INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

728 HAPPENINGS

Our mission is to educate, inspire & empower

With schools in Elk River, Otsego, Rogers & Zimmerman

www.isd728.org

Winter/Spring 2021

Message from Superintendent Dr. Daniel Bittman



Spring is in the air, temperatures are rising, and we are finally able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. The 2020-2021 school year has been exciting to say the least. Our children, families, staff and communities have experienced things they never thought possible as a result of the pandemic. They have also built new relationships, increased collaboration, joined together for the "greater good," and looked for ways to support those most in need. We did it, and will continue to carry these things forward post pandemic.

As the Superintendent of ISD 728, I have been able to witness firsthand the tremendous efforts happening throughout our schools and communities, not only to support our students, but our families and local businesses too. I am humbled to serve with each and every one of you, and look forward to the time when we can gather more freely, attend concerts and activities, keep all students in school without worry of quarantine, and spend time on things not relating to COVID-19.

We have made tremendous progress, love having students and staff back in our buildings, and continue to learn a lot each and every day. In addition to navigating things like COVID-19, quarantine, and vaccinations, we have also been able to:

- Provide various learning models, choices and flexibility for students and families.
- Increase academic and extracurricular offerings for students.
- Navigate the fiscal challenges that came with the pandemic.
- Increase partnerships with local business and community leaders.
- Make significant progress on and fulfill promises related to facility projects made possible by the 2019 Referendum.
- Provide a significant amount of programming and care through Community Education.
- Represent ISD 728 at the Legislature, and on state and national committees (i.e. MASA, AASA, etc.).
- And much, much more.

Now, it's time to make sure we finish out the 2020-2021 school year strong, remain committed to practices that help keep our kids "in school," and plan for an exciting (and hopefully, more normal) 2021-2022 school year. From a District standpoint, this involves things such as, but not limited to:

- Providing training.
- Allocating resources to District priorities.
- Partnering with business and community leaders.
- Being fiscally responsible.
- Maintaining and improving District facilities.
- Evaluating successes and/or things that we can do better.
- Learning from stakeholders; and most importantly.
- Educating, inspiring, and empowering ALL learners.

Thank you for supporting our children, families and each other. I am grateful to serve as your Superintendent and to be part of ISD 728! Let's make the end of the 2020-2021 school year, and the 2021-2022 school year our very best!

Back to School, All Over Again

Imagine going “Back to School” in January … or even February.

ISD 728 students did just that, as the District worked with state partners in education and public health to create a safe plan for all ISD 728 students (who chose) to return to school.

As conditions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic improved in early 2021, ISD 728 worked hard to first bring back elementary school students. That paid off when, in mid-January, students in early education through Grade 2 returned to all elementary buildings in the District, along with all Westwood Elementary students up in Zimmerman. Later, ISD 728 was able to welcome back students in grades 3-6.

“We agree with many families that students learn best in a classroom environment,” said Superintendent Dan Bittman. “There is no doubt we work best when we are all together. The issue at hand is whether we can do that safely, and the science is showing us that with our youngest learners, we can.”

Then, as infection rates continued to drop, ISD 728 administrators and leadership worked with staff and our public health partners to start bringing back secondary students. Mitigation issues, including masks, cleaning and sanitizing were cornerstones of a plan eventually presented to the state, and approved at the end of January.

“Our biggest challenge with the pandemic has not been transmission among students. Rather, it is keeping our staff healthy and in the classroom. We can’t do much when dozens of staff members are quarantined and unable to work. So when the community case rates are down, we are much more confident about keeping our buildings staffed, drivers on our buses, cooks preparing healthy meals and custodians keeping our buildings safe for everyone,” Bittman said.

With that plan in place, ISD 728 secondary students came to school on February 15 and February 22 (10th grade), making it the first time all buildings had in-person learning Monday through Thursday for every student who selected that option.

