

SYCAMORE

FALL 2024



DEEP THINKER: Inside The Chess Mind Of Madison Brown

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Giving Made Easy

For 40 years, and for more than 2,000 alumni, Sycamore has been the beginning of an incredible story. A Big Ten basketball captain, a Harvard Law School graduate, and a Navy fighter pilot are just a few of the successful adults who got their start at Sycamore. These and other stories of achievement were made possible with help from the Sycamore Fund.

When you invest in Sycamore, you enable our gifted students to receive a first-class education focused on their needs. You contribute to things like technology improvements, academic and athletic teams, field trips and speakers, outdoor labs, performing and visual arts, and financial assistance.

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ON THE COVER

Being only four years old when she started playing chess, Sycamore 8th Grader Madison Brown quickly displayed an innate talent for the game. As Madison delved deeper into the world of chess, her passion for the game grew stronger. She spent hours reading chess books, studying opening strategies, and analyzing endgame scenarios. Her chess rating soared, and she has quickly moved up the US Chess list of top 100 best chess players by age. Read more about Madison in this edition of the Sycamore Magazine.



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sycamoreschool.org

Hello to Our Greater Sycamore Community!

Happy Fall! It's such a delight to see our students, families, faculty, and staff return to our halls and begin the school year anew. And though I write this in early September, this first day of school seems like it just transpired. I think of the first day like the restarting of an engine, one that only starts humming (and making noise!) once the students are back in their classrooms, and the first lessons have begun. It's an incredible feeling!

FALL
2024

We have much to celebrate as we begin the school year. Our new Media Center is open for business, and students throughout the school are utilizing this fabulous new space. This issue provides highlights of this project from start to end. There was such excitement over the ribbon cutting at our Back-to-School Social that I was nearly trampled by the dozens of students eager to climb up the stairs into the new treehouse! I'm particularly overjoyed to see our Middle School students back in this space, now that there is dedicated space for their materials. This project wouldn't have been possible without the outstanding generosity of our many donors who supported our Sycamore Inspires campaign. I am most grateful for their philanthropy!

As we begin the year again, we also restart our many competitive academic clubs, such as Quiz Bowl, Science Bowl, and the like. It never ceases to amaze me how talented Sycamore's students are! I learned very quickly that unless I liked to have my ego humbled,

it's best not to join in a "friendly" trivia competition with Sycamore students! In this issue you'll find stories of individual triumph as well as tales of national ranking by our teams. Sycamore is very well represented in the lists of finalists and champions!



Please enjoy reading through these pages, not just to learn about our students' achievements and our new Media Center, but also to catch up on our alumni. As Sycamore starts its 40th year of operations, we count thousands of graduates and former students as alumni who once walked these hallways. Enjoy reading our alumni updates and learning what our graduates have gone on to do since their Sycamore days.

And with that - time for me to return to visiting classes!

Be well,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Huber". The signature is stylized, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

John Huber

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Sycamore Debuts Revamped Media Center



Sycamore representatives cut the ribbon on the renovated Media Center on August 9. The special ceremony took place during the 2024-25 All School Social, introducing students and parents to the new space with a flurry of excitement.

Teachers and students can access multiple areas throughout the Media Center for classes or small group work. The new layout allows students to sit and enjoy reading in a second-level tree house, while

an audio/visual studio space on the first floor will allow multi-media production. New glass doors provide an open, welcoming entrance, and a revamped section has brought back books previously dispersed to the Middle School Commons.

“Libraries are often referred to as the ‘hub’ or heart of the school, and I hope that our new center is just that,” says Courtney Floyd, Sycamore’s Media Center Specialist. Courtney has been with the project from the beginning, serving on the original

Sycamore First in the Nation with Lighting Innovation

As part of the Media Center renovation Sycamore School participated in a groundbreaking collaboration with BrainLit and The Hagerman Group to install state-of-the-art biocentric lighting. This initiative makes Sycamore School the first Early Childhood (EC) through 8th Grade institution in the country to adopt this innovative lighting technology, designed to enhance the learning environment and improve the well-being of students and staff.

The system is scientifically proven to simulate the most important aspects of daylight indoors. The light is designed to support a stable circadian rhythm with many benefits for health and well-being.

“At Sycamore School, we strive to provide our gifted students with an outstanding learning environment,” said John Huber, Head of School. “We were looking for creative solutions to bring the best possible lighting to our new Media Center, and we were thrilled to introduce biocentric lighting as a way of enhancing this space and giving us the ability to maximize learning.”

Research has shown that traditional fluorescent lighting can negatively impact students’ sleep patterns and cognitive performance. In contrast, biocentric lighting mimics the natural progression of daylight, supporting circadian rhythms and promoting better sleep, mood, and concentration. Studies indicate that exposure to blue-enriched light can enhance alertness and improve academic performance, making it an invaluable tool in educational settings.

“We are thrilled to partner with BrainLit and Sycamore School on this pioneering project,” Jeff Hagerman, chairman of The Hagerman Group, says. “Biocentric lighting represents the future of educational environments, and we are proud to be at the forefront of this transformation.”



EDUCATIONAL SPACES



Media Center Task Force created to mold a vision for Sycamore. She has been integral in the transition from a library to the new media center. “Thanks to (Media Center Assistant) Shannon Bloomquist and (Facilities Manager) LeRoy Richens for working to see the renovation through to completion.”

The project spanned two Heads of School, with Diane Borgmann, who retired as Sycamore’s Head of School in June 2023, overseeing the start of the project. John Huber, the current Head of School, picked up where Diane left off and saw the project through to completion through a five-month renovation process.

The upgrade created an enhanced area for Middle School students. “I’m excited for the return of the Middle School collection,” Floyd says. “We received several recommendations for new and popular books that we added to the library over the summer. The entire space in the front of the library was designed with our Middle Schoolers in mind. There is special seating for classes, and I know the media studio will be a big hit with our creative students.”

“This renovation gives us the flexibility to tailor our collections and displays to be accessible to learners of all ages.” ●





FAST FACTS

The renovation of the Sycamore School Media Center featured the efforts of 12 different companies (11 from Central Indiana and one from New York).

- The renovated area includes **Biocentric Lighting** from BrainLit to promote indoor health. These lights are used in state-of-the-art facilities around the world, and Sycamore is the first EC-8th Grade school in the country to use their lights.
- The Media Center includes a new **multimedia/podcast/visual arts studio**.
- The renovated area covers **3,500 square feet**.
- **Nine tons of steel** were used for the treehouse feature, **15 yards of concrete** were poured, and **100' of wall** was built.
- The Media Center contains more than **16,000 printed books**, from Preschool through Middle School, in our collection.
- **The Hagerman Group** managed the Media Center renovation project. The company is headed by Jeff Hagerman, whose two children, Drake ('17) and Stella (4th Grade), have attended Sycamore.



Quiz Bowl Team Finishes 2nd in the Nation



Sycamore took two qualifying teams to the 2024 Middle School National Championship Tournament in Chicago in May, with Sycamore Team A earning the best finish in school history, placing second in the nation out of 160 schools. Including playoff rounds, the team compiled a 12–4 record. **Evan Ting** was selected as an All-Star for his play in the tournament.

Sycamore qualified both teams for the national tournament by taking the top two spots in the Indiana Junior Academic Quiz Bowl State Tournament in February. Sycamore Team A ended the tournament with a perfect record of 8–0. Sycamore Team B finished second in the state with a record of 6–2. The final match was an All-Sycamore matchup for the championship. At the State competition, Sycamore's Team A recorded the top all-time performance for a National Academic Quiz Tournament (NAQT).

Team A members included **Evan Ting**, **Jeffrey Kirkendall**, **Shayen Maun**, and **Gavin Sigua**. Team B were **Lila Epstein**, **Aditya Bhatia**, **Amy Cui**, **Daniel Bazeley**, and **Leo Salerno**. Sycamore's Quiz Bowl Team is coached by **Tony Young**.

Science Bowl Team Places 7th at Nationals



The Sycamore School Science Bowl team earned their third consecutive national top 10 finish by placing 7th in the Middle School division at the National Science Bowl Championships in April in Washington, D.C. This year's team also finished third in the nation in the Science Bowl Cyber Challenge, held the same weekend. The 2024 Science Bowl finals included top teams in the US, with the 48 middle school teams that won their respective Regional Science Bowl competitions. Sycamore finished 5th in the nation the previous two years in addition to being the national runner-up in 2016.

At Nationals, Sycamore earned a 1st place finish in the Round Robin Preliminary rounds with a record of 5-0 in head-to-head games, giving them a place in the double-elimination portion of the tournament. Sycamore won their first four matches in double elimination before being knocked out of the tournament. Sycamore team members are **Justin Warren**, **Gavin Sigua**, **Shayen Maun**, **Allison Jeray**, and **Alex Bramhill**. The team is coached by long-time Sycamore science teacher **David Schuth**, now in his 13th year in the position. His teams have earned a spot at Nationals ten times.

Meet Greg Merrell

“Sycamore is a unique gem in Indiana and makes a national impact in gifted education”

When Greg Merrell first witnessed the power of Sycamore School, he was the parent of two students, Ethan ('17) and Connor ('22). The school provided, he says, “an incredible launching pad for academic success and a passion and respect for intellectual pursuits.”

Forward to the 2024-25 school year, as Merrell begins his second year as President of the Sycamore Board of Trustees.

“Not only is the school providing an incredibly supportive, nurturing environment that still allows children to celebrate and embrace intellectual pursuits,” he says, “we are also quite proud of our legacy for continuing to advance the art and science of gifted education.”

