

Dialogue

Neenah Joint School District Community Newsletter

Summer 2014

A Passion for Excellence

NEENAH
Joint School District



We are incredibly proud of the accomplishments of the Neenah Joint School District and the direction we're heading. However, there's always room for improvement and it's necessary to take opportunities to step back and refocus on our goals.

That's exactly what we've done with our "Strategic Plan for Success" which was recently approved by the Board of Education. The plan is a blueprint of what we value and hope to achieve as a District.

At the heart of our plan is a new mission and vision for the District. Our mission is "Neenah With Pride Ignited by a Passion for Excellence." Our vision is that "all Rockets will embrace their futures with confidence." Nothing distinguishes Neenah better than "Neenah With Pride" and a "Passion for Excellence." It's been a hallmark of this District and community for many generations that every student, staff member and parent takes pride in Neenah and has a passion for making it even better for future Rockets.

Within the plan are four Critical Success Factors: Student Learning and Achievement, People, Fiscal Responsibility and Partnerships, and Communication. The District has developed at least three areas of focus within each of these Critical Success Factors. These factors have been in place for some time, but we now have detailed goals within each area to clearly outline the most important values that define our District. We are still working to establish measurables and the document will continue to evolve.

I invite you to take a few minutes to check out the details of the plan. The Strategic Plan for Success is available on our website and we welcome your feedback.

Dr. Mary Pfeiffer
Superintendent of Schools

FOCUS ON: *Summer Learning*

Summer Academies Keep Students Busy



A summer choir program is one of several one-week learning opportunities for Neenah students during the summer.

One-week programs in different elective subject areas kept Neenah students busy during the summer.

Students participated in academies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) as well as art and music. The programs are taught by Neenah Joint School District staff and open to any student.

The STEM program was in its first year and led by Neenah High School teacher Tony White and Hoover Elementary teaching aide Maripat Franke. Fifty students in kindergarten through fifth grade learned in three separate groups for three hours each day. A group of staff members and 11 Neenah High School students taught

students skills in a variety of STEM areas. A group of engineers from Bemis, Inc. also worked with the participants for one day.

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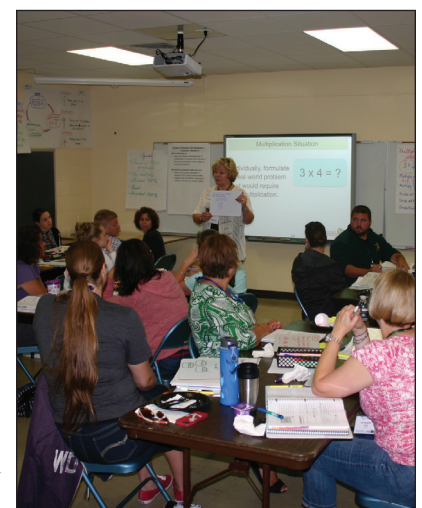
Staff Members Serve as Students in Summer

Neenah Joint School District teachers spent time sitting on the other side of the classroom this summer as students at numerous development classes and workshops.

Staff took part in workshops offered throughout the summer. Many of the workshops were conducted by other District staff and the Cooperative Educational Services Agency (CESA).

For instance, about 200 math teachers from around the state, including 25 from Neenah, took part in the Wisconsin Statewide Mathematics Initiative, which was held in Neenah July 14-18. Teachers gained a deeper understanding of the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics in the initiative, which was developed through cooperation of the Wisconsin Mathematics Council,

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Neenah math teachers were joined by staff from other districts at a regional conference held in July at Neenah High School.

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

Elementary Students Closer to Home in 2014-15

It's only been six years since Taft Elementary housed students from kindergarten through fifth grade, however, that seems like a distant memory with the preparations for welcoming back all six grades this fall.

For the past six years, Taft housed the District's Early Learning Center and overflow kindergarten classes. In 2014-15, Taft has been restructured into a kindergarten through fifth grade building. The Neenah Board of Education approved the changes on Dec. 17 as part of a restructuring plan to keep as many students as possible close to their neighborhood schools while maintaining low class sizes.

Taft Elementary Serving Students in Grades K-5

Since then, Phil Johnson moved from Roosevelt Elementary and Alliance Charter Elementary to take over as Taft's new principal. Taft will host nine classes this fall with two classes each in grades K-2 and one class each in grades 3-5. Six of the nine teachers have come from within the District and three new teachers were hired. Each new teacher has taught at her same grade level in a previous district.

