



FALL/WINTER 2023

FREEDOM ACRES NEWS

From the Principal's Desk

WRITTEN BY ANGELA MILLER, PRINCIPAL



The 2023-24 school year started on July 11th and a school year is a marathon with many sprints. Each sprint requires endurance and collaboration of the team to bring the mission success and reach the ultimate goal!



As we reflect on our sprints, the first sprint allowed our Freedom Acres PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) to be out front and center with an amazing experience of marching in the Ionia Free Fair parade. Our shared goal was to raise awareness of our school in the community and ultimately give our students a presence in a community event. A BIG thank you to Ben and Brandy Durrant for sharing their wagon to create a float for our learners and families to ride on during the parade. Our school family connected and made a day of fun memories! Candy was shared with the downtown blocks of community members observing this very well-attended community event. It was an opportunity to hand out flyers to recruit great staff to serve in the role of health care aide. Our school had the most applicants and it was a great sprint into the new school year!

Our students deserve school events that make lasting memories! What is the perfect recipe for a great fall sprint?

RECIPE FOR A FALL MOVIE ON THE PLAYGROUND



1 scoop of a great movie...Elemental

1 cup of a great screen...Kara Collier shared her screen with our school family!

1 amazing orchestrator, Patrick Tucker

Many heaping cars of families excited to watch the movie!

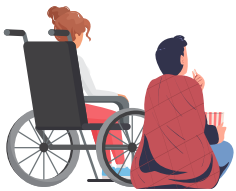
4-6 cases of water...Thank you to our PTO for their donations!

8-10 boxes of flavoring...Thank you to our PTO for their donations!

75 bags of popcorn...Thank you to our high school classroom for popping and packing! Team Rodgers completes a notorious sprint!

50 Ice Cream Sandwiches (Thank you to Mr. Miller for making an emergency run for more to support the Extraordinary turnout!)

1 warm and inviting fall night...September 29th



Sometimes a sprint happens without planning...October 11th was a day of surprise for our learners! Erin Scarborough shows up each day for kids with the biggest smile and heart! When she is not showing up at Freedom Acres, she serves as a volunteer firefighter. She dressed in her gear and visited classrooms and our students loved every minute of the visits. Students had the opportunity to try the gear on and so many smiles were shared. Connection and relational capacity grow when fertilized with joy and curiosity!





As our **Marathon** unfolds with grace and endurance, our school has an amazing contributor, the Michigan Department of Corrections, and the inmates make our school a priority when giving back to the community! Daniel Schafer, MDOC Special Activities Coordinator/Volunteer Coordinator, delivers and shares moments with our students. Our students were so excited about the gift of pumpkins and warm blankets at Christmas! MDOC provides two **sprints** of giving and delight!

Reflection on the launch of the marathon fills my heart ❤️ and I am so fortunate to be the principal of Freedom Acres and to share time with amazing families, staff, and students! Our school leads the journey of connectedness and relational capacity!

Any guesses on our next sprint to the 2023-24 school year?



Halloween 2023

Our famous Freedom Acres Falcon and superhero appeared to lead the Halloween parade! The rainy Michigan weather moved our parade to the inside of the school instead of our new tradition of parading around our GREAT playground. Did the mascot let this weather change rain on our event? Our Falcon is fearless and danced like the sun was shining for the first time after a long Michigan winter! Our Falcon is the best dance partner and will lift anyone's spirit to a glorious level of pure enthusiasm.

Our final sprint is one of the biggest events...lights, camera, action... 2023 holiday celebrations, and Santa visits!



Our team closed 2023 with the most amazing Christmas celebration! December 20th is a day to remember for staff, students, and families! A parent stopped me in the hallway and shared, "I look forward to this day every year!" Every student from our three building programs (Autism Spectrum Disorder, Severely Cognitively Impaired, & Severely Emotionally Impaired) met with Santa to receive a gift. Santa (Mr. Hank Marshall) visited with each student and he made a

Our **marathon** will not be completed until the end of June and we have many more **SPRINTS** to share during the second half of this school year! Parents, know you are valued by me and always welcome at Freedom Acres. The Freedom Acres PTO is a great group of parents and they truly cheer for every opportunity that brings **UNITY** to our school community. They welcome new members and have a Facebook page.

heartfelt attempt to build a connection with each student. Mr. Marshall plans to retire after this Christmas season and has served in the Santa role for 49 years. The day included a family-style grilled fresh luncheon with shared conversation with our local veterans, families, staff, and students. Breanna Sterzick sang for our student body for an hour and we had two hours of music served to us by our very own Patrick Tucker and he makes every musical event a melodic celebration for our ears, heart, and soul. Our PTO and local veterans truly make this day financially possible through their strong commitment to fundraising and making donations. Deb Alderich partners with me during phone and in-person meetings to navigate the waters of fundraising and connecting with many community partners. Every donation helps the giving tradition to continue. We are so blessed to have both groups' support during the holiday season and beyond. The hard work is validated by smiles from parents and students!



