

Top scholar, Vals and Sals named for WO

Ten members of West Ottawa High School's graduating class of 2020 have earned grade-point averages (GPA) of 3.99 or better, led by Colin Brown who was named the top scholar.

Brown, Jamahl Hogan and Greta Davis maintained perfect 4.0 GPAs during their high school careers and were named as valedictorians.

Colin is the son of Susan and Caryl Brown and will attend Princeton University and study chemistry.

Jamahl is the son of Paul and Stephanie Hogan and will attend Grand Valley State University to study sports management and pre-law.

Greta is the daughter of Ellen and William Davis and will attend the University of Michigan and study engineering.

Colin was named the Class of 2020 Top Scholar after earning more than 900 total scholar points by maintaining a 4.0 unweighted GPA,



Colin Brown

completing 19 semesters of Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses, and four semesters of Dual Enrollment classes, and scoring a 1510 on his SAT.

Additionally, Colin served as captain on both his cross country and track and field teams, fulfilled the role of National Honor Society president, performed as the principal cellist in chamber orchestra and was a representative on the Community Foundation of Holland/Zeeland Youth Advisory Committee and the West Ottawa String Teachers Association.

The following students maintained a 3.99 GPA throughout their high school careers and have earned the recognition of salutatorian:

Tyler Bush, son of Margaret and William Bush, will attend the University of Michigan to study meteorology.

Shane Vaara, son of Marcus and Loretta Vaara, will attend the University of Alabama to study chemical engineering.

Kendra Erickson, daughter of Shannon and Brian Erickson, will
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Graduating class achieves amazing feats

The West Ottawa High School seniors who will be graduating at the June 25, 2020 graduation ceremony did not have a typical or traditional finish to their high school career, but it does not diminish their amazing achievements over the past few years.

Here is a glimpse at just a few of the highlights from the Class of 2020:

- 17 members of the first graduating cohort of Spanish Immersion students
- 11 candidates for an International Baccalaureate diploma
- 38 LINKS that provided peer support at WOHS
- 2 National Scholastic Award Winners
- 1 Michigan Interscholastic Press Association 1st place at State

- 1 National Merit Scholarship Finalist/Scholarship Winner
- 19 Advanced Placement Scholar Winners
- 146 gold cord recipients for maintaining a 3.5 GPA
- 103 National Honor Society members
- 2 Band members selected to perform with Michigan All-State Band
- 1 Band member won the Norbert Mueller Concert Competition

Senior led group accomplishments are:

- Band and Orchestra earned straight 1st Division Ratings at Festival
- WOBOT recognized with the Chairman's Award

- Girls Cross Country won OK Red (first ever) and Regional titles
- CTEE completed a shipment of 550 computer stations to Ghana
- Boys Swim won OK Red, and were favorites heading to State championship
- Student Senate organized record setting Blood Drives, Toy Drives and raised over \$100,000 for WINWO in their four years of Senior Survivor

The Class of 2020 had a remarkable career at West Ottawa High School. The two greatest statistics of this class are that they earned a record \$16.4 million dollars in scholarships and 231 of them will be the first in their family to continue education beyond high school.

Congratulations Class of 2020 and Go WO!

LINKS program is coming to Macatawa Bay

The successful LINKS program, which pairs general education students with special education students to create dynamic partnerships and positive experiences for both students, will be implemented at Macatawa Bay Middle School in the 2020-21 school year.

The LINKS program at Macatawa Bay will be very similar to the course at the high school that offers this peer-to-peer course focusing on assisting students with special needs with socialization, independence and age appropriate behavior. The goal of the LINKS program is to spread awareness not only to students in the LINKS course, but to all of Macatawa Bay and the entire West Ottawa community.

During the 2019-20 school year, the LINKS partnership program was piloted in Mr. Keegan's Video Productions course. On any given day, you could walk into this classroom and see students hovering over a computer editing an interview video using software. Pairs of students laughed and smiled as they edited together, working collaboratively to meet classroom expectations.

Students enrolled in the LINKS program will be a mentor, role model and friend to a student with special needs. LINKS students gain perspective of disabilities by participating in case conferences to discuss the progress of their students, and to contribute ideas on how they can more effectively help the students with special needs to progress towards their goals.

In addition to the individual bonds this program creates in the classroom setting, Macatawa Bay will continue to



From left to right, David Edwards, Ahleya Jackson and Gabrielle Reynolds prepare for the LINKS program.

host LINKS lunch activities and field trips to BAM Bowling Center and the Holland Aquatic Center that have been a tradition in the building for several years.

