



THE

RED & WHITE

FEBRUARY 2026

## A LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

### Vicksburg Community Schools Families,

We are officially into the second semester of the year. I am proud of the hard work our students and staff demonstrated during the first semester, and I look forward to the continued progress ahead.

I want to thank you for your patience and understanding as we navigated multiple snow and extreme cold days at the end of the first semester. Our goal is always to make sure our students and staff are safe. We work with village and county officials along with the other

districts in the county to make informed decisions about snow days, putting safety above all else. This time of year is never easy and we appreciate your understanding.

The second semester is a great time to set new goals and stay engaged as we move through the remainder of the school year. The months ahead bring important learning, meaningful experiences, and moments of celebration that I am excited to take part in across all our schools.

In this month's Red and White you'll read about the wonderful new things coming to all of our schools thanks to the Vicksburg Community Schools Foundation. The support they provide our teachers and students is inspiring and we appreciate all they do to support innovative learning in our classrooms.



Kind regards,  
**Keevin O'Neill, SUPERINTENDENT**

## Elementary School Anxiety Workshop

The Family Lighthouse Team at Sunset Lake Elementary is focusing this year on helping families better support children experiencing anxiety.

Each year, more students come to school with high levels of stress and worry. This growing concern has prompted the team to take action. A recently published bestseller, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, offers powerful insights for anyone who works with or cares for children.

Sunset Lake Elementary is hosting a workshop centered on the book and strategies to support students. The event is open to all elementary families in Vicksburg. In partnership with Gilbert and Ivy Bookstore, families can receive a 20-percent discount on the book.

Families are encouraged to purchase and read the book ahead of the workshop on February 12th. That evening, participants will come together to discuss key ideas and explore ways to reduce the negative impacts children are experiencing today.

Please mark your calendars for February 12, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the Sunset Lake cafeteria. Families from all three VCS elementary schools are invited to join this important conversation about helping children become more resilient and less worried in the digital age.

Please scan the QR code and RSVP if you are interested in being part of this special event.



VICKSBURG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FAMILIES:  
JOIN US FOR A DISTRICT WIDE BOOK STUDY OF

### The Anxious Generation By: Jonathan Haidt

Together, we'll explore what it means to teach and raise children in today's digital world. We will discuss the current data, real life challenges, and explore solutions together. Our goal is to provide families with support and knowledge to create a safer, more positive, and more engaging environment for our children to thrive.

FEB  
12

5:30-7:30 PM  
Sunset Lake  
Cafeteria

Pizza will be provided

Students from VHS will be offering childcare programming during the adult study

We have a limited number of \$5 vouchers available to use at Gilbert and Ivy for a reduced cost of purchase of *The Anxious Generation*.

Contact Us  
Sunset Lake Elementary  
269-321-1500

REGISTER  
NOW





# Snow Falls on VCS

Winter has delivered plenty of snow, and our elementary students have made the most of every flake! Recess has been filled with laughter, snow angels, sledding, and rosy-cheeked smiles as students enjoy time outside with friends.

These snowy days remind us that learning also happens through play, connection, and fresh air. Our playgrounds have been full of joy and Bulldog spirit all winter long.





# 2026 VCS Bond Proposal

The Vicksburg Community Schools Board of Education unanimously approved placing a **\$64.135 Million bond proposal** on the May 5, 2026 ballot.

The VCS bond proposal is projected to NOT raise current tax levels and is designed to strengthen safety and enhance student learning opportunities districtwide.

A few highlights include:

- **Safe Entryways & Technology Upgrades:** Secure vestibules and updated systems to further enhance safety for students and staff.
- **Outdoor Education Center:** Hands-on opportunities for science, environmental studies, and real-world learning.
- **Transportation Garage:** Supports safety, and operational efficiency.
- **Performing Arts Center:** Expanded opportunities for arts education, collaboration, and student confidence.
- **Auxiliary Gym & Tennis Courts:** Enhanced practice and competition facilities for VCS athletic programs and community groups.

This proposal builds on the foundation established by the 2020 bond which, thanks to our community, provided air conditioning to all of our schools, updated bathrooms, flooring, and lighting; delivered a new football field and other important facility improvements. If approved by the voters, the May 2026 bond, like the 2020 bond, would be balanced and student-focused while enhancing student experiences and helping to secure our schools.

Community members are encouraged to ask questions by emailing [electioninfo@vicksburgschools.org](mailto:electioninfo@vicksburgschools.org).



