

Glen Lake Walk-a-Thon Fundraiser Sets School Record, Raises Over \$40,000

A clever video got the wheels in motion for what would be Glen Lake Elementary School's highest-grossing Walk-a-Thon fundraiser in school history.



Hopkins Public Schools

A little rain didn't dampen the spirits of Glen Lake Elementary students and staff on Friday, Oct. 6, for the annual Walk-a-Thon fundraiser. And thanks to a clever promotional video and dedication of the school community, this year's event is the highest grossing in school history.

The hallmark of the Walk-a-Thon is the class-by-class walk around the school campus, but before this was even finished, the running fundraising tally was well over \$35,000. And by Monday morning, the final total was just over \$40,000.

"The enthusiasm and effort that our stu-

"This event does not happen without the time and commitment of our parent volunteers," [Principal Jeff] Radel added. "It's a lot of fun to see our school community come together to achieve this goal."

dents and families put forth for this fundraising event is incredibly impressive," said Principal Jeff Radel.

The school kicked off fundraising in September with a promotional video—produced by Glen Lake parents Sonja Jasnisky, Andrew Nawrot, and Amy Bisbee—outlining the different fundraising levels and incentives. Principal Radel took on the quirky personas of many characters, including a young boy selling products, an elderly lady, a chocolate fiend, and an "overly eager fitness nerd." (Watch the fun video at the link given at the end of this article.)

The original goal was \$25,000, but the addition of incentive levels was too good to pass up. If students raised over \$30,000, teachers Scott Stillman, Billy Barringer, Anne Kuffel, and Julie Schlecht, along with Radel himself,

would sleep on the roof. But if they raised over \$35,000, Radel would also have to wear the fitness nerd costume for an entire day.

True to his word, on Tuesday Radel will sport the fitness nerd costume and sleep on

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Chinese Visitors 'Impressed' at Delano

*Paul Downer
Delano Public Schools*

Visitors from the other side of the world recently took their first look at life and learning in Delano, and they liked what they saw.

"The environment is very beautiful and clean," said Zhu Lili, an English teacher at ZiYun (Purple Cloud) High School in the Tanggu district of Tianjin, China, which has a sister-school relationship with Delano High School. "The fresh air, beautiful trees and friendly people impress me a lot."

The schools have a relationship dating back to 2005, but three Chinese teachers and eight students returning a June visit by Delano staff and students were seeing America for the first time when they moved in with local host families Sept. 24–30. The annual visits allow teachers on both sides of the Pacific to observe different methods of education, and help students forge relationships with their counterparts in a very different culture.

"I think the biggest thing is our students come back with a perspective of the world that is so different from the life they live here," said DHS math teacher Lanette Faul, who has headed up the school's China Club and organized visits since 2005. "It gives them a much deeper understanding of a part of the world they might have had preconceived notions about, and I think they really realize how fortunate they are. They also realize that just because these people are Chinese, it doesn't mean they are different. People are people."

Impressions

For Lili, who served as the interpreter for her group, that personal connection highlighted



her time in Delano.

"My favorite part has been the people we have stayed with here," she said. "The people here are very friendly and kind."

A view of life in an outlying Minnesota suburb was also eye-opening to the group, which lives in one of China's largest cities. The municipality of Tianjin has a population of over 15 million.

"Minneapolis-St. Paul is just peanuts to them," said Faul with a laugh.

"The lifestyle here surprised me," said Lili. "People here live a simple and relaxed life, not like the people in big cities. They enjoy a peaceful life. I feel the people and the children here are very fortunate to live here."

Educational Differences

From an educational standpoint, Lili said her group immediately noticed differences in the Delano schools.

"In the high school we feel the teaching style is very impressive," she said. "It is very different from ours. In our school students sit and listen to the teachers. They do not have much time to talk with each other in class. Here we are finding that students divide into groups,

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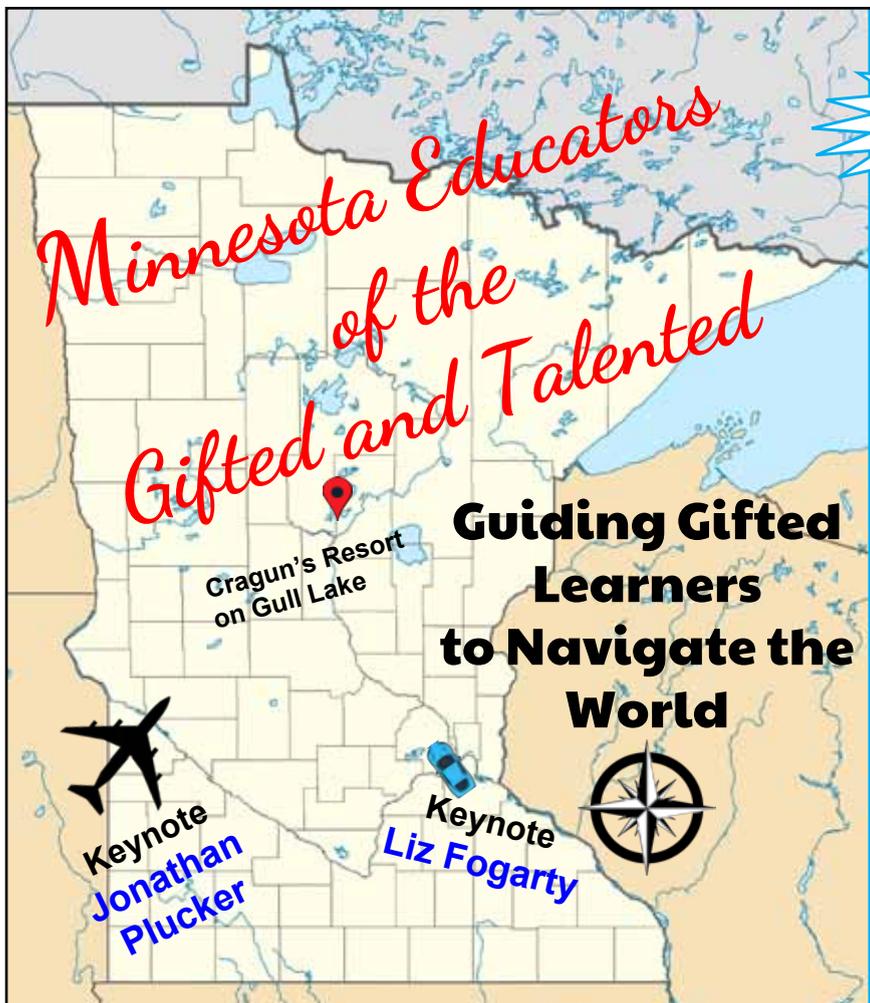


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Chinese Visitors 'Impressed' at Delano Continued from Page 1



teachers give directions and the students finish the tasks by themselves. What impressed me the most was that students here are relaxed in class, but their mind is still focused on their studies.”

In the middle school and elementary school, Lili said her group noticed a different overall atmosphere than in Chinese schools.

“It was very caring, very enthusiastic, very warm-hearted,” she said. “We felt that influence. Many of the kids said, ‘Ni hao,’ (hello) to us in Chinese.”

Special education practices here also caught Lili’s attention.

“I saw a child with a disability at the elementary, and there was a teacher helping her all the time,” Lili said. “In China children with

disabilities may go to a special school, not with the other children, so that impressed me a lot.”

Asked if she would recommend any changes to Delano’s education, Lili said she would encourage students here to learn Chinese. As an English teacher, she said her Chinese students benefit from learning English even though it is a challenge.

“It is very difficult for them,” she said. “They feel it is very hard to learn.”

Other Highlights

Aside from visiting classrooms and interacting with Delano students and staff, the visitors also toured the facilities, enjoyed a pep fest in their honor, appeared at a school board meeting, met Delano Mayor Dale Graunke, toured Delano, went shopping at the Mall of America and other stores, and spent a day in Minneapolis at sites like the sculpture garden and Minnehaha Falls.

