

# Spotlight

Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools



**DISTRICT196**

One District. Infinite Possibilities.

Fall 2020 | Volume 61 • Number 1

At District 196, the sky's the limit. That's because our committed team of educators is dedicated to helping learners explore the outer limits of their vast potential.

## IN THIS ISSUE

New transportation protocols..... P.2

Roadmap to Restart 2020 .....P.6-7

National speech champions ..... P.8

## Year to start in hybrid based on state plan and county data

In early August, the School Board approved the district's Flexible Learning Plan for 2020-21, along with a recommendation to begin the school year in a hybrid model of learning where each student is in school two days per week, with half their class, and learning online from home the other days.

Hybrid is one of three scenarios the state told school districts to prepare for in 2020-21 to continue student learning under different levels of public health restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The other scenarios are distance learning for all students and in-person learning for all students.



Superintendent **Mary Kreger** assembled a team of approximately 30 district, school and teacher leaders who met throughout the summer developing learning models for each of the three scenarios. The district plan has flexibility to transition from one learning model to another based on changing public health conditions.

On July 30, Governor **Tim Walz** released the Minnesota Safe Learning Plan for returning to school. It is a localized, data-driven approach that identifies which learning model districts can operate in based on the number of COVID-19 cases

<< continued on page 4 >>

## Teacher of the Year amplifies marginalized student voices

The 2020-21 school year has already presented a number of exciting firsts for educator **Qorsho Hassan** – the first time beginning school in a completely new learning model, the first year in District 196 and the first Somali-American to earn the title of Minnesota Teacher of the Year.



Hassan said the honor validates her efforts in using education as a means to break down barriers. She accepted the award Aug. 6 at a socially distant ceremony on the grounds of the State Capitol in St. Paul.

"This award means that I've been given a platform to continue to do what I love, which is amplifying marginalized voices, advocating for equity and antiracism, and shedding light on the barriers to retaining teachers of color," Hassan said. "It also means that I'm sharing this representative title with my community, students and fellow educators."

Just weeks before accepting the top honor, Hassan was hired to teach fourth grade at Echo Park Elementary School of Leadership, Engineering and Technology. Out of 134 nominees, she was named one of 10 finalists while teaching in neighboring District 191. Thomas Lake Elementary School teacher Katie Coulson was also one of the 10 finalists.

Prior to coming to Minnesota, Hassan taught for three years in Ohio and one year

<< continued on page 9 >>



## Learning continues

**Svaransh Sapre** of Eagan, a student at Northview Elementary School, showed off a LEGO vehicle he made during a Community Education summer youth program class called Junior Engineering: Theme Parks. A variety of summer activities and sports camps were offered through Community Education after getting approval of their preparedness plan. These in-person summer programs gave the district opportunity to practice new protocols for drop-off and pick-up, social distancing, frequent handwashing and wearing a face covering in all district vehicles and buildings.

## Infinite Possibilities

District 196 is nationally recognized for providing boundless opportunities in which students can learn and grow. Whether they have an affinity for academics, arts or athletics, our goal is to expose students to the infinite possibilities within the district and throughout our communities. Together, we encourage them each day to pursue excellence as they experience their exciting journey along the road of life.

### Spotlight Newsletter

This quarterly publication is mailed to every household in District 196 to inform parents and other residents about district news.

Send comments on **Spotlight** to [tony.taschner@district196.org](mailto:tony.taschner@district196.org)

### NONDISCRIMINATION

**NOTICE:** District 196 does not discriminate in employment or in any of its programs and activities, including vocational opportunities, on the basis of sex, race, religion, color, creed, national origin, marital status, familial status,\* disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, membership or activity in a local human rights commission,\* age or genetic information.\* District 196 provides equal access to designated youth groups.

The Director of Human Resources, Tom Pederstuen (651-423-7859 – [tom.pederstuen@district196.org](mailto:tom.pederstuen@district196.org)) has been designated to respond to employment-related inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies including Title IX. The Director of Elementary Education, Sally Soliday (651-423-7782 – [sally.soliday@district196.org](mailto:sally.soliday@district196.org)) and the Director of Secondary Education, Michael Bolsoni (651-423-7712 – [Michael.Bolsoni@district196.org](mailto:Michael.Bolsoni@district196.org)) have been designated to respond to student-related inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies including Title IX. The Director of Special Education, Janet Fimmen (651-423-7629 – [janet.fimmen@district196.org](mailto:janet.fimmen@district196.org)) has been designated to respond to inquiries concerning the rights of a student with a disability including Section 504. The mailing address for all directors is 3455 153rd Street W, Rosemount, MN 55068.

\*Asterisked categories are limited to employment-related discrimination and harassment.

