

Spotlight

Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools



DISTRICT196[®]
One District. Infinite Possibilities.

Fall 2024 | Volume 65 • Number 1

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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Olympic pride and proposal

Rosemount High School graduate **Payton Otterdahl** (Class of 2014) finished fourth in the shot put at the Paris Olympics Aug. 3. It was Otterdahl's best finish in a world competition. He took fifth at the 2023 world championships and 10th at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. During his senior year at Rosemount, Otterdahl won state titles in both shot put and discus. The day after his fourth-place finish in Paris, Otterdahl proposed to girlfriend **Maddy Nilles** at the Eiffel Tower. They live in Lincoln, Neb., where he trains and coaches high school throwers, and she coaches throwers at the University of Nebraska. Otterdahl said he plans to continue competing professionally and wants to qualify for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. (Getty Images)

Field and Gardner vie for open seat in board election

Two District 196 residents filed affidavits of candidacy for one open School Board seat that will be filled in the Nov. 5, 2024 general election.

The candidates are **Melissa Field** of Apple Valley and **Leah Gardner** of Eagan. The two-week filing period ended Aug. 13 and the deadline to officially withdraw from the election passed Aug. 15.

The election will fill the remaining year of the term of former board member **Bianca Virnig**, who resigned in February after she was elected to the state Legislature. The board conducted an application and interview process, and appointed Gardner to fill the vacancy until the next election. The candidate elected Nov. 5 will serve the remainder of Virnig's term, which runs through 2025.



Melissa Field



Leah Gardner

Early voting begins Sept. 20. Voters can vote by absentee ballot in person at their local city hall/municipal center or at one of the Dakota County government centers in Apple Valley, Hastings, and West St. Paul. To receive a ballot to vote absentee by mail, voters may complete an application at www.mnvotes.org. Voters do not need a reason to vote by absentee ballot. Voters can also cast their ballot on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024, at their designated general election polling place. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day. To find your polling place, or for more information about how to vote, go to www.mnvotes.org.

Focus on student attendance targets chronic absenteeism

District 196 schools will go on the offensive this year to address the growing problem of chronic absenteeism, which has reached critical status in the years following the pandemic, affecting student performance and overall student success in schools across the nation, including District 196.

Defined as missing 10% or more of school days in a year, chronic absenteeism is a significant barrier to student achievement. Studies show that students who are frequently absent are more likely to fall behind academically, struggle with social skills, and drop out from school. **Last year, one of every seven District 196 students missed two or more days of school per month, nearly 20 days or roughly 12% of the entire school year.**

"Regular attendance is fundamental to student success," said **Eric Hansen**, director of secondary education. "Our goal is to create an environment where every student feels supported and motivated to attend school every day. We are committed to addressing the root causes of absenteeism and providing the necessary resources to help our students thrive."

The district's Attendance Matters campaign seeks to combat chronic absenteeism through:

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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 janet.swiecichowski@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, Eric Hansen (651-423-7712 - eric.hansen@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.

Davis leading implementation of system to support students

The Instruction and Achievement Department hired **Kim Davis** to lead implementation of a system to ensure consistent delivery of a solid core curriculum and interventions to support students who need additional help. Davis started as the district's coordinator of the Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MnMTSS) in August.



Last school year, Davis was an elementary school assistant principal for Anoka-Hennepin Public Schools. She started her career in education in 2001 as a kindergarten teacher at a charter school in Minneapolis. In 2008, Davis started working for Saint Paul Public Schools, where she helped create a district-wide area learning center program for middle school students, and was also a teacher, data coach and interventionist. She then worked for Minneapolis Public Schools from 2013 to 2022, first as an instructional facilitator training and mentoring teachers, and two years as a STEM coordinator and instructional coach at an elementary school. After finishing her principal licensure program, Davis took a position as dean of instruction at a Minneapolis charter school for one year before she was hired as an assistant principal in Anoka-Hennepin in 2023.

In her new position with District 196, Davis will provide professional development for educators, manage and analyze data to inform decisions, evaluate program effectiveness, and facilitate collaboration among school and community partners to create an inclusive and supportive educational environment through evidence-based practices and continuous improvement strategies.

"My passion is in ensuring every student gets what they need to experience success in and out of school," Davis said. "I am thrilled to join the instructional team with District 196 to continue to support schools, staff, students, and families."

Dakota County Tribune/Sun Thisweek is district's official newspaper

Each year, public school districts in Minnesota are required to designate an official newspaper in which to publish legal notices, bid requests and minutes of all School Board meetings.

The *Dakota County Tribune/Sun Thisweek* has been the official newspaper of District 196 for more than 25 years. The *Dakota County Tribune* provides weekly coverage of news in Apple Valley, Rosemount, and Farmington. Separate issues of *Sun Thisweek* provide coverage of Burnsville/Eagan, and Lakeville.

In addition to publishing legal notices, the *Dakota County Tribune/Sun Thisweek* covers School Board actions, school events, student achievements, concerts and plays, sports, and more.

For many years, the newspapers were delivered free of charge every week to every household in the district, no subscription required. In recent years, the *Dakota County Tribune/Sun Thisweek* was delivered by mail to any resident who requested a free subscription. Due to increasing costs and declining advertising revenues, a paid subscription is now required to continue receiving the newspaper by mail. For a limited time, subscriptions are being offered for \$36 per year, or \$72 for three years. To subscribe, go to sunthisweek.com or call 763-712-3544.

Notice of digital tools used in District 196

District 196 uses a variety of digital devices and software from technology providers as critical tools to support student learning. Pursuant to Minnesota Statute § 13.32, school districts in Minnesota must annually notify families of the curriculum, testing and assessment providers that have access to educational data.

The inventory of digital tools District 196 uses is posted on the 1:1 Parent Resources page at www.district196.org/academics/digital-learning/11-ipad-parent-resources/.

