

St. Louis Park Public Schools Superintendent Search

Stakeholder Engagement Superintendent Search Survey

Overview: On December 21, 2023, the “St. Louis Park Public Schools Superintendent Search Survey” was made available to stakeholders both online and in hard copy across the district. The survey remained open for respondents until January 18, 2024, and a total of 1,572 people completed the survey (1,549 English, 13 Spanish, 10 Somali).

In addition, multi-language survey groups and focus groups were held with:

- 30 students on January 17, 2024
- 15 Somali family members on January 18, 2024
- 18 Latino family members on January 24, 2024

These groups bring the total of touchpoints regarding the superintendent search for St. Louis Park Public Schools to **1,635 stakeholders**, nearly 3x the number typically expected for a district the size of SLP (estimations early in the search process were that we would receive approximately 580 total stakeholder survey responses). This is a tremendous response and indicates high interest in the St. Louis Park Public Schools superintendent search process.

SURVEY RESULTS: Survey takers were asked to identify the role that best reflected the basis for their responses. The categories selected by the survey takers are provided below.

- 45.10% of respondents selected “Student”
- 35.30% of respondents selected “Parent/Guardian/Caregiver”
- 11.85% of respondents selected “Staff Member”
- 4.61% of respondents selected “Community Member”
- 1.60% of respondents selected “Business Owner/District Partner”
- 1.54% of respondents selected “Other”

Race: Those who responded to the survey were also asked how they would identify their race. The results are shown below.

- 70.23% of respondents selected “White”
- 12.60% of respondents selected “I prefer not to disclose”
- 12.21% of respondents selected “Black or African American”
- 7.70% of respondents selected “Hispanic/Latino”
- 6.17% of respondents selected “Asian”
- 1.84% of respondents selected “American Indian or Indigenous”
- 0.89% of respondents selected “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander”



Ethnicity: Those who responded to the survey were also asked how they would identify their ethnicity. The results are shown below.

- 41.09% of respondents selected "European"
- 24.75% of respondents selected "Other"
- 17.11% of respondents selected "I prefer not to disclose"
- 6.55% of respondents selected "Jewish"
- 5.03% of respondents selected "African"
- 4.77% of respondents selected "Mexican"
- 4.01% of respondents selected "Somali"
- 1.91% of respondents selected "Middle Eastern"
- 1.59% of respondents selected "Native"
- 1.34% of respondents selected "Arab"
- 1.21% of respondents selected "Caribbean"
- 1.21% of respondents selected "Indian"
- 0.76% of respondents selected "Ethiopian"
- 0.76% of respondents selected "Vietnamese"
- 0.70% of respondents selected "Nigerian"
- 0.64% of respondents selected "Colombian"
- 0.51% of respondents selected "Guatemalan"
- 0.51% of respondents selected "Hmong"
- 0.32% of respondents selected "Cambodian"
- 0.25% of respondents selected "Afghan"

NOTE: in terms of race and ethnicity, please note none of the quantitative nor qualitative data was separated out by these categories. This data was gathered for the sole purpose of helping the school board better understand which constituencies responded to the superintendent search survey, and how many representative groups across the district were reached in the effort to gather stakeholder data for the purposes of this survey.

Although no opt-in survey instrument is perfect, these results do indicate that a cross-section of St. Louis Park district roles, races, and ethnicities were reached through the superintendent search survey process.

The following pages illustrate overall responses to the quantitative questions asked in the stakeholder survey, as well as a breakout of stakeholder groups by response category.



Areas of Expertise: All of those who responded to the survey were asked to identify the top six desirable areas of expertise they believe the new superintendent must possess. The most frequently noted areas of expertise are listed below in order of preference.

- Budget and Finance
- Collaborative Leadership
- Curriculum Development/Evaluation
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- School Reform (i.e. Strategic Planning, etc.)
- Cultural Competence

Specialized Skills: The top six specialized skills the new superintendent must possess were identified in the survey results as shown below.

- Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner in dealings with the Board, staff, and community
- Develops and directs an effective leadership team
- Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders
- Is a “people person” with proven abilities in human relations and communications
- Is a visionary, creative thinker
- Effectively mediates and accommodates different perspectives; values teamwork

Previous Experience: Respondents were asked if previous superintendent experience is important. Based on the results, 47.49% of the respondents selected “Yes,” while 52.51% of the respondents selected “No.”

Personal Characteristics: Survey takers were also asked to identify the top six personal characteristics they believe the new superintendent must possess. The most frequently noted personal characteristics are listed below in order of preference.

- Honest and ethical
- Effective communicator
- Problem solver
- Confident
- Transparent
- Consistent



The following tables summarize the stakeholder survey’s quantitative data by respondent category (i.e. Parent/Guardian/Caregiver, Staff Member, Community Member, Business Owner/District Partner, Student, Other):

TOP SIX AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Parent/ Guardian/ Caregiver (551)	Staff Member (185)	Community Member (72)	Business Owner /District Partner (25)	Other (24)	Student (704)
Curriculum Development/ Evaluation	Collaborative Leadership	Collaborative Leadership	Budget & Finance	Collaborative Leadership	Budget & Finance
Budget & Finance	Budget & Finance	Curriculum Development/ Evaluation	Collaborative Leadership	Budget & Finance	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Collaborative Leadership	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Budget & Finance	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Collaborative Leadership
School Reform (i.e., strategic planning, etc.)	Curriculum Development/ Evaluation	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Cultural Competence	Curriculum Development/ Evaluation	Curriculum Development/ Evaluation
Student Testing Results and Achievement	School Reform (i.e., strategic planning, etc.)	Student Testing Results and Achievement	Fundraising/Grant Writing	Public Relations	Technology
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Cultural Competence	Cultural Competence	Public Relations	Cultural Competence	Support Services



TOP SIX PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Parent/ Guardian/ Caregiver (551)	Staff Member (185)	Community Member (72)	Business Owner /District Partner (25)	Other (24)	Student (704)
Honest and Ethical	Effective Communicator	Honest and Ethical	Creative	Effective Communicator	Confident
Effective Communicator	Honest and Ethical	Effective Communicator	Effective Communicator	Honest and Ethical	Honest and Ethical
Problem Solver	Problem Solver	Problem Solver	Confident	Transparent	Problem Solver
Transparent	Transparent	Empathetic	Consistent	Problem Solver	Effective Communicator
Resourceful	Consistent	Consistent	Problem Solver	Sense of Humor	Creative
Consistent	Personable	Confident	Flexible	Empathetic	Sense of Humor

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Parent/ Guardian/ Caregiver (551)	Staff Member (185)	Community Member (72)	Business Owner /District Partner (25)	Other (24)	Student (704)
Yes: 43.89%	Yes: 56.32%	Yes: 36.51%	Yes: 68.75%	Yes: 55.56%	Yes: 48.65%
No: 56.11%	No: 43.68%	No: 63.49%	No: 31.25%	No: 44.44%	No: 51.35%

The following page breaks out data which can be analyzed directly against the School Board's responses to the same questionnaire (in other words, an "apples to apples" comparison). Results indicate significant alignment between the board and stakeholders, as School Board members prioritized these same categories as follows:

- Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders
- Has knowledge of and experience with equity leadership challenges and opportunities
- Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community
- Develops and directs an effective leadership team
- Effectively mediates and accommodates different perspectives; values teamwork
- Is visible and accessible to the School Board, staff, students, parents, and community



TOP SIX SPECIALIZED SKILLS

Parent/ Guardian/ Caregiver (551)	Staff Member (185)	Community Member (72)	Business Owner /District Partner (25)	Other (24)	Student (704)
Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community	Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community	Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community	A visionary, creative thinker	Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community
Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Develops and directs an effective leadership team	A "people person" with proven abilities in human relations and communications	A "people person" with proven abilities in human relations and communications	Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community	A "people person" with proven abilities in human relations and communications
Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community	A "people person" with proven abilities in human relations and communications	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders
Experience in implementing educational priorities	A "people person" with proven abilities in human relations and communications	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	A visionary, creative thinker
Possesses a strong academic background with experience in curriculum	Effectively mediates and accommodates different perspectives; values teamwork	A visionary, creative thinker	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Visible and accessible to the School Board, staff, students, parents, and community	Develops and directs an effective leadership team
Effectively mediates and accommodates different perspectives; values teamwork	Delegates authority while maintaining accountability	Delegates authority while maintaining accountability	Delegates authority while maintaining accountability	A visionary, creative thinker	Delegates authority while maintaining accountability



Additional comments: Finally, respondents were given the opportunity (but not required) to answer open-ended questions in the survey, and on average, 1,170 of the 1,572 respondents provided additional commentary. These results were then reviewed by MSBA representatives, with reappearing ideas identified and grouped into themes. These themes are highlighted below for each of the questions.

