

# Communicator

January 2023



## Exploring Artifacts with an Archaeologist in Fourth Grade



The second quarter of the school year was an exciting time for the fourth grade students and teachers. Our second quarter student council representatives were Emerson S., Kira Y., and Tyra W. They worked together with the 5th grade student council representatives to plan fun rewards each month and even organized a food drive for our school. An archaeologist visited our school to teach our students a lesson on early Wisconsin people. Students worked in small groups to get hands-on experience exploring artifacts. Students have been working hard and have earned a movie day at the end of the quarter. Special thanks to Russell's for supplying popcorn! The fourth graders at Neillsville Elementary had a successful first semester. The fourth grade teachers are proud of the students' achievements. We look forward to what the second semester has in store!

### Important Dates

FRI	<b>20</b>	No School
JAN		Teacher In-Service
MON	<b>30</b>	Academic & Career Planning
JAN		Night - 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
FRI	<b>17</b>	No School
FEB		Teacher In-Service
THU	<b>23</b>	Parent-Teacher Conferences
FEB		4:30 to 8:30 p.m.
FRI	<b>24</b>	No School - Parent-Teacher
FEB		Conferences - 8 to 11:30 a.m.
TUE	<b>7</b>	American College Testing
MAR		(ACT)
FRI	<b>24</b>	No School
MAR		Teacher In-Service



## Superintendent's Message



### HAPPY NEW YEAR

It is incredible to think that the current school year is already more than half over. It's amazing how quickly time passes when everyone is working so hard to help prepare our kids for their futures. Rest assured that everyone at the School District of Neillsville is doing their very best to help prepare our kids to be college ready, career ready, and life ready. The work is not easy, but it does pave the way for the future success of our students. Please check out all of the articles in this edition to find out even more of the good things happening in our district.

The holiday break always gives me the opportunity to reconnect with former graduates of Neillsville. I love hearing about all the things that they are now doing, and I thoroughly enjoy seeing the passion that has developed in them for their studies and careers. I am amazed at all of the things they are achieving since their graduation from Neillsville High School. Our graduates are filling much needed positions in the military, as well as in the fields of human medicine, medical research, education, law and law enforcement, veterinary medicine, agriculture, robotics, renewable energy development, engineering, manufacturing, new technology developments, the ministry, and business.

I am also thankful for our graduates who decide to make Neillsville their permanent home. I greatly appreciate the work they do to keep our local economy growing, and for being the next generation that works to make Neillsville a great place to live and raise their families.

We can all take pride in the fact that so many of our graduates are working hard to make a positive impact in this ever-changing world. We can also be proud of living in a community that supports children so well both educationally and emotionally, so that our young people can grow into the successful adults they have become. Way to Go, Neillsville! There is still much more to do, though. There is always a new group of students that will need our support.

Thanks for all of your support of our kids and our schools!

John Gaier  
Superintendent

## English Students Create Lessons on Independent Living

Students in Mrs. Warren's practical English class were given the opportunity to teach their peers an independent living unit. The idea was to pick a topic that would cover necessary tasks when they are living on their own and included five specific items per unit.

Students had a variety of topics to pick from, some included: basic appliance maintenance, civil service duties, basic car repairs, basic home maintenance, or common first aid. Within these units students had to design a visual aid, create guided notes & a quiz, locate a video unique to their tasks and a hands-on activity for the whole class. Lastly they had to present their unit to the entire class.

Opportunities were endless, not only did the students get to know what it felt like to be a teacher, but they got to use their creativity with their peers. In the process the class learned how to remove a bee sting, what to do if they have frost bite, how to properly change a tire and their oil, how to safely lift weights, banking essentials, how to repair holes in the wall, and change their furnace filters, to name a few.

## High School Principal's Message



What do I want to do with the rest of my life? We have a lot of students asking themselves that very question this time of year as we, and they, prepare for graduation and future plans. Though our students are at different points in their lives, the answer to that question may be surprisingly similar!

In the coming weeks and months, school staff will be meeting with many students and parents to discuss the scheduling process, among other things, with returning students for the upcoming school year and their parents. Please be on the lookout for information regarding our ACP Night on Monday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, from 6:00-8:00pm that will coincide with future course scheduling and many other topics. One common theme that we stress to all students is the importance of being involved.

Involved in what? Anything and everything that you can! Whether our graduates are planning to go onto a university or college, join the workforce, or something else, being involved in school and community activities has life-long benefits.

High school is so much more than just academics and athletics. Students can choose to be involved in many school teams, organizations, or groups but they can also be involved with community-based organizations such as 4-H, church, volunteerism, and countless other things. Whether planning to apply for post-secondary schooling, a job, or something else, being able to show others a willingness to be involved in things, not only gives the student a chance to develop relationships with others, enhance leadership skills, and add things to a resume, but it shows college entrance boards and future employers that you have the "soft skills", personal drive, and dedication to self and others, that they need to take notice of you!

With all that being said, every situation and student are different. Some cannot be involved in various activities for a lot of different reasons, but I would encourage all our students to do what they can to enjoy their time here at school in every way possible, be that through athletics, FFA, forensics, music, VICA, Spanish Club, Student Council, Quiz Bowl, or something else! If you ever have any questions about how to become involved or want to know more about how these things can impact everything from college admissions, scholarships, or future employment, please contact me or the guidance office and we would be happy to have that conversation with you!

