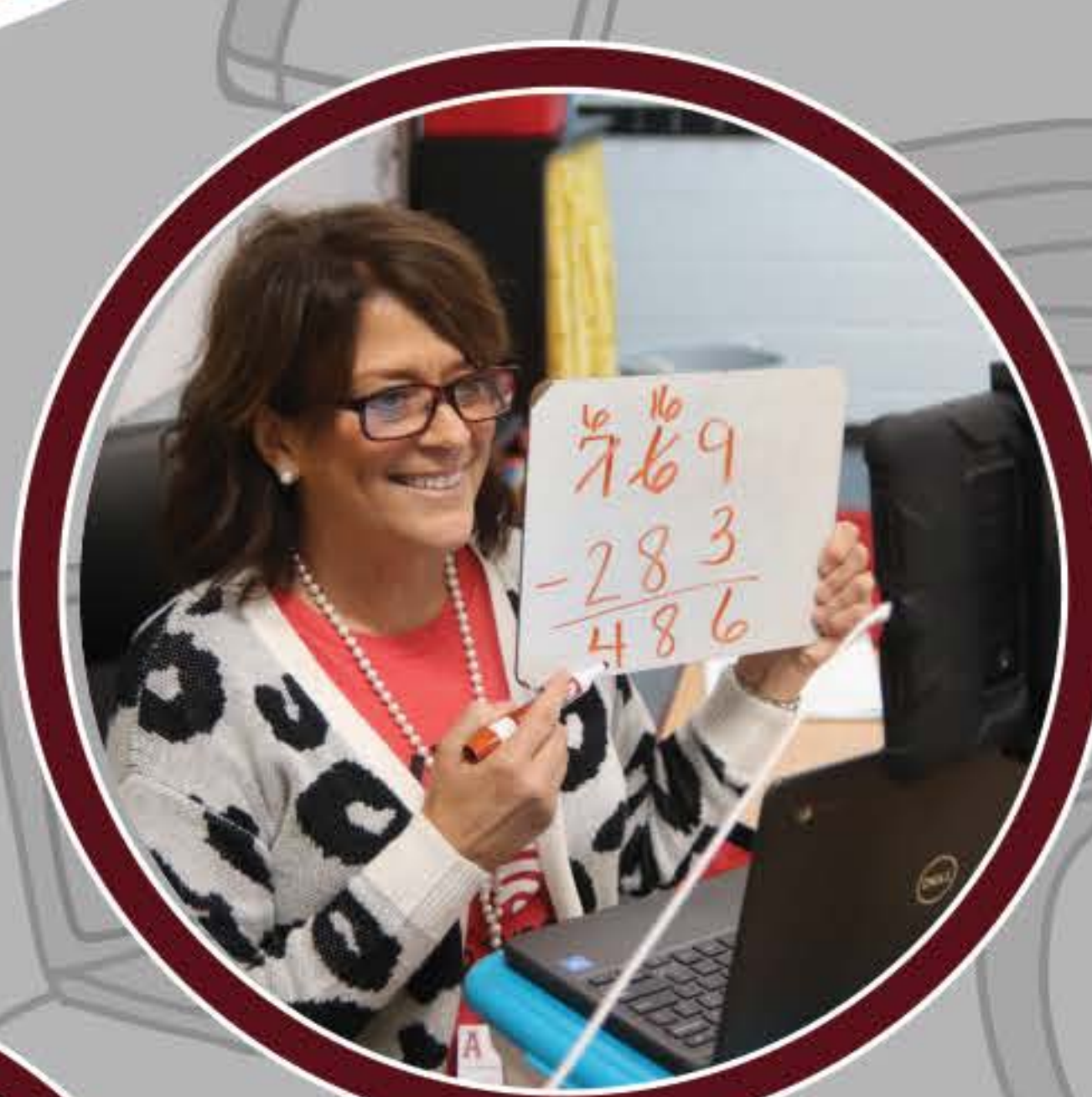
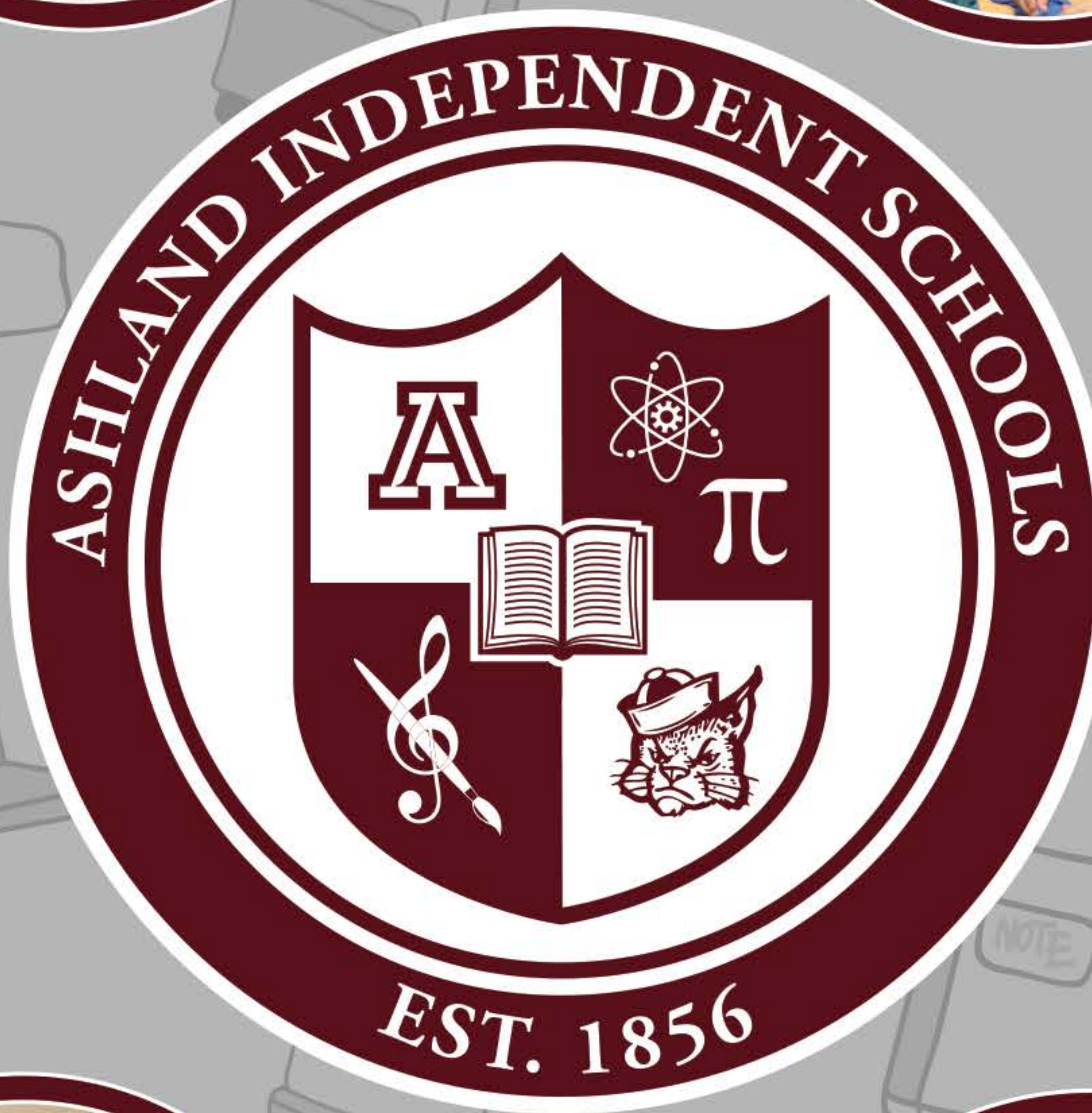
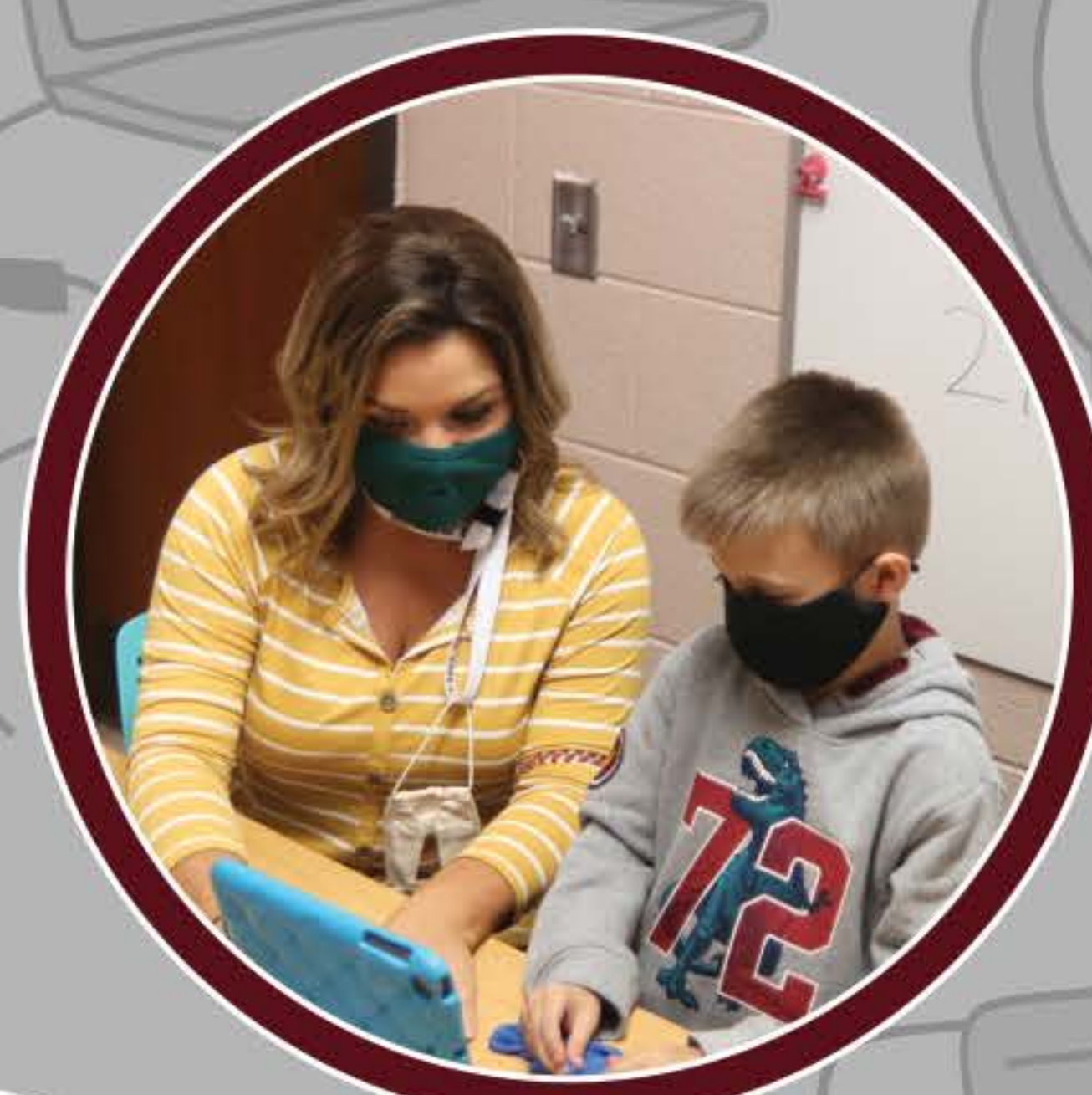


