

MAY 2021

VOLUME 2021/22, ISSUE 3  
THE DISTRICT NEWSLETTER FOR REETHS-PUFFER SCHOOLS



# ROCKET CITY NEWS

## We CAN Fly



*"Birds born in a cage  
think flying is an illness."*

Alejandro Jodorowsky

Rockets, the events of the past 26 months have been enough to make us all feel as though we were "born in a cage." Our ability to fly was limited.

That statement isn't judgment. It's truth. Our experiences were altered, and our choices were narrowed.

Many will say that those limits were necessary for the greater good. Others will say that those restrictions violated freedoms to which Americans are entitled. Either way -- good or bad, right or wrong -- we have felt an impact in society, in our homes, in our places of work, and in our schools.

**But the caged bird can fly regardless of how unreasonable it may seem to her. And so CAN we!**

Despite great hardship, the future can be bright. It must be bright. While the past two years might have some people thinking we are doomed to a lifetime of being "caged" by circumstances outside of our control, we CAN fly!

We need look no farther than the Class of 2022 for inspiration. Two years ago, these teens faced a scaled-down spring



musical and lost sports seasons. One year ago, they saw class schedules change, seasons altered, choral programs shifted to virtual formats, and events like marching band championships cancelled. Today, these young adults have returned to full athletic and musical competition and to the stage. They've excelled artistically and academically.

Yes, they've seen changes along the way. But they haven't just adapted. As befitting of Rockets, they've soared.

As Rockets, we have a certain grit, a resilience built over decades of working to go farther, higher, faster, smarter, and stronger. Two years can't undo generations of that.

Rockets, the past two years have changed all of us. We've agreed, disagreed, struggled, and persevered. We all want a brighter future for our kids and the next generation. As we look to that brighter future, it's important to follow the Class of 22's example and fly!

Sincerely,

Steven L. Edwards

Steve Edwards  
Superintendent

# Reeths-Puffer High School Class of 2022

## ~ TOP TEN GRADUATES ~



Valedictorian of the Reeths-Puffer High School Class of 2022 is Emily Mazurkiewicz. Emily is the daughter of Paul and Holly Mazurkiewicz. She has a weighted grade point average of 4.388.

During high school Emily ran track and cross-country. She is a member of National Honor Society, Student Council, Spanish Club, and has interned with Reeths-Puffer's athletic trainer. Emily received the AP Scholar with Distinction Award from College Board and is also a Michigan Competitive Scholar recipient. She plans to study exercise science or kinesiology and eventually attend Grand Valley State University to pursue a degree in physical therapy.



Salutatorian of the Reeths-Puffer High School Class of 2022 is Keicko Houseman. She is the daughter of Jeff and Cecilia Houseman. Keicko has a weighted grade point average of 4.388.

She is a member of IMPACT Team, National Honor Society, Spanish Club, and is Senior Class Secretary. Keicko has also participated with the Osteopathic Foundation of West Michigan's OsteoScholars program. She will be attending either Grand Valley State University or Michigan State University to study human biology and psychology.



Emma TenBrink, daughter of Tad TenBrink and Leana Reed, is graduating number three in the Class of 2022. She has a weighted grade point average of 4.297. During high

school Emma played girl's lacrosse, was a member of Spanish Club, National Honor Society, Rotary Interact Club, Green Team, and works at McDonald's. She has also participated in the OsteoScholars program through the Osteopathic Foundation of West Michigan. Emma plans to attend Michigan State University to pursue a degree in human biology.



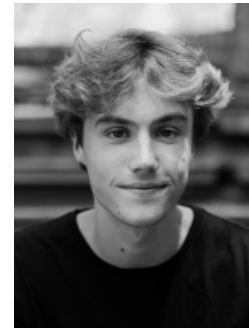
Graduating number four in the Class of 2022 is Sadie Boorman. Sadie is the daughter of Rick Boorman and Rikki Graves. She has a weighted grade point average of 4.296.

Sadie has been a part of Reeths-Puffer's IMPACT Team, National Honor Society, Spanish Club, is a Student Council Trustee, and works part time at The Lake House. She was also involved with Michigan State University's OsteoScholars program. Sadie has been very active in the school theater program, performing in the musical Guys and Dolls and other various theater activities, including Children's Theater manager. She plans on majoring in the health sciences.



Kailyn Eden, daughter of Colin Eden and Pam Eden, is graduating number five in the Class of 2022. She has a weighted grade point average of 4.278. Kailyn has been a

member of color guard, winter guard, and marching band. She has also been involved with the Gay-Straight Alliance, Leadership Team, and was a winter guard trainer for Reeths-Puffer middle school. Kailyn plans on attending Bowling Green State University where she has received the BG Success Scholarship. She plans on majoring in resort and attraction management.



Klay Grant is also graduating number five in the class of 2022. He is the son of Darin and Angela Grant. Klay has a weighted grade point average of 4.278. He has been a member of

the varsity soccer, varsity cross-country, and varsity track & field teams. Klay has been part of IMPACT Team, STATS, and First Priority Club at Reeths-Puffer. He has also been active in his church with student ministry. Klay is a MHSAA Scholar-Athlete recipient where he has been awarded All-State, four times All-Conference, three times All-Region, and three times City Champion in cross-country. He is a Team Michigan Cross-Country Athlete as well as West Michigan's 2022 Student Showcase Athlete Nominee for Reeths-Puffer

High School. Klay plans to attend Colorado Christian University to major in biblical studies with an emphasis in languages while also competing in cross-country and track & field.



Hailey Bos, Daughter of Andy and Beckie Bos, is graduating number seven in the class of 2022. She has a weighted grade point average of 4.250. Hailey played girls soccer where she was

team captain throughout high school. She was awarded the Rocket Award during her freshman year while playing Junior Varsity Soccer. Hailey is a member of National Honor Society, Green Team, Ski & Snowboard Club, and is Treasurer of Student Council. Hailey will attend Grand Valley State University where she has been awarded the Excellence Scholarship.



Also graduating number seven in the Class of 2022 is Kaden Edwards. He is the son of Steve and Karyn Edwards. Kaden has a weighted grade point average of 4.250. He has been a member

of IMPACT Team and National Honor Society. Kaden has been a four-year starter on the

baseball team, where he has been a three-year team Captain, named All-Conference, All-District, and Academic All-State, as well as leading the baseball program to their first district title in 20 years. He was a starter on the 2019 wrestling team that won Conference, County, District, and Regional titles which helped make Reeths-Puffer's first-ever appearance in the wrestling Final Four. As an individual, Kaden was a 2019 Muskegon County Wrestling Champion. Kaden is a finalist for Eastern Michigan University's Presidential Scholarship and plans to attend Eastern, or Saginaw Valley State University, to study medicine while continuing to play baseball.



