



Area School District

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

Finance and Operations

District Administrators Offer Local Presentations

Ripon Area School District Business Manager Jonah Adams was invited to present the Annual Budget at Ripon Noon Kiwanis in January and Superintendent Mary Whitrock was invited to present the State of the District at the Senior Center in March.



Please call the district office at 748-4600 to have either presentation shared with your community group.

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Superintendent and Board Members Attend Monthly Legislative Breakfast

Finance and Operations

The Superintendent and one or two Board members attends a Legislative Breakfast in Oshkosh once a month from January to May to connect with senators and representatives as they make important decisions regarding the budget. Legislators who regularly attend include Rep. Joan Ballweg, Rep. Rick Gundrum, Rep. Dwey Strobel, Rep. Gordan Hintz, Rep. Michael Schraa, Senator Dan Feyen, Rep. Jim Steineke, Senator Luther Olson, Alan Ott for Congressman Grothman, Bill Kloiber for Senator Roger Roth, and Christopher Schaefer for Rep. Rob Brooks.



Two students joined Dr. Whitrock at the Legislative Breakfast to speak about their work with the Youth Apprenticeship program.

RASD Recognized as Reunification County Leader

Human Resources

Ripon Area School District was noted as a leader in the county for their reunification process. Fond du Lac County Communications & Emergency Management recently held an informational and planning session about reunification for area school districts, emergency personnel, and law enforcement. Ripon is the **only school** in the county to hold extensive training for school staff that included two reunification drills at two separate locations in the community on the actual operation of the reunification process in the Fall of 2018. Reunification is a safety system where parents and students are reunited in the event that a school needs to be evacuated. District leadership extended invitations to partner with the Ripon Police Department, Fire District, Guardian Ambulance and Ripon Medical Center to make the training possible.



TIGER UPDATE

Spring 2019

Excellence through innovation

Superintendent's Message

Welcome to Spring Ripon Tiger Nation!

And welcome to our newly revised community newsletter. Our district team updated the format to align each article and feature story to the four strategic priorities set by the School Board. Now, you can review our work on these priority areas in our bimonthly newsletter.

Student Learning and Engagement

- Provide well rounded education in a healthy and safe environment
- Use interventions and support services to ensure student success
- Close achievement gaps in reading, writing and math

Service and Partnership

- Increase partnerships and satisfaction through continuous improvement

Human Resources

- Provide growth and improvement opportunities to build high quality staff

Finance and Operations

- Met financial challenges by refining systems to find efficiencies

Join us in April and May as we revisit our strategic plan, define our outcomes for graduates and set our goals for the 2019-2020 school year. Contact Jolene at 748-4600 to be added to the district's Strategic Planning Team.

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



Dr. Whitrock stands proudly next to an elementary student who's artwork is showcased at the district office.

Service and Partnerships

Furry Friends Making an Impact

Students are making many new friends at school this year, however they are not typical school buddies. They are furry friends. Therapy dogs have been incorporated into the array of programs and services provided at RASD. Through the Collaborative Wellness initiative, therapy dogs "Wally" and "Griffin" as well as the team from Sassu Enterprises are providing services for students during classroom time or in private sessions. They are also used to help regulate different behaviors through their presence and non-judgmental acceptance of others. They help some students learn more about behavior control and management, and they have really become a "mood-booster" with staff and students. Wally, a one-year old English-Cream Goldendoodle, and Griffin, a four-year old Apricot Goldendoodle, are both considered hypoallergenic and non-shedding.



A therapy dog receives training with their owner on how to improve the lives of the people they serve. Their duties range from reading with children in schools, providing mental/emotional support, visiting nursing homes, and visiting hospitals or clinics. Dogs have a unique ability to sense emotion from others and often provide a grounding or calming effect for people. These dogs are specially trained to remain calm and follow instruction from their owner or handler. Students enjoy having the dogs sit near them while they are reading. They are often seen snuggling up together with a good book.

