

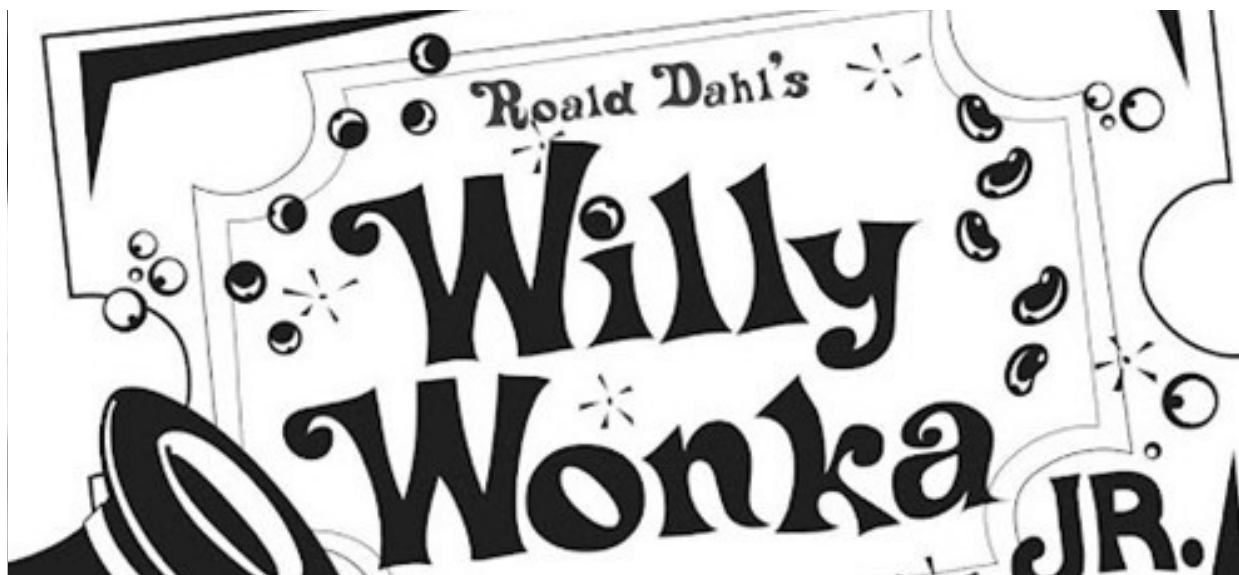
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FALL 2021

# THE TORNADO CONNECTION

KEEPING THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

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## Willy Wonka Takes the Stage November 19

BY JOJO SHULER

Do you like musicals? Come see *Willy Wonka, Jr.* performed by Butler Intermediate High School's talented cast on Friday, November 19 at 3:15 p.m. and 7 p.m. in the Intermediate auditorium. Tickets are \$5 and are available at the door. According to co-directors, Mrs. Tepper and Mrs. Lesjack, the show is approximately an hour long, and you don't want to miss it!

To prepare for the production, the actors have practiced at least three times a week and have put in a lot of hard work. All the cast members had to audition for this musical by reading dialogue and singing. Then, the directors worked with the available talent to assign them a role that fit their abilities best. During a typical rehearsal, the cast would sign in and start by re-running what they did at the last rehearsal, blocking scenes, and polishing music.

According to Mrs. Mia Tepper, she chose this fun musical for specific reasons. "It involves lots of chocolate, candy, and it's very colorful," she said. Out of all the scenes in the musical, her two favorite scenes are when Violet turns into a blueberry and when all the characters come on stage singing with lollipops in their mouths.

Mrs. Tepper is not new to acting and directing. She has been on stage since the age of three, and she has done opera and musical theater in New York City. In addition, she has directed musicals locally and in the Pittsburgh area. In her opinion, theatre offers students many benefits. "Students can learn self-discipline and the importance of working with a team," she said.

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Mrs. Lesjack, who brings her years of dance expertise to the project, is excited to offer a musical at the Intermediate. "I have fond memories of being involved with theater and dance in Junior High, and I was hoping to help create great memories for students at the Intermediate too."

Ninth grade student, Sarah Lucas, plays the part of Willy Wonka. "I auditioned hoping to be cast as an Oompa Loompa, and I was excited and surprised to be cast as one of the lead roles in Willy Wonka," Sarah commented. She said she practices about 4-5 times a week going over things. Sarah's favorite scene is when she gives the tour around the factory showing everyone around. Sarah has been in two other productions previously, Aladdin and Alice in Wonderland. "By getting involved in theatre, I have learned a lot about time management, working with others, and taking criticism."

Zach Marra, an eighth grade student, plays Charlie Bucket. He has been involved in musicals for many years at his old school, but he is excited to take on the role of Charlie. "My favorite scene of the show is probably the one where the candy man comes out and gives the kids candy, and we are just singing and dancing," he said. Obviously, Zach thinks that being in a musical is a great choice. "Becoming another person or character makes you see the world in a different way, and somehow that could make you a better person," he said.

The rest of the talented cast includes: Lucas Rivera (Grandpa Joe), Julia Black (Grandma Georgina), Alexis Erikson (Grandma Josephina), Cayden Hartzell (Grandpa George), Aiden Stevenson (Mr. Bucket), Liza Wick (Mrs. Bucket), Bella Persichini (Matilda), Bradley White (James/Mr. Salt), Kayden McConahy (Phineas), Samuel Miller (Augustus Gloop), Alexa Callahan (Mrs. Gloop), Isabelle Colonna (Vercu Salt), Grace Persichini (Violet Beauregarde), Chloe Schoentag (Mrs. Beauregarde), Julane Tomko (Ms. Teavee), and David Tomko (Mike Teavee). Student directors are Julia Black, Alexis Huselton and Chloe Jones. In addition to the cast, more than 20 students assisted in constructing the set, including students in Ms. DeVanney's ESP Art class.

All of the cast members have learned so much during this process, especially how to project when singing. Mrs. Tepper told them, "Sing louder so grandma in the back with the hearing aid can hear you." Many cast members also commented that putting on a musical is more difficult than a play because in a play you just use facials, actions, and dialogue but for a musical you need all that plus singing.

Come see Willy Wonka on Friday, November 19!



## New Teachers Join Staff

BY MYLEI SCHAEFER

Butler Intermediate welcomed quite a few new teachers this fall. Some of those teachers include Mrs. Victoria Swartz, Ms. Catelyn Cujas, and Ms. Katherine Hegedus.

Mrs. Victoria Swartz teaches seventh grade science. She attended Slippery Rock University, earning her bachelor's and master's degrees. Mrs. Swartz was hired by Butler in January 2021 when seventh grade science teacher, Mrs. Mary Blashford, retired. Mrs. Swartz chose to teach science for several reasons. "I really like biology, and I wanted to show students that science doesn't always have to be difficult. It can be fun and interesting," she said.

