

BlueSky Online December Newsletter

Superintendent's Message

Each year, school districts develop a World's Best Workforce (WBWF) Annual Report, engage in an annual public meeting with stakeholders, and release the annual report publicly on district websites. Under Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.11, the annual report and annual meetings are focused on strategies and initiatives that the district engaged in to meet the goals and the progress made on those goals in the prior school year. The goals must address the following areas:

- All children are ready for school.
- All third-graders can read at grade level.
- All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.
- All students are ready for career and college.
- All students graduate from high school.

In addition, WBWF legislation requires that districts submit a summary of the annual report to MDE (Minnesota Department of Education) each year. BlueSky has recently added our [18-19 Annual Report and World's Best Workforce Summary](#) to our website. Take a look at both documents to find out the results of BlueSky's goals as well as learn all about the innovative programs we have implemented as a way to support each and every one of our students.

One of our innovative program plans focuses on the social and emotional needs of our students. BlueSky is working to incorporate the researched based SEL (social and emotional learning) standards into our curriculum. This will help our students build skills in areas such as managing emotions, maintaining positive relationships, feeling and showing empathy for others, and making responsible decisions. There are five core areas of SEL which are identified in the diagram. If you would like to learn more about SEL and the core competencies, you can visit the [CASEL](#) website.

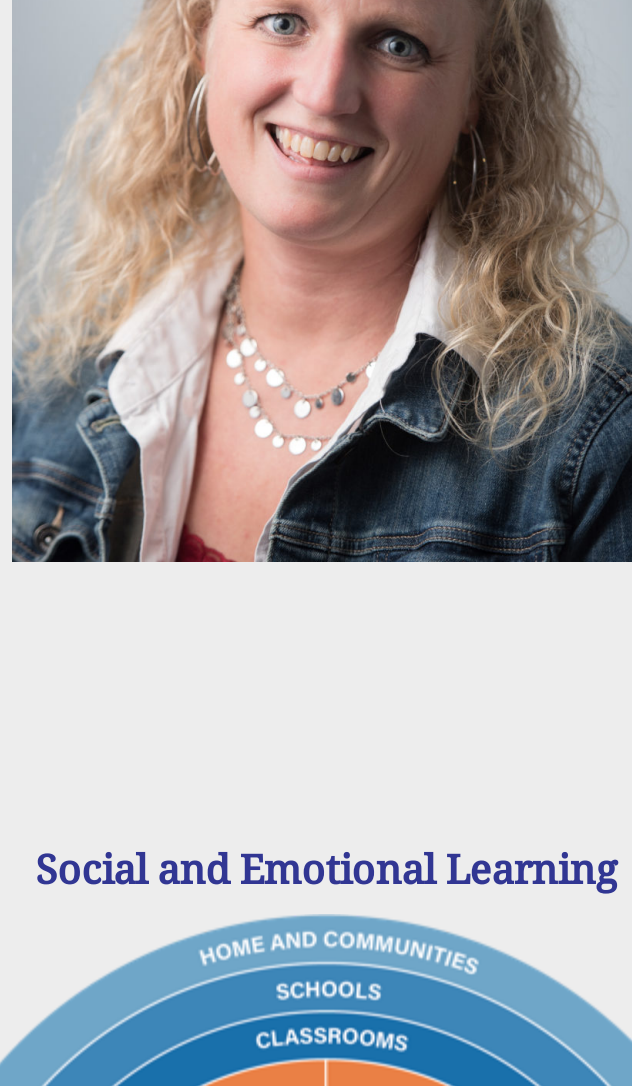
BlueSky's teachers have already begun to implement teaching these competencies in their courses. For example, Heather Novak, Economics teacher, has incorporated a lesson regarding responsible decision making into her course. In her lesson *Decision-Making Grid* students are taught the elements of the PACED decision-making model (Problem, Alternatives, Criteria, Evaluation, and Decision) and then are asked to demonstrate what they have learned by creating a grid with these elements to help them make a decision they are facing in their own lives.

In Casie Hammel's work with students (school social worker), she teaches the *7/11 Breathing Technique* as a way to help reduce anxiety and depression and also help to regulate emotions. Casie's students learn to breathe in for 7 seconds and out for 11 seconds. They then reflect on how they felt before breathing, how they felt after, and in what types of situations they might be able to use this coping mechanism.