Parents and guardians may email digitaltools@district196.org with questions regarding specific digital tools used in classrooms or to request to inspect a contract associated with a digital tool listed on the inventory.

The excitement and promise of a new school year

By **Michael Bolsoni**, superintendent

This year marks my 48th new school year, going all the way back to my kindergarten year at Glen Park Elementary School in Lombard, Ill. After growing up in the western suburbs of Chicago, I traveled to St. Peter, Minn, to attend Gustavus Adolphus College, then to the University of Minnesota, where I earned a master's degree in education. And thankfully, for the last 29 years, I've started each school year right here in District 196.

The start of every new school year is filled with feelings of anticipation, excitement, and promise for the year ahead. As I begin my first school year as your superintendent, I embrace these emotions with a deep sense of responsibility and commitment to our community.

In District 196, our mission is to educate, develop, and inspire our students for lifelong success. Every day, our dedicated staff bring this mission to life, whether safely transporting students, keeping our schools clean, preparing nutritious meals, teaching new skills in the classroom, bringing out talents in the theater, or coaching on the athletic field.



This year, we remain focused on providing a high-quality education that is both rigorous and inclusive. We are committed to creating an environment where every student is inspired to excel, and where learning extends beyond academics. We believe in supporting the whole child by fostering a caring, inclusive environment where every student is valued and respected. To do this, we embrace diverse perspectives, promote social-emotional learning, and ensure that all students receive

the support they need to succeed.

The success of our district is built on the collaboration between students, families, educators, and the broader community. I've worked my entire career in District 196, and there is no place I would rather be. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our students. I look forward to a year filled with learning, growth, and achievement.

Michael Bolsoni

Attendance matters

<< *continued from front page* >>

- **Community engagement**, partnering with local organizations, parents, and community leaders to raise awareness about the importance of attendance and to address barriers;
- **Support services**, expanding access to counseling, mental health services, and other support systems to help students and families deal with challenges that

may contribute to absenteeism, and

- **Early intervention**, identifying and reaching out to students at risk of chronic absenteeism early, providing targeted support to prevent long-term patterns of absence.

Schools are asking parents and guardians to help by maintaining consistent routines at home, limiting access to technology, ensuring their children get enough sleep,

encouraging participation in school activities, and limiting appointments during the school day. School staff will contact parents earlier than years past to discuss options for support if their child's attendance is concerning.

"Every student deserves the opportunity to succeed, and consistent school attendance is a crucial part of that success," Hansen said. "

For more information, visit District196.org/academics/attendance-matters/.

Connect with School Board members at a community listening session this year

District 196 stakeholders can share their experiences, comments and concerns directly with up to three School Board members at community listening sessions held monthly during the school year at the District Office in Rosemount.

Community listening sessions are open to the public. Up to three board members (less than a quorum of the board) attend each community listening session, along with the superintendent and other invited staff. Each district stakeholder has up to five minutes to speak and any remaining time may be used by board members or administrators to ask clarifying questions.

Stakeholders are limited to district residents, district property or business owners, district employees, current students and their parents/guardians, district contractors, bidders on district contracts that are open for bidding or awarded but not completed, and authorized representatives of these stakeholders.

Up to 10 school district stakeholders may sign up in advance to speak at the next scheduled community listening session. To sign up to speak, speakers must complete 801.7P, Request to Speak at Community Listening Session, and submit the completed form to the Superintendent's Office no later than 3 p.m. on the Friday before the community listening session. If more than 10 speakers submit a timely request, a lottery will be conducted to determine the 10 speakers.

If at least one speaker signs up in advance and speaking spots remain at the time the community listening session is scheduled to begin, stakeholders may sign up for the remaining spots on a first-come, first-served basis at the beginning of the community listening session and must complete 801.7P, Request to Speak at Community Listening Session. Community listening sessions adjourn after the last speaker.

Community listening sessions in 2024-25 will be held at the District Office in Rosemount from 5:30 to



Members of the District 196 School Board are (front row, left to right): Clerk **Anna Williams**, Chairperson **Cory Johnson**, and Vice Chairperson **Sachin Isaacs**; (back row) **Jackie Magnuson**, **Art Coulson**, **Leah Gardner** and Treasurer **Sakawdin Mohamed**. Coulson resigned from the board effective Aug. 31; the board will appoint a district resident to fill the remainder of his term (see article on p.7).

6:30 p.m., on the following dates: Sept. 12, Oct. 15, Nov. 18, Dec. 12, Jan. 22, Feb. 24, March 18, April 28, and May 19.

More information about the structure of listening sessions and how to participate is available on the School Board page at District196.org

Regular board meetings streamed live on YouTube

The School Board holds regular meetings on Mondays at least once each month according to a schedule approved by the board. Regular School Board meetings begin at 6 p.m. at Dakota Ridge School, 4629 144th St. W. in Apple Valley.

The remaining regular board meetings for the 2024-25 school year are scheduled on the following Mondays: Sept. 9, Sept. 23, Oct. 7, Nov. 4, Dec. 9, Jan. 13, Feb. 10, March 10, April 14, May 12, June 9 and June 23.

Regular board meetings are streamed live on the District 196 YouTube page and are available to stream the day following from the District 196 TV webpage. Materials for agenda items for regular board meetings are available on the School Board webpage.

District 196 stakeholders may participate at regular board meetings by addressing items on the agenda after being recognized by the board chair, or by submitting a special communication request form no later than five days before the board meeting at which they wish to speak.

The board also occasionally holds special board meetings. Notice of all School Board meetings are posted in district buildings and on the website. Special board meetings are not videotaped.

For more information about board meetings or special communication requests, visit the School Board page at District196.org.

