199 REPORTER

INVER GROVE HEIGHTS SCHOOLS | SUMMER 2026

Superintendent Bernhardson Offered One-year Contract

Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) Superintendent Dave Bernhardson has been offered a one-year contract to remain superintendent for the 2026-2027 school year. Staying in his position next school year will provide the ISD 199 School Board adequate time to complete internal work before restarting the process to select the district's next superintendent.

In December, Superintendent Bernhardson shared his intent to retire at the end of the 2025-2026 school year. The ISD 199 School Board launched a search for the district's next superintendent with the help of the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) Executive Search Service. MSBA guided the search process and assisted the school district in gathering input from staff, families, students, and community members.

The school board held superintendent interviews in April. After four hours of evening interviews and three hours of deliberations, the school board voted 4-3 to extend an offer of employment to Dr. Tyrone Brookins for the position of superintendent, contingent upon reaching a mutually agreeable employment contract. However, based on the narrow margin, the school board ultimately decided it was not a strong consensus among school board members regarding the final decision. The school board determined that the superintendent's role is too important for the district to move forward without broad board support and confidence in both the process and the outcome. At a special meeting on April 29, the school board unanimously voted to withdraw their offer and discontinue the current superintendent search.

The school board reconvened at a special meeting on May 7 to discuss options for appointing a superintendent for the 2026-2027 school year. The school board discussed two options: offer Superintendent Bernhardson a one-year extension of his contract or partner with an association like MSBA to conduct an external interim superintendent search. The school board voted unanimously to offer Superintendent Bernhardson the position for the 2026-2027 school year. His one-year term will allow the school board time to complete professional learning before they restart a search for the district's next superintendent.

The school board and Superintendent Bernhardson must arrive at a mutually agreed upon contract for the one-year term. The contract, effective July 1, 2026, must be ratified by Superintendent Bernhardson and approved by the school board.

The Superintendent Search webpage, www.isd199.org/suptsearch, will continue to be updated in order to keep the community and staff informed about the process and next steps.



199 REPORTER

Inver Grove Heights Schools

2990 80th Street East
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076
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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

Residents are invited to attend school board listening sessions. These sessions are an informal meeting where members of the ISD 199 School Board hear questions, comments, and concerns from residents. Sign up at isd199.org/board.

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.

Simley Participates in State EMS Competition



A group of Simley High School students in the school's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) classes competed at this year's Minnesota State Youth EMS Competition. The competition tests students' skills and knowledge with three hands-on scenarios and a written test. This year, 20 teams from around the state competed.

To begin each hands-on scenario, students were given information that an EMS professional would receive from dispatch. Students worked with volunteers who were acting as victims on the scene, and judges were present to observe and grade the EMS students' responses.

Students worked as a team to decide on the immediate actions they should take to stabilize victims and better understand the situation. They talked to victims to understand their symptoms and conditions before using equipment to simulate how they would provide treatment. Judges graded teams on the steps they took, their proper use of equipment, and other important components of responding to a real-life medical crisis.

At the end of the competition, Simley received high scores from judges for their professionalism and caring attitudes toward the simulated victims. Great job, students!

EMS programs teach high school students skills like maturity, critical thinking, decision-making under pressure, teamwork, and communications. Simley students can earn a professional license to work as an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) or other healthcare worker immediately after graduation. Simley classes like EMT, EMR (Emergency Medical Responder), and CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) prepare its students to serve their communities and work in critical public safety positions.

Simley's EMT and EMR classes, in partnership with Inver Hills Community College, can provide students with up to 12 college credits and state certification upon completion. Simley students can talk to their counselor to learn more.

Simley Teacher Recognized as FOX9 Top Teacher



This spring, Simley High School Special Education Teacher Lexie Hermoza was selected as a FOX9 Top Teacher! The station asks the public to nominate a great teacher in their community. Out of hundreds of thousands of nominations, they selected 10, including Ms. Hermoza!

"Ms. Hermoza is such an amazing teacher and this honor is well deserved," Simley Principal Carrie Gillund said.

FOX9 surprised Ms. Hermoza with her award at a staff meeting this April. As part of her selection as a Top Teacher, she will receive funds for classroom supplies and a Papa Murphy's gift card for a pizza party for her class. She was also featured on FOX9. Click here to watch the FOX9 segment.

Congratulations, Ms. Hermoza!