## Buses at half capacity, with new health and cleaning protocols

Like most other things, riding the bus to school will also look different in 2020. The district's Transportation Department has implemented new health and safety protocols outlined in the Minnesota Safe Learning Plan for returning to school.

All drivers, chaperones and students are required to wear a face covering whenever they are riding in a school bus or other district vehicle. Buses will be limited to 50 percent capacity to allow for distancing. Bus drivers will explain to students the new procedures for loading (back-to-front) and unloading (front-to-back). Drivers will also reinforce expectations for behavior on the bus and will direct students in the seating process the first few days.

Weather permitting, windows and roof hatches will be open to increase airflow and circulation. Buses will be cleaned and disinfected after each route, focusing on frequently touched surfaces such as handrails, seat backs and door handles. At the end of each day, all buses will be thoroughly sanitized with the disinfectant Oxivir using an electrostatic sprayer.

### Bus stop information mailed

Postcards were mailed Aug. 31 to families of students eligible to receive transportation to and from school during the 2020-21 school year.

The postcard includes information about bus stop locations and pick-up/drop-off times. Parents and guardians who do not receive a postcard and believe their child is eligible to receive transportation can call the Transportation Department at 651-423-7685. Bus stop information is also available through the Infinite Campus parent portal. Click on "More," then "Transportation." This information is updated nightly to reflect any changes to bus routes and stops.

### Bus service for a fee

Optional transportation service for a fee is available to families whose children are not eligible for free transportation based on current service distances. The annual cost is \$300 per student, with a \$600 family maximum. Families whose children qualify to receive free or reduced-price school meals receive the service for a discounted rate. For more information, visit the Transportation Department page at [District196.org](http://District196.org) or call 651-423-7685.

### Here Comes the Bus tracking app

Students, parents and guardians can track their school bus using the smartphone application "Here Comes the Bus."

Users of the app can establish a perimeter around their stop and receive an alert when the bus enters the perimeter. Here Comes the Bus also sends a notification message if a bus is running late or if a different bus has been substituted for a child's usual bus.

The app uses HTTPS, or Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure, which encrypts all communication between the web browser and the app for security. The app tracks district buses using GPS, it does not track students. The Here Comes The Bus app is available to download free on the Google Play Store for Android and App Store for iPhone.

To set up an account, users will need the school district identification number (73500) and the student's lunch account number. Parents can monitor buses for multiple children from a single account. Parents of children in early childhood education programs can call the Transportation Department at 651-423-7685 to get a temporary lunch account number.

### After-school activity buses

Transportation for after-school activities will be available for secondary students. Activity buses will start Sept. 14 for high schools and Sept. 21 for middle schools. Departure times are 5:15 p.m. for high schools and 5 p.m. for middle schools.

Bringing back activity bus service a decade after it was eliminated in budget cuts is one of the improvements funded by the levy referendum district voters approved last November. The levy is also providing funding for smaller class sizes and increased mental health support for students.



## Unusual year will focus on familiar themes of safety, achievement and equity

By **Mary M. Kreger**, superintendent

The beginning of every new school year brings excitement, anticipation and possibilities. It is a time to celebrate the achievement of growing in learning and looking forward to more successes. In District 196, our summer was spent developing creative, energizing plans for welcoming our school community back. And while this year will be markedly different than any other we've ever experienced, I have confidence that our teachers, principals, administrators and staff will bring the same level of excitement, support and belief in possibility that they always do.

When we mark the first day of school on September 14, nearly 25 percent of our students will begin the year in the 196 Digital Academy full-time distance learning option. The other approximately 23,000 of our 30,000 students will begin the year in the hybrid model of learning, with two days of in-person learning each week and distance learning the other days. Our teachers and staff are focused on creating those all important connections with students and families in a modified way. Regardless of whether students are learning online or in person, we know that the most important part of September is to create a climate of safety, support and belonging so that every student is prepared for a meaningful year of learning and growth. It is even more important for students to feel that sense of connection with school this year, having been out of the buildings for the last six months.

Three important principles will drive our work throughout the year: safety, achievement and equity.

### **SAFETY**

Responding to COVID-19 is an ongoing challenging. We work closely with the Minnesota Department of

Health to monitor positive cases in Dakota County. The Minnesota Department of Education has provided guidance for school districts to adjust our educational delivery model in response to changes in COVID-19 cases. We are beginning the school year with the hybrid model, as well as the 196 Digital Academy. The hybrid model allows each student to engage in in-person learning two days per week. The foundation of the hybrid model is distance learning, since there is limited in-person time, and to ease transitions between models should the public health data warrant a change. The distance learning foundation also helps ensure all of our students have equitable learning opportunities. Students may need to miss in-person learning due to sickness or quarantine. The hybrid model is structured to provide students continued access to education and continuity in interactions with teachers and staff as much as possible.

