

DISTRICT BULLETIN



summer 2022 GRADUATION EDITION



FRIDLEY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Fridley High School celebrates the Class of 2022!

INSIDE:

+ FRIDLEY HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR STORIES

+ GRADUATIONS AROUND THE DISTRICT

Fridley PYP Preschool celebrates 4-year-old graduating class



Primary Years
Programme



Middle Years
Programme



Diploma
Programme



Career-related
Programme



The first and only school district in Minnesota to provide the full E-12 International Baccalaureate Continuum

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Fridley Public Schools community,

Summer has arrived, and it is already shaping up to be a hot one! I hope you find opportunities to spend time with your families, friends and loved ones enjoying the many things that Minnesota has to offer us in the summertime – beautiful weather, outdoor time, quality time with friends and family, and so much more.

Summer is also a time for students to explore opportunities like a summer job, reading for enjoyment, and engaging in other activities they might not have time for during the school year. After a third year of dealing with the continuing challenges of a global pandemic, more than anything, I hope for the good health and wellbeing of our entire Fridley community.

This special edition of District Bulletin is one you will want to savor. In these pages, you'll learn how our schools are taking steps to be inclusive, welcoming spaces for our students and families. You'll read about students receiving accolades for their talents in academics and activities, shining as leaders in their community. You'll read about celebrations marking the end of the year and important transitions that students make as they progress through their educational experience in Fridley Public Schools.

Most importantly, you'll read inspiring stories about some of our students who are setting off on their path to change the world. There are few things more powerful than listening to our students. Their voices carry a wealth of information about how they are navigating today's complex world. In their stories, you will find triumph over adversity; in their stories, you will find strength, maturity and confidence that our young people are thriving in the face of innumerable challenges.

Thank you to the entire Fridley community for all that you do to support our students, staff and families.

Kim Hiel, Ed. D.
Superintendent



A World-Class Community of Learners

FRIDLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

International Baccalaureate World Schools

DISTRICT BULLETIN

SUMMER 2022: GRADUATION EDITION

SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Kim Hiel

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Fridley High School

Principal: Patty Hand

Assistant Principal: Lamii Zarlee

Fridley Area Learning Center

Principal: Kelly McConville

Fridley Middle School

Principal: Amy Cochran

Assistant Principal: Matthew Engelhardt

Hayes Elementary School

Principal: Gaeli Iverson

R. L. Stevenson Elementary School

Principal: Veronica Mathison

DISTRICT OFFICES

Activities/Athletics: 763-502-5606

Buildings/Grounds: 763-502-5008

Business & Finance: 763-502-5004

Communications: 763-502-5020

Community Education: 763-502-5100

Educational Services: 763-502-5005

Equity and Inclusion: 763-502-5063

Enrollment: 763-502-5081

Human Resources: 763-502-5013

Nutritional Services: 763-502-5021

Special Education: 763-502-5025

Technology: 763-502-5032

Transportation: 763-502-5026

IB (DP): 763-502-5062

IB (MYP): 763-502-5036

IB (PYP) Hayes: 763-502-5228

IB (PYP) Stevenson: 763-502-5317

IB (PYP) Preschool: 763-502-5117

FRIDLEY SCHOOL BOARD



Abdisalam Adam



Nikki Auna



Jake Karnopp



Ross Meisner



Donna Prewedo



Avonna Starck

SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS:

Fridley School Board meetings are typically held on the third Tuesday of each month, with a schedule as follows: 5:30 p.m. Work Session; 7 p.m. Public Forum; 7:30 p.m. Business Meeting

All school board meetings are held at the Fridley Community Center, 6085 7th Street NE, Fridley. All meetings are open to the public.

The Fridley Public Schools District Bulletin is published and mailed to every home in the Fridley School District. Past issues are available online at www.fridleyschools.org.

Fridley Public Schools District 14

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Fridley, MN 55432 © Fridley Public Schools, 2022

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STAY CONNECTED:
www.fridleyschools.org



ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACCOLADES

FHS students earn prestigious Harvard Prize, Yale Book Award

Congratulations to Fridley High School (FHS) juniors Prima Bhakta and Amayramy Ruiz-Barrios who earned the 2022 Harvard Prize Book Award and Yale Book Award, respectively. The students were honored at the Scholastic Achievement and Awards ceremony on May 19.