Tomcat Today

Ashland Independent School District Newsletter



November 2020 - Volume 5



Since our last issue, our country, state, and schools have undergone dramatic changes due to Covid 19. However, the changes applied to our “normal” have made and will continue to make our district and community stronger. Our teachers and staff have done a phenomenal job of rising to the necessary level to continue to bring about positivity in the face of some gloomy circumstances.

I truly believe that we have done the best we could with the obstacles facing our schools. There have been so many “wins” for our students and staff during the last seven months. It’s fairly easy to look at all of the negatives, and there have been many, but we must look forward and search for the best ways to engage and complete the many tasks at hand.

I encourage our students, staff, and community to continue to be patient and as uplifting as possible as we continue this journey. One day, I hope these times will be nothing but a memory.

Sincerely,

D. Sean Howard
Superintendent
Secretary, Board of Education

ASHLAND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS CALENDAR

2020-2021

2020

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	PD	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November

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29	30					

December

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20	21	22	23	24	H	26
27	28	29	30	31		

2021

January

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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	PD	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Upcoming Holiday Breaks:

Thanksgiving: November 23-27
Christmas/New Year’s: December 21 - January 1
Spring Break: March 29 - April 2

No School:

November 2: Election Day
January 18: Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 15: Flexible PD Day

9 WEEKS

8/26/20-10/27/20	43 days
10/28/20-01/15/21	42 days
01/19/21-03/19/21	43 days
03/22/21-05/26/21	43 days

REPORT CARDS

11/04/20
01/22/21
03/26/21
05/26/21

PAUL G. BLAZER HIGH SCHOOL



I don't believe that anyone could have imagined that our school year would have looked like this. However, if anyone was up for the challenge, the students and staff at Blazer were up for it. Before this school year even began, our teachers and staff were working diligently to implement a plan and method of teaching that would reach our students with the highest standard of instruction in our area, dare I say the state.

As we spent our first few days in an all virtual environment, it was easy to see that our students were all on board as well.

As we transition to our next phase of both in-person and virtual instruction, our teachers and students are looking for ways to improve on both methods of instruction and learning. We will continue to strive for the highest standards of instruction and encourage you to applaud both our students and our staff for a job well done. To steal a line from our governor, "we will do this together!" That has never been more true than it is now.

Go Tomcats!
Jamie Campbell

The Doctor Is In

As an art teacher, AP instructor, mentor and coach, Amber Tackett has always instilled the value of education in her students. But they might address her a little differently this year. Recently, Ms. Amber Tackett defended her 150-page dissertation to the University of the Cumberland and has had the title of "Doctor" added to her resume. Now, she's Amber Tackett, Ph.D. The title is far more impressive than three simple letters let on.

Dr. Tackett spent countless hours as a doctoral candidate researching, investigating, studying and writing before she was bestowed with a PhD in Educational Leadership, Curriculum & Instruction from the University of the Cumberland in early October.

Dr. Tackett has served the students of Blazer for the last twelve years. In addition to her classroom duties and the hundreds of hours she has invested in pursuing advanced degrees, she has been committed to the Tomcats' Academic Team for the last nine years. This summer, in the face of the looming uncertainty of the 2020 school year, Dr. Tackett became a source of stability and strength for the Blazer staff as she spearheaded the transition to a virtual start to the school year. As Blazer's "Digital Head Coach," she spent countless hours training co-workers and developing strategies to facilitate online and in-person learning for AISD's largest campus. She did all of this while balancing the demands of her final weeks as a doctoral student!

This outstanding accolade exhibits the determination and work ethic that makes us extremely proud to call her one of our own. Blazer could not be more proud of Amber Tackett, Ph.D. We are excited to see where Dr. Tackett's hard work and dedication take her in the future.

Counselor's Corner

Beginning the 20-21 school year virtually has certainly required some changes for the counseling department. From adjusting to a 4 x 4 block schedule to creating Google Classrooms for each class, our program has seen many positive changes as a result of what most would say is a bad situation. One of those positive changes is the increased use of our Naviance student platform to communicate with our students and continue their Individual Learning Plan. The Naviance feature that is proving to be of long-lasting benefit to students is the addition of virtual representative visits from college counselors.

Prior to implementing Virtual RepVisits, Blazer students were limited to meeting with just those colleges and universities that could host an in-person meeting on our campus. Now, with Virtual RepVisits, our students can meet with college recruiters from all over the country. For the first time, students have been able to meet with representatives from such prestigious schools as the University of Chicago, as well as with small schools like Colby College, in Waterville Maine. It is exciting for students to get the opportunity to meet with schools that are well beyond our normal geographic region. Since September 1st, Blazer has averaged five virtual visits a week for students and will continue to host these events. Additionally, we will make them available to 10th grade students in the spring semester. We are so excited to provide this platform for our students!

Staff Spotlight

One of the most overlooked groups during this time has been our food service workers. Working diligently, day after day, to improve our food service, these ladies and gentlemen have worked to keep our students fed and encouraged during this time. No matter if they are serving breakfast and lunch underneath building one, in the gym lobby, or in the cafeteria they have done everything with a positive attitude and a smile on their face. Their service to our students and staff is vital to the success of our entire program. We appreciate and thank them for all they do for our school.



ASHLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL



plished through adversity.

GO CATS!
David Greene

What a difference a year makes! So many changes and so many challenges since we last printed. One thing that has not changed is that we live in the best community! Our parents/guardians have learned to navigate virtual learning with their children; our teachers have risen to the challenge of acquiring new skills in the classroom, and our students have done the best of all by showing grit and perseverance in the face of a pandemic. Though I hate all that Covid has brought our way, I could not be prouder to be a part of Tomcat Nation and all that you have accom-

Teaching and Parenting in the "New Normal"

As a parent of an elementary, middle, and high school student, I've witnessed the "new normal" at all three levels of the Ashland educational experience. I'm sure others are in similar situations, but one of the things that make my perspective so unique is that I've also been teaching at AMS during this time. I'd like to say that everything has gone smoothly, but honestly, the beginning of the school year started out as a challenge for our family. My middle school and high school students participated in virtual learning from home while I taught virtually from my classroom with my elementary student in class in the background.

Once we had the option to return in person, each of my children made a decision that was right for them. My elementary and middle school students returned to school and are thrilled to be back in person with their teachers and peers. My high school student has remained virtual. Thankfully, the Ashland district has allowed for flexibility in these uncertain times. The guidelines we have in place at our elementary school, AMS, and Blazer have made learning as normal as it possibly can be at this time.

As a teacher, I have had to remain flexible, as well. Teaching students in-person and virtually simultaneously has been a significant learning curve, but the teachers at Ashland have risen to the challenge. I've witnessed my colleagues find creative ways to engage students and bring a sense of stability. I've seen thirty-year veterans, first-year newbies, and everything in between come together and reimagine the way we "do school" in the best interest of our students. Moreover, our leaders have spent countless hours forging a safe path forward and accounting for every variable possible. It may sound corny, but from the perspective of a parent and a teacher, I am proud that my family is a part of the Ashland community. #AshlandProud

Rebekah Williams

Staff Spotlight

John Leistner has worn several hats since he began working in the Ashland Independent School District in 1997. Husband of 30 years to Stacy Leistner, and proud parent of John Leistner III and Dr. Jamie Leistner Todd, John has been the definition of a lifelong learner. First earning a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Louisville, John has worked hard to acquire certifications in both Google (Level 1), Apple System Administration and Samsung Solve For Tomorrow Teacher Academy Level 2. In 1999, John became the Ashland Middle School technician. In this position he also coordinates STLP (19 years) and Samsung Solve for Tomorrow.

