



# POLAR PLUNGE

**The Polar Plunge was held on Friday March 15th. The Unified Physical Education class in cooperation with Special Olympics Minnesota raised a total of \$11,383! 95 Students and Staff participated in the Plunge! The top 3 Student Fundraisers were: Alex Sheldon, Levi Matthees and Troy Clemenson.**



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**  
 PAGE 2..... SUPERINTENDENT LETTER  
 PAGE 3.....TEACHER OF THE YEAR  
 PAGE 4..... BAND AND CHOIR  
 PAGE 5..... SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES  
 PAGE 7..... NURSE NOTES

**WHAT'S COMING UP?**  
 APRIL 1—NO SCHOOL/COMP DAY  
 APRIL 5—7-12 ONLINE LEARNING DAY  
 APRIL 8TH—SCHOOL BOARD WORK SESSION  
 APRIL 10TH—EARLY RELEASE  
 APRIL 22ND—SCHOOL BOARD MEETING  
 APRIL 27TH—PROM



Student Drop off and Pick up Instructions.

Dear Zumbrota - Mazeppa Public School District Parents and Community Members,

March 7, 2024

I would like to thank each of you that attended our school board meeting on February 26th whether you attended in-person or online. Consistent attendance at school board meetings is an indicator that a community is heavily interested in their school district and wants to be involved. As superintendent, it is both exciting and motivating to see so many community members passionate about the direction of our school district. I encourage you to keep attending board meetings, ask questions, and be engaged. Remember, this is YOUR school district.

I want to take this opportunity to update you on some important information regarding our financial status to ensure you have a better understanding of decisions that have been made and forthcoming proposals. Last month I communicated to you that for fiscal year 2023, as a district we deficit spent by \$813,558, thus the need to make changes with our budget moving forward. Unfortunately, being that a large percentage of our annual budget is related to staffing, to ensure we are moving forward as responsible stewards of our resources, reducing staff is an unavoidable reality given our enrollment has declined and our current class sizes are unsustainable. The good news is that after reductions, we will maintain class sizes that are still lower than most area schools. When making reductions, the goal is to have the least amount of impact on the classroom as possible while maintaining services. For fiscal year 2025, our administrative costs to the district in comparison to fiscal year 2023 will be over \$200,000 less.

Reducing staff is not our only method of reducing costs. In fact, staff reductions make up less than half of our overall reductions. I have collaborated with our teacher union leadership team and sought insight from our staff to discover other areas within our budget where we can either reduce expenditures or increase revenues. For example, we are able to reduce expenditures by being more creative with scheduling and curtailing our internal allotted budgets within our athletic department, buildings and grounds, technology department, supply budgets within each school, and transportation budget with Palmer Bus Company.

One thing I have learned in my short time as your superintendent is that our employees are one of our greatest strengths as a school district. One could simply look at the retention rate of our staff and quickly conclude that they want to be a Zumbrota - Mazeppa Cougar, and rightly so. As such, I have collaborated with the administration team to create other opportunities for some staff to remain in the district, albeit not in the very same position they are currently. While it may work for some and others it may not, we certainly are trying to keep familiar faces in our school buildings as we know relationships truly are the foundation of any success we have as a school district.

Throughout this process, please know that I am committed to the following:

- Maintaining core services that are essential to our school district.
- Finding creative solutions to continue offering valuable programs.
- Creating new programming and opportunities that our students will benefit from.
- Keeping you informed throughout this process.

We value your understanding and cooperation as we navigate this challenge. We are confident that by working together, we can minimize the impact of these budget reductions and continue to build a strong and vibrant school district. Thank you for reading and your continued support of Zumbrota - Mazeppa Public Schools. I am honored to lead our school district and look forward to many great years ahead.

Ryan B. Barnick

Superintendent Zumbrota - Mazeppa Public Schools

## Teacher of the Year Katie Kennedy

Health, High School Phy Ed & DAPE Teacher -



This is Katie's 16th year at ZM & 20 year teaching. When asked why she keeps coming back she said, "We live here, have roots here now and really good friends. I enjoy my coworkers a lot and the kiddos - it's unique to get to see them go from Kindergarten to senior year. Fun transitions to watch!". Katie lives in Mazeppa with her family.

