



279,800

The number of breakfasts and lunches served to students since the first day of the 2020-2021 school year

483

Number of people served "at a distance" by School District 197 Community Education Adult Enrichment during the 2020-2021 school year

64,733

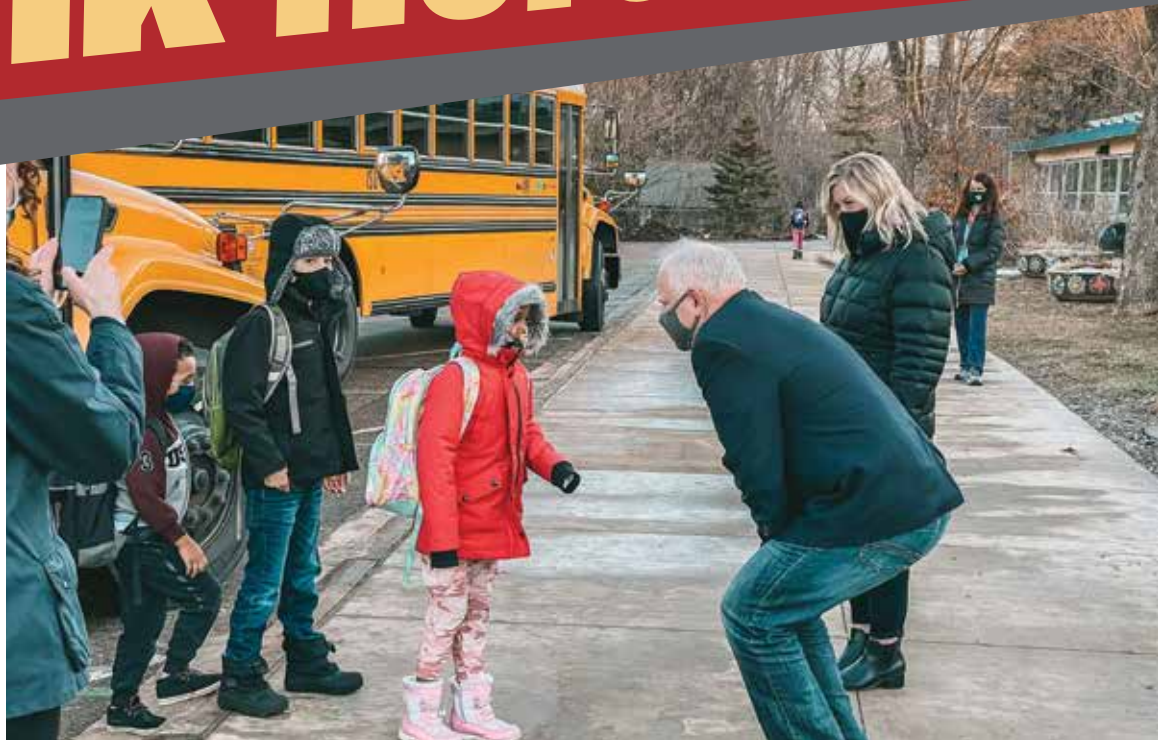
Number of minutes Friendly Hills students read during the school's first annual "I Love to Read"

Read-a-thon between February 8 and March 5

3,852

The number of hours School-Age Care employees have provided emergency child care since the first day of the 2020-2021 school year

In this issue, we feature profiles of the district's cultural liaisons, interpreters, and translators.



Governor Tim Walz and Deputy Commissioner Dr. Heather Mueller greeted students and staff as they arrived for school at Garlough Environmental Magnet School. Students were surprised and excited at the opportunity to meet the Governor. Part of their visit included a short press conference where Governor Walz welcomed students and staff back into the schools and shared progress on the COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

From the Superintendent

Social distancing. If I had said that to you in January 2020, you might have responded with a blank look. Today, "social distancing" joins a number of new words and phrases that are crowding our social consciousness. Masks. Shields. Virus mitigation. Testing protocols. Quarantining. Pfizer. Moderna. It's been a challenging year for everyone.

But today? I can truly say I feel HOPE. Students are back in our schools. I can enter a school building and hear joyful laughter, watch teachers engaging with their students, watch kids swinging on swing sets. What we used to take for granted, now means so much more.

