

Aligning Resources to Strategy and Need

Diagnostic Analysis for Seattle Public Schools

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For questions and more information about this document, please contact the following:

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SPS partnered with Education Resource Strategies (ERS), a national nonprofit with deep expertise in school system budgeting and strategy, to conduct a diagnostic analysis that examines how resources are allocated and how those investments shape student and staff experiences. The report draws on a wide range of data, including district budgets, staffing, student outcomes, and educator and community perception. It highlights both strengths and areas for improvement, with a focus on equity and sustainability. Slides include data charts and text summarizing the findings on each page.



Aligning Resources to Strategy and Need

Diagnostic Analysis for Seattle Public Schools September 2025





Agenda

10 min Intro & Approach

15 min Key Insights: School Funding &

District Operations

15 min Key Insights: Advanced Coursework

& Experienced Educators

15 min Key Insights: School Leaders &

Strategy Implementation

5 min Closing

30 min Discussion & Additional Questions

Overall Planning Timeline

2024 - 2025

Goals and Guardrails **Development**

- Set topline goals and guardrails
- Develop interim metrics predictive of the topline goals and guardrails

Spring – Fall 2025

Diagnostic Resource and Strategy Analysis

- 1. Paint comprehensive resource picture
- 2. Begin System Strategy Return on Investment

Summer – Fall 2025

Prioritizing and Building the Draft Plan

- 1. Prioritize
- Convene taskforce and conduct any additional engagement
- 3. Develop guiding theory of action to achieve goals
- 4. Determine specific actions for central office, schools, and classrooms
- 5. Make tradeoffs to invest in strategies and initiatives

2025 - 2030**

Transition Leadership and Revise Plan**

- Execute leadership transition
- 2. Refine plan with future administration
- 3. Deepen feedback and engagement loops
- Adjust multi-year implementation metrics and progress tracking



This work seeks to inform district leadership's efforts to set strategy and align resources in service of the district's goals and guardrails



Seattle Public Schools' goals and guardrails are designed to ensure the district stays focused on improving student outcomes—especially for historically underserved students—by setting clear priorities and boundaries that guide the superintendent's decisions and actions. The ultimate goal is to align leadership, resources, and accountability around student success and equity.



The superintendent and team are responsible for developing and implementing a strategic plan that translates the goals and guardrails into concrete actions, systems, and supports that drive improved student outcomes and equity.



By examining how resources are allocated and used, SPS is building a shared fact base on the current state of resources to identify and prioritize actions needed to address inequities across the system





Resource equity means schools, the district, and the community working together to ensure every student has access to the right mix of resources and supports needed for high-quality learning. It ensures that all schools across the district create opportunities for every student—so that race and family income no longer determine a student's future.



The full diagnostic report includes the sections listed below – today we're presenting a high-level summary

Introduction

Analytic Insights

Getting to Action

- Context
- Approach

- Overall Resource Levels
- Teachers and Instructional Support
- Course Access & Opportunity
- School Leadership
- Central Office
- School Resourcing
- Elementary Portfolio
- Special Education

- Overview of Key Insights
- Insight 1: School funding
- Insight 2: District operations
- Insight 3: Advanced coursework
- Insight 4: Experienced educators
- Insight 5: School leaders
- Insight 6: Strategy implementation
- Next Steps



About the Full Diagnostic Analysis Report

The report focuses on...

A snapshot of the current resource use patterns and what contributes to those patterns. The intention is to highlight potential resource misalignments and their impact on the student and staff experience and identify potential resource realignment opportunities to ensure that resource use is aligned to district strategy and the District's Goals and Guardrails.

The report does *not...*

Identify cost reduction opportunities to close the deficit. This presentation is not intended to provide options for reducing the deficit. Its purpose is to align resources to strategy and effective practice while giving the incoming Superintendent and the community a clear picture of how current spending patterns connect to student and staff experiences.



The report combines multiple data sources to build a comprehensive picture of resource use in Seattle

Types of Data Included in the Analysis



Over 10M rows of data covering student and staff demographics, student courses and grades, class sizes, staff compensation, and school and district funding



Qualitative

Interviews with teachers, principals, central office staff, and board directors, as well as external stakeholders such as the Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) and the Alliance for Education; reviews of past reports / presentations.



Survey

Perception data from 85 principals conducted February 2025 around strategic resource use, including topics such as instructional support and professional learning, teaching quality and support, personalized time and attention, and the school leader job more broadly



Today, we're sharing highlights of the full diagnostic report that center on the following six key insights

To ensure that SPS can provide all students and staff an excellent foundational experience across all schools and meet the District's Goals and Guardrails, SPS needs to address the challenges across these key insights

Key Insight 1

Potential misalignment of school funding levels, need, and the desired student and staff experiences

Key Insight 4

Inequitable student access to experienced educators

Key Insight 2

Unsustainable district operations given current fiscal deficit conditions

Key Insight 5

Inconsistent and/or inadequate support for school leaders given variation in leader experience and ambiguity around school autonomy

