



Area School District  
1120 Metomen Street  
Ripon, WI 54971



# TIGER UPDATE

Winter 2021

Excellence through innovation

## 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

POSTAL CUSTOMER

## Finance and Operations

### Energy Efficiencies and More

As inflation works to increase all types of expenditures, it is crucial that our organization find savings and new sources of revenue wherever possible. This year, the district will continue its work to replace florescent lighting with more efficient LED bulbs. The LED conversion in all classrooms at Barlow Park/ Journey Elementary School and Murray Park/ Quest Elementary School will hopefully be completed at the end of the 2020-21 school year. The final pneumatic HVAC components at Murray Park/ Quest will also likely be converted to digital systems later this year.

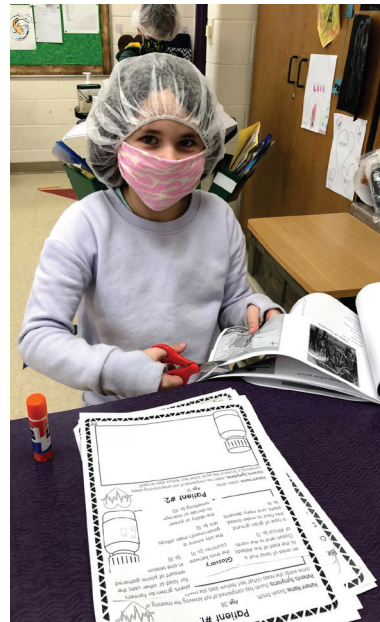
In previous years, energy reduction efforts included installing digital programming and by replacing failing equipment with more efficient boilers, lights and light fixtures, variable frequency drives, and Energy Star rated equipment. Compared to only the first six months of the 2017-18 school year, expenditures in 2020-21 from July to December have been reduced by the following amounts: \$2,357 for natural gas (-11.6%); \$35,356 for electricity (-29.4%); and \$3,196 for water and sewer (-34.2%). Additionally, the district is pursuing an opportunity to pay off some long-term debt early to reduce principal and interest expenses in future years. Some of the facility referendum debt is also being refinanced due to current low rates. The District earnestly seeks opportunities to make all operations sustainable and efficient, with a goal of reducing operational costs and shifting spending to academic programs.

## Student Engagement and Learning

### Innovative School Choices

Being the parent of a student in the Ripon Area School District means having innovative choices. Each school across the district teaches the same curriculum, the difference is in the delivery method. All children can thrive in each of the models. Ripon is unique in that parents may choose the delivery model to match their family's needs or further expand on their child's strengths and opportunities for growth.

Families who reside outside of the Ripon Area School District receive the same innovative school choices through open enrollment. The open enrollment window is open through April 30. Visit the RASD website to learn more about each of our schools.



## Superintendent's Message

Spring is in the air! With very few cases of COVID in our schools, low to no spread of the COVID virus between students and staff, and all staff having the opportunity to be vaccinated, light is appearing at the end of the long tunnel.

As we return to full in-person instruction in Grades 6-12, continued caution will be essential for everyone. This newsletter highlights the impact of COVID, but so much more:

### Student Learning and Engagement

- Provide well rounded education in a healthy and safe environment (In-person Learning p. 1, School Choice p. 4, Staying Active p. 2, Celebrating Music p. 3)
- Close achievement gaps in literacy and math (Attendance and Enrollment Update p. 2-3)

### Service and Partnership

- Increase partnerships and satisfaction through CQI (Parent Survey p. 2, #Ripon Roar p. 2)

### Human Resources

- Increase opportunities to build high quality staff (Staff Survey p. 3)

### Finance and Operations

- Refine systems to find efficiencies (ESSER II Funding p. 3, Enrollment Grows p. 1, Energy Savings p. 4)

Much gratitude goes out to our students and families for their diligence in keeping COVID spread low outside of school. Together we are making a difference for the children of Ripon.

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



## Student Engagement and Learning

### Grades 6-12 Return to In-Person Learning

At their February meeting, Ripon's School Board approved returning to a fully in-person learning model for Grades 6-12 beginning March 1, 2021. Ripon's elementary students have been fully face to face all year with no school-wide closures while Ripon's Grades 6-12 students attended in cohorts attending in-person just two days each week with no school-wide shutdowns.

