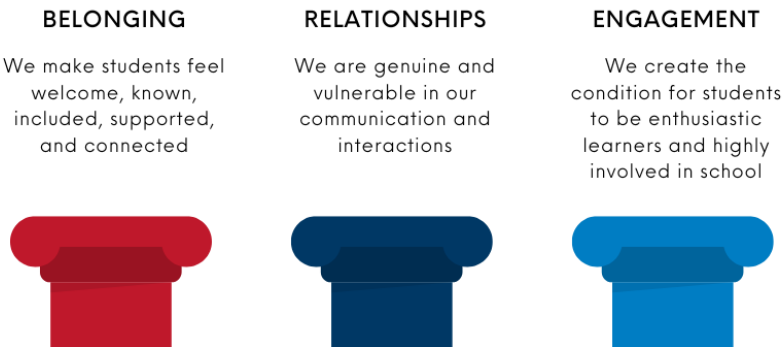
199 REPORTER

INVER GROVE HEIGHTS SCHOOLS | SPRING 2025

# 199 Way Aims to Create the Best Daily School Experience

Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) strives to make every student feel valued and supported. We understand that we need to integrate our students' varied interests into the school day while also making school a place where our students want to be. Our district developed the 199 Way to embody our goals. The 199 Way focuses on what every staff member in our schools – from the classroom to the front office to the lunchroom – should strive to accomplish each day for our students.




**Belonging**
Since 2021, ISD 199 has been gathering students' thoughts on what makes them want to be at school. Their responses included their friends, their teachers, and their activities. Students want to feel like an important part of their school. Our Belonging goal encourages staff to make every student feel like their school is a home away from home.

**Relationships**
When a person is asked to describe a class where they learned the most, they typically recall teachers who connected with them, provided opportunities to learn in different ways, supported and nurtured them, and made learning enjoyable. Our Relationships goal directly connects to learning. When our staff connect with students, it opens the door to learning and success.

**Engagement**
In addition to feeling like a part of the school and having authentic relationships, students want to feel excited about learning. Our students have a wide range of interests. Our Engagement goal is meant to build a school day that offers them options. Whether those options take the shape of classes, after-school clubs and activities, or in-class assignments and projects, students can find learning opportunities that fit their interests and prepare them to understand how they learn best and, eventually, earn success in the workforce.

We continue to have conversations with students and staff to refine the 199 Way. This winter, we conducted a student and staff survey that will help us measure and further refine our 199 Way goals so we can provide the best school experience for our students.

Regards,

Dave Bernhardson, Superintendent

## 199 REPORTER

**Inver Grove Heights Schools**

2990 80th Street East
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076
651-306-7800
www.isd199.org

Monday-Friday, 7:30 AM - 4:00 PM

The 199 Reporter is a quarterly publication that is mailed to every household in School District 199 to keep all of our community members informed about district news.

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## FORUMS

Inver Grove Heights Schools residents are invited to attend school board listening sessions. Listening sessions are an informal meeting where members of the ISD 199 School Board hear questions, comments, and concerns from residents. To sign up for a listening session or for more information, visit *www.isd199.org/boardmeetings*.

# TriDistrict CAPS Students Pitch Businesses



Students in the TriDistrict CAPS Business and Entrepreneurship course had an opportunity to pitch their business ideas to a panel of professionals. The panel granted students an internship opportunity to continue developing their businesses through Rêve Academy, a non-profit organization that helps students build marketable skills for the modern workplace.

Four students presented:

- Brendan of Simley High School pitched a baseball equipment business selling more durable batting gloves for baseball players of all levels.
- Winston of Two Rivers High School pitched a handmade, custom-designed fashion line to build on his existing customer base.
- Derrick of South St. Paul High School pitched a game company that has already debuted a strategy card game and is expanding with the game's own tournament.
- Zander of Two Rivers High School pitched an app to help parent volunteers more easily control the scoreboard at hockey games and a business that would expand into scoreboard apps for other youth sports.

