

Media Literacy Teaches Critical Thinking, Hands-On Technology



Edina Public Schools
Communications Department

Teaching a 21st Century Media Literacy class in the constant and constantly changing media landscape can sometimes mean making daily adjustments to lessons or discussion topics.

This is the eighth year that Valley View language arts teachers Kelly Schoenecker and Leah Engelkes are teaching the course. Engelkes, who teaches two morning sessions of the course, sometimes calls Schoenecker before her afternoon class to tell her the hot topic that students needed to discuss that day.

While media literacy is a part of the language arts standards for eighth graders, it is usually sprinkled throughout language arts courses. Edina Public Schools staff developed this course about 11 years ago, “Having it singled out as its own course means we can go in-depth,” said Engelkes. Andy Schroeder teaches the course at South View.

The class is part current events and part digital citizenship, with a heavy dose

of critical thinking and technology skills. It teaches how to objectively interpret information dispersed by all forms of media, and then gives students hands-on experience preparing a media message of their own.

The first unit of the class addresses the harmful effects of cyberbullying, the consequences of piracy, breaking copyright and plagiarism, and the dangers associated with providing too much personal information on the internet. They also look at bias in the media and how media

influences opinions on body image, race and gender stereotypes, and methods of persuasion. They analyze media messages around current topics and dissect techniques used by print, television and technology media to influence opinions and purchasing habits.

“We talk about bias in the media and the need to get your news from multiple sources and cross reference your facts,” said Schoenecker. “That meme that you see on social media isn’t necessarily the truth.” The students quickly grasp the concepts.

“It is natural for humans to try to put things in categories,” said one student, explaining how stereotypes get started. “Some stereotypes have been deep-rooted in our society for hundreds of years and we have to be aware of what those are.”

Another said she found it “mind boggling” to see the effects of racial stereotypes in a video that depicted a white man acting as though he was attempting to steal a car,

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Re-Thinking How We Do School

First-of-its-Kind Think Tank Brings Industry Together With Education

Stillwater Area Public Schools

In late summer, a dozen industry experts came together with a dozen local educators to re-think education in Stillwater Area Public Schools. The first-of-its-kind Think Tank conversation was designed to bring together people with very different perspectives to talk about a common interest — our future workforce.

“It was a great chance to connect with an impressive group of people to discuss ways we could work together to improve not just K-12 education, but to strengthen and improve the community,” said Mike Teachout, an innovation coach at Stillwater Area High School.

Participants in the Think Tank included leaders from corporations, local manufacturers, engineers and programmers. They came together with teachers, principals and technology staff from across the district to talk about the challenges and opportunities that exist within our current education system, as well as to generate creative solutions.

Participants were encouraged to think creatively to identify gaps that exist within the current education system, and consider ways to improve our schools to engage students and provide relevant learning experiences. Small groups of people shared their ideas on what skills and attributes make up a well-rounded student, a successful graduate, and a desirable employee.

“We’ve been doing school the same way for generations, and while it works for 60 percent of students, there are far too many stu-



“District leaders are aware it is not just math problems, definitions and test scores that make up a young adult,” said Patti Olson of a manufacturing firm in Mounds View. “Each

students feeling disengaged and disinterested,” said John Perry, director of learning technology and system design. “We want to learn from industry experts to see how we can make our education system more relevant and hands-on, and to help our students be more successful.”

Overall, Think Tank participants expressed a desire to see the school district focus on developing soft skills in our students — such as the ability to collaborate and get along with people different than themselves and to think critically and learn from failure. They also suggested the district create more flexible learning spaces for students and provide more project-based and experiential learning opportunities.

“District leaders are aware it is not just math problems, definitions and test scores that make up a young adult,” said Patti Olson of a manufacturing firm in Mounds View. “Each

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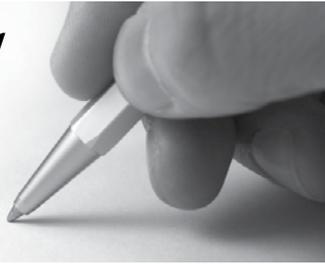
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Farm to School Grant Program

The purpose of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm to School Grant Program is to assist eligible entities in implementing farm to school programs that improve access to local foods in eligible schools. On an annual basis, USDA awards up to \$5 million in competitive grants for training, supporting operations, planning, purchasing equipment, developing school gardens, developing partnerships, and implementing farm to school programs.

Planning grants range from \$20,000 to \$45,000, and Implementation and Support Service grants range from \$65,000 to \$100,000
Deadline: Applications are due Dec. 8, 2016
Website: www.fns.usda.gov/grant-opportunities/farm-to-school

Youth Garden Grant

To be eligible, schools or organizations must plan a new garden with at least 15 chil-

dren aged 3 to 18 involved in the project. The selection of winners is based on the demonstrated program impact and sustainability.

The top five programs receive garden award packages valued at \$750. Fifteen programs receive garden award packages valued at \$500.

Deadline: Applications are due Dec. 15, 2016
Website: www.kidsgardening.org/2017-youth-garden-grant

The Harry Chapin Foundation Education Grant

The mission of the Harry Chapin Foundation is to support organizations that have demonstrated their ability to dramatically improve the lives and livelihood of people by helping them to become self-sufficient. The foundation focuses its grant making on community education programs, arts-in-education programs, and agricultural and environmental

programs. Grants up to \$10,000 are awarded

Deadline: Applications are accepted year-round

Website: www.harrychapinfoundation.org/focus_focusandguidelines.php
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ecoTech Grants

Grants are awarded to support inquiry-based projects in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields that leverage technology or use nature-based designs to address environmental problems in local communities. Ideal projects are youth-led and integrate environmental education with opportunities for students to solve real-world problems using STEM skills and knowledge.

Seventeen grants of \$2,500 each are awarded

Deadline: Applications are due March 15, annually

Website: captainplanetfoundation.org/ecotech-grant

Schoolyard Garden Grants

The Schoolyard Ecology Exploration (SEE) program at the University of Minnesota, in partnership with the US Forest Service, seeks to increase kindergar-

ten through grade 12 student interest and knowledge about monarchs and ecological processes through direct observation and authentic inquiry-based activities conducted in their schoolyard garden.

Grants up to \$1,000 are awarded

Deadline: Proposals are due Dec. 16, 2016

Website: monarchlab.org/education-and-gardening/gardening-for-monarchs/garden-grants

Academic Enrichment Grants

The McCarthy Dressman Education Foundation offers Academic Enrichment Grants designed to develop classroom and extracurricular programs that improve student learning. The foundation considers proposals that foster understanding, deepen students' knowledge, and provide opportunities to expand awareness of the world around them.

Grants up to \$10,000 are awarded

Deadline: Online applications are accepted January 15 through April 15, annually

Website: mccarthydressman.org/academic-enrichment-grants

More Grants on Page 17

Re-Thinking How We Do School

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student is unique and trying to help them find their path early in life is a must by sharing and exposing them many different avenues and options for career paths."

In October, a dozen community members and educators gathered together to talk about public education and their dreams for the future of Stillwater Area Public Schools. The second in a series of Think Tanks brought together leaders in public service industries with district teachers and staff to talk about a common interest — our students.

"I appreciated the invite to the think tank as I am a huge supporter of youth programs, and law enforcement involvement with the youth and our community," said Laura Eastman, Bayport Police Chief. "Clearly youth are the future and they should be everyone's top priority."

"A lot of the same themes came up today as they did in our first Think Tank," said John Perry, Think Tank facilitator and the district's director of learning technology and design systems. "It's really about developing a body of evidence from the community to support changes that need to happen in our school system. The Stillwater community is telling us with consistency what needs to change."

