INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625
Saint Paul, Minnesota
COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Administration Building
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

May 5, 2026
4:30 PM

A G E N D A

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **AGENDA**
   - A. Superintendent's Announcements
   - B. 2025-2026 Gender and Sexual Diversity Parent Advisory Council (GSDPAC) Board Update
     1. Introduction
     2. Presentation 2
     3. Discussion
   - C. Analyzing the Cost of Charter Schools for St. Paul Public Schools
     1. Introduction
     2. Presentation 6
     3. Discussion
   - D. Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC) and AIPAC Resolution Response (Time Certain: 6:00 p.m.)
     1. Introduction
     2. Presentation 42
     3. Discussion
   - E. Fiscal Year 2026-27 Community Budget Meeting
     1. Introduction
     2. Presentation 64
     3. Discussion
3. **ADJOURNMENT**

#BoldSubject#

2025-2026 GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (GSDPAC) BOARD UPDATE

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

Overview

The Gender and Sexual Diversity Parent Advisory Council (GSDPAC) is a parent advisory council composed of 11 official members (including 2 Co-Chairs), who lead a broader community and network of approximately 40 LGBTQIA+ parents and staff and guardians of SPPS's LGBTQIA+ students.

They have a common vision for the success of our students. Their focus is on relationship building, family engagement, and ensuring that all students receive a premier education. They serve as a forum for families to express concerns and advocate on our children's behalf.

Monthly meetings

GSDPAC meets once a month in person or virtually via Google Meet.

History

The GSDPAC was started by a small group of concerned parents who felt the district was not adequately addressing the concerns and needs of LGBTQIA+ students. The group started meeting formally in October 2014 with the support of the Office of Family Engagement and Community Parentships and the Office of Equity.

What percentage of SPPS students identify as LGBTQIA+

What is your gender identity? MNSS 2025	Grade 9	Grade 11
Agender	2%	2%
Boy/man cisgender	49%	45%
Bisexual Transgender	2%	2%
Genderfluid	2%	2%
Girl/woman cisgender	42%	46%
Girl/woman transgender	1%	0.7%
Nonbinary	1%	2%
Two spirit	0.2%	0.4%
Questioning/unsure	3%	2%
Identity not listed	2%	2%

GSDPAC Vision

We envision Saint Paul Public Schools as a district in which all students may achieve academically, have safe and welcoming learning environments, learn about gender and sexual diversity, and build the skills to succeed in life.

GSDPAC Mission

Our mission is to build a strong partnership between families with gender and sexual diversity and Saint Paul Public Schools.

Why

- SPPS LGBTQIA+ students are facing much higher levels of challenges than their heterosexual peers and lower levels of assets.
    - experiencing mental distress
    - being bullied
    - being a victim of school violence
    - are more likely to drop out of school
    - experience higher frequency of and severity of discipline
- Race, gender and sexuality are all interconnected within systems of inequity
- The same systems that contribute to poor outcomes by race also impact LGBTQIA+ students and families.
- Racial equity work in SPPS is essential for LGBTQIA+ students and must be LGBTQIA+ inclusive, representative and supportive.

Accomplishments/Outreach and Projects

Since 2014, GSDPAC has achieved significant milestones in policy, advocacy, and outreach:

- **Policy Development (2014-2015):** Co-wrote foundational documents including the Gender Inclusion Policy (updated October 2024), Gender Inclusion Procedures (updated November 2024), and the Name/Gender Change Request Form.
- **Advocacy & Resources (2015-2017):** Created the "Advocating for your LGBTQIA+ Child and Family" trifold flyer; advised the Facilities Department on universal designs for bathrooms and locker rooms; supported SPPS sexual health curriculum (FLASH and AMAZE pilot); and coordinated parent/caregiver conferences. They also advised on the district-wide Safe Space training program and coordinated the Pronoun Poster competition for middle and high schools.
- **Transition (2024-2026):** Moved to the Office of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships; achieved the goal of creating an Elementary Pronoun poster; and increased visibility through tabling at the Day of the Transgender Child and consistent attendance by Board of Education members at meetings.

2025-26 Priority Areas of Focus

Membership and recruitment

- The PAC is focused on expanding its reach to reflect the full diversity of SPPS families.
- Membership is open to parents, guardians, caregivers (current or former SPPS), and allies who celebrate gender and sexual diversity.
- To ensure parent-led advocacy, over 50% of the membership must consist of SPPS parents, guardians, or caregivers.

Strengthening the Core Responsibilities of GSDPAC Members

- **Advisory Role:** Provide strategic advice to SPPS administration and the Board of Education regarding policies that impact LGBTQIA+ students and families.
- **Advocacy & Leadership:** Collaborate with the Office of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships to set meeting agendas and secure necessary resources or guest speakers.
- **Engagement & Professionalism:**
    - Maintain active attendance and foster a culture of respect for diverse viewpoints within the council.
    - Support the organization and execution of student, parent, and community outreach events.
- **Confidentiality & Discretion:** Protect sensitive information and maintain the privacy of discussions until they are formally approved for release.
- **Continuous Learning:** Stay informed on current LGBTQIA+ issues by engaging with constituents, attending Board meetings, and reviewing relevant district documents.

Strengthening our Collaborations

GSDPAC works closely with the following key departments:
Office of Family Engagement & Community Partnerships, Office of Equity, Facilities Department, and Research, Evaluation and Assessment.

Moving forward

Critical Issues:

- A better way to communicate with parents
- An opt-in process and form that is distributed to ALL families
    - Families need an easier way to:
    - Identify interest in receiving communications about issues that may affect their children/families.
    - Learn about opportunities to learn, participate and advocate at a district level (in any/all PACs or other district-wide opportunities.
- **Ongoing Advocacy:** Continuously urged the prioritization of LGBTQIA+ inclusive curriculum and representation, staff training, and accountability for the Gender Inclusion

Policy procedures. A key ongoing need is advocating for parental opt-in for family engagement communications. Rainbow tassels distributed for all LGBTQIA+ students.

- Improve Student Relationships and Climate for LGBTQIA+

Have you been bullied/harassed in the last 30 days?			
MNSS 2025	**Grade 8**	**Grade 9**	**Grade 11**
Sexual Minority	40%	21%	21%
Straight	23%	11%	9%
Gender Minority	44%	25%	26%
Cisgender	26%	12%	11%

Resources:

GSDPAC Bylaws Approved 2025
SPPS Inclusive Restrooms 2026
Minnesota Student Survey Reports
Minnesota Student Survey Tables

Analyzing the Cost of Charter Schools for St. Paul Public Schools

Aaron Rosenthal, Ph.D. | Hilary Wething, Ph.D.

Research Director, North Star Policy Action • Economist, Economic Policy Institute

Presented to the St. Paul Public Schools Committee of the Board

May 5, 2026

PURPOSE

Why this study?

THE CHARGE

Examine the fiscal relationship between charter schools and St. Paul Public Schools.

COMMISSIONED BY

The SPPS Board of Education in November 2025.

SCOPE

Intentionally narrow. We describe the fiscal relationship, not whether charter schools are educationally better or worse than district schools.

THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Money follows the student.

If a student leaves SPPS for a charter school, the funding leaves with them,[7] but the district also has one fewer student to educate. **Net cost: zero.**

BUT THE REALITY IS MORE COMPLICATED.

1. **Indirect cost-** Schools can't shed costs as fast as they lose students, creates a fiscal externality.

2. **Direct cost-** Charter schools bill resident districts for some services, particularly in special education.

What we covered (and will go through today)

1

The movement of students

How have students shifted between district schools and charter schools in St. Paul.

2

The indirect cost

The fiscal externality- what does this student movement mean for any fiscal externalities.

3

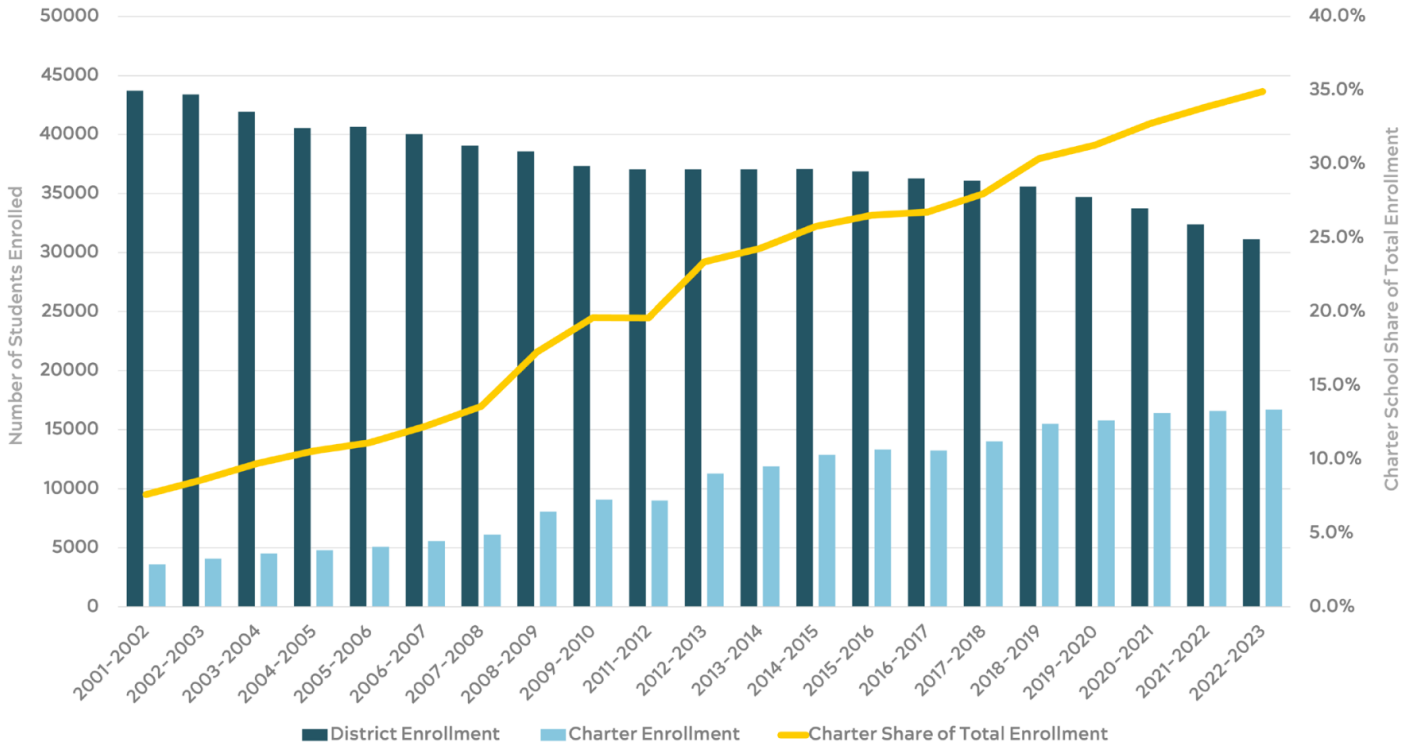
The direct cost

Charter schools' direct bills to SPPS.

8

Charter enrollment has surged as district enrollment has declined

FIGURE 2. ENROLLMENT IN CHARTER SCHOOLS AND DISTRICT SCHOOLS IN ST. PAUL, 2001-02 TO 2022-23



Data source: Khalique Rogers, Joe Nathan, and Aaliyah Hodge, "Minnesota Charter and District School Demographics and Trends, Center for School Change, https://centerforschoolchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FINAL-22-23-Charter-and-District-School-Demographics-and-Trends-1.pdf.

KEY SHIFT

In 2001-02, roughly

1 in 13

public-school students in St. Paul attended a charter school [9]

By 2022-23

More than 1 in 3

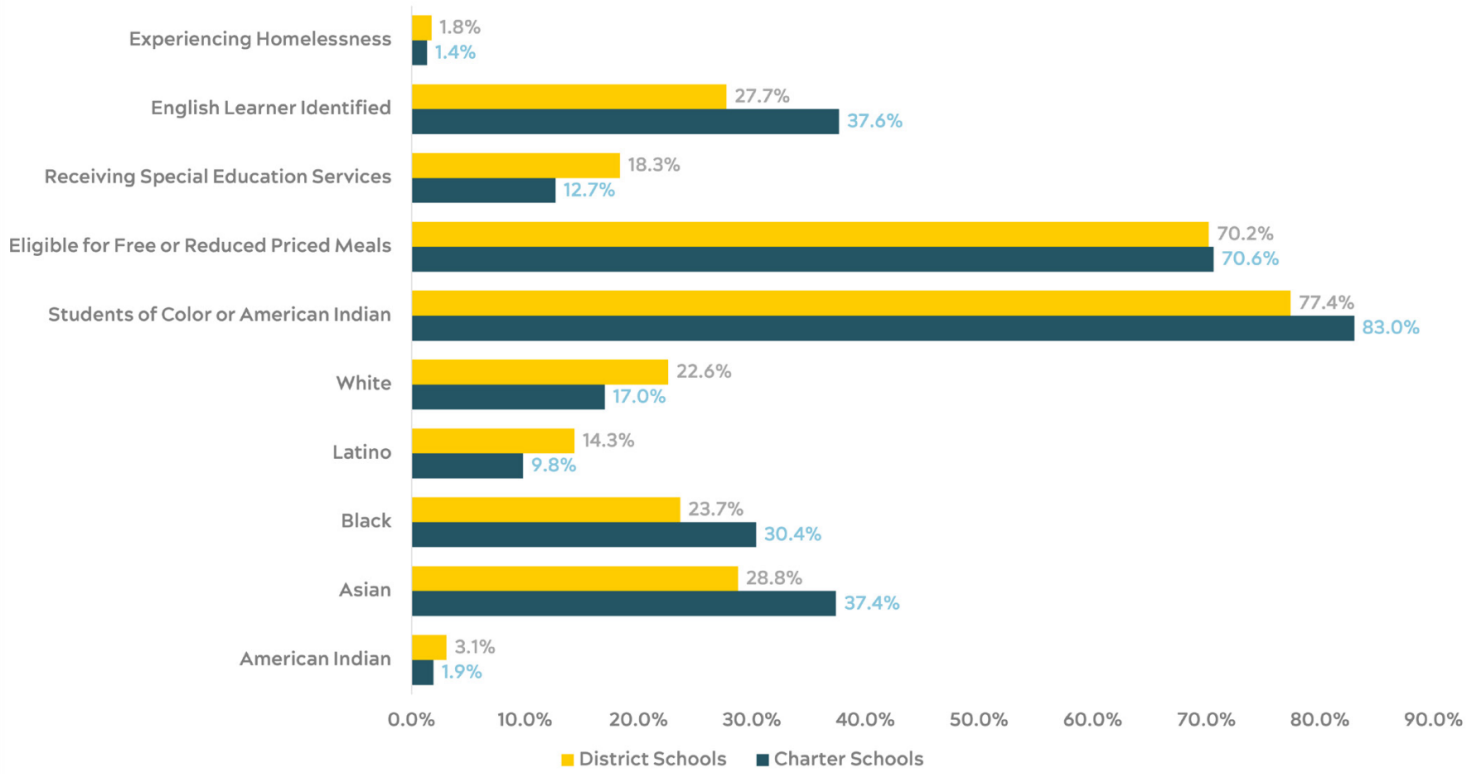
Charter enrollment grew by **+655** students/year on average (5.4% annual growth rate); SPPS lost **–630** students/year (1.7% annual decay rate).

Movement places an indirect cost on district schools

This shift of students means that SPPS absorbs a fiscal externality associated with enrollment decline

District and charter schools serve broadly similar student populations

FIGURE 4. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF CHARTER AND DISTRICT SCHOOLS IN ST. PAUL, 2023–24



Data Source: Data pulled directly by authors from the Minnesota Department of Education's Data Reports and Analytics webpage, found at https://pub.education.mn.gov/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp.

WHAT TO NOTICE

Similar on economic measures.

Free/reduced meal eligibility and students experiencing homelessness are nearly identical.

10

Charters enroll more:

Black, Asian, and English Learner students.

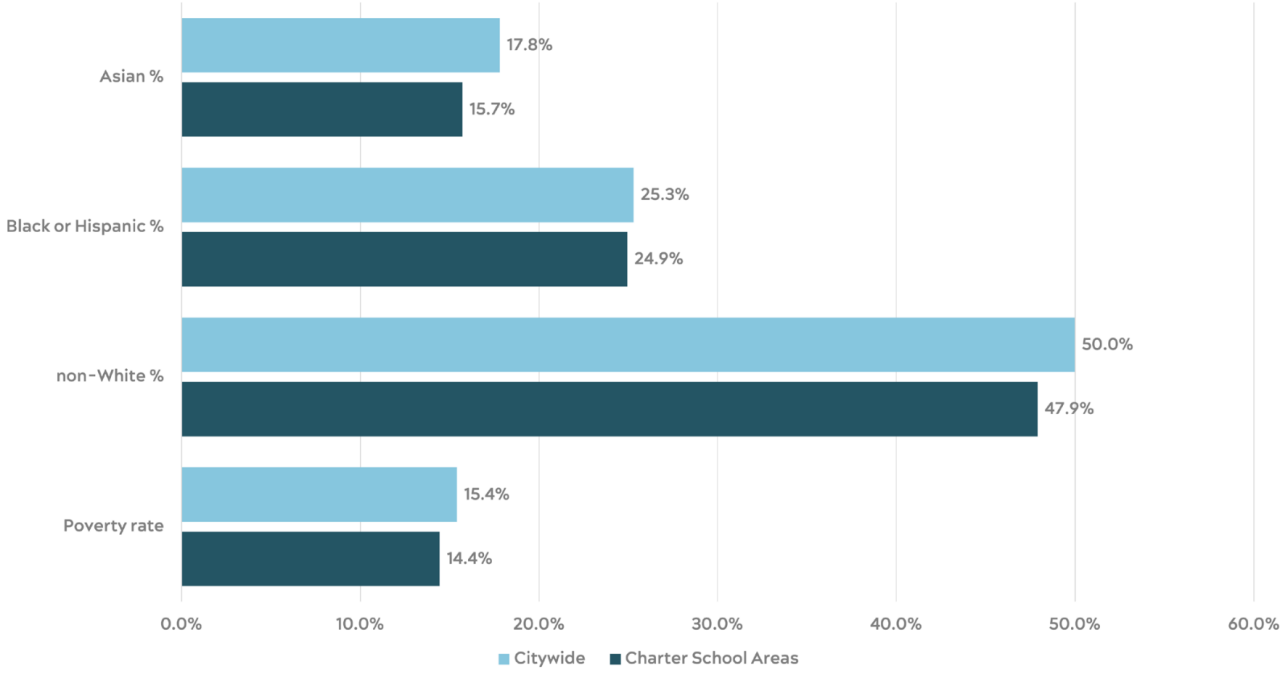
District schools enroll more:

American Indian, Latino, White, and special-education students.

