

# DIRECTIONS



► NEWS FROM LOWELL AREA SCHOOLS

WINTER 2024



Photo by Ryan Heffron

## EXPLORING NATURE'S CLASSROOM: THE WITTENBACH WEGE CENTER'S ANNUAL LUMINARY HIKE A HUGE SUCCESS

Nestled amidst 140 acres of pristine landscapes, the Wittenbach Wege Center (WWC) stands as a beacon of outdoor learning and environmental appreciation. This Agriscience and Environmental Education Center, an invaluable addition to Lowell Area Schools, has become a vital hub for students and the community.

The WWC boasts lush forests, rolling prairies, abundant wetlands, and open fields, all waiting to be explored. It's not just an outdoor space; it's a living classroom where nature takes center stage. Open 365 days a year from dawn to dusk, the trails offer a serene escape for hiking enthusiasts, providing a firsthand experience of Michigan's natural beauty.

Recently, the WWC held its annual luminary hikes, transforming its trails into magical pathways lined with the warm glow of lanterns. This enchanting event unfolded over three days, drawing thousands of people eager to embrace the spirit of the season. The luminary-lit trails provided a captivating backdrop for families, friends, and nature enthusiasts to come together.

Beyond the luminary-lit trails, the event offered a delightful array of activities. From sipping hot cocoa to crafting old-fashioned decorations of popcorn and cranberries, the Luminary Hike became a celebration of community and creativity. Participants adorned the outside Christmas tree with homemade pinecone bird feeders, showcasing the simple joys of holiday traditions.

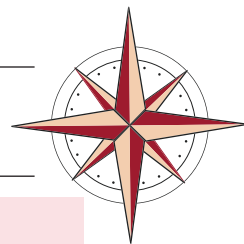
The Wittenbach Wege Center isn't just a destination for seasonal festivities; it's a crucial asset for educational growth. Outdoor learning spaces enhance student experiences, foster a deeper connection to the environment, and promote hands-on learning. The WWC's integration into Lowell Area Schools reflects a commitment to providing students with a holistic education that extends beyond traditional classrooms.

The Luminary Hike not only draws attention to the beauty of the WWC but also reinforces the center's role as a community gathering point. It showcases the importance of fostering environmental stewardship and instilling a sense of responsibility for our natural surroundings among students and community members.

The Wittenbach Wege Center is a testament to the transformative power of outdoor learning spaces. As the Luminary Hike illuminates the trails, it also highlights the broader impact of this center on Lowell Area Schools and the community. By immersing students in the wonders of nature, the WWC is cultivating a generation with a profound appreciation for the environment and a commitment to preserving it for years to come.

**LEARNERS TODAY. LEADERS TOMORROW. RED ARROWS FOR LIFE.**

# SUPERINTENDENT'S NEWS



I hope this letter finds you well as we enter the new year. The holiday season gives all of us at Lowell Area Schools an opportunity to celebrate outstanding achievements over the past year and look forward to exciting opportunities in 2024.



*Nate Fowler*  
*Superintendent*

Our graduates thrive in college, careers, and the military, embodying our academic excellence. Recent state test scores and accountability measures reflect the dedication and hard work of our students and staff, showcasing proficiency across subjects and grade levels. Highlights from the recent testing:

## **Lowell High School**

- SAT Mean Scores are 92 points above state and national averages
- Regularly outperform similar schools in Michigan
- State overall index score of 96.88

## **Lowell Middle School**

- PSAT 8 math scores have the highest growth rate in Kent County
- Regularly outperform similar schools in Michigan
- State overall index score of 92.19

## **Elementary Schools**

- NWEA MAP fall math and reading proficiency significantly above the national average
- M-STEP (grades 3-5) scores well above county and state averages
- State overall index score average of 94.08

We consistently emphasize to students that they are more than test scores. We appreciate the hard work and dedication of our students, their families, and our staff for their outstanding performance. Their continuous demonstration of excellent character and commitment to community service is commendable. As we equip students for post-graduation opportunities, they will possess the necessary tools for sustained success.

We also celebrate the completion of projects from the bond projects that the Lowell community supported in 2019. The newly renovated middle school and early childhood classrooms at Alto Elementary are models for collaborative learning spaces. Additional completed projects include:

- Air conditioning in all classrooms at LAS
- Improvements to athletic facilities at LHS
- An additional driveway to improve traffic flow at Murray Lake Elementary
- Safety and security improvements at all LAS facilities

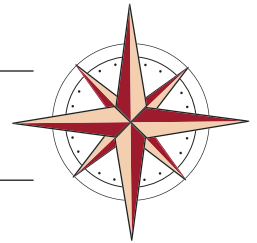
The LAS Board of Education aims to maintain safe and healthy learning environments for students and staff. In May, Lowell voters will decide on extending the current seven-mil levy for facilities. This proposal does not increase taxes. Key projects include:

- Major renovation of Cherry Creek Elementary to enhance and modernize learning spaces.
- Heating and cooling overhaul at LHS will improve air quality and efficiency as we replace HVAC systems near the end of life
- Improvements to the arts wing at LHS to include the construction of an orchestra room for a 20-year-old program that does not have a dedicated classroom.
- Upgrades to finishes and playgrounds at all other elementary schools.

