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BUTLER SCHOOL DISTRICT 53

Newstline

Summer 2015

How sweet it is

With gratitude for their time at Butler Junior High and Brook Forest School – 48 students took to the stage May 27 for the school’s traditional commencement ceremonies.

Echoing the theme “How Sweet It Is!” students spoke enthusiastically about their lifelong friendships, the nurturing teachers and staff and the close-knit ties that developed along the way.

“It has been a terrific year filled with special events and activities designed to unite our class and help us think about the future,” said Bella Florio, student service board president. While she was at Butler for only two years, she said she “feels such a part of this great class.”

On behalf of her classmates Isha Singh, student service vice-president, gave a reflection of her time at Butler. She recounted each of the last eight years, with highlights like Music in Motion in 1st grade and Springfield Trip in 5th grade and more recently the excitement of opening up the time capsules created in 3rd grade.

On behalf of her classmates, she also thanked the teachers for “helping inspire everyone to reach their fullest potential and enjoy each day as it comes.”

Luke Flaska, vice president of student activities, recognized the students in the many extra curriculars, clubs and activities and the faculty sponsors. “They were a major part of our experience because they allow us to connect with our peers and learn something new.”

Student awards were bestowed as well, including the Oak Brook Education Association Citizenship Award. Award winners were Isha Singh and Andrew Doromal.

Honored with the Academic



Isha Singh and Andrew Doromal were honored with the Oak Brook Education Association Citizenship Award.



Kayla Byrne, Isha Singh and Amelia Effrein were given the Academic Achievement Award.

Achievement Awards were Kayla Byrne, Isha Singh and Amelia Effrein. They tied with the highest grade point average.

Principal Amy Read encouraged students to ask for help and advocate for themselves “when you come to a place where the streets are not marked.” She also encouraged students to recognize the people who supported them and helped them achieve their goals – their family and teachers. Finally, she challenged students to “make all of us proud. Be the best version of yourself you can be and best wishes as you write your story of the next four years of your journey.”

For more graduation photos, visit Butler53.com

Exploremore

Where else can you learn to wash a car, make candles, fish in a pond, decorate cupcakes, tie dye t-shirts, karate chop a board and 40+ more classes? Yes, at Exploremore Day. For 27 years, it’s been a favorite end-of-year tradition at Brook Forest. This year, students could choose from 49 different classes taught by parents, community members and teachers. *More photos are at Butler53.com*



Mea Farano, above, gets a chance to play fire fighter while Lalida Larbanan waits a turn. At right, Maliha Arain and Emma Petrucelli create tie-dye t-shirts.



At Exploremore Day, Athena Koulouris and Mario Florio were honored with the Brook Forest Oak Brook Education Association Citizenship Award, above.



At left, Samuel Katz tries out bungee gymnastics at Exploremore Day.

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Pardon our dirt



The District is reworking the drop off area, parking lot and walkways at Brook Forest. Check Butler53.com for details.

A focus on wellness

Todd Beyer sees himself more as a Wellness Teacher than a PE Teacher. For one, he starts off each PE class with fitness exercises for both the body and brain. For younger students, he works on improving locomotor skills (running, skipping, leaping, etc...) and ones where one part of the body crosses the other, like touching your right elbow to your left knee. This helps young brains become more alert and boosts learning. In older grades, students work on more challenging exercises and endurance runs.

Secondly, Beyer holds weekly nutrition lessons. Students discuss the value of different foods, they learn how to read nutrition labels and learn about and sample super nutrient foods.

Two extra curricular programs support the fitness goals. In Mileage Club, students earn tokens for cumulative walking/running at recess. As Nutrition Stars, students earn tokens when they meet Beyer's four-step challenge: 1) eating a balanced breakfast including lean protein; 2) eating a fruit and vegetable at lunch; 3) minimizing sweets and fats; 4) avoiding soda pop.

Finally, Beyer promotes mind and body wellness through an intensive Health and Fitness Week each May. Then, students go on a Dolphin Run, play in the Olympic Games, taste a variety of healthy foods at the Nutrition Fair, and learn from cardiologists, who are Butler District 53 parents, about how the heart works and how to keep it healthy. He also organizes Jump Rope for Heart, which raises \$10,000+ each year for the American Heart Association.

