

The Paw Print

BCWMS

February 2023

Snow Days Enjoyed by All

by SULEIKY RAMOS, FIONNA VU, AND LIVIA HOLWERDA

With Winter in full swing, it is now time to ask, "How many snow days are we going to have this year, and how are we going to spend them?"

Schools have policies that determine snow days set by standards. If the bus can make it through the snow, then students are going to school. Education is essential, but many who go to school love to have a snow day mixed in to brighten up a dull stretch of the year.

With some Winter remaining, it is not known how many snow days there will be this year. However, considering the early snow day we got this year, anything can happen.

See **SNOW**, pg. 2



Above: Students in LINKS enjoy activities together and the opportunity for field trips.

LINKS Connect Students Together

by MCKENNA HUIZENGA, ALIVIA NIELSEN, & TAYLOR IMPERI

Students at WMS have an opportunity to link up with students from Mr. Dunn's MoCI classroom in a program called LINKS. Being a part of LINKS allows students of different ability levels to work together during FLEX, 2nd hour Physical Education, and/or 3rd lunch (2nd hour P.E. and 3rd lunch are only possible if you are in them). MoCI stands for Moderate Cognitive Impairment and Byron Center Public Schools has resources for students in this

program at the elementary, intermediate, middle, and high school. The abilities of the students range in type and some can make it harder for some students to read, write, and/or understand what people are saying to them. Some MoCI students might even having trouble talking to people.

For students interested in being a part of LINKS, the group meets once a month. During this time, students learn strategies for how to be flexible and help others. This happens sometimes during second hour P.E. and sometimes during FLEX.

See **LINKS**, pg.2

SNOW, Cont. pg. 1

“Many factors go into calling a snow day. Road conditions and the weather forecast are two important variables in calling a snow day,” our principal Mrs. Kanitz explained. “Dr. Macina is responsible for all students and staff in the district - and safety is of the utmost importance. It is not a light decision to call a snow day. The state only allows so many snow days before they require us to make up missed time.”

Teachers and staff have to get to school, and the school wants to ensure the kids are safe while taking the buses to school. Snow days aren't always called just because of snow. If the conditions on the roads are bad enough in the winter, there can be an ice day or a delay.

Usually, there needs to be a large amount of snowfall before a school day can become a snow day. For some students, the snow is an enjoyable part of the snow day and others like to spend their time inside.

WMS 8th grader, Elisa Hernandez, says she likes to sleep, go sledding, and then make hot cocoa. 7th grader Alexis Foote enjoys hot cocoa and sitting by a fire.

Teachers also enjoy snow days. Mr. Molenkamp says, “I am always excited for a snow day because it allows me to relax and enjoy time with family, but I also get more time to catch up on some of the things I need to get done.”

Snow days are always a good break for teachers and students. Not only are teachers able to catch up on work, but they also can spend more time with their families.

No matter how that snow day is spent, WMS students and teachers will make sure to cherish the time.

LINKS, Cont. pg.1

During FLEX, students can sign up for Mr. Dunn's class on FLEXished. The activities that occur during FLEX in his classroom vary.

They might include scavenger hunts, cooking, learning more about each other, or other strategies learned from the group meetings described earlier in this article. Some days the MoCI students pick what activities take place, such as legos and puzzles.

Mr. Dunn's classroom is across from the art room and he helps the MoCI kids learn how to do certain things that are hard for them. He does really great with all of the MoCI kids and his students smile when he walks into the room. Mr. Dunn has really enjoyed seeing LINKS grow at WMS.

He said his favorite part is working with the kids and seeing the relationships build. The LINKS program is growing and getting stronger with each meeting.

Addyson Bos-Randall is a 7th grade student who is involved in the program and enjoys the smiles this program brings out in everyone. “Everyone is so kind and everyone is included,” she said.

