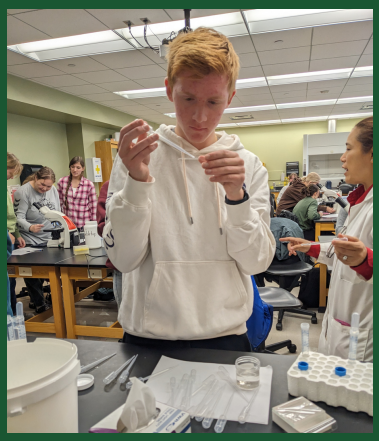
FALL 2023

Rocket Report

ROCKFORD AREA SCHOOLS
DISTRICT NEWSLETTER









Winter Break

Dec. 25 - Jan. 2

Check the school website for current announcements and activities

www.rockford.k12.mn.us







OUR MISSION

In partnership with our communities and families, Rockford Area Schools provides challenging opportunities to engage, inspire, and educate globally-minded citizens.



State of the District

Superintendent, Dr. Jeff Ridlehoover



It isn't an exaggeration when I share that the start of this school year has been nothing short of incredible. While walking the hallways and visiting classrooms, I have the good fortune of seeing the amazing work being done by our passionate and engaging staff. In addition, the laughter I hear on the playgrounds and the abundant smiles on the faces of students, reminds me that learning, while serious, is also a whole lot of fun.



The fall has been busy, yet productive, with accomplishments that make us proud and set our schools up for success. Our Board of Education has spent time reviewing and revising our strategic plan, and with it, anchored our core values to the work that will guide us today, tomorrow, and well into the future. With an intentional focus on fostering partnerships with families, businesses, and municipalities, our school community continues to grow stronger and more connected.



In our schools, our students are thriving. Learning at high levels in the classroom, while also engaging with their peers, advisors, and coaches on the stage, on the court, and on the competition fields. The ability to be part of "anything and everything" remains a hallmark of Rockford Area Schools and truly sets us apart from other districts and schools.



It is a blessing to serve the Rockford Area School community as Superintendent and I know I speak for our collective staff when I say thank you for the trust and the privilege of teaching and educating your children. As we move toward winter break and continue the holiday season, I wish you all safe travels, warm surroundings, and a blessed time with family and friends.

Kindest regards.

Jeffery P. Ridlehoover

Dr. Jeff Ridlehoover
Superintendent

Levy Renewal

In the fall of 2018, the community provided voter approval to support the mission of Rockford Area Schools and our most important work, educating our students. As a district, we remain grateful for your support as well as your trust and we believe we have been excellent fiduciary stewards of the resources provided.

The Minnesota legislature provides for local, elected, school boards, under Minnesota Statute 126C.177, Subd 9b, the authority to renew, one-time, an expiring referendum. It is the recommendation of district administration that our school board discuss, consider, and approve the renewal of the 2018 levy, under the same terms and conditions as voters approved in 2018.

Ensuring transparency in all we do and also in following the most recent legislation, the district will be holding a public hearing on the recommended renewal on Monday, December 18, 2023, from 5:45-6:15 pm in the Rockford Area School district office board room.

Again, thank you for your support of our schools and most importantly, the students and families we serve.

District Wide Safety and Security upgrades

Rockford Area Schools made some significant upgrades for the safety and security of our students, staff and community this past year. These projects include secured entryways at all three school buildings and secured entry into the Community Center during school days. Everyone entering the facilities will be asked a few questions before entering the facilities. The secured entryways are the most visible security upgrade, but a few other items include upgrading outdated cameras, and installing a Door Prop system, that will signal an alarm at the door and send a notification to an Administrator that the door has been propped open for an extended amount of time. The district is also in the process of installing a check-in system, so when anyone enters the school facilities, they will need to have an ID to scan and a badge will be printed to wear while in the facilities. Safety and Security of our Rockford Area Schools community is very important to the Director of Buildings and Grounds James Leuer. " I am always thinking of new ideas and new products available to make our district as safe as possible for our students and staff, that is my number one goal in creating this safe environment".