Key Insight 3

Variation in student access to advanced coursework

Key Insight 6

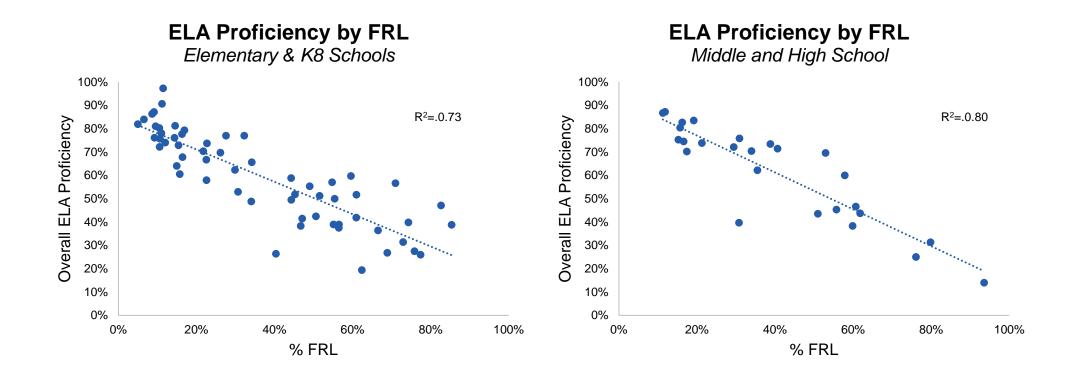
Challenges with strategy implementation driven by a lack organizational alignment & clarity of ownership



Potential misalignment between school funding levels, need, and the desired student and staff experiences



In SPS, as with other districts nationwide, there is a strong relationship between poverty and outcomes

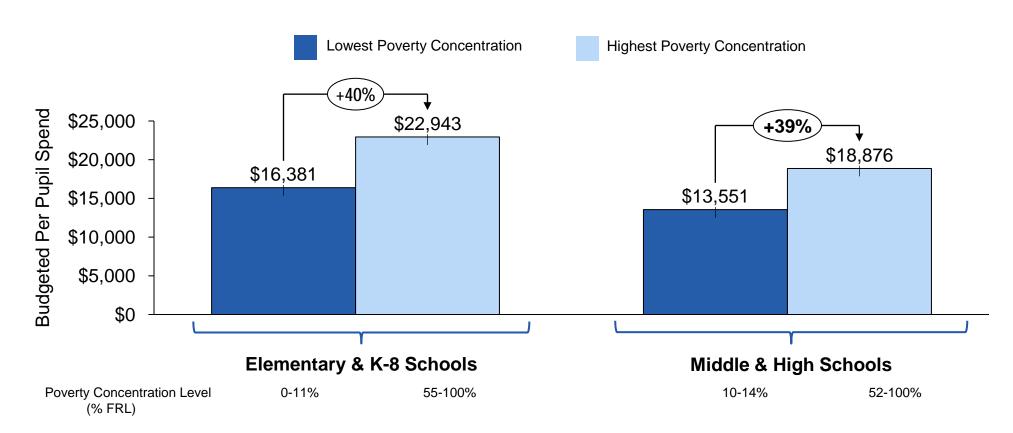




Source: SY23-24 School Enrollment; SY23-24 SBA Results

Schools with higher concentrations of poverty receive additional funding...but what contributes to that?

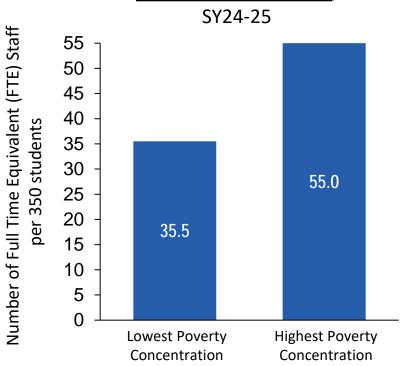
Per Pupil Budgeted Spend by School Poverty Level SY24-25



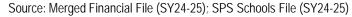


Additional spending levels at schools with higher poverty concentrations are primarily a result of additional special education and multi-lingual learner positions





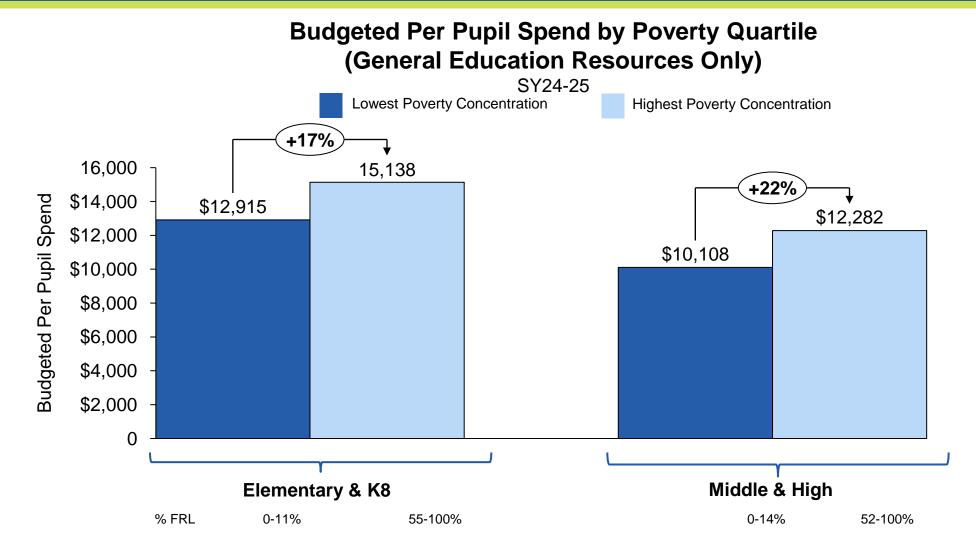
| | Position | Average Staff at Lowest FRL | | Additional Staff at Highest FRL |
|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| | Teachers | 18.0 | | + 0.5 |
| | Instructional Assistants | 1.5 | | + 1.0 |
| GEN ED | Building Admin / Front Office | 2.0 | | + 0.5 |
| GENED | Interventionist | 1.0 | | + 1.5 |
| | Social Worker & Counselor | 0.5 | | + 0.5 |
| | Coach | 0.0 | | + 0.5 |
| | Other | 3.5 | | + 1.5 |
| MULTI- | Teacher | 0.5 | | + 2.0 |
| LINGUAL | Instructional Assistants | 0.5 | | + 2.5 |
| SPECIAL | Teachers | 2.5 | | + 2.0 |
| EDUCATION | Instructional Assistants | 4.0 | | + 6.0 |
| | OT/PT/ST/Psych | 1.5 | | + 1.0 |
| | Total Staff | 35.5 | | + 19.5 |



