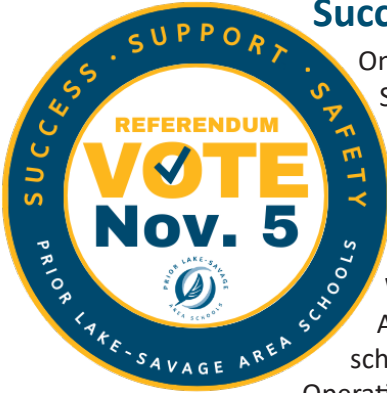


# C Laker CONNECTIONS



A Publication of Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools • August, 2024



### Success • Support • Safety

On November 5, 2024, Prior Lake-Savage Area School (PLSAS) district residents will be asked to vote on an operating levy referendum that would bolster the district's financial stability, maintain what we have and allow us to invest in academics and safety.

#### What is an operating levy referendum?

An operating levy generates revenue for school districts and requires voter approval.

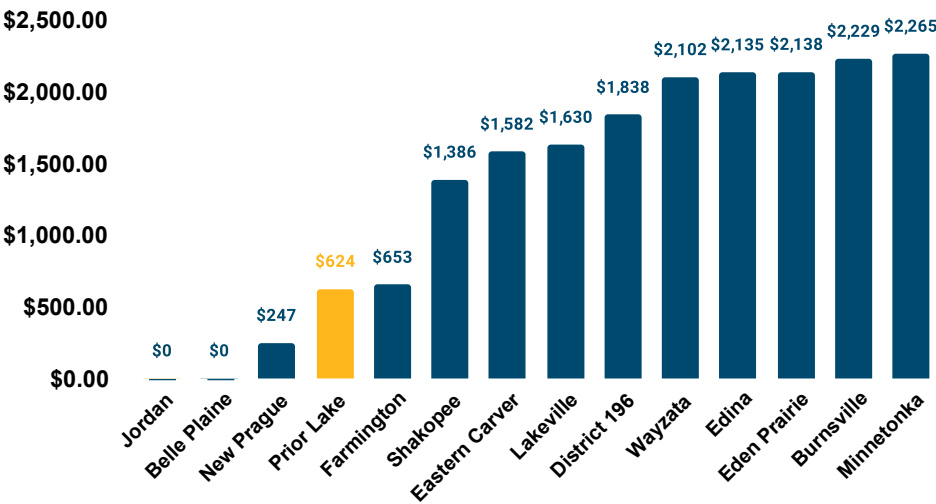
Operating levies provide funding for the district's daily operational expenses, covering the shortfall between state and federal funding and the expectations expressed by many in our community.

#### Understanding the operating levy referendum: addressing budget shortfalls and funding challenges

Like many other school districts in Minnesota and across the country, PLSAS is facing serious budget challenges. We are facing rising costs due to inflation, unfunded mandates and declining enrollment, which reduces the amount of revenue available to invest in the growing needs of our students.

- **Rising Costs Due to Inflation:** Increased prices for goods and services impact the district's budget.
- **Unfunded Mandates:** New state regulations and requirements increase expenses without additional funding.
- **Declining K-12 Demographics:** Fewer students result in reduced revenue for the district.
- **Inadequate State Funding Adjustments:** Ongoing shortfalls in state funding create a significant funding gap. If state funding had kept pace with inflation since 2003, we would have received more than \$9 million in additional funding last year alone.

Voter-Approved Operating Levy Comparison (2023-24 per student)



*PLSAS' current operating levy is one of the lowest in the area, which means our district has less money than neighboring districts to operate our schools and provide competitive programming for students.*

#### Learn more

Visit: [www.plsas.org/referendum](http://www.plsas.org/referendum)

Email: [input@plsas.org](mailto:input@plsas.org)

Call: 952-226-0814

#### Voting information

Polls will be open from **7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, November 5**. Polling locations are based on where you live. **Early voting begins September 20**. Call 952-226-0010 with any voting questions or visit [mnvotes.org](http://mnvotes.org)

Prepared and paid for by the Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools, 4540 Tower Street SE, Prior Lake, MN 55372. This publication is not circulated on behalf of any candidate or ballot question.

