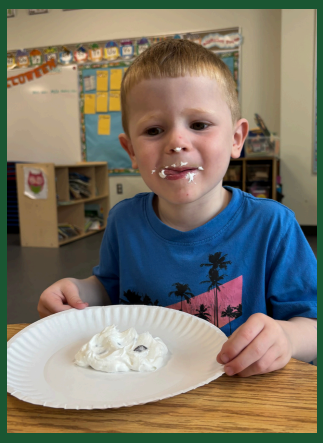
FALL/WINTER 2025

Rocket Report

ROCKFORD AREA SCHOOLS
DISTRICT NEWSLETTER









Winter Break

Dec. 22 - Jan. 2

Check the school website for current announcements and activities

www.rockford883.org







OUR MISSION

In partnership with our communities and families, Rockford Area Schools provides challenging opportunities to engage, inspire, and educate globally-minded citizens.



State of the District

Superintendent, Dr. Jeff Ridlehoover

It is often mentioned that the passage of time is needed to recognize how fortunate we are for the people in our lives. While I wholeheartedly believe this to be true - that time and thoughtful reflection are helpful barometers in assessing our lived experience - I can share with an abundance of certainty that, at this very moment in time, Rockford Area Schools, our students, our families, and our staff, are collectively grateful for the trust and goodwill that our community has affirmed.



On November 4th, you, the residents of the greater Rockford Area Schools community, demonstrated the aforementioned trust by approving two very important levy questions - and you did so by a wide margin. This affirmation of our work is not taken lightly, and it is important to mention that we will utilize the resources, so generously provided, in exactly the manner in which they are intended. We will maintain class size, continue with our pathways in career and technical education, provide an abundance of college credit-earning courses, and enhance the safety and security infrastructure throughout our schools. We will do all of this while continuing to be transparent in our work and also ensuring that we are strong stewards of all resources.



In addition to the levy, it has been an amazing fall in Rockford Area Schools! Through intentional planning, we have seamlessly instituted a new literacy curriculum, collected and analyzed academic data to better inform our instructional practices, and created a data-linked engagement continuum to ensure that all students are connected to their learning in ways never previously seen.

The momentum we have established, in both our instructional and operational work, has been nothing short of outstanding. Morale is high, collaboration is evident in every classroom, meeting space, and conversation, and our work toward the common mission of educating our students through high-quality instruction is unwavering.

In closing, thank you for your continued support and partnership. We are blessed to be trusted partners in the education of your children.

Warmest wishes for a joyful holiday season.

Jeffery P. Ridlehoover

Dr. Jeff Ridlehoover
Superintendent

Building a Community for Life-Long Learning
Rockford Area Schools
COMMUNITY EDUCATION

learn.explore.create.imagine
REAMS
ROCKFORD ELEMENTARY ARTS MAGNET SCHOOL

STEM

INSPIRE ACHIEVE EXCEL
ROCKFORD HIGH SCHOOL

Rockford Ed Foundation Fall Event: An 80's TV Game Show Success!



Thank you to everyone who took part in the Rockford Education Foundation 80's TV Game Show Fall Event! Because of your incredible support—along with sponsors, volunteers, donors, and dessert auction bakers—it was a night full of nostalgia, fun, and community spirit.

More than $110,000 was raised to support Rockford Area Schools! These funds directly power innovative learning experiences, from arts and environmental programs to hands-on career pathways and student support initiatives.

Missed the event or still feeling inspired to give?

You can continue supporting Fund-a-Need initiatives here: https://www.rockfordfoundation.org/fund-a-need/. Every dollar helps bring meaningful opportunities to life for Rockford Area Schools students.



Stay Connected
Follow Rockford Education Foundation on Facebook or sign up for their email list to stay up-to-date on REF events, grant announcements, volunteer opportunities, and more.
Thank you for supporting the Rockford Education Foundation mission to inspire, support, and elevate students across Rockford!







