

A Message from Superintendent Eric Melbye



## Dynamic strategic planning process underway



February marked the official start of our strategic planning process with the gathering of nearly 90 stakeholders - high school students, parents and caregivers, staff, business leaders and community members - in a daylong data retreat.

In the first of three retreats on Feb. 7, Strategic Plan Development Team (SPDT) participants were challenged to consider these essential questions:

- *Where are we now as a school district?*
- *What are our perceptions and those of others about what is going well and needs to be continued and celebrated, and what is not going well and needs attention?*
- *What does data tell us about the district's current academic performance?*
- *What are our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)?*

At the second vision retreat on Feb. 28, the SPDT were asked to imagine the future of Bloomington Public Schools by musing, *Where do we want to be in 2030?* Specifically, what do we want to see, feel and hear differently than what we are doing today as educators, support staff and leaders?

The final retreat on March 28 will have the team setting the direction by identifying goals, strategies and potential key performance indicators aligned to a newly revised mission

and vision. The key outcome from this session is the draft strategic plan.

We welcome stakeholder feedback and share it with the School Board and SPDT to update and iterate their work. It is a crucial component of the strategic planning process. All retreat session materials, data, and surveys are accessible on the Strategic Plan webpage. Stakeholders are invited to provide feedback on the Community Feedback page.

I've been so impressed with the engagement and collaboration of the highly committed and diverse team through the first half of the strategic plan process. Each participant brings a unique perspective to the table, yet collectively takes the time to critically think and dream together. It is a shared exercise in trust building and galvanizing our community around shared aspirations.

I truly believe the outcome of this collaborative work will lead to a dynamic strategic plan that serves as a touchstone for the present and a pathway to our future priorities and strategies to pursue.

We are energized and inspired by all who believe in the legacy and future of Bloomington Public Schools.

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

## Advocating for stable funding

The 2023 Minnesota Legislative session is well underway with a \$17.5 billion budget surplus to address a number of new and ongoing spending proposals. Gov. Tim Walz's budget recommendation includes a significant increase in education spending.

The School Board Legislative Committee sets the district's Legislative priorities each year and works with the BPS Advocacy Committee (BPSAC) to pass legislation supporting the Board's legislative priorities. The Board's 2023 Legislative priorities include:

### ★ Fully funding special education services.

The cross-subsidy, or current gap between the funding the district receives to provide needed and required special education services and programs and the actual cost to provide those services, totals approximately \$12 million per year.

### ★ Fully funding English Language Learner services.

The cross-subsidy to provide needed and required services and programs to multilingual learners totals more than \$3 million per year.

### ★ Increasing the basic per-pupil funding allowance and linking the formula to inflation.

Legislators approve the basic formula allowance every two years with typically two percent per year increases. Increases are not indexed for inflation, and over time fail to sustain ongoing expenditures. Approving a five percent increase over the next two years, with future increases tied to inflation will allow BPS to budget more effectively, cover costs that increase due to inflation, and stabilize our fund balance.

While a host of proposed bills related to education spending are under consideration this legislative session, the district's advocacy efforts are focused on the Board's priority areas to help create and sustain a stable learning environment with consistent staff, programs and learning supports.

## New efforts to address student substance use

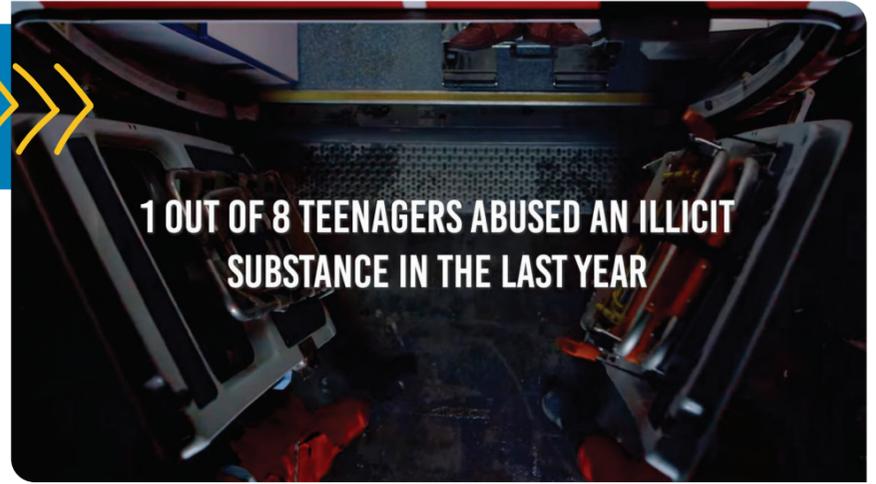
Drugs and alcohol are some of the most detrimental, yet most common disruptions in teenage brain development. They manipulate the brain's wiring and affect the way the brain processes and retains information, including the way a teen thinks, focuses, learns, remembers, and concentrates inside and outside of school.

