



A Spotlight On Montrose Elementary School of Innovation

What did your elementary school experience look like? Some people may remember large chalkboards, classroom pencil sharpeners, heavy metal desks, or filmstrips. Others think of floppy disks, Oregon Trail computer games, overhead projectors, Encyclopedia Britannica, or that exciting day in gym class with the parachute. Whether your school work involved worksheets, standardized tests, number two pencils, computers, keyboarding, spooled printer paper, the sound of a recorder, or card catalogs, those memories are strong.

Students at Montrose Elementary School of Innovation (MESI) will have strong memories too. But theirs will involve coding, robots, green screens, and interactive gym activities.

For the last four years, MESI has been a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) Magnet School, initially utilizing grant funds to bring in a STEAM curriculum, updated furniture, and modified learning spaces. Using resources from the nationally recognized Project Lead The Way

organization, the curriculum at MESI focuses on hands-on, project-based learning across all subject areas.

The funding also provided new classroom technology such as TV monitors, smart boards, chromebooks, and iPads, as well as new desks and flexible seating options.

"The furniture used in classrooms really sets the tone for flexibility in teaching and learning," said Principal Tony Steffes. "We have lots of options that can be adjusted for students to stand or sit including wobble stools and diamond desks. This really allows teachers and students to utilize learning spaces in a variety of ways."

Learning takes place all over the school, and in the case of the gym, even on the walls. A Lu Interactive Playground system is used to turn the walls into interactive game spaces, where students can practice skills like throwing a ball but try to hit targets on the wall to solve math problems.

Third grade teacher Jen Olson was tapped as the Curriculum Integrationist and was a big part of the initial transition to STEAM and more problem-based learning.



"A regular curriculum might have students take an issue and just discuss it, but with this STEAM focus, we can increase the rigor and engagement with our students," said Olson. "We also bring in components from the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) method used across the district to blend these different areas into our lessons."

An example of this is a project done in the third grade classes. Students learned about organisms, structures and functions. Instead of just taking a test about how birds use their wings, or what they are made of, students had to use a problem solving method and design process to find a way to help an injured animal based on the function of those structures including making a prosthetic dolphin tail and leg for a turtle.

Kindergartners use the same type of approach in learning about motions like pushing and pulling. Instead of a worksheet on these terms, they are given



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From the Superintendent's Desk

Redefining Normal: Reflecting on a School Year and Planning for Another



Scott Thielman

It's hard to believe that the 2021-22 school year is coming to an end. We saw progress in a variety of ways including offering in-person learning throughout the year. There will

always be that thought of wanting to go "back to normal" but this year showed that while the definition of "normal" won't be quite what it used to be, we can still prepare our students for a successful future in a changing world.

There were challenges this year. We had to navigate through national staffing shortages, fluctuating case numbers of COVID-19, and evolving guidance. We stayed focused on students at all times, using COVID relief dollars to keep staffing levels up and class sizes low, and giving our teachers the resources they needed to be successful including extra prep and planning time during dedicated days in January and March.

I have been so impressed with how much our teachers and education support professionals have stepped up and shown their passion for our students. We are so fortunate to have a teaching staff that includes new teachers and veteran educators who have shown their ability to work together to solve problems and provide excellent educational opportunities and support.

While many things seem to be trending in the right direction, we have to acknowledge that some challenges will remain. There is a continual struggle to have enough resources for our students, but it is one that we will face head on. While cases of COVID-19 occasionally impacted staffing and student attendance, we are optimistic that we can end our school year with concerts, plays, activities, and graduation ceremonies.

We are also fortunate to have excellent support and participation from our community. The 877 Foundation Porkchop Dinner saw record numbers with almost 1,000 porkchops being

sold, which will provide scholarships for the Class of 2022. Our communities are passionate about the future that our students represent, and we truly appreciate your partnership.

There are also changes on the horizon for next school year that should be beneficial. We will continue to offer staggered start dates at the elementary school level to better connect with our young learners and set them up for success. The board has also approved instituting early release days for eight Fridays throughout the school year. We hope to better equip our teachers and ESPs with additional professional development opportunities, while offering our students and families flexibility throughout the school year.

We have a lot of great things happening at BHM Schools and I am excited to share them with our community every day. As we wrap up one school year and look forward to another, I am confident that we will be able to continue to work together to benefit all students and continue to provide a safe and encouraging space to **dream, believe and achieve.**



The class of 2021 shares about their experience with College in the Schools

A recent survey of the students from the class of 2021 who participated in College in the Schools (CIS) program at BHS checked in on graduates as they pursue their degrees. They provided great feedback about how taking college level courses in high school set them up for success.

