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RENSSELAER CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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RENSSELAER CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

The 2025-26 school year is off to a great start! It is always a joy to have our buildings full of excited students and staff once again.



As the new superintendent, I am looking forward to a year of growth at Rensselaer Central Schools! I am committed to helping students, teachers and staff thrive both inside and outside of the classroom. I am eager to serve this community as we seek to support each and every student academically, socially and emotionally.

This edition includes just some of the good news going on within our walls. From student clubs and leadership groups offering students skills and engagement to implementing AI in the classroom and seeing our CTE programs do real-world projects, we are seeing students succeed.

It is an honor to be superintendent of this amazing school cooperation. Let's make this school year a great one.

Go Bombers!

—Mr. Andrew J. Jones, Superintendent

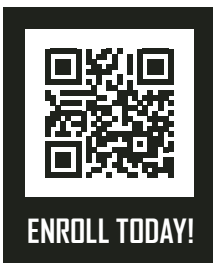


THE ADVENTURE CLUB - ENRICHING. INSPIRING. EDUCATING.

For several years now, Rensselaer has partnered with The Adventure Club to offer an excellent Before and After School Care program for students. The Adventure Club is run by a third party affiliate and has been enriching students' minds through STEAM-based extracurricular learning for over 30 years! Their program believes in supporting children holistically through educational, social and behavioral experiences. They are aligned to state academic standards and focus on literacy and language, creative arts, character building, community outreach, engineering and problem solving and wellness and safety. Their hands-on experiences include drama club, advanced art, bucket drumming, game encounters, outdoor adventures, dance camp, relaxation station, fungineering, science fun camp, music camp, genius hour, imagination station, homework center and sports zone. At The Adventure Club, students are supported and have a blast while learning!

The hours of operation are 6:30-7:30 a.m. before school and 2:40-6:00 p.m./3:10-6:00 p.m. after school Monday through Fridays.

Enrollment is always open! Make sure to visit their website for more information and cost breakdown: www.theadventureclubs.com or reach out to Chief Operating Officer, Sandy Langbehn, at 219-865-6283 or slcoo.tac@gmail.com



ENROLL TODAY!



RCMS CLUBS OFFER STUDENTS NEW EXPERIENCES AND SKILLS

Last school year, Rensselaer Central Middle School started offering clubs to students. Principal Leah Matthew organized teacher and student schedules so that every student could participate in a club. The clubs would meet every Friday during FLEX, a time that is similar to a homeroom where students report to first thing in the morning for 30 minutes. This special time offers students the opportunity to learn new skills and make new friends. Some popular clubs last year were Fishing Club, Plant Club, Drama Club, Spirit Club and Volleyball Club.

The clubs were such a success that with the start of the 2025-26 school year, Principal Mathew introduced an alternate schedule for every other Friday so that students could spend more time in their clubs. This schedule added about 15 minutes to FLEX. Some new clubs this year are Grow Garden Club, Lego Club and Yearbook/Media Club. Outside of FLEX, some clubs get to go on trips. For example, the Fishing Club went on a half-day trip to a local pond and fished. The students came back excited to share how many fish they caught. Also, Plant Club made a beautiful, pressed flower banner last year that was hung up in the school office.



THE BOMB SQUAD - STUDENT LEADERSHIP GROUP MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Maggie Hickman,
Business Teacher and The Bomb Squad sponsor at RCHS

The Bomb Squad, Rensselaer Central High School's student section leadership group, was founded in 2022 with a simple mission: build leaders, strengthen school spirit and bring more energy to school events. Since then, the group has become a central part of school culture, uniting students, staff and the community.



Led by seniors, The Bomb Squad is easy to spot in their signature red and black striped bibs. Their role goes far beyond cheering in the stands—they work year-round to boost morale and encourage participation in school events. Thanks to their efforts in securing sponsors, students often receive free admission to games, making it easier for everyone to show up and support our teams. Each year, The Bomb Squad organizes several key events, including the Homecoming tailgate, Toys for Tots Toy Drive and various school spirit activities such as teacher appreciation nights. Their community impact is especially evident through Toys for Tots; last year alone they collected over 1,000 toys for Jasper County children in need.

This year, the group is continuing to expand its efforts to bring students together and create lasting traditions. Whether it's leading chants in the bleachers, planning events that celebrate our school community or rallying support for local causes, The Bomb Squad continues to prove that school spirit is about more than just game day—it's about pride, leadership and making a difference.

BOOK CHARACTER DAY AT VRES

Friday, September 12 was Book Character Day at Van Rensselaer Elementary School! All year long, teachers celebrate and promote a love for reading. For the last five years, all students Grades 3-5 have the opportunity to celebrate this love specifically through wearing an outfit representing their favorite character from a book. Many students even carry the book of their character with them all day. Each class decides on the best dressed winner. Principal Chad Wynn comments, "We do many things throughout the year to promote a love for reading: Mystery Reader where the kids have to guess who it is reading a book, do a visit with an author, a bookmark creation contest, etc." This focus encourages students to be lifelong readers and learners!



Our winners came dressed as their favorite book character.



AI IN THE CLASSROOM - AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DISTRICT'S AI IMPLEMENTATION LEADER

As the Artificial Intelligence (AI) world continues to grow and become more accessible to the average person, families and community members are starting to wonder how it will impact their children's education. Specifically, how will AI be used (or not used) when it comes to Rensselaer Central Schools?

What you might not know is that High School English Teacher Hunter Hickman is also the district's AI implementation leader. He is passionate about turning emerging technology into measurable gains for student learning and teacher efficiency. So far he has designed and led the 9-12 rollout of Khan Academy's Khanmigo at Rensselaer Central. In doing this, he achieved a 92 percent student activation rate—one of the highest in Indiana—while guiding teachers through responsible-use frameworks that honor FERPA and academic integrity. Beginning this fall, Rensselaer is continuing this rollout in Grades 6-12. Mr. Hickman offer answers to the following questions:

How is AI being used in the classroom this year?

"We are in the midst of evaluating AI's role in the classroom, while leveraging its capabilities to improve student-learning and teacher-effectiveness. Teachers and students in Grades 6-12 all have access to Khan Academy's AI-powered tutor, Khanmigo. Khanmigo provides tutoring assistance to students and serves as a Teacher's Assistant for Educators."

How will it help improve student learning and teacher-effectiveness?

"AI has the potential to serve as a collaborative tool for all stakeholders. It can help teachers differentiate student learning for both high and low-achieving students, develop and create more engaging curriculum and become an extension of teaching instruction and intervention through improved feedback loops. AI, if used with purpose and integrity, can improve the learning environment for students and teachers alike."

What safeguards or policies are you implementing to ensure teachers and students are using it appropriately?

"While we are still in the early adoption phase and policies, safeguards, strategies and instruction must evolve with the changing-technology, RCSC has developed an AI-Use policy in the handbook, Responsible-Use documents that are visible in every classroom and Professional Development opportunities for teachers. We are currently working to develop a plan to increase our AI-literacy both with our teachers and students, so that they may know how to use AI in a responsible and ethical way. Khan Academy has also been a great partner in developing guardrails for students in Khanmigo in order to preserve academic integrity and encourage students to use AI as a learning tool, rather than as a replacement for learning."

As with any new technology, there is a time of transition and exploration needed. Through this time, Rensselaer is thankful to be on the cutting edge of AI in the classroom in order to offer students the best learning experience and teachers the best resources to do so.

You're Invited

The Rensselaer Central Schools Corporation School Board conducts regular meetings at the Corporation Administrative Offices on the third Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. You are invited to attend these meetings.

Board Members

Gary Braasch President
 Janice Deno Vice President
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 Cole Buschman Member
 George Cover Member
 Mark Jordan Member
 Courtney Wilcox Member

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CTE FEATURE: CONSTRUCTION TRADES PROGRAM



**Brant Schmid,
Building Trades at RCHS**

The Construction Trades program at Rensselaer Central High School is one of many CTE (Career Technical Education) programs offered. The three construction pathways are Principles of Construction, General Carpentry and Finishing and Framing.



Principles of Construction students are introduced to the types and uses of common hand and power tools, learn the types and basic terminology associated with construction drawings and practice basic safety precautions.

In General Carpentry, students build upon the skills learned in Principles of Construction and examine the basics of framing. This includes procedures for laying out and constructing floor systems, wall systems, roof framing and basic stair layout.

In the Framing and Finishing pathway, students learn advanced framing skills along with interior and exterior finishing techniques. Additional topics include thermal and moisture protection; roofing applications; doors and door hardware; window, door, floor and ceiling trim; and drywall installation and finishing.

Within the construction trades curriculum students can participate in the capstone pathway that allows them to do an internship within the construction field during the school day. Through teaching these pathways and the possible internships the hope is students have enough knowledge and hands-on experiences to continue a career in construction trades.

Our most recent projects were the stairs to the press box and the ADA compliant viewing deck and ramp at the football field. The stairs to the press box were added to make it easier and safer for personnel entering and exiting the press box. The viewing deck and ramp was completed so individuals who are in a wheelchair have a place to sit on an elevated platform to watch football games.