On a More Personal Note

I have a personal commitment to the Ionia community! I have raised my family here and have always been invested in giving back to this community. With age, I become more of an open book and hope that this community only strengthens with time.

My husband, Jeff, is one of my biggest supporters of the work I do and he rides along on every **sprint**. He has never been able to slow me down, so he joins the journey or **MARATHON**. I want to thank him for his commitment to my dreams and for being a believer in the work at Freedom Acres. He is often quietly behind the scenes. I want to thank him for pulling the wagon in the Ionia Free Fair Parade, making popcorn at the movie on the playground, running to buy more ice cream sandwiches when we had an amazing turnout for an event, assisting with shopping for the holiday celebrations most weekends in December, and above all for always helping with any event or need I approach him with for the love of the students I serve.



I have three amazing sons and it is hard to believe my firstborn, Kyle, will be 30 years old this month! He had many health sprints from his start on January 4th as a one-pound 8-ounce baby. His perseverance taught my husband and me many things! Flexibility and appreciation for each day as a healthy family were just the beginning! Kyle has granted us a wonderful grandson, Lukka, and he has stolen our hearts. Conner is a year and a half into his apprenticeship and college for the tool and die trade. He continues to make his parents so proud with his level of responsibility and giving heart. Keegan is the youngest, and a sophomore at Belding High School. He is having a great bowling season and awaits baseball starting. Driving to school is a new sprint for him and he has experienced some learning along the way.

From a Professional Lens...

Michigan Department of Education supports formative assessment and I completed the process to be a FAME coach. Our staff does a marvelous job with formative assessment and monitors student progress continually through observations and data collection for IEPs. This opportunity has welcomed new training opportunities. I have completed the Advanced Cognitive Coach training and Adaptive Schools. My new supervisor, Natalie Fuller, accompanied me to Adaptive Schools and I was so honored to have the support of my supervisor and district with this mission. Application of our learning has been validated through our meeting practices and collaborative interactions in all settings. I feel very fortunate to have these experiences and know learning is a priceless asset.

Above all, thank you for sharing your child with me and allowing me to serve as your building principal at Freedom Acres! Cheers to all the sprints we embrace together in 2024!

Educationally yours,
Angela Miller

WINTER HEALTH TIPS

Health News from Nurse Becky

Avoid the Flu

- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Get plenty of sleep
- Exercise regularly
- Consider getting an Influenza vaccine
- Stay home when you are ill
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer before you eat or drink touch your face



How the Flu is Spread

People with flu can spread it to others up to about 6 feet away. Most experts think that flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets made when people with influenza cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth or nose.

Also please remember to call Freedom Acres 616-527-2921 to report your child's absence.

Thank you for helping to keep Freedom Acres healthy.

Common Flu Symptoms

Influenza usually starts suddenly and may include the following symptoms:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Diarrhea and vomiting (more common among children than adults)

If you experience any of these symptoms stay home until you are feeling better and for at least 24 hours after you have had a fever, vomiting or diarrhea in order to help stop the spread of the flu.

For more information on Influenza go to www.cdc.gov.



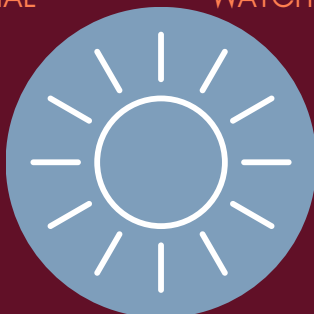
BE SOCIAL



WATCH YOUR SLEEP



KEEP MOVING



GET SOME SUNLIGHT



PRACTICE RELAXATION

Note from Ms. Elizabeth

Be curious about learning new ways to make yourself feel well and healthy by trying some of the listed activities! Checking in with yourself daily by keeping a journal to log how you feel, is an excellent self-monitoring tool to help track your moods. You will see where necessary changes may need to be made in your routine to improve your overall health and keep you with a motivated, positive mindset that you carry with you into the Spring!

Be kind to yourself. Be kind to others. Be Inspired.



WINTER HEALTH TIPS

from Mrs. Emily and Ms. Elizabeth

Get Active This Winter!

Embrace the winter chill with a delightful snowball relay! Gather the family for a high-energy, laughter-filled, five-minute activity. Work together as a family to get the snowballs from one place to another. Get creative with your movement and enjoy the fun. If it is too cold, create snowballs out of socks or paper to enjoy the fun inside! This quick and fun activity will get everyone moving and keep you active over the winter break!

