

THE TORNADO CONNECTION

KEEPING THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

Celebrating Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Neely Aldridge, and Mrs. Sankey

BY STEVIE LESNEY, EDITOR

Three amazing educators, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Neely Aldridge, and Mrs. Sankey, will be retiring at the end of this school year. Together, these teachers have spent more than 100 years in the classroom, helping students learn, grow, and become better people. Their impact on our school goes far beyond lessons, homework, and grades. They have built relationships, supported students, and created memories that will last for years.

Mrs. Jones has been teaching at Butler for 35 years. During her career, she has taught every core subject, although she has spent the last 20 years teaching math. Her favorite subject to teach was history because she enjoyed learning about the different backgrounds and stories of cultures around the world. Mrs. Jones said she wanted to become a teacher because she has always loved working with kids and being around them.



When she retires, Mrs. Jones is looking forward to continuing to coach swimming, spending more time with her daughters who live out of town, and possibly starting a dog-walking business. One experience she says she will never forget was teaching during COVID because of how difficult and different it was.

Mrs. Jones has impacted more than just her students. She has also left a lasting impression on her coworkers. Mrs. Dietrich said she will miss all of the “funny stories about her goats.” She also shared that Mrs. Jones always tries to help students become successful in life and “always pushes students to do their best.” Mrs. Williams added, “Mrs. Jones has had such a positive impact on students at our school by making sure that students become responsible and mature adults.”

Mrs. Neely Aldridge has been teaching English for 35 and a half years, spending most of that time teaching seventh grade. Before returning to teach at her alma mater, she taught grades 7 through 12 at Union High School. According to Mrs. Neely Aldridge, one thing she will miss most is “watching the students grow throughout the year.” She also said she will miss the staff members and friendships she made during her career.

Mrs. Neely Aldridge became a teacher because she has always loved working with students and helping them grow into adults. “I feel really honored to be a part of that,” she commented. During her retirement, Mrs. Neely Aldridge looks forward to spending time with her family and friends, traveling, and volunteering with some of her favorite charities.

Celebrating

CONT. FROM PG. 1

Her impact reaches far beyond the English classroom. She is a founding advisor of Starfish and Alphabet Soup Group, and a member of the Student Assistance Team. Earlier in her career, she also coached within the district. Co-teacher and friend Mrs. Chwalik said, "Mrs. Neely Aldridge has impacted so many things in our school. She cares deeply about her students and her colleagues. She wants others to know that she loves them and that she wants to see them succeed." Mrs. Snyder added, "I will miss how much she makes sure everyone feels worthy of her time. She truly is one of a kind."



Mrs. Sankey has taught at Butler for 33 and a half years. She currently teaches seventh and eighth grade science, but she also previously taught an ESP class about the galaxy. In addition to teaching science, she serves as one of the coordinators for the gifted program and the advisor for Student Council.

According to Mrs. Sankey, "I love teaching science, especially physical science, because I have always been curious about things around me and how things work and happen." She explained that when she first started teaching as a long-term substitute, she was nervous but excited to begin her career.

Mrs. Sankey said helping students is what has kept her passionate about teaching for so many years. "I understand them and want to do what's best for them. I love science and teaching it to others," she shared. During her career, Mrs. Sankey earned her PhD and now looks forward to helping student teachers during retirement. She is also excited to spend more time with her grandson and read more books. "I'm excited about moving into the next phase of my life, but I am also sad to leave teaching," she said.



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Mrs. Sankey has also mentored many newer members of her department. Mrs. Ashe said Mrs. Sankey's biggest impact on the school is that she "inspires students to pursue a career in science and makes the subject interesting." Mrs. McCall, who works alongside Mrs. Sankey as a gifted coordinator, said that Mrs. Sankey is deeply passionate about the gifted program and that she has learned a great deal from her. "She has taught me how to be an effective gifted coordinator and different ways to teach the gifted students. She's a wonderful person and teacher, and I know whatever she does next she will be amazing," Mrs. McCall said.

As these three educators prepare to leave the classroom, it is clear that their impact on Butler will not be forgotten. They have inspired students, supported coworkers, and helped shape the school community for decades. While they will certainly be missed, their influence will continue through the countless students and teachers whose lives they have touched.

Switch to Online PSSA Sparks Debate

BY TYLER YEAMANS

This year, Pennsylvania required all schools to give the PSSA online. Previously, schools could choose between paper and online testing depending on their preferences and technology availability. The IHS has tested both ways, but in recent years students have mostly used paper booklets, so the change has sparked discussion. Have the PSSA exams taken a turn for the better or for the worse?

Students at the IHS have mixed opinions about the switch to online testing. Some think the online PSSA is better than the original paper version, while others disagree. For example, eighth grader Hadley Wisniewski enjoyed taking the test online because she did not have to deal with multiple test booklets or flip through pages. Meanwhile, seventh grader Kendall Cranmer believes the online PSSA is not as effective as the paper version because "students are not as focused on the online PSSA as the paper one."

