



## Reward School



Minnesota Department of  
**Education**



# Montrose and Northwinds Earn *Reward School* Designation

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has named Montrose Elementary School of Innovation (MESI) and Northwinds (NES) Elementary School 2015-16 Reward Schools for having demonstrated exceptional student outcomes and success in closing achievement gaps. While NES is celebrating for the first time, MESI is celebrating for the second year in a row.

This recognition is given to the top 15 percent of schools in the state who receive Title I funding and is the highest rating that MDE awards. In addition to MESI receiving the award last year, they were "Celebration Eligible," meaning they were in the top 25 percent (after the 15 percent) in 2012-13 and 2013-14. MDE uses Multiple Measurement Ratings (MMR) to determine improvements. MMR evaluates a school's performance on four key measures:

- Students meeting or exceeding their scores on state exams (MCAs—Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments)
- Student growth over time (improvement from grade to grade)

- Reduction of achievement gaps between white students and students of color, students living in poverty, students receiving special education services, and English learners
- Increased graduation rates (only for high schools)

Only 103 Title I schools in the state earned this distinction and only six schools were named Reward Schools in Wright County.

Minnesota Commissioner of Education Dr. Brenda Cassellius extended her congratulations to MESI and NES, "Your schools are among the highest performing schools in the state, and this recognition reflects the incredible success of your students and tireless efforts on behalf of your staff. I appreciate the hard work you do every day to ensure the students you serve are successful. Your staff and your students are to be commended."

NES Principal Shawn Gombos says, "This is such a validation for our staff, students and families for the hard and focused work that they have done. The quote, 'Never

doubt what a small group of people can do to change the world, because it always has.' has great meaning for us at NES. When students feel good about who they are and how they belong in the NES community, they will achieve. This recognition helps confirm the good work that we all are doing."

MESI Principal Tony Steffes continues, "It is truly an honor to be named a Reward School for the second year in a row. Earning this recognition certainly helps to validate the hard work of our students and staff. We believe that our success stems from strong foundational academic programming related to reading and math, intertwined with our innovative learning experiences that support students in exploring their passions, utilizing new technology to collaborate and create, and developing critical-thinking and problem-solving skills."

Both principals say that, moving ahead, they will continue to look for ways to improve learning opportunities for students and help them realize and achieve success in and outside of the classroom.

## The place to dream, believe and achieve.

### Attention Parents: This is Only a Test



BHM Schools wants to ensure that we are communicating with parents in the most effective way possible. On **Wednesday, October 12, 2016**, mid-morning, the district will send out a **district-wide emergency test message** to parents and guardians from our parent notification system. You should receive a call, an email and/or text message (depending on

the information you have on file with your child's school). Especially with the upcoming winter months, we want to be sure parents/guardians don't miss any important messages from the school or the district about cancellations or delays. Remember this is **ONLY** a TEST and **NO** action will likely be necessary.

## Enrollment Up, Top Workplace and New Requirements

This year as we start the new school year, to say we look forward to the end of "Road Construction Season" is an understatement for many. Road construction and traffic congestion created a few headaches for our buses and parents as they dropped off their children for school. Middle school families are maneuvering a temporary traffic flow change and high school students have learned how to maneuver the new roundabout. Despite all of the obstacles and some rain on those first days of school, we enjoyed a very good start to the school year.



Scott Thielman

### Enrollment on the Rise

This year, BHM has realized an increase in enrollment of approximately 150 students above the enrollment projections made last fall. The majority of the increase mainly occurred at Buffalo High School which experienced approximately 100 new students on the first day of school. Our six elementary schools combined, experienced an increase of approximately 45 students and Buffalo Community Middle School saw a very modest increase of eight students. The increase in enrollment is good for the district in that it utilizes classrooms as efficiently as possible and also improves the long-term financial outlook for the district. School districts are funded based on student enrollment and maintaining buildings at or near capacity, this ensures stable resources for our students.

