

# News and Views

from the Vandercook Lake Public Schools

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Jackson, Michigan

## Board Seeks Approval of Auditorium

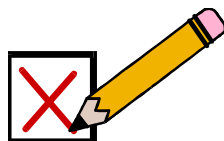
The Board of Education of the Vandercook Lake Public Schools has taken the final step in the process to provide a performance facility for Vandercook Lake students. The Board of Education approved the final resolution to present a bond issue to the voters of the district for the construction of an auditorium. This is an accumulation of many months of planning and committee work to evaluate the need for such a facility and the best way to meet the growing need of a large number of students in the district.

The committee determined there are a large number of students who are not currently having their educational needs met by the district and what steps could be taken to meet these needs. Discussion within the committee focused on our current facility and what type of facility is needed to provide for performances. Mr. Miller, Athletic Director, spoke to the committee of the excellent athletic facilities in the district and emphasized the need to provide equal facilities for student performances in the arts. The committee was unanimous in their decision that such a facility is needed by the district to meet the needs of our students.

The Committee made visits to neighboring districts to see the facilities available in those districts. Mr. Burdette Andrews, Superintendent Emeritus, stressed to the committee to make sure we make it large enough and complete enough to meet the needs of the district. The architectural firm of Woodard and Associates presented some possible solutions and also provided cost estimates of a facility of adequate size to meet the needs of the district. It was also determined that the best site would be at the west end of the high school. The committee reviewed the proposals and made recommendations to the architect of a final version and cost estimate.

The committee was unanimous in their decision to take their final version to the Board of Education and recommend the board seek voter approval for the facility. The Board of Education approved the recommendation and conferred with financial consultants and legal counsel to determine the best way to provide the needed financing for this project. The consultants provided the data and plan that would require a bond issue that would call for a slight increase in taxes and meet the financial needs of the project.

The Board of Education has approved a special election scheduled for March 24, 2003.



**Vote on Monday, March 24, 2003**

## Why do we need an auditorium?

The Michigan Department of Education has now included the Arts as one of the required curricular areas a district must offer. The Arts are now considered the 5th core content area joining math, English, science and social studies. The Michigan Dept. of Education has provided districts with a curriculum framework including benchmarks for visual arts, performing arts, dance, etc. There has also been much research conducted to show the impact participating in the Arts has on student achievement. The data shows the advantages for a student and a district offering programs in the Arts.

The committee, along with the administration, staff, and parents, listed advantages for having an auditorium in the district. Some of the reasons are listed below in several categories.

### Elementary Use:

Having a facility available for use in the elementary program would provide a performance facility that would enhance the students skills. This type facility would allow the focus of the performance be placed on the student with supporting lighting and sound. Members of audiences would be afforded the opportunity to watch the performance in a performance atmosphere. Some of the uses at the elementary level are:

- \* Elementary grade level music programs
- \* School assemblies designed for elementary students
- \* Performance facility for band concerts at the 5th and 6th grade levels.
- \* Kindergarten slide shows and special activities for end of year programs.
- \* Fifth grade celebration activity for end of year ceremony with parents and grand parents
- \* Special events such as guest artist, and talent shows
- \* Evening family-oriented programs with outside or community performers.
- \* Traveling theater performance for elementary students and parents.
- \* Class plays and musicals at the elementary level.
- \* After-school elementary drama club.
- \* PTO activities including special programs and special speakers.

### Secondary Use:

Approximately one third of the Middle School/High School students are involved in performance programs and are not being provided adequate facilities to support these programs. Secondary students will have opportunities to perform in a facility not currently available for their use. The following programs would make great use of this facility:

- \* Performance center for band and choir programs.
- \* Financial nights for parents and students seeking assistance for college.
- \* Presentations for annuals reports
- \* Curriculum courses with the focus being the arts
- \* Used for the staff orientation at the beginning of the year.
- \* School assemblies at the middle school high school level
- \* Baccalaureate services
- \* Graduation ceremony
- \* Make-a-Difference program
- \* Winner Circle program
- \* Drama studies in the curriculum
- \* Stage technology studies for students
- \* Athletic award nights throughout the year.
- \* Plays presented by different grade levels
- \* Musical productions
- \* Speech class usage
- \* Speech contest including forensics and speech competition
- \* Band and Choir Festivals
- \* Homecoming Ceremonies
- \* Class Meetings
- \* Common Planning time activities
- \* Senior awards nights
- \* Student awards nights at all levels

### Community Use:

Not only would there be advantages for our students at all levels, but there would also be definite advantages for the members of our community. Some of these possibilities are:

- \* Community meetings
- \* Concerts
- \* Community theater
- \* Township meetings
- \* Business and Corporate use
- \* Service organizations use
- \* Local Church use

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## **Representative Committee:**

The Board of Education established a special committee to study the possibility of a facility for student performances in the district. The committee was to determine need and possible solutions.