The week ended with a visit to an apple orchard, complete with hay rides, a corn maze, pumpkin carving, potluck and more.

Life-Changing Experience

The recent visit gave Delano students and their families a chance to return the favor for students who hosted them when they visited China this past summer. While there the Delano contingent spent five days at ZiYun, which Lili said has about 2,000 high school students. Then they traveled to Beijing, Guilin and Yangshuo, visited rice terraces and the Li River, and finally saw Shanghai.

Faul has visited China four times as one of the organizers of the Delano delegations, and said she hopes the exchange program can continue to flourish in the future because interest remains strong on the Chinese side.

“I wish we could have at least 20 students go each year, because for every student we have that goes they probably have 20-30 students who have applied to host,” she said.

The trip costs about \$3,000, but that price covers everything from Visas to transportation and meals, making it a good value. Some area organizations have donated to defray that cost in recent years.

Lili echoed Faul’s hopes for a strong continued partnership, though it is difficult for Chinese participants to visit the United States more than once.

“We all feel fortunate to be invited to

your school, and many teachers in our school are looking forward to visiting your school in the future,” she said. “Our students have a good time here.”

Faul said some students end up referring to their counterparts as sisters or brothers, and that members of one Chinese host family actually came to a former Delano student’s wedding years later.

“For some kids who go this is something that can be life changing,” she said. “Some of the friendships and bonds I’ve seen form over the years are absolutely incredible.”

- Since 2005 a total of 58 Delano teachers and 118 students have visited ZiYun, and 138 Chinese students, teachers and administrators have visited Delano.
- Relationships with other Chinese schools began earlier in 1994 and included multiple visits from Delano teachers and staff, but not students.

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the roof with his colleagues.

“This event does not happen without the time and commitment of our parent volunteers,” Radel added. “It’s a lot of fun to see our school community come together to achieve this goal.”

All money raised from the Walk-a-Thon fundraiser goes back to the school to fund education projects and materials for the students. Over the years money from the fundraiser has purchased the school’s weather bug, upgraded the media center, improved the playground, and provided annual funding for each grade.

Roof Update: Principal Radel, Mr. Barringer and Mr. Stillman survive the night

Temperatures dipped into the 30s over-

night on Tuesday, Oct. 10, giving Principal Jeff Radel and teachers Billy Barringer and Scott Stillman a chilly campout on top of the Glen Lake Elementary roof. Nearby, teachers Anne Kuffel, and Julie Schlecht slept in a camper.

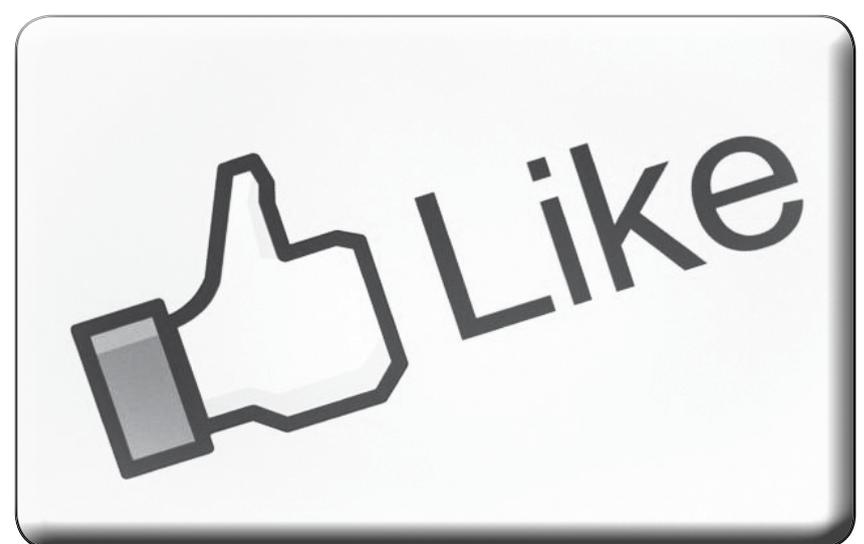
The unconventional camping trip was in celebration of the school raising over \$40,000 during the annual Walk-a-Thon fundraiser. Radel said the weather last year was slightly warmer, but incredibly windy, adding the calmer weather this year helped

the trio sleep better.

Families and students from the school stopped by Tuesday evening for a few bedtime stories and pizza, and then returned early Wednesday morning to greet the teachers.

Video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fpc9hTjf3g
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Congratulations 2017 WEM Honorees!

Academic Challenge Coach Award

This award recognizes coaches of student teams who participate and compete in academic challenge or enrichment programs endorsed by the Minnesota Academic League Council. The honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Statewide honorees:

Laura Nelson

Laura Nelson, a teacher at The Academy for Sciences & Agriculture High School, a charter school in Vadnais Heights is a recipient of a 2017 WEM Outstanding Educator Award as an Academic Challenge Coach.



Nelson has been teaching and coaching for 15 years. She currently teaches high school history and geography and coaches Youth in Government Model Assembly, Model United Nations and World Food Prize.

A colleague shared, "Laura is a passionate teacher who works to give her students not only

an understanding of history and government, but to help them think for themselves and to guide them in developing strong character. She is a resourceful, creative and solution-oriented person who is frequently able to come up with new and innovative approaches to student assignments. She is highly respected by colleagues, parents, students and community partners."

The programs Nelson coaches allow students to excel and reach higher levels of competition, but for her the focus is on their learning and the impact they can make on their community and the world. That is why she chooses to commit herself to the programs she coaches.

"These programs provide the perfect vehicle to show learning doesn't have to take place in a classroom and knowledge gained through school can be used to make a difference in the world," shares Nelson. "Mrs. Nelson gets to know her students well as both students and as people," said a parent. "She suggests students participate in programs that meet their interests and loops the parents in on the opportunities available to the students."

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Jodi Prchal

Jodi Prchal, a teacher at Falcon Ridge Elementary in the New Prague Area Schools is a recipient of a 2017 WEM Outstanding Educator Award as an Academic Challenge Coach.



Prchal has been teaching and coaching for 24 years. She currently teaches fourth grade and coaches Math Masters, Science Fair, Spelling Bee, and Junior Science and Humanities Symposium (JSHS).

A parent shares, "Mrs. Prchal knows that teaching is more than addressing the child's intellect, but includes the child as a whole. For a child to learn, they must be included in the process and feel like a part of the learning community. Under her tutelage, students become very excited about what they are doing. She inspires them to find their full potential without making them feel pushed."

Prchal feels in a world of standardized testing, we need to make sure we are not losing sight of the importance of real-world, hands-on experimentation, exploration and inquiry. By promoting this

type of environment, her students are passionate about learning and excited to come to school. She believes learning and having fun while learning is ultimately much more important than winning a medal.

Prchal adds, "The growth mindset is a powerful thing to see in action. By empowering students to believe they can be successful, they will rise to the challenge, experience success and do things they never thought they could." "Jodi's enthusiasm for learning, willingness to try new things and can-do attitude have been key to the success of her students," said a colleague.

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Jordan Elementary School Validated as a 2017–2018 Minnesota School of Excellence



Jordan Public Schools,
Principal Melissa Barnett
Asst. Principal Carol Lagergren

Jordan Elementary School has been validated as a Minnesota School of Excellence by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This prestigious honor was awarded to Jordan for its commitment to 21st century teaching and learning.

"Through the Minnesota School of Excellence program, grounded in national research on high performing schools, MESPA has created the premier opportunity in the state for validating greatness in a school community," said Jon Millerhagen, MESPA executive director. "This school improvement program examines the entire school community through six national standards, ensuring there is a holistic approach to creating a plan for future achievement and celebrating the unique accomplishments of each School of Excellence."

Jordan Elementary is located in the Jordan Public School District and serves approximately 650 students in grades K-4 and another 150 PreK students. Jordan Public Schools participated in a Strategic Planning process in 2014 to focus on their mission statement: Inspiring a caring community to ignite learning, innovation, and success for all. "We created a vision statement for Jordan Elementary School prior to this process, and the SOE process directed us back to that vision, ensuring we were focused on the academic and social-emotional development of students, and professional growth and well-being of staff," said Melissa Barnett, principal of Jordan Elementary.

