

Dialogue

Neenah Joint School District Community Newsletter

Fall 2020



BACK TO SCHOOL

Most Students in Person, Others Virtual

Board Adopts Resolution Urging Community Support to Remain Open

The Neenah Joint School District is urging families and community members to pull together to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and help our local schools remain open.

A Board of Education resolution asks community members and leaders in the District's five municipalities to promote the activities and lifestyle changes to keep the virus in check, including handwashing, social and physical distancing, small social circles, and face coverings.

The goals of the resolution are to keep schools open for in-person instruction and to promote public health. The resolution asserts that the Centers for Disease Control and American Academy of Pediatrics have stated that in-person instruction provides students the best and most equitable opportunities for academic, social, and emotional learning as well as opportunities for exercise, healthy meals, and mental health services.

The full resolution may be viewed at: <https://bit.ly/3ogUyci>

Over 80 percent of Neenah Joint School District students began the school year in person while others chose an option for virtual learning.

Students in grades 7-12 were given an option of participating in "real time" learning where they can participate live in the classroom from home through technology.

Of the 6,681 students enrolled in the District, 958 students chose the virtual option and 294 students are participating in "real time" learning. The remaining 5,429 students (81.2 percent) are attending in person.

At the elementary level, 595 of 3,199 students (18.6 percent) chose virtual learning. In sixth grade, 87 of 495 students (17.6

percent) selected the virtual option. Among 964 students in seventh and eighth grade, 89 chose the virtual option (9.2 percent) and 109 selected the "real time" choice (11.3 percent). Among the 2,203 high school students, 187 selected virtual (9.2 percent) and 185 chose "real time" learning (9.1 percent).

The District has been enforcing strict protocols as every student and staff member is required to wear masks. Desks, tables and rooms are sanitized regularly.

The middle and high schools are conducting one morning class and one afternoon class to reduce hallway passing times and all high school students are able to leave the school during lunch. Students are assigned to "cohorts" in grades 4K-6 to reduce the number of contacts during the day.



Community Organizations Donate Masks

Generous individuals and organizations around the Neenah Joint School District have donated masks and other safety supplies to students and staff members.

First Presbyterian Church and Gloria Dei Lutheran Church provided handmade masks for students at all levels, along with NE Wisconsin COVID-19 Masks and Supplies.

In addition, Cre8lab in Neenah donated ear savers for students with hearing loss to prevent having multiple things on their ears.

Thank you to these and many others who are helping to keep our students and staff safe.



From the Superintendent



I hope this message finds you healthy and safe as we continue to navigate these challenging times. We are so proud of the job our students and staff have done adapting to the changes in virtually every aspect of school as they previously experienced it. From wearing masks all day to sanitizing regularly and having three-hour classes in middle and high school, this has been a school year like no other.

Having our schools open this year is a priority for us. It's true that some students succeed in, and even prefer, a virtual learning environment, which is a reason why that option was provided for our families. However, it is also true that a majority of our students do not. Children, perhaps even more than adults, need social interaction with their peers. Children also need to regularly see and connect with their teachers.

Closing schools is a significant burden on our community as families need to make arrangements for child care and help facilitate their child's online learning. Many employers have graciously made accommodations to help our families, including those of front-line health care workers, who are so valuable during these times, but are often parents and caregivers for our students as well.

We have concern for the students with special needs, including physical, emotional and academic when they aren't in school. We worry most for the students who need school and will fall even further behind in their learning. But, if the spread of the virus in our community doesn't decrease, our schools can't be open.

This takes all of us to ensure that our students remain at school in person to not only keep from falling behind, but excel academically. By everyone doing their part and doing simple things that have been repeated over and over, like wearing a mask and keeping socially distanced, we can reduce the spread of the virus in our community and make sure our students stay in school. Collectively, we can do this and help every one of our students get the best educational experience possible.

Neenah With Pride!

Dr. Mary Pfeiffer
Superintendent

In Memoriam

NJSD Mourns Passing of Andrew Thorson

The Neenah Joint School District is mourning the passing of the Deputy District Administrator for Business Services Andrew Thorson, who passed away on August 15.



