





Inside this edition: Virtual school options for 2021-22, how technology kept students learning this year, a new career and college readiness pathway, and more!



# MEETING THE ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS



# SOUTH ST. PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOLS BECOMES THE FIRST K-12 BARR SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE NATION

BARR is a strengths-based educational model providing schools with a comprehensive approach to meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students through the power of data and relationships. This year, thanks to a three-year grant from the Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation, South St. Paul Public Schools is expanding its reach of the Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) model district-wide.

For the last four years, the BARR model, in conjunction with the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program and a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework, has

positively impacted ninth- and tenth-graders. These programs work to build on the assets of students and reduce any risks that might become barriers to their learning. After three years of implementing the BARR model, South St. Paul High School's graduation rate experienced a 6.4 percent increase. Additionally, the percentage of ninth-graders with one or more F's decreased by 22.5% over the past year.

"[BARR] is not just another thing. This is the real thing," Kari Aanenson, humanities teacher at South St. Paul High School, said. "It's what everyone should be doing in their classrooms."

### FOCUSING ON THE WHOLE STUDENT



Teachers trained in the BARR framework know how important it is to check in on students' academic, social, emotional and physical wellbeing. Children bring their whole selves when they walk into a classroom. BARR educators recognize that when they focus on every dimension of a child's experience, each aspect influences the others.

"When you build relationships, you get to know the whole student," said BARR coach, Kjirsten Hanson, who's been working with South St. Paul for four years. "By knowing the whole student, you get a better idea of how to tailor the learning to meet each and every student's needs, including their emotional, social and academic needs."

"I had a student who was failing all of her classes. Instead of calling the parent right away, I ended up sending the kid a text," Aanenson said. "Then we talked on the phone. She just needed someone to push her and say they were proud of her. She needed that reassurance. Now she's passing all of her classes except one." cohorts where they can regularly check in on students' strengths and collaborate on how to connect with each student. Administrators and teachers also come together to develop strategies to address the risks students might have.

"The teachers talk to each other and get support from one another in a way that they hadn't before we implemented BARR in our building," said South St. Paul High School Assistant Principal Angie Ryter. "Just watching the growth and watching the change in adults has been really exciting."

### **REDUCING RISKS**

Risks, or barriers to learning, can be anything. It might include stressors or uncertainties due to the pandemic, trauma inside or outside of school, selfharm, relationships or even checking out of school. "With the pandemic right now, more kids might have more needs," Aanenson said. "We keep checking in and making sure kids are doing okay."

In addition to checking in, teachers are getting creative with the "I-Time" or "U-Time" lessons. The virtual experience might include some activities with visual components and could involve using some innovative technologies. Desirae Demmings and Elizabeth Zender, language arts teachers at South St. Paul High School, created Flipgrid videos, a video discussion technology, so students could respond to their peers' videos and engage that way. "We are trying to reduce their risks," Aanenson said. "We are trying to make sure kids become better humans and don't go down traps."

### **ROLLING OUT BARR DISTRICT-WIDE**

Staff and families throughout the district will learn more about the BARR model over the coming months. The roll out started slowly this year at Kaposia and Lincoln Center elementary schools and at SSP Middle School, grades 6-8. This ensures staff and students are well supported during the pandemic and while in distance learning.

"The BARR model matches well with all of the core programming that we believe is best for kids," Superintendent Dr. Webb explained. "We are excited to continue this work at the high school and reinforce our efforts across the district using this significant grant to support the work."

"We are so grateful to be the first K-12 BARR district in Minnesota," Chad Schmidt, director of learning at South St. Paul Public Schools, said. "BARR enhances so many things we are proud of here at the district: our equity work, creating multiple-tiered systems of support for kids and our International Baccalaureate programs. This system and structure builds on everything we are doing and gives us the tools we need to keep improving."

In that example, Aanenson was able to determine the child's emotional needs and meet them. By doing that, the child was able to engage in their schoolwork again.