“I was delighted to be asked to join the Board a few years ago, which gave me a more meaningful way to give back to the school and to the Sycamore community,” Merrell shares. “The Board is a great group of diverse talents with a singular focus: To help make the school the best it can be.”

Merrell knows that the role of the Board, and his role as Board President, is to provide strategic guidance to the Head of School and staff.

“We are ambassadors and promoters of the school and its great work in our interactions in the community. We have a Board that can claim expertise in a wide variety of disciplines - education, business,



Greg Merrell speaks at Sycamore School

law, healthcare, public policy, and government. That is helpful for the school's growth and development.”

Merrell believes Sycamore is a school that makes a difference for families.

“The school has a well-defined mission, a strong culture, and an identity that serve as our North Star in making decisions,” he says. “There are few schools nationally that can demonstrate the type of student success that Sycamore does in local, state, and national competitions. This is all the more impressive given our relatively modest size. The teachers and staff are a talented group of visionary educators. The Board will support them in as many ways as we can.” ●

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We stand on the shoulders of giants and are indebted to all the individuals who came before us who made Sycamore what it is today.

GREG MERRELL

LUNAR ROCKS

Make Stop At Sycamore

Sycamore 6th Graders in Mrs. Caudill's science class were offered a rare opportunity to see moon rocks and meteorite samples from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The lunar samples were from the various Apollo missions. The meteorite samples were collected from Antarctica, Africa, and the US, and included fragments from Mars.

With the help of some Butler College of Education students, the 6th Graders participated in activities focused on the Apollo 11 Mission, including lessons about volcanic layering on the moon and robot end-effector construction. A special thanks to Sycamore's IMPD Officer, Chris Marcum, who was on site for the unique experience — because sharing NASA materials requires specific, NASA-mandated precautions and security! ●



WORKING FROM THE INSIDE:

Building a Basketball Program



Coincidentally, Sycamore's two Physical Education teachers Kevin Branigan and Garrett Guffin, grew up as neighbors. "We both interviewed for the Sycamore Physical Education jobs at the same time," Branigan says of their hiring in 2022. "Not knowing that each of us knew each other when we were younger."

For the past three years, they became a coaching team at Sycamore. As each went through the 2023-24 hoops season, they quickly reconnected through their mutual love of basketball. They often discuss ideas and plans for the basketball program at Sycamore. Their goal is to create a long-term roadmap for a comprehensive basketball program. The organization should build a foundation of skills and thinking that translates into how student-athletes play while at Sycamore and beyond.

Key to any plan is the fact that Sycamore is a small, independent, private school for gifted students. Branigan and Guffin know success will depend in part on how the basketball program grows systematically and organically at the same time and how that impacts the bigger athletic picture at Sycamore.



PAYING COACHING DUES

Kevin, a Cathedral High School, and Marian University graduate, started teaching at Sycamore in 2021, bringing with him many years of experience as an assistant coach at the high school level and a teacher of Physical Education for 17 years at a private Catholic school located on the east side of Indianapolis.

Kevin started his coaching career at Cardinal Ritter before working as a varsity basketball assistant coach at several other local schools, including Brebeuf Jesuit, Guerin Catholic, Fishers High School, Center Grove High School, and Zionsville High School. “I learned under a lot of excellent coaches. I moved around and was able to see what things worked well in a program and what things didn’t work so well.”

Kevin focused on coaching the Sycamore boys 7/8 team in 2024. Before this year, he coached both teams with Guffin serving as his assistant coach. In 2023-24, Garrett took over the 5th/6th Grade program.

Guffin, a North Central High School graduate, coached basketball at Park Tudor for three years before coming to Sycamore. He has experience as a YMCA basketball coach, coordinating and teaching summer

camps for 200 young basketball players each year. He is stepping away from his coaching duties in 2024-25 while he and his wife focus on family and their new son. Guffin will continue to teach PE at Sycamore.

Garrett teaches both Early Childhood (Preschool, Pre-K, and Kindergarten) students and Middle Schoolers at Sycamore. “At the EC level, they need a lot of movement. We’re trying to get some basic fundamental movements and also drain their energy so that they can focus in the classroom. At that age, you’re working on motor skills rather than specifically how to dribble with your left hand,” Garrett says. “Coach Branigan picks up more of the sporting units. Since we both teach Middle School, we reinforce and build every year to get them a little bit better, whether it’s in basketball, baseball, or any of the sports we teach in the classroom setting.”

“We do have basketball as a unit in PE,” Kevin says. “We don’t play full-on basketball games during the unit because some would inherently dominate the game, which is not the goal in a PE class setting. That is different than a practice or game setting as far as playing the actual sport itself. In class, we can teach some of the rules and theories of different sports.

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I learned under a lot of excellent coaches. I moved around and was able to see what things worked well in a program and what things didn’t work so well.

KEVIN BRANIGAN

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“We wanted to be able to put a ball in a kid’s hand in Kindergarten, 1st Grade, 2nd Grade, 3rd Grade, and 4th Grade,” Kevin says. “We wanted to be able to work with those kids on Saturdays in December and January. And it carried over to February this year. We want to get some skill work taught, and we want to generate some interest. We would love to be able to do something intramural-wise in those younger grades to help them compete when they reach 5th or 6th Grade.”

The coaches also teach basketball-related summer camps at Sycamore, including camps for Middle Schoolers.

“When people don’t pick up a ball between February and the start of next season, they don’t improve,” Kevin says. “Summer camps with a basketball-related focus are part of the long-term plan for building this program. Camps help create longevity, and we want a program that’s sustainable long term.”

“Our 1st and 2nd Graders look up to our 7th and 8th Graders. We want those younger students emulating the skills the 7th and 8th Graders have,” Kevin says. “At the same time, those older students have a leadership responsibility and have to know what it looks like to make an impression on those younger kids. We can create that culture.”

HOW TO WIN SO EVERYONE WINS

Sycamore Athletics has a no-cut policy. Everyone makes the team, and everyone plays in games, though playing time might not be equal. Games are 24 minutes at the Middle School level. Garrett carried 15 players on his 5/6 grade team, and Kevin had 10 players on the 7/8 grade team.

“It can be a tricky thing from a coaching standpoint,” Kevin explains. “If all we were concerned about were the wins, the best five would play all the time. We let more students play. We have to put kids in a situation where they’re comfortable coming into that role. That comes during practice time.”

I think that’s fascinating. We can talk about ‘Where do we go with a ball, or what do we do in this situation?’ Not everybody is going to be able to do a reverse spin with a ball, but they’ll be exposed to it.”

CREATING YOUNG HOOPERS

The Sycamore boys’ season runs from October to late January. The idea of building a basketball program started with discussions about how to make the sport more robust at Sycamore.

Sycamore has two teams for boys, and two teams for girls: a 5th Grade/6th Grade team, and a 7th Grade/8th Grade team. They play in the Indianapolis Independent School League (IISL), which includes similarly sized, independent private schools.

“When I first took this job, we didn’t have an open gym like a high school program would,” Kevin says. “The Saturday idea came into mind,” he says, referencing the morning events, spread over multiple weekends, for younger would-be basketball players. That effort began in 2023-24. “We are very limited with our gym space during the week when our boys practice, and even more when our girls’ team practices during their season. The Saturday idea: Do a mini-camp on eight Saturdays during the winter.



Sycamore has had some success in basketball through the years, with the IISL Basketball title being won by the 5/6 team a decade ago. That team was coached by then-athletic director Ryan Cox, who also worked to upgrade the look and vibe of the game day experience at Sycamore. Kevin says he has been working to make it easier for the players to be ready to join a 5/6 team and be prepared for what all that Middle School athletics entails.

“Three years ago, 8th Graders on the team had some struggles with the x’s and o’s part of basketball,” Kevin admits. “My job at that point was to, number one, teach them that part of the game. Number two was to start a culture of love for basketball, and it takes a lot of time to do that. Our first year, a lot of that started with the 5/6 team.”

“We won one game our 1st year at the 7/8 level. We won six during our second year. This past year (2023-24), we finished 11-3, losing in the semifinals of the conference tournament,” Kevin says.

“It was by far our most successful year, and it was because these players had been a part of the first two years of (team) building that started at the 5/6 level.”

“We were at the opposite end of that win-and-loss record with the 5/6 program,” Garrett says, referencing the team that won just one game. “The effort was there, but for some of our players, it was their first time working with a basketball outside of gym class,” Garrett states. “That’s what Coach Branigan and I are trying to eliminate. We’d like these kids to pick up a basketball in Kindergarten, 1st Grade, and 2nd Grade so we’re not starting from scratch later.”

The learning curve is what the two coaches want to make easier.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Success at the Middle School level depends on many factors including a winning record and play that is constantly improving. The two coaches also want the experience to be a fun one for student athletes.



“Oh my gosh, midway through the 2023-24 season, I saw growth in every single player on the 5/6 team. All 15 of them improved throughout the year. My biggest things with the team were buy-in, exposure to skills, and keeping it light,” Garrett says. “When you’re losing and you only score in single digits, that can hurt. We want players to enjoy basketball and like it enough to come back and get better every year. I did try to get all 15 players into the game because you have to at least experience the tempo, see what it feels like, and get used to all the sounds, the scoreboard, and everything. Getting kids to come back next year was the big goal.”

Like Rome, a robust basketball program is not built in a day, or a month, or a year. Long-term success depends upon planning and perseverance.

“We want to have kids come to our Sycamore games and be proud one day to put on a Sycamore uniform and to represent the school,” Branigan says. “I love the travel side of the sport, but being able to put on a Sycamore uniform, and being proud of that Sycamore uniform is part of our building process.” ●

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We want players to enjoy basketball and like it enough to come back and get better every year.

