminatory procedures of Section 504. Parents wishing information concerning 504 planning should contact, Director of Student Services at (651) 457-9481.

Data Privacy & FERPA (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act)

ECFE complies with state and federal data privacy laws that protect the integrity of a student's academic record and student privacy. Information from the Student Information and Immunization/Health forms may be shared with ECFE staff in order to better serve you and your family.

Employed Parent/Guardian Right to Attend School Conference and Activities

Minnesota law allows employed parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to request a leave for school conferences and activities. An employer must grant an employee a leave of up to a total of 16 hours during any 12-month period to attend school conferences or school-related activities related to the employee's child, provided the conferences or school-related activities cannot be scheduled during non-work hours.

A parent/guardian must let their employer know in advance and make every effort to disrupt workplace operations as little as possible. The law does not guarantee that the time off will be paid, but paid

vacation or other paid leave time may be used. More information on the State of Minnesota website.

Homebound Instruction

The school district provides instruction for students who have documented medical conditions that require the student to be confined to their home. A note from a medical authority must be provided with written verification confining the student to the home for a specific amount of time. A teacher will be assigned to the student and one-hour of instruction will be provided for each school day.

Pledge of Allegiance

Students may recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America one or more times each week. Pursuant to Minn. Stat. §121A.11, subdivision 3(c), anyone who does not wish to participate in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance for any personal reasons may elect not to do so. Students and school employees must respect another person's right to make that choice.

Statement of Family/Student Rights

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, the Confidentiality of Information section of the regulations implementing the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975, and the Data Management Policy of Independent School District (Policy 515) parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and eligible students have the following rights:

- The right, if asked to provide private or confidential data, to be informed of:
  - The purpose and intended use of the data within the school system
  - Whether he/she may refuse or is legally required to supply the requested data
  - Any known consequences data
  - The identity of other persons or entities authorized by state or federal law to receive the data.
- The right to inspect and review the student's education record
- The right to explanations and interpretations of the record
- The right to have a representative of the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) or eligible student inspects and reviews the records
- The right to exercise a limited control over other people's access to the student's education record
- The right to seek to correct the student's education record; in a hearing if necessary
- The right to report violations of the rules and regulations, cited above, to the Department of Education

Students Experiencing Homelessness

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, part of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. To ensure that these children have access to educational programs, school districts are required to implement transportation provisions. School districts must within reason provide students experiencing homelessness with transportation to and from their school of origin. If you have questions about the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, contact the office of Student Services, at (651) 457-9481.

Student/Family Support

SSPPS understands the importance of parent and family involvement in schools and its contribution to student success. To help engage and support families, the following support services are available. More information on all of the positions below can be found in the support section of our website https://www.sspps.org/support.

Cultural Liaisons

Our cultural liaisons help to make sure all of SSPPS families feel welcome and heard at our schools and the district is able to communicate well with families about their school, learning and student progress. Additionally, the liaisons serve to reduce language and cultural barriers so that all of our students can thrive and know they have a team of support around them.

Translation & Interpretation

The district provides translation and interpretation services to meet families' language needs at school and with district-related programs or communications. If you would like language assistance with a message you have received; an interpreter for a school meeting, conference or phone call; or want to know more about the district's translation and interpretation services, visit our website at https://www.sspps.org/departments/ed-services/interpretation-translation.

SSPPS Licensed School Counselors

Licensed School Counselors help every student thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. In partnership with students, staff, family, the school counselors strive to prepare students to become effective learners, achieve success in school, live successful and rewarding lives, and develop into contributing

members of our society. The goal is that each and every student builds the skills they need to be successful in the classroom and beyond.

SSPPS School Psychologists

SSPPS Licensed School Psychologists work as the lead of the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) model at each school. They ensure assessment practices are applied across all levels of the system for a deeper understanding of each student's needs for academic and social-emotional success. They work closely with staff, students, and families to conduct special education evaluation and support teachers in addressing needs of students who may have a disability.

SSPPS School Social Workers

The role of a SSPPS School Social Worker is to assist students, families, and staff with methods and resources to address issues contributing to achievement, social emotional adjustment, and attendance in school. Licensed social workers are available to intervene in problematic behaviors in early stages to address outside challenges that may be contributing to the problematic behavior.

SSPPS Family Support Workers

In addition to cultural liaisons, the district's partnership with 360 Communities provides Family Support Workers at each school to help families find and access community resources to help with the challenges of raising a family today - everything from food and finances to getting connected with activities, volunteering, counseling and other specific needs based resources.

HELPme App



SSPPS partners with STOPit Solutions to bring HELPme, a 24/7/365 technology platform, into our school community. HELPme is designed to provide invaluable assistance to our students, families, and staff, offering a private and accessible way to access a wide array of resources and support. Users can make anonymous requests and reports through the app or web-based platform. The best way to use the tool is to download the app. Search for HELPme in the Google Play or Apple App store. Once downloaded, searching for our schools in the app or on the web-based platform use the access code: SSPpackers. To learn more about HELPme or to find a link to download the app visit: https://www.sspps.org/support/helpme.

Enrollment Information

Families new to the South St. Paul Public Schools (SSPPS) can enroll online at www.sspps.org/enroll. On this site you will find information about enrollment, school attendance boundaries, open enrollment, intradistrict transfer, free/reduced meals, and child care. Have questions or need help enrolling? Email our Enrollment Specialist at enrol@sspps.org for help enrolling or to learn about additional programs and services available to you and your family.

