



# THE OAKUM

The Olivet Community Schools Newsletter  
255 First Street, Olivet, MI 49076  
www.olivetschools.org

June 2021



# FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Richard M. Ames, Interim Superintendent

## The Year That Was...or Wasn't

Your point of view determines how you view the 2020-21 school year. Regardless of your point of view, it was unprecedented in many ways, if not in every sense of the word.

Masks, virtual classroom options, hybrid schedules, virtual days, quarantines, on-again, off-again and postponement of sports seasons, social distancing, antigen testing, cracked fingers from hand sanitizer, limited access to school buildings to the general public and on-and-on became a part of our daily experience. How many of those things could we have possibly imagined two years ago?

We've ridden the roller coaster whether it be state mandated or local decision making to protect students and staff while attempting to salvage many curricular and co-curricular experiences for our kids.

In many cases, the pandemic changed home and school routines and protocols. Being creatures of habit, we had to prioritize and find new ways to accomplish objectives which were unfamiliar and less desirable than what we knew as customary and convenient.

Even after dealing with the pandemic as a private citizen, re-joining the District in mid-November was a shocker. The mandated processes and procedures of the state health department and MIOSHA; weekly updates from two health departments and the like occupied a great deal of time to get it right for Olivet.

To be certain, along the way, students lost out on 'normal' opportunities including full access to school resources for teaching and learning. Our standardized testing confirms it. We were able to recover some of the lost instruction time from mid-March 2020 through the end of the previous school year but clearly not all of it. It's been a challenge to authenticate and duplicate instructional practices to expose students to the full breadth of our academic program.

Some students have thrived, distinguishing themselves in a more virtual world. But most have missed not only cognitive opportunities but affective experiences including but not limited to social-emotional interactions which are a critical component to a comprehensive K-12 education.

Enough can't be said for our graduating seniors for the past two school years. If any group had a 'beef' with the modifications to normal programming, it was the classes of 2020 and 2021. Without question, there were disappointments along the way. To their credit, they re-

mained patient and rolled with the punches, demonstrating maturity beyond their years.

And special thanks to their parents as well. There had to be a lot of counseling along the way in addition to finding alternatives to special events and experiences.

As challenging and in some cases disappointing as the past school year was, there were satisfying and rewarding outcomes for students. As a school community, we stuck together and made as much out of this school year as possible. For that, count me as grateful to every member of the school family and to you for your patience as we worked through a myriad of issues beyond our control.

Like most Districts, we have a summer school program planned for 2021. The goal is to begin closing the gap. To be sure, that gap will not be eliminated in one summer school cycle. Planning and work is underway to continue intervention strategies into the 2021-22 school year and perhaps beyond at all grade levels. Work will be needed for a while to fully compensate for the past 15 months.

Beyond this summer, we are looking forward to a new school year! The task at hand is to restore customs and traditional approaches, blending in what we learned since March of 2020 with operations and instruction.

As such, OCS anticipates K-12 face-to-face instruction, five days a week beginning in August. In addition, we are hopeful the general health of the state, region and community will make face masks optional rather than required.

No one has a crystal ball to predict the future but the signs are favorable for a school year that looks much more like what we've known and appreciated. Hmm... maybe we've all been guilty of taking our rights and privileges for granted. If there's any positive takeaway from the past 15 months, that's got to be it—be thankful for what we have and make the most of it.

Thank you for your trust and support. Olivet is a special place and it's been my honor and privilege to have been a part of it—not just once, but twice, having served for six months back in 2016 in addition to a good portion of this year.

Please have a safe and rewarding summer vacation with your family. You've earned it!

Richard M. Ames  
Interim Superintendent

# CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2021!



The Class of 2021 “figured it out!!” On Sunday, June 6th, we celebrated the Class of 2021 during a full graduation ceremony. The class of 2021 has had tremendous success, and has left a positive mark in many ways. Whether it be in the classroom, the arts, FFA, or athletics, the Class of 2021 has played an instrumental role in our success over the last four years. The Class of 2021 has handled adversity with class and character as they worked through their challenges. This year our goal was to not just survive, but to thrive, and the Class of 2021 modeled how to thrive while facing adversity. All of us at Olivet Community Schools are very proud of this class for their leadership, character and for the positive impact they have had on our school.



