

SchoolPages

www.bloomingtonschools.info Winter 2015

A MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT LES FUJITAKE

Priorities bring district's vision to life



Superintendent Les Fujitake and Richfield Superintendent Steven Unowsky visit a Bloomington-Richfield early childhood family education class at Richfield's Central Education Center.

Priorities are how we bring our vision and values to life. By focusing on these priorities, and being faithful to our vision and values, we will continue to move the needle on student achievement and earn the trust of our parents and community.

Each day, in classrooms and offices across the district, we have the opportunity to bring our vision and values to life. We do this because our priority, indeed our commitment, is to be a student advocate helping to guide them on their pathway to graduation.

As superintendent, I am fortunate to see all the things that enrich the lives of our students, the wonderful accomplishments and ongoing projects that define our staff and the district. Here are a few highlights of our efforts this year:

- ▶ Last fall, **all-day kindergarten** — a child's front door to our district — became a reality in every Bloomington elementary school. Coupled with years of dedicated funding for early childhood education, we are providing children from all backgrounds with the best start possible and a solid foundation of learning.
- ▶ Also opening its doors for the first time last fall was the **Dimensions Academy High School**, a unique partnership

with Normandale Community College that provides an early college experience for gifted students in grades 9-10.

- ▶ The rollout of the **Next Technologies for Learning** "one-to-one" initiative — buoyed by the community's support of last year's referendum — has put a Chromebook in the hands of every middle school student. Several elementary schools have begun a similar one-to-one initiative, and next fall, every high school student will begin carrying a device. At the same time The Hub continues to evolve to better connect parents, staff, and students with current and relevant data.
- ▶ The first phase of new **safety and security measures** were completed in eight schools, allowing us to better prepare for, protect against and respond to school emergencies. We'll complete this work in the remaining schools over the next two summers.

At the same time, with a focus on creating a strong community of partners and supporters, we advance the practice of learning through innovation. These efforts represent the possibilities to grow, and the capacity to achieve our vision of creating pathways to graduation for all learners:

- ▶ The development of a **Personalized Growth Plan** for every student that prepares them to meet milestones in order to graduate and enter college or a career with the necessary skills to be successful.
- ▶ Preparing for the opening in fall 2015 of the **Bloomington Career & College Academy**, an innovative program designed to prepare students to pursue a career path, job training or college degree while earning a high school diploma. *(See more on this initiative on Page 2).*

We are not without challenges. We must continually assess how expected changes in resources affect our current decisions. Our priorities will shape how we use the limited resources as outlined in the Right Sizing the Budget process *(See story on Page 2).*

As collaborative partners with parents, families and community residents, we will always be focused on what's best for children. The more we do and learn together, the greater the capacity for children to be successful.



Severe weather procedures explained

Bloomington Public Schools' severe weather procedures aim to minimize the loss of instructional time while being mindful of student and employee safety.

In general, the district will remain open, even in severe weather. We know that snow or extreme cold closing days are an inconvenience to parents, so we do our best to declare them only when necessary.

Decisions to close schools are determined only after the district's Severe Weather Team has consulted various authorities, including meteorologists with Hennepin County Emergency Management and the National Weather Service, law enforcement and transportation agencies and neighboring school districts.

After reviewing all information available, the superintendent makes a decision no later than 5:30 a.m. (often earlier). As a general rule, notification to parents and staff is made **ONLY** if schools are closed. School closures are communicated via phone and email through Blackboard Connect (parent notification system), and posted to the district's web and social media sites. Broadcast media — TV and radio — are also notified.

Please note that official communication is distributed via the district's Facebook (www.facebook.com/BloomingtonSchools) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/District271) sites, and parents are cautioned to be aware of copies, imitations or impersonations. During the recent severe cold weather, erroneous messages were posted and retweeted from a Twitter account impersonating the district's.

Student absences are excused at the discretion of the superintendent of schools during extreme weather conditions only, and must be called in by a parent or legal guardian.