And along with my hope, I also feel thankful. For all of the staff members who continue to go above and beyond in reimagining how to do their jobs. For the partnerships with our local and state health officials who have guided our decision making as we navigated this unique school year. For the families who stepped up for their children as their kitchens, dining rooms, and living rooms were transformed into student learning spaces. And for our students as they bent, flexed, and pivoted as COVID-19 changed how they learn.

In the midst of hope and thankfulness, let's stay vigilant. COVID-19 doesn't care that we desperately want to see and spend time with each other. Despite fraying patience, wear your mask. Get tested. Get vaccinated. Maintain a safe distance from others.

Together, let's put COVID-19 in our rearview mirror.

Peter Olson-Skog
Superintendent

Garlough Environmental Magnet



Warrior Profile:
Xiomara Medina Calderon
Cultural Liaison, Garlough
Environmental Magnet School

“The most fulfilling part of working for the district is that it’s a full circle moment. I’m helping families from the same district that three of my own daughters graduated from, and that my youngest attends now. It feels good knowing I can help these families navigate the educational system to allow them to be part of their children’s schooling. I’m able to provide the support I got and put new systems in place to support the families that need it.”

Garlough 4th Graders Participate in Goal Setting

Garlough 4th grade teachers Jodi Forsberg Carter, Stephanie Skelly, Sheryl Kasella, and Kirstie Cummings are using goal setting to help their students prepare for middle school. The teachers tasked their students with identifying one measurable academic goal they would like to achieve before the next parent-teacher conferences. Students then worked with their teachers to figure out the steps to meet this goal.

“We want students to own their learning more. What are you proud of? And what areas do you need to work on? Just because you didn’t get it right the first time, doesn’t mean you can give up.”

—Stephanie Skelly



working with kids face to face again and to have the opportunity to have the kids in the music room,” says Carlos Siguenza, music teacher at Garlough.

Garlough Kindergartners Explore Rhythm on Drums

Kindergartners at Garlough Environmental Magnet School explored rhythm while learning the basics of how to treat instruments during music class. As they become more comfortable and familiar with the instruments, students will learn to play together in sync as a beginner ensemble. “I am so extremely delighted and excited to be

Mendota

Mendota Elementary School



Mendota Students Celebrate I Love to Read & School Spirit Week

In March, Mendota students participated in “I Love to Read” and School Spirit Week. It was a successful event thanks to the parents, teacher, staff, and student participation. Every grade level had a sledding and hot cocoa event, after-school virtual bingo, and an author and illustrator visit. There were also take-home art projects and NASA selfies!

You are Invited!



Tour Mendota Elementary

Join Mendota Principal Steve Goldade and members of his staff for a tour of the school’s new additions and renovations. The tour will be self-guided with required social distancing and masks. Staff members will be on hand to answer your questions and discuss the updated features of the building.

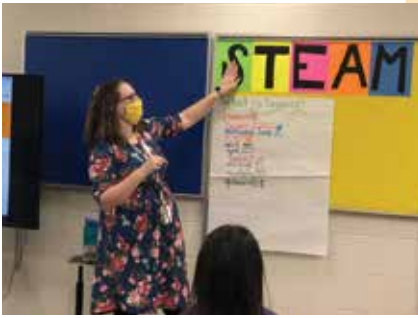
Date: Saturday, April 10
Time: 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Who: You!



Warrior Profile:
Ybeth Jiménez
Spanish Interpreter/Translator,
District-wide

“It is extremely rewarding to be able to contribute to building a bridge between the Latino students and their families and the school by helping them communicate more effectively despite the language barrier — to be able to serve them, to provide the support they need, and to make them feel welcome, comfortable, and important in School District 197.”

Moreland Arts & Health Sciences Magnet School



Full STEAM Ahead at Moreland!

Moreland Arts & Health Sciences Magnet School is excited to announce they have a new class this year called STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math). Students join Caroline Beattie for 60 minutes a week in STEAM. During this class, students participate in building activities, coding and computer activities, logic and thinking, games, and just having a lot of fun! STEAM education is really important for growing creative minds and critical thinkers, as well as increasing innovation and independence.

Geographer Visits Moreland 3rd Graders

Third graders from Mollie Schellinger's class have been studying geography and maps in their current social studies unit. In February, they had a special guest from Dakota County's Office of Geographical Information Systems. Jack Dreas is an intern who shared his knowledge and expertise on landforms, maps, and more. The class enjoyed the visit from a real-life geographer!



