



Pam Ramsey, Tatanaka Elementary STEM School Teacher, collects all of the work from her students after they quarantined for eight days from school. On the day they returned, they would only have one more day together as a FULL class before having a week off for Thanksgiving Break. During that time, teachers prepped for the following week when students would move to a Hybrid Learning Model (about half of the students in class at a time).

## The “Ins and Outs” of Elementary School During the Pandemic

*This is the first article in a three-part series to tell you what school is like for students this year during the COVID-19 health pandemic. The next two issues will cover the middle school and high school levels.*

To say school families are having to adjust during this modern-day health pandemic is an understatement. Changes have been happening at the drop of a hat since March 2020 when schools had little time to prepare for Distance Learning (DL). Even during this school year, one minute your child is in school, the next you are getting a call that your child has been in direct contact of a person with COVID-19 and has to quarantine for up to 14 days. This virus hasn't been easy on anyone and anxiety levels are running high for students, staff and parents.

In September, BHM Schools started out the school year with elementary students attending school In-Person. That meant all students and staff could be in school while following social distancing guidelines as much as possible and wearing a face covering such as a mask.

Long-time Hanover Elementary 4th Grade Teacher Jenny Boldt says her class has talked a lot about COVID-19 and tries to relieve any anxieties that go along with it. “They see the news and only hear the negative stories,” Boldt explains. “We try to focus on the positive and

we’ve had some good discussions.” Boldt is a planner and likes to look at the big picture. She shared how she has frequently finds herself thinking of a quote she learned in college from American educator Madeline Hunter, “Monitor and adjust.” That is how Boldt and her class are finding success each day.

**In-Person to Distance to Hybrid Learning**  
Elementary students were able to complete the first three months of school before the district had to take more precautions. Because COVID-19 started to affect the number of staff who were able to be in school, the district changed learning models. Elementary schools went from In-Person Learning to Hybrid Learning and the middle and high schools went from Hybrid to DL after the Thanksgiving Break. Students enjoyed a couple extra vacations days while teachers were given two days during the holiday week to prep for the change. Any staffing issues can now be addressed by using the Education Support Professionals from the middle and high school who are now available to fill-in where necessary and substitute teachers who are no longer needed at the secondary level.

Many of the elementary teachers have been putting in extra hours to prepare and stay on top of things for their students. What once might have taken 10 minutes of prep time for

a class, now could take up to an hour or more. Teachers have found ways to offer a safer, “individually wrapped” education (as Boldt describes it) where students are doing more work on their own rather than in a small group. Many things have changed and often on a regular basis.

Pam Ramsey’s 3rd grade class at Tatanaka Elementary STEM School knows about changing on a dime. Fortunately they have been prepared since the beginning of the year.

On Thursday, November 9, students were learning how to write a cursive letter “T” when they were told they would have to quarantine because they had been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19.

“We couldn’t even finish writing our letter,” recalls Ramsey. “Lunches were brought in and their supply boxes, books and reading materials were gathered together and every student was picked up within an hour. I got other packets together for parents to pick up later and started making videos to walk students through their math assignments. We had practiced using Google Classroom, so they were already familiar with the program.”

## Giving Thanks in 2020

With the unpredictability of COVID-19 that is turning everyone's lives upside down right now, I just want to take a moment to pause and give THANKS.



Scott Thielman

Our students, families and staff have had a roller coaster ride of emotions as they have had to navigate through this pandemic. From having to immediately transition into Distance Learning last spring to the hopeful beginning of the school year and having students in-person and now the transition back to a more restrictive learning model. I want you to know how much I have appreciated the patience and cooperation from our entire BHM Community--students, families and staff. We have asked all of you to make difficult decisions and sacrifices during this health pandemic.

### CARES Act

School districts across the country received some federal support through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The CARES Act provides additional funding to states, counties, cities, townships and school districts, as well as businesses, to address the additional costs associated with meeting health and safety needs.