"Through the SOE process, we reaffirmed our commitment to the growth of all of our school community members and believe if students and staff feel safe and cared for they will find success in all areas of school," said Barnett. "Our focus on the whole child not

only increases social skills but also improves academic achievement, creates positive school climate, expands a student's independence level, and lessens challenging behavior. By fostering positive relationships with our students and fellow colleagues, we can better engage and empower students to become 21st Century learners where collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication are enhanced through technology in the daily curriculum."

"The School of Excellence process supported our growth as a collaborative culture," said Barnett. "We implemented the systematic shifts that would best support student growth: moving from teacher-directed to student-driven classrooms, supporting the growth of the whole child through PBIS and Mindfulness, and focusing on Learning Targets aligned to standards to tighten instruction. These shifts have opened ongoing discussions on growth mindset, standards based grading, personalized learning, and culturally responsive teaching. We are excited to move forward and to continue to grow as educators."

Principal Barnett described her philosophy in undergoing the SOE process in a quote by Dylan Williams: "As educators we must create a culture where, 'Every teacher believes they need to improve, not because they aren't

good enough, but because they can be even better.' To make this happen, we had to slow down and take time to reflect and honor our hard work from the past two years and recognize the amazing opportunities we provide our students.

Barnett summed up Jordan's School of Excellence experience by saying, "We would highly recommend the School of Excellence process for any school that is looking to engage all stakeholders in conversations and professional discourse, in order to grow and improve the teaching and learning environment. For us, it encouraged more collaborative conversations and helped us to reflect on the action steps we took to create a culture of excellence. It will be our 'road map' as we look towards the future and continue our work as educators and members of a school community."

Reprinted from the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association MESPA: www.mespa.net

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Abdul Wright, '16 MA-Education, 2016 Minnesota Teacher of the Year

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Teacher's Data-Driven Approaches Deliver Big Results

Susan Akre is a 2017 Rural Educator of Excellence



Minnesota Rural Education Association.

For over 35 years, Susan Akre has been a student of education while being an educator of students. Focused on data-driven approaches, she's getting results for students and helping teachers in northern Minnesota do the same.

For the past several years, Akre has been the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Coordinator for the Deer River School District. In this role, she has built on her career's worth of knowledge and convictions about how students learn. She facilitates weekly professional learning communities, data retreats and full-day pedagogical trainings.

In one instance, she was convinced that

6th graders could comprehend a level of reading that was geared for people much older. With the belief that reading material above your level effectively stretches your mind, she wrote a grant that provided a subscription of the Minneapolis Star Tribune to each child in 6th grade in Deer River.

Her efforts get measurable results. The teachers under her tutelage saw three grades increase in proficiency by nearly 20 percent each and

four other grades improve by almost 30 percent per grade. That's compared to the state average increase of less than 2 percent.

"The innovative ways that Sue makes advances in teaching are such a valuable asset to the teachers she serves,"

MREA Executive Director Fred Nolan said. "Her unselfish building up of faculty and stu-

dents alike greatly increases the quality of our rural schools.

MREA recognizes Akre as a 2017 Educator of Excellence for the clear results she's achieving for both teachers and students.

If there is data to support a method or approach to teaching, she is interested. While results matter to Akre, so do connecting to the heart of students. "My teachers put everything they have into teaching and their students' learning — it is my duty to support and uplift them," she said. "I believe these remarkable results were built on the foundation of trust, respect and evidence-based pedagogy."

Referred to by some as "a teacher of teachers," Akre is not interested in simply amassing knowledge. "She is quick to relay that knowledge to those around her," Deer River Superintendent Matt Grose said. "She communicates in a way that

is non-threatening and supportive, and has gained the respect and admirations of my

If there is data to support a method or approach to teaching, she is interested. While results matter to Akre, so do connecting to the heart of students. "My teachers put everything they have into teaching and their students' learning — it is my duty to support and uplift them."



teaching staff, as well as a number of other teaching staffs in the area, something that is an incredible accomplishment."

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Faculty Collaboration in an On-line Setting



William Gillespie, Ph.D., Ann Yehle, Ph.D.
 Institute for Professional Studies in Education,
 UW-La Crosse

A unique, new opportunity recently commenced at the University of Wisconsin La Crosse for PK–12 teachers interested in the school principalship. Housed within the Institute for Professional Studies in Education these new programs focus on Educational Leadership. More specifically, a Master's degree program and a Post Master's

program that both lead to PK–12 Principal Licensure in WI or MN. These programs are offered on-line and students take 2 courses per semester for 5 semesters.

As online instructors for these courses, we quickly recognized the courses have complementary topics and objectives. Hence, we decided to deliver the curriculum in a highly, collaborative way. We do this by meeting regularly, often weekly or twice a month, to discuss ways to create experiential, often

personalized learning experiences for our students and to monitor their progress. As we started meeting on a regular basis, we discovered several benefits to collaborating in an online environment.

These benefits include:

- Developing a system of student support that allows students access to 2 instructors rather than one per course
- Creates shared responsibility for using best teaching practices in an online teaching environment
- Lends itself to experimentation of new teaching modalities such as the use of specific web-based software
- Regular communication about student progress creates an attitude of "shared students rather than my students"
- Dual perspectives on interpretation of learner outcomes and assessment
- Allows for less error when grading as another perspective is available if there is doubt about the quality of a student's work
- Individualized student options for learning become the norm

Student feedback has welcomed our collaborative approach. Further, as mentioned earlier, our courses are online. Although we each take a lead for one course a semester,

we have access to each other's courses and often post news messages as a duo and ensure our assignments to include due dates align with one another. In addition, using methods such as Chats (similar to instant message), common Discussion Forum topics, and live distant learning opportunities we have developed strong on-line relationships between our cohort of students. As they continue to develop their skills as teachers and add new learning through the experiences they are having in the coursework, we are seeing an increase in positive attitudes toward learning in general and the creations of a network of teacher friendships and professional relationships.

As we continue to meet and collaborate on the course material and delivery, we have discovered the talents we each bring to the table and leverage these talents for the betterment of our students. Being able to work together and continually challenge one another has given us as online instructors, a new perspective on the idea of online teacher collaboration.

We look forward to welcoming more teachers in our online programs and also welcome the opportunity to speak with interested educators about how to best support students in an online milieu.

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Leaders in Educational Excellence



Paul Downer
Delano Public Schools

A quartet of Delano teachers, including two from the elementary school, recently received honors as Leaders in Educational Excellence.

The four included Ginger Diethart,

reading interventionist at DES; third-grade teacher Charlene Warne, who was named Delano Teacher of the Year for 2016-17; middle school physical education teacher Jamie Longstreet; and high school social worker Marie Techam.

Their Leadership in Educational Excellence Awards were distributed at the 26th annual Award and Recognition Ceremony on Wednesday, Oct. 25.

Diethart and Warne are featured below. Additional information about Longstreet and Techam will be included in a future article.

Ginger Diethart

Diethart is in her 10th year of teaching in Delano, and said that receiving the LEEA recognition was a true honor.

"It does the heart good to realize that all the hard work you put in throughout the year is noticed and appreciated," she said.

An anonymous nominating letter submitted to the district's Staff Development Committee noted that as a reading interventionist Diethart works hard to help some of the school's most needy students.

"She spends hours after school, as well as (additional) hours on the weekend to prepare the best lessons possible," said the nominating

document. "She is well liked by her team and provides a positive leadership environment. She truly cares about the children she works with and is sincere about meeting their needs as well as following grant guidelines within a very large case load."

Diethart said that helping at-risk students succeed has made for a fulfilling career.

"Most of these students come with low self-esteem and a belief that reading is something they will never be able to do," she said. "I most enjoy helping these kids realize they can achieve in areas they thought impossible. It's very rewarding seeing the progress they make."