Note: Numbers may not fully align due to underlying rounding; figures rounded to nearest 0.5 Full Time Equivalent position (FTE)



Funding differences between schools with higher and lower poverty decrease when excluding Special Education and bilingual resources

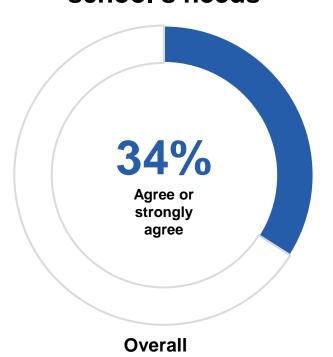


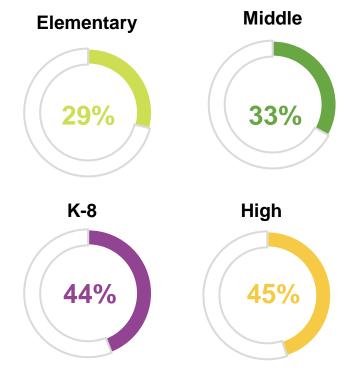


Principals in SPS highlighted questions around overall resourcing, measures of need, and the types of positions they receive through the school funding formula

Principal Survey Results

Positions and dollars are allocated fairly based on my school's needs





"We do not receive any resources to support intensive intervention."

"We feel under resourced."

"The WSS formula is pre-pandemic and feels out of date with current needs."



Related Goals & Guardrails

Potential misalignment of school funding levels, need, and the desired student and staff experiences

All Goals, Guardrail 5

Data Insight 1

Diagnostic Insight: In Seattle, like other school districts nationwide, there is a strong correlation between concentrations of poverty in a school and school performance. But, poverty levels don't fully explain school outcomes.

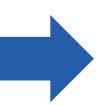


Potential Strategies

Review relationship between other need characteristics and outcomes to identify other potential need measures (in addition to poverty) to incorporate into the school funding formula.

Data Insight 2

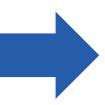
Diagnostic Insight: Per pupil spending at schools with higher concentrations of poverty is about 40% higher than schools with lower concentrations of poverty. The majority of that differentiation is a product additional special education and multi-lingual learned focused allocations.



Articulate the **student and staff experiences** that SPS desires for all schools and how they should be differentiated for its highest needs schools.

Data Insight 3

School Leader Survey: Only 34% of principals agree that positions and dollars are allocated fairly based on school needs.

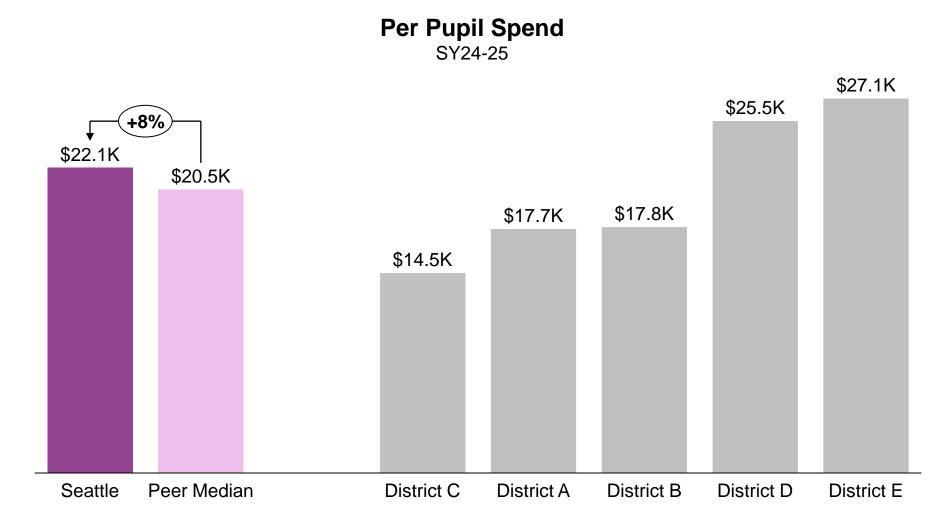


Review and realign resource allocation practices to ensure funding is distributed more transparently and equitably across schools, particularly those serving higher-need students based on the experiences SPS desires to create for its students and staff.

Unsustainable district operations given current fiscal deficit conditions



SPS budgeted \$22k per pupil in SY2425, more than comparison districts even after controlling for regional cost difference





SPS needs more revenue than comparison districts to cover the costs of a single teacher

How many students does it take to cover the cost of a teacher?

