

Oxford Community Schools

Where Great Things are Happening



Photo courtesy of Lifetouch National School Studios



Photos courtesy of Lifetouch National School Studios

VISION

Creating a world-class education today to shape tomorrow's selfless, global leaders.

MISSION

Provide a world-class education that challenges all students to achieve their maximum potential and prepares them to succeed in a global society.

PROOF

Oxford Community Schools is one of the few growing school districts in Michigan.

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The Wonderful Community of Oxford

You're going to Love Living Here

By JANE PETERSON
Special to The Oakland Press

Often described as a quiet bedroom community, the quaint village of Oxford is anything but a sleepy little town. With its thriving business district, residents that care about the community, and an abundance of family-friendly events, the community has something to offer everyone.

Vibrant Downtown, Thriving Businesses

A vibrant downtown area is home to one-of-a-kind retail shops, professional offices and wonderful dining opportunities. Relax with a leisurely meal, head to one of the many parks with the kids, take a ride through horse country or enjoy some time on the golf course.

"The downtown area is very charming," said Village Manager Joe Young. "There's a lot of historic preservation which gives us some identity and adds character."

The Oxford area has many thriving businesses, including the Oxford Bank headquarters and the Covered Wagon Saddlery shop, which serves the region's horse community. Visitors comment about how clean, safe and friendly the community is, said Young. The village strives to offer the best public services it can with a wonderful police department that works hard to keep the crime rate low, a fire department with advanced life support capabilities and a new water treatment plant with expanded capacity and updated technology.

Close to Everything

Getting to downtown Oxford is easy and well worth the trip. Only nine miles north of The Palace of Auburn Hills along the M-24 thoroughfare, the community is conveniently located near many amenities, but without the congestion of a city lifestyle. Parking in the downtown area, for example, is plentiful with lots located in all four quadrants and over 500 parking spaces available, said Young.

Rich History, Bright Future

Oxford has a rich history as well as a bright future. The North Oakland Historical Museum features much of the area's storied background, which began with humble beginnings in the early 1800s and later became known as "The Gravel Capital of the World" thanks to the vast tracts of mining land



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and growth of the gravel mining operations.

Today Oxford maintains its comfortable, hometown character while providing its residents and visitors with all the modern amenities that makes communities attractive to families. The community boasts quality schools, a state-of-the-art library, a 7-screen movie theater, several manicured golf courses, the Polly Ann Trail and plenty of activities for children, families and senior citizens.

Great Events & Fun Festivals

Downtown Oxford is well known

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JOE YOUNG

Oxford Village Manager

for its annual Celebrate Oxford festival that features the popular Taste of Oxford, Classic Car Show, Art & Exhibit Fair, Kids Town, Battle of the Bands, Antique and Craft Show, Student Art Show and Business Expo.

Hot Blues BBQ is a hot ticket in June while crowds are attracted to the Scarecrow Festival in the fall and the Stew Stroll and Christmas parade in

the winter. The summer season ushers in the Thursday Concert in the Park series and the weekly car show on Tuesday evenings.

Plan a visit to Oxford and discover all the area has to offer. For more information, visit www.downtownoxford.org, www.villageofoxford.org or www.oxfordtownship.org.

Academics, Athletics & the Arts

Beyond the Basics: Educating the Whole Child

By JANE PETERSON
Special to The Oakland Press

The Oxford Community Schools logo is represented by a triangle that denotes three areas of concentration: academics, athletics and arts. It symbolizes how equal emphasis is placed on each of these subjects for students in the Oxford district. During a time when the economic downturn has many resorting to cost cutting measures, Oxford Community Schools has added opportunities for its students.

Academics

In the past two years, Oxford has added academic programs to expand on opportunities for children to become globally literate:

- The new All Day Every Day kindergarten program beginning in the fall of 2009 features mandatory world language instruction (Spanish or Chinese). Taking advantage of the young child's natural ability to acquire new language skills, students will have the opportunity to become fluent in a world language by 8th grade.

- Students have the opportunity to take Suzuki strings instruction beginning in Kindergarten.

- The expanded instrumental music program offers orchestra beginning in 4th grade and extending through high school.

- Math and science application skills are augmented through mandatory engineering courses in middle school. Engineering programs at the high school complement middle school courses and provide certification in addition to earning a diploma.

- Honors level as well as at-risk reading intervention courses are offered at the middle school.

