

COOPERSVILLE AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS STATE OF OUR STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS 2021



A Word from Matt Spencer Superintendent

Dear Broncos:

Challenges provide opportunities. The 2020-21 academic year has provided numerous opportunities for reflection, growth, and learning. As I returned to my office earlier this month after visiting Coopersville Middle School, I noticed a number of students and staff engaged in an educational practice that had not previously existed: a mask break. Essentially, students and staff stretch their legs (and their lungs) in unmasked exercise. As I observed, Middle School teachers Mr. Hunter and Mr. Bumgardner were smiling while engaging with students on a walk around the building. I thought to myself, perhaps this practice will continue after COVID is behind us. Certainly, it would not be a mask break, but perhaps a “Walk and Talk” focused on classroom culture, academic vocabulary, or essential learning standards.

Mask breaks are not the only example of learning that could outlast the COVID pandemic. As you will see throughout this publication our students, families, and staff members were in a position that required greater flexibility and understanding. Thankfully, we have a tremendous staff and a community that is extremely supportive of our schools and educational programs. I am hopeful you enjoy reading about the learning that we experienced this year, and how that learning can help us prepare our students for tomorrow’s possibilities!

Respectfully,

Superintendent

Disrupting Education

When author Robert Fulghum penned his essay, “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten,” he recognized the profound impact certain times have on our lives. For most of us, early life lessons about playing fair, sharing, cleaning up our messes, and showing kindness to others proved especially formative as we moved through the various ages and stages of our development.

Like Kindergarten, the events of the past year promise to resonate for years to come, offering insights into the importance of flexibility, perseverance, and a positive mental attitude. Years from now, we will no doubt look back and see the enduring impact of some of the skills and practices adopted by our students, staff, and community during this historic period.

As COVID-19 swept the world last winter, filling hospitals, emptying businesses, and bringing life as we knew it to an abrupt halt, few could have predicted the ways our daily interactions would be transformed. In the early days and weeks after Michigan schools were shut down, teachers and staff across the Coopersville Area Public School District worked to develop new ways to connect with and support students who were no longer assembled in individual classrooms, listening to lessons, asking questions, and sharing their ideas.

As lives and routines were suddenly upended, immediate attention focused on ensuring that students were safe and had enough to eat as parents struggled to balance child-care and the demands of frontline

work or the unexpected loss of income. For secondary students who already had laptops as part of the district’s 1-to-1 program and elementary students with access to a family computer, technology offered a ready link, enabling teachers and staff to record messages and lessons or conduct video chats to check in on students and provide individual attention.

Textbooks, paper packets, and telephone calls filled the gap for others until additional devices or hot-spots could be distributed to elementary students and those scattered throughout the 100-square-mile district without access to the internet or who lack reliable service. Frequent wellness checks and be nice blasts sought to maintain some of the important relationships that had been nurtured at school and to offer gentle reassurance amidst the fear and uncertainty.

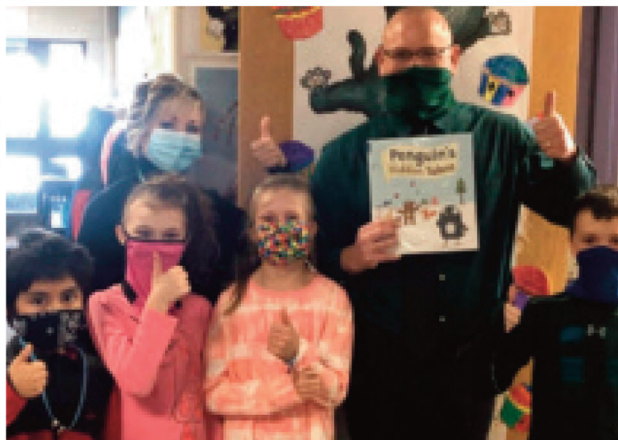
As the weeks wore on and conditions changed, plans and processes were shaped and reshaped continually as knowledge evolved, and along the way, unique and creative ways were devised to celebrate important milestones, among them graduations and retirements. While the beginning of the school year has always been a time of new routines and fresh starts, rarely have the changes been as dramatic and consequential as they were when Coopersville students and staff returned this fall.

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Disrupting Education *(continued from page 1)*

For those returning to in-person learning, the physical and social environment on campus was transformed with mask mandates, sanitizing stations, plexiglass barriers and limited access to facilities, such as the playgrounds before school, the library, and offices. Permanent substitutes were brought in to ease disruptions from sick or quarantined staff, and a full-time nurse was added to help with health and safety protocols, student medical needs, and emergency preparedness. Whenever possible, desks were spread apart in classrooms, and windows on buses and in classrooms stayed open to increase air flow. More teachers took to the outdoors to conduct lessons and projects, while recesses, lunch times, passing periods, and dismissals were more carefully choreographed to reduce the number of social contacts.