Students also made positive comments about the tools included in the testing platform this year. These tools allowed students to do things that were more difficult on paper, such as returning to questions quickly instead of flipping through a booklet. In addition, the system flags incomplete questions so students do not accidentally leave answers blank. Others noted that typing responses increased speed and productivity.

Unfortunately, the online system also has downsides. Students mentioned that the small Chromebook screens made it difficult to see much of the test at one time. Others said the internet lagged because so many students were testing at the same time. Some students were also frustrated by the limited ability to show work in math and science. In addition, the highlighting tools do not include an eraser, meaning students have to completely remove highlights if they make a mistake.

It is not just students discussing the switch to online PSSA testing. Teachers also have strong opinions. Some teachers believe the online PSSA is a huge step forward because it is more productive and efficient than the paper version, especially when it comes to passing out materials. "Online PSSAs are also so much easier for the teachers, but not so much for the students," Mr. McKinley observed. Several teachers also noted that typing TDA responses made writing easier and faster for students.



Even with these benefits, some teachers think testing times should be staggered to help with internet connection problems. Many also worry that students rush more during online testing, which could impact scores. However, teachers noted that the decision was out of the district's hands, so everyone will have to adapt to the new format.

While students and teachers may have different opinions about the switch to online PSSA testing, one thing is certain: online testing is becoming the new normal, and everyone is learning to adjust to the changes.

Ms. Kim Makes a Difference On and Off the Bus

BY CAMRYN RIVERS

On March 9, Ms. Kim Lokhaiser, fondly known as Ms. Kim, received the RISE Award in recognition of her positive impact on Butler's school community as both a bus driver for Center Township Elementary School and a paraprofessional at the Intermediate High School.

Ms. Kim has been a bus driver for 32 years while also working in the office at the bus company. Most days, she wakes up at 4 a.m. and arrives at the bus garage for her morning runs by 5:20 a.m. Ms. Kim enjoys being a bus driver and says she knows all of her students' names on both her morning and afternoon routes. One of her favorite memories as a driver was when a student gave her a red rose and said, "Do you know what this means? I love you!"

The advice Ms. Kim gives to people who are new to working with students is, "Pick your battles, have fun, interact, be firm, and know your kids." When students no longer see her every day, she hopes they remember her for her wacky outfits and the fun things she does, like having her elf, Jimmy Jingles, ride her bus during Christmas time.



In addition to driving her school bus, Ms. Kim has been a paraprofessional at the IHS for the past two years. She wanted a job working in a school, and after asking Mr. Dobransky what positions were available, she became a paraprofessional. Most days, Ms. Kim arrives at school around 9 a.m. after finishing her morning bus runs.

Ms. Kim says her favorite thing about being a paraprofessional is "making the kids laugh." One of the teachers she works with is Mrs. Cunningham in seventh-grade learning support. "Ms. Kim is lovely and is always helpful and willing to work," Mrs. Cunningham said. Mrs. Thomas, another seventh-grade learning support teacher, added, "She is wonderful, and her willingness to help the students is always appreciated."

One of Ms. Kim's favorite memories as a paraprofessional involved helping a student who was unable to walk. After a physical therapist provided the student with a walker, Ms. Kim helped him practice walking a little more each day.

"One day, the student walked all the way to the cafeteria, and when he walked in, all the students and teachers in the cafeteria clapped for him," she recalled.

Besides being a bus driver and a paraprofessional, Ms. Kim enjoys going to her granddaughter's lacrosse games, attending Butler sports events, playing trivia, doing yard work, walking, and reading romance and comedy books.

When Ms. Kim received her RISE Award in March, she said, "For the first time in my life, I was speechless. I am so honored." Before she was told she had won the award, Mrs. Crissman called her to the office and showed her a video filled with pictures and messages from people congratulating her.

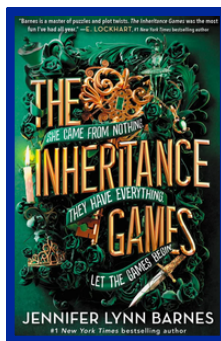
Ms. Kim's advice to her students is simple: "Live life to the fullest and have fun."