The goal of the PE/Wellness program is to improve each student's individual fitness level and develop fundamental activity skills. "When students experience success at an early age and are aware of the benefits of regular exercise and proper nutrition, they are more likely to choose an active and healthy lifestyle," he said.

Beyer practices what he preaches. A 15-time marathoner, he plays golf, baseball and ice hockey. "I like to teach my students how much fun exercise can be and I try to lead by example by eating healthy and exercising frequently," he said.



Olympic Day is a series of games to challenge students' fitness levels. This one is played by (l to r) Nina Norten, Maryam Mohammed and Lalida Larbanan.

Butler keeps up with digital world

As the world changes, so too does Butler District 53's curriculum. In just 10 years, the world has dramatically accelerated.

- There are 1.4 billion users on Facebook,
- There are 300 million tweets a day,
- In 2014, 198 million Americans bought something online,

And, some more alarming statistics:

- 33 percent of Facebook users are 9-16 year-olds,
- 29 percent of digital users age 5-11 believe they are anonymous online,
- 44 percent of teens have lied about their age online.

Given these statistics and others, Butler District 53 is developing a unit and course called Digital Citizenship to be taught at all grade levels next year. In the lower grades, Technology Director Farheen Beg will visit classrooms and talk about privacy and safety at a level that is appropriate to students' age. Social workers will present digital etiquette and cyber bullying concerns as part of the course. In 6th-8th grade, Digital Citizenship will be a required class taken during one of four quarters.

The junior high class will teach a range of topics, including digital etiquette, responsible and appropriate behavior, online safety and privacy, copyright, plagiarism, digital law and digital commerce.

"We feel this is so relevant and there is such a need for this," said Butler Junior High Principal Amy Read. "Technology changes very quickly and it's hard for

parents to stay on top of all the changes," she said. The class will be designed to keep children safe, appropriate and knowledgeable online in our evolving world.

"Before we consumed media; now we create it," said Beg. "It's essential for students to know the written and unwritten rules for creating and sharing it," she said.

Online activities also account for the small number of behavior issues that the school sees. The new Digital Citizen units and classes will address appropriate behavior and set expectations. "We're trying to be proactive," said Read.

Another change to the 6th grade curriculum will be a required class called Scholar Skills. The course will be required as one of a student's four electives that is offered over a year. Scholar Skills will teach students essential skills like planning, organizing, self-regulation, time management, problem solving, active listening, among others. "These skills are critical as the work gets harder in 7th and 8th grade and beyond," said Read. If a student can master study skills and executive functioning skills, they will be a more efficient and stronger learner, she said. It's also important to cement these skills early in life. They reduce student's stress and ensure a more successful high school, college and work experience.

Besides Digital Citizenship, 7th and 8th graders will have the choice of STEM, Science Olympiad, Music and Art Studio for the remaining three of four electives.

Good News

Musical, Spelling Bee, Geo Bees, art and student service

A team effort

The *Sound of Music* is a difficult production to pull off. First, it's known to just about everyone; there are 10 pieces of music plus reprises to perfect and many scene changes. And, with 31 cast members and 9 crew members, there were complicated logistics, like how to share microphones, where to house the cast and where to store props and sets. Still, the reviews were stellar from the Board of Education, faculty and parents alike.

"It was absolutely inspiring," said Superintendent **Dr. Heidi Wennstrom**.

"The students did an amazing job and their performance was just magic," said **Jen Vargocko** who directed the musical with music teacher **Sara Eikenberry**. Students understood the complexity of the musical "and were extremely committed to pulling it off," she said. Putting together the *Sound of Music* is a team effort. Eikenberry worked with the cast on vocals, Instructional Aide **Nina Angelillo** created a set with input from the student's Intro to Theater class; Professional Technician **Mike Ross** taught students to operate sound and light boards, and **Mary Haley**, former District 53 teacher, designed and sewed 35 costumes. Long-term teacher substitute **Sarah Hsi** was the guest faculty performer.

"The show brought out the best in the actors and the student crew. "They supported each other, cheered for each other and it was a complete joy and privilege to work with these students," Vargocko said.