Additional safety protocols were enacted for classes like band and PE. Elementary enrichment classes shifted from a daily to a weekly rotation to reduce sharing of materials and to foster increased focus and continuity. Between classes and at the end of the day, desks, doors, and other touchpoints were wiped clean. Handwashing be-



came a routine.

At the same time, with the district's 1-to-1 technology plan extended down to pre-Kindergarten, students were able to increase their time on personalized and targeted learning programs like Moby Max, Lexia, and myON. Students who were sick or under quarantine could have classes livestreamed on their Chromebooks or access assignments on centralized platforms like Clever and Google Classroom.

With the campus closed to visitors, Zoom and Loom increased meeting and conference options with teachers, therapists, and school officials, while livestreaming enabled families and commu-

nity members to virtually attend school board meetings, theatrical productions, musical performances, and athletic events. New fiber optic cables were installed on campus to support the district's backup internet and prevent outages when the main provider goes down as reliance on technology increased markedly.

Although most Coopersville students came back to school in the fall, some were not able to return for face-to-face instruction, prompting the creation of CAPS Virtual. At the elementary level, Coopersville teachers still guided students through their lessons, while secondary students enrolled in classes through Edgenuity or Michigan Virtual to meet their requirements.

As the pandemic continues, Coopersville families and staff have begun looking forward to a return to normalcy, knowing the past year was far different than anyone could have anticipated. That being said, many of the changes enacted were positive and will likely persist. One thing is certain. Adversity will remain a part of life, although it may not always be quite as dramatic. Learning to embrace flexibility and being willing to adapt to changes like those brought about by the pandemic have been important lessons that will help build in all of us the resiliency needed to overcome future challenges and achieve success.

Creating a CAPS Virtual Classroom

While most Coopersville students returned to campus in the fall, about 20 percent initially opted for online instruction, prompting the district to create CAPS Virtual. More than 500 students from kindergarten through 12th grade signed up to take all or some of their classes remotely after schools were given more leeway to provide remote learning opportunities because of COVID-19.

At the elementary level, about 20 to 25 students per grade from kindergarten through 5th grade work with Coopersville teachers, who conduct classes during regularly scheduled morning and afternoon zoom sessions, and then offer small-group and individual instruction at other times throughout the day. Teachers generally use either the district's curriculum materials or digital content from Pearson Connexus to create lessons for math, reading, social studies and science, as well as electives, such as art and physical education.

Benchmark assessments were conducted virtually or on campus for the majority of students, with some parents electing to opt-out of the testing for their children. Michigan's 3rd Grade Reading Law is still in effect, so district officials will be working with virtual families to help determine the best placement for next year with

students who have fallen at least a year behind in their literacy skills.

CAPS Virtual included approximately 120 middle schoolers and 100 high school students in the fall. Scheduling proved challenging, as the State's primary online providers, Michigan Virtual and Edgenuity, were overwhelmed by the number of students signing up and struggled to find enough teachers. Spring enrollment levels dipped slightly at the middle school and was essentially unchanged at the high school, and fewer enrollment issues were encountered.

Unlike the elementary program, courses at the secondary level are not taught by district teachers and are generally geared toward more independent learning. They include fewer live features and more video-based lessons, digital readings, and discussion boards, giving students more flexibility to set their own pace and structure their own schedules. Three middle school and four high school teachers are serving as mentors, helping keep students on track,



monitoring progress, and providing tutoring or support when needed.

Separate from CAPS Virtual, in-person students periodically had to shift to remote learning with their regular classroom teachers during building or campus-wide shut-downs because of COVID-19 concerns. Students in quarantine or isolation were also able to access classes and assignments virtually, rather than waiting to return to get caught up or having to rely on paper packets being sent home. Remote teaching was also done inclement weather.

This spring and summer, the district will be surveying families to determine if there is a need to continue offering CAPS Virtual next year.

The Year Everyone was Jumping Hurdles!

The coronavirus pandemic impacted more than just students' education in the classroom, it also dramatically altered experiences with athletics and extra-curricular activities. Whether offering students a physical or creative outlet, a purpose to persist, an opportunity to excel, or simply a place to belong, pursuits beyond the classroom often play an important role in students' lives, so the disruptions of the past year have proved especially challenging for some.

Athletics got off to an uncertain start as officials considered postponing some sports until spring before finally reinstating the regular fall season, with an abbreviated schedule, after certain government restrictions were lifted. A variety of safety measures were implemented for athletes and spectators, including mandatory masking, closing locker rooms, and halting concession sales. Visiting teams were also asked to arrive dressed and ready to play.

