

A Message of Thanks



Dr. Michael Thomas
Superintendent

As many of you know, I will be transitioning from my role as superintendent at the end of this school year after accepting the position of Superintendent for Hopkins Public Schools. I want to share my sincere gratitude as I prepare for this transition.

First, I want to say thank you. It has truly been an honor to serve Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools (PLSAS). I care deeply about this community both as a leader and as a resident, and I am incredibly grateful for the support received over the years. From Mayors Kirt Briggs, Christine Kelly, Janet Williams, and Chris Kostik, along with our township leadership, service

organizations, residents, and especially our staff, students and families, your partnership has made PLSAS a strong and thriving school district.

Our School Board is fully committed to ensuring a smooth and successful transition. They will take the time needed to identify the next leader who will continue to build on the strong foundation already in place. In the meantime, our focus remains exactly where it should be, on our students. There is important work ahead, and I am confident we will finish this school year strong, together.

PLSAS is a special place. The relationships, the care for one another, and the shared commitment to doing what is right for students will continue to guide this district forward. Thank you for the trust you have placed in me. I am proud of all we have accomplished together, and I have every confidence that the best days of PLSAS are still ahead.

Yours in partnership,
Dr. Michael J. Thomas
Superintendent
Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools

Superintendent Search Update

Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools is advancing its search for a new superintendent following Dr. Michael Thomas’s transition to Hopkins Public Schools, effective July 1, 2026.

In partnership with the Minnesota School Boards Association, the School Board has established a search process and timeline that began on May 11. The process will move forward with the identification of finalist candidates, who will participate in public interviews on June 1 and June 2 at 5:00 p.m. Following these interviews, the Board anticipates selecting a single finalist and entering into contract negotiations.

The district is seeking a leader with a demonstrated record of strong fiscal stewardship, academic improvement, and collaborative leadership in support of students, staff, and the broader community. The new superintendent is expected to begin their role on July 1, 2026.

Additional information, including recorded search meetings and updates, is available on the district website at www.plsas.org

District Services Center Relocating

Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools will relocate the District Services Center (DSC) as part of its site consolidation plan.

The DSC will be renamed the Educational Services Center at Grainwood and moved to 5061 Minnesota Street SE in Prior Lake. The transition is scheduled for this summer, with a specific date to be determined.

This move is part of a broader effort to optimize resources and respond to current and projected enrollment. As part of the plan, La ola del lago will relocate from Grainwood to WestWood this summer, as WestWood transitions away from serving as a neighborhood school. This shift also creates space to



CLASS OF 2026

PRIOR LAKE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES 665

BRIDGES ALC GRADUATES 72

CLASS MOTTO:
"Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." - Ferris Bueller

CLASS FLOWER:
Dahlia
Meaning: New Beginnings

CLASS SONG:
"Landslide"
By: Fleetwood Mac

Planning for the Future of PLSAS

Recently, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools (PLSAS) invited our community to share what matters most for the future of our schools, while also sharing information about ongoing financial challenges and the decisions ahead.

Community feedback emphasized smaller class sizes, student opportunities, and clear communication regarding school funding. Many also shared a desire to preserve the programs and experiences that make PLSAS unique.

The district shares many of these priorities. At the same time, there is a difficult reality: many of the things people value most in schools require significant funding at a time when resources are increasingly limited.

Like many school districts across Minnesota, PLSAS is facing financial pressures. State funding has not kept pace with inflation for more than 20 years, while costs for staffing, transportation, supplies, and services continue to rise. At the same time, student enrollment has declined, reducing district revenue.

To address these financial challenges, PLSAS has reduced expenditures by \$8.1 million since 2024 and is planning an additional \$4.15 million in reductions next year.

Additionally, the School Board is discussing whether to place a funding request before voters on the November 3 ballot. Discussions have included a potential operating levy question to support day-to-day school operations and a separate question focused on capital and facility needs; funding amounts have not yet been finalized.

Currently, PLSAS also has one of the lower operating levies among metro-area school districts. Even with potential future funding changes, the district will continue to face budget pressures that require ongoing adjustments in the years ahead.

District leaders will refine options and share updates at the Board’s June 8 meeting as plans develop.

We appreciate the community’s input, which helps guide our priorities and informs the difficult decisions ahead. This feedback remains vital as we plan for the future of PLSAS.

expand the district’s Spanish immersion program. The current DSC building is being sold as part of the consolidation plan.

