

Annual Meeting

5/23/24 @ 7:00



Bluffview
Montessori
School

1321 Gilmore Avenue
Winona, MN 55987
(507) 452-2807
May 23, 2024



Bluffview Montessori

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Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Review and approve agenda
3. Review and approve May 11, 2023, Annual Meeting Minutes
4. Annual Reports:
 - a. Head of School: Henry Schantzen
 - b. Treasurer: Shelly Merchlewitz
 - c. Governance: Henry Schantzen
 - d. Human Resources: Renee Knutson
 - e. Building and Grounds: Henry Schantzen
 - f. MNMTSS: Overview and Committee reports
5. Announcement and introduction of elected Board of Directors members
6. Open Forum
7. Adjourn



May 11, 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present - Meghan Booth, Ann-Marie Dunbar, Shelly Merchlewitz, Crystal Hegge, Anna Aarre, Mariah White, Henry Schantzen

Absent - Marcy Faircloth

Non-Board Members Present - Cindy Smith, Katie Kinneberg, Kim Bell

1. Call to Order at 7:09pm
2. Review and approve agenda
 - Move to approve - Shelly, Second - Crystal, Unanimous Approval
3. Review and approve May 12, 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes
 - Move to approve - Anna, Second - Shelly, Unanimous Approval
4. Annual Reports:
 - a. Head of School: Henry Schantzen
 - No questions were raised
 - b. Treasurer: Shelly Merchlewitz
 - Shelly discussed Clean audit
 - enrollment at 212
 - only 1 open spot for fall
 - c. Governance: Henry Schantzen
 - Henry discussed the board nominations and timeline.
 - d. Human Resources: Renee Knutson
 - reviewed 46 policies and decommissioned 20 to be turned into procedures.
 - 2 new board members still need to complete training
 - e. Building and Grounds: Henry Schantzen



- All inspections are good and up to date
- Asbestos testing - ceiling tiles should be tested as work in those areas come up.
- Radon testing is well below limits with a reading of 0.6
- The sewer drain on the main drive into the parking lot is already breaking from summer and will be repaired at the contractor's expense
- The garage bids were more than \$30,000 over expected, we have changed some requirements and are reviewing new bids at the end of the month.
- One sided window covers for classroom doors and library windows for added security
- Continuing to contribute to the capital improvement fund to be ready for the new roof which is expected in about 5 years.

f. Pedagogy: Meghan Booth

- Bluffview hosted a Science PD facilitated by UW River Falls that focused on state standards and connecting them to Montessori Materials. Throughout the year grade level teams have been working on bundling standards into units, creating a broad pacing guide for when topics will be taught
- The NED team has been attending training thanks to a grant from MDE with a focus on restorative practices
- MnMTSS staff members have been attending training hosted by HVED in preparation for requirements coming from MDE

5. Announcement and introduction of elected Board of Directors members



- Jessica McIlrath will be taking on the vacant seat left by Ann-Marie Dunbar
- 6. Discuss and schedule a new meeting date
 - Dates will be discussed at the board meeting in July when the new board is present
- 7. Open Forum
 - No comments
- 8. Adjourn

Moved to adjourn - Crystal, Second - Shelly, unanimous approval

Adjourned at 7:31pm



[Annual Reports](#)

[Head of School](#)

Bluffview Montessori Vision Statement

Empowered learners unfolding their full potential as whole and unique persons in a global community.

