

PANTHER NEWS

STOCKBRIDGE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Winter 2025

HONORING 44 YEARS OF SERVICE TO STOCKBRIDGE SCHOOLS

Judy Heeney's Impact

On December 9, 2024, Judy Heeney was celebrated for an incredible 44 years of service to the Stockbridge Community School District. Before the final Board of Education meeting of the year, a special reception was held to honor her dedication. Family, friends, coworkers and community members gathered to show their appreciation for all Judy has done for the district. The event, complete with cake, punch and cookies, was a heartfelt tribute to her decades of hard work.

Judy first joined the School Board in 1980, and since then, she has been a strong voice for students, teachers and the Stockbridge community. Her time on the board wasn't just about attending meetings; it was about making sure students had access to the best education possible. Over the years, she's seen her children, grandchildren and now great-grandchildren grow and thrive in the very schools she helped improve.

During the evening, Judy was formally recognized for her achievements at the board meeting. Board President Carrie Graham presented her with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Michigan School Board Association. She also received a crystal apple as a symbol of her dedication, along with a card and gift card as tokens of gratitude.

Judy's leadership played a big role in shaping the district. She helped pass bond issues, oversaw construction projects and guided the district through changes that made it stronger. **No matter the challenge, Judy always kept her focus on what mattered most: the students. Her work helped create a learning environment that supports academic success, student growth and community involvement.**

Outside the school board, Judy also supported local causes and worked on her family's farm, showing her deep connection to the Stockbridge area. Her involvement with organizations like SAESA highlighted her commitment to the community beyond the schools.

As Judy finishes her final term at the end of 2024, her contributions to Stockbridge Community Schools and the community will be remembered for years to come. Her legacy is one of care, dedication and positive change.

Thank you, Judy, for 44 amazing years of service to Stockbridge schools.
Your work has made a lasting difference.

In This Issue

Message from the Superintendent	2
WAVE Partnership	3
Stockbridge's Commitment to a Positive and Supportive Environment.....	4
Focusing on Essential Skills for Success	5
Building Highlights	6-10
Panther Athletics	11
2024 Helen B. Mitteer Employee of the Year	14





BRIAN FRIDDLE

Superintendent
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To Our Stockbridge Families,

At Stockbridge Community Schools, our goal is to create a place where every student can thrive. **I challenge each student to set a personal goal for the semester.** Maybe it's earning a specific grade, learning a new skill, or simply showing up every day ready to do their best. New Year's resolutions can be a great way to start strong, and I encourage all students to aim high and work hard to reach their potential.

Our teachers are also working hard to help students succeed. This year, we're focusing on a few key areas:

- **Reading and Writing:** Improving skills in all grades with better support and teaching strategies.
- **Math:** Using new programs like SpringMath and involving families in learning.
- **Mental Health and Safety:** Strengthening programs like PBIS to keep students engaged and supported.
- **Assessments:** Fine-tuning how we measure progress to ensure everyone is on track.

Our theme for 2025 is **"We Want You Here"** because **your presence matters.** Being here every day, whether in class, clubs, sports, or other activities, makes a big difference. Learning isn't just about showing up; it's about being curious, asking questions, and trying new things.

We have so many opportunities for you to grow this year—academically, as leaders, and as individuals. By getting involved in clubs, sports, or special events, you can build skills and create memories that shape your future. The more you participate, the more you'll grow and feel connected to our school community.

Please remember: We Want You Here! We need your commitment, energy and passion to make this year amazing. Let's work together to make 2025 a year of growth and success for everyone. Wishing you a happy, healthy and successful New Year!

Sincerely,
Brian Friddle



Stockbridge Community Schools Partners with WAVE to Help Students Get to School

Stockbridge Community Schools is excited to team up with WAVE (Western Washtenaw Area Value Express) to help students attend school regularly. We believe in the saying, "9 Days or Less for Panther Success" and "We Want YOU Here!"



Being at school every day is important for learning, and we're happy to announce this new partnership to make sure every student can get to school, no matter what.

WAVE, a non-profit group, now offers door-to-door rides in our school district. They provide affordable and reliable transportation for families. **If your child misses the bus and you don't have a ride, WAVE can take them to school for just \$0.50 each way. WAVE also offers rides to other places within their coverage area for \$1 each way, and \$5 for trips outside of that area. This means families can get to places like doctor's appointments or grocery stores more easily.**

"We know that transportation can be tough for some families," said Dr. Stephen Keskes, Ed.D., Executive Director of Grants, Academic Innovation, and Procurement for Stockbridge Community Schools. "With WAVE, we hope to remove that problem so students can be at school every day, helping them succeed in school and life."