The new Educational Services Center at Grainwood will continue to provide district services the community relies on, while also housing selected programs, including Community Education and Laker LAUNCH, which supports students ages 18–22 transitioning to post-secondary opportunities. Community Education classes will continue at multiple school sites across the district, in addition to the Educational Services Center.

By consolidating services and programs into shared spaces, the district aims to increase efficiency, strengthen collaboration, and improve access for families.

www.plsas.org

Dakota Language Students Shine at Regional Bowl

Prior Lake High School’s Dakota language students earned top honors at the 4th annual Hocokata Ti Dakota Language Bowl, competing against 31 youth teams from across the region, including teams from Canada and a Dakota immersion school from South Dakota.

Four Laker teams represented the school with distinction, bringing home impressive results: a 1st place finish in the Beginner Division, along with 4th place finishes in both the Beginner and Intermediate divisions.

The students demonstrated strong language skills, teamwork, and cultural understanding throughout the competition. Their success reflects months of dedicated learning and practice, as well as a deep commitment to honoring the Dakota language and culture.

School leaders and staff praised the students for representing Prior Lake High School with pride and making a meaningful impact on a regional stage.

Middle School Principal Named Minnesota Administrator of the Year



Joe Kuboushek
Middle School Principal

Joe Kuboushek, principal of Hidden Oaks Middle School and Twin Oaks Middle School, has been named the 2025–26 Administrator of the Year by the Minnesota Association of School Office Professionals.

He was nominated by staff and a student in recognition of his visible, calm leadership and genuine care for others.

The award honors outstanding school leadership and impact on school communities. District leaders praised Kuboushek’s student-centered approach and daily commitment to supporting staff and students across both schools.

PLSAS Earns National Recognition for Excellence in Financial Reporting

Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools is proud to once again be recognized for excellence in financial reporting.

The district has earned the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), reflecting a strong commitment to transparency, accountability, and clear communication with the community.

This honor, along with a Meritorious Budget Award and a clean audit opinion this year, underscores the district’s continued focus on responsible stewardship of public resources and high standards in financial management.

LEF Grants and Hall of Fame Announced

The Laker Educational Foundation (LEF) is proud to announce its 2026 Grant Award recipients, supporting meaningful opportunities for students across the district. LEF also continues its Laker Impact partnership with Every Buddy’s Playground to create more inclusive and accessible elementary playgrounds. These opportunities are made possible through the generous support of donors and community partners.

The Laker Hall of Fame is also excited to announce the Class of 2026. Inductees were selected for outstanding accomplishments in Activities, Athletics, and Distinguished Achievement and will be honored during Hall of Fame Weekend on September 18–19.

Class of 2026

Team of Distinction

1976 Boys’ Basketball Team

Activities

Jesse Hrudka-Wartman Anschutz, 2003

Distinguished Achievement

Mark Schroeder, 1976

Athletics

Alex Hart, 2015 • David Busselman, 2000 • Courtney Gruber (Deutsch), 1998 • Megan Pold, 2011 • Thea Hoeg Kelly, 1997 • Scott Pierce, 1991 • TJ Larson, 2010

www.lakereducationalfoundation.com

Middle School Students Shine at History Day, Advance to Nationals



Pictured left to right: Sarah Freese, Violet Spotts, Jenna Zwart, and Claire Dahlen

Twin Oaks Middle School 7th graders delivered an exceptional performance at this year’s Minnesota History Day Competition. Their work showcased strong research, thoughtful analysis, and a deep understanding of the 2026 theme, “Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History.” Through their projects, students demonstrated creativity, critical thinking, and a meaningful commitment to exploring complex historical issues.

At the state competition, 20 students represented the district with nine outstanding projects, earning multiple honors and statewide recognition. Their success reflects not only academic excellence but also their ability to communicate powerful stories and insights from the past.

Among the top achievements:

State Champion & National Qualifier

Sarah Freese, Violet Spotts, Jenna Zwart, and Claire Dahlen, “One Spark Can Start a Flame” (Group Performance)

4th Place Finish

Blake Rasmusson, “The Black Sox Scandal” (Individual Podcast)

Honorable Mention + Topical Award (Educational Reform)

Mylo O’Connor, Kylie Stanley, and Esme Warner, “The Inspiration: Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet First School for the Deaf” (Group Performance)

Honorable Mention

Alex Chhorn, “Saigon’s Burning Bronze: Protest Through Sacrifice” (Individual Documentary)

Special thanks to teachers Nathan Dapper and Holly Bartholow for their leadership, guidance, and support throughout the History Day process—their dedication played a key role in these accomplishments.

