

# 199 REPORTER

## • • • INVER GROVE HEIGHTS SCHOOLS | SUMMER 2023 • • •

### Proposed Legislative Increases Would Only Help With Necessities

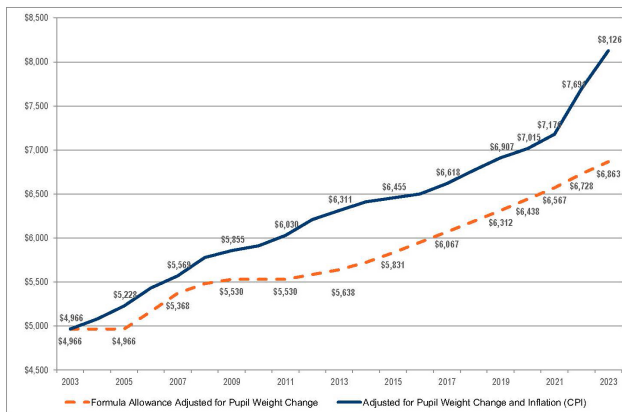
This spring, the Minnesota Governor, House of Representatives, and Senate proposed higher-than-typical state contributions to education for the 2023-2024 school year. At Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199), we are grateful to the Minnesota Legislature for dedicating resources to education. **However, the investment comes at a critical time when factors like inflation mean that most of those dollars must go toward maintenance rather than innovation.** Regardless of which proposal the Legislature approves this May, ISD 199 will not have much revenue, if any, to expand programming and opportunities for our students.

If state funding stayed the same for next school year, ISD 199 would have a \$2.1 million deficit. This deficit budget includes inflation, staffing to maintain class sizes, and decreases in enrollment mainly caused by a widespread trend of lower birth rates.

#### INFLATION

The general education revenue formula is responsible for the largest portion of revenue for school districts in Minnesota. In ISD 199, revenue from the formula makes up about half of our general fund budget. The Legislature has typically approved an increase of about 2% to the formula each year, which equals about a 1% increase to our overall general fund budget. This year, proposals from the governor, House, and Senate all include a 4% increase to the formula. Although that 4% increase is welcome, our reality is that ISD 199's budget is still affected by the last two decades of state funding lagging behind inflation.

General Education Formula Allowance, 2003-2023  
Adjusted for Pupil Weight Change and Inflation (CPI)



Source: MDE June 2022 Inflation Estimates

As you can see in the chart above, state funding has not kept pace with inflation since 2003. **Each year, more and more of our school district budget must be dedicated to inflation on**

**necessities like school building utilities, classroom supplies, and bus maintenance.**

#### ENROLLMENT

The general education revenue formula is calculated based on enrollment. School districts get a set amount of funding for each student. **School districts across Minnesota are experiencing decreasing enrollment at the same time because birth rates are decreasing.** When fewer children are born, there are fewer students to enroll in school. Our graduating Class of 2023 is larger than our kindergarten Class of 2035. As the larger classes of older students graduate, smaller classes will continue to take their place if birth rates continue to decrease. Over time, the total number of students in the school district will become smaller and smaller. Knowing this, we expect decreased state funding each year based on decreased enrollment.

#### STAFFING

So, why does the school district need to adjust staffing or worry about class sizes if enrollment is decreasing? Like most school districts, ISD 199 right-sizes each year. Right-sizing increases, decreases, or maintains staffing to align with enrollment for the upcoming school year. We decreased staffing for the 2022-2023 school year based on enrollments and predictions of enrollment decreases. **Then, more students enrolled in ISD 199 than predicted, and this year's right-sizing process showed that we will need more staff to best support students and maintain class sizes in the upcoming school year.** The higher enrollments this year do not make up for the enrollment decreases that ISD 199, like most other school districts, has experienced over the last decade or more, but our enrollment numbers are higher now than they were the last time we right-sized.

The 2023 legislative session is scheduled to conclude before the end of May. That is when we will find out what funding will be available to ISD 199 for the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years. Regardless of the outcome, our goal is always to be as effective and efficient as possible with our budget. We will continue to monitor enrollment and the needs of our students while searching for cost savings and revenue-generating strategies.

