

MARCH 2022

# FREEDOM ACRES NEWS

## Learning is Soaring to Infinity and Beyond at Freedom Acres and Our School Family Continues to Grow!

WRITTEN BY ANGELA MILLER, PRINCIPAL

It is super hard to believe that it is the end of March! Thank you for making the 2021-22 school year amazing at Freedom Acres school and for sharing your wonderful children with me. Our teachers are truly dedicated to educating and supporting the needs of all learners at Freedom Acres! Very grateful for the majority of our school days being spent with in person learning. I believe we have navigated the most challenging hurdles with COVID and the future is starting to shine bright with normal activities! We are planning many great events for parents and families to be a part of! If you are interested in taking part in a 5K with your son or daughter, please mark your calendars for May 25th and a rain date of May 26th. Looking forward to spending time with the parents of our most amazing students! Thank you for your flexibility and grace during our adventurous return to learn.



Our parent surveys are a compass or beacon of change at Freedom Acres. Are you wondering how we employ the information provided? We reviewed the surveys during our March 18th professional development day. Our staff brainstormed student awards and ways for parents to volunteer at our building. We are ready to put these plans into action! Be on the lookout for a flier about parent volunteering opportunities. I would like to start a parent advisory group to contribute to decision making and great activities for our learners. My initial plan is to meet four times during the school year or once per marking period. If you have an interest in helping us achieve our goals and dreams by serving on this committee, please email me at [amiller@ioniaisd.org](mailto:amiller@ioniaisd.org). We are so blessed to have supportive parents!

Reading opportunities are observed in many ways from reading buddies to the commitment of our dream of a library becoming reality! Thank you to Deb Seal for her numerous hours spent setting up a checkout system and organizing our books. Shout out to the Durrant family for all of their amazing donations of great books. The blessing and financial donation from Emme's Avengers allowed us to purchase two beautiful bookshelves. The library is more than a place for readers to slip away and live vicariously through amazing characters. It is a place for learners to develop their transition skills for employment. Learners of all grades will be collecting books on library days to return to the library. Our transition age learners will help with returning and reshelving books. Sue Wizorek, speech teacher, has been committed to the CORE Language initiative and plans great activities for each word of the week and the library will now offer learning bins for weekly words. March was honored with lots of reading! Several prizes were given away for the AMAZING reading efforts.



My heart skips a beat when I think about how close we are to an adaptive playground. Sometimes I think this must be a dream! Our learners have been blessed with a renovated building, new parking lot, parent loop to safely drop off their most priceless possession, a library and the future playground. Our ISD Board of Education voted to approve the playground bid for equipment on Thursday, March 10th. We have secured a wonderful bid for the first phase and have a plan to add a gazebo for learners and families to share conversation, great food, and shade on sunny days. Some minor excavating will start in the near future followed by ordering and installing equipment. This project being complete will call for a celebration! We will have an amazing cookout for staff, students, and families. Thank you for all of the financial support with this project.



State testing is quickly approaching and we will officially start this requirement after spring break. We appreciate all of the efforts that go into helping our kids be in attendance and be prepared for testing. As parents, please be prideful that every learner gives their best effort. Effort and positive attitude reflect the Freedom Acres values well.

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. In the fall you will receive a school calendar 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!



Learners in our severely cognitively impaired programs will be blessed with additional school days in the summer. Teachers have been busy planning themes and great experiences for summer learning. Each week learners will capture a new word of the week and embark on an activity packed week of learning around a central theme. Our learners will hunt for treasures like pirates, soar their learning about space, and be down on the farm. Excited for the sunshine to be a part of the learning. Programming will start on June 13th and our summer learning days will start at 8:00 am and wrap-up at 2:05 pm.



**HAVE YOU EVER  
WONDERED  
WHAT YOUR  
PRINCIPAL DOES  
WHEN SHE IS  
AWAY FROM  
SCHOOL?**

Have you ever wondered what your principal does when she is away from school? I truly spend the majority of my time with my family and supporting kids! I have worked for The Right Door for 25 years as a facilitator of groups (Trauma for Caregivers and Love & Logic Parenting) and as a licensed respite provider. My passion is to spend time with families in my local community! I have many hobbies and the list is crazy long! I have spent this winter taking winter walks and riding my snowmobile in the UP. I just learned Pine Stump Junction has the best cauliflower pizza. I have four fur kids (AKA: dogs) and they are my best friends. My middle son, Conner, will graduate from high school this spring. I am so very proud of him and his accomplishments. My oldest son, Kyle, shared his exciting news of becoming a father to a sweet boy in September and that means I will officially have the honor of being a grandma. My youngest son, Keegan, stays crazy in love with sports and will have four sports going at once this spring. My wonderful husband, Jeff Miller, is supportive every step of the way and embraces my crazy life journey with a smile and grace. Life is a crazy journey of ups and curves that make all of us stronger! Thank you for allowing me to serve as your principal and sharing your child with me each day at Freedom Acres.