The Harvard Prize Book is awarded by the Harvard Club of Minnesota. It is given to an outstanding member of the junior class who demonstrates excellence in scholarship, as well as high achievement in other areas such as community service and involvement in the school community. Bhakta received the book titled "The Tyranny of Merit" by Michael Sandel.

The Yale Book Award is awarded through the Yale Alumni Association of the Northwest. The award recognizes juniors for outstanding character and intellectual promise. Ruiz-Barrios received the book "Why Food Matters" by Paul Freedman.



Prima Bhakta
Harvard Prize Book recipient



Amayramy Ruiz-Barrios
Yale Book Award recipient

FHS holds signing ceremony for future collegiate student-athletes



Congratulations to six Fridley High School (FHS) student athletes who were celebrated at the Athletic Signing ceremony on May 13. Families, coaches, and staff members honored the seniors for their athletic and academic achievements, as well as their commitment to pursue higher education and next-level athletics at their chosen colleges.

"Our mission within Fridley Activities is to always inspire and develop excellence," said Activities Director Dan Roff. "Each of these students are character-strong athletes with the desire to work hard and achieve at high levels. We are so proud of our students for their accomplishments here, and we can't wait to see what you achieve as college athletes."

Students included: Olivia Curtis - Augsburg University (volleyball), Jaxon Ellestad - Augsburg University (football), Zack Gotsch - Augsburg University (football), Anthony Borom - Minnesota State University-Mankato (track and field), Devin Williams - Bethel University (football), and Daniel Pobuda - Bemidji State University (baseball)

FHS junior selected as Triple Threat on Hennepin finalist

Congratulations to Fridley High School (FHS) junior, Boomer Xiong, who was selected as a Triple Threat on Hennepin student finalist! Xiong is one of 24 Minnesota students who earned the opportunity after a high caliber audition process. The competition is sponsored by the Hennepin Theatre Trust Spotlight Education program. "Triple threat" is a theater term for an individual who can sing, dance and act at a high standard. This year, 200 Minnesota students from 80 schools were invited to submit video auditions based on their performances in their schools' musicals. Performers also submitted a 400-word essay about leadership and their musical theater experience, along with completing an in-person audition prior to becoming one of the top 24 finalists.

"Boomer is a standout leader," FHS Choir Director Jeffrey Johnson said. "He's very humble, and it makes me proud to see him pursue his passions and succeed."

Xiong said that his goal through acting and theater is always to entertain and make people happy. "I love playing the role of a character, and helping people have a good time by my performance."

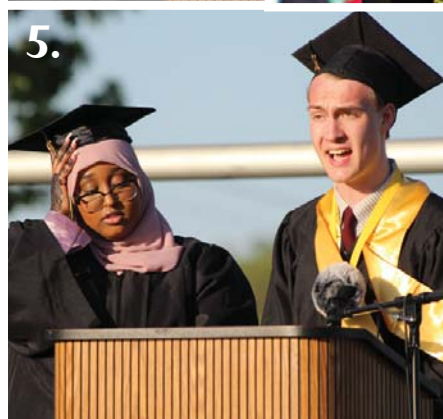
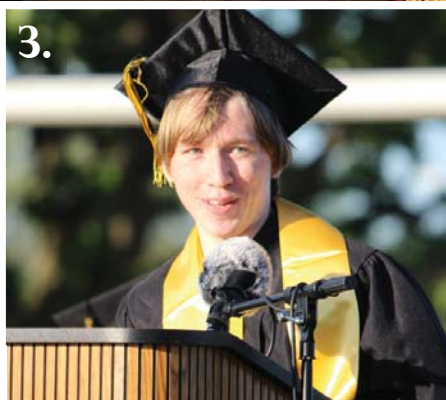
As a Triple Threat finalist, Xiong participated in intensive coaching and rehearsals to perform in the Spotlight Showcase in downtown Minneapolis at the State Theater on June 13 and 14.



Boomer Xiong



SCAN TO VIEW THE
FULL PHOTO ALBUM



1. Superintendent Dr. Kim Hiel 2. Fridley High School Principal Patty Hand 3. Andrew Hill, welcome address 4. Sikoulite Sarah Yannis Sibo, student address 5. Amira Mohamed and Ryken Farr, student emcees 6. Biology teacher, faculty commencement speaker Kris Hatling 7. Fridley High School Concert Choir



Fridley High School celebrates Class of 2022 commencement

The 64th FHS commencement ceremony honored 225 graduates at Bob O'Neill Field on June 2, 2022

Fridley High School's (FHS) 64th commencement ceremony celebrated the Class of 2022 on June 2. A total of 225 graduates received their diplomas at Bob O'Neill Field, capping off 13 years of education.

