

# WAYFINDER

FALL/WINTER 2022 | VOLUME 3



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## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Superintendent Dr. Theresa Battle reads "Nigel and the Moon" to preschool students as part of Read for the Record in October.



# HAVING THE COURAGE TO *innovate*

When we talk about who we are as a school district, we often use the term “trailblazers.” We set our sights on our future and find our own path, and we want to instill that mindset in our students, too.

**Finding our own path means more than just being willing to try something new. We actively search for better ways and if we don't find something, we make a better way. We innovate.**

We want innovation to be part of our culture and identity, and so we've built it right into our Strategic Roadmap, where one of our strategic directions is “Supporting and leveraging new methods and original thinking to improve student outcomes.”

And we have a history of delivering innovative approaches, including

- + adopting the Pathways model approach all the way from preschool to grade 12,
- + making investments in student and family supports like cultural liaisons, social workers and mental health supports,

- + committing to becoming a culturally proficient school system that can truly meet the needs of each student.

It's not the easy, well-worn road. It takes courage but it's how we'll find our path and how we'll make a real, lasting impact on our students, families and community.

In this issue of Wayfinder, you'll read more stories of individuals, teams and our entire district having the courage to create and innovate to reach their goals. I'm so proud every time I see another path being created and excited by where we're headed together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theresa Battle".

Dr. Theresa Battle,  
Superintendent

# HANDS-ON APPROACH

## to science and engineering is part of Pathways model at One91 middle schools



Students in sixth, seventh and eighth grades are excited to try new things, begin to explore what is important to them and dive deep into subjects. Exploratory classes at Eagle Ridge and Nicollet middle schools allow students to do just that in areas like family and consumer sciences, art, health, computer technology, and Project Lead the Way engineering. By providing a meaningful early introduction to the world of computer science and engineering, District 191 is teaching important skills and concepts through technology, hands-on learning, and exploration that goes beyond the textbook.

The district has been working with curriculum from Project Lead the Way (PLTW) for a decade. This innovative approach is focused on providing transformative learning experiences by offering an engaging, hands-on classroom environment that empowers students to develop skills and knowledge that are increasingly important in the modern world. Every student gets the opportunity to explore this curriculum with sixth and seventh grade students rotating through courses quarterly and eighth graders taking semester-long electives that prepare them to transition into Pathways options at Burnsville High School.



**The STEM piece was exciting for me because it is more hands-on and not just based in books. This pulls in a lot of disciplines and really allows for kids to get used to getting messy, making mistakes, and trying again, which is incredibly important. We are trying to instill in them the need to have patience and resilience and keep trying until it works.**

*Emily Beckmann, PLTW teacher*

Emily Beckmann is the PLTW teacher at Eagle Ridge and has been teaching middle school students all about the world of engineering, robotics, and more for the past four years. A former science teacher, she was excited about the curriculum because it puts a big focus on hands-on learning with trial and error, measurement, and making adjustments to find the right solution.

“The STEM piece was exciting for me because it is more hands-on and not just based in books,” said Beckmann. “This pulls in a lot of disciplines and really allows for kids to get used to getting messy, making mistakes, and trying again, which is incredibly important. We are trying to instill in them the need to have patience and resilience and keep trying until it works.”

Students in each grade level have slightly different approaches to what they do. In sixth grade, students are more focused on designing and modeling, using 3D printers to design and create keychains based on templates with the ability to get creative. Seventh graders expand to electrical work including making circuits, electromagnets, creating a motor, and using snap circuits to power a light bulb or motor.

“I let the students start with the snap circuits without a lot of instruction,” said Beckmann. “Most of the time they put too many things on the board and start to figure out how to apply what they have learned about electrons and paths through trial and error, and eventually really get into the design process.”



A recent project combined components of art and science as students were able to design a card, create a drawing on the front, and use a circuit with copper tape, a watch battery, and LED lights to create a functioning light-up design. The students created some amazing projects and had to work through various challenges to make sure the electrical system and lights worked properly.



Another project found seventh graders using household items to create an electromagnet and a machine that could be used to transmit morse code. Using what they learned in the classroom, students transformed a wood block, a nail, some rubber bands, magnetic wire, paper clips, and a D battery into something that used those components for a whole new function. Students enjoy the lessons and materials, but really get excited to put their learning into action with their hands.

“We do a survey every year and the students always say that they love the hands-on days the best,” said Beckmann. “I love seeing students who maybe don’t thrive in more book-focused core classes really come to life and just love what they are learning and doing with engineering. I had a student who doesn’t always get excited about school who completely lit up at the opportunity to use a drone, and that was really cool to see.”

A recent donation from engineering firm Campos EPC allowed for the purchase of new equipment for the Flight and Space class including drones, rockets, and flight simulation tools. The class takes a deep dive into the history of flight from da Vinci to now as well as the science behind it. The class culminates in a Mars Rover project where students have to navigate movement on Mars, know what the atmosphere is

like, and how the human body would be impacted during the flight. Students also use a straw rocket launcher to be able to experiment with different flight paths, levels of intensity for launch, and how to maximize distance.

There is also new equipment planned from VEX Robotics that will allow students to build, code, and control robots with new software and build on different coding languages like Block, Python, and C++, which are becoming essential in a variety of career paths.

I think coding is like the new cursive in that it's a huge tool that is being used more and more and will be an important part of these kids' lives. Students who have a solid understanding of coding will have a huge advantage in the next ten years!

“When I was in school, they taught everyone cursive, but they don’t really do that anymore since it is no longer widely used,” said Beckmann. “I think coding is like the new cursive in that it’s a huge tool that is being used more and more and will be an important part of these kids’ lives. Students who have a solid understanding of coding will have a huge advantage in the next ten years!”