### **BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS**

By putting relationships first, the BARR model allows students and teachers to connect more powerfully with each other. A key component of the BARR model is the weekly lessons focused on helping students learn and practice life skills. Called "I-Times" or "U-Times," these lessons focus on building skills in self-management, communication, social, research, or thinking; SSP staff, students and families recognize these as the International Baccalaureate Approaches to Learning skills. Some of these lessons might be around building empathy, handling grief, setting goals, and resolving barriers. The "I-Times" and "U-Times" are opportunities for each student to build stronger relationships with their peers and teachers by diving deeper into real-life problems and creating spaces where students can reflect.

It's not just the relationships that teachers and students have that matters. The relationships between teachers and administrators are also strengthened through BARR. Teachers join



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# A MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT **DAVE WEBB PACKER PROUD**

What a year it has been! Schools and families across the globe have been faced with one of the most challenging years of our lifetime. I am beyond proud of the incredible ways our students, staff, families, and SSP community have come together to support our students and one another. From the very first days of the pandemic:

- Our teachers have been remarkable at transitioning their classrooms from in-person learning to online.
- · Our families have been amazing as they juggle their work schedules to help support their student's online learning at home.
- Our community's support of the 2017 technology referendum along with our talented technology staff, has put SSPPS into position to serve our students and staff in an online environment.
- · Our food service and emergency care staff have been incredible in providing additional support to families through meal distribution and child care opportunities.
- · Our building and grounds staff have been exceptional in making sure our buildings are safe for students and staff.
- Our nursing staff have been incredible in helping all of us manage the health and safety of COVID-19.
- · Our district leaders have been remarkable in working through the systems and structures to support all of our learning transitions.
- · Our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and our Building Assets and Reducing Risks (BARR) framework has helped our staff provide our students with the much needed academic, social and emotional support.

While nothing was perfect this year, I am proud of the patience, hard work and resilience that our students, staff, families and community exemplified in adapting to the ever changing world we are living in. I encourage you to read through this SixTimes newsletter to learn about all the great things we should be proud of during such a difficult time.

Now, more than ever, the communication and collaboration between our schools and families remains critical. I look forward to continued partnering with our entire community to be Safe, Strong, and Prepared for whatever may come our way.

## PACKER PROUD!!



Dr. Dave Webb Superintendent of Schools



# **RESILIENCE IN A PANDEMIC REFLECTIONS ON THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR**

# **TECHNOLOGY KEEPS STUDENTS LEARNING IN-PERSON AND FROM A DISTANCE**

To say the 2020-21 school year has been challenging for teachers, students, and families is an understatement. Our education system was thrown into the world of digital learning without much notice in the spring of 2020. Thanks to the latest technology referendum, SSPPS had most of the tools in place to make learning possible for students in all grades, K-12. During the 2020-21 school year, we shifted between various learning scenarios: all students in distance learning (online at home), hybrid learning (some students in school buildings, some students learning from home) and in-person learning (all students that choose to be are in-person at school). The challenge was, how do we use these tools to transform curriculum to make personalized learning work for as many students as possible, no matter which learning model they were experiencing?

## **GETTING STUDENTS CONNECTED**

The answer came in leveraging the tools that we already have, and it started with devices. The SSPPS Technology Team worked rapidly to mobilize devices for distribution, in spring of 2020, so that each student who needed a device for distance learning at home had one available. The department also created a "Getting Started" guide for each type of device so that families could setup their device from home, with 1:1 help from the Technology department as needed. Once devices were ready for pickup, the Technology department hosted a series of device pickup days for families to attend, which also included checking out

Internet hotspots for families that didn't have internet access at home.

