

# School Talk

SPRING 2011

## Student connectedness

**Why it's a key to  
academic success**

# Student connectedness

## Why it's a key to academic success

There's a saying that if you need something done, you should ask a busy person for help.

Something similar could be said for students.

It might fly in the face of conventional wisdom, but education experts agree — the more involved a student is in time-consuming academic and co-curricular activities, the more connected the student will feel to the school community. And student connectedness is a key to academic success.

"If you take a look at our highest-achieving students, they're not the type of kids who go to school, come home, do some homework and call it a day," says Scott Gengler, principal of Irondale High School. "Their daily routines involve countless connections to their school community through clubs, activities, service organizations, music, sports... It's those connections that make them feel engaged, valued and inspired to achieve academically. We want all of our students to have those connections, because if they do, we're confident they'll do well in school and in life beyond our walls."

Knowing that student connectedness is a key to academic success, Mounds View Public Schools remains committed to offering a comprehensive program featuring a variety of

"We know that kids who feel more connected do better in school."

— Dan Hoverman, Superintendent

academic and co-curricular opportunities. When students take advantage of these opportunities, they increase their chances of feeling connected to their school and are more likely to perform at a higher academic level than students who do not feel connected.

### A 'sense of belonging'

So what exactly is student connectedness?

"For a student, it's a sense of belonging that comes through your belief that the adults and peers that have contact with you each school day, welcome you, care about you, know you and encourage you to succeed," explains Bob Madison, activities director at Mounds View High School. "That means providing before- and after-school activities that are engaging and offering meaningful opportunities for goal setting and mentoring. It also means supportive student relationships with their teachers, coaches, advisors, deans... with all of our school staff community."

Do Mounds View Public Schools students feel connected? A recent survey of sophomores, juniors and seniors in both high schools revealed that 85 percent feel connected at their school, with 72 percent reporting that their participation in after-school activities made them feel connected, while 78 percent said they felt connected to school through the classes they were taking.

High school students cited a variety of reasons for feeling connected, including:

- First day of school for ninth-graders only
- 9th-grade retreat day
- Diversity club
- Variety of activities and sports
- School dances
- Dean model

On the cover:

**In her sophomore year at Irondale High School, Georgeanne Owiredu is part of the school's orchestra, and she plays on the soccer team.**

*School Talk* is published by Mounds View Public Schools, Independent School District 621. Send correspondence to *School Talk* editor, 350 Highway 96 West, Shoreview, MN 55126, e-mail [rachel.gutierrez@moundsvIEWSchools.org](mailto:rachel.gutierrez@moundsvIEWSchools.org) or call 651-621-6012.

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Schools like Highview Middle School are focused on making frequent, personal, positive contacts with every student. Principal Heather Timmons checks in with seventh-grader Tenzin Kalsang.



“The survey confirmed what we suspected — a majority of our students feel connected. But that doesn’t mean our work is done,” says Superintendent Dan Hoverman. “How can we better reach the students who don’t feel connected? What can we do to maintain and increase students’ feelings of connectedness? What can we do to build more programs that are non-traditional, high quality, financially sustainable and do not compromise the current programs being offered?”

### Do high school students feel connected?

- 85%** “I feel connected at my school.”
- 72%** “I feel connected through after-school activities.”
- 78%** “I feel connected through the classes I am taking.”

*District grades 10, 11, 12 survey, fall 2010.*

### Strategies for success

To answer those questions, school leaders at all levels have made student connectedness strategies part of their schools’ priority goals for student achievement.

Middle schools are tackling a variety of initiatives like expanding their targeted service programs and before/after school activities, adjusting community education athletic fee schedules, increasing student leadership opportunities, strengthening the student mentor and peer helping programs and requiring weekly goal-setting meetings where students and teachers set growth goals and monitor progress.

Elementary schools have implemented PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) as part of the way they connect with all students. This program emphasizes acknowledging students for the positive things they are doing to help schools set a positive tone. Schools also have incorporated Responsive Classroom and Second Step curriculum strategies that work on building classroom communities in each setting students are involved. “Teachers have volunteered their time during the week to meet with identified students to give them a staff member to connect with and talk to about how things are going at school,” says

Nathan Flansburg, principal at Valentine Hills Elementary School. “By getting involved early, we help ensure that all students feel they belong to the school community.”

Strategies to improve student connectedness may look somewhat different in every school but staff in every school throughout the District share the same goal: Making frequent, personal, positive contacts with every student. For some schools this means greeting students before school and at the start of each class or sending students and families positive, encouraging e-mails or postcards. For other schools it involves activities that ensure there is an adult advocate for every student.

### What is student connectedness?

“For a student, it’s a sense of belonging. It’s your belief that the adults and peers that have contact with you each school day, welcome you, care about you, know you and encourage you to succeed.”

*– Bob Madison, activities director  
Mounds View High School*

“Every day in every school we’re working toward improving student connectedness, but it’s important to remember that student connectedness is not a goal in itself,” says Superintendent Hoverman. “Student connectedness really is a strategy to reach a goal of high achievement. That’s because we know that kids who feel more connected do better in school.”

# A Closer Look

## Voters approve levy renewal

**64 percent approval is largest margin of support among successful metro districts**



Election Day 2010 brought a renewed \$6 million, eight-year operating levy for Mounds View Public Schools, thanks to the support of resident voters. With 64 percent of its voters approving the renewal request, Mounds View received the largest margin of support among successful metro districts with levy questions on the ballot.

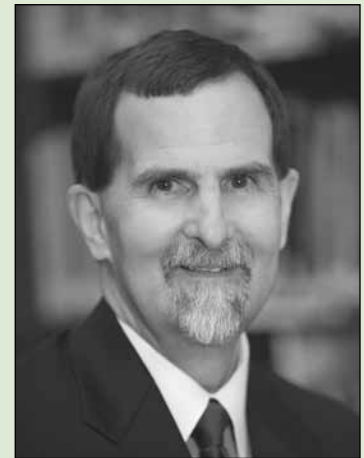
“Our request for renewal was simply an effort to hang onto existing funding,” explains Board member Lisa Sjobeck. “Of the six districts on the ballot, we were the only metro district not asking taxpayers for an increase. I think our community appreciated that approach, especially considering today’s economy.”

