



Rockford Area Schools **ROCKET REPORT**

District Newsletter
November 2019

Come to a *State Fair* Musical Performance on Nov. 22-24

This year's Rockford High School musical performance, "Rodgers and Hammerstein's *State Fair*", features student players in fifth through twelfth grades. Over 80 students make up the cast, crew, backstage and pit orchestra.

Originally based on Phil Strong's novel of the same name, Rodgers and Hammerstein's *State Fair* was the only musical they wrote directly for feature film. In 1995, this romantic story set in America's heartland was adapted for the stage, featuring additional songs from the Rodgers and Hammerstein songbook. *State*



Fair follows the Frake family's journey from their farm to the three-day 1946 Iowa State Fair. Ma and Pop are intent on winning prizes for their accomplishments in hog raising and mincemeat cooking, while their children, Margy and Wayne, have romantic adventures ahead of them. As Margy and Wayne find love and heartbreak on the midway, they discover what they find most important and carry home lessons on love and life that will sustain them long after the State Fair. Features an Academy Award-winning score, including the hit song, "It Might as Well Be Spring."

Come see any of the three performances, November 22 and 23 at 7 pm or November 24 at 2 pm, in the Rockford High School auditorium. Tickets are \$5/student, \$5/senior citizen (age 65+) or \$7/adult at the door.

Pictured: (above) Costumes line up for the performers of State Fair.



Upcoming Events

- November 22-24**—RHS Musical
- November 26**—RMS-CES Winter Band Concert, 6-8 pm RHS
- November 28-29**—No School
- December 2**—Board Work Session, 6:30 pm RHS
- December 3**—Grade 2 Spotlight Concert, 6:30 pm RHS
- December 12**—Grade 3 Spotlight Concert, 6:30 pm RHS
- December 13**—Kindergarten Program, 1:30 pm RHS
- December 16**—School Board Meeting and Truth in Taxation Hearing, 6:30 pm RHS
- Dec 23-Jan 3**—Winter Break

Check out the school website for up-to-date announcements and sports activities at www.rockford.k12.mn.us.



This Issue...

Pictured: (top of page) Rocket varsity cheer squad recently competed at the Minnesota Cheerleading Coaches Association (MCCA) Cheer Off in Apple Valley and came home with the Class A championship.

The Rocket Report is a monthly newsletter published by Rockford Area Schools for communities in Wright and Hennepin Counties.



Rhonda Dean

RAS Principal Accepts Interim Superintendent Position

At its October 21, 2019 regular meeting, the School Board of the Rockford Area Schools approved a leave of absence for Superintendent Paul Durand. The length of leave is undetermined at this point. The Board unanimously appointed Rockford High School Principal Rhonda Dean, to assume the position of superintendent on a temporary

interim basis. Ms. Dean will also continue to serve as the High School Principal.

Rhonda Dean has been an educational leader for over 25 years. She served as an interim principal at the Rockford High School for most of the 2018-19 school year, returning for the 2019-20 school year as principal. She also has served as principal of Washburn High School, the principal at Andover High School and an associate principal at Wayzata High School. Dean serves on various community and civic organizations that support the needs of K-12 students. Prior to serving as a school administrator, Dean was a mathematics teacher in the Minneapolis School District.

Dean attended Normandale Community College, the University of St Thomas and graduated from Cameron University in

Oklahoma with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business and a minor in Finance. She has a Master's Degree in Education, a K-12 Principal License, and a District Superintendent License.

Rockford School Board Chair Amy Edwards stated, "Ms. Dean holds a superintendent's license through St. Mary's University, making her an excellent candidate to serve in this temporary interim capacity. She has shown progressive leadership throughout her professional career as an educational administrator. "[The Board is] grateful to Ms. Dean for her willingness to serve as the superintendent on a temporary interim basis in order to provide continued support for our schools and our community."

School districts with secondary schools are required by law to have a superintendent to ensure that the business of the School District continues to operate efficiently and effectively.

"I look forward to the opportunity to serve the staff and students in the Rockford Area Schools District," said Dean.

During this interim period, questions that would normally be addressed by the Superintendent of Schools should be directed to Rhonda Dean, as the temporary interim superintendent.

Participating in the YES Fall Summit



Rockford Middle School Center for Environmental Studies seventh and eighth grade students in the Youth Eco Solutions (YES) program had the chance to attend the YES Fall Summit in Spicer on Wednesday, October 9.