### Top 30 Workplace

This year, BHM Schools was once again identified as a TOP 30 Workplace in Minnesota for large companies/organizations in the *StarTribune* workplace employee survey. This is the second time we have received this recognition. The previous time was when the district first participated in the survey in 2014. In 2014, BHM ranked 30 for large companies/organizations, and in 2016, our ranking improved to 27. The ranking improved for the district at the same time participation in the employee survey increased. Sixty-eight percent of the 750 full and part-time district employees participated in the third party survey and based on employee responses, a designa-

tion was determined by the *StarTribune*. The ranking identifies BHM Schools as a great workplace and environment for employees which we hope will help attract new employees who will want to be part of a positive workplace. In turn, we know this means we provide a great environment for our students. It is the staff who makes our schools a very special place for our students. I feel it every time I enter a school and I know my child experiences it every day in his classrooms. This recognition is the affirmation of our focus on making a difference in the lives of our students by providing a safe, caring and supportive learning environment.

### New State and Federal Requirements

In December of 2015, new legislation was passed to overhaul the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. NCLB was put in place in 2002 and was the latest reauthorization of the 50-year old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which was enacted as part of the Johnson Administration's "War on Poverty" act of 1965. ESEA was reauthorized several times until NCLB in 2002 which then remained in place until the reauthorization of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). In the 1965 ESEA, school districts were allocated funds to address academic disparities between low socioeconomic rural areas and urban centers with the wealthier suburban areas of the states. Schools were given funds to supplement educational opportunities

and improve student achievement. In the subsequent reauthorizations of the original ESEA, a shift occurred from using funds to focus on improved student achievement to accountability and testing. The Every Student Succeeds Act has some broad sweeping reforms to the oversight of the federal government and now places the majority of control over achievement tests and academic accountability to individual states.

The ESSA requires states to elicit input from all stakeholders regarding five main areas of emphasis in the reauthorization of the bill. Now the ESSA requires states to identify schools for improvement based on five components. The five areas of major accountability are: 1) academic achievement on state tests, 2) academic growth over time, 3) graduation rates, 4) progress towards English language proficiency, and 5) at least one indicator of school quality or student success (examples in the law include student engagement, college and career readiness, school climate and safety, and access to and completion of advanced coursework). The first four academic indicators must be assigned much greater weight than the indicators of school quality or student success. All of the indicators need to include the performance of each student group, including students from major racial and ethnic groups, children with disabilities, English learners and low-income students. Using the measures of the accountability system, ESSA requires that states identify schools for improvement if they: are in the lowest five percent of Title I schools; are high schools with graduation rates below 67 percent; or are particularly low-performing in any student group.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is required to elicit feedback from stakeholders (i.e. parents, students, teachers, school administrators, business leaders and community members) in the creation of the state's accountability criteria. I encourage you to be involved in the process to develop Minnesota's accountability criteria because it may be a very long time before another reauthorization of the Education Act is approved. Plan to attend a MDE regional meeting in your area: October 5 in Duluth, October 6 in Bemidji, October 13 in Marshall, October 14 in Rochester, October 26 in St. Cloud, and November 3 in Burnsville.



# Building the Future

## Half of the Bond Projects Complete

In 2014, BHM Schools passed a \$33 million bond referendum that helped fund updates district-wide in areas of safety and security, technology, deferred maintenance, building additions and activity venues. The majority of the projects are set for completion in three years (with all projects set for completion in five years). Year two of construction is almost in the books but there is still plenty of work to be done. Some major projects were completed this past spring and summer. Here is a summary of those projects and projects to come for this school year (*you can find more photos and a listing of completed projects online at [www.bhmschools.org](http://www.bhmschools.org)*):

### Discovery Elementary/Center

- Auditorium steps removed and patio completed
- Security camera upgrade completed
- Secure entrance design in progress—January/February project bids—spring 2017 start
- Parking lot expansion, exterior wall repair, partial roof replacement—spring/summer 2017