The stakeholder survey asked the following four questions:

1. What are some of the good things taking place in St. Louis Park Public Schools today?
2. What challenges do you see for our district over the next five years?
3. What does the new superintendent need to know about the history of the district and community to be successful?
4. Additional comments.

1. What are some of the good things taking place in St. Louis Park Public Schools today?

Summary

St. Louis Park Public Schools stand out as an inclusive and progressive educational environment. The district is characterized by its deep commitment to fostering an enriching and welcoming environment for learning, and teachers in these schools are exceptionally dedicated, contributing to a robust and positive learning experience for their students. Diversity, equity, and belonging are central themes, providing students with a sense of representation and value. The importance of a well-rounded education is clear, with a strong focus on comprehensive extracurricular activities and equitable learning opportunities. Specialized programs and curricula, which emphasize student engagement and inclusivity, are a testament to the district's dedication to preparing students for a diverse and evolving world. In summary, St. Louis Park Public Schools are celebrated for their focus on quality education and the holistic development of students, making them a model for an inclusive and integrated educational experience.

Key themes

<p>St. Louis Park Public Schools have a caring staff that are deeply committed to providing their students an excellent education and a positive learning environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great teachers who care about students.</i> • <i>The teachers are amazing, and care deeply about all students. They work so hard to make sure each student feels seen, heard, and valued.</i> 	<p>285 related responses</p>
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- *Teachers who care deeply for their students and welcome parents as partners in the educational process.*
- *The educators in SLP are incredible, having a solid leader that can bring people together, see things from multiple perspectives and can continue to celebrate diversity/be inclusive is paramount.*
- *High quality teachers and support staff.*
- *There are a lot of good teachers.*
- *We have some great teachers who care about all students.*
- *Amazing teachers and educators - staff who truly care at all levels.*
- *We have a good education system and good teachers.*
- *Staff want to teach and truly care for kids.*
- *The teachers are really understanding of student's needs.*
- *Teachers are nice and are good at teaching.*
- *Our teachers are inclusive and kind to all.*
- *Personable and passionate teachers.*
- *Teachers who care about their students.*
- *The teachers help the students to practice and keep going.*
- *Great teachers, wonderful principal, great communications with school and district.*
- *The teachers are the core of the school district. They are engaged with students and parents.*
- *Dedicated staff members who value the students and continuously work to provide support and learning to the students.*
- *Collaboration between staff and teams, best-practices being implemented by teaching staff.*
- *Effort teachers and staff put into students. Whether that be academically or building social and emotional healthy children together with our families.*
- *Teachers are incredibly creative with limited resources to craft the best education they can for students.*
- *Some really good teachers are working hard to help students learn.*
- *The staff works tirelessly to raise up all students. We see our diversity as a strength.*
- *Wonderful teachers and staff in all the schools.*
- *We have passionate and hard-working teachers and staff.*
- *Many dedicated staff are working hard in spite of all of the challenges.*
- *Excellent staff that care deeply about students.*
- *We have great teachers and staff.*
- *The teachers genuinely care about the students and try their best to help them with all aspects of schooling.*
- *There are some talented and dedicated teachers.*
- *Current teachers are devoted educators and flexible thinkers.*
- *Amazing and supportive teachers and staff in the schools who truly care about their students.*
- *Dedicated and passionate staff despite the tremendous challenges post covid.*
- *High quality staff and teachers who care about our students and are invested in supporting individual growth/strengths.*
- *We have staff who are committed to our strategic priorities and who are also very knowledgeable about best practices in education today.*
- *Teachers that care about their students and want the best for them.*



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We have incredible teachers and staff who work really hard for students and families.</i> • <i>Our teachers are highly competent and committed.</i> • <i>The staff cares so much about the students as a whole person. The teachers' voices need to continue to be heard because they are incredible and be the change to continue to elevate SLP schools.</i> • <i>Teachers that love their job and their students.</i> • <i>The staff at the schools are amazing.</i> • <i>There are a number of SLP teachers, I've found, who truly value that home-to-school relationship, and who I have complete trust in as partners in my children's education.</i> • <i>The teachers at the high school are good.</i> • <i>I am really pleased with the teaching and the attentiveness of teachers to our students' needs.</i> • <i>There are a lot of good teachers who approach classrooms very well, as well as the focus on IB curriculum, and potential for academic achievement.</i> • <i>The teachers are nice and they want the best for every kid not just a certain group.</i> • <i>Teachers genuinely care about students and make an effort to connect with them on a personal level.</i> • <i>Some of the best, most dedicated staff members around.</i> • <i>The staff that I've interacted with, while from varied backgrounds, are welcoming and supportive of all students.</i> 	
<p>The district is committed to fostering an environment where every student's uniqueness is celebrated, and where equitable opportunities for growth and learning are provided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>My student feels like he belongs to a community at his school.</i> • <i>Schools are very inclusive.</i> • <i>Our racial equity work.</i> • <i>A diverse student population, restorative practices, emphasis on racial equity in teaching practices.</i> • <i>Diversity and inclusion initiatives (including how students can use their learning to change the world), including special needs students in all things, and talent development for all.</i> • <i>Diverse and inclusive classrooms. Thoughtful strengths-based student engagement.</i> • <i>Diversity is celebrated.</i> • <i>The history of good academics combined with focus on racial equity is a positive thing.</i> • <i>Building an inclusive community.</i> • <i>Slp schools are very inclusive.</i> • <i>Equity and inclusion policies are being supported and followed.</i> • <i>Brilliant and diverse student population and an emphasis on equity in our curriculum and teaching practices.</i> • <i>Talent development and a focus on equity.</i> • <i>I am appreciative of SLP's strong focus on equity.</i> 	<p>216 related responses</p>



- *Racial consciousness development in teachers, conversations about equity*
- *The SLP schools have adopted an equity and inclusion policy.*
- *The mission statement - seeing students' brilliance fostering identity, racial equity transformation.*
- *The vision that the district has for racial justice, equity and community and centering student voices.*
- *The work around equity and creating an environment that is safe and welcoming to everyone.*
- *Inclusive, respectful, approachable leadership, commitment to improvement.*
- *The district has a great understanding of equity and inclusion.*
- *Diversity. Ability to change and adapt to new populations because of the size of the district. The staff at the schools are amazing.*
- *Great leaders in all forms of diversity. The district protects ALL persons of all facets of life. This protection is public, protects human integrity, and realizes that EACH and EVERY person contributes positively to their long-term vision and mission.*
- *Known for standing up for our diverse community.*
- *The inclusive curriculum. I choose St Louis Park because of how they embraced diversity while also promoting achievement and high standards for all students.*
- *Some of the good things that are taking place is that people are working hard towards inclusiveness.*
- *I feel like we are a very inclusive school and I like that there are many different people from different backgrounds and communities in our school.*
- *Increased Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs. Heightened level of racial consciousness.*
- *There's a lot more diversity and I feel like there's a bigger sense of community within the schools.*
- *SLP has the potential to be a national leader, modeling how true DEIA work, educational excellence, and educational systemic change can occur.*
- *There are many ways this school is trying to be more inclusive and there are many ways students can express their love for a subject.*
- *They use a culturally responsive pedagogy and inclusive education policies.*
- *There is a focus on diversity and improving educational outcomes for all.*
- *The district is trying to do good things related to equity/DEI.*
- *The racial equity and diversity and inclusion core values are something we really value and we look forward to seeing ways for these to continually be implemented.*
- *Safe environment for the children. Very inclusive and caring staff. My kids love the school and it's community.*
- *Progress is being made towards our equity goals.*
- *The dedicated emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially compared to the unfortunate things you see in other school districts across the state and country.*
- *Commitment to racial equity and justice.*
- *Racial equity focus. The mission and strategic plan is why I'm here.*
- *The work around equity and creating an environment that is safe and welcoming to everyone.*
- *The focus on cultural competency and equity. The work can be difficult and 'messy' however I believe that we are 'in the arena' and making a difference.*