"I'm thrilled with what we've got," Johnson said of his teaching staff. "Every teacher wants to be here. No one was forced to relocate and no one is new to their grade level."

Johnson said the biggest challenges have been logistical in nature such as bringing in new furniture and technology and moving some furniture out.

Every room has a data projector and document camera provided by the District. Some rooms will have SMART Boards that were purchased by the PTO in the past. Also, like all District schools, every student in grades 3-5 will have an iPad and students in grades K-2 will share iPads between the two classes at each level. Plus, every teacher will have a personal laptop computer.

Johnson noted that Taft will have a designated art room and music room. He also said many students within Taft's boundaries have chosen to attend the nearby school this fall.

"Overwhelmingly, the feedback has been positive so far," Johnson said. "Most families seem ecstatic to be able to stay at their home school."

New Boundary Updates Exceed Expectations

The plan of restructuring the District to keep elementary students near home has worked out better than expected.

Despite having strict caps of 22 students in classes for grades K-2 and 26 students in classes for grades 3-5, no student as of the end of the 2013-14 school year was forced to transfer from his or her home school. In addition, over 80 percent of families who requested to attend another school by June were granted that request.

"From the beginning, our primary goal in this process was to maintain low class sizes and keep students at their home school," said Assistant District Administrator for Learning and Leadership Steve Dreger. "That has happened well beyond our expectations."

Neenah Schools Maintain High Marks on State Report Cards

Every school in the Neenah Joint School District maintained its high rankings by meeting or exceeding state expectations in the recently released 2013-14 state report card data from the Department of Public Instruction.

Each of Neenah's 12 schools scored the same ranking as the previous year with eight schools exceeding expectations and four meeting expectations. Alliance Charter Elementary scored the District's highest ranking by significantly exceeding expectations for the third straight year. A District report card was also issued and Neenah's schools met state expectations.

This is the third year of the Wisconsin School Report Cards. Schools are graded on four priority areas: student achievement in reading and math assessments, student growth in year-to-year improvements, gap closing between specific student groups and on-track and postsecondary readiness. Overall District report cards also include attendance and graduation data.

Every Neenah School maintained its ranking from the previous year by meeting or exceeding state expectations

"We're proud to have every school in our District continuing to post high scores on the state report cards," Superintendent Dr. Mary Pfeiffer said. "These scores are important, but they are also only one measure of the great things happening in our schools every day."

Each public school is graded on a 0 to 100 scale and it should be noted these scores are not a "percent correct" measurement. Alliance had the highest score in the District at 87.6 percent, while Clayton Elementary exceeded expectations with a score of 79.6, which was an increase of 3.5 points over 2012-13. Coolidge Elementary, Hoover Elementary, Lakeview Elementary, Neenah High School, Roosevelt Elementary and Tullar Elementary also exceeded expectations with scores over 73.0.

Schools that met state expectations were Horace Mann Middle School, Shattuck Middle School, Spring Road Elementary and Wilson Elementary. Every Neenah school scored higher than a 68.0 with state expectations set at 65.0. The report cards are one part of a statewide accountability system for schools that help schools and district identify strengths and continue to address challenges.

ACT Scores Once Again Surpass State Average

Neenah students again posted ACT scores well above the state averages during the 2013-14 school year with a 24.1 composite score for the third straight year.

The score was significantly better than the state average of 22.2 and the national average of 21.0. Neenah had 322 students take the ACT test last year in the final year before all juniors are required to take the test in 2014-15.

“These scores reflect the hard work of our students and staff at all levels of our District,” Neenah Superintendent Dr. Mary Pfeiffer said. “It is only one measure of overall student achievement, but an important one. We are proud of being able to maintain such high scores and effectively prepare students for post-secondary pursuits.”

For the fifth straight year, Neenah’s highest scores were in reading with a 24.6 average, which easily surpassed the state average of 22.4. Neenah students scored a 24.1 in science for the second straight year, outscoring the state average of 22.3.

Neenah students improved their math scores to 23.6, which was up 0.1 from the previous year. The state average in math was 22.0 for the third straight year. In English, Neenah students averaged a 23.3, which was higher than the state average of 21.6.



