

## PARENT GROUPS INFO

By Debbie Ball-Odeh

Did you know that parents have a significant effect on their children's education? It's true. Good education isn't just about teachers and schools-what parents do really counts. All research indicates that children who have families actively involved in their school will get higher grades, are more likely to graduate and go on to college and will earn more money once they begin their career. Aren't those wonderful ideals for our children? Kalkaska Public Schools has many active volunteer parent groups in its schools, serving all grade levels.

At Rapid City Elementary, the PTA has been a presence for almost twenty years. This group sponsors an annual Spaghetti Dinner with a live auction as its main fundraiser. Parent volunteers help in the classroom and throughout the school. Each February, the PTA holds a Winter Carnival with games and activities to help chase away those winter blues.

Also at Rapid City is a new group called F.O.R.C.E.S., Friends of Rapid City

Elementary School. This group of parents and community members have begun a summer program to encourage continual learning. Featuring reading, gardening and even piano lessons, this program is boasting 30% student involvement.

At Birch Street Elementary and Cherry Street Intermediate, the Kalkaska Elementary PTO serves to supplement funding for supplies, equipment and activities. Entering its fifth full year, this group has increased parent involvement at both schools to average 500 volunteer hours each month. The PTO sponsors a Fall Arts and Crafts Show each October as a community service. They also hold family events throughout the year such as a Free Movie Night, Free Swim Night at the Kaliseum and Donuts with Dads.

New to the parent volunteer groups is the Parent Teacher Student Association at Kalkaska Middle School. Each spring, they hold a Spaghetti Dinner and Auction to help them fund Drug Awareness Week, a childcare course for babysitting and to fill teacher's wish lists for their classrooms. This

group also built an outdoor volleyball court at the middle school.

At both the middle and high school levels, there are Booster Clubs for bands and athletics. Our band boosters are in the middle of a fundraising drive for new uniforms for the marching band. Kalkaska Athletics Boosters are a presence at every home sporting event. They are in charge of the concessions stands at the Thomas J. Close Athletic Complex and at the Middle School gym.

The Senior Parents Association is a group that wants to give each year's graduating class a party to remember for a lifetime. This all-night event includes fun, games and food, along with every senior winning a prize from their raffle. At least one car is given away each year.

All of these groups can only be successful when caring parents and community members are involved. Commitment times vary to whatever you are able to contribute. You will always be welcomed. For more information about the volunteer parent groups, please contact your student's school office.

You can raise money for our school district by using [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) powered by Yahoo!, as your search engine.

Enter Kalkaska Public Schools as your charity of choice and each search you do gives our school district a penny. Not much by itself but it only takes a hundred to make a dollar.

**CRAFTS DAY IN KALKASKA**  
Kalkaska Elementary PTO Craft Show-  
October 13,  
9 am to 3 pm at Birch Street Elementary.  
Applications being accepted, contact Tina at 231 564-1380 or swans1121@hotmail.com

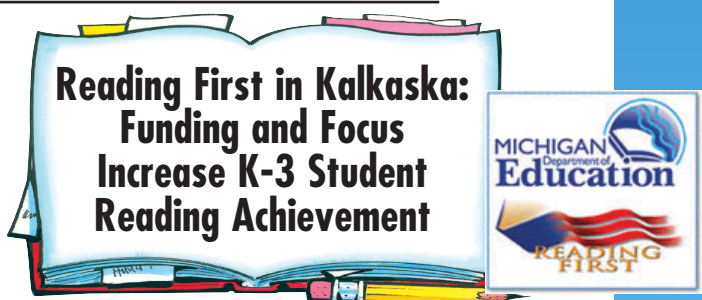
## Kalkaska Middle School Facts

From KMS Principal Mrs. Diane Suoverland

- The middle schools seventh grade class scored higher on the state MEAP test than any other seventh grade in the Traverse Bay ISD (the region), which was considerably higher than the state average.
- On the state report card we received an "A" for math achievement. Advanced math and Algebra are offered at each grade level.
- The middle school has two full computer labs and wireless capability.
- There are two reading labs where five 90-minute blocks of "Read 180" are taught. Each lab has at least ten computers that are used to accelerate the learning process. The "Read 180" program was piloted during the 2006-2007 school year. This learning style allowed students that were below grade level to grow through new technology and teaching styles.
- Highly motivated students that would like to accelerate learning in any of the core subjects may do so by becoming involved in our "Study Island" project. Students will be able to test out of some units of class time and use of this technology. The project can also be used for grade recovery (additional credit). Anyone can access his or her project from anywhere (even while on vacation!).
- Mathematics is an area where many students begin to fall behind. One reason is because you as parents have helped your child for

six years of arithmetic, but haven't had to face algebra or geometry since high school. Without reinforcement at home, some students begin to slide. Technology is giving us another opportunity to catch those students and bring them back to grade level and beyond. For those students we will have a class that will average fifteen students (each grade level) and will use a curriculum that will include "Study Island" and textbooks in addition to "ALEKS." This computer program (ALEKS) is specific to math, algebra and geometry. Access to this technology will allow us to individualize instruction with great effectiveness.

