



DISTRICT BULLETIN

A World-Class Community of Learners

TURNING POINTS IN HISTORY

Fridley Middle School's
History Day showcase

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2024

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The Fridley Public Schools District Bulletin is mailed to every home in the Fridley School District. Past issues are available online at fridleyschools.org.

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6000 West Moore Lake Drive
Fridley, MN 55432
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PRESCHOOL NEWS

100-day festivities bolster partnership between preschool and middle school students

The 100th day of school is a milestone event for Fridley Preschool students. On February 16, preschool students and their parents/guardians celebrated this occasion by participating in a variety of “100” themed activities in the Fridley Community Center gym.



Two separate celebrations accommodate both morning and afternoon preschool sessions. During the morning session, the preschool students had extra special helpers at each of the activity stations. Eighth-grade AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) students from Fridley Middle School were there to run each activity.

“Students in AVID have required community service that is part of our class. This semester the students were in charge of organizing their own community service opportunities,” explained Elise Mulville, 7th grade science and 8th grade AVID elective teacher at Fridley Middle School. “Several students were interested in volunteering with younger kids so they emailed preschool teachers to see if this was an option. The teachers wrote back and we coordinated for this event!”

The middle school students demonstrated patience and kindness while helping the preschool students in various



activities. The preschool students in turn enjoyed having an older student there to help guide them. Preschool staff were ecstatic to build this partnership between FMS and the preschool.

“My students LOVED spending time at the preschool!” beamed Mulville. “They were asking if they could stay longer or when they could go back!”

FRIDLEY COMMUNITY CENTER NEWS



ECCE Friendship Dance supports Fridley’s youngest learners

A joyful energy was in the air, as the youngest Fridley learners gathered together for the first ever Fridley Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Friendship Dance. The Fridley ECCE Advisory Council hosted the event on Saturday, February 17, in the Fridley Community Center gym.

Students and family members enjoyed an evening of friendship with other ECCE families. Attendees enjoyed dinner and a mix of activities kept everyone entertained, including arts and crafts, temporary tattoos, face painting and a bouncy castle. Fridley paraeducator Shaq Shoulders served as DJ for the event and kept the crowd dancing with an energetic mix of pop songs and kid favorites. This fun event celebrated our ECCE families!

Fridley Senior Program celebrates Mardi Gras in style

Fridley seniors let the good times roll as they celebrated Mardi Gras at the Fridley Community Center on Tuesday, February 13. More than 75 seniors attended this year’s event, hosted annually by Fridley Community Education’s Senior Program.

“You could really feel the joy in the room,” said Stephen Keeler, director of Fridley Community Education. “It’s just a fun time with our beloved senior citizens in Fridley.”

Fridley High School’s jazz band kicked off the event performing New Orleans jazz standards while seniors enjoyed sweet treats and refreshments. After the performance, attendees had the opportunity to play bingo or blackjack, with local officials like Fridley Mayor Scott Lund and Fridley Police Chief Ryan George acting as dealers.



“There was some gentle ribbing about losing fake money at blackjack,” Keeler admitted. “But it was all in good fun. I would say it was one of the best Mardi Gras events yet.”

Since becoming director of Fridley Community Education in 2018, Keeler has been encouraged by the increased attendance at senior program events, from annual celebrations like the Fall Kickoff and the Holiday Dinner, to weekly activities like Movie Tuesdays and Bingo Thursdays. The program’s growth has been led by input from seniors, with Community Education staff welcoming feedback to ensure they continue to offer activities and events seniors enjoy.

“We are always looking to see and hear from more of our seniors,” Keeler said. “Please come to the Fridley Community Center and give us a try. You’ll be glad you did. We want to see our seniors thriving in Fridley.”

To learn more about senior programs in Fridley Public Schools, please visit <https://commed.fridleyschools.org/adults-seniors/senior-program>

Stevenson Elementary's Festival of Nations family event brings largest crowd yet!