GARRETT GUFFIN

ACHIEVEMENT

Madison Brown

Plays to Conquer
Chess World—and
Pay It Forward

Madison Brown's passion for chess can be traced back to Christmas Day 2015 when she was four years old. That was the day she showed special interest in a Christmas gift meant for the whole family—a new chessboard. All day, she watched her father and grandfather play chess. Rather than playing with her new Christmas toys, she opted to watch their games, asking questions while they played.

She learned how each piece moved, making up her own names: “horsey” instead of the knight, and that “little guy” instead of the pawn.

“I still remember her enthusiastic voice commentating on their game,” her mom, Nicole says. “Shouting ‘Watch out Papa, your little guy is gonna get eaten.’” That morning that she fell in love with chess, and it marked the first day of her chess journey.”

Nicole says Madison quickly displayed a talent for the game, grasping the fundamental concepts. By five years old, she had entered her first tournament, showing an understanding of tactics and positioning—a skill that went beyond her years.

On her own, Madison delved deeper into the world of chess, spending hours reading books on the topic, studying opening



strategies, analyzing endgame scenarios, and honing her skills through practice. Her skill continued to grow as she played in more tournaments, and her chess rating soared. She quickly moved up on the US Chess Top 100 list, a ranking of the nation's best chess players by age.

Madison reached the number one spot in the nation for girls seven and under in April 2019, as ranked by the US Chess Federation.

Her parents, Nicole and Nathan, believe supporting Madison in her chess journey will help her grow as a player and also instill valuable life lessons like perseverance, determination, and sportsmanship. Nicole says that Sycamore has been a great place for Madison.

“Her success in chess can be attributed, in large part, to the education and supportive environment at Sycamore,” Nicole explains. Madison started at Sycamore in Preschool in 2014, and her mom says

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Sycamore has helped nurture her critical thinking, strategic planning, and problem-solving. “The skills she has honed at Sycamore School have translated into her performance on the chessboard.”

GIVING BACK TO THE GIRLS

The game brings people together, according to Madison. “I have gone on vacation and made friends from playing chess. I have become close friends with people on the



other side of the world whom I would have never met at all because of chess and chess.com. Some of my closest “chess buddies” are gentlemen in their 60s who are Indiana’s top chess players. They treat me as their colleague and equal. They are some of my biggest supporters and cheerleaders.”

In addition to playing chess, Madison has started “Unruly Queens”, an all-girls chess group she runs along with three other top female chess players. They give free weekly chess lessons to younger players. Madison recently held the first Indiana All-Girls Chess Festival to encourage more girls to get into the game.

Madison and her fellow “Unruly Queens” instructors (Alice Lee, Kelsey Liu, and Ellen Wang) hope to play a part in changing the gender disparity in chess. Currently, just 13% of players in US chess are female.

She also works closely with the Indy Chess Club to promote girls in chess.

Ascending the chess rankings requires winning, and Madison has done a lot of that. “The thrill of outsmarting an opponent and seeing my plans come to

fruition is immensely satisfying,” she says. “It’s what drives me, game after game, tournament after tournament. From the day of my first tournament, I made a promise to myself to always strive for excellence.” Excellence at five years old, Madison remembers, came in the form of shiny trophies. It’s what motivated her. As she got older, excellence meant climbing in the rankings. “That first tournament ignited a passion in me to continually improve and push my limits. In chess the only way to become great is through loss, and I have had my fair share.”

MADISON + SYCAMORE

Madison says being at Sycamore has had a profound influence on her abilities. “Teachers have instilled in me the importance of hard work and dedication,” she says. “Mr. Young’s history class is incredibly engaging and informative. Mrs. Simpson’s English class has been a highlight, deepening my appreciation for reading and writing. Science is another class I love. Mr. Schuth creates a fantastic learning environment.”

Outside of chess, Madison enjoys rock climbing and golf. “They provide a balance to the mental intensity of chess. Rock climbing challenges my strength and problem-solving skills in a different way, while golf offers a relaxing yet strategic experience.”

The pairing of Sycamore and chess works for Madison. She moves her inquisitive nature from the classroom to the chessboard and back again. “I love so many things about chess,” Madison says. “It’s a beautifully complex and artistic game. No two games are ever the same. I find that absolutely fascinating. When you sit down in front of a chess board and across from your opponent, none of those things matter. The only thing that matters are the moves you make.” ●

Madison Milestones

- Currently the highest-rated female chess player in the state of Indiana
- Selected to be part of Team USA for the 2024 World Youth Championship being held in Indianapolis, Brazil in October
- Selected as the Official US representative for 2021 World Cadet in Batumi, Georgia
- Indiana State Representative for the National Ruth Haring Championship of Girls
- Indiana State Representative for the Susan Polgar Girls Invitational

Competitive Chess uses a Chess Rating System

A chess rating system is a system used in chess to estimate the strength of a player, based on their performance versus other players. These systems are used by organizations such as the US Chess Federation, the International Correspondence Chess Federation, and the English Chess Federation.

Most of the systems are used to recalculate ratings after each tournament or match. The most widely used is the Elo rating system, named after its creator, Arpad Elo. When two players with different ratings compete against each other, the outcome of the game will result in a change in their respective ratings. If a lower-rated player wins against a higher-rated player, they will gain more rating points than if they were to win against a player with a similar rating.

Conversely, if a higher-rated player wins against a lower-rated player, they will gain fewer rating points. The actual change in rating depends on the rating difference between the two players.



Former Head of Middle School **Ginny Burney** Passes Away



Former Sycamore Head of Middle School Dr. Virginia Burney passed away on May 1, 2024. She was an administrator at Sycamore from 1992-1997, a former Sycamore Board of Trustees member, and the parent of three Sycamore graduates: Thomas Burney '96, Matt Burney '97, and Amanda Burney Ross '00.

Dr. Burney was a leader in the field of gifted education in Indiana, serving as President of Indiana Association for the Gifted (IAG) and was a former Board Member of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). At the 2023 Indiana Association for the Gifted Conference, she was awarded the Lifetime Service Award.

“Ginny’s passion for gifted education has directly impacted Sycamore through her service to the school, both directly and indirectly,” former Sycamore Head of School, Diane Borgmann said. “Her influence on philosophy, curriculum, and school culture has helped make Sycamore the school it is today. She will be greatly missed by friends, by colleagues, by the Sycamore community, and by the field of gifted education.”

Dr. Burney earned her Ph.D. in Gifted Education at Ball State University and was an Assistant and Adjunct Professor at Ball State, teaching graduate courses in the Educational Psychology Department including *Human Development Across the Lifespan*, *Investigating the Social Emotional Needs of Gifted Students*, and *Introduction to the Gifted and Talented Student*.

Ginny's close friend, Kristie Speirs, parent of Sycamore alumnae Anya '16, Hailey '23, Ginny '23, and Avery '24, reflected on Ginny's legacy and the remarkable friendship they shared.

"I first met Ginny Burney when she was a doctoral student of mine in our educational psychology program at Ball State University. At an age where most people start to coast in their careers, Ginny instead had decided to return to school to earn a Ph.D., believing that she could be a more effective advocate for gifted students with this additional credential. What struck me the most about Ginny in my early years of working with her was how much she believed everyone had value."

"She was never caught up in the notion that one's age, social status, or professional position should determine the amount of time and attention their ideas were given. She welcomed everyone's input; as many people observed, if she thought an idea had merit, she was just as likely to champion it if it had come from a young child as if it had come from a legislator."

Speirs and Burney worked together for nearly two decades, as co-chairs on the Board of Directors for the Indiana Association for the Gifted, where they advocated for legislation to support the education of gifted students. They also served as consultants to more than 100 school districts throughout Indiana and the United States, assisting in the development of programs and services for gifted students.

The two led workshops that provided professional development to thousands of teachers of gifted students, and co-published *An Introduction to Gifted Education: The Complete Kit for Facilitators, Coordinators, and In-Service*



(left) Kristie Speirs and Ginny Burney at IAG in December 2023

(below) Former Administrators Glenna Lykens, Ginny Burney, Diane Borgmann, and Nancy Farrar



Training Professionals, and Gifted Program Evaluation: A Handbook for Administrators and Coordinators (2nd ed).

"The field of gifted education will miss her fiercely. I hope that I can carry her advocacy, lessons, and knowledge forward to continue to maximize the potential of all gifted students."

Dr. Kristie Speirs is a professor of Educational Psychology at Ball State University, President-Elect of the Indiana Association for the Gifted (IAG), a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) as well as a member of the Board of Trustees for Sycamore School. ●

“ ”

She will be greatly missed by friends, by colleagues, by the Sycamore community, and by the field of gifted education.

DIANE BORGMANN

Graduation Speeches

2024 GRADUATION SPEECH

PARI PONUGOTI

Today we stand together as Sycamore students one last time, the day we never thought we would get to, but it's here. I decided to use an acronym to describe what Sycamore means to us.

The "S" in Sycamore stands for the start of our journey here. Like the roots of a tree, we all had different beginnings. We all grew together here, becoming one tree, one class.

The "Y" in Sycamore stands for why. Yes, I know the word why starts with the letter W, but I hope Mrs. Simpson and Mrs. Molter won't mind if I take some liberty with this acronym. This one word is a crucial part of our time here, as we were always wondering why our peers and teachers were always doing the things that they did. Why was my class so obsessed with the word sacapuntas?

The "C" in Sycamore. Covid. This was the year that I joined Sycamore — 5th Grade. This was also the year we were all confined to one classroom, our teachers coming to us instead of us going to them.

The "A" stands for the amazing times we had together. We'll always remember MarineLab, where we drank way too much iced tea, playing card games on the benches, rarely agreeing on the rules, examining mollusks and mangroves, and, most importantly, talking for hours.

