INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

728 HAPPENINGS

Our mission is to educate, inspire & empower

With schools in Elk River, Otsego, Rogers & Zimmerman

www.isd728.org

Fall 2022

A Time to Give Thanks and to Get Involved

With the 2022 Thanksgiving Break behind us and the 2022-2023 Holiday Season upon us, I am hopeful that each of you will be able to get together with family and friends, make time to laugh and play, and to express gratitude. I am grateful to serve in ISD 728 with you, and look forward to a wonderful holiday season. Thank YOU for taking care of each other and for making our schools and communities great places to work, live, and learn!

District-Wide Facility Review and Planning Committee Application

We continue to partner with community members and experts to evaluate needs related to future enrollment, programming, and space. Accordingly, we are creating a district-wide committee and looking for members of our community to participate.

The Facility Review and Planning Committee will focus specifically on the physical assets of our District, including buildings, student census, prospective growth and growth areas, and the impact on future learning. Its primary job will be to study and give feedback to the ISD 728 School Board. All stakeholders will have the opportunity to review and provide feedback on any recommendations that are brought forward by the taskforce and will be presented to the Board in 2023 for future consideration.

We are looking for parents, community leaders, and students to participate in this process, and are hopeful to have representatives that reflect ISD 728 (i.e. geographically, elementary, middle, high school, City / County representatives, etc.). Please view the application here: bit.ly/728FacilityReviewCommittee

The meetings will take place at the ISD 728 District Office on Mondays over the months of January through April. Due to the detail and time frame of this process, we are asking that all members who will participate attend all meetings to ensure they are well-informed throughout the process. All Facility Review and Planning Committee meetings will be held at the ISD 728 District Office from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on January 9, 23, 30 · February 13, 27 · March 13, 27 and April 10, 24.

District-Wide Curriculum Committee Interest Form

The process for review and comment on curriculum, instruction, assessment, and programs provided in ISD 728 is expanding to the 2022-2023 District-Wide Curriculum Committee. Membership will be composed of 3 parents, 3 community members, 3 teachers, 3 supporting staff members, and 3 students representing all regions of ISD 728. This committee will meet in the evenings at the ISD 728 District Office two (2) to three (3) times per school year. Additionally, our curriculum team has been working with parent groups as it relates to updated curriculum throughout the past three years - thanks to the 2019 referendum. We thank everyone who has stepped forward to assist our Teaching and Learning staff in this endeavor, as it has already made an impact on our classrooms. Please view the form here: bit.ly/728CurriculumCommittee

Student Success Shines in the Classroom and Beyond

We have had many successes to celebrate both in the classroom, out on the field and on the stage. ISD 728 became one of, if not the first District ever to have three football teams in the State Semifinals - with Zimmerman, Rogers and Elk River all playing at U.S. Bank Stadium in mid-November. We are so grateful for the amazing community support shown to all three programs over the past weeks.

Additionally, we've seen success throughout the District, from Elk River Girls Tennis to Rogers and Zimmerman Girls Soccer, volleyball and swimming - teams and individuals running and playing to new levels. Congratulations to all student athletes and coaches on a spectacular fall season, and thank you for representing ISD 728 so well.

On stage - all three traditional high schools put the spotlight on some talented cast members and musicians with productions this fall. All three shows received many accolades, and we're looking forward to seeing more from our drama and theater students, as well as our band and stage production members, throughout the year.

Finally, ISD 728 continues to shine academically, from standardized scores that are among the tops in the state for large school districts to National Honor Society classes that are the largest in District history, along with Presidential Scholars and ACT honorees - we continue to deliver on our mission to educate, inspire and empower students beyond our school buildings and into our global community.

Construction Updates - Projects Continue

With the centerpiece of our 2019 referendum - Prairie View Middle School - opening this school year, it may seem like the referendum is winding down. However, there are many more exciting things happening around our school district this year and beyond grateful we are for the support.

Lincoln Elementary School will see an exciting renovation and remodel beginning in 2023, bringing more light, safety features and new entrances and offices to the building. And more work is set to happen at the Handke Family Center - our District's foundation - in 2023 and 2024, particularly on the southern end of the building.

