

Excellence

Keystone Oaks School District
2017-2018 Annual Report



Excellence in MUSIC

Strings program added to elementary music offerings for the 2018-2019 school year

A MESSAGE FROM DR. STROPKAJ

Building a Foundation of Excellence. That has been the motto of the Keystone Oaks School District since we completed our most recent strategic plan in 2014, less than two years after I was named the new superintendent for Keystone Oaks School District. It is a motto that I have incorporated into every aspect of the District - from curriculum, instruction and programs, to the budgeting process, to maintaining and improving our facilities, enhancing safety and security, and more - and is a motto that I am proud to live every day.

What does it mean to “Build a Foundation of Excellence?” To me, it means providing high-quality, rigorous instruction that encourages every student to perform at their highest level. It means offering courses and programs that give our students the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to be successful in the 21st century workforce. It means breaking out of the mold of “how things have always been done” and encouraging everyone to think of new and innovative ways to make the school day exciting and relevant for every student.

We’ve made a lot of positive changes over the past six years. But, as someone who has worked in education for 31 years, I’ve learned that the only thing consistent about education is that it is constantly changing. This fall, we will begin the process of developing a new strategic design. The District will be gathering input from a variety of stakeholders through surveys and meetings to develop the next set of goals for the Keystone Oaks School District. What will “Building a Foundation of Excellence” look like in five years? In ten years?

Please check the District’s communication channels regularly for information on how you can participate in the process. The Keystone Oaks School District is fortunate to have three wonderful and engaged communities and I am confident that by working together we will create a plan that meets the needs of each and every student and allows them to build a strong foundation for success.

This year’s Annual Report is full of examples of how the Keystone Oaks School District, its students, teachers, and all employees are “Building a Foundation of Excellence” every day. I hope that you’ll be as #koproud of this District as I am when you read through the pages.

Sincerely,



William P. Stropkaj, Ed.D.
Superintendent, Keystone Oaks School District



MISSION

The Keystone Oaks School District's mission is to provide a safe learning environment that prepares critical thinkers to become responsible and productive members of society.

VISION

The Keystone Oaks School District will remain current and competitive in every aspect of its operations while providing the best education for the children of Castle Shannon Borough, Dormont Borough, and Green Tree Borough. To do this, we will measure our success by assuring that:

- Students demonstrate continuous growth so as to prepare for future challenges;
- Students link learning to real-world applications through a dynamic, comprehensive curriculum that provides creative opportunities;
- Students are provided opportunities for collaboration while engaged in the K-12 curriculum.

VALUES

The beliefs/shared values strategically identify the heart and soul of the District and serve as the foundation behind all operations. The current Beliefs/Shared Values of the Keystone Oaks School District are:

- Learning in a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment is the focus of the educational process, and active engagement and collaboration are critical to the process for promoting lifelong learning in order to live successfully in a diverse society.
- Each student contributes unique abilities and talents which should be challenged in the academics, arts, athletics, and extracurricular activities.
- Individuals are responsible and accountable for their own choices, decisions, and actions, which create the foundation of good citizenship.
- Students, staff, parents, School Board members, and community members share the responsibility for the quality of education.
- Success is strongly influenced by personal motivations and high expectations.
- Diversity in a student population encourages an understanding of cultural differences, values and of the diverse means that learners use to engage with knowledge.
- Recognition and appreciation encourage motivation and dedication.
- Integrity, trust, and open communication are vital for an excellent learning community.
- Collaboration, effective leadership, high expectations, and the responsible use of resources and partnerships with businesses and the community result in excellence.
- Teaching is both an "art" and a "science" that promotes intellectual engagement among members of the learning community to ensure continuous learning.
- The experiences encountered during the learning process are enhanced when the physical plant is well-maintained.



HATS OFF TO THE CLASS OF 2018

On June 7, Keystone Oaks School District awarded diplomas to 137 graduates of the Class of 2018. Congratulations to Valedictorian David Daniel Domalik, Salutatorian Riley Noelle Knavish and all of this year's graduates on their tremendous accomplishments.

Among this year's graduating class:

74 Percent of students will be attending a two or four-year college or university

31 Students graduated with a grade point average of 3.75 and above

13 Students will be continuing their athletic careers at the collegiate level

3 Students will be serving their country as members of the United States Military

2 Students, Benjamin & Joseph Hommrich, were recognized as finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program

1 Student, Charles Boone, completed the Community College of Beaver County's Aviation Academy while also completing the requirements to graduate from Keystone Oaks

“I know that the most joy in my life has come to me from my violin.”

- Albert Einstein

ELEMENTARY MUSIC PROGRAM GROWS WITH ADDITION OF STRINGS INSTRUMENTS

Inspired by a cousin and friend who play the violin, fourth grader Anna Bittner can't wait to start taking viola lessons at Fred L. Aiken Elementary School in the fall.

“I've been to their school concerts and I love the sounds of the instruments,” she said. “I think it would be fun to start an all-girls orchestra someday.”

New for the 2018-2019 school year, Keystone Oaks School District will now give students like Anna the opportunity to take bass, cello, viola, and violin lessons beginning in third grade. The District has long offered students the opportunity to play traditional band instruments - flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, trombone, and percussion - beginning in fourth grade.

The strings program is the most recent enhancement to the District's Music Department, which, along with the Art Department, has been reviewing its curriculum and program offerings with the Arts Education Collaborative since 2015.

“The goal of the strings program is to give students more opportunities to reap the benefits of playing an instrument,” said Dr. Shannon Varley, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment & Staff Development. “And, just as the elementary STEAM and Kindergarten Art Integration programs are having a positive impact on student learning, we are confident that this new music program will do the same - it's all about providing students with a well-rounded education.”

