

Burlington Community School District

THE BURLINGTON BARK

Burlington, Iowa | Dec. 4, 2024



THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ

On the evening of Nov. 15, a flurry of munchkins dressed in varying shades of blue convened around Naomi Eisenmann in the gymnasium at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School, where they had been waiting to take their bows at the end of Burlington High School's musical production of "The Wizard of Oz."

A wand, a pink hoop dress and months of practice had transformed Eisenmann into Glinda the Good Witch, and she spent her time between sets holding court with the elementary students who had signed on to represent munchkin factions like the Lollipop Guild and Lullaby League, keeping them entertained with games like "Mother, may I...?" and "hide and seek."

In the musical, the munchkins, coached by orchestra teacher Diana Wells, had been among the first residents of the County of Oz to meet Dorothy — played by Elaine Guyton — after she and Toto —

played by Guyton's dog, Cooper — arrived there by tornado.

"It's a great way for kids to see, 'I can do this when I get bigger,'" BHS music teacher James Flaherty said of including elementary-aged students in the production.

After all, that was how Eisenmann got her start in musicals.

The year was 2017, and Flaherty, in his first year of teaching at his alma mater, took on the task of directing "The Music Man." It was the school's first musical production since 2008, when they put on "The Wizard of Oz" at the Capitol Theater.

"A big plot point (in "The Music Man") is there are little kids involved," Flaherty said. "Our Glinda was actually one of the little kids in 'The Music Man.' She was a third- or fourth-grader. Now she's



Naomi Eisenmann, dressed as Glinda the Good Witch, and first-grader Tiana Tate converse during a game of hide and seek Nov. 16, 2024, in the gymnasium at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School in between Eisenmann's scenes in Burlington High School's musical production of "The Wizard of Oz."

a junior, so it's kind of come full circle."

Eisenmann remembers gathering on stage in a circle and marching around while the high school performers sang a song. She also remembers huddling around a Chromebook in the corner of the gym, watching a live feed of the musical with her fellow elementary actors when they weren't on stage.

Fast-forward five years, and Eisenmann landed a role as a salt shaker in "Beauty and the Beast." Her sophomore year, she was an orphan in "Annie," a role she was particularly excited about because the set included bunk beds and she got to be on top bunk. This year, she had a slightly bigger role, and a much bigger dress.

"This one, I love because of this dress," Eisenmann said with a smile, motioning toward the dress that Music Booster Nicolette Critser had expertly dyed pink for the occasion, though Eisenmann likely would have been happy with any role. "I absolutely love theater — dancing on stage, singing, acting, all of it."

She isn't the only one.

Eisenmann was among 47 BHS students involved in "The Wizard of Oz," more than four times as many as participated in the 2017 musical.

"Our motto has always been bigger and better and this is the biggest and best we've done," Flaherty said, noting that the upcoming expansion of Aldo's auditorium will go a long way to achieving that goal in the years to come as Flaherty, music teacher Emma Gobble and stage master Sara Parris continue to grow the music and drama program.

QUICK SIX

- 1. Dec. 6**
K-2 Winter Concerts at Grimes and North Hill
- 2. Dec. 9**
First home game for Girls Basketball
- 3. Dec. 13**
K-2 Winter Concerts at Black Hawk and Sunnyside
- 4. Dec. 16**
School Board meets at 6 p.m.
- 5. Dec. 20**
No School (Professional Development)
- 6. Dec. 23-Jan. 3**
Winter Break

INSIDE THE ISSUE

[Next steps in Burlington Performing Arts Center project](#)

[New kitchen manager spices up the menu](#)

[BHS awarded grant to support expansion of health occupations pathway](#)

[Mentor program benefits new and veteran teachers](#)

[Upcoming events](#)

DAYS UNTIL GRADUATION

178



Above: From left, Mason Fritz (a guard), Cooper (Toto), Elaine Guyton (Dorothy), Lydia Dameron (Scarecrow), Ruby McCormick (Tin Woodsman), and Phoebe Hicke (guard) sing on stage Nov. 15, 2024, at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School during Burlington High School's musical production of "The Wizard of Oz." Below, music teacher Emma Gobble applies silver make-up to Ruby McCormick's face Nov. 11, 2024, during a dress rehearsal at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School.

"One of the reasons I went into music education was to both give kids the opportunities that I had but also the things I wish we would have been doing," Flaherty said. "Musicals were one of those things."

After getting his college degree, Flaherty returned to BHS and set about bringing back musicals.