Around the District, many updates and redesigns will continue to happen thanks to the 2019 bond approval. Some will be very noticeable for those in and around our schools. Others - like roof improvements, HVAC updates, and flooring - will be a little less obvious, but are absolutely necessary. They are all important for making our schools a great place for kids to learn and play, and our staff safe and secure each and every day. For more on all of the great projects happening around the District, check out ISD 728.org.

Register for Free and Reduced Price Meals

Our District provides healthy meals each day. Did you know...ISD 728 offers Free and Reduced-price meals for breakfast and lunch?

- If you are having financial difficulties or need assistance with paying your student's school meals, please apply for the ISD 728 Free and Reduced-price meals program.
- Your child(ren) may qualify for Free or even significantly reduced price meals.
- You can apply ANYTIME throughout the school year, EVERY year!
- Your application also helps your household and our schools qualify for additional education funds and discounts.

Complete information can be found on our website: ISD 728.org.

With Thanks,
Superintendent Dr. Dan Bittman

First Day Features 14,000 Friends, Staff Ready to Go

It was a great start to the 2022-2023 school year, as ISD 728 was treated to a picture-perfect morning. More than 14,000 students flocked to school.

The day, of course, featured the opening of a new building - Prairie View Middle School - in Otsego. The state-of-the-art structure is the centerpiece of the 2019 referendum approved by voters.

"It was really exciting to have everyone back, and get rolling with a fairly 'normal' start to our year," said Dr. Will Campbell, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Educational Services. "We saw a lot of smiles on Day One, that's for sure."













Welcome the 2022 ISD 728 School Board Members

Congratulations to current ISD 728 Board Member Sara Weis on her re-election, and to Mindy Freiberg, John R. Anderson and Sarah Hamlin for their election to the ISD 728 School Board. We look forward to working with you on behalf of our more than 14,000 students, 2,000 staff and 70,000 lifelong learners in our ISD 728 Communities. We appreciate your dedication and decision to serve. Together, we make ISD "728 Strong!"



Sara Weis



Mindy Freiberg



John R. Anderson



Sarah Hamlin



2022 Homecoming Highlights around ISD 728

ISD 728's three traditional high schools hosted homecoming throughout the weeks of late September (Rogers) and early October (Zimmerman and Elk River). Royal courts were honored, and many parades and pep rallies were held. Oh, and all three football teams took the "W" on Homecoming Night.

Thanks to all who made these weeks a success, donning costumes and putting school spirit ahead of the pack.













Seeing Double at Rogers Middle School



Nope. You're not seeing double. That's 10 sets of twins - 10! - out of the 11 sets in Grade 5 at Rogers Middle School. Don't blame the Grade 5 team at RMS if they're a bit confused sorting it all out. That's a lot of "double trouble."

"It's pretty rare to see three or four," said Principal Nicole Rittenour. "To have this many is incredible. It's a lot of fun."

MASA Awards $1,000 Scholarship in Superintendent Dr. Dan Bittman's Honor

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators made a special presentation to the ISD 728 School Board at its regular meeting on Monday, July 18, 2022 at the District Office in Elk River in honor Dr. Dan Bittman, who serves as State President.

MASA Executive Director Deb Henton presented a check for $1,000 to the District, which will be presented to a graduate at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. Bittman served as the President of MASA for the 2021-2022 school year, guiding the organization through the "second phase" of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a host of other issues that presented themselves to Districts around Minnesota and, truly, the country.

"He was an exemplary president," Henton said. "Truly, whatever experiences came our way he showed outstanding leadership in challenging times. He listened. He advocated for schools and school administrators. And he supported all our members in an outstanding way."

Bittman will continue to serve the organization as Past President through the 2022-2023 school year and represent Minnesota on the National AASA Governing Board.

Hustvedt Named 2022 MN History Teacher of the Year by Gilder Lerhman



Ron Hustvedt, Jr., a teacher at Salk STEM Middle School in Elk River, MN, has been named the 2022 Minnesota History Teacher of the Year, an award presented annually by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, the nation's leading organization dedicated to K-12 American history education.

Inaugurated in 2004, the History Teacher of the Year Award highlights the crucial importance of history education by honoring exceptional American history teachers from elementary school through high school.

The award honors one K-12 teacher from each state, the District of Columbia, Department of Defense schools and US Territories.

