

BRIDGES



Building

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Publication of Community Consolidated Schools District 168 FALL 2023

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Superintendent's Message

Thank you for choosing to enroll your child at CCSD 168. The staff and I value our relationship with Sauk Village parents, guardians, community members and stakeholders.



We desire to partnership with you and your family during your child's years here. It is the goal of CCSD 168 to provide ample opportunities for parents and the community to invest time into the education of CCSD 168 students. As you read this issue of the newsletter, you will see that Grandparent's Day brought many supportive adults into classrooms to help show support for student success. This was also expressed on

Kindergarten Signing Day as well as at Open Houses and Parent/Teacher Conferences.

Research has shown that children whose families engage in their education are more likely to earn higher grades and score higher on tests. Students will develop self-confidence and have more motivation in the classroom. Better social skills and classroom behavior has been observed as well. We have all heard the phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child." And at CCSD 168, we believe that!

Please encourage your child to do their best, do what's right and treat others as they would like to be treated. I appreciate you taking the time to read our newsletters. CCSD 168 is here to serve and support you and your student(s).

Sincerely,

Dr. Donna S. Leak
Superintendent of Schools



Kindergarten Signing Day at Wagoner

Wagoner Elementary School started the year welcoming kindergarten students for Kindergarten Signing Day! Wagoner kindergartners signed their learning contracts pledging to be lifelong learners. The Wagoner Wildcat made an appearance to welcome all of our students back to school.

Hispanic Heritage Celebration

The Hispanic Heritage Celebration was held at Strassburg School on Thursday, October 12, 2023. It was a festive occasion complete with a gallery of information from all four schools. Students, staff and parents participated in Family Zumba. All left with an appetite for tacos on the go!



OUR MISSION

The mission of Community Consolidated Schools District 168 is to excel by inspiring, challenging and supporting every child every day to reach their greatest academic, social and personal potential.

Blossoms Welcomes New Director

In August, Blossoms Early Learning Center welcomed a new Director of Early Childhood for the 2023-24 school year. Gerri Latting has been busy building a positive rapport with staff and making sure our district's youngest learners continue to learn and develop in a safe and healthy environment.

Ms. Latting has been in education for 17 years. She began as a prekindergarten teacher and worked her way up to the role of Early Childhood Education Coordinator for 10½ years, then served five years as a Principal for Early Childhood before coming to CCSD 168. She holds a bachelor's in business administration from Robert Morris University; a master's in early childhood education from Roosevelt University; and a second master's in education leadership, with the completion of one full year of doctoral studies in Ethical Leadership, both at Olivet

Nazarene University. Ms. Latting had to take a break from her doctoral work after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2014. She has been cancer-free for the last nine years, and she plans to return to finish her doctorate soon. Ms. Latting is also the proud mother of two adult children, Erica and Emani, and one beautiful granddaughter, Ellie.

Ms. Latting loves being a part of, and impacting, the foundational years in children's lives. She has been elated to carry on the great legacy of the Blossoms' buzzing bees!

Family Connections

Wagoner Elementary School is more than just a building, it is a place of growth, development and empowerment for students. The true power of education is recognized when schools and



families collaborate together to create a strong support network and connection from home to school. This quarter there were several events to continue to grow the relationships and connections between home and school.

Wagoner welcomed nearly 70 families to Open House in September. Families toured classrooms, met the school's wonderful staff and even completed scavenger hunts around the building. Open

House provides an opportunity for face-to-face interaction to foster a partnership between Wagoner staff and families.



Blossoms' Team Working Together for A Common Achievement Goal

Every four to five years, the Blossoms' programs are monitored by the Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Division. The tool used to assess and rate the program's quality is the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS). The two preschool programs in our community are Preschool For All and Preschool For All Expansion. Most of these programs provide full day instruction for our district's youngest learners. We do have half-day programming for students who are unable to handle a full day of preschool, for distinct reasons. During the monitoring visit, the agency representing the State Board of Education (ISBE) assesses and observes the two programs in the following categories: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language and Literacy, Learning Activities, Interactions and Program Structure. The ratings are on a scale of 1 (meaning inadequate and no credit is given) up to 7 (meaning excellent, with full credit provided). Each category has subscales. For example, under Space and Furnishings, there are seven subscales. One of the subscales assessed is Indoor Space. To receive an excellent in this subscale, natural light must be controlled by having adjustable blinds or curtains, space is accessible to children and adults with disabilities, and most of the indoor surfaces are durable and easy to clean and maintain. All classrooms have tile flooring.