"I said 'OK, well I wanted to see this happen and if we wait, there will always be a reason not to do it, so we're just going to rip off the band-aid and we're going to do it,' and I haven't looked back," Flaherty said.

Later that year, Gobble began teaching music at the elementary level and joined Flaherty in his efforts. One of her elementary students was Ruby McCormick, who played Hickory and the Tinman in this year's musical.

"I started in January of '15," Gobble said during a dress rehearsal in the hallway outside the auditorium as she applied silver make-up to McCormick's face. "I came from Danville, which has a huge drama thing, and we were just like, 'let's do this.' It's exhausting, but we're doing it."

Their efforts have paid off.



"We have so many kids who have come out of the woodwork to do this," Gobble said.

Among those kids has been Guyton, whose long list of extracurriculars include band, orchestra, choir, swim, tennis, softball, Bring Change to Mind, Student Council, Leo Club and wrestling.

"It's her senior year so she doesn't want to miss a thing," Flaherty said.

Guyton had always liked musicals and looked forward to getting into high school so she could participate in drama activities. Despite her enthusiasm, she didn't try out for any singing roles her first two years. That changed at the start of her junior year, when she landed the role of Miss Agatha Hannigan in "Annie the Musical."

"Even if you're a shy person, you should still try out, because my freshman and sophomore year, I didn't try out for any singing roles because I was too nervous, and then last year and this year, I tried out for two singing roles and I got both the ones that I wanted," Guyton said.

Guyton was among a handful of students that Flaherty, Gobble and Parris thought might make for a good Dorothy, but final casting decisions were made via a blind audition by a panel of four judges.

"We always have to pick a show where we know we have two or three kids who can kind of do everything, so we had two or three kids in our head for each role," Flaherty said when asked how the musical is selected.

"This year we have the right people for this. ... Like Kendal is secretly evil, so we're letting it out," Gobble said with a laugh while looking at Kendal Sawyer as she applied green make-up to her face. "She's really one of the sweetest people in the world."

Despite her real-life sweetness, the role of the Wicked Witch of the West fit Sawyer even better than the green gloves she wore to play the part.

"This is the most really cool acting role I've ever had in my entire life," said Sawyer, who got her debut in acting in the third grade when she played an ogre in a production of "Rapunzel."

The cackles or shrieks punctuating her stellar, villainous performances came easily. What was more difficult was managing her relationship with her four-legged cast member, Cooper.

"I'm a dog person, so I told Gobble on day one, 'I can't be mean to the dog. We have to get a cat,'" Sawyer said.

But Cooper is a professional, and he took it all in stride, sitting calmly in the basket while Miss Almira Gulch carted him off on her bicycle to be destroyed before returning to the stage to rejoin his owner on their adventure to Oz.

Working behind the scenes to make the production a success was the tech crew, a group of students who carried out everything from sound system setup and lighting to set design.

"From painting, lighting, curtain pulling and moving set pieces; the tech crew kids really know how to help bring the show alive," Parris said. "You might not see them on stage, but they are there putting in the same amount of hours. Every year the drama department gets bigger and better, and that's largely due to the extra set of hands from behind the curtain."

The next drama performance will be put on this spring with a yet-to-be-announced play that you won't want to miss.



BOARD SELECTS ARCHITECT, PROJECT MANAGER FOR BURLINGTON PERFORMING ARTS CENTER PROJECT

The Burlington School Board has selected an architect and project manager for the project that will expand the auditorium at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School to create the Burlington Performing Arts Center.

The board approved Bray Architects as the architect for the project during their Dec. 3 board meeting. At an earlier meeting, the board also approved Carl A. Nelson & Co. as the project manager.

With the appointment of an architect, planning for the Burlington Performing Arts Center, slated for completion in August 2027, will be able to move forward.

Dates for upcoming community stakeholder and input meetings will be announced in the near future.

Initial plans for the estimated \$7.5-\$8.5 million project include improved stage presence and acoustics, increased seating to bring the capacity from 503 to 700 and improved accessibility.

Further specifications will be determined through collaboration with and input from community members and the architect.

The project will be funded by the 65-cent per \$1,000 assessed valuation Physical Plant and Equipment Levy that voters approved in September.

Board members Deborah Hatteberg, Anika McVay and William Vance are spearheading a fundraising effort to enable further enhancements such as the purchase of instruments, technology, furnishings, and equipment.