Congratulations Class of 2021! Go out and continue to thrive and make a positive difference.



# FERN PERSONS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

4425 W Butterfield Highway \* Olivet MI 49076 \* 269-749-4611

Brock Peters, Principal



## A Year of Perseverance!

I realize that I am stating the obvious to say, “This has been a year unlike any other.” However, in the midst of that statement, there are SO many things that I am proud of! Please allow me to brag about some of the things that we have accomplished during the 2020-21 school year.

- FPE has been face to face for students who chose to be for all but two days of the school year! If you would have asked me if that was possible in August, I would have laughed.
- FPE virtual teachers have provided an excellent learning experience for our virtual students. To say this pushed us out of our comfort zone would be an understatement. However, I am so proud of how hard our virtual/blended teachers worked to accomplish this.
- Our face to face teachers handled kids being in quarantine in the same way. Packets were made in some cases. In other cases, kids were in live Google Meets in the classroom.
- To be a little redundant, I am so proud of the efforts of our teachers under difficult circumstances!
- Our support staff - custodians, office staff, interventionists, 1:1 aides - have all gone above and beyond what they signed up for this year.
- Our families and kids have been so flexible! We have dealt with masks, quarantine, technology issues, teachers being out, etc. and have persevered through it all! I can't thank you enough!



Because of the teamwork of so many, we have been able to make it through a difficult year. As things wound down, we even got to have some normal things towards the end of the year. I would like to highlight a few:

- OHS FFA students came over and did Mother's Day flowers with FPE students.
- FPE did a cereal drive and were able to collect 1,500 boxes for the local food bank. The collection ended with a domino of cereal boxes throughout the hallways and gym at FPE.
- FPE students were still able to do our Fall and Spring run-a-thons and were able to raise money for our school.
- Kindergarten and 1st graders were both able to take their end of year field trips to Binder Park Zoo and Potter Park Zoo respectively.



While this year wasn't what any of us anticipated last March, I am very proud of how our school and community came together to do our best for our kids. AND I am looking forward to a much more “normal” 2021-22 school year!

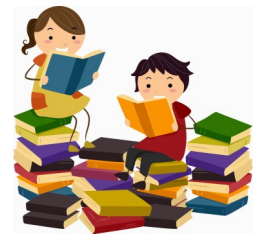
Go Eagles!

# Olivet Elementary Students Love to Read!

Kim Lehman, Director of Curriculum



Even though this school year brought its unique challenges, K-5 students at FPE and OMS were able to celebrate March is Reading Month with many engaging activities. Both FPE and OMS 4th and 5th grade students collaborated to read more than **3,888 books**!! Throughout the month, students participated in days like “Black Out Day”, where students turned off screens and read, instead, and students sported their favorite slippers while they read, for “Slip into a Good Book Day”. All classrooms also participated in Mystery Book Mondays. Each classroom was able to guess clues from a mystery book to earn for their classroom libraries. Students earned prizes throughout the month for all of their hard work, but the best prize of all came at the end of the month,



when OCS Art teacher, Casey Eash, produced an original video and song, *We Love to Read*, promoting all of the reading and activities that students participated in all month long. Readers loved seeing themselves and their classmates showcased in Mr. Eash’s creative endeavor, that they can enjoy over and over!

And while the pandemic postponed our annual author’s visit and Family Literacy Night, students were still

able to meet a children’s book author virtually from the comfort of their own classrooms and homes. On March 19th, all elementary students were able to meet Deborah Diesen, author of the popular *Pout Pout Fish* series and her newest book, *Equity’s Call*. Ms. Diesen read her stories aloud and was able to interact with all of our elementary teachers and students, who were able to share her excitement and enthusiasm for books and writing!



March is Reading Month video by Mr. Eash

Finally, 4th and 5th grade classrooms continued

on with their traditional 6th annual Battle of the Books competitions. Students read preselected titles at each grade level and then competed virtually to answer questions, authors and titles in round one, and then in cohorts for the final round during the day. Our 4th grade first place winner was Mr. Weaver’s room and 5th grade first place winner was Mrs. Fusciardi’s home room. Congratulations to everyone that made March is Reading month a success!



