

NILES NEWS

www.nilesschools.org

March 2020

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Berrien County Advocates for Pre-Labor Day School Start and a Common Calendar

Berrien County has applied for a waiver that could allow local school districts to start before Labor Day next year. Due to the large number of students participating in shared time programming, including Career Technical Education, math and science magnet programs, dual enrollment courses and comprehensive special education services, the county is also looking to align the local districts toward a common calendar to maximize the benefit of these countywide programs. The rationale is that a common calendar would generate more opportunities for students as well as expand shared services.

With that in mind, discussions and the gathering of information are underway at Niles Community Schools to determine a path forward

in the best interest of our students, teachers and staff.

A proposed common calendar with a pre-Labor Day start could significantly benefit students at all school districts in the county, including Niles Community Schools. The calendar reduces the summer by one week, with school starting before Labor Day, but not before August 31 in 2020.

For our high school students, the change would benefit both their studies and future plans. While it doesn't completely solve the differing lengths between fall and winter semesters, proponents believe the biggest advantages of the pre-Labor Day start is the completion of the first semester before winter break.

As it currently stands, students have their final exams after winter break, so instead of

relaxing and celebrating the holidays with their families and friends, students currently spend time studying and focusing on schoolwork. There would also be additional instructional days prior to Advanced Placement testing, a benefit for many. The change could also benefit the college application process, with grades and transcripts completed and able to be sent earlier.

Understandably, families may see the change as disruptive to their summer and spring vacation plans. While school would still be closed on Labor Day and the Friday before, end-of-summer vacationers would need to adjust their plans accordingly. Spring break vacationers could see similar effects, as the county considers moving spring break to mid-March to align with

high school students taking college courses. This creates a common spring break for all students from kindergarten through college, but could, again, require families to modify vacation plans.

The district has not made any concrete decisions to move away from the traditional calendar at this time, but we will continue to study, listen to and communicate with our teachers, families and students over the next few months. We will look at all options and discuss them with other area districts during this time. Thank you, and Go Vikes!

Dr. Dan Applegate
Superintendent

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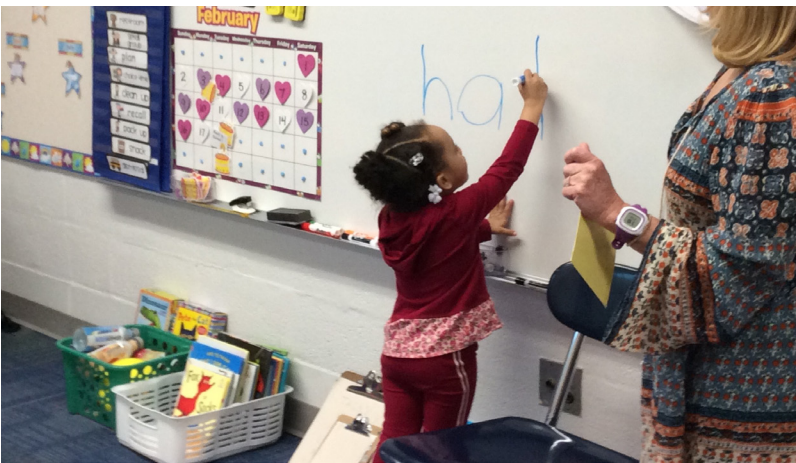
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NEWS FROM NORTHSIDE

The Great Start Readiness Program has been studying recycling. Students created art projects out of recycled items in the classroom and learned how to sort items for recycling.



Northside kicked off their Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) with a school assembly. The children learned how to earn Golden Buckets and prizes for showing exemplary behavior at school. Northside Mini-Vikes are nice, listen and do the right thing!



Northside students continue to learn and practice their letters and sounds. Students are reading to their friends, writing letters and words on the board and eating special foods to go with the letters they are learning.



Students at Northside created self-portraits to celebrate the similarities and differences of each other.



