



## MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

**Dennis Furton**

Dear Laker Parents and Community Members,

In his latest book, *The Anxious Generation*, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt delves into the alarming rise of anxiety among young people today. As both an educator and a parent, I found Haidt's exploration of this issue particularly compelling—especially in light of the recent decision at Spring Lake High School to implement cell phone restrictions.

Haidt identifies several key factors contributing to the mental health crisis facing today's youth, including the pervasive influence of social media, the erosion of unstructured play, and an overemphasis on safety and risk-aversion. These trends are playing out in our classrooms, where many students struggle with resilience, fear of failure, and often shy away from taking risks.

While *The Anxious Generation* doesn't provide a simple solution to these challenges, Haidt's insights shed light on the complexity of youth anxiety and why it's so widespread. Addressing this issue, he argues, will require a concerted effort from educators, parents, and the broader community.

As I reflect on my own experience as a parent, I'm reminded of the delicate balance between safety and freedom. How can we provide our children with a secure environment while still encouraging them to take risks, learn from failure, and develop resilience?

I'd love to hear your thoughts on Haidt's book and its relevance to our community. If you've had a chance to read it, please feel free to share your insights with me via email at [dfurton@springlakeschools.org](mailto:dfurton@springlakeschools.org).





# BOND UPDATE

We are pleased to report that our construction projects are progressing smoothly!

## High School Administration Offices Update

The masons are putting the finishing touches on the west exterior wall and will soon set the remaining sills at the window openings. Roofing work has commenced, and we're excited to report that the first floor has been poured. Once the floor is in place, they will begin framing the interior walls, allowing the electrical, plumbing, fire suppression, and HVAC contractors to start their rough-ins.

## Laker Athletic Center Update

At the Laker Athletic Center, roofing is set to be completed this month, with exterior wall work ongoing. Our goal is to have the building fully enclosed by early December, and we're pleased to report that brickwork has begun on the south side. Interior mechanical and electrical work is also in progress, and the construction of stairways and elevators is well underway. The concrete lacrosse hitting wall has been completed, marking another milestone in our timeline.

Thank you all for your support in our projects!



# FINANCIAL UPDATE

As required of all public school districts, Spring Lake has just completed its annual independent financial audit. We are pleased to announce that the District again received an unqualified opinion, the best that an auditor can give. As part of the annual audit, the District's internal financial controls were tested as well as its handling of State and Federal grants. No significant weakness or findings were noted as a result of these procedures. Additionally, the auditors looked at the construction funds, noting no concerns with how they have been spent to date.

In their presentation to the Board, the auditor indicated that Spring Lake continues to have a reasonable level of reserves (fund balance) in its operating fund as of June 30, 2024. It is the goal of the Board and administration to maintain a strong level of reserves in order to provide a stable level of education to the students in the upcoming years.

If you desire further information, the financial statements can be found on the District's website under "Financial Reporting."



## **From The Curriculum Director Kate Drake**

Spring Lake Schools educators continue to embody learning. We're launching Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to further a culture of collaboration, continuous improvement, and student-centered learning.

"PLCs" center on three key ideas: a focus on learning, collaborative culture, and a commitment to results. Via time together, educators work to identify essential student learning, set learning goals, analyze data to tailor instruction, and support student achievement. By sharing expertise and strategies, PLCs empower teachers to address learning gaps, adapt practices, and build collective responsibility for all students' success. This approach aligns with our commitment to provide every student with high-quality education, driven by informed, purposeful collaboration and ongoing professional growth. These efforts call for increased communication and trust—with every team member's contribution valued.

Collaborative efforts will move us forward in refining a guaranteed and viable curriculum, as acknowledged in our strategic plan.



## **The Classes of 2025 & 2037 Show Passage of Time**

Homecoming's Powderpuff game introduced a touching new tradition: a special meetup between kindergartners and graduating seniors. This moment beautifully highlighted the journey from the start of a student's school years to graduation, capturing the spirit of the Spring Lake community.

While the game brought lively competition, the interactions between the youngest and oldest students stole the show. Watching the seniors on the field, kindergartners dreamed of their own futures in Laker colors—a true celebration of school pride and connection.



## **Spring Lake Welcomes Dr. Dewitt Mid-Year**

Spring Lake Public Schools warmly welcomes Dr. Kris Dewitt, who joined Jeffers Elementary as principal on November 11. Her first day was full of excitement as she met students, parents, and staff, who are eager to work alongside her.

Dr. Dewitt, originally from Mt. Clemens, Michigan, brings a wealth of experience back to her home state. With a background in teaching, curriculum development, and leadership, Dr. Dewitt is ready to foster a continued positive, engaged school culture at Jeffers.



# School Building Highlights

## Fall 2024

### High School

- Our refined cell phone policy focused on removing cell phones from the classroom has had a significant positive impact on the culture. Students are more engaged in learning, participating actively in discussions, and demonstrating improved focus.