For BHM Schools, the CARES Act funding provided additional personal protective equipment, sanitizing supplies and air quality equipment as well as funding for a health and safety coordinator to serve as the BHM Schools' COVID Coordinator. In addition, the district is thankful for the support of Wright County and Buffalo Township for their funding assistance to help offset the cost of technology devices, plexiglass for barriers, additional transportation needs and additional personal protective equipment and sanitizing and disinfecting supplies to support our students. The funding was only available until November and since

many entities were purchasing the same types of supplies, it was difficult to obtain the supplies before the deadline. The district was able to purchase the aforementioned supplies and we are very thankful for this assistance. It must be noted that these funds cannot offset any existing costs, only additional costs associated with Coronavirus preparedness.

### Looking Ahead

Every year in November, the district begins the budgeting process for the following school year. The budget is based on current and projected enrollment for the following year. That data is obviously difficult to extrapolate this year due to the devastating effects of the current pandemic.

Our school district enrollment has been affected by the number of parents who chose to homeschool their children as well as the number of parents who delayed their child's kindergarten enrollment. Those factors have caused school districts across the state to reach out to their state elected officials to recognize the impact the reduced enrollment will have on the adopted school district budgets.

The announcement of a projected budget surplus by the Minnesota Department of Management and Budget of \$641 million was welcomed news, although it must be stated that \$118 million of the projected surplus was from the reduction in public school enrollment that we have experienced. School districts across the state are now faced with having to provide services to students in various learning models that are not as efficient as past years. Fortunately, our legislators are recognizing the impact that the enrollment setbacks are having on school district budgets and have begun to introduce bills that will address the budget shortfalls. Unfortunately, if past legislation sessions are the example we fall back on, school districts will not know their fate until the middle of May, right before the legislative session ends and long after staffing decisions have been made. We remain hopeful that some relief will be made available to

school districts to mitigate the impact of lower student enrollment.

### Congratulations and Thanks to Our Incoming and Outgoing Board Members

I would like to congratulate the elected BHM School Board members Melissa Brings, Sue Lee, Amanda Lawrence and Adam Bjorklund. We look forward to their service to our students, parents, staff and community.

I want to thank Laurie Raymond for her nine years of service as a BHM Board member as well as her 33 years of service to BHM Schools in her role as a Buffalo High School social studies teacher. Laurie's passion and efforts during the district's levy and bond elections and her belief in equitable funding for school districts and service with Schools for Equity in Education is truly appreciated.

I also want to thank Dave Wilson for his 12 years of service to the BHM School District. Mr. Wilson served as the BHM Board Chair for 10 of his 12 years, and his leadership will be truly missed. Dave's financial background and experience has helped guide this district through budget reductions in 2008, 2009 and 2018 and his contributions to the passage of bond and operating levies and his passion for doing what is best for students served our district extremely well.

### Thank you Ms. Raymond and Mr. Wilson!

I am so THANKFUL to our community for the understanding and support you have shown us. This holiday season will be tough as we most likely will not be able to gather with our family and friends like we have in past years. However, I hope you take this opportunity to realize all of the things that we can be thankful for during this time. Thank you for believing in us and the decisions that we have made so we can continue to be the place where our students can *dream, believe and achieve*. We couldn't do any of this without your support. THANK YOU and enjoy the upcoming holidays!



## Proud Of...

Those listed below were submitted by district staff and recognized by the BHM School Board for their special contributions and accomplishments.



### LEEA Award Winners

(Pictured left to right) Danielle Collins, Special Education Teacher at Northwinds Elementary; Kerrie Johnson, Science Teacher at Buffalo Community Middle School; Tracy Johnson, Science Teacher at Buffalo High School; and Rissa Schrick, Multi-Age Teacher at Discovery Elementary who received the Leadership in Educational Excellence Award (LEEA) on behalf of Resource Training and Solutions.

