

RAMPAGE

WINTER 2025 | VOLUME 42 NUMBER 3



Rockford Public Schools

Quality Community – Quality Schools
Together Building a Tradition of Excellence



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A MESSAGE FROM DR. MATTHEWS



Dr. Steve Matthews

In the book *Finding Orion*, by John David Anderson, Rion, a 12-year-old boy named after the Orion constellation, is finding out about the importance of family as he works to find himself. In the course of the story, Rion, at one point, reflects on parents. As he contemplates parenting, he says this:

“You fall and they catch you. I don’t know a whole lot about parenting being twelve years old and never even having kissed a girl, but I know that’s a big part of it – the catching not the kissing. They wait at the end of the slide the first time you go down, they stand at the bottom of the stairs, they hold your hand as you teeter along the icy driveway. You’re going to fall, they know it, so they spend fifty-nine seconds of every minute watching so that they can be there when your shoelaces trip you up, waiting to say, ‘I’ve got you.’”

As we approach the start of 2025, I begin to wonder what it will take to help us all make it through another year successfully. What it takes is people who care deeply for others. People, like parents, who, as Rion says, “... spend fifty-nine seconds of every minute watching so that they can be there when your shoelaces trip you up, waiting to say, ‘I’ve got you.’”

But even with great parents, we all need a little more help.

In the Rockford Public Schools, we also have a lot of people who think about others and say, “I’ve got you,” multiple times a day. People like bus drivers, secretaries, security staff, child care workers, food service staff, paraprofessionals, mental health liaisons, counselors, social workers, teachers, and principals.

Continues on page 2

ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS PODCAST

Hosted by:
DR. MATTHEWS

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VISIT THE ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS WEBSITE AT WWW.ROCKFORDSCHOOLS.ORG

The Rampage is published 5 times annually by Rockford Public Schools

There are a lot of people in our schools. Each one has a job that is important.

While each person in our district has a defined job and many responsibilities, just like Rion thought about parents, each Rockford Public Schools employee's most important job is to be prepared to catch people if, and when, they fall.

That responsibility is not in our job descriptions. It is not listed as an important qualification. But, it is critical if we are to be successful in supporting our students, families, and staff.

In the Rockford Public Schools, our students and families and staff go about each day focused on doing what we need to do. But, every now and then everyone needs help. And when a student or a family or a staff member needs help, we have staff who will be there to catch people, support people, and say, "I've got you."

Those of us who work for the district know that our first responsibility is to educate the students who come to our schools. We work hard to make sure our students know how to read and write, know how to calculate and solve problems, and know how to think and communicate.

However, we also know that sometimes people fall. Sometimes learning is hard. Sometimes life is hard. Sometimes, even when we try so hard, things fall apart. When that happens our students and families need to have confidence that there will be someone there to help catch them.

Our staff understand that we are there to make sure our students learn and that our parents have the resources that they need to support their children. And, at those times when a little more is needed, the people of the Rockford Public Schools will be there to say, "I've got you."

So Happy New Year! I look forward to what 2025 will bring knowing that there are people around us to catch us if we fall.

Dr. Steve Matthews,
Superintendent



ROCKFORD RAMS

ATHLETICS

TEAM SCHEDULES

All schedules can be found at rockfordrams.org. Navigate the Fall, Winter and Spring sports tabs to find a specific schedule or click on the "Master Schedule" tab to view all upcoming events.

ALL-SPORTS PASSES

All-Sports passes and single-game tickets will be sold digitally this year. Head to rockfordrams.org and click the "Tickets" link to purchase.

All admissions are \$5.00 (K-Adult)

Family Pass \$225

Allows up to 7 family members. Any additional spectators will need to purchase individual ticket.

Adult Pass \$85

Student Pass \$25

All-Sports passes are good for HOME events only.
Excludes Ice Hockey, regular season tournaments/invites, and MHSAA tournaments

ATHLETE REGISTRATION

All student athletes must have a valid physical (dated April 15, 2024 or later) on file and have athletic registration completed via "Aktivate" in order to compete. To complete registration, go to rockfordrams.org.

