



SPARTA AREA SCHOOLS

February 2022

BELL RINGER

Home of the Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School

www.spartaschools.org

Communicate, Innovate, & Care

Since March of 2020, and the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, our schools have been anything but normal for our staff, students, and families. First, we had a 10-week closure at the end of the 2019-20 school year, then a combination of in-person, virtual, and remote learning during the 2020-21 school year, and now the 2021-22 school year continues to provide many challenges with the latest surge in cases. If there is any "good" that has come from the pandemic, it might be the recognition that schools are going to need additional support and resources to meet the needs of students moving forward. Over these last couple of years there have been three rounds of funding through federal, state, and local sources, which is often referred to as ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds. I think it is important to let our community know how our school district plans to use these funds over the next couple of years.

The first round of funding (ESSER I) was used primarily to provide protective equipment and cleaning resources during the 2020-21 school year to help limit the spread of Covid-19 in our schools, as well as

improve our ventilation systems.

The increase in our cleaning and disinfecting protocols have been an important part of our Covid prevention strategies, many of which we continue to utilize during this current school year.

The remaining two rounds of funding (ESSER II and III) will provide nearly \$5 million over the next couple of years for our district to continue to address the impact of Covid-19 on our students. We surveyed our staff and parents this fall to gather feedback on the potential areas in which we could utilize this funding, and have begun to use this information to build our budgets for these funds. The top two areas in which our staff and parents felt the funds should be utilized were for additional staffing to keep our class sizes low, and additional social-emotional support for our students. So far this school year we have added four additional teaching positions at our elementary schools to keep our class sizes low, hired extra teacher assistants to assist in the classroom, added an additional school nurse, and recently hired new school counselors at both Ridgeview and Appleview elementary schools. We also have hired two additional

school social workers so that we now have a full-time social worker in each of our buildings, and have added both a KSSN counselor and Spectrum Health teletherapy opportunities at our high school. It is our hope that these additional supports will help to meet both the academic and social-emotional needs of our students, and we will continue to look at additional staffing opportunities as we begin to plan for the 2022-23 school year.

Other priorities, as communicated to us in our surveys, were to continue to make additional investments in educational technology, and to provide updated curriculum/resources for our staff to continue doing their jobs at a high level. For this school year we purchased 800 additional chromebooks for our students, to maintain and continue our 1-to-1 technology initiative, while also securing hotspots to provide connectivity for any families that might not have internet available in their homes. We will be purchasing about 1000 additional chromebooks this spring to replace devices that are nearing end of life and make sure our students have a device that is in great condition. We will also be refreshing technology for many of our staff

members as we work to keep them in updated devices.

We have also begun to implement a district-level team, that includes teachers from all of our buildings, called our Guiding Coalition. This team will be tasked with identifying district goals and initiatives that will help to update our curriculum and resources and ensure that our staff and students have the proper resources and support to be successful. We truly believe that a collaborative environment, that involves our teachers at every level of the planning process, will lead to the best student outcomes.

These last few years have been tough!! Utilizing the resources we have been provided, due to the pandemic, will prove critical to our success in the years ahead. We appreciate the feedback from our staff and parents that responded to our surveys to help us develop the best plan possible. Hang in there Spartans!! There is light at the end of this tunnel.

**With Spartan Pride,
Pete Bush, Superintendent**

Big Hearts Fill Blessing Bags

Third graders in Mrs. Hurley's class showed just how big their hearts are when they participated in a service project called Blessing Bags. Students and their families collected an incredible amount of donations including socks, gloves, snacks, hygiene items, and even cash to create each Blessing Bag. With the holidays, Mrs. Hurley wanted to make sure students felt the joy of giving and compassion for those less fortunate in the community and the greater Grand Rapids area. After the students assembled each bag, they personally delivered them to Mel Trotter here in Sparta! From there, they were distributed to the homeless and needy in the area. Some students even took a Blessing Bag to keep in the car to share with someone in need that they encountered during the holiday season. This important project not only warmed the hands of those in need, but the hearts of each and every third grader!





BELL RINGER



Let's Get Ready to Bumble!

Applevue Elementary held their annual spelling bee on Friday, January 7th. Each classroom sent representatives to the school wide bee based on the results of their classroom bees that took place in December.

