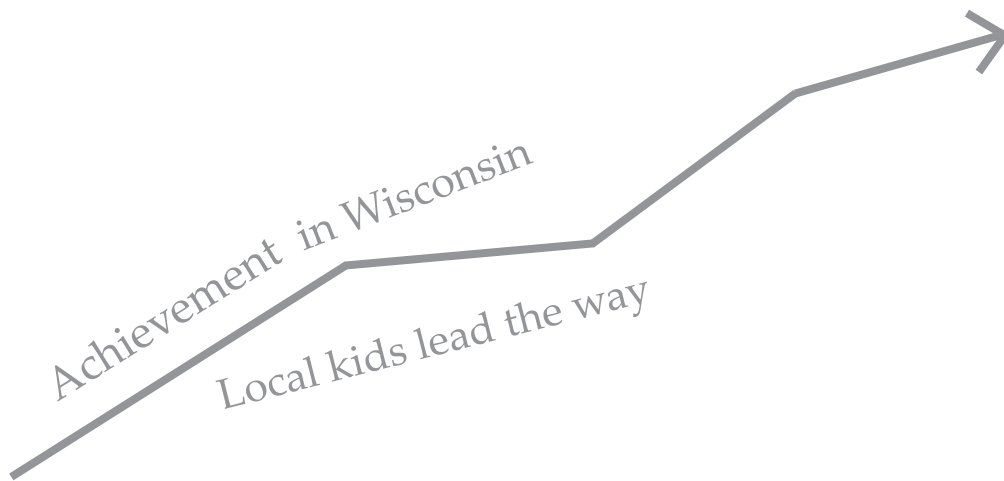


# Simpson Street Free Press

## 2015 Annual Report



Science.....	A
Language Arts.....	A
History.....	A
Math.....	A
Financial Literacy..	A

College Ready



## Community Impact

SSFP builds permanent community assets. We address Wisconsin's most glaring disparities in tangible and concrete ways. Our approach is anchored by award-winning lesson plans and Dane County's first all-academics youth center. We put innovative curriculum in the hands of more kids – right now. SSFP develops assets. And we expand those assets in two ways: provide free curriculum to other organizations (example: Janesville Free Press) and expand SSFP to additional sites (example: James Wright Free Press, and Sennett Free Press).

SSFP examines UW-Madison and other national research, and then applies that research in practical out-of-school settings. The organization collects data and uses that information to develop curriculum. SSFP uses a project-based model backed by evidence and ideally suited for gathering meaningful, evaluative data. The model closely matches all new academic standards. Lesson plans meet individual student needs.

Known for rigorous curriculum, SSFP delivers award-winning academic instruction. The focus is writing for publication. SSFP students write about science, geography, books, history, and the arts. The organization's mission is to spark student success and bridge achievement gaps. Students acquire practical literacy skills working in authentic newsrooms. They learn 21st century job skills. SSFP closely monitors student progress data.



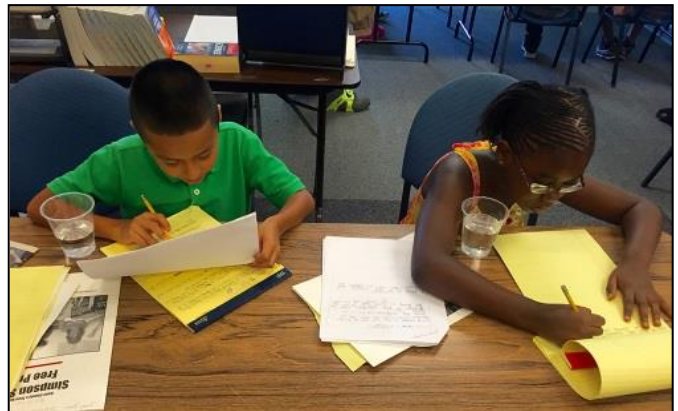
“Writing and literacy are areas where out-of-school programs can have the most impact”  
(National Partnership for Quality After-school Learning).

## Methods and Approach

SSFP reporters are kids (grades 3-12). Program graduates, now in college, work as writing instructors and editors. Experienced and credentialed volunteers support the editors. This innovative “farm system” teaching model and staffing formula places young people of color in leadership positions in the neighborhoods where they grew up. Results are consistent and measurable. Students produce five separate youth newspapers, including the bilingual *La Prensa*. Students join book clubs and publish content on various platforms. SSFP reporters write and read extensively. SSFP students inspire young readers and families across Wisconsin.

SSFP operates at several sites, but SSFP South Towne is our anchor. The South Towne site is a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning center and Dane County’s first all academics youth center. It is an incubator and laboratory with a proven track record. It’s where innovative, local instructional methods are pioneered. SSFP also operates a book club network. Students in grades 3-9 participate. High school and college students serve as club captains. SSFP has developed dozens of book review lesson plans aimed at a middle school audience. Students publish a feature series called “My Favorite Library.” Other ongoing series are titled “That’s a Good Word” and “Coin that Phrase.” SSFP students produce book trailers and publish their videos online.

The current student body at SSFP is younger than it was in five years ago. Our pipeline staffing model grows dedicated and skilled literacy instructors. This increases the organization’s capacity. Young editors work in neighborhoods where they grew up and in schools they attended. They are well-versed in award-winning SSFP curriculum. High school students, as they gain experience, assume leadership roles. They serve as book club captains and section editors. SSFP creates practical, proven pipelines for young professionals of color.