"As a district we embrace the opportunities to prioritize diversity and inclusion," said Principal Kristin Graham. "The LINKS mentor program is an opportunity for all students at West Ottawa Public Schools to shine."

North Holland launches outdoor kindergarten

North Holland embarked on many adventures during the 2019-2020 school year. In many of these adventures, students and teachers moved their learning outside of the traditional classroom.

Studies have shown that the benefits of outdoor learning include: better grades, decreased stress levels, better overall health, increased motivation, better overall behavior, enhanced communication skills, improved memory, increased self-reliance, better attitudes about the environment, increased outdoor skills, and increased community involvement.

In September, North Holland launched Outdoor Kindergarten. Kindergarteners spent their mornings indoors, and their afternoons in an area developed as an outdoor classroom. During their time outdoors, students experienced whole group, small group and individualized instruction, as well as time for free play and exploration.

While teaching part of the day outdoors, North Holland kindergarten teachers delivered the same core instruction content as those teaching in a fully indoor setting. Teachers and parents reported high satisfaction with the program and believe outdoor learning contributed to high levels of engagement and improved social-emotional health for students.

Like their students, North Holland kindergarten teachers learned through this experience and look forward to a second year of Outdoor Kindergarten.



Kindergarteners Aaden Dy-Woods and Harper Egbert explore the forest at Hemlock Crossing Nature Center during a field trip.

Lakeshore remains family through COVID-19

In the unprecedented time of COVID-19 and distance learning, Lakeshore Elementary tried hard to reach and engage as many of our families as possible. In order to do so, Lakeshore decided to utilize everyone's favorite social media platform – Facebook.

For quite some time, the school has used Twitter to reach families at home, but as school closures became more and more real and connection became more and more important, Lakeshore recognized the need to broaden its scope. Its new Facebook page helped reach families in a safe, fun, and friendly way and allowed posts on everything from teacher read-alouds and STEM challenges, to the principal participating in the ice bucket challenge. It provided a platform for connection and gratitude and gave families a landing-pad for whole-school initiatives.

Through Facebook Live the Lakeshore staff planned two school-wide “Virtual Assemblies,” one to kick off distance learning and one to close out the school year. For each celebration, beloved teachers and staff waited patiently on Google Meet, ready to greet students with cheers, signs, and smiles.

During the “See you Soon Send-off,” each teacher was able to say something meaningful, in real time, not only to his or her class, but to the entire school, as students and parents cheered through likes and comments. The send-off ended in many tears, virtual hugs, virtual high fives, “see you later,” and all the social media feels.

Hey, Lakeshore! 🙌 Mrs. Bauer is reading one of her favorite books for our Wednesday read aloud, Put Me in the Zoo! 🦁 🐼 🐻 Enjoy!



16

1 Share 156 Views

Like

Comment

Share

225 people reached >

Boost Post

Mrs. Bauer leads students through a Three R's lesson.

Though distance learning provided most with the educational challenge of their lifetimes, being able to con-

nect with students in a meaningful and current way helped highlight that Lakeshore really is a family—and family can get through anything.

Eighteen retire from West Ottawa Public Schools

Eighteen West Ottawa certified and support staff members retired in 2019-20.

Certified staff members retiring were upper elementary resource teacher JoEllen Barron, core support teacher Wendy Evans, and speech pathologist Kristin Fantin from Great Lakes Elementary; kindergarten teacher Nancy Burrink-Kleinheksel from Lakewood Elementary; Montessori teacher Lynne Gallagher from Waukazoo Elementary; science teacher Craig Kingma from Macatowa Bay Middle School; social worker Jill Kunkel and second grade teacher Shayne Wuerfel from Lakeshore Elementary; technology teacher Lori Marco from Lakewood and Waukazoo elementaries; Spanish/technology teacher

Anne Zimmer from Woodside Elementary and counselor Phil Spreitzer, resource teacher Catherine Watkins and Spanish teacher Melanie Zwyghuizen from West Ottawa High School.

Support staff retiring were assistant librarian Valerie Bares from Macatowa Bay Middle School, educational assistant Carol Hanco from Woodside Elementary, Autism Spectrum Disorder educational assistant Lesa Keely from Lakewood Elementary, Moderately Cognitively Impaired classroom assistant Deborah Langworthy from West Ottawa High School and Great Start Readiness Program assistant Rose Wroblewski from Pine Creek Elementary.

