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Happy summer! At Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools (PLSAS), students are on summer break but a lot has still been happening in all of our schools.

First, I am thrilled to share that PLSAS has been named one of the best school districts in Minnesota by Niche!

PLSAS is ranked 14 out of 354 public school districts in the state. Niche's Best School Districts ranking is based on analysis of key statistics and millions of reviews from students and parents using data from the U.S. Department of Education. Our schools earned top grades in: academics, teachers, college readiness, health and safety, and clubs and activities.

While these kinds of honors are great to report, we know nothing is more important than student safety. That's why we have worked over the summer to review school security and are implementing new protocols to enhance school safety in all of our schools.

Beginning on the first day of school, guests will notice a new visitor management system installed called Raptor. This system will enhance our existing school safety plans and allow us to track all visitors in our buildings. It will also allow school staff to know exactly who is in our buildings at all times.

During the school day, visitors will be asked to present a government-issued ID, such as a driver's license or passport, which will be scanned into the system. The Raptor system will then conduct an on-the-spot background check against the national sex-offender database. Once entry is approved, a sticker badge will be issued. Please know that a copy of your ID will not be maintained in the scanner, nor is it kept by the school.

The scanning process is quick, easy, and user-friendly and our office staff will be able to assist you.

Please remember to bring your government-issued ID to school each time you visit.

Construction projects have also taken center stage throughout the summer months. Thanks to voter approval of PLSAS' two school funding requests last fall, we are making progress on district-wide construction projects to make space for our growing student enrollment.

Renovations are well underway at Five Hawks and Glendale (paid for using existing funding sources) and will be completed in time for the 2018/19 school year. Five Hawks will see renovations to its kindergarten classrooms and Glendale will have additional space for Special Education students and staff.

Teams of staff, parents and community members have been working hard researching and providing input to create exciting learning spaces across the district. Additions and renovations will take place at Jeffers Pond,

Redtail Ridge, WestWood and Edgewood, to be completed by the fall of 2019. Prior Lake High School classroom additions will open in 2020.

In addition, the new Bridges Area Learning Center will open in the fall of 2019 on the Twin Oaks campus, and our new elementary school is planned to open in the fall of 2020 in the Big Sky Estates development.

We have a dedicated web page where our community can see building designs posted as they are approved, along with our construction timeline. Visit www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us/construction

We are excited to welcome more than 8,500 students to school after Labor Day. I look forward to again sharing monthly updates with our community this school year on important news happening throughout PLSAS.