



Viking Voice

Bronson Community Schools Quarterly Newsletter
2014-15 Volume 2, Issue 1

Moving Forward



When I flip my calendar to December it causes me to reflect back on a year quickly coming to a close. I find myself counting my blessings and taking stock. This year has been a time of transition for me. I joined a school district in a town I've called home for some time. Since I started on July 1st, I've been overwhelmed with the amazing things happening in our community. Walking through buildings each week, I have the opportunity to observe

firsthand the bright, creative students we have here. Our students are building robots, taking medical classes and completing dual enrollment courses. They are excelling in athletics and performance arts. When adults talk to me about their concerns for the future, I just smile. I'm not worried. What I see are student leaders with courage, initiative, grit and determination to make the future their own. Our students will carve out a path for themselves and continue to make us proud.

As a school district and a community, this is a cause for celebration. It's important to continue to maintain an environment that will allow our students to excel as they have in the past. Many people have had questions after the election in November when the school bonds failed to pass. I want to share the work being done by a wide variety of school and community members to ensure our school continues to meet the needs of the students in this community.

A technology committee was recently formed to develop a 5-year plan for our district. There are several purposes for the development of this committee. First, schools are required to have comprehensive plans related to technology, including things such as professional learning, curriculum implementation, and instructional needs. Our current plan will expire in 2015. Additionally, there are grants available for technology, but they typically require a comprehensive and specific plan, developed
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"The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives."
--Robert M. Hutchins

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Numbers to Know:

Anderson Elementary
517.369.3234

Ryan Elementary
517.369.3254

Bronson Jr/Sr High School
517.369.3230

Administration
517.369.3260

Grants Received

Bronson Community Schools recently received several grants for everything from technology to playground improvement.

WalMart granted Bronson Community Schools \$750 to test new technology options.

Little Vikings Safe Play (a parent-led group helping to raise funds for renovations and safety improvements of the playgrounds at Ryan and Anderson Elementary) received \$1,000 from the school food company Chartwells.

Bronson Junior/Senior High School was also named the recipient of the 2014-15 Focus Grant from the Guido A. and Elizabeth H. Binda Foundation coordinated by the Calhoun Intermediate School District. The grant will fund workstations for Chromebooks to be placed in seven classrooms throughout the school. The goal is to increase students' vocabulary helping them to become proficient readers, writers, and critical thinkers.

The Binda Foundation also awarded a mini grant of \$750 to teacher Ms. Sarah Medema's "Reaching Readers Through Sports" program.



Above: Barb Yearling (left) and Chris Rakowski (right) of Chartwells present Superintendent Teresa Belote (center) with a check. Photo courtesy of Chris Worst, The Daily Reporter.

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by a diverse group of stakeholders, based on a needs assessment and specific budget and professional development outline. By creating this plan of where we want to be as a district, we open up the potential for funding to make it happen. It's not easy to capture these grants – in fact, they are highly competitive, which is why I am grateful to the committee members who have joined us to complete this important work. We're very appreciative of several technology grants we've received, totaling over \$6,000, thanks to the efforts of staff. In addition, community business partners have provided some new and gently used equipment to upgrade technology and provide new opportunities for students. While we are not there yet, we will continue to seek out grants, both large and small, to meet these needs.

Thanks to the support from the community in August, the sinking fund is providing the school with money to make some of the needed repairs, which have already been started. Plans this year include the repair of one boiler and the replacement of the second boiler at Anderson Elementary School, which is scheduled to be completed in December. In addition, the sinking fund will also pay for an updated fire alarm system at Ryan Elementary.

To meet additional needs in the school system, a group of community members have organized a special projects fund through the Branch County Community Foundation. This fund will provide resources to Bronson Community Schools and will be utilized for things like facility improvements, technology and transportation. More information on the fund and how it works can be found on the back page.

From my vantage point, there is so much to be thankful for this holiday season, starting with the people in our community. Happy Holidays!

Thank You, Mr. Miller

After serving on the Bronson Board of Education for 22 years, Mr. Rick Miller chose not to seek re-election. Over the years he has dedicated countless hours both in and outside of board meetings to improve education for Bronson children. Thank you, Mr. Miller, for your service!



Thespians Host Murderous Night at Museum



Congratulations to the Bronson Thespians on their production of "Murderous Night at the Museum!" In addition to acting roles, students were involved in all aspects of the production including directing, set design, and lighting. The story line included a cast of zany characters solving a whodunit at the opening of a museum exhibit.

"The Wizard of Oz" is up next for the thespians, scheduled to run March 12 through 15 at the Bronson Community Theatre.

Bronson Schools Earn Lime Green Status

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) assesses schools each year based on a range of criteria. The Accountability Scorecard shows federally required school and district accountability ratings under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The ratings include reading proficiency, academic growth, ACT scores, 4-year graduation rates, and dropout rates. Bronson Schools earned a Lime Green status with 83.9% of possible points. A majority of Michigan schools fall in the Yellow or below rating. Bronson has shown strong academic growth, our 4-year graduation rates are over 95%, and drop out rates less than 5%.

Purple 1.1%	Red 14.3%	Orange 6.0%	Yellow 47.0%	Lime 30.1%	Green 1.5%
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The above scale shows the rankings and the percentage of Michigan schools that fall under each category.

Upcoming Events:

December

- 18 Last Day of School for Students
- 19 No School - Records Day
Have a safe and happy break!

January

- 5 Classes Resume
- 19 No School - Professional Development Day

Want to know more?
www.BronsonSchools.org

or
Follow us on Facebook!
<https://www.facebook.com/Bronson.Michigan>

Website Launched

We are thrilled to announce our new website has been launched. www.BronsonSchools.org is much more user-friendly and contains a wealth of information including: calendars, latest school news updates, contact links to staff, and helpful links to other sites like Skyward, MI School Data, Khan Academy, and more!



Congratulations BHS Volleyball!

The Bronson Vikings Volleyball team had a tremendous season this year, winning the District Championship and having an overall season 57-17 record. *(Photo courtesy Ferrell Mayes)*



Fund Established within Branch County Community Foundation

Thanks to the generosity of several Bronson community members, a Special Project Fund has been established within the Branch County Community Foundation. The fund is intended to financially supplement Bronson Community Schools' and its K-12 students in their preparation for life by improving technology, transportation, and educational facilities in the school district.

A Special Project Fund provides easy access of money as needs arise, based on the advisory committee's recommendations, costs the organizers no overhead after the \$100 start-up fee (which has already been donated), and ensures no loss of funds, since it is held in a money market account separate from the Foundation's invested endowed funds.

"Many people approached us about setting up a charitable organization after the bond proposals. While it is a great idea, that can take a tremendous amount of time and resources. Luckily, we have the option of the Branch County Community Foundation," says Superintendent Teresa Belote.

"This will allow people who are supportive of the schools to write a tax-deductible donation," states Colleen Knight, Executive Director of the Community Foundation.

More information can be found and donations can be made to the fund through Branch County Community Foundation online at www.BrCoFoundation.org or by calling the Foundation at 517.278.4517.

Robotics Club Participates in FTC Competition

On Saturday, November 22, nine 7th and 8th grade students traveled to Columbia Central High School to compete in the First Tech Challenge (FTC) Competition. FTC encourages students' interest in science and technology along with building problem-solving, teamwork, and communication skills.

The team placed 14th out of 23 teams total and gained a tremendous amount of experience. Mr. Craig Rees and Mrs. Nisha Ritchie served as the team's advisors. The team was generously sponsored by the Branch Area Careers Center, Bronson Precision Products, and Systems Unlimited.