### **ACHIEVEMENT**

We are proud of our "Triple A" philosophy in District 196. We know that providing opportunities in academics, arts and athletics contributes to the achievement of our students. Some of our past practices will be limited or changed this school year, but we remain focused on high expectations and promoting student achievement. Providing high-quality education to 30,000 students with varying needs during a public health crisis is challenging. We know the emergency distance learning of last spring was not the best educational model for many students and families. Our pledge is to provide a much improved online experience for all of our students during this school year. All students will benefit from better instructional practices and more focused content. We are supporting

teachers and students with guidance to provide more consistent and engaging learning activities. As always, our students will continue to be held to high standards for achievement.

### **EQUITY**

Another area of focus for the 2020-21 school year is equity. Our community has responded to the events of this summer with a renewed sense of responsibility, urgency and commitment. We must learn, grow and change to ensure every student experiences the opportunities and success they deserve. Our staff has engaged in equity work throughout the summer and will continue to do so throughout this year and the years ahead. We have a new Equity Advisory Council sanctioned by the School Board to provide oversight, accountability and guidance for the equity work of this district.

As we embark on a school year unlike any other, the foundation of our work remains rooted in providing an educational experience for our students that assures safety, achievement and equity. I am confident that our students, teachers, staff and families will rise to meet the unprecedented challenges of this time. I am grateful for the incredible members of the District 196 community who care deeply about students and education. This will be an important year for all of us.



*Mary M. Kreger*

## Flexible Learning Plan << continued from page 1 >

per 10,000 residents in their county in the previous 14 days (see table below). Within that framework, districts can decide to be more restrictive than the guidance calls for, but not less. The state plan prioritizes learning in school, especially for younger children and students more negatively impacted during emergency distance learning last spring.

When the state plan was released July 30, the case-rate per 10,000 residents in Dakota County was 17.1 and was trending upward from previous weeks (see table below). Based on the data, the district design team announced its recommendation to open the school year in the hybrid model for all students, with a full-time distance learning option for families who do not want their children attending school in person. By a 6-1 vote, the board approved a resolution at its Aug. 10 meeting adopting hybrid as the base learning model to start the school year. The resolution also gives the superintendent authority to change the learning model anytime during the school year after consultation with the board chair and notification of the board.

“Our challenge is to provide the best education possible for all students during a public health crisis,” Kreger said. “We understand that none of these scenarios work best for everyone. We want to give families options and provide as much time learning in school as we can, based on the data.”

With Dakota County cases at 20.56 per 10,000 residents as of Aug. 20, the next highest range of 30 to 49 cases per 10,000 residents calls for secondary students to be in distance learning and elementary students in hybrid.

### How the hybrid model works

In District 196’s hybrid model, students are split into two groups of approximately equal size:

- **Cohort A** (last names beginning with letters A through K) will be in school Mondays and Thursdays, and distance learning all other school days.
- **Cohort B** (last names beginning with letters L through Z) will be in school Tuesdays and Fridays, and distance learning all other school days. Schools worked with families to consider requests to change cohorts based on need, space and balance between cohorts.

All students will be distance learning on Wednesdays to provide time for teacher planning and professional development, and some connections with individual students electronically.

Time at school will be focused on learning that is best experienced in person as part of a group of learners. At home, students will be engaged in age-appropriate managed independent learning to support the instruction they received at school.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<b>Cohort A</b>	At School	At Home	All Students Learning At Home	At School	At Home
<b>Cohort B</b>	At Home	At School	All Students Learning At Home	At Home	At School

A day at school for elementary students will include a morning meeting, math and literacy lessons, lunch and recess, and specialist classes in art, music and physical education on a rotating schedule. Distance learning days at home will start with a communication from their teacher to maintain connections and get ready for a day of managed independent learning in math, reading, writing, word study, social studies and/or science.

### Improved distance learning

Director of Teaching and Learning **Steve Troen** said all distance learning this year, whether part of the hybrid or full-time distance learning option, will be significantly different than the distance learning provided under emergency circumstances last spring. Using findings and feedback from students, parents and teachers about their experience in the spring, groups of teachers spent the summer developing distance learning best practices that were shared with teachers in back-to-school workshops and ongoing training.

“It will be a much-improved distance learning experience with consistent,

<< continued on next page >>

## Local COVID-19 Data

DATE	Cases Per 10,000 Residents, Over 14 Days, Dakota County
July 2	8.11
July 9	10.55
July 16	13.32
July 23	15.18
July 30	17.14
August 6	19.34
August 13	21.31
August 20	20.56

## State Guidance

Cases Per 10,000 Residents Over 14 Days, By County	Recommended Learning Model
0-9	In-person for all students
10-19	In-person for elementary students Hybrid for secondary students
20-29	Hybrid for all students
30-49	Hybrid for elementary students Distance learning for secondary students
50+	Distance learning for all students

## Flexible Learning Plan << continued from previous page >>

predictable and intentional instruction," Troen said.