Go Warriors!

Mr. Anderson

High School Principal

## Students Learn Life-Saving Lessons

The health classes in high school are practicing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and learning how to operate the automated external defibrillator (AED) machines. Mrs. Linda Ollech from Marshfield Medical Center came in to teach the class the proper way to administer CPR and how to use the AED's. She also talked to the students about shaken baby syndrome and about the safe haven laws that we have.





## Middle School Principal's Message



Welcome to 2023! I hope that this finds you excited and optimistic for another year. I don't know where the time goes, but as I type this, we are wrapping up the tail end of the first semester of the 2022-23 school year. The first half of this school year was eventful in the middle school with field trips, guest speakers, celebrations, service projects, kindness activities, club activities, and sports; all in addition to continuous academic and social-emotional growth through daily coursework.

The middle school has a character trait of the month where students are recognized by staff and peers for demonstrating the monthly character trait. The submitted character cards are hung up on our "Character Board" in the middle school hallway. At the end of the month, the students get to keep the character card that was filled out for them along with a small token of appreciation. Some of the monthly character traits have been reliability, bravery, and mindfulness.

As part of our PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions & Support) program, students are able to earn "Warrior Pride Tickets" for demonstrating safe, responsible, or respectful behavior. The homerooms have a collection container for students to deposit their tickets. Each homeroom works towards a common reward goal that they collectively set. This year we have continued implementing Restorative Circles during eighth-hour non-movement Mondays. Restorative Circles are valuable tools for developing relationships and building classroom communities by giving each participant in the circle an equal opportunity to speak and be heard. In addition, eighth-hour non-movement Mondays also include grade check emails home, social-emotional learning mini-lessons, and all student celebrations. Furthermore, as part of our PBIS program, we have a Tier 2 Intervention called Check-in/Check-out implemented for students who have reached a determined behavioral threshold. Students in this program check in and out with their staff greeter each day along with receiving increased feedback throughout the day from their teachers to increase positive interactions and relationships at school and therefore, improve behavior.

In case there is a need for any future remote learning days, middle school students took home a blue remote learning day folder to keep home in a safe place in case we have any future inclement weather days or any other unforeseen circumstances where school would not meet in person. Inside the folder, there are activities and/or practice for ELA, math, social studies, and science. There is enough work in the folder for multiple remote learning days. Therefore, for each remote learning day, students choose one activity/worksheet of their choice from each of the subject areas (ELA, math, social studies, and science) to complete. The students return only the page they completed from each to their teacher. The folder and the undone sheets are to be kept at home in case we have any other remote learning days. Middle School students do not need to access technology on these remote learning days.

With the start of second semester, as with the start of the new year, we reflect back on what went well in the past year and set goals and hopes on what we would like to improve. During the second semester, we have much to look forward to. A couple of items are Middle School Week and ACP Night. Middle School Week will be January 30th-February 3rd. Activities for Middle School Week are being organized by the Middle School Student Council. Activities include dress-up days, door decorating contest, penny war, Bruce Mound Field Trip, and wrapping up the week with a middle school dance.

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## Middle School Social Emotional Learning



Students at Neillsville Middle School have been participating in guidance presentations aimed at improving strategies to deal with some of the challenges of middle school such as self-concept and self-image. Students are also focusing on academic and career planning activities to prepare them as they look forward to the next school year.

Eighth grade students will be focusing on scheduling and other ACP activities. On January 12th, the 8th graders were able to experience a day in the high school during "Mix it Up Day." This day was designed to allow 8th graders to meet all of the high school teachers and visit each classroom. The next step will be for the 8th graders to build academic plans for high school. At the end of January, Mrs. Backaus will join the eighth grade guidance lessons, along with the Teen Leadership Council, to help the students as they transition into high school. The students will be given the opportunity to evaluate different pathways through high school and will be guided through the process of choosing classes and registration.

Sixth and seventh grade students have continued to work through the positive action lessons as well as touch on their own academic and career planning through the Xello program. This program gives students a window into what their interests may be and possible career paths for their future. Ask your child about it!

The NMS FOR Club (Friends of Rachel) participated in a mitten and sock drive during the month of December. Students collected several hundred items that were donated to the Neillsville Food Pantry. Our donations were generously matched by a local business. The club also created Christmas cards and ornaments that were donated to the local assisted living communities.

Jill Neville  
Interventionist & Coach

## Middle School Principal *continued . . .*

On January 30th from 6-8 pm, students currently in grades eight through eleven, along with their parent(s)/guardian(s) are invited to ACP (Academic and Career Planning) Night. On ACP Night our current eighth-graders will join the high school. This opportunity will allow them to meet their academic and career advisors and get a flavor of what to expect in high school along with an assortment of presentations for the parents to attend. In addition to the high school portion of ACP Night, there will be a variety of informational tables set up in the high school hallways for students and parents/guardians to visit. Watch for a mailing with more information on those evening activities.

I am enjoying watching each of the middle school students grow and change over the course of the school year and look forward to the academic, physical, and social-emotional growth the second semester will bring.