Open Enrollment

Families residing outside of South St. Paul Public Schools are able to enroll in SSPPS through Minnesota's Statewide Enrollment program. Learn more on the website at https://www.sspps.org/enroll.

Kindergarten Enrollment

A student must be five years of age on or before September 1 of the school year for which admission is sought. Children who become five years of age on September 2 through November 1 of the school year for which admission is requested, may apply for Early Entrance to Kindergarten.

Early Childhood Screening must be scheduled prior to applying for Early Entrance to Kindergarten. To schedule a screening appointment, call 651-457-9418. The Early Entrance to Kindergarten Application must be received at the elementary building by April 15 for consideration for the following school year. For questions or to receive the application, please contact the school office.

School Safety & Security

South St. Paul Public Schools (SSPPS) is committed to the safety of every student, staff member and person who enters our buildings. From the time they arrive in the morning to the time they leave in the afternoon, the wellbeing of our students and staff remains our top priority. There are a number of key components that go into this work.

District and school leaders continue to partner with local law enforcement and other agencies to plan, prepare, and implement a safe and supportive learning environment. For more information on the District's Safety and Security work and the Standard Response Protocols we have in place, visit our website at www.sspps.org/about/safety-security.



Communicating Emergencies

SSPPS places a high value on the connections we have with students, families, and the community. We communicate in a variety of ways to help grow these important relationships. While the district strives to be proactive, accurate and timely in communication with families and our greater SSP community, there may be times when circumstances dictate longer notification or response times. There may also be certain information that the district is unable to share due to data privacy reasons. The district will use a variety of communication channels when there is a need to move into a Lockdown, Secure, Evacuate or Shelter:

- ParentSquare (texts, emails, phone calls)
- Website
- Social Media (when warranted)

The district will not typically communicate with families when there is a need to move into a Hold as those are usually low level incidents where classrooms operate as normal, but hallways are kept clear to allow staff or medical personnel to deal with a situation. **To ensure you are receiving messages from the District, please make sure your contact information is up-to-date in the Campus Parent Portal.**

Evacuations/Reunification

In the event building and district leaders make the determination to evacuate a school to another location due to a severe fire or other inhibiting emergency, district leaders will communicate the evacuation plans and options families have for their student's safe release home. Photo IDs will be checked and only adults listed as emergency contacts will be allowed to take students from the evacuation areas. Students will only be released to a non-family member with approval by a parent/guardian.

Emergency Drills

Each school is required, per MN Statute, to perform five lockdown drills, five evacuation drills, and one severe weather drill each school year. One lockdown and one evacuation drill must each be completed within the first 10 days of school.

The primary objective of a drill is for participants to build muscle memory, and practice an action to use in various events or situations. A secondary objective is for school staff to validate procedures, clarify roles and identify operational process gaps. Drills are for staff and students, and are educational opportunities to practice life safety skills. For example, an evacuation drill is conducted at schools worldwide regularly. A fire alarm goes off, students line up and head outside. There is no trauma in these events because there is no simulation of a threat or hazard. Schools do not light fires in the hallways to simulate an evacuation due to fire. Lockdown drills are similar. There is no simulated violence needed to conduct them. The only information needed is for the protocol to be enacted, "Lockdown, locks, lights, out of sight," and then students and staff perform the proper functions.

Emergency School Closings

All unscheduled school closings, late starts and early dismissals due to severe weather, extreme cold or heat, or other emergencies, will be shared with families through the district's electronic messaging system Parent Square, the district's website (sspps.org), district social media accounts, and through local news media. Families are encouraged to have alternate plans in place for possible emergency school closings.

In accordance with district policy, decisions to cancel or shorten the regular school day are made by the superintendent or their designee, in consultation with other staff. Consultation may also include City of South St. Paul personnel, our transportation providers, and neighboring school districts, as appropriate.

The most compelling reason for closing schools involves the safety of students and employees.

Decisions about school closings, early releases, and late starts will be made as early as possible to allow for appropriate notification. For more information, visit our website at www.sspps.org/newsroom/emergency-closing.

NOTE: Please ensure your contact information is up-to-date in the Campus Parent Portal.

Emergency notification methods:

- Automated voicemail
- Email
- Text message
- District website
- Social media
- Radio: WCCO 830-AM
- Television: WCCO Ch 4, KSTP Ch 5, FOX 9 KMSP, KARE 11

Late Starts and Early Dismissals

Late starts and early dismissals are inherently difficult for many programs and families. With this in mind, administration will do their best to keep these to a minimum. Early dismissals will be determined as conditions dictate. All families should have a contingency plan for their children in the event of school closings.

In the event of a LATE START, unless otherwise noted:

- Morning Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes are canceled
- Kids' Choice will start late, in accordance with the emergency announcement (e.g. two hours late)
- Central Square Community Center/Community Education will start late, in accordance with the emergency announcement (e.g. two hours late)
- All morning Early Learning programs and classes (including community preschool, ECSE, ECFE and home visits) are canceled

In the event of an EARLY DISMISSAL, unless otherwise noted:

- Afternoon and evening Early Learning programs and classes (including community preschool, ECSE, ECFE and home visits) may be canceled
- Afternoon and evening Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes may be canceled
- After school Kids' Choice will be closed
- Evening cancellations

Evening Cancellations

Decisions to cancel after-school and evening activities will be made by 3:00 pm, if possible, and are not necessarily tied to a school closing.

Family Communication

South St. Paul Public Schools places a high value on the connections we have with students, families and the community. We communicate in a variety of ways to help grow these important relationships. Families who do not have internet access should contact their respective schools to arrange to receive information in other ways.