Within the science subject, Swartz enjoys teaching genetics the most. Mrs. Swartz claimed, "The best thing about working in Butler is getting to work with a diverse set of students. They all have different backgrounds, and I've connected with many different staff members."

On the other hand, she thinks the most challenging thing about being a new teacher is coming up with her own routine and what works best for her kids. Swartz's favorite part about being a teacher is when students understand something, and they get happy about learning.

Mrs. Swartz is currently a junior high softball coach. Outside of school, Mrs. Swartz enjoys hiking, fishing, traveling, and coaching softball. She said, "I like to show school spirit by wearing my SOAR shirt, and softball shirts on game days." In 10 years, Mrs. Swartz hopes to still be teaching science, maybe still coaching softball, and maybe starting a family.

According to Mrs. Swartz, the key to a good school day is "having kids engage in a lesson and knowing that they understand the topic." When the year comes to an end, Swartz hopes her students will remember that it's OK to make mistakes, and she hopes her students learned something throughout the year. If Swartz had to give advice to students who wish to follow her path, she would tell them: "Choose something you are passionate about teaching. Be understanding, and choose an age group and subject you love!"

Another new teacher at the IHS this year is Ms. Catelyn Cujas. Last year, she was a long term sub for seventh grade math teachers, Mrs. Neigh and Mrs. Lesjack. This year, she was hired as a full time seventh grade math teacher. Mrs. Cujas also attended Slippery Rock University, receiving both master's and bachelor's degrees.

Ms. Cujas's favorite part about being a new teacher is getting to talk to her students everyday. She chose to be a teacher in the math department because she really enjoys math and likes having the opportunity to do it everyday! Within the subject of math, Ms. Cujas likes teaching her students about solving equations the most. As a new teacher, Ms. Cujas thinks learning how to teach during COVID is the most challenging, but she mentioned that the best thing about working in the Butler district is "the students and staff."

Ms. Cujas shows her school spirit by wearing school shirts and colors, and attending sporting events. Outside of school, she enjoys working out, hanging out with family, and eating. According to Ms. Cujas, "In 10 years, hopefully I will be married, with one child, and still teaching at Butler!"

When the year ends, Ms. Cujas hopes her students will remember that they may have enjoyed math for once and had a good time in her class. She would tell students who dream to follow her path and become a teacher, "Make sure you like kids. If not, you will make everyone miserable. And take it day by day!"

The IHS recently added Ms. Katherine Hegedus to the math department. Hegedus attended Slippery Rock University, earning a bachelor's degree and her middle level mathematics certification. Ms. Hegedus was a cyber support teacher in Butler last school year, and she completed her student teaching experience in our building the year before that.

Ms. Hegedus chose to teach math because she always wanted to work with kids, and math was her favorite subject in high school. She also enjoys teaching her students solving equations the most within the math subject. According to Ms. Hegedus, "My favorite thing about working in Butler is the positive reinforcement, Starfish, PBIS, clubs, and all of the things that have to do with making the students good students."

Her favorite part about being a teacher is the students. On the other hand, the most challenging part is working with the rules, restrictions, and extra duties involved with teaching during a pandemic. Ms. Hegedus likes showing school spirit by dressing up for theme weeks, like Red Ribbon Week and homecoming. After school hours, Ms. Hegedus is also a boys' volleyball coach. She also enjoys hanging out with friends and family, watching her nephew, and watching her little sister play basketball at Clarion. In 10 years, she hopes she is still teaching at Butler and maybe adding to that by joining clubs and committees.

When the year ends, she hopes her students remember that she always had a positive attitude and always helped her students through whatever they needed, whether it was math or not! Her advice to future teachers: "Don't get distracted by other things, and focus on what the kids need the most!"

# DC Tradition Continues

BY SYDNEY O'DONNELL AND JAYLA SLUPE

A group of eighth grade students will travel to Washington, D.C. from November 20-21 for the traditional field trip. They will see historical landmarks and learn a little bit about how the government works. Eighth grade students have been taking this yearly trip for more than 50 years!

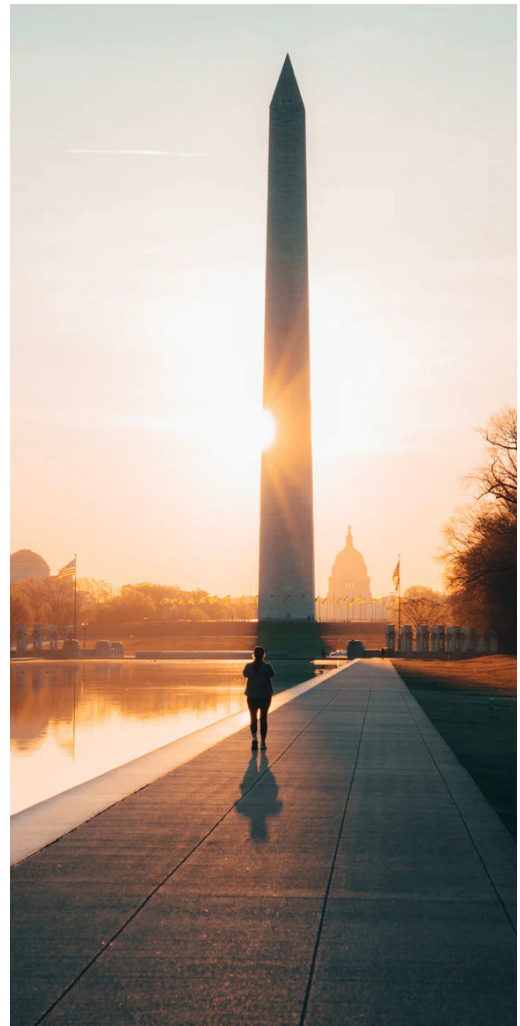
Ms. Jessica Carlson, a social studies teacher at Butler Intermediate High School, will be in charge of this trip that is sponsored by a private travel agency. About 145 students and 15-16 teacher chaperones will load the busses on Saturday, November 20 at 6:30 a.m. in the Intermediate High School parking lot. They will return on Sunday at 7:30 p.m.

Ms. Carlson has been on this trip many times as both a student and a chaperone. She said, "I remember going on this trip in eighth grade myself, and it was very enjoyable." She said that she thought it was such a good experience and still remembers how much fun it was. The overall trip cost is a bit under \$300. "Hopefully this trip will encourage the students to want to learn more about our government and how it started," Ms. Carlson added.

Gracie Gump, a current eighth grader, will be attending the trip. Gracie is going on the trip with four of her friends that she chose to be her roommates. "You get to sit with your roommates on the bus also, and I am super excited about that," Gracie said.

