

Multilingual families at Creek Valley Elementary enjoyed the 7th Annual **Book Bingo Night**. Prizes are books, treats and a lovely fall evening building community!



Experience

Edina Public Schools/Fall 2021

Strategic plan drives focus on mental and emotional wellness support



Edina Early Learning teacher Joanna Taylor uses skills she learned through Pyramid Model training to help young students learn how to play and work together.

At one time, students with underdeveloped social emotional skills, might have been referred for a special services assessment. “Now we say, ‘Oh, you don’t know how to play. I will teach you how to play and how to ask someone to play with you,’” said Leah Byrd, coordinator of Edina Early Learning Center (ELC).

Training in the Pyramid Model, a framework of practices to promote young children’s social and emotional development, has led to a change in staff perspective and in children’s early classroom experiences.

In 2018, the Edina ELC received a grant of \$58,000 from the Minnesota Department of Education, in collaboration with the Minnesota Centers of Excellence, to fund training and implementation of the Pyramid Model. The district’s new strategic plan, adopted in 2020, further emphasizes mental wellness with a specific priority aimed at “fostering positive learning environments and whole student support.”

Now, in the fourth year of a five-year implementation, every ELC staff member has had Pyramid training and results are being noticed. “Parents have said that their child was dismissed from other preschool programs and it wasn’t until they came to Edina ELC that their child learned how to play with others,” Byrd said. “Kindergarten teachers tell us they recognize when they have one of our ELC students in their classroom by the words and phrases they use to solve problems.”

Byrd said training has also contributed to staff wellbeing by helping them feel confident in their ability to help kids be successful at school in spite of the pandemic.

In alignment with the district’s mental wellness strategic priority, Edina Public Schools last spring offered the Panorama Student Survey to students in grades 3-12. Although the survey was voluntary, the majority of students participated. It provides a measure of students’ perceptions of their relationships, feelings, emotions, and engagement at school. “They could tell us how they feel, which reveals to us where we need to do work,” said Jeff Jorgensen, director of Student Support Services.

Survey data has helped target resources to the needs of students at each school and staff outreach to individuals who indicated they may be struggling.

A feeling of valued worth allows kids to participate in school in ways that are meaningful.

Jorgensen said support the district receives from the Edina Education Fund is “tremendously important.” The Ed Fund’s Heal Together fundraising initiative, launched last spring, continues to enhance district mental health resources. A fall concert and a recent grant from the City of Edina, through the American Rescue Plan Act, have helped the district increase the number of full-time therapists at secondary schools, provide trauma-sensitive training and intervention skills for staff, and summer support staff for students and families.

“We want all students to have a sense of belonging and personal wellness. A feeling of valued worth allows kids to participate in school in ways that are meaningful. Through that involvement, they experience success,” Jorgensen said, “and academic success is good for mental health.”

Noteworthy

District welcomes new superintendent

Dr. Stacie Stanley became superintendent of Edina Public Schools on July 1. The School Board unanimously approved her hire in May, after interviewing six candidates for the position. Stanley brings three years of experience as associate superintendent at Eden Prairie Schools, and four years in two director positions in the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage district, among other positions. Stanley holds a doctorate of education from Bethel University. ***Read Dr. Stanley’s reflections on her first months in Edina on p. 3.***



New website launched

Edina Public schools launched a new website in October featuring more photos, improved navigation and enhanced organizational features to serve current and prospective families. Development of a new website aligns with strategic plan objectives to improve communications and access to opportunities for students and families. The site is hosted by Finalsite, an award-winning digital marketing and communications platform that serves public, private, and independent K-12 and post secondary schools around the world. The EPS domain name is the same: edinaschools.org.

Inside this issue

New literacy plan implementation advances

First of five-year phase-in of new plan approved by School Board in May.

Voices

Defining Values

Valley View sixth graders in Emily Olson’s class began the new school year with a discussion about Edina Public Schools’ core values and beliefs.

“Integrity means doing the right thing even when no one is looking.”
-Ethan

“Responsibility means you need to own up to the expectations and you need to take charge in ownership.”
-Evie

“Courage means to be brave.”
-Amzad

“Courage means to stand and do something that you or someone else is scared to do.”
-Nicole

“Appreciation means appreciating something good and being thankful for it.”
-Lauren

“Compassion means having enthusiasm for others.”
-Sasha



Experience is mailed periodically to all residents in Edina Public Schools, District 273, to keep you up-to-date on the activities and accomplishments of students, staff and the district. Questions or comments are welcome at communications@edinaschools.org or 952.848.3919.