Have a wonderful day,  
Kory Poeschel  
Middle School Principal



# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

# HOW TO COMBAT ONLINE BULLYING



Defined as "ongoing hurtful behaviour towards someone online", cyber-bullying makes its victims feel upset, uncomfortable and unsafe. In the digital world, it has numerous forms – such as hurtful comments on a person's posts or profile; deliberately leaving them out of group chats; sharing embarrassing images or videos of someone; or spreading gossip about them. Cyber-bullying can severely impact a young person's mental health ... so, in support of Anti-Bullying Week, we've provided a list of tips to help trusted adults know what to look for and how to respond to it.



## 1. GET CONNECTED

Playing online games together with your child or connecting with them on social media (providing they're old enough) is not only fun but also an excellent way of establishing some common ground to discuss things you've both seen or done online – as well as keeping an eye on who your child is communicating with in the digital world.

## 2. KEEP TALKING

Regular chats with young people about their online lives are good practice in general, but they can also be an excellent refresher to help prevent cyber-bullying situations. Topics you might want to revisit include why it's important to only connect online with people we know and trust, and why passwords should always remain secret (even from our best friends).

## 3. STAY VIGILANT

Observe your child while they're using technology and just after they've used it. Are they acting normally, or out of character? Possible signs of a problem may include seeming quiet or withdrawn, jumpy or anxious, angry or repeatedly checking their phone. When you feel it's the right time, you may want to check in with them to see if everything is OK.

## 4. MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE

If an online bullying incident does occur, it may take a while before your child is ready to open up about what happened. Just gently remind them that they can always come to you with any problems – and that they won't be in trouble. You might also suggest a trusted family member they could turn to, in case they feel too embarrassed to tell you directly.

## 5. BE PREPARED TO LISTEN

When conversations about online bullying do take place, they're likely to be difficult, emotional and upsetting for both you and your child. Actively listen to your child while they're bringing you up to speed, and try not to show any judgement or criticism – even if they haven't dealt with the situation in exactly the way you would have hoped.



## 6. EMPOWER YOUR CHILD

Depending on their age, your child might not want a parent "fighting their battles for them". In that case, talk through their options with them (blocking the perpetrator, deleting the app and so on). By allowing your child to choose the path they take, you're putting them in control but are also demonstrating that you're there to support them along the way.

## 7. REPORT BULLIES ONLINE

Cyber-bullying often takes place through a particular app, social media platform or online game. If this is happening to your child, encourage them to report the offender to the app or game in question – ideally with screenshots to support their complaint. Most games and apps have reporting tools specifically to stamp out abusive behaviour and protect users.

## 8. ENCOURAGE EMPATHY

Protecting themselves online is the priority, of course, but young people should also feel empowered to help if they witness other people falling victim to cyberbullying. Even if they don't feel confident enough to call someone out on their abusive behaviour online, they can still confidentially report that person to the app or game where the bullying occurred.

## 9. SEEK EXPERT ADVICE

Victims of online bullying frequently experience feelings of isolation and anxiety, a loss of self-esteem and potentially even thoughts of self-harm or suicide. If you think that an incident of cyber-bullying has affected your child's mental wellbeing, then seek psychological support for them. There are some useful contact details in the central panel below.

## 10. INVOLVE THE AUTHORITIES

If the nature of any online bullying makes you suspect that your child is genuinely in imminent physical danger – or if there are any signs whatsoever of explicit images being shared as part of the bullying – then you should gather any relevant screenshots as evidence and report the incidents to your local police force.

## FURTHER SUPPORT AND ADVICE

If you or your child need additional help with an online bullying issue, here are some specialist organisations that you could reach out to.

**Childline:** talk to a trained counsellor on 0800 1111 or online at [www.childline.org.uk/get-support/](http://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/)

**National Bullying Helpline:** counsellors are available on 0845 225 5787 or by visiting [www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/cyberbullying.html](http://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/cyberbullying.html)

**The NSPCC:** the children's charity has a guide to the signs of bullying at [www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying/) and can be reached on 0808 800 5000

## Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.





## Elementary Principal's Message



Welcome to the year 2023! With the new semester comes exciting events and news.

### School Arrival Times

I want to remind families that students can enter the school building at 7:45 a.m. The doors are not open for children to enter before this time. The school abides by this for security reasons. Therefore, please be sure that children are not dropped off too early for school and waiting to get into the building. We just want to make sure the students stay safe and warm.

### Playground

Recess is a time to socialize and have fun. We stress respectful speaking to recess teachers and other students. In addition, we continue to remind students to keep their hands and feet to themselves.

In the winter, the snow hill can be a lot of fun for the students. However, it does get slippery depending on the weather. Therefore, we have rules specifically for the hill.

The elementary school also has a temperature rule. When the temperature is below 50 degrees Fahrenheit, students need winter attire like coats, hats, mittens and proper footwear. It would also be helpful to have a plastic bag in the backpacks for wet clothing or shoes.

### Lost and Found

The elementary school has two areas for lost and found items. They are by the elementary/middle school and board of education offices. There are sweatshirts, coats, t-shirts, hats, mittens, etc. in the lost and found areas. If your son or daughter is missing any items, please ask them to look in the lost and found right away. These areas are becoming very full.