With a levy expiring in 2011, the School Board voted unanimously to ask voters to renew the operating levy at the same level of funding, with no property tax increase associated with the renewal. Had voters rejected the levy, the District would have eventually lost \$6 million a year, prompting staff cuts, class size increases and program reductions.

However, for most districts the days of levies providing “extras” are over. The renewed levy funding plays an important role in maintaining class sizes and programs, but considering four more years of flat per-pupil funding from the state, the levy alone cannot prevent future budget reductions.

“The levy alone will not offer a long-term solution to every financial challenge we will face, but it does provide critical assistance to our schools,” says Superintendent Dan Hoverman. “We sincerely appreciate the community’s demonstration of support.”

**What does the successful renewal say about our community?**



Here’s Superintendent Dan Hoverman, in his own words.

“We know we didn’t pass the levy with parent support alone. In our community, some 80 percent of our residents do not have students in our schools. That means residents of all ages view our schools as good neighbors, worthy of support. We appreciate their vote of confidence, and we certainly will work hard to maintain those relationships.

“Last spring a survey showed 85 percent of District residents believe they receive a good value from their investment in Mounds View Public Schools. I think last fall’s vote reaffirms that sentiment, and we’re going to honor their investment by continuing to produce exceptionally educated students who will become our community’s leaders of tomorrow.

“The voters have trusted us to spend the money wisely, and we will.”

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**“We were the only metro district not asking taxpayers for an increase. I think our community appreciated that approach.”**

— Lisa Sjobeck, School Board member

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# All juniors to take the ACT for free

Kevin Sharpe is happy that he won't have to give up a Saturday to take the ACT exam. Instead, the 11th-grade Mounds View High School student will take the exam at his home school with the rest of his class during the school day on April 27. Thanks to a grant from the Mounds View Schools Education Foundation, all Mounds View High School, Irondale High School, Oak Grove High School and Area Learning Center juniors will have the opportunity to take the ACT exam during the school day at no charge. This makes Mounds View the first and only district in the state to offer the exam on-site during the school day at no charge.

"This partnership with the ACT organization reflects our commitment to post-secondary preparation," says Mary Roden, assistant director of assessment and evaluation. "We're very excited to offer all our juniors this opportunity."

When it comes to the ACT exam, Mounds View Public Schools students exceed state and national norms year after year. Jason Hunt, dean of students at Mounds View High School, takes pride in the high numbers that his students receive on the ACT. He says the scores students earn on the curriculum-based test "speak volumes about what students have learned" in high school English, math and science courses and offer students an opportunity to explore college and other career training.



**Kevin Sharpe looks at ACT prep books and college guides in the career center at Mounds View High School while Mounds View senior Molly Rinehart considers which college she'll attend next year.**

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**Mounds View Public Schools becomes the first and only district in the state to offer an on-site administration of the ACT for free to all 11th-grade students.**

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While the District takes pride in the high scores that students achieve on the ACT, the scores aren't the only numbers the District has been tracking. Mary Roden, assistant director of assessment and evaluation, says a continued focus on post-secondary preparation has put ACT test participation on the District's priority list. On average, 73 percent of District students take the ACT exam during their high school career.

Camry Kelly, a 10th-grader at Mounds View High School is already looking forward to her opportunity to take the exam next year. She says that her preparation started in eighth-grade with the EXPLORE test and continues with help from her high school dean and the PLAN test in 10th-grade. In addition to the test preparation being offered, Camry says "offering the ACT through school is showing how much [school deans and leaders] care and want us to succeed after high school."



**To learn more, watch a brief video on the District's YouTube Channel: [www.youtube.com/MoundsViewSchools](http://www.youtube.com/MoundsViewSchools).**

# A Closer Look

## Board eyes unreserved fund to prevent \$7 million in cuts

A quick look around metro school districts tells a similar tale this spring. Budget cuts are officially part of Minnesota school districts' "new normal."

### Estimated Budget Gaps:

*Districts similar to Mounds View in size, performance, diversity and budget*

Robbinsdale	\$1.5 million
Wayzata	\$2.5 million
Bloomington	\$3.5 million
Burnsville	\$4 million
White Bear Lake	\$4 million
Eden Prairie	\$4.5 million
N. St. Paul	\$5.5 million
<b>Mounds View</b>	<b>\$7 million</b>

Source = Association of Metropolitan School Districts, January 2011

As the state sets out to address its \$6 billion deficit, state officials have made it clear: After experiencing three consecutive years of flat per-pupil funding, Mounds View and other districts should expect at least four more years of the same. In addition, the state's recent practice of withholding payments to schools will continue. This year, the state withheld \$37 million from Mounds View. Repayments (at two percent each year) won't begin until three years from now.

### The 'new normal'

Although the District is no stranger to some challenging economic times, experts warn that this is not simply a temporary rough patch. Instead, there are many indicators that suggest this challenging economic and political future reflects a new long-term reality. Both the state demographer and state economist describe the state's situation as "the new normal" — characterized by

slower economic growth, higher interest rates and chronic government deficits. And both agree "the new normal" will have a significant impact on public schools.

For years, the District has taken a conservative approach to budgeting, while using a variety of funding tools provided by the Legislature. This fiscally sound approach has produced an unreserved fund balance of \$21 million. However, revenue does not meet expenses, and Mounds View expects a \$7 million deficit next year.

If the District were to balance the budget by reducing \$7 million from its largest employee group, that would mean cutting about 86 teaching positions. Instead, the School Board plans to close the gap by tapping the unreserved fund. Using this money, the School Board can postpone making significant reductions that many other metro districts are currently experiencing. For 2011-2012, this means:

- No class size increases.
- No program cuts.
- No school schedule disruptions.
- No staff layoffs.

If the School Board continues to spend down the unreserved fund balance to address deficits, by 2013-2014 the District will no longer have an unreserved fund balance to close gaps. A deficit of \$13 million is expected three years from now.

"The math is pretty simple. Flat funding, plus increased expenses, equals an unsustainable financial future," says School Board chair Jon Tynjala. "The question is, 'How do we continue to provide stability in class sizes and programs when our future cannot and will not look like our past?'"

