

ETHS DIGEST

Evanston Township High School District 202 Evanston, Illinois

Popular Annual Financial Report For the year that ended June 30, 2020

Welcome to ETHS District 202

Eric Witherspoon, Superintendent

This *ETHS Digest* is designed to be an easy-to-access annual report with short articles and helpful



visuals, providing an abundance of information about Evanston Township High School District 202 (ETHS). Whether you are just becoming familiar with this extraordinary high school district or your family has been part of the Wildkit family for multiple generations, I trust you will enjoy

learning more about one of our nation's premier high schools.

Even in a year defined by the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, ETHS has been utilizing the e-learning-format. While we have not yet been able to enjoy in-person learning, ETHS has been having real school in a virtual environment. And while we long for the day that our students can return to ETHS in

person, we continue providing quality and challenging classes with abundant learning, and abundant extracurricular and co-curricular activities as this *ETHS Digest* chronicles.

I hope this *ETHS Digest* stimulates your curiosity to learn even more about ETHS. Today's Wildkits enjoy boundless school spirit and, just like generations before them, proudly wear the orange and blue. They excel in academics, in the fine and performing arts, in competitions, and more. But most of all, our students excel in being good human beings who are learning and growing in a challenging and nurturing environment, reflecting on their own mindsets and experiences, developing their skills, and recognizing they are highly valued for their individuality, talents, and aspirations. ETHS is a place of belonging for our students as they learn and grow.

ETHS has a powerful story to tell. Enjoy.

Snapshot of ETHS

Mary Rodino, ETHS Chief Financial Officer

This 9th annual *ETHS Digest: Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR)* is designed to give Evanston/Skokie residents an overview of Evanston Township High School District 202—a snapshot of the district's finances for the prior year, as well as general information that highlights student achievement, academic initiatives, partnerships, and programs.

The selected financial information is taken from statements found in our audited Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the last fiscal year, a detailed report prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). The PAFR, however, is unaudited and summarizes, in an accessible manner, the financial data reported in the CAFR.

For the 8th consecutive year, the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada, which reviews this publication, granted last year's *ETHS Digest* an Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular

Annual Financial Reporting, a prestigious national award recognizing conformance with the highest standards for preparation of state and local government popular reports. To receive this award, valid for one year,



a government unit must publish a PAFR whose contents conform to program standards of creativity, presentation, understandability, and reader appeal. We believe this new *ETHS Digest*, which reflects the 2019-20 school/fiscal year, continues to conform to those standards.

The ETHS administration and school board firmly believe in public scrutiny and transparency of the district finances. Full copies of the district's financial documents, including the CAFR that contains detailed financial information, are available in the ETHS business office or at the district website: www.eths.k12.il.us. Call 847-424-7100 for more information.

Cover photo: Last July 3, four varsity players on the ETHS boys' basketball team, and many others, rose to support the national social justice movement by painting "BLACK LIVES MATTER" along Dodge Ave. in front of the school with the blessing of school and City officials. Photo by Frank Montagna. (See related story on page 11.)

ETHS by the numbers 2019-20

Students and faculty

- 3,693 students (2019-20)
- Student ethnic distribution: Am. Indian–0.2%, Asian–5.8%, Black/African American–25.9%, Hispanic-Latino–18.8%, Native Hawaiian–0.1%, Two or more races–3.4%, White–45.8%
- Low-income enrollment 37% (2019-20)
- Number of certified teachers 264 (76.2% with advanced degrees)
- 4-yr. graduation rate 92% (2019)
- 5-yr. graduation rate 94% (2018)
- College attendance rate 76% (Class of 2018)

ETHS class of 2020 profile

- 7 National Merit Semifinalists, 39 Commended Students
- 221 Illinois State Scholars

District goals for 2018-22

Adopted by the Board of Education, May 23, 2016

GOAL 1 Equitable and Excellent Education

ETHS will increase each student's academic and functional trajectory to realize college/career readiness and independence. Recognizing that racism is the most devastating factor contributing to the diminished achievement of students, ETHS will strive to eliminate the predictability of academic achievement based upon race. ETHS will also strive to eliminate the predictability of academic achievement based upon family income, disabilities and status as English language learners.