"Knowledgeable and impassioned teachers bring our country's history to life for students, allowing them to understand engaging with history is about more than a series of facts," said James G. Basker, President of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. "Teachers are the lifeblood of our students' education,and these are the best of the best."

A veteran teacher at Salk STEM Middle School, Hustvedt received his bachelor's degree at the University of Minnesota Duluth in 1998 and in 2001 he completed a master's degree in teaching and learning from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. Mr. Hustvedt taught eight years for the Minneapolis Public Schools and the past 15 years for Independent School District #728.

Mr. Hustvedt's passion for history, inquiry-based learning and civic engagement have been combined in his classroom, and his students have reaped the benefits. He creates a classroom atmosphere in which history is directly correlated to students' lives through undertaking meaningful inquiry projects, student leadership, travel opportunities, analyzing community-based issues, and understanding numerous primary source documents.

"Mr. Hustvedt wants students to both see their own stories in the curriculum while developing a sense of empathy and understanding for stories completely different from their own. As much as possible, he builds student voice and choice choices in the classroom and utilizes that as a way to promote and invite student learning. Students are encouraged to consider multiple viewpoints, multiple causes and effects, and examine history both in its context but also in the connections it has to events before and after," said Julie Athman, past principal of Salk and current leader of Prairie View Middle School. "Mr. Hustvedt has a passionate following of students. They behold him as a teacher that has provided them the skills to be lifelong learners, given them the vision to be the shapers of their world and has provided them the confidence to achieve their goals. Mr. Hustvedt makes it his personal mission to make each student's middle school experience life changing."

In addition to a $1,000 honorarium, Mr. Hustvedt receives a core archive of American history books and Gilder Lehrman educational materials, recognition at a local ceremony in their honor, and becomes one of 53 finalists for the 2022 National History Teacher of the Year Award.

The winner of this year's National History Teacher of the Year Award will be announced in October 2022. Past presenters of the award include the Honorable Sandra Day O'Connor, Good Morning America's Robin Roberts, First Lady Laura Bush, former US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Nominations for the 2023 History Teacher of the Year awards are now open. Students, parents, colleagues, and supervisors may nominate K-12 teachers for the award by visiting gilderlehrman.org/nhtoy. The deadline for 2023 nominations is April 30, 2023.

About the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History was founded in 1994 by Richard Gilder and Lewis E. Lehrman, visionaries and lifelong supporters of American history education. The Institute is the leading nonprofit organization dedicated to K–12 history education while also serving the general public. Its mission is to promote the knowledge and understanding of American history through educational programs and resources.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charity the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is supported through the generosity of individuals, corporations, and foundations. The Institute's programs have been recognized by awards from the White House, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Organization of American Historians, the Council of Independent Colleges, and the National Daughters of the American Revolution.





Veterans Honored Throughout the School District

Veterans were welcomed at schools across ISD 728 on Thursday, Nov. 10 and Friday, Nov. 11 for annual Veterans Day ceremonies at our schools. Elementary programs featured anthems and singing, while secondary ceremonies were filled with musical performances.

All took time to honor each branch of Service, and several featured military rites performed by local Honor Guards. We appreciate the participation of staff, students, families and, especially, our Veterans in these ceremonies, and we are so glad to have them back in our schools!





















Elk River HS College Fair Returns

Students seeking college opportunities were greeted with tables full of representatives, swag and, yes, so many pens as the College Fair returned to Elk River High School on Sept. 30.

Colleges from around the Upper Midwest hit the ERHS gym for a morning full of conversation and questions.





ISD 728 Recognizes Advanced Placement Scholars

A total of 127 Independent School District 728 students received recognition for their exceptional achievement on Advanced Placement (AP) exams. The three different recognition levels are based on the number of AP exams taken and the scores earned on those exams.

Of the 127 named students, 72 graduated with the Class of 2022. Forty-three of the remaining students are scheduled to graduate with the Class of 2023 and the remaining 12 with the Class of 2024. By school, 67 scholars are from Elk River High School, 53 from Rogers High School and seven from Zimmerman High School.

