

WAYFINDER

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Pathways to Possibilities

one91
Burnsville · Eagan · Savage



FEATURING

- 02** What does it mean to be a “Pathways District”?
- 04** Makerspaces spark imagination, creativity, problem solving in young learners
- 06** Fueling exploration and expanding minds with hands-on learning in Middle School
- 09** Emma and Diego fast track their journeys with the help of One91 Pathway

INSIDE ONE91

- 14** Diverse paths leading to teaching careers in One91
- 17** Media center makerspace has something for everyone
- 17** ERMS hydroponics grows knowledge and food

PATHWAYS

- 19** Light the Spark
- 20** Fuel Exploration
- 21** Blaze New Trails

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Please direct publication questions
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SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

One91 values and the Pathways model

One of the things I love most about District 191 is that our Strategic Roadmap was developed WITH our community, and so it is a unique reflection of our community's values and vision for our schools.

Of course, those values – Caring Community, Cultural Proficiency, Future Readiness, Inclusive Partnership and Student Agency – need to be put into action for any of it to matter. This issue of the Wayfinder is all about how we put those values into action with our Pathways model from pre-kindergarten through grade 12.

I would guess that when most people hear “Pathways” in our community, they think of career-oriented classes at Burnsville High School, and maybe even the series of classes students might take to earn professional credentials like Emergency Medical Technician or ProServ food safety certification.

That portion of Pathways in District 191 is definitely the most visible, and it's emblematic of the whole model.

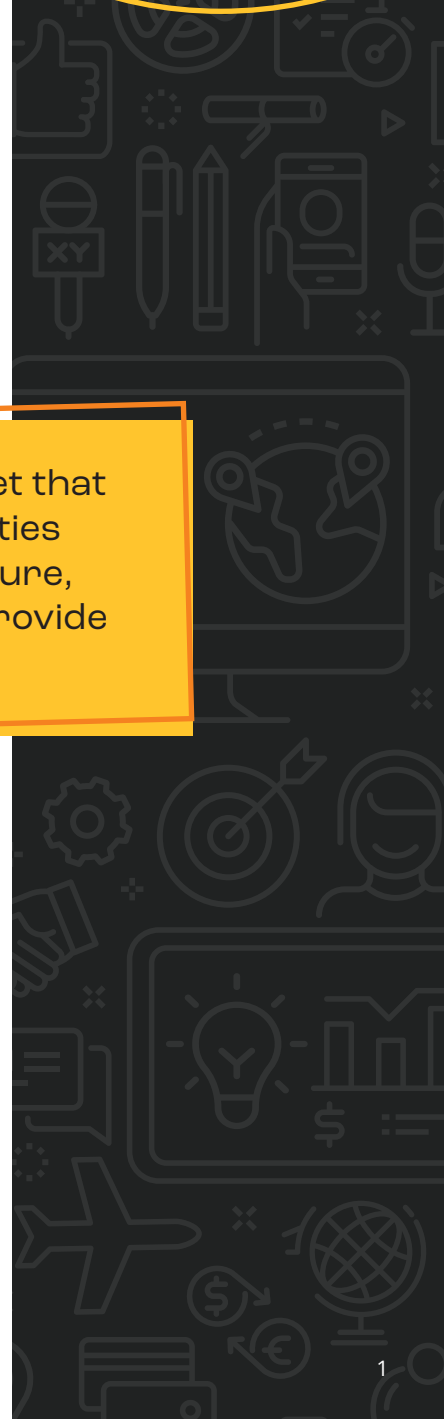
But Pathways is really an approach to education, a mindset that says every student will have access to learning opportunities that inspire them to think about and prepare for their future, opportunities developed with community partners that provide real-world skills and tangible benefits.

With that mindset, we can see a student's journey through our schools as connected. It builds from the spark of new experiences and glimpses of the future. It's fueled by skill development, exploration and self-knowledge. And finally it's giving the opportunity to blaze a path into the future.

I invite you to read these stories and see how Pathways is coming to life in District 191 schools.



Dr. Theresa Battle,
Superintendent



What does it mean to be a “PATHWAYS DISTRICT”

District 191 launched Pathways at Burnsville High School in 2016 as part of the Vision One91 plan, which included expanding BHS to include 9th grade and constructing new spaces at the school to accommodate both students and new programming.

The goals of Pathways at BHS were to create a structure so students can see how the courses they choose now work together to prepare them for their future, provide opportunities for students to earn real-world benefits like professional certifications and college credits, and remove barriers by providing all of this within the walls of the school so all students would benefit.

From the beginning, the Pathways model was about much more than offering career-oriented classes in fields like culinary, health care, engineering or marketing. It was about helping students find their passions and plan for their futures.

Students don't just take the Foundations of Food course. They are able to see a path in Hospitality that could include additional culinary courses, marketing and business courses, and even professional restaurant management certifications - all at no cost, without leaving the high school and before graduation.

Expanding to PreK-12

In 2020, District 191 began expanding the Pathways model to include everything from preschool through high school.

Although elementary students aren't taking culinary classes, exactly, the Pathways model is just as applicable for every student. It means that District 191 schools:



Remove barriers and ensure equitable access for all students,



Center students as decision makers in their learning journeys,



Promote a future-focused mindset, ensuring students have a plan for meeting their next challenge,



Engage in partnerships to maximize resources and opportunities, and



Provide real-world benefits, including professional certifications and college credits by graduation.