This effort is part of a larger plan to improve student attendance and create a better learning environment. By offering reliable rides, we want to help families and encourage students to focus on their education.

Let's work together to make every school day count! We appreciate your support in this effort, and we look forward to helping our Panther students succeed. We want you here!



Parents and guardians are encouraged to take advantage of this great opportunity!

For more information about WAVE services, including how to schedule a ride and who's eligible, visit ridethewavebus.org or call 734-475-9494.

WE WANT YOU HERE!



WE WANT YOU HERE!

We were excited to kick off the 2024-2025 school year with a fresh start and a new theme: "We Want You Here!" **Our goal is to reduce chronic absenteeism — missing more than 10% of the school year — which affects about 20% of students in our county.** Missing school impacts learning, making it harder for students to stay on track.

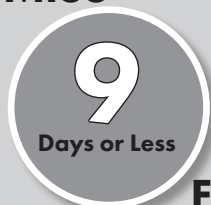
We want students here because we care about them! We miss them when they're gone, and we want them to feel confident and connected. **To support this goal, we're using the Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System to track attendance, behavior, and grades, so we can offer extra support when needed.**

You'll see our "We Want You Here!" message throughout the year, along with slogan "Nine Days or Less" (miss no more than 9 days all year). **Attendance magnets with this message and the school calendar are available at school offices.**

Improving attendance takes teamwork from students, parents, and staff. Together, we can ensure every Panther feels valued, supported and ready to succeed.

For questions or to learn more, reach out to Brian Friddle at friddleb@panthern.net.

MISS



FOR
Panther Success!



STOCKBRIDGE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Welcome Lori Mayo, Our New Business Manager

We are excited to welcome Lori Mayo as our new Business Manager. Lori brings over 17 years of experience from Michigan Center School District, where she most recently served as Business and Human Resources Manager.



With a strong background in school finance, budget planning, payroll, benefits, and human resources, Lori's expertise will be a valuable asset to our district. She has successfully led key projects, like creating an employee handbook and aligning staff pay with market standards. Lori holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Leadership from Baker College and certifications in Business Management from the Michigan School Business Officials (MSBO), where she is also an active member.

Please join us in welcoming Lori to the Stockbridge Community Schools family! We're excited for the positive impact she will have on our district.

Stockbridge's Commitment to a Positive and Supportive Environment

At Stockbridge Community Schools, we aim to create a positive, supportive environment where students and staff can thrive. We use the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework to encourage respect, responsibility, safety, kindness, and positivity. PBIS is based on proven practices and focuses on developing character traits that promote social-emotional growth and academic success.

PBIS is a proactive, multi-level system designed to meet the behavioral needs of all students. Instead of punishing negative behavior, PBIS teaches and reinforces positive behavior. It gives our school a clear system for defining, teaching, and encouraging appropriate behavior, creating a positive environment for both learning and social growth.

Family involvement is key to PBIS success. We work with parents and caregivers to help reinforce positive behaviors at home and encourage their support in promoting character values. We also collaborate with community organizations to get resources and strengthen our PBIS efforts.

Studies show that schools using PBIS see improvements in academic outcomes, such as better attendance, fewer disciplinary issues, and higher academic achievement. By addressing behavior challenges, PBIS helps create an environment where students can succeed.

With a focus on prevention, support, and intervention, PBIS helps create a space where students can reach their full potential. Through positivity, teamwork, and character development, PBIS helps us build a culture of respect, responsibility, safety, and kindness.

Commitment to School Safety: A Community Effort

Student and staff safety is our top priority. Our approach focuses on both physical security and mental well-being. **To strengthen our safety efforts, we've introduced the BTAM (Behavior Threat Assessment Matrix) — a tool that helps identify and respond to potential threats.**

Each school has a crisis team trained to manage emergencies, and we regularly practice fire, tornado, and emergency response drills. Our drill records are shared with the State of Michigan to maintain transparency.

The BTAM system allows administrators, teachers, mental health professionals and law enforcement to work together to assess and respond to potential threats. By focusing on behavior patterns, the system helps us act early, reduce risks, and ensure a safe environment for everyone.

We're committed to improving our safety measures each year and appreciate the ongoing support of families and the community. Together, we can create a safe and welcoming place for students to learn and grow.