Students discussed their business concept as well as the cost of their initial product, pricing, audience, and any prototype testing they had done. The panel asked questions and provided feedback after each presentation. They challenged students to think about how their business could expand, what limitations might be more difficult to overcome, and how working with Rêve Academy could assist their work. The judges panel included:

- Ben Kusch, Program Director and Lead Designer, TriDistrict CAPS
- Avery Weiler, Manager of Student Enterprises, Rêve Academy
- Casey Rutherford, Assistant Director of Learning, Inver Grove Heights Schools
- Amy Winter, Executive Director of Educational Services, South St. Paul Public Schools

All four students were granted the option to build their business through "entrepreneur in residence" internships. If they accept, each student will receive up to $500 in seed money for their business, and they will be connected with an industry mentor, receive logistical support to grow their business, and earn an additional three college credits. Students will also be eligible to do multiple rounds of their residencies as they further develop their businesses.

**TriDistrict CAPS Opportunities for Students and Employers**

Simley, South St. Paul, and Two Rivers juniors and seniors are eligible for the TriDistrict CAPS program. Students can enroll in Business and Entrepreneurship, Computer Science and Information Technology, Healthcare, Transportation Technologies and the Skilled Trades, and starting in the 2025-2025 school year, Natural Resources, Sustainability, and Food Systems. Each course provides a wide range of opportunities to engage in authentic, real-world career exploration. Interested students should talk to their counselor. Employers and local professionals who would like to learn more about TriDistrict CAPS or partner to train the next generation of business professionals can email TriDistrict CAPS Program Director Ben Kusch at *BKusch@tridistrictce.org*.

*Inver Grove Heights Schools does not discriminate in employment or in any of its programs and activities, including vocational opportunities, on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, familial status, membership or activity in a commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age. Inver Grove Heights Schools provides equal access to designated youth groups. Student-related inquiries about non-discrimination policies should be sent to Abel Riodique at 2990 80th Street East in Inver Grove Heights, RiodiqueA@isd199.org, or 651-306-7828. More information is available at www.isd199.org/nondiscrimination.*

## Hilltop Teachers Earn Inclusive Educator Awards



Two Hilltop Elementary School staff members have been selected for the 2024-2025 Inclusive Educator Award from Intermediate School District 917! School Nurse Jamie Lind and 3rd Grade Teacher Chrissy Martin were nominated by District 917 colleagues and selected for their work to support the inclusion of unique learners.

Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) is one of District 917's nine member districts. Students in member districts receive expanded special education services, alternative learning programming, and career and technical education that schools may not be able to provide individually. Ms. Lind and Ms. Martin use District 917's services to ensure students get what they need to do their best at school.

"Ms. Lind is a wonderful collaborator with the 917 team," District 917 staff said. "She ensures that our students with hearing loss have working equipment each morning and helps correct any issues with it throughout the day."

Ms. Martin has made her classroom and instruction as accessible as possible for her student who is blind.



"Ms. Martin is mindful of potential access issues, flexible in doing things differently to make sure the student is able to participate as much as possible, and demonstrates the importance of accessibility and inclusion for all of her students," District 917 staff said.

She incorporates auditory descriptions in all of her teaching, reading everything out loud and describing images and her own demonstrations. Her work allows the student to be more included in the classroom, and it also gives the student the opportunity to be more independent.

District 917 created the Inclusive Educator Award as part of Inclusive Schools Week. The week highlights and celebrates the progress that schools have made in implementing inclusive practices to ensure a quality education for an increasingly variable student population. The District 917 Inclusive Educator Award was created to acknowledge the incredible work of educators from District 917's nine member districts.

Inclusive Educator Award winners were recognized at a District 917 School Board meeting, and District 917 staff presented Ms. Lind's and Ms. Martin's awards at Hilltop.

Thank you to Ms. Lind and Ms. Martin for their outstanding work to support all learners, and congratulations to them for earning this award!

