



Rockford Area Schools **ROCKET REPORT**

District Newsletter
February 2020

Annual Spelling Bee 7th Grader Takes This Year's Championship

The room was quiet.
The tension was mounting, not even a buzz of a bee was heard.
It was the annual District Spelling Bee in progress.

On Monday, January 13, 25 fifth through eighth grade students displayed their spelling abilities in the district-level spelldown. In the eighteenth round, after nine rounds going head-to-head with fifth grader Alyssa Gillman, seventh grader Lizzie Kartak reigned the Spelling Bee champion at Rockford Middle School Center for Environmental Studies! Her winning word was "successor," meaning "one that follows; especially: a person who replaces another in a throne, title or estate or is elected or appointed to an office or other position vacated by another."

Lizzie Kartak went on to represent Rockford Area Schools at the Regional Spelling Bee in Sartell, MN, on February 5.

Pictured: (right) Spelling Bee Champion, Lizzie Kartak, proudly shows her medal. (below) Congratulations to all the qualifying fifth through eighth grades Spelling Bee students!



Upcoming Events

- February 19**—School Board Meeting, 6:30 pm RHS
- February 27**—4th Gr Spotlight Concert, 6:30 pm RHS
- March 2**—Late Start Day (2 hrs later)
- March 5**—Kindergarten Round-Up, 5:45-7 pm, REAMS
- March 9**—RMS-CES Arts & Academics Showcase, 5-7 pm
- March 16**—School Board Work Session, 5:30 pm RHS
- March 16**—School Board Meeting, 6:30 pm RHS
- March 23-27**—No School, Spring Break

Check out the school website for up-to-date announcements and sports activities at www.rockford.k12.mn.us.



This Issue...

Pictured: (top of page) Congratulations to the Rockets Gymnastics team who set a new team score school record of 134.9 on January 23, 2020! The previous record was 129.25 set on February 12, 2015.

The Rocket Report is a monthly newsletter published by Rockford Area Schools for communities in Wright and Hennepin Counties.





Message from Interim Superintendent

Rhonda Dean
Interim Superintendent

About Social Media: Our Children Are Watching

Once upon a time, social media was a means of keeping up with friends. Nowadays, it's a way to announce who we're siding with, or an opportunity to throw out unsubstantiated facts or accusations based on little or no facts. Once it was a source of entertainment; now it's a primary source for news on all topics. National and local elections are upon us, making social media a hotbed for rampant opinion. No doubt about it - social media has changed how we give and receive information, yet we still don't understand its long-term effects on us. We do know that our children are watching us (even if you think they are not). So do something about it by making a personal pledge that helps our children be children.

Purposefully set an example—Maybe you've giggled at someone else's embarrassment or cringed when your own regrettable moment was shared. It can be tough for adults to handle goofs fueled by social media shares. But guess who else is watching? Every single time you use social media to share your opinion, a quote or even a picture (think of the meaning that a red solo cup sends) you're sending your child a message about the kind of person you expect he or she to be. While well-intended, think about how many people are "oversharing." Are we producing a generation that feels everything and everyone must be photographed and shared on social media? Our children are watching (even if you think they are not).

Draw a line between venting and toxicity—As citizens, our community members absolutely have the right to make public comments about what is going on nationally and locally. This includes the right to comment upon our school systems. I would never want to suppress that right or prevent the free exchange of ideas. That would violate our American ideals and run contrary to what we teach our students. We should all remember the important difference between venting frustrations appropriately and responsibly, and turning toxic with baseless commentary that hurts others.

Focus on facts, or stop typing—Someone wise quipped: "*A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.*" It's not just a clever saying -- it's a proven fact. (Source: news.mit.edu) It has happened time and time again on social media, and it's no coincidence that something going "viral" shares the term with sickness. A lone person will post an inaccurate statement with nothing to back it up, other people will spread it via their accounts, and all of a sudden what was untrue has now become part of the public conversation. Before accepting anything as gospel, make sure what you're passing on is true and accurate. Watch out for posts that start with "Not sure this is true, but ..." or "Has anyone else heard ..." Step away from the keyboard! You wouldn't want your kids to be lazy about the facts, right? Sharing questionable material not only can damage an individual, but it can also cause irreversible harm to the morale of a community.