Despite the risky nature of early substance use, drug and alcohol misuse in schools and among adolescents is an all too common occurrence. Research shows chemical use of any kind has negative impacts on student's personal, social, and academic success. By senior year in high school, nearly 50 percent of teens have tried an illicit drug. And this is just the beginning. Over 65 percent of teens have consumed alcohol by the end of high school.



When drug use is prevalent and substances are increasingly easy to get, there is an above average chance middle and high school students have already been exposed to drugs and alcohol.

**Bloomington Public Schools is committed to collaborating with students, families and the community to promote chemical health awareness through prevention, intervention, and support.**



**1 OUT OF 8 TEENAGERS ABUSED AN ILLICIT SUBSTANCE IN THE LAST YEAR**

The district's new Chemical Health Plan outlines a series of goals to meet student needs through ongoing staff development, school-based counseling and support, and consultation with licensed professionals.

As part of an information, engagement and awareness campaign, we are launching a series of events in April and May, and the newly released **Let's Be Honest** video.



Promoting and supporting chemical health is an important component to achieving success personally and academically. Working together, we can address health and social problems related to substance misuse, and support youth intervention, prevention and treatment.

Learn more on the Chemical Awareness page on the district website.

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



## District-wide Food Drive is April 17-21

The 13th Annual District-wide Food Drive is scheduled the week of April 17-21. Each of the district's 17 school sites and business partners, along with district departments will participate in this year's event. All food and cash donations will be donated to Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People (VEAP), a Bloomington non-profit agency serving low-income families.

Each dollar donated accounts for three meals, and each meal is approximately 1.2 pounds. Last year, nearly 49,200 pounds was collected when the cash donations to pounds conversion was applied. The result was nearly 50,000 meals.

The district's Parent Teacher Student Advisory (PTSA) Council is once again coordinating the annual food drive, and has set a goal of 50,000 pounds. Residents are invited to participate by donating cash or non-perishable food items to their neighborhood school.

For more information, contact the district's Community Relations Office at 952-681-6403.



## Let's Talk welcomes stakeholder feedback

The District launched Let's Talk, a new platform for families, staff, students and the community to provide input and feedback on the strategic planning process and general inquiries.



Let's Talk can be accessed on the Contact Us page of the district website

Bloomington Public Schools remains committed to transparent communication, meaningful engagement opportunities and continuous improvement. All stakeholders are invited to share their questions and feedback.

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

## Middle school sports to return in the fall

Bloomington's middle school students will soon have more opportunities to participate in athletics, thanks to a recent decision by the Bloomington School Board.

The move comes in response to a growing need for structured after-school activities, a desire to improve school climate, and provide students with a greater sense of belonging.

Most middle school sports were eliminated in 2020-21 as part of a \$75,000 budget reduction.

Starting in the 2023-24 school year, boys and girls soccer and co-ed wrestling will be added as extracurricular activities; previously track and field was the only middle school athletic offering.

To ensure success of the new programs, the district has begun the process to secure equipment, hire coaches and leadership and schedule games after receiving a \$50,000 grant from the Bloomington Noon Rotary Foundation and the use of ESSER funds over the next two years.





## Preparing students for careers, college and life

### » A pathway revealed «

Jefferson senior **Ameera Ally** always knew she wanted to go into a health or medical field. She credits her Personal Growth Plan (PGP) with helping narrow her options to find the right colleges to apply to.