Crowd sizes were initially limited to two spectators per athlete, although those restrictions were

later eased as State restrictions on gathering sizes gradually increased. With the majority of fans still unable to attend games, live-streaming offered a popular way for friends and families to enjoy the action.



Between the delayed start, a mid-season pause, and a surge in COVID-19 cases,

contact winter sports at one point also appeared to be in jeopardy, prompting several basketball players to lead a protest rally at the Capitol in Lansing. After a slight delay, the winter season got under way, with some adjustments, including limited locker room access. Wrestlers had to test negative for COVID-19 on the day of their matches, while spring athletes must undergo regular weekly rapid testing in order to participate.

Other extra-curricular and co-curricular activi-

ties that attract large numbers of students and spectators, like marching and concert band, choir and theater, have also been impacted by the pandemic.

Summer marching band camp was abbreviated and the whole band was unable to perform together because of size limits on public gatherings. They performed at just one football game. Once classes moved indoors, protective covers had to be put over the brass and woodwind instruments and band members had to wear special face masks while playing.

Similarly, choir members had to socially distance and sing while donning face masks. Concerts were canceled or held for small crowds, and judged competitions took place virtually. The Middle School and High School choirs, however, found a way to end school last year on a high note, coming together to perform an uplifting virtual concert.

Thespians also faced the added challenge of rehearsing and performing in face masks, before limited audiences, but again, live-streaming of performances offered a unique opportunity to showcase students' talents.

Social Emotional Learning Title

The connection between good mental health and academic success is well-known, so helping our students and staff learn to cope with the increased feelings of fear, anxiety, and depression amidst the coronavirus pandemic has been essential. The CAPS Social-Emotional Learning Team has been leading the district's efforts to address individual needs during COVID-19, while also working to increase awareness and educational initiatives aimed at promoting overall wellness.

When the shut-down occurred last year, the district was able to quickly address some of the challenges students and staff were facing, having spent the last several years working on relationship building and a variety of mental health awareness, anti-bullying, and suicide prevention initiatives as part of the Be Nice program.

One of the first things the Social-Emotional Learning Team did was to start sending out weekly be nice blasts to middle and high school students to help them identify what they were feeling and then to offer guidance on dealing with their emotions, as well as resources for additional support. Those bulletins, created by the nearly two dozen members of the district's team, have since been shared by about 130 other schools. Periodic wellness questionnaires have continued to monitor how students are doing and what needs they have. In addition, special signage and other mes-

saging has focused on recognizing signs of trouble and ending the stigma of seeking help.

As part of its professional development activities, the district conducted trainings on how to build resiliency among the staff and within the classroom. Some of the key take-aways include realizing that "it's ok to not be ok" and that responding to others with compassion, empathy, and understanding is important because they or someone in their family may be having a hard time. Since depression and anxiety often affect energy, concentration, and mental function, being more strategic in determining what goals to target is recommended during particularly challenging times to ease stress and reduce worry. Leniency is also important for those working to regain their mental health.

Finally, the district shared Screenagers: Growing Up in the Digital Age and Screenagers: Next Chapter, two award-winning documentaries about the impact of technology and social media on teens' mental health, with families as part of an ongoing dialogue about the increasing prevalence of depression and anxiety among today's youth. The screenings proved especially timely as many students suddenly found themselves navigating both extended periods of isolation and increased screen-time. The films offered a range of strategies and suggestions for how to empower children



to overcome peer pressure and the addictive influence of technology and develop healthier approaches for handling social media.

Life is full of adversity, so one the most important things we can do is teach children how to be flexible and view challenges as new opportunities for growth. By focusing on our students' mental health, we can have a positive impact not only on their academic achievement, but also on their overall sense of well-being. In the coming months, our Social-Emotional Team will begin considering what interventions and supports are needed for the future, knowing that some effects of the pandemic are likely to be felt by our students and families for some time.



COOPERSVILLE

Area Public Schools
One Community. One Campus... Endless Opportunity.

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A Message from Michael Michalak Board of Education President

Change is something that we have all experienced in many facets over the past year. Change can be hard, but change can also be an opportunity. Coopersville Area Public Schools has persisted through changes and challenges that none of us thought we would ever see in our lifetimes. Our students and staff have persevered and grown through these changes and the Board of Education could not be more proud. The last year has taught us that the unexpected can happen, but it has also proven to us that the CAPS community can rise to meet that challenge.

The Coopersville community is a special one indeed. It has been heartening to watch how our people have supported not only our kids, but each other without hesitation. Our community has navigated these changes successfully, and we have continued to prove that we are stronger when we all come together. Go Broncos!



School Funding During a Pandemic

Adequate school funding has long been critical to achieving the mission of the Coopersville Area Public Schools to educate our students for the future. Never has this been more true than during the coronavirus pandemic. In 2020 and 2021, new funding streams have been providing CAPS with a steady flow of one-time revenues to help ensure our students' needs are being met.

