Welcome to 2020!

Here we are at the start of a new decade, and our students and educators are showing themselves as leaders here in our community, and are being recognized at state and national levels.

In this edition of 623 Today, you’ll learn about some of the awards and recognitions received by our employees who are blazing trails in helping students learning English, and in advancing opportunities for students to learn job skills that prepare them for high-paying, high-demand careers right out of high school. You’ll also read about how the state’s commissioner of education has sought input and guidance from our own students to help shape education policy statewide.

I am sure you are aware that last October the Lillie Roseville-Little Canada Review—our community newspaper covering east side suburban issues for more than 80 years—abruptly closed its doors. The paper was a wonderful resource for our community, covering our school events and keeping residents and community members informed on the goings on in our schools. Like you, we miss the coverage and value the paper brought to our community. This is why it is all the more important that we communicate with you through this newsletter. We are proud of our students and educators, and want you to know how we are using your investment of tax dollars to build a vibrant future for our community. We thank you for your commitment to our students.

Aldo Sicoli
Superintendent
Edgerton Elementary Superchoir entertains around the metro

In December, Edgerton Elementary’s Superchoir performed at the Mall of America and at a nursing home in the Edgerton neighborhood. The Superchoir is an enrichment opportunity for students in grades 4-6 led by music teacher Deborah Romero. Participants in the Edgerton Superchoir rehearse each Wednesday for an hour before school starts.

Pictured from left to right: Ms. Sevelius, Ms. Bierschied, Elinor Schense, a student in costume, and Mr. Bibeau.

Roseville Area Middle School celebrates Spirit Week

December 16 – 20 was Spirit Week at Roseville Area Middle School. Each day had a theme: Pajama Day, Character Day, Twin Day, Throwback Thursday and Raider Pride Day. At the end of the day Friday, there was an all-school party in the gymnasium hosted by the student council. Money raised from selling concession will be used for an end of the year all school celebration.

Emmet D. Williams Elementary students form Good Human groups

Students at EDW have been forming “Good Human” groups each month to learn about and celebrate each other. Students and teachers start each month with an all-school morning meeting, they read a common book, and then throughout the month they have discussions in mixed-age groups.

Meanwhile, also at Emmet D. Williams...

EDW was featured in the Star Tribune for a lighthearted, if less auspicious, moment after six different students—on six different occasions—stuck their tongues to a pole outside of the school. Recalling the infamous scene from “A Christmas Story,” in which the character Flick is goaded via a triple-dog-dare to stick his tongue to the flagpole, students discovered that skin does indeed freeze to metal!

The story came to the attention of the newspaper after Principal Jen Wilson sent a note to staff, warning them of the phenomenon and suggesting they carry bottles of warm water with them at recess.

“You know how you see the movie and the kid is screaming and crying and stuck?” Principal Jen Wilson told reporter Ryan Faircloth. “That’s kind of what it looks like here—they’re trying to talk and cry and scream at the same time, because it kind of hurts.”
Roseville Area High School students see “Mean Girls”

Roseville staff, students and families involved in the AVID program recently attended performances of “Mean Girls” at the Orpheum Theatre. Roseville Area High School received 120 tickets and students were able to attend a meet-and-greet with the cast of the show.

AVID, which stands for achievement via individual determination, is a nationally recognized program that provided direct support for students who have the potential of becoming first-generation college students. At Roseville Area High School and Middle School, we use AVID to close achievement gaps by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society.

A big thank you to Hennepin Theatre Trust, Spotlight Education and Bank of America for providing tickets so students could have this experience!

Former RAHS student Jesper Horsted called up to play with Chicago Bears

Jesper Horsted—a familiar name to followers of Roseville athletics—is a 2015 RAHS graduate who went on to give stellar academic and athletic performances at Princeton University. In 2019, Horsted signed with the Chicago Bears and gained attention after making a difficult touchdown catch that lead to the team’s November 28 victory over the Detroit Lions.

The all-around athlete—named the 2015 Minnesota High School Athlete of the Year by the St. Paul Pioneer Press—set records at Princeton in both football and baseball, and was selected unanimously to the all-conference in 2018.

“Jesper was a big kid with great hands, but more so, his body control was far above all the defenders he was playing against,” Roseville coach Chris Simdorn told reporter Patrick Reusse of the Star Tribune.

