



Sixtimes

The Official Newsletter of Special School District No. 6



SPRING 2022

Inside this edition: What I Need Wednesday Success, District Financial Update, High School Athletic Honors, and more SSPPS news.



WELCOME NEW SUPERINTENDENT, DR. BRIAN ZAMBRENO!

I am honored to be the new superintendent of South St. Paul Public Schools and I'm excited to partner with our amazing students, staff, families and community to drive SSPPS forward. During my first few weeks, it has been very clear to me the strong commitment our entire community has for our district's mission of *igniting a passion in every learner to inquire, continuously improve, and engage in positively changing our world.*

I currently live in St. Paul with my wife, Karina, who is a 6th grade science teacher. We have three wonderful children. Our family loves spending time traveling together as a family, going on family bike rides, and splashing in the lake when the weather is warm.

As Superintendent, I place a high value on education. I have degrees from the University of Minnesota, Hamline University, the University of St. Thomas, and St. Mary's University of Minnesota. My goal is to support all students toward post-secondary education of all types. We know each learner is unique, so we will prioritize supporting our students to be well-prepared for whatever direction they choose to take after graduating from SSPPS.

I started my career in Minneapolis Public Schools as a high school Special Education Resource Teacher. In that role, I supported students receiving services for several different disability designations. I was also a high school English as a Second Language teacher in Minneapolis and St. Paul Public Schools. In both districts I worked with new-to-country students from all across the globe, many of whom were refugees. In all of my teaching assignments I feel I learned as much from my students as I was ever able to teach them.

As an administrator, I was an assistant principal at the elementary and middle levels in St. Paul Public Schools and spent 8 years as principal of Richfield Middle School. Most recently I was an associate superintendent for Minneapolis Public Schools. In this role I had the privilege of supporting over 30 different schools with students from pre-kindergarten through graduation.

We are at a unique point in time for SSPPS and our broader community. We are transitioning leadership within the district and looking at what we all hope may finally be the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our staff and students have navigated yet another unique school year and have shown their resilience in the face of uncertainty, something we should all be proud of.



Dr. Brian Zambreno

As we look to future, it is my plan to collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to ensure for the effective and efficient operation of our district and to provide all students with a world class education. I look forward to meeting with staff, students, families, and community members in the near future to hear everyone's hope and dreams for South St. Paul Public Schools.

- Dr. Brian Zambreno

DR. ZAMBRENO'S ENTRY PLAN ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Work with the Board of Education to establish lines of communication and clearly defined responsibilities built on mutual trust and respect.
- 2 Learn from stakeholders about the history of SSPPS and the identified strengths, challenges, and areas of improvement related to meeting the needs of all learners.
- 3 Gain an understanding of our district's systems, structures, and key initiatives.
- 4 Prepare for year-end activities including budget, staffing, and closeout activities at each of our sites.
- 5 Work with the Board of Education to establish goals for the 2022-2023 school year that will keep driving SSPPS forward.

A LOOK BACK AT DR. DAVE WEBB'S 12 YEARS AT SOUTH ST. PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This past fall, Dr. Dave Webb made the decision to retire as Superintendent of South St. Paul Public Schools. Having made the announcement early in the school year, the SSP School Board had more time to search for our next Superintendent.

Shortly after the announcement that Dr. Zambreno would take over as the next SSPPS Superintendent, Dr. Webb made the tough decision to move his retirement to an earlier date. Due to family health circumstances, the School Board approved the change to March 18, 2022.

Dr. Webb says, "I have great appreciation for the support I received from the community during my 12 years here in SSP. While I look forward to spending more time with my family and all that retirement has to offer, it truly has been an honor to serve such a wonderful school district and I will cherish my time working with you as your Superintendent."



"South St. Paul Public Schools will always hold a special place in my heart and I will always be a Packer."



Dr. Dave Webb

DR. WEBB'S TOP 5 PROUDEST THINGS WE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER

1. 12 years of working together, in partnership, to accomplish great things for SSP kids
2. Together, our community passed a construction bond, learning levy, and tech levy.
3. Together, we added teacher collaborative learning and planning time by expanding the ATPPS program
4. Together, with our TriDistrict Schools, we have first class Career Pathways Programs for SSP kids
5. The years of preparation of our district, technologically, prior to the pandemic, and the incredible work our staff throughout the pandemic

STAY CONNECTED!



DISTRICT FINANCIAL NEWS

ONE TIME FUNDING HELPS SUPPORT STUDENTS AND FAMILIES AS RESULT OF COVID PANDEMIC

The spring of 2020 brought unprecedented changes to our society and educational system. On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act was signed into law bringing \$1.3 billion to school districts across Minnesota. These funds, known as ESSER funds, are one-time use to be spent over a three-year period to help districts safely reopen and sustain safe operations, and address the impact of the COVID pandemic on our students. South St. Paul Public Schools (SSPPS) used some of these funds over the past year on efforts to keep our schools open safely.

