



Dear Ringgold Families,

Welcome to the first 2023-2024 edition of The Ringgold Review. We are already off to a successful start as we move forward with new administrative appointments, innovative curricular offerings, and a proactive commitment to strengthening academic performance. Because of the dedication of our staff, students will enjoy relevant, meaningful learning experiences each day that promote student engagement and challenge them to become dynamic thinkers and problem solvers. Through all of these efforts, including those of our students and families, we expect great things for our district this year.

As you may recall, during the past school year, we were able to develop a strategic improvement plan thanks to the hard work of a broad range of District stakeholders. Within that plan, we identified four main pillars – student experience, employee experience, family and community experience, and organizational excellence – with desired outcomes and focus areas.

The plan outlines the framework established to accomplish the District's goals to empower students and staff, as well engage our learners, parents and community. To view the plan in its entirety and see how it will be implemented this academic school year, click [HERE](#).

Because stakeholder communication is essential to us, the District will be administering annual surveys and conducting focus group for students, employees and parents to participate in to ensure that the District is meeting its goals. We look forward to receiving this future feedback.

As you read through the articles which follow my letter, you will see tangible examples of how our goals are aligned with actions and initiatives in our classroom this year. We want the District to be a positive environment for everyone, where we can all learn and lead to the best of our abilities and inspire one another.

Thank you for your continuous support, and we look forward to sharing news and updates with you. Mr. Rogers said, "Imagining something may be the first step in making it happen, but it takes the real time and real efforts of real people to learn things, make things, turn thoughts into deeds or visions into inventions."

Let's make great things happen together this year!

Sincerely,

Randall Skrinjorich

Mr. Randall Skrinjorich
Superintendent of Ringgold School District



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New Position, Administrative Instructional Coach, Supports Learning Realignment Following COVID-19



Despite the World Health Organization declaring the end of the COVID-19 emergency earlier this year, the long-term repercussions of the pandemic's learning interruptions remain a reality in classrooms all across the country. Ringgold continues to take proactive steps to address the academic gaps caused by the pandemic.

To continue to address the learning needs of students in response to the pandemic, the District has developed a new position this 2023-2024 school year, Administrative Instructional Coach. The position is intended to further support high quality instruction to accelerate student learning and close the gaps caused by the pandemic. The individual serving in this new role is a familiar face within the District - former Ringgold Middle School Principal, Mr. Timothy McKay.

"I am very excited to work with a new staff, as well as new students and families. I am also really looking forward to helping teachers get to know their kids on an instructional level and helping them make as much progress as they can," said Mr. McKay.

A study conducted by a national education research organization, the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), assessed the test scores from over six million public school students. The data indicated that students had not made the same progress during the 2022-2023 school year as they had in the pre-pandemic years. The study also ascertained that the average student will need the equivalent of 4.1 additional months of school to catch up in reading.

As the Administrative Instructional Coach, Mr. McKay is responsible for collaborating and planning instructional units and lessons with educators, working with the entire school community to enhance academic performance, visiting classrooms and working with teachers on strengthening instructional practices, assisting instructors with interventions for struggling learners and more. The role will offer support to both elementary schools, focusing on all subjects, with an eye towards honing in on reading skills.

Mr. McKay returns to the District with over three decades of experience as a classroom educator, instructional coach, resource teacher and administrator. His last role was Principal for the Ringgold Middle School, and previously, he served as the principal for the Ardmore Avenue Elementary School and Director of Curriculum and Instructional Technology in the William Penn School District, located in the suburbs of Philadelphia.

Mr. McKay has taught every grade from kindergarten to middle school, as well as undergraduate and graduate level courses at both the University of Pittsburgh and Point Park University. He holds a master's degree from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, as well as an administrative certification and bachelor's degree from Duquesne University.

His experience with the middle school provides a unique advantage to the educators with whom he will be working.

"I know what awaits students when they reach middle school, and if they don't come in prepared with the required skills from elementary school, it will make it ten times harder on them. Knowing what I know about fifth through eighth grade, as far as instruction is concerned, will allow me to assist the teachers as well as collaborating to prepare students for the next level," said Mr. McKay.

To aid the District's efforts to collaborate and improve learning outcomes for students, two instructional support staff members, Faith Martin and Bridget Oder, have been appointed to work at the elementary level to assist Mr. McKay.