Largest gap: students receiving special education services (18.3% vs. 12.7%)- 45% greater share in district schools

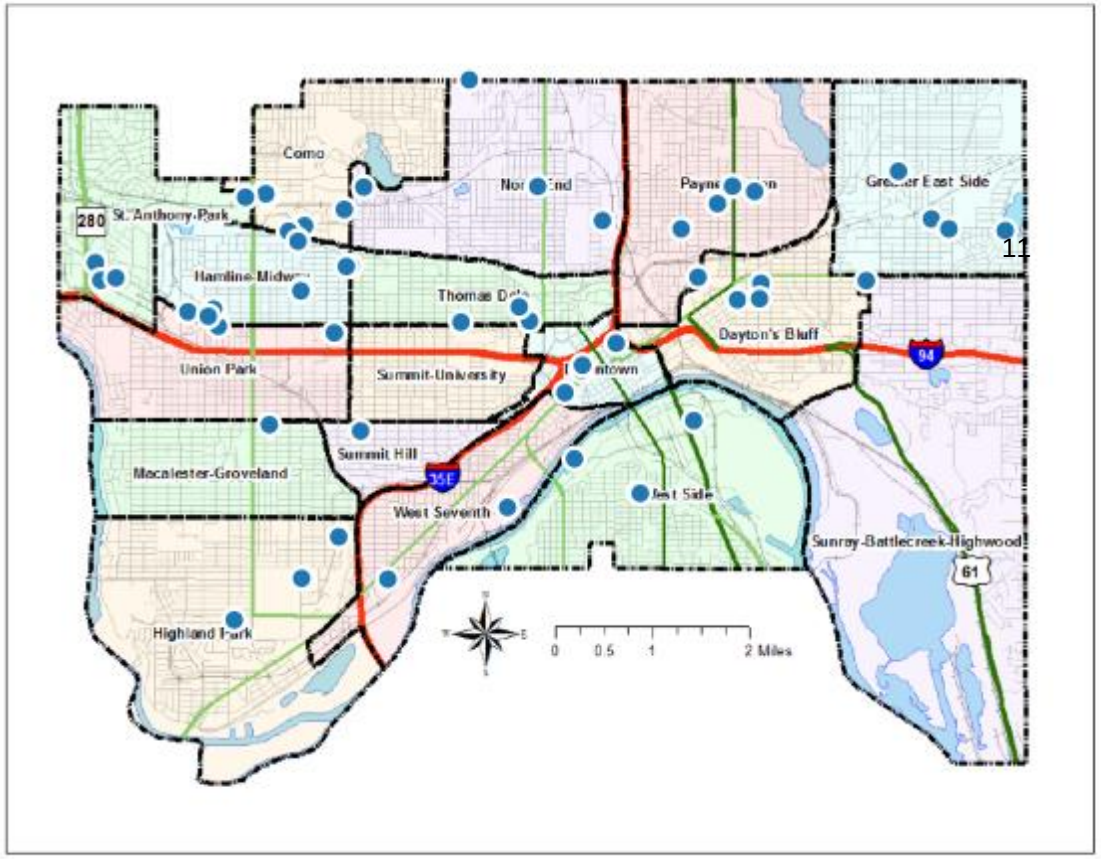
Charter schools are located throughout the city; in neighborhoods that mirror the city as a whole

FIGURE 5. CHARTER SCHOOL NEIGHBORHOODS V. ST. PAUL CITY, 2023-24



Data Source: Data on charter schools located in St. Paul were acquired a via data request to Minnesota Department of Education. Addresses for St. Paul charter schools were compiled by the authors. Demographic information for St. Paul and charter school census tracts was taken from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2019-2024.

St. Paul Charter Schools (2025)



What is a fiscal externality?

When a district loses students, it loses revenue. But it may not shed costs at the same pace.

EXAMPLE: THE SCHOOL BUS

20 students on a bus route.

One student transfers to another school.

Now there are **19 students**, but if the bus runs the same route and makes the same stops, it has the same fuel costs.

Funding follows the student to the new school. The cost to operate the bus stays the same for the former school, leaving fewer resources for other expenses (e.g., teachers).

THE SAME LOGIC APPLIES TO…

12

- Heating a school building
- Maintaining facilities
- Administrative staff
- Existing teacher contracts

The gap between revenue lost and costs that stay is the fiscal externality.

METHODOLOGY, PART 2

Three cost categories — each adjusts differently to enrollment declines

We follow the EPI framework, sorting district spending into three categories. Each has a different assumed ability to shrink as enrollment falls. The adjustment rate captures how much we assume enrollment decline translates into a cost reduction.

INSTRUCTIONAL

0.8

Adjusts most

For example, teachers and classroom staffing. Easiest to adjust, but contracts and licensure complicate fast reductions.

10% fewer students → ~8% lower cost

SERVICE

0.2

Adjusts modestly

For example, clerical and administrative staff. Limited ability to scale down quickly due to fewer staff and less flexibility.

10% fewer students → ~2% lower cost

CAPITAL

13

0.0

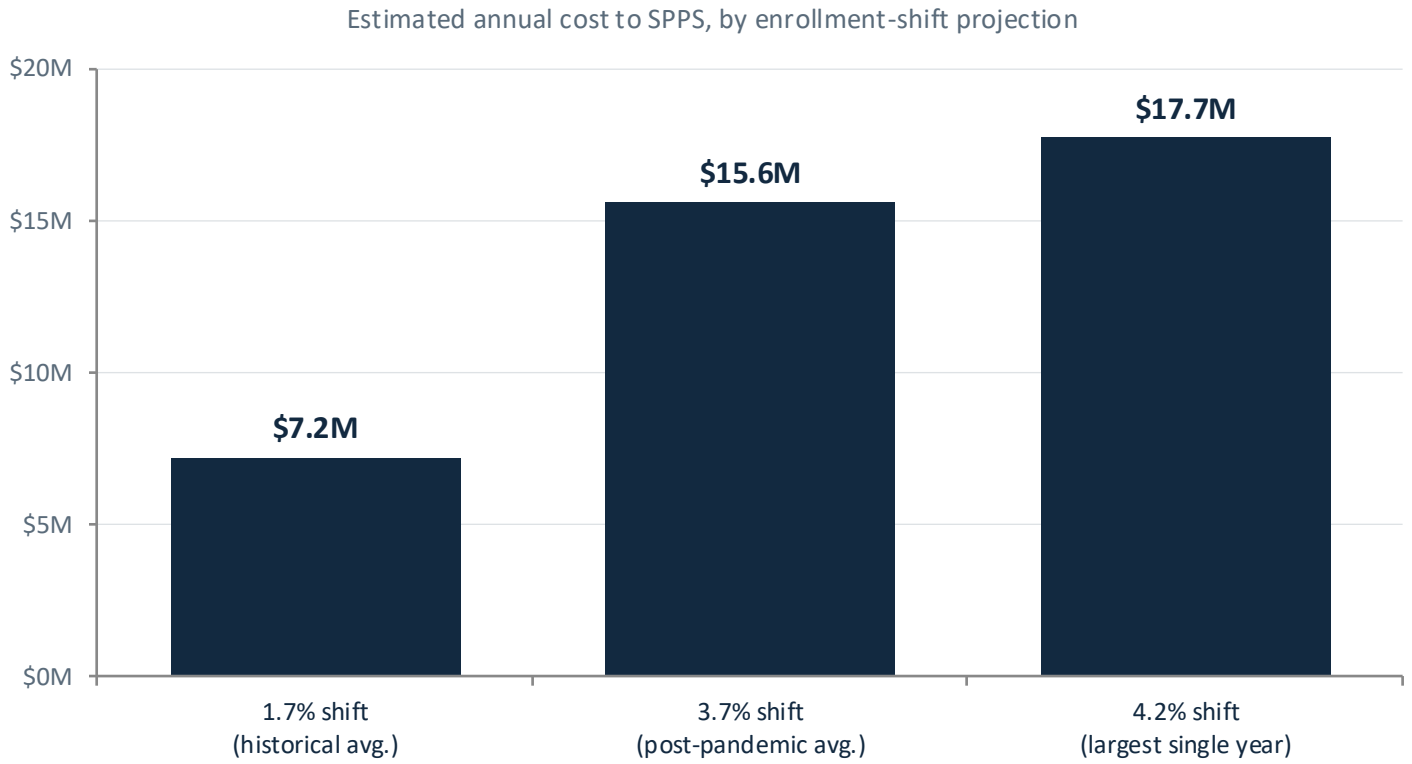
Doesn't adjust

For example, facilities and maintenance. Treated as fully fixed in the short run, as buildings still need to be operated.

10% fewer students → no change in cost

The indirect cost: $7M to $18M

We model the externality under three enrollment-shift projections, each grounded in observed historical patterns.



1.7% SHIFT

$218 lost per remaining student

$7.2M total • Historical average, 2001-2023

14

3.7% SHIFT

$484 lost per remaining student

$15.6M total • Post-pandemic average

4.2% SHIFT

$552 lost per remaining student

$17.7M total • Largest single-year decline (2020-21 to 2021-22)

A note on scope

Totals above are annual but may not represent anticipated losses for each year, as schools can adjust to reduce these indired costs. But further student declines complicate these efforts, as districts try to adapt as their enrollment base changes.

Charters also bill SPPS directly, mostly for special education

Charter schools are legally required to serve special-education students. When state and federal reimbursements don't fully cover those costs, charters bill **80%** of the unreimbursed amount to a student's **resident district.**

WHAT CAN BE BILLED

Special-education instruction

The classroom-side costs of delivering special-education services.

Specialized transportation

Costs beyond a traditional bus or van for students with specific needs.

Some general-education costs

When a charter serves an especially large share of special-ed students.

STATE REIMBURSEMENT TO DISTRICTS

Districts get partial reimbursement from the state when they are billed by charter schools — and that share has been rising.[15]

FY 2020

2.6%

Districts paid nearly the entire bill

FY 2024

44%

Reimbursement now substantially higher

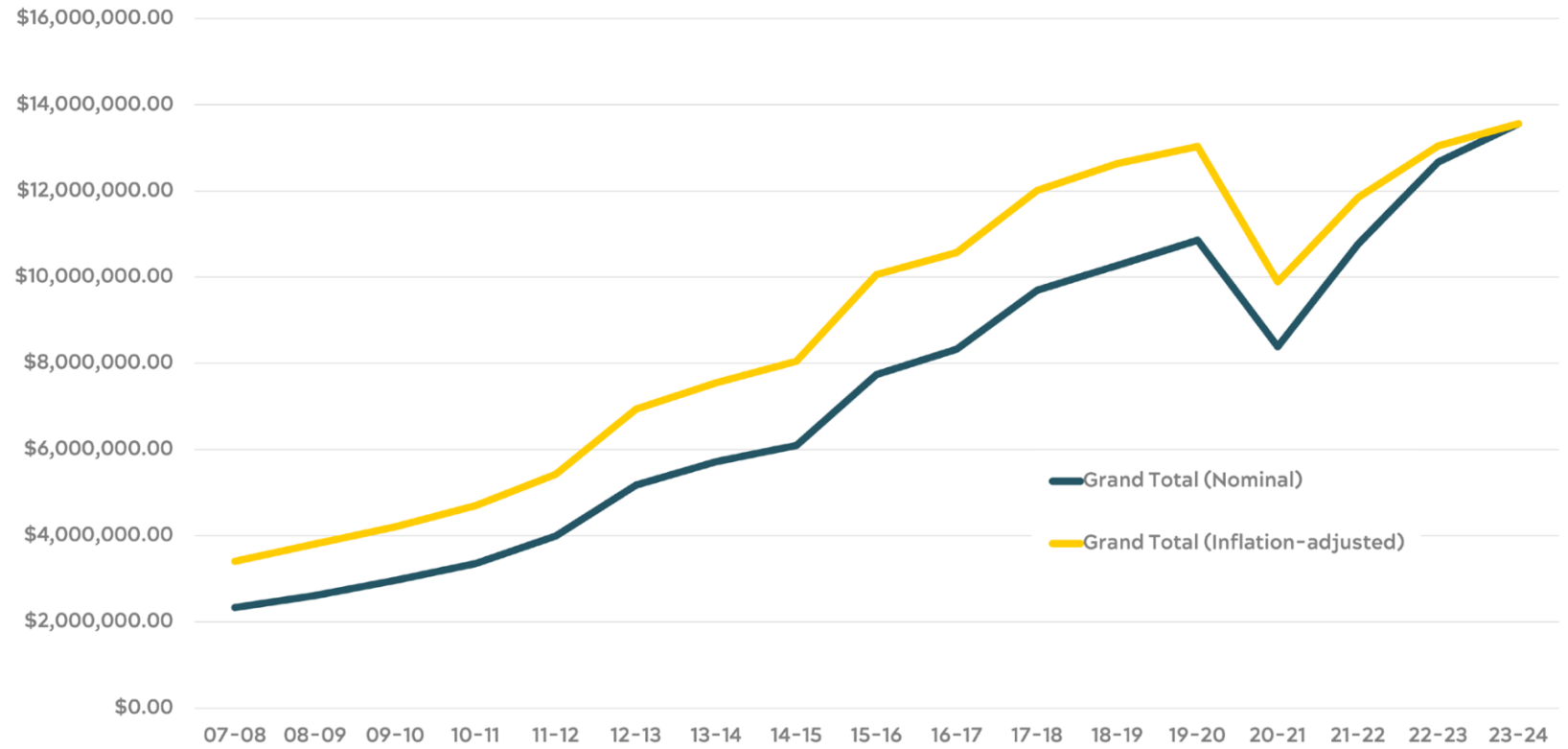
FY 2027

50%

Set to rise further — but districts still retain a large share

Direct bills carry a substantial cost

FIGURE 8. DIRECT BILLS FROM CHARTER SCHOOLS TO SPPS



Data Source: Data obtained via data request to the Minnesota Department of Education.

IN 2023-24

$13.6M

billed to SPPS in a single year

16

SINCE 2007-08

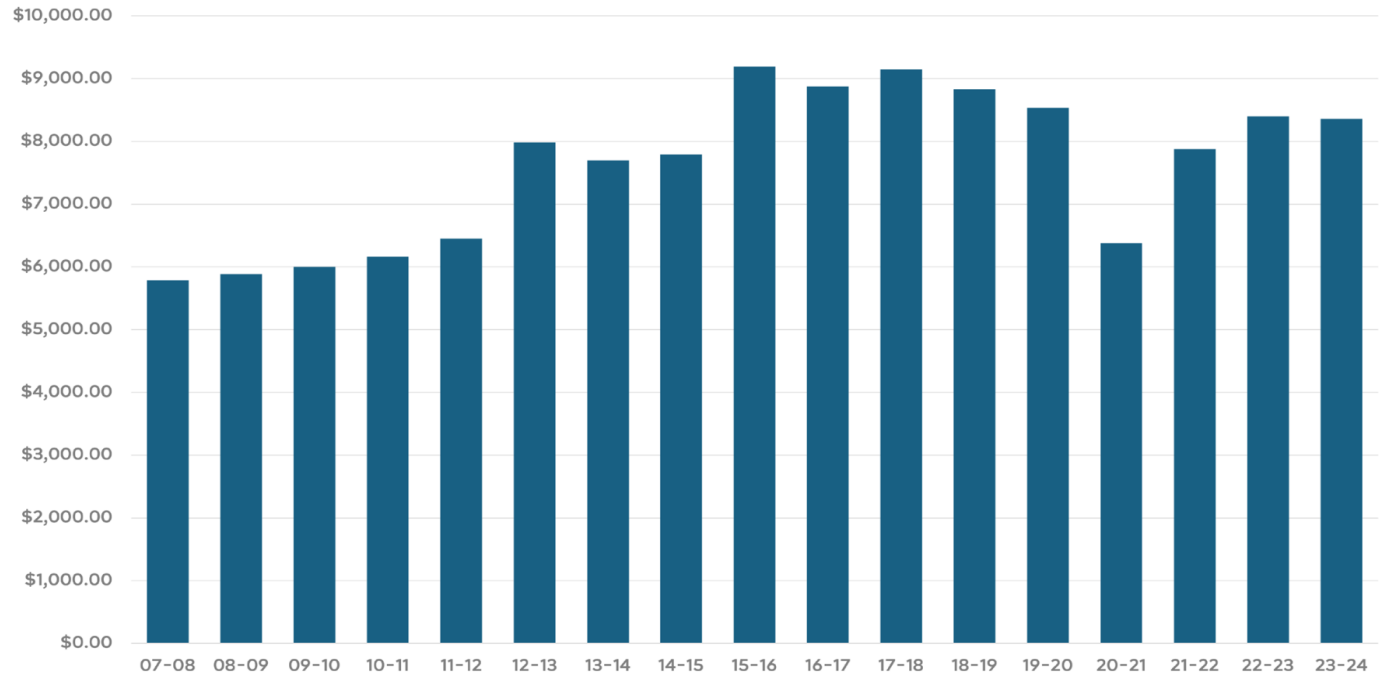
~$125M

nominal total ($150M+ in real 2024 dollars)

Per-student costs direct billing costs have stayed relatively steady; growth reflects more special education students

On a per-special-education-student basis, charter direct bills to SPPS have remained between $7,500 and $9,200 since 2012-13. The overall increase reflects the scale of students receiving special education services who are enrolled in charter schools, not an accelerating per-student cost.

FIGURE 9. DIRECT BILLS FROM CHARTER SCHOOLS TO SPPS, PER SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT



Data Source: Data obtained via data request to the Minnesota Department of Education. All bills are inflation-adjusted to be in real 2024 dollars.

CONTEXT

$7,500 – $9,200

per special-education student, every year since 2012-13.

FOR COMPARISON

$15,580

statewide LEA average special-ed spending (FY2024) — less than twice what SPPS pays to charters per student.

17

CONCLUSION

Charter schools place a financial burden onto SPPS through both indirect and direct costs

STUDENT MOVEMENT

450 students

Average annual increase in St. Paul resident students enrolling in charter schools since 2001-02

INDIRECT COST

$7M to $18M

Fiscal externality from costs that don't decline as quickly as enrollment.

DIRECT COST

$13.6M (23-24), $125M since 2007

Charter bills to SPPS, primarily for special-education services.