The District continues to support all Distance Learners at this time, as well, as we are still in pandemic conditions, and families who chose to keep kids learning at home must have that option available to them. In fact, the success of online learning for students all across ISD 728 has paved the way for expansion of Online 728, which you can read about in another article featured in this issue of 728 Happenings.

“We couldn’t be here, back in person, without the support of both those that have followed the District Model and those families that have decided to do Distance Learning for the entire year,” said Lincoln Elementary Principal Justin Sperling.

“It’s really taken everyone to get to this point. We’re looking forward to an exciting spring. Having everyone back just creates a different vibe at each school, especially elementary school in my opinion. It’s really uplifting for our staff and support to have everybody here.”















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www.isd728.org/eConnection

ISD 728 and Construction Partners Delivering on 2019 Referendum Projects

Working together, ISD 728 leadership, School Board members and construction partners are moving full speed ahead on a number of construction projects made possible by the 2019 Referendum.

Construction projects that are moving forward quickly include a new middle school in Otsego, and the performance gymnasium addition and workout space at Rogers High School. Concrete and masonry work can be seen on both locations after soil improvements were made prior to footings.

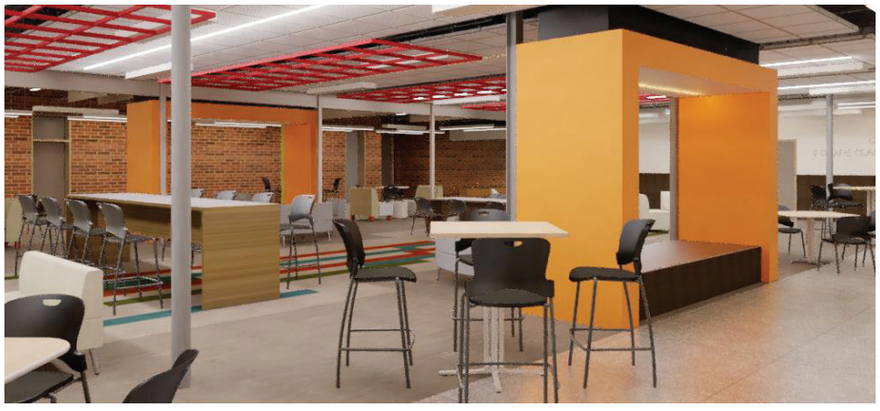
Stadium packages – including field turf for our traditional high schools at Zimmerman, Rogers and Elk River High School have been bid by contractors. Estimates are showing at this time, barring any problems, all three projects can be done within budget targets, which is good news for the District and for taxpayers.

VandenBerge Middle School will be on tap this spring. Office areas and the main entries (bus and flagpole) will be first to be addressed, with improvements looking similar to Salk Middle School, also in Elk River.

PRAIRIE VIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL



VANDENBERGE MIDDLE SCHOOL





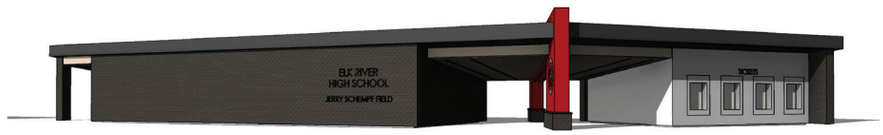
Lincoln Elementary School will also be next in line for renovations. This includes improvements to the health office, learning spaces, multi-purpose areas, outdoor physical education areas and the parking lot/drive loop. Also, additional flexible learning spaces will be created and a new fire sprinkler system will be installed.