Educationally yours,  
*Angela Miller*



# Elementary School with Mrs. April Cavanaugh

## Cavanaugh's Cave!

WRITTEN BY APRIL, EMILY H, AND KATHY M

As spring approaches, we wanted to update you all on the happenings within Cavanaugh's Cave! Our boys have been working hard every Thursday creating art with Ms. Emily. They recently created these cute monsters, experimenting with watercolors and different mediums!

Mr. Jacob brought the English Springer Spaniel puppies to school this month, and they were a major hit across the board. Everyone was able to enjoy a snuggle with a pup! During social work group this month, our boys worked on their team building skills. They used colored pasta and marshmallows to see how they could create an elaborate pasta-art installation with a partner.

March is Reading Month! We are lucky to have an awesome team who creates school-wide bingo cards for our March is Reading month activities. Our learners have had fun reading in many different ways, especially the silly ones. We look forward to spending more time outside with our learners, as we have a goal to get 100 hours before the year ends. We are working on filling up our tracker for our hours outside throughout the week until the end of the school year!



# Middle School with Mrs. Michelle Allen

## Working on Goals

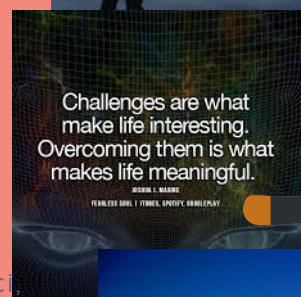
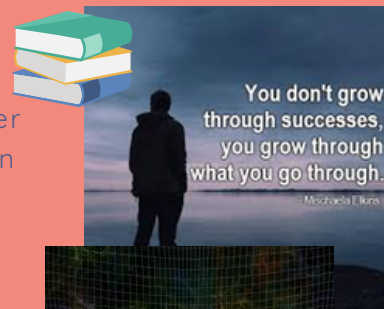
WRITTEN BY MICHELLE AND KACI

As the school year progresses, our students and staff continue to work together on the following: goal setting, mindfulness, character building, and modeling an acceptable work ethic.

Each morning, we look forward to hosting a Reading buddy group for students from

the SCI wing; the highlight of our day and break from academics, Edgenuity! We just completed our winter NWEA assessments and look ahead to the Spring when our students participate in M-STEP and PSAT testing. We enjoy PE with Emily and all the fun activities that she plans including an obstacle course, floor hockey, scooter activities, and Winter Olympics.

A few times each month, students have an opportunity to shop at Meijer with Kaci our HCA, and purchase classroom snacks and recipe ingredients. Students then get to make something yummy to eat, and if there's extras, then they share with staff and peers. Some of our favorite recipes include: breakfast casseroles, baked pasta and garlic toast, and heart shaped cinnamon rolls for Valentine's Day. We are anxiously awaiting more suitable weather to go outside and throw the football or prepare for our annual 5K that's held the end of May. Take each day as it comes and never give up on yourself!



# High School with Mrs. Jessica Rodgers

## Happy Spring!

WRITTEN BY JESSICA, DEANNA F, AND JOSH

It is hard to believe that we are heading into the final marking period of the 2021-2022 school year. However, we have had an amazing year and are so thankful for the memories that we have been able to make as a classroom. Spring is a time of new beginnings, experiences, and looking forward to opportunities to bloom and grow.

Our learners have continued to grow in their organizational, cooking, and communication skills as we continue to produce a Food Buffet every Wednesday for the school staff. The learners work on organizing order forms, helping staff members organize and dish food items into containers, and communicating with school staff when delivering orders and collecting money. Learners and classroom staff are also excited about the cookbook that will be available for purchase at the end of the school year with every recipe used throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

We recently had puppies visit the school for some extra snuggles which allowed for the community and school staff to see our learners bloom in an element that we do not often get to see. We were thankful for the moments of compassion, gentleness, and pure happiness that our learners were able to experience due to a few puppy kisses and snuggles. Thank you Heppe family!



