

Spotlight

Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools



DISTRICT196
One District. Infinite Possibilities.

Winter 2023 | Volume 64 • 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.

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Reading for pleasure and purpose

Shannon Park Elementary School fifth grader **Nada Qaybidid** was lying on a bench outside school reading to help rack up minutes during the school's annual Reading Challenge. Each year, Principal **Erik Davis** challenges Shannon Park students to reach a specific reading goal. This year's collective goal was 281,000 minutes, the equivalent of 4,683 hours or approximately 195 days. To see if the students met their challenge, go to page 11.

Voters elect incumbents and Williams to School Board

District 196 voters elected incumbents **Jackie Magnuson**, **Cory Johnson** and **Sachin Isaacs**, and candidate **Anna Williams** to fill four open seats in the Nov. 7 School Board election.

Magnuson, a Rosemount resident and current board treasurer, received 12,864 votes to lead all candidates and win election to her 10th term on the School Board. Johnson, an Eagan resident and current chairperson, received 12,734 votes to win a second term; Isaacs, a Burnsville resident and current vice chairperson, received 12,354 votes to win a third term, and Williams, an Eagan resident, received 12,103 votes to win the fourth open seat and her first term on the board. Current board member **Joel Albright** did not seek reelection this year after serving the last 20 years on the board.



Magnuson



Johnson



Isaacs



Williams

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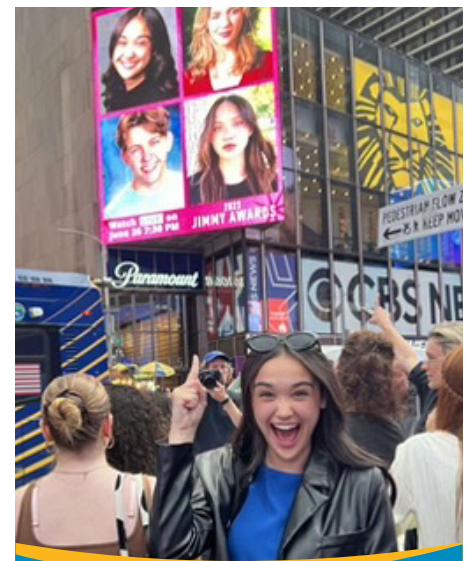
Students pursuing infinite possibilities in theater

Mia Nelson started her senior year at Rosemount High School this year after being named a semifinalist at the National High School Musical Theatre Awards (Jimmy Awards) and performing on a Broadway stage in New York City this past summer.

"It was a dream come true," said Nelson, sharing that she "cried tears of happiness" when the event ended.

Nelson's journey to the Jimmy Awards started last school year when as a junior she performed in her school's musical cabaret production "OnStage, Connecting the Dots," was the lead role in a one act play, "Oh, What A Tangled Web," and also had the lead role of Viola in Rosemount's production of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night".

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Mia Nelson reacted to seeing her face on a digital sign on Broadway in NYC.

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, gender identity, 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, Shelly Monson (651-423-7859 - shelly.monson@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, Jeremy Sorenson (651-423-7782 - jeremy.sorenson@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.

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

District 196 spent more on regular instruction in FY22

District 196 spent more per pupil on regular instruction in fiscal year 2022 (FY22), while spending less per pupil on total operating expenditures compared to averages for school districts statewide, in the metro area, and Minnesota's 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 was the state's fourth largest district in FY22 and is currently third largest. Comparable expenditure data for FY22 shows that District 196 spent less per pupil than the averages for the state, metro area and 10-largest districts in total general fund expenditures, and in five of the 10 categories that make up the general fund, including operations and maintenance, student transportation, pupil support services, instructional support services and district administration. Conversely, District 196 spent more per pupil and a higher percentage of its total expenditures on regular instruction (48%), compared to school districts statewide (43%), in the metro area (44%) and 10-largest (44%).

Expenditures Per Pupil for Fiscal Year 2022

Expenditure Category	District 196	State Average	Metro Average	10-Largest Average**
Regular Instruction	\$6,628	\$6,075	\$6,127	\$6,565
Special Education	2,875	2,743	2,643	2,915
Operations, Maintenance & Other*	793	1,104	1,080	1,052
Student Transportation*	781	890	908	877
Instructional Support Services*	713	788	859	1,015
School-Level Administration	639	553	527	578
District-Level Administration*	547	757	705	678
Student Activities & Athletics	308	386	371	278
Pupil Support Services*	419	545	571	686
Career & Technical Instruction	188	194	179	214
TOTAL General Fund Operating Expenditures	\$13,871	\$14,036	\$13,971	\$14,858

* 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 FY22 were, in order from largest: Anoka-Hennepin, St. Paul, Minneapolis, District 196, Osseo, South Washington County, Rochester, Elk River, Wayzata and Lakeville.

District recognized again for excellence in financial reporting

District 196 earned the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) for the 21st year in a row this year.

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.



The district's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for fiscal year 2022 is available on the Finance Department page at District196.org.

"Every member of our Finance Department played a part in receiving this recognition," said Director of Finance and Operations **Christopher Onyango-Robshaw**. "Spanning the roles from vendor relations, to employee data, to state and federal reporting, there's a commitment to integrity in our financial practices."

