



Superintendent's Articles

Sportsmanship in the Bleachers

By Superintendent Dennis Paquette

Much of the joy of being a high school sports parent comes from watching your children compete in athletic events. I am, very much, enjoying this part of being a dad. There are very few kids who are not lifted by looking into the stands and seeing their parents cheering for them. As part of their responsibilities, parents should be involved in their child's educational process, this includes being actively involved in after school activities. Fortunately, the majority of parents behave appropriately at school sporting events. But those who misbehave can ruin it for all the rest. It takes only a few out-of-control parents to ruin what should be a pleasant atmosphere into one that is stressful for everyone. Yelling at the referee from the stands does not help. Do we really think that the referees are going to change a call because a mom or dad is yelling? Do we believe that a referee is going to ask himself/herself “Did I miss that call?” because of a verbal tirade from the stands?

I've seen a dad confront and taunt visiting coaches and players after a game. I've broken up a fight between two mothers. I've inserted my body, literally, between two dads hell-bent on taking each other apart. I've been at the epicenter of a score of traumatic post-game screaming matches involving parents versus referees, parents versus other coaches, parents versus visiting team parents, parents versus same-team parents, and last but certainly not least, a parent threatened a school administrator with physical violence. This type of behavior from parents is very embarrassing to the student. I sat in the locker room with a young man after a recent basketball game. This student was distraught over his mother's behavior in the stands.

To be honest, the vast majority of parents support their children in athletic endeavors with good cheer and sincere expressions of sportsmanship. Most parents hold their breath when the referee makes a stupid call. Most parents grin and bear it when the coach doesn't start Johnny for the Big Game. Most parents don't want to run the coach out of town after a bad game or a terrible season. Most parents realize that their kids don't have to be stars to learn something about hard work, teamwork, and commitment, which is really what youth sports is all about.

But it only takes one bad apple to spoil the whole batch. In education, we label (yes, we sometimes label) these folks as “high maintenance.” We'd like to jettison these parents at the end of every academic year, but it really wouldn't be fair to their kids, who we'd like to keep coaching and educating, because we like them a lot more than their parents.

Good sportsmanship among all spectators is a goal worth working for, but especially for parents, who have the obligation not only to control their behavior, but to also remind others around them of their responsibilities when necessary. When parents misbehave, it is the duty of other parents and school administrators to step in and correct the situation. A simple rule of thumb for all spectators to follow is that absolutely nothing in their actions should interfere with any youngster's enjoyment of the game.

How Do We Call a Snow Day?

When the snow starts to fall and the temperatures begin to plunge, school districts have a decision to make. That decision is whether to cancel school. While student love the idea of a snow day, it takes a lot before that'll happen in Southwestern Michigan.

Since becoming the superintendent here in Bangor, no topic generates more conversation, opinions, and phone calls than SNOW DAYS. Every time we have cancelled school due to weather, I can count on someone...and more likely, multiple someone's approaching me the next day and asking “Why did we close school yesterday?” My favorite comments comes on the day we do not close school...“Who decided that we should have school today? It's terrible out there.” My answer will always include the phrase “Student safety is the number one consideration when trying to make this type of decision.”

I know that I was always filled with questions as to how a snow day was called. As a student, I often envisioned the superintendent sitting in a dark control room, drinking coffee in front of a bank of monitors, receiving an abundance of data and making this decision based on the most precise meteorological information that is available to mankind. I could imagine many scientific advisors offering expert advice as to current weather and road conditions. After gathering all the information available, the superintendent would take his headset off, lean forward and push a large red button labeled “School Cancelled”. I can only say that I was very wrong with this vision.

A typical snow day starts a day or two prior with the forecast of bad weather from the TV weatherperson. The forecast will get the discussion between the superintendent and the transportation director moving. On the day in question, the transportation director gets into his vehicle at 3am and drives a predesigned route in order to determine road conditions and levels of visibility. The transportation director also initiates phone conversation with directors from 2-3 neighboring school districts as well as the county road commission. The area directors are attempting to determine if it is safe to put busses on the roads. At about 4:30 am the transportation director calls the superintendent and provides all relevant information. Then the groggy, sleepy-eyed superintendent makes the decision whether or not to cancel school. The superintendent must next, log onto the computer, set up and make the automated phone calls to district families and staff members. The automated phone calls start going out immediately. The calls are followed by the use of a computer program that contacts the TV and radio stations and makes them aware of a school closing. The entire process takes about three and a half hours.

Parents, you may think you are helping your children in the process by instructing them to place ice cubes in the toilet, put spoons under pillows, setting a white crayon on the window ledge and turn their pajamas inside out...however, you might serve their cause a little better by getting to know the transportation director and bribing him with a dozen doughnuts. Keep in mind, most people like a snow day now and then, but when we get too many...we make 'em up in June.

South Walnut Elementary

Little Vikings Credit Union Grand Opening Huge Success!

On January 28, 2015, South Walnut Elementary held their Grand Opening! Little Vikings Credit Union opened 51 new accounts! Many bank employees, parents, Superintendent, Chief of Police, Fire Chief/Board member and students took part in the ribbon cutting ceremony. Each Wednesday morning students can deposit money into their own bank account right here at school. We will be open from 7:30-8:00 am. The credit union is run by Honor CU employees, teachers and students for the purpose of teaching valuable financial skills. Get your child started today. Complete the account form for your child and start saving! Students are learning many life-long lessons with this new endeavor.