The Pathways model is about much more than offering career-oriented classes in fields like culinary, health care, engineering or marketing. It's about helping students find their passions and plan for their futures.



Elementary

At the elementary level, Pathways learning is designed to spark students' excitement and give them a glimpse into their future. Whether it's experiences like building birdhouses to learn about design, construction and ecology, or visits from global music organizations that share world cultures, or students developing programs through computer coding, Pathways is about allowing students to wonder and reflect on what's next in their learning journey.



For our youngest learners, Pathways means providing experiences that spark excitement and give students a glimpse into their futures.



Middle School

At the middle school level, Pathways learning is designed to foster exploration, nurture creativity and build personal and academic skills to fuel students as they consider their future. Along with course opportunities that align to Pathways at Burnsville High School - including engineering, computer science, animation, cuisine and more - students benefit from school-wide AVID college prep programs, leadership and service opportunities, and strong support and school culture.



High School

By the time students enter high school, they've done meaningful self-discovery and can engage in the critical thinking needed to put action to their desires and start blazing their own trails. With a host of opportunities, including exposure to career possibilities, experiential learning, mentorship, career path experts and thorough training, students can move on to the next step with an incredible array of experiences. Most importantly, they are equipped with tools to navigate their journey, no matter what life throws their way.



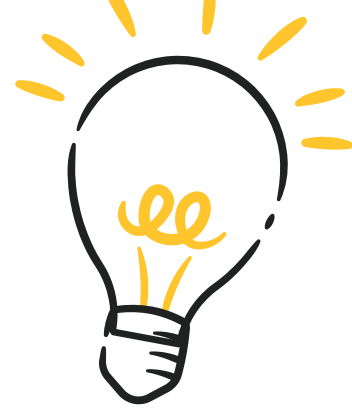
The Pathways model is about seeing the journey for each student from their first years with District 191 schools through graduation and beyond. It's not a series of isolated events; it's connected and aligned and it centers on each student's unique passions. Pathways don't end, they wander, change and grow and lead to incredible things along the journey. ■

Makerspaces

spark imagination,

creativity, problem solving

in young learners



Each of the eight elementary schools in District 191 are being served by Advanced Learning Specialists and an innovative approach to hands-on learning.

As District 191 continues to bring the Pathways experience into the elementary schools with opportunities for hands-on learning, STEAM exploration and sparks of creativity, there is a focus on making sure all students have access. To accomplish this goal, the idea of the makerspace has been made mobile and consistent across the district.

Last year, the Board approved the addition of a full-time Advanced Learning and Pathways Teacher at each elementary site. Previously these specialists were split between two schools, so they are now able to make even more of an impact on students.

With the right people in place, the issue of physical space needed to be addressed. The solution was to purchase identical carts and materials across all schools so there is equitable access for all students.

“The carts have tons of boxes and bins that have different materials for stations and we swap them out throughout the year,” said Dr. Mandi Jensen from Sky Oaks Elementary. “This equitable access gives kids opportunities to think critically, explore, collaborate and cooperate while having fun. Schools are obviously driven by academic performance, but we can’t forget that they are kids and that having fun at school is the most important thing because it builds excitement for school.”

The Advanced Learning and Pathways teachers visit every classroom once a week, alternating between makerspace activities and teaching a Pathways lesson. Lessons are focused on different ways of thinking tied to career pathways, including thinking like a detective, scientist, inventor and others.

One lesson in a first grade class featured the children’s book “Not a Box” where a bunny tells readers that the rectangle next to him is not a box. Students were then tasked with taking the drawing of a box and looking at new ways to show what it is



and writing their own pages for the book. The simple box quickly became a rocket ship, a school bus, a slide and more!

“An engineering challenge or exercise in imagination can reach all students even if they may not fully know English,” said Erin Huber from Harriet Bishop Elementary. “It is important for students to see themselves as learners. If they struggle with something like math or reading, it can be hard for them to feel that they are learning, but we are giving kids a chance to be successful and help build that self-efficacy.”

Once the makerspace cart arrives, classroom teachers get to lead students through different stations and activities which range from accomplishing a goal with snap circuits or building a pinball machine with LEGO bricks to trying origami or creating buildings out of Magna-Tiles. Students rotate through the stations each time so they are able to try a little bit of everything with high-tech, low-tech and no-tech options.

With these projects, there are often many ways for students to solve the problem in front of them. While projects often have a guide to get students started, they are always encouraged to go beyond and see what else they can add to the project. Students are learning how to collaborate with others and building social skills needed to celebrate success or bounce back and learn from mistakes if their first attempt didn't work.

“We teach that you can try your own ideas and need to be brave, because sometimes it won't work and it's an opportunity for growth,” said Jensen. “Play

is so important at school because it breaks things down in a fun way for kids and you get their brains thinking differently as they explore on their own and with a group. I believe that if your kids aren't laughing in your lesson, you aren't teaching.”

While some schools reserve activities like STEAM and makerspaces for students who might be considered high achievers, One91 shows a commitment to equity by making these essential Pathways experiences available to all learners. The spark of interest that a student shows with a makerspace activity can have a lasting impact on their future.