Training for therapy dogs vary based on where they are being certified. However, all therapy dogs must complete an appropriate level of training and are not able to test for certification until they are at least one year of age. Some facilities also require the dogs to meet training criteria prior to testing (for example a certain number of individual or group training classes). The certification test includes dozens of commands that they must complete. Further, the owner or handler of the dog is also being tested as they are viewed as a "team." The owner/handler must have good verbal and non-verbal communication with their dog.

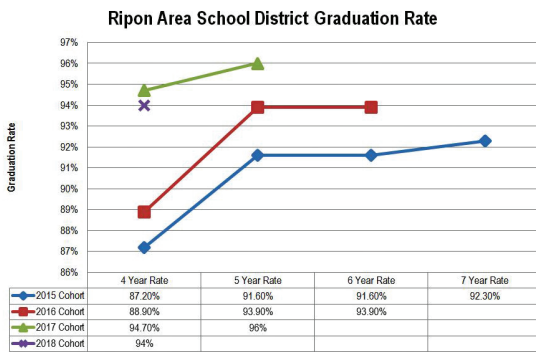
Therapy dogs are different from service dogs who are specially trained to perform specific tasks to help a person who has a disability. An example of a service dog is a dog who guides an owner who is blind, or a dog who assists someone who has a physical disability. Service dogs stay with their person who has a disability.

Owner/handler Lindsay Loewe remarked that RASD students and staff have been welcoming and open-minded to having this service in Ripon schools. "We have yet to meet students or staff that dislike their presence and the work that they do. With dogs having an ability to really sense the energy of others, they also both do a good job of recognizing when a person would prefer to not engage with them. As their owners, we also pay close attention to apprehensions that people might have and never force interaction."

Snow Day Parent Feedback

Following the first 5 snow days of the school year, 778 parents responded to the Snow Day Survey noting an overwhelming preference for school on two vacation days, February 22 and April 22, instead of extending the school year further into June. Since the survey, one additional snow day occurred requiring minutes to be added to the remaining school days or perhaps some digital learning minutes. Staff will review these two options and make a recommendation to the School Board after Spring Break.

RASD Graduation Rate Exceeds State Average



The Ripon Area School District four-year graduation rate was 94.0 for 2018 placing Ripon well above the state rate of 89.6 percent. Even after students leave the high school, staff continue to work with them to help them reach the important life milestone of high school graduation. Wisconsin reports a five, six, and seven-year graduation rates for students needing longer to complete high school. Ripon graduation rate increases when counting these students as noted in the graph.

Allies in Mental Health

A team of Student Service staff attend the Allies in Mental Health Education (AMHE) training each month to better understand how to support students' mental health and wellness. The intent is to break down the stigma of mental illness and create effective systems to address mental health and wellness for ALL learners.



Services and Partnerships

The Webster Foundation Awards RASD Over \$5,300

The Webster Foundation awarded RASD with 10 different grants totaling over \$6,000. The BRAVE program was named one of the recipients by the foundation. Grant dollars awarded to the after-school program provided students with sports and large motor equipment. BRAVE Project Director Ashley O'Kon thanked the foundation stating "As this winter has taught all of us in Wisconsin, we do not always have the option of going outside to expend energy and have fun. Sports classes and physical activities are always in high demand at BRAVE, as students need an outlet at the end of a long school day." O'Kon noted the space to offer physical opportunities after school is limited and often shared with other student organizations and sports teams. The items purchased can be used in any open area or even a hallway without damage to facilities.

Middle School Teacher Jeanne Hall received funding to support the "For The Love of and Sharing the Love of Reading" project. Hall purchased a variety of books to boost her classroom library and provide two desktop easels for students to highlight books they have recently read. In addition, the funding provided bare books to be used in a year-end celebratory activity where students will create children's storybooks to donate to children in need.

Mrs. Hall remarked, "Reading can become habitual through opportunities to self-select books! Choice can put our students on the path to independence. Fulfilling my goal of instilling a LOVE of READING will support that path for my students. Having them be able to share that love of reading is all the better. I am extremely grateful to the Webster Foundation for allowing me the opportunity to provide these experiences for my students!" Thank you Webster Foundation for helping RASD staff meet the needs of students.

