



South St. Paul Public Schools FINAL Semi-Annual Report to Minnesota Department of Human Rights Reporting Period ending: September 1, 2021

With the submission of this document, the South St. Paul Schools completes the reporting requirements outlined in the [South St. Paul Schools Educational Plan to Address Disparate Disciplinary Outcomes](#), a three year agreement with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights.

Our original plan outlined five areas to address disparate disciplinary outcomes:

1. Receive input from students, parents, and teachers to obtain qualitative data on a regular ongoing basis concerning this plan. **(Community Involvement)**
2. Design educational strategies and practices that address student behavioral issues in the classroom. **(Curriculum/Teaching and Learning including Special Education)**
3. Provide professional development opportunities. **(Professional Development)**
4. Implement a system for tracking suspensions, expulsions and exclusions at each school Site. **(Procedures)**
5. Review student discipline policies and student handbooks and make reasonable efforts to either remove or define offenses that are susceptible to multiple subjective interpretations. **(Policy)**

In our previous Semi-Annual reviews, we have provided the record of our internal, external and community activities, systems review and change, and our accomplishments and progress toward a more equitable educational system for all. Below are links to the previous submissions:

- [MDHR Semi Annual Report Feb. 1, 2019](#)
- [MDHR Semi Annual Report Sept. 1, 2019](#)
- [MDHR Semi Annual Report Feb. 1, 2020](#)
- [MDHR Semi Annual Report Sept. 1, 2020](#)
- [MDHR Semi Annual Report Feb. 1, 2021](#)

This document highlights both our work during the last six months in each area, and provides a reflective overall summary.

1. Area: Community Involvement

- **Links to website communication efforts/Examples of meaningful parent and community involvement and conversations:**

- [SixTimes: The Official Newsletter of Special School District No. 6](#) Summer, 2021
Special content regarding Meeting the Academic, Social and Emotional Needs of All Students. This publication is widely distributed across the community for our school district families and community members.

- The South St. Paul Public Schools continued to provide detailed and timely information for our families/community regarding the **COVID-19 Pandemic**, health and safety community information, and specifically information regarding our school district planning, and learning models. At the same time, we continued to use various modes of communication to receive information from our families. Relying on an equity lens for planning and response impacted our decision making protocols and the depth of our conversation as leaders in the district.
 - [Pandemic Information district webpage](#) including:
 - [SSP: Safe. Strong. Prepared.](#) documentation that provides detailed information for each learning model (In-Person, Hybrid and Distance Learning) for all departments (Early Learning, Elementary, Middle School, High School/CLC, Community Ed)
 - [District Communication for Families](#) documents all communication from the school district to families/community since the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. All messages provided in English and Spanish, and available for translation as needed.
 - Through the end of the school year, we continued bilingual outreach via surveys, personal phone calls, home visits, drive up opportunities to:
 - An end of year survey, including gathering interest for online learning was also conducted, and results analysed.

- **Equity Leadership Forum and Student Leadership**
The SSPPS Equity Leadership Forum (ELF) is made up of representatives from a wide range of job responsibilities including classroom teachers, interventionists, special education, nutrition services, counseling, world language and cultural liaisons, plus community members. These passionate participants have an urgent interest in creating deeper equity work and elevating an equity expectation across the district. Our work since January included:
 - Learning strategies for becoming supportive allies for our Black Pride Organization students. Our students created a video, written and spoken word presentation regarding their experiences as BIPOC students in our district which was shared with ELF, and then on to school and board leaders. These were powerful exchanges for both the students and adults involved.
 - Approximately 200 SSP students participated in a walkout against racial injustice. The event, coordinated by the South St. Paul High School Black Pride Organization (BPO), was held in conjunction with the statewide walkout planned by Minnesota Teen Activists.

- [Parent Workshops](#)
South St. Paul Community Education finished up the school year supporting the needs of the parents and families in our community through various learning opportunities. Building Bright Futures is a series of workshops, sponsored by TriDistrict Community Education, to empower parents, caregivers, and educators to help children succeed. There is no charge to attend these workshops. Registration helps us plan for materials and resources.
 - Budgeting for school and family change

- Helping Your Anxious Child: Many children experience anxiety at any point in time. This anxiety can significantly impact a child's functioning in both home and school settings. Learn about the different types of anxiety and what you can do as a parent to help your child cope with the discomfort they experience as a result of their anxiety.
- [School-Linked Mental Health Supports](#) - available to families through 2021 Summer Programming
In support of all families, in the emotional ups and downs to be expected during this time of COVID crisis, the SSPPS is supported by The Associated Clinic of Psychology (ACP). ACP was awarded a grant by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide school and community based therapy to students and their families throughout Dakota County. ACP works directly with South St. Paul Public School students and their support teams to address issues impacting their well-being.