Living our mission to educate, develop and inspire

By **Mary M. Kreger**, superintendent

In my regular travels throughout the district, I am continually impressed with the stories of our employees, students and families living out our mission of educating, developing, and inspiring our students for lifelong success. All of our schools have numerous stories to share. Below are three examples I learned about during a visit to Eagan High School this fall.

Educate | *New Officiating Course Filling a Need*

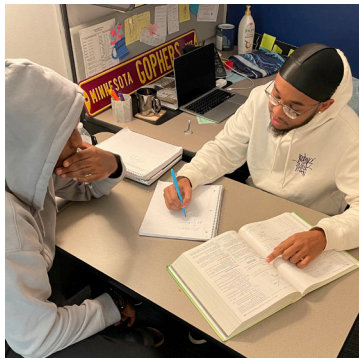
Pat Dorsey was walking by the Eagan High office one day last year when he bumped into Assistant Principal **Pete Zak**. Both were thinking about the negative impacts of not having enough referees, officials and umpires. "We wondered, what if we offered a course on officiating?" The two talked it through a bit more, tested the idea with a few students, and developed a proposal that was approved by the School Board last fall as part of an annual process for adding, changing and replicating course offerings for middle school and high school students.

The officiating course is a hit. There were two classes of 20 students each this fall and two more classes will be offered in spring. Eastview is planning to add the course next year, as are other high schools in Minnesota after Eagan was featured on WCCO-TV.

Dorsey offers students two options for the final exam: take one he created or go through certification to become a youth or high school league official. "I was excited to see how many students went through the certification," he said. "I tell them it's an opportunity to earn money, build confidence and develop leadership skills."



Develop | *Growing Our Own Teachers*



Samson Ghirmai was working in sales a few years ago for a company that serves the education market when he decided to make a switch to public education. His first job was paraprofessional at Valley Middle School of STEM. Now he is a student support specialist at Eagan High. In his short time in education, Ghirmai realized his passion for working with students and began dreaming of becoming a social studies teacher.

Earlier this year, Ghirmai was accepted into our district's Grow Your Own program, which provides support for adults who identify as American Indian and/or people of color in completing a teaching degree and obtaining their initial teaching license. With grant funding from the Minnesota Department of Education's Grow Your Own program, he is one of 30 participants in our district receiving financial assistance for tuition, textbooks and day care.

"I was extremely grateful," said Ghirmai, who graduated from Apple Valley High School in 2016. He says returning to District 196 as an employee, and hopefully one day as a teacher, is a "full-circle experience" that has allowed him to appreciate the education and opportunities he received as a student in District 196.

Inspire | *Stepping Up to Save the Play*

Brody Breen was set to play a minor role in Eagan's production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" this fall, the first show of his freshman year. Then, just two days before opening, opportunity presented itself. A student playing one of the lead roles got sick and would not be able to perform.

"I honestly didn't think any actor could memorize this role in less than 48 hours." Director **Nancy Owzarek** recalled, referring to the part of Nick Bottom. "Imagine my surprise when a freshman with a small role said he was willing to do it." She was hesitant, given the considerable challenges of the role.

While contemplating her limited options, she received an email from Brody's sister Chloe, a senior at Eagan. "I wanted to let you know that he's more than capable of picking up this role," Chloe wrote about her brother. She also offered to help Brody learn the lines in the limited time before the opening show. Moved by Chloe's advocacy for her brother, Owzarek gave Brody the opportunity to step in and play the part. "I was blown away," she said. "Brody saved the production, and I will never forget it."



Enrollment down slightly, special education growing

Enrollment in District 196 schools remains stable this year, but has not been growing as projected, according to the official October enrollment report presented to the School Board Oct. 9.

Total district enrollment on Oct. 2, 2023 was 28,961 students, 86 fewer (0.3%) than last year and 146 fewer (0.5%) than projected. The largest class in the district this year is grade 11, with 2,410 students, and the smallest is kindergarten, with 1,752 students. The breakdown by level shows that on Oct. 2 the district had K-12 only enrollment of :

- 11,597 elementary school students (grades K-5), a decrease of 268 students from last year;
- 6,303 middle school students (grades 6-8), a decrease of 15 students, and
- 9,216 high school students (grades 9-12), an increase of 26 students.

One area where enrollment continues to grow is in special education. Enrollment of students receiving center-based special education services grew to 1,264 this year, 50 more than last year. In early childhood special education, enrollment increased by more than 20% in one year, from 480 students last year to 581 this year. Students in center-based and early childhood special education programs require more staff and space than the average student.

Students of color represent approximately 44% of total enrollment in District 196 this year, up 1% from last year and 6% higher than the state average in 2022. Students who qualify to receive English Learner (EL) services represent approximately 8% of total enrollment in District 196 this year, compared to 9% statewide.

District 196 enrollment hit an all-time high of 29,223 students in October 2019. In October 2020, the first full school year impacted by the pandemic, enrollment decreased by less than 1%. It rebounded slightly in 2021 and has decreased slightly in each of the last two years.



Honoring veterans

Current Highland Elementary School Principal **Chad Ryburn** (left) shook hands with former Highland principal **Duane Burns** during the school's flag-raising ceremony Nov. 10 in honor of Veterans' Day. Burns started the Veterans' Day ceremony when Highland opened in 1986 and Ryburn has continued the tradition. Pictured at right holding the flag is **Nick Vogel**, assistant administrator at Scott Highlands Middle School and a current member of the Army National Guard.