- French, Spanish, art, drama, "Career Cruising," computer technology, marching, concert, and jazz band are some of the elective opportunities offered at Kalkaska Middle School. Physical education is offered every day.
- We all want our children to be responsible, and homework labs stress this behavior. We have highly qualified teachers that stay Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays to help your child in any subject needed. There is no cost for this service and we will provide transportation home. If a student is missing any assignments they will have to attend "Lunch Lab." They do not go to noon recreation after they eat lunch. If an assignment or test is missing, they go to a specific classroom and finish it. Once it is turned in, students are released to noon rec. Our hope is that all work is finished in the classroom or at home and our students won't need to attend lunch lab.



### What is Reading First?

- Reading First is a focused nationwide effort to enable all students to become successful early readers.
- Funds are dedicated to help states and local school districts eliminate the reading deficit by establishing high-quality, comprehensive reading instruction in kindergarten through grade 3.
- Building on a solid foundation of research, the program is designed to select, implement, and provide professional development for teachers using scientifically based reading programs, and to ensure accountability through ongoing, valid and reliable screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based assessment.

### What does that mean for KPS teachers and students?

At Birch Street and Rapid City Elementary Schools, we are set to begin our third year as Reading First grant recipients. Reading First funding has provided us with the resources to place literacy coaches in both elementary buildings to support teachers with training, materials, and help with instruction and assessment. Extensive professional development for teachers and para-professionals in current, research-based reading instruction has increased our teachers' knowledge base and helped us to better meet the needs of all learners.

Reading First funds have enabled us to add a substantial number of new books to the libraries at Birch Street and Rapid City, as well as to the individual classroom libraries of all K-3 classrooms, making sure that all students have easy access to high-quality reading material.

The two-hour uninterrupted reading instructional block that is part of our Reading First grant insures that teachers have enough time to teach important literacy skills, and that students have ample time for practice.

### Reading First is working.

- Reading First is the largest and most effective federal early reading initiative in our nation's history.
- New achievement data reported by the States shows that Reading First students from nearly every grade and subgroup (Hispanic, African American, Disabled, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged) have made impressive gains in reading proficiency.
- Children in Reading First schools receive significantly more reading instruction—almost 100 minutes more per week on average—than those in non-Reading First schools, according to the Reading First Implementation Evaluation: Interim Report.

### Early intervention works.

KPS students in grades K and 1, who have benefited from Reading First supports since they started school, are showing strong gains in all reading scores compared to previous years.

Our grants, which were originally awarded for three years, have been extended, and are now funded through the 2008-2009 school year. We are excited to begin a new year, putting all of our new teaching tools to work to support the learning of all the K-3 students in Kalkaska and Rapid City. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, or would like more information on how Reading First is helping us to improve reading instruction for all children.

Visit the U.S. Department of Education website for more information on Reading First. [www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst](http://www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst)

Kalkaska Public Transit Authority operates student bus runs throughout the KPS district, and this map shows the stops. If you would like your child to be on the roster for KPS busing, call 231-258-6808. Students ride free of charge if they are daily riders. The school pays a fee to KPS for providing this valuable service.

The school district also provides four buses for general education transportation. These routes are in areas of high student need. To learn more about these routes, please call Mr. Drew Bontrager on or after August 27th at 231-258-6114.

**"IS THERE SCHOOL TODAY?"**  
Calling a snow day is one of the more difficult decisions a superintendent has to make. Decisions about school cancellations because of the weather are usually made very early in the morning. We call several radio stations and the local television stations to let them know of 'snow days.'  
People on our staff check roads in outlying areas, and we also rely on weather forecasts and advisories. Safety of the students is of utmost importance.  
Once children are at school, our district keeps them there until school is dismissed. We try to consider the schedules of working families in that we do not delay school and we typically do not send children home once they are here. Of course, parents always have the right to pick up their children if they feel they must.