The success of these initiatives hinges on voter support and active community participation. Your vote in this bond election will influence the future of our schools and the quality of education we offer our students. Together, we can sustain a supportive learning environment and attract young families, contributing to the vibrancy of our community.

Best wishes for a 2024 filled with joy.





## BUDDY BENCH DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF HEIDI GREER

Heidi Greer, a dedicated and remarkable teacher at Alto Elementary for 23 years, holds a special place in the hearts of the school community. The profound impact she made is evident through the numerous special bonds she created with students, parents, and staff. Recognized for her laughter, deep care, and unwavering devotion to helping others, she was a wonderful friend to both young and old.

Acknowledging her commitment to fostering friendships among students, she had expressed the idea of a buddy bench on the playground. In honor of Mrs. Greer and to perpetuate her spirit within the school, a buddy bench in her name was a perfect tribute.



## FIRST GRADERS EMBRACE THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION WITH 'STONE SOUP' PROJECT

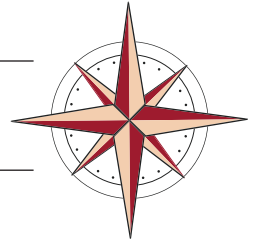
"Stone Soup" is a delightful story about a clever traveler who arrives in a village with just a stone. He convinces the skeptical villagers to contribute small amounts of ingredients to enhance the flavor of his "stone soup." As each person adds something, the soup transforms into a delicious meal the entire community enjoys together. After reading the book as a class, our first-grade friends at Alto Elementary were excited to create their own Stone Soup. This is a great story that teaches the importance of cooperation and sharing, showcasing how everyone's contributions, no matter how small, can lead to something wonderful when combined.



## HOLIDAY FAMILY FUN NIGHT A HUGE SUCCESS

Alto Elementary families came together for an evening filled with festive activities. Parents and students donned roller skates and enjoyed a night of family fun as they transformed the gym and cafeteria into lively spaces for roller skating. There were also stations for ornament making, cookie decorating, and a hot cocoa bar. The more cautious attendees gathered in the halls enjoying the hot chocolate bar. The entire event is an annual tradition that creates cherished holiday memories.





## BUILDING BRIDGES: OFFICER SUMMERHAYS CONNECTS WITH LOWELL'S FIRST GRADERS THROUGH MONTHLY READING SESSIONS



In an initiative fostering community engagement and safety awareness, Officer Summerhays, one of Lowell Area Schools' School Resource Officers, visits Matt Nanninga's 1st-grade classroom monthly to read with them. This event not only cultivates a positive rapport between law enforcement and the community's youngest members but also serves as an educational platform.

Each session delves into meaningful discussions about rules and responsibilities, where Officer Summerhays helps our students understand the crucial aspects of his role within the school district. From ensuring safety to upholding regulations, he provides valuable insight into the significance of community helpers like himself in maintaining a secure learning environment.

As important as this is the most essential part of his visits, at least to our students, is talking about their shared love of pets - especially dogs. While this banter may not seem crucial to the learning environment at first glance, it adds a personal connection, helping children see first responders as authority figures and relatable community members.

The sessions create a space for students to familiarize themselves with Officer Summerhays and foster a sense of trust and understanding. By showcasing the human side of law enforcement, these interactions dispel children's fears and emphasize the role of police officers as community helpers.

## EARLY EXPOSURE TO STEAM CREATES A LIFE-LONG LOVE OF LEARNING

Family STEAM Night brought together students, parents, and educators for an evening of hands-on learning. Why is Family STEAM Night important? It's all about fostering a love for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics in a collaborative setting.

From creating cool contraptions to unraveling the mysteries of science experiments, everyone was fully engaged. The night strengthened the bond between school and home and emphasized the importance of STEAM education in preparing students for the future.

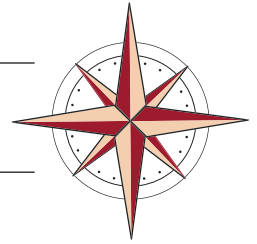


## FIRST-GRADE STUDENTS EXPLORE FIRE SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Amanda VanWeezel's first-grade class took a field trip to visit the Lowell Fire Department, where the students gained valuable insights into fire safety and essential life-saving tips for emergencies. During the visit, the students had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the tools firefighters use to assist in emergency situations and explore various sections of the Fire Hall.







