



VOICE OF THE VALLEY

THE RIVER VALLEY LOCAL SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER - 2024 BACK TO SCHOOL ISSUE

River Valley Community,

It is hard to believe the summer break is over, and the start of the new school year is quickly approaching. It has been a busy summer on the campuses of River Valley Schools. I'd like to provide information about some new programs, upgrades, and updates happening in the district, including the bond projects:

New Programs and Upgrades:

Free Breakfast & Lunch for All Students:

For the 2024-25 School Year, River Valley Schools will enroll in a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program called the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). The CEP program allows qualifying districts to provide free breakfast and lunch for **all** students in the district.

Driver's Education at River Valley:

River Valley High School will once again be able to offer instruction in Driver's Education to students starting in the 2024-25 School Year. This is possible through a partnership between the district and the MOV ESC Driving School as part of a grant from the State of Ohio. As part of this consortium, the district was able to use \$20,000 in grant funds toward a driver's education vehicle. We would like to extend a special thank you to McDaniel Toyota and Rob Knight for their help in securing a Toyota Corolla for this program.



Adam Wickham
RV Superintendent

Addition of a School Van:

In partnership with the RV FFA, the district added a 9-passenger van to provide an option to transport students for extra-curricular activities. The FFA contributed 50% of the cost of this van and we appreciate their contribution. This van will be a much more cost-effective way to transport small groups of students. We extend our sincere thanks to Mathews Dodge-Chrysler-Jeep and Tom Weston for their help in securing this vehicle for our students.

Bond Project Updates and District Upgrades:

Tennis Courts (with Pickleball Lines):

The new tennis courts have been completed and look great. The tennis courts have also been lined to contain eight pickleball courts. This will be a wonderful space for our students and community to utilize.

HVAC:

More information on this project will be provided in future Voice of the Valley editions.



Continued on Next Page ->

Parking Lots:

The parking lots that were selected to be milled and paved have all been completed. Areas that were not paved will receive seal coating to be completed by the first week of August. The district plans to use funds from the Permanent Improvement levy in coming years to address these seal-coated areas for pavement replacement and implement a patching, sealing, and paving rotation plan so we can avoid having our parking lots get into such poor condition in the future.

We were able to showcase the new parking lots at RVHS on July 21st with the RV Athletic Boosters 4th Annual Car Show. Special thanks to Jessie Rowe and the Athletic Boosters for their hard work in making this event a great success!



2024 RV Athletic Boosters 4th Annual Car Show

Roofs:

Meade Roofing has started the roof replacement at Heritage Elementary. Once that is completed, the replacement at Liberty Elementary will start later this fall, currently scheduled for October. Revere Roofing will start at both River Valley Middle and High School on the replacement of the shingle roofs with standing seam metal, as well as the replacement of the flat rubber roofs on both buildings.

Campus Improvements for the Community:

Walking Path:

As part of the paving lot projects, the district had a significant amount of millings available. The decision was made to use these millings to create walking paths as a resource for our community. In fact, walking paths were added at all three school campuses, with varying lengths. (1.25 miles at the MS/HS Campus and approximately 1/4 mile path at both LES and HES) We invite our community to use these paths during daylight hours (dawn to dusk).

RV Farm:

The River Valley Food Service, under The Lunch Bunch brand, has worked hard over the last year and a half to create a great community resource and learning lab for our students. The Lunch Bunch/Food Service Department is an entity that self-funds nearly all of these programs through grants, reimbursements, or outside agency support.

- Two high tunnels have been added where produce will be grown for use in our cafeterias.
- A barn with a covered awning area has been added. Some of the intended uses include: washing produce to be used in our cafeterias for student meals, community demonstrations on cooking and preserving produce, summer camps for students, and a space for teachers and students to meet for outdoor classes.
- Berry bushes and fruit trees (the MS/HS Walking path goes through these areas)

These RV Farm projects were paid for, almost entirely, from Food Service funds. These funds were generated from the following sources: Marion Public Health Community Grants, USDA Farm-to-School Grant, Summer Food Program reimbursements, USDA reimbursements for the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). We invite the RV Community to come out to the Viking Bash on August 23rd from 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM to celebrate these upgrades and see for yourself the great things happening in your district. Then, stay for the first home football game as the Vikings take on Ashland.

Thank you for your support!

Go Vikings!

