



SPARTA AREA SCHOOLS

February 2025

# BELL RINGER

Home of the Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School

www.spartaschools.org

## Reflecting on What Matters Most: Sparta Area Schools, a District Built for Your Family

Dear Spartans,

As we continue to work alongside our families and community, it's become clear that there are certain things we all value when it comes to education. For years, research has told us that parents and communities want schools that not only prioritize academics but also support the growth of the whole student, all within a safe and nurturing environment. At Sparta Area Schools, we've taken these insights to heart—and we believe that's why we are the district where your child can truly thrive.

This school year, we've had the privilege of expanding our academic offerings in a way that aligns with our commitment to providing students with meaningful and challenging opportunities. One exciting development is our partnership with Grand Rapids Community College. For the first time, GRCC instructors are teaching college-level courses right here at Sparta High School, giving our students the chance to earn college credits before they even leave high school. This initiative, along with our longstanding Advanced Placement (AP) offerings and dual enrollment programs, is designed to help our students not only excel academically but also build a strong foundation for the future—whether that path leads to college or directly into a career.

At the same time, we've expanded

career technical education through the Kent County Tech Center, providing even more ways for students to explore their interests and career options. These courses—both at Sparta High School and at KCTC—allow students to gain practical skills in fields such as healthcare, technology, and engineering. We've seen firsthand how these hands-on experiences open doors for students, whether they choose to continue their education or enter the workforce right after graduation.

But our commitment to our students extends beyond academic excellence. As educators, we know that social and emotional development is just as crucial to a student's growth as their academic achievements. We've worked hard to create an environment where every student feels seen, heard, and valued. From the moment they step into our classrooms, students are welcomed into spaces where their individuality is celebrated, and their voices are heard. Our teachers and staff are dedicated to not just educating but nurturing the whole student, helping them develop the skills they need to become confident, compassionate, and capable individuals.

Our efforts to support our students go beyond the classroom as well. We've invested significantly in mental health services and community partnerships, ensuring that every student has access

to the resources they need to thrive emotionally and socially. We believe that when students feel supported—emotionally, socially, and academically—they are more likely to succeed.

And, of course, we cannot overlook the importance of safety. We know that students cannot fully engage in their education if they do not feel safe. This is why we are committed to providing a secure, supportive learning environment for everyone in our community. From the thoughtful procedures we've put in place to the ongoing investments in safety equipment and personnel, we work tirelessly to ensure that our schools are places where both students and staff can focus on what matters most: learning and growing. But our approach to safety is not just about reacting to potential threats; it's about fostering a culture of respect, kindness, and vigilance that helps prevent issues before they arise.

As we reflect on our work, we are continually reminded of how important it is to listen to you—our families and community. Every year, we reach out for your feedback, and we are grateful for the trust you place in us. What we hear from you is consistent: you want schools that not only provide academic excellence but also create a caring, inclusive environment where your children feel safe and supported. We've listened, and we are committed to meeting those expecta-

tions, year after year.

The research has always been clear, and it's reflected in our daily work. Our students continue to show strong performance on nationally recognized assessments, and we take pride in the fact that our partnership with families plays a pivotal role in helping our students succeed—not just academically, but as thoughtful, responsible citizens ready to take on the world.

Whether through advanced coursework, career exploration, or extracurricular activities like Quiz Bowl and FFA, Sparta Area Schools offers a range of opportunities that nurture both the mind and the heart. These opportunities are what make our district a place where your child can grow into the person they are meant to be.

So, as we continue to listen, reflect, and improve, we are reminded that we are all part of something bigger. Every day, we are working together to create a community of learners who are not just prepared for the future—but inspired to make it better. And as we reflect on all that we've accomplished and all that lies ahead, we can confidently say—every day is a great day to be a Spartan.

Thank you for all that you do.  
Together, we are Sparta!

Joel

## EEC Preschoolers Have Fun At The Gym



*The preschool students at the ECC love playing in the gym when it's raining or too cold to go outside!*



*The high school wrestlers joined the Head Start rooms for a "snowball" fight! The students loved having "big kids" join them!*



## The Joy Of Giving

For many, the holidays are a time of joy and comfort. For others, it is a season of hardship, need and longing. This past December, 3rd grade classes at Appleview Elementary came together for a service project to teach their students about the joy of giving and about the importance of having compassion for others! Students were able to assemble 200 blessing bags to deliver to Mel Trotter in Sparta for those in need in their community! Many students, their families, friends and many others generously donated to the cause. We hope that students learned that they can make a difference in the lives of others and truly bless others with the kindness of giving back.