With two-plus years of disrupted learning during their high school years, high school juniors and seniors have faced challenges as they considered their future plans. Bloomington Public Schools supports students' career and college readiness with the PGP, a system for helping students and parents learn about career options and prepare for post high school plans.

"In 9th grade it seemed like a waste of time, but staying on track and completing the activities can really help and inspire you, help you think about different ways and opportunities to reach your goals," Ameera said.

Students begin using PGPs in middle school with grade-level activities focused on success strategies and exploring their personal strengths. Throughout high school, PGP activities focus on life skills and academic planning. Career and college planning includes

learning about career fields, postsecondary education and training, including traditional four- and two-year colleges, technical or trade schools, apprenticeships, on-the-job training and military service. High school students have opportunities for real world learning through internships, mentorships and work-based courses.

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*It was really helpful to have the opportunity to speak with a professional in the field I'm interested in.*

- Ameera Ally

Ameera attended virtual career speaker sessions and took advantage of Bloomington Career and College Academy (BCCA) career classes to gain insight into medical careers. She also learned which colleges may be a good fit for her career area and finances. Ameera plans to attend Dougherty Family College at the University of St. Thomas, with a goal to attend medical school.

"When students commit to researching career and college opportunities for one to two hours per trimester, by the time they are seniors, they have all of the information they need to make an informed decision about their first step after graduation," said Becky Wallerick, Jefferson High School career and college counselor.

## CS students partner with peers to advance technology

The impact of computer science on society is undeniable. From powering the digital economy to the way we communicate and work. As the world becomes more technologically advanced, the need for students to be proficient in technological skills grows.

Improving access to technology education for underrepresented students and enhancing science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) awareness ensures diverse perspectives in the technology industry. This is particularly true for programs like Students with Unique Needs (SUN), which helps students who require support and motivation to succeed in the classroom.

Recently, SUN teachers Kara Holmin and Olivia Mrozek partnered with Olson Middle School computer science (CS) students to learn about KIBO robots. The interactive device teaches coding to young learners to spark their interest in STEM-related fields.

Three students in CS teacher Ashly Tritch's class were selected to integrate "The Wizard of Oz" as a motivator, programming sequences with cutouts of the characters and sounds from the movie. SUN teachers were impressed by the creativity and thoughtfulness of the students.

"As SUN teachers, we create opportunities for our students to connect with their general ed peers in unique ways," said Mrozek.

Tritch emphasized the importance of these connections. "In our class, we focus on projects that help others and make the world a better place. When we do this, our students develop empathy and an understanding for others who may have different abilities."



The success of partnerships between educational programs demonstrates the significance of technology education in engaging and motivating students. With the increasing pace of technological progress, providing interactive and engaging CS opportunities for learning can help students build the necessary skills to thrive in a technology evolving world.

"I was touched by how the students connected the project to a topic we were learning, and connected in a way that was so meaningful and engaging for our SUN students," said Holmin.



# IN THE KNOW

## CHIP IN FOR SCHOOLS

Mark your calendars, Tuesday, July 25 for the 2023 Chip in for Schools Golf Classic at The Wilds Golf Club in Prior Lake. Tickets will cover 18-holes of golf, golf cart, dinner and awards ceremony.



Tournament proceeds help Bloomington students through the Education Foundation of Bloomington (EFB) Children's Food for Thought, student success stipends, classroom innovation grants and other programs and scholarships. Save the date and register today.

[bit.ly/efb-23-chipin](https://bit.ly/efb-23-chipin)

## COMMENCEMENT DATES

Commencement dates for Bloomington high schools are now set. Graduation ceremonies for Kennedy and Jefferson high schools are scheduled for Tuesday, May 30 and Wednesday, May 31 respectively. Metro South/Choice Academy graduation is June 15, and completion ceremonies for transition programs are May 31 for Bloomington Transition Center June 2 for Project Search.

## SUMMER PROGRAMS FOR ALL AGES

Registration is open for summer 2023 programs and Community Education classes, including options for youth and adult enrichment, driver's education, summer musical, Camp Invention and summer aquatics. Scan the code to view the catalog.



