



Power in Partnership

Partnerships across One91 are opening doors, sparking curiosity and helping students thrive—in school and beyond.

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SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Partnerships at the core of One91



It's bittersweet that this is my final letter to the community as part of the Wayfinder magazine, and I think it's appropriate that this edition's theme is "Inclusive Partnership." One of the things that attracted me to District 191 six years ago, fit with my personal values, and has impressed me throughout my time in this community is the deep commitment to doing things in partnership.

Anyone who has worked with me closely has probably heard me say that knowledge is too vast for any one person. We have to rely on each other and in District 191, that's what we do.

In fact, it's how we do everything we do, because we know it's how we deliver the best possible service and experience to our students, families and community. From sparking wonder and inspiration about future careers in elementary schools to better understanding local foods through the knowledge and history of Native American communities to supporting students and families mental and physical health with the help of community organizations and so much more, partnership is what makes it possible.

I hope as you read through this issue, you feel the same pride I do in the strength of this community. I'm so incredibly grateful for everyone who has partnered with me and others in One91 over the past six years. I've felt welcome, supported, empowered and never alone, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Dr. Theresa Battle,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theresa Battle". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Superintendent

Strong community connections bring opportunities for students and benefits for local organizations



What began as a stack of business cards has grown into thriving partnerships.

When Dr. Kathy Funston started as the Director of Curriculum in District 191 in 2010, she was handed a stack of dozens of business cards by the superintendent. She was asked to reach out and follow up with these organizations. This simple act of delegation has evolved into a variety of partnerships, programs and resources that greatly benefit the students and community of District 191.

Funston accepted the role of Director of Strategic Partnerships and Pathways in 2016, and her responsibilities have since evolved to include grant writing, which has secured more than \$5.4 million in funding, materials, and services. Through partnerships with individuals, businesses, nonprofits, government agencies and other organizations, students have the opportunity to experience unique learning in and outside of the schools. Instead of just learning about career opportunities, they are meeting people who are successful in careers they hope to enter, and can get an immediate understanding of what they need to do to best prepare for their futures.

“While serving as the district administrator to reimagine high school programming for the 2015 referendum, I was asked to take a role focused predominantly on creating partnerships and implementing the High School Pathways program,” said Funston. “With over 200 partnerships, District 191 is incredibly fortunate to have a community that cares so much that they understand and act upon their role in helping our students realize their futures in the community.”

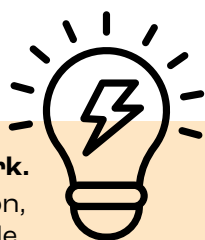


Driven by its Strategic Plan, the district partners with the community at all levels of the organization and in every department. Classroom teachers are working with the Food Services Department to create hydroponics to show students how to grow food, local restaurateurs are judging a food truck concept developed by business and culinary students who are working together on unique culinary/business concepts, with many more examples. Teachers have been instrumental in maximizing these partnerships by embracing a variety of individuals bringing relevant content and projects into their curriculum.

Idea

It all starts with a spark.

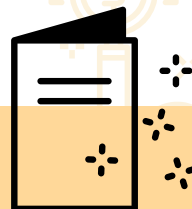
A passing conversation, a fresh idea or a simple “what if?” moment can ignite the possibility of working together.



Invitation

Let's talk.

Once there's a spark, we'll reach out to the teacher, district staff member, business leader or interested organization to explore the idea and open the door to possibilities.



Shared Goals

Finding the win-win.

Through open conversations, we explore what matters most to our students, district partners. When our goal is clear, we can see what success looks like together.

"Forming partnerships is as varied as the partnerships themselves, but one constant is that all partnerships are relationships," said Funston.

"Perhaps a staff member meets someone at a chamber event or City of Burnsville activity and conversations evolve into ideas, which evolve into invitations to learn more. If there is a good match to each organization's goals, then ideas turn into action and a partnership becomes reality."

Partnerships can be an invitation from a business to bring students into the workplace, or an offer to be a guest speaker, or donating equipment or funding. Ultimately, for any organization interested in partnering with the district, the process begins with a conversation or a request submitted through the district's website.

One partnership that continues to evolve, expand and innovate is the connection to the Burnsville Chamber of Commerce. A highlight is the Business Education Network, which has been a pivotal connection point to so many partnerships. A variety of recent projects have benefited both students and the business community.

An Online Student Job Fair was held as an opportunity for local businesses to recruit students for summer, part-time, or full-time jobs. Meanwhile, Manufacturing Month provided an opportunity to bring students into the workplace and share with businesses the amazing manufacturing education happening at Burnsville High School. Chamber President Jennifer Harmening says she is especially proud of the Teacher Externship Program, which allows teachers and administrators to experience the real-world workforce inside local businesses to integrate into the schools' plans to improve student outcomes.

A two-day experience, a small group of teachers, counselors, and administrators visit 4-6 businesses to learn about the variety of careers available in those businesses and how they relate to the Pathways program. The program offers incentives for teachers to bring their experience back into their classrooms.

