

BUTLER SCHOOL DISTRICT 53

# newsline

Summer 2018

## COMMENCEMENT

# "Butler has united us all as friends"

Graduates gave so many reasons to celebrate the years spent at Butler Junior High School and Brook Forest Elementary School. Student speakers at the May 30 graduation noted the close bonds, nurturing teachers and mutual respect. "Butler has united us and made us into special friends for life who love and respect each other," said Rhea Kumar, a member of Butler's student service board.

Dan Petrucelli, Student Government Communications Director, who spoke about the "Butler Adventure," echoed similar sentiments in his graduation speech.

"No matter what, we will always remember the friends we made, the experiences we had," he said. "Wherever we may go, we will always be Butler Vikings."

AJ Smith, President of the Butler Student Council, counted the many experiences and successes that made up the Class of 2018. "We faced and overcame many challenges... We scaled heights at Iron Oaks (outdoor education field trip) and we defeated the faculty in both volleyball, basketball and soccer." He also noted that the group survived



Athena Koulouris, Sophia Lee and Serene Safvi were honored with Academic Awards for the highest grade point average. Pictured above, Atif Kamal and Riley Conway were awarded the Oak Brook Education Association Award for character, leadership and compassion.



unscathed by Mother Nature when a tree fell on the school bus during the Washington, D.C. field trip. The group then figured out how to take the Metro to their next scheduled stop.

He ticked off ways that Butler students excelled, including the Science Olympiad, Math Team, Poetry Slam and Science Fair.

Indeed, students worked hard and went beyond their comfort zone, said Principal Amy Read. She thanked families, teachers and staff who were always nurturing and encouraging students to challenge themselves.

The staff, many of whom were in attendance, were always willing to go above and beyond to support students. She also noted the dedication of students who have learned that their abilities can be developed through commitment and hard work.

The students' graduation theme reflected that sentiment: "Our Futures are So Bright We Have to Wear Shades."

If you would like to see more photos about graduation, please visit our web page [www.butler53.com](http://www.butler53.com) and click on "news."

## What's better than puppies and music?

Under the direction of music teacher Laretta Sterner, Brook Forest 4th and 5th graders performed in the musical *101 Dalmatians*. In all, the group included 47 cast members and 27 stage crew members. Actors met three times a week in the winter and spring for rehearsals that included vocal music training, choreography, and acting training. Stage crew met during March and April to create posters and programs, write announcements and train for backstage support. "The cast grew as a group in learning how to focus their energy during rehearsal," said Sterner. "They also learned to memorize parts, support one another through the creative process, and stretch themselves in their acting, dancing and singing abilities," said Sterner.



## STRATEGIC PLAN

# Plan moves District to next level of excellence

The Board approved a new Strategic Plan this spring, a guide to help the District's continuous improvement. "This District is already a high performing school system and this plan is a vision for the next 3-5 years defining how we can improve upon excellence," said Dr. Heidi Wennstrom. "It is focused on key initiatives in all areas – curriculum, instruction, operations, finances, facilities and communications," she added.

The plan was developed after a community engagement process that involved a series of focus groups, interviews and surveys. During that process, parents, students, staff and community members shared their ideas about next steps, Wennstrom said. (See story below).

The Board also approved detailed action plans for the first year, beginning in 2018-19, for which planning has already begun.

These three areas are:

- Creating an instructional and curricular framework
- Promoting community engagement
- Creating value

Here are examples of some of the critical work:

### Ambitious Instruction

Strengthen teaching and learning by identifying enhancements for the K-8 STEM curriculum, developing a framework for social-emotional learning, reviewing community data in order to update expectations and readiness of a D53 graduate, conducting an audit of extracurricular opportunities and exploratories in order to provide students with more choices, increased learning

The Strategic Plan addresses these three broad areas. A detailed action plan for the first year, 2018-19, was approved by the Board and planning has already begun in these three areas. The detailed action plans are available on the website [www.butler53.com](http://www.butler53.com) under "news."



## What the community said...

To listen to the community on their expectations for Butler District 53, focus groups were held and community surveys were conducted. In addition, there were interviews and focus groups of staff, parents, students and Board members. This data, along with the District's mission statement, vision statement and guiding principles were analyzed to determine findings, goals and objectives for the Strategic Plan. A number of common themes on the strengths and challenges of Butler District 53 emerged from this community engagement process.

### What the community identified as STRENGTHS

Butler School District 53 is a premier school district that has a history of excellence. It is consistently recognized for high performance in every area, from test scores and student achievement to teaching strategies, curriculum, technology, professional development and preparing students for high school. Additionally, Butler 53 is known for its high standards in operations and finances and its low tax rate. Teachers personalize learning to meet the needs of students and there is academic support available for every student. The schools each have a sense of community, and the care and concern for every child is abundantly evident from the custodians, to the secretaries and classroom assistants, to the teachers and administrators. Moreover, parents and community leaders actively support the school. Participants also

and improved student engagement.

### Community Engagement

Some items in the plan are to develop a clear process for conflict resolution, develop a guide for the District's accelerated placement and gifted and talented programs, develop a communications survey and develop an updated communications plan that includes an expanded website presence and additional video. Also planned is to create a community stakeholder group of non-parents, senior citizens and businesses.