Season Highlights

Football: The Rockford Football team played a lot of close games this year and received some great individual recognitions and awards including,

2025 TEAM AWARDS
Most Valuable Defensive Lineman - Abbott Callahan
Most Valuable Linebacker - Ian Faber
Most Valuable Defensive Back – Max Ladman
Defensive Player of the Year – Bradley Graunke
Most Valuable Offensive Lineman – Gabe Stuckmayer
Most Valuable Offensive Back – Jacob White
Most Valuable Receiver – Ethan Robran
Offensive Player of the Year – Sean Asangwe
Most Improved Player Offense – Peter Thomas
Most Improved Player Defense – Benton Blanchard
Special Teams Player of the Year - Sean Asangwe
Scout Team Player of the Year – Bob Kruse
Why We Play Team Player of the Year – Jet Gish

DISTRICT AWARDS
All District - 1st Team Sean Asangwe, Bradley Graunke
2nd Team Max Ladman, Ian Faber

SECTION AWARDS
All Section- Gabe Stuckmayer, Cooper Jennie

Academic All District awards: Charlie Brun, Peter Thomas, Benton Blanchard, Canon Braun, Max Ladman, Ethan Robran

Cheer: Rockford Cheer had 17 Varsity cheerleaders for Fall Season. Three cheerleaders made the MCCA All State Sideline Cheer Team; Audra Engebretson, Braelynn Dawson and Elizabeth Kelly. They will be performing at the State Competition in the end of January.

Continued on activities page.

REAMS
ROCKFORD ELEMENTARY ARTS MAGNET SCHOOL

Arts Troupes

Third and fourth grade students have the opportunity to participate in one or more Arts Troupes this year at REAMS. These specialized classes of presentation or performance groups are in the arts areas of dance, music, or theater. By offering these in-depth fine arts experiences, students go beyond the traditional elementary arts curriculum in a smaller setting with more hands-on training.







This fall, third and fourth grade students had options to work with Theater teacher, Mrs. Hall, being imaginative and explorative in Theater games. Some students had the opportunity to participate in World Drumming or Bucket Drumming using five gallon pails with music teacher, Darren Eliason. In this troupe the students learn to read rhythms, work together as a team, and create their patterns to perform for audiences. Students have also been able to work with music teacher, Elsa Swanson in a Dance Troupe that uses movement and instruments for affect and a troupe called Mallet Masters where they perform pieces using the Orff instruments.

All of these experiences give students an opportunity to perform at concerts and in front of peers where they showcase their talents, gain valuable skills in the Arts, and make lasting memories together.

Student Council

The REAMS Student Council had its first official meeting in October and students were hard at work. Student Council is a group of students who applied to be a part of the program and five students per classroom were chosen. The Student Council consists of six different committees: Service, Community Outreach, Kindness, Green Team, and Teacher Appreciation. Each committee works on different projects each month. The big focus of this last meeting was the Food Drive. Two committees spent their time helping gather food from the drop off bins around the building and organizing it by product for the local food shelf. The school collected over 1,300 items of food this year so this was a huge project!

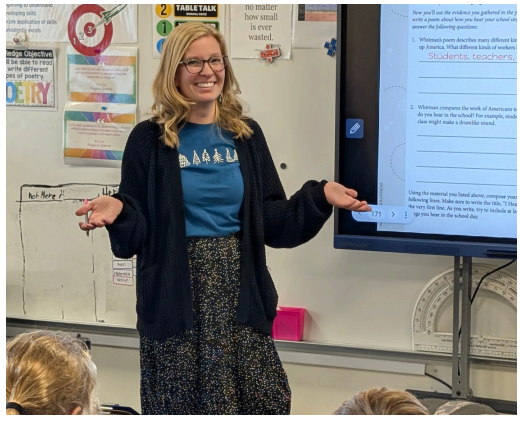




Many Teacher Appreciation students went to Mrs. Oeding's class to help kindergarten students. The Kindness Committee helped make posters to promote RTR (respect, trust, and responsibility) in our school. Additionally, the Community Outreach Committee decorated placemats which were then taken to a local nursing home for the holidays. This was also a project that our Smile Squad students completed. Smile Squad consists of one student representative from each class in grades K-2, chosen by their teachers for their kindness and leadership. We are so proud of all of the young leaders in our building and all that they do to support the Rockford Schools and community!

discover REAMS

Implementing New Language Arts Curriculum



REAMS classroom teachers have been hard at work implementing a new foundational skills and knowledge building literacy curriculum, Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA). This curriculum was chosen and approved by a committee of licensed Rockford teachers to support the science of reading. Students are engaging daily in lessons to boost their literacy skills through foundational skills, vocabulary instruction, reading complex texts along with activities to improve their writing skills. Teachers are collaborating with their grade-level and cross grade-level teams to dive into and deliver quality instruction.

