

Dialogue

Neenah Joint School District Community Newsletter

Winter 2016



SOLID FOUNDATION

Neenah 4K Program Off to a Great Start



Neenah 4K students learn concepts in all core subject areas, fine and gross motor skills, social skills and routines and expectations of the school experience. About 345 students are enrolled in the second-year 4K program.

Even the best of expectations couldn't have predicted the early success of the Neenah Joint School District's four-year-old kindergarten (4K) program, which began its second year in 2016-17.

A total of 330 students participated in the half-day program during its first year and about 345 students are enrolled this year. The program teaches concepts in all core subject areas, fine and gross motor skills, social skills and routines and expectations of the school experience. In one year, it has already made a significant impact in students' preparation for kindergarten.

"We're trying to identify needs in the 4K year rather than their kindergarten year," said 4K program administrator Stacie Nelson, who serves as principal at Washington School of Early Learning. "We're targeting that child before they get to kindergarten so when they get there they'll be even more successful. Some kindergarten teachers are saying it has saved them two months of not having to teach routines and allowed them to get into their curriculum sooner."

The program currently has eight morning and eight afternoon sections with a maximum of 22 students per class. Eight of the sections are at Washington with two each at Hoover Elementary, Taft Elementary, Wilson Elementary and A Child's Imagination Child Care Center.

continued on page 5

Mill Rate Drops Again to Remain Lowest in Valley

Taxpayers in Neenah will see a significant decrease in payments to the Neenah Joint School District in 2017 as the District's mill rate will drop 52 cents and remain the lowest in the Fox Valley at \$8.05.

The mill rate represents the amount paid per \$1,000 of property value, meaning the owner of a \$100,000 home will pay \$805 to the District in 2017. The state average for mill rates in 2016 was \$10.24.

One of the key reasons for the decrease is due to an increase in total state aid by 11.3 percent from \$30.2 million to \$33.7 million. The total District budget for 2016-17 is \$86.9 million. The District is also using only \$200,000 from the community service Fund 80, which has a significant impact on the mill rate.

continued on page 5

STATE CHAMPS!



Neenah's girls volleyball team won its first state title since 1978 with a three-set sweep of Burlington on Nov. 5. The Rockets finished 46-4 for the season and are ranked No. 23 in the USA Today national high school rankings.

Words From the Superintendent



As the school year nears the end of the first semester and closes in on the holidays, this is a perfect time of year for reflection and saying thank you. In the case of the Neenah Joint School District, there are so many positives and things to be grateful for

that it's hard to know where to start.

Maybe it's with our staff members who dedicate enormous amounts of time and energy into our students, encouraging them to fulfill their potential and explore new areas of learning. Our staff members personally care about their students and go out of their way to make sure schools remain a safe, caring and special place.

What about our families who continue to support our schools and students in so many ways? It's remarkable to see so many dedicated family members volunteering at their schools or just simply showing their support by attending events and connecting with their schools.

Of course, our students are what drive all of us every day. We are thankful for their immense dedication and energy. We see it at the elementary levels in their pure joy for learning and at the secondary levels through their devotion to various activities and perseverance with new challenges.

Our school board and administrators continue to put students first and develop strong programs in a cost-efficient manner. It's easy to see how much they truly care about our students through their actions and decisions.

All of these individuals and many others make Neenah a community that is a great place for learning. Neenah is a special place where staff, families and students are all dedicated to making their schools the best they can be.

For this I am truly grateful.

Dr. Mary Pfeiffer
Superintendent of Schools

Back on Track

Students Get Help After Long Absences

Whether a struggling learner or an academic all-star, returning to school after an extended absence is a challenge for any student.

That challenge has been made easier at Neenah High School through the Transitional Learning Center (TLC) where students can choose to work outside of the classroom to get caught up on coursework before returning to a full class schedule in typically three weeks or less. No other school in the area is known to have a similar program.



"It's a lot of weight for a student to carry coming back here after a long absence," said principal Brian Wunderlich. "For them to return to a smiling, happy face helping them get caught up and back on their feet is a great thing."

That happy face is Tracy McClowry (pictured, right), who has been assisting nearly 50 students so far this fall get back into the routine of school. The reasons for using the TLC vary from hos-

pital visits and concussions to suspensions and habitual truants. McClowry works with the teachers to determine the priorities for each class and what students have missed.

Counselors refer students to the TLC and the students range from those simply trying to graduate to others who are college-bound and taking advanced classes. Counselor Kristen Mahoney and School Psychologist Ann Hatch developed the program and created a pilot program during the last six weeks of the 2015-16 school year before the Board of Education made it a full-time program for 2016-17.

