

Grand Haven Area Public Schools Beacon

Summer 2024

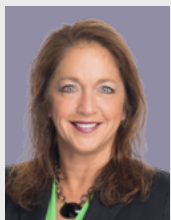
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Board Meeting Schedule

- Monday, July 22
@ GHAPS Education Service Center
- Monday, August 19
@ GHAPS Education Service Center
- Monday, September 16
@ GHAPS Education Service Center
- Monday, November 18
@ Lake Hills Elementary School
- Monday, December 16
@ Griffin Elementary

All board meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

www.ghaps.org

Open Public Presentations:

July 23 and 30, 5:30 p.m.
GHAPS Education Service Center
1415 Beechtree Street

Meet Superintendent Kristin Perkowski and learn more about GHAPS' sinking fund proposal on the Aug. 6 ballot.

If approved, the 0.70 mill sinking fund would generate approximately \$2.2 million in its first year (2025) to address repairs and replacements throughout the district. This equates to about \$5.84/month per \$100,000 of taxable property value. Sinking funds cannot be used for operating expenses, regular maintenance, or employee salaries and benefits.

www.ghaps.org/2024sinkingfund

Dear Grand Haven Community,

It is with great enthusiasm and a profound sense of responsibility that I join this exceptional community of educators, administrators and support staff dedicated to fostering the academic and personal growth of our students.

First, let me extend my heartfelt gratitude for the warm welcome I have already received. The commitment and passion evident in our district are truly inspiring, and I am eager to work alongside such a talented and dedicated team. Together with our students, families and community, we will continue to build on the strong foundation already in place, ensuring that every student has access to the highest quality education and the opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential.

A little about myself: I bring decades of experience in education, having served in various roles including high school teacher and coach, building administrator at every level, district curriculum director, executive director of student achievement, and currently as an associate superintendent. Throughout my career, I have always prioritized collaborative leadership, innovative thinking and a student-centered approach. I firmly believe that the best outcomes are achieved when we work together, harnessing the diverse strengths and perspectives within our community.

It is an honor to join Grand Haven Area Public Schools, and I am excited about all that we will accomplish together. Go Bucs!

Yours in education,
Kristin M. Perkowski



Reflecting on my 35-years as an educator and Buccaneer, I am filled with gratitude for a career full of meaning and purpose. From my time at the high school as a business teacher and coach, then vice principal and principal, and moving on to my role as deputy superintendent and superintendent, it has brought me profound joy to watch as students and staff learn, grow and achieve excellence—as Bucs and in life.

Serving as your superintendent has been the highlight of my career, and working alongside our incredibly talented and dedicated teachers, administrators and staff has truly been an honor. It's their hard work and commitment to Success for All that is making a positive, lasting impact in the lives of our students.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this incredible community. A Buccaneer for life, I look forward to cheering on our scholars, artists, athletes, contestants, grads, musicians and performers in the years to come.

I will always cherish the memories and friendships I've built here, and I look forward to joining you on the sidelines. Go Bucs!

Sincerely,
Scott Grimes



Robinson Elementary: “Exemplary High-Performing School”

Robinson Elementary is one of only 11 Michigan schools to receive the 2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools award from the U.S. Department of Education. With this, Robinson joins Griffin, Lake Hills, Peach Plains and Rosy Mound elementary schools to become the district's fifth to earn the Exemplary High Performing School designation on the basis of their overall academic excellence.

“Everyone on our team has an important role to play. Driving a bus or teaching third grade, we’re all here for the same reason: success for all students.”

- Robinson Principal Jeff Marcus

“The team, parents and students were over the moon to be recognized in this way,” shares Robinson Principal Jeff Marcus. Marcus says the award affirms the incredible work that’s being done to achieve ongoing progress, always striving for better.

Representatives from Robinson and the district traveled to Washington, D.C. to accept the honor at the 2023 National Blue Ribbon Award Ceremony. “It was a great experience to have that time together. D.C. is an incredible place and it was powerful to connect with educators from all over the country,” says Principal Marcus.



Pictured are Matthew Mulvahill, Robinson Elementary School third-grade teacher; Megan Goffnet, kindergarten teacher; Jeff Marcus, principal; Nicole Tiefenbach, instructional coach and Superintendent Scott Grimes.



Powerful Collaboration Drives Instruction



“In the face of lingering learning gaps, teachers are using the best research available to elevate teaching and learning throughout the district—and it’s working.”

- GHAPS Executive Director for Instructional Services Mary Jane Evink

GHAPS educators come together each Wednesday at early release for one hour of intense focus and collaboration. Every school is a Professional Learning Community, or PLC, with “guaranteed time once a week for us to collaborate and improve instruction to best meet each student’s individual needs,” says the GHHS English 9 team.

