

School District 197
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools
Regular Meeting
Monday, October 6, 2025
Mendota Heights City Hall, Council Chambers

A meeting of the School Board of Independent School District 197 was held on Monday, October 6, 2025 beginning at 6:00 p.m. pursuant to due notice.

The meeting was called to order by current Chair Larsen at 6:00 p.m. The following School Board members were present: Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Marcus Hill, and Randi Walz. The following School Board members were absent: Tim Aune. Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog was present. 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; Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources; Sara Blair, Director of Communications; Dave Sandum, Director of Technology; Lisa Grathen, Director of Community Education; and Mark Fortman, Director of Operations.

Agenda

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

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

The motion carried (6-0)

Consent Agenda

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

- Approval of the September 22, 2025 School Board Regular Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Personnel Recommendations
- Approval of September 2025 Wire Transfers Report
- Second Reading of Policy 414, Mandated Reporting of Child Neglect or Physical or Sexual Abuse

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

The motion carried (6-0)

Recognitions

Two groups were recognized for their achievements and contributions. National Merit Commended students Bryn Christopherson, Brendan Monroe, Kaia Smith, and Hannah Trudeau were honored for their outstanding PSAT performance last October, a distinction that highlights their exceptional academic talent and promising futures. The Board also welcomed the 2025 Warrior Hall of Fame inductees: Brenda Corbett, Tom Johnson, Tori Nelson, and Jim Probst, whose accomplishments and dedication have significantly impacted the School District 197 community through excellence in athletics, activities, fine arts, academics, and philanthropy.

Student Representatives' Report

Student representatives Evangeline Fuentes and Rhys Walsh delivered their first report highlighting recent events across District 197. At the Early Learning Center, preschoolers settled into routines with their teachers and peers, with a site report presented later in the meeting. Elementary schools celebrated a busy start to the year with events such as Garlough's upcoming Hoot Hike, Somerset's visit from baby kangaroos, Moreland's first-grade trip to Dodge Nature Center and art self-portraits, Mendota's family fun nights and upcoming Trunk or Treat, and Pilot Knob's Hispanic Heritage Month lessons. District-wide, elementary students enjoyed Future Warrior Day on October 1, connecting with nearly 100 high school role models. Middle schools celebrated community through Heritage's family field day and upcoming camp trip, while Friendly Hills engaged students with WEB leaders, spirit week, and Walk/Bike to School Day. At Two Rivers High School, the year began with a successful Link Day, the Warrior Rally, and strong participation in clubs and activities. Highlights included the Warrior 5K fundraiser, a spirited homecoming week with theme days, pepfest, and dance, and the induction of four new Warrior Hall of Fame members. Dr. Jess Cabak was also recognized for a strong start as principal. Looking ahead, winter sports registration has opened, and fall sports are concluding with notable achievements, including the Girls Varsity Tennis team's first-ever conference win.

Superintendent's Report

The Superintendent shared highlights from the start of the school year, noting the excitement and engagement across schools through events such as the Warrior Rally, Homecoming, and Future Warrior Day. The annual Warrior 5K drew over 300 participants, raising vital funds for the ISD 197 Educational Foundation to support teachers and students. Homecoming week featured Future Warrior Day, where high school students visited elementary schools to build connections and model kindness and school pride. October also brought recognition of National Principals Month, with gratitude expressed for school leaders' dedication, and National Bullying Prevention Month, with Somerset Elementary students creating uplifting sidewalk art. Two Rivers High School was honored by the U.S. News & World Report as one of the top 5% of high schools in Minnesota, reflecting the collective effort of students, staff, families, and the district's educational foundation. In addition, the district celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month, highlighting student projects at Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School inspired by Frida Kahlo.

Site Report from Branch Out

Rachel Johnston, Special Education Supervisor, and Emily Waters, a class of 2026 graduate of Branch Out, presented a site report on Branch Out, the district's Special Education Transition Program for students up to age 22 who have completed high school programming but require additional support transitioning into independence and adulthood. The program focuses on independent living, job training, and post-secondary education, with students engaging in community-based activities, workforce training at local businesses, and coursework at Dakota County Technical College. Highlights from the past year included the addition of two new teachers, expanded flexibility through partnerships with Two Rivers High School, and increased student leadership opportunities such as clubs, site management, and talent showcases. Looking ahead, several new job sites are being added for 2025-2026, including Amore Coffee, El Destino Market, and Oxendale's Market, with coordination supported by new Work-Based Learning Coordinator Carrie Garcia. The program also benefits from the district's Assistive Technology Resource Center led by Dr. Jennifer Veenendall.

