

199 REPORTER

• • INVER GROVE HEIGHTS SCHOOLS | BACK TO SCHOOL 23-24 • •

ISD 199 Looks Ahead in 2023-2024 School Year



Our mission at Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) is “Inspire. Innovate. Excel. A community commitment.” Our district leaders have been talking to students, families, staff, and community members since the beginning

of last school year. Through design workshops, surveys, and conversations, we gathered the school community’s thoughts about what steps we can take to further fulfill our mission. We hope to make the resulting community-informed goals a reality for our students starting in the 2024-2025 school year.

While we lay the groundwork for increased opportunities for our students, we are aware that our current funding will limit what we can add for them. Minnesota’s historical investment in education comes after 20 years of state funding lagging behind inflation and at a time of historical inflation and historically high costs of necessary goods and services, such as utilities and transportation. Without their investments, we would have a

\$2.7 million deficit. With their investments, we are only able to maintain the status quo. We are grateful for the State’s investment, but we want to implement our community’s ideas, especially after they took the time to voice them.

This fall, we will ask our voters for approval on two ballot questions, which you can read about below and on the following page. While you read, it’s helpful to know that ISD 199 currently has the eighth lowest per-student funding amount of its nine surrounding school districts. We take great pride in being effective and efficient, so even if both questions were to pass, our funding amount would remain in eighth place.

Thank you to all of our school community members who helped us understand their priorities for students over the last year. I look forward to growing our mission through those collective goals!

Regards,

Dave Bernhardson, Superintendent

• • Inver Grove Heights School Board Approves November Referendum

During the July 17 Inver Grove Heights School Board meeting, board members approved a two-question referendum. The decision comes after a year of the 199 Future Ready initiative that gathered the perspectives of students, families, staff, and community members on ways Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) could enhance the school experience for students. To make the school community’s ideas a reality, residents of ISD 199 will be asked to vote on two referendum questions on Election Day, November 7, 2023. Voters will also vote for five school board members, including four 4-year seats and one 2-year seat.

The two referendum questions will help the district expand opportunities for students at all levels, extend student support, and provide more resources for school safety and security.

“I think the potential addition of these programs is very exciting because it makes us comparable to, competitive with, and maybe even ahead of most school districts,” ISD 199 School Board Member and district parent Jake Klingner said. “I think programming like this makes Inver Grove Heights Schools the clear choice for the families living in our district and for families who are considering moving into our community.”

EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES

The district has heard about the school community’s goals and priorities for students through 199 Future Ready focus groups, surveys, and conversations. Goals include providing world language skills and classes starting in elementary school, hands-on career learning for middle school students, and more in-field career experience for high school students.

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199 REPORTER

Inver Grove Heights Schools

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

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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 to browse answers to previously asked questions about our district or ask your own.

November Referendum Approved (Continued)

“We are thankful to the legislature for its historic investments. Without them, we would have a budget shortfall of \$2.7 million due to factors like a smaller pool of potential students, the cost of unfunded mandates, increases in operations costs, and funding not keeping pace with inflation since 2003. But with them, we only have enough to maintain what we already offer,” ISD 199 Superintendent Dave Bernhardson said. “We want to implement the community’s vision to best prepare our students for their futures. That is why we initiated this referendum, which puts forth amounts that align with our community’s responses to our April phone survey.”

STUDENT SUPPORT

For students to do their best, schools need to have teachers trained in current research-based best practices, resources that prepare students to learn, and manageable class sizes. “Best practices and student needs are always changing,” ISD 199 Director of Learning Teajai Anderson Schmidt said. “We want to make sure our teachers and students have the tools and resources they need for the most effective and engaging learning possible.” ISD 199 hopes to maintain class sizes while retaining Learning Partners and Student and Family Success Coaches who have been improving student outcomes since the 2021-2022 school year. Learning Partners provide updated training for staff, and Success Coaches connect with families and support student mental health and emotional needs.

SAFE & SECURE SCHOOLS

“Safety is a priority in Inver Grove Heights Schools, and we want to ensure our students and their families feel safe in our buildings,” ISD 199 Health & Safety Coordinator Barbara Pierce said. “To do that, we want to increase safety and security measures in our buildings, which requires some upfront investment.”