What to Read This Summer: Student Book Picks

BY ISABELLA CANCELLA

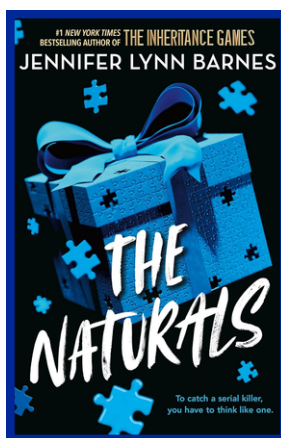
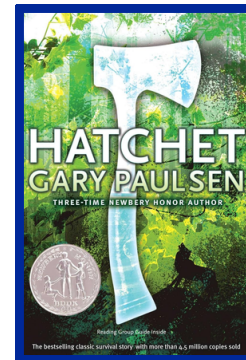
Reading is a great summer activity. Not only is it entertaining to read books that interest you, but it also gives you a chance to keep learning. IHS students who enjoy reading as a hobby have some book recommendations to enjoy this summer.

Skylar Hastings, a seventh grader, highly recommends the book *Better Than the Movies* by Lynn Painter. This rom-com is about Liz Buxbaum, a high school girl whose childhood crush moves back to town. She teams up with her annoying next-door neighbor, Wes, to help get her crush's attention, but after spending time with Wes, she starts to see things differently. Skylar likes this book because "Wes is cute and a baddie." She also enjoys the plot, which she would describe as "enemies to lovers." Skylar said she enjoyed the ending and that the book has a surprising plot twist.



Fellow seventh grader Addison Glasgow recommends the series *The Inheritance Games* by Jennifer Lynn Barnes. This mystery series follows Avery Grambs, a high school student who inherits a fortune from someone she has never met. She must move into his mansion and live with his family, who all want to know why she was chosen. To claim the inheritance, Avery has to solve a series of complicated puzzles while trying to survive the experience. Addison likes this series because "it has a lot of plot twists." She read it in her free time and is an avid reader outside of school.

Sixth grader Adam Mason recommends *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen. He enjoys the book because "it's adventurous and fun." The story follows a pilot who suffers a heart attack and crashes his plane in the forest, leaving him to survive on his own. Adam liked the ending of the book, even though he said it was somewhat predictable. He read this book in his free time and reads fairly often outside of school.



The final recommendation comes from eighth grader Carly Cousins, who has been an avid reader throughout her time at IHS. She highly recommends the series *The Naturals* by Jennifer Lynn Barnes. This psychological thriller follows Cassie Hobbes, a 17-year-old girl recruited by the FBI to join a special program for teens who are "naturals" at understanding human behavior patterns. Cassie uses her skills to help track down killers. Carly likes these books because "they have a lot of twists and turns which are very interesting." She said she loved the ending because it had a major plot twist. She read the series on her own time and enjoys reading often in her spare time.

Whether it's romance, mystery, survival, or thrillers, these student recommendations show there's a book out there for everyone to enjoy over the summer.

Building Substitute Keep IHS Running Smoothly

BY MASON GLADD

Some very important members of the Intermediate High School staff are the building substitute teachers. Each of them contributes in a huge way by filling in wherever they are needed each day.

Mr. Matt Mainhart has been a building substitute teacher for one year. Before becoming a substitute teacher, he worked as a sales engineer and a computer and technology teacher, which is why math is his favorite subject to cover. Mr. Mainhart said his substitute teaching experience has been positive because “all the kids have been good.” Outside of school, he enjoys kayaking, hiking, gardening, and geocaching. Sixth grade is his favorite grade to cover because the students are new to the school and he likes helping them learn their way around.

According to Mr. Mainhart, “My favorite part about subbing here is I feel very welcomed by everyone.” He said the most challenging part of subbing is coming in each day and making sure he understands everything the teacher wants him to do. He believes teachers can make his job easier by leaving detailed sub plans and enough work to keep students busy throughout the class. His advice to new substitute teachers is to come in early and get familiar with the lesson plans. One of the funniest things a student has said to him was, “Mr. Matt for the WI!” A fun fact about Mr. Mainhart is that he once tried to live in a solar-powered trailer for the summer, but it did not go as planned.



Mrs. Susan Moon is another substitute teacher at the BIHS and has been subbing there for 25 years. She has spent most of her life working in education. Mrs. Moon said that getting to know many different students and staff members has made her experience at BIHS enjoyable. English is her favorite subject to cover because it was her major in college. Outside of school, she enjoys reading, listening to music, and spending time with her grandchildren.

Mrs. Moon said her favorite part about BIHS is that everyone is kind and friendly. The most challenging part of subbing for her is when students do not respect her because she is not their regular teacher. She believes teachers can help by leaving clear plans and backup activities in case something does not work. Mrs. Moon also shared some advice for new teachers: “Take the time to know the people here and make connections.” One of the most memorable things a student ever said to her was, “I became a teacher because of you.” A fun fact about Mrs. Moon is that she is very involved in her church.

Mrs. Kelly Smith has been a substitute teacher at BIHS for nine years. Before teaching, she worked as a journalist in Washington, D.C., and later worked in sales and marketing for a toy company. She said interacting with students and staff has made her subbing career enjoyable. English is her favorite subject to cover because it matches her background. In her free time, she enjoys reading, working out, and spending time with her family. Her favorite grade to cover is seventh grade.