### Happenings

The elementary school will be planning a Family Fun Night. Please watch for the dates and details. We will get those out to families as soon as we know more information.

Parent teacher conferences will be Thursday, February 23rd (4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.) and Friday, February 24th (8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.). There is no school on Friday, February 24th for the students. Parent teacher conference slips will be mailed home with grade reports on Friday, January 27th. We would like these slips returned to the school by Monday, February 6th. The school will send home a confirmation of conference times with students on Thursday, February 16th.

The Forward Exam will be administered to students in grades 3rd - 5th in April. The Forward Exam is the "state test" that is usually given in the spring of the year. The grade level teachers will inform parents of dates and times as the event gets closer.

Summer School is just around the corner! It will be held from June 5th to June 30th, Monday through Friday. We will send home details very soon. Registration forms will likely be due in April.

### Reading

As many of you know, our elementary school adopted three new reading programs this school year.

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## Third Graders Improve Their Reading Strategies

In reading, we continue to work at improving our reading skills and strategies as well as independent reading levels. Students need to be able to read and comprehend 98% of the words and concepts within a text to be a successful reader. **More than ever, it is important that your child spend at least 20 minutes reading every day.** We have written step-by-step directions in writing. We have some pretty creative third graders!



In math, third graders are gaining a better understanding of how to use math strategies every day. They have also been working very hard learning their multiplication and division facts. They have quickly discovered that it is faster to multiply than to add again and again! **Please continue to support your child at home by practicing the multiplication and division facts every day for at least 10 minutes.**

This spring students will be administered the state assessment called the Wisconsin Forward Exam. This is a multiple day test. Third graders will be preparing for this more in the coming weeks. You should be seeing more information regarding specific testing dates and times soon.

Thank you for your continued support and encouragement. It really makes a difference when your child knows we are all in this together! Keep up the good work!

## Elementary School Principal continued . . . . .

These programs follow the science of reading research. Four-year-old kindergarten has the program *Happily Ever After*; five-year-old kindergarten through second grade have the program *SuperKids*, and third through fifth grade have the program *Wonders 2023*. These programs are specifically designed and research based.

The science of reading research has been ongoing for five decades. It explains how reading and writing develop. The research also explains why **explicit** reading instruction is so important. Phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension are the five main components of the science of reading. I want to stress to families that it is so important to read to and with your children. It not only benefits learning to read, but it is wonderful for speech and language development. If families are in need of books to read with their children, please contact the elementary office. We are happy to assist.

### In Closing

Thank you for supporting our elementary school. School is a very important part of a community. Neillsville Elementary School is very fortunate to have such a supportive and caring community. In addition, I'm extremely proud of our teachers and students for all of the hard work they do, and the willingness to adjust this school year. I'm looking forward to spring!

Marcy Kunze  
Elementary School Principal



## High School Guidance



Congratulations on a positive first semester; please keep the following points of information in mind to plan for a successful spring.

### **SENIORS:**

Please continue to reference your **YELLOW senior year checklist** sheet to make sure you are on track. Please continue work on **scholarships**; remember, most local scholarships are due **Friday, March 10<sup>th</sup>**, but a few are due earlier or later. For more information, please continue to routinely check your Gmail account for updates and additional scholarship opportunities. All scholarships and applications (or instructions on how to obtain applications) are located on the Neillsville High School scholarship page. This webpage is updated routinely as additional scholarships become available. **8<sup>th</sup> Hour Scholarship Help Sessions started on 1/12 and will continue to run each week (THURSDAYS) through March 9<sup>th</sup>. Please consider coming if you would like assistance with your scholarships and a designated place/time to work.** Also, please remember to complete your **FAFSA** (*financial aid application*) before the priority date for your college; most priority dates are coming up soon, some have already passed. Please feel free to contact Mrs. Backaus if you need help or assistance with either of these two items.

**\*\*March 7, 2023 NOTIFICATION:** On Junior ACT Day (Tuesday, March 7, 2023) seniors will get to choose from the following options:

- Come to school during the AM to receive help (proofread, double checked, etc.) on local scholarships in the library. Students will be allowed to make copies if needed as well during this time. This option is HIGHLY ENCOURAGED for all students who plan to turn in local scholarships on March 10, 2023.

- Schedule college visits, look for job opportunities, post-high school planning, etc. *on your own.*
- Attend school; all seniors choosing this option will be given a quiet day of study in the library.

A permission slip will be required for **all seniors** indicating which option you will choose on March 7. Permission slips will be given out the week of February 13<sup>th</sup> and need to be returned by February 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Save the Date: Scholarship Awards Day, Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023\***

*\*Note this is a DATE CORRECTION from what was printed on the 22-23 district calendar and shared earlier this fall with seniors in a graduation letter from Mr. Anderson.*

### **JUNIORS:**

Spring testing is right around the corner! Please remember these important dates and do your best to come to school well rested and prepared to do your best on these exams.