Due to the complexity of student transportation, the district does not currently offer two-hour late starts. Every attempt will be made to avoid closing schools once classes are in session.

For more information, please visit www.bloomington.k12.mn.us/about-us/emergencies-and-closings.

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Investing in the Future

District to launch Career & College Academy

Bloomington Public Schools is launching a new academic opportunity aimed at preparing all students to succeed after high school. The **Bloomington Career & College Academy** — set to launch in fall 2015 — will provide high school students the opportunity to explore introductory and advanced technical learning in a hands-on, applied environment.

Bloomington Career & College Academy (BCCA) offers students a unique learning option, aligning courses and curriculum with pre-designed career paths including health science, information technology, criminal justice/law enforcement and building and construction trades.

Students will graduate from high school workforce-ready, armed with foundational training and credentials that will transition directly to college or the workplace. The program offers concurrent post-secondary credits along with high school STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) or elective credit. Some students may graduate with a career certification or credential, and the courses and credits are compatible and transferrable within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system.

"In creating the Bloomington Career & College Academy, we are investing in our students and community," says Superintendent Les Fujitake. "We know not all students will go to a four-year college or university. The Career & College Academy will offer students the opportunity to experience college classes and job training that will benefit them no matter what path they follow after high school."

Statistics show a skills and achievement gap in Minnesota, along with projections that indicate a shortage of workers over the next 10 years. BCCA identified career pathways using data that shows employment fields with job growth and livable wages requiring some post-secondary education but not necessarily a four-year degree. Instructors will work closely with local employers to arrange workplace visits, job shadowing and internship opportunities for students.

Classes will be held at the BCCA campus, the former Lincoln High School that also houses the district's community education offices and programs, or on the campus of an education partner. Transportation will be provided between the high schools, the BCCA, and partner campuses at no cost to students. Students will take core classes at either Bloomington Jefferson or Kennedy high schools, enabling them to continue to participate in athletics, activities and clubs. Open enrollment is also available for non-resident students.

Career & College ACADEMY

Bloomington Public Schools

Students and parents can learn more at an **Open House on Feb. 12, 2015**, showcasing the Bloomington Career & College Academy campus, with representatives from education and supporting partners, including Normandale Community College, Dunwoody College of Technology, Hennepin Technical College the Minnesota Building Trades Apprenticeship program, the Governor's Workforce Development Council, and the Greater Twin Cities United Way.



"As educators, we work every day to help our students thrive and achieve their dreams. The Bloomington Career and College Academy will open a lot of doors for our students, and help place them on the path to success after graduation." – Superintendent Les Fujitake



Poplar Bridge incorporates 3D printing

Poplar Bridge Elementary School students view the school's new Makerbot 3D printer. As a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) school, Poplar Bridge fourth and fifth graders use the 3D printer on a variety of classroom and school projects.

The Makerbot is part of the social problem-solving curriculum City X Project, according to teacher Nate Edwards, who wrote a grant to fund the purchase of the 3D printer last year.

"The curriculum teaches students how to design objects that help solve societal issues such as transportation, health and communication," said Edwards. "Students are given different scenarios and then use 3D design software to build models that are printed with the Makerbot."

3D printing is a process of making three-dimensional solid objects from a digital file. A 3D printer creates the objects by laying down successive layers of material until the entire object is created. These machines are used to create toys, mechanical parts and prosthetic limbs.

Poplar Bridge was featured on 5 Eyewitness News for its work with 3D printers in the classroom.

Visit bit.ly/poplarbridge3D to see the full story.

Right Sizing the Budget

District targets \$4 million reduction for 2015-16 budget

District administration is recommending a series of budget reductions and funding shifts in an effort to bring the school system's spending more in line with revenues. This will be the first of a multi-year "right sizing the budget" process to "change the way the district does business," according to Superintendent Les Fujitake.

The proposed budget reductions amount to just over \$4 million — a target established by the school board — and includes increasing student-teacher ratios and scaling back annual curriculum revision expenses. Administration is also recommending another spend down of the district's fund balance, a practice it has employed the past two years.