18

A NOTE ON SCOPE

This report describes a fiscal relationship, not whether charter schools are educationally better or worse than district schools. A fuller assessment on the value of this financial arrangement would require additional analysis of student outcomes, which we recommend as a subject for future research.

Analyzing the Cost of Charter Schools for St. Paul Public Schools

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Aaron Rosenthal is the Research Director for North Star Policy Action. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Minnesota. He has published a book and several articles on public policy and inequality, with his writing appearing in outlets ranging from *The Washington Post* to *MinnPost*.

Hilary Wething is an Economist for the Economic Policy Institute. She holds a Ph.D. in public policy and management from the University of Washington. Her research examines the relationship between labor market policy, household economic security, and social safety net programs.

NorthStar
POLICY ACTION

Contents

Executive Summary 4

Introduction: Charter Schools in Minnesota 6

The Movement of Students in St. Paul 7

- Charter school growth in Minnesota
- Charter growth in St. Paul
- School enrollment trends for St. Paul Resident students
- Student profiles in district and charter schools
- Where charter schools are located

Fiscal Externality Analysis 14

- Methodology
- Findings

Direct Bills to SPPS 18

Conclusion 21

Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by the St. Paul School Board of Education to examine the fiscal relationship between charter schools and St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS).[1] While charter schools receive public funding, conventional wisdom holds that they impose no cost onto district schools.[2] If a student leaves a district school to attend a charter school, public funding follows that student. The public school district may be left with less revenue but also one fewer student to educate.

That logic is intuitive, but it does not fully capture how school finance works in practice. In particular, it misses two aspects of the relationship between charter schools and district schools. First, charter schools in Minnesota can directly bill public schools for certain services, especially special education services.

Second, when students move between schools, their former school does not necessarily shed costs at the same pace that it loses students and funding. Some costs can be reduced relatively easily, but others remain in place even after enrollment declines. For example, a school bus may be carrying 19 students instead of 20 after a student leaves, but if the bus is going to all of the same stops, the cost to fuel the bus remains the same. As a result, the student's former school continues to absorb a cost. Enrollment decline therefore creates an indirect cost for their former school, which this report refers to as a fiscal externality. To the extent that more students have left district schools to attend charter schools, we would expect an externalized cost from charter schools placed onto district schools.

To better understand these fiscal externalities for St. Paul, this report examines student movement between district and charter schools in the city since 2001. In addition, we examine the direct bills that charter schools have charged to SPPS since 2007, providing a more comprehensive sense of the fiscal relationship between SPPS and charter schools.[3]

1 The contract to carry out the research was approved at the St. Paul School Board's meeting on November 18, 2025. Meeting minutes are available at https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1765477260/sppsorg/tnohuwzb38dpsaouaxiv/MINUTES_11-18-2025V2.pdf.

2 Throughout this report, we use the term "district schools" to refer to public schools that are not charter schools.

3 In the case of both student movement data and billing data, the period of time included in our analysis is based on data availability. Student movement data was provided to us by the Minnesota Department of Education going back to the 2001-02 school year, while billing data was provided starting with the 2007-08 school year.

The main findings of our analysis are as follows:

- **Charter school enrollment has grown rapidly in St. Paul, with much of this growth coming at the expense of district school enrollment.** Since the 2001-02 school year, charter schools in St. Paul have grown by an average of 655 students per year, while district schools have averaged losing 630 students each year. As a result, **charter schools moved from serving one-in-thirteen public school students in St. Paul in 2001-02 to serving more than one-in-three in 2022-23.**

- **Demographically, enrollment in district schools and charter schools is similar.** Charter schools enroll a slightly larger share of Black, Asian, and English Language Learner students, while district school students are more likely to be American Indian, Latino, White, and require Special Education services.

- **Enrollment declines create indirect costs for district schools.** Depending on the assumptions used to capture student movement from district to charter schools, we estimate that the **fiscal externality imposed onto SPPS by charter schools is between $7 million and $17 million annually.**

- In addition to these indirect costs, **charter schools have directly billed SPPS substantial sums for services, primarily related to special education.** In 2023-24 alone, these bills totaled $13.6 million, up from $3.4 million in 2007-08. **Since 2007-08, SPPS has paid nearly $125 million to cover services at charter schools.**

Taken together, these findings suggest that charter schools have placed a financial burden onto SPPS. Notably, this report does not make any claim about the cost effectiveness of this burden. For example, we do not assess whether charter schools provide better or worse educational outcomes than district schools, which would provide greater insight into whether this financial relationship is beneficial to students. It is our recommendation that future research takes up this topic. Our purpose is narrower: to describe the financial relationship between the two entities and to identify the ways in which charter school growth has created both indirect and direct costs for SPPS.

Introduction: Charter Schools in Minnesota

Minnesota was the first state in the country to authorize charter schools, creating the nation's first charter school law in 1991.[4] Distinct from traditional public schools, charter schools operate outside of school district governance structures, giving them greater independence in their operations, curriculum, and policies.

Because charter schools are publicly funded, they are often discussed as part of the broader public education system rather than as a separate, private sector. This funding structure helps explain why charter schools are frequently described as fiscally neutral for district schools. If a student leaves a district school for a charter school, the district loses the funding tied to that student but also no longer bears responsibility for educating them.

At first glance, this logic appears straightforward. Yet it leaves out important features of how school systems function. School districts do not operate with costs that rise and fall perfectly with each student. A school building still needs to be heated at the same level even if a small number of students leave. Staffing, scheduling, and facilities decisions are also not instantly adjustable. As a result, when enrollment declines, districts often lose revenue more quickly than they can reduce spending, generating an indirect cost.

In addition, some costs for operations at charter schools are directly paid for by district schools. In Minnesota, charter schools must deliver special education services to students, but they often lack adequate resources to do so. To cover this cost, they bill their resident public school district. In these cases, districts are not simply losing students and funding, they are also making direct payments to help support services delivered in charter schools. While some of these payments are reimbursed by the state, districts budgets must account for a substantial share.

This report examines each of these dimensions of the fiscal relationship between charter schools and SPPS. It first looks at student movement between district and charter schools in St. Paul. Within this analysis, we also examine the different compositions of school enrollment in charter schools and district schools in St. Paul and consider the geographic position of the city's charter schools. We then estimate the indirect fiscal externalities created by this movement of students. Finally, we document the direct bills that charter schools have charged to SPPS over time, examining how these have changed over time.

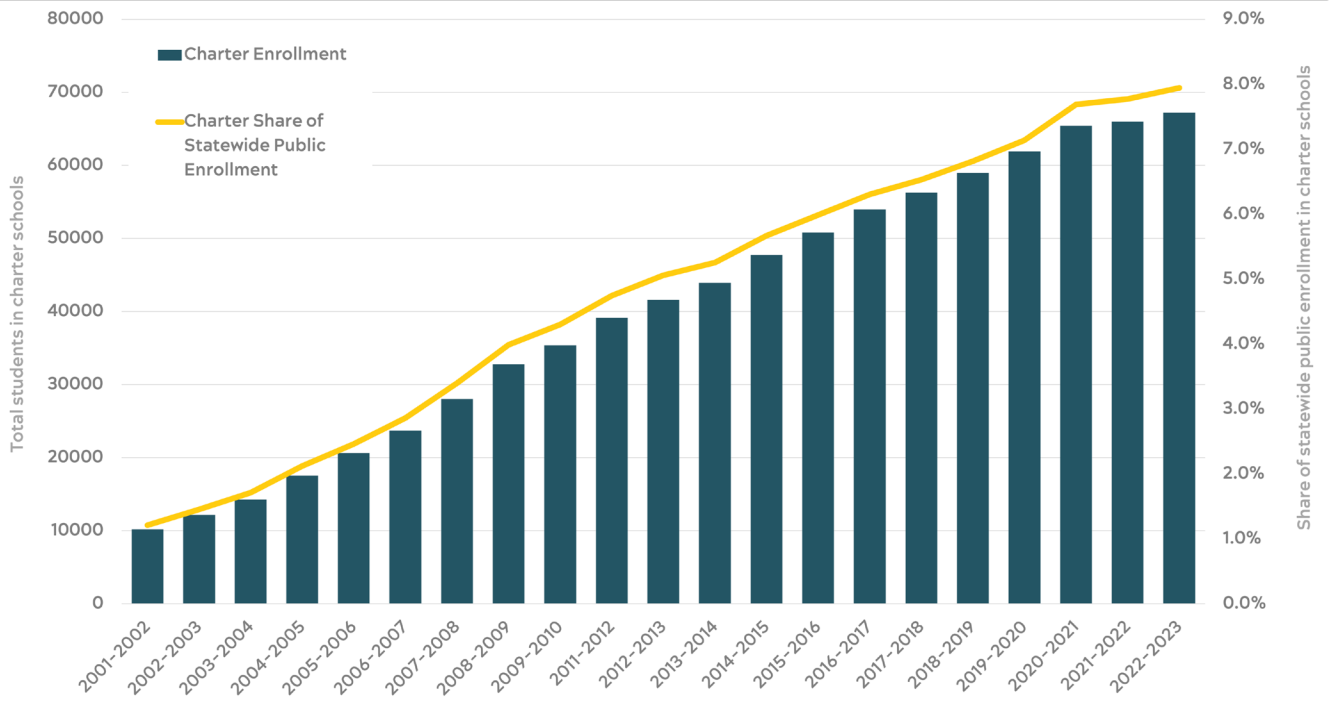
4 "Minnesota's Charter School Story," MN Association of Charter Schools, https://mncharterschools.org/advocacy/mn-charter-school-story.php.

The Movement of Students in St. Paul

CHARTER SCHOOL GROWTH IN MINNESOTA

The first charter school in the nation opened in Minnesota in 1992. According to the most recently available data, there are now 173 charter schools in the state, meaning Minnesota has averaged adding roughly 5 new charter schools per year for over the last three and a half decades.[5]

FIGURE 1. CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN MINNESOTA, 2001-02 TO 2022-23



Data source: Khalique Rogers, Joe Nathan, and Aaliyah Hodge, "Minnesota Charter and District School Demographics and Trends, Center for School Change, https://centerforschoolchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FINAL-22-23-Charter-and-District-School-Demographics-and-Trends-1.pdf.

This expansion of schools has been accompanied by steadily rising enrollment numbers. As recently as 2001-02, charter schools enrolled just over 1 percent of all public school students in the state. By 2022-23, that share had risen to eight percent, comprising nearly 70,000 students.[6]

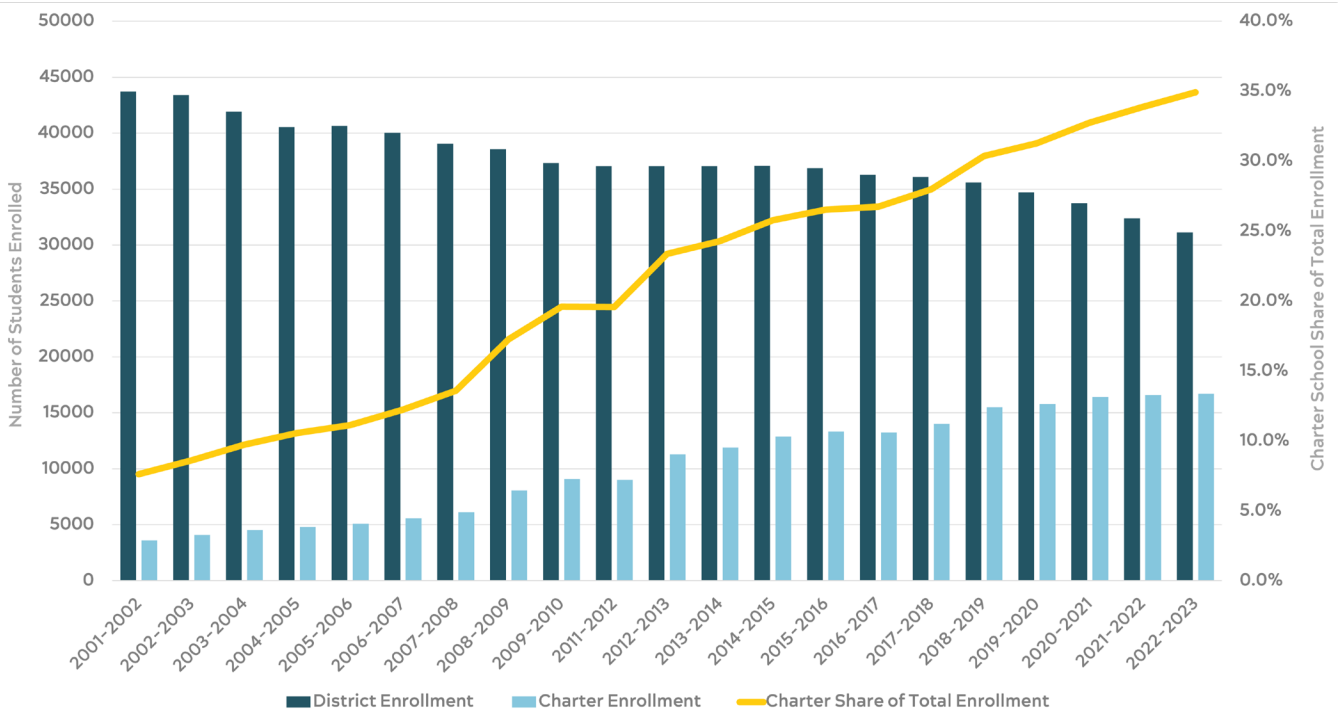
5 "Charter Schools," Minnesota Department of Education, https://education.mn.gov/mde/dse/chart/.

6 Khalique Rogers, Joe Nathan, and Aaliyah Hodge, "Minnesota Charter and District School Demographics and Trends, Center for School Change, https://centerforschoolchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FINAL-22-23-Charter-and-District-School-Demographics-and-Trends-1.pdf.

CHARTER GROWTH IN ST. PAUL

The growth of charter schools has been more significant in St. Paul. Over the last two decades, charter enrollment in the city has increased dramatically, matched almost identically by the same level of decline in district enrollment.

FIGURE 2. ENROLLMENT IN CHARTER SCHOOLS AND DISTRICT SCHOOLS IN ST. PAUL, 2001-02 TO 2022-23



Data source: Khalique Rogers, Joe Nathan, and Aaliyah Hodge, "Minnesota Charter and District School Demographics and Trends, Center for School Change, https://centerforschoolchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FINAL-22-23-Charter-and-District-School-Demographics-and-Trends-1.pdf.

Figure 2 shows that enrollment at charter schools in St. Paul grew from roughly 3,600 students in 2001-02 to almost 17,000 students in 2022-23, a nearly fivefold increase. Over that same period, enrollment in SPPS declined by more than 12,000 students, or nearly 30 percent. On average during this period, district schools in St. Paul lost 630 students per year, which amounts to an annual decline of 1.7 percent. At the same time, charter schools in the city averaged growing by 655 students per year, or 7.2 percent annual growth. As a result, charter schools moved from serving one-in-thirteen public school students in St. Paul in 2001-02 to serving more than one-in-three in 2022-23.

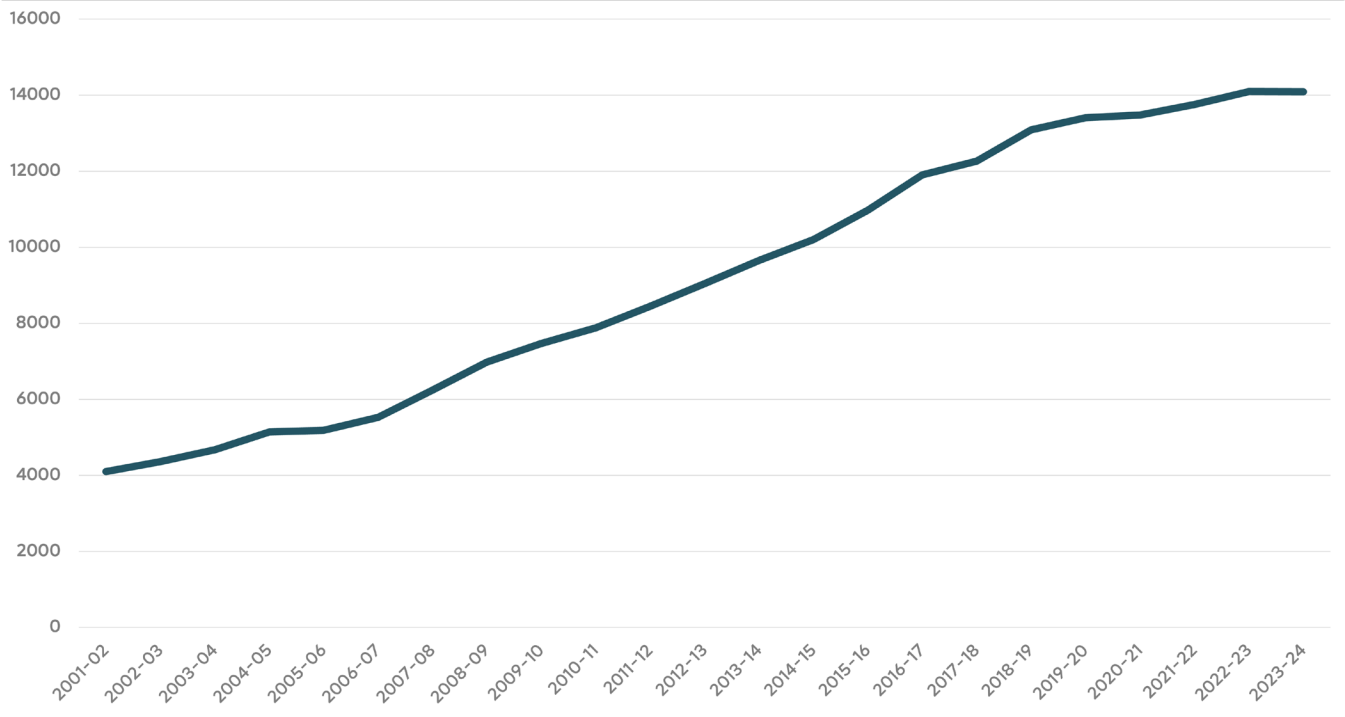
Notably, all of the estimates above rely on enrollment for students in district and charter schools physically located in St. Paul. As such, they do not, by themselves, prove that students are moving directly from the city's district schools into charter schools. It is possible that charter ranks in St. Paul are growing because students from outside the city are choosing to attend the city's charter schools. Similarly, district school enrollment loss in St. Paul could reflect student movement to district schools outside the city. For

that reason, it is important to examine the enrollment decisions of students who live in St. Paul, as is done in the next section.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS FOR ST. PAUL RESIDENT STUDENTS

To better capture the direction of student movement, this report examines the number of St. Paul resident students who enroll in charter schools. This lens provides a more direct picture of the potential externalized costs facing SPPS, because it focuses on the students who theoretically would have attended district schools in St. Paul, if charter schools were not an option. To the extent that more St. Paul resident students are enrolling into charters, the fiscal externality functions such that charters are imposing costs onto SPPS. If the reverse is true and more residents are moving from charters to district schools, there would be a financial burden for charter schools.

