

— Our mission is to —
educate, inspire & empower

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★ 728 ★ HAPPENINGS

With schools in
Elk River, Otsego,
Rogers & Zimmerman

Summer 2022

Gratitude, Service and Hope Through the Pandemic

It has been an absolute honor to serve as ISD 728 Superintendent over this past school year! I am extremely grateful for your and the School Board's trust in me, the opportunities I have had to learn with and from many of you, and to serve our outstanding communities. Although the lessons learned are too long to list, here are some of the most significant in no particular order:

- Education will never be the same, and that is ok. Let's learn from our recent experiences and continue to grow.
- Collaboration with internal and external stakeholders is more important than ever.
- Without mental health support for our children, families and staff, we will not be able to educate and give our students what they need to be successful.
- Schools play an extremely important role in the lives of our students, staff, and community members.
- Words matter.
- Each and every employee in our system plays an important role in the success of our children.
- Access to things such as, but not limited to food, childcare, technology and support services must be made available for all.
- Truly listening to and engaging with our students is essential.
- Time and energy spent worrying about and/or responding to local, state and national distractors takes time away from serving and supporting our students.
- Public education is worth fighting for and will ensure a better and brighter future for all.
- Our systems and communities are full of amazing people.
- Serving as an educational leader is an honor, privilege, and opportunity to be part of the solution.

Recently, the ISD 728 communication team and I took time to review our journey from the beginnings of the coronavirus pandemic through 2022. We recognize it has been a long season of downs, ups, downs again, and then incredible accomplishment in all of our schools. We are proud that, through it all, our families, staff, administration, School Board and leaders throughout our communities have worked both tirelessly and collaboratively to help our students and families through a very challenging time. Our future looks bright, and I am proud to serve with each and every one of you.

Some reminders this summer, as we make time to restore, relax and celebrate:

- ISD 728 will shift its educational model in the south end of the District (Rogers and Otsego) next year, as outlined by recommendations from various committees leading up to and after the 2019 referendum and bond, to support enrollment growth. Our Grade 5 students will shift from Hassan Elementary, Prairie View Elementary and Rogers Elementary to middle school buildings. Meanwhile, all students in Grades 5 through 8 at Prairie View Elementary will move from their current school to the brand new Prairie View Middle School, which will open on

time and under budget. We know this may feel different and uncomfortable for Grade 5 students and parents initially, but please know that processes are in place to welcome your students to their new setting. It will be amazing, and we feel so grateful for the support received to make this possible for our children. Thank you! Also, some of our schools have new administrators due to retirements, reassignments and/or personal choice. Please join us in welcoming them to their new schools and/or roles. Information about the changes was sent to all families previously, and information is also available on the District website if interested.

- Summer construction will continue and lead to even more improvements in 2022-2023. Last summer, of course, was dominated by the construction of our new activity areas in Elk River, Rogers and Zimmerman, including three new multi-purpose fields, which are used by men and women student-athletes within multiple and various programs. This summer, our list of projects continues, including the centerpiece of the 2019 bond question - the new Prairie View Middle School, which will be ready for students in September. As promised, we also have been and continue to improve parking lots, roofs, heating and cooling systems, painting, replacing flooring, and doing some other "non-glamorous," yet extremely important projects around our schools - each of which aligns with our mission to provide an equitable learning environment for students in our communities. Please "bear with us" through our construction seasons and work as we fulfill our 10 year plan and promises made.
- We continue to need YOU! ISD 728 is hiring multiple positions throughout our communities. Many of these jobs provide face-to-face interaction with our amazing students, who are doing creative and fun things each day in our classrooms and spaces. From custodians to food service, substitute teachers to paraprofessionals, we are in need of staff throughout our buildings as we continue to grow in both services and population. Please visit our website for more information, and if you or anyone you know is interested in joining our phenomenal team, contact: hr@isd728.org and someone will work with you to explore the possibilities. Together, you and ISD 728 can make a difference in the lives of our children, families and community.

Finally, we look forward to a school year that, we hope, will feel less chaotic, knowing that this most likely will be our "new normal." Many feel the pandemic has now reached the endemic phase, meaning that COVID will be part of our healthcare system for ages to come. As we adapt to that new phase, we know that our students will be moving forward without many of the restrictions that were in place - for safety purposes - over the past two school years.

While our goal is, as always, to provide a safe environment for all students - we are proud we have come this far and done so much throughout this unprecedented time. Together, we have learned much from that experience and look forward to future possibilities.

Thank you, as always, for supporting our District, being a part of what we do, and making ISD 728 the best place to live and learn in Minnesota.

Superintendent Dr. Dan Bittman

Hundreds Join the Ranks of ISD 728 Alumni

ER ELK RIVER HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2022

VIEW ALL PHOTOS
www.isd728.org/erhsgradphotos



 **IVAN SAND COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL**
CLASS OF 2022

VIEW ALL PHOTOS
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ROGERS HIGH SCHOOL

CLASS OF 2022

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ZIMMERMAN HIGH SCHOOL

CLASS OF 2022

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AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM CLASS OF 2022

VIEW ALL PHOTOS
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ISD 728 Celebrated Fifty Retirees



Nearly two dozen of the 50 ISD 728 retirees joined Human Resources staff and leadership at the ISD 728 District Office, to honor their many years of service.