"Chamber members are passionate about connecting with our schools and helping prepare students for life after high school," said Chamber President Jennifer Harmening. "Our partnership programs offer them opportunities to engage in meaningful ways and stay informed on what is happening in our schools and allow for students to gain real-world experience through their connections with local businesses."

This type of partnership is not only unique, but innovative! For families, it means knowing that their students are able to dive deeper into their interests than ever before. The Pathways model helps students understand who they are, what they like doing, where their talents and skills lie, and provides many opportunities for unique learning experiences in every grade. If a student is interested in cooking, they can not only learn the fundamentals in the classroom, but can obtain catering experience, develop increasingly more difficult skills, earn industry certifications, and work alongside local chefs to see what they like or don't like about the industry.

"It's rare to find a Chamber that is able and willing to walk alongside a school district in bridging business language and education language to achieve incredible outcomes," said Funston. "I am forever grateful to Jennifer for having the vision and persistence to be that vested partner. We are teaching very valuable academic and workplace skills, which is how the district and our partners are preparing students for 'what's next!'" ■

Partnership

Turning ideas into action.

When the time is right, the idea becomes reality. From guest speakers to job fairs to internships to donating equipment and beyond, each partnership is unique and serves not only the district but also our community.

Benefits for All

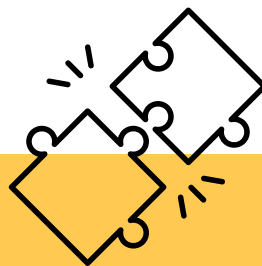
We're stronger through partnerships.

Students gain real-world skills and experience. Partners connect with future talent and help students realize their futures. And our whole community grows stronger, together.

Partner with us.

Learn more and complete an interest form to get started!

isd191.org/community/partnerships



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for our partnership

MORE THAN A MEAL:

The partnerships, passion and hard work behind District 191 food resources

How District 191 harnesses the power of community to reduce hunger

Picture a bag with enough food items to provide four meals for a single student. Simple items like oatmeal, ramen, single-serve snacks, crackers, juice boxes, milk, meat and cheese sticks that will be about three pounds or less when full. This is what student volunteers and community members pack each week at Burnsville High School, 800-850 bags at a time.

BrainPower in a Backpack is the overarching Hunger Relief Program through District 191, 191 Community Education, Burnsville High School Youth Services and Burnsville High School, which benefits all students, staff and families in the district. High school students and community volunteers assemble hunger relief packages via three programs, including BrainPower in a Backpack, 191 Community Pantry and the seasonal 191 Fresh Produce Distribution.

The weekly packing events are full of activity and excitement. BrainPower in a Backpack Coordinator Pamela Voigt shares that while the BHS Cafeteria may look a little chaotic during these events, there is a method to the madness.

"We usually have about 20-25 students on Thursdays who start out by preparing all of the bags that come in sets of 100 by separating them out and then they start making laps to pack the bags," said Voigt. "BrainPower can take 15 minutes to pack those 800 bags with a lot of volunteers because they move quickly. We have a couple of folks who do two bags at a time!"

Volunteers are excited to be a part of this program. For high school students, 25% of volunteers have at some point received food from BrainPower, so they are passionate about doing it for other students because they know the impact it has. The program is budgeted for 32 volunteer-run packing events a year with the food going directly to students, who can sign up at the schools or be referred by a school social worker.



The beginning of BrainPower

The program started in 2008 because of a clear need. With more than 60% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, there were families facing challenges.

"We were seeing students whose last good meal of the week was Friday lunch at school and they would go home to little or no food with very limited access to food options over the weekend," said Voigt. "As a Community Education program, we are able to expand that reach. We predominantly serve families with students in the district, but 30% of those who participate in the pantry or other programs do not have a student currently enrolled in the district, but may have had a student graduate, so they are all a part of the 191 community."

The Burnsville Rotary Club provided initial funding for the program, with additional contributions from community organizations over the years, including the Burnsville Savage Lions, Prior Lake Savage Optimist Club, Savage Rotary, Burnsville YMCA, and others.

Pantry partnerships

Through the 191 Community Pantry program, community members can pick up grocery bags of food on the first and third Tuesday of every month at the Diamondhead Education Center. Each grocery bag contains 10-15 nonperishable items, designed for a family of four, with a box of assorted fresh fruits and vegetables included when available. The Pantry is open to the public, with some bags being reserved for 20-30 Adult Basic Education students and their families who need food assistance. These are students who participate in classes that help students further their English language, academic, digital literacy, and career pathway skills.

"The Adult Basic Education students are some of the hardest-working humans I have ever met," said ABE Coordinator Susan Edmondson. "Many of them work multiple jobs, take care of their families, and find time to come to school to further their education. Many students are struggling to make ends meet, so the free food they receive twice a month is very much appreciated."