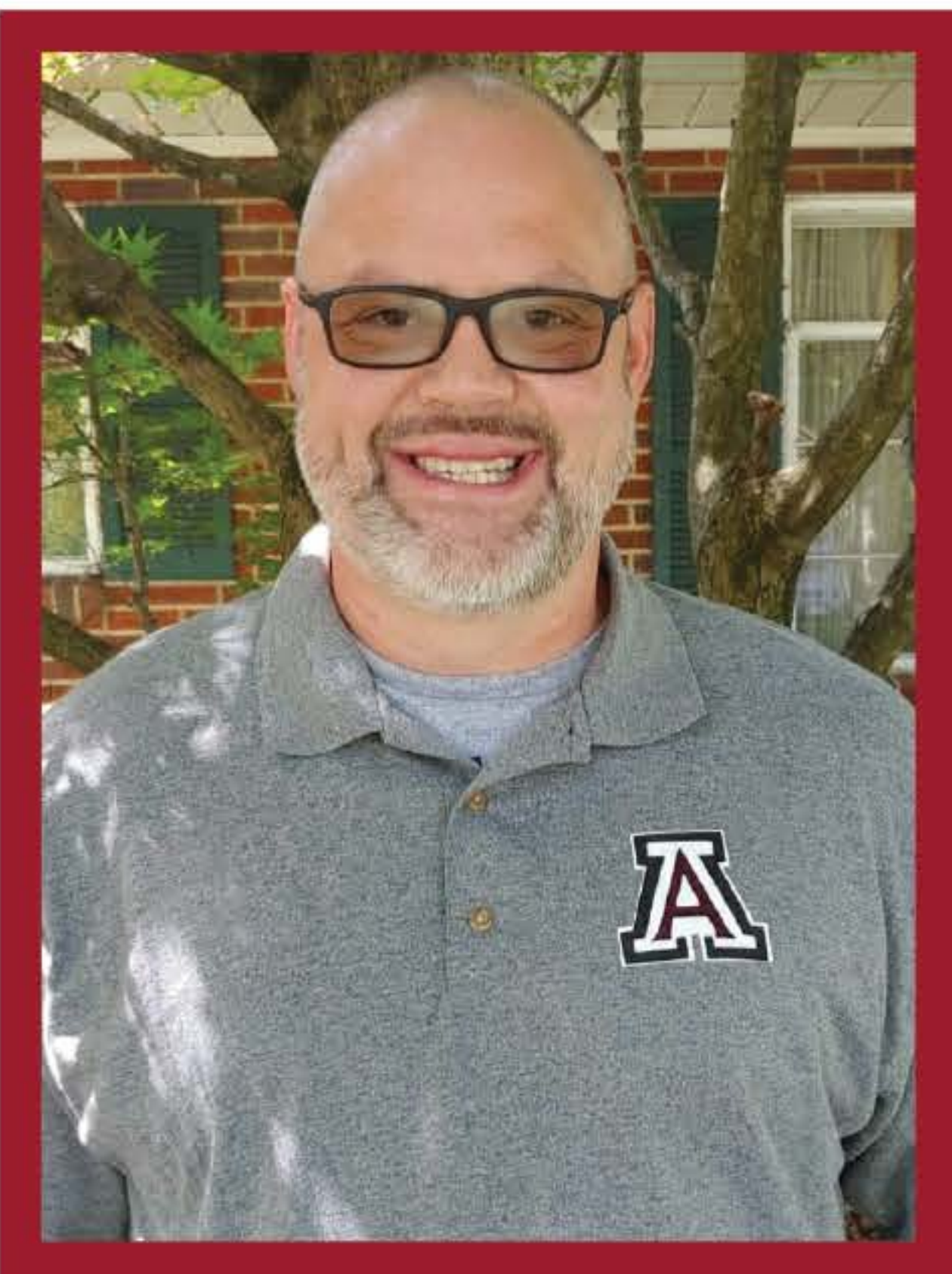
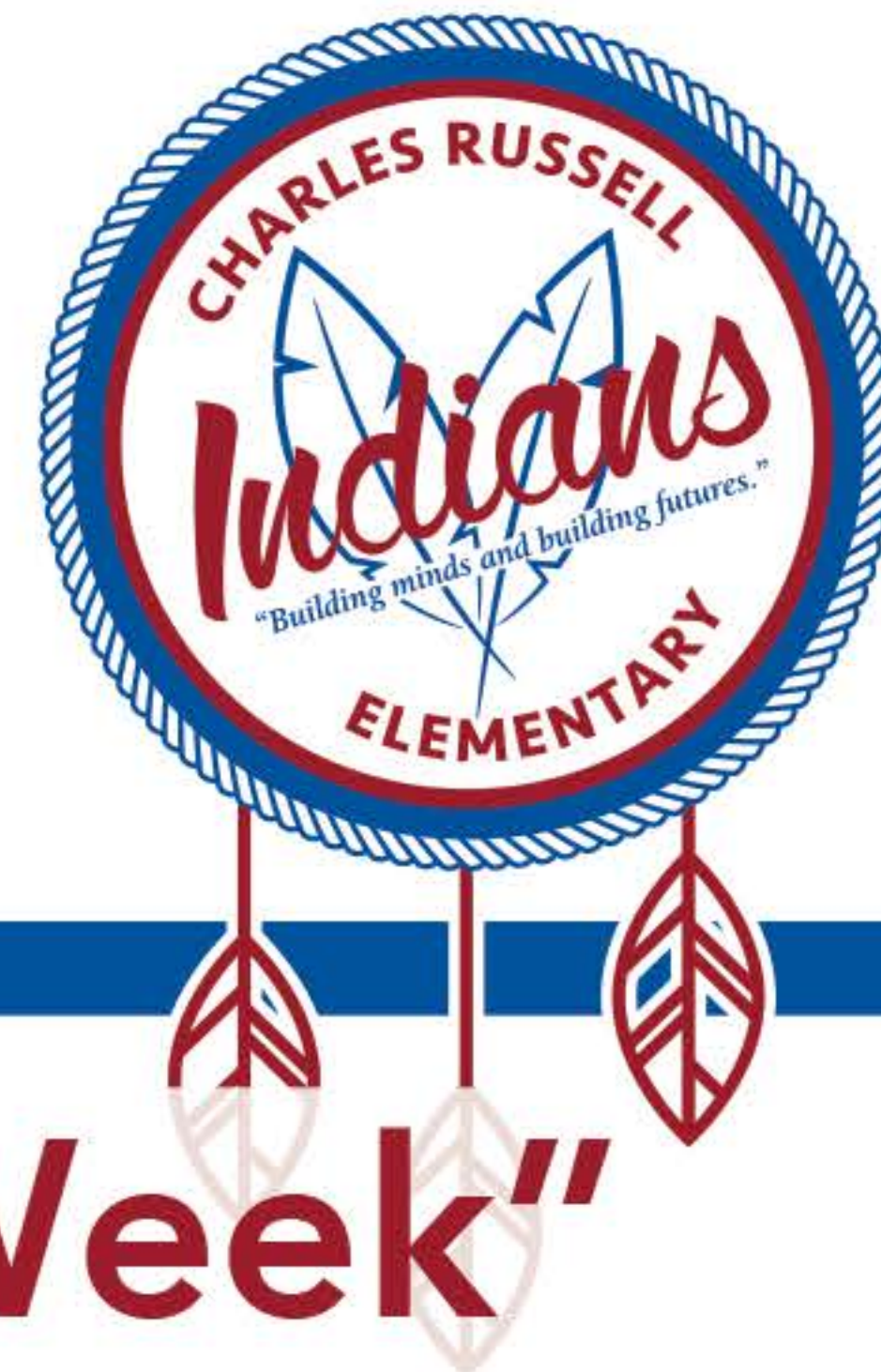


Outside of the building, John also coached soccer for 18 years. He is also an Aerospace Education Member (AEM) of Civil Air Patrol (CAP), providing aerospace/STEM educational opportunities for our students.

During his career, John has helped facilitate a Samsung Solve for Tomorrow National Championship (2018), Samsung Solve for Tomorrow State Championship (2019), and a Samsung Solve for Tomorrow National Finalist (2020). The results of these top finishes have awarded our school \$250,000 in prize money. He has also led STLP to an Overall State Champion (2018) and a Showcase Best Technology Product State Champion in 2020.

His most memorable moments include looking out over the National Mall from the Speaker's Balcony of the United States Capitol, meeting Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell in his Capitol Office, and spending the afternoon on the White House grounds as Samsung Solve For Tomorrow National Champions!

CHARLES RUSSELL ELEMENTARY



It has been an honor to work in the Charles Russell community as the Charles Russell Elementary School Principal. Being new to the position, I have had lots to learn and I continue to learn daily. I cannot thank my teachers and staff enough for their

support through this process. They have shown unequalled professionalism and patience in navigating both virtual and in person learning. From feeding the kids to delivering instruction in the classroom, our staff has stepped up to the challenge these times present. I am so proud to be a part of this team at Charles Russell Elementary School.

I also want to thank the families in our community for their support and patience as we began this school year. From navigating virtual classrooms and supporting their children, to showing patience during after school pick up, our families have been so supportive. We, the staff at Charles Russell Elementary, genuinely thank you!

Bob Pulliam

Staff Spotlight

Mrs. Kerry Bocook is an 18 year veteran member of the Charles Russell Elementary School staff. She has her B.A. in Early Childhood Education, M.A. in Library Media, a Rank I in Educational Technology and also has her certification in Instructional Supervision. She and her husband have four children. Mrs. Bocook has been instrumental in helping Charles Russell Elementary School with Google training. Her overall positive attitude and hard work ethic have made her a wonderful person to be around.



"Indians of the Week"

We have started our "Indians of The Week" spotlight in the front hall to recognize students and staff that have gone above and beyond in the classroom and as peers. Two students from each grade are recognized for their academic efforts and kindness to others every Monday. From these students, two are selected as Charles Russell Elementary School Indians of The Week. We are also recognizing a staff member every week that has shown true professionalism and work ethic in collaborating with colleagues and students.

Recognized on this bulletin board are First Grader Lillian Hobson, Fourth Grader Brennan Shannon, and Second Grade teacher, Mrs. Bocook.



Adapting and Serving

Like our educational staff, our cafeteria staff has been instrumental in adapting to the changes that COVID-19 has presented. Tracy Bradley leads a group of outstanding cafeteria staff that are providing great meals for both virtual and in-person students. Not only do the students love the food, they also love the interaction with the cafeteria staff. The cafeteria staff also help set the tone for the seasons and holidays with decorations that make the students feel at home. Tracy, Valerie, Kellie, Charity, and Amanda always carry a positive attitude and share that positivity with the staff and students of Charles Russell Elementary. They are not just providing meals, but also providing smiles and a sense of belonging to our students. They are truly an asset to the Charles Russell family.