Get Regular Exercise!

Exercise strengthens your immune system, releases feel-good chemicals in your body and improves your mental health. You do not need a fancy gym membership to get moving.

Find an activity that you enjoy, whether it is going for a brisk walk outside, yoga, light stretching or just walking up and down your stairs in your house, engaging your body in 30-60 minutes of physical activity will leave you feeling more emotionally regulated and energized! If you are behind a desk all day or work a sedentary job, try setting a timer for every 15-30 minutes to remind you to get up and move.

Be Social!

When feelings similar to depression set in, it is very important not to isolate yourself. Increasing your social interactions with friends and family can boost you and motivate you to engage in the activities that you enjoy! Meet a friend at your favorite coffee shop, ask them to go on a peaceful winter hike in the woods, or go see a movie. Laughing, meaningful conversation between friends and sharing meals together go a long way to maintain a positive, warm outlook during the chilly months.

Prioritize Sleep!

During sleep, your body is busy working to restore and heal itself, in order to begin anew the next day feeling alert and refreshed. Aiming to get at least 6-8 hours of sleep every night will help prevent moodiness, as well as improve concentration, memory and focus during the day!

Find Your Light!

Light and Sun therapy is a great way to get some necessary Vitamin D that is essential for our bodies to maintain a healthy immune system, bones and muscles while protecting us from cognitive decline. Exposure to sunlight, especially during the morning or midday hours, have been found to help maintain healthy sleep-wake cycles and avoid an afternoon energy slump.

Practice Relaxation Techniques!

Our thoughts are very powerful in the way in which they impact our everyday lives and mood. Explore and learn about different relaxation techniques that work for you such as yoga, meditation, visualization or guided imagery, massage therapy or group/individual counseling support services. All of these strategies can be effective in reducing stress levels which promote emotional health. Practicing one of the previously listed activities for 5-10 minutes a day, will significantly influence your daily thought patterns and boost your overall mood.

Elementary School with Mrs. April Cavanaugh

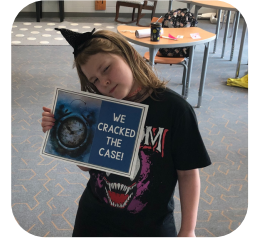
Hands On Learning

WRITTEN BY APRIL, KATHY AND CASSIDY

It's hard to believe that we are 3 months into the school year. The students have been working hard on academics and social emotional learning. We started the school year off with our 5K and welcome back cookout. All the students completed the 5K and enjoyed the potluck lunch.



Academically, in Science, students started their own spider plant. Each week they measure the growth, water as needed and recently had to transplant them into bigger pots. In Social Studies we did an escape room with Mrs. Abby's room for Constitution Day. What a great way to learn and interact with peers!

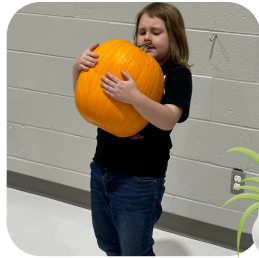
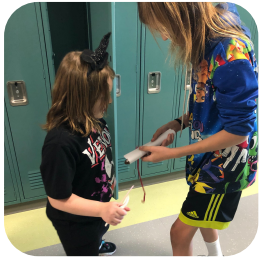


We had a great Halloween celebration, a parade through the school, escape room fun, and lots of treats! The fall brought lovely weather, which meant more outside activities and fun! The playground is still one of our favorite activities.

The holiday season is upon us. Our theme this year is 'Frosty the Snowman'. As a class we created a Frosty scene to display for the school to see. We also had Santa's workshop where the students made different items as gifts or just for fun.



The year has started off amazing and we are looking forward to all the upcoming events, activities and learning!



Middle School with Mrs. Abby Bailey

New School Year, New Teacher, New Beginning!

WRITTEN BY ABBY, NATASHA AND KACI

Welcome to Mrs. Bailey's classroom, where students were welcomed to a new look to their classroom and fresh new ideas. At the end of August and beginning of September the students had fun learning about the life cycle of a monarch butterfly and seeing them hatch from a chrysalis into a butterfly. We did a U.S. Constitution and Halloween escape room activity with Mrs. April's class and had a blast. The students enjoyed racing the clock to finish all the different challenges in time to escape the rooms.



In the midst of all the fun learning activities, our class has been working hard at their academics and reading goals. Reading buddies has been reestablished where our students leave the classroom and join another classroom in the SCI program to partner up and read to those kids.