FIGURE 3. ST. PAUL RESIDENT STUDENT ENROLLMENT INTO CHARTER SCHOOLS



Data Source: Data obtained via data request to the Minnesota Department of Education.

The trend in Figure 3 is clear. The number of students living in St. Paul who attend charter schools has increased substantially over time. In 2001, just over 4,000 St. Paul resident students were enrolled in charter schools. By 2024, that number had grown to more than 14,000. Across these 22 years, the average annual increase was roughly 450 students, representing a 5.4% annual growth rate.

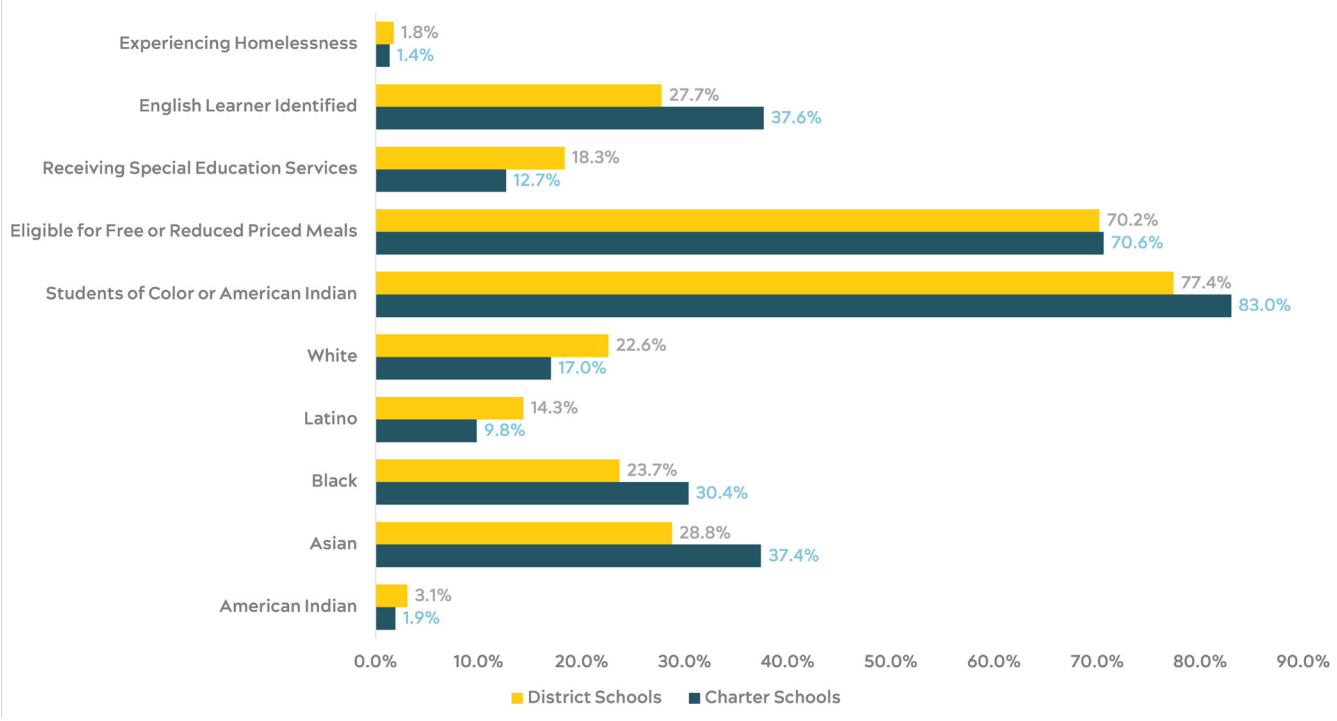
This movement is essential for understanding the fiscal relationship between charter schools and SPPS because it indicates that the broad enrollment pattern seen in Figure 2 is not simply a story about St. Paul charter schools drawing students from elsewhere.

It reflects a steady movement of St. Paul students away from district schools and into charter school over the last two decades, creating a fiscal externality placed by charter schools onto SPPS.

STUDENT PROFILES IN DISTRICT AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

Before turning to the fiscal externality analysis, it is useful to consider the characteristics of the students served by district and charter schools in St. Paul. This analysis does not by itself establish anything about school quality or outcomes, but it does allow us to see if district schools and charter schools are serving different populations.

FIGURE 4. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF CHARTER AND DISTRICT SCHOOLS IN ST. PAUL, 2023-24



Data Source: Data pulled directly by authors from the Minnesota Department of Education's Data Reports and Analytics webpage, found at https://pub.education.mn.gov/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp.

Overall, the student bodies of district and charter schools in St. Paul appear similar on several indicators, as seen in Figure 4. The sectors look particularly alike on economic measures such as eligibility for free or reduced-priced meals and student homelessness.

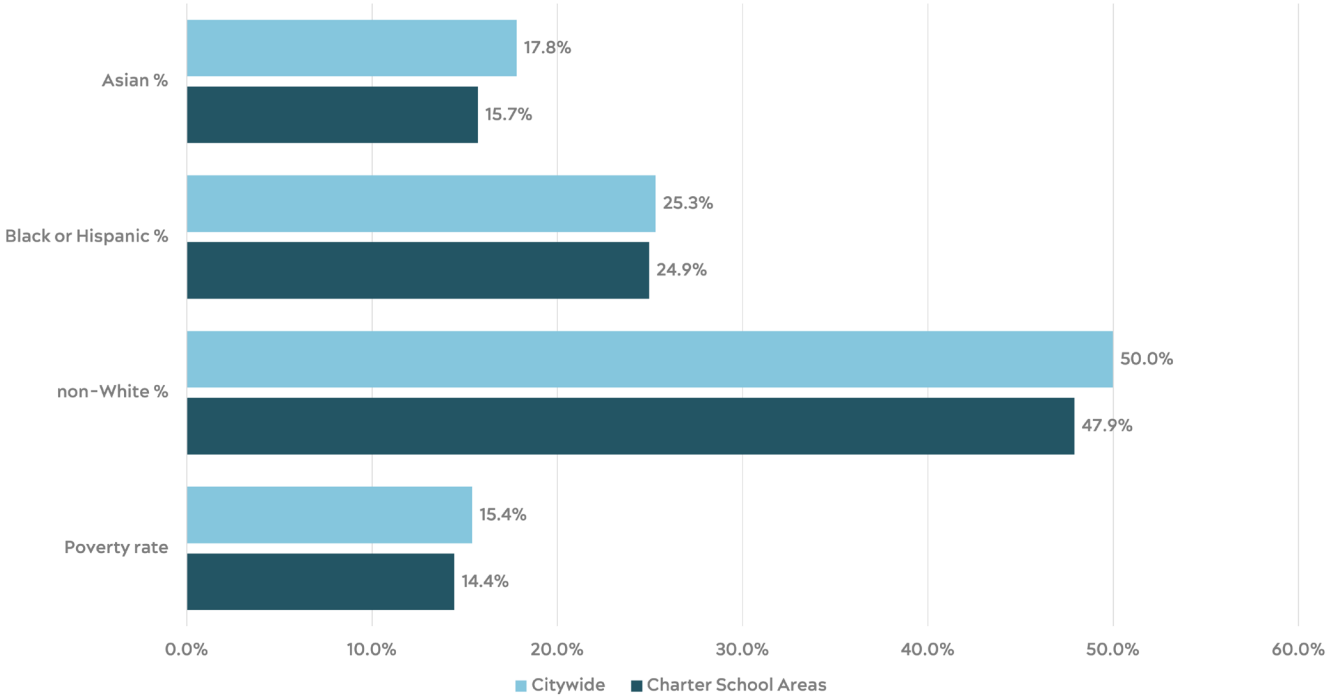
There are also some slight differences. Charter schools in St. Paul enroll somewhat larger shares of English Language Learners, as well as Black and Asian students. District schools, by contrast, enroll somewhat larger shares of American Indian, Latino, and White students. One notable gap is that district schools appear to enroll a substantially larger share of students receiving special education services. While these differences are not so large as to suggest two completely separate student populations, they are

meaningful enough to indicate that district and charter schools are not serving identical mixes of students within St. Paul.

WHERE CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE LOCATED

A final aspect of student populations in this report considers the geographic distribution of charter schools in St. Paul. The purpose here is to provide some context about where charter schools are located and how those locations relate to the city's broader demographic landscape.

FIGURE 5. CHARTER SCHOOL NEIGHBORHOODS V. ST. PAUL CITY, 2023-24



Data Source: Data on charter schools located in St. Paul were acquired a via data request to Minnesota Department of Education. Addresses for St. Paul charter schools were compiled by the authors. Demographic information for St. Paul and charter school census tracts was taken from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2019-2024.

Figure 5 does this by comparing the demographics for St. Paul as a whole to the demographics of the areas within St. Paul immediately surrounding charter schools.[7] In general, this analysis reveals that the areas surrounding charter schools tend to resemble the city overall. Charter school areas do appear to be a bit Whiter and somewhat less impoverished than the city of St. Paul as a whole, though these differences are small.

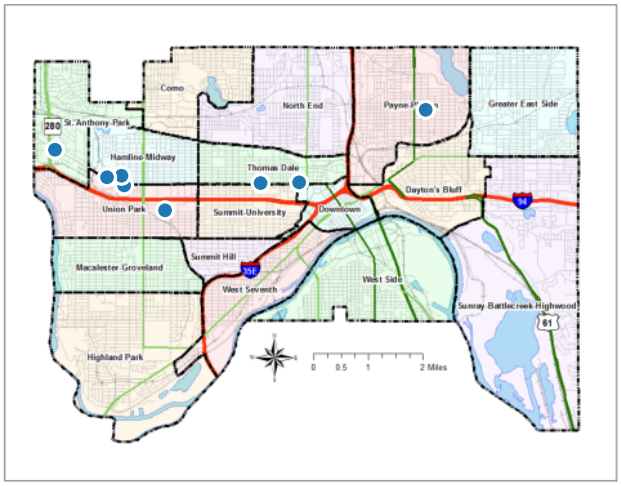
7 Charter school areas are represented in Figure 5 by the census tracts within which charter schools are located. Census tracts generally contain between 2,500 and 8,000 people, making them smaller than most neighborhoods but big enough to capture the community immediately surrounding a school.

The relatively even spread of charter schools also becomes apparent when mapping their locations over time, as is done in Figure 6. Perhaps the most obvious feature of Figure 6 is how much charter schools have grown in the city, rising from 9 locations in 2002 to more than 60 in 2025.

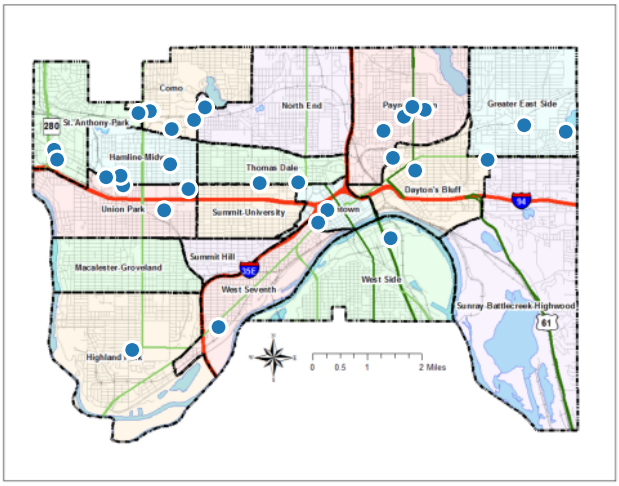
Throughout this period, the strongest concentrations of charter schools appear in the northwest part of the city, including the St. Anthony Park, Hamline-Midway, and Como neighborhoods. Similar clustering can be seen in the northeast neighborhoods, including Payne-Phalen and the Greater East Side. More recent growth is also visible in places such as Highland Park and the North End, which saw almost no charter activity prior to 2017. Other neighborhoods, including Macalester-Groveland, Sunray-Battlecreek-Highwood, and Summit-University, continue to see relatively few charter locations up to the present.

FIGURE 6. CHARTER SCHOOL LOCATIONS IN ST. PAUL

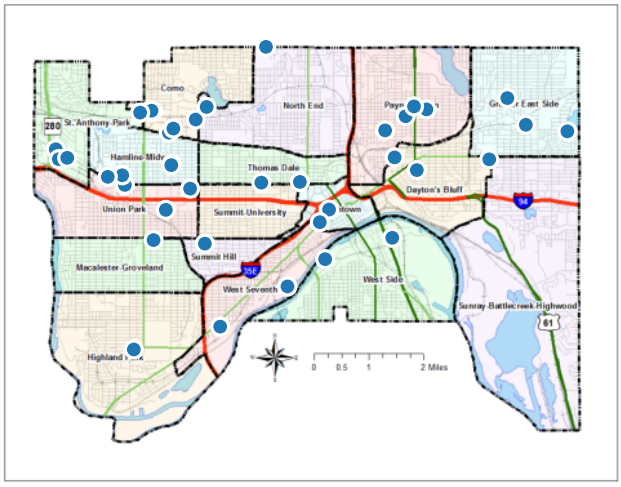
2002



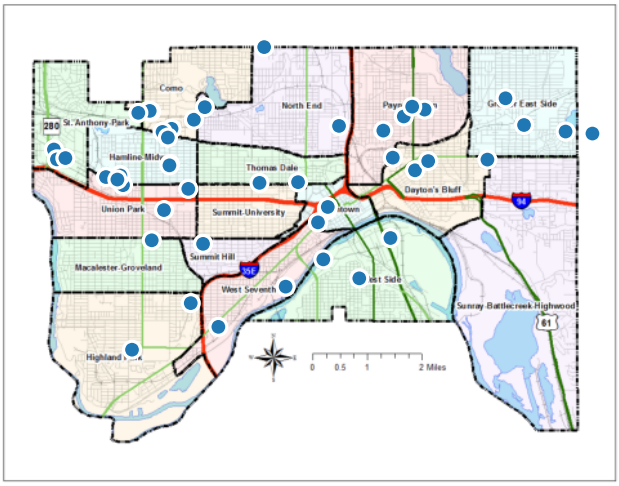
2007



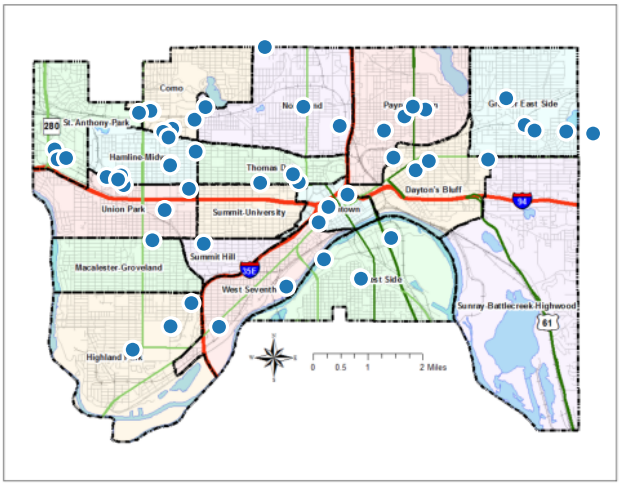
2012



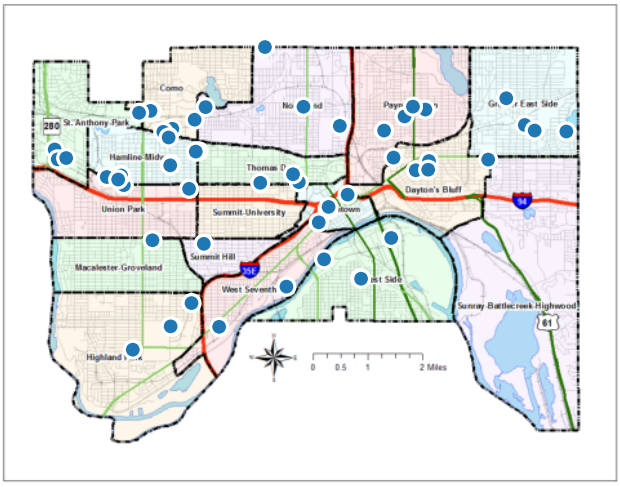
2017



2022



2025



Data Source: Data on charter schools located in St. Paul acquired via data request to the Minnesota Department of Education. Addresses for St. Paul charter schools were compiled by the authors.

Taken together, the analysis of student enrollment discussed above suggests that St. Paul has experienced a long-term movement of students from district schools into charter schools, even as the composition of these schools has remained similar. The next section considers what this movement has meant for district finances.

Fiscal Externality Analysis

METHODOLOGY

The underlying logic of a fiscal externality in education funding can be understood as follows. When a district loses students, it also loses revenue. But it does not necessarily shed costs at the same rate. Some costs are variable, meaning they can be reduced more easily as enrollment changes. For example, a district may be able to reduce some classroom costs by changing staffing levels, combining classes, or adjusting programming. Even here, however, complications are likely, as reducing the number of teachers takes time, leaving some instructional costs at the same level despite lower enrollment.

Other costs are more fixed, meaning they are more difficult to bring down when enrollment declines. Buildings still need to be maintained and heated. Buses still need to be fueled. In practice, this means that enrollment losses force a larger share of the district's remaining budget to be devoted to costs that cannot quickly be reduced. The result is less flexible spending capacity for the students who remain.

These leftover costs can be understood as the fiscal externality resulting from shifting enrollment. In the case of this report, the consequence is that students who remain in St. Paul's district schools experience fewer resources for the more variable parts of schooling (e.g., teachers) because the district must continue paying for more fixed costs that do not disappear when a portion of students leave (e.g., heating school buildings).

To estimate this externality, the analysis follows the approach developed by researchers at the Economic Policy Institute (EPI).[8] That method organizes district spending into three broad categories to calculate fiscal externalities: instructional costs (e.g., teaching), service costs (e.g., record keeping), and capital costs (e.g., buildings and maintenance). These categories are useful for this analysis because they differ in how easily they can be adjusted in response to dropping enrollment. For example, it may be easier to reduce the number of teachers relative to the number of buildings. This difference is baked into the analysis as described below.

