

# A Final Farewell

A Message from Superintendent Les Fujitake



For the past 26 years, I’ve had the wonderful honor and privilege to serve our amazing community and school system. Leading Bloomington Public Schools has been so rewarding and such a joy in my life. The work as superintendent has been challenging but, without

question, has blessed me with so many amazing memories. I have been extremely fortunate to have worked alongside wonderful educators and staff who have answered the noble call of educating our most precious resource. Their dedication, commitment and care

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for students and each other is humbling. I owe special thanks and recognition to my Executive Assistant Deb Bunkholt for her 50-plus years of unwavering service and for being my trusted partner, providing me priceless guidance and support.

What has been most valued by me is our city’s wealth of social capital—people working together to make our community a great place to live and our schools a safe place to learn and grow. The generosity, volunteerism and valuing of education by parents, caregivers, business and civic leaders, retired educators and community residents has enabled us to have one of the most innovative and progressive school systems in Minnesota. There is a lot to be proud of that we’ve accomplished together.

The hiring of our former assistant superintendent, Dr. Eric Melbye as the next superintendent ensures that our schools will continue to prepare the children of our community for lifelong success.

Thank you for your commitment and support, and my best wishes to you all for continued success and unity.

Aloha!

## Dr. Eric Melbye selected as new superintendent



The Bloomington School Board unanimously approved the selection of Dr. Eric Melbye to become the next superintendent of schools. He becomes the ninth superintendent in the district’s 100-plus year history. The school board will begin contract negotiations with Melbye with the goal of having a contract approved at its May 10 meeting.

Melbye is the current associate superintendent for middle schools and student services in the Anoka-Hennepin School District. He will replace Les Fujitake, who is leaving after 26 years with Bloomington

Public Schools, the last 15 years as its superintendent.

“I’m humbled and honored to return to a district I know and love, and eager to work with the school board, staff, students and families to set a new vision and priorities to achieve greater success,” said Melbye. “Bloomington is a special community and school district.”

Melbye is no stranger to Bloomington. He served as assistant superintendent (2015-19), executive director of student services (2010-15), and special education supervisor (2003-06). He also spent 16 years in

a variety of teaching and leadership positions with the Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative in Chaska.

“Dr. Melbye possesses the qualifications, experience and familiarity of our district to carry on the great work of our teachers, staff and administrators,” said Chair Nelly Korman. “He has a vision and skills to move the district forward.”

Melbye earned his graduate, educational specialist and doctorate degrees from the University of St. Thomas, and an undergraduate degree from Minnesota State University, Moorhead.





MY GREATEST CHALLENGE THIS SCHOOL YEAR WAS ...

Not having that peer help. Also communication with teachers. Sometimes it was hard to get in touch with teachers.

— JAZZMYN, GRADE 9

The lack of interaction with my peers and teachers.

— FATOU, GRADE 12

Not getting one-on-one time with my teachers, and not being in school.

— WILLA, GRADE 10

Not hugging my students when they needed a hug.

— CAROL, STAFF

Staying positive.

— DEBBIE, PARENT

Engaging each and every student.

— EMILY, STAFF

ONE SILVER LINING OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR HAS BEEN ...

Going back to school.

— MANUAL, GRADE 9

Having more time to get my work done and being on a less structured schedule.

— AMINATA, GRADE 10

The endless amounts of opportunity and possibilities that the future holds for me.

— FATOUMATA, GRADE 12

PANDEMIC perspectives

I was able to see more of my daughter before she goes to college.

— CHRISTY, PARENT

The transformation of using technology as a tool. Paired with relationships, this could be great.

— KIMBERLY, STAFF

Witnessing the resilience, creativity and community building that occurred.

— SARAH, STAFF

The global pandemic showed us where we need change, improvement and reform in public schools. Our students deserve a quality education with humanity and equity at its core.

— LETICIA, STAFF

IF I COULD SUM UP THIS SCHOOL YEAR IN A PANDEMIC, IT WOULD BE ...

Hectic at most, there were endless amount of changes it was hard to cope.

— ROMERO, GRADE 12

A roller coaster—you never knew what was coming next but you always had to be ready.

— ANA, GRADE 10

Very interesting.

— JA'SHAUN, GRADE 9

Disaster because it wasn't fun but not bad as well.

— YAEL, GRADE 9

An opportunity for us to build resilience.