IMPACT TO STUDENTS

The two ballot questions would increase the operating levy paid by local property taxes, with Question 2 being dependent on the passage of Question 1. Funds provided by Question 1 would allow the district to maintain class sizes and provide world language learning for elementary and middle school students; career-focused hands-on learning for middle school students; career-focused courses and experience for high school students; and instructional coaches, such as Learning Partners, and training for teachers.

Funds provided by Question 2 would allow the district to increase support for safety and security and provide resources for student mental health and emotional needs.

COST TO TAXPAYERS

ISD 199’s current operating levies total a little less than half that of other Dakota County school districts. The district has deliberately kept levies low by operating as efficiently as possible. Of ISD 199’s nine surrounding school districts, the per-student amount for ISD 199 is currently in eighth place and would remain in eighth place even if both ballot questions passed.

The proposed levy increase would amount to an additional \$110 annually (\$9.17 monthly) on a \$312,600 residence, which is the average district home value. The additional levy increase in Question 2 would add \$30 annually (\$2.50 monthly) on the same residence for a total monthly impact of \$11.67.

More information about the referendum will be posted soon on the district’s website, www.isd199.org, and the district will mount an intensive information campaign so voters can learn more and make an informed decision.

IGH Middle School Principal Named Principal of the Year



The Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) named Inver Grove Heights Middle School Principal Jodi Wendel the Capitol Division Middle Level Principal of the Year!

The MASSP Principal of the Year awards are driven by colleagues. MASSP presidents and committees from each of the organization's seven divisions select their Principal of the Year based on nominations from those who work with the principal. Principal Wendel was selected from one of the largest MASSP divisions, the Capitol Division, which includes members from Dakota, Ramsey, and Washington counties.

In their nominations of Principal Wendel, staff talked about their high regard for her. They noted that she is always student-focused and staff-centered and that she is humble in her work.

"Her passion really stands out," Inver Grove Heights Schools Superintendent Dave Bernhardson said. "Jodi is always looking for ways to make the school experience the best that it can be for students, and she shows up for her staff. She is incredibly deserving of this recognition."

Principal Wendel was officially named the 2023 MASSP Capitol Division Middle Level Principal of the Year this June. Congratulations, Principal Wendel!

Success Coaches & Learning Partners Offer More Support

During the 2021-2022 school year, Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) created two new roles to address the additional needs students and families had as buildings reopened. The district used one-time federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER III) funds to hire a Student and Family Success Coach and a Learning Partner at each school. After just one year of having Success Coaches and Learning Partners in place, schools saw students become even more successful in the school setting, academically and socially.

What do Student and Family Success Coaches do?

Success Coaches work with students, families, and teachers to create the condition for successful learning. They build relationships between school and home and remove barriers to keep students in class and engaged in learning. The Success Coaches also help students find physical and emotional support and reinforce skills for time management, peer relationships, decision making, and problem solving.

What do Learning Partners do?

Learning Partners work side-by-side with teachers in the classroom using evidence-based strategies. They strengthen student engagement and support students in understanding core instruction. Additionally, Learning Partners collaborate with teachers to assess and identify student needs. They use the information they gather to plan, design, and provide extra targeted small group instruction or enrichment that accelerates learning and increases teaching time during the school day.

Federal ESSER III funding will only be available until September 2024. ISD 199 is committed to retaining the Success Coach and Learning Partner positions for the success of students for years to come. The direct impact that they have had on student success has made them irreplaceable in schools, even in the short time that these roles have existed.

FREE MEALS & EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

All students in Minnesota schools are now guaranteed a free breakfast meal and lunch meal at school through the State's Free School Meals bill. The bill will provide funding or reimburse school districts for each full breakfast and full lunch served to students. Food items outside of a full breakfast or lunch meal, such as a second slice of pizza in addition to a full meal or milk for students who bring a meal from home, are not covered by the bill. Also, provided or reimbursed funds will be restricted to a separate fund that can only be used for Food Service expenses.

Despite universal free meals, it will continue to be important for families in Inver Grove Heights Schools to apply for Educational Benefits. The percentage of families who qualify for Educational Benefits may still be used to determine the district's eligibility for grants and State and Federal dollars.