### Collaboration is key

Tynjala and other Board members agree that once the fund balance is spent, replenishing it would be unlikely. Finding answers won't be easy. But the only way to solve these challenges is with the commitment, creativity and collaboration from several groups including the parents, community, School Board, employees and District administration.

"Whatever the future holds, our community can expect our schools to continue their commitment to continuous improvement in all areas — from student achievement to fiscal responsibility," says superintendent Dan Hoverman. "What the picture of our schools looks like tomorrow, depends on the actions we will take together today."

### Video reveals 'new normal' for schools

When our future cannot and will not look like our past, what is the best way to offer stability in class sizes and programs?

This budget season, a new video takes a closer look at the District's economic realities and future prospects. District officials are sharing the video with staff, parents and community groups in an effort to ensure all communities have a shared understanding of the economic realities and challenges.

To watch, please visit [www.moundsviewschools.org](http://www.moundsviewschools.org).



# School Board News



## Serving on the School Board: What does it require?

For a public that's generally more familiar with city council structures, School Board roles can often be confusing. But School Board chair Jon Tynjala offers this insight — "Simply put, school boards govern, and city councils manage. For us, that means following a 'policy governance' model of leadership that allows the administration to operate the schools according to the policies we set. In other words, our School Board members won't have a 30-minute debate about what color to paint the hallways."

So if the School Board isn't involved in the day-to-day decision making and running of schools what exactly does it do?

### Responsibilities

As the elected governing body of the Mounds View School District the School Board is responsible to:

- Interpret the needs of the community regarding the educational program.
- Establish policy. The administration implements policy and supervises school operations.
- Employ and evaluate the superintendent. The School Board is responsible for hiring, then evaluating, the chief administrator

who oversees all operations of the School District.

- Approve appointment of staff members as well as resignations, terminations and leaves of absence.
- Establish and approve the annual budget.
- Authorize development and revision of curriculum and student services.
- Work with the administration to determine the District's educational goals.
- Set the annual local school levy.
- Approve expenditures and otherwise ensure that proper facilities and equipment are available to support teaching and learning in Mounds View Public Schools.

In addition, School Board members accept assignments to numerous School District committees which meet periodically to study specific issues, work on special projects and make recommendations to the School Board. School liaison assignments pair School Board members with specific elementary, middle and high schools. School Board members also represent Mounds View Public Schools in metro and state education organizations

### 2011 School Board

**Left to right: Jon Tynjala, Marre Jo Sager, Barb Bollum, Susan Murphy, Bob Helgeson, Lisa Sjobeck and Greg Madsen.**

in which the School District has membership.

"It's a very challenging, time-consuming yet satisfying responsibility," says Board member Lisa Sjobeck. "Serving our schools and our community in this way can be both a sacrifice at times and a privilege."

### Elections

In Mounds View, the School Board is made up of seven citizens elected at large by voters in the District every two years to four-year overlapping terms. At the end of a four-year term, members may run for reelection to successive terms. Voting takes place at general elections in November and terms begin the first Monday in January thereafter.

The terms of four current School Board seats are expiring in January 2012, and elections will be held on November 8, 2011. The period for filing affidavits of candidacy for the office of School Board member begins on August 9, 2011, and closes at 5 p.m. on August 23, 2011. Affidavits of candidacy may be obtained from — and ultimately filed in — the Ramsey County Elections Office, 90 West Plato Blvd., Suite 160, St. Paul, MN 55164. The expiring terms are currently being served by members Barb Bollum, New Brighton; Lisa Sjobeck, North Oaks; Bob Helgeson, North Oaks; and Susan Murphy, Shoreview.

To learn more about the School Board election, call 651-621-6001. For more information on School Board responsibilities, visit [www.moundsvIEWSchools.org](http://www.moundsvIEWSchools.org).

### Ask the Board

Are you interested in running for a seat on the School Board and want to know what it's really like being a School Board member? Members of the School Board are hosting informational gatherings where residents can learn about the roles and responsibilities first hand.

Wednesday, May 4, 2011 • 7 – 9 a.m.  
Shoreview Community Center  
4580 Victoria Street North

Thursday, May 5, 2011 • 6:30–8:30 p.m.  
Mounds View Community Center  
5394 Edgewood Drive

Or to learn more about the upcoming School Board election, call 651-621-6001 or visit [www.moundsvIEWSchools.org](http://www.moundsvIEWSchools.org).

# Around the District

## Edgewood to open magnet school in 2012

### ‘STEAM’ curriculum for some 60 students

When Mounds View joined an integration collaborative district in 2010, one of the terms of membership included the establishment of a magnet school. In fall 2012, Mounds View will fulfill that requirement when Edgewood Middle School in Mounds View opens a 60-student magnet school.

By definition, a magnet school is charged with providing a racially balanced and ethnically diverse environment that ensures academic achievement for all students through the magnet theme. Magnet programs are typically distinguished by distinctive curriculum and instructional approaches that are innovative, effective and engaging for students and teachers. They also allow for student enrollment across attendance boundaries and offer enhanced racial/ethnic balance.

#### From ‘STEM’ to ‘STEAM’

Mounds View’s integration collaborative district, the Northwest Suburban Integration School District (NWSISD) identified the need for a middle school STEM program which features a curriculum rich in science, technology, engineering and math. The eight-district NWSISD currently has three elementary STEM programs that could feed a STEM middle school.

However, the Edgewood magnet school curriculum will infuse a strong creative strand of the arts, making the STEM school a “STEAM” school, broadening the value and appeal of the program for students and staff. The

STEAM program will offer its students a different delivery of curriculum than the traditional Edgewood students, but it will operate parallel with the traditional Edgewood experience. Learner outcomes will remain the same for all three middle schools.

In fall 2012, the magnet school will enroll up to 60 students (no more than 20 from each grade: 6, 7, 8), and

a lottery system will select enrollment from applicants who reside in the NWSISD attendance areas. Students who live in the Chippewa, Edgewood and Highview attendance areas may apply to enroll in this program at Edgewood. Students who live in the Edgewood attendance area will still attend Edgewood, unaffected by the magnet program within the school.

#### Edgewood = best fit

NWSISD requires that magnet programs be located at sites with the highest levels of racial diversity. In choosing a location and considering many factors including location, level of diversity, capacity, facility and technology available, only one factor distinguished Edgewood from Highview – its size. (Chippewa was eliminated from consideration because of its low level of racial diversity.)