IGH Middle School Earns Revalidation as National Demonstration School



Inver Grove Heights Middle School again earned revalidation as an AVID National Demonstration School this April. The school has been consistently revalidated since it originally earned the designation in 2018. The designation certifies that IGH Middle School is implementing the AVID program throughout the school with fidelity and seeing evidence of student achievement schoolwide.

IGH Middle School started offering AVID elective classes 15 years ago, using the program's research-based teaching practices to prepare students for college and life after school. Since then, the school has added AVID elective classes, and AVID classes have broadened their focus to include career readiness. The practices used in the AVID elective classes have also expanded schoolwide. Every IGH Middle School student uses AVID's WICOR – writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading – practices and all staff are trained in AVID's teaching strategies so students in every classroom experience rigorous instruction and gain the tools they need for lifelong success, from communication to time management.

The school must go through a thorough revalidation process every three years to maintain their National Demonstration School designation. This year, IGH Middle School earned revalidation after submitting evidence of schoolwide student achievement and holding an AVID Showcase to show AVID practices in action. Minnesota educators and AVID staff visited IGH Middle School classrooms to see how students across the school are using the program's strategies to learn. They talked to students, quietly observed classrooms, and asked questions during a staff panel and a student panel. Click here to watch highlights from the showcase.

Although more than 7,000 schools use the AVID framework, IGH Middle School is one of only 207 National Demonstration Schools in the U.S. and only 10 in Minnesota. The designation makes IGH Middle School an exemplary learning center for schools interested in expanding their AVID programming schoolwide.

The middle school was also chosen as a Showcase School this year, a designation given to only 10 schools in each AVID region who exemplify AVID best practices.

Congratulations, IGH Middle School staff and students on this outstanding achievement!

Science Museum of Minnesota Visits Hilltop to Talk About Paleontology



An educator from the Science Museum of Minnesota visited Hilltop Elementary School 2nd graders to teach them about dinosaurs and paleontology. Students got an up-close look at different bones and talked about what paleontologists do.

Students got to see a human femur bone and compare it to the femur of a moose and the replica femur of a large dinosaur, the diplodocus. Students used their scientific investigation skills to guess which animal each bone belonged to, and they learned how the shape of each femur supports the animal. Then, they dug into the work of paleontologists who study the fossils of plants, animals, and other life of the past.

The Science Museum educator simulated digging for bones with the students, and they learned what each layer of earth typically uncovers. Students got to see plant fossils, shark teeth, and fossilized dinosaur footprints as the Science Museum educator provided more detail about each. She showed students the tooth of the largest existing shark and compared it to the enormous tooth of the extinct megalodon.

Finally, students reached the dinosaur bones and started on their next task: sorting all of the bones into a full skeleton. Second graders tried putting the bones in order – head, neck, spine, ribs, legs, and more – to understand the work of paleontologists once they discover a skeleton. They learned that, sometimes, paleontologists end up with mystery bones, like bones that are broken beyond recognition or bones that might belong to a different skeleton, which can make reconstruction more difficult.

Once the bones were arranged, students saw the final dinosaur, the deinonychus. The Science Museum educator first showed a drawing of the dinosaur from previous decades.

