

Willie Spelts

Director of School to Work Engagement

Fundraising Coordinator

School Board Presentation

January 12, 202

- **Thank you to the Golden Bear Foundation**
 - Grant winners were informed of their award and ordering has commenced.
 - Nearly \$10,000 received in the fall of 2025. Thank you to the Golden Bear Foundation!
- **St. John's University Engineering Design Competition - Strasser**
 - Check out more here:
<https://www.csbsju.edu/Physics/Engineering-Design-Competition/>
- Tour of Manufacturing
 - Over 60 of our students attended with Mr. Fyre, Mr. Eicholz, Mr. Johnson, and myself on 4 separate buses.
 - We toured the following manufacturing businesses:
 - GPM of Duluth
 - Hydrosolutions of Duluth
 - Exodus Global of Superior
 - Thanks to True North Stars Consortium coordinators Shannon Malovrh and Jane Shade, AMFA and the planning team for their great work!
- Great compliments about our staff and students who attended the Curling Championships
- Justin Liles came to speak to our 9th graders about weather and the study of. Nice work by Alison Glade, 9th grade science teacher, for the request. Thanks to Justin for coming.
- Nice work by our CTE Teachers in applying for Impact Grants from the NESD-John Engelking. Fingers crossed for approval.
 - **Speaking of CTE Teachers, have you seen the Bog Walk or the Ice Houses that our students in Eicholz' and Foster's classes have built?**
- Great work by our Rock Ridge Ambassadors Emma Lintula, Samantha Bartovich, and Haylie Seppala as they go above and beyond in welcoming our Wednesday speakers. We have added a monitor outside the Bezek Career Center that provides a photo and company information of the speaker each week. Huge thanks! Also, thank you to the professionals who come each week! During the week of November 10-14, we had

4-5-6 speakers that they hosted, made slides to prepare for the display in the hallway, etc. It was a busy week, and a great semester by these girls!

- Check received from the St. Louis County Protective Factors grant in the amount of \$43,336.40 for reimbursement of costs and my salary. Huge thanks for this grant(Cassandra Hainey) and Raymond Jobe at the County.
- Congratulations to Mary Rantala, Health Sciences Teacher for her recent MDE Program Approval. This is great for the district and students as she now qualifies for many grant and funding opportunities. CTE and Perkins Funding.
- Teacher Mary Rantala brought her Medical Careers students on a tour of OA. The students were such a large group that they went over in smaller groups to make the tour most beneficial.
- Teacher Mary Rantala brought her Medical Careers students on a full tour of the Essentia Hospital in Virginia. It was a huge success. Way to go, Mary! Thank you to the Essentia staff for their generous time and information.
- On 12/5/2025, Greg Foster, James Eicholz, and August Galloway and I took 50+ students to the MN North-Hibbing Campus Career Tech Day. A great experience for our students to learn about and compete in CTE skills areas. I appreciated the opportunity to go along on this field trip.
- Rock Ridge has received a check from the Virginia Community Foundation - Rock Ridge Education Fund for the 2025-26 school year. The check has been deposited. Grant requests have been awarded to teachers and staff who applied. HUGE thank you to all involved!
- Rock Ridge has received a check from the Virginia Community Foundation - Wolverine Fund for the 2025-26 school year. Josh Lamppa will manage these funds as the Wolverine Funds are only for MSHSL Activities. HUGE thank you to all involved!
- VHS - Roosevelt High School Class of 1957 donated their class' remaining funds. A very nice phone call from Sharon Maki who kindly donated the funds. We discussed where to best donate it and came up with the RRHS Science department. Thank you to the VHS-Roosevelt Class of 1957!
- I believe we have created a positive culture of giving opportunities within the Rock Ridge School District. People know to contact me. People know that Rock Ridge accepts donations and gifts. People are interested in supporting Rock Ridge. I

received this email about someone who is planning to give to Rock Ridge from their life legacy plan. This is fantastic! Thank you!