They will also be working alongside the reading coordinators, assisting with progress monitoring and implementation of lesson plans to address the needs of students in each reading intervention group.

"It is our intention that through this collaboration, we will support students in reaching the vital benchmark goals required to progress and succeed at the next level of their educational journey," stressed Mr. McKay. ■

Ringgold School District Improves Safety & Security Measures with PCCD Grant



District Police and Security Officers participating in a training drill covering new equipment obtained through PCCD grant.

Ringgold School District is committed to fostering a safe and secure learning environment for all of its students. The District is continuously seeking additional practices and methods to promote the safety, wellbeing and security of its students, and to achieve this, the Ringgold School District obtained a Physical School Safety and Security Grant of \$142,796 from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD).

Established in 1978, the PCCD serves as the justice planning and policymaking agency for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In 2018, the PCCD created the School Security and Safety division to provide funding and ongoing support to schools for safety and security purposes.

The allotted money was used to adopt a district-wide communications platform, implement a cloud-based, body camera system and secure additional security equipment. To attain the grant, Clayton Shell, Chief of Police for the District, was required to outline a plan detailing how the funding would be spent to improve protection and security measures within the District.

The grant process, which has been underway for four years, is now complete with the incorporation of the state-of-the-art communications platform. The platform allows staff members, District police officers and other faculty members to instantly communicate with anyone in the District using the portable radios. "Being able to quickly communicate during a critical incident is

extremely vital to the safety of our students and faculty. Now, with the equipment obtained through the Physical School Safety and Security Grant, we can communicate with anyone in the District in a moment's notice, which will aid how we administer a united response, in the instance of a critical situation," said Shell.

All vehicles, school buses, school vans, maintenance trucks, mechanic trucks and police cars will be equipped with digital and analog radios. In the unlikely event that the digital radio fails, then the analog radio could be activated.

"Our communications vendor and manufacturer both reported that our advanced platform outranks those utilized by other school districts in Western, Pa. Whether there is an incident on a school bus or at one of our elementary schools, the faculty and staff members can instantly communicate with not just the principals and other staff across the District, but with the police department as well," said Shell.

Starting this school year, the District will require all police and security officers to wear body cameras.

"The cloud-based Motorola system that we purchased is the same platform used by numerous local police departments, such as the Peters Township and Monongahela City Police Departments. If an incident occurs, our police officers and Superintendent can instantly evaluate the situation and view the footage in real-time, resulting in a quicker, more accurate response," said Shell.

Training by Motorola for police and security personnel was conducted on August 15. Some of the additional equipment obtained through the grant consists of twelve sets of soft body armor and ballistic rifle shields, and a tactical entry/breaching kit.

The District will continue the yearly, nationally accredited ALICE training program conducted by the police department for all students, staff and faculty, which stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate.

Additionally, the middle school and high school will continue to deploy the daily, meticulous screening process of each student upon entry to ensure weapons, paraphernalia and other harmful equipment or material don't make their way onto the grounds.

These existing procedures, coupled with the advanced training and equipment accrued through the grant, will assist staff, faculty, police and security personnel to respond to emergencies quickly and effectively, and promote the safety and wellbeing of all Ringgold students. ■

Meet Our New Administrator: RMS Principal Kenneth Patterson



The District is happy to welcome Mr. Kenneth Patterson to Ringgold Middle School as the new principal for the 2023-2024 school year. Born and raised in Waynesburg, Pa., Mr. Patterson brings nearly two decades of experience with him to Ringgold and is eager to get to know the community.

“Family is at the core of education. Communication and building relationships between home and school make all the difference in the success of our students. I’m excited to start this new journey at Ringgold and look forward to becoming part of the Ram family,” said Mr. Patterson.

Most recently, Mr. Patterson served as Principal at the Neil Armstrong Middle School in Bethel Park from 2015 to 2023. Simultaneously, from 2010 to 2018, he served as an adjunct professor at his alma mater, Waynesburg University, where he taught computer and history classes. In 2014, Mr. Patterson completed the Superintendent Letter of Eligibility Program, offered through the California University of Pennsylvania. Prior

to his career at Bethel Park, Mr. Patterson served as the principal at both the elementary school and middle school level for another Pennsylvania school district, as well as the special education liaison for the elementary school.