“Simpson Street Free Press is one of the best achievement gap closers we’ve got going. With even more attention focused on education in our state, on disparities and achievement gaps, and on strategies like out-of-school-time or after-school programs, the Simpson Street Free Press model and curriculum is going to increasingly be held up as an example of success.”

- Neil Heinen, Channel 3 News

## Outcomes and Measurement Tools

SSFP always measures the same things: school grades, school-day attendance, research/writing assignments published, book reviews completed, and hours of extra instruction time in core curriculum and literacy. At its South Towne site the organization also measures family and community engagement.

**Objective #1:** Students improve academic performance and school-day attendance. They acquire practical skills and learn to transfer those skills. **Measurement tools:** Report cards and school progress reports, Infinite Campus. Trimester evaluations conducted by parents, teachers and editors. **2015**

**Outcomes:** All (100%) students submitted school report cards each academic quarter. More than 70% of new students improved overall school performance within two semesters. At least of all 80% improved school-day attendance. During the most recent three-year period, 92% of SSFP middle school students improved overall core subject GPA.

**Objective #2:** Students complete predetermined requirements for research/writing assignments. Students write across languages. **Measurement Tools:** Students keep assignment logs. Editors monitor assignments. Assignments are complete once published. Newsroom-style slug sheets track published assignments. **2015 Outcomes:** At least 90% of students published three research/writing assignments per semester (including summer semester). About 93% completed a book review assignment each semester (including summer). All (100%) La Prensa students completed and published work in both English and Spanish.

**Objective #3:** Students receive extra instruction in reading/language arts. Instruction is across the curriculum. Students receive individualized math support. **Measurement Tools:** Student timesheets, assignment logs, and newsroom slug sheets. Rough drafts, and all subsequent drafts, are reviewed one-on-one with an editor (writing and fact checking conferences). **2015 Outcomes:** About 95% of students completed assignments in at least two lesson plan categories. All (100%) students participated in regular one-on-one writing conferences. At least 90% of students completed one science assignment and one book assignment per semester. Students received, on average, 4.25 hours per week of extra instruction (over and above homework help).

**Objective #4:** SSFP students engaged the community. They gain confidence, leadership qualities, and 21<sup>st</sup> century job skills. Families find a range of enrichment activities in a modern center of learning. **Measurement Tools:** Participation in features lesson plans, interviews, newsroom events. All (100%) students host events or newsroom tours. Students conduct interviews and speak in public. Students participate in a school support system. Jeopardy quiz bowls, classic films, 70's board game nights, book clubs, technology training, and museum trips are available to parents and families. **2015 Outcomes:** At least 65% of SSFP middle and high school students assisted younger peers with math homework or newspaper assignments. All high school students and 80% of middle school students participated in a features lesson plan. Eighty-eight percent of SSFP students guided newsroom tours or attended public events. Approximately 85% of SSFP parents attended at least one event or activity per semester (including summer).

**NOTE:** Evaluations are conducted on a trimester schedule (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and summer semesters). Evaluations focus on assignment completion, writing proficiency (7 Traits of a Writer), and organizational and work skills. At least 85% of program participants will achieve a 3.75 grade (on 5.0 scale) during each semester.

**NOTE:** The evaluation team for the South Towne center includes parents, teachers, and school principals.

## Facts and Figures

Achievement gaps in Madison mirror trends in other urban districts. SSFP is based in decidedly low-income neighborhoods. The median household income in south and southeast Madison (WI census tract #15.02) is about 60% of median household income in Dane County. According to UW-Madison Institute for Research on Poverty, the poverty rate for Madison is three times the state average. In Madison, 29.7% of families fall below the poverty line vs. 10% statewide. Madison's poverty rate exceeds Milwaukee's poverty rate, which is 18.8%.

Schools in these neighborhoods show chronic truancy rates between seven and 20%. School-day attendance numbers show the high rates of truancy typical of schools in low-income neighborhoods. SSFP always measures school attendance, and we show stellar results in sparking attendance. During the most recent five-year period, more than 80% of SSFP students showed improved school attendance within two semesters.

According to Wisconsin DPI, about 79% of students from these schools are below proficiency in reading. About half of students in these schools are ELL, and many are in DLI programs at their schools. SSFP literacy curriculum is backed by research and evidence. We emphasize close reading, vocabulary, writing and literacy, and practical skills building. At least 90% of new students improve reading comprehension during their first semester at SSFP.

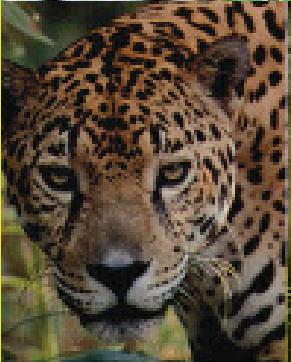
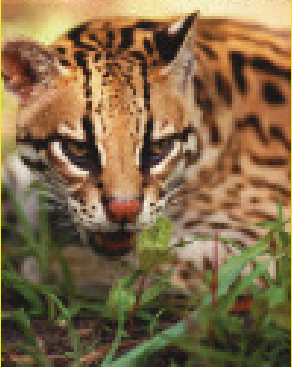
“The size of children’s vocabularies, reading comprehension, and verbal skills are directly related to the quantity of text they read. Because children are typically given little time for reading in school, reading during out-of-school time is the primary way to increase the amount of reading children do, hence building their reading competence” (Cunningham and Stanovich).

“A child’s reading comprehension in first grade is predicted almost exclusively by decoding ability. But by second grade deficiencies in vocabulary, background knowledge, and critical thinking are the principal limiting factors of a child’s reading comprehension abilities. This effect increases with each grade” (Juel).