We assume that instructional costs are the most easily adjusted, as fewer students require fewer teachers. Even here, however, a district cannot always reduce teachers exactly in alignment with enrollment decline. Consider that student declines are likely coming in different grades, while teachers are licensed to teach different subjects, creating practical difficulties in losing teachers. In this report, instructional costs are assumed to adjust at a rate of 0.8. In practical terms, that means that if enrollment falls by ten percent, instructional costs are assumed to fall by only eight percent.

8 Hilary Wething, "How Vouchers Harm Public Schools," Economic Policy Institute, https://www.epi.org/publication/vouchers-harm-public-schools/.

Service costs refer to the range of supports and operations necessary to run a school system. These include functions that help students access and move through the system and that allow schools to operate day to day. Many of these costs are less adjustable than classroom instruction in the short run, partially because there are fewer staff involved. When a school already has just a few clerical and administrative staff, for example, it is not easy to reduce the number of them. For that reason, this report assumes service costs adjust at a rate of 0.2, meaning that a ten percent enrollment decline is assumed to produce only a two percent decline in service costs.

Capital costs refer to buildings and other physical infrastructure, which we assume are the most difficult to bring down. These costs are treated as completely fixed in the short run, recognizing that a school district is unlikely to immediately save money on facilities simply because a modest number of students leave. Capital costs are therefore assumed to adjust at a rate of 0, meaning a ten percent decline in enrollment will lead to no change in capital expenditures.

One final assumption that is required to calculate the size of the fiscal externality is the number of students moving from district schools to charter schools. When more students move, the externality is larger. The earlier analysis showed that student movement in St. Paul has been steady but has not happened at a constant rate. To capture this variation, this report examines three projections for student movement.

The first projection assumes a 1.7 percent enrollment shift from district to charter schools in St. Paul, which reflects the average annual district school enrollment decline from 2001-02 to 2022-23. The second projection uses a 3.7 percent change, which reflects average enrollment decline in district schools in the post-pandemic period. The final projection utilizes a 4.2 percent change, matching the single largest annual enrollment decline in district schools, which occurred between the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years.

These projections should not be understood as arbitrary hypotheticals. Each is rooted in an observed pattern of enrollment change in St. Paul. Together, they provide a way to estimate the fiscal externality under different, empirically grounded assumptions about the pace at which students are moving from district schools into charter schools.

Two additional points are worth stressing about this methodology. First, in assuming that instructional costs will be easier to reduce than service and capital costs, we replicate the framework used by EPI in their original analysis.[9] There are reasons to believe these assumptions might not hold, such as existing contracts making it more difficult to reduce instructional and service costs, suggesting the fiscal externality would actually be larger than what we report here.[10] Second, declines in instructional costs are likely to disproportionately impact early-career teachers and educational support professionals.

9 Ibid.

10 It is possible for the authors to change the assumptions concerning the adjustment rates for instructional, service, and capital costs to create new fiscal externality results. We are willing to provide additional results if there is interest in seeing different projections analyzed.

Notably, these instructional staffers are more likely to be people of color in Minnesota, meaning that reducing these costs is likely to create an even larger racial gap between students and their educators.[11]

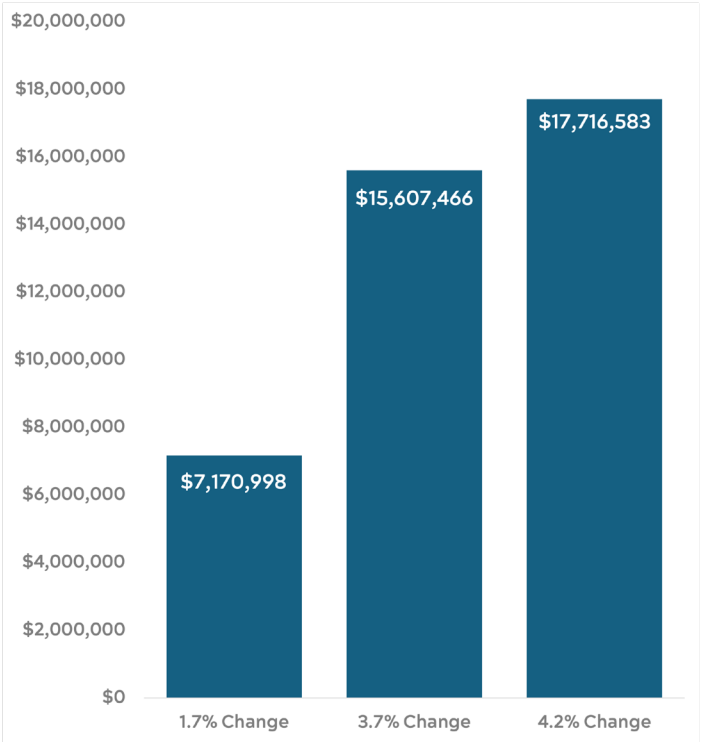
Finally, it is worth pointing out that this fiscal externality analysis should be understood as a snapshot of the district's fiscal pressure under each student movement projection for a single year. We are not claiming that the same total externality will recur every year in the same amount. Over time, SPPS may make adjustments that reduce the size of the externality, for example by changing transportation systems, consolidating programs, or closing buildings. At the same time, if students continue to move from district schools into charter schools, the district would be attempting to adapt while its enrollment base shifts, making it difficult to alleviate this fiscal pressure entirely.

FINDINGS

We apply the methodology described above to data on instructional, service, and capital costs in St. Paul Public Schools in Fiscal Year 2022 taken from the National Center for Education Statistics.[12] Doing so produces substantial fiscal externalities under each of the three student movement projections.

If we assume a 1.7 percent enrollment shift from district schools to charter schools, the fiscal externality is estimated at approximately $218 per remaining district school student, or $7.2 million total. With a 3.7 percent enrollment change, as has been averaged since the pandemic, this price tag rises to $484 per student, or $15.6 million overall. Finally, under the projection in which 4.2% of district students leave to attend charter schools, the fiscal externality reaches $552 per student, resulting in a $17.7 million total cost. Put another way, for each student that remains, the district effectively has $552 fewer dollars to educate them.

FIGURE 7. FISCAL EXTERNALITY PLACED ONTO SPPS BY CHARTER SCHOOLS



Data Source: Data on SPPS costs obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics. Results generated from the authors' fiscal externality analysis.

11 "Summary Report: Increasing Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota," Minnesota Department of Education, https://www.lrl.mn.gov/docs/2025/mandated/251741.pdf

12 Data from the National Center for Education Statistics can be found at https://nces.ed.gov/

These totals suggest that even modest enrollment losses can produce meaningful fiscal pressure when a district's costs are not fully adjustable. That pressure does not mean that every dollar associated with students who move to charter schools is somehow still owed to SPPS. Rather, it means that the district's spending structure does not shrink proportionately with enrollment, leaving fewer flexible resources available for the students who remain in district schools.

It is important to interpret these estimates carefully. They are not projections of what SPPS will necessarily lose every year going forward. District leaders can and do make budgetary and operational changes in response to enrollment decline. If such changes reduce capital, service, or instructional costs, the externality may fall. But the reverse is also true. If student movement into charter schools continues, new rounds of adjustment become necessary. This tension between district adaptation and continued enrollment loss makes the fiscal externality difficult to project precisely across time, which is why we limit our analysis to one yearly snapshot. For that reason, the estimates presented here are best understood as a picture of what the indirect financial burden on SPPS could look like in the present moment under different observed patterns of student movement.

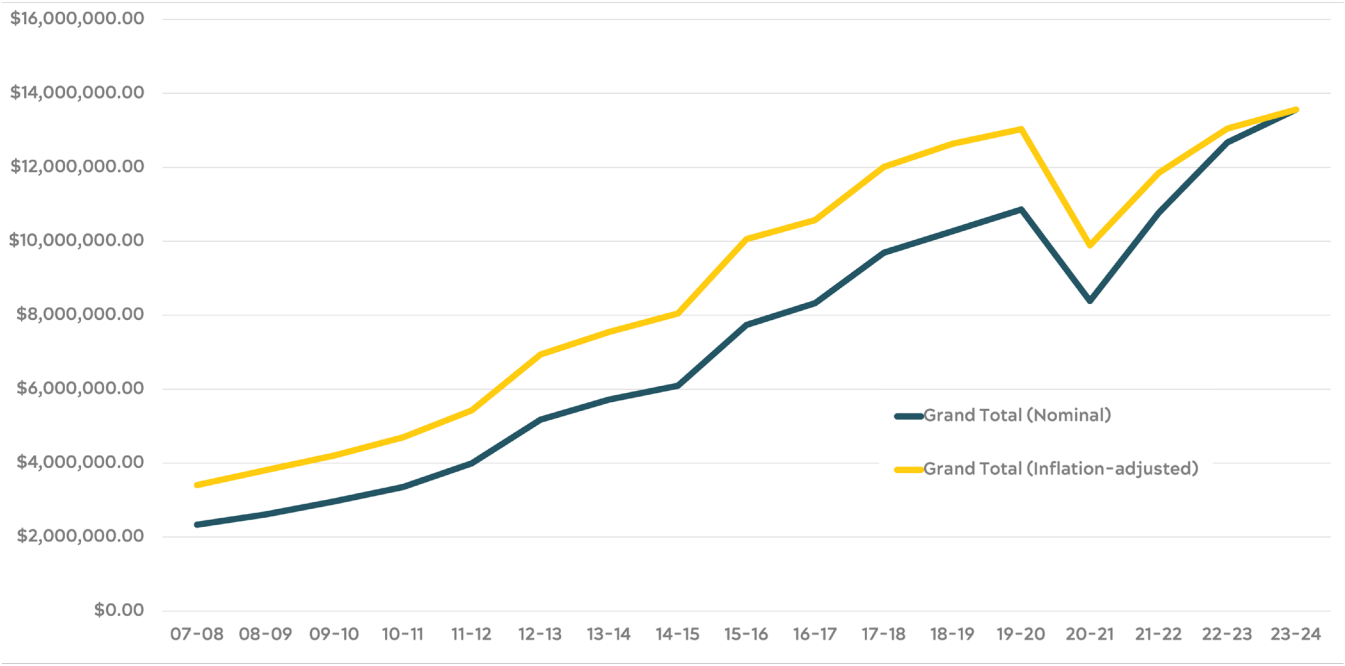
Direct Bills to SPPS

In addition to the indirect costs associated with student movement, charter schools also generate direct costs for SPPS by billing for certain services. These bills are primarily connected to special education. Charter schools, like district schools, are legally responsible for serving students who need special education services. However, the state and federal reimbursements associated with these services often do not fully cover their cost. When there is an unreimbursed portion, charter schools then bill 80 percent of that unreimbursed amount to their resident district.

In practice, this means that public school districts, like SPPS, are required to send funds to charter schools to help cover special education-related services provided to students who do not attend district schools.[13] When school districts provide this funding, they do receive partial reimbursements from the state. Overtime, that reimbursement amount has changed, rising from 2.6% in Fiscal Year 2020 to 44% in 2024. Starting in Fiscal Year 2027, the reimbursement amount will be 50%, meaning districts will receive substantially more assistance, but still retain a large share of the expense.

These charges can reflect a range of service-related expenses, including instructional costs tied to special education, transportation costs for students with needs beyond a traditional bus or van, and some general education costs in cases where charter schools serve especially large numbers of students receiving special education services.

FIGURE 8. DIRECT BILLS FROM CHARTER SCHOOLS TO SPPS



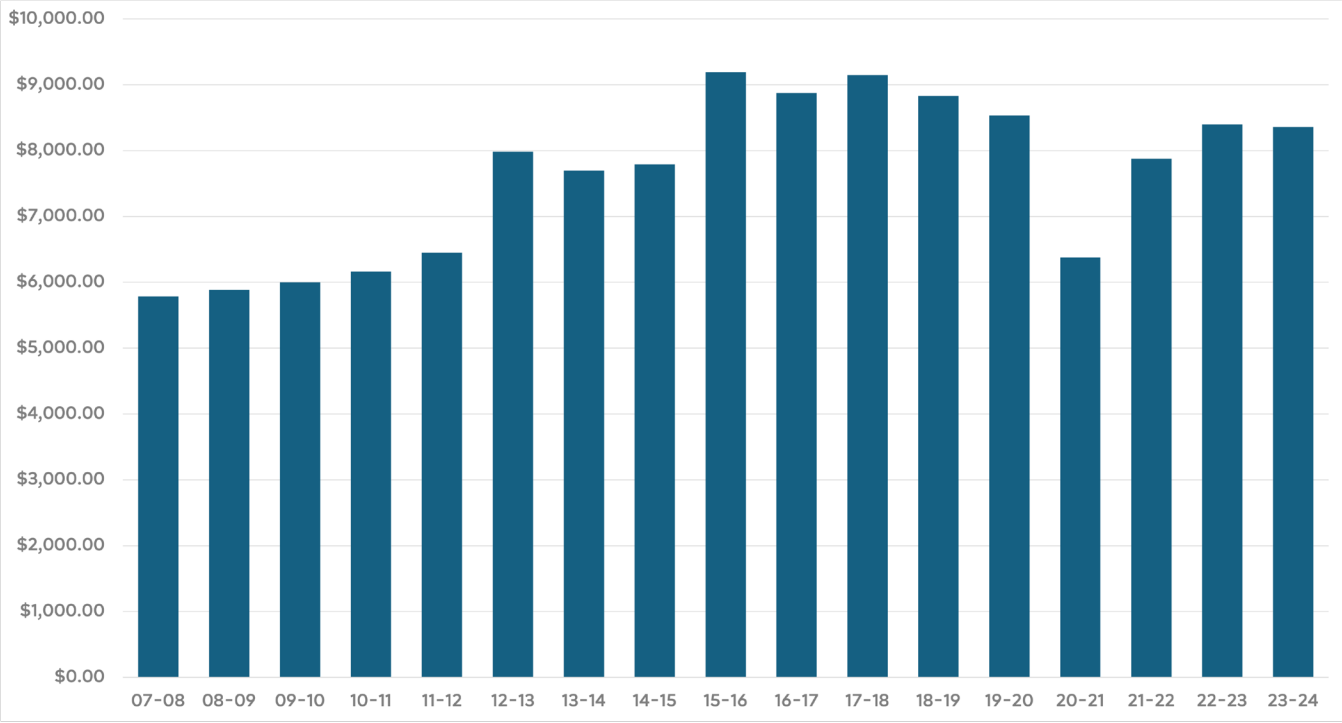
Data Source: Data obtained via data request to the Minnesota Department of Education.

13 Information on this funding relationship between charter schools and public school districts was obtained by the authors through conversations with staff at the Minnesota Department of Education.

Figure 8 shows that these direct bills represent a large and growing expense for SPPS. In 2023-24, charter schools billed SPPS for $13.6 million, up from $3.4 million in 2007-08. Across the last fifteen years, the average annual billing amounted to roughly $7.3 million in nominal dollars, or about $8.9 million in inflation-adjusted 2024 dollars. Looking over the full period covered in the data, charter schools billed SPPS for more than $125 million in nominal dollars, or more than $150 million when adjusted for inflation.

At the same time, it is important to interpret the growth in these bills while considering the number of students attending charter schools. This analysis shows that much of this increase appears to reflect the growing enrollment of students receiving special education services in charter schools, rather than a sharp increase in per-student cost.[14]

FIGURE 9. DIRECT BILLS FROM CHARTER SCHOOLS TO SPPS, PER SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT



Data Source: Data obtained via data request to the Minnesota Department of Education. All bills are inflation-adjusted to be in real 2024 dollars.

When direct billing is examined on a per-special education student basis, the pattern appears more stable. There is some fluctuation across years, but since 2012-13, the amount has remained within the range of $7,500 to $9,200 per student. This trend suggests that a meaningful part of the overall increase in direct billing is tied to the scale of charter enrollment and service delivery rather than to an accelerating cost for each student.

14 The count of special education students used in Figure 9 reflects the Average Daily Membership (ADM) of St. Paul resident special education students in charter schools, reflecting the number of students who would be eligible for the direct billing described in this section. The special education ADM data was obtained via a data request to the Minnesota Department of Education.

Notably, that lack of change in per-student spending does not make the financial impact on SPPS any less real, as is made apparent when considering the amount spent on special education in the state. In Fiscal Year 2024, local education agencies (LEAs), including school districts and charter schools, spent an average of $15,582 in state funding per special education student, or less than twice as much as what SPPS provided to charter schools.[15] From the district's perspective, the most salient fact is that it has had to devote growing sums to services delivered in charter schools. The result is a direct fiscal obligation that sits alongside the indirect fiscal externality described in the previous section.[16]

15 LEA state funding put towards special education services was calculated by taking the weighted average of spending provided in Table 3 of the Special Education Statewide Average Expenditure for Fiscal Year 2024, found at https://education.mn.gov/MDE/about/rule/leg/rpt/2025Reports/.

16 It is unclear if the direct billing from SPPS to charter schools for special education services is generally included in reports that calculate per pupil funding for district schools and charter schools in St. Paul. To the extent that this sum is not captured, it would suggest that existing per pupil calculations provide misleading per pupil totals.

Conclusion

This report was commissioned to examine the fiscal relationship between charter schools and SPPS. It approached that question by analyzing student movement between sectors, estimating the indirect fiscal externality associated with that movement, and documenting the direct bills that charter schools have charged to SPPS.

The findings point in a consistent direction. Charter schools have grown rapidly in St. Paul, creating a sustained flow of students away from district schools and into the charter sector. Notably, the student populations served by charter and district schools are broadly similar, though there are some modest differences, particularly in relation to the larger share of students receiving special education services in district schools.

Most importantly for the purposes of this report, this student movement has fiscal consequences for SPPS. Because some costs cannot be perfectly adjusted to align with enrollment decline, movement into charter schools imposes an indirect cost on the district. Depending on the student movement projection used, that indirect cost is estimated to range from $7.2 million to $17.7 million.

The district also faces direct costs. Charter schools have billed SPPS substantial sums, largely in connection with special education-related services. Those bills have risen significantly over time, amounting to more than $13 million in 2023-24 and more than $125 million since 2007-08.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the relationship between charter schools and SPPS is more complicated than the idea that money follows students. The movement of students from district schools into charter schools has left SPPS with both indirect and direct costs that matter for district finances.

