

Laker CONNECTIONS



A Publication of Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools • February, 2021



PLSAS welcomes students back to buildings



Grades K-5 are attending school In-Person



Grades 6-12 are in the Hybrid Learning model

Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools (PLSAS) recently welcomed back grades K-5 to full time, In-Person Learning for the first time since March, 2020. A rolling-start process was used to gradually bring students back into our buildings starting with grades K-2 on January 19 and grades 3-5 returned on February 1.

Secondary students returned to Hybrid Learning using the same rolling-start process, with grades 6-10 returning to sites on February 8-9 and grades 11-12 returned February 15-16.

To prepare for students' return to buildings, in addition to existing safety procedures, several new safety measures were put in place, including reduced social distancing, regular site testing of COVID-19 for all on-site staff and requiring instructional staff to wear both a mask and a face shield when interacting with students.

School safety remains top priority at PLSAS

At Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools (PLSAS), one of our strategic directions calls on us to provide safe and secure learning environments. That's why staff routinely take part in trainings and exercises to ensure we are implementing best practices and are up to speed on the latest strategies and philosophies regarding school safety.



PLSAS staff attend a virtual school safety training

Two years ago, a small group of PLSAS staff attended a conference on the Standard Reunification Method, presented by the "I Love U Guys" Foundation. It was a powerful event which moved the district to action to develop a detailed reunification plan to ensure parents and students are safely reunited during an emergency.

The same organization held a virtual conference recently that several staff, School Board and public safety partners attended. The focus of the conference was on proactive, measured and effective methods of keeping schools safe. The symposium offered an opportunity to learn and collaborate on school safety and to discuss the district's ongoing work in crisis management and reunification. The group heard from nationally recognized practitioners of school safety, lessons learned from traumatic events and preemptive school safety measures.

All of our schools are practiced in crisis management and the district has a plan to help ensure we are doing everything we can to first prevent a crisis, but also be prepared for one should it occur. For more information about school safety, visit www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us

School Board members take the Oath of Office

Newly elected School Board members took the Oath of Office on January 11. Congratulations to Julie Bernick and Amy Crosby, as well as re-elected board member, Mary Frantz.



School Board members take the Oath of Office

Also on January 11, Stacey Ruelle was elected Chair, Michael Nelson was elected Vice Chair/Clerk and Jonathan Drewes was elected Treasurer.

www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us

Countdown to kindergarten 2021/22

Connect to Kindergarten - a Drive-Through Event!

(For incoming 2021/22 kindergarten students and parents)

March 4, 2021

4:30-5:30 p.m.

It's time to get excited about kindergarten! At this event we'll help you connect to kindergarten with a drive-through book parade. Bring your incoming kindergarten student to the elementary school in your attendance boundary area anytime between 4:30-5:30 p.m. on March 4. From the safety of your car, your student will receive a book about kindergarten, a bag of fun supplies and activities and meet our fantastic kindergarten teachers.

Enroll online for the 2021/22 school year

Parents are strongly encouraged to register their child now to help us plan for staffing needs at each building. Families can register for tuition free, full-day kindergarten or full-day kindergarten Spanish Immersion at La ola del lago at Grainwood.

Visit the district website: www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us/enroll to register your student. For questions, please call 952-226-0043. We are looking forward to welcoming your student as a Laker!

Kindergarten Open House

May 18, 2021

Save the date for our Kindergarten Open House on May 18. We hope to be able to safely open all of our elementary buildings to kindergarten families and offer tours of our schools. Look for more information in the coming weeks.

Great Start to Kindergarten assessment days

August 2-13, 2021



MSBA Directors' Award

School Board Vice Chair/Clerk, Michael Nelson has earned the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) Director's Award for 2020/21.

The MSBA recognizes those who complete 100 or more hours of attendance at MSBA and national organization-sponsored meetings and activities within a four-year period of time. Michael Nelson has achieved this honor and was recently recognized at the virtual MSBA Leadership Awards ceremony.



Michael Nelson

/ We Are PLSAS /

MNCAPS offers new trades pathway for high school students

Prior Lake High School (PLHS) students interested in the construction industry now have a new learning option through Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools' MNCAPS program.

The MN Center for Advanced Professional Studies is launching a new Trades Pathway for juniors and seniors that provides a focus in the field of construction. MNCAPS students will be able to take advantage of PLHS's expanded Industrial Technology wing that offers hands-on learning opportunities to prepare them for a profession in the trades.

This learning experience will also be enhanced through guest instruction where industry leaders will mentor students and offer on-site experiential learning. The Pathway will culminate with a large-scale construction project.

