

Grand Haven Area Public Schools Beacon

Spring 2021

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Board Meeting Schedule

Monday, May 3, 2021

Monday, May 17, 2021

Monday, June 7, 2021

All board meetings will begin at 7:00 p.m. and held virtually from the Education Service Center unless otherwise noted.



Making Waves

by Andrew Ingall

None of us could have ever imagined the challenges we would face over the last year. However, one thing is certain — nothing stops Grand Haven Area Public Schools from making waves! No matter what comes our way, GHAPS continues our ongoing commitment to **Success for All**. From students to teachers to school support, everyone stays focused!

Meeting the diverse needs of our students is always our priority, which means making sure that all students can participate in school activities. Thanks to the 2014 Bond Proposal, GHAPS was able to invest in six new school buses, two of which are Special Education buses. One is designed specifically for field trips and can hold six wheelchairs. We want to be a leader in inclusion and that starts

with ensuring all students can thrive. Creating access for all fosters success for all.

We have continued to ask so much of our administrators, teachers and support staff, who go above and beyond their roles in the district to provide our students with the best education possible. Not only are we recognizing them within our GHAPS community, but they are being recognized across the state for all their hard work. Kathryn Drake, principal of Peach Plains Elementary, was recognized by the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association (MEMSPA) for her dedication to students and fellow colleagues. For those who are unfamiliar with MEMSPA, it is a community of elementary and middle school principals dedicated



Andrew Ingall — Superintendent

to delivering quality educational experiences by advocating, leading and learning.

In addition, Amy Stringham of Central High School was honored by State Farm Insurance as a 2021 State Farm Teacher Assist winner. She is one of only 40 teachers in Michigan to receive this recognition, and was granted \$2,500 to help her implement innovative ideas in her classroom.

One group of students also made big waves that rippled across the state. The Grand Haven High School Women's Swim & Dive state team placed 5th overall, which is the highest placement in nearly two decades. Congratulations again to these dedicated Bucs — way to demonstrate resilience and teamwork!

Success for All Takes Us All and although we have had to navigate uncharted waters this year, we have made some great waves along the way! •



Grand Haven High School Women's Swim & Dive state team.

Helping Local Heroes

First responders go above and beyond daily to support the community. But last semester, Grand Haven elementary students had the opportunity to return the favor and support their local heroes by partnering with Grand Haven Township Fire Rescue to help with their gear efficiency. The collaborative effort was part of the district's Homegrown program, which pairs elementary students with local companies and organizations to solve real-life challenges using design thinking and project-based learning.

Students from Peach Plains Elementary, Robinson Elementary and Rosy Mound Elementary were asked the driving question: "How can Grand Haven Township Fire Rescue more efficiently dry their turnout gear after a fire?" Students were placed in groups where Kindergarten through 3rd graders worked together through "creative sequence" stages, including observation, investigation, incubation, solution and validation, to develop solutions to present to the fire department. This was the first year that Kindergarteners participated.

"The district's Homegrown program focuses on elementary students and encouraging design thinking at an early age," said Andrew Ratke, GHAPS STEM teacher. "It takes project-based learning one step further. We foster deep thinking within our classrooms while nurturing business connections within our community. During this project I was honored to be a part of both aspects as the GHAPS Homegrown facilitator, but also as an on-call



Homegrown students help local heroes.

firefighter/EMT sharing information and experiences with the students to help them throughout the project."

Students researched what a firefighter's job requires and how they currently dry their turnout gear. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, videos were filmed at the fire station to assist with the investigation, including areas of the station, trucks and interviews with the firefighters. Once students had a good understanding of the challenge, they brainstormed ideas and narrowed down solutions. To complete the project, students created prototypes of their solutions and pitched them virtually to the fire department. In total, the project was two weeks long and the majority was done virtually.

GHAPS is committed to **Success for All** and project-based learning programs like Homegrown provide students with exciting opportunities to develop and build their communication, problem-solving and design skills at an early age.

They learn how to process a problem and figure out the tools to find a solution. Through the program, GHAPS students have had the opportunity to work with multiple local businesses and organizations, including the City of Grand Haven, Health Pointe, Herman Miller, Tri-Cities Historical Museum and Williams & Works.

"From building the prototype to crafting solutions to pitching their ideas through Flipgrid videos, students enjoyed every aspect of the challenge," said Mary Larson, 1st grade teacher at Robinson Elementary. "Projects like this are not only fun, but help students build multiple skills in a purposeful, meaningful setting. This type of learning encourages all voices to be heard as they work their way through the solution process. Teachers and parents learn a lot as well. Problems or situations may be better solved by children as sometimes they're better at thinking outside the box." •

Unsung Individuals of GHAPS

When school first moved to remote learning in March 2020, everyone in education was unsure when students would return in-person, let alone know when they would be riding the bus again. That situation did not sit well with GHAPS transportation staff. Why? Because it is more than driving a bus to them.