# Maya Grossman Up for Scholarship Award

Congratulations to Vicksburg High School's Maya Grossman for being a finalist in the MH-SAA's Scholar-Athlete Award!

Maya is just one of 16 Class B girls to earn this achievement!

She is now in consideration for one of four scholarships in her category.

Good luck in the final round, Maya!



## KINDERGARTEN KICK-OFF 2026!



Kick-off your child's kindergarten education with Vicksburg Community Schools!

 **April 9, 2026**

 **5:30-6:30 PM**

 **VHS Performing Arts Center**

**PARENTS AND GUARDIANS WILL LEARN ABOUT:**

 Classroom expectations

 Curriculum & learning support

 Transportation

 Food service

 Before & after school care

 Parent organizations

**This event is for adults**

A meet & greet for students will be scheduled at a later date

**Questions? Contact your school:**

Indian Lake

269-321-1400

Sunset Lake

269-321-1500

Tobey

269-321-1600

**Start the registration process by scanning here:**







KALAMAZOO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**An evening of music and community celebration with the Kalamazoo Symphony and our local Vicksburg students!**

**The event will feature VCS band & choir students, artwork from K-12 students, and the Kalamazoo Symphony Quintet**

**Tuesday, February 10th**  
**Vicksburg Performing Arts Center**  
**5:30pm - Pre-Concert Instrument Petting Zoo**  
**6:30pm - Concert Starts**



Tickets required. Pay what you can!



## DECA Students Go to State

16 Vicksburg High School students have earned a spot in the DECA State Conference in March!

This weekend, students competed for a spot at the state competition and VHS qualified a record number!

Congratulations and good luck to the following students:

Addison Arnold  
Ayden McCleary  
Bailey Mefford  
Benjamin Roiniotis  
Blake Hoffman  
Braden Jimenez  
Andrew Roiniotis  
Erica Centofanti  
Isaac Byrne  
Leah McIlvain  
Lincoln Taylor  
Matthew Peters  
Maya Grossman  
Solana Sutherland  
Vadim Schwaiko-Belsner  
Viktor Robertson-Wicks



## Bardeen Grants Support New School Projects

Teachers across Vicksburg Community Schools are celebrating receiving Bardeen Grants from the Vicksburg Community Schools Foundation.

The Teacher Incentive Grant Program has been supporting special teacher training, high tech equipment and unique innovative programs at Vicksburg Community Schools since 1986.

This year, the Foundation awarded more than \$38,000 in Bardeen Grants to educators across every school in the district! These funds are being used to support a wide range of initiatives, including:

- Student competitions, enrichment programs, and real-world learning experiences
- Professional development and conferences to bring new instructional strategies back to classrooms
- Flexible seating, calming spaces, and classroom furniture to improve learning environments
- High-tech equipment such as iPads, 3D printers, drones, heart rate monitors, and instructional display tools
- STEM materials, science supplies, curriculum resources, and student basic needs



Students at Vicksburg High School are receiving support to attend the DECA State Competition, giving them the opportunity to compete, network, and apply business and marketing skills in a real-world setting. Another grant supports a summer water systems experience, allowing students to explore environmental science and engineering concepts beyond the classroom.

### Drone Flying and Emerging Technology

Students in the newly created drone club will participate in a drone flying program designed to build technical skills, problem-solving, and career awareness in high-demand fields such as aviation, engineering, and lo-

gistics. This hands-on experience introduces students to emerging technologies in an engaging and practical way.

### STEM Innovation Through 3D Printing

Sunset Elementary is adding a 3D printer and supplies, expanding opportunities for students to design, prototype, and test their own creations. This project promotes creativity, critical thinking, and real-world application of math, science, and engineering concepts.

### Flexible Seating and Calming Learning Spaces

Multiple schools are enhancing classroom environments through flexible seating and calming

corner supplies. These projects support student focus, comfort, and emotional regulation, helping create classrooms that better meet the diverse learning needs of students.

Together, these projects reflect the purpose of the Bardeen Grants: empowering educators to implement creative, innovative practices that enrich student learning and engagement across the district. Thank you to the foundation and all its donors for supporting the students and teachers of Vicksburg Community Schools.