There will be more frequent synchronous opportunities to interact with teachers and classmates on Zoom, greater consistency in use of SeeSaw and Schoology, and continuous monitoring of curriculum scope and sequence across all grade levels throughout the year, focusing on:

### Full-time distance learning option

Approximately 7,000 of the district's 30,000 preK-grade 12 students registered for the 196 Digital Academy full-time distance learning option by the initial registration deadline in mid-August.

At the elementary level, students are assigned a Digital Academy classroom teacher who may or may not be from their home school of enrollment. Each elementary school will maintain connections with their Digital Academy students and families throughout the year. Curriculum and learning activities are aligned with standards and managed on SeeSaw in grades K-3 and Schoology in grades 4-5. There will be daily Zoom sessions to connect Digital Academy teachers and students, and teachers will have regular office hours to assist students and parents.

At the secondary level, students remain enrolled in their school and Digital Academy classes are taught by their school's teachers. Curriculum and class options are the same as the hybrid model. There are scheduled Zoom classes, independent learning through Schoology and teachers will also have regular office hours to assist students and parents.

Families who want to register for the 196 Digital Academy now or at any point during the school year can do so by contacting their child's school. For more information, go to [www.District196.org/DigitalAcademy](http://www.District196.org/DigitalAcademy).

### Special education services

Like most students K-12, most students receiving special education services in the district choosing the hybrid model will attend school



in-person two days per week and distance learning the other days, as part of the A or B cohort. This includes students attending Transition Plus. Students receiving early childhood special education services will attend school in person one or two days per week based on age. Learners at Dakota Ridge School will attend school in person four days per week and distance learning on Wednesdays.

Families of students receiving special education services will be offered a meeting to discuss special education services. In these meetings, the child's IEP team discusses and determines a plan that addresses the child's services and accommodations. Discussions will also address plans for shifting to a different learning model, if necessary, based on changing public health conditions during the school year.

### Calendar changes

The School Board approved several changes to the 2020-21 academic calendar to provide time for student-teacher connections at the start of the school year and maximize instructional time for students.

These changes remain in effect regardless of which base learning model the district is operating in.

- September 8-9 - Elementary assessments
- September 8-11 - Success Week for orientation and connections between teachers, students and families (details to come from schools)
- September 14 - First day of in-person instruction
- June 8 - Last day of school for elementary students (last day for secondary schools remains June 11)

Three professional development days previously scheduled for Fridays will be held on Wednesdays, when all students are distance learning. Parent-teacher conferences will be conducted electronically by phone or videoconference. There are no changes to winter or spring breaks. The revised calendar is available at [District196.org](http://District196.org).

### School times for in-person learning

The student times for in-person learning are as follows:

#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

- 7:45 a.m. to 2:05 p.m. (Deerwood, Highland, Pinewood and Southview)
- 9:25 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. (15 other elementary schools)

#### MIDDLE SCHOOLS

- 8:15 a.m. to 1:55 p.m. (Valley Middle School of STEM-magnet)
- 8:45 a.m.-2:25 p.m. (5 other middle schools)

#### HIGH SCHOOLS

- 8 a.m. to 1:40 p.m.

### Technology devices, access and assistance

An iPad will be provided to each student in kindergarten through fourth grade. Each elementary school will be communicating with their K-4 families regarding the distribution of iPads to students who do not yet have one. Once deployed, all students in District 196 K-12 will have a district-owned learning device that is funded by an annual technology levy approved by district voters in 2015.

Families needing assistance with internet access are encouraged to contact the local internet service providers for their area to learn what options are currently available for low-cost internet. If that is not a solution, contact your child's school for assistance. The district has hotspots available for families in need.

For technical assistance now or at any time during the school year go to <https://www.district196.org/techhelp> and complete the form to have a district technology employee reach out to you to assist.

## Roadmap to Restart

The start of the 2020-21 school year will be unlike any other. More than 7,000 of our students will be participating in full-time distance learning and our hybrid learning model will bring students back into the classroom two days each week and distance learning the others. Over the summer, our educators, administrators and staff carefully planned and prepared for a safe return to school. Together, we will continue supporting the infinite possibilities District 196 is known for providing students.

For the latest updates and information about health and safety protocols, and our back-to-school plan for 2020-21, visit [District196.org/Restart2020](https://District196.org/Restart2020).

## 2 Arrival and Dismissal

A partnership between students, families and staff is essential to ensuring arrival and dismissal times are done safely. Prior to arriving at school, families must do a daily at-home health screening. Screening will not be done when students arrive for in-person learning each day, as to avoid congregation and congestion.