Regards,

Dave Bernhardson, Superintendent

## 199 REPORTER

## Inver Grove Heights Schools

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www.isd199.org

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

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

If you have questions about this publication, please contact:

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## 199 REPLIES

## Do you have a question about our district?

Part of our mission is to maintain an involved and invested community. To do so, we want to keep you informed. Visit [www.isd199.org/FAQ](http://www.isd199.org/FAQ) to browse answers to previously asked questions about our district or ask your own.

*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](http://www.isd199.org/nondiscrimination).*

## Survey Results Show Support for Operating Levy Increase

Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) voters give the school district high grades for quality and its financial management, according to a survey conducted during the first two weeks of April. The Morris Leatherman Company, a national survey research firm, conducted a stratified random-sample phone survey of 400 residents. A stratified random-sample survey aims to mirror the community's voter demographics with its respondents. The survey asked about perceptions of the district and reactions to potential levy options.

Morris Leatherman Company Consultant Don Lifto presented highlights of the survey results to the ISD 199 School Board at the May 8 school board work session.

Highlights of the survey results are below:

- When asked to grade ISD 199 on quality, 77% of respondents gave it an A or B. This is significantly higher than the national average of 54% A's and B's.
- When asked to grade the district's financial management, 67% of respondents gave it an A or B. When compared to 2017 responses, the number of D's and F's decreased from 12% to 2%.
- When asked at the beginning of the survey whether they would support an increase to ISD 199's operating levy, more than 65% of community members said they would support an increase.
- After being informed of the ways an operating levy could expand support and opportunities for students and some of the ways that ISD 199 has demonstrated financial stewardship, support increased to more than 73%.
- When asked whether they agreed with the statement, "Public schools are a good investment in the future," 95% of community members said they agreed or strongly agreed.
- On the topic of tax aversion, 28% of respondents said they would never support a tax increase, regardless of the amount or how it was used.

For more details about the community survey, visit [www.isd199.org](http://www.isd199.org). Thank you to all of the residents who were called during the phone survey and agreed to share their perspectives. The survey results will help the district understand the priorities of the community and how to best serve students.

## Middle Schoolers Author Preschool eBooks



Inver Grove Heights Middle School sixth graders wrote e-books earlier this year as part of a service learning project that is benefitting preschoolers at the Inver Grove Heights Early Learning Center. IGH Middle School set up the project to give students a hands-on activity that would build their skills while producing something that would help others.

Before they began writing, middle school students learned about early childhood literacy. They learned some techniques to use in their e-books based on how preschoolers learn, such as including pictures. Students each chose an animal to write about and then researched it to write an introduction, some facts, and a short quiz in their e-books.

IGH Early Learning Center preschool classes are using the e-books to teach students about conservation while increasing their literacy skills. Great job, sixth graders!

## Retired NASA Engineer Inspires Students With Inside Look at STEM Career



Retired NASA engineer Ann Micklos visited STEAMM classes at Salem Hills Elementary School and the Atheneum Gifted Magnet Program to talk about her career. Students are constantly exploring

technology and finding new approaches to problems in their STEAMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math, & Media) classes. They showed Ms. Micklos their skills, and she encouraged them to picture themselves in future STEM careers.

Ms. Micklos talked about her 33 years as a NASA engineer and the projects she worked on. She explained how she helped

engineer heat shields for shuttles to keep astronauts safe. During her explanation, she dove into science lessons about space, friction, and more to help students understand how she protected shuttles against 10,000-degree temperatures and why the shuttles got so hot.

After her presentation, students asked questions about her work, space, shuttles, and more. Students then used STEAMM supplies, like wood blocks, Legos, and gears, to build their own inventions that could help astronauts in space. Students showed Ms. Micklos their final products.

Thank you to Ms. Micklos for giving students an in-depth look at the work that NASA engineers do and how they can do the same someday!