Edina Public Schools

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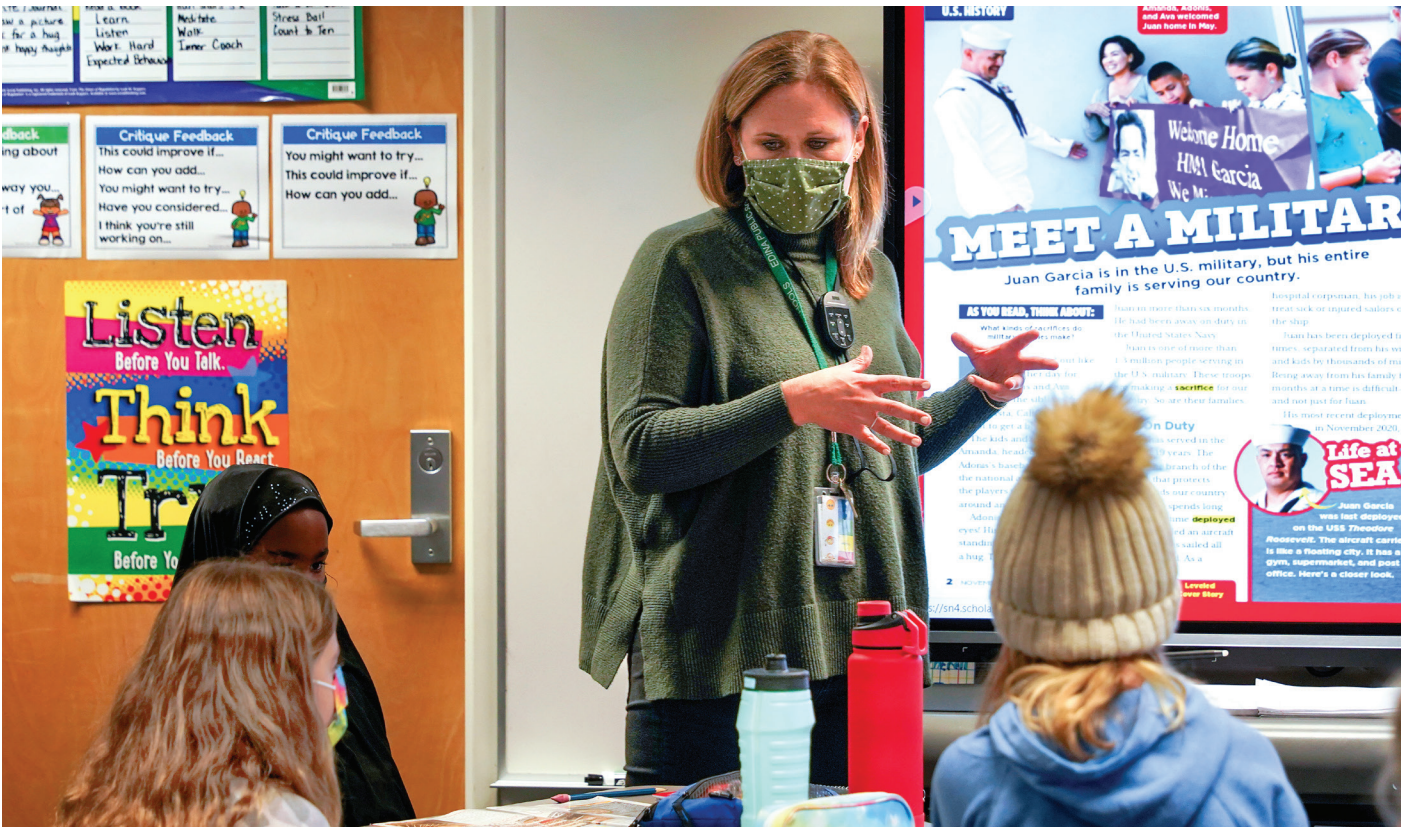
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For each and every student to discover their possibilities and thrive



Bryana Carlson, fourth grade teacher at Countryside Elementary, is among the early learning through grade five teachers who is incorporating aspects of the district’s new comprehensive literacy plan into her teaching.

New literacy plan implementation advances
Plan ensures Edina students will be ‘college, career and civic-ready’

Edina preschool and elementary teachers have begun implementing a comprehensive literacy plan approved by the School Board in May. It is described as a “continuous improvement plan for literacy, readiness, inclusiveness and rigor for all” and ensures Edina students will be “college, career and civic-ready.” It is a priority objective of the district’s strategic plan.