For additional help/instruction: rockfordrams.org



ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ROCKFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION

President.....	Jarrold Folsom
Vice President.....	Kelley Freridge
Secretary.....	Christie Ramsey
Treasurer.....	Jake Himmelspach

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Steve Matthews	616.863.6557
Superintendent of Schools	
Mike Ramm	616.863.6556
Assistant Superintendent of Instruction	
Dr. Korie Wilson-Crawford	616.863.6554
Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources	
Lisa Jacobs	616.863.6322
Executive Director of Community Services	
Mindy Duba	616.863.6326
Executive Director of Special Services	
Allison Clements	616.863.6555
Executive Director of Operations and Finance	

SUPPORT SERVICES

Athletics	616.863.6040
Cole Andrews, Director Nick Davis, Assistant Athletic Director	
District Literacy	616.863.6556
Sharon Wells, Director	
Facilities Operations (Maintenance)	616.863.6330
Shawn Hayward, Director	
Finance	616.863.6555
Jessica Walburg, Director	
Food Service	616.863.6037
John Henry, Director	
Information Services (Technology)	616.863.6332
Robert Stull, Director	
Innovation and Accountability	616.863.6326
Maggie Thelen, Director	
Media Services	616.863.6377
Mindy McGinn, Director	
Security	616.863.6034
Scott Beckman, Director	
Special Services	616.863.6326
Larinda Fase, Director of Special Programs	
Transportation	616.863.6328
Matt Puett, Director	

Trustee	Tricia Anderson
Trustee	Barbara Helms
Trustee	Nick Reichenbach

SCHOOLS

Belmont Elementary	616.863.6362
Rachel DeKuiper, Principal	
Cannonsburg Elementary	616.863.6344
Teya Cotter, Principal	
Crestwood Elementary	616.863.6346
Kyle Avink, Principal	
Edgerton Trails Elementary	616.326.1030
Shannon Ouellette, Principal	
Lakes Elementary	616.863.6340
Matt Zokoe, Principal	
Meadow Ridge Elementary	616.863.6342
Blake Bowman, Principal	
Parkside Elementary	616.863.6360
Mindy McGinn, Principal	
Roguewood Elementary	616.863.6374
Amie Santillan, Principal	
Valley View Elementary	616.863.6366
Jeremy Karel, Principal	
East Rockford Middle	616.863.6140
Adam Burkholder, Principal Derek Dillon, Assistant Principal Jennifer Domagalski, Student Activities Coordinator	
North Rockford Middle	616.863.6300
Lissa Weidenfeller, Principal Jesus Santillan, Assistant Principal Jennifer Domagalski, Student Activities Coordinator	
RHS Freshman Center	616.863.6348
Dr. Kelly Amshey, Principal Al Reickard, Assistant Principal	
Rockford High School	616.863.6030
Tom Hosford, Principal Eric Cavalli, Associate Principal Ricky Clark, Assistant Principal	
River Valley Academy	616.863.6324
Lisa Jacobs, Principal	
Rockford Virtual	616.863.6320
Jenny Thompson, Director	

The Rockford School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, height, weight and marital status in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Korie Wilson-Crawford, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources, Rockford Public Schools, 350 N. Main, Rockford, Michigan 49341, Telephone 616.863.6554.



Be a part of our Community Garden



Please call 616.863.6322 for an application, garden plot fees, or for more information.



ADULT EDUCATION HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

WANT TO EARN A ROCKFORD HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR PREPARE FOR THE GED?

Let us help you! Our dedicated teaching staff tailors instructional methods and curriculum options for each individual student. Students are given a clear plan and the help needed to achieve their goals.

Teachers are highly qualified in their teaching major and are aware of the unique needs of the adult education student. One-on-one time is given in each class.