Adam Wickham - Superintendent





Please Update Your FinalForms

Parents of all bus riders need to complete/update your information on FinalForms. These need to be updated every year. Busing is assigned according to FinalForms information.

Bus Routes will be driven the same way as last year for the first two weeks of school, times will be close to the same as the year before. Please be patient as the drivers are picking up new students, so times will vary. Open Enrollment students will not have busing for the first two weeks of school. The Open Enrollment Bus Rules Agreement form is due prior to the start of school and this will get your student on the list of an available bus. Open Enrollment busing is not guaranteed.

Top 5 Bus Rider Tips

- ➔ Be outside waiting five minutes prior to the bus arriving
- ➔ Wait for the driver's signal to approach the bus or cross the road
- ➔ Stay ten steps away from the front of the bus
- ➔ Put down the cell phone, take out AirPods, be alert & cautious as you board the bus.
- ➔ Once on the bus, sit in your seat quietly

River Valley Preschool Child Find Information

Child Find screenings are offered by River Valley Local Schools as a resource to parents who have developmental concerns for their child. Children may participate in the free screening if they are a resident of River Valley Local School District and are between 3 and 5 years old. Child Find is NOT a Kindergarten screening.

The purpose of Child Find is to provide information about a child's current development in the areas of: Motor, Language, Concept, Self-help, and Social-emotional development

The screenings are held at River Valley Liberty Elementary School. Screenings are held from September through May. Screenings are conducted by our team of special needs preschool staff. A parent must be on site during the screening which lasts approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Liberty Elementary School is located at 1932 Whetstone River Road N. Caledonia, OH 43314.

To schedule a child check preschool screening, go to: rvk12.org/childfind



A reminder from the nurse.....

As we return to school for the 2024-2025 school year, I find myself once again reviewing vaccination records for our students. Did you know the state requires students to have a current vaccination record or vaccination waiver on file to attend a public school? This is why those documents are requested when your child registers for school. As the years pass and boosters are recommended, we need to review our records for the health and safety of our students. If you have a student entering Kindergarten, 7th grade, or 12th grade specifically, please check with your physician to be sure your child is up-to-date with their vaccines. Please submit an updated copy of your child's vaccination record or a vaccination waiver to the school before October 1st. I appreciate your cooperation with this matter and look forward to a safe, healthy school year.

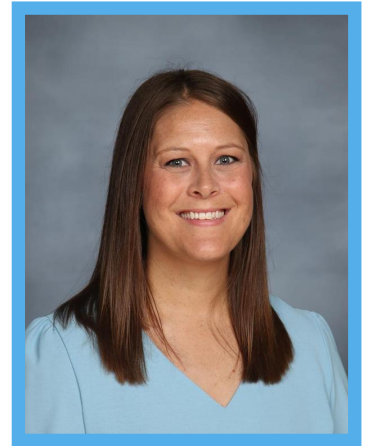
SCHOOL
NURSE
NOTES



House Bill 920 and Its Impact On Ohio Schools

Have you ever wondered why so many school districts across the state seem to be asking their communities for additional money or why so many districts return to their communities about every two or three years with a levy request or renewal? No matter where you live in Ohio, regardless of whether you have children or whether they attend public schools, you will be asked to vote periodically on a local school levy.

House Bill 920 was passed in 1976 during a period of unprecedented inflation. Home values were climbing, and property taxes were growing at the same rate. The State Legislature attempted to lessen the burden on homeowners by freezing the dollar amount paid to school districts at the 1976 level, not at the percentage rate but at the actual dollar amount. The information shared below will help you better understand the impact that House Bill 920 has had on Ohio schools and why House Bill 920 forces some school districts to be on the ballot more often. House Bill 920, the Ohio law that determines how public schools are funded, is complex and confusing, but it significantly impacts all public schools.



Brittany Keller

RV Schools Treasurer

The primary source of income for most Ohio school districts is a tax on property located within the school district. The local property tax is levied in "mills." A mill is one-thousandth of a dollar. According to the Ohio constitution, all local governments combined can levy only ten mills without a vote of the constituents. These are called "inside mills" because they are inside the 10-mill limitation. A local school district typically receives around 4.5 of these ten inside mills. River Valley receives 4.2 of the ten inside mills, and other local governments receive the rest. Any mills above the 10-mill limit must be approved by the voters. These are called "voted mills." Voted mills are the major source of income for most school districts, but House Bill 920 essentially freezes a school district's income on voted mills. This freeze on school income started in 1976, so the income our school district receives from each levy voted since 1976 was frozen the moment the levy was passed. Even when home values increase, a school district's revenue remains the same because of House Bill 920. No revenue increase is permitted for schools, except a one-time increase for new construction and a small amount of revenue growth on inside mills. For school districts, simply keeping up with day-to-day cost increases is difficult under House Bill 920 and is the main reason for their return to taxpayers for additional revenue.