Students in the Trades Pathway will acquire high school credits, and college credits earned from Dakota County Technical College (DCTC), to allow students to seamlessly transition to the Construction Management program at DCTC after high school.

Students have several other Pathway options to choose from at MNCAPS' Lakeville location, including: Design and Marketing, Education, Business, Medicine and Healthcare, Marketing Analytics and Professional Selling.

Students interested in applying to MNCAPS can visit www.MNCAPS.org. Industry professionals who may be interested in partnering with MNCAPS can contact Coordinator, Erik Sill at esill@priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us

New learning spaces open at Prior Lake High School

Since 2017, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools has been steeped in construction. Thanks to voter approval of an operating levy and building bond, the district has added staff and additional spaces throughout our district to serve students. This winter marks a significant milestone with the culmination of district-wide construction projects.

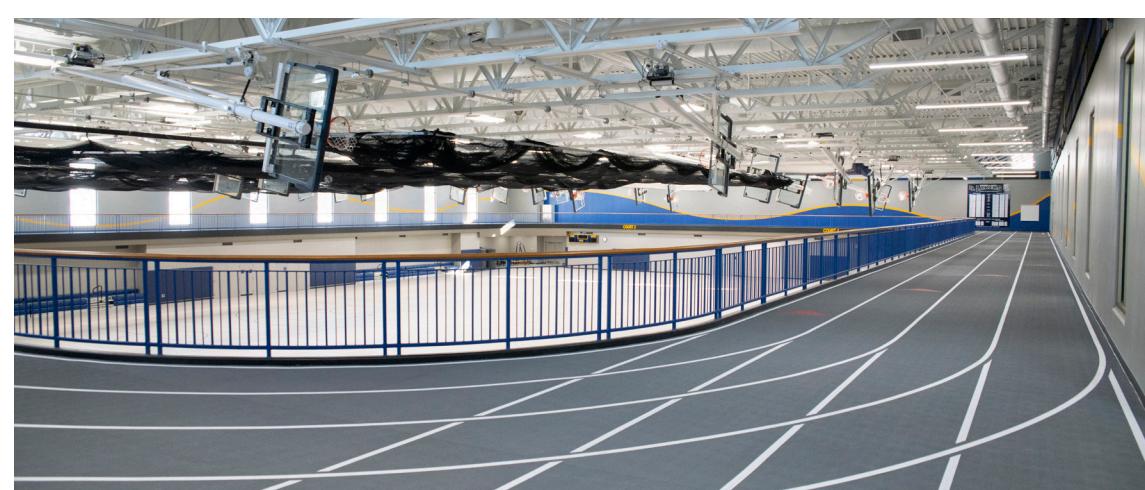
The most recent projects completed are at Prior Lake High School (PLHS). The high school opened an expanded cafeteria area and a third, three-story classroom addition this winter. Many of the new PLHS classrooms were constructed with operable walls that open directly into collaborative spaces with flexible furniture to compliment student group work.

At the beginning of this school year, PLHS opened a new, secure front entrance, two, three-story classroom additions, an expanded kitchen and servery, an expanded parking lot and a four-court activity center.

Thank you to our community, along with our Operations, Custodial and construction teams for bringing these new spaces to life for students.



PLHS now has an expanded cafeteria, kitchen and servery



PLHS' new four-court activity center



From the Superintendent



Students are at the center of all decisions made at Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools (PLSAS) and there is much to celebrate in our district. This is also the time of year when school districts work to determine the budget for the coming school year. As always, PLSAS strives to be fiscally responsible with the funding we have while prioritizing student learning.

Like all districts throughout Minnesota, PLSAS' budget process is further complicated by three things: unanticipated expenditures due to COVID-19, the pandemic and the negative impact it has had on our student enrollment, and state funding that has not kept pace with inflation.

School districts have many fixed costs each year and the additional variables in expenditures due to the pandemic have made it a difficult year. This school year we experienced increased expenditures due to COVID-19 to pay for personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies, additional staffing needs due to the requirements for distance learning and free child care for Tier 1 employees, as well as technology for all of our students in order to implement distance learning.

In Minnesota, the state does not provide aid to school districts for technology needs. Schools must use General Fund dollars to fund technology or ask voters to approve the funding for a technology levy. PLSAS does not have a technology levy, while most surrounding districts receive this additional funding. Currently the Board is evaluating the possibility of a future technology levy.

Student enrollment is the driving factor in determining revenue for our district. The amount of aid our district receives is dependent on the number of students it serves, which means attracting and retaining students directly affects the district's financial well-being. Last fall the pandemic caused many families to make other choices for their children, leading to an enrollment decrease, which negatively impacts our district's finances.