### Katie's Nomination:

One of our star teachers has provided **rigorous and well-thought, relevant content** to her students every day along with a **safe space for students** to pour out their fears and anxieties, hopes and dreams or even just a peaceful place to collect themselves before starting or continuing their day. Her Health and Wellness classroom is a hot spot for students of all abilities and backgrounds to drop by and say hi or even just be before they go to their next destination. More often than not, her joyful presence is their destination. So have you ever had a chance to observe a 10th grade Health and Wellness class while Katie Kennedy teaches? It's a wonder to behold: kids of very, very different perspectives and upbringings interacting and having deep discussions about vulnerable and sensitive topics, opening up to each other and having multiple "light bulb" moments. Many times these kids come into the class at the start of the semester and have a chip on their shoulder, and by the time they finish are wishing it wouldn't end, both because of their outstanding, energetic teacher and because of her comprehensive, detailed and thorough teaching. Have you ever seen her engage her Developmental Adaptive Physical Education students when they are having a rough day? She is all smiles, singing songs and giving constant encouragement with a "don't quit, let's get to it" attitude. **All that talk we have each year about differentiating for our students? Katie can do that in her sleep, on the fly and in fractions of seconds.** Her creative and quick mind is always running for her students to make each lesson one of the best.

And have you ever walked along the catwalk while she teaches a high school Physical Education class? It's the best, we all know that, and if we don't, we should. PE classes, gyms and weight rooms are always stereotypically the most intimidating places, but Katie makes these environments fun for everyone of all experience levels, from the competitive athletes, motorheads and artists, to the less athletically inclined, and even our sensitive, withdrawn students who may loathe moving their bodies or just simply being around others in such an open and different setting. She connects with her students as naturally as if they've known her their whole lives, but it's a lot of work behind the scenes and she puts in the time with meaningful conversations and honest, encouraging feedback. Besides all of the fantastic curriculum and fun opportunities she provides her students, she also participates with her kids to get them engaged, and is competitive when she needs to be but can tone it down in an instant to meet the needs of her other students.

**Katie pours her heart and soul into her lessons** and her teaching not only because she holds herself to the highest of standards, but also she does it for her students. Her students are aware EVERY DAY of what they're learning and for what reason, and walk out of her classes with the knowledge to be successful in their own lives, decisions and relationships. I have run into alumni over the years and so many of them know or ask how Katie is doing because they care to continue the relationship she helped foster.

This **superhuman teacher** has dealt with plenty of curveballs in her own time at Z-M, from the never ending leaky ceiling issues in our gyms and who knows how many gym floodings at this point, to not having a Health classroom for over a year and constantly having to relocate to teach her students throughout the day. She bends over backwards to serve and help others, and can still land on top in terms of her ability to teach and foster relationships with her students. She has collaborated with so many of her colleagues, community members, parents and guardians, law enforcement, health professionals, other teachers in other districts, and dozens of alumni students to provide EVERY opportunity for our students in her time at Z-M.

**She is here for ALL students of all abilities**, backgrounds and upbringings. Students feel safe and heard in her classroom and presence and they are also just smiling all the time when they're around her.

In the past, Katie has served as Student Government Co-Advisor and Senior Class Committee Advisor; coached Volleyball for a season, and Dance Team and line judged for Volleyball for many years; helped bring the "Walk! Bike! Fun!" curriculum to our district so our students have the opportunity to bike in their high school physical education classes; facilitated the obtainment of cross-country skis from Nordic Rocks so our students 2nd grade and up can experience cross-country skiing; assisted in the Safe Routes to School program which helped get maps of safe walking and biking routes out to the communities of Zumbrota and Mazepa. The amount of grants that Katie has applied for and been awarded for our District and students behind the scenes is unreal. She has served as a member of the Site Team many times, and was even asked last year to come back to it.

Currently, she is (and has been for many years) the Chair of the Wellness Committee (including serving on the District Wellness Committee in the past); a REACH teacher for one section of students; a member of the Emergency Response Team when there is a medical emergency at the Zumbrota site; coaching Softball; co-teaching Unified PE to better serve our SPED students in DAPE and provide empathetic and inclusive experiences to a group of hand-picked general education students. There are a host of other things past and present not listed, however, her contributions to our students, staff, families and communities should not go unnoticed.

## **Zumbrota-Mazeppa High School Band and Choir**

On Wednesday, March 6th, the Zumbrota-Mazeppa High School Band and Choir performed in the Minnesota State High School Large Group Contest at Cannon Falls High School. The Concert Choir performed "Dirait-on" by Morten Lauridsen, "Non Nobis, Domine" by Rosephanye Powell, and "He Never Failed My Yet" by Robert Ray with Charlotte Haley, Kaylee Peterson, Reagan Rasmussen, and Thea Peterson performing solos. Judges for the vocal contest included: Stephanie Schumacher, Doug Strandell, and Lin Warren. The choir received good comments from all three judges including "lovely unison, "wonderful french," "nice warm tone in the tenor and bass," "Soprano and altos excellent work connecting the tone on the breath in those ascending leaps." "I love your attention to the details where you pull the volume back and build," and "Congrats to all the soloists! Great Work." Out of 40 points total, the choir received 38, 35, and 36 for a Superior rating.

