

School District 197
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools
Regular Meeting
Monday, November 4, 2024
Mendota Heights City Hall, Council Chambers

A meeting of the School Board of Independent School District 197 was held on Monday, November 4, 2024 beginning at 6:00 p.m. pursuant to due notice.

The meeting was called to order by Treasurer Schwab at 6:00 p.m. The following School Board members were present: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, and Randi Walz. Board members Sarah Larsen and Jon Vaupel were absent. Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog was also present. Student Representatives Patrick Bohmbach and Nawal Hassan were present.

Also present for the meeting were: Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Sara Lein, Director of Special Services; Jason Stegeman, Director of Finance; Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources; Dave Sandum, Director of Technology; Sara Blair, Director of Communications; and Lisa Grathen, Director of Community Education.

Agenda

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

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Randi Walz. Nay: none.

The motion carried (5-0).

Consent Agenda

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

- Approval of the October 21, 2024, Regular School Board Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Personnel Recommendations
- Second Reading of Policy 512, School-Sponsored Student Publications and Activities
- Second Reading of Policy 613, Graduation Requirements
- Second Reading of Policy 620, Credit for Learning
- Second Reading of Policy 624, Online Learning Options
- Approval of the August 2024 Accounts Payable Report
- Approval of the August 2024 Treasurer's Report
- Approval of the September 2024 Wire Transfers Report

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Randi Walz. Nay: none.

The motion carried (5-0).

Listening Session Report

No one attended tonight's Listening Session.

Recognitions

Superintendent Olson-Skog introduced two student groups - the Native American Student Group and the new Two Rivers High School Cheer Team. Nell Barri, American Indian Education Coordinator, and Two Rivers High School students Gianna Reynolds, Carlo Reynolds and Nico Reynolds discussed the Native American student group. This group offers a time for students to come together to celebrate their culture with discussions, games, event planning and networking. New this year is the Two Rivers Cheer Team coached by Tye Michaels, Cecila Zerna, and Nina Quintanilla. The team has been making their mark at sporting events and at community events. Participants include Bryce Booker; Windy Xiong; Kancher Siaway; Autumn May Her; Heaven Gordon; Laniya Smith; Jannah Lewis; Jostiana Baion; Kenaket Gadissa; Italia Roff; Braelene Booker; Violet Johnson; Olivia Caban; Jae Nguyen; Danna Barrera Videz; Annika Lechowich; Elliot Williams; Summer Vang; and Kiara Colton-Spearman.

Student Representative's Report

Student Representatives Patrick Bohmbach and Nawal Hassan presented their student report. They stated that they attended MSBA's (the Minnesota School Board Association) annual Student School Board Development event at Shakopee High School with Chair Larsen. They connected with students from other school districts for meaningful conversations. The Early Learning Center will be hosting a parent meeting this week. Mendota and Moreland held book fairs for the students. Garlough held their annual Hoot Hike. All elementary schools will host showcase events for Kindergarten students and will participate in the Scholastic Book Fair. Somerset celebrated the Day of the Dead in their art classes. Heritage Middle School students enjoyed a field trip to Camp St. Croix and will host a car show. At the high school, students shared posters representing their diverse backgrounds from countries like Colombia, Honduras, Venezuela, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. This event allowed insight into the various cultural backgrounds of the students. Unity Day brought together many different groups of students to unite against bullying and learning how to prevent it. The Two Rivers Cheer Team offered a free community skate. The ALMAS club hosted their annual Dia de Muertos event which showcased traditional dances and celebrations. Boys Cross Country participated in the state tournament and placed 7th. The football team participated in the section semifinals.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Olson-Skog stated that November is Native American Heritage Month. School District 197 serves nearly 200 American Indian students and their families. The district honors and recognizes the Indigenous cultures that are part of the community, as well as the Dakota land where our schools are located. Recently, Mendota Elementary students participated in the Indigenous Peoples' Day field trip, where students explored the confluence of the Mississippi River and the Minnesota River, known as Bdote. With guidance from American Indian Education Coordinator Nell Barri, students engaged in hands-on learning about the history and culture of the Dakota people. This is the first year of the *Thrive With Us Scholarship Program* in partnership with Metropolitan State University. This initiative, similar to a "grow your own" program, aims to recruit and prepare local community members for teaching roles within the district and help increase teacher diversity that reflects the students. Recipients receive full scholarships for their education at Metropolitan State University, mentorship from experienced teachers, and regular classroom observations. After graduation, recipients return to School District 197 to teach for at least three years. Congratulations to the first scholarship recipients - Caleb Tate, Cayla Friemann, Dominique Harness, and Keyla Betanzos. For those with a child who will be five years old by September 1, 2025, there are upcoming Kindergarten Showcase events. Each of the district's five elementary schools will host two showcase events in November where one can tour the school, learn about the school community, meet teachers, and more. Showcase dates are listed on the district website. Tomorrow is Election Day, and the Superintendent encouraged all members of the school community to remain respectful in their interactions with others.