Website

The district website (sspps.org) is your primary source for news and updates, information about academic programming, school board policies and meeting information, links to school and Community Education program websites, easy access to the portal and more.

Newsletters

Each school and often teachers, send an electronic newsletter to families on varying schedules to keep families in the loop on what is happening. Additionally, the district publishes the following newsletters:

- **SSPPS District eNews -** a monthly electronic newsletter containing information and stories sent to all district families via email the Wednesday following a SSPPS School Board business meeting.
- **Six Times -** a printed newsletter mailed to all SSPPS families and district residents three to four times a year.

If you do not receive the District eNews to your inbox and would like to sign up for it. An electronic form can be found at:https://www.sspps.org/departments/communications.

Social Media

Stay connected to SSPPS through social media!

Like our Facebook page (/SSPPS6) to see news, photos, videos, events and emergency notifications.

Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) (@SSPPS6) for district news and emergency notifications, real-time updates and more.

Follow us on Instagram (@SSPPS6) to get a glimpse of the student experience and achievements and quick stories of life in SSPPS.

Subscribe to the SSPPS YouTube channel (SouthStPaulSchools) to be the first to see district produced videos and watch school board meetings.

Connect with us on LinkedIn (South-St-Paul-Public-Schools) to see employment opportunities, follow progress on our strategic plan, and other district news.

Parentsquare

The district uses the electronic notification system ParentSquare to send direct messages via email, voicemail, and/or text message to district families and staff. This system communicates emergency information quickly, as well as important messages, alerts, and reminders. Schools and programs also use this system to send families important information and reminders. Please make sure your contact information is up-to-date in the Campus Parent Portal. To update your contact information in the Campus Parent Portal, visit the Resources tab of the District's website.

With ParentSquare users can:

- Fine-tune notification settings for both school and district notifications so you receive them when it is most convenient for you.
- See communications from all teachers and schools that your students are connected to, as well as the district, in the same place.
- Direct message your student's teachers from your phone.
- Change your language settings and receive all messages in your preferred language.

The best way to receive school alerts and communications is to download the app to your smartphone. Just search for "ParentSquare" in your app store.

Peachjar eFlyers

SSPPS uses Peachjar, a digital flyer management system, to share community sponsored events, classes and activities for SSP students and families. Peachjar provides an innovative flyer management system that sends school-approved eflyers directly to parents' inboxes and posts them on schools websites, making it easy for parents to learn more about events, activities and programs offered to students. Each Wednesday and Friday, parents/guardians will be notified via email when the flyers are posted. They can then access the flyers through the email link or via each school's Peachjar page, a link can be found on the district and school's homepage. Learn more at https://www.sspps.org/departments/communications/peachjar.

Calendars

The district's online calendars have the most current information about important dates in the district and events at your students' schools. Customizable online calendars show the events that are most important to your family, which can be downloaded to your personal or mobile calendar. Find information on how to customize calendars for your devices at https://www.sspps.org/resources/calendar.

Student Information Access

SSPPS uses technology tools to allow better utilization of the district's student information system and better access to online learning tools and classroom resources.

Infinite Campus

Infinite Campus is the student information system. This is where student schedules, report cards, etc. are located as well as your Parent Portal, where you can manage your Contact Information and Preferences. All families should have a Portal account to stay connected and to receive important messages from the District. Portal information is posted on the Resources and Parents/Family tabs of our website. If you need an Access Key to set-up your Portal account, contact your school office.

Health Services

Immunization Requirements

For newly enrolled students and those entering Kindergarten and 7th grade.

SSPPS has a NO SHOT- NO SCHOOL policy in compliance with Minnesota School Immunization Law. State law requires students entering early childhood programs, kindergarten, 7th grade, 12th grade, and those newly enrolled to SSPPS to show proof of required immunizations or to file legal exemptions from immunizations with the school. Families will be contacted if immunization information is needed in order for their child to attend school. Updated or new immunization information should be sent to the school health office as soon as possible to allow time for processing.

Many clinics in Dakota County provide immunizations at low or no-cost to children without insurance through the Minnesota Vaccines for Children (MnVFC) Program. Contact your clinic to find out if they participate in that program. In addition, the Dakota County Public Health Department also provides immunizations for children of all ages without insurance at their walk-in clinics and by appointment. These clinics also serve children on Minnesota health care plans including MA, MNCare or PMAP. Children under age 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

Call the Immunization Information Line from Public Health, at 952-891-7999 (English and Spanish) for current information about immunizations.

Illness

Students should not come to school if they have had:

- A fever of 100.0 degrees or more, the student must stay home for 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal without fever reducing medication such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen;
- Has vomited or had diarrhea, the student must home until 24 hours after the last episode;
- Has had any rash that may be disease-related or the cause is unknown, check with your health care provider before sending the student to school;
- When a student is out with an illness call the school daily to report the absence.

Notify the Health Office if your child develops a communicable disease (e.g. strep throat, chickenpox, head lice, impetigo, scarlet fever, pink eye, etc.). Note: If you take your child in for a throat culture, DO NOT send them back to school until the results are negative, or they have been on antibiotics for 24 hours.

