SAINT PETER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
LEARNING MATTERS

School Highlights

Saint Peter Public Schools

December 2025

"May your walls know joy, may every room hold laughter, and every window open to great possibility."

– Mary Anne Radmacher

SPHS HOSTS ANNUAL VETERANS DAY PROGRAM









Saint Peter High School hosted its annual Veterans Day program on November 11th with Minnesota Army National Guard Sergeant Major (SGM) Keith Swanson, a 2003 SPHS alum, serving as the guest speaker. Swanson was introduced by his daughter, Nevaeh, who is currently a junior at SPHS.

A large crowd of SPHS students and staff, local veterans, and community members were on hand for the event to honor all of our military veterans. Local veterans in attendance were treated to a special reception in the Saint Peter Community Room prior to the program, where donuts and coffee were served. For more info on this program at SPHS, please see the following link --> https://www.stpeterschools.org/article/2543120

Here are some photo highlights from this year's program. Special thanks to Chelsea Klaphake, SPPS communications intern, for her photographic assistance!

Saints Pride: Congratulations on an Outstanding Fall Season

Dr. Jon Graff, Superintendent of Saint Peter Public Schools



Activities are the most publicly facing aspect of a school district's repertoire of offerings. In no other way is the district more regularly exposed to the public eye than through its activities. In this way, students who participate in activities are placed in a unique position to represent our schools, district, and community. And this fall, our students gave us a lot to be proud of.

The Saints had one state champion (girls cross country), two state-qualifying teams (girls tennis and girls cross country), seven individual state qualifiers (girls tennis and boys cross country), two section runners-up (boys and girls soccer), a single-loss season in football, and an outstanding musical production of The Little Mermaid. The Saints' success was recognized beyond our district as well, with 21 students named to their respective All-Conference teams and 5 earning All-State honors.

But our reasons to be proud extend well beyond this fall's impressive records, awards, and recognitions.

We are proud of our students' commitment to their activities and their perseverance throughout the season. They reminded us that meaningful achievement rarely comes without consistent effort and a willingness to improve. We are proud of their ability to collaborate and communicate as members of a team, demonstrating that when we respect our differences, rely on one another's strengths, and align our efforts toward a shared goal, remarkable things can happen. We are proud of their leadership, mentorship, and willingness to serve as role models for younger classmates. They understand that representing Saint Peter comes with both privilege and responsibility.

This season showcased more than competitive success; it highlighted the character of our students and coaches. Their sportsmanship, resilience, joy, and respect for one another reflect the true purpose of school activities. Wins and accolades may be remembered for a season, but the lessons learned, relationships built, and confidence gained will serve our students and our community for a lifetime.

I am proud to be a Saint, grateful for the example our activities program sets, and excited to see what the seasons ahead will bring.

Go Saints!










SPHS production of "The Little Mermaid" draws large crowds to each show

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

The cast and crew of Saint Peter High School's fall musical production of "The Little Mermaid" dazzled audiences with its vibrant costumes, enthralling set design, and amazing music and dialogue during four shows over three days, the weekend of November 21-23. Shown here are some highlights from one of the dress rehearsals!

Large crowds were on hand at the SPHS Performing Arts Center for each show, and they were treated to an amazing two-plus hours of entertainment from these talented young performers!

Here are some photo highlights from one of the dress rehearsals during the week prior to the four shows! The director was Robbie Deering, the musical director was Bri Bergstrom, and the technical director was Scott Robinson. Others involved in the production included Sam Budzinski as choreographer, Tarynn Bice as student stage manager, and Melina Chadwick as dance captain.