“Put that talent with the head he has on his shoulders … all coaches love guys like Jesper.”
Rapper Speech celebrates arts learning at Harambee, state’s newest Turnaround Arts school

Harambee Elementary School is celebrating a new infusion of arts-based learning through Turnaround Arts, a national program from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and run by the Minnesota Department of Education.

In December, students at Harambee attended a lively assembly to welcome Speech, a dynamic rapper, musician and member of Grammy Award winning hip-hop group Arrested Development. Speech is a high-profile artist mentor working with the students around the country, and now brings his energy and expertise to Harambee.

Speech was joined by Turnaround Arts National Director Holly Bass, Minnesota Department of Education Assistant Commissioner Heather Mueller, and Roseville Superintendent Aldo Sicoli at the event. After performing a couple of songs for the students, Harambee students performed their own “house cheers,” or celebratory songs and dances that have been written by students with their teachers that reflect their unique identities.

Attendees of the assembly were surrounded by music and joy as students celebrated the unique climate of Harambee.

“For me, it’s always been important to give back to let people know we’re here for you – we are rooting for you,” Speech said. “Love is what really moves this world forward.”

Harambee joins seven other Minnesota schools in partnering with Turnaround Arts to strategically implement arts-based learning as a strategy to help bolster overall school success. Harambee is focusing on increasing student learning and family engagement, through arts-based learning starting in year one. Since this partnership began, Minnesota schools in the program have demonstrated increased student learning, increased student and family engagement, and improved school culture and climate.

Turnaround Arts schools receive training to integrate the arts throughout the school day, art supplies, musical instruments, licenses to produce school musicals, a Turnaround Artist mentor, and much more as part of the program. Turnaround Arts works in 79 schools in 17 states and the District of Columbia that are facing some of the toughest challenges in the country.

Did you know?

Harambee is a Swahili word that means “working together for a common purpose”
Foundation awards nearly $55,000 in grants to teachers
The Roseville Area Schools Foundation awarded nearly $55,000 in grants to teachers for the 2019-2020 school year. The grants are funding amazing projects, including:

- Pop-up culture shows.
- Leadership training for students.
- Makerspace and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning opportunities.
- New books for classrooms to share absent narratives and encourage inclusiveness.
- Flexible and collaborative seating to help students learn more effectively.

Anthony Larson, a science teacher at Roseville Area Middle School, received a $3,500 grant from the foundation to fund the robotics team at the school. Students designed a robot to enter in a competition, learning life skills through the process of building, programming and competing against other schools. The team (pictured above) recently attended a school board meeting to share about their experience winning first place at the Lakeville FIRST Tech Challenge Qualifier.

The teacher grants are making an immediate and significant impact on students in all of our schools. To learn more and read about all 29 grants, please visit rosevilleareaschoolsfoundation.org.

Alpha Delta Kappa presents scholarships
The Roseville Chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa recently presented $250 scholarships to two new Roseville teachers, Lucy Wakefield from RAMS and Laurel Carey from Brimhall Elementary. Alpha Delta Kappa is an international honorary organization of women educators dedicated to educational excellence, altruism and world understanding. An important part of their mission is recognizing outstanding female educators.

The scholarships were used to purchase classroom materials. Pictured above, left to right: Lucy Wakefield, life science teacher at Roseville Area Middle School; Bonnie Spivak, ADK scholarship chair; Laurel Carey, Brimhall sixth grade teacher.

RAHS teacher named to prestigious Academy of Screen and Digital Printing Technologies
The Academy of Screen and Digital Printing Technologies recently inducted its newest members, including Brian Hoag, an industrial technology teacher at Roseville Area High School. Mr. Hoag is the first high school teacher in the nation to receive this honor and award. Hoag has spent 28 years teaching more than 20,000 students in the media arts program. Through industry partnerships and starting Raider Grafx—Roseville’s student-run print shop—he has continued to expand this program, which will occupy a 12,000-square-foot space by fall 2021. In addition to facilitating student internships, Hoag has offered his services, curricula and support materials to help build similar programs across the country.
Members of the English learner team: Sarah Holty, Angela Froemming, Amber Erickson, Marisa Knoss and Kristina Robertson.