To fund the program development, the District is receiving \$200,000 of integration district revenue over the next 18 months as teachers, administrators, parents and community members are collaborating to plan programming.

“The STEAM program at Edgewood will benefit students in all middle schools, because we’re going to replicate best practices at other schools in the District,” says director of curriculum and instruction RoAnne Elliott. “Opportunities for sharing, professional development and collaboration will extend well beyond the magnet program and around the District.”



**Penny Howard, principal of Edgewood Middle School, looks forward to welcoming students to the magnet school in fall 2012.**

*The Edgewood magnet school curriculum will infuse a strong creative strand of the arts, broadening the value and appeal of the program for students and staff.*

# From ALC to e-ALC

Mounds View's Area Learning Center is transitioning from ALC to an e-ALC that will offer students a blended course model featuring online classes with regularly scheduled face-to-face seminars.

Mounds View's ALC currently serves high school students who are struggling in school or have dropped out and want to return to meet their graduation requirements through credit recovery. They desire a program that better fits their individual needs.

Beginning in fall 2011, the e-ALC will offer a unit-based credit-recovery program for all District high school students. Features of the new e-ALC include a more flexible, individualized

and immediate educational experience not bound by the traditional bricks and mortar boundaries. Teachers will offer a supportive, student-centered approach that follows the national standards for online curriculum and an option to divide student time between on-line learning and classroom time.

The e-ALC will continue to offer a variety of classes in core subjects including language arts, reading, mathematics, science and social studies. Elective classes include computer technology and work-based learning. The new e-ALC courses will be available to 9th through 12th grade students.

In an e-blended course, approximately 60 to 80 percent of every

course is delivered online through a web-based program called Moodle, and approximately 20 to 40 percent is delivered through face-to-face instruction. Students and teachers at the e-ALC will divide their time between classroom courses at the current ALC location at 500 10th Street N.W. New Brighton, and on-line interactions.

Like today's ALC, students from any Minnesota school district may enroll in the e-ALC program. Dual enrollment is accepted within the Mounds View School District. For more information on the e-ALC, contact director of curriculum and instruction, RoAnne Elliott at 651-621-6003 or [roanne.elliott@moundsvIEWSchools.org](mailto:roanne.elliott@moundsvIEWSchools.org).

## Students celebrate seniors



Sandy Collins' Turtle Lake Elementary School fifth-grade orchestra students (pictured) traveled to North Oaks Presbyterian Homes in October to bring elderly and disabled residents a musical performance, flowers and handmade greeting cards. Orchestra students organized the Presbyterian Homes visit in celebration of Kids Care Week, a national grant program of generationOn, which afforded 100 service projects nation-wide to celebrate volunteerism.

Roxanne Britz's Bel Air Elementary School fifth-graders visited seniors at Presbyterian Homes in New Brighton. Seniors at the New Brighton Home enjoy musical performances from Bel Air students annually around the holidays.



### Seniors to seniors

Nearly 400 students, parents and community members gathered in December for Irondale High School's annual Seniors to Seniors Concert and luncheon. Students from the school's concert band, concert choir and symphony orchestra performed a holiday concert for community seniors, grandparents and parents.



High school junior and concert choir performer Britta Alstad helped community members to their seats at a luncheon that was held in the school's cafeteria after the musical performance.

# Around the District

## Elementary school students 'Fill the Bus'

District elementary schools worked together to deliver more than 7,000 pounds of food to the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf in February.

A First Student school bus stopped by all District elementary schools in February to pick up donations for delivery to the Food Shelf.



**Bel Air Elementary School's student council (pictured) coordinated a "Fill the Bus" food drive to collect non-perishable food items for District families who are served by the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf in New Brighton.**



**Nancy Kellerman's sixth-grade Turtle Lake students collected more than 600 items for the Fill the Bus food drive and helped the school's student council load the bus.**

## Operation Joy

The Ralph Reeder Food Shelf collected more than 2,000 gifts this holiday season during its annual Operation Joy Campaign that benefits Mounds View Public Schools families. Thanks to more than 50 community volunteers and donations from area churches, schools, businesses, clubs, individuals and Toys for Tots, nearly 700 children (ages birth to 12th grade) received gifts. Qualifying families who registered with the Food Shelf were invited to the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf December 15 and 16 to pick out gifts for each of their children. Pike Lake Education Center, in New Brighton, hosted the "Toy Shop" which helped make the holiday season a little brighter for more than 300 District families. In addition to the District-wide Operation Joy toy drive, many schools throughout the District hosted food drives to help bring food to the Mounds View Public Schools community during the holidays.

In December, the Sunnyside Student Leadership Team collected nearly 1,200 pounds of donated items and almost \$200 in cash donations for the Food Shelf which distributes an estimated 40,000 pounds of food each month.

To learn more about how you can help, visit Ralph Reeder Food Shelf's web site at [www.moundsvIEWSchools.org](http://www.moundsvIEWSchools.org).

## ALC sends packages to troops

Area Learning Center students participated in the St. Paul Post Office “Shop, Ship and Share” program by collecting donated items and writing letters to Minnesota military members overseas for delivery during the holidays. To thank students, Chief Master Sergeant Steve Campos presented students with a patch from one of his uniforms while he

delivered a message about the importance of education, focus and commitment. Michael Larson, postmaster for the St. Paul Post Office, presented students and Sarah Levinski, ALC teacher and service learning coordinator, with a certificate and plaque and thanked them for their participation in the program.



Pictured from left to right in the front row: Mary Mattila, Donovan Cole, Maddie Bakke, Jade Gunter, Morgan Radar, Deziree Toombs, Sgt Campos, Cherise Schuster (holding patch), ALC teacher Sarah Levinski and Postmaster Steve Larson. From left to right in the back row: Beau Schouveller, Jake Huey, Travis Myers, Nick Lubrant, Kyle Myers and T.J. Fehringer.

## Presents from Boston Scientific



Continuing a six-year tradition, Boston Scientific delivered some holiday cheer to Valentine Hills families. This year, 49 families from the Valentine Hills community received toys, clothing and food thanks to the Arden Hills company and its employees. Pictured: Sue Ford of Boston Scientific delivered packages to Lori Carlson, Valentine Hills para, and Steve Paquette, Valentine Hills maintenance, who made presents available to families in need.



