

December, 2016

# ***Visions*** Newsletter

Ottawa Elementary District 141, 320 West Main Street, Ottawa, Illinois 61350

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Cleve Threadgill, Superintendent

Dear Community Members,

I want to thank all of our families for your support of Freezin' for a Reezin'. Ottawa Elementary has been actively involved in this endeavor for several years. The can goods collected at OES for the food pantry is measurable in thousands of pounds. What a wonderful message our students and families are sending to those in need during the holiday season! We certainly enjoy the opportunity to partner with WCMY on an annual basis to support the food pantry.

There are many individuals and organizations within our community who support students and families in our district. Assistance with winter clothing, food, and helping families who are facing hardships is common in our schools. Our faculty collects donations and fundraises to assist those who are in need. We have received donations from churches, businesses, charitable organizations, and anonymous individuals who sponsor families annually. Kevin Lowe has continued to honor his son Kyle by reaching out to families at each of our schools. We thank everyone for your thoughtfulness and giving nature during this time of the year.

The winter break is a wonderful time for families and we hope that yours is truly a relaxing and enjoyable time to be together. We look forward to beginning the New Year with our students on January 4. May the year 2017 bring good health, peace, and joy to your family! Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Cleve Threadgill  
Superintendent

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# Central Elementary School

Ryan F. Myers, Principal

Melanie J. Conley, Assistant Principal

## RULER - EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Bringing Yale Education to Central Intermediate School

Over the summer, our Assistant Principal, Melanie Conley, and social worker, Erica Levin, traveled to Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut to attend the Anchors of Emotional Intelligence training. The training teaches the RULER approach to emotional intelligence which includes the ability to: **R**ecognize, **U**nderstand, **L**abel, **E**xpress, and **R**egulate emotions in an appropriate way in order to increase a student’s and school’s overall wellness and positive climate.

RULER consists of four “anchors,” which are tools that will be used in order for students and staff to increase their emotional intelligence. These anchors include: The Charter, The Mood Meter, The Meta-Moment, and The Blueprint.

The Emotional Charter is a compact that is created first by staff, and then by our students. This compact outlines and defines how we want to feel in school each day, what we have to do to have these feelings consistently, create a positive learning environment, and how we will prevent and manage conflict and unwanted feelings. The Charter sets the tone of expectations for this school year.

The Mood Meter is a tool that helps accurately identify how someone is feeling. The mood meter is broken down into four quadrants based on a person’s level of energy and how pleasant they were feeling. The four quadrants are then assigned a color: red, yellow, blue, and green. The Mood Meter allows someone to correctly identify how they are feeling, and then provide strategies if a person wants to shift from one quadrant to another.



The Meta-Moment is a process for prolonging and managing the time between when something occurs to when we respond to it, in order to allow us to respond in the most appropriate manner. The Meta-Moment is similar to the idea of stopping and thinking before we do things. However, the Meta-Moment asks a person to think about their “best self” and think about how they would handle the situation. This requires for individuals to think about when they are at their best, and how a situation would be handled if we were in our best state of mind.

The last anchor, the Blueprint, is precisely that. It is a problem-solving tool for situations and conflicts in the past, present, and future. It helps build empathy, compassion, problem solving skills, and perspective-taking ability.

This school year we have started implementation of the RULER initiative at Central Intermediate School. Ms. Levin has been working with our students and staff to learn about the Charter, the Mood Meter, and the Meta-Moment process. She has started working with students and staff to learn about how to plot their own mood, where their emotions fall on the mood meter, and how to tie their emotions to words. We have also placed a focus on identifying what their “best self” looks like and how to maximize this each school day. By learning how to manage your own feelings and identify how others are feeling you can expand your emotional intelligence to help develop emotionally, which in turn, will help to enhance the positive climate within our school community.

We would like to thank Fairmount Minerals and our PTO for the financial support to fund this program and make it happen!

## **Jefferson Elementary School**

Nathaniel M. Pinter, Principal



We have had a great first part of the 2016-2017 school year. I cannot believe we are on the cusp of winter break. The years seem to continue to fly by. It seems like just yesterday, I was starting my new adventure of being the Principal at Jefferson Elementary. It has now been over a year in a half and I am enjoying every minute of being part of Jefferson. We have welcomed a few new faces here at Jefferson. We have a new 1st grade teacher and her name is Baily Schank. We have a new 3rd and 4th grade Cross Cat. teacher and her name is Spring Weygand. We have a new ELL teacher and her name is Lara Kinkin. We have a new nurse that started this year and her name is Gina Hogan. We welcomed two new teacher's assistants and their names are Emily Manning and Amy Brenbarger. We also welcomed a new custodian to Jefferson and his name is Brian Wasilewski. We just welcomed a brand new crossing guard and her name is Meagan Rowe.