On food distribution days, students from all classes and levels come together to select their fresh produce and pick up a bag of pantry essentials. Edmondson says that this time feels like a celebration where students talk, bond, and laugh together when they see what produce is available that day and exclaim with joy when it's a favorite fruit or vegetable.

The Community Pantry is another district program that has students who get involved. The BEST Transition program serves young adults ages 18-21 who have an individualized education program (IEP) plan targeting preparation for adult life. Students have a graduation plan that identifies skills they need to reach their employment, postsecondary and independent living goals. A group of BEST students serve as the primary volunteers for the Community Pantry Pack, where around 120-150 grocery bags are packed twice a month.



"Volunteering plays a vital role in the BEST Program, as it provides students with meaningful opportunities to build and practice essential employability soft skills," said BEST Transition Services Coordinator Ashley Gonnella. "Through volunteer work, students develop competencies such as task initiation, problem-solving, following directions, and maintaining high-quality work—all of which are critical for success in future employment and everyday life."

BEST students can utilize this volunteer work as a job training opportunity and earn volunteer credit. Past volunteers have gone on to work in grocery stores or other retail chains, packing bags, as well as taken jobs at Amazon or FedEx.

A well-oiled machine of community involvement

While the program is coordinated and run by district employees and volunteers, it wouldn't be possible without the contributions from the community. All of the funding for food costs are provided through donations, grants and internal giving programs where financial contributions can be made.

"We have food shelves in the area, but they have requirements around residency and income as well as restrictions on how often someone can visit," said Voigt. "We are often a food shelf of second and third resort and provide items designed to provide eight meals for a family of five. We are happy to be able to provide the option." ■



If you want to support BrainPower in a Backpack, you can find ways to help on the program website at www.tinyurl.com/brainpower191.



Austin's Journey

from the BHS culinary program to sous-chef at Manny's



Ten years ago, 15-year-old Austin Allen stood behind the counter at his first job, serving customers at a beachside hot dog stand along the southern tip of Kauai, Hawaii. Even then, he envisioned himself pursuing a career in the culinary field.

When Allen's family moved to Burnsville before the start of his sophomore year in 2015, he continued to pursue that goal. He started working as a host at Burger Jones in Burnsville and eventually moved to the kitchen.

"I realized I was just good at it and it just kept going from there," Allen said.

Sometime during a busy sophomore year spent working at Burger Jones and playing football for the Blaze, Allen learned about the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management Pathway at Burnsville High School and soon signed up for his first Pathways class. By the time he graduated in 2018 he'd taken every culinary course available and gained valuable skills and knowledge directly related to his career aspirations.

"My culinary teacher, Matt Deutsch, was awesome and made the classes very fun. In the top culinary class, we used to do cooking competitions against other schools and I absolutely loved it," Allen said.

“Ever since I was little, I always had dreams of being a chef and owning my own food truck. I figured I’d take all those classes and go from there, and it did get me into the industry and got me going with it.”

After five years of serving as a line cook, Allen’s dream of being a chef was realized last year when he was promoted to sous-chef at Manny’s Steakhouse, a nationally renowned restaurant in Minneapolis. A sous-chef is a chef who manages the kitchen and is second in command, ranking directly below the head chef.

“It feels really good to get this opportunity,” Allen said. “It’s definitely been a learning curve. I’ve never been in a position to make calls and I’ve had to learn on the fly how to do certain things and deal with issues, but I definitely feel way more comfortable than I did eight months ago.”

In January, Allen had the opportunity to give back to the program that helped him pursue his dream when he teamed up with Burnsville High School culinary students for the Stars of the Future event. The event was a fundraiser for a culinary arts and restaurant management program for high school students.

“Mr. Deutsch reached out and asked me to do this event and I absolutely loved the idea,” Allen said.

Allen met with students at BHS in early January and then prepared with them at Manny’s before the event, which was held Jan. 22 at Four Seasons Hotel in Minneapolis. Allen and the BHS students collaborated to create a crostini flight appetizer for attendees, consisting of a selection of crostini — small, toasted slices of bread — served with various toppings.



“Working with Austin was a cool experience because we don’t work with professional chefs very often. He taught us a lot of useful things, like how to make a perfect steak. He also gave us a tour of Manny’s and it was cool to see the kitchen and how things worked in an actual restaurant,” BHS senior culinary student Angelina Berg said. “The experience was beneficial to me because seeing the other school’s foods gave me a lot of ideas and inspiration for what I want to try to make later on.”

Likewise, Allen appreciated the opportunity to revisit his old stomping ground in the culinary lab at BHS and connect with current students.

“I really enjoyed going back to BHS and seeing the progression of all the equipment and the space. They have about 30 times the stuff we had back then,” Allen said. “It made me super happy looking at it that these kids have some great stuff to play with. They have the No. 1 culinary program in the state now and that’s awesome. It’s great that there will be more students those culinary teachers can reach out to.” ■



Pathways in District 191

From preschool through graduation, District 191’s Pathways model provides all students with age-appropriate experiences through which they explore possibilities, develop the skills and attributes they’ll need to succeed, find their passions and prepare for their futures.