Scrutinize the source—It is easy to write, print and publish just about anything these days, and sometimes readers fall into the trap of thinking clean, neat and slickly produced material must be believable. Don't fall into that trap. Instead, take the time to look into the *Funny Newspaper Generator with Your Own Picture* sources and facts that support what you are reading. Don't assume that because something looks professionally produced means that it's accurate.

Be nice. Always.—Rockford Area Schools does not tolerate meanness from our students, and we wish it were not so prevalent on social media. That is an arena in which innocent intent often blooms into hurtful blowback. Our schools and communities are filled with hard-working, well-intentioned and dedicated public servants, and respect and courtesy should guide our interactions. Threats and foul language have no place in our community. Having different viewpoints and working through them respectfully is a hallmark of our democracy. If you resort to attacking the messenger and not the message, you have already lost.

For district-related news: Choose traditional channels over social media—It's helpful to remember that "social" media is just that: the best place to see your nephew's Halloween costume, the recipe your friend wants to try, the fish your father caught on vacation, etc. It's not called "news media" for a reason, and thankfully most Americans seem to get that. "*If America was giving social media a Yelp review, a majority would give it zero stars.*" (source: www.ctvnews.ca/sci-tech) Traditional communication channels remain the best way to learn about the goings-on in the school district.

Social media has its place and can be a tremendous benefit to our community. Rockford Area Schools recognizes this by including Digital Citizenship in our curriculum. I ask our families and communities to use the megaphone of social media to lift up our schools and not to tear them down. We have an incredible community and school district. Let's keep the positive momentum going!

It's I Love to Read Month at REAMS

I Love to Read Month ~ February 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3 Read Shirt Day	4 Drop everything and Read Week: Choose your own time!	5	6	7 REAMS DEAR 8:5-8:30 READABLE Shirt Day 5	8
9	10 Read Shirt Day	11	12	13 DOOR SWAP!	14 Happy Valentine's Day 5	15
16	17 NO SCHOOL President's Day	18 I LOVE TO READ ** SPIRIT ** WEEK! Make a book mark Day 1	19 Make an Acrostic Poem Day 2	20 Make your own book cover BATTLE OF THE BOOKS Day 3	21 All Day Read & RJ Day	22 Dr. Seuss Word Search Day 4
23	24 Read Shirt Day	25 (Dress as your Favorite Book Character Day)	26	27	28	29

FFA: Learning to Become Leaders

Several Rockford High School FFA members recently placed in the Region IV Career and Leadership Development Event on held on January 20.

Junior Kyle Thomas placed first in Public Speaking and qualified for State competition in April. Student contestants write and deliver a six to eight minute speech related to agriculture in Prepared Public Speaking LDE (Leadership Development Event). Speakers are judged on content and composition, delivery of the speech and their ability to answer questions from the judges.



Rayna Bowen

Junior Rayna Bowen finished second in Extemporaneous Speaking and qualified for State. In this LDE, Student contestants will have 30 minutes to prepare and deliver on a topic drawn from several possible subjects related to agriculture. Judging is based on the quality and delivery of the speech and the ability to answer questions from the judges.

The Parliamentary Procedure team, consisting of junior Sydney Christensen, sophomore Ella Robberstad, junior Katharine Bills, junior Libby Johnson, junior Sophie Czech and junior Kyle Thomas, finished third in the region and will be an alternate to go to State in April. Parliamentary Procedure members complete a written examination and then demonstrate their proficiency at using the correct parliamentary procedure in conducting meetings. Contestants discuss chapter events during their mock meeting.



Freshman Claire Shaikoski finished fifth in Creed Speaking and is an alternate to go to State. The Creed Speaking LDE is for FFA members in grades seventh, eighth, and ninth. They must present the FFA Creed from memory and answer questions about its meaning and purpose. The event boosts self-confidence and develops their ability to communicate in a powerful, professional manner.

Senior Jaiden Sundeen finished sixth in Employment Skills/Job Interview. Participants in the Employment Skills LDE submit a resume, complete job applications, and participate in mock interviews and practicums with a panel of possible employers.