Something new we have started this year is "Circle Time". This incorporates our restorative practices in a time set aside, each morning and afternoon, for our class to come together in a circle and talk about our feelings, emotions, how our night/morning/weekend went and how the day has been. The students have been very engaging in circle time and look forward to the short games to follow.



High School with Mrs. Jessica Rodgers Time Flies When You Are Having Fun!

WRITTEN BY JESSICA, GINA AND MEGAN H

The 2023-2024 school year kicked off with classroom staff having gained an abundance of knowledge and skills after participating in five days of Restorative Practices training in both Kansas and Muskegon, MI. These practices have been utilized in cultivating and growing relationships in the classroom and across the program. You will see them on display every morning when we circle up together; going over a quote, playing a game, setting goals, and growing as individuals and as a whole class.

"Restorative practices are essential for a community to care for each other and grow together." - Kara Pranicoff

Our restorative practice skills are not the only skills that we are honing and developing! We are excited to share that we have continued with the school-wide food buffet every Wednesday. From preparing menus, passing out order forms, grocery shopping, prepping food, and serving staff, learners are cultivating their transition skills, communication skills, and personal communication skills.

We are enjoying a change to our adaptive physical education schedule; a change that reflects a more recreational physical education schedule. Each month our students are offered two different activities by Mrs. Emily and they select a minimum of four activities to participate in! Giving the students the ability to make the choice of what to participate in allows them to practice their advocacy skills while giving their voice further meaning in their education.



TRAILS SEL curriculum continues to be delivered to students by Ms. Elizabeth, our School Behavior Coach, on a weekly basis. This time gives students an opportunity to practice identifying their emotions, their coping skills, and more while growing their interpersonal relationship skills with their peers and support staff.

Our school is truly off to a great start and we cannot wait to see what the rest of the year holds.

Adapted PE with Mrs. Emily Stall

Something for Everyone

WRITTEN BY EMILY S

I am thrilled to update you on the fantastic strides being made in our Adapted Physical Education class here at Freedom Acres! Students have been actively engaged in physical activities and exercises that cater to their unique needs, fostering a sense of growth, inclusion, and well-being. We focus on enhancing motor skills, promoting fitness, and increasing peer relationships within the classroom.



Some highlights include our FALL 5K, Recreational Sports Program (Transitions and Upper SEI), as well as our daily growth through the exploration of sports. Please take some time to enjoy a few pictures of the learners showing off their excitement to be involved in our engaging programming. I am looking forward to future recreational excursions, our annual Olympics, and warm weather.

This has been an exciting year! I had the honor of marrying my wonderful husband in June. It was a wonderful celebration filled with love, family, and our closest friends. We also purchased our first home together and have officially moved into Ionia County. I am enjoying the shorter commute to work. I want to thank you all for your continued support as we all continue to grow and achieve our goals here at Freedom Acres!

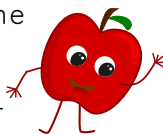


PreK/Elementary SCI with Mrs. Stephanie Brown

Laughter = Goals

WRITTEN BY STEPHANIE, ASHLEY, STACIE, DENISE AND TYLER

Fall is in full swing! We had a super fun summer and now are embracing the holiday spirit! The students have started making all kinds of fall crafts, singing seasonal songs, and even helped Ms. Tyler make homemade applesauce. We had a successful Halloween parade and the students enjoyed showing off their awesome costumes. The staff all displayed their inner Barbie spirit!



Don't be fooled by the sounds of laughter coming from our classroom, our students and staff are working super hard at achieving goals! Everyday our students are greeted by cheerful staff that come up with creative ways to teach new skills so that the work seems like play time. We incorporate communication and motor skill practice into each activity.



We continue to have PT on Mondays, Adaptive Physical Education on Mondays and Fridays, Speech and OT group every Tuesday, Library on Wednesdays, and Reading Buddies with our SEI friends on Thursday afternoons. Most of our students also receive Whirlpool Therapy sprinkled in throughout the week as well. We are BUSY, BUSY, BUSY!!!!

We wish everyone a fabulous holiday season!



Middle School SCI with Ben Croel

Making Connections

WRITTEN BY BEN, GYWEN, KIM K, AND HEATHER

I think by now I have met all of the families of the wonderful students in my classroom this year! It has been such a pleasure to get to know each student and make connections with them. I want to share a little information about myself as well as the staff in the classroom. My name is Ben Croel. I started with the ISD in August of 2014 and have primarily worked with transition-aged students with Autism. It has been a wonderful change for me to work with this younger population that appears to appreciate my desire to be silly and playful.