The Concert Band performed three selections. The first was a Concert March titled Bright-on Beach by William Latham. The second was an arrangement of the hymn tune "It is Well With My Soul" by David Holsinger. The third was a Jazz influenced piece entitled Metrix by Robert Sheldon. The band's scores out of 40 possible points from the 3 judges included a perfect 40, 39, and 39. These scores were the highest given to any band that day and qualified the ZM band for an overall rating of Superior.

Congratulations to the ZMHS Concert Band and Concert Choir for their outstanding achievements. The Zumbrota-Mazeppa High School Band and Choir will receive trophies awarded by the Minnesota State High School League.

The choir was accompanied by Cindy Wilson. The Concert Band is directed by Scott Cory and the Concert Choir is directed by Susan Peterson.

Independent School District No. 2805  
Zumbrota-Mazeppa Public Schools  
Monday, February 26, 2024

Members Present: Angie Bredehoft, Jason Lohmann, Stephanie Miller, Jean Roth, Travis Liffrog and Jake Rude.

Also Present: Mr. Barnick, Mr. Rasmussen, Mr. Stapleton, Ms. Ahern, Mr. Schumacher, Scott Marine and Board Clerk Secretary Amber Rasmussen

Angie Bredehoft called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited

Jean Roth motioned to adopt the agenda as presented. Jason Lohmann seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

#### Reports:

Mr. Stapleton reports on 1/23/24 he participated in a Health Sciences Summit at Southeast Service Coop. ZM will be offering an Intro to Law Enforcement class here at ZM next year in conjunction with the Goodhue County Sheriff's Department. Registration, PSEO and Scholarship meetings were held in February. He attended the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals Winter conference on 1/25/24. The Read Act and NED (non exclusionary discipline) were big topics of conversation during breakout sessions.

Mr. Rasmussen reports that the Elementary School is finishing up I love to read month. This week they will be having dress up days. He attended the STEM educator of the year through SE Service Coop which recognized Lidia Wallerich's nomination. February 23 the High School FFA came to our buildings for some games and activities for our students. It is appreciated that they go out of their way to include our 3-6 students.

Ms. Ahern gave an update on the 9th annual Kids Heart Challenge. Primary students have been busy with field trips. Primary students are also enjoying I love to Read Month. Ms. Ahern recognized Senior Rachel Krinke for organizing a book drive for Primary students. Each student received a free book to take home. Kindergarten registrations are starting to come back to the

office. Registration will be up next year. Adapted Bowling starts this week. Ms. Ahern gave an update on the HSMS Popcorn Stand: Students are in charge of organizing and facilitating a popcorn concession stand on Fridays. They are in charge of selecting and ordering the materials needed. They also run the popcorn stand on Fridays and sell popcorn to both staff and students.

Mr. Schumacher gave a Winter Testing Benchmark report. Using the results Building-level data teams analyze & interpret: Identify students who would benefit from intervention (increased or initial), Begin interventions (Title I, ADSIS, WIN time groupings), Identify curriculum and instruction adjustments needed immediately (example: K-1 nonsense words), Identify ongoing check-ins needed (progress monitoring student growth) and Plan for future adjustments to curriculum and instruction (changes to implement the following year)

Scott Marine gave the January Finance Update. Currently 3.8M ahead of FY23 pace because of the timing of payments. Early FY payments made in FY24 are for FY23. Currently we are 2.86M behind of FY23 Pace primary due to less cares funding and the FY23 Capital Outlay Expenditures.

Superintendent Barnick reviewed enrollment numbers. The Strategic Planning Team met on February 13th and will meet again on April 17th. Mr. Stapleton and Mr. Barnick met with the director and HR director of the Zumbrota Care Center. They are in the process of creating a collaboration with them that would result in our students gaining field experience at their facility while earning high school credits and would result in them being able to earn a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) certification. He met with a Mayo representative to have initial discussions on the possibility of ZM offering a Medical Technology Program here at ZM. Mr. Barnick attended the Region 1 Spring Superintendent meeting at the Southeast Service Cooperative. We received updates on legislation from the Executive Director of MASA and other representatives, information on Cannabis Legalization and the impact it has on school districts, and alternative scheduling. He also attended the State Dance Competition on February 18th.