#### What is the ballot request?

The district's goal is to sustain and enhance academic programs and services for our students. If the operating levy is approved, the additional funds would bolster the district's financial stability and enable investments in academic programs and services directly aligned with our new Strategic Plan, which was developed with community input. To support each student's growth and success, we propose the following enhancements:



#### Enhancing academic excellence that increases student performance and outcomes

- **Teaching Specialists:** Add specialists in every building to collaborate with teachers and ensure district-wide instructional coordination, elevate academic rigor and provide support for students who need it.
- **Spanish Immersion Programming:** Increase staffing support to align the Spanish curriculum across all grade levels.
- **Maintaining Class Sizes:** Ensure that class sizes remain consistent to support individualized student needs and effective learning environments.



#### Increasing staffing for behavior intervention and student support

- **School Counselors:** Introduce school counselors to elementary schools, and add an additional counselor at Prior Lake High School, to align with our middle school staffing.
- **School Psychologists:** Add two school psychologists to assist in addressing behavioral and academic needs across the district.



#### Expanding career pathway programs

##### MN Center for Advanced Professional Studies (MNCAPS):

- Expand career pathway programs based on student demand.
- Increase space to accommodate more students.
- Strengthen partnerships with the local business community.



#### Strengthening safety and security at all schools\*

- **Classroom Security:** Update and standardize classroom door locks for quick emergency locking.
- **Perimeter Security:** Improve security with additional surveillance cameras and security film on entrance windows.

- **High School Security:** Construct a more secure lower-level entrance at Prior Lake High School.

*\*Based on recommendations from an audit conducted by the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security - Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency*

#### Oversight Committee

If approved, the district will establish a Referendum Oversight Committee tasked with monitoring the implementation of levy measures.

#### Impact if the levy is not approved by voters

If the operating levy is not approved, the district is projected to have a budget shortfall in the 2025-26 school year and beyond, resulting in the need to make significant annual budget reductions, which are likely to include the following:

- School closure(s) resulting in elementary boundary changes.
- Increase in class sizes.
- Reduction in staffing and personnel expenditures across the district resulting in reduced services and student supports.
- Move MNCAPS to a district facility.
- Reduce programs for students including:
  - Limit Spanish Immersion to K-5 only
  - Eliminate MNCAPS pathway(s)
  - Eliminate middle school activities
- Reduce Laker Online staffing
- Reduce secondary electives
- Reduce student access to educational technology.
- Increase fees for community facility use.
- Close pool at Twin Oaks.

#### Tax impact

The proposal will ask voters to revoke the district's existing levy of \$623.97 per student and replace it with a new levy of \$1,803 per student with an inflationary factor. Based on enrollment projections, the new levy will provide approximately \$10.8 million additional dollars for the first year with an inflationary factor included for years 2-10. The tax impact on a \$445,500 home will be an additional \$45 per month.

[www.plsas.org](http://www.plsas.org)



Twin Oaks forms Optimist Club



Even during the summer, our Lakers are making a significant impact through community service projects. Last month, members of the newly formed Twin Oaks Junior Optimist Club joined forces with the PLHS Junior Optimists to support The Sandwich Project.

In less than an hour, the enthusiastic volunteers assembled approximately 400 sandwiches. These were then delivered to the Groveland Emergency Food Shelf in Minneapolis, providing food to individuals in need.

Their efforts highlight the community spirit and dedication of our young Lakers, demonstrating that even during their break, they remain committed to making a positive difference.

Middle Schools receive state honor

Hidden Oaks Middle School and Twin Oaks Middle School have been recognized as Sustaining Exemplar Schools for their successful work using Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) during the 2023-2024 school year, according to the Minnesota Department of Education.

PBIS is a data-driven program that provides schools and districts with training and support to promote positive student behavior. The schools receiving recognition are leaders in supporting positive behavior, improving school climate and increasing student achievement.

Food Services welcomes students back to school with fresh meals and fun programs



Child Nutrition Services is thrilled to welcome students back into our cafeterias for another exciting school year of shared meals and healthy eating.

Fresh and local

Our robust Farm 2 School program continues, bringing a variety of fresh, local items from 12 surrounding farms straight to our cafeterias. Students can enjoy fruits and vegetables, microgreens, beef, wild rice, honey and maple syrup. Popular programs like Try It Tuesday, where students can taste unfamiliar or uncommon foods, and MN Thursday, which highlights Farm 2 School menus, are also returning, adding fun and educational elements to lunchtime.