Staff will assist during arrival and dismissal to curtail congregating and ensure students travel from vehicles directly to their classroom, and vice versa. Schools may stagger arrival and dismissal times to accommodate students safely and adhere to social distancing protocols.

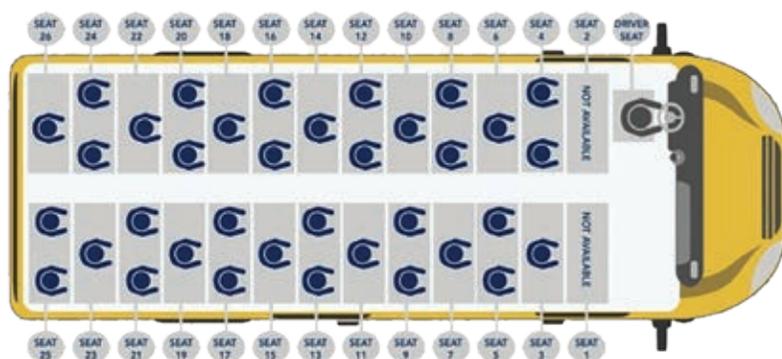
If a student needs to leave early, the student will wait in the main office until their parent or guardian arrives. The parent must call the school when they arrive and the student will be sent out.

## 1 Health and Safety on the Bus

When students are participating in in-person learning, our buses will provide transportation for eligible students at regular bus stops. Pick-up and drop-off times will be different based on the start and end time of your school. We implemented a number of new protocols to keep students and staff as safe as possible while riding the bus to and from school during the pandemic.

We ask parents and guardians to help ensure students practice social distancing at the bus stop prior to arrival of the bus and reinforce expectations for behavior on the bus.

- Limited to 50 percent capacity.
- All persons driving or riding in a District 196 vehicle must wear a face covering.
- Students will load the bus from back to front leaving the seat immediately behind the driver open, and will unload the bus from front to back.
- Students from the same household will be encouraged to sit together.
- Windows and roof hatches will be open to increase airflow and circulation.
- Buses will be cleaned after each route (high-touch areas) and disinfected with a sprayer at the end of each day.



## Expectations to Help Curb Transmission of COVID-19

- Complete a self-wellness assessment each day before coming to school.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Masks must be worn in all District 196 schools and buildings. Wear your mask properly so that it covers both your nose and mouth.
- Maintain a 6-foot distance between you and others whenever possible.
- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently, for up to 20 seconds each time. This the best way to stop germs from spreading.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available.
- Limit unnecessary interactions and opportunities for mingling.



### 3 Classroom Spaces

Classroom and learning areas will be rearranged to allow students to maintain a minimum of 6 feet separation. Desks will be turned to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other) to reduce transmission caused from virus-containing droplets (e.g., talking, coughing, sneezing). In addition to 6 feet of distance between people, students will have assigned desks/work areas to ease tracking of interactions and potential exposures.

Mixing between cohort groups will be limited as much as possible, and practices will be adapted to allow physical distancing between students. Students will also be required to have their own supplies and will not be allowed to share items.

### 4 Building Signage

Signs will be posted throughout our buildings to remind students, families, staff and limited guests of our health and safety protocols such as handwashing, social distancing and entering and exiting buildings. Stickers will be placed on floors to guide traffic flow and help students maintain 6 feet of social distancing when moving throughout buildings.



### 5 Moving Throughout Buildings

Secondary cohorts will rotate between classes on in-person learning days. Floor markings will provide guidance for traffic flow. Staff will assist during passing times to mitigate congregating and promote social distancing.

Elementary cohorts will travel together with an adult to specialist times, lunch and recess, adhering to guidelines regarding physical distancing, masks and other safety protocols. Elementary teachers will look for opportunities to include movement wherever possible throughout the day.

As circumstances permit, efforts will be made to use slightly staggered times to limit the number of students during passing time.

## 6 Serving Safe Meals

Our Food and Nutrition Services Department employees will use practices consistent with guidelines of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Minnesota departments of Education and Health. Receiving and purchasing meals will be contactless and all meals will be packaged in compostable packaging. Students may bring their own meal. Other safety measures include:

- Cafeteria entry points arranged to reduce congestion;
- Directional floor markings and signage to promote social distancing;
- Hand sanitizer available;
- Plexiglass shields at cashier stands;
- Regular cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch areas

## 7 Cleaning & Disinfecting

New protocols for cleaning our buildings and classrooms are in place and will be promoted throughout the school day.

### Every Night

Custodial teams will sanitize with Oxivir disinfectant cleaner using electrostatic sprayers:

- Common areas
- High-touch areas
- Classrooms (desks, tables, chairs)

### Throughout the Day

Custodial teams will clean high-touch surfaces:

- Door knobs, handles and handrails
- Light switches and push buttons
- Tables where students are eating
- Restrooms and locker rooms

Teachers and classroom staff will be provided with safe, disinfecting products to use on classroom desks and surfaces.

