

Spotlight

Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools



DISTRICT196

One District. Infinite Possibilities.

Winter 2021 | Volume 62 • Number 2

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

District spending and reporting p.2

New winter weather protocols p.5

Attendance-area adjustments p.8-9

Mohamed, Virnig and Coulson elected to School Board

District 196 voters elected **Sakawdin Mohamed**, **Bianca Virnig** and **Art Coulson** to three open School Board seats in the Nov. 2 school district election. The board canvassed official election results for all 14 combined school district precincts at its Nov. 8 regular meeting.

Mohamed, an Eagan resident and first-time candidate for School Board, led all vote-getters with 9,783 votes. He and his wife have six children, including four current District 196 students, one recent graduate and a future District 196 student, according to his candidate profile for the media. He is a budget and revenue manager for the state Financial Services Section and was twice appointed by governors to serve on the Minnesota Commission on National and Community Service.

Virnig, also of Eagan, finished second with 9,623 votes to win election to the board in her second attempt, the first in 2017. She and her husband have three children, all currently enrolled in District 196 schools. She is a facilities and environmental health and safety specialist for the educational services cooperative Metro ECSU and is currently serving as regional COVID coordinator for metro-area schools. Virnig is also a member of the district's Budget Advisory Council.



Sakawdin Mohamed



Bianca Virnig



Art Coulson

<< continued on page 6 >>

Survey seeks input on desired daily experience in 196

The District 196 administration and School Board are encouraging students, parents, guardians and employees to help define the desired daily experience in District 196 by completing a short survey available through Dec. 17 on the front page of the district website at District196.org.

As a parent or guardian of a District 196 student, what would you like to experience on an everyday basis? "I receive clear and consistent information from my child's teacher and school," for example. Similarly, for parents and guardians, what do they want their child's daily school experience to be like? Expressed from the student's perspective, one example is, "My teachers know and care about me."

The surveys are an important step in the district's strategic organizational planning work this year. The themes identified in these surveys will define the desired daily experience for students, families and employees in District 196 and will provide the foundation for developing the district's vision and an initial three-year operational plan starting with the 2022-23 school year.

The survey is open through Dec. 17. All answers are collected anonymously and the survey is completely voluntary. It is appropriate for students in grade 6 and above.

To take the survey, go to: www.District196.org/DDE.



Seeing science up close

Fifth-grade students at Glacier Hills Elementary School of Arts and Science peer into makeshift terrariums as part of a science unit on ecosystems. During this project, students get an up-close look at how organisms work together to create a sustainable living environment and explore the lifecycle of plants. This real-world learning opportunity is just one of many available to students attending our magnet schools, which are accepting applications for the 2022-23 school year. Learn more about our magnet school program and how to apply on page 11.

DISTRICT196.ORG

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

NONDISCRIMINATION NOTICE:

As required by Title IX and other state and federal nondiscrimination laws, District 196 does not discriminate in employment or in any of its education 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) is the designated Title IX Coordinator and has also been designated to respond to employment-related inquiries regarding the district's non-discrimination policies. The Director of Elementary Education, Sally Soliday (651-423-7782 – sally.soliday@district196.org) and the Director of Secondary Education, Michael Bolsoni (651-423-7712 – michael.bolsoni@district196.org) have been designated to respond to student-related inquiries regarding the district's non-discrimination policies. The Director of Special Education, Janet Fimmen (651-423-7629 – janet.fimmen@district196.org) has been designated to respond to inquiries concerning the rights of a student with a disability. The mailing address for all directors is 3455 153rd Street W, Rosemount, MN 55068. Title IX inquiries may also be referred to the Assistant Secretary of the US Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

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

District 196 spends higher percentage on regular classroom instruction

In fiscal year 2020, District 196 spent less per pupil on general fund operating expenditures than the averages for school districts statewide, in the metro area, and Minnesota's 10-largest districts. While spending less per pupil in total, District 196 spent a higher percentage on regular classroom instruction compared to the averages statewide, in the metro area and the 10-largest districts.

Each spring, the Minnesota Department of Education makes available financial data for all public operating elementary and secondary independent school districts in the state. District 196 is the fourth largest school district in Minnesota.

Comparable expenditure data for fiscal year 2020 shows that District 196 spent less per pupil than the averages for the state, metro area and 10-largest districts in four of the 10 categories of the general fund, including district administration, operations and maintenance, pupil support services, and transportation. Conversely, in the category of regular instruction, District 196 spent approximately \$303 more per pupil than the average for districts statewide and \$215 more per pupil than the average for districts in the metro area. The regular instruction average for the 10-largest districts was higher, but not as a percentage of total general fund expenditures compared to District 196.

Expenditures Per Pupil for Fiscal Year 2020

Expenditure Category	District 196	State Average	Metro Average	10 Largest Average**
Regular Instruction	\$5,801	\$5,498	\$5,586	\$6,039
Special Education	2,606	2,510	2,407	2,649
Operations, Maintenance & Other*	751	941	921	908
Student Transportation*	654	795	789	838
Instructional Support Services	702	662	712	810
School-Level Administration	580	514	496	546
District-Level Administration*	523	640	609	534
Student Activities & Athletics	268	332	329	232
Pupil Support Services*	283	410	432	536
Career & Technical Instruction	173	174	164	179
TOTAL General Fund Operating Expenditures	\$12,341	\$12,476	\$12,445	\$13,271

* Category where District 196 spent less per pupil than the averages for the state, metro area and 10-largest districts.

** The 10-largest school districts in Minnesota in FY 2020 were, in order from largest: Anoka-Hennepin, St. Paul, Minneapolis, District 196, Osseo, South Washington County, Rochester, Elk River, Robbinsdale and Wayzata

District 196 recognized again for excellence in financial reporting

For the 19th year in a row, District 196 earned the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO).

The Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting is the highest recognition of school district financial operations offered by ASBO, a professional organization with more than 6,000 members. The program reviews and critiques district accounting practices as represented in the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, and recognizes school districts that meet or exceed the program's high standards for financial reporting and accountability.

This year's Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting recognizes the preparation and issuance of the district's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for fiscal year 2020. The report is available on the Finance Department page of the district website at District196.org, along with financial reports and annual budgets for the current year and previous nine years.

"Winning this award for over 15 years generates pride in our district and its efforts to go beyond the minimum requirements in providing transparency in its financial statements, said **Andy Schornack**, a Rosemount resident who currently chairs the district's Budget Advisory Council.

"The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report provides full disclosure of the financials and is readily available to anyone who wants to review them. This recognition reflects the hard work of the district's Finance Department and their high standards for financial reporting."

Staff overcoming chaos of COVID-19 challenges to bring calm to classrooms for students

By **Mary M. Kreger**, superintendent

The 2021-22 school year started with hints of normalcy and a return to routines that were turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic.



We started in person and have been able to continue learning at school five days a week for the first three months of the year thanks to health and safety mitigation strategies like mask wearing, air filtration, frequent cleaning and hand washing, and staying home when sick.

Despite these efforts, the current surge in COVID-19 cases in our state and within our district threaten our ability to continue to adequately staff our schools for our 29,000 students and their families who count on us each day. We will do everything we can to continue in-person learning, but I ask all parents and guardians to have a plan in place in case we should face the need to quickly shift to online learning. To help keep us learning in person, we strongly encourage you to get vaccinated when eligible, screen for COVID-19 if asymptomatic and stay home and get tested if symptomatic.