Warrior Profile: Lidia Miranda Carrillo

Cultural Liaison & Family Support Worker, Moreland Arts & Health Sciences Magnet

“What I find most rewarding about my position at Moreland are the connections I am able to make with not only students and staff but also with parents and guardians. By practicing authentic caring, I have been able to witness families practice higher academic engagement, reach out for support with basic needs, and find community at Moreland.”

Pilot Knob STEM Magnet

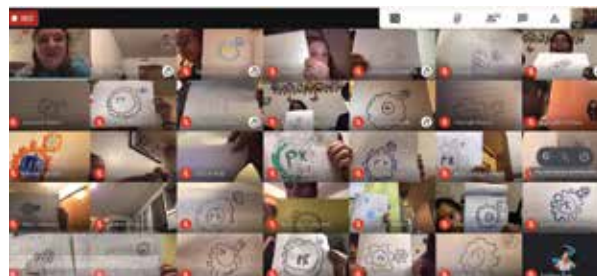
Pilot Knob Students Practice Critical-Thinking Skills

Pilot Knob 2nd graders in Ikhlas Abdelkhalig's class have been practicing their inferential thinking. In a recent lesson, students were tasked with making inferences about a character from a book they were reading. This exercise helps students improve their skills in drawing conclusions and making educated guesses.



Students, Families Participate in Virtual Family Fun Night

Instead of cancelling the Family Fun Night (a big Pilot Knob tradition), the Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School teachers and staff decided to host a virtual Family Fun Night. Jeff Oppenheim, Char Kascht, Andrea Boe, Ryan Schmitt, Haley Howard, Haley Burns, Jessi Nelson, and their grade-level teams created and presented “LIVE” virtual events for students and their families. More than 160 students and their families joined the Virtual Family Fun Night. After a welcome from Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog, students had their choice of PK Bingo, Home Scavenger Hunt, Black History Kahoot, Art Drawing, and a Literacy Kahoot.



Warrior Profile:

Amal Younis

Cultural Liaison, District-wide

“The most fulfilling and rewarding aspect of my position is seeing the growth of students and families on a daily basis. I am excited to continue working towards building strong relationships between schools and families.”

Somerset Elementary School

Somerset Students Celebrate 100 Days of School



In March, Somerset Elementary 1st graders celebrated the 100th day of school! They commemorated the day by dressing up like 100-year-old people.



Warrior Profile:
Khong Xiong
Cultural Liaison, District-wide

Kindness Week Activities Benefit Local Organizations



This year, students and staff at Somerset Elementary School continued their Kindness Day and service learning approach to Valentine's Day — but with a Covid twist. Somerset Stars have participated in lessons and projects to benefit several local organizations including: Neighbors Inc., DARTS, local hospitals, police and fire stations (essential workers), and one project to be used in their own backyards! Throughout the week, Somerset students explored the following questions:

- How can we help the hungry? (Giving Cups to collect coins for Neighbors Inc.)
- How can we help animals? (Bird Feeders)
- How can we help the elderly? (Letters and Origami Hearts for DARTS)
- Why do we share our gratitude? (Big Heart Hero Awards for Essential Workers)

“The favorite part of my job is helping parents and students find the community resources they need to have peace of mind, having meaningful conversations, and educating each other about our culture and language.”

Friendly Hills Middle School

Friendly Hills Student Participates in Future City Competition

Shanmuka B., a 7th grader at Friendly Hills Middle School, met with judges via Zoom to compete in this year's virtual Future City Competition. Lunar City, located on the Maria on the Moon, boasts a safe city with no pandemics or pollution, as well as futuristic smartwatch technology to keep citizens safe and connected. Crystal Mielke, a Friendly Hills science teacher and Future Cities advisor, said, “Shanmuka did a great job answering the judges' questions, and I am so proud of all the hard work and research he put into the project!”