Mr. Thomas Duxbury, who joined the music department part-time at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, has played the viola for 19 years. His passion for the instrument was evident as he exposed students to a variety of strings instruments throughout the year.



Anna Bittner tries the viola during the “Instrument Petting Zoo” at this year’s elementary Studio & Stage event.

Aiken Elementary third grader Natalia Rivera's interest in strings instruments was piqued during Mr. Duxbury's music class this year, where she also was able to try the ukulele.

“I really enjoyed strumming the ukulele and learning how to play songs on the instrument,” said Natalia, who wants to take viola lessons next year and is also interested in playing the trombone.

Students in third and fourth grades will be able to sign up and try out for the strings program during the first few weeks of school. Fourth and fifth grade students will be able to do the same for the band program. Students will have strings or band lessons once during the six-day rotation schedule.

The District will provide the cello and bass, which will remain at the school building. All other instruments will be rented by families and will travel between home and school with the student.

“With the support of the community, this program will be a tremendous asset for the students and for the District and we look forward to it being offered in the middle and high schools in the years to come,” Dr. Varley said.



INTRO TO STRINGS: STUDENTS LEARN TO PLAY UKULELES AS A STARTING POINT FOR ELEMENTARY STRINGS PROGRAM

The addition of ukuleles to their library of instruments allowed the Keystone Oaks Elementary Music Department to set a foundation for the launch of the elementary strings program.

Thanks to a generous donation from the Sebastian family in Green Tree, 31 ukuleles were purchased to start the program. The District purchased an additional 50 instruments so that they could be used in all three elementary schools.

Why ukuleles? Elementary music teacher Rob Naser wanted to introduce students to ukuleles because, not only are they fun to play, but their affordability and portability make it an ideal instrument to help foster music literacy while also introducing students to string instruments.

This year, students learned how to properly hold the instrument as well as how to play all of the notes and chords. Students will continue to learn to play the ukulele as part of their elementary music classes.



GETTING CREATIVE IN KINDERGARTEN NEW PROGRAM CONNECTS ART WITH CURRICULUM

This year, Keystone Oaks launched a new Art Integration Program that incorporated art into the kindergarten curriculum to help improve students' academic skills, decrease stress levels, and increase student motivation.

Led by elementary art teacher Rebecca Hersan, the program was offered in addition to the students' regular art class, giving them more opportunities to build their problem solving, critical thinking, and social skills. The program tied into literature, too, as students were read a book prior to beginning the art project.

"I think that this is a great program for kindergarten students because it allows them to be creative while making connections to what they are learning in class," Mrs. Hersan said.

The program kicked off in August with students listening to the book "The Day Without Crayons," learning about artist Andy Goldsworthy, and then venturing outside to create their own works of art with leaves, sticks, grass, and other craft supplies.

In the spring, as part of their curriculum on community, students created a class mural by drawing their part of the community on large pieces of paper with oil pastels.



EXCELLENCE IN CLASSROOM DESIGN: REMAKING OUR SPACES TO CREATE A MORE EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Gone are the days of classrooms coated in dove white paint and filled with endless rows of bulky metal desks and chairs.

Today, classroom walls are painted sky blue or pale yellow to represent a sense of calmness and tranquility. The opposite wall may be painted neon green or bright orange to inspire creativity.

Students sit at crescent-shaped tables with a dry erase tabletop, allowing them to better collaborate with their peers. They can choose to sit on a wobble chair or stability ball, giving them the chance to move more freely. Bean bag chairs, lap desks, high top tables, and standing desks make today's classrooms more welcoming, comfortable, and flexible learning environments for students and teachers.

Since last summer, Keystone Oaks School District has invested more than \$40,000 in redesigning 17 classrooms in each of the five buildings through an internal Classroom Design Grant program, developed and managed by Dr. Shannon Varley, Keystone Oaks' Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment & Staff Development.

"The need and desire for this program was evident after we unveiled the elementary STEAM classrooms in 2016," Dr. Varley said. "The elementary students loved the bright colors and flexibility of the space, and teachers kept asking if they could do something similar in their classroom."

The grant program requires teachers to solicit feedback from students about colors, furniture, and other design elements. Teachers then develop and submit a proposal and a budget. The proposals are reviewed by an internal committee.

Myrtle Elementary fourth grade teacher Kristie Rosgone was admittedly hesitant to transition to flexible seating, but she applied for and received a grant during the 2016-2017 school



Fourth grade students in Mrs. Rosgone's classroom use over-sized bean bag chairs and laptops to work comfortably.

year and says "the experience has been so positive for everyone."

"My entire room, from the new colors on the walls, to the variety of seating and learning spaces that it has created, is a more exciting and motivating environment," Mrs. Rosgone said. "With students being able to have a little freedom by choosing their learning space and seat, I've noticed improvements in their focus and time on task, which has led to an increase in scores and overall better behavior."

In addition to eight classrooms, the High School and Middle School libraries and the technology education manufacturing lab are also being renovated this summer.



A new edition to Mrs. Seltzer's classroom, wobble stools allow kindergarten students to move around without tipping a chair.



A sketch of what the High School Library will look like once it is complete.

“With students being able to have a little freedom by choosing their learning space and seat, I’ve noticed improvements in their focus and time on task, which has led to an increase in scores and overall better behavior.”

-Kristie Rosgone, 4th grade, Myrtle Elementary



At Aiken Elementary, Mrs. Pfeifer’s first grade students use rocking chairs and lap desks to complete their morning work.