Students Help Create District Open Enrollment Banners

Seventeen Ripon High School Media Production and Building Construction students helped create promotional banners for the school district Open Enrollment window. The banners are placed throughout the Ripon community. Media Production students printed and installed grommets onto the banners while Building Construction students built the banner frames. The Ripon Area School District began accepting Open Enrollment applications for the 2019-20 school year on February 4, 2019 and will continue to until the window closes on April 30, 2019.

Board Highlights Social and Emotional Learning



The Board of Education approved Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies K-12. Making social emotional learning part of the learning equation supports children success in school and life. SEL skills are a protective factor against risk-taking behavior such as drug and alcohol use and violence. Explicit teaching of these skills will help children manage their feelings, build healthy relationships, and navigate social environments. Ripon Area School District is among the many districts across the state of Wisconsin making social emotional learning a priority.

Purposeful Play

At the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, BPES Second Grade Teacher Kathryn McMillan began exploring purposeful play.

Soon, McMillan's co-worker BPES Second Grade Teacher Heidi Hopp was noticing some new things happening in McMillan's classroom. Hopp was interested in the possibility of purposeful play too. With Principal Sanderfoot's permission, they were allowed to step back and take time with their students to pilot purposeful play. Their specific goals were to build community and social skills through play. They quickly saw that it was working so it was developed further.

Each teacher has many different items offered throughout the room for students to play together such as cutting and pasting, board games, Playdoh, Legos, kitchen sets, and dolls. Before sending students off to explore the teachers needed to take the time to teach skills such as sharing, cooperation, and taking turns. Both teachers started very basic and built up from there.

Now both teachers are seeing the benefits of purposeful play on both social interaction and academics. In addition to the work she is doing with McMillan, Hopp is piloting a new math program called Bridges. This curriculum incorporates elements of purposeful play which teaches strategic skills targeted at specific academic standards such as place value, building numbers, or measuring items around the room. The key is that the variety of options reflect what is being learned in the current math unit.

Besides the math program in Hopp's classroom, both teachers are incorporating purposeful play every day. The play has meaning and is customized to fit the interests and social skill needs that they are seeing in their students as well as the standards and objectives in core classes.

"This play thing, there is something to it", McMillan stated, "It has calmed their hearts, they work together, they say please and thank you more often when I pass out papers." She noted that while it is working wonderfully in the classroom there needs to be more exploration on how to put it in place in a larger setting. "Are (the students) taking it outside of our classroom? Not so much. That is something we probably need to investigate as a school. When they're within the realms of our walls they do fantastic. In our classrooms it has just been wonderful."

Both teachers noted that they've learned a lot about their students through play such as who is being kind to others, and who can handle the length of time they've been given. Hopp added "Sometimes it's been straightforward teaching and other times it's just been to let them work out their differences if they can and that has been another huge thing."

The play activities have offered students the opportunity to demonstrate to teachers that they are proficient in some of the standards. Purposeful play is yet another tool that can be used to assess if a child has met a standard rather than just paper and pencil assessments.



Alliance Laundry and RHS Students Partner in Robotics

Thanks to a more than a \$6,000 donation by Alliance Laundry Systems, RHS students have the opportunity to compete in the FIRST Robotics Competition. The donation covered the cost of a robotics kit which students used to design, build, and test a robot within a limited time, and set of strict rules and resources. RHS/Lumen students are working with a team of Alliance engineers in areas such as computer aided electrical and mechanical design. A world landmark competition, FIRST, challenges students to design a robot with no blueprint and a set of guidelines to follow. The rookie team of six students had from January 5 to February 19 to build their robot. The regional competition will be held in Milwaukee March 27 - 30. The Ripon Education Foundation is providing \$1,200 for their travel accommodations for the competition. Participants in FIRST have access to \$80 million dollars in scholarships. The long-term goal is to increase program participation to 20 students annually.



PBIS Team Celebrates Student Achievement through Snow Tubing

PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) is the behavior management framework used in all schools. As part of a PBIS system, staff celebrate students' achievement for academics and behavior. 8th-grade students earned a day of tubing at the Sunburst Ski Area in Kewaskum for their efforts in class through the quarter and for demonstrating consistent respect, responsibility and citizenship in the school.