**ACT:** Test Date: **Tuesday, March 7, 2023: 10:00-3:20** at Neillsville High School.

We are running a "late-start" time for the ACT test to give students more rest prior to taking it. *Busses will run on the normal schedule only*; students choosing to come in late will need to provide their own transportation. Juniors coming to school at the regular time will be given study time prior to the test. Permission slips, with all the details, will be given out the week of Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> and need to be returned by February 24<sup>th</sup>. **A special lunch will be provided for all juniors as well! : )**

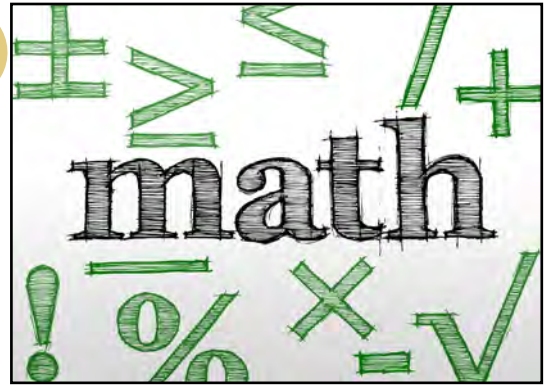
The ACT make up day will be two weeks following on March 21, 2023.

ACT Prep Sessions will be during 8<sup>th</sup> hour; dates and times TBD. Stay tuned!

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## Focusing on Math in the Fifth Grade

We are jumping into the new year in 5th grade! We have been learning about the skin, teeth, and eyes. In math, we are working hard at mastering long division! Soon we will begin working on division with decimals. Our students are very excited to celebrate the end of the semester with our movie and popcorn reward!



## High School Guidance *continued* . . .

Please remember, all juniors (unless taking a different assessment under an IEP) are *required* to take the ACT under Wisconsin's state assessment program *unless* opted out by written parent request. <https://dpi.wi.gov/assessment/faq>

### **SOPHOMORES:**

Great job on the Jan 12<sup>th</sup> ASVAB! I am looking forward to going through the Score Interpretation & Career Seminar with you soon. Remember, this is one more resource to help you explore and plan for future career options. Additionally, 30 (about 50% of your class) of you chose to have an *optional* individual sophomore planning conference over the past couple of months. Again, great job taking the initiative to plan for your junior year!

### **FRESHMEN & SOPHOMORES: March 7, 2023 Field Trips**

March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 is scheduled to be a fun day for you! While the juniors and seniors are hard at work, you will be on a field trip. Freshmen will be heading to Marshfield, WI and Wisconsin Rapids, WI to visit UWSP-Marshfield and Mid-State Technical College. Sophomores will be heading to Eau Claire, WI to visit Chippewa Valley Technical College and UW-Eau Claire. Permission slips, with specific details regarding lunch, will be given out the week of February 13<sup>th</sup> and need to be returned by February 24<sup>th</sup>.

### **23-24 SCHEDULING: All students in grades 8-11**

We are looking forward to our annual **ACP Night** to kick off the 23-24 scheduling process on **Monday, January 30, 2023, from 6:00-8:00 PM!** We will continue with the registration process throughout the month of February; students will enter their class requests the week of February 13-17. The schedule building process will take place in March. We will do our best to keep you updated as we get further into this process. Schedules for next year will be finalized later this spring. Please see Mrs. Backaus or your advisor with any questions you may have.

### **8<sup>th</sup> GRADERS:**

As we head into the spring semester, I want to encourage you to focus on the quick approaching transition into high school. Some self-reflective thoughts/questions to ask oneself might include: *Am I taking my 8<sup>th</sup> grade courses serious, so I am academically prepared for the challenge of high school work? Am I maturing in my words and actions toward my fellow classmates, so the Class of 2027 enters high school as a respectful and unified class? Am I pursuing other talents and interests, so I am a well-rounded person who has many potential career and/or post-secondary options in front of him/her?* If you answered yes to all or most of these questions, great, keep up the good work. If you answered no to all or most of them, please consider how you might change your thoughts, words, and actions so you can answer yes to more of them by the end of the year. The TLC students, Mrs. Neville and I look forward to finishing the last part of your 8<sup>th</sup> grade year together in a fun and positive way!

**As always please feel free to contact Julia Backaus, HS Counselor, if you have questions about any of the information provided at 715-743-8713 or [jbackaus@neillsvillek12.org](mailto:jbackaus@neillsvillek12.org)**



## Elementary Guidance



### Classroom Lessons

Our topics second quarter have been:

#### Preschool- Being My Best Self

Students in 4K finished the first guidance unit. Students explored how everyone has connected emotions, thoughts, and actions. They learned how to recognize their own and others' emotions, how situations influence their thoughts and emotions, how emotions, thoughts and actions work together, and how to regulate emotions. The students recently started learning about diversity and how to make sure everyone feels included.

#### 5K-3rd Grade- Valuing Each Other

In November, students wrapped up the valuing each other guidance unit. This unit explored recognizing and appreciating each other's emotions and perspectives and identifying strategies so that everyone feels welcomed and included. Students learned about diversity, how to be inclusive, and how to break stereotypes. To wrap up the unit, the students learned about empathy and how to support and encourage others in unfair situations.