Thorson, 38, died from complications after being stung multiple times by a swarm of hornets on August 2 at his home. He and his wife, Heather, have four daughters: Abigail-11, Lydia-9, Emily-7 and Vivian-2.

"We are shocked and devastated by Andrew's passing," said superintendent Dr. Mary Pfeiffer. "He was not only extraordinary in his job, but he was an even more exceptional husband, father and human being. Our hearts ache for Heather, his girls and his entire family. We will continue to do whatever we can to help them through this difficult time for all of us."

Thorson brought a unique skill set to his position as a licensed engineer and licensed school business official with a Master's Degree in Business Administration. He was a visionary behind the creation of the District's \$114.9 million referendum and was instrumental in its passing in April. He also was an integral part of the early designs of the new Neenah High School with his construction and finance background as a member of the Core Planning Team.

The District's former Director of Facilities/Engineer, Thorson was beginning his 10th year in the District, having transitioned to his new role in January 2015. In 2019, Thorson was named the New School Business Manager of the Year award recipient by the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials after guiding the District through numerous changes while implementing strategy, leadership and vision.



The Neenah Joint School District served 178,039 meals for an average of 3,123 meals per day through a bus delivery process during the COVID-19 school closure from March 17 through June 4. The meals were delivered Monday through Friday across the District at 97 different locations. All meals were free to any child 18 and under. Children received breakfast and lunch each day. The totals count breakfast and lunch separately.

Three Neenah Seniors Named National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists

Three Neenah High School seniors have been named semifinalists for the prestigious National Merit Scholarship Program.



Rachel Strandberg, Alicia Zhang and Daniel Zhao were honored for their performance among more than 1.5 million students nationwide who entered the 2021 competition by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.

A total of 16,000 semifinalists were named nationwide, representing less than one percent of high school seniors. The three Neenah students are each vying for one of 7,600 National Merit Scholarships, which total more than \$30 million. Final scholarship awards will be announced next spring.



Strandberg (pictured, top) is the daughter of David and Lisa Strandberg and attended Roosevelt Elementary School. She has a 3.821 grade point average while taking numerous advanced courses.

Zhang (pictured, middle) is the daughter of Ron Zhang and Yan Luo and attended Coolidge Elementary School. She is a member of the Touch of Class orchestra and owns a 3.992 grade point average with a schedule of advanced courses.



Zhao (pictured, bottom) is the son of Hongwu Zhao and Hong Yao and attended Clayton Elementary School beginning in fifth grade. He has a 3.957 grade point average while participating in several advanced courses.

Clayton Elementary School beginning in fifth grade. He has a 3.957 grade point average while participating in several advanced courses.



Students in need across the Neenah Joint School District received backpacks filled with school supplies from The Kids in Need Foundation and Neenah-based Jewelers Mutual Group Insurance Company. A total of about 400 backpacks were delivered across the District and included notes from Jewelers Mutual employees.

Free Meals Available for All NJSD Children Through End of December

Neenah Joint School District residents under age 18 are eligible for free meals through December 31, 2020 through a federally-funded waiver program.

All virtual learners and any child 18 or under who resides within the District boundary are eligible for a weekly meal pick-up of breakfast and lunch. These meals may be ordered for a single day or for the entire week and all orders will include both breakfast and lunch. An order form is available each week on the District food service website for families to order meals for the following week. Children attending school are receiving free lunches at school as usual.

Families who may qualify for free or reduced lunch should continue to submit applications as meals will be charged beginning in January.



Hoover Elementary received \$2,935 as part of Office Depot's "Round it Up" program. The school received the award in gift cards that may be used to purchase supplies, furniture or technology for the school. Included in the award presentation were (left to right): Office Depot Appleton-East general manager Sean Moderson, Office Depot Appleton-West general manager Corby Williams, Hoover reading interventionist Heather Hocks, Hoover teacher Kim Friedrich, Hoover principal Lexi Snedden, Hoover counselor Katie Kessen-Checki and Office Depot Oshkosh general manager Wess Worth.