Mrs. Fusciardi’s 5th grade Battle of the Books winners:  
Claire Ellis, Reegan Lehman, Jocelyn Molhundra



Mr. Weaver’s 4th grade Battle of the Books winners:  
Lilly Britton, Kendall Peters, Amneet Kaur

# OLIVET MIDDLE SCHOOL

255 First Street \* Olivet MI 49076 \* 269-749-9953

Terry Sedlar, Principal, 4th & 5th Grade



## 4th & 5th Grade Year End Activities!

### 3rd Grade Crossover Event

The transition from 3rd grade at FPE to the 4th/5th Hallway at OMS has begun! Mr. Sedlar was able to interact with 3rd grade students in the lunchroom, on the playground and in the individual classrooms as part of the 3rd grade transition to the 4th/5th Hallway. Mr. Sedlar is able to field the many questions and thoughts that 3rd grade students had about

the transition. The 3rd grade students came over to the 4th/5th Hallway to have lunch in the Cafe and take a tour of the Specials classrooms as well as the 4th grade classrooms where they met each of the teachers. As a culminating event, 3rd grade parents and students attended a Meet-n-Greet with Mr. Sedlar in the OCS Auditorium where students led the

conversation by telling the adults the information they have learned about the 4th/5th Hallway. The transition process from FPE to the 4th/5th Hallway can be stressful

for students and parents alike. However, the 3rd Grade Crossover has eliminated a large amount of the wonders and fears that previously existed.

### Track & Field Day

Students from the 4th and 5th Grade Hallway at OMS experienced a little bit of "normalcy" with the annual grade-level Track and Field Meet organized by Mrs. Misty Fitzpatrick! Students were able to participate in field events such as long jump, softball and Frisbee throw. Mrs. Fitzpatrick, along with help from members of the OMS and OHS Track and Field teams, organized individual running and team relay events as well! The 4th and 5th grade students had a great time and showed great sportsmanship while competing!



## Fourth Grade Students Put Their Knowledge & Skills to Work by Dissecting Owl Pellets

*Submitted by Marie Toburen*

During the last week of school, fourth grade students were each given the opportunity to dissect their own barn owl pellet. This activity allows us to integrate ELA and Science due to students having just read the book Poppy by Avi, which contains a memorable scene around the Great Horned Owl character producing a pellet, which contains an important clue to the plot line of the story! Prior to dissecting the pellet in science class, students learned about the external and internal structures of owls, especially those external structures that function to help it hunt its prey and the internal structures that function to produce the pellet. Next, students completed models that explained the steps involved with information processing that occurs in the brain of the owl after it receives signals from its sensory receptors, resulting in the final action of regurgitating the pellet. Lastly, after examining the contents of the pellet, each student was able to make a claim based on evidence about what exactly the owl had eaten from its food web. I'm so proud of all of our fourth grade scientists for making continued growth in their observation, thinking, and reasoning skills throughout the entire school year!

# OLIVET MIDDLE SCHOOL

255 First Street \* Olivet MI 49076 \* 269-749-9953

Jessica Yearling, Principal, 6th - 8th Grade



This past year of school closures, hybrid learning, pandemic protocols, and uncertainty has been one for the record books. We have all experienced events and practices we never would have imagined to be our daily reality. Our students, staff, and community have shown grit, resilience, flexibility, and tenacity throughout this difficult time, and I could not be more proud of our OMS Eagles.

One of the things I am most proud of are the continued opportunities for our students to participate in extracurricular activities while navigating within changing requirements and recommendations for health and safety. In addition to sports and fine arts, students also participated in Math Hoops, Robotics, STEM, industrial arts and FFA activities and competitions just to name a few. These opportunities provide space for students to build social skills and relationships with their peers while developing positive self-esteem, leadership skills, time management, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. The hands-on and experiential learning we continue to develop at OMS, paired with the drive for academic excellence, will provide students a strong foundation as they move forward and continue their academic, social, and emotional development.



