



The "High School Musical" is performed at BHS.

## Advancing the Arts

THE BARRINGTON AREA COMMUNITY HAS ALWAYS VALUED FINE ARTS EDUCATION IN ITS SCHOOLS. AS THE BARRINGTON 220 FINE ARTS PROGRAM EMBARKS ON ITS BUSY FALL SEASON, QUINTESSENTIAL BARRINGTON TALKED WITH BRIGID TILESTON, DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF FINE, VISUAL, AND PERFORMING ARTS, ABOUT HOW THE PROGRAM ENRICHES LIVES AND WHAT IT WILL REQUIRE IN THE FUTURE TO MATCH THE TALENT LEVEL OF ITS STUDENTS AND MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS.

**QB:** *What do the fine arts programs at the elementary, middle, and high school levels entail and how does each program assist in student success?*

**BT:** Visual and performing arts are an integral part of our curriculum. Arts instruction begins in kindergarten with weekly instruction in general music and visual arts, and continues throughout elementary school. During middle school, instruction in theater, band, orchestra, choir, and visual arts is offered to students, alongside after school arts opportunities. By the end of their time in Barrington 220, approximately 1,200 high school students a year narrow their art focus at BHS, taking classes in areas such as dance, TV production, theater, choir, instrumental music, ceramics, woodworking, digital arts, graphic

design, photography, drawing and painting, and jewelry making. A variety of after-school activities are offered to students at all levels, including musicals, plays, clubs, and instrumental performing groups.

**QB:** *How do you create a connection as students move from one grade level to the next?*

**BT:** Our K-12 arts teachers make every effort to use the arts as a vehicle to ease transitions between levels. For instance, we offer a summer musical opportunity to all students entering grades 6-10. Thus, we are welcoming students entering both middle school and high school to our arts community and easing that transition into the next academic level. Additionally, our middle school jazz musicians perform at the high school, all



Brigid Tileston, Barrington 220 Director of Fine, Visual, and Performing Arts

of our orchestra students grade 4-12 perform together in February, and we have showcased multiple grade levels in art shows over the past two years.

**QB:** *Why is it important to forge that connection between K-12?*

**BT:** Being a part of a unified K-12 district is such a gift. Our arts teachers are inspired when they work on collaborative projects across levels. Last year we showcased the work of students within our AP drawing and painting class, showing their 220 artwork from kindergarten through senior year.



A district-wide music festival held at BHS.

## Two BHS Grads Accepted as Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois



Natalie Dowell (on left) and Lindsay Olesen.

Two recent Barrington High School graduates have been accepted into the Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois program. Natalie Dowell ('17) and Lindsay Olesen ('17) were both nominated by their life skills teacher, Janet Schultz. They were two of 1,843 Illinois students who completed a rigorous application process last fall and are among just 200 accepted into the program. Since 2009, 18 Barrington High School students have been accepted, including Dowell and Olesen.

Dowell will attend The University of Wisconsin-Madison this fall, where she plans to study elementary education. Olesen will attend Illinois State University this fall, where she plans to study special education. The Golden Apple Scholar of Illinois program identifies students with the promise and drive to later teach in high-needs schools. The scholars receive \$23,000 in college scholarships and stipend funds, if they choose to pursue a degree in education at one of 52 participating Illinois universities.



It was amazing to see their artistic talents develop over the years. In all areas of the arts, students develop not just artistic skills, but they also become leaders and critical thinkers in a way that is inspirational to educators. Being an educator in a K-12 district allows staff to guide students through their journeys from early childhood through early adulthood.

**QB:** *Why is the fine arts program such an integral part of this community?*

**BT:** Education in the arts is significant in a child's development, as it encompasses 21st century skills of creative problem-solving, modern communication and improves executive functioning. The wider Barrington community has always placed a value on the arts, partially because there is such a strongly researched connection between arts education and academic success. For example, students partaking in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement. Additionally, brain research has demonstrated that music improves skills in math and reading, and promotes creativity, social development, and positive self-identity. Students participating in after-school arts activities such as school musicals, concerts, marching band, and art club are more likely to find academic success and a strong sense of identity.

**QB:** *What does the fine arts program need to continue to achieve at high levels and meet community needs?*

**BT:** Our students need to benefit from modern technology and resources in order to continue the tradition of excellence within the Barrington arts community. For example, the BHS auditorium dates back to 1948, and lighting and sound equipment need to be modernized to provide a 21st century experience. Middle schools and elementary schools do not have a performance space designed and designated to the arts, despite the fact that there are dozens of performances and productions at these levels each year. All of our students would benefit from dedicated spaces and updated facilities to support large productions and art shows.

**QB:** *How could the recent Blueprint 220 initiative take the program to that next level?*

**BT:** We are excited about the possibility of where Blueprint 220 can take the arts. The hope is that the creative work that is being done by students and staff in the program will be supported by improved facilities which contain safe and modern technologies that match the talent level of our wonderful 220 students! I encourage all community members to attend a performance this school year to understand the value of the arts in our schools. 