AP Scholar with Distinction: District wide, 29 students earned the title of AP Scholar with Distinction. These students received an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on five or more AP exams:

View the list of students here:
isd728.org/2022AdvancedPlacementScholars

Elk River, Zimmerman and Rogers Make History on the Football Field

It's been a historical season on the gridiron for the District, as all three traditional high schools claimed Section Championships and then, each won their quarterfinal game to earn a contest at US Bank Stadium in the Prep Bowl Semifinals.

Elk River emerged victorious in their semi, topping Mahtomedi. Meanwhile, Rogers High came up just short - by a yard - in their bid to knock off Mankato West in the other Class 5A semifinal.

Zimmerman overcame a rough start to make it a tight contest against Hutchinson, but the perennial power ended the Thunder's dream season in the Class 4A semis.

"A lot of outstanding team and individual effort on all three programs," said Superintendent Dr. Dan Bittman. "It's been exciting to watch."







School Board, Administration Hear Day One Enrollment Report

ISD 728 School Board members and leaders were given a brief enrollment report in October as the District took a snapshot of the student population on the first day of school 2022.

Overall, the District is in a strong position, recovering fully from the student losses it saw during the pandemic due to transfers or home schooling by more than double - and approaching the 14,000 student threshold for the first time ever.

“I think it can be said that we’ll reach 14,000 this school year,” said Superintendent Dan Bittman. “We usually see some growth with new homes in the southern end of our District throughout the school year, and move-ins up in the north. So, if that trend continues, we will make history.”

The official number for Day One of the 2022-2023 School Year is 13,958 students. That’s up from a dip of 13,339 - reported in 2020-2021 - at the height of the pandemic. In fact, ISD 728 returned to pre-pandemic levels last school year, so this year’s number is more than 200 students higher than ever. A testament to the growth in Otsego and Rogers.

“The growth of the District is happening where we projected that it would,” said Dr. Joseph Stangler, Director of Research and Assessment. “Additionally, even with the move of fifth-graders to the secondary level in the southern end of the District, we didn’t experience much of a loss in elementary buildings - just about 50 kids.”

That, the Board responded, was eye-opening. With fifth grade sections from Rogers Elementary, Hassan Elementary, Prairie View Elementary and Otsego Elementary moving to RMS and the new PVMS, a larger drop was perhaps thought to occur in the elementary levels. Instead, it held nearly steady.

And, it’s higher than it was in 2020-2021, with 7,454 students this year, compared to 7,351 that year. The 7,454 mark puts it just 19 kids behind the Day One K-6 level reported in 2019-2020.

To sum up - the southern end of the District continues to grow at record speed. Growth is happening in Elk River and Zimmerman as well. Lincoln Elementary added nearly 50 students year over year, while Twin Lakes added 30. Up in Zimmeman, Zimmerman and Westwood elementary schools held pretty much steady, as did the middle and high schools, which saw small declines. Elk River High remains around 1,700 kids, while Rogers High is knocking on 1,800 students for the first time in school history.

“It’s definitely something to keep an eye on,” Bittman said of the growth in the south end of the District. “And it’s a good thing to have. With Prairie View Middle School opening this year, we’re confident that we can accommodate all of that growth in the short term. We can thank our voters and our families for the vision to do that and do it well.”

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Project Update: PVMS, Parking Lots and Preparation for 2022-2023

When voters approved the levy and bond questions in the 2019 election, a few, core projects emerged as the centerpieces to some wide changes across ISD 728.

They include renovations and updates to athletic and activity areas at all three traditional high schools; the construction of a new middle school in Otsego on the Prairie View campus; reconstruction and renovation of Lincoln Elementary and VandenBerge Middle schools; restoration, renovation and updates at the Handke Family Center.

In addition to those seven projects, the District also promised to update roofs, parking lots, entrances, flooring, painting and more around ISD 728 through a myriad of other projects over a 10-year period.

"We are so grateful for the support the community has shown us both at the polls three years ago, now, and throughout the past three years as we've embarked on these major projects," said Superintendent Dan Bittman. "It's a journey, and we do it together. But we truly couldn't have done this without the patience of our staff, families and students and the hard work of our construction workers and partners."

Athletic/Activity Improvements

From track to multi-purpose fields, bleacher improvements to restrooms and concessions, all three high schools saw huge improvements at their stadiums throughout the 2021-2022 school year. These facilities host a variety of men and women programs throughout ISD 728, and are used nearly every day, night, and weekend throughout the year.