Focusing on Essential Skills for Success

Literacy and math are key to education. They help students succeed in school and in life. Our district focuses on building strong skills in reading, writing, and math to prepare students for future challenges.

Good literacy skills improve performance in all subjects. As students improve their reading and vocabulary, they can understand difficult texts, gather information, and share ideas. A larger vocabulary helps students communicate clearly, engage in discussions, and understand other subjects. Strong literacy sets the stage for success in their education.

Literacy is crucial for learning and thinking critically. It includes five key components:

- **Phonemic Awareness:** Recognizing and manipulating sounds in words.
- **Phonics:** Understanding how letters and sounds work together to form words.
- **Fluency:** Reading smoothly and with expression.
- **Vocabulary:** Knowing and using a variety of words.
- **Comprehension:** Understanding and connecting ideas in texts.

Beyond Basics is a program that helps students struggling with literacy. It provides extra support to help them read at grade level and beyond, improving their academic success.

The district also uses a system called MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) to support all students:

- **Tier 1:** General literacy instruction for all students.
- **Tier 2:** Targeted help for students who need extra support.
- **Tier 3:** Intensive help for students with significant struggles, like the Beyond Basics program.

By combining these approaches, our district ensures all students get the help they need to become confident readers and succeed in school and beyond.

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STOCKBRIDGE JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

WELCOME BACK - WE WANT YOU HERE!

We kicked off the 2024-2025 school year at the Junior/Senior High with a big message: "We Want You Here!" We know how important it is for all our students to feel like they belong. We're working hard to create challenging and meaningful learning opportunities for everyone!



BUILDING UPGRADES

We've made some great improvements to our school this year. Mrs. Debby Lopez used ideas from students and staff to update our library and media center. We now have a newly improved Student Success Center! Mr. Bob Richards and his Agriculture and CTE classes built a hoop house, which will bring lots of benefits for our students. Our FFA hoop house is growing food that will be used in our cafeteria! Plus, we've added more artwork and graphics around the school to make it feel even better.

BACK TO SCHOOL ASSEMBLY

After our first full week of school, we had some fun with games and introduced the new staff members in our building



HOMECOMING 2024

Homecoming Week is always a blast with lots of school-wide activities! We came together to celebrate traditions and make connections because We Are Stockbridge! The staff also took part in a special challenge during the week.



GAME BALL CHEER

Our cross country team visited every elementary classroom with the football game ball. They ran it all the way back from the opposing team's school!

FRIDAY WELCOME

On Homecoming Friday, our student-athletes greeted the elementary students as they came to school, spreading school spirit and excitement.

FALL ACTIVITIES

- The band played at the Chelsea Exhibition
- The equestrian team headed to Regionals
- We celebrated "Senior Sunrise"
- Junior High Football played in the Big League
- Our cross country team competed in the Stockbridge Invitational
- The choir sang the Star-Spangled Banner for the whole school on 9/11



Host Families Needed

Stockbridge Junior Senior High Schools is always interested in bringing students from different cultures together with our Panthers to learn and build lifelong memories. The International Student Exchange Program is looking for families to host students in Stockbridge.

Host families do not need to have kids in the district; they only need to be willing to open their home to a student.

If you are interested in hosting for Fall of 2025 or have questions, please contact the office at 517-851-7770 for more information.



Welcome Lisa Anderson and David Jones to Our Team

We're thrilled to welcome **Lisa Anderson as our new Algebra I and Algebra II teacher!** With a BS in Engineering Mathematics from Elon University, a BS in Civil Engineering from Columbia University, and an MA in Secondary Mathematics from the University of Michigan, Ms. Anderson brings a rich blend of academic excellence and industry experience. Her background as a structural engineer allows her to connect math concepts to real-world applications, making learning more engaging and meaningful for students.

Ms. Anderson shared, "I am so excited to inspire students and help them grow as mathematicians."

We're excited to introduce **David Jones as our new Biology Teacher!** With a BS in Secondary Science Education from Eastern Michigan University and an MA in the Art of Teaching from Marygrove College, Mr. Jones brings a wealth of experience in high school science education. Known for building positive relationships and serving as a mentor and leader, he's a valuable addition to our school community.

When asked about joining us, Mr. Jones shared, "I feel like I hit the job lottery.... Stockbridge is close to home and I enjoy the unique interactions that I get to make with students while teaching them science. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to continue my career here."

