

- + *Student choice and  
Student voice*
- + *Personalized  
learning and a path  
to success*
- + *2023 graduate  
chases dreams of  
becoming a teacher*

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## ***STUDENT AGENCY:***

*How Students Are Choosing Their Own Path in One91*

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# ENSURING STUDENTS HAVE A VOICE IN THEIR LEARNING

When I make decisions, I always ask myself “Who is most affected by this decision?” and invariably, students are one of the groups.

This simple question makes it so clear how important it is to ensure students have a say in their own education, and that’s why it’s a core value for District 191. We believe that students should have the ability to personalize their learning journey and proactively build a day-to-day experience. We call it “Student Agency.”

When we live that value, the results are striking.

A student who is empowered is also motivated. They gain confidence in themselves and will continue to advocate for themselves and their future. Their communication skills are strengthened.

Our entire Pathways model throughout District 191 is built on the benefits of student agency. We provide experiences that spark interest and wonder so that students can find and blaze their own paths. Given that opportunity, students’ talents and passions are illuminated.

In this issue of “Wayfinder,” you’ll read about some of the different ways that student agency comes to life in our schools from the youngest grades, such as during the regular Rahn Enrichment Academies, all the way to high school, where student input helped our English department completely reimagine course offerings to grow interest and engagement.

When I see students expressing themselves and truly engaging in their own learning, I’m inspired and proud and I think you will be, too.

*Theresa Battle*

Dr. Theresa Battle,  
Superintendent

Superintendent Dr. Theresa Battle ensures student agency, one of District 191’s core values, is front and center in all decision making.



# Getting a Head Start on Career Options with Pathways

## 2023 Graduate Ashley Alanis Palacio is chasing her dreams of being a teacher.

Ashley's passion for kids came pretty naturally. As the oldest of six children, she has had lots of opportunities to care for, encourage and teach kids throughout her life. Thanks to the Pathways model at Burnsville High School (BHS), Ashley is building on that experience to get a head start on her career and is growing the tools she needs to start inspiring young learners.

As a lifelong resident of District 191, Ashley has had a variety of great teachers over the years who encouraged her through the English Learner (EL) program and through activities and core classes. In middle school, she was taught by Mr. Sean Simmons, which was one of the first times she had a person of color as a teacher. She was so inspired by this experience that she entered high school knowing she wanted to start taking classes in education as soon as possible so she could someday give that same kind of inspiration to others.

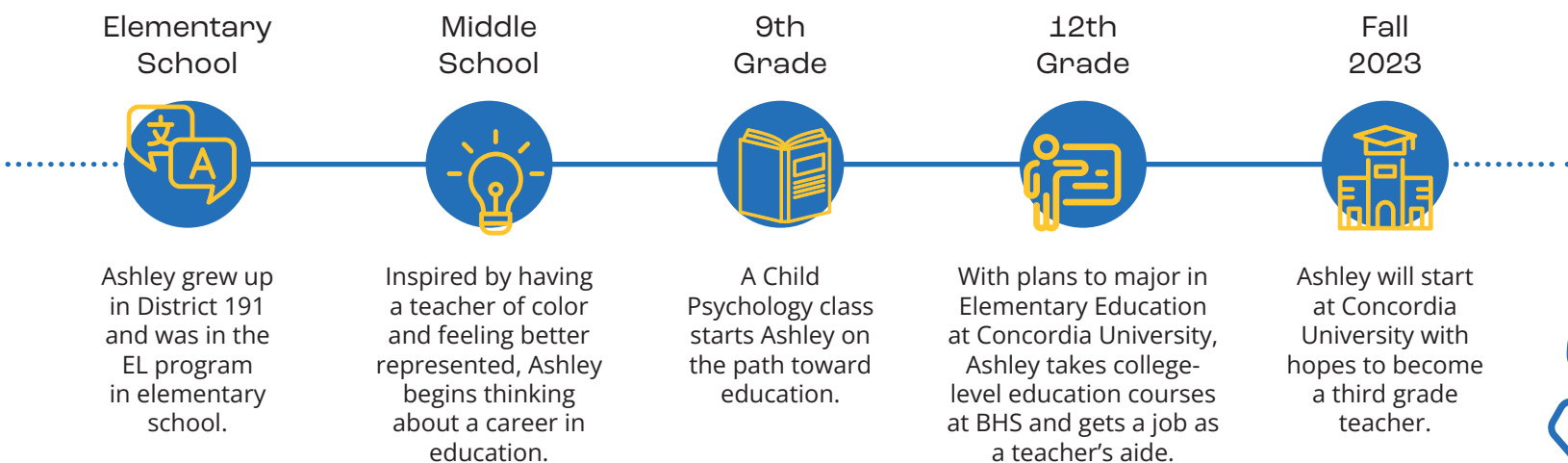
"I took a child psychology class in ninth grade that started it all for me," said Ashley. "My teachers really supported me and told me to explore more so I ended up taking Preschool Lab my junior year and learned so much. I knew that this is what I wanted to

do and was encouraged to keep pursuing it by my teachers."

