



MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dennis Furton

Dear Laker Parents and Community Members,

As another school year comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on the places that shape us.

Schools are, of course, buildings. They are classrooms, gyms, libraries, playgrounds, athletic fields, and performance spaces. Over the past few years, our community has seen significant construction activity across the district, with improvements designed to serve students for generations to come. It is exciting to watch those projects take shape.

But as I walked through our schools at the end of the year, I was reminded that what makes a place meaningful isn't the brick, concrete, or steel. It's the experiences that happen there.

A classroom becomes memorable because it is where a student discovers a passion, overcomes a challenge, or is encouraged by a teacher who believes in them. A gymnasium becomes special because of the friendships formed, lessons learned, and moments shared with teammates. Hallways, cafeterias, stages, and playgrounds all become part of a student's story in ways that are often only appreciated years later.

For our graduated seniors, many of these places will soon become memories. For younger students, they will continue to be the setting for new friendships, accomplishments, and opportunities.

As summer begins, I am grateful for the people who bring life to these spaces and for a community that continues to invest in them. Together, we ensure that Spring Lake Public Schools remains **big enough to challenge, small enough to care.**



CURRICULUM UPDATE

KATE DRAKE

As our school year wraps up, we celebrate the incredible growth each of our students have shown. Summer is a time to rest, recharge, and explore—and the learning doesn't need to stop!

Please consider keeping curiosity alive this season. A few starter ideas:

- Get out and explore: Visit local libraries, nature centers, museums and parks. Hands-on experiences spark a love of learning that lasts.
- Tap into free resources: Khan Academy, PBS LearningMedia, Epic! (for readers) and our public library's digital tools offer engaging, grade-level content at no cost.
- Embrace a growth mindset: Try something new, make mistakes, and keep going. Modeling this, as adults, can be powerful. Every challenge this summer is a chance to grow.
- Interest-specific offerings: It's not just about sports! STEM and project-based learning camps abound via the VanAndel Institute, Ottawa Area Intermediate School District's futurePREP'd program, Muskegon Community College, and Hope College. Grand Valley State University's Lake Michigan Writing Camp also provides inspiration, among many K-12 offerings.
- Living a reading life: Perhaps focusing on choice and flexibility will help foster eyes on print this summer? Also, reading in different locations can shake things up and audiobooks count (builds vocabulary and a quality roadtrip option). A gentle reminder—kids are more likely to pick up a book if they see their adults reading, too.

In closing, research advocates for summer days to still provide some consistency (wake-up times, meal times), while the middle of the days could offer variety. Some have adopted the “when/then” rule—where unstructured times are afforded when movement goals or chores are complete. Whatever your family's approach is, we wish you a wonderful summer respite, Lakers!



OPERATIONS UPDATE

LIZ BOEVE

As soon as summer break begins, our campus will transform into a hub of progress. Thanks to community support, robust construction projects will roll out alongside our Operations team's annual deep cleaning and maintenance.

The high school campus faces the most dramatic updates. Athletic facilities will receive twelve new post-tension concrete tennis courts, a new parking lot, and brand-new synthetic turf fields for baseball and softball. Inside, the music and arts wings will get a complete refresh with new flooring, paint, ceiling tiles, and furnishings, while the commons and north corridors upgrade to energy-efficient LED lighting.

Down the road, crews will repave the Middle and Intermediate bus lot and add crucial exterior light poles. The middle school offices are getting a full refresh with new carpet, paint, and furniture, while the gym, bathrooms, and hallways transition to LED fixtures. Finally, every single building in the district—including Jeffers and Holmes Elementary—will break ground on a brand-new Outdoor Learning Pavilion, giving all Laker students access to fresh-air instructional spaces this fall.

Laker Environmental Work In Action

Spring Lake students and teachers have spent the spring showing some serious love to our planet through hands-on environmental science and community action. Throughout the year, upper-grade students learned the intricate art and science of bird banding—safely capturing and tracking migratory birds to collect vital data. To wrap up the season, these older Lakers visited younger classrooms, acting as mentors to pass their passion down to budding elementary scientists.