Welcome, Ms. Anderson and Mr. Jones — we're excited to have you on board!



WE WANT YOU HERE!



STOCKBRIDGE HERITAGE SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE INITIATIVE

In the fall, we kicked off our Monthly Attendance Challenge! Here's how it works: the class with the best attendance each month wins a cool prize. It's a fun way to encourage everyone to come to school every day. Let's show some school spirit and aim for perfect attendance! In September, Mrs. Whitt's 5th grade class had the highest attendance with almost 98% daily! Overall, 95% of students came to school every day in September. Keep it up!



PEER MENTORS

Heritage 5th graders are teaming up with 2nd graders from Smith Elementary as peer mentors. They'll meet at least once a month to work on reading and math. This is a great chance for 5th graders to practice leadership and teamwork.



4TH GRADE SCIENCE

Mrs. Maples' 4th grade class studied the life cycle of a butterfly. They got to watch the process from caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly. Once the butterflies were fully grown, the students released them back into nature. Special thanks to Geri and Greg Uihlein for donating the caterpillars!



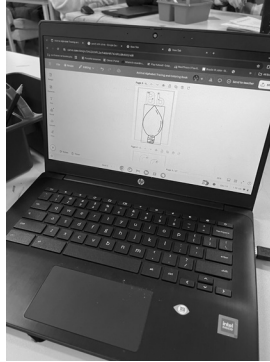
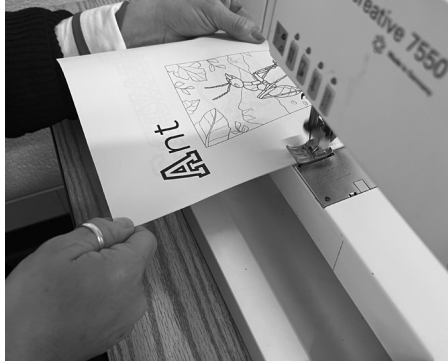
COMMUNITY MEETINGS WITH SARGENT KING

Every month, students meet with our School Resource Officer, Sargent King, to talk about important topics. In September, they learned about the difference between rules and laws, and why they are important.



4TH GRADE DANCE OFF

In September, the 4th graders learned a dance to the Earth, Wind & Fire's song "September." On October 4th, all 4th grade classes performed the dance together in the gym, followed by a dance competition. Mr. Thorburn's class won, with Mrs. Allen's class close behind!

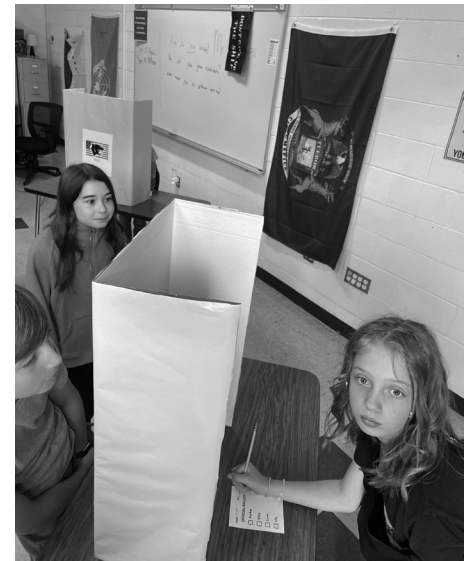


STEM & STEAM COLLABORATION

Mr. Anderson's 2nd grade STEM students are teaming up with Mr. Nichols' 5th grade STEAM students on a fun project. They're designed and 3D printed custom bubble wands. After the wands were finished, the 2nd graders created a bubble solution, and then both classes tested their creations!

STUDENT COUNCIL ELECTION

Mr. Gauthier's 6th grade Social Studies class learned about elections by holding their own for 6th grade student council representatives. Two representatives from each class were elected, complete with a voting booth and ballot box.



Welcome Abby Marthaler

We're excited to welcome Abby Marthaler, a recent Grand Valley State University graduate with a BS in Elementary Teaching (PK-3). She's already made a positive impact as a teacher in our summer school program and as a student intern with our third-grade team this fall. In January she became the full-time teacher of her 3rd grade students.

With her passion for education, kindness and collaborative spirit, Ms. Marthaler is a fantastic addition to Heritage. She's eager to inspire lifelong learners and support the academic and personal growth of every student.