- Good Morning Willie,

We have a client that would like to leave a gift to the school, however, they want it directed to the Music Department only. Can you tell me the best way to designate this in their estate plan document? Something like "Rock Ridge Public School, Virginia, Minnesota, to be used for the benefit of the Music Department". Do you think this language would be sufficient to make sure it goes directly towards the Music Department? Thank you,

- DECA students needed volunteers from the community for their RolePLay and came to me to see if I could help. How great is this: 15 people for ten spots in a couple hours. So happy and grateful for our community support!
- Just received a phone call from a community group who has heard about our great Culinary program and wanted to check in to see if they would cater an upcoming event. I tell you this because it is important to me that you know how connected to the community we are. I know these people in our communities and love when they call.

- **Student report in action:**

- Last Tuesday, Emily from Essentia in Duluth came to talk to Rock Ridge College in the Schools Microbiology class! She went over her day in the life of a Microbiologist as well as what her path looked like in becoming one. In addition to this, Emily brought in plates so the kids could grow bacteria! She gave each group a plate and instructed them to run their finger on something, like a door handle or table top, and smear it on the plate. The groups brought their initialed plates back to her and she took it with her to the lab to see what they would grow! Emily did not only give a fascinating and informative talk, she has given Rock Ridge the opportunity to hold a field trip down to her place of work. We cannot thank Emily enough!

- **Report by Lennon Hilde, RRHS student**

- **Donations are coming to the Rock Ridge Construction Club in memory of Al Williams.** Al was the longtime owner of Pohaki in Virginia. He was also a VHS graduate. Most importantly, he was a great man who beautifully supported the work in our Construction classes. We thank the Al Williams family for their kindness to include Rock Ridge in Al's memorials.

- **ACP - Advisory Group is up and running as we continue the forward momentum in our Academies.** I appreciate the teachers who have volunteered to join me in setting up an Advisory Board to make decisions and recommendations for getting this year's seniors recognized for Academy Achievement, Pathway Proficiency, and Capstone Completion.



- **Student share: My job shadow was great,** I went to their organization in Chisholm. Where we had some good conversations about schooling and what he does at work or what others in a similar field do. He showed me some blueprints too and told me some of the steps and which type of engineer does what. **-G. Harvey, 9th grade, RRHS**
- **I talked to you last time about a student from Mrs. Andrie's class** who shared a thank you to Mrs. Andrie following a field trip to St.Paul for the Culinary Students. Here is that note: [Read Note](#)
- **Golden Bear State hockey Champions** event went really well at the HIPP on December 20th. To have players from the 1948 State Champions in attendance was truly incredible! We had family representatives from all the years, evans far back as the 1945 team. A big thank you to Figgy Ritacco for helping me put this event on. Figgy's willingness to help allowed this "Virginia" guy to connect with his "Eveleth" guys. Thank you to Kathy Merkle for her help with registration and welcoming everyone. Thank you to WA Fisher, Jeff lease and staff, for their collaboration and super cool artwork displays they made for each team. A big thank you to Jess and Sheila Richter, from Iron Range Apparel, for their donation to help pay for the event. Finally, a huge thank you to Margie Koivunen and Bob Pazzelli for their incredible financial support and for hosting a post game gathering for everyone who was home for the celebration. Zero cost to the school district.
- Great field trip on Wednesday with Mr. Strasser and his students to Cirrus and Essentia in Duluth. The students were impressed with both places and learned a lot about careers and got to see the physical spaces of both companies. A great experience! I appreciate the collaboration with Mr. Strasser.

Academies, Pathways, and Capstones

At Rock Ridge High School (RRHS), we use the Academy Model to drive student learning and provide professional experiences and opportunities. The Academy Model at RRHS has three components:

1. Academies (4) within grades 7-12:
 - a. Grades 7-9 Career Exploration
 - b. Grades 9-12 Natural Resources, Engineering, Manufacturing, Architecture, & Construction
 - c. Grades 9-12 Business, Information Technology, Communication, & Arts
 - d. Grades 9-12 Health Science & Human Services
 - e. **Academy Achievement = Pathway Proficiency (below) and Capstone Completion (below) will earn the student special recognition at graduation.**
2. Pathways:
 - a. High School Pathways in Career Academies are a sequence of academic and career-focused courses that prepare students for a specific industry through integrated learning experiences like college credit, certifications, and internships.
 - b. These programs combine rigorous academics with career-specific training, helping students explore interests and build skills for future success in college or the workforce.
 - c. **Pathway Proficiency = The completion of the Pathway Courses identified in the photo charts of each Academy and will earn the student special recognition at graduation.**
3. Capstones:
 - a. A capstone project is the culminating experience of a student's learning journey.
 - b. An opportunity to apply academic knowledge and real-world skills to a meaningful challenge or question.
 - c. Grounded in the Gold Standard PBL framework from the Buck Institute for Education (PBLWorks), a high-quality capstone experience engages students in sustained inquiry, authentic work, and public sharing.
 - d. **Capstone Completion = The completion of an agreed upon project, or the like, and then successfully presented to the Capstone Advisory Board.**