Growth continues to happen every week when we participate in the Adaptive Physical Education class with Ms. Emily! Watching learners enjoy new experiences and gain access to sports and equipment they have never seen before while working on sportsmanship and teamwork is something that does not get old for school staff.

Our upcoming annual 5K has learners and staff excited to utilize our brand new track, cheer each other on, and enjoy some time outside of the classroom. The training will be difficult, but we believe in ourselves and in each other that with a little work, we will truly bloom and set some personal records this year! We cannot wait for the warmer weather so that we can be outside doing lessons, interacting with other classrooms and learners on the ball field, and truly bloom with our social-emotional learning. Here is to a great end of the school year and more memories being made with all!

## Adaptive PE with Miss Emily Armentrout

### Bronze, Silver and GOLD!

WRITTEN BY EMILY A

This year is flying by! I am so happy to be a part of the Freedom Acres family. The students enjoy Adapted Physical Education (APE) or at least seem to. We completed the winter Olympics in February. The students were divided into country teams across the building and were able to compete with each other for gold. Each student received an Olympic ID and entered each event with their game faces. We were introduced to curling, bobsledding, speed skating, and skiing. The winning countries (B-Canada, S-Japan, G-France) were awarded medals for their accomplishments as a team. The unit really focused on individual strengths and working together. To the right are some pictures highlighting some events!

I am looking forward to our upcoming units! We will be practicing our basketball skills for March Madness. We will start spring training for our 5K (May 25th) and set personal goals and records for ourselves. We are also looking forward to warmer weather to get outside and utilize our baseball fields to practice our striking, throwing, and catching skills.

This year has been amazing and I am grateful to be a part of your student's learning experience.





# Pre-School SCI with Mrs. Stephanie Brown

## WOW – Always Learning!

WRITTEN BY STEPH, DENISE, KATHY L, AND TYLER

Spring is coming and we can hardly wait! Our class is ready to hit the paved trails and enjoy spring weather!

Having fun while learning is our number one goal in Ms. Steph's Pre-school/Lower Elementary classroom. We achieve this goal daily through many different activities. Gym class was extra fun in February as we participated in Winter Olympic events. Our gym teacher, Ms. Emily, did a brilliant job of adapting the events so that all of our students could participate.

We continue to focus on a new word from our CORE vocabulary each week. We watch stories and videos featuring our word of the week (w.o.w.) that are provided by our speech therapist, Sue. We also try to incorporate our word of the week into our daily routine in other ways. Jacob (OT), Kara (COTA), and Sue provide us with fun activities each week as we do a speech and OT group session every Friday.

Circle time remains a favorite for all of our students. During our circle time we focus on requesting songs, reviewing our w.o.w., learning the days of the week, reviewing the month, talking about the shape and color of the month, greeting each other, and counting the number of friends present. It is so much fun to see the students enjoy this time spent learning together. We are even starting to hear some of our friends sing along to familiar circle songs at circle as well as request songs outside of circle time. So exciting!

**We continue to be impressed by each of our students daily.**

*Have a great spring!*



# Elementary School SCI with Mrs. Leigh Chick

## We Work, Work, Work to Play, Play, Play!

WRITTEN BY LEIGH, GWEN, ALEXA, AND ASHLEY

It has been an amazing year so far!! The students never stop surprising us as they master skills, gain strength and are courageous enough to try new activities. All of the students are working hard on their individual goals and objectives. Although we love to work...work...work.... We REALLY love to play...play...play! All the kids are enjoying weekly visits to the MOVE room to ride bikes and run around, daily visits to the sensory room to swing and play as well as free time within the classroom. We never seem to stop moving ☺

Our classroom also just wrapped up March Is Reading Month! This school wide activity is something everyone looks forward to each year. Our classroom loves to hand out new BINGO cards, draw out the names of the lucky winners and watch what prizes the students pick. We thank you all for reading with your child as well as sending in the Fun Friday donations so we can make this event such a success.

We are all looking forward to warmer weather, more sunshine and wrapping up another great school year!



Grace is enjoying the sensory lights while doing some goal work.



Emme was a March is reading month winner and is picking out her prize from the prize cabinet.



Sammy is having fun working on her goals!



Travis is excited to earn a reward after completing his morning work.