Benefits and information

Visit [www.plsas.org/meals](http://www.plsas.org/meals) for information on filling out the Application for Educational Benefits, accessing our menus, and downloading the SchoolCafe app. Applying for educational benefits could provide your family with reduced or waived fees for athletics and activities, field trips, discounts on internet service and much more.

For any questions regarding your student's account, please contact your school directly.

JOIN US FOR THE

2024-2025

**BAG TO SCHOOL**

EVENT

Celebrating our new Strategic Plan

August 22, 4-7PM

**FREE community event**

Bouncy House, Games, Prizes, Food Trucks

**PRIOR LAKE HIGH SCHOOL**

**LOWER PARKING LOT**

7575 150TH STREET WEST, SAVAGE



A WORLD-CLASS DISTRICT  
CENTERED ON STUDENTS, DRIVEN BY RESULTS.



Dr. Michael Thomas  
Superintendent

New strategic plan sets vision for a world-class district centered on students, driven by results

We are thrilled to announce that Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools’ strategic plan was approved by the School Board June 17. This achievement is a testament to the engagement and support of our community.

Strategic planning is essential for shaping the future of our schools and we have placed community involvement at the forefront of this process. In January, we embarked on updating our strategic plan, bringing together a diverse group of over 50 members—including parents, students, staff, community members, city leaders and school board members. This collaborative effort aimed to identify key priorities and define the roadmap for learner success in PLSAS.

From February to April, we held a series of stakeholder engagement meetings and also conducted a survey. We reviewed hundreds of comments to ensure our plan reflects our community’s needs and aspirations.

With the plan now approved, our next step is to develop department and school improvement plans, with performance metrics, centered around our mission to “Inspire and empower each student to reach their full potential.”

Thank you for your invaluable support. Together, we are creating a world-class district centered on students, driven by results.




VISION

A world-class district centered on students, driven by results

MISSION


Inspire and empower each student to reach their full potential

OUR PRIORITIES




**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

Students receive challenging, rigorous, and relevant instruction for their unique learning needs and goals, and to develop essential skills to be successful.




**OPTIMIZE RESOURCES**

Prioritize efficient and effective use of fiscal, human, and capital resources through excellence in governance, administration, and staff.



**POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

Foster a welcoming, inclusive, and safe learning environment, where staff are valued, and students can fully engage in learning.



**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

Develop a culture of engagement through shared responsibility, and collaboration among students, staff, families, and community partners.

CORE BELIEFS

**Accountability:** We are transparent, take responsibility for actions and decisions, answer to our community, and uphold commitments and standards of excellence.

**Respect:** We appreciate the value, feelings, and rights of others, fostering an environment of mutual understanding and consideration.

**Unity:** We support each other, cultivating a sense of belonging, and collective strength, ensuring everyone is seen, valued, and heard as we pursue our common goals together.

**Stewardship:** We responsibly manage resources, ensuring their sustainability, and ethical use for the benefit of current and future generations.



**PUBLIC NOTICES**

Public Notices are now available on our website for your convenience.

[www.plsas.org/publicnotices](http://www.plsas.org/publicnotices)



Public notices now available online

Due to the dissolution of our local newspapers, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools’ Public Notices are now available on our website for your convenience. You can access them at [www.plsas.org/publicnotices](http://www.plsas.org/publicnotices)

In addition to being available online, these notices are also posted at the Prior Lake and Savage Libraries. Paper copies are available upon request by calling 952-226-0000.

Public Notices include but are not limited to:

- School Board Agendas
- School Board Minutes
- Election Notices and Resolutions
- Advertisements for Bids

Stay connected with Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools!

If you don’t have children enrolled in PLSAS, you can still stay informed by signing up for our E-News. Simply scan the QR code or visit [www.plsas.org/communications](http://www.plsas.org/communications) to subscribe.



Welcome to the 2024-25 school year

We can't wait to welcome back our Laker learners in September! Visit [www.plsas.org/calendars](http://www.plsas.org/calendars) for this school year's district calendar.



E-STEM Schools



Community Education offers a variety of classes and events for all ages. Registration is now open for our Fall session. Visit [www.priorlakesavagece.com](http://www.priorlakesavagece.com) or call 952-226-0310 for more information.