— CHRISTY, PARENT

With a heavy sigh and a hopeful glimmer in the eye.

— EMILY, STAFF

I don't like synchronous, asynchronous or hybrid learning. I like in-school learning.

— SUE, PARENT

MY GREATEST WISH FOR NEXT YEAR IS ...

To be less work then it is now.

— DOMINIC, GRADE 11

To talk to more friends.

— AARON, GRADE 9

For COVID to be less severe.

— JANAYSIA, GRADE 9

That there is no COVID.  
— JA'SHAUN, GRADE 9  
For everyone to be able to come back.

— MANUEL, GRADE 9  
A safe return to in person instruction for all who want/need it. Preferably, with as many adults/ children vaccinated as possible.

— CARLA, PARENT  
A normal year. I don't need wows, just a nice normal year.

— DEBBIE, PARENT  
For our families to feel included, and a part of their child's education and school experience.

— LETICIA, STAFF  
We allow for flexibility and combine our new learning of technology with traditional school to create something new.

— KIMBERLY, STAFF  
Loss, grief and societal issues —poverty, inequality and racial justice—must be part of ongoing discussions in our schools and community. Let's use this time to heal, build community and come together.

— DAVID, PARENT  
We will be back to a more "normal" year, but with the knowledge of all we've learned to appreciate from this year.

— CAROLE, STAFF  
Not returning to normal, but seeing us learn from the trials of the pandemic and improve for our students, staff and community.

— RICHARD, STAFF

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS: Pandemic Reflection

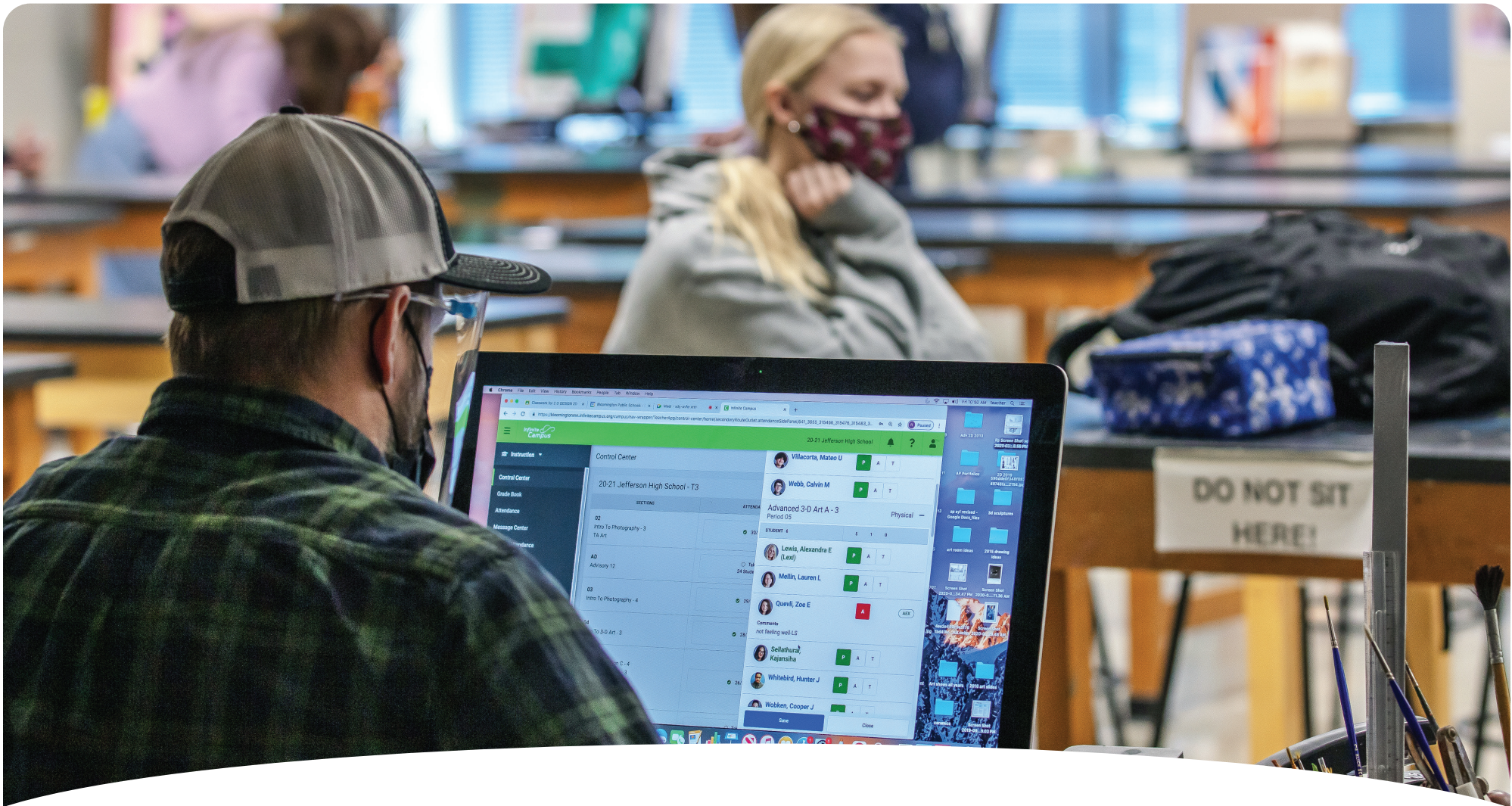
Dinna Wade-Ardley  
Director, Office of Educational Equity