“Transportation staff are more than just bus drivers. They are the ones responsible for making sure your children get to and from school safely,” said Thereasa Klouw, GHAPS Transportation Director. “Our drivers take pride in their job, some for almost 30 years. They truly care for the students like they are their own.”

The GHAPS transportation department is responsible for ensuring students get to their destination safely. When the pandemic took that responsibility away from them, it was like time stood still. No one could tell them when they would be back to their normal routine. The unknown was difficult to accept, but the biggest challenge for GHAPS bus drivers was they were not able to say goodbye to the students.

So when school was not in session due to COVID-19 restrictions, GHAPS was committed to keeping the transportation staff connected to the students in some way. Even through this season of uncertainty, drivers continued to serve their students by packing and delivering meals, passing out meals at food assistance pick-up locations, and delivering and picking



GHAPS transportation staff delivering distance learning supplies.

up distance learning supplies such as library books and technology. Not one bus driver has stopped working since the first shutdown and no matter what the district, students and families need, they are some of the first ones to come forward and get it done.

Drivers dedicated their time to getting to know one another and utilizing their individual strengths for the greater good, assisting in areas that went above and beyond their roles. They cleaned buses, painted throughout the district and took buses for drives to keep them running properly. Transportation staff even went to the Grand Haven State Park to pick up and deliver picnic tables to schools so students could have class outdoors.

Every single GHAPS transportation staff member continues to step in and step up. However, two bus drivers that exemplify **Success for All Takes Us All** are Tiffany Strail and Sherry

Stone. Tiffany has been very involved in the district’s food program and has stayed engaged through the summer as well as through the last COVID-19 mandatory remote learning in November 2020. There is nothing that Sherry will not do — she prepares buses for routes, makes sure they are supplied with safety products, cleans the snow off buses and more! We are incredibly proud of Tiffany, Sherry and all our transportation staff!

“GHAPS transportation will go above and beyond, whether that’s driving students to school, listening to them if they had a bad day or taking on something that doesn’t fall under their job description — they love their jobs, but more importantly they love the kids,” said Klouw. “Our drivers are 100% invested in our students and there is nothing they will not do to help them succeed. None of us could do our jobs without them. They are the unsung heroes of GHAPS.” •

Keeping Students Connected Through Music

More than a year has gone by since the beginning of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has significantly impacted music education across the country. However, GHAPS continues to focus on the importance of the arts by keeping students connected through music.

“As educators, encouraging students through times of adversity will often be when we make the largest impact,” said Andrew Ingall, GHAPS Superintendent. “Being involved in an arts program, such as band, orchestra or vocal music, keeps students engaged and provides social and emotional support by empowering them to find their voice.”

Last spring, as part of the district’s ongoing effort to provide **Success for All**, GHAPS music education programs introduced learning methods and technology to the curriculum as a response to COVID-19. However, these practices continue to be successful today when a class, school or the district needs to shift to remote learning. Although band, orchestra and vocal programs have faced ongoing challenges due to coronavirus, the district’s 1:1 technology has helped keep students connected and making music together.

“Most students join a music program for a sense of community and belonging, and we were still able to do that even though we may not be together physically,” said Parks Payton, Lakeshore Middle School vocal teacher. “In addition to gaining more vocal technique and music literacy skills, students gain self-confidence. We must

continue to be flexible and creative to keep music education alive and well, especially for the social-emotional wellbeing of our students.”

The vocal program’s weekly projects incorporate Flipgrid technology to share performances. While the band program utilizes SmartMusic, a music learning software, the band, orchestra and vocal programs all introduced UpBeat, an app where students rehearse and record in real time.

Vocal music implemented a student-choice model allowing 6th through 8th graders to choose to record a performance, create music using digital audio workspaces or analyze musical structures. To date, Payton has received more than 1,000 videos of student performances. Students then record affirmations for fellow middle schooler performances, including for classmates they have never met before.

During remote learning, Grand Haven High School band had weekly sectionals and fostered creative section-based recording using UpBeat. Band members record collaboratively in smaller groups through UpBeat and the teachers use Adobe Premiere to create virtual concerts.

“The last year has been so hard for everyone, especially in music education,” said Tatyana Walters, Lakeshore Middle School orchestra teacher. “Seeing the students so excited and hungry to make music together was inspiring. They have been determined to do what they need



in order to play. To many, music is a safe haven, a place for mental health. Yes, they learn music on an academic level, but they also grow emotionally, mentally and individually.”