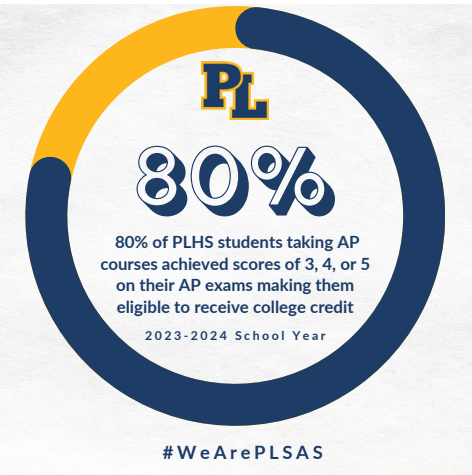


**Student information update**  
We are gearing up for a successful start to the school year! Part of that planned success depends on great communication and we need your help to make that happen.  
We are asking all parents of current students to complete the Annual Update in Infinite Campus for each student before the first day of school.  
If this will be your student's first school year at PLSAS, you do not need to complete the update this year unless your student's information has changed since completing the initial enrollment.

For returning students, it is important to confirm or update your information so we can communicate with you about important events including emergencies and school closures. You will also be asked to review the Parent/Student Handbook that contains important district policy information.  
To start, visit our website at [www.plsas.org](http://www.plsas.org) and login to Infinite Campus in the Families portal. Then click on "More," then "Online Registration" and follow the prompts. For assistance, contact the IT HelpDesk at 952-226-0048 or [ithelpdesk@plsas.org](mailto:ithelpdesk@plsas.org).

Prior Lake High School achieves record high AP exam scores

The newly released Advanced Placement (AP) exam scores bring fantastic news for Prior Lake High School! For the 2023-2024 school year, 80% of Prior Lake High School (PLHS) students taking AP courses achieved scores of 3, 4 or 5 on their AP exams. This means that more than 700 PLHS students are eligible to receive college credit.  
Additionally, almost 100 more students took AP exams in the 2023-2024 school year compared to the previous year. Increasing both the number of students taking the exam and the percentage of students scoring a 3 or higher in the same year is an impressive accomplishment.



This highlights the school's dedication to academic excellence and our mission to inspire and empower each student to reach their full potential.  
To provide context for this year's success, here is a summary of the past five years.  
• 2020: 74% (489 out of 658 PLHS AP students) achieved scores of 3, 4 or 5  
• 2021: 60% (481 out of 794 PLHS AP students) achieved scores of 3, 4 or 5  
• 2022: 73% (548 out of 741 PLHS AP students) achieved scores of 3, 4 or 5  
• 2023: 74% (587 out of 793 PLHS AP students) achieved scores of 3, 4 or 5  
• 2024: 80% (710 out of 884 PLHS AP students) achieved scores of 3, 4 or 5  
Congratulations to all the students, teachers and staff for their outstanding work and commitment to academic success.

Standard Response Protocol launching this school year

Ensuring the safety of our students and staff remains our top priority. As we prepare for the upcoming school year, we're excited to announce the implementation of a comprehensive Standard Response Protocol (SRP) plan.  
Developed by the I Love U Guys Foundation, this protocol provides clear and consistent protocols for responding to a wide variety of emergencies such as fires, lockdowns, evacuations, severe weather and medical situations.  
Students and staff will be training, practicing and drilling the SRP beginning in the 2024-25 school year. Families will be provided more detailed information from their school. The SRP actions are as follows:

**HOLD**

**HOLD - "In Your Classroom or Area"**  
HOLD is called when there is a situation that requires students and staff to remain in their classroom or area to keep hallways or access areas clear. Inside classrooms, it will be business as usual. Examples include: medical situation or a utility issue.

**SECURE**

**SECURE - "Get Inside. Lock Outside Doors"**  
SECURE is called when there is something dangerous outside the building. Students and staff are brought into the building and the outside doors will remain locked. Inside the building, it will be business as usual. Examples include: Criminal activity or a dangerous animal in the area.

**LOCKDOWN**

**LOCKDOWN - "Locks, Lights, Out of Sight"**  
LOCKDOWN is called when there is something dangerous inside the building. Students and staff will be trained to enter or remain in a room that can be locked, and maintain silence. Examples include: active threat inside or on the property.

**EVACUATE**

**EVACUATE - "To a Location"**  
EVACUATE is called when there is a need to move people from one location to another for safety reasons. Examples include: fire alarm or a gas leak.

**SHELTER**

**SHELTER - State the Hazard and Safety Strategy**  
SHELTER is called when specific protective actions are needed based on a threat or hazard. Examples include: severe weather or hazardous materials outside.