When working with makerspaces, students are collaborating, cheering each other on when something works and maybe groaning if an attempt didn't work. Their hands are busy, eyes are focused and there are smiles across the faces of just about everyone in the room.

With a dedication to providing access to all schools across the district, all students are widening their worldview and trying new activities in a safe and supportive environment, where mistakes are not only accepted but encouraged.

“It feels good that we are investing in this part of student learning and highlighting it,” said Huber. “Thinking about the whole child and bringing access to everyone is essential and our team is really passionate about bringing it to everyone because kids need this.” ■

**Makerspace:
a communal public
workshop in which
makers can work
on small personal
projects.**

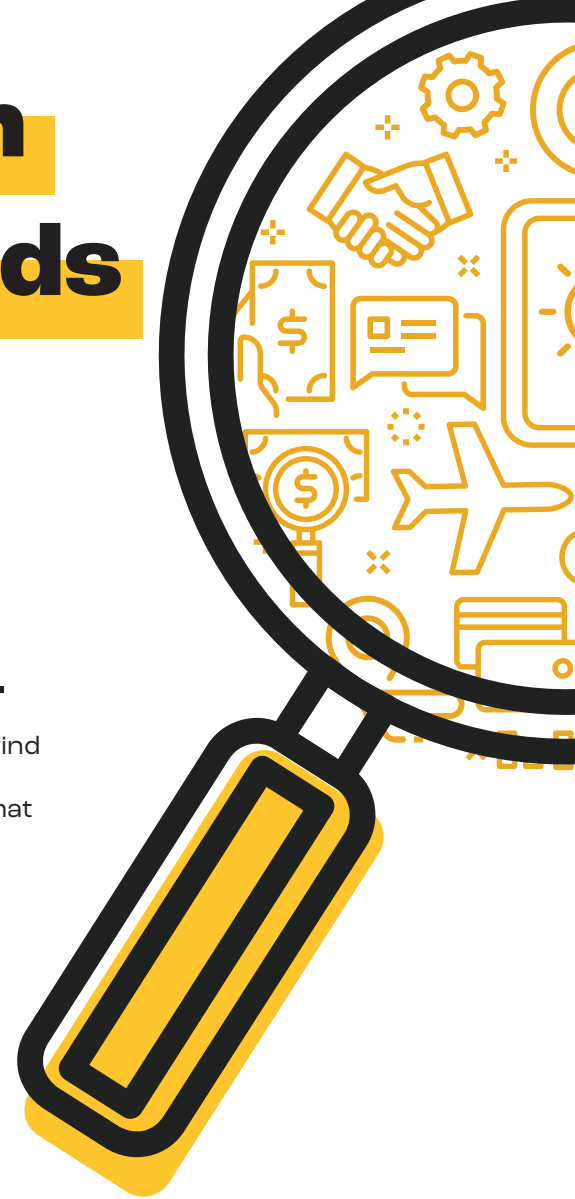


Fueling exploration and expanding minds in middle school

Middle school students are getting real-world, hands-on learning experiences every day in District 191.

On a given afternoon, visitors to Eagle Ridge or Nicollet Middle Schools may find students building and programming robots in one classroom and designing clothing for a fashion show in the next, while a third group is flying drones that are whizzing around the cafeteria. These types of experiences that foster exploration and nurture creativity are at the heart of what the Pathways program at the middle school level is all about.

Through Pathways, every student in sixth and seventh grade experiences a variety of classes each quarter with teachers who focus on expanding opportunities and fueling interests. Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) teacher Paige Borden, Tech Ed teacher Austen Scheuneman, and Digital Literacy teacher Jennifer Schmidt are a few of the dedicated educators who provide these experiences and offer additional electives for eighth grade that dive deeper, preparing students to experience the 14 distinct Pathway options at Burnsville High School and their future.



A dash of this, A bit of that

With so many pathways and career opportunities available, having the chance at a young age to engage with new things is invaluable for middle school students. In classes like Teen Cuisine, Automation & Robotics, and Film & Animation, students are dipping their toes into different worlds and using hands-on learning to get a glimpse of what careers are out there.



cooking in later grades, while also learning about nutrition and essential skills like budgeting. While not every student will end up working in a professional kitchen, all students learn essential skills.