The following is the cast & crew list for this year's SPHS fall musical:

CAST
ARIEL - Lyric Ruble
PRINCE ERIC - Evan Embacher
GRIMSBY - Parker Brown
FLOUNDER - Charlotte Hagen
SCUTTLE - Jentzen Franklin
KING TRITON - Levi Gilbertson
SEBASTIAN - Zebulon Davis
URSULA - Rebekah Roemhildt
EEL - Maizie Davis
EEL - Gabe Zayas
CHEF LOUIS - Calvin Kuhlman
GRIMSBY (understudy) - Asher Boyd
MERSISTERS
AQUATA - Melina Chadwick
ANDRINA - Courtney Domras
ARISTA - Josie Scrabek
ATINA - Ella Twaddle
ADELLA - Megan Graham
ALLANA - Molli Weber

ENSEMBLE – Ramiro Alcantara Alvarez, Madison Boon, Asher Boyd, Claire Deming, Alex Dlouhy, Ava Grunzke, Reign Harmon, Aubrey Haynes, Kacey Hollerich, Riley Kamm, Paige Marquardt, Olivia Mish, Faduma Muhidin, Sophia Mullaly, Sophie Nielsen, Madelyn Rolfing, Marlowe Smith, Jaylin Yost, Karissia Wolters.

SET CREW
Abdurahman Burale, AJ Huiras, Andrew Hoag, Audrey Burns, Bruce Melby-Rose, Caden Pugh, Calvin Kuhlman, Cass Petrick, Cooper Meyer, Drew Lyle, Dylan Hutchins, Ellie Hughes, Emily Kukacka, Emma Bohmer, Esme Gransee, Faduma Muhidin, Flynn Brancamp, Isabela Turner, Jade Anderson, James Sargeant, Jayden King, Jayden Petrick, Jazmyn Hermel-Eggers, Josie Scrabeck, Jude Hoffman, Kacey Hollerich, Keagan Siemers, Kiercelyn Smith, Kyla Harmon, Livia Salisbury, Maizie Davis, Mak Kiczula, Maya Knutson, Mulki Jimale, Parker Joosten, Piper Eggen, Reid Wills, Rexton Gratton, Sadie Albrecht, Scarlett Wendt, Sebastian Coates, Tarynn Bice, Teddy Francis.

SPHS Choir Board members present at ACDA fall Conference



SPHS choir director Bri Bergstrom (middle), along with (l to r) Hamdi Garad, Bekah Roemhildt, Gabe Zayas, and Parker Brown, did a presentation at the American Choral Directors Association's Fall Conference in Mahtomedi on November 15.

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

Four student representatives of the Saint Peter High School Choir Board, along with SPHS choir director Bri Berstrom, traveled to Mahtomedi on November 14 to do a presentation for the American Choral Directors Association's (ACDA) fall conference.

SPHS students Bekah Roemhildt, Gabe Zayas, Hamdi Garad, and Parker Brown accompanied Bergstrom to discuss building community in large ensembles. They shared details about the SPHS choir program and taught games for directors to use in their classrooms to foster community.

"I had the incredible opportunity to present a session for the first time at the ACDA (@acda_minnesota) Fall Conference and felt I needed student representation with me to fully explain our program to everyone," Bergstrom said. "It brought me so much joy, and I'm feeling so grateful for the kids for joining me and for everyone who supports our choir program."

"Our student presenters did such an amazing job with the presentation, and the feedback I received from the other ACDA members was so positive. I'm so proud of our students for such a job well done!"