Right Sizing the Budget

The district's reserves have been spent down by nearly \$10 million over the past two budget cycles, and administration expects to reduce the fund balance by another \$3 million for the 2015-16 school year. In order to comply with school board policy, the district must maintain a fund balance of five percent of its general fund budget. The current fund balance cannot sustain the projected deficit and still meet the reserve policy, thus the need to reduce spending by \$4 million.

While most metro area school districts were making significant budget cuts and layoffs over the past several years, Bloomington Public Schools was maintaining a strong financial picture thanks to conservative financial management practices and a stable student population,

according to Superintendent Les Fujitake."

Financial stability also allowed for the set aside of revenues to grow the district's fund balance, a sound business practice that provides "a bridge for any unforeseen circumstances that impact the budget when expenses are greater than revenue," said Fujitake.

However, a combination of factors — declining student enrollment, state funding that has not kept pace with inflation and increased district spending over the past couple of years — are forcing the district to right-size the budget.

The school board is currently reviewing the budget reduction recommendations as part of the overall 2015-16 budget development.

To learn more about the Right Sizing the Budget process, visit www.bloomington.k12.mn.us/RSB.



Welcome Center connects families and schools

Bloomington Public Schools' new Welcome Center opened last summer to help parents and families more effectively support their children in the educational process.

Housed in the Pond Family and Welcome Center, 9600 3rd Ave. S., the facility is part of the Office of Community Relations and Family Engagement.

It offers a host of resources for parents and families new to the community, including the following:

- ▶ Centralized student enrollment. Bilingual enrollment specialists provide hands-on and language-specific assistance for families in completing the online enrollment process and navigating the school system.

We have truly become a welcoming presence that helps families not only enroll their children in school, but also learn about and adjust to their new community.

— Suzanne Kpowulu, family and community engagement manager

- ▶ Introduction to resources and support within the Bloomington community.
- ▶ Referrals to the Fairview Pond Center Clinic for immunizations.

- ▶ Early childhood screenings.

"Many families new to the district are also new to the state or the country,"

said Suzanne Kpowulu, family and community engagement manager. "We have truly become a welcoming presence that helps families not only enroll their children in school, but also learn about and adjust to their new community."

For more information, call 952-681-6248 or visit www.bloomington.k12.mn.us/family-engagement.



Research shows...

Parent satisfaction survey scheduled

The district's biennial Parent Satisfaction Survey will be administered online between Feb. 2 and March 27. The online survey will be provided to parents via email.

The survey seeks parent feedback in three general areas: Academics, Climate & Safety, and Communication/Parent Engagement. The survey is not an assessment of an individual teacher, administrator or staff, but an overall review of the school. Parents are encouraged to complete a survey for each school their children attend, but only one survey per school.

Survey results will be used by each school to assess areas of improvement.

The survey may be taken online from any computer, and schools will make computers available during their parent-teacher conference dates. For more information, please contact the Community Relations Office at 952-681-6403.



Kennedy High School hosted the Minnesota Association of Counselors of Color (MnACC) College Fair. Students had the opportunity to learn about a variety of college options with representatives from 48 colleges and universities.



Oak Grove Elementary School second and third graders in the school's Elements program for gifted students spent a week studying at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. The students used the scientific method to learn about animals and plants with a focus on the rain forest and tundra biomes. Students observed animals and worked together to build enrichment activities for them by winding fruit and other foods through dried grape vines.

Stakeholders provide insights on Pathways to Graduation

A series of facilitated conversations held in October and November with stakeholders — students, staff, parents, and business and community leaders — provided insights on the district's *Pathways to Graduation* plan, and specifically the development of Personalized Growth Plans for all students. Pathways to Graduation is a comprehensive framework that identifies milestones students need to meet in order to be prepared for the next level of study, graduate on time and enter college or a career with the necessary skills to thrive and be successful.