Calendar changes coming next year to implement Read Act

A district task force is meeting in December to develop recommendations for changing next year's calendar to provide time for teachers to receive training required to implement the new state law mandating districts use a structured literacy program.

District 196 was starting to prepare for a transition from balanced literacy to structured literacy when the Minnesota Legislature approved the Read Act earlier this year. One of the law's requirements is that all preK-grade 3 teachers and K-12 reading intervention teachers complete at least 45 hours of structured literacy training by July 1, 2025, and that all other elementary, reading and English Language Development teachers complete the training by July 1, 2027.

That is the challenge facing the task force, which includes students, parents, teachers and administrators. The task force is scheduled to meet three times in December to discuss options and develop recommendations for providing training opportunities spread throughout the year, without adding days to the teacher contract or going below the days/hours of student instruction required by state law.

In November, members of the district's budget and legislative advisory councils discussed the idea of advocating for additional flexibility and/or funding to help implement requirements of the Read Act and the many other 2023 law changes impacting school districts. Communications Director **Tony Taschner**, who oversees the Legislative Advisory Council, said it is likely to be a theme of the district's legislative priorities for the 2024 session, which begins in February. "The challenge of finding at least 45 hours to train every current and future elementary teacher is considerable, and was not given adequate consideration," he said. "Providing flexibility on calendar requirements could help districts find solutions to the challenge."

The task force will present its advisory recommendations to the superintendent's cabinet by January. Any proposed changes to the 2024-25 calendar would be presented by the administration and would require approval by the School Board. The administration hopes the recommended changes could serve as a model for providing all teachers with more frequent opportunities for professional learning and collaboration in future district calendars.

District 196 makes Forbes' list of Best-in-State Employers for fifth year in a row in 2023

For the fifth year in a row, District 196 is included on Forbes' annual list of Best-in-State Employers.

District 196 is 53rd of the 60 employers selected for the Minnesota list in 2023 and is one of only two school districts on the state list. District 196 has been selected for Forbes' America's Best-in-State Employers list every year since debuting on the inaugural list in 2019.

"Consistently receiving this recognition shows that District 196 continues to be a district of choice among employees," said Superintendent **Mary Kreger**. "Being a district of choice allows us to attract and retain the best teachers, administrators and support staff in our industry. We value every employee and recognize how each of them contributes to the success of our students, families and the district."

Forbes

Forbes and market research company Statista selected America's Best-in-State Employers based on an independent survey of 70,000 Americans working for employers with at least 500 employees. The anonymous online survey asked respondents how likely they'd be to recommend their employer to others and to rate their employers on a variety of criteria, including working conditions, diversity, compensation packages, potential for development and the organization's public image. The number of employers ranked in each state was dependent on

the number of qualifying employers and the size of the state's workforce. Employers with operations in more than one state could be listed multiple times. The combined list includes 1,392 U.S. employers that received the greatest number of recommendations in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

With nearly 30,000 students and more than 4,000 full- and part-time employees, District 196 is the third largest district in Minnesota and one of the largest employers in Dakota County.

For more information or to review the list, go to www.forbes.com/best-employers-by-state/ and search by state. For information on employment opportunities in District 196, go to District196.org and click on "Employment" on the black navigation bar at the top of every page.



JOIN OUR TEAM!

District 196 is a Forbes Best-in-State employer.



Paraprofessionals | Custodians | Bus Drivers
Nutrition Services Associates | and more!



APPLY NOW!

Deadlines are fast approaching to apply for magnet school enrollment in 2024-25

District 196 is accepting applications from families interested in having their students attend a magnet school in the 2024-25 school year. The deadlines to submit applications are Jan. 5 for the five elementary magnet schools, Dec. 15 for Valley Middle School of STEM and Dec. 22 for the School of Environmental Studies optional high school for juniors and seniors.

Applications and more information are available at www.district196.org/magnetschools.

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

The five elementary magnet schools in District 196 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 for grades K-5, Valley Middle School of STEM for grades 6-8 and Apple Valley High School for grades 9-12.

Any District 196 student who will be enrolled in elementary school, middle school or 11th or 12th grades in the 2024-25 school year can apply to attend a magnet school. Enrollment at magnet schools is determined by lottery and is limited to space available at each school and grade level. Students living in District 196 who are selected by lottery for magnet school enrollment receive transportation if they



District 196 has five elementary magnet schools for grades K-5, Valley Middle School of STEM for grades 6-8 and the School of Environment Studies for grades 11 and 12.

live more than one mile from the elementary magnet school they will attend, or one and one-half miles from Valley Middle School of STEM or the School of Environmental Studies.

The magnet school lotteries will be held shortly after each of the application deadlines. Parents of students selected for enrollment will be notified after the lottery and will be asked to confirm their child's enrollment for the 2024-25 school

year. Families of students not selected for enrollment in the lotteries will be notified and placed on a waiting list.

Parents can learn more about each of the magnet schools on their websites and by contacting their school of choice. For questions, contact **Tony Eatchel** in the district's Teaching and Learning Department at tony.eatchel@district196.org or 651-423-7810.

Nearly 700 students earned AP scholar honors last year

The College Board recognized 698 District 196 high school students for their performance on Advanced Placement (AP) course exams taken during the 2022-23 school year.