District purchases UMore Park parcel to be site for new Rosemount Middle School

The District 196 School Board unanimously approved an agreement with the University of Minnesota at its July 22 meeting to purchase land that will become the site of a new Rosemount Middle School. The university's Board of Regents approved the agreement following the School Board's action.

Part of the UMore Park property, the 75.6-acre parcel is located in the southeast corner of the intersection of County Road 42 and Biscayne Avenue in Rosemount, adjacent to the Amber Fields development and Dakota County Technical College to the east. The agreement is for a purchase price of \$2.20 per square foot, or \$7,242,408 total. That is within the amount the district budgeted for land acquisition, according to Director on Special Assignment **Mark Stotts**, who is overseeing construction of facilities improvements approved by district voters in May 2023.

Stotts thanked university officials and Dakota Aggregates for making the purchase of this land possible. He said the site offers optimal accessibility and is large enough to house the new school building and athletic fields for physical education classes, games, and other school and community activities.

The district has been searching for available land for the new middle school for more than a year. Because of how long it took to acquire the site, the anticipated opening date for the middle school has been moved back from fall 2026 to fall 2027. Part of the middle school project will be extending Boulder Trail east of Biscayne Avenue. This new stretch of road will run along the south side of the middle school.

The new middle school will replace the current Rosemount Middle School, which is the oldest building in District 196. It includes the original 1918 school that once housed all grades K-12 and is still being used today. The district plans to repurpose the building for other uses after the new Rosemount Middle School opens.



This rendering shows the upper level main entrance to the new Rosemount Middle School looking southeast from the intersection of County Road 42 and Biscayne Avenue.



A rendering of the lower-level hallway, cafeteria/performance area, and media center at the far end of the hallway. The stairway shown leads to the upper-level main entrance area to the building.

Homeschools are required to report to district by October 1

Families living in District 196 who plan to homeschool their children for the 2024-25 school year must submit a yearly Initial or Intent to Continue Report, as required by state law. The deadline to submit reports for 2024-25 is Oct. 1, 2024.

The report is available at <https://www.district196.org/academics/homeschool/>. Completed reports should be submitted to the Director of Community Education, 15180 Canada Ave., Rosemount, MN 55068. For more information or to request a homeschool packet, call 651-423-7722.

New cabinet director is experienced school communicator

In August, the district hired **Janet Swiecichowski** (pron. Switch-a-kow-ski) to be the next director of communications to replace **Tony Taschner**, who retired after a 27-year career in the district.



Swiecichowski has more than 25 years of experience in school communications, most recently as vice president of CEL Marketing PR Design, which provides communications and marketing services to schools and districts.

Swiecichowski started her communications career in a fast-growing suburban Milwaukee school district, where she led two successful referendum campaigns. In 1999, she took a job as communications coordinator for the Wayzata Public Schools, and three years later was

hired as executive director for communications for the Minnetonka Public Schools. Swiecichowski led the department in Minnetonka for the next 15 years, providing communications leadership as a member of the superintendent's cabinet. In 2017, she accepted a position as associate vice president for public relations at the University of St. Thomas. She worked there two years before moving to CEL in 2019.

"Public education is my calling," said Swiecichowski. "I'm excited to return to public service and join a district communications team I have admired for years. I look forward to building relationships, sharing student and staff success stories, and promoting community engagement. Communicating the infinite possibilities District 196 offers is the first step toward inspiring students for lifelong success."

Hansen is secondary director

Eric Hansen was hired this summer to be the district's director of secondary education.



Hansen has worked in District 196 for 22 years, starting in 2003 as Shannon Park Elementary School's media specialist. In 2005, he became assistant administrator and athletic director at Falcon Ridge Middle School. Three years later, Hansen moved to Rosemount Middle School assistant principal, and in 2017 was named principal.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to build upon the collaborative leadership of our middle schools and high schools, and will continue my commitment to making student-centered decisions, having high expectations and promoting a fundamental belief that all students can achieve at high levels," Hansen said.



JOIN OUR TEAM!

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



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



APPLY NOW!



New teachers excited and ready to make a difference

Woodland Elementary School Principal **Lisa Carlson** (left) posed with some of her new team members at the District 196 New Teacher Welcome event on Aug. 19. This year, the district welcomed more than 175 teachers who are new to District 196, but not all are new to the profession.

District 196 population estimate tops 165,000 residents

The total population of Independent School District 196 is estimated at 165,608 residents, according to projections by the Minnesota State Demographic Center.

The School Board approved the district's 2024 certified census in June. The 2024 total represents an increase of 2,095 residents, or 1.2%, over the demographer's estimate of 163,513 residents in 2023. The School Board approved the district's 2024 certified census in June.

The population of District 196 has nearly tripled over the last four decades. The most rapid growth occurred during a 10-year period from 1984 to 1994, when the number of people living in District 196 nearly doubled, from 55,500 to 106,898. In the last 30 years, the district's population has grown

by another 55% to the current estimate of 165,608 residents.

District 196 is the third largest school district in Minnesota, with total enrollment of more than 29,000 students. The district covers approximately 110 square miles and includes all or parts of the cities of Rosemount, Apple Valley, Eagan, Burnsville, Coates, Empire, Inver Grove Heights and Lakeville, and Vermillion Township.

More than 80% of school-age children who live in District 196 attend district schools. According to former state demographer **Hazel Reinhardt**, anything over 80% is high for a school district in the Twin Cities area, and is a reflection on the quality of the local public schools and the availability of educational alternatives in the area.

Art Coulson resigns from School Board after 16 years

District 196 School Board Director **Art Coulson** announced his resignation from the board effective Aug. 31, 2024, citing increasing work demands.



"My own teaching responsibilities, a full schedule of readings and school visits, and work on upcoming book projects demand more of my time and attention than ever before, allowing inadequate time and energy to fully focus on my board responsibilities," Coulson wrote in a letter to Board Chairperson **Cory Johnson**.