Area Summary:

In the original plan, the school district committed to actions in support of improved Community Involvement including:

- Regular parent/community meetings
- Articulating the role of School Resource Officers (SRO) in our schools
- Maintaining pathways for ongoing verbal/written feedback regarding school culture, discipline procedures, bullying/harassment reporting or other safety concerns.

During the past three years, the district has transformed our communications systems, methods of outreach and interaction with all of our community including students, staff and families. Our administrative team met with the SSP Police Department leadership and for specific discussions regarding the role, presence and responsibilities of our now one, down from two SROs. Plans have been made for ongoing participation for the assigned SRO to participate in professional development opportunities in concert with the school district specifically related to de-escalation, social & emotional supports and self-regulation skills for adults and students. Our Students Rights and Responsibilities Handbook is now a living document that is responsive to changing needs based on student input. An example is the new inclusion of “Microaggressions” as behaviors to be addressed. This topic was brought forth through the voices of an active student leadership group, the Black Pride Organization, who raised the racial concerns of students in deliberate and productive conversations with staff, administration and School Board.

2. Area: Curriculum/Teaching and Learning

- **All Learning Models Planned and Implemented, School Year 2020-21:**
 - Delivery of core curriculum continued to be our primary goal during Distance and In Person Learning models implemented February, 2021 through the end of the regular school year and throughout Summer Programming. Standards are prioritized and lessons include learning targets with success criteria. District wide, there are now monthly standing meetings to monitor progress for standards continuum development/implementation. Students have multiple pathways to practice (choice) and multiple modes and opportunities for assessment. We continue to prioritize

systems of support for our students, with social/emotional support taking a lead to allow learning to happen. Distance Learning did continue to be an option for our families through the end of the 20-21 school year, and approximately 20% of our families chose this approach throughout the pandemic.

- [Technology - all students/families](#)

All kindergarten through 12th grade students have received one-to-one technology devices and technology support including access to the internet in support of Distance and In Person learning. Support and learning opportunities for families have and will continue to be provided with access in both English and Spanish.

In addition to the K-12 support, other focus areas in the district included:

- Early Learning families participating in SSP Community Preschool for three and four-year-olds also have access to a device and hotspot as needed for full participation in learning.
 - Special, individualized outreach for groups of students including families for whom English is not their first language, our American Indian families, and families who children receive Special Education services is a critical component of our family connections.
 - Key to this work is making an extra effort to build and maintain relationships with our families so that with focus on removing barriers to learning through technology whether distant or in-person can support our students' academic progress.
 - [Tech Help Center for Families](#) Bi-weekly electronic newsletter
- **Nutrition Services** continued to serve meals during both In Person and Distance Learning models. Throughout the school year, and particularly during the time of Distance Learning only, meal boxes were providing seven days of meals to all SSP children, were available for pick up at various sites/times. Access to school meals is critical for many of our families for whom food security is a barrier for school success. Educational Benefit information and reduced price offerings were shared in many ways for our families to use throughout the school year.
 - **Equitable and Affordable school-age child** care programs are essential to support working families and provide enrichment and care for students. Following guidance from the state, SSPPS provides school-age care for district-enrolled children in grades K-6 (age 12 and under) who are children of critical care workers in Tier I, as defined by the state. Once we returned to In Person schooling, child care was available on site for families before or after school. Health protocol was maintained.
 - **Enhanced/Expanded Summer Programming** was offered for preschool through grade 12. We knew that learning loss was a concern for parents and that many of our young children would be expected to come to school in the fall with little or no actual in person quality school experience, with some school age students having not been in a school building in a year and a half. We were able to expand our summer offerings from what had typically been four weeks to six weeks. We were able to provide transportation across the district and two meals on site with food

programming available to all children in the community, all for free. Our target students for enrollment in summer were the students for whom attendance during the regular school year may have been erratic, those whose work completion may not have matched progress expected, and, of course, standards based credit recovery for older students to make learning efficient and essential.