## TriDistrict CAPS Healthcare Students Recognized with Public Health Award



The Dakota County Public Health Department recognized a group of students in the TriDistrict Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS) Healthcare class with an honorable mention for this

year's Public Health Achievement Award. The award recognizes the contributions of Dakota County residents who devote their time, energy, and talents to improve community health. The Dakota County Board of Commissioners selected the group of Simley High School, South St. Paul High School, and Two Rivers High School students after they took steps to increase the number of students with lifesaving skills.

TriDistrict CAPS Healthcare students researched a healthcare issue they are passionate about for a class project this winter. One group talked to experts about training more students with lifesaving skills and developed action steps to do so.

After the project, the group approached Inver Grove Heights Schools Community Education Director Barb Pierce to make their action steps a reality. They worked with Ms. Pierce to get all TriDistrict CAPS Healthcare students trained in CPR, the Heimlich maneuver, and the administration of Narcan in case of an opioid overdose. The training was such a success that it will be part of the program's curriculum moving forward. Students and staff hope to expand the program so even more students learn these important skills. Great job, Healthcare students!

## Simley's Education Students Get Hands-on Career Experience at Hilltop



Simley High School students in the Introduction to Urban Education class are getting hands-on experience at Hilltop Elementary School this spring. The Introduction to Urban Education class is a concurrent enrollment

course offered at Simley through St. Paul's Metropolitan State University. In addition to gaining professional experience, students will earn high school and college credit once they complete the class.

The Introduction to Urban Education class started in the fall with online classes. Simley students learned about the education field and issues that affect students in preschool through high school. In March, students stepped into classrooms for observations. After visiting a few other schools for a day or two, Simley students started routinely working in Hilltop classrooms.

Each student works in an assigned classroom for about an hour each day, observing the teacher and helping students with their in-class tasks. Simley students set up Hilltop students for in-class assignments, answer their questions, and sometimes, help them tie their shoes.

Working in classrooms gives students risk-free first-hand experience to understand whether teaching and education is a good fit for them. Students also get an early start on a college degree and a Minnesota teaching license. Simley students who complete the Introduction to Urban Education class will earn six college credits, allowing them to graduate from college and earn their teaching license earlier and at a lower cost.

Simley students who will be juniors and seniors next school year can talk to their counselors about enrolling in Introduction to Urban Education during the 2023-2024 school year.





Disney and CAMERON MACKINTOSH'S  
**MARY POPPINS**  
THE BROADWAY MUSICAL

August 4-5, 11-12 at 7 PM  
August 6 & 13\* at 2 PM  
\*ASL Interpreted Show (August 13th)

Simley High School Performing Arts Center  
2920 80th Street East in Inver Grove Heights, MN

Tickets & Crew Opportunities:  
[IGHtheatre.org](http://IGHtheatre.org)

@IGHCommunityTheatre

INVER GROVE HEIGHTS  
Community Theatre

## FOX 9 Top Teacher Award



FOX 9 recognized Simley High School Special Education Teacher Denise Landman with a 2023 Top Teacher Award. The award recognizes outstanding educators in the community, and only 10 are chosen from hundreds of nominees. This year, Ms. Landman was one of the 10 selected, thanks to nominations from current students, former students, and a parent.

FOX 9 surprised Ms. Landman at a Simley staff meeting, bringing in anchor Cody Matz, a camera crew, and the students who nominated her. In their nominations, students wrote that Ms. Landman makes them feel safe and she advocates for them to be in mainstream classes when they are ready.

In an interview after her surprise, Ms. Landman showed the same admiration for her students. When asked what the best part of her job is, she said, "Just seeing [my students'] faces. They are always so eager to learn. Always. They just work so hard."

Ms. Landman has been teaching and inspiring Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) students since 2014. Her commitment to students and expertise in special education make ISD 199 grateful to have her on staff.

Congratulations to Ms. Landman on this recognition! Visit [www.isd199.org/news](http://www.isd199.org/news) to watch the FOX 9 segment.

## Thank You, 2022-2023 Retirees!

Congratulations to the 12 Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) retirees of 2022-2023! Many of this year's retirees have been with ISD 199 for more than 20 years. These well-known teachers and staff have helped thousands of students get on a path to lifelong success, and they will be greatly missed.