# Watersheds at Outdoor Education Center

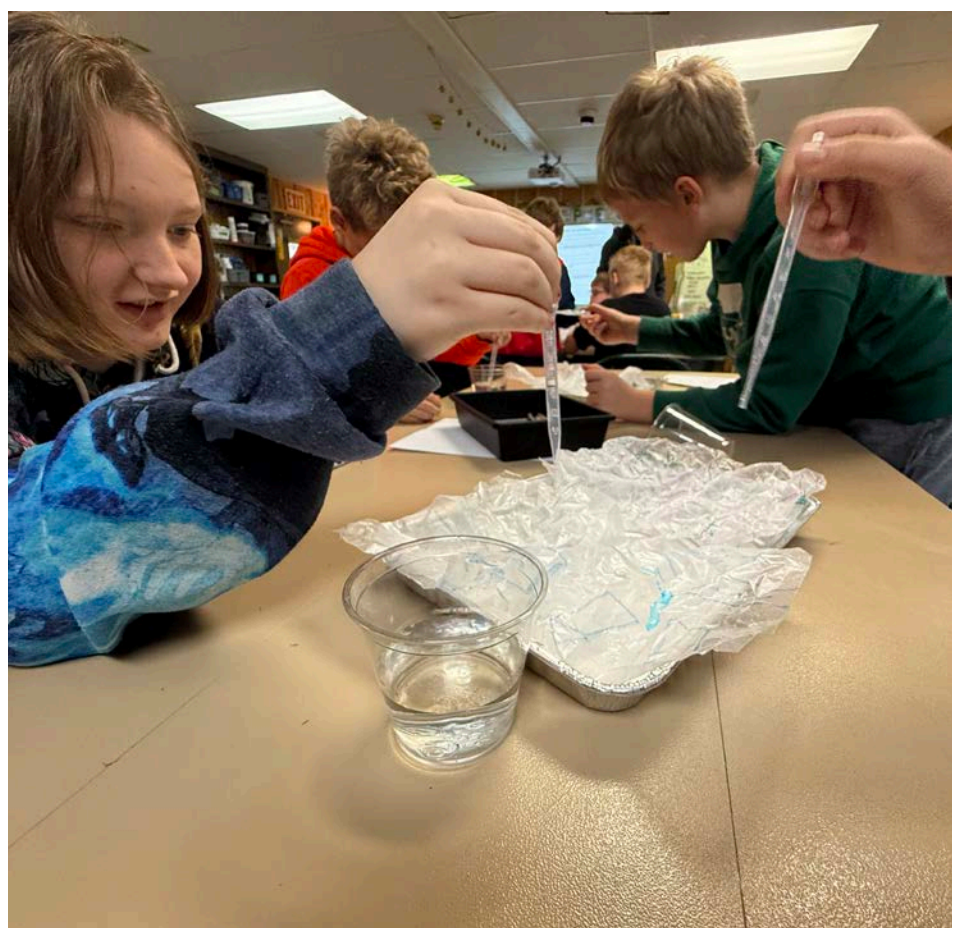
Fifth-grade students at the Vicksburg Schools Outdoor Education Center recently took part in a hands-on learning experience focused on watersheds and water flow.

Students designed and built their own watershed models, then explored a guiding question: *If you were a raindrop, where would you end up?* Before testing their models, students made predictions about what would happen when rain fell on their terrain.

After simulating rainfall, students observed how the water moved across their maps, noting how elevation, slopes, and channels

influenced the flow. They then compared their predictions with what actually occurred and wrote reflections explaining the results.

This engaging project strengthened students' understanding of geography, environmental science, and critical thinking, while connecting classroom learning to real-world systems that impact communities and natural resources. This is the type of learning that makes the Outdoor Education Center such a valuable resource for students in Vicksburg Community Schools!





## STRIVE Program Raffle Tickets On Sale Now

Each year, the Vicksburg Rotary Club sponsors the STRIVE program for Vicksburg High School seniors who need a little extra support to graduate. It's an outstanding program, built on the principles of academics, attendance, and attitude. Students get involved, raise their GPA, experience success, and develop healthy attitudes about their future.

To help support the program, The Vicksburg Rotary sponsors an annual STRIVE Beef Raffle.

For a \$10 ticket, you are entered into a drawing to win a quarter of a cow, courtesy of Oswalt Farms. This is equal to approximately 50-70 pounds of premium Black Angus beef.

8 winners will be drawn during half time of the Winter Homecoming Basketball Game on February 13th. You do not need to be present to win.

Tickets can be purchased at the Vicksburg High School office, the VAB or from any Rotarian in our community.

### VICKSBURG ROTARY STRIVE BEEF RAFFLE

**\$10 per ticket**

**8 winners will be drawn!**

Win 1/8th of a cow, courtesy of Oswalt Farms!  
Proceeds support the VCS STRIVE program

**Drawing is February 13th at the  
Winter Homecoming Basketball Game**

Tickets will be sold at both doors from 5:30 to 7:30pm!



