

## Hopkins Teacher Takes Off to Space Camp During Summer Break



*Hopkins Public Schools*

One Hopkins educator took an out-of-this-world adventure over the summer and spent a week in the shoes of a NASA astronaut.

Monica Grubb, English language learner educator at Glen Lake and Gatewood elementary schools, attended the Honeywell Educators @ Space Academy (HESA) at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Grubb was one of 200 educators from around the world chosen to attend the camp, which was held June 12-18. Split into two teams, Grubb's consisted of teachers from 45 states and 35 countries.

"The camp was a good mix of experiences that filled 12-hour days," she explained. "We heard from astronauts, engineers, participated in simulations, and worked in engineering

teams to build and launch rockets."

Retired astronaut and mission specialist Clay Anderson spoke to her team. And she spent some time with NASA engineer Ed Buckbee, who is known widely for training some of the first astronauts and famed engineer Homer Hickam. Hickam's life was portrayed in the movie *October Sky*.

"We learned how engineers are using origami to design equipment for space, and we also learned about the history of the space program, observed demonstrations about different kinds of rocket fuel and their purposes, and so much more," Grubb said. "The missions were my favorite. At

the end of the week we had a graduation ceremony. My team won the Outstanding Team award."

A self-proclaimed space enthusiast, Grubb has been fascinated with all things space from a young age. Growing up in San Jose, California, she

got an early education on the space program when a classmate's parent was involved with the Space Shuttle program. During a presentation, she and her peers were given a small piece of a tile that was once affixed to the shuttle. To this day, Grubb said it is kept in a "special box,"

[Monica] Grubb said the camp further expanded her passion for science and space travel. And the camp gave her new topics, such as plant growth in space and how the International Space Station shapes the scientific field, to discuss with her students.

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## Apollo Swim Team Dives into History

*St. Cloud Area School District 742*

When it comes to making strides in the classroom, Apollo English Learner instructor, Alex Badger, knows how to make it happen. As a first-year Apollo swim coach, she is similarly shaping this year's girls' team with one goal in mind: to reflect the strengths and diversity of Apollo High School.

Determined to break through barriers to accessibility and success, Badger obtained a van license so she could drive athletes who could not provide their own transportation to practices and meets. She encouraged members of the team to recruit new girls to join the team, even if they were not strong swimmers, and encouraged the team's idea of a "sister" mentor program where an older, more experienced swimmer is paired with a new, younger swimmer. And she hosted a free swim camp this summer where all the girls came together to learn and grow.

"Some girls did not even know how to put their faces in the water," Badger admits. "One girl was blind. But we are looking to generate interest for all swimmers."

The end result is perhaps the most inclusive, supportive and *loudest* girls swim team in the state of Minnesota.

Team co-captain, Rachel Warner, laughs with pride.

"At a meet, we are always the loudest team.



We will even cheer for other girls [from other teams] if no one is there cheering for them."

Suhan Mohamed and Nimo are seniors at Apollo and former students of Badger's. Knowing they loved swimming, Badger approached them early on about joining the team. Despite support from family and friends, however, the Muslim girls faced a potential barrier because of the swimwear.

Badger and Apollo Athletics Director Dave Langerud sprang into action to problem-solve how to make the sport accessible to them.

Badger researched swimwear options

across the country to find acceptable suits for the girls. Mohamed's swimwear is full-bodied and covers her wrist to ankle, her swim cap serving as her hijab. Nimo has a similar suit with a hijab hood that she pulls over her swim cap, as well as a small skirt.

Because the swimwear was not officially

Because the swimwear was not officially recognized by the Minnesota State High School League, (MSHSL) Langerud helped Badger submit a waiver to MSHSL. Once the waiver for their swimwear was granted, the girls were then able to compete.

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# Lake Marion Elementary School: A Blue Ribbon School



Lakeville Area Public School District

Lake Marion Elementary School (LME) is part of the Lakeville Area Public School District in the southern suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota, that serves all or part of the communities of Lakeville, Elko, New Market, and Credit River. Opened in 1990, LME served grades Kindergarten through six. The Lakeville Area Public School District underwent a change to its elementary and junior high school model switching the elementary schools to kindergarten through grade five. The junior high schools became middle schools serving grades six through eight. Today, Lake Marion serves nearly 600 students. As Lake Marion's student population has changed, it consistently continues to be one of the top performing Title I schools, recognized by the State of Minnesota as

a Reward School five out of the last six years. Reward schools are public schools that receive Title I funding that have demonstrated exemplary academic achievements in state exam proficiency, student growth, graduation rates and closing opportunity gaps. Lake Marion also hosts the center-based program that serves Lakeville's students with the highest level of emotional and behavioral (E/BD) special education needs K-5 through the Academic and Behavior Classroom (ABC) Program.

Lake Marion is a learning community that recognizes and celebrates the diversity, strengths, and inquisitive spirit of every child. Using the culturally responsive teaching (CRT) model, we enable all students to succeed and strive for personal excellence, no matter the background or experience. One of the secrets to our success is a strong school climate focused on respect and building relationships. All adults, no matter the role or position, work together to create a welcoming environment where all students can succeed. We are known as the Lake Marion Elementary CATS, which stands for Caring Community, Awesome Attitude, Trustworthy and Safe, "Learning for Life." Together our school community came up with CATS. We selected this name because fifth grade students, when transitioning to sixth grade, divide

into two middle schools with mascots called the Panthers and Cougars. We needed something that could unite our students and staff, regardless of the schools our students would be attending. By putting a focus on the things that bring us together with a strong emphasis on relationships, we continue to build a strong community.

We are dedicated to building a strong community through numerous culturally responsive and relevant trainings that are embedded in our practices. Seeing the shift in our student populations, our staff called for an opportunity to engage all students in our school community. We continue to see the benefits of this by witnessing how easily students integrate into our school from other districts. Another commitment to the school culture comes from the way our staff work to take ownership of all students. If a student makes a contribution to the school community, there are several adults who recognize the greatness of the child. Students are frequently heard saying, "How do you know my name? You're not my teacher." We believe these personal efforts to know all students go a long way toward building school community.

Lake Marion's success builds on a strong foundation of academics in literacy, math and other content areas, ensuring all students learn the variety of skills needed to be successful both in and out of school. Through the blend of technology and traditional methods, Lake Marion uses numerous tools to meet the needs of our students. We leverage digital literacy resources

to personalize learning by providing supplemental and interactive lessons based around a whole group lesson. Lake Marion teaching staff use a model of whole group instruction that gradually releases into small group work and independent application, depending on the needs of the student. Through continual professional development, Lake Marion's teaching and support staff are involved in the learning process, just like the students.

LME integrates culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies within all instructional areas. Teachers and administrators have been trained in Beyond Diversity as well as Dr. Sharroky Hollie's Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning. These strategies enhance our academic language, classroom management and academic literacy. Students see texts and symbols that value culture. Teachers use terms that value diversity and youth culture. We feel it is important to separate out our biases, misinterpretations and miscommunications in the classroom. By continually learning CRT strategies and being aware of how this impacts our classrooms, we believe this groundwork lays the foundation of learning for all.

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## Hopkins Teacher Takes Off to Space Camp

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and helped feed her love of the space program — and *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, of course. But it wasn't until her first year teaching at Hopkins that she began dreaming about space camp.

"One of the teachers in fifth-grade, Rita Wigfield, had attended a space camp," she said.

"Rita had hung her flight suit in the classroom and that's how I learned of it. I was so excited that such a thing existed. Fast forward to fall 2016, I received an application for HESA. And there was no choice but to apply."

Honeywell sponsored the weeklong camp, and all expenses for travel and the camp were paid for through the company. Grubb said the camp further expanded her passion for science and space travel. And the camp gave her new topics, such as plant growth in space and how the International Space Station shapes the scientific field, to discuss with her students.