"You don't want the students to come back and just pass," McClowry said. "You want them to have a foundation. Being able to do this from the start of the school year really gives time to catch kids earlier and help them get the credits they need."

McClowry tracks grade improvement, reduction in missing assignments and comments from students and parents to determine the success of the program. It also helps the District counter the "cost of failing" where students are forced to re-take the same courses or spend extra time in school. So far, it has exceeded her high expectations.

Some students work independently and only need help in some of their classes while others need additional one-on-one attention. McClowry and the students work together to decide when they are ready to return to the regular classroom.

"Our main goal is giving kids a safe landing spot to be successful," Wunderlich said. "I love that this program serves all kinds of students – those high-flying and those struggling. We repeatedly have students who come back and just get piled on. This helps them come out from under that black cloud and succeed."

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.

HEALTHY REWARDS

Neenah Schools Collect Health Awards

Neenah schools have placed an emphasis on health and wellness in recent years and their achievements have been honored with numerous awards in recent months.

Horace Mann and Shattuck Middle Schools and Spring Road Elementary School were among 21 Wisconsin schools honored as Let's Move! Active Schools National Award winners. Horace Mann, Spring Road and Hoover Elementary were also among 85 schools nationwide to receive



\$1,000 grants from Action for Healthy Kids for initiatives that support schools in promoting health and wellness.

In addition, 11 Neenah schools were among the 68 winners of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's 2016 School Health Awards. Four Neenah schools were among 31 schools statewide recognized with the gold award as Hoover, Horace Mann, Spring Road and Wilson Elementary received the honor. Hoover has been recognized every year in the award's four-year history, while Spring Road was



honored for the third straight year and Horace Mann received laurels for the second straight year.

Shattuck was the only Neenah school in the silver category. Six schools were recognized as bronze award winners: Alliance Charter Elementary, Clayton Elementary, Coolidge Elementary, Lakeview Elementary, Neenah High School and Tullar Elementary.

"This is such an impressive achievement for so many Neenah schools to be honored with these awards," said Neenah superintendent Dr. Mary Pfeiffer. "I am incredibly proud of our students and staff as well as our Neenah community for their continued commitment to healthy activities."

Neenah Schools Earn High Marks on 2015-16 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 2015-16 state report card data from the Department of Public Instruction.

Overall, the District earned a score of 76.9, which exceeds state expectations. Seven of Neenah's 13 schools were named in the "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" category with Alliance, Clayton, Coolidge, Lakeview, Tullar, Wilson and Horace Mann earning that distinction. Three other schools rated in the "Exceeds Expectations" category with Taft, Roosevelt and Spring Road landing in that category.

Wisconsin School Report Cards were not issued in 2014-15 after being published the previous three years. 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. All Neenah schools have at least met expectations every year the report cards have been issued. The seven schools significantly exceeding expectations are the most Neenah has had in a single year.

Each public school is graded on a 0 to 100 scale and it should be noted these scores are not a "percent correct" measurement.

How Neenah Schools Rated

School	Score	Rating
Alliance Charter	94.0	Significantly Exceeds Expectations
Tullar	93.3	Significantly Exceeds Expectations
Wilson	87.6	Significantly Exceeds Expectations
Horace Mann	86.1	Significantly Exceeds Expectations
Lakeview	85.1	Significantly Exceeds Expectations
Coolidge	83.4	Significantly Exceeds Expectations
Clayton	83.0	Significantly Exceeds Expectations
Taft	79.2	Exceeds Expectations
Roosevelt	76.5	Exceeds Expectations
Spring Road	75.7	Exceeds Expectations
Shattuck	71.6	Meets Expectations
Hoover	66.4	Meets Expectations
Neenah H.S.	65.1	Meets Expectations

Schools and districts are also evaluated on their level of student engagement through test participation rates, chronic absenteeism rates, and dropout rates when applicable

Neenah Athletes Win Individual Fall WIAA State Championships

Senior Christina Price and junior Kiki Risgaard rolled to Neenah's first WIAA state girls tennis doubles championship since 2002 and freshman Av Osero became Neenah's fourth state girls diving champion in the past five years at state meets this fall.



Price (pictured, top left) and Risgaard (pictured, bottom left) delivered straight set victories in all five of their matches at state. The duo finished the season 27-1 and avenged their only loss of the year by beating Elise Gerard and Annabelle Crowley of Nicolet 6-3, 6-0 in the championship match. Price and Risgaard dropped a total of just 10 games in 10 sets played at the tournament.