“The new global, high-tech marketplace demands intense creativity and thinking that goes beyond basic learning skills. With the growing importance of 21st century skills such as critical thinking and global awareness, the ability to comprehend written text is an essential building block. At its core, literacy is the use of written information to function in society, attain goals and develop knowledge. Without this tool, a student will almost inevitably struggle with other forms of learning. Literacy is an absolute necessity to further learning and development.”

—MetLife Foundation and Afterschool Alliance



**Research and evidence drive programs.  
We innovate, measure, collaborate, and replicate.  
Curriculum is designed to support the school day.**

Writing, skill acquisition, and academic confidence are central to SSFP pedagogy. Students write across the curriculum, investigating core academic subjects throughout the writing process. We focus on productive writing habits, workplace skills, confidence and curiosity. We preach clear and concise writing. Lesson plans include invention strategies, close reading, drafting methods, word choice and revision techniques. SSFP methods nurture imagination and confidence. Assignments and activities grow in complexity with age and ability. We believe learning happens, in large measure, during the revision process. Multiple rounds of revision are required during each assignment.

Instruction and training is preparatory. Because SSFP students write about core subject areas (science, geography, history, books) content area understanding improves quickly. We teach a multi-step writing process that students understand. They master it quickly. These skills are practical and transferable, and work in any classroom. SSFP students learn to apply their skills. School grades and school attendance improve quickly.

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*Never hand in your first draft!*

### **The multi-mission approach of SSFP:**

**Mission #1:** Deliver rigorous academic instruction in after-school settings. SSFP methods support the school day and bridge achievement gaps.

**Mission #2:** Spread a positive message of youth achievement, academic success, and community service throughout Wisconsin.

Biodiversity and genetic diversity are important science concepts and part of the fascinating place we call Planet Earth. Do you know the difference between biodiversity and genetic diversity? Scientists do. So do our student reporters.

Learn about these two different but related terms and learn about your world at [www.simpsonstreetfreepress.org](http://www.simpsonstreetfreepress.org)

# Major Program Areas

**After-school Academic Centers:** SSFP South Towne is our anchor facility. It acts as an incubator, producing after-school strategies easily adapted to other sites. It's the first of its kind in Dane County, a youth center focused on academics. A youth center using richly layered, national award-winning curriculum. This is project-based learning, and SSFP student reporters easily transfer their newsroom skills to any classroom. Satellites operate at Capital Newspapers and local schools.



**Literacy Partnership:** SSFP operates a youth book club network. Students choose the club they join based on interest or what they're reading at school. They blog with peers using a secure SSFP site. Students submit their book reviews at school and/or for publication. Our book network began in 1998, and we've developed dozens of book review lesson plans. Working with local libraries, students produce book trailer videos and publish content on a variety of media platforms. Students use new media technology to encourage peers to read our featured books. SSFP book clubs expand during summer semester.



**Writing for Publication:** Want kids to read your newspaper? Put a dinosaur on the front page. Articles about ancient pyramids, grizzly bears, and space science draw young readers into core subject learning. SSFP uses a multiple outcomes approach. Our student reporters learn very practical skills and inspire their younger peers. SSFP publications nurture imagination and encourage academic achievement. SSFP students create tangible, concrete, permanent community assets.



**Wisconsin Idea/La Prensa Project:** La Prensa addresses what scholars call the "language achievement gap." The project is designed to help all students -- using methods proven to help ELL students. A partnership with UW-Madison, La Prensa synthesizes national research and SSFP curriculum. La Prensa students write and read extensively. They work across languages. They produce bilingual youth newspapers and publish content on various media platforms.



**School Support System(SSS):** Activities at SSFP connect to the school day, but do not replicate the classroom. Students struggling in math, biology, or Spanish are matched with older peers who previously completed those courses. SSS also connects schools to after-school sites. School support is central to newsroom operations and contributes to a contagious culture of achievement at SSFP. We look for students who are behind in school but likely to improve with support. We look for students who will benefit from positive peer influence. Students are often referred by classroom teachers.

# Innovation at Work



**Our key strategy is integrated core curriculum deftly applied in after-school settings. The SSFP project-based learning model supports the classroom, but does not replicate the classroom. Students encounter predictable connections to the school day.**

“Teaching a kid to read is a laudable and necessary service to the community. Teaching a kid to write is to empower an individual to compete in any field on any stage.”

- Vince O’Hern, Publisher of *Isthmus*

**Work Readiness:** We use an apprenticeship model. Students apply to “work” for SSFP publications. All SSFP newsrooms follow this tried and true formula. Students fill out a “job” application, schedule an interview, and supply recent report cards. Parents sit in on interviews and describe their student’s academic goals. Once hired, students have business cards and real assignments. Kids know our brand is rigor, but working for a SSFP publication is “cool.” Newsroom skills are very practical, easily transferred to school or work. There are waiting lists at all SSFP publications.

**STEM, Language Arts and Common Core:** New academic standards are coming to Wisconsin. Whatever we call these new standards, they will be more rigorous. And they will emphasize writing proficiency, literacy, and STEM. SSFP lesson plans are excellent examples of integrated curriculum applied in after-school settings. We teach productive use of out-of-school time and an organized approach to academic work. Students study the core subject areas and then write about their research. They use technology to edit, check facts, and publish.

