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SouthwestFoundation.org

A New Home and Family for Principal Littles-Butler



Principal Littles-Butler (front) poses with Administrators Josh Zoucha, Camille Erickson, Lacy Cannon & Shaun Flandrick.

By Dave Premack, Board Member

Students came back to school this fall anxious to meet their new principal, but Dr. Valerie Littles-Butler was more anxious to meet them! Hired in June, she spent the summer learning the school by wandering empty hallways and classrooms, awaiting the bustle and excitement that only 2,000 teenagers could bring. The first day of school marked the start of a new chapter for Southwest, and she made sure page one began with celebration!

As Southwest's new head-cheerleader, she dressed in purple to welcome students back to the Southwest Family. She has capitalized on that message, creating "We Are Family" tee-shirts, and belting the Sister Sledge's song of the same name at the Homecoming Pep Fest among her new fine arts faculty sisters and brothers. She begins her emails "Greetings Southwest Family."

Whether you asked her in July or November about the students at Southwest, her answer remained the same. "These kids are incredible and must be celebrated," she

says. She stated such at the staff's first day back too, and at Freshman Orientation, also at the Athletic Hall of Fame Inductee Ceremony, Fall Curriculum Night and throughout Homecoming festivities.

You can expect that type of consistency from her. She is extremely transparent and pragmatic in approaching the complexities of running the district's largest school, and she values input from all stakeholders, particularly students. Her go-to phrase is, "I appreciate you." She is the leader Southwest needs and the staff have let her know it. In her first days, she walked into an after-school backyard staff gathering to a standing ovation.

When asked about her decision to leave Saint Paul's Central High School, she told the Southwest Journal, "It's time to continue to grow. I just want to try new things and broaden my skills." She is doing just that, rolling up her sleeves working with limited financial resources to ensure the school operates smoothly and serves all students. She has overseen new cell phone and tardy policies, and brought a renewed focus to keeping kids out of the halls and in class. "If you're in the halls, you're not learning- and this is a place to learn," she said at a recent Leadership Council Meeting.

She brings an extensive resume as she's worked as a principal and assistant principal in St. Paul, an adjunct professor at Concordia University, a classroom teacher in Minneapolis and a basketball coach. She holds a doctoral degree in educational leadership from St. Mary's and obtained her principal licensure and master's degree from the University of Minnesota. She earned her superintendent licensure from Minnesota State University and bachelor's degree from Florida A&M University.

With 33 years of experience, and a smile as big as the school she now leads, you can tell she has found her new home. When speaking to a group of students, parents, staff or community members she always starts with "I'm Valerie Littles-Butler, I'm your new principal and I'm not going anywhere." That is good news for Southwest because you never want to lose your family.

From our Chair



Adam Barrett, '00

In September of 1996, I entered Southwest High School's doors as an "official member" of the community. I am convinced that the ability to navigate its hallways derived from a "ghosts of first-year students' past map" unknowingly inserted in my mind.

"Greeters" mostly consisted of anxious staff members gripping walkie-talkies and older students angling to poke the insecurity pouring from our faces. Truth be told, it was more "Lord of the Flies" than "Perks of Being a Wallflower"; a "we are infinite" feeling may have existed for 1% of the newbies.

"When I graduated in 2000, Southwest didn't even have a choir."

Fast-forward 23 years, to September 2019. First year students were greeted with administration clad in purple, teachers with face paint, a pep rally organized by LINK Crew that embraced individuality within community and helped lay the path for a positive education experience.

On "First Friday", over 60 student organizations host a college-like "meet and greet" as an invitation to unite peers in extra-curriculars. These groups are most often initiated by students and paired with advisors for mentorship and to ensure valuable progress.

When I graduated in 2000, Southwest didn't even have a choir. Our "debate team" consisted of about 4 passionate students but no resources or formal recognition. The theatre program had eager actors and a passionate leader but next to nothing in funding.

Today, student organizations/activities thrive and are funded extensively by the Southwest Foundation.* Paired with equitable-principles demonstrated by school leaders, their existence is responsible for a significant uptick toward cultural inclusivity and universally high academic performance. Simultaneously, opportunities for participation offer students paths to discover their own individual purpose while applying the world's strongest curriculum in the real world.

The progress at Southwest may result from a coalition of many things and people, but a paradigm shift within the institution can clearly be seen following two major occurrences around 2012:

1. The International Baccalaureate (IB) Program being open to all students (opposed to a magnet program) and the introduction of the IB Middle Years Program (MYP) to support students not yet prepared for the formal IB curriculum.
2. The Southwest Foundation's fundraising initiatives and emphasis on collaborating with administration to fund programs deemed integral to student and school-wide success.

"The immediate impact of the district's refusal to increase funds to Southwest, is felt by our most at-risk and underserved students."

Despite repeated pleas to Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) officials, Southwest is at the bottom of per student funding. Most high schools have student programs, adequate counseling resources and college-preparatory activities paid for through the MPS budget. The



Freshman Debate Team members celebrate their first place ribbons at Regionals.

immediate impact of the district's refusal to increase funds to Southwest, is felt by our most at-risk and underserved students. Long-term, it decimates our core while promoting a "survival of the fittest" collective.