GOAL 2 Student Well-being

ETHS will connect each student with supports to ensure that each student will experience socialemotional development and enhanced academic growth.

GOAL 3 Fiscal Accountabilty

ETHS will provide prudent financial stewardship.

GOAL 4 Community Engagement and Partnerships

ETHS will strengthen parent/guardian relationships to create an effective continuum of learning and seamless transitions into and out of ETHS.

Meet the ETHS Board of Education



President—Pat Savage-Williams **Vice Pres.**—Monique Parsons **Members**—Jude Laude, Patricia Maunsell, Stephanie Teterycz, Gretchen Livingston, Elizabeth Rolewicz, Carmiya Bady **(student representative)**

Pat Savage-Williams

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Budget overview

In these unprecedented times, ETHS had a challenging 2019-20 school year (FY 20) in many ways. Not only did the state continue to implement its new Evidence Based Funding program, which leaves ETHS's state-aid funding flat with no expected increases (and possible future decreases), but the COVID-19 pandemic caused all governmental agencies, including schools, to re-evaluate their budgeted expenses and to make plans for the future unknown. As Illinois schools switched to remote learning in March 2020, ETHS finished the school year with a robust remote learning program.

In addition, other major financial threats to the district remain on the horizon. The state is considering a property tax freeze to assist taxpayers seeking financial help due to COVID's impact on the economy and their lives. A lingering financial threat from the state is the potential pension reform issue. If it would someday pass, the legislature could assess school districts a portion of normal pension costs for certified staff under the teachers' retirement system. The costs for this shift could amount to over \$2 million a year in new expenses. In addition, tax-caps that don't keep up with increased costs of supplies, energy, services, health benefits, and employee compensation are still in place.

Despite these challenges, the ETHS school board adopted a balanced budget—for the 14th consecutive year—of \$90.6 million in expenditures, 5.5% more than the FY 19 budget. The operating revenue budget of \$79.4 million was up 4.1% over the previous year. Typically, the budget is 2-3% over the year before. The majority of the increase was due to salary and benefit costs, and planned transfers.

ministration use Value-Based Budgeting, focusing cuts as far from the classroom as possible.

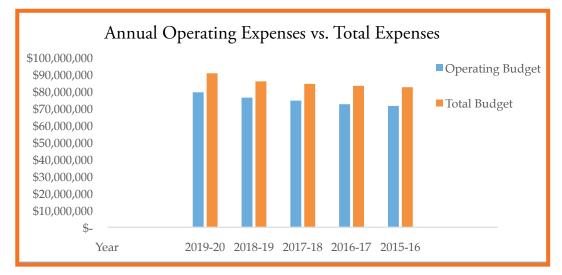
The fund balance of the General Fund increased by nearly \$1.5 million during FY 20, partly due to a reduction in certain expenses during remote learning. Cash reserves and fund balances continue to be within the District's acceptable ranges per the Fund Balance Policy.

Funding was up somewhat due to the expected influx of revenue from the expiring Washington National Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District and from taxes on new property, which added \$1.5.-\$1.8 million to the district. This new revenue was transferred to the Capital Improvement Fund for much needed infrastructure projects.

What continues to be of concern is not what is known but what is NOT known. We don't know how much COVID will impact the budget and for how long. We don't know what the legislature will decide about teacher pensions, whether a property tax freeze will be mandated, and how interest rates will react to the economic downturn. Our close monitoring of economic events and legislative decisions over the next year will continue to be critical.

The revenue and expenditure charts on these next two pages reflect final budget numbers for the 2019-20 school year. For more comprehensive information, see the district's audited Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) in the Business Office or online at the school's website (www.eths.k12.il.us under Business Services).