Other construction projects

During the summer months we were also able to complete some asphalt repairs to close up some large holes in the drive areas, but still have more repairs to make. After school started this fall, County Road 50 underwent a major update in front of the High School and Elementary school, from our Safe Routes to School (SRTS) study in 2020. This project was also in the planning for over a year and a half because Hennepin County was waiting on approval from the Federal Government for grant funds to help with the project. The project included a center island to improve safety for pedestrians crossing Co. Rd. 50. Flashing lights and street lights for visibility were also added to improve safety.

REAMS
ROCKFORD ELEMENTARY ARTS MAGNET SCHOOL

Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School Celebrates 20 Years as a Magnet Program!









An arts magnet school provides a strong academic core with opportunities for students to create at many levels. Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet school is celebrating its twentieth year as an Arts Magnet program this year and staff and students are finding unique and creative ways to celebrate this accomplishment!



Magnet schools provide students with learning adventures that take them beyond the traditional instructional classroom experience. Teaching through the arts helps students experience concepts rather than merely discussing or reading about them. The goal at Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School is to provide creative expression, critical thinking, self-confidence, communication skills, appreciation of the arts, and multicultural experiences for all students through the artistic disciplines (dance, theater, diversity, music, and visual arts). The staff is committed to a program of academic excellence through the arts. The school meets this goal by infusing the arts into core subjects and providing arts opportunities for the students in a variety of ways.

Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School staff believes students learn best through active participation in real-life activities. Each child is provided with a variety of opportunities for personal achievement. Classroom teachers and arts specialists collaborate in order to connect the academic concepts studied in the classroom. The study of the arts has been linked to students increased critical and creative thinking skills, self-esteem, willingness to take risks and ability to work with others.



discover
REAMS



In addition to integrating the arts into the core curriculum, students have several unique arts experiences annually. They have the opportunity to partner with local artists in a residency experience and participate in arts related field trips. Students in fourth grade share their talents in Art Troupe to leave their legacy at REAMS in a permanent art collection piece. All students have numerous opportunities to perform through grade level concerts, monthly Fabulous Friday performances, and Arts and Academics night.

The development of magnet schools is based on the premise that all students learn differently. Students who attend classes with a unifying theme will learn more in all subject areas. A student who wants to be in school and makes the choice to be there has a greater likelihood of achievement, satisfaction, and success.



Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School Provides New Theater Class

Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School is providing a new Theater class for students in kindergarten through fourth grade this year. The skills that students are learning in theater class will not only transfer back to their classroom learning and core curriculum, but to life as well.

In the first couple of months, students have been working on community building, introduction to voice, body, imagination, and character development. They have had the opportunity to be creative and show leadership in a very new way. As the program grows, students will be able to participate in performances in their classrooms, concerts, and school assemblies. The vision is to grow the program to provide an increase in performance opportunities including one to two productions each year.











Students who participate in theater class gain many skills that will benefit them in many areas of their lives including: social and self-awareness, interpersonal, decision making, and self-management skills, empathy and stronger relationships with peers, and sustained focus and communication skills. As students progress in school and decide on a career path, the skills that they are learning in theater class will only benefit any area that they decide to pursue.

The staff at Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School is excited to give students in all grade levels another opportunity in their Arts education. The tools and benefits from this type of class will enhance their learning in so many positive ways and provide essential skills to help them now and far into their future.

RMS-CES

ROCKFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL - CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

RMS-CES Prairie Restoration Project

Rockford Middle School-Center for Environmental Studies is committed to transforming our campus to include the four biomes of Minnesota. Over the past eleven years, we have created outdoor learning spaces, including a School Forest classroom, rain and raised bed gardens, and a greenhouse. Our school's next steps include connecting curriculum and outdoor spaces to reflect Minnesota's varied landscape.

RMS-CES is actively restoring approximately one acre of turf grass to prairie. When mature, this prairie will help to form a habitat corridor from the maple basswood forest of Lake Rebecca Park Reserve to the diverse biology of the Crow River. Returning the area to prairie grassland will provide habitat opportunities for a diverse variety of pollinating insects, birds, and other wildlife. More specifically, the restored area would provide habitat for the rusty patch bumblebee, which once occupied grasslands and tallgrass prairies of the Upper Midwest and Northeast. These slopes have traditionally created challenges for our maintenance crew. They are difficult to mow, have inconsistent turf grass coverage, pose safety concerns, and are not usable spaces for students and staff. As an environmental magnet school, one of our responsibilities is to promote an environmentally friendly and sustainable lifestyle.