District high schools offer 24 different AP courses which have been audited and approved by the College Board, a nonprofit organization of colleges, universities, secondary schools and higher education institutions focused on college readiness programs. 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 that are defined by the scores received and the number of exams taken during a student's high school career. The top designation is National AP Scholar, which recognizes students who received an average score of at least 4 on all AP exams taken and scores of 4 or higher on eight or more exams. The other designations are AP Scholar with Distinction, AP Scholar with Honor and AP Scholar.

To see the names of all 698 District 196 students recognized last year, go to District196.org, click on News in the About section, and search "AP scholars."



School Board may be in process of filling a vacancy

The District 196 School Board may be seeking to fill a vacancy on the board, if **Bianca Virnig** was elected to fill the vacancy in House District 52B, as projected. The special election was held Dec. 5, just after this issue of *Spotlight* went to press. For the most up-to-date information, go to District196.org.



If Virnig was elected, she would resign her seat on the School Board to assume the position of state representative for House District 52B. The board would then declare a vacancy and provide information about the process for filling the position. State law spells out the timeline for filling board vacancies, but leaves the board to decide what process to use. The last time there was a board vacancy in District 196 was in 2011. The board invited eligible district residents to apply, and selected finalists for a

group interview conducted during a special board meeting open to the public, where the board selected its appointee.

If there is a vacancy and the board follows a similar process, the application window would start in December and be relatively short, followed by a special meeting to appoint sometime in January.

By state law, anyone appointed to a School Board seat must wait 30 days after the board's action before taking office. The law also states that the appointed seat must be up for election no later than the next November general election, which would be Nov. 5, 2024. The seven board seats in District 196 are all at-large seats.

Virnig was elected to the School Board in November 2021, after running for board in 2017 and then serving as a citizen representative on the district's Budget Advisory Council.

School Board election

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Twelve names appeared on the ballot. The other eight candidates who received votes, in order of finish, are: **Kim Bauer**, 7,185 votes; **Melissa Field**, 7,159 votes; **Lori Urkiel**, 6,898 votes; **Teressa Schlueter**, 6,766 votes; **Craig Angrimson**, 1,970 votes; **Charles McCready**, 831 votes; **Leah Gardner**, 710 votes, and **Gina Swaney**, 520 votes. There were also 150 write-in votes. McCready and Gardner unofficially withdrew from the race, after the deadline to not have their names on the ballot.

The newly elected board members' four-year terms begin Jan. 1, 2024. On Jan. 8, they will take the oath of office and the board will elect officers as part of its annual organization meeting, 6 p.m. at Dakota Ridge School in Apple Valley.

There were 105,881 registered voters in District 196 on Election Day morning and 21,911 voters cast ballots in the School Board election, representing approximately 20.7% of registered voters.

Legislators visit AV Arena to see need for upgrade, funding

Members of the House Capital Investment Committee visited the Apple Valley Sports Arena Nov. 14 to see the needs to upgrade the nearly 50-year-old facility. The city and school district, who have partnered on the arena since it opened in 1976, recently made significant investments in new ice-making equipment. The city and district are seeking \$6 million in the 2024 state bonding bill to help pay for a locker room addition and other upgrades to the building and facilities, which would total \$15 million. The Capital Investment Committee visited during their tour of the state this fall, in preparation for the start of the 2024 session Feb. 12.

Projected completion dates for bond projects

Various staff committees continue meeting with the district's architect and project manager designing the first phase of improvements from the bond referendum approved in May. Construction will begin next spring. Below are the projected completion dates for the major projects included in the \$493 million bond.



Two more from District 196, Laws and Larson, to join MSHSL Hall of Fame in 2024

Apple Valley High School football and wrestling standout **Trevor Laws** and athletics administrator **Scott Larson** were both selected for induction into the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) Hall of Fame. They and the 10 other members of the MSHSL Hall of Fame Class of 2024 will be recognized at a ceremony in St. Paul in April.

Laws was named the Minnesota Gatorade Player of the Year in football and was the nation's #1-ranked heavyweight wrestler in high school. He was part of three state champion wrestling teams and won one individual state title. Laws attended the University of Notre Dame on scholarship and played five years in the NFL for the Philadelphia Eagles (2008-2011) and St. Louis Rams (2012).



Larson was a teacher, coach and athletics administrator in District 196 for nearly 30 years. He started in 1975 and for the first 10 years was a teacher and coach at the middle school and high school levels. After leaving the district for five years, Larson returned in 1990 as the athletic director at Eagan High School. Six years later, he moved to Apple Valley High, where he was athletic director for 13 years before retiring in 2008. Larson has continued to be involved in high school athletics as a region and conference secretary.



The MSHSL Hall of Fame started in 1991 to recognize the achievements and contributions of athletes, coaches, officials, administrators and contributors to their programs. Of the 257 current Hall of Fame members, 18 are from District 196, including eight who coached speech and debate, four athletic coaches, three administrators and three athletes.