Challenges

I've visited a lot of schools and classrooms this fall and am grateful for the calm and caring learning environments that our teachers, administrators and support staff are working so hard to provide amid the chaos of COVID-19 challenges that our schools are facing every day. The challenges continue to weigh heavy on us all, as individuals, both physically and emotionally. Collectively, as a school district, we feel the gravity of the pandemic in almost everything we do, from daily staffing shortages in almost every position to supply chain issues that force frequent menu changes as staff work to source nutritious food to serve our students.

We continue to balance the interests of public health and public education. Our collective effort at mitigating the

spread of COVID-19 will play a critical role in how our district navigates the second half of this school year. As a community, it remains imperative that we work together and stay focused on educating our children.

Successes

The disruption in education over the past two years is showing up in many students who are struggling socially and academically. But every day, our teachers and staff are adjusting to the needs of students and working to ensure safety and success for each of them. Our educators are rising to the challenge because they are committed to doing whatever it takes to support the students they serve. The grit and resilience of our students and staff during this time is awe inspiring.

The following are examples of how our high schools are overcoming the challenges of COVID to support the infinite possibilities of our students.

- A group of Apple Valley High School students identified a problem, proposed solutions and pitched their ideas in meetings with local business and community leaders. These real-world learning experiences are provided through Apple Valley's flourishing partnerships with local businesses and organizations.
- Eagan High School brought its annual Veterans' Day recognition ceremony back in person this year and hosted a beautiful reception and tribute for local veterans and their families.
- Eastview High School's concerts and drama returned to the stage this fall, and members of their speech and debate program were notified that Eastview ranked third in the Top 100 schools in the nation for the number of new participants in 2021 (Eagan High ranked ninth).
- Rosemount High School's award-winning marching band has been invited to perform in the 134th Annual Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif. on Jan. 2, 2023 (see article on page 10).

- And at the School of Environmental Studies, juniors recently wrapped up their investigative pond projects, representing hours of preparation, data gathering, testing and analysis to create profile reports that they presented to City of Eagan staff.

The social media dilemma

Our children's use of social media is having a negative impact on learning and the climate in our schools. At the beginning of this school year, school districts nationwide were confronted with a TikTok challenge that encouraged students to steal and damage school property. Rumors and misinformation can spread rapidly on social media, and students and adults alike can be quick to respond with fear, anger and calls to action. Much of the online bullying and inappropriate messaging by students happens outside of our schools, but the responses they generate can quickly make their way into our buildings and become disruptive to learning. We need parents and guardians to monitor their children's use of social media and partner with us in supporting good digital citizenship.

From chaos to calm

As we look forward to 2022, we are confident in putting to use all that we have learned through the challenges and difficulties of the pandemic to better serve our students. Falcon Ridge Middle School sixth-grade teacher **Jessica Aelits** aptly summed it up this way. "I know these things to be true: our jobs are hard, the pandemic stinks and children cast a light so bright that we cannot help but to see the world a bit more clearly." As a district and as educational leaders, we remain on our journey of continuous improvement and our mission of providing students with boundless opportunities to pursue their infinite possibilities.



Enrollment is up from last year and growing, but not back to pre-pandemic levels yet

After declining slightly last year due to family choices driven by COVID-19, District 196 enrollment is up 78 students (0.27 percent) this year to 29,086 total students, according to the Oct. 1, 2021 enrollment count presented at the Oct. 11 School Board meeting.

The district submitted its official Oct. 1 enrollment report to the Minnesota Department of Education. The state uses the Oct. 1 count to determine some of the funding school districts receive from the state and the district uses the numbers to make final budget and staffing allocations to schools.

District enrollment hit an all-time high of 29,233 students two years ago in October 2019. Enrollment had increased for seven years straight until October 2020, when it decreased by 215 students (0.74 percent). Some families chose to keep kindergarten-eligible students out of school last year and some chose education alternatives like private schools and homeschooling. Although not yet back to pre-pandemic levels, Director of Finance and Operations **Mark Stotts** told the School Board the district's tax base is growing, housing is growing and more families are moving into the district.

"We do still project growth in the district," Stotts said. "If you look at it from a statewide perspective or even a nationwide perspective, our enrollment is up while a lot of districts are still down. The reputation this district has built over the years and the fact that families have indicated it is a place they want to be for the education of their students, I think we are in a really good position going forward."

The largest class in the district this year is grade 9, with 2,367 students, and the smallest is grade 1, with 1,880 students. The breakdown by level shows that on Oct. 1, 2021, the district had:

- 11,968 elementary school students (grades K-5), an increase of 47 students from last year;
- 6,437 middle school students



Students arrived for the first day of school at Rosemount Elementary School on Sept. 8.

(grades 6-8), a decrease of 130;

- 9,150 high school students (grades 9-12), an increase of 172;
- 1,085 students in center-based special education programs, an increase of 15, and
- 446 students in early childhood special education, a decrease of 26 students from last year.

Students of color represent 41 percent of total enrollment, up 1 percent from last year and 5 percent higher than the state average last year. Fifty-eight-point-six percent of students are White, 14.2 percent Black, 10.9 percent Hispanic, 8.2 percent Asian, 7.6 percent two or more races, 0.4 percent American Indian, and 0.1 percent

New online form streamlines student absence reporting

In November, the district launched a new online form that all District 196 families should now use to report students absent from school. The Online Absence Notification System allows families to report an illness or other absence, sign a student out of school and alert staff of if a student is going to be late. Once submitted, the system will notify staff at the school

"... our enrollment is up while a lot of districts are still down. ... I think we are in a really good position going forward."

- **Mark Stotts**, director of finance and operations

Pacific Islander.

Students who qualify to receive English Learner (EL) services represent 7.6 percent of total enrollment, down from 8 percent last year and slightly less than the 8.4 percent state average.

and send confirmation to the user.

The link to the form is located on the Attendance page of all school websites, under Families, and on the Contact page. It is also available on the Español and Soomaali language pages, which can be accessed in the black utility bar on the top of all District 196 websites.

Weather-related schedule changes include 'snow days' and new E-Learning Days

Beginning this year, days when the normal school schedule needs to change as a result of excessive snow or extreme cold, the first two of these days in any one school year will be school cancellations ("snow days"), with no regular classes at school or online. If there are additional days beyond the first two (inclement weather days 3-7), students and teachers would work from home during an E-Learning Day, new this year.

Snow Days (days 1-2)

If/when school is canceled the first two times in a single school year, same as in years past there would be no regular classes for all students (including 196Online) and the following activities would also be canceled:

- School-Age Care (SAC);
- all daytime and after-school Community Education activities, Adult Basic Education (ABE), Transition Plus, Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) classes;
- all elementary and middle school after-school and evening activities, and
- a decision about high school after-school and evening activities, including Community Education, would be made and communicated by mid-afternoon.

E-Learning Days (days 3-7)

If/when there is a third inclement weather day in one year, all students scheduled to have school that day would participate in an E-Learning Day from home.

If an E-Learning Day is called, teachers will communicate with students through Seesaw and Schoology to post assignments, instructional activities and resources to guide students' learning for part of that day, but there would be no synchronous (Zoom) instruction. Students would be expected to access Seesaw or Schoology in the morning and be engaged in learning, with flexibility in how and when they choose to do the work.

Teachers would be available during

regular school hours to respond to student and family questions sent by email and phone call messages left on their work voicemail, but there would be no synchronous (Zoom) office-hour sessions.

The state allows districts to have up to five E-Learning Days per school year. Students are considered in attendance for an E-Learning Day unless a parent or guardian contacts the school to verify an absence.