Woodside team focuses on at-home reading

Woodside Elementary's Core Support team, consisting of Molly Bengelink, Jill Kuiper, and Rhonda Marsman, jumped into action when the life of educators, students and parents changed dramatically across Michigan on March 13.

A remote learning plan was already in place for the elementary classrooms and teachers within the West Ottawa school district, but the Woodside Core Support team wanted to determine how they could best impact the at-home reading life of their school's 530+ students.

"As both educators and parents, we (Core Support teachers) understood, and needed to consider the fact that there were so many factors that cannot be controlled when students learn in a home environment," said Bengelink. "Knowing how unique and individualized learning to read can be, we were determined to find one facet of reading that we COULD control, that would also apply to students of all grade levels. The reading component we chose to target for Woodside students was 'fluency,' honing in on the modeling of fluent reading."

With the many faces of their students in mind, the team began to create a virtual read aloud "library" from their homes for all Woodside students and families. The teachers recorded themselves reading various children's books, being sure to model what good reading sounds like, while also pausing to make their thinking "visible," stopping to make predictions and inferences, and posing questions for the audience to ponder along the way.

New stories were recorded and uploaded to the library each week. Classroom teachers at Woodside then provided students and families with a link to this collection through various forms of communication. Individuals could browse the story titles and choose which one to listen to while at home at any time during the day, sometimes even listening to a favorite story multiple times.

"We hoped to provide a positive connection with the students that we were no longer able to have in person," explained Kuiper. "We wanted to encourage them to continue enjoying books and reading, and maybe give them a little escape as they become part of the stories that they listen to."

Currently, this read aloud library



Camryn (left) and Jillian Evink read from the Woodside virtual library.

consists of nearly 60 stories. While some students visit this virtual library regularly and enjoy listening to the stories by themselves, others share the experience with their siblings, or even set aside time to listen with their whole family.

In a recent survey conducted with Woodside students and families, one parent indicated that their favorite part of this library "is the fact that we had a different story read out loud to us and we all watched and listened as a family."

Woodside students shared that the teachers "read so I don't feel alone during Quarantine" and expressed that they loved being able to "see a familiar face."

Bengelink, Kuiper and Marsman have plans to continue adding books periodically throughout the summer

months, since 70% of survey responses indicated a desire to have more stories and around 90% said they may utilize this library during this summer break from school.

"Virtual library or not, good stories are meant to be read and shared," says Bengelink. "We hope that by modeling our love for stories, our students and families will want to continue to engage in reading on their own, allowing ALL to venture into worlds that physically may not be an option during this current pandemic."

Learning can happen anytime and anywhere, whether or not school is in session. If you feel the need to connect with new people and places today, simply pick up a good book and read!

Montessori program experiences 20-year growth

The West Ottawa Montessori Program, housed at Waukazoo Elementary, has experienced incredible growth through the last 20 years.

It began in 2000 with one classroom, one teacher, and just over a dozen students. Still housed at Waukazoo Elementary, it now consists of eight classrooms, eight teachers, eight educational assistants, and enrolls 170 students.

The Montessori Program now engages kindergarten through fifth grade learners and offers families across the district the opportunity to learn through a combination of the methods of Dr. Maria Montessori as well as all the traditional methods the school and district have to offer. Montessori students at Waukazoo Elementary, like every student at Waukazoo and all West Ottawa schools, are working on a path toward being "College, Career and Life Ready."

The Montessori Program at West Ottawa

As students enter the Montessori classrooms at Waukazoo Elementary to begin a new day, their first task is to consider their work plan. This plan is individualized to student interest and learning style, and guided by the teacher to ensure mastery of learning targets. Students work individually or



Lower Montessori students Emersyn Otten (back) and Greta Dalton (front) work in flexible seating on Montessori Work Plans.



Lower Montessori students Max Nemschoff and Lilly Trocke work on science.

collaboratively with all age levels. Some students are with the teacher in a presentation, but most are self-directed as they move through their plans to master content and skills.

Children move frequently from one learning activity to another. Teachers and education assistants check-in on a regular basis to monitor progress, facilitate skills, and encourage students. Educational ownership is high because students are pivotal in the learning process.

The Montessori Method

The Montessori Method, created by Dr. Maria Montessori in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is a holistic educational approach that encourages independence and freedom to assist in developing self-directed learners. Montessori teachers and education assistants follow students at their own individual learning level.

Within the prepared environment, multi-aged groupings provide opportunities for peer tutoring and coopera-

tive learning by using Montessori materials that are hands-on and often self-correcting. This method of instruction increases self-confidence, intrinsic motivation, excitement for learning and academic achievement!

