SPARTA

DISTRICT #140

Mission: *Every Student Counts. Every Moment Matters.*
Vision: *Create a learning environment that inspires every student to find their pathway to success.*

FEASIBILITY STUDY

Authorized on July 10, 2025 by
Sparta Community Unit #140
Board of Education

Compiled by: Dr. Kelly D. Stewart
Presented to Board of Education by: Chris Miesner

Executive Summary

Preface

Sparta Community Unit School District #140 commissioned this feasibility review to examine operational structures and assess opportunities to strengthen educational outcomes. The consultant, Dr. Kelly Stewart, commends the Board of Education for its commitment to a thoughtful, data-informed process. The leadership of Superintendent Chris Miesner and district staff was instrumental in supporting this review. Dr. David Deets contributed the transportation analysis included in this report.

The consideration of researching and evaluating a district's organizational structure is a significant decision requiring careful analysis and broad stakeholder awareness. While Boards of Education, staff, parents, and students are central to this process, the broader community is also affected by structural decisions. Ultimately, any consideration must remain grounded in a single guiding question: *What is in the best interest of students?*

Feasibility Study Background

The Sparta Community Unit School District #140 Board of Education authorized this feasibility study to provide a comprehensive review of district operations, resources, and conditions in support of future planning and governance discussions. The study examines student achievement, facilities, staffing structures, enrollment trends, transportation, and financial context to inform consideration of potential long-range operational and programmatic options.

This feasibility study was conducted to examine current learning environments, facilities, programs, and resources in order to inform future discussion and long-range planning aligned to the district's Strategic Plan. This feasibility study is intended to **provide information and context** for Board deliberation. It does not propose or predetermine decisions, nor does it recommend specific actions. Rather, it presents data, observations, and considerations to support thoughtful discussion aligned with the district's mission: *Every Student Counts. Every Moment Matters.*

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this feasibility study was to:

- Examine district facilities, capacity, and projected long-term maintenance needs
- Review staffing structures and instructional program delivery
- Analyze student achievement data and learning environments
- Evaluate enrollment trends and transportation considerations
- Provide financial context to support long-range planning
- Identify areas for continued study and discussion by the Board of Education

Throughout the study, the focus remained on how district systems and learning environments currently function and how they may continue to support student learning now and into the future.

Scope and Methodology

This feasibility study was conducted as a **document-based review**. The process included:

- Review of historical district documents and Board materials
- Analysis of data from the Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Report Card
- Review of district-provided operational, financial, and facility information

No interviews, focus groups, or on-site observations were conducted as part of this study. As such, findings reflect the data and documentation available at the time of review.

Summary of Key Observations

District Enrollment Overview (PK–12)

- **Total Enrollment (Excluding Pre-K)**
  - FY25: **1,103 students**
  - FY26: **1,078 students**
  - Projected range next 4 years: **1,075–1,085 students**
  - District enrollment has experienced recent fluctuations and is projected to remain relatively stable with modest long-term declines.
- K–8 total: **760 students**
  - Evansville Attendance Center (K–8): 105
  - Sparta Lincoln School (K-8): 655
- High School (9–12): **318 students**
  - High school enrollment has fluctuated in recent years and is projected to remain relatively stable, though graduating classes beginning in 2031 are projected to exceed incoming freshmen.

Academic Performance Overview

Overall Index Scores (Last 3 Years – PK–8)

School	FY23	FY24	FY25
EAC	69.32	57.67	53.11
SLS	48.78	56.14	71.21

- Sparta High School operates as a single campus and was not included in PK–8 comparison analysis.
  - The high school continues to operate under its own instructional model and performance reporting structure.
- Sparta Lincoln School reported higher percentages of students meeting proficiency in most reported ELA and Math areas.
- Class Size (FY25)
  - EAC: **12**
  - SLS: **19**
  - SHS: 17

Financial Position (District-Wide)

- FY25 Fund Balance: **$24,655,699**
- Financial Profile Score: **3.7 / 4 – Financial Recognition**
- ESSER funds concluded FY24
- Tier I Evidence-Based Funding designation (Adequacy: 73%)
- The conclusion of federal relief funding and ongoing uncertainty in state funding reinforce the importance of long-range fiscal planning and sustainability.

Per Student Expenditures (FY25)

School	Spending Per Student
Evansville Attendance Center	**$16,285**
Sparta Lincoln School	**$12,348**
Sparta High School	**$15,695**

- Spending per student is calculated by taking all expenses (except capital outlay and debt service) divided by the total number of students.
- EAC spending exceeds SLS by approximately $3,937 per student
- SHS spending is consistent with secondary-level program requirements and facility needs

Facilities Overview

Facility	Construction / Renovation	Approximate Square Footage
Evansville Attendance Center	1968 / 1978 / 2001	32,618 sq. ft.
Sparta Lincoln School	1995 / 2015	88,160 sq. ft.
Sparta High School	2003 / 1963 / 1983 / 2023	141,314 sq. ft.

- At the time of this study, the district was scheduled to undergo a Ten-Year Health Life Safety Review conducted by the district's architectural firm for EAC. This formal review had not yet been completed. SLS Ten-Year Health Life Safety Review completed in FY25 and SHS scheduled for completion in FY27.
- District facilities vary in age, condition, and projected maintenance needs.

Transportation Trends (District-Wide)

- Total Transportation Cost:
    - FY21: **$883,210**
    - FY25: **$1,349,157**
- Transportation serves PK–12 students district-wide
- Existing routes operate below capacity in some areas
- Currently undergoing further review with the district bus company

Areas for Continued Study

Taken together, the findings suggest value in continuing Board-level discussion regarding how district facilities, programs, and resources align with the district's mission and long-term priorities. **Differences in programming, operational costs, and facility conditions between attendance centers present areas that may warrant further exploration.**

Given the complexity of these topics and their potential impact on students, families, staff, and the community, any consideration of future operational or structural options would benefit from careful study, stakeholder engagement, and deliberate governance discussion.

Next Steps

The information contained in this feasibility study is intended to serve as a **foundation for continued inquiry on the structure of Sparta 140, which includes facilities and programs**. The Board of Education may wish to consider whether additional analysis, stakeholder input, or scenario modeling would support future planning conversations.

Suggested membership for the Feasibility Inquiry Committee would be:

- Superintendent, Chair of Committee (1)
- 2 Board of Education members (2)
- Principals from EAC, SLS, and SHS (3)
- Teacher representative from each school (3)
- Parent representative from each school (3)
- Sparta Education Association Union Representative (1)
- Sparta Service Employees Union Representative (1)

This structure would ensure representation from governance, administration, instructional leadership, staff, and families.

Topics for Committee to discuss

- Review updated facility condition assessments
- Examine enrollment and demographic projections
- Analyze staffing and retention trends
- Review transportation efficiency and cost modeling
- Consider academic performance patterns and programming across grade spans
- Evaluate long-term financial sustainability scenarios
- Gather stakeholder input

Timeline

- March 2026: Board of Education receives Feasibility Study and Superintendent Miesner presents recommendation to BOE.
- April 2026: Members of committee are identified and meet for Meeting #1.
- May - July 2026: Committee meets approximately 5 times
- August 2026: Update to BOE

- September 2026: Action Plan / Next steps begins

Closing

This feasibility study provides a data-informed foundation for continued governance discussion. Establishing a Feasibility Inquiry Committee would allow for additional analysis, stakeholder engagement, and careful review of options before any decisions are considered.

A deliberate, transparent process will help ensure that future planning aligns with district priorities, operational sustainability, and the best interests of students.

Dr. Kelly Stewart Biography

Dr. Kelly D. Stewart is an accomplished educational leader with extensive experience in superintendent leadership, strategic planning, and district feasibility studies. As a Superintendent, she guided school systems through complex organizational decisions, focusing on academic improvement, fiscal responsibility, and community engagement. Her leadership emphasized transparency, data-driven decision-making, and long-range planning to ensure sustainable district growth and student success.

Dr. Stewart has led comprehensive strategic planning initiatives that align vision, resources, and measurable outcomes. She has also conducted in-depth feasibility studies examining enrollment trends, financial projections, school configuration, facilities usage, and program effectiveness. Her work supports boards of education and leadership teams in making informed decisions grounded in research, community input, and fiscal analysis.