Northside held their annual dance on February 6. Over 100 families came to the dance for a fun night of dancing, crafts, pictures and snacks.



WINTER WONDERLAND AT CEDAR LANE

On December 12th, Niles Cedar Lane hosted a Winter Wonderland event for four Howard-Ellis Elementary kindergarten classes. Hosted by NCL students and staff, the event was inspired by students in the Reaching for the Reins service learning program.

During the event, the kindergarten classes were guided through four rooms, each with a holiday theme and festive activities. The room themes included storytime, Candyland©, Frozen© and Santa.



EASTSIDE CONNECTIONS STEM ACADEMY KICKS OFF 6TH YEAR

Eastside Connections School (ECS) STEM Academy has grown to be one of the largest school sponsored STEM programs in the state of Michigan and plans to continue the growth from 120 students to nearly 200 participants for the 2019-2020 program.

“For the sixth year in a row, ECS STEM club members will enjoy unique, fun, hands-on learning. Our goal is to stimulate and engage each student, inspiring learners to continue their personal exploration of science long after the program's conclusion,” said Joe Racht, ECS principal.

This year ECS STEM Academy members will broaden their experiences by participating in specifically designed programs developed by certified Michigan teachers aimed at utilizing a unique approach of combining dynamic topics and hands-on activities with once-in-a-lifetime experiences. Each activity fulfills Common Core requirements, including Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

Mrs. Mitchell, ECS middle school science teacher and STEM Academy leader added, “Our STEM programs strive to

encourage a student's innate curiosity while instilling the fundamental scientific, technological, engineering, and mathematical (STEM) tools needed for success in today's world.”

“Over the past four years, we have provided a unique program to inspire and expose our students to a wide range of STEM learning, fields of collegiate study and possible careers,” said principal Racht.

“Every year, our program gets stronger because our science teachers are so passionate about igniting student's curiosity to STEM careers.”

While ECS boasts the largest STEM club in southwest Michigan, ECS learners can also participate in a vibrant performing arts program that includes choir, band, orchestra and drama club. Middle school students have opportunities to participate in National Junior Honors Society, Student Council, Model United Nations debate club, Peer to Peer mentoring and mediation program and a school safety club.



NEWS FROM NILES VIRTUAL SCHOOL

While second semester is just starting, we are hard at work preparing for next school year. Some of our elective courses include an option lab component that consists of time spent with a community expert. If you are interested in pursuing time with a community expert not on our current list, now is the time to reach out to them and direct them to our webpage www.nilesvp.com. There is a tab titled Community Expert. Experts can find the email of the Community Expert Liaison on the website.

Students desiring to enroll in one or more courses with the Niles Virtual School should go to www.nilesvp.com and click on “Enroll”. There, you will find one of three pre-enrollment forms to complete.

Shared Time (Homeschool & Private School) wanting non-core classes Sign Up Here

This is the form you complete if you are a homeschool or private school student.

Current Full-Time Traditional Niles District Students wanting non-core classes Sign Up Here

This is the form you fill out if you are enrolled in another District program and would like to take one of our virtual courses.

Students interested in Full-Time, Virtual, Schooling-at-Home, core & non-core classes Sign Up Sign Up Here

This is the form you fill out if you are interested in a “school-at-home” option. We provide all our classes virtually and an in-district Mentor Teacher

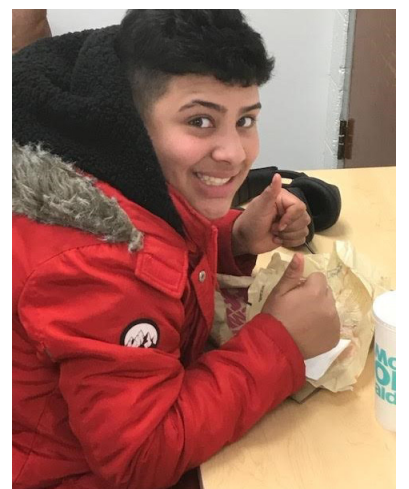
There is limited space so it is imperative to get your information to us as soon as possible. If you are interested in participating in one or more of the Niles Virtual School offerings, reach out to Gail Bliss at gail.bliss@nilesschools.org for more information or call her at (269) 262-4505.