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### Adapted Phy Ed Teacher of the Year

Jennifer Heebink, Adaptive Physical Education Teacher at Buffalo Community Middle School and Buffalo High School, who was named the 2020 MNSHAPE (Minnesota Society of Health and Physical Educators) Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year. This award honors and recognizes the outstanding services and contributions in adapted physical education by a Minnesota Adapted Physical Education Teacher who is also a member of SHAPE America. Heebink has been working in BHM Schools for the last 11 years.



### Outstanding Educational Support Staff

(Pictured left to right) Jaime Anderson, School Secretary at Montrose Elementary School of Innovation; Tim Domka, Head Engineer at Tatanka Elementary STEM School; Susanne Glawe, Education Support Professional at Tatanka Elementary STEM School; and Susie Karels-Brown, Nutrition Services Manager at Buffalo High School, who received the Outstanding Educational Support Staff Award on behalf of Resource Training and Solutions.

## Ins and Outs, p. 1

Ramsey knew how difficult it was last spring for some students to learn at home, so she called those students to keep them engaged and on track. One of those students was Derek. He struggled in DL last spring and went from being a funny, joking boy to angry and sad. His mom, Alexis Horne, shared that Derek was bound and determined to be in school this fall, no matter what. However, Horne has lupus which compromises her immune system and their family has to be very careful not to contract the virus. Despite her health condition, Horne realized the affects DL was having on her two children and opted to let them go to school.

"We moved to Buffalo for the schools and the great services they are providing to my children," says Horne. "Their education is very important and we are taking all precautions to be sure they can stay in school. Derek was excited that he's been going to school In-Person, but was devastated when his class had to quarantine. He had a hard time understanding and didn't want to be home," shares Horne. "I'm not great with computers, but this time around we received a packet of papers from Ms. Ramsey and she shared videos of the lessons that were easy to follow. Derek was also more motivated since he knew he was going back after a few days."

Now they are in Hybrid Learning and Derek goes to school on the A days (Mondays, Wednesdays and every other Friday) and has 12 students in his class (there are only 8 on the B days—Tuesdays, Thursdays and every other Friday). Due to an executive order from the governor, the school day was shortened by 30 minutes to allow teachers more time to prep in the Hybrid model. The



Jenny Boldt, Hanover Elementary 4th Grade Teacher, has been looking for ways to make school fun. While students are doing a great job with the masks, teachers are finding that it's creating a new barrier between the students. To help build relationships and keep students engaged, Boldt took her class outside to explore the woods behind the school. Normally, students outside get a mask break, but because they are in small groups, they masked up.

school day mostly consists of reading and math and shortened specialist class time (such as physical education and music). Subjects such as science, social studies, health and art are saved for Fridays. All of the work students complete during their At-Home days does not require technology under the Hybrid Learning Model, providing relief to many parents such as Horne.

### Distance Learning

Families were also given the option to choose Distance Learning for their child(ren) if there is an underlying health condition or if parents didn't feel it was safe sending them to school. Teachers were also given the opportunity to teach Distance Learning students from home if they had a medical reason. In all, each level of K-5 has two sections of DL with each class averaging about 25-28 students.

Julie Johnson is a Northwinds Elementary 4th Grade Teacher who is teaching a class of 26 4th grade students from home in Distance Learning. She is being extra cautious since she has a close family member who has an underlying health condition. "We don't want to

risk getting COVID," shares Johnson. "DL has been a challenge since I am learning about all of the technology options that are available. The students have been very patient with me and we are learning together."

Johnson teaches live to the whole class for a total of three hours over the course of the whole school day. Other time is spent working individually with students or in small groups as they need help with their work and prepping for future lessons.