Recognized for her ability to translate complex data into clear, actionable recommendations, Dr. Stewart brings a systems-thinking approach to district improvement. She is particularly skilled in facilitating stakeholder engagement processes that build trust while navigating sensitive or high-impact decisions.

In addition to her district leadership and consulting work, Dr. Stewart serves as a professor at McKendree University, where she prepares aspiring superintendents and school leaders. Her teaching integrates real-world case studies in strategic planning and organizational leadership, equipping future leaders with practical tools to guide change effectively and responsibly.

Frequently Asked Questions

For Board of Education members to communicate with community

1. Why is Sparta commissioning this feasibility study now?

Sample Response:

“The role as a Board is to ensure long-term academic quality, fiscal responsibility, and stability for the district. This feasibility study is a tool to help us fulfill that responsibility. Over the past several years, our enrollment projections indicate that Sparta CUSD will likely remain below 1,100 students, excluding Pre-K. At the same time, we have seen differing academic trends between buildings and significant variation in class sizes. As a Board, we have a responsibility to look at long-term sustainability—academically and financially. This study allows us to evaluate the data carefully before making any decisions.”

2. Is the Board planning to close Evansville Attendance Center?

Sample Response:

“No decision has been made. The purpose of this study is to evaluate multiple scenarios and understand their academic, financial, and operational implications. We are gathering information—not implementing a predetermined outcome. All options will be discussed.”

3. What data is driving this review?

Sample Response:

“We are reviewing several factors, including enrollment projections, class sizes, demographic data, financial sustainability, and academic performance and programmatic trends. For example, over the past three years, the Overall Index Score for Sparta Lincoln School has increased, while Evansville Attendance Center’s score has declined. Additionally, average class size differs significantly between buildings. We also want to ensure Sparta High School graduates are competitive to other district peers. These are the kinds of data points that warrant thoughtful review.”

4. How do academic outcomes factor into this discussion?

Sample Response:

“Academic performance is central to our analysis. In FY2025 IAR results, Sparta Lincoln School demonstrated higher percentages of students meeting proficiency in most grade levels and content areas compared to Evansville Attendance Center. We want to ensure that high school programming stays competitive with schools our size. We are examining what these trends mean for long-term student achievement and access to programs.”

5. What criteria will be used to evaluate options?

Sample Response:

"We will evaluate options based on student academic impact, financial sustainability, class size, staffing considerations, transportation logistics, and community implications. Student learning and long-term district stability will remain central in our review."

6. How will this impact students?

Sample Response:

"Our responsibility is to every student in Sparta CUSD. If any structural changes were ever considered, we would evaluate academic programming, transportation, social-emotional impact, extracurricular access, and overall student experience. No decisions will be made without considering student well-being first."

7. Is this about finances?

Sample Response:

"Financial sustainability is one factor, but not the only one. With enrollment projected to remain below 1,100 students, we must evaluate how we allocate resources across buildings. The study will help us understand both short- and long-term fiscal implications while maintaining academic quality."

8. What happens to staff if changes occur?

Sample Response:

"At this stage, we are reviewing data—not making staffing decisions. Any future decisions would follow contractual obligations and be handled thoughtfully. Our staff are valued members of this district."

9. How will the community be informed?

Sample Response:

"The feasibility study findings will be presented publicly. We are committed to transparency and to providing opportunities for community feedback before the Board deliberates any action."

10. What happens if we maintain the current structure?

Sample Response:

"One purpose of this study is to understand the long-term implications of maintaining our current configuration. With enrollment trends, academic data, and facility usage in mind, it is important that we evaluate both action and inaction to make an informed decision for the future of Sparta CUSD."

Enrollment Trends

A review of enrollment data over the past several years indicates variability across buildings within the district. While overall district enrollment has remained relatively stable, patterns at the building level reflect shifts in student distribution that warrant consideration in long-term planning.

Evansville Attendance Center (EAC) has experienced lower overall enrollment compared to Sparta Lincoln School (SLS), resulting in smaller class sizes and single-section grade levels. In contrast, SLS maintains larger enrollment cohorts, typically supporting multiple sections at most grade levels.

These enrollment differences have operational and instructional implications. Smaller enrollment at EAC contributes to higher per-pupil costs and limits staffing flexibility, while larger enrollment at SLS allows for greater scheduling options, collaborative grade-level structures, and program scalability.

Continued monitoring of enrollment trends will be important to ensure that staffing models, resource allocation, and programming decisions remain aligned with student needs and long-term district sustainability.

Enrollment and Demographics Summary (SY 2025)

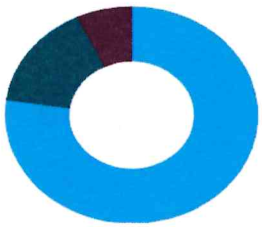
Class Size:

- Sparta High School has average class size of 17
- Evansville Attendance Center (EAC) has average class size of 12
- Sparta Lincoln School has average class size of 19
- Sparta Lincoln School serves the highest percentage of low-income students (65%), closely followed by Sparta High School (62%), while Evansville serves 20%.
- EAC has the highest percentage of students with IEPs (28%), compared to 21% at Sparta Lincoln and 15% at Sparta High School.

SPARTA HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Student Mobility	10%
Low Income	62%
English Learners	Redacted
Students with IEPs	15%

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



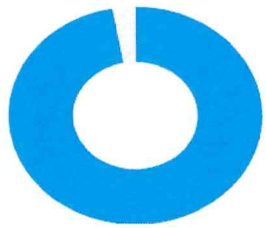
White	75%
Black	15%
Hispanic	Redacted
Asian	Redacted
Am. Indian	Redacted
Two or More	7%
Pacific Islander	Redacted

EVANSVILLE ATTENDANCE CENTER

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Student Mobility	Redacted
Low Income	20%
English Learners	Redacted
Students with IEPs	26%

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



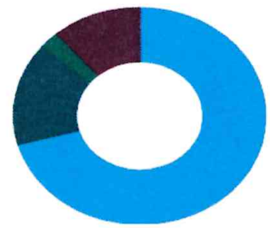
White	97%
Black	Redacted
Hispanic	Redacted
Asian	Redacted
Am. Indian	Redacted
Two or More	Redacted
Pacific Islander	Redacted

SPARTA LINCOLN SCHOOL

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Student Mobility	11%
Low Income	65%
English Learners	Redacted
Students with IEPs	21%

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



White	71%
Black	15%
Hispanic	3%
Asian	Redacted
Am. Indian	Redacted
Two or More	11%
Pacific Islander	Redacted

ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

School Enrollment History and Forecast

Understanding enrollment trends is essential when considering attendance center consolidation or facility closure. Enrollment patterns directly affect facility needs, staffing, programming, and long-term financial planning. This study provides both a historical baseline and four-year projections to guide future decision-making.

A six-year historical review (beginning in SY 2020–2021) was conducted to identify trends. Due to significant year-to-year variability in Pre-K enrollment, Pre-K students were excluded from projections. Instead, a six-year average of 96 kindergarten students was used to stabilize forecasting assumptions.

Projection Methodology

Enrollment projections were developed using the **Cohort Survival Method**, which tracks groups of students as they move from one grade level to the next. Historical "survival ratios" were calculated to determine whether grade-level cohorts increased, declined, or remained stable over time. These ratios were then applied to current enrollment figures to project four years into the future.

The district's six-year average cohort survival rate is 97.8%, indicating a slight overall decline in enrollment over time. While projections suggest modest fluctuations year to year, overall enrollment is expected to remain relatively stable in the near term.

District Enrollment Trends

The district experienced a loss of 25 students (2.2%) from FY25 to FY26 (excluding Pre-K). Projections suggest enrollment will level out over the next four years, with small annual fluctuations

(+6, –9, +3, +6).

K–8 enrollment experienced pandemic-related variability. After dropping to 825 students in SY2021, enrollment rebounded to 848 in SY2022 and remained relatively stable (775–780 range) over the following years. Growth occurred in SY2024 (793 students) and SY2025 (810 students). However, the current year reflects a decline of approximately 60 students (about 6%).

Looking ahead, K–8 enrollment is projected to stabilize between 745 and 751 students over the next four years.

Study Limitations

As with all projection models, reliability decreases over longer timeframes. The cohort survival method is linear and can be influenced by unusual fluctuations, policy changes, or unexpected demographic shifts. Projections should be revisited if significant local conditions change.