### Montrose Elementary School of Innovation

- Cafeteria/gym floor replaced
- Finished west-side window replacement
- Security camera upgrade completed

### Northwinds Elementary

- Exterior wall repair and painting completed

### Parkside Elementary

- Health office in design—summer 2017 construction
- Wall repair and partial roof replacement—summer 2017

### Tatanka STEM Elementary

- Cafeteria/gym floor replaced
- Secure entrance, four kindergarten classrooms, music room and gym are on track to finish ahead of schedule (December 15 deadline)

### Buffalo Community Middle School

- Six Northstar classrooms have new hallway access
- Pool HVAC (heating ventilation air conditioning) and water filtration systems replaced
- Pool family locker rooms and storage created
- Partial roof replacement



Crews work on the Tatanka STEM Elementary new secure entrance.



Aerial view of the new Bison Outdoor Athletic Complex (BOAC)—pictured bottom to top: Bison Field East (track/field); Bison Field West (artificial turf); Bison Yards 1 (varsity) and 2 (junior varsity)—baseball; Bison Park 1 (varsity), 2 (junior varsity) and 3 (grade 9)—softball. Also included are eight tennis courts, four practice fields, and a facility for the ticket booth, rest-rooms and concessions.



In August, asphalt is laid down to finish off the north parking lot at Buffalo High School.

- Two health classrooms and new exterior pool entrance—set for completion by mid-November 2016

### Buffalo High School

- North parking lot replaced
- Phase two of the roof replacement project completed

- Athletic fields—artificial turf field completed—baseball, softball and track/field ready for use in 2017
- Two additions—gym space and multi-purpose fine arts classroom space—bids opened in September 2016—construction begins in October—June 2017 completion



One of two new health classrooms at Buffalo Community Middle School.



New hallways were created for Northstar classroom access at Buffalo Community Middle



The new cafeteria/gym floor at Montrose Elementary School of Innovation.

## BHS Scores a Gohl for Assistant Principal

On Monday, August 8, the school board approved the appointment of Katie Gohl (*pronounced: goal*) as the new Buffalo High School (BHS) Assistant Principal. This is a new assistant principal



Katie Gohl

position due to the reallocation of two positions—the Phoenix Learning Center (PLC) Coordinator and the administrative assistant position at BHS. The PLC Coordinator position is now part-time (BHS Assistant Principal Kris Thompson has taken on those new responsibilities) and the administrative assistant position now has assistant principal duties.

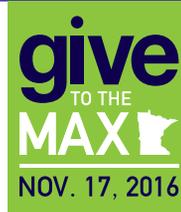
Gohl joined BHM Schools in 2005 and for nine years was the Buffalo Community Middle School (BCMS) Reading Intervention Teacher. She pioneered the Read180 program and established a building-wide focus on literacy. In 2012, she added K-12 Technology Integration Specialist to her responsibilities. Gohl helped to establish K-12 student ePortfolios and promoted high tech learning by providing support and training to teachers, district-wide, on ways to integrate technology into the classroom. That same year, she earned a TIES Exceptional Teacher award for her positive impact on student learning through technology. Finally in 2014, Gohl accepted a teacher on special assignment position at BCMS where she had a variety of administrative responsibilities.

“People get excited to work with Ms. Gohl, and we are excited to have her as a part of our BHS team,” states BHS Principal Mark Mischke. “She is approachable, kind, hard working and caring, but she is willing to have those tough conversations with students and partner with them in their educational journey. We are fortunate to have her working with the students in our district.”

Gohl believes building relationships with students, parents and staff members has helped her to be more influential in her work. “Growth and success of all students has always been a passion of mine,” explains Gohl. “I want to help support each child’s individual needs as well as support teachers with their own needs and professional development. I believe being a school administrator is one of the most honorable and rewarding professions on the planet.”