CRABBE ELEMENTARY



Welcome back Tiger families! We have truly missed seeing our scholars here at Crabbe Elementary School! Through this trying time, I want to express my gratitude to the parents/guardians for understanding the “new school normal.” Families, I appreciate how you have grasped onto the online component through Parent Portal, All Things Google, and other online platforms to ensure your child is still receiving an appropriate education. Safety is a top priority! Those of you who are traditional learners, we welcome you back in our building. To our virtual learners, we miss you, respect your decision to learn from home but cannot wait to see your smiling faces in-person again. Continue the hard work Tiger families and remember “It’s a Tiger Thing Here at Crabbe Elementary Where We Are Family and We Are Glad to Have You Here!”

Uriah A. Tolbert, Ed.S.
Principal

Staff Spotlight

We welcome Ms. Arianna Brown to our Tiger Family. Ms. Brown has a Bachelor’s Degree from Marshall University. She is a 1st year teacher teaching 1st grade and is excited to begin her career as a Crabbe Tiger! Welcome again Ms. Brown!



Learning Styles: Virtual and In-Person

Virtual Learners are logging on and interacting with their teachers. We are so proud of our scholars who are learning through our Ashland Virtual Learning Center (Crabbe). Keep logging on and working hard!



Take a look at our in-person learners. Here you can see we have spaced out our desks. Our scholars have their own space and freedom to learn in their personal area. Scholars are wearing masks and are engaged in their teachers' lesson. Way to go scholars!



SBDM Meetings

Our Site-Based Decision Making Meetings will be available via Zoom at 6:00 on the following dates:

November 16, 2020
December 9, 2020

HAGER ELEMENTARY



Welcome back to school, Wildcats! We have missed having kids in the school building. First, let me thank our students and parents for adapting and supporting us during the end of last school year and the beginning of this school

year. We have been faced with many challenges and have worked collaboratively and diligently to provide the safest environment for our students to learn. Please continue to talk to your students in a positive light about school: as a positive attitude from students, staff, and Hager families will go a long way. If you are a virtual learner and family-we miss you and respect all decisions to learn from home. Please know your spot is saved here at Hager. Thank you in advance for your trust and cooperation in making this the best school year possible.

Phillip Caudill

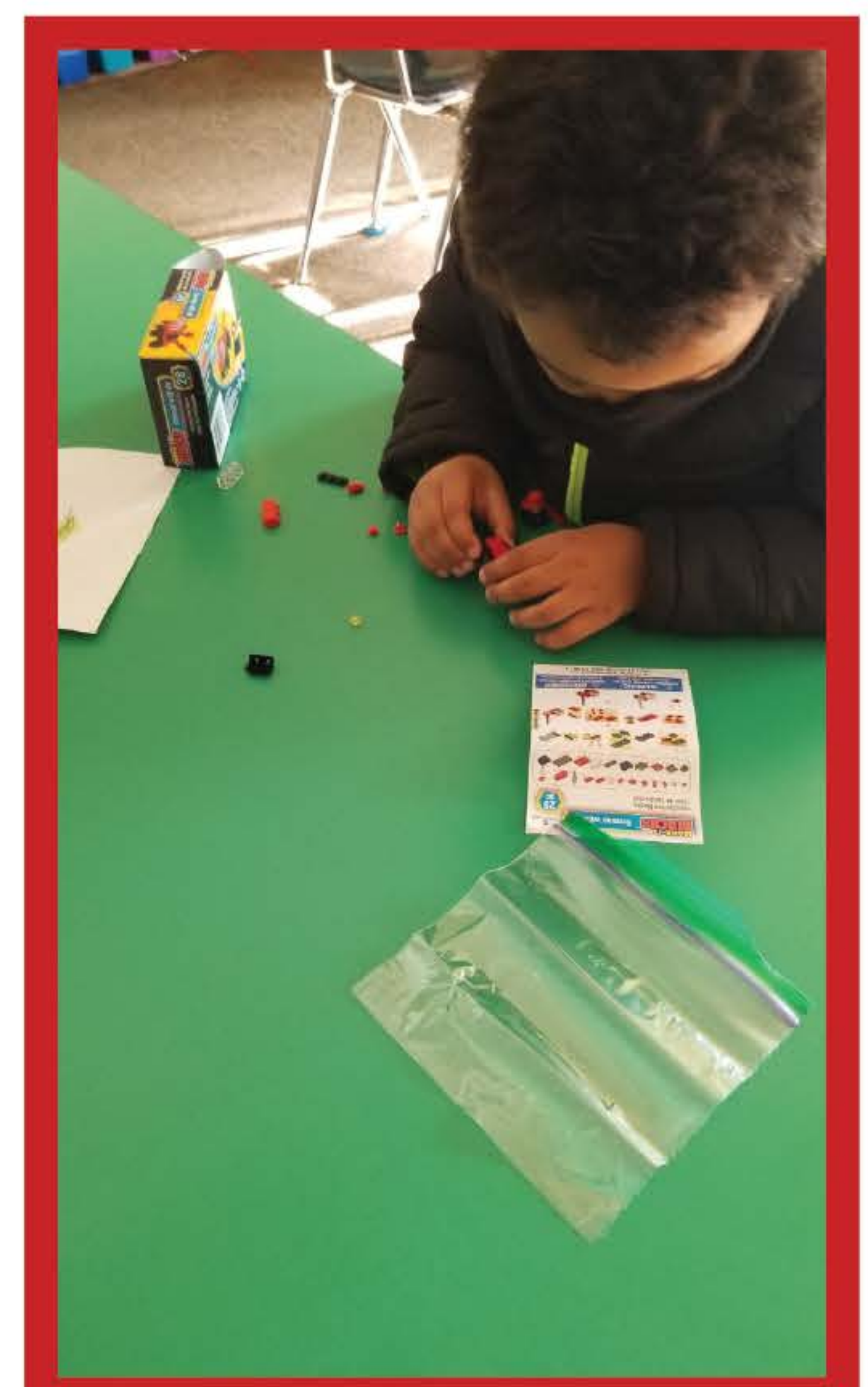
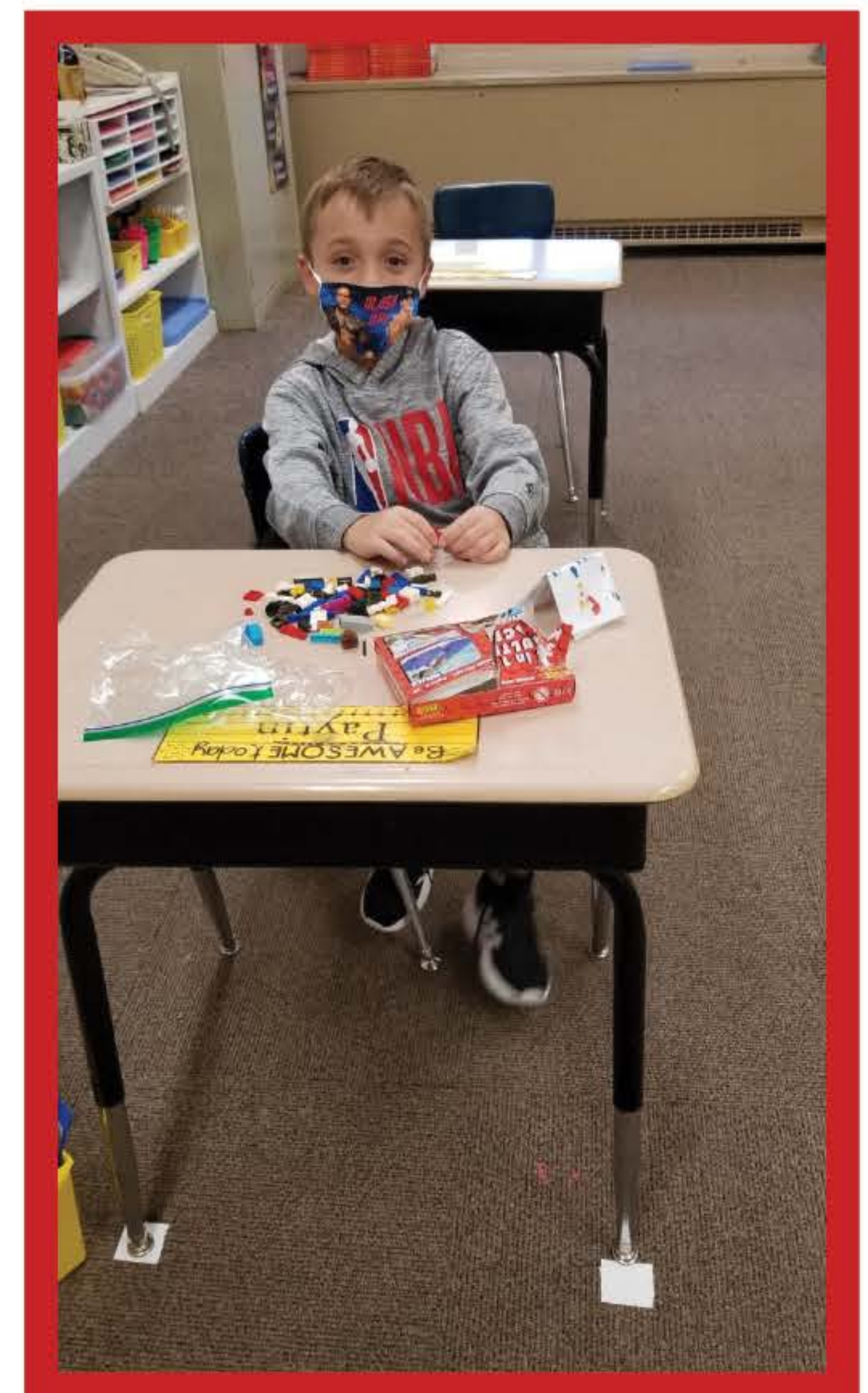
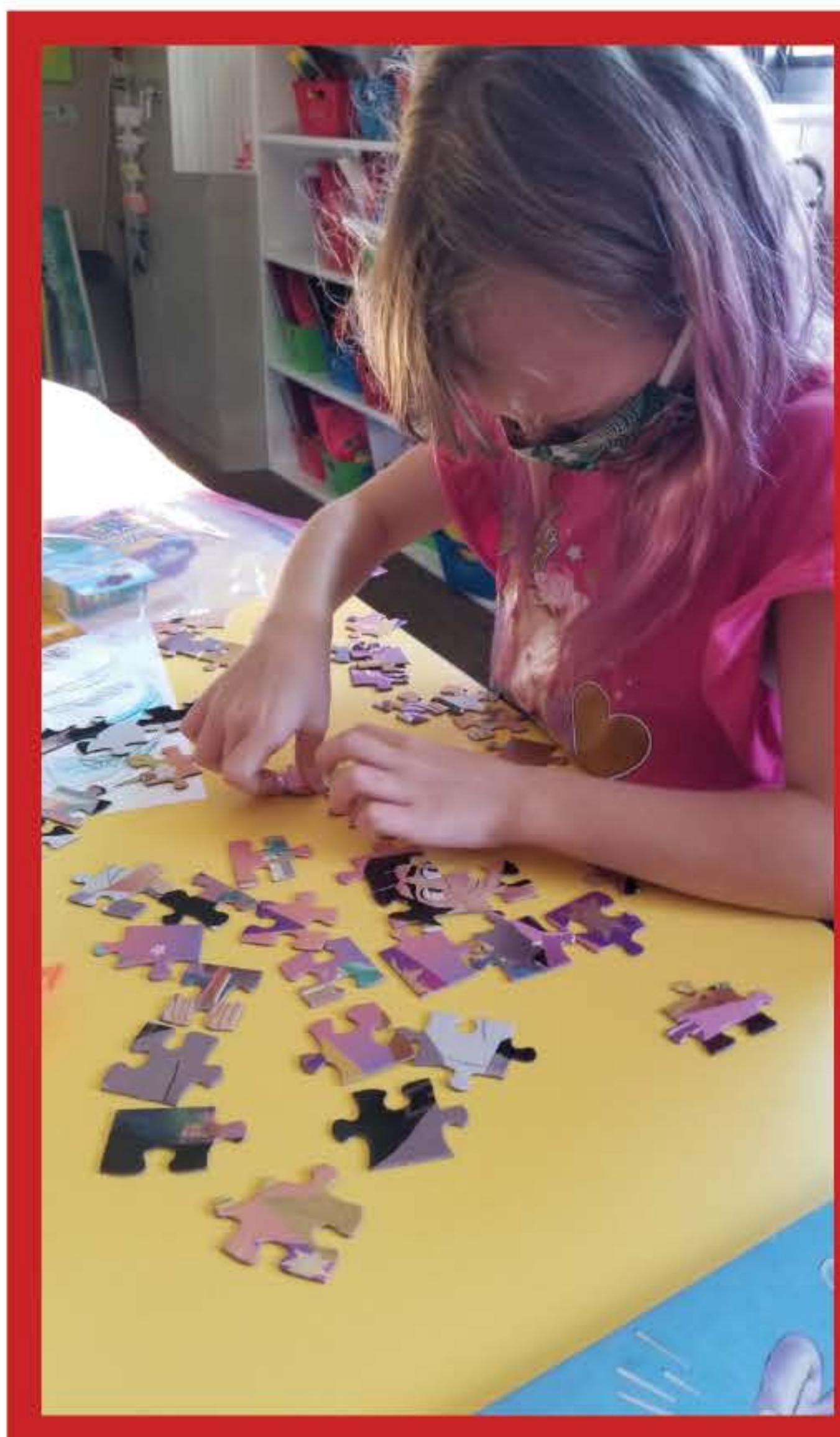
Staff Spotlight

