



THE

# RED & WHITE

OCTOBER 2025

## A LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

### Dear Vicksburg Community Schools Families,

What a great start to the school year we have seen! Homecoming was a wonderful celebration of our schools and village. And I am happy to see our schools settling into routines and doing great work in the classrooms and on the sports fields and courts.

In this month's Red and White, I'm excited to highlight our VCS Innovation Project Grant and the creative ways teachers are using it to enhance student learning. The Innovation Project is designed to support staff-led ideas that make learning

more engaging, relevant, and impactful. This is the second year teachers have been able to apply for the grants and it has been exciting to watch their ideas flow.

Thanks to our partnerships with The Vicksburg Community Schools Foundation and The Vicksburg Foundation, \$60,000 will be allocated annually for three years to support this exciting initiative. I cannot thank our local foundations enough for this precious gift!

The stories you will read this month will show how

innovation in the classroom is sparking curiosity, deepening understanding, and building essential skills for our students.

Thank you for continuing to support our staff as they lead this important work. I look forward to sharing these stories of innovation and the positive impact they are having across our schools.



Kind regards,

**Keevin O'Neill, SUPERINTENDENT**

## Celebrate Our Principals This Month

National Principals Month is celebrated every October to recognize the significant contributions and leadership of principals in K-12 schools.

This month provides an opportunity for the school community to express appreciation for our principals' dedication, passion, and tireless efforts in creating positive and effective learning environments for students and staff.

Please join us in thanking our wonderful school principals!





# Vicksburg Schools Lead the Way with FAME

Within the first few weeks of school, Vicksburg Community Schools has had the honor of welcoming officials from the Michigan Department of Education, not once, but twice, to observe our work with the FAME program, or Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators. Why? Because our educators are at the forefront of using FAME to strengthen teaching and improve student learning!

So, what is FAME?

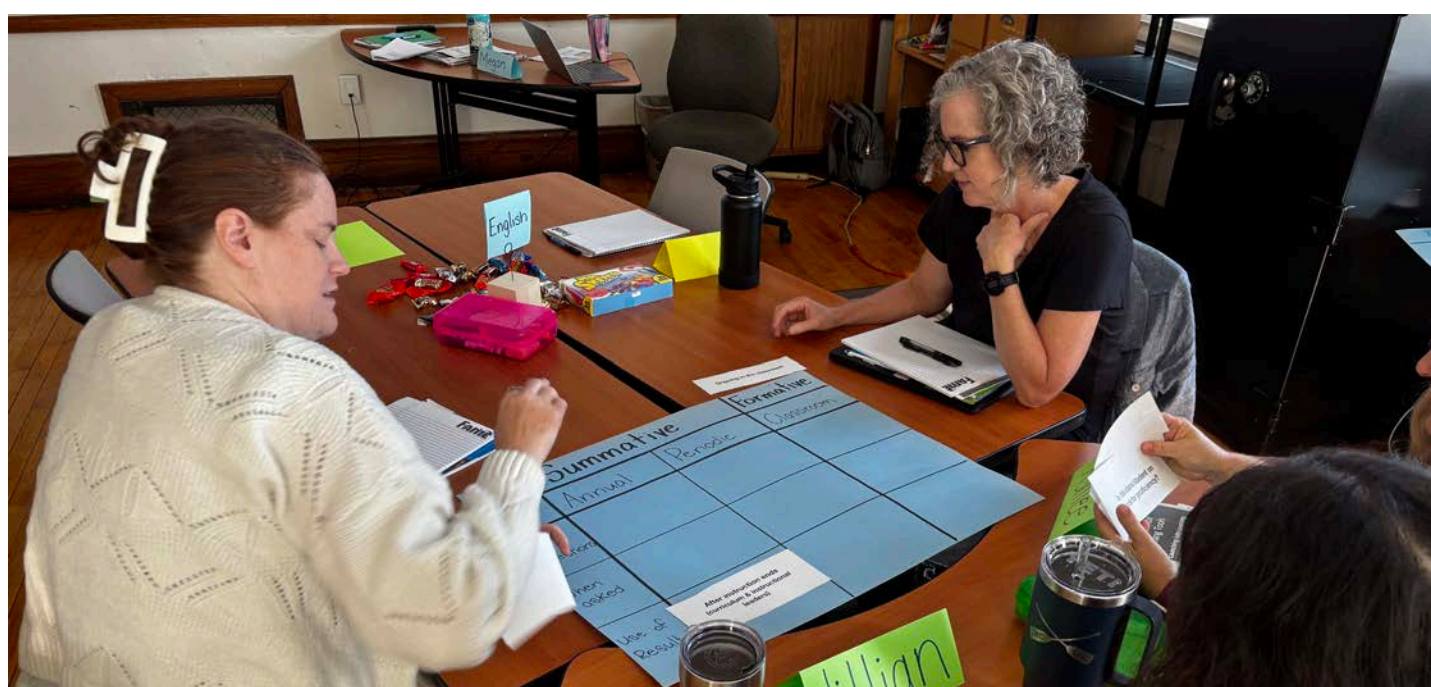
FAME is a statewide professional development program that helps teachers use formative assessment, which is an ongoing process where teachers and students work together every day to check their understanding, give feedback, and make adjustments in real time. It's about using classroom moments to help students take charge of their own learning!

