



Brentwood
Borough
School
District



SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

BY DR. AMY M. BURCH

Canvas Mentors Explained in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Quotes

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (August 28, 1749 – March 22, 1832) was a German poet, playwright, novelist, and scientist. While Goethe followed in his father's footsteps by studying law, but his true passion was poetry, literature, and science. He is considered Germany's greatest literary figure of the modern era.

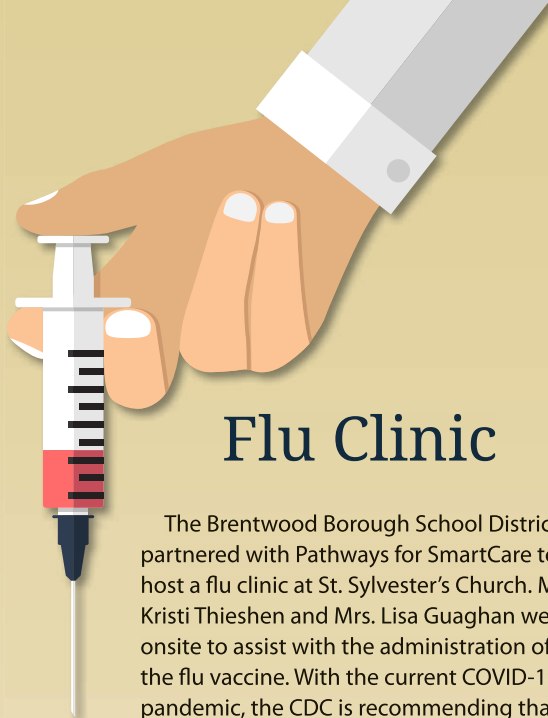
When the District posted for six Canvas mentor positions, it was unclear how many teaching professionals would agree to meet the challenge. Goethe says, **"everybody wants to be someone, but nobody wants to grow"**. While this may be true in other situations, our Canvas Mentors proved this statement inaccurate because of the multiple interest letters submitted to lead District's new student Learning Management System (LMS). Narrowing the pool to six candidates was a welcomed challenge. Our staff recognized that in order for our students to be successful, we needed to explore new and divergent ways of providing instruction.

Everything is hard before it is easy. The Canvas Mentors dedicated countless hours of researching and exploring the new LMS so that they could better prepare the staff when they returned. The challenge was monumental but now, four months into implementation the collaboration is producing results. The next step is to shift our focus to better assisting our families as they continue to navigate the new system.

Instruction does much, encouragement everything. The mentors were tasked with developing training videos, supporting documents, and working one on one with our professional and support staffs. The feedback and encouraging words were overwhelming positive in relation to the quality of product our mentors shared.

We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise, we harden. With the pandemic and the uncertainty of the days to come, the mentors and staff recognize that in order to meet the needs of our students, we must continue to learn and share our experiences. In keeping with this philosophy, Mr. Jim Cassell, Middle School- High School Assistant Principal and leader of our Brentwood Cyber Academy is leading collaboration sessions with other South Hills Area School Districts. Students in the South Hills will benefit from the collaboration of teachers and administrators.





Flu Clinic

The Brentwood Borough School District partnered with Pathways for SmartCare to host a flu clinic at St. Sylvester's Church. Mrs. Kristi Thieshen and Mrs. Lisa Guaghan were onsite to assist with the administration of the flu vaccine. With the current COVID-19 pandemic, the CDC is recommending that everyone who is eligible get the vaccine.

According to the CDC, the benefits of the flu vaccine include; keep you from getting the flu, can reduce the risk of flu-associated hospitalization for children, working age adults, and older adults, is an important preventive tool for people with chronic health conditions, can be lifesaving in children, and getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you



Several large construction projects were undertaken in the past twelve months.

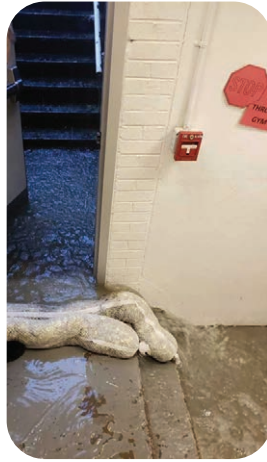
At the start of the school year the emergency work on the roofs on the middle/high school building were completed. The roof work addressed the leaks from rain that damaged the inside of the building. The project was completed at more than \$192,000 under budget.

Additionally, Moore Elementary had waterproofing done to entire building to address flooding caused by rain damage. Removal and installation of sidewalk on the back of the school and the renovation of the retaining wall were done as part of the project. These safety measures will ensure our children can safely play on the playground while reducing future structural issues.