MSHSL Hall-of-Famers from District 196

- James Boesen**, administrator, Apple Valley High School, Class of 1997
- Polly Reikowski**, speech coach and administrator, Eagan High School, Class of 2003
- Pam Cady Wycoff**, speech and debate coach, Apple Valley High School, Class of 2004
- Carol Ann Shudlick**, athlete (basketball, graduated in 1990), Apple Valley High School, Class of 2004
- Joni Anker**, speech coach, Eagan High School, Class of 2006
- Wanda Manther**, speech and debate coach, Rosemount High School, Class of 2006
- Walt Weaver**, volleyball coach, Apple Valley High School, Class of 2007
- Bill Demaray**, wrestling coach and administrator, Apple Valley High School, Class of 2009
- Geri Dirth**, track coach, Apple Valley High School, Class of 2011
- Nancy Grimes**, administrator, Apple Valley High School, Class of 2011
- Chuck Scanlon**, soccer coach, Apple Valley High School, Class of 2011
- Dennis Swanson**, theater director and speech coach, Eagan High School, Class of 2013
- Cort Sylvester**, speech and debate coach, Rosemount High School, Class of 2015
- Todd Hering**, speech and debate coach, Eastview High School, Class of 2017
- Natalie Darwitz**, athlete (hockey, graduated in 2002), Eagan High School, MSHSL Class of 2019
- Chris McDonald**, speech and debate coach, Eagan High School, Class of 2022
- Trevor Laws**, athlete (football and wrestling, graduated in 2003), Apple Valley High School, Class of 2024
- Scott Larson**, administrator, Apple Valley High School, Class of 2024



Community, inclusion and belonging

More than 375 people attended River Valley Project Explore's Fall Kick-Off Dance at Valley Middle School of STEM for an evening of dancing and socializing. Project Explore serves adults with physical, cognitive and developmental disabilities by encouraging inclusion in community activities and providing customized learning, social and recreational opportunities. It is a Community Education consortium of five school districts: Burnsville, Farmington, Lakeville, Randolph and District 196. Project Explore relies on donations from the community to keep the program affordable. Donations for bingo prizes are greatly appreciated. Beanie Babies, coloring books, word search and activity books, DVDs and snacks are popular items. Call 651-423-7931 to donate.

Students earned \$2.8M in U of M credits last year taking dual-credit courses



District 196 high school students who participated in the College in the Schools (CIS) program during the 2022-23 school year earned a combined 5,237 college credits valued at \$2.8 million, according to a value statement released by the University of Minnesota's CIS program.

Students who participate in the CIS program earn college credits for taking advanced courses at their high school that are taught by their high school teachers. Last year, 780 students from the five District 196 high schools registered for at least one CIS course. Students of color represented 42% of high school enrollment in District 196 last year and accounted for 41% of the CIS course registrations.

The 780 participating students in District 196 registered for 1,263 CIS courses in the 2022-23 school year. Rosemount High School led with 410 course registrations, Eastview High School had 326, Apple Valley High School had 255, Eagan High School had 241, and the School of Environmental Studies had 31. Ninety-four percent of all registrations resulted in a grade of C or better to earn college credit.

At the 2022-23 U of M tuition rate of \$538.70 per credit, the 5,237 CIS credits earned by District 196 students last year are valued at \$2,821,172. The school district paid the university \$183,135 (\$145 per course) for the students to take these college-credit courses at their high schools last year, and received \$66,396 in state aid (\$52.57 per registration) to help cover the cost of this benefit for families.

CIS is one of several opportunities available for District 196 students to earn college credit while attending classes at their high school. Others include Advanced Placement courses and tests, and concurrent enrollment agreements with specific colleges, community colleges and technical schools.



Many of this year's National Merit semifinalists and commended students, and College Board honorees posed for a group photo after being recognized at the Oct. 9 School Board meeting.

National Merit and College Board program recognition

Thirty-three District 196 seniors are being recognized this year for scores they achieved on a national standardized test they took last year as juniors. Twelve are semifinalists in the 2023-24 National Merit Scholarship Program, 14 are National Merit commended students, and seven were selected for the College Board's African American and Hispanic recognition programs.

National Merit semifinalists are **Ajay B Singh** of Apple Valley High School; **Samson Axelrod**, **Jacob Braginsky** and **Huy Vo** of Eagan High School; **Khoa Nguyen**, **Wyatt Peick**, **Ethan Phua**, **Elsie Warren**, **Mazuki Wu** and **Julie Zhang** of Eastview High School, and **Brayden Herzberg** and **Vanessa Huang** of Rosemount High School.

Students are selected based on their scores on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). Semifinalists rank in the top 1% of students who took the test. They may submit additional information to be considered for selection as a finalist. Students named finalists this spring will compete for more than 7,000 scholarships totaling nearly \$28 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% of students nationwide receive letters of commendation. The commended students in District 196 are **Ishaan Koratkar** of Eagan High; **Rasin Hussain**, **Aver Kahar**, **Samuel Kenney**, **Elisabeth Lambert**, **Sahasra Molleti**, **Isaac Nicolai**, **Aimen Patel** and **Matthew Yin** of Eastview High, and **Lauren Begich**, **Katherine Buesing**, **Achyuth Kasthoori**, **Matthew Pasillas** and **Noah Rodenwald** of Rosemount High.

The College Board also recognizes 11th grade Black, Indigenous and Latino students who have a grade-point average of 3.5 and higher, rank in the top 10% on the PSAT, and/or have earned a score of 3 or higher on two or more AP exams in their freshman and sophomore years. Rosemount's **Adonias Ketema**, **Pritschet Ondara**, **Debora Tadese**, **Michael Thomas** and **Nicholas Zweber** were selected for the National African American Recognition Program. **Eva Finn Nowlin** of Rosemount and **Carter Veen** of Eagan were selected for the National Hispanic Recognition Program.