Madalynn Holmes is also graduating number seven in the Class of 2022. She is the daughter of David and Connie Holmes. Madalynn has a weighted grade point average of 4.250. She

has been involved with the OsteoScholars and OsteoCHAMPS programs as well as Reeths-Puffer High School's IMPACT Team and Green Team. Madalynn has served as President of her 4-H club and as Vice-President of National Honor Society. She has also worked as a model for a local photographer. Madalynn has been awarded a full academic scholarship to Grand Valley State University where she plans to study biochemistry and psychology

and hopes to later attend Michigan State University's Medical School to become a cardiologist.



Jaymi Carmean, daughter of James and Valerie Carmean, is graduating number ten in the Class of 2022. She has a weighted grade point average of 4.241. Jaymi has participated in

basketball and soccer, is a member of National Honor Society, IMPACT Team, Peer-Assisted Learning, Teacher Readiness Training, and the Rotary Interact Club. She has been a volunteer assistant coach for Reeths-Puffer youth soccer and a counselor for Camp Break-a-Leg. Jaymi has been awarded a scholarship to attend Georgetown College in Kentucky where she plans to major in engineering while playing college soccer.



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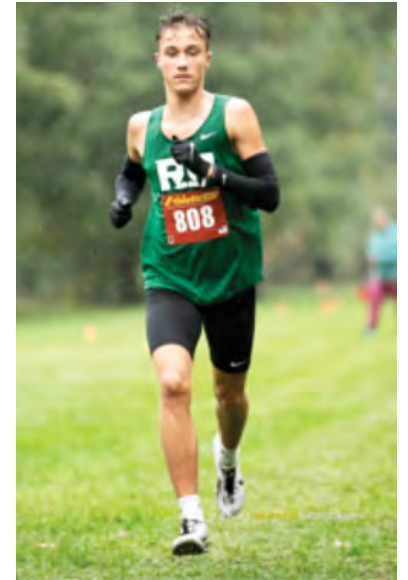


## Ice Dump For Kids Food Basket

High school student leaders were given the challenge by Kids Food Basket to raise money and supplies to help them supply other students with nutritious meals right here in Muskegon County. Our student leaders stepped up and planned a creative campaign that got the entire school involved. Our students were motivated to coordinate to help other students and learned more about food insecurity and the importance of access to healthy food. Classrooms gathered specific food items that could be donated and we also raised money through a Teacher Freezer Ice Dump Challenge. Many staff members, and even one student, signed up to have freezing water dumped on them. Students were randomly selected to get to be the one to dump the ice. It was great to see our student leaders rise to a challenge and coordinate all efforts for a great cause.

## Klay Grant, Scholar Athlete

Congratulations goes out to Klay Grant on being recognized as a scholar athlete by the Michigan High School Athletic Association. Klay is one of only 13 student-athletes from Class A schools throughout Michigan to receive this honor.



Klay is the second student-athlete (Kim Le gymnastics 2001-02) from Reeths-Puffer to receive this \$2,000 college scholarship. Students applying for the Scholar-Athlete Award must carry at least a 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale) grade-point average and have previously won a letter in a varsity sport in which the Michigan High School Athletic Association sponsors a postseason tournament. Other requirements for the applicants were to show active participation in other school and community activities and produce an essay on the importance of sportsmanship in educational athletics. Klay holds an impressive 4.278 weighted grade point average.

Below is an excerpt from "The Second Half" a publication of the MHSAA:

Klay Grant, Muskegon Reeths-Puffer  
Ran four seasons of cross country and is currently participating in his fourth season of track & field; also played varsity soccer as a freshman. Earned three Greater Muskegon cross country championships and finished eighth in Lower Peninsula Division 1 Finals this past fall. Qualified for MHSAA Track & Field Finals in four events as a junior and earned all-conference. Served as captain of cross country and track teams. Served as student council freshman president and as trustee as a sophomore. Participating in his third year of his church's children's ministry and as student leader, and second year as church intern. Serving as student leader in third year participating on school's IMPACT leadership team, and served as ambassador for Straight Talk About Tough Stuff coalition. Will attend Colorado Christian University and major in Biblical studies with an emphasis in languages.

Essay Quote: "I believe the integrity of sportsmanship is often downplayed. It is not only the heroic acts of sportsmanship in front of a big crowd, or when the cameras are on, but in the day-in-day-out monotony of relationships. I viewed this highly by encouraging each teammate after practices, telling them: "Nice job today, I'll see you tomorrow."

Klay is a fine example of a student-athlete living into Respect, Pride, and Integrity.

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## Awards from MSVMA District Solo & Ensemble Festival

On February 12, the RPHS Choirs hosted Vocal Solo & Ensemble. Our MadriGALS and Mad Men Choirs both received Division 1 Excellent ratings for their performances. All of our soloists received Division 1 Excellent ratings as well. Congratulations soloists: Caleb Sobolewski, Kyle Schlaff, Taylor McKinnon, Ava Rodriguez, Sydney Williams, and Gracibelle Sapone



## R-PHS Choirs Earn Division 1 Excellent Ratings at MSVMA District Choral Festival

On March 9, the Reeths-Puffer High School Choirs traveled to Grand Haven High School and competed at the District Choral Festival for ratings on their performances & sight-singing. All three Reeths-Puffer High School Choirs: Rocket Harmonics, Vocal Fusion, and Madrigals qualified for State Choral Festival with Division 1-Excellent Ratings in performance and sight reading.



## MadriGALS Selected as Top Choir at State Solo & Ensemble

Special recognition and an outstanding honor goes to our ladies of MadriGALS. MadriGALS was selected as the Number 1 Top Choir

at State Solo & Ensemble on Saturday, March 26th. The ladies of MadriGALS have been invited to perform at Michigan State University in May at the All-State Gala Honors Concert, and the Vocal Solo and Ensemble Recital. MadriGALS choir members are as pictured.: Allison Koens, Kate Miller, Taylor McKinnon, Emma Dibble, Gracibelle Sapone, Claire Woodrum, Megan Harris, Wyndham Ross, Alyvia Ackerberg, Irelyn Niklasch, AnnaLeesha Jenkins, and Kylie McNeilly.. Congratulations ladies for making Reeths-Puffer history representing our choir program with Excellence!