[bit.ly/bps-summer-2023](https://bit.ly/bps-summer-2023)



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BLOOMINGTON



Public Schools

# POINTS OF PRIDE

Three of 10 teachers originally nominated as Education Minnesota Teacher of the Year candidates have advanced as semifinalists. They are **Angela Mahowald**, **Ryan Pedersen** and **Laurel Wiehe**. The field of 33 semifinalists will be pared to 10-12 finalists. We are proud of this year's BPS nominees, the most of any school district in the state: [bit.ly/bps-23toty](https://bit.ly/bps-23toty)

- **Jill Andersen**, Ridgeview grade 3
- **Serena Christensen**, Washburn grade 2
- **Kristina Ebert**, Valley View Middle science
- **Beth Kiene**, Jefferson science
- **Angela Mahowald**, Hillcrest grade 5
- **Ryan Pedersen**, Jefferson art
- **Scyler Shearer**, Hillcrest music
- **Ashly Tritch**, Olson Middle computer science
- **Laurel Wiehe**, Kennedy social studies
- **Jeff Zupfer**, Normandale Hills music



Jefferson seniors **Snezhanna Medvedovski** and **Nathan Orcutt** and Kennedy seniors **Siri Anderson** and **Davaughn Lane** were nominated for the Academics, Arts and Athletics Award (Triple 'A'), recognizing high school seniors for their participation in MSHSL-sponsored arts and athletics while maintaining high academic standing. Anderson was also nominated as a finalist and representative for Region 3AA: [bit.ly/bps-23triple-a](https://bit.ly/bps-23triple-a)



Jefferson seniors **Charlie Grant**, **Adam Lueth** and Kennedy senior **Maisie Pederson** are finalists in the 2023 National Merit Scholarship Program. All four candidates are presented a certificate of merit and now eligible for a merit scholarship to be awarded this spring.

Jefferson and Kennedy high school students earned high honors in the 2023 Minnesota Scholastic Arts Competition, considered the nation's longest-running and most prestigious art recognition program for creative teens. Awardees are:

- **Gold Key:** Jefferson's Aidan Arkley, Camille Camish, McKenna Long, Scarlet Rundle and Connor Wigglesworth.
- **Silver Key:** Jefferson's Synnove Erickson, Grace Goodin, Renee Peacha, Darian Whittet and Allison Wolfe; Kennedy's Katie Campbell, Ka'Veaun Jones and Ling Schardin.
- **Honorable Mention:** Jefferson's Delaney Mundt and Tysen Velner; Kennedy's Gisselle Dominguez, Zoe Johnson, Vy Nguyen and Noah Thornburg.

The **Jefferson High School cheer team** earned its seventh national championship title at the 2023 UCA National High School Cheerleading Championship in Orlando. This is the team's sixth time winning the Small Varsity Game Day Division I competition and the team's fourth consecutive national championship win.



Indian Mounds third-grade teacher **Alex O'Connor** was named KS95 Teacher of the Week in February.

The Jefferson and Kennedy high school **Science Olympiad teams** advanced to the state competition after strong performances at regionals. Kennedy and Jefferson placed third and fifth respectively. Kennedy's team is coached by Laura Gislason and Annika Jensen, and Jefferson is coached by Jon Leverenz and Emily Trieu.

Kennedy High School's show choir **Rhythm in Gold** earned an invitation to the prestigious FAME Show Choir National Finals next month following a best in show performance at the Waconia Star Power competition in February. Rhythm in Gold will compete at the 2023 Show Choir National Finals in the Encore Theatre in Branson, MO on April 1.



**Nate Linscheid**, Jefferson High School boys swimming and diving coach, was named a finalist for the National High School Athlete Coaches Association (NHSACA) Coach of the Year award. Linscheid is one of nine coaches representing Minnesota.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has honored the district's transportation department with a *Certificate of Appreciation* for demonstrating a sustained commitment to school bus security.

Jefferson senior **Jackie Larsen** and sophomore **Anders Westanmo** finished 46th and 9th in the MSHSL Nordic state meet respectively. Jefferson senior Tom Robar also competed in the Alpine state meet, completing the race in 37th place.

**Jefferson Theatre Company's** The Great Gatsby placed first in the One Act Competition. The production was directed by **Gaby Schmit** with costumes by **Laurie Clements** and technical direction by **Roger Skophammer**.