Electives are a big part of the Pathways model in District 191, allowing students to experience things that they otherwise wouldn’t have the opportunity to explore. Whether it is getting to use real kitchen equipment, playing an instrument, or programming a robot, middle school students are benefitting from hands-on learning experiences that go beyond the textbook. ■



# A PASSION FOR SEWING

## places BHS alum at the forefront of a future fashion pathway for students

An entrepreneur at heart and expert seamstress, Julie West, Burnsville High School and Nicollet Middle School alumna, didn't expect to find herself teaching at her former schools some 30 years later.

The driving force behind West's return to her alma mater was, of course, her passion for teaching. But, it was also because she wanted to share a piece of her creative self with others and inspire them to pursue their own passions, just like she had done for herself over the years.

Whether it was teaching swim lessons out of her parents' backyard pool as a teenager, participating in beauty pageants in high school, running a sewing school for young children as a stay-at-home mom, managing home-based businesses, supervising student teachers, doing preschool screenings or teaching students how to cook, she explored opportunities where she could thrive as an educator, entrepreneur and artist. All these experiences have helped shape her into the innovator that she truly is.

West began her journey in One91 at Harriet Bishop Elementary, where she taught fourth through sixth grades for eight years. She also taught at Vista View Elementary for five years. In 2020, West was

one of the teachers selected to pilot the new K-5 math curriculum, part of the implementation of Elementary Pathways that launched that year.

At the end of the 2021-22 school year, it came as no surprise to West when Nicollet Middle School Principal Frannie Becquer and Burnsville High School Associate Principal Sarah Noble asked her to take up teaching Family and Consumer Science (FACS) classes at their schools the following school year. Both principals were familiar with her experience, specifically her sewing abilities, and were in need of a teacher who knew how to sew.



"They thought they had a seamstress who was willing to teach FACS," said West. "I don't think they knew what I brought. How could they have? This is my dream. Of my peers, no one else can do what I do. I just love it. It's so creative. I can take anything, add to it and make it creative."

The transition from teaching elementary and college students to teaching middle and high school students was easy for West to make. However, since she was teaching outside her license area, which is K-6, West was granted an out-of-field permission to teach FACS and would need to do some additional training to show that she was proficient in certain skills.

Sewing is West's passion and heritage. Her mother



and grandmother taught her how to sew at a young age and instilled that passion in her. As she got older, her sewing skills flourished. She believes one reason for that was because she was so tall.

“Fashion didn’t fit me when I was in high school,” said West. “I can remember thinking, if I’m going to wear something, I’d rather either make it so it fits or alter it so it looks pretty.”

She remembers as a young girl attending horse camp with a friend. West recalls all the girls at the camp were wearing Umbro shorts and t-shirts, and she was wearing purple, pleated shorts – all

Forenza – a blouse, sweater vest and matching, wooden-beaded earrings and necklace.

“In high school, I’d always dress up,” said West. “I remember Tom Mraz, former beloved teacher and theater director at Burnsville High School, stopping class and pointing out to everyone that I was wearing jeans! So, it’s really special that I can really share my passion with kids.”

This year, fashion

design classes at the high school are at capacity for enrollment. West said that there just weren’t enough teachers available to meet the need, which is one of the reasons why she was asked to come aboard. With support from District 191 administration, West hopes to build a fashion and merchandising pathway for students.

“All you have to do is stand outside the lunchroom between lunches to know that the way a kid looks is very important to them,” said West. “Build this pathway, and they will come. We’ve got to be able to connect what we’re doing with the community.”

West, who is a lifelong learner and self-proclaimed perpetual student, understands the need for alternatives to a traditional academic path.

“As a mom of a child who didn’t do traditional college, it took me a minute to understand,” West said. “I have my undergraduate, master’s, plus. To really understand that these associate degrees are a niche for some of these kids – that they are going to get them that speciality, that hands-on learning – it’s going to be a perfect fit for them. And those kids are probably going to be my students. Just like my son.”

The passion she has for her craft, the expertise she has in her field and the innovative ways she uses her skills place her at the beginnings of this idea for a new pathway.

Even though the cooking and hospitality piece of the FACS program, which is her focus right now, doesn’t come as natural as the fashion part for West, she knows enough about her craft – teaching, in this case – to get students excited and engaged in their learning.

“I’ve never taught cooking, but good teaching is good teaching,” added West. One of her goals as a teacher has always been to get kids involved in their learning. She is very uncomfortable on the days when she is lecturing and kids take a passive role in the classroom.

“I have 15 years left of my career. What I didn’t expect is being here, being an alumni, being at my first school assembly as a teacher and realizing how emotional it made me. I didn’t expect that,” said West. “That school pride, 30 years later? And then really thinking like, how am I gonna really dig in to make sure I leave something here at Burnsville

High School that means something?

What do I get to leave behind here at this high school that really sent me on a pretty good trajectory. I’ve got some time left here to leave the ladder down for others.”

West says that when she takes on something new, she doesn’t look back. She is committed and goes all in.

“I want my students to see that they, too, can take their passions and turn them into a business for themselves, even if it’s not sewing or crafting,” said West. “These students are our future leaders.” ■



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# A college degree by graduation will soon be possible for BHS students

There are a lot of different options for students to pursue after high school, ranging from starting a career to pursuing a degree. The new Associate of Arts Pathway at Burnsville High School (BHS) lets students get a head start on what comes next in a way that no other district is doing, by earning an associate degree without ever leaving the building.