One major factor that makes the impact of House Bill 920 devastating for our schools is inflation. Every three years, the value of taxable property in the school district is reevaluated. If inflation has caused the value of the property to increase, the auditor reduces the school tax rate so that schools do not receive more money on voted levies. This is called the "effective tax rate." As inflation drives up the value of property, House Bill 920 prevents schools from collecting more money despite increased expenditures due to inflation. To better understand the ramifications, let's break this down with numbers. Imagine you own a \$100,000 house, and you are paying ten mills. First off, residential real estate is assessed at 35% of the appraised value. This means that a one-mill levy on a \$100,000 home does not generate $(\$100,000 \times .001)$ (per mil) in taxes, which would equal \$100, but rather $(35\% \times \$100,000 \times .001)$, therefore equalling \$35 per mil in tax each year. Therefore, a ten-mill levy would result in a total of \$350 per year $(\$100,000 \text{ home value} \times 35\% \text{ assessed value} \times .001 \text{ per mil} \times 10 \text{ mills})$. After three years, the value of your house is reevaluated and determined to be \$120,000. The amount received by the school must remain the same as prescribed by House Bill 920. Due to this, the millage amount will be adjusted by the county auditor to 8.33 mills from 10 mills, so the homeowner's tax amount remains at \$350 even though the home value has increased.

Now, imagine that this has gone on for 10 or 20 years. After a while, your house has increased in value to \$250,000, and your local schools are still generating the same \$350/year, even though it is now only four mills, which is 40% of the original passage. Other kinds of revenue generation tools, such as income tax and sales tax, include allowances for inflation. Unfortunately, since schools were designed to work primarily with property tax, the current laws around this type of taxation make it seem like schools are continually requesting more taxes. However, in reality, most of the time, schools need to pass a new levy so they can try to keep up with the increased costs that inflation causes for operations. This includes teacher salaries, textbooks, and fuel for school buses, which go up over that twenty-year period. When schools are not receiving a single dollar more in tax revenue, no matter how conservative or efficient districts are with taxpayer money, they cannot keep up with those day-to-day cost increases without asking for additional revenue from a levy. This is why your support on levy requests is crucial for the continued operation and improvement of our schools. We do our very best to be good stewards of the resources you have provided. We hope you found this article informational. As always, if you have any questions, please reach out to the business office by calling 740-725-5400.

Heritage Elementary News

Welcome Back

Welcome back to the 2024-2025 school year! The Heritage Staff is excited to kick off another great year on Wednesday, August 14. The custodial staff has been working hard to prepare the school for the return of students, and some wonderful changes have been made to the building as well. These changes are outlined below. We can't wait to see the students back in the building, refreshed from summer break and ready to make it another wonderful learning year!

Heritage Upgrades

When you come back for the new school year you will notice the changes that we have made to the entrance of our Heritage Office, along with the configuration of the space. The change will help increase safety, allowing Heritage Office Staff to monitor all visitors coming into the building.

We also have replaced the restroom sinks in both student restrooms in the building. The replacement of these sinks will cut down on the increasing costs that we were having with repairs and replacement of parts with the previous sinks.

The Heritage parking lot is now pothole free! The new parking lot is definitely one of the most noticeable changes that has been made to the outside of the building. We hope all of the families that drop off this school year are able to appreciate the smooth surface!

Finally, work has started on the replacement and repair of the roof. With all of these wonderful improvements and repairs, the 2024-2025 school year will be the best one yet!

Heritage Elementary Open House

We will be hosting our Open House on Monday, August 12, from 4:30-6:00 p.m. Open House is your opportunity to discover your child's teacher for the upcoming school year, drop off school supplies, and allow your child to see their new classroom. We hope you are able to join us!

School Supply Lists

The Heritage Elementary School Supply List can be found by visiting the Heritage website at: heritage.rvk12.org.

Kindergarten!

Gentle Start

We are excited to welcome a new group of kindergarten students this school year. Kindergarten students will follow a "gentle start" schedule to help allow for smaller groups of students to come in on the first several days of school and learn about the building, get to know their teachers and how school works.

