

The Buzz...

Monthly Employee
Newsletter – February 2025



February's here, with snow still deep,
Minnesota's winter has promises to keep.
Through frosty mornings and skies so gray,
Your work shines bright, each and every day.

In our halls, there's warmth and cheer,
Because of the care you bring all year.
From guiding lessons to lending an ear,
You inspire hope and help dreams appear.

This month reminds us of kindness and love,
Acts of goodwill that rise above.
Like snowflakes falling, each one unique,
Your efforts bring the success we seek.

So bundle up, and let's embrace,
The strength of this school, a special place.
Together we thrive, through cold or storm,
Creating a space that's safe and warm.

Thank you, dear staff, for all that you do,
Our students succeed because of you.

With gratitude and warmth,

Eric

Read Act

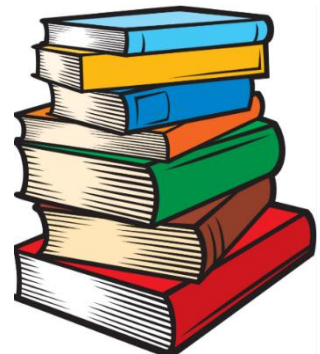
We are thrilled to share that approximately 50 of our dedicated staff members are actively participating in Read Act Training!

This journey has been filled with valuable insights and impactful learning, all of which are helping to strengthen our commitment to literacy and student success.

We've officially reached the halfway mark—what an incredible milestone! While the work can be challenging, your dedication to growing professionally and improving outcomes for our students is truly commendable.

Remember, the effort you're putting in now will create lasting benefits for the students we serve. So hang in there, keep supporting each other, and know that your perseverance is deeply appreciated.

Thank you for your hard work and commitment to this important initiative. Let's keep the momentum going and finish strong!



Employee Evaluations

Staff evaluations will be in full swing from now through the spring. If you are due for an evaluation this year, your supervisor will be reaching out to schedule.

~ WE APPRECIATE YOU ~

**SCHOOL VAN/BUS DRIVER APPRECIATION DAY –
FEBRUARY 22**

Becky Blanchard, Johnie Goodpasture, Jack Hall,
Ace Ludovissie, Miranda Matis, Jerry Miller, Ryan O'Bar

****Thanks also to the Academies Staff who stepped up
this fall and winter to cover routes when we were
understaffed!

**NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR WEEK
FEBRUARY 3 - 7**

Marty Thorp



Terrie Aho	February 1
Miranda Sazama	February 1
Meghan Robertson	February 2
Kylie Olson	February 4
Rachel Beard	February 7
Trent Becker	February 10
Lisa Wright	February 10
Marlo Benning	February 11
Margaret Grondahl	February 15
Jackie Beavers	February 16
Jesse Ashbaugh	February 17
Sam Tumberg	February 18
Matt Parker	February 25
Katrina Aho	February 26
Kaitlin Spar	February 28



PERSONAL GOALS SHARED

In our Share Your Success Challenge

At the start of 2024, I set an ambitious goal: shave five minutes off my sprint triathlon time from the previous year. Determined to crush it, I poured countless hours into the pool, spent grueling sessions on the bike trainer, and braved freezing runs to build my stamina.

On May 4th, 2024, all that hard work paid off. I crossed the finish line in 1 hour, 17 minutes, and 33 seconds—blowing past my goal with a 12-minute, 35-second improvement from 2023! Now, I'm fired up for 2025. My sights are set on completing the May 3rd sprint triathlon in Morris, MN, in just 1 hour and 10 minutes. *"My discipline is a promise to my future self,"* and I'm ready to deliver!

-Matt Parker

My goal of completing my Master's degree in K-6 and special education required balancing full-time teaching with my responsibilities as a single mom to a 15-year-old daughter and supporting my fiancé, who serves in the Air National Guard.

I had to prioritize my time carefully, managing coursework, teaching, and parenting while staying committed to my long-term vision of improving educational opportunities for students with special needs. Some days were tougher than others, but my passion for teaching and determination to give my daughter a strong role model kept me going.

I leaned on my family and learned to adapt to a crazy schedule, knowing it was all worth it to grow as an educator and a person. Completing this degree is not just a professional milestone but also about proving to myself, my family, friends and students that hard work and persistence pay off.

I actually had this whole crazy journey completed on January 1 😊

-Maureen Baymler

One of my personal goals the last few months has been self-care. I have been taking time for myself to do things I enjoy doing, for example I just completed a jigsaw puzzle. I also am trying to leave work at work and home life at home. That can be challenging but it is getting easier as time goes by. I also have been trying not to get to work at such an ungodly hour in the morning :) That is the hardest part of my new goal.

-Vanessa Waldahl

I set a goal of starting to learn to put myself first. It may seem like a strange goal, but as I had been a Special Education Teacher for 14 years, it was time. In my job as a teacher I was often hurt by students (to put it mildly). It became increasingly difficult to enjoy life and the "self-care" suggestions did not fit into my too busy work life or often felt trite. So, I set out to figure it out... what I could do for myself to become healthier, happier and more satisfied with life?

Steps I took:

- 1) learning to drink water
- 2) found health care professionals that would listen to my story and help me recover (not just prescribe meds)
- 3) Listened to the advice from others that cared for me without rejecting their ideas as "too selfish"
- 4) Applied for (and got) a different, safer job
- 5) Committed to doing things I had put off...short vacations, painting, more gardening, reading, photography, and visiting with friends

It is still hard for me to say "No" when asked to do things that are not best for me to be involved in (I like helping people), but I have reached the goal of starting and often starting is a huge goal in itself.