## Both the MadriGALS and the Mad Men Choirs

received Division 1 Excellent ratings for their Performances and Sight-Reading at State Solo & Ensemble in Allendale. Both MadriGALS and Mad Men choirs had perfect scores in performance! Caleb Sobolewski and Kyle Schlaff both earned Division 1 Excellent ratings as soloists. Kyle Schlaff scored a perfect rating in solo sight reading!

Pictured: Director-Regina Schlaff, Jacob Pierce, Wyatt Smith, Myles Norman, Gavin Wierenga, Greyson Wilder, Ashton Carpenter, Kyle Schlaff, Caleb Sobolewski, Victor Williams, Dylan Mason, Preston Carpenter, Accompanist-Lisa Ziemeis



May 19 & 20,  
7 p.m.,  
RPHS Choir's  
POPS Concert,  
"ON AIR"

a performance celebrating radio & streaming through the decades. Ticket sales will go live April 25 at RPHSRocketChoirs.ludus.com



# COLORGUARD

## I Won't Complain

The Reeths Puffer High School Color Guard started the season as underdogs. They were competing in the open category against such schools as Michigan State University and Purdue University and the high school guard included two eighth graders this year. Their performance is called "I Won't Complain". It showed how we have all experienced the pandemic in different ways and sent a message of hope. They went on to set numerous school records. When they competed at the Winter Guard International Competition against guards from multiple states, they scored the highest score of all the guards at the Prelims beating the schools mentioned above. They went on to place second in the finals (the highest Reeths Puffer Guard has ever placed at these finals was 3rd). While this is the third year Reeths Puffer Winter Guard will not be able to compete at the State competition, they ended the season with the highest score Reeths Puffer Guard has ever received with an 84.32. They came in 2nd place by 0.18. They were showered with applause from multiple guards around the areas making signs and wishing them a great last show. The Reeths Puffer Winter Guard continues to make a name for Reeths Puffer High School in the guard community.



# Guys and Dolls



This spring, R-P Fine Arts shared the fun and classic musical *Guys and Dolls*. It is not as well-known as some of R-P's most recent productions, but this show brought our audiences lots of laughs, gasps and heart-warming moments. They met groups of gangsters, gamblers, missionaries and showgirls as we traveled back to the 1940s with catchy music and lyrics by Frank Loesser. It has been difficult getting the high school musical back on its feet after COVID hit the department so hard, but we are so thankful for the audiences that attended and supported us this spring, and the opportunity to share art with our community.

Although there have been some changes in the arts department, this production was a student-driven experience, as is tradition. It showcased the immense amount of talent we have here at R-P. Students performed on stage, played the music, designed and ran the lights, built and moved the set pieces, worked as ushers and more! They are the reason *Guys and Dolls* was a massive success!



# R-P Middle School Singers receive top honors at Solo & Ensemble Festival

On Saturday, February 11th, musicians from around West Michigan traveled to Reeths-Puffer High School to participate in District 7 Solo & Ensemble Festival, hosted by the R-PHS Choir program and the Michigan School of Vocal Music Association (MSVMA).

After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, students & directors savored the opportunity to be together again making music! The judges were impressed & very complimentary of our middle school students. One judge commented that they were one of the “finest middle school choirs he has heard”. High praise after a long season of challenges & hard work!

All (11) R-PMS events received Division I ratings & valuable feedback. The RPMS Treble Makers along with 4 of our soloists received perfect scores! Brava & Congrats goes out to the R-PMS Treble Makers Choir as well as the following middle school soloists: Claire Biesiada, Avery Cooper, Keira Erickson, Juliauanna Gedmin, Olivia Harshbarger, Madeline Horenziak, Sophia Ross, Mackenzie Rynberg, Taylor Scheleh & Emma Wagbo.



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read their own book, students chose one of several books. They simultaneously read the book with a group of other students. Much like watching the same show on television, “watercooler” conversations naturally begin to happen centering on the books and topics that they are reading. Lessons are then further developed around these novels and conversations. In addition to Historical Fiction novels purchased by the school district, two of the ELA teachers, Mrs. Curle and Ms. Kotecki have been applying for community grants to add additional books and clubs to the



Middle School ELA program. They are elated to have been awarded over \$1350 in grants this year that directly benefit our Reeths-Puffer Middle School students!

Many thanks to the following organizations that awarded the following grants to our ELA classrooms this year:

- Best Financial Credit Union \$197.69
- Meemic Insurance Company \$197.69
- Muskegon Northside Lions \$200.50
- Muskegon Northside Lions \$193.00
- Pi Beta Phi \$150.00

Youth Advisory Council of the Community Foundation \$472

## Community Grants Support RPMS Book Clubs

This year, the Middle School English/Language Arts (ELA) team has begun to incorporate book clubs into the 7th and 8th grade reading curriculum. During a book club rotation, instead of a traditional silent reading period in which students would all

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- Sat. July 9, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. @ Walker Park
- Sat. July 13, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. @ Walker Park

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For more information about our club, see:

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



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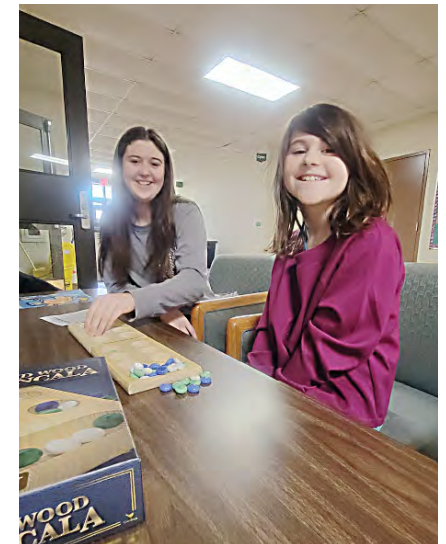


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# Middle School Buddy Program Off to a Great Start!

Beginning second semester, Reeths-Puffer Middle School and Central Elementary started a collaborative opportunity for students known as the Buddy Program. The Buddy Program consists of 20 Reeths-Puffer Middle School students that provide consistent friendly interactions, while building strong relationships and providing support to Central Elementary students.

The goal of the Buddy Program is to build lasting relationships with Central Elementary students. Buddies have participated in extensive after school training over the course of a 2-month timespan. In that time, students grew in their understanding of personal strengths and growth areas, active listening, conflict resolution, team building, as well as their capacity to build meaningful friendships. Students in the Buddy Program share a desire to have a positive impact for participating Central Elementary students, and the great thing is, they are just getting started!



# Ride with Pride Launched at RPI!



After a great first semester of school, some of our students were recognized for their leadership, hard work and excellent behavior within the school. RPI has partnered with West Michigan Driving Academy, Alma Ford, Radium Photo and Assured Heat and Cooling to celebrate the great kids! Here are some pictures from our first semester give away! Who doesn't love gift cards? Thanks community partners. Next semester we will be giving bikes away to two lucky students and more gift cards.