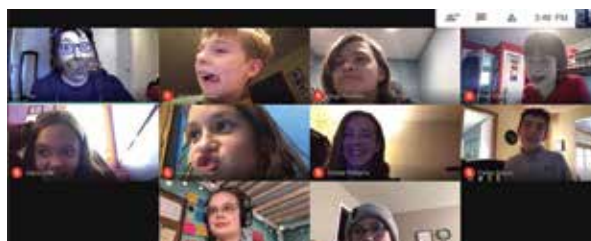


Warrior Profile:
Mary Pirela
Interpreter/Translator,
District-wide

“To help Latino families overcome the communication barriers of a school system unknown to them so their children can have the support they need to be successful is the most rewarding part of my position.”

Students Compete in Regional Knowledge Bowl

Friendly Hills students are participating in the academic trivia competition Knowledge Bowl for the first year ever. A group of 12 students representing all grades signed up to compete against other schools in the regional Knowledge Bowl, and immediately began preparing their trivia skills on every subject from math to geography to poetry. But when the Knowledge Bowl organizers had to cancel the official season,



FHMS students were not deterred, and vowed to make their own competition. The two teams then completed their first “official” virtual meet against one another. Team “Yer a Quizzard, Harry” just barely beat out team “Quizzards of Oz” by only two points. The group hopes to hold at least two more meets by the end of the year.

Heritage

Heritage E-STEM Magnet School



Heritage Boosters Say "Thank You" to Staff

Through Heritage family donations and a Culver's night fundraiser, Heritage Boosters were able to give every teacher and staff member a cute bag with a sweet note, big cookie from Mama Bear's Sweets, and a \$10 gift card to Amore Coffee in West St. Paul.

Heritage Students Learn Boundary Waters History

Kim Young from Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness presented to 5th grade social studies classes at Heritage E-STEM Magnet School

in March. Students learned about the history of the BWCA, including the American Indian tribes and the French fur traders who once inhabited the area. "I hope that this helped to make our distance learning social studies lessons more real for students," said Leigh Danner, social studies teacher at Heritage. "I hope that it inspires them to get outside and into a canoe if they ever get the opportunity to visit the BWCA!"



Warrior Profile:

Yolanda Beltran

Cultural Liaison,
Heritage E-STEM Magnet School

"I feel very proud to be Mexican-American. I didn't have the opportunity to learn English until I was 13, but it's never too late to learn."

Warrior Academy

Online



What is Warrior Online Academy?

Pending approval from the Minnesota Department of Education, School District 197 is planning to debut Warrior Online Academy in fall 2021. Warrior Online Academy is an online learning option for School District 197 students

in grades K-12. Warrior Online Academy will leverage what we have learned from the full-time distance learning option in our school district and adds enhancements and adjustments based on suggestions from students, teachers, and parents/guardians.

Who is Warrior Online Academy for?

Warrior Online Academy is an optional program for families who would like their children to learn online for the 2021-2022 school year.



How do I register my student?

Registration will open in mid April and will be communicated to all families via district and school communication including email, the district website, and social media. Registration will be open for 12 days and interested families will need to complete an application for their child. Please note that registration is not guaranteed.

How can I learn more?

Once registration opens, the district will host information sessions for families where additional information will be provided and families can ask questions. Families will also have the option to sign up for individual online meetings where they can ask their own questions of district staff.



**Registration
Opens April 19**



High School

High School



Natalie Meyers Named National Merit Finalist

Congratulations to Henry Sibley High School senior Natalie Meyers, who was named a National Merit Semifinalist this past fall, and has advanced to finalist standing in the 65th annual National Merit Scholarship Program. She was one of approximately 15,000 semifinalists nationally who were notified this spring that they have advanced to the finalist standing.

Henry Sibley Student Earns National Debate Award

Henry Sibley senior Aaron Rajput has been named a recipient of the prestigious National Speech and Debate Associations' Academic All American Award. Of the 14,000 students members involved in the program, less than one percent receive this award each year. In order to be eligible, students must show academic rigor, speech and debate success, and personal excellence. A couple of Rajput's accomplishments during his time in speech and debate include: qualifying for this year's varsity semifinals in the Minnesota Classic Debate League State Tournament and earning a spot to compete in the Speech for the National Individual Events Tournament of Champions for the last two seasons. He did this all while maintaining a high GPA.



Warrior Profile:
Allicia Waukau-Butler
American Indian Cultural
Liaison, District-wide

"I enjoy working for my community and supporting education and cultural simultaneously in School District 197."