The GHHS physics team shares, “This allows us to meet for longer and really dig into the data and analyze student learning.”

“We asked a lot from our families,” says Evink. “Their support makes early-release Wednesdays possible.”

During sessions, teachers explore these questions:

- What is most important for every student to learn at a high level?
- How do we know if they’ve learned it?
- What do we do if they didn’t learn it?
- What do we do if they did learn it?

The algebra team says, “We discuss teaching strategies and ways to intervene. We are more intentional about aligning our assessments with what we teach and can focus more on student outcomes.”

At the district level, the guiding coalition monitors the PLC process and provides feedback on how to grow/improve learning. They also support consistency in learning across grades and schools.



PBIS Improves Attendance, Learning

Teaching and learning go hand-in-hand with positive student conduct. That’s why every building has a well-established Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) to encourage school-appropriate behaviors and routines.

“Students are motivated much more effectively by positive reinforcement than through consequences,” explains Mary Jane Evink, GHAPS executive director for instructional services. “They respond well to structure and, because they understand what’s expected, they feel less anxious.”

PBIS looks a bit different at each school. The right motivation has reduced tardiness at GHHS, where a Party Cart randomly visits classrooms to pass out treats—but only if all students have arrived on time. At White Pines Intermediate, Principal Mike Shelton says “Staff have been fully engaged in using verbal recognition and ‘golden tickets,’ to reinforce values like excellence, kindness, respect and responsibility.” The tickets can be spent at the school store for a variety of treats, treasures and experiences.

“Across the district, results include fewer behavior referrals and reduced tardiness, better attendance and improved learning,” shares Evink.

The World is Our Classroom

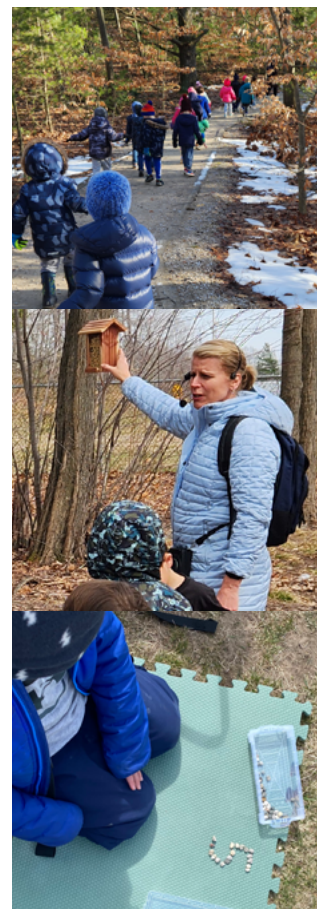
Sometimes, the most memorable learning experiences happen outside the traditional classroom. “Our classrooms are safe, familiar and effective—and students need that,” explains GHAPS Executive Director for Instructional Services Mary Jane Evink. “They also benefit greatly from experiences outside the classroom that create real-world connections and make learning relevant.”

Young Fives teacher Heather Worthington knows learning (and student health) can be improved just by going outside. She explains, “I was reading about the benefits of being outdoors, even for just 15 minutes a day. Then I read that children spend an average of four to seven minutes outside per day—and average seven hours of screen time. That’s not including screen time at school. That hit me. I have them for seven hours of the day, and I needed to do something.”

“Being outside is so healthy for kids and adults too,” she says. “Outdoor learning reduces behavioral, mental and physical health problems and improves retention, test scores and grade point averages. It combats stress and helps us be more creative. Why wouldn’t we do it more?” she says.

GHAPS plans to build on the success of the Young Fives program and is actively exploring ways to bring outdoor learning to preschool and kindergarten classrooms. A partnership with the nearby Outdoor Discovery Center (ODC) has been key, their staff is passionately involved in providing professional development on how to introduce outdoor learning, define classroom boundaries and effectively weave the curriculum into outdoor lessons.

“We spend 45-90 minutes outdoors daily. Nature becomes our classroom,” says Worthington. “We practice handwriting with a stick and some dirt, count acorns and go on story walks. Every day, the great outdoors brings new discoveries and students who are happier, healthier and more creative. It’s a breath of fresh air for all of us!”



Getting The Wiggles Out

At Peach Plains, teacher Danielle Bolthouse led her first graders on a Design Thinking Challenge to answer a very tough question: “What can we put in the hallway to help kids get their wiggles out and get back into their thinking brain?”