# Middle and High School with Mrs. Laura Fish

## The "Specials"

WRITTEN BY LAURA, CYNDI, DANIELLE AND TONY

Learners in the Fish Bowl (aka MSCI program) have been very active working on each of their goals; and more! Everyone enjoys our "specials" such as gym, speech and OT group and reading buddies; several learners really enjoy whirlpool time!! Recently, we participated with winter Olympic events in the gym class; we had so much fun doing the luge and speed skating! We have been progressing with monthly themes with Unique Learning Systems, March is Reading month and Women's History. We are looking forward to spring and going outside more often!!



# Transition SCI with Mrs. Lynne Geiger-Wester

## Safety Matters

WRITTEN BY LYNNE, TRINA, GLENDA & KIM

Our classroom has been very busy working on transition skills in the kitchen! We completed a unit called, "Safety Matters" from our transition curriculum. Students learned how to safely use appliances, such as a toaster, to make toast for our very own breakfast. Students also worked on the safe use of a coffee maker to make coffee. This coffee is sold in our snack shop. In addition, we have cooked or baked many things which required the use of a handheld mixer. To make sure all students were involved, we connected the mixer to a switch board which allowed students to press an attached button. This button turned the mixer on and off. Students did this to make scrambled eggs for the breakfast burritos we make and sell in the snack shop. Students also did this to help make sugar cookies, frosting, applesauce bars, sugar glaze, homemade noodles, soups, and dirt pie. We worked on measuring ingredients correctly to make sure that our food tastes good. If we don't follow the recipe then our food won't look or taste yummy! We experimented with the smell and texture of the things we were using to cook or bake. We did like the smell and feel of some things better than others! Best of all, we were able to eat all of the wonderful food we made! We will continue to work on these skills in the classroom!



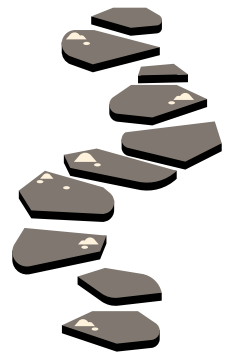


# Elementary ASD with Miss Khloe Kremer

## Approaching Warm Weather

WRITTEN BY KHLOE, TASHA, KRISTA, MEGAN, SURENA, BECKY, LAUREN, AND DEANNA

As the school year continues, the students in the ECSE ASD classroom are making leaps and bounds with social skills, working on fine and gross motor imitation all while building a strong communication foundation. As we get into spring, more outdoor activities will be incorporated in the daily routine allowing for walks and riding bikes on the trail. As we approach the end of the school year, we will be focusing on transitional skills for the students moving onto elementary school next year.

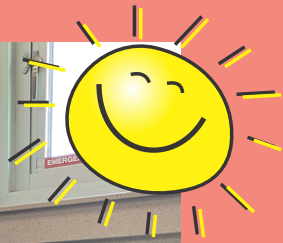


# Middle School ASD with Miss Kyanne Root

## Big Gains for Big Fun

WRITTEN BY KYANNE, ALAINA, TAYLOR, AND KATIE

This school year is flying by! It's hard to believe that it's already the end of March! In our classroom we have made some big gains in our academic and personal goals, putting a focus on our life skills, but also not forgetting the fun activities. We have played some fun group games. The students have also enjoyed sledding, playing in the falling snow and skating on the ice, but they are also excited that warmer weather and the sun is coming! We are ready to enjoy some outdoor games, and fun. One of our favorite moments from this past semester was to pet and hang out with a puppy!



# UPCOMING EVENTS

OUR FIRST 5K, AND WE'RE SO KEEN  
TO BE ALL TOGETHER SINCE COVID-19

## FREEDOM ACRES 5K

WALK, RUN, OR ROLL WITH YOUR STUDENT



WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2022

10:00 AM

FREEDOM ACRES SCHOOL

*In case of rain, the 5K will be postponed to  
Thursday, May 26, 2022.*

Spring is abounding and we are preparing for our first BIG event since COVID. Our learners are training for their annual 5K and we want to celebrate their drive to reach goals. We will welcome all learners, families, siblings, and community partners for a walk/run, music, activities, and a tailgate lunch!

**Please register with the link or QR code below to join or volunteer for the Freedom Acres 5K.**

<https://forms.gle/wp3NRQY8AoY61maj9>



*Families and community members, please arrive by 9:45AM and get any shirts that were ordered.*

*Parent volunteers arrive by 9:30AM to receive volunteer positions.*



## Teacher Professional Development Day

Freedom Acres teachers bonded in new ways during the professional development on March 18. While identifying goals for the remainder of the school year, brainstorming plans for state testing, and beginning a structure for summer programming, teambuilding is also a MUST! Emily, our APE teacher, hosted a King's Corner tournament for the teachers to collaborate and get involved with some gym time activities. OT, Jacob Heppel, took the trophy and was crowned King Heppel!



