

SPPS 2033 Strategic Plan Advisory Taskforce

Final Report

June 2026



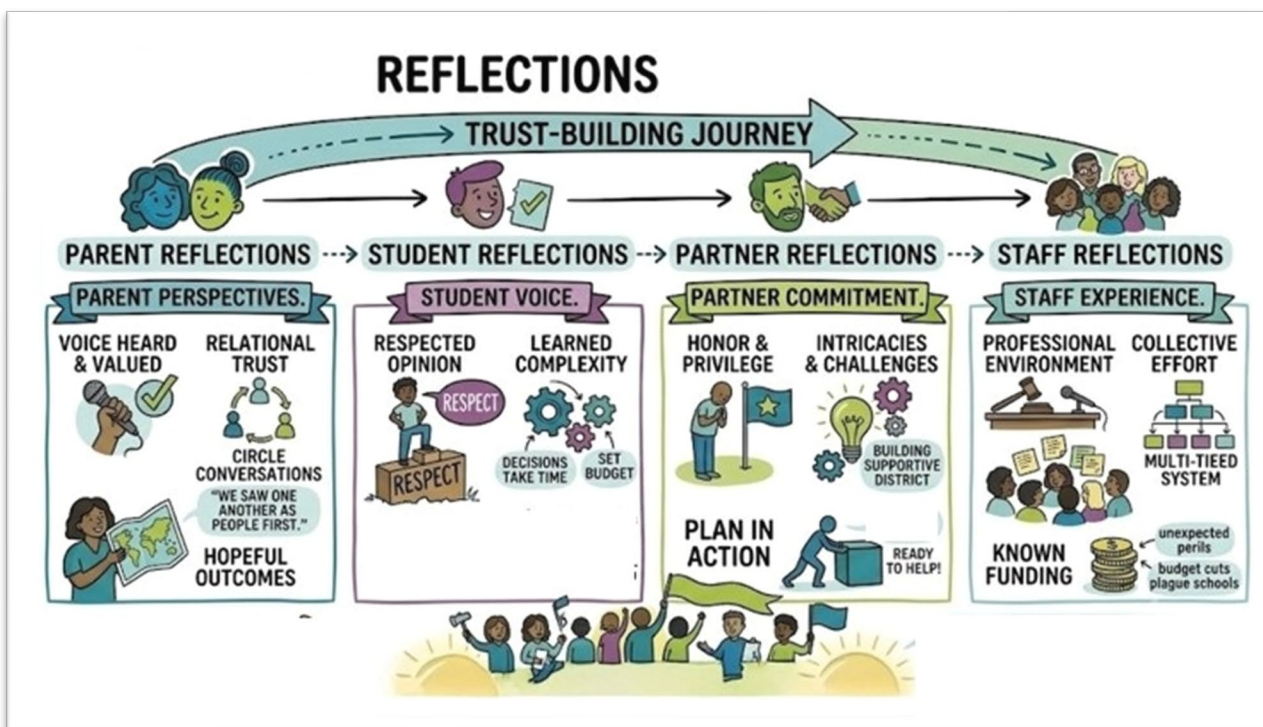
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1 REFLECTIONS

PLEASE NOTE. THIS SECTION WAS CREATED AND WRITTEN BY TASKFORCE MEMBERS; TO RESPECT INDIVIDUAL PRIVACY, NAMES ARE NOT PROVIDED.



1.1 PARENT

I joined the SPPS 2033 Strategic Planning Task Force first and foremost as a parent. Like many parents, I care deeply about the experiences students and families have in our schools and wanted to contribute in whatever way I could to conversations about the future of our district.

Throughout the process, I felt that my voice was heard and valued. I appreciated the opportunities we had to share our perspectives, ask questions, and engage in meaningful discussions about the future of Saint Paul Public Schools. I believe my voice showed up in the final plan through conversations centered on student belonging, family engagement, and the importance of creating school communities where every student feels seen, supported, and able to succeed.

One of the things I appreciated most about this experience was how intentional the facilitators and task force leaders were about creating a space where everyone felt included. Regardless of background, role, or perspective, there was a genuine effort to ensure that every voice had the opportunity to be heard. I especially valued the circle conversations woven throughout the process. In a world where many meetings focus solely on agendas and outcomes, those moments

created space for listening, reflection, and connection. They helped us see one another as people first and task force members second.

As a parent, I also appreciated the opportunity to hear from people whose experiences with SPPS were very different from my own. The task force brought together individuals from different backgrounds, neighborhoods, professions, and life experiences. While we did not always agree on every issue, I was continually reminded that everyone in the room shared a common desire to see students succeed and our schools thrive. Those conversations were among the most meaningful parts of the experience for me and gave me hope for what is possible when people come together around a shared purpose.

One of the most valuable things I learned during this process was the complexity and scale of Saint Paul Public Schools. It is easy to view the district through the lens of a single school, program, or family experience. Participating in this work gave me a greater appreciation for the many interconnected challenges that exist across the district and for the people who work every day to support students and families.

As I reflect on this experience, I leave feeling hopeful. Not because we solved every challenge facing SPPS, but because I witnessed what is possible when people come together with a genuine desire to listen, learn, and work toward a shared future. Strategic plans alone do not create change. People do. My hope is that SPPS 2033 serves not only as a roadmap for the district, but as a commitment to ensuring that every student feels welcomed, valued, challenged, and supported. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been part of this process and for the many people who dedicated their time, energy, and perspectives to shaping the future of Saint Paul Public Schools.

1.2 PARENT

First, I want to say that it was truly an honor to be part of the Advisory Taskforce. As both a parent and a community advocate, I appreciated the opportunity to contribute to this important work. I genuinely enjoyed every part of the experience and am grateful to have been included.

Overall, I thought the process was organized and well put together. I especially enjoyed the circle discussions, ice breakers, and the opportunities to hear different perspectives. I also appreciated the sessions focused on specific challenges. The SPED session was particularly meaningful to me, and I enjoyed participating in those discussions.

One area that I believe could benefit from additional work is the Language Access Plan. Based on what was presented, I did not feel it was as well developed as some of the other areas. I would be interested in reviewing additional information and seeing what the final version looks like, however, I do believe there is room for improvement.