(Average Teacher Compensation / Per Pupil Spending)

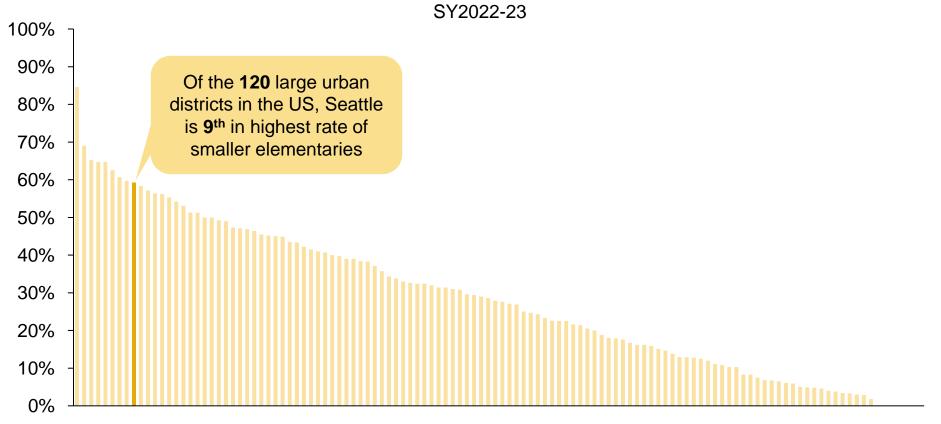
| Seattle | 6.4 | 222221 |
|--------------|-----|--------|
| Peer Average | 5.7 | 22221 |
| District E | 4.9 | 88888 |
| District D | 5.5 | 88888 |
| District B | 5.8 | 88888 |
| District A | 6.0 | 88888 |
| District C | 6.3 | 888888 |

If the ratio of per pupil spending to teacher compensation were the same as the peer average (5.7), SPS would have to spend an additional \$2.8k per pupil, for a total of \$143.5 M more



SPS has among the highest rates of elementary schools under 350 students for large urban districts nationally

Rate of Smaller Elementaries at SPS vs. All Other Large Urban Districts in the U.S.





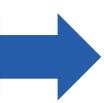
Unsustainable district operations given current fiscal deficit conditions

Related Goals & Guardrails

All Goals, Guardrail 5

Data Insight 1

Diagnostic Insight: The portfolio, configuration and size of elementary schools creates challenges in providing robust school & teacher supports and ensuring student access to high quality instruction.



Potential Strategies

Assess district portfolio and school configurations to balance efficiency with student and staff experience, addressing challenges like limited access to Specials, small teacher teams, and under-resourced facilities.

Data Insight 2

District Context: SPS faces a \$94 million dollar budget deficit, which will require strategic decision-making in the coming fiscal years to ensure financial sustainability.

Diagnostic Analysis: SPS needs more "students' worth" of revenue than comparison districts to cover the costs of a single teacher relative to national peer districts, even though staffing costs are comparable to local peers.



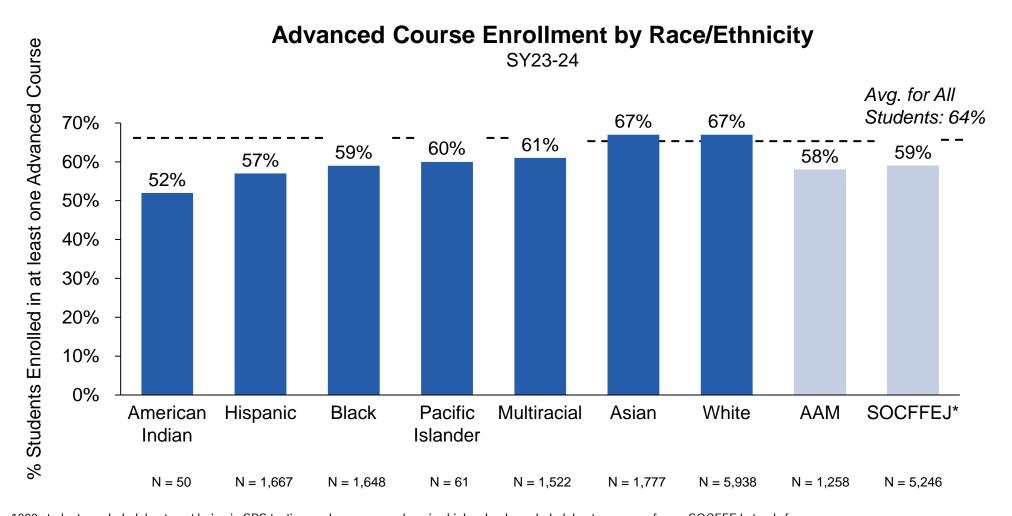
Develop a multi-year fiscal strategy that aligns resources with student priorities, accounts for enrollment decline, pursues additional revenue, and positions SPS to navigate its budget deficit while protecting equity and instructional quality

Advocate for additional revenue and explore cost reduction opportunities in higher spending areas (e.g., special education and transportation) by reviewing district policy / practices

Variation in student access to advanced coursework



American Indian, Hispanic, and Black students enroll in advanced courses less often than peers across high schools





What factors can influence enrollment patterns?

1

Student Incoming Performance

Incoming performance impacts which courses students may enroll in.

2

Course Availability
Across Schools
(Courses not offered
at certain schools)

Course availability at certain schools can limit or enable opportunities to take certain courses. This could be related to a school's programmatic focus, overall size, or other factors.

