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I. Overview

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) has presented school districts across the country with an incredible opportunity. Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) is receiving approximately \$207 million to be used over the next three years for COVID-19 response efforts and to address long-term student outcomes that have been impacted by the pandemic.

SPPS is committed to providing sustainable resources to schools and students, improving teaching and learning, and ensuring a safe return to school for all students and staff. In the coming months and years, supporting students will mean investing in not only their education, but in their human potential to be resilient, adaptive, courageous and successful. These funds present an opportunity for SPPS to be innovative, try new things, and prepare our students for the future while supporting our staff in providing effective instruction, social-emotional learning, health and wellness support, and addressing academic and enrichment gaps within our communities.

To determine the best use of these funds, SPPS reassessed our [SPPS Achieves strategic plan](#), recommitting to the plan's long-term student outcomes and initiatives as the foundation for improving achievement for all students. We also engaged the community in a thorough needs assessment, represented by 11,000 responses, that confirmed our strategic plan is on the right track and gave us additional insight into students, schools, staff and family/community needs directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Internally, we formed a cross-functional workgroup to create a process and determine how best to use these funds to meet our district's needs.

Superintendent Joe Gothard emphasizes that SPPS has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve student outcomes with federal funding from the American Rescue Plan. "We believe the strategies we are proposing will help us reach our goals as a district, and we are committed to monitoring their progress and making necessary adjustments to ensure **every dollar is being spent to equitably meet the needs of our students, families, staff and community at large.**"

II. Federal Requirements

The American Rescue Plan (ARP), also known as ESSER III, provides funding to K-12 school districts and institutions of higher education to reopen safely for in-person learning and address students' needs. Funding may be encumbered from March 2020 to September 30, 2024. Within these parameters, SPPS is targeting the following four priorities:

1. Safely reopen schools for all students
2. Address pre-and post-pandemic unfinished learning
3. Build lasting, equitable systems of teaching and learning
4. Support student and staff social emotional needs on returning to full on-site learning

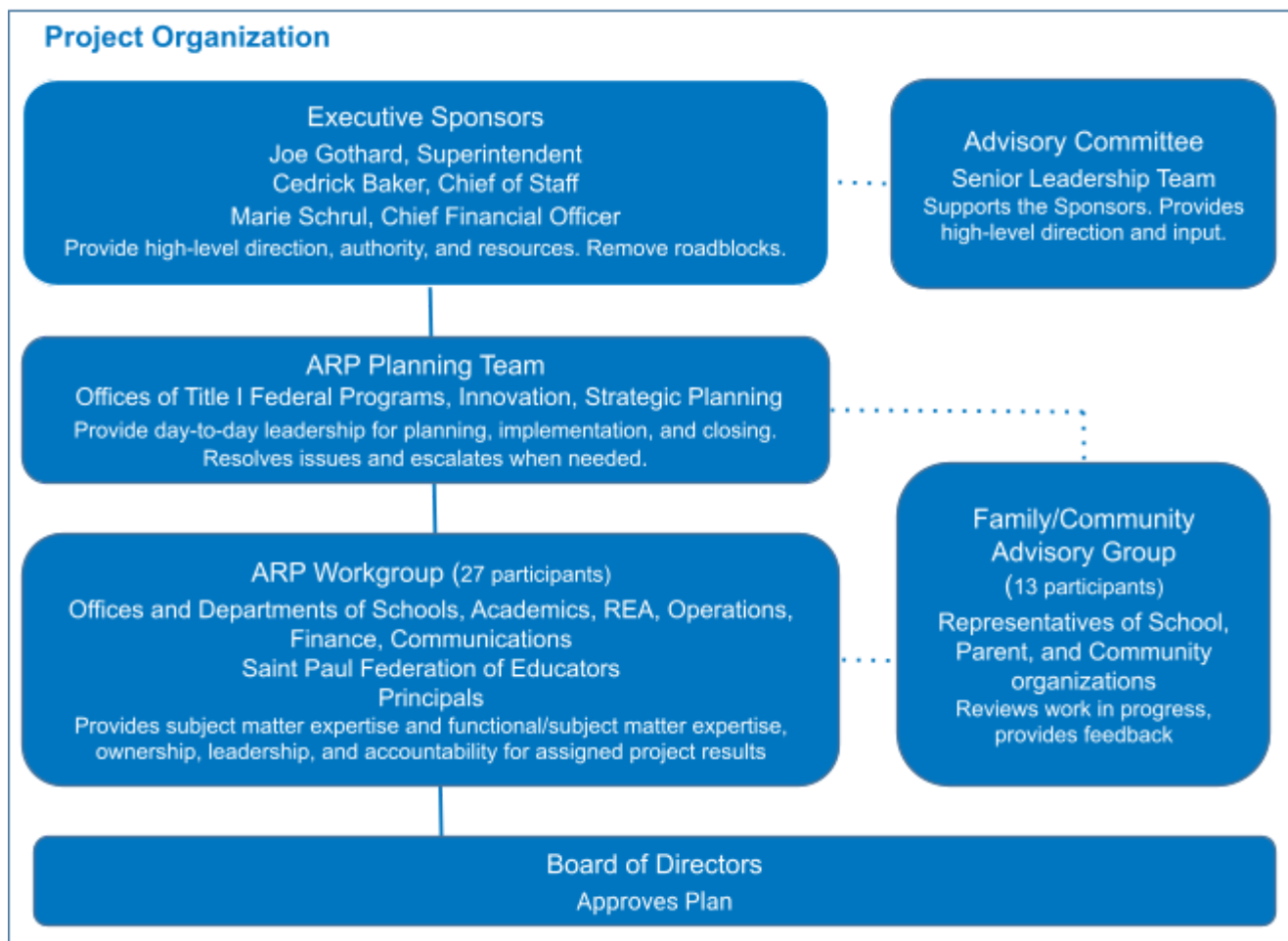
School districts are required to reserve 20 percent of their funds to address “learning loss” caused by the pandemic. This includes providing for extended day, extended year, summer school and evidence-based interventions to respond to students’ social, emotional and academic needs.