Alena Schleh is another 7th grade student in LINKS who joined to learn more about others. She said, “I know that people are different and learn differently and (I can) see if I can learn more about it and look at it through others' eyes.”

According to Mrs. VanDeRoer, who is the speech Pathologist (a professional who works with others on their ability to communicate) at WMS and helps lead different opportunities and lessons with LINKS, there are over 70 students already involved in the program. Because the activities happen during P.E. in addition to FLEX, WMS qualifies as a Special Olympics Unified School.

Students were even able to spend time working together bowling during a field trip. Nine LINKS students get invited to these types of trips on a monthly basis and get to enjoy working with Mr. Dunn and his students.

LINKS is open to students interested in working with others and learning more about how others learn and understand school. LINKS can be a chance to make new friends and help others in a fun way.

If any students at WMS would like to join, they can email their interest to Mrs. VanDeRoer at cvanderoer@bcpsk12.net, Mrs. Rusticus at arusticus@bcpsk12.net, or Mr. Dunn at ddunn@bcpsk12.net.

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**Thank You
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Club Shares Students' Interests and Voices

by SULEIKY RAMOS, FIONNA VU, & LIVIA HOLWERDA

You may have seen people walking around the whole school at random times taking pictures or someone at your sporting event taking pictures. Chances are this is the Newspaper & Yearbook Club.

In this club, there are three main roles. One of the roles is the reporter. The reporters help come up with story ideas in case someone doesn't know where to start. Then there are the editors; they are the leaders of the newspaper and yearbook club. They help edit other stories written by other members and they communicate with others on the deadlines. Lastly, there are photographers who take pictures to be shown in stories and in the yearbook. All roles have to write a story, but there are many things to write about.

Members of the club are allowed to write stories about anything they want. To join, there is a Schoology code that gives members a chance to sign up for stories and apply for different roles. There is a story idea document that gives categories and ideas to write about. The news section include stories that highlight the important things happening around the school or community. The student life category focuses on things happening in school with the students. These could be events or interesting things happening. The arts and entertainment section includes reviews of books, video games, movies, music, and Arts programs at WMS. There's opinion writing where you can write about something you have an opinion on. And there is the sports section that highlights athletics at West. In addition to those categories, members can just write about a story they have or even make a comic.

Mrs. Campbell is the advisor and started the club with students over ten years ago. "I was involved with newspaper when I was in high school and really wanted to bring that experience to my students when I became a teacher," Mrs. Campbell said. "It was fun to research and write stories that reflected what was important to me and my friends and I know that my students appreciate doing that, too," she said.

All students could join if they would like. Members can come into the Art room during flex to work on their stories and share new ideas with each other. Members of the Newspaper and Yearbook Club get to take photos for the yearbook. They also get to pick out a cover for the yearbook.

If you like to share your thoughts about something and write, take photographs, or research different topics while working with others, this club might be a good fit for you.

Teacher Feature:

Ambition Started in Middle School for New Teacher



by ALIVIA NIELSEN

There are many new staff members at West Middle School this year. One of them is Ms. Atkinson, the Orchestra teacher.

Ms. Atkinson started as a long-term substitute teacher last year during her student teaching and became the full-time teacher at WMS soon after. She graduated from Western Michigan University. Her interest in string instruments started when she was in middle school and led to her wanting to become a teacher.

She said when she became interested in middle school while listening to others play who were already involved in her school.

“I was in 7th grade and I was trying out for sports, but I ended up hearing people playing and I decided I wanted to play, too,” she said.

Ms. Atkinson has an answer for why she chose to teach Orchestra. “I started playing in the Orchestra in 7th grade. I played violin and knew I wanted to do it. I started teaching kids in 8th grade, and I wanted to share that with other people,” she said.

In addition to teaching WMS students during the school day, Ms. Atkinson leads the OrchEXTRA program after school and also has played professionally at events like weddings. She loves cats and would be a cosmetologist if she wasn't a teacher because she enjoys doing hair and make-up.