Beginning in the 2023-24 school year, the Associates of Arts Pathway will offer juniors and seniors at BHS the opportunity to graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate degree. An alternative to the post secondary enrollment option (PSEO) which brings students onto college campuses, the new pathway will formalize and build upon the hundreds of college credits currently offered in the school. A grant from the Minnesota Department of Education is helping get the Pathway started, including covering expenses for planning, administration, instruction and materials.

Students will be able to complete a full day of college-level courses, culminating in 60 college credits with 40 credits being under the Minnesota

Transfer Curriculum (MTC) goal areas, which allow for a seamless transfer of credits into the MN State College system, and 20 credits in electives. There are options to combine this work with the other Pathways offered at BHS to work toward college credits or careers in fields like health care, education or criminal justice. Former high school counselor Becky Akerson is the Associates of Arts Coordinator charged with getting the program up and running.

“  
**We really want to offer the highest level of education possible to our students in a highly supportive and encouraging environment.**”

Becky Akerson,  
Associates of Arts Coordinator

“We really want to offer the highest level of education possible to our students in a highly supportive and encouraging environment,” said Akerson. “We want to feel confident in our ability to support them and to remove barriers that may be keeping some students from pursuing something like this.”

By housing the program within BHS, students will be able to connect with teachers and counselors more readily than they could with college professors, and find support to get used to the level of rigor the courses provide. The program is possible through a strong partnership with a variety of higher education institutions including Inver Hills Community College, the University of Minnesota, Metro State University, and Normandale Community College.



“When students have to leave campus to take college classes, they not only face barriers of transportation, they also forfeit their high school experience,” said Dr. Kathy Funston, the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Pathways. “While in high school, students develop essential leadership, teamwork, time management, critical thinking, and maturity skills. One91 is an innovative, future-focused district and our students deserve all of the opportunities we can bring to them.”

Because so many teachers at BHS have the advanced coursework that allows them to teach college classes to high school students, classes are taught by current teachers with plans for professors to come into the school for specific courses as needed. When students complete the program, they will be able to transfer seamlessly into any of the Minnesota State University options where they will enter as a junior and be able to focus almost exclusively on their degree specific coursework. Other colleges will also honor most of the credits with some requiring a few additional courses.

“On the absolute low end of the spectrum for what a two-year degree would cost, our students and their families could save over \$25,000 by participating in this pathway,” said Akerson. “Barriers like money and transportation have prevented students from achieving their dreams or even pursuing them and this will help by giving the power back to the students.”

Students will still be able to participate in classes that are important to them like fine arts electives and other options while working towards the Associates of Arts Pathway.



“This additional pathway is for students who want the challenge of taking a full schedule of college courses and also want to participate in the activities and social life of high school,” said Dr. Funston. “Our goal is that students are successful in this ambitious program and at Burnsville High School, they will have the care and support of high school staff, teachers, and peers.”

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Our goal is that students are successful in this ambitious program and at Burnsville High School, they will have the care and support of high school staff, teachers, and peers.”

Students taking college classes at other high schools will have the opportunity to earn college credits while on the high school campus, but they will not be able to earn an Associate Degree. BHS’s partner colleges and universities have been excited to participate in a program that allows students to experience college level work in high school and encourages them to explore different options before they get to college.

“High school is often viewed as a series of requirements you have to do, but we want to get kids having more choices and have them try out different things in high school for free instead of in college,” said Akerson. “We want to enhance the power of education and encourage well-rounded, community-driven, and future-prepared students for the world!”

Students are able to explore joining the Associates of Arts Pathway with no application or requirements beyond the GPA requirements for the college-level classes. All students are welcome to explore the pathway and teachers and counselors will be working to promote the pathway, encouraging students who are excelling in an AP or College in the Schools course to consider taking on more through the pathway.

“I want to be able to provide great information and encouraging advice about this option to students, families, teachers, and counselors,” said Akerson. “We eventually want to start connecting with middle school counselors so that students in eighth grade can start having a plan for their future as they enter high school understanding their potential next steps.” ■



For more information on the Associates of Arts Pathway, contact Becky Akerson at [rakerson@isd191.org](mailto:rakerson@isd191.org) or 651-667-6579.

# Educational Innovation in Action:

## One91 Virtual Academy



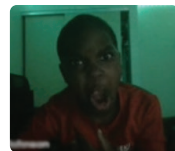
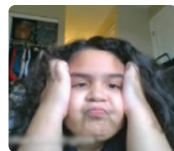
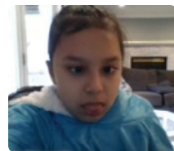
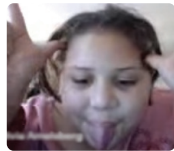
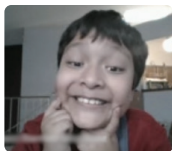
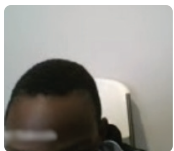
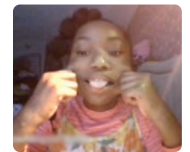
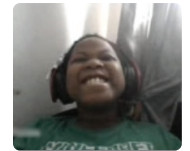
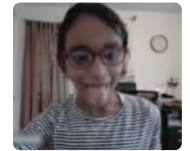
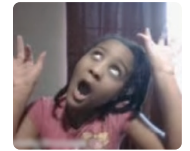
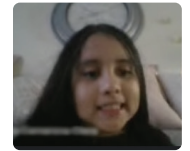
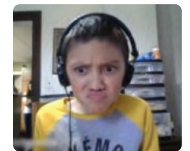
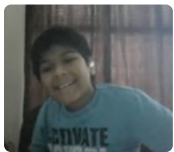
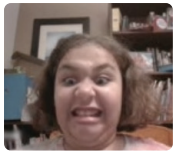
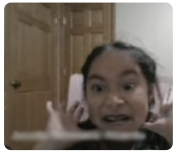
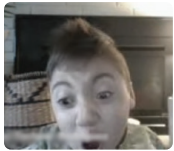
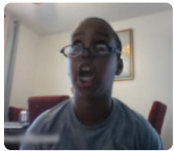
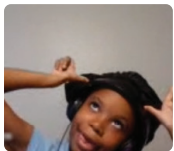
### *How District 191 built a future-focused online school to best serve students*