Hager would like to introduce all of our new staff members. Please give a warm Hager welcome to **Kaylie Beaver** (Art Teacher), **Taylor Powell** (5th Grade), **Laikin Parsley** (4th Grade), **Cristin Mertz** and **Leah Watts** (Instructional Assistants), and **Whitney Cornwell** (School Nurse).

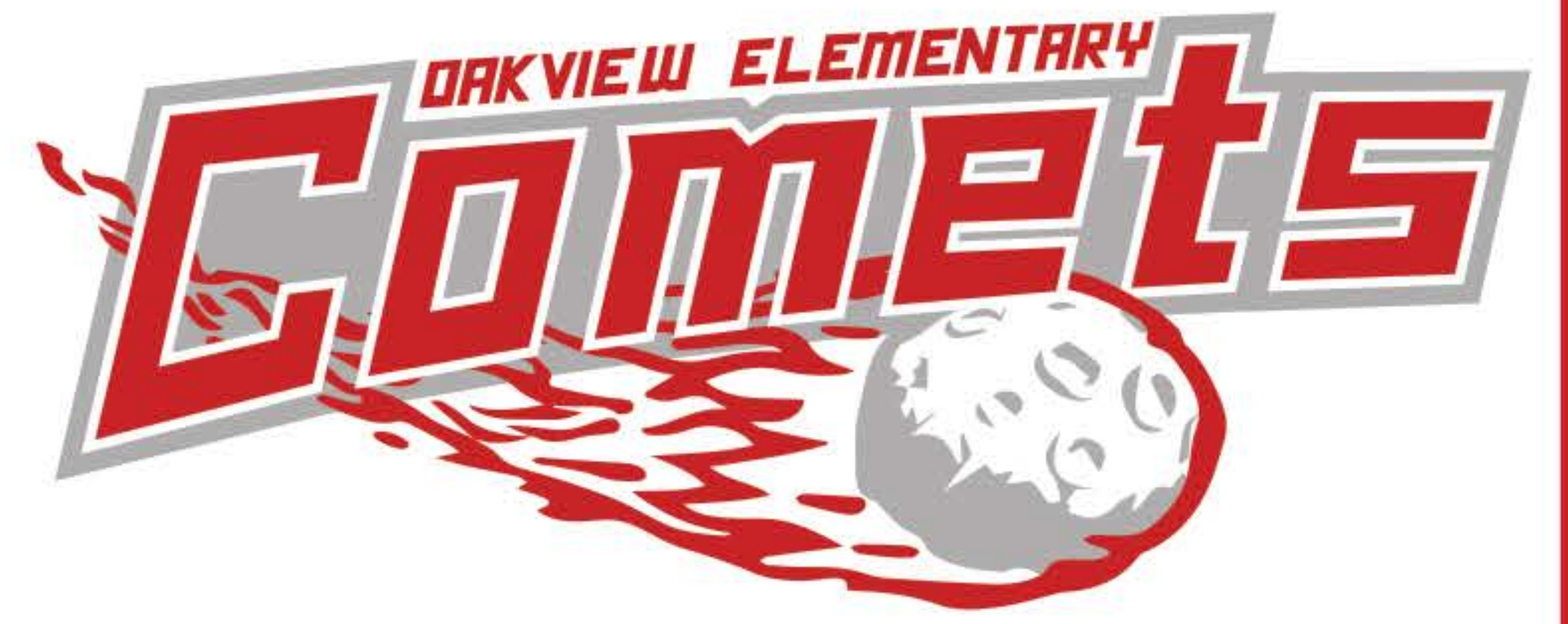
Also, the following staff have changed roles this year: **Mike Compliment** (Special Education Teacher), **Shelly Osborne** (Reading Intervention Teacher), **Stacy McCarty** (2nd Grade Teacher) **Emily Ream** and **Kelsie King** (Ashland Virtual Learning Center Teachers).

Wildcat Jungle

Hager is beginning its third year of the 21st Century Afterschool Program "Wildcat Jungle." Wildcat Jungle occurs on Mondays through Thursdays from 2:55-5:30 p.m. The first hour and fifteen minutes is dedicated to academic remediation, enrichment, and homework. The second hour and fifteen minutes is the enrichment hour including several community partners that plan fun activities for our students. Wildcat Jungle has begun in person. If you are interested in having your child attend, please complete the online registration form on our school website or school facebook page.