FREEDOM ACRES

## FAMILY BOWLING NIGHT

DATE TO BE DETERMINED

IONIA BOWLING ALLEY  
MORE INFORMATION  
COMING SOON

### Thematic Fun Fridays!!

April 1 <sup>st</sup> - April 10 <sup>th</sup>		<b>No School!</b> Enjoy your spring break!
April 15 <sup>th</sup> Speech word of the week: THINK		<b>No School!</b> Have a wonderful Easter weekend!
April 22 <sup>nd</sup> Speech word of the week: TIME		<b>Earth Day</b> It's <b>TIME</b> to celebrate Earth Day by wearing green or wearing an Earth Day shirt.
April 29 <sup>th</sup> Speech word of the week: LIVE		<b>National Oatmeal Cookie Day!</b> Do you <b>LIVE</b> for a fresh baked cookie? I do, lets celebrate cookies by wearing a shirt with cookies on it or a shirt that is the color of your favorite kind of cookie!



# SUBSTITUTES AND SUPERHEROES

**Help!! We are in NEED of great people, who love to work with wonderful kids!**

Freedom Acres staff has pulled together as a team and worked really hard to fill all staff vacancies this school year. Our school has had up to 15 staff absences on a given day with minimal substitutes. We are very blessed to have three total teacher substitutes for all programs at Freedom Acres. Donna Smith, Tabitha Gibbs and Crystal Weller have been very committed to covering as many days as they can! Sarah Reinhardt and Joy Adler are our HCA substitute superheroes. Take a peak at the picture in this section and you will notice our students are superheroes too! Here is a snapshot of a high school learner helping to serve lunches. He truly helped us have a successful lunch. Our recent retirees, Amy Bagnasco, Janet Selleck, and Deb Seal, have returned to the frontlines to guide us over the speed bump of shortages. This devotion has allowed us to weather the after COVID challenges and I am so proud of the staff!! We have remained on a face to face learning platform through all of the challenges. If you are reading this newsletter and you know of someone who would love to sub at Freedom Acres, please have them call our office. We promise to guide them through process, support and train them to serve our kids well. Our classrooms are designed in a team structure and will coach anyone to a strong finish line.



## Parent Advisory Committee Special Education Awards

Freedom Acres is made up of so many devoted staff and it is wonderful to see them recognized for their efforts.

### Recently Nominated Special Educator Award

*Laura Fish*

### Recently Nominated Contributor Award

*Alaina Denney  
Tyler Heydenburk  
Kyanne Root  
Cindy Zamarron*

### Past Freedom Acres Staff Special Educator Award Winners

*1997-1998 Amy Bagnasco  
1999-2000 Carol Ritcheske  
2005-2006 Kathy Sloan  
2008-2009 Gwen O'Mara  
2014-2015 Michelle Allen  
2017-2018 Angela Miller  
2019-2020 Leigh Chick*

### Past Freedom Acres Staff Contributor Award Winners

*2007-2008 Tony Bianchi  
2008-2009 Toni McPherson  
2010-2011 Teresa Krieger  
2012-2013 Kim King*



*Congratulations*

# High School ASD with Mr. Dan Frayer

## We Aren't All Work and No Play!

WRITTEN BY TONI, DAN, ERIN B, GINA, AND JORDAN

In Michigan, the calendar may indicate spring but the weather may not always agree.

Like all of us, our high school students are longing for the warmer weather.

Our classroom is taking advantage of any opportunity to enjoy the sun and practice our leisure skills.

We aren't all work and no play.

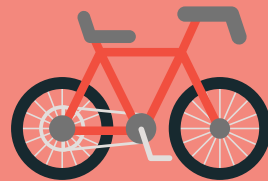
Leisure skills are an important part of any adult's life. Leisure activities can make our day to day lives more meaningful and enjoyable.

Developing leisure skills can be difficult for individuals with autism.

They often have very focused and limited interests. These skills need to be taught.

Luckily we can teach these! Leisure skills can incorporate many other skills, such as working cooperatively, practicing social skills and an opportunity for friendships outside of the school setting.

We are hopeful the weather will soon cooperate and we can take to the great outdoors and practice other fun activities.



For more information, check out this link.