2-Hour Delayed Start

If the opening of school is delayed for weather, school buses operate on a two-hour delayed schedule, meaning students are picked up at their bus stops two hours later than their normal pickup time. When there is a two-hour delayed start, the following activities are canceled:

- SAC (morning only);
- ABE classes (morning only);
- ECSE and ECFE classes (morning and afternoon);
- Connections Preschool classes (morning and afternoon), and
- Community Education activities (morning only).

Communicating Schedule Changes

Information regarding school cancellations, delayed starts and

E-Learning Days is communicated in the following ways: on district and school websites first (a popup will appear with information), a phone call from the superintendent to parents and staff, a text message (text "Y" to 67587 to opt in, message and data rates may apply), district social media, the district information line recording (651-423-7700) and on local television stations (look for "Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools").

Snow-related schedule changes -

The superintendent will make a decision by 5:30 a.m. to delay the start of school or cancel school. No communication is shared if school will start on time

Cold weather-related schedule changes -

The superintendent will make a decision by 6:30 p.m. the night before. District 196 schools will cancel school for cold weather if the National Weather Service forecast for 6 a.m. the following morning calls for:

- Air temperature of -25 degrees Fahrenheit or colder, or
- Wind chill of -35 degrees Fahrenheit or colder.

If school is canceled for cold weather, SAC is offered at predetermined locations only for families already enrolled in SAC.

Apply for Educational Benefits to earn funding for schools

All District 196 students ages 18 and younger can receive free school meals again this year through special funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

All families are encouraged to complete an Educational Benefits Application,

formerly the free and reduced-price meals application, even though meals are free this year. An approval for educational benefits also allows families to receive discounted or free activity participation and/or fees for Community Education activities, AND it benefits your child's school.

The Educational Benefits Program directly supports your child's school with compensatory aid, which is

determined by how many families apply. This critical funding provides additional teachers, additional instructional materials, math and reading support, and additional paraprofessionals and social workers.

Apply at District196.org/edbenefits/.

The process is safe, secure and private. Only one application is needed per household, but a new application must be submitted each year. Paper applications are also available from the front office at every school. If you have any questions about completing the application, please call 651-683-6958 or email nutrition@district196.org and staff will be happy to help.

Earn a living *and* make a difference in students' lives working in 196

Like most business and organizations, District 196 has immediate job opportunities with competitive pay and benefits. Unlike most employers, District 196 also offers the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children and the priceless rewards that provides.

District 196 has immediate openings for positions listed below. For more information and to apply online, go to District196.org and click on "Employment"

Substitute teachers earn \$165 for a full day and \$99 for a half day. Applicants must have a current Minnesota teacher's license and must attend an orientation.

Substitute paraprofessionals are paid \$16 per hour. Applicants must be available Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. most weeks; be willing to work at multiple schools; pass a pre-employment physical and background check; complete online Personal Care Assistant training and an orientation.

Substitute school nurses are paid \$27 per hour. Applicants must be a licensed LPN or RN (preferred), be available weekdays during the school year and attend a substitute nurse orientation.

Custodians earn \$19.57 per hour (\$14.50 per hour for substitutes). Typical hours are 3 to 11:30 p.m.; perform custodial duties and be able to lift up to 50 pounds on a regular basis, and pass a pre-employment physical and background check.

Bus drivers earn \$19.03 per hour. Prefer individuals who are available for both morning and afternoon routes. Training provided to obtain necessary licensure. Benefits available at 23 or more hours per week.

Food service associates earn \$17.53 per hour (\$14.50 per hour starting wage for substitutes). Regular and substitute positions are available, three to five hours per day.

Board approves 2.8-percent increase in proposed tax levy

In September, the School Board approved a proposed 2021 (payable 2022) property tax levy at the maximum amount allowed by the state and is expected to certify the final tax levy for the same amount as part of the annual truth-in-taxation hearing at the Dec. 13 board meeting.

The proposed tax levy is \$124,898,864, an increase of \$3,433,449 or 2.83 percent compared to the levy for payable 2021 property taxes. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) calculates the maximum levy limitation for each public school district in the state. By law, the final levy approved by the board in December may not be greater than the proposed levy, except for adjustments made by the state and voter-approved operating levy increases.

The 2021 property tax levy will provide revenue for the 2022-23 school year. For many of the individual levy categories that make up the district's total tax levy, there is corresponding state aid that would be reduced if the district levies less than the maximum amount in those categories.

Election

<< *continued from page 1* >>

Coulson, an incumbent, garnered 9,211 votes to claim the third open seat. He was first appointed to the board in 2008 and was re-elected Nov. 2 to his fourth term. He and his wife live in Apple Valley and have two grown daughters who graduated from District 196 schools. Coulson is the communications lead for the Disability Services Division at the state Department of Human Services.

The newly-elected board members will be sworn in at the Jan. 10 regular board meeting to begin their four-year terms, which run from January 2022 to January 2026.

Official vote totals for the other 13 candidates in order of finish are as follows: **Kim Bauer**, 8,682 votes; **Curtis Henry**, 8,215 votes; **Kayla Hauser**, 7,781 votes; incumbent **Craig Angrimson**,

In mid-November, Dakota County mailed notices to individual property owners showing estimated taxes based on proposed levies approved by the school district, cities, the county and other taxing agencies.

Director of Finance and Operations **Mark Stotts** said the biggest reasons for the increase are the annual inflationary adjustment to the district's operating levy referendum approved by voters in 2019, and an increase in the lease levy for certificates of participation that will be issued to fund the purchase of the Silver Bell Learning Center building in Eagan early in 2022.

Stotts said the district's tax capacity and market capacity rates increased by over 5 percent, meaning district taxes are spread over a larger tax base. The tax impact on a particular property, he added, will depend on its assessed value. If a property's assessed value did not increase from last year, he said the increase in school taxes would be less than the 2.83 percent increase to the district's proposed 2021 property tax levy.

1,548 votes; **Derek J. Kottke**, 1,512 votes; **Kyle Anderson**, 1,095 votes; **Jacob Mark Rylander**, 1,075 votes; **John Schaefer**, 690 votes; **Loren Jay Balazs**, 470 votes; **Jessica Turner**, 257 votes; **Teresa A. Maki**, 246 votes; **Kaia Zeigler**, 244 votes, and **Rebecca Gierok**, 213 votes.

There were 109,951 registered voters in District 196 on Election Day and 20,918 voters cast ballots in the school board election, representing 19 percent of registered voters. The last time there was an election with only School Board positions on the ballot in 2017, voter turnout was 5 percent.

The current terms of Coulson, Angrimson and **Mike Roseen** expire Jan. 3, 2022. Roseen, who was first elected to the board in 1989, did not seek re-election to a ninth term.

District 196 Foundation is working to eliminate barriers to learning for our students

The District 196 Foundation is working to eliminate barriers to learning by ensuring students have consistent access to food, books to keep them reading during the summer and instruments so they can participate in band. To date, funding from the foundation has provided:

- 40,000 bags of nutritious weekend food for nearly 1,000 students facing hunger issues;
- 75,000 new books for 2,500 elementary school students to help keep them reading and learning in summer, and
- 380 refurbished instruments for students to participate in band

Additionally, this past year the foundation provided start-up funds to a group of District 196 middle and high school students who brought the issue of period poverty to their attention. Funds from the foundation are being used to ensure that feminine hygiene products are available at every school in the district. The District 196



Students in District 196 facing hunger issues receive bags of weekend food in their backpacks every Friday during the school year. The Every Meal program is supported through donations from the foundation and individuals and organizations in the community.