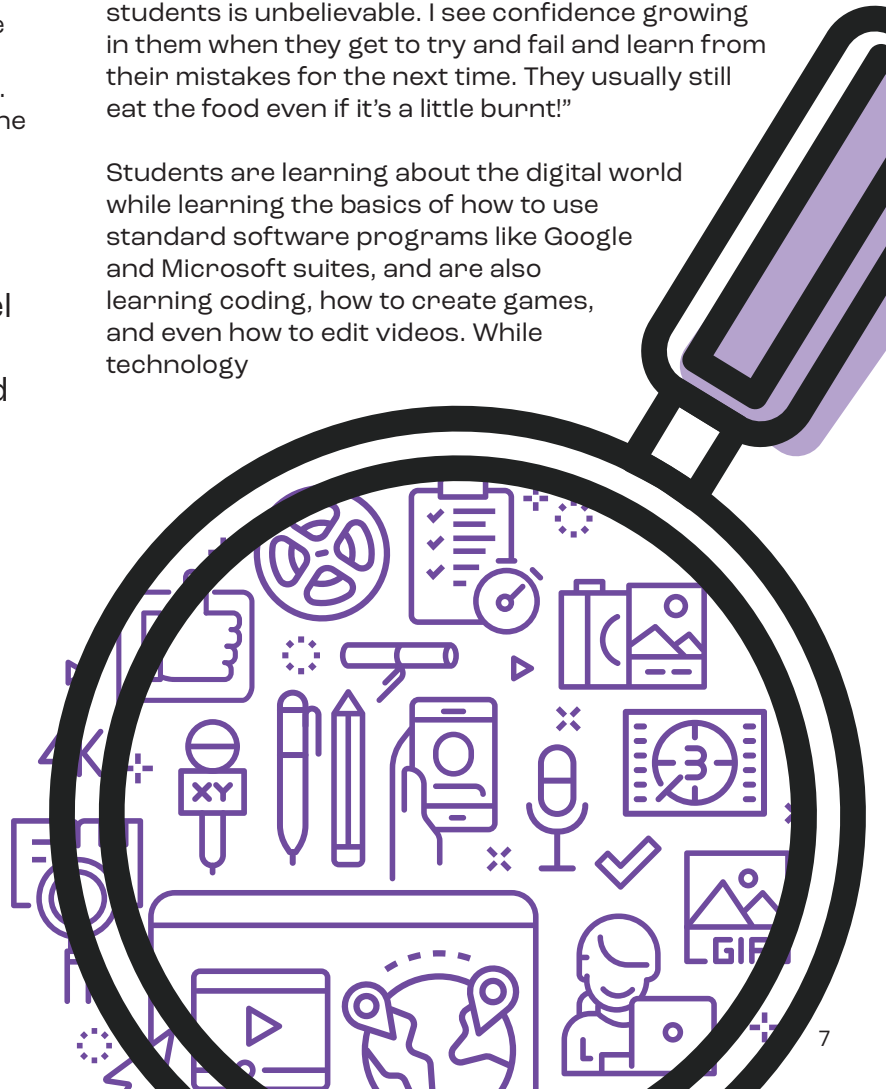
“Everyone has to eat and knowing the basics of how to be safe and handle yourself in a kitchen is important,” said Borden. “Seeing the growth in students is unbelievable. I see confidence growing in them when they get to try and fail and learn from their mistakes for the next time. They usually still eat the food even if it’s a little burnt!”

Students are learning about the digital world while learning the basics of how to use standard software programs like Google and Microsoft suites, and are also learning coding, how to create games, and even how to edit videos. While technology

In Tech Ed classes, students are doing 3D modeling and prototyping to design different items based on the challenge given, using snap circuits, and conducting flight simulations. They spend part of the week learning about different mechanisms or processes, and by the end of the week, use those same concepts in their own creations. In one project, eighth graders choose between three different clients who need items like spinning signs, automated pet toys, or a dragster and use their imagination and skills to create them. It’s not always a smooth process, which is part of the challenge.

“Being able to see the authentic curiosity and desire to explore is really fun for them because they feel a little more independent and enjoy creating and seeing what works and what doesn’t,” said Scheuneman. “When I was a student here, this same type of experience sparked an interest for me because I had frustration with school and the stress, so this space where you can have some trial and error and less of a linear process was important.”

For many students, the FACS classroom may be the only time they get to explore a kitchen. With many kitchen spaces, it seems a bit chaotic with students, chopping, mixing and moving around. They learn basics like kitchen safety in sixth grade along with making little snacks and hand sewing and then progress to more baking and stovetop





to the middle school three years ago. He has a unique perspective on how to combine high school focused experiences like affinity groups and clubs with student interests and ultimately career and college exploration and readiness.

“The Pathway work really happens in every classroom,” said Helke. “I was in a math class and they were designing their dream home while calculating square footage. An ELA class might be making an advertisement to try different writing styles. No matter what the career path is, there is entry-level knowledge and skills to give students access to those early on really gives them a head start with prior knowledge.”

The bigger picture

Learning skills and exploring new topics is important, but one of the best things about the Pathways Program is that it focuses on the whole child with important concepts. Whether it is collaboration, trial and error, or gaining confidence. These middle school experiences push students beyond their comfort zone and into a place where they are free to explore while gaining essential skills that they will use for the rest of their lives.

“The more experience you have with everything is knowledge that will serve you well,” said Borden. “Career exploration and trades are so important for kids who may not want to go to college, but it is also important to be exposed to these things to see what you like.”

“Seeing students light up when they find something they really like, whether it is coding or working with video is really exciting,” said Schmidt.

“We use a lot of different concepts and methods and some kids will find that certain things are just not for them and that is ok,” added Scheuneman.

By requiring all sixth and seventh grade students to try a bit of everything, and then allowing students to choose electives in eighth grade, the district is making it easy for students to create their own path.

“It adds relevance and excitement to the middle school experience,” said Helke. “At the middle school level, the Pathways model is all about exploration and opportunities, while also supporting social-emotional learning and a strong academic foundation.” ■

“The Pathway work really happens in every classroom.”

- Principal Dave Helke

changes quickly, students still have a foundation of knowledge with simple things like what a save button looks like, how to share a link, or the general functionality of video software.