Now onto the "M" in Sycamore. Mr., Mrs., and Ms., like Mr. T, who inspired the love of math. Mr. Keith, who gave us a laugh during every class. Mrs. Simpson, who was always there for us. Mr. Young, who encouraged learning on a deeper level. Mr. Schuth, who always challenged us.



Pari Ponugoti

Mrs. Hayden, who always made us smile.

The "O" in Sycamore. Opportunity. Opportunities to grow our character, our knowledge, our skills, our perspectives, and our friendships.

For the "R.", it's Realization. A few months ago, we began to realize that as students, we would never gossip at these lunch tables together again, never create a horrible cacophony of sound right before band again, and never walk these halls together again.

Finally, the "E." No, the "E" is not the end of our journey, but our everlasting connection. While our tree may branch out into different high schools and colleges, we will always be rooted here at Sycamore.

2024 GRADUATION SPEECH

**SHAYAN
MAUN**

Two summers ago, a friend and I randomly decided to wear Sycamore shirts for the whole month and never stopped. For the past 729 days of my life, I have worn a Sycamore t-shirt. Every. Single. Day. To class. On the weekends. On vacations. To my uncle's wedding.

Just to make it clear—I have 27 Sycamore shirts, so they are washed—mostly—when I wear them”

One might wonder why would I wear a Sycamore shirt every day? It's because I love this school and everything about it. For the past nine years I have been at Sycamore, I have been lucky enough to collect these shirts. Each shirt has its own value and memory for me.

My Sycamore tennis shirt represents support. My brother's tennis team had gone undefeated just before I arrived in Middle School. They have a banner in the gym. My goal was to one-up my older brother. In 7th Grade, we were approaching this goal. We were undefeated, facing Park Tudor, and the match was tied 2-2. The final result would be decided by the doubles match that I was playing.

We fell behind. Point by point, we climbed back up until we somehow took the lead and had two match points! The first ball came to me, and I saw that conference banner within my grasp. I hit it, but it was too deep. Viraj took me aside and left me with this profound, inspiring statement: “bruh.”

But I knew this was code for: “We have another chance. Another ball came high right to me, and I smashed it! It went wide. We went on to lose this match. I was devastated, but I looked around and saw teammates, all wearing the same Sycamore shirt.

My Cross Country shirt represents trying new things and stepping out of your comfort zone.

The Class of 2024 shirt represents my classmates and all the memories we

shared together at Sycamore. We found connections with each other that will last us a lifetime. As we go on to high school, we will go our separate ways, but this shirt reminds me that our memories will always bind us together as friends.

A few years ago, when I was in Europe, a random woman came up to me—she said, “Is that Sycamore School on your shirt? From Indiana? I love that school.”

Her son had attended Sycamore many years ago, and she still recognized the Eagle.

On our 8th Grade Washington, D.C. trip, during our 5-hour airport layover, a kid from another school recognized our Sycamore School shirt from being at the National Quiz Bowl competition in Chicago.

The final shirt I'm going to talk about is the basic Sycamore shirt that I'm sure many of us own. To me this represents the foundation of our school—the teachers and staff and the thousands of hours they spent with us in EC, in LS, and in MS, giving us valuable lessons that we will take to high school and beyond.

In Language Arts we will take away the importance of figurative language. In PE we learned to play every major sport. In History we learned about ancient battles and world wars, and how it's important to never let these mistakes repeat themselves. In band we immersed ourselves in the songs so much that students would hum them down the hallway. In science we learned through hands-on experiments. In math all the teachers drilled one universal lesson into our heads: “Show your work!”

I look forward to seeing where our Sycamore education takes us these next four years and beyond. I look forward to visiting the teachers and faculty during our reunions. I look forward to staying in touch with my classmates.

And most of all, my mom looks forward to me retiring my Sycamore t-shirts. ●



Shayan Maun

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EXCERPTS FROM Honors Speeches

ARYA DESAI

I thought about what makes our class unique. The answer was our diversity. We, in fact, have a great deal in common: memories, banter exchanged in the Sycamore halls, and academic and extracurricular accomplishments. Maybe most importantly, we ate for lunch together—every day. “Wait. Is she really going to talk about lunch?”

One item that nearly all of us ate most often was a sandwich. From wheat to white to sourdough bread, mixed with cheeses and spreads and lots of vegetables—we had them all. In many ways, these endless combinations reflect our class and their diversity of backgrounds and the attributes that make them successful at Sycamore.

While the world around us grapples with how to face and respond to this diversity, our class embraced and enjoyed it. At the International Festival, almost all of our class volunteered and participated in cross-cultural dance forms such as tap, Ballet, Flamenco, Irish Step, and Bollywood.

Sandwiches have layers. Even in the simplest sandwich model, the outer bread layer represents our Sycamore environment, holding safely the internal contents, the students.

As we move up the layers of the sandwich, we must eat the dreaded green vegetables,—that’s our transition to Middle School and facing the onslaught of unending homework. But Middle School brought new opportunities and privileges. MarineLab made many of us anxious about spending a week without parents. MarineLab brought all of us closer, with adventures such as snorkeling in the ocean, swimming next to

jellyfish and Manatees with our best friends, growing bonds, and learning independence.

So many teachers and staff contributed to our growth. It represents the final layer of our sandwich—the Sycamore Secret Sauce. Each ingredient came together to create a rich and unforgettable experience. Together, these ingredients have undeniably nourished our young lives.

NICK MOLTER

Before I started at Sycamore in 3rd Grade, I had been in two different schools. As much as the teachers tried, I just wasn’t challenged enough. The teachers did not have the same passion for math that I did, and I had to ask repeatedly to learn new things. I had made some friends and was heartbroken when switching schools. I wouldn’t know anybody at the new school where I was going into the unknown.

My parents asked me to spend a day at a school called Sycamore. I imagined it would be the same as the others, that I’d be really bored and not happy. As soon as I walked through the doors at Sycamore, I knew it was different.

Known as one of the hardest years at Sycamore, 7th Grade includes tons of homework, difficult tests, and many new teachers. But we were prepared. We used the study and time management skills that we had learned. I heard people complain about homework all the time, but what I didn’t hear were phrases like “I can’t do this.”

“Sycamore welcomed me and made me feel like I had been here all my life. Everybody was smart and had many of the same interests. Sycamore was home.”

Bullard '20 Gives Inaugural Alumni Graduation Speech

"In a phrase from Swedish DJ Avicii's song 'The Nights', he says:

*Go venture on beyond the shores.
Don't forsake this life of yours.*

*I'll guide you home no matter
where you are.'*

Sycamore is sending us into the world to do great things. It has been a home away from home for many of us. We know that we can always come back to the people, the teachers, and the academic aura."

"When I sat down to write this speech, it was hard to know where to start. My mom suggested I start with 'how Webster's Dictionary defines graduation'. My dad suggested I start with 'the airing of grievances.'"

"When I think about all those things I couldn't do when I started at Sycamore, I see a different person. I can be bold. I can speak up in a room full of people. I can juggle a shocking amount of homework."



Nicholas Bullard, Sycamore Class of 2020, delivered the school's first-ever graduation speech by an alumnus at the May commencement exercises. A member of Park Tudor High School's Class of 2024 and student body president, his speech was a balance of humor, insight, and advice urging the graduates to "Cherish these next few years and the experiences that will come along with them, rather than following whatever you need to do to get a paper. Don't let that control how you shape your life. You write the words on your own page. Strive to set aside the stresses of focusing on the superficial and be excited to explore what brings you joy." Nicholas will be attending the University of Notre Dame this fall.

ALUMNI SPEAKER SERIES

In April three alumni returned to Sycamore to deliver presentations. They spoke to our Middle School students in the afternoon, and in the evening they shared their stories with parents, alumni parents, and friends.

ADITI DEY '20

“Tempo-ramental: The Intersection of Music and Neuroscience”



Aditi Dey

“”

Being back in the
Sycamore environment
reminds me of
good memories—a
good feeling,
a nostalgic feeling.

ADITI DEY

It had been 2021 since Aditi Dey had been back at Sycamore. When the 2020 Sycamore graduate toured the school this spring, she noticed changes.

“When I walked through Lower School, it seemed totally different,” she says. “That was true for Middle School, too. It was interesting to see all the changes in the hallways and the art classrooms.”

Despite the differences, Aditi says she also remembered lessons that she still holds onto—lessons that formed a foundation to help accelerate her study of music and genetics. That led the 2024 Park Tudor High School graduate to study dementia and Alzheimer’s and how music affects the brain.

Aditi is attending Brown University this fall. “I’m excited for that next chapter of my life. I plan to major in human development, focusing on aging and health, similar to my research right now.”

Aditi returned to Sycamore for the 2024 Alumni Speaker Series to talk to students about the connection between music and cognition. She had completed a project at Park Tudor focused on music and nostalgia. “That was what I spent the past year researching. You get to see specifics on aging and how that affects your brain.”

Her interest in studying the brain came from her dad. “He works with gene therapy, so I hear a lot about it. I took a course at Harvard during the summer

after my sophomore year on epigenetics just to see if I actually liked it, or if he was just talking it up to be something cooler than it was. And I really liked it.”

Epigenetics is the study of how behaviors and the environment can change how genes work.

She wanted to get specific with her learning and find out more about the relationship between music and the brain. “I always thought that connection was interesting because musicians’ brains develop differently from people who’ve never learned music,” she says. “Remembering music as a dementia or Alzheimer’s patient is a unique phenomenon. They encounter a stimulus, like a musical cue, and suddenly remember a part of their life. Many times they can’t even remember their names or their family, but you can play the music for them, and their eyes brighten, and they can sing the lyrics. How does that happen?”