Board of Education Members

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
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Safety/Security and ADA Updates Completed Throughout the Summer

Clayton Elementary



This summer, construction crews completed safety/security and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) updates to Clayton Elementary, Lakeview Elementary, Spring Road Elementary, Taft Elementary, Wilson Elementary and Horace Mann Middle School. The remaining elementary schools will undergo similar updates next summer. The photos on this page show the new secure entrances at the five elementary schools.

Lakeview Elementary



Spring Road Elementary



Taft Elementary



Wilson Elementary



A Primary Focus

Planning Process Underway for Future of Neenah Elementary Schools

The Neenah Joint School District is beginning the planning process for a restructuring of its elementary program beginning in 2023-24.

As part of the District's successful referendum in April, fifth graders will move to the new intermediate school and the elementary program will consist of students from kindergarten through fourth grade. This will result in approximately 20 fewer classes and about 500 fewer students across the District's nine elementary buildings. Additionally, with sixth graders moving to the intermediate school, Horace Mann School will be available and considered in future planning.

The Board of Education held a brainstorming session this summer related to the elementary program and facilities. That activity led to



the creation of a committee consisting of administrators, teachers, staff members, parents and community members. The group will begin meeting in October and will be charged with developing a recommendation for the elementary program starting with the 2023-24 school year. The group's initial work will be devoted largely to facility use with discussions about building capacity, building use and school boundaries. The committee plans to bring an initial recommendation to the Board in May

or June 2021.

The District will offer opportunities for community feedback throughout the process and has not begun making any decisions at this point.

New Neenah High School Designs Prepare Students for Today and the Future

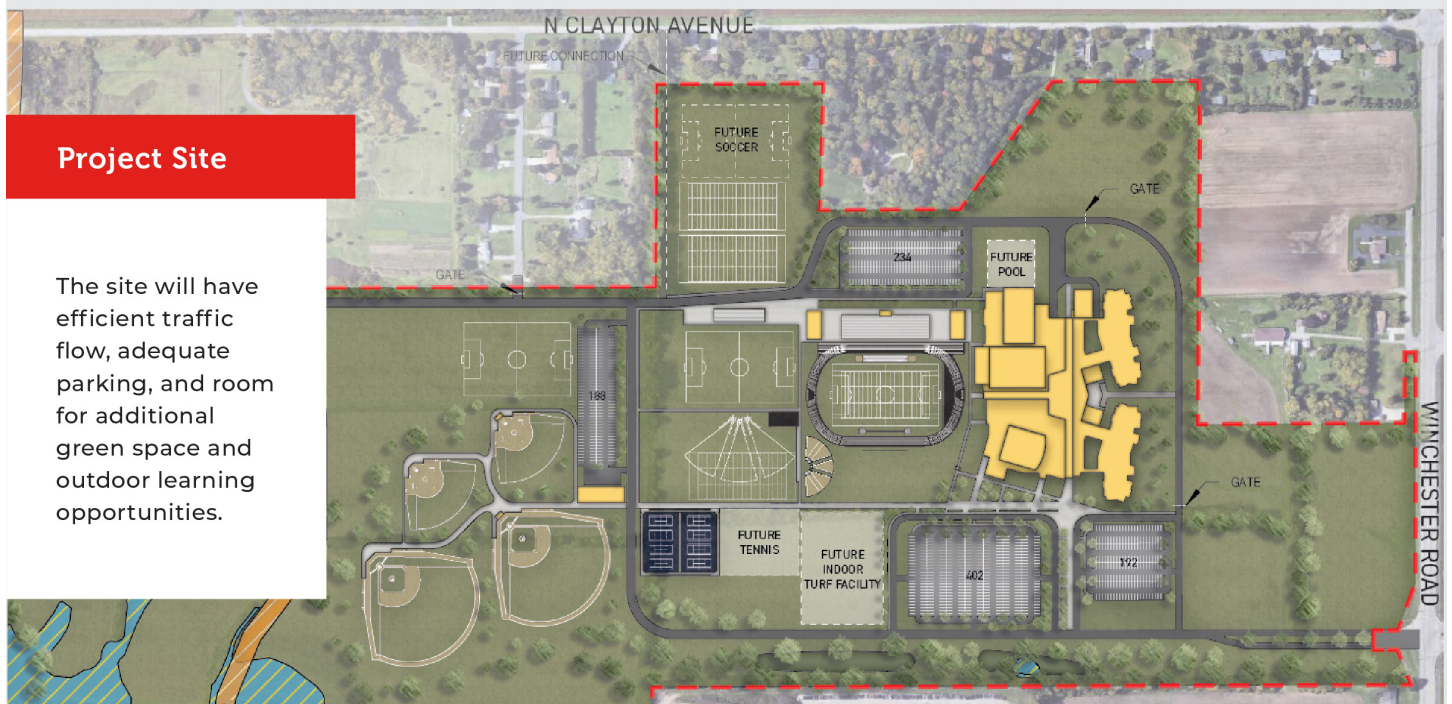
Below is the current version of the new Neenah High School site. Our vision is to create hands-on, flexible learning environments and student-centered collaboration spaces for the needs of today and well into the future.