Participants in the most recent Think Tank were asked to consider their own educational experiences, and then delve deeper into the

current education system. They discussed the skills they believe students need for success in the workplace, and what experiences students should have in school to ensure those skills are developed. They talked very little about standards and testing, or even specific courses or curriculum. Instead, participants focused on things like developing empathy in students, instilling grit and determination, and expanding connections to the community.

"I love that our district leadership wants to engage the community in this way," said Brent Voight, Divisional Strategy Director at The Salvation Army Northern Division and parent of students in the district. "The opportunity to shape what the district will look like in the future is a blessing in this community. As I've had the opportunity to be involved with district staff and leadership, I've seen how capable they are in leading and how passionate they are in leading well this district."

Two more Think Tanks are being planned for this year, with a culmination event to celebrate this work coming in the spring.

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versus the reaction that a black man received in the same scenario.

"Many of our conversations about certain topics are really deep," Engelkes said. "We have courageous conversations with our classes and talk about things that really affect kids."

The teachers said that, depending on life experience, some students arrive naïve about some subjects, and more aware of others. Some students, they said, thought that racism ended with the Civil Rights Movement, while others are able to address topics such as stereotypes of the transgender community in ways that are "so advanced," according to the teachers. "The students are very open minded with some topics that adults struggle with," Engelkes said. "But this is their life and they are comfortable with each other."

The students also said they now view advertisements and movies with a different eye. "It is kind of scary how they use colors to make you feel happy and buy things," said a student. "And I notice the loaded words they use," said another, "like fabulous, ultra, amazing." One girl said she and her little brother stopped watching a movie after she explained to him that the female character was being portrayed in stereotypical ways by always being saved by the male hero. "It was displeasing," she said.

At the end of the first unit, the students choose an issue, team up with classmates

and create 30- to 90-second public service announcements. They incorporate all they learned about the media's persuasion techniques to try to influence viewers to see the topic from their point of view. For many students, it is their first real video editing experience. However, the teachers noted that being in front of the camera seems to come naturally to this generation of students. "These kids are so used to having their picture taken and being on camera," Engelkes said. She noted that she used to have to check-out video cameras from the media center for the project. Now, students use their cell phones.

"These kids are technologically literate — it is how they get information, communicate with one another, and how they spend their free time," Engelkes said. "Some of the student work is truly fantastic!" said Schoenecker, referring to the PSA projects. "Our goal in this class is to help students be successful in the 21st century."

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BCS Work Program Helps Special Needs Students Find Success

Christiaan Tarbox
Sun Post Newspapers

A special education work experience program at Brooklyn Center Secondary School is helping students find confidence in preparing themselves for the workplace and individual living.

The program, piloted last spring and in its first full year of operation for the 2015–16 school year, helps special education students with an individualized education program, or IEP, gain experience in a work environment to better prepare themselves for life after high school.

“We focus on three areas: postsecondary education and training, employment and independent living,” said BCS Special Education Coordinator Jennifer Tousignant. “Throughout high school, we need to make sure that their IEPs align to those three areas. For some students, that means taking all general education classes and going on to college, but having some support.”

However, some IEPs will determine that college isn’t always the best course of action after high school, depending on a student’s needs and skill set. Case managers offer students help on organizational skills, time management and other aspects of individual living.

The need for work experience necessitates the program connecting students with

local businesses to gain employment and communication skills. Currently, the program is partnered with the YMCA, Arc Value Village and the Prism food shelf.

“For the students who work at the Y, one student works in the childcare area, one works the front desk, one does janitorial work and one’s a floater,” said Tousignant. “While they’re at the Y, they do rotations so they get experience in each of those four areas. They’re learning a variety of skills, but then we’re also figuring out what they enjoy, what they don’t like, what they’re good at.”

Although the experiences aren’t paid, students earn school credit for working an equivalent of three class periods a day. One student in particular, 12th-grader Isaiah Hudson, saw success in his participation with the program. His work at the YMCA was so well received that he ended up being offered a paid job in its childcare center.

“I recommend people with disabilities to go through it,” said Hudson. “At first, I thought it wasn’t going to be good, but when I did it, I was like, ‘It’s cool.’ And then it got me a job!”

In addition to helping students like Hudson gain work and life skills during high school, the program also helps students find postsecondary connections to continue fostering their skill-building after graduation.

“All students who receive special ed ser-

vices have the right to a free and appropriate education until they’re 21,” said Tousignant. “Isaiah will be transitioning to a transition program that really focuses on those three transition areas. He’ll be transitioning on to a program that will help him figure out if he wants to get an apartment and live on his own. Does he want to stay living at his parents for a little while? What kind of job does he want?”

Brooklyn Center students generally attend postsecondary transition programs via District 287.

“If their skill set allows, they’ll go on to a postsecondary education program, or it can be a program where they can get a certificate,” said Tousignant. “It just really depends on the individual students.”

Thus far, students have been adapting to the program successfully, said Hudson’s case manager Amy Teigen.

“These students are students who struggle in the classroom. They find that they can excel, and they can do really well,” said Teigen. “So our



educational assistants are sharing with us that they’ve seen a huge improvement in confidence levels for these kids, because they’ve found a way that they can contribute and that they can make a difference. They’re able to find a way that they can feel better about themselves.”

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brooklyncenterschools.org

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Navigating MSP Airport

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

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District Bus Paraeducator Named Special Education Transportation Assistant Of The Year



Anoka-Hennepin School District
Communication and Public Relations

As a special education bus paraeducator, Shannon Hulleman's job is to assist special needs students as they ride the bus to and from school. But it's Hulleman's knack for forming connections with her students that has earned her a statewide honor.

Hulleman has been named the Special Education Transportation Assistant of the Year for 2016 by the Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation.

"Shannon really respects her students, and they know that she respects them just by how she treats them," said Jeff Mueller, transportation safety coordinator for the Anoka-Hennepin School District. "She has been working with a group of students that really needs someone who's consistent, committed, and willing to do what it takes

to provide a safe bus ride. They just needed someone like Shannon to be successful."

So dedicated is she to her students, that when she was recently in the hospital, Hulleman had the bus driver pass by her hospital window so she could wave to them. That gave them the assurance and support that they needed, Mueller said.

"With special needs students, consistency is key," he said. "We've had students have their routine broken when they've had to take a different bus on the route. And just that change, they notice that. And Shannon has been able to give them the consistency that they need to be successful."

A former day care worker for 25 years who tried retirement before deciding it wasn't for her, Hulleman said she just loves kids.

"I like to see them happy," she said. "I have nine grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren."

Hulleman works with 14 students every day, split between three schools in the morning and three in the afternoon. They include students from elementary school, middle school and high school, and they all have varying needs and abilities.

For instance, she works with two brothers — she calls them "my boys" — who are age 19, one of whom is non-verbal.

"Every day is something different," she said. "We kind of make it up as we go along. Some days are really bad, and you have to get them out of that mode and into the right mode, so it's just conversation and routine. Those are important."

Hulleman helps connect with her students by taking a keen interest in their interests, whether it's Pokemon cards or books, which she scoops up regularly at garage sales to give to them, or even Christmas catalogs

"I've spent more time going to Target and Walmart and getting the toy catalogs," she said. "They wear them out."

She said she has learned to pay attention to the little things that can make a big difference to each student, something as simple as needing to have a hood on before getting on the bus. And when they're having a tough day, she works to refocus their attention to something more positive.

"When they're anxious, you can't just point out a big truck and say, 'Hey, watch how it's carrying a load of dirt.' They don't comprehend that. So you have to find a different way to entertain them. And it might just be holding their hand," she said.

Traci Jackson, transportation secretary, said Hulleman is wonderful at what she does.

"She really gets to know her students; that's what's always impressed me," she said. "She works with students who have needed two paras to be with them in the past,

but now all they need is Shannon."