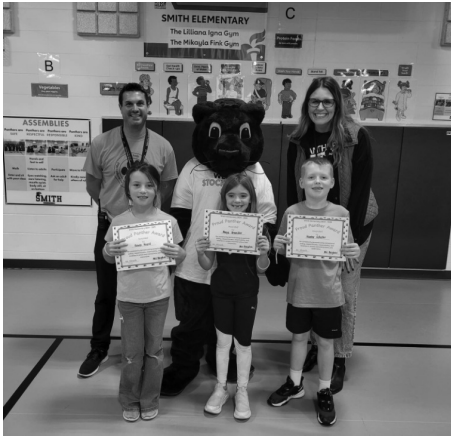
WE WANT YOU HERE!



STOCKBRIDGE SMITH ELEMENTARY

2ND AND 5TH GRADE BUDDIES

2nd grade and 5th grade students have teamed up this year for this wonderful mentorship opportunity. These students are building wonderful relationships throughout the year working on various literacy and classroom activities.



PANTHER PRIDE ASSEMBLIES

Every day students earn Panther Pride Cards when they exhibit outstanding Panther Pride for being Safe, Respectful, Responsible, and Kind. Each week teachers pull 2-3 pride cards from their classroom and students are recognized during our Friday morning announcements. As an extra special acknowledgment, teachers nominate 3 students from their classroom at the end of each month that showed extraordinary Panther Pride for the month. We then hold special school wide assemblies to present students with a special certificate. September's assembly was a fun glow party!



GOLDEN SPATULA

During each lunch period our lunch staff and Mrs. Lehr acknowledges a class that has exhibited exceptional Panther Pride during lunch. Mrs. Lehr keeps a tally throughout the month and which ever class has the most golden spatulas win's a pizza party sponsored by our local Hungry Howies. September's Golden Spatula winner was Mrs. Whitt's 2nd grade class.



PRESCHOOL FIRE SAFETY



Preschool students have spent a week learning about fire safety. They were able to visit with a local fireman, tour a fire truck, and learn about the dos and don'ts about fire safety.

SPELLING WITH THE SPARKLE GAME

Mrs Filice being creative with her Kindergarten classroom! She switched around her learning environment to play the Sparkle game to help students learn how to spell their sight words in a fun differentiated way.





PANTHER ATHLETICS

From State Qualifying Cross Country runners to nail-biting district volleyball contests, the fall season was full of competitive opportunities and growth!

STATE QUALIFIERS

William Gancer (10th) - Cross Country

Ava Vaccaro (12th) - Cross Country

RECORD BREAKERS:

Brock Rochow (12th) - Football - Tied the state record for interceptions in a single season and broke the school record for season and career!

Zac Rogozinski (12th) - Football - Broke the school record for Tackles for a Loss in a single game, season, and career!

Megan Mackinder (12th) - Volleyball - Broke school records for both Kills and Aces!

TEAMS BY GPA

(school average: 2.82)

Cross Country: 3.66

Soccer: 3.24

Football: 3.19

Volleyball: 3.17

Cheer: 2.87



Scan to get involved
with our Boosters!

WE WANT YOU HERE!





Stockbridge Community Schools Joins the Big Eight Conference

In the 2024-2025 school year, Stockbridge Community Schools will officially join the Big Eight Interscholastic Association. The Board of Education approved the move on February 19, 2024, opening the door for Stockbridge to compete alongside schools like Bronson, Concord, Quincy, Reading, Springport, Union City and Maple Valley.

This is an exciting opportunity for our student-athletes to face new competition, grow their skills, and showcase their talents. Joining the Big 8 supports our district's goal of providing well-rounded student experiences that build character, teamwork and sportsmanship.

We look forward to the new rivalries, fostering community spirit and supporting our athletes as they rise to the challenge. Go Panthers!



Fostering Respect, Teamwork and Positivity

We continue to focus on promoting sportsmanship and encourage everyone—administration, students, coaches, parents, staff and the community—to uphold a higher standard. We recognize that a few individuals sometimes create a negative environment, but we believe we can all improve in this area to help reduce or eliminate unwanted behaviors.

Sportsmanship is important from many different perspectives, including those of administrators, student athletes, student fans, parents, community members, coaches, opponents and officials. Each group experiences the game in a different way and has its own role to play.

It's important to set a positive tone for sportsmanship. This includes setting clear expectations for our athletic programs, how events are organized, and how teams, coaches and officials communicate with each other. It's also essential to be clear about how everyone should behave during athletic events. **We encourage you to come out and support our student athletes, and to set an example by creating a positive environment.**

Throughout the year, we will continue to evaluate our sportsmanship expectations and find new ways to promote positive behavior in our programs.