## ISD 199 2022-2023 Retirees

- Patti Goettsch, Pine Bend Elementary School, 38 years of service
- Colette Ryan, Salem Hills Elementary School, 36 years of service
- Kris Chermak, Hilltop Elementary School, 34 years of service
- Diane McKeever, Simley High School, 30 years of service
- Sandra Emerson, Transportation, 23 years of service
- Marie Zangs, Simley High School, 23 years of service
- Thom Fisher, Simley High School, 22 years of service
- Hank Pommerening, Simley High School, 18 years of service
- Joel Rogness, Simley High School, 16 years of service
- Sue Pommerening, Inver Grove Heights Middle School, 15 years of service
- Michael Deleon, Inver Grove Heights Middle School, 13 years of service
- Dave Boese, Hilltop Elementary School, 8 years of service

ISD 199 wishes each of these retirees the very best as they begin new adventures in retirement. Thank you, retirees, for your care and dedication over the years, and congratulations on your well-deserved retirements!

## EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

When families apply and qualify for Educational Benefits, they get deals on student parking, school device protection plans, student activity fees, tickets to school events like prom, and local services like electric and gas utilities.

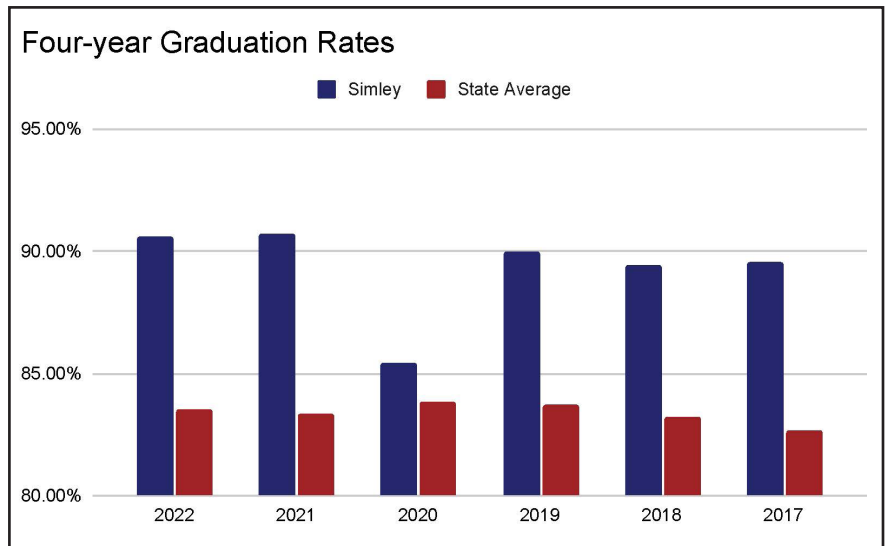
Every qualifying application also means about \$1,500 of funding for the student's school to help maintain class sizes and provide student support services. Families can visit [www.isd199.org/edu-benefits](http://www.isd199.org/edu-benefits) this July for the 2023-2024 Educational Benefits Application Form and to learn more about Educational Benefits perks.

## 2022 Graduation Rates Surpass Pre-pandemic Years

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) released graduation rates for the Class of 2022 this spring. Simley High School's four-year graduation rate for 2022 surpassed its pre-pandemic graduation rates and was far higher than the state average. Many of the school's student groups also graduated at higher rates in 2022 than 2021 and surpassed state averages.

Simley's Class of 2022 had a four-year graduation rate of 90.55%. With the 2022 state average being 83.55%, Simley has continued its streak of graduating far more students than average for Minnesota each year. The school's 2022 graduation rate also surpassed graduation rates from several school years before COVID-19 disruptions.

Simley's overall graduation rate is bolstered by gains in multiple student groups between 2021 and 2022. Simley students who identify as two or more races saw the largest increase between 2021 and 2022. Students who identify as two or more races in Simley's Class of 2021 graduated at a rate of 90%. Then, in 2022, all Simley students who identify as two or more races graduated, increasing that number to 100%!



Simley students who were enrolled in special education programs also saw a large increase in their group's graduation rate in 2022. In 2021, 81.8% of Simley's special education students graduated within four years. In 2022, that number increased by more than eight percentage points to 90.63%.