## **REDESIGNING THE TEACHING**

Once teachers knew that students had a device to be connected to distance learning, the next critical step was learning how to make all of these tools fit together. "Our teachers had to transform their content pretty heavily," says Connor Murphy, SSPPS Digital Learning Specialist, "They now had to take lessons developed for in-person learning and make them work in an entirely online format." Teachers attended training sessions to learn how to host video meetings using Google Meets (similar to Zoom), how to create videos

of their lessons, and how to post learning materials on the school's online sites: Seesaw (elementary) and Schoology (secondary). Luckily, both systems were not new for SSPPS teachers, but they had to learn to use the sites in a different way. Teachers focused on building their online communities, to really tune in on the students and their relationships. Teachers, counselors, and administrators were making phone calls, sending emails, and online messages to reach out to families to get them what they needed. A very focused

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experience to make sure

effort was made to get every student

"attending school" from home. In all of our learning scenarios, we want students connecting to school every day. They are required to join video meetings at least once a day. Most days, students will join their class online at least three times during the day. There's time to check in with the teacher, their classmates, and to ask questions about the work they need to complete. The rest of their school day is spent learning at their own pace and accessing the materials the teacher posted online.

Another critical piece to the training was how to check for student understanding in a distance learning scenario. Murphy says, "One tool, Edpuzzle, allows the teacher to have a video stop at a certain point and require a student to answer questions related to the content before they can move onto the rest of the lesson." Materials that are posted

and completed on Schoology give teachers real-time data to know whether or not a student is doing the work. Students work at their own pace, have to complete activity (A) before going on to activity (B). They cannot take a final quiz until they've learned the material and have done the work.

### WHAT DOES THIS TECHNOLOGY MEAN FOR STUDENTS?

This technology won't replace teachers or lessons. It is designed to enhance the lessons already in place. It gives students the opportunity to take control of their own learning and frees the teacher up to give individualized attention to those who need a little extra help. "Everything we use in our classrooms, and use well, has a certain amount of personalization to them," says Murphy. Murphy compares the technology to programs like BARR and the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, "They all add to the student experience to make sure they are learning how they learn best."

It's not just about the programs being used, it's also about the physical technology and making sure every student has the device they need. "We believe in equity," Peterson says, "Every student should have access to a learning device because not every child has something at home." She says, "We know that Schoology, Seesaw, Raz-Kids, and all of the other great tools our teachers are learning and using work on the Chromebooks we made available to students. We also know when something goes wrong, how to quickly get them back online and learning." Future technology levies will help continue to advance our student equity as well as training for all teacher's district-wide.

# **SSPPS STUDENTS?**

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world. As an IB Worlds School District, SSPPS students strive to be: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective. While this past school year hasn't been what we expected, it has taught our students a lot when it comes to these characteristics.



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# **HOW HAS DISTANCE LEARNING BENEFITED**

## **BALANCED**

Our students are actively practicing time-management skills. Figuring out what tasks need to be done when, including attending classes, office hours, and one-on-one Meets. They're learning boundaries between work and play.

### PRINCIPLED

Students are practicing self-management and regulation by attending Google Meets each day, following their schedule, and completing independent work.

### **RISK-TAKER**

With an immediate shift to distance learning last spring, SSP students were resilient in learning new skills that will help them adapt, adjust, and work through other challenges they may experience in life.

### THINKER

Students are practicing grace and grit. Students are learning to work through academic or technological challenges and accepting feedback to push forward.

Students are technology experts in areas they may not have been before. They regularly share their new found technical abilities with teachers and other students.

Regularly checking messages and replying appropriately is often an adult skill, but now our students are growing more comfortable with this daily task. Students are also engaging in virtual meetings, discussing with classmates, sharing their thoughts, and practicing inclusion by inviting peers to do the same.

Students regularly show patience and compassion for others who are not at the same level as they are, academically, social-emotionally, and technologically.



# **SSP K-12 ONLINE SCHOOL**

Over the past year, South St. Paul Public Schools (SSPPS) has offered a distance learning option to our families that have needed this opportunity. With the uncertainty of whether the state will allow districts to continue offering this as an option this fall, SSPPS has proactively submitted an application to become an online school district provider. While we don't have specific details yet, as our application takes 90 days to reach full approval through the state, we want our learning community to know we are working hard behind the scenes to make this opportunity available for interested families. We will continue to communicate with staff and families as we learn more in the coming weeks and months.