According to Mrs. Smith, “My favorite part about subbing here is the age group and all of the people in the building.” She said the most challenging part of being a substitute teacher is not always having all the lesson plans she needs. Like the other substitutes, she believes detailed sub notes make the day much easier. Her advice for new teachers is, “It might be challenging at first, but in the end, teaching will be very rewarding.”



Ms. Lauren Kugima is the newest building substitute teacher at BIHS and has been subbing for one year. She said interacting with students and teaching them has made her experience rewarding. English is her favorite subject to cover because it was her favorite subject in high school.

Outside of school, Ms. Kugima enjoys reading, walking, and playing with her cats. She said her favorite part about subbing at BIHS is meeting all the people in the building. Her advice for new teachers is simple: "Take it day by day." One memorable moment for her was when a student told her she was their favorite substitute teacher.

Although substitute teachers may not always be in the same classroom every day, they are an important part of the school community and help students and teachers succeed every day.



More Than Just a School: An Editorial

BY ELLA GOLOB, CHIEF EDITOR

Transitioning from elementary to the Intermediate High School can be overwhelming, and for many, that feeling doesn't go away. Between a much larger building and a bunch of new faces, it's okay to feel stressed. But our teachers and guidance counselors are always there to support us when things get difficult. Some of that stress goes beyond the daily routine of classes, homework, and sports. It stems from the fact that we are all trying to figure out who we are as people and what kind of adults we want to become.

No school is perfect, and Butler obviously has its flaws. Everyone, including the guidance counselors, secretaries, lunch ladies, custodians, nurses, and security guards, works hard to keep the school moving. We often overlook how much they do, but they are the backbone of our daily school lives.

We hear the word "integrity" constantly in assemblies, but its true value is found in how we use it outside of school. True integrity means being honest and respectful in our everyday lives. However, that gets complicated in a competitive environment. Butler isn't just preparing us for high school exams; it's teaching us how to respect ourselves and others in the real world. By looking past state standards, the staff is helping to form the next generation of leaders.

The mindset extends into our classrooms and our community. In history class, we don't just memorize dates, we analyze people's actions--how they affected the world and how they fixed their mistakes--so we can apply those lessons to our own lives. We also look past our own hallways to help those in need. Whether we are selling lollipops for Autism Awareness Month or competing in food drives to support our neighborhood, Butler Intermediate is a place that cares about making a difference. And the hope is that, when we leave and move on to high school and beyond, we take some of that with us.

Adjusting to IHS

BY HALEY CROUCH

Stepping into the Intermediate High School for sixth grade is a huge change. To help incoming students from elementary school, the current Class of 2033 shared some advice about adjusting to the building and getting comfortable with middle school life.

One of the biggest changes from elementary school is moving between classrooms and learning how to manage the school schedule. At first, it can feel overwhelming being in a larger building and traveling from class to class, but current sixth graders promise it gets easier quickly. Nevada Kopps offered reassurance by saying, "It's easy to get the hang of." Lillium Palmer reminds new students to stay organized: "Don't lose your schedule and keep track of time." Aaliah Lynch agreed that paying attention to the clock is important: "Just watch the time, and you'll learn."

Another big adjustment in the Intermediate is the increased academic workload. It can be difficult to stay on top of homework and grades, especially if you also play sports or participate in activities. Luckily, the current sixth graders have some helpful advice. Aaron Griffin encourages students to stay positive and never quit. "Just try your best," he said. Logan Hortert shared a similar message. "No one can fault you for trying your hardest," he advised. Avyn Anderson offered a tip for success on difficult tests: "Study extra...more than you think you should." Blake Dimond suggested completing any bonus work as a way to improve grades. Hayden Early explained the importance of staying caught up, claiming, "Try to get your homework done so you don't fall behind."



Since students come from different elementary schools across the district, the hallways and cafeteria will be filled with many new faces. Even though making new friends can feel scary at first, the current sixth graders said it does not have to be. Dylan Hill encouraged students to be confident: "Don't be shy." Colt McGee reminded everyone to stay true to themselves: "Be yourself." Elizabeth Morris shared the simplest, but most important advice of all: "Be kind."

These are just a few of the important tips the current sixth grade students wanted to share to help incoming students have a fun, welcoming, and successful start to the new school year.

A Season of Growth for Spring Sports

BY GRADY BOHIN AND NOLAN MILLER

This spring season gave our school a lot to celebrate, with the boys' volleyball, track and field, baseball, and softball teams all making memories and improving throughout the year.

The boys' volleyball team's record did not fully reflect how much the players grew during the season. After losing several close matches, one of the biggest highlights came when the team earned its first win. As the season continued, the players improved their communication and learned how to work together more effectively. Coach McKinley explained, "One of the biggest challenges was getting players to focus on teamwork instead of blaming." By the final weeks of the season, the improvement was easy to see.