- Fall of 2009 will bring four new Advanced Placement (AP) courses to the high school, bringing the total AP course offerings to 10. Additional AP offerings are scheduled for implementation in fall 2010.

Athletics

"Winning in our athletic programs means learning from setbacks and working diligently toward a common goal as a member of a team," commented Mike Watson, Director of Athletics, Physical Education and Intramurals.



ABOVE: The 2009 Oxford High School production of *Annie* set box office records with 3,320 patrons attending.

RIGHT: Oxford has aggressively increased their K-12 fine arts programs, which include choir, band, orchestra, theatre, guitar, 3D art, 2D art, graphic arts and ceramics.

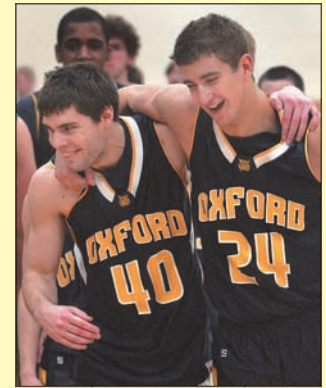
Photo courtesy of Lifetouch National School Studios



"It is certainly OK to win; it's the goal of the game. But most importantly, we need to ensure that participation in athletics is truly teaching lessons that cannot be easily learned in a classroom environment."

Elimination of the pay to play program demonstrates the district's commitment to athletics and has resulted in increased participation from student athletes and the community-at-large.

"Pay to play becomes an economic barrier for student participation. We had a moral obligation to eliminate pay to play and give the money back to our parents," said Superintendent William Skilling.



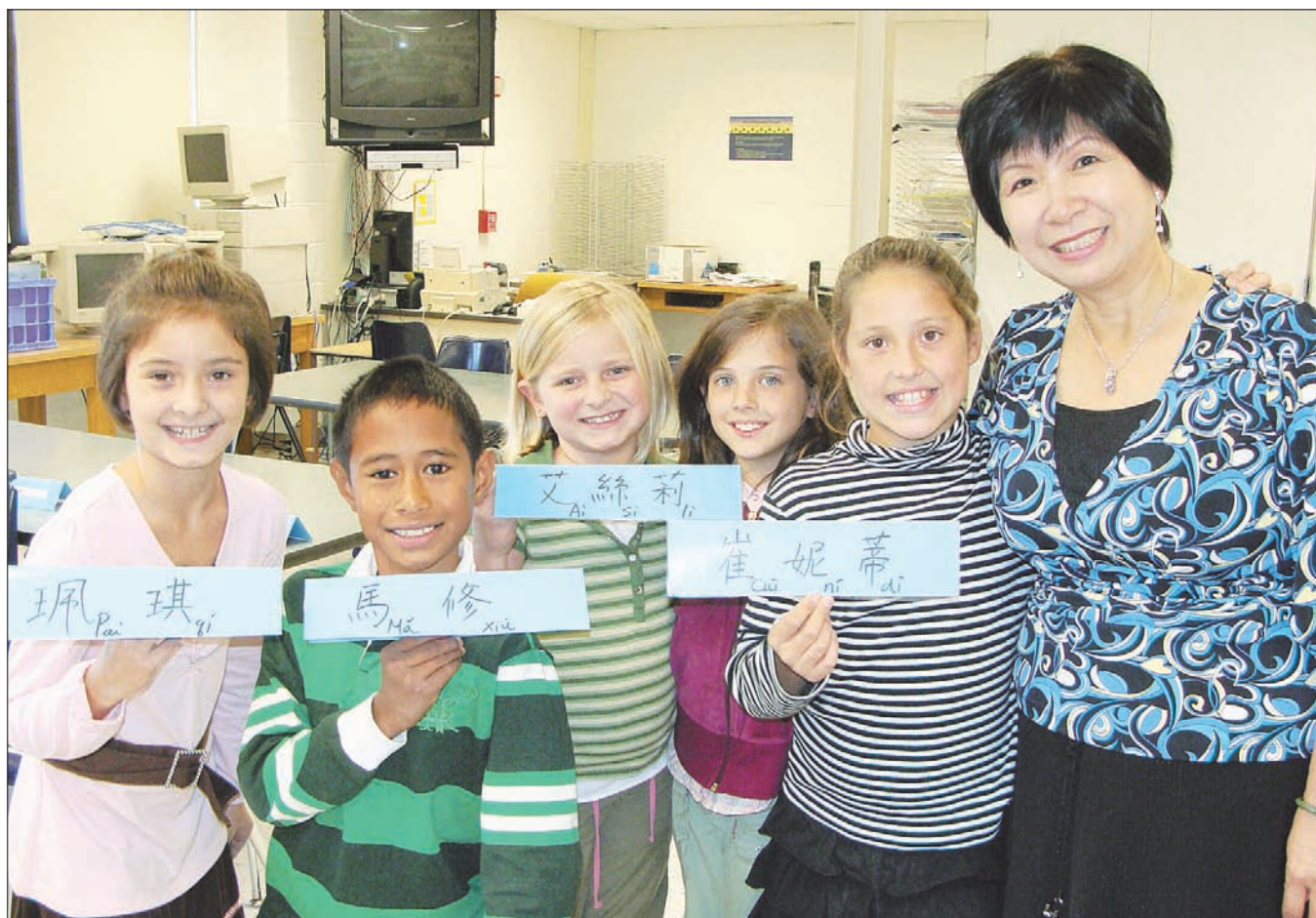
"Pay to play becomes an economic barrier for student participation. We had a moral obligation to eliminate pay to play and give the money back to our parents."