Her students did the research, such as interviewing others to identify the need/problem, then ideating sensory path designs. “We worked in groups to come up with a design, then got feedback from Ferry/Voyager first graders who have a sensory path and use it often,” shares Bolthouse. Students used the feedback to adjust their design before pitching the idea to Peach Plains Principal Jason Lawson.

Students at the Careerline Tech Center used the students’ sensory path design to bring it to life for installation. Sensory play increases concentration, focus and cognitive development, improves coordination and motor skills, develops language, communication and social skills, and teaches concepts like cause and effect, sharing and decision making.

GHAPS Safety & Security Update

“Through drills and training, everyone can become solid on the basics. They need to know what to do, how to do it correctly and feel prepared enough to make sound decisions.”

- GHAPS Safety and Security Director Trent Carithers



An early priority for Carithers, Critical Incident Mapping significantly reduces response times by proactively equipping local first responders with detailed, location-specific information ahead of an emergency. “Central Dispatch of Ottawa County now has a detailed map of every building in the district, including the locations of all AED units, fire suppression devices, roof access, gas and electric lines and more,” explains Carithers.



Did you know that there's a red bucket in your child's classroom? With food, water, first-aid supplies and more inside, this small idea has big potential to save lives. Leading the charge is Safety and Security Director Trent Carithers. Once responsible for protecting the President of the United States, Carithers is now protecting GHAPS students, staff and guests.

Thanks to a Michigan Schools Safety Grant, Carithers was able to hit the ground running when he came on board in 2023, addressing opportunities uncovered by district safety audits. Many have been fully implemented, others are at various stages of completion, and all are expected to be finished before school begins in the fall.



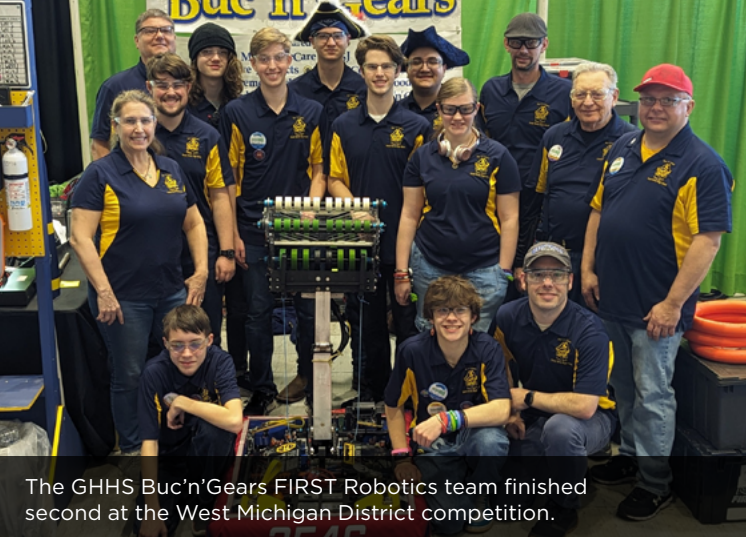
Carithers leads safety and security training for the district, and shares that “The mindset of staff and teachers has shifted. They are aware, watching and paying attention to the little things.” Carithers is also aligning district Behavioral Threat Management Programs to updated state recommendations, training Medical Emergency Response teams and providing Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events training for all staff.

“We also updated how the door and camera systems work together and aligned them with after-hours schedules,” says Carithers. The new digital visitor management system is being installed district wide and gives staff real-time control of who can enter the building. Doors have cameras, and vestibules have an intercom and camera that allow staff to see and speak with guests before they're allowed to enter the building.

Once per quarter, the Ottawa County ISD and West Michigan school districts, including GHAPS, Hudsonville, Spring Lake, West Ottawa and others get together for groundbreaking collaboration. “We learn from one another, share ideas, best practices, and make sure we're all on the same page.”

Fall 2024: See You After Labor Day!

We asked, you answered. We listened, and more than 70% of the GHAPS community agrees: Summer should last through Labor Day. The first day of the 2024-25 school year is Tuesday, September 3. The later start may help avoid losing instruction time due to high temperatures. Last year, two half-days resulted from the August heat. Enjoy the extra-long summer!



The GHHS Buc'n'Gears FIRST Robotics team finished second at the West Michigan District competition.



The GHHS girls wrestling team earned first-ever State Championship.



At the state DECA competition in Detroit, 10 students earned spots to compete at the international level.



The GHAPS Interact Club received the distinguished Youth Impact Award at the 2023 Governor's Service Awards ceremony.



In state competition, every GHAPS musician earned a Division 1 rating and the freshmen quartet received the Outstanding Ensemble nomination.



GHHS Science Olympiad team won its 31st regional championship and came in third in state competition.