### Exemplary Value

This area addresses improving fiscally sound practices by completing an analysis of comparable districts, researching a cost-savings consortia, strengthening staff and leader satisfaction, investing in professional growth to continue to grow teacher excellence and identifying a Professional Learning Management system.

These are only a few of the action steps outlined under the three goals. "The work is an intensive systematic process of taking broad goals, breaking them down into workable action steps and working diligently to achieve them," said Wennstrom.

Each step has identified measures of progress and metrics of success. "This forward-thinking plan embraces our passion about educating our students to become world class learners and takes an already premier school district to even higher levels of accomplishment," said Wennstrom.

noted that communication with parents is generally strong and technology is accessible to all students. Even with all of these achievements, the schools and staff maintain high expectations and continue to find ways to improve the instructional program and hold themselves to high standards for their own growth as educators.

### What the community identified as CHALLENGES

Participants addressed some challenges for the District: Continuously communicate with stakeholders, especially those who don't have children in the school as well as provide ongoing information about the curriculum and academic expectations to parents. Other areas for growth are to continue the District's efforts to meet the needs of the whole child and grow the social emotional program so that students continue to have a well-rounded experience. Participants suggested broadening current programs and implementing others so students have a more expansive choice in courses. Related to that was continuing to grow partnerships with other organizations in order to provide more class choice for students. Participants also noted a challenge to expand transition planning for students going to high school. Keeping class size small, continuing professional development for technology and new instructional practices, and continuing to fine-tune and strengthen the language arts curriculum were also identified as important next steps.

## RETIREMENT



Brook Forest social worker Ann Wolff receives a gift from the school during Brook Forest's Exploremore Day.

## Saying goodbye to retiring social worker Ann Wolff

*Ann Wolff retired after 28 years as a social worker and resource teacher with Butler District 53. As anyone who has met her knows, she has a big heart and adores children. She started her career working in a group home with children with disabilities. A mentor encouraged her to get a social worker degree so she returned to college and received a Master's Degree in Social Work. After four years working with the Department of Children and Family Services, she began her career in District 53. Here we explore her insights about her career.*

**Q: What's the best part of your job?**  
I love the children. They make me smile each and every day. I love watching them learn, grow and play. Each day is special and unique in its own way.

**Q: What's your go-to tool to help students?**  
The best tools were taught to me by the occupational and speech and language therapists. These tools were sensory integration (a process by which we receive information through our senses, organize this information, and use it to participate in everyday activities), breathing techniques and "social thinking" (where students are encouraged to identify what thought patterns and behaviors promote or help their social experiences.)

**Q: What is your favorite day at Brook Forest?**  
By far, my most favorite day is the first day of school. I have a hard time sleeping the night before school begins. All the children come to school with their new backpacks, shoes, haircuts and big smiles on their faces ready to begin the new year. There is so much excitement about the new year for the children, staff and parents.

**Q: What's your biggest pet peeve?**  
Unkindness... Every day brings new opportunities to be kind and empathetic.

**Q: What are your plans in retirement?**  
I plan on being a "snowbird." I don't like the snow and cold weather. My new grandson's name is Kitt so I'm also going to Kitt-nap him for trips to the zoo, museums and parks.

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# PHOTO GALLERY

## Exploremore Day

Exploremore Day – the favorite day of the year at Brook Forest. Students could select from 49 different classes where they could explore topics like reptiles and repairing broken bones and also learn and play new sports, crafts and fine arts. New classes included learning magic, making balloon animals, designing acrylic boxes, solving puzzles and mysteries in an escape room, building rockets and fusing beads, flying a drone and trying yoga, among others. Following classes, the Jesse White Tumblers entertained and students were presented with awards. Pictured below, 5th graders Jessica Kmoch and Santino Florio were awarded the Citizenship Award from the Oak Brook Education Association for service, academics, courtesy, leadership, sportsmanship and school spirit.



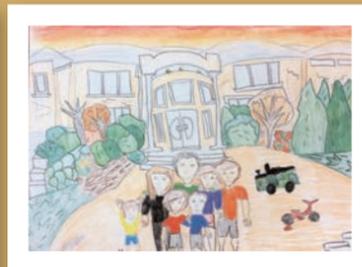
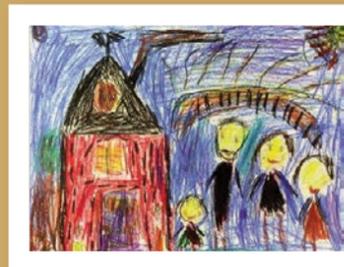
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[www.Butler53.com](http://www.Butler53.com)

## Art Board

Butler District 53 students display their artwork on [artsonia.com](http://artsonia.com). Pictured here (from l to r) are family portraits by Brook Forest students in kindergarten, grade 3 and grade 5.

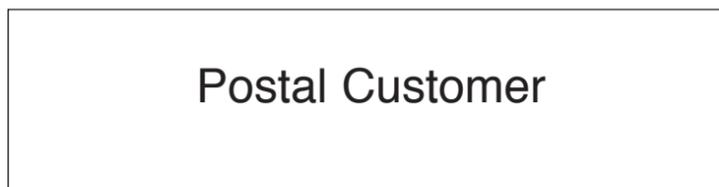


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