Coulson was appointed to the School Board in February 2008 and was elected four times, in 2009, 2013, 2017 and the last time in November 2021. It is too late for Coulson's vacancy to be added to the Nov. 5, 2024 special School Board election, so the board must appoint someone to serve the remainder of his term, which runs through 2025.

"District 196 truly is a special place. I will miss serving on the board, but it is time for new energy and ideas," Coulson wrote.

On Nov. 5, District 196 voters will elect **Melissa Field** of Apple Valley or **Leah Gardner** of Eagan to serve the remainder of **Bianca Virnig's** term, which also runs through 2025. Virnig resigned from the board in January, after she was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives. The board conducted an application and interview process, and appointed Gardner to fill part of Virnig's remaining term until the next scheduled election on Nov. 5.

The district resident appointed to fill Coulson's vacancy will also serve through next year. The appointee would need to win election to a new four-year term in the November 2025 election to continue serving on the board beyond 2025.

Five schools have new leaders this year and four are familiar faces in District 196

Five District 196 schools have a new principal or coordinator to begin the 2024-25 school year, and all but one have experience working in the district.

Lostetter returns to district

Dave Lostetter is the new principal at Thomas Lake Elementary School in Eagan. He replaced **Rachel Hughes**, who was hired to be director of the district's Instruction and Achievement Department.



Lostetter is returning to District 196 from the Inver Grove Heights School District, where he had been principal of Hilltop Elementary School since 2020. Lostetter started in District 196 in 2013 as an elementary physical education teacher. He also served as technology coordinator and STEM teacher at Woodland Elementary School, where he developed and implemented an award-winning STEM program. In 2019, Lostetter left the district to pursue his first principal job, a short-term position in the Grand Rapids (Minn.) School District, and one year later he accepted the position in Inver Grove Heights.

"It has been a goal of mine to return to District 196 to lead as a principal," said Lostetter, who lives in Rosemount.

Soliday interim at Greenleaf

Former director of elementary education and elementary school principal **Sally Soliday** agreed to come out of retirement



to serve as interim principal at Greenleaf Elementary School for the 2024-25 school year.

Former Greenleaf principal **Drew Goeldner** resigned from his position in June. The district conducted a search and interview process, but did not identify the right candidate for the position. Due to the difficulty of hiring a principal from another district so

close to the start of the school year, district leaders reached out to Soliday to ask if she would be interested in a one-year interim position.

Soliday retired in 2023 after a 40-year career in District 196. She started working here in 1980 as an elementary school teacher. In 1994, she became a teacher on special assignment, charged with mentoring teachers and overseeing curriculum at Echo Park Elementary School. Three years later she was hired to lead Echo Park and served as the school's principal for the next 18 years. Soliday was named director of the Elementary Education Department in 2015 and served in that position as a member of the superintendent's cabinet for eight years until she retired.

Next spring, the district will conduct another search and interview process to hire the next Greenleaf principal, who will start in July 2025.

New East Lake principal

Emily Wyse Moore started July 1 as the new principal at East Lake Elementary. She replaced **Miles Haugen**, who retired in June after a 35-year career in District 196.



Wyse Moore was the assistant principal of Excelsior Elementary School for the last two years. Prior to that, she worked for the Eastern Carver County Schools for 10 years, first as a culinary arts teacher, then a personalized learning coach, and was lead instructional coach for elementary when she accepted the position in Minnetonka in 2022.

Wyse Moore started her career in education in 2005 as an elementary band director with the Edina Public Schools. In 2010, she moved to Australia and pursued her passion for cooking. She taught home economics/hospitality classes at high schools in Australia for parts of two school years before returning to Minnesota in 2012 to teach culinary arts in Chaska.

Schafer is RMS principal

Brad Schafer is the new principal at Rosemount Middle School. He replaced **Eric Hansen**, who was hired to be director of the district's Secondary Education Department.



Schafer has been an administrator at Rosemount Middle for the last 16 years. He started there in 2008 as an assistant administrator and athletics director, and was promoted to assistant principal in 2017 when Hansen moved up from assistant principal to principal. Prior to his role as an administrator, Schafer began his career in education as a mathematics teacher and coach at Apple Valley High School.

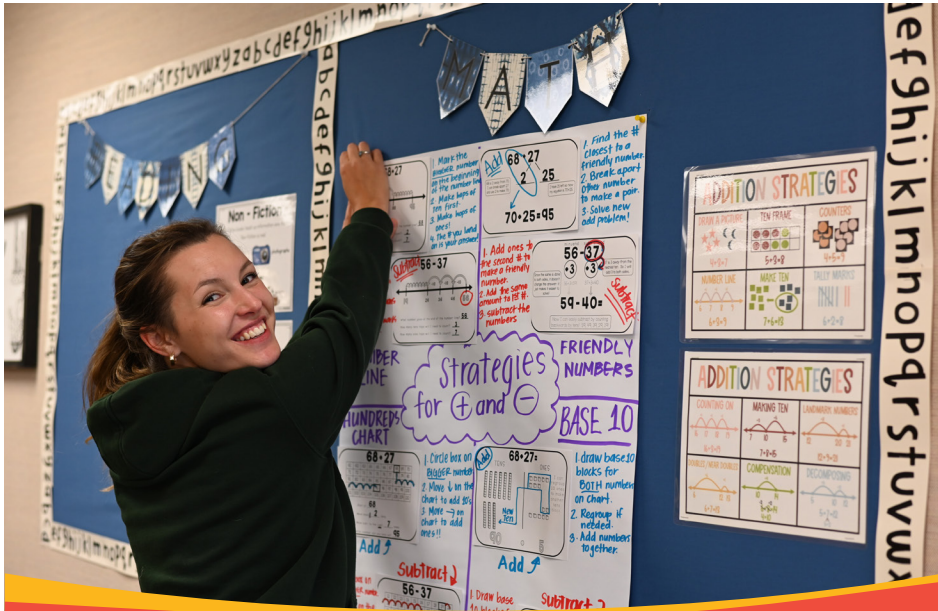
Engstrom is interim at ALC

Dakota Ridge School Coordinator **Andrea Engstrom** is serving as interim coordinator at the Area Learning Center (ALC) this school year. She replaced **Dave Schmitz**, who retired after leading the district's alternative high school program for more than two decades.