Tickets can be purchased at the Vicksburg High School office, the VAB or from any Vicksburg Rotarian

## VHS Placed on AP School Honor Roll

For the 3rd year in a row Vicksburg High School has earned a place on the College Board's AP School Honor Roll!

This year, VHS has a silver ranking, up from bronze the last 2 years.

The AP School Honor Roll recognizes schools that have done outstanding work to welcome more students into AP courses and support them on the path to college success.

This recognition reflects our commitment to expanding access to Advanced Placement courses, supporting student success, and preparing our students for college and beyond.

Research shows that students who take AP courses and exams are more likely to attend college and graduate on time. And even for those who don't earn college credit for their classes, AP coursework provides early exposure to college-level work, giving them an advantage.

Congratulations to our students for their hard work, and thank you to our teachers for their dedication, and to our families for their continued support. Together, we're building a culture of excellence in Vicksburg Community Schools.

### Congratulations



Vicksburg Community High School

has been recognized for the

**2025 AP<sup>®</sup> School Honor Roll**

for developing an AP program that creates a college-going culture and gives students opportunities to earn college credit and to maximize their college outcomes.



## CPR Kits Donated to VMS

Thanks to Southern Michigan Bank & Trust and the American Heart Association, Vicksburg Middle School now has 10 new CPR Manikin kits!

These kits will help Health and PE Teacher Sawyer Duncan teach valuable life-saving skills to our students. The kits will ensure that all 7th graders learn hands only CPR.

SOUTHERN MICHIGAN  
BANK & TRUST



American  
Heart  
Association<sup>®</sup>





# Big Red Machine Goes to Texas

The Vicksburg High School Big Red Machine Marching Band is recently back from a trip to Texas. They traveled to San Antonio to participate in the Alamo Bowl's halftime show!

Together with other high schools from around the country, they played 4 country western tunes including "Wagon Wheel" and "Boot Scootin Boogie."

97 students and several adults, including Band Directors Ben Rosier and Jay Bennett, made the memorable 7 day trip the week after Christmas.

Highlights included historical sights like Remember the Alamo, the Mission of San Jose, the San Antonio RiverWalk, a Mexican Market, a night of line dancing at Pedrotti's Ranch, the Tower of the Americas and the San Antonio Zoo.

Students also participated in a service project while on their trip, packing more than 20,000 meals at the San Antonio Food Bank and cleaning up outdoor landscapes for the San Antonio Parks Department.

The Marching Band typically travels together every 3-4 years and are thankful to have another successful trip added to their portfolio!





# Sunset Lake Students Celebrate Excellence

Students in Sabrina Fall's 4th grade class at Sunset Lake Elementary are celebrating a campaign to improve their math and reading skills!

Since October, they have been tracking their i-Ready lessons. i-Ready is an adaptive online program our schools use for personalized reading and mathematics instruction to what each individual student needs most.

Each time a student passed a lesson at 100% they colored in a spot on their chart. Ms. Fall's class recently celebrated completing 100 lessons at 100%!

Their hard work earned them a donut party. Great job students!

# 100



KALAMAZOO RESA

**Career Connect**

## OPEN HOUSE

**Tuesday, February 10, 2026**

**5:00-7:30 p.m.**

**at the Career Connect Campus**

3500 Vanrick Dr, Kalamazoo, MI 49001

Kalamazoo County high school students and families are invited to discover the many free educational opportunities available to them at the Career Connect Open House.

**GET CAREER CONNECTED AND EXPLORE THE FOLLOWING CLASSES & PROGRAMS:**

- ▶ **Career & Technical Education (CTE)**  
Hands-on career preparation courses to develop skills and earn credentials
- ▶ **Education for the Arts (EFA)**  
Arts-intensive courses in theater, dance, visual arts and more
- ▶ **Early/Middle College (EMC)**  
Dual-enrollment with KVCC to earn a certificate or an associate degree during high school
- ▶ **Career Pathway Planning Programs**  
Learn about career development services, internships and programs to explore the world of work

Questions? Visit [kresa.org/apply](https://kresa.org/apply) or call (269) 250-9300 to learn more.

In the event of weather-related cancellation, makeup date is Thursday, February 12, 2026.



A FLEXIBLE WAY TO EARN YOUR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA



**Enrollment is open for January 2026!**

- The VPHS lab is staffed with certified teachers to help students
- Our online content is available 24/7/365
- Pathways offers 2 different diploma options



## APPLY TODAY!

**Questions? Call (269) 321-1088**