



**Brentwood  
Borough  
School  
District**

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

BY DR. AMY M. BURCH



### In-Person Learning Verses Online Learning

The pandemic has forever changed the way we think about education. To some this is a frightening concept while to others it is an opportunity to explore new opportunities. One thing resonated throughout the year; in-person learning is the best way for the majority of our students to be successful. We also must acknowledge that the handful of students that remained online were successful due to significant parental support. This led to discussions around the questions highlighted below.

#### **Why is the Brentwood Borough School District special?**

A common theme was identified in district communications, relationships matter! Professional staff established office hours for online learners to connect, seek assistance with assignments, and celebrate successes. Zoom provided the platform to allow live parent webinars that encouraged real time feedback. This feedback led to the implementation of synchronous learning. Our students returned to in-person learning this spring. It is our intention to return to a traditional schedule for the 2021-2022 school year.

#### **Will the BBSD Students the Opportunity to Continue with Online Learning?**

Two years prior to the pandemic, Brentwood Borough School District partnered with another public-school district to offer a cyber academy for students at the high school. Mr. Cassell, assistant MS/HS principal led the initiative to expand the cyber program using Brentwood teachers and staff for grades K-12, thus creating the Brentwood Cyber Academy. Prior to the Brentwood Cyber Academy, if students elected to attend cyber or charter schools outside of the district, taxpayers paid the cost of the outside tuition rate. In Brentwood for the 2021-2022 school year the tuition rates are as follows; \$14,988/student/year for students that do not require additional supportive services and \$32,678/student/year students that require additional services through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). If the student does

not achieve academically or does not attend on a regular basis, the school district had no recourse. We firmly believe that our professional staff is the best qualified to provide educational services. Furthermore, the creation of the Brentwood Cyber Academy enabled the district to utilize our professional staff to deliver the board approved curriculum at NO additional cost to taxpayers. The current system allows for students to attend charter and cyber schools across Pennsylvania.

#### **How did the Pandemic Impact the Use of Technology in the District?**

At the beginning of the pandemic, BBSD was NOT a one-to-one school district. The technology plan called for the district to reach this status by the year 2022. Meetings with the administration, Brentwood Education Association (BEA) and the Brentwood Education Support Professionals Association (BESPA) increased in frequency. This along with grant funding enabled the district to become one-to-one by December of 2020. Simultaneously, the BEA learned how to use a new student learning management system. Using mentors, professional learning opportunities were offered for the full year. Through the use of ESSER II funds, the district will be able to replace outdated instructional equipment in the classrooms at the middle and high school.

#### **BBSD was the first district in Allegheny County to be declared a Common Sense Media District. What was the Impact of this Declaration on the Educational Programming?**

Brentwood was the first school district in Allegheny County and the second district in Pennsylvania to be designated a Common Sense Media District. This meant that our professional staff made a commitment to providing safe and innovative spaces for students to thrive as they harness the full potential of technology for learning and life. It was critical that our staff was previously trained in this area.

## BOARD MESSAGE



## Board Perspective: Instructional Models and Project Updates

The Brentwood Borough School District (BBSD) is excited for the remaining weeks of the school year. During the first three quarters of the school year, the district experienced a number of variables due to the pandemic. In a recent Brentwood survey the majority of parents and guardians indicated that families will be sending their students back full-time in person for the 2021-2022 school year.

Work on the bridge between the Middle-High School and the activities wing has been undertaken to ensure the safety and functionality of the walkway. This work is on schedule and will be done before the start of the new school year.

Additionally, work will start on replacing windows and doors of the MS-HS building. As mentioned in the BBSD article in the previous edition of this magazine, replacing the number of windows without interrupting classes will take time. The project is expected to take more than a year until it is completed. The more efficient windows will improve the classroom experience for many students, staff, and guests.

BBSD is still in negotiations with the Catholic Diocese regarding the possible purchase of the former Saint Sylvester school building and convent. As the process continues, information will be shared with the community.

As always, we invite the public to attend school board meetings. The schedule for the meetings may be found on the school district website.

## Mental Health Temperature Check



It has become commonplace to be required to have your temperature taken and to answer a few health questions before staff allow you to enter any place of business. Brentwood Borough School District is applying that same principle and expanding upon it to “take the temperature” of our students in terms of the mental health effects COVID 19 has had upon our students. The district has partnered with Board Works and purchased an assessment tool (PASS) that will allow the district to survey students from grades 3-11 to identify social and emotional barriers that may affect their success in school. Many mental health professionals have forecasted that students returning to school after COVID closures

and hybrid learning will be dealing with additional mental health concerns.

