



HASTINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER

A newsletter for the stakeholders of ISD 200

Message from the Superintendent

Raider Staff and Families,

With the winter season upon us and the new year on the horizon, this is always such a busy time of year both at school and likely at home too. To help take a little stress off, consider joining us for one of the upcoming musical events, remember a break is right around the corner, and that the new year provides an opportunity to reset our goals and priorities.

Winter Concerts and Show: Hopefully you were able to take in the holiday concert and the many other music events during the month of December. There are a few more not to be missed events so be sure to check out the district's event calendar. Looking into the new year, our show choir preview is in the high school auditorium on January 9th.

Winter Break: As the holiday season approaches, on behalf of ISD 200, we wish everyone a joyful and relaxing winter break. As a reminder our schools will be closed from December 25 through January 2, 2024. Our first official school day in the new year will be January 3, 2024.



Looking ahead to 2024: As we approach the end of 2023, we are excited about all the opportunities and possibilities in 2024. We look forward to partnering with our families, staff, and community to make the new year the very best it can be.

With gratitude,
Tammy Champa

District Calendars



Attention all planners! The district's got you covered with the 2023-2024 academic year and events calendars, available online at hastings.k12.mn.us/news___events/calendars.

But wait, there's more! Take a peek at the 2024-2025 academic calendar and get a head start on your future planning. All you need to know, a click away!

Annual Audit Report for Hastings Public Schools

Every summer, our business office staff works with an independent accounting firm to conduct an audit, as required by law for all public school districts in Minnesota. We are proud to announce that for the year ended June 30, 2023, the Certified Public Accounting firm Malloy, Montage, Karnowski, Radosevich & Co. issued a clean report to the Hastings Public Schools.



A clean audit report is the highest opinion an auditor can give to school districts. However, in their presentation to the School Board on November 21, MMKR noted that there were still findings that needed to be addressed. The audit verifies that the district is compliant with state and federal regulations, internal and administrative controls, and ensures the accuracy of financial reports used in calculating state and federal aid. These exceptional results highlight the district's unwavering commitment to financial accuracy, transparency, and accountability.

PSAs Provide Pivotal Role in Student Success

As we think about the positive educational experiences our students have each year, it is essential to recognize and appreciate the unsung heroes in our school community - our dedicated pupil support assistants and instructional aides. These invaluable individuals play a pivotal role in ensuring the success and well-being of our students, complementing the efforts of our teachers and enriching the overall educational experience for all students at Pinecrest Elementary.

Educational support professionals are a cornerstone of our school's support system. They work tirelessly to provide personalized assistance to students, addressing diverse learning needs and creating an inclusive environment for all. In our pursuit of academic excellence, their contribution is immeasurable.

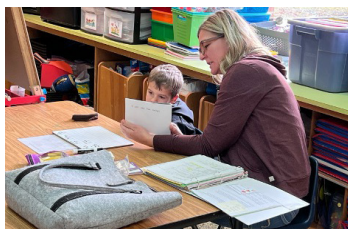
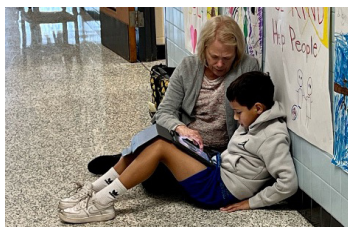
One of the primary responsibilities of educational support professionals is to offer additional support to students who may require individualized attention. Whether helping a student grasp a challenging concept, reinforcing positive behavior, or providing emotional support, paraeducators are instrumental in fostering a nurturing and conducive learning environment.

Making all students feel welcomed and successful are core values at our school, and educational support professionals play a crucial role in making this a reality. They collaborate with teachers to implement differentiated instruction, ensuring that every student can actively participate in the learning process, regardless of their abilities or challenges. This collaborative approach contributes to the overall success of our student body.