#### 5K-3rd Grade- Mindfulness

December was packed full of mindfulness activities. During the mindfulness exercises, students paid attention to their bodies, minds, and feelings and how they react in the moment. At the end of the mindfulness exercise, the students identified things that bring them peace and joy.

#### 4th-5th Grade- Emotions, Thoughts & Actions

Fourth and fifth grade students have been focusing on the connections between emotions, thoughts, and actions. The students learned about the benefits of having helpful self-talk. They played a card game where they swapped unhelpful self-talk with optimistic, helpful self-talk statements. The students have also been practicing identifying the levels of their emotions. Students learned that when they feel an emotion strongly, they can use several strategies to regulate their emotions. Strategies include breathing exercises and releasing muscle tension. Students were able to practice different calming strategies in small groups and identify which strategies worked best for them.

#### Questions and Concerns

If you ever have any questions about the guidance program, please feel free to contact me. Also, if you are interested in getting your son or daughter in a small group or individual counseling with me please reach out.

Thank you,

Chelsea Opelt  
Elementary School Counselor  
[copelt@neillsvillek12.org](mailto:copelt@neillsvillek12.org)  
715-743-8745





# TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION  
**13+**

(certain features are restricted to over-18s only)

TikTok is a free social media platform that lets users create, share and watch short videos ranging anywhere from 15 seconds to 10 minutes in duration. The app gained notoriety for its viral dances, trends and celebrity cameos and can be a creative, fun platform for teens to enjoy. Now available in 75 languages, it has more than a billion active users worldwide (as of spring 2022) and is most popular with the under-16 age bracket. In fact, a 2022 Ofcom report found TikTok to be the most-used social media platform for posting content, particularly among young people aged 12 to 17.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While TikTok's "Following" feed only displays videos from users someone follows, "For You" is a stream of clips based on their previously watched content. Most videos on a child's "For You" feed will therefore be light-hearted and amusing, but it could potentially surface something unsuitable. TikTok's guidelines prohibit the sharing of illegal or inappropriate content, but the sheer volume of uploads mean they aren't manually monitored and vetted.

18

CENSORED

### DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

Due to TikTok's immense popularity, some young people have unfortunately been influenced by videos challenging them to perform harmful, criminal or even deadly acts. One extreme example was the 'blackout' trend, which encouraged users to hold their breath until they passed out from a lack of oxygen. It led to two families filing lawsuits against TikTok over the tragic deaths of their children.

### CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

With around 1.1 billion users globally, the potential for contact from strangers on TikTok is high – especially as accounts created by over-16s (or youngsters using a false date of birth) are set to public by default. This not only means that someone's profile is visible to everyone else on the app; it also lets their videos be suggested to others and enables anyone to comment on them or download them.

### IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase emojis in the app. These emojis are then sent as rewards (retaining their monetary value) to other users for videos they've created. Coin bundles range from £9.99 to an eye-watering £99; TikTok's policy is that they can't be bought by under-18s, but it's possible to bypass this with a fake birthdate.

### ADDICTIVE NATURE

Like all social networking platforms, TikTok can be addictive: figures show that young people are investing increasing amounts of time in it. In the UK, children with TikTok spend an average of 102 minutes per day on the app, versus 53 minutes on YouTube. This compulsive repeated use can interfere with their sleep patterns – leading to irritability – and distract them from other activities.

### TIKTOK NOW

Introduced in late 2022, the 'TikTok Now' feature lets users post a daily video or photo at the exact same time as their friends. Users receive a synchronised notification at a random time of day, giving them three minutes to take a video or real-time photo. This addition can not only be a distraction to young people but could lead to them inadvertently sharing private content such as their location.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account with their child's and control their settings remotely. Parents can then, for example, turn on Restricted Mode (reducing the chances of a child seeing inappropriate content); set screen time limits; and manage their child's ability to send messages (and to whom). Children can't alter these settings without parental approval.



### MAKE ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Although under-16s will have their TikTok account set to private by default, bypassing this setting is relatively easy. However, parents have the ability to manually set their child's account to private – meaning that their videos won't be visible to strangers and they won't be able to exchange messages with people who aren't on their friends list.



### LIMIT IN-APP SPENDING

If your child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can alter the settings to prevent them from making in-app purchases. We'd recommend that you enable this feature, as it's quite easy for a young person – without realising what they're doing – to spend a significant amount of real money buying TikTok coins so they can unlock more features of the app.



### DISCUSS THE DANGERS

If your child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's crucial to talk about the potential risks in this type of app. For example, ensure they understand not to share any identifying personal information – and that they realise they could be exposed to inappropriate content. Thinking critically about what they see on TikTok can help children become generally more social media savvy.



### READ THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that your child might be spending too much time on TikTok, or that they've been emotionally affected by something inappropriate or upsetting that they've seen, it's important to know how to spot the possible signs. Increased irritability and a lack of concentration are potential red flags, as are failing to complete homework or regularly not eating meals.



### Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid *The Inquirer*, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.