Studying epigenetics became Aditi’s passion, including learning how the environment changes your gene regulation. “It is not just the genetics that we’re born with, but things throughout our lives that change that,” she says. “I focused on Alzheimer’s disease because my grandfather was diagnosed with it. I wanted to look into an epigenetic connection. That’s where everything started for me.”

When Aditi reflects on her time at Sycamore, she says she sees how it has helped her with her research. “As I was working on my project last year, it reminded me of our 8th Grade project researching a current event for Mr. Young’s class, learning Modern Language Association (MLA) citations,” she says.

“Once you learn it, it doesn’t seem that difficult. Getting to that point, especially at such an early age at Sycamore, helped me master those basics and be able to move into something more complicated like Alzheimer’s research.”

“Being back in the Sycamore environment reminds me of good memories—a good feeling, a nostalgic feeling.”

JASMINE McWILLIAMS '16

Northwestern University Graduate (2024) and Division 1 Basketball Player

Jasmine McWilliams spent 12 years at Sycamore, both in class and on the court. After a terrific high school basketball career that culminated at North Central High School, Jasmine was recognized as an All-County and All-Conference player who was also named to the American Family Insurance ALL-USA Indy Area Super Team. She chose to attend Northwestern University, following in the NCAA Division I footsteps of her father, Terrence. Terrence had played football at Louisville and was a member of the 1991 Fiesta Bowl Championship team.

Jasmine was a team captain at Northwestern during her senior season, and her mentorship of younger teammates is something she is proud of. “We had a lot of freshmen who were very young. I was one of only two seniors who had to take on a larger leadership role.”

Jasmine sharpened her leadership skills in a corporate environment while interning

with Deloitte, an industry-leading audit, consulting, tax, and advisory firm that serves many of the world’s biggest brands. McWilliams was accepted as an intern the summer before her senior year of college and traveled to Spain to work for the company. She’s still with Deloitte, which is now sponsoring her MBA degree through Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Management. The job has given her the choice to live in any city she wants, including internationally.

“I’m researching what I want to do, if I want to stay in Chicago, and when I want to get my MBA. Their program allows me to push it off for up to five years. I want to take a gap year, but I also want to make sure I’m not staying out of school too long.”

McWilliams says a common question from people is “What is consulting?”

“I’ll do similar things to what I did in the summer with my internship, working on the strategy and commercial side, focused on healthcare. I worked on a project for a company based in Warsaw, Indiana, which is the largest producer of prosthetics. Deloitte was coming in to help with a five-year project. I became the connection between the leadership of the company and the leadership of Deloitte, taking notes, making presentations, and attending meetings.”

A lot of it is just problem-solving and connecting with different people, especially because the project is very STEM-minded.

A Communication and Legal Studies double major at Northwestern, McWilliams says a lot of her classes were very focused on presenting and public speaking. “It is about just making sure you learn how to navigate certain spaces, especially professionally,” she says.

McWilliams’s presentation at Sycamore was titled *Beyond the Game: Discovering My True Self as a Black Woman in Academia and Athletics*. She spoke about the intersection of race, athletics, and academics, and she reminded students



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At a place like Sycamore, where everyone is so high achieving, talented, and smart, I was probably the only one who was talented, smart, and also athletic. That brings a lot of attention to you. It gave me the confidence I needed at the next level and then again at the next level above high school.

JASMINE MCWILLIAMS

that just because you're a student-athlete doesn't mean you have to put career aspirations on the back burner.

"I talked about my experiences, my interests, how I came to those experiences, and how I found outlets for my different interests while also balancing school and academics."

As a teen, Jasmine attended two different high schools, first Carmel and then North Central. "I made some great friends (at Carmel) that I still have today. It got me used to being in a large environment. At North Central, which is still a large school but a lot more diverse, I was able to take what I learned from Carmel and bring it to that space, to that community."

Looking back at her time at Sycamore, McWilliams says some moments helped her grow. "I spent 12 years at Sycamore and was challenged, not only academically, but socially. I talked a little in my speech about how I was the only black girl in my class and any class around me. At a place like Sycamore, where everyone is so high achieving, talented, and smart, I was probably the only one who was talented, smart, and also athletic. That brings a lot of attention to you. It gave me the confidence I needed at the next level and then again at the next level above high school."

What's the best thing about being back at Sycamore? "Oh, my gosh. Seeing how different it is," she says. "I haven't seen my teachers in quite a while, and it's so crazy that they still remember me so well, and I still remember them. It's just a nice feeling. I feel like I'm still a part of the Sycamore family. I appreciate that."

McWilliams started for six games for Northwestern during her senior season and saw action in every game of the 2023-24 season. Her best game was at Indiana, in which she scored eight points, had four rebounds, and one block. McWilliams improved her season totals in steals and rebounds, with 73 rebounds and 85% shooting from the free throw line.

EVAN RELLER '99

"What's the best part about being back at Sycamore? Just seeing how this place is thriving. There's more staff. The facility looks amazing. The process of writing my presentation for the Sycamore students and looking back at everything has made me appreciative of the experience I had here."

Evan Reller discovered he had options. His job was not what it once was. Beginning in 2009, he had worked in journalism, covering every level of athletic teams and sports. He ran a popular Indianapolis Colts website called Horseshoe Heroes for the Fansided network. He became not only a writer but also a software coder, learning JavaScript in an Accelerated Learning Program from the Eleven Fifty Academy in Indianapolis.

"When (Alumni Coordinator) Mary O'Malley reached out to me about the Alumni Speaker Series, she mentioned my long, varied work history and asked me where I was in my career," he says. "I wanted to talk about something that would be helpful or inspiring to the kids. I focused on my education and career path; how everybody sets goals and has lofty aspirations, and how they get there."

"I was hoping I could help students understand that life can evolve and change. Academically precocious kids might not take a chance to sit back and take a look and say, 'Do I really want to do this?'" he says. "They can change their mind, and sometimes that's a great thing. Sometimes a kid can be told, 'Hey, you would be good at that.' With a lot of the kids at Sycamore, they're so talented that there are probably more options available to them than they realize."

Evan's own story diverged from the sports and website focus, shifting as he became the marketing manager and web marketing specialist at a company called Smash My Trash which specializes in the unglamorous work of compacting waste in open-top



Evan Reller

dumpsters. Their hook is that crushing and reducing commercial waste volume saves businesses money and cuts harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

How did Reller, a 1999 graduate of Sycamore, go from writer and web developer to working with a cutting-edge trash company?

"I got burned out on the website and content pieces," he says. "I hit a wall with my career at the same time that the web industry started contracting. I needed to make a change to something more fulfilling for me that would support me better in life. There was not a lot of money doing what I was doing. It was not great."

He predominantly ran websites covering college and pro athletics. That began with high school sports in Indianapolis and eventually expanded to include Indiana University, then all collegiate and pro teams in Indiana. For the last few years, he wrote about the Colts.

After graduating from Indiana University with his four-year degree, Evan earned a Master's in journalism at IUPUI in the IU Graduate School. He had originally wanted to go to law school, but transitioned to become a sports journalist. That was his career for a decade. It was during this time that he began to learn coding at Scott Jones's Eleven Fifty Academy.

"I graduated from grad school with some insanely gifted writers. One of them, Zach Kiefer, is at *The Athletic*" Evan says. "He also covered the Colts for a while and did a fantastic job. He was one of those writers where you look at your own work next to his and you're asking, 'What am I doing?'"

From Sycamore to Today

Evan was only at Sycamore for four years, from 5th through 8th Grades. He found his way to the school after attending IPS and Cold Spring Elementary. "My mom wasn't comfortable with IPS schools for me. There wasn't a very good academic situation at the middle school that I would have attended. Then we found Sycamore."

"I didn't realize this until years later, but a lot of what was built here with me at Sycamore were critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills," he says. "I think those skills have been the most important in my life, especially now."

"It's completely different," he says of Sycamore. "This doesn't look anything like what I remember from when I was here."

"I work in the corporate side of a franchise company called Smash My Trash," Reller says. "I have been leading the marketing team for the past six months while we looked for a new director. Reller believes he was chosen by the company because of the accumulation of skills and experience outside of the industry. "They said, 'Here are the things we want you to be good at.' I thought, 'I've done all of those in my past two jobs.'"

It is a change for Reller. Instead of scraping and churning sports content, he forged a new chapter for himself, and he believes that journey started at Sycamore.

"The Sycamore graduates from my class were all academic powerhouses, and several went to Ivy League schools," he says. "Goals are great, but they can change, and that's what I wanted to express to the students at Sycamore. Sometimes change is a great thing. Sometimes it's better than you could possibly imagine." ●

““”

The Sycamore graduates from my class were all academic powerhouses, and several went to Ivy League schools. Goals are great, but they can change, and that's what I wanted to express to the students at Sycamore. Sometimes change is a great thing. Sometimes it's better than you could possibly imagine.

EVAN RELLER

Senior Spotlight 2024

[SYCAMORE CLASS OF 2020]

Awards, Achievements, Scholarships

NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP FINALISTS

North Central High School
Akshay Guttikonda

Park Tudor
Abby Cheng
Aditi Dey
Alex Lu
Aarish Sakib
Rohan Shah
Hanna Warren

University High School
Marie Coutant

NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP SEMIFINALISTS

Park Tudor
Danica Wei

NATIONAL MERIT COMMENDED SCHOLARS

Carmel High School
Athul Ramkumar

North Central
Erik Haggstrom

Park Tudor
T.J. Cole
Anastasia Ebersole
Cooper Grabow
Oliver Seifert
Alexa Wei
Kaden Xu

University High School of Indiana
Keegan Pyatt

INDIANA ACADEMIC ALL-STARs

North Central High School
Akshay Guttikonda

Park Tudor
Alex Lu

Each high school may nominate one senior for consideration as an Academic All-Star, based on criteria such as number of AP, IB, ACP classes, standardized test scores, extracurricular activities, and community service involvement.

