



SPARTA AREA SCHOOLS

November 2023

# BELL RINGER

Home of the Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School

[www.spartaschools.org](http://www.spartaschools.org)

## Sitting in the Shade of a Tree

Hello Spartans!

I remember reading a quote from Warren Buffet some time ago, "Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago." Planning and preparation are the foundations of success and satisfaction. This school year we are working in the fifth year of our five year strategic plan. As an organization, we have seen great successes and progress as a direct result of the time, preparation and work that went into identifying critical focus areas found in the current strategic plan. To use Mr. Buffet's quote, we are sitting in the shade of that tree.

This year we begin the process of reflecting on the progress brought on by the current strategic plan, identifying areas of strength and areas of opportunity. We are holding focus groups that include students, staff, parents and community stakeholders. The goal of this time with these varied members of our school community is to collect trends, targets and feedback overall. From this data collection, we will be developing a series of surveys that will be sent out to all within our school community. These focus groups will help shape what questions to ask but all of us will be critical to guiding where we go next in order to

move Sparta Area Schools forward. During the months of January/February, please be watching for surveys going out to our students, staff, families and community. We need and want your input.

Once we receive and analyze the results of these surveys, a small constituent group will be pulled together to review and reflect on the feedback. From this information, we will identify what focus areas the district will commit to over the next three years. Within the focus areas, we will develop goals, strategies and activities. This final product will shape and influence how we dedicate our time, energy

and resources. Our strategic plan will be the guide that directs the financial commitment of the Board of Education, the initiatives and professional development of our educators and the programs and services provided to our students.

If you are participating in the focus groups, thank you! This winter, when you see the surveys, please find the time to share your thoughts and ideas. All voices matter! TOGETHER, WE Will! move our district forward.

Every Day is a Great Day to be a Spartan!

**Joel**



## 3rd Graders Explore the Dunes

During the first two weeks of October, third grade students visited Hoffmaster State Park to explore the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan.

"We choose this field trip at the beginning of the year because it coincides with our Social Studies curriculum so well," shared Mrs. Dana Fredrickson, 3rd grade teacher. "Michigan" from territory to statehood is the curriculum we follow in third grade. The learning at Hoffmaster supports student learning about Michigan's dunes, great lakes, wildlife & state parks. The state parks are ours to enjoy, care for and belong to the citizens of Michigan. We have five great lakes that surround us and which makes our state special. You can even see Michigan from outer space!

Mrs. Hall's students enjoy Lake Michigan, running the dunes, and also examining magnetite, a mineral in the sands surrounding the lake.



## Applevie's Apple Crunch

National School Lunch week was celebrated with activities throughout the week, including the great apple crunch! Applevie students all crunched an apple following morning - an apropos activity for our students living near all the wonderful area orchards



## Applevie's Big Idea

The Big Ideas assemblies returned to Applevie this year educating our students in character building through games, skits, and video clips. October's Big Idea is INTEGRITY! Ask an Applevie student what it means to be a person of integrity to determine if he or she has the Big Idea!



## Patriots Day

On September 11th, 4th graders from Mrs. Z's class learned about Patriot's Day, and the attacks of 9/11. Students listened to a story called the Man in the Red Bandana by Honor Crowther Fagan and John Crowther about Welles Remy Crowther. Welles was a heroic man who helped so many people escape one of the World Trade Center Towers, and kept going back up to rescue more. He will be forever remembered for his bravery and his red bandana that he had on him always. In honor of his memory students were given their own red bandanas to wear on Patriot's Day.



## STEM Classes and Native Plants

In September, Mrs. McKellar's Middle School STEM and Mr. Oudbier's Applevue STEM classes worked together to clean storm water before it enters the ground water or makes its way to Lake Michigan. There is only one way to do that-by planting native plants, and they planted

almost 3,000 of them! The long roots help native plants survive during Michigan summers and winters. Roots also absorb pollution from storm water and use it to make food in plant's leaves then release clean oxygen and water. Many of the beautiful wildflowers will be habitat for butter-

flies and pollinators next summer. Students will see more native insects and animals return to the banks and the little creek that flows through the ditch. We are grateful to Sparta Education Foundation, GVSU Groundswell, and Rogue River Partners for purchasing the plants.



## Dollar General's Donation

Dollar General in Sparta generously donated 100 books to Sparta Area Schools! Thank you Dollar General!