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Equity is a paramount focus within the school district.</i> • <i>Racial Equity Transformation - making a clear stance on what's best for ALL students and staying consistent.</i> • <i>Inclusivity of LGBTQ+ students and teachers, discussion of current world and community issues and promoting critical thinking.</i> • <i>We have strategic priorities which center children and families, especially those who have been historically under-served in our school system.</i> • <i>The race-equity work we have been engaged in for over a decade is our greatest strength and draws both families and staff to our district. It is ongoing work that is transformative and on-going.</i> • <i>Commitment to racial equity and to gender-inclusive policies.</i> • <i>Focus on diversity and inclusion to ensure every student finds success.</i> • <i>Focus on equity, providing a world-centered inclusive education (not solely based on test scores) building community and empathy.</i> • <i>I think SLP has the potential to be a national leader, modeling how true DEIA work, educational excellence, and educational systemic change can occur.</i> 	
<p>The St. Louis Park community, families, and district collaborate to create a strong support network that enhances the educational experience and well-being of their students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Welcome parents as partners in the educational process.</i> • <i>Engaged parents.</i> • <i>Strong community.</i> • <i>We have a community like a small town but resources like a large city.</i> • <i>Schools are safe, diverse, welcoming and provide a sense of community.</i> • <i>The district has a good sense of community. Families of various backgrounds are invested in their child's/children's education.</i> • <i>I think the intercommunication in the community is a priority and is very helpful.</i> • <i>Good community support that believes in education.</i> • <i>Community, parents and school admin working together to navigate tough situations.</i> • <i>It is wonderful how many people care for the education and community at St. Louis Park and how many people are involved.</i> • <i>Being a great community.</i> • <i>We are a good community.</i> • <i>We have a great group of supportive parents and the broader SLP community.</i> • <i>Wonderful schools that foster a sense of community. Great families with strong family values live in SLP. Let's keep it that way!</i> • <i>Wonderful community, feel like a small town sometimes.</i> • <i>The community supports the schools.</i> • <i>A community that truly cares.</i> • <i>Parents are getting more involved.</i> • <i>Community continues to vote for investing in schools.</i> • <i>Participation of students and families. Park schools offer activities for a wide array of interests and remove barriers, as much as possible, for participation.</i> • <i>Strong community commitment to arts and creative endeavors.</i> • <i>A parent community that values inclusion and diversity.</i> 	<p>195 related responses</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of support for the schools. • There is a great community with families who care deeply about teaching kids how to be good, responsible and contributing members of society. • Good focus on relationships with parents. • Parent involvement is high. Parents are willing to support initiatives when they are communicated or when opinions are sought. • Great community support. • The schools are a welcoming and kind place. And the community of SLP is very giving and kind. • Great support of sports teams. • Opportunities for community involvement. • Clubs and classes that actively support and open the community to others. • Involvement with the community and outreach programs and resources to help underprivileged students. • There's a lot more diversity and I feel like there's a bigger sense of community within the schools. • St Louis Park community always supports the schools with referendum funding. • Families seem committed and proud of the community. • Diverse student body and supportive community. • Supportive community who cares about the district regardless of whether they have kids here. • We have strategic priorities which center children and families, especially those who have been historically under-served in our school system. • The race-equity work we have been engaged in for over a decade is our greatest strength and draws both families and staff to our district. • There is a strong community, families are very involved and eager to help. • School engagement with the community. • An engaged and committed community. We have consistently approved referendums to support our schools. • Great sense of community and looking out for one another. 	
<p>St. Louis Park Public Schools offer innovative curricular programs which contribute to a dynamic and well-rounded educational experience for students, and provide an enriching range of extracurricular activities that nurture students' diverse talents, interests, and needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers at the elementary level are learning about the science of reading and implementing new literacy curriculum. • Strong academic principles. • Excellent opportunities for children to grow as whole-person learners—intellectually, culturally, emotionally. • We find the new literacy curriculum outstanding. • STEM programs, MN outdoors, Language arts. • Educational reform through the design team/curricular and program review process. • Our professional development and curriculum is amazing. 	<p>168 related responses</p>



- *The history of good academics combined with focus on racial equity is a positive thing.*
- *New curriculums in phonemic awareness and phonics instruction in elementary schools is being used.*
- *We have systematic curriculum in core subjects. We've adopted a new literacy curriculum that is comprehensive.*
- *Early childhood programming is excellent. New emphasis on teaching reading fundamentals.*
- *Teachers are being incredibly creative with limited resources to craft the best education they can for students.*
- *There is an effort to recognize differences among learners.*
- *The high school is offering some variety in courses.*
- *Still have high standards for our schools and students are, by and large, still getting a good education in SLP.*
- *I choose St Louis Park because of how they embraced diversity while also promoting achievement and high standards for all students.*
- *The High School is going in a good direction by doing renovating and adding programs.*
- *There are a lot of good teachers who approach classrooms very well, as well as the focus on IB curriculum, and potential for academic achievement.*
- *A lot of inclusive programs.*
- *We appreciate the emphasis on learning about other cultures in the elementary school. We also appreciate the focus on arts education (music, theater, visual arts). We also appreciate the changes to the reading instruction.*
- *Innovative curriculum, International Baccalaureate program, focus on DEI.*
- *Middle school - Sound programming with the basics covered.*
- *Good academics and achievement within high diversity.*
- *Spanish immersion is an amazing opportunity for students!*
- *Curriculum that covers a broad array of topics including arts/creative learning. Smaller class sizes.*
- *Creating relatable curriculum for students.*
- *The early childhood and early childhood special education programs are thriving.*
- *The high school programming that provide real life skills to train our young people to get jobs is a great asset (the nursing program).*
- *The IB program and global perspective it brings to students.*
- *Broad set of offerings for students to be involved in (sports, clubs, activities).*
- *Sports and after-school activities.*
- *Student leadership programs.*
- *Early childhood programming is excellent. New emphasis on teaching reading fundamentals.*
- *Best practices being implemented by teaching staff.*
- *Opportunities for participation are greater and don't always need to compete to be part of a team. I like that Kids Place has been accessible and not a struggle to have a stop.*
- *Wide variety of co-curriculars offered at MS & HS.*
- *The steam programming (talent & development), access to regular gym and the outdoors.*
- *The early childhood programs are wonderful.*



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Park schools offer activities for a wide array of interests and remove barriers, as much as possible, for participation.</i> • <i>The middle school has a great music program that we really enjoy. The high school's choir and theater departments are great.</i> • <i>The extracurricular programs.</i> • <i>Support of sports teams.</i> • <i>Participating in the AP African American studies pilot program.</i> • <i>Several sports and activities options for students.</i> • <i>SOAR and their important conversations, other clubs, athletics.</i> • <i>Different things and programs we do in classes.</i> • <i>Programming and opportunities that allow students to explore their interests and strengthen their skills, such as arts, music, and theater classes, Talent Development classes, STEM classes, etc.</i> 	
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2. What challenges do you see for our district over the next five years?

Summary

In looking ahead, St. Louis Park Public Schools may face numerous challenges. These could include an increasing need for innovative educational approaches, declining test scores, and balancing equity and diversity efforts with academic rigor. In addition, families may opt for other schooling options due to academic and safety concerns, leading to decreasing enrollment which will impact funding and the district's competitive standing. Budget constraints would be exacerbated by this trend, with continued community concerns focused on the allocation of funds towards direct educational needs. Additionally, the district may struggle with recruiting and retaining high-quality staff, addressing staff burnout, and providing adequate support and resources to employees across the district. Other challenges could include addressing staff and student mental health issues, managing student behavior, and enhancing student safety to ensure a secure and supportive educational environment.

Key themes

<p>Survey respondents believe St. Louis Park Public Schools are likely to face significant challenges related to enrollment, impacting both funding and the district's long-standing reputation. This trend is influenced by factors such as families opting for neighboring or private schools due to perceived higher academic standards and perceived fewer safety issues elsewhere.</p>	<p>213 related responses</p>
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- *Competing with neighboring and private schools for enrollment.*
- *Declining enrollment resulting in lack of funding if students/families decide to leave the district.*
- *Enrollment sounds like it's been an issue since the pandemic.*
- *Lower enrollment because other schools have bigger budgets & better academics based on the data.*
- *The challenge is that enrollment is declining.*
- *Low enrollment/families choosing other options.*
- *How to deal with a changing population (and enrollment).*
- *A year over year decline in enrollment for SLP residents.*
- *A continued decline in enrollment. Parents will continue to leave the middle school if students have no opportunity for honors classes or if ap classes are scaled back in high school.*
- *Declining enrollment and budget shortfalls leading to cutbacks and starting a self-perpetuating downward spiral.*
- *Concerned about losing enrollment because of lack of differentiation as well as lowered academic standards.*
- *Adapting to continued funding cuts based on enrollment.*
- *Our enrollment has dropped because families left because of housing or that their schools are not meeting their academic needs.*
- *Stagnant and/or declining enrollment impacting funding.*
- *Declining enrollment due to lack of focus on fundamental academic rigor.*
- *Funding/enrollment – I debate if my kids should transfer to Edina or a private school.*
- *Enrollment fluctuation and budget.*
- *We know several families that have left the district after elementary school due to concerns about lack of academic rigor and safety.*
- *The district needs to retain more SLP kids and limit our open enrollment.*
- *Declining enrollment is affecting finances/budget (need to capture larger share of students within district boundaries).*
- *Declining enrollment, declining capture rate of SLP students, declining reputation of the district resulting in families leaving or never starting in SLP.*
- *Declining enrollment and the district's inability or lack of desire to adapt. Macro factors such as declining birth rates are one factor, but the competition from private, charter and other public schools has made student acquisition/retention a challenge for a district who cannot marry academic rigor and racial equity.*
- *Enrollment - with a consumer-driven school, SLP has to compete with bigger districts and private schools.*
- *Diminishing student enrollment must be addressed.*
- *We continue to see enrollment decline.*
- *Exodus of St. louis park families to suburban schools with better academic performance through open enrollment.*
- *Enrollment from within St. louis park is dropping; reasons include the lack of art and science classes in elementary schools, discipline issues and the removal of advanced classes at the middle school and dropping standardized test scores across the district.*
- *Keeping enrollment up.*