Teachers by School Year

Teachers by School Year (Fig.2)

Year	Evansville	Lincoln	Sparta HS
2025	10	53	25
2024	9	54	21.3
2023	9	53	25
2022	Not collected by ISBE		
2021			

Source: Illinois Interactive Report Card (2026)

Enrollment Conclusions

From FY2021 through FY2025, district enrollment remained at or above 1,100 students. As of September 30, 2025, enrollment declined to 1,078 students (excluding Pre-K), dropping below that threshold for the first time in five years.

For projection purposes, a six-year average of 96 kindergarten students was used. This figure is slightly higher than the district's actual kindergarten enrollment over the past two years, suggesting that projections may be conservatively optimistic. When coupled with Illinois' approximately 11% decline in birth rate between 2020 and 2024 (U.S. Census Bureau vintage estimates, as reported by Beautify Data, 2025), there is legitimate concern regarding continued enrollment pressure in the coming years.

Beginning in SY2031, if current trends persist, the number of graduating seniors is projected to exceed incoming freshmen for at least four consecutive years. In SY2031 alone, this would represent a net loss of 26 students at Sparta High School, excluding additional attrition reflected in the cohort survival ratio.

Given these trends, it is reasonable to expect that total district enrollment will remain below 1,100 students (excluding Pre-K) for the foreseeable future. Ongoing monitoring will be essential. Enrollment projections should be updated annually, alongside staffing and retirement projections, to ensure Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) allocations align with anticipated student needs and support efficient, responsible use of district resources.

Enrollment History District Wide (FIG. 3)

It is important to note that the Enrollment History District Wide includes Special Pre-K and Pre-K; however, these student groups were not used in the Enrollment Projections.

SY	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL	plus/minus
2025-26															
EAC	14	14	16	8	8	10	9	13	13					105	-4
SL	80	68	70	74	72	78	66	69	78					655	-46
SHS										88	77	85	68	318	25
Dist	**94**	**82**	**86**	**82**	**80**	**88**	**75**	**82**	**91**	**88**	**77**	**85**	**68**	**1078**	**-25**
2024-25															
EAC	15	16	7	8	10	11	14	13	15					109	-5
SL	79	88	86	82	77	67	70	80	72					701	28
SHS										75	83	71	64	293	-38
Dist	**94**	**104**	**93**	**90**	**87**	**78**	**84**	**93**	**87**	**75**	**83**	**71**	**64**	**1103**	**-15**
2023-24															
EAC	16	8	9	11	10	14	15	16	15					114	1
SL	77	83	84	79	66	80	79	71	60					679	14
SHS										93	89	78	71	331	6
Dist	**93**	**91**	**93**	**90**	**76**	**94**	**94**	**87**	**75**	**93**	**89**	**78**	**71**	**1124**	**21**
2022-23															
EAC	10	8	10	11	15	16	15	14	14					113	0
SL	87	81	73	61	78	80	79	57	71					667	-11
SHS										93	79	74	79	325	6
Dist	**97**	**89**	**83**	**72**	**93**	**96**	**94**	**71**	**85**	**93**	**79**	**74**	**79**	**1105**	**-5**
2021-22															
EAC	8	11	11	13	16	14	14	13	13					113	-9

SL	96	79	62	81	81	76	52	62	78					667	32
SHS										77	77	79	86	319	-18
Dist	**104**	**90**	**73**	**94**	**97**	**90**	**66**	**75**	**91**	**77**	**77**	**79**	**86**	**1099**	**5**
2020-21															
EAC	10	13	13	15	16	11	15	11	18					122	-11
SL	86	62	75	86	78	59	71	78	58					653	-37
SHS										83	86	80	88	337	-37
Dist	**96**	**75**	**88**	**101**	**94**	**70**	**86**	**89**	**76**	**83**	**86**	**80**	**88**	**1112**	**-85**

Academic Performance

A review of the Illinois School Report Card Overall Index Scores over the past three fiscal years indicates divergent performance trends between Evansville Attendance Center (EAC) and Sparta Lincoln School (SLS). EAC's Overall Index Score declined from 69.32 in FY23 to 57.67 in FY24 and 53.11 in FY25. In contrast, SLS demonstrated consistent improvement during the same period, increasing from 48.78 in FY23 to 56.14 in FY24 and 71.21 in FY25.

Analysis of FY25 Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) results further reflects this pattern. SLS reported a higher percentage of students meeting state proficiency benchmarks in English Language Arts (ELA) Proficiency, ELA Growth, Math Proficiency, and Math Growth across all reported grade levels, with the exception of 6th- and 8th-grade Math Proficiency. It should be noted that some EAC data were redacted due to small subgroup sizes, limiting full comparative analysis in certain grade levels.

In addition to assessment data, there are factors that may contribute to student achievement. Class size and teacher retention are two additional factors that ISBE reviews annually for schools as part of the annual school performance review.

CLASS SIZE

These findings warrant contextual consideration. SLS maintained a larger average class size (19 students) compared to EAC (12 students). Additionally, 65.2% of SLS students were identified as low-income in FY25, compared to 19.6% at EAC. Given longstanding research documenting the association between poverty and academic outcomes (Pollak et al., 2025; Oulhote & Grandjean, 2025), SLS's upward performance trajectory under these demographic conditions is notable.

Student:Teacher Ratio by School Year (Fig. 4)

Year	Evansville	Lincoln	Sparta HS
2025	12	17	14
2024	12.7	16.6	18.3
2023	12.8	17.1	14.7
2022	Not collected by ISBE		
2021			

Source: Illinois Interactive Report Card (2026)

The student-to-teacher ratio in the district is about 16:1, which is on par with the state average in Illinois. However, there is a discrepancy between Evansville and Lincoln, which may need to be reviewed.

TEACHER RETENTION

Teacher retention patterns may also contribute to performance differences. SLS reported higher teacher retention rates than EAC in all years except FY24. Given EAC's smaller staffing structure, with typically one teacher per grade level, novice teachers may have fewer opportunities for same-grade collaboration and mentorship. In contrast, SLS's multi-section grade levels allow for greater peer collaboration and distributed instructional support. Research on professional collaboration and teacher development suggests that structured peer support and mentoring can positively influence instructional effectiveness and student achievement.

Collectively, these findings highlight differences in performance trends, resource allocation, and staffing structures that warrant further examination in understanding academic outcomes across the district's elementary schools.

Teacher Retention by School Year (Fig. 4)

Year	Evansville	Lincoln	Sparta HS
2025	74.2%	87.6%	81.4%
2024	87.5%	86.8%	82.2%
2023	84.4%	90.7%	89.2%
2022	80.6%	89.1%	82.7%
2021	61.3%	86.8%	83.1%

Source: Illinois Interactive Report Card (2026)

Teacher retention trends differ between the two elementary buildings. Sparta Lincoln School (SLS) reported higher teacher retention rates than Evansville Attendance Center (EAC) in all years reviewed, with the exception of FY2024.

Given EAC's smaller staffing structure—typically one teacher per grade level—newly hired teachers, who are often early in their careers, may have limited access to same-grade collaboration and peer mentorship within the building. In contrast, SLS maintains multiple sections at most grade levels, providing greater opportunity for shared planning, instructional dialogue, and collegial support. Research consistently demonstrates that structured collaboration and mentoring contribute to teacher development, instructional consistency, and overall school stability. The limited opportunity for grade-level collaboration at EAC may influence both teacher retention and instructional coherence, which in turn can affect student academic outcomes.

