

## Travelers steps up investment in Saint Paul Public Schools

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The Travelers Companies, Inc. will collaborate with Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) to advance public education reform. Through grants to SPPS and other strategic service providers for this effort, Travelers will support a few key initiatives that, when combined, will represent approximately \$1.4 million. Travelers will back SPPS initiatives that aggressively reduce the achievement gap and measurably increase academic and career success for underrepresented students.

The announcement is the first of several expected in the coming weeks from Strategic Priority Partners who were named during Saint Paul Public Schools Superintendent Meria Carstarphen's State of the District address. The Travelers support will promote college readiness and access for underrepresented students and leadership development for school principals.

"This partnership ushers in a new era for how our corporations and businesses work with and support critical initiatives in Saint Paul Public Schools," Carstarphen said. "Collaborations like the partnership with Travelers will move us toward long-term solutions."

"We believe in Superintendent Carstarphen's improvement plan and we intend to support it with our dollars and our large base of employee volunteers," said Andy Bessette, executive vice president and Chief Administrative Officer. "Our goal is to help build a sustainable system that will ensure a quality education for future generations."

A majority of the funds are expected to be dedicated to expanding the successful Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, which is now incorporated into 11 secondary schools. AVID gives traditionally underrepresented students the skills, preparation and encouragement needed to successfully continue their education after high school.

The project will train approximately 750 elementary teachers and 112 secondary teachers to help expand the program over the next five years. It is expected that the project to expand AVID will ultimately serve a total of 5,640 elementary and 800 secondary students annually.

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Support from Travelers also will fund systemic leadership development and principal leadership development efforts focused on student achievement and strategic planning. Funding will support efforts such as principal leadership development programming based on the nationally recognized National Institute for School Leadership model.

The goal of the AVID expansion to elementary students is to increase student performance, attendance and other academic indicators while decreasing gaps in attendance rates. Travelers' direct support of SPPS and the AVID program goes to the company's goal of working to effect meaningful change.

"The students we're helping are our future workforce," Bessette said. "The quality of life in our communities, and the health of our business, depends on an educated population."

"In the challenging financial times facing the country, state and SPPS, it is creative and pro-active collaborations like the partnership with Travelers which will ensure that SPPS is strong and focused for years to come," Carstarphen said.

"This is about working together to close achievement gaps and ensuring that our students can truly graduate to something great," she said. "That is the epitome of shared accountability and bringing belief into action."