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enrollment and test scores which are connected. marketing is needed to show community and state of Minnesota why people choose St. Louis Park Public Schools.</i> • <i>Loss of parental and community confidence, declining enrollment</i> • <i>Academically talented students (and their dedicated parents) leaving the district, no longer feels like a small-town neighborhood school, catering to open enrollment students.</i> • <i>Declining enrollment. People are leaving the district due to lack of reading and math intervention programs at the elementary schools that other nearby districts provide.</i> • <i>Our students need to feel safe going to school and right now they do not. if this is not handled i see declining enrollment happening.</i> • <i>Financial impact of enrollment.</i> • <i>Maintaining a sustainable enrollment.</i> • <i>Declining enrollment as kids reach high school.</i> • <i>It seems every year more and more families remove their kids to go to another school.</i> • <i>I worry about losing more families to outside districts and private schools.</i> • <i>Declining enrollment of SLP district students due to lack of discipline.</i> 	
<p>Like many districts, St. Louis Park Public Schools may face increasing budget constraints and funding challenges, which could be affected by any decline in student enrollment. The community has a growing concern over how funds are allocated, emphasizing a desire to direct more funds to directly addressing students’ educational needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increasing expectations for public schools paired with fewer resources.</i> • <i>Making the best use of a small but large district with a small but large staff.</i> • <i>We all want more funding & budgets to support a better education, but it continues to be an issue & our district suffers from this.</i> • <i>There are continual funding issues.</i> • <i>Fundraising, grants, getting money into the district.</i> • <i>Declining funding.</i> • <i>The budget needs to be managed better so that the district can stop asking for special taxpayer levies, etc.</i> • <i>Funding - there are always more desires than available funding.</i> • <i>As we experience more park residents open enrolling in neighboring communities or seeking private school options, i anticipate that more financial challenges can be on the horizon.</i> • <i>Budget constraints and shortages of staff.</i> • <i>Managing district finances so less gets spent outside classrooms and more students from within SLP are enrolled.</i> • <i>Put the money at the classroom level.</i> • <i>Ensuring funding for diverse programs and opportunities.</i> • <i>Budget shortfalls leading to cutbacks.</i> • <i>Getting budget needed to effective learning.</i> 	190



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Adapting to continued funding cuts based on enrollment.</i> • <i>Making sure we manage our budget well, since i know there were a lot of renovations.</i> • <i>Budget cuts take great teachers, funding for extracurricular activities (which seems to hit the arts more than athletics), assistance with monitoring for violence and vaping, and effective discipline needed.</i> • <i>It's possible that there will be budget issues with remodeling the school.</i> • <i>The way they spend money. We did not need a new cafeteria. It was fine and we could have spent the money on field trips and other things to make our education more fun.</i> • <i>Financial management, specifically within the school system, the distribution of wealth throughout the schools needs work.</i> • <i>Construction delays meaning we must put more money in the money hole, the deficit that led to mass firings recently continuing and subsequent bankruptcy.</i> • <i>Financial stability, there seems to be spending even though they talk about budget problems.</i> • <i>The need to spend money on retaining teachers and staff and less on building upgrades.</i> • <i>Cuts in funding leading to more responsibility placed on the classroom teachers with limited time and resources.</i> • <i>Funding - no more referendums to make up for shortfalls or to pay for technology that will be obsolete within a year.</i> • <i>The school district's budget and spending needs to be scrutinized and changes need to be made to get the budget under control.</i> • <i>Finances - with the cost of living on the rise, schools are struggling to meet their finance needs.</i> • <i>The budget cuts and declining enrollment need to be addressed; the district's financial future is murky.</i> • <i>An increasing amount of focus & money is spent on remedial efforts.</i> • <i>Raising cost of transportation, finishing building projects while staying within budget.</i> 	
<p>Also like many districts, SLP Schools are encountering difficulties in retaining and recruiting high-quality staff, managing staff burnout, and providing staff with adequate support and resources. At the same time workload expectations may continue to increase, leading to additional stress for district staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Supports need to be put back in place in order to support scholars and teachers.</i> • <i>Shifting resources and attention to address the overwhelming social/emotional needs of both staff and students.</i> • <i>Supporting staff and keeping enough staff.</i> • <i>We need to provide support and training to new teachers.</i> • <i>Teacher burnout, evolving with the times & finding more innovative ways to teach.</i> • <i>High number of special education needs with little para support, difficult to keep paras staffed.</i> 	<p>147 related responses</p>



- *I believe we are going to see a massive burnout of staff.*
- *A continued need for increased special education support.*
- *Teacher burnout because of not being allowed to work part time or job share at elementary schools.*
- *We need to do whatever we can to support teachers and support staff to make education great.*
- *There simply isn't enough resources/attention to handle students.*
- *Getting back to supporting teachers with specialists.*
- *Teacher burnout - more and more teachers leaving for lack of compensation for an over-stacked workload. Other reasons for teachers leaving include lack of support or sense of solidarity with admin. High school continuously asks more and more of teachers when it comes to classroom and hallway management.*
- *Budget cuts that impact teachers and support staff will continue to have a negative impact on all students.*
- *Enough staffing with the right experience and education to support mission and environment.*
- *Lack of engagement due to burnout.*
- *Public education keeps getting harder with fewer resources and needier students.*
- *We need to support teachers and staff with the resources they need— retain good teachers at all cost!*
- *Because teachers aren't receiving the same support from admin, teachers are quitting, and soon we won't have enough teachers with a passion for teaching.*
- *Veteran teachers leaving and younger teachers leaving (due to lack of mentoring for younger teachers) and the immense challenges for all teachers with so many new curricula, student behaviors increasingly challenging with a lack of mental health resources, less and less time for proper lesson preparation and higher-class sizes.*
- *Staff are exhausted and need support and leadership to effectively guide and encourage all children.*
- *Cuts in funding lead to more responsibility placed on the classroom teachers with limited time and resources. Teacher burnout.*
- *Maintaining staff burnout as educational roles become more tiresome.*
- *Support staff to ensure they want to remain in the field.*
- *Staff retention for education in general; Teacher burnout.*
- *Educating and supporting District leaders, and growing future leaders.*
- *District doesn't pay enough to retain special needs staff or teachers; definitely doesn't pay a competitive wage for substitute teachers; sped retention; not enough teachers for growing grade sizes.*
- *Teacher burnout, more students needing support and limited resources.*
- *Good teachers quitting the profession, lack of resources, too much on teachers plates and not enough support.*
- *Teachers want to feel supported by their leadership in this stance, mission, and vision.*
- *Teachers often express frustration at the lack of support from the school district, which hampers efforts to help students are struggling with their schoolwork or who are ready for more challenging work.*



St. Louis Park Public Schools will continue to face challenges in addressing mental health for both educators and students, as well as managing student behavior and enhancing overall student safety to maintain a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

142 related responses

- *Safety in schools - how to keep a safe learning environment?*
- *Welcoming inclusive values and viewpoints while also keeping developmentally appropriate practice in view for all learners.*
- *Students not being held accountable for behavior. This has gotten way out of hand. There are no significant consequences and teachers get in trouble.*
- *Increase in discipline/disruptive behaviors.*
- *Our students need to feel safe going to school and right now they do not.*
- *Addressing student needs in mental health.*
- *Effectively implementing restorative practices, so that behavior concerns are adequately addressed and schools can have a peaceful and effective learning environment.*
- *Changing student behavior.*
- *Discipline is a big concern for me as a parent. It seems that kids can get away with anything. This is and worsening test scores are only going to increase the amount of families leaving the district.*
- *Unruly, undisciplined students.*
- *Making the school more inclusive.*
- *Not having bullying.*
- *Making sure to be supportive and inclusive of lgbtq+ people in the community.*
- *Kids mental health.*
- *We have noticed a lack of support when it comes to mental health.*
- *Hold students accountable for behavior.*
- *Behaviors in school have shifted dramatically over the years and we seem to be lacking appropriate resources to be proactive and shift our standard thinking into new thinking on how to best meet the needs of the students educational, emotionally, and behaviorally. it would be important to have more relevant training to managing behaviors and academics that may reshape how we address current needs.*
- *Maintaining a safe learning environment. I am still highly concerned about the changes with the school resource officers.*
- *Increasing number of students to teachers, no control of misbehaved students, increased bullying and social media trends.*
- *Disruptive students are continuing to distract, the environment is loud because of kids who don't listen, are growing up and are not learning respect, they feel like they can get away with anything.*
- *Lack of appropriate disciplinary action which makes it hard for other students to learn, very serious student safety concerns,*
- *Lots of behavior problems and disrespect in ms and hs, and because of inclusivity there is not always lot of correction of these behaviors.*
- *Regular kids are being short changed due to disruptive classmates.*