Students login before school begins to socialize (just like they would in the halls before school) and then they begin the day about 9 a.m. with "morning meeting" and math. They break into small group rooms to work together with reading and language arts around 11 a.m. On Thursdays, Johnson will have lunch with a small group of students in a "break-out" room online where they visit, tell jokes and get to know each other more. Around 1 p.m. Johnson teaches students subjects such as social studies, health, science, art or more reading. Since students in her class are from around the

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# Winter Weather Alerts



With COVID-19 changing all of the rules of school this year, many students and families wondered if BHM Schools would even have “snow days” since so many students are learning from home. At this point, in order to keep the educational opportunities equal and equitable for all students, the district WILL continue to have “snow days.”

Since elementary students are currently in Hybrid Learning, meaning, on any given day, some students are in school and some are learning from home, and middle and high school students are in Distance Learning (learning at home), if school is delayed two hours or canceled (for any reason—snow, fog, icy roads, etc.), ALL students will follow the SAME instructions provided through our parent/staff notification system.

The parent/staff notification system is used to alert parents (and district staff) when school is cancelled, delayed or dismissed early due to poor weather conditions. School and activity delays or cancellations can also be found on local TV stations, KRWC Radio, the district website at [www.bhmschools.org](http://www.bhmschools.org) and on Facebook.

Decisions to close, delay or dismiss school early are never an easy task. Anytime weather threatens the school day, district administration make informed decisions by monitoring weather reports, talking with the bus company and surrounding districts, driving the roads and referring to local and county officials for road conditions.



Because the district has students who walk to school, whenever the wind chill reaches a level when a person can get frostbite within 10 minutes or less, school may be delayed or cancelled. Often times weather forecasts will change over night, especially when temperatures are concerned, therefore, the district will often wait until the morning to determine the risk factors.

Generally, school will remain in session if buses can drive their routes safely. As a rule, if there is no school, there are no evening

school district and Community Education activities/classes.

Especially in winter, weather conditions may be severe in one area and not in another (since the district spans over 150 square miles). **Remember, as a parent, YOU ultimately have the final decision about whether or not it's safe at any time for your child to go to school.**



## World's Best Work Force Annual Report

The “Striving for the World's Best Workforce” bill was passed in 2013 to ensure every school district in the state is making strides to increase student performance. The World's Best Workforce (WBWF) Plan is intended to serve as a foundational document aligning educational initiatives serving students from pre-kindergarten through high school.

The WBWF legislation is based on the following five goals:

1. All students ready for kindergarten.
2. All third-grade students can read at grade-level.
3. All students attain career and college readiness before graduating high school.
4. Close the achievement gap.
5. All students graduate from high school.

The district's WBWF Plan, coupled with the district's strategic plan, provide a solid foundation to accelerate student achievement. The full WBWF document will be published after December 14, 2020, on the district's website: [bhmschools.org](http://bhmschools.org). If you do not have access to a computer and would like a copy of the report, you may call the BHM Teaching and Learning Department at 763.682.8778 to request one.

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district (Northwinds, Discovery and Parkside), they try to end the day with a game that helps them build relationships.

“It's been just over three months and I am amazed at how well they are doing,” says Johnson. “Last spring Distance Learning felt very isolating and lonely. Now since we meet together live every day, we feel just like a regular class. Being face to face on the computer makes it so much easier. A lot of focus goes into being in front of the screen and keeping energy levels up. I am so proud of my students this year and how hard they are working. These kids are kind-hearted and encourage each other daily.”

### What the Future Holds

It's uncertain what will happen in the days and weeks ahead. Superintendent Scott Thielman communicates with families regularly as to any updates and changes related to the pan-



This is what Julie Johnson's 4th grade Distance Learning Class looks like from her computer. Students login on a Google Meet every day to have class with other 4th graders from Northwinds, Discovery and Parkside.

dem. The district plans to remain in these learning models (provided no major changes with the pandemic) until the end of the first semester (January 28, 2021) with the hope of returning to the previous learning models to start of the second semester. Future issues of

the *Insider* will share what school is like at the middle and high school levels. One thing is for certain during these unsettling times, no matter if students are in or out of school, BHM Schools is providing an environment where students can *dream, believe and achieve*.