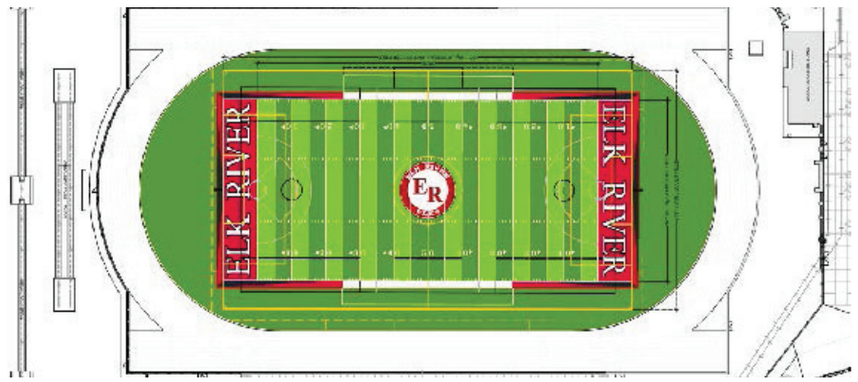
Completed projects include a multi-million-dollar reconstruction of the Elk River High parking lot, and multiple painting, flooring, roofing and HVAC projects around the District, as recommended by and promised to our families and communities.

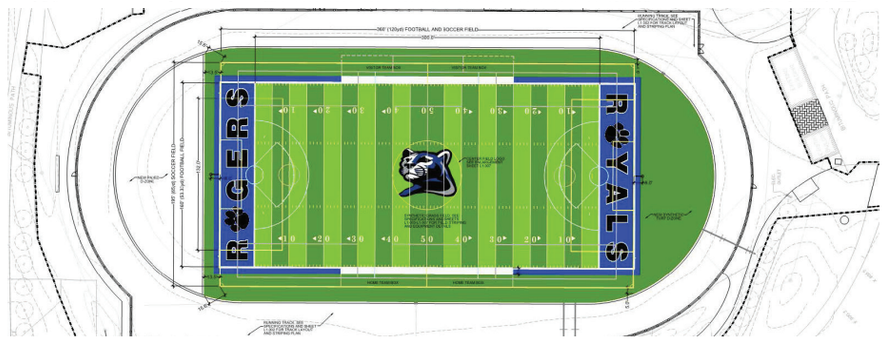
Those will continue throughout the five-year construction plan, according to Superintendent Dan Bittman.

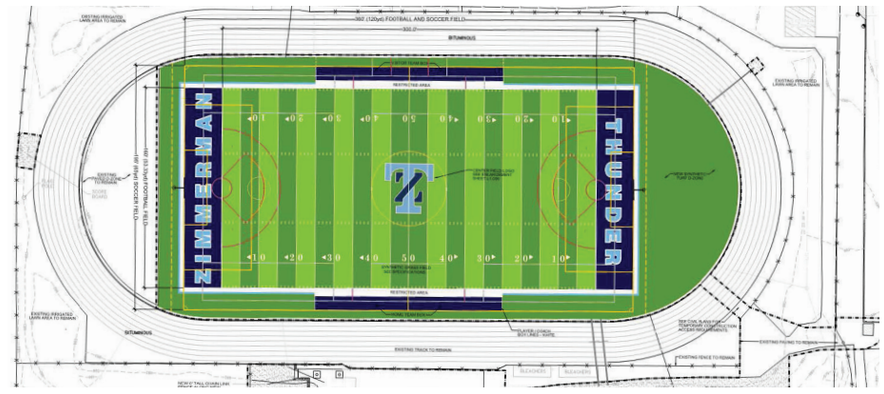
“This couldn’t be done without our community support. The projects, themselves, will provide equity and opportunity at our schools. And with the available dollars now to finance other needs, we will see improvements in each building around our district. That’s great news,” he said.

To stay tuned on all the projects, including a weekly supply of construction photos showing the progress at multiple projects, check out **www.isd728.org/728Strong**.









Online728 K-12 School: Because Every Learner is Unique

Online728 is a full-time online K-12 school offered through Minnesota's 8th largest school district, ISD 728. Online728 helps personalize the learning process and provides an alternative learning model to the classroom. Courses are uniquely designed just for those learners enrolled in the program. This format allows instructors to provide more personalized instruction and better support learners.

IS ONLINE LEARNING RIGHT FOR YOU?

