



## At a Glance

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## Key Dates

### April

- 10.....877 Scholarship Foundation  
Pork Chop Dinner, 4:30-7 p.m.
- 11.....Two-hour early release day
- 14...School board wksp., 4:30 p.m.
- 22.....Disabilities Resource  
Fair, 5-8 p.m.
- 24...MESI Gr. 5 concert, 6, 7 p.m.
- 24.....NES Gr. 2 musical, 6 p.m.
- 24-26...BHS spring play, 7:30 p.m.
- 25.....TESS Spring Fling, 5 p.m.
- 26.....ECFE Family Fair, 10 a.m.
- 28.....School board mtg., 7 p.m.
- 29.....BHS Strings and All That  
Jazz, 7:30 p.m.

### May

- 1.....BCMS Family Expo, 4 p.m.
- 1.....BHS band concert, 7:30 p.m.



**History Day builds both research and presentation skills. See Page 6.**



## Ambassadors in song

**Student musicians represented the BHM community well on a pair of high-profile stages in recent weeks. Above, members of the BCMS Chamber Choir sing the national anthem before the Timberwolves game at Target Center on March 17. At right, BHS Unified Music students sing the anthem in the Minnesota Capitol rotunda on March 21, which was Unified Capitol Hill Day.**



Photo courtesy of Special Olympics Minnesota

## Hockinson named Parkside principal

Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools is pleased to announce that Jake Hockinson will be the next principal of Parkside Elementary School.

An extensive search and evaluation process has been conducted over the past two months, culminating in the school board's appointment of Hockinson to the principal's position during its meeting on Monday, March

24. Hockinson emerged from a competitive field of candidates due to his strong instructional background, his proven ability to form personal connections with students and staff, and his approachable, enthusiastic and collaborative demeanor.

Hockinson joined BHM Schools in the fall of 2023 as

**See Hockinson**  
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**Jake Hockinson**

# Working for the best interests of our students

This time of the year is very busy for superintendents and school board members as legislators and the governor set funding targets for school districts. Over the past several weeks, some of the BHM School Board members and I have visited with our local legislators and have heard from state legislators regarding education funding and policies. We shared our appreciation for having the general education funding formula tied to inflation for the first time in history, as well as our concerns regarding the 65 new education mandates that were passed in the previous legislative biennial session.

Board members and I heard from several Education Finance committee members, including representatives Elliott Engen and co-chair Cheryl Youakim, as well as senators Michael Kreun and chair Mary Kunesh. These legislators acknowledged that changes need to be made in this year's biennial session to address or correct bills that were passed in the last legislative session.

Board members and I also met with our local legislators to discuss priorities. We met with representatives Joe McDonald, Walter Hudson and Marion Rarick, as well as Senator Bruce Anderson. Local legislators also acknowledged that changes are needed. For example, while unemployment insurance for hourly school employees had a fixed amount of funding appropriated for the benefit, that amount will be depleted this summer, meaning that school districts will now need to pull from their general fund budgets for this purpose. On an annual basis, that cost for BHM Schools is approximately \$850,000 per summer if all eligible staff apply for benefits.



**Scott Thielman**

Additionally, we addressed the funding swap that takes money targeted to reduce class sizes in grades K-2 and reallocated it to pay for the READ Act. That caused an approximate decrease of \$300,000 annually. The governor's budget priorities focus on eliminating funding for programs that BHM currently has in place, as well as capping special education funding. Districts across the state received additional funding last legislative session for special education services, but the new proposal will reduce that funding for special education by approximately \$660,000.