Every qualifying Educational Benefits Application can bring in critical aid for student services to address class sizes, retain social workers, and provide mental health services. Qualifying families also receive exclusive school year savings.

All families are encouraged to apply for 2023-2024 Educational Benefits. Families who qualified previously must apply every school year to continue their benefits. Only one application per household needs to be completed.



To learn more and apply, use your smartphone camera to scan the QR code and click "Educational Benefits" or visit www.isd199.org/edu-benefits.

TriDistrict CAPS Students Reflect on Immersive Career Courses



After completing their internships, students in the TriDistrict Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS) program presented at a spring showcase. Simley High School, South St. Paul High School, and Two Rivers High School students presented about their experiences in class and in the field to the teachers, administrators, family members, local professionals, and post-secondary staff who attended.

The TriDistrict CAPS classes – Business and Entrepreneurship, Computer Science and IT, Healthcare, and Transportation and Skilled Trades – are open to all incoming juniors and seniors. Students took classes that fit with their future goals and classes that gave them brand-new experiences.

“I originally wanted to be a pediatric nurse, but then speakers came in to talk about occupational therapy,” Simley senior Ashleigh Skappel said. “I had never heard of occupational therapy before, so I’m really glad I did this class. It really opened up my eyes to the whole medical field.”

Ashleigh added that she has decided to pursue occupational therapy as a career after interning at Therapy OPS, a pediatric therapy clinic for occupational, physical, and speech therapy.

199 Online High School



Minnesota students in grades 9-12 can now enroll in 199 Online High School, Inver Grove Heights Schools’s fully online learning program. The program offers direct instruction from certified Simley High School teachers in a flexible format that meets each student’s needs and equips them with skills for success in college and career.

Students can choose the online classes that fit their needs: They can take individual online classes within their in-person school schedule, or they can take a full schedule of online classes. Visit www.isd199.org/199OnlineHS or call 612-443-2808 to learn more or enroll.

Other students held internships at hospitals, marketing firms, animal clinics, automotive repair shops, and many other local businesses that gave them a first-hand look at daily responsibilities. While some TriDistrict CAPS experiences reinforced students’ career aspirations, other students discovered that certain careers weren’t for them.

“I was deciding between electrical engineering and computer science, and because of my experiences with this [class], I was able to cross computer science off my list,” TriDistrict CAPS Computer Science and IT student Tyler Schneider said. “Even if I didn’t enjoy it the way I thought I would, now I know that’s not something I should pursue when I head to college.”

Students completed the class with professional experience that will give them an advantage as they enter the workforce. They also gained an understanding of what they want for their future, using their experiences in the risk-free TriDistrict CAPS classes to inform their decisions about college and career.

Visit www.careercollegeready.org to learn more about the TriDistrict CAPS program. Simley, South St. Paul, and Two Rivers juniors and seniors can also talk to their counselor about enrolling.

Local employers, TriDistrict CAPS is always looking for more business partners to influence and help teach the next generation of employees. Visit www.careercollegeready.org or email TriDistrict CAPS Director Ben Kusch at bkusch@tridistrictce.org.

School Board Election on November 7

This November, Inver Grove Heights Schools residents will vote on four 4-year ISD 199 School Board seats and one 2-year seat. The seats are currently held by Rachel Hanson, Jake Klingner, Darcie Pierson, Matt Schaefer, and Sherry Warrick.

Information about candidates and the election will be available on the ISD 199 Board Elections webpage, www.isd199.org/district/board_elections, as soon as it is available. Polling places, absentee voting, and voter registration information will also be available on the Board Elections webpage.

2023-2024 Student Handbooks

The district’s Elementary Student Handbook and the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook outline important policies and appropriate school behavior for students. The 2023-2024 handbooks are available at www.isd199.org/students/handbooks.

JOB OPENINGS

In Inver Grove Heights Schools, we are lucky to have so many caring and experienced educators and volunteers in our community. As we approach the start of this school year, please consider applying for some of our open positions and joining our outstanding team. Visit www.isd199.org/careers to apply and browse full-time, part-time, and substitute job openings.



Join Your School's PTSA, PTO, Booster Club, or Volunteer Corps



Inver Grove Heights Schools has many amazing volunteers who make the school experience special for students. Among them are parents who volunteer with their schools' PTSAs, PTOs, and booster clubs.