Those interested in donating toward the Burlington Performing Arts Center should email Hatteberg, McVay or Vance, or contact the Administration Building at (319) 753-6791.



Students smile while going through the lunch line Nov. 14, 2024, at Burlington High School. Kelly Pfeifer, who is in her first year as kitchen manager, has been working to bring new items to the menu.

STUDENT INPUT SHAPES NEW LUNCH OPTIONS

Students at Edward Stone Middle School were delighted on Oct. 30 to find a tasty surprise awaiting them in the cafeteria at lunchtime.

In addition to the nachos, tater tots, salad and kiwi being served up for lunch, students were able to sample four other food items that had yet to appear on the school lunch menu: chicken alfredo, taco burritos, chicken fillet sandwiches, and chicken enchilada empanadas.

Those items will start being added to the food menu in January and February, taking the place of some less popular foods.

The tasting was set up by Kelly Pfeifer, who took on the role of kitchen manager this year following the retirement of George Houlton.

"I thought how fun would it be to have the kids kind of put their word out there of what they like, because they change, they eat differently, and if there's something I can put out there that they're going to eat, why not have a say in it?" Pfeifer said.

The students were enthusiastic about the taste testing, and were excited to be able to give their feedback.

"They loved it!" said Ed Stone school nurse Kathryn Menke, who surveyed students in their classrooms after lunch. "It was fun, tasty, and they loved that they felt they had a voice and someone was wanting their opinion. They were very excited talking about it."

Little did they know that Pfeifer has been taking into account students' opinions about school meals for some time. Her daughter, who is a student at BHS, often shows her food review videos posted by her classmates on social media.

"There's a couple videos out there where the kids are rating my food, and I just find that so cute and it's great feedback," Pfeifer said. "I love interacting with the kids."

Pfeifer values the input and keeps it in mind while looking for new things to offer.



A student smiles at a cashier while going through the lunch line Nov. 14, 2024, at Burlington High School. Kelly Pfeifer, who is in her first year as kitchen manager, has been working to bring new items to the menu.

School food items have been somewhat restricted over the past several years due to changes in nutrition rules and guidelines, but, Pfeifer said, vendors are catching up with these guidelines and expanding their offerings accordingly.

“More of the food vendors now are coming and leaning more toward us to help us with those restrictions like meeting our grains, the lower sodium,” Pfeifer said.

She’s eager to spice up the menu, having already gotten started with the addition of pizza crunchers, bagel bites, and, on Halloween, chicken nuggets in the shape of bats.

“Surprisingly when I had the Halloween bat nuggets, high school kids just loved them,” Pfeifer said. “At their age, I didn’t think they’d really care, but they just loved them and they were rating them.”

Other changes haven’t gone unnoticed by students.

“I just wanted to take a minute to truly thank you and tell you how much me and the other students of BHS are appreciating the changes you are bringing to the lunch menu,” sophomore Ian Steward wrote in an email sent to Supervisor of Technology and Food Services Vida Long. “I have truly enjoyed some of the new menu items added and I think it’s very nice to have new items beside the ones we have had since kindergarten.”

Pfeifer also is working to bring back some of the offerings that were put on pause by the pandemic, such as hot breakfast, which is available twice weekly at BHS and may be expanded to other schools in the future. She’s also looking to bring back the high school’s a la carte items as early as February. Those items will not

be included in the free meals that students receive but may be purchased via student lunch accounts.

Long commended Pfeifer’s work in her new role.

“She has a LOT of food service pride,” Long said. “I love how passionate Kelly is about her job and her love of serving our Grayhounds quality food. She’s a gem.”

Pfeifer has been with the district for 10 years, starting as a server at Sunnyside Elementary School and moving around to different schools as needed before taking the lead position at Grimes Elementary School. She remained there for five years before moving to the bakery at James Madison Education Center. From there, she became lead satellite, taking care of food orders and getting them out to the other elementary, intermediate and middle schools.

Her passion for the food industry began at an early age as she helped her parents in the kitchen at Hotel Nauvoo, where her father was the head chef and her mother was his assistant.

“I was always in the kitchen with them, especially at the hotel,” Pfeifer said.

She commended the kitchen staff at all of the schools for their hard work and support, and she looks forward to continuing to try new items for students to try. Students are looking forward to it, too.

“Please keep the new options coming,” Steward said. “We love getting to try all the new lunches.”



Health occupations teacher Mary Zippe and Deanna Johannsen, an associate professor and clinical coordinator of respiratory care for Southeastern Community College, show students the differences between healthy and diseased lungs April 19, 2024, in the newly renovated health science wing of Burlington High School.