In VCS, this means students aren't just learning what to learn, they're learning how to learn. They set their own goals, reflect on their progress, and become more confident, self-directed learners. And because our teachers are part of the FAME program, they're equipped with powerful strategies to support every student, every step of the

way.

Mary Helen Diegel from MDE said their FAME Project Team is very intrigued by the way Vicksburg has developed our roll-out of FAME and how it is connected to our continuous improvement plan. They came to see if they might be able to replicate it and showcase the VCS model to other districts around the state.

We're proud that the Michigan Department of Education recognizes our leadership in this work, and even prouder of the impact it's having in our classrooms!



## Use the Purple Pump and Give Back to Schools

Have you spotted the Giving Pump at the Vicksburg Johnny's Markets Shell gas station location?!

Shell is giving 1 cent per every gallon sold from the purple Giving Pump at the Vicksburg location to Vicksburg Community Schools!

Give back simply by filling up your gas tank! The Giving Pump runs through October 31st.



### The Giving Pump runs through October 31<sup>st</sup>



The Giving Pump



**Our Vicksburg Johnny's Markets location will be giving 1 cent per every gallon sold at each purple Giving Pump branded dispenser to Vicksburg Community Schools!**



**Look for the Purple Giving Pump logo to make sure you're at the right pump!**



## Student Caught Reading at VHS

This year, to promote a reading culture at Vicksburg High School, teachers and staff are handing out "I Got Caught Reading" tickets to students who they see reading books around the school. Students can then fill out the tickets and put them into the drawing in the library for prizes.

Congratulations to Torrie Hillard for winning the first VHS "I Got Caught Reading" drawing!

The library will do weekly drawings this year for a variety of prizes. Thank you to the staff for handing out tickets and Mr. Brush for providing prizes! Who will be our next VHS reading winner?



## The Sunset Lake Elementary Greenhouse

Students at Sunset Lake Elementary are getting hands-on experience with gardening and everything that goes into growing our own food.

This summer, Sunset Lake teacher Sami Buell built a greenhouse and garden beds, thanks to a grant from the Innovation Project.

Her 2nd grade class is currently growing radishes, and carrots after researching plants that would do the best as the weather gets cooler this fall.

The students learned about the life cycle of a plant and planted the seeds themselves. They have been watering and checking on the growth of their plants every day!





# Vicksburg Homecoming Court

Congratulations to the VHS Homecoming king and queen: Corban Cox and Addyson Steele!!

They were crowned at half time of the Homecoming game.

This year's homecoming court members are: Anthony Marchese, Michael Johnson, Corban Cox, Luke Deal, Wesley Post, Jada Glenn, Taylor VanDam, Addyson Steele, Kayla Chisholm

and Selah Bell.

And also congratulations to the VHS Junior class for winning the annual float contest. This year's theme was seasons. The juniors decorated their spring themed homecoming float with all the baby pics of their football players, and the players came out to get a picture with them all at the parade to celebrate their win.