Kirenza Cooper's third grade students arrive on time for their 9:30 a.m. math class. She greets everyone as they enter, and refers to them as "our friends" as she gets ready to launch today's dive into the eight times tables. Students are excited to be there, immediately raising their hands and ready to share. They are given 45 seconds to gather what they need for today's lesson – a white board and a marker – time that is marked by a countdown clock with upbeat music.

Students show they are ready by holding their whiteboards up to the camera and Ms. Cooper launches today's lesson on screen. The first problem involves solving for the price of a small popcorn in a pattern of numbers, so naturally a bunch of popcorn graphics surround her. A volunteer unmutes herself to read the problem to the group and everyone gets to work, letting the class know they are ready by putting their finger on their nose. A discussion begins about patterns in numbers and counting down from 89 by eights and the methods used to solve for what would be next in the pattern.

The teacher pulls in the occasional visual aid from just off screen and students mouth along as they count together. Not everyone got the right answer but Ms. Cooper reminds the class that "mistakes allow us to learn and think about how we can fix it for next time" before she transitions to a brain break. Students jump up from their chairs to move along to a video to catch Pokemon.

It's another wonderful day in class at One91 Virtual Academy.





## ***Virtual learning made better***

The concept of learning from home is one that most people didn't think much about until a few years ago. The urgent switch to the distance learning model for all students in 2020 brought this strategy to the spotlight, with districts like District 191 establishing standalone online schools to provide the option for students and their families beyond the pandemic. Director of Technology Rachel Gorton was part of distance learning as well as the shift to a permanent solution.

"There is a perception that distance learning didn't work during COVID, but we got a real understanding that some of our students found it as a beneficial way to learn and we wanted to improve it," said Gorton. "Every student has a unique story about why One91 Virtual Academy is a good option for them including medical needs, family situations, or learning styles, and this is a viable option for the future for a lot of students and their families."

Knowing that many students thrive in this environment, the district set out to create an option that follows the innovative Pathways model, supports students in a variety of ways, and adapts throughout a student's time to allow for more independence. Teachers like Ms. Cooper in the elementary grades are seeing their students multiple times a day with grade levels getting to work together in some sessions and on their own in others. The daily schedule includes time with their specialists, virtual recess, and interventions for students who are needing an extra challenge, or extra support, as well as independent work time.

**"I have to be innovative in how I deliver content and I love finding ways to be engaging and exciting with the goal of making sure that kids keep loving learning,"** said Cooper. "We have the same high expectations, we follow the district curriculum, and have the same standards and report cards as students who are physically in the classroom."

Paul Connell is a teacher and Technology Integrationist who has helped interface between the technology and curriculum departments to ensure the success of this program. He won a Community of Excellence Award for Innovation from the district in 2022 and helps coordinate the software and hardware needed for everyone to succeed.

**"Innovation to me is looking forward and finding a better way to do things,"** said Connell. "When we reflected on the pandemic,

we knew some things were hard, but we also saw that there was an opportunity for our students and students across the state to experience great online learning, and it was really exciting."

## ***School without a school: How does it work?***

Students enroll at One91 Virtual Academy for a lot of different reasons, and have to be able to work well independently and stay motivated. Some teachers are dedicated solely to the virtual academy while others split their time between the classroom setting and virtual teaching. Vista View Elementary serves as the physical hub with students able to attend school-wide events there and staff able to participate in professional development opportunities. There are even principals, like Dr. Angie Pohl who oversees Vista View Elementary and K-5 of One91 Virtual Academy.

"Our students are making such amazing connections with their teachers and each other and are learning and performing at the same level as students who are in the classroom," said Dr. Pohl. "Families appreciate the flexibility and like that they are partners in their student's learning. I feel like this is a model that works and that there are so many families that this is a great option for."

While the elementary students are connecting with their teacher, specialists, interventionists, and their classmates throughout the day, older students have a little more independence. Middle school students have some scheduled meetings with their teachers, but are also given more flexibility to complete their assignments on their own. Students at the high school level take a different approach, with teachers publishing a weekly schedule of lessons, work, and due dates so students can establish their own plan for the week. While some may work on one subject at a time, others divide up the day with different classes with the option to connect with teachers during their office hours. Some students work during the day and do schooling in the evening, others spend time traveling for sports or activities, but thanks to the technology options available, they can find a system that works for them.

**"We are meeting students with the mode that works for them and that is exciting,"** said Connell. "We have built a great technology department with support from the community and technology levies, so we want to maximize those dollars and show that we are providing a service to our students and their families."

Students become familiar with a lot of different education applications including Seesaw, Schoology, Google Suite, Securely, EdPuzzle, PearDeck, WeVideo, and more. Every student has a Chromebook with options for hot spots to strengthen home internet connections if needed.

## ***Innovative and adaptive teaching and learning for the future***

The technology team works hard to make the virtual learning experience as seamless as possible, taking support requests and working quickly to address them. Training is provided to teachers, and there is always an eye on where to go from here. As the instructional techniques change, the technology will adapt and so the program remains at the top level possible.

