SAINT PETER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
LEARNING MATTERS

School Highlights

Saint Peter Public Schools

November 2026

"Gratitude is like gravy – put it on everything!"
— Meghan Craig

NORTH STUDENTS ATTEND SCIENCE & NATURE CAMP

Sixty North Elementary third and fourth grade students attended the annual Science and Nature Conference at Gustavus Adolphus College on October 20th. South Central Service Cooperative sponsors the conference, which is designed to expose students in grades 3-6 to a variety of topics and offers highly educational hands-on sessions. Many areas of science and nature were represented, giving students the opportunity to learn how science plays a part in our world, environment, home, space, earth, life, and technology. Instruction was innovative, active, and designed by grade level for maximum student learning and participation.









Saint Peter Public Schools Shares 2026–2027 Strategic Initiatives

Jon Graff, Superintendent of Saint Peter Public Schools



Each fall, the district sets goals and initiatives for the upcoming year. This annual planning process builds on our long-range plan (2022–2027) and accounts for the district's strengths, areas for growth, and available resources. Known as strategic planning, this process aligns district resources, establishes meaningful goals to guide our work, and serves as a cornerstone of our continuous improvement efforts.

This year's initiatives were discussed at the School Board's October study session and officially adopted at its regular meeting on October 21.

FOUR KEY INITIATIVES FOR 2026–2027

1. *Implement Newly Adopted English Language Arts and Social Studies Curricula and Continue District-Wide Improvement Plans*

Last spring, the district made a significant investment in student learning by purchasing new curricula and dedicating administrative time to support the improvement process. The newly adopted English Language Arts (ELA) and Social Studies curricula align more closely with updated state standards and offer a clear learning progression across all grade levels. This year, the district is focused on supporting teachers and students as they implement these new materials with fidelity. At the same time, our math department has begun exploring updated options for future adoption.

2. *Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)*

MTSS is a framework used across Minnesota schools that emphasizes data-informed decisions regarding student support. Schools constantly collect information on student progress (e.g., homework, quizzes, tests). MTSS helps us utilize this data efficiently to provide targeted support. This year, the district will focus on implementing Educlimber, a software platform used by student support teams to track and analyze data for better instructional decision-making.

3. *Culturally Responsive Teaching*

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy emphasizes welcoming learning environments and connecting curriculum to our students' everyday lives. Our goal is to continue supporting a culture of relevant learning, high engagement, motivation, and achievement. This year, we remain focused on building a strong community where everyone feels safe, valued, and connected.

4. *Complete a Comprehensive Strategic Planning Process*

Every three to five years, school districts undertake a comprehensive strategic planning process to define a shared mission, vision, and priorities alongside the community. With our current strategic plan expiring at the end of this school year, the district is gearing up to create its next strategic plan, which will guide us through 2032. Be on the lookout for opportunities to share your feedback and participate in the process. Saint Peter Public Schools is committed to continuous improvement, and these initiatives position us to better meet the needs of every student. I look forward to sharing our progress with the community throughout the school year.



The Saint Peter High School's PBIS team delivered donuts to students for positive attendance, including (l to r) Elizabeth White (SPHS Student Services assistant), SPHS Principal Annette Engeldinger, Rachel Fitch (SPPS school nurse), Courtney Miller (SPHS social worker), Karissa Davis (SPHS truancy agent), Heather Sather (SPHS special education case facilitator), Regina Sirianni (SPHS school counselor), and Shari Karlsrud (SPHS's dean of students).

SPHS REWARDS POSITIVE ATTENDANCE WITH DONUTS!

Saint Peter High School's PBIS team planned a positive attendance day on October 14th at SPHS! Around 700 donuts/rolls were handed out to students and staff during Saints Time.

"We gave all students in attendance a donut as a 'prize' for being at school," Regina Sirianni, SPHS school counselor, said. "Attendance is critical to student success and academic achievement, and we want to positively reinforce students coming to school with incentives such as donuts."

A quick attendance fact for Saint Peter High School, 97.7% of Saint Peter High School students had consistent attendance in 2025 compared to the state average, which is 76.5%.

"That's amazing," Sirianni exclaimed. "Funds from the SPHS PBIS program paid for half of the donuts, while Dunkin' donated the other half. A huge thank you to the St. Peter Dunkin' Donuts for the very generous donation of donuts to support our positive attendance!"