My biggest hope is that the work of this taskforce leads to meaningful and visible action. Over the years, I have heard from students, families, and even longtime district employees that many initiatives are discussed, but too often people do not see the changes reflected in their daily experiences. I still remember a student telling me, “You always attend meetings at the district; however, nothing changes.” Hearing that really stayed with me and honestly broke my heart a little because it reflects a feeling that many people in our community share.

I am hopeful and praying that this work will lead to real, tangible change for our students and families. My hope is that the recommendations from this taskforce result in changes that can be seen and felt across all SPPS schools. Success should not only be measured by reports or plans, but by improvements that students, families, teachers, and staff can actually experience. I would love to see clear follow-through, accountability, and evidence that community feedback is leading to meaningful outcomes.

Thank you again for including me in this process. I leave this experience feeling grateful, hopeful, and honored to have been part of this important work. I truly enjoyed the experience and appreciate the time, effort, and care that went into organizing and facilitating the taskforce.

1.3 PARTNER

Here's my reflection on being part of the advisory taskforce. Thank you so much for including me in this project. I really enjoyed the opportunity to work with and learn from everyone involved. If there's anything that Minnesota State Mankato can do to help advance this plan, don't hesitate to reach out to me!

"It was an absolute honor and privilege to serve on the SPPS Advisory Taskforce. The members of the group reinforced how much the SPPS students, staff, and community members deeply care about the experience offered in all the district buildings. I learned a lot about the intricacies of the school district, challenges faced by school officials, and conversations happening at all levels to help build a supportive, inclusive, and innovative school district.

I've had the pleasure of working with a number of SPPS staff, every conversation has focused on improving the student experience. This is a special school district that understands the impact it can have on the St Paul community and state of Minnesota. I am so excited to see this plan be put into action and look forward to the incredible work that will be done."

1.4 STUDENT

I feel that my voice was heard throughout the Task Force process, even though I did not speak very much in the main group or in smaller breakout groups. During the preference group discussions, especially in the Achievement Gap Reduction and Academic Acceleration group, the members made an effort to ask for my opinion and include me in the conversation. That made me feel respected and appreciated. I also valued the group circle because it created a space where everyone listened to one another and treated each other with respect.

My final thought about the Task Force is that I am curious about what happens next if the board does not approve the plan. I wonder whether another team would be formed, whether the Task Force would continue, or whether revisions would be made to strengthen the plan. Overall, I am interested in seeing how the work of the Task Force continues and how it fits into our daily lives.

One thing I learned is that important decisions and large changes take time, follow a process, and must go through several steps before they can be approved. I also learned that there is a set budget, and major changes cannot happen instantly. Because of that, I understand why the process has to move carefully and thoughtfully. Taking time allows the group to gather information and better understand how decisions will affect students and teachers in SPPS.

What I appreciated most about the process was the communication and organization, including the emails about what would happen next. I also appreciated the food provided at meetings and the thoughtful support shown throughout the process. Most importantly, I believe the Task Force was valuable because it gave both students and staff a voice. Students can share what works well and what does not, while teachers can offer insight into what fits within their schedules and what best supports the student body. Having both perspectives made the Task Force more meaningful and balanced.

1.5 PARTNER

As St. Paul Public Schools embarked on its mission to develop a new strategic plan for the next seven years, I was truly honored to be a part of the process through a community Task Force. Throughout the process, I felt like there was an intentional effort to ensure everyone's voice was heard and valued and the diversity of voices and experiences among the group allowed for deep conversation. I really enjoyed getting to know all of the members of the Task Force and learned a lot from everyone who participated.

It is clear that SPPS is doing a lot of things well and that there is a genuine desire among all community members, district staff, teachers and students to continue to improve. As the world around us changes and new barriers and challenges are faced by public schools, it is critical that SPPS is being proactive in its approach to growth and development. In this regard, I think the Task Force did a great job of highlighting areas of concern and offering a variety of solutions and approaches. It is clear that all members of this Task Force and the broader community within St. Paul are committed to doing right by our students and fostering the best educational environment possible.

I learned a lot about SPPS throughout this process, not least of which was the framework for improvement and areas of focus the district is most keyed in on. This clarity was very helpful throughout the Task Force process and allowed the group to dig deep into topics that are of the most importance. Through engaging in the consultancy protocol with a broader group of SPPS staff, I learned a lot about the strategies and goals that the district staff have been working on for years and the innovative ways they will look to improve in the years to come. Overall, my confidence in the people who are working within the district was solidified and I trust that despite the many challenges, we have great people working behind the scenes.

Overall, there are many challenges that the district is facing that fall outside of the control of the Task Force and even the staff of the district. This is my biggest area of concern, as even with a great plan, there is so much working against high quality public schools in the current state of America. That said, I am heartened that SPPS remains dedicated to being the best version of itself and always puts the well-being and education of its students at the heart of their planning.

1.6 PARENT

From my perspective as an Advisory Task Force member, two priorities would most effectively advance equitable student outcomes: strengthening data use and tightening system coherence.

First, I would prioritize more disciplined, actionable use of data. While data is abundant, its application is inconsistent and not always instructionally decisive. The focus presentation revealed uneven practices in how data is analyzed and translated into instruction. Establishing clear protocols: regular data cycles, defined instructional responses, and collaborative inquiry, would enable earlier identification of gaps and more precise, timely interventions. This is essential, as delayed or fragmented responses allow disparities to widen.

Second, I would prioritize stronger alignment between central office guidance and school-level implementation. Variability in outcomes reflects uneven enactment of literacy practices across sites. The district must articulate clear, non-negotiable expectations, supported by sustained

professional learning, coaching, and accountability structures. At the same time, schools must retain the flexibility to adapt practices to their specific communities, ensuring both coherence and responsiveness.

I was particularly struck by the lack of standardized assessment and data practices across SPPS. The wide variability in both measurement and performance raises important questions about where benchmarks will be set and how the district will guide schools toward a unified trajectory under this proposal.

Overall, my experience on the task force was deeply meaningful. Each meeting began with a “circle,” which initially felt uncomfortable, even as someone typically gregarious, but quickly established a sense of psychological safety. This simple yet intentional structure fostered trust and encouraged authentic participation across perspectives. The process was far more people-centered than I had anticipated, enriching my understanding of SPPS and the communities she serves. It also strengthened my confidence in the district’s capacity to listen, align, and advance equitable outcomes for the next generation. Thank you for the opportunity to engage in this work and contribute to advancing equitable outcomes for SPPS students.