Furthermore, educational support professionals serve as role models and mentors, fostering positive relationships with students. Their presence extends beyond the classroom, creating a sense of belonging and support essential for a child's development. Students who feel supported academically and emotionally are more likely to thrive in and outside the classroom.

The importance of educational support professionals extends beyond the academic realm. In our commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals, paraeducators actively contribute to developing essential life skills. Through their guidance, students learn the values of empathy, teamwork, and resilience, preparing them for the challenges they may encounter in their educational journey and beyond.

As we celebrate the dedication and hard work of our educational support professionals, let us collectively acknowledge and express gratitude for their indispensable role in shaping the future of our students. Together, as a united school community, we can continue to provide an enriching and supportive environment where every child can succeed.



Hastings Raiders Give Back to the Community

Hastings High School Athletics maintains a commitment to developing character and community. Raiders athletes and teams regularly contribute to community service activities as part of that stated purpose. Over 200 athletes and coaches from ten different sports contributed over 410 combined service hours to seven different organizations or events this fall! Partner groups included the Hastings Rotary, Pleasant Hill Library, City of Hastings, Downtown Business Association, Hastings Middle School, and Gobblegait 2023. Keep an eye out for more student-athletes in service out and about in our local community throughout the winter. Contact HHS Athletics when you, your organization, or your business need local support. Go Raiders!



Nurturing Minds, Resolving Conflicts: The Vital Role of Critical Thinking Skills in Elementary Peer Conflict Resolution

As an elementary principal, I am acutely aware of the pivotal role that critical thinking skills play in the development and well-being of our students, particularly when it comes to addressing peer conflicts. Elementary-aged students are navigating a crucial phase of social and emotional growth, and the ability to think critically is key to empowering them to discover thoughtful solutions to conflicts.

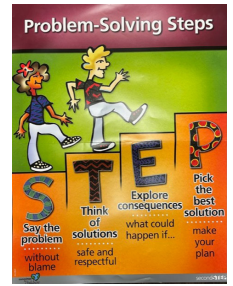
Teaching critical thinking skills serves as a cornerstone for effective problem-solving in the intricate landscape of peer interactions. The capacity to think critically allows students to analyze the root causes of conflicts, fostering a deeper understanding of the emotions involved. By encouraging them to consider multiple perspectives, evaluate evidence, and question assumptions, we equip our students with the tools necessary to navigate the complexities of interpersonal disputes. The process we use is supported by our social-emotional learning curriculum, called Second Step. Our process includes saying the problem, thinking of solutions, exploring consequences, and picking the best solution.

One of the primary benefits of instilling critical thinking skills in our students is the promotion of empathy. By guiding them to think critically about their own emotions and those of their peers, we create a foundation for empathy and understanding. When faced with a conflict, a child who has developed critical thinking skills is more likely to approach the situation with an open mind, seeking to understand the perspectives of others and finding common ground for resolution—versus reacting harshly with either a verbal outburst or a physical altercation. Furthermore, critical thinking skills contribute significantly to effective communication, which is essential in resolving peer

conflicts. Through thoughtful consideration and analysis, students learn to express themselves clearly and concisely, fostering a conducive environment for constructive dialogue. This not only aids in conflict resolution but also cultivates strong communication skills that are invaluable in all aspects of life. Civil problem-solving strategies can address almost every peer problem evident in our immediate school community.

As an elementary principal, it is important to integrate critical thinking into the fabric of our educational approach. Incorporating activities that encourage problem-solving, collaborative discussions, and reflection into our school environment nurtures the development of these skills. Our staff works to understand what issues arise throughout our building and creates lessons for each teacher and all students to experience to help strengthen our understanding of each other. Whether through specific classroom lessons, activities, or real-life examples, fostering critical thinking ensures that our students are well-equipped to face the challenges of resolving conflicts in a positive and proactive manner.

In conclusion, the importance of teaching critical thinking skills to support discovering solutions to peer conflict among elementary-aged students cannot be overstated. By empowering our students with these skills, we are shaping resilient problem-solvers and nurturing compassionate individuals capable of fostering harmonious relationships within our school community and beyond.