<https://www.autismsociety-nc.org/leisure-skills/>

## Health News from Nurse Becky

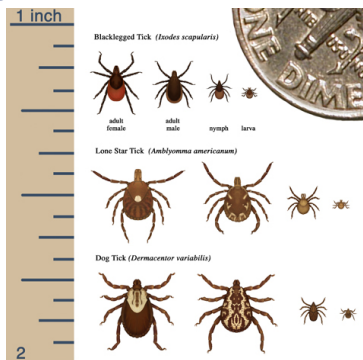
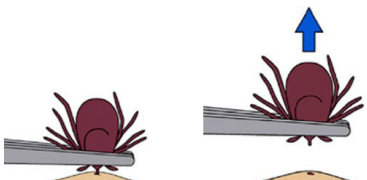
### Spring in Michigan

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
- P Use of repellents



### How to Remove a Tick

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
  - o Putting it in alcohol,
  - o Placing it in a sealed bag/container,
  - o Wrapping it tightly in tape, or
  - o Flushing it down the toilet.

For more information about ticks and tick borne disease, go to [www.cdc.gov/ticks](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks)

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

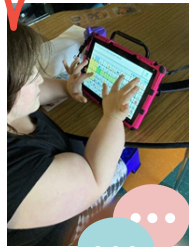


# Speech Therapy with Sue Wizorek

## Books for Learning!

### WRITTEN BY SUE

This school year has been a busy and fun time of working with our students! I'm thankful for a "normal" year with only a few bumps in the road. Because March is Reading Month, I've been using a lot of books in therapy. Reading is a great way to lead our learners to new vocabulary. Research suggests that children who are consistently exposed to reading, even if they are very simple books, gain a larger vocabulary. Our Occupational Therapy/Speech weekly group has always used books to reinforce our word of the week and we continue to work together to make sure that our learners are exposed to new words and things. Our students need exposure to language all the time and may need multiple exposures to learn new things. We are blessed to have great staff who are always looking for opportunities to learn new ways of supporting communication. I provide materials for our word of the week, such as songs and videos, but I also provide trainings so that everyone is familiar with various means of communication, such as speech generating devices, and are able to make communication enticing and meaningful! There are many means of communications in our school besides speaking, things like PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), sign language, AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication, generally a speech generating device), or gestures. All means of communications are encouraged and honored. Our students love to share their thoughts and ideas! We are always focused on what is the best method for each individual and we work together with teachers and families to figure out what works. 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

## Explore Your Needs with Visual Therapy

### WRITTEN BY AMY

DID YOU KNOW...on March 2nd, 1829, The Perkins School for the Blind in Boston, Massachusetts was the first in the United States? Its original name was the New England Asylum for the Blind.

It has been a very exciting, fun and educational winter for all of us. We have been working on reading environmental braille, focusing and tracking light sources partnered with sound, making choices and creating tactile books and pictures. I have noticed many positive changes and actions this semester.

A couple of weeks ago Mr. Heppe brought in his very large litter of puppies to share with everyone at Freedom Acres. It was a very calming and fun experience that brought smiles to many faces. Your student was able to feel, smell and listen to the puppies. It was a great experience for all of us.

I hope you all have a peaceful and happy spring break full of memories. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me. My email is [ablunt@ioniaisd.org](mailto:ablunt@ioniaisd.org) and my phone number is (616)930-5177.



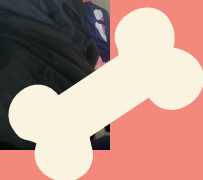
# Occupational Therapy with Jacob Heppe

## Puppy Play Therapy

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. We even had a guest with us for most of the winter in the form of COTA student, Sam Fyan, who really enjoyed spending time with our students and learned a lot about multiple disabilities.

I hope you didn't miss PUPPY Day. I know the students and staff here at FA enjoyed it. Having the puppies around really brought out the joy in the different classrooms and it even helped promote ROM exercises for several of our students! Sometimes all it takes is a strong motivation to want to pet a puppy for some students to practice reaching out and working those muscles in our shoulders, arms, and hands. Look at this puppy taking a nap with one of our students.