## Scholarships: Give to the Max

On November 17, consider donating to the 877 Scholarship Foundation during Give to the Max Day. Funds raised will directly provide community scholarships for 2016-17 Buffalo High School seniors. Go to [givemn.org](http://givemn.org) and enter the key word **877 Scholarship** to donate. The 877 Scholarship Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit; all donations are fully tax deductible. Thank you in advance for investing in the educational future of our BHM graduates!



## Proud Of...☆☆☆

Those listed below were submitted by district staff and recognized by the School Board for their special contributions and accomplishments.

Buffalo High School National Merit Scholarship Semi-Finalists - Elizabeth LaCasse and Andrew Scherber.



Buffalo High School AP Scholars who demonstrated college-level achievement on three or more Advanced Placement exams - Meghan Cahill, Thomas Fredrickson, Trey Green, Faith Kulzer, Kayla Lehtola, Callie Liska, Otiti Mayo, Alec Olson, John Schoder, Julia St. Amant and Kathleen Tierney.

Buffalo High School AP Scholars with honor who demonstrated college-level achievement on four or more Advanced Placement exams - Maximilian Jude, Sophie Lefebvre, Taylor McNitt, Andrew Scherber, Jonah Schmitz and Chase Schottler.

Buffalo High School AP Scholars with Distinction who demonstrated college-level achievement on five or more Advanced Placement exams - Samuel Hamann, Joshua Polzin and Madeline Schwappach.

Buffalo High School National AP Scholar Joshua Polzin who received an average score of 4 on all AP Exams taken and a score of 4 or higher on eight or more Advanced Placement exams.

## New Teachers Start a New School Year



The district welcomed a new school year and 24 new teachers into the schools. Pictured (front, left-right): Lindsay Wurm, Ashley Brausen, Emily Moritz, Whitney Bennett; (row two): Tanya Remer, Kerrie Johnson, Nicki Schahn, Michelle Ryder, Lisa Nordmeyer, Alex Edwards, Jennifer Buhl; (row three): Kayla Pesola, Lisa Sturm, Hanna Mahan, Anna Lantz, Amanda Matter, Melissa Paulson, Amanda Gregoire, Sandra Villaral; (row four): Nancy Buselmeier, Kelsey Ortman, Paul Lundberg, Tara Rosh, and Laura Ortega. (Photo by Rob LaPlante)

## College Credit in High School, p. 6

districts in the state even offer their high school students the opportunity to earn their Associates Degree.

But BHS is setting a new standard. For the last three years, BHM Schools has been working to provide more college level options to more students at BHS. They began the challenging work to bring what is called the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) into BHS, unlocking the opportunity for even more students to have access to college level courses and credits. The MnTC is the curriculum required to satisfy the general education requirements for college students (the first two years of general education classes before moving into a major field of study).

Beginning with this school year, BHS students will have unprecedented access to college level courses thanks to our unique partnership with the University of Minnesota, St. Cloud State University,

Southwest Minnesota State University, and newly added North Hennepin Community College (NHCC) and Hennepin Technical College (HTC). The new partnership with NHCC (adding seven new courses) and HTC (adding nine new courses) will allow BHS students in the top 70 percent of their class to have access to 37 college level courses. No other school district in the area is able to offer the level of access and the number of college level courses that BHS is offering. Students may take as many MnTC classes as they want and the credits will transfer to either the University of Minnesota, a school within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, or other institutions in and out of the state. A continued benefit is that students are earning college credits while in high school without having to pay the cost of tuition.

In a 2015-16 survey of students at BHS, 92 percent say that BHS is preparing them for the future. This is an exciting statistic for BHS Principal Mark Mischke, and he is beyond excited to offer the MnTC to his students. While he explains that there are still a few more classes to fulfill three more "goal areas" (there are 10 total goal areas with classes offered in each), Mischke says that the plan is to have that completed by the 2017-18 school year. "The goal for implementation of the MnTC is to create the best high school in the state of Minnesota," explains Mischke. "The more opportunities we can offer through this program, the better. There are course offerings for everyone. Whether a student is on a career or college path, those opportunities are here at BHS through the MnTC."