District Recognized by Humphrey School as Leading Innovator for English Learner in the Mainstream Coaching Program

The University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs has recognized Roseville Area Schools with a Local Government Innovation Award for our work with Hamline University on English Learner in the Mainstream (ELM) coaching. The awards bring attention to the innovative ways that local governments in Minnesota have responded to rising costs, reduced revenues and increasing demand for public services.

Roseville’s ELM coaching program addresses the critical need for general education teachers to receive professional development on evidence-based academic language instructional practices, and it does so in a sustainable and affordable way. The program started in 2017 and four ELM coaches have been added every year to allow for an ELM coach in every building. ELM coaches are teachers licensed in English as a second language who receive language training resources and coaching professional development from Hamline University.

“Our district English learner program has 1,150 students identified with 30 different languages,” said Kristina Robertson, EL program administrator. “They will accelerate their language and content proficiency if they receive language instruction and supports in the general education settings as well as their English language development services. General education teachers have not had the opportunity to learn about language instructional strategies in the teacher preparation programs, and this model allows for job-embedded professional development with ongoing support to help them with implementing new learning.”

The program creates the opportunity for deeper discussion on language and instruction between teachers and coaches.

“Classroom teachers are doing this work enthusiastically, asking more questions and seeking guidance on language specific questions that they didn’t know to ask previously. It’s opened up a dialogue that didn’t exist before,” said Angela Froemming, an ELM coach at Edgerton Elementary.

Successes in breaking down barriers for students of color and indigenous students

Did you know that due to our nation-leading work with a program called AVID (which means achievement via individual determination), and by redesigning our Advanced Placement program to build support for success, we’ve been able to increase participation in college credit classes by students of color and indigenous students by 260% over the last four years? Looking at the data another way, we find that 44% of our students of color and indigenous students are currently enrolled in a college credit course.

We routinely hear from businesses that they have high-wage jobs going unfilled, and some are partnering with the district to prepare our graduates for these jobs. RAHS students enrolled in Raider Career Pathways courses learn industry-specific skills in engaging, hands on classroom and field experiences, such as internships, connecting with local industry professionals, touring local businesses, and other experiential learning opportunities. Participants in Raider Career Pathways develop essential skills and experience needed to either enter the workforce directly in a high-paying career or further their education at a two-year or four-year post-secondary institution. Learn more about our career pathways at isd623.org/careerpathways.
Student leaders meet with state education commissioner to discuss mental health

Last fall, and again this month, Minnesota Department of Education Commissioner Mary Cathryn Ricker held a roundtable discussion with Roseville Area High School (RAHS) students to discuss student mental health. The conversation was in response to statewide results from the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey, which show that more Minnesota students than ever report having long-term mental health, behavioral or emotional problems. The commissioner told students that their feedback would help shape Governor Tim Walz’s education proposals for the upcoming legislative session.

“Our students are talking to us and we must listen,” said Ricker. “The results of the Minnesota Student Survey show a number of concerning pieces of data, including student vaping and declines in mental health. No matter what is happening in students’ lives outside of school, we must make sure that they feel supported, safe, and welcomed when they’re in the classroom so they can succeed academically.”

The students were coaches in Leaders in Training (LIT), a unique leadership and mentoring out-of-school program sponsored by Roseville Community Education and led by Jamey Johnson, a youth leadership specialist. The scholars reacted to the statewide findings, answered questions about their experiences in school, and offered frank insight on how state and district leaders can improve school climate to address some of the issues raised.

Some of the observations from students included:
- “It’s pretty simple. People wonder why students aren’t doing well in school. [It’s] because they don’t feel like anyone hears and loves them.”
- “We need to take advantage of mental health counselors. We have counselors to help us with our schedules, our classes, but how many students even know we have counselors for mental health?”
- “Funding. Programs like this need funding.”
- “I’ve realized that having mental health issues isn’t a bad thing. Treating mental health is like treating an illness, or fixing a broken bone.”
- “In LIT, I’ve learned that I’m beautiful, I’m intelligent, I have so much to offer.”
- “We need a mentoring revolution,” so students can receive the support and mentorship they need to be successful in school and life. “A lot of [young] people are missing male figures as personal mentors.”

