



TITAN TIMES

RUTHVEN-AYRSHIRE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Musician with a Message SaulPaul to visit GTRA



SaulPaul is a Grammy Award-nominated artist with an international reputation as the Musician with a Message. He will be on stage for GTRA Students February 14 as part of his "Be the Change" Tour.

He is known for sharing his art with his heart to inspire audiences with his music. His latest album "Okay to Be Different" is being played across the U.S. along with his previous album, "Be the Change."

He says, "I believe that my voice, lessons learned from my journey and my input are more important than ever at this time. I had to release this music because timing is everything. My grandmother taught me that being kind makes a difference. And it is my belief that by being kind, you can Be The Change."

"The fact is that we all live on the same planet. But the truth is, we each live in our own world. The goal is to be the change in the world that you live in."

SaulPaul has performed for America's Got Talent, Austin City Limits, five Super Bowls and has done three TEDx Talks.

He is an author, motivational speaker and works to be a force for good in his community. His book, *Be the Change: A Story of Transformation*, debuted at #1 on Amazon.

He will give two presentations during his visit to GTRA, one for MS/HS and one for elementary students. He hopes to inspire students to change the world they live in for the better. He shares with students what he learned from his grandmother, that as long as you have something, you have something to give.

SaulPaul will not only entertain students and share his personal story, he will challenge them to "be a change" in their communities by doing good deeds.

As part of the challenge he will ask students, parents and educators to do good, document it and share it. The challenge is to choose 30 acts of kindness, one to do each day for a month. The acts of kindness can be done as an individual or as a group. The goal of the challenge is to show kids how to be kind to others, but also to show them how to help others.

Ideas for acts of kindness can be simple things such as complimenting someone, leaving a treat or thank you note for someone, smiling at someone, donating unused items to those in need or volunteering in the community.

The challenge website has a long list of ideas and one can be repeated each day or a new act can be done each day. Hundreds of schools across the U.S. have accepted the Be the Change Challenge. In February, GTRA will be added to that list.



LEARN MORE



IN THIS ISSUE:

SchoolPulse offers resources for students	Page 3
Policy manual sees recent review and updates	Page 4
Learning to play	Page 5
Staff receives ALICE Training	Page 7

FEBRUARY 2024

SchoolPulse is Text-based Platform Connecting Students to Resources

SchoolPulse was started in 2017 as a way to be proactive in connecting with students with positive messaging while connecting them to local mental health resources if needed. Ruthven-Ayrshire is the first district in the state to use the text-based platform. Students in grades 5 through 12 could choose to opt in to the platform at the start of the school year.

SchoolPulse blends technology and human interaction to reach students where they are – on their phones. Regular messages are designed to inspire, motivate and encourage students. It also offers the students a chance to respond back about their feelings, in an anonymous and convenient manner.

One student who uses the platform says they like the genuine responses. Another said it has helped to boost confidence.

Co-creator Iuri Melo says it's about using positive psychology that is interactive, personal and fun. From his location in Southern Utah, he was seeing a need for additional resources to support students with social and emotional health needs. Melo is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

"We deliver three text messages per week," he explained. "One may be a podcast or video, one is a check-in and one is more fun and engaging. With the check-in message, we can measure from the responses the general wellness of the student body. The platform gives students an avenue to honestly express themselves and we can respond with additional support."

While the platform is aimed at students, families and adults may also use the resource. By visiting the website www.schoolpulse.org/schools/gtra, anyone can access information on a long list of subjects such as goal setting,

positive habits or physical health.

The introduction on positive habits, says, "Habits are a two-edged sword. You can create extraordinary habits that will help you to build muscles, intelligence, masterpieces, and habits that will bring you life-long happiness and joy. You can also become a prisoner to habits that will wreak havoc in your life. Learn the best psychological technologies that will help you pick up some awesome habits, and drop some unwanted ones."

Each subject includes professional videos, podcasts, and articles for learning more.

Principal Courtney Cook says that although the platform may not be a fit for all of the students, it is another tool in the toolbox.

"When it comes to the emotional well-being of our students, we need to have a variety of tools available. This one is a little different because it reaches them direct on their phone or device. It is convenient and their responses are completely anonymous."



OPT-IN
TO SCHOOLPULSE

Titan Closet Offers Free Clothes for all Ages

Members of the National Honor Society were looking for a community service project. At the same time, advisor Mrs. Mary Smith had several bags of clothing made available for children.

The Titan Closet was created. NHS members cleaned and organized a small room on the lower level. They washed, folded and organized all of the clothing by size and use and stacked it neatly on shelving.