Charlene Warne

Warne, in her 13th year at Delano Elementary and 22nd year in teaching overall, was named the district's Teacher of the Year for 2016-17. She attended last week's banquet in that capacity.

"It has been an honor to represent Delano," Warne said. "I feel so fortunate to work at DES and work with amazing people."

The recommendation given to the Staff Development Committee said Warne is among the most competent professionals in the business, and one who always goes the extra mile to meet students' needs.

"She is patient and always looks for

unique challenges and projects that will inspire learning," said the recommendation. "She clearly enjoys her job and her students adore her. She has a great rapport with the staff, students and parents. She is a willing participant in school and community activities and always does it with a smile on her face."

Warne's extra work in staff development, curriculum matters, PIE activities, as a cluster teacher and as "an integral part" of the DES Relay for Life team contributed to her suitability for the honor.

"I enjoy building a strong community with the students in my classroom so it is a place to learn, grow, and belong," said Warne.

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Congratulations 2017 WEM Honorees! Continued from Page 5

Teacher Achievement Award

This award recognizes teachers who support, inspire and assist students to achieve despite barriers to learning. The honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Statewide honorees:

Kurt Reynolds

Kurt Reynolds, a teacher from Lincoln High School in the Thief River Falls Public Schools, is a recipient of a 2017 WEM Outstanding Educator Award for Teacher Achievement.



Reynolds has been teaching for 19 years and currently teaches high school English and college composition at Lincoln High School. Reynolds does not want to simply prepare students for college and a career. Instead, he wants to help develop remarkable, life-long learners who have developed skills that allow them to adapt to any changes the future may hold.

"He teaches students to find their niche, which is so important," shared a student. "Many students graduate high school without a clue what to do next. Mr. Reynolds helped me, as well as countless others, feel ready for that next step. His teaching style is legendary, engaging and incredible."

One of Reynolds' missions in his classroom is to catch his students doing something right every day. He captures these moments and shares it with their parents and the community. He wants to show the parents how amazing their kids are.

"Mr. Reynolds is able to accomplish amazing things because of the strong relationships he builds with each student," said Principal Shane Zutz. "His emphasis on creating a classroom culture where students trust him and are not afraid to take risks in their learning has helped create the best classroom learning environment for all students that I have ever seen."

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Stacy Busta and Sarah Kratcha



Stacy Busta and Sarah Kratcha, co-teachers from Breckenridge Elementary in Breckenridge Public Schools are recipients of a 2017 WEM Outstanding Educator Award for Teacher Achievement.

Busta has been teaching for 17 years and Kratcha has been teaching for 9 years. Together the two co-teach in a fifth grade classroom at Breckenridge Elementary.

The classroom, referred to as Studio 5, is a project based learning classroom where the two of them facilitate the learning for 40 students as a team. Inspired by their grant writing, the two viewed the movie, "Most Likely to Succeed" which led them to reflect on the fact that education had not changed in more than 100 hundred years. What was good for students 100 years ago probably was not meeting the needs of

students in the 21st century. In preparation for the 21st century skills necessary to succeed in the future workplace, they looked to set up a project based learning environment to engage students while allowing for deeper learning.

Students in their classroom are engaged on a daily basis in projects involving science, social studies, and language arts.

"The results of Studio 5 are engaged learners, fewer classroom and behavioral issues, students discovering and pursuing their passions, and kids learning at their personal ability instead of "teaching to the mean" like in a traditional classroom to name a few of the very many positives," shared a colleague.

Busta and Kratcha were an integral part of the culture shift in the school district because of their success with Studio 5. Their school is adopting project based learning throughout the K-12 classrooms and is already seeing positive effects just months later.

breckenridge.k12.mn.us
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Reprinted from the Synergy & Leadership Exchange: synergyexchange.org/Home.aspx

New STEM Biomedical Science Program Teaches Biology In Forensic-Meets-Bioscience Format



Lakeville Area Public Schools

Students at Lakeville North High School were met with crime scene tape and a “body” in Room 306L. Their assignment? To figure out who Ana Garcia was and how she died.

The scene was met with reactions ranging from, “umm, wow” to “I took this course because there was a dead body on the first day.”

Throughout the year, students in Honors Principles of Biomedical Science will have to figure out how Garcia supposedly died and what factors were involved in her death in a class that’s part CSI (crime scene investigation), part medical drama and all hands-on. Teachers say the course is a way to teach biology and other biomedical science disciplines in a hands-on fashion.

The class is part of the new STEM Biomedical Science Program at Lakeville North High School. Funding for the curriculum came from voters’ approval of the 2015 levy referendum.

This year, about 135 students are enrolled, including nine from Lakeville South High School, said Sally Winecke, one of the two teachers instructing the five sections. The program is starting with freshmen

and sophomores; eventually, classes will be offered for juniors and seniors as well.

Lakeville North is one of three high schools throughout the Twin Cities teaching this specific program from PLTW which provides transformative learning experiences in biomedical science, computer science and engineering for students in kindergarten through grade 12. The classes are intended for any student who wants to pursue a career in medicine or any discipline involving science of living organisms, said teacher Teri Homan.

“I’m not going to stand up and lecture,” Homan said. “They’re going to learn by doing. It’s all going to be self-driven.”

Students say that hands-on nature combined with the subject drew their interest.

“I want to be a forensic scientist when I grow up, and this seemed to be the closest thing to it at my age level, so I took the class,” said sophomore Zeshaan Sarwar.

For sophomore Jacob Bellile, the course offers a chance to learn more in depth about medical studies.

The pathway also is fostering career exploration.

Freshman Ishaan Lukhey and sophomore Rachel Riskedahl say for them, the

program is about learning whether a career in health sciences might be right for them. Riskedahl already volunteers at Regions Hospital and said she is drawn to fields in that kind of setting.

Sophomore Sarah Hawkinson was so excited about the nature of the class that she arrived early – just so she could get a seat closest to the staged crime scene, which included a mannequin, overturned furniture and other clues.

“I don’t know if the blood is real,” Hawkinson said. “I kind of wanted to poke it.”

Winecke and Homan said the format of the class is invigorating for them, too.

“It’s all about bringing in all of the biological concepts into a real-life situation with Ana Garcia being in the crime scene and seeing how biology can relate to that,” Winecke said. “This is student-driven. This is inquiry-based, and a lot of real-life problem-solving.”

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- Ivy W., Diagnostic Medical Sonography Class of 2019



Bellin College

New Program Prepares BHS Students For Careers In Health Care

Communications Department
Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191

In the Burnsville High School healthcare lab, life-like mannequins Hazel, Alice and Ed are well taken care of by students in the new Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program.

Students use them to learn and practice skills such as dressing, applying compression stockings, cleaning dentures, placing hearing aids, washing and brushing hair. Students also learn to modify patient positioning for decompression of pressure, measure urinary output and provide catheter hygiene care. In the CNA program, students gain basic nursing care skills and understanding of concepts necessary for delivering high-quality nursing assistant care to a variety of patients.

New this year, the CNA program is designed to prepare students for success with the state written and practical exam to earn certification. Burnsville High School students are learning the skills they'll need through a combination of classroom work, practice on mannequins, and eventually a 16-24 hour clinical experience with real patients at a long-term care facility.

Upon completion of the program and a passing score with placement on the nursing assistant registry, students could walk right into good-paying, high-demand jobs.

The CNA program is part of the Health

Sciences pathway, one of several pathways at BHS created with Vision One91. A pathway is a series of classes that BHS students can take that will help them follow their interests and prepare for further study, training or work opportunities with a career field. Students in the CNA program may also earn college credit through a community college.

"The CNA programs offers incredible hands-on, real-world learning for our students," said Principal Dave Helke. "Right at Burnsville High School, these students are preparing for certification that can lead to good-paying jobs in health care, or be on the career path to becoming a nurse, doctor, physical therapist, or other health care professional."

As part of the Health Care Core Curriculum class that was offered as an introduction to healthcare, students create online portfolios that showcase their work and reflect on their learning. They can modify and update their information throughout their learning process and have ways to showcase themselves in a fun and current platform. They also produce a resume and cover letter to use in the job search.