The Great Kindness Challenge

Mrs. Small, school counselor, organized and planned a one week positive bullying prevention initiative called The Great Kindness Challenge. The week was dedicated to creating a culture of kindness in schools nationwide. South Walnut had special activities planned throughout the week of January 26-30 that included dress up days, kindness stations, writing contest, canned food drive, classroom door decorating and participation in the Guinness book of world records! South Walnut's hallways are currently decorated to show-off our random acts of kindness!!



Students Participate in Ice Carving

On the morning of Saturday, Jan 31st, Bangor students participated in South Haven's annual Winterfest by carving blocks of ice in the ICE BREAKER ice carving competition. This was the fifth year that Bangor Schools has been represented in this event.

The team, which consisted of 5 Bangor students plus 2 area home school children, chose and carved a pair of jumping dolphins. Participating in this event were Bangor students, Olivia Kuiper, Eric Wheeler, Anders Mortensen, Brenden Gregory, and Haily Muniz and home school students Libby and Morgan Umbanhowar. A special thanks goes out to Jens Mortensen.

Results of this competition were not available at this time.



Kindergarten Round Up

will take place at South Walnut Elementary School

**Wednesday, April 29
 & Thursday, April 30
 3:30-7:00 p.m.**

Stations will be set up for parents to register their child for enrollment.

- Please bring:
- * copy of your child's original birth certificate
 - * proof of residency
 - * updated immunizations record
- (Required by law for entrance to school.)

We need this documentation to allow your child to enter school in the fall. Making these documents available at the time of registration would be very helpful.

Packets will be available at South Walnut Elementary starting Wednesday, April 1, 2015 if you would like to get them completed before registration begins.

Please mark your calendar!

We look forward to meeting you!

Community Education: Your Community -Your Program

Dear members of the Bangor Public Schools Community:

As the Director of Community Education for Bangor Public Schools, I am asking for input from the community as to programs you would like the Bangor Community Education Center to provide.

Current offerings include; cyber academy, high school completion, GED prep courses, English as a second language, credit recovery for high school students, and a home school partnership program. Additional plans include a bi-lingual/migrant resource program, adult enrichment, and recreation programs, just to name a few.

Three entities outside the school system are housed on the C.E.C. property, offering services to the Bangor community. They include the Van Buren County Headstart Program, Punkin' Patch Daycare and Youth Development and Company (YDC). YDC currently operates an after school program for students in grades 5th through 8th. YDC is currently exploring the option to expand to include grades K-8th.

We are open to exploring any ideas that community members may have to share with us. Any classes or programs, you, the community would like to see, please feel free to contact the Community Education Office (269-427-6800 ext. 2100).

Bangor Middle School

Athletics is not the Only Arena for Competition

By Jeremy Davison, Principal Bangor Middle School

In early November, middle school students were invited to begin practicing with 6th grade teacher Mrs. Kimbler for our annual spelling bee. On January 13th, Bangor Middle School held it's annual spelling bee and it was quite the experience.

When we talk about competition, most people immediately think of it from the perspective of athletics. The excitement, suspense, and the rollercoaster of emotions that players and fans alike experience make it difficult not to enjoy.

On January 13th, there was a great example of competition at its finest that took place in the Bangor Middle School library. Five students went through 31 gut-wrenching rounds of a spelling bee before one student could claim the victory of the evening.

On that evening, 6th grade students Michael Hardester, Keith Kueny, Cameron London, and 8th grade students Victoria London and Leonna Wallace all gave their best effort in what was one of the longest, most competitive spelling bees ever held at the middle school.

Round after round I sat and listened as words were announced by Mr. Thorbjornsen for the competitors to spell. Looking back, I have to admit that I would've been eliminated several different times for words that my students showed no hesitation in spelling.

The atmosphere was incredible. I found myself holding my breath as I listened intently to every word that was being spelled. At times, the students had to stop and work through the spelling of their word carefully in their mind as I sat, leaning on the edge of my chair, waiting to see if they made it to the next round.

Unfortunately, not everyone could move on to the next level. Again, it's important to point out how proud I am of every student that competed. They did their best and made the evening one of the most exhilarating events of the year for me personally.

Michael Hardester, Leonna Wallace, and Keith Kueny will be moving on to the Cloverleaf Regional Spelling Bee competition on February 24th, 2015. That competition will feature schools from Berrien and Van Buren county middle schools. The top three spellers from each school will compete in an individual spelling bee contest. They will be competing for numerous cash prizes and the top prize of the day will be an admission to the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee that will be held in Washington D.C. in the spring.

Whatever happens at the Cloverleaf, we should all be extremely proud of the hard work and dedication that these students have shown. They have represented Bangor Public Schools with a great deal of pride and confidence. Wish them all the best in their upcoming regional competition. A big word of thanks to Mr. Thorbjornsen, Ms. Hoehn, and Mrs. Kimbler for all of their help with the middle school spelling bee. An extra special thanks to Mrs. Kimbler for her coaching and mentoring of these students. Their success is due, in part, to her guidance and commitment.

Bangor High School

Compassion Project

By Wendy Tremblay, Bangor High School Principal



On January 20th and 21st, all of the students at Bangor High School participated in a project called, “The Compassion Project”. The Compassion project was a ½ day program that included team building activities, small group discussions, and whole group activities. The theme of the day was Tolerance. Each grade level participated in a separate session to promote grade level cohesiveness. This day was made possible thanks to many staff and community volunteers. A special thanks goes out to Doc Stevens for leading our team building activities and our community volunteers; Derek Babcock, Theresa Wiles, Elaina Danashevskya, Eric Stricklin, and Diane Finch.