## CHARGING AHEAD: LL&P GENERAL MANAGER CHARLIE WEST SPARKS ENERGY ENTHUSIASM WITH 4TH GRADERS AT CHERRY CREEK ELEMENTARY

Fourth-grade students visited the Lowell Light and Power Energy Center where Charlie West, LL&P General Manager, helped them construct simple DC motors, providing a hands-on learning experience.

This field trip introduced students to the world of energy through practical application. Together, they delved into constructing simple DC motors, unraveling the principles behind their functionality.

The collaboration between LL&P and CCE showcases the commitment to fostering educational experiences beyond the traditional classroom setting. Students had the opportunity to interact with a seasoned professional like Charlie West and gained valuable insights into the practical aspects of energy generation and utilization.

This collaborative initiative highlights the significance of bridging the gap between industry leaders and the classroom, providing students with enriching experiences that extend their understanding of real-world applications. Charlie West's involvement exemplifies LL&P's commitment to community engagement and fostering a passion for learning in the younger generation.



## 5TH GRADE STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM FOSTERS GRATITUDE DURING THANKSGIVING WEEK

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, the 5th Grade Student Leadership Team at Cherry Creek Elementary took the initiative to spread gratitude throughout their school community. They planned and executed a heartwarming project to express appreciation to every staff member, recognizing the collective efforts that make the school a nurturing environment. Every adult who leans into a student's life at CCE was included - teachers, para-professionals, food service personnel, custodians, bus drivers, and office staff. Each person received a personalized note of thanks. This project was a testament to the leadership skills of the 5th Grade Student Leadership Team and served as a unifying force within the school. The thoughtful notes conveyed appreciation and fostered a sense of community and connection among the students and staff.



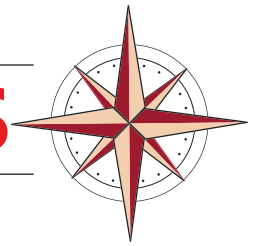
**"The deepest craving of human nature is the need to be appreciated." – William James**

## EARLY ACT CLUB BRIGHTENS HOLIDAYS WITH 128 TOYS FOR FLAT RIVER OUTREACH MINISTRIES

You don't need to look any further than our Red Arrows to know our future is bright. In early December, the Early Act Club at Cherry Creek Elementary loaded up 128 toys from their toy drive and delivered them to Flat River Outreach Ministries for their Christmas Distribution Program.

FROM will help bring a happy holiday to 450 students in our community this season, and they are off to a great start thanks to this crew and their fearless leader, Joseph Audia. Students delivered the toys, learned more about Rotary International from Lowell Rotary Club advisor Amanda Rogers, and a tour of all of the great things FROM does for our community.





## PRESCHOOL SETS YOUR CHILD UP FOR SUCCESS

**2024-25 ENROLLMENT BEGINS FEBRUARY 5, 2024**

Preschool. Those glorious days of quiet time, snacks, crafts, and making friends. If you wonder why preschool is important for your child, the short answer is that it sets them up for success in elementary school, both socially and academically.



social and emotional development skills. Most importantly, they learn how to control their emotions better and apply language to express their feelings.

It is the first opportunity for many students to learn conflict resolution under teachers who specialize in this age category. Did you know that between the ages of 3 and 5, a child's vocabulary grows from 900 to 2,500 words, and sentences become longer and more complex? Preschool helps them develop longer, complex sentences, and language skills. Curiosity is not only encouraged; it's a way of life in preschool. Growing curiosity can increase a student's motivation to learn.

If you are interested in exploring preschool for your upcoming 2.5 - 5 years old, give Kathy Burch a call (616) 987-2571. We would love to talk to you about our environment and give you a tour.

Here are a few reasons we think providing your child with a preschool education is important: Learning to function in a structured setting, learning to share, follow instructions, and basic classroom rules.

The requirements of elementary are far more academic than even 5 years ago. Your child will be reading and writing sentences in kindergarten, doing 1-10 multiplication in first grade. Preschool introduces them to this subject without compromising their imagination and playtime.

It also helps to develop both fine and major motor skills. Preschool promotes critical



## BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE: DON'T LET IT STOP YOUR LITTLES FROM VENTURING OUT

Michigan is beautiful in the winter and there are so many things you can do as a family during this season. From building a snowman, a fort, going on a winter scavenger hunt to night hikes with crystal clear skies, it is important to get your kids outside.