3

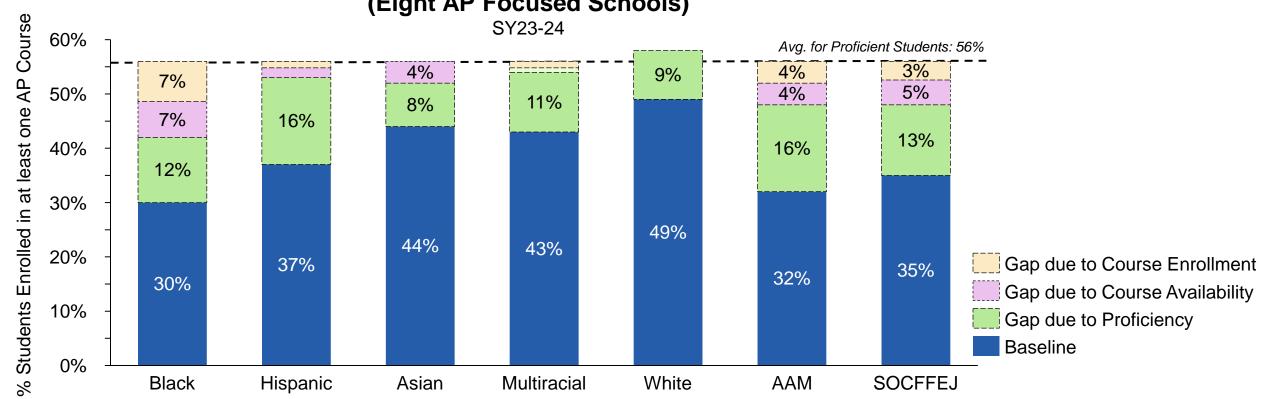
Course Enrollment
Within Schools
(Courses offered, but certain students not enrolled)

Even for students with the same incoming performance, course enrollment may vary based on assignment practices within schools – such as advising practices and student data considered. This could also be driven by differences in student interest or previous credits.



Proficiency largely closes the gap in AP enrollment for Hispanic students but not for Black students





Note: American Indian and Pacific Islander groups excluded from this graph due to low n-size when disaggregated by proficiency level; ~1800 students excluded due to not being in SPS testing pool; non-comprehensive high schools excluded due to program focus
Source: ERS Snapshot Analysis of SY23-24 Transcript Data



AP Calculus Deep Dive: Most students enroll in courses aligned with the typical course progression in Math

Percent of Students in Enrolled in Each Math Course by Grade Level

SY23-24

| Middle School | | | High School | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|--|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 6 th | 7 th | 8 th | 9 th | 10 th | 11 th | 12 th |
| Math 6 | Math 7 | Math 8 | Algebra 1 | Geometry | Other | Other |
| 86% | 42% | 41% | 48% | 45% | 37% | 31% |
| Math 7, 8 or 7/8 | Math 7/8 | Algebra 1 | Geometry | Algebra 2 | Algebra 2 | Pre-Calc |
| 13% | 36% | 45% | 34% | 25% | 30% | 11% |
| | Math 8 | Other | Algebra 2 | Pre-Calc | Pre-Calc | AP Statistics |
| | 12% | 13% | 11% | 13% | 21% | 20% |
| | Algebra 1 | | Other | Other | AP Calculus | AP Calculus |
| | 6% | | 6% | 16% | 12% | 13% |
| | Other | | | | | Business Math |
| | 4% | | | | | 13% |
| | | Courses aligned with an accelerated math | | | | RS Math |
| | | progression are noted in dark red text. | | | | 12% |



Variation in student access to advanced coursework

Related Goals & Guardrails

Goal 3; Guardrail 1

Data Insight 1

Diagnostic Insight: In HS, Black and Hispanic students enroll less often in advanced coursework. This is primarily driven by disparate outcomes and enrollment in earlier courses that prepare students for advanced coursework.



Data Insight 2

Diagnostic Insight and School Leader Survey: SPS spends less per pupil on instructional materials and supplies than peer districts. Only 50% of HS and 67% of MS principals agreed that SPS provides their school with high quality materials, while 81% of Elementary did.



Data Insight 3

School Leader Survey and Central Office Interviews: Variation in the vision, expectations and supports for implementing academic practices – such as MTSS – has led to inefficiencies and inconsistency in school implementation.



Potential Strategies

by strengthening middle-grade readiness, ensuring equitable course offerings across schools, improving advising systems that guide Black and Hispanic students into preparatory and other post-secondary classes

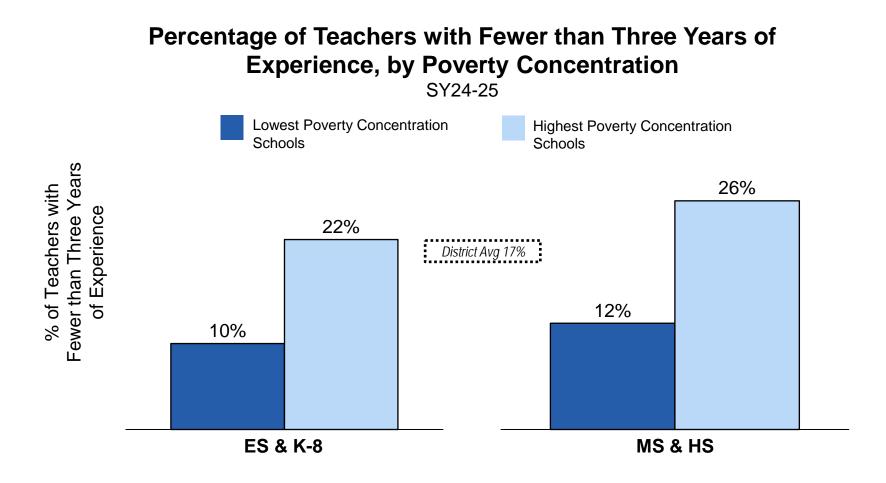
Improve quality and equity of instructional resources by assessing per-pupil spending on curriculum and materials, addressing gaps identified by secondary principals, and ensuring access to high-quality tools across grade levels