The outside excavating waterproofing of the middle/high school gym was necessitated by flooding from rain. A new gym floor, bleachers, scoreboards, sound system, new padding, in addition to new paint and a terrific new mural were installed. As many have now seen, the gym is in better condition than before and has hosted many varsity games. In addition to the portion covered by insurance, the work was completed at more than \$222,000 under budget.

Additionally, the district wide phone system replacement, and relocation of the phone, fire and alarm systems was undertaken. Unforeseen conditions with electrical conduits, gas line, plumbing, internal wall restoration, and a steel beam replacement were addressed with this project.

As you can see when you drive by the front of the middle-high school that the school driveways and parking were resurfaced over the summer. The work widened the circle area to make it easier for buses and larger vehicles to maneuver around the bend by the front doors. The mud path on the hill that many children used as a shortcut to get from Brownsville Road to the front doors was replaced with a concrete walkway to increase safety for the students. Additionally, existing concrete sidewalks were replaced and there was an addition of new sidewalks behind the school. Also, the façade was restored, and the loading dock was redesigned. This project is coming in under budget.



Proposed South Elevation

BRENTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL



An upcoming capital project that will take more than a year to complete is replacement of the windows at the middle/high school. Due to the large numbers of windows in the middle/high school, the estimated time frame for the project is two years. Work will include masonry restoration and repair of the damaged lintels. The windows project is the first major renovation not done due to an emergency in about twenty years. Lastly, the current air conditioning units located in the library, cafeteria, and auditorium exceeded the projected lifespan of the equipment and require replacement. The good news with the replacement of the air conditioning units is that the latest technology for air purification will be included in the project specifications.

New School Building versus Renovations

On October 7, the school district held a community meeting via Zoom to discuss the status of the aforementioned work but also to share the preliminary conversations Brentwood Borough School District leaders have had with

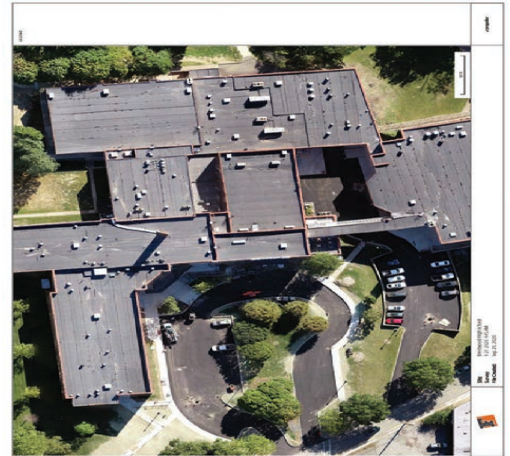
St. Sylvester leaders and the Diocese of Pittsburgh regarding the vacant St. Sylvester school building and convent properties. More than 150 people participated in the community meeting.

As it has been more than twenty years since a non-emergency major renovation of the elementary schools, and with a projected increase in elementary student

population, leaders investigated the unique opportunity of purchasing and utilizing the St. Sylvester property in the heart of Brentwood.

A study conducted by HHSDR Engineers was shared at the community meeting. The study overviewed the renovations required at Elroy and Moore Elementary school buildings to meet the growing demand for space for students and instruction and to purchase and update the old St. Sylvester School building to meet the needs of our growing student population versus costs associated with purchasing the St. Sylvester property and building a new school building on the property to house all of the elementary students. The costs were similar.

Our teachers and administrators are working to constantly improve our programs and prepare our students for a rapidly changing workplace. Renovations to existing facilities or a new school building are required to meet this need. While there are advantages to both options outlined in the study, there has been no final decision made.



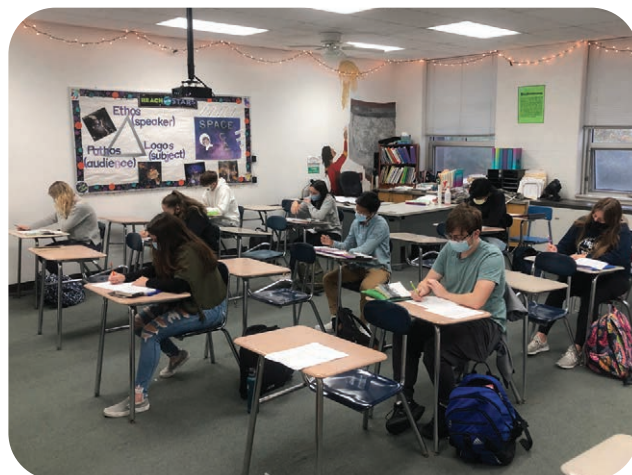
As always, community members are encouraged to attend school board meetings to hear updates and information and ask questions. Public meetings and hearings will continue to be advertised within our school and residential community.