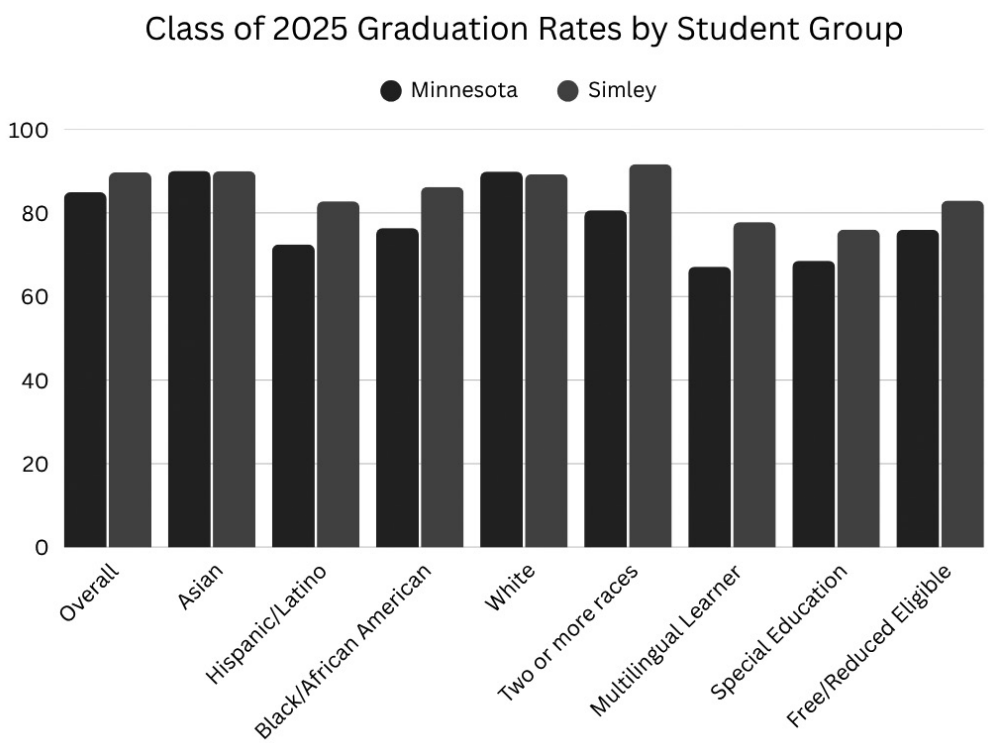
"This illustration of a big scaly dinosaur was what I saw when I was your age, but you know what? Scientists have learned more about this dinosaur since then," she said, adding that scientists have learned this dinosaur's closest living relative is the chicken and so updated illustrations of these dinosaurs have feathers. "Was the previous illustration bad? No, we just have more information now!"

Thank you to the Science Museum of Minnesota for providing an interactive presentation and encouraging students to keep searching for the most accurate information, even if they don't find it right away.

Simley & ALP Class of 2025 Graduation Rates Show Significant Increases

Class of 2025 graduation rates for Simley High School and its alternative learning program (ALP) surpassed the state average while also showing increases in nearly every student group! The Minnesota Department of Education recently released graduation data for the Class of 2025. It showed higher graduation rates than the average Minnesota school and double-digit increases in multiple student groups.

Simley's Class of 2025 had a four-year graduation rate of 89.67%, outpacing its Class of 2024 graduation rate and the state average by nearly 5 percentage points. However, the most impressive gains were seen within student groups. The graduation rate for Simley students who identify as Hispanic or Latino increased by nearly 18 points between 2024 and 2025 and the group's graduation rate was nearly 14 percentage points higher than the state average for the Hispanic/Latino group. Simley ALP students in the Hispanic or Latino group also surpassed the state average for their group by nearly 11 percentage points.



Simley's Multilingual Learners, students working toward English fluency, graduated at a rate of 80.65%. Their Class of 2025 graduation rate surpassed the state average for the group by more than 13 percentage points. They also increased the group's graduation rate by nearly 31 percentage points between the Class of 2024 and the Class of 2025!

Other groups that showed outstanding results for the Class of 2025 included Simley ALP students who would qualify for free- and reduced-price meals, Simley students who identify as two or more races, and Simley Special Education students. Simley ALP students who would qualify for free-and reduced-price meals graduated at 90%, 14 percentage points higher than the state average. Simley students who identify as two or more races graduated at 91.67%, 11 percentage points higher than the state average. Simley's Special Education students graduated 10 percentage points higher than the group did in 2024.

In addition to graduating students, Simley and its ALP work to ensure that students graduate with a plan and the skills for their next steps. Simley continues to encourage more students to take advanced courses with events like the Advanced Course Fair. During the fair, students who have taken a college-level or career-focused course run booths about the class for their peers ahead of class registration. The peer-to-peer information helps students make informed decisions about class registration for the next school year and build a plan to achieve their post-secondary goals.

Congratulations to Simley and the Simley ALP on their outstanding Class of 2025 four-year graduation rates!

Thank You, 2025-2026 Retirees!

Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) will say farewell to seven staff this school year. This year's retirees include long-time teachers, custodians, bus drivers, and food service staff. During their time with our district, they have made our schools a wonderful, welcoming place to be. Congratulations to:

- Tina Ebertz, IGH Middle School, 11 years of service
- David Kurth, IGH Middle School, 2 years of service
- Sally McHenry, Pine Bend Elementary School, 21 years of service
- Missy Cress, Salem Hills Elementary School, 20 years of service
- Kellie Keifenheim, Salem Hills Elementary School, 35 years of service
- Kathryn Mellen, Simley High School, 16 years of service
- Carolyn Hudson, Transportation, 23 years of service

All of our retirees will be missed, but we wish them the very best as they begin their next chapter. Thank you, retirees!