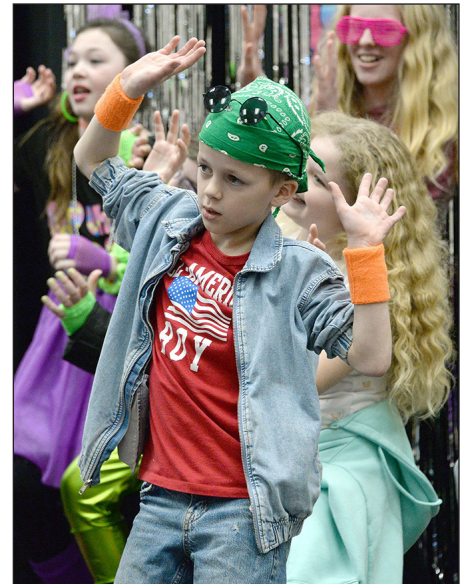
Board members and I also advocated for the ability to make a one-time fund balance transfer from restricted funds to pay for the unfunded mandates. For example, the BHM Nutrition Services fund balance has grown substantially over the past several years, mostly due to the number of meals served as a result of the Universal Free Meals legislation. This is great for students and is also the reason for the positive fund balance in the Nutrition Services fund balance. Approximately eight years ago the district had to transfer \$250,000 into the Nutrition Services fund due to a deficit budget. Now that budget has a fund balance of over \$3,000,000 due to the Universal Free Meals legislation, but that money cannot be used in the general fund budget. If we receive permission to make a transfer from the Nutrition Services fund, that money could be used to offset the unfunded or underfunded mandates, and ultimately keep smaller class sizes for our students.

Our focus remains on the best interest of our students. Whether it is student opportunities and options or student academic performance, BHM Schools is committed to ensuring our students have access to rigorous academics, have knowledge of the opportunities that will prepare them to be successful in the future, and have the ability to advocate for themselves and their needs in order to reach their full potential. We continue to make the BHM School District the place where students can **dream, believe and achieve** their aspirations!



## March music

Elementary musicians have been busy over the past few weeks. At right, Montrose students put on an '80s-themed show. Below right, Tatanka students sing for their families. Below left, Northwinds students perform and applaud their classmates. At left, Discovery students play a recorder finale.





## Outdoor skills

Fourth-graders at Northwinds Elementary enjoyed an Outdoor Survival Skills course on March 26. Led by Carson Law from Wright County Parks & Recreation, the session focused on finding appropriate kindling, setting up for success, then using different types of unfamiliar fire-starters to light a fire contained in a metal tray. A session earlier this year focused on snowshoeing, and a pond study is planned later this spring.



## Upcoming Events



### 31st annual Pork Chop Dinner moves to Buffalo High School on April 10

For more than three decades, the 877 Scholarship Foundation's Pork Chop Dinner has helped Buffalo High School graduates take the next step on their college or career pathways.

The 31st annual dinner takes place from 4:30 to 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 10, at **Buffalo High School**. (The event is normally held at the middle school, but has relocated to the high school due to construction on the main middle school entrance this year. Use the north parking lot behind the high

Order meals now

Scan for  
advance tickets



school to access the BHS cafeteria or curb-side pickup.) One pork chop meal is \$12, and a two-pork chop meal is \$17. Beans, applesauce chips and dessert are included. There are also \$5 hot dog meals for kids. See [877foundation.org](http://877foundation.org) for more information or to donate.

### Disabilities Resource Fair set for April 22

A Disabilities Resource Fair will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, April 22, at the Discovery Center in Buffalo.

This free event, formerly known as Transition Trek+, features three speaker seminars, a comprehensive vendor fair, and more. The objective is to provide resources and support to families of individuals with disabilities of all ages (birth to adulthood).

All are welcome to attend, including those who do not live in the Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose School District. The event is sponsored by Autism Allies and the Special Services Department of BHM Schools.

For more information, scan the code above or see <https://www.bhmschools.org/disabilities-resource-fair-set-april-22>.

More info  
Scan for  
event details



### ECFE Family Fair arrives on April 26

The annual Early Childhood Family Education Family Fair, including food, entertainment, book giveaway, silent auction and more, takes place from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 26, in the Discovery Center gym. All are welcome.

## BHS preparing 'The Miracle Worker'

Buffalo High School Theatre will present "The Miracle Worker" Thursday through Saturday, April 24-26 at 7:30 p.m. each day.

The show is based on the true story of Helen Keller, who is both blind and deaf as a result of infant illness, but who is able to emerge from her dark, silent world with the help of Annie Sullivan, whom she refers to

as "Teacher." Her mother pities her and often confuses pity with love. Her father is worried Helen will injure the baby of the family, and her half brother believes she should be sent to an institution.

The father finally sends for a governess from a notable blind school, Sullivan, who has her own challenging history of disability and loss.

