

School District 197
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools
Regular Meeting
Monday, April 6, 2026
Mendota Heights City Hall, Council Chambers

A meeting of the School Board of Independent School District 197 was held on Monday, April 6, 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, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz. School Board members absent: Morgan Steele. 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.

Agenda

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

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0)

Consent Agenda

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

- Approval of the March 16, 2026 School Board Regular Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Personnel Recommendations
- Approval of Gifts to the District
- Approval of January 2026 Accounts Payable Report
- Approval of January 2026 Treasurer's Report
- Approval of February 2026 Accounts Payable Report
- Approval of February 2026 Treasurer's Report
- Approval of March 2026 Wire Transfers Report
- Approval of School Resource Officer (SRO) Services Agreement
- Approval of Fresh Produce Request for Proposal Award
- Second Reading of Policy 722, Public Data Requests

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0)

Recognitions

Several student groups were recognized for their achievements and contributions, including Two Rivers Winterguard, cast members from Moreland Arts and Health Sciences Magnet School's production of "Shrek the Musical: Kids", the Friendly Hills and Heritage middle school math teams, and members of the Two Rivers Science Olympiad team. Coach Katie Hoflock introduced the Winterguard team and shared highlights from a successful season, while Moreland staff Michelle Edlund and Katie Wiley presented students involved in the school musical, including a short video and performance. The Board also celebrated the continued success of the district's middle school math teams, noting that Friendly Hills placed first and Heritage placed second in the SE Metro Division, continuing a streak of district dominance since 2021. Finally, Coach Laura Gislason introduced members of the newly launched Science Olympiad team and spoke about the program's first season, highlighting student participation in a variety of STEM-focused competitive events.

Student Representatives' Report

The Board received a comprehensive student report highlighting activities and achievements across the district's schools. Elementary schools shared updates including student performances, service projects, STEM activities, and community engagement events, while middle schools reported strong participation in reading initiatives, wellness activities, and academic competitions. Heritage and Friendly Hills highlighted notable accomplishments such as competition successes, student leadership efforts, and continued support for families in need. At the high school level, students reported on academic opportunities, fine arts performances, athletic achievements, including a first-place Winterguard finish, and postsecondary planning events. Student representatives Evangeline and Rhys emphasized student engagement, leadership, and a strong sense of community across all schools in the district.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Olson-Skog welcomed the Board back from Spring Break and noted the transition into the final stretch of the school year, highlighting continued student growth and preparation for future opportunities. The Board recognized the 2025 Thrive With Us Scholarship recipients, a "grow your own" initiative supporting students and staff pursuing careers in education with the goal of returning to District 197. The report also highlighted real-world learning opportunities, including a new middle school employment readiness program and the TriDistrict CAPS course at Dodge Nature Center, where students engage in hands-on, career-connected experiences. Additionally, the Superintendent shared examples of student learning through events like Heritage's Showcase Nights and announced the appointment of Amy Stenson Kujawski as the next principal of Somerset Elementary School, beginning July 1.

College and Career Readiness (CCR) Focus Area Update

Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and Miles Lawson, Secondary Curriculum Coordinator, presented an update on the Strategic Framework implementation focused on College and Career Readiness, including progress on expanding equitable opportunities for career exploration and preparation. The presentation highlighted key focus areas such as strengthening course access, enhancing direct student supports, and developing career and technical education pathways to improve student outcomes. Staff shared ongoing efforts to reduce barriers to advanced coursework, expand college credit and certification opportunities, and integrate career planning into student learning experiences. The update also included progress on new initiatives, such as the CAPS Natural Resources, Sustainability, and Food Systems course and the development of student support systems across grade levels. Overall, the report emphasized continued alignment of district programming to ensure all students are prepared for postsecondary success.

Site Report: Somerset Elementary

Interim Principal Mark Quinn presented the Somerset site report, highlighting the school's focus on fostering a positive, inclusive, and student-centered environment. The presentation emphasized strong school culture initiatives, including the "Somerset STARS" expectations, student affinity groups, and recognition programs

that promote positive behavior and a sense of belonging. Staff highlighted efforts to support equity and engagement through family communication tools, implementation of the AmazeWorks curriculum, and ongoing work to ensure all students feel connected and valued. Additionally, the report outlined instructional strategies such as the use of Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) to strengthen student writing skills. Somerset's commitment to community, kindness, and continuous improvement in student learning and support systems was emphasized throughout.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee Update

Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and Miles Lawson, Secondary Curriculum Coordinator, presented an update on the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee, including its role in aligning district programming with current workforce needs and state requirements for Perkins V funding. The presentation outlined the committee's diverse membership, which includes representatives from business, industry, education, and the community, and noted ongoing efforts to ensure the group reflects student demographics and future workforce priorities. Staff reviewed progress toward the district's 2023-2026 CTE goals, including expanding work-based learning opportunities, developing full course pathways, and increasing access to college credit and industry-recognized certifications across program areas. The Board also heard about recent and planned course expansions at the middle and high school levels, as well as draft priorities for 2026-2029 focused on innovation, equitable access, and strengthening career-connected learning experiences for all students.

Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC) Update

Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and Miles Lawson, Secondary Curriculum Coordinator, presented an update on the Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC), which supports community involvement in curriculum planning and ensures alignment with Minnesota Academic Standards. The presentation outlined the committee's diverse membership, including parents, students, staff, and community members, as well as its role in providing recommendations to ensure curriculum is rigorous, culturally responsive, and equitable. Staff reviewed key activities from the 2025-2026 school year, including curriculum reviews, implementation of the Read Act, development of artificial intelligence guidelines, and new course proposals. The update shared expanded student voice efforts through multiple advisory groups and listening sessions across grade levels. The update highlighted continued focus on equity, community engagement, and ongoing curriculum improvement aligned to district priorities.

Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee (GTAC) Update

Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and Miles Lawson, Secondary Curriculum Coordinator, presented an update on the Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee (GTAC), which supports the development and continuous improvement of gifted education programming across the district. The presentation outlined the committee's mission to strengthen partnerships among staff, families, and the community while advocating for current and future programming needs. Staff reviewed the committee's work during the 2025-2026 school year, including ongoing efforts to refine identification processes, expand enrichment opportunities, and enhance programming at the middle and high school levels. The Board also heard about GTAC's role in advising on broader curriculum initiatives, such as the Read Act, district strategic framework, and curriculum reviews. The update emphasized a continued focus on equitable access, diverse representation, and alignment of gifted programming with district goals.

Presentation of Financial Overview and Potential Capital Project Levy

Superintendent Olson-Skog presented an overview on the district's financial outlook and future planning, reviewing current conditions, actions underway, and potential next steps. The presentation highlighted that \$2.5 million in permanent budget reductions have been approved for 2026-27, contributing to improved financial stability and progress toward rebuilding the fund balance, which is projected to reach approximately 5% compared to the 8% board target. The ongoing structural challenge was explained, noting that revenues are

projected to grow at approximately 1% annually while expenditures increase closer to 3%, creating a persistent gap over time. The Board also reviewed a potential capital project levy as one option to shift certain existing costs outside of the general fund to reduce future budget pressures. The session served as an initial discussion, with no action requested, and additional financial updates and potential recommendations expected later this spring.

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Schwab and seconded by Mr. Hill to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0)

The next regularly scheduled School Board meeting of Independent School District 197 will be Monday, April 20, 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