The Waukazoo Montessori curriculum includes: Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, Language, Art, and Cultural Studies. Language Arts, Reading, and Mathematics are also key components of the daily schedule for students. Each of these curricular aspects are embedded in the foundational skills, concentration, and independence that students focus on day in and day out.

As the West Ottawa Montessori Program marks its vigintennial, the future looks bright. Classrooms, teachers, education assistants and, most importantly, students continue to implement Dr. Maria Montessori's methods daily and are clearly finding success in propelling students on the journey to be "College, Career and Life Ready." Go WO!

Harbor Lights bond work back on track

When Harbor Lights and the rest of West Ottawa schools closed after school on March 13, due to the governor's COVID-19 order, new construction in the 6th grade hallway was just about to begin. As a precautionary measure, all work was ceased.

When the district was made aware that construction might be able to resume in May, teachers in construction-affected areas of the building were able to enter the school in small groups to pack up their classrooms beginning in mid-April. Following social distancing protocols, groups of teachers boxed up their classrooms mid-April through the end of May, making way for demolition crews to come in behind them to get the renovation project of Harbor Lights, that will eventually affect over 70% of the building, back on track from its temporary hiatus this spring.

As part of all of this movement, Harbor Lights 6th grade teachers will be moving to Macatawa Bay for the entirety of the 2020-21 school year. Mac Bay will serve all West Ottawa Class of 2027 6th graders for one year next year, as construction intensifies at Harbor Lights into the fall and winter of 2021. By the time the entire bond project at Harbor Lights is completed in 2022, almost every teacher at Harbor Lights will have at the bare minimum packed up their classroom at least once!

Over the summer, construction crews will work to completely renovate all classrooms on the south



New classroom exterior walls facing the south courtyard being prepped for construction.

side of the building (6th and 7th grade hallways). Exterior classroom walls are being replaced with new larger windows for better natural lighting, interior classroom square footage is being increased, and new mobile storage units will be installed in each room so that teachers will be able to quickly reconfigure their classrooms as needs change.

Crews this summer will also begin to tackle the only new construction component of the entire renovation project: the addition of a new office built off of the south end of the Har-

bor Lights library that will face the main visitor parking lot and 136th Avenue. This office will include a secure entry, as well as a new nurse's office and conference room. The new office addition will create needed space in the existing Harbor Lights office area to add small group meeting rooms that are currently in short supply. Most of this work will continue throughout the summer and into the fall of 2020.

The biggest renovation job at Harbor Lights next school year will be the demolition and reconstruction of the kitchen and cafeteria. This project alone will be the single biggest component of the entire bond project. It will take most of the 2020-21 school year to complete this phase. When it is done, it will allow for more and varied seating, better cafeteria lunch options for students, better lighting, and open up the cafeteria to become a true "multi-purpose" room for large group instruction and after-school extra-curricular activities.

The entire staff at Harbor Lights has maintained a great attitude amid all the changes taking place. In the end, the final product is going to be an updated middle school learning space that will serve students, teachers, and the community well for many years to come!



The 7th grade foyer will become the new main entry. For now, it's still a work zone.

Sheldon Woods has unique remote experiences

Each Sheldon Woods staff member had his or her own unique experiences throughout the process of remote learning while finishing the 2019-20 school year.

During the few weeks when COVID-19 required remote learning, educators in the West Ottawa School District worked hard to create a plan for remote learning that would be easily accessible and provide quality learning experiences for all students. Although the lesson plans were the same throughout the district, each staff member had his or her own way of teaching.

"First grade online learning highlights included two weekly class meetings in which students were given the chance to connect, share, ask questions, and see one another!" said Katie Eidson, first grade teacher at Sheldon Woods. "We also shared knock-knock jokes, riddles, books, and an occasional Go Noodle dance.

"Not only could students share their completed work and projects, they also shared their pets, items that reminded them of school, and an occasional sibling! We ended each meeting with individual students sharing a Good Thing about their day/week. These meetings took place every other week. We were able to use this time to focus on math and reading skills, writing support, or just connecting through conversation. It gave me an opportunity to individualize the time for what that student needed."

She also added, "I think it was so positive to see a group of WO first grade teachers collaborate to create meaningful and engaging lessons. Students were exposed to many exceptional teachers who used their talents and love of teaching to guide and direct the kids through the lessons!"