1.7 STUDENT

Throughout the Advisory Taskforce process there was a lot to learn. I had never been on a taskforce before, so each step was something new. With that being said, the most interesting part for me was not what I learned about taskforces in general, but what I learned about SPPS as a district. By being a part of this Taskforce I feel I truly understand the scale of SPPS operations. Firstly there are all the people involved, students, teachers, support staff, custodians, kitchen workers, building maintenance workers, coaches, principals, vice principals, counselors, interpreters, bus drivers, the list goes on and on. There are also all the services that are distinct overseas such as, infrastructure demands, budgets, teaching practices, and transportation. Knowing all of this, It makes me forever grateful to have met the people in charge of getting all of this done. Because of my time on the strategic Taskforce I have witnessed the attention to detail and the thoughtfulness that the district takes into all that do and I know the hard work and dedication each member of the process brings. Lastly I know they truly care not just about education but about each and every student. That is why I have full confidence in saying, there are amazing things that lay ahead.

1.8 STAFF

Throughout this process, Dr. Gray-Akyea, Dr. Landreau, Superintendent Stanley, and various district presenters maintained a professional environment where my perspectives and those of my fellow advisory task force members were genuinely valued. Their capacity for unified collaboration and transformative leadership was impressive, utilizing diverse forums such as focus groups, consultancy work groups, community engagements, and "circles" to facilitate our contributions. The final outcomes demonstrate how collective effort can effectively strengthen our district, school communities, and the families we serve.

The collaboration and dedication shown by my fellow advisory task force members during our sessions was truly impactful. As "collaborators," we united with the goal of improving the school

district for the benefit of both students and families. Throughout this advisory process, I deeply valued our time together, as we consistently prioritized listening to, sharing with, and showing mutual respect and acknowledgment for one another.

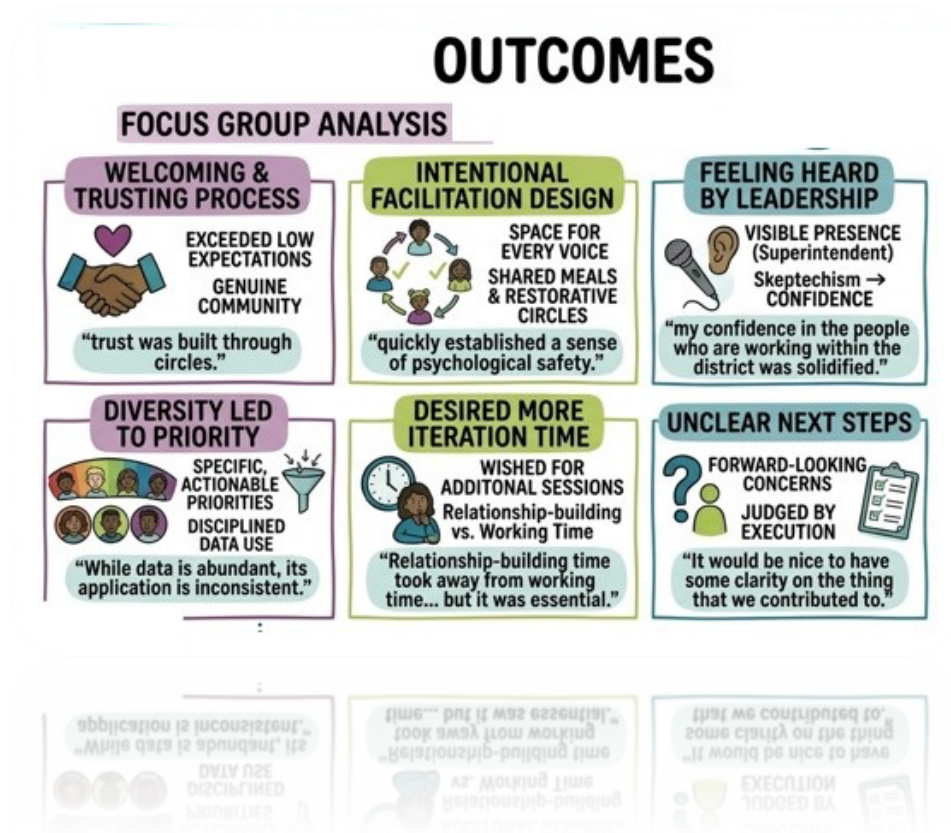
Through my experience, I discovered that having adequate funding is essential for a school district to operate successfully, but not knowing the unexpected perils that follow from district budget cuts continue to plague our schools with uncertainty.

I also know that Saint Paul Public Schools serves as a diverse, multilingual hub for students and families, maintaining rigorous standards and prioritizing quality education for every learner. Our district is committed to achieving excellence, consistently working to refine and expand the educational opportunities we provide to ensure the highest level of service.

I found the Strategic Plan Process and its convenings to be both well-facilitated and deeply impactful. My only critique is that I would have valued additional time to explore the specific challenges, feedback from community groups, and the various strategies developed to meet the framework goals outlined in the strategic plan.

2 OUTCOMES

THIS SECTION WAS CREATED AND WRITTEN BY EXTERNAL EVALUATOR, DR. MILES DAVIDSON. DR. DAVIDSON WAS HIRED TO CONDUCT A FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS OF THE ADVISORY TASKFORCE EXPERIENCE. THIS SECTION IS PRESENTED AS WRITTEN BY DR. DAVIDSON.



2.1 OVERVIEW

This report draws on focus groups and written reflections from members of the Strategic Plan Advisory Task Force commissioned by Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS). The Task Force brought together stakeholders from communities across SPPS (e.g. staff, parents, students etc.) to provide crucial input that would help shape the forthcoming strategic plan. The findings that follow reflect summarized themes from participants on how they experienced the work, what earned their trust, and what they want the district to carry forward.

2.1.1 *The process was welcoming and built trust amongst participants.*

Participants entered with no or low expectations and left describing a genuine community. Across a group spanning different backgrounds and roles, the experience exceeded what people anticipated.