For a map of local trails, visit [discoverlowell.org/lowell-trails/](https://discoverlowell.org/lowell-trails/)

### Benefits of cold weather adventures

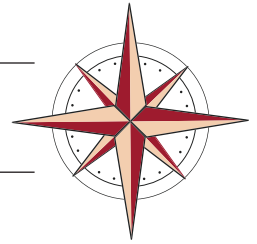
- Exercise
- Vitamin D
- Decreases anxiety
- Social development
- Improves sleep
- Improves focus
- Helps their Immunity
- Physical Development
- Cognitive Development
- Social Development



Little Explorers,  
Big Adventures







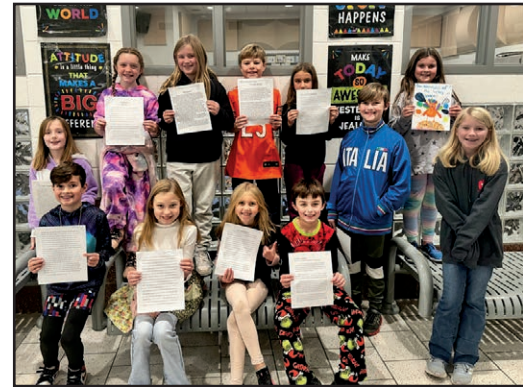
## THE FLAVOR OF SCIENCE: 5TH GRADE ICE CREAM EXPERIMENT

The end of the Cereal City Science unit, Structures and Properties of Matter: Lesson 5A, has a summative experiment to show how we can apply what we learned about using energy to change phases of matter, such as liquid milk and vanilla and solid salt, sugar, and ice to create a new substance of ice cream. MLE's 5th-grade students had a blast learning about the concept!



## MLE THANKSGIVING WRITING CONTEST TRADITION CONTINUES

Thanks to those 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th-grade students who participated in MLE's annual Thanksgiving Writing Contest. There were so many amazing entries! This year, we were able to award turkeys to our first-place winners in various categories and Meijer gift cards to our 2nd and 3rd place finishers. Congratulations to our young authors!



A Red Arrow shoutout to the winners:

2nd Grade

1st place - Ally Mitchell, 2nd place - Cameron O'Neil, and 3rd place - Lottie Thenn

3rd Grade

1st - Everleigh Koval, 2nd place - Owen Hayes, and 3rd place - Violet Van Den Driessche

4th Grade

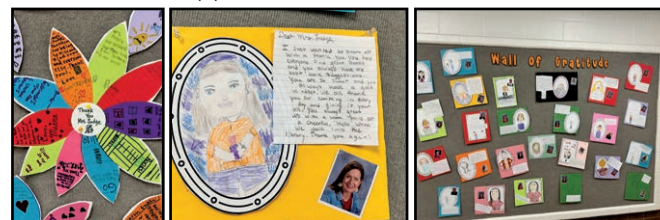
1st place - Reese Marek, 2nd place - Emma Henige, and 3rd place - Isaiah Homolka

5th grade

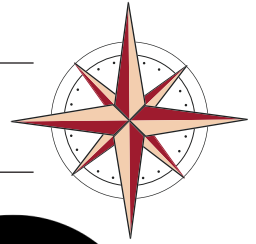
1st place - Josie Dykstra, 2nd place - William Cunningham, and 3rd place - Nora Doyle

## MLE CELEBRATES SUPPORT STAFF MONTH

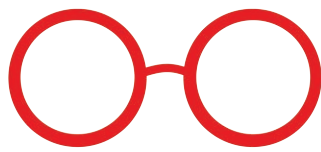
Education Support Professionals Day was first celebrated in 1987 after NEA's Representative Assembly, the Association's decision-making body of nearly 8,000 member delegates, called on the organization to honor the contributions of all school support staff. MLE celebrated its support staff with special treats and a wall of gratitude in November. The students drew pictures of parades and itinerants and used thoughtful words to describe their appreciation for them. It made for all to enjoy a colorful wall of gratitude displayed in the main hallway. We would be lost without our support staff!



# MIDDLE SCHOOL NEWS



It was three years in the making. On August 29, 2023, we paused to celebrate the official dedication of our newly renovated learning environment at Lowell Middle School. It's not just a building but a space where dreams will be nurtured, and futures will be shaped. Again, thank you to our community for supporting the 2019 bond.