WILLIAM SKILLING
Superintendent, Oxford Community Schools

RIGHT: For the first time in the district's history, elementary students are learning Chinese. Here they proudly display their names.



Dr. Skilling reviews Oxford's strategic plan with Yue Yong, Director of the Chongqing Municipal Education Commission, Division of International Cooperation & Exchanges.



World Language as 'Fifth Core'

Your Child will be telling you 'Xie Xie' & 'Gracias'

By JANE PETERSON
Special to The Oakland Press

In today's global marketplace, people who are multilingual have more marketability and a better understanding of other cultures and the world around them. That's why Oxford Community Schools established its "Fifth Core" in world language. It is a vital aspect to global learning and success, and Oxford is determined that the world language programs flourish even in tough financial times.

Traditionally, students do not begin studying a world language in American schools until they enter high school, long after the window of opportunity has passed to easily soak up vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation that come so easily to young children. Research

In Oxford, all students will receive daily world language instruction from kindergarten through eighth grade.

has proven that it is increasingly difficult to begin language learning after age 12. The most opportune time for students to learn another language is 0-7 years.

In Oxford, all students will receive daily world language instruction from kindergarten through eighth grade. A robust curriculum is in place that includes

Spanish and Chinese at all grade levels along with the key subjects of math, science, social sciences, reading and writing. The goal is to have all students fluent in one world language and a comprehensive understanding of world cultures by the end of eighth grade. Chinese and Spanish classes are also offered in high school as elective offerings for students that wish to pursue a language beyond 8th grade.

All students deserve an international education that helps them dream, grow and prosper. Establishing the Fifth Core in Oxford is one of many ways the district prepares students to compete successfully in a global economy.



Photo courtesy of Lifetouch National School Studios

When adding all day, every day kindergarten, administrators developed a very different program that would lay the foundation for future success, incorporating world language instruction and orchestra lessons into the curriculum to capitalize on children's natural ability to learn at a young age.

Commitment to Learning

Creative Approach to Learning often takes Road Less Traveled

By JANE PETERSON
Special to The Oakland Press

Working from the premise that ALL students are at risk of not reaching their maximum potential, Oxford Community Schools has rejected traditional modes of instruction where teaching is basically memorizing factual information and applying it. The District considers this to be baseline learning and instead has engaged their faculty in teaching to a much higher level of learning for all students.

The district's commitment to learning starts young. As administrators looked at adding all day, every day kindergarten, they dismissed the conventional approach of expanding kindergarten to include a half-day of daycare. Instead, they let their vision guide development of a very different kindergarten program that would lay the foundation for future success. The result was incorporating world

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language instruction and orchestra lessons into the kindergarten curriculum to add value to the all-day concept and capitalize on children's natural ability to learn at a young age.

World language instruction in Oxford is known as the "Fifth Core." In addition to language arts, science, math and social studies, students are required to take a world language every day and each year through eighth grade. Not only will this help prepare students

for their futures in a global society, but learning a world language simultaneously with English strengthens their understanding and command of the English language as well.

Implementing a strings program in kindergarten is also very unique to Oxford. Students become better musically through stringed instrument instruction and also enhance their language acquisition skills.