Students Involved in Acts of Service

by AUGUSTINA KUIPERS

WMS has done a lot to help to uplift the Byron Center community. This year's National Junior Honor Society has brought fundraisers and volunteering into the daily agenda of WMS. This year, before Thanksgiving, the food drive helped those in need in our community. Miss Monk's 1st hour won with the most donations gathered. Before Winter Break, they also organized the Toy Drive.

The ELA classrooms participated in paper bag decorating for the Kid's Food Basket, which benefits kids in need. This was a part of one of the RISE Friday lessons.

BCWMS Choirs performed for the community with their Holiday Concerts, which included performances by 7th graders at Room to Bloom and 8th graders performing at Rivertown Mall, BCHS, and Aurora Pond.



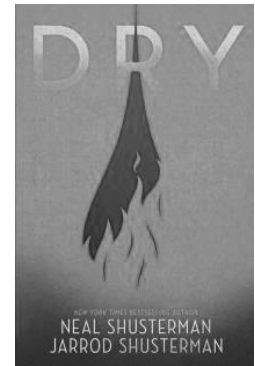
2023 Scholastic Award Winners

WMS Visual Artists received 85 awards this year, setting a new school record. A Regional Awards Celebration will take place March 4th at 3:00 p.m. at Fountain Street Church in Grand Rapids. All Gold Key winning work moves onto the National Competition in New York City. Results will be announced this Spring. Here is the list of WMS winners:

- Kaeden Alber: 2 Honorable Mentions
- Azarius Alonzo: Gold Key
- Grace Arthur: Honorable Mention
- LB Austhof: 4 Silver Keys
- Cora Ball: Gold Key
- Claire Bartkowiak: Gold Key
- Mason Broka: Gold Key
- Ace Bryant: Silvery Key and Honorable Mention
- Axle Cramer: 2 Gold Keys
- Paige Cunningham: 5 Gold Keys, Silver Key, and 2 Honorable Mention
- Hayley Dickey: 2 Gold Keys, Silver Key, and Honorable Mention
- Semaj Dixon: Gold Key
- Rosalia Feldpausch: 2 Gold Keys and Honorable Mention
- Tessa Feldpausch: 3 Gold Keys and Silver Key
- Brady Finkbeiner: Silver Key
- Matthew Hager: Honorable Mention
- Josh Jager: 3 Gold Keys
- Cade Johnson: Honorable Mention
- Madeline Knapp: Silver Key
- Augustina Kuipers: 2 Gold Keys
- Michael LeVault: 2 Gold Keys
- Andrew Manning: 2 Gold Keys
- Knox McCallum Silver Key
- Ben Newell: Gold Key and Honorable Mention
- Karina Ortiz: 2 Honorable Mentions
- Josie Pell: Silver Key and Honorable Mention
- Bishop Pelton: Silver Key
- Hannah Phan: Gold Key
- Eric Pierce: 2 Gold Keys and Honorable Mention
- Parker Pruitt: 2 Gold Keys
- Evey Rogers: Gold Key and 2 Honorable Mentions
- Joey Rush: Gold Key and Honorable Mention
- Natalie Rutgers: Honorable Mention
- Savannah Schmitz: Gold Key
- Emily Sinquefield: Honorable Mention
- Kizza Smith: Silver Key
- Avery Sokol: Gold Key
- Daylin Stasio: Gold Key
- Harrison Steed: Gold Key and 2 Honorable Mentions
- Trent Sydloski: Gold Key
- Izzy Tawoda: Silver Key
- AnaMaria Tenuta: Honorable Mention
- Lauren Thornton: Honorable Mention
- Noah VandeBerg: Gold Key and Honorable Mention
- Lily Walcott: Silver Key and Honorable Mention
- Ellyana Watt: Honorable Mention

Book Review:

Book Dives Deep into Drought Impacts



by AUGUSTINA KUIPERS

In a world where issues are bountiful, many people forget the ones right under their noses. In the dystopian novel *Dry*, by the father-son duo Neal and Jarod Shusterman, global warming is the cause of a massive crisis for the people living in Southern California.