Our goal is to build a school community that reflects good sportsmanship. We hope you notice this at our events and will support the efforts we're making.

A simple rule for promoting sportsmanship is to uplift our student athletes with encouragement and focus on the positive. Thank you for your support, and we look forward to cheering with you in the future!



WE WANT YOU HERE!



Stockbridge Schools Honors Lissa Avis with 2024 Helen B. Mitteer Award

At the Stockbridge Schools' Welcome Back Staff Breakfast on August 13, Lissa Avis, a dedicated math teacher and cross-country coach at Stockbridge Junior/Senior High, was named the 2024 Helen B. Mitteer Employee of the Year. Avis, who has been teaching for 25 years—23 of those in Stockbridge—received a standing ovation from the crowd.

The award, managed by the Stockbridge Area Educational Foundation, comes with a \$1,500 prize for educational use. Principal Jeff Trap shared the history of the award, first given in 2013, before inviting teachers Steve Allison and Susan Lockhart to present the honor.

Allison, who has known Avis since their 8th-grade band days, praised her consistency and dedication, noting how well-prepared her students are for Algebra. Lockhart highlighted Avis's success teaching AP Calculus and her humility, despite her achievements. Lockhart also shared how Avis's guidance helped her overcome challenges as a new teacher.

Avis's impact extends beyond the classroom, often tutoring students after hours and during summer sessions. A former student credited Avis with shaping their successful career in supply chain management, saying, "Everything I do is just solving complex math problems, and she prepared me for that."

Avis's dedication mirrors the legacy of Helen B. Mitteer, a beloved Stockbridge teacher from 1929 to the early 1970s. The award continues to honor educators who show the same commitment to students.

Stockbridge is grateful for Avis's passion and leadership, which inspire both students and staff alike



Math department chair and teacher Lissa Avis (with bouquet) is surrounded by some of her biggest fans: Left to right, Steve Allison, son Alex, husband Andy, daughter Rachel, Susan Lockhart, and Principal Jeff Trapp.



STOCKBRIDGE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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Board of Education Appointment

The Stockbridge Area Educational Foundation is a public non-profit 501(3)(c) committed to supporting educational opportunities for members of the Stockbridge community.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR PARTICIPANTS IN THE 2024 ONLINE AUCTION.

Because of your generosity; over \$20,000 was raised to support scholarships and grants!

To make donations to the Stockbridge Area Educational Foundation, or apply for grants or scholarships, please contact the Central Office at 517-851-7188.

SAEF is planning an in-person event for April 2025.

Stay tuned for more information!



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Regular meetings of the Board of Education will be held as posted each month at 6:30 pm at the Junior/Senior High School Student Success Center, 416 N. Clinton, Stockbridge, MI 49285. All regular meetings are open to the public.

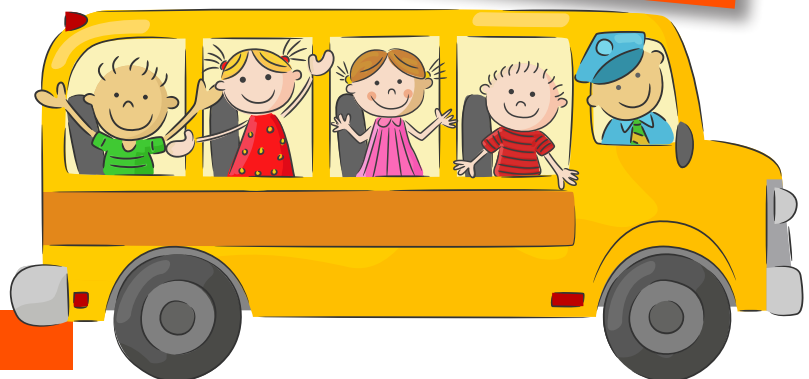
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Transportation safety is an important part of our school safety plan. Bus drivers practice evacuation drills three times a year, teaching students how to exit the bus safely from both the front and rear.

If a bus breaks down, another bus will be sent to pick up students, usually within a few minutes. If there's a delay, it might take up to 15 minutes for a replacement bus to arrive. Please do not go pick up your child, as it can create safety risks.

If a significant delay occurs, the transportation department will notify families.

Please follow these safety rules to help keep our students and drivers safe!



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