Balancing the FY 20 budget required conservative budgeting and deliberate containment of personnel costs, most of which are determined by contracts. When considering cost reductions, the school board and ad-



Where does the money come from?

ETHS District 202 receives funding from local, state, and federal sources. The operating budget includes the Education (General), Operations and Maintenance, Transportation Funds, and Working Cash Funds, as referenced in the district's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The district's operating budget makes up 88% of all revenues as well as 88% of all expenditures. The funds excluded from the operating budget are the Municipal Retirement, Debt Service, Capital Projects, and Fire Prevention Funds. FY 20 operating budget resources from all sources totaled \$79,405,000, a 4.1% increase from FY 19. Increased revenues come from small increases in the Consumer Price Index and also from new property development, both of which cause property tax increases. Property taxes, at 84%, continue to be the largest source of revenue. The next largest revenue category at 5% is other local revenues.

Property Taxes. Evanston property owners pay taxes to several entities, including District 202. ETHS's portion of the total property tax bill is just over 25%. This percentage has remained constant or slightly reduced over the past five years. For FY 20, property taxes represented 84% of the total ETHS operating revenue. In addition, property taxes pay for the Bond and Interest Fund, which covers annual debt service on outstanding bonds, and the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund, which pays retirement benefits for non-certified staff. The Operations & Maintenance Fund and Transportation Fund are also partially supported by property taxes.

District 202 is subject to property tax caps, which

limit the growth of taxes to 5% or the Illinois Consumer Price Index, whichever is lower. The district fiscal year straddles the current and previous years' levies (2.1% for 2018, 1.9% for 2019), so the dollars available for this budget were a blend of these rates. Property taxes for the operating funds were \$66.7 million for FY 19.

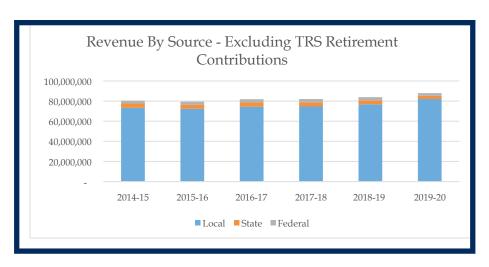
Corporate Personal Property Replacement Taxes (CPRT) are part of the state income taxes and generally reflect the state of the Illinois economy. The CPRT goes into the Education, Operations-Maintenance, and IMRF funds. District 202 received \$2.1 million for FY 20.

Other Local Revenues come from tuition, interest on investments, food-service income, student fees, Tax Increment Financing revenue, and other local sources. ETHS received \$4.62 million in FY 20 in Other Local Revenues, approximately .4% higher than FY 19.

Evidence Based Funding has replaced **General State Aid** and incorporates general aid along with some former categorical aid payments. This revenue source remained flat for FY 20. Future declines are highly likely due to the state's economy.

State Categorical Aid is aimed at specific needs and programs, including special-education personnel, transportation, bilingual programs, and others. FY 20 categorical revenues were \$835,000 compared with \$979,000 in FY 19.

Federal Aid goes toward Title I, Title II, student meal subsidies. IDEA, and ETHS Health Center costs. Total funding for FY 20 was \$2.9 million compared with \$3.4 million in FY 19. Reductions are partly due to changes in expenses due to 4th quarter remote learning.



Where does the money go?

The operating expenditure budget proposed for District 202 is \$79.4 million. This includes all the operating funds—Education, Operations and Maintenance, Transportation, and Working Cash funds. This represents a 4.1% increase over FY 19. For the operating funds, salaries and benefits continue to dominate the costs. Salaries represent 68% of the budget and fringe benefits are at 9%—therefore, 77% of the budget is personnel cost-related. The next highest categories are purchased services at 9% and tuition at 5%. Supplies and materials represent 4% of costs.

Salaries are mainly determined by negotiated contracts with the six labor unions in District 202. Actual salaries amounted to approximately \$54.6 million, up 2.63% over FY 19.