"We are doing something right at Southwest, but sustaining it is a challenge."



Theatre students recruit at First Friday.

Through our efforts to invest money in and advocate for: universally high academic expectations, increased experiential learning opportunities and those who require financial assistance, Southwest is able to claim (within MPS):

1. The highest graduation rate.
2. Lowest drop-out rate.
3. Highest number of minority students taking advanced tests.
4. And highest number of student extra-curricular opportunities.

We are doing something right at Southwest, but sustaining it is a challenge.

We are progressing with major achievements for the Southwest community and could provide a replicable model for the entire city of Minneapolis and beyond however, we must secure financial resources to grow this momentum.

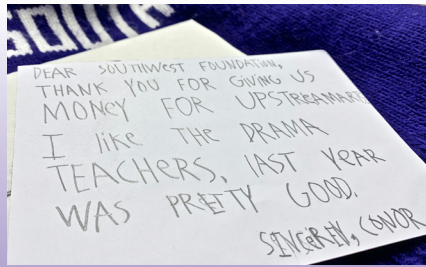
Please prioritize our students as you plan for end of year philanthropy. Invest in what's working: Southwest High School and The Southwest Foundation.

Thank you and Happy Holidays.

*See our 2019-2020 grant awards on page 3 and at southwestfoundation.org. View alumni and school updates on our Facebook page: [@southwestfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/southwestfoundation)

Upstream Arts

Upstream Arts is a unique program utilizing the arts to develop social and communication skills for people with cognitive, developmental, emotional, behavioral and physical disabilities. Through funding from a Southwest Foundation grant, our Special Education students were able to recently visit their program.



Their professional artists teach fundamental skills in a variety of art forms that nurture self-expression, conversation and group participation using mirroring,

imagination and creativity. Teachers note significant student growth and some students who are otherwise non-verbal are found laughing, paying close attention and responding to cues. “The students truly love the class,” note the staff.

This program walks hand-in-hand with Southwest’s Unified program where, during advisory time, students of all abilities gather to share their work and play.

Advanced Academics

Since the introduction of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program to Southwest High School in 1987, our community has embraced the challenging curriculum as a standard for present and future academic achievement.

The Southwest Foundation is critical to Advanced Academics. Our grant provides scholarships for AP and IB exams for students and families who do not qualify for Educational Benefits (National Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility Program). We have provided approximately \$3000.00 towards scholarships yearly with this grant.

Southwest also uses this grant to celebrate the achievements of students completing IB work. The funds are allocated to the Middle Years Program (MYP) Personal Project Showcase, geared to the 9th grade class, for student supplies, awards and a Pizza lunch. IB Diploma candidates and their families are recognized at a banquet which awards them the Southwest Achievement Medallion and the IB Graduation stole. IB Career-related candidates are recognized at a cake and social event that awards them the IB Graduation stole. Achieve-

ment candidates are awarded the SW Medallion during Senior Award night. All medallions, stoles, food/beverages, supplies, mailings and plaques are purchased with the Southwest Foundation grant.

It is important to know that at Southwest the number of students participating in Advanced Academics (IB, AP, CIS, Concurrent Enrollment and PSEO) has been increasing from 90% in Advanced Academics coursework in 2016 to 96% in 2019.

“When expectations are raised for every student in tandem with an encouraging culture, we all succeed.”

We continue to increase the number of Advanced Academics course offerings as well. In 2013 we offered 37 Advanced Academics courses and as of 2019 we offered 66 courses. Open access to all students in Advanced Academics is our goal which has resulted in increases amongst all ethnic groups and special populations since 2013.

Our goal is to expose and inspire the entire community toward a curriculum designed to “teach how to learn”. When expectations are raised for every student in tandem with an encouraging culture, we all succeed.

Foundation 2019-2020 Grant Awards

The Southwest Foundation's Board of Directors believes in collaboration, transparency and guidance from school administration when voting to approve grant requests. Value may be found in every proposal we review however, we are limited by finances generated solely from supporters and often operate every school year with a negative grant-balance to fund what the MPS District will not (although does fund at other schools).

Our 2019-2020 grant allocations were made in June 2019, in consultation with Southwest Administration (Dr. Michael Favor), per our guidelines (listed on website) and with consideration to our financial standing/projections. We commend the tremendous work that everyone invests toward Southwest High School, its students and our community.