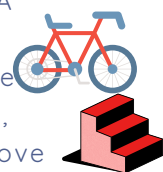


## Physical Therapy with Brenda Brown

### Moving Keeps us Growing

WRITTEN BY BRENDA PT AND KACEY PTA

Spring is always an exciting time here at the Freedom Acres PT department! Spring signals the beginning of new growth with warmer weather on the horizon. These past few years have been challenging for all of us, but there are exciting things happening, including the building of a new playground on campus that will allow us to get outside and work on wonderful movement activities including climbing, walking on uneven surfaces, riding bikes and endurance activities. We continue to implement the MOVE(Mobility Opportunities via Educational Experience) Curriculum with focuses on maximizing the students special physical abilities and function throughout their educational day! A HUGE SHOUT OUT TO ALL THE STAFF AT FREEDOM ACRES! The staff play a huge role in getting student's stronger and as independent as possible, as they support student's goals daily within the classroom, including the adaptive PE class. They get students in and out of standers, gait trainers, walkers as well as help them ride bikes. These are just a few of the things they work on, DAILY. I love when staff send me pictures of a student doing something new! They also work on walking up and down stairs, completing range of motion and working on getting on and off of the toilet and changing tables! These are all the areas that are addressed by PT. Along with these activities, PT also can assist with wheelchair seating, obtaining appropriate braces for feet and sometimes hands, as well as assisting families obtain equipment that will help you and your student be more independent at home. Physical Therapy facilitates student's movement while maintaining and improving their mobility/function to the best of the student's ability. We may be working on crawling, standing, getting up from the floor, going up and down the stairs, riding a bike and using a stander to improve and/or maintain their function as well as other positioning! Please let me know if there is anything I can help you with at [bbrown@ioniaisd.org](mailto:bbrown@ioniaisd.org). Kacey, the PTA, and I can usually be found in the building on Monday's. PT will be provided during the summer schedule as well to keep everybody "MOVING" toward their goals!!!!







# SANTA AND MRS. CLAUSE







# LIBRARY



With the completion of our building addition, Freedom Acres finally has the space for a library! At the beginning of the year, Angela Miller got the ball rolling with a generous donation of several hundred, personally purchased, classroom books. Many of our teachers and parents jumped on board by donating personal books and moving former classroom books to our school library.

Converting a classroom into a library has, at times, required all hands on deck! Former secretary, Janet Selleck, and building tech coach, Deb Seal, took on the great task of sorting, cataloging, and organizing the many donated and new books. Stephanie Lopez, our new secretary, has now stepped in whenever she can. A few of our health care aids, when possible, have also helped to cover some of our newer books. We even had one of our SEI students step up to help label books for easier re-shelving after being checked out.

Lynne Wester secured a \$500 mini grant from MAASE (Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education) in order to obtain supplies for the library so we could also use the library as a transitional training situation for our SCI students. Our students will learn to communicate with peers, follow directions, and complete work tasks.

While it is new, we look forward to the continuation and growth of a space for our learners. The **Grand Opening** of our library will be **Tuesday, April 19th!**



Permission slips will be sent home for you to sign if you would like your student to be able to bring home library books.

# THANK YOU!

## A Big Thank You to All

We want to say thank you to everyone who has made donations to Freedom Acres to benefit our students and their growth.

A special thank you to those who have donated books to our new Freedom Acres Library.