The student emcees for the evening were Amira Mohamed and Ryken Farr. Both congratulated their classmates on persevering through the pandemic and celebrated a return to many activities that had been on hold the previous two years, such as pep fests and homecoming.

Andrew Hill delivered the welcome address for the ceremony, speaking of the success the Class of 2022 achieved, despite the uncertainty of the past two years.

"One of the most important things we all learned over these last four years was to adapt," Hill said. "You took what was given to you, and when things weren't going as planned, you changed up what you were doing."

Sikoulite Sarah Yannis Sibo offered encouragement to her classmates in her student address.

"We graduate in every area of our lives once we show that we can handle situations bigger than ourselves," Sibo said. "Once we show that, we can make things happen and become whomever we desire to be."

"Try to make a difference," Sibo added. "We all know that the world is a scary place filled with people who will do anything to try to put us down by consistently placing their needs first above all other things. That is not the behavior we should harvest; in fact, we should try to be the change in a world full of people with ignorant thoughts. If we want the world to become a better place for us and the ones after us, we should make a difference."

Principal Patty Hand welcomed families and congratulated the graduates, acknowledging the extraordinary effort the students put in to earn their diplomas.

"When we opened schools this year, we were still in the middle of a pandemic that presented many challenges, and opportunities," Hand said. "However, with these challenges, we worked hard,

supported one another, and have found success, which is why we are here today. Thank you, seniors, for your resilience, perseverance and hard work. I am so proud to be your principal."

Kris Hatling, biology teacher at FHS, was the chosen staff member to give the faculty address for the occasion. Hatling voiced how proud she was of the graduates, and their ability to affect change in the world.

"Do not let the unique contributions you have given our community escape you," Hatling implored. "As you continue your path and chart new rivers, make it a priority to authentically show up for your community. Continuously work towards making this world accepting, loving and dynamic. Welcome mistakes and reflection. The world is full of helpers. Be a memorable one!"

Before the awarding of diplomas, Dr. Kim Hiel, Fridley Public Schools superintendent, stood in front of the students and asked them to always remember the many people who lifted them up along their paths.

"There will come a time when you draw upon the examples set by the mentors in your life," Dr. Hiel said. "That is how you build purpose. Remember you are never alone and there are many people that are around to support you."

Nearly half of the graduates attained honors designations, with grade point averages of 3.25 and higher. Twelve students completed the rigorous International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP), earning eligibility for the distinguished IB Diploma. In addition, 14 students earned an Associate of Arts degree via the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program.

"We graduate in every area of our lives once we show that we can handle situations bigger than ourselves. Once we show that, we can make things happen and become whomever we desire to be."

- Sikoulite Sarah Yannis Sibo
Class of 2022

Akshay Rai



Akshay Rai is already on his way to big things, as evidenced by earning the title of 2022 National Merit Scholar, one of only 7,500 students in the United States to achieve that honor. He is also a first generation college student, with two years and 65 credits of Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) classes at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities under his belt.

Rai's parents moved to Fridley when he was in second grade, and enrolled him at Stevenson Elementary School.

"I had moved around a lot before coming to Fridley. I was born in Paris," Rai said. "And then we moved to India and California."

Rai hasn't had an easy road to success, however. "The education system is just not very kind to an immigrant kid," he said. "The first thing you're confronted with is academics. So forget how you're treated socially if you're not even being accepted where you're at academically."

"There is such a big difference in the way Fridley accepts diversity and allows people to be themselves. I feel like we have a big focus on identity, making sure everyone finds their identity and stands out, versus homogenizing people."

Despite feeling the need to prove himself in academics, Rai also said he appreciates the depth of diversity in the school district, and how Fridley is embracing all cultures.

"There's such a big difference in the way Fridley accepts diversity and allows people to be themselves. I feel like we have a big focus on identity, and making sure everyone finds their identity and stands out versus homogenizing people."

For Rai, having Ms. Cheryl Burghardt as his art teacher at Fridley High School made a significant difference in how he expressed himself. He won numerous awards in two years at the Minnesota Scholastic Art Awards competition in both photography and poetry.

He considers learning resiliency to be his greatest accomplishment as a student, noting that it is the one trait that helps him achieve his goals.

In addition to Ms. Burghardt, Rai said he is thankful to his family, Priyanka, Rajeev and Abhinav, as well as the district communications department.