The hotel where students will sleep is the Hampton Inn in Manassas, VA. Each hotel room has a king-sized bed and a futon, or it can have two queen-sized beds. Gracie was excited about the trip, "I am going with my friends, and I get to see America's history," she said. Gracie is going to be packing warm outfits for the fall, a bathing suit and towel for the indoor swimming pool, and all of her other necessities. Along with clothes, students are allowed to pack snacks for their hotel rooms. Gracie will be packing snacks such as cheez-its, chips, and several kinds of drinks. She is also going to bring \$40-50 to spend in various shops while in D.C.

Both students and chaperones are excited about this trip and all of the opportunities it offers.



# Fall Athletes Finish Season

BY TOBY GEIBEL AND EVERETT REGES

This fall, BIHS students gave their best in cross country, golf, football, boys' soccer, girls' soccer, tennis, and girls' volleyball.

The Butler cross country team was great this year. Their season started near the end of August, and they practiced every day at 3 p.m. up at the SHS. One of this year's top runners was Alec Wright, an eighth grade student who likes the encouragement of the sport. Although Alec loves the sport, he doesn't plan on playing through his academic career due to the other sports that intermix with cross country. Alec has a great relationship with his teammates on and off the track. "The relationship is at practice and during school," he said. There were over 20 students on the team, so there had to be some strengths and weaknesses. One of the girl runners, Natalie Collins said, "We worked really hard when we were focused, but some weaknesses were sometimes we got side-tracked."



According to a freshman runner, Zachary Slear, there are some life lessons to be learned while doing cross country. "It teaches you to never give up and just to keep going and to get to the finish line," Zachary said.

Another fall sport that brought a bunch of attention was golf. This year, the team had 20 matches. One of the girls' golfers is Madison Wolf, a golfer that enjoys playing because it lets her know that she is there to perform, and she is a part of the team. Madison hopes that one day she can be the top golfer on her team. "I want to be the number one seed on the team," she said. According to Madison, "Golf is great because you can play at any age. It doesn't even matter if you have skill or not. Just go out and play a round of golf." Athletes who want to prepare for the next golf season can just go outside for a little bit each day and take some swings to get warmed up for the new year. They could also watch some YouTube lessons on how to get a good swing and follow through.

Mr. Popovich, an eighth grade science teacher, was one of the junior high football coaches this season. He is coaching football because it was his first love. "I also loved to work with the players and watch them grow into better football players," he said. The team played nine games this season and finished with an impressive record of 7-2. They lost to North Hills and Pine Richland. Their season overall was very good.

According to Coach Popovich, "The guys played with a lot of emotion and a lot of passion, and that is their greatest success." With this mindset, the football players had a great season, and they will continue to have outstanding seasons. The quarterback, Tyson Pino, was a huge help to the success of the winning season. He knew at the beginning of the season that if he didn't put his head down, then he would have a successful season. He stuck with that mentality, and looked at what happened. "One life lesson that I have learned is to never put your head down," Tyson said.

Students at BIHS played on a variety of different soccer teams. Some played for the school, while others played for other clubs such as Hotspurs and Century Steel. One student that played for the school is Maddox McCall. He has been playing since he was younger and stuck with it because he has nothing else to do. This season the team had a respectable year. Maddox played as a starting winger. According to McCall, there are some strengths and weaknesses to the team: "We're not very fast, we don't shoot a lot, and lastly, we are not selfish."

Another student that played soccer for Butler is Kat McGuire. She is a freshman in high school for the Butler Golden Tornado and a starter for the team. She loved being a part of the team, being in a competitive atmosphere of the sport, and of course, scoring goals. According to Kat, "I feel like we're a very connected group which is a very big strength, but injuries always play a part in being a downfall of the team. However, I think we're going to be able to take those injuries in stride and prevail."

The tennis team was coached by Coach Wilson. Ms. Wilson, a ninth grade English teacher, was inspired to coach tennis because she loves the game and wanted the chance to get to know her students outside of the classroom. The team played about 10 matches this year. "A strength to the team is that we have a smaller team, but that is also a weakness. If we have girls that are missing or out sick, we have to rearrange the ladder in order to secure wins whenever we have matches. It's also a positive thing because we can work more one-on-one with individual players and help them improve as the season goes on," Wilson commented.

One of the younger players is Aerianna Pintell. She has been playing for several years. She can't play for the school yet, but she had been taught some lessons from Coach Wilson. Aerianna is excited to play for the school. She plays tennis because she loves being with her friends while playing a sport she loves.

One of the last sports is volleyball. In the fall, the sport was only available for girls. However, the boys can play in the spring. The girls' played in Bethel Park and Shaler this year for their tournaments. At Bethel Park, they came in third place, and they came in second at Shaler. Although they didn't win a tournament this year, they played well while they were there. One of this year's top players was Julia Mason. According to her teammates, she has had a great year. She thinks that every girl should at least try the sport. "It's fun, and it's a good way to make friends," Julie said. Julia wants to go to a Division 1 college for volleyball when she gets older.

Fall sports are a great way for students to get involved, become more social, and have loads of fun. Congratulations to all of the students and teams on their successful seasons!

# Do Teens Get Enough Sleep?

BY MACKENZIE MAIER

Many researchers have investigated the question: "Do teens get enough sleep?" Eighth grade guidance counselor, Mrs. Misencik, believes that many teens do not for various reasons.

According to Gigen Mammoser of Healthline.com, "As kids hit puberty, their bodies go through a host of changes, including those that affect their sleep schedule. Not only do teens need more sleep in general, but their sleep cycles also shift later, which means waking up later." School start times are also a huge factor in teens' sleep schedules, according to Healthline.com: "School schedules often contribute to teenagers having to get up earlier than their bodies naturally want them to."

Ms. Misencik suggests having a time management schedule. "Creating a schedule to prioritize school work, house work, social life, and extracurricular activities is extremely important," she said. If a teen does not get enough sleep their concentration, attention span, and even memory will be greatly affected, causing them to not reach their full potential.

Ms. Misencik suggests that teachers and parents should educate their students a bit more about the importance of sleep. They could also talk about the signs of sleep deprivation, such as increased moodiness, trouble staying awake in school, disinterest in activities that used to interest them, and depression-like symptoms. Per Healthline.com, 73% of high school students regularly do not get enough sleep. Pre-teens need 9-12 hours of sleep, and teens need 8-10 hours. Ms. Misencik commented, "Consistency is key," meaning teens should keep a consistent sleep schedule even on the weekends!

Social media is known to impact teens on many levels, including their sleep schedule. To help with this, Ms. Misencik proposes there should be rules set in place for teens and social media. She compares this to learning to drive a car: "Teens and parents need to work together to determine the 'rules of the road' when it comes to social media usage." Teens should be taught how long it is appropriate to be on social media. Social media could also impact teens' mental and physical health, causing them to be more tired during the day and more restless at night. If teens grow up with a slow and healthy introduction to social media and electronics, it might help them succeed in their academics and future life.

Overall, most teens don't get enough sleep, but that can be fixed if the right steps are taken, and the adult and teens are both dedicated to making a change in their sleep schedule.