With a line out the door, Stevenson Elementary School's annual Festival of Nations event drew more than 900 attendees. The popular event celebrates the rich cultures represented at Stevenson and the district. Students, families and community members waited up to 25 minutes to enter the school for the event, which took place on February 29.

The festival occupied the entire school building. Student performers of all grades sang and danced for a packed crowd throughout the evening in the gymnasium. The Cheremosh Ukrainian Dance Ensemble performed as well.



Throughout the school's hallways, tables representing different countries presented information, cultural items and food, giving attendees a glimpse into that country's culture. Countries worldwide were represented from Brazil to Mexico, Germany to Afghanistan and Nigeria to the Philippines. Volunteers from those countries, or with connection to those countries, tended to the tables. Additionally, student artwork was displayed for all to see in the hallways. Other activities students participated in

included getting henna tattoos, designing flags and stamping their passport at different spots within the school.

"It is truly an event where you feel the love of our school community. Our students and our families shine," reflected Veronica Mathison, principal of Stevenson Elementary. "The students' artwork, performances, and celebrations of their own culture and of others were absolutely beautiful."

Bingo at Stevenson Elementary



Hundreds of students and families packed the Stevenson Elementary gym for the RLS Bingo Night on January 24. This annual event is free for families and sponsored by the Stevenson parent teacher organization. Players were treated to popcorn and water, and winners were able to choose from a large selection of prizes. The night was overflowing with lively energy and joyful smiles from all!

Hayes Books and Bingo Night a big success

Hayes Elementary celebrated the end of "I Love to Read" month like never B-4 with its first-ever Books and Bingo Night on Thursday, February 29. Students and families packed the school gym to try their luck at winning prize bags and their pick of a new book.

"It was wonderful to see our community embrace this new event," said Gaeli Iverson, Hayes principal. "Combining bingo with our celebration of literacy month gave our scholars a renewed excitement for reading, which is such a critical component of their learning journey."

One happy parent emailed the school after the event to express how much fun they had seeing the school's community get together and to thank staff for putting in the time and effort to host these events throughout the school year.



Reflecting on the night, Iverson was appreciative of the support she saw from families and staff. "Thank you for making this event fabulous and helping us get books into the hands of our students!" she said.



Seed Relay at Hayes

Working in partnership with Heidi Ferris from Growing Green Hearts, Hayes 3rd graders are participating in a seed relay this spring.

First, they rescued seeds from native prairie plants and learned about the unique features of these plants. Then, students mixed peat moss and vermiculite as a soil base, with water and planted the seeds! Lastly, students engineered paper pots with newspaper (no waste/ biodegradable) and transplanted the seedlings that have been growing under a heat lamp in Mrs. Claggett's office for several weeks.



Fridley Public Schools celebrate National African American Parent Involvement Day

Parents and guardians joined their students for lunch on February 12 for National African American Parent Involvement Day (NAAPID). Hayes Elementary, Stevenson Elementary and Fridley Middle School students were thrilled to spend time and eat lunch with their parents/guardians. NAAPID is a national event created by Joe Dulin, an educator and principal from Ann Arbor Public Schools, in 1995 as a call to action to get parents more involved in their students' education. At Fridley Public Schools we invite all parents to participate in this exciting day.



"Being here shows our kids that we care to be involved," explained Xavia Riggins, parent to kindergarten student Ximena. "Growing up, my parents didn't really come out for events and things, so I like to show that to my baby."

Each school approached the parent involvement day in its own way. Stevenson invited parents/guardians to join their students in the cafeteria during their lunch period, mingling among their student's classmates. Hayes brought the students and families to a separate classroom and played music while sharing facts about famous Black inventors in honor of Black History Month. Fridley Middle School enjoyed a large turnout with attendees playing bingo in the media center.



Parents/guardians enjoyed checking in with their students during a typical school day. Parents Ahmed Awad and Hager Youssif shared the importance of making their fifth-grade son Mustafa feel comfortable at school, taking care of him and giving him hope so he can succeed in his future.