While she took classes like cooking mostly to learn new skills or for fun, she stayed committed to build the foundation to someday become a teacher. During Preschool Lab, Ashley worked with other BHS students to create lessons for real preschool students including science projects and outdoor activities. The classes take place within BHS and the high school students teach and ultimately write a final paper about the experience of seeing the young learners grow and learn.

"I noticed that kids really need a routine to learn best, so we always started with a morning song and then into some lessons," said Ashley. "I was able to create some really strong bonds with kids in that class and it was amazing. The fact that I can make a child excited to come to school is so rewarding."

She got involved with a variety of activities during her time at BHS including dance, joining the LatinX club to connect with other students, and later joining the Future Teachers of America Club. During a recent field trip to a college with the club, she heard all about the immense need for teachers of color in the field, which further encouraged her on her path and increased her passion for representation in the classroom.







A portrait of a young woman with long, straight brown hair, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. She is wearing a black top and a necklace with a green, ornate pendant. The background is a colorful wall with letters and a cartoon character.

“Through the Pathways program, it’s almost like I was given an internship opportunity since I got the required experience to be able to qualify for my job,” said Ashley. “I have such a passion for kids and I find the job to be so rewarding. I originally didn’t plan to become a teacher, but through the classes I have taken, I learned how powerful the job of an educator truly is.” ■





# Matt's Journey into Auto Body Repair and Teaching

Building on a passion for working with his hands, Matt Omodt is now teaching the importance of Career and Technical Education to college students.

Growing up in Savage, Matt was mechanically inclined from a young age, often tinkering with various things around the house. During junior high, a camp that involved automotive classes sparked a passion to become a mechanic and get all the knowledge he could about how automobiles work and how to repair them. He was drawn to Burnsville High School (BHS) because they offered automotive classes, which ended up being a very impactful life choice.

As a sophomore, Matt dove into classes centered around the trades, learning about construction, welding, drafting and audio electronics, but it was during his junior year that he found a passion for auto body repair. "I am really creative and I like the artistic part of auto body work," said Matt. While Matt says he did well in high school, he acknowledges that he did the best in the more hands-on courses, thanks to interesting projects and support from teachers like Mr. Russ Tesmer.

At the time, it was more than just a high school class, they actually operated an auto shop out of the school, working on real cars owned by school staff. "Matt was passionate about learning the trades and it was fun to see the pride gleaming from Matt's face after he had accomplished a quality repair on staff members' vehicles," said Mr. Tesmer.

After he graduated from BHS in 2012, Matt chose to attend North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton. During college, he never shied away from a new skill or challenge, and prepared himself to work relentlessly to achieve his goals. When he graduated in 2014, he set his sights on purchasing a house by age 21 and worked hard to achieve it. He moved to Fargo and got a job with Freightliner Trucks in auto body and collision repair eventually becoming the lead frame and engine technician. Additionally he worked on restorations, did custom paint jobs out of his home, worked in the commission automotive collision industry eventually specializing in heavy hits.

While he was getting valuable experience in the field, he started chasing his desire to help teach and train the next generation, eventually going back to North Dakota State



*I thank Mr. Tesmer every time I talk to him for what he did in guiding me into my career and how he helped make me into the person I am today. All it takes is one person to positively affect our lives, and he was one of those people.*





Middle  
School



A camp experience that involved automotive work sparked an interest in auto repair.

10th  
Grade



Matt starts at BHS and begins taking as many hands-on classes as possible.

12th  
Grade



Serving as foreman of the school auto shop independent study, Matt knows that this is what he wants to do for his career.

2012



Matt graduates from BHS and enrolls at NDSCS to learn all he can while preparing for his career.

2014



After completing the two-year program at NDSCS and graduating with a 4.0, Matt starts working multiple jobs, never turning down a chance to learn a new skill.

2022



Years working in the field sparked an increased interest in passing his knowledge along, so Matt begins teaching at NDSCS and is tasked with recruiting students and teaching them in a real shop setting.

College of Science, this time as an instructor. "I started working on every certification and every training opportunity that I could to be positioned to be an instructor," said Matt. "I always thought that Mr. Tesmer had the dream job and being in the industry made me want it more."