## Staff Prepares Yearbook

BY ALLY BRAUN (EDITOR) AND LILLY EKAS

The BIHS yearbook is prepared by two separate yearbook classes, the ESP, or Enrichment Studies Program, course composed of seventh and eighth grade students and the ninth grade yearbook elective class. The classes are taught by Mr. Casher and Ms. Wilson respectively.

Mr. Casher has been teaching science and yearbook in Butler for 27 years. In his ESP class, the seventh and eighth grade students learn how to use the yearbook program called "Balfour" to create the book that families can purchase in mid April. This year's yearbook will cost about \$35.

Each trimester, ESP students have different projects for the yearbook to be completed on time. The first trimester of students focuses on making the page layouts and discussing what the theme should be for the yearbook. The theme each year for the book depends on what is trending or what students' interests are.

In the second trimester, the students have the job of taking all of the pictures of students around the building, and once all of the pictures are inserted into the system, they add captions to the images with the answers the students gave. The third trimester has the job of finishing the spring sports and editing the book until there are no known mistakes.

After the students finish the book, they get to take their own pictures and make their own four-page mini yearbook. While the students are working, Mr. Casher makes sure all the students are on task, and he also works on parts of the yearbook. Mr. Casher mainly focuses on the seventh graders, eighth graders, faculty, all sports, division pages, index, etc. The biggest challenge Mr. Casher and his students think the yearbook has is hoping that technology will work everyday. "Without the technology, it would be impossible to finish the book," Mr. Casher said.

Although sometimes it's a struggle to finish, there's many good outcomes of being in yearbook too. "The most rewarding part is seeing the finished product and seeing the kids having fun doing it," said Mr. Casher. From Mr. Casher's view, the most difficult part of making the yearbook is doing the index because it can't have any mistakes in it. The students believe that the biggest challenge is dealing with the software program itself because sometimes it doesn't work correctly due to the internet outages. The students said they liked being able to see the front cover and looking at all the action photos in the sports section.

In the ninth grade class, taught by new teacher Mrs. Wilson, they mainly focus on the student life section of the yearbook. For the student life section, students take pictures of the clubs, and they get to see the book start to finish. Mrs. Wilson has a degree in communications. She was inspired to teach this class because she was a member of the yearbook when she was in junior high, and she really enjoyed that yearbook class. "I like to be creative, and it's a good way to see all the aspects of the school put together," she said. One of the biggest rewards for the ninth grade is being able to see students create something on their own with guidance. On the other hand, one of the biggest challenges is getting technology to work. There is normally no time crunch to get the book done for the ninth grade classes.

Yearbook is an ESP/elective class at Butler Intermediate High School that most students enjoy.



## Advisory Program Adds Club Opportunities

BY ISABELLE COLONNA

The BIHS has expanded club offerings this school year, providing opportunities for students with a wide array of interests during advisory period. Some of these clubs include: Chess Club, Fly Tying Club, and Art Club.

Mr. Popovich, an eighth grade science teacher, advises the Fly Tying Club. His club has to be split and organized into two groups: seventh grade and eighth/ninth grade. During a typical club meeting, students set up their fly tying vice and watch a video on how to tie the fly they will be creating that day. Sometimes, Mr. Popovich shows part of the video several times to make sure students know what they are doing. Each meeting, a different fly will be tied, and each fly will require a different technique.

The Fly Tying Club meets once a month, according to the schedule set up by the office. In addition to those meetings, after school meetings may be planned. If the students wanted any other extra practice opportunities outside of the club, Broad Street Elementary School is hoping to offer additional opportunities in the near future. Students completed an interest survey to join the club, and all of those students were invited into the club. However, not all of the students accepted, which might be a good thing, since the club only has 20 vices and one per student.

Although at this time the club has only had one meeting, during the first meeting the students learned how to start and end each fly being tied, and how to identify the different pieces of equipment. There is no prior experience required to join the club. It is assumed that most students have never tied a fly before, so beginner skills are also taught along with more advanced skills for students who have done it before. With Fly Tying being one of the most popular clubs at BIHS, Mr. Popovich is proud and happy that students are getting back into more outdoor activities like fly tying. "As an angler who likes to fish, I feel that today's youth shy away from outdoor activities. I am happy to help kids gain an interest in outdoor activities," he said.

Mr. Popovich and Mr. Andrews previously hosted a Fly Fishing Club when he taught at the old Butler Junior High School (currently Butler Middle School), but when he moved to the Intermediate, it became more difficult to travel to the streams. The club focus switched to fly tying, and guest instructors, like Dr. Slamecka and Mr. Dobransky, have taught the members skills in the past. Grants have helped purchase necessary supplies for the club. The first grant was from the Golden Tornado Foundation and was used to start the club.

According to Mr. Popovich, the skills taught in his club are important to the students' lives because tying the flies teaches patience, and how to pay attention to small details. He commented, "Tying the fly will lead to success, patience, and paying attention to the smallest details of life." Hopefully these students will be able to use their flies to develop a love for fishing and the outdoors.

Mr. Waseleski sponsors the very popular Chess Club. They meet once a week, every Friday, and around 40 players will show up to each meeting. As the club moves forward, more chess strategies and new ways to play will be taught. In addition, tournaments will finish the school year.

Each week, the students pair off, preferably playing against someone they haven't before, so that new strategies can be learned from other people, instead of playing the same person with the same strategy each time. You don't learn as much as you could if you are playing the same person each meeting. There is no limit to the number of students per each meeting, and anyone can apply via the club sign-up form. Students are not required to come each week, so that students who have ESP can balance club time with class time.

There is no prior experience required to join the club, as new students will be taught the basics of playing chess. Mr. Waseleski, the club sponsor, begins with minor pieces such as the pawns, and finishes with more valuable pieces, such as the queen. He also posts websites on Google Classroom to help with more tips on learning how to play chess. Mr. Waseleski thinks that it is cool that the Chess Club is so popular. "Chess can be played by anyone, so all kinds of students are pulled into the club, and students end up talking to people they would otherwise never talk to," he observed.

As for pairing the students, they really just choose a partner and go. At first, the students would only pair with people they knew. But now, they know it is encouraged to pair with someone they've never played, or maybe never even met. However, they will be paired up for future tournaments. As for practicing on their own, it's up to them whether they want to or not. "Some do practice on their own, while others only play during meetings," Mr. Waseleski said.

This club was created out of Mr. Waseleski's love of the game, and now that there is a period for clubs, he is taking advantage of that and teaching students how to play. Mr. Waseleski believes that chess is a way to teach the students skills that they will use and improve on throughout their lives. "Chess promotes life-long learning. When you ever hear a professional chess player being interviewed, these are the people that are the best in the world still learning new strategies," Mr. Waseleski said. "Once you're out of school, you don't stop learning in real life," he added.