Patron Input was received

#### Old Business

1. Jason Lohmann motioned to accept the 2023-2024 house bid of \$390,000. Stephanie Miller seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.
2. Policy Review. Jason Lohmann motioned to table policy 606.5 for further review. Jean Roth seconded the motion. Motion carried. Jason Lohmann motioned to approve Policy 301 - School Administration, 302 - Superintendent, 310 - Elementary School Principal, 311 - Middle School Principal and 312 - High School Principal. Jake Rude amended the motion to introduce Policy 310 to state Elementary and Primary Principal. Travis Liffriig seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried. Jake Rude amended to take Letter A i-vi from policy 311 and add that language to policy 310 and 312.. Jason Lohmann stated policies 310, 311 and 312 should be reviewed by the policy committee. Jason Lohmann motioned to approve Policy 301-School Administration and Policy 302 - Superintendent. Jean Roth seconded the motion. All in favor.

#### New Business

1. Stephanie Miller motioned to adopt the consent agenda along with the payment of bills. Jean Roth seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.
  - a. Approve Minutes: January 29, 2024 and February 12, 2024
  - b. Approval of Hire: LaDonna Lexvold—Cook
  - c. Approval of Termination: Jessica Wilson—Cook
  - d. Approval of Resignation: Todd Petterson, Peer Review
  - e. Approval of Donation: Mazeppa Lions Club—\$1500 for Senior Banners
  - f. Approval of Bill Consideration: February – Stephanie Miller- February, Travis Liffriig-March
2. Revised Budget FY 2024. Scott Marine reviewed the budget. Projected to be down \$400,000. Jason Lohann motioned to approve the revised budget. Jean Roth se-

conded the motion. All in favor.

3. Ryan Barnick recommends making the following reduction of Positions:4.5 Teacher, 4 General Ed Paraprofessionals, 1 Nurse LPN and 1 Custodian. Travis Liffriig motioned to move the action item to a later time. Jake Rude seconded the motion. Jean Roth questioned Mr. Barnick, if this vote is postponed what would it delay. Mr. Barnick stated he would like to let staff know sooner. Roll call vote to postpone the vote for reduction of positions: Stephanie Miller-no, Jason Lohmann-no, Jean Roth-no, Angie Bredehoft-No, Jake Rude-yes, Travis Liffriig-yes. Motion failed. Jason Lohmann motioned to approve the following staff reductions: 4.5 teachers, 4 General Education Paraprofessionals, 1 Nurse LPN and 1 Custodian. Jean Roth seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Jason Lohmann-yes, Jean Roth-yes, Stephanie Miller-yes, Angie Bredehoft-yes, Jake Rude-no, Travis Liffriig-no. Motion carried.
  4. Jason Lohmann motioned to move the June School Board Meeting to Monday June 17th instead of Monday June 24th. Stephanie Miller seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.
  5. 2024-2025 Calendar Change: John Stapleton presented a change of calendar for the MSHS conferences. Staff would like to hold a Registration Conference on January 30th from 3:30-7:30 for parents so they may come in and learn what classes are available for their students. Angie Bredehoft motioned to approve the 2024-2025 Calendar Change. Stephanie Miller seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Angie Bredehoft motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:19 PM. Stephanie Miller seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

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Stephanie Miller, Clerk



Medications: ALL medications taken at school should be administered through the health office. Please notify the nurse if your child in KG-12th grade needs medication at school.

Health Conditions: Please keep the health office up to date on any changes to your child's health status during the school year. If they have been doctoring for anything and have any new diagnoses, please update nursing. We are here to help ensure that all students stay healthy and in school.

Scoliosis Screenings: Zumbrota-Mazeppa schools has brought back the scoliosis screening program to identify female students who might have an abnormal curve of the spine (scoliosis). Studies estimate that two to five of every 100 children develop scoliosis, and some require treatment.

Early detection and treatment help prevent or minimize the development of severe spinal problems. This spring we will be completing screenings on 6th grade girls. If you are concerned that a student has an abnormal curve and would like them assessed, please tell the nurses you want your child screened at any time during the school year.

Immunizations: Immunizations the school has on record are viewable in Parent Portal in Infinite Campus. Letters were sent home to 6th and 11th grade students reminding them of immunizations are needed before 7th and 12th grade. Incoming Kindergarten students will have letters sent home soon.

Incoming Kindergarten student requirements:

DTP – 5th dose Polio – 4th dose MMR – 2nd dose Varicella- 2 doses Hep B – 3 doses

Incoming 7th grader requirements:

MMR and Varicella – 2 doses Tdap booster Meningococcal

Incoming 12th grader requirements:

Meningococcal booster

If you choose to file exemptions for any immunizations, forms are available on ZM school website under Parents/Health services/Immunizations, or you can contact the school nurse at 507-732-7848. Students will not be eligible to attend the first day of school in 2024 until we have up to date immunizations on file.