Rai will be continuing his studies at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities this fall, where he plans to major in neuroscience, a course of study he became interested in after taking bio psychology at the college.

Contemplating final thoughts for upcoming students of Fridley Public Schools, Rai encourages students to make space for themselves in whatever endeavors they choose to pursue. "If you aren't given a seat at the table, you still need to go for it," he said. "There are a lot of opportunities. Make your own table."

Linnea Burdick



Linnea Burdick has achieved many accolades through her high school career, graduating with highest honors and achieving the International Baccalaureate (IB) scholar status. According to Burdick, she and her family have always placed high expectations on herself, although it hasn't always been easy.

Burdick joined the Fridley school district when she entered sixth grade, relocating from North Carolina. When she first came to Minnesota, she and her sisters were separated and lived with different family members, creating challenges in her academic focus.

"It was the lowest my grades had ever been because I just didn't really have a stable home," said Burdick. "It was really difficult being a teenager and going through all these shifts."

As she progressed through middle and high school, her environment began to stabilize, allowing her to re-focus academically, care for her own mental health and grow as a person.

Burdick decided to challenge herself during her junior and senior years by enrolling in multiple rigorous IB Diploma Programme (DP) classes.

"The DP classes are definitely college-preparatory," said Burdick. "I've studied hard to succeed in my DP classes, but the challenge was well worth it because now I feel fully prepared for college-level work."

According to Burdick, her favorite and most beneficial class taken at FHS was forensic sciences during her junior year.

"That class really did help solidify my interests and decide to pursue criminal justice and forensics in college," she said. "Ms. [Andrea] Mulry does a great job with the content, and we learned how to analyze and collect things like fingerprints, hair, and blood spatter; document a crime scene; test blood types; and dive into a lot of interesting topics. Homework didn't even feel like homework because I enjoyed it so much."

Burdick plans to attend St. Cloud State University to major in criminal justice with a focus in 21st century policing, along with a minor in forensic science. Her goal is to become a police officer and eventually pursue her interests in working in crime scene investigations.

Burdick is thankful to FHS teacher Elizabeth Jensen, her swimming coaches Emily Heille and Kyle Severson, her cousin, Teagan, and the nutritional services staff members for going above and beyond in creating accommodations for her vegetarian diet.

Alan Etsa-Mora



Fridley High School (FHS) graduate Alan Etsa-Mora has a unique high school journey — having attended eight different schools through his K-12 experience. His immediate family is based on Ecuador and Minnesota, which has required him to relocate several times.

He enrolled at FHS during his junior year in spring 2021, and said he has felt incredibly welcomed and thankful to have a school that he can consider a second home.

“At times, it’s been difficult for me socially to communicate with others because English is a second language to me, but Fridley has been a great place to meet friends, learn the language and build confidence,” said Etsa-Mora.

According to Etsa-Mora, the most beneficial class at FHS has been personal finance. “It’s been a great introduction to all sorts of important financial aspects and has taught me how to budget, find resources, and understand other essential life aspects like health

insurance, car insurance and taking out loans,” he said. Etsa-Mora added that the class even inspired his post-secondary plans to study business administration.

“At times, it’s been difficult for me socially to communicate with others because English is a second language to me, but Fridley has been a great place to meet friends, learn the language and build confidence.”

A passionate soccer player, Etsa-Mora plans to soon try out for the Minnesota United FC team this summer. This fall, he will be attending the University of St. Thomas to pursue business administration.

Etsa-Mora is thankful to FHS teachers Matt Nalepka, Dan Nalepka, Elizabeth Jensen and Rachel Imholte for supporting and helping him throughout his FHS journey.

Milo Setterlund



Overcoming many obstacles and building strength through struggles, Fridley High School (FHS) graduate Milo Setterlund is proud of the resilience he has built and the person who he has become. A transgender male student, Setterlund has felt supported through his journey and credits many Fridley teachers for the care and compassion they provided during challenging times.

“Our Fridley teachers are amazing,” said Setterlund. “They are accepting, supportive, always listen and genuinely care about me. It’s been unbelievably helpful to be a part of this open and welcoming space and feel like I can talk about anything.”

Growing through the many challenges he has faced, Setterlund encourages peers to talk about their own mental health, keep an open mind and know that it is okay to ask for help.

“Caring for your mental health is so important, especially in this day and age,” he said. “The more we actually talk about it and have open conversations, the more we can strengthen our community. We all need to overcome the fears of stigma and embrace who we

are, how we are feeling and help each other out.”