GRANT TO SUPPORT NEW HEALTHCARE CLASS

The Burlington Community School District has been awarded a \$10,000 STEM BEST enhancement grant by the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council to support the expansion of health occupations programming at Burlington High School.

Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, BHS will begin offering a health care assistant certification class in addition to the certified nursing assistant program already in place.

"We are excited to help support your engagement with Iowa's growing community of trail-blazing schools and districts connecting learning with the world of work that awaits all of our youth," Justin Lewis, bureau chief of the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council Division of Innovation, said.

The STEM BEST funds will be used to purchase equipment to provide students with the tools and equipment they will encounter in a clinical setting.

"The extension of the STEM BEST grant for Burlington High School provides the opportunity to expand our Health Sciences program through increasing opportunities and equipment in order to best prepare students for their postsecondary plans," BHS Principal Nathan Marting said. "BHS continues to lead schools in providing multiple career pathways and coursework while ensuring our graduates are ready for whatever career choice they pursue. Our continued focus in providing all students, regardless

of background, the opportunity to start their postsecondary coursework while in high school is enhanced through this grant."

The enhancement grant is an extension of a \$40,000 STEM BEST grant the district was awarded in 2022 to improve curriculum development within the Health Sciences pathway, including the CNA course, which BHS first began offering on site in 2021. Since then, BHS has seen a nearly 400% increase in the number of students taking Health Sciences classes.

"The success of that grant was that the school district was able to initiate the offering of the Health Sciences curriculum to our students of the CNA courses," BCSD Grant Coordinator Sibyl McIntire said. "Those courses were so popular and they exposed our students to the health care field, getting them jobs immediately and providing our partners in the community with workers."

With the addition of the HCA certification classes next year, students will be able to accrue 11.5 college credits in the health occupations field before graduating high school.

"We're providing students ways to, in high school, gain access to college credits which in turn hopefully helps them see themselves as college ready," McIntire said. "Our district is striving to help high school students envision success, showing them that they can attain a short-term certificate and achieve it."



First-year teacher Michenna Davis poses for a photo alongside her teacher mentor, Tracy Walding, Nov. 25, 2024, outside of their third grade classrooms at North Hill Elementary School. They are among 37 mentees paired with 26 mentors this year via the district's teacher mentor program.

BUILDING SUCCESS

Veteran teachers guide new educators through critical first years.

At the start of Michenna Davis's first year of teaching third grade at North Hill Elementary School, she was pleasantly surprised to discover an unexpected source of support — her mentor teacher was right across the hall.

"It was kind of comforting knowing I have a familiar face not only that I work with everyday, but also to do this kind of stuff with, because it can be a lot," Davis recalled of when she first learned who her mentor would be. "If I have a question I need answered right away, she's right there."

The mentoring relationship is part of an Iowa-mandated program that pairs new teachers with experienced educators for their first two years of teaching. In the Burlington Community School District this year, 37 mentees are matched with 26 mentors,

creating a support system designed to help new teachers master eight teaching standards.

A STRUCTURED PATH TO SUCCESS

Monica Mundt, the district's Teacher Leadership and Mentoring Coordinator, oversees the careful pairing of mentees and mentors.

"I try to be very purposeful about that. I look at content and building, as far as pairings," Mundt explained. "The main focus of the mentoring program is to help the beginning educator work through and show proficiency in the eight teaching standards, which leads to the beginning educator obtaining their standard license."

These standards are:

- Classroom management
- Use of technology
- Content knowledge
- Planning and preparation
- Instruction delivery



Teacher mentors pose for a photo Nov. 20, 2024, at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School.

- Monitoring student learning
- Professional growth
- Professional responsibilities

To become a mentor, one must have a minimum of three years' teaching experience. They also must undergo two years of mentor training with Mundt and mentor trainer Christine Larkins.

"The bulk of our training is helping mentees become independent, reflective teachers," Mundt said. "We tell mentors over and over again it is not our job to create mini us-es; it is our job to help them develop the skills to be independent."

MUTUAL BENEFITS

The mentee-mentor relationship proves beneficial for both parties. While Davis receives guidance and support in mastering the standards, her mentor, 40-year teacher Tracy Walding, gains fresh perspectives and new techniques.

"Having her as a team member has been very helpful," Walding said of Davis. "She has some really good ideas, like with this new phonics that we're going to that she's already incorporated. She had training in college in it, which is something that the other teacher and I have not had, so she's kind of a leader in that way."