The Region IV FFA is comprised of 25 local FFA chapters including: Academy for Sciences and Agriculture, Andover, Anoka, Blaine, Buffalo, Braham, Champlin Park, Chisago Lakes, Foley, Forest Lake, Hastings, Hinckley-Finlayson, Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted, Highland Park, Humboldt, Milaca, Mora, North East Metro, Ogilvie, Princeton, Rockford, Rush City, Sauk Rapids Rice, School of Environmental Studies (MN Zoo) and Stillwater.

Jaiden Sundeen

Since 1928, FFA has worked to create CDEs and LDEs that demonstrate the meaningful connections between classroom instruction and real-life scenarios. FFA Members may only compete in one team LDE, one individual LDE, one team CDE and any invitational CDEs during their Minnesota Convention.

Pictured: (top) Ella Robberstad, Katharine Bills, Libby Johnson, Sydney Christensen, Sophie Czech and Kyle Thomas are all part of the Parliamentary Procedure team.

The Honor of a Blue Corduroy Jacket

An important blue corduroy jacket was recently awarded to Rockford Middle School FFA member, Cole Sundeen, from the MN FFA Foundation.

Cole is an eighth grade student who is part of the FFA leadership team at RMS-CES, participates in various CDEs (Career Development Events) including Milk Quality & Products along with Fish & Wildlife. In addition, Cole has played an integral part in growing the membership of the FFA program at the middle school level and tends to lead by example.

Cole was awarded his jacket through a program called "Blue Jackets Bright Futures" as support for his involvement in the FFA program. "A personalized FFA jacket provides recipients with a sense of pride while giving them ownership of their FFA experiences," said Lavyne Rada, Minnesota FFA Association Leadership Development Coordinator. "FFA plays an important role in developing agricultural and leadership skills in students while preparing them for their future careers."



Cole Sundeen



RHS Welcomes Interim Principal

Rockford High School recently welcomed Paul Menard as interim principal for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. He replaces Rhonda Dean, who is currently working as the interim superintendent.

In his first principal's message to RHS families, Menard wrote, "Born and raised in Minnesota, I experienced the challenge and opportunity of attending PK-12 schooling in five buildings across three school districts. This is where I learned at a young age the importance of how a school community and culture can help (or hinder) student success. In my time as a student, a teacher, and an administrator, I have worked hard to build positive culture, help all students feel safe and welcome, and believe they can surpass their goals while realizing their vast skill set and sources of inspiration."

Menard received his Bachelors of Arts in English Education from the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, MN and taught English and Theater for Chisago Lakes High School. After becoming engaged, he relocated to the St. Cloud area and taught Theater and English, coached middle school baseball, and directed the fall play, winter one act, and spring musical for years. "In my time teaching, I learned to make genuine connections with students through humor, honest conversation, and a sincere interest in their aspirations," said Menard.

After obtaining his Masters of Education in Educational Administration from the University of Cincinnati, Menard served as an Assistant Principal for four years at Saint John's Prep School in Collegeville, MN. During this time, working alongside his colleagues, they launched the first International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program (DP) in an independent school in an eight state radius and, at the time, the second IB DP outside of the Twin Cities metro area. "In my capacity, I helped with coordinator duties, managed CAS, and taught Language A1: English Literature," said Menard, "More importantly, we saw the positive consequences of collaborating across departments, providing teachers resources for success, and educating students and families about the program structure and demand to,



*Paul Menard, Interim Principal
Rockford High School*

ultimately, garner more external recognition for the hard work already being spent on some of our most challenging course options."

His family then moved to Rochester, MN where he obtained his K-12 principal certification from the University of Minnesota. Menard served as principal for four years before deciding to enter higher education in order to begin pursuing his Ph.D. Menard spent the last two years at Marian University in Fond du Lac, WI as the Director of Teacher Education. He stated, "I appreciated this venture as I was able to interface with student transitions to higher education first-hand as an advisor, engage in intensive studies surrounding leadership theory, and work with veteran educators and administrators from diverse backgrounds."

Menard went on to say that his hopes for the remainder of this school year are to maintain and strengthen the culture of Rockford High School, enhance relationships with all students, continue to educate and engage stakeholders through the IB process, and prepare students for college and career readiness through strong leadership, aligned priorities, and a common goal for all students to realize their potential.



RMS-CES Teachers Learn about School Forest

Recently, some Rockford Middle School Center for Environmental Studies teachers had the opportunity to attend a conference at French Regional Park in Plymouth on School Forest education. They met with other STEM-integrated districts and shared ideas and activities. The teachers also attended sessions that focused on phenology, building empathy with storytelling, using Nature's Notebooks, creating student-led podcasts and listening to the International Wolf Center Outreach Director from Ely.