Below is the schedule for these days.

- **Wednesday, August 14**
 - Last names starting with A-G
- **Thursday, August 15**
 - Last names starting with H-N
- **Friday, August 16**
 - Last names starting with O-Z
- **Monday, August 19**
 - ALL Kindergarten Students Attend

Open House Reminder

- Heritage & Liberty Elementary
Monday, August 12th 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM
- River Valley Middle School
Monday, August 12th: 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM
- River Valley High School
Monday, August 12th: 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

Liberty Elementary News

Welcome back to a new school year at Liberty Elementary. We are excited to continue our work with your student on the values accentuated in our Viking P.R.I.D.E Rubric. Staff will continue to work with students to show Pride and Respect while Living with Integrity, Making a Difference, and Expecting Excellence. Students who show those qualities will continue to have opportunities to earn coins, which they can turn into rewards. We are also excited at LES to continue to grow traditions that were brought back a year ago, such as a Veteran's Day program, various PTO activities, and a Fifth Grade Recognition. Liberty staff is also excited to bring new opportunities to the students of LES.

As you visit the school, you will notice multiple upgrades for safety as well as functionality. The main entrance to the office has been changed to allow visitors to come directly into the office. The configuration of the office was changed to allow for this entrance while also giving a fresh new look. There was also a set of doors added to the first-grade hallway for security purposes, while bathrooms were upgraded with badly needed new sinks. You'll also notice the smooth new parking lots that were a major upgrade.

The custodial staff has once again done an outstanding job of preparing Liberty for a new year, and we thank them for their efforts. The Liberty staff is ready for another great year.

Go Vikes!
LES Staff

New Liberty Staff:

Rachel Hawerlander, 3rd Grade Teacher

I am excited to join the Liberty team as a third-grade teacher! This will be my tenth year teaching at RV, as I previously taught at the middle school. I am from Mansfield and graduated from The Ohio State University (elementary/middle school education) and then Ohio University (special education). My experiences include teaching early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school in regular and special education. I enjoy reading, baking, gardening, music, laughing, and making learning fun. Here's to a terrific year in third grade!

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FACT

Did You Know?

Students are about 70 times more likely to get to school safely if they take the school bus instead of traveling by car.



**NATIONAL SCHOOL BUS
SAFETY WEEK - OCTOBER 21-25**

Technology Protection Plan



Protection Plan fee of \$35.00 will be added to your child's MySchoolBucks account for the 2024–25 school year. By paying this fee, you are protecting yourself from future expenses assessed if your child's Chromebook is accidentally damaged. We have found the Technology Protection Plan to be an excellent option for parents to ensure that a dropped device or accidental spill does not result in an unexpected financial burden. Last year, nearly 30% of our devices required some type of repair. Paying this \$35 fee before the deadline of September 1st covers up to \$400 of accidental damage during the school year and makes sure that you and your student can rest assured that a simple accident will not be a considerable expense. In addition to paying the Technology Protection Plan, we also recommend having a conversation with your student about how to care for their school device. The technology protection plan does cover accidents, but it does not cover damages due to intentional, reckless, willful, wanton, or malicious conduct. We appreciate your partnership as we work to prepare students for their technological future.

4th Annual Car Show Held at RV

The River Valley Athletic Boosters held their 4th Annual Car Show on Sunday, July 21st. This event is always well-attended, and this year's show did not disappoint. Over 240 cars registered for the event, and the show awarded 75 trophies to the winning cars. Current River Valley student-athletes selected all of the winning vehicles. We want to thank all our generous sponsors and participants, those who attended the event, and Jessica Rowe and her family for their hard work organizing the event. The show raised over \$20,000 for our athletic booster club, and the 4th annual show is currently being planned. Go Vikes!



Middle School News

Hello, River Valley Middle School families. My name is Tom Bower, and I am the new principal at RVMS. I am returning to the middle school after one year as the principal of Liberty Elementary, having served as the middle school assistant for two years prior. I am excited for the opportunity to work with the great staff at RVMS and meet and educate the students who will be attending RVMS this year.

I have been in education for over 30 years. I taught both elementary and middle school before transitioning to River Valley in administration. My wife and I have been married for 27 years, and we have 4 wonderful children. Around the building you will notice some upgrades, including our nice new parking lots and driveways. The middle school will also have new lunch room tables to accommodate our students. I would like to thank the custodial staff for their hard work this summer to prepare the building for the upcoming school year. RVMS looks great!