Engstrom has worked in the district's Special Education Department since 2004, when she was hired as an autism teacher at Dakota Hills Middle School. In 2010, she became a strategy support specialist, then a lead teacher, and in 2014 was hired as a coordinator supporting special education programming in elementary schools. Three years later she was named coordinator at Dakota Ridge, a special education school serving the unique needs of students from kindergarten to age 22.

The district called on Engstrom to lead the ALC this year after the successful candidate to replace Schmitz withdrew from consideration. Another hiring process will be held next spring.



Final preparations for the new school year

Shannon Park Elementary School Teacher **Taylor Seaberg** put the finishing touches on decorating her 2nd grade classroom during workshop week Aug. 21. The first day of school for Seaberg's class and all elementary students across the district was Sept. 3.

Parents asked to review and update important information

Each year, District 196 asks parents and guardians to review and update information currently on record with the district, including contact information, emergency contacts, student health records and more. It is important for the district to have current information in order to be notified in case of emergency, changes in the school schedule and to receive regular communication from the schools and district.

Parents complete this annual review online through the Infinite Campus parent portal known as Campus Parent. The first time parents and guardians log into an existing account this year, they will be prompted to complete the online review process before proceeding.

The review includes a question on "preferred communication language" that all parents and guardians should answer. The data from this question is used by staff to make decisions about which families should be offered interpreter services and translations of certain materials.



This is the one time each year the district asks parents to complete the review to ensure schools have the most up-to-date information. Parents can also make updates any time during the year through Campus Parent or by contacting their child's school.

All District 196 parents and guardians are encouraged to have a Campus Parent account of their own to stay involved in their child's education, to access end-of-term report cards, transcripts, attendance and other information. Parents who do not have their own Campus Parent account can request an activation key from the office at their child's school.

Directions for setting up a Campus Parent account and completing the annual online review process are available at www.district196.org/community/families/.

Academic calendar for the 2024-25 school year

Earlier this year, the School Board approved a committee recommendation to make changes to the 2024-25 calendar to convert three student contact days to professional development days for staff, with no school for all students. The three additional days are needed to provide teacher training required under the Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act, which was approved by the Minnesota Legislature in 2023.

The three days that are now no-school days for all students are Monday, Nov. 11, 2024; Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2025 (day after the Presidents Day holiday), and Monday, March 31, 2025. After converting these days, the district still remains well above state requirements for instructional hours at each level.

All middle school and high school students started the year Aug. 28 and 29, and resumed on the day after Labor Day, Tuesday, Sept. 3. All elementary school students started Sept. 3, and the last day of school for all students is Thursday, June 5, 2025.

New fee payment system implemented

Over the summer, District 196 changed fee payment systems from MyPaymentsPlus to EduTrack Connect. EduTrack Connect collects registration information and payments for cocurricular arts, athletics, and activities, and also hosts online stores for spirit wear and fundraisers. EduTrak is also the destination for paying fees such as field trips, library fines, and iPad repairs. The district continues to use current payment systems for Nutrition Services (Paypams) and Community Education programs (Eleyo).

For directions on using EduTrak Connect or creating an account, go to District196.org, select Community from the main menu, then Family Resources. For assistance, families should contact their child's school.

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/](https://www.district196.org/edubenefits/). Only one application is needed per household, but a new application must be submitted each year.

Student handbook was emailed to families

In mid-August, all families with a child enrolled in District 196 received an email from the district with a link to the *Overview of Student Rights and Responsibilities* handbook for the 2024-25 school year. Parents and guardians are encouraged to take time to review the handbook with their children, along with expectations for their behavior at school.



The handbook is reviewed and updated annually to ensure compliance with state and federal notification requirements and school district policy.



Eyes on the ball

High school students across the district took to the fields, courts and running courses in mid-August to begin practicing for fall sports. Pictured are members of the Eastview High School boys' soccer teams. The varsity team opened their season with a 2-1 win over Hastings Aug. 22.

Students need high school ID or an adult to attend football

High school students need to purchase a ticket and show their student ID to attend varsity football games at District 196's four comprehensive high schools. The requirement was implemented last year to help ensure a safe and fun environment for teams, officials, and fans.

Only students from the home team are allowed to sit on the home side of the stadium. High school students from the visiting team or any other high school must sit on the visitor side of the stadium.

Students in grades K-8 also need a ticket and must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or adult caretaker who is responsible for them for the

duration of their time in the stadium. Some district high schools have designated seating areas for middle school students. In these stadiums, students are expected to either be in the designated section or sitting with their adult caretaker.

All ticket sales are online only (no cash sales at the gate). There is no entry into varsity football games after halftime and no re-entry after leaving a game.

The expectations for intradistrict games is the same; students from the visiting team must sit on the visitor's side of the stadium. Other metro-area high schools have similar requirements.

District does not provide accident insurance

District 196 does not provide accident insurance for injuries that happen to students at school or during school activities, nor does the district provide insurance protection for student property that is lost, stolen

or damaged at school or at school activities.

Families that wish to have accident or property protection are encouraged to contact an insurance company.