Like his experience in high school, Matt and his students are operating an actual shop with real customers. After learning on donor cars from a local salvage yard for the first eight weeks, Matt's students begin running a shop that charges lower prices than other shops, with the expectation that the work will take a little longer. Students get a chance to learn about sourcing parts, providing estimates and of course doing the work themselves.

As a teacher, Matt is able to take the knowledge he gained throughout his education and time in the field and pass it along to his students. “Career and Technical Education is so important because it is not the typical school experience of learning, testing and moving on, it’s working with your hands and it encompasses so much.” ■





# STUDENT LEADERSHIP ON DISPLAY:

## How School Board Student Representative Ava Drobnick Makes a Difference

As Ava Drobnick entered her senior year at Burnsville High School, she was already maintaining a pretty busy schedule, participating in Burnsville Strong, National Honor Society, Student Council and Link Crew.

She thrived in those group activities, but was looking for something she could do individually where she could hold a leadership role, make an impact, and that would help her become more comfortable speaking in public. She found all those things in her role as student representative on the District 191 School Board. As student representative, Ava provides monthly updates about the accomplishments of fellow students and shares with the board issues students are facing.

**“Students are at the center of it all, so it only makes sense that someone experiencing the schools first-hand is there with the perspective they provide,” Ava said.**

Ava has also brought a student perspective to district projects beyond the board room. Earlier this year, she assembled a group of students to participate in the creation of the District’s Profile of a Learner (read more on page 10). Ava and her classmates joined community members to talk about what competencies students should learn as they move from preschool to graduation. She also participated in the interview process for the BHS principal position last fall.

“I have never been on that end of an interview which made it an enthralling experience, especially given that it’s a more high-stakes job interview than what I’ve experienced,” Ava said. “This opportunity only emphasizes how important first impressions and passion are when presenting yourself in the workforce. Times like those interviews and workshops have shown me that the board values the perspective of someone who is experiencing the policies they decide on.”

Ava said she’s learned a lot by attending the board meetings, especially about things she wasn’t previously familiar with like official meeting processes and school district finances. She’s also observed how much board members and staff across the district genuinely care about students.



“There is a lot of time to think while people are sharing and the commonly surfaced thought is the appreciation for our truly dedicated staff. One group of teachers from the elementary schools noticed kids struggling with phonemic awareness - a crucial part in understanding how spoken words are made up of individual sounds. The part that stuck out was how they found the pilot program they’re using now in a few of the elementary schools on Facebook,” she said. “It is not truly a huge thing, but it was heartwarming to think that, outside of work, we have teachers perusing through Facebook still thinking of their students. It was clear how genuinely excited the teachers were seeing the improvement in their students.”

Ava plans to attend the University of Minnesota Duluth this fall and major in exercise and rehabilitation sciences. She said her experiences both in the classroom and in extracurriculars during her time in District 191 have prepared her well for her future.

“I feel very lucky. BHS and District 191 as a whole have set me up for success in any future plans I wish to pursue,” she said. “I appreciate the access to advanced classes I’ve had starting in middle school. As someone who plans to pursue a post secondary education, I know the classes are only going to get harder, but taking the AP (Advanced Placement) and CIS (College in the Schools) classes now allows for a smoother transition.” ■

# Nicollet Middle School Revalidated as a National Demonstration School

Nicollet Middle School has been revalidated as an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) National Demonstration School. Revalidation signifies that the school is an exemplary model for successfully implementing AVID strategies and curriculum to support students in achieving academic and personal success.

National Demonstration Schools are considered to be in the top 5% of schools using AVID in their learning. Nicollet first attained Demonstration School status in 2015.

AVID is a college prep program designed to increase the number of students who enroll in four-year colleges and improve college readiness for all students, especially those groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

Demonstration Schools undergo a rigorous, multi-step validation process and are required to be revalidated every few years to ensure high levels of implementation, with quality and fidelity to AVID strategies schoolwide.

**“Being nationally recognized as an AVID Demonstration School lets everyone know that our school has an AVID program that meets or exceeds the organization's standards for college readiness,”** said Amy

Smalley, AVID coordinator at NMS. “Revalidation ensures that the curriculum and methods being used in our schools are updated to meet current

industry requirements and prepares students for success.”

The AVID program in One91 has grown and evolved over the years, with elective classes expanding to all middle and high school grades, as well as the implementation of schoolwide strategies. AVID has had a positive impact on students, both academically and socially. AVID helps students develop the skills and mindset needed for success in high school, college and beyond. The program has also brought staff together as a community, working collaboratively to support student learning and growth.