Osero (pictured, right) posted a final score of 508.65 to outscore runner-up Samantha Nickerson of Homestead, who finished at 473.80. Osero led after each round and was the only freshman among the 20 semifinal qualifiers. She had a preliminary score of 225.10 and a score of 355.40 after the semifinals.

Osero joins past Neenah champions Greysen and Hazel Hertting. Greysen won the 2012 state title and Hazel won titles in 2013 and 2014.

Risgaard and Price both have 4.0 grade point averages and Osero had a 4.0 grade point average the past two years in middle school.



For the third straight year, Neenah's girls tennis team played in the state championship match. The Rockets placed runner-up with a 4-3 loss to Homestead in the final and finished with a 15-4 season record. Neenah won the state title in 2015 and was runner-up in 2014.

Arete Academy Receives \$10K Grow Rural Education Grant

Neenah High School's Arete Academy received a \$10,000 grant from the America's Farmers Grow Rural Education Program to help develop a greenhouse area behind the school. The grant is sponsored by the Monsanto Fund.

The Arete Academy is a project-based learning program at the high school. Farmers from across the country nominated and selected the grant recipients. The program is awarding \$2.3 million to rural public school districts to benefit STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) activities.

The greenhouse consists of a composting area and a rain barrel project in order to study hydroponics, genetics in biology and sustainability. Students will grow produce to use in farm-to-table meal preparation for the school's culinary arts program.

Homecoming Activities Support Neenah High School Orbit Closet

For the fourth consecutive year, Neenah High School's homecoming activities supported a worthy cause as students held events to benefit the Orbit closet.

Created in 2014, the Orbit is a closet full of essential goods to help Neenah High School students and families in need. Students are identified by school counselors and then accompanied to the closet to get items. The closet is filled with personal hygiene items, school supplies and a limited amount of non-perishable food items.

The week raised over \$7,000 through a variety of activities, including a drive-in movie, a parent's night out and a powder puff football game that all drew donations for the Orbit. Previous causes were the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Special Olympics and a student battling brain cancer.

Throughout the year, the Orbit welcomes monetary donations that are tax deductible and establishes partnerships with local businesses. Individuals or businesses are invited to check the list of needs on the website and drop their donations, marked "Orbit" at the high school main Door #3.



Students and families at Lakeview Elementary collected nearly 5,000 food and water items for the Salvation Army in its annual "Stuff the Turkey" event. This was the ninth year of the event and the amount collected was double the amount typically collected in past years.

4K Program Thriving in Second Year

continued from page 1

Transportation is provided to school for all students in the afternoon session and those students in the morning session outside of a two-mile radius from school. All students get transportation home. This year, the District is providing transportation to and from 13 different day care centers in Neenah.

“The transportation has been a nice, safe and organized experienced for the students,” said Nelson. “Most enjoy riding the bus and it’s a fun part of their day.”

UW-Oshkosh has begun a Head Start program at Washington for three and four-year-olds which helps complement the 4K program. The 4K program also has a number of parent outreach activities to introduce families to the District and help make the inaugural year a good experience. This fall, families participated in the homecoming parade, enjoyed a day at a pumpkin patch and had a movie night.

Nelson credited the staff for making the program so successful in its first year. Many of the staff members are experienced District teachers who opted to switch to 4K.

“All of our staff members are here because they chose to be here,” Nelson said. “Many are working with 22 students in the morning and 22 more in the afternoon, which can be exhausting, but they all love it and they are extremely dedicated.”

About 75 percent of all Neenah four-year-olds are in the program and Nelson would love to see that number climb to around 90 percent in future years.

“We’re very appreciative of so many families spreading positive things about our program,” she said. “We started with so many unknowns, but we had people contact us last year in the middle of the year saying they’ve heard great things and don’t want their child missing out.”

Mill Rate Falls 52 Cents

continued from page 1

The mill rate includes vouchers that are paid for students attending private schools. The mill rate would be \$7.96 without the private school vouchers.

Despite the low mill rate, Neenah is in its second year of a four-year-old kindergarten program and has maintained low class sizes with 21.5 students per elementary class District-wide. The District is also in its second year of providing every student in grades 3-12 with their own personal computing device, while having devices available in every classroom for grades 4K-2. In addition, all staff groups have received salary increases and stipends based on performance for each of the past four years.