**“It is innovative just to be at home, in the hospital, or traveling but still fully connected to your classroom,”** said Gorton. “Virtual learning is not for everyone, but some of our students really thrive there and our teachers are finding amazing ways to make connections.”

One91 Virtual Academy may look different in the future. Virtual and augmented reality environments could become more prevalent, hybrid options with students choosing how they want to access different classes based on their preferences and schedule, or supplemental options for high school students are all being discussed.

“We can keep innovating and looking at curriculum and teaching strategies to make sure we are meeting needs and expectations while providing flexibility and individualized learning,” said Dr. Pohl. “It is wonderful seeing students able to do what they need to do in order to be comfortable and successful in their learning with so much support available.”

The main focus now is to provide an excellent opportunity for students to experience the Pathways approach with dedicated teachers supporting them no matter where they are.

“When this was starting, I loved what we were offering compared to other online schools around us and I was just excited about what we were creating with the One91 experience,” said Cooper. “I knew it was more of a classroom experience. We are still a classroom community where we are supporting each other’s thinking and collaborating, and that is really special.” ■



## **one 91 School for Adults**

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it required all levels of education to adjust and be able to provide instruction in new ways. One of the District 191 programs that responded quickly to ensure students could keep moving forward with their classes was the School for Adults, where students can learn skills in English and career development, earn their GED, U.S. citizenship and professional certifications. It continued offering classes through a combination of virtual instruction and an online learning platform.

Now that in-person instruction is fully available, One91 School for Adults is offering classes in a variety of models to meet students needs, from fully virtual to hybrid classes that meet both virtually and in-person on different days, and even “HyFlex” virtual classes where instruction is delivered live both to students attending in person and those attending virtually.

“Our students are at the center of all our scheduling decisions,” said Susan Edmonson, adult basic education coordinator. A 2022 student survey showed 40% of students preferred online class options. “The student response to the expanded virtual options has been overwhelmingly positive. Our online only ESL morning and evening classes are completely full. We also have a waiting list with 16 students who are waiting to get into those all virtual ESL classes.”





## ***Virtual options remove barriers for adult learners***

The flexibility of being able to attend some classes in-person or virtually has removed a barrier for many students, especially those with families. The HyFlex classes use a special 360-degree camera and microphone so students can see and hear their teacher, classmates and any presentation that's being given.



"Whether it's young kids at home, an illness, the weather, or a car breaking down, students are very relieved that they are still able to learn the material, see their teacher's face on the screen, and hear what their classmates are talking about, all from home," Edmonson said.

Offering virtual learning is extremely important for our adult students because they all have busy lives outside of our classrooms. They are juggling busy work schedules, family and other obligations. We just want to make attending classes as easy and stress free as possible.

Offering the classes in multiple ways also helps students learn digital literacy skills that will benefit them in every-day life, including joining virtual meetings, sharing their screens, using breakout rooms and more.

"Offering virtual learning is extremely important for our adult students because they all have busy lives outside of our classrooms," Edmonson said. "They are juggling busy work schedules, family and other obligations. We just want to make attending classes as easy and stress free as possible."

# Honoring the **Hall of Fame** *Class of 2022*

Burnsville High School honored four former students, two retired teachers and a state championship team when it inducted its Hall of Fame Class of 2022 this fall.

Congratulations to this year's inductees:

**Glenn Cleveland**  
Retired teacher and coach

**James Heighington**  
Class of 1999  
Technology and equity leader

**Martin Kuz**  
Class of 1986  
Journalist

**Colleen LePrell**  
Class of 1989  
Researcher and professor

**Kelsey Mann**  
Class of 1993  
Film director

**Ron Ronning**  
Retired teacher

**1977 State Champion**  
Girls' Basketball Team

The BHS Hall of Fame was established in 2006 as part of the school's 50th anniversary celebration. It recognizes those who have made exceptional achievements in their field, significant contributions to Burnsville High School and unique contributions to their community on a local, state, national or international level.

To read more about the Class of 2022 or more information, visit [isd191.org/halloffame](https://isd191.org/halloffame).

# For BHS grad Kelsey Mann, CREATING HAS BEEN A LIFELONG PASSION

Kelsey Mann is a 1993 graduate of Burnsville High School and a newly inducted member of the school's Hall of Fame. He is an animator and director, currently working for Pixar Animation Studios in California where he will be directing "Inside Out 2." While at BHS, Mann created original comics for "The Voice" student newspaper and helped design the Blaze logo in 1993. He holds a bachelor of fine arts degree in illustration from Northern Michigan University.

During his career, Mann has worked for major production companies including Disney, Warner Brothers, LucasFilm and Cartoon Network. He was nominated for a Daytime Emmy Award in 2007 for his work at Cartoon Network. For his work on Pixar's "Onward" in 2020, Mann was nominated for an Oscar and received a Saturn Award. He also regularly participates in outreach programs at local schools and youth organizations, helping inspire young people about art, animation and filmmaking.





**What experiences did you have in high school or younger that you think helped you discover your passion for storytelling & animation?**

When I was growing up, I was always drawing. If you looked at any of my notebooks from school, you would find the margins littered with sketches. I loved it and I was good at it. It was how people knew me. I was "the kid who could draw." In fact, when I was only seven-year-old, I was asked to do one of those assignments where you say where you think you'll be when you're older. I said I wanted to be married with two kids, have a dog, and work as an animator. Even then, I knew what I wanted and it pretty much ended up being that way.

**What is it about arts and storytelling that you find compelling? Why is creation an important & worthwhile endeavor?**

I am a huge fan of Jim Henson and the Muppets. Jim had a great quote that has always stuck with me: "My hope is to leave the world a little better for having been there."