# Vicksburg High School Donates 4,518 Pizzas

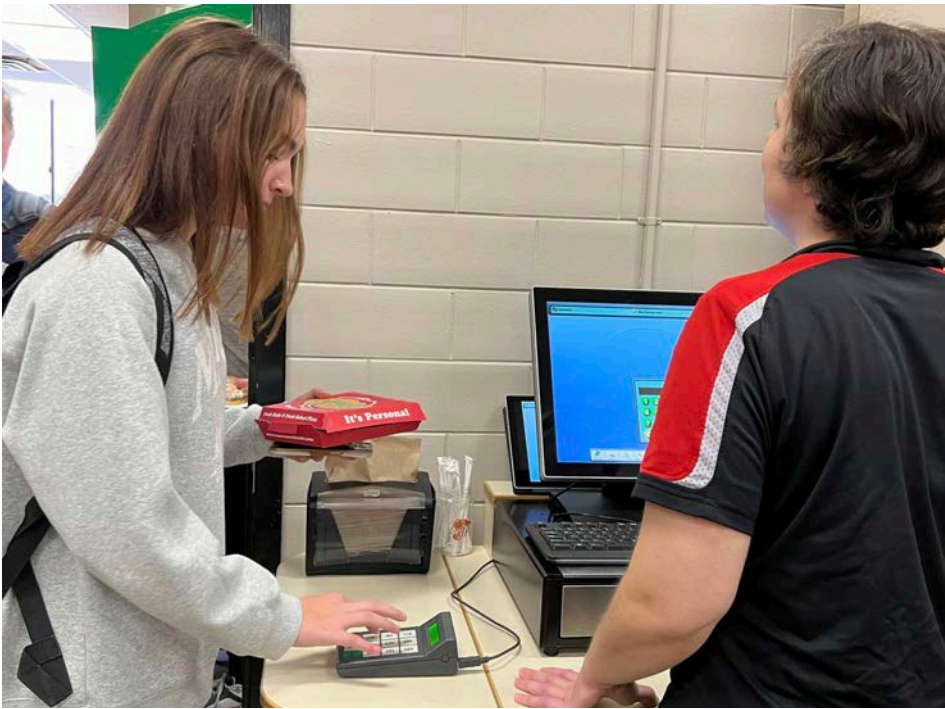
Vicksburg Schools is giving back, one pizza at a time!

Both Vicksburg High School and Middle School have the Smart Mouth Pizza stations and for every 10 pizzas sold, the company donates a meal to kids in need across the country!

Since last school year, Vicksburg High School alone has donated 4,518 meals!

We can't wait to see the total at the end of this school year, now that VHS and VMS have the pizzas.

What a yummy way to give back!



# Sunset Lake Teacher Kim Bond Honored

Congratulations to one of our teachers who was recently honored by a former student!

During back to school, Kalamazoo Orthodontics hosted a school supply drive and the top 3 patients who brought in the most items won a chance to nominate a teacher who has had a positive impact on their life. Those teachers won supplies for their classrooms.

they wanted her to know that she's affected this student's life in a positive way and because of that, they wanted to say a huge, "THANK YOU" with this tote.

Congratulations Mrs. Bond!

Sunset Lake Elementary teacher Kim Bond was surprised with a tote full of supplies. She learned she was nominated by student Azalea VanStrein.

Kalamazoo Orthodontics sent Mrs. Bond a message saying





# OEC Teaches Kids About Frog Calls

The Vicksburg Schools Outdoor Education Center is taking their lessons to the next level this year, thanks to support from local groups.

Third graders from across the district were the first to attend lessons at the OEC this year. They each got to spend a day learning all about frog calls and how they communicate.

First they broke out into small groups where they used various items provided to them to create their own unique “frog call” sound. New this year: they also used tablets provided by an Innovation Project grant to listen to and mimic the calls from specific types of frogs.

Then the class went out onto the grounds of the OEC to test out those calls! One student would be blindfolded while the others in their group would move around the area before making their frog calls. First they tested how long it took the blindfolded “frog” to find a single group member and then they tested how long it would take them to find their group when they all stood together.

The exercise was designed to mimic frog calls at night and show how the amphibians must work together to find each other.

It's the type of hands-on lesson that becomes really special using the backdrop of the Outdoor Education Center!





# Math Students Try Virtual Reality Headsets

Our Algebra 2 and Geometry students at Vicksburg High School are taking learning to the next level thanks to an Innovation Grant.

Using VR headsets and the Prisms VR Math program, they're stepping inside math problems to visualize and explore concepts

in new ways. Hands-on, immersive experiences like this help make abstract ideas click and bring problem-solving to life! We're proud to provide students with tools that prepare them for the future!





# Outdoor Beautification at Tobey Elementary

Thanks to a great group of students, staff, alumni, and community members for gathering for a special beautification day to kick off the school year looking sharp at Tobey Elementary!

Volunteers helped to refresh planting beds, pick up litter, and spruce up the entire area. The collaborative spirit was evident as people of all ages worked side-by-side to make the campus shine. Thank you to everyone

who contributed their time and effort to make our school look so amazing.

A huge shout-out is also in order for the generous support from local businesses. Kyle Shoemaker from Triple Edge Lawn Care and Romence Gardens who kindly donated and delivered beautiful mulch for our planting beds, which made a huge difference. Thanks for helping us out and supporting our school!



## Robotics Class at VHS

Students in our new Vicksburg High School Applied Engineering and Robotics class are off to a great start!

They started out learning the Engineering Design Process and practiced by building spaghetti towers.

Throughout the new class, students will use a hands-on, project-based approach to learn and apply engineering principles, exploring all fields of robotics and engineering through fun and innovative classroom activities