Three Sibley Students Earn Optimist Essay Contest Awards

Congratulations to the following Henry Sibley AVID students who competed in this year's Optimist Club International Essay Contest. Students wrote and submitted an essay on the topic: "Reaching your dreams by choosing optimism." Hannah Hayes earned 1st place and will advance to the regional contest where she will be eligible for a \$2,500 scholarship. Other winners included Paige Novak (2nd place) and Elise Buzzell (3rd place).

High School Name Change



District Seeks High School Name Committee Participants

In December, the School District 197 School Board made a decision to change the name of our high school and work with stakeholders to develop options for a new name. As part of this process, the School Board has decided to form a School District 197 High School Name Committee and is requesting help from our community to help develop the name options. We are seeking students, staff, families, alumni, and community members who can bring a diversity of experience, age, race, ethnicity, and gender to the naming process.

committee, please visit www.isd197.org/district/high-school-name-change. Please review the meeting dates to ensure you are available and then complete the online application by Friday, April 2.

We anticipate a great response to help develop name options for our high school. The selection of the committee members will be made by the superintendent after a careful review of submissions for the committee. It is unlikely that all of those seeking to participate on the committee will be selected. However, we will also provide opportunities for all stakeholders to provide input or feedback about potential school names during the process. Applicants who are selected will be notified on Tuesday, April 13.

Participation on the committee means a commitment to four virtual evening meetings and it is important that team members commit to attending all sessions. If you are interested in serving on the

If you have any questions about the High School Name Committee, please contact Carrie Ardito, the director of communications, at carrie.ardito@isd197.org.

Equity News

District Forms Equity Advisory Committee

To support the district's work in the Strategic Framework focus area of equity, School District 197 formed an Equity Advisory Committee. The committee is comprised of approximately 20 district staff members, students, and families who have a variety of experiences and perspectives along with a sense of urgency and commitment to making sure the school district is more inclusive and equitable. "This team will continue to have authentic input into our policies and practices that we hope result in more equitable experiences and outcomes for our students and families," explains Maria Roberts, the district's equity coordinator.

District Equity Audit to Identify Inequities, Future Work

With support from Sankore Consulting and Dr. Lanise Block, School District 197 is in the midst of conducting an equity audit, which will help guide the work of the district's equity focus area in the Strategic Framework. In addition to student data, the audit will provide insights into student and family perspectives related to equitable practices and systems as well as highlight some specific practices and policies that need updating. The district's Equity Advisory can use the information to help guide the school district in its action planning related to our equity priority.

"Sometimes, when we are in the midst of the system, it can be harder to see the inequitable practices, programs, and policies," says Assistant Superintendent Peter Mau. "The equity audit will help us understand the inequities that exist in our school district and be a springboard to creating a more equitable organization."

Standing Up For Our Asian American Community Members

"As a community, we must live our values. In School District 197, two points in our strategic framework clearly define our values especially as it relates to lifting up our Asian American community members and serving as allies in their time of need. First, our diversity makes us stronger. Second, seeking to understand each other strengthens the individual and the community. Let's commit as a community to not remaining silent when we see injustice and hatred. As our district tagline says, Together, We Thrive."