Foundation also provided funding to the Back-to-School Supply Project to ensure that every child has the supplies they need for school.

You can help eliminate barriers to learning! A \$215 donation provides a child with weekend food for a year and there are additional children who could

be added with more funding. A \$30 donation would provide funding for 10 new, age-appropriate books for a child, and a \$25 donation supports a refurbished donated instrument for a child who cannot afford to rent or buy one to participate in band.

To make your tax-deductible donation, visit www.district196foundation.org or send a check payable to The District 196 Foundation, 15180 Canada Ave, Rosemount MN 55068. For more information, call Community Education Director **Khia Brown** at 651-423-7720

Join the Foundation

The District 196 Foundation is seeking applicants for its volunteer Board of Directors. Directors serve a three-year term with the option to serve up to nine total years. The Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday, every other month, at 6 p.m. Apply online at <https://bit.ly/3oBYRQq/>. For more information, call Community Education Director **Khia Brown** at 651-423-7720.

Ochocki earns career achievement award for social work

District 196 Coordinator of Student Support and Social Emotional Learning **Dr. Stephanie Ochocki**



Stephanie Ochocki

is the recipient of the 2021 Career Achievement Award from the Minnesota School Social Workers Association. The award highlights Ochocki's exemplary work in social work, student wellness advocacy and educational equity.

Ochocki was a social worker with the Anoka-Hennepin School District for 15 years prior to joining District 196. During her tenure, she was instrumental in implementing robust student support systems, along with providing staff, administration and educational teams professional development and training on mental health issues to meet the social, emotional and academic needs of students.

Ochocki joined District 196 in 2020

when the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the rapidly growing mental health needs of students. Director of Special Education **Janet Fimmen** said Ochocki "stepped into her role with enthusiasm and quickly became a valued partner in our work of safety, equity and achievement (SEA Change)." Her commitment to educational equity and social justice and expertise in student development has been critical to the district's efforts in implementing a coordinated and enhanced approach to mental health services.

"Supporting students through their triumphs and challenges is incredibly rewarding," Ochocki said. "School social workers seek to support the social, emotional and behavioral well-being of students from a systems perspective. I've always found that outcomes are better when you are working with a team, and I'm so grateful for the collaborative spirit we have in District 196."

Get information by text

District 196 uses texting as a communications method to share information with parents and guardians. The texts are delivered via SchoolMessenger, the mass notification service the district uses for phone calls and email messages. Parents must opt-in to receive text messages. Only cell phone numbers listed as guardians in the Infinite Campus student information system can receive texts. Standard message and data rates may apply.

Text Y to 67587 and you will receive a confirmation message stating you are now registered to receive SchoolMessenger notifications via text. (If you do not receive a confirmation message or what appears to be an error message, it most likely means that short code texting is not enabled on your wireless plan.) For help or information, text HELP to 67587. To opt out at any time, text STOP to 67587.

Attendance-area adjustments recommended to ease crowding by using available space

The School Board was considering recommended changes to middle school and high school attendance areas when this issue of *Spotlight* went to press in late November. The administration presented recommendations to the board as new business Nov. 8 and the board was expected to take action on the recommendations as old business at its Dec. 13 meeting.

The changes are recommended to address current and projected overcrowding at Rosemount High School and Rosemount Middle School by using available space at the district's three other comprehensive high schools and two of six middle schools. Rosemount High has capacity for just over 2,100 students; current enrollment is approximately 2,450 students, 350 over capacity, and is projected to reach 2,650 students in the next three years.

If approved by the board, the changes would take effect starting with the 2022-23 school year next fall, with a phased implementation to give students the choice to remain enrolled at their current attendance-area school through completion of that level or enroll at their new attendance-area school. As proposed, transportation would be provided to either middle school over the next two years, through 2023-24, and to either high school over the next four years, through 2025-26.

There would also be preference for younger siblings to attend their current attendance-area schools if an older sibling is attending that school at the same time or graduated from Rosemount High. The legacy preference was added to the final recommendations based on input received from parents. Another specific addition to the recommendations would allow students in grades 3-5 living in the affected areas and studying Mandarin at Diamond Path Elementary School of International Studies to enroll at Scott Highlands Middle via intra-district transfer to continue studying Mandarin.

If the recommendations are approved by the board Dec. 13, students living in the affected areas would be asked to make their enrollment choices for next year by Jan. 5. The following defaults would require no action by families:

- Current 5th graders move levels to their new attendance-area middle school in 2022-23;
- Current 6th and 7th graders remain at their current middle school in 2022-23;
- Current 8th graders move levels to their new attendance-area high school in 2022-23, and
- Current 9th-11th graders remain at Rosemount High in 2022-23.

If families in the affected areas want something other than the defaults, they would need to submit a completed intra-district transfer request form by Jan. 5.

Background

Discussions about the need for attendance-area adjustments started more than two years ago at a special School Board meeting in July 2019. It was presented as the first step in a two-step process that will also include a bond referendum requesting funding to build additional school space that enrollment projections show will be needed. One year later, in July 2020, the board endorsed a process for developing proposed attendance-area adjustments, but decided to postpone the process in order to focus efforts on the district's continuing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This past July, the administration restarted the attendance-area process, guided by the parameters set forth by the board the previous year: to maintain similar-sized schools at each level; responsibly use existing school space, and phase implementation to allow students to finish at their current school. The recommendations meet these parameters and would achieve the goal of providing relief to

overcrowding at Rosemount High and Rosemount Middle.

The four proposed high school changes would move the outermost parts of the Rosemount High attendance area to the three other comprehensive high schools – Apple Valley, Eagan and Eastview (*see map on p.9*). There are 600 Rosemount high school students currently living in these four areas combined.

The four proposed middle school changes would move parts of the Rosemount Middle attendance area to Dakota Hills and Scott Highlands, and parts of the Scott Highlands attendance area to Falcon Ridge and Valley middle schools (*see map on p.9*). There are 380 District 196 students currently living in these four areas combined, who attend Rosemount and Scott Highlands middle schools.

In October, the district mailed a letter to all families in the potentially affected areas who have a child currently enrolled in the district. The letter and accompanying maps explained the proposed adjustments and plan for phased implementation, and invited families to attend one of three informational meetings. Information was also shared in emails, on websites and social media posts. More than 200 people attended the three meetings combined and there were 383 submissions to an online input form where families were directed to share comments and suggestions. The administration reviewed all comments and made the two changes referenced earlier.

The recommendations also include one small change to elementary that would move part of the Shannon Park Elementary School attendance area located in the City of Apple Valley to Diamond Path Elementary. If this change was not made, this would be the only part of Shannon Park attending Falcon Ridge Middle and Eastview High. There are no current Shannon Park students living in this area

Attendance-area recommendations

High School Area #1 and Middle School Area #1 - All of Inver Grove Heights and a small portion of Eagan currently in the Rosemount High and Rosemount Middle attendance areas would move to Dakota Hills Middle and Eagan High.

High School Area #2 and Middle School Area #2 (part) - The northeast corner of the City of Apple Valley in the Scott Highlands/Rosemount Middle and Rosemount High attendance areas, including the Huntington neighborhood, Valleywood Golf Course and a small portion of the Evermoor neighborhood located in Apple Valley, would move to Falcon Ridge Middle and Eastview High.

