

Annual Report

2025



Bridging Research, Practice, and Design
in K-12 Education


SERP
Strategic Education Research Partnership

“SERP’s progress reflects the commitment of educators, researchers, district partners, funders, and staff who contribute their expertise and trust to long-term collaborations.”

*Suzanne Donovan,
Founding Executive Director*

This year underscored the steady progress that comes from sustained investment in partnerships, evidence, and organizational capacity. At the SERP Institute, our work continued to be guided by two demanding goals: the first is that our research and development provide solutions to problems our district partners consider to be of high importance. The second is that our solutions not only improve student learning, but also improve the experience of both educators and students.

*Over the past year, SERP **advanced a growing portfolio of initiatives** spanning early elementary through high school. We completed and launched new instructional programs, updated and strengthened existing curricula, and expanded access to professional learning designed to support educators’ day-to-day practice. Across these efforts, we remained focused on usability—ensuring that materials are not only research-based, but practical, adaptable, and responsive to educators’ needs.*

***Research remained central** to our problem-solving work. We expanded large-scale randomized controlled trials across multiple states and districts, deepened long-standing partnerships with public school systems, and continued to study how instructional designs function across diverse contexts. These studies are helping to build a more nuanced understanding of how and why programs work, and how they can be strengthened over time.*

*This year also marked an important **focus on organizational growth**. SERP invested in infrastructure to support sustainability, including new systems for publishing, distribution, and sales. These changes allow us to better manage demand for our materials while preserving our long-standing commitment to making resources freely available whenever possible. At the same time, we **expanded our public engagement efforts**, sharing research and practitioner stories with broader audiences through new formats.*

None of this work happens in isolation. SERP’s progress reflects the commitment of educators, researchers, district partners, funders, and staff who contribute their expertise and trust to long-term collaborations. Their willingness to engage in iterative improvement—testing ideas, learning from results, and refining approaches—continues to be the foundation of SERP’s impact.

As we look ahead, SERP is well-positioned to build on this momentum. With a strong pipeline of research and development projects, expanding partnerships, and growing organizational capacity, we remain focused on producing knowledge that endures—knowledge grounded in practice and aimed at creating more equitable and effective learning opportunities for students.

We invite you to explore this report as a reflection of the year’s work and as part of an ongoing effort to advance problem-solving R&D in education.

With appreciation,



M. Suzanne Donovan
Executive Director
SERP Institute

SERP Institute Board of Directors, 2025



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“The Board’s willingness to devote time and energy to SERP is testimony to the importance of its mission and the excellence of its pursuit. I am honored to follow founding Board Chair Bruce Alberts in this role.”

SERP is a unique institution. Many sincere efforts to improve education exist, and research-practice partnerships have become a popular approach to that challenge. These various efforts and partnerships share some features with SERP. But SERP distinguishes itself in a couple of ways. First, it is focused on producing knowledge as well as solutions. SERP efforts integrate information drawn from practitioners' experience with information drawn from the research literature to craft new approaches to educational challenges, and to design tools not just for impact but also for supple use in the classroom. SERP has been at this task for over 20 years, maintaining long-term relationships with various districts and groups of schools in doing its work. SERP projects are also intentional about recruiting and incorporating the skills of young researchers – those who will go on to teach their doctoral students how to work in this truly revolutionary paradigm. As a result of their excellent design, relevance to practitioners' challenges, and innovativeness, SERP products are being used in every state in the US and in many countries where students' literacy and math skills need greater support, as documented in this annual report. The work of the SERP staff is supported by the members of the Board, who meet regularly to hear about progress and proffer suggestions. Their willingness to devote time and energy to SERP is testimony to the importance of its mission and the excellence of its pursuit. I am honored to follow founding Board Chair Bruce Alberts in this role.

A Growing Portfolio of Initiatives

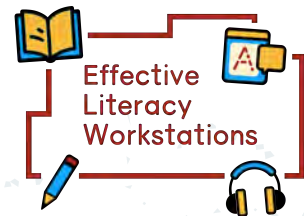
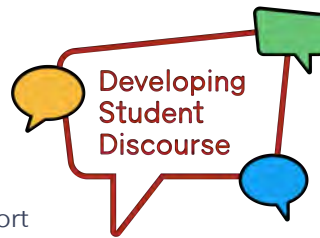
In 2025, SERP expanded high-impact, research-based solutions for the field.

K-2 Literacy

ONLINE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In the fall, SERP launched new K-2 literacy online professional resources – **Effective Literacy Workstations** and **Developing Student Discourse** – designed to support highly effective literacy instruction.

These courses were developed in close partnership with the District of Columbia Public Schools. More than 150 DC educators engaged with the courses offering strong feedback on their relevance, usability, and grounding in classroom practice.