OAKVIEW ELEMENTARY



"YESTERDAY I WAS
CLEVER, SO I WANTED
TO CHANGE THE WORLD.
TODAY I AM WISE, SO
I AM CHANGING MYSELF."
- MRS. HOWELL

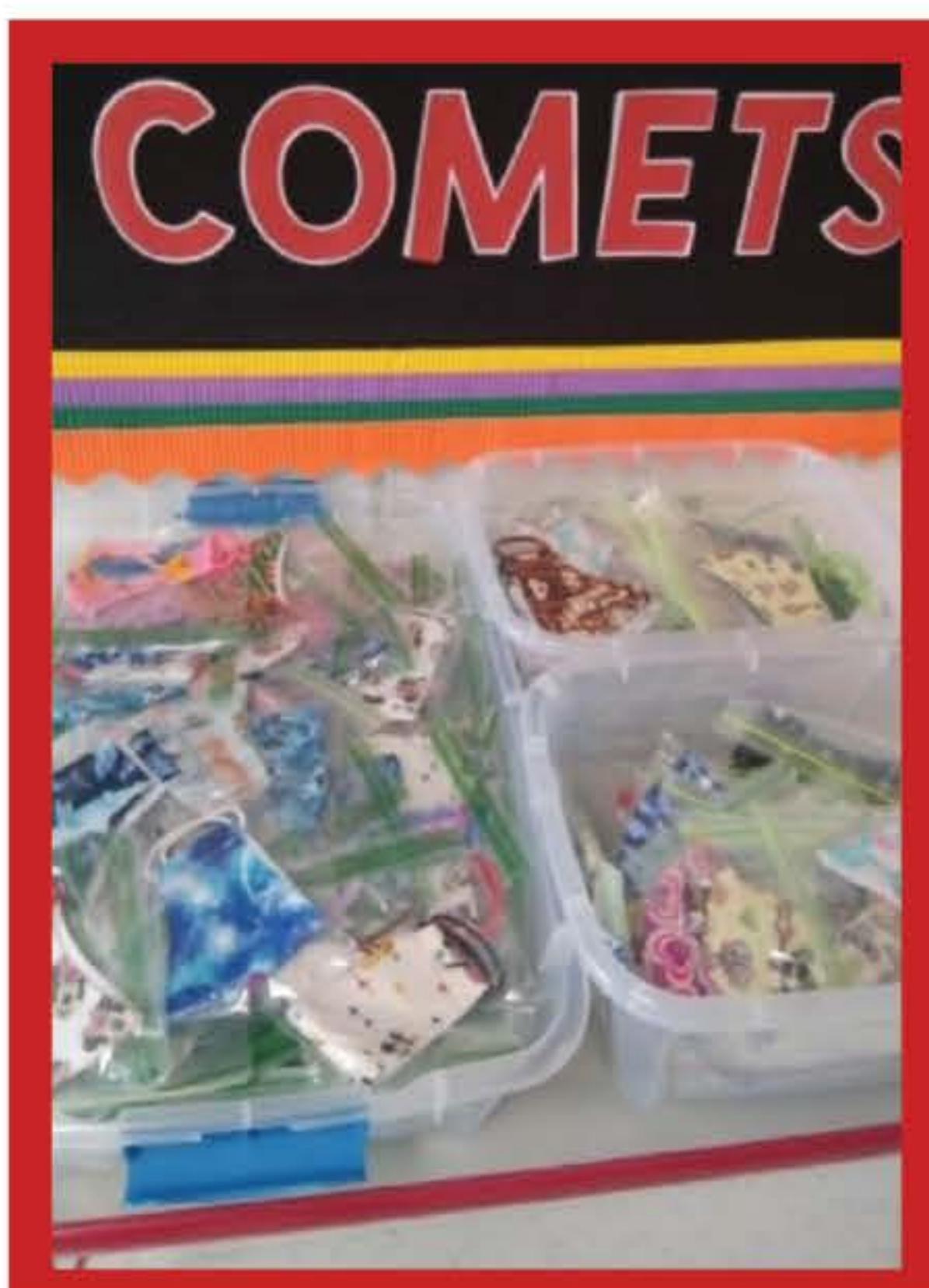
Hello, Comet Community! This has been a school year like no other! First of all, I would like to thank all of our parents, grandparents, extended

family and friends for what you have helped us accomplish during virtual learning. It was not easy, but by pulling together and leaning on one another, we made the best of a tough situation. As some of our students begin to transition back into the classroom, we want you to know that we appreciate your willingness to work with us as a team. If you are remaining virtual, you may meet some different faces, but remember - you are a Comet. Once a Comet, always a Comet!

Rebecca Howell

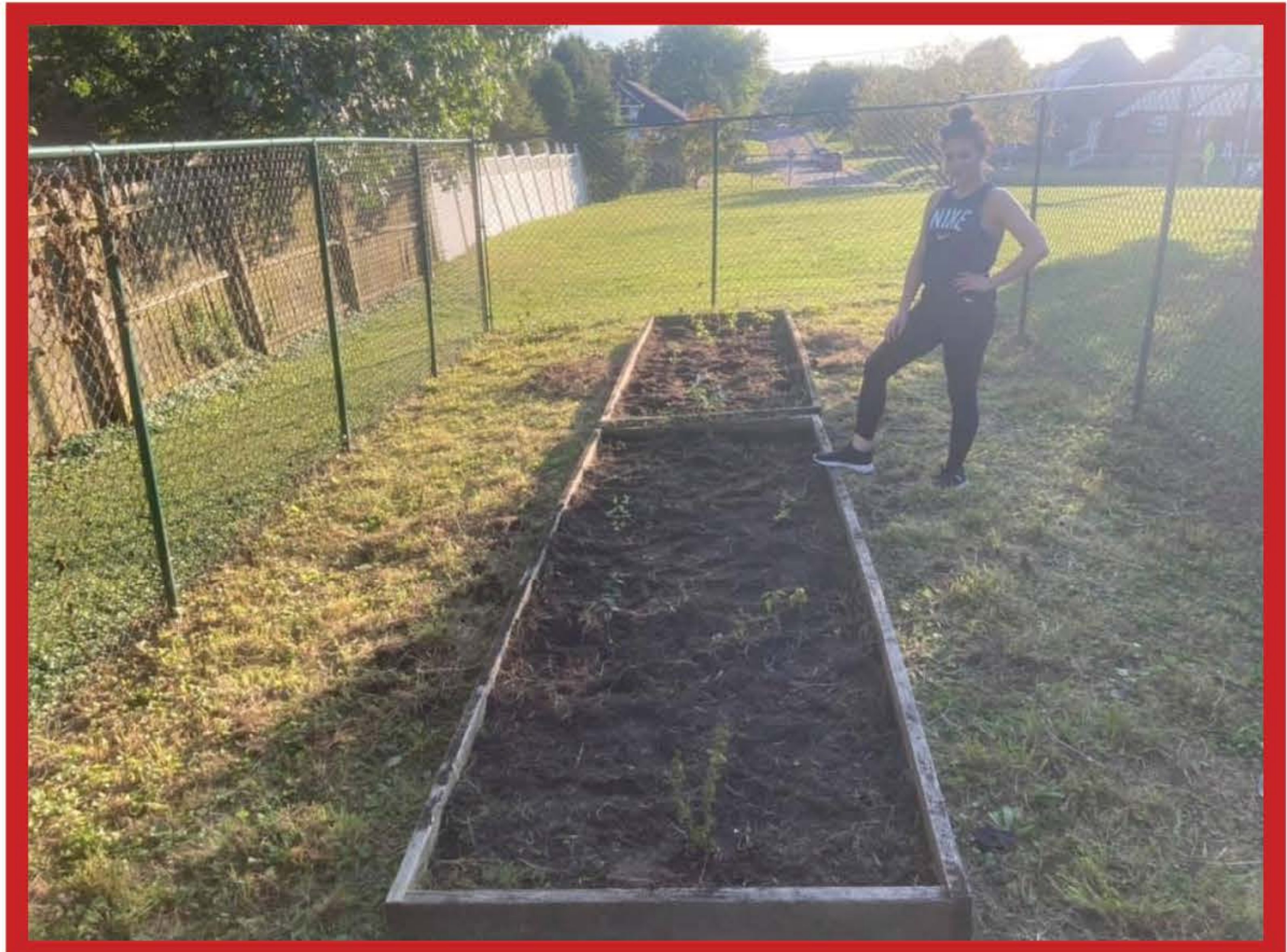
Masking Up!

We are still blown away by the efforts of a saintly lady named Debbie Yanacek and her mother. These women have graciously donated the time and materials to hand sew masks for every student in our building! We cannot wait to get these out to our little Comets! Thank you so much!



Planting Opportunities

At Oakview, we are always thinking about how we can better the experience of our students. This long neglected area of the school has been turned into a pollinator garden! Thank you to Farmer Shane at Sweet Bee Gardens for donating a variety of native pollinator plants to Oakview School to make this happen! Also, thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Patierno, and our custodian Danny Fugett, for taking on this project. We can't wait to see all of the learning opportunities that will take place here!



Staff Spotlight

Welcome to Oakview, Mr. Levi Pennington! He is a graduate of Kentucky Christian University and will be working as a resource teacher in our primary classes. We are so glad to have you!



POAGE ELEMENTARY



Welcome back, Pioneers! First of all-**THANK YOU** for all of your support and hard work during our virtual time. We are so excited that you are back in our building. We missed you! For those staying virtual, remember, you are

always a Pioneer! We look forward to all the exciting things we have planned for you this school year!

Katie Holbrook

Staff Spotlight

Our Poage family wants to welcome Miss Ashley Carpenter to our 1st grade. She is a recent graduate of Morehead State University and is extremely excited to be a Pioneer and to join the Isibindi house!



Donating Time and Love

We can't thank Rachel Nicols enough! She donated handmade masks to our Pioneers. We are so thankful that we have parents who love our school enough to donate their time and love!



Love from Afar



Mrs. Hill's second grade class has learned to give High 5's even though they can't touch!

ASHLAND EARLY EXCEPTIONAL CHILDHOOD CENTER



Even though things look so much different this year, one thing remains the same. We are so very excited that your children are here with us each day! We have missed you all so much! Our staff has worked so hard and even though it was nice to see you on virtual, there is nothing like traditional learning for our children. We have so many exciting “hands on” activities and games going on this year in our classrooms and can’t wait to soak up every moment with your child. Thank you, parents, for working with us on our new changes and thanks for sharing your little one with us. We are looking forward to an awesome year.

Teresa Conway

Staff Spotlight

We would like to introduce one of our new IECE teachers for one of our 3 year old classrooms.

Mrs. Ashley Delinger. She is a graduate from Marshall and brings seven years of experience with her. We are so happy and fortunate to have her.



What Are the Kids Up To?



In Mrs. Steele’s class, girls built this amazing tower of wooden blocks.



Mrs. Synder’s class made science experiments that allowed them to blow up their own balloons.



Mrs. Hankin’s preschoolers have been enjoying the nice weather outside.

Director's Message

The C.A.T.S Academy of the Ashland Independent Schools is a program for the gifted and high potential students in our district. We are located in a beautiful building on Paul Blazer's campus. Students are brought to us each day from all the elementary schools and also from Ashland Middle School. We provide these students with challenging enrichment opportunities in math, science and other subject areas.

C.A.T.S. Walk for Dogsand Cats

In March of 2019, the C.A.T.S. Academy students decided to participate in a service project. After discussing several options, the students overwhelmingly elected to raise money for the Ashland Animal Rescue Fund known as AARF. They raised money by organizing a Walkathon. Students asked family and friends to sponsor them in one of two ways: the sponsors could donate a set amount for the student to walk as much as he or she could, or the sponsors could donate a set amount based on how many laps were completed. The Walkathon was held in the gymnasium of Oakview Elementary on a Saturday morning. About thirty students and parents walked for two hours collecting \$ 1,040.50! Student representatives presented the check for AARF to Cathy Queen, Associate Director of AARF, at the September board meeting of the Ashland Independent Schools. The money will be used to help local abandoned animals to be fed, vetted, and boarded until they find their "Furever" home!