The staff that is working with me this year are some of the best Freedom Acres has to offer. Gywen Miilu, Kim King, and we currently have a long-term substitute HCA named Lisa English. I feel lucky everyday to work with a staff that clearly cares so much for each student. We went from working on Halloween crafts right into making Christmas crafts with the students. It is really fun to see the students get excited and participate in different activities. Though it is not all fun and games! The students are working hard on their goals every day and we are seeing amazing growth!



High School with Mrs. Kate Alcook

Learning, Laughing, Lots of Fun!

WRITTEN BY KATE, TONY, KIRSTEN AND KIM S

What an exciting time this school year has been so far! When I joined the Freedom Acres family, I stated that I am looking forward to learning, laughs, and lots of fun. The past several months have been packed with them all!

Through our journey there have also been lots of changes made to the physical layout of our classroom. As I learn more about my students each day, it's exciting to see how their interests play a part in the transformation. While it's still a work in progress, the end goal is to create a space for everyone to explore and try new things throughout the learning process. I can't wait to see what the rest of the year will bring!



We have been working hard to practice our communication skills and move our bodies. When you walk into our room you will see the use of adaptive equipment, reading stories with friends, completing jobs in the classroom and throughout the school, as well as dancing and singing. It truly fills my heart to watch my students participate and have fun as they engage in the classroom activities!



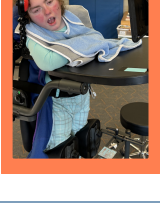
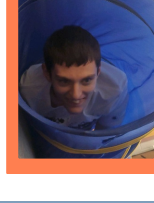
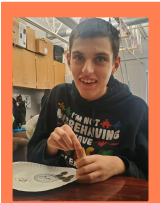
Transition SCI with Mrs. Lynne Geiger-Wester

New Spaces! New Experiences! More Learning!

WRITTEN BY LYNNE, TRINA, HALI AND JESSICA W

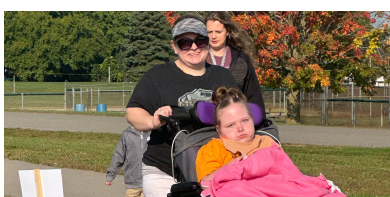
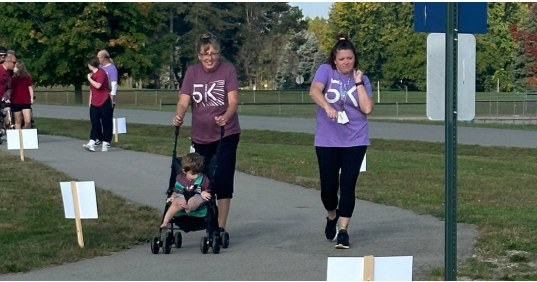
Our classroom has a whole new look this year! Gone are the student desks and many of the things which made our room look like a "traditional" classroom. Now it looks and feels more like a space we may live in as we get older and transition into adulthood. It is our little home away from home!

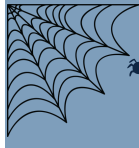
We have a new "kitchen" table in the kitchen. We eat breakfast and lunch together around it just like we would with our family at home. This experience offers us daily opportunities to practice important social behaviors like personal space, sharing, and table manners. We have a new "living room" recliner to snuggle up in while listening to music, enjoying a good book, or watching a favorite movie on our new television. We have a new couch in the "living room" too! Some of us like to sit on it while looking out the windows. Others like to sit on it and play games together. Sometimes it's just a great place to relax when we need a moment of quiet time. Our "living room" couch offers another new space to learn while practicing social skills such as taking turns, sharing, and communicating with each other. Our "new" room lets us explore learning opportunities together, in a setting much like the one we will live in, as we transition to adulthood. We LOVE our new space!



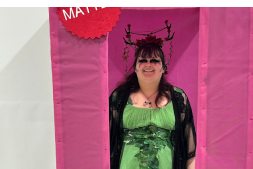
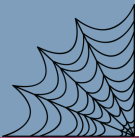


FA ANNUAL 5K





HALLOWEEN



Elementary ASD with Miss Khloe Kremer

Practice Makes Progress

WRITTEN BY KHLOE, MEGAN R, MEG A, TAYLOR, KENDRA, CARMEN, SYDNEY, AND KAIJA

The ASD preschool classroom has been having such an amazing school year!

In the beginning of November, both the morning and afternoon sessions took their first field trip to Taggart's Playground in Portland. This gave the students the opportunity to practice skills we have been working on in the classroom in a new environment. Watching the students make progress in and outside of the classroom was a great experience. This field trip allowed for the students to work on transitioning to new locations outside of their normal routine to playing with new toys and expanding their skillset all around.