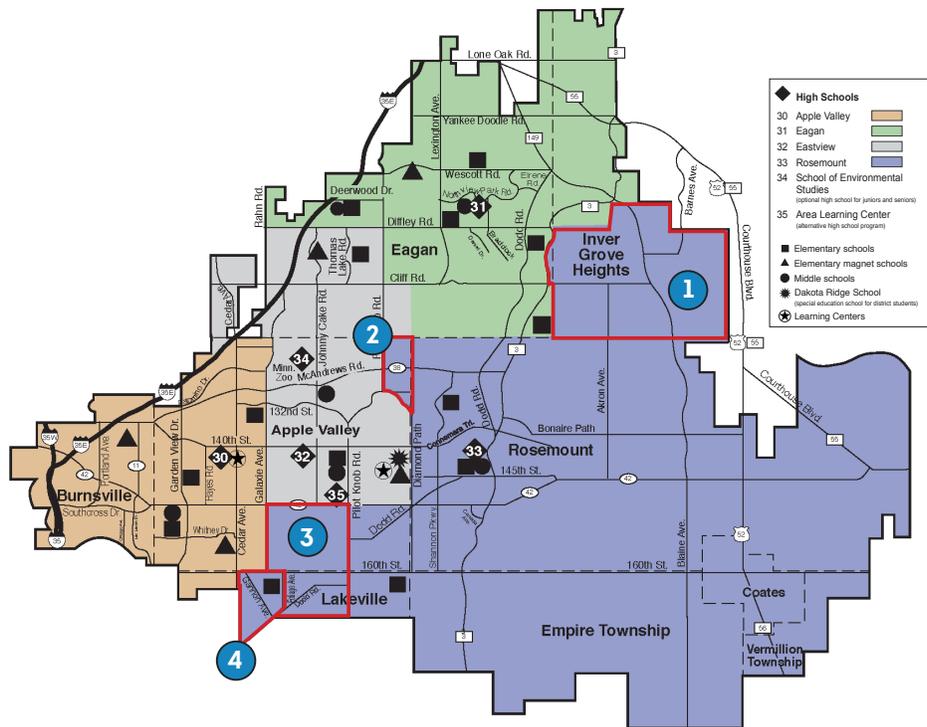
Middle School Area #2 (part) - The remaining portion of the Scott Highlands attendance area north of 140th Street would also move to Falcon Ridge and would remain Eastview High.

Middle School Area #3 - The southwest corner of the City of Rosemount and northwest corner of Empire Township would move from the Rosemount Middle attendance area to Scott Highlands and would remain Rosemount High. The area is bordered by County Road 42 and 155th St. W. to the north, Highway 3 to the east, Diamond Path to the west and the district border to the south.

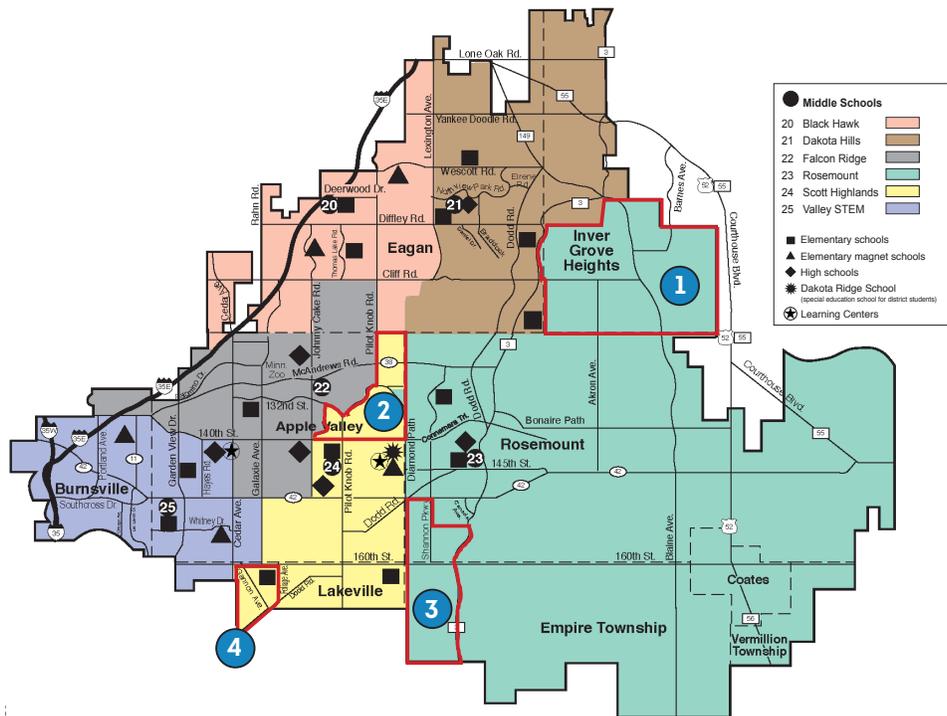
High School Area #3 - An area in the southwest corner of the Rosemount High attendance area would move to Eastview High and remain in the Scott Highlands Middle attendance area. It is bordered by County Road 42 to the north, Pilot Knob Road to the east, Galaxie Avenue and Foliage Avenue to the west, and the school district border to the south.

High School Area #4 and Middle School Area #4 - The far southwest corner of the Scott Highlands Middle and Rosemount High attendance areas in the City of Lakeville/Valley Park neighborhood would move to Valley Middle and Apple Valley High. The area is bordered by County Road 46 to the north, Foliage Avenue to the east, Cedar Avenue to the west and Dodd Road to the south.

Proposed High School Changes



Proposed Middle School Changes



Rosemount High School Marching Band among nation's best under Leon Sieve's direction

The Rosemount High School Marching Band has built a reputation as one of the best in the nation. Since its inception, the program has amassed hundreds of state and national awards, performed in the Tournament of Roses Parade and Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, traveled the world and earned the title Minnesota Youth in Music (YIM) Grand Champion 11 times, most recently in October.

Leading these talented student musicians is longtime band director **Leon Sieve**, who was inducted into the YIM Hall of Fame Oct. 10 during the 2021 Marching Band Championships at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.

"This award is so much bigger than me," Sieve said. "This award is for my band director colleagues. It is for the lesson teachers, the marching band staff, my mentors, the band parents and school administrators. It is about the communities I have called home for the past 29 years. It is for the students I have the honor to stand in front of every day."

At Rosemount, Sieve conducts the high school wind ensemble, is a woodwind specialist for the band program, he team-teaches the fall marching band, woodwind chamber ensemble, winter pep band, solo and ensemble, and coordinates the color guard. Sieve also directs the musical pit for the drama department and is coordinator of the music, art and dance departments.

"In his 20-year tenure, Mr. Sieve has



Rosemount High School band director **Leon Sieve** posed with several members of the band displaying the many awards they won at this year's Minnesota Youth in Music Championships in October. (Photo by Bruce Maeda)

positively impacted many programs here at Rosemount High School," Principal **Pete Roback** said. "He has been responsible for bringing national recognition to Rosemount, and he has always been committed to providing students with an exciting and engaging band experience here."

Sieve and the talented ensemble of

student musicians have managed to stay on beat despite the many challenges presented by the pandemic. They played outdoor concerts, participated in virtual festivals and learning clinics, adapted to playing instruments with masks on and still managed to make the best of the circumstances. At the end of the day, Sieve said his greatest motivation is "witnessing the pure joy on band members' faces after they perform and know they gave it their all."

In November, Rosemount made its first-ever appearance at the Bands of America Grand National Championships in Indianapolis. They took fifth place in their class (3A) and finished 24th overall at an event featuring the nation's best high school marching bands.