Brentwood Middle/High School Students Adjusting to "New Normal"

When classes began at Brentwood Middle/High School on Monday, August 31, school looked much different than it had in previous years. The COVID-19 pandemic that caused schools to close back in March has forced significant changes in many aspects of the traditional school experience. Outlined below are some of these changes:

Hybrid and Remote Learning Options

The most significant change for both students and staff for this school year has been the switch to either a hybrid or remote learning environment. Students who have chosen the hybrid model attend school in-person two days per week (either Monday/Thursday or Tuesday/Friday) and work remotely on the other days of the week. Remote students work from home five days per week. Over the summer, the school district integrated a learning management system known as Canvas to provide remote instruction to the students. Canvas allows the teachers to provide instruction through video recorded lessons as well as a format where students can submit their course work and receive feedback from the teachers. All students who chose the remote learning option had the opportunity to receive a district provided laptop. New Chromebooks will be arriving for all district students as we get closer to the end of the 2020 calendar year.



Masks and Physical Distancing

Students who are attending school in-person are required to wear face coverings during the school day and steps have been taken to allow for proper social distancing among students. We are extremely pleased that our students have been very cooperative in following these safety

measures. While wearing a mask all day can certainly seem burdensome, the students understand that these actions are paramount in helping to keep the school environment as safe as possible. In addition, the students are becoming accustomed to the physical distancing guidelines that are in place in areas such as classrooms and the cafeteria. Signs throughout the building remind the students to take actions to mitigate the spread of the virus including wearing a mask, keeping a safe distance, and washing hands regularly.

Extra-Curricular Activities

When extracurricular activities were cancelled last spring, there was great concern that fall activities might also be in jeopardy. The district is extremely happy that our students have been able to participate in extracurricular activities this school year. Fall athletics and activities – including Band, Cheerleading, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Soccer, and Volleyball – have proceeded as scheduled. While the number of spectators has been limited for these events, it has been wonderful to see our students involved in activities that they are passionate about.

While traditional education has been drastically affected by the pandemic, we are very appreciative to be able to provide both an in-person and remote learning option to best meet the needs of all of our district families. We are proud of both the students and staff at Brentwood Middle/High School as they continue to balance academic achievement, safety protocols, and involvement in extracurricular activities!



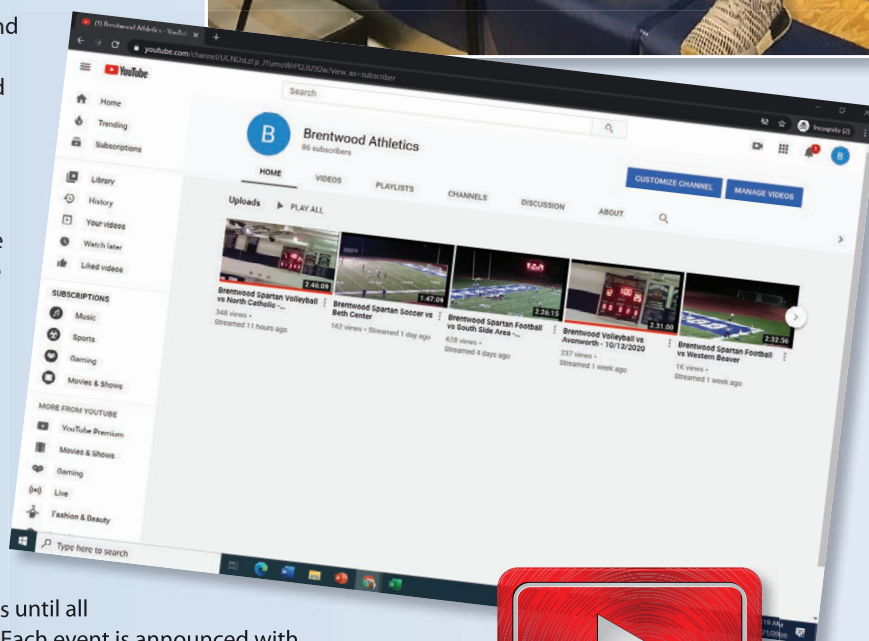


Brentwood Athletics Introduces Livestream Athletic Events Due to COVID-19

COVID-19 has impacted much of what and how things are being done in our schools. Beginning in August, Pennsylvania and Allegheny County imposed gathering restrictions on indoor and outdoor events in an effort to reduce the spread of the virus. These restrictions meant that our fall sports which are band, cheerleading, cross country, football, golf, soccer, and volleyball were going to be significantly restricted with the number of spectators at each of these events. Thanks to Brentwood High School Athletic Director Rick Huffman, Brentwood High School implemented a student run plan to stream many of the events that have spectators. Jennifer Bakowski, Nathaniel Barker, Brady Linke, Brandon Linke, Rachel Levandowski, and Nathan Ziegler were the first students to respond to a school-wide call to be videographers for our fall events. These students have created and worked a schedule in order to broadcast varsity athletic events that have been impacted by spectator restrictions.