## LIVE BOLD. LOVE BIG. PASS IT ON.

In October, LMS observed National Bullying Prevention Month. Signs were created by art students, lessons were presented by teachers, and on October 18, the school community came together by wearing orange for Unity Day, a highlight of the month. Students attended a presentation by Kelly Jandernoa, author of the Red Glasses Movement, promoting living boldly, loving big, and passing it on. Eighth-grader Kole Woodhead emphasized the importance of fostering a kind and inclusive middle school environment. A video by LMS drama students and produced by Matthew Laura, coordinator of student support, aimed to raise awareness during a month known for behavior referrals, emphasizing active student participation in anti-bullying efforts for lasting change.

## ROBOTICS TEAMS EXCEL IN FIRST TECH CHALLENGE, EARNING AWARDS FOR INNOVATION AND CULTURAL IMPACT

The Lowell Middle School Red Arrow Robotics teams celebrated a successful end to the FIRST Tech Challenge season! Despite not making it to the state competition, their three robots performed exceptionally well, marking significant progress from last year. The Red Arrow Robotics Team White secured 3rd place in the Innovate Award, showcasing their imaginative thinking and inventive design execution. The Red Arrow Robotics Red Team received the Promote Award for their exceptional work crafting a compelling video message to reshape cultural perceptions and celebrate STEM fields.



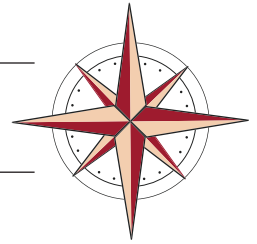
The clothing closet at our middle school is designed to meet the diverse needs of our students. Located within our school building, this closet is a valuable resource to ensure that every student feels confident and comfortable regardless of their circumstances.

The clothing closet operates on a system of confidentiality and respect. Students can access it discreetly, either through self-referral or with the help of a trusted adult, such as a teacher, counselor, or school nurse. This approach ensures that student's privacy is protected and there is no stigma associated with utilizing this valuable resource.

This is not just about providing essential clothing; it also fosters community and compassion. Donations from staff, students, and community members play a significant role in keeping the closet well-stocked, highlighting the importance of empathy and helping one another.

In essence, our middle school's clothing closet is a symbol of our commitment to creating a supportive environment for our students. It promotes self-esteem, reduces barriers to learning, and reinforces the idea that every student is valued and deserving of the opportunity to thrive academically and socially.





## LHS COLLABORATES WITH VERSITI BLOOD CENTER FOR LIFE-SAVING IMPACT

LHS partners with Versiti Blood Center of Michigan every eight weeks to host a blood drive. These blood drives allow students, staff, and community members to donate blood for people in need around our community.

Community members and students 16 years old and older can sign up online at [Versiti.org](https://Versiti.org) and then come into the high school at their scheduled time.

One of the high school student coordinators, Ben Vonderheide, shares what he loves about blood drives. "I love the selflessness of donating blood. It can be a little uncomfortable, and you must plan out your hydration and iron intake beforehand. You're totally going out of your way to donate your blood to somebody else for the greater good, all because your discomfort or inconvenience pales in comparison to that of a person receiving the blood."

Donating a pint of blood saves three lives. Setting up a donation is just a few easy steps online, but it genuinely helps people in and around our community.

## STUDENTS IMMERSE IN ART AND CULTURE AT DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

Art and Spanish students had a wonderful experience at the Detroit Institute of Arts in November, exploring world-renowned works of art and Ofrendas in celebration of the Day of the Dead. The day was filled with thoughtful conversations regarding art, history, and current issues. Teachers Emma Bandos, Sarah Ellis, and Chaye Klomprens accompanied students on this memorable trip. Students could talk with an artist of one of the Ofrendas and hear how her whole



also saw memorable works of art by Pablo Picasso, Vincent Van Gogh, Frida Kahlo, Salvador Dalí, Diego Rivera, and many more. The DIA was voted the top art museum in the nation last year, having a vast array of priceless works, extraordinary exhibitions, and an outstanding community outreach program. In an article by the National Endowment of the Arts, Jamee Yung, Education Coordinator for the Weisman Art Museum, states, "Art gives us an experience like nothing else can, a chance to connect, understand, and explore perceptions, feelings, and innovative thoughts."

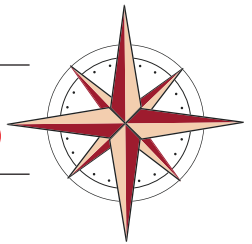


family contributed to the piece that honored her late husband. While reflecting on this rich and meaningful cultural practice, they asked poignant questions that deepened their understanding of how humans grieve. Students

## SCIENCE RESEARCH CLASS FOSTERS AN AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIP WITH VAN ANDEL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Lowell High School Science Research class has been running for the last seven years, partnering with the Van Andel Research Institute. Students can engage in authentic research, studying a project that piques their interest. The class also reads and discusses the book written by Hope Jahren - Lab Girl. The class is one of a kind in West Michigan, where students can conduct real-world research in the high school environment.





