

QUINTESSENTIAL PEOPLE®

BY LISA STAMOS



Honoring BRIGID TILESTON

BARRINGTON 220'S DIRECTOR OF FINE, VISUAL,
AND PERFORMING ARTS

Mrs. Tileston's Magnum Opus

EACH YEAR, there are about 20,000 tickets sold for Barrington 220's various arts events that draw public audiences. At any given time, nearly 35% of Barrington High Schools students are enrolled in one or more Fine Arts, Performing Arts, or Visual and Media classes. And since 2015, all 12 (including the Early Learning Center) of Barrington 220 school's art teachers and students are connected through multi-grade level programs to create a closer community around the arts in Barrington schools and help ease students as they transition from elementary to middle, and middle to high school.

This is Brigid Tileston's magnum opus. Since her start as Barrington 220's first art director across the entire district in July 2015, she has revolutionized the arts department with her staff of 50 art teachers and the thousands of supportive parents and boosters. They all worked together to keep the arts alive during the pandemic in 2020 and beyond with remarkable and innovative offerings.

Mrs. Tileston, as her students call her, grew up in Midland, Michigan with parents who worked in education—mom as a teacher and counselor, and dad was in administration. Tileston recalls that her parents' values placed personal growth and furthering the mind and heart above making

top grades. This loving, humanizing message resonates through her today.

Spending time with Tileston, you see her gracious personality and gentle demeanor envelop a passion for the arts, and especially for her teachers and students. You sense she doesn't use the words "no" or "can't" very often, if at all. She is supportive, collaborative, and nurturing—the ideal skill set for managing an arts department that spans 12 district schools with students from pre-K through high school, with a large staff and thousands of students at any given time.

Barrington 220 is the first district where Tileston was able to run the entire show and it was the first time the district had created the district-wide arts director position. Her training began at Marquette University in Milwaukee, where she majored in Theater and English. She taught English and Theater Arts for 10 years at Brookfield Central High School, and Nequa Valley High School in Naperville.

She directed more than 30 theater productions and oversaw an expansive theater program as artistic director at Nequa Theater. Later she served as the English Department head at Fremd and was assistant principal at Hoffman Estates High School. In 2021, Tileston was re-certified as a National Board-Certified Teacher, through its rigorous application process that also required time in the classroom teaching. "Going back into the classroom has offered me optimal time for reflection," she said.

“I love being able to advocate for the arts district-wide,” Tileston said. “I am able to see first and second graders on their journey to becoming high school students who are confident and accomplished in their art technique and unique self-expression.”

Barrington 220 offers these Performing Arts Courses: Choir, Orchestra, Band, Dance, Theater, and BHS-TV. These are the Visual Arts Courses offered: Digital Photography, Photography, Ceramics, Drawing/Painting, Jewelry/Metals, Woodworking, Graphic Design, and Sculpture. The Clair E. Smith Gallery at BHS shows artwork from students across the entire district with rotating displays.

HERE ARE SOME WORDS THAT OTHERS SHARED ABOUT BRIGID TILESTON.

Mary and Bob Beaubien, BARRINGTON 220 PARENTS

We have had the distinct honor of knowing Brigid Tileston since her first few days in Barrington 220. Mary was a part of the interview team of parents and 220 staff members who first met Brigid at a round table interview at the district office. Mary remembers her first impressions of Brigid as an excellent candidate with a positive personality and a goal to make sure the Fine Arts programs within District 220 not only maintained the high level of excellence expected within our community, but also made sure all fine arts participants were featured and showcased throughout the district. Mary came home from this committee interview hopeful and excited about what the future could hold for 220 Fine Arts with an inclusive leader like Brigid at the helm.

Brigid has initiated many new ways to showcase our fine arts students over the last eight years including an increased social media presence to recognize fine arts accomplishments, performances, and exhibits. She added the 220 Summer Fine Arts Intensive Musical for rising 6th grade through sophomores, allowing students from various age groups to work together on the BHS mainstage each summer to build lasting bonds and experience every aspect of a theatrical production. She advocates to showcase our fine arts students with as much focus and fanfare as our community regularly does for its athletic programs and helps create a sense of community and belonging for the fine arts students. Brigid has an open-door policy and is always ready and willing to listen to all ideas related to the arts. Here are some of the ideas presented to Brigid which our now staple events or programs within the BHS Fine Arts Department: Fine Arts Senior Signing Day: an evening celebration highlighting any Fine Arts senior accepted into a Fine or Applied Arts program in college; BHS Fine Arts Alumni Facebook page: a place for BHS fine arts alumni to share and promote post-graduation work in the arts; and BHS Fine Arts Sidewinders: for the first time at BHS, we are celebrating BHS Fine Art students making All-State in the same way All-State student athletes are celebrated when sports teams reach state level competitions. Thanks to Brigid several band, orchestra and choir students reaching All-State Chorus this winter were celebrated in the same way as any All-State athlete with a traditional All-State sidewinder parade down the hallways of BHS!



Brigid Tileston with BHS student and multi-media painter Olivia Sims.

One of the most amazing things that Brigid accomplished over the last eight years was keeping BHS Fine Arts alive during the pandemic. Along with her amazing department heads, she came up with many ways to showcase our artists, despite the pandemic restrictions, with creative programs like outdoor stages, a drive-up theater, online shows, and a community event called Winter Fest celebrating all levels of the Arts within District 220.

We are lucky to have her commitment and focus throughout our district at every level bringing awareness of the Arts to an all new high. District 220 Fine Arts programs have always been some of the best in the state and Brigid has made sure this legacy not only continues but improves every year. Our daughters, Annie and Ella, have both enjoyed the expansion of Fine Arts programs at BHS thanks to Brigid's intense and passionate focus on the arts. And with any luck, her strong leadership and passion will help all of Barrington finally get its long overdue performing arts center to match the quality of its programs and its leader!

Dr. Jeff Doles, BHS-TV

Brigid's unwavering commitment to the fine arts and the entire Barrington learning community makes her an invaluable advocate. Her passion for creativity is evident in her recognition and support of both the students and staff who showcase their talents at BHS. Throughout the past decade, Brigid has significantly contributed to the plethora of triumphs of the fine arts program and has boosted the job satisfaction of teachers, myself included, through her outstanding leadership. The presence of a supportive and understanding mentor cannot be understated, and Brigid's positive influence has been nothing short of transformative.

Every time I present Brigid with an idea that could benefit students, she consistently responds by inquiring how she can assist in bringing it to fruition. This mutually supportive rapport is particularly evident when we collaborate on producing videos for the #everyonematters220 campaign in our district. Consequently, when she approaches me with an idea, I reciprocate by asking how I can contribute. Together, we have collaborated on several remarkable initiatives such as the Winter Wonderfest, All District Orchestra Festival, and videos that showcase creativity while advocating for diversity and inclusion. Thank you, Brigid, for all you do to make BHS a better place! 