The decision was based on the Board requiring the continuation of the multiple mitigation strategies in place this school year including:

- properly wearing masks;
- practicing physical distancing as space allows;
- using hand sanitizer and washing hands; and
- cleaning surfaces more frequently if touched by students and staff.

With this change, RASD encouraged students at all schools to return to the in-person model if they were able, though the district will continue to work with families who are still in need of an all virtual option due to COVID-19. There will no longer be a cohort model offered for Grades 6-12.

A return to in-person learning will add over 30 additional face to face days of instruction for Grades 6-12. Ripon Middle School and Ripon High School students will have the same two Fridays off each month as the elementary schools in the district for staff planning and professional development. These dates include: March 12, March 26, April 16, April 30, May 14, and May 28.

The District is thankful for their partnership with parents this year which allowed the children of the Ripon community to receive the best education possible in spite of COVID.



## Finance and Operations

### Enrollment Grows in 2020-21

Total enrollment on January 8, 2021, the District's second major student enrollment count date for the 2020-21 school year, was 1,941 – down just 11 students from the September count which was the highest enrollment for the district in 40 years. Enrollment in Odyssey Academy of Virtual Learning was at 458 in September and decreased by just 18 students by the January count date. It is encouraging that the District's historically high enrollment remained fairly consistent throughout the year.



### Parent Satisfaction Survey

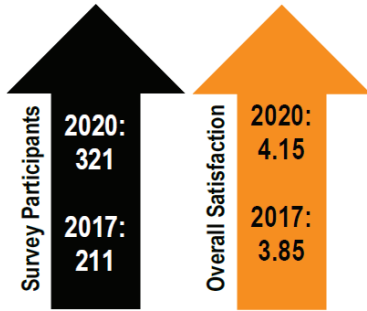
The Ripon Area School District's Parent Satisfaction Survey is composed of 21 questions, each scored on a scale of 1-5, within four areas related to overall satisfaction. Since 2017, when the first survey was conducted, satisfaction in all areas has increased significantly as has survey participation.

Overall High Satisfaction Areas:

- Cleanliness and maintenance of the schools
- Safety of learning environment
- Student's access to supplies and equipment necessary for learning
- Family's respectful treatment
- Recommendation of school to other parents
- Child's learning is high priority
- Sense of pride to have children apart of RASD

Thank you to RASD families for their feedback and ideas on how to make Ripon the best school district in the area. Together we have continued to increase satisfaction in all areas over the past 6 years by hearing from you and growing together.

Additional survey feedback is available on the RASD website on the District Data and Results page of the District tab.



### Let's Hear Your #RiponRoar

The Ripon Education Foundation held their first annual week-long #RiponRoar Days campaign during American Education Week in November. Tiger alumni and supporters of RASD came out in full force and made it a roaring success! The goal of the social media campaign was two-fold: to celebrate our innovative District and to raise money for the Foundation.

A challenge was issued to inspire at least 226 donors to give - that's one gift in honor of every staff member in the District. It was an amazing week with a greater response than what could have been imagined. Alumni quickly turned it into a fun class challenge to see which class could roar the loudest. The 226 donor goal was quickly surpassed!

An overwhelming 308 donors along with Game Changer donors provided the Foundation with \$44,576. The class of 2003 topped the leaderboard with the highest level of participation. #RiponRoar gifts directly benefit RASD educators through grants providing classroom supplies or experiences to students as well as tutoring scholarships and grants that expand student learning. Plans for #RiponRoar 2021 are already underway.



### Staying Active Despite COVID

Not only does learning look different this year, but extra curricular activities do too. Safety protocols have been extended beyond the classroom to assure that students are as safe as possible in all school-related activities. Students were able to enjoy the low-contact Boys' and Girls' Cross Country and Girls' Tennis seasons in the fall. High-contact fall sports (Volleyball, Football, and Boys' Soccer) will compete in the WIAA alternative spring season with the Flyway Conference. As the school year has progressed mitigation measures have supported adding more opportunities back into the mix for students such as Boys' and Girls' Basketball, Competition Cheer, and Wrestling.

Athletic Director Bill Kinziger notes, "The Ripon Athletic Department's goal has been to safely play as many athletic events as we can to allow our athletes a chance to compete. We have been able to schedule and play nearly full sports seasons in all sports and to safely allow spectators to be a part of such an important experience in the lives of their loved ones. We know that education-based athletics plays such an integral part of many students' lives and feel fortunate that our athletes and families have sacrificed to make this as successful as possible."