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# La Clase de Español

Students are reading, speaking, and writing in Spanish through Spanish Books like The Hungry Caterpillar and Alexander's No Good Very Bad Day. We are celebrating March Reading



## “Help Victims of Natural Disasters” Hat Days

In February, with help from the student body at RPI, the students on the Carter/ Coyne team raised over \$460 from their “Help Victims of Natural Disasters” Hat Days that were held every Friday in February! This idea to raise money, specifically for the tornado victims of Kentucky and wild fires of Colorado, was all started from our Driving Question Board in Language Arts class of, “How Do We Help Others Who Have Been Affected by Natural Disasters?” Students studied different types of natural disasters, had book clubs that focused on natural disasters, and created public service announcements about a chosen natural disaster. It was so wonderful to end the unit by understanding how if we all work together, we can help others in need.

## Grant Provides 75 New Books for RPI Library

We received grant money from the Muskegon County Community Foundation and were able to purchase 75 new books for our library. The kids were so excited to see the new books available for them to check out.





# Music in the Morning with Mr. Lawton (AKA...Triple-M)



Music has been unbeatable (*music pun intended*) these past few months! From boomwhackers to composition, the students have had a myriad of opportunities to safely grow and learn as young musicians.

## Boomwhackers:

What...are they? Boomwhackers are hollowed out tubes designed to correspond with each piano key/pitch. The smaller the tube, the higher it will sound! These instruments are awesome tools used to teach rhythm, pitch, chords, octaves, and accidentals. Plus, they allow the students to play together as an ensemble. The students construct a human piano, and each note is important! Also, let's be real, it's always satisfying to hit something with a stick!



## Music Composition:

The students have also had the opportunity to compose their own piece of music. We spent a lot of time practicing how to correctly write out quarter notes, eighth notes, treble clefs, bass clefs, time signatures, measures, etc. The students each created their own composition, and I played them on the piano for the class! It was rewarding for them to experience what it feels like to compose something, and immediately listen to it played by a... "professional." Special shout out to the following fantastic pieces (If you couldn't tell, the students named them as well.): "Mr. Lawton's Toe." "Notes of Fun" "Major Bag Alert"



## Talent Share Day:

Don't we all just love performing for our peers? You'd think the answer would be "no," but these talented and confident 5th & 6th graders showcased some amazing talent for our "talent share days." We saw everything: Skits, instrumentalists, singers, dancers, awkward griddy's, animal sounds, burping the ABC's- you name it! It was a blast to see such an array of wonderful and eager students expressing themselves for the class.





# RPI Choir

RPI Choir had their first in-person concert last December, and they were absolutely phenomenal! With 280 students in choir, an entire tech crew, a slew of parent volunteers, and a special appearance from Scott Panozzo himself as our Christmas Tree, it proved to be a spectacular event. The choir students experienced their first live performance, for a packed house! Many students were also able to audition a solo “special act.” This consisted of a variety of dancers and singers! Our next concert, titled “RPI Variety Show: Out of This World,” will be on May 24th at 7:00 PM, at the RPHS Rocket Center. The theme of this performance is “outer-space.” It’ll be the space to be....Space humor...



Stay “tuned” for more!  
(Music pun intended...)

**-Mr. Lawton & RPI Choir**



## 5th Grade Science Museum Exhibit Display Project



Ms. Carter and Mrs. Hazard’s science classes learned how to create a museum display for our PBL project. In small groups, students researched the biomes of the world in order to create a display to highlight the features of their group’s biome. The Muskegon Lakeshore Museum will be featuring several of the student created biome displays beginning in mid April.





# Winter Endurance Adventure

As you well know, the Muskegon Luge and Winter Sports Park in the Muskegon State Park is a gem of our county and West Michigan. Thursday's throughout the winter were a highlight for over 130 of our kids. Raider, RPI's therapy dog, and Mrs. Peel joined in the emotional and physical benefits from being outside and moving.



# Rocket Junior Band

Our Rocket Junior Band is off to a great start! This Leadership Ensemble is filled with energetic and positive students ready to make a difference for others! After Spring Break our ensemble will be taking a tour of the school district to perform inspirational concerts for our elementary students! We are excited to serve our amazing community! More to come!





**Nate Smith**  
Director of Instruction  
and Learning

## ELA and English Lessons: Turning Text into Action

I don't think that you can live in a house with kids and not at some point hear the quote, "This book is boring".

As we continue to grow in our understanding of performance tasks and demonstration of visible learning, we are seeing a connection between our literacy units and the visible

demonstrations with our students.

The skill of "showing" what you know about a book or story takes on many shapes and forms. In Kindergarten it can look like becoming a meteorologist and performing a weather broadcast at an outdoor weather station. In 1st Grade, it can look like bird watching at lunch and in 2nd grade, digging for fossils to better understand the context of archeological digs.

At the secondary levels it might look like understanding water shortages around the world and the impact that fresh water has on developing countries, reenacting the efforts of hauling water to villages. It could be writing a letter to a legislator based on the persecution of a character in a book. Students may travel to a Holocaust museum to see the impact of a genocide or visit a local business that has outreach programs similar to a character in a book. It may be having a guest into the classroom to discuss the culture and context of a story that they have lived in or it may be an activity in which the author has a strong opinion about but a guest to the class represents the other side of the opinion.

Often when our kids feel a book is boring, they may really be trying to say, "Why do I have to read this and what am I going to do with the information?"

In closing, thank you for allowing our school to connect literacy to purposeful writing, relevant topics, people and events across cultures and interests. The more we allow for the text on pages to turn into actions, the more exciting literacy becomes to our kids.

## How Can I Help...With New Math

Our Illustrative Math program spans K-Algebra 2 and there are a few principles that are priorities for our students. We can all help support our kids with these

principles, listed below, in their math development Kindergarten through Algebra 2 and beyond.

**Principle #1: Our students will talk about ways to solve problems, increasing their understanding and context to number problems.**

Traditional Questions to keep asking: Did you get your homework done? What did you get on the test? What did you do in class? Can I see it?

Please keep asking these questions, they have not become irrelevant and on some days these questions allow us to get an idea of how much energy and effort they are putting into their learning. It also allows a common start to a math conversation.

Questions that support Principle #1: How did you come up with the solution, can you show me? Wow, that is way different than how I would solve it, can I show you how I was taught to do it? Can you tell me/show me what you did to get that answer? Will you teach me how?