## UNITY STUDENTS SHOWCASE CREATIVE GENIUS IN ANNUAL RIDDLE CHALLENGE

Each day in October, Britney Altoft, the administrative assistant at Unity High School, presented a challenging riddle to students and staff. Pictured are the students who not only accurately solved intricate, mind-bending riddles but also offered alternative answers that sometimes surpassed the initial solution.

Unity students enjoy the privilege of having a workspace they can personalize with items that reflect their personality. The rewards for these riddle masters ranged from miniature pumpkins as tiny as ping pong balls to gourds adorned with more warts than one could count, and even custom-painted Frankenstein pumpkins.



## HANDCRAFTED CARDS SENT TO PERSEVERANCE HONOREES

In the weeks leading up to Pink Arrow, our students dedicated time each week to read the Perseverance stories published in the latest Lowell Ledger. The touching and relatable nature of these stories inspired some students to express their support. Sue Sweet, who has a passion for scrapbooking and card making, provided the students with all the necessary materials to personally handcraft cards. These cards were sent to the individuals featured in the Perseverance stories.



### Pink Arrow Pride

Pink Arrow Pride was the brainchild of Lowell's former football coach, Noel Dean. A football game was played, in rare pink jerseys, the sound of a thousand donated pink thunder-sticks was in the air, and the stadium was virtually a sea of pink. Through the work of numerous dedicated volunteers and the support of our community, Pink Arrow Pride has raised hundreds of thousands for charities.



## THE ART OF GIFT WRAPPING

Because life skills matter. Students took some time out of the regular curriculum to learn a valuable skill — proper gift wrapping. This hands-on lesson went beyond the aesthetics of neatly wrapped presents; it underscored the importance of thoughtful presentation and the impact it can have on both the giver and the recipient.

Students were guided through the step-by-step process of wrapping a gift, from measuring and cutting the paper to creating crisp folds and securing the perfect bow. Britney Altoft shared tips and tricks to make the process more manageable, ensuring that even the most intricately shaped gifts could be wrapped well. Beyond the practical aspect, the lesson delved into the emotional impact of presenting a thoughtfully wrapped gift.







## **WINTERFEST 2024 FEBRUARY 3 | 10 A.M. – 3 P.M.**

Come OPT-OUTSIDE and have some healthy, winter fun!

### **SNOWSHOEING**

all day if snow permits! (\$5/pair rental)

### **WINTER BIRD PROJECTS AND CRAFTS**

Back Yard Birding and Winter bird projects & crafts throughout the day.  
Make Pinecone birdfeeders, learn how make your own suet, paper & fabric birds,  
and prepare for the Great Backyard Bird Count!

### **TRAIL GAMES AND SCAVENGER HUNTS!**

ARCHERY— a fun challenge at the WWC

EMBROIDERY YARD ART—among the trees

ICE CANDLE DEMONSTRATION—weather permitting

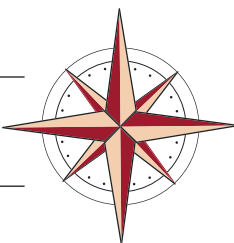
HOT COCOA—\$1/cup & Free Popcorn

## **WINTER WAGGLE VIRTUAL 5K CHALLENGE**

Register and race anytime the day of WinterFest. Snowshoe, ski, run, walk, hike or waggle!  
You pick the pace and the place as long as it's outside.  
Full 5K or 1 mile Fun Waggle

Cost for 5K: \$15/individual or \$30/family (up to 4 people) and includes snowshoe rental.

Can't make it to WinterFest?  
Email [ccheers@lowellschools.com](mailto:ccheers@lowellschools.com) to sign up and we will send you your medal.



## A DONATION TO THE LOWELL EDUCATION FOUNDATION IS AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

In October 2023 the Lowell Education Foundation (LEF) reviewed over 30 grant applications submitted by teachers in the district from all buildings. The board approved almost \$27,000 worth of grants for this school year. LEF is a non-profit organization that helps teachers with projects not funded by public tax revenues.

Each fall teachers are asked to submit a grant application, up to \$1,000, for projects that promote innovative learning and enhanced programs within the classroom. Recently approved applications include Kiwi Crates for STEM exploration, Ozobot Evos, salmon in the classroom, physics demos and lab supplies, and phonics and phonemic awareness for at-risk readers.

Visit our Facebook page and website (<https://www.lowelleducationfoundation.org/>) to see photos of items purchased being used by students throughout the district or make a donation to help support future grants. Donations can be set as a recurring contribution or as a one-time gift. They can also be made in memory or honor of a teacher or someone in the district who has made an impact. LEF is thankful for community individuals and businesses who support its mission and values.