Additionally, it was wonderful to celebrate the successes of our students' hard work and dedication throughout the school year. Many grade level and department awards and honors were handed out during the last week of school. It was impressive to see the large number of students recognized for their academic achievements and honors. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend these programs and help us recognize our students.

This year has come to an end much too fast for some and not fast enough for others. All of us at OMS are looking forward to getting back to chartered waters and precedent times as we start a new school year in the fall. Watch for the back to school newsletter in August. This letter will include a school calendar and plans for the OMS Open House. We anticipate having parents and students in the building to meet their teachers and find their classes. Student schedules will also be released on Skyward mid-August. Please ensure your email is up to date and you are receiving updates as we will send the vast majority of communications via Skyward and School Messenger. Have a safe and enjoyable summer, and I look forward to seeing everyone back in the building this fall!



# Olivet Girl Scouts Earn Bronze Award

By Jenny LaPaugh & Theresa Miller, Troop Leaders

The Bronze Award is the highest honor a Junior Girl Scout can achieve. This award is given for projects that make a difference in the community. The Junior Girl Scouts in Olivet Troop 30700 started brainstormed many different issues. After reviewing the issues, they agreed to take on a project that focused on supporting the physical and mental health of 4th — 8th graders at OMS.



The Girl Scouts identified a problem at recess - there was not enough playground equipment. On most days, they noticed it was a race for approximately 100-200 kids to claim the playground equipment; there weren't enough items for everyone. Those that didn't get the equipment each day would sit around and do nothing, while the kids that did get the equipment got to share with friends and enjoy recess. The Girl Scouts recognized the importance of having opportunities to play because kids need a break from mental tasks, and they need to be physically active.

So, the Girl Scouts worked together to solve the problem by getting more playground equipment for Olivet Middle School. They raised funds by selling Girl Scout Cookies, and they planned what equipment they would purchase. When COVID-19 caused school to close, they had to pause their entire project. During the worst of COVID, they couldn't even fundraise. The Girl Scouts had to rely on Google Meets to budget and plan. When they realized they wouldn't have the funds to purchase everything as planned, they adapted! The Girl Scouts learned about budgeting, comparing prices, letter writing, participating in online meetings, speaking and listening, and fundraising.

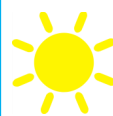
The girls were finally able to purchase basketballs,

gaga balls, jump ropes, hockey pucks, sidewalk chalk, soccer balls, and even a cart to move the equipment around. They proudly delivered the items to Misty Fitzpatrick (PE Teacher) and Cindy Herlein (Paraprofessional and Playground Aide). The students at Olivet Middle School have truly enjoyed the new playground equipment, and there are more items to use.



Their Bronze Award project will have a lasting positive impact on the students at Olivet Middle School! In the words of the Girl Scouts, "We learned a lot of different leadership skills! We learned how to take action to solve a problem. We learned that we can help others. And, we learned not to give up during a very challenging time."

Congratulations to the following members of Troop 30700 for earning the Girl Scouts Bronze Award: Lili-ana Almanza, Madelyn Cortright, Kendra Edick, Ava Garcia, Lyla LaPaugh, Katie Miller, and Anneliese Patterson.



## Free Summer Meals!

School may be out, but school meals are still in! All summer long we'll be distributing breakfast and lunch to anyone 18 years or younger in the community, continuing with all of the safety protocols our food service staff has followed throughout the year. Beginning June 9, pre-ordered meals may be picked up at the OMS Café (Door #32) on Wednesdays from 12:15 to 1:15 pm. Visit the district website or call 269-749-4281 for more information.

# Olivet FFA Receives Awards at State FFA Convention

By Emma Kelenske, Olivet FFA Reporter

On April 19-23, the Olivet FFA received awards at the State FFA Convention held virtually. Anthony Devito, Emilie Hebenstreit, and Blaine Cords received the Academic Excellence Award. Joe Zimmerlee, Braylon VanDeMoortel, Blaine Cords, Emilie Hebenstreit, Devin Fischer, and Anthony Devito received the Outstanding Junior Award. Cords was also honored as being part of the Top 3 Individuals out of 296 for the Outstand Junior Awards. Ty Mott and Savannah Mauk received the State FFA Degree (with Mott receiving a gold rating for the degree). Marcus Pennington, Michigan FFA Sentinel and Olivet FFA alumni, also gave an excellent retiring address.