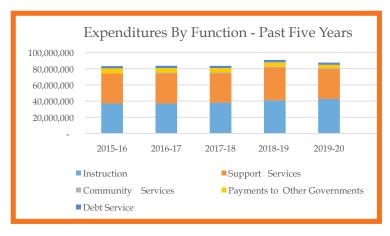
Employee Fringe Benefits include health, life, and optional dental insurance, and Social Security, Medicare, and pension expenses. Total

fringe benefits costs for FY 20 were estimated to be \$7.0 million, similar to the previous year. Health claims vary from year to year.

Purchased Services. These expenditures for FY 20 are estimated to be \$6.2 million, down 8% (\$500,000) from FY 19. The District makes every effort to maintain the significant reductions made here in previous years. Decreases in this category during FY 20 were mainly due to reductions attributed to remote learning during COVID-19.

Supplies/Materials. These expenses are for office supplies and materials, and once again ETHS is trying to keep costs down. The total for FY 20 was \$3.41 million, down \$300,000 from FY 19 (\$3.7 million).

Capital Outlay. Capital outlay expenditures in the operating funds for FY 19 amounted to \$1.18 million, almost the same as FY 19.



Other Objects. Expenditures here amounted to \$350,000, a slight increase from FY 19.

Tuition. Tuition decreased by 25% to \$4.5 million for FY 20. Significant decreases were experienced as some off-campus programs changed to remote learning during the pandemic.

Excellence awards for financial reporting

For the 12th year, the Association of School Business Officials International awarded ETHS its Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting award for its FY 19 *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report* (annual audit), an award earned by fewer than 10% of Illinois school districts.

Also for the 12th year, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) awarded ETHS their Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Re-

porting for having met or exceeded the program's high standards for financial reporting and accountability. Fewer than 5% of Illinois schools earn this award. These GFOA budget honors are in addition to its renewed award to ETHS for the Popular Annual Financial Report (*ETHS Digest*).

ETHS has maintained its Moody's Aaa bond rating since 2008. This highest possible rating allows the District to borrow at the lowest possible rates.

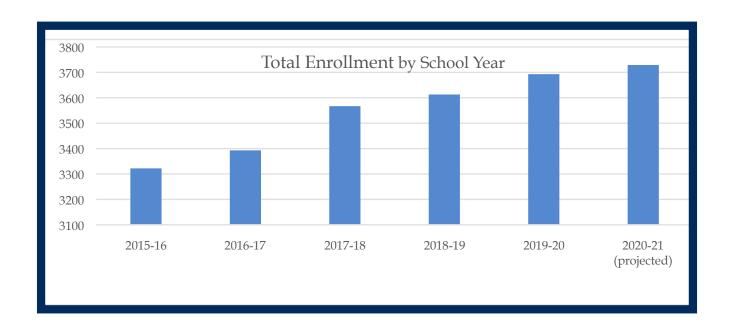
ETHS ranked among top high schools

In April, *U.S. News & World Report* released its "Best High Schools" rankings for 2020, placing Evanston Township High School (ETHS) at 37 in Illinois and 773 in the nation. Overall, ETHS received a score of 95.66 out of 100 on the national rankings scorecard.

The *U.S. News* Best High Schools report ranks nearly 18,000 public high schools, out of a review of more than 24,000 in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. According to the *U.S. News* website, the top-ranked public high schools around the country include a mix of traditional, charter and magnet schools. The highest-ranked schools are those whose students excelled on state tests and performed beyond expectations; participated in and passed a variety of college-level exams; and graduated in high proportions.

"I am greatly impressed with our students and staff. We are not a magnet school nor a selective enrollment school and, yet, this high school ranks at the top 3% of high schools in the nation for which data was even considered," said ETHS District 202 Superintendent Eric Witherspoon. "Our Wildkits are proudly keeping up the strong tradition of excellence at ETHS."

