

EDUCATION

# Reading gets a boost at Peach Plains

Early reading proficiency is one of the key indicators for students’ future success.

For students at Peach Plains Elementary, a focus on literacy has proven successful across subjects. Overall test scores for Peach Plains increased by 15 percent since the school partnered with the Reading Now Network in 2016, according to the Michigan Department of Education’s Parent Dashboard.

“We continuously work to improve our students’ reading performance based on standardized test scores, and are always looking to grow as teachers and educators,” said Peach Plains Principal Kathryn Drake. “Partnering with the Reading Now Network brought literacy experts directly into our school, giving us the tools to continue learning ourselves and live out our own reading lives.”

The Reading Now Network (RNN) is a collective effort of superintendents, school boards and school districts throughout West Michigan to improve early literacy. After a field study in 2014, RNN established a set of five core elements common in schools where students’ reading scores were outperforming similar schools. The RNN team now visits individual schools and, based on these “Roots of Reading Success,” makes



Tribune file photo

Reading proficiency scores at Peach Plains Elementary School have improved 15 percent since the school partnered with Reading Now Network.

customized recommendations to help improve reading levels.

For Peach Plains, the key areas of focus included identifying and incorporating

literacy practices into every single lesson and using data to better inform intervention lessons and plans.

“Thanksto recommendations

from RNN, we’ve given students more of a voice in their reading material, which means they are so much more invested in their own learning,” Drake

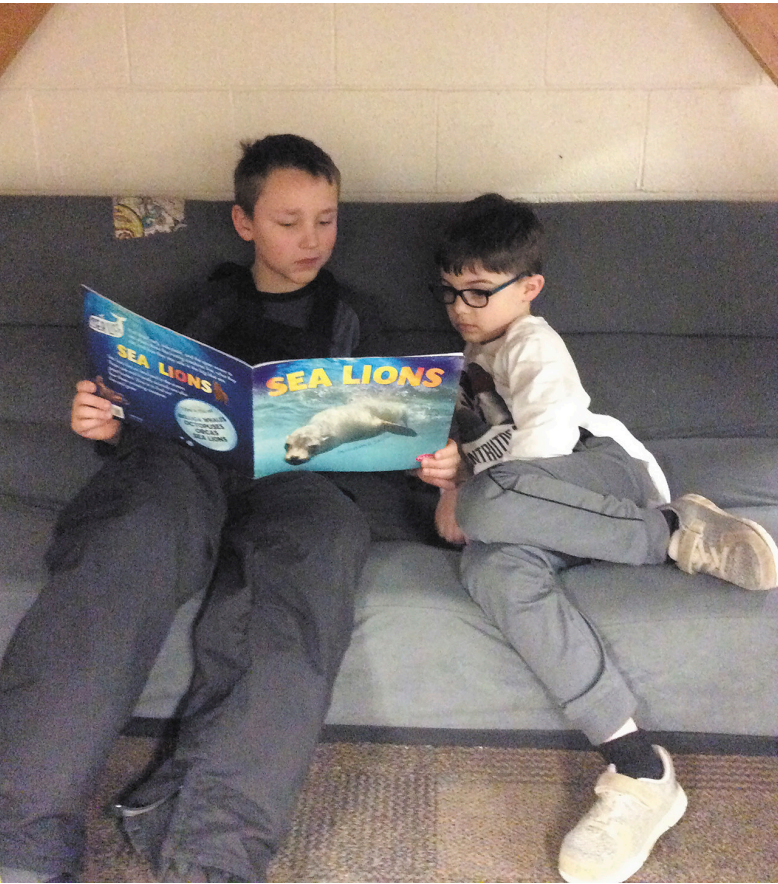
said. “We still have very clear expectations for our students, but we’re giving them a say in how to reach those.”

“We dove into understanding what kind of data we needed to collect to determine what students actually need, and we have weekly grade level data meetings to make decisions together,” said Jennifer Kenny, a Peach Plains literacy coach.

Currently, only about 67 percent of all Michigan third-graders read at grade level. The State’s goal is to reach 80 percent, and while Ottawa County already has some of the highest elementary literacy levels in Michigan, the Ottawa Area ISD has embraced RNN initiatives to set students across the county up for success.

“RNN is really about teaching and learning, focusing on collaboration among educators to bring literacy into every subject,” said Doug Greer, Director of Instructional Services for the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District.

“My conferences with students show me that their thinking is being pushed and that they are reflecting on their learning now more than ever. It’s been a very rewarding experience,” said Peach Plains second-grade teacher Beth Bolhuis.