Visit https://amplify.com/caregiver-hub/amplify-ckla/ for resources and guides to help you support your child at home.

Veteran's Day

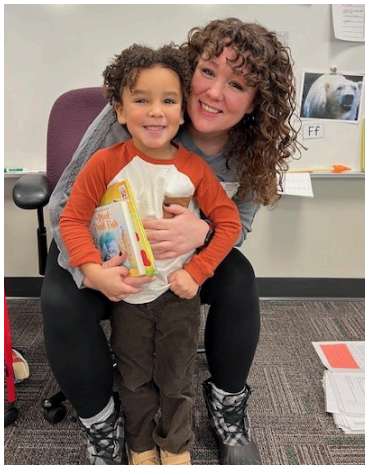
Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School staff and students honored U.S Veterans in a special assembly on Veteran's Day. Many of our students and families know people who have served our country in the armed forces. This is a day for our students to honor those people who have fought for peace and learn about the importance of Veteran's Day. We had many students participate in this assembly. Students show their pride for the Veteran's that have served our country each year and have an immense amount of respect during this program.











Family Engagement Connection

This past November our district's math and literacy intervention teachers hosted a Literacy Engagement Presentation for families. The session gave parents a look at how literacy is taught at REAMS and shared simple ways to support reading and writing at home. Families explored interactive literacy and math stations and received take-home tips and resources. QR codes were created to access fun, easy-to-use activities that make learning enjoyable and help build a lifelong love of reading and learning.

The strongest influence on your child's literacy journey comes from the partnership between home and school. Continue to reach out to your child's classroom teacher or intervention support staff to see how you can support your child's literacy growth at home.

Letter Leaders & Math Masters Program

4th graders are back leading our youngest learners through participation in the Letter Leaders/Math Masters program. Letter Leaders/Math Masters is a school-initiated program to help students master literacy and math skills and grow in confidence as a learner. Students in 4th grade can apply to be a Letter Leader or Math Master and work, 1 on 1, with students in kindergarten through 2nd grade.



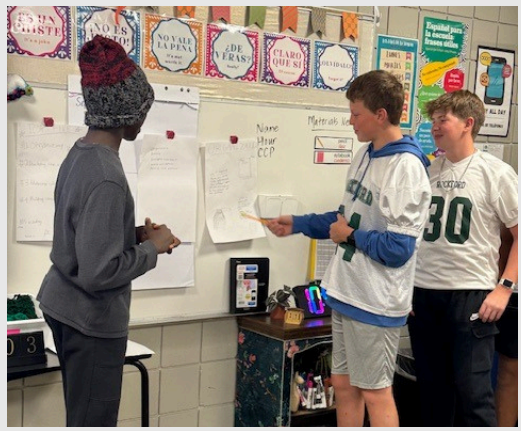
RMS-CES

ROCKFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL - CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

New Courses at RMS-CES

Shifts in staffing have opened the door to pilot several exciting new courses this year—each designed to strengthen our magnet theme and provide students with meaningful, hands-on learning experiences. These additions reflect our continued commitment to connecting academic rigor with real-world relevance.

Environmental Explorations (5th Grade)
Students will dive into science and the natural world through hands-on exploration of our environmentally focused campus. This course fosters curiosity and a deeper understanding of how humans and ecosystems interact.



EGuiding Personal Success – GPS (6th Grade)
Focused on academic, organizational, and life skills, GPS helps students chart their path toward success. Through lessons in goal setting, leadership, and self-management, students learn tools to thrive both in and out of school.

Minnesota Outdoors (7th Grade)
This course takes learning outside the classroom, connecting students with Minnesota's diverse ecosystems through authentic, place-based environmental experiences.



College & Career Pathways (8th Grade)
Students begin to look ahead to high school and beyond, exploring future opportunities while strengthening the academic and organizational habits that build confidence and readiness.

