



**Saint Paul**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# Envision SPPS: Enrollment Workgroup

*Report on findings | September 2021*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The initial purview of the Enrollment Workgroup was to inform the development of the district's strategic plan, SPPS Achieves, by examining the driving forces behind families' decisions to withdraw from SPPS. Results were used to inform how to improve family experiences to retain students; results are included in this report.

This initial data is also informing the Envision SPPS goal to align school facilities with programs in order to provide all students with access to a well-rounded education. The ongoing work of the Enrollment Workgroup lead, Director of Student Placement Jayne Williams (who is also part of Envisions Core Planning Team) is to advise Envision SPPS on its final recommendations to the Board of Education to minimize unintended consequences with regards to student enrollment. See how the Enrollment Workgroup [intersects with other Envision workgroups](#).

## II. WORKGROUP MEMBER NAMES, ROLES AND/OR TITLES, ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

1. Workgroup lead: Jayné Williams, Director, Student Placement, SPPS
2. Traci Buckle, St. Paul Federation of Educators, representative and teacher
3. Peter Gaffney, SPPS parent
4. Neftali Ramirez-Rosario, SPPS staff and parent

## III. MEETING DATES

1. January 22, 2020
2. February 26, 2020

## IV. WORKGROUP PURPOSE STATEMENT

Saint Paul Public Schools is a leader in school choice. The Student Placement Center has evolved as the District's one-stop for enrollment options and access to increased programming. This evolution necessitates a review of our processes to better serve families and students in the enrollment process. Essential questions reviewed the enrollment process through a [family feedback survey](#) and informed improvements to key communication materials such as the [school selection guide](#).



Taking this qualitative data a step further, in 2021, SPPS' Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department conducted an analysis of the impact of caps on class sizes to the enrollment of high-demand programs. The results of this analysis is pending and is anticipated to be released late fall 2021.

## V. FINDINGS

When the initial workgroup convened in 2020, two focus areas were reviewed to inform how SPPS might retain more students: A [family feedback survey](#) and feedback on its key communication tool, the annual [school selection guide](#) that families use to determine which school options are available to their student based on their home address.

### FAMILY FEEDBACK SURVEY

#### The Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) Family Feedback Survey School Year 2015-16 Results

The Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) Family Feedback Survey was designed to collect information on parent and family decisions to withdraw their students from SPPS. The content of the survey centered on reasons for withdrawal, subsequent enrollment after SPPS, and potential for re-enrollment.

The survey was administered online. The survey was sent to families who withdrew their students during the 2015-16 school year. The survey was sent two times during the school year; once at the close of quarters 1 and 2 and again at the close of quarter 3. Families were contacted by the Office of Student Placement. After an initial period, families received a follow-up communication. In addition, the Office of Student Placement telephoned several families to conduct over the telephone surveys.

There are several factors that require *caution* when interpreting results. They are described below:

- a. Between October and March there were 2243 students withdrawn; 1790 families (after accounting for multiple children).
- b. Because the survey was administered online; it was sent to families that provided an e-mail address. Of those 2243 students withdrawn; 1525 had e-mail addresses.
- c. Of the 1525 families with e-mail; there were 1164 unique families (after accounting for multiple children).
- d. One hundred and one families (n=101) completed the survey; 63% with more than 1 child (n=63) for an overall response rate of 15% of the families with an



e-mail address and 5% for all families that withdrew students.

## Results Summary

Results are rounded to the nearest whole percentage:

1. Most families had between 1 and 4 school-aged children (92%) in their family.
2. All racial and ethnic groups were represented in the feedback; White (30%), Black (24%), and other (46%). *“Other” is comprised of the following racial groups; American Indian, Asian, Hispanic and multi racial. The racial groups were combined to maintain family privacy for smaller numbers.*
3. 60% of families live in the city of Saint Paul.
4. The five reasons families chose to withdraw their students (families could choose more than one response) most often mentioned:
  - A. The family moved (40%).
  - B. The family believed the school was unsafe (36%).
  - C. The student(s) were harassed/bullied (30%).
  - D. The school staff was not approachable (20%).
  - E. There was a lack of rigor at the school (20%).
5. Most families chose to enroll their student(s) in their resident district school after withdrawing from SPPS.
6. When asked if there was anything that could have changed their decision to withdraw their student(s); families responded most often with the following (families could choose more than one response):
  - A. No there is nothing that would have changed our mind (55%).
  - B. Provided the right support services for our child/children (28%).
  - C. Responded quicker to my concerns (24%).
  - D. Made my family feel welcomed and valued at the school (23%).
  - E. Given us our first choice of school (8%).

(Source: SPPS.REA.SGA.2016)



## IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SPPS SCHOOL SELECTION GUIDE

### (recommendations, insight from the group)

Overall the Guide has greater organization, is simpler, the layout is much better and it was described as friendly

#### Steps outlined on pages 1 & 2

- Recommend merging steps 1 & 2
- Add questions parents may ask (e.g. transportation? Special needs?)
- Does your community school meet those criteria?

#### Elementary map (p.21)

- streets not clearly identifiable
- show some streets – major thoroughfares
- Possibly have an enlarged map for each zone

#### General items:

- Instead of “call to find out school” add apply site URL
- Can we find a way to offer “TEXT to get your area school” with language options
- Move priorities closer to the front
- Add link at bottom with reference to FAQ’s
- How do we discuss choosing SPPS vs. charter schools?
- Why choose SPPS? (licensed staff,...)
- PR-Mktg is needed
- Are there general requirements to continue in a program?
- Add “Happy” pictures of our students in school
- Academy of Finance at Como as a video (incorporate in some way)
- Fill in blank spaces with pictures of students
- Websites p/school are now managed by volunteers
- Is there the option of one school choice website with content that could be used in other ways?

#### Other recommendations:

- Reaching out to daycares as a marketing method
- SPPS hiring cycle is much later than other districts which results in later teacher allocations and impacts hiring options/availability
- Modify school zones – e.g. Galtier has a lot of commercial space (not as much residential)
- Sending regular marketing notifications to families since not everyone takes advantage of our deadlines, SCF, etc...

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- Busing lag – how can transportation be more flexible during the first few weeks of school so that families are not having to wait to have their children start school because no busing is set up/available; can we establish late buses to serve larger zones/areas; possibly have family volunteers assist with rides

**VI. INTERSECTIONS WITH OTHER WORKGROUPS - consider the following:**

**a. How does your focus area intersect with other Envision Workgroup focus areas?**

Enrollment is at the core of Envision SPPS as student enrollment determines a school's ability to provide a well-rounded program due to enrollment forming the basis of state and federal funding which in turn determines school budgets. To that end, enrollment is a key lens in which to determine if findings from each Envision workgroup are able to produce viable recommendations.

**b. What information will you need from other workgroups to complete your work?**

The Enrollment Workgroup's role with Envision SPPS is to assess findings and related recommendations (determined by Envision's Core Planning Team) to determine if overall enrollment will be positively or negatively impacted. While major district systems change will always run the risk of causing some initial enrollment loss, the overall Envision goal of providing all students with access to a well-rounded education aims to stabilize and increase enrollment by providing families with strong education programs at every school.

**c. What information from your workgroup is relevant to share with other workgroups?**

Enrollment data has been shared with several workgroups to inform their discussions, especially as it pertains to determining which programs have the critical mass/enrollment necessary to support program viability.