

WAYFINDER

FALL 2021 | VOLUME 1

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Please direct publication questions
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**SUPERINTENDENT'S
MESSAGE**



**TURNING PASSION
INTO PURPOSE**

In District 191, part of what we do is spark our students' wonder and curiosity. We tend to think of this as something that is especially done at the preschool and elementary level. Students experience and learn about all kinds of subjects and career fields with the goal of helping them see the possibilities of their futures.

Then, as students progress through elementary, middle and high school, we help them understand themselves better, grow the academic and personal skills they'll need to pursue their passion, envision their personal paths, and even help them earn college credit and professional certifications that get them a head start.

It's the Pathway model that we're establishing throughout the district.

But the truth is that a person can find their passion - or find a new outlet for their passion - anytime in life.

One of the things I love the most about our Pathways model is that it recognizes - even celebrates - that every person's path is unique. Every student finds their own path in their own time.

In this issue of Wayfinder, you'll read a few stories about District 191 alumni and current staff who have found a way to turn their passion into purpose: a healthcare professional who becomes a teacher and helps build a new program for high school students (page 8), a social worker who becomes a researcher and advocate to make a broader impact (page 2), and recent graduates whose experiences as early as elementary school helped them find their pathway (page 12).

Their stories are inspiring to me and I hope they provide a spark of inspiration to our current students and our entire community, as well.

Theresa Battle

Dr. Theresa Battle,
Superintendent

Hall of Fame Class of 2021:

Traci Laliberte, '85

Traci Laliberte At a Glance

Traci Laliberte is a child welfare practitioner, researcher and policy advocate. She holds a bachelor's degree from Minnesota State-Mankato, a master's degree from the University of Connecticut and a doctorate from the University of Minnesota. Currently the Executive Director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, she has dedicated her career to supporting children and families, including by providing research to the Minnesota Legislative Taskforce on the Protection of Children and working to pass bi-partisan legislation for meaningful change in training and support for the children's protection workforce. For her work, Laliberte has earned numerous awards, including the Outstanding Service Award from the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health in 2019.



We sat down for a Q&A session with esteemed Burnsville High School graduate, child welfare practitioner, researcher and policy advocate Traci Laliberte.

Wayfinder: How did you discover what you wanted to do with your career? Why is what you do important to you?

Traci Laliberte: I spent some time working with teenagers living in a psychiatric facility right after college. These were youth with incredibly complex challenges and living with trauma. I decided pretty early into that job that I wanted to help kids and their families before they reached that point of crisis in their lives. Because of that, I started to work in the field of child welfare. Over time, I began to recognize the need for changes in the system and learned about the importance of advocacy, policy and research, all contributing to improving social work practice with kids and families. That was when I went to school for my Ph.D. I believe I was born with the soul of a social worker. It is who I am, who I was meant to grow into – a professional who is able to walk alongside families during some of the most difficult times in their lives as they make critical changes for their safety and well-being.

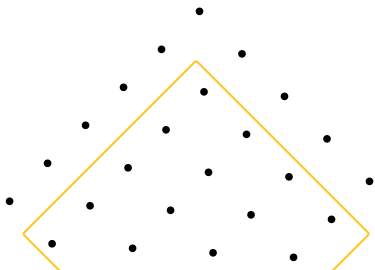
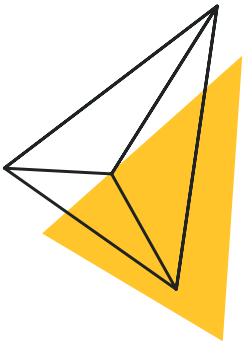
WF: What experiences did you have in high school or younger that you think might have helped you down that path?

TL: My earliest recollection of wanting to spend my time helping people was in 7th or 8th grade at Metcalf Junior High. I'm not exactly sure how it happened, but the local elementary school down the road on Diffley (in Eagan) needed volunteers in their special education room, helping kids who were deaf

with their spelling. I was allowed to go there several times per week. I LOVED being able to help the kids. It was then that I now identify as a time when I learned about social justice and access to equity in education. Critical aspects to life and certainly foundational to my life as a social worker. In high school I continued to volunteer and help others when I could. I remember being in high school and Grandma Schreck's Social and Family Living class. We learned about relationships, equity, inclusion, kindness, and compassion. These were the concepts that resonated with me. It was an invisible language (of sorts) that I had known my whole life and Grandma Schreck put words to it all.