When complete, the Middle School Library will be updated with new carpeting, vibrant paint colors, and new furniture. The circulation desk has also been refurbished and the middle section of the library has been opened up.

The High School Library will be completely transformed with a nearly \$180,000 investment in new carpeting, modern furniture, new paint colors, and a redesigned circulation area. Students will have a dedicated “green room” where they can write, film and edit their daily video announcements. French doors will be added, giving students access to the recently renovated outdoor courtyard.

“The library should be the hub of the high school at all hours of the day and this complete redesign will make it a vibrant space where students will want to meet to work on projects,” said Dr. William Stropkaj, Keystone Oaks Superintendent. “This project is a long-time coming and, through responsible fiscal management, we are able to complete this renovation with money that has been set aside for capital improvement projects.”

The manufacturing lab will receive an approximately \$7,000 renovation, giving students a quiet, clean space for design, research, and collaboration. Students will now have access to computer aided design (CAD) capabilities, which will be kept separate from the noisy and dusty manufacturing lab. A storage closet will be opened up and windows installed to connect the research and design lab with the manufacturing lab, allowing the teacher to monitor both spaces.

“Student creativity and collaboration will improve tremendously,” said High School technology education teacher Craig Wetzal. “Having an all-in-one space for students to complete every aspect of their project will allow them to move more quickly and easily and will go a long way towards minimizing distractions and interruptions. I am really looking forward to both the aesthetics of the room and to the way it will function on a daily basis,” he added.



In Mrs. Puffer’s third grade classroom at Dormont Elementary, students use balance balls to work at computers, allowing them to move and adjust how they sit and work.



Mr. Kirchner’s high school classroom is painted with bright colors and new seating allows students to work collaboratively.

Highlighting Excellence

Keystone Oaks students excelled in their academic, artistic and athletic endeavors. Highlights from 2017-2018 include:



Excellence in ROBOTICS

The High School Robotics Team hosted the Western PA Robotics Championships in March, with the winners advancing to the World Robotics Championships. Keystone Oaks' Robotics Team advanced to the semi-final round of the competition.



Excellence in SCIENCE

Two teams of High School students took first and second place during the regional PA Junior Academy of Science (PJAS) Competition at Duquesne University and advanced to the state competition. Team member Oliver Casadei also won a special award for excellence in civil and environmental engineering.



Excellence in SCHOOL PRIDE

8th grade student Emma Mower began a project to make the Middle School a more encouraging - and colorful - place. She has been painting inspirational quotes on the walls of the mens' and womens' restrooms throughout the building.

Excellence in ACADEMICS

Seniors Benjamin Hommrich and Joseph Hommrich were among 15,000 high school students named 2018 National Merit Scholarship Program Finalists. A third senior, Riley Knavish, was one of 34,000 students named a commended student by the prestigious program.



Excellence in TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Senior Josh Wilson was inducted into the Parkway West Career & Technical School's Chapter of the National Technical Honor Society. He is a student in the Information Technology Essentials program.



Excellence in VIDEO PRODUCTION

Alexander Grattan's short film about lead pipes contaminating Pittsburgh's water supply won first place in the One Earth Young Filmmakers Contest. His film was chosen from more than 100 entries. He received a \$350 scholarship and Pittsburgh United's Our Water Campaign received a \$350 matching donation.



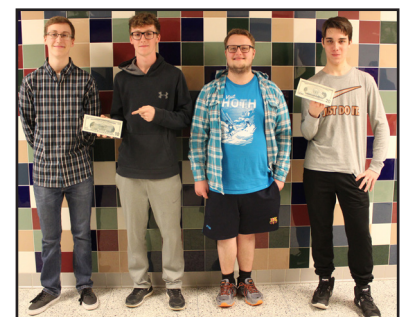
Excellence in EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Four teams of students advanced to the state level Odyssey of the Mind competition. Two teams from Dormont Elementary and one team each from Keystone Oaks Middle School and Keystone Oaks High School competed at Pocono Mountain East High School in early April.



Excellence in BUSINESS

Sophomore Benjamin Lubina took 1st place in the "Coding and Programming" event at the FBLA State Competition and earned a spot to compete at the National Conference. Ben was one of 10 Keystone Oaks students to compete against 6,500 of their peers from across Pennsylvania.



Excellence in ECONOMICS

Four high school students took first place out of 1,841 teams in the Spring 2018 PA Stock Market Game. Starting with \$100,000, students spent nine weeks investing and trading in the stock market. At the end, they made more than \$23,000, outperforming the S&P 500 by 26.83 percent!

Excellence in STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS



The Food Service Department received the **Crystal Apple Award** from the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and Allies for Children for their commitment to childhood nutrition and innovative programs. The Department also received a \$5,000 grant from the PA Department of Education to implement an alternative breakfast program at Mrytle Elementary.

Middle School ELA teacher Sarah Hardner and Technology Integration Specialist Carol Persin each received \$500 grants through the **McDonalds Making Activities Count** grant program. The grants were used to purchase an iPad and a BreakoutEDU kit.

Elementary STEAM teachers Jennifer Martin and Aaron Colf highlighted the success of the District's STEAM program during a three-minute **Ignite Talk** as part of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit's 2017 STEAM Showcase.

High School Computer Science Teacher Kevin Gallagher participated in Code.org's **Computer Science Education Week** kick-off event in San Francisco, California, networking with educators and leaders from the top technology companies.

Elementary STEAM teacher Jennie Martin was selected to participate on a **female makers panel**, sponsored by the Pittsburgh Children's Museum, where she shared experiences and KO's elementary STEAM success story with others who work with k-12 students.