Adolescent Literacy

SERP also strengthened and expanded existing tools to support educators promoting **adolescent literacy**. Word Generation was first launched in 2009, and since then has offered teachers resources to promote academic language and debate about civic and societal issues in classrooms. STARI was launched in 2014 to build literacy skills among adolescents reading two or more years below grade level.

STARI FOR HIGH SCHOOL

Surveys and requests from educators indicated strong demand for a high school version of SERP's adolescent reading intervention. STARI **Series 4** was developed to support high school readers foundational reading skills and comprehension.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT OF STARI INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

STARI Professional Learning was expanded to include a series for coaches, familiarizing them with STARI and providing strategies for supporting teachers with each component, particularly with improving pacing and building student ownership.

NEW WORD GENERATION UNITS

New and refreshed brief, interdisciplinary units were released on timely topics such as banning cell phones in school, and whether school meals should be free for all students, creating new opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussion.

PLUS...

In addition, SERP launched a **STARI FAQs webpage** to help educators quickly find, understand, and implement STARI; expanded **professional learning offerings** with updates designed to better support multilingual learners; and strengthened **staff capacity** for live virtual STARI professional learning and support, all in service of supporting diverse adolescent readers nationwide.

Strengthening Infrastructure

In 2025, SERP focused on strengthening organizational infrastructure to support scale and operational efficiency.

In response to increasing demand for its materials, SERP enhanced its operational foundation: improving how resources are produced, accessed, delivered, and shared with educators and district partners.

Key investments in 2025 included:

● NEW PARTNERS FOR DISTRIBUTION

SERP established partnerships with new book distribution and printing companies to enhance the capacity to deliver materials quickly and affordably to districts across the United States.

● LAUNCH OF SERP STORE

SERP launched an online storefront powered by Shopify. Schools can now easily add selections to an online cart, generate quotes, and submit purchase orders. This streamlines fulfillment, improves reliability, and better supports district partners.

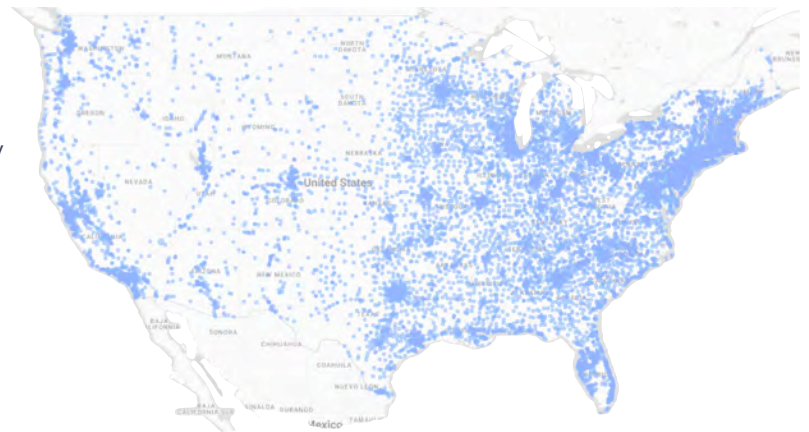
● BUILDING INVENTORY

Sales revenue has allowed us to build an inventory of STARI literature. It can take months for publishers to reprint books. By building inventory, books are always accessible.

● IMPROVED DATA ANALYTICS

SERP enhanced its data analytics using Looker Studio to provide real-time information on interest in and engagement with SERP resources. These metrics help us to make data-informed decisions regarding where to focus our efforts.

With these systems in place, SERP is well-positioned to meet growing demand while maintaining its commitment to free, high-quality resources, ensuring that educators and students continue to benefit from research-based learning tools now and into the future.



SERP analytics data demonstrate increased engagement: In 2025, SERP websites were visited by over a quarter million unique users in all 50 states and internationally, including Canada, Hong Kong, and Brazil.

Extending Community Outreach

In 2025, SERP elevated its visibility and thought leadership through strategic communication initiatives, educator amplification, and networked advocacy.

SERP was able to devote greater staff time to communications and outreach. We shared our impact more broadly and strategically in both old and new ways.



Podcast

ELEVATED VOICES OF PRACTITIONERS, RESEARCHERS, AND DESIGNERS THROUGH FIRST-EVER PODCAST

In its inaugural year, *SERP Stories* earned Spotify's Instant Hit Show designation and was selected for a live taping at SXSW EDU in March 2026.



Outreach

FOCUSED ON COMMUNICATIONS TO ENGAGE USERS AND CONVERT USERS TO CHAMPIONS

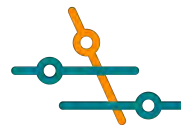
SERP published more than 55 blog posts and sent over 130 targeted email updates, reaching educators, researchers, and partners worldwide.