The following photo charts of the Academies host an abundance of information for the students to use and apply when making course choices. Please reach out to Willie Spelts at willie.spelts@rrps.org or 218-290-1237 for more information about Academy Achievement, Pathway Proficiency, and Capstone Completion.





Natural Resources, Engineering, Manufacturing, Architecture, & Construction

Rock Ridge High School Natural Resources, Engineering, Manufacturing, Architecture, & Construction **Career Academy** is a dynamic program designed to prepare students for rewarding careers in some of today's most essential industries. This academy offers hands-on learning experiences, integrating classroom instruction with real-world applications. Students engage in specialized coursework that covers fields such as environmental sustainability, engineering design, advanced manufacturing, and construction technology. Through partnerships with local businesses, industry experts, and post-secondary institutions, the academy provides students with access to internships, mentorships, and certifications that align with their career goals. Whether exploring renewable energy, designing innovative structures, or mastering state-of-the-art manufacturing techniques, students graduate with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to succeed in college or the workforce. This academy is ideal for students passionate about building the future and shaping the world around them.

Sample Careers	• Architect • Millwright • Landscaping • Carpenter • Mechanic • Auto Mechanic • Bus Driver • Biologist • Science • Mathematics	• Electrician • Technicians • Lineman • Contractor • Railroad Worker • Lab Technician	• Equipment Operator • Engineer • Bus Driver • Biologist • Science • Mathematics	• Plumbing • Contractor • Forester/Logger • Agricultural Engineer	• Masonry • Diesel Mechanic • Veterinarian	• Welding • Small Engine • Climatologist • Engineering
Required	Pathway Advanced Courses (Choose 6)			Capstone		
• Career Exploration	• Design and Construct I • Design and Construct II • Building Construction I • Building Construction II • Home Maintenance • Wood Tech I • Wood Tech II • Engineering I • Environmental Science • Zoology • Intro to Physics	• Small Engines • Auto Maintenance • Auto Mechanics • Welding I • Welding II • Welding III • Intro to Millwright & Mining • Botany • Biology/AP Biology • College Trig • College Alg • Calculus	• Senior Internship • Capstone Project • Individual Project approved by Administration • Approved Employment	Construction, Architecture, & Engineering <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skilled Trades• Design/Pre-Construction• Engineering Natural Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mining Systems• Plant, Animal & Natural Resource Systems• Environmental Services Maintenance & Repair <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facility Maintenance• Equipment Maintenance• Manufacturing Maintenance• Technology		

1/8/2026 -WS



Business, Information Technology, Communications, & Arts

Rock Ridge High School Business, Information Technology, Communications, & Arts **Career Academy** is an innovative program designed to prepare students for success in dynamic, fast-paced industries. This academy offers a comprehensive curriculum that combines rigorous academics with hands-on learning experiences. Students explore areas such as business management, entrepreneurship, information systems, digital media, graphic design, and performing arts. Through collaborative projects, internships, and access to state-of-the-art technology, students gain practical skills and industry knowledge. The academy emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, and communication, equipping graduates with the tools to excel in college, careers, and beyond. It fosters a passion for innovation and empowers students to become leaders in their chosen fields.