# BELL RINGER

## Exciting January Field Trip to Blandford Nature Center for Fourth Graders

Bundle up! This January, the fourth-grade classes will put on their snow gear and head to Blandford Nature Center for an exciting experience filled with exploration and discovery. The trip will increase students' understanding of animal adaptations in a fun and interactive way.



At Blandford, students will get to participate in hands-on activities and games that will help them see how different adaptations help animals survive. They will learn how different creatures survive and thrive in their natural habitats, even during the harsh winter months. To make the experience even more engaging, students will have the chance to meet some real-life animals up close!

If there is enough snow, which it is looking like there will be! Students will get to strap on snowshoes and trek through the snowy trails of Blandford. This activity not only provides a unique way to explore the winter wonderland but also offers a great opportunity to observe nature in action. Who knows what animal tracks or signs they might discover along the way?

While this field trip promises plenty of fun, it's important for students to dress warmly. Hats, gloves, scarves, and sturdy boots are a must to stay comfortable in the cold and snowy weather.

We are thrilled to provide our fourth graders with this opportunity to connect with nature and deepen their understanding of the world around them. Be sure to ask your child about their adventures at Blandford – it's bound to be an experience they'll remember for years to come!

## Sparta Middle School November and December Students of the Month!

### November Students of the Month



### December Students of the Month



Each month, our staff at Sparta Middle School nominates students whom they have in class to be honored as our Students of the Month. Criteria for being a Student of the Month are students who conduct themselves as model citizens who set a positive example by living out our Spartan Values - Safe, Positive, Accomplished, Respectful, Trustworthy, Accepting.



## The Wild Robot Comes to Life

The Second Grade team at Ridgeview Elementary had the opportunity to see the movie, The Wild Robot. The second grade students have been listening to the read aloud novel in class and had the chance to experience the book come to life. Thank you to the Sparta Education Foundation for the grant that covered the costs of the movie tickets and bussing for all second grade students and teachers to attend. This was a fun way to connect concepts covered in class with a real life experience. The second grade students compared and contrasted the elements within the novel to the differences and similarities in the motion picture movie. What an awesome experience we were able to have!

## Upcoming Spring Dance at Sparta Middle School Thursday, March 27th

Parent/Guardian Chaperones and Volunteers Needed!  
More details about this fun event will be sent out in early March!

## Sparta Middle School Spring Parent/Teacher Conference Information:

Thursday, March 20th:  
3:30pm-6:30pm

Details will be communicated in advance regarding virtual and/or in-person options.

**Sparta Education Foundation**

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT FUNDRAISER**

**SIP, SAVOR SUPPORT SEF**

at Brick Haus Brews  
Dine In or Take Out

20% of your total bill (not including alcohol) dine-in or take-out will be generously donated to the SPARTA EDUCATION FOUNDATION to help provide classroom grants. Mention the SEF when ordering.

Enjoy Open Mic Night from 6-9 pm

**MONDAY FEBRUARY 3 4-9 PM**

**BRICK HAUS BREWS**  
133 E Division St Sparta  
616-383-1155

sparta-education-foundation.givecloud.co  
Facebook: Sparta Education Foundation MI

Our **High Quality Program** is free to pregnant women and families with children ages 0-5.

## Early Childhood Programs

### Pregnancy - 3 Years Old

There are many developmental changes that take place during these first three years of life. We provide opportunities for exploration, and play that is based on each child's interests and development.

**Home Visiting**  
Families meet with Home Visitors once a week for 90 minutes, where the home environment is used to enhance the child's school readiness outcomes. Families and home visitors work together to develop and achieve goals and find community resources to meet families' needs. Socializations and family engagement events are offered regularly to provide opportunities for families to build relationships with one another.

**Infant/Toddler Rooms**  
Providing a safe, nurturing environment is the top priority for our Infant/Toddler classrooms. Each child has a primary caregiver who partners with the family to best understand the child's cues and ensure their needs are met. Learning takes place during every part of the day in these classes through individualized daily routines.

### 3 Years Old - 5 Years Old

**Preschool**  
We understand that children learn through experience and strive to nurture the whole child in our preschool programming. In addition to math, reading, science, social studies, and art skills, our students develop skills in cooperation, problem solving, and personal responsibility.