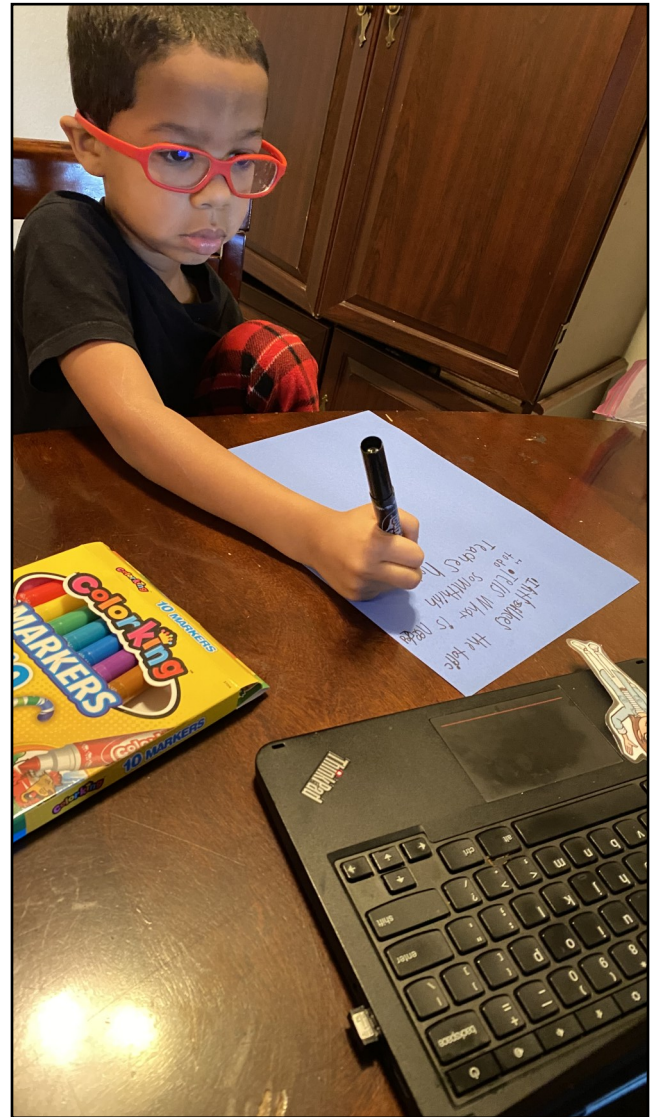
In kindergarten, teacher Jacqueline Dunn explained that "Remote learning has been a new experience for everybody, but it has been amazing to watch our students step into this strange and unknown task. From learning how to use a mute button properly to learning how to send a real letter in the mail, our students have stepped alongside us and soaked up the knowledge in every way.

"This time apart has taught me how to appreciate the little things -- hearing students in the hallway, laughing at silly 5-year old jokes, and watching my kids work hard to improve. I feel as though my educational career has been made sweeter, due to this small inconvenience. Next year, when I hear a child laughing in the hallway, I will have a deeper appreciation for it. Next year, when I look out over my class of 20-something students, I will pause and take in the moment. Kids are amazing, and they have shown me time and again how to adjust, smile, and move forward."

In addition to new experiences in their classrooms, Sheldon Woods staff also had to learn how to work as a team remotely. This included many virtual meetings using Google Meet.

"We held virtual staff meetings on a weekly basis in addition to School Improvement and PBIS meetings," Principal Dennis White said. "We adjusted to this new format quickly and had many productive meetings."

Sheldon Woods tried to establish normalcy by continuing some of its traditions, such as the weekly announcement of our Positive Behavior winners. Instead of making the announcement over the intercom each Friday morning, White shared a video with the families of Sheldon



First grader Willie Riley learning remotely

Woods announcing the winners. The weekly winners then joined him for a virtual lunch the following Monday.

Another example of a tradition that was continued during remote learning was the annual Awards Assembly. While the assembly would normally be held in the gym on the last day of school, this year Sheldon Woods staff created a video that followed the same format and included the same participants. Although staff and families would have preferred to assemble in the gym, it was a fitting way to end remote learning this year.

"As quickly as this all happened, it was incredible to see how successfully everyone adapted," White said. "It just goes to show the character of the people in our community. When we left on March 13, I said that we would work through this together. And that is what I saw, a community came together to meet the needs of our students."

Weekly videos keep Pine Creek on track

School defies odds daily by not accepting limits

"We are a community of learners that work hard to gain important knowledge and skills to defy limits daily."