Six indicators were used on a weighted scale to produce this year's ranking: College Readiness (30% of the ranking); Math and Reading proficiency (20%); Math and Reading performance (20%); Underserved Student Performance (10%); College Curriculum Breadth (10%); and Graduation rate (10%).



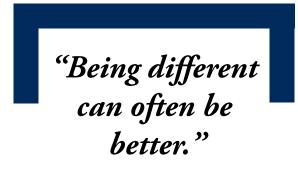


How ETHS has battled COVID

In spring 2020, COVID-19 greatly challenged individuals and institutions across the globe. The pandemic forced people to protect themselves and others from contracting the virus.

ETHS switched from in-person learning to remote

(e-learning) from home on March 17. Since all students and staff have school-issued Chromebooks laptops, and ETHS successfully field-tested e-learning last year, the school community was ready. Soon the state closed all Illinois schools to in-person learning for the rest of the school year.



E-learning can be done using various forms of technology such as computers, smartphones, or other mobile devices. ETHS teachers took attendance through an online form and through students' completion of their daily assignments sent online to the teacher. For students without WiFi access to the internet, ETHS issued over 150 WiFi hotspots that students can check out.

Remote learning hasn't been the only concern for ETHS. Keeping the school family up-to-date about academic concerns and other local issues have been discussed in live broadcasts on the ETHS website. ETHS social workers have been on call to help students and staff members work through emotional worries about the pandemic. The Science and Operations Departments scoured cupboards and closets throughout the school and located over 16,000 masks, gloves, and head bonnets that they donated to Evanston and St. Francis Hospitals.

ETHS's Nutrition Services Department partnered immediately with the City of Evanston and School District 65 to provide free meals to youth ages 1-18 affected by the school closures. (See related story.)

To help keep up social connections among friends during lockdown, Nichole Boyd, ETHS Student Activities Director, created a Virtual Spirit Week. To help ETHS athletes stay in shape during their time at home, the Athletic Department developed a computer app called Athletic U so students can access

workouts and videos for all sports to use at home. In addition, deeply aware of the loss of graduation for the Class of 2020, the school held a virtual graduation ceremony on May 24, and every Friday in May from 8:20-8:40pm, the lights and scoreboard at Lazier Football Stadium were lit up in honor of

the seniors.

Since then and over the summer, the ETHS administration, school board, staff, parents, and others discussed what a fall opening should look like. Gov. Pritzker said COVID in Illinois has surged and that while educators and parents nationwide were

unsure about students returning to school in person, school districts across the country—including ETHS—decided to continue with e-learning.

This remote schooling will remain in place until ETHS officials determine it is safe to move to a hybrid system that includes some in-person attendance. But for now, remote learning will continue into third quarter, which begins January 4.

This fall Enhanced E-Learning at ETHS has been different from what took place last spring. Teachers and students began the school year getting to better know each other online.

Each class meets remotely for two 70-minute blocks of live-group learning per week which also includes time for individual and small group work. Attendance is mandatory and monitored daily, expectations have been strengthened, and letter grading and daily/weekly routines are firmly in place. Students are expected to complete homework. There will be no semester exams. Rather students will do "authentic assessments," multi-media projects that synthesize what they've learned in class. Teachers offer academic support as well as routine office hours. So far, student attendance has been between 90-95%. And students, when surveyed, said while it's different, "It's real school and rigor is strong."

The ETHS Enhanced E-learning model also takes into account needed supports. ETHS repurposed Continued on page 10

Food, the common denominator

Providing food—for students, children, and families throughout the community—has become another lifeline that the schools, the city, and philanthropic entities in Evanston have rallied around during the COVID pandemic.



Food service staff prepare grab-and-go breakfast and lunch weekly for Evanston kids ages 1-18.