The protagonist, Alyssa Morrow, leads a relatively ordinary life, aside from the few scares of droughts and heat. But a day that many citizens of Southern California are not soon to forget, the water supply runs dry in an event dubbed the “Tap-Out.”

As readers are led through the story, the characters are faced with unimaginable challenges. With a nonchalant government and citizens in denial of the problem they’ve created, the Shusterman’s use effective transitions to lead readers through an equally captivating and harrowing plotline.

The part that stuck out to me about this book was the use of character development. The authors used the development of each character to show the ways that this catastrophe has affected each person differently. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing the ways different characters respond to the pressure of oppression by the government, and I think that the authors did an optimal job of using slow changes to show this.

Not only did they use character development to boost the storyline, but they also used mob culture to show how the mass population acts in these types of situations, and how humans fail in surviving in almost every crisis. The exposure of human morality and how humans are amongst the least able to survive when our climate is changed makes readers feel somewhat hopeless, but in contrast, hopeful for change. Overall, this dystopian novel is anything but dry.

Video Game Review: Two Sides

Craft Keeps Students Interested, Mostly

by LB AUSTHOF, HAYLEY DICKEY,
DALANIE BARES, & KAYLA VOGT

A critical review of the world's favorite blocks:

Minecraft gets 2.5 gold blocks out of 5 for its gameplay and nostalgia value alone. Minecraft is an open world sandbox game with near endless possibilities and combinations of things to do. I've been playing it since I was 4 years old, so you should probably take my opinion with a grain of salt. But the recent events such as the 1.19 scandal with not adding all promised features and the fact it was a disappointing update paired with the non-transparency of mojang is horrifying to me as a long-term community member and player.

Mojang's misuse and waste of resources is terrible and burns out its developers and makes the updates worse. After several years of playing, the gameplay becomes repetitive and stale. The new terrain generation helps prevent this, but even that eventually loses its charm and I find myself getting burned out and bored after only about an hour. The only real value it holds at this point is the great multiplayer but even that falls to the same flaws. The gameplay is great but we are in desperate need of some updates to keep it fresh.

A complimentary review of one of the world's most popular blocks:

Although I don't know nearly as much about Minecraft as some, I still do really enjoy the game. I give it 5 out of 5 gold blocks. As an art student, Minecraft is one way to create anything you want. It's also a great game for people who like survival games like Rust or Terraria.

There are two commonly known modes of Minecraft including Creative and Survival mode. Creative mode makes everything completely open ended. You can get anything you'd like in creative, as well as the perk of flying and being unable to die or take damage. Survival mode is the fight for life.

There are many things that make Minecraft fun, from breaking the first block in your world to defeating the ender dragon. Does it have an educational purpose? Many would think not, but think again. The website funtech.co, an online school website states that Minecraft is educational. Solving problems quickly can help with solving problems in real life.

Lockers Should Have Remained Optional

by JOSIE PELL

Although Byron Center West Middle has accomplished many exceptional things, one of the biggest issues currently facing students is our inability to carry around our backpacks from class to class. For many students the new rule about mandatory use of lockers hit them hard.

Learning locker combinations and stopping between every class is a new concept for this year. It

seems nearly impossible for some, and despite the contrary beliefs of many teachers, students weren't making a fuss over nothing.

Many students have to walk across the school to get from class to class, and having to stop at their lockers eats up a lot this time. Passing time is already short, and this time isn't only dedicated to lockers. This is also the only time many students have the

ability to go to the bathroom or complete other necessary tasks. Students have had to find other ways to meet their basic human needs. Not only this, but many 7th graders expected the ability to carry their backpack from class to class. A new school already imposes many changes onto students and these new policies did not help for the new 7th graders adjust.