More than 150 individuals participated in 11 stakeholder conversations representing the following groups:

- Special Education Community Advisory (SECAC)
- Community Services Advisory (CSAC)
- Education Foundation of Bloomington (EFB)
- Latino/Spanish Parents
- Youth Leadership (middle and high school students)
- Parents of African American, Native American and bi-racial students
- PTSA Council and PTA leaders
- Somali Parent Network
- Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)
- Bloomington Chamber of Commerce
- Community Collaboration Council (CCC)

The following are common themes generated by participants:

- The Pathways to Graduation focus on students' personal and career plans must provide relevance for learning.
- Parents and students agreed that a balance between rigor and choice is necessary for student learning.
- Personalized Growth Plans must include life and social skills along with academic expectations.
- The district must provide adequate support through counseling, mentorship and coaching to assist students on their pathways to graduation.

The collective responses reported in the Stakeholders Conversation Executive Summary are intended to assist the school board, district leadership and various advisory committees in identifying opportunities to develop and improve programs and services.

The executive summary is available upon request from the Community Relations Office at 952-681-6403.

Points of Pride

STUDENT AND STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS



Jefferson High School junior **Zak Ketterson** qualified for the World Junior Championships at the 2015 U.S. Cross Country Championships held in Houghton, MI. Ketterson's finishes in three races — first in a classic sprint, second in a 15-kilometer individual start freestyle, and third in a 10-kilometer mass start classic — qualified him for the Under-18 Scando Nations Cup and the Under-20 World Junior Championships. He will compete in the Scando Nations Cup in Ornskoldsvik, Sweden, and the Czech Cup in Nove Mesto, Czech Republic, in February. (Photo by Jacob Ellingson)



Jefferson and Kennedy high school seniors receiving recognition for their performance on Advanced Placement (AP) exams are: **Kathleen Wang** was named a National AP Scholar. AP Scholars with Distinction: **Deanna Benyo, Caitlyn Chung, Henry Fronk, William Frost, Jackson Haas, Karina Hayday, Austin Hegland, Brendan Klein, Lauren Larson, Christina Reinhardt** and **Neal Walsh**. AP Scholars with Honor: **Noah Becker, Clare Biedny, Scott Blazanin, Emily Carr, Taiying Chin, Nicholas Daoust, Hayat Essa, Sarah Freschi, Justin Humenik, Blake Johnson, Philip Mic, Kelly Mitzel** and **Isaac Schmidt-Jensen**. AP Scholars: **Sean Bannigan, Megan Eide, John Elliott, Christine Ha, Molly Hendricks, Madeline Johnson, Rachel Lee, Jake Lindvall, Maverick Manzke, Nicholas Meyer, Laura Peller, Philip Punnoose, Daniel Tobon, Jesse Upton, Timothy Voigt, Jaimie Wolner, Xiaojing Zeng, Priscilla Barrientos, Nicholas Brazel, Colin Erickson, Daniel Fremder, Katharine Hauge, Ryan Jahr, Benjamin Paul, Isaac Velasco, Benjamin Starfeldt, Katherine Madsen, Jordan Sybesma** and **Jacob Zielinski**.



Teachers **Laurie Espe** (Ridgeview) and **Sam Hostetler** (Kennedy) were selected this year's TIES Exceptional Teachers. They are among teachers selected for modeling best practices in using technology to engage students.



Google for Education showcased **Bloomington Public Schools'** use of Google Apps and Chromebooks to enhance student learning. To read the full article, visit bit.ly/BPSgoogle.



Gifted and Talented department staff presented at the National Association of Gifted Children conference. Representing Valley View Middle School's Nobel program for gifted students were **Chris Thompson, Stephanie Kristjanson, Erin Boltik, Ben Magras, Julie Donaldson** and **Meredith Aby**. **Barb Dullaghan**, elementary gifted coordinator, presented

"Perspectives," a language arts unit she wrote for The College of William and Mary and Kendall Hunt.



Jefferson's **Leah Dargis** and **Zach Diedrich**, and Kennedy's **Laura Gale** and **Grant Johnson** were selected ExCEL Award nominees for academic excellence, leadership qualities, participation in fine arts or athletic activities and volunteerism.