The class is for 11th and 12th grade students. It's limited to 20 students because a 10-1 ratio of students to instructors is required.

"The program is highly regulated and



audited by the Minnesota Department of Health," said teacher and chiropractor Dr. Anne Werner-Dempsey, who was part of the team at BHS that created the Healthcare Core Class and CNA program. Other team members include Lori VanderWoude, a health and wellness teacher at BHS, and Rachel Tushaus, a registered nurse. Together they bring more than 25 years of teaching and 25 years of healthcare experience to benefit students and their learning.

A partnership with a care center has been an essential part of the program in providing equipment and real-world learning experiences for students.

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Northeast Metro 916 Unveils 24th Student-Built Home



Northeast Metro 916

A 1600 square-foot “farmhouse chic” rambler in North St. Paul is the ultimate final project for students at the 916 Career and Technical Center. The newly-built home boasts three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a fireplace, main-floor laundry, an open floor plan and a screened-in porch. Over the course of nine months, more than 40 students from the Career and Technical Center partnered with the school district’s contacts in industry, business and higher education to build the \$306,000 home from scratch.

For eighteen years, students in the construction occupations program at Northeast

Metro 916 Intermediate School District have been revitalizing the City of North St. Paul by building affordable, modern and high-quality housing. The program is the only one in the state where students get real-world experience constructing a full-sized house on site; students spend only 10 percent of their time in a traditional classroom.

After uninhabitable homes have been demolished, high school students and school district staff step in to build brand new home on the lot over the course of a single school year, all while earning important college credits. Those involved ensure the new homes match the surrounding neighborhood’s home value, size and architecture, so it is truly an upgrade, not an intrusion.

“Students do not learn a single skill like carpentry or masonry. They get a well-rounded education that builds skills in electrical, heating/cooling, plumbing, drywall, flooring, and landscaping,” said

Tom Spehn, who teaches the course. Students also practice teamwork, build their resumes and make important professional connections with the tradespeople they encounter on the job.

Some students find related employment after leaving the program, others pursue a four-year degree in Construction Management and others may leave the field. “Regardless of what they choose, students leave the program with lifelong skills in home maintenance that will impact whatever community they land in,” said Spehn.

The construction industry faces a skilled-labor shortage, and is eager to partner with the school district to fill that need. Since the program started in 1999, hundreds of students have contributed to building 24 homes, with one more on the way.

The program has revitalized neighborhoods in the City of North St. Paul, leading to an additional \$3 million in real estate value and adding energy to a town that is already fully-developed. By partnering with the school district, the city is able to save thousands of dollars in labor costs. The city usually breaks even in the sale of the home, but every home is a long-term investment. The new homes inspire neighbors to invest more in home maintenance and improve-

ment, which raises property values and tax revenues throughout the city.

The program benefits from a close partnership between the school district, the City of North St. Paul, St. Paul College and Century College. The city identifies homes that are beyond repair, demolishes them and purchases the materials that high school students use to build the home. Students from St. Paul College design, build and install custom cabinetry. Interior design students from Century College select the paint colors, cabinet stains and other finishing touches.

Business partners include: Anderson Concrete Forming Inc., Builders Association of the Twin Cities (BATC), The Builders Group (TBG), Carpentry Contractors Company, Fireside Hearth & Home, Harkraft, Innovative Surfaces, Kraus-Anderson, Lyman Lumber, Pratt Homes, Quality Insulation, and Southern Lights.

“This program is truly the result of the entire community pitching together to make a difference,” said Spehn.

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Geometry in Construction at Park High School

South Washington County Schools

Beginning in the 2014–15 school year, sophomores at Park High School had the opportunity to take a unique math class thanks to a \$19,000 Ingenuity Grant to spark student interest and achievement in mathematics. *Geometry in Construction* was designed to provide students with the chance to apply geometry concepts through the construction of a number of different items including storage sheds, wooden folding chairs, cement stepping stones, and more. Technology Teacher Bonnie Thoe-Austin and Math Teacher Megan Diediker taught the class and assisted the students in the construction process.

By Megan Diediker

The curriculum is designed to keep spiraling back to previous material so students who may have struggled at first or even missed certain concepts will continue to see the concepts throughout the entire year.

The way the curriculum is arranged is amazing. I have already seen students catch on to material taught in the first unit, triangle similarity now as a result of learning right triangle trig because each unit includes material from the previous unit. Additionally, every quiz is a group quiz. Students are expected to work together and then when they are done I will grade their quizzes right in front of them.

This gives them immediate feedback and in some cases I ask them questions in order to catch where the misconceptions occurred. This immediate feedback makes it far more meaningful than when students turn it in and get it back a couple days later. It also allows me to change my lesson right away the next day if needed.

There is no book for this class. Everything is done with a problem bank of word problems (about 100 questions each unit) and hands on activities. Additionally there are only 8 units to be covered over the entire year. I love this because I don't feel pressured to get through so much material. None of the lessons involve me standing in front of the classroom more than 20 minutes. This is such a hands on course that students drive the lessons. Between the warm up of contextualized construction questions and the investigative activities I really don't have to do a lot of lectures. Students discover the concepts and we take short notes on "yellow pages" which students can use on tests. Since students know they can use their yellow pages on their tests it forces me to keep my notes simple and students to pay close attention during lectures; if a student is absent he or she usually finds their elbow partner to write down what was missed. I also believe that because students are allowed to use "yellow pages" on their test that it gives them added confidence.

Over the last 2 years we have built 10 playhouses and every student has built their own chair. Students have learned how to wire electrical outlets and light switches, and participate in numerous group activities and assessments. Students also build model playhouses and sheds out of balsa wood and a set of stairs and stringers. The biggest thing we have taken away from teaching the class is how students become a family. They work through challenging situations and then develop friendships with students they may never had a chance to get to know. As a result of working on projects every day in the shop students are able to make connections to the material much sooner than in a regular classroom. Additionally, it has been extremely rewarding to see students who are not normally leaders be seen as leaders amongst all their classmates. After 9 months in this class students leave with a sense confidence that is hard to describe. It's not just confidence



working with tools but a sense of pride and motivation that he or she will be successful in high school. Students also leave with ideas and goals for post high school opportunities. We are also starting to connect with tech schools in the

Continued on Page 13

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Geometry in Construction Continued from Page 12



area to encourage students to pursue careers in construction after high school.

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1. Students gain confidence that carries over into other aspects of their life because for the first time they are having success in a math class and school is enjoyable again. Additionally, in the shop they are learning how to use

power tools that they may never have learned how to use before which gives students a sense of accomplishment and confidence.

2. Students are forced to work with all different types of peers (especially in the shop). They learn how to communicate and appreciate different personalities and really become a family.
3. Most of our students don't particularly enjoy math and so having the hour of construction in the shop is a motivator to work and get the math done so they can go into the shop. We don't use NOT going in the shop as any sort of punishment . . . instead of telling a student they can't go in the shop to work I tell Bonnie "hey this kid is not getting their stuff done can you talk to them?" She finds a time while the student is working during the construction hour to talk to the student. It has really worked for us. She always finds a way to connect with students that I can't seem to reach at the moment. Which is a testimony not only to her being a fantastic educator, but also shows that kids brains think differently and sometimes Bonnie's way of thinking works better for explaining things. At other times mine does the trick.

4. I truly believe that because our projects *have* to be completed, in other words we have people counting on us that are buying our playhouses, sheds, chairs, and other projects students don't have the option not to do it. Having a deadline and not having the option to just "take a zero" is a huge piece to the success of this class and the confidence students feel after accomplishing their goal.
5. Bonnie and I are very energetic teachers. We love to tell stories and laugh a lot so the energy in our classroom is different than any other classroom. Students see not only a respectful and professional relationship but they also see two friends who truly enjoy what they do. This is so important for kids to watch and see. I believe that this year our reputation from last year of being understanding teachers along with the fact that the class lends itself to be very fun allows all of our students to be successful, especially the students who have struggled in the past either academically or behaviorally.
6. Our students have used us a references when applying for jobs. This class functions much like a real-world job experience and we encourage them to



put us on their applications as we can testify about work habits and skills that they possess.

