As I reflect on my first year as program director of Blackburn, I am nonplussed at how fast the year has zipped by and overwhelmed with pride at what the staff and students at Blackburn accomplished this year. We have a graduating class of 43 students—one of the largest ever! We have several pieces of original art that were collaborations by students, staff and community members. We had yet another successful year of service learning, and we had two award-winning teachers in our building this year: Nancy Rampey-Biniamow won the Phillip and Ruth Sokolov Award for Outstanding Jewish Educator of the Year for 2015 and Cathy Nelson won an Alice Buffett Outstanding Teacher Award. We have three retirements among our staff; we will greatly miss Sam Eisenman, Nancy Rampey and Barbara Jennings.

Our building will be undergoing much needed updating this summer that will result in some important 21st century upgrades. As a result, our summer school program will be held at the Integrated Learning Program at 36th and Spaulding, from 12 to 3 pm. LaDeidre Jackson is the summer school principal.

As summer begins and hard-working staff and students take much needed breaks, we wish for all to have a safe and healthy summer. We will see you in August!

Ms. Jodi Pesek

A Message from the Program Director
Blackburn held its first Prom on Friday, April 17th. The gym was transformed into the city of light with the theme of “Midnight in Paris.” The prom was expertly DJ’d by our security guard, Dishon Watson; the food was delicious; and knew that even a dollar would help make someone else who is grieving have a glimpse of hope. Our staff and students raised more than $1500—the most of any OPS school—for the third straight year. Ted E. Bear Hollow’s goal is to empower the community to be more responsive and supportive of the needs of grieving families. Experienced grief professionals educate community agencies on children’s grief and at times consult with organizations following a death in order to provide excellent grief support.

Money raised by staff and students for the Grief drive

The Grief Drive
by Makayla McAuliffe

Since 2001 Ted E.Bear Hollow has been a place where grieving children, teens, and adults can find hope. Research indicates that unresolved grief causes a lot of emotional distress such as poor school performance and emotional and behavioral issues. Healthy coping skills lead to long-term success for the children, family, and the community. This year at Blackburn our very amazing students and peers have generously donated to the Grief Drive fundraiser because we all have lost loved ones and I think everyone here realized and knew that even a dollar would help make someone else who is grieving have a glimpse of hope. Our staff and students raised more than $1500—the most of any OPS school—for the third straight year. Ted E. Bear Hollow’s goal is to empower the community to be more responsive and supportive of the needs of grieving families. Experienced grief professionals educate community agencies on children’s grief and at times consult with organizations following a death in order to provide excellent grief support.

Update: The Students have Spoken!!
by Hilary George

The staff members at Blackburn wanted to know what our students wished to learn about, research, and discuss in school. After voting from a list of topics developed by the students, the top pick was school lunch programs!!! From March 16 -23, every teacher conducted lessons during their 4th period with this topic in mind. Lessons were widely varied and quite interesting! Topics included the history of the school lunch program, nutrition, “what’s in your food?” and the logistics involved with getting food from its original source to school cafeterias. On May 21, students were treated to their lunch of choice—pizza, of course! This project stemmed from results of the Student Engagement Survey taken by our students. Two of the lowest scoring categories were students seeing relevance in content and student/teacher relationships. Minnesota Humanities supported this as an Adaptive Action Research Project.

Principal Student Advisory Council: Prom

Blackburn held its first Prom on Friday, April 17th. The gym was transformed into the city of light with the theme of “Midnight in Paris.” The prom was expertly DJ’d by our security guard, Dishon Watson; the food was delicious; the evening culminated with the crowning of a Queen and King, Prince and Princess and Duke.
**Blacksmithing**

On May 12, students shared their creations from the blacksmith component of their mixed media class, taught by artist and teacher extraordinare Hilary George. Students go to Blacksmith Omaha twice a week and create beautiful objets d’arte under the direction of Elmo and Kathy Diaz. This day was very special because students and staff (and especially Kathy Diaz!) created an original stained glass lion for Blackburn, which was revealed on this day. Staff and students also created an arched hanger for the piece at Elmo’s forge. Beautiful!!