"I think it's being present in your kids' life, especially when they're in school, since they're there most of the day," reflected Katherine Laudenbach, parent to Stevenson kindergarten student Alynn. "And I think it's important to know what they're doing at school and make sure that they're getting the best they can out of things."



Inaugural bingo night brings together the FMS community

The FMS gym was packed with students and families on Thursday, April 11 for Fridley Middle School's first ever bingo night. With 145 students and their families present, FMS Principal Dr. Amy Cochran considers this first event a success.



Fridley Public Schools has a long-standing tradition of hosting successful bingo nights, with Hayes and Stevenson Elementary Schools leading the way year after year. Dr. Cochran wanted to see if the same engagement and interest would hold true for middle school families.

"Bingo night was a huge success! It was really well received by families," she said. "It was a fun way for families to engage with each other and their students."



We were really happy with the turnout and look forward to making this an annual event."

Dr. Cochran is thankful to the family engagement committee who set up the bingo night and to Jaimie Beran, FMS social worker, who helped organize it. Additionally a huge thank you goes to all of the community members who donated prizes.

FMS students spell their way to win a spot at Twin Cities Regional Spelling Bee

Cellulose. C-E-L-L-U-L-O-S-E. Cellulose.

This was the winning word, spelled by 8th grade student Jackson Gilbert at Fridley Middle School's schoolwide spelling bee on January 24. FMS participated this year in the Scripps National Spelling Bee education program that offers students a variety of tools to widen their vocabulary through the study of words.

"Students received grade-level word lists to study, practice, and prepare for a classroom spelling bee," explained literacy coach and 8th grade language and literature teacher, Laneé Purdy Ellingson. "Each grade had either a classroom or grade-level spelling bee to qualify for the schoolwide spelling bee." In total around 30 FMS students participated in the spelling bee.

Proud parents and families gathered to watch the spelling bee in the middle school band room, while FMS students were able to watch in their classrooms from a livestream. The contestants spelled their words to two judges, Zack Bobick, the 8th grade dean of

students, and Terrell Nyangai, a Fridley alum and current FMS support staff. If they spelled their word correctly, students moved on to the next round; if they were incorrect, they were encouraged to sit in the audience to support their fellow students. After a few rounds, only three students remained: Neil Clariza (grade 5), Marley Gilbert (grade 6) and Jackson Gilbert (grade 8). Jackson was the only student who spelled his word correctly making him the winner.

"The Scripps National Spelling Bee education program has been in schools since 1925," said Purdy Ellingson. "Fridley Middle School is participating for the first time in 15 years and is excited to send a participant to the regional spelling bee in March."

Jackson will go on to compete in the Twin Cities Regional Spelling Bee, which Fridley Public Schools is hosting in March.



FMS eighth graders talk "Turning Points in History" at History Day showcase

The September 11 attacks, the bubonic plague, Rosa Parks, Barbie, and the Cuban Missile Crisis were among the most popular topics selected by eighth grade students for their historical research projects presented at the History Day showcase at Fridley Middle School on Thursday, February 15. This year's showcase featured 161 students presenting 134 projects illustrating the theme "Turning Points in History."

Vivian Nealy's project titled "The Living Dead Women" focused on the Radium Girls, a group of five female watch dial painters who sued their employer after contracting deadly radium poisoning in the early 1900s. She chose it because of the impact their lawsuit had on workplace safety in America.

"Even though their lives were very short and painful," Nealy explained, "the Radium Girls left a mark because their lawsuit was looked at to create the Occupational Safety and Health Administration that helps people to this day."



The school showcase is the first stage of the annual National History Day competition in which students in grades 6-12 participate nationwide. Students are permitted to pick the medium of their project in one of five categories: exhibit board, documentary, website, performance, or research paper.

Amar Bahar was the only student to choose a performance for his project about Rosa Parks, which included a large cardboard bus to represent the Montgomery bus boycott led by Parks in 1955.