“Implementing AVID in all four of our secondary schools has had a significant impact on our students,” said Assistant Superintendent Dr. Chris Belmont. “They are more engaged in their classes and are better prepared for college and career success. Teachers who have received AVID training have the tools and strategies to better support their students and create a more equitable learning environment. Our community has also benefited from AVID, as it helps to close achievement gaps and creates a culture of high expectations and achievement for all students.”

AVID aligns closely with District 191's mission and beliefs, with a shared focus on equity, excellence and student empowerment.

“We are proud to be an AVID district and will continue prioritizing this program in our schools,” said Belmont. ■







# BHS Students Build Strength, Community in **BOXING CLUB**



Emma Ganion is always thinking about ways she can help her students be successful. So earlier this year, Ganion, a special education resource teacher at Burnsville High School, started talking to students about an activity that she's found beneficial for herself - boxing.

Ganion joined a boxing gym in St. Paul last summer as a way to stay active and try something new. She's been happy not only to see her skills improve but to be surrounded by a supportive community at her gym. That got her thinking about how boxing could be advantageous for some of her students at BHS, as well. A few students were interested in the idea from the start and that quickly grew to 35 students who are now regularly participating in the new Boxing Club at BHS.

"I knew there were about 5-10 students interested, so I was expecting a small group. Once I put up a few flyers around the school, the sign-ups came pouring in. I was planning to lead the first session by myself, but I asked one of my teammates, Asiya Mohammed, to come help me after I checked the sign up again and realized that I might have 30-plus students,"

Ganion said. "Asiya recruited another one of our teammates, Zach O'Connor. Asiya and Zach had so much fun with the students at that first session that they agreed to stick around as weekly volunteers. Emily Ansell, another teacher at BHS, also came on board to help me with the club."

After some weather delays, the group met for the first time at BHS in early March. It's now meeting weekly at nearby CMB Boxing Gym. Earlier this year, Ganion reached out to boxer Leo Medel, who runs CMB, and he agreed to help coach the club, as well.

"When I started this gym, this is the kind of thing we wanted to do to help the community. Kids from all different backgrounds can come together as a team here and that's going to help them in life," Medel said. "This is what we love to do. This is a great opportunity for the kids to learn, work hard, train, and reach their goals."





Ganion also received support to the tune of nearly \$1,000 in donations that she used to buy gloves and hand wraps for all the students in the club. The activity fee to join the club is \$10, but scholarships are also available.

"The response now is just as enthusiastic. I have students come by my room every week and ask me for a permission form to join the club," Ganion said. "We added a second session each week, and we are already talking about plans to continue over the summer if possible."

Ganion is excited for her students to experience not just the physical but the mental benefits of boxing.

"There are so many physical benefits to boxing, but it is also amazing for the brain. It requires enough focus that your brain locks in but not so much that it's mentally taxing. You have to think quickly and adjust to your opponent without sacrificing your own technique," she said. "There is a lot of discipline involved. My students can come to boxing and use their brain in a totally different way than they do at school."

Ganion said boxing is also a great outlet for stress, which makes it beneficial for her students who struggle with emotional and behavioral regulation.

"There are the endorphins that come with any kind of exercise, but there's an extra rush that comes with throwing punches... Boxing Club has been a great opportunity to show them that there is an environment in which they can get out any frustration and stress," she said. "I've read some interesting studies about how exercise can help with emotional regulation, and I love being able to offer students a chance to try a new activity that can help them in so many ways."

Sophomore Israel Ontiveros describes himself as a self-taught boxer. He's been training for a few years and was excited for the opportunity to join the club and participate in his favorite activity with his classmates.

"I saw the flyers and posters and went to see what it was all about. It's been a really cool opportunity," he said. "I've been interested in boxing since I was little and would like to turn it into a full-time career, so this is a good start."

Ontiveros got to spar in the ring for the first time on April 13. During the three-round session, Ontiveros and his opponent were cheered on by their teammates and coaches, as well as Burnsville High School Student Resource Officer Javier Jimenez, a boxer himself and family friend to Ontiveros, who invited him to attend.

"As SROs, we're always trying to bridge that gap between the students and the community so to be invited to be here means a great deal to me," Jimenez said. "Israel is a great kid and I appreciate the opportunity to watch him spar."

Students are already taking ownership of the club, making plans to form a board and establish roles like event coordinator and social media coordinator. One student already started a TikTok account for the club with the description: "We don't fight for fun or to hurt people. We fight to learn and grow as a family."