The Bluffview school-wide theme this year was built around a story that aligns beautifully with the growth mindset approach, which represents a powerful element of the Montessori experience: *The Magical Yet*, by Angela DiTerlizzi. In this story, the magical Yet encourages us all to reframe our thinking from “I can’t do it” to “I can’t do it...Yet!”. One of the foundational concepts of the philosophy is that as children engage the world they build their capacity for self-sufficiency (independence) and resilience through the power of choice. Dr. Montessori wrote in *The Absorbent Mind*: “*How does he achieve this independence? He does it by means of a continuous activity. How does he become free? By means of constant effort. ...we know that development results from activity. The environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences.*” While this is a short snip from a brilliant text, the continuous activity, freedom of choice, and exploration of possibilities lead us right back to the quintessential Montessori line: “Help me do it myself.” Here is a great article on growth mindset from The American Montessori Association titled [The Power of ‘Yet’: Helping Children Develop a Growth Mindset](#). At Bluffview, the path to empowering children to unfold their full potential is rooted in aiding (and believing in) the students to develop this growth mindset as they undertake their daily work while always aiming at the true Montessori goals of independent thinking, learning, and acting in their communities.

As an institution, Bluffview staff is always working to make positive, impactful shifts and adaptations in the way we go about serving our students. This year we have several grants that are aiding in this work. One shift is our focus on MnMTSS (Minnesota Multi-Tiered Systems of Support). The MnMTSS leadership team has led the charge on this process by reorganizing our committees into teacher-led, co-chaired committees that focus on behavior, academics, data, and family and community

engagement (each submitted a report below). Part of the leadership team is currently working through a series of 15 MDE (MN Department of Education) driven webinars as we work to refine our practices. This includes a formal assessment of where the school's processes are now, the drafting of a school-wide MnMTSS handbook, and the creation of action plans that will be evaluated annually for growth. In collaboration with that work, Bluffview is in the second year of working through a Non-Exclusionary Discipline grant. This has allowed the whole school to engage in Restorative Practices training with MDE, which has led to implementing these practices throughout the school. This process focuses on working to build up the school community's culture through communication and connection. Bluffview also has a strategic planning committee grant called the Comprehensive Arts Planning Program through Perpich Center for Arts Education. This is a small grant, but it is guiding our committee through drafting a three-year strategic plan for arts programming. The committee has identified 5 strategic directions, and will begin working on the action items in the fall.

Quite a few laws were passed last summer that have had significant impacts on Bluffview. The Free School Meals for all K-12 students has been the biggest. It has greatly increased our food service output. We strongly believe that all students should have access to the food they need to be successful at school, and celebrate this law for accomplishing that. However, the law shortsightedly did not allocate money for capacity building for expanding the kitchen, food storage, or staffing to meet the increase in demand. Our kitchen is pretty small by school standards, and the storage areas are even smaller, which has made meeting this challenge difficult. Another significant new law is the Read Act. The idea was to increase reading proficiency across the state by beefing up the literacy instruction knowledge of all teachers, curriculum directors, and others that have any function relative to literacy education. This upcoming year, all staff that plan and instruct reading/literacy must engage in professional development relating to literacy. The MDE selected 3 options for schools to choose from, each of which will require at minimum 50 hours of engagement by staff. The state is paying for the actual professional development platforms but has committed no extra money for teachers to do this work, so some will be done during inservice days and some will be done outside of normal working hours. There are some other details to



this law, but this professional development piece will have the greatest impact on us. The Earned Sick and Safe Time law has guaranteed all employees paid leave time. With this law, all staff, including short call subs, are eligible for PLT after 80 hours worked. The other significant change is that non-exempt employees that don't work during the summer are now considered "seasonal employees." This means that all hourly employees have the right to collect unemployment benefits during the summer even though our employees are paid on an annualized plan, which gives them a steady paycheck all year. This has potential implications for Bluffview, which, as a Montessori school has more staffing than other pedagogical models (with teachers, assistants, and paraprofessionals in all Montessori classrooms). For now the state is paying for this change for hourly employees, but it is possible that schools will be required to pay for this in the future, which could have a huge financial impact. Each of these new laws, and a few others not mentioned here, have both "roses and thorns" for Bluffview and schools throughout Minnesota.

All that said, we will continue to move forward with the Bluffview Vision at the forefront of our planning. The work of growing the school culture through engagement with our wonderful partners, students, parents, staff, and other stakeholders will continue to be a point of emphasis next year, as will a renewed push for fiscal equity for Bluffview and all other MN charter schools that now serve 67,000 students and growing by the year. Thank you for your continued support and partnership!