The team's best match came against Deer Lakes, and the goal for next season is to "reach that level of success earlier in the season." The team finished with a 2-12 record. Looking ahead, boys' volleyball hopes to compete for a WPIAL championship someday, just like the varsity team accomplished this year.

The track and field team also had a season full of growth. One of the biggest highlights was seeing athletes set personal records throughout the year. Coaches were proud of the effort athletes gave at every practice and meet, even during difficult weather conditions. Invitational meets became important opportunities for athletes to compete at a higher level and continue improving. In the future, the track program hopes to build even stronger communication, relationships, and technique. According to Coach Hegedus, "The weather was a big challenge this season, but by the last two weeks, the team was working together, and we had a lot of PR's."



The baseball team measured success not only through wins and losses, but also through growth as a team. Coach Manning highlighted the players' hard work and development as some of the biggest positives of the season. Coach Manning said, "The team started as 26 individuals and finished as one team."



One challenge the team faced was showing up ready to compete every day, but there were still many memorable moments throughout the season, including the game against Hampton. The team also had strong performances against Avonworth and North Hills, along with an exciting game against Shaler Blue that featured four home runs. Kole Rea hit two home runs, Luke Macko added one, and Josh Fink contributed another. Heading into next season, Butler plans to focus on improving baserunning, speed, strength, and conditioning. The team finished the season with an 8-10-1 record.

The softball team showed determination and toughness all season long. One major highlight was that the team scored at least one run in every game and was never shut out. The players battled through a season filled with injuries, but they continued supporting one another and stayed positive no matter the score. Coach Wilkinson said they were most proud of the team's effort and encouragement of one another. "I am proud that they never gave up no matter what the score was. They cheered each other on and kept positive attitudes," she said.



One memorable game came in a 5-3 loss to Shaler, when Hailey Beauregard pitched an outstanding game and the team played well both offensively and defensively. Another important moment came against Karns City, which coaches described as a turning point in the season.

Beyond the competitions themselves, each team built strong connections through team activities. Volleyball players enjoyed games like USA and Avalanche, track athletes celebrated with ice cream trips after invitationals, baseball players bonded during bus rides, practices, and games, and softball players had fun with a baserunning relay, an Easter egg hunt, and other practice activities. These moments helped strengthen friendships and create team chemistry that will last beyond one season.

As the spring season comes to an end, every team has something to be proud of. Whether it was earning a first win, setting a personal record, or battling through a difficult game, this season was all about growth, teamwork, and perseverance. With so much improvement this year, the future looks bright for our school's athletes.

The 2026 Tornado Connection Spring Staff



Missing from photo: Tyler Yeamans

Do you know of a Butler student who could benefit from a summer meal program? St. Vincent dePaul of Butler is collaborating with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and BASD to offer a bundle of five grab and go breakfasts and lunches for any child under age 18. Meals will be distributed at Emily Brittain Elementary School (338 N Washington Street) from 10-11 am every Thursday from June 18-August 13.



SPRING 2026

THE TORNADO CONNECTION

STUDENT SECTION

Best Friend Battle 25-26 Spring Edition

BY WILLO YOUNG

Kylee Moore and Quinn Steyer

- "Our sports are different. I dance, and she plays lacrosse and soccer."
- "I think she would go to Turks and Caicos."
- "My favorite things to do with her are to have sleepovers and hang out with her!"



- "One difference is I have straight hair, and she has curly hair."
- "I think she would love to go to Turks and Caicos for vacation."
- "My favorite thing to do with her is office aides at school."

Nash Zaccari and Bill Schollaert

- "I can't live without his nice basement!"
- "We sometimes play golf when we hang out, but we play lacrosse most of the time."
- "He's tall, and I'm short."



- "I can't live without his backyard."
- "We walk in the street playing music which is fun!"
- "He's really funny, and I'm annoying."

Grace Bush and Miley Bayer

- "Something she has that I wish I had is her clothes. I would steal them."
- "I think she would probably go to North Carolina on vacation."
- "I love to hang out with her at Altitude; it's really fun."



- "Something I wish I had was her little sister, Sophia."
- "I think she will go to Florida again."
- "The place I love most to hang out is her house."

Sunny Days Ahead: Students Share Summer Plans

BY LUCY FEHL, EDITOR



Greyson Perry– "Besides going to Tennessee in July, I'm planning on hanging out with Austin Ritchie most of the time this summer at Alameda. Austin and I will be griddying to Arby's while listening to Rod Wave."

Natalie Gregory– "I'm looking forward to going to two basketball camps, hanging out with my friends, going to Virginia, and celebrating my birthday over the summer."



Carleigh Rubcic– "I'm hoping to go to Florida in June or July, and I'm most excited to go to Kennywood."