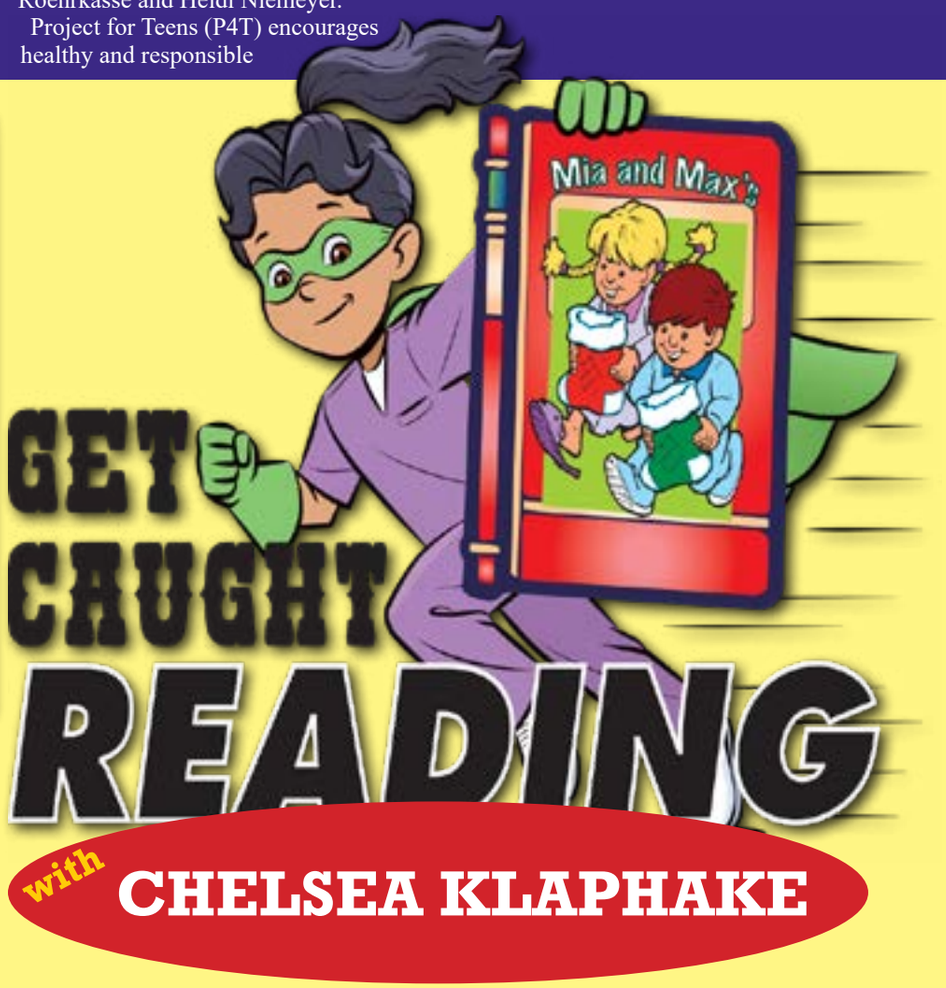
The 2025-26 Saint Peter High School chapter of Project for Teens (P4T) recently took part in training at South Central College in North Mankato.

SPHS Project for Teens crew takes part in training at SCC

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

The newest members of Saint Peter High School's chapter of Project for Teens spent the better part of November 5th taking part in their annual training sessions at South Central College in preparation for working with Saint Peter Middle School students this school year. This year's advisors are Dani Roehrkasse and Heidi Niemeyer.

Project for Teens (P4T) encourages healthy and responsible decision-making by youth through peer-to-peer education. P4T covers various topics, such as face-to-face communication, healthy relationships, consent, kindness, and being an upstander. P4T seeks to foster a sense of connection between middle and high school students and provide them with information and skills to prepare them for responding responsibly should they face an at-risk situation.



Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

This month's Get Caught Reading featured guest is Chelsea Klaphake, Saint Peter Public School's communications intern from Gustavus Adolphus College. Chelsea is a senior at Gustavus, majoring in communication studies and minoring in English and music. She is a native of Plymouth, MN, and a 2022 graduate of Robbinsdale Armstrong High School. Back home are her mom, dad, younger brother, and dog! She is helping out Mr. Hildebrandt this school year, and you might see her with a camera at concerts, school-related functions, and/or special events during her time here with SPPS! The following is a Get Caught Reading profile with Chelsea Klaphake:



Chelsea Klaphake is reading the latest release in Rebecca Yarros's fantasy romance Empyrean series.

What did you read when you were a kid? When I was younger, I loved reading the Babysitter's Little Sister series, Junie B. Jones, and Diary of a Wimpy Kid!

What do you like to read now? I enjoy reading a variety of genres, including mystery, romance, and fantasy! I am currently reading the Empyrean Series by Rebecca Yarros, and I have also

What do you enjoy most about reading? I love being able to escape into a world other than my own when I read. I think it's fun and exciting to put myself in the shoes of a main character and immerse myself in their life! Sometimes, I get so caught up in a good story that I forget that I'm sitting in my room and simply reading words on a page!

SPMS sixth graders take part in BizTown interview process

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator







Several Saint Peter Middle School students participated in the interview process on Wednesday as part of Junior Achievement North's BizTown experience. This interview is one component of North's JA BizTown comprehensive program, which offers students a hands-on learning opportunity about business and economics.