WF: Have you ever felt unsure of your path? If yes, why? How did you respond?

TL: There are a lot of ways to help people and first and foremost is that people have to want your help ... or frankly it isn't helpful. I think some early learning for me centered around those concepts and that help isn't supposed to be paternalistic or pejorative. Being able to help is a privilege and one that can take place with many different people in many different settings. If I've ever been unsure of my path it was around not knowing which direction I could go to be most helpful or most effective. The only way I found that helps to crystalize your path is to try different things. I was lucky to have found my path early in life and to love that path.





“

It is important to try new things. You might not love everything or stick with it – and that is fine – but try. The knowledge and skill you gain will be immeasurable.

”

WF: In your career, you’ve been a social work practitioner as well as a researcher and policy advocate. How are those experiences different and why did you eventually choose to focus on research & policy?

TL: Being a practitioner is different than being a policy advocate and a researcher and yet you often employ the same skills because, believe it or not, success in each of those areas is relationship based. You have to love and respect people to walk a path with them as a practitioner. Working in policy and research is a step removed from working with kids and families and yet we need to hear the voices and experiences of those kids and families in order to write and implement effective policies and to inform the research questions that are so critical to ask. Creating partnerships and collaborations within communities and with individuals who have utilized direct services is critical to both policy and research.

WF: What about you do you think made your accomplishments possible? Is there a lesson for students on what’s possible for their futures?

TL: Sometimes it is difficult to talk about yourself and accomplishments but I think it is important while also being humble, so that students can see the potential for themselves in their own future. I know myself to be an incredibly tenacious person. I don’t back away from a challenge or believe that things are too challenging to tackle. In fact those challenging things are likely the things that need our attention the most. I believe that as a young student in Burnsville, I learned how to think critically and problem solve through both academics and extracurriculars. Those skills and early experiences stayed with me. It is important to try new things. You might not love everything or stick with it – and that is fine – but try. The knowledge and skill you gain will be immeasurable. Lastly, over time I benefited greatly from both formal and informal mentors. It is important to find people to learn from and to approach life with curiosity and openness. As you hone those skills, the world and its possibilities open to you. ■

2021

HALL OF FAME

INDUCTEES



Traci Laliberte
Class of 1985,
child welfare
practitioner,
researcher and
policy advocate



Vicki Roy
District 191
School Board
member,
community
volunteer

The purpose of the Burnsville High School Hall of Fame is to recognize individuals or organizations that have made exceptional achievements in their field, significant contributions to BHS and/or unique contributions to their community on a local, state, national or international level.

The selection of these individuals is intended to recognize and encourage a tradition of excellence, achievement, hard work, commitment and dedication at Burnsville High School.

We’re proud to welcome these inductees as part of the 2021 Hall of Fame class.



Martin Rothrock
Class of 1986,
Air Force colonel
and national
security expert



Dave Wicker
Class of 1979,
high school
athletics
administrator



Christine Hills
Class of 1985,
pediatrician



Ronald Holzacker
Class of 1979,
political scientist
and professor



Catherine French
Class of 1975,
engineer



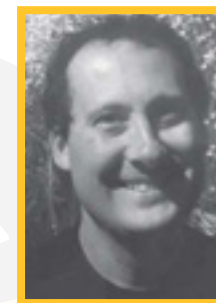
Angela Rodel
Class of 1992,
literary translator



Tori Dixon
Class of 2010,
professional
volleyball player



Cheryl Wunderlich
Class of 1982,
author



Peter Stathopoulos
Class of 1979,
author



Nominate a Candidate for the 2022 BHS Hall of Fame

We encourage individuals to nominate candidates that haven’t already been selected for the BHS Hall of Fame. The nomination form closes on March 15, 2022 at 3 p.m.

See full inductee profiles and find the nomination form at bhs.isd191.org/discover/bhs-hall-of-fame.