Classroom Winners 2022

3rd Grade

CLASS	WINNER	RUNNER-UP
BEUSCHEL	Yanelsy Macias	Beechum Swiger
BUFTON	Addie Vess	Lainie Spalding
GLYNN	Gavin Long	Madison Murray
HALL	Isaak Genther	Ava Wilson
HURLEY	Jase Noto	Maci McLemore
LEHNER	Bentley McCullough	Micah Hankinson
SINGLETON	Betsy Elliott	Denise Calva

4th Grade

CLASS	WINNER	RUNNER-UP
BARR	Claire MacDonald	Mason May
DAVIS	Sophie Searcy	Hunter Wiedmayer
KILPATRICK	Benjamin DeWys	Autry Bockheim
SHELNER	Haedyn Burns	Grayson Williams
TAYLOR	Alessandra Guerra	Cecilia Lundberg
VANVLIET	Troy Johnston	Avery Hunter
ZDANCIEWICZ	Caroline Wolford	Arianna Armstrong

5th Grade

CLASS	WINNER	RUNNER-UP
DEGRAFF	Jorge Zuniga-Palomino	Peter Crum
LEY	Veda Larson	Natalie Wood/Carson Gerth
RIDDLE	Lillian Straayer	Joselyn Hatchew
SWANSON	Anna May	Alayah Johnson
SWIHART	Michael Boehm	Tiana Ducharme
UTTER	Evelyn Miner	Austin Wilcox



Sparta Education Foundation

Providing Extras for Education

This year marks Sparta Education Foundation's 31st year of providing grant monies to Sparta staff to fund creative, innovative additions for all students. Prompted by so many changes in life in general, we determined this to be a great time to evaluate and update our strategic plan. When this process is completed, we will be ready to share how we have changed and grown and what we envision for SEF's future.

Our highest priority at this moment is to commend Sparta's entire staff for their unending dedication to our students and their families to meeting every new, unforeseen, demand the last two years have created. They continue to put students first, to work to make sure all social and emotional needs are being met along with their focus on the goal of great academic progress for every student.

We encourage you to reach out to every staff member who touches your child's life daily, in any capacity, and let them know how much they are appreciated and valued. The rewards of these combined efforts will be far-reaching and ultimately benefit all of Sparta's students as well as bring smiles to staff members who continue to give above and beyond.

Sincerely,

Julie Anderson

SEF Board President

If you'd like to support our cause, "Providing the Extras for Education!", please visit our website at www.spartaschools.org/sef.

Mark your calendar for our next fundraiser, RetroBowl 2022, coming up on Saturday, March 12, at Sparta Lanes with two bowling times 9:30 a.m. and noon. Your student's school will provide more details in the coming weeks as well as our Facebook page: Sparta Education Foundation MI. Thank you for your continued support. Together, we're making Sparta a great place to learn.

SMS Student Government is Sponsoring a Talent Show!

In late February, SMS will be hosting a student talent show consisting of 3 grade level assemblies! We will be letting parents know if they are able to attend. Each act will be 5 minutes or less. We look forward to sharing pictures and videos with the community on our SMS Facebook page of Sparta middle schoolers showcasing their talents!

Attention 8th Grade Students & Families...8th Grade Recognition Ceremony Information is Coming Soon!

As we move through the 2nd semester, please stay tuned for information and details regarding our annual 8th grade Recognition Ceremony! This is a time honored tradition here at SMS. We plan on getting information out as far in advance as possible.

With ever-changing circumstances, we will do our very best to keep students and families updated about the details of the this year's Recognition ceremony.

Testing Season is Approaching!

Following our return to school in early April after Spring Break, all students at SMS will participate in M-Step testing. Information will be communicated via School Messenger and on our Facebook page so parents and students can plan and prepare accordingly.



BELL RINGER

Sparta Area Schools Food Service Updates

What's Happening in Your Schools?

We are excited to use our Pop Up Discovery Kitchen. Our unique pop up offers a fun location for students and administration to learn about our newest theme, taste samples, or interact with a nutrition education demonstration. Look for us in your school cafes soon.

January's theme is The Great American Road Trip. The Great American Road Trip allows students to experience this great country through the power of food! We will have new recipes and meals available in the café, along with samples for students to try. There will be activities, fun facts, and recipe cards for students to share with their families. This theme is designed to spark curiosity about agriculture and cuisines around the country.

National School Lunch Week-October 11-15th

Did you know that The National School Lunch Program serves nearly 30 million children every school day? We are excited to celebrate this annual event to recognize the importance of healthy school meals. School lunches offer students fruits and vegetables, whole grains and milk, and meet federal nutrition standards limiting fat, calories and sodium.

The fun and creative campaign theme, "WILD About School Lunch" highlights the importance of a healthy school lunch to student's success both in and out of the classroom. Are you ready to walk on the wild side? In honor of National School Lunch Week, Comstock Park's Food Service Team planned special events for students to enjoy. These events included; Coloring Pages, Tropical Smoothie Taste Testing, Lucky Tray, and Wild & Crazy Dress Up Day. Recent research shows children are getting their healthiest meals at school. National School Lunch Week highlights the nutritious foods available daily and allows students to try items they might not have tried before.