"They're really leaning into the community aspect of boxing, which is amazing to see," Ganion said. ■



## **BURNSVILLE BOXING CLUB:**

"We don't fight for fun or to hurt people. We fight to learn and grow as a family."



# Profile of a One91 Learner

## Beginning with the End in Mind

Providing a clear explanation of the knowledge sets, skills and abilities that District 191 students will gain from PreK through graduation.

### ***Each student set up for success***

District 191 is proud to put every tool possible in place to push the programs, offerings, teachers and students to be the best they can be. By establishing a snapshot of what each learner should be able to know, do and accomplish, District 191 is setting the tone for what it means to be a learner in every school in the district and how to support that work.

The result is the Profile of a One 91 Learner that serves as the “what” for what the district wants to see in each and every student as they work through their journey in the schools. Unlike some districts who use a profile of a graduate, the District 191 team very intentionally focused beyond the graduation stage and into the overall educational experience from PreK through high school. The profile lays out clearly that students in the district will be Academically Ready, Civic-Minded, Culturally Proficient, Financially Ready, Future Ready, Life Ready and Workplace Ready, but that is not all.

“We want students to feel that school isn’t something that is happening to them but something that they find interesting, fun and challenging that they get to pursue,” said Director of Curriculum and Instruction Imina Oftedah. “This is not just about seniors, but it is about learners at every stage. It’s less about unveiling and more about revealing and sharing about where children can find these experiences, lessons and skills being taught and offered to them.”





Building on the strong foundation of the district's Pathways model, the profile will show students where they are going and give them tools to choose for themselves how to get there depending on their chosen path and passions. The profile shows the district's commitment to innovation and whole child education, going beyond the academic needs and building a full-spectrum approach to what each student is capable of.

## ***Blazing a path with strong support***

The process to establish the Profile of a One91 Learner goes back to September 2022 and was enhanced by a willing community who stepped up to participate. The process would take some time, but the team was willing to do the work to establish and implement this important asset quickly and with community involvement at every step.

**“Our symbol is blaze for a reason,” said Director of Strategic Partnerships Dr. Kathy Funston. “We are calculated risk takers and innovators and when something is going to be good for our kids, we move forward strategically and collaboratively!”**

The district partnered with educational resource company YouScience to launch a community-focused process to hear directly from students, teachers, families, business leaders and community members about what characteristics a learner in the district should have. At the first Community Forum event, there were more than 80 participants – business owners, parents, teachers, students and others – all of whom were eager to dive into discussion and provide their perspective on outlining and defining what it means to be a successful learner in District 191.

“To look out and see the diversity of folks who are invested in making sure our schools are successful was very overwhelming and humbling,” said Oftedahl.

“The best conversations I heard involved hearing an educator saying one thing and a business person saying another, and through discussion having them realize that they were saying the same thing, but in a different way,” added Funston. “They would talk through it and find that common understanding, which is what we were striving for.”

## ***Defining the “what” and planning for what’s next***

The Profile of a Learner went through several drafts between the district team and stakeholder groups before ultimately launching in January 2023. Each round of changes involved going to community partners and defining and refining the traits and characteristics of the profile. The next steps will involve assessing curriculum all along the PreK-12 continuum and making adjustments to best serve students, meet their needs and provide opportunities that excite them. Work will include identifying where and how each of the characteristics are being taught and addressing any gaps.



“The first phase was to define the profile and the next phase is really digging in to find where each proficiency is found for every student so we can make good on our promise and process,” said Oftedahl. “It’s important to have the end in mind and know what it is that we want for our students and how to prepare them as they enter adulthood and into their engagement with their community.”

The Profile of a Learner also gives a very clear picture of what families can expect of their students in terms of skills, knowledge and abilities. As the next phase of work continues, the connections to the community will continue to be an asset.

“These attributes aren’t just wow factor skills that you might see like ‘a student can build a computer from scratch.’ These are the subtle, inherent attributes that students develop over time through our system that lead to academic and life success,” said Funston. “I can’t thank our partners enough because they always come to the table and help inform and guide the opportunities for our students because they really do care about what our students are learning.” ■





# Sparking ✖ Excitement at Rahn Elementary

*with Principal Brad Robb*



The opportunity to choose their own activity is something that ignites a spark of excitement in students at Rahn Elementary. That excitement is on full display when it's one of the school's monthly Enrichment Academy days. At the start of Enrichment Academy, students scatter into the hallways and find their way to a new teacher in a new classroom where they get to focus on an activity that interests them.