## Thanking those who serve

Continuing a five-year tradition at Island Lake Elementary School, fourth- and fifth-graders honored veterans at their annual Veteran's Day programs. Students sent invitations to veterans and community members for the event, which included American folk and patriotic songs. Donations were collected at the concert and sent to deployed Island Lake relatives. Veterans like Harold Masek were invited to school to meet directly with students like fifth-grader Alina Nguyen to describe their experiences as a soldier.

## Celebrating an increasingly



### Cultural night

Almost 600 people braved the cold on January 21 to attend the Valentine Hills Elementary School Culture Night celebration. Festivities included Scottish dance, international snacks, music and games. Students like Kaylee Bateman and Lillian Rieke were among the Valentine Hills students who participated in the event's cultural fashion show.

### Japanese cultural exchange

In February, Turtle Lake Elementary School hosted an intercultural institute in which 34 Japanese college students visited Turtle Lake Elementary School for an annual event made possible through the St. Paul Intercultural Institute. The event offered Turtle Lake students interactive exposure to Japanese culture and a chance to participate in hands-on activities. Japanese students, who were in Minnesota participating in a three-week program at Bethel University, observed several elementary school classrooms and received a student-led tour of the school prior to hosting the cultural fair in the school's Turtle Hall.

### Bel Air wins one of 32 national PTA grants

Bel Air Elementary School was one of only 32 schools in the nation to receive a National Parent Teacher Association grant to celebrate the "2011 Take Your Family to School Week," February 13 – 19, 2011.

Bel Air used its grant of \$1,897 (honoring the year PTA was founded) to host a Family Involvement Night on February 18. The event featured music, dance, entertainment and food representing diverse cultures from around the world.

Bel Air serves an increasingly diverse immigrant population. With an enrollment of 668 students, 34 percent are students of color and 25 different languages are spoken at home.

This is the sixth consecutive year the National PTA presented grants to schools for their initiatives to engage families in their schools.

### Students bring Chinese lessons to middle schools

Nearly 20 Irondale High School and Mounds View High School Chinese II students visited eighth-grade classes at Chippewa Middle School and Edgewood Middle School in January delivering Chinese lessons. High school students taught eighth-graders how to count from one to 10 in Chinese and helped middle schoolers learn a few basic greetings. Eighth-graders enjoyed a presentation on China, a geography lesson, cultural lessons that included a hands-on art project and other activities.

# diverse community

## Aprendiendo Juntos

Learning together, or “Aprendiendo Juntos,” is exactly what a group of Mounds View Public Schools families did during a nine-week program that offered Spanish-speaking families more information about resources and programs available through the school district and throughout the community. The District partnered with CLUES, an agency that works with Latino families, to provide the program free of charge.



**Aldo Cantellano (pictured), the District's cultural community liaison, hosted team-building activities and offered information on a variety of topics such as discipline and nutrition. The program also offered help with finances, legal services and more. For more information, or to learn about upcoming Aprendiendo Juntos programs, please contact Aldo Cantellano at 651-621-7466.**

## Hundreds gather for fiesta

**Pinewood Elementary School's annual fiesta dinner drew a crowd of more than 400 people this year. Pinewood parents, families and community members joined together for music, dancing, food and community-building fun. The school's PTA sponsored the event which featured Minneapolis dance group Folklorico Mexico (pictured) and a Mexican buffet.**



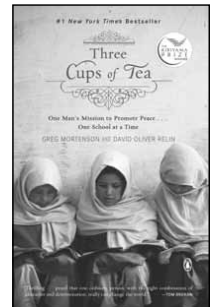
To learn more about District programs and events featured in this issue of *School Talk* in Spanish or Hmong, please call Aldo Cantellano (Spanish) at 651-621-7466 or Mee Yang (Hmong) at 651-621-7476.

Yog xa paub ntau tshaj nov txog peb lub District cov program thiab kev sib sau ua ke ntwm peb cov tsev kawm ntwm thiab niam txiv nrog rau me nyuam kawm ntwm uas muaj nyob rau hauv tsab ntwm *School Talk* no, thov hu rau Mee Yang ntwm 651-621-7476.

Para aprender mas sobre los programas del Distrito Escolar y de los eventos en esta edicion de *School Talk*, llame a Aldo Cantellano al 651-621-7466.

## Chippewa students enjoy 'Three Cups of Tea'

Chippewa eighth-graders heard first hand about the experiences of *Three Cups of Tea* author Greg Mortenson when Greg's mother, Jerene Mortenson, visited the school in February equipped with photos, statistics and details of her son's work and her own experiences in education. Jerene, who founded an international school in Tanzania, spoke about her son's efforts to rebuild terrorist-ridden areas of the world by focusing on education. She gave students a sneak peak at what life is like for students in remote areas of Central Asia and talked about a world-changing humanitarian campaign that started with a simple fundraiser at a Wisconsin school. Eighth-graders, who are reading *Three Cups of Tea* during English class, were asked to look closer at the story of a Minnesota-born author who is changing the world, one student at a time.



# Around the District

## C'motion at Pinewood Elementary

Students kept moving during the winter months thanks to a new music-driven “exergame” that was introduced to all Pinewood physical education classes.

The new “C'motion” unit had students moving their feet to motivational music. Prompts from an LCD display guided students' footwork on floor pads that tracked both movement and scores while pedometers tracked steps, calories and miles. Students like first-grader Chase Behr worked on eye/foot coordination, balance, rhythm, reaction time and spatial awareness – all while having fun dancing to the C'motion beat.



## Earth science students head outdoors

Irondale juniors and seniors ventured outside the classroom in October to get hands-on experience with several aspects of Minnesota geology. More than 40 earth science students visited Stillwater, Minnehaha Falls, Indian Mounds Park and Decorah Shale in St. Paul looking for pieces of history dating back 400-500 million years. Adry Cota, Tad Miller, Rob Krummel, Blaze Katzmarek, Derek Loahr and Matt Saldana (pictured here from left to right) were among the students in Kris Nelson's earth science class who learned about environment, order and age while searching for fossils, sandstone and more.