## BOARD ELECTION CYCLE

Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) is considering switching school board elections from odd years to even years. Even-year elections offer relief from many of the financial and logistical strains of running school board elections in odd years.

A switch to even-year elections would make voting for school board members more convenient for voters. They would vote at their typical polling place, instead of the odd-year locations. Even-year school board elections would also align with more local, state, and national elections.

Holding school board elections in even years would also cost less, reducing the burden on the school district and its taxpayers. School districts must run odd-year elections and pay for the majority of the cost. However, in even years, the Inver Grove Heights City Clerk and a dedicated staff run the elections and manage most of the associated costs. The school district employee who takes on the role of school district election clerk would also have fewer additional responsibilities during an even-year school board election.

The school board will discuss and vote on switching school board elections from odd to even years at upcoming school board meetings. If the school board decides to switch elections to even years, the current terms of all board members will be extended by one year. Terms that were set to expire in 2025 would expire in 2026 and terms set to expire in 2027 would expire in 2028.

The switch would not affect future referendum ballot questions, which, by state statute, can be held at different times and in different years depending on the question. ISD 199 is dedicated to informing its community members, so it will continue to provide information about its school board candidates, elections, and ballot measures regardless of when elections are held.

## Early Learning Coach Chosen as Next Director of Early Learning



Melissa Hendrickson was selected as the new Director of Early Learning for Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199). Ms. Hendrickson has been working in the district's Early Learning program for the past 12 years, first as a preschool teacher, and then as an instructional coach.

She has 23 years of preschool experience, including teaching and as a center director previous to joining the ISD 199 team. During her career with ISD 199, Ms. Hendrickson has supported teachers in monitoring and assessing student progress, assisted in the implementation of new assessment tools and the Conscious Discipline social emotional framework, mentored new staff members, and provided ongoing support for the early childhood screening, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), and preschool programs.

She brings a wealth of experience to this position, including leading teams, implementing high-quality early childhood programs, and fostering professional development for educators.

"I believe that fostering strong partnerships with teachers, families, and the community is essential to creating a supportive and enriching environment for young learners," Ms. Hendrickson said. "I am thrilled to step into the role of Director of Early Learning and continue partnering with this wonderful staff. Together, we will continue to build the foundation we have established to support our youngest learners, their families, and each other."

As Ms. Hendrickson starts her new position, ISD 199 also wishes a fond farewell to former Early Learning Coordinator Lora Lambert. Ms. Lambert developed ISD 199's Early Learning program into the successful program that it is today. During her 12 years of leadership, she guided tremendous growth, increasing the programs in size and offerings to put our youngest learners and their families on a path to success.

Thank you, Ms. Lambert, and congratulations, Ms. Hendrickson!

## Leah Byrd to Continue as Hilltop Elementary School Principal



Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) is thrilled to share that Leah Byrd will continue as the Hilltop Elementary School Principal. Ms. Byrd was hired as an interim principal this summer. Her interim status allowed her to prepare Hilltop for the school year before completing the district's full interview process.

In the past four months, Ms. Byrd has made genuine connections with students, staff, and families. She has proven herself as an excellent leader who cares deeply for the community and who will continue to make Hilltop feel engaging and welcoming to everyone who walks through its doors.

We look forward to the impact that Ms. Byrd will make as she continues in her role as principal. Congratulations to Ms. Byrd and the Hilltop community!

## Hilltop Focuses on Reading With "I Love to Read" Week



Hilltop Elementary School packed a week full of literacy-focused activities and events this February for "I Love to Read" Week. Students had time to focus on reading throughout the week. They got comfortable during their all-school "Drop Everything a Read," or D.E.A.R., time. They snuggled up with a book and had time to read alone. Students could also listen to recorded read-alouds from teachers and staff, including EL Teacher Matt Mitchell, Spartan Kids' Care Specialist Tanner Tatarek, and Superintendent Dave Bernhardson.

On Book Character Day, students showed off their favorite books in a schoolwide parade. They had the option to dress up as a character, but every student held a book in the parade. Each class took their turn to walk the hallways while the other classes applauded. Students connected over having the same favorite book or recognizing book characters in the parade.