In the March session, fourth-grader Thor chose to go to the media center where he built a pinball machine out of cardboard. Thor received instructions from Principal Brad Robb, then went to work on his project, trading ideas with his friend Jack along the way.

"I can't wait to decorate it, bring it home and show my parents I made something cool," Thor said.

Evelyn, also a fourth-grader, wanted to do something more active, so she chose to take a Zumba class. Evelyn said she likes having the freedom to decide what she wants to do and she picks Zumba whenever she can.

"I like to be able to choose what I get to do. This gets you moving and I love to dance," she said.

In addition to dancing, games, science and art projects, students can also learn skills like braiding, piano, coding or how to use Google Docs. Fourth-grader Maryan chose dance class on previous Enrichment Academy days, but this time around she chose to learn more about Google Docs because she said it's a practical skill and she liked the teachers.

"It's fun to get to learn from Mrs. Hartl and Mrs. Slattery," Maryan said.





## How did Enrichment Academy get started at Rahn Elementary?

**Brad Robb:** Two years ago, we developed a new vision for who we are and how we want to provide new, exciting and engaging learning for our students. We created a new vision based on the values of Curiosity, Creativity and Achievement. We created a plan to address all of these areas in a unique and effective way. We have built the Enrichment Academy as an integral part of our Site Improvement Plan.

## Why is it important to provide students with these types of opportunities?

**BR:** When students have the opportunity to learn more about an interest of theirs, they are more engaged with their learning and with school. School is much more than academics; it is about supporting the whole child. We want to spark interests that can be a part of their life beyond elementary school. These opportunities could even lead to potential career options.

We believe that the more students are involved and engaged in their learning and the more they are connected with the school community, they can achieve great things. This also provides an opportunity for the students to choose an interest and learn more about it. Student agency in their learning is also very important to Rahn.

## How does Enrichment Academy align with the concept of Spark experiences we talk about as part of elementary Pathways?

**BR:** Enrichment Academy embodies the vision for Pathways for students. Through the Enrichment Academy, elementary students are given the chance to experience new opportunities that could inspire them for their future. Students are learning the basics of piano, doing diamond painting, making piñatas, learning how to write calligraphy and making jewelry, among many other options. These amazing opportunities provide that spark to ignite a new passion for learning. Students might become the next great artist, musician, architect, engineer or dance instructor. Without these experiences, some students may never uncover a hidden talent.

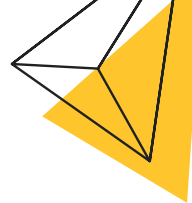
## What has the student response been like on Enrichment Academy days?

**BR:** On the days of Enrichment Academy, there is a buzz in the air. Students are so excited to learn and try new things. They are excited to be with other students from other grades and other classes. After the Academy is done, many teachers provide time for the students to share what they learned or what they did. They can't wait to show and tell the rest of their class all they learned. They take their projects home and share them with their families. We have heard so many great stories of families doing some of the activities at home.

A parent shared: "My son really loves enrichment day because he gets to try new things that he normally wouldn't have the chance to do, and he has instructions on how to do them. It is always an exciting day for him, he looks forward to it and he memorizes the day it is going to take place."

## What do you hope students get out of the experience?

**BR:** We hope that students will try something new, gain a new understanding of topics that they don't know much about, and become more engaged in their learning. We want students to keep learning something that they are passionate about. We want students to feel more connected to Rahn Elementary. ■



Scan to watch Enrichment Academy in action!

# Student-Driven

## English Electives Go Beyond the Classics at BHS

Juniors and seniors have voice and choice in English Language Arts and are excited to connect with the material.

There are more choices than ever before when it comes to high school level classes. At Burnsville High School (BHS), the Pathways model has become the gold standard for student choice, but there are ways to bring that same type of agency to core subjects. The English Language Arts (ELA) department is doing just that by offering literature and composition electives for 11th and 12th grades that are driven by student and teacher interests.

During their first two years at BHS, students experience the high school level ELA courses focused on short stories, novels, writing papers and doing analysis, but the choices really open up in eleventh grade. Students are required to take one literature elective and one writing elective during the school year with classes combining juniors and seniors. There is something for everyone including Science Fiction/Fantasy Literature, Film as Literature, and Mythic Patterns for reading, as well as Creative Writing, Journalism, and Writing for STEM for writing.

ELA teacher Sheana Eggers and the rest of the department initially developed the courses in 2017-18 during a curriculum review with the goal of creating more specific electives that matched student interests to strengthen the connection and engagement with what students were reading and writing. The skills taught would remain, but the course materials, content and actual work would be refreshed and refined to meet the theme of the course.