WAY PROGRAM STUDENTS OF THE MONTH



Angelina Dobrzykowski



Luis Escalera

CHAMPIONS MAKE BALLARD PROUD AT CLOVERLEAF SPELLING BEE

Resilient. That’s spelled R-E-S-I-L-I-E-N-T. That adjective perfectly describes fourth graders Javion Hodge, Izabelle Nelson, and Alaska Buckhanan, Ballard Elementary’s School Spelling Bee Champions. On February 20th, they represented Ballard at the Cloverleaf Spelling Bee at Lake Michigan College, with admission to Washington D.C.’s Scripps’s National Spelling Bee on the line. The Mendel Center event was not the beginning of their hard fought journey, though. They’ve been competing since November.

Ballard began the process by having every classroom in the building, kindergarten through fifth grade, compete in a classroom spelling bee. Students in each classroom battled it out until a classroom champion was named.

From there, the classroom champions competed in the Ballard Spelling Bee. Under enormous pressure and many family members looking on, each classroom champion competed against one another to be crowned the overall Ballard Spelling Bee Champion. After a hard fought match, Javion Hodge edged out Izabelle Nelson to be crowned the winner,

The top three contenders at Ballard were invited to be a part of the team that went to the Lake Michigan College competition on February 20th. But first, they were paired up with their coaches, 1st grade teacher Mrs. Waggoner and Speech Language Pathologist Mrs. Miller. The students worked hard in weekly training sessions that tested their abilities. At practice, they worked on

spelling, but also on dealing with the immense pressures of competing in front of a large crowd at the Mendel Center.

After months of preparation, hard work, and resilience, the students traveled to Lake Michigan College for the regional Cloverleaf Spelling Bee competition, where they competed against students from area schools. Despite being three of the youngest contenders, they competed fiercely and made Ballard proud during their effort. While they did not win, they were able to stay and watch much older students compete for the eventual prize. It was quite impressive to see students as young as the Ballard team on stage.

As the older competitors posed for their victory photos, the students excitedly looked on to see where they could be in the near future. As fourth graders, their future spelling bees look very bright.



Fourth graders Izabelle, Alaska, and Javion pose for a photo before the big competition on February 20.

NILES EDUCATION FOUNDATION NEWS

WHAT IS NEF?

The Niles Education Foundation (NEF) is an all-volunteer non-profit 501c(3) that works independently, yet collaboratively, with Niles Community Schools. Our mission is to acquire and grant resources for programs and projects aimed at enhancing, enriching and supplementing learning opportunities for students, staff and the community.

Since it’s establishment in 2009, the NEF has impacted over 6,000 Niles students and invested more than \$230,000 for the enhancement of public education at Niles Community Schools.

NEF GRANTS - SPRING 2020 DEADLINE - APRIL 17TH

The Niles Education Foundation is kicking off it’s spring round of grants and projects. The NEF encourages teachers to apply for grants to invigorate their classroom in new and innovative ways that help students achieve their goals.

All applications are taken online at: <https://www.nileseducationfoundation.org/grants/>.

Questions can be directed to Taylor Campbell: tjbrandstatter@gmail.com.

Learn more about NEF visit our website: <https://www.nileseducationfoundation.org/>.

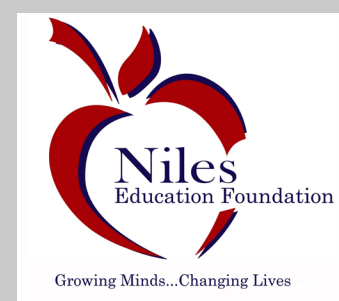
Keep up today by following us on Facebook!