Below are essential conditions for success in an online environment. It is important for families to ensure they are able to create a successful learning environment for their child before committing to Online728.

ENGAGE DAILY IN THE LEARNING PROCESS WITH YOUR CHILD

All learners benefit from caring adults providing assistance at home. K-8 learners need daily assistance during the learning process in addition to their teacher. It will be important for families to review the daily expectations communicated by the classroom teacher.

CREATE A LEARNING SPACE FOR YOUR CHILD

Create a special, personalized corner of a room dedicated to learning, creating, and reading. If possible choose a space that is free from distractions and clutter to help your child stay focused.

COMMIT TO A SCHEDULE

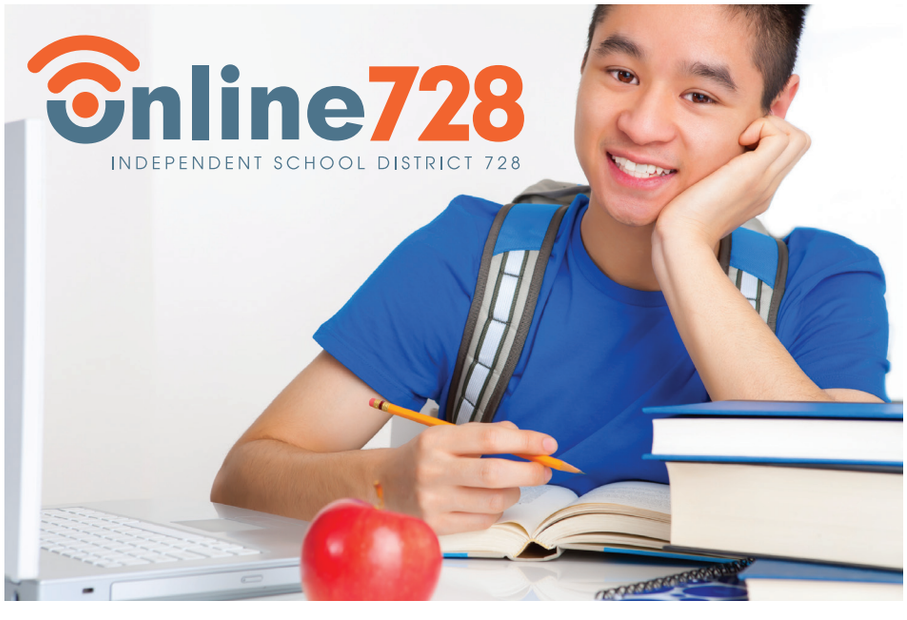
Finding time for learning requires planning. Take a look at your family's schedule and figure out the best times for learning. While your child's teachers will have set times for Google Meetings, it will be important to establish other routines for breaks, exercise and studying during the course of the day.

REDUCE DISTRACTIONS

Video games, computer games, social media, TV, toys, pets — our homes have lots of distractions. Make a list of the things that distract your child. Then, find ways to limit them during learning time.

REACH OUT TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

You play a key role in the success of your child in the online learning environment. Be an advocate for your child and communicate with your child's teacher when you have questions about your child's academic and social-emotional well-being.



THE NEW ELEMENTARY (K-5) PROGRAM

Online728 Elementary (Grades K-5) provides classroom communities that maximize opportunities for students to engage with each other and their teacher while supporting social skill development.

- Students will be provided learning in all academic areas that meet the Minnesota Academic Standards including specialists such as Art, Music, Physical Education (P.E.) and Media and Technology.
- Students will engage in a balance of direct instruction, independent and group work, hands-on practice, and creation.
- Students will have access to all the academic supports and services that exist in a face-to-face classroom.
- K-2 Learners will connect to a virtual classroom through Seesaw.
- 3-5 Learners will connect to a virtual classroom through Schoology.
- Students will be engaged in a combination of live and self-paced instruction.
- Video conferencing using Google Meets will be used to support and instruct students.
- Dedicated online teachers, who are focused solely on their Online728 learners, will be providing instruction.