Student Achievement and Growth

Illinois School Report Card Data

Data Sources and Assessment Overview

Information presented in this section was obtained from the Illinois Report Card 2024–2025 website (Illinois Report Card, 2025). The data include results from:

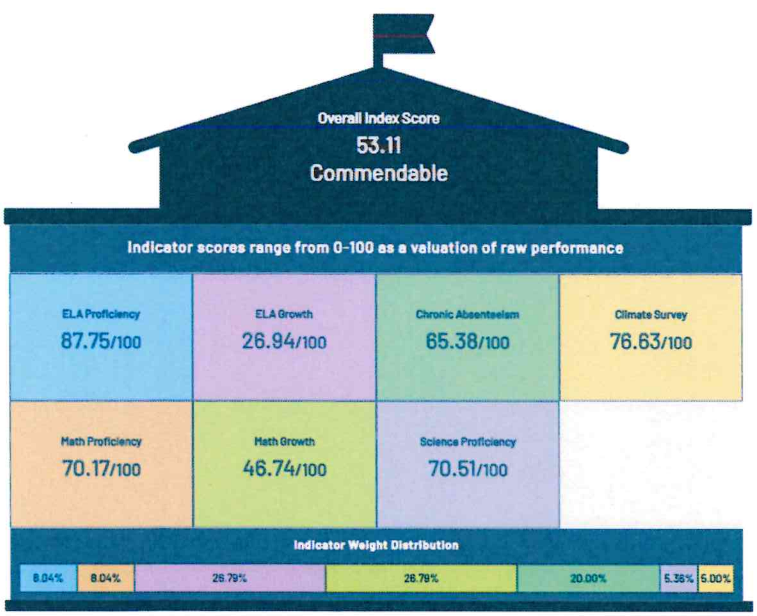
- Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) for grades 3–8 at Evansville Attendance Center and Sparta Lincoln School
- ACT assessment data for grades 9–11 at Sparta High School

English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Science performance data are reported by grade level at both the school and state levels. All reported results reflect publicly available accountability data and are presented for informational and planning purposes.

Summative Designation and Indicator Scores (FY 2025)

Illinois School Report Card summative designation scores range from 0 to 100 and reflect multiple performance indicators.

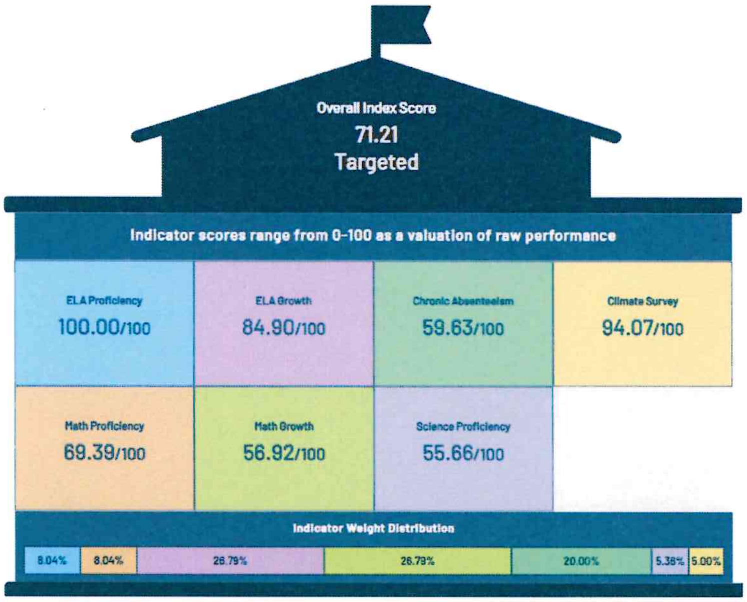
Evansville Attendance Center



(Fig.5)

- Overall Index Score: **53.11**
- Designation: **Commendable**
- Academic Indicators:
    - ELA Proficiency: 87.75
    - ELA Growth: 26.94
    - Math Proficiency: 70.17
    - Math Growth: 46.74
    - Science Proficiency: 70.51

Sparta Lincoln School



(Fig. 6)

- Overall Index Score: **71.21**
- Designation: **Targeted**
- Academic Indicators:
  - ELA Proficiency: 100.00
  - ELA Growth: 84.90
  - Math Proficiency: 69.39
  - Math Growth: 56.92
  - Science Proficiency: 55.66

Accountability Designation Context

Although Sparta Lincoln School reported a higher overall index score than Evansville Attendance Center in FY 2025, it received a Targeted designation. This designation reflects the performance of one or more student subgroups relative to state-established benchmarks.

In FY 2025, Sparta Lincoln School's Students with Disabilities subgroup scored slightly below the state's minimum performance threshold. Under state accountability rules, subgroups must include at least 20 students to be included in designation calculations.

Evansville Attendance Center did not meet the minimum subgroup size threshold in all categories; therefore, subgroup performance did not factor into its designation.

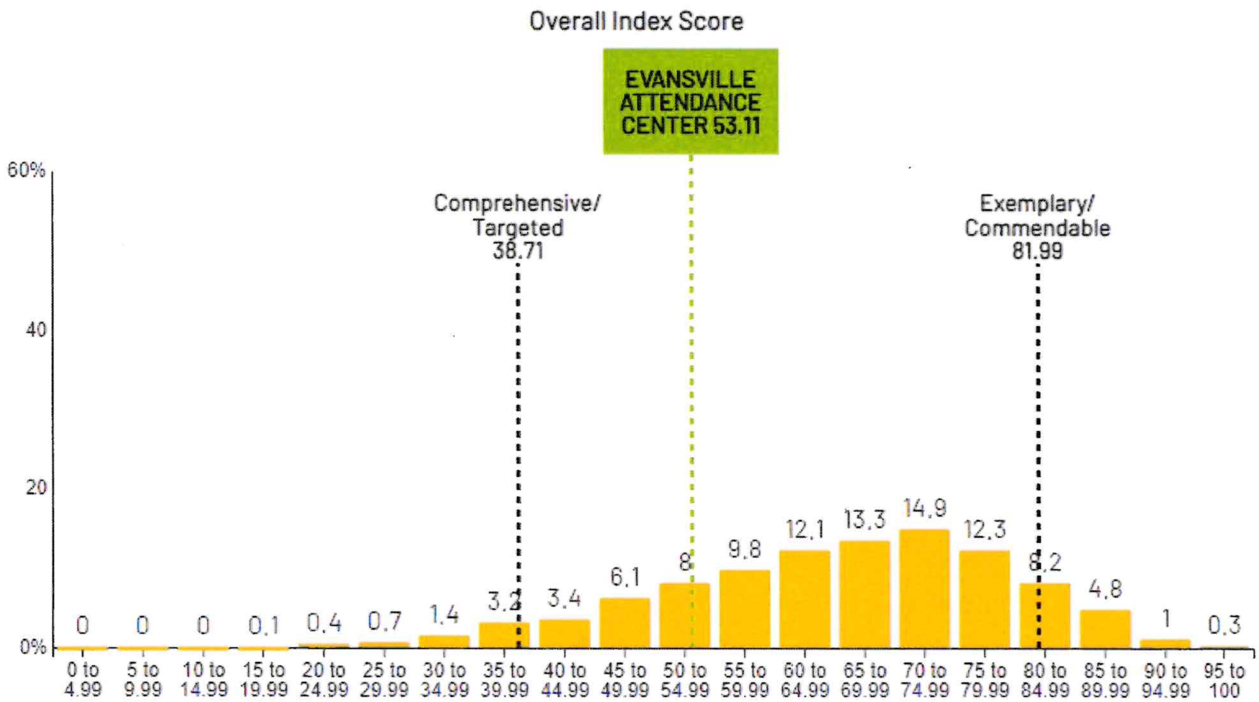
As a result, differences in designation reflect accountability criteria rather than overall academic performance alone.

