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District No. 2689

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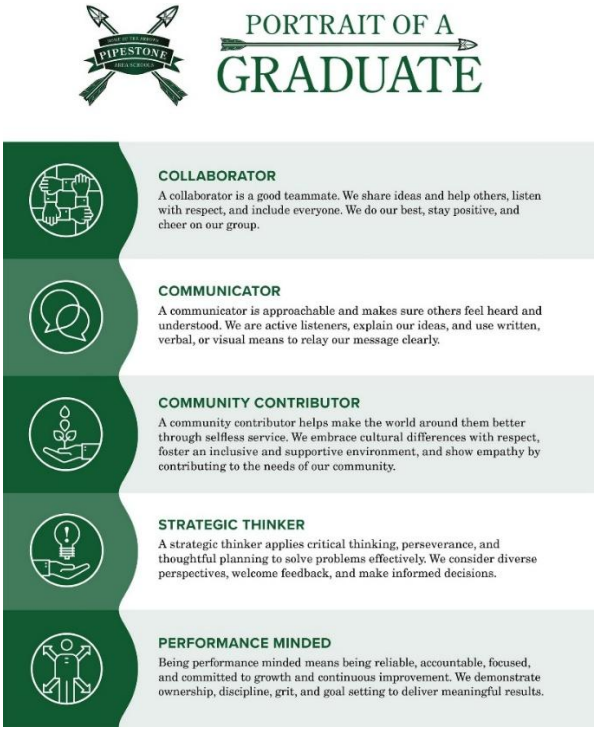
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School Board Report
November 18, 2026

November is a time that allows us to reflect on the blessings and the joys of the previous year. As we enter the Thanksgiving season, it is a time to be mindful of others and to reflect. Additionally, this is the time of year when our days are shorter, the temperature is colder, and we begin to move from the outdoor activities of the fall season to the indoor opportunities that will be in full swing in December. Here are a few items of note to share with the board as we round out this month and look toward December.

1. **MREA Legislative Platform** – At the MREA Conference there was a great deal of discussion about the upcoming legislative session. I am including the MREA draft legislative platform for the board to review. As you review the platform, you can see that there are three key areas of emphasis: Sustainable and adequate funding, policy reform, and improved levy fairness. The funding issue is a dominant topic, particularly in light of the recent news about multiple school districts across Minnesota addressing failed operating referendums.
2. **Innovation Award** – At the MREA conference, the Southwest West Central Service Cooperative received an award for innovative programs. The recognition came for a program that is possible from a collaborative effort of several school districts, including Pipestone Area Schools. The Medical Careers program that includes the districts of Pipestone, Adrian, Luverne, Edgerton, and Hills-Beaver Creek was recognized for the innovative and engaging work in the medical careers area. Here is a link to the award and a brief video that included some familiar faces from Pipestone Area Schools! Medical Careers Program – 2026 Innovation Program Award – MREA | Minnesota Rural Education Association
3. **Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA) Fall Conference** – I was able to attend the MREA symposium in Brainerd. The event had nearly 500 participants including teachers, administrators, and school board members from all corners of rural Minnesota. There were many great presentations and breakout session highlighting changes in educational practices, updates on state finance and policy, as well as information on tools to help rural schools. I was pleased to have the opportunity to share a breakout session titled, “Innovate or Be Left Behind” where I shared our Portrait of a Graduate story, including the ways we engaged students, staff, the board, administration, and the community in focus groups and community groups to identify our 5 key POG attributes. The session was very well attended and I was excited to share the good work we are doing in the Pipestone Area Schools.
4. **Black Hawk Roofing Punchlist** – The roofing company is completing the punchlist items and working to wrap up the project. There are some items that need minor attention and focus before the project can be completely finalized and wrapped up. Overall, this has been a great project to complete over the last 24 months. It is something that we have done with available resources and long-term facility maintenance funding. As you know, this is a project that will serve the district and the community for decades to come!

5. **Portrait of a Graduate** – We continue to elevate the Portrait of a Graduate within the district. Principals are leading their buildings with the POG by focusing on one attribute at a time throughout the year. We know this will be a slow and intentional process as we continue to advance the Portrait and begin implementing the 5-year strategic design. Our leaders were invited into a free coaching and training cohort called Emerging Leaders this year with other districts from across the country. We are in the cohort with districts from Michigan, Arizona, New York, Colorado, Montana, and other states. The focus of the cohort is on human centered leadership. I am excited for this work to continue and know that it will take time to make changes in the system as we emphasize a student/learner centered approach to teaching and learning. We are also looking at training and staff development options for teachers and paraprofessionals. As you may recall, when we adopted the strategic design, Richard DeLorenzo shared how important it is to provide training and support for teachers as we continue this work. We have staff development funding available and we will work with teacher leaders to determine how we can best proceed to provide training and support for student-centered teaching and learning training and development.