## Night at the museum

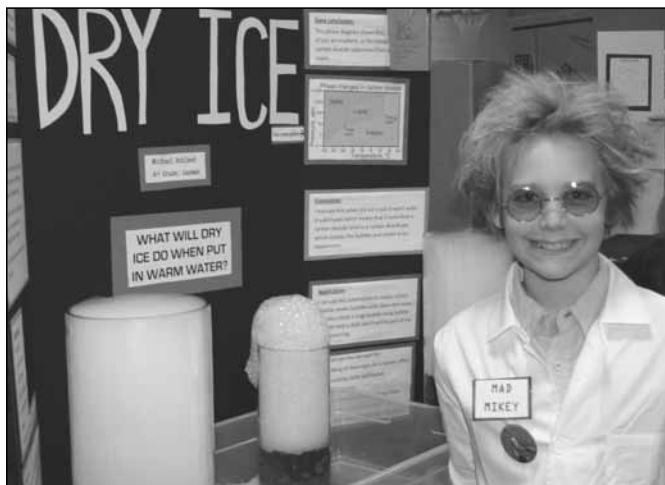
Valentine Hills Elementary School fourth-graders experienced a night at the museum recently after the school was selected to receive an overnight experience at the Science Museum of Minnesota and two in-school science assemblies. Valentine Hills was one of only 17 schools selected for the experience. More than 120 schools applied. As part of the experience, students participated in hands-on activities in the museum and enjoyed a presentation by staff scientists and an omni-theater movie presentation. Before sleeping in an exhibit hall for their real life “Night at the Museum” experience, students toured the State Capitol. The entire experience was free to students thanks to funding provided by the Flint Hills Foundation.

**Pictured: Aaron Pierson, a scientist from the Science Museum of Minnesota, invited students to look at fossils and other artifacts during a presentation on dinosaurs. In February, Valentine Hills kindergarten, first- and second-grade students enjoyed an in-school presentation on dinosaurs. Third-, fourth- and fifth-graders enjoyed a presentation on electricity.**



## Sunnyside Science Fair

Parents and community members who attended Sunnyside Elementary School's Science Fair in February enjoyed exhibits that featured everything from worm farms to helium balloons.



Michael Ruhland's (pictured here as "Mad Mikey") Dry Ice exhibit was a crowd pleaser. The fourth-grader explained how a carbon dioxide solid turns to a carbon dioxide gas by mixing dry ice with warm water.

## Journey Week

Every year, Edgewood Middle School seventh-graders take a journey designed to challenge individual abilities, teach the importance of individual roles in group activities and help students to understand their individual roles in society.

This year, half of Edgewood's seventh-graders traveled to Laurentian Environmental Center in Britt, Minn., to take part in the "Laurentian Journey." They spent four days outdoors learning survival skills, developing orienteering skills and working as a team without adult influence.

The other half of Edgewood's seventh grade experienced the "Edgewood Journey." They tackled world hunger by volunteering at Feed My Starving Children in Coon Rapids, built shelters and learned orienteering skills at Dodge Nature Center, spent a day with Youth Frontiers in a Courage Retreat and experienced working in small groups to solve team challenges.

Both the Laurentian and the Edgewood journeys created an opportunity for students to participate in problem-solving activities, creative expression and practical experience with leadership and personal reflection.

## Middle schools Mix It Up

Mix It Up at Lunch Day, sponsored by Teaching Tolerance, is a national event that asks students to cross the lines of division to meet new people and help build an inclusive and welcoming school community. District middle schools used Mix It Up as another opportunity to promote student connectedness and encourage students to get to know their classmates.

This year's Mix It Up theme at Chippewa Middle School was birthdays. Students were asked to sit at lunch tables by their birth month. In this way, everybody at each table was connected in at least one way. The birthday celebration included table decorations with a birthday theme, a DJ playing music throughout lunch and a birthday cupcake for each student.

Edgewood students Mixed It Up with Silly Bands. Students sat with other students who were given the same shape or color Silly Band. Edgewood's "Dare 2 Be Real" leadership team stopped by tables to help students get to know each other.

At Highview Middle School, lunch tables offered conversation-starting suggestions and school deans helped students branch outside their comfort zone during lunchtime to learn more about their classmates. In February, Highview students Mixed It Up again with a Valentines Day lunch in which each student received a Valentine that assigned them to a new table — with new faces and opportunity to meet new friends.

## Local store selling CLT students' work

The District's Career and Life Transition Program (CLT) has partnered with a local grocery store to premiere students' handmade cards. The cards are available for purchase at Fresh and Natural in Shoreview. In addition to making and selling cards, CLT students are also offering creative gift baskets for almost every occasion at the CLT store in the Shoreview Mall on Highway 96. The Career and Life Transition Program is a community-based initiative between the Mounds View and Roseville Public Schools. The CLT program assists young adults with disabilities to become confident, responsible, contributing members of their families and communities. For more information, please call 651-621-7966 or visit [moundsviewschools.org](http://moundsviewschools.org).



## Dental health

The District's Early Childhood Family Education program partnered with Children's Dental Health Service for Children's Dental Health Month in February. Children's Dental Health Service offered on-site free dental check-ups to students of all ages and provided information to parents about dental treatment.

# Around the District

## SEEing savings

The energy bike was one of many District-wide initiatives that have focused on energy awareness and energy saving in recent months. Since partnering with the Schools for Energy Efficiency® program in July 2008, Mounds View Schools have collectively avoided more than \$1 million in energy costs. In addition to the awareness campaign and behavioral changes taking place District-wide, system and equipment updates have earned the District a 20 percent reduction in energy use. For more information, please visit [www.moundsviewschools.org](http://www.moundsviewschools.org).



**Students in Michael Lundberg's science classes at Island Lake Elementary School experienced first-hand how much energy it takes to power one light bulb during an energy bike activity that had them pedaling to see how much energy it takes to turn on different kinds of light bulbs and small electronics.**

## Chippewa art class goes green

With help from Zero Landfill, an "upcycling" company, Debbie Andrews' eighth-grade art class at Chippewa Middle School created works of art using discarded materials from design and architecture firms. A unit on Ojibwe culture inspired students to create woodland creatures using empty water bottles covered with paper mache'. Students dressed their water bottle creations with the discarded fabric and leather that was made available through Zero Landfill. Woodland creatures like Drew Gran's (pictured) were created almost entirely from recycled materials. Gran's woodland creature got him noticed on Artsonia.com. He was selected as an Artsonia Artist of the Week candidate and he received nearly 1,000 votes for his creation. Eighth-grade artist Mia Westby-Kastner was also selected as an Artist of the Week candidate.