PRIOR LAKE CHAMBER & PRIOR LAKE-SAVAGE AREA SCHOOLS COMMUNITY EDUCATION

# FALL COMMUNITY FEST

FREE ENTRY

PRIOR LAKE HIGH SCHOOL  
7575 150TH ST. W.  
SAVAGE, 55378

FOOD • LOCAL BUSINESSES • CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES • LOCAL NON-PROFITS

SEPT. 16TH 6-8 PM

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SCAN THE CODE OR VISIT [WWW.PRIORLAKECHAMBER.COM](http://WWW.PRIORLAKECHAMBER.COM)

**ECFE**  
Early Childhood Family Education

## OPEN HOUSE

Tuesday, September 3rd or Wednesday, September 4th  
9:00-11:00 and 1:00-3:00

**Edgewood School**  
5304 Westwood Drive SE  
Prior Lake

**Contact us**  
952-226-0975  
[www.priorlakesavagece.com](http://www.priorlakesavagece.com)

- Meet our teachers
- Make connections with other parents and families
- See our learning spaces
- Learn about our programs
- Sign up for ECFE classes

### CIRCLE OF FRIENDS ANNOUNCES A NEW CLASS!

## LITTLE LAKERS

TUESDAYS 9:30-11:00  
EDGEWOOD SCHOOL

For Children who turn 3 before 12/31/24  
Registration information can be found at [www.priorlakesavagece.com](http://www.priorlakesavagece.com)

This class is a great introduction to preschool. The shorter time helps children adjust to school routines through play. Licensed teachers foster a love for learning and help develop key social-emotional skills.

# JOIN Kids' Company THE FUN

BEFORE + AFTER SCHOOL CHILD CARE

**SCHOOL YEAR 2024-25**  
Before School Child Care | 6:30 AM - School Start  
After School Child Care | School End - 6 PM  
2, 3, 4, & 5-day Schedule Options  
Located in All Elementary Schools  
Kindergarten - 5th Grade

[priorlakesavage.ce.eleyo.com/kidscompany](http://priorlakesavage.ce.eleyo.com/kidscompany)  
[kidscompany@plsas.org](mailto:kidscompany@plsas.org) | (952) 226-0375



Connect with your local schools

Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools is pleased to offer free activity passes to residents in the community age 55 and older to attend most home events. This includes any home sporting events and other special events with a few exceptions such as the Fall Musical, Celebrate Concert, section/state games and any school-produced plays. Passes for the 2024-25 school year can be picked up at the District Services Center, 4540 Tower Street SE, Prior Lake, Monday through Friday, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Call 952-226-0000 for more details.

Laker Educational Foundation

The Laker Educational Foundation hosted its first Food Truck Fest on Saturday, May 18th, on Main Street in Prior Lake. The event was a huge success! We had a variety of food truck vendors, live music, face painting and games. All proceeds from the event support our mission to inspire and enrich creativity, innovation and excellence for the students and staff of Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools.

The Prior Lake High School Hall of Fame is proud to announce the Laker Hall of Fame Class of 2024:

- Chris Fleck
- Deb Sunderman
- Tony Doherty
- Matt Arends
- Chloe Radcliffe
- Kiel Wuellner
- Sydney Smythe (O’Keefe)
- Team of Distinction- 1970 Football Team

The Laker Hall of Fame Class of 2024 will be inducted during Homecoming Weekend, October 4-5. Inductees will be announced at the Homecoming football game on October 4, followed by a celebratory banquet on October 5 at The Legends.

Empowering future leaders: Link Crew and WEB program welcome new students



Hundreds of student leaders at Prior Lake High School and both middle schools are undergoing training as part of the Link Crew and WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) programs.

These orientation and transition initiatives are designed to welcome new students and ensure they feel comfortable and supported throughout their first year in a new building. By facilitating a smooth transition from one school level to the next, these programs aim to create a fun and supportive environment for all students.

Trained student leaders serve as positive role models and mentors, guiding incoming students to discover what it takes to be successful in middle and high school. Through their leadership, they help foster a sense of belonging and community, setting the stage for academic and personal success.

Are you new to the district?



Welcome to Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools!

If you have school-age children, you can enroll them online at [www.plsas.org/enroll](http://www.plsas.org/enroll) or visit the District Services Center, 4540 Tower Street SE in Prior Lake.

