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Butler School District 53

# Board Report

## A news report of the Feb. 13, 2017 Board of Education meeting

### Four students win national awards

Four Butler Junior High students and their teacher were honored by the Board after the four 8th graders received top awards in the Midwest Region on the Scholastic Art & Writing Competition.

- Jasmine Tan won a Gold Key (top 5-7%) in the Flash Fiction category.
- Carolina Rico won a Silver Key (top 7-10%) in the Personal Essay category.
- Aditya Badlani won a Silver Key (top 7-10%) in the Journalism category.
- Ajay Jejurikar won an Honorable Mention (top 10-15%) in the Poetry and Personal Essay categories.

The four students read portions of their winning piece. Butler Junior High Language Arts teacher and sponsor Joanna Lago said she was thrilled with the student's recognition and for their willingness to submit their work for such a prestigious program. "Butler continues to nurture articulate, authentic writers and we're pleased that they've earned top recognition in the Midwest." She said what started as student-led lunch groups where students edited each other's papers led to national recognition in the Midwest. The four entries will compete at the national level in March.

Scholastic Art & Writing Awards is the country's longest-running and most prestigious recognition program for creative teens in grades 7-12. Last year, 320,000 works of visual art and writing were submitted for the Scholastic Awards and 2,500 works earned National Medals. National Medalists and their educators will be celebrated at a ceremony this summer at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

### Plans for furniture, collaborative areas for STEAM labs

The Board of Education heard a presentation on the vision for new furniture and collaborative areas for the Butler Junior High and Brook Forest STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) labs. Two junior high students Kara Xu and Aanika Atluri gave the presentation along with their teacher Kim Krupicka and Technology Director Farheen Beg. The students, led by teachers, are involved in helping design more functional lab spaces in the two areas. Beg said that the timing is right as the STEM hardware is at its life expectancy. The students said the goal is to make the lab engaging for students and enhance collaboration and communication, all key to problem solving and success with the program. The STEAM lab at Butler Junior High is a hands-on science, technology, engineering and math lab. Students chose modules from a variety of choices, including robotics, software engineering, alternative energy and digital communications. The STEAM lab at Brook Forest is in the retrofitted computer lab area in the LMC. Students showed a video of how the labs operate and how furniture could be organized to provide collaboration and flexibility. They also offered ideas for carpeting, paint and furniture.

## District refutes lawsuit allegations

President Alan Hanzlik read a statement from the Board on a lawsuit filed in federal court related to the isolated case of academic dishonesty in outside academic contests. The statement read: “Last year the District conducted an internal investigation into allegations of possible academic irregularities involving outside academic contests in which the District and its students participate. Our investigation resulted in certain appropriate actions taken by the District. That action was followed by a series of legal proceedings, such as grievance complaints, administrative hearings, a Regional Board of Education review, and several state court lawsuits against the District. Most recently, we were made aware of a Federal lawsuit filed against the District and District administrators, Board members and legal counsel. All parties named as defendants in the lawsuit deny the allegations made against them, and we are working closely with our attorneys to vigorously dispute those claims. While litigation is pending, we cannot comment further on this matter. Butler 53 prides itself on being open and transparent with our school community and will continue that practice to the extent possible in light of the restrictions the lawsuits impose on us.”

## New committee to address concussions

The Board heard an update on the formation of the Concussion Oversight Committee, required by a new state law. Butler Junior High Principal Amy Read said work has focused on developing protocols, processes and an action plan in the event that a student receives a head injury. They will also add training for students and staff about symptoms of a concussion. Administrators and board members said that while some elements of the work is required, the District is going above what is recommended to ensure that students are safe in the event of a head injury during PE, on the playground and in sports activities.

## Wellness and allergy policies

The Board heard an update from Brook Forest Principal Jason Bednar on work by the Student Wellness and Allergy Committee to update a related policy. They are revising the policy to better address allergy concerns and wellness. He said the committee will make a recommendation in the future on healthy snacks allowed for birthdays and other celebrations in the schools.

## Concerns expressed about adding more vocabulary, grammar

During public comments to the Board, two parents and an older sibling expressed concern that students were not receiving enough instruction on grammar, spelling and vocabulary in the new Reading and Writing Workshop model. While they said they were proponents of the model, which enhances lifelong reading, writing and critical thinking, they wanted students to have more explicit instruction in those areas. President Alan Hanzlik said the Board has strongly supported educational enhancements and that the request won't be ignored. Superintendent Dr. Heidi Wennstrom said that teachers are very invested in the curricular decisions and their involvement will be part of adding or enhancing curriculum.

## Awards, bids, handbook and more

In other news, the Board:

- Awarded a bid to J. L. Adler Roofing and Sheet Metal, Inc. to replace the roof at Brook Forest for \$1,150,395. It was the lowest of eight bids received. The roof is beyond its life expectancy and in need of complete replacement, said Buildings and Grounds Director Bob Jakupi.
- Approved on first reading the Board Member Handbook, which has been reviewed by the Board over the last several months. The handbook addresses expectations and duties of the Board, policies affecting the Board and Board meeting procedures. Final adoption will be on the April Board agenda.
- Heard a report on official kindergarten registration. Superintendent Dr. Heidi Wennstrom noted that although official registration has ended, the District is continuing to advertise via community signs so that families continue to register.
- Heard that the Butler Junior High Mathcounts team placed 4th and is advancing to state in March; the Science Olympiad placed 8th in a recent invitational; the Wrestling Team had two students place 4th, one student place 3rd and one place 2nd in the conference tournament.
- Approved employee contracts with Director of Technology Farheen Beg, Director of Buildings and Grounds Bob Jakupi and Business Manager Dr. Sandra Martin.

- Heard a report on the Buildings and Grounds Committee, including plans to go to bid for repairs and replacement of the Butler Junior High courtyard, which has significant drainage issues.
- Heard a report on the Technology Committee, which discussed phasing out old Chromebooks and purchasing new for grades 3, 4 and 6. Chromebooks now used for 8th graders will be recycled for 5th graders next year.
- Approved on first reading 12 policies that had been vetted by the Policy Committee and other committees. Most were updated due to changes in state law.

### Board Calendar

- Feb. 27** Policy Committee Meeting - 4:30 p.m.  
Administrative Center
- March 2** Buildings and Grounds Committee - 7 a.m.
- March 7** District Leadership Team - 4 p.m.
- March 13** Board of Education Meeting - 6:30 p.m.  
Administrative Center

### School Calendar

- Feb. 24 BJH Winter Sock Hop
- March 1-5 BJH 8th grade Washing D.C. Trip
- March 3 Institute Day: No School for students
- March 4 Mathcounts competition
- March 6 Pulaski Day: No School for students
- March 10 PTO Carnival



Want to learn more? Listen to the Board Meeting audio at [www.butler53.com](http://www.butler53.com) Click on the tab "Board of Education"