Commissioner Ricker noted that discussions such as this are important in understanding data from the Minnesota Student Survey.

“You are helping these numbers become real in a very important way,” said Ricker. “What I’m hearing from all of you is, ‘Care about all of me. That might get me to class.’”

About the Leaders in Training program

Seventh, eighth and ninth grade students attend regular sessions with high school student coaches, doing deep exploration of their personal styles and focus on leadership and public speaking skills. They do assessments of their own family dynamics and dream mapping to set life goals. Putting all of this together, the participants construct their life stories in compelling and artistic ways so they can tell them to others with a focus on equity and racial reconciliation.
Finance

District revises current-year budget and prepares for additional reductions for 2020-2021 fiscal year

District staff have recently completed current year budget revisions. The original 2019-2020 budget was developed last spring based on many assumptions, including enrollment and staffing. In updating the current year budget, several favorable factors were noted including higher than anticipated enrollment resulting in increased general education revenue, an increase in special education revenue over original projections, and decreased expenses compared to original projections. These revisions will provide us with a current year operating surplus of $847,000 compared to the $233,000 surplus previously projected. The current year budget did include board approved reductions totaling $800,000 – approximately half of the reductions came as a result of increasing class sizes by 0.5 students per class in all grades K-12.

District praised for excellence in financial reporting in audit report

In November 2019, the audit firm of Clifton, Larson, Allen LLP reviewed the district’s 2018-2019 audited financial statements and supplemental reports. They issued the highest level of audit reporting an auditor can give an organization and commended the district for its excellence in financial reporting. Copies of the audit report are available on the Business Services webpage under Financial Data & Publications at isd623.org/finance-publications.

Understanding the difference between a bond referendum and operating levies – and why they are important to Roseville Area Schools

Roseville Area Schools currently receives two forms of voter-approved levy dollars—operating levy and bond referendum—that are essential to the district.

Voter-approved operating levies are for the day-to-day running of our schools, so we can maintain essential programming and control class sizes. All school districts in the state currently get some of their revenue from an operating levy. We currently have a voter-approved operating levy of $1,652 per student. This is not only less than the state average – it is also significantly less than the average operating levy of the 48 school districts that make up the Twin Cities metro area.

Bond referendum dollars fund the construction and improvement of district facilities. Roseville’s students are already benefitting from the bond referendum approved by voters in 2017 through remodeled learning spaces, new safe and secure entrances, and building additions to accommodate student growth.

Roseville Area Schools continues to have challenges meeting the needs of our students while maintaining adequate reserve funds. In developing budget parameters for the upcoming 2020-2021 fiscal year, the school board will likely be looking at approximately $750,000 in budget cuts.

Unfortunately, even with increases in funding from the Minnesota Legislature in recent years, overall state funding has not kept pace with inflation for more than a decade, and this gap is anticipated to grow. The result is increased dependence on local levy dollars.

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Board certifies 2020 property tax levy at lower amount than 2019

On December 17, the Roseville Area Schools Board of Education approved a resolution to certify the 2020 property tax levy. The final certification was forwarded to Ramsey County for processing of the final property tax statements, which will be mailed out in March 2020. The total tax levy amount is $39,936,529, which is 1.1% less than the 2019 tax levy.
Facilities

**FALCON HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY**

1. Create Dedicated Friendship Connection Space
2. Renovate Special Education Areas To Align With Needs
3. Improve School Safety and Security
4. Renovate Media Center Including Computer Lab
5. Renovate Art Classroom

**HARAMBEE ELEMENTARY**

1. Add School Store
2. Renovate Classrooms
3. Renovate Special Education Classrooms
4. Vestibule Addition For Secure Entry

**November 2017 Bond Commitments**
- Building pre-K addition.
- Creating a dedicated room for Friendship Connection.
- Renovating special education areas to align with needs.
- Improving school safety and security.
- Renovating media center to include a computer lab.

**PROJECT TIMELINE**

**October 2019**: Groundbreaking, beginning of construction.
**October 2019-April 2020**: Construction on building site and Friendship Connection addition.
**April-August 2020**: Renovation of building interior.
EMMET D. WILLIAMS ELEMENTARY

PROJECT TIMELINE

October 2019: Groundbreaking, beginning of construction.
October 2019-March 2020: Construction on building site and additions.
June-August 2020: Renovation of building interior.