At the same time, the scope of this report is limited. Its purpose is not to determine whether charter schools are educationally superior or inferior to district schools, nor to make a broader normative judgment about school choice. It is focused specifically on the fiscal relationship between the two sectors. A fuller assessment of the merits of this relationship would require additional analysis of student outcomes and educational quality. That work falls outside the scope of this report and represents a valuable subject for future research.


NorthStar
POLICY ACTION

Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC) and AIPAC Resolution Response

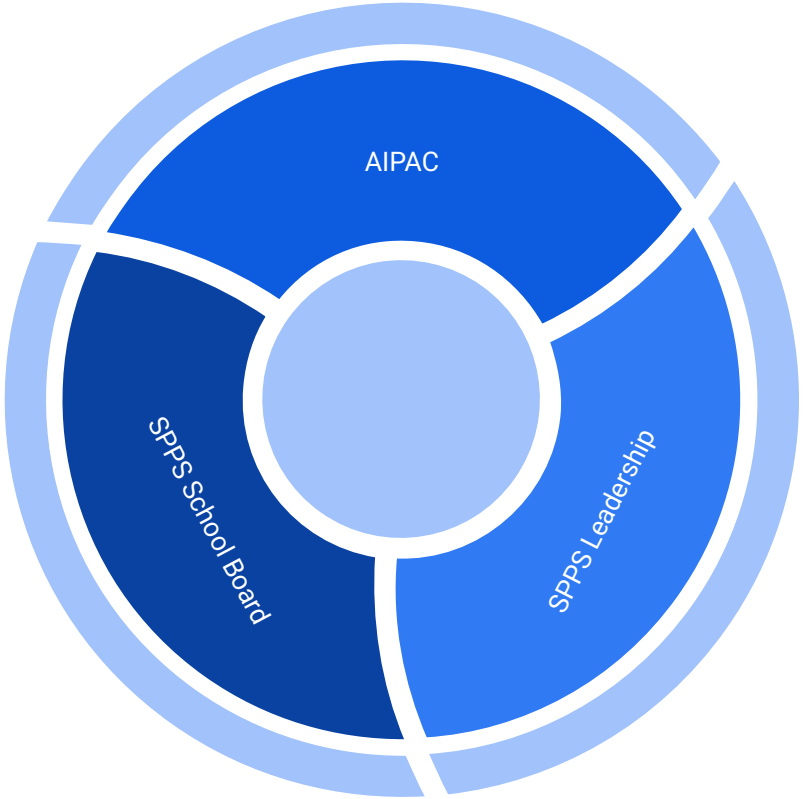
May 5, 2026

TNEC Consultation Process



43

AIPAC Resolution Process



44

Response Timeline



Resolution in place with 4 areas addressed by SPPS.

Resolution reviewed by AIPAC in preparation of vote.

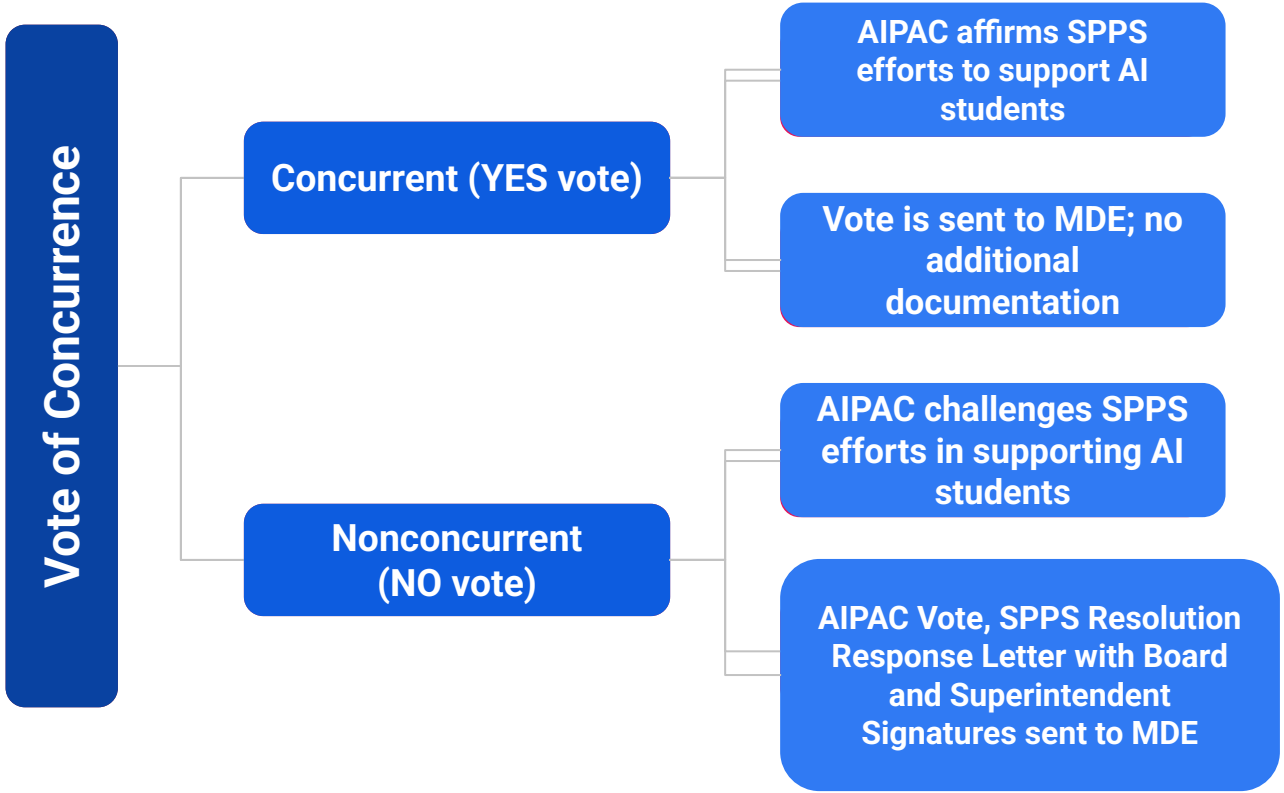
Resolution presented to the Board of Education with a vote of Non-Concurrence.

District meets to plan response. Response due to the PAC

District presents response to the American Indian PAC during the COB.

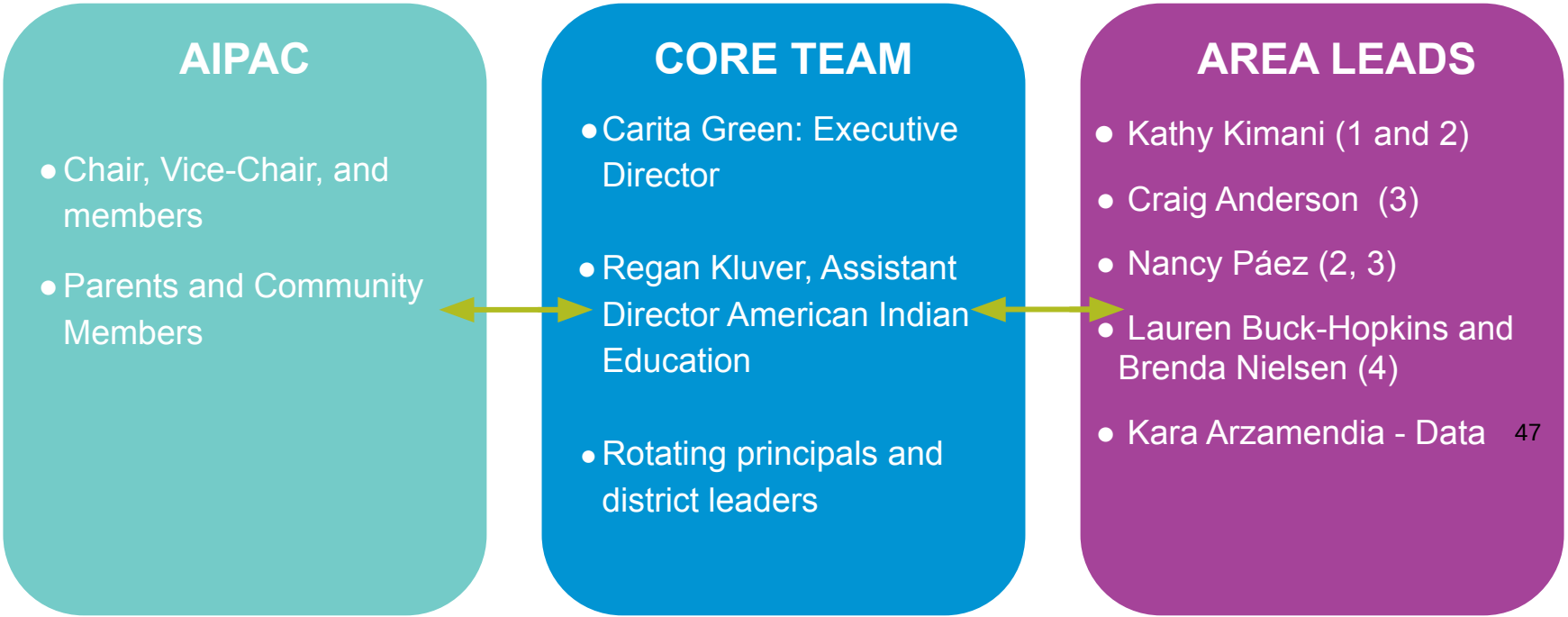
45

Annual Compliance



46

Structure



47

AREA 1: ATTENDANCE

- **Sustain American Indian Specialist position**
  - Support and build on previous successful efforts and strategies
  - Intentional connection with the SPPS Office of American Indian Education
- **School Attendance Matters (SAM) collaboration with American Indian Ed. Staff and school SAM teams.**

- **Increase use of Attendance Ad Hoc report on Campus**
  - to monitor truancy, at-risk students, and celebrate consistent and improving attendance
- **Provide Quarterly Attendance updates to AIPAC**
  - District SAM staff are available to provide additional information about attendance strategies and efforts upon request

48

AREA 2: BEHAVIOR

- **Data-Driven Support**
  - Continue efforts to monitor data, quarterly reports, and support schools as needed
- **Incorporate Specialized Services Support**
  - Continue to support the role of the Specialized Services American Indian Cultural Specialist
  - Continue to train and use the Dream Catcher Proect through MDE for American Indian students.
- **Utilize non-exclusionary restorative practices with American Indian Students**
  - Intervention rooted in culturally specific needs of students
- **Professional Development**
  - Check in with Leadership during Leadership Academy and/or Assistant Superintendent Meetings

49

AREA 3: INSTRUCTION

For the 2025-26 school year, the district is committed to advancing student outcomes through focused work in three key areas:

- **Leadership Development**,
- **Adult Professional Development**, **and**
- **Data-Driven Instructional Support**

These priorities are rooted in our commitment to improving academic outcomes for American Indian students, informed by feedback from the resolution and the work completed during this school year.

The office of Teaching and Learning is committed to fully supporting the Indigneous TOSA FTE, to maintain the work of Indigenous integration into SPPS.

AREA 4: STAFFING

American Indian Magnet School (AIMS)

- Continue to monitor to ensure appropriate staffing.
  - The 26-27 criteria for two APs at a school like AIMS (prek-8) is 650 students, AIMS is projected a student enrollment of 598

Recruitment

- Continue intentional recruitment efforts with established American Indian career pathways and make a concerted effort to learn new ways of community connection. 51

Retention

- Focus on retention of existing American Indian staff through stay interviews and studying turnover data.

District Implementation of 2026/2027 SY Response

- **Ongoing and Active Process**
  - A version of Principal inclusion will continue at meetings
- **Regular check-ins** will continue to occur in each of the four response Areas
  - Process will be updated to reflect established best practices
  - Continue to refine Area 3: Instruction to connect school site processes to AI student achievement

52

- **Regular reporting** will continue to AIPAC regarding actions named in the Resolution Response

Questions

53

Independent School District 625
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102-3299

Superintendent
Dr. Stacie Stanley

Phone: (651) 767-8139 • www.spps.org

Date: April 21, 2026
To: American Indian Parent Advisory Council Members
From: Dr. Stacie Stanley, Superintendent
Subject: Saint Paul Public Schools Administrative Response

Thank you for providing the 2026-27 American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC) Title VI Resolution on March 17, 2026. Below is the response to the areas presented. I look forward to sharing them in greater detail with you in person on Tuesday, May 5, 2026.

Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) is committed to partnering with our American Indian families across the district to meet the distinct cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of American Indian students.

Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) is committed to addressing the unique educational needs, interests, and strengths of American Indian students. Our American Indian students are no longer the lowest performing demographic group. There is still room to grow. As we have improved there is still a disparity attributed to several systemic barriers that key areas impacting achievement, including attendance, behavior, instruction, and staffing.

This document details the ongoing work the district is undertaking to improve outcomes for American Indian students. While current efforts have resulted in growth in certain areas, the district remains dedicated to implementing further changes to ensure continued improvement.

To fully support the Administrative Response below, the district will honor the following commitments:

1. Provide project management support and accountability to support our collaborative work:
    - Once per month at the scheduled AIPAC meeting in conjunction with TNEC consultation guided improvement and projects.
2. Share regular and accurate data reports:
    - To reduce inconsistencies, the district's Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (REA) Department created the following data schedule:

Data Source	Data Provided	Student Groups	Internal Deadline	Date Publicly Available
MCA	Math proficiency and achievement levels	Grades 3-8, 11	August	August
MCA	Reading proficiency and achievement levels	Grades 3-8, 10	October	October
MCA	Science proficiency and achievement levels	Grades 3, 5, 8, and 9-12	August	August
Graduation	Graduation, dropout, continuation, and unknown rates	Grade 12 (4, 5, 6, and 7-year cohort)	Spring	Spring

Saint Paul Public Schools

Independent School District 625
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102-3299

Superintendent
Dr. Stacie Stanley

Phone: (651) 767-8139 • www.spps.org

Attendance	Days absent, percentage absent	K-12	Quarterly	September
Discipline	ODR, suspension, and dismissal rates	PreK-12	Quarterly	September
FastBridge	Reading risk levels (fall, winter, spring) and growth category (fall to winter, fall to spring)	K-12	October, February, June	Not available
HMH Into Math	Math scaled score categories (fall, winter, spring) and growth (fall to winter, fall to spring)	K-12	October, February, June	Not available

In addition to the commitments above, the district will implement the following responses to the four areas outlined in the 2026-27 American Indian Parent Advisory Committee Resolution.

Area 1: Attendance

Goal: *Attendance: American Indian students spend less time in class due to having the highest absentee rate of any other demographic group. It is imperative to decrease the absentee rate of American Indian students by 10% at every school site each year for 5 years.*

Specific AIPAC Recommendation*:* During the current school year, the American Indian Attendance Intervention Specialist has already demonstrated a positive change of attendance outcome for American Indian students. Continued funding of this position will have a direct impact and decrease the high absentee rate. Ensure that the Intervention Specialist has access to district resources so that they can do the assignment to the best of their ability as she is the only person in her office that supports this role. Make sure building principals track attendance data on their American Indian students and prioritize most needs for secondary principals. We also want to make sure that building social workers attend SAM meetings for their American Indian students.

SPPS Response and Strategies for 2026-2027: SPPS agrees that it is critical that we increase rates of consistent attendance for American Indian students. The first thing that we commit to is maintaining the American Indian Attendance Specialist position. The staff in this role will continue strategies such as:

- Ongoing messages containing community resources and attendance guidance sent to all American Indian families through Final Site.
- Continuing the Attendance Pledge & Campaign
- Hosting a table at American Indian Education family events
- Monitor attendance of students on the State Identified American Indian Student list reaching out to schools and families of students with rates of inconsistent attendance.
- Collaborate and connect with culturally specific community agencies to garner their support of SPPS families and consistent attendance.

The School Attendance Matters (SAM) staff will invite a school representative to all School Attendance Review Team meetings for American Indian students. They will also continue to invite a representative from the American Indian Education team, however we realize that they may not be able to attend all meetings.

SAM staff frequently attend school based Attendance Team meetings. During those meetings, SAM staff will review the attendance for State Identified American Indian students, drawing additional attention to the importance of addressing attendance concerns in a timely manner. As needed, they will garner the support of the American Indian Attendance Specialist.

The district will continue efforts to increase the use of the Attendance Ad-Hoc report for American Indian students. The following strategies will be continued for the 2026-27 school year:

- Providing building administrators with reminders and directions on how to pull and monitor this data at Leadership Academy meeting(s).
- Include directions in the Fall SAM Kick-Off meeting and emailing it to the Attendance Teams directly throughout the school year.
- SAM staff will discuss and advise on this at the Attendance Team meetings they attend.

The district will provide quarterly attendance updates to the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee. District SAM staff will be available to provide additional information upon request.

Area 2: Behavior

Goal: *Behavior: American Indian students have a disproportionate number of dismissals, suspensions, and office disciplinary referrals than most demographic groups. It is imperative to decrease disciplinary referrals by 10% at every school site each year for 5 years.*

Specific AIPAC Recommendation*: Early indications do show a decrease in disciplinary referrals for American Indian students. This committee requests that the district continue this effort and provide yearly updates to AIPAC. We also ask for staff support for American Indian students who have an IEP/504 plan, and to support these students in IEP meetings. Also, let the building staff know to ask for support from the Indian Education or Attendance specialist when needed, and when American Indian students return to school after a suspension.*

SPPS Response and Strategies for 2026-2027: The district continues to commit to following the efforts noted in this section to reduce suspensions and ODRs of our American Indian students.

Data-Driven Support

- **Quarterly reports -** The Office of Research Evaluation and Assessment (REA) provides quarterly discipline reports. These reports include the discipline data for state-identified American Indian students. The report includes school-by-school data and district-level data. This data will be used to monitor growth and areas in need of improvement on a school-by-school basis and to create a conversation around behavior through the site-specific data.
- The Office of School Support will review the district database to identify the intersections of behavior, inconsistent attendance, IEPs, and 504s. We will focus on the students who emerge in these intersections and learn about what is happening, when, how often, and how to improve the school experience for our students.

Saint Paul Public Schools

Independent School District 625
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102-3299

Superintendent
Dr. Stacie Stanley

Phone: (651) 767-8139 • www.spps.org

Adult Professional Development

- Districtwide Departmental support to school sites includes:
    - District Restorative Practices Coordinators facilitate a monthly cohort focused on Non-Exclusionary Discipline Practices. The team will commit time to focus on the specific needs of American Indian students.
    - SPPS OAIE provides professional development for school sites and departments within the district on a requested and as-needed basis.
    - Professional development and training for school site staff to increase the impact of our efforts in direct student services;
        - Schoology course available for all SPPS staff to take.
        - Develop professional development opportunities and messaging for staff to increase awareness of the Resolution, American Indian Education Programming, and the cultural and linguistic needs of American Indian students.