Virtual C.A.T.S.

The rooms here in Building 5 on the campus of Paul Blazer High School have been unusually quiet. We miss the hustle and bustle of play and discovery. We love to watch our students figuring out density by seeing how many pennies can float on a formed piece of aluminum foil. We like to see them working in teams to complete challenging math problems in order to unlock several combination locks and Escape the classroom. We enjoy observing them as they collect tree leaves in order to discover the tree species they come from using a dichotomous key. Covid has definitely had an impact on C.A.T.S. Seeing our students through the computer screen has not been the same. We look forward to having our students back with us safely.

Going Virtual with FRYSC

Ashland Blazer

Brittany Brown, Coordinator
Bethany McDowell, Liason

The ABYSC has been working hard to make sure our students are getting what they need and staying happy and healthy at home while virtually learning. We have moved all of our programs to an online version and have been sharing them via Facebook. Our Facebook page includes community programming, informational flyers, and our virtual office. The virtual office includes informational websites and forms that students and parents can fill out. When the family fills out a form, it automatically sends us a notification that a family is in need. We can then contact that family and help them in the best suited way. We've had several events via Facebook including Ready Fest and Rapp (Relatives As Parents Program). The ABYSC has also had a Basic Needs Drive Thru where we provided food, clothing, hygiene items, and school supplies to students. We have been attending several online trainings to better serve our families and are working hard to stay in contact with our families to make sure they know we are here to help!



Ashland Middle School

Karen Gearheart, Coordinator
Jeanie Stafford, Liason

AYSC has set up a virtual office and shared it on the Facebook pages for Ashland FRYSC and AYSC at AMS. This virtual office includes links to many resources for our families, including how to request participation in our Backpack Blessings weekend food program. In addition to assisting with food resources, we have also provided school supplies since the Ready Fest Drive Thru as requested. Also, when a family has contacted us in need of emergency clothing, we make an appointment to meet in the lobby of AMS so the students can choose what they like and will fit. We continue to assist families in registering their students online for school as well as to obtain a school issued Chromebook. We are consistently reaching out to families when students are struggling with classwork. We miss our students and are doing everything we can to ensure a safer environment as we return to school. Temperature checks have become the new normal; we have our temperatures taken every morning before entering AMS... even Zeke!



Team Effort Leads to Regional Championship

The girls varsity golf team has had a great season, culminating in a 45-stroke Regional victory, earning them a spot in the KHSAA State Tournament at Bowling Green Country Club on October 9 & 10.

The girls played in 10 Tier 1 (highest KY HS classification) this season, which gave them plenty of experience going up against the top teams in Kentucky. We definitely took our lumps, but the experience paid off in the Regional!

Seniors, Kate Hanni and Carley Cullop, lead the way this year. Kate was Medalist at four tournaments with a combined 10 under par in those events, while Carley was always steady and put up her best performance of the year at Regional, when it was needed most!

The Regional Championship was truly a TEAM effort. With Kate battling through an injury, Carley, sophomore Tori Brown, and freshman Laney Sorrell, stepped up to the occasion and fired their best rounds of the year! It was a great "sports story" to witness!

Our school and community can be very proud of these young ladies for the work they put in this Fall, and the way they carried themselves on the golf course. We traveled to the Louisville and Lexington areas every weekend, since the end of July, to play in events, and they were excellent representatives of Ashland Blazer!



Laney Sorrell, Carley Cullop, Kate Hanni, Tori Brown

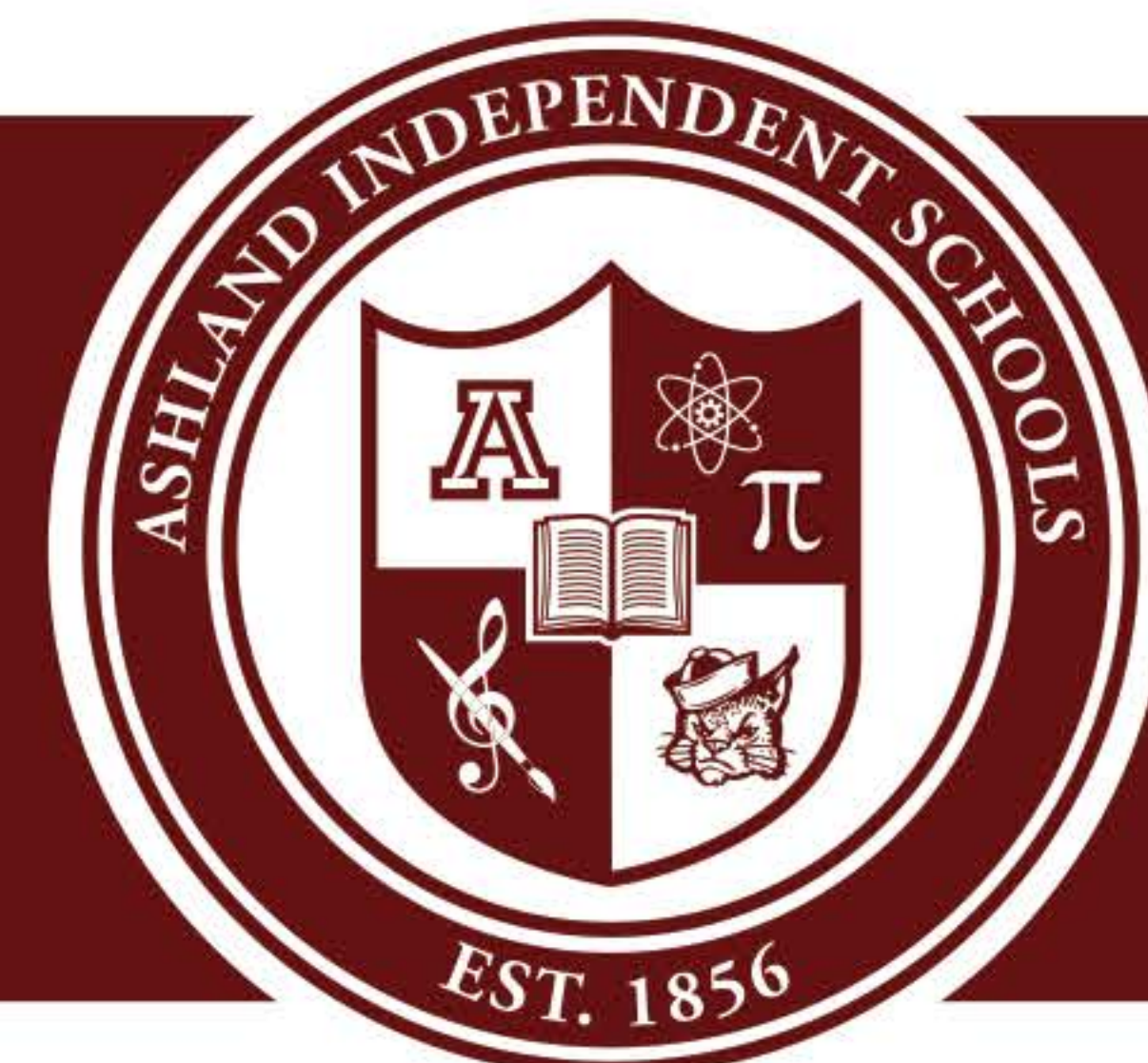
Tomcats Show Strengths on Both Sides of Ball Through Five Games, Ashland Outscoring Opponents 224-35

The Tomcats scored 44 points in their season opener against Bourbon County and haven't looked back. Putting up 50, 54, 41, and 35 most recently against Bell County. Ashland has started 5-0 and locked themselves in for at least a tie in the district. The district win against Russell came as the thirteenth in their last fourteen meetings. While their offense is second in the state (3A) in points per game, they rank first in scoring margin, averaging victories by 37.8 points. Their team defense also stands atop the stat sheet at only allowing 7 points per game. The high-powered offense is led by runningback Keontae Pittman, currently ranked fifth in the state (3A) averaging 134 yards rushing per game while JT Garrett is averaging 85 receiving yards per game, good for second in the state. That

top-ranked defense is giving up just over 60 rushing yards per game and only allowing 113 yards in the air. COVID-19 has caused a numerous changes to the schedule, causing some cancellations as well as alterations to the opponents. Ashland has one more regular season test against Rowan County before moving forward to playoffs in November. The Tomcats will be looking to make another deep run into the playoffs this year, potentially bringing more games back home to Putnam Stadium. While the stadium may look different this year, and the crowds a little smaller, one thing remains the same- the Tomcats have come to play!



Once a Tomcat...



Michael Bias ('05) is proud to have been a Poage Pioneer, Verity Patriot, and Ashland Tomcat. After graduating from Blazer in 2005 he earned his Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Asbury College, then his Master's and Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Marshall University in 2014. Dr. Bias completed his training at the Federal Medical Center in Lexington, KY and currently works as a clinical psychologist at the VA Hospital in Huntington, WV. He and his wife, Katie Bias (Blazer '05 grad and current Blazer teacher) continue to live in Ashland with their daughter, Hayden. He reflects positively on his experience with the Ashland school system and says, "Blazer not only prepared me to be successful through graduate school and as a psychologist, but also introduced me to my wife and provided me with so many wonderful memories." He credits his biology teacher, Brock Walter and soccer coach, Frank Sloan as being integral to the development of his character and work ethic. Dr. Bias is proud to have a career that allows him

to serve veterans who struggle with addiction and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. "It's incredibly rewarding to help America's heroes who have endured more than most can imagine. I think growing up in Appalachia and attending Ashland public schools helped me develop a sense of pride for this area and I am grateful to have an opportunity to give back." Dr. Bias encourages current students not to take this small community for granted. "Continue to seek experiences outside Appalachia, but remember not everyone has the opportunity to grow up in an environment that can be as enriching and supportive as Ashland has been for me."