Once the assessment of the program is complete. The assessors rate each category accordingly and a full report is provided to the program which highlights the categories and its subscales where the program excelled and the categories and their subscales indicating a need for improvements. The quality of circle classifications are licensed (primarily for daycares), bronze, silver and gold. As you may be aware, both Blossoms' programs are established as

Gold Circle of Quality, which is the highest recognition bestowed upon a Preschool For All or Preschool For All Expansion Program in the State of Illinois. Last month, we were notified that our program will be monitored this school year, anytime between now and May 2024.

Therefore, to maintain our excellent quality rating, the staff and the director have been working together diligently to make sure all categories and their subscales are in place and functioning optimally.

The Blossom's team believes,

"Teamwork makes the Dreamwork!"



Strassburg School Grandparent's Day 2023

Grandparent's Day 2023 at Strassburg Elementary School was a huge success on

Friday, Sept. 8, 2023. The Strassburg team's promotions and advertisements helped to make it an outstanding and eventful morning. Last school year only 14 parents attended on Grandparent's Day 2022. This year Strassburg had 54 who attended. Wow! That is a 386% increase in the number of participants. What an achievement!

Grandparents were greeted by the school's administrative team of Dr. Walton, Dr. Teague and Mr. Bintz and were treated to donuts and coffee. The grandparents were praised as the backbone of the family and acknowledged as having the knowledge, experience, wisdom and "Tuff Love" that grandchildren need to become positive learners.

A large group photo was taken of the Strassburg Grandparent's Day 2023. Grandparents of third, fourth and fifth grade students were escorted to their grandchildren's classrooms to see what classroom work and their day looks like. Afterwards, one participant informed Dr. Teague that being a grandparent was the single most important role in her life. After completing classroom visitations, individual photos of the grandparents with their grandchildren were taken as they exited the school doors.

Did you know that Grandparent's Day has been celebrated nationally for many years? It showcases the strong bond between grandparents and grandchildren. The grandparents in America represent 35% of the country's population. That illustrates their importance in students' learning. Many prominently famous persons have been raised by their grandparents to successful careers including Oprah Winfrey, Maya Angelou, Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton and gymnast star Simone Biles.

We thank the Strassburg staff and grandparents who helped make Grandparent's Day at Strassburg a tremendous success. We had a wonderful day and we can't wait for next year!



Grandparents Visit Wagoner

Grandparent's Day was a huge success. More than 97 grandparents attended this event and were able to see their grandchildren's classrooms, their favorite place in school and completed a portrait of each other as the culminating activity.

The District Title 1 Literacy Night hosted at Wagoner was another engaging opportunity for many Wagoner families that integrated robots, reading and STEAM. The Wagoner classrooms were packed with families. It was a wonderful event to highlight literacy and provide an opportunity for students and families to learn together.



Strassburg Elementary School's Crew Time: *Building a Stronger Classroom Community*

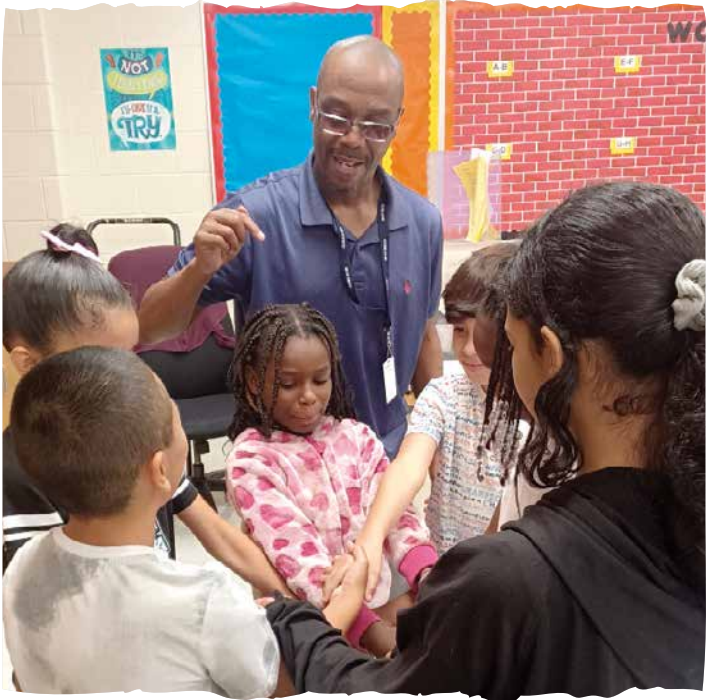
Strassburg Elementary School has always been committed to providing a holistic education that goes beyond academic achievement. Recognizing the importance of social and emotional development, the school recently introduced Crew Time, which has already proven to be a game-changer for both students and staff. This innovative program takes place every day for 30 minutes during Homeroom. It has brought about a host of benefits, including the establishment of a strong classroom community, nurturing positive relationships between students and staff, and enhancing a safe learning environment.