Already, more than half of the 21 benchmarks in the early learning through grade five portion of the literacy plan are well underway. This is the first of a five-year phase-in of the new plan. Teaching and Learning Director Jody De St. Hubert said parents will notice an increased emphasis on foundational skills, such as phonetics. What they don’t see is the new learning experienced by teachers.

Already, more than half of the 21 benchmarks in the early learning through grade five portion of the literacy plan are well underway.

“Thirty-one members of the teaching staff participated in LETRS training this summer,” she said, “which provides more than 40 hours of learning on the science of how we learn to read.” It was followed by collaboration with literacy coaches to deepen their learning of best practices and how to apply them within the comprehensive literacy instructional framework.

There is also a first year focus on establishing site-based literacy leadership teams so that the new plan is driven from within each school. While the implementation outcomes across buildings are the same, the process of getting to the outcomes will differ because not every student needs the same thing, De St. Hubert said.

Districtwide literacy teams bring teacher leaders, the literacy supervisor, school principals and literacy coaches together throughout the year for collaboration and data review. These teams support the site teams to create alignment with systems of support, social emotional learning, and professional learning communities.

Creating a purposeful assessment system is a key part of the literacy plan. “Reading, writing, and communicating are developmental and therefore are complex areas to assess,” De St. Hubert notes in the plan. “Every literacy assessment offers multiple purposes, yet no single assessment can serve all purposes.” A well-designed comprehensive assessment system will monitor progress, diagnose specific needs and reveal students who are ready for acceleration or who need support.

Other elements of the literacy plan being addressed this year include updating the dyslexia handbook, which is the guidebook for educators on how to recognize reading difficulties. Work on development of next year’s implementation phase also continues.

Raising funds the wacky way

Countryside Elementary students held their annual Wacky Tacky Walk-a-thon on a beautiful fall day.

Students seek pledges from friends and family based on the number of laps they make around the course. To make it fun, they and their teachers dress in all sorts of wacky ways. Funds raised support the school’s Day of Service, when students make blankets, pack sandwiches, and fill bags with toiletries for persons in need.



Message from Superintendent Dr. Stacie Stanley

Connectedness is the spirit of Edina



Words cannot express the joy that I have experienced since joining the Edina Public Schools community. During my first 90 days I had a chance to speak with and listen to a wide range of stakeholders including parents, current and former staff, students and community members. In addition, I engaged in experiences that are deeply meaningful to the Edina community such as our 4th of July and Homecoming Parades, and the 9/11 20-year commemorative ceremony.

I’ve learned much about the spirit of Edina and one word to describe it would be **Connectedness**. *Caring for one another* is the bedrock of who we are in the Hornet Community. This same care was evident as so many community members welcomed me into Edina as one of their own.

Although we continue to navigate the pandemic, through the use of strong mitigation efforts including masking, vaccinations and most recently testing, we have been able to ensure our Early Learning – grade 12 students are back in-person five days a week, and with the least disruptions to learning. I am incredibly proud of all Edina Public Schools staff as they have provided the frontline support to keep our students in school and learning at rigorous levels.

We continue to partner with local and state public health officials to monitor the level of community transmission in Edina, and our health services staff keep the public updated with school impact each week. Our goal is transparency. We are grateful for the partnerships that allow us to offer vaccination clinics and use testing to keep our students and staff safe—this is paramount.

As a leader, I firmly believe that our mission and vision serve as our guideposts for our work to support our students, families and the overall community. My goal is that we will have a laser-like focus on ensuring Each and Every Edina Public Schools student realizes their **Full Potential, Discovers their Possibilities, and Thrives**.

My goal is ... ensuring Each and Every Edina Public Schools students realizes their Full Potential, Discover their Possibilities and Thrives.

I am delighted to help usher in the efforts outlined in our Strategic Plan, and grateful for the time and commitment our stakeholders invested in creating the plan. The investment in our roadmap will allow us to **Elevate** and **Illuminate** our reputation of **Excellence**.

We have so much to be proud of—Academic Excellence throughout our district that engages our students in authentic and meaningful learning experiences, our focus to make certain our students are well rounded with opportunities for youth service and leadership, our intentional investment in the mental wellness of our students, the myriad of activities and athletics opportunities, and our High School’s designation of #1 for Best College Prep High School in Minnesota four years running, to name a few! Your continued belief and support in our schools and district means the world to me.