From Seed to Salad



Glendale students admire their indoor harvest

The most popular spot in the Glendale Elementary cafeteria recently wasn’t the snack line, it was the garden bar. Students celebrated their final indoor harvest of the year, showcasing a vibrant, crunchy crop of greens grown right inside their cafeteria.

These aren’t your average school gardens. Using innovative Tower Gardens, students at Glendale and Five Hawks are mastering the art of vertical, soil-free farming. This tech-forward approach uses a nutrient-rich hydroponic system to grow vegetables faster and more sustainably than traditional gardening.

But the real magic happens in hands-on learning. Students check pH levels and manage water cycles to ensure their crops thrive. The reward for their hard work? A fresh, homegrown addition to their school meals.

This hands-on health initiative is made possible by a SHIP grant, bridging the gap between the classroom and the cafeteria to encourage lifelong healthy habits.

E-STEM Day at La ola del lago



La ola del lago students observe a turtle during E-STEM Day

Students at La ola del lago enjoyed a hands-on day of outdoor learning during E-STEM Day, focused on Environmental Education, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. E-STEM Days are a popular experience across all elementary schools in the district.

Working with naturalists from the Three Rivers Park District, students engaged in interactive, nature-based activities that sparked curiosity, collaboration, and discovery beyond the classroom.



Lisa Manders
WestWood Principal

Lisa Manders Named Next Principal of Five Hawks

Lisa Manders has been named the next principal of Five Hawks Elementary School. She will succeed Katy Schuerman, who is retiring at the end of the school year.

Lisa brings extensive experience and a strong record of leadership in supporting students and staff. Since 2024, she has served as interim principal at WestWood Elementary. Her career in PLSAS began as a teacher at WestWood, and she has since served in a variety of leadership roles, including peer coach, district Q-Comp coordinator, and dean of students, as well as elementary principal in a neighboring district.

As she prepares to transition to Five Hawks, the district extends gratitude for her steady leadership and care for the WestWood community during an important time, as WestWood transitions to house La ola del lago Spanish immersion as part of the district’s site consolidation process and to support the continued expansion of the immersion program.

Stakeholder Feedback Highlights Strengths and Guides Next Steps

HIGHLY
RECOMMENDED



Our neighborhood schools are valued by families for their nurturing, student-centered environments.

DEDICATED
TEACHERS



Educators are described as the “backbone of our schools,” committed to every student’s success.

SAFE &
WELL MAINTAINED



Over 90% of survey respondents agree our schools are safe, secure, and well maintained.

This year, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools (PLSAS) gathered feedback through both our annual survey and community priority survey to help guide future decisions, including potential operating levy considerations and how to best prioritize resources. We are grateful to everyone who participated, as this input plays an important role in shaping our plans.

Overall, the community priority survey results reflect a community that supports its schools and values continued investment in student success, while emphasizing the importance of clear and transparent financial communication. Annual experience survey results show:

- Students:** Responses ranked in the 85th percentile nationally, placing PLSAS among the top-performing school systems in the country.
- Families and Caregivers:** Satisfaction remained strong at 3.96 out of 5, reflecting continued trust and confidence.
- Staff:** Employees report a strong sense of purpose, clear expectations, and positive relationships with their supervisors.

At the same time, respondents identified areas for growth, including concerns about budget pressures, class sizes, student behavior, and a desire for more consistent communication about student learning. These insights will help guide our ongoing improvement efforts.

Learn more and view the survey results at www.plsas.org

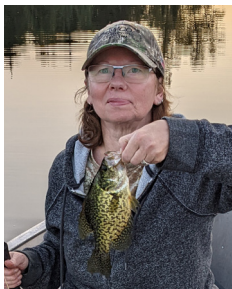
Congratulations 2026 Retirees



Trudy Adderley
Edgewood School
Special Education Teacher
19 years of service



Sarah Bowman
Five Hawks Elementary
4th Grade Teacher
26 years of service



Pam Doerr
Redtail Ridge Elementary
5th Grade Teacher
29 years of service



Rebekah Fonder
Edgewood School
ECFE Parent Educator
32 years of service



Kim Koepp
Hidden Oaks Middle School
Social Worker
20 years of service



Heidi Murray
Glendale Elementary
3rd Grade Teacher
20 years of service



Karen Russell
Jeffers Pond Elementary
Speech Language Pathologist
30 years of service