"I also found value talking with other educators from around the country and world," Grubb said. "We learned so much from each other. I would encourage other teachers to apply for HESA, or to attend other space camp weeks in Huntsville."

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## Apollo Swim Team Dives into History

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recognized by the Minnesota State High School League, (MSHSL) Langerud helped Badger submit a waiver to MSHSL. Once the waiver for their swimwear was granted, the girls were then able to compete.

Badger explains that the team not only embraced Mohamed and Nimo as teammates, but also went a step beyond in welcoming them.

"The captains wanted to make sure that Suhan and Nimo felt included, comfortable and a part of the team, so . . . [they] dug through websites to find suits to match Suhan and Nimo's."

"We wanted to incorporate a part of their suits [into ours]," reflects Warner, "so we have black suits with some blue."

At the first meet, Mohamed and Nimo came just to observe. Now, they couldn't be more excited to be on the team and in the water. Mohamed is working on freestyle for meets, but favors the breaststroke.

"Freestyle is my favorite," says Nimo.

The girls were surprised to recently learn that they are the first Muslim girls in the state to become competitive high school swimmers.

Nimo explains her participation simply, "I got interested in swimming because it is a good

activity and it is fun."

Mohamed, however, has advice for other girls. "Have confidence in yourself. Be good to yourself."

Meanwhile, there's still a competitive season ahead.

Warner isn't sure how many meets they will win this year, but she is proud of how supportive and hardworking the team is.

Outlining a five-year plan for growth, Badger agrees. "These girls have so much potential. They have drive, motivation and integrity. They make my job easy. I just get out of their way."

Making strides as the first girls swim team in the state to include Muslim students is just a page for the history books. These girls are empowered to set high standards for future swim teams and support each other.

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# Edina High School Students Witness Biennial Mock Crash

Lily Jones and Morgan Sheehy, *Edina Zephyrus*

*Edina Public Schools*

Sirens. Screams. Cries. Edina High School students were not prepared for the tragic scene that took place on Thursday, September 21. Tears filled students' eyes as they witnessed the tragic fate of their fellow classmates. The audience stood silent as they watched intently and tried to fathom that this could happen to any one of them.

The scene started out with two totalled cars. Broken glass was scattered everywhere and passengers were visible in both cars. A young boy was thrown from the back window into the street, and the front seat passenger in the car full of teenagers had been tossed through the front windshield and lay motionless on the hood of the car. The teenage driver came stumbling out of his car in a blood-soaked tuxedo, holding a beer bottle in hand. He paced around the scene distressed, but clearly confused and intoxicated. The other driver, a middle aged man, rushed to the unconscious boy on the ground, screaming and choking back sobs. After a few long minutes, police and fire departments arrived on the scene and proceeded to take the injured passengers into the ambulance. One female passenger continuously yelled at the drunk driver, "Jack, this is all your fault." White sheets were carefully placed over the deceased. The scene

ended with the arrest of the drunk driver and a hearse taking away the bodies.

While the emotions this event sparked were very real for the audience members, the event was simply a dramatization of a crash. This event, called a "mock crash," is routinely performed at high schools around the nation to raise awareness of the reality of fatal car crashes, especially in accidents that deal with distracted and intoxicated driving. The dramatization was orchestrated by Edina Thespians and volunteer students throughout EHS, with the help of the Edina police and fire departments. The event consisted of the mock crash and two guest speakers, one a former police chief and one sharing a personal story about a drunk driving crash. This dramatization was not far from reality. "Unfortunately this is stuff that we deal with, in terms of bad crashes and people that have been injured," an officer on the scene said. Junior Ella Dolynchuk, one of the student coordinators of the mock crash, helped to make it appear as realistic as possible. "It was hard to watch all the actors lie there for about half an hour," she said referring to her peers who had to play dead, with gruesome special effects makeup and tarnished clothes. "I hope students realize to stay safe, whether that's texting and driving or drinking and driving" Dolynchuk said.

Natalie Bartolomei, a junior at EHS and another one of the mock crashes' student direc-



Edina Thespians and volunteer students throughout EHS stage a mock car accident, with the help of the Edina police and fire departments

tors could not help but get choked up while watching the scene. "I just got my driver's license the morning prior to this performance, and I have always been terrified of car crashes," Bartolomei said. "Even though I helped set up and knew what was going to happen, I watched the mock crash for the first time with the rest of the student body and was moved. It hit very close to home as I knew all of the actors in the scene." Bartolomei described the long nights the actors and police department put in to make sure

the mock crash went off without a hitch. A once in a lifetime opportunity for legal destruction of property was also necessary for the success of the scene. "The cars weren't damaged enough so we got to throw stage weights at them, jump on top of them and smash the windshields."

Jack Ford, a senior at EHS, played the "drunk driver" in the scene. Ford has been a part of a few theatrical productions, dating

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## Anoka STEP Automotive and Aviation



Jessica Lipa

Career & Technical Education Director  
Anoka-Hennepin STEP  
Anoka-Hennepin School District

In Minnesota and across the nation, the transportation industry is projected for growth and if the future of the economy is

dependent upon an educated, skilled workforce, then improving the skills, knowledge, and credential attainment of our workforce is critical. It is more important than ever to expose our youth to the potential career possibilities within the transportation industry.

The Anoka-Hennepin School District recognized the need for a skilled workforce and began to align itself with employers and engage in discussions with industry leaders to develop competent, skilled graduates that are prepared for the high skill, high demand transportation industry.

Anoka-Hennepin Schools have five large high schools and the Secondary Technical Education Program (STEP). The five high schools offer traditional technology education courses and the STEP program provides courses in advanced pathways within transportation, including Automotive Careers and Aviation

Careers. Students in 11th and 12th grades that attend STEP can earn industry recognized credentials as well as college credits.

After several years of declining enrollment in traditional technology education courses, Minnesota's largest school district looked to employers to help develop a career pathway in transportation assure that students were prepared to compete in a global economy. With strong support from Superintendent David Law and school board, the Career & Technical Education department sought the expertise, knowledge, and support from industry leaders across the transportation industry to build a pathway that is relevant, engaging, and prepares students for the workforce.

### Automotive Careers

The automotive industry was changing quickly and while the district believed that there were some high quality programs already in existence, they didn't believe that all of the current practices met the needs and truly prepared students for the workforce. The district began by establishing an advisory board that met monthly to review and evaluate the district's current model and to design a new pathway. It was through this process that members of the committee toured facilities across

the district, reviewed current curriculum, and evaluated equipment & technology. Members of the committee provided advice and support on critical academic, technical, and other industry standards integral to preparing students for careers in the automotive industry.

As a result of the work of the committee, the school district has:

- Developed a new course pathway to begin in 2018-19 school year
- Deleted older, outdated courses
- Revised current course offerings & curriculum to meet industry standards and prepare students for careers in the industry

Because of the ongoing support from the committee, the school district will offer courses at the traditional high schools that expose students in this industry. Courses offered will include classes for students in Outdoor Power Equipment which means a change in curriculum from fixing smaller, DIY maintenance engines to outdoor sporting equipment including boat, ATV, and snowmobile engines. Additionally, the current automotive courses will shift from basic maintenance of a personal vehicle to industry standards designed to prepare stu-

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## Introducing Young People to Rewarding Careers in the Automotive Industry



Counselors, teachers and parents all share a common goal when advising students about their education and career decisions: an affordable education that leads to a fulfilling career and lifelong success. In Minnesota, more than 110,000 professionals have found that success in the automotive industry. With employees in high-demand and a variety of career options, here are just a few of the reasons why the auto industry is a great choice:

### Auto Professionals Love Their Careers

The rewarding feeling of getting a car back on the road is one of the most-cited benefits of working with cars. From the service advisor or collision estimator that starts the process to the technician that works hands-on to make sure it runs and looks like new, professionals in the automotive industry play a key role in keeping everyone safely on the road.

