

Viola Rand and Alton Elementary Schools

May 9, 2021 Report for the RSU34 School Board

Parents really showed their appreciation of teachers and staff in a big way in both Alton and Bradley last week. The year we have spent performing our work in very different environments has been a demanding one. Staff in both schools were visibly touched by the outpouring of caring and support!

Native American Studies Workshops

On April 27 and May 11, former RSU34 elementary librarian, Lynn Mayer and 4th grade teacher Laurie Ouellette teamed up to bring information to AES and VRS staff with visitors from OTES and LMS as well. Lynn is well versed in excellent resources and suggestions for accessing up to date curricular material in Native American/Wabanaki studies. She advocates for tying this information into lessons throughout the year as well as providing structure for the development of units of study. Laurie is passionate about social studies instruction and this topic in particular. She has developed detailed inclusive units of instruction. Lynn presented on this subject to AES/VRS teachers quite a few years ago, and before she got too far into retirement, I wanted to have her return so newer staff could receive an introduction and veteran staff would have a chance to review this important content with her. With our proximity to the Penobscot Nation, it is something about which we need to be especially well informed. Michelle Reesman has done a fabulous job making all of the information Lynn shared readily available on the RSU34 website. It is worth a look! Michelle also gathered library materials for staff in Bradley and Alton to use in preparing for day two of the training. Teachers found the hour long training on day one an excellent investment of time!

Summer School

Jenn Vafiades has been hired as the director for the first summer school program for Alton and Viola Rand Schools' students. We have had high numbers of registrations for our Monday –Friday July 6-August 6 program. Jon's brainstorm "Earn to Learn" pilot is providing some excellent candidates for the summer camp positions. Weeks 2 and 3 have the highest numbers and will require an extra section of students those weeks. The 'Water and Ice' and 'Olympics' themed weeks are top picks! We are now starting to work on bussing schedules, supply orders and lining up weekly field trips. Kimm Kenniston has staffed the program with ESY (Extended School Year) staff in Alton so that students with summer learning in their IEP will be able to attend at AES with their school year peers this year. We are getting more excited by the week as we hammer out details and come up with new fun ideas to engage students!

Events

May 10

PRIDE Meeting 6:00 Zoom

May 11

Second of 2 Native American Studies workshops provided by Lynn Mayer and Laurie Ouellette

May 26

RSU34 Annual Budget meeting

May 24-28

Virtual World of Work Week

May 28

VRS 2nd grade trip to Hirundo

June 2

AES Kindergarten screening

June 4

VRS Kindergarten Screening

June 10

AES 5th grade Step Up Day to LMS

June 14

AES AM Field Day and Cookout

VRS Awards Assemblies

June 15

AES Awards Assemblies

VRS Field Day and Cookout

Special CRF Projects in April

During the week of break, each school had a good sized project completed. In Alton, two of the remaining classrooms with carpeting were replaced with tile floors. Tile is much easier to keep clean and sanitized than the pre-existing carpet. With the fresh coats of wax, those classroom floors were sparkling when students returned. Covid adjustments caused a number of tables to be put into use in one of those classrooms. The tables are past their prime and have become wobbly. Replacement desks and chairs will be delivered this week.

At the Viola Rand School, special tiles were installed on the ceiling of the multi-purpose room, with some on the walls as well. These tiles are designed to improve acoustics and the result has been quite remarkable. When you enter the room now, you can actually feel the difference in the air. The change in the ambient noise is amazing! There is no longer an echo and it is a cozier feeling in this room that is being used as a first grade classroom this year.

Virtual World of Work Week

The last week in May is the one that teachers will be selecting videos or virtual meetings with volunteers sharing information about their profession. There are additionally another one or two in person presentations. One will be with Maine Guide Dan Pelletier, who is a parent in Alton. School counselors Vicki Wilcox and Trysha Lunn together with Jenn Goodwin have worked to accumulate short videos made by community members that share information about a number of careers and types of employment options. It is a different approach than the big event that had been held at Old Town Elementary for several years prior to the pandemic.

Challenger Learning Center Programs

Second through fifth grade students in both schools have participated in rocket building or a Mars Exploration (5th grade) that was provided at no cost to the school by a grant through the Challenger Center. Their staff met with classes virtually and took them step by step through the activities. Materials were sent to the schools ahead of time and students enjoyed the lessons. Those rockets they each made really soared!