Sincerely,

Henry Schantzen

Treasurer

Bluffview's financial management company is Creative Planning, formerly BerganKDV. In addition to compiling our monthly financial reports, creating budget projections, managing payroll and accounts payable, and working in an advisory position to help the Board make sound financial decisions for our school, they inform us of updates from the state and federal levels regarding revenues and legislative changes. They are, in large part, responsible for the clean audit issued to Bluffview by CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) for FY 2023.

One of the primary functions of the Board of Directors is to ensure the financial health of the school while working to maintain a balanced budget. In FY 2023, Bluffview had a 39.0% fund balance for all funds. During FY 2024, BMS has a projected fund balance of 33.4% of our expenditures. We are obligated to have a fund balance of at least 20% and our policy states a minimum goal of a fund balance of 24%. We, as a Board, have a goal of 30%. The state's annual holdback of our funding is currently set at 10%. As of April 30th, we have received 105% of our FY 2022-23 holdback. The holdback has been as high as 40% back in FY 2012, which the state used to help balance its budget. Our working budget has a projected cumulative fund balance of \$1,167,653. Staff will see a 2% pay increase for the 2024-2025 school year. One significant reason for maintaining a strong fund balance is to insulate the school against external influences as much as possible in times of financial shortfalls.

Enrollment is the main source of the school's income (approximately 92%) and is one thing the Board looks at during each monthly meeting. This year our Average Daily Membership is currently at 213 students. For 2023-24, we have waitlists for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th grade. Maintaining and increasing our enrollment continues to be a priority, especially for the tuition based preschool and Erdkinder programs.

ESSER III funds from the American Rescue Plan have helped the school with increased costs, supplies, staffing shortages, and increased student needs post-pandemic such as Lexia Core Reading and



additional mental health supports. Covid-related funds have also greatly helped us to maintain a healthy fund balance. As a charter school, we have to lease our building so we were unable to use any of these federal funds for the maintenance of or improvement to our building. All ESSER and GEER funds have been completely utilized. Care was taken to ensure that programming with “tails” was avoided as it was clear that these monies were “one-time” revenues.

The Board, along with our partners Creative Planning, the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools, and our Authorizer (Volunteers of America), continues to research and assess viable financial options for Bluffview, such as the Winona Foundation, Qcomp, and Winona County ARP funds. We applied for and received the Employee Retention Credit. We are always returning to our Vision for guidance as we work to provide the best possible services for our students and their families.

Sincerely,

Shelly Merchlewitz



Governance

The Governance Committee is responsible for:

- Promoting an active Board recruitment process for the school
- Orienting and mentoring new Board members
- Working with the Board Chair and Head of school to promote ongoing leadership and governance education and the continued growth of all Board members
- Periodically assessing processes for individual Board members and the Board as a whole
- Conducting the annual election of Directors and filling Board vacancies

Schedule for the 2024 elections

March 1, 15	Call for nominations sent in Newsletter/RSS feed
March 25	Deadline for nominations to be returned to the office. Nominees are expected to attend the March 28 meeting at 3:00
March 28 @ 3:00	Candidates attend an orientation session and review committee candidate questionnaires with Governance Committee members - in Bluffview computer lab
April 5th	Nominees announced in Bluffview newsletter/RSS feed
April 15	"Ballots" are distributed to school community members: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will be done via Google survey• Paper ballots will be drafted and available upon request
May 3	Voting ends at 3:30 today. All digital or paper submissions must be submitted
May 6	Votes tallied and recorded
May 23	Elected Board members announced at Annual Meeting



The committee called for nominations for the Board elections on March 1st and 15th. There were two seats up for election:.

- 1 Teacher seat (Mariah White's seat)
 - May be Montessori trained or not
- 1 Parent member seat (Crystal Hegge's seat)

The results are on the final page of this Annual Meeting Packet. The newly elected Directors begin their three-year terms serving on the Bluffview Montessori School Board on July 1, 2024.