Jefferson's **Xiaojing Zeng** and **Neal Walsh** and Kennedy's **Abby Trudell** and **Nick Brazel** were selected as this year's Triple A (Academics, Arts and Athletics) Award nominees. To be eligible, students must participate in MSHSL athletics and fine arts activities and have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.



Oak Grove Elementary School is one of Minnesota's 48 Celebration Schools as recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education.



Bloomington Public Schools received a Star Award for Strategic Communications for effectively engaging the community in the 2013 Safe and Innovative Schools Referendum.



Two Jefferson High School debate teams have advanced to the State Tournament: the team of **Jeremy Kuoch** and **Cindy Chiev** and the team of **Ann Phan** and **Michelle Wang**. Kuoch and Chiev were undefeated through six rounds of section competition.



Bloomington Public Schools was named to the 5th annual AP District Honor Roll by CollegeBoard. The AP District Honor Roll represents districts that have increased access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses while maintaining the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP Exams. Bloomington is one of 547 school districts in the U.S. and Canada and one of 10 Minnesota school districts to receive the honor.

IN THE KNOW

Student Registration Information

The district is currently enrolling students for the 2015-16 school year. Visit www.bloomington.enrollview.org to enroll today!

With enrollment questions, or to enroll your child in grades K-8, contact the Welcome Center at 952-681-6248. If enrolling your child in high school, call Jefferson High School at 952-806-7600 or Kennedy High School at 952-681-5000.

Senior Achievement Nominations

Nominations are now being accepted for the 25th annual Bloomington Public Schools Senior Achievement Awards, which recognize outstanding Jefferson and Kennedy high school seniors.

Nominations must be received by the nominee's high school no later than noon on Friday, Feb. 6. Forms are available at bit.ly/senior-achievement, at each of the high schools or at the district's community relations office.

Enrollment Report

The 2014 Enrollment Report is now available online at bit.ly/enrollment-14. The report includes the following data:

- ✓ actual vs. projected enrollment comparisons
- ✓ enrollment by school and grade
- ✓ student demographics by school
- ✓ student diversity profile
- ✓ trends in overall enrollment, ethnic diversity and free & reduced-price meal eligibility over the last 10 years

New Board Leadership

The Bloomington School Board appointed new leaders for 2015 at its Jan. 12 meeting.

They are Chair **Maureen Bartolotta**, Vice Chair **Ric Oliva**, Clerk **Nelly Korman** and Treasurer **Tom Bennett**. Directors are **Dick Bergstrom**, **Jim Sorum** and **Dawn Steigauf**.



Maureen Bartolotta, School Board Chair



Performing Arts Calendar

FEBRUARY

- 13 Jefferson and Kennedy one-act plays at Kennedy, 7 p.m.
- 19 Jefferson winter orchestra concert, 7 p.m.
Kennedy orchestra pops concert, 7 p.m.
- 24 Kennedy band concert, 7 p.m.
- 27 Jefferson band pops concert, 7 p.m.
- 28 Jefferson band pops concert, 6 p.m.

MARCH

- 3 Kennedy mid-winter choir concert, 7 p.m.
- 12 Olson Middle senior citizen preview, "Hairspray Jr," 9 a.m. coffee and rolls; 9:30 a.m.
- 12-13 Olson Middle presents "Hairspray Jr," 7 p.m.
- 14 Olson Middle presents "Hairspray Jr," 1 p.m. and 7 p.m.
- 16 Bloomington orchestra concert at Kennedy, 7 p.m.
- 18 Oak Grove Middle senior citizen preview, "Sound of Music," 9 a.m. coffee and rolls; 10 a.m.
- 19 Olson Middle honor music concert, 7 p.m.
- 19-20 Oak Grove Middle presents "Sound of Music," 7 p.m.
- 21 Oak Grove Middle presents "Sound of Music," 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.
- 24 Valley View Middle presents Valley View Voices Variety Show, 7 p.m.
- 26 Kennedy presents "Kennedy's Got Talent," 7 p.m.



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