New core values and vision statement bolster District 191 mission

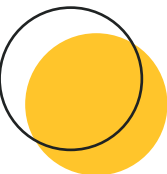
Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191 adopted a new vision and core values in May 2021. Driven by the same mission of “**Each Student. Future Ready. Community Strong.**”, the vision and core values represent a way forward following the implementation of the district’s 2015 strategic roadmap, Vision One91.

VISION

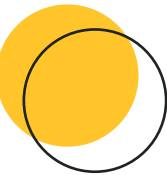
Vision Statement

Our vision statement uses aspirational language to communicate our purpose — it’s the change we intend to make in the world.

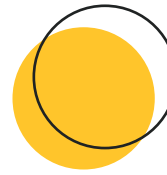
We will be a school district that provides transformative learning experiences that mirror students’ own stories, and where students will:



Be equipped to meet rigorous academic challenges that build their capacity to pursue excellence.



Be supported by a caring community that sparks their curiosity and fuels their progress down a self-determined path.



Embrace the humanity of all people and welcome diverse perspectives and voices.

SEVEN VALUABLE FUTURE

Our core values express what we stand for and what we believe in. They are our foundation. They represent the lens through which all our work is done.

Caring Community

Our culture will actively encourage and embrace each member of the community, creating a sense of support that fosters their individual growth and pursuit of learning.

Inclusive Partnership

Our collaboration and communication will inspire a culture of trust where students, families and staff are reflected in decisions that shape our district.

Cultural Proficiency

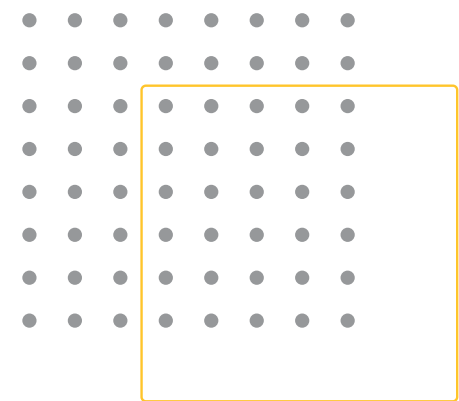
Our school community will work to understand our assumptions and biases, making a commitment to value and manage cultural uniquenesses and adapt education to meet the needs of each student.

Student Agency

Our students will make choices that personalize their learning journey, proactively building a day-to-day experience that leads them toward their passion and purpose.

Future Readiness

Our students will know they are ready to meet every next challenge through the confidence that comes from adventurous exploration and rigorous academics.



Healthy Progress

Anne Werner-Dempsey's healthcare experience puts spine in Health Sciences Pathway



In the Health Sciences & Human Services Career Field, students interact with teachers who are passionate about their subjects – and helping students see a world of possibility. Courses generate opportunities for

special certification and college credits, plus they expose students to a number of disciplines in three distinct Pathways: Health Sciences, Government & Community Services, and Education.

The future of this Career Field remains bright, as the need for healthcare innovation and skilled workers is an ever-present reality.

Anne Werner-Dempsey made a slight adjustment to her career, and students at Burnsville High School (BHS) are the beneficiaries. After 16 years as a practicing chiropractor she decided to go back to school and earn a teaching degree.

“I decided to go back to school to teach for a variety of factors, one of which was the love I had for teaching both chiropractic and massage interns in practice,” Werner-Dempsey explained. “Another reason I chose to teach was the loss of my father in 2012. He was one of the most inspirational teachers I have ever known, and his loss was felt by many.”

In 2015-16, Werner-Dempsey was teaching chemistry when she was asked to help develop the Health Sciences Pathway for certified nursing assistants with another teacher, Lori VanderWoude. She jumped at the opportunity. She currently works with Wanda King, RN to deliver the nursing assistant program.

“I had experience working as a chiropractor and hoped that my years of practice would bring some valuable patient care applications for the students,” Werner-Dempsey said. “I thought originally that I would teach chemistry because it has always been a love of mine, and I have been inspired by incredible chemistry teachers like Dr. Jeff Pribyl at Minnesota State Mankato. I am pleased that transitioning into teaching healthcare has been such a natural progression for me.”