Aiken Elementary Principal Dave Thomas was accepted into the Allegheny Intermediate Unit's **School Re-Tool Program**, a professional development fellowship that helps school leaders redesign their school culture through small experiments called "hacks."

Technology Integration Specialist Carol Persin delivered a presentation on YouTube at two regional and state technology conferences. She also delivered a presentation on digital signage at the ISTE Conference. Mrs. Persin was also accepted as a **Google Education Certified Trainer** and as a Keystone Technology Innovator through the Pennsylvania Association for Educational Communications and Technology.

Aiken & Dormont Elementary Schools each received a \$1,000 grant through the **Let's Move Pittsburgh Champion Schools Grant Program**. The grants will be used to support the schools' gardens and an outdoor classroom at Dormont Elementary.

Keystone Oaks received an \$8,000 grant from the **Highmark Foundation** to implement a bullying prevention program at the Middle School.

Excellence in ATHLETICS



Junior Alicia Lehman represented Keystone Oaks at the PIAA State Swimming Championships, where she competed in the 100 yard backstroke event.

Varsity Boys 4x100 relay team members CJ Morrow, Tyler Hrivnak, Ryan Musulin, and Michael Daure competed at the PIAA State Track & Field Championships after taking 2nd place at the WPIAL Championships and setting a new school record of 44.12 seconds.

Three members of the Varsity Swimming & Diving Team competed in the WPIAL Championships. Junior Alicia Lehman competed in the 100 and 200 Free. Sophomore Nathan Cleary competed in the 100 backstroke, 200 free, and 100 fly. Freshman Alex Oleksak competed in the WPIAL Diving Championships.

The Varsity Girls Basketball Team earned the title of 4A Section Champs for the second consecutive season. Junior Gillian Piccolino scored her 1,000th career point when she hit a 3-pointer with 6:39 left in the first quarter during the team's February 5 game against Belle Vernon.

The Varsity Boys Soccer Team advanced to the WPIAL Playoffs for the first time since 2010. The boys finished the season with a record of 12-5-1 and were second place in the section.

After finishing the season with a 6-4 record in their section, the Varsity Boys Volleyball Team advanced to the WPIAL Playoffs.

Senior Josh Snell received KDKA-TV's Extra Effort Award, which recognizes students who excel in the classroom, in athletics and in the community. Josh played basketball, volleyball, golf, and tennis, had a GPA of 4.215, and was an active volunteer in the community.

Thirteen Keystone Oaks seniors committed to playing sports at the collegiate level:

- Muataz Alquass Ishaq - Soccer, Thiel College
- Keagan Brownlee - Basketball, Carlow University
- Alexis Butler - Softball, Chatham University
- Tyler Caragein - Football, Washington & Jefferson College
- Ryan Collins - Basketball, Susquehanna University
- Olivia Dewick - Softball, Washington & Jefferson College
- Isabella Harris - Volleyball, Carlow University
- Elania Lancia - Soccer, University of Maine at Machias
- Mariah Lomire - Volleyball, Carlow University
- Austin Oleksak - Soccer, St. Vincent College
- Nate Taylor - Soccer, Westminster College
- Joe Tortorella - Football, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
- Jerry Volpe - Football, John Carrol University

Excellence in COMMUNITY SERVICE

Keystone Oaks students and staff gave their time, treasure and talents to a number of area organizations. Notable fundraisers and activities include:

- Fred L. Aiken Elementary School's 8th annual head-shaving event raised more than \$13,000 for the St. Baldrick's Foundation, which supports childhood cancer research. More than 200 students, staff and community members have shaved their heads and raised more than \$90,000 since 2010.

- Through various Jump Rope for Heart and Hoops for Heart events, students in kindergarten through sixth grade raised more than \$9,600 for the American Heart Association.

- Students and staff raised more than \$5,000 for the Houston Independent School District Education Foundation to support the victims of Hurricane Harvey. Elementary students participated in a week-long Penny Wars and all students took part in a Hats for Harvey fundraiser.

- The High School's Health Career Club and Student Senate hosted a number of "Pink Out" events, raising more than \$750 for St. Clair Hospital's Breast Care Center.



- High School students, staff members, families and 15 different clubs and teams purchased gifts for 51 local children in need as part of the annual Teddy Bear Holiday Party, held in partnership with the Salvation Army.

- High School Art Club members Haley Bopp, Tori Campbell, Anna Swindle, and Linda Washburn, club sponsor Mrs. Heather Hruby, and technology education teacher Mr. Craig Wetzel created life-size Peantus characters that were on display in Dormont Borough during the holiday season.

- The High School Math Club organized a hot cocoa stand fundraiser to benefit Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, raising more than \$1,390 to fund research for childhood cancer.

- The Middle & High School Best Friends Clubs raised more than \$530 for the PA Tourette Syndrome Alliance through the sale of blue ribbons, a spare change collection and a "Blue Out" Day. The funds raised helped provide scholarships for families to attend the annual camp. Keystone Oaks also received an Accommodating School Award from the PA Tourette Syndrome Alliance.



INVESTMENTS IN THERAPISTS, EQUIPMENT & TRAINING ENHANCE SAFETY AND SECURITY AT KEYSTONE OAKS

For more than one decade, Keystone Oaks has been a leader in ensuring that students have access to mental health therapists and a school safety coordinator. The District continues to dedicate financial resources to identifying, understanding and meeting students' social and emotional needs and to addressing safety and security concerns throughout the District.

For John Bruner, being a school police officer is about more than patrolling the hallways and ensuring that exterior doors are locked.

“Whether you play basketball with a middle school gym class for a few minutes or eat peanut butter and jelly for lunch with kindergarteners, it’s all about building that rapport with students,” Officer Bruner said. “Those positive interactions are what makes it more likely that students will report suspicious activity and that is what makes the school police officer position so important for school districts.”