On-Site Health Services

The Mission of SSP Health Services is to promote optimum health status to strengthen educational potential for all students. School Health Services provides care that promotes students' academic success by:

- Managing chronic health care conditions
- Providing interventions that return students to class
- Lessening the number of students sent home
- Shortening illness-related absences
- Identifying health-related barriers and referring for appropriate care
- Providing health screenings such as vision and hearing
- Promoting a safe and healthy school environment

A Licensed School Nurse (LSN) or Registered Nurse (RN) is on staff at each district school building during regular school hours. Nursing care is provided for students who become ill or injured during the school day, need medications or treatments, or have other medical needs. If your child has a health condition that requires medical attention during the school day, please contact the Health Office to arrange a conference to discuss how these needs can be met during school hours.

Health and Wellness Guidelines

- Send a note from the doctor if your child has any activity limitations or will need to remain out of physical education or indoors at recess for more than three days. Notes from parents/guardians to stay indoors because of cold weather will not be accepted unless medically ordered to do so.
- Children should be dressed appropriately for the season and specific weather as they go outside most days for recess.
- If your child has an accident in which their clothing has obvious blood or other bodily fluids on it, the parent will be asked to bring in a change of clothing if none is available in the Health Office. This is to keep other students and staff safe from potential contact with possible blood transmitted pathogens.
- It is important children eat a nutritious breakfast every day. Free breakfast is available for all students prior to the start of school.
- Please read communicable diseases notifications emailed or sent home with students and follow recommendations for each specific illness.

If your child becomes ill or is seriously injured during the school day, the Health Office will notify the parent/guardian so arrangements can be made for

your child to be taken home. Emergency contact information in Infinite Campus must be kept current, to include home, parent/guardian work, and daycare phone numbers (see page 23 for more on updating your information). Students will not be released unless accompanied by a responsible adult. It is expected that students will be picked up within one hour of the call to the parent/guardian.

Chronic Health Conditions

Families should consult with the Licensed School Nurse if they have a child with a diagnosed chronic health condition such as asthma, diabetes, seizures, or severe allergies. The nurse, student, and family will work with the child's health care provider to establish a health plan that will assist school staff in understanding and accommodating the student's health needs.

Medication

Some students may require prescription and non-prescription medication during the school day. Medication may only be administered by a licensed school nurse or delegated trained school personnel. District procedures and Minnesota State guidelines require the following:

- Each year, at the beginning of the new school year, a form must be completed and placed on file with the school nurse for any student to receive any medication or medical treatments during school hours. New forms are required whenever there are changes in medications, dosages or times is to be given.
- ALL medications need to be FDA approved. If there is a question about FDA approval, parents/guardians are to check with the Licensed School Nurse.
- Medication may only be administered by a Registered Nurse (RN) or Licensed School Nurse (LSN), or in the absence of the nurse, a health assistant or someone designated by the school.
- Medication to be given in schools must be supplied in the original prescription bottle. The pharmacist should prepare a container of the medicine with the appropriate labeling for school use.
- Written parent permission AND written physician orders are required for any prescribed or over the counter medications, including oxygen, to be given in school. The medication administration must be at the discretion of the School Nurse. Forms are available in the Health Office and online at https://www.sspps.org/departments/health-wellness.
- All medication must be accompanied by specific instructions, including student name, medication name, dosage, time of day, and length of time needed. Medications should be given at home whenever possible.
- All medicine will be kept in a locked area or cabinet and dispensed in the health office, except in special circumstances, which must be approved by the school nurse.
- For the safety of all students, it is recommended that parents bring their child's medication to the health office directly. If this cannot be done, a phone call is required alerting the health office staff of the amount and date the medication was sent.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of students requesting any prescription or over the counter medication be administered during school hours by school personnel are required to provide:
  - A written parental release for the administration of medication,
  - A signed statement from the licensed prescriber stating the name, dose, and frequency of the medication to be given,
  - Medication in the original container or pharmacy-labeled container

Medical Devices

Medical devices (crutches, wheelchairs, neck braces, arm/leg slings, etc) need to be provided by the family or physician and require a doctor's note indicating restrictions and length of use.

Health Concerns Shared with Transportation Company

If a student's health concern information is not to be shared with the contracted transportation company, the parent/guardian is obligated to notify the District. Questions should be directed to the school nurse.

Health Screening

If a vision or hearing screening is warranted, the district may provide the appropriate screening. If a parent/guardian does not want their child screened they need to contact the school nurse to opt out.

Personal Hygiene

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardians to educate their children on proper personal hygiene techniques. Early Learning staff may reach out to inform families when issues of personal hygiene are affecting students negatively in school.

Do Not Resuscitate/Do Not Intubate (DNR-DNI) Orders

When any student experiences sudden illness or injury, the role of an employee is to render emergency health care to preserve life and prevent disability. In life-threatening emergencies, the emergency medical system (911) will be activated. Per District Policy 518, district staff will not accept or honor requests to withhold emergency care or DNR-DNI orders. The school district will not convey such orders to emergency medical personnel. Notwithstanding this school district policy, IEP and Section 504 teams must develop individualized medical emergency plans for students when appropriate in accordance with state/federal law.

Medical, Health & Accident Insurance

The district does not purchase medical, health, or accident insurance for students. If a student has an accident, becomes ill, or is injured while at school or participating in district-sponsored activities, families will need to access their own insurance plans to cover any associated costs (e.g. medical care, emergency transportation). The district cannot pay these associated costs.

Health and Safety legal Notifications

Asbestos

The Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) requires that the district notifies building occupants annually regarding asbestos-related activities. Until the late 1970s, asbestos was commonly used in building materials, such as floor tile, fireproofing, and insulation. In the late 1980s, all school buildings were inspected for asbestos-containing building materials by EPA-accredited inspectors. Based on the results of these inspections, management plans were developed for each school where asbestos was found. AHERA also requires that districts conduct periodic surveillance inspections every six months to evaluate the condition of asbestos-containing materials, and to re-inspect buildings every three years to re-quantify all remaining asbestos-containing materials.