Some options for how the remaining 80 percent of funds may be used include:

- Purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean, improve ventilation systems
- Providing mental health services and supports
- Addressing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student groups
- Activities allowed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Elementary and Secondary Education Act and other federal programs

III. SPPS Planning Process


SPPS decisions about allocating ARP funds are based on our strategic plan, SPPS Achieves, and community input collected through an extensive needs assessment. For the SPPS Achieves framework, please see spps.org/strategicplan. The below graphics illustrate the ARP planning structure and timeline.






To support planning for the next phase of our COVID-19 response, SPPS engaged with a wide range of stakeholders in a needs assessment over the course of the 2020-21 school year. The needs assessment included a mix of methods for collecting data from students, family members, teachers and other school staff, department and program leaders, principals, community-based organizations and other stakeholders. Some of the methods used included questionnaires, surveys, online forums, focus groups, document review, and analysis of existing data. In total, SPPS received over 11,000 responses. A report with findings is available at spps.org/Page/42080.

While many strategies and recommendations were identified, *SPPS is focusing on the needs that were presented, defined as the highest priority, but not comprehensive set of the most pressing/foundational needs* to be addressed across the district at this time. Four stakeholder groups were identified, along with the most pressing needs for each group:




STUDENTS

1. High-quality instruction
2. Strong feeling of welcome, safety, support as an individual and as a member of an ethnic/cultural/racial group and the school community
3. High level of engagement and representation in the classroom




SCHOOLS

1. Understanding that different schools have different needs
2. Being flexible and allowing staff to focus



STAFF

1. Time
2. Professional expectations for culturally relevant teaching and instruction
3. Partnerships with families and community resources



FAMILY & COMMUNITY

1. Consistent safety procedures at school
2. High-quality, engaging education that addresses core learning
3. Racial/ethnic/linguistic representation
4. Acknowledgement of the challenges facing families with children

Throughout the summer, the ARP workgroup reviewed the needs assessment and strategic plan priorities. They developed overall funding objectives and considered proposals on how to address them. Representatives from 13 parent and community groups participated in meetings to review and provide feedback on the work in progress and establish objectives, strategies and allocations. Adjustments to the strategies were made based on this feedback, and the ARP workgroup finalized a draft plan for stakeholder review.