One of the most significant benefits of Strassburg Elementary School's Crew Time is the establishment of a strong classroom community. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) activities, such as group discussions, team-building exercises and collaborative projects, encourage students to work together, share their thoughts and feelings, and develop a sense of belonging within their classrooms. This sense of community fosters a supportive environment where students feel valued and included.

By promoting open communication and empathy, Crew Time helps students understand and appreciate the unique perspectives of their classmates. This not only enhances their social skills but also creates a positive atmosphere where differences are celebrated rather than marginalized. As a result, students become more willing to help one another, which improves overall classroom dynamics and contributes to a more harmonious learning environment.

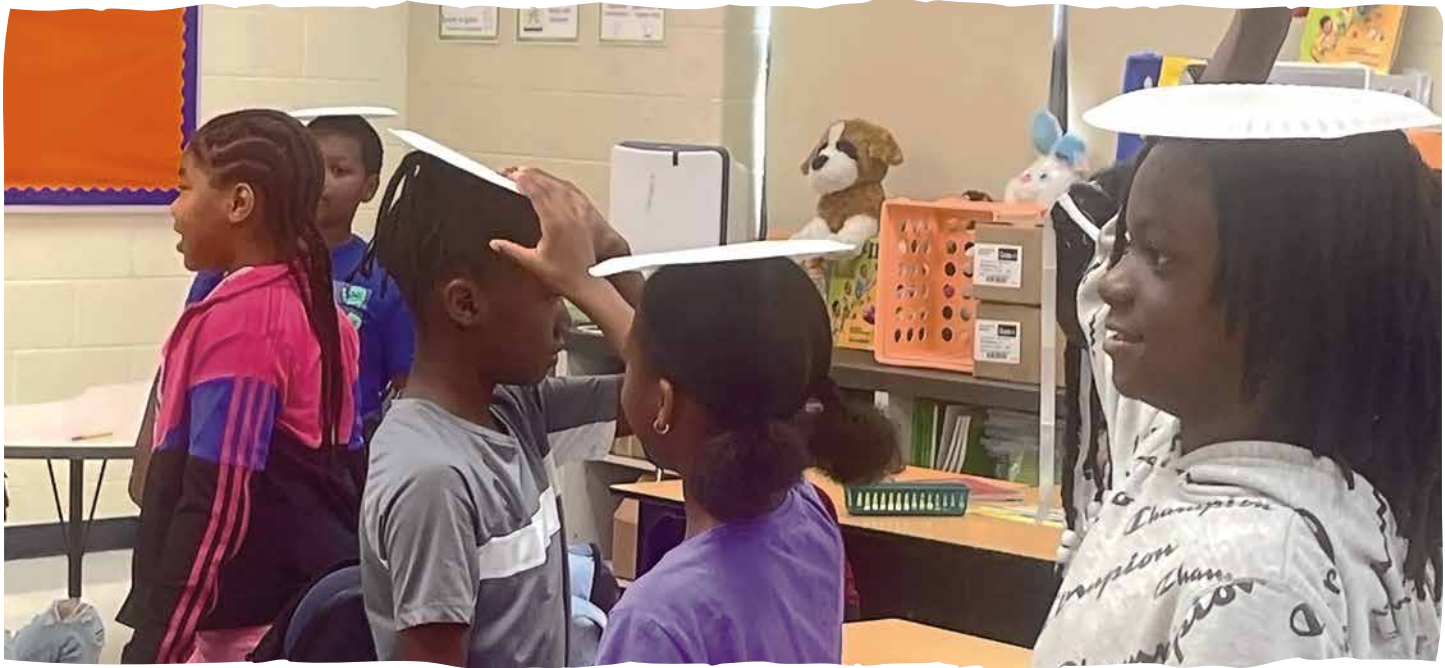
Crew Time at Strassburg Elementary School places a strong emphasis on nurturing positive relationships between students, staff and the community. Teachers and other school personnel actively participate in SEL activities alongside the students, creating an environment of mutual respect and understanding. This approach helps break down barriers that may exist between students and adults, making it easier for students to seek help when needed and for teachers to provide the support and guidance students require.

Furthermore, the program encourages students to develop emotional intelligence, which enables them to better understand their own emotions and those of their peers. This heightened emotional awareness allows students to respond more effectively to conflicts, reducing the likelihood of disruptive behavior and bullying. It also promotes a culture of kindness and compassion, making the school a safer and more welcoming place for everyone.



