

A new normalcy

A Message from Superintendent Les Fujitake



A year ago this month we closed our schools amidst an unknown virus and growing worldwide pandemic. We never imagined its effect on our students, families, staff and community.

Today, as we slowly return to some semblance of normal life we pause to reflect on the far-reaching impacts COVID-19 had on almost every aspect of our lives. One area hit particularly hard is education.

Over the last year, we faced challenges and made decisions that created divisions and debate within our community. Our decision making was based on state guidance, science and the recommendations of local and state public health officials. We took bold steps and pushed to reopen schools when it was safe to do so for our students, not based on what neighboring, parochial or charter schools were doing.

We’ve learned lessons that change how we think about education.

With our students forced to learn from home, this crisis will undoubtedly have a myriad of effects on teaching and learning for the foreseeable future. How much is unknown, but it seems clear that some students will have made some degree of progress academically while others will experience a “COVID slide.”

Today as we temper our excitement over the fact that more than 75 percent of our students are learning in the classroom again, we must remain diligent in following the state’s safety guidelines to ensure we can complete this school year unlike a year ago. And, as new state guidance is expected, to have traditional proms and graduations with modifications.

The pace of vaccines in the arms of our educators and staff has reached the point where many of our teammates are receiving their second doses. A majority of our staff who chose to do so are vaccinated.

We owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to Dr. Nicholas Kelley, acting public health administrator for Bloomington Public Health, for marshaling the resources and push to get educators and school staff vaccinated. This act alone has brought a tremendous amount of comfort and peace of mind to our entire workforce.

We are well into planning to ramp up our summer programming for students. We expect to offer a mix of programs with the goal of meeting the academic and social-emotional needs of our students and preventing a further erosion of preparing our students for a new world.

Together we can, and together we did. Thank you for entrusting your children to our schools and care.

Editor’s Note: Superintendent Les Fujitake has announced he will not seek to have his contract renewed when it expires on June 30, 2021. He has indicated that he will share more about his plans and future at a later date. We will share more in the final issue of School Pages in May.

Bloomington Online School earns MDE approval

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) recently certified Bloomington Online School (BOS) to expand enrollment for a fully online learning option to students throughout Minnesota. Developed in partnership with the University of Minnesota, BOS serves K-12 students.

BOS will also serve as the distance learning option for the 2021-22 school year for currently enrolled families with pandemic-related concerns. The district plans to offer a distance learning option for the upcoming school year.



K-8 Computer Science Focus

The K-8 BOS curriculum will focus on building problem solving and design-thinking skills foundational to computer science. Building upon the computer science immersion curriculum at Poplar Bridge and Indian Mounds Elementary and Olson Middle School, BOS K-8 students will have regular computer science lessons and concepts interwoven into most subjects.

High school students will have a robust selection of courses offered online. Bloomington Public Schools is a leader in developing online courses for high school students, with more than 70 fully online courses currently

offered. In 2019-20, more than 50 percent of high school seniors had taken at least one online course.

BOS is unique among other Minnesota online schools as its curriculum is aligned with the district’s and designed by Bloomington teachers and curriculum specialists to meet the same high level of academic rigor present in traditional school.

Courses and content are tailored to the developmental needs of students at each level with a focus on creating an online learning community.

BOS teachers are district teachers with an interest and advanced training in teaching online.

“Although the launch of BOS was accelerated to meet the needs of families in the pandemic, we have years of expertise in online learning and teaching,” said John Weisser, executive director of technology and information services. “We are excited to expand BOS as an option to families throughout the region and state.”

Enroll now:

bloomington.k12.mn.us/academics/bos



OUR COMMITMENT:

Safe and Supportive Schools

Equity and access for all students have long been a focus in Bloomington Public Schools. As our own community and the world around us grows more and more diverse, it is more important than ever for our school district to be a bold leader in nurturing global citizens skilled in critical thinking and capable of demonstrating empathy, tolerance and acceptance. In June of 2020 the School Board approved a Safe and Supportive Schools resolution that commits the district to fostering a school

Here is a look at how this important work is taking place throughout our district and schools:

An inaugural cohort of about 50 staff members are participating in a year-long series of cultural proficiency training. The training is based on using an inside-out approach to transformational change at both the personal and organizational levels and is grounded in a framework and four interrelated tools: the essential elements, barriers, values and a continuum of cultural competence and

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environment that promotes respect for and curiosity about all cultures, affirms the equal humanity of all members of the community and rejects all forms of bullying and discrimination for everyone.