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Eight Years Later, Repurposed Buildings are Allowing Anoka-Hennepin and its Most Vulnerable Students to Thrive



Anoka-Hennepin School District

As Amy Homicke thinks about the young children that fill Riverview Early Childhood Center, a smile grows on her face. “It’s been amazing for our students and our staff to be in this building,” she said.

Homicke is the special education supervisor at Riverview Early Childhood Center in Brooklyn Park, a school that since 2010 has exclusively been home to Anoka-Hennepin Early Childhood Special Education and Early Childhood Family Education programming.

“Having all of our students and staff in one place like this is amazing,” Homicke said. “And parents feel more comfortable having their small children attend a school-building instead of bringing kids to storefronts and malls.”

Storefronts and malls may sound like hyperbole, but it was the case for a lot of the programming Anoka-Hennepin had for its most vulnerable students until 2010. That year, the district made the difficult decision to repurpose six of its neighborhood schools, reimagined the roles of the buildings, and converted them into new, different spaces for district students.

“It was a difficult decision, but students, parents, and staff are thrilled with the move from storefronts to schools with green spaces, playgrounds, ball fields, gyms, and lunchrooms,” said Anoka-Hennepin Chief Operations Officer Chuck Holden. “Ultimately, we are serving our students much better.”

So what changes were made?

Washington Elementary School in Anoka is now the sixth-grade campus of Anoka Middle School for the Arts; Sorteberg Elementary School in Coon Rapids and Riverview, which had been Riverview Specialty School for Math and Environmental Science, are now home to Early Childhood Special Education, Early Childhood Family Education programs and preschool, as well as early childhood screening; L.O. Jacob Elementary School in Coon Rapids is now

the River Trail Learning Center and home to the district’s full-day, level IV special education programming; Sandburg Middle School is now used for Community Education programming, high school athletic programs (specifically Anoka High School gymnastics and Andover High School dance), district professional development, some special education staff, and

School Board meetings; and the Parkview Kindergarten Center in Champlin became Champlin-Brooklyn Park Academy. All of those repurposed neighborhood schools are full of students and programming each and every day.

Before 2010, Anoka-Hennepin’s early childhood students were spread out around seven different locations, including three outside of district schools: the Coon Rapids Family Place Mall, Champlin Strip Mall and Coon Rapids Head Start Building.

Homicke says the change was profoundly positive for the district’s early childhood programming, which consolidated from seven different locations all across the district — including sites at the Coon Rapids Family Place Mall, Champlin Strip Mall and Coon Rapids Head Start Building — to two: Riverview and Sorteberg.

“We have the ability to provide building-wide opportunities to help our students get ready for kindergarten transitions, including practicing in the cafeteria for what the kindergarten lunchroom will look and feel like,” she said. “And now we offer celebrations assembly-style gatherings with our students, which is great and provides a real sense of community for our students.”

Marsha Polys, who is the special education supervisor at Sorteberg, says the benefits of being in a school versus a strip mall go deeper than what meets the eye.

“It ensures that resources are used wisely and don’t have to be duplicated at different sites,” she said. “It also means that there is a consistent location that families can access without confusion on where they should go.”

Using resources more wisely was one of the main reasons the changes were originally made, according to Holden. At the time, there was an excess of more than 150 unused classrooms in schools across the central and southern portions of the district, plus a significant number of malls and storefronts being leased for program needs.

In 2008–09 the School Board appointed a citizen task force to review the issue. The group met for several months, studying demographics, enrollment projections, and finances before making recommendations.

“The task force found that operating schools under capacity is expensive and inefficient, and that money could be better used for teachers and other program needs,” Holden said. “The repurposed schools are now being used efficiently, and specifically, students at Riverview, Sorteberg, and River Trail at L.O. Jacob now have playgrounds, lunchrooms, and gyms that they did not have access to in leased spaces.”

In addition to better serving students, the district has saved more than \$3 million a year since repurposing the schools, Holden said.

Specifically, more than \$700,000 a year was saved by consolidating the district’s early childhood programming into Sorteberg and Riverview. And by moving the district’s level IV special education students to River Trail at L.O. Jacob, the district no longer has to send students outside the district to intermediate districts 287 and 916, which has saved nearly \$1 million a year in transportation and tuition costs.

“Keeping our students here is not only financially beneficial, but it is a much better service for our students and families,” Holden said.

Two other sites were also involved in the building repurposing in 2010 — Champlin Elementary School and the Educational Service Center on Hanson Boulevard in Coon Rapids.

Champlin Elementary School was closed, and has since been sold. The school was closed because of the significant price tag of renovating it to meet the needs of today’s students and federal laws. The building, which only had a 400-student capacity, had two levels, and required the costly

installation of an elevator to meet federal accessibility laws, plus at least \$6 million in other repairs.

In addition, the former Educational Service Center off Hanson Boulevard was also closed and sold after district administrative staff were moved to the Peter Enich Kindergarten Center, which the district already owned in Anoka.

Nine years later, the enrollment projections the task force studied in 2008-09 have held true for the central and southern portions of the district, Holden said.

“Today, it’s true Anoka-Hennepin is growing, but it’s growing in different areas, specifically in the northern parts of the district in Ramsey and Blaine,” Holden said. “And the growth areas are so far away from the schools that were repurposed in the south and central parts of the district that it wouldn’t be feasible to convert the repurposed buildings back into traditional schools to address space needs.”

While the changes were difficult at the time, after more than eight years to review them, Holden said it’s pretty clear they were a good thing for Anoka-Hennepin and its students.

“It’s easy to understand why the community would be irritated that the elementary school down the street was repurposed,” Holden said. “Given the choice, I don’t believe any parent would prefer to have their child in a storefront location rather than a school building with all the amenities it provides. Repurposing the schools — it was just so much better for our kids.”

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Student Contests and Awards

eCYBERMISSION

eCYBERMISSION is a web-based science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) competition free for students in grades 6 through 9. Teams of students can compete for state, regional, and national awards while working to solve problems in their communities. Through eCYBERMISSION and its entire portfolio of Army Educational Outreach Programs (AEOP), the US Army is committed to answering the nation's need for increased literacy in STEM.

Deadline: Team registration deadline is December 13, 2017

Website: www.ecybermission.com

Future Engineers: Two for the Crew Challenge

Calling all students! Use your ingenuity to create a tool that combines the functions of two objects already being used by crew aboard the International Space Station! Visit the challenge website to find out about space station tools and to get brainstorming resources to help you create a design. The site provides links to free 3-D design software. The winning design will be 3-D printed on the station. Prizes include "3-D Printing in Space" prize

packs, a 3-D printer for your school and a trip to Washington, D.C.!

Deadline: Entry Deadline: Dec. 19, 2017

Website: futureengineers.org/twoforthecrew

EngineerGirl Essay Contest

The annual EngineerGirl Essay Contest encourages students to write about the role of engineering in society and the impact it has on our world. Essays for the current contest, which is entitled, "Engineering For Your Community," should convince other to improve the community's infrastructure.

First-place winners are awarded \$500, second-place entries \$250, and third-place entries \$100

Deadline: Essays are due February 1, 2018

Website: www.engineergirl.org/42593.aspx

National Science Bowl

The US Department of Energy (DOE) National Science Bowl (NSB) is a nationwide academic competition for middle and high school students that tests knowledge in all areas of science and mathematics. It was created in 1991 to encourage students to excel in mathematics and science and to pursue careers in those fields.

Regional competition dates vary, but are

typically between January and March. See the website for specific dates. The national competition will take April 26 through 30, 2018; April 25 through 29, 2019; and April 30 through May 4, 2020.

Website: science.energy.gov/wdts/nsb

Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision Competition

ExploraVision is a science competition that engages student teams in research and development with a strong emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Working in teams of two, three, or four members, students study a technology of interest and predict what that technology might be like in 20 years, and then explore what is necessary to make their visions a reality.