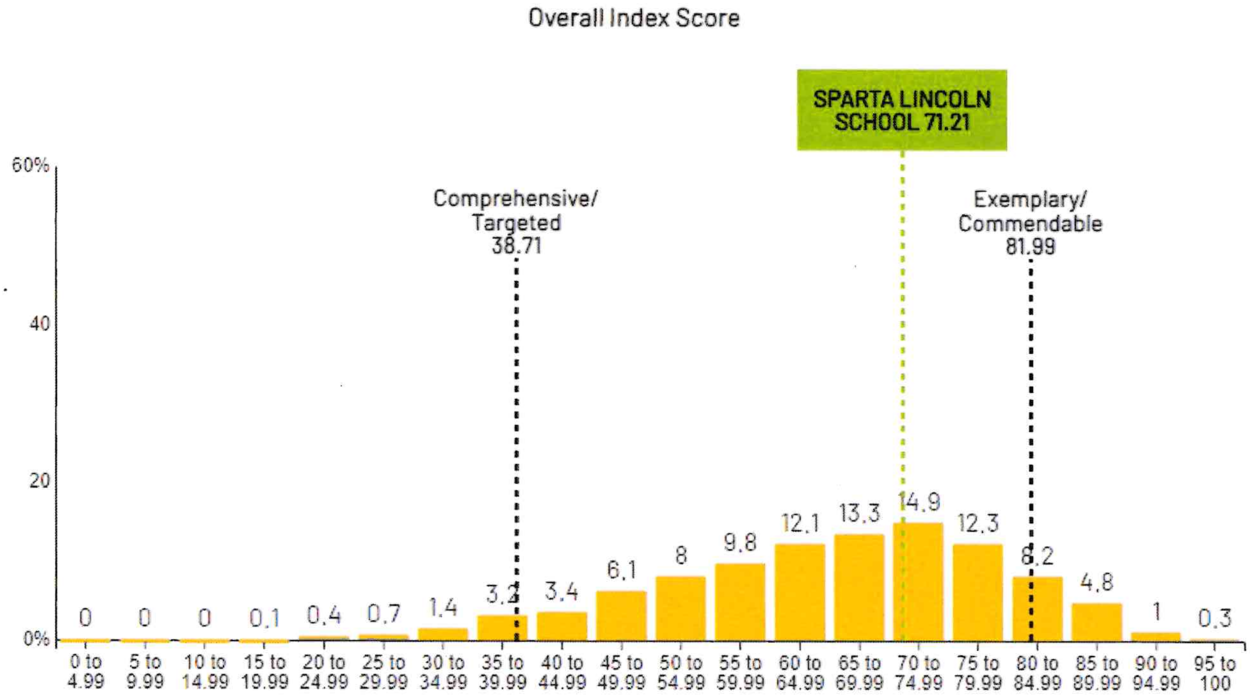
Comparative School Rankings (FY 2025)

The following graphs illustrate the relative standing of each school within statewide performance distributions.

- Evansville Attendance Center was designated Commendable.
    - However, EAC is performing in the 50-54.99% of schools statewide
- Sparta Lincoln School was designated Targeted based on subgroup performance indicators.
    - Lincoln is performing in the 70-74.99 range.
- Sparta High School is performing in the 66-69.99 range for high schools in the state. .

(FIG 8)





These rankings provide comparative context within the statewide accountability system.

IAR English Language Arts (Grades 3–8)

ELA Proficiency (FY 2025)

Table 1 reports the percentage of students scoring Proficient or Above Proficient. Some Evansville Attendance Center results are redacted due to subgroup size requirements.

Across reported grades:

- Sparta Lincoln School reported higher proficiency rates than Evansville Attendance Center at corresponding grade levels.
- Sparta Lincoln School exceeded state averages in grades 4 and 7.

IAR ELA Proficiency Scores by Grade Level : Redacted scores indicate that there were not enough students to get a statistically accurate level.

2025 ELA Proficiency (Fig. 9)			
Grade	**Evansville AC**	**Sparta Lincoln S**	**State**
Summary	35.4	**46.8**	**53.1**
Grade 3	Redacted	22.1	**47.3**
Grade 4	40	**61.1**	51.2
Grade 5	Redacted	40.6	**54.6**
Grade 6	41.7	**48.5**	**54.3**
Grade 7	46.2	**67.6**	54.5
Grade 8	14.3	**41.5**	**56.7**

ELA Growth (FY 2025)

Fig. 9 summarizes ELA growth scores by grade level.

- Sparta Lincoln School reported higher growth scores at all reported grade levels.
- Sparta Lincoln School exceeded the state average in all grades except Grade 5.

IAR ELA Growth Scores by Grade Level (Fig.10)

Yellow represents below state cut score; green indicates above state cut score.

IAR Mathematics (Grades 3–8)

Math Proficiency (FY 2025)

Fig. 11 presents math proficiency results.

- Sparta Lincoln School reported higher proficiency in grades 3, 4, 5, and 7.
- In grades 4 and 7, Sparta Lincoln School exceeded the state average.
- Evansville Attendance Center reported higher proficiency in grades 6 and 8.

IAR Math Proficiency Scores by Grade Level

2025 Math Proficiency (Fig. 11)			
Grade	**Evansville AC**	**Lincoln School**	**State**
Summary	26.2	**27.4**	27.2
Grade 3	Redacted	26	**27.4**
Grade 4	10	**37.5**	34.1
Grade 5	Redacted	15.9	**16.7**
Grade 6	**33.3**	26.9	27.8
Grade 7	30.8	**37.8**	36.8
Grade 8	**21.4**	18.5	19

Math Growth (FY 2025)

Figure 12 summarizes math growth scores.

- Sparta Lincoln School reported higher growth scores across all reported grade levels.
- Sparta Lincoln School exceeded state averages except in grades 5 and 8.

AR Math Growth Scores by Grade Level

Math Growth Scores by Grade Level per School (Fig. 12)			
Grade	**Evansville AC**	**Sparta Lincoln S**	**State**
Summary	46.1	**51.7**	50
Grade 4	29.6	**51.6**	50
Grade 5	Redacted	**33.4**	**50**
Grade 6	57.3	**64.1**	50
Grade 7	52	**61.1**	50
Grade 8	43.3	**47.1**	**50**

IAR Science (Grades 5 and 8)

Fig. 13 reports science proficiency for grades 5 and 8.

- Evansville Attendance Center reported the highest summary score.
- Grade 5 results for EAC were redacted due to subgroup size.
- Sparta Lincoln School reported the highest district score at grade 8, though below the state average.

IAR Science Proficiency Scores by Grade Level

2025 Science Proficiency (Fig. 13)			
Grade	**Evansville AC**	**Sparta Lincoln S**	**State**
Summary	**43.5**	35.3	43
Grade 5	Redacted	33.8	**40.6**
Grade 8	35.7	36.9	**45.4**

Summary of 3-8 Academic Performance Indicators

Review of available student achievement data indicates:

- Academic performance varies across schools and grade levels.
- Sparta Lincoln School has demonstrated higher proficiency and growth in several subject areas.
- Evansville Attendance Center has demonstrated strengths in selected grade levels and subjects.
- Accountability designations reflect subgroup performance in addition to overall results.

Student achievement data represent one component of the district's overall educational profile and should be considered in conjunction with staffing, programming, and resource allocation.

Student Achievement and Growth

Illinois School Report Card Data

Data Sources and Assessment Overview

Information presented in this section was obtained from the Illinois Report Card 2024–2025 website (Illinois Report Card, 2025). The data include results from:

- ACT assessment data for grades 9–11 at Sparta High School

English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Science performance data are reported by grade level at both the school and state levels. All reported results reflect publicly available accountability data and are presented for informational and planning purposes.

Summative Designation and Indicator Scores (FY 2025)

Illinois School Report Card summative designation scores range from 0 to 100 and reflect multiple performance indicators

Sparta High School

(Fig. 14)