Increase coherence in academic practices by clarifying expectations for MTSS and related frameworks, and ensuring schools receive the supports needed for consistent and effective implementation

Inequitable student access to experienced educators



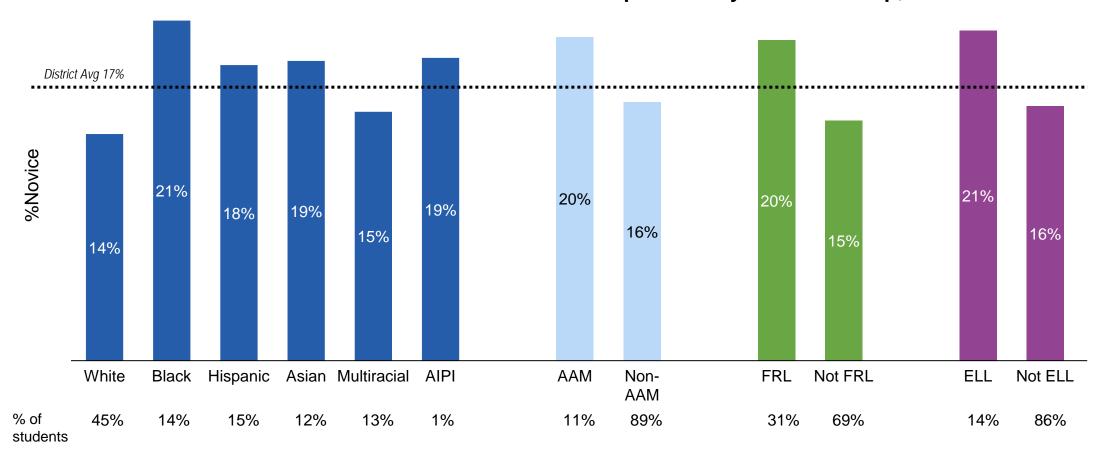
The highest poverty schools in SPS have the highest proportion of teachers with fewer than three years of experience





And, Black, FRL, and ELL students are in schools with a higher percentage of novice teachers

Access to Teachers with fewer than 3 Years of Experience by Student Group, SY24-25



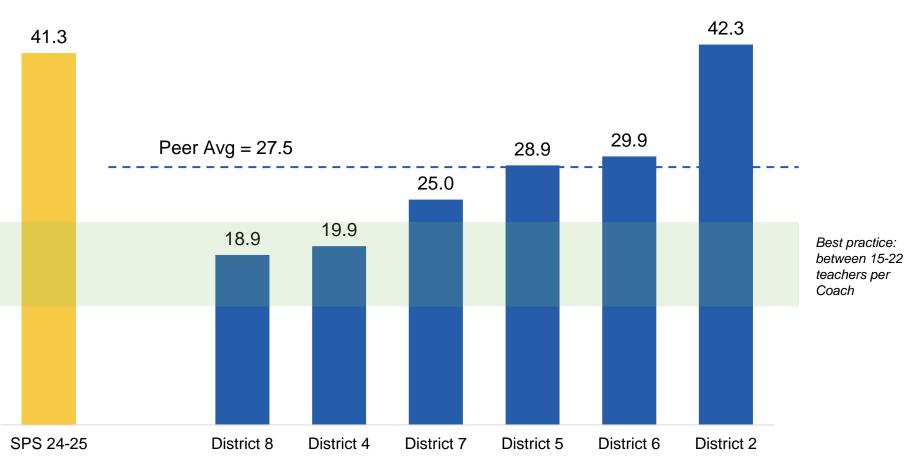


^{1.} AIPI is shorthand referring to students identified as American Indian and/or Pacific Islanders.

^{2.} These results are a weighted average based on proportions of each student and teacher group at each school. Source: SPS Schools File (SY24-25); SPS Teacher Experience File (SY23-24)

SPS has fewer coaches than national peers, resulting in coaches supporting more teachers, on average





Inequitable student access to experienced educators

Related Goals & Guardrails

Goals 1 & 2, Guardrail 5

Data Insight 1

School Leader Survey: Principals largely agree they have enough effective teachers at their school to achieve student performance goals, and that they can consistently retain these teachers. However, K-8 and HS principals struggle to assign highly effective teachers to classrooms with the highest concentrations of high need students.



Potential Strategies

Focus retention and assignment strategies on directing effective teachers to classrooms where they can most impact student performance

Data Insight 2

Diagnostic Insight: Novice teachers (17% of the workforce) are concentrated in high needs campuses.

Distinguished teachers (37% of the workforce) are less prevalent in high needs campuses.



Strengthen attraction and retention strategies through targeted supports for teachers with fewer than three years of experience and approaches to keep effective educators in the hardest-to-staff schools

Data Insight 3

Diagnostic Insight: Instructional coaches are staffed at an average ratio of 1 coach per 41 teachers – much higher than best practice (1:16-22). Outside of formal coaching positions, several positions across multiple departments provide instructional support but alignment and collaboration across these positions can prove challenging.