“

*These classes allow me to express myself and write about what I actually like, which is so refreshing.*

“There is student choice and voice throughout the process,” said Eggers. “We built these courses knowing that all writing classes would have a research component or a larger topic writing piece so students may make a film or write a children’s book instead of a paper. We still talk about the elements of writing or how to analyze a story but we do it through a different lens.”

During the curriculum review, teachers started with a list of potential classes and surveyed students on which options they wanted to take. The list was further refined and then teachers dove into creating the structure of the classes and selecting materials. Students register for the courses through a ranked choice system and many choose options based on their chosen pathways or interests, while others just want to try something new.

“I really like that these electives take a more direct and focused look at each topic,” said senior Sydney Hawkins. “I’m interested in becoming a teacher at the moment, and thinking about what subject I want to teach, it lines up with all of these English classes. Plus, I do love the more Gothic style in literature, so it’s just fun to read about these darker topics.”

Being able to choose topic-specific classes feels more like college than high school, but at BHS, where students have gotten used to being able to customize and personalize their educational path, it’s a perfect fit. Teachers say that engagement is up







were focused on reading mainly outdated books, and I felt like I never grew as a writer.”

Students are able to personalize their school day to best suit their chosen path. Those who are interested in sports may take Sports Literature and Journalism, while more creative-minded students may choose Film as Literature and Creative Writing.

“I teach the film class and it’s a tough class,” said Eggers. “I tell students they will take more notes because there are no books, just really analyzing every element of film down to the camera angles. I get excited when students tell me that they couldn’t wait to finish a film in class and watch it at home or when a parent emails me to share that their student keeps pausing a show and discussing what the placement of the characters in the scene says about the story.”

Students have provided great feedback about the classes, and teachers continue to adjust their lesson plans based on student interests. The excitement to explore continues to grow.

“I loved these electives much more than my regular English classes because the content was more specific and the conversations about what we were learning were fun and interesting,” said senior Norah Joseph. “My advice is to take a class because you are genuinely interested in that idea or subject matter, even if it is just a little bit of interest.”

Elements from previous courses are still seen in the electives. Instead of fully focusing on world or American literature, the elective classes take material from those areas and incorporate them into the theme. Teachers are excited to continue updating the courses and materials to make sure that students can see themselves and new perspectives in what they are reading.

**“These electives are fun and contemporized, and students are still learning the essentials, but with a new spark in their learning,”** said Eggers. “Personalizing and expanding these core subjects is a way to help us inspire students to keep going towards their passion. A place where they can share the best parts of themselves.” ■

since launching the courses because students have chosen to be there.

**“These classes allow our students to shine a little bit more,”** said Eggers. **“They get to feel like they are an expert on something if they’re reading this type of literature or doing creative writing at home, they can bring it back and feel like this is where they belong.”**

We were nervous about fracturing the classes that we have done for a long time, but we are all glad we made these changes.”

When selecting materials for classes, teachers pay special attention to include texts beyond the usual English class canon to bring diverse and contemporary perspectives.

“My favorite thing about these classes compared to other English classes is the freedom they have,” said senior Martha Wondimu. “These classes allow me to express myself and write about what I actually like, which is so refreshing. Before, my English classes

*“I’m interested in becoming a teacher at the moment, and thinking about what subject I want to teach, it lines up with all of these English classes. Plus, I do love the more Gothic style in literature, so it’s just fun to read about these darker topics.”*



# Celebrating the Class of 2023

Congratulations to the more than 600 students who graduated in ceremonies at Burnsville High School, Burnsville Alternative High School and the BEST Transition program during the week of June 5!











**Spark.**

**Fuel.**

**Blaze.**

Our preK-12 Pathways program continues to stand-out not just within our community, but at the national level. Dr. Amy Loyd, assistant secretary of career, technical and adult education for the U.S. Department of Education visited Burnsville High School in April to tour our Pathways program and hear about the student experience and our 200+ community partners that make the program possible. Students shared how when they have opportunities to discover more about what they love early in life, they get an invaluable head start towards their futures.

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

Elementary students are inspired to approach the world with wonder.



In April, Virtual Academy kindergarten and first graders engaged in a hands-on, interactive learning experience about hens and roosters with the Dodge Nature Center at Vista View Elementary School.

“One of our goals in Virtual Academy is to provide in-person learning and social opportunities for our students and their families,” said Ashley Gravink, VA teacher. “Inviting the Dodge Nature Center to Vista View gave our students the opportunity to have a hands-on experience while learning about some of our life science standards. We have many online social opportunities in One91 Virtual Academy, but this experience was one of several in-person chances for our students to see each other face-to-face and socialize while learning!”