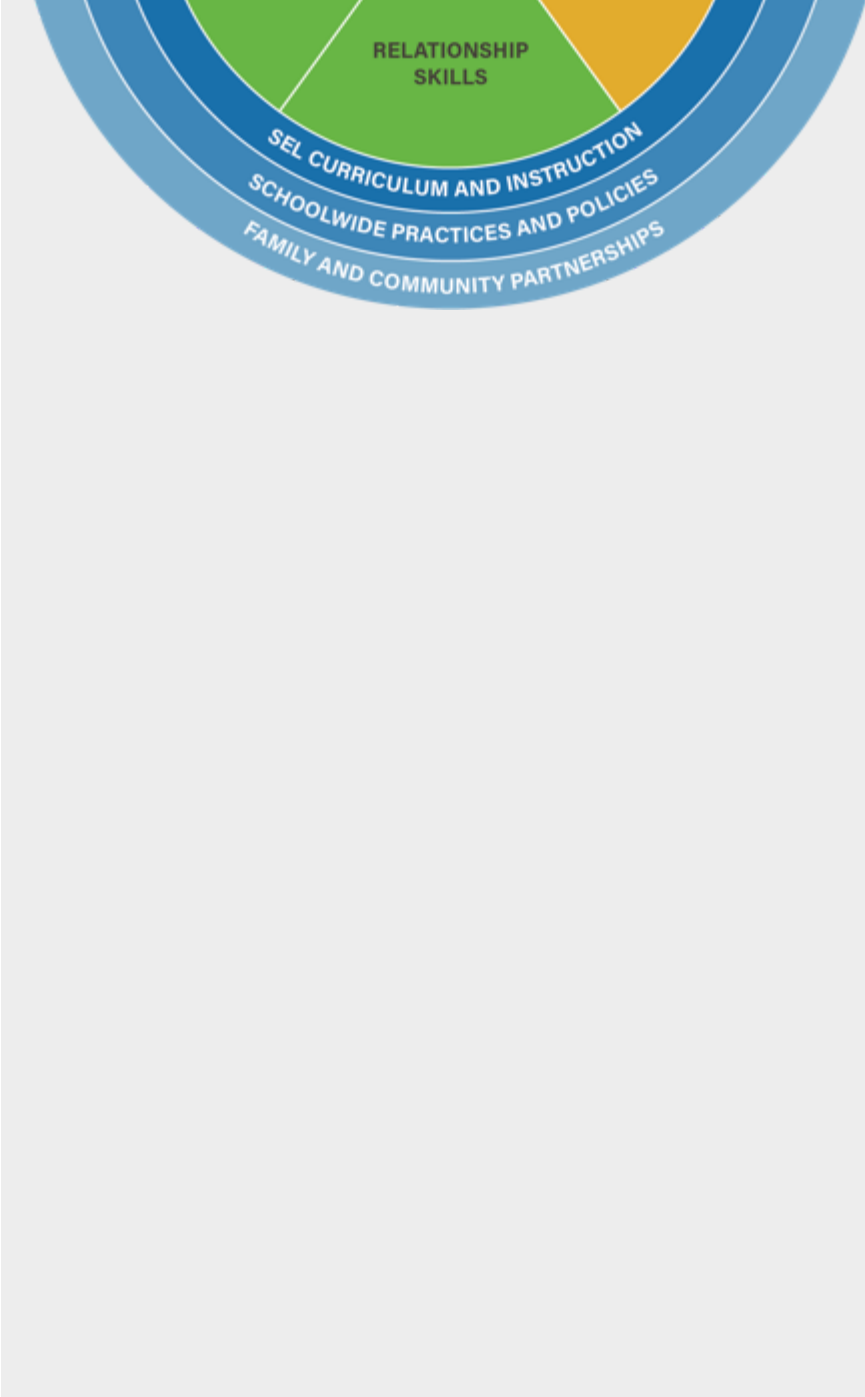
Julie Johnson, Earth Science teacher, also incorporates SEL in her course. In her lesson *Ethics in Science* she teaches her students how scientists attempt to answer questions and use new knowledge in an ethical way. Students are then asked to use the PACED decision-making model (Problem, Alternatives, Criteria, Evaluation, and Decision) to help them make an ethical decision in a mock scenario.

We will be continuing our work in this important area and will hopefully soon be able to see the benefits of our students learning these important social and emotional skills.