Oxford Community Schools was recently featured in Channel 7's Best Schools in Michigan television program. The Best Schools in Michigan Web site — www.bestschoolsinmichigan.com/featured/oxford.php — includes videos, blogs, chats and links for parents, teachers and students to interact and learn why Oxford is one of Oakland County's top schools.

Schools of Choice

Your Child can be part of the Excitement at Oxford Schools

By JANE PETERSON
Special to The Oakland Press

Many families are drawn to the education philosophies of Oxford Community Schools and its balanced focus and commitment to academics, athletics and the arts. Add to the mix innovative initiatives like the elementary strings program and world language instruction for all students as well as an attractive, thriving community and it's no surprise the district fields many enrollment requests each year.

Oxford Community Schools participates in K-11 Schools of Choice for students outside of the district so as long as there are openings available. Once a student joins the Oxford schools community through Schools of Choice, he or she can remain a student and graduate from the district, as well as any younger siblings in the family.

"Many inquiries come from parents of younger students in grades K-2," said Pat Bono, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. "They want to give their child a strong foundation in a good school district that offers subjects not typically taught at the elementary level, like Spanish, Chinese and orchestra."

"We love the district. At a time when other districts are cutting their curriculum, Oxford incorporated orchestra. My son loves it—it's a benefit some districts do not have. Oxford puts the children first."—Heidi Snyder, parent

Families with older students appreciate the Advanced Placement (AP) classes, study skills class for incoming

"We don't need to look anywhere else. The schools offer everything we wanted, and the people here are really helpful."

VICKIE PAYE
Oxford Schools Parent



Photo courtesy of Lifetouch National School Studios

Oxford High School has a nationally-recognized automotive technology (above) and robotics programs (right).



freshmen and no pay to play athletics or attend school events. Award-winning career and vocational clubs and programs such as automotive technology, robotics and DECA are also very attractive options for incoming students.

Schools of Choice students are primarily from Oakland Lapeer counties. Oxford faculty members also enroll their own children – a strong testament to the quality of education offered at Oxford Community Schools. They know firsthand how students receive a solid education as well as support from the entire community.

"We don't need to look anywhere else. The schools offer everything we wanted, and the people here are really helpful."—Vickie Paye, parent

The application process is underway for the 2009-10 school year, with interested families welcome to call (248) 969-5002 for more information or visit



www.oxfordschools.org and follow the Schools of Choice link to complete an application online.

"We love the district. At a time when other districts are cutting their curriculum, Oxford incorporated orchestra. My son loves it – it's a benefit some districts do not have. Oxford puts the children first."

HEIDI SNYDER
Oxford Schools Parent

Technology

Learning at the Speed of Thought



“The school day is changing, and we have to get away from a passive student learning environment. We want to create opportunities for students to continue learning outside of the school day, week or year. In today’s global economy and various time zones, it’s a 24/7 world,” said Dr. William Skilling, Superintendent, Oxford Community Schools.

By JANE PETERSON
Special to The Oakland Press

Students today are accustomed to handling multiple streams of information, discerning that information and manipulating it simultaneously to problem-solve. They have acquired these skills through video games that force them to make quick decisions and social networking technologies that provide them with instant communication capabilities.

Oxford Community Schools is continually reviewing and upgrading its instructional technology to move students closer to creating and learning at the speed of thought. “We put a great deal of focus on changing classrooms to reflect real-world scenarios,” said Tim Throne, Director of Technology. “Infrastructure is in place to support the internet, distance learning, computer labs and portable classrooms. A talented, diverse technology staff keeps Oxford ahead of the curve in providing optimum environments for digital education.”

For example, students have the same ability as the teacher to control information coming into the classroom. While a lesson is in progress, a student can research a question posed by the teacher and display the results for all to

see and discuss.

Electronically communicating with children from other countries increases the understanding of international cultures and helps develop writing skills for younger students. The innovative e-pals program safely connects students to other students internationally and allows for collaboration between classrooms and individual students. Middle school and high school students are competing internationally with other students through the ThinkQuest project. They develop critical 21st

century skills in communication and technology while collaborating on a web page design. Research shows that collaboration motivates students, builds critical thinking skills, and creates authentic learning.