Small class size, competent teachers, individualized learning plans, accelerated classes, online and onsite classes, a safe environment, a flexible class schedule, including day and evening classes, and a convenient location near US 131 and the E. Beltline are reasons students choose our FREE program.

NOW ENROLLING FOR THE 2025/2026 SCHOOL YEAR

Please contact: Jenny Thompson
Director Adult/Alternative Education Rockford Public Schools
616.863.6324 | jthompson@rockfordschools.org

WINTER CALENDAR

WINTER RECESS: December 23-January 3 (no school)

JANUARY

6: School Resumes

20: No School (Staff Development)

FEBRUARY

5: Early Release, 12:30 (Gr 6-12), 1:30 (Gr DK-5)

14, 17: Mid-Winter Break (no school)

26: Early Release, 12:30 (Gr 6-12), 1:30 (Gr DK-5)

MARCH

12: Early Release, 12:30 (Gr 6-12), 1:30 (Gr DK-5)

26: Early Release, 12:30 (Gr 6-12), 1:30 (Gr DK-5)

APRIL

SPRING BREAK: April 3-April 11 (no school)

14: School Resumes

23: Early Release, 12:30 (Gr 6-12), 1:30 (Gr DK-5)

BOARD MEETINGS

Check individual Board agenda for access to Board meetings; Board agenda posted on website no later than the Friday preceding the meeting.

GARDEN CLUB SCHOLARSHIP

The Rockford Garden Club 2025 Scholarship is available to high school seniors majoring in Horticulture Studies, Landscape Architecture, Environmental Science, Conservatory Management, Organic Farming, or associated, related fields. A \$2,500 scholarship will be awarded to one student attending any college in the fall of 2025 and can be used for tuition and/or books.

Applications are available on Facebook at the [Rockford Garden Club, Inc. of Michigan](#) page or at the [RHS Counseling office](#). Deadline is March 31, 2025.

Rockford
Preschool
& Child Care
services



Preschool Information Night

2025-2026 PARENT ONLY INFORMATION NIGHT

Join us at the Child Development Lab or the Administration building to gather all the preschool information you need for the 2025-26 school year!

Child Development Lab Preschool

Monday, February 3, 5:30-7pm

Child Development Lab at Rockford High School,
4100 Kroes St, Rockford
(entrance is around the back of the high school)

All Other Preschool Programs

Tuesday, February 4, 6-7:30pm

Administration Building, 350 N. Main St, Rockford
(use Community Services Entrance)

For more information,
please call the Child Care office.

616.863.6560

SCHOOL CLOSING INFORMATION

SCHOOL CLOSINGS/DELAYS

The decision to close or delay school can be a tricky one. As a Michigan resident, you know how fickle our weather is. Just as weather systems can appear without warning, there are times when weather systems predicted to appear do not. Please keep in mind that a forecast is a prediction. Even skilled meteorologists will agree that not all watches, warnings, and advisories materialize as predicted.

School personnel carefully monitor weather forecasts and road conditions. The Rockford Public Schools district spans approximately 97 square miles. Therefore, weather and road conditions can be significantly different within our school district. Ultimately, the decision to close or delay school is made by the Superintendent of Schools, with every effort to make a decision by 5:30am.

In summary, weather is unpredictable and district staff does their best to make reasonable and practical decisions with the safety of students as their top priority. In addition, please keep in mind that weather conditions can rapidly improve or decline from the time a decision is made in the early hours of the morning to the time school is scheduled to start. If at any time you feel it is unsafe to send your child(ren) to school due to the weather or road conditions, you are encouraged to exercise your right to keep them home with an excused absence.

EARLY DISMISSALS

Once students are in school, it is only in extreme cases the district would dismiss early due to weather, mainly due to the fact that many of our younger students could potentially go home to an empty house. However, in the rare case of an early dismissal, this will be posted on TV and the district website, and parents will be notified via the district's automated School Messenger system and/or the school phone tree.