The Jefferson PTO has done some events already and will be doing some throughout the year. They hosted the annual ice cream social in September and had an unbelievable turn out. It was such a great turn out, we had to go back to the store to get more ice cream. This is exactly what we want to see though and that is parents taking an active role in their child's education and school. They hosted a Culvers night in late October and this was a huge success. They are planning on holding one more of these nights in the early Spring. Another big night planned is their Trivia Night. Last year was our 2nd year doing the Trivia night and I have to say that it was a huge success. We only had a couple of tables not filled which is great. They are looking at late February for this event. I could go on and on about all the happenings and things that our Jefferson PTO does for Jefferson. They are such an asset to our school and community.

Our Student Council has been very busy in the last year. This past February, the Student Council sponsored a Random Acts of Kindness Day. Students posted positive quotes around the building and also created a Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) tree with suggestions and ideas of random acts of kindness. This hung in the hallway just before the gym entrance for all students and staff to see as they lined up for lunch. Student Council is planning on doing RAK again this coming February. Student Council provided a bounce house for all students to enjoy at our end of the year Field Day. They put goody bags together for the Ottawa Fire Department this past October to thank them for their commitment and time that they give to our community to help keep us safe. Student Council turned October into Socktober and collected all sizes of brand new socks to be donated to PADS. They also collected food for the annual WCMY's Freezin for a Reezin.

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## **Lincoln Elementary School**

Ryan D. Lemberg, Principal

### Welcome to Our Zoo!

Zookeeper Lemberg is proud to lead the Lincoln School Team through another year of learning, good character, and FUN!



### We're Wild About...

- ...the annual Rummage Sale which generates funds for our Neediest Kids Fund.
- ...watching the *Jungle Book* movie for our October incentive.
- ...celebrating the Cubs big "W"!
- ...the annual Veterans' Day Program where we honor and celebrate local veterans.
- ...implementing Cafe in all our classrooms.
- ...the incentive trip to IVGA where everyone had fun monkeying around!
- ...the Holiday Shop where our menagerie shopped for their pack.
- ...1st & 2nd graders making a joyful noise at their Music Concert!
- ...*Roaring for Reading* at the book fair while selecting great books!

Til next time,  
Take Care, Polar Bear!  
Gotta Go, Buffalo!  
Toodle-loo, Kangaroo!

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## **McKinley Elementary School**

Moriah S. Mott, Principal

The 2016-2017 school year is off to a smooth start at McKinley School! We welcomed new staff members to the McKinley team this year. Miss. Nicole Baker is our new Instructional Support Teacher. Sarah Breyne is working as a paraprofessional in Ms. Hendrickson's classroom and Jessica Drake joined us as a paraprofessional in Mrs. Cole's classroom. We happily welcome these ladies into the McKinley team.

Our student council has been hard at work this year. They chose to host a fundraiser to help raise money our local Food Bag Program. We were able to raise and donate \$1500 to a great charity that helps many families throughout LaSalle County. Thank you to our families and friends for your generous donations. Since we met and surpassed our original goal, I was made into a Human Monster Mott Sundae. What a fun way to give back to our community!

Third and fourth grade students participated in an after school running club hosted by McKinley teachers. They started out walking around the field and by the end of running club; they were running almost the entire time. We had a nice turnout and our students enjoyed running with their teachers and friends.

Coupled with Daily 5, we have incorporated Café strategies into our Language Arts block. Café stands for comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and expanding vocabulary when reading. Teachers discuss these strategies with their class and during individual conferencing to help students become better readers. Daily 5 has become a favorite time for students. They enjoy choosing their centers and reading good fit books.

We have great kids at McKinley and I am proud of each and every one of them. I have made over 70 Marvelous Mustang phone calls this year. Not only are these enjoyable calls to make, it is nice to hear all of the positive things our students are doing. We have students opening doors for staff members, helping to pick up dropped books, tie shoes, helping kindergarten students find classrooms, and volunteering to help their teachers. Students are not doing these kind deeds for recognition; they do them because they are nice kids. Keep it up Mustangs!