At this summit, the students learned more about water quality by testing water they collected in a canoe, planted seeds on a prairie, learned about YES projects, and swung on a high ropes course. The annual YES! Fall Summit brings students together from across the state in a conference-like structure offering opportunities to learn from experts in varying fields. Students enjoy sharing project ideas and participating in fun hands-on activities that will kick-start their project planning ideas and spark excitement for the upcoming YES! season!

STEM Curriculum Coordinator Beth Russell said, "These students are dedicated to improving the environment in our school, homes and world. It was an inspiring day at Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center!"

YES! is a unique youth program that develops youth leaders while inspiring widespread adoption of renewable energy technologies, waste and energy conservation best practices, local foods, habitat restorations, and water quality and conservation improvement projects. In addition, students are gaining leadership and workforce skills such as problem solving, communication, teamwork, innovation and project management. In 2007, Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center (PWELC) partnered with Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) to develop and implement Youth Energy Summit (YES!) as a program in response to emerging issues and opportunities around renewable energy, climate change, energy efficiency, and conservation. Today, as Youth Eco Solutions, YES! seeks to be part of the solution to today's ecological challenges through hands-on action projects.

Pictured: RMS-CES students explore the grounds of the Learning Center.

RHS Teachers Learn About Technology Integration

Rockford High School teachers, Brian Fleisner and Alex Vasseei, started this school year with key resources, tools and strategies for their classrooms as a result of attending BestPrep's four-day Technology Integration Workshop (TIW) this summer at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis.

They were among 80 other educators in attendance, where they participated in hands-on breakout sessions and learned how to incorporate the newest technologies into their classrooms from experienced speakers and fellow educators.

Another key component of TIW included a half-day job shadow. Each educator was paired with a Twin Cities corporate volunteer to visit their workplace; the interactive job shadows allowed educators to learn more about things like workplace culture, important skills students will need to be successful in a business environment, and how to better prepare their students for the workforce.

Popular breakout sessions included Build Your Own Virtual Reality, coding, digital collaboration and presentation tools, digital storytelling and formative assessments.

Educators also updated a unit plan, integrating strategies and resources they learned during the workshop to, giving them a new technology-inspired plan to use in their classes this fall.

"Attending TIW is a unique experience for educators because they're able to both learn and apply new strategies and resources to help them better integrate technology into their curriculum. Educators come out of the workshop with increased knowledge to create valuable and relevant classroom learning experiences



and help their students develop essential skillsets," said BestPrep's TIW Program Manager Stephanie Musgrove.

Teachers interested in attending the TIW in 2020 can find more information at www.bestprep.org. Registration will open by December, and sponsorships are available. Contact Stephanie Musgrove at smusgrove@bestprep.org for more details.

BestPrep is a Minnesota-based nonprofit organization dedicated to preparing students with business, career, and financial literacy skills. BestPrep offers seven innovative programs and has served more than 1.7 million students and teachers since its creation in 1976. To learn more about the Technology Integration Workshop and BestPrep, go to bestprep.org.

Pictured: High School teachers, Alex Vasseei and Brian Fleisner, stand in the Opus Hall Skyway at the University of St. Thomas when they attended the Technology Integration Workshop this past summer.

Winter Hazard Awareness Week November 4-8, 2019

Winter storms can bring snow, sleet and freezing rain across the entire United States and its territories. Even Hawaii gets snow in its Big Island, and major cities as far south as Atlanta and Dallas have been paralyzed by snow and ice. Blizzards occur when strong wind causes blowing snow and whiteout conditions, making roads impassable. Thousands of people are injured or killed every year in traffic accidents related to slippery roads from winter storms.

To help Minnesota residents minimize the risks of winter, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, in collaboration with the National Weather Service and other state, federal and non-profit agencies, sponsors Winter Hazard Awareness Week each fall. The week-long effort includes a media campaign, website promotion and social media posts. Go to <https://dps.mn.gov> and look up additional information on Winter Hazard Awareness Week.

Various topics each day included:

- o Winter Weather Overview – Ice storms, blizzards, sub-zero temperatures, winter weather watches warnings and wind chill.
- o Outdoor Winter Safety – Safety on ice, snowmobile safety, hypothermia and frostbite.
- o Winter Fire Safety – Winter and holiday fire safety, alternative heat sources, smoke detectors, cooking safety, candles and decorations.
- o Indoor Winter Safety – Carbon monoxide, radon, mold and general home care.
- o Winter Driving – Auto safety, snowplows, road conditions, using 511, winter driving tips and car survival kits.