This allows Annie to see Helen without pity. Instead, she is determined to help connect her to the world around. Stage Agent calls the show "One of the great stage plays of the 20th century, as past and present, fact and mere conjecture, are woven together in a thrilling and heart-rending drama."

Tickets are available at <https://bit.ly/BHSplaytix25>.

BHS Theatre presents:

# The Miracle Worker

By William Gibson

April 24  
<https://www.bhmschools.org/tickets>

April 25  
<https://www.bhmschools.org/tickets>

April 26  
<https://www.bhmschools.org/tickets>

7:30 pm  
BHS PAC

Tickets go on sale in activities office or on line  
March 1st  
\$6 adults  
\$4 students and seniors

"The Miracle Worker" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. [www.concordtheatricals.com](http://www.concordtheatricals.com)

## Proud Of....

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



BHS band and orchestra students who participated in the Minnesota All-State Band and Orchestra at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis on Saturday, Feb. 15. All-state musicians are, from left, Jayde Hallman, Julien Kariniemi, Anna Wuollet, Maggie Bertsch, Kiera McGorry and William Gustafson.



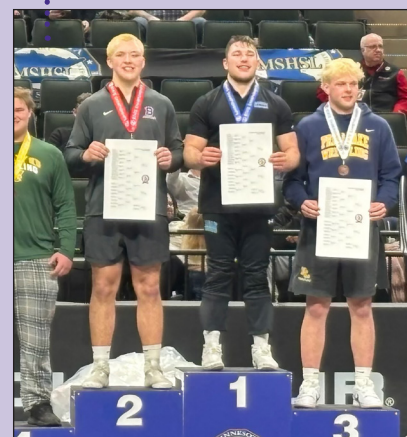
The BHS Mock Trial team, which qualified for the state meet and took 12th place. Adler Neu was named Best Witness, and Carolyn Rokke was named Best Attorney.



BHS wrestlers Gabe Roehl (above) and Ryan Babatz (below) who qualified for the Minnesota State Wrestling Tournament. Babatz finished in second place.



BHS seniors Jayde Hallman and Julien Kariniemi, who have been named finalists in the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Competition.





BHS Boys Swim and Dive Team members who qualified for the State Swim and Dive Meet: Mason Pilcher in the 100 backstroke; Trent Strome, James Lemus, Rylan Close and Cameron Cich in the 200 freestyle; Lemus, Close, Cich and Jacob Crosland in the 400 relay; Close in the 50 freestyle and 100 butterfly; Lemus in the 100 freestyle; and Mason Evenson in diving. Evenson took second place at state. In this photo, the team celebrates its first section title.



BHS gymnasts Lydia Field, left, and Macy DuBois, who qualified for the state gymnastics meet in the uneven bars and floor exercise events.



Collin Hoffman and Gavin Collins, shown here with Coach Dwight Monson, who took second place in Fortnite at the Esports State Tournament.



BHS Business Professionals of America (BPA) members who placed in the top 10 at the State Leadership Conference. Kylie Kelm placed first in Integrated Office Apps; Luke Gramstad placed third in Admin Support Research; Emmerson Breyer placed fourth in Graphic Design Promotion; Emmerson Breyer and Daniel Jungwirth placed fourth in Website Design; Kumail Akram, Natalie DesMarais and Cecily Holmberg placed fifth in Econ Research; Kylie Kelm placed sixth in Fundamental Word Processing; Natalie DesMarais placed Top 10 in Banking and Finance; and Luke Gramstad placed Top 10 in Economic Research. Kylie Kelm and Luke Gramstad earned a spot at the BPA National Leadership Conference.



BHS choir students Parker Carlson, left, and Ellie Cassady, right, who sang in the Minnesota All-State Choir at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis.

# Students delve deep on History Day

After months of research and preparation, sixth- and seventh-graders in the Quest program at Buffalo Community Middle School presented their findings in a Minnesota History Day event on Tuesday, March 4.

The theme of this year's event was "Rights and Responsibilities in History." Organized by the Minnesota Historical Society, the program challenges students to choose a topic related to the theme, conduct extensive research, and present their findings through performance, exhibit, documentary or website.

"Our middle schoolers continue to impress me with the amount of work they put into this project and the quality of what they create," said BCMS Quest teacher Danielle Kelm. "I feel like with each year of the competition, they keep leveling up what these projects can look like. Their work is nothing short of amazing."