Live Engagement

INCREASED CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SERP'S PRACTICE-DRIVEN, RESEARCHED-BASED RESOURCES

SERP hosted an Education Week webinar and presented at national conferences including LitCon, AMLE, and UNITED, as well as regionally in Illinois, Wisconsin, and California.



Network Development

ACCELERATED THE VISIBILITY, ADOPTION, AND USE OF EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Strategic partnerships, including the IES-funded Leveraging Evidence to Accelerate Recovery Nationwide (LEARN) Network led by SRI International, the Alliance for Learning Innovation (ALI), and the Center for the Success of English Learner (CSEL), position SERP to advocate for additional federal investments in R&D in education, amplify practitioner-informed research, and support district-initiated problem solving.

Research Remains Central

In 2025, SERP partnership work generated new evidence through research and evaluation.

STARI studies continue in over 70 schools.

In 2025, SERP’s EIR-funded STARI Expansion Study entered a new phase.

Extending past evidence from RCTs, the current study is exploring the program’s effectiveness across a geographically diverse sample in Wisconsin, California, Illinois, and Maryland, assessing suitability for subgroups, and informing national scaling efforts.

K-2 literacy research continues.

In 2025, SERP and the District of Columbia Public Schools continued a two-year RCT of literacy courses for K-2 new and novice teachers.

One course focuses on Effective Literacy Workstations, and a second on Developing Student Discourse. The study will advance understanding of how micro-course designs support teaching and learning outcomes for early-grade classrooms.

Evidence published in peer-reviewed publications.

In 2025, SERP strengthened STARI’s robust evidence base with the publication of results from Jackson, Mississippi, in the *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*.

STARI students outperformed control students on the Mississippi state test (MAAP) by a sizable and statistically significant margin ($d = 0.32$, $p = .08$).

The effect size – or the size of the difference between groups – indicates STARI students demonstrated approximately one full school year’s worth of growth over and above the growth demonstrated by control students.

Compared to the control group, STARI students’ MAAP scores showed a 6 percentage point increase in the Proficient category and the same percentage decrease in the Minimal category.

SERP also contributed to a newly published article on MathByExample, led by research partners from Temple University in the IES-funded grants that produced the “ByExample” resources.

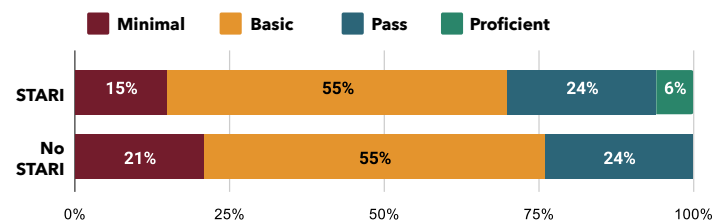
McGinn, K., Booth, J., & Young, L., Huyghe, A. (2025). Preparing 4th and 5th graders to learn algebra with worked examples and self-explanation prompts. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 260.

Collaborators on the Academically Productive Talk project funded by the Spencer Foundation further extended knowledge about academic discourse in the classroom across subject areas.

Al-Adeimi, S., Reisman, A., Murphy, K.P. (2025) *Debating the Purpose of Talk: Disciplinary Learning and Student Authority in Classroom Discussions*. Teacher College Record, Sage Publications.

Flammia, M., Reznitskaya, A., & Osborne, J. (2025). Learning to be wrong: using Socratic Challenge to foster critical thinking. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 60, 102060. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.102060>

STARI Impacts on MAAP Scores 2021-22



Troyer, M., Somers, M-A, & Hemphill, L. (2025) An evaluation of the Strategic Adolescent Reading Intervention (STARI) in an urban school district during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Research in Educational Effectiveness*, 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2025.2499808>

Expanding Reach, Expanding Resources

In 2025, the audience for SERP's research-based tools continued to expand.

SERP websites attract well over a quarter million unique website visitors. SERP products have been downloaded more than a million times in the last five years. These efforts reflect a growing commitment to ensuring SERP's work is rigorous, visible, and positioned to scale so that research can drive meaningful change for educators and students nationwide.

\$1,000,000+

Sales Revenue
of SERP printed curriculum materials, accompanying literature, professional learning registrations, and more.

37,000+

Engaged Registrants
downloading SERP curriculum materials and receiving regular communications.