Indoor Air Quality

To help maintain our healthy school environment and comply with requirements established by the Minnesota Department of Education, SSPPS has developed and implemented an Indoor Air Quality Management Plan. Inspections of district buildings are performed annually to detect problems and help prevent future problems from occurring. General information regarding school indoor air quality is also available from the Department of Health at www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/air/schools/

Lead in Drinking Water

SSPPS conducts Lead in Drinking Water testing per the Minnesota Department of Health's "Reducing Lead in Drinking Water: A Technical Guidance for Minnesota's Schools" publication, and Minnesota Statute 121A.335. If results of any test are over the EPA-established action level for lead, the affected fixtures are taken out of service, repaired, or replaced, and then re-tested to verify the repair or replacement was effective. Some fixtures are not meant for drinking water, like bathroom sinks, custodial slop sinks, lab sinks, or most hose connections, so those are not routinely tested. Please only take water for drinking from hallway water fountains and bottle fillers, break room sinks, elementary classroom water fountains, or other fixtures that are clearly meant for drinking water.

Pesticides/Herbicides Application

As needed, SSPPS applies certain pesticides and herbicides on school property. To be notified prior to pesticide or herbicide application, contact the Buildings and Grounds Department.

Herbicides

Because of such variables as weather, it is difficult to predict the day on which herbicides will be applied. The district generally applies only one herbicide (i.e. dandelion preventer). It is applied twice yearly in June and August, during times when there is no scheduled use of the affected area.'

Pesticides

Because the district applies pesticides only on an as-needed basis, it is likewise difficult to predict exactly when they will be applied. The district contracts with a pest elimination service to inspect each building monthly. Category IV pesticides are applied only in affected areas, on average twice per year in each building, and always on non-school days. Category IV pesticides are in the least harmful category, and are not regulated by state notification laws.

More Information

Testing and reports are public information, you can receive a copy or learn more about the health and safety notifications in this handbook by contacting the SSPPS Buildings and Grounds Office at (651) 457-9431 or mfenton@sspps.org.

Educational Benefits

Educational Benefits and Other Benefits for Families

All SSPPS families are asked to complete or opt out of the Application for Educational Benefits, regardless of income or eligibility. A new application must be submitted each year. By completing the application and if you qualify, your student and family may be eligible for a variety of discounts through SSPPS like free/reduced activity fees as well as many other discounts such as:

- Internet Services
- Phone Services
- MTC Bus Passes/Lime Access
- Science Museum of Minnesota
- Minnesota Children's Museum
- SUN bucks (Summer EBT)
- Amazon Prime
- YMCA; and much more

In addition to the benefits your student and family may receive, families also have the potential to help SSPPS. For each qualifying application, SSPPS receives state and federal revenue.

For more information and the different ways you can complete an Application for Educational Benefits, visit the District's website at https://www.sspps.org/departments/nutrition/edbenefits or contact our Student Nutrition Office at (651) 457-9456.

Additional Information

- All SSPPS families are asked to complete the Application for Educational Benefits regardless of income or eligibility annually.
  - If your family was approved in the 2025-26 school year, you will need to reapply to ensure no disruption of benefits for the 2026-27 school year.
  - NOTE: If at any time during the school year your family income status changes you are encouraged to complete a new application for educational benefits.
- Milk alone is not provided for free even if a student qualifies for meal benefits- Milk can be purchased for $.50.
- Foster children who are the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for Educational Benefits regardless of household income. Please complete an application identifying the children who are in foster care.
- Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for Educational Benefits. Please fill out an Application for Educational Benefits.
- You may apply if someone in your household is not a U.S. citizen.
- Include all people living in the household in the application, related or not (e.g., grandparents, other relatives or friends)
- If your income is not always the same, list the amount you normally get. If you normally get overtime, include it, but if you get overtime only occasionally, ***do not*** include it.
- Information you provide on the form, and your child's approval for educational benefits, will be protected as private data.
- Information given in the application will be verified, you may be asked to provide written documentation.

Students of those families who qualify for educational benefits can also qualify for household discounts on some services and activities throughout the state of Minnesota. For more information, see district website at https://www.sspps.org/departments/nutrition/edbenefits.

Food & Nutrition

It is the goal of Nutrition Services to provide delicious, nutritious meals to all students. Student Nutrition is an important part of the school day. All South St. Paul Public Schools participate in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Our district provides a wide variety of meals that meet or exceed the Federal and State guidelines for nutrition. Our goal is to help teach healthy eating habits and enhance learning as well as maintain the financial integrity of the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs. Preschool classes may eat meals in the cafeteria or in the preschool classroom, depending on the developmental level of the students.

Healthy Meals

A breakfast meal consists of whole grains, meat/meats alternates, a variety of fruit/juice and milk. Each student is allowed one breakfast per day at no cost.

A lunch meal consists of Meats/Meat Alternates, Grains, Fruits, Vegetables and Milk. Each student is allowed one lunch per day at no cost.

Interactive Online Menus

SSPPS students and families can access interactive meal menus online through their SchoolCafé account. This app allows access to nutritional and allergen information of food options provided at each school. You can also find menus on the homepage of the website.

Family Involvement

South St. Paul Public Schools is strongest when the ideas, energy and voices of all stakeholders are included in planning and decision-making. Throughout the year there are many ways for you to be involved with the school district.