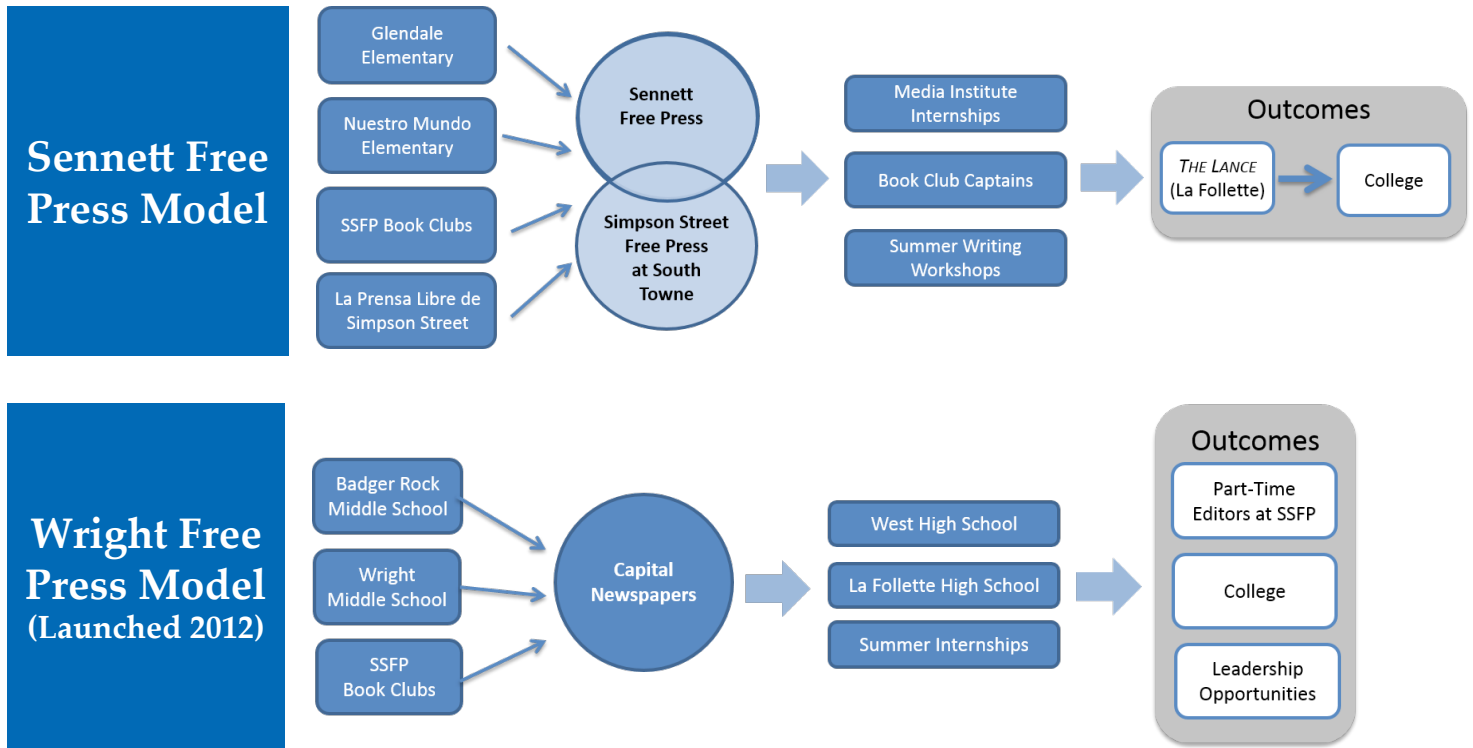
**Youth Leadership – Skilled Staff:** We develop young leaders using an innovative “pipeline” staffing formula. The SSFP farm system trains new after-school instructors. We constantly grow our own. At all levels of SSFP programs young people are promoted through the newsroom ranks. Our editors are SSFP grads, now in college. These dedicated young leaders work with the same schools and in the same neighborhoods where they grew up. Many SSFP staff members are bilingual. SSFP has assembled a staff that is impressively credentialed. They are dedicated to the cause of academic achievement and well-versed in core subject, across-the-curriculum instructional practices.

“SSFP is a program deserving of support. They have a talented staff, a proven curriculum, and dedicated base of volunteer teachers and editors. But the final proof of the quality of the program is the students. They love the program and achieve great things when they go off into the post-SSFP world.”

- Hemant Shah, Director, School of Journalism, UW Madison



SSFP concepts are dynamic. We develop innovative curriculum and apply that curriculum in practical after-school settings. Sennett Free Press is a practical after-school and summer setting. Our focus is always the same: core academics, practical skills, and literacy. College-readiness is the SSFP brand. We teach productive use of out-of-school time and an organized approach to academic work. Our methods produce solid results. We make our curriculum available. SSFP programs are expanding, and the Sennett plan is central to our approach.



Like Wright Free Press, the Sennett model relies on appropriate physical space. Both models provide newsrooms. Sennett Free Press reporters work at their school newsroom, and at the South Towne youth center. They encounter the same, sequential curriculum at both sites. They feed *THE LANCE*, also with its own newsroom. *THE LANCE* is a core subject, school-day class offering at La Follette High School. Both models result in more one-on-one instruction time. The Sennett Free Press model is a 3rd grade to college pipeline and a permanent, neighborhood-based youth leadership pipeline.