Hulleman said she cried when she found out she received the award — "It's quite an honor," she said — but she also gives credit to the bus drivers and the other paraeducators that she works with, as well as the ongoing training the district provides throughout the year.

"It really is a team effort," she said. "The schools help out, too. If there are questions you have about bullying or something, they're right there to help you. They want to know what's happening on the buses, too."

When asked how much longer she wants to be a paraeducator, she said, "forever."

"I love seeing that I'm accomplishing something with these kids. That I'm making it better for them," she said. "As long as I can walk up three steps and down the aisle of the bus, I will be doing this."

[www.anoka.k12.mn.us/
Domain/4](http://www.anoka.k12.mn.us/Domain/4)
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Navigating MSP Airport

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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 features 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)



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Student Contests and Awards

Doodle 4 Google

Doodle 4 Google is an annual program that invites kindergarten through grade 12 students in the United States to use their artistic talents to think big and redesign the Google homepage logo for millions to see. This year, students can create a doodle that tells the world “What I see for the future.”

A scholarship of \$30,000 and a technology grant of \$50,000 are awarded

Deadline: Entries are due December 2, 2016

Website: doodles.google.com/d4g

eCYBERMISSION

eCYBERMISSION is a web-based science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) competition free for students in grades 6 through 9 where teams can compete for state, regional, and national awards while working to solve problems in their communities. Teams must choose a Mission Challenge then identify a specific community problem that can be addressed through research and experiments. This year’s Mission Challenges include alternative sources of energy; environment; food, health, and fitness; forces and motion; national security and safety; robotics; and technology.

Deadline: Team registration deadline is December 7, 2016

Website: www.ecybermission.com/HowToCompete

Extreme Redesign Contest 3-D Printing Challenge

The Extreme Redesign Contest 3-D Printing Challenge is an annual competition open to students worldwide. Students work alone or in a team of two to design an original piece

of art, jewelry or architecture, or to make an existing design better. Winning entries must be creative, mechanically sound, and realistically achievable. There are three contest categories:

- Engineering: secondary education is open to students in middle school and high school.

- Engineering: postsecondary is open to university, college, or postsecondary school students.

- Art, Jewelry and Architecture: open to students of any grade level.

Scholarships of \$2,500 for a first-place winner, and \$1,000 each for second-place winners are awarded

Deadline: Entries are due March 9, 2017

Website: www.stratasys.com/industries/education/extreme-redesign

Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision Competition

ExploraVision is a science competition that engages students in research and development, with students on the winning teams receiving prizes of US savings bonds. Working in teams of two, three, or four members, students study a technology of interest and predict what that technology might be like in 20 years, and then explore what is necessary to make their visions a reality.

Deadline: Projects are due February 6, 2017

Website: www.exploravision.org/what-exploravision

World of 7 Billion Student Video Contest

Population Education is sponsoring a video contest open to all middle and high school students in grades 6 through 12. Contest

entrants create a short video of 60 seconds or less that illustrates the connection between population growth and one of three global challenges. All videos must include how population growth impacts the issue and provide at least one idea for a sustainable solution.

Deadline: Entries are due February 23, 2017

Website: www.worldof7billion.org/student-video-contest

World Series of Innovation

The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship’s (NFTE) World Series of Innovation is a fun, experiential activity that allows students ages 14 to 24 to think creatively and invent new products or services that address everyday opportunities. All students are encouraged to participate to develop their creativity and innovative thinking skills.

The winning students receive \$2,000 to share and a prize of \$500 for their school or other nonprofit youth serving organization. Winners may also receive prizes from their category’s sponsor.

Deadline: Submissions are due December 15, 2016

Website: innovation.nfte.com

C-SPAN’s StudentCam Video Documentary Competition

C-SPAN’s StudentCam is an annual national video documentary competition for students in grades 6 through 12. Individual students or teams of up to three students create a short video documentary on the theme of “The Three Branches and You.” Each video documentary should tell a story that demonstrates how a policy, law, or action by either the executive, legislative, or judicial branch has affected the applicant’s community.

Deadline: February 15, 2017

Website: www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/teacher-of-the-year

Sara Jaffarian School Library Program Award

The Sara Jaffarian School Library Program Award is an annual award given to a school library that has conducted an exemplary program or program series in the humanities during the prior school year. The humanities program can be focused in many subject areas including, but not limited to, social studies, poetry, drama, art, music, language arts, foreign language, and culture.

Grants of \$5,000 are awarded

Deadline: Applications are accepted from February 3 through May 5, 2017

Website: www.ala.org/programming/jaffarianaward

Deadline: All entries must be uploaded by January 20, 2017

Website: www.studentcam.org

We the Students Scholarship Essay Contest

The Bill of Rights Institute seeks to help high school students understand the freedom and opportunity that the Constitution offers through programs such as the We the Students Essay Contest.

The grand-prize winning student receives \$5,000 and a scholarship to Constitutional Academy; six runners up receive \$1,250 each; eight students receive honorable mention and \$500 each; and the teachers of winners receive \$100 each

Deadline: Applications are due February 5, 2017

Website: www.billofrightsinstitute.org/engage/students-programs-events/scholarship

EngineerGirl Essay Contest

The annual EngineerGirl Essay Contest encourages students to write about the role of engineering in society and the impact it has on our world. Essays for the current contest, which is entitled, “Engineering and Animals,” should explain engineering ideas to improve life for endangered, critically endangered, and vulnerable animals.

Deadline: Essays are due February 1, 2017

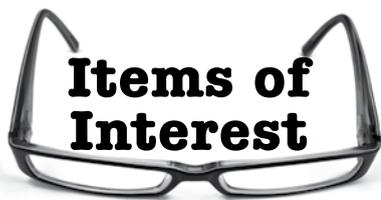
Website: www.engineergirl.org/GetThere/Contest.aspx

National Child Care Teacher Awards

The Terri Lynne Lokoff/Children’s Tylenol National Child Care Teacher Awards acknowledge the critical role of child care teachers in providing quality early care and education. As a part of the application process, each applicant is asked to design a classroom enhancement project for the children they teach, illustrating the educational, social, and emotional benefits of the project. Fifty teachers will be selected for their commitment and dedication to the children they serve. Award recipients will receive \$500 for their personal use and \$500 to implement the project.

Deadline: Apply by January 5, 2017

Website: www.tlccf.org/teacher-awards#awardspre



Alan Shepard Technology in Education Award

The Alan Shepard Technology in Education Award rewards excellence in the development and delivery of technology programs. Programs that focus on aerospace or aeronautics are given priority to other programs. The award is presented at the 32nd National Space Symposium. The winner receives a cash award of \$1,000.

Deadline: Applications due Feb. 1, 2017

Website: www.astronautsmemorial.org/alan-shepard-award.html

VFW Smart/Maher National Citizenship Education Teacher Award 2017

The VFW Teacher of the Year award contest recognizes three exceptional teachers for their outstanding commitment to teaching Americanism and patriotism to their students. Each year, a classroom elementary, junior high and high school teacher whose curriculum focuses on citizenship education topics — for at least half of the school day in a classroom environment — can be nominated for the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award. Winners receive:

- A \$1,000 award for professional development expenses.
- A \$1,000 award for his/her school.
- Two award plaques: one for the teacher, the other for his/her school.
- An all-expenses-paid trip to attend a VFW conference to receive their award.

Automotive One of Many New Pathways at Redesigned High School

Grant from Walser boosts BHS program



By John Gessner

Like never before, career exploration and preparation became part of the educational landscape at Burnsville High School when classes resumed Sept. 6.

That includes a strengthened emphasis for students eyeing work in auto repair, technology and sales, the District 191 School Board

was told Aug. 25.