"I have said for years that I am the luckiest band director around," Sieve said. "None of this would be possible without the village I surround myself with. They are the true reason for me receiving this honor. I am truly humbled and grateful."

Rosemount Marching Band selected for 2023 Rose Parade

For the second time in less than 10 years, the Rosemount High School Marching Band will be performing in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif., on Jan. 2, 2023.

Band leaders submitted a video application last spring and were informed on Nov. 22 that out of nearly 300 applicants, Rosemount is one of six high school bands selected to perform in the 134th Rose Parade.



Tournament of Roses President Amy Wainscott will visit Rosemount High next summer to personally extend the performance invitation.

The annual Rose Parade® draws about 700,000 spectators in person and is viewed by more than 300 million people in 220 countries. The first time Rosemount performed in the Rose Parade was in 2014.

Reading Rocks!

This fall, students at Shannon Park Elementary School celebrated their reading success with Book Character Day! Students and staff were invited to dress up as book characters in celebration of reading 259,855 minutes during a two-week period! Principal **Erik Davis** promised the students he would dress up like a rock star if the school met its goal. The students did meet their goal and Mr. Davis delivered. Third-grade student **Nina Trujillo** looked the part of Waldo.



Magnet school application window for 2022-23 enrollment lottery is open now

Parents interested in having their child attend a District 196 magnet school next school year must submit an application by Jan. 5, to be considered for one of the five elementary magnet schools and by Feb. 9, for Valley Middle School of STEM. For the applications and more information, go to District196.org/magnetschools/.

Magnet schools offer parents increased choice in their child's education by providing a concentrated focus that offers innovative ways to meet students' learning goals through a particular theme. Magnet schools still provide the district's core curriculum in the areas of science, math, language arts and social studies.

The five elementary magnet schools are: Cedar Park Elementary Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) School in Apple Valley; Diamond Path Elementary School of International Studies in Apple Valley; Echo Park Elementary School of Leadership, Engineering and Technology in Burnsville; Glacier Hills Elementary School of Arts and Science in Eagan, and Oak Ridge Elementary School of Leadership, Environmental and Health Sciences in Eagan.

The district's K-12 STEM pathway includes Cedar Park and Echo Park elementary schools, Valley Middle and Apple Valley High School. The School of Environmental Studies (SES) in Apple Valley is an environmental magnet school for high school juniors and seniors. SES accepts enrollment applications anytime during the year.

Any District 196 student entering elementary or middle school in the 2022-23 school year can apply to attend a magnet school. Enrollment is determined by lottery and is limited to space available at each school and grade level. Students residing in the



Students at Oak Ridge School of Leadership, Environmental and Health Sciences explored different technologies during a STEM class.

district who are selected for magnet school enrollment receive transportation if they live more than 1 mile from the elementary magnet school they will attend or more than 1.5 miles from Valley Middle.

The elementary magnet school lottery will be held after the Jan. 5 application deadline. Parents of students selected for enrollment will be notified by the end of January and will be asked to confirm their child's enrollment for the 2022-23 school year. The lottery for Valley Middle will be held after the Feb. 9 application deadline. Parents of students selected for enrollment will be notified by the end of February. Students not selected for enrollment in the lotteries will be placed on waiting lists.

Parents can learn more about individual magnet schools by contacting their school of choice directly or by visiting the school website. For more information, go to District196.org/magnetschools/ or call **Tony Eatchel** in the Teaching and Learning Department at 651-423-7810.

District 196 seniors recognized in 2021-22 National Merit Scholarship Program

Forty-nine District 196 seniors received special recognition this fall for scores they achieved on a national standardized test taken last year as juniors. Seventeen are semifinalists in the 2021-22 National Merit Scholarship Program and 32 are National Merit commended students. All of the students and their parents and guardians were invited to be recognized at the Oct. 11 School Board meeting.

The 17 National Merit semifinalists from District 196 are:

Allen Gong, Arlan Hegenbarth, Nina Mirfakhraie, Anna Schuller, Sarah Smith and Eric Sorensen of Eagan High School;

Isaiah Dalzell, Hunter Dunne, Maria Galindez, Maxwell Leach, Thomas Nelson, Kim Ngo and Cameron Ojala of Eastview High School, and

Benjamin Ellis, Miriam Marks, Alexander Sell and Drew Wetterlind of Rosemount High School.

Students are selected for recognition in the National Merit Scholarship Program based on their scores on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), which they take as juniors. Semifinalists rank in the top 1 percent of students who took the test. They may submit additional information to be considered for selection as a finalist. Students named National Merit finalists next spring will compete for some 7,500 scholarships totaling nearly \$30 million awarded by businesses, colleges and universities, and the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

Students whose scores on the PSAT/ NMSQT rank them in the top 5 percent of students nationwide receive letters of commendation in recognition of their outstanding academic promise. In District 196, the following 32 seniors are 2021-22 National Merit commended students:



High school principals **Drew Mons** of Apple Valley, **Polly Reikowski** of Eagan, **Bruce Miller** of Eastview, **Pete Roback** of Rosemount and **Lauren Trainer** of the School of Environmental Studies posed with their National Merit Scholarship Program honorees who attended the Oct. 11 School Board meeting at Dakota Ridge School.

Alarith Dameh, Elise Hachfeld, Sarah McDevitt and John Schwartz of Apple Valley High School;

Samantha Ballesteros, Meghna Bosco, Elliot Buslee, Kristin Cullen, David Naranjo, Julia Schowalter and Audrey Schwartz of Eagan High;

Sohan Addagudi, Amy Brewster, Anthony Brogni, Dean Catlin, Regina Dehnert, Morgan Gallagher, Enzo

Izzo, Tarun Kota, Andrew Lu, Katelyn McClure, Clinton Pan, Ryan Porter, Silvie Reitz, Joshua Schaefer and Lillian Spade of Eastview High;

Erin DeWitt, Connell Hagen, Keegan Messner, Hannah Swanson and Hope Wanken of Rosemount High, and

Sera Cooper of the School of Environmental Studies.

More than 600 students earned AP scholar honors last year

The College Board recognized 646 District 196 high school students for their performance on Advanced Placement (AP) course exams taken during the 2020-21 school year.

District high schools offer 24 different AP courses which have been audited and approved by the College Board. Students who complete an AP course can take an optional exam and earn college credit, depending on their score on the exam and admission requirements at the college or university they attend. An AP exam score of 3 or

higher (on a scale of 1 to 5) earns credit at many of the nation's colleges and universities.

There are four different levels of AP scholar recognition determined by the number of AP exams taken and the scores earned: National AP Scholar, AP Scholar with Distinction, AP Scholar with Honor, and AP Scholar. To see the names of all 646 AP scholars in District 196 last year, go to District196.org, click on News in the About section and search "AP scholars" to find the Aug. 31 news release.

District 196 students top state and national ACT scores

District 196 students scored higher than the state and national averages on the ACT college admissions test in 2021, according to results released in October.

The average composite score for District 196 students increased by 0.2 points to 22.9 out of a possible 36. The district average is 2.6 points higher than the national average of 20.3 and 1.3 points higher than the Minnesota average of 21.6, which is highest among the 19 states where more than 60 percent of all students took the test.

Apple Valley High School junior **Bryson Flake** earned a perfect score of 36, something accomplished by fewer than half of 1 percent of students who take the ACT. Flake said he is grateful for the many wonderful teachers, counselors, administrators and mentors in District 196 who prepared him well for this achievement.