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In Minnesota, more than 110,000 professionals have found success in the automotive industry. With employees in high-demand and a variety of career options, here are just a few of the reasons why the auto industry is a great choice:

Students earn their degree and start working in two years

Auto careers pay strong compensation

High-tech features in vehicles evolve constantly

Options for employment are endless

## Anoka STEP Automotive and Aviation Continued from Page 6



dents for a career in automotive technician pathway.

At the STEP program, courses are NATEF (National Automotive Technician Education Foundation) Accredited and are designed to prepare students for careers in the automotive industry. This program has a long history of offering courses with certification and college credits and students have successfully entered into the workforce and college upon completion of this program. Courses offered include:

### Advanced Autos I

- Automotive Brake Systems
- Basic entry level technician skills

### Advance Autos II

- Suspension & alignments
- Manual Transmission Operation
- Use of alignment technology

### Advanced Autos III

- Electricity
- Fuel Injection Systems
- Ignition Systems
- Turbos & Superchargers
- Scan Tools

Additionally, the school district, with ongoing support of industry partners, has expanded work based learning opportunities for students to further engage them in the automotive field. Throughout their high school experience, students have the opportunity to engage in mentorship and job shadowing opportunities with local automobile dealerships as well as participate in internship programs their senior year. In the internship program, students participate not only at the workplace, but are required to complete coursework designed to prepare them for the required safety and technical skills in the industry, demonstrate the

## Aviation Careers

The STEP program already offered high quality courses aligned to industry that prepared students for various careers in aviation. In fact, students not only earned college credit but could gain their Private Pilot Knowledge Test certification and would only have to complete their flight hours outside of school time. Yet, a new career was emerging – DRONES.

When drones were introduced to the broader public, they were viewed as a toy. As drones and their use advanced, so did the possibilities of careers – bridge and water tower inspections, law enforcement and agriculture uses expanded, and the

opportunities keep increasing daily.

At the urging of district leadership, STEP teacher, Pete Groebner, began to explore how to bring Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) programming and engineering to STEP. For the first time, in 2018-19, STEP will offer a new course, Unmanned Aerial Systems (Drones). It is in this course, students will learn FAA regulations and requirements, aircraft components and systems, assembly and programming for UAS, and safe operation of drones. In this course, students can ultimately not only earn college credit but can earn their Remote Pilot certification.

required employability skills for success, and additionally are required to participate in a leadership component of the program to further their learning and empower students to be successful in the workforce.

Without the partnership of business and industry, the changes that happened in Anoka-Hennepin would be impossible. Part-

ners have donated equipment, time, and other resources, including vehicles.

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## Edina High School Mock Crash

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all the way back to his middle school days. However, he had never actually acted in a production, having previously been part of the stage crew or pit orchestra. “This was a whole new experience for me to be in the full spotlight,” Ford said. “I was extremely nervous, but I was there to make a difference, and all I had to do was be myself, but drunk, of course. I just went for it and did what I felt was good in the moment.” Although Ford has always taken driving under the influence seriously, playing his character in front of the whole school and witnessing the effect he had on the hundreds of students that watched truly opened up his eyes and his heart. “What everyone saw today is something that happens every day, maybe not as severe, maybe more severe. I want students to just be aware of what can happen and what the consequences of your actions can be.” Ford’s performance touched many students due to his ability to allow each and every person to picture themselves in his character’s shoes. His character’s one mistake killed two people, severely injured four, and brought a promising kid’s future to a decade behind bars and a life full of crippling regret.

After the performance had finished, the students grappled with what they had just witnessed. “It hit me really hard knowing that people might drink and drive during homecom-

ing,” junior Maeda Mohamud said. She stood with a group of friends to discuss the emotional scene, “The fact that this still happens...it’s really sad,” Mohamud said. “This made me really think about the dangers of driving and the importance of being aware of your surroundings,” junior Arnelle Tonye Mbog said.

EHS students got a chance to share the same thought of what it would be like to lose a loved one in a drunk or distracted driving accident and come to terms with the severe consequences. Along with the crash, the words of the guest speaker who lost her fiancé due to a drunk driver had a strong impact on the audience, as well as the words of a former police chief who has had far too many real-life experiences with this type of tragedy. Hopefully the mock crash will inspire students to be the person to stand up and take away the keys from a drunk peer.

*This article was originally published on the Edina Zephyrus website.*

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## Careers in the Automotive Industry

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### High-Tech Features in Vehicles Evolve Constantly

Technology in vehicles is evolving at a blistering pace, from enhanced safety features to luxury entertainment systems and new materials. Innovation shows no sign of stopping in the coming years, making auto service and collision repair an outstanding industry for tech fans.

### Options for Employment are Endless

There’s a place for every personality. Whether your student wants to be hands-on working directly with cars, or prefers a customer-focused role working with people, the auto industry has the perfect career for them.

### Employees are in Demand Now

According to recent figures, Minnesota is home to 110,378 automotive jobs. The industry is in great need for qualified employees to keep up with future demand, meaning there’s an open job waiting for your student right now.

### Auto Careers Pay Strong Compensation

Entry-level automotive careers typically start around \$30,000, and many senior-level professionals are earning upward of \$60,000. As experience grows, so do paychecks. Talented auto pros have the potential to earn six figures!

### Auto Professionals Enjoy Stable Employment

In Minnesota alone there are 4,844,583 registered vehicles and the average driver logs 17,156 miles each year. These cars will continue to need service and repair which translates to a steady job market for automotive professionals.

### Students Earn Their Degree and Start Working in Two Years

Thanks to high demand for automotive professionals, students find rewarding employment soon after earning their automotive education in just two years. Many students even find entry-level positions while still in school!

Encourage your student to visit **CarCareers.org** to learn more about career paths, read stories of professionals in the field and explore education opportunities in Minnesota.



# Aviation Taking Flight at Johnson Aerospace and Engineering High School



*Johnson Aerospace and Engineering High School, Saint Paul Public Schools*

It's a typical Tuesday morning in early December. Malik, A 10th grade student at Johnson Aerospace and Engineering High School in St. Paul, is flying across the San Francisco landscape in a small twin engine airplane. It's partly cloudy and the morning sun shines across the bay in spectacular fashion. His mission is to navigate a way,

together with his co-pilot, Mai Lia, an 11th grader, to the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz Island to take the best possible photos of the famous landmarks. They'll shift their flight path towards wine country and end their flight at the Napa Valley airport.

Of course, these high school students were not actually flying, nor were they in San Francisco. They were in the school's ultra-realistic flight simulator lab. Their

class, Introduction to Flight, has introduced the duo, along with 20 other students, how to fly airplanes and get down the basics of air traffic control. The class is one of three different flight simulator classes, all built around a standard private pilot curriculum. It is part of the Aerospace career pathway at the school and will give students a head start in multiple careers of the aviation field — ranging from pilot, air traffic control, airport management and aircraft maintenance.

Within the school, the word has gotten out about the class. It's become a school favorite — not because everyone is interested in flying, but because it is the most unique educational experience a high schooler could ever imagine having. Students are immersed in a simulated environment to a level that they feel the motion of the airplane even though there are no moving parts to the simulators. Students also get to view the world from a different perspective (the air) going to all the corners of the world. One of their instructors, Scott Shaffer states, "Having such a diverse student body gives students the opportunities to fly around the various areas of their decedents, which is a very enlightening for them. Not only that, but students get an opportunity to see some of the world's greatest wonders of the world — like the Eiffel Tower, Sydney Opera House, Great Wall of China and the

Pyramids of Egypt to name only a few".

Of the 7 simulators in the classroom, students work in teams of 3 — all of whom rotate between pilot, co-pilot and as an air traffic controller. Teams need to work together to complete flight missions that correspond to a given learning objective. Each new flight mission builds on the previous missions learning objective and it isn't long before cheers of encouragement fill the classroom as students complete their first landing without crashing!