Senior Madeline Hibbs-Magruder and junior David Lang have been selected to serve as student representatives to the Board of Education in 2014-15. This year will mark the sixth year students have contributed to the School Board meetings.

Welcome to Schoology!

The Neenah Joint School District is introducing a new web service called Schoology. Schoology is a learning management system (LMS) designed to foster student achievement and engagement in this modern age of one-to-one devices in classrooms.

Schoology will provide NJSD staff with a “virtual extension” of the classroom that provides an instructional platform for digital collaboration and communication between teaching staff, students, and parents.



Teachers will be able to post assignments, tests, quizzes, discussions, and other activities online within their courses, allowing students to work individually or collaboratively whenever and wherever they are, even from home. Parents will be able to have their own Schoology account that gives them the ability to view school news, their child’s or children’s classroom participation and turned in work, and view school coming events and assignment due dates.

The implementation of Schoology District-wide begins this fall. For more information about Schoology, please visit <http://schoology.com>. Horace Mann parents began working with Schoology in September and parents from all other schools will receive information in November.

Coolidge Earns State Recognition Award

Coolidge Elementary School has been selected as a 2014-15 Wisconsin Title I School of Recognition Award recipient by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Coolidge was recognized as a High-Progress School, which honors schools that fall within the top 10 percent of schools experiencing student growth in reading and mathematics and have achievement gaps that are less than three percentage points between student groups. It is the first time Coolidge has been named a School of Recognition since the program began in 2003. Coolidge was one of 173 schools statewide to earn recognition and one of 45 in the High-Progress category.

“This is a great honor and recognizes the hard work by the staff, students and families at Coolidge,” Neenah Superintendent Dr. Mary Pfeiffer said. “Coolidge has excelled in many ways and we are proud of their accomplishments.”

All Wisconsin Title I Schools of Recognition receive federal Title I aid because they have significant numbers of students from low-income families based on federal free and reduced price school meal income guidelines. All Schools of Recognition also meet the state’s test participation, attendance and dropout goals.

Representatives from Coolidge will be honored at a recognition ceremony at the State Capitol on Oct. 13. The school will also receive \$500 and a commemorative plaque.



Coolidge teacher Jessica Martine works with her second grade class on the first day of school.

Calling All Alumni...

NJSD Hall of Fame Seeking Nominations for Inaugural Class

The nomination process is underway for the inaugural Neenah Joint School District Hall of Fame. Anyone is invited to nominate individuals for the inaugural class, which will be inducted during homecoming weekend in 2015.

Individuals may submit a nomination on the Hall of Fame Website. Nominations can be made through an online form. The nomination form may also be printed and submitted through the mail or in-person at the District Administration Building at 410 S. Commercial Street. Printed nomination forms are available at the Administration Building as well.

Nominations will be accepted until Nov. 30, 2014 and selections will be announced in February 2015. The Hall of Fame is open to anyone who graduated from Neenah High School or had an



association or employment with the District. It is designed to recognize individuals from a variety of different backgrounds. The only requirements are that nominees must be graduated from Neenah High School for at least 20 years or retired from the District for at least five years.

Nominations will be good for three years and five individuals will be selected each year by a 15-member committee. For the first year, the committee has discretion to name additional individuals. Deceased individuals are eligible to be nominated.

Questions about the nomination process can be directed to Jim Strick in the District communications office at 751-6800 x225 or by e-mail at jstrick@neenah.k12.wi.us. More information is also available at the NJSD Hall of Fame website at:

www.neenah.k12.wi.us/community/NJSDHallOfFame.cfm.

School Lunches Get Local Flavor

Apple Blossom Lane Orchard and Market in Black Creek will supply Neenah schools with onions, peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, watermelons and a large variety of apples for school lunches this fall. A number of other foods may be available depending on the crops.

Apple Blossom also provided staff with a gift bag of vegetables on the opening day and one of their staff members will visit schools this fall to teach the value of local produce.

In addition, 5th Season Co-op from Viroqua will provide Winter Moon Blend and Potato Fusion. Winter Moon consists of butternut squash, red and gold beets, carrots and yukon potatoes, while the Potato Fusion is a blend of red gold and russet potatoes.