**Principle #2: Our students will apply math beyond the classroom to the world around them.**

Traditional Questions to keep asking: I never use this after high school, when are you going to use it? Did you get the correct answer? Do you have practice problems to do? Can you ask your teacher for help?

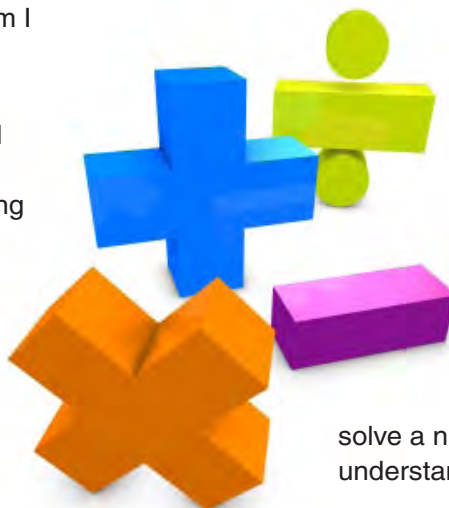
These questions are critical to Principle #2, having a purpose in math is critical for students to increase their fluency, accuracy and engagement. Asking these types of questions allows for conversations, providing our kids with a mission to talk more math in the classroom with their peers and teachers.

Questions to support Principle #2: Why is explaining your work important? Why do you need to know this? Why don't you just solve the problem? Why is solving the problem correctly important? Is this math easy or hard for you, why?

**Principle #3: Our students will engage in math discourse (struggle) to allow for multiple contexts and solutions to the same problem.**

Traditional Questions to keep asking: Are you finished with your math yet? Are you struggling to understand the problem? You finished that fast, did you understand the problems? How can you check your answers to see if they are right? Why don't you just use the calculator on your phone?

Kids need to be able to consider multiple ways to solve problems and check answers. This is the quickest and easiest part of the process. Explaining the way that a solution works or multiple ways to solve a number problem is the hard part, but it leads to the best understanding of mathematical problems..





Questions to support Principle #3: How did your classmates solve the problem? Did your teacher model or show you a strategy? Can I sit by you and see how your mind works? Can you tell me how you came up with that solution? I can tell you are frustrated, what can you do next? Are you stuck, can I listen? What are some questions in your workbook that are similar, maybe there is a clue? How close do you think you are to having the answer?

By supporting your kids with math you are supporting our continued growth as a community that supports math.

## Classroom Environments

In recent years, research projects have focused on components that impact student learning. The project, conducted by John Hattie and his organization, Visible Learning, draws attention. Research projects he has conducted over the last 15 years encompass influences on student learning that have a significant effect/impact on our students in terms of their schooling and home life.

Using the graphics in this article, we are able to visualize the ideas and strategies that influence our ability to learn both inside and outside of the classroom. Research like this can help us to refocus on schools as communities.

It is common to have opinions or ideas of what needs to be done every day for our children. Hattie's research suggests that we are probably right. Every choice we make with the idea of helping kids improve their chances of learning, feeling successful in school, and learning at a higher level. In addition, the data shows that only a few practices have a regressive effect on learning. Providing the most impactful options to our children and ourselves often requires us to compromise in order to provide the skills necessary for life after Rocket City.

If you're curious and wonder what 15 years of research on learning has revealed, here are four recurring themes.

1. A teacher's belief in their work and their students' abilities is important.
2. Students who have their basic needs met have an easier time learning, but they can still reach higher levels
3. Having a positive attitude towards school without fear or punishment is important
4. Consistently delivering high-impact instruction is essential.

Knowing that students are our number one priority, we are always working on implementing strategies that will benefit them the most in a positive manner.

### For more information please visit:

<https://visible-learning.org/>

<https://visible-learning.org/2022/01/hatties-barometer-of-influence-infographic/>

<https://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-sizes-learning-achievement/>

# What is Place-based Education?

Listening Walk Through the Woods  
USING OUR SENSES



Designing with Nature  
NATURE ROOM ACTIVITY



Harvesting Lettuce for Snack  
HOOPHOUSE



**Place-based education promotes learning that is rooted in what is local - the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place - that is in students' own "place" or immediate schoolyard, neighborhood, or community.**



# What does today's child need?

Ten years ago, the Pennsylvania Elementary team asked one another, "What does today's child need"? They quickly got busy developing an engaging environment, place-based curriculum, and open-minded teaching team that supports meaningful and authentic learning. Place-based education is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum. Emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences, this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students' appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens.

At RP Pennsylvania Elementary, we cultivate the young child's desire and ability to become involved citizens committed to enhancing their community. Some of the activities we have engaged in over the past years involve teaching about animal and water conservation, culminating



each year by visiting the Muskegon County Resource Recovery Center as well as supporting the protection of the Gray Wolf through the WWF. We have also grown food for RP High School, built birdhouses for the playground, planted a

butterfly garden and a rain garden, completed annual service work at the Muskegon Luge Adventure Sports Park, as well as donated recycling bins and a water fountain for the community to use while visiting the state park, spread the joy of music at the local nursing home, and visited an Amish community to see how they grow food. Our love for the earth is expressed in many ways including an annual beach sweep, visiting the recycling center and landfill and



then using these good environmental practices at school as well as at home. At Penn, we constantly look for new ways to connect with the community and use these place-based experiences to become environmental citizens.



# Central Elementary stands to get Greener this Spring!

Our school has been awarded \$5000 in grant money through the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative. Teachers at every grade level will use place-based education to connect Central students to their communities through environmental stewardship projects that leave a lasting impression on students.

The kindergarten team is looking forward to improving the sensory garden that they started last year. They look to improve the sustainability of the sensory garden with the addition of an irrigation system.

Each first-grade class is responsible for a garden bed in the Central courtyard. The garden beds are no ordinary gardens though. They act as a certified waystation for migrating Monarch

butterflies through the University of Kentucky. First graders will plant and maintain the gardens with native plants to attract butterflies and birds.

The multi-age class is installing a rain garden in downtown Muskegon along Ryerson Creek. The rain garden will help clean run-off from the parking lot at the United Way building, before the water goes into the creek.

Second graders are eagerly awaiting warmer temperatures to plant a new pollinator garden in Central Elementary's front yard. This project provides real-world application of their reading and writing curriculum.

Third grade students are studying frogs that call Michigan home. They

will combine science with technology and design to produce signage with QR codes along the trails at Lost Lake. Hikers will be able to learn from our incredible young herpetologists!

Our fourth-grade leaders noticed that more and more classes are spending time learning outdoors. They will be adding additional outdoor classroom space so that more students can connect with the natural world during the school day.