## DONATING IS EASY! SCAN THE QR CODE



Contributing to LEF holds profound significance as it directly impacts the present and future of education right here in our community. By donating, you are making a strategic investment in the development of future leaders and contributors to society. LEF plays a pivotal role in addressing funding gaps that educational institutions often face, ensuring that essential needs such as classroom supplies, technology upgrades, and teacher professional development are adequately met.

Your support also enables us to go beyond the basics, funding enrichment programs and innovative initiatives that enhance the overall quality of education. These may include extracurricular activities, advanced courses, and the integration of cutting-edge technologies, providing students with a more comprehensive and well-rounded learning experience.

Moreover, your contributions contribute to fostering a sense of community. We engage various stakeholders, including parents, alumni, and local businesses, in a collective effort to support the shared goal of providing excellent education. This collaborative spirit strengthens community ties and instills a collective pride in local educational institutions.





## DISTRICT HIRES NEW SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR

By Erin Albenese | School News Network

Liz McCall loves to be in the classroom, modeling best practices in special education instruction for teachers.

"I spend a lot of time in classrooms," she said. In the ever-changing world of special education, she is willing to step in and demonstrate how something works in action to help make things click.

McCall started as the district's new special education director in October. She oversees all things related to special education in the district as well as all 504 Plans, which are created for students with disabilities who require accommodations.

She comes from the Upper Peninsula, where she was director of special education at Delta Schoolcraft Intermediate School District for one year. Before that, she was a special education department supervisor for six years and worked as a classroom teacher for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. She has worked in North Carolina, Washington D.C. and Plymouth-Canton Community Schools.

Originally from Traverse City, McCall has a bachelor's degree in creative writing from Western Michigan University. After a several-year stint in car sales, she worked as a substitute teacher and "instantly loved it." Two months later she returned to college and eventually received a master's degree in special education (emotional impairment) and another in education leadership from Eastern Michigan University.



*Special education instruction is in Liz McCall's blood.*

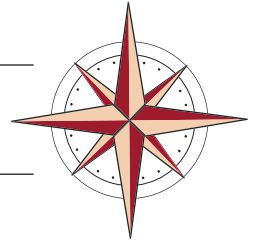
Serving students with special needs is in McCall's blood. Her grandmother was the director of special education for Detroit Public Schools and her grandfather was a special education administrator who ran a self-contained program; both had their master's degree from EMU as well. She also has two aunts, a sister and cousin who are all teachers.

McCall is currently meeting with principals to hear from them about district needs. She says her goal is to make teachers feel supported and have all the tools they need.

"I love that it's different all the time because we are really able to focus on students as individuals," she said. "I get to be creative with each and every one of them in making decisions and supporting them and supporting the teachers who support them."

"Now I get to support teachers and reach more and more kids."

# THIS AND THAT



## LOWELL EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Each year the Lowell Education Foundation (LEF) provides enrichment materials, equipment, and experiences for students in the Lowell Area Schools. This helps teachers provide our students enhanced learning experiences that would not be available through the regularly budgeted curriculum.

Some of the projects supported include books for reading programs, supplies for STEM projects, equipment for music and arts, items for special needs students, Chromebooks, and Odyssey of the Mind expenses.

LEF also is involved with LHS alumni records, communications, activities, and reunions. If you were a LHS student, we would love to have current information about you and your graduating class.

To learn more about LEF and support its mission visit [lowelleducationfoundation.org](http://lowelleducationfoundation.org) and consider naming the foundation in a will or trust, or make a contribution of \$400 or more to honor someone by adding a leaf to the LEF Tribute Tree in the hall at the high school.



## Rock the Vote | May 7, 2024

Lowell voters will decide on extending the current seven-mil levy for facilities. This proposal does not increase taxes. Key projects include:

- Major renovation of Cherry Creek Elementary to enhance and modernize learning spaces.
- Heating and cooling overhaul at LHS will improve air quality and efficiency as we replace HVAC systems near the end of life
- Improvements to the arts wing at LHS to include the construction of an orchestra room for a 20-year-old program that does not have a dedicated classroom.
- Upgrades to finishes and playgrounds at all other elementary schools.



## Lowell Performing Arts Center

March 1, 2, 8, and 9 | 7 p.m.

March 3 | 2 p.m.

Tickets available online at  
[www.showtix4u.com/events/lpac](http://www.showtix4u.com/events/lpac)



## INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Wondering what's happening in schools across the District? Wonder no more!