Partnering with Perpich Center for Arts Education

Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School hosted Perpich Center for Arts Education staff as well as several art teachers from around the state on Tuesday, October 22 as part of the Perpich's Center's Teacher Leader Program.

The day began for REAMS staff with a staff development opportunity from Jeremy Holien, visual and media arts Education specialist from the Perpich Center. As the day progressed, visiting visual arts educators took time to observe lessons in Cheri Weber's art classroom, tour the school to learn more about what Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School offers students, and collaborate to share ideas and techniques in art education.

REAMS has had a strong partnership with Perpich Center and continues to gain skills in the Arts that can be utilized in the classroom. Last year, Visual Arts Teacher Cheri Weber was selected as a Regional Arts Teacher Leader. Perpich Center for Arts Education began a new Teacher Leader program to help provide professional development and support for educators who

teach the arts through content expertise, focused professional development, and opportunities to network.

During this time, REAMS was also chosen to be a demonstration school for its commitment to Arts Education. A demonstration school is a school site that exhibits long-term commitment to arts education that dedicated arts programming with a strong emphasis on including Minnesota K-12 arts standards, and opportunities for a well-rounded education for students. In addition, a demonstration school serves as a model of arts education for other districts around the state.

"It is so beneficial to open the doors at REAMS and collaborate with other educators to share ideas and better the programs to help serve the students in the best way possible," said Brenda Nyhus, REAMS Principal. REAMS will be part of the Teacher Leader Program and will remain a Demonstration School through the 2020-2021 school year.

Pictured: Visual Arts Teacher Cheri Weber assists students during a demonstration lesson with visiting artists.



First Graders Visit the School Forest

Jean Schneeweis' first grade class spent time in the REAMS school forest making outdoor shelters on November 5, while learning how the Native Americans used all the materials in their environment to survive and build their homes. The class also gave a tour to Alexandra Probst's first grade class and helped

them explore different habitats. They had a great time working together creating shelters and look forward to visiting the forest again!

Pictured: Alexandra Probst's first grade class has fun learning in the school forest.





What is ECFE?

Learning about Early Childhood Programs

What is Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)?

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a program for all Minnesota families with children between the ages of birth to kindergarten. Its mission is to strengthen families through the education and support of all parents to provide the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children. ECFE recognizes that parents are a child's first and most important teacher, and that they provide a child's first learning environment. Developed in Minnesota 45 years ago, it is the oldest and largest parent education and family support program in the country, and is often used as a national model.

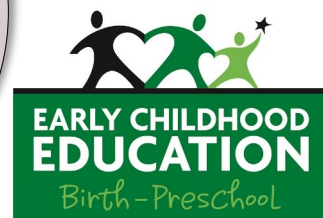
A typical ECFE class includes Together Time, where parent and child together can engage in learning activities in the classroom that foster children's social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and language skills; Parent Time, where parents separate from their children and join together for discussion of topics driven by parent interest/need and facilitated by a parent educator; and Children's Time, where children participate in play activities facilitated by an Early Childhood teacher while parents are in discussion, .

Some ECFE classes vary from this "typical" design and instead children and parents remain together the entire class time, either with a formal parent discussion time within the same classroom, or an informal parent discussion during the class session. This design is helpful for infant classes, for children who may be working through separation issues, and for evening classes when one or both parents may have been away from their child during the day and want to spend time together.

"Parenting can be difficult, with many ups and downs and unending questions. Through ECFE, parents have opportunities to gain knowledge and learn strategies for navigating through the many challenges that present themselves through the young years. Parents build support networks and friendships with other parents within their own community who are experiencing the same milestones, challenges, concerns and joys," said Tiffany Reinhard, Early Childhood Programs Coordinator.

ECFE offers a sliding fee for classes, so all families, regardless of income, can participate. Classes are offered through Rockford Area Early Childhood Programs and take place at Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School. Class options can be found in the Community Education brochure and on the school's website at www.rockford.k12.mn.us.

Pictured: (top) Rockford ECFE teacher, Stephanie Ogland, joins parents and their child in class. (far right) Claire Radde has fun with mom, Jill Stahler, during their ECFE class. (right) Ashley Maldonado Celleri poses for a photo with mom, Anna Celleri.



RHS Student of the Month Program Adopts IB Learner Profile Attributes



The Rockford High School Student of the Month recognition program added a new twist this school year—a focus on the International Baccalaureate (IB) Learner attributes. October's attribute was "Communicators".