November 2017 Bond Commitments
• Adding a gymnasium.
• Creating a dedicated room for Friendship Connection.
• Renovating special education areas to align with needs.
• Renovating media center including computer lab.

Updated Construction Timeline

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<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Construction Start</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>Little Canada</td>
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<td>August 2018</td>
<td>Completed 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brimhall, Edgerton, Central Park</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>December 2018</td>
<td>Completed 2019</td>
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<td>Parkview, Roseville Area Middle School</td>
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<td>September 2019</td>
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<td>Roseville Area High School</td>
<td>Phase 1 (E-wing)</td>
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<td>Completed 2019</td>
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<td>Phase 2 (Autoshop)</td>
<td>January 2019</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Phase 3 (Auditorium, building interior)</td>
<td>Summer 2019</td>
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<td>Fairview Education Center</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>Spring 2020</td>
<td>On schedule for fall 2021 completion</td>
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</table>

The south side of E Wing faces Highway 36.

New building with science labs and family/consumer sciences classrooms opens at Roseville Area High School

Students at Roseville Area High School (RAHS) returning from Thanksgiving break were welcomed into the newly completed E Wing, which now houses science classrooms and the district’s growing family and consumer sciences program. The new facility, visible from Highway 36, broadens opportunities for learning skills that will open doors to postsecondary education, high-demand and high-wage job opportunities, while providing important life skills.
Common spaces feature comfortable furnishings for discussion and breakout spaces allow for small group collaboration.

Science labs
Students take courses in chemistry, biology, physics, environmental science and marine biology in brand new classrooms outfitted with the latest technology and equipment, putting students on the cutting edge of science learning. Classrooms feature fully windowed breakout spaces where small group learning can occur under supervision, and common spaces feature comfortable furnishings. An outside learning space on the second floor offers opportunities for a greenhouse and impromptu classes in the open air.

Science labs
The building section that previously housed science classrooms was demolished this month. In fall 2021, new career and technical education classrooms, workshops and a new auditorium will be complete here.

Fabric and sewing workshop
In the new fabric and sewing workshop, students learn to make and mend their own clothes, make home furnishings, create new products and explore different careers in the fashion industry. With large tables in a brightly lit open space, students study fashion merchandising and design, and learn industry topics like fashion history, design, color, global clothing attire, clothing styles and fashion trends.

Fabric and sewing workshop
Students learn about food science and healthy cooking in the residential teaching kitchen.

Commercial and residential kitchens
Students study culinary arts in new state-of-the-art commercial and residential kitchens, where they learn to cook restaurant-quality meals, are immersed in industry topics, such as sustainability and global cuisines, and become armed with the skills to find and keep a job within the restaurant industry. Whether part of the district’s hospitality career pathway, or developing cooking skills for life, a classroom full of residential kitchen spaces allows students learn to prepare international foods, explore the food heritage of the world, study food science and learn skills like healthy cooking for one.

Commercial and residential kitchens
Students learn to cook restaurant-quality meals in the new commercial kitchen.
Edgerton’s coding crew are state-level winners in national problem-solving contest

A team of sixth grade students from Edgerton Elementary—led by Laura Mittelbrun, the school’s media specialist—are state-level winners of the 10th Annual Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Contest. The nationwide competition challenges students in grades 6-12 to develop solutions to a problem in their community using science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills.

Edgerton students came up with the idea to develop a wash to remove invasive species, like milfoil, from the bottom of boats to prevent the invasive species from spreading to lakes. Edgerton was selected from five semi-finalists from Minnesota, and is among 100 state finalists nationwide.

The school will receive $15,000 in Samsung technology and classroom resources as a prize, and will advance in the contest for the opportunity to win additional prizes and educational opportunities. Over the next two months, Edgerton and other state winners will develop their STEM prototypes and submit a three-minute video that showcases their project in action for a chance to be named one of 20 national finalist schools in March. If selected as a national finalist, they could win $50,000 in technology and classroom materials. Five grand prize national winner schools will receive a total of $100,000 in technology and classroom materials, and a trip to Washington, D.C., to present their projects to members of Congress.