The design will allow students, teachers and community partners to collaborate in preparing students for college, technical college, or entering career pathways.

Committees consisting of District employees and community members have been working with Bray Architects in the designs.

The new Neenah High School will have learning spaces throughout the building to foster skills that include communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. Some examples of collaborative spaces include:

- Collaboration spaces located adjacent to classrooms and labs
- Breakout spaces for small group instruction
- Flexible spaces within the naturally-lit cafeteria and atrium
- Spirit Concourse located between athletics and performing arts
- Courtyards with access from classrooms



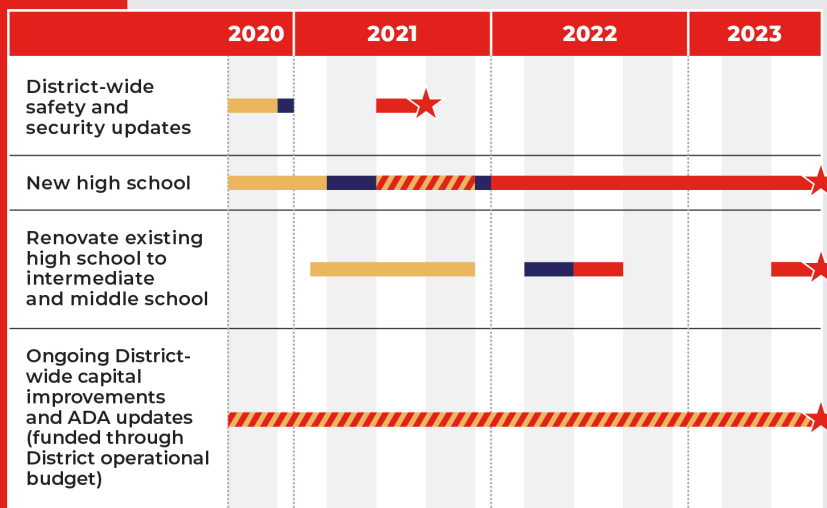
Project Site

The site will have efficient traffic flow, adequate parking, and room for additional green space and outdoor learning opportunities.

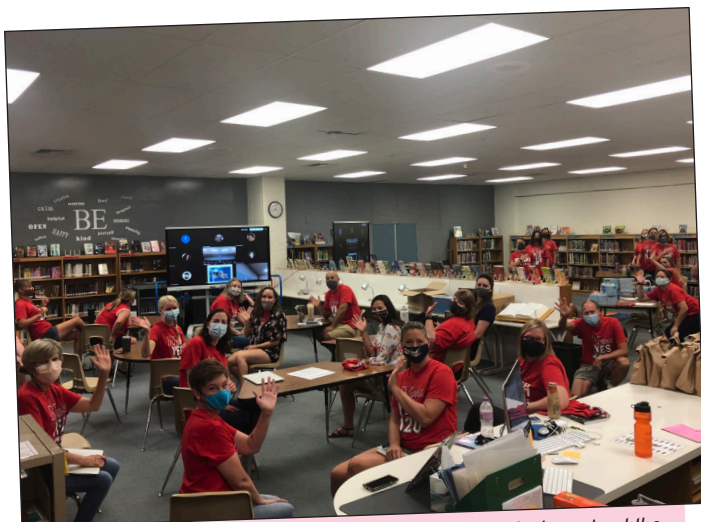
Next Steps

What will happen between now and spring?