"Consistent school attendance is key to students' academic success and future opportunities. It's great to see Saint Peter High School celebrating students and reinforcing that every day school attendance matters," Karissa Davis, SPPS's truancy agent, said.

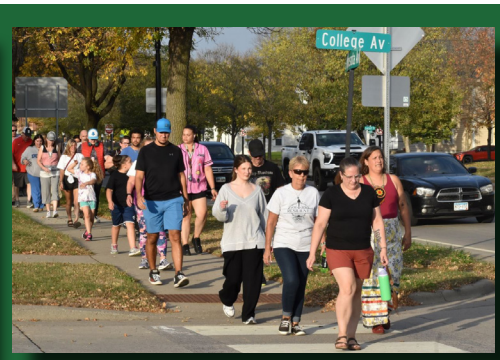
SPHS history students visit famed James J. Hill House

Mr. Clark took his MSU U.S. History students to the James J. Hill House in St. Paul last month to experience firsthand what the Gilded Age looked like. Touring the railroad tycoon's mansion brought lessons about wealth and industrialization to life.

Students also enjoyed lunch at Cossetta's Italian Eatery, connecting another part of our studies to local history. Its founder, Michael Cossetta, immigrated from Italy during the Gilded Age and opened a food market in 1911. A great day of exploring history beyond the classroom!

Click on the following link to view a video recap of the visit to the James J. Hill House --> https://www.facebook.com/reel/2091946841585004











INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY WALK HIGHLIGHTS

A large crowd turned out for the annual Indigenous Peoples Day Walk on Monday, Oct. 12, which was sponsored once again by Saint Peter Public Schools' Native American Parent Advisory Committee (NAPAC) and the St. Peter Good Neighbor Diversity Council.

The event started with the traditional walk from Saint Peter Middle School to Minnesota Square Park. There, NAPAC held a special program featuring the Red Tree Singers, a traditional Indigenous drum and singing group based in Morton, Minn. A traditional meal was served by NAPAC to wrap up the event, which had nearly 100 people in attendance.

The Red Tree Singers and their youth group, the Little Red Tree Singers, are a traditional Indigenous drum and singing group based in Morton, Minnesota, within the Lower Sioux Indian Community (Mdewakanton Dakota).

SPHS Aerospace Club is excited about future of the group

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

After the graduation of the two members at the time of the Saint Peter High School Aerospace Club in the spring of 2025, it looked like the group's future wasn't very bright; that is, until a determined group of seniors this year stepped forward a year ago to keep the club going.

Khalid Ibrahim and Elliot Schmidt led the effort to continue the Aerospace Club's legacy in 2025-26 and welcomed classmates Sam Barnick, Elliot Klobassa, and Xander Fromm into the mix, giving the club solid footing for this school year. Khalid is the younger brother of former SPHS Aerospace Club member Isam Ibrahim who co-founded the group with fellow 2025 SPHS alum Logan Pherson. The Aerospace Club's teacher advisor is Aaron Dimock, who worked with the previous club as well.

"Elliot and I were able to get some of our friends to join us last school year, and we'd like to continue to build on that momentum this year and keep my brother and Logan's legacy alive," Khalid Ibrahim said.



SPHS Aerospace Club members include (l to r), Khaled Ibrahim, Elliot Schmidt, Sam Barnick, Elliot Klobassa, and (inset) Xander Fromm.

Ideally, the new members of the Aerospace Club had hoped to do a public launch of a rocket at SPHS, similar to what the original duo did on a couple of occasions in the past few years. However that isn't possible this time around given the larger scope of their current rocket project, compared to the previous group. The current club is planning a launch at their regular launch location near Albert Lea in the spring of 2027.

"With the help of my father, our group earned a Level 1 rocket certification over the summer months," Schmidt said. "Our goal is to eventually get everyone in the club certified at level one, and then eventually seek Level 2 certification, but that's a ways down the road."

The rocket they hope to eventually launch near the rural Albert Lea location will be constructed from a kit, which the group will work on together and also do all the electrical programming for the rocket's motor. That rocket will have the capability to go up 5,000 feet into the air, if all goes as planned.

The group still has a lot of work to do before they can launch their rocket, and they are targeting spring 2027 as a potential launch date.

"It's a fun group to work with, and we all get along really well," Ibrahim said. "We've all put in a lot of work to make this year's launch happen, and we're hoping to really put on a great show for those who are able to make it to our launch."