The committee consisted of the following individuals.

- Burdette W. Andrews, Superintendent Emeritus of the Vandercook Lake Public Schools
- Chuck Miller, Athletic Director, community member, and grandchildren in the district
- Joan Conat, long time resident of the district and graduate of Vandercook Lake Public Schools
- Randall Treacher, President of the Board of Education, graduate of Vandercook Lake Public Schools, parent of children in the district
- Jeff White, resident of the district, parent of children in district, and graduate of Vandercook Lake Public Schools
- Teresa Smak, parent of students in the district and graduate of Vandercook Lake Public Schools
- Diane Schweda, community member, member of Board of Education, parent of five graduates of Vandercook Lake Public Schools and grandchildren in the district
- Trevor Goedert, teacher in the district with past experience in drama performances
- Ken Fischman, community member with children in the district
- Steve Tucker, longtime teacher in the district, children graduated from Vandercook Lake Public Schools, child in the district, experienced performer
- Joe Verbecke, District band instructor, responsible for musical instrument student performances at all levels
- Matt Laura, Vocal music director at the Middle School and High School level. Responsible for all secondary level vocal music performances
- Marsha Sparks, community member, parent of children in the district, graduate of Vandercook Lake Public Schools, member of athletic boosters organization
- Lynda Childs, Music director for the elementary program, responsible for all musical performances of elementary students
- Katie Wilcox, community member, children in the district, active in music booster organization
- Tony Hollow, High School Principal
- Paul Chilcote, Elementary Principal
- Carolyn Rink, community member with children in the district and children graduated from Vandercook Lake Public Schools, works with music students in the district
- Sue Haney, Curriculum Director for the district
- Diane McQuillan, Elementary Assistant Principal
- Joe Sheets, VL school board member, graduate of Vandercook Schools with children in the district.
- Ron Bennett, Superintendent of Schools

## **Is this a good time to build?**

According to the financial consultants, the time is very good for school districts to be selling bonds. The current market is offering low interest rates for bonds currently on the market. The consultants used an interest rate of five percent in determining our proposal. The market at this time is lower and bonds are selling at interest below the five-percent interest rate and therefore would be beneficial to our proposal.

According to information we have received, this is an excellent time to build. Contractors are looking for work and providing very good pricing in an effort to secure the work for their company. Many bids in the area are coming in well below budgeted figures. Here again, this is a positive time for this project.

## Cost to the Tax Payers

How much is an auditorium going to cost? The Auditorium will require permission from the voters to issue construction bonds in the amount of \$3,625,000 for the construction of this facility. This bond issue will be for a twenty-five year period.

The voters of Vandercook Lake approved a bond issue for the additions to the High School and Townsend Elementary in 1997. That issue required an increase of 6.06 mills on property taxes. This new issue would increase the millage rate to 6.93 mills, which is an increase of .87 mills, less than a mill increase. Using the increase of .87 mills over the 1997 bond issue, the following examples show the cost for the building of the auditorium. It is important to remember that the tax amount is figured on the taxable value of the property and not the assessed value. The wording on the ballot is confusing and written to comply with state law. The figure that best represents the true issue is the last line that indicates the total tax rate will not exceed the 6.93 mills.

### Example 1:

Assessed Value (SEV Value shown on tax statement) = \$44,000

Taxable Value (shown on tax statement) = \$40,000

.87 mills is 87 cents per \$1000 value

Tax increase would be  $40 \times 87$  cents or \$ 34 increase over the 1997 issue.

This would be approximately 9 cents per day.

### Example 2:

Assessed Value (SEV Value shown on tax statement) = \$30,000

Taxable Value (shown on tax statement) = \$25,000

.87 mills is 87 cents per \$1000 value

Tax increase would be  $25 \times 87$  cents or \$ 21 increase over the 1997 issue.

This would be approximately 6 cents per day.

### Example 3

Assessed Value (SEV Value shown on tax statement) = \$70,000

Taxable Value (shown on tax statement) = \$65,000

.87 mills is 87 cents per \$1000 value

Tax increase would be  $65 \times 87$  cents or \$56 increase over the 1997 issue.

This would be approximately 15 cents per day.

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Many property owners qualify for the homestead tax credit which greatly reduces the amount of taxes paid by property owners on a fixed income. This tax refund can be received from the State without having to file a tax return. This can be done by filing a Property Tax Credit Form available from the State. Individuals receiving property tax refunds would have no increase in their taxes.

## Winterfest 2003

Gymnasium-wall decorating competition, dress-up days and a pep rally were all part of this year's Winterfest activities. The SADD organization sponsored this year's Winterfest dance on Saturday evening, February 8, 2003.

