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Our District

Rockford Area School (District 883) currently encompasses three schools, an elementary arts magnet school, a middle STEM magnet school and a high school, serving communities in Wright and Hennepin Counties. Our preK-12 public school population is about 1680 students. Our district is also a member of the NorthWest Suburban Integration School District.

Rockford Area Schools provides quality services and support for life-long learning opportunities. Helping every student be successful is at the heart of our mission of educating students for life. We are proud of our staff and the community for their dedication to and support of student success.

Rockford Board of Education

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Vice Chair Chuck Tryon, term expires December 2018
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FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT

This Report to the Community summarizes the many programs and facets of our schools. Here are a few key initiatives at the forefront of our efforts and results.

Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School started a new program called “Genius Hour.” This is part of a larger movement in education that promotes student-driven learning and ensures that young people learn to think for themselves. In the classroom, students are given a set amount of time to explore and create a project about something they want to learn or are passionate about. During Genius Hour, students are in control, choosing what they study, how they study it and what they do, produce or create as a result. As a learning model, it promotes inquiry, research, creativity and self-directed learning.

This school year, Rockford Middle School-Center for Environmental Studies welcomed fifth grade to the building and to the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) curriculum. Also new this year at the middle school is a switch to a quarter-based system for all classes, the core classes (math, science, reading/language arts and social studies) as well as courses in art, agriculture, music, physical education/health, writing, STEM Literacy and Exploratory.

Rockford High School added a business department this school year. The new courses include Intro to Business, Computer Applications, Web Design, Marketing, Accounting, Sports and Entertainment Marketing, and a Entrepreneurship class, which is currently working hard on planning the start up of the school store.

With our Community Education programs, the Rockford Community Center memberships are up by 164 new members. New classes and programs have been added that to accommodate most members schedules. We have also made it a higher priority to get more building staff and area residents to teach our community education classes. The Winter CE brochure identifies many of these system-wide upgrades. In 2015, necessary changes and improvements are planned as we focus on strengthening our community education department.

Our student enrollment continues to increase. On the first day of school in the 2014-15 school year, we had 40 more students than we had on the last day of school in the 2013-14 school year. Enrollment drives many decisions in our school district from curriculum, scheduling and class sizes to busing and food service offerings. We closely monitor enrollment changes throughout the school year so we can determine the best options for our students in all areas.

I want to extend an invitation to you to get involved, check out the updates and renovations, and witness first-hand how our students learn. These upcoming changes are truly great for our students and district.

Paul D. Durand
Superintendent of Rockford Area Schools
Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School is celebrating its eleventh year as an arts magnet school for grades kindergarten through grade four. Students are provided with learning adventures that take them beyond the traditional instructional classroom experience. Teaching through the arts helps students experience concepts rather than merely discussing or reading about them. Teachers focus on a strong academic core with opportunities for students to create at many levels.

Students in kindergarten through grade four are experiencing partnerships with artists in residence and arts-related field trips during the 2014-2015 school year. The Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School staff is excited to partner with many local artists who are providing experiences for students at REAMS in the areas of dance, drama, music, literary and visual arts. Children have the opportunity to work with many of the artists for one or more sessions and often couple their learning with a connected field trip. The teachers have also related the artists’ work to the core curriculum to enhance the students learning back in their classrooms.

All students at REAMS have a yearly cultural focus celebrating student diversity by introducing rich, cultural content that expands student knowledge, interest, and respect for all cultures. Students experience cultures through performances, guest speakers, and classroom learning.

Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School students and staff are working together on a building-wide Kindness Project. Giving students the tools to treat each other in a positive manner in every situation is the goal. Students have participated in Kindness Camp, The Great Kindness Challenge, and a Kindness Retreat this year. They are challenged each day to initiate random acts of kindness and find the positive traits in each other.

**Assessments**

A variety of tests are given at the elementary level to evaluate the achievement of students as well as the instructional programs in our school. The tests include the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests, administered twice per year at each grade level to ensure that students are making expected growth in reading and mathematics, Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA), a standardized testing system, or state alternative assessments.