Academic Lab (7th–8th Grade)
Replacing Music Appreciation for non-Band students, this every-other-day course supports targeted academic growth using IXL and focused learning sessions to ensure students are successful in grade-level coursework.

Together, these courses continue to make Rockford Middle School – Center for Environmental Studies a place where learning is connected, relevant, and uniquely rooted in our environment.

RMS Sixth Graders Become Phenology Reporters

Rockford Middle School sixth graders are falling into phenology and noticing seasonal changes in our community. Phenologist John Latimer visited last month and helped students identify the flora and fauna in the school forest. He began watching the rhythms of nature while delivering mail 41 years ago. John shared that it started with the citing of a robin and a conversation with a regular on his rural mail route one spring day. His unquenchable curiosity has led him to explore the world with a childlike sense of wonder. He hosts a weekly radio program on KAXE and works with schools across the state to engage students in observing nature.



Continued on next page

discover
RMS-CES

New Initiative: STEM IRL - A Speaker Series for Career Exploration







We are thrilled to announce the launch of **STEM IRL** (In Real Life), a new speaker series designed to expose our students to diverse careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). This program builds directly on the successful STEM breakout sessions from our past Career Fairs, offering an engaging way for students to connect classroom learning with professional fields.

Program Overview for Parents

- **What it is:** A speaker series featuring professionals who share their career journeys and lead a short, hands-on activity.
- **Schedule:** Sessions will be held twice a month on Fridays during the students' Lunch/Boost time, ensuring minimal disruption to the academic day. Dates include:
  - December: 5 & 19
  - January: 9 & 23
  - February: 6 & 20
  - March: 6 & 20

Monthly Focus: Exploring ESTEM

The series is structured around monthly themes to explore all components of ESTEM (Environment, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Career examples include but are not limited to:

- **Science (November):** Biologist, Doctor/Nurse, Vet Tech, Chiropractor
- **Technology (December):** Coding
- **Engineering (January):** Industrial Design
- **Mathematics (February):** Machine Learning Engineer
- **Environment (March):** Environmental Engineer, Hydrologist

How You Can Get Involved

We are actively seeking guest speakers from our community. We aim to have at least two professionals cover each of the ESTEM components. If you, a family member, or a friend work in a related field and are interested in sharing your experiences and inspiring our students, please contact RMC-CES CIC, Jamie Madson

Thank you for helping us make the STEM IRL series a success for our students.

RMS Sixth Graders Become Phenology Reporters



Every few weeks sixth grade students discuss, write, read, edit, and record phenology reports in Language Arts based on their own phenological observations documented on the calendar in class. One report is sent off to KAXE, a radio station in Grand Rapids, that hosts the phenology talks and podcasts each week. Listen in to the October 8th October 15th, and November 5th sessions to hear some familiar RMS-CES student voices. The October 15th report was featured within the Season Watch podcast: Owl See You in the Trees on October 23rd.

John Latimer plans to visit this coming spring for another walk in the woods with RMS-CES sixth graders.

RHS
ROCKFORD HIGH SCHOOL

Letter from Principal Menard

We are off to an amazing start to the 2025-2026 school year at Rockford High School!