That is the vision statement Pine Creek Elementary students recite daily after the Pledge of Allegiance. Pine Creek students and staff defy limits every single day, being an economically disadvantaged yet high performing school. Limits are not placed on students to stop them from reaching their highest potential.

So to keep that spirit alive, Pine Creek developed DLD (Defying Limits Daily) News, a weekly video created by staff and students. Technology teacher Drew Johnson is the father of this creation, and teamed up with Spanish teacher Mindy Vork, who helped produce the videos. The goal was to keep students and families involved in gaining knowledge and skills during the school closure due to COVID-19.

The weekly themes and missions for students the last five weeks of online school were:

Week of May 4: Nature Scavenger Hunt Week. Possibly create a self-portrait made from items found in nature, or make a family creation or positive message with chalk art for mom/someone you love on the sidewalk.

Week of May 11: Super Hero Week. How do we defy limits as a superhero or be a hero for someone else by doing a good deed for them? You could help a younger sibling make his/her bed, help an



Evans brothers Armani (5th grade) and Hayes (kindergarten) performed many science experiments.

adult cook dinner, sweep the floor, call a grandparent, etc.

Week of May 18: Make a Creation Week. Use items around your home to create something. Build a fort, a tower, etc.

Week of May 25: Read to Someone Week. Choose people at home, or a stuffed animal or toy, and read to them.

Week of June 1: Sports Week. Challenge yourself or a family member to a game -- basketball, jump rope, board game, puzzle...your choice. Build your brain muscles this week!

Students sent in videos or pictures of themselves participating in the weekly themes, which were shared

during weekly DLD News segments along with students of the week and staff well wishes. Each week participation increased.

"It was fun to see what staff came up with for examples each week and what students did to meet the mission," Mindy Vork said. "It helped bring a sense of connectedness among everyone in the building."

"We wanted to reach out to our students weekly with a fun, engaging video that challenged them to keep hope and persevere on their daily school work and weekly missions. Themes such as 'Read to Someone' and 'Nature Scavenger Hunt' encouraged them to stay connected to learning and making healthy choices."

Lakewood's Classroom Buddies a hit!

If you were to ask Lakewood students which activities at school they enjoy the most, chances are high that the majority of kids would have "Classroom Buddies" at the top of their list.

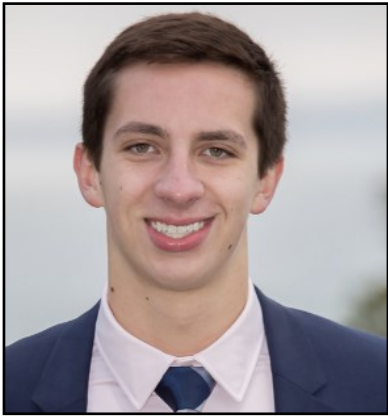
Classroom Buddies has been a tradition at Lakewood for more than 20 years but, with priorities in edu-

cation shifting at times, it hasn't always been an expectation for all classrooms. However, that changed this year when Lakewood's staff decided that "Buddies" would be one of the school's top priorities.

Classroom Buddies is the pairing of two classes of varying grade lev-

els who meet twice or more each month. Students are paired and work together. Typically, the older buddy supports the younger with reading, math skills and projects, but there's far more than simply being a helper.

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**Jamahl Hogan****Greta Davis****Tyler Bush****Shane Vaara****Kendra Erickson****Blake Pedersen****Abby Olson****Cate Krueger****Allison Teav**

Top scholar, Vals and Sals named for WO

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attend GVSU.

Blake Pedersen, son of Scott and Sara Pedersen, will attend Calvin University to study business.

Abby Olson, daughter of Brian and Julie Olson, will attend Butler University to study health sciences with a minor in Spanish.

Cate Krueger, daughter of Brent and Renee Krueger, will attend Oberlin College of Arts & Sciences.

Allison Teav, daughter of Bachealy Teav and Phalla Lonh, will attend Ferris State University to study health information technology and health information management.