Hastings Teaching and Learning Update

Hastings Teaching and Learning has focused heavily on new literacy implementations at our pre-k and elementary sites. We have brought the implementation of a new pilot phonics program into our elementary schools.

The program is called UFLI: Foundations, a systematic approach to teaching phonics developed by the University of Florida's Literacy Institute. It provides teachers with a comprehensive resource to teach phonics according to the Science of Reading, an approach steeped deeply in brain development and decades of research. The UFLI program teaches students about the 44 different sounds created in our language from different letter combinations, focusing on decoding all sounds in a word. It is a whole class lesson taught daily in our K-2 classrooms.

We also are using it as an intervention program for our students in K-4 who need an extra dose of reading instruction during the day. One of the many significant aspects of this program is its focus on reading and spelling, helping our students continue to develop strong spelling skills daily.

In our pre-k classrooms, we are also helping to promote strong literacy skills. Before kids in preschool and kindergarten can have mastery over letter names and the sounds they make, they need to have explicit instruction in phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to differentiate and manipulate sounds within words. A strong foundation in phonemic awareness will give kids the stepping stones they need to cement future literacy skills. Phonemic

awareness activities are done without any letter representations, so we can do things with preschoolers that are fun and engaging and don't require alphabetic knowledge. Our pre-k classes at Tilden have started using a phonemic awareness curriculum called Heggerty, a daily, easy-to-implement program accessible to all students. This program has been in place in our kindergarten classrooms for the last two years, and we have seen great benefits for our kindergarten students while using it.



Heggerty curriculum taught in a kindergarten classroom.

Connecting Generations: Veterans Day Experience in Third Grade

At Kennedy Elementary, we strive to create enriching opportunities for our students to connect with the broader community, fostering a sense of respect and gratitude. This Veterans Day, our third-grade classrooms had the privilege of hosting special guests—parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents of our students—who generously volunteered their time to share their military experiences.

The room was filled with curiosity and respect as our young learners eagerly absorbed stories that reached back to the 1950s. The Veterans spoke passionately about their military roles, their motivations for joining, and the profound experiences that shaped their service. Our students seized the unique opportunity to engage directly with these honored guests, asking questions that helped their understanding of the sacrifices made.



The Veterans brought history to life, sharing a visual timeline adorned with photographs from their military journeys. These snapshots offered our students a tangible glimpse into the evolution of their service, creating a bridge between the past and the present.

A powerful and universal theme emerged from these presentations—the camaraderie among Veterans, transcending branches of service. Our students, in turn, gained a profound

appreciation for the shared sense of duty and unity that binds those who have served our country.

The impact didn't end with the presentations. Our third graders translated their gratitude into action, writing heartfelt letters to Veterans expressing their appreciation for the sacrifices made. They extended the reach of their gratitude beyond the classroom by creating posters of appreciation, which were shared with the Veterans Home in Hastings.

This experience extends beyond the curriculum—it's about instilling enduring values of respect, gratitude, and connection. By engaging with Veterans in such a personal manner, our third graders are learning about history and recognizing the living history within their own families and communities.

The event is a great reminder of the importance of honoring our heroes and connecting generations through shared stories and expressions of gratitude.



Hastings Middle School and The Raider Way

Each year, HMS implements Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) called The Raider Way. Throughout the year, our monthly themes are discussed and covered in our advisory classes assigned to each student. Our pillars of The Raider Way are being Safe, Respectful, and Responsible. You can see this throughout our school on our entrance rugs and many permanent wall banners.

Our Raider Way Team meets bi-monthly and consists of teachers, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and administrators. This group's charge is to guide our school's culture through monthly lessons, planning dances, and assemblies, and managing our positive reinforcements, which we call Raider Recognition tickets. Students earn tickets for living the Raider Way, which can be used in our Raider Cove store to

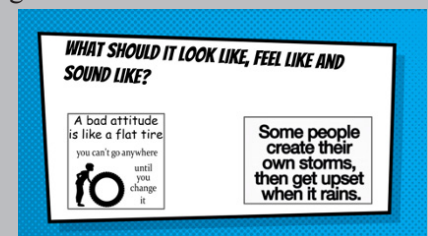
purchase items or other fun activities. We keep track of this data to ensure we are on track with rewarding the behaviors we want to see around the building.

