



Area School District
1120 Metomen Street
Ripon, WI 54971

MISSION STATEMENT

Empowering learners, engaging community, enriching the world.

VISION STATEMENT

One of Wisconsin's finest school districts, fostering excellence for all through innovation.

ORGANIZATION VALUES

- Integrity
- Excellence
- Commitment
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Kindness



TIGER UPDATE

Fall 2020

Excellence through innovation

POSTAL CUSTOMER

Superintendent's Message

Thank you to our community members for your support of the Operational Referendum question presented at the November 3 general election. The increased revenue funds technology, curriculum and facilities maintenance needs throughout our schools. The District appreciates your support of our team and the students we serve.

This Tiger Update highlights work in the Board's four strategic areas:

Student Engagement and Learning

- Solid education in a healthy/safe environment (*COVID Update p. 4*)
- Provide support services to ensure student success (*Speech & Language Services p. 1*)

Service and Partnership

- Increase partnerships and satisfaction through CQI (*Ingalls Field Sponsors p. 2, REF #RiponRoar p. 2, Distinguished Alumni p. 2, Friend of Public Schools p. 2, Spring Board Election p. 3*)

Finance and Operations

- Refine systems to find efficiencies (*Referendum p. 1, Enrollment p. 3, Grants p. 3, Free Meals Can't p. 3*)

Human Resources

- Increase opportunities to build high quality staff (*Education Week p. 1, Staff Trainings p. 3, Odyssey Growth p. 3*)

Thank you to everyone for setting the tone for a successful and exciting school year in the midst of COVID.

Respectfully yours,
Dr. Mary Whitrock
Superintendent of Schools
Go Tigers!

Thank You for Your Support!

Operational Referendum

Official Results

YES: 3,467

NO: 2,155



Speech & Language Pathologist Melissa Edinger providing innovative services to a student.

Student Learning and Engagement

Innovative Speech and Language Services

Three speech-language pathologists (SLPs) provide support to approximately 100 students from Early Childhood through high school with a variety of communication needs. During the pandemic, the speech-language team is innovating their service delivery to serve students by moving therapy online or adapting materials and activities to maintain physical distance. Alison Lessmann, Ripon's newest addition to the team, provides virtual lessons to Barlow Park/Journey and Odyssey students. She notes, "While providing virtual therapy has its challenges, it has allowed me to make stronger connections with my students' families. It's as if they are inviting me into their home. Parents are seeing what speech and language therapy looks like and we're working together to grow their child's communication skills."

Depending on a student's abilities the speech pathologist may need to develop creative techniques of communication. Jodi Kulick shared her reflections on their work, "In my 34 years as an SLP, I have learned that if I can teach a child to communicate with their family, whether it be verbal or nonverbal, my goal is accomplished."



SLP Jodi Kulick delivering creative services safely.



SLP Alison Lessmann supporting students at home with virtual speech and language services.

American Education Week: A Time to Celebrate

American Education Week, November 16 - 20, celebrates our nation's public schools. The Ripon Board of Education joins this national effort to honor the team of people who work in Ripon public schools, everyone from the bus driver and classroom teacher to the food service worker and administrative staff, plus countless others. Consider a public school educator who has influenced your life or greatly impacted your child. Please take the time to offer them your thanks.

Human Resources

Student Engagement and Learning

District COVID Update

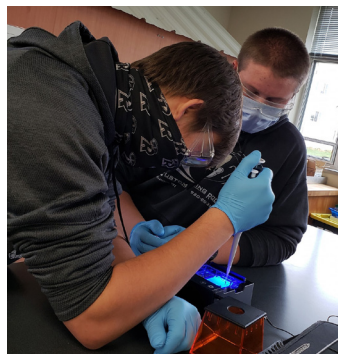
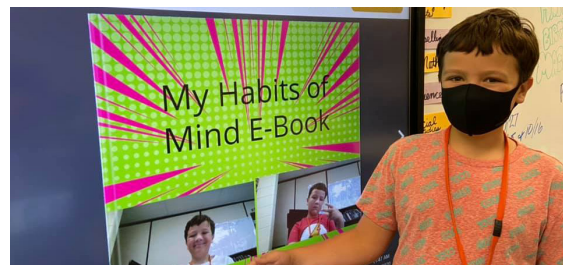
Ripon's schools remain open with face-to-face instruction at 4K/Grade 5 and a blended learning model in Grades 6-12 despite increasing numbers of COVID cases locally and across the county. The Ripon School Board approved the continued use of masks for all students, staff and any other visitors in district buildings.

In response to confirmed positive COVID cases, any students and staff identified as a close contact switch to virtual learning for up to 14 days. Information about COVID may be found by visiting the COVID-19 Roadmap to Re-Entry, the COVID-19 District Dashboard, and/or the Fond du Lac County Health Department website.