During his presentation as part of the District’s Community & School Safety Forum in May, Officer Bruner listed “Mental Health & Rapport Building” as the number one factor for a successful school safety program.

Keystone Oaks has provided school-based mental health services since the early 2000s and, in 2016, engaged with two full-time mental health therapist consultants to work directly with students during the school day through referrals to the Student Assistance Program.

“We saw a growing need for mental health services across our student population,” said Suzanne Lochie, Supervisor of Pupil Services. “Providing students with access to mental health therapists is key to improving student well-being and supports the school’s overall goal, which is for students to learn.”

Consulting services by mental health therapists is one component of Keystone Oaks School District’s school counseling program. In 2017, Keystone Oaks hired one full-time school counselor for Myrtle Avenue Elementary School and increased the counseling support at Fred L. Aiken Elementary School and Keystone Oaks Middle School.



With those additional positions, Keystone Oaks now provides one school counselor for approximately every 300 students. This is significantly lower than Pennsylvania’s average of 412 students for every one counselor, according to the latest information available from the U.S. Department of Education.

“School counselors are a critical component of school safety because they interact with every student and are the first point of contact for “red flags” such as social and emotional issues or school attendance,” Mrs. Lochie said. “We are fortunate that the Board of School Directors values school counselors and has invested resources that have allowed us to enhance the services we provide students.”

In addition to supporting students’ social and emotional needs, another critical component of school safety is building security.

Since the 2016-2017 school year, Keystone Oaks has more than \$26,000 to make its buildings more secure by:

- Implementing the Raptor Visitor Management System
- Providing all employees with identification cards to scan into the buildings
- Increasing the number of security

cameras in and around the buildings

- Fine-tuning procedures for visitors and identifying secure spaces where meetings can be held
- Purchasing additional portable radios for staff and sharing the District’s portable radio frequency with local police, fire and EMS
- Adopting a “Locked & Propped” policy that requires teachers to keep their door either locked and propped open or locked and closed during the school day.

“Our newest building was built in 1996, at a time before security elements like captured vestibules were commonplace,” Officer Bruner said. “But we are continually looking at ways to strengthen the security of both the physical and human elements of our buildings.”

A third component of creating a safe school is providing training opportunities and working in conjunction with local police and fire departments and emergency medical services.

Just as students and staff take part in a monthly fire drill, Keystone Oaks dedicated resources during the 2017-2018 school year for each building to hold evacuation, lockdown and weather emergency drills. Police and fire departments in Castle Shannon, Dormont, and Green Tree, and the Medical Rescue Team South Authority actively participated in planning and conducting the drills.

This type of training - and other safety planning - will continue in the 2018-2019 school year.

“The safety and security of students is our number one priority,” said Dr. Stropkaj, Superintendent. “We hope that the community will continue to share their ideas as we work together to determine what is the best for the Keystone Oaks School District.”

44

Additional interior and exterior security cameras installed since 2016

35

New portable radios for staff, giving them the ability to communicate directly with local police, fire, and EMS

1:305

Ratio of school counselors to students. Keystone Oaks increased the number of counselors available at the start of the 2017-2018 school year.

15

Training drills held for students and staff in 2017-18, focusing on evacuations, lockdowns, and weather-related emergencies

EXCELLENCE IN ADVANCED PLACEMENT: PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL MATH AND SCIENCE INITIATIVE EXPANDS OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TAKING ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES

AP Physics students riding on a hoverboard to physically experience Newton's Laws of Motion. AP Calculus students drawing graphs on the hallway windows outside of their classroom. AP English students utilizing the TEDTalks library as a starting point for a classroom discussion.

These are all examples of strategies that Keystone Oaks High School teachers learned during their professional development with the National Math & Science Initiative and put to use in their classrooms this year.

"I've only taught AP Physics for two years, so the training sessions really opened my eyes to a whole new library of resources that I could use with my students and different approaches that I could use to teach the class," Michelle McSwigan said.

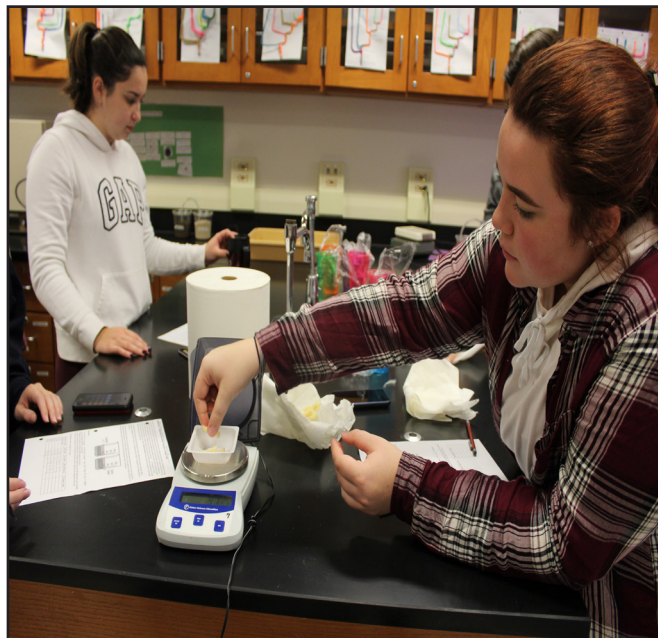
As part of the District's three-year participation in the NMSI program, teachers attend training programs and students participate in study sessions that help prepare them for the exam.