### Alternative Education

- We were visited earlier this fall by Alan VandenBosch, a local parole officer, who came in to discuss cyber security and how to keep safe online.

### Middle School

- We have been busy recognizing students for being respectful, responsible, and caring--what we are calling "The Laker Way." When students are caught in these great behaviors, they have opportunities to enter drawings for small and big rewards, such as tickets to a Griffins game.

### Intermediate School

- Our Walkathon was the highlight for the Intermediate School this fall, raising almost \$39,000. This money will be used to help pay for 5th graders to attend camp and 6th graders to attend their end-of-the-year field trip.

### Holmes

- We will end this trimester with our HEART Smart prize of build, play, and create days! All students will participate and be a part of the fun. We are just buzzing at Holmes.

### Jeffers Elementary

- Our Halloween festivities were amazing at Jeffers! The teachers and parents made this day a lot of fun for our students while we've also anticipated the arrival of our new principal.



# From the Voice of a Teacher

Mr. Joe Sinn



As we near the end of the fall trimester, I find myself reflecting on the start of another school year—my 37th. Fall always brings a unique energy: new clothes, reunions with friends, the kickoff of sports, marching band, and other long-awaited activities. It's a time marked by creativity in classrooms, camaraderie in hallways, and competitive spirit on the field.

The fall trimester can feel the longest, with no major breaks: winter offers Christmas, Winter Break, and the occasional snow day; and spring brings the optimism of warmer days, Spring Break, and the anticipation of summer. Yet fall, despite its lack of school breaks, has its own balance. Homecoming Spirit Week, the cooler weather, and the excitement of new routines offset the challenge of moving up a grade, managing busy schedules, and facing difficult tests and projects.

Fall's challenges seem more manageable with the rhythms and rituals unique to this season. The sound of the drumline before the Homecoming game, applause at the fall play, lunchroom chatter, and laughter on a warm Friday afternoon remind us of the best parts of school.

There's a comforting predictability to each fall that brings peace, reminding us that year 37 feels a lot like years 35, 29, or even 3. Although much has changed during my years in education, the essence remains: we're here to open doors for young people and to give them every opportunity to grow. It's why teachers teach, administrators lead, and support staff work tirelessly behind the scenes. We all share the common goal of helping students discover their potential, and this purpose gives meaning to our work.

Fall is a time for renewal, progress, and hope. As this season winds down, I look forward to winter and the fresh challenges it will bring.



## STUDENT SPORTS HIGHLIGHT

Zoe Dull's time on the Spring Lake High School golf team has been marked by dedication, growth, and a true love for the sport. Introduced to golf at a young age by her dad, Zoe first saw it as a way to spend time together. "But after I started playing tournaments, I saw how rewarding it was, and I was hooked."

Golf has given Zoe more than just athletic skills—it's taught her essential life lessons. "Golf has taught me so much mental strength and critical thinking," she says. "Sometimes, you have to take your medicine. If you hit your drive into the trees, you can't always go for the green. I've taken that into my life, learning to accept consequences and make the smartest choice, not just the most fun one."

A tight-knit support system has been central to Zoe's journey. "I'd like to thank my parents, Julie and Andrew Dull, my Grandpa Ray, and my coaches," she says. "Their support has meant everything."

Looking back, Zoe cherishes moments with her teammates. "One highlight has to be watching my best friend shoot her personal best," she recalls. "Seeing her smile was probably more exciting than winning the tournament myself."

Next year, Zoe will continue her golf journey at Central Michigan University, studying engineering or science. "I hope Central has the same impact on me that Spring Lake golf did," she says.

Spring Lake Public Schools proudly celebrates Zoe's achievements and wishes her every success.



## Top 5 Athletic Highlights Fall 2024

1. Zoe Dull takes runner-up at Division 2 State Finals in girls golf. The team finishes 6th overall.
2. Girls Cross Country are regional champs for the first time in 17 years.
3. Girls Swim & Dive qualifies for the state competition in 10 of 12 events.
4. Field Hockey participates in the post-season tournament for the first time in school history.
5. Volleyball wins its first round at districts.

### Honorable Mentions:

- Football wins three of four home games this season including rout of rival, Fruitport.
- Boys Soccer faces the #1 ranked team in the state three times in one season.
- Boys Tennis falls one win shy of advancing to state finals, marking a bright future.
- The crew team competed in two regattas, highlighting the skills of Owen Fogel, Christian Kondrat, Brennan Manzer, and Dominic McGrath.
- Congratulations to junior, Max Eggert, on winning the State Championship in A Fleet division of Butterfly sailing.







## ALUMNI UPDATE

### 1965 CELEBRATION

This fall, Spring Lake Public Schools welcomed back its first-ever graduating class, the Class of 1965, for a special luncheon. As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of our school's founding, we're reminded that the achievements of our alumni continue to inspire our community and students today. These pioneering Lakers set the foundation for the vibrant, supportive learning environment we cherish today.