Deadline: Projects are due February 8, 2018

Website: www.exploravision.org/what-exploravision

The Paradigm Challenge

The Paradigm Challenge is an annual competition developed by Project Paradigm and the American Red Cross. The challenge is intended to inspire youth to use science, technology,

engineering, and mathematics (STEM) skills and kindness, creativity, and collaboration to make a difference. The annual challenge aims to generate new ideas to reduce waste in homes, schools, communities, and around the world. Youth are invited to submit entries, including posters, videos, inventions, public messages, community events, websites, mobile apps, or anything else that will help reduce waste.

Deadline: Entries are due May 1, 2018

Website: www.projectparadigm.org/rules

World of 7 Billion Student Video Contest

Population Education is sponsoring a video contest open to all middle and high school students in grades 6 through 12. Contest entrants create a short video of 60 seconds or less that illustrates the connection between population growth and one of the three following global challenges: (1) advancing women and girls and their access to education, gender equality, women in government, women's health, and child marriage; (2) feeding ten billion (hunger, food waste, resource and energy use, deforestation, and pollution); and (3) preventing pollution (impacts on air, water, land, climate change, human and wildlife health, and ecosystem destruction).

Deadline: Entries are due February 22, 2018

Website: www.worldof7billion.org/student-video-contest

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AIAA Foundation Classroom Grant Program

The AIAA Foundation Classroom Grant program promotes aerospace education activities in classrooms from kindergarten through grade 12. Funds are considered for the following materials needed for an activity: aerospace technology, biological and physical research, earth science, human exploration and development, space science, classroom mathematics or science demonstration kits, classroom science supplies, kindergarten through grade 12 mathematics and science software, mathematics manipulative materials, supplies for making flying objects, and supplies for robotics programs.

Grants up to \$250 are awarded

Deadline: Applications are accepted October 1, 2017 through January 5, 2018

Website: www.aiaa.org/ClassroomGrants

ecoSolution Grants

The Captain Planet Foundation (CPF) awards ecoSolution Grants to support solu-

tion-oriented, youth-led projects that result in real environmental outcomes. Projects must be solution-oriented, project-based, performed by youth, and have real environmental outcomes.

Awards range from \$500 to \$2,500

Deadline: Applications are accepted January 16 through July 15 and July 16 through January 15, annually

Website: www.captainplanetfoundation.org/grants/ecosolution

Tensor Strengthening Underrepresented Minority Mathematics Achievement Grants

Tensor Strengthening Underrepresented Minority Mathematics Achievement (SUMMA) Grants support projects designed to encourage the pursuit and enjoyment of mathematics by students who are members of groups historically underrepresented in the field. Projects may be designed for middle school students, high school students, or college or university students.

Grants up to \$6,000 are awarded

Deadline: Applications are due February 12, annually

Website: www.maa.org/programs/maa-grants/tensor-summa-grants

Amber Brown Grant

The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) offers the Amber Brown Grant to commemorate author Paula Danziger. The grant is awarded annually to one school and includes a visit by a children's book author or illustrator to encourage children and youth to read and connect them with creative influences.

Deadline: Applications are accepted November 1 through April 15, annually

Website: www.scbwi.org/awards/grants/amber-brown-grant

Education Program Grants

The Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation's funding interests focus on environment and health, music, and education. Education Program Grants are intended for environmental and arts education to children and youth by supporting programs for educators and artists to improve and apply their teaching skills in these subjects; and by supporting efforts to advance environmental and arts education programs.

Deadline: Letters of Inquiry due Feb. 1, 2018

Website: www.cehcf.org/application-information

Baseball Tomorrow Fund Grants

The Baseball Tomorrow Fund is a joint initiative of Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association. The goal of the Baseball Tomorrow Fund is to increase youth participation in baseball and softball by awarding grants to schools and school districts, municipalities, and qualified nonprofit groups that are involved in youth baseball or softball.

Deadline: Applications are due January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1, annually

Website: web.mlbcommunity.org/programs/baseball_tomorrow_fund.jsp?content=about

Saucony Run for Good Program

The Saucony Run for Good Foundation encourages active and healthy lifestyles for children and is dedicated to preventing and eliminating childhood obesity. In addition, the foundation acts to inform the public about the causes and prevention of childhood obesity and provide funding to optimize the impact and success of community organizations, including public schools that promote running and fitness programs for children.

Grants up to \$10,000 are awarded

Deadline: Applications are due June 15 and December 15, annually

Flexible Learning Environments Open Unlimited Possibilities

Flexible classrooms look and feel different from traditional classrooms. Desks are replaced with a variety of learning spaces that allow students to sit, stand, recline, wiggle, and collaborate.



Hopkins Public Schools

Justin Ingham, a third-grade teacher at Gatewood Elementary, was in his 14th year of teaching when he decided to do something completely different. Inspired by a presentation his colleague gave during workshop week, he became interested in creating a flexible classroom — a fluid space that allowed students to customize their learning environments. It was one week before the first day of school, not exactly the best time to tear apart your entire classroom, but it was now or never. And one thing was clear: If he was going to build this environment, all of the desks in his classroom needed to go.

Ingham's first flexible classroom was bare bones and made mostly with extra furniture he found in his school's back hallway. A few months into his experiment, his classroom was chosen as a pilot site to test out flexible furniture. But the change is bigger than removing the desks and replacing them with fun furniture — it's about the learning that happens when you change the classroom environment.

This is not about furniture, it's about the psychology that is behind this," said Karen Terhaar, director of teaching and learning for Hopkins Public Schools. "When you have a lot of open space, there is a peacefulness to the space that changes how students respond."

Flexible learning spaces are just one way that Hopkins Public Schools is pushing past the traditional classroom model and exploring innovative methods that remove barriers, deepen engagement and critical thinking, and allow students to take ownership over their learning. "Once the idea of an assigned seat is out of the picture, I am allowed to trust my students and engage with them where they are, instead of trying to manage where they should be — it strengthens our relationship," Ingham said.

Grassroots enthusiasm

One year after he made the change, Ingham has no plans of returning to a traditional classroom. He is now part of a grassroots movement sweeping across Hopkins Public Schools as teachers at every level are embracing flexible classrooms to improve student outcomes. The District plans to continue to support teachers who have an interest in transforming their classrooms.

"This is a model that is growing organically District-wide as teachers watch the transformation in their colleagues' classrooms," Terhaar said. "It is our hope to nurture this interest in creating flexible spaces and support teachers in the continued effort to transform their classrooms to better meet the needs of students."

Flexible classrooms look and feel different from traditional classrooms. Desks are replaced with a variety of learning spaces that allow students to sit, stand, recline, wiggle, and collaborate. Throughout the day, students can roam freely around the classroom, rotating to the learning space that works best for them. All of this means students have greater ownership over their learning and can participate in it with greater frequency.

"The goal was to give students choice," Ingham said. "I want to increase the engagement of my room to 100 percent, and with a flexible classroom, I am getting more quality work from all my kids, and the engagement is much higher."

21st century classrooms

Hopkins teachers began exploring flexible learning spaces a few years ago. The secondary level implemented flexibility differently because students rotate spaces more frequently. Some classes contain a hybrid of flexible seating and traditional desks. North Junior High introduced flexible furniture in its media center and the gifted and talented Autonomous Learning Model

(ALM) class used these concepts long before there was language for it.

Tracey Beaverson, now a teacher at Meadowbrook Elementary, was one of the first elementary teachers to pioneer this shift in her classroom. It was an idea she heard about in HopDina, a professional development cohort that serves Hopkins and Edina public schools. Teachers were grappling with how to teach in classrooms that were designed to prepare students for industrial work. Collaboration is now critical in the classroom, and a technology-rich curriculum means that the teacher is no longer the only source of information in the room. The learning environment needs to reflect the learning expectations.

"We are changing our teaching styles, but the room was stagnant," Beaverson said. "I would move kids around and change desks, but it was not easy, and it was not conducive to the collaborative, creative learning environment I was trying to produce.