- Finalizing the design and engineering for the remaining safety, security and ADA projects for summer 2021 construction
- Detailed design and engineering of New Neenah High School



■ Design ■ Construction ■ Bidding
▨ Design & Construction ★ Completion



Staff members at Wilson Elementary and all schools throughout the District participated in a unique virtual convocation that welcomed back staff on August 25. Staff members from the high school and District office participated in the event from Pickard Auditorium, while all others participated from their respective buildings. Technology allowed the participants from all locations to interact with each other.

Kiplin Chosen as Clayton Principal

Bringing nearly a decade of experience at the elementary school level, Nicole Kiplin has been selected as the new principal at Clayton Elementary.



Kiplin served as Dean of Students at Houdini Elementary in Appleton the past two years. She implemented numerous mental health, behavioral and attendance initiatives in her short time and saw discipline referrals drop 47 percent in her first year. Houdini is one of the largest elementary schools in the Fox Valley with over 600 students.

Prior to her role at Houdini, Kiplin spent six years as a classroom teacher at Lincoln Elementary in Appleton. She also coordinated summer school programs at Richmond Elementary in Appleton the past five summers.

Kiplin is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and earned her Master's Degree in Administration from National Louis University. She holds licenses in elementary education, administration and supervision and curriculum development.

NJSD Asbestos Removal Report

The Board of Education approved an Asbestos Management plan in accordance with the Federal Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA). A copy of the District-wide plan is on file at the Administration Building, 410 South Commercial Street. Inquiries about the plan should be directed to the Director of Facilities at (920) 751-6800, ext 10133. Each school building also has a plan, which is on file in the principal's office. Inquiries about a building's plan should be directed either to the building principal or to the school secretary. Asbestos management activities which occurred over the past 12 months include, but are not limited to, the following: 1) the required 6-month inspections; and 2) ongoing operations and maintenance projects done as necessary by certified personnel.

Fall Sports Limited to Girls Golf and Boys and Girls Cross Country

Neenah High School athletes competed in boys and girls cross country and girls golf during the fall with all other fall sports moving to an alternate fall season in the spring.

The decision was based on the application of three criteria: whether existing safety measures were sufficient to ensure safety of student-athletes, whether participation in the sport would enhance the emotional well-being of student-athletes and whether there would be sufficient competition in our local area.

The WIAA identified five sports as "low-risk" activities: boys and girls cross country, girls golf, girls swimming and diving and girls tennis. No other Fox Valley Association school that offers girls swimming and diving competed in the fall and only two other girls tennis programs competed. Four other sports were identified as "high-risk" activities: football, boys soccer, boys volleyball and girls volleyball.

The alternate fall season will begin Feb. 15 for girls swimming and diving. Boys and girls volleyball will start practice on Feb. 22. Football and girls tennis start on March 8 with boys soccer beginning on March 22.

A decision regarding the status of winter sports had not been made as of late October.



Neenah High School honored its Class of 2020 graduating seniors on graduation day with a procession through the city. The event went from Neenah High School down Cecil St., S. Park Ave. and Wisconsin Ave. The graduation event was held in a virtual format that evening.