You can find out more about the MnTC online at [www.bhmschools.org/schools/buffalo-high](http://www.bhmschools.org/schools/buffalo-high).



BHM Schools is also proud of the four staff members who were recognized by Resource Training and Solutions as the **2016 Outstanding Educational Support Staff**. They are pictured left to right with Superintendent Scott Thielman, April Schmidt--Parkside Elementary School Secretary; Marie Jacobs--Buffalo Community Middle School Senior Technician; Sandy Weldele--Buffalo Community Middle School Media Center/Supervisory ESP (Educational Support Professional) and Bill Jordan--District-Wide Grounds/Maintenance. They were honored at a banquet in St. Cloud on Wednesday, September 28.

\*\*\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*  
RESIDENT DISTRICT 877

## Student Money Saver



Students practice their one minute impromptu speeches in the CIS Public Speaking class. This is a new class offered through North Hennepin Community College as a part of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

## Earn College Credit in High School BHS Initiates Minnesota Transfer Curriculum

**T**True story—A 2016 Buffalo High School (BHS) graduate left high school with 36 college credits (equivalent to one year of college) without ever having stepped foot onto a college campus. To top it off, that student also saved about \$30,000 in annual tuition fees at an out of state college.

Now you may ask, “How is this special? Many students in high school can take college level courses for credit, especially if they already have a high grade point average (GPA).”

For the past 15 years BHS has offered College in the School (CIS) courses or Advanced Placement (AP) classes for students who rank in the top percent of their class. There has also always been Post Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) for those students who might need the flexibility that a college schedule offers. And yes, many high schools do offer college credits in certain areas, and a couple other

**College Credit in High School, p. 5**

## School Board Appoints Bob Sansevere

**U**Using an application and interview process, the BHM School Board selected Bob Sansevere to replace outgoing board member Jeff Trout. Trout announced in August that he would be leaving the board because his family moved just outside the district boundary, thus making him ineligible to continue serving on the board.



Bob Sansevere

Sansevere has lived in Buffalo for four years on a 70-plus acre horse farm along the southeast side of Buffalo with his wife Mary and five children (currently two in college, one in high school and two in elementary school). Professionally, Sansevere works in media and communications. He has been a member of the KQRS Morning Show for the past 28 years and has hosted a daily podcast for the last 14 months. Sansevere is also a sports columnist for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and has been an award-winning television commentator.

When asked why he wanted to serve on the school board, Sansevere says, “I have wanted to get involved in my community, as I did in Orono (serving on the Orono City Council for eight years). At a young age, I wanted to do something to change the world. As I got older, I realized it is just as important—even more important—to do something that impacts your own little corner of the world. That belief led me to run for city council, do foster care for nearly two decades, and now serve as a member on the BHM School Board.”

“We had four good candidates,” explains BHM School Board Chair Dave Wilson. “We were most impressed with Bob. Those of us on the interview team felt he showed good insight into the district and that he would bring a unique perspective to the board. Bob has a desire to ‘give back,’ which is evident by his past actions. We look forward to working with him.”

Sansevere’s appointment was approved on Monday, September 26. His term will continue until December 31, 2017. The seat will be up for election on the November 2017 ballot.



Board members tackle a Cubelets challenge at Montrose Elementary School of Innovation.

### School Board

Dave Wilson ..... Chairperson  
Sue Lee..... Vice Chairperson  
Laurie Raymond..... Clerk  
Melissa Brings ..... Treasurer  
Ken Ogden..... Acting Clerk/Treasurer  
Bob Sansevere ..... Director  
Stan Vander Kooi ..... Director  
Mitch Bunting ..... Student Representative  
Scott Thielman ..... Superintendent

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*Reader comments or questions welcome!*