All SSFP programs share certain lesson plans and strategies. Here is a February 2016 breakdown of student participation at various sites and in various programs:

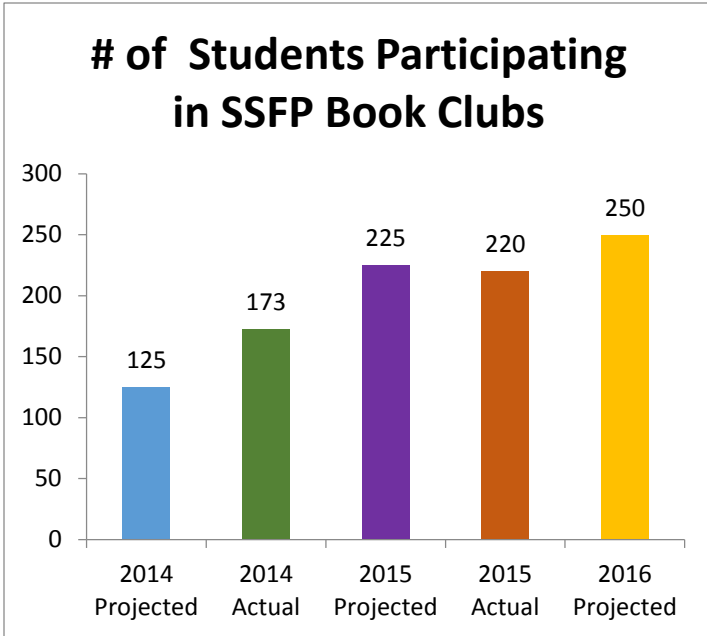
- Wright Free Press at Capital Newspapers (55)
- Falk Free Press (TBD)
- Glendale Free Press at South Towne (18)
- La Prensa Libre de Simpson Street at South Towne & Other Sites (74)
- Sennett Free Press (18 Unduplicated)
- Literacy Partnership/Book Clubs at Libraries, Schools, & All SSFP Sites (167)
- Summer Writing Workshops & Media Internships (30)
- South Towne Youth Center (152)

Students can move (or be promoted to leadership roles) within or between SSFP programs. This approach aligns with Common Core principles and the national research. Students encounter predictable connections to the school day and a sequential, project-based curriculum. Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) is a key strategy. Currently, 260 unduplicated youth are enrolled in SSFP programs and about 45 are on waiting lists. Janesville Free Press (not include above) is a different model. Here we provided curriculum and support to another interested organization – the Janesville School District.

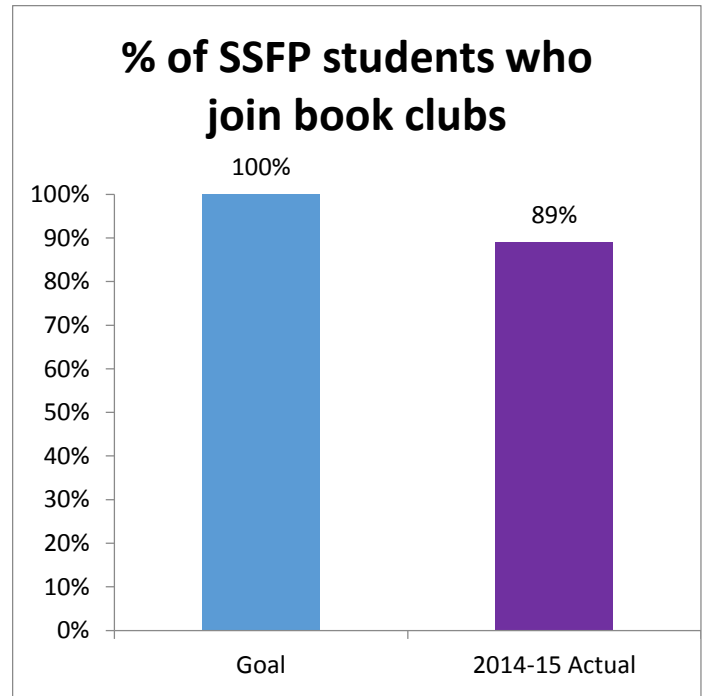
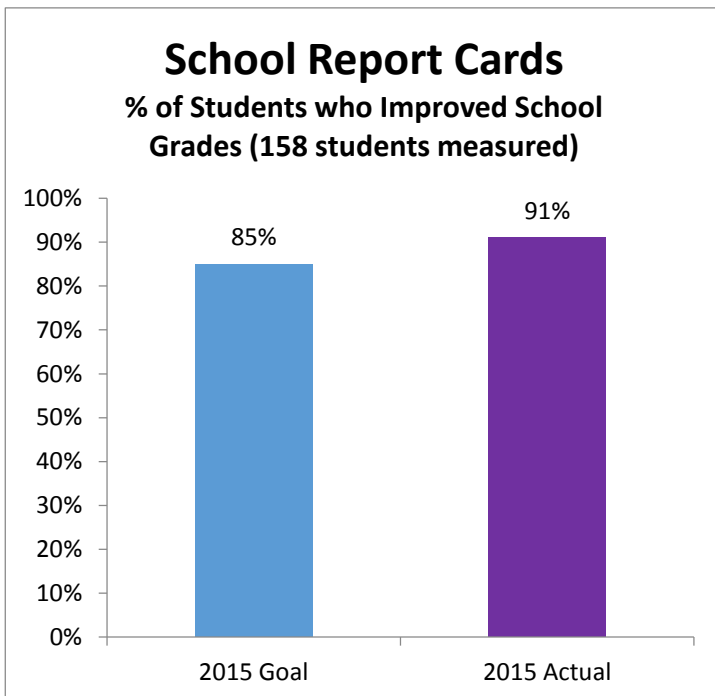
# Simpson Street Free Press