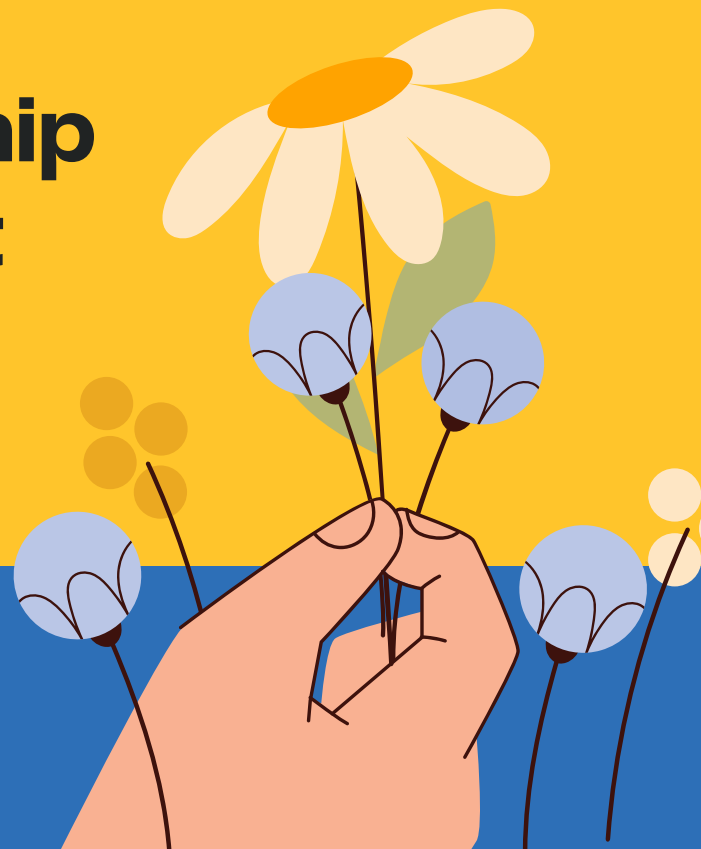
Being a Pathways district means we:

- ▶ 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

Learn more at pathways.isd191.org.

District partnership increases student access to mental health support

How a District 191 partnership with Washburn Center for Children removes barriers to accessing therapy services by bringing therapists directly into schools



It can be challenging to make appointments work when a child is in school and parents are working. After-school appointments fill up quickly, transportation can be a challenge and interrupting the school day for a learner can cause additional stress. Thankfully, for students and families of District 191, there are school-based mental health services in every building, making it easy for them to access the additional support they need without the usual challenges.

In its second academic year, the school-based therapy partnership with the Washburn Center for Children provides co-located, embedded therapists from Washburn in every school in District 191, with two therapists assigned to Burnsville High School. Director of Student Support Services Amy Piotrowski notes that a previous provider struggled with retaining therapists, prompting the district to seek a more consistent approach.

“We really needed consistent support for our students and families because if they aren’t doing well with their mental health, there is a ripple effect throughout other parts of their life,” said Piotrowski. “Not all of our families can access these services before or after school and we thought the most effective way to get this care for students is to have it in the school building.”

The Washburn school-based therapy program began as a pilot program in Minneapolis about 20



years ago and has evolved over the years. The partnership creates a system where therapists can work closely with school staff, get to know staff and students in the building, and, most importantly, make lasting connections with families. While not employed by the district, the therapists become part of the team, collaborating with the district team and providing an additional layer of support. Jessica Mathwig-Olson, LICSW is the Director of School-Based Services for Washburn and has been an integral part of developing this program.

“It is so important to meet kids where they are at and see them where they are every day,” said Mathwig-Olson. “If a student usually has an appointment on Wednesdays but they had a really hard weekend, we can adjust and make that appointment happen earlier because we are in the building. There is a lot of great research that shows that by reducing the barriers to mental health support, we are catching potential issues earlier.”

Because the therapists are embedded in the school, it is easy to collaborate with teachers, school social workers and other staff members to refer students or consider changes to care. This can include creating an IEP or 504 plan or sharing information that gives a greater view of the whole-child that wouldn't be possible otherwise. Therapists have dedicated office spaces in the buildings and make a point to greet kids in the hallways and be visible. While there are occasionally waitlists for care, the therapists make every effort to see as many students as possible. Appointments are also scheduled with learning in mind so learners don't miss the same class every week.

Services are covered by most insurance plans, with additional options for families who may be experiencing a lapse in coverage, including a sliding fee scale. Therapists don't stop working over the summer, instead, they meet students in other places, which could be their home, a park or an office. While the child is the primary focus, there are also times when the therapist provides support and resources for the family to create a stronger system of support.