Items are available in sizes from infant to adult 2XL. There are shoes, coats, sports gear and dress clothes.

Due to limited space in the closet, anyone wishing to get items should make an appointment by contacting Mrs. Smith at 837-5211 or msmith@gt.ratitans.org. Donations are also welcome.

The students believe there is a need for this type of program and are looking to include health and beauty items in the future.



Maddie Fay and Josie Reiman are two of the NHS members that organized the Titan Closet by separating clothing by size and use.



**▶▶ NO FEE
DEBIT CARDS
FOR STUDENTS!
GET YOUR DEBIT CARD TODAY!**

*No fee for students until age 23



IOWA STATE BANK
1108 GOWRIE ST., RUTHVEN, IA 51358
MEMBER FDIC • BANKISB.COM

School Policy Manual Gets Routine Review and Update

It's not an exciting task, but one that must be done on a routine basis.

One important responsibility of the R-A School Board is reviewing and updating school policies.

Superintendent Marshall Lewis says that the policy manual is typically reviewed at least once every two to five years. The most recent review of all nine sections was done over a period of about 18 months.

When legislative changes happen, a close look at related sections is taken to make sure the district is within the legal requirements.

A handful of sections were updated to better reflect recent legislative actions.

School library

"When it comes to the library, we have followed the guidance. I can say the intent of the legislation is good, it's just how far does it go," said Lewis.

"The intent is to have our shelves stocked with age-appropriate items and yet provide an opportunity for our kids. It is about a balance and it's about maintaining local control. We want to keep our kids safe physically and emotionally. The awareness was a key factor to me, and it helped us to take the time to go through our book inventory."

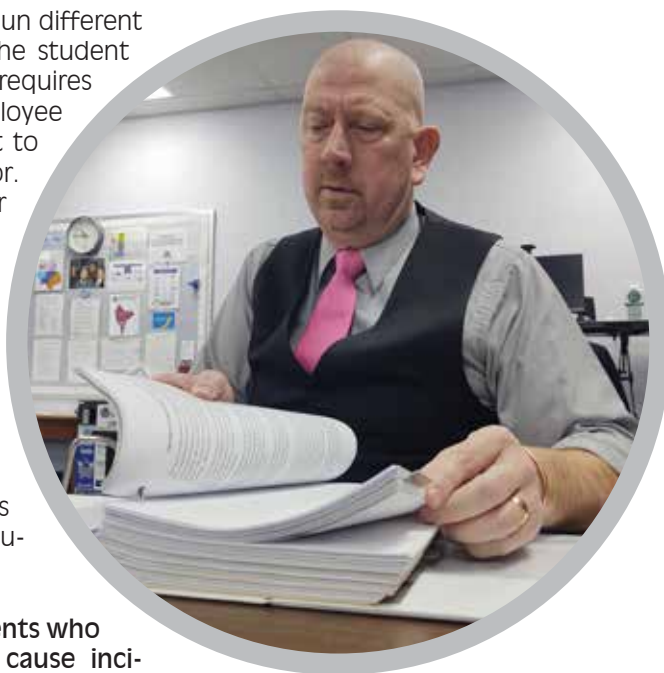
Challenges to library materials are handled through the reconsideration process included in the policy.

For many years, R-A has offered an online card catalog on the school's website. This searchable catalog can be found under the Student/Families menu.

Student disclosure of identity

"With open communications between the school, the student and the parents, we hope in all situations to work in a supportive environment. We don't want to keep secrets and this encourages communication between the school and the family," said Lewis. If a student requests to accommodate a gender identi-

ty, name, or pronoun different than what is on the student record, Iowa law requires that school employee report the request to an administrator. The administrator is also required to report the request to the parent or guardian. The requirement applies to all nicknames as well. A form is included with the policy for parents to update the student identity.



Discipline of students who make threats or cause incidents of violence

To follow legislative changes, policy was updated to now include a tiered system that defines levels of threats or incidents. Incidents were defined by three escalation levels. The levels are also defined by grade level. Definitions for sanctions and consequences are clearly detailed. Reporting and response guidelines were reviewed to follow legislative updates that came in 2023.

Graduation Standards

The state made a few changes to graduation standards. "Because we have shared students between R-A and G-T, we made some revisions for uniformity. The counselors first went through to identify requirements that were different between the districts and those were updated for accuracy. Some simple terminology was also updated to be more clear for students."

When the policy is reviewed it is divided by sections. As policies are systematically reviewed, consultation with an attorney is common practice.

R-A policies can be found on the school website and can be searched for easy access.