**Supporting you as your child's first, best teacher!**  
Contact us for more information: [hs4kc.org](https://hs4kc.org)





# BELL RINGER



## Sparta Education Foundation

Providing Extras for Education

### SEF Boosts PreK-12th Grade Education in Our Community

The Sparta Education Foundation (SEF) was founded in 1991, based on the belief that Sparta students should not be limited to minimum standards due to a lack of state funding for education. Since that time, many students have benefited from SEF-funded grants that provide the “extras for education”, but still the need continues.

The SEF’s mission is to help provide creative, progressive and innovative educational opportunities for our students and staff which are beyond the normal operating budget of the school district. Some examples are Toast the emotional support dog, the middle school fishing club, and a drone camera for high school students’ media classes.

Please consider making a contribution and give our students important enrichment opportunities that wouldn’t be available otherwise. Thank You, in advance, for your generosity and ongoing support.

465 S Union St,  
Sparta, MI 49345  
<https://sparta-education-foundation.givecloud.co> sef@spartaschools.org

### SEF FUNdraising Opportunities:

Sip, Savor, Support SEF Monday, February 3, 2025, from 4-9 p.m. Enjoy a meal at Brick Haus Brews 133 E. Division St in downtown Sparta. Dine-in or take-out (616) 383-1155. 20% of your total bill will be generously donated to SEF (alcohol not included) to help provide classroom grants. Mention SEF when ordering. Enjoy open mic night from 6-9 p.m.



**NEW YEAR, NEW YOU!**  
**FREE CLASSES**  
GED, HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA,  
OR ESL  
IN SPARTA AT THE  
EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

**SCAN HERE**



**OR CALL US AT:**  
**(616) 887-7321**

### Reading Month Kick-off

Kick off reading month at Schuler Books (2660 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids) & support Sparta Education Foundation by purchasing items in house or online March 2-8, 2025, and 20% of your purchase will be donated to the SEF. Simply mention SEF Book Days during checkout in the store or use code SEFBOOKDAYS during online checkout at <https://www.schulerbooks.com/>.

*Thank you*  
FOR YOUR SUPPORT

A huge THANK YOU to our very generous local benefactors and to all our donors. We have officially reached our matching grant goal of \$100,000, bringing the total to \$200,000! Monies raised will fund important programs and initiatives that support our students and educators. Together, we’re Providing Extras for Education ~ Inspiring Learning and Empowering

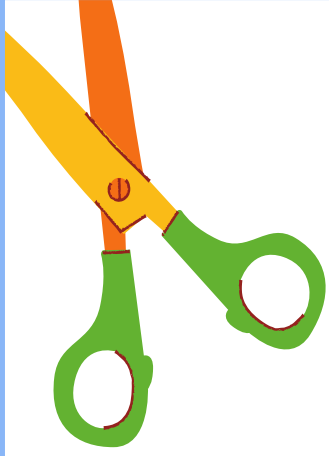
### Help support our Sparta Middle School STEM (Science, Tech, Engineering & Math) Programming:

We are excited to announce that our STEM program is in the process of creating a Makerspace for all classes to utilize. This initiative aims to foster creativity and innovation among our students, and we are reaching out to the community for support. We are seeking donations to assist students and teachers with this opportunity.

Below is a flyer that outlines what we are creating, how we plan to implement it, and the specific items we are hoping to receive. Your support would mean a lot to us and greatly benefit our students.

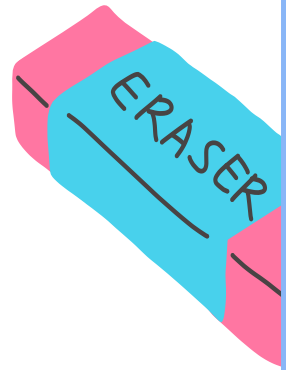


## BELL RINGER



***SPARTA AREA SCHOOLS***

***RIDGEVIEW***



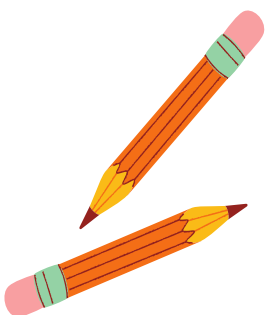
***ROUND UP!***

Do you have a 4 or 5  
year old who does not  
attend Ridgeview?

***Tuesday,  
March 18  
6:00PM***

***Curious about Kindergarten and  
the programs Sparta has to offer?***

***Come join us for an evening of fun  
for your whole family!***



Ridgeview Elementary School  
560 West Spartan Drive  
Sparta, MI 49345