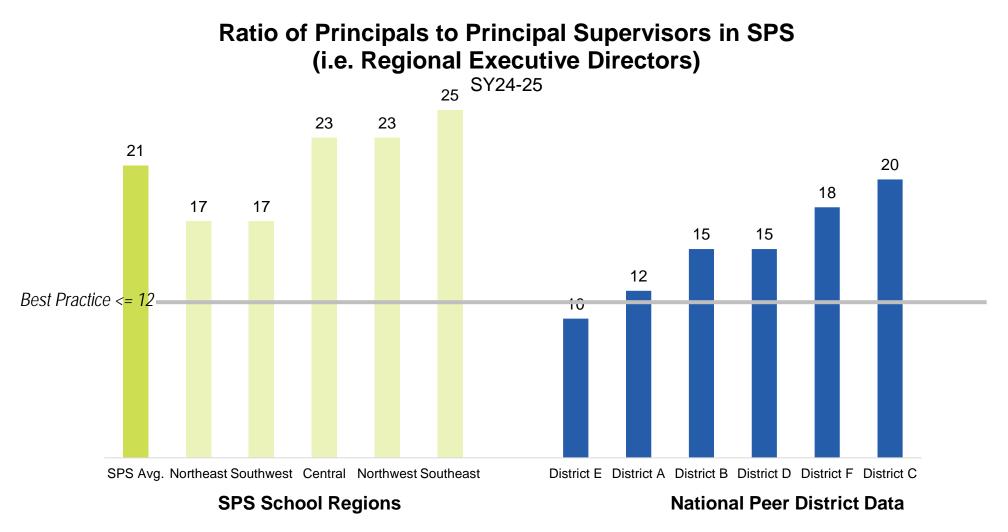


Support teacher development by improving access to coaching, coordinating instructional support roles, and reassessing spending on instructional materials compared to peers

Inconsistent and/or inadequate support for school leaders given variation in leader experience and ambiguity around school autonomy



School supervisors in SPS typically support more principals than other large, urban school districts





Source: SPS SY24-25 Budget Data, ERS Analysis

School and principal needs also vary across each region in SPS

SPS Region Demographics (SY24-25)

| | School Count | Enrollment | % FRL | % SOCFFEJ | % AAM | % Novice Principals (<3 years of experience) |
|-----------|-----------------|------------|-------|-----------|-------|--|
| Northeast | 17 | 9,000 | 23% | 33% | 8% | 41% |
| Southwest | 17 | 9,000 | 31% | 45% | 11% | 35% |
| Central | 23 | 9,000 | 35% | 46% | 14% | 35% |
| Northwest | 23 | 14,000 | 17% | 29% | 6% | 43% |
| Southeast | 25 | 10,000 | 56% | 69% | 19% | 55% |
| Total | 105 | ~51,000 | 32% | 44% | 11% | 42% |



35

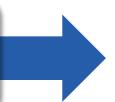
Related Goals & Guardrails

Inconsistent and/or inadequate support for school leaders given variation in leader experience and ambiguity around school autonomy

All Goals, Guardrails 1 and 5

Data Insight 1

Diagnostic Insight: 42% of Principals have 0-2 years of experience – requiring support to utilize autonomy strategically



Potential Strategies

Differentiate support for principals based on experience and school need by ensuring novice principals and those in higher-need schools receive more tailored guidance and development opportunities.

Data Insight 2

Diagnostic Insight: School supervisors in SPS have high caseloads that are not differentiated by need. Best practice ratios are **12:1.** SPS's are **21:1**



Strengthen school supervision structures by moving toward lower supervisor-to-principal ratios and ensuring supervisors can provide more strategic instructional leadership support.

Data Insight 3

School Leader Survey: Only half of school leaders agree that (1) central office departments coordinate effectively to provide support, and (2) share that they can easily find the correct support person.



Improve coherence and accessibility of Central Office support by clarifying roles, improving coordination across departments, and making it easier for principals to access the right expertise.

Challenges with strategy implementation driven by a lack organizational alignment & clarity of ownership



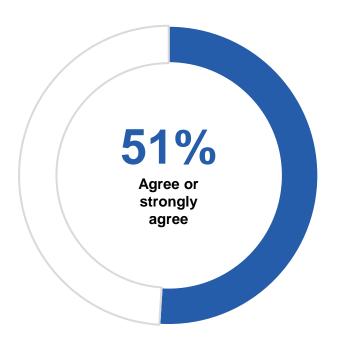
Stakeholders named coordination, coherence and alignment in the central office as challenges

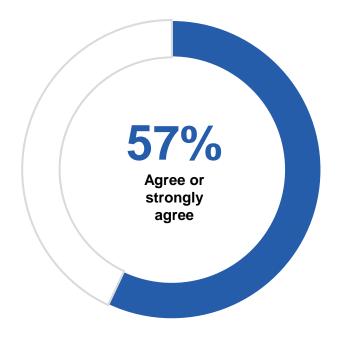
Principal Survey Results

Central office departments

coordinate effectively
to provide integrated support to my school.