In alignment with the district's strategic priorities, the district is continuing to place a strong emphasis in 2024-25 to help build engagement with staff, students, and family/community. Watch for these and other opportunities to be announced on school and district websites and through various school and district communication channels.

Parent-Teacher Associations and Advisory Groups

Family involvement at the school level is positively related to a student's achievement and success. Early Learning families can join the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC). In our elementary schools, Parent/Teacher Associations (PTA) meet monthly in each building. See the principal's monthly newsletter and the District calendar for details. All parent(s)/guardian(s) are welcome and encouraged to attend. Contact your school office or visit https://www.sspps.org/get-involved to see the many ways you can be involved.

Partnerships

Working in partnership is a key component to the South St. Paul Public School's mission, and it is one of the five primary initiatives of our strategic plan to leverage local resources to meet student needs. The power of partnership is in its ability to serve as a multiplier for the involved parties, providing greater benefit together rather than working alone. Learn more about district partners at https://www.sspps.org/partnerships.

School Resource Officers

South St. Paul Public Schools partners with the South St. Paul Police Department to include two School Resource Officers (SROs) in our schools during the school year. Their office is located at the Secondary Building, but the officers travel to the other buildings periodically. The purpose of the School Resource Officers is:

- **Enhanced Safety and Security:** SROs provide a visible law enforcement presence on the school campus which can deter potential threats and respond quickly to emergencies, ensuring the safety of our students and staff.
- **Builds Positive Relationships:** SROs can foster positive relationships between students and law enforcement, promoting trust and understanding, and serving as role models and mentors.

Volunteers and Chaperones

Volunteers/Chaperones are welcomed and encouraged in SSPPS. Volunteer opportunities are determined and communicated by building/department administration and/or the classroom teacher. All volunteers and chaperones are required to complete a Volunteer Application Form and complete a background check each school year. You can receive a form and background check consent at your student's school office. The fee for the background check is paid by the district.

Preschool Guidelines and Information

Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook



Every student and employee of South St. Paul Public Schools is entitled to learn and work in a safe school environment that is aligned with the core values, mission, and vision of the district. Parents/guardians, teachers, staff and administrators are expected to mutually support each other in efforts to help students exhibit responsible behavior within the school community as part of learning basic life skills. Students are taught ways to handle differences in a non-violent manner and are expected to use those methods to handle disputes or conflicts. Our desire is that every child that comes to our school has the right to feel safe and free to be who they are without feeling any more or less significant than any other student in school.

To ensure this safe environment, the District's Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook establishes clear student discipline policies, consequences appropriate to behaviors, and a practice to implement these guidelines fairly. Students are expected to behave in accordance with federal, state and local laws, district policies and guidelines, and in a way that respects the rights and safety of others.

Assessments/Conferences/ Progress Reports

Each child's progress in preschool is observed and monitored throughout the year. We use an observational assessment tool called Teaching Strategies GOLD throughout the year to track developmental and academic progress.The teacher looks for growth in areas of social/emotional, cognitive, language, and physical development. Skills are assessed in the fall, winter and spring and reported via Conferences in fall and spring. During the school year, additional conferences may be held as requested by school personnel, parent(s), or legal guardian(s).

Birthdays, Invitations, and Holidays

Birthdays are important for many preschoolers. We acknowledge children's birthdays with songs, discussions, and stories, unless we are notified by a family they do not observe birthdays. We ask that birthday treats or desserts be saved for parties at home, and not brought to school. Consider bringing a healthy snack such as fruit or crackers. They will be passed out at the teacher's discretion either during the snack/meal time or as a "take home treat."

We understand that parents plan birthday parties at home, and would like to invite the preschool class. Preschool staff cannot take responsibility for party invitations being distributed at school, and are not permitted to give out classmates' contact information.

In order to create a classroom environment that is welcoming and inclusive for all students and families, we choose not to celebrate holidays in general in our preschool classrooms. However, we do recognize that holidays are an important part of many lives, and may have discussions about holiday activities as preschoolers bring them up. We use classroom celebrations and special activities to reflect the season, focus on kindness and building our school community, and celebrate our learning.

Clothing

Children should wear comfortable, washable play clothes and closed-toe shoes (please no flip-flops - gym shoes are best). Clothing that is easily managed by children encourages self-help and independence, and prevents toileting accidents. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather as we go outside nearly every day. Label all personal items such as backpacks, mittens, boots, etc. **Please keep a full set of extra clothes for your child in their backpack.**

Do Not Bring: Pets/Balloons/ Flowers/Toys from Home

Please do not bring family pets into the school or onto school property for visitation/sharing. Student allergies and uncharacteristic, nervous responses by animals create health and safety concerns at school. Balloons and flowers of any kind are also not allowed in school due to potential allergies. Toys from home can be a distraction, can get lost or broken, and can cause conflicts with other children, so in general should be kept home. Exceptions may be made in individual classrooms for comfort objects or Show & Tell days.

Field Trips

Off-site preschool field trips are rare, but may be used to ignite learning or enhance our curriculum. Parents will be notified in advance of the event, location, time, and expectations. A Field Trip Permission Form is required for each child.

Confidentiality and Data Privacy

SSP Community Preschool takes confidentiality very seriously and makes every effort to protect the privacy of every family. Communications among staff and parents about children should be kept confidential at all times, and conversations about a child, behavior, or incident should be conducted in private, away from the child and other members of the community. Discussions at drop-off and pick-up should be kept to a minimum. If you have a question or concern, please contact your child's teacher via ParentSquare to arrange a time to discuss.