Bryson Flake

Since 2016, Minnesota law requires that all high school juniors have an opportunity to take a college entrance exam during the school day. In District 196, approximately 1,800 students in the graduating class of 2021 took the ACT at least once. This school year, all juniors will take the ACT on April 5, 2022; seniors who did not take the ACT during the school day in 2021 will also have the opportunity to test on April 5.

The 2021 average composite scores by high school are: Apple Valley High School, 20.8; Eagan High School, 24.3; Eastview High School, 23.8; Rosemount High School, 22.6, and the School of Environmental Studies, 21.7.

ACT Average Composite Scores, 2016 to 2021

Year	District 196	State	National
2021	22.9	21.6	20.3
2020	22.7	21.3	20.6
2019	23.0	21.4	20.7
2018	23.1	21.3	20.8
2017	23.1	21.5	21.0
2016*	23.0	21.1	20.8

* In 2016, all high school juniors in Minnesota began taking the ACT during the school day.

Minnesota Student Survey to be given in January

Public school students statewide in grades 5, 8, 9 and 11 will take the Minnesota Student Survey in January.

The survey, which has been given every three years since 1989, is a collaboration between school districts and the Minnesota departments of education, health, human services and public safety. The state agencies develop the survey content, monitor data quality, analyze data and report results. Schools administer the survey to students and use the results to monitor student needs and inform programming decisions.

The survey asks students about their activities, opinions, behaviors and

experiences. Students respond to questions on school climate, bullying, out-of-school activities, healthy eating, emotional health, substance use and connections with school and family. Questions about sexual behaviors are asked only of high school students. Participation is voluntary and responses are anonymous and confidential.

Parents may request to review the Minnesota Student Survey and can have their child opt out of taking it. Schools will be sharing this information directly with parents and guardians of students in grades 5, 8, 9 and 11.

Students can earn college credits for proficiency in multiple languages

High school seniors who can demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English can earn recognition on their transcript and credits at a Minnesota state college or university as part of the state's Bilingual/Multilingual Seals and World Language Proficiency Certificate program.

The Minnesota Department of Education program was established to recognize the unique advantages of being a bilingual or multilingual speaker. Students who are bilingual are more culturally and linguistically competent and better prepared for a college or career experience with a global perspective.

"Being able to communicate in more than one language opens up a whole new world and even a new way of thinking," said **Susi Sullivan**, a world languages teacher at Rosemount High School.

To earn this recognition, seniors must be assessed in reading, writing, listening and speaking in a language other than English. Students are scored in all four areas based on proficiency guidelines established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

- A World Language Proficiency Certificate is awarded for students who score at the intermediate low level in a language other than English. Students can receive up to two semesters of college credit.
- A Gold Bilingual or Multilingual Seal is awarded for students who score at the intermediate high level in a language other than English and earn English language arts credits. Students can receive up the three semesters of college credit per language.
- A Platinum Bilingual or Multilingual Seal is awarded for students who score at the advanced low level in a language other than English and earn English language arts credit or proficiency. Students can receive up to four semesters of college credit per language.

Proficiency level information and practice exams are available at ACTFL.org.

Congratulations!

A sampling of recent student and staff achievements in academics, the arts, and athletics

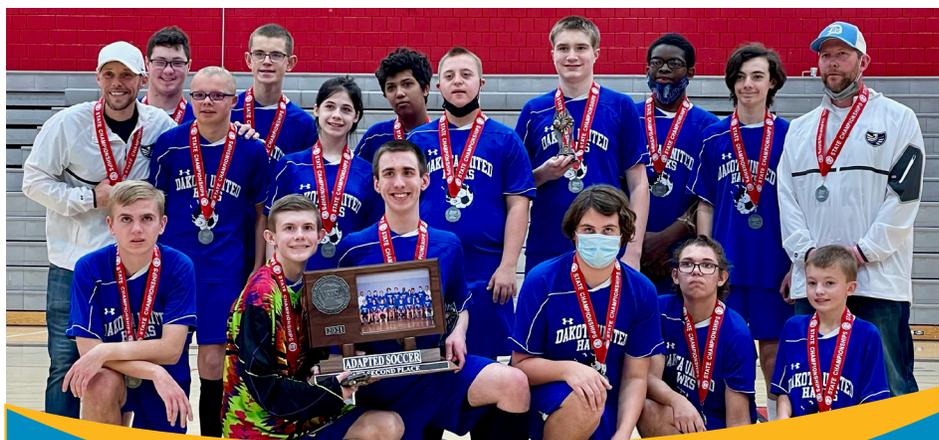
The **Rosemount High School girls' and boys' soccer teams** both competed in their respective state tournaments in November. The girls won their quarterfinal game and ended up finishing in fourth place. The boys' team advanced to the state title game and finished runner up.

Students from all four comprehensive District 196 high schools qualified for the **state girls' and boys' cross country tournaments** held at St. Olaf College in November. Rosemount High School finished fifth as a team in the boys' race and Eagan High School took eighth place as a team in the girls' race. The top individual finishers from the district in the boys' race were **Hunter Dunne** of Eastview High School, 18th place, **Abdikafi Khalif** of Apple Valley High School in 22nd and **Will Harder** of Rosemount in 30th place. The top individual finishers from the district in the girls' race were **Kienna Loberg** of Eastview in 12th place, **Norah Sjerven** of Eagan in 15th and **Rina Aschemann** of Eagan in 43rd place.

Chris McDonald, a longtime speech and debate coach at Eagan High School, was one of 12 people selected for induction into the Minnesota State High School League Hall of Fame.

Eastview High School was ranked third and Eagan High School was ninth on the National Speech and Debate Association's **Top 100 schools** in the nation for the number of new participants in their speech and debate programs in 2021.

Tom Sharp, a science teacher and head cross-country and track coach at Eastview High School, was featured in the Minnesota State High School League's *Connect* newsletter for his continued efforts to raise money and awareness for inclusion by running marathons while pushing others who have physical and/or cognitive disabilities.



Dakota United Hawks teams both state runners up

The Dakota United Hawks adapted soccer teams both finished runner-up in their respective state tournaments Nov. 19-20 in Stillwater. The cognitively impaired (CI) team (pictured) beat South Washington and Park Center to make it to the championship, where they faced Lakeville/Burnsville/Farmington. The physically impaired (PI) team earned a bye in the quarterfinals, beat Rochester in the semifinal game and faced Robbinsdale/Hopkins/Mound Westonka in the championship.

Fifty-two students named all-state musicians for 2021-22

Fifty-two District 196 high school students were named all-state musicians by the Minnesota Music Educators Association for the 2021-22 school year.

Students were selected by recorded audition last spring and took part in camps held in August.

Apple Valley High School students are **Noah Jackson** and **Adam Spaeth**, Symphonic Band; **Branda Leung**, **Logan Rasmussen** and **Samuel Streeter**, Jazz Band; **Mason Phoulavan** and **Grace Schindler**, Concert Band; **Bethelhem Collins**, **Lane Dehnel** and **Sophie Todaro**, Mixed Choir; **Dawit Gebremaryam**, Tenor Bass Choir, and **Frida Santos Castillo**, Soprano Alto Choir.

Eagan High School students are **Charlie Stonecipher**, Symphonic Band; **Spencer Ainza**, **Cole Clubb** and **Will Walters**, Concert Band; **James Eiden**, **Sophia Peterson** and **Audrey Schwartz**, Mixed Choir, **Manjim Bhattacharyya**,

Tenor Bass Choir, **Anna Schuller**, **Emily Teigland** and **Mengyuan Zhou**, Orchestra, and **Elle Eisenberg** and **Janani Venkatasubramanian**, Soprano Alto Choir.

