SAINT PETER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
LEARNING MATTERS

School Highlights

Saint Peter Public Schools

September – November 2026

"When you are grateful, fear disappears and abundance appears."
— Anthony Robbins









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!

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.











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).

SPPS custodial staff member wins Facilities Award of Excellence

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

Congrats to Nathan Hughes, a member of the Saint Peter Public Schools custodial staff, who was recently recognized by the Minnesota Educational Facilities Management Professionals Association (MASMS). Hughes, who is the head custodian at Saint Peter Middle School, received the 2026 Facilities Award of Excellence for the MASMS Southern Chapter Award at the association's annual conference on October 1. SPPS's Operations and Maintenance Supervisor Seth Putz nominated him.

"This Award is a great representation of the commitment and dedication to keeping the District a safe and clean environment for all students and staff in the Saint Peter School District system. Congratulations, Nathan, on the accomplishment," Seth Putz said.



SPMS Head Custodian Nathan Hughes (left) was recently recognized by the Minnesota Educational Facilities Management Professionals Association (MASMS). He received the 2026 Facilities Award of Excellence for the MASMS Southern Chapter Award at the association's annual conference on October 1. SPPS's Operations and Maintenance Supervisor Seth Putz nominated him (shown on the right in this photo).

SPHS Mock Trial team begins organizing for 2026-27 season

Saint Peter High School's Mock Trial program has had a successful run over the past decade and this year's senior captains, Melina Chadwick and Khaled Ibrahim, are eager for the upcoming season and are hoping to find new members to join the program. Both laud their involvement in the program and feel it will benefit well beyond their high school years.

"I have been a part of our mock trial program since eighth grade, and I have enjoyed it so much," Chadwick said. "Being a part of the mock trial program is a great way to learn to advocate for yourself, and also expand upon ways for you to articulate how you think."

"I love how it has improved my public speaking skills over the years which are very important as you get older," Ibrahim said. "It also is a great way to develop critical thinking skills and improve your ability to think on your feet."

Long-time SPHS advisor/coach Dan Clark stepped down after the 2026 season, and this year he is being replaced by local attorney Andrea Faches, who is also Chadwick's mother.



SPHS seniors Melina Chadwick (left) and Khaled Ibrahim (right) are this year's Mock Trial captains.

This year's captains hope to start practicing regularly in early October. Practices are held at 3:30 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. The Monday practices are at SPHS, while the Tuesday and Thursday practices are at the Nicollet County Courthouse. Competitions are scheduled to begin on January 11, 2027.

"We had about 10 team members at the informational meeting this year, but are always looking for new members," Chadwick said. "We had about 17 students express an interest in joining the team during the recent SPHS Activities Fair."

Anyone interested in joining the team should contact Chadwick (mchadwick@stpeterschool.org) or Ibrahim at (kibrahim@stpeterschools.org). More information can also be found on the program's Instagram page (@stpmocktrial).

According to the Minnesota High School Mock Trial information webpage, "The Minnesota High School Mock Trial Program is an exciting law-related education program that introduces students to the American legal system and provides a challenging opportunity for personal growth and achievement. Your students will exercise their critical thinking and teamwork skills, as well as the basic skills learned in the classroom."

More info about the Minnesota Mock Trial program can be found on the state website by clicking HERE.

Three SPHS students honored by College Board program

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

Saint Peter High School is proud to celebrate students who earned academic honors through the College Board National Recognition Program (bigfuture.org). This year, three of our students were among the more than 300,000 recipients nationwide—the highest participation in the program's history. Those students include senior Melina Chadwick and juniors Grace Penner and Lucia Penner.

"Our students have been recognized for their dedication and excellence, and we're incredibly proud of them," SPHS Principal Annette Engeldinger said. "This honor reinforces their exceptional achievements in high school and will support them in their pursuit of a big future."

To be eligible, 10th- and 11th-grade students must earn a cumulative GPA of B+ or higher and either score 3 or above on two or more AP Exams by the end of 10th grade. They also qualify if they're one of the top 10% of test takers—in their high school, among first-generation college students in their state, and/or among rural and small-town students in their state.

"For students across the country, the award represents more than an academic honor. It signals their achievement to colleges and scholarship programs that may not actively recruit in their communities," Amy Reitz, senior vice president of BigFuture at College Board, said. "We congratulate all students at Saint Peter High School who earned an award by demonstrating exceptional academic achievement."



Three SPHS students were honored recently by the College Board National Recognition Program for academic testing success. Pictured here are SPHS junior Grace Penner, Principal Annette Engeldinger, SPHS senior Melina Chadwick, and SPHS junior Lucia Penner.