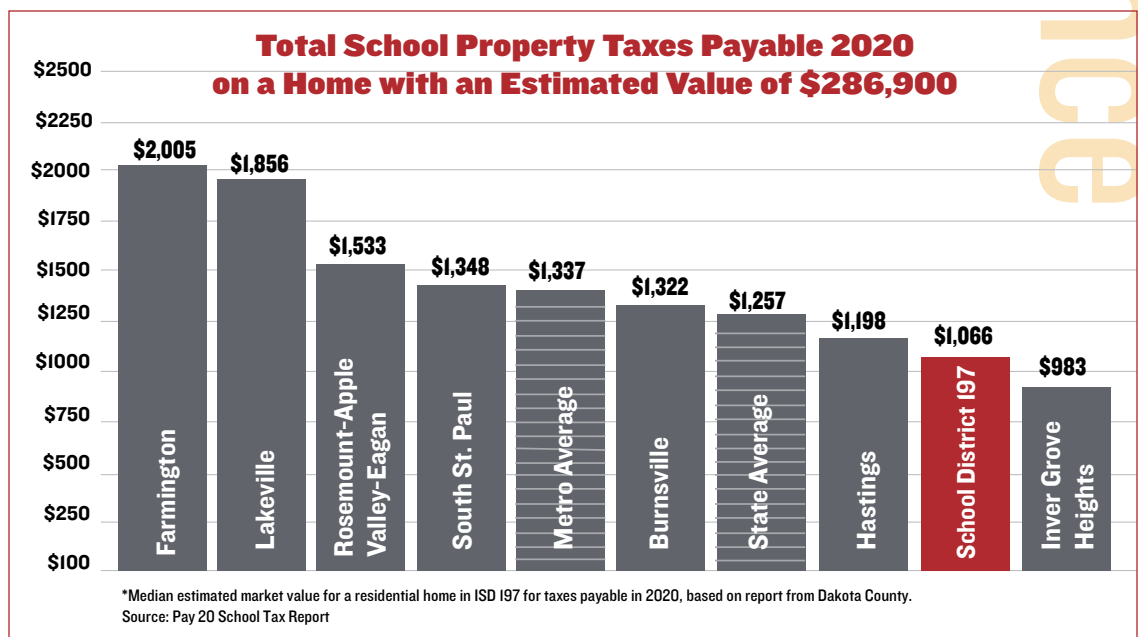
—Peter Olson-Skog, Superintendent

Your Property Tax Statement: What Do the School Taxes Mean?

Property owners in School District 197 will be receiving their property valuation notices soon. As part of the property valuation, community members will receive estimates for their property taxes payable in 2022. A portion of those property taxes are school district taxes and generated based on four components:

- **Operating Levy:** These are voter-approved funds that go to pay for non-facilities-related district expenses such as teachers' salaries and classroom supplies.
- **Tech Levy:** These are voter-approved funds dedicated to supporting the district's technology-related expenses such as computers, software, and support.
- **Bond Referendum:** These are voter-approved funds that pay for facilities-related renovations and additions.
- **Other Categorical Funds:** A number of taxes fall into this category including those that pay for school security, long-term facilities maintenance, and the leasing of educational space.

Thanks to a vibrant tax base and strong fiscal management, School District 197 community members are fortunate to get a good value for the school-based property taxes they pay.





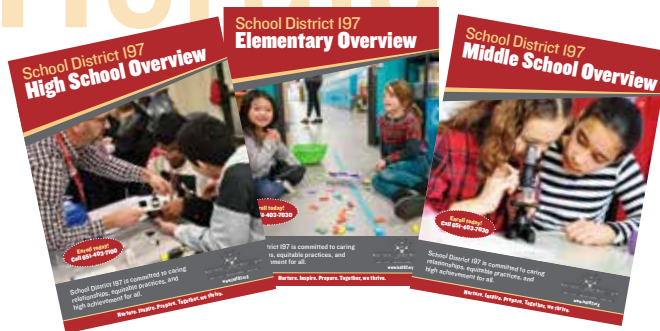
West St. Paul + Mendota Heights + Eagan Area

1897 Delaware Ave.
Mendota Heights, MN 55118
www.isd197.org

Hank Herald

Learn more about School District 197 Schools

Visit isd197.org to check out our school overview booklets and fact sheets to find out about how our students learn in innovative environments that promote curiosity, creativity, and courageous action!



Branch Out Students Celebrate Bus Drivers

Students at Branch Out wanted to make sure their bus drivers know how much they are appreciated! During Bus Driver Appreciation Week, they created signs and surprised their drivers with them! #TogetherWeThrive

Register Today for SAC Summer School!

School-Age Care (SAC) Summer Camp provides students entering kindergarten through grade 8 with a full day of recreational activities and supervision. Students enjoy guest presenters, a variety of creative, enriching activities, and access to the SAC Bike Fleet! For more information and to register, contact Necole Berglund at necole.berglund@isd197.org or 651-403-8054.

Early Learning Programs Welcome Back Students, Families

Early learning staff across School District 197 welcomed back students in person in February. The program currently has 45 students in virtual preschool, 101 preschoolers learning in person, and 100 families participating in Early Childhood and Family Education (ECFE) classes. "We are so excited to see our students smiling faces in person and to be able to continue to offer a virtual preschool experience to those families that want it," says Laurie Hume, assistant director of early learning for School District 197. "We have worked very hard to meet the needs of our community, and we are thankful for the families who have participated in our early learning programs."