The school has become one most advanced high school aviation programs in the nation. As the school looks to the future, using sponsorships and grants, they hope to expand the program to the St. Paul airport where students can gain greater experiences in aircraft maintenance, airport management and even actual flight in obtaining their private pilot license.

[www.spps.org/johnsonsr](http://www.spps.org/johnsonsr)  
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## What do you want to be when you grow up? Careers in Aviation

*Ken Polovitz*

*Assistant Dean John D Odegard School for Aerospace Science*

"Since you were old enough to understand the question, you have been asked, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?'" And, like most, you probably blurted out something that seemed really exciting and glamorous but really didn't have the first clue what it really was or how you become a fireman, rock star, ballet dancer or pilot. Now that you are older and wiser and considering your options after high school, the question now goes like this: "Where are you going to college and what are you going to major in?" And, you may be like most — still clueless and confused! Determining a career and selecting a college can be some of the most difficult decisions we ever make.

For almost twenty years as Assistant Dean for Student Services within the Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences at the University of North Dakota, I've been advising young people who are considering a career in Aviation. And, when asked what specifically they would like to do in aviation the vast majority respond: "Airline Pilot"! That's certainly exciting and specific, but most have really no clue about how you become a professional pilot. Or, about the many other occupations

within the industry like air traffic controllers, maintenance and avionics technicians, airport managers, military options, helicopter pilots, corporate pilots, airline operations managers and the list can go on and on. Like many career fields, the aviation industry is so large and diverse that it can leave many clueless and confused — again!

When considering a career within the aviation industry, it's best, in my opinion, to first turn toward those colleges and universities that have the degree options covering all or most of the occupations you should explore. This approach can help determine the quality of the school but just as importantly, allow you to explore and become more knowledgeable about the many, many occupations within the aviation industry—including becoming an airline pilot!

It is very important that you find and explore degree options in professional flight—both airplane and helicopter, air traffic control, airport and aviation management, aviation systems management (maintenance/avionics/dispatch), engineering, ROTC programs and the newest degree option, unmanned aerial systems (UAS) operations.

Collegiate aviation has become the main avenue for individuals to follow to as they



consider establishing a career within the aviation industry.

Consequently, not only is it important to choose a school with comprehensive degree options, it's also very important to choose a university with a strong reputation within the aviation industry. This, of course, gives you an advantage with job placement upon graduation.

So, what do you want to be when you grow up? Well, if you are considering a career in aviation, don't limit yourself to any single occupation or university. Explore the vastness of the industry and the comprehensive collegiate aviation programs that can enable you to lay a foundation for success."



## 2017 School Bus Safety Poster Contest has Two National Winners!

Cindy McKay, MAPT Poster Chair & Transportation Coordinator  
Fridley Public Schools

This year, 113 students participated in the 2017 School Bus Safety Poster Contest and almost 900 online votes were cast for winners!

Once again, we were impressed by the talent of our students and the entries received. A special thank you to the 12 school districts that participated!

Four Minnesota students were chosen to move on to national competition for their

winning poster designs. They were: Samuel Coleman, second grade, Madison

Elementary, Anoka-Hennepin Schools; Evan Sailer, fifth grade, Reinertsen Elementary, ISD 152; Marissa Woods, seventh grade, Coon Rapids Middle School, Anoka-Hennepin Schools; and Aaron Clark, transition, Edgewood, Intermediate District 287.

We are excited to announce that TWO of our Minnesota School Bus Safety Poster entries were selected as winners at the National level by the National Association for Pupil Transportation!

Congratulations to Aaron Clark, Grade 12, Edgewood School in Crystal, who took First Place in Division IV (Special Education) (*Below Left*); and to Samuel Coleman, Grade 2, Anoka-Hennepin Schools, for taking third place in Division 1 (Grades K–2). (*Below Right*)

The Minnesota School Bus Safety Poster Contest is held each year cooperatively by MAPT and MSBOA to raise students' awareness of school bus safety in a fun and creative way.

The theme for 2018 is 'My School Bus: The Safest Form of Student Transportation!' The contest is open to all K–12 students in the State of Minnesota. The contest presents opportunities for school bus safety activities, as well as provides an opportunity to discuss pupil transportation safety themes while working on, or critiquing, student posters.

The poster contest has proven to be a lot of fun for teachers and students. Schools can submit the top three from each grade (K–12) to the State contest in April. One idea is for bus drivers to get their route to participate in the contest and send their top three on to state competition.

Once all submissions are received, voting is done online. Members will be sent a link to participate.

Posters are due March 31st. The top three from all grades (K–12) in the state are invited to a Minnesota Twins Game in August, sponsored by the Minnesota State Patrol and other sponsors. National competition is done in October of 2018 and the poster will be used in the School Bus Safety week in 2019. Our state will send one winner from each division to nationals.

Additional details including the full list of rules can also be found at [www.mnapt.org](http://www.mnapt.org).



Aaron Clark, Edgewood School, Crystal



Samuel Coleman, Anoka-Hennepin Schools

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\* Federal Highway Administration. WestTrack Track Roughness, Fuel Consumption, and Maintenance Costs, 2000  
\*\* Edelman Berland Survey, 2013

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## 'Once-in-a-Lifetime' Field Trip



Paul Downer, Delano Public Schools

A small group of Delano High School science students recently had the unique opportunity to visit Camp Ripley and fly a Blackhawk helicopter simulator, one of just a handful in the country, as part of their Aviation class.

They also examined several drones kept at the base, learned how they are operated, what they are used for, and more.

"The drones and other things were cool, but that simulator was definitely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for all of us," said senior

Patrick Eikmeier. "It was probably the best field trip I've ever taken."

Class instructor Jason Monke said each one of the students had the opportunity to climb into the simulator's cockpit and take the controls. The Delano class was only the second school group to receive that kind of access at Camp Ripley this year.

"I'd been looking for something like that to do," said Monke. "They have flight simulators at the Mall of America, but that could get kind of spendy. So we were looking for something else but really hadn't found anything."

That's where area National Guard recruiter John McCann came in. McCann arranged for the visit, and the trip took place on Monday, Oct. 2.

### Studying aviation

The aviation course is a quarter-long elective that focuses on aviation history, basic knowledge about the control surfaces and parts of an airplane, and more. Students

study the Wright Brothers, aces and planes of World War I and II, work on flight simulators installed on the media center computers, and watch videos about flight, tactics and more.

The primary project in the class requires each student to construct an intricate wood model of a World War II aircraft. Some of the models require 60 hours of time to build, while others require 35-45 hours. As a result, a number of students have been coming in before school or staying after to keep up.

"It's a pretty hands-on, project-based type of class, for the most part," said Monke. "This is an elective for science so it goes toward their graduation requirements if they want to take an extra class, but I'm just hoping to generate some interest in aviation and their understanding of aviation."

Senior Steven Hajas selected one of the most complicated models, a B-24 bomber.

"This is a cool class," he said. "I had talked to some of the other science teachers about what extra classes I could take, and they said I should take this one. We built the Delta Dart model in the first two weeks and that's when I was like 'Yep, this class is (great).'"

### Career option

In recent years Monke has also hoped to spark interest in aviation as a career, or at least in obtaining a pilot's license. Last year he had

an airline pilot come in and address the class.

"They can go over to Buffalo and do their ground courses for only about \$200, so it's cheap at first," said Monke. "That gets them entry-level, but then they have to start paying for flight time and instructors, and that's when it starts to get expensive."

Still, Monke said his Sun Country contact had invested about \$30,000 in his career and was making more than \$100,000 after a few years.

"For four years of college (in another area of study) you're probably talking in the neighborhood of \$100,000 in cost, and then maybe you get a job making \$30,000 or \$40,000," he said. "When you look at it that way, spending \$30,000 to get a job making over \$100,000 sounds pretty good."