Pictured: At the recent school forest conference, teachers, Rachel Sharp, Beth Russell, Cassie Korzendorfer and Kristine Mateyka, enjoy the winter weather.



8th Graders Participate in MN Youth Symphonies

On Sunday, February 2, two eighth grade band students, Elizabeth Smith on flute and Jane West on oboe, performed at Orchestra Hall in downtown Minneapolis as part of the Minnesota Youth Symphonies.

Our students come from all over Minnesota and western Wisconsin and from a wide variety of economic and cultural backgrounds to play in MYS orchestras. While many of students hail from Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Twin Cities suburbs, some are from as far away as Rochester, Hudson, Bemidji and St. Cloud. MYS holds weekly Saturday rehearsals at Highland Junior High School in St. Paul.

Minnesota Youth Symphonies is comprised of four major ensembles and perform three times per season. Students audition and are placed into the appropriate ensemble for the season. Both Elizabeth and Jane are members of the Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by James Bartsch. This full orchestra includes all instruments. Literature is a combination of arranged and unedited works designed to expose students to a diverse selection of orchestral music. Rehearsals include separate sectionals for strings, brass, woodwinds and percussion to work out problems specific to their instrument and explore the musical nuances that enhance the overall orchestration. String seating is rotated each trimester; brass, woodwind and percussion rotate from piece to piece.

Pictured (above) The MYS Philharmonic Orchestra performs at Orchestra Hall. (right, left to right) Musicians Jane West and Elizabeth Smith pose for a photo.



RHS Students Participate in BSU Honor Band



On Saturday, January 25, Ellie Davis, a senior flute player, and Paige Henrich, a junior flute player, both participated in the Bemidji State University Honor Band.

The BSU Honor Band is an annual band festival that features the top musicians from Minnesota high schools. Students meet in the morning and rehearse their music throughout the day to showcase their talents in a final performance at the end of the day. The ensemble was conducted by Dr. Scott Guidry, director of bands at Bemidji State University.

Juniors Noah Lewis and Brandon Schmidt were also selected but were unable to attend the event.

Pictured (left) (front row center) Ellie Davis and (front row second from the right) Paige Henrich perform in the BSU Honor Band.



Registration for Preschool Now Open Launching Pad Preschool Open House Feb. 20

Registration for the 2020-21 school year at Launching Pad Preschool is open!

Join us for our annual Open House on Thursday, February 20, from 5:30-7 pm. It's a great time to ask questions, meet the teachers, and tour the classrooms. All complete registrations received by March 16, 2020, will be included in the lottery for classes with more registrations than spots available. Preschool registration materials were mailed at the end of January to all district residents on our census with children who will be between the ages of 3 and 5 by September 1, 2020.

The Launching Pad Preschool programs provide an outstanding and unique public preschool experience. Our learning environment is bright, warm and safe. Children learn and play together in an atmosphere that is rich in opportunities to explore. They are encouraged to problem solve and try new ways to do "old" things in accepting, secure surroundings where they do not experience a fear of failure. The caring and highly trained staff constantly interacts with the children, engaging them in conversations about their work and encouraging them to reach beyond their current abilities. The entire program is designed to be engaging and fun so children don't just learn, they love to learn!

On-line registration and information is available on our website. Please call us at 763-477-7500 or visit us on the web at: www.rockford.k12.mn.us click Early Childhood Programs under the Community Ed tab.