The school is newly expanded to accommodate the addition of ninth-graders, with newfangled learning spaces in three new building additions. The building expansion and ongoing technology investments throughout the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage district are part of the Vision One91 referendum package

In Russ Tesmer's Consumer Auto class, students begin with a unit on consumer knowledge: to include buying, leasing, insuring, and maintaining a vehicle. Then the students disassemble an automobile and study the components and systems. While students will learn basic maintenance and repairs, emphasis is placed on how the car and its systems function. Students may choose to continue in the Automotive Vehicle Services class in which they build on this knowledge and learn how to complete more complex repairs.

The Welding/Auto-body class provides experience with oxyacetylene, arc, MIG and TIG welding equipment, along with brazing sheet metal for auto-body repair. Auto-Bodywork and Refinishing provides experience in proper technique to correct damage due to collision and rust. Students learn paint finishing and inspection on



car bodies and panels.

Tesmer's more advanced students have the opportunity to participate in a business setting within the automotive facility. Staff members can bring their vehicles in for repair and pick it up at the end of the day. There is a \$40.00 an hour flat-rate charge for this service which is split evenly between the program and the students. The students receive their earnings in the form of gift cards to purchase tools of their own.

voters approved in February 2015.

A major focus of the redesigned high school program for grades nine through 12 is the Pathways model. It offers series of classes students can use to explore careers, prepare for post-secondary education in a field of study or even find work after high school.

A \$200,000 grant from the Walser Foundation is bolstering the launch of the Engine and Automotive Technology pathway — one of four offered under Design, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies.

The automotive technology field provides more than 10,000 specialized jobs in Minnesota at a “very livable” average annual wage of \$40,940, said Kathy Funston, the district's director of strategic partnerships and pathways.

Jobs and specialties range from web programming and engineering to consumer electronics, technician and customer care, Funston said.

“When it boils right down to it, you think automotive and you think I’m fixing cars and my hands are filthy, or I’m selling a car,” said Ryan Moffit, corporate training manager for Walser Automotive Group, which funds the Walser Foundation. “Well, there’s 194 other positions just in the Walser Automotive Group alone that have nothing to do with fixing a vehicle or selling a vehicle.”

Specialties include marketing, information technology, graphic design, project management, facilities management and accounting, Moffit said.

Burnsville High School has a prime spot for its pathway — the new automotive technology lab facility built in the old bus garage on the west end of the school as part of its \$52.5 million expansion.

“You guys did a fantastic job on that automotive facility, by the way,” Moffit told the board.

The pathway includes an introduction to consumer automotive class that touches on all facets of the industry, Funston said.

More advanced coursework is available in areas such as engine technology and welding, Funston said.

“We want our students to be employable as they leave our system or ready to go to that next level of training in the automotive industry,” Funston said. “We also want to increase (the number of) underrepresented students that are participating in this program.”

Students in the pathway will have the

opportunity to earn eight credits from Hennepin Technical College, Funston said. They can also seek internships and enter skills competitions, she said.

Internships are available at “all levels” in the Walser Automotive Group, Moffit said.

The Walser Foundation “wanted to partner with us because they saw that potential and possibility in what we were doing with Vision One91,” Funston said.

“When it boils right down to it, you think automotive and you think I’m fixing cars and my hands are filthy, or I’m selling a car,” said Ryan Moffit, corporate training manager for Walser Automotive Group. “Well, there are 194 other positions just in the Walser Automotive Group alone that have nothing to do with fixing a vehicle or selling a vehicle.”

Career fields and pathways

The other pathways in the Design, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies field are:

- Architecture and Construction.
- Manufacturing.
- Engineering, Design and Technology.

Under the Arts, Global Communications and Information Systems field, pathways are:

- Visual and Performing Arts.
- Journalism and broadcasting.
- Information Technology.

Under the Health Sciences and Human Services field, pathways are:

- Health Sciences.
- Education.
- Government and Community Services.

Under the Business, Management and Entrepreneurship field, pathways are:

- Marketing.
- Finance.
- Business, Management and Administration.
- Hospitality and Tourism.

All ninth-graders will take a one-semester course, Success 191, to help them learn about themselves and their interests and begin planning their futures.

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Mock Crash has Real Impact for MWHS Students



Becca Neuger
Communications Coordinator
Westonka Public Schools

In the time it takes to read a text message while traveling at 55 mph, you have gone approximately 100 yards. That's like driving the entire length of a football field blindfolded.

On Wednesday morning, Sept. 28, Mound Westonka High School students in grades 10-12 came face-to-face with the consequences of distracted driving. Blue tarps covering a pair of smashed vehicles were removed to reveal their bloody classmate lying unmoving on the cement. MWHS students involved in Homecoming festivities had crashed head on into a car carrying their classmates because the driver had been texting.

From a grassy hill overlooking the high school parking lot, students watched as their peers screamed and cried into the phone to the 9-1-1 operator as they waited for help to arrive. They watched as a one of their classmates was pried from the car and loaded into

an ambulance. They watched as another classmate, who never regained consciousness, was airlifted by helicopter to a nearby hospital. They watched as the young driver was placed in handcuffs and loaded into the back of a squad car.

They watched as the medical examiners and fire fighters zipped their friend into a body bag.

The mock crash was organized by MWHS Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), school staff and administration, and local emergency personnel to illustrate some of the realities of distracted driving. The

actors were all MWHS students, and the emergency responders were real.

First responders from the Minnetrista Police Department, Mound Fire Department, North Memorial Ambulance, North Memorial Air Care and Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office donated their time, and a grant funded the parts of the event that were not donated.

[T]he simulation was held before Homecoming to encourage students to think twice before making life-changing decisions. Minnetrista Police Sergeant Pat Cummings, who narrated the mock crash, repeated the takeaway message several times: "This is 100 percent preventable. It doesn't have to happen."

The student actors, who were also volunteers, were MWHS seniors Noah Brammer, Max Taggart, Charley Hagen, Nate Leif, Megan Martin, Abbie Dierbeck and Tori McCann; juniors Shelby Cooper and Piper Bruce; and sophomores Sarah Brammer, Emma Jordahl, Joey Colianni and Kris Kurtz. Several other students, staff and volunteers helped to organize, set up and film the event.

According to MWHS Assistant Principal Marty Fischer, the simulation was held before Homecoming to encourage students to think twice before making life-changing decisions. Minnetrista Police Sergeant Pat Cummings, who narrated the mock crash, repeated the takeaway message several times: "This is 100 percent preventable. It doesn't have to happen."

Distracted driving, Sergeant Cummings explained, is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. This includes sending or reading text messages, talking on the phone, eating or drinking, using a navigation system or chang-



ing the radio station. Every day, 11 teenagers die because they are texting behind the wheel.

MWHS has made it a priority each year to educate students about the dangers of reckless driving, which includes being impaired by drugs or alcohol, speeding, texting or becoming distracted. A similar mock crash held before prom in 2015 focused on the consequences of drinking and driving.