AVID prepares students for college and career, closes opportunity gap

AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is an academic program with a mission to close the opportunity gap by preparing all students for college and career readiness and success in a global economy.

Established in 1980, the AVID program is currently in place in more than 7,500 schools in 47 states. District 196 began using the AVID program at Apple Valley High School in 2006. Since then, it has been implemented at all four comprehensive high schools, the School of Environmental Studies, and three middle schools. In the last five years, the AVID program has served nearly 3,000 students in District 196 and currently enrolls nearly 700 students annually.

AVID focuses on providing students with the skills and strategies needed for success in rigorous coursework, emphasizing critical thinking, organization and collaboration. The program incorporates elements such as tutorial support, college and career exploration, and development of academic and social skills.

In District 196, 99% of district seniors enrolled in AVID between 2018 and 2022 graduated from high school on time. In 2022, more than 80% of AVID seniors in District 196 were accepted into a four-year college. And in 2023, 100% of AVID students in District 196 took courses that would allow them to meet entrance requirements of a four-year college.

“Because of AVID, I am able to stay on the right path academically and reach my goals not only as a student but also as an individual outside of school” said **Mariana Abaunza Hernandez**, a sophomore at Apple Valley.



Volunteer **Drew Huffman** of Lakeville helped students understand the cost of buying groceries at his station of the Reality Fair Oct. 27 at Eastview High School.

Reality Fair teaches financial literacy through life events

Eastview High School students received a dose of reality this fall participating in an event that had them navigating the financial implications of significant life events like buying a house or having a child.

Sponsored by Wings Financial, the Reality Fair featured credit union advisors and high school teachers staffing life milestone stations meant to educate students about the importance of fiscal responsibility.

Business and Marketing Teacher **Ericka Phelps** teaches an elective titled Money Management, where students study a variety of financial topics such as saving and investing, retirement planning and credit cards. She said the Reality Fair is a way to expose her students to life from a financial perspective.

“Students are getting to see what it

costs to have kids, to buy groceries, to buy a house, and to buy a car,” Phelps said. “One of the things students need to know is financial responsibility. I provide these opportunities for students to help them be financially successful in whatever they choose to do with their life.”

At the fair, each student received a folder assigning them a career, providing family information and a worksheet to guide them through the different life milestone stations. Based on their income, students navigated paying bills. Eastview sophomores **Elissa Ansari** and **Bennett Vennie** found the cost of groceries to be the most eye opening.

“You never really realize how much everything adds up,” Vennie said. “It really puts into perspective how much my parents are spending.”

Did You Know?

The 2023 Minnesota Legislature approved a new law requiring students to complete a course for credit in personal finance in grade 10, 11, or 12. The requirement begins with students who enter ninth grade in the 2024-25 school year.

Langworthy is new health services coordinator

Mary Langworthy

started as the district's new health services coordinator in October. She comes from Saint Paul Public Schools, where she was director of health and wellness. Langworthy has more than 25 years of nursing experience, including 13 in public education.



As health services coordinator, Langworthy is responsible for providing leadership and support for school nurses to ensure a comprehensive, effective and sustainable health services program that enhances student learning across the district.

"I look forward to building strong relationships to support efforts that are student centered and improve health outcomes for all students in District 196," Langworthy said.

Educational Benefits applications support students and schools

All families, regardless of income, are encouraged to complete an Educational Benefits Program application. Eligible applicants receive discounted cocurricular participation fees, academic testing fees (ACT, AP, PSAT, SAT), college application fees and Community Education course fees.

In addition to assisting eligible students, the program provides direct funding for their schools, which may be used to hire additional teachers and other supports. The more families that apply, more eligible students receive support and their schools receive more funding.

Apply today at District196.org/edubenefits.

Only one application is needed per household, but a new application must be submitted each year.



Wonders of water

Second grade students at Glacier Hills Elementary School of Arts and Science learned about different phases of the water cycle this fall during a residency with the Science Museum of Minnesota. Here they were learning about condensation, in relation to fog and clouds. The "Water is Life" partnership is supported by the Twin Cities Collaborative and includes the Minneapolis Institute of Art and Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

Here Comes the Bus keeps families informed, 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 because of weather or another reason, 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 need the district

identification number (73500) and their child's meal account number. Parents are able to monitor buses for multiple children from a single account.



When reading gets messy

Shannon Park Elementary School Principal **Erik Davis** gave thumbs up after getting slimed in front of students and staff in October. Davis challenged students to read more than 281,000 minutes in just 14 days, a goal which they achieved and surpassed.

Congratulations!

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

Cassan Li of Eagan High School finished state runner-up in the singles competition of the girls' Class AA state tennis tournament in October.



The **Dakota United Hawks** adapted soccer teams finished state runner-up in the CI state tournament and third place in the PI state tournament in November.

The **Eagan High School girls' soccer team** qualified for the Class AAA state tournament in October.

Mary Dye, assistant coach of the Eastview High School boys' soccer team, was named Assistant Coach of the Year for Class AA.

The **Eagan High School volleyball team** qualified for the Class AAAA state tournament in November.

The **Eagan High School girls' and Rosemount High School boys' cross-country teams** qualified for their state tournaments in November and took ninth and 11th place, respectively.