Administration Requests:

Parents of Color Engagement: \$1,350
LinkCrew: \$2,700
Project Success: \$4,500
Clubs and Activities: \$4,500.00
Offsite Education Experiences (Transportation): \$3,600
ACT Prep Test: \$9,000

Individual Teacher/Team Requests:

Creative Writing Workshop & Trips: \$840
Advanced Academics; Testing, scholarships, etc: \$7,000
Upstream Arts: \$2,000
AVID Program: \$1,500
Community Ed Summer Theatre: \$1,000
Voice Lessons: \$1,500
ESL Program: \$548
American Mathematics Tests: \$500
Japanese Exchange Program: \$276
Study Buddies: \$500
ASL Silent Night: \$350
Model UN Conferences: \$2,000
Anchor Program Sensory Room: \$650
Robotics Registration/Activities: \$825
After School Tutoring: \$7,500
Passport to College: \$500
English class Guest Artists: \$600
Interactive experiences with actors and writers: \$400
PTSO: \$4,000
612 Mountain Bike Club: \$1,000
Southwest Sailing: \$1,000

SOUTHWEST KUDOS

Elizabeth Bieger, Lukas Johnson, Theodore Lindholm, William Marshall, Rachel Springer and **Noah Willhite** who are this year's National Merit Scholarship semi-finalists!!!!

Reid Wixson, Director of Instrumental Music, for being awarded the Minnesota Music Education Association Educator of the Year.

SW Math Team for earning first place in their recent competition!

315 of our **vocal** and **instrumental music students** for their beautiful concert held at the Basilica of Saint Mary on December 6.

SW Mountain Biking Team who finished the season 2nd in State, led by Senior **Zoe Camp** who went undefeated the past two seasons!

Guitar faculty **Ruth LeMay**, for being recognized at a MN United game for her *Three Strings* Adaptive Guitar Program. The group just played at the National Association for Music Education Convention in Orlando, FL.

English faculty **Megan Marsnik** for completing a book tour to promote her novel "Under Ground" which was serialized in the Star Tribune.

SW Debate Team Freshman **Keshav Singh, Landon Mclean, Merik Shaefer** and **JoJo Lynch-Beaty** for earning first place at Regions.

Juniors **Josephine Spanier & Alexis Nafziger-White** for receiving a free 9-day trip to Japan with the "KAKEHASHI Project - The Bridge for Tomorrow" through the Japanese government.

Athletic Update

Dear Laker Fans, My name is Robert Hollway and I am excited to be Southwest's new Athletic Director! I am grateful and humbled to be joining all the great teachers, coaches and administrators at this pillar of our community. I am also thrilled to be returning to my roots in Minnesota! I am a proud husband, father of twin boys and former head football coach. I want our Laker legion to know that I am committed to building a program that will be a source of pride for our students, parents and Southwest community.

Our goal as coaches and mentors, is to develop the full potential of every Southwest student in the classroom, community and in athletics. Sports teaches us many life lessons including: goal setting, discipline, responsibility and determination. We help student-athletes understand how to measure success by striving to reach their full ability as human beings, in all aspects of their lives.

With that said, I want to acknowledge just a few amazing accomplishments from our Fall Athletes.

Cross Country had two state meet qualifiers: 8th grader **Sam Scott** and senior **Jakob Baatrup-Sabo**. Junior **Alison Bode** won the girls race at the Minneapolis City Conference Championships; **Baatrup-Sabo** won the boys race. Both girls and boys teams earned Minnesota State High School Coaches Associa-

tion academic excellence awards at the Gold Level with average varsity team GPA above 3.75.

Football finished 7-3 earning a Conference Championship. Running back **TK Marshall** has been named a finalist for 2019 Mr. Football. Coach **Josh Zoucha** was recognized by the Minnesota Vikings as Gatorade Coach of the Week & Twin Cities Coach of the Year.

Girls Soccer finished with a 13-5 record advancing all the way to the Section Semi-Final. Senior **Lola Baldwin** was named All-State.

Boys Soccer finished with a 6-1 Conference Record. They finished the season by winning 10 of their last 11 games including 1-0 win over Washburn in the Sylvester Cup. Coach **James Plaisance** was named Region 6 Coach of the Year. Junior **Ramzi Ouro-Akondo** was named All-State.

Girls Swimming & Diving finished 8th overall at the 2019-2020 MSHSL State Championships. Top finishers included: Senior **Peyton D'Emanuele** - 3rd in the 50 Free, 4th in the 100 Butterfly. Senior **Elle Niebuhr** finished 3rd in the 500 Free & 6th in the 200 Free. Our 400 Free Relay took 9th (seniors **Sigrid Schwarzkopf, Olivia Walton, Niebuhr & D'Emanuele**). While our 200 Free Relay took 13th (sophomore **Sierra Hermansen, Walton, Niebuhr & D'Emanuele**). NCAA National Letters of Intent were signed by

D'Emanuele (University of Notre Dame) and **Niebuhr** (University of Minnesota).

Girls Volleyball finished 2nd in the conference with 3 being named All-City: seniors **Hannah Fox, Catherine Hurcomb & junior Isabella Walsh**.

Please join us this Winter at one of our many sporting events! I will look forward to meeting and seeing you all soon. GO LAKERS!



The Southwest Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to work with Southwest High School and its alumni to create an exceptional educational experience for all Southwest students. The Foundation raises money to support academic, athletic and artistic opportunities for students and to provide scholarships to graduating seniors.

There are many opportunities to become involved with and support the Southwest Foundation. To learn more, please visit our website: www.southwestfoundation.org.

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