More than 70 third, fourth and fifth graders explored the scientific method as they presented their projects at the Rahn Elementary science fair in March to student judges from Burnsville High School. For one project, Lekhya, a fifth-grader, measured the temperature of egg shells, vinegar and water as part of her hypothesis about global warming.

“The hard part was doing the set-up. The model took 15-20 days to make,” Lekhya said. “The fun part was presenting something you figured out and showing what you learned and what you know about science.”



Fifth graders from around District 191 cheered and sang along to familiar songs as they watched the Burnsville High School band and orchestra perform at the Mraz Center in March. The visit was not only entertaining but also educational for the fifth graders as they heard directly from the high school students about their music experience and got the chance to ask questions about their instruments.

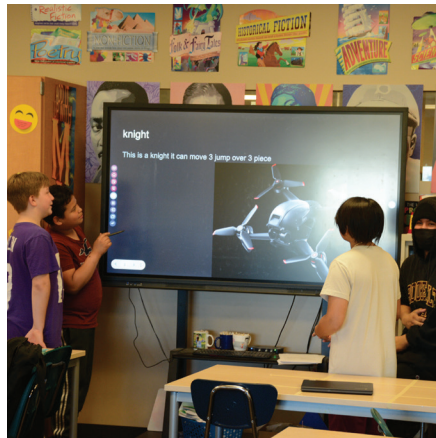
“The students got to experience a super-engaging hour of concert performance by high school musicians, and gain knowledge for their future if they choose this pathway,” band teacher Molly Holmes said.

# Fuel

Middle school scholars discover new ways to look at the world.



Checkmate! In March, the Nicollet Middle School and William Byrne Elementary chess teams were crowned champions at the Minnesota State Scholastic Chess tournament in St. Paul. Shoutout to John Blomer, middle school team leader, as well as Jon Nguyen, Theo Diep and Levi Spitznagle who scored in the competition. At the elementary level, the team consisting of Charlie Doll, Miles Malundo, Faith Spitznagle, Oscar Spitznagle and Dylan Tongerud earned the top spot.



Thanks to District 191 Community Education, students in the Burnsville Youth Collaborative (BYC) have gotten to explore an array of learning opportunities. This spring, BYC partnered with an organization called Girls Who Code. With help from Collins Aerospace leader Liz and a crew of volunteers, middle schoolers were introduced to the world of coding.



The return of middle school athletics continued this spring at Nicollet and Eagle Ridge middle schools. Following the return of wrestling and boys and girls basketball over the winter, the boys and girls track teams and boys tennis team made their way outdoors and had successful seasons this spring.



# Blaze

Immersive experiences increase future readiness for high school learners.



Created by BHS affinity groups, Culture Week is an amazing way to celebrate our students and their culture and heritage!

During the first week of May, special lunches were served in the cafeteria and students led and participated in a variety of activities, including a lip sync contest, fashion show, and a pow wow, that reflected their various cultures.



The Burnsville High School robotics team had a banner season this spring, placing first out of 77 teams and winning the Imagery Award at the World Championships in Houston before placing fifth in the Einstein Division. It was the highest finish in the 13-year history of the program.

The robotics team placed first at the Heartland Regional Tournament in Kansas and the Central Missouri Regional Tournament before finishing the season by placing second out of 36 teams at the state competition.



In May 17, 14 seniors who plan to become teachers took part in a signing ceremony at Burnsville High School. The ceremony, similar to those where high school senior athletes sign letters of intent regarding where they will play college sports, honors students who are committed to pursuing a teaching career.

Teachers Matt Deutsch, Dave McDevitt and Allison Millea, advisors of the Future Teachers of America (FTA) club, were on hand to welcome parents, staff and students to the event.

"I don't think there's any job on earth that compares to being a teacher," said Dave McDevitt. "You really become a part of someone's life through the personal connections you make as a teacher."

TO THE ISD191 RESIDENT AT:

# Student Voice: Hallway Chatter



**IBRAHIM ABDULLAHI**  
4TH GRADE



**MASON WISE**  
4TH GRADE

*In art class,  
we get to do  
our drawing  
projects  
multiple ways  
and it lets us  
be creative  
and do what  
we want  
to do.*



**ROSE MOONEY**  
4TH GRADE

*In WIN (What I Need),  
I like that we get to  
choose which books  
we get to read.*

*For our Black  
History Month  
projects, we got  
to pick who we  
presented about  
and how we  
presented it. I liked  
it because it helps  
me do my best when  
I get to choose  
something  
I'm interested  
in.*