Last spring, and again this fall, Evanston School District 65 and ETHS have marshaled their respective Nutrition Services staff to provide meals, free of charge, to all children ages 18 and under. Each district's food personnel prepared and packaged five days' worth of meals (10 meals of breakfast and lunch per bag per week) and made them available for curbside pick-up once

a week. The food includes all hand-packaged items such as PB & J sandwiches, yogurt, bagels, fruit, veggies, muffins, cereal, milk, and more.

The City provided funding in the spring through government school lunch/child nutrition reimbursements and staffed four sites for food pick up. This fall's program was made possible through a waiver sponsored by the USDA, effective through December 31, 2020. There are no income-based restrictions for families to participate in the program.

Philanthropic donations have also helped the schools and community in the quest to feed Evanstonians who need food.

Last May, the Produce Alliance Foundation and Illinois Bone & Joint Institute (IBJI) CARES together donated \$5,000 in fruit and vegetables to help feed Evanston youth during the pandemic. Hundreds of pounds of produce were delivered to ETHS, where food service staff and volunteers sorted and placed apples, oranges, carrots, lettuce, and cucumbers into individual bags to be distributed to 1,600 families each week.

On July 18, three ETHS alumni—Grace Sarkor '15, Parker English '14, and Margaret Bamgbose '12—held a food collection and distribution event in the

school's front parking lot. They advertised locally and accepted drop-off donations the morning of the food drive. That afternoon, volunteers wearing masks and gloves distributed the food while food donors and recipients remained in their cars. In addition, the alums collaborated with Koi restaurant owner Sandy Chen, who donated 100 free meals as well as 3% of the restaurant's profits to the cause from diners who mentioned the event.

On September 27, the ETHS Community Service Club: Anti-Hunger Committee partnered with Evanston Connections for the Homeless, Giving Storeroom, Soup at Six, and the Vineyard to collect canned foods, shelf-stable items, and more, as well as monetary donations. In this first food drive, 1,125 items and more than \$400 were donated to Evanston organizations that support individuals and families facing food insecurity.



ETHS received a shipment of produce from the Produce Alliance Foundation and IBJI CARES.

Wellness resources for students and staff

Providing the best academic e-learning program for students during this COVID pandemic is proving to be an exhausting experience for students and families, but also for teachers and staff.

To help everyone cope with their feelings, ETHS Human Resources has provided two creative ways that help people focus on their own well-being—the Rebel Human program and the Virtual Calming Room.

Rebel Human is an organization that provides tools and training on mindfulness practices through the arts. ETHS alumna Jenny Arrington '94, co-founder of Rebel Human, along with other artists and wellness professionals, offer videos that feature creative ways to address mental health in connection to the body. Rebel Human teachers provide lessons in dance, writing music, choreography, singing, fitness, and meditating, among other ways to help

leave your worries behind. Teachers can integrate the lessons into their online teaching curriculum.

Another wellness resource is the Virtual Calming Room. English teacher Elizabeth Hartley and history teacher Aaron Becker are in charge



Jenny Arrington

of the program that offers activities in mindfulness, journaling, yoga and exercise, breathing, coloring, music, and more. The Virtual Calming Room is modeled after websites at colleges and high schools that have links to find tools and strategies to help with managing emotions and feelings.

How ETHS has battled COVID, continued from page 8

job roles of more than 30 district employees who were then trained to work directly with students and their families. Efforts focus on students who may require more follow-up to stay connected and get the most out of e-learning.

Non-teaching staff pulled together to help distribute about 6,000 individual student bags of books and supplies for the school year. As of October 12, ETHS distributed more than 2,000 additional bags of books and supplies to students via pick up and delivery. This effort of distribution is ongoing.

While there are no indoor club activities (many were held outside), extracurricular activities and parent meetings are being "reinvented," says Supt. Eric Witherspoon. Club meetings and the school's *Daily Bulletin* with up-to-date news are accessed remotely. *The Evanstonian* student newspaper is writ-

ten and published online. Athletics have been pared down: contact sports such as football and soccer have been postponed until spring. Parent-teacher conferences and financial-aid nights were held remotely. The Boosters Club held its annual Boosterpalooza fund-raiser—remotely—and raised over \$70,000, an all-time high, to support the school's extracurricular program.