“The school day is changing, and we have to get away from a passive student learning environment. We want to create opportunities for students to continue learning outside of the school day, week or year. In today’s global economy and various time zones, it’s a 24/7 world,” says Dr. William

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TIM THRONE

Director of Technology, Oxford
Community Schools

Skilling, Superintendent. The district is developing online classes through Moodle to support education outside of traditional school hours. Students can earn extra credits to graduate early, take college courses in high school, or make up credits to graduate with their class. Global competence is the goal for the new requirement that students participate in an international project or problem-solving team endeavor.

Rigor, Relevance, Relationships

Modern Learning Program creates Critical Thinkers, Problem Solvers

By JANE PETERSON
Special to The Oakland Press

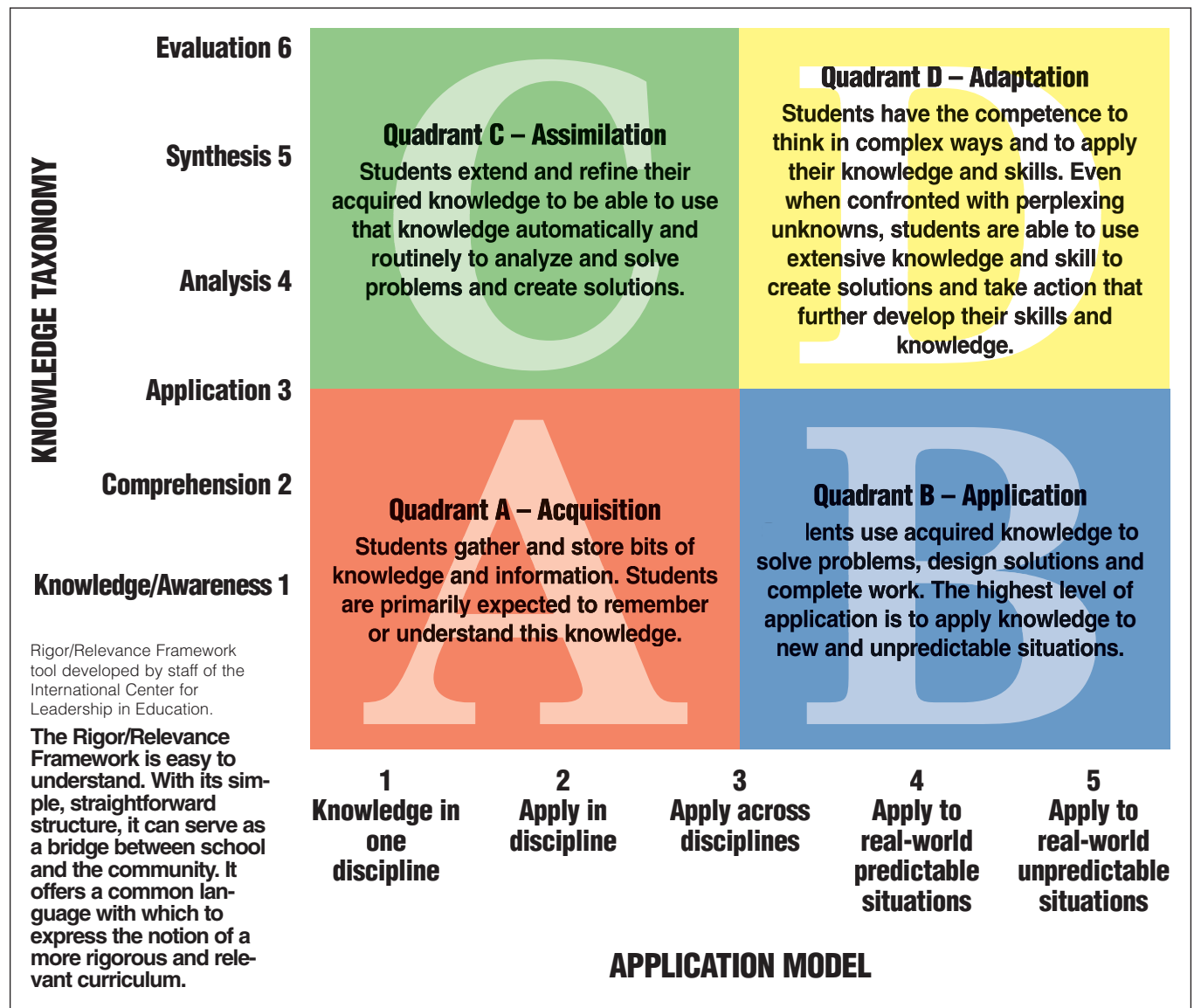
The kind of education Oxford provides is unprecedented in this area and in Michigan. And it is essential in order for students to be successful in an ever-changing global economy.