Parental Custody/Restricted Contact

Minnesota law offers a non-custodial parent the right to review and receive copies of school records and information, to attend conferences, and to be informed about the child's welfare, educational progress, and status. The school is not required to hold a separate conference for each parent.

In cases where parents are separated or divorced, it is recommended that the school have legal documentation of custody and visitation rights. The custodial parent is responsible for providing the following to the school:

- A copy of the signed and certified court order; and
- Court order revisions/updates that affect custody, visitation, or record-access rights.

If there is no legal restriction, and upon request, the school will send duplicate correspondence to the non-custodial parent; arrange for review of school records by the non-custodial parents; and keep non-custodial

parents apprised of major school events. It is the parent(s) or legal guardian(s)' responsibility to inform and provide the school with current documentation if anyone is legally restricted from contact with a child. Adults listed as an authorized person on the emergency contact list are allowed to pick up a child in case of illness or emergency. Parents/guardians will be notified prior to the release of their child from school.

Snacks

Snacks may be offered in some classes, either as a scheduled time of the class day or as a choice-time option for children who want/need it.

Parents may be asked to provide snacks during the year; a sign-up sheet will be posted by your child's preschool teacher. All snacks must be store-bought, unopened and in store packaging, and be nut-free. Your donations are appreciated!

Student Information Release

Throughout the school year students attend programs, activities, field trip and events along with normal classroom routines that support their education, promote community service or encourage positive behavior. District officials may visit your child's school to cover these special events, and the South St. Paul Public School District may wish to use your child's photographs, voices, likenesses or student work for promotional and educational reasons. This includes co-curricular activities/athletic program rosters, school yearbook, district/school newsletters, etc.

If you wish to opt-out regarding the use of your child's name or image for school district and/or media purposes, please sign the Student Information Release Agreement form and return completed form to your school. This restriction is valid for one year and a new agreement must be signed for each school year.

Toileting

Children must be fully toilet trained to attend preschool. This means that children can communicate when they need to use the bathroom and can independently take care of their own personal needs.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to have their children use the bathroom before class begins. Accidents do happen, of course, so please be sure that your child has a full set of extra clothing in their backpack every day. Children will be expected to change their own clothing in case of a toileting accident. If a toileting accident occurs that a child can not deal with on their own, or if the child does not have extra clothing to change into, the parent/guardian will be notified and asked to come to school to change and/or pick up their child. If accidents become chronic, a meeting will be held with the Early Learning Coordinator and/or your child's teacher. Age appropriate bathrooms are available to children to use any time during the day.

Toy Safety

The school district's weapon policy applies to preschoolers. Toys that look like weapons, such as guns or knives, are not allowed in school, on the bus, or on school property. In general, keep all toys at home unless invited by the teacher for a special event or activity.

Visitors

All district school buildings are secured during the school day. For the safety of the students and staff, all exterior doors are locked during the school day except for the main entrance.

Individuals wishing to visit the school during the school day should adhere to the following expectations:

- All visitors, including parents/guardians must first sign in at the main office, show their photo ID and receive a visitor badge.
- Visitors must coordinate with the classroom teacher, secretary or administrator to schedule a visit. Visitors are asked not to loiter in/or around the buildings, without purpose, to avoid interrupting the academic flow of the school day.
- When requesting to eat lunch with your child, due to space restrictions, parents/guardians need to call the main office and reserve a spot to eat lunch with your child.
- Adult visitors are role models in our buildings and should abide by all school and district rules and codes of conduct.
- All visitors must sign out in the office upon departure from the building.
- Visitors who have not received permission from the office to be in the building will be asked to leave the premises. Failure to comply will be considered trespassing and the police will be contacted if necessary.
- Should an attempt be made by an unauthorized person to remove a child from school, the principal will immediately notify the custodial parent/guardian and contact the police if necessary.

As a guest in our building, it is expected that visitors remain in visual contact with a school employee when with students. For the protection of our students, as well as our visitors, it is expected that visitors refrain from physical contact with our students and do not discipline them.

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Guidelines

Arrival

There is designated Early Learning parking on the west-side of the Kaposia Parking lot. Please use these spaces and enter through door #2 when attending Early Childhood Family Education classes. An ECFE staff member will be there to greet you. If you are arriving late and no staff are at the door, please call the ECFE classroom at 651-306-3637 to be let in.

Attendance

Attendance is expected, and we also understand that families with young children have many commitments. If your child will be absent from ECFE class, please contact the Early Learning office at 651-457-9418. Thank you for prioritizing your ECFE class! You are ALWAYS welcome here!

Cell Phone Policy

Cell phone use should be limited to use for emergencies only during ECFE classes. Giving children your full attention during class is a great practice for building strong bonds and healthy, loving attachments.

Child Care Providers

Child care providers may attend with their child and enroll another child in class, if space is available. If class enrollment is full, a parent attending with their child will be given priority for registration.

Dress

ECFE classes are fun and can get a little messy. Dress comfortably in clothes you don't mind if they get a little dirty.

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)

ELAC is made up of Early Learning/Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) parents and community members. Their mission is to support the Early Learning programs such as Preschool and ECFE. They always welcome new members! For more information, contact the ECFE Office at 651-457-9418.

Family Library

The family library is available to checkout books to support parenting, understanding your developing child, addressing concerns, or just for fun. Talk with your ECFE teachers for details.

Grandparents

We welcome caregivers of all kinds, including grandparents, to enroll in class with children ages 0-5.