Finally, the Art Club is run by both Mrs. Reich and Mrs. Grantz. Unlike the other two clubs in this article, the Art Club only has 25 students meet each week. Groups are being formed to paint the different doorways, rotating different roles in the group based on students' strengths and weaknesses. For example, if one student is good at painting gradients, that student will do that job, and the other members of the group will play supporting roles in that. On another day, another member of that group will apply another art technique on that doorway.



On meeting days, groups will be built for working on different doorways and getting visual references and material for the doorway the group is going to work on. Currently, the club meets once a month, according to the club schedule, and there is no requirement to attend every meeting. The application process is closed for this year, but at the beginning of the year, anyone can apply. Around 100 students signed up at the beginning of the year, 40 filled out the application form, and 25 were accepted. Each student had to draw something and write why they wanted to be accepted into the club on their application form. Students were selected based on the originality, craftsmanship, and detail put into their work.

The Art Club was created to brighten up the school and encourage artistic creativity. The sponsors also recognized a need to reduce confusion about room location. "The rooms only have small tags on them, so oftentimes students get confused with rooms such as 111 and 112, and 108 and 109. With all the room numbers painted, the rooms will be easier to find. It will clear up confusion and eliminate some of the dullness around the school," Mrs. Grantz said.

According to one art club member, "The skills taught through different forms of art are perseverance and patience. The more details added to a drawing, the more times you'll have to try to get it just right. No piece of art will ever be perfect, but through perseverance you can make it as close to it as possible."



## Starfish Sponsors Seventh Grade Field Trips

BY HALEY MONTAG

On September 29-30, seventh grade students attended a half day field trip to learn more about the Starfish Program at BIHS. During the field trip, students learned about the history of the program, the Starfish ideals, and how they can become more involved in the school.

Seventh grade students attended with their English class in either the morning or afternoon, but they were quickly reassigned to new groups, encouraging students to get to know new people. Once in new groups, the Starfish leaders and teachers explained the background of the program and the purpose for the day.

According to Mrs. Snyder, one of the Starfish advisors and eighth grade math teacher, the program all began with Mr. Denny Barger, a former teacher, and Mr. James Allen, a former administrator. Mr. Allen brought Mr. Barger and the Starfish program to the Butler Junior High School more than 20 years ago. "It was started before I arrived," said Mrs. Snyder. Mr. Barger began by training the teachers in the program. Although Mr. Barger comes back to visit our training every year, the teachers then took over the program and began training eighth grade students who were recognized by their teachers as kind, inclusive, and good role models. "Each year, we train a new group of students to become Starfish leaders in early August," said Mrs. Snyder.

The seventh grade Starfish Days have changed a lot over the past few years. Mrs. Minch, another Starfish advisor and eighth grade ELA teacher, commented, "Sadly, last year we were unable to have the seventh grade Starfish Days due to social distancing and other regulations, so we were very excited to have the entire seventh grade attend this year!"

There is a lot of work from many people to make these days a success. "Mrs. Crissman coordinates with several of us to schedule the days, arrange coverage and substitutes, talk to the students about the importance of Starfish, etc," said Mrs. Snyder. Mrs. Waseleski organizes and presents the opening activities and video for the seventh graders. She also helps coordinate Starfish leaders throughout the day. Mrs. Minch is involved in every aspect of the decision making, planning, and implementing the seventh grade days. She works with the leaders, the seventh grade groups, the teachers, the equipment, and anything and everything else that needs done. Mrs. Snyder does a lot of the behind the scenes planning for the day, like organizing the schedule, gathering the leaders who help, and sharing information with the staff. There are a lot of other teachers who help by volunteering on the day of the event. "It takes a lot of people willing to go above and beyond to make these days work, and the seventh grade ELA teachers and Starfish teachers always jump right in," Mrs. Minch said.

The auditorium presentation included student speakers who have been inspired to make a difference in the school as a result of their involvement in Starfish. This year's student speakers were Sophia Cornetti, Zach Marra, and Adele Hohn. The seventh graders also heard the starfish story, where one boy walks along the beach and saves as many starfish as possible by throwing them back into the ocean. The basic message is that even if we try to help just one person, we are making a difference. Starfish brings great awareness to why it is important to be kind and explains realistic ways to show kindness to others. It creates a team atmosphere and brings everyone together for a common goal.

Students then participated in a variety of team building activities, aimed at reinforcing the five main ideas behind the Starfish program: respect, kindness, acceptance, teamwork, and diversity. "This was the first year that we really relied on the Starfish leaders to run the activities, and they did an outstanding job. I think that hearing from their peers about the importance of kindness, acceptance, and teamwork is more powerful for the seventh graders. I also met a lot of potential leaders in the seventh grade group. It was a great couple of days!" said Mrs. Minch.

Seventh graders who would like to get involved with Starfish as eighth grade leaders should let their teachers know. In the spring, all seventh graders will be asked to express their interest in participating by filling out a Google Form. Then, more information on the summer training will be distributed to the interested students.

## Homecoming 2021: A Week to Remember!

BY MADI LEWIS AND RACHEL SMITH

Students, teachers, and community members celebrated Homecoming week October 4-9. The spirit week culminated with Friday's football game festivities and Saturday's dance at the Senior High School.

One of the long-standing traditions is the crowning of the Tornado Prince and Princess at halftime of the football game. According to Student Council president, senior Christian DePolo, "The first round starts out with teachers selecting the ballot. Once the names are on the ballot, the Junior class votes on who they want on the Homecoming Court." The student body then votes on the eventual winners. This year, Juniors Tyce Snyder and Annabelle Turner were crowned. Other members of the court included: Carlie Baker, Zoe Scott, Morgan Coughenour, Brynn Morton, Mark Collins, Reid McDonald, Nate Grossman, and Lance Slater.

Homecoming spirit week always has daily themes, which the Student Council selects at their summer meeting. This year's spirit week themes were: Monday was College Day, Tuesday was Color Day, Wednesday was Western Day, Thursday was Decade Day, and Friday was Golden Tornado Pride Day. On Tuesday, each class was assigned a color to wear, and hats were permitted on Western Day. Students and teachers in grades 7-12 dressed up each day, and the spirit week theming was a huge success!

Perhaps the most anticipated part of the Homecoming activities was Saturday's dance, which took place at the Senior High School. Each year, this dance is the most highly attended dance, and this year was no different. Approximately 950 students attended the event, which was only open to students in grades 10-12 and their dates. According to Christian, "Because the ninth grade is in another school building and attendance has to be limited somehow, ninth graders could only come to the dance if they were invited by an upperclassman."

Jaxon Salata was one of the lucky ninth graders invited by an upperclassman. According to Jaxon, he feels the rule is fair. "If too many people attend the dance, there is more of a chance of problems," he said. His favorite part of the event was going out to dinner beforehand. Isaiah Lorenzini, who is also in ninth grade, disagreed with Jaxon. "Ninth graders should be able to go, even if they aren't invited by an upperclassman." He hopes that once ninth grade is part of the Senior High School it will no longer be an issue.