He holds a Master’s of Education in Administration and Supervision from the Virginia Commonwealth University and a bachelor’s degree in Secondary Education (Social Studies) from Waynesburg University.

Mr. Patterson and his wife reside in Canonsburg with their two children. During his free time, Mr. Patterson enjoys traveling with his family and playing golf. ■

Understanding the 2023-2024 Budget

The Ringgold School District continues to maintain financial stability and meet the needs of students and staff. The Act 1 index for the 2023-2024 school year was 5.5%, allowing for a maximum .8343 mill increase, which would generate \$1,001,160 of additional local revenue.

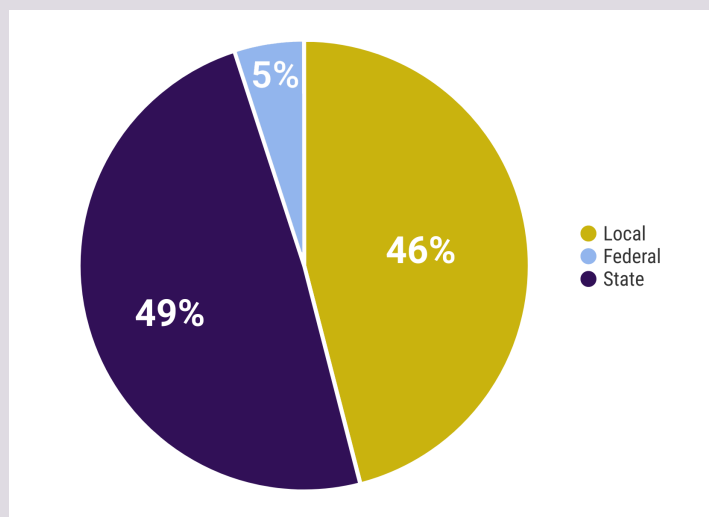
In a time when other districts are raising taxes to the index or above, Ringgold has been successful in always remaining below the Act 1 index.

The 2023-2024 final budget included a .5 mill increase generating an additional \$600,000 of local revenue. The \$600,000 increase was used to balance the budget, with the major financial impacts being state funding, contractual obligations, and health insurance.

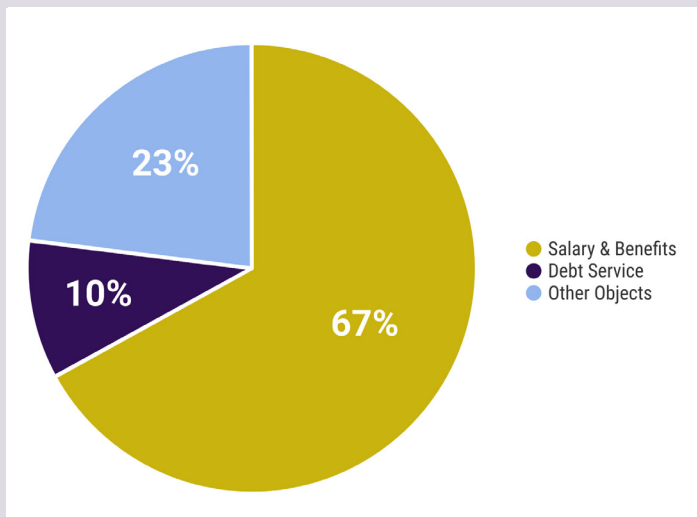
Where does the money go?

A large portion of the District’s budgeted expenditures can be traced to three main areas: salaries, benefits, and debt service. These areas are considered “fixed” costs as they are contractual obligations and predetermined payments. For the 2023-2024 school year, these “fixed” costs represent 77% of the budget. The smaller portion of the budget, other objects comprising 23%, are costs that fluctuate with use and/or the economy. One of the larger expenditures in “other objects” that has a major impact on the budget is cyber/charter tuition. Despite budget challenges, Ringgold continues to practice conservative spending, and as a result, has not made any cuts to staffing or programs. ■