Courtesy photo

Declan Dora and Silas Deruiter read about sea lions.



Courtesy photo

Emmalyn Holiday and Adaline Burgess read about horses.

# Education groups react after Trump speech

BY JEREMY P. KELLEY/HAMILTON

(Ohio) Journal-News (TNS)

President Donald Trump’s State of the Union address Tuesday night made very little mention of education issues facing America’s schools, colleges and students, angering some in the education industry.

In the 5,000-word speech, Trump said “the time has come to pass school choice for America’s children,” but he did not offer details on what that program or legislation might look like.

In Ohio, K-12 students have the ability to attend free charter schools, including online schools, rather than their local public schools if they wish. But brick-and-mortar charter schools can only open in school districts that the state defines as low-performing. Ohio students in low-performing schools also are eligible for state-paid vouchers to attend private schools.

Trump’s only other mention of education was a passing reference to schools and hospitals that he said are “overburdened” because of illegal immigration.

In the Democratic response, former Georgia state Rep. Stacey Abrams called for more investment in schools, for gun safety measures to ensure safe schools, plus efforts to address the rising cost of college and “the crippling effect of educational loans.”

Teachers unions, which consistently align with Democratic Party principles, criticized Trump for his light treatment of education issues. National Education Association President Lily Eskelsen



TNS photo/Olivier Douliery, Abaca Press

President Donald Trump delivers his State of the Union address to a joint session of the Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, Feb. 5, 2019.

Garcia said investing in public education and protecting schools from gun violence should be higher priorities than a border wall.

“The contrast between President Trump’s speech and Stacey Abrams’ response was palpable and powerful,” added American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten. “Abrams talked about what ordinary Americans need to seize their futures, while the president said not one word about either the shutdown or public education.”

U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy

DeVos, a Trump appointee, applauded Trump’s call for increased school choice, calling it an issue of “education freedom.”

“Too many American students are far too limited by the current education ‘system’ that assigns them to a school building based solely on where they live,” DeVos said. “That means their family income largely dictates their education options.”

JoAnn Bartoletti, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, said while explicit mentions about schools were few,

Trump “actually said quite a bit about education” in running through a list of great American accomplishments.

“(Those) reflect a uniquely American commitment to draw out the best in each person,” Bartoletti said. “Buzz Aldrin and generations of great Americans launched their dreams in a robust system of public education that releases the full potential of every child in our nation.”

Bartoletti also said Trump’s inflammatory rhetoric on immigration has marginalized immigrant students in America’s schools. And she called for fair treatment of students of color after the Trump administration recently rescinded 2014 federal guidance on school discipline equity.

Trump made no mention of school safety, or state progress under the new federal education law, or efforts to deal with higher education funding and the student loan crisis.

Multiple groups said they hoped that Trump’s mention of renewing the nation’s infrastructure would include a commitment to the Rebuild America’s Schools Act, recently introduced in the U.S. Senate.

The Center for Education Reform, a pro-charter school group, praised Trump’s call for increased school choice, citing low national test scores and degree attainment.

“A major reboot in federal education priorities is long overdue,” the group said in a statement, calling for legislation that would “provide hope and expanded opportunity for our most vulnerable students.”

# Central High School releases honor roll

The following students earned spots on the honor roll at Grand Haven’s Central High School for the first semester of the 2018-19 school year:

Allen W. Adcock, Emir O Ayala Romero Jr, Lee J. Baribeau, James Barnes,

Collin Betts, Andrew B. Boos, Danielle E. Callahan, Logan M. Casemier, Eliza J. Christopher, Chloe E. Davis, Hailey R. Ellis, Jazzmyn J. Foreman, Josiah M. Gadea-Villa, Jack C. Harwell, Caitlin N. Hemmes, Jenna L. Hill, Lauralyn Hitsman,

Jonathan J. Hoisington, Tayler G. Kieft, Jazzaray L. Lankheet, Angelina M. Leeuw, Mackenzie C. Leslie, Aundrea R. Lugo, Ian C. Lynam, Kelsey M. Merryman, Carlee E. Nagy, Hannah H. Payne, Kyle B. Phipps, Jacob W. Porter, Anna L. Razmus,

Mercedes M. Rodriguez-Magallan, Hailey K. Rozek, Natalia R. Russell, Sanora C. Sauers, Parker I. Smith, Stormee R. St. Bernard Sylvester, Hayley R. Vincent, Andrew J. Vining, Kaiden L. Walbrink, Zophia G. Zysk.