In 2014, Rockford Elementary students scored 64.3% in reading proficiency, above the state average (58.8%). In math, REAMS also scored above the state average (60.5%) at 67.4%. The MCA’s are used by the state of Minnesota to measure Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for all students and the subgroups.
Rockford Middle School - Center for Environmental Studies

Nominated for the US Dept. of Education’s Green Ribbon

Rockford Middle School - Center for Environmental Studies is in its fourth year as a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) magnet school for students in grades five through eight. Students enjoy a bold curriculum that teaches the standards through experiential learning.

The core of the magnet program is developed around the unique learning opportunities available through the environment. The school established two outdoor classrooms, developed a rain garden and is taking advantage of a DNR-certified forest, as well as partnerships with Three Rivers Parks, the Raptor Center, Excel Energy, The Arboretum and BestPrep to enhance their curriculum. RMS-CES students learn about the connections between humans and nature, the importance of a healthy lifestyle and what it means to be a steward of the environment.

All middle school teachers are Project Learning Tree certified. This curriculum focuses on increasing students’ understanding of our environment; stimulating critical and creative thinking; and developing students’ ability to make informed decisions on environmental issues.

RMS-CES students explore multiple STEM-related topics through project-based learning; which research shows is a best practice when working with middle level learners. All students in grades 5-8 have the opportunity to participate in band, as well as agri-science, art and healthy lifestyles.

Assessments

All eighth grade students at RMS-CES take the EXPLORE test; which is a predictor of success on the ACT college entrance exam, and focuses on career preparation and improving academic achievement. EXPLORE helps students identify academic strengths or weaknesses in four areas—English, math, reading, and science. RMS-CES students scored significantly higher than their national peers. The average composite score for RMS-CES students was 16.0 compared to the national average of 15.5.

All student subgroups met proficiency targets, which means that RMS-CES is making adequate yearly progress (AYP) as outlined by the Minnesota Department of Education. In 2014, RMS-CES students scored above state averages in their math proficiency at 73.5%. In the reading proficiency, middle school students scored 69.8%

The NWEA/MAPS tests are also administered at RMS-CES twice per year at each grade level to ensure that students are making expected growth in reading and mathematics.
**Link Crew**

Link Crew is a high school transition program that welcomes freshmen and makes them feel comfortable throughout the first year of their high school experience. Built on the belief that students can help students succeed, our high school transition program trains students from junior and senior classes to be Link Crew Leaders. As positive role models, Link Crew Leaders then serve as mentors and student leaders who guide the freshmen to discover what it takes to be successful during the transition to high school.

Rockford High School offers rigorous college-prep courses as well as curriculum designed to develop critical-thinking skills for students in grades 9-12. RHS offers seven College in the Schools (CIS) classes, two Advanced Placement courses and two Project Lead the Way classes. Graduation requirements are rigorous with full year classes in each of the subject areas of language arts, science, social studies and mathematics.

Rockford High School is committed to making our students college and career ready. Our elective programs provide great opportunities for students to explore a variety of subjects. Students can explore topics in business, agriculture and technology education, and can participate in a number of clubs and activities related to these classes like running the school store, being part of the FFA program or designing and building a super mileage car.

**Assessments**

All tenth grade students take the PLAN test; second part of a testing system that starts with EXPLORE and ends with the ACT. The test provides information to guide career preparation and improving academic achievement. Rockford High School students scored significantly higher than their national peers in all areas, including English, mathematics, reading, and science.

Starting in 2015, All Rockford High School juniors will take the American College Test (ACT) as part of the state testing sequence. The state average score for the ACT in 2014 was 23, with Rockford students averaging 22.5.