Occasionally when road conditions deteriorate during the day, a decision is made to dismiss students up to one-half hour early to allow buses additional travel time so students arrive home at their regularly scheduled time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your school principal or the Superintendent's Office at 616.863.6557. To receive free text information about School Closings or Delays, just send a text message of "Y" or "Yes" to 67587.

Morning closings and delays are posted on the district website and local TV/radio stations, with several stations offering notification options such as text or email alerts

▶ SAVE THE DATE ◀

REF | ROCKFORD EDUCATION
FOUNDATION

The Taste

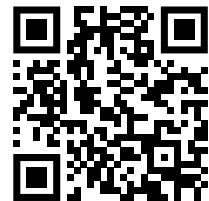
MARCH 6, 2025
6:00 PM - 10:00 PM

THE GILMORE
5179 WEST RIVER DRIVE

Well Minded Matters

“Well Minded Matters” is an informational newsletter put out by Rockford Public Schools.

Our next issue of “Well Minded Matters” will focus on building confidence. Confident children are more likely to take on challenges, explore new opportunities, and bounce back from setbacks. This resilience fosters a growth mindset, encouraging them to view failures as learning experiences rather than obstacles. Read our issue of “Well Minded Matters” to learn more about boosting confidence. You can check out our winter issue at <https://secure.smores.com/n/bmq1y> or by scanning the QR code.



Rockford Public Schools

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BELMONT ELEMENTARY NEWS

Belmont Elementary has the BEST community!

Because of this, we have been SHINING BRIGHT a lot this year! Some highlights include: our all-school Shine Bright Celebration, visits from Officer Morin, spending Belmont Bucks at the School Store, learning outdoors, and being safe, respectful, responsible, and kind ALL THE TIME!





RHS THEATRE PRESENTS Seussical™

March 6-16, 2025
Tickets: rocktix.org

RAMS

News & Views

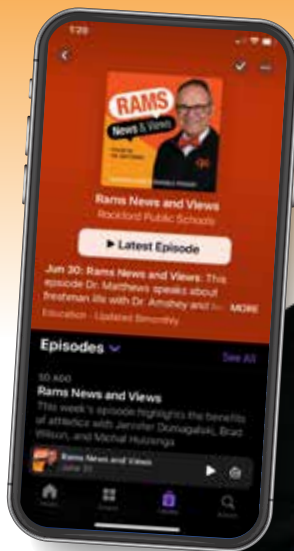
ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS PODCAST

RAMS News & Views is a new Rockford Public Schools podcast. **RAMS News & Views** will share stories about the people and the activities of Rockford Public Schools and education in the 21st century. Our school district intersects with the lives of our students, families, and community members in a wide variety of ways. We hope to explore many of those intersections here on **RAMS News & Views**.

Subscribe to our podcast!



Listen to us on your favorite podcast app!



Hosted by: DR. MATTHEWS



Rockford Public Schools

EATING DISORDERS HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

January 29th, 2025

5:30 - 8:30 PM

Free - 2.5 CEUs

In-Person Event



Thank You!

CEU Sponsor Forest View Hospital

PRESENTATIONS:

The Hidden Medical Consequences of Eating Disorders

Dr. Daniel Schellenberg, Medical Director
[Forest View Hospital](#)

Hilary Fowler, MSN, PMHNP, CPNP [Sanford Behavioral Health](#)

Recognizing the Signs and Responding with Support

Anna Flores, Doctor of Clinical Nutrition
[Authenticity Recovery](#)

Panel Discussion

From Diagnosis to Recovery: Real-Life Tools for Managing Eating Disorders

Panelists from [Authenticity](#), [Forest View](#) & [Sanford Behavioral Health](#)



WHERE?

Rockford Public Schools Auditorium
4100 Kroes Street NE
Rockford, MI 49341

- Vendor Tables (by invitation)
- Coffee & Cookies in the Auditorium Lobby
- For Professionals, Students, Parents & Interested Parties

REGISTER HERE

Contact Kelly Stone
kstone@sanfordhouse.com

Welcome Future Rockford Rams!

Enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year opens February 13, 2025!