While much of the "up front" work is complete, more improvements at those facilities continue this summer, including accessibility ramps, so-called "punch list" items and plans for future entrance and storage improvements at Zimmerman High School and Rogers High School. Scoreboard updates were also made, thanks to our Cornerstone Sponsors – The Bank of Elk River and Rol-Air Plumbing and Heating.

Inside, facilities at Rogers High and Zimmerman Middle/High School have seen major renovations, including the weight rooms, a performance gymnasium at RHS and a wrestling area at Zimmerman. Many ISD 728 activities will have improved areas for practices, performance, and training due to the support of our students, families and community members.

VandenBerge Middle School

Work over the summer of 2021 saw major improvements to common areas in the school building, as well as locker updates, offices, and new paint and flooring. Interior work has also included the pool surface and deck area, as well as locker areas.

Major exterior changes include the VMS bus loop, parking lot and entrances too.

The hope is the newly designed lot will be safer for parent drop-off/pick-up at the busy intersection of Proctor Avenue Northeast and School Street.



Prairie View Middle School

The centerpiece of the 2019 referendum is the new Prairie View Middle School, which opened with more than 800 students in the new building.

That makes two, new, state-of-the-art facilities for Otsego area families on the southwest side of the community, serving more than 1,500 students and early elementary learners as the former E-8 building transitions to an elementary school with an early education wing (preschool).

"Can you imagine trying to squeeze more than 1500 students into one school? We are grateful our community supported the plan when they did, or things would have been much more challenging," Bittman said.

The new building hosts Grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 as grade configuration changes on the south end of the District were made due to historic growth. It has state-of-the-art media center, open spaces for group and individual learning, specialist areas for FACS and science classes as well as art and music areas, and a state-approved storm shelter in one of the gymnasium areas.

Principal Julie Athman comes to the school from Salk STEM Middle School in Elk River and has been with ISD 728 for more than 25 years.

Lincoln Elementary School

Lincoln Elementary had preliminary work done this summer (2022) on security improvements, parking lot renovation, storm-water drainage and more in preparation for major reconstruction and renovation planned for 2023.

Wold Architects and construction partners have been working with staff and administration on comprehensive plans for the building, as classrooms will be renovated, common spaces updated (including activity areas) and a change to the main entrance and offices within the school. More plans will be communicated in the near future.

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ISD 728 INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 728

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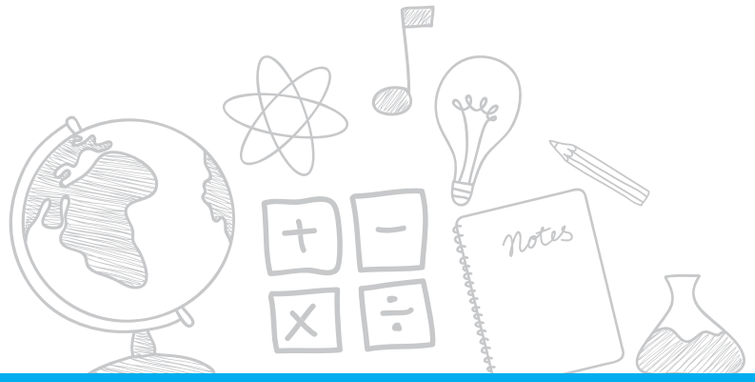
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ISD 728 is hiring ~ Come Join Our Team!

Please scan the QR Code to visit our website for more info

SCAN ME

isd728.org/joinourteam



School is Cool! Photo Gallery



Zimmerman High School Girls Soccer Team after winning the Section Championship



Elk River High School DECA members collected 529 items for a local food shelf



Rogers Elementary students, student council members, staff and families helped bring in over 300 coats to be donated to those in need



Dawn Perry was congratulated on her retirement after 42 years with ISD 728



The Rogers High School Theater Production of Elf received several awards from the Spotlight Education Hennepin Theatre Trust



Twin Lakes Elementary students during their Fall Festival Parade

728 Happenings is prepared by the ISD 728 Communications Department. If you have any questions or news you would like to submit, email us at news@isd728.org.