The best is to come!

Dr. Stacie Stanley, Superintendent Edina Public Schools

Noteworthy

National Merit students honored

Ten EHS seniors are National Merit Semifinalists and 23 are Commended Students, based on scores from last spring’s PSAT testing. They earned top scores from among the more than 1.5 million students who tested. The EHS students were honored at a reception this month where they, in turn, honored an educator who has influenced their academic journey.

District sets calendars

The School Board has approved academic calendars for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. A 16-member committee developed the calendars, which feature before-Labor Day starts (due to construction needs), winter breaks of about two weeks, one-week spring breaks, and a conversion of early release days to full-day professional development days. Click the Calendar button on the district website for printable, one-page versions of each.

Visit edinaschools.org/News for more news and information.

Begin their world-class Edina Education in Kindergarten!



Edina Elementary Schools feature:

- ✿ Academic support to promote success
- ✿ Academic challenge to engage and grow all
- ✿ Relationship-focused teachers
- ✿ Social and emotional learning and supports
- ✿ Maker Spaces and Media Specialists in every school
- ✿ Cutting edge technology
- ✿ Leadership opportunities
- ✿ Service learning
- ✿ French Immersion
- ✿ Multi-Age/Continuous Progress Program
- ✿ New program options under development!



Kindergarten Information events!

Meet Principals and Kindergarten Teachers
Learn about our kindergarten curriculum
Know your options for choice programs
Check the district website for times and locations edinaschools.org/kindergarten or call 952-848-4585

I might be biased, but I think we have some of the best in the world here in EPS! Thank you for giving my children a world class education.
—Edina Schools parent

Don’t forget to schedule Developmental Screening!

Early Childhood Screening includes a check of development, vision and hearing, growth, health history and immunizations. Minnesota requires all children be screened prior to kindergarten. In-person screening is offered in our new screening suite at the Edina Community Center.
Make an appointment online at: edinaschools.org/DevelopmentalScreening



edinaschools.org/kindergarten

Edina Dance Team cultivates leadership, strength

Learning to dance and learning to lead may not seem to be related, unless you know a bit about the Edina Dance Team (EDT). Over the past decade, their hard work and persistence has paid off with state championships. Now the program is expanding to give the same opportunity for growth to younger students.

Kristin Biwan has coached EDT since 2011. When she was hired as Edina’s coach, she was tasked with turning the team around and creating a program that every Edina dancer wanted to join.

“When I first started it was hard to get the kids to think of the program as a competitive team versus a social club,” Biwan explains. “But even in the first year we made huge strides and the mindset shifted. Then every year after that, we kept hitting program ‘firsts’ and the team was starting to see the payoff for working hard.”



This year EDT has created a dance club for sixth graders.

Biwan not only pushes her dancers to be leaders and elite dancers, but she also coaxes them out of their comfort zone to become the best person that they can be. EDT ticks many of the boxes related to the district’s strategic plan objective to develop leaders, as well as future-ready competencies.

Making this opportunity available to sixth graders gives them a jump start on that growth

journey. The new EDT Club meets Wednesday mornings before school, at Valley View Middle School. EHS team members are on hand each week along with the B Squad coach. The season will end with a performance in January. “We have 10 registered for the club, but we’d love more!” Biwan said.

“Our goal is to create strong women, not only in dance but also in life.

We want to help shape the next generation of young women to be empowered to achieve their personal and team goals,” Biwan said. “This sixth grade club allows students to get a taste of what EDT is like without a big commitment. We have wanted to do something so our middle schoolers feel more connected to dance from the start and we are so excited it’s happening now!”



DEFINING EXCELLENCE

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Edina High School No. 1 in College Prep

Niche, an online ranking site, has reported Edina High School as the No. 1 Best College Prep High School in Minnesota for the fourth year in a row. Rankings are based on graduation rates, AP enrollment, SAT/ACT scores, state test scores, and the quality of colleges students consider.

EHS received an A+ Overall Niche Grade, an A+ in Academics, and is rated the #3 Best Minnesota Public High School for STEM.

Calendar	
Nov 24-26	No School
Nov - Dec	Kindergarten Information Nights begin Nov 30. Check the website for details: edinaschools.org/Kindergarten
Dec 22	Winter Break Begins
Jan 4	School Resumes
Jan 17	No School, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Jan 20	End of Semester 1
Feb 21	No School, Presidents’ Day
Feb 22	No School, Staff Professional Development