Student Advisory Council Helps Decide the School Menu With Taste Test



The Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) Student Advisory Council wrapped up this year's work with a taste test of potential school lunch items. Council members, who are students in grades 4, 7, and 11 from all ISD 199 schools, have been working with ISD 199 Superintendent Dave Bernhardson to build leadership skills and provide feedback on district initiatives. Their previous meetings included learning about their role as council members, getting an inside look at district operations, providing input for the Superintendent Search Survey, and giving their perspectives on what school should look, sound, and feel like to achieve the best student experience.

Students visited the Cahill Court cafeteria in Inver Grove Heights Middle School and Simley High School for a taste test and tour. ISD 199 Director of Food Service Dorie Pavel showed students around the cafeteria's kitchen while teaching them about her department. Students saw Food Service staff prepping fruits and vegetables for the day's salad bar while Ms. Pavel pointed out different equipment and explained some of the laws and guidelines that staff must abide by when providing school meals.

To understand what students like best, Ms. Pavel and the Food Service Department conducted a taste test with students. Students tried a hot honey chicken flatbread, chicken street tacos, beef pot roast and roasted potatoes, chicken enchiladas, and a french toast breakfast sandwich. They rated each dish and provided feedback on why they liked it or didn't like it. Food Service staff will compile the feedback to understand what to put on future menus and what adjustments they can make to the current dishes.

Council members will bring what they have learned back to their schools and their feedback will be used to further improve the school experience for all students.

Simley Bands Impress Once Again at State Large Group Band Contest



Simley High School's Symphonic Band and Wind Ensemble received impressive marks at this year's Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) Large Group Band Contest. Simley hosted the competition, and bands from Park High School, Prior Lake High School, and Two Rivers High School performed in the contest as well.

Each band had a chance to play their pieces for a panel of judges who ranked them in different categories. Simley Symphonic Band played "Chasing Sunlight" by Cait Nishimura, "Ancient Flower" by Yukiko Nishimura, and "Future of Tomorrow" by Benjamin Yeo. Simley Wind Ensemble played "Silent Land" by Steve Danyew and "Neon Nights" by Katahj Copley. After each band performed its pieces, a judge worked with students to further improve their performance.

Simley Symphonic Band received Excellent ratings from all three judges. For the 30th year in a row, Simley Wind Ensemble received Superior ratings from all three judges! Superior is the highest rating a band can receive in the contest.

Congratulations to the Simley bands on their outstanding performances!

DAKOTA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH AWARD



The TriDistrict CAPS (Center for Advanced Professional Studies) Healthcare class, which includes students from Simley High School, South St. Paul High School, and Two Rivers High School, was awarded a Public Health Achievement Award for their work with a local assisted living home. The group was recognized at a County Board of Commissioners meeting on April 7.

This winter, TriDistrict CAPS Healthcare students worked with residents at River Heights by Vivie, a senior living, assisted living, and memory care home in South St. Paul. Students connected with residents, playing games with them and asking questions. The opportunity gave students a chance to consider a healthcare career in senior living or assisted living spaces, and it gave residents a chance to get to know the kids and future healthcare workers in the area.

The Dakota County Board of Commissioners selected the class as the 2026 recipient of the Public Health Achievement Award in the Youth category. The award recognizes contributions from community groups, individuals, and youth to promote the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Dakota County.

Congratulations, TriDistrict CAPS Healthcare students!

Atheneum & Pine Bend Place in Top Spots at Math Masters Competition



Teams and competitors from Pine Bend Elementary School and the Atheneum Gifted Magnet Program competed in the 4th-grade and 5th-grade Math Masters tournaments with outstanding results! Math Masters challenges students in grades 4-6 to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills in mathematics.

As part of the tournament, students compete in a 5-minute Fact Drill, three 10-minute Individual Problem-solving rounds, and three 15-minute Team Problem-solving rounds. Problems include everything from order of operations and the properties of numbers to geometry and statistics.

4th-grade Math Masters Tournament
On Pine Bend's Red Team, Cooper D. earned 2nd place in the Fact Drill. On their Blue Team, Avantes R. earned 7th place in Individual Problem-solving.