Native prairie — virgin grasslands untouched by the blade of a plow — once made up 19 million of Minnesota's 44 million acres, and dominated parts of western and southern Minnesota. Today about 250,000 acres — less than 2% — of these ecological regions remain. Even less of that acreage is protected.

The prairie restoration process typically takes about four years, which dovetails nicely into the career of a middle school student. In 5th Grade, students are just starting to take root as they develop the skills to be a successful middle school student on the Wright side of the Crow River. On the prairie, year one is spent amending the soil and planting the prairie. The initial growth is mostly weeds with a few early adopter native plants and flowers starting to emerge.



Sustainability is the ability to maintain or support a process continuously over time. 6th Graders spend their time building on the habits developed in 5th Grade as they continue to send out deep roots. Meanwhile, on the prairie, year two brings less weeds, deeply rooted native plants, and a small variety of wildflowers.

discover RMS-CES

7th Grade is a transition year. Students are exploring new opportunities, new friendships, and new responsibilities. It is simultaneously challenging and rewarding. The prairie, likewise, is exploding in diversity. A few weeds remain, but natives are starting to take deep roots. Once established, a controlled burn will release seeds and provide nutrients to the soil for long term health.

8th Grade is a year of transition. The challenges of middle school will soon be behind them and they have hopefully established work ethic and attention to detail that will serve them well in high school. Meanwhile, on the prairie, habitat has been created to attract and retain a diverse population of plants and animals.

Three key words center the teaching and learning at RMS-CES. These words can be applied to our prairie restoration project.



Intent: Our intent is to create a sustainable environment for native plants and animals. Add to the approximately 1% of the native prairie remains in Minnesota, and secure the soil on a sloping hillside

Interaction: Restoring a prairie is a four year process. First the existing vegetation is removed, the soil is disturbed, and prairie planted, weeds are removed until the prairie is established. At some point, for the long term health of the prairie, a controlled burn is conducted. Once established, seeds are collected and replanted.

Impact: Impact is both short term and long term. In the short term, soil is held in place and habitat is created for insects, birds, and animals. There should be a maintenance cost savings to the district, and ultimately long term, the prairie will teach students, staff, parents, and community members about the benefits of native grasslands.

From a July 31, 2020 article in Star Tribune, John Moriarty states "There is nothing in nature that will take care of itself anymore," Moriarty said. "We as humans have fragmented things and messed things up enough that it is our responsibility to maintain the habitats as they should be."

Here at RMS-CES, with our prairie restoration project, we intend to do our part.

Climbing Higher: RMS-CES Students ready to go to the top!

In coordination with building and district leadership, under the direction of the Rockford Area School Board, we are excited to announce that on the week of December 19th a Rockwall of epic proportion(32 feet Wide x 25 feet Tall) will be installed in the Gymnastic Center to provide RMS-CES with a secondary Phy Ed space. This opportunity will drastically decrease students being transported to the High School to use the facilities. The rockwall will embody our challenge by choice philosophy where students can push to their personal limit through challenge and support from those around them, no matter where that limit might be! In addition, to the Rockwall, RMS-CES has designed lessons to be done in the gymnastics center, predominantly on the floor exercise area. This use of space will give our students new opportunities to engage in Physical Education in a way that is both relevant and meaningful to their lives. Please know that safety is now and will forever be our number one priority, and parents and students can expect safety protocols and processes to come in your direction in the near future. It is our hope that students will be able to utilize the wall in January/February 2024 after our staff have been properly trained in all safety processes. A special thanks to our very own Joe Roelofs who has done a fantastic job preparing for this change!