Setterlund said he is thankful to have been a part of the diverse Fridley Schools community, as he said he has learned a great deal from others.

“This is a place where you learn that people are people no matter what they look like, who they are, or where they come from,” he said. “I’ve been raised in a place where I’ve been able to learn from people from around the world. I’ve really enjoyed that part about Fridley.”

Setterlund is still deciding on postsecondary plans but has an interest in beginning a criminal justice and psychology degree at a two-year college or embarking on a hair technician path at the Aveda Institute.

“Our Fridley teachers are amazing. They are accepting, supportive, always listen and genuinely care about me. It’s been unbelievably helpful to be a part of this open and welcoming space and feel like I can talk about anything.”



Priya Rana



A resilient, determined and first-generation college-bound student, Priya Rana has found success through her time at Fridley Public Schools, taking full advantage of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (DP) and immersing herself in activities, including the Fridley High School (FHS) Key Club.

A community-service leader and valued Key Club officer throughout her time at FHS, Rana has served as Key Club secretary for the past three years, consistently earning the title as Distinguished Officer at the annual Minnesota-Dakotas District Leadership Convention (DCON) and has been instrumental in a multitude of Key Club projects and volunteer service opportunities. “Whether I volunteer through Key Club, Minnesota Honor Society, or just on my own time, helping others is one of my passions,” said Rana.

In June 2020, Rana co-founded a non-profit called Kavya Tutoring, a virtual tutoring program that provides academic support in reading, science, math and social studies for students in 1st through 8th grade. She serves as vice president and said the nonprofit has allowed her to develop leadership and communication skills, while discovering a new passion for teaching children.

“Whether I volunteer through Key Club, Minnesota Honor Society, or just on my own, helping others is one of my passions.”

“I’ve learned a lot about myself through this experience, and have developed great skills that I’ll carry on with me for the rest of my life,” she said.

Her dedication and commitment to service contributed to her earning the most prestigious individual award in Key Club, the Sandy Nininger Medal, which is annually awarded to one senior in the Minnesota-Dakotas district who has distinguished themselves by making the most of opportunities, and one who has served above and beyond the call of duty.

One of Rana’s favorite aspects about FHS is the service-oriented mission of the IB World School. Rana has also thrived in academics and created high expectations for herself over the years. She decided to enroll in the highly rigorous IB DP during her junior year and said the classes, essays and service requirements of the IB Diploma have fully helped to prepare her for post-secondary success.

Rana is grateful to several people who helped her through her high school journey, including FHS staff members Ahmad Samadi, Kris Hatling, Jeren Anderson, Elizabeth Jensen, Andrea Mulry, Dan Terebayza, Kelsey Knutson, and Key Club advisor and mentor Mary Bowen.

“We have a lot of teachers and staff who go the extra mile to help you out, in school work or through real life issues,” said Rana. “They make you feel comfortable, validated and supported. I’ll be forever grateful and they have made a difference in my high school experience.”

Rana plans to attend the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities this fall to major in biology. Her goal is to follow the pre-medical track to become a pediatric surgeon.

McAlvin Juasemai



McAlvin Juasemai has grown up through the Fridley School District, from kindergarten at Hayes Elementary School to graduating with highest honors at Fridley High School. He said his greatest high school accomplishments have been overcoming challenges, flourishing in academics and developing his own determination and resilience to achieve his dreams.

According to Juasemai, his family immigrated to the United States from Liberia with only \$500 when he was 4-years-old. Since then, his family has found great success and has established a strong foundation for he and his siblings to thrive.

“One aspect about Fridley that makes it stand out is the diversity and seeing all these different cultures come together from all walks of life. It’s easy to find friends here - you can always find someone who you relate to.”

“It’s inspiring to look back and see where we came from, where we’ve been,” said Juasemai. His father, Alvin, has been his role model since he was young and has always encouraged and supported him in his interests in computer science and information technology (IT).

“I’ve grown up around technology and working on computers with my dad when he has free time at home,” said Juasemai. “I’ve always had a love and drive for technology, so I plan on becoming a computer engineer.”

During his senior year, Juasemai embarked in an intensive application process to become an Act Six Scholar. Act Six provides a full-ride scholarship that includes room and board, as well as leadership training and support, over four years. The program aims to develop emerging, diverse student leaders who are academically gifted and service-minded into transformational leaders on their college campuses. Earning a full-ride to the University of Northwestern, Juasemai said he looks forward to empowering students who look like him to pursue the field of computer science and achieve their dreams.