Emily LaSalle received 3rd place in the State Job Interview Contest

Braylon VanDeMoortel placed 2<sup>nd</sup> gold in the Extemporaneous Public Speaking Contest. Emily LaSalle placed 3<sup>rd</sup> gold in Job Interview Contest. The Green-

hand Conduct of Meetings team consisting of: Addison Van De Moor-

tel, Emmalie Letts, Laken Piepkow, Peter Zimmerlee, Gracie Hebenstreit, Brennen Etson, Ryleigh Mauk, and Ethan Ryan received 9<sup>th</sup> with a silver award. The Parliamentary Procedure team consisting of: Prestin Sterley, Abigail Dotts, Kennedy Moore, Katherine Rugg, and Andrew Schadler placed 11<sup>th</sup> with a silver award.

The chapter was recognized with the following awards: a gold rating for the National Chapter Award and the superior chapter award. Olivet will be recognized for the award in October at the National Convention.

In addition Savannah Mauk was elected as the Michigan FFA Region IV State Vice President and Patricia Hebenstreit was elected as the Michigan FFA Region VI State Vice President. This is the first time Olivet has had 2 officers on the same team!



Ty Mott (l) & Savannah Mauk received the State FFA Degree



The Class of 2021 on the playground at FPE

# OLIVET HIGH SCHOOL

255 First Street \* Olivet MI 49076 \* 269-749-3671

Troy Waffle, Principal

What a year this has been!

This last year has presented many challenges for students, staff, and parents. Everyone deserves special recognition for the work done to make this school year a success. While it would be easy to compare this year to prior years and focus on things that were lost or different, we do not want to overshadow all the activities and experiences we were able to have. As I reflect on the past year and look at what we were able to do, I am even more proud of our students and staff for the effort they put into creating positive experiences. So as we wrap up the year, I would like to share highlights from the year:

**Band:** Ms. Edwards provided a marching band season beginning in the summer with the hope that students would be able to perform. Fortunately they got to perform at several games, put on a parent show that included senior recognition, and traveled to two playoff games. Additionally, Jazz Band provided a modified dinner show as a part of a fundraiser where they sold chicken dinners, and this spring they performed for the residents of Marshall Assisted Living Community. We had Individual students compete in a virtual solo and ensemble, and the concert band performed in a virtual festival, where they received a division one superior rating.

**Choir:** This last fall Mrs. Faulkner created a beautiful landscape outside the auditorium for an outdoor concert, and this spring we were able to host Cabaret over two nights so our choirs, groups, and individuals could perform. In the middle of the year, individual choir students competed in a virtual solo and ensemble, & the whole choir performed in a virtual festival.

**Theatre:** This winter our competitive theater team competed virtually in MIFA, at the district, regional and state levels. We are also able to host our spring musical in person. We are graduating a very talented group of actors this year, and it was awesome to see them perform during their senior year.

**Student Council:** Our student council was determined to provide activities for students. In the fall, we were able to have homecoming which included dress up days, classroom activities, and the king and queen crowning at the football game. With the basketball season delayed and condensed, we could not have winter homecoming. However, instead the student council provided a spring homecoming, which included even more class activities, and the crowning of the king and queen at an outdoor assembly.

**FFA:** Mr. Pennington and our FFA students did not seem to miss a beat. Although more things were completed virtually, this winter our students competed in district, regional and state competitions, and the state convention. Students competed in the poultry contest, and the Ag Skills competition this



spring. Some of our students raised animals that they will be able to show at the fair this summer. Our FFA students had a very successful year and many students received state and national recognition.

**NHS:** This fall we inducted 22 students into NHS during the NHS induction ceremony. Fortunately, we were able to have an in-person ceremony in the auditorium. NHS was also able to complete their adopt-a-family service project at Christmas, and they held two money drives to support the community.

**High Honors Ceremony:** This spring we were able to host an in-person high honors ceremony to recognize over 100 OHS students for their academic excellence.