We appreciate all of you who made a difference in a child's life. We will miss you!

View full list of retirees here: www.isd728.org/2022retirees

Trio of Leaders Honored at DO

ISD 728's leadership team held a short "thank you" event for a trio of retiring leaders.

Brian Menth, in his years of service, has seen the District grow from under 10,000 students to more than 14,000, and opened several buildings thanks to the 2014 and 2019 bond elections. Marcia Welch has long led VandenBerge Middle School as an outstanding principal, leader and mentor to other young principals in the District in her time here in Elk River. Kim Eisenschenk led the Business team through the District's largest budget reduction, and largest referendum in District history.

We wish you all the best in your next adventures!



ISD 728 Honored the Staff of the Year with Annual Awards



Each year, out of more than 2,000 ISD 728 staff and volunteers, the District recognizes a handful as winners of the coveted Annual Awards, including Early Education Teacher of the Year, Staff of the Year, District Staff of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, Secondary Teacher of the Year and Elementary Teacher of the Year.

"If you came through and won this year, well that's pretty amazing," said Superintendent Dan Bittman. "Because there will never be another year like this. Each and every one of you is worthy of an award for this school year. And, we are particularly happy to celebrate these individuals, because they've been recognized as leaders, as examples, and as outstanding members of our ISD 728 family. It's one of our favorite things to do each year."

See below for this year's winners!



**EARLY EDUCATOR
of the Year**
Anna Hampton
ECSE School Psychologist
Handke Center



**ELEMENTARY TEACHER
of the Year**
Kelly Gorder
Speech Language Pathologist
Hassan Elementary School



**SECONDARY TEACHER
of the Year**
Monique Sabby
FACS Educator
Elk River High School



**SECONDARY TEACHER
of the Year**
Sue Yankowiak
Teacher
Ivan Sand Community High School



**DISTRICT WIDE
STAFF MEMBER
of the Year**
Pam Beckermann
Digital Learning Specialist
District Office



**STAFF MEMBER
of the Year**
Melissa Bistodeau
Blind/Visually Impaired Paraprofessional
Westwood Elementary School



**VOLUNTEER
of the Year**
Mary Bailey
Classroom Volunteer
Prairie View Elementary School



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Student Advisory Council Donated Funds to Open Doors, Thumbs Up



The inaugural Superintendent’s Advisory Council – a panel made of more than two dozen ISD 728 students from around the District that has worked closely with Dr. Dan Bittman throughout the 2021-2022 school year – made a pair of donations to local non-profit organizations earlier in June.

The crew – which has been active in school and social causes and a sounding board for school leaders – donated hundreds of dollars to both Open Doors for Youth and Thumbs Up 5K.

Open Doors is a non-profit aiding local families with food, clothing and other essentials. Thumbs Up, meanwhile, recently opened a youth center in downtown Elk River and is aimed at improving mental health through fundraising and programming throughout the District.

Thank you to these amazing young people for their support of our District and these incredible partners/organizations.

Andy Almos to Head Business Services in ISD 728

The ISD 728 Leadership Team is pleased to announce that, after a thorough search, it has named a new Executive Director of Business Services.

Andy Almos, currently Superintendent of East Central Schools, will join our District July 1, 2022.

Andy is a great leader to take the helm of our award-winning team, and has a long history of leadership and finance training with Minnesota schools throughout his career, said Dr. Dan Bittman.

Almos has been at the head of East Central since 2013. Prior to that, he served as a K-12 principal in Goodridge, Minnesota. He also was a principal in nearby Maple Lake, and started his career as a CTE teacher in Shakopee.

A member of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) Board of Directors, Andy remains active at the state and national level through MASA and the Great Start Cohort. He will replace Kim Eisenschenk, who retired from ISD 728 on June 30, 2022.



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Twin Lakes Elementary School Celebrated Their Blue Ribbon School Award

Twin Lakes Elementary School earned their Blue Ribbon School status last Fall. In early June the staff celebrated with students and their families with a program, parade, art displays & fun outdoor activities! TLES is only one of just three MN elementary schools to earn this award. View all photos here: www.isd728.org/tlesblueribbon



Student Representatives Recognized by ISD 728 School Board



Each year, the four ISD 728 high schools select one student per each building to serve as liaisons to the ISD 728 School Board. These Student Representatives make a small presentation at one meeting per month, reporting on activities at their respective high school, issues

the School Board and administration could address, and provide some insight into their personal journeys through ISD 728.

“This year’s group had a particularly important job, because it was such a strenuous year coming back from last year’s COVID impacts and dealing with the pandemic’s effects this year – particularly in the fall and winter,” said ISD 728 Board Chair Holly Thompson. “With those factors as well as many social issues impacting our students, it was really an emphasis for us as a Board to hear from our students.”