Hilltop wrapped up the week-long celebration with a Family Reading event. Parents and loved ones were invited to start the day reading with their children. Some students read to each other, and some read with staff and volunteers, including players from the Simley Girls and Boys Basketball teams.

Thanks to a generous donation of grade-level books from the Friends of the Inver Glen Library, students got to pick a book to bring home and continue building their literacy skills! Thank you to everyone who organized and attended "I Love to Read" Week as well as everyone who made the celebration possible.

## ISD 199 Student Advisory Council Tours City Hall



The Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) Student Advisory Council took a tour of Inver Grove Heights City Hall during their second meeting. The tour highlighted how the city functions and how the school district works with the city.

ISD 199 Superintendent Dave Bernhardson leads the ISD 199 Student Advisory Council of 4th-, 7th-, and 11th-grade students from each school. Students selected for the council learn about the district, provide perspective on district initiatives, and learn leadership skills to bring back to their schools during their last year there.

Students started their tour in the police department. ISD 199 School Resource Officer (SRO) Ericka Eid talked about the different jobs in the department, from officer to investigator to records specialist. Students saw their work areas, the garage and police vehicles, the evidence room, and the holding area. Officer Eid detailed how dispatch works, the steps in the booking process, and the other jobs that fall under the police department, such as animal control.

After Officer Eid's segment of the tour, Mr. Bernhardson let students know that the district will have a second SRO from the IGH Police Department starting next school year. The second SRO will help Officer Eid support the district's more than 3,500 students, their families, and school staff. Thank you to our ISD 199 community for voting to approve an increase to our operating levy that will make a second SRO possible. The second SRO will be invaluable to supporting students in making the best choices for themselves, others, and the community!

Students ended their tour in the IGH City Council's chambers. Inver Grove Heights City Administrator Kris Wilson talked about all of the city departments, such as city council and public works. Students got a glimpse into all of the careers connected to the city that could align with their interests.

Students from Simley High School's Spartan SPARC group wrapped up the meeting with an informational piece about what they do. Spartan SPARC works to make sure their peers, families, teachers, and the community know that, based on the results of a 2024 Positive Community Norms Survey of 1,628 Simley and Inver Grove Heights Middle School students, MOST Spartans DON'T vape, drink alcohol, or use marijuana.

Thank you, city staff! The Student Advisory Council will wrap up this school year's activities at their next meeting.

## Dental Healthcare Pathway Created for Simley



This spring, Simley High School students in the TriDistrict CAPS Healthcare class can take the first step into a dental healthcare career. The Smile and Shine Pathway is the result of a partnership between Herzing University, Heartland Dental, and TriDistrict CAPS and is supported by the United Way's Purpose Driven Paychecks grant.

Five TriDistrict CAPS students will participate in the pathway program this year as part of their Healthcare class's internship experience. Students will start in paid internships at a Heartland Dental office. Following their spring internship, they will have the option to enroll in the Dental Assisting program at Herzing University with scholarship support. Through the university program, they will become a Licensed Dental Assistant within two years, working full-time in the field.

Students will also have the opportunity to continue working for Heartland Dental as a regular employee while they are a student at Herzing University. As an additional program benefit, Herzing University is providing two courses free of tuition for students in the Smile and Shine program.

In the fall of 2025, students will be able to choose to enter either the residential or hybrid Dental Assisting program. Heartland Dental and Herzing University will assist in paying for tuition in the program.

Thank you to our TriDistrict CAPS partners for providing this opportunity to our juniors and seniors!

## Michael Busch Visit



Inver Grove Heights Schools graduate and current Chicago Cubs first baseman Michael Busch visited Pine Bend Elementary School this winter. A former student at Pine Bend, Mr. Busch shared memories with teachers, took a tour of the school, and connected with students.

He stopped into classrooms to talk, and he graciously posed for pictures and signed autographs for excited students and staff. In 5th-grade classrooms, he took time to talk to the students about leadership. Thank you, Mr. Busch!