Children who turn five on or before December 1, 2025 are eligible to enroll for the 2025-2026 school year.



Rockford Public Schools

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SAVE THE DATE! MARCH 18, 2025 6:00-7:00 pm

For parents/guardians of Developmental Kindergarten and Kindergarten students starting school in the fall of 2025, please plan to attend an Informational Night at your neighborhood elementary school.

Please note, this informational night is for parents/guardians only.

BOOSTER BUCKS

Boost Our Schools... Boost Our Community

with



ROCKFORD CASH



Gives Back! ^{Now} 5%



Rockford Public Schools
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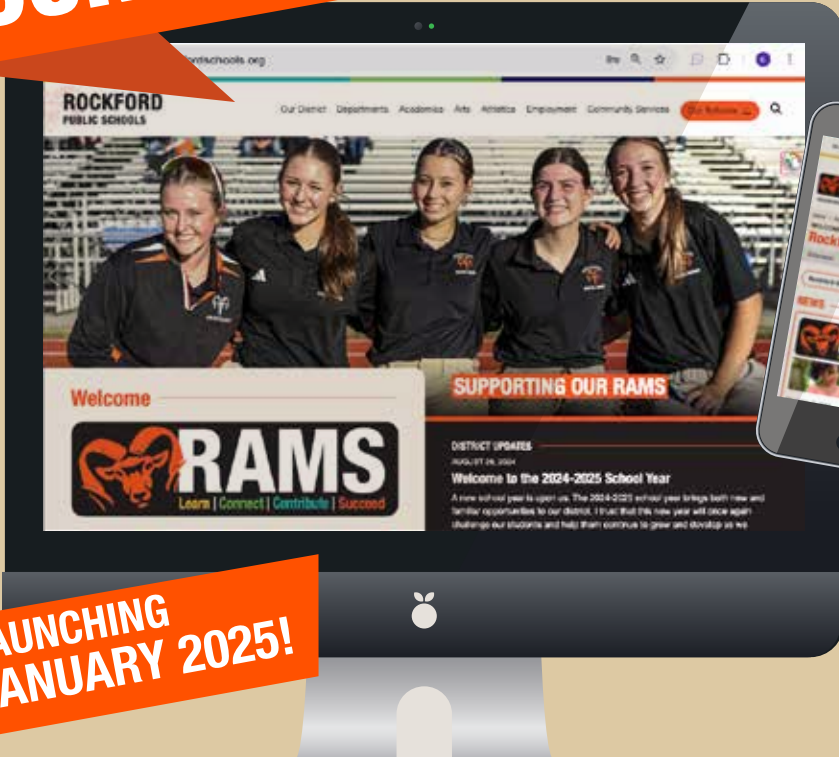
www.rockfordschools.org/booster-bucks/

Lakes Elementary Honors Our Veterans

Lakes Elementary has a long tradition of honoring the many branches of military service veterans in our community with a celebration or parade. On Veteran's Day, our students honored our local Veterans with an outdoor parade stretching over 400 kids and staff members. Students held up signs of gratitude, chanted U.S.A., waved, and shook hands with the men and women who served our country. Students followed those parading to the flag pole at the front of the school to participate in a flag-raising ceremony. As the Color Guard presented the flag, our students stood at attention, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. The students ended with chants of U.S.A. and cheers for all those who served. Remembering those who fought hard for our freedoms is something Lakes Elementary will continue to celebrate.



Introducing
OUR NEW WEBSITE!



**LAUNCHING
 JANUARY 2025!**



Rockford Public Schools
 Quality Community – Quality Schools
Together Building a Tradition of Excellence

2024 A Year in Review!

2019 Bond CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

We invite you to follow along with Bond construction by visiting our new website



rpsbond.com

Or go to www.rockfordschools.org and click on "News"



brought to you by our construction partner,
 Owen-Ames-Kimball Co.



ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Honors School Board Members

FOR ANNUAL RECOGNITION MONTH

January is National Oatmeal Month.