Site Report from Early Learning Center

Assistant Director Laurie Hume presented a site report from the Early Learning Center. The Early Learning program serves children from birth through pre-kindergarten and their families through Community Preschool/School Readiness, Early Childhood Family Education, Early Childhood Special Education, and Early Childhood Screening, with services offered at both the Early Learning and Family Resource Center and Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School. Highlights included the expansion of Voluntary Pre-K from 18 to 40 scholarship spots, the use of AmazeWorks picture books to support inclusive curriculum, and teacher training in the science of reading through LETRS for Early Childhood. Looking ahead, the program has launched a new all-day

preschool class at Pilot Knob, created a staff lactation/meditation room through a wellness grant, and engaged staff in a day of service learning and community building prior to the start of programs. The report emphasized the district's mission to provide high-quality, developmentally appropriate, and nurturing early childhood experiences that foster confidence, relationships, and future readiness for young learners.

Action Item: Approval of the 2024-2025 World's Best Workforce Annual Report and 2025-2026 World's Best Workforce Annual Plan

In accordance with Minnesota Statute 120B.11, the School Board fulfills its responsibility to adopt a long-term strategic plan for teaching and learning through three primary actions: the Strategic Framework, the Annual Report, and the annual Strategic Implementation Plan. The current Strategic Framework was adopted in spring 2020. The 2024-2025 Annual Report, previously reviewed at the September 22nd work session, includes revisions based on committee feedback and new data, such as bolded key statements in the superintendent's letter, removal of a non-approved goal, updated MCA Science results (noting the district's top ranking among comparables despite statewide declines), and adjustments to charts for clarity and accuracy. At this meeting, the administration is seeking the Board's formal approval of both the 2024-2025 Annual Report and the 2024-2025 Strategic Implementation Plan, which outlines specific actions to continue advancing the goals of the Strategic Framework.

It was moved by Ms. Steele and seconded by Mr. Schwab to approve the 2024-2025 World's Best Workforce Annual Report and 2025-2026 World's Best Workforce Annual Plan as presented.

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

The motion carried (6-0)

Action Item: Close Open Enrollment for Grades 7-12 for the 2025-2026 School Year

Two Rivers High School is currently over projected enrollment by approximately 25 students in grades 9 and 10, with total 2025-2026 enrollment at 1,667 students. Enrollment is at or above projections in nearly all grades, with large incoming 8th- and 7th-grade classes expected to further increase numbers. Administration has already adjusted schedules to accommodate space limitations, and core classes across secondary buildings are nearing capacity. To help manage enrollment within Board-approved parameters, the administration recommends closing grades 7-12 to open enrollment while continuing to welcome resident students. This practice, permitted under Minnesota Statute 124D.03 and used in several other districts, applies when open enrollment exceeds 1% of total grade-level enrollment. In District 197, open enrollment ranges from 20%–28% across grades 7-12, meeting the criteria for closure. The proposed resolution formally limits nonresident enrollment in these grades for the 2025–2026 school year and requires reporting to the Minnesota Department of Education by July 15, 2026.

It was moved by Ms. Steele and seconded by Mr. Hill to Close Open Enrollment for Grades 7-12 for the 2025-2026 School Year.

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

The motion carried (6-0)

Action Item: Approval of 2025-2027 Agreement Between ISD 197 and the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers Local #1148

The School Board reviewed and approved the tentative agreement between School District 197 and the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers, Local 1148, representing approximately 450 licensed staff members for the 2025-2027 contract years. The agreement includes salary schedule increases of 1.25% in year one and \$1,250 per cell in year two for both K–12/ECFE and Pre-K staff, with two additional steps added for Pre-K. Beginning in the second year of the contract, longevity pay will range from \$1,500 to \$2,500 based on years of service. Insurance changes effective July 1, 2026, include updated copays, deductibles, and maximum out-of-pocket amounts, with the district maintaining a 95% contribution for single coverage and 80% for single plus one and family coverage. Additionally, 403B contributions will increase by \$200. The union has ratified the agreement, and administration recommended formal Board approval.

It was moved by Mr. Schwab and seconded by Mr. Hill to approve the 2025-2027 Agreement Between ISD 197 and the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers Local #1148.

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

The motion carried (6-0)

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Schwab and seconded by Mr. Hill to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 p.m.

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

The motion carried (6-0)

The next regularly scheduled School Board meeting of Independent School District 197 will be Monday, October 20, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. It will be held in the School District 197 District Office Training Room, 1897 Delaware Avenue, Mendota Heights. *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