“We do regular satisfaction surveys and are proud that we have 95% satisfaction with this program,” said Mathwig-Olson. “Therapists have regular check-ins with families to keep them updated on the situation and engaged, but they are also talking



to the school with questions like: ‘Has attendance increased? Have there been more positive interactions? Are we seeing changes in grades?’ Our approach is that the earlier we are talking about mental health systems and identifying stressors, the earlier we can intervene and the better the prognosis will be.”

By expanding the way teachers and staff view students, truly embodying the whole-child approach to education, District 191 is demonstrating a commitment to meeting needs in the most convenient and supportive manner possible. With a dedication to individualized learning, having embedded therapists is another way to highlight the individualized approach to mental health and development.

“We are looking at the whole child and want to build kids up and give them the coping skills they need to be successful later on,” said Piotrowski.

“Without this partnership with Washburn, I don't know if some of our families could get these services on their own. Since the beginning of this partnership, we have been nothing but thrilled with them, and we are seeing a lot of kids who are doing well moving out of sessions!”

With the mental health landscape changing along with the stigma of receiving this type of care evolving, District 191 is going above and beyond by investing in this vital resource for students and families. ■

We are looking at the whole child and want to build kids up and give them the coping skills they need to be successful later on.

— Amy Piotrowski,
Director of Student Support
Services, District 191

Inspiring movement, nurturing creativity and confidence in middle schoolers through dance



Thanks to a partnership between District 191 Community Education and Youth Dance Ensemble (YDE) – a non-profit organization that provides dance training and performance – the Modern Dance Project offers barrier-free access to dance education for all learners.

Since its inception in 2015, the Modern Dance Project has provided free, after-school dance instruction to District 191 middle schoolers. Conducted by teaching artists from around the Twin Cities, the eight-week program teaches the fundamentals of modern dance in its many forms, while also providing a space where students can nurture creative thinking, build confidence, and foster a love of dance.

The goal of the Modern Dance Project is to allow youth an opportunity to receive instruction in

modern dance and other dance styles. For many of the participants, it's their first experience belonging to a dance group and receiving competition-quality dance instruction, but in a non-competitive environment. Students meet new friends, learn how to dance and find a sense of belonging. Programming culminates with a community concert, where students showcase what they've learned by performing on stage.

"Students can come here and be a part of an amazing organization, part of a group that's very, very positive but also very demanding," said YDE Founder and Artistic Director Leanne "Dixie" Rairamo. "We set high expectations so that students learn how to finish something that they started, and it's through that hard work that they realize what they're capable of."



Aileen, a seventh grader at Nicollet Middle School, joined Modern Dance Project because she's loved to dance since she was a young child and wanted to do something fun with her friends.

"My favorite part of Modern Dance is that we all get to express ourselves," she said.

It's Aileen's second year participating in the program, so she's more excited than nervous about performing in the community concert.

"Something I've gained from this experience is not getting embarrassed about learning new things," she added.

Joanna, a sixth-grader at Eagle Ridge Middle School, signed up for Modern Dance Project because she always wanted to learn how to dance and this was a perfect opportunity to learn new dance moves. Her favorite part of the experience has been getting ready for the show and putting on the outfits.

"The Modern Dance Project has made me a little bit more confident now," said Joanna.

Support for Youth Dance Ensemble

In addition to its partnership with District 191, YDE receives funding from a Minnesota State Arts Board operating grant, along with funding from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. This funding is crucial to the operation of Modern Dance Project programming.

YDE depends on these funds to support outreach programs such as the Modern Dance Project. YDE does not turn away a student due to financial hardship. Funding enables them to provide scholarships to any student who needs one. It also ensures that students are able to continue their dance study at YDE when the Modern Dance Project is over.

"We've had marvelous support from District 191 and District 191 Community Education over all these years," said Dixie. "We're also connected in the dance community, and feel lucky to be able to bring in such outstanding artists to teach these kids. So, the partnerships are extensive, and through these relationships we're able to provide such a supportive environment."

In 2019, Bekah Gudim Berry, a Burnsville High School 2009 graduate, took over as Modern Dance Project's program director. She is passionate about supporting students as they explore their love of dance. In addition to her leadership with the Modern Dance Project and YDE, Bekah is also the Burnsville High School swing coach.

Under the tutelage of teaching artists Haley Jensen, Darrius Strong and Nancy Xiong, students receive expert instruction and technical training within a supportive environment. ■

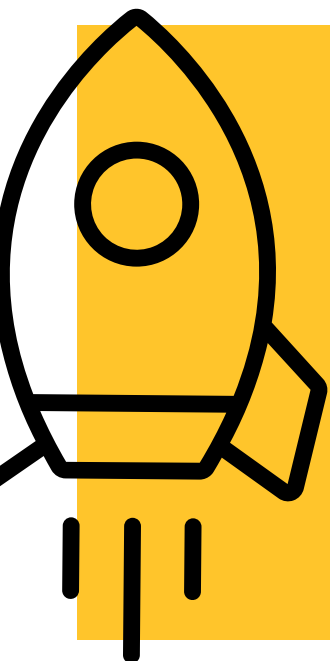


The Modern Dance Project Community Concerts

The Modern Dance Project held its Community Concerts at the Mraz Center for the Performing Arts at Burnsville High School on March 7-8.