“It’s a fun class and we do cool things that students really enjoy but it also really helps them know how to use their devices in a variety of ways,” said Schmidt. “It’s fun to see some students really take off with these things and some who really don’t like it, but it’s good to experience it. I am personally not a big fan of coding, but some kids really take to it and do cool things!”

Getting a head start by building prior knowledge

They say that you don’t know what you don’t know. By having so many different subjects introduced at the middle school level, District 191 students are gaining a truly broad base of knowledge to help them when they choose to go deeper in any direction. Through classes like these as well as extracurricular clubs and activities and support from programs like Where Everyone Belongs (WEB) and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), there are tons of opportunities for students to spark, fuel and blaze in any given interest or skill.

Eagle Ridge Principal Dave Helke was part of the original team developing the One91 Pathways Program at Burnsville High School before returning



Personalized Pathways. Individual Journeys.

How two current BHS students are maximizing their time and preparing for the future





EMMA'S JOURNEY into the healthcare field

How One91 Pathways showed Emma Legorreta a future in nursing and set her on a path to success

You never know where the spark for your future will come from. For Emma Legorreta, it was a conversation with her friend and fellow member of the Blazettes Dance Team.

A lifelong resident of District 191, she attended Hidden Valley and Eagle Ridge before starting at Burnsville High School (BHS). Her younger years were mostly focused on being a kid and staying busy with dance at Footsteps Dance Studio where she started at five years old. The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic hit during her seventh-grade year, at a time when she was already wanting to make some changes. With virtual and hybrid school, she found that she had the time she needed to reflect and refresh.

She loved school and enjoyed helping her classmates, which made her think she wanted to become a teacher someday, but as she was entering high school, Emma started to feel that she was drifting away from that idea. Her friend told her about the Health Sciences Pathway at BHS and the passion of teacher Anne Werner-Dempsey, so she decided to register for a class.

With a busy high school schedule in her first two years that included AVID, band and Spanish, she hadn't had a chance to explore the One91 Pathways opportunities yet, but that changed when she registered for the Healthcare Core Curriculum class.

"That class taught me so much about the basics of health care and thanks to the class, I realized I wanted to

become a nurse," said Emma. "The final project is to pick a career in healthcare that we wanted to focus on and I felt excited to keep learning."

She grew her learning more the following semester, enrolling in the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program at BHS that got into more detail and allowed students to use mannequins and each other to practice different methods. Past CNA students also helped out in the class, giving the students an additional resource.

As she worked after school with her fellow students on skills, Emma was gaining confidence. The classroom is designed to be both a lab space and a classroom space with hospital beds, mannequins and all the tools a nurse would need.

In addition to getting experience in the classroom, students are also able to get real-world experience through clinicals. Emma took part in a two-day clinical where she completed two eight-hour shifts at Ebenezer Ridges Care Center.

"The experience of working with real people really confirmed that I want to go into this field," said Emma. "The residents were so open and easy to connect with and after the clinical, I talked to my friends and my parents who gave me great recommendations for what to do after I got my certification."

In the fall of 2024, she was able to earn her CNA Certification at no cost thanks to the class. During her senior year, Emma is focused on taking more classes to learn more skills, and she is also helping current CNA students with their journeys just like others did for her. She is exploring colleges and plans to attend Concordia University in St. Paul, where she got direct admission due to her



background and experience at BHS. She is especially excited about the mannequins at Concordia that allow students to take vital signs and can actually talk back.

“I thought that I wanted to be a teacher because I loved helping classmates in class and seeing that a-ha moment,” said Emma. “I realized that it is so close to nursing because it’s the same feeling of helping my patients and having them realize that there are things they can do that they didn’t know they could do.”

As she thinks about her future, she sees a plan for college that includes working as a CNA as she takes classes with the ultimate goal of becoming a registered nurse in a senior living facility or in hospice care. At BHS, she continues to be a member of the Blazettes, having been named a fall captain and recognized with awards by her coaches and teammates. She also finds ways to bring her two passions together and shares advice with other students who may not know what they want to do after high school.

“A girl got a bloody nose at practice and I ran over to help her with the right way to deal with that and I am always offering to wrap injuries for my teammates. They call me the nurse and mom of the team,” laughed Emma. “My advice is to stick with your heart and do what makes you happy instead of what others think will make you happy. Follow the path that you want to follow, make your own choices, and find your own path with your own people.” ■



Five years old

Emma starts dancing, kicking off an activity and passion that would continue to drive her.

Elementary School

She liked helping her fellow students in class and began thinking that she could be a teacher someday.

Middle School

With the COVID-19 pandemic in full swing, she had time to reflect and reassess her future.

Ninth Grade

Having been a studio dancer since elementary school, she decided to join the Burnsville Dance Team, where she would meet some great friends.

High School

For the first two years, she was so busy with other classes and commitments that she didn’t take any classes within the Pathways Program.

11th Grade

Pushed by her best friend to give it a chance, Emma enrolled in the Healthcare Core Curriculum class and finds a passion for nursing.

12th Grade

Continuing to take classes and learn as much as she can, Emma earned her CNA Certification in the fall of 2024.

Future

As of now, Emma plans to attend Concordia University in St. Paul and major in nursing. She believes that someday she would like to be a registered nurse at a senior living facility or hospice care.