**Be sure to check out our channels!**

**Facebook | [lowellareaschools](https://www.facebook.com/lowellareaschools)**

**Instagram | [@lowelldistrict](https://www.instagram.com/lowelldistrict)**

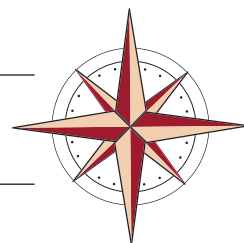


For closing information and other urgent notifications, be sure to download **MyCallNow** available in both the Apple and Google Play Stores. Enter Code #3587 to get specific notices for our District.



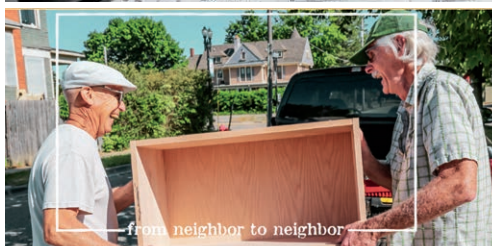


# COMMUNITY CORNER



FROM partners with the United Way and the IRS to provide income tax assistance each year through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.

Kent County residents who meet the income guidelines can schedule an appointment to have their taxes e-filed for free by IRS-trained volunteers at FROM's main office. Visit [fromlowell.org](http://fromlowell.org) for more information.



We never want a neighbor to face the tough decision on whether to pay for their medication or their rent. FROM Homes helps neighbors avoid those tough choices through affordable housing and repair services in the Lowell area.

## REPAIR & RESTORE

Provides free/low cost home repairs or weatherization assistance for homeowners in the greater Lowell community. If you have a home repair need, contact the Connections Office at 616.897.8260 ext. 125.

## MAIN STREET HOUSING

FROM owns a multi-family home at 504 East Main. If you are in need of affordable housing, watch for signs of available housing or call us for a list of affordable housing in the area.



Saturday, February 3, 2024  
10 - 11 a.m.  
Englehardt (Lowell) Branch

Suitable for children  
5-10 years old.

Don't miss your chance to have your own architecture adventure and build the tallest tower or coolest castle with all sorts of different materials. The only limit at this program is your imagination — and the amount of supplies available.

[KDL LAB Experience = STEAM](#)

STEAM is an approach to education that focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics. KDL LAB Experiences are designed to help students increase their proficiency in STEAM disciplines through fun activities. With STEAM learning, children are able to develop their brains to think in a way that allows for creativity, tinkering, problem solving, collaboration and exploration.

lowellArts

## PENCIL DRAWN HORSE



Saturday, February 17, 2024 from 1 - 2:30 p.m.

Learn how to draw a horse!  
Draw using pencil to convey motion and action by using techniques like leading lines and shading.

This is a single-session class.

Instructor: Sharon Brandner

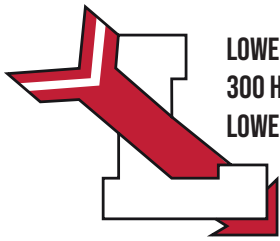
Sign up online at  
[www.lowellartsmi.org/event-details/pencil-drawn-horse](http://www.lowellartsmi.org/event-details/pencil-drawn-horse)

Ages: 7-12

Materials Needed:  
All materials provided.

Class Fee:

\$17 (\$15 for LowellArts Members).  
Fee includes materials.



LOWELL AREA SCHOOLS  
300 HIGH STREET  
LOWELL, MICHIGAN 49331

## CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

**Nate Fowler**  
Superintendent

**Sonia Hodge**  
Chief Financial Officer

**Dustin Cichocki**  
Director of Human Resources

**Dan VanderMeulen**  
Director of Curriculum

**Liz McCall**  
Director of Special Education

## BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Brian Krajewski**  
President

**Laurie Kuna**  
Vice President

**Tom Kaywood**  
Treasurer

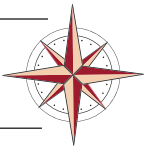
**Pat Nugent**  
Secretary

**Jared Blough**  
Trustee

**Jessica Curtis**  
Trustee

**Jennifer Dougherty**  
Trustee

# 2023/24 CALENDAR



### February 12

Board of Education Meeting  
Runciman Building | 7 p.m.

### February 19-20

Mid-winter Break  
No School for students and staff.

### March 1

End of 2nd Trimester  
Half day students. Full day staff.

### March 11

Board of Education Meeting  
Runciman Building | 7 p.m.

### March 15

Half day students. Full day staff.

### March 29 - April 5

Spring Break

### April 8

Board of Education Meeting  
Runciman Building | 7 p.m.

### May 13

Board of Education Meeting  
Runciman Building | 7 p.m.

### May 24

Half day students. Full day staff.

### May 27

Memorial Day Holiday  
No school students and staff.