## NATIONAL SIGNING DAY

Six Mounds View High School seniors signed letters of intent on National Signing Day.

Kelsey Bethke signed with Winona State University for track; Jimmy Duffy signed with Augustana for football; Nick Goldsmith signed with St. Cloud State University for football; Alex Ronchak signed with University of Wisconsin – Green Bay for soccer; Lydia Storms signed with Clarke University for soccer; and Emma Worthington signed with University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee for soccer.

## Physics Fair



More than 300 students participated in the 14th Annual Physics Fair at Mounds View High School on March 7. The Physics Fair required students to design, build and test original contraptions that interacted to create a chain reaction. Local engineers judged the event.

Irondale High School hosted its annual Physics Fair on March 22. In conjunction with the Physics Fair, Irondale hosted its third annual STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Career Fair. Students and parents had an opportunity to meet with representatives from several local companies, government agencies, and universities that involve STEM careers.

District high schools host Physics Fairs to highlight the results of students' long-term group projects in which five components are assembled into a chain reaction sequence and principles of physics and engineering are put into practice. Funding for the Physics Fairs is provided by the Mounds View Schools Education Foundation.



# With Honors

## Mounds View students score big at Quiz Bowl

Mounds View High School's Quiz Bowl team won one of the top spots at the Run for the Roses Quiz Bowl Tournament in February at Roseville High School. The team — **Colin Catlin, Connor Duffy, Robbie He, Isaac Jamiellita, John Ke** and **Joshua Yue** — ranked fourth and qualified for the National Quiz Bowl tournament in Atlanta in May. In addition to the team win, sophomore Connor Duffy earned one of the top scores in the tournament. He ranked second out of 134 students in the individual competition.

## Mounds View students named State Officers

Mounds View High School seniors **Maddy Storrar** and **James Thompson** were recently elected to represent Mounds View High School and Minnesota as Skills USA State Officers. Their appointment was announced during the Skills USA Delegate Assembly in Duluth. Both students are enrolled in Lynn Stupke's Career Education classes. Mounds View students Crystal Trevino, Dan White and James Punzal attended the conference as delegates. Stupke and her students will represent MN Leadership at the Skills USA National Leadership and Championship Conference June 20-24 in Kansas City.

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled work force. SkillsUSA is a national nonprofit organization serving teachers and high school and college students who are preparing for careers in trade, technical and skilled service occupations, including health occupations. It was formerly known as VICA (Vocational Industrial Clubs of America).



Skills USA State Officers James Thompson and Maddy Storrar



Middle school Spelling Bee winners (pictured from left to right): **Brandon Duffy, Mary Lind, Ouyang Xu** and **Emily Ruan**.

## District Spelling Bee winners

The following students earned top honors at District-wide elementary and middle school Spelling Bees recently.

### Third Grade Winners

- 1st: **Leah Brandt**, Island Lake Elementary
- 2nd: **Valerie Heideman**, Turtle Lake Elementary
- 3rd: **Charlie Schumer**, Pinewood Elementary

### Fourth Grade Winners

- 1st: **Abhi Vijayakumar**, Turtle Lake Elementary
- 2nd: **Eric Palmer**, Island Lake Elementary
- 3rd: **Austin Kim**, Bel Air Elementary

### Fifth Grade Winners

- 1st: **Justin Duffy**, Turtle Lake Elementary
- 2nd: **Julia Glaeser**, Bel Air Elementary
- 3rd: **Ryan Nguyen**, Sunnyside Elementary

### Middle School Winners

- 1st: **Emily Ruan**, seventh grade, Chippewa Middle School
- 2nd: **Brandon Duffy**, seventh grade, Chippewa Middle School
- 3rd (tie): **Mary Lind**, eighth grade, Highview Middle School
- Ouyang Xu**, eighth grade, Chippewa Middle School



# With Honors

## Minnesota Honor Band

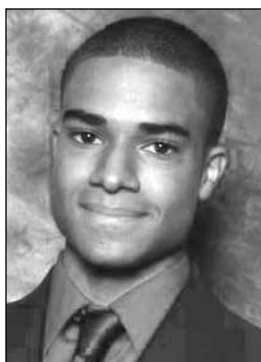
Chippewa Middle School eighth-grade clarinet player **Ellen Brough** and Highview Middle School eighth-grade tuba player **Nicolas Elscott** were selected for membership in the Minnesota Band Directors Association Honor Band for grades six through eight for the 2010-11 school year. Brough and Elscott were two of 81 students selected from the 317 students who auditioned for the Honor Band.

The students will have the opportunity to work with some of the finest music educators in the state as their section coaches, and will be conducted by Dr. Alicia Neal, assistant director of bands at the University of Minnesota. The students will perform a concert at 2 p.m. on April 10 at Farmington High School.

## Mounds View student wins Brain Bee competition

Mounds View High School sophomore **Max Wang** won first place at the Brain Bee State Competition at the University of Minnesota in February and was awarded an all-expense paid trip to Baltimore where he will compete at the National Competition. The Brain Bee challenges students to answer questions about brain anatomy, neurodegenerative diseases, addiction, sleep and memory.

As a state competition winner, Wang will participate in activities at the National Museum of Health and Medicine, tour the National Institutes of Health, participate in lectures given by noted neuroscientists and be eligible to win thousands of dollars in prizes.



## Irondale student elected state DECA president

Irondale High School senior **Nnaoma Oji** was elected to serve as president of Minnesota DECA. DECA is a leadership network that prepares students for careers in finance, hospitality, marketing and management.

## Marching Knights win top honors

The Irondale Marching Knights recently competed in the Bands of America Super Regional marching band competition in St. Louis where they placed first in Class AA and placed ninth overall. The Marching Knights were also awarded first place for General Effect and first place for best Visual Effect in their class.

To learn more about the Marching Knights or receive information on registration for the Marching Band Program, Winter Color Guard or Winter Drum Line please visit [www.irondalebands.org](http://www.irondalebands.org) or find Irondale Marching Knights on Facebook. Irondale Band Director Bill Sucha is at 651-621-6848.