A couple of the recent grants & projects include:

21st Century Art program at Eastside Connections and District Wide Handwriting without Tears

HOW CAN YOU HELP THE NEF?

- Donate your time by volunteering to help with special projects and events.
- Sponsor a program.
- Fund a grant.
- Select Niles Education Foundation as your charitable organization on smile.amazon.com.



HOWARD ELLIS SPOTLIGHT



Mrs. Hollis and Ms. Sarno's classes celebrated the Chinese New Year with a school parade and a presentation from Panda Express.

Howard-Ellis students participated in the Gift of Love food drive to benefit the St. Mary's Christian Service Center. Front Row: Kaden Lane, Maggie Tapia, Elowyn Miller; Lily Nichols. Back Row: Lydia Yates, Max Rucker, Cobi Marlin, and Lucas Bentley.



"Grandpa Herrmann" and "Grandpa Sharkey", friends and Viking alumni from the 1950s, volunteer (along with "Grandma Sharkey") in Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Kane, and Mrs. Hamm's classes each week. The students love having them at the school.



Fifth graders are recognized as Students of the Month for showing respect, responsibility and resiliency.

Kindergartners celebrated the 100th day of school by dressing up as 100-year-olds, playing games and counting 100 objects.



When a Howard-Ellis student gets a sibling, big brother or sister receives a baby book signed by the staff.

Lifting Literacy to New Levels was our family night in January. Teachers on the reading committee planned a night of workshops for parents and students. Each student received a new book.



NILES ADULT EDUCATION

Niles Adult Education, located in the lower level of the Niles District Library, welcomes adults seeking to complete their high school diploma or GED and improve their job opportunities. With individualized learning strategies, we strive to help participants "fast track" their completion as quickly as possible. Other supports are available at the Library, such as free library cards, access to Tutor.com for extra help with classes, access to a Michigan Works! Talent Development Specialist and access to social workers with connections to personal and family support resources.

Enrollment is open throughout the school year, Monday through Thursday, 3pm-7pm.

For more information, please contact:
Niles Adult Education
620 E. Main Street
Niles, MI 49120
(269) 684-4480
email: NilesAdultEducation@nilesschools.org



SOUTHSIDE HAPPENINGS

After enjoying a relaxing winter break, Southside students and staff came back to school rejuvenated and ready to take on the second half of the school year. The month of February was particularly busy with trips to the Niles Police Department, the art fair, and Kindness Day events.

Southside’s SOAR program has expanded and grown to the point where two job sites were added, thus providing more students with work experience opportunities. Students as young as 12 years old have the opportunity to actively develop their work ethic. All Southside students are included in SOAR and receive on the job training that can be carried over into post-secondary employment.

Mike and Lexie celebrate after the art fair awards ceremony.



Officer Angie Lick from the Niles Police Department speaks with Southside students.



7th grade student, Kaleb, refills the jellies at Hob Nob restaurant in Niles



Kindness Day was celebrated on February 13th this year. Southside staff voted on our kindest staff member and our kindest student in each program. This year Mr. Jerry Scott was voted kindest staff member. If one would observe the daily interactions between Mr. Scott and his students, along with witnessing the strong relationships that Mr. Scott has built with Southside staff and students, it is hard to believe that this is his first year at Southside. In December, Mr. Scott organized the canned food drive that brought in over 370 cans of food. That is just one example of how Mr. Scott goes above and beyond for our students and community.

The kindest students at Southside School are Sabrina, Michael, and Val. All three students are consistently friendly and are always willing to help their peers and teachers.

NOT GOING TO WASTE- NILES NEW TECH

Water, and purchasing it in small plastic bottles, has become quite popular the past decade. With the potential health benefits of drinking water, this trend will undoubtedly continue. More, in this case, is better. This trend, however, has created some less than desirable consequences. One of those consequences is plastic water bottle waste.