“Pledge With Pride” Upgrades Underway at Rocket Stadium

A new ticket booth, stadium entrance archway and sound system have been installed as part of the first phase of the “Pledge With Pride” fundraising efforts for Rocket Stadium at Neenah High School. A new track and visiting bleachers are also part of a total project that will eventually cost over \$1 million. The track will be completed in October, but the rest of the first phase is complete.

Eventually, improvements to the concession stand/restrooms building will be completed along with a new press box. The renovations are being done as fundraising for each phase of the project is completed. The committee is planning to raise a total of about \$750,000 for the entire project.

About \$225,000 has been raised during the past year to get the project underway and the School District contributed the funding to replace the aging track and add the visiting bleachers. To see more details and assist with the project, visit www.pledgewithpride.com.



The Wilson PTO completed work on a new playground this summer. A group of volunteers worked to replace the gravel surface with artificial turf. The group was also able to purchase three new pieces of equipment.

FOCUS ON: *Summer Learning*

Summer Academies Keep Growing

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Students learned the engineering design process and created their own puzzle cubes. They also did a scientific investigation where they mixed and evaluated their own polymer compounds. Students explored the structure and function of different materials while solving design challenges and participated in several unique engineering challenges such as an egg drop, marble roller coaster, paddleboat, zip-line and structures. The students kept a notebook of all their activities for their own learning and to share with their parents.

A junior visual arts academy was held this summer for the second time. The program was split into weeklong events for grades 1-4 and grades 5-8. In the program, students learn about art history, two-dimensional art, three-dimensional art and creative careers. Students were drawing, painting and sculpting using conventional materials as well as unique materials like toast painting and marshmallow sculpture. The creative careers portion teaches children about possible careers available in art and design. Overall, the academy helps students see what opportunities are available in art in the Neenah Joint School District.

The music department held three one-week events for continuing music students with 103 students in a summer string program, 83 students in a summer band program and 74 students in a summer choir program. Each program included instruction designed to inspire and enhance students' music skills. Students met for three hours each morning and capped the week with a performance in Pickard Auditorium. They were led by District music teachers and each had assistance from four Neenah High School students.

Incoming fifth graders had the opportunity to participate in a summer beginning string program and a summer beginning band program. About 40 students took part in each event, which was a 7.5 hour program designed to give beginners a head start with additional instruction and technique prior to the beginning of school.



A group of students from Neenah High School's French classes under teacher Erin Meilhon visited Quebec last June, getting the chance to practice their French skills and immerse themselves in French-Canadian culture. The group visited museums, parks and squares, while walking city streets and dining on local cuisine in both Montreal and Quebec City.

Staff Find Summer Valuable

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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Higher Education and K-12 schools.

The math conference was one of many attended by Neenah staff this summer as teachers in nearly every subject area took part in workshops or continuing education classes.

The newly-added Common Core State Standards provided another wrinkle for staff to learn many new curriculum plans and ideas. Many staff members met throughout the summer to make sure their lesson plans were ready for students when they return from summer vacation.

"I think many people would be surprised how much time school staff members spend working during the summer and preparing for the upcoming school year," Neenah Superintendent Dr. Mary Pfeiffer said. "It just shows the commitment these individuals have for our children and their profession."

Numerous staff members were involved in teaching and organizing various academies for students that were offered within the District this summer. The summer is also the busy time for operations and maintenance staff to get major projects completed before students return.



A team of 14 Neenah staff members who assist students on the autism spectrum attended a two-day conference this summer through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.



In an event unique to NJSD, new staff members were welcomed to the District with a luncheon on August 21 at Bridgewood Resort in Neenah.

NJSD Staff to Conduct Second Parents Connect Convention

A unique free event will be held in the Neenah Joint School District to connect elementary school parents with professionals from various local services and organizations.

Parents of Neenah elementary students are invited to attend the second annual "Parents Connect Convention," which will be held on Tues., Oct. 7 from 5-7:30 p.m. at Horace Mann Middle School. Presenters will cover a wide range of topics and include representatives from a variety of different backgrounds and organizations. Dinner is provided and free child care is also available for children ages two years old through fifth grade.

PARENTS CONNECT CONVENTION



The purpose of the convention is to respond to the needs of families and connect them with professionals who can provide information, support and resources necessary to encourage their child's success. The event also aims to

strengthen families through education, and foster relationships within the community.