Upcoming Events:

- Jan. 17 Martin Luther King Jr's Birthday
- Jan. 19 National Popcorn Day
- Jan. 20 National Cheese Lover's Day
- Feb. 1 Chinese New Year
- Feb. 2 National Tater Tot Day
- Feb. 2 Groundhog Day
- Feb. 4 National Wear Red Day

Michigan Apple Crunch-Thursday October 14, 2021



Since 2014 we have highlighted National Farm to School Month with MILLIONS of Crunches across Michigan. The Michigan Apple Crunch is our opportunity to celebrate local food and farms!



Melissa Alley
DIRECTOR OF DINING SERVICES
616-887-1744
melissa.alley@spartaschools.org

chartwells
serving up happy & healthy

Sparta Early Childhood Center 2022-2023 Enrollment and Open House

- Tuition 3's Preschool
- Childcare
- Great Start Readiness Program-4's Preschool
- Headstart-3's only



March 21, 2022
4:30-7:00pm

4's Preschool-4 years old by September 1
3's Preschool 3 years old by September 1
(Children who turn 4 between September 1 and December 1 can also apply but will likely be placed in early September)

Please bring the following documentation

- State Issued Birth Certificate
- Proof of Residency
- Proof of Income-4's Preschool only
 - For anyone working in the home



Building a foundation and a love for learning along with kindergarten readiness are the primary focus of the preschool years. The foundation is built on play as the primary mode of learning as well as a consistent daily routine, meals, group times, outdoor time and peer interactions.

Throughout the year the children will be building their skills in the areas of math, literacy, social emotional, gross and fine motor, writing, and the sciences. The home-school connection is a critical piece of preschool ensuring that families feel accepted, comfortable, and part of their child's education at the early childhood center.

For questions or information: Call 887-0068 or email heather.lashuay@spartaschools.org.

Educationally,
Heather Lashuay
Director of Sparta Early Childhood Center



Happy New Year!

As we start a New Year, a new semester, and juggle the cold winter months your student(s) may face some Seasonal Blues! It is a common reaction to the cold, short, and dark days of winter.

Here are some signs and ways to help fight against it while we wait for the warmer days of Spring!

What to look for in your student:

- Changes in Mood- such as being sad, feeling down, or increased irritability
- Negative Thinking- being more critical of yourself.
- Low energy or enjoyment in activities- you may feel tired, low on energy, or not motivated to do things.
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns/habits- such as sleeping longer than usual or struggling to get up or get ready for school in the morning
- Trouble concentrating

What you can do to support your student:

- Be intentional about encouraging your student to get outside or engage in physical activities 2-3 times a week.
- Take a walk, use the gym, etc...
- Try to increase quality time together with:
- Family dinners, movies, or winter activities.
- Encourage your student to stay on top of their homework and sleep.
- By sticking to a regular bedtime routine you can maximize your exposure to daylight.
- Talk about it!
- It is normal this time of year.
- It can feel scary or be difficult for teens to explain what they are feeling.

I'm really trying.
I want to be
doing better. I
wish I understood
why it's so hard.

Understood
for learning & attention issues

For the 1 in 5 kids with learning and attention issues, every day can be a challenge. Explore [Understood.org](https://www.understood.org), a free online resource designed to help you help your child thrive in school and in life.

Brought to you by 15 nonprofit partners.

[understood.org](https://www.understood.org)



BELL RINGER



It's Not Chaos... It's STEM Lab "Take Chances, Make Mistakes, Get Messy" ~ Ms. Frizzle

Students at Applevue Elementary are experiencing for the first time a class called STEM. A new class that is part of the Art, Music and Physical Education "Specials" rotation, STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math and is taught by Mr. Oudbier. This class uses hands on projects/experiments that students complete either individually, with partners or in small groups to incorporate the 4 main components of STEM.

According to the article The Importance of STEM in the Elementary Classroom "STEM encourages

kids to experiment, make mistakes and learn from their own experiences to reach correct outcomes, rather than relying on what the textbook says. Critical thinking, logical analysis, inquiry and project-based learning are the keystones in STEM education. It boosts the curiosity in the kids, making the learning process fun, relevant and everlasting."

Some of the activities students have navigated through include, testing why chewing gum loses weight the longer its chewed, deciding if Oobleck is a solid or liquid, building the lightest package to prevent candy canes from breaking, making

their own version of the game "Operation" to test circuits, learning how static electricity causes our hair to stand on end, and understanding how polar bears stay warm in the arctic by wearing a Blubber Glove.

One of the highlights of the year so far was "Glow Week" leading up to Halloween. The STEM Lab was transformed into a classroom illuminated with Black Lights and Glow in the Dark tape. Students learned about how things glow in the dark and then made Glow in the Dark Slime. It was a truly awesome experience.