To help prioritize the remaining ESSER funds, the district completed a comprehensive engagement to solicit insight and input from students, families, staff, and the community on the impact of the COVID pandemic.

Based on the data collected the following common trends emerged:

- Need for enhanced mental/social/emotional health, social interaction/motivation
- Need for individualized instruction/more adults per student
- Need for family support/parenting/engagement

As SSPPS works through the challenges of insufficient state and federal funding, declining student enrollment, and other increased costs, these one-time ESSER dollars will help us lessen those budget burdens and address the clearly articulated needs of our students, families and staff a result of the COVID pandemic.

Our ESSER spending priorities include:

- Expanding mental/chemical and social/emotional health supports
- Maintaining low class sizes for more individualized instruction
- Enhancing our school year with innovative learning opportunities

Our planning priorities include:

- Creating conditions for positive social interactions for our students and families
- New engagement ideas and parenting support for families
- Collaboration with our community partners to better support all families

SCAN QR CODE FOR MORE ON THE ESSER FUNDING AND STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH SSPPS FINANCIAL NEWS.



SSPPS REFUNDS BONDS SAVING TAXPAYERS DOLLARS

South St. Paul Public Schools issued more than \$12.6 million of refunding bonds that will reduce the amount of taxes paid by South St. Paul property owners. Refunding bonds are similar to refinancing a home mortgage. The district can take advantage of lower interest rates to reduce the amount of interest paid on the district's debt. It is not a savings to the school district, but rather a reduction in the annual tax levies. This means the savings are passed on to SSP property tax payers. The overall savings for residents will total \$1.8 million over the next seven years.

SSP COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMMING

SSP Community Education is excited to be housed at Central Square Community Center. After a successful fall season, Community Education has expanded programming for the winter/spring and is planning exciting opportunities for the summer. Below are just a few of the exciting opportunities in the works.

Youth enrichment

- Arts & crafts
- Recreation
- Brain Building classes

Adult Enrichment

- Money & Finance
- Fitness classes
- Cooking/lifestyle class

SSP Senior Center

- Social Gatherings
- Trips
- Fitness Classes

Keep an eye on your mailbox for the summer programming catalog for both Community Education and Early Learning. Programs will be offered for all ages birth through adult.



PACKER PLUS: WIN WEDNESDAY

SSPPS SEES DECREASE IN FAILING GRADES WITH WHAT I NEED (WIN) WEDNESDAYS

At the start of the 2021-22 school year, South St. Paul Secondary staff decided they needed to think outside the box to help students academically. The past way of intervening when a student began to fall behind wasn't working; add in more than a year of learning model shifts, the amount of students failing one class or more was beginning to grow.

In the summer of 2021, the High School team worked on developing a plan that would:

- Incentivize students to get good grades
- Help struggling learners in a timely fashion
- Allow students to have input into what they need to be successful

Packer Plus: "What I Need" Wednesday

On What I Need Wednesday (WIN), students with a C- attend school. It is not a day off for students who have a C or higher in their classes, instead it gives them the incentive of choosing whether they want to complete their work at home or in school. Additionally, school begins about two hours later on WIN Wednesdays. This extra time in the morning is used for staff to meet in teams, collaborate, and work on BARR strategies to help students who are falling behind. The later start still allows all students to be bussed if needed and receive both breakfast and lunch at school.

What he says he didn't expect was the culture shift they have begun to create. "Students are beginning to think of a C- as the new F," Ochocki says, "I had a student say, 'look I'm even failing physics now' and when I walked by and looked over his shoulder I said, 'hey you have a C-' and he responded, 'Might as well be an F.'" He also says they saw a decreasing number of students that HAD to come throughout the semester, but saw attendance go up because students appreciated the extra help and support they received from teachers.

Feedback from students and families has been positive. Nate, a sophomore at SSP, says he likes the program because, "It gives me a chance to catch my breath and make sure my school work is on track." He goes on to say, "When I come into school, teachers are asking if I need help because they want us to be successful. There is a real incentive to do well at school." SSP Junior, Aalyah, says, "I really like Packer Plus: What I Need Wednesday because you can focus with the teachers when you come into school, get direct help, and not get behind in your work. I hope WIN Wednesday never goes away!"