A real client

Students in Digital Graphic Design had a real-life client for their work. Butler Junior High Art Teacher **Jennifer Scavone** linked the class with the Naperville Humane Society to create a video for the group's outreach program. Students created graphics, manipulated photos

and designed a video in the school's Mac lab. The course mirrors the contemporary design field by giving students the opportunity to work as graphic designers for a real world client, said Scavone. Their work will be used to educate students about the Society's mission. "It's essential for students to have real-world experience," she said.

National Spelling Bee

Chris Chang, graduating 8th grader, competed in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in



The Von Trapp children, pictured above, are **Kashif Carter, Lana Elzein, Gaia Quaranta, Kara Xu, Lexi Hui, Nick Schopp, Mia Gaddis. Maria**, played by **Isha Singh**, is in the middle.

Washington D.C. He was the winner of the DuPage Spelling Bee earlier this spring. He competed in the national preliminary rounds of the national contest.



A photo of **Jasmine Tan's** winning poster.

A poster for peace

Jasmine Tan, 6th grade, won First Place in the Oak Brook Lions Club Peace Poster contest. Butler Junior High Art Teacher **Jennifer Scavone** said she asked students to participate in the contest because of its theme "Peace, Love and Understanding" and the opportunity to employ critical thinking and creativity to the challenge. Honorable Mentions went to: **Aanika Atluri, Jillian Snukst, Gaia Quaranta** and **Shea Smith**.

Siblings go to Geo Bee

Sixth grader **Adi Badlani** and 4th grader **Akshay Badlani** both competed in the state level of the National Geography Bee, advancing to the Top 10 in the final round. Adi was the winner of the Butler Junior High Geography Bee and Akshay was the winner of the Brook Forest Bee. Both students reached the National Bee after taking a qualifying test competing against thousands of other students state wide.

Feeding a need

Brook Forest student council representatives, Butler Junior High students, parents and teachers – 140 in all – packed more than 23,000 meals for the hungry this spring at Feed My Starving Children in Aurora. The meals will help feed 65 undernourished children in third world countries for a year.

"This is a lesson that can't be taught from a textbook," said **Lisa Owen**, 5th grade teacher who sponsors student council with teacher **Ellen Wozny**.

"It was pretty powerful," she said. The student council hopes to make it an annual event.



The soliders were played by **Rizwan Zaheer, Mikhail Essa, Marcos Lopez** and **Tolu Akin**, pictured above.

Tops in Spanish exams

Butler Junior High Students recorded stellar performance on the National Spanish Exam. Most scored above the 50th percentile and 20 percent scored above the 95th percentile. The results are a 35 percent increase over last year. These are exceptional results given that Butler students compete against students from other schools who have many more years of Spanish.

Science Olympiad

Congratulations go to both Butler District 53 student squads on another successful season of Science Olympiad. The Blue Team had a memorable state competition at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, taking home medals in Pentathlon, Geocaching, Air Trajectory, and Anatomy. Among the winners are:

- **Luke Berg** and **Ansh Shah** - 4th, Geocaching,
- **Jay Amin, Luke Berg, Sidh Leekha, Ansh Shah** - 3rd, Pentathlon,
- **Alisha Kumar** and **Adi Badlani** - 5th, Anatomy,
- **Rithik Prakash** and **Chris Chang** – 4th, Air trajectory.

Saying goodbye



Mary Lou Costin, Patricia Johnson and **Terri Eilks** retired at the end of the school year.

Three long-time faculty members were honored by their colleagues and students during end-of-the-year events. Butler Junior High Librarian **Mary Lou Costin**, Brook Forest 1st grade teacher **Terri Eilks** and Speech Therapist **Patricia Johnson** retired at the end of the 2014-15 year. At an assembly on Exploremore Day, students thanked the teachers and remarked on their careers. Here are some excerpts from their comments:

- "Thank you for being so nice to me and giving me a warm welcome when I moved here."
- "You're amazing teachers and you deserve an amazing retirement."
- "Thank you for everything you've done for us; we will always remember you."
- "I really appreciate the time you put into our lives."