What a school year this has been for all of us! A new normal is in the making. A new way of schooling provided a better understanding of how technology and education are integrated within our homes and classrooms. Students had to learn a new way to do school and life, many of them navigating online learning for the first time. Teachers had to learn to be educators in their own homes and through a virtual lens. Parents and families stepped up to the task of supporting their children's learning at home. As we transitioned several times from distance

learning to in-person learning at school and back again, we continued to keep safety and the best interests of our students in mind. We have moved through this pandemic with as much grace and poise as possible. I believe that this pandemic has brought our BPS community closer than ever before. Our new normal will be brighter for all students as we continue to guide and facilitate learning for all. Another pandemic we must face with grace and dignity is mistreatment and hatred toward some people. I continue to ponder what the new normal will look and feel like. How does BPS and the Bloomington community ensure success for every

one of our students, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, religion, language or socio-economic status? Although there are many unknowns and new questions to be addressed, I firmly believe there we are stronger in our diversity. We are only as strong as the people who believe the best community is one that is safe, welcoming and caring for all, no matter your background. I believe in our community. I believe we can be better, do better. When we can look each other in the eye with true respect for one another, that is when we will be the great BPS I know we can be.





# Introducing New Code Academy

Bloomington Online School has new name, computer science focus



New Code Academy offers a rich and engaging online education with a robust curriculum infused with computer science to ensure all students learn the critical and design thinking and problem-solving skills they'll need today and in the future. The curriculum offers a high quality, standards-aligned online learning experience created and taught by licensed Bloomington Public School teachers with training in online course

design and instruction. Courses hold students to the same level of rigor and assessment as equivalent face-to-face classes. The new name and brand reflect the program's certification as a K-12 online school by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), allowing students from across the state to enroll.

[newcodeacademy.org](https://newcodeacademy.org)

**2021-22 Remote Learning Option**  
While MDE has not released updated school guidance for the 2021-22 school year, we anticipate a return to in-person learning and pre-pandemic normalcy as much as possible. For families who wish to continue online, BPS plans to offer a remote learning option for the 2021-22 school year through New Code Academy.

## SUMMER PROGRAMMING OFFERS ENGAGEMENT, KEEPS STUDENTS ON TRACK

After a year of ongoing changes and challenges for our students, including significant time spent in distance learning, district teams have worked together to plan an engaging and collaborative summer school experience for our students.

Our Learning Supports and Office of Educational Equity will team up to offer an elementary program centered on social and environmental justice with the goals of ensuring all students

- feel they are part of the summer school community,
- see themselves in the curriculum,
- engage in social/emotional learning (SEL) with their peers,
- experience empowerment, and
- spend as much time as possible outdoors.

In the upper elementary grades, this includes a partnership with the Watershed District focused on learning about watersheds and hydrology, and fostering stewardship and confidence to make a difference.

"Partnerships like this provide an added layer of engagement for our students, which is so important especially after such a challenging year," said Molly Coyne, director of learning supports.

BPS will also offer a morning summer program for middle school students that can be easily paired with afternoon summer Galaxy programming. The middle school program will focus on retaining and building reading and math skills, and fostering social emotional connections. Part of the reading current and relevant texts to address past and recent pandemics while addressing specific skill development.