For more information, call 952-226-0000. We look forward to welcoming your child into our school district as a Laker!

**Become a Laker!**  
Enroll today at [www.plsas.org/enroll](http://www.plsas.org/enroll)

Congratulations class of 2024

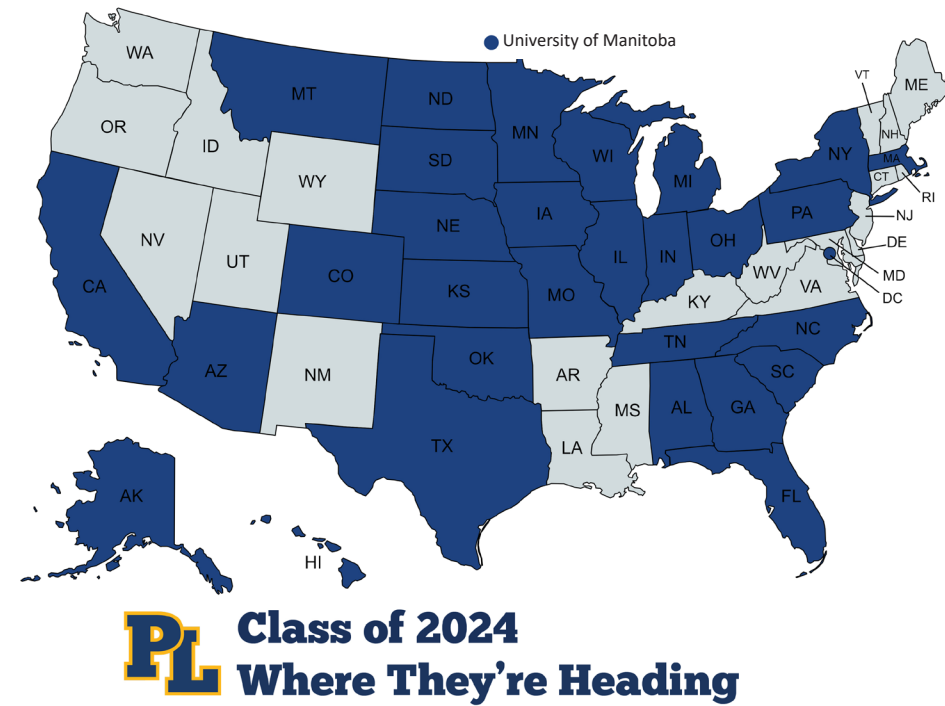


Photo courtesy of Danny Nong

On June 6 we celebrated 636 Prior Lake High School graduates and 53 Bridges Area Learning Center graduates at Dan Patch Stadium at the Prior Lake High School campus.

Class of 2024: where they’re heading

The class of 2024 is getting ready to embark on their next journey! 85% of 2024 graduates plan to attend 2 or 4-year colleges/universities, 7% plan to enter the workforce and 1% are joining the military. In the following graphic, the states in blue represent where our Lakers will be attending colleges/universities in the fall.



**Support our students**  
**Support our classrooms**

**NOW HIRING**  
Paraeducators  
Food Services Staff  
Kids’ Company Staff  
Custodians

SCAN THE QR CODE OR APPLY TODAY AT  
[www.plsas.org/employment](http://www.plsas.org/employment)

**Connect with us**  
To get news, photos, events and more, “Like” us on Facebook and/or follow us on Instagram.

[facebook.com/PLSAS](https://facebook.com/PLSAS)  
[instagram.com/isd719](https://instagram.com/isd719)  
[youtube.com/isd719](https://youtube.com/isd719)

The stock we are printing on contains 10% PCW

**Our Vision:**  
A world-class district centered on students, driven by results

**Our Mission:**  
Inspire and empower each student to reach their full potential

**About this Newsletter**  
For questions or comments regarding *Laker Connections*, contact Kristi Mussman, Director of Communications, [kmussman@plsas.org](mailto:kmussman@plsas.org) or 952-226-0014

**2024 Board of Education**

<b>Chair</b> Mary Frantz	<b>Directors</b> Lisa Atkinson Amy Crosby Jessica Olstad Enrique Velázquez
<b>Vice-Chair/Clerk</b> Amy Bullyan	
<b>Treasurer</b> Julie Bernick	<b>Superintendent</b> Dr. Michael Thomas
<b>Student Representative</b> Anh Pham	