## After-School Academies / Madison Literacy Partnership End of Year 2015 — Outcomes Data

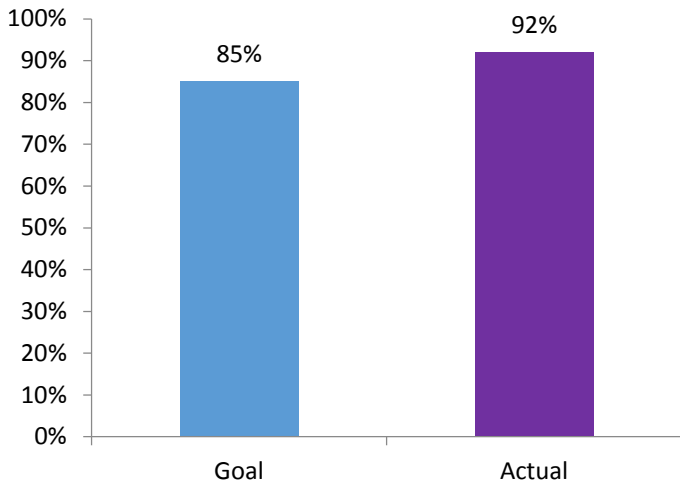
### Outcome #1:



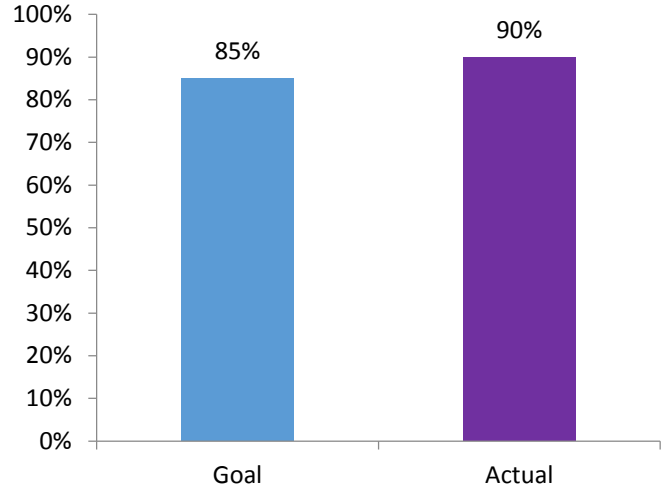
### Outcome #2:



**SSFP Fall Semester Evaluations**  
 % of students who achieved a 3.75 grade  
 (on a 5.0 scale) during fall semester 2015  
 (154 students evaluated)