Storytelling is a powerful tool. It can not only entertain but it can also change the way we think. Take the first "Inside Out." That was not only a super fun movie, but it also made a meaningful impact on our world. It gave all of us a way to talk about a very complicated topic: our emotions.

I cannot tell you how many people have told me how much they use what was in that movie to help them talk (especially to kids) about their emotions. It made a meaningful impact on our world and I hope to do that again with the sequel. Only this time with specially teenagers. It's an extremely hard time in our lives and if I can even make that time a little bit better for someone, then I'd be extremely happy. It's why I love Pixar and why I love telling stories.

**How do you go about innovating and being creative in your field - storytelling and / or animated cinema - when there is so much that's already out there?**

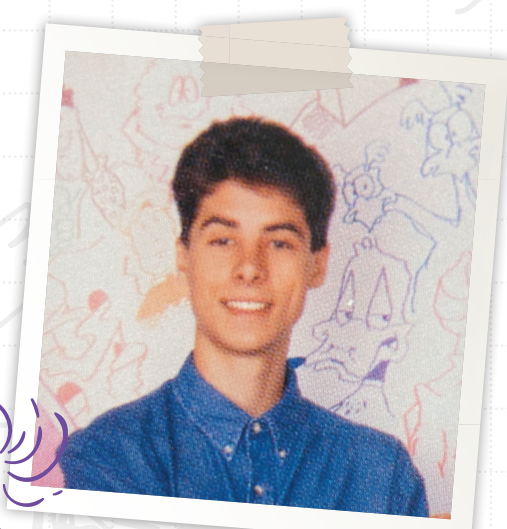
It really comes down to what you want to say. Why are you telling this story? What is it that you believe that you want the main character to learn? That's where you can bring uniqueness.

Storytelling is as old as we are. As long as we could communicate, we've been telling stories and everything has been done before. But how you tell it, who you're telling it through, and what you're saying is how you can stand out.

**When you were in high school and creating unpaid comics for the student newspaper, did you imagine that your future might include directing feature films (animated or otherwise)?**

When you're first starting out you do a lot of work for free to gain experience. But I loved doing it. It was my first experience of having a real deadline for my art and I had to deliver once a month. And yes, I always knew I wanted to get into film and animation. But I had no idea if I could actually make it. It's a highly competitive field and not everyone gets to do it.

I pinch myself everyday when I get to drive through the gates of Pixar. I never take it for granted. It's a hard job and there are definitely times that are really difficult, but I never forget that there's a little 7 year old Kelsey in me that has always wanted to do this and that can't believe I get to what I do. ■



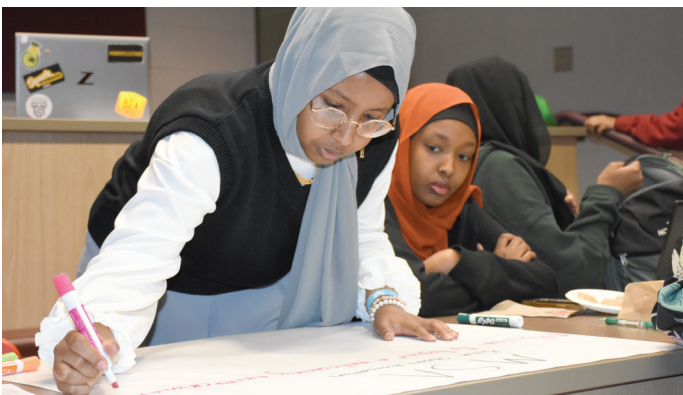
# Student Voices Amplified:

## Diversity Council celebrates cultures, empowers students at BHS

Familiar faces surrounded Siham Ibrahim as she walked to the front of the lecture hall at Burnsville High School to present on the morning of Oct. 27.

As the senior prepared to talk about the mission, vision and goals of one of her affinity groups at the first Student Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Council (DIBC) meeting of the school year, she was joined by people she's gotten to know in a variety of ways over the last few years. Some of them were fellow members of the Black Student Union and Muslim Student Association, affinity groups of which Ibrahim is the president. Some of them were people she knows from class. And many were friends from other affinity groups Ibrahim has gotten to work with more closely since the council held its first meeting in March.

BHS administrators established the DIBC as a way to bring students from a variety of different groups together during the school day, giving them a platform to discuss issues they face and a structure through which they can guide the school's equity work. Administrators have also made the affinity groups themselves more accessible by building meeting times into the school day so every student has the opportunity to participate.



Since Ibrahim began attending the DIBC meetings, she has been joined by student representatives and staff advisors from her own affinity groups, as well as representatives from the Asian Student

Association, the Indigenous Student Council, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the Gender Sexuality Alliance, the Student Council, Burnsville Strong, Somos and Alma (for creating solidarity and safe spaces for Latinx students), Believe Transform Evolve (for helping young men of color grow into leaders), Community Strong (a Muslim men's group), and AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) college prep program. The affinity groups represent students from a variety of different cultural backgrounds, but Ibrahim and her classmates are bonded by their desire to support each other, work for positive change, and strengthen the sense of community at Burnsville High School. That bond has been there since the first meeting.

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*For 8th graders coming up, this is now a great opportunity for them to understand, ask questions, and learn in more detail about all the cultures that are here.*

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"The first one didn't seem like different worlds colliding. It was like a reunion more than anything. One thing we do well is fostering that kind of community. I think it's because we feel like we're all in the same boat and we're able to easily relate to each other," Ibrahim said. "Every single group tries to make their group as accepting and fun and entertaining as possible. We take pride in our affinity groups."