## New Careers Class Will Focus on Natural Resources, Food Systems, & More

Starting next school year, Simley High School will offer a Natural Resources, Sustainability, and Food Systems class through the TriDistrict CAPS program. The class will give students a first-hand look at careers in the integrated industries of natural resources, sustainability, agriculture, and food systems.

Students will learn about the interconnectedness of our natural resources and food systems and how sustainability is used within various industries. They will study air, water, and soil chemistries through research and exploratory activities, earning a chemistry credit that fulfills state graduation requirements.

During the class, they will also design a project of their own aimed at improving local sustainability efforts. Students will address issues surrounding access to food, the local management of natural resources, or any topic connected to the course that interests them.

Like other TriDistrict CAPS courses, Natural Resources, Sustainability, and Food Systems classes will be hosted off-site. Local environmental education leader Dodge Nature Center will welcome students to its Mendota Heights site five days per week in the fall semester before they apply for spring internships.

Incoming Simley juniors and seniors can talk to their counselor about enrolling in the Natural Resources, Sustainability, and Food Systems class through TriDistrict CAPS for the 2025-2026 school year. TriDistrict CAPS also offers Healthcare, Business and Entrepreneurship, Informational Technology and Computer Science, and Transportation Technologies and Skilled Trades classes.

Employers who would like to get involved with TriDistrict CAPS and help train the next generation of professionals can email program director Ben Kusch at *BKusch@tridistrictce.org*.

## Salem Hills & Atheneum Garage Sale Teaches Skills & Philanthropy



Salem Hills Elementary School and Atheneum Gifted Magnet Program 4th graders organized a garage sale to raise funds for their charity of choice: Feed My Starving Children. Salem Hills and Atheneum provide service learning opportunities for students as part of the Ashoka Changemaker School program. Students are empowered to be changemakers, working on solutions to real-world problems in order to change the world for the good of all.

The annual garage sale is an opportunity for 4th graders to fundraise for a cause that is important to them. Students brought toys, books, and snacks to sell and practiced their math and marketing skills during the garage sale, which was open to the whole school. Everything was priced at $1 or less so students could use change to participate and help 4th graders donate to a worthy cause. Students raised nearly $1,500 for Feed My Starving Children. The nonprofit organization gathers volunteers to pack meals for malnourished people in nearly 70 countries. Great job, students!

## SIMLEY ADVANCED COURSE FAIR • • • • • • • • • • • • •




Simley High School held its annual student-led Advanced Course Fair ahead of registration. Students learned about Simley's college and career class options from students who have already taken the class.

Freshmen through juniors had the opportunity to browse dozens of booths that focused on each advanced course. Each booth was run by some of the class's former students. Younger students learned about the classes offered alongside universities like the University of Minnesota's College in the Schools (CIS) options. Students who had taken different AP classes talked about their classroom experiences. Alumni from the TriDistrict CAPS program shared their thoughts on their internships and what it was like to work alongside local professionals. Students who had taken technical classes, like Simley's Emergency Medical Responder class, showed other students what they learned with CPR demonstrations.

Simley is dedicated to providing opportunities that will challenge students and best prepare them for life after graduation. When administrators sought to increase participation in advanced courses, students said they would be more likely to take advantage of a college or career class if they heard about it from another student. The result was a student-led fair where kids could ask their peers the questions they had and understand their options from a student perspective.

## SPARC Hosts March 14 Open Skate for All Ages



Inver Grove Heights Spartan Prevention, Advocacy, and Resource Coalition (IGH SPARC) and Inver Grove Heights Parks and Recreation will host an Open Skate on March 14. According to the 2024 Positive Community Norms Student Survey of 1,628 Simley High School and Inver Grove Heights Middle School students in grades 6-12, **MOST** Simley and IGH Middle School students choose **NOT** to vape when hanging out with friends*. The Open Skate event offers yet another way for kids to find healthy, positive fun and connection.