## School Resource Officer (SRO) & School Security Manager

We are off to a great start at Sparta Middle School! Part of what makes our school special are the relationships that our staff and students have with one another. Two key members of our staff are Deputy Tom Costa, our School Resource Officer, and Josh Fellows, our new School Security Manager. These gentlemen keep our building safe and secure by forming relationships with students and their families, helping us work through challenges and solve problems constructively. If you see either of these guys around, be sure to introduce yourself and say "Thank you!" for all they do to support our students here at Sparta Area Schools!



## Sparta Moose Lodge Donation

Thank you to the Sparta Moose Lodge for the school donations!

## Museum Field Trip



Thanks to the generosity of an SEF grant and Spirit Walk funds, fifth graders experienced Native American / Anishkenabe Culture Day at the Grand Rapids Public Museum. Indigenous People shared drumming, dancing, art, storytelling in the planetarium. Some students even learned how to make corn husk dolls. They shared many other facets of their culture with our students. Students learned a lot and really enjoyed the experience.



# Sparta Middle School Spirit Week

## Dress Up Days



## Tug O War



## 6th Grade Camp

**SMS Snowcoming Dance**  
**Wednesday, December 20th**  
**6pm-8pm**

**1/2 Day For Students**  
**November 22, 2023**

7:30	Doors Open for Students/Breakfast Served in the Cafeteria
7:40-8:35	Block 1/2
8:40-9:35	Block 3/4
9:40-10:31	Block 5/6



## RV Fire Safety

Ridgeview elementary participated in National Fire Prevention Week by meeting our very own Sparta firefighters! They taught us the ABCs of fire safety, answered our questions, reassured us that the person behind the gear is there to help us, and let us check out the fire truck! Thank you, Sparta Fire Department!

# Tips for choosing high school electives

The curricula at many secondary schools is designed to provide students with the education they need to go on to higher learning and/or enter the workforce. While certain subjects are on the educational menu in every school, students also have opportunities to pick unique subjects that cater to their interests and potential career goals. Classes that the school requires are often listed as core classes. Those that students are free to choose are called electives.

Electives exist outside of the required curriculum. Many education experts say that electives provide a great chance for students to experiment and determine if any niche subjects or topics appeal to them. According to psychologist Regine

Muradian, who works with students on learning and study skills, electives also can increase a student's desire to learn by offering a respite from the pressures of required courses.

Schools vary regarding how many elective classes high schoolers may take each year. Electives typically are a more prominent component of upperclassmen's schedules because they may have already completed most of the core curriculum requirements. Here are some tips for selecting electives.

- Go with what you know. Pick courses that tie into already established interests. If you love to write and get to the bottom of a story, then a journalism class may be ideal.

- Step outside your comfort zone. Another way to pick electives is to try new things and explore classes in that way. Maybe you never thought about computer programming before, but think it could be interesting to dabble?
- Choose with future major in mind. If you have an idea of which subject to study in college, you can select electives that align with that major. Someone who plans to major in finance may select an elective in marketing or business management, for example.
- Think about what colleges want. Colleges accept applicants based on academic performance, but they're also looking for students who check an assortment of boxes. Think

- about which electives may help you look more attractive to admissions departments. Classes in STEM, public speaking, debate, and international affairs might help you stand out.
  - Diversify your skills. Richard Detweiler, researcher and president emeritus of the Great Lakes Colleges, says a top preparatory factor to earning a six-figure salary is not one's college major, but having taken a large share of classes outside of one's major. Diverse courses throughout high school and college can put students on a successful path.
- Choosing electives need not be complicated. Students can opt for different strategies to select classes that will complement core learning.



## BELL RINGER

# The Chartwells K12 Division Salaried Leader of the Year



Melissa Alley, Sparta's Food Service Director, has been named The Chartwells K12 Division Salaried Leader of the Year. Every year one salaried leader from each of the Chartwells K12's 8 regions (650 school districts) is recognized for their innovation, an unwavering commitment to food and nutrition education, operational excellence, and outstanding community partnership. Of the 8 regional nominees, Ms. Alley took home the top honor and will be honored at the Compass Night of Stars in Orlando, celebrating with the best associates across Compass Group North America.

Melissa is a Sparta graduate and takes pride in serving the students, staff and families of Sparta Area Schools. Melissa has expanded our food service program, and continues to find innovative and fun ways to support student nutrition. Congratulations Melissa!