The winner's court included:

Ninth Grade: Katherine Mollitor and Brandon Johnson

Tenth Grade: Heather Fushi and Brandon McCollum

Eleventh Grade: Traci Wells and Randy Hancock

Twelfth Grade: Carly Cyphers and Eric Radford and Prince Brent Watkins and Princess Lindsay Adamczyk

The dance was well attended by our student body. Chaperones included Mr. Essex, Ms. Koetsier, the Roggenbaums, and the Irwins.

## Academic Games 2003

Vandercook Lake High School will once again compete in academic games, Saturday March 22, 2003, at Jackson Community College. Our students will compete with students from other county schools in the area of English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Historically, we have had much success in this academic competition. It is open to the public and all are welcome to come and watch. Check McDevitt Hall at Jackson Community College for time and location of these competitions. Our next "News and Views" will announce our coaches and participants.

## DAR Winner Selected Benjamin Charles Masters

In 1934 the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution established a Good Citizens Contest in high schools. This award is to recognize and encourage outstanding young people in the pursuit of high ideals. The established qualities for good citizens are based upon:

1. Leadership: personality, self control, assumption of responsibility
2. Dependability: truthfulness, loyalty, and punctuality
3. Service: cooperation, courtesy, consideration of others
4. Patriotism: unselfish interest in family, school, community, and nation.

During the month of October, the teachers were asked to nominate a senior student for the DAR award. The top three teacher nominee names were presented to the senior class for their final vote. Those students were Leah Adair, Jordan Clark, Ryan Essex, Korey Kuhl, and Ben Masters. Ben Masters was chosen to receive a Good Citizen Pin and Certificate from the Sarah Treat Prudden Chapter of the NSDAR for Jackson County in February, 2003.

During December Ben began his state competition by completing a questionnaire and submitting a letter of recommendation, complete transcript and graduation picture. He also wrote a 500-word essay on a topic selected by the NSDAR. Congratulations to Ben on his Jackson County selection and good luck in the state competition!

## Annual Blood Drive March 13, 2003

The Vandercook Lake Student Council is hosting its Annual Blood Drive on Thursday, March 13, 2003, from 8:30-2:30 p.m. in the high school gymnasium. This is an excellent opportunity for our community to give the gift of life. Please call the high school at 782-8167 for an appointment or stop by during blood drive hours.

## Women in Sports

This year's award goes to Mrs. Wendy Woodard Waldron. During high school, Wendy played basketball, volleyball, and varsity track. She was a 1988 graduate. After high school she attended Western Michigan University where she received a bachelor of science degree.

In 2002, she went to Jackson Community College and received an associates degree in nursing. Wendy is married and has three children. Congratulations, Wendy!

**Parents, winter blues got you down?** Come join us for a free night of stress relief, relaxation and pampering. Townsend Elementary is hosting its first annual "Parent Pampering Session" Tuesday, February 25, 2003 from 6:30-8:00 PM. Free baby-sitting, healthy snacks, a speaker, door prizes, facials and stretching are some of the activities planned. Please call Townsend at 784-6133, ext. 601 to register or receive more information for this relaxing night out.

### **High School MEAP Test:**

The window for this year's High School MEAP test will be April 28 - May 9. All juniors will be tested in the areas of social studies, science, mathematics, and English language arts. Any senior needing to retake any portion of the test to qualify for the Merit Scholarship should see Ms. Koetsier to sign up before April 28. We strongly encourage seniors to retake any portion of the test needed for the Merit Scholarship. If you have any questions regarding testing or the Merit Scholarship, please contact Sue Haney at 782-0342.

### **4 Year Old Preschool Program Registration:**

Registration for next year will begin the week of April 7. We will have a morning session and an afternoon session with both state funded and tuition paid slots depending on our allotment from the state and eligibility. If you have a child who will be 4 by December 1, 2003 but not 5 before December 1, 2003, please contact the McDevitt school office at 782-0342 or stop in the McDevitt office for registration information the week of April 7. Space may be limited so call early if you plan to have your child attend in the fall.

## **Kindergarten Round-up - See Calendar on Page 8**

### **Lions of Michigan Exchange Program May be Looking for You**

Lions of Michigan Youth Exchange Program offers summer opportunities for youth to travel, to expand their knowledge of family and community life in other cultures.

Young people between the ages of 16 and 21 may participate. Youths traveling must be of good health, both mentally and physically, and be willing to learn new customs and cultures. Knowledge of foreign languages is not mandatory, except in France where the participant must have previously studied at least one year of French. However, some knowledge of the country that a youth chooses to travel is helpful.