# **INSIDE OUR HALLS IN 2020-21**

# TRIDISTRICT CAREER AND COLLEGE READINESS ADDS **NEW CAREER PATHWAY UNIQUE TO SSP STUDENTS**

The TriDistrict Career and College Readiness (CCR) program gives students the opportunity to explore different career paths and earn college credits, degrees, and job-ready experiences or certifications while in high school. CCR is a partnership between South St. Paul Public Schools, Inver Grove Heights Community Schools, Mendota Heights-West St. Paul-Eagan Schools, and local businesses.

The program offers pathways in:

- · Healthcare and Medicine
- Transportation Technologies Business and Entrepreneurship
- Urban Education is new this year only for SSP students!

We know our staff will continue to grow and change and this is the avenue that could be seeding that change. - Tim Kennealy

Urban Education at Metro State focuses on the unique needs school systems in urban settings have. Future teachers in the program learn how to use diversity to set students up for success in school and in life. The framework around Urban Education is more about how we can use our education system to create equity in our society. "We're training our future school leaders," says SSPPS teacher and Program Lead, Tim Kennealy, "We set them up to be successful in this program, send them into the world to learn and grow as educators, and then hopefully bring them back to our schools someday."

The program is based on two areas of work: dialogue and experience. The dialogue portion is based on open honest discussions about

real topics in our schools today. The atmosphere is set up for students to feel comfortable having difficult conversations with differing opinions and no simple answer. Kennealy says, "The idea is that these students can see that everyone has room to grow. We know our staff will continue to grow and change and this is the avenue that could be seeding that change." The experience portion gives students a look at how their dialogue plays out in real life. In collaboration with administrators in Special School District 6, students are placed in schools around the district to observe classes from a teacher's perspective.

Once the year long course is over, students will have earned six college credits. They will also have completed the first two required classes towards a State of Minnesota Teacher Certification. Kennealy says, "Alongside the college credits they are also gaining an introduction to college life and what a career in education looks like."

To learn more about the SSP Career and College Readiness program visit: www.sspps.org/CCR

# **SSPPS IS A RECIPIENT OF TWO MNDOT SAFE ROUTES TO** SCHOOL BOOST GRANTS

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program works to increase the number of students who walk and bike to and from school by making it fun, safe, and convenient. SRTS also works to strengthen community relationships and neighborhood safety to make it safer for students to do so.

### **ADAPTIVE BIKE FLEET**

South Saint Paul Public School District was one of seven schools within the state to receive the 2021 MnDOT Safe Routes to School Boost Grant. The goal of this Boost grant is to provide equitable access to biking for all students by developing a fleet equipped with adaptive gear and appropriate-designed bicycles. Skills training is also provided to give more students the opportunity to learn to bike. This is the second Boost Grant SSPPS has received and allows the district to build off the existing efforts of integrating the Safe Routes to School program within the community.

### SAFE CROSSING PROJECT

Another MNDOT Boost Grant SSPPS received was to fund the Safe Crossing Project. The safe crossing project was designed to address the 5th Ave South / 7th Ave South corridor identified as an area of concern in the Safe Routes to School Planning Grant for Kaposia Education Center. To help pedestrians at the identified intersections, the Safe Crossing Project is a system of flags used to alert drivers that a person needs to cross



the street. Students simply wave a flag from the sidewalk where they need to cross, wait for the cars to stop completely, cross the road with the flag out in front of them, and place the flag in the holding bucket on the other side. The flags are not only for student safety use, but for the community as well.

The MNDOT Boost Grants align with the SSPPS Comprehensive Plan completed in June 2018 and brings focus on equity by creating opportunities for walking and biking access to all. You can find more details on the SSPPS comprehensive plan, as well as details and videos about the Safe Routes to School Initiatives on the district website:

www.sspps.org/safeschools

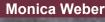
# **SSPPS SCHOOL BOARD UPDATE:** WELCOME TWO NEW MEMBERS

The SSPPS School Board consists of seven members elected to four-year terms. The School Board had three seats up for election this past fall, which brought two new faces and one reelected member to the board.