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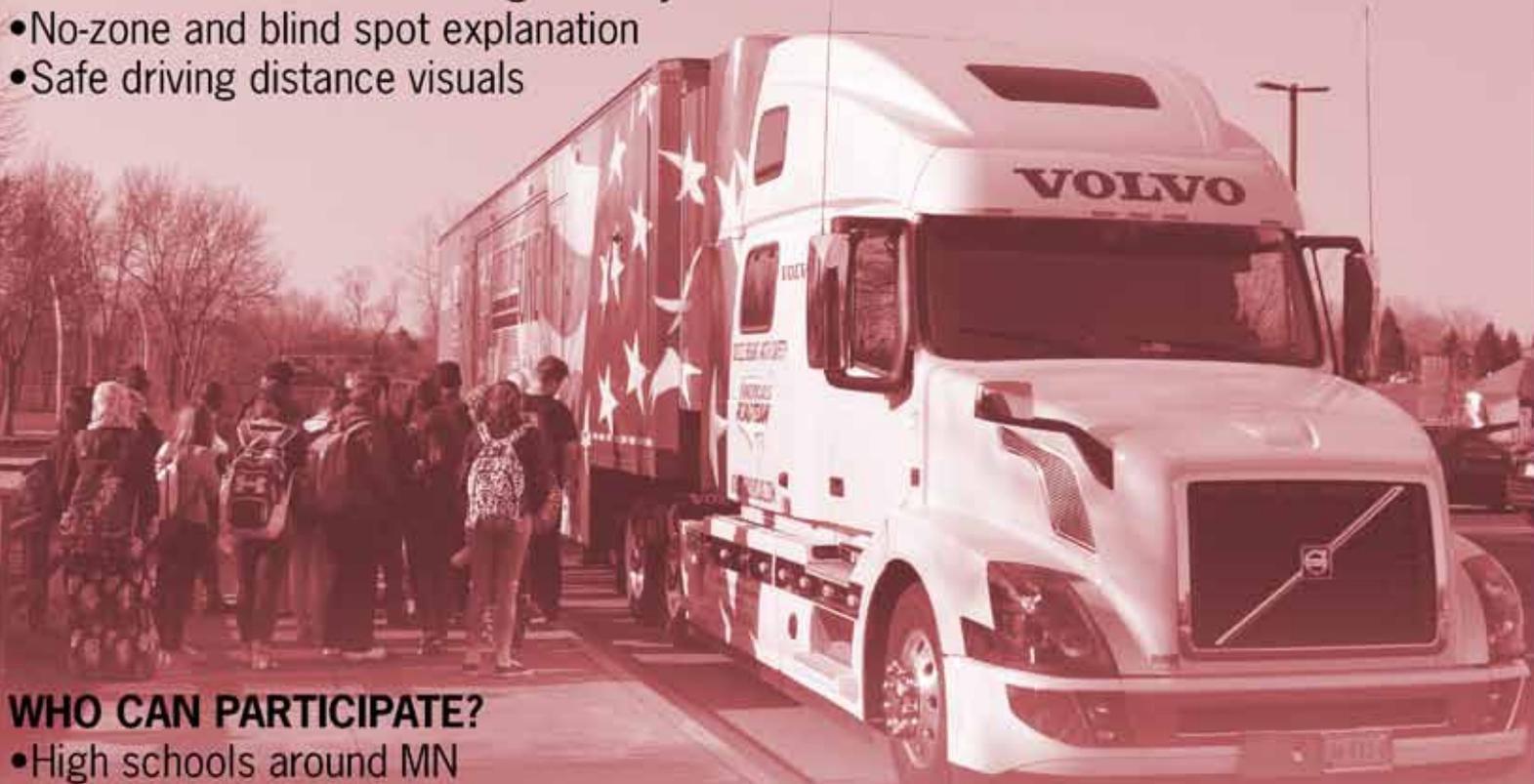
WHAT IS SHARE THE ROAD?

Share the Road is a highway safety program of the Minnesota Trucking Association that teaches high school students how to share the road with large trucks.

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- No-zone and blind spot explanation
- Safe driving distance visuals



WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

- High schools around MN
- All 9-12 graders
- Drivers Education Programs

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Fridley Schools' Cindy McKay named 'Transportation Administrator of the Year'



Photo Credit: David Webber, Fridley Public Schools

By Sam Lenhart

Cindy McKay of Fridley Public Schools was awarded the Transportation Administrator of the Year Award from the Minnesota Association

for Pupil Transportation during the July 19 School Board meeting. The award is presented annually to an individual who exemplifies outstanding qualities that support and further the

mission of the Minnesota Association.

"I was just overwhelmed when I got this," said McKay. "It is a huge honor for me. Taking care of the students is a passion and I am so fortunate and blessed to work at Fridley Public Schools. The great staff here is so helpful and has really grasped onto my passions."

The Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation is a non-profit association of school transportation professionals and industry leaders who promote safe and efficient student transportation in Minnesota. The organization, founded in 1975, aims to develop a working relationship with the total school system to foster the progress and improvement of the educational program.

McKay began her career with Fridley Public Schools as a part-time transportation assistant in 2012 and took the full-time position of transportation coordinator just six months later.

"Cindy is continually looking to make the districts transportation world a better place," said MAPT President Derrick Agate. "Whether it is with GIS, new cameras, safety seats, route

exchanges or the district wide coloring contests to raise bus safety awareness . . . She is an amazing advocate for that."

Additionally, McKay has made significant progress updating the districts transportation website. She has worked alongside district personnel to fill the site with useful and educational information for parents.

"Since she has arrived she has been such a hard worker" said Agate. "Safety is always Cindy's priority. Once she got settled in

her position she put together a bus evacuation program and ensured that everyone involved would be able to practice safe bus evacuation.

Reprinted with permission from the Sun Focus

"Cindy is continually looking to make the districts transportation world a better place," said MAPT President Derrick Agate. "Whether it is with GIS, new cameras, safety seats, route exchanges or the district wide coloring contests to raise bus safety awareness . . . She is an amazing advocate for that."

www.fridley.k12.mn.us
(763) 502-5000

2017 Poster Contest

What Is It?
A design contest to encourage students to THINK about all elements of school bus safety. 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.

Who May Enter?
The School Bus Safety Poster Contest is open to all K-12 students.

Rules:
The 2017 theme is: "My Driver - My Safety Hero!" This theme must appear in writing or printing in all posters submitted. Drawings must be original, correct in safety concept, and the exclusive work of the student entering the contest in idea, design and execution. All artwork should be positive in approach, demonstrating only proper school bus safety behaviors. At least a part of a yellow school bus must be present in the poster. [Click here for official rules](#) and [click here for an entry form](#). All participating schools will be sent a link to vote online in April 2017.

Prizes:
The student in the winning grade from each category will receive a certificate of recognition and a \$35 gift card to Barnes & Noble. If the entry is forwarded to the National Contest, the student will receive, instead, a \$50 gift card from Barnes & Noble. National Contest awards cash prizes. Top State winners will also be invited to and recognized at a Minnesota Twins game.

Deadline:
March 31, 2017

Questions?
Contact **Cindy McKay**
Cindy.McKay@fridley.k12.mn.us
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Art Connects Community

By Carissa Hopkins-Hoel
St. Cloud Area School District 742

Nothing connects communities quite like art. Especially when the artwork is done by students from multiple communities.

Each year, Apollo High School and Tech High School participate in an art collaboration with other area schools: Becker, Foley and Sauk Rapids-Rice.

The art collaboration formed by these schools is in its seventh year.

This year's project was funded by a Central Minnesota Arts grant. The allocated funds are used for student murals. The goal of the collaboration is to ensure students are making a community impact and using 21st century learning.

Each year a professional artist is brought into the collaboration to work alongside the students and art teachers in the classroom.

Bob McCoy was this year's artist.

McCoy is a local painter of abstract and landscape art. He assisted with the design, layout and painting of all the murals that are displayed at Promise Neighborhood.

Promise Neighborhood is a family, community and parent-focused organization helping to support home and community aspirations. It is located in the Talahi neighborhood of St. Cloud.

Each school had a different theme and artistic style for their murals. And each mural

was comprised of many panels with two or three students assigned to a panel.

While Apollo student Maddie Powell painted a sunflower, she explained, "The sunflower [to me] is light and bright. It represents happiness."

Alex Gonzalez chimed in, "Happiness creates happy!"

"For Promise Neighborhood, the flower represents growth," said Gabby Sanchez.

Apollo chose a landscape of Promise Neighborhood with silhouettes of children and adults interacting around the building.