Since June 2017, eight high school teachers have participated in nearly 450 hours of training sponsored by NMSI. Students have received an additional 50 periods of instruction. To date, Keystone Oaks has received about \$55,000 in training and supplies from NMSI.

"In the AP courses that I took this year, I noticed that we learned material in a lot of different ways when compared to previous years," said senior Patricia Jackson. "They've made the content very relevant to what you're going to be tested on, so it helps you stay on track."

More Keystone Oaks High School students are taking advantage of the benefits of enrolling in AP math, science, English and computer science courses. Requests for AP courses increased by 65 percent for the 2018-2019 school year. In addition to earning college credit, NMSI also offers a 0.5 quality point on a student's GPA, a 50% discount on the cost of the exam, a \$100 stipend for passing the exam, and the benefit of not taking a final course exam.

"I think anytime you have the opportunity to raise your expectations, you should take advantage of that," math teacher Kevin Gallagher said. "You're going to be taking college classes in the near future, so you might as well get a head start in high school."



The National Math & Science Initiative Numbers:

448

Hours of training since June 2017 for eight Keystone Oaks High School teachers who teach AP math, science, computer science, and English courses

143

Advanced Placement exams taken, by 75 individual students, during the 2017-2018 AP testing window

65

Percent increase in the number of student requests for Advanced Placement courses for the 2018-2019 school year

50

Additional class periods of instruction for students that attended Saturday Study Sessions, sponsored by NMSI

23

Students enrolled in AP Computer Science courses for the 2018-2019 school year - an increase of more than 400% from the first year the courses were offered

INAUGURAL DIVERSITY EXPRESSION CONTEST “CELEBRATES INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES THAT MAKE US PROUD TO BE PART OF ONE KEYSTONE OAKS COMMUNITY”

Keystone Oaks School District’s inaugural Diversity Expression Contest invited all students in grades k-12 to submit a writing or work of art that depicted their interpretation of the theme *“Celebrating our individual differences that make us proud to be part of one Keystone Oaks Community.”*

More than 75 poems, essays, drawings and posters were submitted as part of this year’s contest. The following students were selected as winners:

Mikayla Staab- Eighth Grade, Keystone Oaks Middle School

Alya Mittal - First Grade, Fred L. Aiken Elementary School

Amina Babajanov - Second Grade, Fred L. Aiken Elementary School

Mary Paulick - Second Grade, Dormont Elementary School

Sophia Paulick - Fourth Grade, Dormont Elementary School



Meghan Anderson - Second Grade, Dormont Elementary School

Ariana Arzuaga - Second Grade, Dormont Elementary School

Rayyan Barakat - Kindergarten, Fred L. Aiken Aiken Elementary School

The students were recognized by the Board of School Directors at their April meeting. Each student received a certificate of recognition and a Barnes & Noble gift card.

The 2018-2019 Diversity Expression Contest will be announced in December and entries will be accepted through March 2019.

30 YEARS. 3,000 DIPLOMAS. PROJECT SUCCEED CELEBRATES THREE DECADES OF GIVING STUDENTS A SECOND CHANCE TO EARN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

At the conclusion of the school year, Project Succeed handed out its 3,000th high school diploma, commemorating 30 years of giving individuals a second chance to earn a high school diploma.

“When we graduated the first four students in 1988, I had no idea that the program would grow to be the success that it is today,” said Joel Vanucci, Executive Director of Project Succeed. “But the flexibility of evening classes, combined with the dedicated teaching staff and the students’ commitment, we’ve been able to help people pursue higher education and gainful employment.”

This year, 105 students between the ages of 17 and 43 participated in Project Succeed, with 100 of those students meeting the requirements to earn a diploma either from Keystone Oaks School District or their home school district.

Nearly 70 students will attend a post-secondary institution, including South Hills Beauty Academy, Community College of



Allegheny County, and Point Park University. Three students have enlisted in the Armed Forces.

Project Succeed is an evening academic program, approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and operated by Keystone Oaks School District. Students must earn 25.5 credits, complete an independent study, and perform 30 hours of community service. All classes are taught by certified teachers and are offered two

evenings per week.

Project Succeed also provides students with career and college counseling support and gives participants the opportunity to hear from guest speakers and attend a college fair. Project Succeed is funded with support from the Grable Foundation, the Laurel Foundation, BNY Mellon, and tuition paid either by the student or their home district.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY: MAINTAINING A FUND BALANCE THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE DISTRICT TODAY - AND IN THE FUTURE

The Keystone Oaks School District, under the leadership of the Board of School Directors, is committed to saving money in a way that both meets financial guidelines and is responsible to current and future taxpayers. School district fund balances - or savings accounts - have been scrutinized recently for containing too high of a balance. Some reports, however, do not show the full breakdown of money that the district has saved for specific (“assigned”) expenses versus money that is “unassigned” or available for unexpected expenses.

Just as a financial advisor recommends how much an individual should save for retirement or how much a homeowner should save for unexpected or planned home repairs, there are similar guidelines for school districts, with industry experts recommending that districts maintain a fund balance that is between 5% and 10% of revenue. Keystone Oaks’ Board of School Directors Policy on Fund Balance states that the board will “strive to maintain a general unassigned fund balance of not less than 5% and not more than 8% of budgeted expenditures for that fiscal year.”

