



## MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

DENNIS FURTON

Dear Laker Parents and Community Members,

Our recent stakeholder surveys reveal something that matters deeply to me: safety is a shared priority in Spring Lake, and our collective efforts are making a real difference.

I'm encouraged that more than 90% of students, staff, and parents report feeling safe in our schools. Our elementary and intermediate students express particularly strong confidence--over 95% agree they feel safe at school. Staff members echo this, with 98% agreeing they feel safe in their work environment.

The data also shows us where we need to keep focusing. While overall safety perceptions remain high at the secondary level, fewer students "strongly agree" as they move from middle to high school. This isn't unique to Spring Lake, but it reminds me that adolescence brings heightened awareness of social dynamics and safety concerns that deserve our continued attention.

This year, we've prioritized crisis readiness through enhanced training, updated protocols, and improved communication systems. We've also made critical facility infrastructure upgrades that strengthen both physical security and environmental safety. These aren't just building improvements--they're investments in peace of mind for our entire community.

Feeling safe isn't a luxury; it's the foundation for everything else. When students feel secure, they're free to take academic risks, build friendships, and focus on learning. I'm grateful for the trust you place in us, and I'm committed to earning that trust every single day.



# CURRICULUM UPDATE

KATE DRAKE

## **Building a Stronger Support System: Our MTSS Intervention Review**

To provide assurance that every student receives the right support at the right time, our Spring Lake Public Schools' District Improvement Team is further honing a comprehensive intervention system for grades DK-12. Noted via our Strategic Plan, this calls for a task force to inventory and map current interventions, their effectiveness, and return on investment.

By carefully examining all intervention tools and programs in use, we're taking stock while identifying what's working well and where we might have gaps. First, we've documented every academic and behavioral intervention currently in use--considering how often each is utilized and which students benefit from the tools.

Next steps include reviewing research on the intervention's effectiveness, ensuring alignment with educational goals, and taking care to inquire about key questions: Does this intervention have evidence of success? Does it complement core instruction and promote best practice? Can we implement it with fidelity? Further, we'll use this learning to come to consensus around a common definition of "intervention" and our service plans.

By further crafting a coherent system that provides extra support--whether reading, math, school readiness or social-emotional development--we can quickly identify and match the most suitable, high-quality intervention available. As a district, we commit to using resources wisely and avoiding gaps in support. Together, we're building a system where every student can thrive.



# OPERATIONS UPDATE

LIZ BOEVE

Our operations teams work largely behind the scenes, yet their efforts support every student and program in our district.

For the first time in several years, our transportation department is fully staffed. This milestone has brought greater consistency, safety, and reliability to our bus routes. In Food Service, expanded menu offerings have been well received, and students are enjoying the debut of "Larry's Laker Sauce," a new favorite addition to our meal options. Our maintenance team has navigated the demanding early months of the school year with steady commitment--supporting building needs, responding to high-activity levels, and preparing for winter weather ahead. Their work ensures that our schools remain safe, clean, and welcoming.

At the same time, our Fitness and Aquatic Center leadership continues to grow membership and strengthen community involvement. And the Laker Athletic Center is now fully in use--supporting band rehearsals, physical education classes, and athletic teams daily. This shared space reflects careful planning and responsible stewardship of the resources entrusted to us.

We are proud of this progress and grateful for the continued support of our community.

## Financial Corner

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 continued 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, 2025. 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 transparency reporting section of the website under "Financial Reporting."



## Celebrating Excellence from U.S. News & World Report

Spring Lake Public Schools has been honored in the recent *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, with each building earning a place among Michigan's top schools.

- Holmes Elementary #7 of 2,600
- Jeffers Elementary #18 of 2,600
- Spring Lake Intermediate #25 of 1,979
- Spring Lake Middle #29 of 1,979
- Spring Lake High School #26 of 1,135

These achievements reflect the dedication of our students, staff, families, and community. While rankings change over time, the commitment and collaboration behind them remain a consistent truth of our success.



## KATwalk Brings Awareness to Inclusion Month

Spring Lake Intermediate and Middle Schools launched September's Inclusion Week with their first-ever KATwalk in support of the KAT6 Foundation. Students and staff joined together to raise awareness of KAT6A syndrome, a rare genetic disorder caused by mutations in the KAT6A gene. While research continues to explore its impact on brain development and function, the KAT6 Foundation is working to build knowledge, advocacy, and hope for families. The walk was a meaningful opportunity to shine a light on this rare condition while celebrating inclusion, compassion, and connection.