Students get one breakfast and lunch per day at no cost

Minnesota's Free School Meals for Kids Program provides each student with one breakfast and one lunch meal each school day at no cost. Individual items, second meals/ entrees and a la carte options are not included in the Free School Meals for Kids Program and must be purchased. The cost for an adult or second student breakfast is \$3, and an adult or second student lunch is \$5.25; these meals are not subsidized by the state or USDA. An additional carton of milk costs 40 cents.

The District 196 Nutrition Services team fuels students for top performance each day. This year,

they will provide students with more locally grown foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, milk, oats, wild rice, honey and tofu. The menu will also feature more culturally diverse meals, including empanadas, red lentil curry and sambusas. Members of the Nutrition Services staff will be involving students in taste tests, kitchen tours and student panels to provide food they enjoy.

Families can view their school menu through the Nutrislice online menu platform (district196.nutrislice.com), which includes photos and information about nutrition and allergens.

Families must decide on iPad optional protection plan

District 196 offers an optional protection plan to families for \$20 per iPad to cover the cost of potential theft and damage throughout the school year. The plan is free for students eligible for the Educational Benefits Program, so it is recommended that parents and guardians complete that application first. The Educational Benefits application is available at District196.org; select Services from the main menu, then Nutrition Services.

All families are asked to review and consider purchasing the optional protection plan by Sept. 23. Until that date, the district will cover damages (not loss) to allow families

time to complete the review and sign-up process. After Sept. 23, 2024, families without the protection plan are responsible for any costs associated with loss or damage of an iPad, as defined in the protection plan language.

Families can purchase the protection plan at any time throughout the school year by logging into their EduTrak Connect account and paying for the "24-25 iPad Optional Protection Plan" fee. For directions on using EduTrak Connect or creating an account, go to District196.org, select Community from the main menu, then Family Resources. For assistance, families should contact their child's school.

District 196 Foundation benefits students here

The District 196 Foundation eliminates barriers to learning by ensuring students have consistent access to food, books to keep them reading during the summer, instruments so they can participate in band, and school supplies for their learning.

Last school year, funding from the foundation provided bags of nutritious weekend food for 70 students facing hunger issues, band instruments for 25 aspiring musicians and filled the gaps of needed school supplies

for students across the district. The foundation seeks to double its impact this school year and you can help.

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 Bruse** at 651-423-7720.

Multilingual students can earn recognition and college credits

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.

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

- A World Language Proficiency Certificate is awarded for students who score at the intermediate low/ mid-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 to 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.

High school seniors interested in participating in the program during the 2024-25 school year should speak with their counselor, world languages teacher, English Learner teacher, or cultural family advocate for more information on how to register for the bilingual exams. Registration closes March 14, 2025, with testing scheduled for April 2025.

District 196 students and schools earn national speech and debate honors

Nine District 196 students were finalists in their category of competition and three of the district's high schools earned top team honors at this year's National Speech and Debate Association National Tournament held in Des Moines, Iowa, in June.

For team honors, Apple Valley and Eastview were both selected Schools of Excellence in Speech, and Eagan High School was a top-20 School of Excellence in Debate based on the number of rounds of competition their students completed during this year's tournament.

Apple Valley had five finalists in four events, including **Isaiah Craig** and **Aquilla Dunn**, third in duo interpretation; **Mfaz Mohamed Ali**, third in original oratory; **Hodan Husen**, sixth place in original oratory, and **Aniya Bostick**, sixth in program oral interpretation. **Monisha Suresh** and **Neal Rajvansh** of Eastview finished fifth in duo interpretation, and in Congressional debate (Senate), **Awa-Bilan Amarreh** of Eastview took eighth place and **Jacob Braginsky** of Eagan finished 17th of the top-20 students who made the finals.

District 196 students who advanced to the semifinal rounds included **Sahiti Atluri** of Eastview, who placed eighth in humorous interpretation, and **Mason Hoekenga** of Eagan finished in 12th place in impromptu.

District 196 schools and students have a long record of success in speech and debate at the state, regional and national levels. In the history of the state speech tournament, Apple Valley ranks first in the number of state champions all time, with 94 in its 48-year history (opened in 1976); Eagan is second with 70 state champions in its 34-year history (opened in 1990), and Eastview is seventh all time, with 31 state champions in its 27-year history (opened in 1997).



Seniors complete college boot camp

More than 100 Rosemount High School seniors prepared to board buses to visit the University of St. Thomas on the last day of College Boot Camp in early August. The three-day camp included information on filling out college applications, writing effective essays, selecting the right college, and a session for parents on parenting college students. The annual camp is organized by members of the school's Counseling Department.

Magnet school applications for 2025-26 open in October

District 196 will begin accepting applications Oct. 7 for families interested in having their students attend one of the district's magnet schools during the 2025-26 school year. The deadline to submit applications is Jan. 3 for the five elementary magnet schools, Dec. 13 for Valley Middle School of STEM, and Dec. 20 for the School of Environmental Studies, an optional high school for juniors and seniors. The applications are available at District196.org/magnetschools/.

Magnet schools provide a concentrated theme that offers innovative ways to meet students' learning goals through a particular focus. While giving families increased choice, magnet schools still provide the district's core curriculum in the areas of science, math, language arts and social studies.

Any District 196 student who will be enrolled in elementary school, middle school or 11th or 12th grade in the

2025-26 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.

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 2025-26 school year. Families of students not selected for enrollment in the lotteries will be notified and placed on a waiting list.

More information about the magnet schools and the application process is available at District196.org/magnetschools/, or by calling **Tony Eatchel** in the district's Instruction and Achievement Department at 651-423-7810.

Eagan High School Presents



Sept. 25, 4 p.m. (senior preview)
Sept. 26-28, 7 p.m.