The CIS program has been preparing students at BHS for college in a variety of ways. "Starting college is already a huge transition, but I was already used to the workload of a full-time college student, so I knew how to manage my time," said one BHS graduate.

Respondents said they earned a large number of college credits during their time at BHS with one student earning 57 credits before graduating high school! Graduates

reported that all or almost all of those credits transferred to their institutions and that they saved between \$6,000 and \$25,000 in tuition costs. "Because I finished most of my generals at BHS, I was able to add an additional major because I had the time to take more classes," said one graduate. "I was able to take classes that applied to my major and because of that, I am on track to graduate a year early," said another.

Students who participated in CIS courses have been encouraging of BHM Schools to continue the program. "I would absolutely keep this program around for as long as possible! I am the only one out of many of my college classmates that I have talked to that had this kind of curriculum, and it was a major advantage for me," said one current university student.

Buffalo Community Middle School Expanding AVID Program



Students at Buffalo Community Middle School (BCMS) have a lot of opportunities to figure out who they are, what they want to be, and how to get there. Thanks to a staff and a sense of community that is incredibly connected and built on personal relationships, students use seven words as the foundation for everything they do: Attitude, Character, Compassion, Courage, Integrity, Respect, and Service. One place all of those values come together is the school's use of the AVID program.

AVID means Advancement Via Individual Determination, and is a system that promotes college and career readiness for all students that is infused in every aspect of the school day at BCMS. AVID has been an elective course for two classes in eighth grade and one class in seventh grade. Starting in the 2022-23 school year, all students will get to participate in this program and learn incredibly valuable life, study and career skills.

"We have been using AVID at our school for about five years and we are really thriving with it," said Principal Matt Lubben. "Expanding this program to every grade level in our school is

really going to allow students to own their education and teach them a lot of skills like applying to colleges or jobs, paying taxes, and being an active and organized learner."

Each grade level will practice different skills giving students the tools they need to be successful in high school and beyond. Sixth graders will learn more about being organized and seventh graders will expand on that with good note writing and study skills, while eighth graders will work on establishing a four-year high school plan setting their direction for life after high school.

Megan Losey teaches the AVID Elective courses and serves as the AVID coordinator for BCMS. She is excited about expanding the program to give all students the baseline skills and knowledge they need to collaborate and be prepared for high school and beyond.

"A big part of AVID is giving students 'opportunity knowledge' of just knowing what is out there and getting the strategies and skills they need to stay organized, support their learning, and plan for the future," said Losey. "We have so many teachers who care so

much about all their students and we want to set them up for success in high school and beyond."

Students who have taken the elective have gotten a lot out of it. A popular portion of the class is called Tutorials, where students can bring a problem from another class they may be having trouble with to work through it in a group discussion format. Instead of just telling them the answer, other students and facilitators ask questions about different ways to look at the problem to help the student solve it.

"When you figure out something on your own, you remember it," said Losey. "Our goal is to get students to the point where they can collaborate and solve problems together. The new classes being implemented will help all students have that experience."

"We know every kid in our school and we are so proud of them and expanding AVID is really going to continue to improve our district and our community," said Lubben. "We want each and every student to be able to choose their path after their graduation day. We want to keep all doors open to find what is best for each individual student."

Tatanka Elementary Using Play and Wonder to Encourage Students



Tatanka Elementary STEM School (TESS) is a STEM magnet school with a specialized curriculum that helps students become thinkers and problem solvers, and is finding new ways to encourage students to use their voice and express themselves. Principal Andrée Iden is in her first year as principal and works with her team to develop new opportunities for students in every grade level including the Wonder Workshop and developing the use of Dramatic Play.

"At the beginning of this school year, we talked about the importance of student voice and wanting to have every voice in our school heard literally and metaphorically," said Principal Iden. "We participated in a professional development opportunity on The Voices Framework, which sparked the movement here to have students express who they are in new and fun ways."

In the fall of 2021, a new initiative called the Wonder Workshop began. Students participated in the morning announcements, first in the principal's office, then moving to a google meet format throughout the school, and eventually to its new home in a repurposed storage space. The space contains furniture, technology, and supplies like a green screen and recording tools that were all fully funded by community members thanks to support from the PTO.

STEM Curriculum Coordinator Jenny Wykle oversees the Wonder Workshop and is able to get student groups using the space for a variety of activities including podcasting, recording videos, small group projects, and whole class opportunities. Fourth grade students recently recorded themselves reading their favorite books, and the recordings were added to the books via a QR code.