Sincerely,

Henry Schantzen

Human Resources

The Human Resources Committee met every other month. Due to several updates to Minnesota laws, about 25 policies were revised and approved. In addition, there were around 4 new policies that were created and approved. Bluffview maintains its MACS and MSBA membership in order to ensure its policies remain up to date.

The family handbook went through a major revision utilizing the MSBA Model Student Handbook. The staff handbook was also updated. Several policies were added to both handbooks.

There was a major change in Minnesota's Unemployment Insurance Program in May 2023. Non-instructional employees became eligible to receive unemployment during the summer months as they were considered "between terms" by the state, even if they were returning to the same or similar position in the fall. 8 individuals filed for unemployment during the summer of 2023.

Another big change occurred with Minnesota's Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST) Law. Effective January 1, 2024, after 80 hours worked in a year, employees must accrue at least one hour of earned sick and safe time for every 30 hours they work, up to at least 48 hours a year. For employees at a .5 FTE or more, Bluffview's Paid Leave Time (PLT) is more generous than required by the ESST Law, so no changes need to be made. However, employees less than .5 FTE now earn 1 hour of PLT for every 30 hours worked after 80 hours each year. Earned sick and safe time accrual aligns with Bluffview's fiscal year, July 1 - July 30.

A challenge to recruiting new staff has been, and will continue to be, that we do not offer health insurance as we are not financially able to provide it. This is also a major factor in retaining staff.

Sincerely,

Renee Knutson

Building and Grounds

The Building and Grounds Committee is tasked with planning, discussing, and presenting recommendations to the Board of Directors on all Building and Grounds-related projects associated with Bluffview Montessori and the BMS Building Corporation. All three members of the BMS Building Corporation Board of Directors (Henry Schantzen, Mariah White, Meghan Booth) attend this committee's monthly meetings.

1. All inspections are up to date, including but not limited to:
 - a. Summit: fire suppression completed-annual and 5th year
 - b. Mississippi Welders: anse unit in the kitchen and fire extinguishers
 - c. Full fire marshall inspection: next is in October
 - d. Kitchen inspections: added a temperature monitoring program and a preventative maintenance plan to the walk in refrigerator. Maintenance plan includes other units as well. The cooler itself may be compromised, as it dipped below freezing (the refrigerator side) a few times during the coldest winter weather. We are monitoring this situation.
 - e. Custom Alarm: alarm system has been tested and is working
 - f. Preventative maintenance schedules for HVAC each fall and spring
 - g. Emergency lights are checked monthly and logged, replaced or repaired as needed
2. Key Electric and Xcel Energy put together a proposal to upgrade all the lights in the school. The proposal was for \$40,000, \$11,000 of which was a rebate. The BMS Building Corporation used money from the long-term maintenance fund that is held by UMB Bank to pay for that up front. The projected savings is approximately \$1,020.00 per month. Work is ongoing.
3. We have also subscribed to a solar garden, which is saving the school approximately \$150.00 monthly in energy costs. Of course, as a charter school, we remain ineligible for the Solar for Schools program as we cannot own the building. A solar garden was the next logical step.



4. The 5th year of the lead in our drinking water testing cycle occurred last summer. All tested units were well within the expected ranges, so no further action is required.
5. The garage was completed, which was the primary component of the planned deficit spending by the school. The end cost was approximately \$119,000.00. The unit is completed, insulated, and conditioned.
6. An electronic strike has been added to the “little door” in the front of the building, synced with the mechanism that controls the big door.
7. One-way visibility window film was installed on all the main building classrooms' exterior doors to limit visibility into the building, primarily with lockdowns in mind.
8. After an incident by the pergola that occurred outside of school hours, it was decided to add 2 video cameras to the system—one on the pergola and one on the garage. That will almost completely fill the available channels.
9. All original building fire suppression system sprinkler heads were replaced as they were flagged as starting to be compromised during an inspection.
10. The Erdkinder science lab had the fixed tables removed, water and electrical supplies eliminated/capped, and the holes in the floor patched. Now there are movable tables, which allow for much more flexibility.
11. Children's House playground: the retaining wall was falling over. It was replaced and the wood chips were filled to capacity.
12. The main driveway sewer drain had to be replaced for a second time. The original repair had what was deemed to be a bad batch of concrete by the contractor, and the work to fix it was done free of charge.
13. One other security concern is the visibility of the school yard from the Mall parking lot. We are working to make a plan to add a privacy fence along the east property line. Much work remains to be done there before we can proceed. The estimated cost of this fence installation is \$12K. Now