Sixth-grader Claire Neumann produced a documentary on the Grimke sisters, who advocated for the abolition of slavery in the United States during the 1800s. It was Neumann's first experience with History Day, and she experienced a natural arc of emotions and enthusiasm during the rigorous research and production process that started in late October.

"I chose the Grimke sisters because I thought it was kind of cool how they fought against slavery even though they didn't have to," Neumann said. "At first it was like, 'This will be so fun!' In the middle it was like, 'This is stressful. I don't want to do this anymore. I'm never going to do this again.' And now by the end I'm like, 'This is awesome!'"

## Next-level learning

Students appreciated the opportunity to choose their own topics and mode of presentation. Asked what she enjoyed most about the assignment, Neumann said it was the agency that she was able to exercise throughout.

"It's the control I have in learning," she said. "It's being able to do a hands-on project rather than being told what to do, and it's kind of like you can do it yourself."

While students learn research skills, how to make a thesis statement and other logistics like citations, annotations



**Henry Winger performed a solo dramatic performance depicting "The Second Wounded Knee and How it Changed History."**



**Rosalie Drew-Schmeling, left, and Dorothy Karson, along with partner Hattie Crisostomo (not pictured), put on a performance about the history of women in the Olympics.**

and bibliographies, Kelm said the History Day format lends itself to a much broader scale of learning than a simple textbook study and written report.

"In the past, my students used to write a research paper to address Minnesota's English Language Arts standards, and they typically had an audience of just me as their teacher," said Kelm. "With History Day ... they put it all together in a project of their choosing: an exhibit, where they design the board and let their artistic skills shine; a website, where they learn

how to format things like navigational buttons and image boxes; a documentary, where they write a script and work out detailed timing and transitions through the editing process; or a performance, where they're the playwright, the director, and the technical director combined.

"They learn real life writing, research, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, and their audience is far greater than just us as their teachers, and the depth of their research and writing skills are something they'll carry into their futures."

## Bringing history to life

Several students opted to present their findings through short dramatic productions, changing costumes and props to represent the historical figures they had studied.

"It was really fun once we started getting to memorize our lines and go through it and hear feedback from people," said sixth-grader Hattie Crisostomo who, along with Rosalie Drew-Schmeling and Dorothy Karson, presented a group performance about the history of female athletes in the Olympics.

"We definitely learned how to research better. And we learned how to work together as a group and how to split time and parts evenly," said Drew-Schmeling.

**See History**  
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# Test season a chance to show what you know

Spring is the season for students to show what they know, and a variety of tests scheduled for the coming weeks provide opportunities to do just that.

In addition to regular classroom work and assessments, standardized tests like the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) in math, reading and science will be administered to many students across BHM Schools in April and May. High school students will also have the opportunity to take the ACT, ACCUPLACER, ASVAB and other college entrance and aptitude exams.

Our district encourages families to embrace this process, and support students by ensuring consistent attendance and quality rest and nutrition during exam season. This is a chance for students to demonstrate the learning they have accumulated over the course of the school year, and should not be a source of undue pressure.

## Testing in perspective

In regard to the MCAs, the federal Every Student Succeeds Act requires that states measure the achievement of at least 95% of all public school students on an annual basis. This is the basis for the MCA examinations.

While testing is important on many levels, BHM Schools and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) agree that MCA results are only one of multiple tools used to ensure students are learning and retaining important subject matter. MDE clarifies that



“individual student results from the MCA should always be considered in the context of additional, more fine-grained evidence of student learning like projects and classroom assessments when making decisions.”

## Importance of participation

Although federal law requires states to test students annually, state law allows parents to withdraw their students from participating in the MCAs, and BHM families are notified each year that they have the ability to opt their students out. While this is an option, there are benefits to students and schools alike when it comes to participation.

For example, high school students looking to attend college will also take the ACCUPLACER to determine appropriate course placement and if remedial courses are needed.

“Any state college will require you to take a placement test,” said BHM

District Assessment Coordinator Rob Nosbush. “If you take the MCAs and can show you met the standards, it closes the door to having to take a remedial class that you have to pay for but don’t get college credit for. This also applies to eighth-graders who want to take CIS classes at the high school.”