Simley staff hope to continue increasing its four-year graduation rates each year. In addition to the student groups with significant increases between 2021 and 2022, some of Simley's student groups experienced smaller increases and others experienced minor setbacks, a common occurrence between graduating classes. Simley and Inver Grove Heights Schools will continue to work with students to ensure that they not only graduate, but that they graduate with the skills, credits, certifications, and experience they need to be successful moving forward.

## • • THANK YOU, COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS!



Community volunteers have been making Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) events extra special this school year! Thanks to the help of volunteers, students have celebrated reading, learned about their neighbors, and tried new things this school year.

Community members helped Hilltop Elementary School kick off its literacy celebrations in March. City council member and Hilltop alumnus John Murphy read a proclamation from Mayor Brenda Dietrich to begin the month of celebrations. Community members, including ISD 199 School Board Clerk Carrie Lounsberry, Inver Grove Heights Police Chief Melissa Chiodo, and Dakota County Commissioner Joe Atkins, then read to each class.

Community members from the school district, city, and county also visited Salem Hills Elementary School for World Read Aloud Day. Mayor Dietrich, staff from the Inver Grove Heights Police and Fire departments, staff from Inver Glen Library, and more read a book to students and then told them a little bit about themselves. Students asked their guest readers questions and learned about their careers.

Volunteers are a huge part of Pine Bend Elementary School's Students and Adults Learning Together Day, or SALT Day. Volunteers hold short classes on a craft, hobby, sport, or activity that they are passionate about, and students choose which classes to take. Thanks to volunteers, students got to try decorating cupcakes, practicing taekwondo, doing science experiments, and so much more this year.

Visit [www.isd199.org/volunteer](http://www.isd199.org/volunteer) to fill out a volunteer application. It's wonderful to have the community together to learn and connect in fun, new ways. Thank you, volunteers!

## Simley Senior Earns 2023 Apollo Award as Outstanding Athlete & Leader



Senior Gavin Nelson received Simley High School's 2023 Apollo Award. The award is given to the top male athlete each year, as selected by Simley's head coaches. It recognizes achievement in athletics, academics, and leadership throughout high school. Gavin finished his distinguished career as a high school student-athlete with state championship titles in two sports.

In wrestling, he earned six letters, won five section championships, earned five All Conference and All State honors, and was crowned individual state champion three times. He was part of five state championship teams, and he led Simley's nationally-ranked team this year as a captain. Gavin also took his talents abroad. As the best wrestler in the country in his age division, he wrestled as a member of United States teams at two world championships.

In his nomination of Gavin, Simley Activities Director and Head Wrestling Coach Will Short also noted his character: "He is kind

and supportive to all the guys on the team. He has also helped with middle school and elementary wrestler development."

Gavin has committed to wrestle for the University of Minnesota, one of the nation's top collegiate wrestling programs.

He has distinguished himself in Spartan Football, too, where he earned four letters. During his career, he rushed for more than 3,000 yards, scored more than 30 touchdowns, made 131 solo tackles, and scored a defensive touchdown. A captain this year, his coaches credit him with leading Spartan Football to its first state championship in school history. Gavin was key to the team's come-from-behind victory at U.S. Bank Stadium against last year's champions. This school year, he was named Most Valuable Player.

"Gavin has been an invaluable member of our team and is a huge reason we've had the success that we did the past few years," Simley Football Coach Chris Mensen said. "Gavin's leadership skills and ability to build up those around him are what separate him."

Congratulations to Gavin for his impressive achievements!

## Alum Wins St. Cloud State University Leadership Award

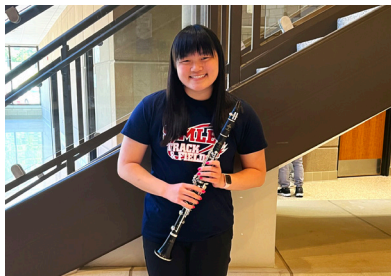


Simley High School graduate Alaina Friske received the Excellence in Leadership Award from St. Cloud State University. This annual distinction was only given to 25 SCSU students this year. Winners received a certificate and engraved medallion at a banquet on April 16.