with the Mall being owned by HVED, we have put this on hold as we want to see how their facilities plan unfolds.

14. As of our March Financial Report, the BMS Building Corporation capital improvement fund has \$86,441.00 in it. It grows by \$25,000 each year, assuming it is not needed. The purpose of this fund is to have a reserve for large building projects. As written earlier, \$29,000 from this fund was just spent on the lighting upgrades. The school roof will be due in the next 4 years, and the goal is get this fund to \$115,000 in the next 2 years, so hopefully it won't be "needed" for anything else.
15. Potential Legislation Alert: As it stands, charter schools may not own their own building, so we have this absurd workaround called the BMS Building Corporation that we manage and control, thereby allowing the school to lease the facility from it. The MACS bill on facilities was not heard this year by the House or Senate. MACS has created a facilities working group with what is shaping up to be the "right people" on the committee, including the individual that wrote an opinion on the MACS bill to the House and Senate Committee Chairs stating that the proposed legislation was incomplete and in need of changes. This working group will make the necessary changes and try again next year.

With all the information above, one large-scale plan is being moved forward slowly. OWA is working on preliminary plans to add an art room to the rear building, along with a gym, and to expand the kitchen. Funding these projects may not be practical, but the initial designs need to be done so that the Head of School can work on grants and other funding sources for the project. The addition of the art room would allow the computer lab to move to the current art room, giving SPED the current lab and collaborative space they need. Then a few offices would be opened up for the Title math teacher to relocate to, allowing storage for the kitchen (getting the racks out of the hallway). The gym is a secondary item, but would greatly benefit the school as a whole. This is an ambitious plan, and the first steps must be taken and paid for if it is ever to become a reality.



Bluffview Montessori

The other goal is to work on finding a path forward that will help with the traffic flow in the parking lot. The space has seemingly gotten less safe, as there seem to be more and more families driving kids to school instead of using the busing that is available.

The committee is always working to stay one step ahead of the needs of the building to ensure that it remains an asset to the school.

Sincerely,

Henry Schantzen

MNMTSS

MnMTSS Overview and Leadership Committee Description

The State of Minnesota defines MnMTSS as a “systemic, continuous improvement framework for ensuring positive social, emotional, behavioral, developmental, and academic outcomes for every student.”¹ MnMTSS provides students with tiered practices of support, depending on the student’s academic, social, and behavioral needs. MnMTSS envisions a holistic approach to student support through a school’s academic practices, its family and community engagement, its use of assessment and data, and the emotional and behavioral support provided to all students. This year, Bluffview Montessori School restructured its committee work around these key tenets of a strong MnMTSS system. The Family and Community Engagement, Emotional and Behavioral Support, Assessment and Data, and Academic Practices committees were co-led by two teacher leaders and met monthly to work on the relevant components of the MnMTSS framework.

The MnMTSS Leadership Committee is comprised of these teacher leaders and administration. The Leadership Committee met monthly on the Wednesday or Friday following school committee meetings in order to accomplish an important focus of the MnMTSS vision: transparent and ongoing communication among school leadership. Throughout these meetings, joint purposes were realized and committee leadership offered necessary, thoughtful guidance throughout the year on the MnMTSS initiatives. As part of the MnMTSS mission, Bluffview also started a Child Find Committee, consisting of ADSIS, Title, and SPED teachers, administration, and the school psychologist, that kept a close watch on student progress across all tiers. This committee functioned as the decision makers for moving students across tiers or proposing SPED evaluations when student progress regressed or stagnated.