GHAPS music education programs also implemented daily lessons and projects to keep spirits high and have fun in times of remote learning. The middle school orchestra program introduced students to Noteflight and MuseScore, allowing the students to have concerts as well as create their Holiday Cheer Project. Orchestra members spread cheer by sending their performances to friends, family and the elderly. High school orchestra students continue to participate in “Good Things,” where they share something positive taking place or have a topic of the day to discuss.

“With anything new, there is always some hesitancy as this was a technology journey into the unknown of digital performance,” said Iain Novoselich, GHHS Director of Bands. “However, students and teachers alike have gained a greater appreciation for in-person rehearsals and performances that we may have previously taken for granted.” •

Community Comes Together to Support GHAPS

Success for All Takes Us All has never rang truer than it has over the last year. The greater Grand Haven community has taken it upon themselves to support and invest in the future of our community — the students. We continue to be amazed by the generosity of the community and former GHAPS staff and families through their donation of in-kind efforts, instructional supplies, social-emotional wellness support, time and more!

Providing learning essentials

Across a years' time, schools, teachers, students and their families have had to shift the way they provide and receive education, sometimes at a moment's notice. Whether families



Grand Haven Area Community Foundation continues to support GHAPS students.

chose Buccaneer Virtual or students had to move to virtual learning due to quarantine, GHAPS has been dedicated to making the transition as seamless as possible. Local organizations like Covenant Life Church have helped to make that possible by making more than 200 desks and purchasing chairs for at-home learning.

To support literacy, the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation and Tri-Cities Kiwanis provided all the books for the Reading Fellows program. In addition, Kiwanis volunteers have offered to support elementary readers when the safety protocols allow visitors to join the learning community in schools. They have also provided books for all second graders one summer to encourage ongoing reading even when school is not in session.

Supplying financial assistance

With the constant change over the last year, it has been a rollercoaster for

parents and teachers. Parents have had to work remotely, adjust their schedules or find a new job. They have also had to make difficult decisions on where their younger children are enrolled in preschool based on their schedule or due to financial reasons. To help alleviate that burden, organizations like the Grand Haven Schools Foundation have been providing scholarships that enable parents to place their children in special programs, like a high-quality preschool. Preschool is a gamechanger for future education and every child should have that opportunity.

The Grand Haven Area Community Foundation also provides grants and scholarships for GHAPS students and teachers. Last spring, they gave more than \$600,000 to 220 Grand Haven area students. Additionally, they have provided nearly \$80,000 in grants to support the shift to digital learning and

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COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

We truly appreciate all those who have stepped up, and continue to do so, to support the district and our students, including:

- The Chamber of Commerce Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Ferrysburg
- Covenant Life Church
- Grand Haven Area Community Foundation
- Grand Haven Area Public Schools PTOs
- Grand Haven Schools Foundation
- Hand2Hand
- Hope Church
- Individual Community Donors
- Kids Hope Network
- Love in Action
- Mosaic Counseling
- Tri-Cities Kiwanis
- United Way
- Women Who Care

Community Comes Together (continued)

provide math and reading materials across the district.

Fulfilling basic needs

Everyone deserves to have access to resources to fulfill their basic needs — food, water and shelter. In addition to the flexibility of the State of Michigan in providing weekly meals, the Grand Haven community continues to wrap their arms around GHAPS families to supplement what is not provided. Community members stock the shelves with needed items in the Grand Haven High School BucsCare Food Pantry, which helps to reduce food insecurities for students. To supplement weekend meals, Love in Action and Hand2Hand's Backpack Blessings provide additional food resources needed to carry students until the start of the new week. Throughout the year, GHAPS



Covenant Life Church made more than 200 desks and purchased chairs for at-home learning.

families and community members also supply schools with snacks for use when needed. In addition to food resources, extra winter gear is donated throughout the district.

Another essential resource provided to teachers is through the Greater Ottawa County United Way's 2-1-1 program. If a teacher or GHAPS staff member is aware of a student in need, they can simply dial 2-1-1 and the United Way will be able to connect them with the resources they need — from food, housing and clothing to utility assistance, healthcare services and transportation.

Supporting health and wellness

At GHAPS, our priority is to not only provide exceptional education, but also to foster social and emotional health. Last summer, thanks to the

Grand Haven Schools Foundation and The Chamber of Commerce Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Ferrysburg, GHAPS introduced Cultivate Club, a pilot leadership program which supports academic and social-emotional wellness. Over the course of five weeks, several 3rd graders participated in leadership training lessons and applied them in the community through kayaking, visiting a blueberry farm, cleaning our local beaches, fishing and experiencing a Farmer's Market. Students discussed leadership, writing, being a team player and perseverance, and learned how applying them in real life now is investing in their future.

We continue to be thankful for all community partnerships and support! Investing in our students now makes for a future brighter! •



Third grader participating in Cultivate Club.