



# THE SPARTAN SENTINEL

Vol 40-5

Rosendale-Brandon School District Newsletter

January 15, 2020

## Computer Science Ed Week: Hour of Code™

Submitted by RBSD Library Media Specialists

Computer Science Education Week (CSEdWeek) is an annual call to action to inspire K-12 students to learn computer science, advocate for equity in computer science education, and celebrate the contributions of students, teachers, and partners to the field. This week is held in recognition of the birthday of Admiral Grace Murray Hopper (December 9, 1906), who invented the first compiler and coined the term “bug” (an error in a program) after removing an actual moth from a computer in 1947. Grace’s role in computer science is truly a remarkable accomplishment considering even today women only make up 18% of all computer scientists (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Rosendale-Brandon School District joined students from over 180 countries in recognizing the importance of Computer Science by participating in the Hour of Code™.

### What is computer science and why is it so important?

Computer Science is the area of study that include artificial intelligence, computer systems and networks, security, programming languages, and software engineering (just to name a few). Computer Science promotes problem-solving skills, logic, and creativity. By introducing students to programming as early as kindergarten and continuing to offer opportunities through 12th grade, students will have a foundation for success in any 21st-century career path. The workforce is changing and the jobs of the future are no longer going to be focused on the service industry, but instead, they will be in developing, building, programming, and repairing technology. We are lucky at Laconia to have Computer Science courses taught by Mr. Hiemstra. Only 47% of schools in the United States offer such courses. Mr. Hiemstra currently teaches three different levels of computer science that high school students may take.

### What can you do at home?

There are an abundance of resources available to help introduce students to programming. Many of them offer a free introductory project or Hour of Code™ activity. Sites such as Code.org, Tynker, Kodable, Scratch, Kahn Academy, and Google CS First offer activities of students of all ages and abilities. These activities are online and many students have already participated in at least one activity. Ask them to show you what they accomplished this week.

Brandon 8th grade students, Emma Bohn (front) and Jayden Wellhoefer (back) work through their Hour of Code™ project in Ms. Fellerer’s Computer Science course.



Mrs. Grade’s kindergarten students work through the Kodable project for Hour of Code™.

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## A Thank-You from the Class of 2024

Submitted by Freshman Class Advisor Kaytie Storms

This year’s Freshman Class Fundraiser has come to a successful end! Overall, students profited \$3,220! We would like to thank everyone who supported the fundraiser by purchasing Club’s Choice items or with a monetary donation. Because of you, the class of 2024 is looking forward to experiencing all the fun that comes with homecoming, prom, and graduation!

## Taxes and Middle Schools Possibly Combining

Submitted by Superintendent Wayne Weber

Taxes and changes to schools. Two topics that no one is happy to talk about. Both have been topics of conversation recently.

Starting last month when tax bills were sent out by municipalities, Board members and I have been fielding questions about why there was such an increase in their property taxes for the portion attributed to the school district. While I don’t know the increase for all municipalities, my understanding is that the Village of Rosendale went up 16% and the Town of Metomen went up about 20%. I am guessing other municipalities are seeing increases as well. Unfortunately, there is no one answer as to why the district portion of taxes increased as they did. Instead, there are a number of known variables that can be attributed to the increase and perhaps some variables we are not aware of.

Our revenue authority, the amount of revenue the district is able to generate, increased for a couple of reasons:

- The state increased our per pupil revenue limit to \$10,000. In large part, our school funding is based on our student enrollment. This year, the amount of revenue we were allowed to generate increased by about \$300 per student. The state allowed us to do this because we were deemed a “low revenue” district: when limits were put in place in the early 1990s, our district was a low spending district. At that time, districts’ revenue authority was based on what they were spending then. Districts who were spending more at that time have enjoyed a higher revenue limit since then. This increase allowed for low spending districts like ours to close a little ground on other higher revenue districts. This in turn allows us to be funded at a more equitable level.
- The Department of Revenue (DOR) valuation of the entire district increased by \$16 million dollars (3.55%) from last year. We were estimating an increase of 1.99% for the budget approved at our annual meeting. Total land valuation in the district for 2020 is just under \$450 million--our highest valuation ever. That represents an increase of approximately \$41 million dollars since 2018. Land value is determined by the DOR based on property sales within the district. The district distributes the tax levy among the municipalities according to the portion of equalized value each municipality has of the total equalized value in the district. In short, land value has a great impact on school budgets. While no one likes to see an increase in taxes, high property values are a good sign of healthy communities.

Add to that, the state decreased its portion of aid to the district by about \$100,000, meaning that shifted to the local tax base.

Our annual meeting budget estimated the tax levy to be \$3,413,016 and a mill rate of 7.72. Our October adjusted budget numbers were \$3,558,501 and 7.92. While these numbers resulted in a double digit percent increase in the school district portion of the tax bill for a number of our taxpayers, our district taxation is relatively small compared to surrounding districts and even historically in our district. I believe that district taxpayers are still getting a tremendous value for their tax dollars. The school funding formula is a complex beast. If you would like more information on school funding and how our district’s funding is determined, please contact District Business Coordinator Jen Post at [postjenk@rbsd.k12.wi.us](mailto:postjenk@rbsd.k12.wi.us).

Another topic that has caused concern from individuals in the district is the possibility of combining our two middle schools into one, which would be located in the Rosendale Intermediate School. The district has been operating separate K-8 schools since combining in the late ‘60s. Changes have occurred throughout the past 50 years. School buildings were closed, built, remodeled and reconfigured. The most recent closure was B. D. Leith School, which was located on County Road N, north of Eldorado. This building closed in 1983. At the time of its closure B. D. Leith School housed 57 students grades K-2. Based on newspaper reports from that time, enrollment and staffing concerns were driving factors in making that decision.

Also during this time, families began getting smaller. I grew up in an area inhabited in large part by German Catholics. It was not uncommon for families to have five or more children. Now the average number of children per family is closer to two. In 1979-1980, our student enrollment was 1,354. All of them resided in the district as open enrollment did not exist. This year our student enrollment is 978, including 211 open enrolled from outside the district. Our resident student population is almost half of what it was 40 years ago. As I shared earlier, much of our school funding is based on our student population. As our student enrollment decreases, so does our budget. This isn’t something exclusive to Rosendale-Brandon. It is something most districts in the state are experiencing. As funding decreases, districts are faced with difficult decisions.

We have a great district that we can all be proud of. We continue to offer strong academic and extracurricular opportunities and financially we are in a good place. My experience in the district has shown me that our current and past school boards have worked hard to keep the best interest of our students, communities, and staff in mind when making decisions.

The Rosendale-Brandon School Board will hold a listening session on this item during the regular board meeting on January 18 at 7 p.m. in the Laconia Gym. (Face coverings will be required.) District residents wishing to speak regarding middle school consolidation are encouraged to request to do so ahead of time by calling Jill Englund at the District Office at 872-2851. District residents may also sign up the night of the meeting. More information regarding this topic can be found on the district website.