Oxford's teachers have received ongoing intensive professional development in the Model Schools' approach, whereby applications-based teaching takes center-stage in the classroom. All of the district's teachers are working in collaboration with the International Center for Leadership in Education, through the leadership of Dr. Willard Daggett, a profound educational leader for 21st Century schools. Teachers are learning how to teach to applications-based standards and methodologies, how to use data to inform their instructional decisions, how to teach reading in all content areas, and how to create units and lessons that pull together all aspects of curriculum. They are learning how to teach rigor through relevance via an intensive 3-year professional development plan.

Quadrant D lessons require students to use levels of knowledge taxonomy

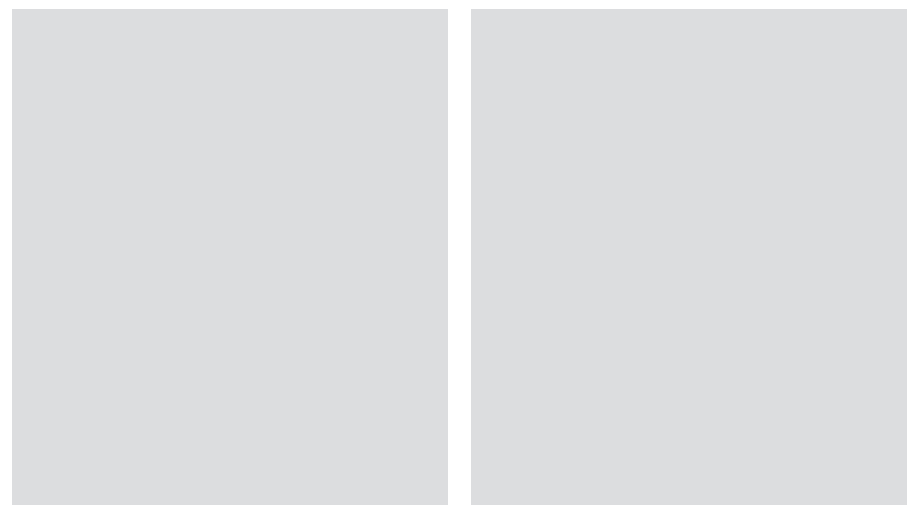
"The power of student-teacher relationships cannot be understated. Positive relationships in the classroom enhance instruction and performance."

JAMES SCHWARZ
Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Oxford Community Schools



such as synthesis and evaluation along with high levels of application. They learn how to problem solve in unfamiliar areas and unpredictable situations, laying the foundation for creating and inventing their own work. This is an essential 21st Century skill. According to futurist Alan November, "the truly employable workers of our 21st global economy are those who can create and invent their own work."

James Schwarz, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, says: "The power of student-teacher relationships cannot be understated. Positive relationships in the classroom enhance instruction and performance."



Blue Ribbon Schools

Recognized (Twice!) as a Statewide Leader in Education

By Jane Peterson
Special to The Oakland Press

Oxford Community Schools has a long tradition of academic commitment. The dedication of the district's administrators and teachers haven't gone unnoticed as two elementary schools were recently named Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools. The designation was awarded to only 22 elementary schools statewide this year and Lakeville Elementary School and Leonard Elementary School were among them.

The award honors schools for their outstanding school improvement strategies. Established in 1982, the program recognizes schools that demonstrate a strong commitment to educational excellence and significant academic improvement over five years. To qualify, schools must complete a comprehensive report of key criteria for school effectiveness. This serves as a basis for an extensive assessment of their building and programs.

"Michigan Blue Ribbon Schools are models of both excellence and equity," State Board of Education President Kathleen N. Straus said in a press release. "To be recognized, a school must demonstrate a strong commitment to educational excellence for all students."

To celebrate being named a Michigan Blue Ribbon School, over 800 Oxford students, staff, parents and dignitaries came together in the Fine Arts Center in May. The event included performances by the district's talented supersingers and orchestra students as well as speeches and recognition from Superintendent Dr. William Skilling, Straus, Board of Education President Colleen Schultz and State Representative James Marleau. Lakeville Principal Kristy Gibson-Marshall and Leonard Principal Joyce Brasington also spoke about the application process and gave kudos to those who made the awards possible.