- Our LINK crew welcomed 119 9th graders on the first day of school. An alternate schedule was filled with team building, an open Q and A about all things 'high school' to ease their worries, an introduction to our staff all to ensure a solid start for the Class of 2029.
- Building wide goals have been set by our Building Instructional Leadership Team (BILT) in the areas of student engagement, instructional alignment, and data-backed student support. Additionally, Mr. Menard set principal goals across the district's 5 strategic directions to help support staff and students in achieving said goals.
- Students in grades 9-11 engaged in FAST testing so we can establish their fall benchmarks. This data will be used to inform classroom interventions, instructional strategies and tools, assistance in or outside of the classroom, and more. Students will also test in the Winter and Spring.
- We had a very successful and vibrant homecoming week complete with dress up theme days, coronation, flag football, athletic events, and the dance. While we didn't win the big game, Mr. Menard, with the help of our cheerleaders, gave the fans something to cheer for at the end of the game when they successfully "flew" him to the student section's delight.
- Seven Full Diploma candidates began their senior year of studies in the hopes of receiving an IB diploma at the end of high school; 6 juniors began their DP journey this month, aiming to earn their IB diploma next year.
- 22 students in total are striving to complete their Career Pathway Diploma (11 juniors, 11 seniors).
- IB Coordinator Jill Gordee and 9th Grade Counselor Ellie Engstrom will meet with every 9th grade student by December; this is the start of a long-range plan to have every student at Rockford High School declare a career path. This career path, along with elective credit options will be published in their Academic Planner, allowing them to create their own comprehensive four year course plan to best prepare them for their field of interest.
- A team of leaders restructured our Career Pathway program to align with both the IB CP program and the Minnesota Career Clusters. As a result, we have outlined 21 Career Pathways currently running or under research and development for our students to have a wide variety of options. In addition, students currently have the opportunity to earn or qualify for up to 50 college credits. This model, entitled "Launch Your Future".
- This RHS early college and career program, "Launch Your Future", has changed the way college and career preparations are discussed with students and families. Centering on the six career clusters, we intend to grow from 4 to 21 pathways running or under development. As a reminder, this dovetails with our IB Career Pathway Program. As a result, preliminary discussions with all departments have taken place to begin the first step in implementing registration for the 26-27 school year, which will take place in December.

Rockets

discover RHS

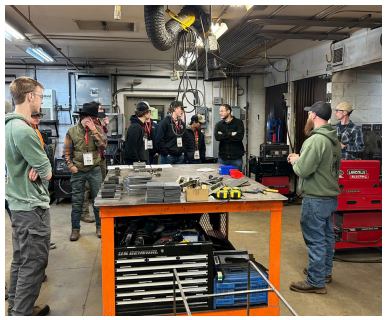
Launch Your Future:
Early College and Career Preparation at Rockford High School

Strong communities hope the best for children. Strong schools provide children the skills they need to function in society and be successful in future training or formal education beyond high school. The best schools are able to connect academic content to real-world application. The highest functioning schools accomplish all of this while also providing students with opportunities that immediately benefit them upon graduation. This is what we aim to accomplish at Rockford High School with our new initiative for early college and career preparation: Launch Your Future.

Have you ever been at work, a family outing, or a training and asked, “Why are we doing this?” High school students are very good at asking this evaluative question time and time again. It is a natural thing to wonder if we don’t see the interhent value in the activity. Our aim is that every student in our school commits to a career pathway and has the opportunity to earn college credit or career certification before they earn their high school diploma. This is made possible through 21 career pathways (15 active, 6 under development at publication) offering the potential for 50 college credits through College in the Schools and International Baccalaureate Exams (depending upon performance) and six career certification opportunties with potential for more in the future.

We are profoundly fortunate to have a team of teacher leaders and administrators who feel so passionately about our students having an advantage in the college application and career entrance processes that we are able to offer such a robust and sought-after program in a school district our size. Below is a list of our career pathways, which are categorized by the Minnesota Career Wheel Clusters–developed by the Minnesota Department of Labor in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Education to help ensure that our school help students understand career opportunities and prepare them for success in these fields to keep the workforce and economy in our state strong and vibrant. If you’re interested in becoming involved in any of our pathways as a mentor, community resource, guest speaker, or more please do not hesitate to contact us.









Diploma Programme | Career-related Programme | Middle Years Programme

#Rockets883

Season Highlights Continued

Cross Country: The Rocket Cross Country Teams had a banner year in 2025. Both Boys and Girls teams achieved Gold Status for team unweighted GPA's (Boys 3.826, Girls 3.936) with 10 athletes earning All-Conference Academic. Four girls received All-Conference Honorable Mention Honors with the team finishing 4th at the conference meet. The girls also placed 7th at the Section 6AA Championship (The 11th consecutive year finishing in the top-10). The Boys won 4 meets during the regular season (Maple Lake, Norwood-YA, New London-Spicer and WCC West Conf. Championship) The Back-to-Back WCC West Conference Championship was the first time since 1993-1995 winning consecutive championship titles and the 11th conference title in program history. The boys had 4 individual All-Conference Awards (Czech, Connor Ellos, L. Mendenhall, Cayden Ellos) and 3 All-Conf. Hon Mention. The Boys Team finished 4th at the Section 6AA Championship with Will Czech advancing as an Indv. Qualifier to the 2025 State Meet. Will Czech and Connor Ellos earned All-State Academic awards at the Section Meet with their Top-15 finishes and unweighted cumulative GPA > 3.75. Will Czech placed 15th at the State Meet and earned All-Conf. Honors, setting the School Record for Place (15th) and Time (16:04) at the state meet at the Univ. of MN