Site Report from Somerset Elementary School

Principal Libby Huettl presented a site report from Somerset Elementary School. The school has their highest enrollment this year with 418 students and celebrated an 8% growth in reading and 19% growth in math. Points of Pride include:

- The building's Wellness Committee raises awareness on things like sugar content in food, hydration, importance of sleep and hand washing.
- The students, staff and community raised enough funds to install a fully accessible playground which is the fifth school in Minnesota to do so. It features rubberized flooring, ramp entrances for wheelchairs and sensory stations. The ribbon-cutting was held in August.

Looking ahead, students will participate in the "Word of the Week"; offer a "Focus Friday" segment that highlights a variety of backgrounds and family customs; and have "Happy and Proud Students" that will gather information on student experience.

Strategic Framework College and Career Readiness Implementation Target Update

Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Miles Lawson, Secondary Curriculum and Gifted and Talented Coordinator, Josh Overby-Lange from Heritage Middle School, and Shawn Robinson from Friendly Hills Middle School, presented an update on the Strategic Framework College and Career Readiness Implementation Target which is one of two updates that will be provided this school year.

One of the district's focus areas is to "Increase E-12 opportunities for career exploration and preparation".

Within the focus area, goals include:

- Course, School and Structural Support with a main highlight of supporting the implementation of the new middle school schedule.
- Direct Student Supports with a main highlight of refining and developing sustainable procedures for students making transitions from Pre-K to elementary, elementary to middle school, from middle school to high school, and with postsecondary and labor partners.
- Career and College Readiness with a main highlight of preparing, implementing, monitoring and adjusting new middle school electives.
- Career and Technical Education Pathways with a main highlight of continuing to develop secondary pathways in all six MCIS career fields and identifying at least one college credit-bearing opportunity or industry-recognized certification in each program area.

Site Report from Friendly Hills Middle School

Principal Chris Hiti and Britini Osmonson, Administrative Assistant, presented a site report from Friendly Hills Middle School. The school serves students in grades 5-8 and emphasizes integrating technology, the arts, and rigorous academics so students develop the skills necessary to achieve their academic goals and become lifelong learners. Points of Pride include:

- Adaptability to the new middle school schedule, new classes, and flex period choices
- Celebrating student diversity with "*Girls Taking Action*," "*Boys of Hope*," and cultural heritage celebrations
- Student Acclimation in Newcoming Groups, Friendly Ambassadors, and WEB Leaders

Looking ahead, staff will create a culture of learning with the use of technology, cross-curricular supports, and helping to develop interpersonal skills; STEM applications by developing a greenhouse and using animals in classrooms; preparing for high school with a college and career fair, counselors in classrooms and interactions with high school students.

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Hill and seconded by Ms. Steele to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Randi Walz. Nay: none.

The motion carried (5-0).

The next regularly scheduled School Board meeting of Independent School District 197 will be Monday, November 18, 2024, 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