2020 NJSD Employees of the Year



Elementary Teacher
Debbie Burmeister, 18th Year
Tullar Elementary 4th Grade



Middle School Teacher
Andy Braunel, 28th Year
Horace Mann M.S. Social Studies



High School Teacher
Beth Plankey, 28th Year
Neenah H.S. Speech/Journalism



Special Services Teacher
Katie Kessen-Checki, 8th Year
Hoover Elementary Counselor



Administrator
Matt Anderson, 7th Year
Director of Instructional Technology



Administrative Asst./Exempt
Jim Strick, 11th Year
District Communications Manager



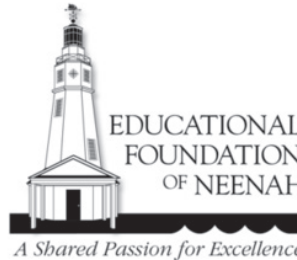
Educational Assistant
Jen Wild, 4th Year
Clayton Elementary



Operations/Maintenance
Eric "Chip" Olson, 8th Year
Tullar Elementary

Educational Foundation of Neenah Selects Teaching Award Recipients

The Education Foundation of Neenah honored 17 Neenah Joint School District educators in its 2019-20 "Rocketing Ahead: Celebration of Education" Teaching Awards.



Each recipient receives a grant for classroom enhancements or professional development opportunities. The grants were created to recognize educators who have demonstrated innovative or creative classroom methods and who are involved in extra-curricular activities for their students and community. They were

announced and recognized at the District's all-staff convocation on August 25.

Each school has at least one recipient of the awards with two selections from Shattuck Middle School and four honorees from Neenah High School.

Those honored include: **Briana Hankemeier** (Clayton), **Kattie Stenson** (Coolidge), **Kayla Plante** (Hoover), **Alisia Myers** (Lakeview), **Kaelyn Altmann** (Roosevelt/Alliance), **Emma Kopitzke** (Spring Road), **Courtney Zuehlke** (Taft), **Amy Buege** (Tullar), **Missy Rosiejka** (Washington), **Kim Woodkey** (Wilson), **Jennifer McMahon** (Horace Mann), **Jeff Ferge** (Shattuck), **Tracee Lemke-Hildreth** (Shattuck), **Chris Christensen** (NHS), **Jennifer Hager** (NHS), **Adam Hendries** (NHS) and **Beth Plankey** (NHS).

The Educational Foundation of Neenah, founded in 1986, is a non-profit community-based organization with an all volunteer board of directors. The foundation's mission is to provide funds to enhance the quality, accessibility and diversity of learning opportunities within the Neenah public school community.



The NJSD Team of the Year honor was awarded to the high school counseling team. The award is presented to any group of individuals who collaborated to achieve student success during the past year. Team members include (front, L to R): Marcy Bauman, Beth Altekruise, Natalie Shea, Emily Hennes, (back): Kristen Mahoney, Chris Christensen, Jennifer Keberlein, Emily Berceau and Felicia Torres.



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Key 2020-21 Dates

* All Dates Subject to Change

November

25-27 Thanksgiving Break

December

23.....No School - All Levels (Professional Learning Day)

24-Jan. 3.... Winter Break

January

15.....Early Dismissal - All Levels (End of Semester)

18.....No School - All Levels (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)

29.....No School - All Levels (Professional Learning Day)

February

15.....No School - All Levels (Professional Learning Day)

March

3/8.....Parent-Teacher Conferences, Grades 6-12, 4-8 p.m.

4/9.....Parent-Teacher Conferences, Gr. 4K-5, 4-8 p.m.

5.....No School - All Levels (Professional Learning Day)

12.....Parent-Teacher Conferences, 4K, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

12.....Parent-Teacher Conferences, K-12, 1-4 p.m.

12.....Early Dismissal - All Levels (Parent-Teacher Conferences)

19.....Early Dismissal - Grades K-8 (End of Quarter)

22-29No School - All Levels (Spring Break)

April

2.....No School - All Levels

5.....No School - All Levels (Professional Learning Day)

May

26.....NHS Graduation

28.....No School - All Levels (Professional Learning Day)

31.....No School - All Levels (Memorial Day)

June

3.....Last Day of School - 4K and Early Childhood

4.....Last Day of School (Early Dismissal) - Grades K-11



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Board Meetings Held Online

All Neenah Joint School District Board of Education meetings will be held online via Zoom until further notice. The public is welcome to join the meetings through a link on the District website (www.neenah.k12.wi.us). Meetings are typically held the first and third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m.