This computer-assisted survey will be administered to students three times in the next year (once prior to the end of the 20/21 school year, once early in the 21/22 school year, and once toward the end of the 21/22 school year.) This schedule of administration will give the district vital information about student needs prior to the end of the school year so student mental health needs can be identified, and services can be offered to families during the Summer of 2021. School counselors from all three levels (Elementary, Middle and High School) have indicated that they are willing to develop and lead mental health workshops for district students. The district is also planning to continue its partnership with Mercy Behavioral Health to provide onsite school-based mental health counselling during the summer months. The second administration of the survey will yield data indicating if the programs that were provided to students over the Summer months were successful. The second administration will also allow guidance staff to identify any student needs that were not identified during the earlier assessment. This information will be utilized as baseline data for the 21/22 school year and will help the district plan supports, mental health services, and SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) lessons for the 21/22 school year. The last administration of the survey late in the 21/22 school year will provide the district with information about effectiveness of programming.

Any parent who is interested in having their child participate in any of these services should call their child's school counselor or the Director of Student Services, Dr. Chris Winiarski.



## NEWLY ESTABLISHED THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM

COVID-19 was a main issue or topic in the media and in schools, and district administrators had many tasks added to their already busy job duties. School safety did not take a back seat for the Brentwood Borough School District.

School safety has been a main topic for years and one we do not take lightly. In addition to many programs that the district already has in place, such as the Student Assistance Program (SAP), ALICE Program, and the Safe2Say Something System, Act 18 amended the Public-School Code of 1949 by adding Article XIII-E, Threat Assessment. Among its provisions, Article XIII-E requires the establishment of threat assessment teams for all school entities in Pennsylvania.

In March of 2021, Superintendent Dr. Amy Burch and Director of School Police and Security, Jeremy Bogdanski worked on establishing and appointing members to the districts threat assessment team.

Each school entity shall establish at least one team to assess and intervene with students whose behavior may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community, and others.

The Brentwood School Districts threat assessment team consist of school administrators, school counselors, and school police officers. Each member was required to take the ten hour “Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines” two level course. The team has also developed procedures to follow when an incident or threat is reported. The main goal of the team is to receive information, analyze the information received, categorize the threat and its legitimacy, put a plan in place for the student in question, refer the student to the SAP program or refer the threat to law enforcement if necessary.

The District Safety and Security Coordinator will document and annually present all referrals to the school board of directors.



# HAPPY RETIREMENT



Jan Wroblewski



Kellie Rebholz



Lisa Kovacs



Cindy Matthews



Kristie Thieshen



Nancy Brown



Aggie Greer

## Brentwood Borough School District Retirees

Seven staff members with 140 years of combined work were recently recognized by the Brentwood Borough School District as they prepare to say farewell this June.

Four teachers, two nurses, and the secretary for the Superintendent make up this year's retirees and were honored with kind words of thanks from administrators and Board of Education members. The retirees are Cindy Matthews, Kellie Rebholz, Lisa Kovacs, Janet Wroblewski, Aggie Greer, Kristie Thieshen, and Nancy Brown.

These employees have dedicated their lives to a career of serving. They have served the young people of Brentwood Borough School District with an abundance of love, care, and have a positive passion and lasting impact in each student and staff member they have touched. As excited as we are for them to experience the next part of their life journey, we hate to see them go. It is not always easy to walk away from something that has been so meaningful and important — their life's work.

We hope the retirees are pleased in their decision and leave knowing that they have made a difference for many. Please know how grateful we are and how much we have been touched by your work. On behalf of the entire district, we wish each of you much happiness and all the best that retirement has to offer. We are truly honored having you as colleagues and always know you will be part of the Brentwood family.



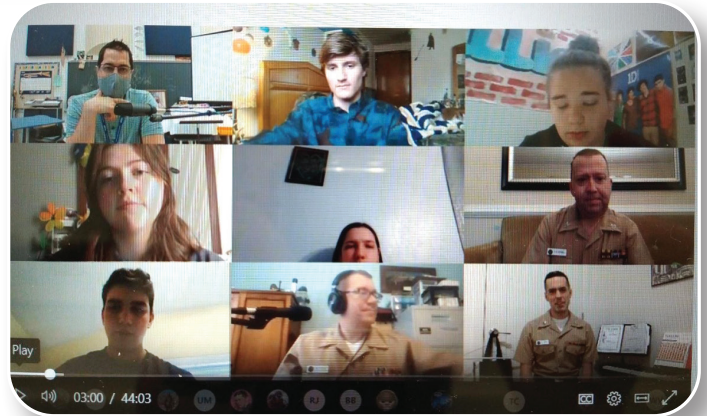
# Brentwood Spartan Marching Band Virtual Visit with the U.S. Marine and Navy Bands