The draft of the strategies and allocations was made available for review and comment online for the SPPS community. The comment and engagement period was three weeks. Individual and small group feedback was also gathered by SPPS staff and partners. Stakeholders were given a high-level overview of the ARP funding and background on a list of strategies that SPPS is proposing. After participants were given this background information, they were asked four questions:

- What works well about the draft ARP plan?
- Is there anything you disagree with?
- What is important that is missing from the draft plan?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share?

After a week with low response, the SPPS team took the opportunity to re-examine its outreach strategy and adjust accordingly to review the draft with stakeholders that had not been engaged to a degree staff deemed was necessary. Staff shifted to having individual conversations, especially with families. SPPS staff gathered feedback from over 140 families of SPPS students, focusing on families of student groups most negatively impacted by the pandemic. Staff also heard from nearly 80 SPPS school employees. Because the online form was open and available on the website, we also received feedback from other stakeholders such as Saint Paul residents, community partners and SPPS alumni.

Clear themes emerged from the feedback that was received during the engagement period. These themes were mentioned across stakeholder groups:

- Overall, the draft plan and allocations are supported by families and staff
 - Many stakeholders indicate they wonder about the accountability, monitoring, and adjustments to the plan as it is implemented
 - In particular, stakeholders approve of the focus on high-quality education
- Across stakeholder groups, people were looking for more:
 - Targeted support for student groups
 - Mental health and social emotional learning (SEL)
 - Investment in systemic equity

In response to this feedback, SPPS made the following adjustments to the plan:

- Additional funds were allocated to the systemic equity strategies, increasing that investment from \$5.4 million to \$9.7 million
- With the planned \$10 million investment in community partnerships, the district will prioritize partnerships that support targeted student groups and provide mental health and SEL services

The final plan was submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) for approval on October 1, 2021, and the plan was formally approved on November 2, 2021.

III. SPPS ARP Strategies and Allocations

High-Quality Education	Primary Need(s) Met	\$90.5 million
<p>Direct Funding to Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds for schools to meet their specific needs in core instruction, social emotional learning and/or other ARP priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different schools have different needs Flexibility and allowing staff to focus 	\$24.5 million
<p>K-8 Core Reading Instruction and Math Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding 1-2 new teachers per school to increase small group reading instruction; district staff to address math learning gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality instruction Different schools have different needs 	\$23 million
<p>Well-Rounded Education and Professional Development for Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More specialist teachers and materials in elementary schools for classes like art, music, theater, world languages or technology Time and resources for classroom teachers to focus on core instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality instruction Time for staff Different schools have different needs 	\$17.7 million
<p>Summer and After-School Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding K-12 after-school and summer learning programs to more schools with new courses and curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality instruction High level of engagement and representation 	\$11.8 million
<p>Technology Support and Improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements to internet access and bandwidth, phone systems, cybersecurity and other technology Added staff to manage elementary iPads and library needs and districtwide technology needs Funding for educational software licenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality instruction 	\$8.6 million
<p>High School Schedules, Grading & Credit Recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligning high school schedules Implementing standards-based grading Supporting credit recovery at every high school during the school day in addition to other options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality instruction 	\$3.3 million
<p>College and Career Readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding career centers and related curriculum at every high school Internships, hands-on programs and job certifications for more high school students Finance and career curriculum for middle schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality instruction High level of engagement and representation Partnerships with families and community resources 	\$1.6 million

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career curriculum integration at elementary schools 		
Safe Schools	Primary Need(s) Met	\$63.2 million
Building Maintenance and Cleaning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added custodial and trades staff to keep buildings clean and improve maintenance Ventilation system upgrades and equipment to reduce the risk of virus transmission in schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent safety procedures at school 	\$42.9 million
COVID-19 Contingency Funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds set aside to support other needs created by the continuing COVID-19 pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent safety procedures at school 	\$8.1 million
School Health Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School nurses and health staff to cover COVID-19 related needs in addition to regular responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent safety procedures at school 	\$5.6 million
Meal Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food service supplies and staff to safely serve meals at all schools in accordance with COVID-19 foodservice guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent safety procedures at school 	\$3.3 million
Protective Gear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional masks for students and staff, PPE (gloves, gowns) and hand sanitizer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent safety procedures at school 	\$2.2 million
Transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$2,500 per route incentive for bus drivers to address driver shortage that was worsened by the pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent safety procedures at school 	\$700,000
Security Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional staff to support buildings in responding to emergency and daily security needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent safety procedures at school 	\$400,000
Targeted Student Services	Primary Need(s) Met	\$11.7 million
Special Education Recovery Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for 6,000 students in special education negatively impacted by COVID-19 Expanded “Check and Connect” program for Black and American Indian students in special education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality instruction Strong feeling of welcome, safety & support Acknowledgement of the challenges facing families 	\$7 million

