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For the last several months, I have been sharing details about our school district's facilities needs driven by the more than 1,500 additional students expected in our schools by the year 2021. To address the needs that come from that growth, we placed a comprehensive school funding request before voters on May 24. Unfortunately, the referendum request failed by a margin of 47% yes (3,100 votes) to 53% no (3,557 votes).

While I am very disappointed in this outcome, our growth needs are real and we need to determine why the referendum failed. The request was based on a year of community input and planning to address growth by providing space, technology and security for our more than 8,000 students. Those needs have not gone away and will continue to grow. We must find a way to address them, and we will work with our community to find a solution for our students. Until we do, classes will get increasingly crowded and we may need to make some tough decisions about attendance boundaries and how to allocate limited funds across growing classroom, building and security needs.

I am grateful to the board members, staff, parents and community members who spent months researching and planning for our growth needs. Now, we all must move forward and finish our school year strong and united for our students.

Throughout our district there is so much in which we can be proud. This month alone I have either witnessed or been part of so many positive actions taking place.

I enjoyed learning from several senior students as they shared their 20% projects in which they spent one day a week (or 20% of their week) working on independent learning projects on topics of interest in their social studies classes. I was amazed as students demonstrated everything from a website they learned to create to playing an instrument to establishing a small business. Teachers Nicole Flug, Pete Hartman and Alan Andersen used International Society for Technology in Education standards along with the PLSAS Digital Frameworks to improve the students' digital citizenship and critical thinking skills throughout these projects.

Our districtwide Retirement Celebration was held last week, and was a wonderful event to recognize and thank our outstanding staff members who have provided many years of service to PLSAS.

Our physical education staff did a phenomenal job coordinating the 10th Annual 5th Grade Track and Field Day at Dan Patch Stadium. I loved watching the students cheer on one another. I also got to experience my first high school lacrosse games along with a pep band performance. What phenomenal athletes and musicians!

I was treated to another excellent demonstration of parent, staff and community support when I attended the Middle School Jazz and Honor Band Breakfast. The Middle School Band Parent Group hosted a breakfast for students and families as a way to recognize and celebrate a great year of band performances and activities. There was full house at 6:30 a.m., which speaks to the energy and commitment of our students, staff and families!

Eighth grade students were engaged in a special Twitter Chat this week led by Jessica McMahon and Megan McDermott. Students have been blogging as part of their English coursework and we had the opportunity to learn from them via Twitter about the power of this experience. Hearing the voices of our students about their learning experiences was a highlight of my year.

It is in these moments and experiences with students that I am consistently reminded of the critically important role public education plays in the lives of students, families and the entire community.

I am so proud to serve Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools. As we move forward, our district has much yet to accomplish and unfinished work to do. But all of this can and will be done if we focus on our students as the key to our collective future. I feel our best days are yet to come.