Ripon has been fortunate not to have identified spread within schools in the district, though our school could close if that were to occur or if the district does not have adequate staff to keep the building open.

Community members are encouraged to help flatten the curve in Ripon by:

- Wearing masks and practice social distancing;
- Avoiding social gatherings, especially large gatherings;
- Avoiding close contact such as hugs, kissing, and handshakes;
- staying home when they are sick; and
- washing hands frequently and using hand sanitizer.



Let's Hear Your #RiponRoar

ROAR for Ripon! The Ripon Education Foundation (REF) launched the first Annual #RiponRoar Days November 16 to celebrate the Ripon Area School District and provide a pathway for parents, alumni and community members from all over the world to donate to the foundation and proudly show their Tiger stripes.



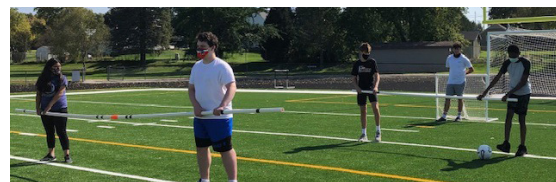
#RiponRoar Days features an online giving platform and dozens of volunteers spreading the word through social media. The goal is to reach 226 donors which represents the number of staff and educators in the district – a symbolic representation of the REF's commitment to changing lives through expanding educational opportunities.

Individuals are encouraged to consider contributing at www.riponeducationfoundation.org/RiponRoar. Donations made online will be securely processed through GiveCampus, in association with the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, fund management partner for the Education Foundation. Contributions may be tax deductible – please check with your tax preparer. Contributions can also be mailed to the Foundation at PO Box 395, Ripon, WI 54971.

Ingalls Field Improvements

In June 2020, the District and Ripon College replaced the Ingalls athletic field surface and installed a shock pad. The district's two-thirds portion of the expense (approx. \$319,000) was covered by an endowment that was established in 2006 by a voter approved referendum.

This summer, the Ingalls Field Group, led by Warren Sherman and Tom Stellmacher, raised more than \$300,000 in pledges from local organizations and individuals. Some of the donations that have already been received were used to replace the football goal posts. This fall, the fences along Highway 23 and St. Wenceslaus Street will be replaced. Upcoming projects may include asphalt replacement at the entrance, an upgraded sound system, and new soccer goals.



Students practiced social distancing, were physically active, and enjoyed the fresh air on the new turf while playing Human Foosball!

Friend of Public Schools Award



Bill and Judy Neill have donated countless hours and made many donations to the school district over the years through the Ripon Education Foundation (REF). Bill and Judy met as students at Ripon College in 1965. They returned to Ripon in 1972 when Bill accepted the position of Director of Alumni Relations for Ripon College and worked there for 39 years. Judy worked for Moraine Park Technical College (20 years) and for the Wisconsin Technical College System Foundation (17 years). Their two sons both graduated from Ripon High School.

Bill has served as a REF Board Member since 2011 and Judy since 2009. Bill chairs the Development Committee, actively seeking gifts and working with major donors and potential major donors. As treasurer for the Foundation, Judy manages REF finances and serves as the liaison with the Oshkosh Community Foundation. Judy and Bill are consistent donors to REF.

Bill and Judy shared "We believe that strong public schools are essential to a high quality of life at all levels of community including local, state, national, and global. Our hope is that all Ripon Area School District children will have the opportunity to maximize their potential to benefit from an education that offers excellent opportunities to develop competence in math, science, language, and the arts, along with life-long social/emotional and fitness skills. We believe that this can happen only in an environment where students, parents, teachers, and staff members share mutual respect, and in the context of strong support from the local community."

2020 Distinguished Alumni

Anthony Alvarado, a graduate from the Class of 2002 received Ripon High School's 2020 Distinguished Alumni Award. Mr. Alarado started the non profit organization Rise Together that harnesses the power of storytelling to prevent addiction and promote mental health. He was recognized by FORBES as a movement builder and has been featured in HuffPost, USA Today, NPR, PBS, NBC, CW14, and a documentary film. He was recognized by the White House Office of the National Drug Control Policy for his service to others.

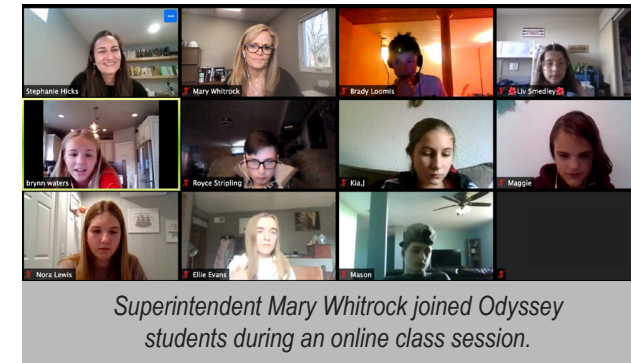
Mr. Alvarado shared "my life mission is to rid the world of hopelessness by empowering others to strive toward their full potential. I believe that the universe has much more in store for us than we can possibly imagine, but our time can be shorter than what we would ever expect and that true happiness is not dependent on how much we have but instead how much we are willing to fight for what matters most." He went on to add "I believe that we will never have all the answers, so put yourself around those that help you grow. I believe in kindness, not only to others but also to yourself. Learn from the past while being present, but don't forget to dream. Lastly, but most important, have faith in something greater than yourself."

