

JANUARY 2026 | ISSUE 40

ROCK RIDGE REPORTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ROCK RIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS



EDUCATION TO INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION

LAURENTIAN GRADES PREK-6 WONDERFUL, WINTER FUN

Laurentian 3rd graders had a wonderful Winter Fun Day filled with outdoor learning and fun! Students rotated through three engaging activities, including roasting s'mores around a fire, building creative snow sculptures with classmates, and snowshoeing.



**S'more Days
are
the BEST
Days!**



FOURTH GRADE HOLIDAY CHEER

The 4th graders at Laurentian Elementary had a wonderful time creating mini-Christmas trees as a fun and festive grade-level project! Students used wire hangers, garland, and Christmas lights to design their own unique trees, and the creativity on display was amazing.



This project would not have been possible without the help and support of our many parent volunteers. Their time and assistance helped everything run smoothly, and we are so grateful for their involvement.



Most importantly, the students had a blast! It was a joyful way to kick off winter break, build memories, and spend quality time together as a 4th grade community.



PARKVIEW GRADES PREK-2 FESTIVITIES & FAMILIES

Parkview's holiday sing and gingerbread house celebration was a wonderful way to kick off the holiday break!

Students filled the room with cheerful songs, proudly sharing the music they had been practicing and spreading holiday spirit to everyone in attendance.

Following the performance, families joined their children to decorate gingerbread houses, filling the space with laughter, creativity, and sweet treats. It was truly special to see students and families working side by side and enjoying time together.

The day was full of joy, music, and meaningful moments that created lasting memories for our school community. Thank you to all the families who joined us and helped make the day so festive and memorable!

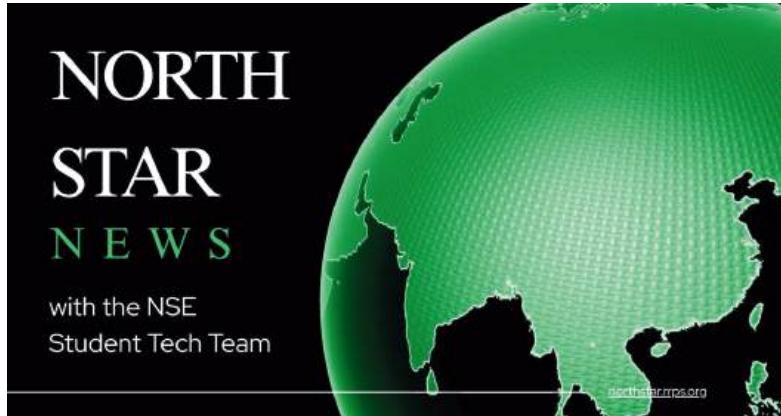


NORTH STAR

GRADES 3-6

NORTH STAR STUDENT TECH TEAM

NEWSCAST



A group of ambitious and energetic sixth graders have been hard at work recording a daily newscast at North Star Elementary School in Virginia. The first video newscast was shared with classes the week before Thanksgiving break and a new episode has been sent out each school day since.

The daily newscast features a "good morning" message, weather report, lunch menu, announcements, the Pledge of Allegiance, and more. The students producing the newscast on and off camera are members of the North Star Student Tech Team, led by Mr. Kramer.



The Tech Team records each newscast for the following school day. They are learning how to record videos on an iPad in front of a green screen and add them to a fun background in iMovie. The students are also working on creating content, rehearsing, speaking clearly, editing video & audio, directing, and working as a team. Mr. Kramer's goal is to have the team be able to produce each daily video independently and send the finished product to him for sharing with staff.



Here is a sample newscast featuring the whole team: <https://youtu.be/YbEZr4STdf8>



RRHS GRADES 7-12

OUR SCHOOL, OUR

RESPONSIBILITY IN ACTION

At Rock Ridge High School, the past month has been a powerful reminder that a high school is a busy, vibrant place—full of learning, leadership, and opportunity. Guided by our shared commitment to Our School, Our Responsibility, students and staff have been engaged across classrooms, career spaces, and community partnerships, all at once.

Over the past month, students in the Child Development and Learning class extended their learning beyond the classroom with visits to Parkview Elementary School, Iron Range Tykes Learning Center, and the adaptive playground at Lincoln School. These experiences allowed students to explore careers connected to early childhood education while also seeing inclusive design in action.

Experiencing an adaptive playground reinforced an important lesson—play is pure fun, and when people of all abilities can play together, it is even better. It was a meaningful example of empathy, inclusion, and shared responsibility.

With the creation of Rock Ridge University, the high school has intentionally brought together all CIS and AP classes offered at Rock Ridge under one unified umbrella. This month, students and families will have a chance to learn more about these opportunities and how students can earn college credit while still in high school—putting some on a path to graduate from college in three, or even two, years. Rock Ridge University reflects a focused commitment to academic rigor, access, and future-ready planning, ensuring students understand and can fully take advantage of these opportunities.