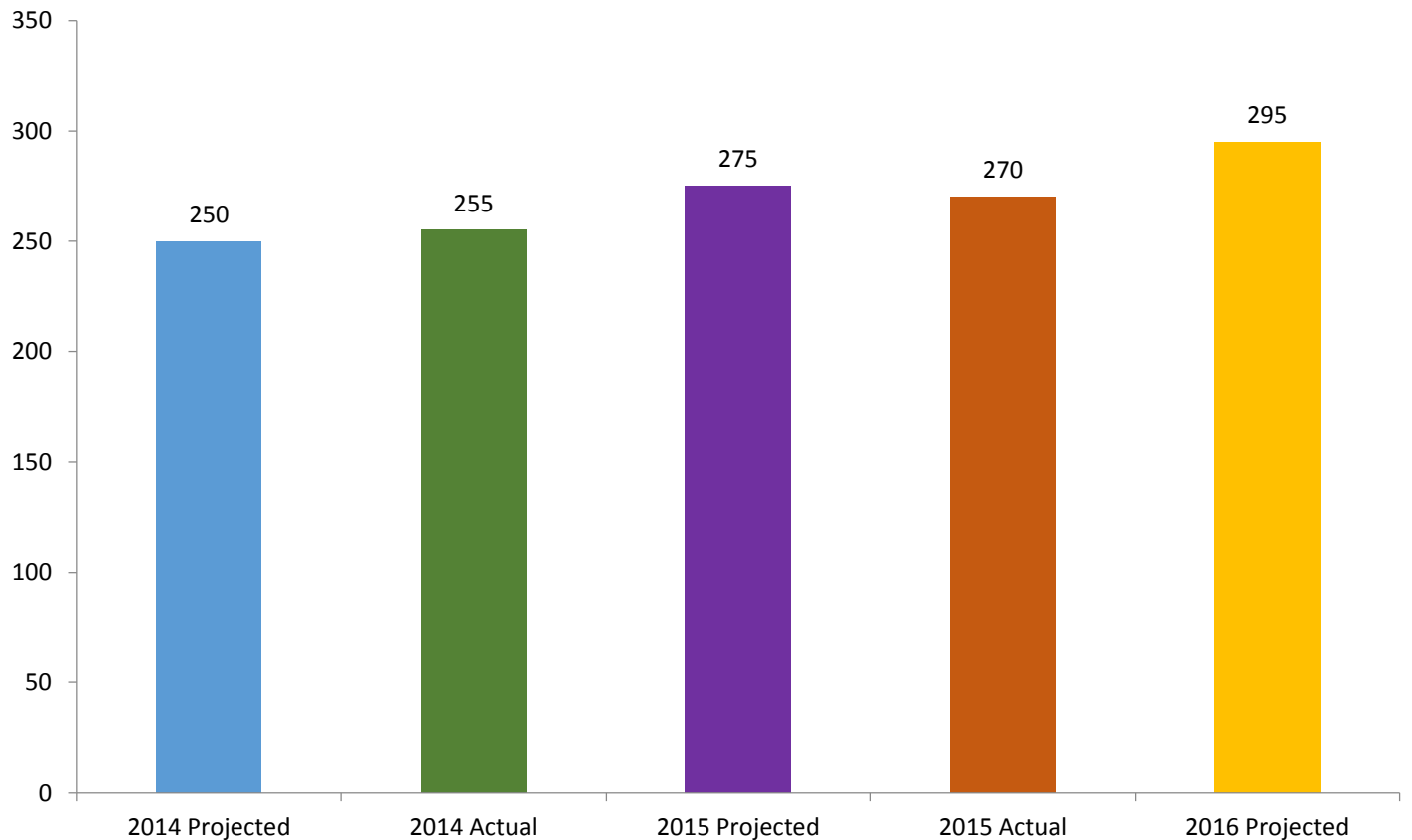


**SSFP Spring Semester Evaluations**  
 % of students who achieved a 3.75 grade  
 (on a 5.0 scale) during spring semester 2015 (146 students evaluated)

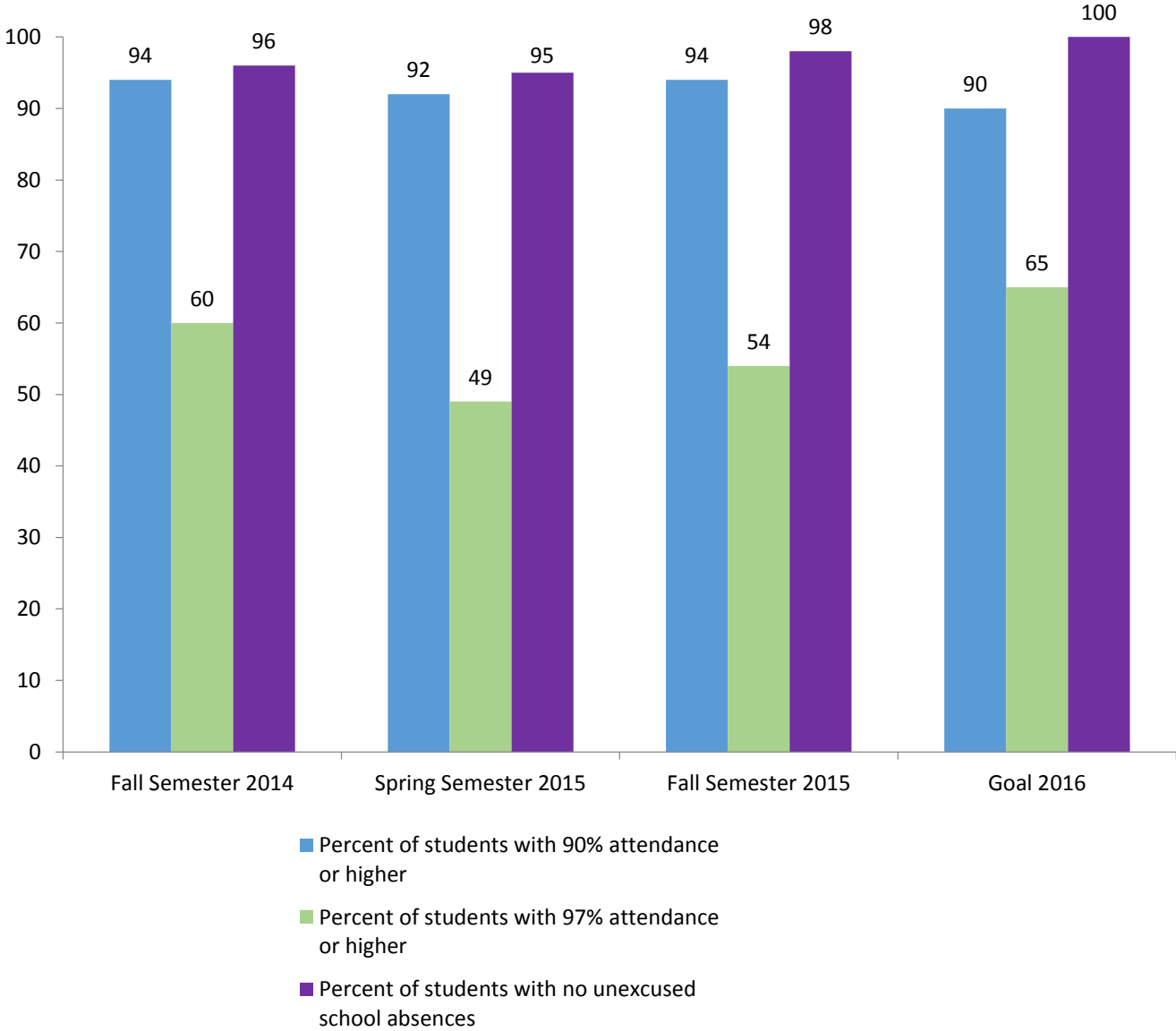


**Outcome #3:**

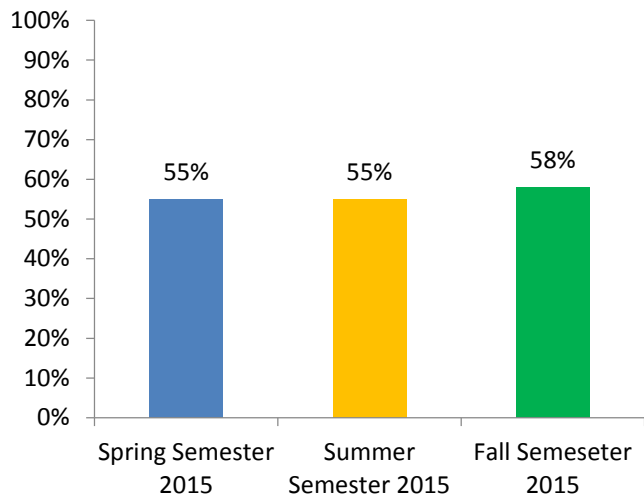
**Unduplicated Students in SSFP Programs**