**Parent Support:** We have always been fortunate to have great parent support. This year parents definitely rose to the occasion as they were understanding of the limitations, restrictions, and constant adjustments to schedules, and were willing to step in and help when needs arose. Parents helped provide transportation, created special experiences for our teams and groups, and supported kids however they could. For example, we could not host prom, but parents stepped in and provided this opportunity for our students. The extra efforts made by parents was simply amazing and greatly appreciated. *continued...*



**Athletics:** What a roller coaster. Although there were several restrictions, adjustments and modifications during the year, all OHS teams were able to compete, a success in its own right. Our teams and athletes didn't miss a beat in continuing our school traditions as we won four team championships, several individual championships, broke records, and had turn around seasons. We would not have been able to do this if it was not for the commitment and flexibility of our coaches, student athletes, and families.

**Academically:** This last year saw more radical changes in teaching and learning than is usually seen over a decade. It is very remarkable the transitions our teachers and students made to adapt to our needs. Teachers spent considerable time converting to virtual formats



and learning new tools to teach students in different ways. A lot was learned in the first semester, and teachers made adjustments going into the second semester that had a significant positive impact on learning. We had to springboard into using technology at a much more immersive level and using teaching practices to best utilize technology. Normally this type of transition would take 3-5 years to accomplish, however a benefit of this last year is that we have a tremendous foundation created in a short-term span. We are very excited as we look to use much



of what we have learned to provide better instruction and more opportunities to better meet student needs.

**Senior Awards and Scholarship Ceremony:** On May 26th we hosted the senior awards and scholarship ceremony where seniors were recognized for academic, athletic and personal excellence. In addition, students were recognized for scholarships they have been awarded, which at this time totals more than \$1,000,000.

**Graduation:** On Sunday June 6th, we held graduation. Being able to hold graduation without restrictions was certainly a blessing & a great send off for our graduates.

As you can see, in a year where nothing is guaranteed, we have been fortunate to have still provided many opportunities and experiences for our students. We have taken what has been given to us, faced the challenges before us, and have been able to find success in new ways. I would like to thank our teachers, staff, students, parents, and community for your efforts and commitment to OHS and our students. Together we were able to not just survive a crazy year, but we were able to find ways to thrive and be successful.



# Board of Education

**President**

Greg O'Dell

**Vice President**

Nick VanDeMoortel

**Treasurer**

Anthony Faulkner

**Secretary**

Mary Barkley

**Trustees**

Becky Frazier

Dean Peters

Sarah Scott

**Superintendent**

John Mertz

# OLIVET COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

255 First Street, Olivet, MI 49076

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Olivet, MI 49076  
Permit No. 15

**POSTAL PATRON**

## Board of Education Meetings

Olivet Board of Education meetings take place on the Second and Fourth Monday of each month in the Olivet Middle School library at 7:00 pm, unless otherwise indicated. Visit [www.olivetschools.org](http://www.olivetschools.org) for more information.



Important Contact Information	
<b>Olivet High School</b> Troy Waffle, Principal	<b>269-749-3671</b>
<b>Olivet Middle School</b> Jessica Yearling, 6-8 Principal Terry Sedlar, 4-5 Principal	<b>269-749-9953</b>
<b>Fern Persons Elementary</b> Brock Peters, Principal	<b>269-749-4611</b>
<b>Superintendent's Office</b> John Mertz, Superintendent	<b>269-749-9129</b>
Athletic Department	269-749-9631
Transportation Department	269-749-4541
Food Service Department	269-749-4281
Olivet Child Care	269-749-4548
Business Office	269-749-9129
Use of School Facilities	269-749-9631

21—22 Olivet School Calendar Key Dates	
Aug 25	First day for students
Sep 3-6	No School: Labor Day
Nov 24-26	No School: Thanksgiving Break
Dec 20-31	No School: Christmas Break
Mar 25-Apr 1	No School: Spring Break
April 15	No School: Good Friday
May 30	No School: Memorial Day
June 5	Graduation: Class of 2022
Visit <a href="http://www.olivetschools.org">www.olivetschools.org</a> for the complete School Calendar	