The current school board members include:

- Chris Walker (Chair)
- Linda Diaz (Vice Chair)
- Nikki Laliberte (Clerk)
- Wendy Felton (Treasurer)
- Bill Arend
- John Raasch (new)
- Monica Weber (new)

### John Raasch







This year brought a few challenges to the school board as they navigated in-person and virtual meetings. Still, students and staff were invited to join (both virtually and in-person) to showcase what good things are happening in our district. You can learn more about the SSPPS School Board at: www.sspps.org/schoolboard



Solar Possible is a clean energy initiative that helped school districts install solar panels, with no upfront investment, and to generate power for the community. SSPPS entered into an agreement with Impact Power Solutions (IPS) to install 880 panels for the district that are expected to generate 408,000 kWh annually.

Here are some fun facts about what 408,000 kWh looks like: It would cover 74% of Kaposia's annual energy usage It could power 49 average homes per year • It would charge 36,800,000 smartphones To create that much energy from coal you'd need to burn 318,000 pounds

Superintendent Dave Webb says, "The District's International Baccalaureate curriculum teaches our children a sense of responsibility as members of our local and global communities. What better way to do that than to let them see and learn about environmental impact initiatives first hand." Students are able to see how sunlight is converted to electricity and can be integrated into Science. Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs at every level.

All energy generated is visible to students and teachers through a site specific dashboard. Webb says, "We now have this awesome solar generating system in our district that we can use to teach our students about Science and Technology. It's a win for the district, it's a win for our students, and it's a win for our environment."

- world outside









# SOLAR PANELS AT KAPOSIA SAVE DISTRICT DOLLARS AND **PROVIDE UNIQUE LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

SSPPS is utilizing the roof of Kaposia Education Center to save the school district money, protect the environment, and provide a unique learning experience for SSPPS students. It's all possible through a State of Minnesota initiative, Solar Possible.

The IB curriculum teaches our children a sense of responsibility as members of our local and global communities. What better way to do that than to let them see and learn about environmental impact initiatives first hand. - Dr. Dave Webb

# **HIGHLIGHTS FROM IB LESSONS IN 2020-21**

As Minnesota's First K-12 International Baccaluareate (IB) World Schools District, South St. Paul Public Schools aims to develop inquirings, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. These programs encourage SSP students and students across the world to become active, compassionate, and lifelong learners, who understand that othe rpeople with their difference can also be right.

• Primary Years Programme (PYP): Designed for all students in grades K-5. It focuses on the development of the whole child as an inquirer, both in the classroom and in the

• Middle Years Programme (MYP): Serves all students in grades 6-10. It focuses on providing a framework for academic challenge and life skills.

• Diploma Programme (DP): A rigorous academic program for grade 11 and 12 students. It focuses on creativity, innovation, self-discipline and the ability to function as part of a team. The Diploma Program consists of a common pre-university curriculum and a common set of external exams for students in schools throughout the world. It seeks to provide students with an international education that encourages an understanding and appreciation of other cultures and societies.

At the end of the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middles Years Programme (MYP), and IB Dipoloma Programme students complete projects that demonstrate the skills they have learned throughout their years in elementary, middlle, and high school. The exhibitions normally take place in a large gathering, instead, this year some are being brought to you virtually. You can view them on the SSPPS website at www.sspps.org/IB or by following our IB hashtags on social media: #IBinSSP #MYPinSSP #PYPinSSP

# **SSPPS STUDENTS MAKING A DIFFERENCE**



### MADYSEN, 10TH GRADE

Personal Projects are the capstone to the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP), which includes all students in grades 6-10. 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. Madysen chose to do her personal project on raising money for a charity that means a lot to her, "My grandma and I were super close. She was always big into volunteering so I wanted my project to give back to her legacy." Madysen chose to raise money

for Our Lady of Peace Hospice Care, "Our Lady of Peace was super good to her and kind in her last days." Madysen raised more than \$1,700 for the charity. She says this project showed her how fulfilling it can be to volunteer and raise money for something selfless.