Military bands have long been a staple in the United States, although very few people know what they do in addition to performing parades, concerts, and things like Taps. The band members have families of their own and in most years, do a good deal of traveling to different parts of the U.S. to perform clinics, masterclasses, concerts, official ceremonies, as well as traveling to other countries on deployments, dedications, and of course, educational outreach. Because of the pandemic, they had to figure out a way to reach the students without coming to the schools. Enter technology. The Marine and Navy Bands educational outreach team and our Brentwood Spartan Band Director, Mr. McKinney, to bring it all together!

In March, the Brentwood Spartan Marching Band had the opportunity to meet some of the faces of the President's Own Marine Band and the U.S. Navy Band from Washington DC. No, we did not go to DC this year or see them on a concert tour, we had them coming to us live from their homes and into our school auditorium and band room. Mr. McKinney, a Navy Band veteran and PA Air Force National Guard Band member, was able to help bring the band members into a virtual setting with the students. We used Chromebooks and WIFI from the school to connect the band members to the students. The band members talked about their careers, shared what they do at the bands, talked about practice routines, and generally answered any questions they could.

On the first day, we had the opportunity to interact with Gunnery Sergeant Harry Ong from the Marine Band. Harry spoke about his career and fun highlights that he has had the opportunity to have throughout his 18-year career in the band. He fielded questions about the band and had a great time showing the students ceremonies and presidential inauguration photos from behind the scenes. The students now know that to play a ceremony at noon, that you must go through a security check point far worse than TSA about 6 hours before!

The second day, we saw the US Navy Band from DC bring us three musicians to run what we call sectionals. This is a time when we get to break apart into smaller units within the band to group like instruments together and work on things. Chief Musician Bill



Dunn, a trumpet player, brought with him, Dave, a clarinet player, and James, a percussionist to give a little insight into what they do at the Navy Band and a few warmup routines that the band can use in their own practice. The band had "virtual sectionals" with the three members of the band and went over lots of things they can do themselves to get better on their instruments outside of band.

The band learned quite a bit about what the musicians do besides playing their instruments. They have other jobs within the bands that are a part of the day-to-day operations as well. Things like administrative duties, operations or scheduling the band in events, educational programs, library duties for the entire band, conducting, section leaders, transportation manager, etc. The Spartan Band found that there are many career opportunities in the bands and in the regional bands as well. In several cases we also had many questions from the high school students who are thinking about colleges, or opportunities in the work force. All four members of the military bands answered questions and helped the students to learn about jobs that they may not have considered before meeting someone from the field.

The Brentwood Spartan Band would like to thank the school and the Marine and Navy Bands in Washington DC for these visits and we look forward to bringing them to the school and the community soon!

## Student Leaders Meet with State Representative Jessica Benham

Brentwood High School worked in collaboration with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit to provide a leadership forum with State Representative Jessica Benham. Armon Smith (Senior Class President), Ashley Mingrino (Senior Class Vice President), Hanaa Ghassa (Senior Class Secretary), Rachel Bohonek (Senior Class Treasurer), Jamie McGrail, Bailey Wertz and Brendan Wertz represented the students of Brentwood High School in the event. The forum covered a wide range of topics from social and political issues to concerns that students have for their futures. State Representative Benham replaced long-standing State Representative Harry Readshaw following his retirement. The students were particularly interested in how State Representative Benham became interested in politics and her experience as a new lawmaker. The conversation was interesting, and the students were pleased to be able to have personal contact with their representative. It was a wonderful day of sharing ideas about the present and the future. Brentwood High School thanks the Allegheny Intermediate Unit and State Representative Jessica Benham for their time with the students.





# Samir Kadariya Qualifies for the 2022 National Merit Scholarship Program

Samir Kadariya is currently a junior at Brentwood High School. He has received notification that his PSAT scores have qualified him for the 2022 National Merit Scholarship Program in the fall. Each year College Board pulls 50,000 students who are the highest-scoring participants in the PSAT program, and they are recognized as a Semifinalist or Commended Students in the fall of the following school year. Samir has the opportunity to be one of 16,000 who will be named as a National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists which represents the top test scorers in each state. Brentwood High School is extremely proud of Samir and this accomplishment. We wish him the best as he progresses through the process.