PATHWAYS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Since being brought on to the Health Sciences Pathway team, Werner-Dempsey has watched the program grow. Originally, it offered the opportunity for students to become a Certified Nursing Assistant. Now students can also study to become Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT).

In addition to the Health Sciences Pathway course work and possible certifications, students have the opportunity to work with partners like Ebenezer Care Center, the Burnsville and Savage fire department, where they can learn from mentors and potentially apply what they've learned in the classroom in a practical and real-world setting.

“The Health Sciences Pathway provides students with multiple avenues to both explore and pursue careers in healthcare,” Werner-Dempsey said. “Students have the opportunity to see the healthcare profession from a practical point of view.”

And if they like the view, those students can seek certification as a nursing assistant or EMT while still in high school. They also have the potential to earn college credits while they learn in BHS, through Inver Hills Community College.

“In non-COVID years, the students have had a practical clinical experience in a local long-term care facility,” Werner-Dempsey said. “Many students came back from the experience with big smiles and lots of stories about the connections they made with residents.”

ROBUST LEARNING EXPERIENCE

COVID has also been an eye-opener.

“I think that this pandemic has many people's eyes on the vital role healthcare workers play in society,” said Werner-Dempsey. “It is critical to have well-trained and passionate healthcare staff at every level of healthcare.”

While not every student who takes health care classes at BHS will choose a healthcare career, the learning experience still proves to be valuable. “I hope that all my students take away from my classes a love for life-long, continuous learning. My goal for students is that they finish the coursework with confidence to help others.” ■

“The Health Sciences Pathway provides students with multiple avenues to both explore and pursue careers in healthcare. Students have the opportunity to see the healthcare profession from a practical point of view.”

- Anne Werner-Dempsey

The making of a mentor

Nicollet 8th grader's personal struggles fuel desire to help others

When Bailey Fox first entered 6th grade, she had a hard time forming relationships, and had emotional and mental struggles in school and at home.

Now an 8th grader at Nicollet Middle School, with a cultivated confidence and strong sense of self, Bailey helps incoming 6th graders make connections and find support.

Bailey is a leader in Nicollet's Where Everybody Belongs (WEB) program, an orientation and discovery program that aims to build a positive school culture. Eighth-grade students welcome 6th graders and other new students through activities that reinforce school values.

"I realized how much help that I needed at the time and felt that I wasn't really getting the support I needed to be successful," said Bailey. "I became a WEB leader so that I could have a chance to help other 6th graders struggling just like I did."

She found her interests validated and supported by staff. Her experiences fueled her desire to become a WEB leader and help facilitate a student's transition to middle school.

"I wish that when I was in sixth grade that there wouldn't have been a focus just on my grades, but on my emotional and mental well-being," said Bailey. "But, there were two people, Assistant Principal [Eddie] Blaylark and my counselor, Ms. [Katy] Hemmah, who helped me a lot. Mr. Blaylark would lift up my mood if he saw that I was down, and Ms. Hemmah, who continues to help me today, just accepted me for who I was. They were always there for me."

Thankful for the support she received from staff during a difficult time in her life, Bailey

desires to be that support for her peers. Being a WEB leader enables Bailey to care for her classmates.

"I make sure that students know that I care about them and show them that they can come to me if they need to talk," said Bailey. "The first thing I say to someone who comes to me for support is, 'Do you want me to talk or do you want me to listen?'"

"I'm passionate about my ability to help people. The hurt in my life has helped me become a better person and makes me want to help others who might be going through the same things."

Bailey is excited about what the future holds. She feels empowered and looks forward to the high school years where she can explore her interests, including playing the violin in the orchestra and taking a variety of math classes. Bailey thinks she might want to study neuroscience some day. But most importantly, Bailey would like to continue pursuing her passion of helping others, in whatever role that might be. ■

"I'm passionate about my ability to help people. The hurt in my life has helped me become a better person and makes me want to help others who might be going through the same things."





Discover One91 Trailblazers

With One91 Pathways, students are invited on a joyful journey of self-discovery from the first sparks of wonder as young learners, through the discoveries that fuel their academic exploration, to being equipped with the tools they need to blaze their own path, no matter what life throws their way.

Read more about how Justin, Jenna Kay and Osman are One91 trailblazers.