Sample Careers	• Lodging Management, Concierges, Housekeeping/Janitorial/Maintenance, Front Desk/Guest Services, Event Management, Finance • Restaurants and Food/Bev Service • Advertising & Promotion Manager • Manager • Tellers • Tax Preparers • Financial Advisors	• Recreation, Amusement & Attractions (Museum Curator, Tour Guide, Park Ranger) • Travel & Marketing Specialist • Public Relations • Insurance Sales Agents	• Sales Representative • Appraisers • Claims Adjusters • Personal	
Required	Pathway Advanced Courses (Choose 6)			
• Career Exploration	• Marketing Strategies • Advanced Marketing • The Art of Persuasion • Entrepreneurship I • Entrepreneurship II • Intro to Business • Food Chemistry • Personal Finance • Sports and Entertainment Marketing	• Culinary I • Culinary II • Food and Nutrition • Photography • Adobe Suite • Intro to Communication • Journalism I • Journalism II	• Senior Internship • Capstone Project • Individual Project approved by Administration • Approved Employment	Business Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entrepreneurship• Finance• Marketing• Hospitality• Human Resources Arts, IT, & Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audio/Visual Technology• Web & Digital Communications• Design• Visual & Performing Arts• Broadcasting

1/8/2026 -WS

R O C K R I D G E	 Health Science and Human Services				 A C A D E M I S	
	Rock Ridge High School Health Science and Human Services Career Academy provides students with an immersive educational experience that prepares them for careers in healthcare, public service, and related fields. This academy integrates core academic subjects with specialized coursework and hands-on learning opportunities. Students explore areas such as nursing, emergency medicine, psychology, and social work, gaining foundational knowledge and practical skills. Through partnerships with local healthcare providers, government agencies, and community organizations, students engage in internships, job shadowing, and service-learning projects. Graduates of the program are equipped with the expertise and certifications to pursue post-secondary education or enter the workforce in a variety of rewarding and impactful careers.					
	Sample Careers		•Medicine - (Physician, PA, Pharmacy, etc.) •Occupational Therapy, Exercise Physiology •Mental Health Counselor/Psychologist •Pathologist •Human Resources •Personal Care (Cosmetology) •EMT, & Paramedic •Chemistry •Human Anatomy and Physiology I •Human Anatomy and Physiology II •Biology/AP Biology •Psychology/AP Psychology •Child Development & Learning •Introduction to Communication •Introduction to Physics			•Laboratory/Radiology •Pre K-12 + Teacher •Educational Administrator •Physical Therapy, •Sign-Language Interpreter/Speech •Social Worker •Personal Care Assistant PCA •Police, Sheriff Patrol Officer, & Protective Services •Fire Fighter, EMT, & Paramedic •Mortician/Funeral Director •Librarian/Media Specialist •Emergency Med Response/BLS •Intro to Healthcare Careers •Intro to Nursing Assistant / Home Health Aide •Introduction to Teaching •Microbiology •Law & Criminal Justice •Basic Life Support / CPR
						Career Pathways
	Required		Pathway Advanced Courses (Choose 6)			Capstone
	• Career Exploration		• Chemistry • Human Anatomy and Physiology I • Human Anatomy and Physiology II • Biology/AP Biology • Psychology/AP Psychology • Child Development & Learning • Introduction to Communication • Introduction to Physics	• Medical Terminology • Intro to Healthcare Careers • Emergency Med Response/BLS • Intro to Nursing Assistant / Home Health Aide • Introduction to Teaching • Microbiology • Law & Criminal Justice • Basic Life Support / CPR		• Senior Internship • Capstone Project • Individual Project approved by Administration • Approved Employment
						Human Services • Personal, Family, & Community Services • Law, Public Safety, Corrections, & Security Health Sciences • Therapeutic, Diagnostic, Support Services • Biotechnology Research & Development • Health Informatics & Administration Education & Training • Teaching and Training • Early Education & Child Development • Adminstrative & Professional Support

1/8/2026 -WS

I do have current seniors that qualify for **Pathway Proficiency**. I am working on getting this out to all current seniors for their consideration. I am encouraging the Pathway Proficient students to consider doing a **Capstone Completion** so they can earn **Academy Achievement**. I would love to give these seniors the opportunity even though the time is tight.

● **SAVE THE DATE:**

- Saturday, February 14, 2026 Rock Ridge High School celebrates the 75th anniversary of the 1951 State Basketball Championship won by the Gilbert Buccaneers. If you are a player, cheerleader, coach, or a family representative of any of these folks, please join us in The Waschke Family Activities Center for a celebration to take place in the U. S. Steel Gymnasium at Rock Ridge High School at approx 2:00 for a pre-game ceremony recognizing the anniversary of this amazing championship. Contact: Willie Spelts at 218-290-1237 with any questions.
- Now, I would like to introduce Mr. Paul Gregerson as he will be speaking to you about a great upcoming event.