Of course, January is also National Soup Month, National Hot Tea Month, National Slow Cooking Month, National Hobby Month, and National Mentoring Month. Almost as important, January is also National Healthy Weight Awareness Month.

Evidently, there is a lot to recognize in January.

Not to be forgotten, January is also School Board Recognition month — a time to salute the work of our school board members and to celebrate public education.

Recognizing our Rockford Public Schools Board of Education members reflects our community's combined commitment to ensure that all children succeed.

It's an exciting and challenging time in public education. The needs in our community and our nation remain great. The opportunities are boundless, but success requires education. The members of our Board of Education recognize and are committed to ensuring that the students in our district receive an education that will prepare them to be successful today and in the future.

Our district provides services to children and young adults from birth through age 26. Our school board develops policies and makes tough decisions that help shape the future of the 7,900 students in our district.

The Board of Education bears responsibility for an annual budget of \$100 million, our capital projects bond approved in 2019, more than 1500 employees, thirteen school buildings, and three support buildings.

Our board, and the hundreds like it across the state, work to ensure that students in communities large and small receive a high-quality, robust, and challenging education. In doing so, the Board of Education guarantees that our community and our country will have knowledgeable and prepared citizens who help build thriving communities. Public education works because school boards across our state help to make decisions on school programming that reflect our community's values, culture, and circumstances.

Showing appreciation for the important work of school boards should be a year-round process, but too often we fail to recognize the dedication and hard work of these men and women who represent our community. This January, I would like to take a moment and thank our school board members.

Our community has been well served by Tricia Anderson, Kelly Freridge, Jarrod Folsom, Barbara Helms, Jake Himmelspach, Christie Ramsey, and Nick Reichenbach. In January, Mr. Reichenbach will be replaced by Andrea Jacobson. Together, they serve without pay and without benefit. They serve because they have a deep commitment to the students in our district.

Members of Rockford's Board of Education would state that serving is an honor and a privilege. It is also a lot of hard work. During January, I would encourage you to thank the members of the board for their service.



ABOVE & BEYOND

With Heartfelt Thanks!

The Rockford Education Foundation is grateful for the community's support of the Above & Beyond Campaign. Together we achieved our goal of delivering critical resources to Rockford's students and are making a lasting impact.

The Above & Beyond Campaign supports Rockford kids in the following areas:



Student Wellbeing

Essential Needs Fund

Instrument Fund

Literacy Support

REF is dedicated to addressing needs and delivering essential resources to our schools. As we enter the new year, please know how much your commitment means to us, to our schools, and – most importantly – to Rockford's kids.



ref@rockfordschools.org



rockfordEDfoundation.org

REF | ROCKFORD EDUCATION
FOUNDATION

PARKSIDE ELEMENTARY NEWS



Parkside Elementary Celebrates World Kindness Day

In November, Parkside Elementary School joined schools worldwide to celebrate World Kindness Day through inspiring activities aimed at spreading kindness and compassion. Students were treated to guest readers, including Mrs. McGinn and Dr. Matthews, who shared the importance of kindness and empathy. Ms. Weidenfeller and Hopper the counseling dog visited some of their former Meadow Ridge students and made some new Parkside friends!

Students engaged in "Kindness Bingo" challenges, where they completed acts of kindness (from helping a classmate to picking up litter) for a chance to win fun rewards. Staff members passed out tickets when they observed students demonstrating kindness. Each morning, the day began with uplifting quotes about kindness read over the loudspeaker to inspire everyone to make a positive impact. Students were eager to share their efforts with members of the staff. The activities filled the hallways with excitement and goodwill, reminding everyone that kindness starts with small, everyday, intentional actions.

ROCKFORD COMMUNITY

EXP



ROCKFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



**100+ local
exhibitor booths**



Giveaways & prizes



& more!

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

AT ROCKFORD HIGH SCHOOL

9AM - 2PM

 616-866-2000

 www.rockfordmichamber.com

**Booth registration
available online
January 2025**