All students are required to demonstrate basic competencies in reading, math and written compensation in order to be eligible for a Minnesota public high school diploma. In 2014, RHS students scored above state averages in the MCA reading proficiency test at 69.4% (state average 60.0%). In the math proficiency test, RHS high school students scored 57.3% (state average 49.8%).
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Rockford Area Schools offers a wide variety of extracurricular activities and sports for students in grades 7-12 to participate in throughout the school year. About 69% of grade 7-12 students participate in at least one extracurricular activity with 50% participating in two or more. The Athletic activities include:

FALL -
- Cross Country (girls & boys)
- Soccer (girls & boys)
- Cheerleading
- Football
- Volleyball
- Dance Team (Performance)

WINTER -
- Basketball (girls & boys)
- Hockey (girls & boys)
- Cheerleading
- Gymnastics
- Wrestling
- Dance Team (Competition)

(Girls hockey is through a cooperative agreement with Buffalo High School. For more information, access www.mississippi8.org; Boys hockey is through a cooperative agreement with Delano High School. For more information, access www.wcconference.org.)

SPRING -
- Baseball
- Softball
- Track & Field (girls & boys)
- Golf (girls & boys)

Fine Arts and other activities include:
- Auditorium Technicians
- Band (Concert, Jazz, Pep, Marching, Flag Twirlers, Major/Majorette)
- Choir (A Cappella, Belle Canto Women’s Ensemble)
- Equestrian Club
- Future Farmers of America
- Mock Trial
- National Honor Society
- Plays (One-Act, Three-Act, Musical)
- Robotics
- Spanish Club
- Speech
- Statistician
- Student Council
- Team Managers
- Trap Shooting
- Webcasting
- Yearbook

CONFERENCE CHANGE

During the 2015-16 school year, Rockford Area Schools will transition from the Central Minnesota Conference to the Wright County Conference. What is most exciting about this move is that some of the teams are on our regular season schedules already. We know, with hard work, dedication and our Rocket spirit, this move will be a successful one.

GO ROCKETS!
FINANCIALS

Rockford Area Schools is committed to being fiscally responsible and having a balanced budget. Our aim is to have the maximum resources reach our classrooms.

Our student enrollment has consistently risen in the last few years, boosting our revenue streams. Our goal is to build a healthy fund balance, and a reserve to help the district weather the state aid and tax shifts that affects all Minnesota school districts.

The district has received the Minnesota Department of Education School Finance Award for several years in a row. Additionally, Rockford Area Schools has consistently received a clean audit opinion by the CliftonLarsonAllen firm as well as receiving a bond rating from Standards and Poor’s of AA–.

Rockford Area Schools has an active finance committee, comprised of community and business leaders in the district. The committee meets on a regular basis, with the school board chair and treasurer as standing members.

CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Last summer saw a plethora of activity with the various construction projects in the district, now in our third year. The construction projects at Rockford Area Schools have been underway since the beginning of 2013 and will continue through 2016. A $27 million bond issue was approved by the voters in November 2012, for buildings, grounds and infrastructure improvements.

At the high school, the band and choir wing upgrades included finishes and new instrument, music and uniform storage cabinetry. The auditorium has a new sound system and upgraded lighting. There is an additional parking lot, and new drop-off area and pedestrian approach at the activities entrance.

During the 2014-15 school year, work continued on a new lighted varsity baseball field and stadium, bleachers, and entrance plaza, upper campus renovations with paved parking lot and new soccer and practice field, new athletic corridor entry, and new gymnasium, music wing, and locker room doors.

All three buildings have had work done to or replacement of the HVAC systems, as well as boilers. A new phone system has been implemented district-wide as well. As these projects progress into this year and next, Rockford Area Schools students and staff look forward to benefiting from these various improvements as
well as hosting many games and events on our great facilities.

These projects will prepare and equip our district facilities to effectively serve our students and surrounding communities for many years. For updates on these projects, please visit the Rockford Area Schools website at www.rockford.k12.mn.us and click on the Bond Pledge tab on the left side.
Grounded in the core values of lifelong learning and citizen involvement, the Rockford Area Schools Community Education Department is an integral component of the school district. The department views education as anything that enhances life and expands personal potential by providing opportunities for learners of every age through a variety of programs and services. Building a great place to live is the simple goal of Rockford Community Education.