# Shepherd Middle School

Gary R. Windy, Principal      Melanie J. Conley, Assistant Principal

The 2016-17 school year is off to a great start. This year marks my third year at Shepherd, and first as Principal. I truly enjoy everything about Shepherd. I am proud of all the activities that we offer our students to be involved and make a difference. I look forward to continued success.

Shepherd is always looking for ways to give back to students. One of the ways we have been able to accomplish this is through the Kroger Rewards Program. If you have not



signed up for this program, please consider doing so as the goal of this program is to give back to Shepherd students. Kroger Community Rewards makes fund-raising easy! The only things our supporters have to do are link their card to our school and shop at Kroger.

Quarterly, Kroger will donate a percentage of sales to our school. Shepherd has been part of this program since October 2015. We have 150 families supporting our school at this time and have earned more than \$5,000. Money earned from this program has helped our school put

supplies into our classrooms. Along with helping our classrooms, we have also been able to give over 100 incentive rewards to various students. We were also able to purchase our mascot, Rocky through this program. If you would like to become one of our supporters, all you have to do is log on to the Kroger website. Click under Community Rewards, sign in, and create an account. Follow the directions and enter our school number, 10193.

Parent communication continues to be an ongoing goal for Shepherd. We hope to have the Shepherd web page completely functional before winter break. Teachers are currently working on their pages, which will help you keep track of what's happening in the classroom. I want to thank you for your patience during this transition period.

I am excited to announce that Shepherd Middle School will have a S.T.E.M. lab for the 2017-18 school year. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. This hands-on activity based learning will be an exciting new educational adventure for our students.



## **Athletics**

Craig Shymanski, Athletic Director

Students at Shepherd Middle School are offered a variety of extracurricular activities from which to choose during the school year. Three of the activities require that the students begin participating before school starts. This type of dedication is what we are looking for both on and off the field of competition and in the classroom.

Late July saw Coaches Schmidt and Levin preparing the softball team for another successful season. This year, however, school history was made as we finished second in the IESA State Tournament. July also brought another season for our baseball team. Coaches Lenny Newell and Chad Halloway had an impressive season, advancing to the IESA Regional Championship game. In mid-August the soccer program began preparing for their upcoming contests. Coaches Paul Baxter and Caleb Gould brought great enthusiasm to the soccer program.

Coach Shymanski and Coach Phelps are the coaches of the seventh and eighth grade girls' basketball teams. The seventh graders finished first in the Starved Rock Conference and won the Starved Rock Conference Tournament hosted by Peru. The eighth grade team finished second in the Starved Rock Conference Tournament. Both teams advanced to the IESA Regional Championship Games. The teams were cheered on by members of the cheerleading squad led by Miss Evensen.

The boys' basketball teams have started their seasons. Coach Rath and Coach Gebben are preparing their teams for another successful run in the Starved Rock Conference Tournament. The teams are supported by the cheerleading squad led by Mrs. Niemann.

Throughout the girls' and boys' basketball seasons, fans are entertained by the Shepherd Pomerettes. This group of girls performed many different routines during the season. Coach Wackerlin and Coach Emma Verona do an outstanding job coaching them.

Wrestling coaches Mike Jensen and Steve Niemann have selected their team, and they are preparing for another run at the IESA State Tournament. Their season has just begun.

The seventh grade volleyball team, coached by Mrs. Guilinger, is practicing for their upcoming season. The eighth grade team, led by Coach Schmidt, hopes to build off the success of last year's squad. The games begin in January.

Under the direction of Mr. Lowe, the Shepherd Academic Team is in the process of tryouts and practicing for its season which begins after winter break.

Mrs. Brown, the girls' coach, Mr. Lowe, the boys' coach, and track assistant Miss Davis will begin their season in March. Students should listen to announcements for try-out dates.

Central Intermediate School is having success in all of its programs. Sixth grade girls' Coach Andy Johnson and fifth grade Coach Nicole Baker celebrated successful seasons. Boys' Basketball Coach Caleb Gould has both teams currently in the middle of their seasons and are improving every game. Finally, the volleyball program just completed its tryouts. Practices will begin soon as Coach Hackler looks to continue the improvement and success of last year's teams.