Proposed 2017 Fox Valley Mill Rates

District	Per \$1K/Property Value
Neenah	\$8.05
Freedom	\$8.35
Winneconne	\$8.59
Kaukauna	\$8.79
Appleton	\$9.60
Kimberly	\$9.70
Oshkosh	\$10.13
Little Chute	\$10.42



The Neenah Joint School District inducted its second annual Hall of Fame class at a banquet on Oct. 15 at the Bridgewood Best Western Premier Hotel. Inductees were (left to right): Patricia Westphal, Tom Berven, Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, Jean Kessler and Dr. Wellington Hsu. Tom Wiesner and Ivan Williams were also inducted posthumously.

Roekle Named National Merit Scholarship Semifinalist

Neenah High School senior Ryan Roekle has been named a semifinalist for the prestigious National Merit Scholarship Program.

Roekle earned the honor for his performance among the 1.6 million students nationwide who entered the 2017 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. Roekle is vying for one of 7,500 National Merit Scholarships, which total about \$33 million. Final scholarship awards will be announced next spring.

Roekle is the son of Scott and Kristi Roekle and attended Coolidge Elementary School. He owns a 3.89 grade point average while taking a schedule that includes several advanced classes. Roekle performs with the Touch of Class orchestra and was named an Advanced Placement Scholar With Honor last spring.

Established in 1955, the National Merit Scholarship Corporation is a not-for-profit organization.



A Hero's Welcome

Student-Led Convocation Welcomes Back Neenah Teachers

After a much-needed summer break, the Neenah Joint School District staff is annually welcomed back with a rousing student-led convocation on its first day. The 2016-17 school year marked the seventh year students have led the event in Pickard Auditorium.

Senior Jack Murphy served as Master of Ceremonies and gave musical performances with a piano piece from Rachmaninoff and a guitar rendition of Dave Matthews Band's "Where Are You Going?"

Murphy was joined by his fellow Neenah High School show choir teammates in a performance of "Cross the Line" from the musical "Big." Cross the Line was introduced as a theme for the staff for the upcoming year in remarks by Superintendent Dr. Mary Pfeiffer.

Staff members were clad in red and white and made contributions to local charities. A total of 1,580 pounds of food were donated to Ruth's Pantry in the annual Bob Melzer Food Drive, while contributions of school supplies were collected for the Educator's Closet and money was raised for flood relief for teachers in the Baton Rouge (La.) School District.

The event featured over \$3,100 in door prizes for randomly-selected staff members provided by several Neenah businesses and District business partners. Nine days off were also distributed where one of the District Administrators will sub for a teacher or non-certified staff member. The staff member may choose any day during the school year for the administrative sub.



A wellness expo with various local organizations and businesses followed in the cafeteria. The entire staff returned to Pickard Auditorium afterwards for a showing of the film, *Most Likely to Succeed*, about the future of education in the 21st century and the importance of teaching critical skills needed for the workforce rather than just memorization of information.



Students from Horace Mann Middle School enjoyed a unique outdoor learning experience for the second straight year at Camp Anokijig in Sheboygan County this fall. Students experienced a hands-on science curriculum and recreational activities during a two-day, one-night visit. Horace Mann students and staff had exclusive use of the facilities for the week. An anonymous donor provided \$50,000 and pledged another \$50,000 over five years to support the trip.

Wellness Center Aims to Keep District Insurance Rates Low

The Neenah Joint School District Health and Wellness Center officially opened on Sept. 7. The Wellness Center offers NJSD employees and their families an opportunity to have their medical needs addressed on-site Monday through Friday. Costs are lower for both the employee and the insurance company, which could result in lower premiums in future years.

Located on the west wing of Shattuck Middle School, the Wellness Center has a private access off the parking lot on Elm Street. The Center is staffed by Prevea Health with a Certified Physician Assistant, Physical Therapist and Medical Assistant.

Dialogue Earns Top State Honor

The Neenah Joint School District *Dialogue* community newsletter recently received an Award of Excellence, the highest award presented by the Wisconsin School Public Relations Association. It marks the second time in three years the publication has been honored.

The *Dialogue* is edited and published by Communications Manager Jim Strick. It is printed and distributed by Graphic Composition of Greenville. Members of the Illinois School Public Relations Association judged the entries.





Neenah High School's one-act play received an "All State Award" for qualifying to perform at the State Theatre Festival in Stevens Point and a "Crew Award" indicating exceptional work on the technical elements of the production, communicating and enhancing the audience's experience. The Tech Olympics team took third in the state. The group performed the play "Girls Like That."



Students from the Shattuck Middle School Velocity Academy researched various creatures native to Wisconsin and showed their work to first grade students from Wilson Elementary. The students demonstrated their knowledge of the animal by creating a "Wild Wisconsin" hallway that consisted of skits, models, art-work, bird houses, websites, children's books, moose calls, nesting boxes, etc.