Other groups that performed at the concert included Ballare Teatro, Deuxmensions Dance Theatre & School, PIM Arts High School, Plymouth Youth Dance Program, Young Dance and Youth Dance Ensemble.

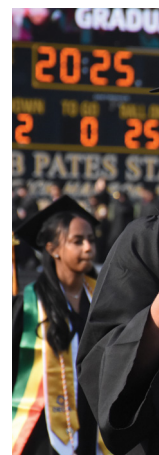
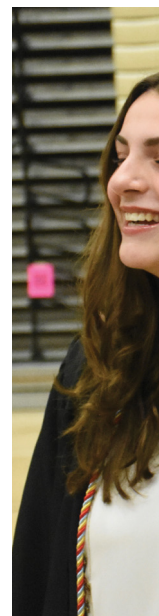
To learn more about Youth Dance Ensemble and the Modern Dance Project, visit www.ydeschool.com.



BLAZING INTO THE FUTURE!

Celebrating the Class of 2025

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 2. Scan the QR code to hear from some graduates on how their experiences at BHS helped prepare them for their next steps.





Beyond the kitchen:

BHS culinary students step into nature to learn about Indigenous foods, plants

Thanks to the Understand Native Minnesota grant, funded by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and administered by the Minneapolis Foundation, students in the Culinary Pathway at Burnsville High School (BHS) are learning about foods and flavors in local Native American food culture and Indigenous food systems.

The grant program aims to increase awareness of Native history and culture by supporting teachers who are pursuing training or classroom projects to share accurate narratives and build understanding of the contributions and experiences of Native peoples in Minnesota.


After adding Native-authored texts to the culinary classroom library and designing lessons for students centered on those texts to learn about Indigenous food ways, BHS culinary teacher Matt Deutsch took students on a guided plant walk at Terrace Oaks Park West in Burnsville to learn about native plants used in Indigenous cooking, as well as plants used for medicinal purposes.

Before embarking on the plant walk, students shared a meal they prepared the day before in the culinary lab using recipes from the new cookbooks. The menu featured a variety of foods typical of Indigenous cooking, including green beans, red chile potato casserole, three sisters salad, fried walleye, halibut cakes, bison meatballs, white bean dip served with bannock or fry bread, summer peach crisp, and a highbush cranberry, mint, and maple drink.

Linda Black Elk from the North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NATIFS), founded by James Beard Award winner Sean Sherman, also known as The Sioux Chef, guided students on the plant walk.

"One of my favorite things to do is to get young people outside enjoying nature, getting in touch with Mother Earth and understanding all the gifts they provide," said Black Elk.





"It's so important to get them into nature on plant walks like this because they really get to know the land," Black Elk said. "Even scientific studies show that when you're outside, there's a lot less anxiety and depression. But, it also connects them to the land and to their homeland, and just has them looking at the world around them in a different way. Instead of walking through a field of 'weeds,' they know they are walking through a field of plant relatives, plants that they can learn the names of and plants that offer a variety of gifts. And I think that helps them look internally and realize that they all have gifts to offer the world, too."

"We used recipes and ingredients that we haven't used before, so it was definitely different but a lot of fun. I also love being outside and these experiences are just so fun," said BHS junior Tevalyn Vilayhong.

Black Elk added: "Not only did these students learn about the plants, but they also ended up cooking with a lot of traditional North American Indigenous foods. It's just about increasing their knowledge. I was so impressed and honored that these kids tried a lot of these foods – foods that were new or different for them."

"Grants like these make it possible to do more hands-on learning with our students," said Deutsch. "I love to see them engaged with new learning and working with ingredients that are new to them. Community experts like Linda Black Elk add depth to the learning experience for our students. I know that they gained a deeper understanding of the world around them and learned a great deal about Indigenous food ways." ■



The Culinary Arts Pathway is part of the Business, Management & Entrepreneurship career field, which prepares students to pursue careers in Marketing, Finance, Business, Management & Administration, and Hospitality & Tourism.



Guests spark students' curiosity with Career Day presentations

On May 6, Harriet Bishop Elementary welcomed 18 local professionals to share their journeys with fifth graders as part of Career Day.

Students got a firsthand look at a wide range of career paths thanks to firefighters, police officers, nurses, engineers, entrepreneurs, staff from the City of Savage, and more. Each guest brought their unique perspective, offering engaging stories, real-world insights, and thoughtful answers to questions.