We believe that all our students and families have dignity and worth and we value their unique cultures and traditions. We believe it's important to acknowledge that we live in a diverse society where there is a wide range of beliefs. That regardless of individual beliefs, the way we treat people matters

proficiency. A second cohort of employees will take part in the training starting in August 2021.

Our schools are working to introduce more literature works featuring diverse characters, cultures and storylines. Throughout distance learning, Ridgeview principal Carey Seeley has recorded and shared read-aloud videos featuring the newly added books. "Distance learning enabled me to share these new books with more students and families," Seeley said. Kennedy and Jefferson will be offering an

ethnic studies course next year, expanding on students' civics and American history education. The course will include a section where students consider concepts related to their own personal, group and/or national identity.

Olson Middle School has strengthened a culture of restorative practices, which allow both youth and adults to repair, restore and improve relationships when necessary, building an environment of care and support. Ridgeview Elementary and Valley View Middle schools have also engaged in restorative practices training. An additional eight schools will begin their work in 2021-22.

Each school in the district has a site improvement plan, which includes a Safe and Supportive Schools goal and action plan aimed at growing opportunities for meaningful engagement and a climate of care. Regular reports to the School Board outline site and district goals and progress, ensuring accountability for this important work.

View the Safe and Supportive Schools resolution:

bit.ly/BPS-SSS

District renews focus on social-emotional learning

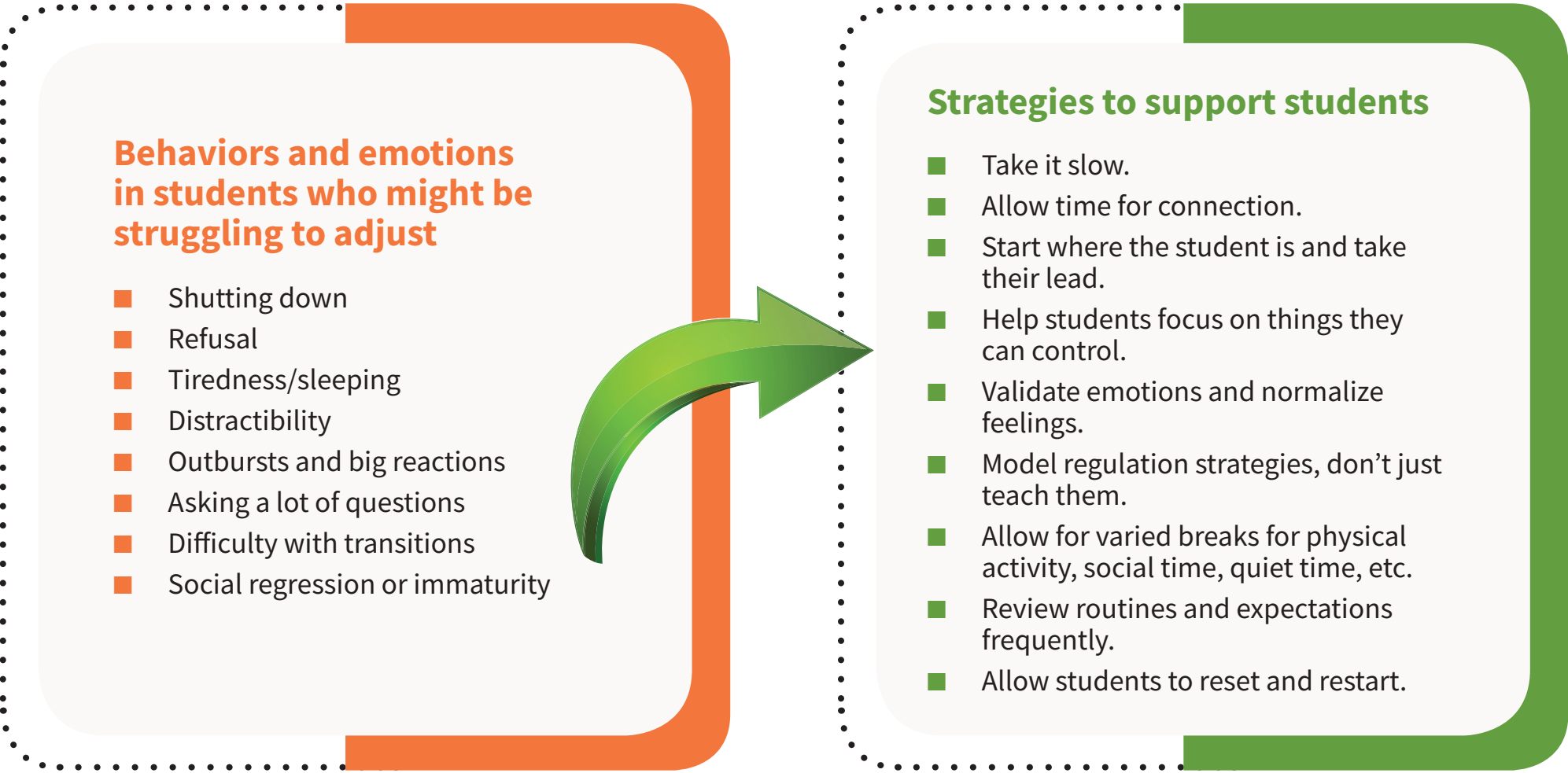
While the return to in-person learning this spring has elicited joy and excitement among many of our students and staff, we know that this is not a typical year, or “school as usual.”