This spirit of conservation carried directly into the district's Earth Day celebrations, which transformed standard lesson plans into days of active stewardship. Students were spotted across school grounds and local parks rolling up their sleeves for community cleanup efforts, leaving our shared spaces cleaner than they found them. Other classrooms took advantage of the beautiful weather to move their lessons outdoors entirely.

Meanwhile, things are officially blooming inside the Holmes Elementary Greenhouse. Thanks to upgraded equipment, younger students are getting dirty planting new seeds and experiencing the lifecycles of our ecosystem firsthand.

These incredible, hands-on experiences are made possible through strong community support, including the Spring Lake Schools Foundation and school parent clubs, whose funding helps turn creative teacher passions into unforgettable student realities. Whether tracking migratory birds, cultivating new greenhouse growth, or cleaning up neighborhood parks, Spring Lake Schools remain aware of the necessity to care for our Earth. We only have one, and it is in good hands with our Lakers looking out for it.



Middle School Kindness Club in Action

As the school year wrapped up, middle schoolers proved they are not done giving back. Inspired by Mrs. Kuhlman's Kindness Club and funded by the Spring Lake Schools Foundation, 130 students recently tackled a unique challenge: perform one free act of kindness, and use a \$10 grant to fund another.

Our Lakers hit it out of the park. Students washed dishes for family, left uplifting notes on lockers, bought treats for teachers, and delivered goods to The People Center, and so much more.

The challenge sparked deep reflection. "Helping people unexpectedly made me feel like that's who I want to be," shared student Brecklyn. Fellow student Maddox agreed, adding, "It makes me happier knowing that I can give back."

Holmes Elementary Earns Literacy Honors

If you walked into Holmes Elementary in mid-March, you saw a sea of Laker gear and immense pride. Holmes was selected as one of only six schools for the prestigious TalentFirst 2026 Literacy Leadership Recognition Program.

This data-backed honor recognizes the school's strict commitment to research-based reading methods. Notably, Holmes students significantly outperformed regional peers with similar economic profiles on the M-STEP. To celebrate, leadership from TalentFirst joined staff and students for an official award ceremony, a "big check" presentation, and school-wide cookies. Congratulations to the Holmes team for proving that Laker excellence starts with literacy!



School Building Highlights Spring 2026

High School

- The High School's "Chalkboard Project" brought powerful vulnerability to our hallways. Students were photographed holding signs with words that had hurt them, which peers later covered with colorful, uplifting messages. It made for a moving art display.

Alternative Education

- Our Alt Ed program celebrated 12 graduates who smashed their academic goals by completing over 650 quarter credits.

Middle & Intermediate Schools

- Our 5th and 6th graders spent an inspiring day exploring their futures during an interactive, round-robin Career Day. Local parents and community professionals volunteered their time to share honest insights into a wide variety of fields, giving students a firsthand look at real-world success.

Holmes Elementary

- Holmes wrapped up the year with unforgettable PBIS celebrations, featuring a talented juggler, dunk tanks, the HEART Smart Store, and a festive end-of-year foam party. The school also hosted its annual graduate walk-through to inspire current learners and honored the incredible careers of retiring educators, Nancy Ireland and Lisa Mulder.

Jeffers Elementary

- Jeffers students received a wonderful, furry boost during testing week thanks to Koda, a newly certified therapy dog. Trained by school nurse Mrs. Hopkins, Koda visited classrooms to ease testing jitters and offer quiet comfort, bringing plenty of smiles, calm, and joy to our young learners when they needed it most.



From the Voice of a Teacher Ms. Kathy VanderMeulen

Spring Lake has been much more than a workplace; it has been home. It's where I raised my children, built lifelong friendships, and spent 32 years helping young people grow. I realized just how deep those roots ran when I couldn't go to the grocery store—or even Disney World—without running into a Laker family.

I hope I am remembered as someone who genuinely cared about children, saw the best in them, and made learning fun. More than anything, I hope my students felt valued and supported. If they also remember me singing badly, telling corny jokes, or crying over a great book, I'm perfectly okay with that. Helping a child gain confidence is my definition of a successful career.

Spring Lake Schools are special because of the people. Our strength doesn't come from buildings or test scores, but from the staff and families who care deeply about kids. Every day, teachers work behind the scenes to keep students loved and challenged—all while finding missing water bottles and tending to hurt feelings.