“I can’t wait to use this opportunity to do something progressive in life, not only for myself, but to help others in the future,” he said.

He plans on taking Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) classes while enrolled at the University of Northwestern, with the goal of joining the United States Air Force upon graduation. Alongside his computer science degree, he aims to achieve an officer rank and become a pilot.

Juasemai added that Fridley has provided an excellent diverse environment that has allowed him to thrive. “One aspect about Fridley that makes it stand out is the diversity and seeing all these different cultures come together from all walks of life,” said Juasemai. “It’s easy to find friends here - you can always find someone who you relate to.”

Juasemai is thankful to many Fridley staff members who have helped him through his high school journey, including Elizabeth Jensen, Kelsey Knutson, Dan Terebayza, Daren Dressler, Kirk Myhra, and Jeffrey Johnson, as well as his mother and father Janneh and Alvin.



Fridley PYP Preschool celebrates 4-year-old graduating class

OVER 100 PRE-K STUDENTS GRADUATED FROM FRIDLEY'S INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE WORLD SCHOOL PRESCHOOL

Fridley Preschool, an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, celebrated the “graduation” of 117 4-year-old students from its program on June 8. The day of ceremonies marked each student’s preparedness to enter kindergarten in the fall. The future Class of 2035 beamed with pride as they received their diplomas, sported graduation caps, and presented a song and dance.

Fridley Preschool is one of the only programs in the state of Minnesota to offer the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) to its students. Through IB PYP’s inquiry- and play-based curriculum, children develop a foundation and love for learning at the starting point of their educational journeys.

Kelly McConville, principal of alternative services, spoke of the impact the preschool program has made in the lives of future kindergartners.

“The graduation ceremony is a great way to recognize the amazing work our youngest scholars have done through the year and how much they’ve grown social-emotionally and within their education,” McConville said. “We want every scholar to leave Fridley Preschool with a love for learning. Many of our students say that they cannot wait until kindergarten, which is a great accomplishment.”

“Friendship and social skills were the big focus for us this year,” added Karin Beckstrand, IB PYP coordinator. “The kids made great friendships and connections with each other, their teachers and all our classroom assistants. It was a successful outcome, considering these students have spent half their lives in a pandemic.”

Fridley Preschool offers 3- and 4-year-old morning or afternoon class sessions, as well as a full-day option for an additional head start.

The unique and innovative IB approach provides a rigorous curriculum framework that encourages students to think critically, to consider both local and global contexts, and develop a second language. Fridley Public Schools is the first and only school district in Minnesota to offer the full IB Continuum from prekindergarten to grade 12.

Fridley Pre-K teacher Jaimie Finch and graduate Imran Abdulkerim



Fridley Moore Lake Area Learning Center celebrates Class of 2022 graduates



The Fridley Moore Lake Area Learning Center (ALC) celebrated the success of 21 students at its Class of 2022 graduation celebration on May 26. Families, friends and staff gathered at the Fridley Community Center (FCC) to congratulate the graduates on their success. The ALC is an alternative school in the Fridley School District that allows students to achieve their individual learning goals and receive a Fridley High School diploma. It features small classes, individual learning plans, flexible schedules, independent study and direct instruction, along with a variety of course completion options and credit for on-the-job training.

At the ceremony, Principal of Alternative Services Kelly McConville praised the graduates for their abilities and determination as he welcomed families, staff and school board members.

“We are so proud of our graduating students today. They realized what they knew all along: that the attributes of hard work, perseverance and resilience made all the difference,” McConville said. “They started to see success, and it built and grew.”



Class of 2022 Area Learning Center graduates

AROUND THE DISTRICT



Stevenson Elementary School becomes an International Peace Site

An International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, R. L. Stevenson Elementary has now officially become a designated International Peace Site led by a school-wide action project. As an International Peace Site, all Stevenson students have pledged to live out five peace actions: seek peace within yourself and others; reach out in service; protect the environment; respect diversity; and be a responsible citizen of the world. Stevenson Elementary is authorized as an International Peace Site by the nonprofit organization World Citizen Peace, proudly displaying its peace action pole in front of the school.

“Action is an integral component within the IB framework and philosophy,” said Kate Talaious, IB PYP coordinator at Stevenson. “Action within IB provides opportunities for student agency and contributions to local and global communities.”