The celebratory mood included festive banners, flags, parades, assemblies,



Photo courtesy of Johnston Photography

Lakeville Elementary School and Leonard Elementary School were among only 22 elementary schools statewide recognized as a Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School.

lunches and open houses.

In addition, Village of Leonard President Michael McDonald declared May 1 Leonard Elementary School Day.

Lakeville and Leonard join Clear Lake Elementary which had previously achieved blue ribbon status. The district is very proud of its blue ribbon schools.



"Michigan Blue Ribbon Schools are models of both excellence and equity. To be recognized, a school must demonstrate a strong commitment to educational excellence for all students."

KATHLEEN N. STRAUS
President, State Board of Education

Oxford Parks & Recreation

Wet & Wild & Loving it!

By JANE PETERSON
Special to The Oakland Press

Even a bit a rain couldn't dampen the spirits of nearly 5,000 people who turned out for the Seymour Celebration in Oxford. In fact, many of them expected to get wet – it was, after all, an event planned around the opening of the community's new splashpad.

Located in Seymour Lake Township Park, the K.L.R. Splashpad is 6,200 square feet and contains over 20 water features. It opened with a splash July 18 thanks to a family-oriented event complete with a ribbon cutting, DJ, car show, inflatables, children's play area, big trucks, food, live entertainment and fireworks.

"It was great," said Oxford Parks and Recreation Director Ron Davis. "The feedback we heard was positive."

The oval-shaped splashpad features a variety of interactive water features like ground geysers that erupt, buckets that pour and animals shapes that spray. There are water tunnel sprayers, a pelican pal fountain, a misting bullfrog and aqua aliens. Children can also delight in individual or team cannon battles or enjoy colorful flower soakers.

Younger children can soak up the fun in a special Discovery Bay area designed just for them with a tot twister, magic mister and a water buggy.

Perhaps most importantly, the splashpad has a universally accessible design so all children can enjoy some fun in the sun. The complete facility is ADA accessible.

Parents can relax on the benches conveniently placed inside the splashpad and breathe a little easier thanks to the safety features that have been incorporated, like a decorative vinyl fence that surrounds the splashpad and a slip resistant concrete base.

The splashpad is located on the south side of the Kids Kingdom playground complex in Seymour Lake Township Park. There is no cost for Oxford residents and the fee is \$4 for non-residents.



Special to The Oakland Press/DAVID KILKENNEY

Located in Seymour Lake Township Park, the K.L.R. Splashpad is 6,200 square feet and contains over 20 water features.

The splashpad is a great addition to the parks and recreation offerings in Oxford. In addition to the splashpad, the 125 acre Seymour Lake Township Park features lighted tennis courts, softball, baseball and soccer fields, picnic areas, sledding hill, fitness trail, 18-hole disk golf course and sand volleyball courts.

Stony Lake Township Park has picnic pavilions, a gazebo, boat launch and playground.

Other parks are less active, focusing on the natural beauty that makes the area special. Oakwood Lake Township Park, for example, is a 300 acre park with a variety of wildlife and plants as well as a branch of the Flint River with scenic overlooks. Powell Lake Township Park also features passive recreation opportunities with a mile-long ADA approved nature trail, fishing on Powell Lake and boardwalks.

Davis said there are parks and recreation activities available for everyone. The department enjoys a close relation-

ship with the school district as the two entities share a common goal of serving children in the community.

What makes Oxford special, said Davis, is that it is a close-knit hometown with a thriving downtown area, exceptional schools, beautiful parks, plenty of recreational activities and friendly, supportive residents.

In addition to the parks facilities, hundreds of parks and recreation classes are scheduled throughout the year in areas like aquatics, gymnastics, youth and adult athletics, health and wellness, family enrichment, computers, travel, seniors and more.

For more information about the parks and recreation offerings in Oxford, or to view a brochure of upcoming classes and events, call (248) 628-1720 or visit www.oxparkrec.org.

Oxford Parks new K.L.R. Splashpad features a variety of interactive water features like ground geysers that erupt, buckets that pour and animals shapes that spray.



The Oxford High School wrestling team – conference, district, regional champs and Michigan State runner-up!

Michigan Green Schools Program

Environmentally Aware

By JANE PETERSON
Special to The Oakland Press

These days it's not enough to simply teach students what's going on in the classroom or their school building. Today's global society dictates that students know what is going on around them, especially when it comes to other cultures and the environment that everyone shares.