Atheneum entered three teams into the 4th-grade tournament: Purple, Blue, and Red. Vrishank A., Declan K., Brody N., and Bennie N. won 1st place as Atheneum's Purple Team. They were followed closely by the school's Blue Team of Brandon B., Brendan B., Gabe K., and Faith S. who earned 2nd. Atheneum's Red Team of Charlie C., Ebrahim G., Aeriana L., and Annika L. earned 5th place.

Students went on to win multiple individual awards as well. The Blue Team's Brandon B. won 1st place in the Fact Drill and earned 5th place in Individual Problem-solving. Gabe K. tied with the Purple Team's Declan K. for 9th place in the Individual Problem-solving rounds. Purple Team's Bennie N. earned 10th place in the Fact Drill and 2nd place in Individual Problem-solving, and Purple teammate Vrishank A. earned 4th place in Individual Problem-solving.

On Atheneum's Red Team, Aeriana L. earned 7th in the Fact Drill, and Charlie C. earned 3rd place in Individual Problem-solving.

Great job, 4th graders!

5th-grade Math Masters Tournament
Atheneum entered one 5th-grade team into the tournament, which included William G., Annika K., Rowan R., and Ava S. The team earned 3rd place in the Overall Team Competition. Individually, Rowan R. earned 9th in the Fact Drill and 5th in Individual Problem-solving while Annika K. earned 10th in the Fact Drill and 6th in Individual Problem-solving. Manha K. earned 8th place in the Individual Problem-solving rounds. Great job, 5th graders!

Congratulations to all of the Math Masters on an outstanding tournament, and thank you to Pine Bend coach Nancy Gagne, Atheneum 4th-grade coach Kim Westra, and Atheneum 5th-grade coach Jessica Swanson!

Simley Wrestling Continues State Victories With New & Known Athletes



The Simley High School Wrestling Team is known for its competitiveness in the State Tournament, but this year marked some exciting new accomplishments from the athletes. The school's wrestlers worked together to win the State Team Tournament. Following that tournament, nine wrestlers, in both the boys and girls tournaments, qualified for the State Individual Tournament:

- Buddy Jackson qualified for the boys tournament in the 133 weight class.
- Amilio Salas qualified for the boys tournament in the 172 weight class.
- Damir Safronov placed 6th in the 127 weight class of the boys tournament.
- Aiden Mincey placed 3rd in the 152 weight class of the boys tournament.
- Junior Jake Kranz placed 3rd in the 114 weight class of the boys tournament.

State qualifiers also included some of the team's younger wrestlers. In only his freshman year, Adrian Mincey qualified for State in the 121 weight class of the boys tournament and placed 2nd! Greta Gundry, an 8th grader at Inver Grove Heights Middle School, earned a spot at State and brought home 5th after competing in the 142 weight class of the girls tournament.

The team also had two State Champions this year: Jake Kos and Charli Raymond. Jake competed in the 145 weight class of the boys tournament and brought home his second title win. This State win marks Charli's 5th title win and she is on pace to break State records. She finished her season with an astounding 111-0 record.

Congratulations to the individual Simley wrestlers and the team as a whole for another season of excellence!

Simley Senior Earns Athena Award for Outstanding Athletic Achievements



Simley High School senior Josie Johnson has been selected as a 2026 Athena Athlete of the Year! Simley head coaches chose Josie for her achievements and athleticism in soccer, Nordic ski, lacrosse, hockey, and flag football.

Josie has made her mark in a variety of sports during her school career, but her contributions on the Simley Girls Soccer team stand out. A 4-year letter winner and 3-year starter, she became team captain in 2025. She earned an Honorable Mention and then All Conference the next year. She was nominated for All State, ranking 9th among the top 12 players in the conference. In 2021, she earned the title of MVP, and in 2025, she was awarded the Golden Boot for most goals scored and was named Offensive Player of the Year.

"Josie made an impact immediately," Simley Girls Soccer Head Coach Nora Austin said. "She scored a goal in her very first varsity game!"

Other teams quickly took note of Josie's powerful plays. "As the 2025 season progressed, our opponents were man-marking her or putting two defenders on her," Coach Austin said. "But Josie still found a way to have a positive impact on the game or score a goal."