Teaching with humor

Great Lakes teacher makes students laugh during remote math lessons

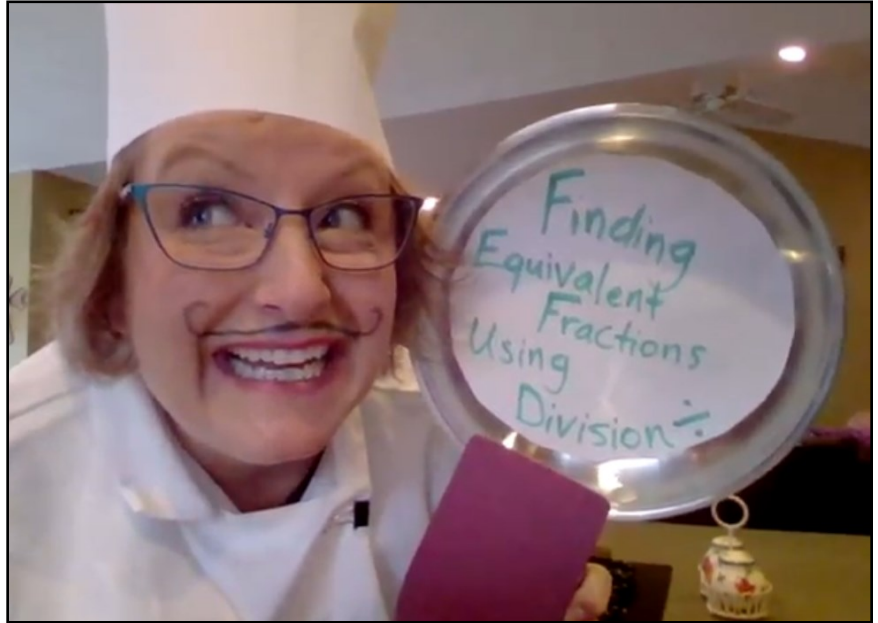
Like all schools and districts, West Ottawa made the quick move to remote learning for the last marking period of the 2019-20 school year.

Students were able to access their teachers and lessons remotely and the transition was extremely smooth and successful given the unprecedented circumstances of the school year. So many teachers rose to the occasion during our shutdown, but Mary Ritsema, 4th grade teacher at Great Lakes, took her math lessons to a new level.

When planning for the 4th grade math lessons, Mary wanted to be sure that she was also connecting with students before providing the content. She did this by using humor in her lessons.

"It's always great when you can ease into learning with humor and laughter. It allows students to connect with the teacher and share a common experience" Ritsema stated.

Mary started using math jokes as a way to connect and invite her students into their learning. However, the jokes she used sometimes came from students themselves. Students would send Mary jokes and she would share those jokes on her video lessons. A favorite joke that Mary shared was "There's a fine line between a numerator and a denominator... it's a shame they'll never meet!"



Teacher Mary Ritsema adds a dash of humor to her math teaching.

As Mary planned with other fourth grade teachers across the district, she stated that "it was one of the fourth grade math team's goals to create videos that kept students tuning in and wanting to come back for the next lesson."

Mary's videos became a bit of the talk of the town as parents began to reach out to her and thank her and

the math team for creating such fun videos.

"Thank you to all the parents who sent in emails to let me know that your family has watched and re-watched your favorite videos! I'm so glad so many students and parents got a kick out of them!" Ritsema shared.

WO Educational Foundation enhances student learning

The West Ottawa Educational Foundation is a non-profit that was created to enhance and strengthen student learning through financial support of innovative programs and activities for which general school operating funds are not available.

The WOEF board meets six times a year to review and approve grants as well as manage the Foundation.

Over the years, the WOEF has funded items such as adaptive seating, design modules, advanced lab equipment, and much more. In March, WOEF provided grants to fund teacher initiatives such as materials for Culturally Responsive

Novel Studies at Lakewood and North Holland, Outdoor Learning Environment at Lakewood, STEM Early Learning sets for Young Kinders, the graphic wrapping of West Ottawa's new Bookmobile and more.

The WOEF board is made up of West Ottawa parents, both former and current, and WO graduates. If you are interested in volunteering to serve on the board, please contact the Foundation's website.

We continue to build the WOEF fund through the generous donations of the West Ottawa community and local businesses. If you are able



West Ottawa's new bookmobile

to donate, please check out our website at <https://woef.org>.

An update from Superintendent Martin

Dear Friends:

While we have entered phase four in Governor Whitmer's reopening plan for the state of Michigan, and it's great to get out and take advantage of all our area has to offer, the health and well-being of our community's children will remain our primary concern. Thus, I would encourage families to continue practicing social distancing as a precautionary measure against the spread of COVID-19.

In the fight against the spread of COVID-19, West Ottawa Public Schools was happy to serve as a testing site on June 6 and 7 in partnership with the Ottawa County Department of Public Health. More than 1,300 tests were conducted over that weekend. Results of these tests will be shared in the coming days by the Ottawa County Department of Public Health.