2024 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM CANDIDATES

Aditi Dey
Park Tudor

Akshay Guttikonda
North Central High School

Alex Lu
Park Tudor

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program recognizes and honors the nation's most distinguished graduating high school seniors. These students demonstrate exceptional talent in the visual, creative, and performing arts as well as ability and accomplishment in career and technical education fields. Annually, up to 161 seniors are named as Presidential Scholars, one of the nation's highest honors for students.



RISING STARS OF INDIANA CLASS OF 2024 (SENIORS)

North Central High School
Akshay Guttikonda

Carmel High School
Jonathan Yang

Park Tudor
Aditi Dey
Anastasia Ebersole
Alex Lu
Kaden Xu

NORTH CENTRAL INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM CANDIDATES

Akshay Guttikonda
Erik Haggstrom
Avery Outcalt

CARMEL DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR

Jonathan Yang

COCA COLA SCHOLARS SEMI-FINALIST

Carmel High School
Jonathan Yang

SENIOR PARK TUDOR CUM LAUDE SOCIETY

Abby Cheng
Aditi Dey
Anastasia Ebersole
Alex Lu
Emaline Morse
Rohan Shah
Hanna Warren
Kate Weigand
Kaden Xu

Many alumni siblings returned for the 2024 graduation ceremony.



SYCAMORE CLASS OF 2020

College Decisions

Solomon Arterburn
Ball State University

Nicholas Bullard
University of Notre Dame

Abby Cheng
Boston College

T.J. Cole
University of Miami, Florida

Marie Coutant
Purdue University

Mary Cudworth
Purdue University

Sruthi Devarapalli
Indiana University, Indianapolis

Aditi Dey
Brown University

Anastasia Ebersole
Duke University

Michael Fryburg
Carnegie Mellon University

Sara Fulk
Ball State University

Cooper Grabow
DePauw University

Akshay Guttikonda
Rutgers University

Erik Haggstrom
Washington University,
Saint Louis

Anna Hargrove
Indiana University

Annabel Hermacinski
Washington University,
Saint Louis

Lily Hovda
DePauw University

Lauren Janeira
Flagler College,
Saint Augustine, Florida

Calyx Kandel
Butler University

Valerie Kossmann
Purdue University

Will Loftus
Marietta College,
Marietta, Ohio

Alex Lu
University of Pennsylvania

Emaline Morse
Bates College

Sam Mulvey
Indiana University

Owen Murray
Rose-Hulman Institute of
Technology

Avery Outcalt
Indiana University

Nicholas Passarelli
DePauw University

Keegan Pyatt
DePaul University, Chicago

Athulya Ramkumar
Indiana University

Aarish Sakib
Butler University

Oliver Seifert
UCLA

Rohan Shah
Purdue University

Ria Tandra
University of Southern Indiana

Kara Wang
Purdue University

Hanna Warren
Carnegie Mellon University

Danica Wei
New York University

Alexa Wei
Chapman University

Kate Weigand
Indiana University

Drew Whelan
University of Notre Dame

Ben Wilkerson
Indiana University

Kaden Xu
Northwestern University

Jonathan Yang
Harvard University

Nelson You
Undecided

SYCAMORE CLASS OF 2024

High School Destinations

BREBEUF JESUIT BRAVES

Alex Cunningham
Arya Desai
Lila Epstein
Elin Glushik
Hugh Lavery
Shayen Maun

CARMEL GREYHOUNDS

Aditya Bhatia
Riya Chandra
Amy Cui
Viraj Gadeela
Laila Ghoneim
Nora Heikal
Abby Leivant
Anaya Mistry
Rohan Parikh
Joyce Tang

CATHEDRAL IRISH

Avery Neumeister

FISHERS TIGERS

Nick Molter

NORTH CENTRAL PANTHERS

Anais Beuoy

PARK TUDOR PANTHERS

Rachel Cudworth
Asha Gussick
Pari Ponugoti
Grant Porter
Chloe Sigua
Gavin Sigua
Sadie Sniderman
Evan Ting
Krishna Una
Justin Warren

PENDLETON HEIGHTS ARABIANS

Jeffrey Kirkendall

UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL OF INDIANA TRAILBLAZERS

Tess Eggeson
Sawyer Jackson
Parker Outcalt

ZIONSVILLE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL EAGLES

Greer Hanlon
Ella Pryor

AMERICAN HERITAGE STALLIONS (PALM BEACH, FLORIDA)

Alex Bramhill

JESUIT COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL OF DALLAS RANGERS

Raza Hassan

BOARDING SCHOOLS

CULVER MILITARY ACADEMIES EAGLES

Henry Martinson
Cole Welton

CHOATE ROSEMARY HALL WILD BOARS

Bea Hyatt

Alumni News and Notes

HIGH SCHOOL

North Central Siblings Continue Their Love Of Music Through High School

Deke Kandel '22, a junior at North Central High School (NCHS) is a 2024 ISMMA gold medalist for both solo and ensemble. He has been studying Jazz Trumpet with Professor Kent Hickey at Butler University. Deke recently joined the Kent Hickey Jazz Combo to perform at The Jazz Kitchen with guest artist Dr. Ansyn Banks, Professor of Trumpet, University of Louisville. He also performs in North Central's Wind Ensemble and had the opportunity to play at Carnegie Hall, by invitation, in March. Deke is also a third place finisher at State for National History Day 2024.

North Central recent graduate **Calyx Kandel** '20, a violinist, participated in the NCHS Symphony Orchestra that earned the title of ISMMA state finalist.

His ensemble won an ISMMA gold rating with distinction. He looks forward to continuing to participate in theater and orchestra productions at Butler University. He was vital member of the NCHS Nationally Qualifying Quiz Bowl team.

Park Tudor senior **Daniel Liu**, '21, has been named a co-winner of the 2023 Congressional App Challenge in Congressman Andre Carson's 7th District of Indiana. This Challenge is part of a nationwide STEM event in which participants compete against each other by creating and exhibiting their own software applications. There were a total of 11,334 students and 3,645 original applications this year from across the U.S. Daniel and his classmate's app, "Latin Learner," will be showcased in the lobby of the Capitol Building and on www.House.gov for next year.

Sycamore grads inducted into Park Tudor Cum Laude Society

Class of 2025 New Inductees:

Neela Gussick
Emily Hackwelder
Daniel Liu
Siri Vuppalandhi

Nate Liang '21 has been elected as Co-President of the student body at Phillips Andover Academy for the 2024-2025 academic year. "In terms of the role, each of the Co-President pairs builds close relationships with the students and faculty. We run student council meetings. Additionally, the other co-president and I meet with the Dean of Students, the Residential Life team, and the Dean of Studies team every Wednesday. We have breakfast with the Head of School once a month and give speeches at the Board of Trustees' dinners." Liang will be one of two student speakers at the Academy's 2025 commencement.

Seniors **Sophie Farnum** (North Central High School), **Elizabeth Schuth** (Westfield High School), and **Emily Hackwelder** (Park Tudor School), all Sycamore Class of 2021 alumnae, won the State National History Day Championship for Group Performance, performing *Madame Mystery: How Agatha Christie Transformed the Mystery Genre*. This is the fourth time in five years the team has won and the fifth straight year they have qualified for Nationals. The three first worked on a project together at Sycamore when they were in a Seventh Grade History Day Elective with Ms. Mihm. They have continued to compete annually together despite attending three different high schools.

Current University High School senior **Mikey Cardwell**, '21, set a new school record for the highest points scored in a single season during Academic Team competition. Mikey scored a total of 254 points during the season, besting the record previously held by another Sycamore alumnus, Jack Paganelli '14, who had scored 252 points.

COLLEGE

Congratulations to recent Davidson College graduate **Anya Neumeister** '16, for winning the Mario Vargas Llosa Award, which is granted annually to only one Davidson undergraduate Spanish major or minor. The award recognizes a student who has demonstrated outstanding achievement in all upper-division courses and has shown exemplary involvement in extra-curricular activities related to Spanish.

Robbie Sheffield '16, was selected by a committee of coaches and administrators from DePauw University's Athletic Department as the recipient of the Phil Eskew Award. The Eskew Award, named after Dr. Phil Eskew, a 1963 DePauw alumnus, is presented each year to a senior male student-athlete who best exemplifies effort and excellence in academics, athletics, leadership, integrity, dedication to the team, campus involvement, and community service. Sheffield is now back at Sycamore for the 24-25 school year as a 1st Grade teaching assistant.

Northwestern University Wildcat Women's Basketball player, **Jasmine McWilliams** '16, was named a "BIG 10 Distinguished Scholar" and made the Academic All-BIG 10 Team.

PROFESSIONAL

Kyle Hagner, Ph.D. '97 was awarded a 2024 STEM Educator Award for putting innovation at the forefront of his lessons. He has degrees in electrical engineering (MSEE, Purdue University) and physics (Ph.D., Indiana University). As a graduate student, he taught courses in semiconductor circuit design, mechanics, electricity and magnetism, acoustics, and pre-calculus. He currently teaches AP Physics at Columbus North High School in Columbus, Indiana and sponsors the school's chess club. Dr. Hagner is deeply passionate about science education. He explains, "A lot of jobs are increasingly demanding STEM skills. STEM helps to instill a sense of awe and wonder in students and allows them to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are applicable to their everyday lives."