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A complete lack of discipline options available to teachers and ability to remove distractions from the classrooms makes it nearly impossible to teach the students who are willing to learn.</i> • <i>Lack of accountability for high school students who wander the halls, don't attend class, don't do homework, etc. the expectations have been lowered so much that it is doing at risk students a disservice to have no consequences for their actions.</i> • <i>School safety for all students and staff at all slp schools.</i> • <i>Becoming a district struggling with discipline - getting consistent hallway roamers and class disrupters into a space that fits their needs vs just letting these students continue to disrupt.</i> • <i>I have observed teachers deal with all kinds of behavioral issues in the classroom-taking away from the learning of those students as well as the rest of the students.</i> • <i>Focusing on mental health support is also incredibly important for the well-being of students and would improve school safety (gun violence, drug use, other harmful acts) possibly through stress management practices such as guilt and stigma-free counseling and teaching mindfulness through meditation.</i> • <i>More fights happening, cyberbullying.</i> • <i>Being inclusive.</i> • <i>Managing students behavior, dealing with social changes, behavioral plans not working.</i> • <i>Peer pressure and bullying in schools, especially in elementary schools.</i> • <i>Inclusion of new students, fighting and social media, bullying and no teachers stepping up.</i> • <i>Safety and increasing and keeping our schools safe.</i> • <i>My impression is that behaviors are a bit out of control, very little accountability for those that disrupt learning, ruining the experience for all.</i> • <i>We need to invest in school mental health personnel to reduce our embarrassingly high student-to-staff ratios. We need to invest in behavioral intervention/supports rather than fly by the seat of our pants.</i> • <i>Developing and implementing effective and culturally responsive student supports is a significant need! we are so very behind. we must invest in student support systems that promote not just academic but social and emotional needs as well.</i> 	
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3. What does the new superintendent need to know about the history of the school district and community to be successful?

Summary

To succeed, the new superintendent of St. Louis Park Public Schools must grasp the district's legacy of prioritizing high-quality academics as well as diversity and inclusivity. They should be aware of the concerns regarding declining academic standards and the need for a



balanced approach between equity initiatives and academic rigor. Recognizing the district's history as a progressive, tight-knit community, the superintendent should be adept at integrating various cultures and addressing changing demographics. Success will hinge on the superintendent's ability to listen, lead with empathy, maintain transparency, and engage in effective communication. They must be proficient in balancing diverse viewpoints, prioritizing both equity and academic excellence, and steadfastly uphold the district's core values and vision while ensuring the voices of students, staff, parents, and the broader community are heard and respected in decision-making processes.

Key themes

<p>The next superintendent needs to understand the district's historical commitment to academics, diversity, and inclusivity, while recognizing a perceived relaxation of academic standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>This community has had one of the top high school and middle schools in the nation in the past. They achieved this by focusing on academic rigor and excellence while respecting student and their family's diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.</i> <i>Increase academic standards in elementary and middle school. Bring back small group learning.</i> <i>SLP Schools used to be a draw to our city, lately it's moving people to open enroll elsewhere. We need to bring back rigor in our curriculum and not cater to "fairness" above everything else. Those that want to excel should have the opportunity, those that need more support should be given the support, it's not one-size fits all.</i> <i>There is a history of high student achievement in SLP, which we are very proud of. Recent declines in reading and math test scores (especially at the secondary level) are concerning, along with the district's decision in recent years to remove reading/math interventions from elementary schools and eliminate certain honors options in middle/high school.</i> <i>We have a long history of putting equity, most specifically racial equity, at the fore front. This is important, but it has been at the fore front for at least 20+ years and unfortunately it has not allowed for time and opportunity to really work deeply on academics and also other kinds of equity work.</i> <i>We need to catch up to some of the surrounding districts and make SLP a place people seek out vs families always questioning whether or not they want to stay in the district for Middle and High School.</i> <i>The school district has been getting worse, as good teachers leave, the curriculum is dumbed down.</i> <i>We need to support the families that actually live in St. Louis Park first and foremost, equity has always been strongly valued. However, achieving equity only on a surface level with lip service does not actually serve the students and community. Education and supporting academic achievement for all socioeconomic classes need to be prioritized more.</i> 	<p>118 related responses</p>
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- *This is an inclusive school & there's a lot of pride for that fact. We care about a great education and arming our teens with knowledge and experiences to set them up for success for their next chapter.*
- *The focus historically on high-quality academics. I think parents will continue to leave if this focus is not there, especially as families left for private schools during the pandemic and see that standards are high at private schools.*
- *St Louis Park has a history of being progressive on topics of inclusion and belonging and we should not go backwards.*
- *I believe in equity and inclusion but not at the cost of our kids excelling to their full potential. Let's set the bar high and push our kids.*
- *We have a history of high student achievement, along with a diverse student population. These are things our community is proud of and want to see continue in the future.*
- *SLP used to be a district with a strong brand. One that people trusted and were excited and proud to send their kids to every day. Now their brand is slipping to one where people are scared of the low academic outcomes and thus looking for options out of district. We can definitely get back to the previous brand but it will take making hard choices around what is best for kids and their academic outcomes. If it isn't serving immediate learning goals around reading and number sense it shouldn't be prioritized until we get those two building blocks set again.*
- *Historically, the SLP district was known for academic excellence. In the past 5 years or so, the academics have dramatically declined.*
- *Our students learning is suffering because of cuts to essential programs and increases in class sizes when academic and social/emotional needs are at an all time high.*
- *I believe we are doing a disservice to our young people in not providing them with as much academic rigor as they can handle, and thus preparing to compete on a global stage.*
- *It is important to note the history of intervention programming and note how this has impacted schools, families and students in positive and negative ways.*
- *SLP has always prided itself on being inclusive and diverse.*
- *We want test scores back up and kids held accountable for their actions.*
- *SLP is a great district and I believe we can continue to be great. I strongly believe in the mission of equity and diversity throughout the district. That being said, the district took that too far and forgot the kids that are quietly doing their work and wanting to strive for more.*
- *Getting rid of accelerated math programs, gifted and talented programs, and also more support for reading intervention at the elementary school level has caused many people to pull their students out of SLP.*
- *AP classes at HS is something that is important and allows students to be challenged and get college credit. Many students now are leaving for other districts or PSEO to pursuit college credit.*
- *Our equity work and the importance of it and that it continues.*
- *We need to provide a challenging academic experience for ALL students.*
- *Our district has too many initiatives in place and because of that we do a lot of things, but very few of them are done well. I would like to see an increased focus on making sure kids are reading well by 3rd grade with the inclusion of extra support for kids who need it.*



- *We need to increase our focus and dedicate resources towards social-emotional learning opportunities with implementation of a curriculum for students.*
- *Equality of ALL students, keeping high academic standards.*
- *St Louis Park schools used to have a fantastic reputation. Parents chose to live in SLP because they valued the diversity of our community as well as the academic opportunities available to all students. We cannot accept the recent declines in academic performance as the new normal.*
- *Strong community pride in our schools.*
- *The reasons for including more diversity/inclusion goals in the curriculum.*
- *People have pride living in SLP and want their schools to reflect the high quality of life here.*
- *I want the new superintendent to be passionate about racial equity. I don't want our students and community members to believe this has somehow lost its importance.*
- *There seems to be some tension between focusing on important equity and inclusion initiatives and focusing on core academic skills to ensure our young people are adequately prepared for post-high school work and education.*
- *Our district has allowed lower standards by teachers and thus students, in regard to both behavior and academics. At the middle school teachers are teaching to the lowest learners, and students who want to learn are not being challenged.*
- *It's vast diverse direction and implementation of diversity in education, cultural competency, culturally relevant curriculum and ensuring that future staff is upheld to high cultural and diverse expectations that are meeting SLP Schools.*
- *Continue to invest in the schools and attract people into SLP by having the best test scores in the west metro.*
- *I would like to see the racial equity focus continue.*
- *The SLP community strongly values education. The community also values equity, and wants all students to maximally benefit from school resources.*
- *We will not accept anything but the most inclusive environment for our students.*
- *That SLP was and should continue to be a beacon - a leader in education - and that it has a strong history of educating well.*
- *To be successful, we need to return to having high expectations for our students both behaviorally and academically. Our scores have decreased and we no longer seem to be the Park that had parents fighting to get their child enrolled because of academic staffs and rigorous education.*
- *Figure out how to be inclusive and also how to provide a top education for every single kid.*
- *SLP Schools used to be the school so many wanted their kids to attend. For the academics, elective options, school sizes (big enough, but not overwhelming), diversity, inclusion, extracurricular opportunities, teacher to student ratio, etc.*
- *I think a lot of people here value an inclusive environment. It's important to maintain that.*
- *That this is a school that is a inclusive community and you need to be able to be flexible.*
- *Our history of racial equity & diversity.*
- *SLP has a WONDERFUL history of inclusion and academic success. Unfortunately, the more recent laser-focus on JUST racial equity has been expensive and ineffective and weakened the academic success and staff morality in the district.*