Eastview High School students are **Brenda Olander**, Concert Band; **Brianna Barry**, **Brigid Coyne** and **Uchenna Ngwu**, Mixed Choir; **Leyla Boulous**, **Ariel Edwards**, **Aaron Grawe**, **Jacob Hammond**, **Carmen Pasquerella**, **Max Pringle** and **Adrea Turchi**, Orchestra; **Laura Schile** and **Alexis Schulke**, Soprano Alto Choir, and **John Rasmussen**, Tenor Bass Choir.

Rosemount High School students are **Aspen Howard** and **Chloe Moeller**, Symphonic Band; **Alexander Sell**, Jazz Band; **Lauren Droberg** and **Jaxon Jones**, Concert Band; **Jackson Henry**, Mixed Choir; **Elijah Doran** and **Luke Sewpersaud**, Tenor Bass Choir; **Daniel Ewing** and **Jack Torrini**, Orchestra, and **Miriam Marks**, **Delaney Riley** and **Sarah Schultz**, Soprano Alto Choir.

COVID-19 cases rising among students and staff, vaccinations and testing encouraged

There were approximately 250 cases of COVID-19 among District 196 students and staff, the highest in the district since the pandemic began, when this issue of Spotlight went to press in late November. At that time, the transmission level in Dakota County remained high, at more than 500 new cases per 100,000 residents over a seven-day period.

District 196 Superintendent **Mary Kreger** credits mask wearing and other continuing mitigation strategies for being able to maintain in-person learning five days a week for the first three months of the school year. However, she said the rising number of cases among teachers, bus drivers and other employees is making it increasingly difficult for schools to manage daily staffing shortages.

The district strongly encourages everyone to get the vaccine when they are eligible, to continue regular screening for COVID-19 and testing when feeling ill, and to stay home when sick.

Vaccine for ages 5-11

The Federal Drug Administration approved emergency use of the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine for children ages 5-11. Only the Pfizer vaccine has been authorized for children younger than 18. The vaccine for ages 5-11 is administered as a two-dose primary series, three weeks apart, and is a lower dose than that used for those 12 and older. All children younger than 18 must have parent/guardian consent to receive the vaccine. Appointments are readily available through the Minnesota Department of Health and can be scheduled at <https://bit.ly/2Z3egk6>

Testing and screening

Students and employees who are sick should stay home and get tested. District 196 has partnered with Dakota Child and Family Clinic to offer a drive-up testing site for students and district employees. An appointment is required prior to arriving and can be made by contacting your school directly. This is only offered to students and staff who are symptomatic. The

drive-up site is located at the District Service Center, 14301 Diamond Path West, in Apple Valley, and is available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Regular screening for COVID-19 is also important, especially for those involved in co-curricular activities, to ensure everyone involved stays healthy. Data from our schools show the majority of cases are the result of exposures outside the classroom. Family members are strongly recommended to quarantine if there is a positive case within their household.

Testing continues to be available to all

Minnesotans at no charge through community testing sites across the state. Find a local testing site by visiting the Minnesota Department of Health's website at <https://bit.ly/3nxFLf1/>.

Families are required to report all positive cases to their child's school, as well as self-quarantines if a student is unvaccinated and a member of their household is positive.

For more information about the vaccine, testing and the district's health and safety protocols, visit the District 196 COVID-19 Dashboard at www.District196.org/COVID19/.

Concerts and shows return to high school theaters

Students, staff and audience members were excited to return to the theaters this fall following a year of socially distanced plays and online productions. Below is a list of free concerts and shows at District 196 high schools in December and January. Face masks are required inside all District 196 buildings.

Apple Valley High School

- Choir concert, Dec. 13, 7 p.m.
- Jazz ensemble, Dec. 22, 7 p.m.

Rosemount High School

- Concert band/symphonic/wind symphony, Jan. 10, 6 and 8 p.m.
- Jazz concert, Jan. 24, 7 p.m.

Eagan High School

- Holiday choir concerts, Dec. 20, 6:30 and 8 p.m.
- Jazz band concert, Dec. 21, 7 p.m.
- Winter winds band concert, Jan. 24, 7 p.m.
- Carnival concert, Jan. 25, 7 p.m.

Eastview High School

- Winter choral concerts, Dec. 20 at 6 and 8 p.m.
- Winter band concerts, Jan. 13, 6 and 8 p.m.
- Winter dance show, Jan. 23, 7 p.m.
- Jazz Showcase, Jan. 31, 7 p.m.

Bus-tracking app keeps families informed and on schedule,

Parents and students can download the free Here Comes the Bus tracking app to let them know when the bus is getting close to their stop in the morning and when it is dropping off in the afternoon.

Parents can set a perimeter around their child's bus stop and receive an alert when the bus enters that perimeter. Here Comes The Bus also sends notification messages 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.

Here Comes The Bus is available to download free on the Google Play Store for Android phones and the App Store for iPhones. To set up an account, parents will need the district identification number (73500) and their child's lunch account number. Parents are able to monitor buses for multiple children from a single account.



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Time Value Material
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Community Education

It's a spare and a strike!

Project Explore's three bowling leagues started up again after 18 months. Our 143 adults with disabilities enjoy bowling every week at Bogart's Entertainment Center!

Find your passion ...

Bob Ross Method of Oil Painting

Do you remember Bob Ross from his *Joy of Painting* series on PBS? His technique of painting is for all skill levels. Complete an entire oil painting. Be amazed at how much fun and enjoyment this painting technique will give you! Supply fee of \$15 payable to instructor.

Monday | Dec. 13 | 6-9 p.m. | \$49 | Rosemount Middle School

Close-Up and Macro Photography

Learn how to take great close-up photos. Explore how to control your depth of field and lighting, and what equipment works best. Photograph everything from flowers to rings and more. Let's move in and have fun!



Saturday | Dec. 4 | 10 a.m.-3 p.m. | \$49 | Falcon Ridge Middle School

Research shows participating in structured, out-of-school time programs predicts improvement in test scores,

grades, health and safety. This fall, we have received over 3,900 registrations for youth enrichment activities!

Parents and young children ...

We invite you to join our Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) family as we share and learn together this winter. Supporting early childhood development and parenting is our passion. We offer a variety of classes with a focus on your child's stage of development and specific parenting topics of interest.

Tackling Tough Topics (parents with children ages birth-5 years)

Why? Why? Why? Parents everywhere can speak to the insatiable curiosity of children. As children grow, they will naturally have questions about themselves and their world, including tough topics that you are not always sure how to handle. Build your capacity and confidence to have developmentally appropriate conversations with your children with support and research.



Wednesday | Jan. 5-March 16 | 9:15-11:30 a.m. | sliding fee scale* | Dakota Valley Learning Center

Positive Parenting (parents with children ages birth-7 years)

Focus on the positive by learning to guide and teach young children in ways that are kind but firm. Explore what prompts children to behave in ways that are sometimes confusing. Based on the book *Positive Discipline* by Dr. Jane Nelsen, learn the skills and tools necessary to decode children's behaviors and respond in ways that address them.

Wednesday | Jan. 5-March 16 (skip Feb. 9) | 5:45-7:45 p.m. | sliding fee scale* | Dakota Valley Learning Center

* ECFE class fees are based on annual family income and are determined by a sliding fee scale. District 196 residents are encouraged to attend regardless of their ability to pay.



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