## School Building Highlights Fall 2025

### High School

- Spring Lake High School students participated in WoodTV's Football Frenzy morning, with nearly 200 students attending and more than 1,000 canned goods collected and donated to The People Center, demonstrating both school spirit and community support.

### Middle & Intermediate School

- The New Laker Athletic Center hosted an inspiring Unified Sports soccer game, where athletes and partners displayed teamwork, enthusiasm, and sportsmanship. With cheers, high-fives, and shared celebrations, the event highlighted inclusion, camaraderie, and Laker pride—making it a memorable day for our unified community.

### Holmes

- Holmes students filled the HEART Smart tube with tickets, earning a whole-school prize assembly featuring Brain Break Academy. The program entertained and energized students with laughter, learning, and even magic tricks, while reinforcing kindness, responsibility, and focus. It was a joyful celebration.

### Jeffers Elementary

- Jeffers celebrated a strong fall with academic and safety achievements, alongside positive school climate data. The PBIS program expanded with parent representatives offering valuable feedback. Bus HEART Smart tickets were also introduced, recognizing students and drivers who model positive behavior.



## The Staff Voice

Mrs. Emily Louange



There's so much to be grateful for this Thanksgiving season — especially the meaningful work happening in our schools. This is my 2nd year with the district serving as a part-time school nurse in the special education SXI classroom at Holmes. It's been an incredible experience getting to know these students, supporting inclusion, and seeing how much all students benefit from the program.

I'm grateful to be in a district where leadership recognizes and cultivates internal talent. When I offered to become a Certified CPR Instructor to support staff development and emergency preparedness, the superintendent eagerly encouraged it, helping advance his vision for every school to become a Heart Safe School — starting with Jeffers, prioritized due to its history of cardiac emergencies.

Having worked mostly in hospital settings responding to codes, I've been amazed by the outcomes at Jeffers and the team's responsiveness — especially knowing that 90% of people who experience out-of-hospital cardiac arrest do not survive. Their success reflects the strong systems in place.

Since spring, Megan Vink and I have certified 147 members of the district in CPR. This trimester, Jeffers was officially recognized as our district's first Heart Safe School, and we'll support other schools when the application window opens in 2026.

At my previous organization, I served as an Employee Wellness Ambassador, and as a board-certified holistic health coach, I'm passionate about strengthening community health and wellness.

I'm truly grateful to be part of this district and look forward to continuing this work and supporting initiatives that empower our students, staff, and community.

## STUDENT SPORTS HIGHLIGHT



Spring Lake High School senior Ellie Adams continues to make waves with her remarkable success in swimming. This season, she has qualified for five individual events and three relays, with plans to compete in the 200 Individual Medley and all three relays at the state meet on November 21 & 22 in Holland, Michigan. Her focus remains on helping the team score the most points possible.

Ellie's journey in swimming has been defined not by that classic physical swimming stature but by determination, discipline, and the support of her coaches. She acknowledges that while many swimmers possess the "tall frame" often associated with the sport, her strength lies in muscle density and an unwavering drive to prove herself. With coaches who recognized her potential and pushed her to embrace discipline, Ellie has grown into a formidable competitor.

As team captain, Ellie finds motivation not only in personal achievement but in her responsibility to inspire others. "You swim for your team, your coaches," she explains. "Right now, I feel I have a duty to be an inspiration to my girls, who I love more than anything. If I cannot hold myself to a standard, how could I expect to ask it of someone else?"

Ellie's success reflects both her individual commitment and her dedication to her teammates. Her story is a powerful reminder that excellence in athletics comes from resilience, teamwork, and heart.



## Top 5 Athletic Highlights Fall 2025

1. Girls Golf captured the regional championship and went on to finish 8th overall at the State Finals, marking an outstanding season of achievement.
2. Boys Cross Country earned the regional title and represented Spring Lake at the State Finals, securing a 20th-place finish against strong statewide competition.
3. Girls Cross Country finished as regional runner-up and advanced to the State Finals, where the team placed 16th, demonstrating resilience and determination.
4. Football advanced in the playoffs for only the 4th time in school history, a milestone accomplishment that reflects the program's growth and commitment.
5. Girls Swim & Dive qualified three relay teams and three individual events for State competition, showcasing depth, talent, and teamwork in the pool.