The pandemic also has caused a shortfall in the state's budget. This further complicates our budget-planning process since the legislative session has just begun and school districts do not yet know what funding from the state will be. At this point, we are assuming a 0% increase on the general education formula for next year and a 1% increase for the following year. Recently the School Board held a virtual meeting with local legislators to discuss these budget challenges.

To strengthen our financial picture, last school year PLSAS identified a combination of increased revenues and decreased expenditures to adjust the district's budget shortfall by 3% (\$3 million) for the current school year.

This school year, to date PLSAS has reduced supply budgets and received some Coronavirus Relief Funds to help with requirements related to the pandemic mandates placed on public education. Moving forward, the School Board will continue to discuss budget planning and next steps to help ensure we maintain a balanced budget over the next few years, while staying within our 8-12% fund balance policy.

Our Strategic Plan calls for us to continue fiscal accountability through operational excellence, along with engaging students, parents, families and community to strengthen a culture of respect and inclusion. To that end, in an ongoing effort to be transparent with our stakeholders, our website is an excellent source of financial information about the district. We also have a Community Budget Guide that is designed to help stakeholders understand how their tax dollars are invested and how school finance works in our district. You can visit www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us for more information.



Community Education
Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools
www.priorlakesavagece.com
952-226-0080

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

Family Catalog
Classes For All Ages
December to May 2021



Adult
Programs
Pages 4-27

Youth
Programs
Pages 28-39

Early
Learners
Pages 40-43

www.PriorLakeSavageCE.com



Community Education spring and summer

Register now for spring classes: www.priorlakesavagece.com or by calling 952-226-0310. Summer class and camp registration will open February 26. Watch for the catalog in your mailbox in early March.

Summer Swim Lesson registration opens March 1 online at www.priorlakesavagece.com

Community Education has a new location

Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools' Community Education and Kids' Company offices recently relocated from the District Services Center to La ola del lago at Grainwood, 5061 Minnesota St. SE, Prior Lake, MN 55372.


We've Moved

Early Childhood Family Education



Quarter 3
February 1—March 22



Registration begins January 11 at 8:00 a.m.



Scan the QR code or visit
priorlake-savage.ce.eleyo.com

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)
Quarter three class spots are still available. Register at www.priorlakesavagece.com



**YOUR CHILD'S
LAKER JOURNEY
STARTS HERE**
**Circle of Friends
Preschool**

**Registration for
2021/22 will begin soon**
priorlakesavagece.com
952-226-0956



Circle of Friends Preschool

There is space in some of our preschool classes for the remainder of this school year. Preschool offers a Distance Learning Academy for families who would prefer virtual learning. Register today at www.priorlakesavagece.com or call 952-226-0956 for more information.

Registration for the 2021/22 school year will begin soon. Call 952-226-0956 to be added to an interest list and receive email notifications about registration and class options for fall.

Early Childhood Screening

This is a free and simple check of how your child is growing and developing. Screening can detect possible health or learning concerns so that children can get help before they start school. As soon as your child reaches 3 years, 2 months, call 952-226-0975 to set up an appointment.

PLSAS' energy efficiency leads to thousands of dollars in cost avoidance

Thanks to the public's investment in energy-efficient buildings, mechanical renovations and Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools (PLSAS) Operations Department's close monitoring of system controls, our district saved nearly \$173,000 last school year in energy cost avoidance.

A recent annual utility usage report shows that for the last several years, PLSAS has continued to pay less than \$1 per square foot in energy cost, placing us as one of the top energy-efficient districts in the state. According to the State of Minnesota's B3 Benchmarking for public buildings, with data current within the last 180 days, only 1 other school district of comparable size realized this kind of energy efficiency, earning the district a 4.3 out of 5-star rating.

"We are continually monitoring our energy use every month," said Jim Dellwo, Director of Operations, Transportation and Health and Safety. "Thanks to our community's investment in our district, our buildings are running more efficiently than ever before."

In 2017, PLSAS residents approved building bonds to add space for our growing enrollment, as well as replace aging mechanical equipment. Since then, PLSAS has added approximately 336,806 additional square feet of space throughout our district that includes energy-efficient materials, lighting, boilers and air-handling units.



"Our district's Strategic Plan calls for us to continue our fiscal accountability to our community in all areas of the district, including operational excellence," said Superintendent, Dr. Teri Staloch. "This is our promise to the community and thanks to their support, we have been able to make wise choices that will maximize our energy dollars through energy-efficient equipment."

PLSAS also is able to contain cost by carefully controlling its energy use. Adjusting building automation controls to avoid peak demand and turning off lights when not in use have contributed to lower energy costs for the district. The annual report also showed that during Distance Learning from April through June, lower energy usage saved the district more than \$123,500 in cost avoidance, in spite of an active construction time in which energy usage is typically high.