Many students struggle to open their lockers and find it unfair that they do not have the choice to carry their backpack around with them. This sometimes results in students finding alternative ways to avoid shutting lockers or even breaking them.

I find the new rules about backpacks unnecessary and it forces students to make additional trips to their lockers.

Basketball Brings Teamwork Center

by ISABELLA FERGUSON

Basketball is a favorite sport by many Americans, it first originated in Springfield, Massachusetts on December 1, 1891 by a 30-year-old Physical Education instructor from the international YMCA training school, James Naismith. He invented the indoor game which was considered to be a mix between football and baseball, then later was named "basketball."

At Byron Center West Middle School many students are involved in sports such as wrestling, baseball, football, volleyball, swim, tennis, cheerleading, track and field, cross country, soccer, and of course basketball. We provide a girls and boys basketball team; two teams for 7th grade and two teams for 8th grade allow for students to try out and make up to one of the four teams, annually.

7th grade student Isaiah Thrash said he likes playing basketball because it is a way to be active while being with a group of people you like and want to play with to get better.

"It's a fun thing for me to do in my free time and it's also a sport I really like. It's also a good time to bond with my friends," he said.

Some students play to be active and fit. Others play for fun. Many play to win.

8th grade student Carson Conrad said, "It makes life better and I feel so great when I succeed."

When observing the Boys' teams, teamwork is central to their success and whether or not they enjoy playing.

Coach Krauss, who also teaches Math at WMS, said, "It's a team sport and it requires everybody to be on the same page to be successful."

This just shows when you find something that you enjoy there is no limit to what you can do. As the team huddles you can see how serious they are and how committed they are to this game all thanks to one idea by James Naismith.

Student Question:

What is your favorite Winter Sport or Activity?

"I like hockey because it is fun to play and a fast sport. I play right wing at Patterson Ice Arena."

Jordan Wallen,
7th grade Student



"We do Competitive Cheer!"

7th graders Taylor Imperi, Maddy Denhoff, McKenna Huizienga, Lilly Chochrane, and Betty Brant.

"I love swim because I get to make new friends and compete with a team that is super encouraging."

Madelyn Powell
8th grade Student



Girls' Swim Dives towards Success with Positivity

by CARTER WILLARD

This year Girls' Swim team dove into the season with a very positive, competitive, and charismatic attitude. With 60 swimmers on the team, it is filled with teammates who cheer each other on, work hard in practice, and for some, are diving into new aspects of the sport for the first time.

8th grade swimmer, Paige Cunningham said, "The team definitely works harder than last year, it's more fun than last year with all the new girls."

The team is bigger than last year, with potential to win big at their meets this year. The team this year might be able to win dual meets. This happens when two teams go against each other in races to get points for placement and once all the races are completed, whichever team has more points wins. The team is also working towards a conference title, which happens when you win against all the other teams in one final meet at the end of the season.

Tuesday, November 8th, 2022 was the team's first swim meet at Grand Rapids Public Schools. They won with great races from everybody. The diving side includes Marley Flietstra, Gracie Gavin, Gwen Glerum, Audi Hernandez, Ezra Ritsema, Lilly Terpstra, Mage Thompson, Nyicear Vance, Tallulah Warkentien, Paige Winkel, and Liv Younglove. Some of these members are diving for the first time competitively.

The WMS head coach, Holly Morren who has been coaching for three years, said, "I thought it went really well. (I'm) really happy how people cheered for each other, and how they warmed up and cooled down well. They swam and dove well, too."

She is optimistic about their progress and prospects this season.

"I think it will go well. Many kids returned from last year and the new girls have caught on well. We have a huge team of 60 people. Super happy with how they have started with being good teammates and getting to know people, cheering on each other in meets and practices. And they're not afraid to work hard in practice," she said.

Winter Sports Snapshots

Photographs provided by BCWMS Families