Early in this process, volleyball had indoor restrictions of a total of twenty-five total people which limited the entire team from being in the gymnasium and eliminated parents from the event. Thanks to the work of Mr. Huffman and the students all of the home volleyball games were streamed so the families and fans could see the team in action.

Since October, Allegheny County and Pennsylvania have increased the number of spectators that are allowed into events both indoor and outdoor. There are restrictions still in place, however Brentwood High School has continued to livestream these events until all spectators are permitted to be at home events. Each event is announced with the livestream link using e-mail to district families and posting the link on the school district's website. Mr. Huffman also shares the link with the visiting teams so they can enjoy the activities also. All of the streams are free of charge and are considered a service to our school community, the Brentwood community, and all of our guests. We are certainly appreciative of the work the Mr. Huffman and our team of students have done to promote our events and allow virtual access to all of the home events.



The Importance of Reading 15 Minutes Per Day

Dr. Barbara Pagan

At Elroy, we love to read! Teachers have been working to make up for lost time away from the school building. They are implanting the reading curriculum and Foundations with fidelity. In Second Grade, we are implementing Read to the Principal and will expand this initiative to the other grade levels throughout the year. Research reveals that fifteen minutes of reading a day will help students in all subject areas. Try to make reading a part of your daily activities.

A study of the reading practices of more than 9.9 million students over the 2015–2016 school year found that **more than half** of the students read less than 15 minutes per day on average. An analysis comparing the engaged reading time and reading scores of more than 2.2 million students found that students who read less than five minutes per day saw the lowest levels of growth, well below the national average. Even students who read 5–14 minutes per day saw sluggish gains that were below the national average.

Only students who read 15 minutes or more a day saw **accelerated reading gains**—that is, gains higher than the national average—and students who read just over a half-hour to an hour per day saw the greatest gains of all.

Although many other factors—such as quality of instruction, equitable access to reading materials, and family background—also play a role in achievement, the consistent connection between time spent reading per day and reading growth cannot be ignored.

Moreover, if reading practice is linked to reading growth and achievement, then it follows that low levels of reading practice should correlate to low levels of reading performance and high levels of reading practice should connect to high levels of reading performance. This pattern is precisely what we see in student test data.

The long-term effects of reading practice

What's the difference between kids who read more than 30 minutes per day and those who read less than 15 minutes per day?

Twelve million.

Between kindergarten and twelfth grade, students with an average daily reading time of 30+ minutes are projected to encounter 13.7 million words. At graduation, their peers who averaged less than 15 minutes of reading per day are likely to be exposed to only 1.5 million words. The difference is more than **12 million** words. Children in between, who read 15–29 minutes per day, will encounter an average of 5.7 million words—less than half of the high-reading group but nearly four times that of the low-reading group.

Some researchers estimate students learn one new word of vocabulary for every thousand words read. Using this ratio, a student who reads only 1.5 million words would learn only 1,500 new vocabulary words from reading, while a student who reads

13.7 million words would learn 13,700 new vocabulary terms—more than **nine times** the amount of vocabulary growth.

This is especially important when we consider that students can learn far more words from reading than from direct instruction: Even an aggressive schedule of 20 new words taught each week will result in only 520 new words by the end of the typical 36-week school year. This does not mean that reading practice is “better” than direct instruction for building vocabulary—direction instruction is key, but teachers can only do so much of it.

Vocabulary plays a critical role in reading achievement. Research has shown that **more than half** the variance in students' reading comprehension scores can be explained by the depth and breadth of their vocabulary knowledge—and these two vocabulary factors can even be used to predict a student's reading performance.



We can see the relationship between vocabulary and reading achievement clearly in NAEP scores, where the students who had the highest average vocabulary scores were the students performing in the top quarter (above the 75th percentile) of reading comprehension. Similarly, students with the lowest vocabulary scores were those who were in the bottom quarter (at or below the 25th percentile) in reading comprehension. This means those additional **12 million** words could potentially have a huge impact on student success.