Niles New Tech is a member of the New Tech Network, a larger organization that connects like schools. The Network is made up of over 210 schools that all use project-based learning as their instructional model. Recently, four New Tech Directors from four Michigan schools applied for and received a grant through the New Tech Network called the Power of Us grant. The intent of this grant was to connect New Tech schools in meaningful learning

opportunities. The four schools, one being Niles New Tech, chose to combat a local and state dilemma.

On February 4th, 17 Niles New Tech students traveled to Everett New Tech High School in Lansing. They were met by nearly 50 other students from Everett, Pickney New Tech and Bellville New Tech. Their time together centered around the driving question, “How can we, as New Tech students, work collaboratively to bring about positive change in environmental policies in Michigan?”

Learners collaborated in small groups to create a list of knows and need-to-knows. By the end of the meeting, learners had enough direction to take the challenge back home and start generating ideas. One of the ideas even involved legislation and law. The four schools

collectively agreed to combat plastic bottle waste and returned home to begin the work.

Many opportunities to interact with academic content exist in the project through earth science, civics, and chemistry. Meaningful learning experiences need to include content obviously; we also want these experiences to matter to our learners and to our community. We also love connecting our learners with professionals in various fields and other students across the state. Grace Fawcett, a Niles New Tech freshman, appreciated the collaboration.

“We had a room full of people from different schools all working on a common project. At the end of the day, I felt like I got to know a lot of people.”

Anna Balog, another freshman at New Tech, enjoyed doing

important work.

“We worked on a project with water bottles. We are going to try to get water bottles to be returnable so there aren’t as many littering our city. We are hoping to make Michigan a cleaner space.”

The hope is that the four schools will gather together again, both virtually and in person, to keep this work moving forward. The goal to minimize plastic waste in our state will undoubtedly be achieved by these conscientious and hard-working young people.



Niles New Tech learners work with other New Tech students to solve a global problem.

RING LARDNER SPOTLIGHT

It is hard to believe that we are well into the second semester already! This year has been packed with recognitions, celebrations, and unbelievable classroom activities that have brought our students' thinking to a new level. We are excited about what has been happening here at Ring Lardner and we are excited for the remainder of the school year.

On January 31st, Ring Lardner's very own Mr. Evan Winkler was named the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association's (MEMSPA) Assistant Principal of the Year. Mr. Winkler was recognized for his dedication to ensuring that the instructional environment is focused on continuous improvement of student learning. Additionally, Mr. Winkler was recognized for his extensive work in the overhaul and development of the district's health curriculum and focus on whole child education and spearheading efforts to secure well over \$200,000 for the district, helping to change the trajectory of students' lives. Mr. Winkler will represent MEMSPA, Ring Lardner, and Niles Community Schools at the NAESP National Outstanding Assistant Principal Awards Program in Louisville, Kentucky this July!



Ring Lardner will once again be celebrating March is Reading Month with everything that is reading! Students and staff will celebrate their favorite books through book talks posted on RLTV, book give aways, daily reading challenges and a book store, which gives students a free book of their choice. At Ring Lardner we emphasize Reading Month because when students understand why they are being asked to complete an activity, they are more likely to be invested in the activity and try hard to succeed. Educators have to draw out the reasons for reading and use those reasons to motivate students. Some students will be motivated to disappear into a fantasy or science fiction world and wonder about things only possible in their imagination. Some will find solace in reading about flawed characters with whom they identify, or heroes and heroines they aspire to be. Whatever the motivation, the "why" has to transcend passing a test or getting ready for the next grade level.

Ring Lardner is also continuing our push to promote healthy habits. Research has found strong evidence that students who make good health-related decisions exhibit better performance in school. During the month of March, Ring Lardner will hold its "March Madness of Fruits and Vegetables" contest. Based on student input, we have explored new options to keep this annual event fresh. We will pair several new variations of fruits and vegetables against each other to determine which one will be the champion! Through this competition students are introduced to healthy eating habits, bring new knowledge of foods that some students may have never heard of. Additionally, our health committee staff has introduced a variation of different after school clubs that utilize the DON'T QUIT Fitness Center and promote physical activity.