Our current theme we are working on with students is having an Attitude of Gratitude. This is a perfect theme through November and December. Our learning target for students is "I understand what it means to have an attitude of gratitude and can demonstrate examples of being grateful." Students work through various activities during advisory that include some of the following:

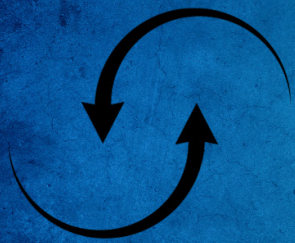
What is an attitude of gratitude?

- Making a habit of being thankful
- Having an appreciation for all parts of your life
- Giving kindness to others
- Recognizing the sources of goodness outside of ourselves

What are some examples of living a life of gratitude?



We are also focusing on giving kindness to others. Students and staff have been participating in Penny Wars, where students and staff bring in change in a competition between grade levels and staff. The winning bucket earns a reward, AND all proceeds from our penny war fundraiser will support Hastings Animal Ark. We choose a different charity to benefit from our kindness each year. This is a great way for our students to put what they are learning into practice and positively impact their community!



Hastings Public Schools 18-22 Programming for Students Receiving Special Education Services

This past summer, the Minnesota state legislature increased the range of eligibility for special education transition services from June 30th of the year the student turns 21 to the day before a student turns age 22. 18–22 transition services are offered to students receiving special education services who require services beyond their twelfth-grade year. This decision is made by a student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team. The team should start discussing the possibility of needing transition services during the ninth or tenth-grade year of the student’s high school experience. If the decision for transition services is made, the student still has the option to participate in graduation with their class; however, instead of receiving a diploma, the student receives a certificate of completion. The student receives their diploma once they have completed the 18-22 transition program.

Completion of an 18-22 program is dependent on a student’s individualized needs and progress toward or meeting IEP goals and portfolio requirements (transition services activities within the IEP). Some students attend until the day before their 22nd birthday, while others may only attend for 1-2 years. The decision to discontinue special education services is made by the IEP team. Once the student completes the program on their individual timeline, the student receives their diploma. The diploma does not look any different than one received by a student who graduates right after their twelfth-grade year.

Hastings Public Schools is proud to offer 18-22 transition services in our program called Students of Transition Age Acquiring Relevant Skills (STAARS). The STAARS program is located at Hastings High School. While the program is housed at the high school, the program does not run on the high school bell schedule; rather, the day is divided up to ensure students receive transition services in the areas of employment, post-secondary, independent living, and community/recreation, and leisure skills. The program is staffed with a teacher and PSAs and is also supported by our Work Based Learning Coordinator and School Social Worker.

While students are in the program, they have access to many activities and experiences that help increase their skills in all transition areas. Not every student will participate in all of the activities listed; instead, the IEP team will determine what the student needs based on their transition goals:

- Employment
 - Instruction and support from a Work Experience Coordinator
 - Volunteer experience
 - Non-paid supported work experience
 - Paid work experience
 - Interview experience
 - Vocational Rehabilitation Services
 - Job shadowing
- Post-Secondary
 - Access to college and career fairs
 - Tours of colleges and technical schools
 - Opportunities to research schools of interest
- Independent Living
 - Budgeting
 - Cooking
 - Household activities
 - Researching options and support for housing
- Community/Recreation and Leisure
 - Community outings such as bowling, scavenger hunts, museums, performing arts, etc.

For more information on 18-22 transition services, please reach out to your student’s case manager or contact the Director of Special Services, Megan Miller, at mmiller@isd200.org or 651-480-7009.