Many may be dealing with anxiety about returning to in-person learning or heightened stress levels around the pandemic and other current events, so our commitment to fostering students’ social emotional well-being is paramount to creating a successful learning environment.

“Most people are dealing with some form of chronic stress,” said Kim

Lloyd, lead school psychologist. “Everyone is doing the best they can with the given circumstances -- that includes our staff, our students, our families and our community.”

In an unpredictable year, routines and structure help students feel safe and ready to learn, both in school and at home. While school staff work to build routines into the school day, families can help by maintaining healthy routines at home, such as sharing family meals and keeping consistent sleeping routines.



Social workers and school psychologists are available at each school. At the middle and high school levels, each student is assigned a counselor who can refer students to a school psychologist/social worker or an outside agency for additional support, consultation or more intensive services.

Mental health resources: bloomington.k12.mn.us/health-services/covid-19

Community Education Summer Programs



Bloomington Community Education is preparing for a summer of fun with a host of camps and classes returning for a new season, including sports, arts and crafts, STEM programming and swim lessons.

The Summer 2021 catalog will arrive in Bloomington homes in early April with registration for classes opening on April 21.

SLAM Camps will get your child excited about sports, art, chess, coding, fencing or STEM. Offered Monday–Thursday, June 14–Aug. 13, from 9 a.m.–Noon and 12:30–3:30 p.m. at Olson Middle School.

Youth and adult enrichment classes are offered in dance, soccer, horseback riding, sea kayaking and group fitness classes.

Many classes take place at off-site partner locations. Looking for rock climbing, gymnastics, or ninja camps? We have them all! New this year: multi-city tennis clinic for high school tennis players to improve their skills with a professional instructor.

For the first time, Bloomington Community Education is offering enrichment classes specifically for summer school students. Classes are Wednesdays in July from 2–3 p.m. at Oak Grove Middle School. Information on classes will be sent directly to summer school families.

Swimming lessons will be held all summer at Valley View Middle School for children, adult aquatic fitness classes and specialty

classes, including lifeguard and water safety instructor training. New this year: high school swimming 101 for students considering joining their high school swim team.

Driver’s education will continue with online classes only, featuring classroom and behind-the-wheel, or a behind-the-wheel option only for students who have taken the classroom portion at their local high school.

bloomington.k12.mn.us/ce

Registration:

[952-681-6132](tel:952-681-6132)

bloomington.ce.eleyo.com



IN THE KNOW

Updated School Year Calendars

The School Board has approved changes to school year calendars. Updated versions of the 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 calendars are available in English, Spanish and Somali:

bloomington.k12.mn.us/calendar

Register for Preschool

Learn and grow with us and help your child build a love of learning! Our early childhood and preschool classes help prepare parents and kids for a successful start to kindergarten and their school years.

Registration is now open for

- Preschool for 3s
- Preschools for 4s
- Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)

We offer in-person and distance learning class options, and tuition assistance is available.

bit.ly/bps-enroll-prek



All district employees who wish to receive the COVID-19 vaccine have been offered the opportunity to be vaccinated, including non-teaching staff. Thank you to Bloomington Public Health for prioritizing educators and school staff in their vaccination roll-out.