I am looking forward to the upcoming seasons and witnessing the continued achievements of our athletic programs at Shepherd Middle School and Central Intermediate School. Athletics are an extension of the classroom, and we strive to succeed in all areas.

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## Special Services

Dr. Jeremy J. Lambe, Director of Special Services



The OES special education department would like to thank everyone for helping us to create collaborative and individualized educational plans for our exceptional students. Through our strong partnership, we are off to another very successful school year.

### FAQ's Regarding IEP's

- **Who are the members of an IEP team?** The student (required after 13.5 years old), parents/guardians of student, General Ed teacher, Special Ed teacher, someone qualified to explain assessments and evaluations such as a psychologist, school or district administrative representative such as the Principal or Director, and anyone else that may provide valuable input or expertise such as a grandparent, friend, private therapist and so forth.
  - **Do parents/guardians influence the IEP?** Yes! They are equal partners in the IEP process and are critical members of the decision-making team. Parents should be actively involved with developing, reviewing, and revising the IEP. Parental input and attendance is one of your rights!
  - **Does a General Education teacher have to be present at an IEP meeting?** Yes. At least one must be present and it has to be someone who works with your child.
  - **What is a transition plan?** A transition plan helps students prepare for post-academic goal/career areas (when they leave the school system). In Illinois, transition plans must already be in place when a student turns 14 ½, therefore they are developed at the first meeting after the student has turned 13 ½. The student is required to attend any meeting where a transition plan is reviewed.
  - **What should an IEP goal contain?** Goals must be specific, and MEASURABLE. Goals should be meaningful to all people working with the child and also to the child, tied to the general education curriculum and should be done in a natural part of the day to have it make sense to the child. If progress is not being made, IEP team may need to review and revise goals.
  - **What is the difference between Accommodations & Modifications?** Accommodations do NOT change curriculum. They only change the way a student is taught or allowed to respond. Modifications DO CHANGE the type and/or amount of curriculum taught and are used when a student is expected to learn less or learn different content.
  - **What is the difference between Occupational Therapy & Physical Therapy?** Occupational therapy focuses on fine motor skills such as writing, eating, dressing, toileting. Physical therapy focuses on gross motor skills such as sitting, standing, walking, and balancing.
  - **What is a 504 Plan?** A 504 Plan is a written plan created for students with disabilities who require accommodations to be successful in the classroom. A 504 plan is not IEP. A 504 plan is designed to insure that a student with a 504 disability is able to receive a free and appropriate public education under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
  - **Can a student have both an IEP and 504 Plan?** No. The IEP is more in- depth and already covers things that would be on a 504 Plan such as the accommodations that would be in a 504 plan. These are two separate processes. The 504 has an accommodation plan where special education has an IEP.
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## **School Social Worker**

Heather Jackson, MSW and Mallory Wassmann, MSW

### Anxiety and School Refusal

Each year, OES staff encounters students and families who are considered chronically truant. These students have missed at least 5% of the past 180 attendance days possible. In the 2015-2016 school year, 8.3% of students were considered chronically truant meaning that 172 students missed at least 9 days or more of school without a valid excuse. These numbers makes us wonder, what is the problem? Is it simply defiance or something much deeper? While research in this area is still relatively new, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors, Clinical Psychologists, and Licensed Clinical Social Workers have reported an increasing number of school refusal cases in their private settings. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America describe school refusal as “the disorder of a child who refuses to go to school on a regular basis or has problems staying in school” and consider anxiety to be a possible cause.

Anxiety-based school refusal affects around 2 to 5 percent of school aged children and may present in many ways. For example, students may experience fear or worry, tantrums, irritability, defiance or even physical symptoms that result in frequent trips to the nurse or counselor/social work office and missed class time. So what can we, as school professionals, do to support these students and families?



- Continue to provide clear and enforceable absence policies
- School personnel can maintain consistent dialogue with parents on student's progress and expectations (i.e. weekly contact with parent)
- When the student is present, build rapport with him or her to help form meaningful connections in the school setting
- Establish a calm, supportive, organized and structured classroom setting
- Create a "common language" among staff and provide choices rather than demands
- Work as a team to set up a plan of action for the refusal (i.e. drop off/arrival routine)
- Maintain consistency as much as possible in the school environment

Research suggests that students who refuse to attend school have an average to above-average intelligence and refusing to attend hinders their social and cognitive development. It is essential to understand *why* a child is having difficulty attending school in order for school personnel to develop effective plans and assist in the reintegration of students back into school. Communication with parents and your school's social/emotional support staff are a great place to start.