Amy Larsen
Superintendent/Executive Director
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Social and Emotional Learning

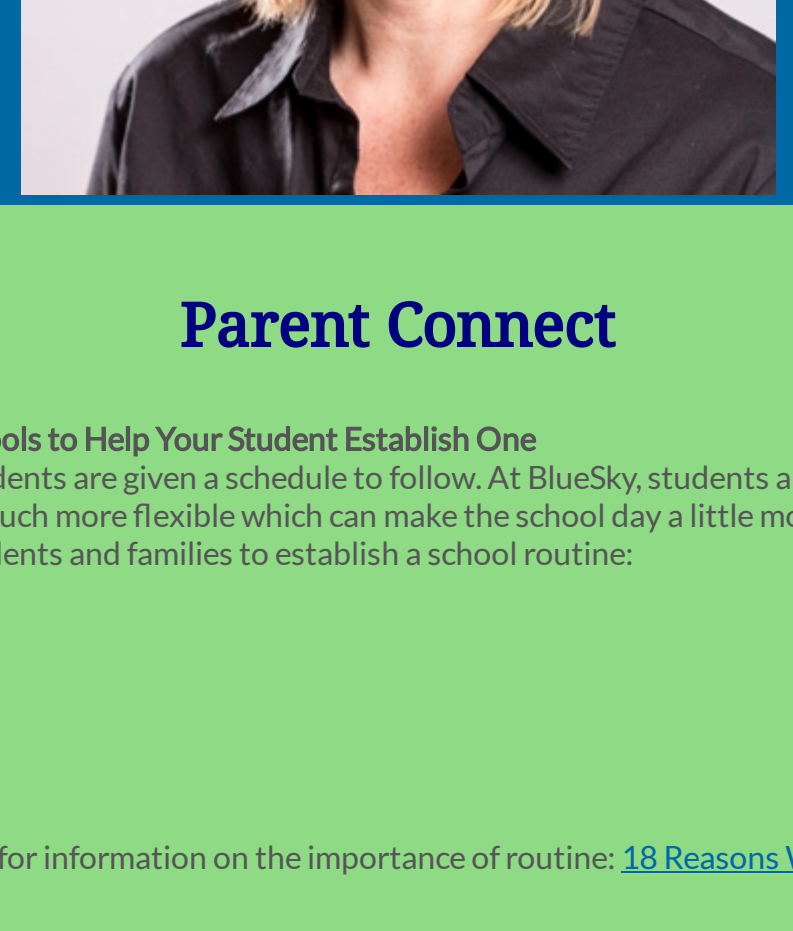


Upcoming Events

- December 12th- SeaLife MOA Field Trip
- December 23rd- January 1st- No School
- January 16th- Last Day of 2nd Quarter/ Semester 1
- January 17th- No School
- January 20th- No School - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- January 21st- No School
- January 22nd- First Day of Quarter 3/ Semester 2

BlueSky Parent Board Member

Please help us welcome Sandra Meinerts to the BlueSky Board of Directors! Sandy was appointed to the open parent member seat at the October board meeting. She is a parent of BlueSky 9th grader, Jonah Johnston, and resides in Fridley, MN. Sandy is a licensed dental hygienist who has served as the Program Director of a dental hygienist (DH) program in the metro area and has experience with curriculum development, teaching courses, reviewing and interviewing student applications for the DH program, as well as on-boarding new staff. Sandy currently co-owns a small business that provides CPR, AED, and First Aid training. Sandy is excited to be part of the BlueSky Board of Directors and is looking forward to helping develop opportunities for students and families to meet each other and engage in the BlueSky School community. Welcome, Sandy!



Parent Connect

Routine: Why It's Important and Tools to Help Your Student Establish One
In a traditional school building, students are given a schedule to follow. At BlueSky, students are given course assignments and deadlines but their schedules are much more flexible which can make the school day a little more challenging. Here are some reasons why it is important for students and families to establish a school routine:

- Improve efficiency
- Reduce procrastination
- Increase confidence
- Obtain specific goals
- Reduce stress and anxiety

Please consider reading this article for information on the importance of routine: [18 Reasons Why a Daily Routine Is So Important](#)

Once your student has established a school routine, being organized will help them to maintain that routine. One tool that BlueSky School uses to help our students remain organized is the Google Calendar. Items contained on the calendar are live session class times, school events and teacher/counselor appointment times. To learn more about how your student can use the Google Calendar to remain organized, check out some of [Google's training materials](#).

Counselor Corner

Financial Aid Information
Last month BlueSky hosted a Financial Aid night with Riverland's Financial Aid Director Patty Hemann. We had a great turnout- but if you were unable to attend, you can watch the recording of that session here: [Financial Aid Night Recording](#). And here is the [Financial Aid Slide Show](#) that was shared. If you have any further questions about financial aid, reach out to your BlueSky Counselor.

Featured Career:
Nuclear Medicine Technologist
Working primarily in hospitals, nuclear medicine technologists prepare and administer radioactive drugs used to monitor, diagnose, and treat conditions such as cancer.