Central Office departments
are aligned on a shared vision
for the student and teacher experience







Deep Dive: Multiple departments and staff in SPS have core professional development responsibilities

| Department | Positions & Roles with Professional Learning Responsibility | Total FTE |
|--------------------------|---|-----------|
| | Consulting Teacher Program (1.0 FTE Manager, 17.0 FTE Teachers) | |
| | Professional Development & Instructional Services Specialists (2.0 FTE) | |
| Human Resources | Teacher Leadership Cadre (2.0 FTE Coordinators) | 33.0 FTE |
| numan Resources | Peer Assistance and Review Program (1.0 FTE Coordinator) | 33.0 FTE |
| | Principal Leadership Coaches (5.0 FTE) | |
| | Racial Equity & Advancement Office (1.0 FTE Directors, 4.0 FTE Specialists) | |
| | Content Area Curriculum Specialists (10.0 FTE) | |
| Academics | Academic Program Managers (6.0 FTE) | 18.0 FTE |
| Academics | Digital Learning Manager (1.0 FTE) | |
| | Curriculum, Assessment, & Instruction Specialist (1.0 FTE) | |
| | Student Support Services Consulting Teachers (13.0 FTE) | |
| | Bilingual Instructional Services School Coaches (6.0 FTE) | |
| Ctudent 9 Celecel | Advanced Learning Program Specialists (3.0 FTE) | |
| Student & School Support | Special Education Program Specialists (10.0 FTE) | 42.0 FTE |
| Зирроп | Regional Executive Directors of Schools (5.0 FTE) | |
| | AAMA Director (1.0 FTE) | |
| | Restorative Practices Program (1.0 FTE Manager, 3.0 FTE Coaches) | |



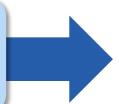
Related Goals & Guardrails

Challenges with strategy implementation driven by organizational incoherence & lack of clarity of ownership

All Goals, Guardrails 4 & 5

Data Insight 1

School Leader Survey: Many principals reported difficulty navigating central office, with only one-third of middle school and 39% of Title I elementary principals agreeing they can easily find the right person for support. Data indicates service fragmentation across central office.



Potential Strategies

Clarify ownership and accountability across
departments so that supports such as professional
learning, MTSS, and UDL are delivered with coherence
and aligned to districtwide priorities

Data Insight 2

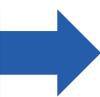
School Leader Survey and Central Office Interviews: Less than half of school leaders feel central office departments coordinate effectively, and leaders themselves acknowledge fragmented ownership of key initiatives like MTSS, UDL, and professional development.



Streamline central office support structures by **reducing duplication**, **coordinating services across departments**,
and ensuring principals can easily access the right staff for
timely and effective support

Data Insight 3

School Leader Survey: While HR and Early Literacy teams received positive feedback for their clarity and direct support, principals highlighted that other central office roles and structures (e.g., consulting teachers, PD coordination) lacked coherence, clear vision, and measurable impact.



Build on bright spots to strengthen consistency by scaling models like HR and Early Literacy that principals identified as **clear**, **coherent**, **and impactful**, while addressing gaps in other support teams

Looking Ahead



Overall Planning Timeline

2024 - 2025

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Prioritizing and Building the Draft Plan

- 1. Prioritize
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- 3. Develop guiding theory of action to achieve goals
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2025 - 2030**

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Guiding Framework For This Work

Goals and Guardrails: How do we define organizational success?

Priority: Where will you focus your efforts to achieve your mission?

Metrics: What outcomes are you trying to achieve?

Strategic Initiatives: How are you planning on achieving your goals?

Investments: How are you directing resources – people, time and money – towards your strategies?





Funding Levels: Insights and Potential Strategies

| Key Insight | Related Goals & Guardrails | Potential Strategies |
|--|----------------------------------|---|
| Potential misalignment of school funding levels, need, and the desired student and staff experiences | All Goals Guardrail 5 | Review relationship between other need characteristics and outcomes to identify other potential need measures Articulate the student and staff experiences that SPS desires for all schools Review and realign resource allocation practices to ensure funding is distributed more transparently and equitably across schools |
| Unsustainable district operations given current fiscal deficit conditions | All Goals Guardrail 5 | Assess district portfolio and school configurations to balance efficiency with student and staff experience Develop a multi-year fiscal strategy that aligns resources with student priorities Explore cost reduction opportunities in higher spending areas (e.g., special; education and transportation) |



Student Experience: Insights and Potential Strategies

| Key Insight | Related Goals & Guardrails | Potential Strategies |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Variation in student access advanced coursework | Goal 3 Guardrail 1 | Expand and align pathways into advanced coursework by strengthening middle-grade readiness Improve quality and equity of instructional resources Increase coherence in academic practices by clarifying expectations for MTSS and related frameworks |
| Inequitable student access to experienced educators | Goals 1 & 2 Guardrail 5 | ➤ Focus retention and assignment strategies on directing effective teachers to classrooms where they can most impact student performance ➤ Strengthen attraction and retention strategies through targeted supports for teachers with fewer than three years of experience ➤ Support teacher development by improving access to coaching, coordinating instructional support roles, and reassessing spending on instructional materials |



System-Level Support & Coherence: Insights and Potential Strategies

| Key Insight | Related Goals & Guardrails | Potential Strategies |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| Inconsistent and/or inadequate support for school leaders given variation in leader experience and ambiguity around school autonomy | All Goals Guardrails 1 and 5 | Differentiate support for principals based on experience and school need Strengthen school supervision structures by moving toward lower supervisor-to-principal ratios Improve coherence and accessibility of Central Office support by clarifying roles, improving coordination across departments, and making it easier for principals to access the right expertise. |
| Challenges with strategy implementation driven by organizational incoherence & lack of clarity of ownership | All Goals Guardrails 4 and 5 | Clarify ownership and accountability across departments Streamline central office support structures by reducing duplication, coordinating services across departments Build on bright spots to strengthen consistency by scaling models like HR and Early Literacy |