"With projects like the recording project, we literally got to hear from students that we don't typically hear from," said Wykle. "There is a student who is typically unable to speak in class who came in to record with friends, and thanks to great encouragement from them, really came to life and did an amazing job. It was a surprising benefit of encouraging student voice, and was really a very emotional and overwhelming experience."



TESS is also incorporating creativity, exploration and social emotional learning for students by using Dramatic Play. School Social Worker Brea Landrus is utilizing a grant from United for Youth to purchase supplies and toys to create a Dramatic Play Space. Students will be able to solve problems and explore activities through play, talk about feelings and interactions with puppets and other toys, and use play to drive learning in other core subjects.

"Play is really the foundation of all learning," said Landrus. "Dramatic play is giving students an opportunity to act out real life activities, and explore in their own way with their peers and their teachers in a creative and collaborative way."

The Dramatic Play program is being introduced to incoming kindergartners and being used by kindergarten teachers, but these activities will eventually be embedded into all grades.

"We are seeing an increased need for social and emotional learning and we know that students learn best through hands-on activities," said Iden. "We want to include students in every grade and provide developmentally appropriate opportunities while encouraging students to express themselves."

Updates from the Wonder Workshop are regularly posted to the school's Facebook page, including podcasts, recording, and other great stories.

End of School Year Celebrations

THE RETIRING CLASSES OF 2020-2021-2022



The school district is celebrating the work of 19 employees who are retiring this year and 22 who retired in 2021. All together, they have provided a combined 968 years of service to our school district. We are so fortunate for their dedication to our district, schools and students! Retirees were honored at a retiree luncheon in early May. Since we weren't able to hold this celebration the past two years, we invited back those who retired in 2020 and 2021 to honor them as well. Thank you again to all of our retirees for your years of service and the impact you have made on so many students!

FIRST ROW L TO R:
Caroline Zachman, Randy Klatt,
Jeana Menzemer, Kevin Underberg,
Susan Kohn, Cynthia Altmann

SECOND ROW L TO R:
Theresa Spike, Brenda Steen,
Sue Lee, Eileen Schmidt,
Connie Peters, Kim Colebank,
Mary Jo Ende, Jane Van Dorp,
Lori Olson

THIRD ROW L TO R:
Marcia Bauman, Kim Dingmann



FIRST ROW L TO R:
Vicki Cary, Martha Driscoll-Nelson,
Karen Howey, Debra Bestland,
Tracy Durant, Holly Kelly

SECOND ROW L TO R:
Denise Casey, Mike Quady,
Michelle Robinson, Rollie Dehmer,
Nancy Daniels, Lori Trogstad,
Kathleen Schmidt, Arlene Nelson,
Tom Bauman, Gloria Siemers

Proud Of....

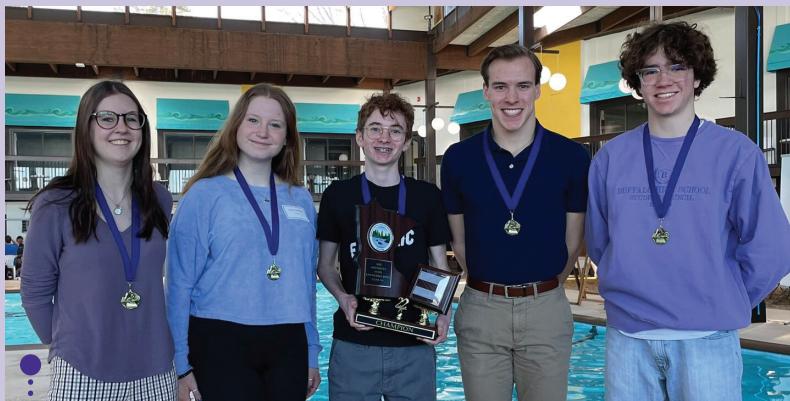
Those listed below were submitted by district staff and recognized by the BHM School Board for their special contributions and accomplishments.



BCMS 8th Grader Princess Hart, who took 1st place in the Middle School Division of the Escape the Vape video contest sponsored by a collaboration between the MN Department of Health, Masonic Cancer Center, U Of MN, Tobacco-Free Alliance, CCF Advertising, Medtronic, MN Youth Council and Allina Health's Change to Chill.