### **GABBY, 3RD GRADE**

Gabby has been in and out of the hospital this past year undergoing treatments for cerebral palsy. One thing that always brought a smile to Gabby's face was when one of the nursing staff would bring her a toy. One day Gabby turned to her mom and said, "Mommy, I want to give Barbies back." That's when Gabby and her mom, Lanaya, decided to start a toy drive for the Masonic Children's Hospital. Lanaya said she put a note on Facebook for her friends and family and within days she started receiving Amazon

packages full of toys. The final number donated in February was 527. As an IB Worlds School District, students strive to be all of the characteristics of an IB learner. One of those characteristics is caring. "There's a lot that Gabby doesn't understand," says Lanaya, "but she does understand caring." Gabby plans to have another toy drive next winter and dreams of making it bigger and better.

To learn more about International Baccalaureate in SSPPS visit: www.sspps.org/IB

# **EMERGENCY BROADBAND PROGRAM**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced a program to provide a temporary discount on monthly broadband bills for qualifying low-income households.

- Provides up to \$50/month reduction in broadband costs for eligible households and up to \$100 discount on device purchased from an approved provider
- Not limited to households with students.
- 60+ providers approved for MN. Includes Comcast, Frontier, AT&T, T-mobile, and other well-known cable/internet providers.

For more information and to sign up visit: www.getemergencybroadband.org

# **CENTRAL SQUARE COMMUNITY CENTER**

In July 2004, South St. Paul Public Schools (SSPPS) and the City of South St. Paul entered into a joint partnership agreement to form the Central Square Community Center (CSCC). The core operation of the CSCC is dependent upon fitness memberships and program revenue. Fitness memberships hit a peak in 2013 and has since been steadily in decline. The continued decrease in memberships put additional financial pressure on both the city and school district.

After months of discussion and almost 20 years of operation, the City of South St. Paul and SSPPS are ending their joint partnership agreement for CSCC effective June 30, 2021.

Beginning July 1, SSPPS, as owners of the Central Square building, will take full responsibility for the management of the site. While you will likely see many of the same things our community has come to know and love about CSCC, we are also excited to be working on some expanded programming opportunities.

The CSCC will be closed July 1 through July 11 to allow time for the Parks and Recreation office to transition to their new location at City Hall and for the district to reset the CSCC site. Here is what you can expect from SSPPS when the doors reopen on July 12:



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# **NEW TO CENTRAL SQUARE THIS FALL!**

We are excited to be working on expanded programming options.

### Adult Enrichment: Programming to fit every interest

• Health, Wellness, and Safety

After school activities for middle

• Youth enrichment for mixed ages

Culinary Arts

Creative Arts

school students

ACT prep

DanceFitness

Hobbies

- Home
- Money Management
- And much more
- Youth Enrichment: Opportunities for ages 5-15
  - Drivers education
  - Babysitter TrainingCPR for Babysitters
  - And much more

- SSP Senior Center: Opportunities for socialization, recreation, education, and health to residents ages 55+
- Aquatics: Adult lap swim, water exercise classes, and activities
- Adult Fitness Classes: Get active this summer through a variety of fitness classes to keep you moving. We will offer a variety of group exercises and specialty classes for almost every ability and interest
- **55+ Fitness Classes (formerly named Senior Classes):** Classes designed for building core strength and improving muscle coordination and balance





While this is not a full list of all opportunities, a detailed program brochure and new website are being developed to provide easy access to all Central Square Community Center offerings. One area that we unfortunately are not able to continue offering are the fitness center memberships. The result of a joint study conducted by SSPPS and the city of South St. Paul determined the fitness center memberships have been in steady decline since 2013 resulting in a continued significant financial loss. We will continue to be creative and explore opportunities in our long-term planning efforts.

We look forward to partnering with our community to make Central Square Community Center a place where we can come together to learn, grow, and socialize. Questions regarding the transition and/or programming for CSCC can be directed to the SSPPS Community Education Department at (651) 306-3632 or visit **www.sspps.org/CentralSquare**.