Monke said at least one former student is currently pursuing a pilot's license. Eikmeier he is considering joining the military, and that as a result of the class he would be open to looking into the aviation side of things.

"I'm not saying I could ever be a fighter pilot, but I'd fly around helicopters all day if they asked me to," he said.

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# Navigating MSP Program

Many families who have children with special needs avoid flying because they are unsure how their children will respond. In an effort to ease the anxiety associated with an airport visit and flying, the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), Fraser and the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) have teamed up to create the Navigating MSP program. The program includes several events, all designed specifically for individuals with special needs, that guide families through the steps of an airport visit, from walking in the door to finding their seats on a plane.

## What to Expect

- ➔ Upon registering for the program participants are emailed a children's social story, detailing what it's like to take a flight—from the airport experience to plane protocol to being in flight and landing. Parents and guardians are encouraged to read the story to their children to prepare them for the program and, ultimately, for their actual flight
- ➔ On the day of the tour, participants meet by the Information Booth on the Tram Level of MSP Airport to pick up their concourse passes. There, each family

is assigned its own MSP Airport Travelers Assistant volunteer to guide them through the event.

- ➔ The group then heads to the Ticketing Level and moves through the TSA security line at Gate 6. This process is extremely realistic. Participants utilize MSP's family line, which tends to be shorter, but they must still wait in line, show a TSA agent their concourse pass, remove all items from their persons and pockets, as well as their shoes and winter coats and place them in bins. They move through the same security system as they would if taking a real flight. TSA agents are active partners in the Navigating MSP program and happily walk children and families through the process, ensuring their comfort.
- ➔ Once they move through security, the group is given a gate assignment and has approximately 30 minutes pre-“flight” to explore the terminal with their Travelers Assistant. Some families choose to have a bite to eat or to shop the many stores throughout the terminal. Others head to the children's play area on Concourse C, which fea-

tures a mock airplane and air traffic control tower, slides, and a statue of Snoopy (whose creator is a native Minnesotan), as well as adult seating and electrical outlets. For those families who seek a quiet place to rest, MSP offers a Family Center, which has a family restroom, comfortable seating, a rocking chair and a crib. It is located near the entrance to Concourse E. A private Nursing Mothers room is located on Concourse C.

- ➔ After approximately 30 minutes of roaming the terminal, families head to their gate assignment where boarding is announced. The group follows the gate agent's instructions for boarding the plane and take their assigned seats. They buckle up and listen to safety instructions — just as they would on a real flight. Once everyone is settled, Delta Pilot Rich Kargel steps out and explains to the families what will happen on an actual flight, covering topics such as the sensation of liftoff and touchdown to pressurization in ears.
- ➔ Upon “touchdown” the group departs the plane and is directed out to Baggage Claim and then to Tram Level and



Parking. The program is offered monthly; those families who feel they need another practice run before their trip are welcome to sign up again.

[mspairport.com/passenger-services/Navigating-MSP.aspx](http://mspairport.com/passenger-services/Navigating-MSP.aspx)

this is what autism can feel like  
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Repetitive behavior can be one sign of autism. There's no medicine to treat the symptom, only understanding. At Fraser, we help parents cope and children achieve. Learn more about autism at [fraser.org](http://fraser.org).



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# Minnesota Special Education Transportation Committee 2017 Bus Driver and Bus Assistant Awards



*Amy Tiedens MAPT Special Education Chair and Region 1 Director – Covering the Mpls/St. Paul Metro Area*

In May of 2017, I had the honor of presenting the MAPT awards to Special Education School Bus Drivers and Bus Assistants.

In 2017, we had 18 nominees representing school districts from across the state of Minnesota. The award is sponsored by the Minnesota Special Education Transportation Committee, in cooperation with the Minnesota Association of Pupil Transportation.

All of the winners demonstrated a commitment and dedication to their school district's mission to deliver superior services, respect and patience to every student they work with on their school Bus. Each award winner displayed their true compassion and professionalism towards the students, staff and parents they work with and the school districts they serve.

The first place Special Education Bus Driver award winner, Niaz Hasan, had five nomination forms submitted by five separate Osseo Bus assistants he has worked with through the years. Here is what his current bus assistant had to say about Niaz: "Niaz truly cares about his students and the families. He gets to know about their needs and behaviors. He's always respectful and compassionate. On an icy day, he got out of the bus at each student's house and walked up to the door and helped them to the bus, to ensure no one would slip and fall."

Heidi Rogers, the first place Special Education Bus Assistant winner, had a co-worker state this in her nomination form: "Heidi

agreed to take on a high needs students who had a history of spiting, kicking and hitting. Heidi took the time to get to know the student, asking school staff for ideas on how to make the bus ride successful for the student. By Heidi taking the time to better understand the needs of the student, he has had an immediate change and all the students on board now have a successful ride to and from school."

The nominees were nominated by their supervisors, safety trainers and co-workers. Members of the MAPT Special Education Transportation Committee judged the submitted nomination forms for the drivers and the assistants.

I encourage school districts and bus companies to nominate deserving special education drivers and assistants for the 2018 awards this coming spring.

Nomination forms can be found at <https://www.mnapt.org>

Congratulations to all of the 2017 nominees and to each 2017 award winner!

## Think Life Success, Rather Than School Success



Success means different things to different people, but your hopes and dreams for your child probably extend beyond good report cards. Maybe you hope that your child's future includes a fulfilling job and satisfying relationships, for example, or a happy family and a sense of contentment.

The point is that success in life—rather than just school success—depends, not on academics, but on things like a healthy sense of self, the willingness to ask for and accept help, the determination to keep trying in spite of challenges, the ability to form healthy relationships with others, and other qualities that aren't as easy to quantify as grades and SAT scores.

A 20-year study that followed children with learning disabilities into adulthood identified the following six "life success" attributes.

By focusing on these broad skills, you can help give your child a huge leg up in life.

### Learning disabilities and success #1: Self-awareness and self-confidence

For children with learning disabilities, self-awareness (knowledge about strengths, weaknesses, and special talents) and self-confidence are very important. Struggles in the classroom can cause children to doubt their abilities and question their strengths.

- Ask your child to list his or her strengths and weaknesses and talk about your own strengths and weaknesses with your child.
- Encourage your child to talk to adults with learning disabilities and to ask about their challenges, as well as their strengths.
- Work with your child on activities that are within his or her capabilities. This will help build feelings of success and competency.
- Help your child develop his or her strengths and passions. Feeling passionate and skilled in one area may inspire hard work in other areas too.

### Learning disabilities and success #2: Being proactive

A proactive person is able to make decisions and take action to resolve problems or achieve goals. For people with learning disabilities, being proactive also involves

self-advocacy (for example, asking for a seat at the front of the classroom) and the willingness to take responsibility for choices.

- Talk with your learning disabled child about problem solving and share how you approach problems in your life.
- Ask your child how he or she approaches problems. How do problems make him or her feel? How does he or she decide what action to take?
- If your child is hesitant to make choices and take action, try to provide some "safe" situations to test the water, like choosing what to make for dinner or thinking of a solution for a scheduling conflict.
- Discuss different problems, possible decisions, and outcomes with your child. Have your child pretend to be part of the situation and make his or her own decisions.

### Learning disabilities and success #3: Perseverance

Perseverance is the drive to keep going despite challenges and failures, and the flexibility to change plans if things aren't working. Children (or adults) with learning disabilities may need to work harder and longer because of their disability.

- Talk with your learning disabled child about times when he or she persevered—why did he or she keep going? Share stories about when you have

faced challenges and not given up.

- Discuss what it means to keep going even when things aren't easy. Talk about the rewards of hard work, as well as the opportunities missed by giving up.
- When your child has worked hard, but failed to achieve his or her goal, discuss different possibilities for moving forward.