Nikki Sullivan, M.D. '03 has been selected as the chair of Dermatology for Mayo Clinic Health System (MCHS) in Minnesota. Dr. Sullivan will be responsible for defining and implementing a strategic plan with the aim of quality, safety, efficiency, patient experience, and staff satisfaction. In addition, she will provide leadership to physicians and advanced practice provider colleagues. Sullivan received her undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame. She earned her medical degree at the Indiana University School of Medicine and completed her Dermatology residency at the University of Michigan. She completed a fellowship in micrographic surgery and cutaneous oncology at Skin Center Tauranga in New Zealand. She joined the Mayo Clinic Health System in Mankato, Minnesota in 2022 as a dermatologist and Mohs surgeon. She will continue her Mankato-based practice in addition to the Minnesota chair of Dermatology role.

If you have any professional updates or news to share, please email
omalley.mary@sycamoreschool.org

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Mary Brody, '06

Director of Instruction for Grades 3–8 at KIPP Indy Unite Elementary



Before 3rd Graders enter their classrooms in the morning, Mary Brody has already ensured they are well-prepared to engage in meaningful daily lessons. Brody created and offers 3rd Grade students a before-school tutoring program entitled “Rising Readers.”

Brody, the Senior Director of ELA (English Language Arts) Achievement for Kindergarten through 8th Grades at KIPP Indy Public Schools, has 12 years of experience in education. Before her current role, she was both a 1st Grade and 3rd Grade lead teacher after joining KIPP in 2016.

At KIPP, Mary works alongside the school leadership team to ensure that it has the knowledge, skills, and support necessary to help students access the high-quality education they deserve.

As a participant in the Emerging Leaders Fellowship, Brody is part of a three-year program for educators in Indianapolis charter or innovation schools. The first year of the fellowship, “Establish Your Leadership,” had her traveling to Washington, D.C., New Orleans, and Nashville, where she participated in a combination of leadership development training sessions and visiting schools. She also went to New York City, visiting two high-performing charter schools and engaging in professional development with education leaders during her stay.

Additionally, in the 2023-24 school year, Mary received \$10K in funding from The Mind Trust in Indianapolis to drive academic achievement at her school. “I secured a grant that funded early bus routes for 3rd Graders, enabling them to engage in before-school literacy tutoring. Five days a week, more than 30 3rd Graders now arrive at school an hour early to participate in Rising Readers. Studies

demonstrate the importance of students reading at grade level by the time they leave 3rd Grade; post-pandemic, this remains our students’ biggest academic gap,” she explains. “By providing early bus routes and before-care for siblings, we can eliminate barriers for 3rd Graders who would otherwise not be able to engage in high-dosage tutoring.”

In her second year of the fellowship, she’s also involved in “Mastering Your Craft,” which entails training specific to her role. She will engage in a program centered around school leadership, curriculum, and instructional development.

Next school year, her final year of the fellowship, titled “Wielding Your Influence”, will include executive coaching and opportunities to build a network across the city by leading professional development or mentoring other leaders.

“The Emerging Leaders Fellowship has been a phenomenal experience thus far,” she says. “I look forward to continuing to grow and develop. It is an honor to do this work with so many passionate educators and in such a wonderful community.”

“As an educator, I often get the prompt, ‘Who was your favorite teacher?’ My answer is always Miss O’Malley—thank you for pouring into me!”

In 2016, Brody won IPS #51’s Teacher of the Year Award, and during her first semester at KIPP, won an Excellence in Teaching award. A 2010 Brebeuf Jesuit High School graduate, she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Depauw University and her Master’s in teaching from Marian University. Mary’s brother, Scott, is a 2002 Sycamore graduate, and her sister, Courtney, Class of 2013, just began work as a Pre-K teaching assistant at Sycamore. ●

Alumni Births and Nuptials

BIRTHS 2023-2024

Terry Sullivan '04 and his wife, Kelly, welcomed their first born, a baby girl, Charlotte, in August in New York City.

Malia Moore Gannon '00 and her husband, Steven, had their third son, Boden, born in September in Zionsville.

Kristen Lange '07 and her husband, Barrett, who reside in San Diego, California welcomed their first child, a daughter, Marlowe, in October.

Andy Warren '02 and his wife, Mandy, had their first child, a son, Lark Garrad, born in October in New York, New York.

Celia Ristow '06 and **Julian Toumey '06** who graduated from Sycamore and North Central together and were married in 2020 had their first child, a son, William Hugh Toumey, born in December in Indianapolis.

Grace Kennedy '04 and her husband, James Wallin, welcomed their first child, a daughter, Emilia, born in December in Indianapolis.

Ben Borgmann '00 and his wife, Jessie, welcomed their first child, a son named Wesley Boyce, born in early February in Jasper, Indiana. His grandmother is former Head of School "Nana" Borgmann.



Tommy McKay '08 and his wife, Alexa, had their first child, a daughter, Rory, in March in Austin, Texas. Tommy is the son of Mrs. Cindy McKay, long-time 2nd and 3rd Grade Assistant.

Becca Passarelli Heiden '06 and her husband, Brendan, welcomed their first child, a baby girl, Emma Kelcey, in April in Berwyn, Pennsylvania.

Shelby Kroeger Craven '06 and her husband, Mike, had their first child, a daughter, Camille Kay, born in May in San Diego, California.

Please email omalley.mary@sycamoreschool.org with any family updates.

NUPTIALS 2023-2024

Alex Brethauer '02 married Megan Henning in September in Indianapolis. Several members from Alex's Sycamore class were in attendance, including Matt Giffin, Scott Brody, and Andy Warren.

Samantha Ayers '10 married Jess Kobren in September in Indianapolis.

Lauren Ciulla '11 married Connor O'Donnell in September in Carmel. Several Sycamore alumni from various grade levels were in attendance.

Kat Shirrell '05 married Yonni Shelmerdine in September in Hamilton County.

Anna Papazian '05 married David Ong in September in Indianapolis.

"Kat Shirrell and I have been friends since we were 11! We've been doing annual Christmas Day movies together since then, missing only a couple if someone was out of town. Even if there are long stretches of time when we don't see each other, we always reconnect as if no time has passed at all. Sometimes you're lucky enough to make a friend for life." – Anna Papazian '05



In October outside of Washington, D.C., **Chris Rosiello '02** and Kathryn Martucci were married by Chris's Sycamore classmate and friend **Neil Shah**. In addition to the officiant, two other Sycamore classmates, **Matt Giffin** and **Scott Brody**, were in the wedding party. The Huster brothers were also there – **Nick Huster's '04** band came from Texas to play at the festivities, and **William Huster '02** attended and played with the band as well.

Jacob Baldwin '08 married Olivia Ortmann in January in Carmel. Jacob's Sycamore classmate Bill Ristow was part of the wedding party.

Elaina Vohra, DDS, '12 married Dr. Sean Callahan in June in Carmel. They live in Batavia, Illinois.

WHEN THEY COME BACK



UPPER LEFT: **Lauren Janiera '20** volunteered her time as a workshop assistant at the annual STEAM Conference. UPPER RIGHT: **Hudson Pangan '20** spent the summer working in Extended Care at Sycamore Summer Camp. LOWER LEFT: **Alex Brethauer, Kara Findley, and Alexandra Cochrane**, all from the Class of 2002, attended the Borgmann Inspiration Fund gathering in January. LOWER RIGHT: **Alex Brinkman '14** came back to substitute teach during the 2nd semester.





TOP: Several members of the **Class of 2020** and many faculty members attended the Senior Send-off in May.
 LOWER LEFT: **Charlie Williamson '23** and **T.J. Truesdale '23** "ham it up" at the Media Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.
 LOWER RIGHT: **Isaac Meng '14** attended the annual SchuthCon event held at school during the holidays.



WHEN THEY GET TOGETHER



UPPER LEFT: Caroline D. Bradley Scholars **Dominic Gasper '23**, **Emily Hackwelder '21**, and **Nate Liang '21** met up at the Bradley Seminar in Pasadena, California in February. UPPER RIGHT: The **Narayanan** and **Sinha** siblings, along with **Agrayan Gupta '15**, strike a college football pose. LOWER LEFT: **Scott Brody**, **Andy Warren**, **Matt Giffin**, and **Alex Brethauer**, all from the Class of 2002, enjoy time together again at Alex's wedding. LOWER RIGHT: Getting together at the North Central/Carmel Cross Country Meet are **Navya Shah '23**, **Sara Fulk '20**, **Evelyn Cunningham '22**, and **Kelsey Rehmel '22**.

Sycamore Earns First In Nation at Scholastic Achievement League



Sycamore finished first in the U.S. in the American Scholastic Achievement League (ASAL). The ASAL contest featured questions on General Knowledge (food, art, sports, music, current events, entertainment, mythology, etc.), Language and Literature, Geography, History, Science, and Mathematics. **Evan Ting** was the top overall scorer for Sycamore and also had the top score in Indiana. Ting, **Gavin Sigua**, **Justin Warren**, and **Alex Bramhill** were the top scorers and the combined Sycamore scores resulted in a best-in-the-nation finish. The students received individual engraved gold medals along with a plaque for the school.

Choir and Band Earn Gold at ISSMA

Sycamore bands and choirs earned high honors at the statewide ISSMA Organizational Festival in 2024. All four of the Sycamore ensembles received Gold ratings, with the 7/8 band receiving the honor "With Distinction."