<p>American Indian Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing curriculum that accurately represents American Indian history and culture for all PreK-12 students Additional direct support for American Indian students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality instruction Representation of American Indian students as a protected class 	<p>\$2 million</p>
<p>Multilingual Learning (ML) Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More staff, materials and training for teachers and educational assistants to better support English language learners Biliteracy testing for 600 high schoolers to earn college credit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality instruction Racial/ethnic/linguistic representation Time for staff 	<p>\$1.9 million</p>
<p>Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional staff to evaluate and support the projected increase in students needing ECSE services Training for ECSE teachers to support students with characteristics of autism Training for ECSE educators and support for families in building healthy relationships and managing stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality instruction Strong feeling of welcome, safety & support Acknowledgement of the challenges facing families 	<p>\$800,000</p>
<p>Family Services and Community Partnerships</p>	<p>Primary Need(s) Met</p>	<p>\$10.8 million</p>
<p>Community Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community partners to provide academic, social emotional and family support Review and potential expansion of Full Service Community Schools program Social services partnership to increase attendance and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships with families and community resources Strong feeling of welcome, safety and support Acknowledgement of the challenges facing families 	<p>\$9.9 million</p>
<p>Communication Services for Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact center for families to get answers to questions in their home language Improved language interpreter services for families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships with families & community resources Acknowledgement of the challenges facing families Racial/ethnic/linguistic representation 	<p>\$900,000</p>
<p>Systemic Equity</p>	<p>Primary Need(s) Met</p>	<p>\$9.7 million</p>
<p>District Equity Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant support, planning time, professional development, and materials for a three-year project defining and establishing sustainable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District-wide leadership, implementation and accountability in addressing equity 	<p>\$5.1 million</p>

<p>systems based on the SPPS Racial Equity and Gender Inclusion Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct services for programs and departments seeking help in addressing patterns of inequity and building internal capacity towards systemic transformation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial/cultural/ethnic/linguistic/gender identity acknowledgment and representation • Strong feeling of welcome, safety & support 	
<p>Recruiting & Retaining Diverse Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and materials to find, hire and support effective teachers and administrators, with a goal of 23% of teachers of color by 2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality instruction • Racial/ethnic/linguistic representation 	\$3.3 million
<p>Culturally Responsive Instruction (CRI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and materials for all teachers and principals in CRI to improve instruction and close achievement gaps based on race 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality instruction • Strong feeling of welcome, safety & support • Culturally relevant teaching expectations 	\$1.3 million
Mental Health and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)	Primary Need(s) Met	\$9.3 million
<p>Social Workers & Counselors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional counselors to provide academic, social emotional, and college and career support at every school • Additional social workers to provide direct services to students • Training for staff on responding to trauma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong feeling of welcome, safety & support 	\$6.4 million
<p>Social Emotional Learning Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District mental health coordinator • Including SEL activities in high school and middle school courses • Wellness activities and training for staff in culturally responsive SEL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong feeling of welcome, safety & support • Acknowledgement of the challenges facing families 	\$2.9 million
Operational Expenses	Primary Need(s) Met	\$11.7 million
<p>Operational Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessary expenses for supporting American Rescue Plan strategies, including staffing, equipment and tracking 	N/A	\$11.7 million

IV. Monitoring and Reporting

The ARP workgroup is putting progress monitoring tools in place to ensure funds are being used appropriately and having a positive impact on student outcomes. This process will involve:

- Tracking spending
- Tracking project task completion

- Tracking outcome indicators
- Collecting documentation
- Reviewing the work taking place in various settings

Data review and discussion will occur on a regular basis for every strategy, with varying levels of tracking and evaluation depending on the scope of the investment.

This system will allow for consistent reviews to determine whether the strategies are progressing as intended or if adjustments are necessary. Additionally, this process will provide us with the necessary information and structures to ensure compliance with state and federal reporting.