Lap Infants

Infants who are not yet walking may remain with their parent during a class that a sibling is registered for, including during the Parent Education portion of the class. A child of any age who stays in the early childhood classroom during Parent Education must be registered for that class.

Photographs/Videos

South St. Paul ECFE staff or representatives of the media occasionally take photos and video of students and staff in classrooms. These may be used in newsletters, newspapers, on television or internet pages or for educational purposes. If you do not wish your child(ren) photographed or recorded, please discuss this with your ECFE teacher. You will be asked to fill out a non-media release form. Parents are not permitted to take photos or video of children other than their own.

Registration Priority

South St. Paul families receive priority registration for ECFE classes. Registration for families from other districts is welcome on a first come, first serve basis, and if space is available.

Snacks

Snacks are offered during each ECFE class. Alternatives will be offered in the case of health reasons such as allergies. Parents may be asked to sign up to bring snacks; a sign-up sheet will be posted by your child's ECFE teacher. Snacks must be store-bought, unopened and in the original packaging, and nut-free. Your donations are appreciated!

Stay-and-Play Cards

Stay-and-Play cards are available for purchase and can be used at any stay-and-play session. Cards are available at Central Square Community Center or by calling 651-457-9418.

SSPPS Community Education

South St. Paul Community Education provides inspiring and motivating high quality opportunities for lifelong learning, leadership development, and citizen engagement while advancing equity and eliminating disparities for our community. Community Education provides resources that help people from newborns through adults of all ages raise the quality of life in their communities. If you are an individual, local organization, or business that is interested in bettering our community through community education, please contact our office. We are always looking for new class offerings. For more information, call (651) 306-3632 or visit https://communityed.sspps.org/.



Early Education

The Early Learning/Family Center ECFE offers high-quality education opportunities for families with children from birth through age five. New baby classes, parent education, inclusive preschool programming and kindergarten readiness are all part of serving the district's youngest learners.



Youth Programs

A variety of fun and educational activities are offered through Kids' Choice school-age care (gr. K-5 school year), Kids' Choice Summer program (gr.K-7 in the fall) and enrichment classes (grades K-12). These opportunities are available before and after school, on many school release days, and all summer.



Adult Programs

Lifelong learners thrive. They are happier, healthier and more connected. Our programs, including adult enrichment, Access adults with disabilities programs, older adult programming, and Adult Education (ABE) all provide opportunities for adults to continue learning and following their passion.



SSP Senior Center

The South St. Paul Senior Center promotes and provides opportunities in the area of socialization, recreation, education, and health to residents age 55 and up. Annual membership includes senior center activities, free senior lap swim (65+) during scheduled days/times and senior fitness class pricing (65+).

SSP School Board

The care, management and control of the schools is vested by statutory and constitutional authority in the school board. The school board shall carry out the mission of the school district with diligence, prudence, and dedication to the ideals of providing the finest public education. The SSP School Board strives for excellence in governance, operates in partnership with the Superintendent, who strives for excellence in management, and both partner for excellence in consultation with staff, students, families, and the public.

The SSP School Board meets twice per month. Work Session meetings are open to the public and begin at 5:00 pm. The second Monday of month, the work session will be held at the SSPPS District Office (104 5th Ave S). The fourth Monday of the month, the work session will be held at SSP City Hall (125 - 3rd Avenue North). Business Meetings take place the fourth Monday of the month and are open to the public. Meetings begin at 6:00 pm at SSP City Hall (125 - 3rd Avenue N). Meetings can be viewed in person, on television, or web-streamed visit for more: https://www.sspps.org/about/school-board/meetings.

Current Board Members



Anne Claflin
aclaflin@sspps.org



Paul Cumings
pcumings@sspps.org



TBD
tbd@sspps.org



Tim Felton
tfelton@sspps.org



Wendy Felton
wfelton@sspps.org



Kim Humann
khumann@sspps.org



Monica Weber
mweber@sspps.org

Student School Board Representatives

- Josie Albin
- Sophia Arrivillaga
- Monica Schmidt

Student Voices

The South St. Paul School Board has made it a priority to increase opportunities for student voices in their work.

Student School Board Representatives

Student School Board Representatives serve as the liaison between the School Board and our students. They work closely with the Board to provide input and share student perspectives. Each spring two or three representatives are chosen each year.

Superintendent Advisory Council

The Elementary Superintendent Advisory Council is made up of 4th grade students from both Kaposia Education Center and Lincoln Center. Throughout the school year, council members meet with the Superintendent to share ideas, provide feedback, and discuss ways to enhance the overall student experience in our schools. The council serves as an important two-way communication channel between students and district leadership.

District Directory

District Office
104 5th Avenue South
Phone: (651) 457-9400, Fax: (651) 457-9485
www.sspps.org

Transportation
Phone: (651) 457-9474
sspps.org/departments/transportation

Nutrition Services
Phone: (651) 457-9429
sspps.org/departments/nutrition

Student Services
Phone: (651) 457-9481
sspps.org/departments/student-services

Parent Tech Help
Phone: (651) 457-9458
ParentTechHelp@sspps.org

Community Education & Adult Basic Education
Jeanne Zehnder, Director

Central Square Community Center
100 7th Avenue North
Phone: (651) 306-3632, Fax: (651) 457-9485
communityed.sspps.org

Early Learning & Early Childhood Screening
Kristen Sammartano-Weeks, Coordinator

Family Education Center
104 5th Avenue South
Phone: (651) 457-9418, Fax: (651) 457-9485
earlylearning.sspps.org
Office Hours: 7:00 am - 4:00 pm