Central Elementary is recognized as a Michigan Green School and is the only school in Muskegon county with 100% of classes participating in GLSI projects this spring.

For more information, visit: <https://www.westmichianglsi.org>



## Rocket Way Leaders

Despite the challenges we have all felt and faced over the course of these past two peculiar and unprecedented years, our behavior data continues to point to our kids' strength, adaptability, and resilience. In fact, 85% of our students have received 0-1 behavior referrals this entire school year. That number

climbs to roughly 92% when folding in those who have 2-5. In short, Respect, Pride, and Integrity is consistently on display throughout Central!

Our Positive Culture Team has structured some new initiatives in an effort to better recognize, celebrate, and acknowledge our leaders of the Rocket Way. For example, each week the name of a Rocket Way leader from each grade level is randomly drawn.



Those students then earn a golden ticket equivalent to 10 Rocket Slips. Additionally, we have reinstated Lunch with the Principal and monthly Rocket

Way school-wide assemblies. Also, new items and experiences have been added to the Rocket Shop to generate increased excitement and motivation. At the classroom level, teachers are structuring similar weekly recognition pieces for their respective rosters, building community around our agreed upon behavior expectations.

# The Power of Peer to Peer



Peer to Peer programming continues to grow throughout Central! Many Kindergarten and 1st Grade classrooms have established Buddy Classes with 3rd and 4th Grade through our pilot of the Caring School Communities curriculum. In addition, several teachers are teaming to creatively share students during small groups to better meet academic skills needs. Outside of core times, teachers are intentionally linking bigs with littles to better support social needs. On a larger scale, we recently launched a new Buddy program in partnership with the Middle School to build community and extend the impacts of Rockets supporting Rockets across Rocket City. This has already generated considerable success. In addition to Middle School Buddies, our partnership with the High School Pals program is continuing strong.

Relationships are at the heart of our work, and structured peer to peer support has proven itself magical. Often, the bonds and friendships created through these types of programs are the very moments many of our students

look forward to the most. Thank you to those who have built and coordinated additional touchpoints and opportunities for our students to feel loved, supported, and believed in.



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# Empowering Twin Lake Students Through Goal Setting

Students at Twin Lake Elementary are diving deeper into owning their learning through goal setting. The learners start each month by setting 1-2 reading goals for themselves focusing around phonics & fluency, in addition to 1-2 math goals focusing around addition & subtraction. Through looking at their data charts created by each learner, they determine which percentage, words per minute, etc. they would like to get to by the end of each month. The learners take this task a step above and beyond by coming up with 2-5 strategies they plan to use in order to help them reach their monthly goals.

Goal setting helps create a belief in oneself that one is capable of conquering hard tasks. Through the use of these goals, the students are more confident and fearless to try new things, and step out of their comfort zones the more they feel success. Their reading fluency has increased, as well as their percentage of accuracy when looking at phonics and math skills. When a child owns the hard tasks or skills they are completing, it is harder for them to become discouraged or defeated, as well as increases their engagement in each lesson. When one feels success, they can achieve hard things.



## March is Reading Month

In celebration of reading month, the kindergarten hallway at RPTLE was completely Seussified.

Students helped Mrs. Greene and Mrs. Bradford make green eggs & ham, hopped on “pop” with balloons filled with letters that created cvc words, and learned why it is important to “speak for the trees,” like the Lorax. A great book to lead us into our next unit, “Trees Are Alive.”

Kindergartners also had the opportunity to celebrate books and authors that were special to their teachers as well as Mr. Edwards, Mrs. Schmitt, Miss Emmie, & Mrs. Palazzolo.

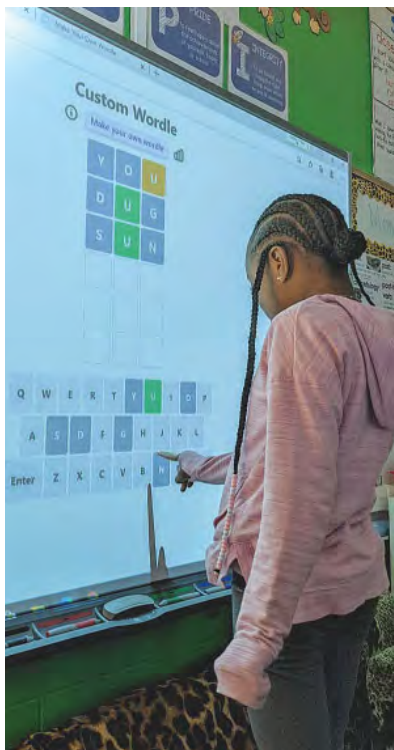




# Music with Mrs. Clifton

1st through 4th grade students across the district have been busy singing, drumming, moving, playing, and learning in general music with Mrs. Clifton. 1st and 2nd graders have experienced many different types of instruments, including; drums, boom-whackers, & xylophones. 3rd and 4th graders received their first individual instrument, the recorder! They have been earning recorder “karate belts,” after completing new songs in their course. All grades completed a unit on the ukulele!





London Owens enters the letters for her next guess.



Riley Pfeiffer celebrates after the team figures out the word in five tries!

## Spelling hurdles? **PLAY WORDLE!**

*By Sue Kinstner, Twin Lake Elementary 2nd grade teacher*

This teacher, like many others, has been sucked into the world of Wordle. Wordle is an online game that challenges the player to use their knowledge of the English language to decipher a word. Each unique word has five letters. You only get six tries. The words have to be real words and spelled correctly.

I decided that this would be fun practice for my students too. And wouldn't you know it? Someone already had that idea, and built an online, customizable Wordle game to use in the classroom! Each morning, I make two to three puzzles to use within our day. Because we're only in second grade, I choose three- or four-letter words with common spellings (we call those "Snap words"). We play Wordle right before Read-Aloud, but it can be squeezed into a spare moment throughout the day! The kids are so excited to come to the rug and play. I draw "sticks" with student names to see who gets to type in the letters, but they all help in guessing the word and spelling it correctly. It's so fun to watch them working together as a team to figure out the word...and celebrate together when they've won!



## Speed Friending With Our Little Buddies

Each grade level has a buddy classroom and they regularly come together to read, or work on a project together. During our Rocket Launch celebrations on Fridays in March, the buddies spent time "Speed Friending". Speed Friending has given our kids the opportunity to discuss a book that they are reading or share a time when they showed courage~ our Capturing Kids Hearts theme for the month. Each child has two minutes to share while their buddy listens and then they switch roles. They practice speaking and listening to one another and get to know each other a little better. We look for ways to build a sense of belonging and community at RP-TLE and our kids feel more connected when they know that someone cares about them. Kids keep a positive mindset and attitude and look forward to coming to school.