Terrie Schoenbauer
District Services Center
Benefits Specialist
16 years of service



Katy Schuerman
Five Hawks Elementary
Principal
6 years of service



Jill Selchow
HOMS and TOMS
FACS Teacher
23 years of service



Martha Walz
District Services Center
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent
33 years of service



Alison Zak
Middle School
Peer Coach
20 years of service

Not Pictured: Andrea Carin, Joan Freidlund, Pam Giefer, Brenda Goetsch, Sheryl Haugen, Renee Kaiser-Muelken, Kari Keimig, Lisa Kraft, Michael Mahoney, Debra Maxfield, Debra Parizek, Steve Raby, Sherry Sorenson, Lisa Theis, Diane Torrey, Joni Wendt

/ E-STEM Schools /



Community Education
Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools
www.priorlakesavagece.com
952-226-0310

Community Education offers high-quality learning and enrichment opportunities, helping you enhance your life and strengthen our communities. Community Education provides everyone the chance to explore their interests, develop their talents, and build connections within the community.

PRIOR LAKE-SAVAGE
AREA SCHOOLS

June
Through
August

Community
Education

Summer 2026

www.PriorLakeSavageCE.com | 952-226-0310

ADULT PROGRAMS | YOUTH PROGRAMS
KIDS' COMPANY | EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS
PRESCHOOL/PRE-KINDERGARTEN

@PLSASCommEd

Summer camp registration is open! Register for all of our classes and events at www.priorlakesavagece.com.

SWIMMING LESSONS

Make a Splash This Summer!

Dive into confidence and cool down with our certified swimming coaches! From beginners to advanced levels – kids and teens will love learning in a safe, fun environment.

PROGRAM FEATURES:

- ✓ Certified Instructors/Trainers
- ✓ 8 consecutive lessons per session
- ✓ Safety focused
- ✓ Held at Hidden Oaks Middle School

Session 1: June 15-18 & June 22-25
Session 2: June 29-July 2 & July 6-9
Session 3: July 13-16 & July 20-23
Session 4: July 27-30 & August 3-6

Full schedule online!

952-226-0310
 communityed@plsas.org

Register online
www.priorlakesavagece.com

Give Your Child a Strong Start at Circle of Friends Preschool

Now is the perfect time to give your child a joyful, high-quality early learning experience at Circle of Friends Preschool.

Our Preschool 3s and Prekindergarten 4s programs provide engaging, play-based learning led by licensed early childhood teachers who are dedicated to helping every child grow with confidence and care.

In Preschool 3s, children build comfort with school routines, strengthen early social skills, and learn through purposeful play in a nurturing environment. In Prekindergarten 4s, children take the next step by deepening early literacy, math, problem-solving, and independence through hands-on learning experiences.

Across both programs, children are supported in a welcoming, inclusive community where curiosity is encouraged, confidence is built, and learning feels joyful every day.

Enroll today and start your child’s learning journey at Circle of Friends Preschool. Visit www.plsas.org/preschool or scan the QR code to register.

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS
PRESCHOOL AND PREK
REGISTRATION OPEN

SCHEDULE A TOUR AND SEE WHERE THE
LEARNING BEGINS!

SCAN FOR DETAILS

QUESTIONS?
CONTACT KARLY JACOBSON AT
952-226-0950 OR KJACOBSON@PLSAS.ORG

PRIOR LAKE-SAVAGE
AREA SCHOOLS

Please Early Learning Programs
Learning Begins Here

2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR
SCHOOL YEAR

Circle of Friends
Step Into Preschool

A Class that Combines Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and Preschool Begins September 2026



About this Class

Our Step Into Preschool program is designed for children who are approaching or newly three and would benefit from a gentle introduction to preschool. This class is ideal for children new to group settings or those who would benefit from extra support with separation, routines, and social-emotional development. Rooted in our belief that learning begins here, this program supports children as they build independence and confidence while equipping caregivers with strategies to support learning and development at home. This class is a joyful first school experience!

Helpful Details

- When? Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:15-11:00
Tuesdays-Caregivers Attend
Thursdays-Drop Off Day
- Where? Edgewood School
- Age? Newly or approaching 3 years old in the fall of 2026
- Have another child outside the Step into Preschool age range? We offer sibling care to make things easier for your family. Be sure to register online.