Sawyer Sinsky– "I'm planning to hang out with my really good friends, travel to South Carolina this summer with my family, and play lots of football and baseball."



Miya Binus– "I'm looking forward to hanging out with my close friends and family this summer. I go camping with my family and go swimming."

Ben O'Dean– "I plan to go to camp, catch up on my sleep, play Roblox most of the summer, go to the beach, and hang out with my Mom for her birthday."

Adia Gold– "I swim competitively in the summer, so I go to a lot of swim meets. I also look forward to going to the beach."

Nash Zaccari– "I'm excited to hang out with my friends at the Butler Farm Show. We are going to go together and blast music."



Who Am I?

Sixth Grade Mystery Student

BY MADISON MACDONALD, EDITOR

The first mystery student is in sixth grade and was born in Pittsburgh. His favorite school subject is history. He has one sibling, an older brother named Adam. This student is not sure what he wants to be when he grows up. His best friends include Cam Varner, Lukas Renwick, and Jaxson Clouse.



This sixth grader enjoys the movie *Spiderman*. If he could travel anywhere in the world, he would take a trip to Florida. His favorite memory from his time at the Intermediate so far is “making new friends.” If he could have any superpower, he would want to fly.

Who Am I?

Seventh Grade Mystery Student

BY MADISON MACDONALD, EDITOR



The next mystery student is in seventh grade, and she was born in Butler. Her favorite subject is ELA. She has a younger brother named Brady. When she grows up, she wants to be a zookeeper. Her best friends include Willo Young, Maddie MacDonald, Riley Smith, Colette Trepanier, and many more.

Her favorite movie is *Ratatouille*. This seventh grader commented, “I want to go to Georgia because my dad grew up there.” Her favorite memory from the Intermediate was seeing if her friends were in her classes. If she could have any superpower, she would want to be invisible.

Who Am I?

Eighth Grade Mystery Student

BY MADISON MACDONALD, EDITOR

The final mystery student is in eighth grade, and she was born in Kittanning. This student enjoys history class the most. She has two siblings named Roman and Laiken. When she grows up, she wants to be a sports medicine doctor. Her best friends are Brinley Baird, Braelyn Sasse, Sophia Slaughenhoup, Kyla Kern, and Kenzie Erdos.

This student’s favorite show is *The Rookie*, and her favorite movie is *The Notebook*. If she could travel anywhere in the world, she would go to Aruba. Her favorite memory from the Intermediate is being involved with the school and having fun with her friends. If she could have any superpower, it would be “to read people’s minds.”



Teachers Share After School Hobbies

BY RYLIE BACHELER

When we were younger, many of us believed our teachers lived at school and had no lives outside of teaching. But as we got older, we realized that teachers actually do a lot outside of school, and sometimes they even have some pretty cool hobbies. Teachers like Mrs. Pollock, Mr. Waseleski, Miss Carlson, Mr. Jewart, Mrs. Williams, and Mrs. Walker all have interesting lives outside the classroom.



Mrs. Pollock, an eighth-grade English teacher, leads a fulfilling life outside of school by spending time with her daughters, traveling, reading, and running. “I began running in school. I was on the track team, and it just stuck with me,” she said. She believes running is “good for managing stress and anxiety” and encourages students and teachers to give it a try. Her other passion is Disney, and her friends and family even have her plan their Disney vacations for them. “I was married there, and we usually visit as a family a few times a year,” she said.

Mr. Waseleski, an eighth-grade history teacher, enjoys less strenuous activities such as reading, spending time with family, and collecting old vinyl records and sports memorabilia. His favorite part of collecting is finding rare and historical items. If he had unlimited money, he said he would definitely turn collecting into a full-time job. “There is a sports memorabilia convention this summer, which I plan to attend,” he shared. Mr. Waseleski also has two parrots, Sergeant Pepper and Daisy, whom he enjoys taking care of.

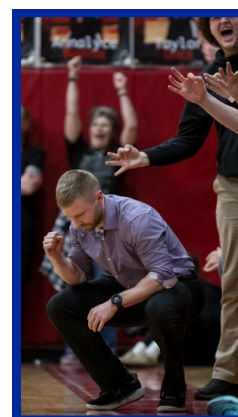


Mr. Waz holds a mini Notre Dame helmet signed by Terry Hanratty, 1966 Butler grad and two-time Super Bowl champion!



Miss Carlson, a seventh-grade history teacher, enjoys a calm and peaceful lifestyle. She spends her free time with her dog, friends, and family, and she also enjoys embroidering. Miss Carlson said she likes embroidery because “it forces me to get off my phone and not spend hours doomscrolling.” She started embroidering during COVID because “I just needed something that I could do by myself at home.”