With the continued reopening of our state, we have decided to move forward with our summer athletic conditioning program, following strict safety guidelines by the National Federation of State High School Association (NFHS) and the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA). Students will have their temperature scanned upon arrival and equipment will be cleaned with disinfectant wipes before and after each use. Through the first portion of the workouts, which began June 8, coaches will be working with student athletes on functional movement and preparing for a gradual ramp up of strength. Please know that we will be vigilant in maintaining proper social distance protocol throughout these workouts.

In addition to opening up for our athletics program, I'm pleased to share with the community that we are moving forward with a more formal in-person graduation celebration for our seniors – including the first graduating class from our Spanish Immersion program – at 6 p.m. on Thursday, June 25, in the Stadium parking lot. We are so very proud of all of our seniors and look forward to joining together to honor their hard work and contributions to our school community. We will provide more information on the ceremony in the coming weeks.

Due to the pandemic, we postponed our May 5 ballot initiatives. I

A letter from...



Supt. Tom Martin

want to remind our community that these two ballot initiatives will be on the August 4 ballot – one focusing on the operating 18 mills renewal and the other on the district .3 mills sinking fund. Additional information on these initiatives will be provided well in advance of voting. **In the meantime, please be advised that absentee ballots will be available by June 20. If you need an absentee ballot, please reach out to the [Ottawa County Board of Elections](https://www.ottawacountymichigan.gov/elections).**

Our last official day of school was Friday, June 5. What it may have lacked in energy – without our children and teachers in classrooms – it made up for in poignancy, as it served as a reminder of all that we have been through these past few months and what lies ahead. I will not soon forget how our school community came together to support our children in a time of crisis—how community volunteers and our food service team have provided more than 260,000 meals since March or how the district team seamlessly rolled out a distance learning plan well before the state-mandated deadline in April. There is so much to be proud of at West Ottawa Public Schools, as can be seen in this video featured on the district's social media channels: <https://bit.ly/37p412A>. Thank you to all who stepped up and stepped in to help out.

We will continue our WO mobile

“I will not soon forget how our school community came together to support our children in a time of crisis—how community volunteers and our food service team have provided more than 260,000 meals since March or how the district team seamlessly rolled out a distance learning plan well before the state-mandated deadline in April.”

food delivery through the end of June. Starting July 1 and running through August 28, food distribution will be available for children 18 and under, as well as any adult with special needs under age 26, through the Meet Up and Eat Up program. For more information on this program, visit <https://www.westottawa.net/wops-food-service/>.

I wish I could provide a more definitive answer to what next fall will look like, but we are waiting for further guidance from the Governor's Office. The Governor has selected a committee of 16 volunteers from around the state to develop a return to school plan. We hope to have that plan by the end of June. Until then, we continue to plan a framework for options, such as totally remote, a hybrid of half remote/half in classroom attendance and, of course, full attendance in the classroom. Until we receive further guidance, we will continue to work with our local superintendents and health officials on possible scenarios.

Again, thank you for your continued support in preparing our students to be College, Career and Life Ready. I hope you have a safe and healthy summer.

Sincerely,

Thomas K. Martin
Superintendent of Schools



1138 136th Avenue
Holland, MI 49424
616.786.2050

On the August 4 ballot:

Due to the pandemic, we postponed our May 5 ballot initiatives. These two ballot initiatives will be on the August 4 ballot – one focusing on the operating 18 mills renewal and the other on the district .3 mills sinking fund. Additional information on these initiatives will be provided well in advance of voting.

In the meantime, please be advised that absentee ballots will be available June 20. If you need an absentee ballot, please reach out to the Ottawa County Board of Elections.

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Classroom Buddies a hit

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Why is it important to Lakewood to establish Classroom Buddies? The reasons are many. First of all, the Classroom Buddies program nurtures relationships between older and younger students. Teachers encourage buddies to connect beyond the bi-monthly meetings on the playground and hallways as well. When buddies see each other walking down the hall, there's often an excited giggle and many times a warm hug to accompany it.

In addition, Classroom Buddies provides additional support for learning. Sometimes the encouragement or feedback from another student versus a teacher is more effective for kids who are struggling.

Most importantly, Classroom Buddies promotes a "family culture" for the Lakewood community. Families must learn to be patient, helpful and kind to one another. We see these social/emotional skills increasing when students are given consistent opportunities to be leaders and nurture new relationships. Plus, it's pretty fun, too!



Elsie Howard, Noelle Zumbado and Clara Romans enjoy the Classroom Buddies program.