THE NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL (6-8) PROGRAM

Online728 Middle (Grades 6-8) provides engaging learning opportunities that provide community building and collaboration with the flexibility of online learning. This program will be offered as a full-time option for students.

- Students will be provided learning in all academic areas that meet the Minnesota Academic Standards including elective courses.
- Students will engage in a balance of direct instruction, independent and group work, hands-on practice, and creation.
- Students will have access to all the academic supports and services that exist in a face-to-face classroom.
- Learners will connect to a virtual classroom through Schoology
- Students will be engaged in a collaborative Advisory live meeting with their peers and teacher.
- Video conferencing using Google Meets will be used to support and instruct students.
- Dedicated online teachers, who are focused solely on their Online728 learners, will be providing instruction.

ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

In order to enroll your child in the Online728 Elementary or Middle School Program, please complete the enrollment form at **www.isd728.org/Online728-Enrollment**.

QUESTIONS?

Planning committees will continue to meet this Spring to further articulate program details. Visit **www.isd728.org/Online728** to learn about our Online728 programs or updates for the 2021-2022 school year.

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In Memory of our Friend Tricia Sanford

ISD 728 lost a very special member of its family earlier this year when Patricia (Tricia) Sanford passed away, suddenly, in January.

She was a champion of students everywhere, leading many of our career and continuing education teams with her steadfast work in our curriculum department.

"It's a very special District," she said of ISD 728. "Communities that are very different working together to make kids better and pave a path for their future – that's not something you find everywhere. We're very fortunate to have amazing teachers and leadership here."

And we were very fortunate to have her.

A scholarship account has been set up to honor Tricia Sanford. If you are interested in contributing, please send checks to:

ISD 728 - Attention Joe Primus
(*Write Tricia Sanford Scholarship in the Memo*)
11500 193rd Ave. NW
Elk River, MN 55330



Visit us on Facebook & Twitter!
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Mike Breyen Named Minnesota Strength Coach of the Year



Congratulations to Elk River High School Coach Mike Breyen for being named the Minnesota Coach of the Year by the National High School Strength Coaches Association.

Mike has been INSTRUMENTAL in helping design our Physical Education areas - especially the workout areas - at all three traditional high schools, including the improvements we will see at Zimmerman Middle/High and Rogers High School thanks to the 2019 Referendum!

"It's definitely an honor," Breyen said. "It's a group that does great things for kids. And we work together and learn a lot from each other. I've made friends for life through these coaches, and to be recognized like this is very special."

ISCHS Principal Receives State Award



Ivan Sand Community High School Principal Deanna Chiodo was awarded the MAAP Exemplary Award (Minnesota Association of Alternative Program) on Friday, February 5, 2021 during the virtual award ceremony at the annual MAAP Statewide Conference. The exemplary award goes out to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding dedication, service, and commitment to alternative education. One who also had made significant contributions to their students, programs, and communities.

Deanna has served on the Board and Executive Committee since 1990. Included in her repertoire is MAAP Regional Director, President-Elect, President, Past President, and Secretary. She has also coordinated three state-wide conferences and worked on two international planning committees.

Bill Zimniewicz whom nominated her said, "Even though she is an administrator, she is always a teacher." Because Deanna has served on the Executive Board a couple of decades, she had not previously been eligible to receive this award.

ISD 728 Celebrates School Board Dedication, Accomplishments

ISD 728 leadership and staff joined the Minnesota School Boards Association in celebrating Minnesota School Board Recognition Week February 22-26, 2021, aiming to build awareness and understanding of the vital function these elected officials play in our communities.



"We appreciate, so much, their commitment to our ISD 728 communities, as well as what they do for all of our students and families," said Superintendent Dan Bittman. "They spend a lot of hours away from their own families to take care of ISD 728 students, families, and community partners, and we want to recognize them for their dedication, especially during the pandemic. I could not be more proud of them and to serve with them. It is just humbling."