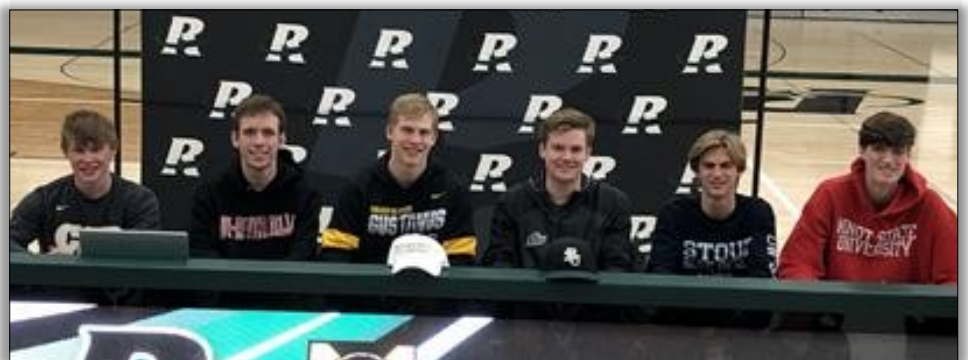
Pictured: (top, left) Ashley Maldonado Celleri and Bentley Lappe are enjoying their day at preschool! (bottom, left) Ms. BethAnn's Launching Pad Preschool class enjoyed a visit from Rockee during the recent REAMS Unity Day. There were hugs, high fives and smiles all around.

Start with Hello Program at REAMS

The Start With Hello program was created by Sandy Hook Promise, a national non-profit organization founded by several parents of the Sandy Hook tragedy that occurred in Newtown, CT on December 14, 2012. The purpose of Start With Hello is to teach students the signs of social isolation, and to help those who feel alone feel included. Start With Hello is just one of many researched-based programs Sandy Hook Promise has created to help protect children from gun violence in schools. During the last week of January, Principal Brenda Nyhus and Counselor Elizabeth Sigette visited each classroom to teach students the basics of the program and why it is important.



RHS Seniors at National Signing Day



On National Signing Day, February 5, 2020, Rockford High School Activities Department held a celebratory program for six seniors. In front of their family, coaches, teammates and friends, the following seniors signed their letters of intent to play sports at the collegiate level next year.

Pictured: (left to right) Congratulations to Austin Schloede, who signed for Track & Field at Concordia St. Paul; Nolan Aker - Cross Country, UW River Falls; Drew Engebretson - Football, Gustavus Adolphus College; Jacob Mathiason - Baseball, Bemidji State University, Nels Trandahl - Cross Country, UW Stout, and Calvin Sisk - Basketball, Minot State University.



Ben Pennings

About IB Programme: It's Curiosity & Problem Solving

Ben Pennings, Rockford High School ninth grade American History teacher, was recently interviewed about the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme and teaching its philosophy in the high school this school year.

This is the seventh year that Pennings has taught at Rockford Area Schools.

Prior to this school year, he taught seventh grade social studies at the middle school. Here are his comments.

Is the answer to the question the most important? Or is it the journey you take to get to the answer—the questions you ask... the discoveries you make... the information you uncover... the curiosity that grows? It's an age-old debate, and one that's ever changing.

The journey to the answer looks a lot different today than it did when I was in school. I remember walking to the library, checking out a book, and citing sources for a paper. Now, with a phone in their hand, students can have the answers in a matter of seconds. But they need to know what to ask and how to sort through the information. They need problem solving, critical thinking, and communication skills.

With the first semester as an International Baccalaureate (IB) Candidate School* in the books, I can see how IB can enhance the Rockford experience by supporting the development of the essential life skills necessary to thrive in the real world. For students to get that benefit, they must ultimately take ownership of their personal learning and academic achievement.

The 9th grade teachers and I have incorporated Middle Years Programme (MYP) vocabulary, rubrics, and philosophy into our classrooms during the first semester. After spending the past several years at Rockford Middle School, I embarked on this new chapter to teach American History at the high school level. I believe that as a teacher I am a navigator—here to guide and show students the different ways to do things.

The IB curriculum is world-renowned and will be available to

every student at Rockford High School. I believe the IB programmes, in concert with the countless other academics, artistic, and athletic opportunities at Rockford High School, will help students develop the skills that make whatever path they choose after graduation day more meaningful.

As we continue to roll out IB, traditional classroom aspects will start to look different. Students will receive academic feedback from the traditional A through F system and from the 0-8 MYP rubrics. This enhanced level of feedback will help students, teachers, and families clearly understand what is expected of students on their assessments, as well as what students can do to increase their achievement level.

I understand any change in the status quo prompts questions. I experience this every day in my American History classes. Students want to know how the IB programme is different, what it means for grading and for graduation. Many parents have the same questions. And my advice to parents is the same advice I give my students: keep asking questions.