2021 BHS Yearbook staff for the "Square One" edition of the Tatanka which took 1st Place in the Yearbook Theme Package and received 10 individual awards: Eric Lynch, Alayna Mills, Claudia Staut, Molly Hedenn, Alandra Stoll, Madelyn Anderson, Grace Bruhn, Lindsay Hartman, Ellie Carik and Kate Manninen



BHS Knowledge Bowl Varsity 2 Team who won the State Championship - BHS Juniors Amelia Butler, Ryder Zvorak, Milo Zimmerman, Matthew Scherber and Avery Thompson.



BHS Drumline who won the State Championship.



Anna Reedy, BHS English Teacher and Student Council Advisor, who was named the Minnesota Association of Student Councils Advisor of the Year.



Jen Heebink, BCMS/BHS DAPE Teacher, who has been named the 2022 National Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year by SHAPE America.



Erica Kyllonen, BHS Junior, who served as the Student Council Representative for the ISD 877 Board of Education for 2021-22.



BHS Senior Joe Durben, who has received the Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award from the American Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers. Joe was also awarded Outstanding Composition High School Honors for his composition titled "Tachyon," through the DownBeat Magazine's Student Music Awards Program.



BCMS 7th graders who were selected into the Central MN Band Directors Association Second Year Band Festival: Jade Anderson, Kennedy Sarvie, Patrick Breyer, Ireland Morris, Cade Nissen and Landon Glur.



BCMS 7th and 8th graders who were chosen to participate in the Allegro Honor Band: Lynne Franzen, Garrett Iverson, Cayden Kepke, Ireland Morris, Hunter Reinhart, Carter Robertson and Erik Salhus.



BCMS 6th graders who were chosen to participate in the Central MN Band Directors Association Beginning Band Festival: Stellie Bloomquist, Alexis Burgess and Meghan Reeves.



Congratulations to Elise Lubben and Owen Herbst, the BHS 2022 Hall of Fame award winners!



BHS music students who participated in the Eastern Wright County Solo and Ensemble Festival. There were 131 entries and of those, 102 received Superior Ratings and 28 received Excellent Ratings. The following students received the Best in Site Award. BHS students received 8 of the 10 awards: Vocal Soloists Olivia Carey and Emily Stromman, Vocal Duet of Ovie Mayo and Lucas Bokusky, Soprano/Alto Double Trio of Hope Schmitz, Evie Weiche, Claire Erickson, Kiley Herbst, Sophie Hanson and Neve Elo, Band Soloists Abby Bertsch, Tomm Linder and Lily Cooper and Violin Soloist Temi Oyewole. Additional students receiving perfect scores include Jazz Ensemble I, flutist Maggie Bertsch, oboist Elle Keranen, BHS Singers for their Jazz performance, vocal soloists Hope Schmitz and Drew Elo, and the vocal duet of Drew Elo and Lucas Bokusky.



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a problem of having large boulders in a yard and are tasked with designing a machine or vehicle to move those large items around obstacles. The feedback from students has been phenomenal.

"Students really love these units," said Olson. "When we first piloted the program with first graders they took to it really quickly and they were so excited as second graders when they got to get their 'launch logs' which are the books they keep track of their projects in. They actually cheered in the classroom!"

Teachers at MESI have also found ways to collaborate across different areas and introduce units of study that push beyond the usual elementary school curriculum. Performing Arts Teacher Andrea Ihnken focuses on general music for grades K-2 but has units of study like ukulele, world drumming, keyboard, mallet percussion, recorder, and even theater for the older grades.

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"The cool thing about the performance arts space is that we have a real stage with lighting and sound equipment so our students can really dive into performing," said Ihnken. "Our third graders usually do an opera performance, but since COVID postponed it for two years all the students in grades 3-5 did it this year. The kids learned real stage directions and blocking and performed a condensed version of an opera."

Tanya Remer has worked as the schools Innovation Specialist for the last six years and works with students throughout the week as part of their Innovation time. The Innovation Space allows students to spread out and work in groups on a variety of projects including coding, animation, recording, robotics and more on a variety of devices and technologies.

"Kids are so engaged and love all of the hands-on activities," said Remer. "We have different activities for each grade level and projects that really encompass science and engineering. It blows my mind that at the age of 7 or 8, these kids can code a character, or build a video game program."

Units include recording, making a weather report, podcasting, creating animated stories, and even robotics. The goal is to use the Innovation time to tie lessons to the interests of the students and use multiple skills and technologies.

"We are always looking for ways to get students engaged with problem solving and incorporating challenges throughout the year," said Steffes. "There is a lot of excitement in our staff, students, and families around how much our school has changed from five years ago both in its appearance and in the resources we have. We are excited to get kids really engaged in their learning every day."