DIEGO'S JOURNEY

to fast tracking his academic goals through the Associate of Arts Pathway

How Diego Laurens Flores is taking advantage of programming at District 191 to get a head start

Picture being in seventh grade and having to switch schools in the middle of the year. Now imagine that not only is it a new school, but a new country, where you don't know the language. Also, the year is 2020 and the school year is about to be greatly interrupted, pushing all learning to virtual options followed by hybrid the next year. This is how Diego Laurens Flores started his journey in District 191.

Growing up in Venezuela, Diego spent a year in Argentina before briefly moving to Florida, and ending up in Minnesota in January of 2020. His time at Nicollet Middle School involved learning English, getting to know his classmates in an adjusted environment, and getting used to life in Minnesota.

"It was fun at first, but remote learning got a little harder and I got frustrated being home all the time," said Diego. "I was able to learn English pretty quickly and was really excited to start high school in person."

In ninth grade at Burnsville High School (BHS), Diego made friends, did well in his classes, and felt connected to classmates and teachers. His family moved before tenth grade, so he spent a year at another school, but in keeping in touch with friends at BHS, he heard of a unique program that made it clear that BHS was the place for him.

"The Associate of Arts Pathway felt like a really good opportunity that would save me a lot of time and money," he said.

Diego was told about the program by Associate of Arts Degree Pathway Coordinator Becky Akerson.

"She told me how hard it was going to be and how much work it was, and I agreed and knew that I had to do it."

More than 40 seniors and 37 juniors are taking advantage of the program with classes taking place entirely at BHS, making it easy for students to earn college credits while also completing high school. At the end of two years, students will graduate not only with a high school diploma, but an Associate of Arts Degree, giving them a huge head start with credits that can transfer or a way to start a career right out of high school.

"Students need to take about 15 college credits per semester and are still able to stay connected to the high school community, participate in activities and get additional support," said Akerson. "The general rule of thumb is that for every college credit you take, you should anticipate about 2-3 hours of homework per week, so it is a ton of work and may be more challenging than a traditional college route."

Childhood

Diego grew up in Venezuela, then spent a year in Argentina before briefly moving to Florida.



Middle School

After moving to Minnesota, Diego enrolls at Nicollet Middle School in January 2020, where he learns English and navigates distance learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic.



Diego has found that Ms. Akerson was not lying about the large quantity of homework and rigor of the classes. Taking College in the Schools (CIS) and Inver Hills Community College courses have allowed him to learn a lot and develop great studying habits. He plans to go into business and is considering a business management degree after high school.

“The classes are hard but I know that it’s worth it to help me get ahead and be able to graduate early from college and really enjoy my life and work towards my goals of someday owning my own business,” said Diego. “My advice for others is to take advantage of this opportunity to save time and money, but be ready to work hard!”

CIS classes are offered thanks to the University of Minnesota with concurrent enrollment courses offered in partnership with Inver Hills. There are plans to have a professor from Inver Hills teach an environmental science course in the building at BHS, giving students a chance to not only experience the level of rigor of college classes, but the teaching style. Ms. Akerson meets with students weekly during advisory and encourages them to take advantage of other resources including the writing center and tutoring options from the University of Minnesota, BHS and Inver Hills.

“Advisory time goes quickly, but we talk about tracking credits, preparing for upcoming tests and taking advantage of additional support,” said Akerson. “I am really pleased with how well these students are doing with how much they are being asked to do. We have a wide variety of students in



the program and they are all really eager to get their college education and be a part of something no one else has done.”

Teachers are excited about the program and there is a renewed sense of excitement about the college credit options offered at BHS. The goal is to provide a safe space to try challenging courses and show students in middle and high school that it is an option to help them get ahead, as long as they are prepared to work hard.

Showing that he is dedicated to his chosen path, Diego says he doesn’t spend much time playing video games, or soccer or working out these days, instead staying focused on his homework and preparing for classes.

“Studying gives you great opportunities in life and this will not only make my transcript look better and give me college credits, but it prepares me for college-level classes,” said Diego. “To me, the hard work is worth it.” ■

Ninth Grade

Diego began to flourish in high school, making connections with classmates and teachers and doing well in classes.

11th Grade

Diego takes advantage of the new Associate of Arts program with the goal of graduating from Burnsville High School with a high school diploma and an Associate of Arts degree.

The Future

The Associate of Arts program sets Diego up for future success as he plans to go into business and is considering a business management degree after high school.

Many Roads, One Destination: Diverse paths leading to teaching careers in One91

Not all teachers arrive at school through the traditional route of education degrees and student teaching. Some bring experiences from previous careers with unique perspectives and skills to their classrooms. These educators, who took non-traditional paths to teaching, prove that the journey to become a teacher can be as diverse as the students they wish to inspire.

Take Maria Gutierrez Beltran, for instance. Previously, she worked as an educational assistant (EA) at Rahn Elementary School and a bilingual educational assistant at Vista View Elementary before pursuing her teaching license through District 191's Grow Your Own grant program. This fall, Gutierrez Beltran began her role as an English Language Acquisition teacher at Sky Oaks Elementary School.

On Amber Christman, now a kindergarten teacher at Rahn. She started as a parent volunteer. She then worked as a volunteer coordinator, as a part-time behavior education assistant and a media center education assistant.