6. **Social Media Harm Lawsuit** – There are conversations beginning in school districts across the country regarding litigation against social media companies for the harm caused to children as a result of the algorithms and the addictive nature of social media platforms. The primary focus has been on the mental health implications for children and young adults. Some of these conversations are starting in Minnesota now as well. As we learn more about this in the months to come, I anticipate bringing some thoughts and recommendations to the board regarding our district's participation in this litigation. I am sharing a couple of recent news article about school districts involved in this effort in other parts of the country. La Crosse school board approves legal action against social media companies | La Crosse | news8000.com Social Media Giants to Pay $27 Million in School Suit Accord

7. **Rally Your Region Follow Up** – There will be a follow-up to the Rally Your Region sponsored by the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF). The focus of the Rally Your Region event was on the nexus of education and economic development. The follow up will continue to find ways to continue this work in meaningful ways. From what I have observed, Pipestone is well positioned in this space as we have started the Pipestone Area Career Expo as well as other programing and service we provide aligned to the message of competitive advantage shared by Mark Perna.

8. **Minnesota State High School League Announcement of Bylaw Amendment and Submission** – Recently school districts were notified regarding a bylaw amendment proposal. The constitution of the High School League is permissive and does not require any board action or discussion. Additionally, neither the board nor the district leadership is required to comment on the actual merits of the bylaw amendment. I envision that our district would have a brief discussion including the superintendent, activities director, and the school board activity representative to determine if we want to provide feedback to the MSHSL region secretary.

9. **Employee Retirement Recognition Policy** – We would like to discuss a possible change to the retirement recognition policy, particularly the portion that states school board members will receive an engraved plaque. I have attached the policy and envision this will be a committee meeting we want to have before the December board meeting.

10. **Facilities Committee** – I would like to schedule a facilities committee meeting to discuss a grant opportunity the district has pursued. It is a possible option to fund some renovations/improvements to the gender-neutral single use restroom outside of the auditorium area. We also need to discuss the final steps of the roofing project.

11. **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Visit** – We had a surprise OSHA visit to the district on October 13, 2026. The visit centered primarily on the functions and operations in the middle school/high school building. The visit was beneficial in identifying some areas for improvement that needed to be addressed. While our overall feedback and report was positive, there were three areas of note the district had to address. The mandatory progress report was returned to OSHA and we will wait for any further direction and/or guidance from OSHA once they have reviewed the district response. Here are the items and a brief note on the response from the district.

    a. Item 1 – The district did not have an eyewash station in the woodworking classroom area. The instruction in the space utilizes some chemicals from time to time that require the placement of an eyewash station. The district has installed the eyewash station.

    b. Item 2 – The district needed to complete Employee Right to Know training for staff that work with chemicals. The district completed the training with our partner from the coop, IEA. The staff included in the training were required science employees as well as required maintenance staff.

    c. Item 3 – One science classroom had a respirator protective mask. We learned that if a staff member has a mask like this, there are required tests including a fit test that must occur regularly for the utilization of the mask. The employee had never had a fit test completed. After consultation with IEA and the employee, it was determined the mask was not necessary and has since been removed from the district inventory.

12. **Maintenance Shop and Storage Cleaning** – We are starting to go through the shop and identify items that can be declared surplus due to age, lack of use, or no continued need. I anticipate we will compile a list,

assign a value, and present the list for the board to declare as surplus. I anticipate we will do this as early as the January or February board meeting.

13. **Referendum Follow-Up** – Jacque and I are working with PMA to conduct some additional analysis of the district finances. We are working to establish what a lower referendum amount might be if we implemented budget reductions at certain levels. Additionally, I believe it will be prudent and timely to have a community feedback survey regarding our district results. We have received some anecdotal feedback and it would be better to have something that is broad-based and provides more fact-based information. I have reached out to a partner the district has worked with before regarding a community survey to gather feedback and input on the referendum. I have attached the information provided on the survey process. I believe it would be a good step to have a presentation to the finance committee from both PMA and from the survey company. Then, the committee can bring recommendations for action to either the December or January board meeting.

As we close out the month, from my entire family, I want to express my deepest wishes that all the families of Pipestone Area Schools have a blessed and memorable Thanksgiving. May we all pause for a few moments to reflect on the many gifts and blessings we have received all year long and never take for granted the positive people and events in life.