Area Summary:

In the original plan, the school district committed to create a comprehensive plan to implement behavioral support and services within a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework with a focus on social and emotional learning with actions to include:

- PBIS implementation in all buildings district wide supporting social, emotions and behavioral learning with supportive structures,
- Implement culturally responsive teaching strategies, building and restoring staff/student relationships
- Continue to support students of all backgrounds in enrolling and successfully completing International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program (DP) classes, and
- Schedule curriculum review, standards development and system for improving equitable curricular content.

During the past three years, we have been able to restructure and define our [MTSS systems of support](#), specifically regarding social/emotional learning support. Through the [framework of PBIS](#), and grounded relationship development, our response to behaviors has become proactive, instead of reactive. We have structures in place to support staff and students, and monitor that support. In addition to our original plans, we have also become the nation’s first [BARR school district](#), giving our teachers articulated activities to use daily/weekly in classrooms with a clear focus grounded in equity. We do monitor student participation in the IB/DP classes, seek out students who could/should be participating in advanced leveled classes and provide support systems to ensure success. These systems have been impactful, allowing us to focus on improving each one of our students’ experiences in our learning environments.

3. Area: Professional Development

- Calendar of professional development opportunities 2020-21:

	Culturally Responsive Teaching/Practices	Audience
Sept-May, 2020-21	Equity Professional Learning Community, two meetings per month addressing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personal Reflection: Power & Privilege, Implicit Bias/Stereotype Threat, Multiple Perspectives ● Education as an Institution: Achievement/Suspension Gap, Discipline & Policing, How children Learn about Race, Stages of Racial Development ● Society and Race: Personal/Institutional Racism, Cross-Cultural Understanding, Microaggression, Protests ● Education as Healing: Culturally Responsive Teaching, Connecting & Engaging Families, Restorative Practices, Social Justice, Developing Muscle/Will & Skill ● Equity and Children’s Literature - internal review strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on this work, we completed and received a grant to enhance literature options throughout all preschool and ECFE classrooms 	Preschool Teachers, All Early Learning Staff, Early Childhood Special Education staff

Sept - Feb, 2020-21	Constructing the Innocent Classroom Training: (year 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implicit Bias ● Stereotype Threat ● Finding a Child's Good 	Kaposia Education Center Teachers & Lincoln Center Teachers
Sept - June 2020-21	Innocent Classroom Labs/Cohort Support (year 2)	Middle School & High School Teachers/Admin
Sept-May 2020-21	Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED): The SEED program is a year-long seminar style professional learning opportunity for educators, staff, and community members. From October to May, participants meet monthly in SEED circles to participate in text based discussions about topics surrounding educational equity and diversity, and how they relate to the experiences of staff, students, and parents within our school districts. Monthly SEED seminars include readings, activities, discussions, and/or reflections.	40 Staff Members with SSPPS Facilitators
Sept - June 2020-21	Educator of Color Cohort available to all staff of color through collaborative Equity Alliance, MN	Staff of Color
Jan 28, 2021	Breakout Sessions offered during Professional Development Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is "Implicit Bias" and Why do I Need to Know About It?: Have you ever heard the term "implicit bias," but you don't know exactly what that means? Or, maybe you've heard the term and know what it means, but aren't sure why it's so important to know and how it applies to you, your daily instruction, your everyday interactions with students and colleagues, and even in your personal relationships? If you want to learn a little more about "implicit bias," then attend this session. If you already have learned a great deal about this term, then you may find this session a little redundant; however, many people find it refreshing to converse with colleagues to gain better insight and perspective. ● Creating an LGBTQ+ Inclusive Classroom and Curriculum: During this session, faculty will take away strategies they can integrate into their classroom and curriculum that are LGBTQ+ inclusive. This will foster a more positive learning environment, which correlates with positive learning experiences for LGBTQ+ students. 	Teaching Staff
	Anti-Racism/Equity Advocacy	
2020-21	Equity Leadership Forum Staff members and community leaders interested in developing equity leadership and advocacy. Monthly commitment.	Any staff member
	Restorative Practices	
2020-21	Restorative Practices Training - available Equity Alliance, MN	Self-selected SSP staff
	Bullying and Harassment	
Sept/Oct, 2020	Bullying and Harassment Training All Staff various dates	All Sites
January, 2021	Anti- Bullying and Harassment "Re"Teaching month	All Sites
	PBIS (Behavioral systems and structures) future	