Horace Mann and Shattuck social studies classes had special visits from veterans on Nov. 18. Veterans from Kimberly-Clark Corporation's Salute Program, as well as speakers from the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King spent the day talking to students about their military service to our country.



Alliance first, second and third grade students read "Jack and the Beanstalk" and held a challenge to create their own beanstalk. Students were given tape, cotton balls, a picture of a castle, green construction paper, scissors and time to create a free-standing structure that supported the picture of the castle at the top of the beanstalk.



Clayton fifth grade students collected new, unused books for its 16th annual Give-A-Kid a Book project with the Neenah Public Library. The students also collected donations and then purchased books at Barnes & Noble to donate to the campaign. They have collected over \$11,000 since the program began in 2001.



Coolidge Elementary hosted a family night called "Destination Exploration" on Nov. 17 where families traveled around the world to explore a variety of hands-on and creative stations. Activities included building a tower, designing a paper link, racing Lego cars, building a catapult, making origami and doing Pilates.



Hoover students donated 25 cents when they dressed up and participated in Red Ribbon Week activities. All of the money was collected to go towards a "Socktober" fundraiser that purchases socks for the needy. Red Ribbon Week is a program teaching the importance of being drug free.



Lakeview students participated in a mock election to learn more about the voting process on election day. Students voted for President and for a name for the Lakeview mascot. Lightning was chosen as the mascot's name and each major Presidential candidate earned exactly 182 votes.



Roosevelt students participated in the Neenah Veterans Day program at Shattuck Park on Nov. 11. Students sang the National Anthem and presented cards and poems to the veterans.



Spring Road held its annual Grandparents and Retired Friends Day on Nov. 3. Students invited their elders to join them at school and took them through their classes for the day. Students showed off the technology used in their classes and also engaged in games and other activities.



Taft students read 770 books over a two-week span as part of the school's first Fall Into Reading Challenge. As each student finished a book, a leaf was added to a tree on a display in the hallway. Overall, Taft students spent over 15,000 minutes reading at home during the two-week challenge.



Tullar second grade students completed an author/illustrator study on Wisconsin author Lois Ehlert. Besides reading several of the award winning author's books, students worked on collage, researched squirrels and created their own videos using the ChatterPix app on their iPads.



Washington has held monthly parent outreach events. On Nov. 29, families took part in a 4K movie night at Pickard Auditorium. The school also held a pumpkin day at Cavanaugh Carriages on Oct. 22. The event featured face painting and s'mores along with carriage rides through the pumpkin patch.



Wilson is hosting its Giving Gobbler during the holiday season to assist families needing help during the holiday season. A total of 14 Wilson families were assisted with their Thanksgiving meals. Wilson has been doing the program since 2004 and has had an anonymous family donate turkeys every year.

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

December

26-30 ... No School - All Levels (Winter Break)

January

13..... Early Dismissal - K-12 (End of Semester)

13..... No School - 4K and Early Childhood

21..... NHS Jazz "Cotton Club," 6 p.m. (Cafeteria)

24..... Horace Mann Choir Concert, 7 p.m.

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

February

2-3 NHS Winter Drama, 7 p.m. (Pickard Auditorium)

4..... NHS Winter Drama, 1 and 7 p.m. (Pickard Auditorium)

7..... Middle School Orchestra/Band Concert, 7 p.m. (Horace Mann)

9..... NHS Band Concert, 7:30 p.m. (Pickard Auditorium)

13..... NJSD Stringfest, 7:30 p.m. (NHS Fieldhouse)

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

February

21..... NHS Choir Concert, 7:30 p.m. (Pickard Auditorium)

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

23..... Early Dismissal - K-12 (Parent-Teacher Conferences)

23..... No School - 4K and Early Childhood

23..... Parent-Teacher Conferences, All Levels, 12:30-8 p.m.

24..... No School - All Levels (Parent-Teacher Conferences)

24..... Parent-Teacher Conferences, Gr. 4K-5, 7:45-11:45 a.m.

March

9-11..... Middle School Musical "Lion King", 7 p.m. (Pickard Auditorium)

11-12.... Middle School Musical "Lion King", 2 p.m. (Pickard Auditorium)

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

21..... NHS Wind Symphony Concert, 7:30 p.m. (Pickard Auditorium)

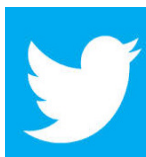
24..... No School - All Levels (Professional Learning Day)

27-31 ... No School - All Levels (Spring 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)**