More than 240 students are part of affinity groups at BHS. So when planning began around forming a representative council of 45 students and staff, BHS brought in Diversity, Equity and Belonging consultant Patricia Leonard as a community partner to help facilitate early meetings and establish structure and procedures. Leonard emphasized the importance of good communication practices and making sure the council remains student-led while being supported by advisors. One of the council's first steps was to





provide information to incoming freshmen about what affinity groups are available to join at BHS.

“When I first heard about this work with affinity groups happening (at Burnsville High School), I knew I wanted to participate,” Leonard said. “For 8th graders coming up, this is now a great opportunity for them to understand, ask questions, and learn in more detail about all the cultures that are here.”

Last spring, the council came up with an idea that has become its primary project this school year - a Culture Week that will give every affinity group an opportunity to share aspects of its culture with the entire school community. It will be modeled after Homecoming week, with different theme days, activities, performances, clothing, and foods being featured throughout the week. Leaders from each affinity group also decided on events their

is provide opportunities for a lot of students who feel like their voices weren't being heard, not just being able to display their culture and share it with their peers, but having their voice echoed by administration and teachers,” Parkin said. “One of the things this group does so well is break down those barriers. The students are able to change the school in their image, make it represent who they are, and allow them to see themselves as a part of our district and make it reflect them.”

Parkin didn't even know what the council was when then-Associate Principal Frannie Becquer invited him to a meeting and asked him to participate.

“Frannie laid out the vision for it, bringing in students and making their goals happen, and after one meeting I thought it was the coolest thing ever. I said ‘I want to be involved in this.’” he said. “I



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*One of the things this group does so well is break down those barriers. The students are able to change the school in their image, make it represent who they are, and allow them to see themselves as a part of our district and make it reflect them.*

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own groups will coordinate that will support their mission, vision and goals for the year. For example, students from the Black Student Union looked at how the school celebrated Black History Month last year and talked about ways it could be improved this year.

Landen Parkin is a language arts teacher at the high school and an advisor for the Gender Sexuality Alliance. He said it's not only important for students to share who they are, but for them to see that they're supported by school staff and know that their ideas, questions and concerns will be heard.

“I think the most important thing this group does

want to make sure the school is a place they feel comfortable and supported and their individual cultures are celebrated.”

Ibrahim said she has seen BHS take more steps to embrace its multiculturalism over the last couple years and was pleasantly surprised when the Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Council was formed.

“I was shocked at the amount of support from students and staff last year,” she said. “It's a reason I have pride for this school. We have an open mindset and I can go to the administration and just talk and have my voice heard.” ■



## Students learn practical, professional skills in Culinary Pathway

There are lots of reasons to learn to cook.

Whether looking for ways to feed yourself or others, exploring new ingredients and techniques, or even setting the foundation for a career in the hospitality industry, it all starts with the knowledge of the elements and processes of preparing food.

Students at Burnsville High School have access to a wide array of career pathways that they can explore, but only one results in projects that they can eat. Growing from its roots in the Family and Consumer Sciences department program, the BHS Culinary Pathway has expanded to 21 class sections a year, all of which are full of students eager to learn new skills.

Teacher Matt Deutsch was part of the initial creation of the Hospitality and Tourism Pathway and the inclusion of cooking classes. With years of experience as a teacher and having recently completed culinary school on the side, it was the perfect time and way to combine two of his passions.

“It is really fun to be creative in a different way like cooking,” said Deutsch. “Students get excited about their work and really show pride in what they are making. Teaching these classes is still teaching but it’s so different and sometimes I can’t believe my job involves things like sharpening 70 knives or sourcing ingredients.”

Classes include Foundations of Food, Cooking in Motion, Chef 1-3, and Hospitality & Tourism Management. Students get to go beyond the classroom, occasionally catering events in and out

of the school, doing the menu planning, prep and cooking in the school kitchen.

Deutsch and his students are often called upon for other food-related needs as well. When an extra pallet of blueberries was delivered to the school, students developed recipes to use them for lunch service. An on-campus garden provides produce that is donated to the local food shelf with students creating recipes that are distributed with the food to provide ways to cook products that may be unfamiliar. Before the pandemic, classes worked with the BHS food service team to develop some recipes that ended up being served in the cafeteria, including a traditional Somali dish called Chicken Suqaar.

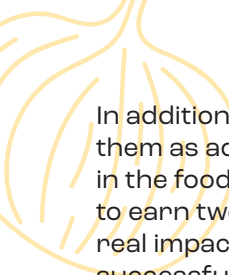
“The students are really curious and like exploring and trying different foods,” said Deutsch. “I had one student say that a cake we made was the fanciest cake and the best dessert she had ever had! Students also get to try foods they may not have had before with one of the most popular being asparagus. There are never leftovers on asparagus day.”

“  
I love making something and having it look good and be presented well and then being able to eat it.”

LILLY BANASIK  
BHS SENIOR







In addition to learning techniques that will benefit them as adults, some students continue into a career in the food and hospitality industry. Students are able to earn two different certifications that can have a real impact on their ability to become employed and successful in the industry. Students can take tests to achieve the ServSafe certification, a certification from the National Restaurant Association that covers safe food handling and other essential parts of restaurant operations or the National ProStart Certificate of Achievement, an industry-recognized certificate given to those with a strong foundation in the management and culinary skills critical to success by restaurant industry leaders.

These certificates can immediately be put to use in a student's life and combined with an internship at a local business, students can be on the fast track to a great career. BHS senior Lilly Banasik first took a Family and Consumer Sciences class in middle school and has proudly taken every cooking class offered. She is also working towards the hospitality and tourism internship alongside her job at a bakery while planning to pursue a degree in Culinary, which blends food science and culinary art with the ultimate goal of becoming a food stylist.