The first grant CAPS received was part of the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act and it provided essential support to the District as we worked to address immediate student learning needs during the initial shutdown in March 2020. The District chose to invest in additional technology for our elementary schools so that all of our students could

continue to learn from home. The funds allowed CAPS to purchase devices for each student to use during periods of remote learning. When our schools reopened in the fall, the devices were converted to classrooms use, but they remain available for remote instruction whenever the schools have to shutdown.

As we moved into September of 2020 and the new school year got underway, CAPS received funding from the first of three ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) grants. The ESSER funds were used to support the District's increased need for staff coverage during absences or quarantine periods. In addition, these funds enabled CAPS to offer a virtual program for students who opted for online or remote learning this year. The grants also paid for

tents for outdoor learning, individual desks and students supplies, cleaning items and personal protective equipment, as well as the installation of fiber redundancy so our District's computer network can function optimally during times of high demand.

As we look to the future and the variety of challenges and opportunities facing our students, the importance of funding education will remain a driving force. We will continue developing plans to spend additional ESSER funds in ways that are consistent with the goals of our Strategic Plan. With hard work and creativity, and the ongoing support of our families and community, we are building a plan that promotes learning, supports the needs of our students and staff, and emphasizes safety.



POINTS

of

PRIDE

High School

- High School PSAT and SAT scores increased by an average of 43 points
- More than 80 Advanced Placement students and at least 120 students in dual enrollment/early college classes earned college credit last year
- 20 art students were recognized regionally by the Holland Area Arts Council
- The Theatre Program successfully staged two socially distanced productions – “The Radium Girls” and “Guys and Dolls”
- A new e-Sports Club was started with about 40 participants
- Our all-female Stemineers team joined other FIRST Robotics participants in virtual competitions
- FFA members competed at the State level in Parliamentary Process and Public Speaking
- Varsity Football had its first playoff win in 13 years
- The Boys’ Tennis, Girls’ Golf, and Volleyball teams earned Team Academic All-State honors
- Cross Country and Girls’ Golf team members qualified for State Competitions
- The Volleyball and Boys’ Basketball teams won District Championships
- Students donated hundreds of items during a Student Council fundraiser for Every Woman’s Place to help victims of domestic violence
- Volunteer efforts continued during the pandemic through Student Council, NHS, Students Live United, and FFA
- The MEPP Program connected students with local employees who provide free tuition credit
- The EPIC 11 Program (Encouraging, Positive, Inclusive, and Compassionate) recognized students who demonstrated positive behaviors

Middle School

- 132 students were named to the most recent Principal’s List for earning straight A’s
- Nearly 170 students made the 3rd Quarter Honor Roll for receiving all A’s and B’s
- At least 100 students raised their GPA by 0.5 or more to earn Five High honors this spring
- More than 200 students earned Bronco Cards in the 3rd quarter
- Students participated in Student Council, be nice, and the Creativity, Gardening, Science, and Sewing clubs
- Virtual Student of the Month celebrations were bimonthly for honored students and families
- At least 75 students are recognized weekly with treats for earning Bronco tickets
- A two-week spirit challenge before the holidays collected donations for Toys for Tots
- Students supported Coopersville Cares for a Valentine’s Day challenge
- Students made cards for Fountain View, Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital, and the Grand Rapids Veterans’ Home
- Staff wellness promotions featured donuts and cider, green and white treats, and a calming corner
- Expanded email access has improved student-teacher communications

South Elementary

- All students received their own Chromebooks as part of the district's 1-to-1 initiative
- Teachers are posting assignments online using the Clever platform for easier student access
- Student engagement has increased with the use of the Pear Deck, an interactive teaching tool
- South students used Rosetta Stone to help them learn Spanish
- Kids Hope mentors have resumed meeting in-person with their student partners
- The Ottawa County Schools Network partnership helped connect our families to vital resources
- Girls on the Run members have learned about self-esteem and fitness while training for 5K fun run
- Teachers identified key standards students need to develop for success in English Language Arts

East Elementary Elementary

- All K-2 students have access to Chromebooks as part of the district's 1-to-1 initiative
- 60 students' families received daily and weekend meal assistance from Pack It Up and Hand-to-Hand
- be nice lessons and activities focused on the social and emotional needs of students
- K-2 students learned about financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and work readiness during Junior Achievement lessons and activities
- Response to Intervention (RTI) staff provided 15 to 30 minutes of additional instructional time daily to students who need extra help in meeting grade-level standards for reading and math

West Early Childhood Center

- 115 children were enrolled in quality preschool programs
- A CAYAC grant will provide tuition scholarships for the 3-Year-Old Preschool Program
- Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)