## WYOMING 2023

This July, some of our Spartans from the boy's cross country team traveled to Wyoming for a backpacking trip in the mountains. There were 20 people in total who went: Ted Smith, Mike Hull, Dave Oudbier, Joe Skripka, Ryan Metzger, Brian Momber, Adam Birkeland, Brandon George, Rhett Bunker, Girum Merriman, Griffin Mis, Owen Metzger, Nate Seekman, Harper Skripka, Noah Momber, Justin Bradford, Isaac Meyers and Cayden Oudbier. After surviving the grueling 22-hour car ride there, the group headed into the mountains on the Wind River Indian Reservation. All they had for the 5 days and 5 nights was what they had packed in their hiking packs. Each weighing in at around 40 pounds, the backpacks contained everything they would need for the week. Freeze-dried meals, snacks, a sleeping bag, 1 or 2 pairs of clothes, a toothbrush (maybe), and other miscellaneous things such as bug spray, bug net, flashlight, and a camera. Along with all their personal things, every group of 2 people had to carry their tent and some of the "group" items such as the cooking pot, hot chocolate, powder, water filters, and most importantly the JetBoils that heated up all the water used for cooking the food and drinks. The first stop on the way up for day 1 was to drop off drinks in the creek. This way everyone could have something to look forward to on the last day when coming down from the mountains. On the first day, the team hiked up to a high point called *The Saddle* (due to the surrounding area going down and back up like a saddle). After catching their breath from the hike up, it was immediately lost again after taking in the outstanding view from the top. Nothing but beautiful mountains, trees, and rivers as far as you could see. The first night was spent at a camping lot called Tillux. When they arrived there, 10 small orange tents popped up and were staked in for the night. A campfire was made and everyone ate their first of five freeze-dried meals. There was a mixed consensus of thoughts on the meals, and everyone sat around the campfire talking about the hike, what meal was the best (it was the fettuccine alfredo), and just getting a chance to take in the surroundings. The next day was a hike to Sonnicant where they stayed the rest of their time there. The campsite sat right between two gorgeous lakes where lots of fishing ensued. Every day the group got up and ate oatmeal for breakfast and then either went for a hike or took whoever wanted to go fishing out to the lake. They traveled to Lake David where some of the boys fished and others stayed back at camp, and the next day the whole team traveled to the Great Divide. The most beautiful view overlooks the reservation at around 12,000 feet of elevation. After signing the log and fishing at the Great Divide, another night was spent around the campfire enjoying the time with everyone. The next day was spent packing up, and at this point, our packs were a lot lighter (if it wasn't needed, burn it). Then was the hike back to Tillux for the last night. At Tillux, we noticed there were signs posted of a bear in the area (it must have been tired of the freeze-dried



## Grateful, Thankful, Blessed!

November is the time we look back upon our year and give thanks. I am so very grateful to live in a community that is filled with businesses, organizations and individuals who are supportive of our hometown!

One of these organizations is the Sparta Education Foundation (SEF). The SEF is a 501c3 public charity who had the vision to inspire learning and empower the success of the students of Sparta Area Schools. We believe that we are impacting the future of Sparta by supporting the education of our community's young people today. We are able to accomplish this through the generous financial support of our community members.

Your donations have provided:

- Musical instruments for our youngest learners, as well as guitars and band instruments for our middle and high school students
- A therapy dog named Toast
- Aquarium supplies for participation in Salmon in the Classroom (Michigan DNR)
- 3-D printers
- Ozobots for robotics and coding experiences
- PE equipment for life-long sports
- Funding for participation in organizations such as Science Olympiad and Farm Lab
- Drone camera
- Assemblies and experiences such as Lion Heart and Creative Art through Music

And much, much more!

We are so very grateful to the many teachers, businesses,

and individual community members who have so graciously given their time, their goods and services, and their hard-earned cash to make these grants possible.

This year we are especially thankful for the generosity of two long-time Sparta residents and ardent supporters of public education. These donors have made available to SEF a gift of up to \$100,000 to be used as a matching grant through June 2025. This two-year partnership is designed to enable the SEF to expand our grant-giving activities and build our endowment.

As a community, we have the opportunity to participate in this Matching Funds Campaign. No donation is too small or too large. By donating, we have the potential to impact Sparta students and our community for decades to come! Please take a moment to visit our website at <https://sparta-education-foundation.givecloud.co> to make a contribution.

It is truly a privilege to be able to serve alongside each of you as we support our current students, teachers, community, and future leaders. We know the investment we are making today will positively impact our community for years to come.

*Blessings,*  
**LeAnn Kitson**  
**President**  
**Sparta Education**  
**Foundation**