Mundt said throughout her years as a mentor, she learned as much from her mentees as she hopes they did from her.

"They're coming out of college with fresh ideas and I'd see things and be like 'that's brilliant, can I steal that,'" Mundt said. "I loved that learning aspect, and teaching is about sharing ideas."

SUPPORT SYSTEM IN ACTION

The program includes regular meetings between mentees and mentors, with required sessions two to three times per month. Additionally, all mentees meet together monthly, creating opportunities for peer support and collaboration.

"Being able to collaborate with other first- and second-year teachers has been very beneficial," Davis said. "As a first-year teacher, there's a lot of new things and things you've just got to figure out on the go."

Mentors also meet regularly throughout the year. During one such

“**TEACHING IS ABOUT SHARING IDEAS.**”

— MONICA MUNDT —

TEACHER LEADERSHIP & MENTORING COORDINATOR

recent meeting, mentor coach Larkins emphasized the reflective nature of the program.

"We help these young teachers come into teaching and we want to keep them in teaching even when they get to those frustration points or overwhelming points," Larkins said. "It's nice to have somebody help guide you through the learning projects, but it's also nice to have a confidant to be able to talk to and confide in."

More than half of BCSD's current mentors started teaching before the mentor program was first put in place in the early 2000s, which helps them further see the value in participating in it.

"I would've given anything 28 years ago to have somebody to talk to when I first started," mentor Sandy Dunlap said, recalling the anxiety she felt during her first-ever individualized education plan meeting with a parent and administrator.

Now, she takes pride in the fact that she can provide the same kind of support that would have benefitted her during that time to her mentor now.

Others, like Jenny Mehaffy, were inspired by their own mentors.

"Part of why I am a mentor is because I had a really good experience with mine," said Mehaffy. "I had a really good experience and she was somebody who was really positive and optimistic. I started calling her my mom at school and she really guided me, so I'm fortunate to be that person that my mentee will come and find me when she needs me and she knows that I'm a person she can come to."



Above: First-year teacher Michenna Davis works one-on-one with a student Nov. 25, 2024, at North Hill Elementary School. Below: Teacher Leadership and Mentoring Coordinator Monica Mundt speaks during a mentor meeting at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School.

INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

The district provides mentors with a stipend — \$2,000 for mentoring one teacher or \$3,000 for two — but the real rewards go beyond financial compensation. Many mentors see it as an opportunity to strengthen the teaching profession while keeping their own practices fresh.

"Nobody goes into this for the money," mentor Alex Cushman said. "We come in here because we love kids and we want to change kids' lives. Teaching is really sacrificial, coaching is really sacrificial. You just come in and you do it for other people."

For Davis and other new teachers, the support system has proven invaluable.

"I could not do this if I actually had to be on my own," Davis said. "Having the support system I have here at North Hill I feel like has made it a whole lot easier with a lot less stress."

That support system is sure to be something Davis looks back on next spring as she and her fellow first-year teachers prepare for the Colloquium, when they will present on key takeaways from their first two years of teaching. It's an event that Cushman and other mentors look forward to each year.

"At the end of the two years, they have to do this presentation over what they learned in the first two years, and I always tell



people I wish everybody got to sit in that room and listen to them and whatever their takeaways were, because it kind of makes you all kind of remember why we went into this in the first place."

BURLINGTON ACTIVITIES DEPT.

To view the Activities schedule, [click here!](#)

THE RECAP



UPCOMING EVENTS

BURLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Dec. 16 - School Board meets at 6 p.m.
- Dec. 20 - No School (professional development)
- Dec. 23-Jan. 3 - Winter Break

BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

- Dec. 16 - Holiday Jazz Festival at 7 p.m. at Edward Stone Middle School
- Dec. 19 - Holiday Concert at 7 p.m. at Burlington Memorial Auditorium