- Fay Pary

I am pleased to provide a testimonial highlighting a personal goal I have achieved over the past 12 months. I have achieved success in many areas, however, I will focus on the specific goal area of health and wellness. Over the last year, I have successfully maintained my ideal BMI range of 20 to 21, as well as a consistent waist to hip ratio of 0.44.

This accomplishment has been the result of a dedicated focus on exercise, nutrition, and overall lifestyle balance. Through regular strength training and increased flexibility, I have noticed significant improvements in my physical capabilities. I no longer experience stiffness in my joints when taking my dog on her morning walks, and I have been able to steadily increase the weights used in my strength training routine. To support these health and wellness goals, I have invested in working with a personal trainer, a nutritionist, and a life coach. This multifaceted approach has allowed me to establish clear targets, visualize the desired outcomes, and maintain accountability throughout my journey. By prioritizing my health, I have not only experienced physical benefits but also found inspiration and freedom to focus on other important areas of my life, such as nurturing loving relationships, achieving time and financial freedom, and discovering vocational fulfillment. I am grateful for the opportunity to share this personal testimonial and hope that my experience can serve as an inspiration to others who are seeking to improve their own health and well-being.

-Kristina Harstad

My main goal this year was to learn the basics of Google sheets. We had a speech disability meeting in November and Tabitha gave a lesson on setting up Google sheets for schedules and data collection. At first it felt overwhelming to create new data sheets for my caseload when the paper system was "sort of" working. I quickly found out that I can link useful materials directly into the digital data sheets, keep better track of goals, and use shared drives so our online SLP can access the info any time. It feels so nice to be organized.

-Janelle Lass

I have 2 !

1) I completed my coursework for Physical/Health Disabilities licensure on August 1, 2024. It involved taking 5 courses/16 credits through MN State University Moorhead 8/2023-7/2024. This has allowed me to expand my role through Freshwater and hopefully be a helpful team member to staff, students, and families!

2) I helped plan and implement the Regions 5&7 2024 "ECC & Me! Academy" held on September 26 & 27, 2024 in Alexandria. The theme was "The Active Traveler" and included 14 area students. Sessions for parents were also incorporated. Some of the activities were: exploring the Rainbow Rider transportation system, traveling by coach bus to the Alexandria airport, practicing daily living skills, experiencing a zip line and more! Here are some pics: [\[LINK\]](#)

A BIG SHOUT OUT TO MY CO-WORKERS FOR HELPING KEEP ME SANE DURING THESE STRESSFUL TIMES!!

-Nicole Schmidt

My goal that I've crushed and continue working on: Breastfeeding for a full year has been such an incredible accomplishment for me. With my other kids we got so close, but it just wasn't possible, and I always felt a bit disappointed about it. This time, I stuck with it through all the challenges and leaned on support when I needed it. The connection I've built with my baby and knowing I've given them this nourishment has brought me so much joy. It's a goal I'm so proud to have reached, especially since it's something I once thought I couldn't do.

-Anonymous

My goal for the year 2024 was to make time for "me". As many of us know, being a mom, wife, and working full time doesn't necessarily leave much time for oneself. This past year, I have started to re-find my love for reading. Find a new love for running. And my girlfriends and I FINALLY made the jump for our first (hopefully annual) girls trip. Trip one was an amazing trip to Sedona, Arizona where we hiked Devil's Bridge, Cathedral Rock and West Fork Oak Creek. Even before we made the return home, we were looking up ideas for our next adventure.

-Sara Truax

GREAT JOB EVERYONE!



From our Together Improving Care Team

Vision: A compassionate community that builds relationships and empowers individuals

When someone is going through a trauma response, it means they are feeling very scared, upset, or overwhelmed because something is reminding them of a difficult or painful experience from their past. Their brain is trying to protect them, and they might not feel safe, even if everything around them is okay.

Giving them space is important because it helps them feel calmer and safer. Imagine if you were feeling really upset and someone kept asking you questions or standing too close—it might make you feel even more stressed. By stepping back and giving them time, you're letting them know that it's okay to take care of themselves and calm down.

It's like giving someone a quiet moment to catch their breath when they've been running really fast. Once they feel better, they might be ready to talk or be around others again. Being kind and patient shows them that you care.

DID YOU KNOW?

**KEEP YOUR
D-I-S-T-A-N-C-E
WHEN COMFORTING
SOMEONE
EXPERIENCING
TRAUMA RESPONSE**

NEW Wellness Page on our Website

A new section has been added to our website highlighting all things “WELLNESS”. Please take a moment to check it out! It can be found by going to the Freshwater Website <https://www.fed.k12.mn.us/> , clicking on Staff Resources and scrolling down to see this:



Employees who take Freshwater's Health Insurance:

You can find links and information for Blue Cross Blue Shield benefits on the Wellness Page as well! To access it now:

[Click here for Blue Cross Blue Shield information](#)

Remember to get a jump start on earning CASH on the Wellright App for 2025! If you haven't registered, use the code below to get started:



Get Started Today:

- Register at sourcewell.wellright.com or via the WellRight mobile app.
- Simply click 'Register' and complete the form.

Scan the code with your phone's camera to register or sign into your account.