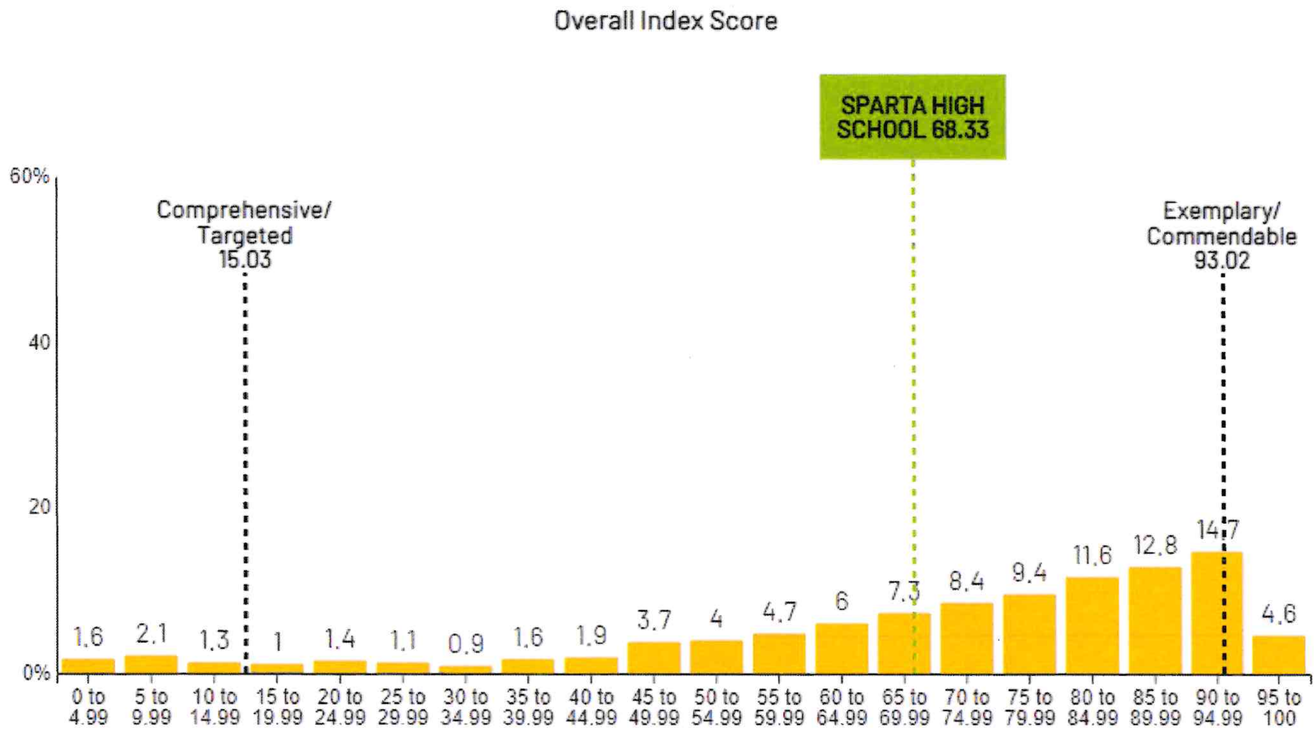
- Overall Index Score: **68.33**
- Designation: **Commendable**
- Academic Indicators:
    - ELA Proficiency: 100.00
    - Math Proficiency: 80.07
    - Science Proficiency: 56.26
    - Graduation Rate: 60.90
    - 9th Grade On Track: 71.25

At the high school level, summative scores incorporate Graduation Rate and 9th Grade On Track in place of ELA and Math Growth.

Comparative School Rankings (FY 2025)

The following graphs illustrate the relative standing of each school within statewide performance distributions.

- Sparta High School is performing in the 66-69.99 range for high schools in the state. .



Sparta High School Academic Performance (2025)

Beginning in 2025, Illinois reinstated the ACT as the statewide high school accountability assessment. As this is the first year of implementation since 2015, longitudinal trend data are not yet available. Therefore, the analysis below reflects a single-year snapshot of proficiency and growth relative to state averages.

ACT English Language Arts (ELA) Proficiency (Fig. 16)

Yellow represents below state cut score; green indicates above state cut score.

In 2025, 50.7% of Sparta High School (SHS) students met or exceeded state proficiency standards in ELA, compared to 51.7% statewide. While the overall difference is modest, SHS performed below the state average at each reported grade level. These results suggest that although overall performance is close to state norms, there is limited evidence of grade-level outperformance.

ACT Growth – ELA

Illinois growth scores reflect academic progress relative to academically similar peers statewide, with 50 representing average growth. SHS reported an overall ELA Growth score of 44.1, indicating below-average growth. Grade 9 recorded a growth score of 49.4 (near average), while Grade 10 demonstrated growth well below the state benchmark. These findings suggest that while some cohorts are maintaining pace with peers, overall literacy growth at the high school level is an area requiring attention.

ACT Math Proficiency

Math proficiency at SHS was also slightly below the state average. In 2025, 37.7% of SHS students met proficiency benchmarks compared to 39.3% statewide. Performance at each grade level was below state averages. Notably, Grade 9 (13.6%) and Grade 10 (13.7%) proficiency rates were substantially lower than state averages (38.0% and 34.6%, respectively), indicating potential gaps in foundational mathematics readiness during the early high school years.

ACT Math Growth

SHS reported an overall Math Growth score of 49.1, which is approximately at the state average benchmark of 50. Grade 9 (46.8) and Grade 10 (46.0) growth scores were slightly below average, while Grade 11 demonstrated above-average growth (55.2). This pattern indicates stronger academic progress among upper-grade students compared to earlier cohorts.

ACT Science Proficiency

Science proficiency represents a more significant area of concern. In 2025, 36.2% of SHS students met proficiency standards compared to 48.7% statewide. At every grade level, SHS proficiency rates fell below state averages. The largest disparities were observed in Grade 9 (21.2% vs. 50.3% statewide) and Grade 10 (26.0% vs. 49.6% statewide), suggesting a need for closer examination of curriculum alignment, instructional supports, and course sequencing in science.

9th Grade On Track

The 9th Grade On Track indicator measures the percentage of freshmen earning sufficient credits and passing foundational courses to be promoted to Grade 10. In 2025, SHS reported an overall On Track rate of 90.4%, exceeding the state average of 89.3%.

Subgroup analysis shows that 91.7% of Black students were On Track compared to a state average of 81.5%, representing a notable positive outcome. The percentage of White students (92.3%) was slightly below the state average of 93.5% for that demographic group.

Because Sparta CUSD #140 operates a single high school, school-level and district-level data are identical for these measures.

Overall, 2025 results suggest that Sparta High School is performing near state averages in ELA and Math proficiency, below state averages in Science proficiency, and slightly below average in ELA growth. However, Math growth and 9th Grade On Track indicators reflect areas of relative strength. Continued monitoring across multiple years will be necessary to determine whether these patterns represent emerging trends or transitional baseline data following reinstatement of the ACT as the statewide assessment.

9^{th} Grade On Track (Fig.17)

	School	District	State
Demographic	2025	2025	2025
All	90.4	90.4	89.3
Am. Indian	No Data	No Data	85.4
Asian	No Data	No Data	97.2
Black	91.7	91.7	81.5
Hispanic	Redacted	Redacted	85.6
MENA	No Data	No Data	92
Pacific Islander	No Data	No Data	90.9
Two or More	Redacted	Redacted	88
White	92.3	92.3	93.5

Programming

SHS has increased the number of dual credit/dual enrollment offerings over the last three school years to 14 in house offerings and 8 additional from SIUC and CCSI. This was done in large part with utilizing Teacher Vacancy Grant funding to get teachers certified to teach dual credit. SHS has partnered with SWIC for dual credit, CCSI for dual credit, and SIUC on dual enrollment courses. The next step is incorporating more honors level courses for students.

SCHOOL FINANCE REVIEW

In this section of the report, the consultants present fiscal data intended to support an understanding of the district's financial position and to inform long-range planning discussions, including consideration of attendance configuration and facility utilization options. Information was drawn from district fiscal documents and publicly available sources, including Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) materials, Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) calculations, Annual Financial Reports, School Report Cards, and County Tax Computation Reports.

Table 1 provides baseline information on district revenues, disbursements, and fund balance trends over the past ten fiscal years, beginning with FY 2016. The district reported deficit spending in FY 2016 and FY 2017 of -$5,006,866 and -$4,139,919, respectively. During this period, the district's overall fund balance reached a low of $3,391,020 at the end of FY 2017.

Beginning in FY 2018, Evidence-Based Funding took effect in Illinois, and district revenues increased. Available documentation indicates the district received $531,404.87 in additional state funding associated with EBF in FY 2018. In addition, fiscal records reflect the issuance of bonds during this period, which contributed to increased revenues and improvement in fund balance.

Deficit spending occurred again in FY 2023, FY 2024, and FY 2025. Based on the district's financial records, these years coincide with capital and construction activity. It is important to note that school district budgets may reflect timing differences between when revenues are received and when expenditures occur. This is commonly observed in years when bond proceeds are received in one fiscal year and expended across subsequent year(s) for capital projects.

The district also received federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds over multiple years beginning in FY 2021. The reduction in revenues reported in FY 2024 reflects, in part, the discontinuation of these temporary federal funds. As of FY 2025, the district reported a fund balance of $24,655,699, indicating a strong current financial position.