## District 196 high schools and students earn top national speech and debate honors

Three District 196 students won national championships and Apple Valley, Eagan and Eastview high schools all won top team honors at this year's National Speech and Debate Association national tournament, which was held online in June due to COVID-19 restrictions.

For the second time in school history, Eagan won the Bruno E. Jacob Award, presented to one team each year with the highest number of accumulated rounds of competition in national tournament main events over the course of time. After a school receives the award, they start from zero again and begin accumulating rounds toward another award. Eagan won the Bruno E. Jacob Award for the first time in 2005 and Apple Valley won it in 1998 and 2019.

Eastview was one of only 10 schools to be named a School of Outstanding Distinction in Speech and Debate based on the number of rounds of competition their students completed in both speech and debate during this year's tournament. In addition, Apple Valley was named a School of Excellence in Speech and Eagan was named a School of Excellence in Debate, recognizing the top 20 schools in each category at the 2020 national tournament.

Seven District 196 students advanced to the final round of competition (top six) in their category: **Semaj Lee** of Apple Valley is a national champion in dramatic interpretation after taking third last year; **Jessica Connors** and **Jonah Johnson** of Apple Valley are national champions in duo interpretation; **Campbell Bernstein** and **Jordan Adams** of Eastview finished runners-up to Connors and Johnson in duo interpretation; **Ceceilia Voss** of Apple Valley took third place in informative speaking, and **Veeravikash Giritharan** of Eastview finished fifth in U.S. extemporaneous speaking.

A total of 35 District 196 students qualified for this year's national tournament, 13 from Eastview, 12 from Eagan, nine from Apple Valley and one from Rosemount High School. In addition to the seven finalists, 19 others advanced to the elimination rounds. Semifinalists included **Allison Hering** of Eastview, 10th place in international extemporaneous speaking; **Mimi Le** of Eastview, 10th place in original oratory, and **Layla Foster** of Eastview and **Prapthi Jayesh Sirkay** of Eagan in congressional debate. **Eric Li** and **Archan Sen** of Eagan finished in the top 24 in policy debate. Quarterfinalists were **Sydney Wilson**, **Liza Rotty** and **Kyrylo Pernatyi** of Apple Valley, and **Charlotte Krekeler**, **Josh Negussie**, **Nikhil Kapur**, **Pavan Guttipatti** and **Elise Noonan** of Eastview. Octofinalists (top 60) were **Laurel Carter** and **Frank Knier** of Apple Valley, and **Bianca Turman**, **Audrey Schwartz** and **Arush Iyer** of Eagan.

Two District 196 coaches also received high honors during the 2020 national tournament. Apple Valley's **Scott Voss** was named National Assistant Coach of the Year and Eagan Head Debate Coach **Chris McDonald** became the fourth District 196 coach to be inducted into the National Speech and Debate Association Hall of Fame. Eagan Principal **Polly Reikowski** was inducted in 2017, Eagan Head Speech Coach **Joni Anker** in 2011 and former Apple Valley Head Speech Coach **Pam Wycoff** in 2007. McDonald also received the Albert S. Odom Award at this year's tournament for his leadership of Eagan's debate team.



Apple Valley High School's national tournament finalists (left to right): **Ceceilia Voss**, **Jessica Connors**, **Jonah Johnson** and **Semaj Lee**.



Eagan High School Head Debate Coach **Chris McDonald** with the plaque commemorating his induction into the National Speech and Debate Association Hall of Fame.

## New websites give parents consistent navigation, unique content and timely updates

The websites of all District 196 schools and programs feature uniform design and connected functionality heading into the 2020-21 school year following the completion of a two-year phased transition to a single website content management system (CMS).

The remaining 10 schools launched on the Finalsite platform Aug. 7. The CMS streamlines communication between schools and parents by providing a consistent, user-focused experience across all District 196 school websites.

The new sites feature a media-rich, mobile-first design that is visually pleasing, practical on content and accessible to visitors with disabilities. The design provides a unified look across the district while allowing each school to maintain its unique identity with use of colors, logo and content.

### Parents using new systems to make school payments

The District 196 MyPaymentsPlus and Paypams websites went live in August to accept registrations and payments for activities and school meals. MyPayments Plus and Paypams replace FeePay.

MyPaymentsPlus is used for online payment of athletics and activities registrations, field trips and fees. PayPams is used for managing student meal accounts, including online payments and meal account balances. All existing meal account balances were automatically transferred to the PayPams system. Families don't need to complete any steps for this process.

Account setup and login instructions are available on the Family Resources page at [District196.org/FamilyResources](http://District196.org/FamilyResources) families.