Specialized Services Support

- The Office of Specialized Services (OSS) has hired an American Indian Cultural Specialist who is trained in Check and Connect and the special education evaluation process. In partnership with the American Indian Education Social Worker, the Special Education American Indian Cultural Specialists works with families and IEP teams to ensure cultural perspectives are integrated into decisions that teams make about students.
- OSS collects data regarding rates students who qualify for special education services and also dismissals and suspensions of students who receive special education services. This data is disaggregated by race, including targeted review of American Indian students who receive special education services. The district has provided two trainings to principals and assistant principals this school year focusing on reducing suspensions and dismissals.
- This is the second year that SPPS has partnered with MDE to implement the Dream Catcher Project. The Office of Specialized Services is implementing a training plan for the Dream Catcher Project professional development and framework. Over the last year, over 150 special education staff, administrators, social workers, and school psychologists have been trained in the Dream Catcher Project.

Summary: By addressing high areas of need through Specialized Services and providing professional development opportunities based on data-driven support, the district is in a position to continuously improve the student experience in this area.

Area 3: Instruction

Goal: *Instruction: American Indian students have not made typical or aggressive growth as measured from fall 2025 to winter 2026, FAST reading and math assessments at the same rate as other demographic groups. This screener measures student learning and growth in SPPS classrooms from fall to winter. American Indian students must make measurable growth in reading and math by 10% at every school site each year for 5 years.*

Specific AIPAC Recommendation*: During the last year, the American Indian Curriculum TOSA created a repository and developed several Indigenous lessons in collaboration with content area leads*

that meet MN state standards. Continued funding for this position will continue to directly support Instruction support that moves the dial in reading and math. The AIPAC also recommends the district fiscally supports district-wide Ojibwe and Dakota language learning at schools outside of AIMS and Harding. Language text books and resources are available, and it should be the responsibility of the district to provide these resources, as you would for other world language classes across SPPS.

SPPS Response and Strategies for 2026-2027: For this school year, the district is committed to advancing student outcomes through continuing our focused work in three key areas: **Leadership Development**, **Adult Professional Development**, and **Data-Driven Instructional Support**. These priorities are rooted in our commitment to improving academic outcomes for American Indian students, informed by feedback from the resolution and the work completed during this school year.

Leadership Development

The district continues to invest in building the capacity of school leaders to identify and support interventions for American Indian students.

- During Leadership Academy sessions, elementary principals were trained to filter and analyze data specifically for State-Identified American Indian students in Attendance, Literacy, and Mathematics.
- 100% of elementary principals have utilized the data tools provided, creating targeted intervention plans for students at every school site.
- Additionally, principals have had 2+ hours of PD focused on land acknowledgement practices and began writing their own land acknowledgement to use when they lead PD or school based meetings.
- 100% of secondary principals received targeted training in Infinite Campus to identify American Indian students and track academic data (attendance, grades, and reading/math progress).
- Elementary and Middle School Leadership Academy (March 12 & 26): Led sessions focused on historical and contemporary educational experiences of Indigenous students. The curriculum included:
    - Reviewing Indigenous Education for All (IEFA) legislation.
    - Analyzing school-specific data to transition from passive monitoring to targeted intervention.

Adult Professional Development

The district has made significant strides in professional development, particularly in enhancing cultural competence and instructional practices.

K-12 Level

- Opening Week 2025, the TOSA supported multiple sessions of professional learning - including sessions for social studies, science, and elementary general education teachers and provided resources.
- On October 2, 2025, TOSA supported professional learning for Visual & Media Arts teachers to deepen their understanding about Minnesota American Indian Tribes and Communities. Dakota Spirit Walk at Wakan Tipi, created by Spirit Lake Dakota Artist Marlyena Myles
- On November 7, 2025, TOSA supported professional learning for physical education and health teachers about Indigenous Games to include in their classes.

- TOSA created an asynchronous PD course for teachers to complete their P6 relicensure requirement.
- TOSA supports a collaborative relationship with Jim Barta (a professor from Bemidji who focuses on mathematics and indigenous) for the Tribal Nations standards alignment with our math curriculum and state standards.
- TOSA presented about SPPS science instruction during the National Science Teacher Association conference and the Great Lakes Planetarium conference.
- TOSA will be attending the Minnesota Council of Teacher of Mathematics conference in April to learn more about integrating indigenous teaching into MDE math standards.
- Upcoming – MN English Teachers' Conference (April 30): Scheduled presentation with the Minnesota Humanities Center on the Native American Lives Series Pilot (DEARi).
- Participated in MTSS COMPASS Training and have started to work with district counselors on indigenous ways of knowing. We will be doing PD for middle and high school counselors in April.
- Native American Lives Series (NALS):
    - Created a Drop Everything and Read Indigenous (DEARI) framework to be used in SPPS to assist with literacy goals.
    - Collaborated with the MN Humanity Center to secure a series of books about real life stories of Dakota and Ojibwe leaders, artists, activists, and elders who have been influential for their communities and have shaped Minnesota and the nation.
    - Secured funding with partnership with the Equity Dept. for the purchase of the books in order to expand their availability.
    - Facilitated Middle School Professional Learning sessions around the NALS. Participants were provided with necessary texts and account access for the pilot at AIMs.
- Minnesota Indian Education Association (MIEA) Quizbowls (March 18–20):
    - TOSA facilitated the Ojibwe and Dakota Quizbowls, managing the full logistics of the field trip.
    - TOSA delivered two distinct presentations in collaboration with the Minnesota Humanities Center regarding Bdote and NALS.

Elementary Schools

- Continued collaboration with Bdote curriculum:
    - Facilitated Teaching Bdote Workshop (March 7): This session served as a continuation of previous workshops, introducing a suite of new educational resources.
    - Facilitated Bdote Curriculum Review (March 14): Collaborated with Dakota elders, cultural subject matter experts, and educators from across the state to continue vetting and refining lesson plans.
        - District Curriculum Development: TOSA is currently creating three lessons for district-wide use on Indigenous Peoples Day in partnership with our Social Studies and Equity Departments.
    - Social Studies Integration: TOSA co-presented on the Bdote Experience at the MInnesota Council of Teachers of Social Studies conference.
- K-5 standard alignment for curriculum: TOSA will help with creating resources. They were going unit by unit. Using what science has done. More inquiry based.
- TOSA is supporting UFLI lesson learning walks at AIMs.

Saint Paul Public Schools

Independent School District 625
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102-3299

Superintendent
Dr. Stacie Stanley

Phone: (651) 767-8139 • www.spps.org

Middle and High Schools (Grades 6-12):

- The Indigenous Curriculum Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) played a **key role** in developing, coordinating, and delivering 6-12 professional development opportunities focused on Indigenous education and Minnesota Tribal Nations content.
- On February 25 and March 25, 2026, worked with 9-12 ELA teachers to revise curriculum to include more Indigenous texts and American Indian state standards.
- On March 20, 2026, District PD Day, presented to all 6-12 math teachers and led breakout sessions centered on integrating authentic American Indian education into the classroom moving beyond performative gestures to build sustainable, relational teaching practices rooted in the ancestral homelands of the Dakota and Ojibwe people.
- TOSA updated scope and sequences and unit design for Ojibwe and Dakota language and culture classes.
- On March 20, 2026 in the afternoon, the Indigenous TOSA led professional learning at Humboldt High School about integrating authentic American Indian education into the classroom moving beyond performative gestures to build sustainable, relational teaching practices rooted in the ancestral homelands of the Dakota and Ojibwe people.

Collaborative Partnerships: The TOSA also partnered with the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) Science Team, the Planetarium, and Belwin programming to embed Indigenous knowledge into science education offerings.

Data-Driven Instructional Support

The district is committed to using clear, measurable data to assess progress and guide improvements:

- **Attendance, Literacy, and Mathematics** data will continue to be the primary indicators of student achievement.
- A **new Science assessment** was administered this year, establishing a baseline for future comparison and growth tracking.
- Ongoing course feedback and adjustments will be implemented for licensure courses focused on Indigenous requirements, ensuring continuous improvement based on educator input.

Summary: By centering leadership development, building adult capacity, and utilizing targeted student data, the district is strategically positioning itself to better serve American Indian students during the 2026/27 academic year and beyond. We deeply value the partnership with the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee and are committed to working together to ensure meaningful, measurable progress.

Area 4: Staffing

Goal: *Staffing: American Indian students need to have American Indian staff present at all levels of staffing in SPPS. It is critical to increase the number of American Indian professionals by 25%.*

Specific AIPAC Recommendation*: Early indications do show an increase in American Indian staff within SPPS, however, this committee would like to see an increased effort to hire more American Indian professionals. Specifically requesting an additional Assistant Principal at American Indian Magnet School. This addition will create a more equitable service for the students and their families*

who are attending AIMS.

An additional assistant principal at AIMS would also allow the continuation of the family engagement programming currently going on (for example, Wednesday community nights, Dakota/Ojibwe storytelling, Powwows, and language tables) and ensure these programs and services continue. We also ask for more retention for current American Indian staff and mental health support. Also, more support for American Indian staff at non-American Indian Studies schools. We also ask the district to continue its plan in recruiting AI staff across the district and not just AIS schools.

SPPS Response and Strategies for 2026-2027:

Request for an additional Assistant Principal for AIMS

- PreK-8 Schools receive a maximum of two Assistant Principals if they meet the appropriate criteria for the priority area of enrollment. All PreK-8 schools receive 1 Assistant Principal regardless of size, given the programming and grade levels offered.
- The criteria for 2026-27 require enrollment to be at least 650 students to qualify for a 2nd Assistant Principal. Projected enrollment for AIMS for 2026-27 is 598. The District will continue to monitor student enrollment as we hope that AIMS continues to grow.

Recruitment

We continue our intentional recruitment efforts to attract American Indian staff to work at St Paul Public Schools. We have been attending job fairs hosted by, geared towards, or geographically near American Indian audiences across Minnesota and Wisconsin. We are also working to establish relationships with American Indian organizations such as Minneapolis American Indian Center, Indian Health Board and Tribal Colleges. Since January 2026, we have attended 16 hiring events and are currently registered for 5 more. Of these, 9 have been hosted by one of our partnership colleges, such as UW-Eau Claire, UW-River Falls, UW-Lacrosse, U of M-Minneapolis, and Bemidji State. We've ramped up efforts to seek out job fairs focused on diversity, and are looking forward to the upcoming Founders' Day Career Fair on May 14th with American Indian OIC. We have also hosted a virtual job fair for support staff.

We are also continuing our commitment to developing university partnerships that will allow us to gain earlier access to American Indian students in education degree fields. This includes our Education pathway students in our high schools.

Retention

We recognize that in addition to recruiting American Indian staff, we need to do a better job of retaining them. For this reason, we are expanding efforts to better understand the turnover patterns and the retention of our staff. While all employees can complete an exit survey and request an exit interview when they resign, not many currently do this. We continue to reach out to any American Indian staff who resigned to get their feedback on the reasons for their decision to part ways with Saint Paul Public Schools. In addition, we have been conducting "stay interviews" for our existing American Indian staff to learn more about what motivates them to stay at Saint Paul Public Schools. Stay interview data points to staff primarily using external supports as the enduring mechanism of choice (e.g. family/friend support groups, social events for self care, organizations for teachers, etc), however in-district

mechanisms are typically site-specific and involve positive supportive relationships with their administrator and colleagues. By gathering data about why our American Indian staff stay and why they leave, we will be more effective in implementing meaningful changes to retain our valued employees.

School Year	**American Indian <u>Regular</u> Employees & Athletic Coaches Hired** *(Excludes temporary workers*)	**Percent of Total Regular Hires**	**Resignations of classroom staff** *(Educators & Paras)* **with less than 3 years of retention**
July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020	14	1.9%	5
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021	10	1.8%	3
July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022	19	1.9%	2
July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023	25	3%	9
July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024	33	2.9%	7
July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025	19	2.3%	11
July 1, 2025 - March 29, 2026	35	3.8%	8

Currently, our 146 American Indian (active, regular) employees are spread out over 39 schools and 4 administrative buildings. Classroom staff specifically *(licensed educators and paraprofessionals*) work in 30 schools across the district.

We will continue to work with AIPAC to provide transparent communication in our efforts to hire and retain more American Indian employees for SPPS across all of our schools.

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our American Indian students and community. We look forward to continued partnership with our AIPAC members to glean wisdom together that will result in our American Indian students experiencing a greater sense of visibility, belonging, and improved student outcomes.

Saint Paul Public Schools

Independent School District 625
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102-3299

Superintendent
Dr. Stacie Stanley

Phone: (651) 767-8139 • www.spps.org

Required signatures:

Name	Title	Signature	Date
Uriah Ward	Board Chair		May 5, 2026
Erica Valliant	Board Vice Chair		May 5, 2026
Chauntyll Allen	Board Clerk		May 5, 2026
Carlo Franco	Board Treasurer		May 5, 2026
Halla Henderson	Board Director		May 5, 2026
Yusef Carrillo	Board Director		May 5, 2026
Dr. Brandon Lowe	Interim Board Director		May 5, 2026
Dr. Stacie Stanley	Superintendent		May 5, 2026
Regan Kluver	OAIE Director		May 5, 2026

Fiscal Year 2026-27 Community Budget Meeting

May 5, 2026

Meeting Agenda

Thank you for joining us!

Today, we will cover the following topics:

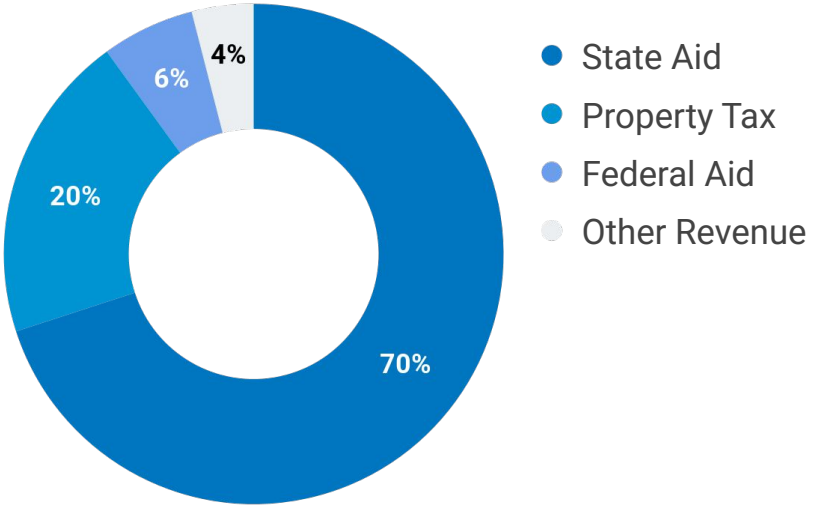
- How school budgets work
- An overview of the anticipated 2026-27 budget
- Answers to questions about the budget shortfall and referendum
- How budget decisions are made
- School and district reductions for 2026-27
- Next steps in the budget process
- Questions

65

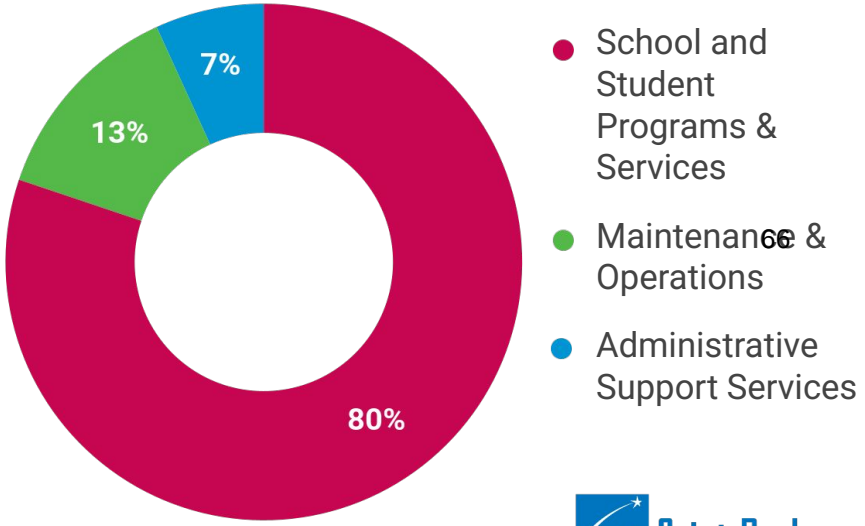
How Do School Budgets Work?

SPPS must create a balanced budget based on our revenue (funding sources) and expenses. School district budgets come from many funding sources with specific rules that dictate how the money can be spent.