Thanks to the generous support of an anonymous donor, SPMS students participated in this unique experience at the Junior Achievement Building in St. Paul on Tuesday, Nov. 25. After the interview process, each student was assigned a job in a simulated economy, where they took on real-world roles in one of BizTown's interactive labs. Students engaged in English lessons at SPMS with Mrs. Jennings and math lessons with Mrs. Ballman, applying classroom learning to real-world contexts at BizTown.

Throughout the program, students demonstrated their best efforts both in and out of the classroom, making the BizTown experience truly unforgettable! Those businesses participating in the BizTown interviews, according to Haley Geinnotta, Southern Minnesota Program Manager for JA North, included representatives from Federated Insurance, CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen), and Affinity Plus Credit Union.

"The St. Peter sixth graders were incredibly respectful and engaged throughout their mock interviews as they prepared for their BizTown roles," Geinnotta said. "Our volunteers shared how impressed they were with the students' professionalism and effort. It's wonderful to see St. Peter Schools providing students with the opportunity to begin developing these essential career skills at such an early age.

"Junior Achievement is lucky to be part of their journey, helping them build skills that will serve them well in the future. One volunteer even mentioned that the experience gave him renewed confidence in the future of our youth," Geinnotta added.

Here are some photo highlights from Tuesday's interview sessions.









SPMS KICKS OFF 2ND QUARTER DURING ASSEMBLY!

Saint Peter Middle School students and staff gathered in the school's gym on the morning of Nov. 10 to celebrate the start of the third quarter of the 2025-26 school year. Included in the assembly were a welcome by Principal Jessi Buttell, a recognition of the most recent Students of the Month, a student raffle for prizes, and a Minute-to-Win-It game which was won by the Pine House (gr. 8).

North kids have fun with a collaborative mosaic art project

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator









North Elementary students in Mrs. Nyhammer's art classes participated in a fun mosaic project in mid-November. The students in each class came up with a fun theme involving their teacher's likeness for a collaborative mosaic art project.

Afterward, the students broke into small groups to create "panels" using bits of colored paper and glue, and then Mrs. Nyhammer combined those panels into a final mosaic work of art for each class.

Below is a Q&A with Mrs. Nyhammer about this project:

What is the official name of this project, and in a nutshell, what was the goal? – The project is called the 4th Grade Collaborative Class Mural Mosaics.

– Students explored the art of mosaics throughout history, covering topics like Islamic Architecture, Roman Bath Houses, and Byzantine Portraits, along with artists like Marc Chagall.

– Classes brainstormed 20-30 ideas for a collaborative project, and students voted on their top topics, narrowing them down to one or two choices, often combined creatively (e.g., "Booyah and Dancing Pancakes").

– Teachers were also consulted about being included in the artwork.

How was the students' response throughout the project? – Students really dove into the brainstorming process, especially when they realized their topic didn't have to be a serious one. I try to point out to my students that art can take on many forms, and sometimes it is just about sparking joy and happiness.

When completed projects were hung up in the lunch room, they were excited to show what they had created. The younger grades also looked forward to seeing what each class had selected for their topics.

How did the students pick out the theme for each classroom's poster? – This was done with a voting process. I try to have this part of the lesson aligned with election day to help students gain a better understanding of the democratic process in a fun, artistic way.

How were the students matched up in groups to work on this particular project? – The creation and competition of the image is done within a 50-minute class period, where students work in table groups. We talk about how it is a team effort, and the whole class really pulls together to get it done. If one group finishes early, they would join another group to complete the section or help with the clean-up process.

Shown here are some photo highlights of the students' creative work in action!







Native American cultural trunk exhibit begins SPPS tour at North

Native American Heritage Month is celebrated each year in November, and this year Saint Peter Public School's Native American Parent Advisory Committee (NAPAC) once again provided a "Cultural Trunk" exhibit, which debuted at North Elementary this past week (Nov. 3-7).

Each year, the trunk provides a variety of pieces that focus on Native American Culture surrounding the Ojibwe, Dakota, and Navajo tribes. Among the items on display with the large cedar trunk are several authentic and replicated articles of clothing, a loom (used to weave cloth and tapestry), a sacred Eagle feather display, a dream catcher, and models of birch bark canoes.