Several years ago, Ripon was fortunate to have Mr. Alvarado speak to Ripon's middle and high school students. After seeing his team present, former RHS counselor Leah Gullickson commented "We were blown away. It seemed to have a huge impact on (the student body). They were perfectly silent for the entire two hours." The Rise Together Team did a combination of sharing statistics as well as mainly sharing personal stories.

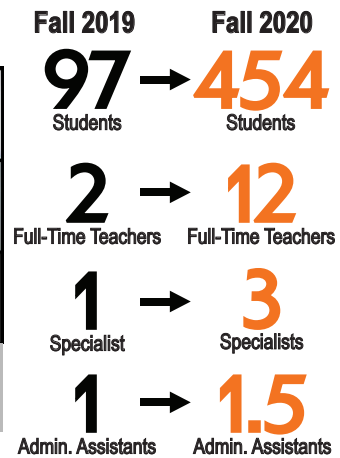


Rapid Growth at Odyssey Academy of Virtual Learning

Odysey Academy of Virtual Learning grew to just over 450 students and includes 10 new staff members this year. Many of these new team members, though experienced educators, were introduced to virtual education for the first time in the spring due to COVID. All Odyssey instructional staff hold a Master's Degree and together have 183 years of collective experience. Odyssey allows students and staff from across the state to experience the high quality education for which RASD has become known.



Superintendent Mary Whitrock joined Odyssey students during an online class session.



Free Meals Extended to Spring

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) extended the free breakfast and lunch program yet again. Anyone 18 years of age and younger can receive two free meals per day, five days a week through our food service.

This service is truly available to all - anyone learning virtually whether in quarantine or a full virtual setting, homeschooled, attending a daycare or not school age yet. Follow these guidelines to obtain meals for your child(ren):

- Temporary Virtual Students (including quarantined students): If students are sent home midweek, please email storzb@ripion.k12.wi.us to make arrangements for food pick up. Virtual Students: Please register for weekly meal pick up, via RASD website-district/food service using the Virtual/Community form (or use the QR code). This option is best for children in 4PS, Odyssey, homeschool, daycare, and other community children 18 years old and under.



SCAN ME

School Board Spring Election

The Spring Election for the Ripon Area School District Board of Education will be held on Tuesday, April 6, 2021 with those elected to succeed the present incumbents: Nicole Dash, Andy Lyke, and John Sperger. The term of office for school board members is three years beginning on Monday, April 26, 2021 and expiring on April 28, 2024. The deadline to declare candidacy is 5:00 pm on January 5. Anyone interested in serving on the board is encouraged to contact Jolene Meyer at the district business office at (920) 748-4612 or meyerj@ripion.k12.wi.us.

District Wellness Program

Staff are committed to staying healthy amidst the mental and physical challenges of COVID. 92.7 percent of staff on the district's insurance plan are engaged on the district's wellness program, Vitality. The staff participation is up from last year.

92.7%
of employees completed an activity through Vitality

Open Enrollment at Record High

Our district grew rapidly, especially through the Odyssey Academy of Virtual Learning. As of the third Friday count in September, total district enrollment increased 292 students, or 17.4% to 1,968. Student enrollment is at its highest point in the past 36 years. Open-enrolled students now make up 35% of our student population. Resident student enrollment is down from ten years ago, but it has remained mostly flat over the past three years. See more in the 2020-21 Budget Hearing Booklet found on the district website under Business Services.

Learning Never Ends

Despite the many challenges COVID has presented, RASD staff have embraced the opportunity to learn new technology and teaching strategies to support students in various models of instruction. Like our students, RASD staff participated in learning opportunities throughout the summer and during our back to school inservice week that looked very different from years past. To ensure the safety of our staff, the majority of staff training was held virtually rather than in person. Training that was able to be held in person was conducted in smaller groups in larger spaces while practicing physical distancing and wearing masks.



District Awarded over \$760,000 in Grants for the 2020-21 year

- \$230,661 to Barlow Park Charter School for the second year (\$800,000 over 5 years)
- \$190,476 to Odyssey Academy of Virtual Learning for the third year (\$900,000 over five years)
- \$115,000 for the second year of five year grant for the 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant at Barlow Park Elementary
- \$75,000 as a third one-year grant for School-Based Mental Health
- \$155,277 for COVID related expenses through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund