

SPRING 2023

FREEDOM ACRES NEWS

Connections build the character and relationships stronger at Freedom Acres

WRITTEN BY ANGELA MILLER, PRINCIPAL

Freedom Acres School is vibrant with connections, perseverance, and mission possible at all turns in the journey! It is June and I reflect as I gaze in the rear-view mirror. Our 2022-23 school year remains consistent with our drive to be a known school for excellence and our true foundation being the kids we serve. Every decision is built around what is best for the kids we serve! It has been an amazing journey this year with so many first experiences!

Our parent council launched and I met with amazing parents! A big thank you to Brandy Durrant and Hali Eveleth for meeting with me to plan events and ways for parents to be involved in our school mission. Brandy took the lead to establish a PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) and a group of parents began connecting during evening meetings. The group has six amazing moms: Mollie Zanella, Cory Blain, April Kreiner, Leanna Hewitt, Hali Eveleth, and Brandy Durrant. They planned the BEST teacher appreciation for May and staff felt so energized by the week long recognition from the red carpet, VIP lounge, snacks, and popcorn Monday. They welcome new parents joining their tribe and would love some dads to join the team. Our next big event will be marching in the lonia Free Fair parade as a school on July 15th. Mark your calendars and more information will be shared closer to the date. At this time, we have a mascot costume, wagon/trailer with seating, and Mr. Miller has agreed to tow us. I am so excited to dance down Main Street with the most amazing super hero parents, staff and students!









Work-based learning was implemented because of our amazing community partners! Herbruck's Poultry Ranch reached out to me last fall and wanted to pursue a partnership for a work-based learning experience. It was a phenomenal first year! Our learners learned so many priceless life lessons from applying for the job, securing bank accounts, completing orientation, touring, and working each week. Our learners earned credits toward their goal of a diploma and earned some money to begin learning about saving. They packaged the Barnyard Blend egg selection, which was a mix of brown and white eggs. I had the pleasure of touring Herbruck's Poultry Ranch and I left with validation regarding the most hygienic facility and I am so proud this business is part of the Ionia County canvas. We are so blessed to have a family run business with a willingness to support our youth, give back to the community, and be the employer of many Ionia County residents. Hats off to Herbruck's Poultry Ranch! I want to personally thank Amy Herbruck, Jake Herbruck, Aimee Misiewicz, and Andre Benjamin.

Our staff validates the pro in professionalism each and every day they serve from the heart! I value our team more than words can ever communicate and know the importance of hiring well on behalf of the families and organization. Families, you trust us with your number one asset and big piece of your heart, your CHILD. My goal is always to hire the BEST staff, who honor the cultural expectations and are driven to provide educational experiences and form trusting relationships with the learners, their colleagues, and parents. After Christmas break, I had the pleasure of hiring two parents, Hali Eveleth and Stacie Yockey, this school year and they are true heroes and assets. Natasha Brickei returned to the ISD in January and joined forces with our SEI (Severely Emotionally Impaired) team! Ben Croel will be transitioning to the SCI teacher position for our elementary SCI (Severely Cognitively Impaired) classroom on June 12th and he has agreed to serve as a homebound teacher for a learner. Erika Wolf joined the SCI elementary team and is on a mission to acquire a teaching degree. We currently have three job postings: SCI Teacher, SEI teacher, and SEI HCA. Please spread the word and help us recruit a superhero! As we set our sights on next school year, we always need great substitute teachers, health care aides, nurse, secretary, kitchen assistant, and more. Please consider encouraging or signing up to support our school by signing up on the ISD website and WillSub is our substitute staff service.

text

Communication is the backbone to the success of a school. We would like to cordially invite all of our parents to sign-up for the Freedom Acres Remind application. The directions for the Remind application are enclosed with this newsletter. Signing up for this service will allow you to receive text messages about school closing or other important events at Freedom Acres School. The 2023-24 school calendar is the final page of this newsletter edition and Remind will allow you to receive reminder text messages regarding important dates on our school calendar. Our goal is to serve our parents and families well!

Sammy as "Principal"

If you are interested in joining the Freedom Acres Parent Council, please call or email the office for more information!





As we close the 2022-23 school year, our team (parents and staff) have many things and experiences to be proud of! We have accomplished so much together! I have a saying that guides many facets in my personal life and journey. I often say, "The rearview mirror is small and it allows reflection only and the windshield is big and transparent to allow each traveler to paint the canvas with new goals and experiences because the future is a blank canvas for each artist to paint and cultivate."

Principal's Personal Perspective

Last September, I became a grandma to the most amazing little boy, Lukka. He is now 8 months old and has a piece of my heart! I wrestled with being called grandma and I have to validate...this is an honor. We share protein pudding, laughs and my inner child is awakened in his presence.

Jinx, is a French Bulldog, and the newest Miller family member. We love him and he brings us many laughs!

Each day is a blessing with a gift! I am so lucky to live and serve in Ionia County. My three sons and husband continue to cultivate my perspective and I hope a little of my vision becomes a part of their compass. Being the principal of Freedom Acres is truly a **notable honor** and brings me great joy!

SUMMER HEALTH TIPS

SUN SAFETY

SUMMER SKIN PROTECTION



WEAR BROAD HAT



USE SUNGLASSES



WEAR PROTECTIVE CLOTHING



AVOID DIRECT SUNLIGHT



AVOID SUN BETWEEN 11 AM AND 3 PM



USE SUNSCREEN



DRINK MORE WATER



REFLECTION CAUTION



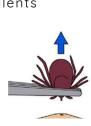
SEEK SHADE

Health News from Nurse Becky Spring in Michigan How to Remove a Tick

As we welcome spring in Michigan, we also welcome ticks and mosquitos. Ticks are prevalent in Ionia County and have been known to carry Lyme disease. It is important to prevent disease, and remove ticks as soon as possible.

Ways to Prevent Tick Bites

- P Avoiding areas with lots of ticks such as grassy, brushy, or wooded areas
- P Checking skin regularly when outdoors
- P Checking clothing regularly when outdoors
- P Checking pets regularly
- b Use of repellents





- 1. Use clean, fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
- 2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth-parts with tweezers. If you cannot remove the mouth easily with tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.
- 3. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.
- 4. Never crush a tick with your fingers. Dispose of a live tick by
 - Putting it in alcohol,
 - Placing it in a sealed bag/container,
 - Wrapping it tightly in tape, or
 - Flushing it down the toilet.

For more information about ticks and tick borne disease, go to www.cdc.gov/ticks

Please remember to <u>call</u> Freedom Acres 616-527-2921 to report your child's absence.

Elementary School with Mrs. April Cavanaugh Hands On Learning

WRITTEN BY APRIL AND KATHY M

It is hard to believe that the school year is coming to an end. We have been busy the past few marking periods. As warmer weather approaches we are getting ready to start planting our Freedom Acres Garden. We are hoping to expand our garden this spring.

March was reading month and we did a weekly Bookopoly board for students to fill out and return on Fridays. They received a Falcon Buck for every book they read and could spend their money at our school store. There were so many great prizes!

Our class has been working hard academically in all our subjects. We have been researching animals and their habitats in science. Math games are a favorite, Skipbo and Farkle are at the top of the list. Each day we take time to find a comfy spot and read. Our library has been a great addition and we look forward to checking new books out each week.

Our annual Freedom Acres 5K is approaching and the students are preparing for the big day. This is a great time when families, staff, and students come together and enjoy a wonderful day. Also on the calendar this May is a Freedom Acres field day. Students and staff are looking forward to the fun and games. It is hard to believe that another school year is coming to an end. I am proud of our students and their accomplishments. I am looking forward to the 2023-2024 school year!







Middle School with Mrs. Michelle Allen

Hold onto the Memories

WRITTEN BY MICHELLE, NATASHA, AND KACI

Our students and staff have been busy with daily lessons and spending time each morning reading to our buddies from other classrooms. We look forward to APE (Adaptive PE) with Emily each week and the fun activities she plans for us! Elizabeth plans engaging lessons in TRAILS (Social Emotional Learning Curriculum), ties them into Art/Craft activities, and takes time to meet with students individually. As we (staff and students) learn more about ourselves and how our mindset can impact our day, we've become more aware of growth and change in ourselves and others. We try to acknowledge the successes and encourage each other.

This will be my last newsletter as a teacher at Freedom Acres School. I feel very blessed to have worked with such an amazing team of coworkers, students, families, agencies, and administrators. I feel proud to have been a part of the changes and improvements that have occurred at our school and programs. It's because of the positive mindset and "can do attitude" of everyone in the community that we're able to accomplish what we do at Freedom Acres School. As I retire at the end of this school year, I will hold onto the memories we've made together.







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

WRITTEN BY JESSICA, GINA AND MEGAN H

It is hard to believe that 2022-2023 is wrapping up already, but before we say hello to summer, we want to make sure that we celebrate the success that the SEI students and program have experienced this school year!

In January, the USEI program and Freedom Acres began partnering with Herbruck's Poultry Ranch to create a work-based learning program. Two learners have successfully completed the on-boarding process, gone through orientation, and have been enjoying working two, three-hour, shifts a week, with staff supporting them. While at Herbruck's learners have learned great life skills and work skills such as clocking in, communicating with leadership, following guidelines and directions, and sorting through eggs to create a Barnyard Blend; a special blend of white and brown eggs sold at boutique grocery stores throughout the Grand Rapids area.

During a survey visit, the USEI program was able to spend time with the professional, learning about what they do, where they went to college, what they studied, and how their job impacts other professions and projects. While this was an excellent opportunity to learn more about a great job opportunity and career, the students truly enjoyed being able to get up close and personal with the drone and camera. We had all seen the personal drones that are used for personal entertainment, but we had never seen a professional drone with different cameras, multiple sensors, and the ability to

In May, the USEI program and Mrs. Miller welcomed each local school district's special education director and other representatives. along with the Michigan Department of Education, to Freedom Acres. During our time together, each learner's academic transcript was looked through and approved by the local school district. This ensured that each learner's transcript was looked at bu their local district to ensure that they are on the proper track for their diploma and ensured that all records, both at learner's local school districts and at Freedom Acres, are being accurately kept and demonstrate the great work that our learners do on a daily basis. Finally, we are so excited to celebrate Logan Fossler earning his high school diploma from Ionia Public Schools! Logan has demonstrated great focus, tenacity, and the ability to be flexible as we navigated in-person and remote learning throughout his time at Freedom Acres. We could not be more proud of Logan and we enjoyed celebrating him with a ceremony in May! We wish you nothing but

the best Logan and we thank you for allowing

Freedom Acres to support you on this



WRITTEN BY EMILY A

Adapted Physical Education provides all learners the opportunity to engage in physical activity and improve their physical fitness, motor skills, and overall health. It also promotes socialization, independence, confidence, and self-esteem. Here at Freedom Acres learners are able to interact with peers through a variety of sports and recreational activities. I truly believe there is something for everyone!



We recently have had the opportunity to participate in such sports as baseball and basketball. We have also explored recreational activities such as Mini Golf and Z. I am very proud of the accomplishments and growth ALL learners have achieved this school year. I am hopeful they will continue to be engaged in movement activities throughout the summer.

On a personal note, I will not be returning as Miss Emily Armentrout next school year. Following the end of this school year, I am getting married! I plan to return in the fall as Mrs. Emily Stall and could not be more excited! I wish everyone a restful and enjoyable summer break and look forward to reconnecting in the fall for another exciting year of learning and growth.



PreK/Elementary SCI with Mrs. Stephanie Brown

Success and Socialization

WRITTEN BY STEPH, DENISE, STACIE, AND TYLER

The sun is shining and so are our students!! The growth and improvement that each of our students have shown this school uear has been amazing. Each of our students have gained milestones individually, and collectively our students have gained 60 milestones since October! So much for them to be proud of.

It has been so much fun to see more socialization between peers during play activities. We have been working on different play skills. taking turns, and of course increasing skills in the greas of fine motor, gross motor, and communication.

Gym class continues to be a favorite as Ms. Emily provides fun and exciting activities each week. Recently the students played basketball, miniature golf, and baseball. The students also love their Friday Speech/OT groups where Ms. Sue, Mr. Jacob, and Ms. Kara come in and do a literacy activity featuring our "word of the week" and also a craft or fine motor activity to go along with it. Our class has also really enjoyed our weekly visits to the library. We read a story and then the students pick a book. Thank you to Deb Seal for helping to organize and create such a wonderful library for our school!

We hope that everyone has a great summer and enjoys the beautiful weather! We sure will!





















Middle School SCI

Working Hard and Playing Hard WRITTEN BY STEPH B, GYWEN, ASHLEY, AND **ERIKA**

Ashley, Gywen, and Erika have been doing a fabulous job at keeping the class running smoothly in the absence of a fulltime teacher. While we have all missed Ms. Leigh, we are looking forward to Mr. Ben Croel joining the SCI team and leading our classroom. Ben will take over Room 503 on June 12th!!

The students have been having fun and working hard. They have been focusing on using appropriate adaptive equipment like standers, gait trainers, adaptive bikes, and the HOPSA. Students have been practicing making choices independently and have been actively playing with their peers.

Highlights of our past few months include getting outside to enjoy the sunshine, playing fun games in gym class, and having lots of fun with other classes in the hallway while working on walking. We are looking forward to summer fun and spending lots of time playing on our fabulous new playground!!!!

Have a great summer!









High School with Mrs. Laura Fish

Experience Through Outings

WRITTEN BY LAURA, TONY, CYNDI AND DANIELLE

So hard to believe we are already at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. We've seen so many changes in our learners as they work toward their individual goals. Recently, the FishBowl has proven that they are amazing on land as they participated in putt putt golf during gym class. So much fun navigating around the obstacles on the courses!

The FishBowl began participating in CBI outings. We paired with learners from 503 Wonders to gain experience in fulfilling grocery orders, paying for items and bagging them up. Our learners also had a chance to hand out at Mooville on one of the outings! We are looking forward to new opportunities to take our learners to assist them in the community and future adult daily living.





The class has been given an opportunity to trial a Clever Board which is a touchscreen television/sensory app station, etc. Learners from the SCI wing have had opportunities to check the board out as well. The FishBowl has used the Clever Board for interactive calendar activities as well as daily groups sessions. Recently, several learners completed their benchmark assessments using the Clever Board as the screen is so huge that it was easier for them to respond to the questions.

The FishBowl is looking forward to the annual 5k planned for May 17. This is always a great opportunity for our learners and families to participate at goal setting and being physically active.

Transition SCI with Mrs. Lynne Geiger-Wester

Learners Explore Leisure Skills

WRITTEN BY LYNNE, TRINA & KIM

Transition age learners need time to explore and discover activities which bring them enjoyment. It's important that these learners get exposed to a wide range of leisure activities and experiences. Each learner is an individual and therefore has their very own set of likes and dislikes. Sharing and communicating these likes and dislikes to those around them is crucial. Every learner should be able to communicate what they like or want to do to those around them. Each learner has a voice and it is the responsibility of those in their life to listen. Learners may engage in leisure activities in a variety of ways. Some students may enjoy these activities on their own. Others may like to do leisure activities with friends. Some students enjoy their leisure activities with the help of an adult. It's a necessary piece to growing up-discovering and engaging in activities which bring joy to our life. Our classroom is the perfect place to work on this very important transition skill!











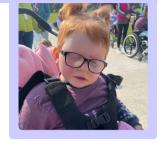
FA ANNUAL 5K















































FIRST FA FIELD DAY



















Elementary ASD with Miss Khloe Kremer

Gains in Goals

WRITTEN BY KHLOE, MEGAN R, BECKY H, LAUREN. MEG. KENDRA. AND DEANNA

The ASD ECSE classroom had such an amazing school year! All of the students made huge gains in all of their goal areas.

Throughout the year we focused heavily on play skills. This includes sitting at circle time for large group where we do attendance and say hi to all of our friends for the day. One of the other main focuses in my room is communication. Over the course of the school year, we were able to establish communication modalities and transitioned the majority of the students to high tech devices. This allows them to have a wider, more extensive vocabulary that was not an option for them before.

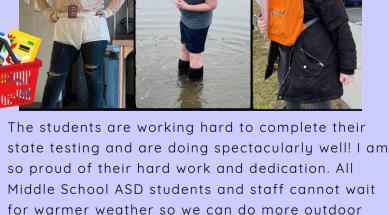
Social and peer interaction were targeted at our egg hunt, water day, and field day where we saw amazing student interaction as they were engaging in parallel play, turn taking with water balloons.



Middle School ASD with Miss Katelyn Burns Today Is Going To Be A GREAT Day!

WRITTEN BY KATELYN, ALAINA, KATIE, JORDAN

We have been working so hard this year! Our social, academic, and life skills have started to flourish! We have been participating in community based instruction with some learners by grocery shopping weekly for our classroom needs. The students have been doing amazing at it!



activities. We love the sunshine and warmth! Here's to finishing the school year strong!

High School ASD with Ms. Maria Olvera

Socializing in the Community

WRITTEN BY MARIA, ERIN, TAYLOR, AND BILL

The ASD High School team's motto is "Today is going to be an amazing day." We have been rocking our social skills this spring. We have been stretching our social interaction muscles by teaming up with our middle school friends for a weekly group activity. During social skills group we are focusing on practicing taking turns, coping strategies, and trying out new leisure activities.

A few learners have begun community based instruction and are heading out to the store each week to help keep our classroom stocked up on necessities. During these trips we are practicing waiting, using a grocery list, going through the checkout, as well as safely navigating and interacting in the community.

As the weather warms, we are looking forward to spending more time outside and finishing out the school year with more amazing days.



XXXXX

Behavior Coach Ms. Elizabeth Dreja

Overcoming Barriers WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH

Hello!

My name is Elizabeth Dreja, and I am the Behavior Coach at Freedom Acres.

Since starting with Ionia ISD last October 2022, I have had the privilege to work alongside a dedicated and talented group of educators to provide behavioral support services to our Severely Emotionally Impaired learners. Using the TRAILS Social-Emotional Learning curriculum from the University of Michigan, I facilitate weekly groups with the learners, utilizing the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Model and mindfulness practices to develop self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills and discuss strategies for managing difficult emotions and behaviors.







I am continuously striving to find new ways to help learners engage in the various lessons in socially meaningful ways, which are designed to teach and model coping skills to combat personal and academic barriers. Meditation, visualization techniques, progressive muscle relaxation, and breathing exercises are incorporated into the lessons to model various ways to calm the body and mind. It has been very reinforcing to see students utilize their coping skills and move through challenging emotions throughout this school year, overcoming barriers and learning how to be successful in the school environment.

I am grateful for this opportunity to make a positive impact on our learners and help them reach their goals. GO FALCONS GO!

Speech Therapy with Sue Wizorek

Find Your Way to Communicate

WRITTEN BY SUE

It has been a great year for our learners. Many of our learners received new communication devices, or are experimenting with borrowed devices, this year, that have helped them to find their voice. Our teachers and aides are great advocates of communication and they model language that is individualized for each student to make sure that every student have some sort of communication available. We are always looking for the best means of access for each student.

We continue to coordinate with occupational therapy to do a weekly group in the classrooms. We combine literacy, verbal behavior instruction, and motor skills to encourage growth in every child. We like to use activities and crafts to inspire requesting, commenting, labeling and social skills. This year, Abby Lindeman joined me as a speech-language intern. Abby has a background in music therapy, so we took advantage of her experience to expose our students to language in a fun and different way. The students loved it and enjoyed playing their own instruments and feeling the vibrations of the guitar. We're fortunate to have interns who bring a variety of experience and new perspectives.



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

Happy Summer!