 National Merit<sup>®</sup>  
Scholarship Program  
conducted by National Merit Scholarship Corporation

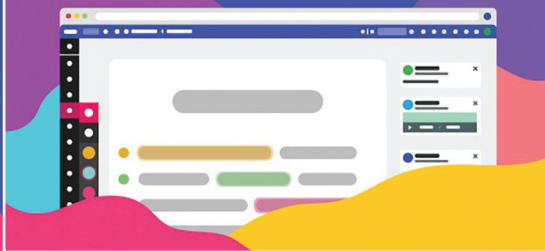
## Rotary Club Supports Technology in Schools

The 2020/2021 school year brought about a lot of unexpected changes for school districts across the Country. To continue providing a high standard of learning for all students K – 12, Brentwood Borough School District chose a new online learning tool called, Kami which assisted in facilitating instructional needs. Kami enables teachers to post documents, PDFs, images, and other learning resources into an interactive format that allows students to edit and provide feedback on the documents.

Through the generous support of The Pleasant Hills Rotary Club and the Rotary Foundation, The Brentwood Borough School District was able to secure a grant to purchase Kami for the 2020/2021 school year. Darlene Kruth, President of the Pleasant Hills Rotary Club, assisted Brentwood with the grant process that made Asynchronous and Synchronous learning more feasible for students, parents, and teachers at Brentwood. Kami has proven to be valuable online learning resource when paired with the district's current learning management system Canvas, and Kami will continue to be used through the 2021/2022 school year.

**Rotary**   
Club of Pleasant Hills

# Kami



# First Year of Teaching... During a Pandemic!!! *An Interview with Ms. Manolis*

When Maggie Manolis graduated from Westminster College in May 2020, she was excited to begin her career as a science teacher. After interviewing with 7 districts, Ms. Manolis accepted a position teaching 7th grade Science at Brentwood Middle School. In addition to the typical challenges a first-year teacher faces, Ms. Manolis had to navigate a pandemic that had a significant impact on all schools across the nation. Mr. David Radcliffe, Principal at Brentwood Middle School, talked with Ms. Manolis about the challenges and successes she encountered during a very atypical first year.



**Q:** When you first accepted the position at Brentwood Middle School, what did you expect the school year to look like?

**A:** *Based on my student teaching experience when the pandemic first started, I really expected anything to happen. I was hoping to have students back in the building at some point during the school year, but I knew the year was not going to be like anything I learned in my teacher preparation program.*

**Q:** What have been the greatest challenges associated with teaching during a pandemic in your first year?

**A:** *The combination of the typical first year challenges such as developing new materials and lesson plans and then adding the need to be able to teach everything remotely. I always tried to find ways to make sure that the students could access all of the materials. I also tried to stay in constant contact with the kids and parents without bothering them too much.*

**Q:** What have been your biggest accomplishments this year?

**A:** *I am most proud when the kids tell me that they really enjoy science and my class. It makes me feel like I am having a positive influence. I also coached the middle school cheerleading squad and it helped me to build positive relationships with the students. I feel like those personal connections helped me to create the family type environment that I want in my classroom.*

**Q:** What are you most looking forward to for next school year?

**A:** *I'm looking forward to seeing the kids in class every day. I want to be able to do more things outside of the classroom such as supporting the students in their extracurricular events or other areas that they are interested in. I also am looking forward to being able to do more "real labs" without worrying about sharing equipment or sanitizing all the materials each period.*

**Q:** How did other staff members help you to have a successful first year?

**A:** *I wouldn't have been able to make it through this year without everyone's help. People were always stopping into my classroom to check on me. I love being on a team with the other 7th grade teachers. They are always able to provide extra reassurance or help me when I have questions about students.*