Meeting the Moment

NEW HIGH SCHOOL CIVICS COURSE FUNDED

In 2025, SERP launched a four-year collaboration with DC Public Schools and the Rhode Island Department of Education, along with researchers at the University of Maryland (David Blazar and Sarah McGrew) and Harvard Graduate School of Education (Catherine Snow) to design, implement, and study a semester-long, coherent high school Civics curriculum. The curriculum also builds students' disciplinary literacy and digital media literacy and has students grapple with the challenges of U.S. democracy, focusing on the tensions among foundational principles such as individual liberty and the common good. While the iterative development and evaluation process will take several more years, the course, funded by Leonard Schaeffer, will be freely available when it is finished.

Breaking Through

HIGHLIGHTING STARI'S SCALE AND RECOGNITION

- Under NYC Reads, STARI was approved as a Tier II literacy intervention for grades 6 and up, and SERP partnered with the Office of Academic Intervention Services to provide professional learning to more than 800 NYC teachers.
- STARI is now on the list of approved reading interventions in the State of Minnesota after the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement reviewed more than 1,700 reading intervention studies.
- Chicago Public Schools and Los Angeles Unified School District, both involved in the STARI expansion study, are expanding the use of STARI beyond the study schools.

Sustainability and Looking Ahead

SERP earned over \$1 million in revenue in 2025

through professional development and the sale of products to school districts that prefer to purchase them, rather than printing our free downloads.

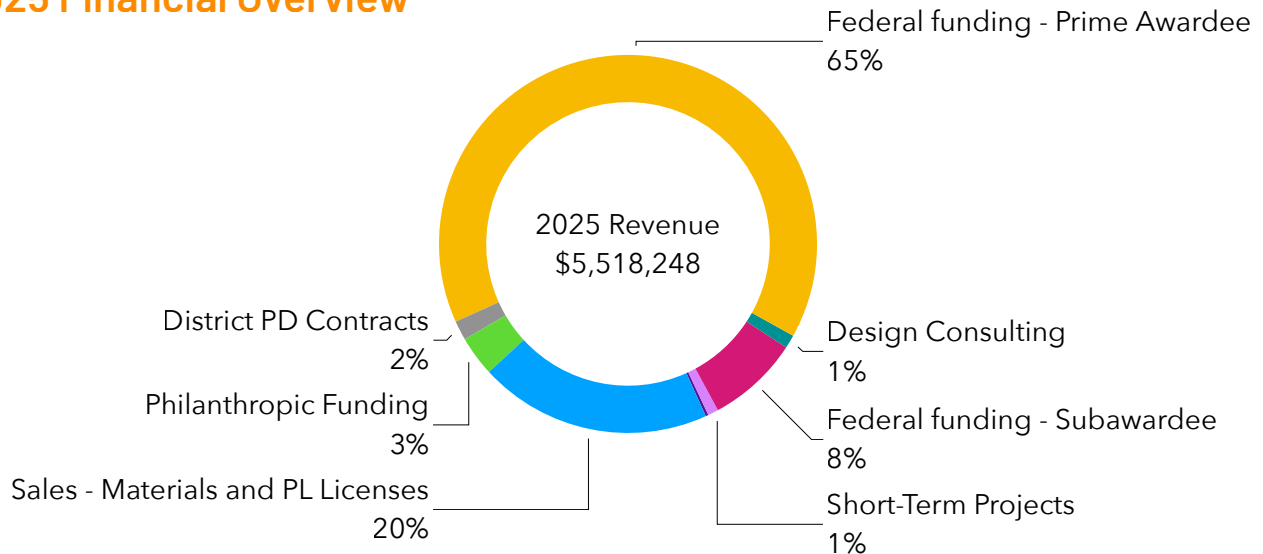
This milestone reflects growing demand from schools and districts for evidence-based solutions that support educators and enhance student learning.

As a nonprofit, SERP relies on a hybrid model: grant funding and philanthropic support generate impact by funding the development and testing of new instructional tools, while earned revenue strengthens the organization's ability to maintain those tools. Together, these streams allow SERP to scale proven solutions, remain responsive to the field, continue to innovate, and serve the students and educators who need us most.

Philanthropic contributions in 2025 that support these efforts include:

- \$2.3 million from Leonard D. Schaeffer to develop and test a high school civics course in partnership with Rhode Island Department of Education and DCPS
- \$60,000 from the Brinson Foundation to support updates to the WordGen Weekly curriculum

2025 Financial Overview



The milestones of 2025 mark a significant step forward in SERP's mission: generating innovative, scalable solutions to schools' most pressing challenges through sustained collaboration among educators, researchers, and designers.

SERP enters 2026 well-positioned to deepen impact, scale evidence-based solutions, and continue serving the field through research, design, and partnership.

Together, we can integrate research, practice and design in education by advancing knowledge, scaling proven solutions, and ensuring that all students have access to high-quality learning experiences.



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