Mr. Jewart, a seventh-grade science teacher, has a more active lifestyle. He coaches basketball, does CrossFit, and enjoys reading. Mr. Jewart started coaching basketball because “one of my earliest memories is going to one of my dad’s basketball practices when I was younger, and I just assumed that coaching was something I would end up doing.” He has been a JV coach for three years and a varsity coach for one year. “I definitely think that students should think about coaching when they are older. It’s a great way to give back to their community,” he said. Mr. Jewart is also a big fan of college basketball and trying new coffee.



Mrs. Williams, a sixth-grade English teacher, enjoys a peaceful life filled with farming, gardening, and working out. She highly encourages students and teachers to try farming or gardening because “it is just so great to be outdoors and to enjoy the Earth.” Mrs. Williams has gardened her whole life but started farming later in life. “My husband was a farmer, so farming is just a way that we can be together,” she explained.

Mrs. Walker, an eighth-grade FCS teacher, also has a busy and interesting life outside of school. She coaches second-grade basketball, is involved with the Golden Tornado Scholastic Foundation, and even plays in a women's basketball league. Mrs. Walker also has two sons who play baseball. "I'm usually at the baseball fields four days a week for my boys," she said. In the summer, she enjoys boating, golfing, and gardening whenever she can. Mrs. Walker also cares for 25 chickens, four lizards, and three cockatiels.

These are just a few examples of the teachers in our school who have exciting hobbies and busy lives outside of grading papers and teaching classes.



Bizarre or Brilliant? A Look Inside Butler Backpacks

BY RILEY SMITH

Students carry around huge backpacks during the school day, but do they contain essentials or just random junk? Students from all three grades shared the contents of their backpacks and explained what they think is necessary – and what definitely is not.

Jaxson Clouse, a sixth grader, said the weirdest thing in his backpack is his kindergarten memory book. He keeps it because he likes looking back at pictures of his friends when they were younger. "I use it almost every day when I want to find someone," he said. Jaxson admitted that he barely uses many of the things in his backpack, but he considers these items the most important: a calculator, Chromebook, math book, both of his ELA books, pencils, an eraser, a science binder, a water bottle, notebooks, folders, and, of course, his trusted kindergarten yearbook.

Another sixth grader, Vivienne Bowser, shared that the weirdest item in her backpack was a five-month-old bag of sliced cantaloupe. She discovered it while cleaning out her backpack and finding it buried at the bottom. "When I pulled it out, it had strange colors, it was dried out, and pigmented gray and green," she said. Vivienne explained that she used to hate cantaloupe, but her parents did not know that and would still pack it in her lunch. "I felt bad that I didn't eat it, so I decided to hide it in my backpack," she admitted. She soon forgot about it, leaving the cantaloupe in her bag for five months before finally throwing it away.



Vivienne said she uses everything in her backpack because she likes to stay organized. Right now, her backpack contains the books *When You Trap a Tiger* and *Butterfly*, along with six pencils, two erasers, a calculator, note cards, sticky notes, binders, her Chromebook, folders for each subject, and hand lotion. Despite the cantaloupe incident, she believes she would not find much trash in her backpack because she tries to keep everything tidy. Vivienne also said that staying organized at home and school helps create a functional environment.

Seventh grader Jackson Hilliard said the weirdest things in his backpack are packs of cranberries and a paper straw. He keeps cranberries with him whenever he wants a snack. The straw came from a project in Mrs. Sankey's class where students experimented by "sucking on brownie M&M's and Skittles." Jackson believes it is important to always have pencils and a Chromebook in your backpack. His advice to future sixth graders is to always carry cranberries or another favorite snack. "It is important to eat fruit every day to get nutrition," he said.



Keeping with the food theme, fellow seventh grader Juliet Miller carries Parmesan cheese packets in her backpack. She got them after her friend, Ella Kormos, passed around packets of Parmesan cheese from Sam's Club during lunch. Juliet said she does not actually use the cheese, but she keeps it in her backpack just in case she wants it someday. She admitted that she only uses a few of the many things she carries. According to Juliet, "The most important thing to have in your backpack all the time is your Chromebook."

Eighth grader Henry Meiser claimed the weirdest thing in his backpack is a magnifying glass. He keeps it because he thinks it is useful for helping him read and understand his work better. Henry said he probably does not use everything in his backpack, even though he considers himself organized. "It is important to carry a magnifying glass because you can use it on a daily basis," he said. His advice to future sixth graders is: "Make sure that you always bring a magnifying glass, erasers, pencils, and folders."



The weirdest thing in eighth grader Brinley Baird's backpack is a gnome. She has it because her friend's mom made it for her, but she forgot to take it out of her backpack. On a regular school day, Brinley said she mostly uses pencils. She admitted that if she cleaned out her backpack right now, she would probably find a lot of trash because she does not always use everything she carries. Brinley's advice to future sixth graders is simple: "Carry gum because that's how you make friends."

