



Saint Paul
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Envision SPPS: How schools will be better able to provide a well-rounded education

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Consolidating programs targets resources more effectively

The schools selected for merger or closure were based on their low enrollment and program compatibility for prospective mergers, i.e., dual language immersion, Montessori. Consolidating similar programs allows for the more effective use of resources in support of the program focus and more equitable distribution of district resources across all SPPS schools. Specifically, merging similar, smaller programs brings more FTEs into a school that can be deployed to round out its education program and/or provide student and family supports.

To ensure there is a baseline educational program at under enrolled schools, the District has historically subsidized smaller schools. In turn, **this impacts the resource distribution to all schools as funds must be provided by other school budgets to subsidize under-enrolled schools--this dilutes academic programs across the district.**

The following outlines what is compromised educationally in vastly under-enrolled schools (two or fewer sections per grade). Building leaders are given liberties to determine exactly which specialists and [other supports](#) best meet their program needs--**projecting exactly what will be provided at newly merged sites would usurp the process schools undergo annually** to determine the best way to deliver their program with the budgets allocated to them to meet the needs of their particular school community. However, to illustrate the differences in educational experiences, an [example of what students would get academically](#) in an under-enrolled versus a larger school is provided below.

Fulfilling SPPS Achieves objectives

The following objective has been identified by the SPPS Achieves strategic plan as central to providing a well-rounded education for all students:

- Provide consistent **Licensed Specialist offerings** in all PreK-5 schools in at least three content areas:
 - **Music**
 - **Art (visual and performing arts)**
 - **Science**
 - **Physical Education/Health**
 - **World languages**

- **Technology**

SPPS also provides for a well-rounded education through a variety of program choices such as language immersion, Montessori, Aerospace, and other thematic offerings.

In 2018-2019, REA in partnership with Academics and Schools completed a thorough review of the status of well-rounded offerings at each site. The [report is posted here](#) and provides a baseline for understanding how academic standards are addressed at schools serving grades K-8. Key takeaways from this report are:

- Some K-5 Schools struggle to meet all the academic standards expected of them at each grade level due to the number of state standards, inadequate funding, and the school size.
- Schools **meet state standards first through Specialist rotations** at elementary and through elective offerings at 6-8.

The depth of instruction provided by specialist teachers

Specialists are licensed experts in the areas of science, the arts (visual and performing arts), physical education/health, social studies, world languages, advanced instruction and technology. To illustrate the depth of instruction that a student receives from a subject-matter specialist (as opposed to a generalist teacher), here is an example of what a student receives at a school with a **licensed music teacher as a specialist**:

- Two or more class periods of weekly instruction in nine standards/benchmarks per grade level in foundational areas such as rhythm identification, note reading; choral and small instrumental music-group performances; expression and creation through composition; responding to various cultural music experiences; and making connections within and outside the global music world.
- Integrated literacy and math skills taught through music instruction.
- A specialist's music room that is equipped with a range of hands-on materials such as small rhythm instruments and drums for drumming, pitched xylophones, ukuleles, and recorders for notation and music creation that are used in addressing the standards.
- Important sequential foundational music instruction and skill development to prepare students for their secondary music experiences.
- Social and emotional (SEL) tools and skills through self expression, team development, and collaborative opportunities.

In contrast, music taught by a generalist teacher has access to fewer resources and relies on the generalist teacher's range of experience which is often less proficient than a teacher who is licensed in the specialty area.

School size impacts program delivery and educational quality

In response to declining enrollment, we spent the past two years reenvisioning SPPS school

programming in order to better align our resources and offerings. Two key takeaways from this process were:

- School size impacts the ability to offer a well-rounded education.
- Three or more grade-level sections improve the ability of special programs, as well as all programs, to achieve their academic goals.

A significant challenge in implementing a well-rounded experience has been the impact of school size on staffing because of how:

- School budgets are tied to the number of students enrolled.
- School enrollment needs to be large enough (350+) to provide sufficient specialists and other resources that enable a well-rounded education.
- Elementary schools with fewer than three sections do not have the enrollment needed to budget for multiple content-area specialists.

At minimum, an elementary school should provide **at least three sections for each grade level**. At three sections, a school is able to provide a foundation of instruction with three specialists in addition to generalist classroom teachers. The following tables **compare educational program offerings at a two-section school versus a three-section school**. Two-section schools have limited resources and thus are unable to provide the breadth and depth of instruction afforded to schools with three or more sections.

Sample Three-Section School (enrollment: 350 students)

| Daily Rotation | Day 1 Specialist | Day 2 Specialist | Day 3 Specialist |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| Grade 3: Section 1 | Science | Music | Physical Education |
| Grade 3: Section 2 | Music | Physical Education | Science |
| Grade 3: Section 3 | Physical Education | Science | Music |
| Additional funds are available for: | Art (Northern Clay Company) or Science Residency (3M Scientists) | Community Partnerships | Additional standards integrated into instruction with classroom generalist teacher |

Sample Two-Section School (enrollment: <250 students)

| Daily Rotation | Day 1 Specialist | Day 2 Specialist | Weekly |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Grade 3: Section 1 | Science | Physical Education | Additional standards integrated into |

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------|---|
| Grade 3: Section 2 | Physical Education | Science | instruction with classroom generalist teacher |
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Examples of FTEs and supports available based on school sizes

| Staffing choices made based on revenue | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| Class size: 25* | Large Elementary 500-600 students | Small Elementary 300-450 students | Unsustainable Elem. < 250 students |
| Office staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 principal ● 1 assistant principal ● 2 clerks ● 1 parent engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 principal ● 0 assistant principal ● 1 clerk ● 0-1 parent engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 principal ● 0 assistant principal ● 1 clerk ● 0 parent engagement |
| Support staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 nurse ● 1 librarian ● 1 academic coach ● 1 counselor ● 1 social worker ● 1 behavior support ● 1-2 interventionists ● 2 additional staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● .5-1 nurse ● 0-1 librarian ● 0-1 academic coach ● .5-1 counselor ● .5-1 social worker ● 1 behavior support ● 0-1 interventionists ● .5-1 additional staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 0 nurse ● 0 librarian ● 0 academic coach ● .5 counselor (per teacher contract) ● .5-1 social worker ● 0 behavior support ● 0 interventionists ● 0 additional staff |