## FIRST Lego League Champs

Mounds View Public Schools Lego League team, Hydrogen Peroxide, won first place at the Minnesota FIRST Lego League Championship Tournament in January. **Jacob Lindmark, Andrew Edwardson, Pushkar Chaubal** and **Graham Fiebiger** attend Mounds View High School and Chippewa Middle School. In addition to winning first place at the state competition, the students received the Quality Technical Design Award for a robot they created. Team Hydrogen Peroxide will compete at the FIRST Lego League World Festival in St. Louis in April.

## Mounds View pianist wins symphony contest

**Megan Ruan**, a sophomore at Mounds View High School, won the piano division at the 12th annual La Crosse Symphony Orchestra Rising Stars Concerto Competition in January. Her performance of the first movement of Dmitri Shostakovich's second piano concerto also won the \$1,000 Anna Beth Culver first prize.

## Mounds View athlete recognized

Mounds View High School senior **James Rafter** was recently named a Region 5AA AAA winner for his dedication to academics, arts and athletics. Rafter is one of only two students selected by the Minnesota State High School League for this award.



## Dental student honored

Irondale High School senior **Barbara Lee** was recognized by Northeast Metro 916 for her success in the Career and Technical Center's Dental Occupations program. Lee was named student of the month for December and was recognized for an oral hygiene presentation that she delivered earlier in the year.

## STAFF HONORS

### Educator of the Year

Mounds View Public Schools teacher **Jon Larson** was named Minnesota Middle Level Educator of the Year recently. Larson, a seventh-grade math teacher at Highview Middle School, was recognized with the 2010 Educator of the Year Award at the Minnesota Middle School Association's (MMSA) state conference.



### Exceptional teachers

Mounds View Public Schools teachers Pam Baglien and Rachel Odland were among 79 educators honored as Exceptional Teachers at the 2010 TIES Education Technology Conference in December.



**Pam Baglien**, fifth-grade teacher and instructional strategies facilitator at Sunnyside Elementary School, was recognized for integrating new technology components into her classroom instruction. In addition to using SMART Board features, student response systems, streaming videos and online curriculum content in the classroom, Baglien was noticed for using technology for student evaluations and parent communication.



**Rachel Odland**, integrated language arts instructor at Edgewood Middle School, was recognized for using technology to effectively engage struggling readers and increase their achievement. Integrating iPod touch applications in her work with students proved to be successful in increasing achievement.

### National Art Educator of the Year

Valentine Hills Elementary School art teacher **Mark Trampf** was named the National Elementary Art Educator of the year and Western Region Art Educator of the Year by the National Art Education Association (NAEA). The NAEA awards program honors art educators who have demonstrated excellence in the classroom and have given significant service in art education at the local, state and national level. Trampf was honored at the NAEA national convention in Seattle in March.

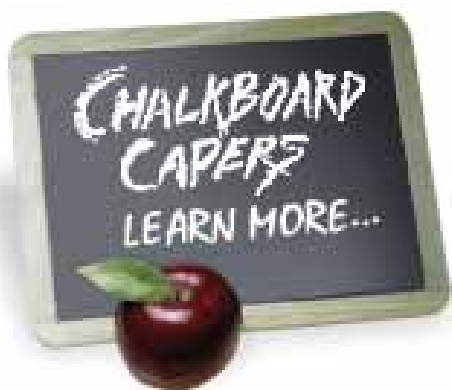


### Energy Education Award

Irondale High School physics teacher **David Parent** was awarded an Energy Education Certificate recently, making him one of only nine teachers in Minnesota who have qualified for this recognition. Representatives from the CREED Project and Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education presented Parent with the award at a brief ceremony at Irondale High School on January 17. Parent earned the Energy Education Certificate by attending Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) course/workshops and studying all aspects of the subject — from energy basics and energy problem-solving to solar, wind, hydro and biomass.



# Upcoming Events



Chalkboard Capers is a variety show presented annually by the teachers of the Mounds View Education Association to raise money for student scholarships given to graduating seniors from Irondale High School, Mounds View High School, Oak Grove High School, Area Learning Center, and Adult Basic Education. Each scholarship is for \$621. The number of scholarships awarded depends on the financial success of the show. The 2011 Show is slated for April 6 – 9. All shows will be performed at Irondale High School. Download a ticket order form at [www.moundsviewschools.org/chalkboardcapers](http://www.moundsviewschools.org/chalkboardcapers) or purchase tickets at the door for \$7.

## Dates and showtimes:

- Wednesday, April 6, 5 p.m. (dress rehearsal)
- Thursday, April 7, 6:30 p.m.
- Friday, April 8, 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday, April 9, 1 p.m., 6:30 p.m.



For more information or to find out more about making a financial contribution or prize donation, please visit [www.moundsviewschools.org](http://www.moundsviewschools.org) or e-mail [chalkboardcapers@moundsviewschools.org](mailto:chalkboardcapers@moundsviewschools.org).



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## District Art Show and Empty Bowls Dinner in May at Irondale

### Mounds View Public Schools Art Show



The District Art Show will feature more than 200 works from Mounds View students from various District schools and grade levels. The event will open on May 3 and will be staged in the front lobby at Irondale High School through May 8.

### Empty Bowls, May 3

The District's Community Education Department will host the Empty Bowls event, a community dinner to raise awareness of global hunger and poverty issues. Hundreds of students from across the District will participate in this year's Empty Bowls service learning project. Event-goers will pay \$5 for a simple dinner of soup and bread. For another \$5, attendees can purchase a ceramic bowl created by District students. The dinner starts at 5 p.m. in the Irondale High School cafeteria.

## Oak Grove High School's Third Annual Charitable Golf Tournament

**May 21, 2011 • 1 p.m. shotgun start**  
**Majestic Oaks Golf Club in Ham Lake**



\$135 per person includes: 18 holes of golf, golf cart, gift basket, social hour, dance, BBQ buffet dinner and door prizes

Registration deadline is April 9, 2011. Registrants can sign up as a single or bring a foursome. Register by calling 651-621-7912 or via e-mail to [wendy.wild@moundsviewschools.org](mailto:wendy.wild@moundsviewschools.org).