Ditching the desks

At the elementary level, when young kids are in one room for most of the day, desks can be problematic. Ingham estimates that at least half of his kids struggled to sit still in the same

spot all day. A flexible learning space acknowledges the need to move and allows the student to choose the space they need to stay engaged in their work. It empowers both the students and the teacher.

Emma Henke, a fourth-grade teacher at Meadowbrook Elementary, shifted her classroom at the start of this school year. She created a variety of collaborative spaces and a number of configurations that allowed students to work independently. Her students give her feedback on what they need, and she adapts her classroom accordingly. She continues to be surprised by the spaces students are drawn to, but she is also impressed by the results she is seeing.

"You have to be reflective and adaptive," she said. "I really did not think the pillows would be such a hit. The students sit in the most random places, but I have seen their stamina grow, as well as their ability to work with partners and in groups. My students are better able to focus."

www.hopkinsschools.org
(952) 988-4000



Lemonade Wars

Alice Smith SMARTS kids host friendly competition for charity

Hopkins Public Schools

SMARTS students spent the summer reading "The Lemonade War," and decided to host a competition of their own. All of the proceeds were donated to Feed My Starving Children.

The battleground was set. The signs were hung. And the drinks were cold. The lemonade war was on.

Alice Smith Elementary summer SMARTS (Students Making Academic Results Toward Success) students took a page from the book "The Lemonade War" and put on a friendly competition of their own on Tuesday, Aug. 8. But their "war" had a charitable twist: All proceeds from the competing stands would go to the local chapter of Feed My Starving Children.

The SMARTS students spent the summer reading Jacqueline Davies' "The Lemonade War," which tells the story of brother and sister Evan and Jessie and their budding lemonade stands. The two compete to see who can sell the most lemonade and rake in the most money. Through perseverance and a lesson in teamwork, the two eventually come together for the greater

good. And so did the SMARTS kids.

At one stand, ice cold classic lemonade for 50 cents. At the other stand, various flavors of the summertime favorite Capri Sun for 75 cents. It didn't matter so much about who sold the most, but rather how much the two groups together could help others.

"It feels very good to be donating this money and giving back," said 9-year-old Aiyana Brown. "We saw a video of Feed My Starving Children of the kids and I just wanted to help them and give to them."

Together the two stands collected \$152 for Feed My Starving Children, a nonprofit organization that brings people together to pack food pouches that are distributed to communities across the globe experiencing food insecurity.

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Tim Finn Receives MASE New Special Education Leader Award



St. Francis School District

The Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE) has named Tim Finn, Director of Special Services at the St. Francis School District, as the recipient of the 2017 New Special Education Leader Award. Finn has received this award for his commitment to students with disabilities and their families and his active involvement in professional and community affairs. He will be honored with the New Special Education Leader Award at a statewide recognition ceremony during the MASA/MASE Spring Conference, March 9–10.

“Tim continuously demonstrates a commitment to providing exemplary programming

for all students within the St. Francis School District, collaborating with parents and staff, and mentoring new leaders within the district,” said AnnaRae Klopfer, Special Services Supervisor at the St. Francis School District in her letter of support. “Tim takes the time to listen to all points of view, considers all options, and bases his decisions on what is going to best meet the needs of everyone involved, particularly the student.”

Finn has been with the St. Francis School District as the Director of Special Services since 2013. He has been instrumental in increasing the programming options for all students.

Finn helped establish Saint’s Online for the fall of 2015, an online school for students in grades 3–12, as well as Saint’s Academy for the fall 2016, an alternative learning program for students in grades 6–12. He was also the driving force behind researching and becoming a member of Intermediate 916 to better meeting the needs of St. Francis’ most challenging students with disabilities. Finn has co-chaired St. Francis’ new Strategic Plan Implementation Team, identified a need and developed a new center-based special education program at East Bethel Community School, and worked closely with the director of curriculum and instruction

to more effectively implement the RTI program. He has also supervised the Indian Education Program, implemented changes to the district’s 504 development and delivery, and repurposed St. Francis’ Crossroads School and Vocational Center by bringing back the 18–21 Transition Program.

“Tim is the glue that binds our district level cabinet and administrators together — each of us goes to Tim when we need a fresh and honest perspective. He truly is an out-of-the-box thinker who provides new perspectives on an ongoing basis,” said Troy Ferguson, Superintendent of the St. Francis School District in his letter of support. “Tim’s tireless work ethic and commitment to continuous improvement has significantly helped our district move forward in its mission to ‘equip all students with the knowledge and skills to empower them to achieve their dreams and full potential while becoming responsible citizens in a dynamic world.’”

For the first 15 years of his professional career, Finn worked for a non-profit social services agency that provided day programming and employment services to adults with disabilities. He joined the St. Francis School District in 2001 and has held the roles of Transition Teacher/Due Process Facilitator and Program Supervisor ECSE. Finn took over as Director of Special Services in 2013. He has also been an active MASE member serving on the Strategic Plan-

ning Committee.

Finn received a post-master’s graduate certificate in Educational Administration and Leadership and he holds a master’s degree in Special Education and a bachelor’s degree in Sociology.

MASE is a professional association organized to promote programs and services to improve the education of children with disabilities, to foster high quality programs of professional development, and to study problems relating to serving children with disabilities and improving the leadership of administrators for special education. MASE members are administrators for special education in public or private schools, cooperative regional, state and other education administrative units, college and university professors of special education teacher or administrator preparation programs, and administrators, coordinators or consultants for the Minnesota Department of Education.

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Unified Physical Education Class Creates Acceptance and Inclusion in LNHS, LSHS



Lakeville Area Public Schools

Lakeville North and South high school students are getting to know each other a little better at their respective schools as a result of a new course offered this year.

The unified physical education class brings general education and special education students together to build relationships, have fun and break down the walls of both populations of students. Students enrolled in the class are paired with students with intellectual and/or physical disabilities, and as a pair, they develop

skills in various sports.

After a two-week period, the students rotate partners. The program helps to build confidence and improve on important social skills, all while giving students a chance to create a new friendships and feelings of self-worth.

"There's a lot of hands-on problem solving skills that take place during the hour," said Shawn Tatge, a health, physical education, and adaptive physical education teacher at Lakeville North and committee member of Special Olympics Minnesota. "We start out the

class by squaring away the goal or objectives for the day, then the general education student is responsible for making sure their athlete, or special education student, is on-task to make sure the goal and objective was complete."

Kirk Goldberg, a physical education/developmental adapted physical education teacher at Lakeville South, believes the class is a great chance for general and special education students to get to know each other.

"I feel like it is a great opportunity for students to interact with our special needs students and really get to know them," Goldberg said. "I'm hoping this class will help build friendships that can carry over outside of class and outside of school."

Besides making connections with other students, it provides an opportunity for students to participate in a variety of activities, including archery, floor hockey, volleyball, bowling, bean bag toss, disc golf and horseshoes.

"My favorite part is the activities . . . I think they are really fun and time goes by fast. And bowling has been the best — it's my favorite sport," said junior Lucas Alexander, a student at Lakeville North.

Student Holland Kannie, a junior at Lakeville North, likes the class because it makes students happy.

"My favorite part of this class is seeing all the [special needs] students smile and have

a good time. I like taking this class because it helps people," Holland said.

Not only is the class uniting students, but Tatge hopes the class will also help students discover what they want to do in their professional future.

"It's really a hands-on class. Our district always talks about being career-ready, and this class is perfect for that," Tatge said. "It helps you determine if you want to go into teaching or special education or physical therapy . . . there are so many jobs where you can work with individuals with disabilities."

Tatge is happy the unified physical education class has been brought to both high schools in Lakeville, as Minnesota is currently a pilot state for this class.

"We are nailing down the curriculum to try and get this class to go nationwide," Tatge said. "This is the second year schools in the state have been doing this — Wayzata and Proctor schools started it last year — and this year we joined in along with Orono and Minneapolis."

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