WRITTEN BY AMY

This school year we have been working hard on using our vision to see amazing things! We were able to interact with music, moving lights and tactile objects. Students have been using their best field of vision to follow along with stories and cards to match. However your child sees, through touch or sight, please take time this summer to explore stories by adding texture, sounds and interactions while reading to your child.

As the school year comes to a close I would like to take a moment to say thank you! Thank you for sharing your pride and joy with me. I have enjoyed all of the smiles and positive responses your child has shared with me. It has been a wonderful school year of learning and fun!

Be safe, happy and healthy this summer season!



Occupational Therapy with Jacob Heppe We Love Music!

WRITTEN BY JACOB, OTR/L AND KARA, COTA

These winter months sure have flown by. The OT department continues to have a blast week in and week out working with all of our wonderful students and staff here at Freedom Acres. If you come on any given Friday you will typically see our OT/SLP group sessions making the rounds in the different classrooms. When you visit our school, you may even see some type of craft displayed in the hallways or classrooms that our students have worked on either independently or with the help of adult support.

One common thing that almost all of our learners love is music! From songs like **Down on Grandpa's**Farm, to shaking a maraca, to activating a switch playing Wheels on the Bus, all our learners enjoy some type of auditory input. That's why at Freedom Acres we love to incorporate music and dance into our sessions on Friday's consistently. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the 5k and field day this year!









Physical Therapy with Brenda Brown

On the MOVE!

WRITTEN BY BRENDA PT AND KACEY PTA
We are MOVE'n in PT!

We have had a fun school year, continuing with the MOVE curriculum, throughout the SCI classrooms!

CRECEPTER

Ending with the 5K and Field Day provided great movement and play for all students.

Enjoy the summer with **LOTS** of play outside!!













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.

REASONS TO CELEBRATE

Valentine's Dance







MISCELLANEOUS



Reading for Whitecaps

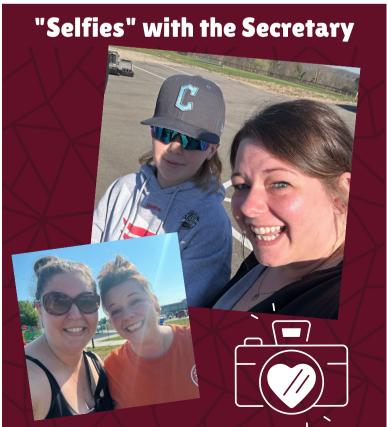
Freedom Acres partnered with the Whitecaps during March is reading month. Free tickets were awarded to learners that



Kitchen Aides

Students are great helpers in the kitchen!





FREEDOM AGRES SCHOOL

2023 - 2024 SCHOOL CALENDA 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
- 24 End of 1st Marking Period SEI, ECSE
- 31 HALLOWEEN Playground Trunk or Treat

NOVEMBER

- 20 NO SCHOOL Staff DPPD #2
- 21 NO SCHOOL Staff DPPD #3
- 22 NO SCHOOL Thanksgiving Break (Nov. 22-24)
- Classes Resume

DECEMBER

20 FA Christmas Party

(Inclement weather date Dec. 21)

25 NO SCHOOL

Winter Break (Dec. 25 - Jan. 5)

JANUARY

NO SCHOOL (cont.)

(Dec. 25 - Jan. 5)

- 8 Classes Resume
- 10 End of 2nd Marking Period
- 12 End of 2nd Marking Period SEI, ECSE
- 15 NO SCHOOL Staff DPPD #4

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

FEBRUARY

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

MARCH

Reading

15 NO SCHOOL

Staff DPPD #5

- 19 End of 3rd Marking Period SEI, ECSE
- 22 End of 3rd Marking Period SCI
- 28 Spring Egg Hunt
- 29 NO SCHOOL

APRIL

NO SCHOOL

Spring Break (Apr. 1 - 5)

- 8 Classes Resume
- 29 NO SCHOOL Staff DPPD #6

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

OFFICE HOURS:

7:30 AM - 3:00 PM

STUDENT HOURS:

8:00 AM - 2:05 PM

TO REPORT ABSENCES:

(616) 527-2921