<p><i>While racial equity is extremely important, it CANNOT be the single focus of finances and professional development.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• The school is very diverse so they need to be accepting and inclusive.</i> <i>• Our district's gifted & talented program has been gutted, test scores are unimpressive at best, and families are leaving for private schools in droves.</i> <i>• Racial equity is at it full front and it is an important work at SLP.</i> <i>• Inclusive and high achievement at all levels.</i> 	
<p>To be successful, the next superintendent must prioritize transparency, effective communication, and active listening to the needs and feedback of students, staff, parents, and the community. Multiple voices should be included as decisions are being made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• We need to have transparency on these issues & listen to what kids & parents are saying.</i> <i>• Staff across all programs do not feel heard and appreciated- this needs to be rectified.</i> <i>• Either the use of funding has not been spent appropriately or communication about where money is going is not accurate- either way this needs to be addressed and communicated to staff.</i> <i>• That we are passionate about our students receiving a strong education, that we want to build a compassionate and connected community, communication and honesty are vital.</i> <i>• We're supportive of our public schools, but need more transparency.</i> <i>• That cooperation between the members of this community, in my opinion, thrives on open discussion and asking questions when needed.</i> <i>• She/He must respect differences and be open to the voices of others.</i> <i>• We should ask all stakeholders; especially the teachers, for input before decisions are made.</i> <i>• We like to have community involvement in our schools.</i> <i>• Please be transparent with where all the money goes that the school district acquired, from public voters and our taxes. Please keep families informed of all the changes happening in the district.</i> <i>• Listen to all voices. Ask families who have left the district why they chose to leave.</i> <i>• Involvement of the community members and maintaining positive communication and relationships will help with adding new families to our district.</i> <i>• This community values transparency and honesty, diversity, equity and inclusion, and academic excellence.</i> <i>• SLP district parents vigorously value transparency. The new superintendent should view their role as a collaborative leader who listens to feedback and clearly communicates reasons for curricular, facility, and resource decision.</i> <i>• Community support has always been strong but relies on openness and transparency. Being available to parents and approachable is very important.</i> <i>• As the district moves forward, it is important that its superintendent listens to the community as well as the staff. All need to feel their voices are being heard.</i> 	<p>64 related responses</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They should actually listen to student voices. • I believe being a leader also means to listen to the people you are being a leader for. • They have to be able to listen to students. • They need to listen to the community as a whole citizens are vested and they need to be listened to and really heard. Not just head nodding. • Take student feedback seriously. • Strong support for education in community, but need transparency and solid ethics. • Figure out how to streamline communication/involvement so that it's meaningful, straight-forward. • There should be clear communication from admin to staff. • Hopeful that big changes can be better thought out and communicated regarding the rationale to the stakeholders. 	
<p>The next superintendent must understand St. Louis Park is a small, tight-knit community with a history of progressive values and diversity, but it is also facing challenges in integrating new cultures and adapting to the community’s changing demographics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are plenty of moderates and conservatives in SLP. • We are a small school district surrounded by larger districts, so we have a strong sense of community. • St Louis Park has a history of being progressive on topics of inclusion and belonging. • St. Louis Park has had a long history of a large Jewish population. For the last several years the population has decreased significantly. This has been in large part due to the atmosphere in the schools. • The history and pride this school and many suburban communities once had prior to the influx of so many different cultures without the proper understanding or knowledge as to how to accomplish the integration successfully. • This is an inner-ring suburban school district with a small-town feel. • SLP has always prided itself on being inclusive and diverse. Starting with its history of a large Jewish community. • History of progressive thinking. • The history and evolution of the city’s demographics and diverse cultures that reside and contribute to it. • Needs to know about community demographics and history. • We have one of, if not the most, active and largest population of Jewish students compared to the other public schools in the state. That's because SLP has been made to be a place where we feel safe and welcome, that feeling has diminished over the past year, but it's something we definitely wish to return. • They need to know the history of this land and why it's important to us that we acknowledge it. • SLP has a WONDERFUL history of inclusion and academic success. 	<p>59 related responses</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I think a knowledge of the diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds that have historically and currently make up the school district and community is important.</i> • <i>What makes this district amazing is the well rounded community with people from all walks of life and backgrounds.</i> • <i>St. Louis Park is a racially and socioeconomically diverse city that is a gem within the Twin Cities metro area. It is generally quiet and safe, yet accessible to everywhere. The community has many progressive residents who value diversity & inclusion, and generally support education initiatives through voting.</i> • <i>They need to know that our community is highly engaged, diverse, and eager to commit to making this district exceptional.</i> • <i>SLP is a small tight community and leaders are successful here that engage with the community.</i> • <i>Long history of community passing all tax levies although it has an aging population.</i> • <i>This is a big city with a small town feel and we love that.</i> 	
<p>To be successful, the new superintendent should possess not only hard skills but also soft skills such as empathy, transparency, and collaboration, as well as hold strengths in trust and relationship-building. They should also possess emotional intelligence and strong, synergistic leadership skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I hope the new superintendent would not feel pressure to pull back in our values of tolerance and acceptance, and instead will stand grounded in our core values while also encouraging families to join us in our work.</i> • <i>The Superintendent needs to align with the goals and vision that the district is already pursuing.</i> • <i>We need someone to have a backbone. The superintendent needs to also balance a multi-cultural district that has many different views and be inclusive of ALL - not just one - perspective.</i> • <i>The new superintendent needs to make it a good learning environment again.</i> • <i>They have to be skilled in helping the entire SLP community understand the "why" behind the commitment to racial equity.</i> • <i>I am looking for a superintendent who will stand STRONG in making brave and just choices that align with our mission and vision.</i> • <i>There seems to be some tension between focusing on important equity and inclusion initiatives and focusing on core academic skills to ensure our young people are adequately prepared for post-high school work and education. This is a both/and, and the next superintendent will need to navigate these sometimes polarizing perspectives.</i> • <i>We need a strong leader who is either going to manage decline or grow enrollment.</i> • <i>The future superintendent MUST be a leader in this category to protect the vision and mission.</i> 	<p>50 related responses</p>



- *The new superintendent should view their role as a collaborative leader who listens to feedback and clearly communicates reasons for curricular, facility, and resource decision.*
- *Strong, trustworthy leadership is needed. The community values equity and top curriculum. Diverse needs and limited resources will require clear vision and communication.*
- *Be a good communicator and leader.*
- *Empathy is really important to have in order to be successful because there are many different people with different lifestyles.*
- *Identify needs and policies, develop regulations, provide leadership, and manage the day-to-day operation of the district.*
- *Our students are blessed to meet so many people from different parts of the world and different economic circumstances. Our superintendent needs to understand and embrace that- which includes prioritizing both the most disadvantaged students AND the most academically talented students.*
- *Hopeful that big changes can be better thought out and communicated regarding the rationale to the stakeholders.*
- *You don't have to be super-human but respect yourself and the community enough to maintain a level of honorable leadership worth the title.*
- *We need a Superintendent to be excited about working with the schools/staff/students and will hold people accountable. We need someone that can delegate well, expects the best from themselves and others and communicates clear strategy and expectations. We need someone that can consistently hold themselves and staff/teachers/students accountable. Honesty and consistent engagement and evaluations of leaders in the district is important as well.*
- *SLP needs strong, transparent, effective leadership. Our children deserve the best.*
- *A clear understanding of our trajectory with racial equity transformation, and a clear vision for how to move forward to strengthen and deepen our work. This is CRITICAL to finding a superintendent who will come work with us to move forward - and not create a new trajectory.*
- *St. Louis Park Public Schools has always valued the involvement of ALL stakeholders in decision making even when cumbersome - from senior citizens to community members to business leaders and all staff members at all levels within the district.*
- *I seek a superintendent who brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the position and can leverage those learnings to improve the academic programs for our children.*
- *We have had our ups and downs in many ways, but our district is resilient and can bounce back with the proper leadership.*
- *I believe they need to recognize the work that has been done to bring this system to where it is, and they need to have evidence of minimally a commitment or disposition to be vulnerable as a leader as it relates to issues of racial equity as it relates to developing people and systems to deliver results.*
- *A strong vision will be more important than trying to incorporate the community's whims. Presenting a getting buy-in to a solid plan will work better than blindly implementing the latest, popular policy idea.*



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We NEED someone who understands elementary students and their needs. It's hugely important for the foundation to be strong for the future to also be strong. Elementary students aren't just small high schoolers.</i> • <i>It is important that the superintendent be completely transparent with everything happening within the district.</i> • <i>We work with each other; we show leadership and empathy. The next superintendent needs to care about everyone who enters school.</i> 	
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4. Additional Comments:

<p>The next superintendent should be a transparent, effective communicator and leader, committed to high academic standards, ethical decision-making, inclusivity, and active engagement with stakeholders to foster a trusting, diverse, and equitable educational environment for all students across the district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I hope our next superintendent is truly serious about academic rigor, growth and progress.</i> • <i>I would want to make sure the next superintendent is an effective leader.</i> • <i>I like teachers and people in charge that are happy and are willing to cooperate and know that they're working with a team and are not just making decisions on their own. Also the superintendent should be a nice person.</i> • <i>It's vital that the new Superintendent show complete transparency with the community about what is happening with the district.</i> • <i>My hope for the new superintendent is to look at what is being done and who is doing what.</i> • <i>The new superintendent needs to have a strong academic and curriculum savvy background, a strong moral & ethical compass, exceptional leadership qualities and good communication skills.</i> • <i>I want our new superintendent to value the human experience and work to ensure that all community members feel like they are worthy of dignity, safety and a sense of belonging.</i> • <i>New superintendent should be able to benchmark against other thriving school districts and implement changes that have made them successful.</i> • <i>We need a superintendent who thoughtfully involves stakeholders and communicates effectively. We need one who can guide the administration effectively, someone who is fair yet holds high standards.</i> • <i>The superintendent should be able to define the word equity and how it differs from the word equality.</i> • <i>SLP needs leaders who appreciate and consider the input of employees in the trenches, have meaningful dialogue with staff, and work with staff to make significant continuous improvement in the district that results in better student outcomes.</i> 	<p>65 related responses</p>
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- *I just hope they will be able to make decisions based on the needs of the students and the school. Not for money or simplicity.*
- *I want to see a superintendent that prizes diversity, but not at the expense of offering advanced classes, and offering space for gifted students.*
- *We need a superintendent with an open mind that is wanting and willing to see all points of view.*
- *I think that the Superintendent role in a school district should be one that is grounded in desire to do the best for the children and learners in the community that he/she is working in. Leading by example with compassion, integrity, transparency and accountability.*
- *The new superintendent must create a plan to retain and attract families. The more students we lose, the more difficult our situation will be.*
- *We need an experienced, hardworking superintendent with endless energy who is passionate about lifting ALL students.*
- *I hope that our new superintendent can come in with a fresh set of eyes and build a high level of trust with the community. I believe that transparency about the current state of our district will be critical to building trust in our community.*
- *It would be great if the new superintendent made an effort to know who staff is and what their contributions to the district have been.*
- *I hope our new superintendent is willing to speak to all stakeholders to figure out what is working and not working at every level.*
- *Communication is the key. Hoping we can find a new superintendent who understands the importance of building relationships with staff, parents and the community through meaningful conversation that makes everyone feel heard and valued.*



Community Input Sessions

SOMALI PARENT GROUP

On January 18, 2024, MSBA and St. Louis Park Public Schools staff met with 15 Somali parents/guardians and asked them four open-ended questions. The results of the listening sessions were reviewed by MSBA representatives. Below is a summary of the discussion for each question.

1. What are some good things about your student’s school or education?

St. Louis Park Public Schools is well-regarded for its quality of education and has a positive reputation. This perception is shared by both longstanding residents and those who have recently moved to the district. Parents appreciate the school's proactive approach in communication, notably through emails and phone calls whenever a student falls behind or faces issues. Additionally, there is an efficient system in place that allows parents to stay informed about their children's homework and missing assignments.

The approach to homework is also notable, with some parents highlighting that students often complete their work at school, reducing the burden on families, particularly those who may face language barriers. Safety at the school is considered good, and there's prompt communication from teachers regarding various aspects of the students' educational experience. Overall, the school district is seen as providing a supportive and effective educational environment.



2. What are some challenges about your student’s school or education?

The primary challenges attendees identified for St. Louis Park Public Schools center around transportation and communication issues. Parents face difficulties due to the lack of nearby bus stops, forcing students to walk considerable distances to catch their transport. Additionally, the school's communication system poses challenges, particularly for non-English speaking families.



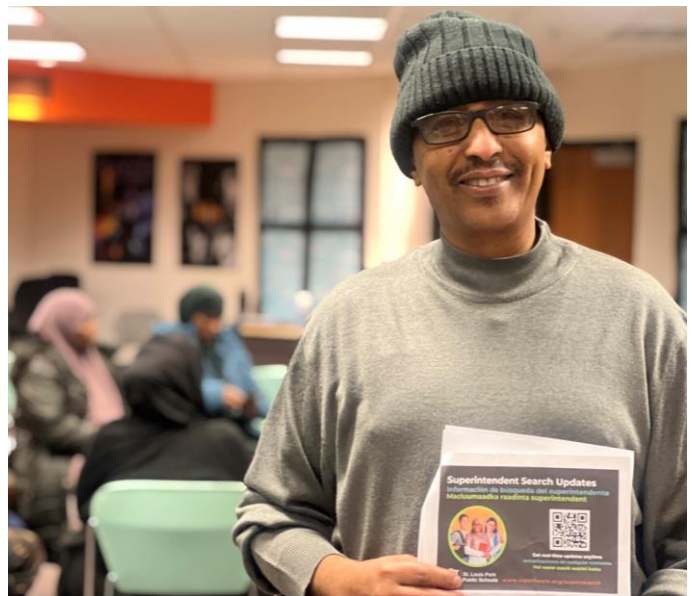
There's a notable need for more language support, like Somali-speaking liaisons, to bridge the communication gap. Parents also struggle with understanding the process for scheduling meetings with teachers and obtaining clear information about their children's academic performance.

Disciplinary measures and conflict resolution within the school are other areas of concern. There are instances of student fights, with some parents expressing frustration over the handling of these incidents. They report a lack of thorough investigation, leading to unfair blame on students, including those facing language barriers. This situation is compounded by a perceived inadequacy in addressing concerns raised by students and parents, which sometimes escalates to physical confrontations. Moreover, issues with the attendance reporting system, where students are marked absent despite being in school, further highlight the need for improved administrative processes and transparency in the school's operations.

3. What personal characteristics, skills, or areas of expertise are important for the new superintendent to have?

The ideal superintendent for the district should be highly accessible, demonstrating a strong commitment to engaging with parents and attentively listening to their concerns. Key personal traits for this role include patience, a genuine passion for education, and being approachable. This accessibility is crucial in fostering a trusting and open relationship between the school administration and the community. The ability to effectively communicate is paramount, not only in addressing current issues but also in regularly updating parents and the community about ongoing developments within the school.

In addition to interpersonal skills, the superintendent should embody fairness and accountability. This includes holding principals accountable for their actions and ensuring progress in educational outcomes without granting special privileges to any group. A keen sensitivity to cultural diversity is essential, with the superintendent needing to be comfortable and fair in interactions with people from various cultural and religious backgrounds. Building and maintaining relationships with students and parents is also vital, alongside a preference for peaceful resolution of issues. Overall, the community seeks a superintendent who can navigate the diverse needs of the school while fostering an inclusive and progressive environment.



4. What does the new superintendent need to understand about your family or community to be successful?

The new superintendent needs to have a deep understanding of the specific educational and cultural needs of the diverse community they will serve. One major aspect is the unique challenge with ESL (English as a Second Language) education. Many children in the community, especially those arriving from overseas, require substantial ESL support. These students are often placed in classes based on their age rather than their academic proficiency, leading to a need for more resources and tailored support to bring their English skills up to standard. Additionally, there is a desire for greater cultural sensitivity in the school environment, including accommodating practices for religious observance, such as providing prayer spaces and breaks.

Furthermore, the superintendent should be aware of and sensitive to the community's concerns regarding certain aspects of the curriculum, particularly those that may conflict with Islamic faith and values. The community expects to be informed about and involved in discussions related to curriculum content that may go against their beliefs. On a broader note, the superintendent should possess a rich background in dealing with diverse communities, bringing experience and maturity to the role. They should be someone who can exhibit patience and understanding, effectively engaging with families. This includes playing a supportive role akin to a parental figure when necessary, helping children, especially those new to the country, to come out of their shells and feel comfortable in the school environment.



LATINO PARENT GROUP

On January 24, 2024, MSBA and St. Louis Park Public Schools staff met with 18 Latino parents/guardians and asked them four open-ended questions. The results of the listening sessions were reviewed by MSBA representatives. Below is a summary of the discussion for each question.

1. What are some good things about your student's school or education?

The school district is positively regarded for its proactive engagement with families, particularly through initiatives like the "Bring it Home" program. This program is especially beneficial for Latino families, providing essential information, fostering a platform for parental feedback, and focusing on cultural and familial aspects important to the community. These meetings are a vital resource for parents to understand and contribute to their children's education, highlighting the district's commitment to inclusivity and responsiveness to diverse needs.