This event is a shining example of what District 191 is all about. A true Pathways experience, it gave fifth graders a unique opportunity to explore potential future careers in an engaging and inspiring way. More than that, it demonstrated a commitment to collaboration and inclusive partnership with the broader community. Events like this not only spark curiosity - they also strengthen the connections that make our district a place where every learner can thrive.

"The students absolutely loved it. They were excited to learn about different careers they didn't even know existed and were thrilled to hear they could turn things they already enjoy into a future career," Special Education Resource Teacher Clarissa Infante-Ruvalcaba said. "From aspiring firefighters to video game developers, business owners and nurses, it was amazing to see their imaginations come alive."

Edward Neill All-Star Day celebrations give every student an opportunity to shine brightly

Designed to highlight every child's unique identity and talents, All-Star Day celebrations at Edward Neill Elementary School have become much more than just a monthly school assembly. The celebrations — rooted in the idea of creating a supportive school culture through school-wide engagement — not only build community at the school but also foster a sense of belonging in each student.

Each month, and throughout the year, students participate in a variety of projects and activities that reflect who they are, where they come from and what makes them unique. A grade level is chosen to lead the month's activities, but every student at the school is included in the celebration in some way. Whether it's engaging in a service project, creating a presentation or welcoming family members to the school on an All-Star Day or simply setting up the gym for the celebration, all students are given the opportunity to be seen and heard.

Building community takes community effort

All-Star Day celebrations were first implemented in the 2023-24 school year, and are still in their infancy stage, but staff continuously look for ways to build upon and improve this program.

Principal Lyle Bomsta and the school's dedicated staff, including social worker Sarah Parker and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team, believe that All-Star Days are the foundation to building school culture. They have continuously worked to make Neill an inclusive space where every child shines.

Ryan Moran, a multilingual teacher, believes that even though the school appears to be taking relatively simple actions, those simple steps are having a significant impact on students.



"Aside from the regular kind of shift in a normal school day and schedule, which always brings some anticipation and excitement, I think, definitely with the service projects, there's a sense of pride and ownership that the kids feel," said Moran. "Our second graders reorganized our lost and found area, and put up coat hooks, nailing and attaching the screws and everything. That's a real, tangible thing that they've done to improve our school climate!"

He added, "It's been cool seeing that when they walk by the hooks, the kids will now say, 'hey, we did that, that was us.'"

Fourth-grade teacher Jim Condon, whose class engaged in a playground beautification project last year, believes the celebrations are creating a much greater sense of involvement and belonging.

"It's all about building a new culture here at Neill," said Condon. "I appreciate that, but I think I see kids starting to actually feel it. They recognize the difference and see that this is supposed to be created by them, not for them. So, they are growing in a sense of, 'Yep, this is our ship. We've got to help steer it.'"

"I appreciate the way we're doing these celebrations now, where everyone is spotlighted. Why do I get highlighted? Because you are here, you matter, that's it," said Condon. "It doesn't really matter right now what you've accomplished. It matters that you are here, that you're a part of this group, this community. This is a family, of sorts, for nine months of the year. And, that's how we get better as a community."

All-Star Day identity projects help students embrace who they are

Social worker Sarah Parker is a big advocate of the All-Star Days. She leads the "identity projects" for the celebrations. The projects, which look a little different at each grade level, are designed to get students thinking about who they are, what they like, what they are proud of and promote exploration.

"When it comes to culture, religion and ethnicity, all of that is wrapped up into these projects," said Parker. "It shows that everyone has something really cool and unique about themselves. Everyone has talents. Everyone has a story."

She added, "I know that sounds so cliché and you might think that it's really not that deep. But it is, and it's empowering students."

Second-grade teacher Tiffany Lenton, who helps facilitate activities on All-Star Days, agrees that any time students are a part of something bigger or see themselves as an important piece of the system, it's a positive thing.

"Students all wearing the same shirt on the same day, seeing their projects displayed in the hallways or seeing their service project being used – all those things create unity and help everyone be seen," said Lenton.

Parker believes the positive impact of the celebrations is evident. Students are taking pride in their projects, attendance is improving, especially on All-Star Days, and staff engagement is building.

While the school continues to refine and expand the All-Star Day initiative, Parker thinks the school is delivering on its mission of making every student feel like they truly belong at Neill.

"When you step into the building, you can feel it," said Parker. "There's so many great things happening here and it's a beautiful thing." ■

Lifelong learning and connections at the Burnsville Senior Center



One of Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191's most impactful partnerships is the Burnsville Senior Center. A partnership between District 191 and the City of Burnsville, the Senior Center provides a place where community members can meet for coffee and conversation, share a meal, play cards, engage in activities like arts and crafts, take classes to learn new skills, volunteer, access health and wellness opportunities, and much more. The Burnsville Senior Center, which is part of the district's comprehensive Community Education program, is a shining example of what makes District 191 Community Strong.

The Burnsville Senior Center is located at Diamondhead Education Center at 200 West Burnsville Parkway. Learn more at communityed.isd191.org/adult/senior-center





One91

PATHWAYS

Spark. Fuel. Blaze.