# 2021 BHM School Board



Melissa Brings



Sue Lee



Amanda Lawrence



Adam Bjorklund



Laurie Raymond



Dave Wilson

Election Day was Tuesday, November 3 and district residents had nine school board candidates to choose from on the ballot. There were four open seats for 2021. Two incumbents will return to the board and two new members will join in January 2021.

Melissa Brings, Susan Lee, Amanda Lawrence and Adam Bjorklund, having received the

highest number of votes, are elected to four (4) year terms beginning in January, 2021.

BHM Schools thanks outgoing members Laurie Raymond and Dave Wilson for their years of service to BHM Schools. Raymond served nine years on the board and Wilson served 12 (10 of those years were as BHM School Board Chair).

**THANK YOU** Raymond and Wilson for your hard work and dedication to our students over the past decade. You are part of the reason why *BHM Schools is the place to dream, believe and achieve.*

## Apply to the BHM Quest Program

While other districts have discontinued their gifted education services during the pandemic, BHM Schools has continued their commitment to the Quest program. Quest is a tuition-free program that provides specialized classroom instruction for highly gifted students (top two to three percent in their class) in grades 2-9. The program combines enrichment and acceleration of district curriculum.

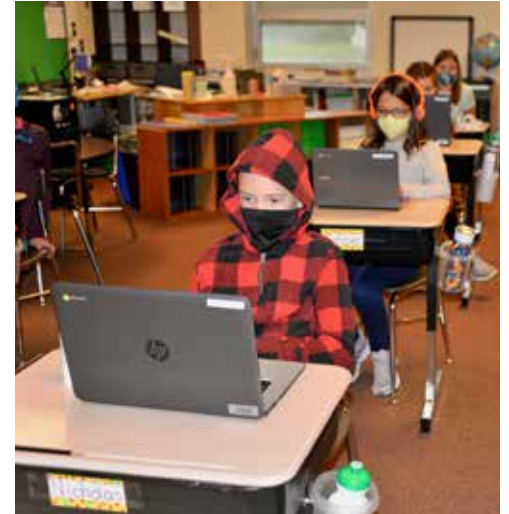
Quest for students in grades 2-5 is located in Parkside Elementary in Buffalo. Siblings of Quest students may also choose to open enroll to Parkside. Transportation to Parkside Elementary is available for in-district students. Middle school and high school students attend their regular building.

Students who are considered for placement should score in the mid-90th percentiles on test scores from the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and the Cognitive Abilities

Test (CogAT). Parents and teachers also submit information on students to help guide the team in making placement decisions. BHM Schools resident and non-resident students are welcome to apply. Qualified resident students receive priority placement.

Information about the Quest program, including Request to Assess forms can be found at [bhmschools.org/quest-program](http://bhmschools.org/quest-program). You may also contact Rob Nosbush, High Potential Services Coordinator, at [rnosbush@bhmschools.org](mailto:rnosbush@bhmschools.org) or 763-682-8766 with additional questions.

Families of students currently in grades 1-8 who feel their child may benefit from this type of environment are invited to apply for the 2021-22 school year. A **Quest Information Night** is scheduled for Monday, January 11, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. ONLINE. Find the link for the online meeting at [www.bhmschools/](http://www.bhmschools/)



quest-program. Scroll down and click on "Quest VIRTUAL Information Night" to find the link to the meeting. All materials to apply are due by Thursday, January 28, 2021.

## STEM, STEAM and Arts Magnet School Registration Opens

Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools has three magnet schools available for BHM students and is now accepting open enrollment:

**Montrose Elementary School of Innovation (MESI) STEAM Magnet** offers students Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM).

**Tatanka Elementary STEM School (TESS)** offers students Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, with the primary focus on engineering.

**Buffalo High School (BHS) Arts Magnet** offers students a school experience focused on visual, performing, literary, media and applied arts.