Here are some photos from NAPAC members Char Klah and John Warren leading discussions with North students during the exhibit. For more information on the SPPS Native American Parent Advisory Committee, please click **HERE!**

SPOTLIGHT STUDENT

Congratulations to Odin Brewer, first grade student at South Elementary, who was chosen to be the November Spotlight Student at the school board meeting. Odin is a very kind friend, an engaged learner, and loves to read. Odin is pictured with South Elementary Principal, Jana Sykora.





SOUTH FIRST GRADERS VISIT APPLE ORCHARD

South Elementary first-grade students and their teachers made the trek to rural Jordan earlier this fall to visit Ferguson's Minnesota Harvest Apple Orchard. Among the many activities they participated in were the giant corn maze, huge corn pit, gem mining, duck races, giant spinning apples, and apple cannons, as well as wagon rides to the orchards! Here are some photo highlights from some of the South students' visit to the orchard!





Quinn's Closet at North volunteers for 2025 included: front row, Danely Bocanegra, Zoii Alas, June Elias, Quinn Rassbach (founder), Rahaf Salim, Keira Friedrich, Ashlyn Loula; middle row, Nichole Garcia, Tiara Torres, Himalaya Harrison (co-organizer), Maya Knutson (co-organizer), Anya Stoll (co-organizer), Eleanor Zender; back row, Addie Jaeger, Tatum Kennedy, Kady Thoms, Habsa Abdi, Janissa Parras, Piper Winters, Gabi DeVos, Avery Hatlevig, Charlotte Loken, Avery Loken, Maci Grunzke, Emma Midthun, Kadence Nicholle.

New Quinn's Closet at North warm clothing drive was well attended

Kurt Hildebrandt, School Information Coordinator

> *"We appreciate everybody who came to the event and love this opportunity to provide for the community."*
>
> ***– Himalaya Harrison***

Quinn's Closet attracted another large crowd on Friday, Nov. 21, at the North Elementary gym. A wide variety of warm clothing items, as well as books, toys, and school supplies, were distributed. The event was organized by SPHS senior Quinn Rassbach during her fourth-grade year (2017-18) with the help of her then-teacher, Mrs. Landsteiner, and the drive has been held every year but one, due to the pandemic, since it started.

This was the first year that new organizers, Anya Stoll, Maya Knutson, and Himalaya Harrison, were involved in all facets of running the event. Rassbach has been working with them on the transition prior to the event, and she was on hand to answer questions as well as help out with the setup and clean up.

"I think that the event went well for our first time. We didn't have many issues with the event's organization or the actual event," Knutson said. "The transition also went well, and I look forward to being able to carry on Quinn's legacy."

All four school buildings participated in donations of clean, new, or gently used clothes, including hats, mittens, snow pants, jackets, long pants, and long-sleeved shirts. Monetary donations were also accepted, and those proceeds were used to purchase much-needed clothes. In the past few years, Rassbach and her crew have also been accepting donations such as books, toys, and school supplies.

Collectively, the new organizers felt the turnout was strong, and they were pleased a good portion of the donated items were given away. Any remaining items will be donated to the local homeless shelter.

"We had a huge line of people waiting at the doors and a big rush for about the first 45 minutes," Stoll said.

"The turnout of people was amazing," Harrison said. "At the beginning of the event, we had five racks of winter apparel; at the end of the event, there was one rack of winter clothing left. We appreciate everybody who came to the event and love this opportunity to provide for the community."

SOUTH CELEBRATES END OF QUARTER WITH ALL-GRADE RECESS!

South Elementary marked the end of the first quarter by hosting an extra all-grade recess session for its kindergarten and first-grade students. Here are some photo highlights from the fun, taken by Chelsea Klaphake, SPPS's communications intern from Gustavus.