"I have always really loved baking and cooking, going back to just wanting to help my parents," said Lilly. "In ninth grade, my dad and I did some research on different career paths I could work towards and planned courses I could take in high school, and I got really excited about the culinary pathway. I love making something and having it look good and be presented well and then being able to eat it."

Students like Lilly have used what they learned in the Culinary Pathway courses to make an impact on their lives. Alumni have gone on to culinary school, to work in restaurants and hotels, and other career paths. A recent student who was employed at Mystic Lake Casino got a \$3 an hour raise for having their ServSafe certification.

The program continues to expand with more connections to local businesses and industry partners. BHS has been a partner of the Star Tribune's Holiday Cookie Contest in recent years, with students assisting local chefs and bakers in preparing and testing each of the finalist cookie




recipes. Lilly even sits on the panel of judges alongside industry experts and food critics.

"It is really fun to explore the different recipes and sometimes the techniques are really cool like having to intricately place almonds to look like a pinecone," said Lilly. "We get to spend all day tasting and talking about each cookie while we select our favorites. It's a great way to explore recipes, which is something I really enjoy."

Two big changes for the program that Mr. Deustch has noticed are the increase in enthusiasm from students and the growing support from the community and the local restaurant industry. Restaurants and hotels offer behind the scenes tours to classes, tastings and demonstrations, and donations of ingredients and equipment. The Burnsville Chamber of Commerce has been a strong supporter of the program with many business owners eager to connect with students.

"A lot of local businesses are excited because they are looking for great employees," said Deustch. "There is a lot of passion to cook good food and teach others how to cook good food. Mainly we are showing students how to provide for themselves and be happy and healthy while showing them some of the jobs they can get into earning a good wage right after high school." ■



**Students also get to try foods they may not have had before with one of the most popular being asparagus. There are never leftovers on asparagus day.**

MATT DEUSTCH  
TEACHER

”







One91

# PATHWAYS

**Spark.**

**Fuel.**

**Blaze.**

As a school district, we are proud to continue to grow, expand, and strengthen our nationally recognized Pathways program across our district with opportunities at every grade level. When students can discover more about what they love early in life, they get an invaluable head start towards their future that cannot be replicated.

By sparking curiosity, fueling student passions, and allowing them to blaze their own path, District 191 continues to be a leader in college and career readiness that is constantly focused on student preparation and success.





# Spark



## Students Connecting for Kindness

It was an amazing day for Vista View fifth-graders at Diamondhead Education Center! Youth Frontiers and Burnsville High School student-leaders (also former Vista View students!) facilitated a 'Kindness Retreat' where students learn about a variety of important social skills and engage in a day of Kindness with their peers!



## Finding the Spark with Rahn Enrichment Academy

Every month, students at Rahn Elementary School get the chance to choose their own hands-on learning experiences as part of the school's "Enrichment Academy." It provides each student with a wide variety of experiences that engage them in their education and helps them find what sparks their interest – a foundational part of the elementary pathways approach in District 191!



## Read for the Record

District 191 elementary schools participated in Jumpstart's Read for the Record, a shared reading experience to celebrate children's early language and social-emotional development. Staff and community volunteers shared the story of "Nigel and the Moon," a tale about how pride in where we come from can bring a shining confidence!

# Twel



## The Triumphant Return of Middle School Sports

We enjoyed seeing our middle schoolers get involved this year at schools with the return of middle school sports and activities! Students participated in cross country (seen here), soccer and tennis. A big thanks you to all the One91 coaches and volunteers for making this possible.



## Continuing and Growing the Love of Chess

The Nicollet Middle School chess club – the Nicollet Knights – held a celebration and chess board rededication event at Nicollet Middle School. The event celebrated the life-size chess board that had been installed previously at Metcalf Middle School and was moved to Nicollet this summer!



## Connecting with Cultures via Tipi Construction

Sixth grade students are learning about the Dakota and the remarkable legacy and impact they have in Minnesota. They are studying both the Dakota and Ojibwe tribes during the course of the year. The tipi construction also brings additional awareness to Native American Heritage Month during November.





# Blaze

## Continued Community Service at BHS

Burnsville High School students volunteered their time to clean up campus grounds as part of Green Apple Day of Service! Started in 2012, Green Apple Day of Service is an international movement of over a million volunteers in 80 countries celebrating the central role that schools play in preparing the next generation of global leaders in sustainability. We applaud our students commitment and dedication to serving their community.



## Celebrating Diwali at BHS

The Asian Student Association, one of Burnsville High School's affinity groups, held a Diwali celebration after school for students! Fantastic South Asian cuisine, dance and discussion were all a part of the event.



## BHS Theatre Showing their Range with Season 62 Productions

The Burnsville High School Theatre Guild kicked off Season 62 with the horrifically-delicious, sci-fi rock musical "Little Shop of Horrors."

"We chose Little Shop of Horrors to open Season 62 because it's an incredibly fun, dark comedy with amazing music and fantastical technical elements!" director Erika Sasseville said. "It's a good balance with our Season 62 spring musical, Disney's The Little Mermaid, which is just as light and bubbly as Little Shop is dark and twisty!"



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TO THE ISD191 RESIDENT AT:

# Student Voice: Hallway Chatter

*Every single group tries to make their group as accepting and fun and entertaining as possible. We take pride in our affinity groups.*

SIHAM IBRAHIM  
BHS SENIOR



Learn how affinity groups at Burnsville High School amplify student voice and celebrate cultures on page 14.

*I love making something and having it look good and be presented well and then being able to eat it.*

LILLY BANASIK  
BHS SENIOR



Read how Lily took her love of baking and dove into the culinary pathway on page 16.