NJSD teacher Sara Kokko will provide parents with practical tools and tips to support students facing obstacles. NJSD Wellness Coordinator Kelly Kelderman will provide parents with tips to encourage whole family activities. Professional organizer Jennifer Strachen will help parents balance school and family activities. Lisa Bakken from the Free Market will prove easy recipes to encourage healthy family eating.

Hoover Counselor Katie Kessen-Checki will provide strategies for parenting positively and productively. Shattuck Police Liaison Officer Jeremy Bauman will discuss strategies for keeping children safe and secure. Library/Media Specialist Amy Bauman will show how to find entertaining, interactive and educational websites.

Exchange Program Brings Chinese Teacher to Neenah

Neenah Joint School District students will learn Chinese firsthand from a native speaker during 2014-15 as Yan Liu has been hired through the Hanban teacher exchange program.

Liu, who has taught English in Tianjin, China for the past 10 years, will teach two classes at Neenah High School and three at Shattuck Middle School. Neenah becomes the first public school in the Fox Valley to offer the world's most-spoken language

Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Susan Nenning wrote the Hanban grant to begin the process of acquiring a teacher from China. After two interviews, Liu was

one of 140 teachers from China selected to take part. She is one of two teachers from the program working in Wisconsin.

Liu, who will go by Selena as her American name while in the United States, began speaking English in elementary school and found it to be her favorite subject. She said she always wanted to be a teacher and teaching English was a natural fit.

Liu hopes to teach her Chinese students more than just reading and writing. She has several culture projects planned for her classes, including tai chi, paper folding, Chinese knots, Chinese paintings and eating with chopsticks.



New Administrators Join NJSD

There are some new faces in administration in the Neenah Joint School District. Matt Anderson has been hired as the new Director of Instructional Technology, while Tim Kachur is an Associate Principal at Neenah High School and Stacie Nelson is the part-time administrator at Washington Early Learning Center. Earlier last spring, Melissa Chrisman was announced as Principal at Roosevelt Elementary and Alliance Charter School.

Anderson (*upper left*) served in a similar role in Ashwaubenon for the past four years. He previously taught in the Green Bay School District for six years and worked in a variety of different business roles.

Kachur (*right*) was an English teacher at Shattuck Middle School the past three years after previously teaching at Laconia High School. Kachur also served as freshman football coach last year.

Nelson (*lower left*) brings a variety of different experiences in early childhood education, including a stint in the Milwaukee Public Schools.





The Hospitality and Culinary Arts Academy is beginning its first year at Neenah High School this fall. The academy has partnered with Fox Valley Technical College and many local restaurants to offer a wide range of opportunities for students to show their skills. The mission of the academy is to provide students with a comprehensive education in the hospitality and culinary industries.



The Shattuck Velocity program sold items from its school garden during the Shattuck Open House on Aug. 26. Velocity students planted the garden last spring and tended it all summer. Among items available were tomatoes, peppers and beans. The academy students also picked vegetables in September and provided gift packs for every staff member. The Velocity program is beginning its second year in 2014-15 helping at-risk students.



A FIRST Lego League Robotics team began this year at Horace Mann with a day camp on Aug. 21. Students will have an opportunity to learn how to program a robot, design a team name and logo and participate in team challenge events. FIRST teams meet twice per week for practice and the season culminates with an all-day event in November. The team is under the direction of Ms. Val Cleveland, who works with gifted and talented students.



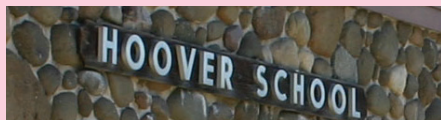
Alliance and Roosevelt highlight one virtue each month and do class activities related to it. This month's virtue is reliability. Students will be taught to make promises they can keep, treat agreements seriously, plan ahead, do their best at all times, finish projects on time and find other ways if obstacles occur. Parents are asked to help reinforce these virtues at home and discuss the virtues with their children and families.



The gymnasium at Clayton was resurfaced during this past summer in red and white tile. The school also received new carpeting in several rooms around the building. Most of the upgrades were made after a pipe froze last winter, causing damage in various parts of the building.



Teamwork has been a focus to start the year for all grades at Coolidge. For instance, fifth graders have been given teambuilding tasks to enhance collaborative problem-solving skills and build critical thinking and teamwork. The month started with all classrooms being read the book *The Rock and the Ripple*.