"This experience was so much better than I even imagined...I would tell others to sign up to make that meaningful change" – SPPS Staff Member

It was more of a community than I expected it to be. – SPPS Staff Member

2.1.2 *Intentional facilitation design made space for every voice to contribute honestly.*

Participants credited specific activities like shared meals and restorative circles for creating conditions where people could speak openly. The design of the sessions reached everyone, including those who were less eager to speak or share input. Drawing out those voices ensured that their views still contributed to or shaped the conversation.

They never timed us...no pressure. People just shared without inhibition. – SPPS Staff member

Each meeting began with a “circle” which initially felt uncomfortable...but quickly established a sense of psychological safety. This structure fostered trust and encouraged authentic participation. – SPPS Community Member

I feel that my voice was heard even though I did not speak very much. The members made an effort to ask for my opinion and include me. That made me feel respected and appreciated. –SPPS Student

2.1.3 *Feeling genuinely heard by leadership left participants more informed and optimistic about the district.*

The visible presence of district leadership, including the superintendent, combined with a clear willingness to listen, convinced members that the process was authentic. That credibility helped convert initial skepticism into a deeper grasp of the district’s complexity and renewed confidence in the people leading it.

They were all people who really listened. They never tried to push their own agenda...the more I got engaged, the more I saw a genuine desire for the district to hear from us. – SPPS Staff Member

By being a part of this taskforce I feel I truly understand the scale of SPPS operations...my confidence in the people who are working within the district was solidified. – SPPS Community Member

My hope as a staff member is that it goes through and we see the accountability throughout to make the plan happen. – SPPS Staff Member

We might come up with a very beautiful plan, but if the implementation is not uniform, it definitely goes under. We have to hold people accountable. I believe its not going to go under, it’s not going to be buried somewhere like past experiences have been. – SPPS Staff Member.

2.1.4 *The diversity of voices led to concrete priorities for advancing equitable outcomes.*

The range of perspectives produced specific, actionable priorities rather than general affirmation. Particularly, more disciplined use of data and tighter coordination between district guidance and school-level practice.

While data is abundant, its application is inconsistent...clear protocols would enable earlier identification of gaps and more precise, timely interventions. – SPPS Community Member

Behind every student is a story that is not being told when we look at numbers. – SPPS Staff member

2.1.5 *Participants desired more time to iterate and push ideas forward.*

The most consistent improvement request was to provide more time to work through topics and solidify input. While participants were engaged, they wished for additional sessions to work through proposals. Some participants acknowledged that relationship-building time took away from working time, but felt that relationship building was essential.

To do even better, we would need maybe one or two more dates. Would that have come about if we spent a little less time on the community aspect? Maybe, but that was also important. – SPPS Parent.

My only critique is that I would have valued additional time to explore the specific challenges, feedback from community groups, and the various strategies developed. – SPPS Community member.

2.1.6 *Participants are unclear about next steps in the process.*

The clearest forward-looking concern was transparency about what comes next. Members could not locate a final plan and raised questions about what happens if their plans are not approved. They also signaled that the process will ultimately be judged by the execution of the ideas presented.

I am curious about what happens next if the board does not approve the plan. I wonder whether another team would be formed, whether the task force would continue, or whether revisions would be made. – SPPS Student.

It'd be nice to have some clarity on the thing that we contributed to. – SPPS Community Member.

It would be great if there is also a task force group to monitor the implementation, to ensure that every priority is being implemented properly. – SPPS Staff Member

2.2 IMPLICATIONS

2.2.1 *The engagement design is a reusable model.*

The structure of the Advisory Task Force really worked for participants. The district can follow similar structures for engaging the community in the future.

2.2.2 *Add time to iterate without cutting relational time.*

Build in one or two additional sessions for members to work through proposals together and ease information overload. An additional session would allow adequate time to supplement the relationship-building that participants valued.

2.2.3 *Increase visibility of how the work will be carried forward.*

Make clear the next steps once the work of the task force ends so that participants know what to expect and when.

2.3 ADDITIONAL QUOTES

"I just really appreciate how this whole process has been. I've never seen a district do something like that." — SPPS Parent

"Working with the students was one of the blessings of this experience... what they had to say was extremely deep and impactful." — SPPS Staff Member

"We usually start with a meal, which is very unifying, and then we go to the circle. They never timed us, no pressure." — SPPS Staff Member

"I really valued the community that was built in the circles." — SPPS Staff Member

"The circle time was essential for us to build trust amongst each other, to learn one another." — SPPS Parent

"The superintendent was there for the circle. They were all people who really listened." — SPPS Staff Member

"I think this is going to go toward something that would be very enduring for the district, because of the process the superintendent has taken to seek input from us." — SPPS Staff Member

"My hope as a staff member is that it goes through and we see the accountability throughout to make the plan happen." — SPPS Staff Member

"I would prioritize stronger alignment between central office guidance and school-level implementation... clear, non-negotiable expectations, supported by sustained professional learning and coaching." — SPPS Community Member

"I believe all the voices have been included and integrated into the plan — inclusion, infrastructure, and equity." — SPPS Parent