Mitchell Miller and Jose Guzman, Apollo students, worked on a silhouette of a child sitting on the ground. To them, the child represents learning.

This year, the art teachers decided to create art that impacts a space. With 50 to 60 students working on the murals, they were able to cover a large area. With only two weeks to finish the project, it was a large undertaking.

Mike Carson, art teacher at Foley High School, is a past student teacher at Apollo. He and Apollo art teacher, Andrea Burriss, met while working on their master's degrees.

Carson and Burriss wanted to do a project-based collaboration.

"It is important that what the kids do is authentic," said Carson. "Because they can smell it if it isn't."



Carson believes the reason kids "want in" on the collaboration is because the projects in the past have been so good.

According to Joni Eichler, art teacher at Becker High School, "I think they're mostly excited to do something good and art is mostly done in isolation. It was fun for them to do it together."

However, the Becker students all agreed having McCoy in the classroom was the "funnest" part of the project.

Faisa Ali is a Tech 10th-grader. Her original artwork was chosen for Tech's mural. Her inspiration came from another artist she admires.

One of the murals done by Sauk Rapids-Rice students is a comic strip style.

Shaelynn Waseka, a 12th-grader at Sauk

Rapids-Rice, explained, "We wanted to do a bubble. Then, the dinosaur was brought in and then space."

The other mural created by Sauk Rapids-Rice uses zentangle patterns to create the plants and wildlife in their natural landscape scene.

In the end, students, teachers and volunteers from five area schools brought together a stronger sense of community among themselves as well as to the Talahi neighborhood of St. Cloud.

stcloud742.schoolwires.net
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Six Schools Validated as 2016–2017 Minnesota Schools of Excellence

A Vanguard in Minnesota Education



Six Elementary Schools have been validated as a Minnesota School of Excellence by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA). This prestigious honor was awarded to the schools for their commitment to 21st century teaching and learning.

The Minnesota School of Excellence Program promotes excellence through a rigorous evaluation process that showcases dynamic schools of the 21st century. Established by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association, the program is rec-

ognized by the Minnesota Department of Education, as well as the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and was nominated for the Brock International Prize in Education – which "recognizes particular innovations and achievements in the field of education."

MESPA endorses schools whose principal, staff, students, and community -- working as a team -- demonstrate the desire to strengthen education by successfully undertaking the research-based Minnesota School of Excellence school improvement process. This includes a systematic school-wide self-study, development of a school improvement plan, and implementation of that plan. The entire Minnesota School of Excellence Program is aligned with six national standards: Learning Centered, Diverse Communities, 21st Century Learners, Quality Instruction, Knowledge and Data, Community Engagement.

Sam Richardson, chair of the School of Excellence Committee, said of the School of Excellence process, "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 the important data-driven conversations about what a high-quality 21st century learning experience should be for all students. Honoring the important work of dedicated staff, eager students, and supportive communities is an essential component of becoming a School of Excellence."

Six elementary and middle level schools achieved recognition as 2016-2017 Minnesota Schools of Excellence:

Cuyuna Range Elementary School, Crosby-Ironton Public Schools, Principal Kurt Becker

With preschool through sixth grade classes, it is our goal to nurture, direct and help each child reach his or her full potential. Enrollment at CRES is approximately 620 students with 100 staff members. The school is arranged in a "pod" system, with each pod housing a grade level and specialist classrooms. We have a "maker space" we call the Creative Cafe, a music room, a band room, an art room, a newly upgraded playground and most importantly a dedi-

cated staff that cares for each and every child.

Eagle Creek Elementary, Shakopee Public Schools, Principal Josie Koivisto

Eagle Creek Elementary opened in 2007 and has about 850 students in the Shakopee Public School District. It has about 100 staff members. An active PTO supports Eagle Creek teachers and students with activities and fundraisers. The purpose of Eagle Creek Elementary is to ensure all students learn at high levels in a safe and respectful environment. The school's motto is "If We Believe, We Can Achieve!"

Hiawatha Community School, Minneapolis Public Schools, Principal Deb Regnier

Howe Community School, Minneapolis Public Schools, Principal Kevin Oldenburg

Hiawatha Community School is located within a culturally diverse, urban community. Pre-K-2nd grade are housed at the Hiawatha Campus and 3rd-5th grade are

Continued on Page 16

Educators' Road Map to Graduate Studies

Resources to Pay for Graduate Programs

If you've been through the funding gauntlet as an undergrad, you're probably already aware that financial aid is provided by a variety of bodies, including the federal government, the state government and the university itself. On the other hand, there are few things about federal, state and university aid that change in grad school. These may make a degree more affordable than you might imagine.

Federal Financial Aid

According to the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid office, there is more than \$150 billion in federal financial aid available to college students, including graduate students attending accredited online colleges. Students can use this money to pay for a variety of academic expenses, including tuition, room and board, fees, textbooks and other academic supplies.

Federal Loans

Federal loans are borrowed money that must be repaid. In contrast to private loans, federal student loans often offer lower interest rates and more repayment options. Additionally, these do not need to be repaid until graduation and some loans may qualify for certain tax deductions.

William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program

This is the largest federal student loan program-lender. It offers Direct Unsubsidized Loans up to \$20,500 per school year, although students in certain health profession programs may receive additional unsubsidized amounts. Direct PLUS Loans, are for graduate students who need more than the maximum Direct Unsubsidized Loans to meet education costs.

Federal Perkins Loan Program

These school-administered loans are available to students with exceptional financial need who meet eligibility requirements.

Students can receive up to \$8,000 a year, depending on need, other aid, and the availability of funds at their school.

Grants

Federal Pell Grants

A Federal Pell Grant, unlike a loan, does not have to be repaid. Federal Pell Grants usually are awarded only to undergraduate students who have not earned a bachelor's or a professional degree. In some cases, however, a student enrolled in a postbaccalaureate teacher certification program might receive a Federal Pell Grant.

Savings

Section 529 Plans

You can keep Section 529 plans working for you long into graduate school:

- Don't withdraw all your 529 funds during your undergraduate years; allow some of this money to remain accruing interest.
- Consider working before graduate school and saving money for a few years.
- Keep adding money (even if you're withdrawing funds) while you're an undergraduate. You and/or your family may find state grants that match your contributions.

As always, you should talk to a trusted financial advisor about your options and evaluate your 529 approach annually.

IRA/401(k) Retirement Savings

As long as you're paying for qualified educational expenses, the IRS will allow you to withdraw funds from your IRA without having to pay the 10% additional tax for early withdrawal. However, you may have to pay income tax on part of the amount distributed.

Although it sounds great, borrowing off your 401(k) can be a slippery slope:

- You lose all the compound interest you might have earned by keeping the money in the 401(k).
- You may not be able to contribute to your 401(k) until you've cleared your loan.
- If something happens to your job (you're fired or wish to leave), you have to pay back the loan immediately.

Fellowships

Fellowships are lucrative academic awards that apply to graduate and post-graduate projects. They're typically merit-based and include famous programs like the Rhodes, Marshall and Fulbright.

Each fellowship is different. For some, you may receive a tuition waiver and a generous stipend. You may be able to conduct your own research without having to teach. You may be funded to travel overseas and work on an independent project. For others, you may be asked to complete partial repayment or a service commitment after graduation.

Website: studentaid.ed.gov/sa

National Distinguished Principals Program



The National Distinguished Principals (NDP) Program was established in 1984 as an annual event to honor exemplary elementary and middle school principals who set the pace, character, and quality of the education children receive during their early school years.

The program highlights the fundamental importance of the school principal in achieving educational excellence for pre-kindergarten through eighth grade students.

The recognition afforded by the NDP designation instills pride in principals' accomplishments and reinforces their continued leadership in helping children develop a life-long love of learning.