## Algebra Bridge Program Enters Third Year

BY ETHAN LOURENS

The Pre-Algebra and Algebra teachers have offered a "Bridge Program" to prepare advanced math students for seventh grade Algebra since 2019.

Mrs. Bodamer and Mrs. Lesjack, two seventh grade mathematics teachers have been the driving force behind the program that prepares students for the jump to Algebra. The Bridge Program was created to help prepare students who would be skipping Pre-Algebra to take Algebra in seventh grade. It exposes those students to all of the content that they would miss by skipping a course to ensure that there would be no gaps in learning. The students have to successfully complete independent lessons and an exam to take Algebra in seventh grade.

According to Mrs. Bodamer, "The program is not meant to be too difficult, but it is meant to be challenging. Students are learning a course by themselves." Mrs. Lesjack's advice is for students to just try their best in sixth grade to qualify for the Bridge. The course starts in March and ends in June, so students are done before summer break. Students who complete the Bridge Program and score a 70% or higher on the exam then qualify to take Algebra in seventh grade.

Some parts of the course have been described as difficult because they didn't have a teacher there in person to help them, and they had to rely on watching videos. Students also talk about having troubles remembering things from the Bridge over summer. Joseph Perneluzzi completed and passed the Bridge course and thinks that it is worth it. He said, "It's not hard because I think the teachers teach it well." He highly recommends it for those who qualify.

Mrs. Lesjak has been teaching the skills in the Bridge Program for 16 years, and Mrs. Bodamer has been teaching Algebra classes for 21 years. They bring this wealth of math knowledge to the Bridge Program. If your child is planning to take the Bridge and you want to learn more, you can go to the full courses on Pre-Algebra on Khan Academy. There is also a one week Algebra Camp that students can take during the summer with Mrs. Bodamer to be ready for the school year.

# Schools Have Changed Over the Years

BY CHEYENNE MAGILL AND ALICIA COLEMAN

One thing parents and teens can agree on is that the school system has changed greatly since the 80's and 90's. Mr. Rock, Mr. Craig, and Mrs. Neely Aldridge were all teachers who attended Butler Area School District as students. All of them agree that the last 30-40 years have brought many changes in education.

According to Mr. Craig, a seventh grade ELA teacher, "The teaching methods were different because teachers were less open back then and less likely to get to know you." Teachers primarily lectured, and students took notes on what they said. He also said that there were more papers and pencils back then, and now there is more technology used. The physical appearance of the school was also a little different. "Instead of the plain orange lockers, there were rainbow colors which added more brightness to the school." As far as discipline, Mr. Craig believes that it is better now because the punishments back then were very harsh. "I would also definitely go back to school again--to get my hair back," laughed Mr. Craig.

Mr. Rock also said it was mostly pencils and papers back then. He also explained that it was more hands-on learning then. "There was also more school pride back then, and I would like to see some of that school pride come back," he explained. His favorite subject was science in seventh grade but changed to math soon after. He became a history teacher because he thought his history teachers were far too boring, so he wanted to make it more interesting. Although Mr. Rock agreed with Mr. Craig that discipline was a bit harsh back then, he still prefers it to today. "It holds people more accountable," he said. As far as going back to school, Mr. Rock said, "I would definitely go back to high school to be young again because who wouldn't?"

Mrs. Neely Aldridge attended the Intermediate High School for ninth and 10th grade when the building was still set up in an open classroom concept. She remembered, "It was very hard to focus in class because there were no walls between the classrooms." Class sizes were also larger at that time. The teachers at the Intermediate were also not as helpful with reaching out as they are now, she explained, but she does remember some very caring teachers from her seventh and eighth grade years. Computers were also only for the gifted students because computers were so expensive. On the topic of discipline, she said, "If a student gets in trouble now, we help them overcome their difficulties." Also, she would not go back to high school because she thinks it is hard to make friends and figure out who you were.

All of the teachers had different views on how the schools have changed since they went to school, but they definitely agreed that school is quite different than when they attended.



## Language Classes Popular With Students

BY OLIVER CHASTAIN

Students at IHS have the opportunity to explore foreign languages in seventh grade, and then choose to take Latin, German, French, or Spanish in the following years. All of these options are popular choices among students seeking to sharpen their skills in other languages.

Mr. Jim Kasperek, the Butler Intermediate High School Latin teacher, has studied Latin for 23 years. "This is my seventeenth year of teaching Latin, but I am always learning about the language," he said.



Mr. Kasperek went to North Hills High School, where he started learning Latin in seventh grade, and then he attended Duquesne University and earned his undergraduate degree in only three years.

He thinks that students who take the five years of Latin provided at Butler become more fluent readers. A lot of the students take Latin because they believe it will be beneficial in their future job or they want to expand their knowledge of the English vocabulary. Mr. Kasperek thinks that students should be exposed to a new language earlier because studies have shown that it is way easier to learn a language the younger you are.

A typical day in Latin class starts off with a greeting in Latin, then for the rest of class they either read a Latin story, complete a vocabulary activity, or they learn about the culture. There used to be a Latin Club, but sadly there is none anymore. Those who wish to learn more about Latin should pay attention in Exploratory World Languages and also look up some fun facts or watch some cool videos.

According to Mr. Kasperek, "Latin is interesting because it is deeply connected to our culture, and it is so relevant in that we can see references to Latin in our culture nowadays even though Latin was spoken and written thousands of years ago." Latin is a fun class where students learn more than they think while having fun.

Mr. Jared Schneider is the German teacher at IHS. "I started learning German in seventh grade, and I continued to take German every year through college," he said. He lived in Germany as an exchange student. Mr. Schneider has been teaching German for seven years, since 2014. What convinced him to learn German was because his family heritage is German, and he went to Germany. If he were to learn a different language, it would most likely be Spanish or French though probably Spanish because he likes to travel and it is spoken a lot more.

According to Mr. Schneider, German can be difficult to learn because English is somewhat of an "untucked language," but English and German have distant ties. Students who take all five years of German do gain a good understanding of the language because the years are consecutive. "By the time students are in their fifth year, they can be quite fluent," he said.

In class, they always start with a bell ringer to help them recall what they learned in a previous class, followed up with something to help them learn new skills. At the end, students produce a product, like homework or a project. "The German program is a good opportunity to learn a second language in a fun and engaging way," Mr. Schneider said.

One of the Spanish teachers is Mrs. Jackie Thomas, who has been educating students in the Spanish language for 24 years. She chose Spanish because she thought it would be the best choice at the time because it was and still is the second most popular language in America. She studied Spanish in Spain at a university; she also went to Costa Rica in the summer for one of her years of teaching to build towards a master's degree.