The Excellence in Leadership Award honors undergraduates, graduate students, and new alumni who demonstrate outstanding contributions to SCSU and the community. A panel of faculty and staff judged applications and chose award recipients based on each nominee's demonstration of progressive responsibility, leadership in the community, and achievements and contributions while at SCSU.

Alaina graduated from Simley in 2019. Currently, she is completing her bachelor's degree at SCSU with majors in English and Marketing. Congratulations to Alaina on this honor and her work as a leader!

## ALL STATE BAND SELECTION



Simley High School junior Madeline N. has been selected for the Minnesota Music Educators Association (MMEA) All State Band for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year! The All State program is the highest honor a high school musician can achieve in Minnesota. Madeline is the first Simley student to be chosen for this award in more than 20 years. She was chosen out of more than 1,000 submissions during a difficult and competitive audition process.

"Madeline has made a decision to dedicate part of her high school career to making music on her clarinet," Simley Band Director Kevin Robinson said. "As an integral part of our program, she continues to raise the bar."

Madeline will attend a camp in August with other All State Band students. They will meet their guest conductors and attend rehearsals and sectionals to develop advanced technique and prepare for their performances. All State Band students will perform in an August concert to showcase the great dedication and commitment from some of the most talented young musicians in Minnesota. The group will also perform at Orchestra Hall next February during the MMEA Midwinter Convention.

Great job and congratulations to Madeline on this outstanding achievement!





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

## #1. DECLINING ENROLLMENT

Some news reports in recent years have focused on widespread school enrollment declines. While some may point to students leaving the public school system during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the most significant declines are actually due to lower birth rates across the state, country, and globe.

Fewer babies are being born each year, which means fewer students are starting school now than even 13 years ago when the current senior class was starting kindergarten. As larger classes of seniors graduate and smaller classes of kindergarten students start school each school year, the school district's total number of students declines.

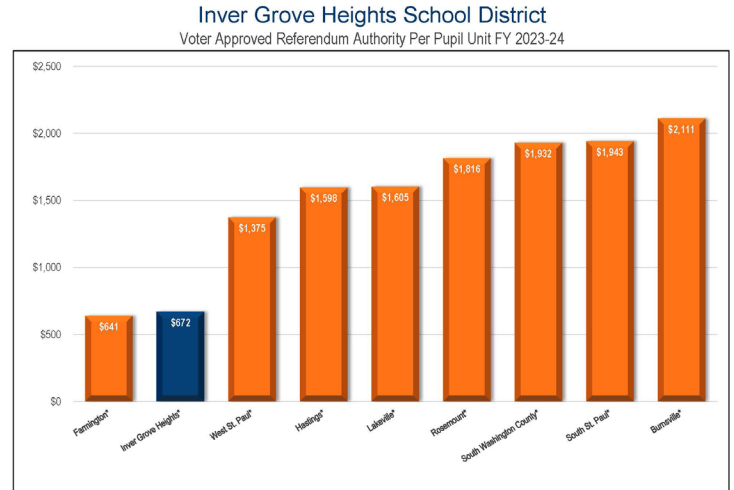
## #2. CROSS-SUBSIDY

The State of Minnesota and the U.S. federal government require schools to provide certain services for students, such as special education and English language (EL) services. These government requirements are commonly known as mandates. Often, when the state or federal government puts more mandates in place for schools, they do not cover the cost of those additional mandates. These "unfunded or underfunded mandates" mean more of the district's general budget must be dedicated to required services, leaving less available for districtwide programming. This is why

school districts consistently ask representatives for EL and special education cross-subsidies.

## #3. LOWEST LOCAL LEVY

The local levy for Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) remains the second lowest levy among its surrounding school districts. ISD 199 receives only slightly more than Farmington Area Public Schools. The district receives about \$672 per pupil compared to the area's average local operating levy of \$1,521.44.



## • QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR DISTRICT? [WWW.ISD199.ORG/FAQ](http://WWW.ISD199.ORG/FAQ) •



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