Sept-May, 2020-21	PBIS Cohort Implementation Year 3: Lincoln Center PBIS Cohort Implementation Year 3: SSP Secondary PBIS Cohort Implementation Year 4: Kaposia Elementary	Lincoln Center Staff SSP Secondary Staff Kaposia Staff
Administrative Learning/Training		
Sept-May, 2020-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of Equity Leadership Statement ● Equity Goals, Personal/Professional ● Equity Learning, Targets, monthly meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Actions that reduce institutional racism by increasing cultural and racial knowledge ○ Culturally responsive pedagogy and practices to validate, affirm, build and bridge 	District Administrative Staff

- Innocent Classroom implementation calendar/plan:
 - South St. Paul Public Schools received a \$210,000, three year grant from the St. Paul Foundations for district wide Innocent Classroom training and implementation, 2019-2021. This plan supported district efforts to deliberately interrupt the racial predictability of academic performance and disciplinary referrals for our students of color, differing abilities and poverty. This project addressed the impact of stereotype threat and implicit bias, and the ways these interfere with authentic teacher-child relationships in classrooms and adult-child relationships across the district. Innocent Classroom strategies will continue to serve as a restorative practice to enhance the effectiveness of South St. Paul's commitment to Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports (PBIS), Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Restorative Practices. Based on staff feedback during and after training, Innocent Classroom has had an impact on how teachers think about and engage their students, especially students of color. South St. Paul has radically impacted the academic and disciplinary disparities for our students from underrepresented groups.
 - Feb-Jun, 2019: Leadership and the Innocent Classroom.
 - Cohort 1 for District Administration/Teacher Leaders from each site to participate - COMPLETED
 - Opening Days, August 26, 2019: Alex Paite, CEO Innocent Technologies will provide keynote address for all staff to introduce Innocent Classroom theory and practice, and provide an overview to the district-wide implementation. - COMPLETED
 - Sept-Feb, 2019-2020: Constructing the Innocent Classroom
 - Cohort 2 for Secondary and CLC teachers grades 9-12, and - COMPLETED
 - Cohort 3 for Secondary teachers grades 6-8 - COMPLETED
 - Feb-June, 2020: Cohorts 2-3 follow up with podcasts, newsletters and implementation support - COMPLETED
 - Fall 2020: Innocent Classroom presentation for School Board - To Be Scheduled
 - Sept-Feb, 2020-21: Constructing the Innocent Classroom
 - Cohort 4 for Kaposia teachers grades K-5 - Scheduled, beginning Opening Days, Sept 2, 2020 - COMPLETED
 - Cohort 5 for Lincoln Center teachers grades K-5 - Scheduled, beginning Opening Days, Sept 2, 2020 - COMPLETED
 - Cohort 6 for teaching staff of birth to adult programs - To be scheduled

- Feb-June, 2021: Cohorts 4-6 follow up with podcasts, newsletters and implementation support - Planning Meetings completed Aug, 2020.
 - Sept, 2020- June 2021: Plan for formalizing and systemizing use of “good” as routine part of Student Review, Middle and High Schools, staff meetings, check ins, labs in collaboration with BARR review and planning.
 - Other supports TBA 2021-21: lab/practice sessions for paraprofessionals, community information

Area Summary:

In the original three year plan, in the area of professional development, we outlined training needs to support implementation of MTSS/PBIS, and using evidenced based methods regarding fostering positive relationships, engagement and academic achievement. We planned to focus on strategies for addressing implicit and institutional bias, stereotype threat, cultural responsive capacity building and restorative practices. Specifically, training was to be provided in the areas of Bullying and Harassment, Cultural Competence, PBIS (Behavioral systems and structures) and Social Emotional Learning (MTSS behavior support).

Upon review, we have completed the three year plan, addressing each of the areas we had highlighted for professional learning. Our training in support of the MTSS/PBIS systems has been well received and incorporated into day-to-day work. The work of Innocent Classroom helped us dive deeply into our preconceived notions, recognise the danger of assumptions about our students, and understand the incredible importance of each student knowing and feeling their innocence in our classrooms. We have heard our students and know the damage of bullying and harassment, and now shine a bright light on training for staff, activities for students and pathways for reporting and supporting that had not been articulated before.

4. Area: Procedures

- Summary data as defined in Minnesota Statutes sections 13.02, subdivision 19: Number of suspensions for each site during reporting period: Once again, the pandemic impacted in-person learning, behavior and levels of support, and created the need for ongoing distance learning. We did reinstitute our suspension review monthly practices at each site, February through June. Due to very low suspension incidents across the district, these review meetings shifted to focus on social and emotional needs of individual students, and how the systems of support shift from responsive to proactive, self-regulation based practices. During the in-person and Distance Learning, February through June, we did continue to track attendance and indicators of engagement. In support of these efforts, here are highlights of the systemic work we engaged in this school year:
 - **South St. Paul Public Schools becomes the first K-12 BARR school district in the U.S.**
 With a three-year grant from the Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation, South St. Paul Public Schools is implementing the Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) model districtwide. 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.