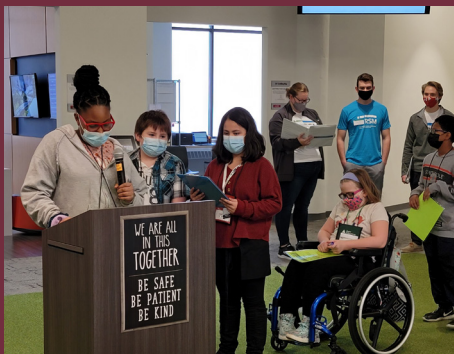
It gives me a chance to catch my breath and make sure my school work is on track.
- Nate, SSP Sophomore



Staff collaborates Wednesday mornings

School board member John Raasch shared the positive impact it has had on his household. John says, "It's teaching kids, even the ones doing well, time management. High school is a lot of supervised work and that is not what life after high school looks like. Giving students a taste of that early on, while they are still being supervised in the safety net of parents

SIXTH GRADERS VISIT BIZTOWN



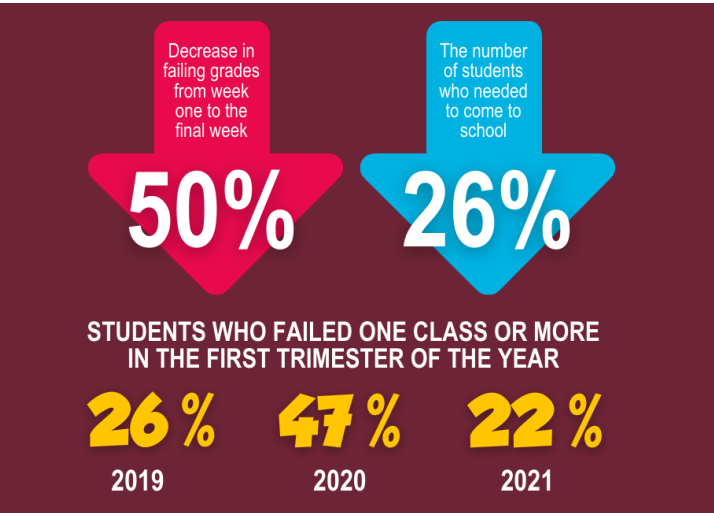
Sixth Grade students had the chance to run their own community for a day with the annual trip to BizTown. JA BizTown is a simulated city located in St. Paul. Students prepare over several days to become adults at the experimental learning lab. Students learn what it takes to run a successful business, to manage their own money, and work as a team. Through lessons and hands-on activities students see first-hand how their studies can be applied to the "real world." Leading up to the trip, students applied and interviewed for jobs and the business CEOs and CFOs prepared to lead their businesses for a day.

and teachers, will benefit all of our kids.”

Ochocki also received emails from parents who say at first they were skeptical, but after seeing the impact it has made they support it continuing. One parent wrote, “Wednesdays have not been “days off” for her, but rather time she knows she will be able to do some extra studying, go in and get help in a class, take a quiz or test that was missed [due to COVID]. It also provides her with time to take care of her mental health by just slowing down for a day and having TIME for herself.”

Principal Ochocki says the school has been receiving emails and calls across the country. Ochocki says, “There are schools asking us what we did and how we did it. Now that we have the data to back it up and are beginning to share it, people are asking more questions.” WIN Wednesdays will continue to shift and evolve as more feedback and statistics are gathered.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ THE FULL STORY AND WATCH THE KARE 11 NEWS REPORT ON WIN WEDNESDAY



PACKER ATHLETICS AND ACTIVITIES NEWS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR’S TRIPLE ‘A’ AWARD RECIPIENTS!

This year’s Triple ‘A’ Award winners are Macey E. and Jacob R.! The Triple ‘A’ Award recognizes senior students who excel in Academics, Arts, and Athletics. Each school in the State nominates one senior male and female for this award. This award was created in 1988 to honor high school students for their achievements in the classroom, the arts, and athletics. To qualify for the award, students must:

- Be a senior at the time of nomination
- Have a 3.0 or higher grade point average
- Participate in a League-sponsored program and fine arts activity
- Be respected citizens in their community



CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR’S ATHENA AWARD WINNER!

Congratulations to Abby R. for being named the 2022 Athena Award Recipient for South St. Paul Secondary School. The Athena Award is given to an outstanding female senior athlete from each private and public high school in the metropolitan area.



ALL-CONFERENCE ACADEMIC HONORS

Congratulations to the fall and winter teams that achieved greatness both in the game and in the classroom. These teams earned All-Conference Academic Honors this past fall and winter:

FALL

- Girls Tennis
- Girls Swimming
- Girls Soccer

WINTER

- Wrestling
- Gymnastics
- Dance Team



SNACK CART GIVES STUDENTS HANDS ON LEARNING AND WORK EXPERIENCE

Kaposia Education Center Special Education students are getting hands on learning and work experience with the snack cart. Each Friday the students prepare the snack carts and visit each classroom to offer the teachers and staff a snack for the day. Students practice communication skills, counting money, keeping an inventory, work ethic, and responsibility.



WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

Lincoln Center Students in the S.U.N. Program (Students with Unique Needs) celebrated their friends with Down Syndrome on World Down Syndrome Day, March 21. The idea of World Down Syndrome Day is to bring awareness to what the genetic disorder is and bring inclusivity for students with these unique needs. Lincoln Center Principal, Theresa Starkman says, “The staff here is just amazing, all of our teachers work hard to give the same educational experiences to all students.” To celebrate, teachers read a story to students about chromosomes and watched videos about what it means to have Down Syndrome. They were also treated to snacks, bubbles, and fun!



MYP PERSONAL PROJECTS FAIR

Personal Projects are the capstone to the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP). Students have the chance to explore an area of personal interest and show the skills they’ve learned in the five years of the MYP. Personal projects assess the student’s approaches to learning skills for self-management, research, communication, critical thinking, and collaboration. Each year the Personal Project Fair is held at the High School for students to show off their work to their peers, SSPPS staff, and families.





FREE TAKE ‘N BAKE MEALS
CENTRAL SQUARE AND MINNESOTA CENTRAL KITCHEN

South St. Paul Community Education has partnered with Minnesota Central Kitchen, an initiative of Second Harvest Heartland, to offer free take ‘n bake family dinners.

Meals serve around four people and are produced by local restaurants, caterers, and commercial kitchens. Ingredients and allergens are listed on the package and will change every time. Meals are fully prepared, you just need to warm them up before enjoying!

- WHO:** All SSP residents
WHAT: FREE meals either single serve or family style (serves 4)
WHERE: Central Square Community Center 100 7th Ave N, SSP
WHEN: Meals are delivered to CSCC every Monday. Meals can be picked up Mondays after 2:00 pm and available through Saturday at 12:30 pm while supplies last.



South St. Paul Public Schools
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sspps.org

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WORK FOR SOUTH ST. PAUL SCHOOLS!

SSPPS is always looking for great people to join our team.
We have openings for:

- Substitute Teachers
- Custodians
- Nutrition Services

Scan to view
our current job
opportunities



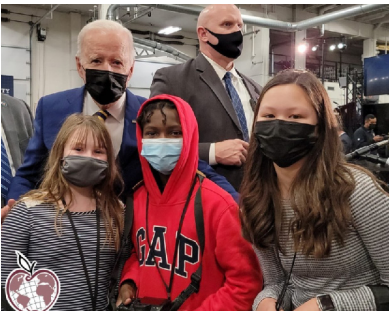
Follow our journey on social media:

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| | /SSPPS6 | #SSPpride |
| | @SSPPS6 | #SSPcares |
| | @SSPPS6 | #SSPlearns |



FOLLOW SSPPS ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO SEE WHAT’S HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS!

Three #SSPpride Middle School Jr Reporters documented history at President Biden’s speech in Rosemount. At the end they got the chance to ask him what his main priority for 2022 is. Thank you President Joe Biden for taking a minute to speak with our students! Read more about the experience here: <https://www.sspps.org>



#SSPpride high school students had the chance to meet with more than 50 Colleges and Universities at this year’s college fair held in the PAC Center. #SSPlearns



Congratulations to the winners of the “I Love to Read Month” bookmark contest at Kaposia! Way to go!! #SSPpride



The #SSPpride Black Pride Organization at the Secondary Building shares what Black History Month means to them, who inspires them, and what they hope to accomplish by sharing Black History Month with their Peers and Community. Read their story here: <https://www.sspps.org>



Kindergarten students district-wide celebrated 100 days of school! Some classes made hats and projects based on the number 100 and others dressed like they’re 100 years old! #SSPpride #SSPlearns



At the end of their IB journey, Diploma students complete a CAS (Creativity, Activity, Service) project. The projects are initiated and developed by the students themselves. This year, Kayla, Olivia, and Rylee made blankets for Vista Prairie Assisted Living Memory Care and visited with the residents. Thank you Vista Prairie for sharing this with us! #SSPpride



The Packer Girls Hockey Team ends the season with a Class A 4th place finish at State. Way to go girls! We are so proud of you! #SSPpride



Congratulations to the #SSPpride Boys Swimming Medley Relay Team of Steven, Daniel, Jon, and Colin for advancing to the MSHSL state tournament!



Students in Mrs. Roering’s class at Lincoln are finishing their PYP unit of justice and equity by advocating for changes they want to see at their school. It was a peaceful protest with all voices heard. Some of the examples of the changes were a pool, new drinks, and a French class! #SSPpride