Gail Diedrichsen, one of the founders of the Naperville Humane Society visited the class with her dog **Brody**. Also pictured is **Kashif Carter**.

2014-15 year in review

What we did, where we're going

There were many projects and programs that advanced our District this school year. They were a strong collaboration of staff and faculty, Board of Education, administration and parents. Many of these programs have their beginnings from the Instructional Blueprint, a collaboration of what our stakeholders want in a Butler graduate.

A more comprehensive report is at Butler53.com

CURRICULUM

- The District piloted a new math curriculum for students in grades K-5 and will launch it in the fall. Called Go Math, it is rigorous, engaging, interactive and incorporates many of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). It has the appropriate depth and rigor, incorporates writing, vocabulary and technology and allows teachers to differentiate curriculum to varying levels of learning.
- The District developed a prevention-oriented child sexual abuse curriculum for grades preK-3, as required by law. It will be launched in the fall.
- The District audited classrooms and conducted a study on how literacy is taught in District 53. As a result, faculty are being trained on how to incorporate the more rigorous CCSS into their instruction.
- The District revamped its gifted program so that all children are exposed to more difficult works. Faculty specialists pushed into each elementary classroom to coach students on reading comprehension techniques, higher order reading skills and scaffolding strategies.
- The District is planning a state-of-the-art broadcast communications studio that will provide students with real-world skills in planning and creating media projects for journalism, graphics art and other instruction.



- The District is revamping its elective program at the junior high, adding two required courses Scholar Skills and Digital Citizenship for 6th graders. See story on page 2.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

- The District had a large focus on professional growth. Much of the work centered on incorporating the more rigorous Common Core standards and English Language Arts best practices into the curriculum.

TECHNOLOGY

- In 2014-15, the staff and students became fully immersed in Google Apps for Education.
- To further facilitate use of personal computers, Butler Junior High students can now take devices home. Additionally, students at both schools have access to Apple and Windows-based products.
- The District implemented a new tool, Hapara, to help teachers manage and monitor student work-flow.
- Brook Forest will see the addition of more windows-based and iPad mobile carts, and Butler will see more Apple TV's in the classroom.



OPERATIONS

- The District instituted a pilot plan next year to stagger start and end times at each school to ease safety concerns and difficulties in dropping off and picking up students.
- The District developed a new school calendar for the current year, maximizing student-learning time, adding more professional growth for teachers and providing dedicated evening time for parent-teacher conferences.
- The District successfully implemented All-Day Kindergarten this year. The change has allowed teachers to dive deeper into the curriculum,

provide more flexibility and more personalized learning.

FINANCES

- Despite many initiatives, the Board was able to continue its practice of establishing balanced budgets. While there are ongoing pressures of decreased support from federal and state sources, and a threat of pension cost shifts to the local level, the District continues to be in a good financial position.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

- The District has undertaken extensive summer construction projects of \$3.2 million as part of its four-year capital improvement plan. It includes substantial work to regrade the fields and playgrounds at both schools, which will help decrease standing water in parking lots and poor drainage on the fields. The work will also include reconfiguring the parking and drop off areas at Brook Forest, all to improve safety for students and families.



GOVERNANCE

- As a Board of Education, members assembled 12 times for regular business meetings, 6 times for committee-of-the-whole meetings and dozens more times in committee meetings. Also, board members shared 14 other year-long assignments during the year, ranging from PTO liaison, committee membership and Illinois Association of School Board representative. The Board also held a retreat earlier in the year, focusing on budget efficiencies, space utilization at the two buildings, and capital improvement plans, among others.

Board of Education

- Alan Hanzlik, President
 - Dr. Hitesh Patel, Vice-President
 - Dr. Alan Kumar, Secretary
 - Rajiv Advani
 - Elizabeth Chun
 - Lou Paskalides
 - Todd Rusteberg
 - Dr. Heidi Wennstrom, Superintendent
- www.Butler53.com



Art Board

Butler District 53 students display their artwork on artsonia.com

Pictured here (from l to r) are 2nd grade Audubon bird study, Kindergarten Matisse still life, 2nd grade birch tree landscapes.

Photos courtesy of Beth Marano.



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