Families and children of all ages are welcome to skate for free at the Veterans Memorial Community Center ice arena. Parents of first-time skaters can teach their young children to skate while avid skaters of all ages are invited to practice fundamentals or skate alongside friends and family.

**SPARC Open Skate**
Friday, March 14
Session 1: 6:30-7:30 PM
Session 2: 7:30-8:30 PM
Visit *ighmn.gov/register*, click "Activities," and search "Open Skate"
Registration is required; walk-ins only accepted if space allows

IGH SPARC's goal is to keep youth substance use low in Inver Grove Heights by showing the school community, through data, that MOST kids are NOT vaping, drinking alcohol, or using marijuana. IGH SPARC works to ensure that students, families, teachers, and neighbors know the facts. The coalition furthers its mission by organizing fun, positive events that help connect students with their friends and family.

Inver Grove Heights parents, students, and community members and Inver Grove Heights Schools staff are invited to join IGH SPARC. Visit *www.ighsparc.org* to learn more about the coalition or scan the QR code to get information about coalition meetings.

*Funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services - BHA.*

## • • Simley International Club Fashion Show



Students in Simley High School's International Club held their 4th Annual Cultural Fashion Show. The show featured club members as they showcased cultures from around the world. Students walked a runway in the Simley Performing Arts Center in cultural regalia, they performed dances, and they flew flags to represent each culture.

Each group of students was also accompanied by facts about the highlighted culture, such as the significance of certain parts of the regalia, the history of the dances, and more. Great job, students! Scan the QR code to see clips of the students on the runway.

## All Conference Musicians



Congratulations to the 21 Simley High School students who were selected for this year's Metro East All Conference Band, Choir, and Jazz Band!

Every year, the top band, choir, and jazz students from the Metro East Conference are selected for a two-day event and a performance at the Metro East All Conference Music Festival. Students worked with renowned clinicians to rehearse and learn a variety of advanced repertoire ahead of their performance in Mahtomedi.

**2025 All Conference Concert Band**
- Diego Ayala Sanchez
- Tommy Carroll Forsberg
- Cadence Dolphy
- Poppy Komatsu
- Archer Ness
- Tiffany Nguyen
- Antonio Perez
- Noah Pierson
- Lisseth Pimentel
- Diego Rivas Rivera
- Anna Steahl
- Sophie Steahl
- Emma Turbett

**2025 All Conference Choir**
- Erick Das
- Arriana Foster
- Elizabeth Gonzalez
- Jaya Kellogg
- Lilah Moen
- Elliott Tabor

**2025 All Conference Jazz Band**
- Peter Parker
- John Scopatz

Congratulations to all of the student musicians who earned this honor!

# FAST FACTS • • • • • • • • • • • • INSPIRE. INNOVATE. EXCEL.

Stay informed of the current issues, challenges, and changes facing the Inver Grove Heights School District.

## #1. FUNDING SOURCES

Like all public school districts, Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) operates with funds from the federal, state, and local levels. About 77% of ISD 199's total budget comes from the state. Federal funds account for about 3% and local funds account for about 18%, with the remaining 2% coming from a variety of sources like athletics fees.

The district is grateful for the increase in its operating levy that ISD 199 voters approved last November. Funds will be spent on our referendum goals of maintaining current programs and updating security. However, sufficient funding from the state and federal levels is crucial to serving ISD 199 students and families while minimizing the financial burden on the community. Losing even 1% of funding equates to about $250,000 less in our budget.

The district will use all available outlets to increase or at least maintain state and federal funding. Minnesota representatives are currently in the legislative session that will determine school district funding for the next two school years. ISD 199 develops legislative priorities each year and stays in contact with local representatives to help them understand the district's funding needs. The district is also part of larger collectives that illustrate the need for education funding to all legislators. ISD 199 will continue to monitor conversations at the state and federal levels and plan accordingly.






## • INVER GROVE HEIGHTS SCHOOLS WEATHER UPDATES: WWW.ISD199.ORG •


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