As principal, I will emphasize the Viking PRIDE rubric that focuses on values we want our students to accentuate. We will work as a staff to develop Positive and Respectful students who live with Integrity, Make a Difference, and Expect Excellence. These core values will be key to our success inside and outside of the classroom.

I look forward to meeting and talking with you as we begin the 2024-25 school year. Open house will be on Monday, August 12 from 5:30 PM -7:00 PM.

Go, Vikes!
Tom Bower

New Staff at RVMS:

There are several new staff members at RVMS. The following are staff members who will join our Viking family:

- Sam Lodge - 6th Grade English / Language Arts
- Ainsley Work - 6th Grade English / Language Arts
- Hannah Jarvis - 6th Grade Science
- Emma Harvey - 6th Grade Intervention Specialist
- Lauren Deweese - Special Education Unit
- Christine Bellamy - Technology
- Laura Moore - 8th Grade English / Language Arts

High School News

The 2024-25 school year is fast approaching and will be an exciting time at River Valley High School. RVHS will conduct our open house this year on August 12th from 5:30-7 pm, and all students begin school on August 14th. As we approach these dates, there are a number of important changes that we would like to spend some time highlighting:

From a facilities perspective, our parking lots have been repaved and look great. Students will notice that there are now numbered spots for them to park in that will correspond with their parking pass number. More information will be coming via our normal communication channels in the coming weeks. The tennis court project is nearly complete and will provide our community with some of the best courts in the state. The courts will soon be open for community use on all five tennis courts, as well as the eight available pickleball courts.

Our office staff will have many new faces. First off, I am honored to take over the role of building principal after Mr. Dutt's retirement at the end of last school year. We will have a new assistant principal, Kyle Strzelecki, and a new Athletic/Activities director, Sage Brannon. Additionally, we will have a new front office secretary who we plan to announce soon.

River Valley's music department will have two new directors as well. Nick Denino is a recent graduate of The Ohio State University, and will be leading our vocal music program (including Show Choir). Joshua Neff comes to us after three years at Cardington Middle School, and will take over the instrumental music program (including Marching Band).

Fall sports are getting underway. An update with important athletic dates and information was sent via email on July 12th. The update is also available on the district website on both the RVHS and RV Athletics pages. Ms. Brannon will be sending out additional information as we begin the fall season. For athletic-related questions, Ms. Brannon can be reached at sbrannon@rvk12.org or 740-725-5806.

We will be offering drivers education through River Valley Schools this year. We have two certified instructors who spent some time this summer training and learning how to instruct young drivers. Information will be forthcoming to families of students who are looking for options to complete drivers education in a local and convenient manner.

Finally, I would like to pass along two pieces of information for students to begin taking into consideration for the upcoming school year. First, students will be receiving information about their schedules in early August. Also, RVHS is implementing a building-wide policy regarding cell phones. In short, cell phones will no longer be allowed in classroom settings, including study halls and our new academic assist period. Students are able to keep their phones on them during the day, but are to be off and put away. This will be a positive change that will allow students to focus on their studies during the school day.

As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions at tstout@rvk12.org, or 740-725-5805.

Travis Stout - RVHS Principal



New driver's education vehicle provided through State of Ohio grant funding.



THE 2024 VIKING BASH

Friday, August 23, 4:30 – 6:00 pm
River Valley High School Campus
(Between the Middle School and Tennis Courts)

PLUS - Kids PreK-5th Grade get a free football game ticket w/ parent ticket purchase

Apparel Vendors, Shaved Ice, Inflatables



- Hot Dogs
- Chips
- Watermelon
- Bottled Water

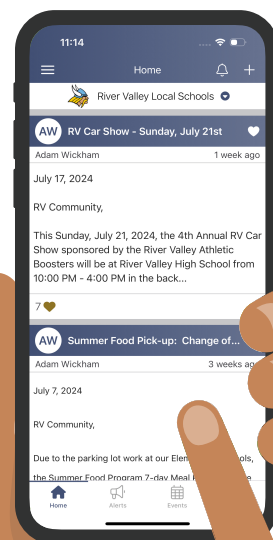
Free Food ↗

Download the ParentSquare app today!

Stay involved with your student's learning and activities at school. From anywhere.



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**“I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious.”
– Albert Einstein**