Each cultural exchange is approximately four to eight weeks long, depending on the country to be visited. Youths traveling on the program are responsible for their fees and fares but may write to local Lions clubs and organizations to request sponsorship. Youths traveling on the program stay with Lions approved families.

The Lions are also looking for families who would like to host a youth for three to six weeks in the winter or summer months.

For more information on the Lions of Michigan Youth Exchange Program please call Lion Bill Mason at (517) 726-0286.

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## STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION IMPACTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### ***Federal No Child Left Behind Legislation***

You have probably heard of President Bush's education reform legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). If you have wondered what this is about and how this impacts Vandercook Lake Schools, you are not alone. NCLB is a federal reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and was signed into law by President Bush in January of 2002. It focuses on four basic goals: 1) Stronger accountability for results 2) Increased flexibility over federal funds 3) Expanded options for parents 4) Emphasis on proven teaching methods.

The legislation has created some new programs, including: a new Reading First program; more opportunities for students to receive supplemental instruction; a way for some students in under-performing schools to transfer to other schools; new requirements for notifying parents; assurance that teachers and paraprofessionals working with your children are highly qualified.

All districts are affected by NCLB. Vandercook Lake School District initiatives reflect the spirit and intent of NCLB while some practices will require some changes. Some activities Vandercook Lake has in place to help raise student achievement and meet NCLB requirements include after school tutoring, HOSTS, wireless computers, Educational Development Plans, community service projects, FAIM, reading recovery, summer school, Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI), common planning time and many other initiatives. We will continue to monitor information regarding NCLB in order to maintain full compliance with the law. We will always monitor our own programs for their effectiveness and impact on student achievement.

### ***Michigan Education YES! Accreditation Program***

Education YES! A Yardstick for Excellent Schools) is the new accreditation system developed by the Michigan Department of Education. It is designed to provide two things: 1) A comprehensive picture of student academic achievement over time, and 2) A snapshot of the school's efforts to improve student and school performance.

Accreditation will be determined by combining student achievement and school performance results. The Education YES! report card meets the state's responsibility to NCLB for reporting to the community about student achievement, school status and progress. The Michigan State Board of Education establishes the standards by which all Michigan schools will be evaluated. Comparing Vandercook Lake students' achievement against these standards will determine whether they make adequate yearly progress (AYP), required by the federal legislation (NCLB).

At this point, we have been told the report card will include an overview and reports on MEAP scores and school performance indicators. A school's yearly MEAP status will be shown, as well as the three-year history. Achievement will be measured in terms of status, change, and growth. The MEAP results will make up 67% of a school's overall grade. School performance will be evaluated by factors such as engagement (continuous improvement, curriculum alignment, performance management), instructional quality (teacher quality and professional development, extended learning opportunities, arts and humanities, and advanced coursework), learning opportunities (family involvement, student attendance and drop out rates, four-year education and employment plan, and school facilities).

When the Education YES! report cards are made available for the public, it is important to keep in mind that this is the beginning of a process, not an end. The information contained in the report will be used as a tool at Vandercook Lake to continue to improve the education of our students.

**CALENDAR - 2002-2003**

March	5	Parent-Teacher Conferences Elementary 5-8 pm;
	5	Parent Teacher Conferences - MS/HS 6-8 pm
	6	Parent Teacher Conferences MS/HS 1-4; 6-8 pm; Elem. Conf. 1-5 pm - <b>1/2 Day of School</b>
	7	<b>1/2 Day of School</b>
	10	Board Meeting - HS Library - 6:00 p.m.
	13	Blood Drive - 3rd Grade Music Program 7:00 p.m.
31	Spring Break Begins	
April	7	School Resumes from Spring Break
	14	Board Meeting - HS Library - 6:00 pm.
	17	Make a Difference Dessert 7-9 pm
	18	Good Friday - <b>1/2 Day School</b>
	22	Kindergarten Round-up
	23	Kindergarten Round-up
	24	Kindergarten Round-up
	24	First and Second Grade Music Program - 7:00 pm
May	2	Spring Band/Choir Concert at JCC 7:30 pm
	3	Prom
	12	Board Meeting - HS Library - 6:00 pm.
	12	5th Grade Orientation 8-9:30 am
	13	5th Grade Parent Orientation 6:15 pm
	21	Senior Dessert 6:30 pm - High School Awards 7:30 pm
	23	<b>1/2 Day of School</b>
	26	Memorial Day - <b>No School</b>
	28	6th and 7th Grade Awards 1:30 pm
	28	8th Grade Awards 6:30 pm
June	1	Baccalaureate
	2	Commencement - Potter Center 8:00 pm
	4	Exams - <b>1/2 day of school</b>
	5	Exams - <b>1/2 day of school</b>
	6	<b>No School</b>
	9	Board Meeting - HS Library - 6:00 pm

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