SPHS Outdoor Education students take fishing trip to Mill Pond Park

Saint Peter High School students in Keith Hanson and Kris Koehler-Sandborg's Outdoor Education classes recently completed a fishing unit, and then capped the unit with a fishing trip to Mill Pond Park in St. Peter.

"Both Keith Hanson's block three outdoor education class and my block four outdoor education class participated in this fishing activity," Koehler-Sandborg said. "Each class spent one day working their angling skills at the Mill Pond."

Awards were given in each class for the following categories:

Mr. Hanson's block three winners are as follows: Alex Juarez(Most Fish Caught-5), Max Welp, Natalie Salfer (Biggest Fish by weight per gender)

Ms. Sandborg's block four winners are as follows: Ella Dirks (Most Fish Caught -2), Anas Yasin, Renata Garcia Landa (Biggest Fish by weight Per gender)

The local DNR officers also stopped by to provide some education to our students. Here are some photo highlights of the winners.









SPMS fifth graders take a field trip to History Fest

Students in Mr. Myhra's fifth grade social studies class recently took a field trip to take part in the History Fest festivities in rural Mankato.

History Fest is held annually during the second week of October at the McGowan Farm. Kids get hands-on learning experiences with periods in history and have the chance to interact with people outside of their own home/community, broadening their horizons and getting a taste of what it was like in days gone by.

There are a variety of entertainers on hand and activities range from Historical Interpreters of 17th century Scotland and the Old West to belly dancers, launching a catapult, cider making, cannon shooting, and so much more. Here are some photo highlights of the fifth graders' trip to History Fest!











Sarah Sullivan, SPMS's attendance clerk, enjoys sitting down and reading with her sons when she has some free time.



Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

This month's Get Caught Reading featured guest is Sarah Sullivan, Saint Peter Middle School's attendance clerk. She and her husband, Matt, live in Mankato with her two sons, Gerald and Gary, along with their dog, Bailey, and kitty, Tiger. She also has a bonus daughter, Natalie, who lives in southwest Minnesota with her boyfriend. "I was born in Minneapolis as the first of a set of triplets and grew up in Richfield," Sullivan said. "I hold a degree in Medical Administration. Outside of school, I am a mom taxi to my kids and love spending time outdoors and taking advantage of everything each season has to offer." The following is a Get Caught Reading profile with Sarah Sullivan:

What did you read when you were a kid? Growing up, I read The Baby-Sitters Club series.

What do you like to read now? I tend to gravitate toward nonfiction mostly, but find myself enjoying fiction every now and again.

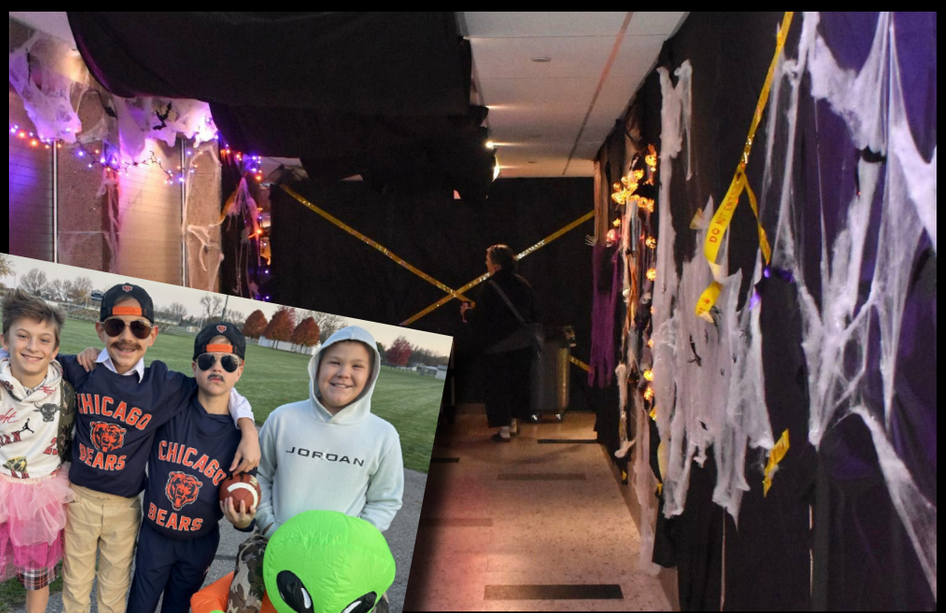
What do you enjoy most about reading? There's something special about a good book that pulls you into its world and keeps you turning the pages. I love when a story is so captivating that I completely lose track of time and just can't put it down

SPMS KITCHEN STAFF & STUDENTS ENJOY SOME HALLOWEEN FUN!