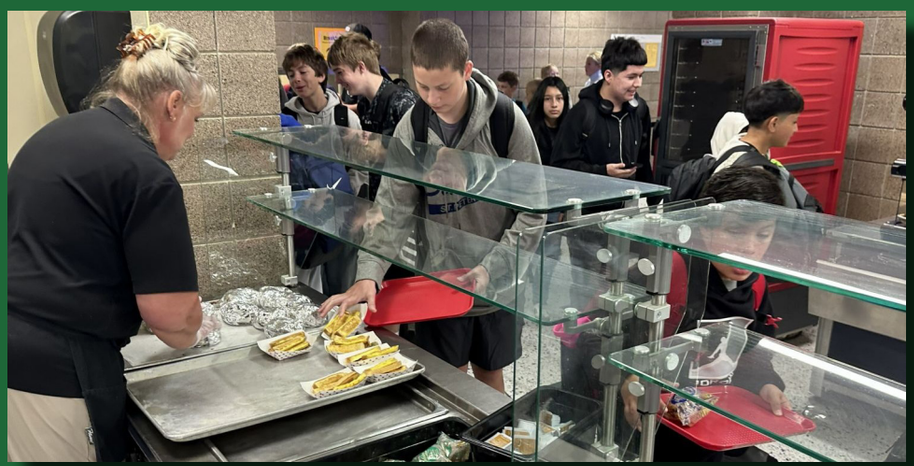
SOUTH



NORTH



MIDDLE SCHOOL



WELCOME BACK TO SPMS, NORTH & SOUTH STUDENTS!

The new school year officially began the morning of September 10th for students at South Elementary (gr. K-1), North Elementary (gr. 2-4), and Saint Peter Middle School (gr. 5-8). Here are some photo highlights from the start-of-the-school-day activities!



SPMS STUDENTS KICK OFF DAY WITH ASSEMBLY

The energy level inside the Saint Peter Middle School gym was high on the morning of Sept. 18, as students and staff took part in the Kick-Off Assembly to start the day. The SPMS PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) team hosted the event, which featured information on the Saints' ticket program, including a few prize giveaways, and wrapped up with staff and students taking part in a rousing game of Balloon Hooping! Here are some photo highlights from the festivities!

St. Peter Children's Weekend Food Program

CHILDREN'S WEEKEND FOOD PROGRAM APPLICATION INFO

Families of students at South Elementary (gr. K-1), North Elementary (gr. 2-4), and St. Peter Middle School (gr. 5-8) can enroll in the Children's Weekend Food Program at any time during the school year if they need nutritional support for their children on the weekends. Bags of two nutritional breakfasts, dinners, and snacks are sent home each week of the school year. To enroll, please click HERE



NORTH STEAM STUDENTS TAKE PART IN PAPER CHAIN CONTEST

Second grade students at North Elementary recently had a paper chain contest in STEAM class, under the guidance of their instructor Rachael Schweigert. The challenge was to make the longest paper chain possible using only one piece of paper. Here are the finalists for each class:

1st Place - (117 inches) - Wrenleigh Frey-Anderson and Giannah Danielson *(Schmidtke)*

2nd Place - (107 inches) Romeo Vetter and Myar Salim *(Schmidtke)*

3rd Place (tie) - (97 inches) Sofia Coates and Mateo Juarez *(Lenhoff)*

3rd Place (tie) - (97 inches) Raina Zarrett and Sophia Brooks *(Robinson)*

Runner-ups-

Asa Koch and Evelyn Smith *(Lenhoff)*

Marshall Haseltine and Parker Koch *(Cosgrove)*

Keegan Fitzgerald and Hailey Reeder *(Robinson)*

Kasper Brown and Veronica Knutson *(Moelter)*

Conway Brostrom and Loretta Gonsior *(Moelter)*



NORTH ELEMENTARY HOSTS KICK-OFF ASSEMBLY

North Elementary students and staff gathered in the school gym at the end of the day on Friday, Sept. 11, for the annual kick-off assembly. Principal Darin Doherty welcomed everyone to the gym and gave a presentation on the theme of “Kindness”. Here are some photo highlights! New North Dean of Students Mandy Kennedy also addressed students and staff about the upcoming year, and several students shared experiences of kindness they witnessed in school. The assembly wrapped up with the first public showing of the annual North staff video, which can be found at https://youtu.be/uxgf62qJhIM







SPPS students take part in annual bus safety training

Bus safety training at the start of the school year is a yearly event for students at Saint Peter Public Schools. Students at South Elementary, North Elementary, Saint Peter Middle School, and Saint Peter High School take part in the training early on to prepare them for the new school year. Here are a few highlights from some of the training activities!

North kids take part in Walk, Bike & Roll to School event

Several North Elementary students took advantage of the nice weather to participate in the biannual Walk, Bike & Roll to School event on the morning of October 7th!

The students were greeted at each of the main entrances by law enforcement officers from the St. Peter Police and Nicollet County Sheriff's Office, along with St. Peter Mayor Shannon Nowell. Here are some photos from that morning's activities!













Fire department visits South as part of Fire Prevention Week

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

As part of Fire Prevention Week (Oct. 4-10), students at South Elementary were paid a visit by St. Peter Fire Department members on Friday (Oct. 10). During the visit, Fire Department members also brought along some of their large trucks, which were parked just outside the building.

Students learned about what services the Fire Department provides to the St. Peter community, the equipment and gear they use, and the students were also allowed to walk through the trucks at the end of each presentation.

After the visit, students were given coloring books that contained fire prevention tips and other safety messages. Here are some photo highlights from the fun day!

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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stpeterschools.org

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!