Whether students are carrying magnifying glasses, Parmesan cheese, or forgotten cantaloupe, one thing is clear: every backpack tells a story.

A Day in the Life of a Principal

BY EMMA POST

A principal's day is packed with phone calls, planning, meetings, and student interaction. While students may only see principals in the hallways or cafeteria, there is much more happening behind the scenes every day. Mr. Dunn, Mrs. Crissman, and Mr. Dobransky all have busy schedules that begin long before students arrive and continue after the school day ends. Here is a closer look at what their days are really like.

The principals all start their mornings early. Mr. Dunn wakes up at 5:30 a.m. and likes to have plain black coffee and a bagel for breakfast. Mrs. Crissman starts even earlier, waking up around 4:15 a.m. She said, "Four minutes after I wake up, I have a double-shot espresso americano with a splash of cream." Mr. Dobransky also wakes up early, around 4:30 a.m., but usually skips breakfast altogether.

All three principals arrive at school before students each day. Mr. Dunn gets to school around 7:00 to 7:10 and spends his time checking emails before students arrive. Mrs. Crissman arrives around 6:45 and reads emails, responds to parents, and gathers student discipline reports. Mr. Dobransky arrives the earliest, around 6:30, and also starts his day by checking emails.

Once students begin arriving, the principals help make sure the school day starts smoothly. Mr. Dunn and Mrs. Crissman both help outside during student drop-off and handle issues that come up in the holding room or with buses. Mrs. Crissman also helps direct traffic, takes certain students to class, and assists with metal detectors. Mr. Dobransky helps with parent drop-off and metal detectors when needed.

Lunch looks different for each principal. Mr. Dunn enjoys leftovers or deli sandwiches, while Mrs. Crissman's favorite lunch is chicken tenders and fries. Mr. Dobransky usually skips lunch completely.

After lunch, the principals continue handling many different responsibilities. Mr. Dunn catches up on work from the morning and deals with discipline issues. Mrs. Crissman focuses on student discipline and plans events such as move-up days and other end-of-year activities. Mr. Dobransky says every afternoon is different, but he often spends the time checking emails and taking care of whatever problems come up during the day.

When students leave school, the principals' work is still not finished. Mr. Dunn said, "All us principals meet together and reflect on the day while we plan for the next." Mrs. Crissman explains that Tuesdays and Thursdays often include professional development meetings and parent phone calls before the principals meet to discuss the day. Mr. Dobransky spends his afternoons finishing emails, taking phone calls, handling bus issues, and attending meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays. All three principals usually leave school between 3:45 and 4:00 p.m.

Once they get home, family becomes an important part of their evenings. Mr. Dunn changes out of his suit, picks up his son from the bus, and plans dinner. Mrs. Crissman says the first thing she does is greet her children and look at their artwork. Mr. Dobransky says he finally has time to eat once he gets home. All three principals make time for their families every day, even with their busy schedules. Mr. Dunn says he always makes time to take care of his kids, farm, and spend at least two hours playing with his children. Mrs. Crissman also makes time for “two hours of play with kids and one hour of dinner.” Mr. Dobransky says every day is different, but he always takes care of his kids and works on creative projects.

Dinner is another way their routines differ. Mr. Dunn’s favorite dinner is spaghetti with salad and garlic bread. Mrs. Crissman loves tacos cooked by her husband and jokes, “If he doesn’t cook, I don’t eat.” Mr. Dobransky’s favorite meal is baked salmon, brussel sprouts, and sweet potato fries.

Even though their schedules are different, the principals share many of the same challenges and rewards. All three said working with students is one of their favorite parts of the job. Mr. Dunn enjoys building relationships with students, while Mrs. Crissman likes getting to know and helping them. Mr. Dobransky says he enjoys the pride in the building, working with the other principals, and the fun environment at school.

The most difficult part of the job for all three principals is student discipline and problem-solving. Mr. Dunn said the challenge is “managing priorities and finding what can wait and what is necessary.” Mrs. Crissman explained that discipline takes a lot of time because of all the different steps involved. Mr. Dobransky said many situations require mediation because “sometimes there is no clear right or wrong.”

Before becoming principals, each of them had different careers in education and leadership. Mr. Dunn worked as a guidance counselor, Mrs. Crissman taught sixth-grade math, and Mr. Dobransky served in the Army before becoming a woodshop and history teacher. Despite their different backgrounds, all three describe their leadership styles as student-centered.

Being a principal involves much more than most students realize. From early mornings to late afternoons, the principals work hard to support students, teachers, and families while keeping the school running smoothly. Although every day brings different challenges, Mr. Dunn, Mrs. Crissman, and Mr. Dobransky all share the same goal of making the school a positive place for students to learn and grow.



Mystery Students: AJ Dugan (6), Aubrey Wilkinson (7), and Carly Cygan (8)