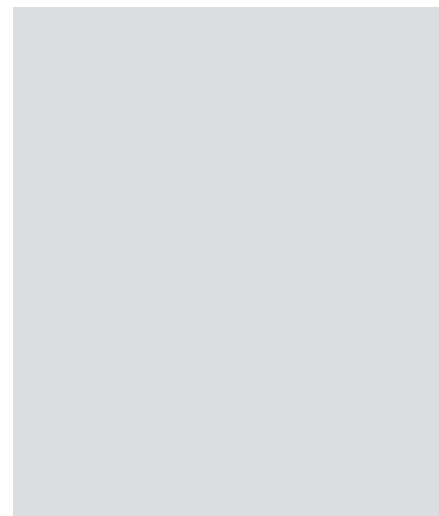
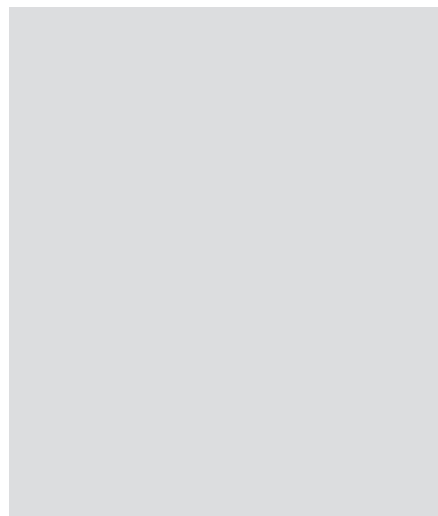
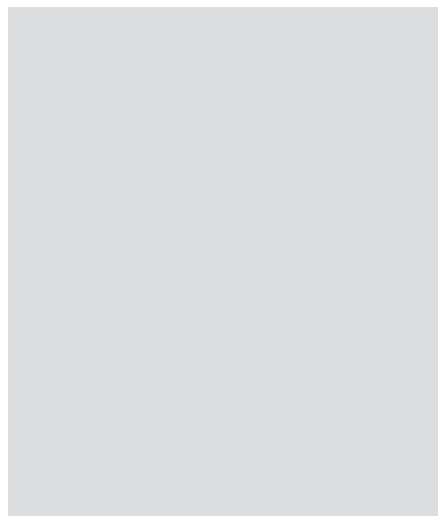
Raising awareness about the environment and protecting precious natural resources is a priority at Oxford Community Schools. Oxford elementary has been designated as a Green School and Leonard and Clear Lake elementary schools were recently certified as Michigan Emerald Schools for 2008-09.

The Michigan Green Schools Program was enacted to teach students not only about the environment itself, but also social responsibility and good citizenship. In order to become a Michigan Green School, schools must be actively engaged in at least half of 20 approved activities. The activity

list includes common activities like recycling paper and printer cartridges as well as newer ideas like planting a garden with native Michigan plants or hosting a solar power presentation or experiment, like a solar cookout.

Buildings awarded the Emerald School certification need to be involved in a minimum of 15 of the 20 activities.

But it's not about just crossing off items on a list to achieve an award. In Oxford, teachers and school leaders inform students about the activities and teach the value of them. The hope is that students will share the points with their families and implement green strategies at home.





The Oxford High School Symphonic Band

BEYOND BASICS

FROM PAGE 3

Recently added sports include hockey, skiing, bowling, boys and girls swimming and lacrosse. With only one exception, the district offers every athletic program sanctioned by the Michigan High School Athletic Association.

Arts

Oxford has aggressively increased their K-12 fine arts programs, which

include choir, band, orchestra, theatre, guitar, 3D art, 2D art, graphic arts and ceramics. Choir programs at the middle school and high school have grown over 200 percent, while the orchestra is expected to grow to over 300 students this fall.

“Music is another language,” says Superintendent William Skilling. “Students who are in music programs perform better academically than their peers who do not have a strong music background. Every one of our school buildings has a strong fine arts infusion to allow ALL students the opportunity to excel in their artistic, creative, linguistics, and leadership abilities.”



ABOVE: Lacrosse is a new program gaining momentum, with participation nearly doubling at the middle school last year.



LEFT: “Every one of our school buildings has a strong fine arts infusion to allow ALL students the opportunity to excel in their artistic, creative, linguistics, and leadership abilities,” says Superintendent William Skilling.

Photo courtesy of Lifetouch National School Studios