"I chose Rosa Parks because she fought for Black people's rights," Bahar said. "The lesson from her is to treat people equally, no matter the color of their skin."

Each project is evaluated by a team of 2-4 judges made up of district faculty, community members, and seniors at FHS. Projects are judged to determine which will



move on to the regional competition held in March. From there, students have the opportunity to progress to state and national competitions.

The project allows students to put into practice the Middle Years Programme Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills that are fundamental to the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. ATL skills, which consist of self-management, communication, research, social and critical thinking skills, empower students to succeed and prepare them to pursue the rigorous IB Diploma Programme or IB Career-related Programme at Fridley High School.

Congratulations to all of our eighth grade scholars who completed this middle school milestone!

UPDATE: Fridley Middle School 8th grade students Karla Hernandez-Galvan, Leah Martin and Megan Vang participated in the National History Day Minnesota statewide competition on April 20!

Karla created a documentary about representation in America's West Side Story, Leah created an individual exhibit on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and Megan participated in a group exhibit board about the response to the Ebola Pandemic in 2014.

"They each worked very hard on their project and should be very proud of themselves," said Aaron Cuthbert, Fridley Middle School teacher and History Day advisor. "Although they did a great job in their initial presentation to the judges, unfortunately none of them made the final round."

Congratulations to Karla, Leah and Megan for your outstanding accomplishments at the statewide competition!

Tenth grade students present personal projects at annual celebration

What do “Sweet Child O’ Mine” by Guns N’ Roses, Guatemalan cuisine, snowboarding, Baroque painting, and baking cookies have in common?

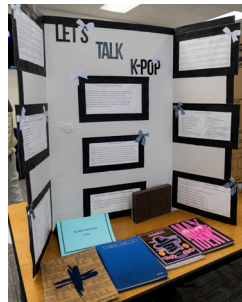
They were each the subject of a personal project created by a 10th grade student, which were showcased at the annual personal project celebration at Fridley High School on Wednesday, January 17. Families, friends and faculty crowded the high school’s media center and hallways to see the projects displaying the diverse interests and independent research skills of the more than 200 students that participated.

The personal project is the culminating milestone of the Middle Years Programme for the International Baccalaureate curriculum. Each 10th grade student begins working on the assignment at the start of the school year. It allows them to pick a topic they are passionate about, set an achievable goal related to their topic, and then use their Approaches-to-Learning skills – communication, thinking skills, self-management, social skills, and research – in creating and presenting the project.

Some students took the opportunity to dive deeper into a topic related to their culture, like Shahnaaz Omer with her “Learning hijab styles” project, through which she discovered five distinct hijab styles.

“I chose this because I am committed to wearing the hijab for the rest of my life,” Omer said. Therefore, she wanted to see how she could make her hijab more unique and, as she put it, give it some “pizzazz.”

Other students decided to explore possible career interests through their project. For Beglad Kasongoma, who braids her own hair, “How to braid hair” was a natural choice.



“I talked to a few people and asked if I could braid their hair, and I gave step-by-step tutorials on how to braid their hair,” Kasongoma explained. “It helped me learn a lot about myself and what I want to do in the future, you know? Like maybe starting a hair business.”

No matter what motivated them, each student took pride in completing and showcasing their personal projects.



FHS students learn the ins and outs of an ambulance in EMR/EMT classes

Students enrolled in Fridley High School’s Emergency Medical Responder and Emergency Medical Technician courses learned first hand about EMS equipment and procedures from an Allina Paramedic on March 12. Students learned about the meticulous organization of equipment inside the ambulance that allows paramedics to easily access what they need to help patients with any emergency. A tour of the exterior of the ambulance was also given.

Eric Anderson teaches the EMR and EMT courses, in addition to physical education and health at FHS. “In our EMR class students get their certification with CPR/AED and their state EMR certification, and in our EMT class students get state and nationally certified as an EMT,” he said.

Students in both classes are concurrently enrolled in college through Pine Technical and Community College and earn three college credits with EMR and six college credits with EMT.