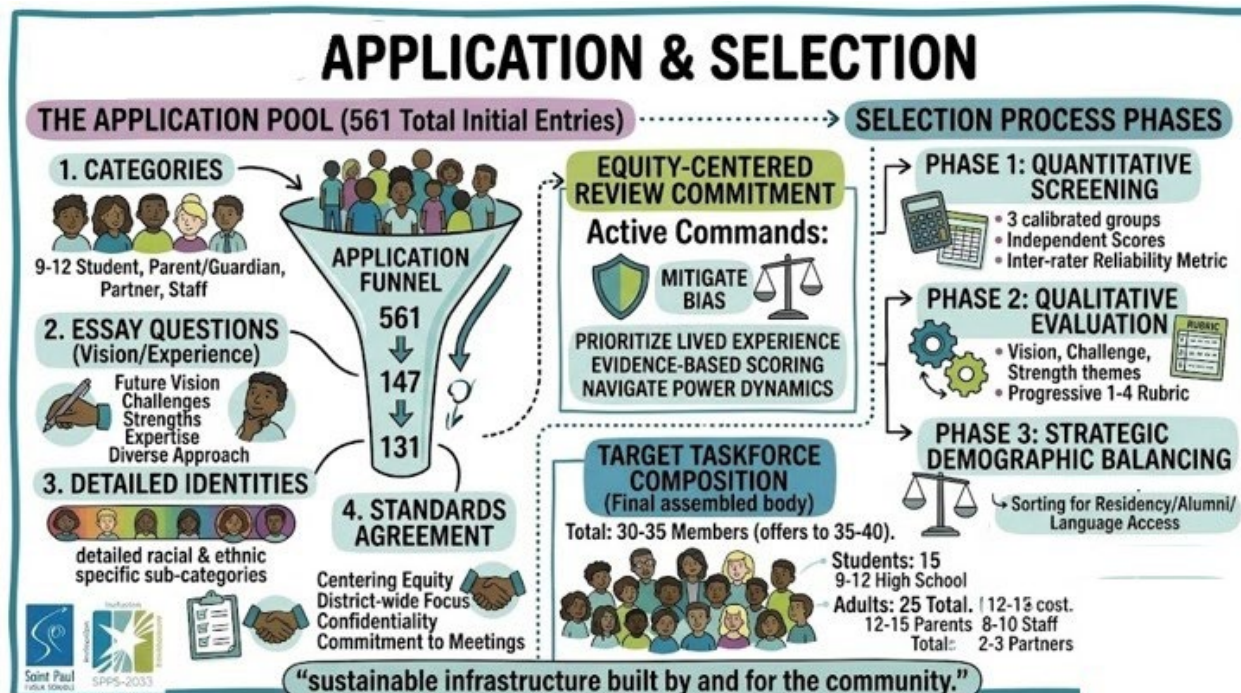
"Now that we're in the groove... I have time to really think about this and what it means. I would have been open to having additional time." — SPPS Parent

"Everything we did was phenomenal, the circle, the community building, the discussions. It's just that we need more time to do it." — SPPS Parent

"It would be great if there is also a task force group to monitor the implementation, to ensure that every priority is being implemented properly." — SPPS Staff Member

"It would be nice...getting it out there so that the public also has an opportunity to see it before the school board is voting on it." — SPPS Staff Member

3 APPLICATION



The application process for the Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) 2033 Strategic Plan Advisory Taskforce was designed to select a balanced team of 15-25 adults and 10-15 high school students to inform the district's strategic direction. The process involved several key components designed to identify candidates with the necessary expertise and commitment to equity.

Applicants were required to provide detailed information across several categories:

- **Contact and Personal Information:** Standard contact details, including name, phone number, and email address.
- **Narrative/Essay Questions:** Applicants answered six specific questions focused on their vision and experience:
- **Future Vision:** Identifying three critical skills students need for success after graduation.
- **Critical Challenges:** Identifying the greatest issues the district must address over the next six years.
- **District Strengths:** Highlighting what the district does best and how to build on it.
- **Community Representation:** Explaining which communities they would engage with and how they would ensure those voices are heard.
- **Relevant Expertise:** Detailing professional or personal experiences (e.g., finance, facilities, social-emotional learning, data analysis).
- **Collaborative Approach:** Describing a past experience working with a group holding diverse ideas to make a decision.

To ensure a team representative of the district's diversity, the application asked for detailed racial and ethnic identities, including sub-categories for American Indian/Native American, Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and White identities.

Applicants also identified their role as a student (grades 9-12), parent/guardian, community/business partner, or staff member, providing specifics like school site, years of experience, or number of children in the district.

Last, candidates had to agree to several procedural and ethical standards, including:

- A firm commitment to centering equity and the success of all SPPS students.
- A dedication to making decisions for the whole district rather than personal or departmental interests.
- Willingness to engage community networks and maintain taskforce confidentiality.
- The ability to attend meetings between February and July 2026.

The application deadline was Friday, January 16, 2026.

4 SELECTION

STRATEGIC VISION FOR COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

The selection process was designed to ensure that the taskforce was not merely "diverse" in name but inclusive in reality, specifically lifting up voices most impacted by district policies. This approach follows the philosophy of D. Richler: "Inclusion is not a strategy to help people fit into the systems and structures which exist in our societies. It is about transforming those systems and structures to make it better for everyone." The Selection Committee anchored its work in a formal "Equity Commitment for Selection," executing the following active commands:

- **Practice Self-Reflection:** Members reflected on personal identities and potential biases to mitigate subjectivity during evaluation.
- **Prioritize Lived Experience:** The committee intentionally centered the perspectives of historically underserved communities.
- **Evidence-Based Scoring:** Evaluations were strictly tied to rubric-aligned evidence, disregarding an applicant's positional power or personal familiarity.
- **Navigate Power Dynamics:** The committee held space for differing perspectives, ensuring shared power in final decision-making.

This framework ensured that the transition from a broad application pool to a concentrated taskforce was governed by values, not just volume.

3. Application Funnel and Quantitative Analysis (Phase 1)

To manage the high volume of community interest while maintaining institutional accountability, the district implemented a rigorous multi-phase screening process. The "Application Funnel" demonstrates the scale of this engagement:

Category	Total Entries
Total Initial Applications	561
Completed by Deadline	147
Completed with Full Data Included	131

Scoring Procedures and Inter-Rater Reliability To ensure procedural justice and mitigate rater bias, the 131 data-complete applications underwent a calibrated evaluation. The Selection Committee was divided into three groups to provide deep focus on specific applicant subsets:

Each applicant received four independent scores based on a 96-point total scale. The "Results Methodology" utilized a "Total Average" and a "Reliability Metric" (calculated by agreement vs. disagreement). To qualify as a finalist, an applicant generally required a total score exceeding 40% of the possible points (38.4/96) and an inter-rater reliability metric above 0.5. This high-reliability approach ensures that the finalists were selected through a consistent and defensible methodology.

4. Qualitative Evaluation Criteria and Rubric Standards

The qualitative scoring phase was designed to identify candidates with a visionary understanding of the district's challenges. The committee evaluated responses against a rubric progressing from "1-Limited" to "4-Exemplary."

Rubric Precision for the "Vision" Standard:

- **3-Proficient:** The candidate connects three future skills to local needs and identifies a specific, nuanced application of those skills for post-graduation life.
- **4-Exemplary:** The candidate offers a visionary look at student success, identifying at least three specific skills within a well-developed, holistic vision for the future.

5. Phase 2: Strategic Demographic Balancing and Final Representation

Phase 2 moved beyond individual scores to the strategic assembly of a representative body.