### Learning disabilities and success #4: The ability to set goals

The ability to set realistic and attainable goals is a vital skill for life success. It also involves the flexibility to adapt and adjust goals according to changing circumstances, limitations, or challenges.

- Help your child identify a few short- or long-term goals and write down steps and a timeline to achieve the goals. Check in periodically to talk about progress and make adjustments as needed.
- Talk about your own short- and long-term goals with your child, as well as what you do when you encounter obstacles.
- Celebrate with your child when he or she achieves a goal. If certain goals are proving too hard to achieve, talk about why and how plans or goals might be adjusted to make them possible.

**Continued on Page 13**



# New Special Education Learning Facility Opens in Lake Elmo

Northeast Metro 916

Pankalo Education Center, Minnesota's newest special education learning facility, opened its doors to students and families this fall in Lake Elmo.

Pankalo, which is operated by Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District, serves students in kindergarten through grade 8 who have emotional behavioral disorders (EBD), autism spectrum disorders (ASD), and developmental cognitive disabilities (DCD). The school has been specially-designed to meet the needs of students who learn best in a supportive and safe environment, free of auditory and visual distractions found in many typical school facilities.

Students enjoy an abundance of natural lighting and therapy lights throughout the building; flexible learning spaces for small-group or one-on-one instruction; sensory rooms with colored lighting and student-controlled music and sounds; an outdoor playground with musical and other sensory features; an indoor playground; soft, movable, and child-friendly furniture; the latest in assistive and educational

technology; and more.

The 75,000 square-foot building has four "neighborhoods" within the school, each made up of five classrooms. Class sizes are small — usually between five and eight students — and the facility can accommodate up to 130 students total.

Pankalo's integrated arts theme connects educational philosophies to the arts, helping students build relationships between their inner and outer worlds. "The goal is to provide a compassionate, creative, safe, and child-centered learning environment," said Amy Johncox, principal of the school. "This is a place where students can grow academically, socially, and personally, all while tapping into their creativity."

The facility is modeled closely after Karner Blue Education Center (Blaine), Northeast Metro 916's first major facilities project. Since that building opened in 2014, the school district has seen significant improvements among its elementary students in terms of student achievement, emotional/behavioral control and social adaptation. "Our students have shown us time

and time again that despite their challenges, they have limitless potential," said Connie Hayes, superintendent of Northeast Metro 916. "With this new building and school program, they will certainly have what they need to take their accomplishments to the next level."



Construction is progressing on Quora Education Center in Little Canada, another unique special education facility that is scheduled to open in the fall of 2018 as the final stage in Northeast Metro 916's facilities plan.

Students may only enroll at Pankalo, Karner Blue or Quora if they are referred by one

of 14 school districts that are members of Northeast Metro 916: Centennial, Columbia Heights, Forest Lake, Fridley, Mahtomedi, Mounds View, North St. Paul - Maplewood - Oakdale, Roseville, South Washington County, Spring Lake Park, St. Anthony - New Brighton, St. Francis, Stillwater, White Bear Lake.

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## Think Life Success, Rather Than School Success

Continued from Page 12

### Learning disabilities and success #5: Knowing how to ask for help

Strong support systems are key for people with learning disabilities. Successful people are able to ask for help when they need it and reach out to others for support.

- Help your child nurture and develop good relationships. Model what it means to be a good friend and relative so your child knows what it means to help and support others.
- Demonstrate to your child how to ask for help in family situations.
- Share examples of people needing help, how they got it, and why it was good to ask for help. Present your child with role-play scenarios that might require help.

your child learn to recognize specific feelings.

- Ask your child what words they would use to describe stress. Does your child recognize when he or she is feeling stressed?
- Encourage your child to identify and participate in activities that help reduce stress like sports, games, music, or writing in a journal.
- Ask your child to describe activities and situations that make them feel stressed. Break down the scenarios and talk about how overwhelming feelings of stress and frustration might be avoided.

*This is part of a larger article from Helpguide.org. To read the full article and more go to <https://www.helpguide.org/>*

### Learning disabilities and success #6: The ability to handle stress

If children with learning disabilities learn how to regulate stress and calm themselves, they will be much better equipped to overcome challenges.

- Use words to identify feelings and help



# EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

*Current job openings in the month of December, 2017, according to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.*

**Website:** [mn.gov/deed](http://mn.gov/deed)

## Minneapolis Public School District

Teacher, Special Education (2018-2019 Candidate Pool)  
Associate Educator—Bilingual Somali—Anne Sullivan  
Associate Educator—Bilingual Spanish—Roosevelt  
Community Education, Associate Educator—Lucy Laney Beacons  
Teacher, Art—Bryn Mawr  
Associate Educator—Bilingual Somali—Hmong International Academy  
Teacher, Elementary—Dowling (5th Grade)  
Associate Educator- Classroom Support-Bilingual Somali- Page Middle  
Minneapolis Kids Child Care Assistant—Lake Harriet Lower  
Minneapolis Kids Child Care Assistant—Lake Harriet Upper  
Minneapolis Kids Child Care Assistant—Hale  
Associate Educator (Behavior Resource)—Sheridan  
Associate Educator—Folwell  
Associate Educator—Bilingual Spanish—Folwell  
Teacher, Special Education- Resource—Hmong International Academy  
Teacher, Music (Vocal)—Nellie Stone Johnson  
Teacher, Art—North  
Teacher, Science—Heritage  
Teacher, Elementary—6th Grade—Hmong International Academy

Teacher, Theatre—Sanford  
Teacher, Elementary—Third Grade—Bethune  
Teacher, Math—Franklin Middle  
Teacher, Math—Heritage  
Teacher, Special Education (SERT/EBD)—Anwatin Middle  
Extended Learning- GEMS/GISE Coaches  
ALC-Extended Day Teacher  
Teacher, Math—Seward Montessori  
Associate Educator—Credit Recovery Lead (2017–2018)  
Teacher, Special Education—Resource—Whittier  
ALC-Extended Day Teacher  
Special Education Assistant—Harrison  
Associate Educator (Bilingual Spanish)—Special Education 1  
Developmental Adapted Physical Education Teacher  
Special Education Assistant—Edison  
Special Education Assistant—Franklin  
Special Education Assistant—Transition Plus  
Special Education Assistant—Barton  
Special Education Assistant—Hmong International Academy  
Special Education Assistant—Hall  
**Website:** [www.mpls.k12.mn.us](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us)

## St. Cloud Area School District

Bilingual Communications Support Specialist (Somali)  
Classroom Teacher, Elementary  
Behavior Resource Specialist  
Student Support Para  
Special Education Teacher—DCD Homebound  
Custodian  
Kitchen Helper

Special Education Teacher—EBD or ABS  
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Coach, Assistant, Speech  
Coach, Assistant Varsity, Boys Soccer  
Coach, Assistant, Boys Soccer  
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Science Teacher, Junior High

**Website:** [www.isd742.org](http://www.isd742.org)

## Osseo Area Schools

ESP—Early Childhood Family Education Program  
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Teacher—Self-Contained Autistic Classroom (Long-Term Substitute)  
Teacher—EL (Long Term Substitute)  
Teacher—Grade 4 (Long Term Substitute)  
ESP—Special Education Vocational Trainer  
Kidstop Instructor (Elm Creek 6:30am-8:45am)  
Kidstop Instructor—The SPOT Program at Maple Grove Middle School (1:45pm-6:15p)  
ESP—Special Education Strategies Program—HQ—Temporary  
ESP—Special Education—Resource Program—HQ  
**Website:** [district279.org](http://district279.org)

## Spring Lake Park Schools

Substitute Teacher  
Paraprofessional: Media  
Substitute Early Childhood Classroom Assistant  
Child Care Professional—Substitute  
Substitute School Nurse (Multiple Positions)