# Local Author Visits 1st Grade

## Welcome “Gummy Bear” Back to the Halls of Reeths–Puffer Elementary



Who ever thought that I would meet a local author at the hair salon! I had never met a “real” children’s author before until I took a trip to my local salon. I decided to strike up a conversation with the “nice” lady next to me! I am so glad I did! Being a first-grade teacher, you can imagine my eyes when she said “Hey you want to see my first children’s book”? Do I ever! That was all it took, and a few weeks later we gave our first graders an opportunity to believe in themselves.



Meet Ms. Gwen Glatz, referred to as “Gummy Bear”, a North Muskegon graduate, and raised four children who graduated from Reeths-Puffer High School. In the younger years, her children attended Reeths-Puffer Elementary. Her children’s book is titled “Bertha Mae Gets a New Job”, it is a story about her family. “Gummybear” came into RPEL to read and tell her story to Mrs. Oyler and Ms. Thorns first graders, and she inspired them to write their own stories. We are so thankful for the time and effort she put into our students telling her story, and the hard work it took to get her book published. We sure do hope she continues to write and inspire others here in our community!



Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, and our first graders hope to have her back to hear some of their own stories in the future. The students will never forget her “Gummy Bear” way!

*Mrs Oyler and Ms. Thorns Class*







VIEW FROM THE HIL-SCHOOL PROFILE

## Readers Today, Leaders Tomorrow: Teachers at Reeths-Puffer Elementary are engaging families in new ways



By Jane Dezinski, HIL Facilitator  
Paul Klimsza, Reeths-Puffer Elementary  
Principal

The HIL Leadership Team at Reeths-Puffer Elementary School (RPEL) has taken their goal of increasing family engagement and made it happen with an interactive literacy calendar for each month of the year. The calendar focuses on the theme of, "Readers Today, Leaders Tomorrow" by sharing a large variety of literacy opportunities for students at home.

### At Reeths-Puffer, every month is reading month!

Literacy activities are engaging for students and encourage all areas of literacy practice at home. This idea takes the place of the traditional "March is Reading Month" and replaces it with the concept that every month is reading month. Students are encouraged to turn in their completed calendar to qualify for regular drawings for prizes and incentives. The electronic calendar is shared weekly in the building newsletter and at literacy events, conferences, and any type of parent gathering. During morning announcements, the activity for that date is also read to students. Staff plan to reach out to community businesses to also participate in this initiative by providing



incentives and advertising the newsletter to the community. The calendar was created by teachers that are members of the HIL Team.

The goal of the HIL work at RPEL is to develop systems that leverage shared leadership to sustain continuous growth in equitable literacy learning for all students and staff. Our shared vision is to create a literacy-rich environment where all students can thrive and learn. One focus is on **Literacy Essential #10: Collaboration with families in promoting literacy**. Families engage in language and literacy interactions with their children that can be drawn upon and extended in kindergarten through fourth grade. Educators help families add to their repertoire of strategies for promoting literacy at home.

Of particular importance to this process is having the instructional coach involved in the learning lab, so that she can provide additional supports for teachers, ensuring that the Learning Lab is not just a one-day event but rather an on-going learning journey throughout the school year.

### About HIL at Reeths-Puffer

RPEL is in the final year of their HIL Grant. The work through the HIL process has invigorated the staff at RPEL. Data-based decision making, coupled with a firm grounding in the Essential Literacy Practices, has allowed our staff to develop and focus on our growth edges.

Our growth edges have allowed us to continuously monitor our data to make sound educational decisions for our students. Through shared leadership, commitment to data-based decision making, and continuous feedback, the HIL process has provided a platform for our staff to learn and grow.

*Jane Dezinski is a retired Executive Director of Intervention and Prevention for Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency (NCRESA). Jane currently works as an independent consultant for Kaplan Early Learning Connect 4 Learning Curriculum presenting nationally. Her work with the HIL Project draws on her commitment to continual learning and growth. She appreciates the unfailing commitment of the school leadership teams she works with during an exceptional time in educational history.*

*Paul Klimsza has served as principal for Reeths-Puffer Elementary School for 13 years, and he considers his tenure "the most fun and rewarding time in the profession." Paul has a passion for lower elementary students. Establishing a firm foundation in learning is key to their lifelong learning and future success. Walking with our youngest students as they learn and grow is the biggest reward.*

**Congratulations Reeths-Puffer Elementary team for creating such a dynamic way to engage our students in literacy each month!**



*HIL Team interactive literacy calendar authors: Amy Yarian, Lynelle Brainard, Mandy Wheeler*



# Welcome Michigan Marine “Private Jayme Woodring” to Reeths-Puffer Elementary

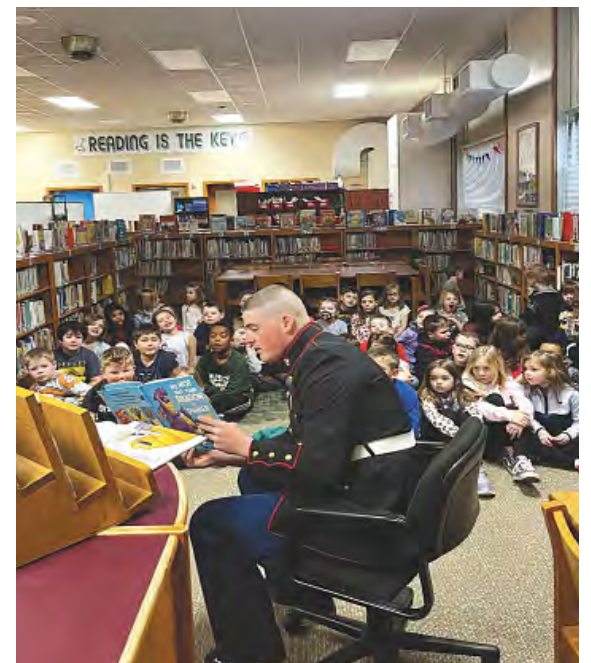
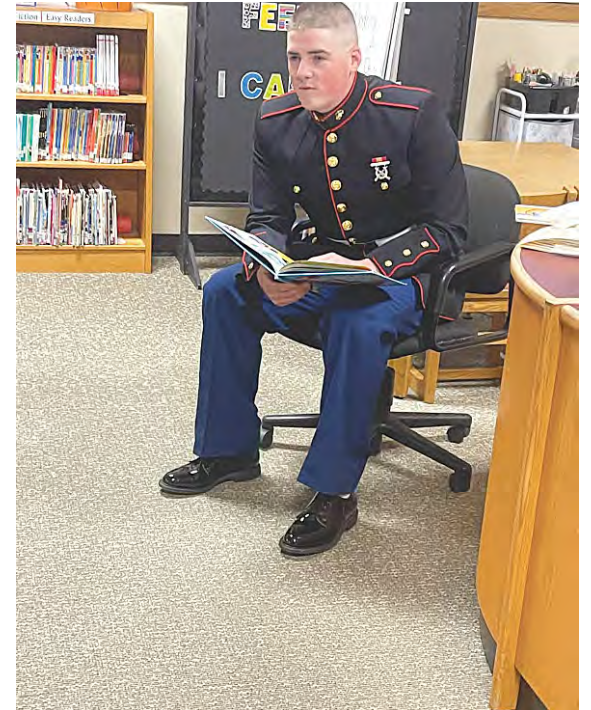