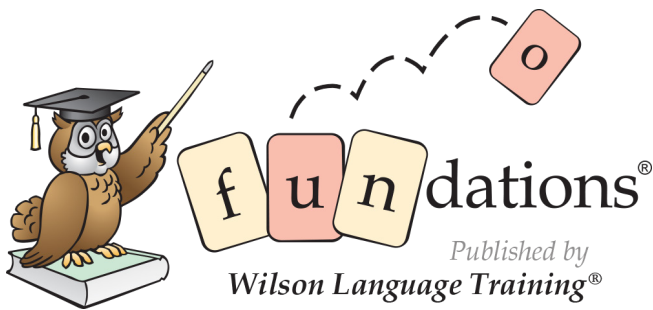
Budget Revenues
\$52,350,740



Budget Expenditures
\$52,350,740



Supplemental Reading Program Supports Reading Proficiency



Over the last year, the District has been on a steadfast mission to strengthen reading skills to ensure that students are prepared for the next phase of their educational journey. To further assist struggling students and bolster gains in foundational literacy skills, Ringgold School District is launching a new supplemental reading program, Foundations, at the K-3 level this school year.

“The Foundations curriculum is a continuation of the focus that we have placed on strengthening the skills of young readers. In our post-COVID world, we need to focus on learning realignment and strengthening our students’ foundational reading skills, and Foundations will help the District accomplish that,” said Assistant Superintendent Mr. Thomas Grierson.

Foundations, offered through the Wilson Language Training Corporation, is an educational program that reduces reading and spelling failures in the classroom and assists young readers in

achieving success. The systematic program focuses on the critical foundational reading skills necessary for students’ success, such as phonological and phonemic awareness, comprehension strategies and more.

Working in tandem with the existing curriculum, Foundations provides students an additional boost of instruction and support, and it is incorporated into daily classroom instruction for upwards of 30 minutes a day. Teachers elected to participate in training on the program over the summer.

“Foundations is widely recognized as a premiere program for teaching students foundational reading skills, and it was a program recommended by our teachers,” said Director of Curriculum Mrs. Shannon Crombie.

Foundations is yet another phase of the District’s mission to counterbalance the effects of disrupted learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementation of Foundations, in conjunction with the work of the Reading Coordinators and Administrative Instructional Coach will support students on their path towards reading proficiency and help them build developmental skills to improve their knowledge.

“We are still addressing learning gaps from COVID, and Foundations is going to help us close those gaps,” said Mrs. Crombie. ■

Innovative Teacher Spotlight: Mrs. Christy Lewis



Mrs. Lewis on the first day of school with her daughter, who is also a student at Ringgold Elementary South.

For the last 22 years, Mrs. Christy Lewis has been an integral part of the success of both students and staff at Ringgold Elementary School South. Teaching primarily second-grade over the last two decades, Mrs. Lewis has deployed innovative teaching strategies to engage students in daily lesson plans and promote academic retention and long-term success.

With her consistent guidance and encouragement, Mrs. Lewis’s students are the leading independent readers in the school’s Accelerated Reading Program.

“Her data shows that she is a distinguished teacher. There is no time lost in transition in her classroom. She always puts her kids first, and she does a wonderful job of taking every opportunity to make it a teachable moment,” said Mrs. Ashli Gilbert, Principal at Ringgold Elementary School South.

Mrs. Lewis’s devotion to her students goes beyond the classroom. To contribute towards students feeling a sense of accomplishment and achievement, Mrs. Lewis displays her students’ science projects in the building’s display case. Her students walk by that display case each day, feeling proud and recognized for their hard work.

“Mrs. Lewis truly goes the extra mile, and this past school year, she incorporated an instructional unit on sign language to teach her students about the different ways that they can communicate with one another,” said Mrs. Gilbert.

At the end of the unit, students performed a song that intimated what it means to be a friend and what it means to be one of the Ringgold R.A.M.S. (Ready, Accepting, Mindful and Safe) and the “Leader in Me” habits adopted by the District. The students also performed poems written by Mrs. Lewis to go with their poetry unit.

“This year, Mrs. Lewis was moved from second grade to fourth grade because there is a stark demand for her instruction in that grade level,” said Mrs. Gilbert.

Regardless of what grade level she teaches, Mrs. Lewis’s commitment to her students and their academic success never wavers.

“She cares about her students and she cares about her job. We are very grateful to have Mrs. Lewis as an integral part of our faculty, but her students are the most fortunate ones of all,” said Mrs. Gilbert. ■



Mrs. Lewis teaching a lesson to her fourth grade students.