

School District 197
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools
Regular Meeting
Monday, May 4, 2026
Mendota Heights City Hall, Council Chambers

A meeting of the School Board of Independent School District 197 was held on Monday, May 4, 2026 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. School Board members present: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel. School Board members absent: Randi Walz. 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; Sara Lein, Director of Special Programs; Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Brian Schultz, Director of Finance; Sara Blair, Director of Communications; Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources; Dave Sandum, Director of Technology; Mark Fortman, Director of Operations; Lisa Grathen, Director of Community Education.

Agenda

It was moved by Ms. Steele and seconded by Mr. Aune to approve the agenda.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0).

Consent Agenda

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

- Approval of the April 20, 2026 School Board Regular Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Termination and Non-Renewal of Probationary Teaching Contracts
- Approval of Personnel Recommendations
- Administrative Review of 200 Series Policies
- Administrative Review of 300 Series Policies
- Approval of Branch Out Camp Field Trip
- Approval of TRHS Speech & Debate Field Trip
- Approval of March 2026 Accounts Payable Report
- Approval of March 2026 Treasurer's Report
- Approval of Identified Official with Authority (IOwA) Annual Designation

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0).

Listening Session Report

One Two Rivers High School student asked questions of the board and expressed interest in the future Student School Board Representative role. Somerset Elementary families expressed concerns regarding consistency in staffing due to budget cuts in the 2026-2027 school year.

Recognitions

Fourth grade contributors to the literary publication *Confluence* were honored, along with Curriculum and Gifted and Talented Coordinator Miles Lawson and elementary principals in attendance. Two Rivers students who earned state-recognized Bilingual and Multilingual Seals were also recognized, noting a record year for participation and certificates earned, with all participating students achieving gold or platinum recognition. Winter season student-athletes and activity participants were celebrated, including state tournament qualifiers in wrestling, speech, dance, adapted floor hockey, and Nordic skiing. Recognition was also given to basketball players Sophia Amundson and Lamont Michaels for surpassing 1,000 career points.

Student Representatives' Report

Elementary schools shared celebrations including recognition of administrative professionals, student learning experiences such as art residencies, STEM and project fairs, and community-building events like kindness initiatives and recycling drives. Notable accomplishments included Odyssey of the Mind state placements and a district teacher finalist for Minnesota Teacher of the Year. Middle school updates included enriching field trips, completion of MCA testing, and student engagement in academic and service activities, such as fundraising for the American Heart Association and immersive learning experiences. At the high school level, students reported on academic milestones, leadership activities, and extracurricular success, including speech team state participation, athletic achievements, and statewide honors in music and dance. The report also reflected on the approaching end of the school year, with students focused on final exams, graduation, and transitioning leadership roles.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Olson-Skog shared reflections on the final month of the school year, noting ongoing end-of-year activities, student recognitions, and preparations for the upcoming year. The Board, led by Chair Larsen, recognized student representatives Evangeline Fuentes and Rhys Walsh for their leadership and service, awarding each a \$500 scholarship in appreciation of their contributions. The Superintendent also expressed gratitude to all district staff, acknowledging the important roles they play and highlighting recent staff appreciation recognitions. The report included updates on professional development, specifically a staff learning experience through the Minnesota Humanities Center's *Learning from Place: Bdote* program, which deepened understanding of Dakota history and culture. Additional highlights included a student-supported environmental project at Two Rivers High School involving the construction of a bioretention basin to improve water quality. The report concluded with a video honoring teachers in celebration of Teacher Appreciation Week.

Equity Focus Area Update

Assistant Superintendent Peter Mau and Educational Equity Coordinator Kevin Sheridan presented an update on the work of the District 197 Equity Advisory and progress toward the Strategic Framework's equity implementation targets. The Equity Advisory continues to serve in an advisory role to district leadership, providing input on equity goals, action plans, and progress, while also elevating site-based work and challenges. Updates included ongoing professional development efforts, expansion of student voice opportunities, development of a Language Access Plan, and increased access to internships and certifications for students of color. The presentation also outlined the district's equity focus areas and implementation targets, including efforts to strengthen diverse classrooms, improve staff diversity and training, ensure equitable resource allocation, and advance culturally responsive curriculum and instruction. Additional priorities include fostering inclusive school environments, expanding student leadership opportunities, and building stronger family and community partnerships through language access and engagement strategies. It was emphasized that advancing

equity is a shared responsibility across all levels of the district, including staff, students, families, and leadership.

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Update

Rachel Johnston, Special Education Supervisor, presented an update on the work of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), which is required to support parent involvement in district policy and decision-making related to special education. The committee includes parent, staff, administrator, and school board representatives from across grade levels and meets throughout the year to address topics impacting students with disabilities. During the 2025-2026 school year, SEAC meetings focused on key topics including inclusive community initiatives such as Communities for All, supported decision-making and guardianship, and navigating Dakota County services and supports through partnerships with local agencies. The committee also highlighted an upcoming session on technology and screen addiction and shared future meeting dates for the 2026-2027 school year. The update emphasized SEAC's role in fostering inclusive practices, connecting families with resources, and strengthening collaboration between the district and community partners.

Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) Update

Laurie Hume, Assistant Director of Early Learning, presented an update on the Early Learning Advisory Committee, which supports the district in developing, planning, and monitoring early childhood family education programs in alignment with Minnesota statute. The committee includes parents, staff, and a school board representative, with a majority of members being participating parents to ensure community representation and input. During the 2025-2026 school year, the committee met regularly to review topics such as curriculum, registration, technology use among young children, community resources, and planning for the upcoming year. The committee emphasized increasing family engagement by expanding opportunities for feedback, including parent-led listening sessions and creating intentional spaces for family voice. Looking ahead, future goals include offering more flexible meeting times to increase participation and creating events that celebrate the diversity of district families.

Approval of Language Access Plan

Peter Mau, Assistant Superintendent, and Kevin Sheridan, Educational Equity Coordinator, presented the District's Language Access Plan, which establishes a framework to ensure families and community members have equitable access to information and services in languages they understand. The plan was developed in response to new state legislation and aligns with Minnesota Statute 123B.32 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, outlining expectations for the use of trained interpreters and translation services in key educational interactions. The presentation highlighted current language access supports, including Language Line for on-demand interpretation in over 240 languages, TalkingPoints for two-way multilingual communication, ParentSquare for mass notifications with auto-translation, and district translators providing written and in-person interpretation services. The proposed plan organizes these services into a more coherent system and includes enhancements such as training multilingual staff as on-call interpreters and formalizing procedures to ensure compliance with state requirements.

It was moved by Ms. Steele and seconded by Mr. Hill to approve the Language Access Plan as presented.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0).

Presentation of FY26 Revised Budget

Brian Schultz, Director of Finance, presented proposed revisions to the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget for the General and Construction Funds. Revenues and expenditures were both adjusted based on updated information,

with increases in key areas such as special education aid, general education aid, and compensatory funding, as well as expenditures related to transportation, special education services, and employee benefits. The revised budget projects an increase of approximately \$370,154 to the unassigned fund balance, bringing the total to an estimated \$1.6-\$1.7 million. The presentation also highlighted how budget resources are aligned to support the district's Strategic Framework and equity commitments, including funding for intervention programs, English learner services, and achievement and integration initiatives. Adjustments were also made to the construction fund based on updated project costs.

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Schwab and seconded by Mr. Hill to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0).

The next regularly scheduled School Board meeting of Independent School District 197 will be Monday, May 18, 2026 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