The District honored members prior to a February 22 Work Session at the ISD 728 District Office. Family members and ISD 728 staff were in attendance.

School boards work consistently, Bittman said, to raise student achievement each year by:

- Creating a vision for what the community wants to be and for making student achievement a top priority.
- Establishing standards, in accordance with state standards, for what students will be expected to learn and be able to do.
- Ensuring progress is measured to be sure the District's goals are achieved and students are learning at expected levels in one of the top school districts in Minnesota.
- Being accountable for their decisions and actions by continually tracking and reporting results.
- Creating a safe, orderly climate where students can learn and teachers can teach.
- Forming partnerships with others in our communities to solve common problems.
- Focusing attention on the need for continuous improvement by questioning, refining and revising issues related to student achievement.

"We truly are grateful for the work our school board does for our kids. It goes well beyond meetings. They are present at events, community celebrations and much more, and they represent our schools and students very well," said William Campbell, Assistant Superintendent. "This is a weeklong recognition, but their work is year-round. That deserves credit."

Serving the ISD 728 School District on the Board this year are:

- Holly Thompson – Board Chair
- Kim Michels – Vice Chair
- Tony Walter – Clerk
- Sara Weis – Director
- Shane Steinbrecher – Director
- Christi Tullbane – Director
- Joel Nelson – Treasurer

For more information on the ISD 728 School Board, visit **www.isd728.org/schoolboard**.



Holly Thompson – Board Chair



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Tony Walter – Clerk



Sara Weis – Director



Shane Steinbrecher – Director



Christi Tullbane – Director



Joel Nelson – Treasurer



Zimmerman E-Sports Captures First State Championship

With COVID-19 shutting down most activities, many have felt the sting of being unable to compete. After all, drive and competition - wanting to win - are huge pieces of adolescents learning about what it takes to succeed. While some have seen this as a season of "missing out," others have taken full advantage of a new opportunity.

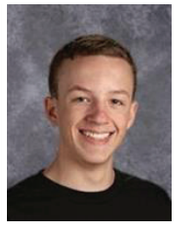
Topping that list this winter is the Zimmerman High E-Sports Team. The group came together throughout 2020 and has emerged as the top team in Minnesota, winning the state tournament in the game "League of Legends" by winning a competition that featured 12 Minnesota teams.

"They're just a group of kids that really did the work necessary to be more than just good gamers," said adviser Angela Yanke. "They became a great team." Aidan Maloney, Bryant Yanta, Scott Rickard, Carson Nolan, Ryan Reinking make up the Thunder's top team, with substitutes Logan Skog, Tylor Plaster.


Aidan Maloney


Bryant Yanta


Carson Nolan


Scott Rickard


Ryan Reinking

"We came to Ms. Yanke last year with the idea of doing something, but everyone was kind of uncertain about how it would look," Maloney, a senior and this year's captain, said. "This year, we really wanted to put it together and do it right."

Yanke said the team did research, figuring out what each member did really well and the strengths they could bring to parts of the game. Meanwhile, they also used Twitch - a game streaming service - to scout other teams and see what they needed to do to top the competition. The team rose up the ranks this fall, playing in the Play VS leagues and making their way through the Midwest Playoffs. There, they were beaten in a three game series by Washington County, a fellow Minnesota team.

In the state tournament - a 12-team ladder - their hard work paid off, Yanke said. They defeated Washington to exact some revenge and get the championship. "You could really see them improve with their strategies," Yanke said. "It was fun, as a fan, to watch."

For those that haven't played "League of Legends," the game consists of five-member teams. In competition, the two teams square off, using a poll of characters to protect a base, defeat minions and capture the gold. It's much more complex, obviously, but win the gold and conquer the base and you're on your way to victory. The Zimmerman Club also has a Rocket League Team featuring students Logan Skog, Kayden Ledier, and Will Rachel. That group is working to improve at the popular competition, which is like cars/vehicles playing soccer in unique stadiums. Rocket League is one of Twitch's most popular games.