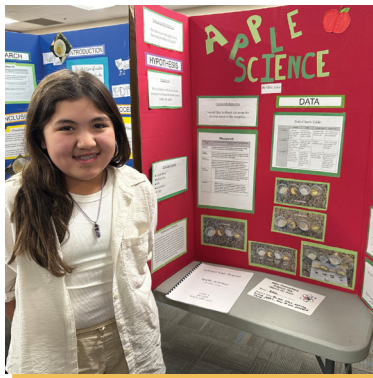
This edition of the Wayfinder highlights how partnerships power Pathways across the district, connecting students with professionals, organizations and opportunities that bring learning to life. Whether it's career days, internships, mentorships, or community-driven experiences, partnerships are at the heart of allowing students to explore their interests and shape their future.

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.



Rahn's young scientists shine

In March, Rahn Elementary School students showcased their creativity and curiosity at the school science fair! With a wide range of projects on display, they confidently answered a variety of questions while presenting their projects to guest judges. Visitors enjoyed seeing each student take pride in their work and demonstrate knowledge of their chosen topic.



Tapping into tradition

Vista View Elementary School kindergarteners ventured outside to tap the school's maple tree. This annual spring tradition was led by teacher Amy Tucci and supported by fellow kindergarten teachers Haley Warren and Sammy Downey. This year's experience was enriched by the presence of parent volunteer Brian Burthay, a tribal member of the Red Lake Band of Ojibwe, and EL teaching partner Kara Zimmerman, a tribal member of Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior. Thanks to a grant from the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Wacipi (Powwow), the class was able to purchase the supplies needed for the tree tapping.



Reading takes the spotlight

Elementary schools across District 191 celebrated I Love to Read Month in February with a variety of literacy-focused events, including Breakfast with a Book family events, author visits, "drop everything and read" opportunities, dress-up days, and much more. Students discovered books that inspired, educated and sparked their love of learning!



Fuel

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



Checkmate Champions!

The Nicollet Middle School Knights ruled the board at the National Middle School Chess Supernationals in Orlando, winning the U1100 national title! Charlie Doll and Franklin Briceno finished 1st and 2nd individually, leading a strong team effort. Nicollet teams also placed in the U600, U700, U900, and blitz competitions, with many individual medals earned. In total, 21 students competed and Coach Brian Ribnick was honored nationally with a \$10,000 award for chess education excellence!



Reading together, growing together

Throughout the school year, nearly 40 seventh graders from Cole Rogers' class at Eagle Ridge Middle School have visited Hidden Valley Elementary to read with kindergarten and first-grade "Reading Buddies." This program not only helps middle school students become confident readers, but it also gives them a chance to serve as positive role models. "Watching the students read stories, step into leadership roles, laugh and build connections across grades has been such a joy," said Cole. "The impact of mentorship and literacy is truly powerful."



Leaf it to Eagle Ridge

Thanks to a collaboration between District 191 Food and Nutrition Services and Eagle Ridge Middle School staff, students at the school have the exciting opportunity to harvest greens through hydroponic technology. Hydroponics is the technique of growing plants using a water-based nutrient solution rather than soil. It's the first school in District 191 to install an indoor garden to harvest food for school meals and snacks!



Blaze

Immersive experiences increase future readiness for high school learners.



Future Educators, future ready

In April, nearly 50 students in Burnsville High School's Future Educators club visited Minnesota State University, Mankato to learn about its education program. The students had the opportunity to meet with professors, talk with a panel of college students and tour the campus. It was a great chance for students to envision their future.



Running into the record books

At the Hamline Elite Meet in April, BHS junior Carley LaMotte broke her own school record in the 1600-meter run with a time of 4:48.83. That time is the second fastest in the state of Minnesota this spring!



Beating the competition

Burnsville High School Drumline hit all the right notes at the 2025 MPA Championships held at the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester on April 5. The victory marks the program's eighth state title and first since 2015. "We have had a lot of close calls in the last 10 years since our last title, so it was fun to finish on top again," said Paul Connell, head director. "It was also great to be honored with the Fan Favorite award because we always try to create a show that is enjoyable for the audience."



Student Voice: Hallway Chatter

Read more about 5th Grade Career Day at Harriet Bishop Elementary on page 15.

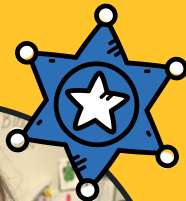


"I was so excited. I loved learning about the fireman. I loved learning how they get in danger and how they do their stuff and how they feel in case I want to do that someday."

-Lizzie

"I enjoyed learning about the police career and how they do their job and how they help people in their job."

-Kendall



"The job that I liked learning about was the Chief Fire Marshal. He was a really nice guy and it was really fun to see how he really liked helping people in the community and he was really funny."

-Jackson



"I liked learning about the guy that was a software engineer at Target because I like computer science."

-Megan