"We are excited to continue our "Student of the Month" recognition program with attributes of the IB Learner Profile serving as our focus each month. We are recognizing both students and staff who exemplify the various attributes at our monthly celebration," said Matthew Scheidler, IB Programme Administrator, "This tradition includes genuine and authentic stories of how students and staff have enhanced the RHS learning environment." September's attribute was "Thinker." There are ten attributes in total which include Inquirers, Knowledgeable, thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring, Risk-takers, Balanced, and Reflective.

Rockford High School is two months into their status as an International Baccalaureate (IB) candidate school for the Middle Years Programme (MYP), the Diploma Programme (DP), and the Career-related Programme (CP).

The school has also implemented an "IB Headquarters" in room 501 this school year. Students are encouraged to stop in and ask Dr. Scheidler questions they have about the implementation of MYP, DP, and/or CP. This room will also be utilized for collaborative meetings with students, staff, and families.

"As we continue our efforts towards becoming an authorized IB world school, we will continue to engage our students, staff, families, and community members for their feedback and ideas," said Scheidler, "Our students and staff are to be commended as they have demonstrated flexibility and focus during this implementation phase."

In other updates with the IB program, over 40 students enrolled in the new Theory of Logic course for eleventh and twelfth grades. Caroline Young is currently teaching this new class to seniors, and Ben Pennings will lead this class with the junior students in the spring semester. One focus of this course is for students to be able to answer the question of "how do you know what you think you know?" Early feedback indicates students appreciate the opportunity to hone their critical thinking, communication, and inquiry skills as part of this dynamic course.

Our ninth and tenth grade students are experiencing the transition to the Middle Years Programme in a variety of ways. Unit plans, assessments, and rubrics include IB vocabulary, an emphasis on inquiry, and conceptual learning. As a result, students are receiving additional levels of feedback on their academic performance. Nearly all of the staff members who teach ninth and tenth grade courses have attended IB training through the US. Several teachers have also participated in Minnesota Association of International Baccalaureate (MNIB) workshops, conferences, and round table discussions with IB teachers and administrators from across the metro region and state of Minnesota.



One significant change in the ninth grade core classes offered is the addition of the use of technological tools. This past week, our Language & Literature (English), Individuals & Societies (Social Studies), Science, Mathematics, and World Language (Spanish) classes added a Chromebook cart with enough computers for each student to use. This access to technology helps our students work collaboratively via shared Google documents, research their current topics of study, and allows students to organize their work in a digital environment. Our ninth grade core classes also either have a Smart Board or a large screen to allow interactive and shared learning experiences to flourish.

Pictured: (above right) Physical education teacher Brian Fleisner recognizes Jose Morales as a "Communicator" at the October Student of the Month celebration. (left) Other students recognized as student of the month in October include (left to right, standing) Lilian Jones, Makenna Schmatz, Nicholas Page, Lauren Condon, (kneeling) Caden Petersen, and Ina Xhelilaj.



Raising Voices at District Choral Festival

Over 350 young singers, in fourth through twelfth grades, performed at the annual Rockford Area Schools District Choral Festival, on Monday, October 28. There were a total of nine district choirs from all three schools performing.

The fourth grade choir performed a medley of American folk songs including “America,” “Home on the Range,” and “When the Saints Go Marching In”. The fourth grade singers have been working on singing with an open vowel, tall posture, watching the director, starting and ending together, and enunciating the ends of each word. This joint concert allowed the youngest singers to see and hear where their voices will continually grow to throughout their middle and high school years.

In addition to learning the actual songs, the students were learning overarching musical skills like which part of the choir sings the melody, how loud or how soft it should be sung, how the song is structured, and other themes. For example, the eighth graders were working on their Power Standard of ‘Analyzing the elements of music, including melody, dynamics, tone color, texture, and form.

Each choir sang a song by themselves and a mass choir song as a finale. All the choir students joined together for “Sisi Ni Moja” by Jacob Narverud, which translates to “We are one”. In class, the students had talked about how it’s important to look at other people as we look at ourselves, and to share kindness instead of judging someone. Music teachers, Miriam Ausburger and Cecelia Lauerman, commented, “Hearing all the choirs sing that message together was very powerful and showcased the sound and talent of each grade level.”

Pictured: (above) Nine choirs gathered for the District Choral Festival, held in the Rockford High School gymnasium. (right) Fourth grade choir students sing with their older mentors.

