



**Dr. Michael Thomas, Superintendent**  
**Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools**  
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With just two months into the school year, students are deep into learning and showing tremendous growth both academically and socially as we have finally been able to bring back the learning activities students know and love, along with some new ones. From E-STEM days and the middle school Fun Run & Fitness event, to Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center and the dedication of a new Hammock Forest for reading at Jeffers Pond Elementary, students are fully engaged in school.

We were also able to host the School Board Scholar ceremony at Prior Lake High School. 507 students in grades 10-12 were honored for their educational achievement in earning a cumulative grade point average of 3.8 or higher.

As I mentioned in my last column, I am laser focused on high quality, core academics and providing the support necessary to meet the unique learning needs of all students, while providing them with social-emotional skills to help them reach their full potential.

To that end, our district is piloting a new elementary curriculum in math. We have also been teaching a new elementary reading curriculum that will be fully implemented in grades K-3 by the end of this school year. Both curriculums are aligned to new state learning standards.

The math resources we are piloting are Bridges, published by Math Learning Center, and Reveal, published by McGraw Hill. Several teachers at each grade level throughout the district are participating in this pilot work. At the end of this school year we will be choosing one of these resources to implement in all elementary schools beginning in the 2023-24 school year.

We have three main goals for doing these pilots:

1. Provide our students with a challenging instructional experience that addresses their learning needs and aligns with our District Math Vision.
2. Ability to fully vet the resources and measure the effect on student growth.
3. Ensure there is proper alignment between the resource and the MN Math Standards.

In reading, the curriculum resource we are implementing is called Foundations. It includes phonics, spelling and handwriting curriculum to benefit all K-3 students.

District wide, we will measure student success by analyzing student achievement data with a new tool called EduClimber, to better identify student needs for early intervention and instructional adjustments throughout the school year.

Finally, we believe that regular attendance correlates with success in school. When the academic learning process is not interrupted, students spend less time on make-up assignments and students benefit from participation and interaction with others in class. That's why Prior Lake High School in particular has established more detailed guidelines for student attendance this school year.

These are just a few of the ways we are working to fulfill our promise to our community to increase measurable student learning and reduce achievement gaps, along with providing a safe, secure and supportive environment that nurtures the social and emotional well-being of all learners.

I look forward to sharing more student and staff successes throughout the school year as we work to educate all learners to reach their full potential as contributing and productive members of our ever-changing global community.