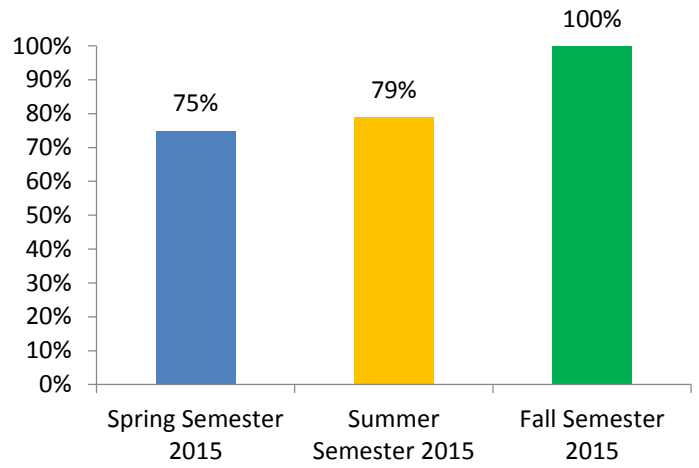
# SSFP Student Attendance Data 2013-2015 School Year (196 students measured)



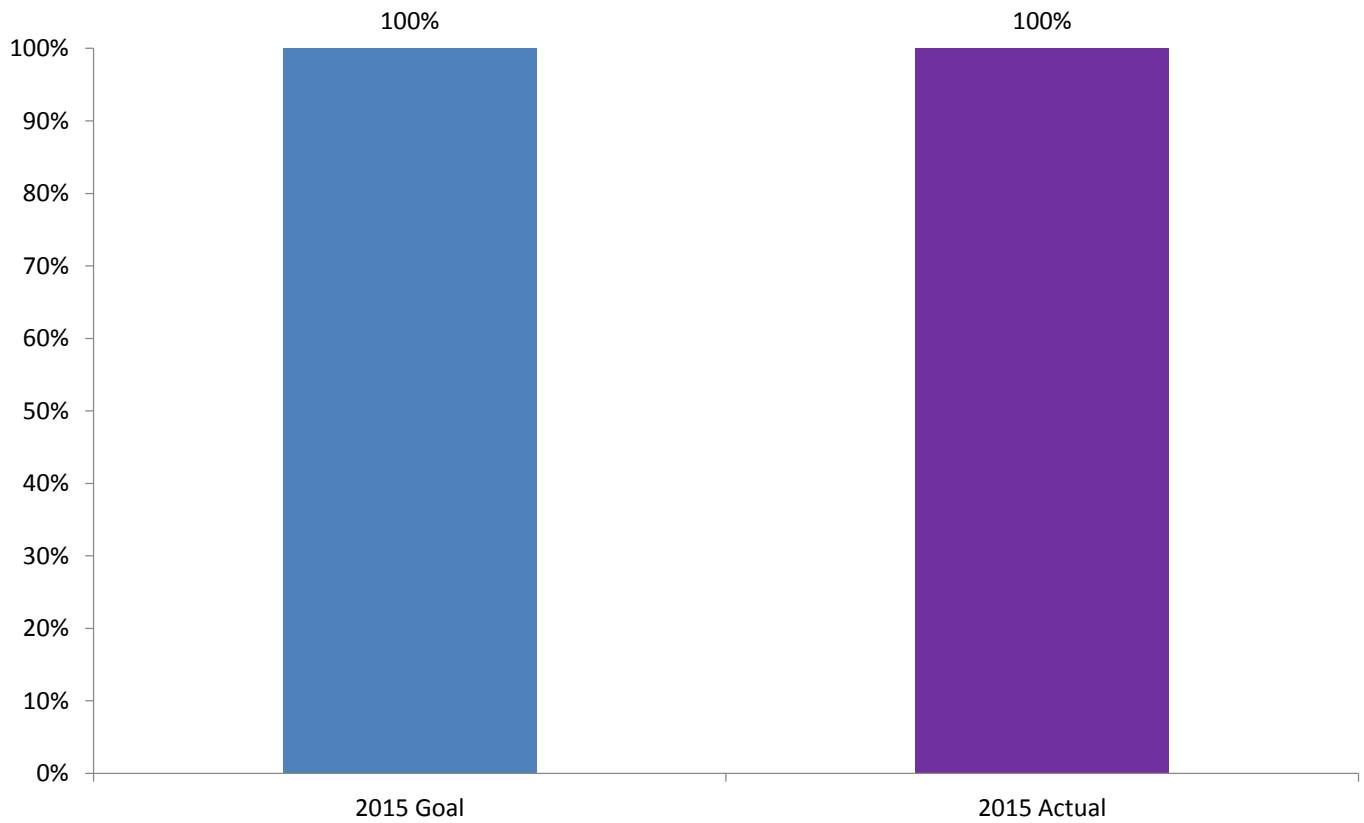
### **% of WFP students who are ELL or Bilingual**



### **% of WFP ELL Students Participating in a SSFP Book club**



### **% of La Prensa Students Who Have Published in English and Spanish**



## La Prensa Student Attendance Data Spring + Fall Semesters (60 Student Evaluated)