FINANCIAL REVIEW – REVENUE/DISBURSEMENTS (Fig. 18)

FY	REVENUES	DISBURSEMENTS	EXCESS/ DEFICIT	FUND BALANCE
2016	$15,218,950	$20,225,816	-$5,006,866	$7,530,939
2017	$15,291,304	$19,431,223	-$4,139,919	$3,391,020
2018	$18,241,271	$15,394,674	$2,846,597	$6,237,617
2019	$17,919,199	$17,809,347	$109,852	$6,347,468
2020	$20,164,899	$18,306,591	$1,858,305	$8,205,778
2021	$21,468,342	$20,375,379	$7,231,523	$15,437,301

2022	$26,128,061	$21,542,515	$4,585,546	$20,022,847
2023	$23,641,921	$25,042,746	-$1,400,825	$18,622,021
2024	$23,446,433	$23,737,301	-$290,868	$18,331,151
2025	$23,578,448	$31,806,599	-$8,228,151	$24,655,699

Financial Profile Score

Table 2 shows the district's Financial Profile Score. Sparta CUSD #140 received a score of 3.7 out of 4, resulting in a designation of Financial Recognition. The School District Financial Profile is used by the State to assess a district's financial indicators based on annual financial reporting and established criteria. Designations include: Financial Recognition, Financial Review, Financial Early Warning, and Financial Watch.

FINANCIAL PROFILE SCORE (Fig. 19)

ACCT. BASIS	ORIGINAL SCORE	ORIGINAL DESIGNATION	ADJUSTED SCORE	ADJUSTED DESIGNATION
Cash	3.70	Recognition	—	Recognition

Summary of Financial Profile Indicators

The Financial Profile includes analysis of the following indicators:

- Fund Balance to Revenue Ratio – reflects overall financial strength based on ending fund balances relative to revenues in key operating funds.
- Expenditure to Revenue Ratio – identifies how much is expended for each dollar received.
- Days Cash on Hand – estimates the number of days a district could meet operating expenditures without additional revenues.
- Percent of Short-Term Borrowing Ability Remaining – reflects capacity for short-term borrowing relative to allowable limits and existing obligations.
- Percent of Long-Term Debt Margin Remaining – reflects remaining capacity for long-term debt within statutory limits.

An important indicator of fiscal condition is maintaining an adequate fund balance. Under Illinois School Code and the ISBE Financial Profile framework, fund balance ratios and liquidity measures (including days cash on hand) are key components of annual evaluation. Sparta CUSD #140's Financial Profile Score of 3.7 out of 4 reflects strong performance on these measures for FY 2025.

For planning purposes, reserve guidelines vary. The Government Finance Officers Association recommends maintaining a minimum level of reserves, and many Boards adopt local reserve targets to support stability in the event of revenue delays or unanticipated expenditures. In FY 2025, the district reported **353.84 days cash on hand, which indicates high liquidity and confirms a strong fiscal position.**

STATE FUNDING MODEL FOR ILLINOIS SCHOOLS (Evidence-Based Funding)

Illinois has shifted from the former State Aid model to the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) model. The model includes four major components:

1. **Adequacy Target** – estimates the cost of providing a high-quality education based on research-based essential elements and student needs, with adjustments for regional wage differences.

2. **Local Capacity Target** – estimates the extent to which the district can contribute toward adequacy using local resources, based on property wealth and "real receipts."

3. **Percent of Adequacy** – reflects how well-funded the district is relative to its adequacy target.

4. **Distribution of New State Dollars** – directs new funding to districts with the lowest percent of adequacy, using a tiered system recalculated annually.

As shown in Fig. 21 , the district's reported Percent of Adequacy increased from approximately **57% (FY 2018)** to a high point in the mid-to-upper 70% range in subsequent years. Tier placement is recalculated annually. Districts below the statewide Tier 1 threshold receive priority for new EBF dollars. Over time, as a district's percent of adequacy increases, the amount of new EBF funding may change.

Target Ratio FY 2018 to FY 2025 (Fig. 20)

FY	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Ratio Target	65%	66%	67%	68%	73%	77%	78%

EVIDENCE BASED FUNDING DISTRIBUTION (EBF) FY 2018–2026 (Fig. 21)

FY	(%) of Adequacy	Tier	New Money	Base Funding Minimum (HH)	Total NET FY26 State Contribution
2018	57%	1	$531,404.87	$4,959,233.86	$5,490,638.73

2019	61%	1	$356,595.37	$5,490,638.73	$5,847,234.10
2020	63%	1	$318,495.74	$5,847,234.10	$6,165,729.84
2021	67%	—	$0.00	$6,165,729.84	$6,165,729.84
2022	67%	1	$212,018.32	$6,165,729.84	$6,377,748.16
2023	71%	1	$232,051.16	$6,448,721.40	$6,680,772.56
2024	78%	2	$126,411.13	$6,680,772.56	$6,807,183.69
2025	76%	1	$252,941.77	$6,807,183.69	$7,060,125.46
2026	73%	1	$277,571.39	$7,060,125.46	$7,337,696.85

Finance Conclusions

Review of the district's financial data indicates that Sparta CUSD #140 currently maintains a strong fund balance and substantial liquidity. Over the past ten years, both revenues and expenditures increased, with notable changes during years associated with ESSER funding and capital project activity.
Available information indicates the district managed the receipt and expenditure of temporary federal ESSER funds in a manner that supported operations and planned expenditures. Because these funds were time-limited, they are no longer available as a revenue source in subsequent budgets.
The implementation of Evidence-Based Funding has also contributed to increased state support over time. The district's reported Percent of Adequacy suggests continued eligibility for additional EBF revenue, subject to annual legislative appropriations and tier recalculations.

Because tier thresholds and percent of adequacy calculations are recalculated annually, changes in district status may affect the level of future "new money" allocations. Monitoring of EBF trends, adequacy percentage, and tier status may support long-range financial planning.
Overall, the district's current financial position reflects strong reserves and provides flexibility for planning discussions, including consideration of future facility and operational scenarios.

Funding Per Student by School

Overview

This section summarizes per-student expenditure patterns across district schools using data reported on the Illinois School Report Card and related financial records. The analysis is intended to provide context for understanding how instructional and operational resources are distributed across attendance centers.

Per-student spending reflects multiple factors, including enrollment size, staffing patterns, programmatic requirements, facility costs, and service delivery models. As such, these figures should be interpreted within the broader operational context of each school. The less students in a building, the more per pupil expense is expected.

Expenditure Trends

Review of school-level expenditures over the four most recent fiscal years indicates:

- Evansville Attendance Center reported the highest per-student expenditures in most years reviewed.
- Sparta Lincoln School reported lower per-student expenditures relative to the other two schools during the review period.
- In FY 2022, Sparta High School reported slightly higher per-student expenditures than Evansville Attendance Center. Typically, high schools have more expenditures due to the nature of the class offerings and size.

Combination of site level and district centralized per pupil expenditures (Fig. 22)

	Evansville		Lincoln		Sparta HS	
Fiscal Year	Enrollment	Expenditure per pupil	Enrollment	Expenditure per pupil	Enrollment	Expenditure per pupil
Avg of 5 years	116	$16,123	713	$12,738	320	$15,520
FY 25	107	$16,285	696	$12,348	299	$15,695
FY24	117	$17,213	707	$13,298	320	$16,160
FY23	116	$17,420	720	$13,619	329	$15,629
FY 22	113	$16,438	749	$12,801	316	$16,620
FY21	125	$13,270	695	$11,622	339	$13,494

Data from IIRC Schools in District; Customer Report Builder

School Facility Review

District Facilities Overview

Sparta Community Unit School District #140 currently operates three primary instructional facilities to support its educational programs:

Facility	Construction / Renovation	Approximate Square Footage
Evansville Attendance Center	1968 / 1978 / 2001	32,618 sq. ft.
Sparta Lincoln School	1995 / 2015	88,160 sq. ft.
Sparta High School	2003 / 1963 / 1983 / 2023	141,314 sq. ft.

These facilities reflect different periods of development and investment and vary in age, configuration, and long-term maintenance requirements.

Facility Condition and Maintenance Planning

At the time of this study, the district was scheduled to undergo a Ten-Year Health Life Safety Review conducted by the district's architectural firm. This formal review had not yet been completed.

In advance of this process, district administration and architectural consultants conducted preliminary walkthroughs and assessments to identify potential facility needs.

These differences reflect varied instructional designs, programmatic uses, and infrastructure needs.

Considerations for Continued Review

Future facilities planning may benefit from continued review of:

- Results of the district's formal Health Life Safety Review
- Updated long-term capital improvement projections
- Operational cost trends across facilities
- Enrollment projections and space utilization patterns
- Programmatic and instructional space needs

These factors may support ongoing Board discussion regarding facility utilization, infrastructure investment, and long-range operational planning.