As I retire, I leave with a full heart, deep gratitude, and confidence in our future. I suspect I'll always be a teacher at heart; after three decades, it's hard to stop reminding people to put their names on their papers.



“Thank you, Spring Lake, for letting me be part of your story. It has been the privilege of my life.”

SPORTS HIGHLIGHT

Chasing Excellence: Macy Subka's Historic State Finals

Following a legendary weekend at the Girls Track & Field State Finals, junior Macy Subka has firmly established herself as one of the most decorated athletes ever to wear a Laker uniform. Navigating a grueling four-event schedule in blistering heat, Subka ignited her historic run with an unexpected victory in the 100m hurdles.

"Starting off with a win really set the tone, but I had to keep focus," Subka recalled. "I didn't really give myself time to celebrate between events because it was always right on to the next." That hyper-focus paid off as she piled up state titles and accolades in the hurdles, the 4x200, and the 4x400 relays.

What makes Subka's elite success even more remarkable is her status as the ultimate utility athlete, balancing swimming, soccer, and track. She credits swimming for her endurance and soccer for her conditioning, often practicing her hurdle technique alone before or after soccer practices.

Behind the scenes, Subka attributes her rise to her support system, particularly her parents and track coach Adam Samp, who first encouraged her to try hurdles in middle school. "Being a dual-sport athlete in the spring, he takes extra time out of his day to work around my schedule just to get a couple more reps in," she said.

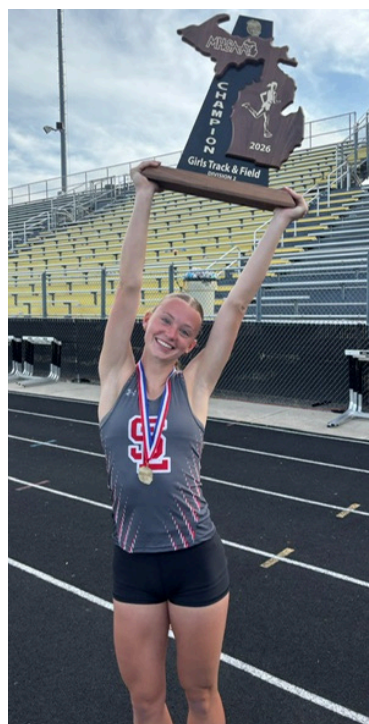
Now, Subka enters her senior year transitioning from the underdog to the "hunted." It's a challenge she welcomes with a leveled head and high expectations. While she was unaware of her permanent place in Spring Lake history, she is already hungry for more.

"There are still some goals I want to reach," Subka said, aiming to shave fractions of a second off the school 100h record and the state meet 300h record. "But as a team, I think another state title is possible."

Top 5 Spring Athletic Highlights

1. Girls Track & Field: Captured the Division 2 State Championship title in dominant fashion. The team broke three school records and one state record, while five athletes earned All-State honors.
2. Ben Goran: Crowned State Champion in pole vault while shattering both the school and Division 2 state records. His performance ranks him among the top five sophomores in the country.
3. Baseball: Secured the OK Black conference championship title before winning a dramatic district crown.
4. Boys Golf: Won the OK Black conference tournament and earned a third-place finish at regionals. Their performance successfully punched their ticket to the state finals.
5. Girls Lacrosse: Competed fiercely for a regional championship trophy after earning a second-place conference finish, marking the highest Tier 1 league ranking in school history.

Honorable Mention: Softball entered districts on a four-game winning streak, upset a heavily favored Coopersville squad, and battled down to the wire in the district championship game.





FROM THE ARTS DEPARTMENT

High School

- Mr. Zuelke's art class transformed into a mock design firm during a week-long residency with New Balance shoe designer Andrew Nyssen. Students experienced the professional creative pipeline firsthand, moving from initial concepts and detailed drafts to a final pitch under the guidance of industry expertise.

Middle School

- Middle School vocalists celebrated the end of the school year with their highly anticipated, week-long Choir Olympics. Kicking off with an opening ceremony, students competed in daily events ranging from music theory challenges and reflection games to random fun.