BHM Schools is a member of the Northwest Suburban Integration School District (NWSISD). The district was created in response to the State of Minnesota's Desegregation Rule. The districts that border the two racially isolated districts (Brooklyn Center and Osseo) create NWSISD and includes the school districts of: Anoka-Hennepin, Brooklyn Center, BHM Schools, Elk River, Fridley, Osseo and Rockford.

One way the district has worked to break up the racial isolation is by creating magnet schools in the seven-member districts. Any student who lives in the seven-member NWSISD can apply for enrollment into any magnet school. Students who live in BHM Schools, but not the attendance boundary of the two elementary schools, must open

enroll through NWSISD. All students who would like to attend the BHS Arts Magnet program must also open enroll through NWSISD. Enrollment also includes FREE transportation to and from school.

Early application into all NWSISD magnet schools for the 2021-22 school year is open through December 31 and can be submitted at [www.nws.k12.mn.us](http://www.nws.k12.mn.us). The application is also available on the home page of the BHM website at [www.bhmschools.org](http://www.bhmschools.org).



## Announcing the Class of 2033

# Welcome BHM Kindergartners!

**Let's get ready for kindergarten!** If your child will be 5 by September 1, 2021 you can enroll your child for the 2021-22 school year in BHM Schools. All incoming kindergarten students need to complete ECFE screening— call 763.682.8408 for more information. Don't miss the following registration nights for your neighborhood school:

- February 16 | 6:30 p.m. .... \*Montrose Elementary School of Innovation
- February 22 | 6:30 p.m. .... \*Tatanka Elementary STEM School
- February 25 | 6 p.m. .... Northwinds Elementary
- March 1 | 6 p.m. .... Hanover Elementary
- March 2 | 6:30 p.m. .... \*\*Discovery Elementary
- March 4 | 6:30 p.m. .... Parkside Elementary

\*MESI and TESS are both accepting Open Enrollment Applications. See p. 5 in this Insider for more information.

\*\*DE entrance is based on a lottery—Application deadline is Feb 8, 2021. See the article to the right for more information.

If you miss a registration night, please contact your child's neighborhood school to register.



The place to dream,  
believe and achieve.



Jen Heebink has been named the 2020 MNSHAPE Physical Education Teacher of the Year. See p. 3 for more info. President Elect Tom Roberts presented the award to Heebink in her driveway.

### School Board

Dave Wilson .....	Chairperson
Sue Lee .....	Vice Chairperson
Melissa Brings .....	Clerk
Laurie Raymond .....	Treasurer
Ken Ogden .....	Acting Clerk/Treasurer
Amanda Reineck .....	Director
Bob Sansevere .....	Director
Sydney Rhodes .....	Student Representative
Scott Thielman .....	Superintendent

### INSider Editor:

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Reader comments or questions welcome!

## Get Ready for the Discovery Kindergarten Lottery

Discovery Elementary is a small school of choice based on the philosophy of multi-age, looping education. The mission at Discovery is to provide community connections and a focus on social, emotional and intellectual development that gives students authentic learning opportunities.



Discovery Elementary does not have an attendance area and therefore uses a lottery process for student enrollment. Due to COVID-19

restrictions, on **Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.**, Discovery Principal Dr. Mathew Nelson will host a Virtual Information Night. The presentation will include information about Discovery's curriculum, philosophy, instructional techniques, an overview of the school and an opportunity to ask questions. To register for the event, please email [mnelson@bhmschools.org](mailto:mnelson@bhmschools.org)

Letters and application forms for Discovery enrollment will be mailed in January to all families who are registered with the district as having a child eligible for kindergarten next fall. If you do not receive this information, want more information about Discovery or would like a tour, you may contact the Discovery Elementary office at 763-682-8400.

**All applications are due by 2 p.m. on Monday, February 8, 2021.**

The lottery drawing will take place Tuesday, February 9, 2021 at 2:30 p.m. All applicants will receive the lottery results in the postal mail.