One principal is chosen annually from each of the 50 states and the District of Colum-

bia. Public school principals are nominated by peers in their home states, and the final selection (based on applications submitted by each nominee) are made by each state's NAESP affiliate. (MESPA selects the Minnesota NDP.) NDP awards ceremonies take place in Washington, D.C., each fall.

NDP Process Timeline:

November 3, 2017 — Materials Available: Nomination Form & Application Packet

January 2, 2017 — Nominations Due Send nominations to kelsey@mespa.net or mail to 1667 Snelling Avenue N, Suite C101, St. Paul, MN 55108.

January 23, 2017 — Applications Due Send the completed application to kelsey@mespa.net or mail to 1667 Snelling Avenue N, Suite C101, St. Paul, MN 55108.

February 1, 2017 — Three Finalists Selected
May 5, 2017 — Finalists Interviewed and MN NDP is selected

Read the full NDP process timeline at: www.mespa.net/NDP



Congratulations to our 2016 NDP: Brad Gustafson

Dr. Brad Gustafson, principal of Greenwood Elementary in the Wayzata Public School District, and a member of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA), is Minnesota's 2016 National Distinguished Principal.

"I try to balance leadership and management duties with a servant-mindset," said Dr. Gustafson in his NDP leadership statement. "This provides perspective,

vision, and balance. I ask for help when experiencing difficulty, and create conditions where our team is empowered to manage a safe and productive learning environment. By cultivating a sense of shared responsibility, those who are closest to the work become key contributors to the collective effort." He describes the foundation of a positive school climate by saying, "Building climate starts with people. I approach my work with passion and positivity because I'm thoroughly in love with our students and staff. Modeling what it looks like to be grateful for the opportunity to serve is one way to cultivate a child-centered climate."

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Birchview Elementary School – A 2016 National Blue Ribbon School!



Wayzata Public Schools

U.S. Secretary of Education, John B. King, Jr., announced that Birchview Elementary School has been named a 2016 National Blue Ribbon School. Birchview is one among 279 public and 50 private schools receiving this honor across the nation and one of only five schools in Minnesota.

“National Blue Ribbon Schools are proof that we can prepare every child for

college and meaningful careers, King said in a video message to honorees. “Your schools are on the cutting edge, pioneering innovative educational practices — professional learning communities, project-based learning, social and emotional learning, positive behavior systems — making you shining examples for your communities, your state and the nation.”

The National Blue Ribbon Schools

Program honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students achieve very high learning standards or are making notable improvements in closing the achievement gap. The award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging content.

Birchview Principal Sam Fredrickson and Robert Bevars, special education teacher represented Birchview at a two-day awards ceremony on November 7 and 8 in Washington, D.C., to celebrate their hard-won achievements.

Relationships and academics flourish at Birchview Elementary School, home of the Bobcats. As a PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) school, we focus on the “4 Cs”: striving to be a Community of learners inspiring Compassion, cultivating Commitment and creating Curiosity.

Our diverse community of learners offers students a chance to interact with many students of different cultures and ethnicities. We believe this gives each student a chance to work with others who not only look different, but also think differently too. We offer targeted instruction through WIN (What I Need) Time - a focused instructional

period of the day where each and every student receives personalized instruction. Personalized instruction is also supported as part of the Wayzata Public Schools’ MyWay initiative. MyWay is the name given to the district’s innovative approach to preparing students for life in the 21st Century that is enhanced through technology.

In addition to our emphasis on personalized learning, Birchview Elementary has a unique architecture that helps to provide an excellent learning experience for each and every student. Instead of the traditional classrooms found in many schools, Birchview is organized into “pods” throughout the building. A pod is a large room with several classrooms inside of it. This open classroom setting increases collaboration and adds to the community feel of our school. Our architecture not only brings students closer together, but has also helped create strong connections between staff members that, in turn, extend to our strong, supportive parent community.

wayzata.k12.wi.us/birchview
(763) 745-5300



2016–2017 Minnesota Schools of Excellence

Continued from Page 13

housed at the Howe Campus. The two campuses are about six blocks apart.

Each student at Hiawatha is a unique and important member of our Community. Our teachers and staff appreciate the uniqueness and work hard to recognize and nurture the many steps of a child’s developmental growth. The entire school (teachers, staff, and students!) takes an active interest in the personal and academic gains happening every day in our school. The result? A welcoming, caring, and exciting elementary school experience!

Kenny Community School, Minneapolis Public Schools, Principal William Gibbs

Kenny School is named after Sister Elizabeth Kenny, an Australian nurse who developed the Kenny method of treating poliomyelitis. The school was erected in 1954 and an addition was built in 1957. A Media/Technology Resource Center and interactive CCC Computer Lab were recently completed. Kenny School provides a nurturing educational setting where chil-

dren achieve high academic success through experiential learning that promotes nature literacy and environmental stewardship.

Randolph Elementary School, Randolph Public Schools, Principal Matt Rutledge

The 390 students in kindergarten through sixth grade receive a broad education with creative teaching. The student/teacher ratio is 17 to 1 which enables the teacher to provide individual attention to students. A three-day Lake Byllesby trip is a highlight of the social studies program. Sixth grade students camp out two nights and are joined during the day by fifth graders. As the students study fossils, botany, math, art, and physical education, they develop an understanding of the interrelationships of these fields.

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Westonka Summer Institute Students Present College-Level Research Projects



Becca Neuger
Communications Coordinator
Westonka Public Schools

Upon completion of a university-style research course in Costa Rica last June, Westonka Summer Institute participants were prepared to present and defend their scientific experiments in great depth at the Oct. 10 school board meeting. During their 10-day adventure, a group of 10 Mound Westonka High School students dove into scientific research, were immersed in Costa Rican culture and explored the rainforest.

The 2016 WSI course focused specifically on the research process. WSI lead teacher Ann Baumann was joined this year

by 2014 MWHS graduate Jack Leschisin, who is currently studying neuroscience. Leschisin, a former WSI participant, led the high schoolers through their hands-on scientific ventures.

Prior to departing for Costa Rica, students mastered the process of conducting scientific research, modeling the expectations that are the educational standard in a university biology course. When they arrived in Costa Rica, the students executed the research process by conducting on-site experiments in several scientific fields.

"We didn't limit the students in what they wanted to look into," Leschisin explained. "We provided them with differ-

ent outlets, and they could dive into answers on their own."

At the board meeting, Westonka Superintendent Kevin Borg asked Leschisin if the process the WSI students followed was similar to what he has experienced in his post-secondary studies. "This is the exact same process that you would go through in your freshman and sophomore years in college," Leschisin explained. "I went through the same process myself three or four times."

The three student research teams presented their experiments and hypotheses to the school board Monday night. The "Los Monos" team of senior Ava Wagner, Olivia Stehlik and Brock Aleshire came up with an experiment that measured the effects of soil pH levels on the growth of cacao plants. The "Las Tortugas" group of seniors Abby Leschisin and Christi Wanous and junior Joelle Hoernemann explored the consequences of global warming, specifically rising sand temperatures, for the Costa Rican sea turtles population. Seniors Kali Anderson and Kristina Linder and junior Katelyn Wagner of the "Las Serpientes" research team compared the impact of wind turbine fields in Costa Rica with those in Minnesota.

Superintendent Borg thanked Jack



Leschisin for taking this year's WSI trip to a new level with the scientific research focus.

"It's great to have alumni connect with this project, but to have [Leschisin] bring that level of thought process and college-level research was highly rewarding," Borg said. "What I have to say to Jack is, 'Don't stop now.' We would love to have you back."

westonka.k12.mn.us
(852) 491-8000

Grants

Continued from Page 4

High School Weight Room Grants

The Lift Life Foundation's mission is to help provide young people with tools to improve their fitness levels and boost self-worth. The foundation provides high schools across the United States with the opportunity to have their school weight room transformed with brand-new equipment.