Adults
Rockford Area Schools Community Education offers adult enrichment and health and wellness classes, ranging from driver improvement, computers, personal finance topics, art opportunities, GED classes, a variety of fitness class options (now included in a Rockford Community Center membership), adult basketball and volleyball leagues, a bike club and more. Since the fall, our memberships have tripled and we have added more fitness classes as we encourage our members to expand their horizons, hone their talents, or be introduced to a new hobby or skill. This is all easily accomplished since there is no signing up for classes—just join in when you can and enjoy!

Youth
Rockford Area Schools Community Education youth programs offer a wide variety of enrichment classes as well as sports and recreation activities to expand their child’s learning and athletic experiences. Youth enrichment opportunities include art, science, chess, acting, classroom driver education, behind-the-wheel training, ACT-prep seminar, Lego classes, guitar lessons, firearms safety, Destination ImagiNation and more. These enrichment classes encourage students to engage, participate, wonder, explore, grow, learn and have fun in a safe environment. Youth sports and recreation opportunities include dance classes, summer soccer league, golf camps, dance camp, youth in-house basketball for students in Kindergarten-3rd grade, NFL Flag football, taekwondo, skateboard camp, Rocket Power strength training, cheer camp, track and field camp, volleyball camp, basketball camps, dance team, snowboard and ski club, spring indoor soccer, Rockford Rockets Gymnastics Club and more. These programs provide our local youth with a positive introduction to athletics, sports and recreation programs. Hundreds of district youth participate in these programs each year. In the fall on 2014, Community education offered 28 classes/activities for youth and adult that broke down to 36 teams, 540 individuals, and 40 vendors.
**Galaxy Kids**

**School Age Care Program**

Galaxy Kids Program provides child care in two settings designed to meet the needs of students in preschool through sixth grade. The program operates Monday through Friday from 6am-6pm throughout the school year and during the summer months. Field trips and special theme-related learning opportunities are available as part of summer programming. Age-appropriate choices for creative, physical and social growth include activities in art, music, sports, cooking, language arts/reading, games, technology, community service, creative dramatics, homework assistance and quiet time. Children are encouraged to pursue their interests, develop confidence and independence, make new friends and, of course, have fun!

**Early Childhood Programs**

Rockford Area Schools Early Childhood Programs offer comprehensive support to children and families during the early years.

**Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)**

At Rockford Area Schools ECFE, parents are offered educational support for the healthy growth and development of their children, and parenting support for strong families. The year-round programs include affordable parent-child classes, parent-only classes, home visits, special events and field trips.

**Launching Pad Preschool**

Through half-day and full-day options, Launching Pad Preschool offers a Reggio-inspired approach to education, considered by many to be the best in the world. New this past year, free bus transportation and increased scholarship dollars were available to families. Teaching Strategies GOLD online, an ongoing, research-based comprehensive assessment tool, helped teachers track student progress, guide kindergarten readiness and inform instruction in real time.

**Facility Use**

Rockford Area Schools Community Education department schedules district facilities before and after school hours, on the weekends, holidays and during the summer months. District facilities become home to programs offered by many different organizations, involving athletics, music, theatre, dance, local service organizations and more. Community members of all ages can utilize their public school facilities for lifelong learning and programs that greatly enhance the quality of life in our area. In 2014, over 130 groups used district facilities for over 14,000 combined and bringing over 25,000 people into the district for a variety of events. Our new facilities showcase the growth and commitment to our amazing district.

**4-Star Rating**

Launching Pad Preschool was re-awarded a 4-star rating from Parent Aware, the highest offered. It reflects a commitment to high-quality programming using research-based best practices, while preparing children for success in kindergarten and beyond. This allows for Pathway II Scholarships for qualifying families.
Rockford Area Schools

Member of the NorthWest Suburban Integration School District
Independent School District 883
6051 Ash Street
Rockford MN 55373
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A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE ONE STUDENT AT A TIME