Finalist Pool Analysis (77 Total Candidates): Beyond racial data, the committee analyzed the finalist pool for variables critical to local representation:

- St. Paul Residency: 56 finalists
- SPPS Alumni: 28 finalists
- Language Access (Multi-lingual): 20 finalists

The Parent Selection Protocol To select the final 15 parents from the 47 parent finalists, the committee employed a rigorous three-variable sorting protocol. The committee first sorted candidates based on a prioritized order of residency, alumni status, and language access. Once this initial sort was completed, the committee conducted a final racial/ethnic balance check to ensure the taskforce exceeded the district's diversity targets before finalizing the roster.

5 MEETINGS

The Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) 2033 Strategic Plan Advisory Taskforce held seven meetings between February and May 2026 to guide the district's seven-year strategic direction. Most meetings began in circle; a process to establish equity in the meeting, create and sustain community and foster connection.

5.1 FEBRUARY 5, 2026: ORIENTATION AND FOUNDATION

This inaugural virtual meeting focused on introducing members to their roles and the foundational tools for equity work.

- **Equity Tools:** The **Dignity Index** (an eight-point scale for interactions) and Equity Standards (frameworks for inclusive environments) were introduced to guide taskforce discussions.
- **District Overview:** Superintendent Stanley provided a comprehensive look at SPPS demographics—noting its 33,000+ students and 77% students of color—and shared findings from her 100-Day Entry Plan, which identified key areas like literacy and achievement disparities.
- **Roles:** Members discussed their advisory responsibilities, which included reviewing community input and advising on success metrics.

5.2 FEBRUARY 6, 2026: STAKEHOLDERS AND RISKS

The second virtual meeting used interactive activities to deepen the group's understanding of the district's complex ecosystem.

- **Identity Work:** Members explored how their intersecting social identities (race, gender, age, etc.) influence their perspectives on the taskforce.
- **Stakeholder Analysis:** Groups examined how different "interest holders"—including students, parents, and business partners—view and judge the district's performance.
- **TRIZ Activity:** To avoid common pitfalls, the taskforce listed actions that would lead to the "worst result imaginable" for a strategic plan (e.g., working in silos or ignoring diverse voices) and discussed how to prevent them.

5.3 FEBRUARY 26, 2026: IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES (THE "HURRICANE")

Transitioning to in-person meetings, the taskforce began analyzing data related to ten key topic areas.

- **SOAR Stations:** Using a "Hurricane" rotation protocol, members reviewed the Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) for topics like Literacy Consistency and Special Education Programming.
- **Feedback:** Participants provided detailed "Post-it" feedback, raising questions about teacher training, the effectiveness of Tier II interventions, and addressing biases in discipline practices.

5.4 MARCH 25, 2026: ARTICULATING STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

This meeting focused on refining the data from the previous session into formal "Strategic Challenge" statements.

- **Defining Challenges:** A challenge was defined as a complex, system-level issue requiring a strategic response, rather than an isolated problem.
- **Drafting Statements:** Groups crafted statements for each key topic.

5.5 APRIL 2, 2026: VISIONING FOR 2034

The taskforce shifted its focus toward the long-term future and finalized the foundational challenges for the action teams.

- **Challenge Finalization:** Challenge statements were completed to serve as a "mirror" for the action teams developing specific strategies.
- **SPPS 2034 Vision:** Members envisioned the district's status in eight years, setting goals such as the highest graduation rates in the state, grade-level literacy for all, and a deep sense of belonging for students and staff.
- **Minimum Specifications:** The group identified non-negotiable priorities for the plan, including literacy improvement and a significant reduction in the achievement gap.

5.6 MAY 7, 2026: STRATEGY CONSULTANCIES

This meeting involved direct collaboration with the Strategy Formation Action Teams.

- **Consultancy Protocol:** Using a formal feedback protocol, taskforce members acted as consultants for the action teams, asking clarifying questions and discussing draft strategies in the "third person" to help authors identify gaps or cultural barriers.
- **Strategy Review:** Feedback was provided on proposed strategies for nine key topics.

5.7 MAY 28, 2026: FINAL PROPOSALS AND NEXT STEPS

The final meeting was dedicated to reviewing the refined strategy proposals and reflecting on the taskforce's journey.

- **Final Proposal Review:** Members reviewed the finalized objectives and implementation plans in small groups, noting areas of satisfaction or remaining skepticism.
- **Reflections:** Participants shared individual reflections on their experience and contributed to the Advisory Taskforce Final Report.
- **The Road Ahead:** The meeting concluded with an overview of the approval timeline, leading toward Board of Education adoption in August 2026.

6 OUTPUT

5.2 VISION OF SUCCESS 2033



6.1 STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

Stakeholders were identified and analyzed through a systematic process called Stakeholder Analysis, which the taskforce defined as examining how various individuals and groups view, judge, and influence the district. The taskforce defined a stakeholder as *any individual, group, or organization with a vested interest*

in the success of the educational system.

Table. Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Criteria	
Elementary Students	• Am I engaged? • Bus ride • Do I feel seen? • Do I feel supported enough? • Does my teacher like me? • Familiarity/close to home • Favorite Subjects • Feelings • Friends Environment	• Fun • Is it challenging enough for me? • Lunch • Recess • Resources • Sense of belonging • Sense of safety • Siblings went there
Secondary Students	• AP and honors classes • College & career readiness • Electives/fun things • Extracurriculars • Friends in their courses • General excitement of being given a higher degree of freedom • Mental Health supports	• More responsibility with the freedom • Options for online, PSEO, internship • Safety - emotional and physical • Skilled and adaptive staff • Teachers with expertise • Transportation
Multilingual Students	• Am I being understood? • A culture in a high school that allows for more autonomy from a	• Connections (family liaisons) • Does my teacher care about me? • Diversity, representation