'Socktober' giving at Westview

Westview Elementary School students collected nearly 1,500 pairs of socks that families and staff donated during their annual "Socktober" event. The socks were given to Mobile Loaves Twin Cities, which uses food trucks to distribute meals, gloves, socks and supplies to families living in poverty.



Reaching the finish line

The **Eastview High School girls' cross-country team** qualified for the state tournament in November and finished 13th in the team competition. This marked the last season for Head Coach **Jorjean Fischer** (right) and Assistant Coach **Jenny Hugstad-Vaa**, who both retired after 40 years coaching cross country athletes, including all 27 years of the Eastview girls' cross-country program.



Shining light on Solar for Schools

The School of Environmental Studies (SES) hosted state legislators, officials from the Minnesota Department of Commerce, members of the media and other guests during a Nov. 29 event to promote the state's Solar for Schools grant program. SES received a grant last year for solar panels that were installed on the school's roof in October, supplying one-third of SES's energy use. Students gave table presentations on solar and other sustainability efforts at the school. In the photo, **JP Sacta-Espinoza** (center right) explained how different plant root systems filter water better than others. Also pictured are (from left) Sen. **Nicole Mitchell**, Rep. **Lucy Rehm**, SES Counselor **Tracy Caruso**, and student **Crow Johnson**. Applications for the next round of Solar for Schools grants opens in January (mn.gov/solar4schools).

Weather-related schedule decisions are based on safety and communicated in many ways

The normal school schedule sometimes needs to be changed due to bad weather and driving conditions. The first two of these days each year, school is canceled and students stay home, with no school expectations for online learning. If there are more than two days when bad weather prevents safe transportation, there are E-Learning Days (up to five each year), with students learning from home.

When this issue of *Spotlight* went to press, there had been no district-wide cancellations or delayed starts this year.

Safety is the overriding concern in making these decisions. Several factors are considered, including road conditions and visibility, snow depth, wind chill, and the weather forecast for the remainder of the day. In general, if school buses can get through the snow without significant delays that would impact students waiting at bus stops, the district will have school whenever possible.

District leaders understand these decisions impact many families who need to arrange care for their children when school is not in session.

It is always parents' and guardians' choice to keep their children at home if they are ever concerned about sending them to school.

School Cancellations (days 1-2)

When school is canceled for weather, there are no regular classes for all students (including 196Online) and the following activities are also 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, is made and communicated by mid-afternoon.

E-Learning Days (days 3-7)

If there are more than two days when bad weather prevents safe transportation of students to school, all students scheduled to have school on these days participate in online learning from home. State law allows up to five E-Learning Days per school year.

When an E-Learning Day is called, teachers communicate with students through Seesaw and Schoology to post assignments, instructional activities and resources to guide students' learning for part of that day. There is no synchronous instruction via Zoom. Students are expected to access Seesaw/Schoology in the morning and be engaged in learning, with flexibility in how and when they choose to do the work. Students are considered in attendance for an E-Learning Day unless a parent or guardian contacts the school to verify an absence.

Teachers are available during regular school hours to respond to student and family questions sent by email and phone call messages left on their work voicemail. There are no synchronous office hours.

2-Hour Delayed Start

If the decision is to delay the start of school 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 about schedule changes is communicated on the district and school websites first, district social media, a phone call, email and text from the district to parents and staff, and on local television stations listed as "Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools."

Snow-related schedule changes: the superintendent makes a decision by 5:30 a.m.; no communication is shared if school will start on time, as scheduled.

Cold weather-related schedule changes: the superintendent makes 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.

Tax deductions for qualifying educational expenses

All Minnesota families with dependent school-age children may qualify for a state K-12 education subtraction and/or credit for qualifying educational purchases in 2023.

The **K-12 education subtraction** is for all parents and guardians, regardless of income. Families can deduct up to \$1,625 per child in grades K-6, and up to \$2,500 per child in grades 7-12, for qualifying educational expenses.

The **K-12 education credit** is a refund (75% of paid and documented qualified expenses, up to the maximum amounts) for families with up to two children and a federally adjusted gross household income of \$76,000 or less (add \$3,000 for each child after two).

For more information, go to www.revenue.state.mn.us or call 651-296-3781.

Theater awards

<< continued from front page >>

Based on those performances, Nelson was selected during the Hennepin Theatre Trust's Spotlight Showcase Awards program to be Minnesota's representative at the 2023 Jimmy Awards, which featured 96 nominees from 48 regional awards programs. Nominees were awarded a weeklong theater intensive that included coaching sessions, and training and rehearsals at The Juilliard School in preparation for a talent showcase on the stage of the Minskoff Theatre on Broadway. Nelson was one of eight semifinalists in the 2023 Jimmy Awards. She received a \$2,000 scholarship to further her education.

This year, Nelson will perform in Rosemount's production of "OnStage," both in the chorus and as a featured dancer, and is preparing to audition for "Mean Girls" this spring.

Eastview High School senior **Gabi Acostacano** was also honored at Hennepin Theatre Trust's annual Spotlight Showcase event at the State Theater in Minneapolis last June. She was named one of four Triple Threat Award winners, who received an all-expenses paid trip to New



Mia Nelson was applauded after being named a semifinalist for the 2023 National High School Musical Theatre Awards, also known as the Jimmy Awards.

York City this past summer to attend Broadway shows, meet with industry professionals and participate in workshops to hone their skills.