Spanish is not too hard of a language to take because it has no silent letters. She thinks that students that take Spanish for all five years do get a good understanding of the language.

A typical class starts with pronunciation and grammar. Students also practice speaking, listening, and writing activities as well. Students are expected to produce Spanish and spell the words and use grammar correctly on a test. Sometimes they will use Quizlet for the vocabulary, or they will play Blooket.com for games. They use Duolingo on occasion. The students may use it as much as they like, and if they are super interested, they can listen or watch Spanish media. According to Mrs. Thomas, "To be successful in a language it takes determination and hard work, but it can be a lot of fun."

She thinks that Spanish is interesting because it is spoken by so many cultures all over the world. She thinks that students that want to learn Spanish because it is spoken a lot in the U.S. "It doesn't have to be Spanish; learning any language will open up a lot of opportunities," she said.

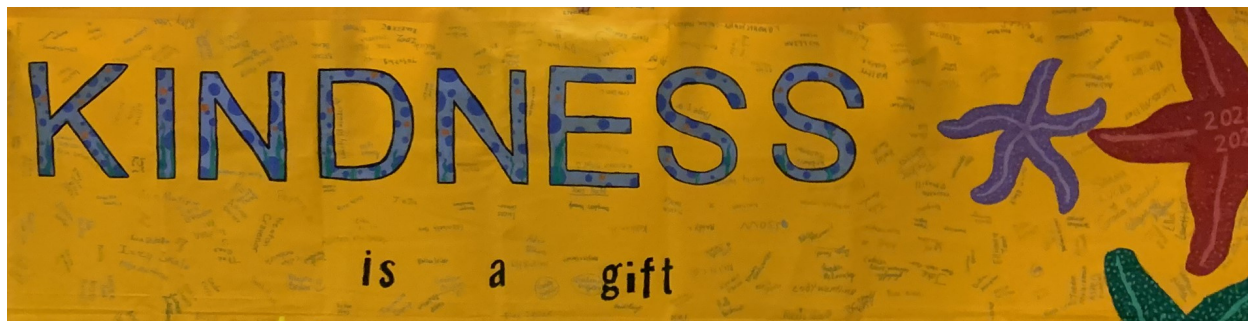
Mrs. Elaine Taoufik also teaches Spanish, and she has been doing so for the last 23 years. She learned Spanish because she wanted to be an English teacher at EDP, and they required all majors in English to take some Spanish; she really liked it so she double majored in Spanish. Mrs. Taoufik also studied the language while living in Toledo, Spain. She thinks that Butler does a great job of introducing students to a different language in seventh grade, but it would be "great" to expose them maybe a little earlier.

On a typical day in Mrs. Taoufik's class, they start with a speaking activity then go on to review from the day before, and finish with the day's activity, which is a variety of things they do. If you want to learn more about the language, there are a plethora of resources on the internet. She likes to refer to "YouTube University" and many other resources to improve Spanish resource skills. According to Mrs. Taoufik, "Spanish is one of the courses that you can take in high school that you can almost immediately recognize outside of school. It can be applied right outside of the classroom."

Madam Lepage teaches French at the Intermediate. She was originally from France, so she learned French first then came to America and learned English. She took English from sixth grade through 12th grade, so that she could speak it and somewhat write it. She took Spanish and German in high school as well. To study English, she would go to England with a family who didn't speak French to learn the language very quickly. Then, she came to America and really studied English and learned it fully. She has been teaching French for 17 years.

"I think that French is just as hard to learn as Spanish," she said. She definitely thinks that all students who take the language for all five years at Butler get a good understanding and really know the language at the end of it. For French class, they usually start off by grading a student in French then they check over the homework. Following, they learn a new lesson or review over what they have been learning.

She thinks that French is interesting because it is spoken in 25 different countries, such as Quebec, Canada. "A lot of writers are French as well, and French is based in Latin," she said. Students who want to take French most of the time want to go to France and Paris. Paris is the biggest destination for tourism so you want to learn the language, and it is also practical because Quebec is right next to America.



## Holiday Gifts for Your Teen: What Does Your Child Want the Most?

BY RYLIE BLYSTONE (EDITOR) AND SOPHIA CORNETTI (EDITOR)

Christmas is coming, and IHS students have definite ideas of what is popular this holiday season.

As far as their biggest Christmas wish, students didn't hold back. Ninth grader Carter Blystone said, "My biggest wish would be a new Apple iPhone, either a 12 or 13. I want a new one because I've had my old one for years, and the screen is cracked." Addison Gatz, also a ninth grader, responded that she wanted eight of her own puppies. She thought eight would be the perfect amount because it's not too many and not too little, and the breed doesn't matter. Eighth grader, Natalie Collins, wished for a Tiffany necklace. It doesn't matter what shape or color. "I would rather just have one that is dainty," she said.

They also discussed their favorite gift from the past. Carter's favorite gift from the past would have been his gaming PC. He could play more games there, and it runs more smoothly than anything else. Addison's favorite gift would have been her phone. It was her favorite because she uses it a lot. Eighth grader Everett Reges's favorite is his Xbox 360. "It gave me something to do, and I grew up on it," he said. Natalie's favorite gift from the past couple Christmases would be her own built-in dance studio from her dad. It is her favorite, because she loves to dance and it is very useful to practice in.

They also gave their opinion about money and presents, and which one they'd rather get. Carter would rather get money. "You can buy whatever you want with it, and you can save up for something special or just to keep it," he said. For Addison, "It really depends if there is a certain gift I really want or, if I'd want nothing special, I would rather have money." Everett would also rather have money, more than presents. Although he liked gifts when he was younger, he'd want money now, because "you have more freedom in what you can get, or you could save your money." Natalie's opinion would be to have money instead of presents. Although gifts are a nice surprise, she thought money would be the better choice because you can choose what you want to get and somebody won't get you a gift that you don't want.



## Students Adjust to 9-Period Day

BY JULIA RUSH AND DEANNA TAYMAN (EDITOR)

This year, the Intermediate High School transitioned from an eight-period day to a nine-period day, which allowed for improved educational opportunities for students in all three grade levels.

Mr. Dobransky proposed the change last year because he wanted to build enough time in the schedule for all seventh grade students to have two periods of math and language arts instruction and all eighth grade students to have two periods of ELA instruction. Previously, math was only one period, and honors eighth grade students only had a single period of English. The advantage for ninth graders was more time for elective classes.

The transition to nine periods also provided for an advisory period when clubs could meet, and it allowed for each grade level to have a separate designated lunch period. "I proposed to move the building to nine periods because I wanted to give students the same academic experience and to make things more organized," he said. As for feedback from students and teachers, it has been mainly positive. Students are happier that they have the courses they wanted, and the negative feedback is that some students think the school day feels longer.

He hopes that the change has had a good effect on the teachers and students because the teachers still teach six classes.

