

School District 197
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools
Regular Meeting
Monday, January 26, 2026
ISD 197 District Office, Mendota Heights, MN

A meeting of the School Board of Independent School District 197 was held on Monday, January 26, 2026 beginning at 5:00 p.m. pursuant to due notice.

The meeting was called to order by current Chair Larsen at 5:00 p.m. The following School Board members were present: Tim Aune, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Marcus Hill, and Randi Walz. Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog was absent. Student representatives Rhys Walsh and Evangeline Fuentes were present.

Also present for the meeting were: Peter Mau, Assistant Superintendent; Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Sara Lein, Director of Special Programs; Sara Blair, Director of Communications; Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources; Dave Sandum, Director of Technology; Lisa Grathen, Director of Community Education; Mark Fortman, Director of Operations; and Brian Schultz, Director of Finance.

Agenda

It was moved by Ms. Steele and seconded by Mr. Schwab to approve the agenda as presented.

*Aye: Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Marcus Hill, Randi Walz, Tim Aune
Nay: none*

The motion carried (7-0)

Consent Agenda

It was moved by Mr. Vaupel and seconded by Ms. Walz to approve the consent agenda items as presented:

- Approval of the January 12, 2026 School Board Regular Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Personnel Recommendations
- Approval of TRHS French Field Trip
- Approval of TRHS Music Field Trip
- Approval of TRHS Robotics Field Trip
- Approval of TRHS Spanish Field Trip
- Approval of TRHS Winterguard Field Trip
- Approval of TRHS Wrestling Field Trip
- Approval of Dakota County SHIP Grant
- Administrative Review of Policy 514, Bullying Prohibition

*Aye: Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Marcus Hill, Randi Walz, Tim Aune
Nay: none*

The motion carried (7-0)

Comments to the School Board

There were no comments to the School Board.

Discussion of 2026-2027 Academic Calendar

Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, presented an update on the 2026-2027 academic calendar and the draft 2027-2028 calendar for School Board discussion. Calendar development follows School Board Policy 602, Minnesota statutory requirements, and a two-year review process established with the Meet and Confer Committee to provide predictability for families and staff. Administration outlined required calendar adjustments to support implementation of the Minnesota READ Act, including professional development obligations that must be completed by July 1, 2027, using the CAREIALL Secondary training program. To meet these requirements, the proposed 2026-2027 calendar includes additional professional development and collaboration days, conversion of select student days, and a shift of one fall professional development day, with dates chosen to minimize impact on families. The 4-way equity test was applied in determining added no-student days, acknowledging potential childcare impacts. No changes are proposed to the draft 2027-2028 academic calendar, and the item was presented for discussion and informational purposes only; the board will approve the calendar at a future meeting.

Proposed 2026-2027 School Board Meeting Dates

Assistant Superintendent Peter Mau presented proposed School Board meeting dates for the 2026-2027 school year for discussion. Historically, meetings were held on the first and third Mondays of each month; however, frequent adjustments were required due to holidays, non-student contact days, and school breaks, resulting in inconsistent spacing and reduced predictability. During development of the 2026-2027 calendar, staff determined that scheduling meetings on the second and fourth Mondays of each month more consistently avoided conflicts and provided a clearer, more predictable schedule for board members, staff, and the community. Revised guidelines outline meeting times, locations, and formats, including one meeting per month in December, no meetings in July unless necessary, and designated listening sessions and work sessions. Specific exceptions were noted for holidays and potential non-student contact days. The proposed meeting schedule was presented for discussion, with formal approval planned for a future board meeting.

Mid-Year Update on Superintendent Goals

On behalf of Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog, Assistant Superintendent Peter Mau provided a mid-year update on progress toward the 2025-26 Superintendent Goals, which were approved by the School Board in October 2025. Progress on Goal 1, related to implementation of the district's strategic focus areas, continues to be monitored through separate, scheduled board presentations and was not revisited in this update. The report instead focused on Goals 2 and 3, aligning documented actions with the Minnesota School Board Association Superintendent Evaluation Rubrics at the "Highly Effective" level. Updates highlighted work to strengthen long-term fiscal stability through structured cost-containment planning, data-informed budget development, staff and community engagement, and regular communication with the Board. The Superintendent also reported progress toward increasing staff engagement through one-on-one interviews, emphasizing relationship-building, trust, and the use of staff feedback to inform district practices and supports. This item was presented for informational purposes as part of the Superintendent's ongoing evaluation process.

Adjournment

It was moved by and seconded by Mr. Hill to adjourn the meeting at 5:29 p.m.

Aye: Tim Aune, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Marcus Hill, Randi Walz
Nay: none

The motion carried (7-0)

The next regularly scheduled School Board meeting of Independent School District 197 will be Monday, February 9, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. It will be held at the City of Mendota Heights Council Chambers, 1101 Victoria Curve, Mendota Heights, MN. *Please refer to the district website for possible changes to any meeting times/locations.*

Upon approval by the School Board, official minutes will be available at the District Office, 1897 Delaware Avenue, Mendota Heights, and on the district website. The full meeting materials are available for public inspection at the administrative offices of the school district and on the district website.

Sarah Larsen
School Board Chair

Jon Vaupel
School Board Clerk