On Rahn Elementary second grade teacher Lisa Reuter, who reinvigorated her teaching career after taking time off to raise her children and working as a Special Education Assistant.

No matter the road taken, all three of these teachers' paths converged at one very specific point: a desire to make a difference in the lives of their students through teaching.

"Deep down, I have always wanted to be a teacher. I spent my childhood teaching my sister and playing with my favorite Barbie, Teacher Barbie," said Christman. "After I had my kids, it was most

important for me to be with them, but I still needed something to do, and every side job I did for extra income involved kids. It was just a matter of time before I became a teacher."

Support from students, staff and family

For Gutierrez Beltran, it was her students who pushed her to continue to pursue a career where she could serve and inspire her community.

"I am a mirror for students of color, reflecting their potential and future selves," Gutierrez Beltran said. "During one of my EL (English Learner) observations, an EL student asked me how long it takes to learn English and how challenging it is, and how to prepare for college. He expressed that I was inspiring him and mentioned his aspiration to become a teacher as well."



For Reuter, it was a welcome return to teaching. She taught in Rapid City, S.D., before moving to Minnesota in 2009. After taking nine years off to raise her children, she returned to education as a Special Education EA at Sioux Trail and Rahn. She returned to the classroom last year after earning her Minnesota teaching certificate.

“District 191 has helped me return to the classroom through the support I have received from my colleagues,” she said. “They have supported me by encouraging me and coaching me through the many tests I needed to study for, take and pass in order to receive my Minnesota teaching license. I couldn’t have done it without their words of encouragement and support.”

Grow Your Own opened opportunities to Gutierrez Beltran

Coworkers also pushed Gutierrez Beltran into District 191’s Grow Your Own program. While working at Vista View, her co-workers encouraged her to return to school to get her degree. Thanks to the Grow Your Own grant, she saved money and kept working at Rahn while attending school and completing her student teaching.

“I was empowered by the unwavering support of my community. The district has consistently provided me with invaluable support, starting from my enrollment as an ESL student in the Adult Basic Education Program in 2012,” she said. “Throughout my educational journey, the district has been an unwavering pillar of support.”

The Grow Your Own program

is a partnership between District 191, educator preparation programs, and community organizations that recruit and prepare high school students and non-certified school staff to enter the teaching profession and teach in their communities. Through the Grow Your Own program, the state provides funds that go toward tuition scholarships or stipends for district employees who are pursuing an education degree.



“Ultimately,” Gutierrez Beltran said, “the [Grow Your Own] program provided me with a paycheck while I was engaged in full-time student teaching. This alleviated the stress of covering my family’s expenses without a steady income. It was truly a lifeline for me.”

“I had the support of the whole Rahn community as I transitioned,” added Christman. “Knowing other staff from around the district, the excitement people had for me transitioning was incredible. I felt really welcomed and wanted. I was really excited to be able to stay in the One91 community.”

Gutierrez Beltran has found that going through Grow Your Own also helped her set an example and show the way for others.



"It's an empowering message that communicates to students and their families the possibility of achieving a college degree. I am seen as a role model by students, their families and coworkers," said Gutierrez Beltran. "They are inspired by the belief that if I can accomplish it, so can they."

Serving a variety of roles

Working in other positions within the district also provides Christman, Gutierrez Beltran and Reuter with a different perspective on connecting with and teaching students.

"I had connected with students in a way that wasn't as a teacher when I volunteered in the classroom," Christman said. "I saw how things were in schools before it was my responsibility, and that helped me to know different ways to connect with students."

"The time away from teaching and then working as a SPED assistant gave me a unique perspective on education," Reuter said. "I was able to take the time to see education from a parent lens and used that to make myself a better educator."

For Gutierrez Beltran, the opportunity to observe different teachers has provided her with a toolbelt full of different teaching strategies to use. "I also pay attention to students who don't participate too much, knowing they may be struggling," she said. "I work with small groups which allows me to engage students in active participation."

Life experiences — getting married, having children, buying a home — have all proven to be valuable for Christman. "I can put more energy and focus into teaching," she said. "And I am much more confident in my abilities as a teacher than I would have been 15 years ago."

Finding their paths

Christman, Gutierrez Beltran and Reuter expressed no regrets about taking the paths they did to teaching, and aren't shy about sharing their wisdom with those seeking to follow them into the classroom.

District 191's Grow Your Own program "presents a wonderful opportunity," Gutierrez Beltran said.

"Participants will receive the necessary support and guidance throughout this program, specifically tailored to help individuals from diverse backgrounds pursue careers in teaching," Gutierrez Beltran added. "It is crucial for students from underrepresented communities to have educators who reflect their own experiences and backgrounds."

"Be ready for an adventure because you never know what's coming next," Christman said. "Be flexible. Plans change minute by minute in my classroom!"

Reuter sums it up nicely: "If you have the passion and knowledge for making a difference in the life of a child, then this is the career for you!" ■



No matter the road taken, all three of these teachers' paths converged at one very specific point:
a desire to make a difference in the lives of their students through teaching.

Media center makerspace

has something for everyone

At Nicollet Middle School, a visit to the media center means more than just checking out books.