For technical support, families can:

- Contact MyPaymentsPlus directly via the support portal for assistance with login or payment issues;
- Contact the student's school with questions about activities, or
- Contact the district MyPaymentsPlus support team via email at [mppsppsupport@district196.org](mailto:mppsppsupport@district196.org)



All school websites have front-page access to news and announcements, a calendar of events with feeds and reminder alerts, and the ability to interact directly on the page with

### Teacher of the Year << continued from page 1 >>

in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as part of a Fulbright Fellowship. In her eight years as an educator, Hassan said her teaching style has evolved to better address the needs of her students, but remains rooted in the power of representation.

"I want to be what I didn't have growing up, which is a culturally competent educator who is reflective, affirms Blackness, and has a growth mindset toward the changes that need to be made in education," she said.

"It is vital for our students to see themselves represented in our school community," said Echo Park Principal **Logan Schultz**. "Qorsho is a mirror for our Somali-American students and she will also be a window for other students and staff who need a different perspective."

When the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools in March, teachers were forced to reimagine education pedagogies. Though the delivery method of teaching changed, Hassan said this only strengthened her belief in a student-centered approach to education.

Her holistic approach to meeting students where they are at and appreciating their interests, ideas, cultures and backgrounds guided her distance-learning plan.

social media accounts. The system offers predictive search capabilities and the ability to publish content once and share it across all sites simultaneously. When there is a change to the school schedule due to weather, for example, visitors to [District196.org](http://District196.org) and all school websites will receive an emergency pop-up notification to inform them of the schedule change.

Currently the Español and Somali links at the top of every page auto-translate the page into the respective language. In the future, these sites will feature human-translated key documents, information and updates.

"I have become more innovative, flexible and understanding as an educator," Hassan said. "I've learned so much about how technology can be used to make learning more accessible. Conversely, I've realized the barriers it can create for students and families who have faced challenges with distance learning."

**"I want to be what I didn't have growing up, which is a culturally competent educator who is reflective, affirms Blackness, and has a growth mindset toward the changes that need to be made in education."**

As District 196 prepares to begin a school year like no other, Hassan said she remains focused on providing a welcoming and nurturing learning environment.

"I'm excited to meet my students, parents

and new school community," she said. "I'm looking forward to starting the year off with good energy and joy in my classroom because we need to hold on to these during uncertain times."

Equally as excited is her team at Echo Park. Schultz said leadership skills, enthusiasm for education and commitment to equity will help guide a safe start to the new year.

"Echo Park being home to the Minnesota Teacher of the Year reinforces the sense of pride and commitment to quality education in our community and district," Schultz said. "Qorsho is a fearless leader who ignites excitement to learn in her students and colleagues."

## Eagan and Rosemount stadiums have turf, Apple Valley and Eastview will in fall 2021

A new level of excitement fills the locker rooms at Eagan and Rosemount high schools this year as student-athletes prepare to play their first season on new artificial turf fields. And with the green light from the Minnesota State High School League to play this fall, girls and boy soccer teams were the first to begin practicing in the new stadiums.

Each of the district's four comprehensive high schools will get a new stadium field and track, and one practice field. Construction of the new Irish and Wildcat stadium fields wrapped up at the end of August and work on the practice fields had started when this issue of Spotlight went to press. Fields will be constructed at Apple Valley and Eastview high schools in 2021 and are expected to be ready by the start of the 2021-22 school year.

The artificial turf projects were proposed by district administration in December, in response to growing concerns about safety and playability of the district's sod fields. The situation reached a breaking point last fall when a wet season and failed drainage tile caused Rosemount High School to shut down its stadium field. Over the last two seasons, Rosemount was forced to move 20 home games to other venues. Schools also had to limit the amount of use stadium fields had in order to preserve it for games.

In April, the School Board approved the sale of \$8.96 million in certificates of participation to finance the



An aerial view above the completed stadium field.

projects at Eagan and Rosemount. District Director of Finance and Operations **Mark Stotts** said both projects were slightly under budget. The total cost of the project at all four schools is estimated at between \$17 million and \$19 million. "Having waited 25 years for this to happen, I teared up with gratefulness for our district leadership and the families in our wonderful community," said **Mike Manning**, athletics director at Rosemount. I am excited for all the

future athletes who will play on these amazing fields."

When athletes aren't using the fields, they will provide learning spaces for physical education classes during the day, marching band practice and performances, and rental by athletic associations for community use.



Rosemount High School teams started using the stadium field when the fall season opened Aug. 17.



Workers installed numbers yard by yard up and down the Eagan High School stadium field.



An aerial view of the Eagan High School stadium project when it was nearing completion in mid-August.

### School Board meetings streamed live on YouTube

In June, the School Board approved its schedule of regular meetings for the 2020-21 school year.