The E-Sports craze shows no signs of slowing, so Yanke expects the team to continue to grow, despite this year's seniors nearing the end of their journey. "It'll be our job to pass it on," Reinking said. "We're having more people ask us about it now - what the league is like and what playing as a team is all about. I think we're up to more than four Rocket League teams for this spring, so that's growing. And we'll be playing in a Regional League as well."

Yanke said she's looking forward to seeing where it goes. "It's definitely just going to grow in popularity," she said. "It should be fun."

ISD 728 High Schools Name EXCEL, AAA Award Winners

Zimmerman, Elk River and Rogers High School have named their 2020-2021 winners of the EXCEL and AAA Awards.

EXCEL AWARDS

Winners of the EXCEL Awards are:

- Gavin Neubauer and Abigail Larson – Zimmerman High School
- Lindsey Redepenning and Kayden Grassel – Elk River High School
- Owen Lefebvre and Paige Vreeman – Rogers High School

The EXCEL Award is sponsored by the Minnesota State High School League and is defined as — Excellence in Community, Education and Leadership — This award is a unique recognition program designed exclusively for Minnesota high school juniors who are active in school activities, who show leadership qualities and who are model citizens.

The criteria for the EXCEL award is that the student must:

- Be a junior in high school.
- Make satisfactory progress toward graduation requirements.
- Participate in a MSHSL fine arts and/or activity.
- Hold a leadership position in school.
- Work voluntarily in their community.


Gavin Neubauer


Abigail Larson


Kayden Grassel


Lindsey Redepenning


Owen Lefebvre


Paige Vreeman

AAA AWARD

The AAA Award winners and state nominees are:

- Bryan Hoerr II and Ella Haas – Zimmerman High School
- Jacob Kotzian and Mallory Williams – Elk River High School
- Alex Heidorn and Anna Eich - Rogers High School

The AAA AWARD is given to:

- Recognize and honor high school seniors who have excelled in the classroom, on the athletic field, and in the fine arts.
- Elevate academic standards and create greater awareness of League-sponsored activities and their values.
- Provide schools with the opportunity to participate in a statewide program that supports, promotes and recognizes academic and extra-curricular achievements.


Bryan Hoerr II


Ella Haas


Jacob Kotzian

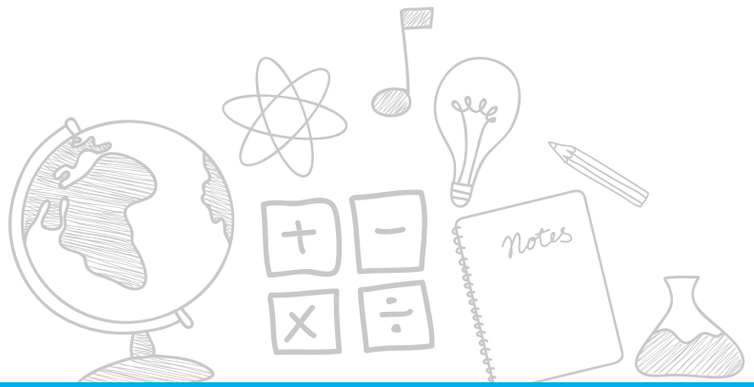

Mallory Williams


Alex Heidorn


Anna Eich

ISD 728 INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 728
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School is Cool! Photo Gallery



Thanks to the ISD 728 CTE program for providing great tools so students can learn real world skills. Pictured above is an Elk River High School student running a CNC Router to produce a custom cribbage board.



Super Hero Math at Prairie View Elementary / Middle School! Stopping those villains one number at a time!



Lincoln Elementary Lightening Bolts were excited to return back to school January 19, 2021.



Ojibwe Language Valentines with our American Indian Education program at Parker Elementary School.



Fridays are for FORTS in Mrs. Adams Kindergarten Distance Learning Class!