**Q:** Is there anything else that you would like to share about your unusual first year?

**A:** *Just that Brentwood has been a very welcoming community and that I plan to be here for a while!*





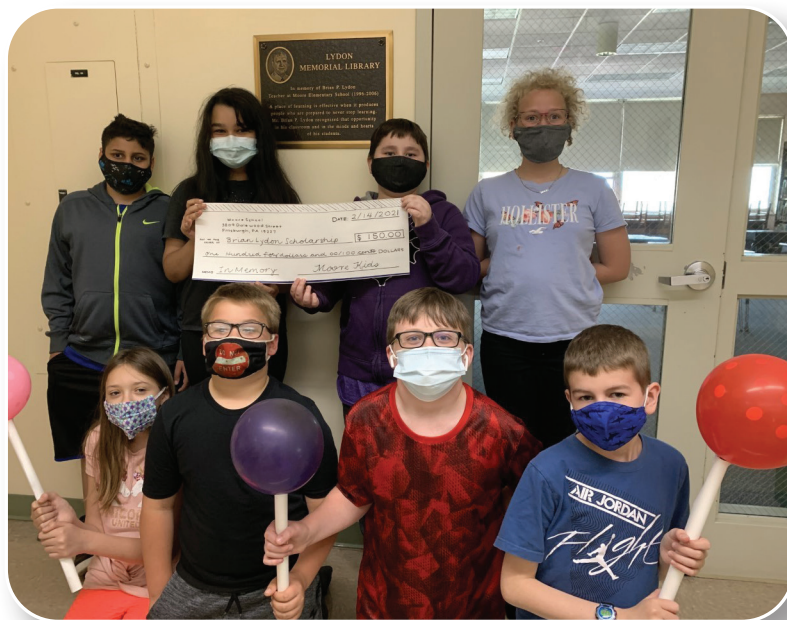
# Remembering Mr. Brian Lydon

Mr. Lydon was a beloved teacher at Moore Elementary School and principal of Elroy Elementary School. He was an outstanding leader and educator. Mr. Lydon had an incredible sense of humor and kind heart.

Mr. Lydon passed away in 2008 and is vastly missed. Valentine's Day is the perfect time to remember our dear friend and leader with a lollipop sale. The proceeds of the sale go to the Brian Lydon Memorial Scholarship. A Brentwood senior pursuing education in college receives the gift, presented at the Senior Banquet.

Our schools and community were a priority to Mr. Lydon. He grew up in Brentwood, was educated here, and served Brentwood during his career. We will continue to honor him each year by raising money for his scholarship and awarding a worthy senior. His memory lives on in each school as the libraries were named after this amazing person.

We will always remember his bright smile, his amazing ability to make people laugh and his passion for education!



## Community Engagement Project

By Dr. Bonnie Betler

Over the past school year, families were invited to participate in a survey from the Brookings Institute. That survey was designed to understand families' expectations for the education and schooling of their children. Extending that work, in the spring of 2021, the Grable Foundation sponsored a project that brought together schools and families to redesign existing school processes.

The Brentwood Borough School District had a multi-building team participate in the three-month process. The team was led by Erin Dusch, representing Moore Elementary, and included Machel Sanders from Elroy and Jamie Mason from the middle/ high school. Dr. Bonnie Betler was the district representative on the team.

The guiding question leading the team was, "How might we build stronger engagement between families and schools for the benefit of all students?" The multi-step process involved using

that guiding question to identify an existing area to innovate. After reflecting and discussing community needs and trends the team decided to work on building parents' confidence to engage with teachers and with administrators. A perceived trend was that some parents are missing important messages or are hesitant about reaching out to teachers or administrators when they have questions or concerns.

As part of the process team members conducted interviews to gain empathy for others. Through those interviews and discussions, a common thread that emerged was that families are inundated with messages from the district, schools, and teachers. Sometimes those messages are getting mixed in with other messages and getting lost.

The community engagement team was asked to 'hack' or take an existing process and try to improve it in small ways. Insights and learnings from that

process covered three broad topics. First, families have information overload. Second, invite parents in to be partners in meaningful ways regarding academics and programs. Finally, investigate ways to provide opportunities for families to get to know teachers and administrators so that they are comfortable communicating with them. This may be accomplished by revising current Open House programs.

The community engagement team's final hack resulted in a recommendation to the Board of Directors that a survey be conducted to identify preferred means to receive messages from the various levels of the district, i.e. teachers, schools, and district messages. The community engagement team hopes that through the survey the district will be able to develop a communication plan that can be shared with families and that can serve as the building block for further dialog and communication between the schools and families.



# ATHLETICS



## BASEBALL

*Left to Right*

Brendan Wertz  
Kiran Gurung  
Josh Griener  
Riley Brendel  
JD Satler  
Michael Guckes

## SOFTBALL SENIORS

*Left to Right*

Alyssa Budd  
Paige Miller  
Sindey Wuenschell  
Racheal Salinas-Garcia



## TRACK AND FIELD

*Left to Right*

Cesia Garcia  
Abby Czerwien  
Nick Milius  
Steven Bakowski  
Aiden Wardsinski  
Heran Pradhan  
Missing from photo Qulik Evans