Call us for more info 952-226-0950

Edgewood School 5304 Westwood Drive, Prior Lake https://ew.plsas.org/ earlylearning@plsas.org



Early Childhood Family Education Summer Classes - Registration Now Open
Session 1: June 9-25 Session 2: July 16-30

- Tuesdays**
Tiny Artists (2.5-5 yrs, 8:45-10)
Sensory Safari (1-5 yrs, 10:30-11:45)
Tuesdays/Wednesdays
Preschool Practice (3-5 yrs, 9:30-11:30)
Wednesdays
Toddlers Together (12-30 mo, 8:45-10)
Time with Baby (Birth-12 mo, 10:30-11:45)
Mindful Moments (1-5 yrs, June, 10:30-11:45)
Music & Movement (1-5 yrs, July, 10:30-11:45)

- Thursdays**
ECFE Family Playtime (Birth-7 yrs, 8:45-10)
Splash & Play (1-5 yrs, June, 10:30- 11:45)
Summer Keepsakes (1-5 yrs, July, 10:30-11:45)
Register: www.priorlakesavagece.com or scan the code
Location: Edgewood School, 5304 Westwood Drive, Prior Lake
Questions: Contact Vicki Spieler, 952-226-0956 or vspieler@plsas.org



Are You New to the District?

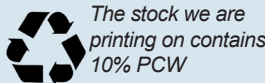


Welcome to Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools!
If you have school-age children, you can enroll them online at www.plsas.org/enroll or visit the District Services Center, 4540 Tower Street SE in Prior Lake.
For more information, call 952-226-0000.

Become a Laker!
Enroll today at www.plsas.org/enroll

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

facebook.com/PLSAS
instagram.com/isd719
youtube.com/isd719



Our Vision:
A world-class district centered on students, driven by results
Our Mission:
Inspire and empower each student to reach their full potential
About this Newsletter
For questions or comments regarding Laker Connections, contact Kristi Mussman, Director of Communications, kmussman@plsas.org or 952-226-0014

Obioma Osuji Named MSBA Scholarship Recipient



Pictured left to right: Shakopee School Board Chair Kristi Peterson, Obioma Osuji, and MSBA Executive Director Kirk Schneidawind

Prior Lake High School (PLHS) senior and School Board Student Representative Obioma Osuji has been named a recipient of the 2026 Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) Robert E. Meeks Student School Board Member Scholarship, a \$3,000 award supporting postsecondary education.

He is the first PLHS student to receive this honor, selected from nearly 60 applicants statewide.

Osuji holds a 3.878 GPA while completing PSEO coursework at Normandale Community College, where he earned Dean’s List honors and Phi Theta Kappa membership. He serves as Student Council President, is a multi-sport varsity athlete, and co-founded the PLHS Pickleball Club, growing it from 15 to 175 members.

He was recognized for using student-led surveys to elevate student voice in School Board discussions and was presented the award at the May 4, 2026 School Board meeting.

Osuji will attend the University of Minnesota Twin Cities in the fall to pursue a degree in finance.



Keeley Mohling named Athena Award Winner

Prior Lake High School senior Keeley Mohling has been named the school’s 2026 Athena Award recipient, recognizing her outstanding athletic achievement.

A three-sport athlete in lacrosse, cross country, and track, Mohling has earned numerous conference, section, and state honors. She also served as a captain for both lacrosse and cross country, helping build a positive and supportive team culture.

Keeley Mohling

Her accomplishments also include school records in the 4x100 relay and 5K and contributing to the 2025 Lacrosse State Championship.

Mohling will attend Butler University, where she plans to continue her academics and play lacrosse.

PLHS Seniors Recognized as AAA Award Nominees



Talia Bushman

Congratulations to Prior Lake High School (PLHS) seniors Talia Bushman and Joe Gannon, who were selected as the school’s 2025-26 nominees for the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) AAA (Academics, Arts and Athletics) Award.

Presented by the MSHSL, the AAA Award honors high school seniors who excel in academics, fine arts, and athletics—while also maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or higher.



Joe Gannon

Talia has distinguished herself in band, speech, cross country, and track and field, while Joe has excelled in band, cross country, hockey, and lacrosse—a testament to their talent, dedication, and commitment both in and out of the classroom.

Their leadership, commitment and accomplishments across multiple disciplines made them ideal representatives of PLHS.

- 2026 Board of Education
Chair Amy Bullyan
Vice-Chair/Clerk Jessica Olstad
Treasurer Jessica Mason
Student Representative Obioma Osuji
Directors Lisa Atkinson, Mary Frantz, Charles Johnson, Dustin Smith
Superintendent Dr. Michael Thomas