The main focus in the classroom is establishing functional communication whether that be through vocalizations, picture exchange, or using LAMP on a high tech AAC device. One of the other main focuses in my room is imitation and following simple instructions. By combining these three areas, it allows them to be more independent as they grow and learn.

field trip



Middle School ASD with Miss Katelyn Burns

Doing Amazing Things!

WRITTEN BY KATELYN, ALAINA AND KATIE

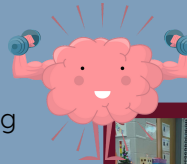
In the Middle School ASD classroom we are doing some amazing things!

We have some AMAZING staff in our classroom that help make the day go by as smoothly as possible. Alaina and Katie are the HCAs that work directly with our students and they are exceptional! Jaime is the classroom HCA Mentor and she has been extremely helpful bringing new ideas and working with the students. Jen is the classroom ASD Consultant and has been very beneficial to the MS ASD team! Without these ladies, the classroom would not run as smoothly as it does! I am so lucky to work with these wonderful women!



The students work really hard every day to grow their brains. We have been focusing on the Zones of Regulation and using coping strategies when we are not in the green zone. It is important to identify our emotions and use coping strategies to help us calm down when we are in an elevated state of mind.

I cannot wait to see the growth these students make as we progress through the school year!



High School ASD with Ms. Maria Olvera

I Get Better Every Single Day

WRITTEN BY MARIA, ERIN AND BILL

In Team Olvera's room we love Snoop Dogg's Affirmation Song and we try to embody the lyrics as we overcome challenges and get better every single day.

Our class is very focused on getting ready for independence. We spend a portion of each day working on practicing life skills such as cleaning, laundry, and washing dishes.



As the weather gets colder, we are working on some indoor leisure activities such as card games, board games, and reading. We recently started a read aloud of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. We are really looking forward to hearing all about Harry's adventures at Hogwarts.



Behavior Coach Ms. Elizabeth Dreja

Overcoming Barriers

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH

I am afforded the opportunity to teach Social-Emotional learning activities and develop individualized behavioral interventions to help students overcome barriers that work to enhance their overall development and growth. I strive to create hands-on learning experiences to teach, model and practice coping skills that help deal with challenging emotions and situations. Such coping skills that we practice on a regular basis are mindfulness, meditation, visualization, and circle discussions to help build meaningful connections between students and staff.



We use the TRAILS curriculum from the University of Michigan and recently finished up Unit 1, which aims to provide students with an understanding of the basic elements of self-awareness: thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. By gaining self-awareness skills, students are better positioned to succeed individually, socially, and academically as they can more effectively observe their internal experiences, manage their behaviors, form and keep relationships, and improve their decision-making. I love my role and job, as well as the students I provide services for and look forward to making more memorable learning experiences to come in 2024! Cheers!



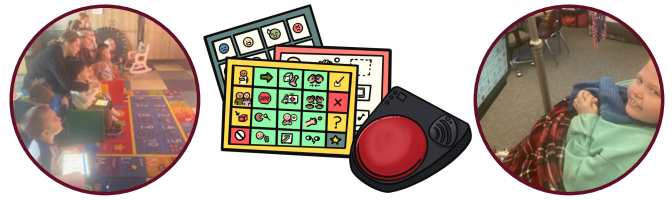
Speech Therapy with Sue Wizorek

Alternative Communication

WRITTEN BY SUE

The 2023-2024 school year is moving fast! Our learners are improving their ability to express themselves and understand the world around them and hopefully having a little fun along the way.

Every week, we focus on a core word, our Word of the Week. We read books, make crafts, watch short videos, and use our core word in a variety of ways and as often as possible. The repetition helps our learners understand its definition and learn to use it themselves. Physical therapists, occupational therapists, teachers, and speech all work together as a group, or individually, to ensure our learners reach their goals.



I explore many different ways to help with communication. Communication is as individual as our learners and they use multiple ways to interact with others. Many learners use Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) to help them express themselves when they can't rely on their speech. AAC is all the ways someone communicates besides speech. We have learners who use eye gaze and touch to activate a speech generating device, or learners who use pictures that they point to or pick up to let others know their needs. No one way is effective for all students, so I, and all of our caring staff at Freedom Acres, are always learning and discovering what works best for each individual.



I continue to provide support to teachers and families in helping our learners find a voice -- any way to communicate! If you have any questions, or would like to talk with me about your learner's communication needs, you are always welcome to contact me at 616-489-2064

Visual Therapy with Amy Blunt

Building Confidence

WRITTEN BY AMY

It's hard to believe that it is 2024 and we are half way through the school year! This year has been filled with adventures, smiles and laughter. Many gains have been made and they will continue throughout the year. The interactions and reactions that I see within your children makes my heart full. One of the happiest moments for an educator is to see our students excited for learning and building confidence in themselves. This coming year will be a time of inspiration and elation for not only our students but also for those of us who have the privilege of being a teacher!

"Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see."
Mark Twain



Occupational Therapy with Jacob Heppe

We Love Music!

WRITTEN BY JACOB, OTR/L AND KARA, COTA

It's hard to believe it's already December. The first few months of the school year always seem to fly by with IEPs happening, meeting new staff in the building, and working with new students. The OT department continues to hold weekly group sessions with our resident SLP Sue Wizorek on Tuesdays where we have a craft to create and a book to read aloud. Typically these crafts are displayed in the rooms or hallways and sent home for the whole family to enjoy! Look at some of our learners and the smiles they have while working during this fall semester.



One popular craft we do in December is making snowflakes! It's a craft activity that requires kids using glue sticks or squeezing glue bottles, pushing down on paper, cutting skills, and pulling down or pushing down on hole punchers. The benefits of these crafts is we can modify and adapt the level of assistance we give to each student to help with completion of the craft and they all still have something they can show to the school and their families. Happy holidays everyone!



Physical Therapy with Brenda Brown

Training and Experience

WRITTEN BY BRENDA PT AND KACEY PTA

We have been super busy this fall in Physical Therapy!!



We have been busy working with our students to get them moving! The best way to do that is making sure all staff are fully trained. Having some new additions to the wonderful staff at Freedom Acres, I was able to train, refresh, and answer questions of those staff in SCI in MOVE, body mechanics, and the proper way to lift at our Professional Development in November. Staff was able to test out the equipment and experience how it feels to be in the gait trainers and other equipment.

Freedom Acres has an awesome administration that has allowed us to purchase a new lift. Our equipment gets used multiple times a day and gets worn out. This new lift has been such a blessing! I was able to get a ride, try out some slings and experience the lift while training staff. We are so thankful for staff willing to learn new information and implement that in the classroom!

While we may not always be at Freedom Acres, both Kacey and myself are in the building Mondays. I am also at Freedom Acres some Wednesdays. We continue to work with Mary Free Bed for braces.



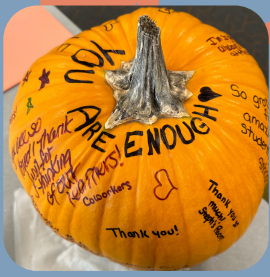
We hope you all have a wonderful holiday season and get to enjoy the time in a way that makes you happy!



Please reach out if you have any questions or needs for equipment, braces and or ideas for your student related to PT. My email is bbrown@ioniaisd.org.

CHRISTMAS





THANKFUL FOR DONATIONS



Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility

Welcome to Michigan!

When Mr. Daniel Schafer brought the LARGE pumpkins in October, allowing students to pick out their own for the fall holidays, it had been snowing and raining. We were grateful to be able to make an "indoor pumpkin patch" and to have an office "thankful pumpkin".

Even with the warm weather December, and no snow, Mr. Schafer didn't miss a beat. He donned his elf cap, packed up his sleigh and arrived with some very cozy blankets to deliver just before Christmas. Thank you Mr. Daniel Schafer and the Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility for your continued support!

EQUIPMENT DONATION

Thank you to April Kreiner and the Kreiner family for their donation of a Lecky Squiggles Stander and tray.



LIBRARY BOOK DONATIONS



Amber Shade
Brandy Durrant



MONETARY AND OTHER DONATIONS

MDOC
FREEDOM ACRES PTO
EMME'S AVENGERS
JIM VANBEEK
DEBORAH MARTIN-GILL AND JIM JAMES
TURKEY ANGEL

AMY BAGNASCO - for supporting our families during the holiday season and volunteering her time to support our learners
CHRISTEE McNEIL - for supporting our families during the holiday season and volunteering her time to support our learners

IONIA VFW 12082
IONIA KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #944
JACKSON MUTSCHLER POST VFW 4461
JACKSON MUTSCHLER POST VFW AUXILIARY 4461
LAKE ODESSA KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #14404
LAKEWOOD LIONS CLUB
PEWAMO KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #8071
WOODLAND EAGLES
BELDING AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY 203
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY BELDING
PORTLAND VFW POST 4090
PORTLAND AUXILIARY VFW POST 4090
COLLEEN GOODMAN
MARYGENE VALDES



MISCELLANEOUS

PTO

REASONS TO JOIN PTO

1. Benefit Your Child!

Research shows that children perform better when parents are involved both at home and school.

2. Get Connected!

There is no better way to know what's happening at school.

3. Tap into a Network!

Connects you to other parents and teachers, helping to build a sense of community.