You are free to ask me, and I am happy to share what I have seen and experienced. Your best resource will be Dr. Matthew Scheidler, who is the IB Programme Administrator for Rockford High School. Throughout this semester, Dr. Scheidler has been proactive in answering questions and meeting with students. Parents are more than welcome to email their questions to scheidlerm@rockford.k12.mn.us.

Becoming an IB World School is a journey, one that we are on together. My oldest daughter will take her first IB classes next fall, and I am thrilled that she will be exposed to this evolving learning environment that nurtures students to become critical thinkers and problem solvers. Even so, you can bet I'll be taking my own advice and asking questions along the way!

**Only schools authorized by the IB Organization can offer any of its four academic programmes: the Primary Years Programme (PYP), the Middle Years Programme (MYP), the Diploma Programme (DP), or the Career-related Programme (CP). Candidate status gives no guarantee that authorization will be granted.*

Publicity Photographs

Throughout the year, photographs and videos are taken in classrooms and at school activities. Some of these may be published in local newspapers, on the local cable station or in Rockford Area Schools' publications and websites. Parents may request that their child's photograph and identifying their name not be published in district productions or websites. The request must be made in writing and sent to the **Rockford Area Schools District Office, at 6051 Ash Street, Rockford, MN 55373.** (This does not apply to pictures of school events taken by the news media.)

Social Media Communications

Rockford Area Schools is growing our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube channels to keep parents, students, community and alumni in the loop of what is happening at our schools, to promote events and share information like concerts, and other reminders, and, most of all, to celebrate our students!



Facebook - [@ISD883](https://www.facebook.com/ISD883)



Twitter - [@ISD883](https://twitter.com/ISD883)



Instagram - [@isd883](https://www.instagram.com/isd883)



YouTube - [RAS - Rockford MN](https://www.youtube.com/RAS-RockfordMN)



Welcome to the Class of 2033!

Kindergarten is a wonderful time in a child's life and Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School staff are thrilled to welcome the class of 2033 to Kindergarten Round Up on Thursday, March 5.

REAMS is proud to offer full-day tuition-free kindergarten for all students for an eleventh year in 2020-2021. With their insight and understanding, the kindergarten staff provides children with outstanding quality, educational experiences. Along with parental support, the staff is committed to fulfilling their responsibility to help each child reach their highest potential.

If you have questions regarding Kindergarten Round Up or upcoming registration for your child, please do not hesitate to contact the building office at 763-477-5837. The staff is looking forward to making your child's elementary school experience a wonderful place to explore, create, imagine, and learn.

Postal Patron ECRWSS

Kindergarten Round Up Coming March 5

If your child is entering kindergarten this upcoming school year, please be aware of the following requirements and deadlines:

Early Childhood Health and Development Screening - This screening is required before a child may enter public kindergarten. These screenings will take place by appointment in the early childhood offices located at REAMS. Make your appointment by calling 763-477-7500. The remaining screening dates this school year are:
February 11 March 19 April 21

Registration Paperwork - Kindergarten registration paperwork should be completed and turned in to the district office. Registration packets have been mailed the first week of February.

Kindergarten Round Up - Be sure to attend Kindergarten Round Up to meet the staff and learn more about kindergarten on Thursday, March 5, from 5:45 to 7 pm.

Pictured: (top) Judah Quayson is learning to be a focused artist and (left) Melody Larson is working hard in kindergarten.

Johnson Receives Director Award for Board Training



Rockford School Board Member Jessica Johnson was recently recognized with a Director's Award by the Minnesota School Board Association (MSBA).

The Director's Award is awarded to MSBA members who have attained 100 or more points of attendance at their training programs within the past four years of their term. She joins 32 other Minnesota school board members with this accomplishment.

Interim Superintendent Rhonda Dean said, "Our district appreciates the time and training Jessica has done to becoming an effective board member. We thank her for her commitment to the students, staff and community of Rockford Area Schools."

Johnson was honored during a recognition luncheon held during the annual MSBA Leadership Conference on Thursday, January 16. She has been a member of the Rockford School Board since 2017.

This year's conference was held January 16 and 17 at the Minneapolis Convention Center with the theme of Learning from the Past; Leading into the Future. The conference is open to all Minnesota school board members and is hosted by the Minnesota School Board's Association.

Pictured: Rockford School Board member, Jessica Johnson, is recognized at the MSBA Leadership Conference while Chair Amy Edwards gives a supporting round of applause.