Transportation and Operations

Overview

Student transportation is a core operational function that supports access to instructional programs and services across the district. This section summarizes transportation patterns, costs, and operational considerations based on available district data.

The information is intended to provide context for understanding transportation capacity, fiscal trends, and potential planning considerations related to facility utilization and attendance configurations.

District Transportation Profile

Transportation data were reviewed for the five-year period from fiscal year 2021 through fiscal year 2025.

During this period:

- The district transported an average of approximately 487 students annually through regular, special and vocational education programs.
- The number of students transported declined in recent years, from a high of 606 students in 2022–2023 to 367 students in 2024–2025.
- Transportation services included regular education, special education, vocational education, and non-reimbursable extracurricular travel.

Transportation data are reported annually to the Illinois State Board of Education through required Transportation Claim forms.

Transportation Costs and Trends

Transportation Data (Fig. 23)					
FY	**Total No. of Transported Reg. Ed Students**	**Total Reg Ed Miles**	**Total No. of Transported SPED students**	**Total SPED Miles**	**Non Reimbursed Miles**
2026	367	127,680	47	117,664	12,360
2025	421	133,301	54	123,139	29,774
2024	606	71,665	60	105,384	13,298
2023	500	83,996	51	95,575	11,104
2022	542	84,767	30	51,952	5,954

Information from ISBE Bus Reimbursement Data

Regular Education Transportation

Regular education transportation costs over the five-year period ranged from approximately $580,000 to $784,000 annually.

Key observations include:

- Per-student transportation costs increased over time, from approximately $1,274 in 2020–2021 to $1,703 in 2024–2025.
- Total route miles increased substantially in recent years, despite declines in the number of students transported.
- Between 2022–2023 and 2024–2025, route miles increased while transported student counts decreased.

These trends reflect changes in routing patterns, geographic distribution of students, and operational requirements.

Special Education and Vocational Transportation

Special education transportation costs increased over the review period, ranging from approximately $154,000 in 2020–2021 to $552,000 in 2024–2025.

Vocational transportation costs also increased, reflecting changes in participation and service needs.

Per-student costs for special education transportation remained substantially higher than those for regular education, consistent with individualized service requirements.

Transportation Information by Student Group (Fig. 24)					
School Yr	**2024-25**	**2023-24**	**2022-23**	**2021-22**	**2020 -21**
Regular Education Routes					
Route Costs	$624,985	$580,154	$784,158	$741,032	$690,557
No. of Students Transported	367	421	606	500	542
Cost Per Student	$1,703	$1,378	$1,294	$1,482	$1,274
Route Miles	127,680	133,301	71,665	83,996	84,767
Cost Per Mile	$4.89	$4.35	$10.94	$8.82	$8.15
Special Education Routes					
Route Costs	$552,035	$535,929	$372,096	$311,973	$153,629
No. of Students Transported	47	54	60	51	30
Cost Per Student	$11,745	$9,925	$6,202	$6,117	$5,121
Route Miles	117,664	123,139	105,384	95,575	8,094
Cost Per Mile	$4.69	$4.35	$3.53	$3.26	$2.96
Route Costs	$552,035	$535,929	$372,096	$311,973	$153,629
No. of Students Transported	47	54	60	51	30
Cost Per Student	$11,745	$9,925	$6,202	$6,117	$5,121
Route Miles	117,664	123,139	105,384	95,575	8,094
Cost Per Mile	$4.69	$4.35	$3.53	$3.26	$2.96
Vocational Education Routes					
Route Costs	$42,069	$40,751	$16,246	$15,378	$13,786
No. Transported	13	24	8	4	4
Cost Per Student	$3,236	$1,698	$2,031	$3,845	$3,447
Route Miles	8,967	9,363	9,584	9,045	8,094
Cost Per Mile	$4.69	$4.35	$1.70	$1.70	$1.70
Table 3: Total Transportation Costs *(including non-reimbursable)*					
Total Dist. Exp	$1,349,157	$1,311,871	$1,229,576	$1,120,695	$883,210
Total # students	427	499	674	555	576
Total Cost/Student	$3,160	$2,629	$1,824	$2,019	$1,533

Total Transportation Expenditures

Total district transportation expenditures increased each year over the five-year period reviewed:

- 2020–2021: $883,210
- 2024–2025: $1,349,157

During the same period, average cost per transported student increased from approximately $1,533 to $3,160.

These increases reflect rising fuel, labor, maintenance, and operational costs, as well as changes in service patterns.

Transportation Reimbursement

State reimbursement for transportation costs did not fully offset district expenditures during the review period. Annual reimbursement shortfalls ranged from approximately $324,000 to $542,000, resulting in increasing reliance on local resources to support transportation services. Currently, in Illinois, reimbursement to school districts for student transportation is declining and difficult to project due to the fiscal integrity of the state's annual budgeting processes.

Variability in state funding levels and reimbursement formulas contributes to uncertainty in long-term transportation budgeting.

Sparta Transportation Fiscal Reimbursement (Fig. 25) Note: reimbursement occurs the fiscal year after expenses				
Year	**Fiscal**	**Regular + Vocational**	**Special Ed**	**TOTAL**
2024-25	Total Costs	$667,054	$552,035	$1,219,089
FY 26	Total Reimbursement	$359,678.30	$317,101.70	$676,780.00
	Deficient			($542,309.00)
2023-24	Total Costs	$620,905	$535,929	$1,156,834
FY 25	Total Reimbursement	$596,449.61	$212,502.62	$808,952.23
	Deficient			($347,881.77)
2022-23	Total Costs	$800,404	$372,096	$1,172,500
FY 24	Total Reimbursement	$512,196.60	$202,504.51	$714,701.11
	Deficient			($457,798.89)
2021-22	Total Costs	$756,410	$311,973	$1,068,383

FY 23	Total Reimbursement	$582,682.73	$122,903.15	$705,585.88
	Deficient			($362,797.12)
2020-21	Total Costs	$729,581.00	$153,629.00	$883,210
FY 22	Total Reimbursement	$461,791.27	$97,849.11	$559,640.38
	Deficient			($323,569.62)

Information from ISBE Bus Reimbursement Data

Bus Fleet and Routing Capacity

At the time of this study, Evansville Attendance Center was served by three district buses (two large and one small).

Review of routing data indicates:

- Several bus routes were operating below full capacity.
- Some routes were operating at less than 50 percent capacity.
- Existing fleet capacity was sufficient to accommodate moderate changes in ridership.

Geographic analysis indicates that most student travel patterns are oriented north, south, and east of Evansville, with Sparta Lincoln School located approximately 15 miles east.

Student Travel Time

Student travel time is an important consideration in transportation planning. While Illinois regulations do not specify maximum ride times, districts generally seek to maintain reasonable transit durations.

Relevant considerations include:

- Student age and grade level
- Distance between home and school
- Safety and roadway conditions
- Route efficiency
- Number of school sites
- School start and end times

Analysis indicates that current student travel times are generally within commonly accepted guidelines.

Travel time between Evansville Attendance Center and Sparta Lincoln School is approximately 15 miles, or 20–25 minutes under typical driving conditions.

Geographic Considerations

Sparta Community Unit School District #140 encompasses approximately 187 square miles.

District size and population distribution affect route design, mileage, and transportation efficiency. Geographic characteristics contribute to variation in travel times and operational costs.

Transportation Summary

Review of transportation data indicates the following:

- Transportation costs have increased over time, while student ridership has declined in recent years.
- Route mileage has increased despite lower participation, reflecting changing travel patterns.
- State reimbursement has not kept pace with rising operational expenses.
- Existing fleet capacity provides some flexibility for moderate changes in service demand.
- Student travel times currently fall within generally accepted ranges.

Transportation trends reflect both statewide cost pressures and local geographic factors.

Considerations for Continued Review

Future transportation planning may benefit from continued review of:

- Enrollment and ridership projections
- Route efficiency and utilization patterns
- Long-term fleet replacement planning
- Fuel and labor cost trends
- State reimbursement policies
- Potential impacts of future attendance configurations

Additional route analysis and scenario modeling may provide further insight into opportunities for operational efficiency and service optimization.

References

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