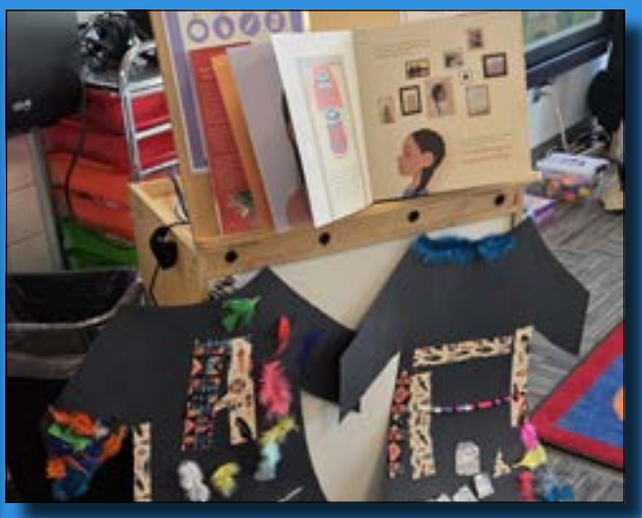












Early Childhood preschoolers learn about and create Jingle Dresses

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

Early Childhood Center preschool students in Colleen Wenner's class recently took part in a variety of Indigenous Peoples Day activities during their classroom time.

"In my Discovery Days class, we learned about Jingle Dresses, and then we read the story, Finding My Dance by Ria Thundercloud," Ms. Colleen, as she's known to the kids at the Early Childhood Center, said. "We watched a short video of dancing and tried dancing ourselves. Then they worked in groups to create their own jingle dresses."

Thanks to Ms. Colleen for sharing these photo highlights from the Indigenous Peoples' Day activities!

That's Community Ed!
Saint Peter Public Schools – ISD 508

Saint Peter Community & Family Education

600 South Fifth Street, Suite 207
(507)934-3048 ext. 7002 | stpeterschools.reg.eleyo.com

CHILDREN & YOUTH CLASSES

Activity	Completed grades:	Gr. K	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4	Gr. 5	Gr. 6	Gr. 7 & up	Date of activity	Day(s)
Drama Kids *Register directly with Drama Kids*		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Through May *(new enrollments end 3/1)*	W
Private Percussion with Justin T. *Call Community Ed for available lesson times*						X	X	X	X	Jan–Apr	M
Clay Coil Hearts *Art with Mrs. Nyhammer – Registration opens Jan. 5*		X	X							Jan 27	Tu
Sculpted with Love *Art with Mrs. Nyhammer – Registration opens Jan. 5*				X	X	X				Feb 2	M
Divine Dips *Kids' cooking with Jackie M. – Registration opens Jan. 5*		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		Feb 4	W
Video Game Design *Virtual Tech Academy class – Registration opens Jan. 5*						X	X	X	Gr 7–8	Feb 7	Sa
Whimsical Winter Trees *Art with Mrs. Nyhammer – Registration opens Jan. 5*				X	X	X				Feb 9	M

Watch for the 2026 Winter Brochure coming in early January!

Registration for winter classes begins Jan. 5th!

Tech Academy
By Computer Explorers

Tech Academy offers at-home VIRTUAL workshops for Winter 2026!
Home technical requirements for ALL classes:

- Computer: PC [Windows 10 or later] or Mac [OSX] with at least 2GHz processor and 4GB RAM
  Chromebooks, tablets and phones typically DO NOT work
- Internet: Broadband internet
- Webcam, microphone and speakers
- Zoom installed on computer
- Students should be comfortable using PC, mouse, and keyboard

REGISTRATION OPENS JAN. 5, 2026!

• Video Game Design
Grades 4–8. Learn how to develop your own game! Students will create a maze using Construct 3, a visual coding platform that teaches students the basics and structure of programming. Basic computer skills are required. *Additional technical requirements: Construct Website, Construct account (sign-up info will be provided before class).*
Sat., Feb. 7, 9 a.m.–12 noon, Register by Jan. 26, $55 per student

• Intro to AI Coding
Grades 3–6. We will introduce kids to the fundamentals of coding and artificial intelligence through Scratch; a visual programming language designed for young learners. Campers engage in hands-on projects and collaborative activities that build foundational coding skills while exploring how AI works in fun and creative ways. *Additional technical requirements: Scratch Website, Scratch account (sign-up info will be provided before class).*
Sat., Feb. 28, 9–11 a.m., Register by Feb. 17, $40 per student

Call Saint Peter Community & Family Education at 934-3048 ext. 7002 to register, or sign up online at stpeterschools.reg.eleyo.com.

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Darin Doherty

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Technology Director
Gus Sorbo

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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!