EDWARD STONE MIDDLE SCHOOL

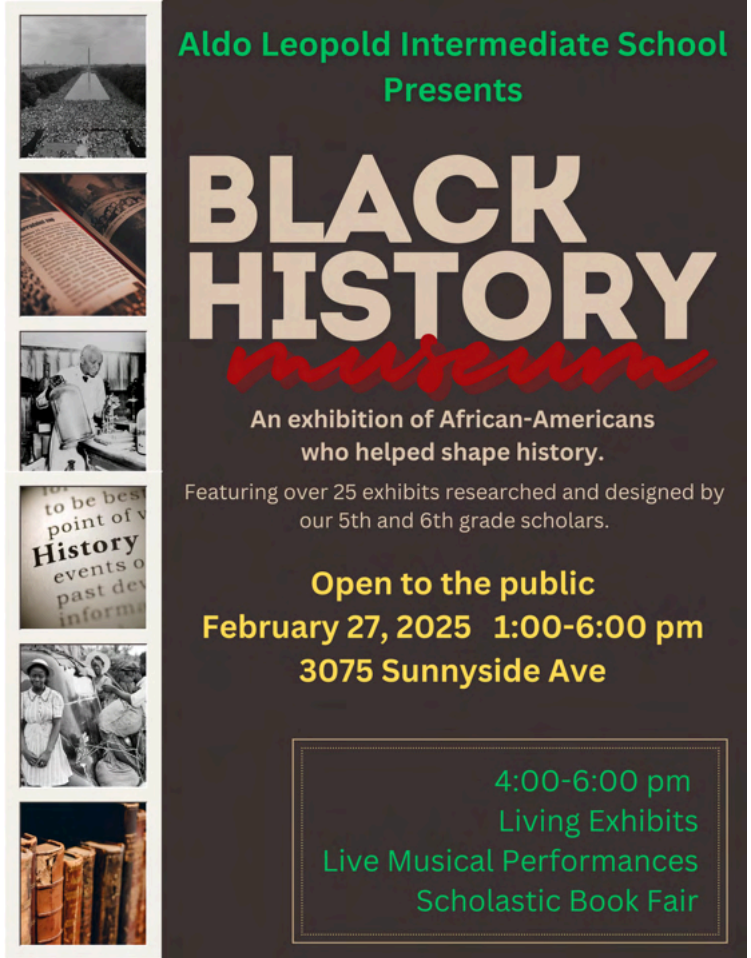
- Dec. 17 - Edward Stone and Aldo Orchestra Concert at 7 p.m. at Ed Stone

ALDO LEOPOLD INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

- Dec. 12 - Winter Band & Choir concert at 7 p.m.
- Dec. 17 - Edward Stone and Aldo Orchestra concert at 7 p.m. at Ed Stone

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS & CORSE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

- Dec. 6: K-2 Winter Concert at Grimes at 2 p.m.
- Dec. 6: K-2 Winter Concert at North Hill at 2 p.m.
- Dec. 13: K-2 Winter Concert at Sunnyside at 2:30 p.m.
- Dec. 13: K-2 Winter Concert at Black Hawk at 2:30 p.m.



Aldo Leopold Intermediate School Presents

BLACK HISTORY museum

An exhibition of African-Americans who helped shape history.

Featuring over 25 exhibits researched and designed by our 5th and 6th grade scholars.

Open to the public
February 27, 2025 1:00-6:00 pm
3075 Sunnyside Ave

4:00-6:00 pm
 Living Exhibits
 Live Musical Performances
 Scholastic Book Fair

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

[Click here to view the PiECES Calendar and activities!](#)

Saturdays with PiECES

Brick Masters: Dec. 14 & 28 from 10 to 11 a.m. at the Burlington Public Library

NO PiECES

Dec. 20-Jan. 3

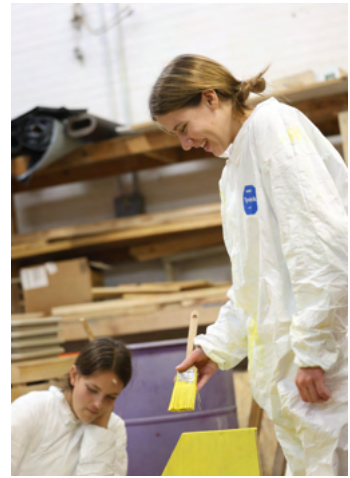
CONNECT WITH US!



@BurlingtonCommunitySchoolDistrict

@bcsdgrayhounds

AT BCSD, WE ARE RAISING GRAYHOUNDS!



BURLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT NONDISCRIMINATION NOTICE

It is the policy of the Burlington Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy please contact the district's Equity Coordinators at the District Administrative Office, 1429 West Avenue, Burlington, IA 52601; (319) 753-6791.

For Educational Programs: Cory Johnson, Director of Curriculum, cory.johnson@bcstds.org

For Employment: Laci Johnson, Director of Human Resources, laci.johnson@bcstds.org