At a school and district level, MCA testing can provide valuable information about the overall performance of student groups.

“We can easily identify low points based on certain questions or subjects within a math test, for example,” said Nosbush.

On the other hand, when a student opts out, that student will not receive personal scores, removing a standard measurement of achievement that is common to their peers across the state. There are also wider implications. When significant numbers of students opt out, school and district assessment results are incomplete, making it more difficult to have an accurate picture of overall student learning. In addition, students who opt out are marked “not proficient” in the school’s accountability reporting. This can lead to lower overall scores in the test results commonly used by outside entities to compare the quality of various districts.

In short, testing is a valuable part of the educational process and experience, and we look forward to helping students show what they know this spring.

## History

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Sixth-grade Quest teacher Katy Bauernschmitt said students did an excellent job of choosing diverse topics and applying them to the year’s theme.

“I think the variety and quality of the projects overall was amazing,” she said.

## Next steps

Regardless of the mode students chose to present their work, boiling down their research into a concise

product that was both informative and engaging was a final challenge.

“Putting their information together in a factual way with very tight limitations on word count or time is difficult for some of them,” Bauernschmitt said.

In addition to presenting to peers and families, students also received feedback from groups of judges in preparation for a regional competition on March 29 at St. Cloud State University. The regional judges will determine which projects advance to state in April.



Elsie Johanson created and presented an exhibit about “The Radium Girls.”



## SCHOOL BOARD

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Matt Hoffman.....Acting Clerk/Treasurer  
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Scott Thielman.....Superintendent  
Lucas Lawrence.....Student Representative

## Hockinson

from Page 1

a dean of students at Montrose Elementary School of Innovation. This winter he shifted to Buffalo Community Middle School in a support role while BCMS Principal Matt Lubben took on the interim principal role at Parkside.

"Through the search process, it became clear that Jake has the experiences, background, and passion to successfully lead Parkside Elementary School as its new principal," said Superintendent Dr. Scott Thielman. "As an internal selection, Jake will have the ability to assume the Parkside Elementary Principal responsibilities on April 7, 2025. Matt Lubben will continue to provide support for the remainder of the school year to assist in the transition."

Hockinson began his educational career in 2008, teaching English as a second language to third-graders in Bahrain. One year as a sixth-grade teacher in Rochester Public Schools followed before he joined Waconia Public Schools to teach grades 3-5 from 2010 to 2017. For the next five years he continued to serve Waconia Public Schools as an instructional coach, and he moved

into a teaching and learning manager role for Waconia in the year before joining BHM Schools.

Multiple references remarked on Hockinson's personable nature, his skill in instruction and curriculum planning, and his "strong," "dynamic" leadership.

"He is without a doubt one of the most effective educational leaders that I have had the pleasure of working with," said Montrose Elementary School of Innovation Principal Tony Steffes, who worked alongside Hockinson for the past year and a half.

**'Jake has the experiences, background and passion to successfully lead Parkside Elementary School.'**

**Scott Thielman**  
Superintendent

Hockinson earned his bachelor of arts degree in elementary education from Northwestern College in Iowa, his master's in K-12 education from Winona State University, and his administrative license from Hamline University.

"It's an honor to step into the principal role at Parkside Elementary," said Hockinson, adding that he sees "incredible opportunities" ahead and aims to work with staff and families closely to make a positive impact on students. "My goal is to provide steady, student-centered, and results-oriented leadership while partnering with the entire school community to support every child's success. I'm genuinely looking forward to the journey ahead!"

While his initial position as dean of students was temporary, Hockinson said he is grateful for the opportunity to make BHM Schools his professional home.

"My experience with BHM Schools has been incredibly rewarding," Hockinson said. "From the beginning, I felt embraced by a district that truly lives out its motto: 'The Place to Dream, Believe, and Achieve.' I've seen firsthand how BHM empow-

ers students to dream big, supports staff in believing in their collective impact, and creates the conditions for every student to achieve success. What was to be a two-year opportunity quickly

**'He is without a doubt one of the most effective educational leaders that I have had the pleasure of working with.'**

**Tony Steffes**  
MESI Principal

turned into something more because of the district's strong sense of community, shared values, and commitment to students. It became clear that this is not just a great place to work — it's a place where I can grow and contribute meaningfully as a leader."