Two new bays of swings were added to the Hoover playground this summer. PTO members assisted with the installation and provided funding for the new equipment. Also, Hoover's Walk to Cure Juvenile Diabetes last May raised over \$3,200 and helped teach Hoover students about how individuals live with the disease.



During the summer months, the north section of Lakeview was remodeled by adding walls and doors to rooms, rewiring lights and putting down new carpet. Duct work for air conditioning was also installed in that section of the building where most of the school's technology is located.



The Girls on the Run positive youth development program is taking place at Roosevelt and Alliance this fall. The 10-week program inspires girls to be joyful, healthy and confident through a fun, experience-based curriculum. The program began in September and concludes in early November with all participants running a 5K.



Spring Road held its first school assembly on Sept. 3 to remind students of maintaining good character and treating others with respect. All of the staff were introduced and the students recited the Spring Road pledge. It was part of the school's Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program.



Taft was recently outfitted with new furniture for most of its classrooms, since much of the furniture was for early childhood and kindergarten classrooms. The school is serving students through fifth grade for the first time since 2008. Taft is hosting a total of nine classes this fall.



For the second straight year, Tullar was the recipient of a "Movin' and Munchin'" grant from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to boost its health and wellness programs. Tullar is one of five Neenah schools, along with Hoover, Spring Road, Taft and Wilson, to earn the grant.



In order to re-open for the 2014-15 school year, Washington received a new roof, heating system, parking lot and phone system. In addition, SMART boards were installed in each classroom and the library. The building had been closed for the past six years and is hosting the Early Learning Center this fall.



Wilson had a big year of fundraising for a variety of causes during 2013-14. In addition to funding a new school playground, Wilson families helped raise over \$10,000 in the American Heart Association Jump Rope for Heart. Wilson staff has been instrumental in organizing, facilitating and participating in these programs.

Upcoming Events



410 South Commercial St.
Neenah, WI 54956
(920) 751-6800
Website: www.neenah.k12.wi.us

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POSTAL PATRON

Upcoming Events

September

- 26.....Early Dismissal - All Levels (Professional Learning Day)
- 26.....NHS Football vs. Stevens Point, 7 p.m.

October

- 3.....NJSD Child Find Screening (Washington School)
- 3.....NHS Homecoming Parade, 5 p.m. (Downtown Neenah)
- 3.....NHS Football vs. Oshkosh North (Homecoming), 7 p.m.
- 4.....NHS Homecoming Dance, 8 p.m.
- 16.....Senior Citizens Dinner Theatre (NHS Cafeteria), 6 p.m.
- 17-18NHS Fall Musical "Footloose" (Pickard), 7 p.m.
- 24-25NHS Fall Musical "Footloose" (Pickard), 7 p.m.
- 26.....NHS Fall Musical "Footloose" (Pickard), 2 p.m.
- 29.....Parent-Teacher Conferences, Grades K-5, 4:30-8:30 p.m.
- 30.....End of First Quarter
- 30.....Early Dismissal - All Levels (Parent-Teacher Conferences)

- 30.....Parent-Teacher Conferences, All Levels, 12:30-8 p.m.
- 31.....No School - All Levels (Parent-Teacher Conferences)
- 31.....Parent-Teacher Conferences, Grades 6-12, 7:45-11:45 a.m.

November

- 1.....Helping Hands Craft Fair (NHS Fieldhouse), 9 a.m.
- 3.....NHS Academic Awards Banquet (Bridgewood), 6:30 p.m.
- 4.....NHS Choir Concert (Pickard), 7:30 p.m.
- 6.....NHS Orchestra Concert (Pickard), 7:30 p.m.
- 7.....NJSD Child Find Screening (Washington School)
- 8.....WIAA Girls Swimming Sectional, Noon
- 13.....NHS Band Concert (Pickard), 7:30 p.m.
- 25.....Vintage Opener/Touch of Class/Jazz Concert, 7:30 p.m.
- 26.....Early Dismissal - All Levels (Professional Learning Day)
- 27-28No School - Thanksgiving Break



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www.neenah.k12.wi.us

**Board of Education meetings are typically held
the first and third Tuesdays of every month
at 6 p.m. at the District Administrative Building
at 410 S. Commercial St.
(Check the NJSD website for complete schedule)**