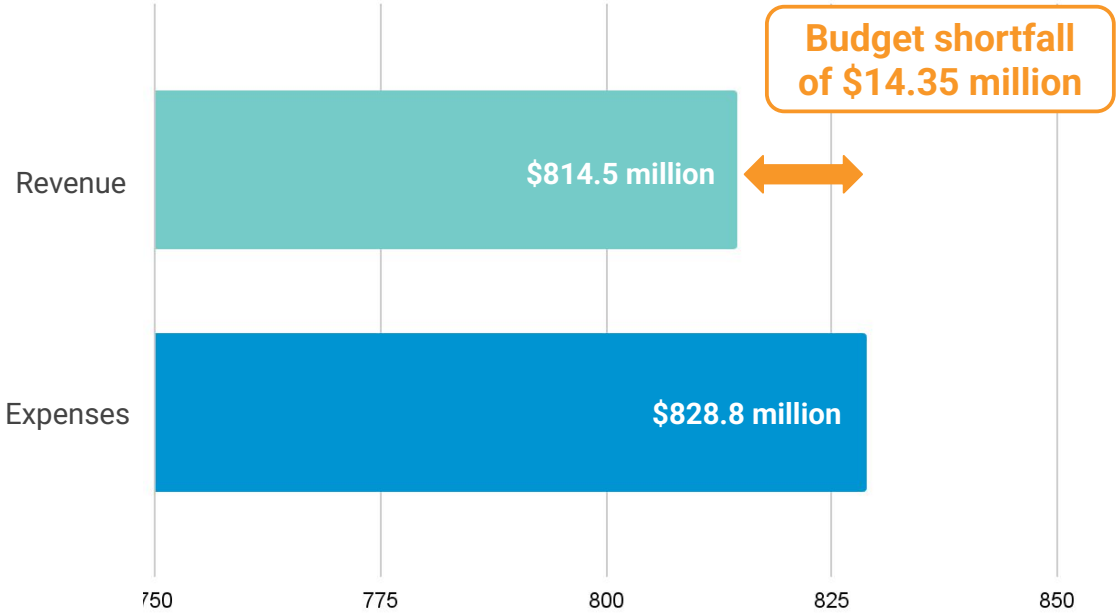
Funding Sources



General Fund Budget



2026-27 Anticipated Budget

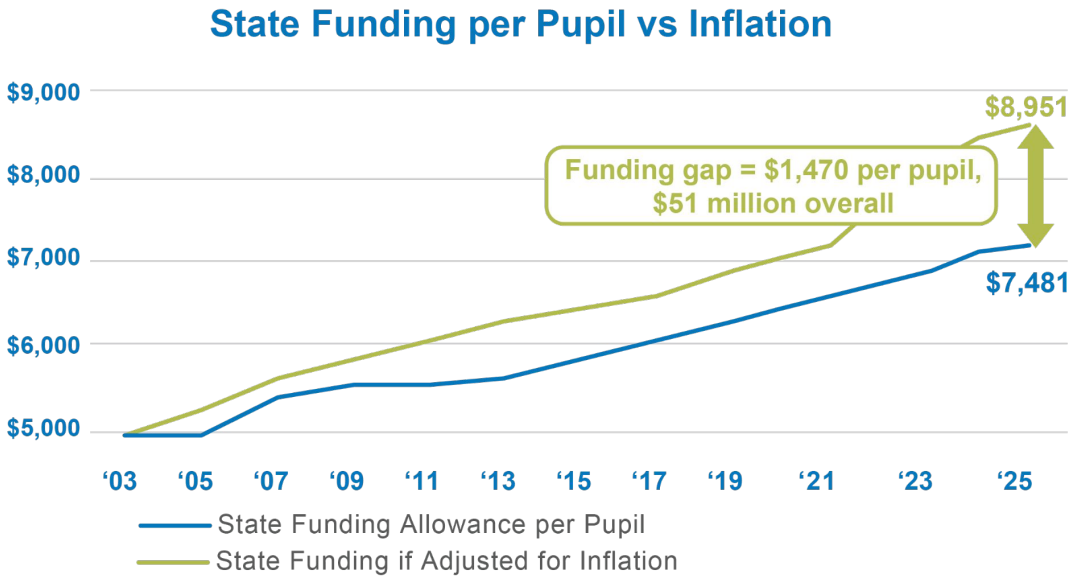


SPPS is planning for a budget shortfall in 2026-27 of $14.35 million, which is 1.7% of the district's total budget. This number is much improved thanks to the referendum approved by voters this fall.

Budget reductions will be necessary at both the school and district levels to balance the budget for next year.

67

Why Did SPPS Ask Voters to Approve a Referendum?



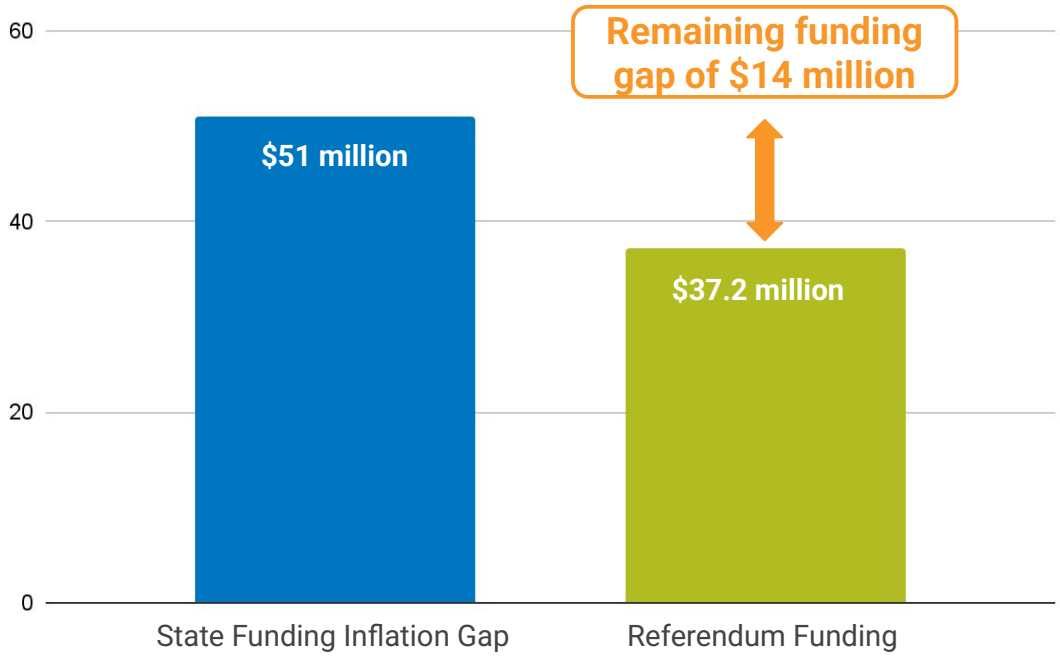
State funding for public schools has not kept pace with inflation for over 20 years.

If state funding was adjusted for inflation, SPPS would have an additional $51 million in funding.

68

This is why SPPS asked St. Paul voters to approve a referendum this fall.

Why Do We Have a Shortfall After the Referendum?



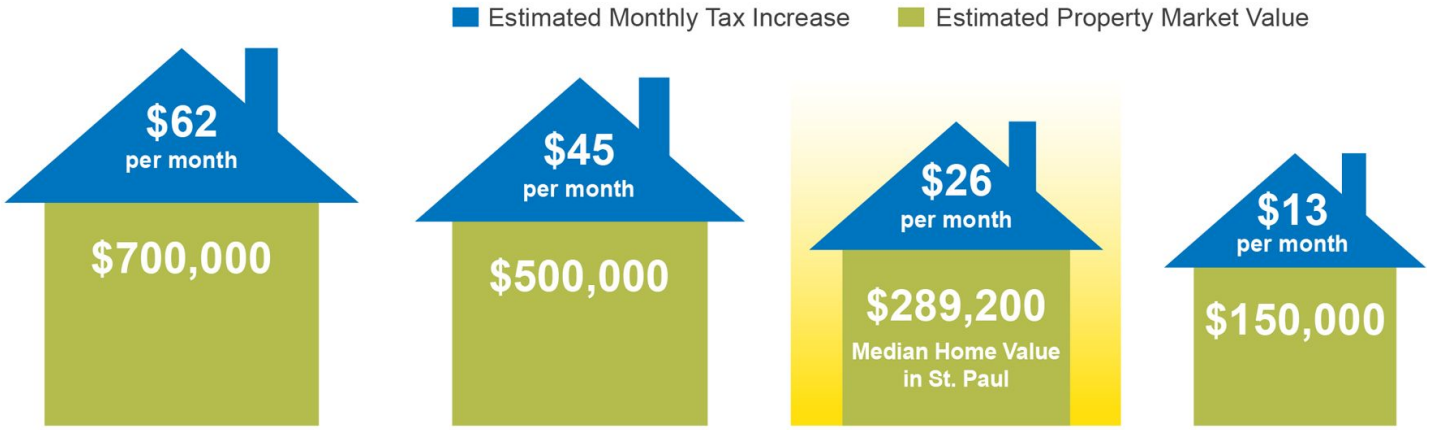
The referendum will generate $37.2 million annually for the next 10 years. **This leaves a remaining funding gap of about $14 million.**

While the referendum revenue will help stabilize the budget and avoid significant budget cuts, it does not completely solve the district's financial challenges.

69

Why Didn't SPPS Ask for More Referendum Funding?

The referendum was approved for $37.2 million annually. This puts SPPS in line with neighboring districts while staying under the legal limit the district could request. Asking voters to approve more funding would have overburdened St. Paul residents and exceeded the legal limit.



The referendum increases property taxes based on the market value of your home.

What Caused the Budget Shortfall?

SPPS used reserve funds to help maintain programs and services and avoid significant budget cuts during the past two budget years.

- Using reserve funds is not an option this year in order to maintain the required minimum of 5% in reserve funds.

SPPS anticipates a decline in student enrollment of 900 students this year and next year. This number was not known until after the Board authorized the dollar amount for the referendum.

-900 students



-$9 million

71

How Are Budget Decisions Made?

District Mission & Community Values

Students, staff and families are asked what they value to help guide budget decisions

Board Parameters

The Board of Education sets guidelines for what the district should prioritize

District Budget Decisions

District leaders make decisions for funding and reductions based on the Board's parameters and community values

Budget Implementation

Principals and department leaders make choices around staffing, contracts and programming based on the funding available

72

Many required expenses fall outside of these priorities and must be funded using available resources, such as utilities, insurance, state and federal mandates, staffing ratios, and other fixed costs.

Community Budget Engagement Summary

SPPS engaged with over 6,000 parents/guardians, staff, and students in grades 6-12 to determine our community's priorities for the 2026-27 budget.

Activity	Participants	Date
Parent/Guardian Budget Surveys	1,059 parents/guardians	Dec. 11, 2025-Jan. 16, 2026
Staff Budget Surveys	1,401 staff	Dec. 11, 2025-Jan. 16, 2026
Student Budget Surveys	3,467 students in grades 6-12	Jan. 5-16, 2026
Community Budget Meeting	86 parents, community members and staff	Dec. 11, 2025
TOTAL	**6,013 participants**	

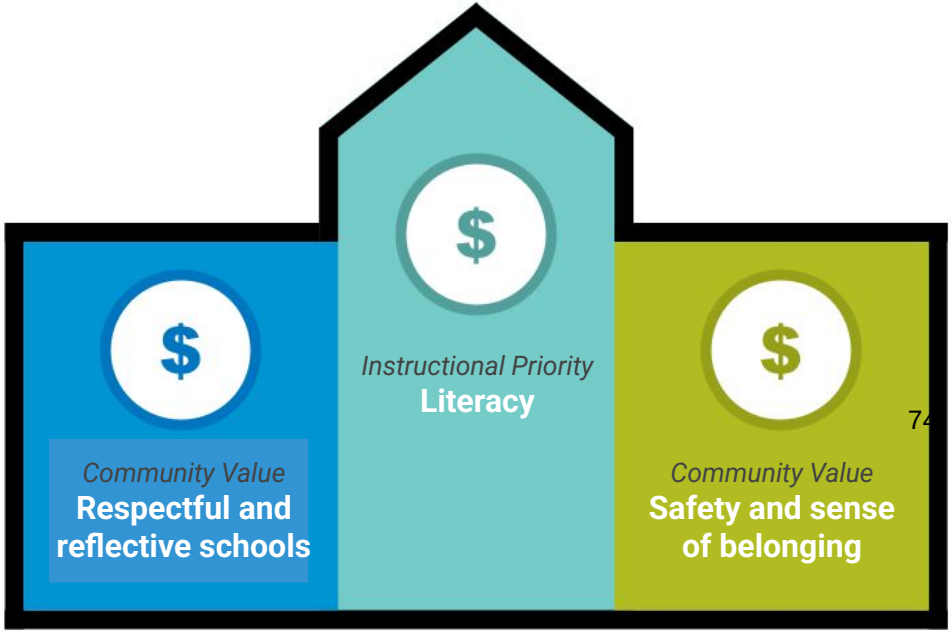
73

Community Budget Priorities

Budget decisions are guided by the community priorities gathered from engagement opportunities earlier this school year.

Survey results also showed strong support for arts and music, mental health support, required course offerings, building upkeep, college and career readiness, and language and culture programs.

Top 3 Community Priorities



Board Budget Parameters

The SPPS Board of Education created three guidelines that will be used when making budget decisions for next year:

1. Maintain district commitment to full-day pre-kindergarten
2. Retain at least 95% of instructional support services
3. Demonstrate continued commitment to language and culture programs

The district must also maintain at least 5% of daily operating expense in reserve funds per Board policy.

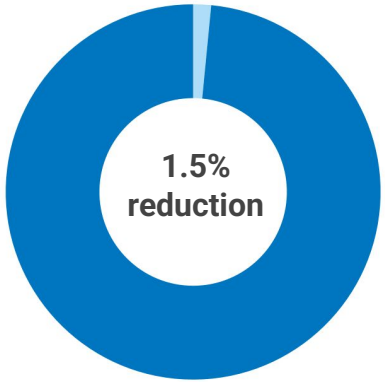
75

Proposed Budget Reductions (as of March 12, 2026)

Reduction	Savings	Rationale
School-based FTEs	$9.39M	Align school staffing with enrollment. No splits PreK-1, specialists round to 0.5; middle/high school remain staffed at 4 below class size
District staff FTEs and central office expenses	$3.06M	Reductions across all central office departments
Reduce carryover to schools by 50%	$750,000	Schools will have some carryover funds for discretionary expenditures
Staff attrition	$510,000	Each year, roughly 850 employees leave SPPS. Conservatively estimating reduction of 6 FTEs through attrition
Allocation practice for kindergarten	$300,000	Continue to maximize kindergarten enrollment by accepting up to 3 students over cap; adjustments in fall 2026 as needed
Fall staffing adjustments	$400,000	The district will set aside $600K for this purpose, resulting in $400K savings
2% increase to supply budgets instead of 4%	$240,000	Reduce standard inflationary increase by 50% for supplies
Maintain partnerships where grants are being reduced	-$300,000	Use general fund dollars to replace lost grant revenue
Total FY27 Reductions	**$14.35M**	

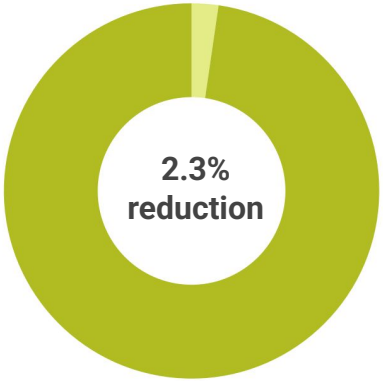
Budget Reductions

School-Related Reductions



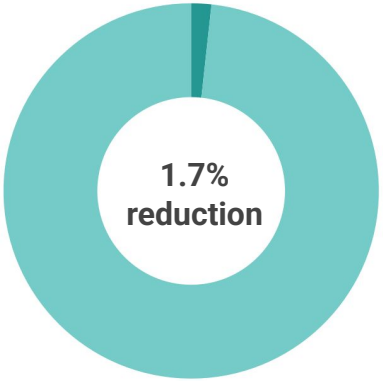
School-related services will make $10.5 million in reductions. This is a **1.5% reduction to schools'** overall budget of $683.9 million.

Non-School Related Reductions



Non-school based services will make $3 million in reductions. This is a **2.3% reduction to administrative areas'** overall budget of $130.3 million.

Total Reductions



SPPS will make $14.35 million total budget reductions for 2026-27. This is a **1.7% reduction of the district's General Fund budget** of $828.8 million.

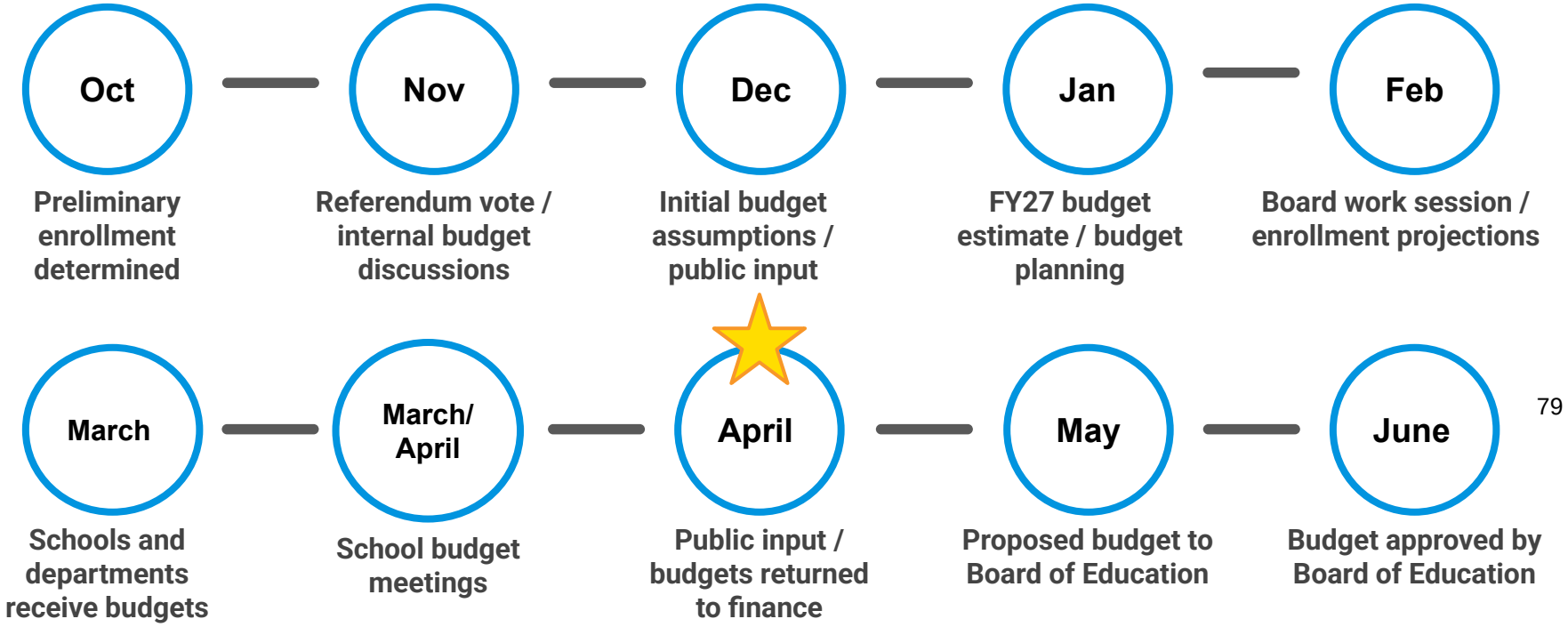
Budget Priorities

SPPS is committed to limiting the impact of budget reductions on students' experiences at school as much as possible and will honor the following priorities:

- Avoid split-level (composite) classes in grades PreK-1
- Adhere to class size averages in all schools
- Maintain full-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten enrollment
- Retain current levels of instructional support staff
- Demonstrate continued commitment to language and culture programs

78

2026-27 Budget Timeline



79

Next Steps and Resources

- The proposed 2026-27 budget will be presented to the Board of Education on May 19.
- The Board will vote to approve the budget on June 23.

The latest updates about Saint Paul Public Schools' 2026-27 budget can be found at spps.org/fy27budget.

80

Thank You!

81