Deadline: Nominations are accepted year-round

Website: www.liftlifefoundation.org/#spark

Mary Lou Anderson Reflections Arts Enhancement Grants

The National PTA Mary Lou Anderson Reflections Arts Enhancement Grants provide

matching grants to local PTAs to support in-school and after-school arts enhancement programs. Grants may be used to engage families, support student success, improve the health and safety of students and families, increase access to arts education, and celebrate advocacy and diversity.

Grants up to \$1,000 are awarded

Deadline: Applications are accepted January 10 through March 17, 2017

Website: www.pta.org/members/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3101

AAUW Community Action Grants

One-year grants fund community-based projects that include clearly defined activities promoting education and equality for

women and girls with direct community or public impact. Two-year grants provide start-up funds for new projects that address local community needs and develop girls' sense of efficacy through leadership, advocacy, or training opportunities.

One-year awards range from \$2,000 to \$7,000, and two-year awards range from \$5,000 to \$10,000

Deadline: Applications are due January 15, 2017

Website: www.aauw.org/what-we-do/educational-funding-and-awards/community-action-grants

Dollar General Afterschool Literacy Award

The Afterschool Alliance, together with the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, is in search of after-school programs that have demonstrated excellence in providing literacy support to English language learner students.

Grants of \$10,000 are awarded

Deadline: Nominations are due December 16, 2016

Website: www.afterschoolalliance.org/awards.cfm

Voya Foundation Grants

The Voya Foundation supports nonprofit organizations addressing a variety of community needs and resources. The foundation maintains the following two giving priorities:

Financial education: The Voya Foundation is especially interested in programming that empowers individuals, particularly young people and minorities, to take control of their financial futures.

STEM education: The foundation is committed to supporting and improving programs that help prepare youth for the twenty-first century workforce and provide experiential STEM learning opportunities for children in kindergarten through grade eight.

Grants of \$2,500 and greater are awarded

Deadline: Applications are due December 9, 2016

Website: corporate.voya.com/corporate-responsibility/investing-communities/voya-foundation-grants



Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center



The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, located in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, is a residential environmental education facility operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center was developed to enhance and promote the understanding and conservation of the prairie pothole region, primarily through support of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.



The Center offers a variety of environmental education programs to learners of all ages, as well as teacher workshops and training sessions for wildlife professionals year-round.

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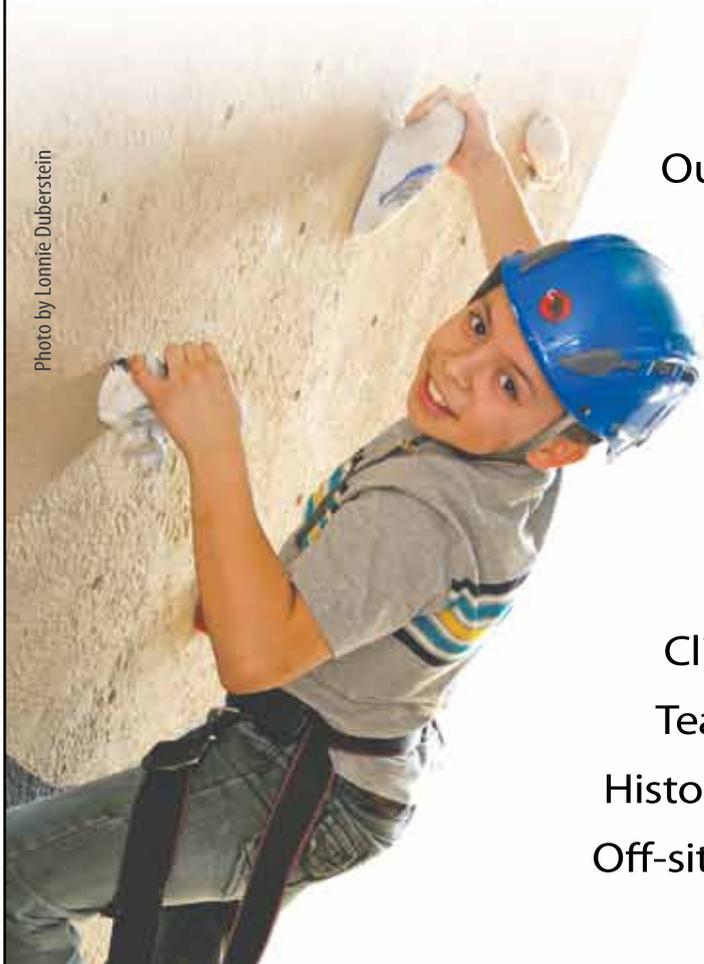
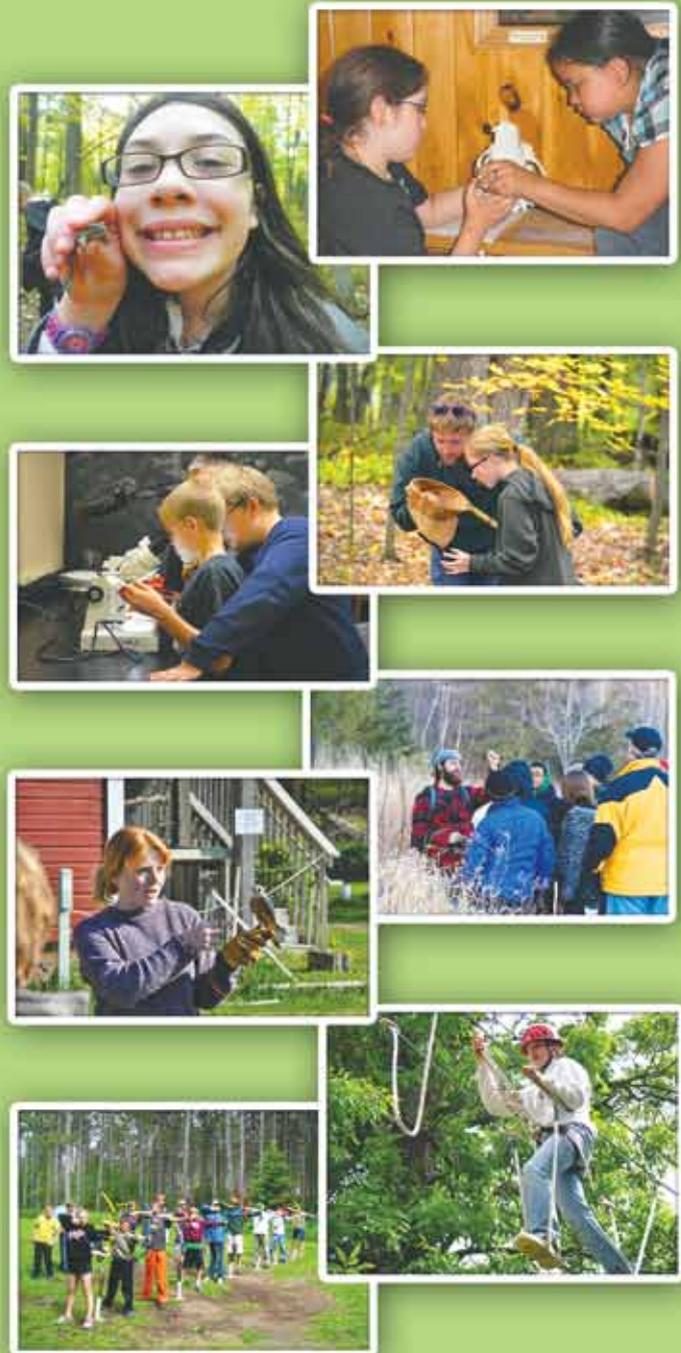


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