Each year, Stevenson hosts a school-wide action project in June, with the topic selected by the graduating 4th grade students. After studying the United Nations Global Goals in media class, 4th graders chose to pursue “Peace and Justice” as this year’s theme and decided to create several school-wide art pieces on Action Day. The action team, comprised of several Stevenson staff members, then plans the activities and lessons as it relates to the theme. According to instructional leader Phil Boyd, the idea of becoming an International Peace Site was raised during a committee meeting.

“Becoming an International Peace Site was the perfect fit for our action project,” said Boyd. “Along with the strong connections with our IB philosophy, we thought this would resonate with students and represent an ongoing commitment to our core beliefs.”

“At Stevenson, we dedicate a lot of time teaching students about the importance of integrity,” added principal Veronica Mathison. “The peace actions directly align with our integrity work, as well as our core values as an IB World School. It all works hand-in-hand as we provide a welcoming and inclusive school community while preparing our scholars to be responsible global citizens.”



“The peace actions directly align with our integrity work, as well as our core values as an IB World School. It all works hand-in-hand as we provide a welcoming and inclusive school community while preparing our scholars to be responsible global citizens.”

- Veronica Mathison
Stevenson Elementary School Principal

Over the past few months leading up to Action Day, Stevenson students have been learning about what it means to be a member of an International Peace Site through the weekly school-wide news broadcast.

On June 2, Stevenson’s Action Day was filled with excitement and school community. Working together to create the art pieces, each student painted a rock that represented their individual interpretation of peace. Collectively, students placed the rocks into the new painted rock peace path in a garden area in front of the school. In addition, students created a word-cloud poster, which was filled with words that represented what peace and justice personally means to them. The poster will be printed on canvas and displayed at the school. Students also learned about “Art in Action” from Fridley Public Schools’ culture and climate coordinator Christopharaaron Deanes, who taught them about his work in promoting peace and justice through visual art in the surrounding community.



Fridley Public Schools diversifies lunch menus, creating inclusive community in school cafés



In an effort to serve more ethnic and culturally diverse lunch items, Fridley Public Schools' Nutritional Services department is expanding its menus to be more reflective of the district's student population. For the first time, the Nutritional Services team served sambusas across the district on May 4. Traditionally served in African, Middle Eastern and South Asian countries, sambusas are fried or baked pastries with savory filling. The sambusas were provided by local Hoyo Somali Food Products. Many students were eager to try the Somali sambusas for the first time, while others were excited to see their home culture represented on the school's lunch menu.

"We want to create an environment where students are excited to try new things, feel represented, and learn from each other, so our school cafes can continue to be a valuable extension of the classroom."

- Renee Arbogast
Director of Nutritional Services

In collaboration with the Equity and Inclusion department, the Nutritional Services department gathered high school student feedback prior to implementation.

"We asked our students their thoughts about sambusas, and what kinds of sides they would like to see," said equity and inclusion coordinator Suzan Samaha. "When it comes to diversifying our foods, we need to ensure we are providing an authentic experience for all students to enjoy, and what better way to learn than by directly asking our students?"

After gathering student feedback, the sambusas were served with a side of rice, as well as a tamarind and date sauce. The traditional sweet and tangy Somali-style sauce is made with jalapenos, tamarind concentrate and dates, also a Hoyo Foods product. According to Renee Arbogast, director of Nutritional Services, there are plans to expand the authentic meal

next school year to include spiced Somali rice, or bariis iskukaris, by adding local traditional spice mixes and additional ingredients.

Arbogast added that the Nutritional Services team will be utilizing more student voice as they move forward with diversifying the district's lunch menus. Currently, students in the high school's Family and Consumer Sciences class provide feedback about new recipes and food items through surveys. Arbogast is looking to expand the reach and regularly engage with student activity groups to gather input on traditional foods and flavors that would ultimately contribute to the inclusive culture at Fridley Schools.

"We want to create an environment where students are excited to try new things, feel represented, and learn from each other, so our school cafés can continue to be a valuable extension of the classroom," said Arbogast.



As plans develop, Arbogast is interested in furthering the student collaboration piece into an educational opportunity for her staff. "If students are willing, we would love to invite them into our school kitchens to show us how they prepare their traditional foods at home," said Arbogast. "From there, we'd work to appropriately source ingredients and establish the recipes so they meet our school nutritional guidelines, while also ensuring that we are providing an authentic experience for students to share with one another."