High School Worker (Child Care)  
Child Care Assistant Teacher  
Child Care Teacher  
Paraprofessional Media Technology  
Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Teacher: On-call Substitute  
Paraprofessional, Special Education  
Paraprofessional, Special Education—18–21 Transitions Program

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## Sauk Rapids-Rice Public Schools

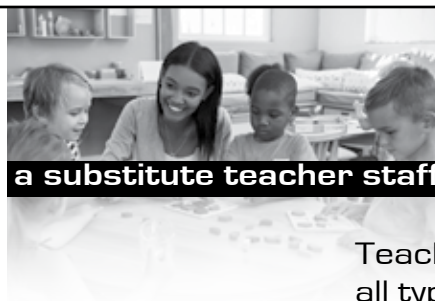
Substitute Teachers for 2017–2018  
**Website:** [www.isd47.org](http://www.isd47.org)

## New Ulm Public Schools

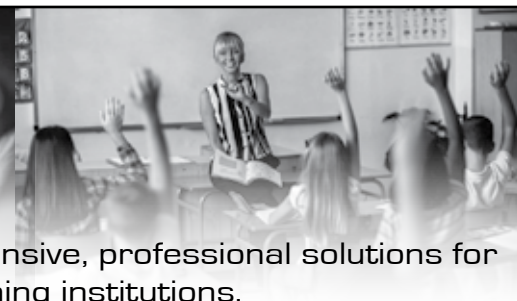
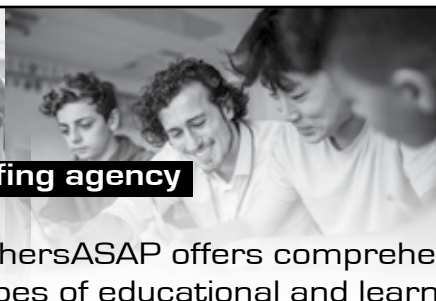
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# Congratulations 2017 WEM Honorees!

## Ethics in Education Award

This award recognizes educators who exemplify ethical behavior for the teaching profession and promote ethical practices and development for their students through classroom activities or curriculum. The honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

### Karla Beck

Karla Beck, a principal from St. James Middle & High School in the St. James Public Schools is a recipient of a 2017 WEM Outstanding Educator Award for Ethics in Education.



“Mrs. Beck believes educators need to learn, grow and change to best meet students’ needs,” a colleague shared. “Her passion is evident when she shares her learning with others. She encourages her staff to move away from traditional teaching strategies and think outside the box to work with innovative approaches that motivate and engage students.”

Beck has been in the education field for 17 years. Beck started her administra-

tive assignment in the St. James Public Schools five years ago at Northside Elementary School. The site had been identified as a priority school and much work needed to be done to turn things around. The staff at Northside worked with Mrs. Beck in a collaborative fashion to increase scores and decrease achievement gaps. The building went from priority school status to continuous improvement to a celebration site all in three short years.

A new initiative Beck was part of creating was a partnership with a major health system and St. James High School to offer Health Career courses. Students get hands-on experiences in fourteen rotations including nursing, therapy, administration and emergency room care through this onsite course. In addition to this, a class was started in which students learn the required curriculum for becoming a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) while partnering with a local long-term care facility for internship and practicum hours.

[www.stjames.k12.mn.us](http://www.stjames.k12.mn.us)  
(507) 375-5974

### Will Ruffin II

Will Ruffin II, a teacher from Lincoln K-8 Choice District-Wide School in the Rochester Public Schools is a recipient of a 2017 WEM Outstanding Educator Award for Ethics in Education.



Ruffin has been teaching for eight years and currently teaches fifth grade at Lincoln K-8 District-Wide School. In addition to teaching, Ruffin serves as the coordinator and leader for the All Pro Dads program which is designed to bring fathers into the school on a regular basis. He also helped launch the program at other schools throughout the district.

“Will is an artful teacher creating his learning canvas as a masterpiece in action for ALL students in his learning environment,” said Jim Sonju, school principal. “He has created a learning environment with flexibly, differentiation in which students can work at their own pace in subjects, while still having solid foundations and maintaining accountability for each student.”

Last year, Ruffin incorporated Genius Hour into the daily schedule. Genius Hour

is education’s version of a Google initiative. Google allows their employees to dedicate 20% of their work time to research projects they are interested in pursuing. In class, Ruffin offers half an hour a day for the students to research topics they are passionate about, or simply want to learn more about. Students are learning skills today’s employers seek: teamwork, creative problem solving, leadership, decision making, use of technology and reflection.

“Will’s relationship with students is less about authority and more about mentorship,” shared a colleague. “He formally mentors two students after school each day and is also involved with the Rochester after-school program but a quick to his classroom reveals that he mentors all students under his watch every hour of every day.”

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## Lyndale Community School Validated as a 2017–2018 Minnesota School of Excellence



Principal Mark Stauduhar  
Assistant Principal Sarah Hunter  
Minneapolis Public Schools

Lyndale Community School has been validated as a Minnesota School of Excellence by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This prestigious honor was awarded to Lyndale for its commitment to 21st century teaching and learning.

"Through the Minnesota School of Excellence program, grounded in national research on highperforming schools, MESPA has created the premier opportunity in the state for validating greatness in a school community," said Jon Millerhagen, MESPA executive director. "This school improvement program examines the entire school community through six national standards, ensuring there is a holistic approach to creating a plan for future achievement and celebrating the unique accomplishments of each School of Excellence."

Sam Richardson, chair of the School of Excellence Committee, said, "It takes hard work and commitment to thoroughly assess areas of strength and at the same time plan for continual improvement. The SOE process provides an opportunity for the entire school community to reflect on the collaborative work being done and to celebrate these accomplishments. Schools that receive validation have had important data-driven conversations about what a high-quality 21st century learning experience should be for all students and have plans to make that learning experience a reality. Honoring the important work of dedicated staff, eager students, and supportive communities is an essential component of becoming a School of Excellence."

Lyndale Community School is located in the Minneapolis Public School District and serves Pre-K through 5th grade students. Lyndale strives to provide a positive learning environment that fosters academic excellence

and responsibility; collaboration with and connection to community; integration of the arts into daily life; and community of engagement and diversity.

"The School of Excellence process has benefitted our school in a number of ways," said Mark Stauduhar, principal of Lyndale Community School. "First, it has challenged us to look deeply at our traditions, policies, practices, and procedures to take stock in how we are serving our school community and identify opportunities for growth. Furthermore, it has allowed us to highlight many of the great things that are happening at our school and take pride in the great work we do. Finally, I believe that will strengthen our image as a viable school option for prospective families, hopefully leading to an increase in student enrollment."

The School of Excellence process helps schools identify areas of strengths and

how they can grow and expand upon those strengths. "One of the strengths highlighted by the School of Excellence process are the many ways in which we partner with our families and the greater community to provide our students with a number of opportunities to learn and find their passions," said Stauduhar. "Whether it be our Band, Orchestra, or Choral programs, or our partnership with Children's Theater, our school continually works with people and organizations outside of our school to make these opportunities a reality."

[lyndale.mpls.k12.mn.us](http://lyndale.mpls.k12.mn.us)  
(612) 668-4000

## Forest Lake Teacher Receives 2017 Formal Environmental Educator of the Year Award



Forest Lake Area Schools

Devon Vojtech, a science teacher at Forest Lake Area High School, has been selected as this year's recipient of the 2017 Formal Environmental Educator of the Year.

Vojtech teaches earth and space science at the high school, as well as meteorology, and serves as adviser to the school's Environmental Club.

This award is presented by the Minnesota Association for Environmental Education (MAEE) Awards & Scholarship Committee. Vojtech was notified of this designation through an email from MAEE on Sept. 15.

"When I received an email with the award notification I was very surprised," Vojtech said. "I learned a few days later that Summer Schwintek, the president of the Forest Lake High School Environmental Club, had nominated me for the award."