Ring Lardner Middle School has had a successful first semester, and has a very promising second semester lined up with the Michigan Model for Health Curriculum. These healthy habits will be beneficial for all students as we move forward in preparation for PSAT, MSTEP, and NWEA assessments that will begin after Spring Break. The eighth grade will take PSATs on April 14th and the window for MSTEP is April 13th through May 8th. The MSTEP window for sixth and seventh grade will be April 27th- May 22nd. The NWEA window for sixth and seventh grade will be from April 13th – May 8th. Ring Lardner will provide families with a testing calendar as soon as it is finalized.

BE COUNTED MICHIGAN - 2020 U.S. CENSUS

National Census Count Day is April 1, 2020. Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a Census to determine the number of people living in the United States.

Census data determines how many seats Michigan gets in Congress. Also, state and local officials use census data to draw boundaries for state and local legislative districts, and school districts.

Who gets counted? Census forms are filled out by household. Everyone living at the address matters and everyone needs to be counted, including children.

What will the Census ask? The Census asks for less personal information than most social media profiles. Items like name, gender, age, birthday, race/ethnicity, relationship to head-of-household, owner or renter and phone number are asked. The Census does NOT ask questions about immigration or citizenship.

Information taken by the Census is private and by law, individual-level census information cannot be shared.

On April 1, 2020 fill out the census either online using the unique Census ID that will be mailed to you, or if you don't

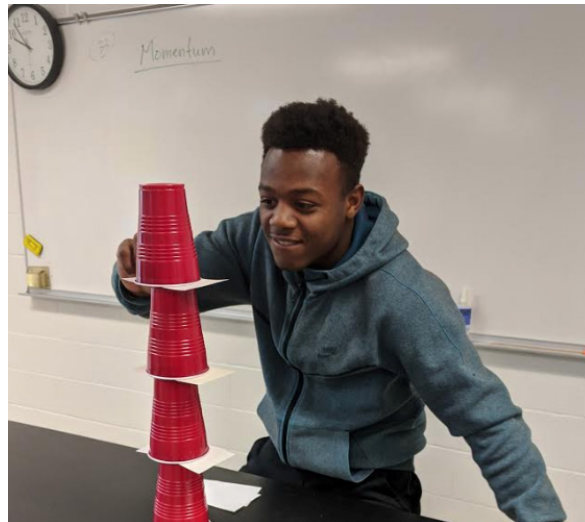
have internet access, you can respond by phone or mail.



NILES HIGH SCHOOL NEWS



Coach Johnson and senior scholar-athlete Alycia Patterson were all smiles at a recent game. Alycia passed the 1,000 point mark and is on the verge of breaking another school record for points scored in a season.



Senior Javond Ball demonstrates Newton's 1st law by showing the cups remain at rest until an unbalanced force acts on them (when the card is removed). Students have finished first semester with finals at the end of January and are now looking forward to what second semester brings.

Did you know that Niles offers two pre-medical field training programs? Pictured here are some of our Professional Health Careers Academy students as they get ready for rounds at the hospital.



Our Spanish students were invited to create bean art, which is common in Mexico, for extra credit. Bean art is an easy craft for students to experience and everyone enjoyed talking about their work and enjoying the chips and salsa provided by Hacienda, who provided the supplies and will feature our artwork at their Portage Road restaurant in March.



How does cornbread and chili sound on a "chili" day? Well, it sounded great for the judges during the Hunter Ice Festival as they named our Culinary Arts program the winner for their entrée in the chili cook-off. Our program continues to make a name for itself in the area and in the state. Congratulations!



Homecoming activities centered around a Disney© theme this year and the freshman were awarded Best Hall in the decorating contest. Their theme was Finding Nemo©.



Two FFA teams from NHS took first in the District Leadership competition in early February. Pictured here is our Parliamentary Procedure team.