“Throughout the courses there are several opportunities that give students real-life experiences,” said Anderson. “Students leave classes with life-saving skills and great career-related skills.”



Fridley High School seniors receive MSHSL Triple ‘A’ Award honors

Fridley High School students Vanessa Pobuda and Ethan Andler were just a couple of seniors enjoying a pep fest in the school gym when Fridley Activities Director Justin Reese grabbed the mic to make an announcement they were waiting to hear but didn’t expect in that moment. He revealed they were this year’s Triple ‘A’ recipients, prompting cheers from their friends and peers.



 **FRIDLEY HIGH SCHOOL TRIPLE “A” AWARD WINNERS** 



“It felt surreal,” Ethan said, shaking his head as if he still couldn’t believe it.

“I don’t think I’ll ever forget that moment,” Vanessa added. “When I look back in a few years at my high school experience, I think that will be one of things I remember most.”

According to the Minnesota State High School League’s website, the Academics, Athletics and Arts Award, otherwise known as the Triple ‘A’ Award, “honors high school seniors throughout the state who have a 3.0 or higher grade-point average and who participate in League-sponsored athletic and fine arts activities.”

ETHAN ANDLER

For Ethan, receiving the Triple ‘A’ Award was validation in a way perhaps only his peers can truly appreciate. It validated that all the nights and weekends he put down the video game controller to put his head in his textbooks paid off.

“It shows putting in that hard work means something,” Ethan said.

His mom, Lori Andler, who has worked in the district for nine years as the executive assistant to the superintendent and school board, pointed to Ethan’s 4.2 grade-point average as an indication of his dedication to academics.

“It demonstrates his work ethic, time management skills and intellectual curiosity,” she said.

Ethan credited the International Baccalaureate curriculum for helping him grow as a student and person since first attending an FPS school as a 4th grade student at Hayes Elementary.



VANESSA POBUDA

For Vanessa, receiving the award was a “full circle” moment for her and her family. She has been a student in Fridley Public Schools since preschool. Her mom, Rachel Pobuda, currently teaches at Fridley Preschool as a classroom assistant and building substitute.

“I think that has a lot to do with how I perceive academics,” Vanessa said of her mom being a teacher. “Even though I’m involved in all of these activities, I’ve always tried to prioritize my academics because that is what is going to get me furthest in school and in life.”

“She has a genuine desire to learn,” Rachel said. One of the ways she could tell early on that Vanessa had a gift for learning was her ear for music. “She was always able to pick up an instrument and figure out how to play it.”

To learn more about Ethan and Vanessa, read the [whole story on our website!](#)



Excellence is celebrated in the accomplishments of ALC students

Congratulations to Fridley Moore Lake Area Learning Center (ALC) students who were honored at the school's annual Celebration of Excellence! The ceremony was held twice to honor both morning and afternoon students at the ALC on February 1. Teachers and staff recognized the award winners during the ceremony and reception afterward.

"I want you to dare to dream big," challenged Renee Van Gorp, interim principal of alternative services and pre-K, during her address to all ALC students. "It isn't just a mantra that you should mindlessly chant to yourself. It's a way of life. When you can dream something and envision it with all your mind to see, you can accomplish anything."



Certificates awarded to students ranged from excellence in academic subjects, attendance, personal growth and the esteemed 3D award recognizing desire, determination and discipline. Teachers and staff beamed with pride as they announced each award winner. In total, 20 students were given certificates between the morning and afternoon students.

"No matter how many setbacks you have, you can still achieve your hopes and dreams," Van Gorp encouraged. "Today, we

celebrate with you for taking steps to accomplish those goals and following your dream. I want you to think big, dream big, believe big, and then I believe the results will be big."

In addition to the certificates of excellence, six ALC students were celebrated for graduating during the first semester. Congratulations Yusuf Abdulkadir, Dejan Davis, Avery Lawson, Rebecca Matthews, Adrian Hernandez Osorto and Kayden Tamura!