Student leadership was highly visible this month as well. Mrs. Ismil's REACH students, through Leo Club, designed and led a Winter Carnival Assembly for grades 7–8. The assembly was energetic, inclusive, and entirely student-driven – showing what happens when students are trusted to lead. This is how culture is built at Rock Ridge: students stepping up, leading with purpose, and creating a positive, welcoming environment for others.



Leadership development extended beyond the building when CORE students attended the statewide Youth Leadership Academy this month. The experience challenged students to reflect on leadership, responsibility, and their role in shaping school culture. They returned with new perspectives and ideas that will continue to influence Rock Ridge in the weeks and months ahead.



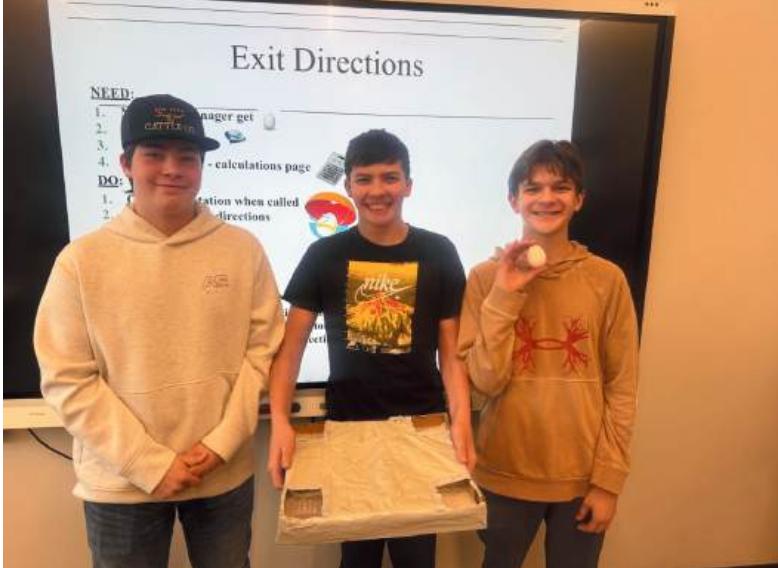
Career exploration continued off campus this month when more than fifty Rock Ridge students from the Industrial Technology and Career Seminar classes participated in Minnesota North–Hibbing Technical Career Day. Students rotated through hands-on experiences in Welding, Automotive, HVAC, Culinary Arts, Law Enforcement, and more. They practiced skills, asked questions, and saw clear pathways from high school to postsecondary training. Reconnecting with recent Rock Ridge graduates who are now Minnesota North students made the experience even more powerful, reinforcing that these opportunities are real and attainable.



Science learning was equally active this month. In the CIS Microbiology class, Emily from Essentia Health visited to share what a day in the life of a microbiologist looks like and how she pursued her career. Students engaged in a hands-on lab using agar plates to grow bacteria samples, turning abstract concepts into real-world science and opening the door to a future field experience.



Meanwhile, in Mr. Borich's 8th grade science class, students wrapped up their motion and forces unit with a hands-on engineering challenge—designing containers to safely catch a raw egg dropped from 2.5 meters. By sketching, building, testing, and refining their designs, students applied Newton's Laws, calculated speed and impact force, and experienced physics in an engaging, memorable way.



Some of our staff are also making headlines! Kevin Szumal, Band Director at Rock Ridge, recently marched in this year's Rose Parade in Pasadena, California. A project of Saluting America's Band Directors, the Band Directors Marching Band accompanied a colorful animated float along the 5.5-mile parade route. Szumal was selected from over 900 applicants to be a part of this 350-member ensemble which was composed of directors from all fifty states, plus Mexico, Panama, and Japan. "I had the opportunity to talk with many people along the parade route and before and after our performances. It was a joy to hear about how music has impacted their lives." Szumal said of the experience. "I think it's important to recognize how involvement in music can open the door to unique opportunities and experiences like this." he added. Szumal was one of seven participants from Minnesota, which included Cherry band director Marie Frietas, and her husband, Chisholm band director Ryan Frietas.



Cherry Band Director Marie Freitas, Chisholm Band Director Ryan Freitas, and Rock Ridge Band Director Kevin Szumal.

Photo by Mark Sauer

All of this happened in just the past month—clear evidence that Rock Ridge High School is a very busy place! From leadership and academics to career training and hands-on learning, students are constantly engaged in meaningful work. Together, these experiences reflect who we are at Rock Ridge: a school where students take ownership, rise to responsibility, and help build a strong, positive culture—Our School, Our Responsibility.

REMINDER

NO SCHOOL FOR ALL
ROCK RIDGE STUDENTS

MONDAY, JANUARY 19
(TEACHER IN-SERVICE DAY)