RHS
ROCKFORD HIGH SCHOOL

Rockford High School Update

It's been a great start to the 2023-2024 school year at Rockford High School. Chief among the goals of our School Improvement Plan is to provide common language, student agency, and quality instruction to our students. Here is a sample of some of the efforts we have made thus far:



- Our IB program is broadening its reach as we grow more full diploma students and add three additional pathways for career-focused certification this year
- We are intentionally beginning to create common language around instructional strategies so students are aware of those to which they respond best
- As an AVID school, we are using the WICOR model to ensure quality instruction across all departments. WICOR stands for Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading and AVID proves to positively impact student success as well as college and career readiness
- This year we created a Student Leadership Team and Building Leadership Team. These groups will work parallel to push our positive climate and culture even further
- We now have a total of four IB Career Pathways in business, landscape design, veterinarian technician, and clinical nursing assistant. Our goal is to add two additional pathways by 2025. All of these pathways train students to be industry ready and include a professional certification and/or recognition
- Our students have earned over $1 million in scholarships since 2020 due to our CIS and IB programs–the only school in the area to offer both

We are proud of our accomplishments, and we thank you for your support in our future success.

BLT and SLT: Focus on the Good



At Rockford High School, we've created a Building Leadership Team, composed of teaching staff, and a Student Leadership Team, composed of students. Both of these groups will work parallel and jointly to issue monthly challenges, awareness campaigns, and celebrations to continue to enrich our unique and highly praised school culture. This group will also boldly analyze operational aspects of the school and suggest improvements. BLT and SLT are an enhancement to previous efforts to provide more voice in positive student leadership. We are thrilled to announce that 29 students stepped up to participate and seven staff members, respectively. I'm excited to intentionally focus on the good; the more we praise positive efforts and achievements, the more we underscore the importance of integrity, academic stamina, and perseverance. We often hear from families, experienced and new to our community, how Rockford High School feels like a family, and we want to put the time and energy into making sure everyone in the 'family' is doing their best and being their best self. These groups will play a key role in those efforts.

Rockets

discover RHS

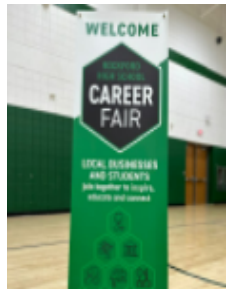
College & Career Fair

Rockford High School - IB World School hosted its 3rd College and Career Fair in October. Over 50 area businesses, two and four year colleges and universities attended the fair. The IB Career Path program at RHS exposes students to various career fields, including the required educational path or work experience they need, to pursue rewarding careers. Students are able to speak directly with businesses and colleges to find and create a pathway to achieve their goals. Grades 9-12 attended the fair and participated in some hands-on activities and live experiments in the areas of Agriculture, Engineering & Manufacturing, Business, Health Sciences, Human Services, Arts and Communication, as well as branches of our military. Every year the fair grows to encompass more of our Career Pathways and student areas of interest.





















Community Tour of our Schools

The Rockford Area School District invited community members to participate in a tour of our schools which include: Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School, Rockford Middle School- Center for Environmental Studies, and Rockford High School International Baccalaureate World School. Magnet schools are public schools of choice, offering comprehensive, high-quality, thematic curriculum intended to "attract" diverse learners. Each school has the ability to offer a comprehensive education in their area of expertise. To learn more about the choices in the Rockford Area School District for your student, please visit our district website at: https://www.rockford.k12.mn.us/

Diploma Programme | Career-related Programme | Middle Years Programme

#Rockets883

discover ACTIVITIES

Fall Musical: Bye Bye Birdie

This years fall musical, Bye Bye Birdie, was a great success with just over 900 guests attending the 3 shows! We had close to 100 students in grades 5-12 in this production, in our pit orchestra, as our stage crew, and on stage. Actors put about 70 hours in to rehearsal between September and our November performances. Students learn that theater is fast - we move fast, we think fast, we learn fast. That effort, time, and quickness pays off in three performances for the public and a brief preview for our REAMS students each year.







Bye Bye Birdie is loosely based on Elvis Presley's induction into the US Army in 1958. The story goes that Elvis was even approached to play the lead, but Colonel Tom Parker was unhappy with the tongue-in-cheek humor.