Honorable Mention: More than 50 Spring Lake alumni are currently active on college athletic rosters this fall. We extend congratulations to these Lakers for their continued pursuit of excellence, both academically and athletically.





## THEATER & BAND BRING FANS TO THE AUDITORIUM

Spring Lake High School's performing arts programs have enjoyed a remarkable season, welcoming more than 1,000 audience members through two signature events. The theatre department staged its fall play, *Witches?! In Salem!?*, captivating audiences with its humor. Soon after, the marching band presented *The Huddle*, its celebrated indoor concert that filled the auditorium with energy and precision.

These events not only showcased the talent and dedication of our students but also highlighted recent upgrades to the auditorium. Audiences experienced a new, crisp audio system and enhanced lighting technology, both of which elevated the quality of each performance. Together, the theatre and band programs continue to enrich our school community, offering memorable experiences to the performers and audience members, alike.



## FROM THE ARTS DEPARTMENT

### High School

- Eight seniors attended a choral workshop at Western Michigan University, working with the professional vocal ensemble, VOCES8.
- This trimester, students in Ceramics, AP Art, and Drawing & Painting demonstrated creativity through hyper-realistic drawings, expressive ceramics, and conceptual fashion design. The department also earned a grant for a new clay pugmill, enabling full clay recycling and expanding hands-on learning opportunities.

### Middle School

- Choral students participated in a regional festival, joining peers from 10 schools to learn and perform music in a single day.
- Ceramics students experienced a traditional Japanese Raku firing, removing pottery from a 1,500-degree kiln and creating striking, unpredictable surface patterns.

### Intermediate School

- Fifth graders explored printmaking, painting, and sculpting during their first eight-week art encore rotation.

### Jeffers Elementary

- At Jeffers Elementary, students collaborated outdoors on inventive STEAM projects, from Rube Goldberg machines to ephemeral nature art, fostering creativity, teamwork, and problem-solving.

### Holmes Elementary

- Holmes Elementary's art room is alive with imagination, from towering hamburgers to dream houses with cookie trees. Fourth graders' Mini Museums are currently displayed in the library.

All fourth graders at Holmes and Jeffers also worked with a professional clarinetist from the West Michigan Symphony, who inspired them to continue learning on the recorder.

# CLASS NOTES

## 1970s

- **KATHIE (SMART) KLAGES '72** is retired.
- **SCOTT WEBB '77** is retired, living in Grand Rapids.

## 1990s

- **KATIE MCBETH '95** opened her own private practice in 2021 where she provides psychotherapy to adults; lives in North Syracuse, NY; married to Kelly Creamer.
- **SCOTT WITTE '95** has been married to Julie since 2002.

## 2000s

- **TRAVIS WELLING '01** is a Senior Operations Manager at Hudsonville Ice Cream; married Megan Rose in 2010; one daughter, Erica (born 2017).
- **KRISTEN (KENNEDY) TYLER '02** is pursuing a PhD in Forensic Psychology.
- **JEREMY COLLINS '03** is a member of the Spring Lake Department of Public Works; promoted to the Utilities Department; lives in Nunica; married to **CASSIE (ORTQUIST) COLLINS '04**; three children-- Bryce (2006), Taylor (2009), Elli (2016).
- **SARA (BABCOCK) BROOKS '06** is now a Chief Operating Officer at Catherine's Health Center in Grand Rapids.
- **MARY CHARLESTON '06** is a Physician Assistant in Heart and Lung Transplant and Mechanical Circulatory Support at Corewell Health; has lived in Maryland and Washington but has moved back to Spring Lake; two daughters, Mia and Ellie.
- **JESSICA (PITRE) SHARP '07** is married to David Sharp.
- **RYENN (BOYCHUK) DIXON '09** is now living in Whitehall; gave birth to her second child, Rowan (born July 2025).

## 2010s

- **MARIA DALMAN '18** is a teacher at Little Lakers Learning Center, promoted to Lead Toddler 1s and is happy to be back in the community that's always had her back.

## 2020s

- **ALEXIS STEGEMAN '20** is a Cardiovascular Sonographer at Trinity Health Hospital.
- **ALEXIS KOTRCH '21** has a Field Observation Research Internship at CMU Biological Station at Beaver Island; lives in Mount Pleasant.

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