Stakeholder	Criteria	
	- more focused and structured immersion school system? - Can I get my needs met? - Can the teacher and students communicate with me, and can I communicate with them?	- Equity reputation - Resources for me to thrive and maintain my culture and languages? - Skilled and adaptive staff - Translation
Special Education Students	- Are my needs being met? - Do I have a team to support me - Do I know who can help me? - Equity reputation - How do the students feel they are being viewed by peers? Staff?	- Will they get their needs met? - Inclusive environment - Resources - Separate spaces Do I feel supported enough? - Skilled and adaptive staff - Will I be able to do my work/understand the content...?
Elementary Teachers	- Class size - Classroom resources - Climate and school culture - Do I feel supported? - Do I know how systems work (building, district)? - Do I know who can support me? - Do I like the culture of my school?	- Experience with parents and community. - Good leadership (top and across) - Is my leader competent? - Pay - Specialists - Team work ethic - Workload
Secondary Teachers	- Classroom size - Classroom support - Climate and school culture - College & career - Community involvement - Does the curriculum provided agree with my expectations for the class I am teaching?	- Good leadership (top and across) - Independence and flexibility - Pay - Resources to be able to teach my classes? - Team work ethic Reputation of schools - Workload
MLL Teachers	- Academic Support options - Additional resources to support ensure my students learn to read & write in English? - Classroom size - Climate & school culture	- Do teachers have the resources they need to support my students? - Good leadership (top and across) - Pay - Workload
Special Education Teachers	- Academic Support options - Classroom size - Climate & school culture - Do teachers have the resources they need to support students?	- Good leadership (top and across) - Pay - Support for paperwork & IEP writing - Workload
Counselor Social Worker	- Can I find support for students. - Climate & school culture	- Pay - Student to counselor/social worker ratio
TAs & EAs	- Am I seen as a valuable member of the teaching profession? - Climate & school culture - Good leadership (top & across)	- How do I collaborate with teachers to support students? - Pay, benefits, Workload - Respect - am I heard?
Principals	- Climate & school culture - Community involvement - District support - How can I work with SPPS to make my school as productive as possible?	- Is my infrastructure adequate /conductive for the kind of programming we have? - Pay - What classes will I have to cut and what can I keep when considering funding - What other equity considerations do I need or advocate for to provide the best
Elementary Parents	- Climate and school culture - Community involvement/support	Opportunities for engagement

Stakeholder	Criteria	
	continuity/experience	School size/Class size Skilled and adaptive staff
Secondary Parents	- AP and honors classes - electives/fun things - Graduation rates - Skilled & adaptive staff - Climate & school culture - Community involvement/support	- Continuity/experience - Does my child feel connected to at least ONE adult in the building - Does the school consider the unique needs of my child? - Encouraging students to exercise autonomy with their peers
Community group	- How hard is it to get into the school? - Is there support?	

6.2 STRATEGIC CHALLENGE

Strategic challenges were developed through a multi-step process of data analysis, community feedback, and collaborative refinement that spanned several months. The taskforce defined a strategic challenge as *a complex, system-level issue that reflects inequities or misalignments across the organization and cannot be solved by isolated actions*.

The development of these challenges was grounded in three primary sources of information:

The Superintendent's 100-Day Report: This provided initial insights from intensive listening sessions with students, families, and staff.

SOAR Analysis: This framework (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) was applied to the nine key areas identified in the 100-day report to create a roadmap for improvement.

Community Engagement Summaries: Input gathered from virtual community meetings held in five languages informed the perceived barriers and successes within the district.

During the February 26 meeting, the taskforce utilized a hurricane station rotation to begin synthesizing data. Members rotated through stations dedicated to the key topics (such as Literacy, Special Education, and Resource Allocation) and were prompted to respond to two sets of questions:

WHAT?: Identifying the core challenge and noticing specific trends in the data.

So WHAT?: Analyzing why the challenge was important, identifying who was impacted most, and recognizing what patterns or assumptions emerged.

Taskforce members provided feedback via Post-it notes, raising questions about issues like teacher training, instructional consistency, and systemic biases.

At the March 25 meeting, the groups revisited the key topics to formalize their challenge statements. They combined the previous feedback with their own interpretations of the data to determine a single, comprehensive "challenge" for each area. During this phase, they utilized additional prompts:

Final revisions to the challenge statements were completed during the April 2 meeting. These finalized statements were intended to serve as a "mirror" for the Strategy Formation Action Teams.

The Action Teams used these challenges as the starting point for developing the specific strategies and implementation plans that would eventually form the core of the SPPS 2033 Strategic Plan.

Table. Strategic Challenges

Key Topic	Strategic Challenge
Achievement Gap & Academic Acceleration	Persistent disparities in student achievement reflect deeper systemic inequities in instructional practices, student engagement, and expectations for learning. A misalignment between equitable supports and instructional rigor—combined with overreliance on compliance-based or technology-mediated learning—limits authentic skill development and critical thinking. This challenge spans curriculum, pedagogy, relationships, technology use, and student identity, resulting in varied learning experiences and outcomes across student groups.
Continuous Improvement	Fragmented improvement frameworks prevent the district from leveraging data for strategic action. This disconnect between funding and actual needs causes operational instability across all schools. Because decision making and resource allocation often fail to align with evolving student requirements, stakeholders experience significant inconsistency in the timing and execution of change. These systemic gaps in leadership and data usage ultimately limit the district’s ability to respond equitably and effectively over time.
Literacy Consistency & Coherence	We aim to ensure all students can read at grade levels with results that are consistent across every student group. Teachers and collaborators need the right training, resources, and support to implement the curriculum with fidelity. A strong multi-tiered system of support allows teachers to differentiate instruction and achieve equitable outcomes.
Special Education Programming Enhancement	Special education programming is characterized by systemic misalignment across individualized student needs, family engagement, service delivery, and available resources. Inconsistent implementation of services, barriers to sustained parent partnership, and stigma experienced by students create inequitable access to high-quality supports and sense of belonging. These challenges often begin when initiating services, spanning instructional practices, staffing capacity, resource allocation, and school culture, resulting in varied experiences and outcomes for students and families.
Language Access & Family Engagement	There is a systemic gap in accessible forms of communication, as well as its consistency and clarity between schools and families, especially multilingual families. Language access, frequency of engagement, clarity of school expectations, and style of communication have been unfairly implemented, limiting families’ ability to support student learning. In addition, lack of consistent information about accessible resources causes the families who need help to remain unaware of the resources available. This challenge spans communication systems, staffing, cultural responsiveness, and resource allocation, resulting in disconnection between home and school and inequitable family engagement.
Discipline & Belonging	To foster a genuine culture of belonging, we must address the systemic inconsistencies in how discipline and behavior - consequences are applied. Our current efforts are strained by shortages that compromise the quality of decision -making, as well as instances of staff unprofessionalism that erode trust. We advocate for a centralized code of conduct for educators to ensure accountability and a shift toward a discipline model defined by objective fairness and equity rather than personal relationships or social influence.
Staff Retention & Recruitment	The challenge is creating equitable systems in HR, teacher support pathways, and building culture that reaches a wide range of educator, and provide consistent support holds everyone accountable, lifts the voices of educators and data, and lead to less teacher burnout and better teacher mental wellness. Staff experience uneven levels of support, accountability, and voice, which contributes to burnout and turnover.
Marketing & Enrollment	The district faces a complex and competitive enrollment landscape due to the increase of private and charter schools. This challenge is exacerbated by an unclear value proposition, a lack of strategic marketing strategies, and enrollment systems and tools that are challenging to navigate. This results in families experiencing uneven access to information and decision-making supports. This challenge spans communications, systems coherence, resource investment, and community trust, leading to inequitable enrollment patterns and uncertainty in strategic direction.