At the high school level, credit recovery will be offered for Jefferson and Kennedy students through Beacon. The district is also offering virtual summer school options for families who may not be comfortable sending their children to summer school in-person.

"Providing an opportunity for students to recover credit in core content is extremely important," said Sam Schroeder, assistant principal of Beacon and Kennedy High School. "Our goal is to help as many students as possible stay on track on their pathways to graduation."





# IN THE KNOW

## Chip in for Schools Golf Classic

Save the date for this year's Education Foundation of Bloomington (EFB) Chip in for Schools Golf Classic, Tuesday, July 27 at The Wilds Golf Club. The day includes a golf tournament followed by a silent auction, dinner and award ceremony.

Chip in for Schools is EFB's biggest fundraiser of the year, and proceeds go toward the many programs and scholarships that support Bloomington students and staff.

Learn more and register for the event:

[efbm.org](http://efbm.org)

## Jefferson, Kennedy Activities Foundations

The Jags Foundation and Bloomington Kennedy Activities Foundation (BKAF) had successful years supporting activities and raising funds to go toward student activity fees, uniforms and equipment and improvements to facilities. Please consider supporting the Jags and Bloomington Kennedy Activities foundations.

[jagsfoundationmn.org](http://jagsfoundationmn.org)

[bkafmn.org](http://bkafmn.org)

## Celebration of Service

The district held its annual Celebration of Service earlier this month, honoring 66 employees with 10 or more years of employment at the time of their retirement or departure from the district. We congratulate and thank our longest serving employees for their dedication and wish them the best in their future endeavors.

View the full list of employees:

[bit.ly/bps-celebration](https://bit.ly/bps-celebration)

## Community Vaccination Opportunities

We believe vaccines are critical to maintaining the health of our students and staff. The more students (of eligible age) and staff who are vaccinated, the more safely schools can reopen full-time this fall.

Walk-ins for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine are welcome at the state's COVID-19 Community Vaccination Program sites, including the Mall of America.

Parent or guardian consent is required for COVID-19 vaccination for people younger than 18 years old.

Appointments may also be made through the Minnesota COVID-19 Vaccine Connector or find vaccine locations at local pharmacies, clinics and hospitals.

[vaccineconnector.mn.gov](http://vaccineconnector.mn.gov)



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## POINTS OF PRIDE

- Jefferson juniors **Jamie Melville**, **Zachary Miller** and **Joseph Shetaye** earned perfect scores on the ACT. On average, less than one-tenth of one percent of students taking the ACT earn a top score of 36.



*The Art in Nature*



- Jefferson senior **Bhavya Sivaram** qualified to compete in humorous interpretation at two national speech tournaments: the National Individual Events Tournament of Champions (NIETOC) and the National Speech and Debate Association's (NSDA) National Tournament.

- Artwork by students from all **11 Bloomington elementary schools** are represented in this year's Bloomington Elementary Art Show. View the virtual show at [bit.ly/bps-elem-art](https://bit.ly/bps-elem-art).

- **Rynetta Renford**, district food service director, received the School Lunch Hero award from ES Foods.

- **Wendy Andrews**, Valley View Middle School food service manager, was selected Minnesota Manager of the Year by the Minnesota School Nutrition Association.

- Kennedy senior **Nicole Osness** and Jefferson junior **Joey Stedman** have earned National Gold Medals in the 2021 National Scholastic Art Competition. Osness's photo "Quarantine Life" and Stedman's photo "The Art in Nature" will be recognized at a national ceremony in June and will be part of a year-long, rotating exhibition in Washington, DC.

- BPS students, staff members and organizations were among this year's Bloomington United for Youth (BUY) volunteer recognition award winners:

**Individual Youth:**  
**Addison** and **AnneMarie Schloo** and **YanYan Zeng** (Jefferson)

**Youth Organization:**  
Kennedy High School Green Club

**Individual Adult:**  
**Michele Dagenais**, elementary school homework assistant

**Community Group:**  
Organizers of the Jumpstart 2 School event



- Kennedy juniors **Kameron** and **Kobe Johnson** were selected as Triple Threat finalists in the Hennepin Theatre Trust Spotlight Education program.

- **Bloomington Public Schools** is recognized by the Minnesota Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) State Leadership Team as a 2021 Sustaining Exemplar PBIS District.