Kaden Kozik, an eighth grader, believes that 40 minutes is an appropriate time for a period, and he can't tell a difference in the length of the classes. He feels that he is more tired by the end of the day, but the workload ends up being about the same.

Gracelyn Gump, also an eighth grader, likes this year's schedule better because she thinks the classes feel shorter, and she likes that she gets to experience a new class and with a couple more people. "We actually end up with more time in the hallway to stretch our legs," she said. She wishes we could go back to starting the day at 8 a.m. instead of 7:30 though.

Gavin Rush, a ninth grader, thinks that the advisory period is too long, although homework can be completed in the extra time. It is enough time to get from class to class, but he would rather just switch for eight. Sophia Cornetti, an eighth grader, doesn't have the typical advisory period because she is in ESP. Students enrolled in the Enrichment Studies Program have class fourth period, and they must complete advisory and their class assignments within that time. With band, she says that when work doesn't get done in class, she has to do it outside of school because she doesn't have a study hall. She thinks it is only fair to have time to do extra work for people with activities. If the schedule was changed again, she thinks that there should still be nine periods but time should be provided for a study hall for students who participate in band and ESP.

Adele Hohn is an eighth grade student, and she thinks that there is less homework and that she has a better understanding of what she is learning this year. One change she would like to see, however, is instead of ELA class being longer for every student, it should have been whatever that student needs the most. "For instance, what if that student struggles in math? That student should have more math," she said.

Rylie Blystone is an eighth grade student who thinks that day feels quicker, but she would rather go back to the 8 a.m. start time. She sometimes feels rushed because she only has so much time to do her work. The day overall seems smoother and faster after lunch. She likes the schedule a lot better even though it starts earlier.

## Musicians Thrive at BIHS

BY SAMANTHA ALBERT (EDITOR)

Chorus, orchestra, and band provide a much needed outlet for many Intermediate students who find joy in music. Our music program not only helps students learn more about music, but it also teaches them to be more confident in themselves and their abilities.

Chorus is offered as young as third grade in Butler, with the addition of a third and fourth grade chorus at Broad Street. In third-sixth grade, rehearsals are often held after school hours, but in seventh-12th grade, choirs rehearse during the school day. The seventh grade choir program has 100 students, eighth and ninth combined has another 100, and 60 additional students currently stay involved at the Senior High. Because of these strong numbers, students never have to worry about singing alone!

The Intermediate choral groups host winter and spring concerts, and the Senior High has additional performances as well. The winter concerts are usually in December and have winter and holiday-themed music; the spring concerts are usually sometime in May and have all kinds of music, and the Senior High's Veterans' Day concert is usually sometime around Veterans' Day and has patriotic music. There are other choirs and festivals that students can also be a part of including the PMEA District choirs, the Music in Our Schools Month concert, and many others.

In some songs, there are solos, so students have to audition. There are multiple judges, so that there is no bias. The audition is recorded and then sent to music teachers from other districts. They rate the students in multiple categories, and the singer with the most points gets to do the solo. If a student doesn't get a solo singing role, they can also audition to be a speaker that introduces songs at the concerts. The audition process is that the students have to write an introduction that is a paragraph or less and then read it out loud to their class. The class judges on the intro, if the student sounds and looks comfortable, and if they would be able to speak to a whole auditorium of people. If students don't want to have a solo or speaking role, they don't have to audition.

The choir directors, Mrs. Waseleski, Dr. Helsel, and Mrs. Tepper make sure that students will have a good time singing. They pick songs based on what students need to learn, what they like to sing, and what will challenge them. For most of the songs, there are two parts. The students are split into two groups, white and gold, and the parts are assigned to the groups based on balance, but for seventh grade, because their voices haven't fully changed yet and it is hard to determine whether they are a soprano, alto, bass, or tenor, the parts alternate between the melody and the harmony.

According to Dr. Helsel, "Choir can be a form of therapy as we work on breathing and singing. Plus, being part of the choral family means that you have instant friends. We're all there to share our joys, our music-making, our sorrows, and all the things with each other and with the audience. Singing makes you a better human being."



Mrs. Waseleski agreed. "So many wonderful opportunities open up for you because of your time in choir. You learn so much about music, life, and about the world through singing. I think that everyone should jump on the choir-wagon," she said.

Another great opportunity for students is to join the orchestra. "I absolutely love working with these amazing musicians every day," said Ms. Black, the orchestra director. This is her seventh year at Butler, and she has loved seeing the orchestra program grow over the years. Multiple concerts and orchestras have been added, such as the Rock Orchestra, a Chamber concert, a Pops Concert, and the annual Halloween Spooktacular.

Students can start playing an instrument in fifth grade. In the seventh-12th grade orchestras, there are about 150 students. Each class has about 40 students. She provides her classes with music that she thinks will challenge them. "It takes practice and discipline to put it all together and sound well for the concert. It's all about pushing to that next level of musicianship," said Ms. Black.

Depending on the grade, there are three-six performances per school year. The year starts off with the Halloween Spooktacular, a community event, where they play spooky music, such as Ghostbusters, Thriller, etc. There is a trick-or-treat hallway, and students dress up in costumes. Next in the year is the Winter Concert on December 8th and 9th. It includes holiday music and winter themes, such as music from The Nutcracker. The Senior High students are working on a medley from The Polar Express, and much more. Rock Orchestra also performs on December 8 then goes on an elementary tour. In February, grades 6-12 perform at the Pops Concert, where they will perform a variety of pop-rock music. The year closes with the Spring Concert in May, which includes multiple styles of music, such as contemporary, modern, jazz, fiddling, and many others.

Students in the orchestra can play violin, viola, cello, bass, and piano. Typically, there are mainly violins, a few violas and cellos, a few bass players, and one piano. "You want a nice balance of instruments," said Ms. Black, "so that one section doesn't overpower the other, and all parts can be heard."

Lastly, a great opportunity for students is to join the band. Mr. Karenbauer has been the seventh, eighth, and ninth grade band director for 11 years. "Band not only teaches music to students, but it also teaches students to organize their time, make new friends, and a number of other things," said Mr. Karenbauer, "Band students become more than a band; they are a family," he added.

Band starts in fifth grade and goes through 12th grade. In normal years, each grade has about 60-80 students. Usually every grade does different concerts. At the IHS, the eighth and ninth grade bands do a winter and spring concert, and the seventh grade bands perform a spring concert. "The goal in each concert is to expose the students to as many different styles of music as possible," Mr. Karenbauer said. In band, students have a choice of playing the flute, clarinet, saxophone, French horn, trumpet, trombone, baritone, tuba, and percussion. "There has to be a limit to certain instruments to keep a balanced sound in the band. Most times it works out that the students get to play what they want," said Mr. Karenbauer.

Chorus, Orchestra, and Band are three great musical opportunities for students in our school district and are an important part of students' school experience.