Regular board meetings will begin at 6 p.m. on the following Mondays: Sept. 14, Sept. 28, Oct. 12, Nov. 9, Dec. 14, Jan. 11, Feb. 8, March 8, April 12, May 10, June 14 and June 28. The board also plans to hold special meetings July 13 and Jan. 25. Notice of all School Board meetings are posted in district buildings and on the website.

Regular board meetings are normally held at Dakota Ridge School in Apple Valley. Meetings have been conducted by videoconference since April and will continue to do so until further notice.

Members of the public may monitor videoconference meetings by

watching a live stream on the District 196 YouTube channel. Members of the public may submit a question or comment in advance of the meeting by emailing the administrative assistant to the superintendent and school board at [caley.jorgensen@district196.org](mailto:caley.jorgensen@district196.org). Members of the public may request an invitation to the meeting if they wish to comment on an agenda item during the meeting by emailing [caley.jorgensen@district196.org](mailto:caley.jorgensen@district196.org). To participate during the meeting, members of the public must be set up in advance to use Zoom videoconferencing. Materials for agenda items are available at [www.District196.org/about/school-board/](http://www.District196.org/about/school-board/), then click School Board Meetings and Agendas.

### District tests for lead in drinking water

District 196 tests for the presence of lead in drinking water in schools, as required by state law. All taps used for drinking water and food preparation must be tested at least once every five years. The initial testing in District 196 schools began in July 2018.

The district plan requires that the tests be conducted using "first draw" samples, meaning the samples are collected before the fixture is used or flushed during the day. Taps located

closest to where the water enters the building are tested first to avoid the potential of accidentally flushing a tap before it is tested.

The district's Drinking Water Testing Plan and test results are available on the Facilities Department page of the district website at [District196.org](http://District196.org). For more information on the plan, contact Facilities and Grounds Manager **Christopher Pint** at 651-423-7735 or [Christopher.Pint@district196.org](mailto:Christopher.Pint@district196.org).

### Notice of use of pest control materials use in buildings

District 196 uses a licensed, professional pest control service for the prevention and control of rodents, insects, and other pests in and around the district's buildings. The program consists of:

- Inspection and monitoring to determine whether pests are present and whether any treatment is needed;
- Recommendations for maintenance and sanitation to help eliminate pests without the need for pest control materials;
- Utilization of non-chemical measures such as traps, caulking and screening, and
- Application of EPA-registered pest control materials when needed.

State law requires parents to be informed that the long-term health effects on children from the

application of pesticides used by the district may not be fully understood. All pest control materials are chosen and applied according to label directions per federal law.

An estimated schedule of interior pest control inspections and possible treatments is available for review at each school's main office and the Office of Health and Safety.

Parents may request to receive prior notice of each pesticide application. Additionally, parents may request to receive prior notification of any application of pest control material on a day different from the days specified in the schedule. Requests can be made to Facilities and Grounds Manager **Christopher Pint** at 651-423-7735 or [christopher.pint@district196.org](mailto:christopher.pint@district196.org).

### District population nears 160,000; 9 of 10 children attend district schools

The Minnesota State Demographic Center estimated the total population of Independent School District 196 at 159,390, an increase of 1,915 residents or 1.2 percent over the previous year's estimate.

The School Board approved the district's 2020 certified census in June. The approved census figure determines tax levies for funding Community Education programs in the district.

District 196 is the fourth largest school district in Minnesota, with total enrollment of nearly 30,000 students. The district covers approximately 110 square miles and includes all or parts of the cities of Rosemount, Apple Valley, Eagan, Burnsville, Coates, Inver Grove Heights and Lakeville, and Empire and Vermillion townships.

Nearly nine of every 10 school-age children who live in District 196 attend District 196 schools. Of the 33,000 school-age children living in District 196 last year, approximately 29,000 (87 percent) were enrolled in District 196 schools. Anything over 80 percent is high for a school district in the Twin Cities, according to former state demographer **Hazel Reinhardt** of Hazel Reinhardt Consulting, who has conducted enrollment studies for the district. Reinhardt says a high resident enrollment rate is a reflection on the quality of local public schools, as well as the presence of charter schools, nonpublic schools and other educational alternatives in the area. Students who open enroll into District 196 are not included in the calculation.

### Homeschools required to report to district

Families living in District 196 who plan to homeschool their children for the 2020-21 school year must submit a yearly Initial or Intent to Continue Report, as required by state law. The deadline to submit reports for 2020-21 is Oct. 1, 2020.

The report is available at [www.district196.org/academics/homeschool](http://www.district196.org/academics/homeschool). Completed reports should be submitted to **Khia Brown**, director of Community Education, 15180 Canada Ave., Rosemount, MN 55068. For more information or to request a homeschool packet, call 651-423-7722.