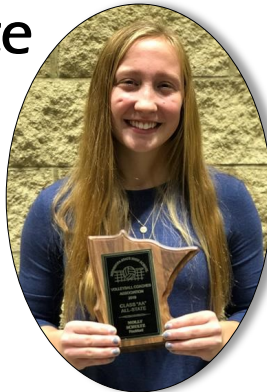


Volleyball Update

Senior Molly Schultz (*pictured*) was named to the AA All-State Volleyball team at the state banquet on November 6, 2019.

In addition, assistant coach Lynette Schultz was also named as the Section 5AA Assistant Coach of the Year by the Minnesota Volleyball Coaches Association.

Congratulations to both!



Social Media Communications

Rockford Area Schools is growing our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube channels to keep parents, students, community and alumni in the loop of what is happening at our schools, to promote events and share information like concerts, and other reminders, and, most of all, to celebrate our students!



Facebook - @ISD883



Twitter - @SD883



Instagram - @isd883



YouTube - RAS - Rockford MN



Postal Patron ECRWSS

Leaders in Educational Excellence Honored

Three Rockford Area Schools teachers were recognized at the 2019 Leadership in Educational Excellence Awards (LEEAA) Banquet on Wednesday, October 23, 2019 in St. Cloud. Rachel Yakesh, Judith Anthony and Elize Werth joined 141 other educational leaders at the event.

Joe Beckman, speaker and owner of the company, "Epic on Purpose," was the keynote speaker at the 2019 Leadership in Educational Excellence Awards, sponsored by Resource Training & Solutions. Beckman spoke to the audience about the importance of finding your calling in life, as he talked about his own journey and the various jobs he held growing up. Jobs that he enjoyed, but knew they were not his calling. It wasn't until he was working for "Youth Frontiers" speaking to children that he knew that he had found his calling. Working and connecting with kids was what he was meant to do in life. Beckman noted that of the educators in the room probably share similar stories to his own that lead them into teaching and eventually finding their calling. He closed his remarks with deep gratitude for all of the educators who help students each day and congratulating the honorees.

Over 449 persons attended the annual event this year. Schools and districts across Resource's central Minnesota region

nominate award recipients based on suggested criteria that includes how educators inspire fellow colleagues, students, and communities through positive leadership, utilize curriculum development, motivate students, implement instructional effectiveness, act as strong role models, and display dedication to the profession of education. Public, private, parochial, and charter schools were included in the event, as well as Meeker and Wright Special Education Cooperative, the West Central Education District, and the Wright Technical Center.

In its 28th year, LEEA event has honored nearly 4,000 central Minnesota educators. The next LEEA event will be on October 21, 2020.

Pictured: (above, left to right) Posing with new awards at the LEEA Banquet are Rockford Middle School Center for Environmental Studies Principal Bobbi Anderson-Hume, Honoree and Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School Kindergarten teacher Rachel Yakesh, Honoree and Rockford Area Schools Speech Language Pathologist Judith Anthony, Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School Principal Brenda Nyhus, and Honoree and Rockford Middle School Center for Environmental Studies Sixth Grade Science Teacher Elize Werth.

Trandahl Earns All-State Honors in Cross Country

Rockford High School senior Nels Trandahl (*pictured*) earned All-State Honors at the state Cross Country meet held on Saturday, November 2, 2019. Trandahl finished 22nd with a time of 16:36, breaking his previous state meet record time by five seconds!

Trandahl won the Section 5A Boys Meet on October 24, running his person best of 16:29. This was his third consecutive year that he earned a place at State competition. At the meet, the Boys Team finished eleventh overall and the Girls Team finished seventh overall. Both teams are also academic gold award recipients with an average GPA over 3.75.

Other season highlights include Leo Duffy (21st) earning all-conference honorable mention. All seven varsity boys (Nels, Leo, Nolan Aker, Mike Nelson, Anthony Mangan, Noah Lewis, and Andrew Finger) finished under 20 minutes for the first time in over four years.

The girls' varsity team finished second overall to Annandale (for the fourth straight season) by only three points. Earning all-conference honors were Hailey Jackson (3rd), Ava Cusiciotta (9th), and Ruby Gifford (12th). Earning all-conference honorable mention were Ellie Sather (13th) and Alix Gifford (15th). All five runners finished in under 22 minutes which is a first with the girls' team. Overall, 75% of the team finished with either a personal best or season best time this season.