- Salary: median income (2016) \$74,350
- Education: Associate Degree in Nuclear Medicine Technology
- Outlook: 10% growth (2016-2026)

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Grant Cameron - grant.cameron@blueskyschool.org
Amy Chicoine - amy.chicoine@blueskyschool.org
Dawn Mensing - dawn.mensing@blueskyschool.org

Social Work Spotlight

With the holiday season approaching, we understand this can be a time of stress for our students and families. [Click on the link here to learn more about managing holiday stress.](#)

BlueSky Stars

The BlueSky advisors have chosen to recognize these students for their hard work and dedication



Maggie Stassen

I have nominated **Maggie Stassen** for the BlueSky Star. Maggie is an 8th grade student who came to BlueSky this year seeking opportunities for flexibility and to be academically challenged. She has risen to the challenge, taking a high school class right away and excelling in all of her work.

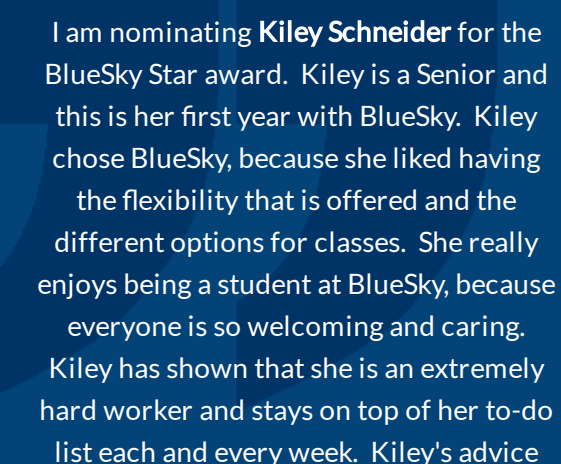
Maggie said one of the advantages of attending BlueSky is she has been able to volunteer on Wednesdays at her brother's elementary school. Most of the time she is helping with office work, but also has opportunities to visit her 3rd grade brother's class to help him and his classmates with reading and Math skills.

According to Maggie, "the kids are adorable!"

Maggie is a competitive figure skater, participating in three local competitions yearly. She received her first pair of rollerskates when she was 5, and fell in love. Then she was looking for an additional sport, and after sampling a few activities she decided figure skating was the right fit. We are fortunate to have Maggie as a student. She is a creative soul who gives 110% in everything she does.

Maggie has an infectious smile, and a fantastic personality.

-Nominated by Dawn Mensing



Kiley Schneider

I am nominating **Kiley Schneider** for the BlueSky Star award. Kiley is a Senior and this is her first year with BlueSky. Kiley chose BlueSky, because she liked having the flexibility that is offered and the different options for classes. She really enjoys being a student at BlueSky, because everyone is so welcoming and caring.

Kiley has shown that she is an extremely hard worker and stays on top of her to-do list each and every week. Kiley's advice for how to be successful at BlueSky is to have a good work ethic. Even when school is difficult, try your best and know that you put in all of your effort. Outside of school, Kiley enjoys working and hanging out with her friends. She loves to go shopping and listening to music.

-Nominated by Sean Miller

Student Learning Center Now OPEN

BlueSky Student Learning Center is now OPEN!

Beginning December 9th, the on-site Student Learning Center is now open Monday through Thursday from 9AM to 2PM. The learning center offers students an opportunity to receive support on assignments and provides a safe place for students to study, with technology available if needed. An Educational Assistant will be available for support and guidance, however, if one on one help is needed, students are encouraged to contact BlueSky Educational Assistant, Jill Hunt. We are excited to have Jill join the BlueSky team and look forward to welcoming students on campus. Jill joins us from the central coast of sunny California and is excited about her first Minnesota winter!

The BlueSky campus is located at [33 Wentworth Ave. E, Suite 100, West St. Paul, MN 55118](#). BlueSky can be accessed from the back of the building, on the first floor of the Wentworth Center building.



Student Art



This month's student work was created by **Grace Loffler**. This is a Doodle Lab assignment from the Middle School Intro to Art & Technology class. Doodle Labs are assignments that get students to loosen up about drawing. In this particular assignment, students created designs and funny faces from an initial scribble. Grace did a great job on her doodle by adding fun and creative faces and designs.

Note from Assignment instructions: *The Wall Street Journal* says... *Long dismissed as a waste of time, doodling is getting new respect. Recent research in neuroscience, psychology and design shows that doodling can help people stay focused, grasp new concepts and retain information. A blank page also can serve as an extended playing field for the brain, allowing people to revise and improve on creative thoughts and ideas. Doodles are spontaneous marks that can take many forms, from abstract patterns or designs to images of objects, landscapes, people or faces. "It's a thinking tool," says Sunni Brown, an Austin, Texas, author of a new book, "The Doodle Revolution." It can affect how we process information and solve problems, she says.*