Sycamore Mathcounts Wins 9th State Championship

Sycamore earned their 9th Indiana MATHCOUNTS State Championship this spring as the team of **Shayen Maun**, **Gavin Sigua**, **Justin Warren**, and **Evan Ting** won the title. The competition was held at Rose Hulman Institute of Technology in Terre Haute. Individually, Ting led Sycamore with a 2nd place finish, qualifying him to be one of the four team members on the Indiana State MATHCOUNTS Team that competed in Washington, D.C. on May 12. Following **Ting**, **Warren** finished 6th, **Sigua** was 7th, **Maun** 11th, **Amy Cui** 14th, and **Krishna Una** 16th. Also competing for Sycamore were **Rohan Parikh**, **Chloe Sigua**, and **Kelvin Yan**. Sycamore had six of the top 16 finishers in the state. The team is coached by **Trent Tormoehlen** and **Bob Fischer**. Sycamore's first place finish enabled Tormoehlen and Fischer to coach the Indiana team in the national competition.

Sycamore Writers Win Regional Awards; Four Advance to Nationals

Seven Sycamore writers won nine regional awards this year in the Regional Scholastic Art and Writing competition. Four advanced to compete at the national competition.

The Regional competition included students ages 13–18 from Central and Southern Indiana.

GOLD KEY WINNERS (advanced to nationals):

Anais Beuoy's poem "But Little Girls Can't Talk"

Anais Beuoy's poem "Tell Me When?"

Laila Ghoneim's critical essay "The Word Choice of Hatred"

Nick Molter's satirical piece "Joining a Soccer Team: A Guide"

SILVER KEYS:

Anais Beuoy's poem "13"

HONORABLE MENTION:

Arya Desai's poem "The Scars We Bear"

Elin Glushik's memoir "Make a Wish"

Greer Hanlon's poem "Teenage Girl"

Nora Heikal's poem "Beyond the Hidden Shadows"

Sycamore Students Qualify for History Day Nationals

Four Sycamore students represented Indiana in the History Day Nationals this summer.

JUNIOR PAPER:

1st – “The Quest for the Ultimate Map: The Human Genome Project”
– **Mina Raiesdana**

JUNIOR INDIVIDUAL DOCUMENTARY:

1st – “A Revolutionary Invention: The iPhone”
– **Lucy Ko**

JUNIOR INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE:

3rd – “Polio vs. World: How the Polio Vaccine Decrease Paralysis”
– **Mikhaela Starnino**

JUNIOR INDIVIDUAL WEBSITE:

2nd – “Battle of Okinawa: A Turning Point in World War II”
– **Savannah Reymer**

“In the four years I’ve been at Sycamore, the most we’ve ever seen advance to Nationals is two students. I am so proud of them.”

– **ALLISON HAYDEN**
Sycamore history teacher and team advisor

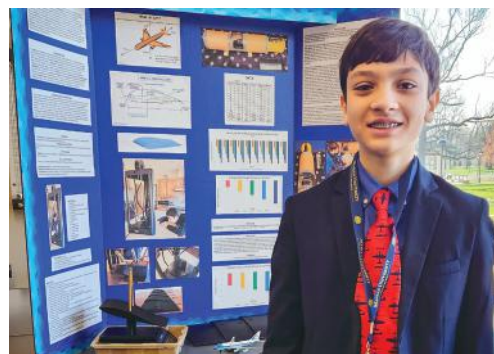
Peng Earns Civic Honor

The Sandra Day O’Connor Institute for American Democracy named Sycamore student **Prudence Peng** the 2024 winner in the Middle School division of its 5th Annual National Civics Challenge. Prudence created a documentary video highlighting Justice Sandra Day O’Connor’s legacy of breaking barriers, civics education and engagement, and democracy advancement.

Author Troy Cummings Visits Students

Noted author **Troy Cummings** visited Sycamore in May, presenting a pair of talks in the Sycamore Theater, one for Kindergarteners and 1st Graders, and another for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Graders. Cummings is a Hoosier author and illustrator of more than 40 children’s books including *The Notebook of Doom*, *The Binder of Doom*, *Can I Be Your Dog?*, and *I Found a Kitty*.

Sycamore 8th Grader Earns Multiple Science Awards



Sycamore’s **Joshua Alcantara** earned 1st Place in the 7th Grade division at the Central Indiana Regional Science and Engineering Fair at Marian University in March. His project was titled “Aloft! Airfoil Aerodynamics: Predicting Relative Airfoil Lift During Wind Tunnel Testing With Laminar Flow.” The current Sycamore 8th Grader also earned the NASA Earth System Science Project Award. In addition, Alcantara finished 3rd in the state last spring in the 7th Grade division at the Hoosier Science and Engineering Fair at IU Indy. He was also the winner of the US Air Force Award for Outstanding Science & Engineering Project and the Excellence in Physics Award, received special recognition from the EPA, and was nominated for the Thermo Fisher Scientific Junior Innovators Challenge 2024.

Sycamore International Festival

Nearly 600 people attended the 2024 International Festival at Sycamore in April. The event featured information booths for 72 countries, art and music performances, an Italian dinner, food samples, crafts, and a room-sized world map. An official 48-page International Festival 2024 Cookbook, containing 32 recipes from the event, was designed by Sycamore parent Nancy Colone.



Ko, Peng Honored With Music Scholarships

The Indianapolis Youth Orchestra's final concert of the 2023–24 season at the Hilbert Circle Theatre included special honors for two Sycamore students. **Lucy Ko**, Concert Orchestra Assistant Concertmaster, and **Prudence Peng**, Philharmonic Orchestra Concertmaster, were awarded Herman Whitfield, III Memorial Scholarships for their excellence in musicianship throughout the season. Prudence also performed her solo of Vivaldi's *Spring Concerto*. The performance was part of the recognition for winning the Philharmonic Concerto Competition.



Watch Sycamore's 2024 Alumni Speaker Series Presentations Online

Watch the three presentations delivered during the Alumni Speaker Series at Sycamore in April 2024

ALUMNI PRESENTERS:

Evan Reller ('99)

"The Unknown Path: Finding Your Life"

Jasmine McWilliams ('16)

"Beyond the Game: Discovering My True Self as a Black Woman in Academia and Athletics"

Aditi Dey ('20)

"Tempo-ramental: The Intersection of Music and Neuroscience"



WATCH VIDEO:
*Sycamore 2024
Alumni Speaker
Series Presentations*

Spanish Students Earn National Honors

More than 70 Sycamore students participated in the 2024 National Spanish Exam (NSE) administered by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP). The two-part, 80-minute, online exam is designed to assess their proficiency (reading and interpreting) and achievement (vocabulary and grammar) at either HS Level 1 (for 7th graders) or HS Level 2 (for 8th graders).



Sycamore's **Layla Emmert** (class of 2025) finished one question shy of a perfect score. Of the 78 total Sycamore MS participants, 60 placed in the top 50th percentile nationally, with 38 of the 60 earning medals for being in the 75th percentile or higher. Additionally, 16 Sycamore alumni participated in either HS Level 3 or HS Level 4 of the NSE, with all receiving Honorable Mention or higher.

NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL FINALISTS

(95th percentile or higher)

8TH GRADERS: **Pari Ponugoti, Cole Welton, Nick Molter, Gavin Sigua, Chloe Sigua, and Alex Bramhill** and 7th Graders **Layla Emmert and Izzy Abraham**.

NATIONAL SILVER MEDAL FINALISTS

(85th–94th percentile)

8TH GRADE: **Rohan Parikh, Alex Cunningham, Arya Desai, Asha Gussick, Raza Hassan, Justin Warren, Rachel Cudworth, Elin Glushik, Jeffrey Kirkendall, Abby Leivant, Tess Eggeson, Viraj Gadeela, Sawyer Jackson, and Joyce Tang**

7TH GRADE: **Nirdvaita Chandrana, Jayden Virvani, Harlan Kelly, Theo Kelly, Rachel Louis, and Yazan Afaneh**

NATIONAL BRONZE MEDAL FINALISTS

(75th–84th percentile)

8TH GRADE: **Laila Ghoneim, Henry Martinson, Shayen Maun, Avery Neumeister, Anaya Mistry, and Parker Outcalt**

7TH GRADE: **Jane Ai, Landon Truesdel, Joshua Alcantara, and Matthew Roth**

FACULTY NEWS AND NOTES



Spanish Teacher Joanne Jones Earns Indiana Teaching Award

Joanne Jones, Sycamore's Early Childhood and Lower School Spanish teacher, was awarded the state of Indiana's Excellence in Education Award from Alpha Delta Kappa. The honor is given to active educators for their outstanding contributions to education. The award considers an applicant's job history, professional philosophy, professional leadership involvement, commitment to professional development, growth as a lifelong learner, school involvement, and community activities. Indiana is a member of the Alpha Delta Kappa North Central Region, which includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ontario, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Joanne was honored at the North Central Regional Conference in Des Moines, Iowa this summer.

Stahl Accepted into Johns Hopkins Ph.D. Program

Head of Lower School **Tiffany Stahl** has been accepted into the Johns Hopkins School of Education Doctoral Program. She will receive her doctorate in educational leadership, with a specialization in creativity, advanced learning, and twice-exceptionality. This four-year degree is mostly remote-based, with occasional trips to the campus in Baltimore.

Farewell Reception for Teachers Leaving Sycamore

Wonderful moments of love and appreciation were shared on the morning of May 16 as the Sycamore School Association (SSA) honored teachers who were leaving Sycamore for their next adventure. The SSA hosted a breakfast reception for **Savanah Estridge**, **Olivia Mayer**, **Allison Nisonson**, **Maddie Johnson**, and **Amy DeRosa**. Each has made Sycamore a better school through their teaching. They will be missed.



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SYCAMORE

Sycamore parents and friends enjoy the annual Symphony on the Playground