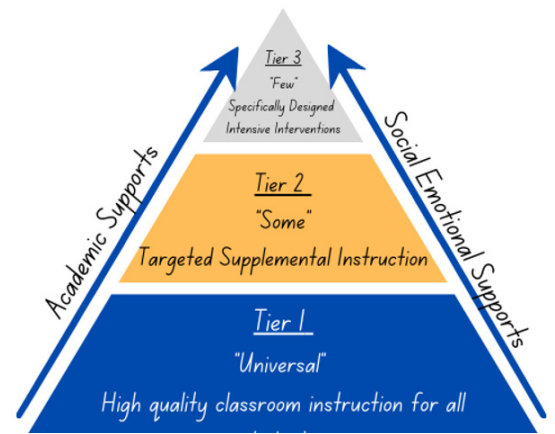
Strengthening School Intervention Systems

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for schools to revamp their intervention systems. Hastings has invested resources into this process, identifying academics, attendance, behavior, and social-emotional learning as key areas of focus.

At the secondary level, the school has hired Maddy Wieneke as its MTSS coordinator, while Tom Fritze has been placed in charge of specialized student support. Their efforts over the past year and a half have been remarkable, with a particular emphasis on aligning the school's system of support around student interventions.

The school's counseling staff, county mental health workers, school psychologists, community in the schools, social workers, and administration have all worked collaboratively to reinforce the support system. The dedicated teachers have been instrumental in providing strong tier 1 support, which works for approximately 85% of students. Those who struggle are identified and given tier 2 support, while a very small percentage of students receive tier 3 support.

Throughout this process, the school is guided by data, as well as staff, student, and parent feedback. The school forms a team around each student, working collaboratively to overcome any potential barriers to success. The school is committed to ensuring that every student achieves success in Hastings.



Summary of the Three Tiers

Tier 1	<p>Universal (All Students) - High Quality Classroom Instruction</p> <p>Tier 1 provides high-quality core instruction to all students through research-based SEL and Academic curriculum. In Tier 1, a universal screener, as well as formative and summative assessments, are utilized to make instructional decisions for students. Whole group, small group, and individual teaching models are utilized in tier I instruction. It Features differentiated and scaffolded pedagogies, strategies, and routines so that all students can access core content and engage meaningfully in their zones of proximal development. Students should be offered multiple opportunities to respond to instruction. 80% of students should respond to high-quality Tier I Instruction.</p>
Tier 2	<p>Some Students: Targeted supplemental instruction</p> <p>Tier II provides targeted supplemental academic and/or behavioral instruction in addition to core instruction. This instruction is utilized for students who are not responding to Tier I instruction. Tier II support typically occurs in a small group setting, 3-5 times per week for 20-40 minutes. Research-based interventions that align with identified areas of student need are utilized and closely monitored. Progress monitoring data will be collected every two weeks to monitor the success of the intervention. Tier II is typically utilized for 10-15% of the student population.</p>
Tier 3	<p>Few Students: Specifically Designed Intensive Interventions</p> <p>Tier III provides the most intensive support for students who have not responded to Tier I or Tier II instruction. Instruction in Tier III is tailored to meet the individualized needs of each student. Tier III interventions are done in a small group setting, and 1:1 instruction is recommended. Interventions should be evidence-based, taught systematically, and monitored on a weekly basis with progress monitoring checks. In Tier III, there should be frequent problem-solving and data checks to ensure student success. Tier III typically serves 5% of the student population.</p>

Important Dates

- **Dec. 25-Jan. 2**
Winter Break
- **Jan. 15**
No School
- **Jan. 22**
No School-Teacher Workshop
- **Feb. 5**
No School-Staff Development
- **Feb. 19**
No School
- **Feb. 28**
Evening Conferences-Elementary Only
- **Feb. 29**
Evening Conferences-All Grades
- **Mar. 1**
No School/Conferences-All Grades
- **Mar. 11-15**
Spring Break
- **Mar. 29**
No School

See What We're Up To