The day before Halloween, the kitchen staff at Saint Peter Middle School gave students a thrill by decorating the commons area ahead of the morning's breakfast rush. Many students got into the Halloween spirit by wearing costumes! Here are some photo highlights courtesy of Alex Kane, SPPS communications intern.









THERAPY DOG VISITS WITH NORTH STUDENTS

Amy Burt and her therapy dog, Zuma, are making a visit to North Elementary every Friday. They visit different classrooms, walk the halls, and spend some time at recess. The visits are already very popular with the North kids!

South students take part in community event

A handful of South Elementary students, along with our special education teacher, paraprofessionals, speech-language pathologist, and occupational therapist, have been working with students using AAC devices and visual supports to strengthen communication skills.

This opportunity gave our students access to a fun, inclusive community event at the Community Center. We love seeing our students build communication skills while participating and engaging in their community! Here are some photo highlights from the event!







North third graders make annual trek to Minnesota Zoo

Third-grade students from North Elementary visited the Minnesota Zoo in Apple Valley in October. Field trips to the Minnesota Zoo offer discovery, learning, and more, and it is a year-round destination that offers indoor and outdoor adventures.

North students visited exhibit areas and trails including Discovery Bay, Medtronic Minnesota Trail, Northern Trail, Russia's Grizzly Coast, Tropics Trail, and the new Treetop Trail! Here are some photo highlights from the field trip to the MN Zoo! Thanks to the teachers for sharing these photos!









From Santa's Helpers to Sushi Masters: Culinary Classes for the Whole Family!

Hands-on cooking, festive fun, and new flavors
with Community & Family Education

Register by clicking on the course title!



Edible Cookie Dough

Wed, Nov 25th

5-16 years old - The best part of cookie making is always tasting the delicious dough! In this class we will be mixing up two different recipes to try.

On the Menu:

FunFetti Sugar Cookie Dough
Chocolate Chip M&M Cookie Dough

Santa's Little Chefs

Thurs, Dec. 10

5-16 years old - Health(ier) holiday-themed snacks! We will be making a few recipes without refined sugar or artificial colorings/flavors.

On the Menu:

Strawberry Banana Candy Canes
Healthy Holiday Snack Mix
Rudolph Celery Snacks





Sushi 101

Wed, Nov 18th

Adults - In this hands-on class, you will prepare and eat a California Roll, a Cucumber Roll, and a FAT Roll. Preparation, food safety, knife skills, and etiquette will be covered

Heritage Holiday Table

Tue, Dec 1st

Adults - In this cozy session, you and your fellow participants will share the heartwarming stories behind your favorite holiday recipes and how you inherited them.



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Saint Peter Public Schools – ISD 508

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Saint Peter Community & Family Education

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CHILDREN & YOUTH CLASSES

Activity	Gr. K	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4	Gr. 5	Gr. 6	Gr. 7 & up	Date of activity	Day(s)
Edible Cookie Dough *Children's cooking class with Jackie Mart*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Nov. 25, 4-5:00 pm	Wed
Dungeons & Dragons 101: *One Shot Minecraft Adventure – Tech Academy Online*			X	X	X	X	X		Dec 5 & 12 11 am-1 pm	Sat
Santa's Little Chefs *Children's cooking class with Jackie Mart*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Dec 10 4-5 pm	Thu
Minecraft Quest Makers: *RPG & Adventure Design – Tech Academy Online*			X	X	X	X	X		Dec 19 9-11 am	Sat
Super Mario Coding *Tech Academy Online*		X	X	X	X				Dec 28 9-11 am	Mon





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Jessica Buttell

Middle School Dean of Students
Steve Alger

North Elementary Principal
Darin Doherty

Special Programs Administrator
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Community & Family Education Director
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The school district newsletter, *Highlights*, is distributed monthly through the office of Community & Family Education. Any questions or suggestions regarding *Highlights* should be directed to:

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Is your family on the school census?

The Saint Peter School District keeps a record of all families in our school district. Being on the school census ensures:

- You will automatically receive ECFE mailings.
- You will be notified of Early Childhood Screening.
- The elementary school will be expecting your child when it is time for kindergarten.
- That maximum funding is received by our district from state/local government.

Please call 934-3048 ext. 2018 if you are new to the district or your family has grown with additional births or adoptions!