

School District 197
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools
Regular Meeting
Monday, September 8, 2025
Mendota Heights City Hall, Council Chambers

A meeting of the School Board of Independent School District 197 was held on Monday, September 8, 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: Tim Aune, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Marcus Hill, and 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; Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources; Sara Blair, Director of Communications; Dave Sandum, Director of Technology; and Sara Lein, Director of Special Programs.

Agenda

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

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

The motion carried (7-0)

Consent Agenda

An updated Personnel Recommendations report was provided to the School Board.

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

- Approval of the August 18, 2025 School Board Regular Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Personnel Recommendations
- Approval of Agreement with St. Thomas Academy for Non-Public Nursing Services
- Approval of Gifts to the District
- Approval of Heritage E-STEM Middle School Field Trip
- Second Reading of Policy 527, Student Use and Parking of Motor Vehicles; Patrols, Inspections, and Searches
- Second Reading of Policy 534, Unpaid Meal Charges

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

The motion carried (7-0)

Recognitions

Pilot Knob Elementary School Principal Tom Benson, along with several members of the Pilot Knob PTA, presented about their fundraising efforts toward their goal of creating an inclusive playground to meet the needs

of all their students as well as increasing accessibility for members of the community. In partnership with local businesses, community donors, and a donation from an anonymous “Fairy Godmother”, the PTA has raised over \$140,000 and anticipates the project to be completed in October.

Superintendent’s Report

The update highlights the excitement of the new school year in School District 197, emphasizing meaningful connections between staff and students during the first week. Kindergarten, fifth, and ninth graders were given a special transition day, supported by staff and student leaders, before the rest of the students joined. Staff were also celebrated with a spirited welcome-back pep fest featuring competitions, cheers, recognitions, and community sponsorship. New student representatives to the School Board, Evangeline Fuentes and Rhys Walsh, were introduced as outstanding 12th graders ready to serve. The report concluded with appreciation for the School Board members and their dedication, marking this recognition during September’s Minnesota School Board Recognition Month.

First Day of School Enrollment Report

The enrollment update for 2025-2026 shows that districtwide K-12 enrollment came in slightly above projections, with 5,203 students enrolled, 13 more than anticipated. While middle and high schools exceeded expectations with gains of 31 and 24 students, respectively, both kindergarten (-49) and elementary grades (-42) fell short of projections, continuing a multi-year trend of under-enrollment at lower grade levels. To address these patterns, the district has increased outreach for kindergarten registration through social media and direct mail, and the School Board has already closed 5th and 6th grades to open enrollment, with possible further restrictions under consideration as data stabilizes.

Board Committee Reports

Results Committee Chair Byron Schwab reported the mid-year update on the 2025 School Board Goals, which outlines the board’s progress on professional development and governance initiatives. Key areas of focus include deepening understanding of Native American culture, expanding equity training for non-licensed staff, improving accessibility of community engagement, and clarifying board member roles and expectations. By mid-year, the board had completed the Native American culture training, initiated discussions on role clarification, and planned but not yet scheduled the equity and community engagement sessions. Additionally, the board reviewed and decided to change the superintendent evaluation rubric, opting to pilot the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) model and recommending a training session to align all members with the updated process.

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Schwab and seconded by Ms. Steele to adjourn the meeting at 6:38 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, September 22, 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