Justin's Journey into *Journalism*

It is fair to say that Justin Amaker has a nose for news.

As a fifth and sixth grade student at Rahn Elementary, Justin was involved in the "Rahn TV3 News," a daily show where students would share daily announcements with the entire school. "That started the spark of getting into news," Justin said. And the spark happened again as a student at Burnsville High School and the opportunity to take courses in the Arts, Global Communications and Information Systems pathway. He was part of the school's TV production class and helped produce a weekly news show where he wrote scripts, served as on-camera talent and worked behind the scenes. His pathway into the news business continued in his journalism class, which led to his involvement in the school's newspaper and yearbook.

Justin continues to follow his nose for news at the University of St. Thomas where he is pursuing a Communications and Journalism degree. At St. Thomas during the Fall 2021 semester, he served as the director of Tommie Media, a student-run news organization, and supervised a 60-member team. There is no doubt that Justin's journalism talents will continue to be shared with the world. ■

And it all started at
"Rahn TV3 News."



Justin on Rahn TV3 News
in 5th & 6th grade



Jenna Kay's Journey to NASA

Jenna Kay Foertsch understands - and appreciates - the time and hard work her teachers in Burnsville-Eagan-Savage District 191 dedicated to her learning.

"I had a few teachers that really stood out to me and all of them in different subject areas," Jenna Kay said. "Some of the greatest lessons I've learned were not from lessons during class but from the chats I had with teachers after class while asking for advice," Jenna Kay noted. She was not a student who excelled in a particular subject, but she felt a spark – because of her teachers – in STEM-related courses. It was the Burnsville High School robotics team that made a difference.

"Joining the robotics team changed the trajectory of both my career and my life. The high school robotics team was a perfect blend of STEM, business, communications, outreach and education - where my sweet spot lies. Through robotics, I discovered a network and community that led to my love for both space and NASA."

She is a 2015 graduate of Burnsville High School and completed her degree at the University of Minnesota. She is now working in her "dream job" at NASA in the Planning, Integration and Environmental Office at the Johnson Space Center in Houston.

Jenna Kay also serves as a mentor to high school robotics team through FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition in Science and Technology) and has served as a mentor for a Burnsville High School team.



Osman's Journey into Architecture

"It's been a roller coaster of projects" is how Osman Warfa describes his interest in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) field.

He is particularly interested in aerospace engineering and architecture and his interest began as a third grade student when he participated in his first science fair at Gideon Pond. "I can remember my elementary science classes, which were taught by Mrs. Rau," Osman recalled. "Her way of teaching us was hands-on and it was one of my first real experiences conducting observations in the name of science," he added.

Osman found success in many ways and also points to his "failed builds" as learning opportunities. Osman noted that when something does not work out the way he intended, he is able to deconstruct the problem to find different ways to approach it. His interest in science continued through middle school into Burnsville High School where he took engineering courses as part of the Design, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies pathway. Osman graduated from Burnsville High School in spring 2021 and will enroll in the University of Minnesota to study architecture.



Osman at the
6th Grade
Science Fair

 **Share your story with us at**
pathways.isd191.org

Threads of Dignity

Staff-led project ensures students have culturally-appropriate clothing at school

Stop in at any District 191 health office, and you'll find bins of assorted clothing items that students can choose from when their own clothing gets soiled during the school day.

Schools have always had back-up clothing available for students in case of spills and other accidents, including jeans, t-shirts, sweatshirts, and socks, but have not always had hijabs or skirts for Muslim girls who wear them.

Maryan Ali, a cultural liaison at three District 191 schools and recipient of Burnsville's Community Builder Award, decided it was time to change that. For a long time, she had a vision to supply all schools with culturally-appropriate clothing, particularly modest clothing and hijabs for Muslim girls.

Gathering garments

The Burnsville Education Association (BEA) equity team took this project on and set a goal of \$800. Gideon Pond staff Becca Buck and Janie Beeninga, a music and ESL teacher, respectively, joined Maryan on her quest to purchase clothing. They went to a local shop owned by a Gideon Pond family, followed by a stop at Children's Choice at the Burnsville Center Mall, and then took several trips to Karmel Mall in Minneapolis. They purchased a total of 126 hijabs and 48 skirts in varying sizes, colors and styles.