¹ *Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Support Framework*, Minnesota Department of Education, March 2022

Future considerations for the MnMTSS leadership committee will be increased access to Tier 2 support for students in and out of the classroom; the draft of a Bluffview reading, math, and behavior guidebook around our MnMTSS practices; and, improvement of Tier 1 data collection on progress across grade-level standards. MnMTSS also enjoyed the support of an MDE-funded grant to support the efforts of the teacher leaders and their committee planning and preparation.

The MnMTSS restructuring launch was an impactful and meaningful way to capitalize on the unique gifts of our teaching staff and enhance cross-committee communication.

Thank you for your time and support for Bluffview Montessori School.

Sherry Lohmeyer

Emotional and Behavior Support Committee

The Emotional and Behavioral Support (EBS) Committee was formed to help ensure the social, emotional, and behavioral support for students are sufficiently aligned and evidence-based. The committee completed a variety of tasks that include the continued implementation of PBIS, Restorative Practices, Peace Partners, and Montessori Virtues. The committee wanted to focus on ensuring fidelity in SEL Instruction, guiding ADSIS and Restrictive Procedures, providing assistant and paraprofessional training, and tracking CPI member certification.

Accomplishments this year include:

- Updated the list of virtues for years 1, 2, and 3
- Reframed books/texts for virtues and researched possible books
- Allocated three hours each week for the behavior interventionist to teach SEL to the Children's House level



- Redesigned the Office Referral form to include a Restorative Guide in line with the Restorative Practices implementation
- Determined what types of behaviors are considered major offenses and minor offenses
- Committee Chairs reviewed and approved the researched books for the Virtues Year 2
- Modified and updated the virtues on the Office Referral form
- Reviewed incident reports on Educlimber with fellow committees
- Created a new behavior reporting form using the Educlimber requirements to take the place of the current Office Referral
- Determined theme days for Montessori Week
- Generated ideas regarding successful work completion and work engagement
- Ordered, received, and distributed Virtues books to all CH, E1, and E2 classrooms in preparation for the 2024-2025 school year

The EBS committee will begin next year with a focus on year three virtues for the 2025-2026 school year. This will include updated texts reflecting the virtues and practices that we expect students and staff at Bluffview Montessori to uphold. We will also extend our work with data collection regarding behavior to determine trends and patterns among the student population. This collection will allow us to delve deeper into EduClimber (data warehouse) with the hope that we can better support the needs of our students.

Sincerely,

Brooke Kammerer and Josh Carlson

Assessment & Data Committee



The focus of the Assessment & Data Committee was to use accessible and integrated data to make decisions relating to students with academic, behavioral, and SEL outcomes across grade levels, content areas, and tiers. The data analyzed was from various sources such as MCAs, FastBridge math and reading assessments, and the FastBridge Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener. Students receiving Tier II & Tier III support based on their performance and staff-created questionnaires were also analyzed.

The goals of this committee were to provide information and make it available to Bluffview's Child Find Committee, provide data to teachers for planning interventions for struggling students, to highlight areas of concern for students or grade level, or for students who might need further challenging work, and review behavioral and intervention data.

- This committee reviewed the 2023 MCA score reports and identified areas of concern. Additional math support was recommended to the Academic Practices Committee and the math club was created.
- Created page on Bluffview's website
- Looked at goal setting for meeting benchmarks
- Reviewed individual skills reports to look for common skill deficits
- Created a Google Form Survey to collect information about how teachers use data from lab time to make instructional decisions
- Determined that FastBridge screening dates and assessments line up with HVED requirements
- A joint session with Academic Practices Committee looked at academic standards through FastBridge screening data
- Created Google Form Survey to collect behavioral data to input into EduClimber
- Recommended more math and reading instruction in the classroom to the Academic Practice Committee

- Evaluated spring assessment scores

Bluffview is committed to ensuring at least 80% of students in each grade score proficient on assessments and the remaining 20% of students are provided the necessary support. This committee will explore options to assess student performance in the Montessori classroom and consider implementing them during the 2024-2025 school year. In addition, this committee will review with teachers how to analyze FastBridge scores to monitor students' growth and create and implement interventions.