This year’s student representatives were:

Maverick Almich - Elk River High School

Lailah Uphus - Ivan Sand Community High School

Peyton Giffen - Zimmerman High School

Hannah Hartlage - Rogers High School (not pictured)

“We truly thank these students for their service to our Board,” said Superintendent Dan Bittman. “They take time out of some very busy schedules to inform us and work with our Board to improve our service to students. That’s a very big responsibility and they handled it so well.”

Students Honored at Leadership Awards

The ISD 728 School Board continued its tradition of honoring students who show outstanding leadership. Students who earned spots in the 2021 National History Day competition were also honored at the meeting.



Dr. Heidi Miller Named Principal at HES

ISD 728 is pleased to announce that on Monday, May 9, ISD 728 School Board approved our recommendation, Dr. Heidi Miller, to serve as the next principal of Hassan Elementary School Principal. She will begin on July 1, 2022.

Dr. Miller is the 2022 Minnesota Outstanding Assistant Principal of the Year (NAESP, MESPA). She is currently serving in the Anoka Hennepin School District as an assistant principal. She earned her doctorate in educational administration and her master’s degree in literacy education from Bethel University. She is also an early literacy expert who is a published author, educational speaker, presenter, and board member of the Twin Cities Area Reading Council.



“I am very honored and excited to be the new principal of Hassan Elementary School,” she said. “Thank you for trusting in me and providing me with the opportunity to be part of ISD 728. I look forward to learning with and from Hassan Elementary School, District, and Community stakeholders.”

Miller said In the first 90 days at her new position she would like to meet with individual teachers and teams to build relationships and formulate collaborative and specific goals around the following areas:

- Build relationships across the Hassan family
- Social-Emotional Needs of students
- Engaging families and community partners
- Provide staff support and advocacy
- School Culture - Maintain stability and continuity
- Set specific and attainable academic goals
- Practical training and preparation for demographic shifts

Dr. Miller will replace current principal La Tonya Cruthird, who has accepted another opportunity with another organization.

“We believe that Dr. Miller will be an excellent fit for Hassan Elementary,” said Dr. William Campbell, ISD 728 Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education. “We are looking forward to working with and supporting her as she transitions into this position. Dr. Miller’s impeccable reputation as a recognized instructional leader across Minnesota will benefit staff and students in our community for years to come. We are excited to welcome her to the ISD 728 family.”

RHS Basketball Standout Goes Pro

Hannah Sjerven, a graduate of Rogers High School and all-state standout for the Royals girls basketball team, is going pro – and doing it for the home team!

Sjerven, who spent the majority of her college career at the University of South Dakota, was taken as the 28th pick in the third round of the WNBA Draft. She was drafted by the Minnesota Lynx. Sjerven received national attention during USD’s run to the Sweet 16. She scored 53 points in their three NCAA Tournament games.

The 6-foot, 2-inch center averaged 15.1 points, 7.7 rebounds and 1.8 blocks for the Coyotes season, and finished as the school’s all-time leader in blocked shots.





ISD 728 INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 728

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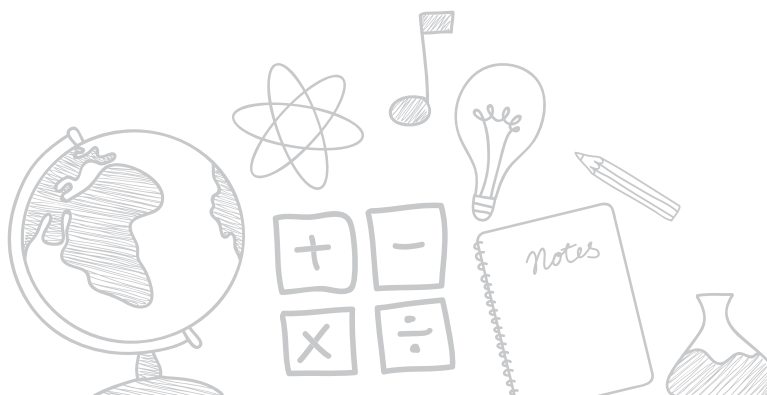
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★ If you've ever thought "I know someone who would like to join our team!" - OR - "I think ISD 728 would be a great place for (XYZ) to work!" - NOW is the time to act!

★ ISD 728 needs people to #JoinOurTeam and is hiring multiple positions, especially as we look ahead to the 2022-2023 School Year.

★ PLEASE pass it on, and find out how you can help others #JoinOurTeam to keep us #728Strong!

isd728.org/joinourteam



School is Cool!

Photo Gallery



Twin Lakes Elementary Student Council made blankets to donate to Guardian Angels.



RHS 2022 Graduates joined together to walk the halls of their youth at Rogers Elementary School.



Meadowvale Elementary & Elk River High had a couple of interesting visitors back in May!



Westwood Elementary Activity Day.



Zimmerman HS/MS Knowledge Bowl Team captured the Granite Ridge Conference Championship.