The leadership within the schools is highly appreciated for their active involvement and accessibility. They are recognized for their hands-on approach, constantly interacting with students and parents, which contributes significantly to the positive school environment. However, engaging a wider range of families in these programs remains a challenge, often due to work commitments and other constraints faced by parents. Despite these challenges, there is a strong sense of community among participating families, underscoring the importance of such involvement for their children's and the community's future. Overall, the district is commended for its effective communication, safety measures, extracurricular activities, and the supportive role of cultural liaisons, which collectively enhance the educational experience.



2. What are some challenges about your student's school or education?

The challenges faced by students and their families in this school district are multifaceted, encompassing aspects of safety, communication, and logistical issues. Safety concerns are a significant issue, with incidents at the high school causing fear among students and parents. The presence of police in schools has been reassuring for some, emphasizing a need for continued attention to safety, especially as students transition to middle school. Parents recognize that no school can guarantee complete safety due to the diverse personalities and behaviors of students. They emphasize the importance of parental responsibility in educating children, acknowledging the influences of peers and media on young minds. Other concerns include bullying, inappropriate language, and a perceived disconnect between teachers and student experiences. Additionally,



practical issues like heavy backpacks, unsatisfactory food service options, and the impact of transportation cuts on families' ability to get their children to school, particularly in bad weather, were highlighted. Despite these challenges, the high school is still regarded as a great school, with the belief that incidents like fights can serve as wake-up calls, reinforcing the need for vigilance and community involvement in school safety.

Logistic and communication barriers also present challenges. The reliance on email for communication can be ineffective, especially for parents facing language barriers or those without regular access to email. School closures due to incidents disrupt the routines of working parents. Language barriers also hinder participation in school meetings, with uncertainty about the availability of interpreters. These challenges underscore the need for the school district to consider its practices related to parent/guardian communication.

3. What personal characteristics, skills, or areas of expertise are important for the new superintendent to have?

The new superintendent must possess a blend of strong communication skills and a deep understanding of diverse community needs. Direct and clear communication with families is crucial, with an emphasis on effectively conveying plans and actions. The ability to actively seek and incorporate feedback from various community groups, such as Latino families, is essential. The superintendent should be approachable and personable, creating an environment where families feel seen and valued. This openness should extend to asking for and receiving help from the community, fostering a collaborative relationship. The new superintendent should appreciate and value diversity, ensuring all community members feel acknowledged and respected. Their presence and involvement in school activities are important for creating a sense of community and providing parents with peace of mind about their children's education and well-being.

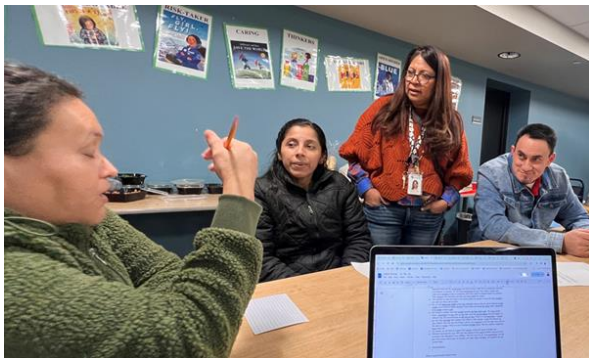
Additionally, the superintendent should recognize and address the varying needs and opportunities of different students. They should support and reinforce values like kindness, manners, and respect, which are taught at home, ensuring that the school and home environments are aligned. The importance of consequences and accountability in student behavior, such as policies on phone usage, is a concern that needs addressing.



4. What does the new superintendent need to understand about your family or community to be successful?

For the new superintendent to be successful, it is crucial to understand and actively support the growing Latino community within the school district. This community seeks not only recognition but also meaningful inclusion in the decision-making process. They express a desire to be more involved in various aspects of the school system, including understanding how to become a school board member, volunteer opportunities, and ways to assist schools. However, there's a lack of clear communication about these opportunities, indicating a need for more outreach and information dissemination.

The community also has specific communication preferences, such as receiving text messages from school principals and the district, which may be more accessible and effective for them. Additionally, there's a demand for more educational programs, particularly those that can help parents understand and utilize technology, exemplified by the request for programs similar to 'tamales.' These programs could provide practical guidance on navigating digital tools and platforms used by the schools. Finally, the Latino community wishes to be actively involved in significant decisions, such as the hiring of the new superintendent, underscoring their desire for representation and a voice in processes that directly affect their children's education.



STUDENT GROUP

On January 17, St. Louis Park Public School and MSBA staff met with 30 students and asked them four open-ended questions. The results of the listening sessions were reviewed by MSBA representatives. Below is a summary of the discussion for each question.

1. What are some good things happening in St. Louis Park Public Schools?

St. Louis Park Public Schools are distinguished by a variety of positive initiatives and resources that contribute to a supportive and inclusive educational environment. The SOAR program is a notable aspect of the school's offerings. The active solicitation of student input, as evidenced by meetings specifically designed for this purpose, demonstrates the school's commitment to involving students in the decision-making process. However, there is some uncertainty among students about whether their feedback is truly considered and actually acted upon.

The availability of mental health resources, including therapy dogs, is another significant benefit students appreciate, reflecting the school's recognition of the importance of student well-being beyond academic achievement. The provision of tutoring services further illustrates the school's commitment to academic support. The quality of teaching staff is highly regarded, contributing to the overall positive educational experience for students. Moreover, the school is generally characterized by a strong, peaceful community atmosphere, which likely plays a crucial role in fostering a safe and conducive learning environment. These elements collectively depict St. Louis Park Public Schools as forward-thinking and student-focused, prioritizing both academic and emotional support.

2. What are some challenges you see or that you see other students facing?

Students in St. Louis Park Public Schools are confronting several social and academic challenges. Socially, issues like bullying, Islamophobia, and racism are prevalent, creating an environment where students often feel unsafe and disrespected. This situation is compounded by concerns of student censorship and a general feeling among students that their voices and experiences are not fully believed or valued. The need for a safer, more inclusive, and respectful school climate is clear.

Academically, the challenges are diverse. There is a need for more varied and effective teaching methods, particularly in subjects like math. The transition to high school, especially for 9th graders, is difficult, with students requiring more support to maintain their grades. There are noticeable racial disparities in enrollment in advanced courses such as AP, IB, and Honors, with some students believing they're not being encouraged to take these classes due to their race. Additionally, the school faces issues with under-resourcing and the impact of financial barriers on students' ability to participate in activities. Students also advocate for better representation in decision-making processes and for more support for first-generation students, particularly in college application processes, along with a need for more resources to address the diverse backgrounds of the entire student body.



3. What personal characteristics, skills, or areas of expertise are important for the new superintendent to have?

According to SLP students the new superintendent should possess a unique combination of personal characteristics, skills, and expertise to effectively lead and resonate with the diverse school community. A strong emphasis is placed on the ability to be an authentic listener, inclusive, and empathetic, particularly towards people of color. Creativity, innovation, and out-of-the-box thinking are highly regarded, along with honesty, fairness, and open-mindedness. The superintendent should be prepared to address tough questions about racial equity and not shy away from confronting difficult issues.

In addition to these personal traits, students felt the superintendent should have a solid understanding of business and financial management, including budgeting and resource allocation. They should be genuinely concerned about student experiences and actively engage with students, demonstrating visibility and involvement in their daily school life. Understanding the specific dynamics of the community, such as balancing the needs of an old community and a first-ring suburb, is crucial. The superintendent should be accessible, adept at building relationships, and support student voices and ideas. Decision-making should be prompt and informed, with an ability to implement systemic changes at an appropriate pace. Involving students in problem-solving, serving as a role model, maintaining policy transparency, and actively addressing current events that impact the community are also key expectations. Overall, the students desire a superintendent who can effectuate real, systematic change, not just performative actions.

4. What does the new superintendent need to understand about St. Louis Park students to be successful?

The new superintendent must recognize and appreciate the rich diversity within the St. Louis Park student body, which spans across various dimensions such as race, religion, gender, and socioeconomics. This diversity necessitates an approach to education and decision-making that is flexible and tailored to individual needs rather than a one-size-fits-all strategy. The superintendent should acknowledge there are multiple perspectives to every issue and be open-minded and willing to learn from these varied viewpoints.

It is also important for the superintendent to value and actively utilize student input. Students are eager to contribute their ideas and insights but want assurance that their feedback will lead to concrete actions and be incorporated into the planning and decision-making processes. Emphasizing equity over equality is a key principle, acknowledging that different students have different needs and require varying levels of support to succeed. Additionally, there's a desire for transparency in the superintendent hiring process, with students wanting to be kept informed about the progress and considerations. Understanding the challenges and hurdles within the school system is also vital, as it enables students to be more aware and engaged in the educational landscape of their school district and community.