**Stay in the Game**

by LaDeidre Jackson

Stay in the Game is a school-wide behavior incentive program where students are recognized for their skill attainment. There was a BIG celebration on May 20 at the North Omaha Learning Community Center. These students stayed in the game by being focused, being respectful, and being on time. They represented the top tier of students who earned the most signatures during the process. In total, 25 students participated! Congrats to these students, who also participated in at least 2 Stay in the Game celebrations!

**Artist-in-Residence**

by Hilary George

On May 18, we celebrated the installation of two murals created under the direction of artist in residence, Kim Darling (Kim Reid Kuhn). Because of a Nebraska Arts Council grant the students were able to plan and carry out two large-scale canvas paintings to be hung in the Blackburn Alternative commons area. Kim encouraged the students to explore their personal iconography and the art of mark making. By weaving together the images and ideas generated by the students, we were able to create two conceptual masterpieces that will beautify our school and inspire students for many years to come.
**Graduation**

On May 27, Blackburn celebrated its largest graduating class in recent memory - 46 students! The event was held in the OPS TAC Auditorium. Sharif Liwaru of the OPS Equity and Diversity Office delivered a beautiful commencement message to our graduating seniors; four students gave heartfelt speeches as well. Tatyana Reed, Markia Bass, Simone Lewis and Chantel Parker shared their insights on becoming high school graduates. We will miss this entire group of graduates.

![Blackburn Class of 2015](image)

![Brittney King sang the National Anthem at Blackburn Graduation](image)

**Service Learning**

![Adams Park Community Center senior citizens celebrate Spring Fling at Blackburn](image)

**Food For Thought**

Our Culinary program just completed its fifth year of service to Adams Community Center, where students prepare and serve a weekly meal to our senior citizen friends under the direction of Kamina Lemons and Beverly Middleton. This wonderful project is done in partnership with Adams Community Center, UNO Gerontology, and UNO’s Service Learning Academy. Twice a year we host our senior citizen friends at a gathering at Blackburn, and on April 30 we held our Spring Fling. We had an amazing turnout for the delicious pasta meal. Guest chef Joe Shimerdla shared his technique for the perfect Chicken Alfredo—we appreciate it!!
For the fourth year in a row we partnered with Dr. Mitzi Ritzman and her UNO Speech and Language majors. This spring the focus was on “getting the word out” by producing a student created yearbook. Teachers Jennifer Noelle and Amellia Hansen agreed to take on this behemoth of a project; the results were well worth it!!

Big Garden
By Nancy Rampey

Mother’s day (the second Sunday of May) marks the end of the killing frosts for Nebraska, and a new planting season. The Horticulture Classes planted the following from seed: tomatoes, eggplant, peppers and various herbs. The plants were picked-up by Big Garden on May 8th. Blackburn’s Horticulture class began the process of planting tomatoes, peppers, eggplants and herbs for Big Garden during the middle of March. This is the fifth year that the Horticulture class has grown the plants for Big Garden, an organization within the United Methodist Church. The plants are to be utilized by Big Garden’s 110 community gardens distributed throughout Omaha. The Horticulture classes can brag that the plants are all organic and most of the plants are heirlooms. Heirloom seeds can be saved and the seed replanted the next year. It has been a productive year full of surprises and joy. The students have worked hard to develop a quality product. As a teacher I think the greatest surprise for the students was, as each day passed, they were in awe as the plants grew to the final transplant stage, the garden.

Get the Word Out

For the fourth year in a row we partnered with Dr. Mitzi Ritzman and her UNO Speech and Language majors. This spring the focus was on “getting the word out” by producing a student created yearbook. Teachers Jennifer Noelle and Amellia Hansen agreed to take on this behemoth of a project; the results were well worth it!!

Forum Theater

One of our livelier service learning opportunities this spring allowed 14 students to participate in an Introduction to Theater class with Dr. Douglas Paterson and a group of Thompson scholars from UNO. Students created scenes that represented oppression; audience members later voted on a singular scene they wanted to see replayed, with an opportunity to “flip the script.” We had the perfect built-in opportunity for this to happen with the Spring Fling, and our senior citizen friends did not let us down! They were completely willing to be game changers! What a tremendous learning opportunity for our students!