The show premiered on Broadway in 1960 with Dick Van Dyke and Chita Rivera in the lead roles of Albert and Rosie, and without Elvis. Elements of his performance style and fan appeal are still very evident, however. The show ran for 600 performances in its first run and has been revived several times for Broadway and television.

2023 Football Season

Rockford Football had a great season this year with some really great recognitions and awards including,

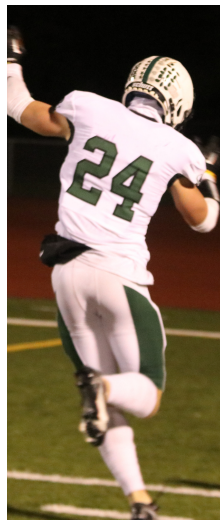
All District - 1st Team: Harrison Brun, Logan Stedman, Tim Houghton, Aiden Smith, Wilson Sanderson, Phil Gorder
All District - 2nd Team: Sam Stuckmayer, Owen Boerboom, Nathan Woodward, Josiah Zilmer
All District players-

Mid-Northwest District White Defensive Back of the Year - #24 Harrison Brun

Mid-Northwest District White Kicker of the Year - #86 Will Luckett

Mid-Northwest District White Coach of the Year - Dan Houghton
KARE 11 All Metro - #24 Harrison Brun
All Section- Avery MacDonald, William Graunke, Brian Schloeder & Will Luckett
Academic All District awards: Owen Boerboom, Ben Johnson, Brian Schloeder, Aiden Smith, Josiah Zilmer, Parker Bode, Max Edwards, Jaden Kolhei, Riley Moran, Aiden Rund, Ryan Schuman



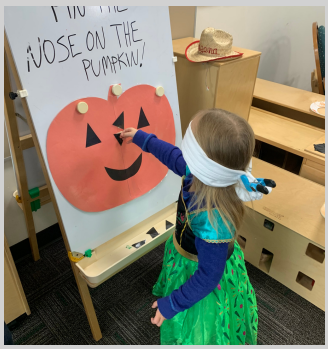




The team has also been awarded for 13 of the last 14 years the Minnesota Coaches Association Academic All-State award which recognizes teams whose team GPA is 3.50 or higher!

discover
COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Early Childhood – ECFE and Launching Pad Preschool







Lots of little ones and a great cause! Our ECFE (Early Childhood Family Education) program hosted a L'il Punkin' Fall Party in late October for children ages 5 years and younger. They enjoyed crafts and games, face painting and snacks. If the smiles beaming on little faces was an indication, fun was had by all!



In conjunction with the fall party, a voluntary food donation was collected for our local Riverworks Food Shelf. All early childhood programs, including party attendees and students in our Launching Pad Preschool, participated in the food drive. Items were generously donated to this very important community service! Thank you, Families!

Building a Community for Life-Long Learning
Rockford Area Schools
COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Galaxy Kids

Galaxy Kids held their annual MEA non-school days for families within the program that needed care on October 18th-20th. Students were able to participate in many fun filled activities throughout each day that were tied to the Halloween/Fall Theme. They also were able to enjoy the fall weather and go outside and play on the playgrounds/outdoor spaces around the school. These exciting activities included:

- Ghost Matching #'s
- Dice Pumpkins
- Ghost Art
- Mummy plates
- Halloween Puzzles, Word Searches, and Coloring Sheets
- Pumpkin Shape Matching
- Bat Drop Relay Game
- Spider Cube Melt Game
- Pumpkin Exploration and Carving









Galaxy Kids is a certified before and after school child care program for Preschool-6th grade students offered through Rockford Area Schools Community Education. We are conveniently located in Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School right across the hall from ECFE and the Preschool classrooms. We are open Monday-Friday from 6:00am-6:00pm, to assist with family child care needs. We have many different registration options that are sure to accommodate most families' busy schedules. If you are looking for child care, before, during, or after school, and on non-school days then this may be the program for you.

For more information contact us at: Call 763-477-7555 or email hallahanc@rockford.k12.mn.us

Independent School District 883
ROCKFORD AREA SCHOOLS
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