To learn more about the PLSAS Operations, Health & Safety Department and ways staff maintain our public buildings, visit our website: www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us

Laker Network

THE SOCIAL MEDIA HUB FOR PRIOR-LAKE SAVAGE AREA SCHOOLS

Get all the latest news on the social media channel of your choice: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, You Tube. Visit www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us and click on "Laker Network" on the top of the page.

Middle School Parent Information Night

February 23rd, 6:30 p.m.

There will be a Middle School information night for parents of current 5th grade students on Tuesday, February 23rd at 6:30 p.m.

To help ensure safety, middle school staff will be live streaming the event. All future middle school parents will have a chance to learn about middle school structure, student scheduling and ways your child will be supported.

There will also be an information session for incoming Spanish Immersion families at 6 p.m. on the 23rd in the Twin Oaks cafeteria. Parents/guardians will have the option to attend in-person or view the information session live on Google Meet.

We look forward to welcoming your child to middle school in the fall!

Visit www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us and click on "Our Schools," then select either Hidden Oaks or Twin Oaks Middle School to view the information session.

Additional food benefits for eligible families with children

Students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals may be eligible for a Pandemic-Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) to purchase food for days they are not in school. This temporary, emergency nutrition benefit is loaded on electronic cards for families to purchase food.

Families do not need to apply for this benefit, they simply need to have their 2020/21 Application for Educational Benefits submitted to the district before February 28, 2021 for the maximum amount of relief.

Applications can be found at www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us/CNS or call 952-226-0009.

Families in need of assistance accessing or using their P-EBT benefits should contact the P-EBT Hotline at 1-800-657-3698. For more information, visit www.mn.gov/dhs/food-emergency

Join our Team Job openings available

Support student learning | Work in your community
School breaks and holidays off | Competitive pay and benefits

www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us/apply



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.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us/enroll or visit the District Services Center, 4540 Tower Street SE in Prior Lake.

For more information, call 952-226-0000. We look forward to welcoming your child into our school district as a Laker!

Connect with us

To get news, photos, events and more, "Like" us on Facebook and/or follow us on Twitter and Instagram.

facebook.com/PLSAS
twitter.com/isd719
instagram.com/isd719



Scholastic Art Awards

Congratulations to the following Prior Lake High School students who received Scholastic Art Awards.



Kaori Hirano
Gold Key
"Distance Learning"



Quinn Ruzicka
Silver Key
"The Effect"



Emily Wu
Honorable Mention
"Negative"

Ten Prior Lake High School student-athletes commit to NCAA schools



Left to right: Tyler Shaver (Football at Bemidji State University), Joe Kohlbeck (Football at University of Sioux Falls), Jason LaGrange (Football at University of Sioux Falls), Jake Anderson (Football at Southwest Minnesota State University), Cam Miller (Football at University of Minnesota, Duluth), Kyle Nordling (Cross Country, Track and Field at South Dakota State University), Jordan Gardner (Lacrosse at Aquinas College), Alex Pellicci, Hockey at Harvard University), Tyler Buss (Swim and Dive at South Dakota State University), Gabe Smit (Cross Country, Track and Field at Loyola University, Chicago)

On February 3, ten Prior Lake High School (PLHS) student-athletes signed National Letters of Intent (NLI).

The NLI is a document used to indicate a student-athlete's commitment to participate at a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) college or university.

Students shared their favorite memory of being a student-athlete at PLHS and what excites them most about competing at the collegiate level.

Students were allowed a limited number of guests due to COVID-19 safety restrictions.

Academics, Arts and Athletics

Award winners

Congratulations to Ashley George and Magnus O'Connor on being named Prior Lake High School Triple A (Academics, Arts and Athletics) Award winners. Ashley participates in Alpine Ski, Track and Choir and Magnus participates in Cross Country, Nordic Ski, Track and Band.



Ashley George

Magnus O'Connor

Mental health support for students during COVID-19

Free webinar series for parents

Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools has partnered with Scott County Connect Therapy to offer five virtual parent training sessions that will help support our students through the challenges of COVID-19. Topics include building resilience and healthy coping skills, anxiety, depression and suicide prevention, how to support your student during distance learning and more. These webinars are available on our website in the Parent Portal. Visit www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us

About this newsletter

For questions or comments regarding *Laker Connections*, contact Kristi Mussman, Director of Communications, kmussman@priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us or 952-226-0014



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Our mission is to educate all learners to reach their full potential as contributing and productive members of our ever-changing global community.