**Angela Miller**

**Deb Seal**

**Lynne Geiger-Wester**

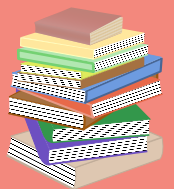
**Brandy Durrant**

**Michelle Allen**

**Jennifer Seal**

**Jessica Rodgers**

**Laura Fish**



### Contributors to Freedom Acres School and the Playground

**Kimberly Kelsey**

**Lois and Douglas Musbach**

**Lois Smith**

**Robin Pline**

**John and Judy Durrant**

**Brian and Melinda Talbot**

**Saranac Knights of Columbus**

**Ionia Knights of Columbus**

**Michigan Reformatory**

**and**

**Emme's Avengers**

**- Kurt and Mara Pline**

**- Chris and April Kreiner**

**- Ben and Brandy Durrant**

### Donations will be used for:

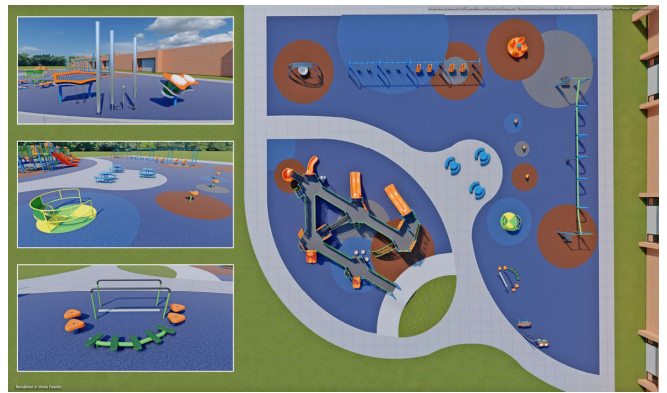
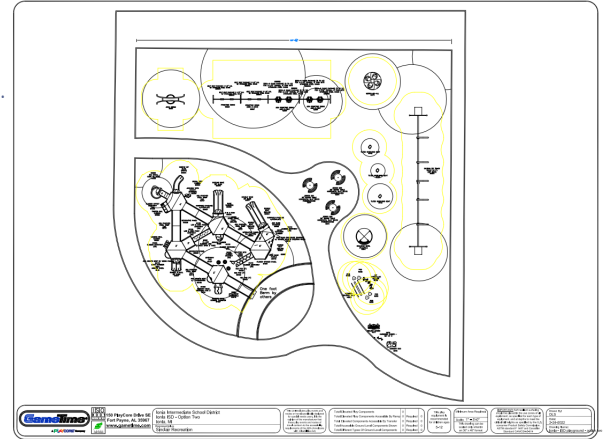
- Educational enrichment activities
- Support projects that build life skills
- Technology
- Art Supplies
- Bookcases in the Library
- iPad for LAMP communication
- Supplies for 5K
- Presentations / Field Trips (Farm Animals in July)
- Supplies to offer active play and learning opportunities



# PLAYGROUND UPDATE

## FROM THE DESK OF THE ISD SUPERINTENDENT, ETHAN EBENSTEIN

Our board of education approved a bid for playground equipment and installation from Sinclair Recreation on March 10. The equipment will be manufactured by Game Time. The board of education also approved working budgets for any additional playground area site prep work and for purchase and installation of a pavilion/gazebo adjacent to the new playground. Preliminary indications are an August 2022 installation, however understanding manufacturing delays and labor shortage may play a factor in the proposed timeline.





# FREEDOM ACRES SCHOOL CALENDAR

## 2021-2022 STUDENT SCHOOL CALENDAR \*Updated\*

August	24	Learners' First Day of Classes / Full Day
August	26 & 27	<b>NO SCHOOL</b> Staff Professional Development Days #1 & #2 (Capturing Kids Hearts)
September	3 - 6	<b>NO SCHOOL</b> / Labor Day Break
October	18	End of 1 <sup>st</sup> Marking Period for SCI & ASD (October 25 Progress Report sent to SCI & ASD parents)
October	28	End of 1 <sup>st</sup> Marking Period for SEI (November 4 Report Cards sent home to SEI parents)
October	29	<b>HALF DAY (8-11am)</b> -for Students and Staff
November	15	<b>NO SCHOOL</b> / Professional Development Day #3
November	24 - 26	<b>NO SCHOOL</b> / Thanksgiving Break
December	20 - Jan 2, 2022	<b>NO SCHOOL</b> / Winter Break
<b>January 2022</b>	3	Classes Resume
January	13	End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Marking Period & (End of 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester) SCI & ASD (January 20 Progress Report sent to SCI & ASD parents)
January	18	End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Marking Period & (End of 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester) SEI (January 25 Report Cards sent home to SEI parents)
February	18	<b>NO SCHOOL</b> / Professional Development Day #4 (NCI, First Aid, CPR)
February	21	<b>NO SCHOOL</b> / Mid-Winter Break
March	18	<b>NO SCHOOL</b> / Professional Development Day #5
March	23	End of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Marking Period for SEI (March 30 Report Cards sent home to SEI parents)
March	25	End of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Marking Period for SCI & ASD (March 31 Progress Report sent to SCI & ASD parents)
April	1	<b>NO SCHOOL</b> / Friday before Spring Break
April	4-8	<b>NO SCHOOL</b> / Spring Break
April	11	Classes Resume
April	15	<b>*UPDATED* NO SCHOOL</b>
May	30	<b>NO SCHOOL</b> / Memorial Day
June	3	<b>Last Day</b> for SEI Learners (End of 4 <sup>th</sup> Marking Period & End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester for SEI) <i>Final Report Cards</i>
<b>June</b>	<b>6 - 10</b>	<b>*UPDATED* SUMMER BREAK</b> for SCI & ASD Learners
June	13, 14, 15, 16 21, 22, 23	<b>Summer Programming for SCI &amp; ASD Programs</b> End of 4 <sup>th</sup> Marking Period & (End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester) SCI & ASD <i>Tentative and Subject to Change Final Report Cards &amp; progress reports for SCI &amp; ASD.</i>