The Environmental Educator of the Year award is presented to the recipient who exhibits innovative and exemplary effort in providing environmental education opportunities for general audiences. Each year,

MAEE reviews nominations for each of their four award areas and recipients are chosen by the criteria around their contributions to the field of environmental education and connecting students to concepts in environmental education.

"As the adviser of the Environmental Club, I am very proud of the club officers and members for their enthusiasm and environmental stewardship," Vojtech said.

"The diverse environmental interests of our students have a common theme of education. Our students are proactive, passionate and excited to have a positive impact within the school district and community. I feel honored to represent the students of Forest Lake Area High School with the 2017 Formal Environmental Educator of the Year Award."

Nearly 40 students attend the high school's Environmental Club weekly meetings, which often include guest speakers from the community who are brought in to help educate and share environmental happenings. Twenty-one of those students will be participating in the upcoming YES! Fall Summit.

Vojtech also noted her appreciation for the Environmental Club members, activities and support organizations, saying that without them, her award would not have been possible.

Vojtech was officially recognized for the award at the MAEE Awards Social on Nov. 5 at the Eastman Nature Center in Dayton, Minn.

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# Tracy Sexton-Oliver, Bluff View Elementary, Selected MN National Outstanding Assistant Principal



Lake City Public Schools

Tracy Sexton-Oliver, assistant principal of Bluff View Elementary in Lake City, MN and a member of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA), is Minnesota's 2018 National Outstanding Assistant Principal. MESPA and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) present this prestigious annual award.

The National Outstanding Assistant Principal program was established in 2011 to honor assistant principals who are doing a superb job in their roles. MESPA and NAESP are committed to preparing assistant principals to step into the principal role. This program promotes educational excellence for pre-kindergarten

through eighth grade (PreK-8) schooling and calls attention to the fundamental importance of the assistant principal.

"It doesn't matter if you are a young child discovering how a butterfly comes to be, a seasoned teacher feeling invigorated by a new approach or an administrator working with staff to uncover ways to increase student engagement, there is amazing power and energy in learning," wrote Tracy Sexton-Oliver in her National Outstanding Assistant Principal application. "In the era of accountability it can be hard to feel comfortable taking risks or making changes even though these are essential practices for educators to utilize in order to move learning forward in the 21st century. This is why I choose to model risk taking and offer support and encouragement for teachers to do the same."

Bluff View Elementary, where Sexton-Oliver serves as assistant principal, serves more than 600 diverse students in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. Sexton-Oliver's work with Bluff View Elementary's pre-kindergarten program is a particular point of pride for her. "I worked with our early learning team to implement our first ever kindergarten readiness measure allowing us to track the impact of our increased programming," Sexton-Oliver wrote. "After just two years we have seen the level of kindergarten readiness increase by nearly 20%."

"Tracy is visionary," Jim Borgschatz, Principal of Bluff View Elementary, said of Sexton-Oliver. "Tracy has a strong desire to influence other teachers and students in a positive way and is a strong advocate of student-centered learning. Her enthusiasm for the learning and teaching of subject matter is very apparent and motivates everyone that she comes in contact with at Bluff View Elementary."

Among Sexton-Oliver's accomplishments as an assistant principal are creating a Multi-Tiered Student Support (MTSS) structure for her school. By establishing the structure, "teachers became better able to focus on providing high quality instruction that meets students' needs in engaging and meaningful ways and students are experiencing more success and gaining confidence."

According to Bluff View Elementary 3rd grade teacher Danielle Hegge, another of Sexton-Oliver's greatest accomplishments is the leadership she provides to the school's Professional Learning Communities. "I currently work closely with Mrs. Oliver as the leader of our PLC Leadership team," Hegge wrote. "Mrs. Oliver believed in me and encouraged me to take on this role when I didn't believe in myself. She has made me feel confident in my role and taught me that leading by example really does work. She has high expectations of

herself as our Assistant Principal and that is contagious with her staff. Leading by example is one of Mrs. Oliver's strongest suits. She sets the bar high and makes you as a teacher want to be the best leader you can be whether that's in the classroom or with your colleagues."

MESPA President-Elect Eric Skanson, principal of Cold Spring Elementary, chaired the MN National Outstanding Assistant Principal selection committee. "We had a number of very strong applications this year, but Tracy's really stood out," Skanson said. "The glowing recommendations from her colleagues and supervisors, her long history of innovation and concrete accomplishments, and her obvious passion for learning and enriching the educational lives of the students she serves make her the perfect person to be named Minnesota's National Outstanding Assistant Principal. If anything, this honor seems long overdue. I can't wait to see what else Tracy does in her career."

Sexton-Oliver holds a bachelor's degree, and a master's degree in Education, Teaching, and Learning.

[lake-city.k12.mn.us](http://lake-city.k12.mn.us)  
(651) 345-2198



## Washington Elementary School: A Blue Ribbon School



Mr. Chad Schroeder Principal  
Rochester Public School District

Washington School is one of five elementary "district-wide" programs in the Rochester Public Schools, a large and diverse district serving approximately 17,500 students in southeastern Minnesota. As an alternative to the curriculum offered in our district's neighborhood schools, Washington's curriculum is based on the Core Knowledge Sequence, a solid, sequential body of factual information that balances content with high expectations for mastery of reading, writing, math, and technology skills. Core Knowledge helps our school achieve its mission of building "to inspire, challenge, and empower all students

with the knowledge and skills required to reach their full potential to contribute to future generations, and to become involved members of a global community." Washington serves approximately 360 students in single-grade classrooms, kindergarten through fifth grade. Our curriculum, small school size, low student and staff mobility, focused learning environment, collaborative relationships, academic culture, and strong home-school connections provide a unique mix of essential elements that foster high student achievement and a "thirst for knowledge."

Core Knowledge is a rich and rigorous body of information in American and world history, geography, science, literature, music and art that builds through the grades to become a solid foundation for life-long learning. The engaging content of exciting historical events, fascinating experiences in nature, magnificent works of art and music, and beautifully-crafted classic literature captivates students' imaginations and provides models for their own creative expression.

With very few exceptions, students who begin school at Washington as kindergartners stay and complete six years of education through the fifth grade. The size and stability of student and staff populations promotes a focused and productive learning environment

that includes accountability, familiarity, and meaningful academic and personal histories. In addition to strong and supportive relationships, the character education program helps provide a school environment that is orderly, respectful and productive. The focus at Washington is on learning.

As a Professional Learning Community, the highly-qualified staff at Washington is deeply committed to delivering the curriculum content and continuously improving instruction. Teachers continually study and align state, district, Core Knowledge, and testing requirements to determine the scope and sequence of instruction. This process results in a deep understanding of curriculum content and high expectations for student achievement. Formative and summative assessment data are analyzed at team, staff, and site leadership meetings and shared holistically at Site Council meetings to monitor student progress, provide differentiated educational opportunities, and ensure high academic achievement for all students.

Members of the Washington learning community have formed very effective collaborative working relationships that reach from home to school and across grade levels to support and address the needs of students. Our school is guided by our Site Leadership, a

group of staff who create, promote, and monitor our site goals, develop our measurement and reporting plan, assess our professional development needs and seek feedback from all staff on the resources and support needed to effectively meet our goals. We also have a Site Council, a group of elected parents and teachers who monitor by-laws and provide assistance and feedback to the entire school community. Parents are informed about school activities and expectations through newsletters, conferences, report cards, websites, Twitter, Facebook and long-range curriculum plans. They are expected to support the students' completion of regular homework assignments. Parents also have a strong presence as volunteers in the classrooms, as facilitators of enrichment and extracurricular activities (Math Masters, Foreign Language Club, Enrichment Club, Family Fun events), and through participation in PTA activities. The strong home to school connection at Washington supports a culture where achievement is valued and learning is celebrated.

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