Sincerely,

Michaela Steinfeldt and Linda Salzmänn

Academic Practices Committee

This school year Bluffview is providing two academic support programs after school: Math Club and Homework club. Math is targeted towards grades two through sixth and focuses on grade level skills through the Buzzmath online program and students participate in games using dice and decks of cards to develop math fluency. Homework club is targeted towards E2 and Erdkinder students who struggle with work completion during the school day and need more adult support to complete their work. Also in continuation from the previous school year is finalizing the adoption of the new Minnesota Science Standards which go into effect in the 24-25 school year. As we wrap up Science alignment we will be moving our focus to the new Language standards and READ Act requirements. Visual Arts and Physical Education did similar work with their standards this year. Physical Education purchased SPARK which is a PE curriculum aligned with Minnesota standards. The Arts (Visual and Music) are working on their standards as part of the Perpich grant that will continue next school year. Something of note in the Arts standards is the requirement that schools offer 3 types of Arts to students. Currently Bluffview only offers two and is looking to include Media Arts as an elective for Erdkinder to meet this requirement.

It was determined that English Language Arts, since adoption of those updated standards comes before Math or Social Studies, would be addressed next by general education teachers. Grade level teams began inventorying materials related to Language Arts Alignment in the Spring of 2024 in preparation for this work. However, at the end of last year the READ Act was passed which replaced the “Read Well by 3rd Grade” legislation. The READ Act encompasses K-12 and requires that all educators who teach reading/literacy go through training by a MDE approved professional development program. The Academic Practices committee spent the spring reviewing the three options provided by MDE and decided on CORE. It was decided that teachers should complete READ Act training before beginning alignment of standards since the former may impact how we do the latter.

The Academic Team Recommends – CORE

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asynchronous – 45–40 hours Online – 3 hours Book and platform Access for 1 year Can work ahead MTSS embedded 	<div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> Impressions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like classroom simulation experiences Chunked to work at same pace as peers Focus on strugglers Has a math component (unrelated to READ act) Keep books to refer to </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like that it has a paper component that we can refer to down the road Like that it sufficiently covers the materials without going more in-depth than we need Like that it has options for ongoing support Like that the time requirement is manageable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any questions for the Academics Team? 	

In addition to work on curriculum at Bluffview, two teachers completed Montessori certification programs. Due to the READ Act requirements we are not planning on starting anyone else with Montessori training this coming year, but expect two teachers will begin Montessori Training in the fall of 2025. Staff as a whole participated in a three-day Restorative practices training in August along with two

additional training sessions during professional development days. Other faculty took opportunities for professional development outside of Bluffview including attending the LaCrosse Montessori conference, Perpich Arts Grant (music and art), and specialists (Art, PE, Music) attended other conferences related to their specific subject areas. Professional development for next year will focus on READ Act requirements followed by Language Standard realignment. In a survey, staff indicated that professional development around behavior/classroom management would be most beneficial, particularly for those in support positions such as classroom assistants. Researching and finding PD for the 25-26 school year, and planning for the Language Arts realignment, will be the primary focus of academic practices next year.