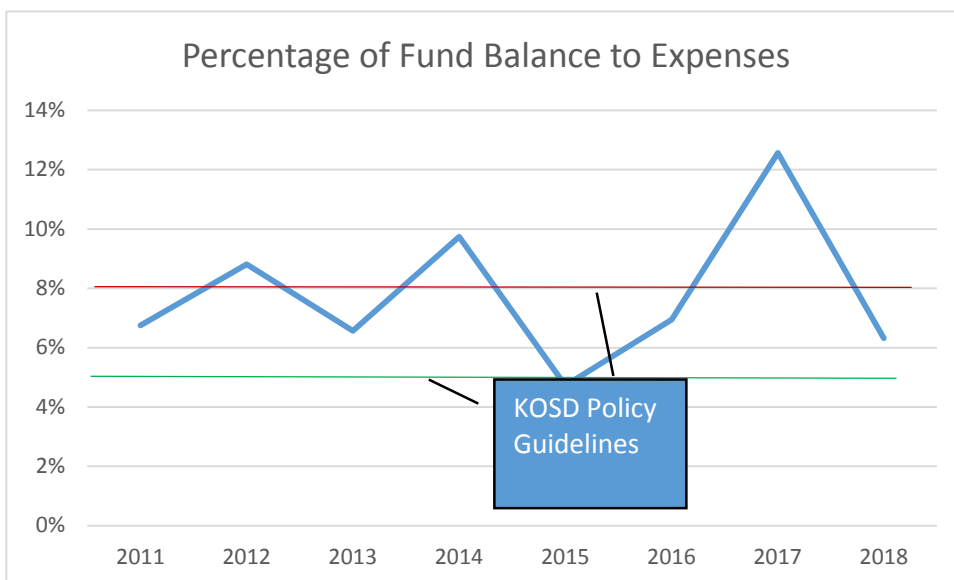
At the conclusion of the 2016-2017 school year, the most recent year that an audit report is available for Keystone Oaks School District, the District had a fund balance of \$7.8 million. Of that \$7.8 million, \$2.6 million was assigned and \$5.2 million was unassigned, representing 13% of the District’s nearly \$40 million budget.

During the 2017-2018 school year, District administrators and the Board of School Directors worked to ensure that the District followed auditors’ recommendations for saving for employee pensions and post-retirement benefits as well as capital improvement projects.

This year, the Board of School Directors looked at the total fund balance of \$7.8 million and approved the following:

- \$2.3 million assigned for compensated employee absences and other post-retirement benefits
- \$1.7 million assigned to the Capital Fund for major improvement projects
- \$926,700 for roofing repairs that were made during the 2017-2018 school year
- \$219,700 to the Risk Management Fund to partially cover the potential liability of a tax appeal

Now, the District has an unassigned fund balance of approximately \$2.65 million, or 6.3% of the \$41.9 million budget for the 2017-2018 school year. This is a healthy unassigned fund balance, both from the perspective of financial experts and the School Board’s policy.



HIGHLIGHTING THE 2018-2019 BUDGET

Keystone Oaks School District’s Board of School Directors approved the District’s 2018-2019 Final Budget on June 19. The Final Budget, with expenditures totaling \$42,929,629, allows Keystone Oaks to implement a new elementary strings program and enhance technology throughout the District.

Keystone Oaks’ spending plan for next school year contains a .2289 mill increase to 19.306 mills. The millage rate, which is within the District’s Act 1 index, will increase property tax bills \$22.89 annually for a home valued at \$100,000. The District has not raised taxes since the 2016-2017 school year and this year’s tax increase is to offset the impact of a revenue shortfall due to an anticipated reduction in property value for a large commercial property in the District.

A median home valued at \$114,000 will pay a property tax bill of approximately \$2,200, before any exemptions. The budget is available on the district’s website: www.kosd.org/FiscalServices.aspx.

The largest increase in the budget is in the District’s contribution to the Public School Employee’s Retirement System, with an estimated \$5.5 million in contributions in the 2018-2019 school year. Additionally, Keystone Oaks is anticipating an increase of \$330,000 in tuition paid to charter schools.

Among the items supported in this year’s budget:

\$176,700

To install additional wireless internet access points throughout the District and to increase the capacity of the wireless system

\$154,778

To purchase new science curriculum for third, fourth and fifth grades

\$115,120

To purchase and install 30 interactive Promethean ActivPanels in elementary classrooms

\$19,080

To continue the collaboration with Duquesne University for professional development with 28 ESL, special education and regular education teachers to implement research-based models of effective teaching, with the goal of closing the achievement gap of the District’s English language learners and special education students

NEW EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION RAISES FUNDS TO RENOVATE COURTYARD THAT WILL PROVIDE AN OUTDOOR SPACE FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS

In line with the Keystone Oaks School District's efforts to redesign classrooms and spaces such as the high school library, the Keystone Oaks Foundation for Educational Excellence (KOFEE) raised more than \$4,000 this spring to begin its first project: the revitalization of an outdoor courtyard.

"We wanted to support a project that could benefit a large portion of the student population and give them a space that they can enjoy and use for a number of different purposes," said Jeff Jesensky, KOFEE President.

This spring, students from the National Honor Society, NHS sponsor Mrs. Deemer, and volunteers from the Foundation spruced up the courtyard by raking leaves, pulling weeds and relocating plants. The tables were assembled by members of the Foundation Board of Directors and Keystone Oaks' Buildings and Grounds department.

Next school year, the courtyard will be available to classroom teachers who would like to take advantage of an outdoor space as well as to students who simply want to get some fresh air while eating lunch or working on a project.

The KOFEE Board of Directors is seeking additional donations to purchase Adirondack chairs, white boards, and other items that will make the space usable as an outdoor classroom and for other social and recreational uses.

"We are thankful to the Foundation for their support of this project and for giving our students a usable outdoor space to get some sunshine and fresh air during their school day," said Keystone Oaks Superintendent Dr. Stropkaj. "This is a tremendous asset and I look forward to seeing teachers and students taking advantage of the space next year."