Ashley Barber Sexton ('07) focuses on memories both at Hager Elementary and Paul G. Blazer when reflecting on her time in the Ashland Independent School District. Before earning her Bachelor's degree in English Literature from Eastern Kentucky University (2011) and her Juris Doctorate from Northern Kentucky University (2015), Ashley was soaking in the kindness shown by so many of her Ashland teachers. "Mrs. Pitsenberger would give all of her students a hug every day at the end of school and say something kind to us. I think that speaks of all the teachers I had during my years in the Ashland School District—each of them truly cared about their students as if we were their very own children. That stability and assurance provided from the teachers supported students to excel and strive to be their best." Real-world experiences provided through the Ashland Blazer Co-Op Program also played a vital role in the decision making for Sexton. During her senior year, Ashley was able to shadow a teacher, a potential career

path, and an area Circuit Court Judge. It became clear during that experience that her calling was in the legal field.

At a relatively young age, Ashley has managed to open her own law firm, providing her the opportunity to change lives for the better. "First and foremost, be kind and have empathy for others. I have been afforded so many opportunities and have helped many people because those are my top priorities. Secondly, have courage to be vulnerable and do it scared! Amazing things happen outside of your comfort zone, and you realize just how strong and capable you are when you push yourself past being comfortable." That kindness and empathy for others is a trait that was built on where she was raised. "To me being an Ashland Tomcat means that I come from a community of goodhearted people who have an incredible work ethic and always strive to help others. I was instilled with the integrity and fortitude that has brought me success and enabled me to help so many people through exceedingly difficult times in their lives."

Always a Tomcat



Mark Swift ('77) has been a staple in the Ashland Independent School district for well over twenty years. Prior to retiring as the Athletic Director in the Spring of 2020, Swift also served as a teacher and coach, carrying a Bachelor's degree from Liberty University and two Master's degrees from the University of the Cumberlands. "I was ready for the next chapter," says Swift upon graduation from Ashland Blazer. "I was completely prepared. I was educated well and mentored by wonderful administrators, teachers, and coaches." He is forever grateful for his upbringing. After spending time in Jacksonville, Florida, Los Angeles, California, and Birmingham, Alabama, it meant so much for Swift to move back to his hometown. He would now be able to raise his sons, Connor and Slater, and provide the same Ashland Tomcat experience for them that he had experienced himself. Returning to his alma mater and serving 22 years as "President of All Things Tomcat" is one of his proudest moments. Reflecting on

his time with the district, Swift notes that he loved being a part of true community. The community he spoke of consisted of strong ties between our city, our schools, and our athletics. When asked if he had any advice for our current students, Swift replied, "I'll give the same advice I've given my two sons and Blazer graduates: When it's tough, and it will be at some point, remember... you're a [Swift] and a Tomcat!"



Clayton Hill ('91) has fond memories both in the classroom and on the field while attending Ashland Blazer. "Taking advanced classes offered by great teachers and playing sports prepared me for college both academically and socially," Clayton responded when asked about how Ashland had prepared him for the next phase of his life. On the soccer field, he was selected as the first All-State Soccer player from Ashland Blazer, under the coaching of Frank Sloan. On Fridays, he traded the shin guards for shoulder pads and handled field goal duty for the Tomcats. One of his proudest moments at Ashland Blazer was being a part of the 1990 AAA State Championship team. Clayton added, "Success definitely depends on work ethic, determination, and perseverance.

Being involved in athletics and extracurricular activities is a vital part of setting yourself up for success. Forming relationships with teachers and coaches will only help in future real world situations that you will encounter in college and the workplace." Upon graduation from Ashland, Clayton attended the University of Kentucky, Morehead State, and the Gemological Institute of America. Currently the Vice President of Pollock's Jewelers in Ashland, Clayton has had the privilege of accepting the "Small Business of the Year" award and most recently a "Key To The City" on behalf of Pollock's and his family; Grandmother Virginia Hagans, mother and father, Leslie and David Hill, and aunt, Carole Ferry. Clayton's family is well versed in the Ashland tradition as well. His wife, Beth, has taught at Poage Elementary for twenty years. His eldest daughter, Emma ('20) is currently a freshman, continuing her tennis career at Georgetown College while youngest daughter, Isabella, is a freshman at Ashland and on the volleyball team. When asked about the pride he takes in being a Tomcat Alum, Clayton said, "The atmosphere that Ashland has formed over the years is incredible. The success that students and athletes have achieved through the years is remarkable considering the size of our town."



Christine Scott,
*Director of Pupil
Personnel*

From the Desk of the DPP

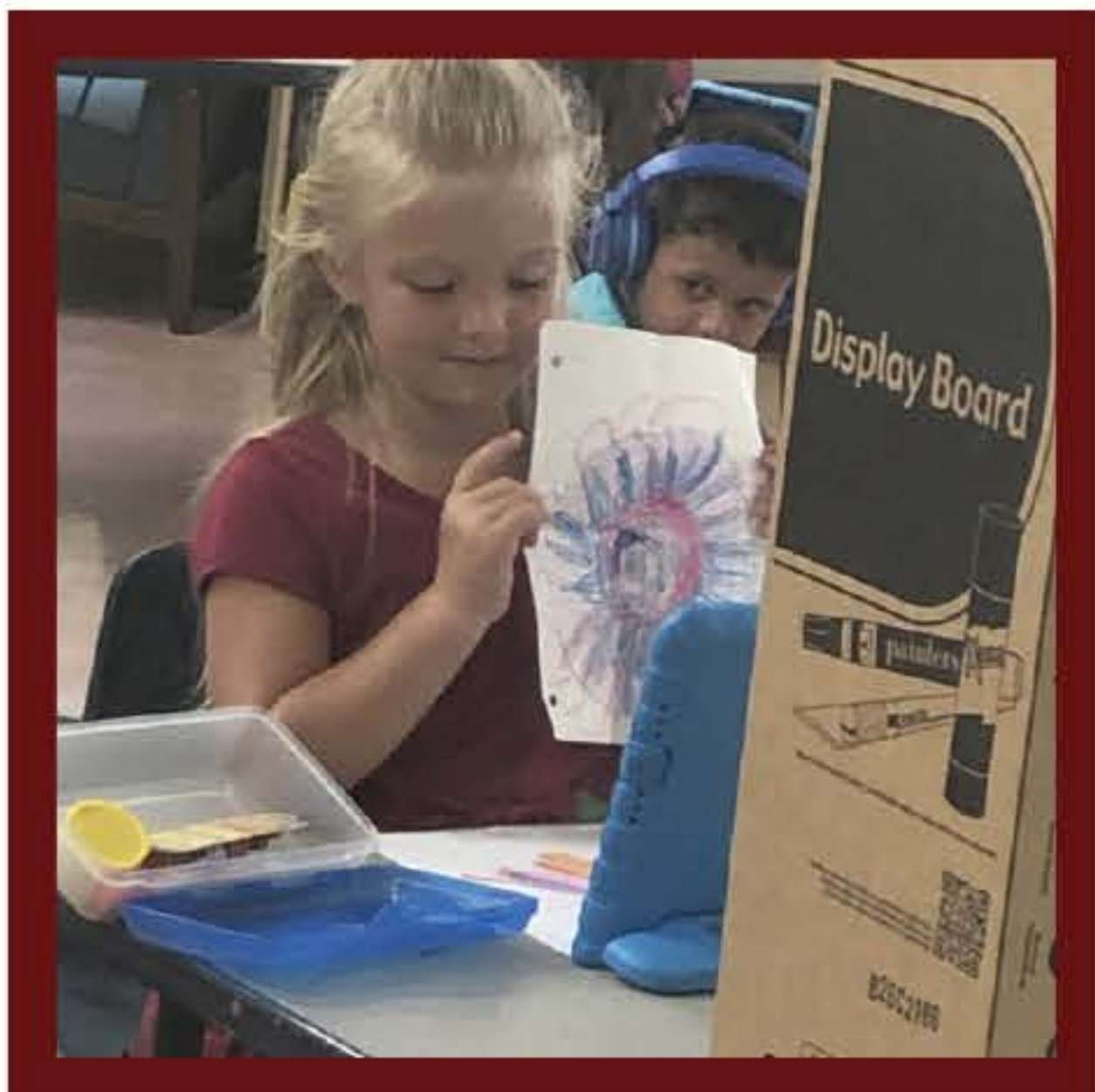
Online Registration and Parent Portals

Thank you to all school secretaries, administrators, teachers, staff, and parents who made our first year using Online Registration in Infinite Campus a success! This is something that we will be continuing as we eliminate the original back to school enrollment packets. It is important that parents keep their parent portal usernames and passwords because the parent portal can give you valuable information such as lunch money balance, student schedules, and attendance. Parents will have to use the parent portal next year to go through the enrollment process, so please maintain and remember your portal information. Do you need a parent portal? Have you forgotten your username or password? Call us at Central Office and we will assist you (606) 327-2706.

Attendance and Participation

This year looks very different in a lot of ways. We have kicked off the 2020-21 school year with virtual instruction and I could not be more proud of the way our teachers and families have embraced it and made the most of it. Attendance for virtual learners will look different than it will look for in person learners; students who attend in person will be held accountable for attendance just the way they always have, while students who are learning virtually will be monitored by participation. Attendance and participation will both be tracked in Infinite Campus. If a student needs to miss school, he/she will need to turn in, fax, or email an excuse to the school office; this applies to both in person and virtual learners. Please call me at (606) 327-2706 if you have any questions about attendance or participation.

AICC Adapts to Help Children at a New Level



Ashland Independent Child Care took child care to a new level to help families during the virtual school period. Children brought their devices, either their own or the ones checked out from the schools, and logged on at the center for their virtual school days. Having children from all of the different elementary schools and teachers proved to be an exciting new challenge that the amazing AICC staff stepped up and handled with professionalism and pride. The children were great and really adapted well to the new virtual education world. Electronic devices, masks, and friends made for a successful virtual experience for the families, students, and staff.