"I am so proud that our Wildkit family is ready to do whatever it takes to help in these difficult times," said Witherspoon, adding, "Being different can often be better." For more information about the ETHS Reopening Plan, visit the ETHS website.

Black Lives Matter at ETHS!

This summer, ETHS boys' basketball players brought the national social justice movement home to Evanston when the team, current and alumni players, and many other ETHS alums painted "BLACK LIVES MATTER" in vivid yellow capital letters along Dodge Ave. in front of the school.



Photo by Steve Lemieux-Jordan, Evanston Photographic Studios

The project was initiated by four varsity players on the current boys' team: Elijah Bull, Jaylin Gibson, Isaiah Holden, and Blake Peters. Messages went across the country to all ETHS boys' basketball players from the past 10 years inviting them to come back and participate in painting the street mural.

Local artists assisted with planning the mural project, which was done with the blessing of the ETHS administration, basketball coaches and staff, and the City of Evanston. Everyone wore masks during the day-long event, and lunch was provided by a local Evanston restaurant.

On September 29, the Evanston City Council unanimously approved a resolution renaming a portion of Dodge Avenue "Black Lives Matter Way" between Church and Lake Streets. The honorary designation was granted after an application was submitted by ETHS Head Basketball Coach Mike Ellis and Ald. Peter Braithwaite (2nd), himself an ETHS alum. The street name designation will be displayed for 10 years. The street mural was also among nine organizations that won a 2020 Mayor's Award for the Arts that recognized their significant contribution to the community through art.

ETHS alums organize protest march



ETHS recent alumni Maia Robinson '18, Nia Williams '19, Amalia Loiseau '18, Mollie Hartenstein '19, and Liana Wallace '19 organized a peaceful and powerful "Evanston Fight for Black Lives" march and rally this summer. Thousands of masked and socially-distanced residents came out to participate. Starting at Church St. and Ridge Ave., the march ended with moving speeches in the parking lot across from ETHS.



Dear Evanston Community,

This has been a year of unparalleled challenges. Now, more than ever, we are grateful to the Wildkit nation for their support and encouragement



of our students and staff. At the most critical point in our history, we needed your support and we received an outpouring of gifts for the Covid-19 Student Response fund and our continued efforts to enhance the campus.

The mission of the ETHS Foundation is to raise and distribute funds to the high school in order to expand opportunities that further excellence and equity at ETHS. Contributions from alumni, parents and corporations come in all sizes and every gift is appreciated. Since 2008, the ETHS Foundation has provided grants of \$8M to ETHS, including over \$7M for leading-edge learning spaces and educational resources. Recent enhancements include a dynamic strength and conditioning facility, modern chem/phys labs, Geometry in Construction, and a new theater rehearsal studio. Next on the horizon, the Foundation is providing funds for the renovated girls' locker room, an all-gender locker room, and an expanded band practice field with a conductor tower.

The current challenges are daunting, but we know that great things happen when our ETHS family comes together. Your support amplifies our Wildkit spirit, one that is generous and eager to make a difference in the lives of our youth. Go 'Kits!

Kevin Mack, President, ETHS Foundation, ETHS Class of 1995



Last February 29, 2020, Wild for ETHS, raised over \$120,000 and was the last great party before the pandemic struck. This year, WILD for ETHS will be virtual with the Wildkit nation attending from across the country! Join ETHS alumni, parents and guardians, and friends for a WILD NIGHT IN supporting all students. This virtual benefit celebration will feature student testimonials, a rare look inside ETHS spaces, and student and alumni performances.

Visit **SUPPORTETHS.ORG** for ticket and sponsorship information. We look forward to "seeing" you on Saturday, February 27, 2021!

Evanston Township High School District 202

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VISIT ETHS ONLINE

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