National Online Safety

#WakeUpWednesday



# Happily Ever After in 4K

This school year 4K has implemented a new curriculum called Happily Ever After. It is a reading readiness program designed to give children the foundation they need to be successful when they begin formal reading instruction. The Happily Ever After readiness curriculum focuses on the following four areas: oral language and vocabulary, listening skills, direction following, and fine motor skills. It builds a child's foundation of vocabulary and concepts by anchoring instruction in classic stories from children's literature. Children listen to a story in the first lesson of each unit and return to it again as they move through the rest of the unit. It also provides opportunities for children to cut, fold, color, glue, trace, and draw.



## First Graders Become Quite The Problem Solvers

The first graders have been busy reading many different genres. Our students have been introduced to nonfiction, realistic fiction, fantasy, plays and poetry as we explore our reading series: Superkids.

Our writing is included within our series. We practice using capital letters, punctuation, and correct grammar daily. Our stories have included fantasies, poems, opinions and personal narratives.

In math, the first graders are becoming quite the problem solvers. The students are solving word problems, almost daily, where they must solve story problems with unknown partners or unknown totals. We wrote our own gingerbread story problems for other first graders in our classrooms to solve. This was a culminating project for our cross-curricular gingerbread unit. We are also building on the children's understanding of tens and extra ones. Our activities will provide experience and understanding of multi-digit numbers that will help them master the concept of place value.

The cold has kept us in for many recesses in December. We had fun playing board games and doing other activities. We are hoping that more mild weather is to come so we can enjoy the snow hills and running around outside.

First graders took a visit to the aquaculture class in the high school to take fish tours. They learned many fun facts about fish as well as how to take care of a pet fish. At the end of January, PBIS arranged for us to get popcorn from Russell's to have along with a movie in our classroom. Thank you to Russell's for providing the popcorn.

In February, we will enjoy our Valentine's Day parties in our classrooms. We will also be using dental health experiments from a dental clinic to learn how to take better care of our teeth and practice good oral health habits. Our second round of parent-student-teacher conferences will also be in February.



## Spanish Students Learn Sweet Lesson

Señora Stokdyk's high school Spanish students dove into a tasty topic this quarter! They learned about the cacao tree, which is where products like cocoa and cocoa butter come from. They put their Spanish skills to good use, reading about and discussing topics like how cacao is grown and harvested. They helped cut open the fresh cacao pods and get the seeds and pulp inside prepared for fermentation. After fermentation, they roasted the beans, ground them into powder, and followed a recipe to turn it into chocolate. The unit was topped off with a chocolate tasting comparing six different chocolates. These ranged from a sweet and light milk chocolate to bitter, super dark chocolate. The final chocolate of the tasting was the one they made together as a class. We determined that making chocolate from the bean to the bar is not that hard... but making GOOD chocolate from the bean to the bar IS!

Curious to hear some of the Spanish they heard in this unit? Scan the QR code to watch one of the videos they watched!







## Sixth Graders Practice Mindfulness

Sixth grade scholars started the new calendar year with a meaningful shift to *mindfulness*. Not only is this the character trait of focus in Neillsville Middle School, but it is also at the heart of what students are learning and practicing in their core subjects of ELA, math, science & social studies. Returning back from Christmas break is often a difficult transition that students in all levels of education face—so the teachers here at N.M.S. have decided to be proactive and incorporate the featured character trait each day in many ways to help our sixth grade students be mindful of “being in the moment” to make the most of their school experience each day.

In social studies, our sixth graders watched a *CNN10* special that focused on the recent recovery of Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin, who is recovering from a scary on-the-field hit during a Monday Night NFL game—which helped them realize how quickly our lives can change in a moment. Mr. Matson then worked with his students to see how important our minds are to helping us realize positive change on a daily basis.

In math class, Mrs. Hare has been mindful to adjust her math curriculum to make learning more fun and hands-on for our 6th grade students. Sixth grade scholars started a unit in geometry on surface area. Together they created triangular and rectangular prism projects that were colored, measured, explored, cut out, and put together as 3-D models of actual problems they were solving in their math workbooks. This fun activity made learning math more fun.

In English language arts, Mrs. Luchterhand read the picture book, “The ABC’s of Mindfulness” and has been picking five concepts (letters) per week to focus on in the implementation of mindfulness activities that coincide with their weekly reading, writing, and grammar projects. The first five letters they focused on were: awareness, breathing, compassion, dream, and empathy—while friendship, gratitude, hope, inspiration, and joy are the *areas they are focusing on* this week.

Students in 6th grade created “Top 10 Lists of Blessings In Their Lives” and worked with great effort and energy to develop acrostic poems which centered on the numbers 2-0-2-3 brainstorming **two** of their  
*continued on the next page . . .*



## Sixth Graders *continued* . . .

favorite memories from 2022, something they wish to spend **zero** energy on so as to be more grateful/positive, **two** new goals they hope to achieve, and **three** people in their lives who can help them be the best Warriors they can be in 2023!!!

Students and staff are hoping that a conscientious focus on mindfulness will bring about many positive changes in our daily MS culture and lives. By living in the present moment, we are better able to train our brains to move past any trouble or turmoil (and not get “stuck” focusing on the past or worrying about the future) in order to be more appreciative, blessed, and centered. We hope to continue to employ our many new mindfulness techniques throughout the rest of the school year to better benefit our learning community. The students were so excited to share their new MS mantras in class and are currently creating quilt square projects to display out in the library to serve as delightful, daily reminders to be mindful. Stop by the sixth grade hallway soon to see the happiness & hopefulness we are all feeling and attempting to share with others here in 6th grade.



