

Nerstrand Family Update

Mission Statement: Nerstrand Elementary School will empower students to be self-directed, lifelong learners by providing a nurturing, multiage environment that fosters cooperation and character development.
Friday, September 12, 2014

Welcome to the 2014-2015 School Year!

We would like to welcome you and your family to the 2014-2015 school year here at Nerstrand Elementary School. What a great day on Tuesday, September 2nd, when we saw the smiling faces of 152 students walk through the front doors of the school. Our opening All-School Meeting that day was a wonderful way to introduce the students to the staff and a chance to see all the students. The staff knows this is a great place to be and hopefully the students and families feel the same way!

Then it was out to the front of the school to the bell tower, and all the new Kindergarten students and the four new students in grades 1-5 had the chance to ring in the school year by ringing the school bell. It's a tradition that has been well received by children and adults alike! So, as you can see, our first day of the 2014-2015 school year went off without a hitch!

It is so fun to be greeted each day by the smiles and waves of these enthusiastic learners and it starts our days off on the right track, every day! Thank you for sharing your children with us and giving us the opportunity as well as the responsibility to teach them not only academics, but social skills and life skills that include character



development and service learning. We sincerely welcome you to our Little School in the Big Woods! We look forward to a wonderful school year filled with learning, respect and lots of fun! If you ever have any concerns, comments or questions, please don't hesitate to call us at 507-333-6850. We are in partnership with you!

Prairie Appreciation Day, Sept. 18th!

Because of the wet, cold weather, we have rescheduled our annual Prairie Appreciation Day. For Thursday, September 18th. The section of the prairie we will be visiting is located at Caron County Park (County Road 88 or 170th Street) just west (about 2-3 miles) of the entrance to the Big Woods State Park. Please consider helping out that day if you are available. We will leave school at 12:50 p.m., bus to the prairie, enjoy the tall grasses and beautiful wildflowers, then return to school at 2:15 p.m. in time for regular dismissal. The students will be paired in groups of two from their homeroom - one older student with one younger student for the experience. We are asking parents to pay close attention to the weather that day and dress students appropriately.

All students are asked to wear long pants that day. We're hoping the mosquitoes won't be bad, but in case they are, the kids will be protected by their clothing. Also, the grasses at the prairie are quite long and sharp, so we don't want anyone to cut their legs on the tall grasses. **Parent and adult volunteers can meet us on the prairie. We plan to arrive there by 1:00 p.m.**

Thank you so much for your help and cooperation. We look forward to a wonderful day on the Prairie! As always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call the office at 333-6850.

CLIMB Theatre Coming to Nerstrand!



Special thanks go out to the PTO group for sponsoring the upcoming program from CLIMB Theatre coming to Nerstrand Elementary School on September 30th. They will visit each classroom and give a presentation on Respect through clever skits and role playing to get the message across to all students. You may remember that they came and did a program on Anti-bullying and Empathy the last few years. The staff and students commented on the great job the actor/educators did each year, so we decided to invite them back to build on the Empathy and Anti-bullying themes they have presented in the past.

CLIMB Theatre, located in Inver Grove Heights, MN, is a nationally recognized non-profit company that has provided programming to K-12 schools for 38 years. CLIMB's theatre artists write, produce and present plays and drama classes on topics like bullying, self control, respect and the environment. CLIMB's work is not only entertaining, it is educational. Independent research done on their programs show that young people learn, and change their thinking and even their behavior, because of CLIMB. CLIMB reaches between 200,000 to 300,000 students and teachers annually, primarily in MN, but also in WI, IA, IL, ND and SD. We appreciate PTO supporting this endeavor for our students.

First Community Coffee Set for September 25th

The first Community Coffee is scheduled for Thursday, September 25th from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. in the Nerstrand Elementary School Media Center. Tara Vondrasek and Angie Schilling's homerooms will host the event. Several students from each homeroom will be selected to stay after school that day and act as hosts and hostesses. They will greet, serve and sit and talk to the community members in attendance at the coffee. A small treat will be served too! We invite Nerstrand community members to plan now to join us! It's a great way for the community members to meet Nerstrand students and for the students to form bonds with our community! A good time is guar-



Visit the **Monarch Butterfly** house that has been constructed inside the school's greenhouse area when you are at school! Volunteer naturalist, Larry Richie has been working with all students over the past year to study the lifecycle of the Monarch.

Mark your calendar to attend the first Community Lunch of the school year on Wednesday, October 8th. We will also be hosting an Adult Flu Shot Clinic that day from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. through the Rice County Public Health Nursing Service. We would love for you to join us for lunch that day. Look for a flyer soon!

Eagle Open Golf Tournament a Great Success!



The Fourteenth Annual Eagle Open Golf Tournament was held on Friday, June 13th at the Kenyon Golf Course. An amazing \$7,500.00 was raised at the event, between the golf hole sponsors, the golfers themselves and the door and raffle prizes that were donated for the event. **WOW!** Special thanks go out to Eagle Open Committee: Lee and Monica Gernandt, Travis & Michelle Roethler, John Menk, John Bonde, Brad & Catherine Luebke, and Steve Potter. Your dedication and commitment to this school is obvious and very much appreciated by the students, families, staff and community! We look forward to the 2015 Eagle Open Golf Tournament in June, 2015! Thank you!

Curriculum Night—October 6th

Please join us for a parent-only evening on Monday, October 6th, 6 – 7pm. (PTO meeting to follow at 7pm). We encourage you to participate in this crucial introduction to your child's year, held in the school gym and classrooms.

This event provides an opportunity for parents to learn about school wide curriculum and programs such as Everyday Math, Reader's and Writer's Workshop, Responsive Classroom, Science and Social Studies themes, homework, committees, scheduling, how parents can get involved and more. The *Responsive Classroom* approach is a way of teaching that emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth in a strong and safe school community. Developed by classroom teachers, the approach consists of practical strategies for helping children build academic and social-emotional competencies day in and day out. All Nerstrand teachers have attended Responsive Classroom training.

Multiage classrooms and homeroom experiences are among the things that make Nerstrand Elementary student learning experience unique. We call the kindergarten and first grade experience 'Prairie', using the team name for two grade levels represented -- the same way that we do for each of our other teams: Savannah' for grades two and three, and 'Woodlands' for grades four and five.

6pm Welcome in the gym

6:15 Classroom meetings begin (Prairie, Savannah and Woodlands, music and P.E.

teachers will present approximately 15 minutes ~ twice during the

evening at 6:15 and 6:30, for parents that have students in more than one grade configuration.

6:45 Open time for meeting with teachers

7:00 Close Curriculum Night, PTO meeting begins in Media Center

Staff will explain the academic direction for the year—curriculum areas in which the class will be working and major requirements such as reports, special projects, and the grading scale. Explain the responsive classroom behavior plan.

Learn about ways parents can contribute to their child's learning and ways the teacher will communicate with parents (blog posts, email, phone, notebook, etc.)—what to expect from the teacher and what the teacher expectations for homework and family involvement.

Curriculum Night is being re-introduced in Nerstrand this year, and we are hoping that you will consider attending. Please consider emailing teachers with your specific questions and concerns in advance, and we will make every effort to address them. Thank you!

Donation from the Bonde Alumni!

Egan and Kipp Bonde, Nerstrand alumni, made a significant donation to the Peace Garden. The kids had a summer job mowing the grass at the Valley Grove church and cemetery and donated all that they earned! The \$300.00 will be earmarked for improvements to the International Children's Peace Garden in the school courtyard. We are very appreciative to these kids for their generous donation. Larry Richie is our environmental volunteer who works with students on the Peace Garden. What a great example these kids are to their peers and all of us! Thank you so much!

Nerstrand Elementary
School

Contact Information

205 South 2nd Street
P.O. Box 156
Nerstrand, MN 55053

Main Office Phone:
507-333-6850

Attendance Phone Line:
507-333-6851

Fax Phone Line:
507-333-6870

Email Address:
info@nerstrand.charter.
k12.mn.us

We're on the Web!
www.nerstrand.charter.
k12.mn.us

We still have two openings in our Kindergarten class for this school year. If you know of someone interested in sending their child to Nerstrand Elementary School, please let them know to contact us or apply online!

Creating Innovators

Students at Nerstrand Elementary School are involved in inquiry-based, project-based learning. We blur the lines between walls of the traditional classroom and the natural environment of the surrounding prairie, big woods and local community. Project-based learning helps students to make the connections between subjects and the world around them.

What are the skills of innovators? The first is **empathy**, which is the ability to imagine the world from multiple perspectives and having an attitude that puts people first. **Integrative thinking** is to be able to see all aspects of a problem and possible breakthrough solutions. **Optimism** is also essential, and solutions can be achieved through **experimentalism**, a process of trial and error that explores problems and possible solutions in new and creative ways. And above all, students in Nerstrand are **collaborators** in their own learning. The school curriculum is integrated, so that students learning opportunities in subject areas—science, math, language arts, social studies, art, music and P.E. are connected. Students experience music and P.E. classes everyday. Students work with a regional naturalist to manage the school's International Peace Garden, a butterfly habitat inside of the school,



and a variety of projects including the study of the life cycle of the Monarch Butterfly, earth science studies on the prairie and in the Big Woods, and the study of the rich regional history. Service learning is embraced, whether it is to support plantings on the prairie, providing food and clothing to regional charities, or helping a local community members. All curriculum is aligned with Minnesota state academic standards.



Upcoming Dates

Wednesday, September 24th 8:30 a.m.—	School Pictures in Gym
Thursday, September 25th	Vision and Hearing Screening
Friday, September 26th	F.H.S. Homecoming Pep Fest
Tuesday, September 30th	Climb Theatre Presentations
Monday, October 6th	6-7 p.m. Curriculum Night 7:00 p.m.— P.T.O. Meeting
Friday, October 3rd	Discovery Day at Big Woods
Wednesday, October 8th	Early Dismissal Staff Development Day 11:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m.— Flu Shot Clinic
Monday, October 13th	3:00 p.m.— Board of Directors' Meeting
Tuesday, October 14th	Fire Prevention w/Volunteer Fire Dept.
Wednesday—Friday, October 15th—17th	No School—Ed. MN Days