Girls Tennis: Girls tennis had a historic year, competing for the first time in school history at the varsity level. Our overall match record was 4-4, and we competed in Section 1A playoffs. We also were afforded the incredible opportunity to have our top six players (Natalie Thompson, Bailey Anderson, Olivia Kissner, Autumn Mantz, Adriana Waschek, and Ireland Rebstock) compete at individual sections held at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter. Bailey Anderson earned All-Conference Honorable Mention, and we had 5 student-athletes achieve Academic All-Conference status. We will be competing in the Wright County Conference next season!

Boys Soccer: The boys had a tough year, being one of the youngest teams in the conference but still gave it their all, with the varsity team winning one game, scoring 15 goals and fighting hard to compete. The program is beginning to bring players from all ages and looks to be shaping up to becoming a competitive team in the future. Individual accolades include our 4 players(Angel Ibarra, Owen Jensen, Daniel Luckett, Theophilus Nyerkeh) who received the academic all conference honors. We also had one of our seniors, Victor Isoe, receive an all conference award.



Marching Band: This summer we had a marching band of over 60 students led by drum majors Max Thornton and Levi Bartels. The marching band once again performed at the MN State Fair. The fall season included the Homecoming performance and concluded with the Fall Concert on November 6.

Musical: About 120 students in grades 5-12 make up this year's Cast, Crew, and Pit Orchestra for the production of MATILDA. This show's difficult score has been the focus of additional rehearsals and learning about multipart disonant harmonies and challenging rhythm sequences. The performances were held on November 21, 22, and 23.

Girls Soccer: Girls Soccer had an outstanding year, achieving multiple team goals. The program grew to 36 players, adding new faces across JV and Varsity (grades 7–12). Varsity recorded 6 wins and scored 25 goals, marking the most successful and offensive season since 2017. In the Wright County Conference, Rockford advanced one spot to 6th place with a 3–5 record. Individual honors include All-Conference awards for Lucy Pennings and Riley Freed, and for the first time since 2017, an All-State selection for Riley Freed.



Volleyball: The volleyball program had a fun and competitive season. The varsity team won 8 games, three of which were very close 5 game matches. The Rockets advanced to the second round of playoffs with an upset over #10 seed Maranatha in 5 games. Senior setter, Bella Wagner recorded 698 assists on the season and Senior Libero Anna Feyen received All-Conference recognition. The team received the Gold Academic All-State award with individual All-State Academic awards going to seniors Gabby Altmann, Anna Feyen, Ashley Storz, and Sofia Westgaard.

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COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Serving residents of all ages and interests

Rockford Community Education is truly the heart of our district—serving residents of all ages and interests. From our **Launching Pad Preschool** and **Galaxy Kids Childcare** to **Early Childhood Family Education programs**, we provide families with a strong foundation for lifelong learning. Our youth and adult enrichment classes, along with a wide range of recreational activities, offer opportunities for growth, creativity, and connection. **The Rockford Community Center**—home to meeting rooms, a fully equipped weight room, and a spacious fieldhouse featuring a walking track and multisport courts—operates as a membership-based facility and is also available for rentals. In addition, we are proud to offer exceptional outdoor facilities that further enhance recreation and community engagement. Each day, our spaces are filled with energy, learning, and laughter, making Community Education the true hub of activity in Rockford.



For more information contact us at: Call 763-477-4563 or email melissa.joseph@rockford883.org

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Rockford Area Schools MN

ENROLL NOW!

ROCKFORD AREA SCHOOLS

Magnet Schools

ARTS (K-4)

STEM (5-8)

IB (9-12)

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