The 2020-2021 school year will always be remembered as an unusual year for education across our country. Students, their families and school staff have displayed incredible resilience in their willingness to adapt to the challenges they have faced.

Due to alternative fall sports schedule, the newly refurbished Ingalls Field will be host to double header football games beginning March 19 with Ripon playing at 4:30 and other Fly-Away conference teams playing at 7:30 (Subject to change).



### Enrollment and Attendance by School Site

Barlow/Journey		Murray/Quest	
September	March	September	March
53 virtual (15%) 356 students	30 virtual (8%) 380 students	35 virtual (12%) 292 students	11 virtual (4%) 303 students
RMS/Catalyst		RHS	
September	March	September	March
38 virtual (11%) 340 students	22 virtual (7%) 338 students	67 virtual (13%) 503 students	22 virtual (4%) 500 students



### Celebrating Music Despite COVID

The music teachers throughout the district have helped their students to adapt to performing for others in multiple ways. RHS Bands shared their love of music with a live-streamed Pep Band Concert while socially distanced and masked on Ingalls Field. Our U.S. Veterans were honored with performances that were included in pre-recorded virtual programs. All students, whether learning in person or virtually, were included in the recordings.

Elementary and middle school music students continued the traditional Winter Concerts which were virtually shared with the student body and community at large. High School Choirs and Bands hosted small in-person concerts that were also live streamed with the help of Ripon Channel TV. The high school concerts were performed in shifts so musicians as well as audience members could maintain social distancing. Virtual students performed with in-person students at the concerts using Google Meet.

The time honored RHS Music Tour prior to Winter Break also happened. Rather than traveling throughout Ripon to perform eleven concerts in one day, musicians shared live virtual performances from the RHS auditorium for elementary and middle school students and staff along with residents of assisted living homes throughout Ripon.

The High School Drama Club hosted 4 different performances of the musical "Singin' in the Rain" in early February to small in-person audiences and hundreds more through a live stream platform. Community members can look forward to the middle school's performance of "Frozen" in March.



Band Director Sandy Polcyn plays alongside virtual pit band member.



### Enrollment and Attendance at Odyssey Academy

458 students in 20-21

117 students in 19-20

81% plan to return to Odyssey

15% plan to return to in-person

21% plan to have a sibling join

4% plan to homeschool

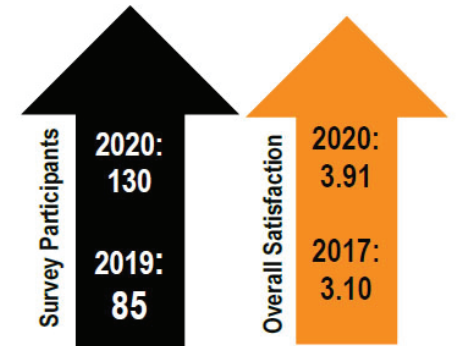


### Employee Satisfaction Survey

The Ripon Area School District's Employee Satisfaction Survey is composed of 50 questions, each scored on a scale of 1-5, within four areas related to overall satisfaction. Since 2017, when the first survey was conducted, satisfaction in all areas has increased significantly as has survey participation.

In spite of COVID, staff satisfaction increased from 2019:

**+.62** for school cleanliness  
**+.68** For looking forward to going to work most days



Additional survey feedback is available on the RASD website on the District Data and Results page of the District tab.



### Ripon Students Benefit from Federal Relief Funding

School districts nationwide will benefit from an additional round of federal funding through Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER). Just as the district's administrative team began making plans to cut its budget for 2021-22, we were grateful to learn that the district would receive enough funding through ESSER to avoid significant academic program reductions.

Due to declining resident student enrollment, RASD expects to see little to no new revenue from state and local sources in 2021-22. Next year, we also anticipate significantly higher employee medical insurance premiums along with normal inflationary increases for wages, fringe benefits, and purchased services-including transportation.

The second round of ESSER funding is estimated to be roughly \$771,000 for RASD. The District intends to spread these ESSER funds over the next two fiscal years (2021-22 and 2022-23) to maintain educational staffing as much as possible. The first round of ESSER funding (\$155,277) was spent in the current school year primarily to purchase cameras and microphones that are used to record instruction for virtual learners.