Private Jayme Woodring, pays his pen pals at R-PEL a visit. Private Woodring enlisted into the Marines and attended boot camp in North Carolina, recently graduating in March 2022. While in bootcamp, Ms.Thorns' and Mrs Oyler's classes wrote him letters and drew pictures to show our appreciation for his service to our Country. Jayme was having a hard time being away from home and the letters and pictures meant a lot to him.

Upon graduating from boot camp Private Woodring wanted to meet his pen pals. On Friday March 18th private Woodring came to R-PEL, dressed in his Marine attire, beaming with excitement to read to our students. After reading a story to many first graders, he did answer questions about being in the Marines, and what being a Marine means to himself and his family. He sent the students off knowing that anything is possible if you work hard and keep a positive attitude along the way!

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!! We wish you all the best in your upcoming journey to where you will be assigned “Japan or Hawaii”. We look forward to sending you letters once you get settled in your new location.

## *Ms. Thorns and Mrs. Oyler Classes*



# Bingo with Santa and Book Fairs Return!

The R-PEL PTO continues to spread cheer and joy to the students and families of R-PEL. In addition to the festive fall activities they brought back Bingo with Santa and two fabulous Book Fair Evenings. Both of these events were well attended that help the PTO raise money to support the students of R-PEL. Thank you, PTO, and thank you R-PEL families for your continued support!

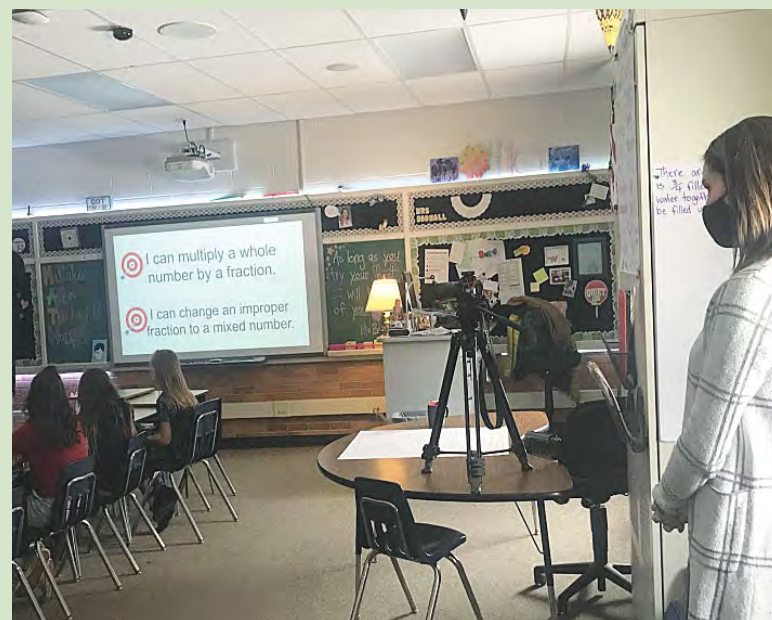


# CHAMPS

R-PEL's Lisa Bignall used her classroom to model "CHAMPS" practices throughout the county. Champs is a part of our Positive Behavior Interventions Supports, PBIS. It is a way for teachers to successfully manage their classrooms. Mrs. Bignall has been a leader throughout the county and her classroom has been used as a teaching model for other teachers. Way to go Mrs. Bignall!



The acronym CHAMPS describes C-Conversation (Voice Level), H-Help (What to do if you need help), A-Activity (What tasks the students should be doing), M-Movement (What is the level of movement required), P-Participation (How can teacher tell if they are participating in the activity), and S-Success!



# March Is Reading Month



## Guest Speaker



During the month of March RP spends extra time focusing on the importance of reading. Wesco Store 18 in North Muskegon Manager Katie offered to be a guest reader to classes and bring popcorn for the kids too!! Wesco employee Tracy Wolfe also came in to read to her child's class and bring popcorn! Students loved hearing the stories, munching, and asking questions. Thanks Wesco!!!

# 22 Day

R-PEL Celebrated on 2-22-22 by having a twin day and a schoolwide assembly. Students were led by our two PE teachers, Mrs. Johnson and Mr. Olsen. Staff and students participated by doing 22 different exercises. It was a fun and engaging way to celebrate 2-22-22



# Classroom Collaboration – Winter Sowing!

## Our Earth, Our Future...RPEL Taking Care of It!

In January, Mrs. Boes' third and fourth graders worked with Mrs. Julie's Discovery Kindergarten students and Mrs. Sheffer's students making bird feeders for the bird sanctuary. The students used bagels and pine cones. They spread peanut butter on them and dipped them in the birdseed. The birds and the kids were happy. It was very messy, but fun! It was neat watching the students work together.



February, the classes worked together to try something new; winter sowing. Students used recycled items such as milk jugs and reusable school lunch containers to plant a variety of seeds in soil. They topped the soil and seeds with snow. Winter sowing is a method of starting seeds outdoors in winter. This is generally done with seeds that require a period of cold stratification.



The method takes advantage of natural temperature, rather than artificially refrigerating seeds. Students are anxious to see if their seeds will germinate.

In March, Mrs. Julie's class joined Mrs. Boes' class to do the school's recycling. This is a school wide initiative to reduce the amount of waste in our building. Students collect the recycling, sort it, and put the paper in the paper gator. This will be a task that will continue throughout the school year.



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## Preschool Roundup for Reeths Puffer Schools 2022-2023 School Year



Please contact White Lake Area Community  
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2022-2023 school year.

- WLACE main office at: 231-893-1091
- RP McMillan EC Center at: 231-766-3443
- Email: [preschool@wlace.org](mailto:preschool@wlace.org) (Please put your school district in the subject line)
- Or go to [wlace.org](http://wlace.org)

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