New installation and repair services:

- Heating
- Air Conditioning
- Heat Pumps
- Water Heaters
- Water Softeners
- Air Exchangers
- Sump Pumps
- In-floor Heating
- Duct Work
- Shop Radiant Heating



712-260-0239 – Shamus
712-260-2716 – Office/Brittney



Serving the Ruthven, Graettinger, Ayrshire, Terril, Emmetsburg area since 2000

Learning to Play

We may likely take for granted the simple task of skipping, doing jumping jacks or running backwards. But these are the activities young students use as they learn how to play.

Mr. Adam Mickelson is the physical education teacher at R-A. He says while most people think gym class is just a glorified recess, it is an academic class that has measurable standards just like any other class. "We need to make sure that students are learning all the required standards by age or grade level. It may start with a basic understanding and as they get older they have to learn to master the tasks using proper form."

Not only does gym class have standards, it provides the building blocks for valuing physical activity and understanding rules, sportsmanship and teamwork.

In preschool, age differences show varying skill levels. Gym class starts with stretches to warm up and then playing a game such as tag that gives them a chance to run with purpose. Each time a game is introduced, they talk about what the tasks look like and Mr. Mickelson demonstrates how to perform the tasks in a safe manner.

"As the year goes on, we need to remind them how to play safe. As a preschooler, things like watching out where they run and learning to understand space sounds simple, but it is an important thing to learn to be safe so they aren't crashing into each other. As they get older, that becomes more natural."

By second and third grade, more work is done to improve on specific skills while those skills are incorporated into games.

In lower elementary, an example of one game is Clean My Room. They are divided into sides and they are challenged to pick up balls and keep them out of their room by throwing them to the other side. The goal isn't to hit someone, but to just throw the ball across the line.

"Sometimes I ask them to just throw the ball, which is much more fast-paced. Other times, I give them a specific way to throw or kick the ball."

Warm-up routines are the same for each grade in elementary doing stationary exercises like stretching, jumping jacks and squats. Then they may do skipping, running, galloping or running backwards. "The exercise may be the same, but the form continues to improve as they get older. Overall, these are good ways to get their heart rate going and helps them to get stronger," said Mickelson.

In middle school, students do more team activities. They work on form and improving specific skills. They also work on sportsmanship, which can be hard for some. "Kids think that fairness and equality are the same things. It is teaching them about the importance of doing the best you can and

not worrying about the outcome. Once the game is over, we talk about winning and losing, and that is how life is. So, getting them to understand those topics is important especially if they don't play team sports," he said.

In a classroom, you can learn how to work with someone which helps in the workplace. But here you have to work on ways to improve individual skills and how to work together as a team. They can also start to see what their strengths are and can consider what sports they want to do in junior high or high school or later on in life.

Mickelson says that many students get excited to play in sports by the upper grades in elementary. "By third grade they are starting to learn what skills they are good at and they may have watched family members play in sports. The aspirations really start then because they are learning to play more competitively and there are school-sponsored activities that they can take part in for more practice."

By high school, students who are in sports can opt out of gym class. Students who are in gym learn and practice games and physical activities that they can play as adults.



By third grade, students focus more on learning to play by the rules and talk about winning, losing and fairness.

Peace of Mind Begins with RVTC!



*Residential and Business Solutions
for your Smart and Security Needs:*

► Smart Home ► Smart Farm ► Cameras ► Security

Shop local and take advantage of our Loyalty Rewards Program

Ask About Elderly Care

- 4-camera WiFi DVR Solution Surveillance Kit
- Remote access from an app anytime, anywhere
- No Monthly fee



712-859-3300 or 712-837-5522
www.rvtc.net

"Did you try? Did you follow the rules?
That's what I want you to worry about."
– Mr. Mickelson



Much like sneaking vegetables into their spaghetti sauce, gym class is a way to sneak in valuable life-long physical skills while kids think they are just playing. They leave gym class with better physical fitness, stronger motor skills and can demonstrate respect and responsible behavior.



Stretching and warm-up exercises are done at the beginning of every class and form is improved each year.



Skipping looks different when watching it through different age groups.



Even the high-fives at the end of class give pre-schoolers a chance to practice jumping and coordination.

**We Dig
Rocks!**

- Custom engraving
- Waterfalls
- Boulders & stone
- Benches & tables



Ruthven Rocks

Call: 712-837-3333



Remember to turn in student
grades to receive your Good
Student Insurance Discount!



OLSON-POEPPPE
INSURANCE AGENCY, LLC.