Josie kicked off an outstanding Nordic ski career in middle school, earning Rookie of the Year as a 7th grader. In the time since, she has earned All Conference and three All Conference Honorable Mentions. She is a four-time letter winner in the sport and was named MVP during her junior year. As a junior and senior, she has led the Nordic ski team as captain. She performed well both as a player and as a student-athlete, earning Academic All State four times and being named to the Academic All State Team four times as well.

Josie led her lacrosse team as a two-time team captain and six-time letter winner. She earned All Conference twice. She became invaluable in her position, earning All Section 1st Team Midfield, All Section 2nd Team Midfield, and Most Valuable Midfield. In her nomination, Simley Girls Lacrosse Head Coach Rachel Droubie predicted that Josie would break program records in her final year of high school.

Josie made the most of her senior year. She earned a letter as the Boys Hockey manager and will add another sport to her already impressive resume. Simley added girls flag football to its options in 2025 as the state piloted the sport with support from the Minnesota Vikings. Josie will play on Simley's first flag football team this year.

In the fall, she plans to attend Minnesota State University, Mankato, for nursing. Congratulations on an extraordinary athletic career and the 2026 Athena Award, Josie!

• • Winter Sports Awards

Boys Basketball
Honorable Mention
Arnulfo Flores II
Andre Glass Jr.

Girls Basketball
All Conference
Grace Asleson

Honorable Mention
Chloe Gee
Hannah Hobot
Ava Wood

Dance
All Conference
Reagan Devney
Aubrey Gutzman

Honorable Mention
Kori Christopher
Noelle Lucas
Katelyn Museus

Gymnastics
All Conference
Beam
Lucy Gieser

Honorable Mention
Bars
Isla Aamot
All Around
Colbie Callahan
Floor
Laila Riggle

Boys Hockey
All Conference
Noah Schwab

Honorable Mention
Sawyer Husemann
Luke Milner
Owen Unglesbee

Girls Hockey
All Conference
Makenzi Ries
Ella Sanders
Jorie Staples
Emersyn Webinger

Honorable Mention
Kennadi Shepard
Sophia Tuccitto
Evelyn Woveras

Boys Swimming
All Conference
50M Freestyle
Vincent Evangelista
Hayden Geffre
100M Freestyle
Jaxon Wanek
500M Freestyle
Sean Larson

Wrestling
All Conference
Greta Gundry
Jake Kos
Jake Kranz
Adrian Mincey
Aiden Mincey
Darryl Jackson
Charli Raymond
Damir Safronov
Amilio Salas
Cassandra Torres
Brenden Watts

Honorable Mention
Kaylee Honorato
Madison LaChapelle
Johnny Salas

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

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

#1. CAPITAL PROJECTS LEVY TO EXPIRE

In 2017, the Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) community approved a 10-year Capital Projects Levy. Unlike operating levies, a Capital Projects Levy can be used to purchase the curriculum and learning tools that are outlined in its Review and Comment.

Over the last 10 years, ISD 199's Capital Projects Levy has replaced worn classroom furnishings, large musical instruments, and outdated textbooks and curriculum materials while also providing students with hands-on career exploration tools, school-issued devices, and learning software. Access to updated learning tools has led to more hands-on learning and, ultimately, more student achievement.

In addition to providing the tools for learning, the Capital Projects Levy has helped the district establish predictable replacement cycles for them. That way, students have the tools they need to fully engage in learning.

The Capital Projects Levy is set to expire in November of 2027, and our school board is currently looking into options for the future. Information will be posted on *www.isd199.org* as it becomes available.

#2. DISTRICT PHONE SURVEY

The Morris Leatherman Company, a national survey research firm located in Minneapolis, will be helping Inver Grove Heights Schools conduct a phone survey of its community. Whether you have students in our schools or not, we want to hear from you!

Some things to know about the phone survey:

- Calls will be placed to a random sample of ISD 199 residents for about two weeks starting on May 20.
- The survey company's caller ID is "Morris Leatherman Company" and phone numbers will have a (651) or (507) area code.
- All individual responses will be confidential. The Morris Leatherman Company will only share summaries of responses with ISD 199.
- You may still get a phone survey call if you are on a "Do not call" list. That privacy protection does not apply to calls made for research, such as phone surveys.

If you receive a call from "Morris Leatherman Company" or a call from a (651) or (507) area code between about May 20 and June 2, please consider taking the ISD 199 survey. Your voice matters.

• UPCOMING EVENTS: ISD199.ORG/CALENDAR •

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