Intermediate School

- Virtuoso clarinetist Julian Bliss—who has performed for British royalty and turned professional at age twelve—visited our students across the district. Students enjoyed a front-row seat to his musical mastery while learning about relentless dedication and hard work.

Jeffers Elementary

- Jeffers 3rd graders brought history to life through an innovative "Living Museum" project that blended research with STEM and art. Students painted portraits, crafted "bronzed" sculptures, and recorded audio guides of influential figures.

Holmes Elementary

- Holmes 4th graders participated in the West Michigan Symphony's rhythmic "LinkUp" concert, playing along on their recorders with professional musicians. The unforgettable event featured student representatives on stage and a guest appearance by Laker dancer Katya Kval.

SPRING LAKE CHOIR PERFORMS AT CARNEGIE HALL

While most families enjoyed a slower pace over spring break, the Spring Lake High School Choirs were busy taking a bite out of the Big Apple. Led by director Mr. Polet, the talented student musicians capped off an unforgettable New York City tour with a once-in-a-lifetime performance on the prestigious stage at Carnegie Hall.

Standing on that iconic stage, singing songs meant to honor America's 250th birthday, served as the grand finale to a whirlwind educational trip. Beyond the performance, students experienced the best of NYC culture, exploring Central Park and Times Square, catching a Broadway show, and enjoying classic New York pizza.

[Watch the video by clicking the link.](#)

Password: theamericanspirit



CLASS NOTES

1970s

- **VICKY GARDNER '76** is a Community Based Instructor for University of Nevada-Reno; lives in Las Vegas, NV; has two grown children and two grandchildren; set to retire in October; wants to remind everyone that the Class of 76 is having its 50th reunion on August 30.
- **SCOTT WEBB '77** is retired from Spectrum / Charter Communications as Facilities Manager.

1990s

- **ERICA ZUBER (OLSON) '96** owns a new Spring Lake business, Zubers Auto Repair, with her husband

2000s

- **SARA BROOKS (BABCOCK) '06** is Chief Operating Officer at Catherine's Health Center in Grand Rapids, MI; married Benjamin Brooks in 2010; has three children.

2010s & 2020s

- **CHELSEA BOOMGAARD-THREEWITT '11** is a real estate agent at Coldwell Banker Woodland Schmidt; lives in Grand Haven; getting married in August 2026; has a 7-year-old daughter who attends Spring Lake Schools; working toward being a Corrections Officer; fosters with local animal rescues while having 5 dogs, 7 cats and 2 rabbits.
- **ANGELINA SEITZ (PERSING-MAZZOLE) '12** welcomed her 3rd child, Alistar, in 2024 with husband **LARRY SEITZ '10**.
- **ERIN VARGO '13** is now the Membership Manager at John Ball Zoo; lives in Norton Shores.
- **ELENA WEBSTER '14** is Community Sustainability Education Manager at The Chicago Academy of Sciences; married Milan Milovanovic on January 24.
- **CHANCE ANDERSON '16** is a Tax Accountant at BDO, USA; marries Sky Hammond in July 2026; finishing a Masters Degree in Accounting.
- **AUBREY BARBA (DUNLAP) '16** is a Licensed Professional Counselor at her private practice, Hope Harbor Counseling; lives in Belleville, MI; married Jacob Barba in 2021; is a proud parent of Betty, born in 2025; is a proud Jesus follower.
- **JOSLYN FAULKNER '17** is an administrator and soon to be a nursing assistant for a foot and ankle specialist; proud parent of Elias, born in 2021.
- **JENNIFER VANKLOMPENBERG (MEULENBELT) '17** is a stay-at-home mom; lives in Florida since 2022; married Jordan VanKlompberg; has three children and one on the way.
- **EMMA EVANS (TOBER) '18** lives in Wahiawa, Hawaii; married Austin Evans in 2020; new parent to Eleanor, born in 2025.
- **BRUMAIRE BODBYL-MAST '19** has legally changed their name to match with their transition and is pursuing a master's in Middle East Public History at North Carolina State University.
- **KNOEL BROWNE '19** is a Field Service Technician at CRH and a Digital Forensics examiner at Data Exam.
- **BRAYDEN DILLON '22** is a particle physics graduate student at UC Davis; lives in Davis, CA.

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