Rosemount High School Presents

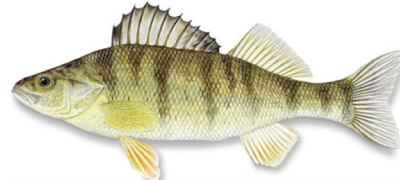


Oct. 10-11, 7 p.m.

Eastview High School Presents

THE ICE FISHING PLAY

A play by Minnesota playwright, actor, and storyteller Kevin Kling



Oct. 9, 3:30 pm. (senior preview)
Oct. 10-12, 7 p.m.

Apple Valley High School Presents



Oct. 31, 3:30 p.m. (senior preview)
Nov. 1-2, 7 p.m. | Nov. 3, 2 p.m.
Nov. 8, 7 p.m. | Nov. 9, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Coming Soon!

Apple Valley High School

- Choir concert, Oct. 14, 7 p.m.
- "Just a Glimpse" dance show, Nov. 19, 7 p.m.
- Band concert, Dec. 9, 7 p.m.

Eagan High School

- Choir concert, Oct. 28, 6 p.m.
- Band concerts, Nov. 4, 6 and 7:30 p.m.
- Choir concerts, Dec. 16, 6 and 7 p.m.

Eastview High School

- Choir concert, Oct. 14, 7 p.m.
- Band concert, Oct. 29, 7 p.m.
- Dance Tech, Oct. 27, 7:30 p.m.

Rosemount High School

- Marching Band Festival, Sept. 14, 11 a.m.
- Choral concerts, Oct. 23, 6 and 7:30 p.m.
- Band concert, Oct. 29, 7 p.m.

Parents, guardians, and adult students may deny release of directory information

Notice is hereby given that District 196, pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, declares the following as "directory information" as provided in said Act, and that information relating to students may be made public if said information is in any of the following categories:

- * Student's name;
- Date and place of birth;
- Major field of study;
- Participation and performance in officially recognized activities and sports;
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams;
- Dates of attendance;
- Enrollment status;
- *District-issued email address;
- Grade level;
- Degrees, honors, diplomas and awards received;
- Honor roll;
- School of attendance;
- The most recent previous educational agency or institution attended;
- Photographs and other video and audio representations for school-approved publications, yearbooks, newspapers, public presentations, student ID badges and publication on school-approved Internet pages;
- * Student identification (ID) number, user ID, or other unique personal identifier used by the student for purposes of accessing or communicating in electronic systems or displayed on a student ID badge;
- ** 11th or 12th grade student's home address and telephone number (for release to military recruiters and institutions of higher education);
- School schedule, daily attendance record and parent or guardian names, email addresses and telephone numbers (for release to law enforcement officials), and
- Home addresses and telephone numbers (for release to the Dakota County Library for purposes of issuing a library card).

*A parent/guardian may not prevent the disclosure of a student's name, identifier or institutional email address

in a class in which the student is enrolled or on a student ID badge.

**In accordance with the law, the district must release to military recruiting officers and institutions of higher education the names, addresses and home telephone numbers of students in 11th and 12th grades within 60 days after the date of the request, unless a parent or adult student denies the release of the information.

Directory information does not include identifying data which references religion, race, color, disability, social position or nationality.

Any parent or guardian of any student in the district, or any student 18 years of age or older, may notify the district that they deny the release of one or more categories of directory

District follows plan for inspection and removal of asbestos

District 196 maintains a plan for managing all building materials that contain asbestos, as required by the Environmental Protection Agency. In compliance with the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act, a licensed asbestos abatement contractor inspects all materials for damage every six months and performs a major re-inspection every three years.

The presence of asbestos does not endanger the health of building occupants. The district works with the abatement contractor on the management and removal of all asbestos-containing materials in district buildings.

District obtains required criminal background checks

Minnesota school districts are required to notify parents annually about compliance with state law requiring school districts to perform criminal history background checks.

District 196 obtains criminal history checks on everyone offered employment in the district, as well as selected volunteers and independent contractors, including volunteer coaches (except enrolled students). In exercising its discretion with respect

information by contacting the principal and completing Procedure 505.2.4.3P, Denial of Release of Directory and Yearbook Information. This notification must be given to the district within 30 days of this publication notice or at any time with the approval of district-level administration. If filed, a denial will remain in effect until it is modified or rescinded by the parent, guardian or eligible student.

Please understand that if you choose to deny the release of all directory information, your child (or you, if a student 18 years of age or older) will be excluded from documents such as yearbooks, honor rolls, news releases regarding sports achievements, honors received, athletic contest programs, theater and fine arts programs, graduation programs, future class reunion mailings, etc.

In summer 2024, asbestos abatement was conducted at Apple Valley High School in conjunction with flooring and window replacement projects. All work was performed by a licensed abatement contractor following state and federal air-monitoring requirements.

Additional asbestos abatement may occur at different times of the year as part of construction projects. Information about the locations, condition and type of asbestos-containing materials in district buildings is contained in the asbestos management plan. For more information or to review a copy of the plan, call the district Facilities Department at 651-423-7706.

to independent contractors and volunteers, the district considers such factors as the amount of student contact and the duration of the contact.

The district does not perform background checks on the staff or volunteers of outside clubs and organizations that offer activities for youth in the community that are not organized or operated by the district.

Parents, guardians, and adult students can access educational records

District 196 schools maintain educational records on all students to help plan the student's educational program, communicate with parents/guardians and comply with state regulations. Student records include information such as standardized achievement and ability test data, grades, attendance records, health/medical records and evaluations by professional staff.

Except in limited circumstances authorized by law, most information from student records will not be released to members of the public without the written permission of the student's parent or guardian, or of the student if he or she is 18 or older. One exception, which permits disclosure of educational records without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff; a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the school has contracted to provide a service instead of using its own employees or officials, including the school district's insurer or an

authorized volunteer. Legitimate educational interests include those directly related to the school official's professional responsibilities for classroom instruction, teaching, assessment and research, student achievement and progress, student discipline, student health or welfare, or other legitimate professional responsibilities.