Of note is the continuation of two working groups from last school year: Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MnMTSS) and Non-Exclusionary Discipline (NED). MnMTSS is a framework for enhancing the implementation of evidence-based practices to achieve important outcomes for every student. The MnMTSS staff members have been attending training hosted by MDE working towards completing requirements such as an MnMTSS handbook and other tasks coming from MDE. Recent work has focused on how to incorporate MnMTSS requirements into existing structures and committees at Bluffview. This is the first year meeting with our MnMTSS committees and the formation of a MnMTSS Leadership committee. NED is a focus on limiting any type of school disciplinary action that removes or excludes students from their usual educational setting. The NED team has been attending training thanks to a grant from MDE with a focus on restorative practices. Through this NED grant we are able to offer targeted immersive training for staff in June. This training will be led by MDE facilitators and staff are able to pick sessions they feel most valuable to them such as a session for paraprofessionals, how to use circles in academic settings, repair harm circles, and so on. The NED work will continue into next school year as Bluffview did receive a renewal of the original grant.

Sincerely,
Meghan Booth & Kim Bell

Family Engagement Committee

The Family and Community Engagement Committee (FCEC) had a productive first year operating in BMS's streamlined MnMTSS committee structure. The group consists of six Bluffview staff members and three Bluffview student parents. Meetings were held monthly.

There are six primary goal focuses of the FCEC:

1. Community Outreach & Public Relations
2. Volunteer Recruitment and Retention
3. Parent/Family Education Events
4. Increasing Attendance at Conferences
5. Staff and Student Wellness
6. Wellness Policy Review and Compliance

For the 2023-24 school year, the committee directed its initial focus towards Parent/Family Education Events and Staff/Student Wellness.

Parent and Family Education:

A priority for the Committee was bringing back more in-person events to BMS, in large part due to the lingering effects of Covid-19 on public gatherings. The first order of business was reestablishing the Breads and Spreads event in the Fall. It has been an annual staple for the school community and brings families together to see all the wonderful things happening in the classrooms. The event this year was a success and we expect it to continue next year.

Next, we shifted focus to hosting a parent and family education night. The Committee deliberated on what type of education to present and the topic of social media and technology was eventually decided on. Those in attendance watched the documentary *The Social Dilemma* and then had a guided discussion afterward. There was much talk about continuing these events into next school year which will be a top goal for the FCEC.

Staff and Student Wellness:

The FCEC also began working towards enhancing the approach to staff and student wellness. The Committee helped oversee the surveying of both staff and families on their level of interest in wellness programming offered at Bluffview. This work was facilitated by Ark Wellness, LLC, which is owned and operated by Tina Smith, a student parent and committee member. The survey results were compiled and reviewed by the Committee with the aim of crafting and curating robust wellness programming for all staff, students, and families. This work will continue into the 2024-25 school year.

Future Goals and Plans:

As stated, next school year will bring more work on both parent and family education, as well as staff and student wellness. The Committee has discussed adding several education opportunities to the BMS event calendar, including wellness-related education. We anticipate continuing to partner with Tina Smith and Ark Wellness, LLC.

From there, the FCEC will also look to build up the volunteer base at BMS while also bolstering the approach to community outreach and public relations.

Sincerely,

Drew Althoff and Mariah White

2024 Annual Meeting Elected Board Members

Effective June 30, 2024 the Board of Directors seats held by Crystal Hegge and Mariah White will be vacated as their 3 year term is expiring. They have chosen not to run for re-election. Therefore, the [Call for Nominations](#) was shared with the Bluffview community. Two individuals were nominated. Kim Bell and Stephanie Schartel Dunn attended the orientation meeting, submitted their questionnaires, and were on an election ballot (survey).

One teacher seat and one parent seat were up for election. One candidate ran for each of the positions. An election survey was sent to the Bluffview community on 4/15/24, and paper copies were available. The election results were reviewed and confirmed by Ruth Rourke and Renee Knutson on 5/6/24. The nominees that attended the orientation and ended up on the ballot were:

- Stephanie Schartel Dunn, parent
- Kim Bell, teacher

One parent member seat was up for election. One candidate ran unopposed and therefore will be inserted into that seat:

- Stephanie Schartel Dunn

One teacher member seat was up for election. One candidate ran unopposed and therefore will be inserted into that seat:

- Kim Bell