Gathering together, these Lakers shared memories, laughs--and hopes for future Lakers. It was a powerful reminder that we are all part of a legacy that stretches across generations—a legacy that empowers us to build a better future together. Thank you, Class of 1965, for leading the way.

Here's to the next 60 years of Spring Lake pride.  
Go Lakers!



## FROM THE ARTS DEPARTMENT

### High School

- Bella Voce performed at Hope College with 200 other students from local schools.
- The theatre department just closed a profoundly moving fall season with two shows: *Parker and the City in the Sea* and *Radium Girls*. All who attended were greatly impacted by the shows' messages, and the students emotional and compelling performances.

### Middle School

- The choir visited Fruitport High School and participated in a festival choir experience with 200 other middle school singers from the area schools.

### Intermediate School

- Over 100 5th and 6th grade singers presented their ENCORE Vocal Music Concert to family and friends.
- Several students picked up musical instruments for the first time by joining their first formal band.

### Jeffers Elementary

- Jeffers 3rd & 4th grade students were visited by area veterans in preparation for a Nov. 4 veteran concert. Students also submitted 133 photos of family veterans for the Jeffers Heroes Wall of Fame. Jeffers families and friends made a donation of over \$700 to the Folds of Honor Scholarship Fund
- All K-4 students at Jeffers Elementary are practicing perseverance, problem solving, and creativity through a collaborative S.T.E.A.M. (Art + STEM) Rube Goldberg project. Check out some of their projects at [Artsonia here](#).

### Holmes Elementary

- Our 4th grade students have started learning the recorder. Thanks to a grant from the Spring Lake Schools Foundation, we have new instruments!
- Our Art and STEM classes worked together to create magical slime on Halloween. Parents and students both had fun.

# CLASS NOTES

## 1970s

- **KIRBY CHITTENDEN '71** is the co-founder and Creative Director at Dunewood Technology Solutions.

## 1980s

- **BRUCE BOONSTRA '80** is delightfully retired.

## 1990s

- **SARAH CHAMBERLAIN (CHRISTIANSEN) '94** practices Elder Law Paralegal at Parmenter Law
- **KRISTEN STORY (ERICKSON) '96** is an Assistant Compliance Officer at Horizon Bank

## 2000s

- **ADAM HILL '01** is a detective for Ottawa County Sheriff's Office; three children, Brady (16), Parker (15), Gibson (12)
- **KARI HILL (BERNARD) '01** is a Nurse Practitioner at Trinity Health Grand Rapids Pulmonology; three children, Brady (16), Parker (15), Gibson (12)
- **SHANNON MONDAY (OLSEN) '02** married Christopher Monday in 2007; two children, Lucas (11) and Lily (9)
- **ROCHELLE ADAMS (GUNDY) '07** is a Customer Experience Manager at BCBSM; lives in Conklin; married Ryan Adams in 2016; one child, Benson (7)
- **ANGEL MENDIOLA '08** is a Philanthropic Services Manager at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation; lives in Spring Lake, MI; married Lance Riggs in 2020; two children, Savannah (3) and Selah Mena (3 months)
- **KATHERINE MERRIOTT (SCHULTZ) '08** is a Spanish teacher at Lee HS (Godfrey-Lee); married Ryan Merriott in 2016; one child, Kylie Glyce (8 months)
- **MCHALE SMITH '09** is a Cloud Architect Cook County Sheriff's Office; lives in Lemont, Illinois; married Katlyn Bermele in 2021; one child, Cooper Cook (1) and baby number two due in January

## 2010s

- **JOSH LUCKSTED '10** is a Philanthropy Officer at Grand Valley State University
- **JOURDAN DEAN (BOYCHUK) '11** is an Outreach & Intake Coordinator at Traverse Bay Children's Advocacy Center; lives in Traverse City, MI; married Zach Dean in 2016
- **KARA CASETTA (DUNN) '12** is a Program Assistant at Preferred Employment and Living Supports; lives in Holland; married Brett Casetta in 2020; two children, Eli (7) and EmmaJean (1)
- **SHANA HAYNES HEARD '13** is a Youth Experience Expert @ The Diatribe and also an independent and traveling spoken word artist who has recently published her first book; lives in Grand Rapids

- **IAN GLUCK '17** is a teacher at Bach to Rock; lives in Nashville, Tennessee
- **JOURNEY LEE '18** is a manager of 400 acres of farm and rec land at A&B farms; lives in Dittmer, Missouri; one child, Journey Jr. (3)
- **EMILY TURNBOW '19** is a Vet Tech at the Fort Bliss Veterinary Treatment Facility; lives in El Paso, Texas; married Josh Turnbow in 2021

## 2020s

- **GRACE KLEPPE '22** is a pharmacy technician at Meijer pharmacy; lives in Roosevelt Park
- **ISABELLA PADULA '22** is a Research Assistant in a Neuroscience Lab at Michigan State University; lives in East Lansing while studying at MSU

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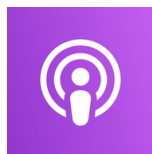


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