District 196 forwards educational records (including disciplinary records) of students to other schools and school districts in which a student seeks or intends to enroll upon request of that school or school district. A parent, guardian or student who is age 18 years or older may request and receive a copy of the records which are transferred and may, pursuant to policy, challenge the accuracy of the records. The district does not, however, notify parent(s), guardian(s) or students age 18 or older prior to such transfer.

Parents(s) or guardian(s) of a student, or a student who is age 18 or older, may request to inspect and review any of the student's educational records except those which are, by state or

federal law, made confidential. The district will comply with the request immediately if possible and, if not, within 10 days exclusive of weekends and holidays. Copies of records may be obtained upon written request. A copying and handling fee will be charged.

A parent, guardian, or student age 18 or older who believes that specific information in the student's educational records is inaccurate, misleading, incomplete or violates the privacy or other rights of the student, may request that the district amend the record in question. Challenges may be made by requesting and filing Procedure 505.2.11P, Request to Amend Educational Records, with the superintendent.

Parents, guardians, and students age 18 or older may submit written complaints of violation of rights accorded them by 20 USC Section 1232(g) to the Student Privacy Policy Office, U.S. Dept. of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW; Washington, DC 20202-8520.

Notice of use of pest control materials in buildings

District 196 uses a licensed, professional pest control service for the prevention and control of rodents, insects, and other pests in and around the district's buildings. The program consists of:

- Inspection and monitoring to determine whether pests are present and whether any treatment is needed;
- Recommendations for maintenance and sanitation to help eliminate pests without the need for pest control materials;
- Utilization of non-chemical measures such as traps, caulking and screening, and
- Application of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered pest control materials when needed.

State law requires school districts to inform parents that the long-term health effects on children from the application of pesticides used by the district may not be fully understood. All pest control materials are chosen and applied according to label directions per federal law, and all pesticide products used in and around school buildings are required to be registered with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and EPA.

An estimated schedule of interior pest control inspections and possible treatments is available to review at the district Facilities Department, 14309 Diamond Path in Apple Valley. For more information, contact Facilities and Grounds Manager **Heather Nosan** at 651-423-7742 or heather.nosan@district196.org.

District tests for lead in drinking water

District 196 tests for the presence of lead in drinking water in schools, as required by state law. All taps used for drinking water and food preparation must be tested at least once every five years. The initial testing in District 196 schools began in July 2018.

The district plan requires that the tests be conducted using "first draw" samples, meaning the samples are collected before the fixture is used or flushed during the day. Taps located closest to where the water enters the building are tested first to avoid the potential of accidentally flushing a tap before it is tested.

The district's Lead in Water Management Plan and test results are available on the Facilities Department page of the district website at District196.org. For more information on the plan, contact Facilities and Grounds Manager **Heather Nosan** at 651-423-7742 or heather.nosan@district196.org.



DISTRICT196

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Community Education



**EARLY CHILDHOOD
FAMILY EDUCATION**

**Early Childhood Family
Education | ECFE**

ECFE recognizes that parents are their child's first and most important teachers. We offer parents hands-on learning experiences, led by licensed early childhood teachers, that will nourish

a lifetime of teachable moments. Help celebrate the 50th birthday of ECFE in Minnesota on Oct. 3, 5-7 p.m., at the Dakota Valley Learning Center.

Visit ce.district196.org/ecfe to learn more and to register for fall classes.

Adult Basic Education | ABE

Prepare for a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course and pass the Personal Care Assistant (PCA) and Community First Services and Supports (CFSS) certification test.

Pre-CNA/PCA Prep Class

Mondays and Wednesdays | Oct 21-Dec 4 | 12:30-2:30 p.m. skip Nov. 11 and 27 | Dakota Valley Learning Center

Visit: ce.district196.org/adult/adult-basic-education or call 952-431-8316 for more information.

RVPE | River Valley Project Explore

We provide educational, social and recreational opportunities for adults with disabilities and encourage inclusion in community activities. Participants enjoy a wide variety of classes and activities including cooking, bowling, crafts, dances, and more!

Visit: ce.district196.org/projectexplore or call 651-423-7931 for more information.

Come one, come all! Craft Fair

With more than 70 crafters, there's something for everyone! Food and beverages for sale.
Sat. Oct. 5 | 10 a.m.-3 p.m. | Free! | VMSS

**Make an impact! Join the Community
Education Advisory Council**

We are seeking applications from community members who wish to provide input regarding lifelong learning opportunities for all residents. Visit ce.district196.org/ceac to find out more about the Community Education Advisory Council, or contact Director of Community Education **Khia Bruse** at khia.bruse@district196.org, or 651-423-7720.

**You, Your Neighbor and the Election:
Supporting Healthy Communities in
an Election Season**

Join us and participate in a professionally facilitated, free-speech, community discussion about our local and national elections, with practical techniques and community-building.

- Understand Our Communities: Learn how we are connected and contribute to our collective well-being.
- Engage in Effective Listening: Prioritize understanding through respectful conversation with diverse perspectives.
- Be an Informed Citizen: Enhance skills for active community participation.
- Foster Considerate Communities: Help ensure everyone feels respected and included.

This event focuses on constructive conversation, not debate, aiming for and honoring diverse viewpoints. Expect to leave with stronger relationships, greater confidence in turning arguments into discussions, and a reduced sense of polarization. A light meal and beverages will be provided.

Tue. | Oct. 1 | 6-8:30 p.m. | pay what you can | ECC
Register at ce.district196.org or call 651-423-7920



DISTRICT 196
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Visit ce.district196.org or call 651-423-7920