Our parent groups host events, recognize teachers, gather and direct donations to supplement school needs, and so much more. The support they provide to staff highlights the important impact they have on ISD 199 schools. With their help, the school year is filled with tons of fun, community-focused events.

Members of PTSAs, PTOs, and boosters work together to make so many events happen. Near the end of the 2022-2023 school

year, the Inver Grove Heights Middle School PTSA hosted a party for grades seven and eight, the Salem Hills Elementary School PTO held its annual Glowflake winter carnival and dance, and parents and community members helped run learning stations at Pine Bend Elementary School's annual Students and Adults Learning Together (SALT) Day. Our parent organizations continue to be busy planning more events for 2023-2024!

Each PTSA, PTO, and booster club meets regularly throughout the year. Parents can contact their school to learn more about parent groups and volunteer opportunities. Parents and community members can also visit each ISD 199 school website at www.isd199.org under "Schools," www.simleyathletics.com, and www.isd199.org/community/give under "Volunteer Corps."

Thank you, parents and community members, for the support you give to our students, teachers, and staff!

State-required Background Checks

Notice is hereby given that ISD 199 complies with state law requiring school districts to perform criminal history background checks.

ISD 199 obtains criminal history checks on everyone offered employment in the district as well as selected volunteers and independent contractors, including volunteer coaches, with the exception of enrolled students. In exercising its discretion with respect to independent contractors and volunteers, the district considers such factors as the amount of student contact and the duration of the contract.

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

Homeschool Reporting

Families living in ISD 199 district boundaries who plan to homeschool their children or whose children will attend an unaccredited nonpublic school for the 2022-2023 school year must submit an annual Full Report or Letter of Intent to Continue as required by state law. The deadline to submit reports for 2023-2024 is October 1, 2023.

Families can find the report on the Minnesota Department of Education website at education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/nphs. Completed reports should be submitted to the ISD 199 Learning Department at 2990 80th Street East in Inver Grove Heights. For more information or to request a homeschool packet, please call 651-306-7101.

Budget Information Available Online

Budget information for the 2022-2023 school year and previous years is available at www.isd199.org/district/departments/finance.

Open Enrollment

Students living outside district boundaries may apply to enroll in Inver Grove Heights Schools through the Minnesota Enrollment Option Program. Non-resident applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible for the next school year and request the school(s) they wish to attend. The district assigns transfer students to schools based on their preference and whether that school has space available. Students who are accepted under the Enrollment Options Program can remain in the district through grade 12, but they will be assigned to schools that have space available.

Visit www.isd199.org/enroll and click "Non-Resident Open Enrollment" in the sidebar for application information.

Current ISD 199 students who move to a residence outside the boundaries of Inver Grove Heights Schools must also complete an open enrollment application. Students who move out of boundaries are guaranteed a spot at their current school, but they must complete the application to notify the district and the state that they are a non-resident student. For application information, visit www.isd199.org/enroll and click "Non-Resident Open Enrollment" in the sidebar.

Back to School Immunizations

Minnesota state law requires students to receive vaccinations to enroll in childcare, early childhood programs, and school. Parents must submit written proof of vaccinations before enrolling. Visit www.health.state.mn.us/immunize for information about on-time vaccinations, exceptions, and resources.

ISD 199 Earns Certificate in Financial Reporting for the 18th Consecutive Year



After a thorough review process, Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) earned the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 18th year in a row. The certificate from the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) recognizes school districts that have met the program's high standards for financial reporting and transparency.

To qualify for the certificate, ISD 199 had to submit its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report to ASBO. A team of professional auditors reviewed the report and provided feedback. ISD 199 earned the Certificate of Excellence by showing that it has used ASBO's feedback from the previous year to increase transparency and the quality of its reporting.

"The Annual Comprehensive Financial Report informs stakeholders about the financial and economic state of the district, making it an important communications tool for building trust and engaging with the school community," ASBO International Chief Operations Officer/Interim Executive Director Siobhan McMahan said. "By participating in the Certificate of Excellence program, school districts demonstrate their commitment to financial transparency."

ISD 199's streak of earning the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting demonstrates the district's continuous work to support student achievement with the most effective resource management and improve its accountability.