Sixth graders also attended a fun field trip to the Oxford Children's Theater in Eau Claire to view a play of the novel, “The Best Christmas Pageant Ever” which they recently read together in class. Now they are looking forward to celebrating “Middle School Week” in February, and participating in the end of the semester reward of going to Bruce Mound to hang out with friends while tubing, skiing and snowboarding. We have all been working really hard and love the idea of a fun field trip outdoors!

## Focusing on Phonics in the Second Grade

The second graders have been enjoying the new reading books about the Superkids. We have learned their names and some of their strengths and weaknesses. They are teaching us some life long lasting skills about getting along with others, working together to get jobs accomplished, and being a good sport about games. Some of the phonics skills that we have learned are the long and short vowels, different vowel teams, and even some silent letters. We are continuing to read decodables, a magazine called “Super”, and even some chapter books. Reading can be so much fun!!

Math class has been exciting! We just finished a unit on measuring. We studied both centimeters and inches. We even measured how tall everyone was in the class. We learned regrouping with addition along with money this quarter. We will soon be learning how to ungroup for subtraction.

December started off our Christmas Around the World unit in social studies. We learned about traditions and customs in several different countries. Did you know that some children in Europe don't get presents until January 6<sup>th</sup>?

The second graders are looking forward to the end of the semester reward of watching a movie and eating popcorn. We have learned a lot of new material so far this year, but we still have another semester to continue our learning.



# Choir Department News

These students participated in the 900+ member choir at the Dorian Vocal Festival. The festival was held January 8-9 at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. (L to R) Kaileigh Kubisiak, Victoria Ratsch, Ellie Walter, and Olivia Koprek joined talented singers from five different states, practicing for a day and a half, and then presenting a concert. They were also treated to performances by the college choirs and the Cedar Falls, IA High School Choirs. This is an unforgettable experience for our students! While the students were rehearsing, Ms Rueth had the opportunity to attend workshops for teachers, including one presented by composer Jacob Narverud. We have performed many of his songs! Ms. Rueth also performed for the students in a directors chorus!



## Drafting Position Papers in Middle School

Middle school has had a very busy 2nd quarter! Students in both 7th and 8th grade have recently started their swimming unit in physical education. Everyone knows this is every middle school student's favorite unit!

In math, 7th grade students have been working diligently on identifying and solving proportions, ratios, and rates. We have been discussing how to use this expertise in the kitchen when cooking or baking with a recipe. Students have also learned how to calculate rates, interest, markups, discounts, and other valuable life skills. Each student continues to be mesmerized by how quickly interest can build on both loans and savings accounts!

Through geography, 7th graders have started to explore Central America and the Caribbean. Ask your student to share his/her travel guide to learn more about these diverse cultures! In ELA, students shared the holiday spirit by writing fiction Christmas stories and sharing them with the elementary students.

8th grade students have been honing their algebraic skills. They are continuing to build on their knowledge of solving equations, graphing linear equations, and now solving systems of linear equations. Each of these skills builds upon the other, and the students are really rising up to the challenge!

In American History, 8th grade students are discussing the events that lead up to the American Revolution. Some key topics they are studying are the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, and No Taxation without Representation. Students also created drawings to reflect the life of a colonist during the American Revolution. During ELA class, the 8th grade students have been focusing on argumentative writing. Each student was able to pick a topic of their choice, and using their knowledge and resources available to them, they will write a position paper on their topic. Some of the topics students chose are: animal testing, boys in girls' sports, year-round schooling, school dress codes, and pushing students too far in athletics.

8th grade scientists have just finished their meiosis and mitosis unit in cell division. They are currently working on the genetics unit and Punnett squares. Students are learning about Gregor Mendel and his pea plant crosses.





10TH GRADE  
ASVAB



MIX IT UP DAY  
2023



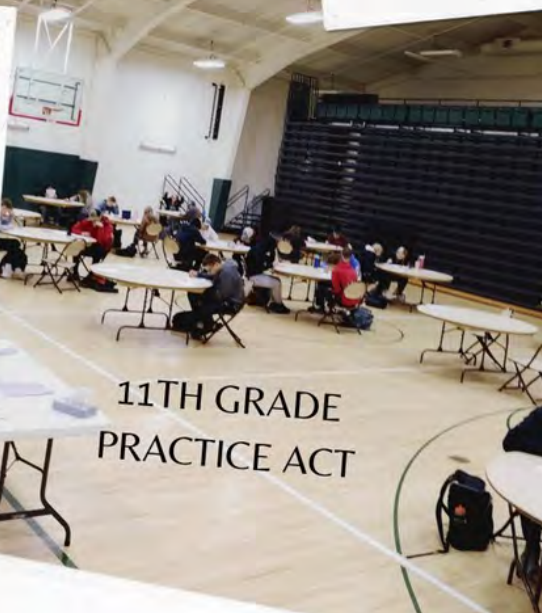
12TH GRADE  
HELPERS



8TH GRADE TO HS



9TH GRADE TO MS



11TH GRADE  
PRACTICE ACT