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.

Staff district-wide in all schools in South St. Paul Public Schools are learning the BARR model with the rollout this year at Kaposia and Lincoln Center elementary schools and at SSP Middle School, grades 6-8.

- **South St. Paul Middle School**

In addition to the BARR work, and ongoing communications and support efforts, another example of continuing improvement work regarding philosophy and approach at the Middle School, is that leaders and staff are actively engaged in conversation about being culturally responsive with their students and families. Expectations are being built together, coaching strategies are being employed, and support is solidifying for continued professional development to build and use culturally responsive skills like empathy, holding high expectations and understanding multiple perspectives. These skills support our relationships with students and families so that we can build on strengths, and break down barriers.

- **Kaposia Education Center and Lincoln Center Elementary:**

During the 2020-2021 school year, leadership and support teams formed two flowcharts outlining a clear team based process for student support. One flowchart highlighted attendance, the other flowchart highlighted student engagement and academic/behavioral support needs. Both flowchart processes fed into spreadsheets that collected the most accurate and up to date data. This monitoring allowed for responsive supports and tight, productive progress cycles. Suspensions at the elementary level functionally disappeared, with alternatives to suspension, keeping students in class, and teaching missing skills becoming the focus of responsive behavioral supports.

Area Summary:

While we have seen success and progress in each of our areas for improvement, this is the area we have impacted most dramatically. Three years ago, our student suspension rates were disproportionately targeting black and brown students, and students with disabilities. Through whole staff skill development, monthly monitoring and review by our administrative team, and the use of systems to develop proactive support and alternatives to suspension, all suspension numbers are dramatically down and disproportionality has decreased. We are not satisfied yet, and will continue this work to ensure every student's personalized learning experience keeps them learning in (and out of) the classroom.

5. Area: Policy

- [Link to website for all the following handbook resources:](#)

- The SSPPS Student Rights and Responsibility Handbook has been updated, and was distributed and posted on the website for Prek-Grade 12.
 - [ENGLISH VERSION](#) and [SPANISH VERSION](#)
 - Audience – SSPPS Students (Gr Prek-12), SSPPS Families (Gr Prek-12)
 - This publication outlines unified, developmentally appropriate behavioral expectations for students across the district, and gives common vocabulary to restorative practices, and disciplinary responses.

- [SSPPS Family Handbook](#) :
 - Audience – All SSPPS Families PreK-12/posted on sspps.org
 - Content satisfies all of the annual notification requirements of the school district. It includes information that is common across the district (e.g. data privacy, food/nutrition, pesticides, asbestos, etc.) as well as other district information of interest (e.g. school closing, community education, cultural liaisons, etc.)

- **Anti-Bullying and Harassment Work:**
 - To continue our yearly work in supporting the Anti-Bullying and Harassment, review of cyber bullying training and student materials has been completed and will be included in the orientation to Distance and Hybrid Learning for students and families, reviewed each January.
 - Special focus on Cyber-Bullying and building allies during Hybrid and Distance Learning.

Area Summary:

Interactive review of policy, responding to feedback from our community and articulating our procedures/protocols to our students and families will continue to be our ongoing practice in the improvement cycle for policy and procedures.

Conclusion:

In our original plan, we stated: “In support of our mission, vision, and core values, is our commitment to equity as a driving force behind which all other actions must be grounded. We commit to provide alternatives to suspension, exclusion or expulsion, and to the concept that consequences for inappropriate behavior are to be rooted in student learning and growth and are to be restorative in nature, rather than being punitive.” At the time this statement was written, it was our vision for this work. Now, it is more than a vision, but an everyday driving force for our school district so that every family, every student, coming through our doors feels welcome, included and has a personalized learning experience with us, the South St. Paul Public Schools.

**South St. Paul Public Schools Semi-Annual Report to
Minnesota Department of Human Rights
Reporting Period ending: September 1, 2021**

Date report will be presented to South St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education:	September 13 , 2021
Submitted by: Connie Garling-Squire	
Title: Director of Early Learning/Equity	
Signature: <i>Connie Garling-Squire (cg-s)</i>	
Date: August 23, 2021	