4. Witness Improvements

By getting involved you'll be part of the solution-helping to make positive changes.

Contact Brandy Durrant if you'd like to join!
brandydurrant22@gmail.com

Movie on the Playground

Thank you to our PTO, Grand Event Rentals, Kara Collier, Jeff Miller and Patrick Tucker for donating equipment, snacks and time into making this a fun family night!



MOVIE TIME



Shop with a Vet



"Selfies" with the Secretary



GET TO KNOW OUR PTO

We strive to appreciate all children. Our hope is to enrich the lives of the children, community, and staff we proudly serve. Diagnosis isn't the end of the road, merely a split. We are here to help on your journey.

Hali

PTO SECRETARY
EDUCATION ADVOCATE
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

April

SCHOOL EVENTS VOLUNTEER
COMPASSION/EMOTIONAL
SUPPORT
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Cory

PTO TECHNOLOGY AND
DESIGN
EVENT DECOR AND DETAIL
PLANNER
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Leanna

PTO TREASURER,
ACCOUNTANT
IDEA MAKER
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Mollie

DISEASE/DISORDER
COMMUNITY EDUCATION
FUNDRAISING
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Brandy

PTO PRESIDENT
FUNDRAISING
COMMUNITY OUTREACH
EVENT COORDINATOR

FROM

FREEDOM ACRES PTO

Join us for more info on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/301521012754939>



FREEDOM ACRES SCHOOL

2023 – 2024 SCHOOL CALENDAR

SCI, SEI & ASD ECSE (Preschool) PROGRAMS



AUGUST

- 16 **NO SCHOOL**
Staff DPPD #1
- 22 **First Day of School**
- 25 **Back to School Cookout**

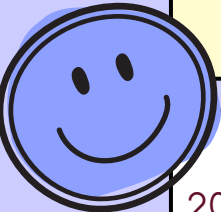
SEPTEMBER

- 1 **NO SCHOOL**
Labor Day Weekend
- 4 **NO SCHOOL**
Labor Day
- 22 **FA 5K**

OCTOBER

- 4 **PICTURE DAY**
Count Day
- 13 End of 1st Marking Period
SCI
- 18 **1/2 Day of School**
Morning: Teacher only DPPD #2
- 24 End of 1st Marking Period
SEI, ECSE
- 31 **HALLOWEEN**
Playground Trunk or Treat

Class starts at 11:00AM



NOVEMBER

- 20 **NO SCHOOL**
Staff DPPD #3
- 21 **NO SCHOOL**
Staff DPPD #4
- 22 **NO SCHOOL**
Thanksgiving Break (Nov. 22-24)
- 27 **Classes Resume**

DECEMBER

- 20 **FA Christmas Party**
(Inclement weather date Dec. 21)
- 25 **NO SCHOOL**
Winter Break (Dec. 25 - Jan. 5)

JANUARY

- 1 **NO SCHOOL (cont.)**
(Dec. 25 - Jan. 5)
- 8 **Classes Resume**
- 10 End of 2nd Marking Period
SCI
- 12 End of 2nd Marking Period
SEI, ECSE
- 15 **NO SCHOOL** *Staff DPPD #5*
Martin Luther King Jr. Day



FEBRUARY

- 14 **Sweetheart Dance**
- 16 **NO SCHOOL**
Mid-Winter Break (Feb. 16-19)
- 20 **Classes Resume**

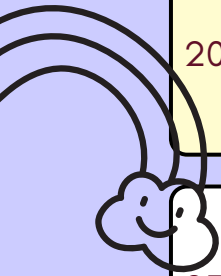
MARCH

- 15 **NO SCHOOL**
Staff DPPD #6
- 19 End of 3rd Marking Period
SEI, ECSE
- 22 End of 3rd Marking Period
SCI
- 28 **Spring Egg Hunt**
- 29 **NO SCHOOL**



APRIL

- 1 **NO SCHOOL**
Spring Break (Apr. 1- 5)
- 8 **Classes Resume**
- 29 **NO SCHOOL**
Staff DPPD #7



MAY

- 23 **Graduation**
- 24 **1/2 Day of School**
- 27 **NO SCHOOL**
Memorial Day
- 29 **Field Day**
- 31 **1/2 Day - Last Day of School**
- 31 End of 4th Marking Period
SEI, ECSE

JUNE

- 10 **SCI** Summer Programming
(June 10 - 13, 18 - 20)
- 20 End of 4th Marking Period
SCI

OFFICE HOURS:

7:30 AM - 3:00 PM

STUDENT HOURS:

8:00 AM - 2:05 PM

TO REPORT ABSENCES:

(616) 527-2921