Simley Junior Named Borlaug Scholar



Simley High School junior Joey S. was recognized for his environmental research. He attended the Minnesota Youth Institute (MNYI) hosted by the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS). The institute is an interactive, day-long program that brings teens from across the state together for an immersive science experience. Students work on solving local and global hunger issues while connecting with research and industry leaders.

At the institute, Joey presented his research on food waste and agricultural sustainability issues in Japan. As a result of his participation, Joey was named a Borlaug Scholar in honor of University of Minnesota graduate and 1970 Nobel Peace Prize winner Norman Borlaug, whose grain research led to an expansion of the global food supply during a time of unprecedented population growth. As a Borlaug Scholar, Joey will receive a scholarship to the University of Minnesota CFANS. He is also eligible to apply for Wallace-Carver Internships at U.S. Department of Agriculture research centers once he is in college.

"It was really nice to see Joey take the initiative to explore such an important issue," Simley Social Studies Teacher Tom Goetz said. "In class, he has always displayed a strong intellectual curiosity about how the world works, so his participation in the MNYI is very much an extension of the kind of learner and doer he is."

Great job to Joey on his impressive contributions and his mission to help solve global issues.

Simley Track & Field Athletes Make Their Mark at State

Ending an incredible 2023 track and field season, 11 Simley High School athletes competed at the Minnesota State High School League AA State Meet. Overall, the girls scored 24 points to take 12th place, and the boys scored four points to take 52nd. Simley sophomores Ayisat Adebayo and Naomi Moore earned second place in their events, several Simley athletes placed, and many earned personal bests!

In her second triple jump State appearance, Ayisat achieved a personal record of 37' 9.5" on her fifth jump in finals. The jump earned her second place, and it set a Simley record! Naomi placed second at State in the 100 Hurdles event. She ran 14.80, a new personal record. Her time also replaced her previous school record. Naomi competed in the 300 Hurdles event as well, earning ninth place with a time of 47.61.

Ayisat and Naomi returned to the track with juniors Alice Islam and Taylor Ralston to race in the 4 x 100 Relay. The girls won their heat in the State prelims with a season best of 49.53 and placed seventh in State finals. In his first State appearance, sophomore Isaiah Wilson placed sixth in the 110 Hurdles finals. He ran a time of 15.21. Even more Simley Track and Field athletes broke personal and school history records at State. Congratulations to these amazing athletes!

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

#1. WATCH FOR BUSES

School starts soon, and Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) is reminding everyone to watch for school buses and stay 20 feet away when the bus stop arm is extended or the flashing red lights are on. Last summer, ISD 199 partnered with its transportation company, Safeway, and the Inver Grove Heights Police Department to earn a grant from the Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). Bus stop arm cameras have been purchased and are being installed on ISD 199 and Safeway buses this school year.

Law enforcement agencies work with schools and transportation companies to cite drivers who do not stop for school buses when their flashing lights are on and their stop arms are extended.

“Bus drivers have a lot to pay attention to while they’re on the job so the camera systems will be an additional effective tool to help them and law enforcement find violators,” OTS Director Mike Hanson said.

Remember the traffic laws to help keep students safe and avoid a fine or criminal charges: Drivers traveling behind a bus or in

the opposite direction on an undivided road must stop at least 20 feet from the bus.

#2. CONSTRUCTION

Babcock Trail and the Salem Hills Elementary School grounds have been under intense construction this summer. While Dakota County repaved Babcock Trail, Inver Grove Heights Schools (ISD 199) renovated the Salem Hills access and parking area to improve safety for students, families, and staff as well as drivers on Babcock Trail. After months of planning and consultation in partnership with the county, city, and Salem Hills neighbors, construction was completed this August. Students, families, and staff will return to Salem Hills with safer routes for those who walk, take the bus, and are driven to school. The new layout will also alleviate traffic on Babcock Trail during school dropoff and pickup times.

Thank you to the Salem Hills neighbors for their patience with the construction. Thank you, also, to Dakota County and the City of Inver Grove Heights for working with ISD 199 on this important project. Safety is a priority in ISD 199, and the district is glad to see this project become a reality for the safety of everyone around Salem Hills.

• **QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR DISTRICT? WWW.ISD199.ORG/FAQ** •



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