Samaha added that taking this step within school cafeterias is incredibly validating for students and families. "Representation matters, and it is so meaningful to have our school meals reflect our racial, ethnic and cultural diversity of the student body we serve," she said. "In nearly every culture, food is a means of expressing identity and pride. Filling this representation gap in our school cafes is a vital way to build connections and encourage our scholars to explore culture through food within our International Baccalaureate World Schools."

Fridley High School celebrates two Act Six scholarship recipients

Congratulations to Fridley High School seniors Crystal Analco Morales and McAlvin Juasemai, who are the district's first Act Six scholarship recipients! Act Six provides a full-ride scholarship that includes room and board, as well as leadership training and support, over four years. The program aims to develop emerging, diverse student leaders who are academically gifted and service-minded into transformational leaders on their college campuses.

As Act Six scholars, Analco Morales and Juasemai are currently engaged in six months of leadership training alongside fellow students from across the State of Minnesota. Analco Morales will be attending Concordia College-Moorhead to pursue a degree in nursing, and Juasemai will be attending University of Northwestern-St. Paul to pursue a degree in computer science.

Juasemai plans on taking Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) classes while enrolled at the University of Northwestern, with the goal of joining the United States Air Force upon graduation. Alongside his degree, he aims to achieve an officer rank and become a pilot. Analco Morales plans to obtain her degree in nursing, with the goal of leaving a positive and strong impact on those around her.



Crystal Analco Morales
Full ride scholarship to Concordia College-Moorhead



McAlvin Juasemai
Full ride scholarship to University of Northwestern-St. Paul



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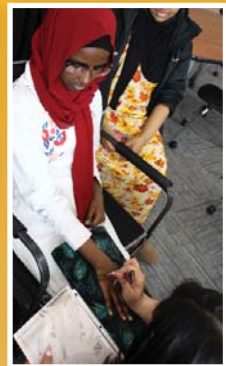
Fridley Middle School students share in cultural traditions during Ramadan

Fridley Middle School (FMS) students had the opportunity to receive Eid mehndi, intricate henna designs drawn on the hands of Muslim women, at the school to celebrate Eid Al-Fitr, the end of Ramadan. Ramadan is a traditional holy month of fasting, introspection and prayer for Muslims.

This year, from April 1 to May 1, Muslim students observed the religious and cultural tradition, which includes fasting from food and water from dawn until dusk. "In the past during this month, I would often hear from Muslim students that there is a lack of space and understanding among the school community," said Aloda Sims, FMS equity and inclusion specialist. "As our district continues on our equity and inclusion journey, it was apparent that we needed to provide a positive, safe and non-isolating environment so we can allow all students to thrive."

Each year during Ramadan, Fridley students have the option of spending the lunch hour in the media center or multipurpose room. Sims partnered with 8th grade students Amara Husein and Sajah Chehber to create opportunities to increase understanding and awareness of Ramadan traditions. By implementing student voice, Sims organized several traditional opportunities for Muslim students to engage in -- including calligraphy and henna.

"It's been exciting to take the lead and help organize opportunities for Muslim representation, and I feel like it's helped spread empathy and understanding across our entire school," said Chehber. "We haven't gotten the question 'not even water..?' like we have in the past. This year, it's been more curious and genuine questions from classmates."



With the help of students, Sims created a Ramadan website for students to engage in during homeroom, which featured information about the holy month, as well student voice videos, ways to support students, and educational trivia games.

As the end of the month neared, Husein and Chehber suggested providing an opportunity for students to receive henna during their lunch hour. A local artist from Sunnah Henna visited the school on April 28, providing henna to over 50 FMS students. The temporary henna is applied in elaborate floral and geometric designs, dyeing the skin with a paste that is created from the leaves of a henna plant. Traditionally, Muslim women receive henna for various celebrations, including weddings and during Eid.

"Bringing the henna tradition within our school walls was the extra spark that we needed this year," said Sims. "We wanted to provide that intentional collaboration with our students, which allows us to bridge the gap to inform and educate about cultural connections." Sims added that implementing equity and inclusion pieces into the school day is highly important for all students. "It helps our youth to build identity, their self-esteem and confidence," said Sims.

"At Fridley, we value and see every single one of our students. This brings so much impact socially to the inclusive learning environment, which leads to academic success. For our students and families to know that their school is partnering with them to embrace who they are, that's what equity and inclusion is all about."

Equity and Inclusion Specialist Aloda Sims (left) with FMS 8th grade students Sajah Chehber (center) and Amara Husein (right).