Classes visit the media center weekly for sessions with media specialist Nancy Meyer, who teaches students how to access helpful online resources like the Electronic Library of Minnesota, ebooks through Mackin Educational Resources and the media center's online catalog. Meyer works with the visiting English Language Arts, Special Education and Multilingual classroom teachers to align the lessons with projects students are working on in class.



After the media lesson, students get the rest of their time to check out books and participate in a variety of makerspace activities. Students can choose to play card games, build with Lego blocks, program and operate remote-controlled robots, play a marble-based game called Turing Tumbles that builds computer programming skills, or work on arts and crafts projects. New activities are rotated in and out on a weekly basis.



“I try to have something for everyone,” Meyer said. “It’s a time for them to create and play with minimal structure and changing the stations every week gets them to try new things.”

Meyer said she’s not aware of any other middle schools who combine media center and makerspace time. She’s happy to provide the extra opportunity for students to build their problem-solving, reasoning and cooperation skills while also getting some time away from screens.

“I like that you get to try different things and be with your friends,” seventh-grader Sienna Becerra said. ■



ERMS hydroponics grows knowledge and food

Eagle Ridge Middle School students are building agricultural literacy through the launch of a hydroponics system at the school! A collaboration between District 191 Food & Nutrition Services, Eagle Ridge teacher Liza Nicklin and other district staff, the project introduces students to sustainable gardening in an educational environment and produces fresh greens to offer as samples and components to school meals.



Spark. Fuel. Blaze.

This edition of the Wayfinder has provided a glimpse of how Pathways make an impact in every school across the district and how we are continually innovating and adding opportunities for students to explore their interests and discover future paths. Check out a few other moments from this school year that stand out!

By sparking curiosity, fueling student passions, and allowing them to blaze their own path, District 191 is leading the way in college and career readiness, ensuring all students are equipped to succeed in their unique journeys.



Spark

Elementary students are inspired to approach the world with wonder.



Crunch. Fuel. Blaze.

Students in schools across District 191 participated in the Minnesota Great Apple Crunch on Oct. 10. The Great Apple Crunch is an annual celebration to support local farmers and apple producers, connect food to classroom learning and promote healthy eating. The One91 Food and Nutrition Services Department and schools organized this fun initiative that is aimed at supporting local farmers.



Walk and Roll Your Own Trail

Rahn Elementary School staff, students and families walked and rolled with others from across the U.S. as part of National Walk & Roll to School Day 2024 on Oct 9. This celebration highlights the importance of safe, active travel for youth and families. Walking, biking, and rolling to school also encourage a healthy lifestyle and has the potential to aid in the battle against climate change.



A Community that Reads Together

District 191 elementary schools invited guest readers from around the community to join us on Oct. 24 to read the book “Piper Chen Sings” in celebration of Jumpstart’s 19th annual Read for the Record. This collaboration is an example of our district’s focus on literacy and demonstrates our core value of being Community Strong.

Twel



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



Sew & Tell: A Fashion Showcase

In Paige Borden's Interior and Fashion Design class at Eagle Ridge Middle School, students learned sewing skills and design techniques, and then collaborated with classmates to design and create dresses. They then walked the red carpet and displayed their creations for the class.



Rock the Vote

Eagle Ridge Middle School students — along with 250,000 students across Minnesota — participated in the statewide K-12 mock election program on Nov. 5. Through this program, the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State and The Y Center for Youth Voice work together to help students discover the importance of elections and the power of their voice — and their vote — in our democracy.



It Actually Is Rocket Science

Eighth-grade students in Nicollet Middle School teacher Robert Paetzold's Project Lead The Way class launched rockets they made. This hands-on project helped our future engineers foster exploration and nurture their creativity!



Blaze

Immersive experiences increase future readiness for high school learners.



Celebrating Manufacturing's Future

In partnership with the City of Burnsville and Burnsville Chamber of Commerce, Burnsville High School hosted a celebration of innovation, craftsmanship and the bright future of the manufacturing industry. The Oct. 31 event spotlighted BHS senior Kaitlynn Patterson and juniors Aiden Goberdhan and Gavin Allen-Wetterlin, who are taking part in Design, Engineering & Manufacturing Pathways classes, focused on robotics, machining, and 3D printing.



Cooking Up Safety

Students in Sandi Holman's Allergen-Friendly Cooking class at Burnsville High School were certified through the ServSafe Allergens program, part of the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. Students participated in an online course and then took an exam that covers the basics of being allergen-aware and safe in the kitchen. It is a nationally-recognized program and the certification is good for three years.



Hands-on with Burnsville Fire

Thanks to the City of Burnsville Fire Department, students in the Emergency & Fire Management Services class are provided with real-world, hands-on learning experiences as they explore the world of healthcare! Burnsville Fire Chief BJ Jungmann and the Burnsville team have been immensely supportive of teacher Anne Werner-Dempsey and the program at BHS. They have supported students, whether it's through in-class trainings, open houses or hosting an Ops day at the fire department.



Student Voice:

Hallway Chatter

Elementary students share what they love about makerspaces. Learn more on page 4.

I like playing with the Brain Flakes because you can make whatever you want.



Xavier



We're making our initials. I like that we get to pick out our own colors.

Ahmed



Leilanie

I like making up my own pattern for my necklace.