The group also ordered One91 iron-on patches and hosted "Ironing Parties" for staff members to help apply patches to the clothing. After connecting with school nurses about specific needs at their buildings, the clothing was packed into bags and distributed to schools.



"We don't just say words, we work hard to take action," said Maryan, regarding District 191's mission to be inclusive and culturally-proficient in its work. "We believe that our schools should represent the students we serve, and this project is one way to show that."

Remaining funds were given to Foundation 191, a non-profit organization driven by a volunteer board consisting of community members, alumni, parents and business people. The money will be used for future clothing needs that District 191 cultural liaisons identify.

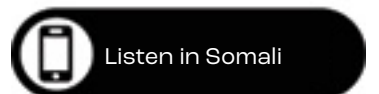
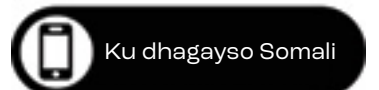
Sparkling change

The fundraiser has raised awareness and inspired several districts with large Muslim populations to do similar projects.

"We don't just say words, we work hard to take action," said Maryan, regarding District 191's mission to be inclusive and culturally-proficient in its work. "We believe that our schools should represent the students we serve, and this project is one way to show that."

Community support for this project was astonishing. They raised nearly \$3,000 – more than triple their goal – thanks to support from District 191 staff and community, as well as donors from around the country.

"This could not have happened if not for the multiple donors to this project, as well as all of those who donated time and materials," said Buck. "Thank you!"





Around the District: Fall 2021

Stories of curiosity, self-discovery,
and transformational learning
experiences in our schools.

Spark

Elementary students are inspired to
approach the world with wonder.



In Angie Tusa's preschool classroom at Hidden Valley Elementary School, students created a poster based on a book they read for Read for the Record, "Amy Wu and the Patchwork Dragon."



District 191 elementary music teacher Becca Buck and her Gideon Pond classroom find their rhythm with buckets! With some slight modifications done by school custodial staff, the buckets are a perfect instrument for delivering great music!



At the Rahn Enrichment Academy, each student chose an activity they wanted to explore, like learning to juggle, playing the ukulele or speaking French. For one hour of the school day, the entire school explored something new to them.

Fuel

Middle school scholars discover new ways to look at the world.



Eagle Ridge scholars in Pat Mosey's sixth-grade science class went on a field trip to study macroinvertebrate and water quality in preparation for Mosey's annual Trout in the Classroom, a project in which students raise trout from eggs to fingerlings and learn about ecosystem connectivity.

Robot Friday happens each week in Molly Moran's digital learning class at Eagle Ridge. Students learn about computer science through games, robots and coding.

While learning about the Jeffers Petroglyphs site in southwestern Minnesota, students in Bounthavy Khamratthanome's 6th grade social studies class at Nicollet Middle School "carved" their own petroglyphs on the whiteboard.

Blaze

Immersive experiences increase future readiness for high school learners.



Burnsville High School Theatre Guild members are amazing and talented! This fall, they returned to the stage at the Mraz Center for the Performing Arts to present the musical review "All Together Now!"

A group of Burnsville High School government students who are concurrently-enrolled and earning college credit had the opportunity to serve as election judges for the District 191 special election. It was a unique opportunity for our seniors to go beyond the classroom and participate in the political process.

Through a variety of service projects on Green Apple Day of Service, students build community with their peers and help maintain the school as a safe, healthy and sustainable learning environment. Hats off to Youth Service Advisory Council and BrainPower in a Backpack for their work in making this annual event a success!

TO THE ISD191 RESIDENT AT:

Hallway Chatter: Sky Oaks Elementary

District 191 is working to help students turn their passions into a future they're going to love. This issue, we heard from fifth-grade students at Sky Oaks Elementary. We can't wait to see how these learners blossom in the future.

“

I love to learn math and how to write better. Right now, we're writing stories and I really like it.

- **Sophia**



“

I'm really passionate about doing dancing and I like to act, sometimes just by myself, but I really like acting.

- **Zoey**



I'm passionate about my brother and my whole family. They are always kind to me.

- **Waleed**

”