Officer Bruner and a group of sophomores enjoy a cup of coffee in the courtyard during the last week of the school year.

The outdoor courtyard project was made possible with generous financial support from:

\$1,000 and above

Jeff Jesensky
Tom LaPorte
Mary Grace Musuneggi

\$100 - \$499

Matthew & Amy Cesario
Lauren Dansey
Jay Pisula

\$500 - \$999

Jesensky Dental

Up to \$99

Dan Bruner
Tom Masztak



Before

The courtyard has been part of Keystone Oaks High School since the building was constructed in 1969. However, it was not able to be used by students or staff and only included two small picnic tables. The space is secure as it is enclosed by the library, classrooms and a hallway.



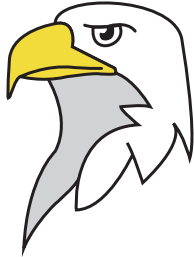
During

In May, a group of students from the National Honor Society, along with their sponsor and volunteers from KOFEE, cleaned up the space by raking leaves, pulling weeds and relocating plants.



After

Five commercial-grade picnic tables were purchased and assembled as a starting point for making the courtyard a usable space. Next school year, teachers will be able to use the space for classes and the space will be available to students for lunch, club meetings, and more! The space will also be accessible through the high school library.



KEYSTONE OAKS FOUNDATION

KOFEE

FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

YOUR DONATION TO THE

KEYSTONE OAKS FOUNDATION

FOR

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

*will enhance the educational experiences of
Keystone Oaks students by supporting
excellence and innovation*

ABOUT KOFEE

In November 2016, a group of Keystone Oaks alumni and community leaders formed a steering committee to determine how the community could support the Keystone Oaks School District through private donations.

That group formed the Keystone Oaks Foundation for Educational Excellence (KOFEE), a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that will strive to enhance the educational experiences of Keystone Oaks students by supporting excellence and innovation.

In addition to supporting the Foundation with a financial donation, you can also become involved by serving on the Board of Directors. The Foundation is seeking board members who:

- Have diverse professional experiences, including: finance, legal, marketing, fundraising and working in or with the non-profit sector
- Have knowledge of the community and professional relationships with the private sector
- Have a passion for the Keystone Oaks School District's mission and vision and a strong belief in the value of public education

If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors, please reach out to:

Jeff Jesensky, President
jjesensky@gmail.com

MAKE A DONATION TODAY!

First Name _____

Last Name _____

Company / Organization _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email Address _____

Affiliation with Keystone Oaks School District:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Current Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Current Employee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Former Employee | <input type="checkbox"/> Alumni (Class of _____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resident | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Owner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Your tax-deductible donation can be made in one of two easy ways:

1. **Online via PayPal.** Visit paypal.me/KOFEE to make a secure donation with your credit or debit card.
2. **Via Check.** Make a check payable to Keystone Oaks Foundation for Educational Excellence and send it via mail with the form above to:
Keystone Oaks School District | 1000 Kelton Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15216

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Be sure to like and follow us on Facebook for updates on initiatives and projects.

Facebook.com/KeystoneOaksFoundationforEducationalExcellence





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Don't Miss Out on KOSD News & Events!

Be sure to visit the updated www.kosd.org and sign up for the District's weekly e-newsletter.

KEYSTONE OAKS LAUNCHES ONLINE REGISTRATION

Visit www.kosd.org/NewStudentRegistration.aspx to get started

Keystone Oaks is now utilizing an online registration system for enrolling students in the District.

This process offers families a more convenient way to enroll their student in school, allowing them to complete the forms electronically and upload all of the required documentation directly into the District's student information system.

To begin the process, families must:

- Call Melanie Streitmatter, Keystone Oaks Registration Secretary, at 412-571-6162 to obtain the Enroll Code. You will need to provide a street address.
- Visit the registration website (kosd.org/NewStudentRegistration.aspx) on a computer, tablet, or mobile device. It is recommended that you DO NOT use the Internet Explorer web browser.
- Fill out the online registration form, enter the Enroll Code and click "Apply to School."
- Check your e-mail for the enrollment confirmation and instructions on how to create a PowerSchool account.

Once your PowerSchool account is created, you will follow the detailed instruction in the e-mail to finish filling out the enrollment forms in PowerSchool. You will be able to upload all of the required documentation directly into PowerSchool. You will need electronic copies of the following documents:

- Birth Certificate (A valid passport, notarized baptismal certificate listing the birth date, notarized statement from parents that includes a birthdate, and prior school record indicating the birth date are also valid in the absence of a birth certificate)
- Dental Examination Form (available for download on the District's website)
- Physical Examination Form (available for download on the District's website)
- Immunization Record (available from your child's doctor)
- Two proofs of residency (acceptable documents listed below)

After you complete the required forms online, you will need to bring hard copies of your child's birth certificate AND two proofs of residency to Pupil Services during normal business hours. Business hours are 8-11 am and 1-3 pm, Monday-Friday.

The District is required to have hard copies of these items on file, even though you will also upload them as part of the registration process.

Proofs of residency include the following:

- A valid Pennsylvania driver's license or Pennsylvania photo identification or vehicle registration card with the address of your current residence within the school district;
- Proof of utilities (current within the last 30 days) in your name at the address of your current residence which include gas, electric, sewage, or phone;



- A deed, current lease, current utility bill, property tax bill, current credit card bill with the name and address of your current residence;
- An occupancy permit for your current residence issued within the past year in your name and address;
- A valid U.S. passport with the name and address of your current residence;
- A current payroll check or government check stub with the name and address of your current residence;
- An IRS tax return within the last year with the name and address of your current residence