By Nancy Rampey

For the fourth year in a row we partnered with Dr. Mitzi Ritzman and her UNO Speech and Language majors. This spring the focus was on “getting the word out” by producing a student created yearbook. Teachers Jennifer Noelle and Amellia Hansen agreed to take on this behemoth of a project; the results were well worth it!!
Asthma, Asthma, Asthma!

by Timora Kroeger,
Blackburn School Nurse

One of the most common childhood diseases is asthma. Asthma is a lung disease caused by an increased reaction of your airway to certain stimuli, and it may become life threatening. Asthma is a lifelong disease with symptoms that may come and go, and is often related to allergies. However, there are some exercises that induce asthma attacks. For exercise induced asthma the student is supposed to premedicate themselves with their inhaler prior to exercise.

During an asthma attack the airway becomes constricted and mucous production increases. Some of the signs that a person may be having an asthma attack are coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing or talking. They may have chest pain or feel a tightness or heaviness in their chest. You may notice rapid breathing, a feeling of anxiousness and/or a blue or grey color of their nailbeds or lips.

Asthma is a very treatable disease. Asthma attacks may vary in severity. Asthma is almost always treated by a nebulizer (breathing machine), or inhaler and at times require additional measures. Some students with asthma may also take a daily oral pill. A person’s asthma may be triggered by different environmental changes and seasons. It is very important for a person with asthma always to have their inhaler with them and to be aware of the triggers that set off their asthma. During an asthma emergency the person is to try the inhaler first. If the attack worsens the person should seek medical attention immediately.

If the asthma attack happens within the OPS school system, the person’s asthma action plan is followed. If there is no asthma action plan or student’s own asthma medication to use, the district follows Rule 59 protocol, which is administration of the epi-pen, calling of 911 and notifying the parent or guardian and administering albuterol by a nebulizer. The administration of epinephrine is the least invasive and lifesaving method out there, the epi-nephrine opens everything up and the effects of it only last for 15-20 minutes. That is why the student is sent out by ambulance in case they suffer another attack, they will be under medical treatment.

It is very important for a person with asthma to have regular medical follow ups to help with the management of their disease. You need to remember that just because you haven’t had a recent asthma attack or used your inhaler often doesn’t mean that it can’t or won’t happen again. You also need to remember just because you don’t have a diagnosis of asthma at present doesn’t mean you can’t develop the disease. Re-asthma is very manageable with proper medical follow up.

Sad Goodbyes

by Deb Nichols

On Thursday April 21st three of Blackburn’s outstanding staff members were recognized during a retirement celebration. Mrs. Nancy Rampey, Ms. Sam Eisenman and Mrs. Barbara Jennings are long time employees of Blackburn and the Omaha Public Schools District.

Sam Eisenman has had a long and prosperous career at Blackburn as a special education teacher, helping numerous children navigate and overcome educational difficulties. A winner of the Alice Buffett Outstanding Teacher Award, Ms. Eisenman was ever available to assist where needed and to co-teach core curricular areas. We suspect that she will be honing her ‘Mah Jongg skills in retirement and enjoying her grandparenting duties!

Barbara Jennings is a native of Omaha and a proud mother of seven children. Mrs. Jennings worked for the University of Nebraska at Lincoln for 25 years before joining Omaha Public Schools as a paraprofessional. Mrs. Jennings has worked at Blackburn for the last 15 years. We will miss her presence!

Nancy Rampey has had a busy 13 years with us in Alternative Education. During her stint at Blackburn, Mrs. Rampey secured a grant that built the greenhouse. Under Mrs. Rampey’s guidance the Blackburn greenhouse provides vegetables for 110 of Big Garden’s community gardens. Mrs. Rampey’s accomplishments in education have been recognized with her winning the Alice Buffett Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award in the 2012-2013 school year. She was honored with the Big Garden Appreciation Award for 2015 and The Phil and Ruth Sokolof Outstanding Jewish Teacher Award for school year 2014-2015. We wish these three distinguished retirees of Blackburn health and happiness in their future endeavors. We will miss you!
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