6.3 VISION OF SUCCESS FOR 2033

The taskforce identified minimum specifications, *non-negotiable priorities that must be met for the plan to be considered successful. If these things are not addressed, included and prioritized in the plan, SPPS will be unable to achieve the visions articulated below.* (not in order of importance):

- ✓ ALL students considered
- ✓ Literacy improvement - reading comprehension
- ✓ Reduction of achievement gap
- ✓ District and community together - involvement
- ✓ Strong staff - Highly qualified educators
- ✓ A strong sense of belonging

6.3.1 VISION #1

We envision:

All students for St. Paul graduate at grade-level literacy with recognition in multiple languages channeling the very diverse and culturally rich communities to reduce the achievement gap, create a strong sense of belonging, and prepare students for lifelong success through new leadership models and staples that are outside of the box and lead to systems of collaboration to bring departments, schools and communities together.

6.3.2 VISION #2

- ✓ Highest graduation rate in the state
- ✓ Highest test scores statewide
- ✓ Highest # of students in National Honor Society
- ✓ Fully staffed and the most desired district to send kids and work in
- ✓ Put the needs of our students and families first while working with highly qualified educators and staff
- ✓ Finally get state and feds to fully fund education programs
- ✓ Sense of belonging, strong community partnerships honoring diversity, equity and inclusion
- ✓ Celebrate and believe in all students and hold them to highest standards

6.3.3 VISION #3

- ✓ Community feels listened to by SPPS
- ✓ Strong staff that reflects student body
- ✓ Improved attendance, graduation rates
- ✓ Improved opinion of the district by students
- ✓ Improved sense of belonging by students
- ✓ Reading comprehension at grade level

6.4 STRATEGY FEEDBACK

The May 7, 2026, consultancy was a formal collaborative session where the Strategic Plan Advisory Taskforce and served as consultants to the Strategy Formation Action Teams. The primary goals were to help participants identify key system-level challenges and use diverse perspectives to reflect on the strategies being developed for the SPPS 2033 plan.

Each taskforce member participated in two consultancies. The consultancy focused on nine key topics.

The consultancy followed a protocol designed to ensure respectful and thoughtful learning. The roles included "Authors" (Action Team members presenting strategies), "Facilitators," and "Consultants" (Taskforce members and students). The 50-minute process for each round included:

Overview (8 minutes): Authors presented the challenge, research, and proposed strategies, ending with framing questions.

Clarifying Questions (7 minutes): Consultants asked brief, factual questions to understand the "nuts and bolts" of the plan.

Review and Note-taking (10 minutes): Consultants reviewed materials and identified potential gaps.

Third-Person Discussion (15 minutes): The author "pushed away from the table" to listen as consultants discussed the content amongst themselves, referring to the author only in the third person to encourage objective critique.

Reflective Response (5 minutes): Authors shared their thoughts on the discussion and identified key takeaways for revision.

Key feedback from the sessions included:

- defining "rigor" as the depth of learning rather than just making work harder. Students emphasized the need for visual learning, modeling, and independent work to accommodate different learning styles.
- questions about how to hold staff accountable for equitable outcomes, specifically regarding tenured teachers and the need for consistent support to retain teachers of color.
- a strong call for "relational accountability," bridging the gap between home and school so parents are empowered as partners in their children's academic success.
- the importance of early childhood learning and ensuring students are taught foundational skills correctly from the start.
- a shift toward a culture of learning rather than a culture focused solely on grades, noting that high-pressure grading can lead students to prioritize passing over actual understanding.

The feedback gathered was used by the Action Teams to refine their final strategy proposals due on May 15, which were later reviewed by the Taskforce on May 28.

6.5 FINAL PROPOSAL REVIEW

The Final Proposal Review took place during the seventh and final meeting of the Advisory Taskforce on May 28, 2026. This session served as the culminating review of the refined strategies developed for the SPPS 2033 Strategic Plan.

Taskforce members worked in pairs and trios to examine the finalized documents produced by the Strategy Formation Action Teams. The materials for review included:

- Action Team Proposals: These were the objectives, strategies, and implementation plans finalized on May 15, 2026, which integrated feedback previously provided during the May 5-7 consultancies.
- Community Feedback: Members reviewed notes and data from a May 12 community engagement session, where 115 participants used a "stoplight" system (green, yellow, and red dots) to indicate their level of support for specific strategies.
- The Review Protocol

The taskforce was asked to provide focused feedback on each proposal by answering three specific prompts:

- "We are satisfied that..."
- "We are curious about..."
- "We are skeptical of..."

The review yielded a mix of approval and critical skepticism regarding the following:

- Some members expressed skepticism, noting that proposed strategies felt "traditional" and had been "the same for the last 20 years," making them difficult to carry out effectively. There were calls for more specificity on what "high-quality instruction" looks like in practice and how to hold teachers accountable for the achievement gap without placing the blame on students.
- Members questioned what "rigor" meant, advocating for "depth of learning" rather than just more difficult work. Students emphasized the need for visual and diverse learning styles to be integrated into daily instruction.
- Some members noting that plans often failed to include accountability for familial support or parent engagement. There was also specific concern regarding how students—particularly Black boys—would be supported to catch up after missing class due to suspensions.
- The need for equitable resources regardless of zip code and warned against "one-size-fits-all" approaches that ignore individual student needs.

The feedback from this review was intended to inform the final plan completion.