So what are we to do, when reading practice is so clearly connected to both vocabulary exposure and reading achievement, but not enough students are getting enough reading practice to drive substantial growth?

The answer seems clear. We need to make increasing reading practice a top priority for all students in school and at home. Make reading practice one of the most important things we can do for our students' long-term outcomes, especially when we combine it with high-quality instruction and effective reading curricula.



Moore Elementary

By Bonnie Betler, Ed. D. with Jessica Downey, M. Ed.
and Jessica Graff, M. Ed.

The 2020 school year may go down in history as one the most unique and interesting school years. While some things this year are different, many things have remained the same. This summer, as in past summers, our custodial staff did an impeccable job of cleaning and prepping our classrooms and common areas. Floors were waxed to a high shine, surfaces were scrubbed and sanitized, and rooms were rearranged.

When the doors were opened to welcome students, they were not the same doors as usual. This year, in order to cut down on traffic flow in hallways, students enter through the two side doors of the building and go directly to their classrooms. No longer are students gathering in the gym waiting for the bell to ring to dismiss them to their homerooms. On those first days students had the same questions as they do every year, "how do I get to my homeroom" and "who is my homeroom teacher." Students were helped to homerooms by the teachers who were all eager to welcome everyone back to school.

When students arrived in their classrooms, they may have noticed that they looked bit different. While rearranging the furniture over the summer, desks were placed so that students were seated six feet apart. Teachers ensured that students would have their own supplies so they would not need to share. While in class, students still get the opportunity to go to the board, they just do so with their own dry-erase pens and with their masks on! The class set up may have changed but our teachers are still implementing interactive and challenging lessons.

In addition to learning in the classroom, students are also learning on-line. Teachers have recreated their in-person classroom experiences for students who are learning from home. Mrs. Graff, our art teacher, took inspiration from Kelsey Montage and created an art experience for our students. Students were asked to draw lines and shapes on feathers, color them and bring them back to the school. She then took those feathers and turned them into a pair of wings that make a wonderful photo opportunity!

Lunch and recess are still popular times for students. Our gym is set up as our cafeteria with students being seated one per table or at individual desks. Students are assigned specific seats in the cafeteria; all students face the same direction and they are asked to remain in their seats until they are dismissed. The first few days of lunch were pretty quiet but as they cold has settled in our students are warming up to the new arrangements. Students are back to laughing and talking with each other, only now so from 6 feet away. Students are going outside for recess and creating and learning new games that they can play with each other from a safe distance.

Although this year is different from the previous years, there are still a lot of things that have stayed the same. Students are excited to be in school with their friends and teachers learning. The teachers are excited to create new learning experiences that have caused them to grow their teaching skills. We may not be as physically close to each other, but a smile can still be seen and experiences can still be shared...even with masks on!

"Wash Your Hands!" said the Teacher. "Why?" replied the children.

By Mrs. Ziegler

How do you start a new school year while experiencing a national pandemic? With lessons on handwashing, of course! Our fifth graders listened to stories, "Germs vs. Soap," by DiDi Dragon and "Do Not Lick this Book," by Idan Ben-Barak. Next, we talked about the importance of handwashing and the recommended ways to wash. Then we decided it would be interesting if we could prove that handwashing matters, so we found an experiment.

Our experiment called for fresh bakery bread, baggies, gloves, tongs, and a marker. We marked the bags "control," "clean," and "dirty." Using gloves and tongs we placed an untouched piece of bread in the control baggie. Next, we had a volunteer put a piece of bread in between their freshly washed hands. Lastly, we had a volunteer put a piece of bread between their NOT recently washed hands. Then we waited a few days, and the results were fascinating and quite revealing! Unanimously, the students agreed that this experiment helped them understand and appreciate the importance of thorough handwashing!



ATHLETICS



SOCCKER

Mario Richards, Ben Betz, Riley Wirth, Heran Pradhan,
Dan Steingraber, Patrick Conway, Mel Noi



BAND

Willow Sandusky



GOLF

Josh Griener



CHEERLEADING

Kayla Miranda, Grace Gralish, Bailey Wertz, Skylar Schmidt, Keara Torrelli, Savannah Wells



CROSS COUNTRY

Bailey Wertz



FOOTBALL

Front Row:

Aiden Wardzinski, Steven Bakowski,
Zander Johnson, Nick Milius

Middle Row:

J.D. Satler, Noah Madden, Brendan Wertz,
Jonathan Hutchison

Back Row:

Adam Majed, Kiran Gurung