By providing students with the skills to navigate conflicts and express themselves constructively, Crew Time aims to reduce instances of disruptive behavior and aggression. This, in turn, leads to fewer disruptions in the classroom and a more focused and productive learning atmosphere. Students feel safer and more secure in such an environment, allowing them to concentrate on their studies and thrive academically.

Strassburg Elementary School's commitment to the well-rounded development of its students is evident through its commitment to Crew Time. By focusing on building a strong classroom community, nurturing positive relationships between students and staff and enhancing a safe learning environment, this program has already proven to be a tremendous success. Students are not only benefiting from improved social and emotional skills but are also experiencing a more supportive and inclusive school environment. Crew Time at Strassburg Elementary School is setting a standard for educational institutions seeking to prioritize the holistic development of their students, ultimately preparing them for success in both school and life. We are excited about our commitment to social-emotional growth!



STUDENTS GET INVOLVED!

As part of Suicide Prevention Week, our Wagoner students engaged in activities focused on kindness and respect. Students wrote kind words that were displayed on a bulletin board in the hallway. Additionally, they received lanyards with information about the suicide prevention hotline.

Our Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program is in full swing. On September 29, we rolled out our first PBIS pop-up cart, where students eagerly used their Raider Bucks to shop for goodies and rewards.

The eighth grade class had the incredible opportunity to participate in Manufacturers' Day, hosted by Bloom Township District 206. Students were especially excited about visiting Amazon during the trip.

We were honored to have members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority visit Rickover Junior High School to promote literacy. They generously donated 365 books, ensuring that every student has access to new reading material.

We are proud of our students' achievements and participation in these events, and we look forward to more exciting activities throughout the school year.



You're Invited!

The Board of Education of Community Consolidated School District 168 will hold their regularly scheduled board meetings and finance committee meetings for the school year on the fourth Monday of each month unless otherwise noted (subject to change if necessary). They are held at the District Administration Building/Boardroom, 21899 Torrence Ave., Sauk Village, IL 60411. Finance Committee Meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. (Subject to change if necessary). Regular board meetings begin at 7 p.m. (Subject to change if necessary).

Board of Education

- Tammy Jones.....President
- Brandie Jackson-Williams..... Vice President
- Sene' Garrett..... Secretary
- Branard Barrett..... Member
- Jeffrey Burns..... Member
- Serena Durr-Jones..... Member
- Sabrina Fisher..... Member

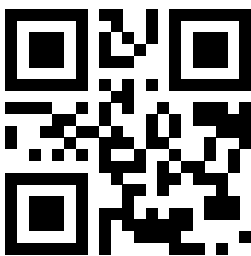
Our Principals

- Brianne Malatt.....Wagoner Elementary School
- Dr. Tricia Walton.....Strassburg Elementary School
- Dr. Kimberly Kimbrough..Rickover Junior High School
- Ms. Gerri Latting..... Director of Early Childhood

Our Phone/Fax Numbers

- Administration Office (708) 758-1610
- Fax (708) 758-5929
- Wagoner Elementary School..... (708) 758-3322
- Strassburg Elementary School..... (708) 758-4754
- Fax (708) 758-2202
- Rickover Junior High School..... (708) 758-1900
- Blossom..... (708) 758-4762

Our Website Address



www.d168.org

Search for #d168excels on social media to see the latest photos and updates of all the great things happening at District 168



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Staying focused on Attendance

Wagoner Elementary School continues to focus on great attendance this year and “Being great in less than 8.” Every school day counts, and consistent attendance not only helps students keep up with the curriculum but also fosters a sense of responsibility and a positive outlook of school. Each grade level met to discuss attendance, NWEA and positive behavior data in order to set goals for the next quarter. Students with perfect attendance were treated to a special trip to see the Chicago White Sox. It was a memorable experience for many students as it was their first visit to the ballpark, and they had a fantastic time.

Upcoming Events

- Dec. 7..... Rickover Parent Coffee Chat (5 pm) and Family Math Night
- Dec. 8..... Pre-K Screening Day-½ Day School Improvement, Strasburg Parent Coffee Chat (9 am)
- Dec. 11-15 Post Q2 Assessment Week
- Dec. 12..... Rickover Picture Day, 8th Grade
- Dec. 13..... Superintendent Parent Coffee Chat (9 am)
- Dec. 15..... Wagoner Winter Celebration, Wagoner Parent Coffee
- Dec. 16..... Rickover Saturday School (9 am-12 pm)
- Dec. 18..... Finance Committee Meeting (6:30 pm), School Board Meeting (7 pm)
- Dec. 22..... End of Quarter 2, Blossoms Holiday Magic Celebration
- Dec. 25-Jan. 8..... Winter Break



PLEASE SEE OUR WEBSITE
FOR OUR 2023-24 SCHOOL CALENDAR