This year, Acostacano will perform in Eastview's production of "Mean Girls," in the lead role as Cady Heron, and she is also preparing to audition for BRAVO, Eastview's annual variety show that is scheduled for spring this year.

Acostacano and Nelson both say they plan to pursue additional education and careers in musical theater after graduation.

Rosemount first, Eastview takes fifth in marching band championships

Rosemount High School was the state and grand champion of the Youth-in-Music Marching Band Championships held Oct. 14 at US Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.

The event featured 31 marching bands from Minnesota and surrounding states that competed in four classes during the preliminary rounds and the top 10 bands were selected to advance to the final round. Rosemount finished first among the Class AAAA schools in the preliminary round and was named grand champion in the final round. Rosemount also earned special awards for Outstanding General Effect, Music and Color Guard.

The Eastview High School marching band also had a top-five performance, finishing fourth in the Class AAAA preliminary round and fifth in the final round. Eastview's **Sam Kenny** received the Outstanding Performer Award for his performances in both rounds.

Eastview concluded its season after the championships. Rosemount concluded its season after finishing fifth at the Bands of America Super Regional Championship in St. Louis, Missouri on Oct. 28.



Eastview High School senior **Gabi Acostacano** (left) is pictured during a performance of "Seussical" last year. She was one of four Triple Threat Award winners selected in the Hennepin Theatre Trust's 2023 Spotlight Showcase. The event is Minnesota's largest celebration of high school theater, honoring students who have shown distinction in singing, dancing and acting, expertise in stagecraft and an overall demonstration of community leadership, teamwork and artistry.

Apple Valley High School Presents



Feb. 23, 24, March 1, 2 at 7 p.m.
Feb. 25, March 3 at 2 p.m.

Eastview High School Presents



Dec. 8, 9, 14, 15, 16 at 7 p.m.
Dec. 10 at 2 p.m.

Eagan High School Presents



Dec. 8, 9, 14, 15, 16 at 7 p.m.
Dec. 10 at 3 p.m.

Rosemount High School Presents



Dec. 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16 at 7 p.m.
Dec. 10 at 2 p.m.

Concerts and Shows Coming Soon!

Apple Valley High School

- Winter Band Concert – Dec. 11, 7 p.m.
- Winter Choir Concert – Dec. 18, 7 p.m.
- Jazz Ensemble – Jan. 10, 7 p.m.

Eagan High School

- Holiday Vocal Concerts – Dec. 18, 6 and 7:30 p.m.
- Pyramid Jazz Bands Concert – Dec. 19, 7 p.m.
- Winter Instrumental Music Concert – Jan. 22, 7 p.m.

Eastview High School

- Winter Choral Concerts – Dec. 18, 6 and 8 p.m.
- Winter Band Concerts – Jan. 8, 6 and 8 p.m.
- Winter Dance Show – Jan. 21, 7 p.m.

Rosemount High School

- Winter Choral Concerts – Dec. 18, 6 and 7:30 p.m.
- RHS/RMS/SHMS Band Concerts – Jan. 9 at 6 and 7:30 p.m.
- Jazz Concert – Jan. 22 at 7 p.m.



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Community Education



Become certified to be a swim instructor and more!

Water Safety Instructor (16+)

Learn how to teach students swimming and water safety skills as a certified American Red Cross swim instructor. Participants 16 years of age by the end of class are welcome.

Tue.-Fri. | Dec. 26-29

9 a.m.-6 p.m.

4 sessions | \$290 | BHMS

Water Safety Aid (13+)

Learn how to help students develop swimming and water safety skills as a swim instructor aide. CPR and First Aid training are included. Successful completion will qualify you to apply for employment at age 14.

Tue.-Fri. | Dec. 26-29 | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

4 sessions | \$195 | BHMS

Junior Lifeguarding (11-14)

Build a foundation of knowledge and skills to prepare for a future as a lifeguard.

Tue.-Fri. | Dec. 26-29 | 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

4 sessions | \$160 | BHMS

Adult Basic Education | ABE

Do you want to be a United States citizen? Learn about and prepare for the United States citizenship interview while improving your English skills.

English for Citizenship

Mon. & Wed. | Jan. 17-Feb. 12 | 12:30-2 p.m. | Free* | Live Online

*\$20 Annual Materials Fee

Early Childhood Family Education | ECFE

You are your child's first and most important teacher! Get hands-on learning experiences that will nourish a lifetime of teachable moments. ECFE classes include parent-child interaction time, parent education and children's activity time.

The Young Child's Developing Mind (parents with children ages birth-7 yrs.)

Early years are a critical time for brain development. Explore the brain and how it grows in the first seven years of life.

Discuss and learn about focus and self-control, perspective taking, communication, making connections, critical thinking, taking on challenges and self-directed engaged learning.

Tue. | Jan. 9-March 19 | 5:45-7:45 p.m. | Sliding Fee Scale | DVLC



Give the gift of learning!

Purchase a gift certificate for a friend or family member and share the love for learning! Gift certificates are available in various denominations. Use them for any Aquatic, Adult and Youth Enrichment or Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) class.

Winter/Spring Enrichment and Aquatic program catalogs available online

Plan a winter and spring of fun and learning. Even though your printed catalog will not arrive in your mailbox until after the first week of January, you may browse and register in our online catalog beginning Dec 12!



Visit ce.district196.org or call 651-423-7920



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