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Bloomington, MN 55431-4126

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Permit #2086

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RESIDENTIAL POSTAL CUSTOMER

School Pages is published by Bloomington Public Schools
1350 W. 106th Street
Bloomington, MN 55431-4126
www.bloomingtonschools.org

School Pages is printed and delivered by mail to 39,700 Bloomington households at a cost of 15 cents per copy to inform Bloomington residents about their public schools.

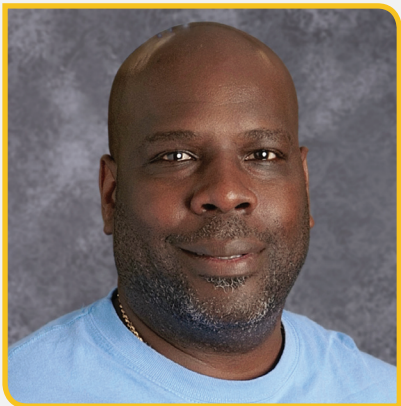
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POINTS OF PRIDE



- Valley View Middle School paraprofessional **Darringer Funches** is this year's recipient of the Omar Bonderud Human Rights Award, presented by the City of Bloomington's Human Rights Commission. It is awarded annually to an individual, organization or business that has made a significant contribution towards ensuring the rights of people in Bloomington.

- **Logan Dosan** and **Libby Lozinski** (Kennedy) and **Sydney Walworth** (Jefferson) are this year's state high school league's ExCEL (Excellence in Community, Education and Leadership) Award nominees, which recognizes high school juniors active in school activities, demonstrate leadership qualities and volunteer in their communities.

- **Carina Bustos** and **Tuan Dinh** (Kennedy) and **Addison Schloo** and **Joseph Carpenter** (Jefferson) are this year's Triple A (Academics, Arts, Athletics) Award nominees. Triple A nominees are high school seniors recognized for involvement in state high school league activities while maintaining high academic standing.

- **Alexander Carpenter**, **Benjamin Carpenter**, **Joseph Carpenter**, **Amy Wang** and **Xiaoxin Zeng** (Jefferson) are National Merit Scholarship finalists.



- Director of the Office of Educational Equity **Dinna Wade-Ardley** is recognized as a pioneer and changemaker by the City of Bloomington. The profile series recognition features Black leaders with a connection to Bloomington.

- Jefferson and Kennedy students recognized in this year's Minnesota Scholastic Art Competition:

Gold Keys:

Brianna Dotter, **Laci Lorenzen**, **Natalie Manro**, **Lillian Nix**, **Nicole Osness**, **Ally Palmquist**, **Olivia Penrose**, **Isak Sevig**, **Noreen Si**, **Joey Stedman**

Silver Keys:

Sophi Bromenshenkel, **Brianna Dotter**, **Synnove Erickson**, **Mary Hergott**, **Mansur Omar**, **Ally Palmquist**, **Olivia Penrose**, **Noreen Si**, **Arielle Swanson**

Honorable Mention:

Gloria Bauch, **Peyton Baumgartner**, **Romero Cummings**, **Jonathan Engebretson**, **Alexis Raskin**, **Isak Sevig**, **Anja Urbanz**, **Evelyn Vara**

- **Isabelle Lynch** and **Molly Arnold** are the 2021 Athena Award winners from Jefferson and Kennedy high schools respectively. The Athena Award honors outstanding female athletes in each school's senior class.



- Jefferson High School language arts teacher **Nick Hupton** is one of 25 semifinalists for the 2021 Minnesota Teacher of the Year award.

- Digital Learning Coordinator **Holly Skadsem** and elementary tech integration team members **Tim Kaari**, **Ray Cannon**, **Devin Tomczik**, **Becka Schulz**, **Ali Holshouser** and **Cristin Caruso** were featured as part of Seesaw's worldwide virtual event this spring. Skadsem's course "Building Consistent Seesaw Practices," and the elementary tech team's "Learn outside the box" video were part of the event.

- **Bloomington Community Education** was awarded a 2020 Minnesota Community Education Association award for Bloomington Bookfest. The award is in recognition of the project's community impact, use of resources, achievement and cooperation/teamwork. More than 600 families attended the February 2020 event at Oak Grove Middle School.