For more information, check out these resources:

<https://www.adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/children/school-refusal>  
<http://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/depression.html>  
[www.worrywisekids.org/node/40](http://www.worrywisekids.org/node/40)

## **Curriculum & Assessment**

Christine M. Bucciarelli, Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Dear Ottawa Elementary Families,

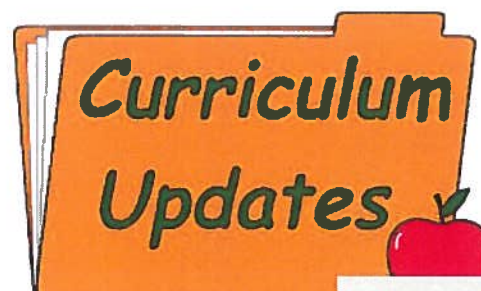
It's hard to believe the start to a new calendar year is only a few weeks away. For those of you new to our district, 2016-2017 marks the second year of our strategic plan. In 2014 a group of stakeholders met to develop the strategic plan for Ottawa Elementary School District. This comprehensive plan encompasses five pillars; Student Achievement, District Finance, Personnel/Staff, Facilities, and Community Engagement/Relations. As the Director of Curriculum and Assessment I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the student achievement initiatives for the 2016-2017 school year.

Kindergarten through fourth grade students continue to build upon the Daily 5. The Daily 5 consists of reading and writing strategies/behaviors. This year students continue to participate in Daily 5 activities with the addition of the CAFÉ (Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency and Expand Vocabulary). The Daily 5 and CAFÉ work in conjunction of one another and allow for all students to be successful readers at their own level.

Fifth and sixth grade students continue to receive guided math as part of their daily instruction. By incorporating guided math into their current math block, the needs of all students' are being met through differentiated activities. Guided math allows for students to work on deficiencies while others may be working on enrichment activities.

Seventh and eighth grade students continue to explore Lucy Calkins, Units of Study. This all-inclusive program focuses on writing. All Shepherd staff have embraced this initiative and have incorporated writing through out all subject areas. Every quarter students participate in cross curricular argumentative writing activities.

We are extremely pleased with the growth students have made and look forward to sharing their progress with you. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at the district office.



## **Board of Education**

Kerry Bryson, Mark Fisher, Mary Ganiere, Ron Henson, Maribeth Manigold,  
Stephen Omolecki, Kurt Stevenson

### **A Message from Mark Fisher, Board of Education President**

It is hard to believe that another school year is almost half over. In addition to the day-to-day learning and studying that goes on in our schools, our students and, in some cases, their parents, have had the opportunity to attend and/or participate in such activities as book fairs, band and choir concerts, basketball games, literacy night, Halloween and Thanksgiving parties, geography bee and Freezin' For a Reason. Such activities make it more fun to go to school and also bring our community closer together.

Last year at this time, I mentioned Superintendent Threadgill and the Board's hope to build a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) lab at Shepherd Middle School. We are still committed to achieving this goal and, in fact, some of you may have attended a demonstration of STEM modules at Shepherd last month. Financial contributions have been received from local groups and companies, and continue to be welcomed, and grants will be sought to further fund the STEM lab. We are hopeful that it will be in place for the 2017-18 school year.

Many in the community know Officer Brenden Donahue, who has served District 141 for many years as School Resource Officer/D.A.R.E. & G.R.E.A.T. Instructor. Officer Donahue was recently promoted to Corporal, and his new responsibilities with the Ottawa Police Department will prevent him from continuing to serve the school district. We wish him the best of luck in all his future endeavors and, while we are sad he will no longer be working in the schools, we are confident that Officer Lou Riva will do an outstanding job in his place.

In recent months, seemingly in connection with the recent presidential election, there have been news stories about bullying in schools based on students' racial, religious, and cultural differences. Thankfully, I have seen no such stories involving local schools. I am hopeful that, with the level-headed, common-sense, and compassionate leadership of our administrators and teachers, and with the good examples set by all the members of our community, that our schools will continue to be welcoming and safe environments for all the children of Ottawa.

In closing, I thank Superintendent Threadgill for his continued leadership and our talented staff for their hard work and dedication to their students. I also thank our students' parents and guardians for their support of the children of our community and of District 141. I wish you all a peaceful and joyful holiday season.

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