1204 Gowrie St. in Ruthven – Phone: 712-240-0388
Christie Poepppe: christie.olsonins@outlook.com

R-A Staff Train on a Tough Subject

We attend school and learn subjects like math and spelling with hopes to use the training in our future. But, there is some training one hopes to never have the need to use. That training is for an active shooter response provided by ALICE Training®.

Recently, the staff at Ruthven-Ayrshire took the training as part of their professional development.

Curriculum Coordinator Mrs. Michelle TeGrootenhuis headed up the efforts for the training. She has been attending quarterly meetings with a cohort made up of the Dickinson County Emergency Management and Dickinson County school districts. The meetings have become a valuable tool to share and discuss methods and ideas.

ALICE Training was first done in the district 10-15 years ago when it first became available. The recent effort started when GTRA administrators became certified as Train-the-Trainers through the institute last summer. Those trainers worked with deputies from area law enforcement to train staff this winter.

"We walk through the acronym, discuss the statistics and why we do what the program promotes," TeGrootenhuis said. "In the afternoon, we divided into small groups and worked through situations and scenarios to consider how we may be able to handle a situation.

"We give the teachers the power to make the decision in the moment. They have had the training and they are deciding on the best option for where they are and what is happening at the moment. ALICE is not linear, it is not automatic. The decisions are made based on what is happening at the moment."

The mission of ALICE training is to improve chances of survival. TeGrootenhuis says it creates an awareness so that teachers and staff have ideas in mind for their classroom on ways to handle a situation. They are given response options and skills. The training is a small way to prepare the staff for the threat of active shooter incident which is rare, but real.

"The training is about knowing 'what am I going to do.' One of the biggest pieces of the training is interrupting the 'O-O-D-A' loop. That is when an intruder comes in a room, they Observe, Orientate, Decide and Act. If we can interrupt that thought process, lives can be saved.

"I hate that we have to do the training, but we have to do the training," she said. "The staff appreciates having it, but it can also add to work stress."

Administrators are looking at how to roll training out in a safe manner for kids in a developmentally appropriate manner for each age group.

"A lockdown drill is done regularly at each school building and has been in place for some time. We have used it enough that it is part of what we do. This could be used for a medical emergency, as an example, and why we would want to practice it."

Training will be done at the start of each school year for new staff in any of the districts within the cohort. And there will be a refresher for all staff annually.

There are now emergency radios in every building. It has a panic button that will signal the local county dispatch for a full-scale response. It also gives 30 seconds of uninterrupted microphone time to the dispatcher so they can hear everything that is being said in that area.

According to ALICE Training, the program is a research-based and peer-reviewed research showing that the program reduces anxiety in students, reduces the length of a violent critical incident, and improves outcomes.

Facts gathered by the institute show that there have been 250 active shooter incidents between 2000-2017 with over 21% of those happening in an educational facility. Further, that 57% of active shooter events are over before law enforcement arrives which is why staff need to be prepared by using pro-active training and hands-on practice.

Breaking Down the Acronym:

A - Alert

Alert is your first notification of danger. ALERT is when you first become aware of a threat. The sooner you understand that you're in danger, the sooner you can save yourself. A speedy response is critical. Seconds count. Alert is overcoming denial, recognizing the signs of danger and receiving notifications about the danger from others. Alerts should be accepted, taken seriously, and should help you make survival decisions based on your circumstances.

L - Lockdown

Barricade the room. Prepare to EVACUATE or COUNTER if needed. If EVACUATION is not a safe option, barricade entry points into the room in an effort to create a semi-secure starting point. Instructions on practical techniques for how to better barricade a room, what to do with mobile and electronic devices, how and when to communicate with police, and how to use your time in lockdown to prepare to use other strategies

I - Inform

Communicate the violent intruder's location and direction in real time. The purpose of INFORM is to continue to communicate information in as real time as possible, if it is safe to do so. Armed intruder situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly, which means that ongoing, real time information is key to making effective survival decisions. Information should always be clear, direct and in plain language, not using codes. If the shooter is known to be in an isolated section of a building, occupants in other wards can safely evacuate while those in direct danger can perform enhanced lockdown and prepare to counter.

C - Counter

Create Noise, Movement, Distance and Distraction with the intent of reducing the shooter's ability to shoot accurately. Counter is NOT fighting. ALICE Training does not believe that actively confronting a violent intruder is the best method for ensuring the safety of those involved.

E - Evacuate

When safe to do so, remove yourself from the danger zone. ALICE provides techniques for safer and more strategic evacuations. Evacuating to a safe area takes people out of harm's way and hopefully prevents civilians from having to come into any contact with the shooter.

One stop for:

- Tobacco products
- Hot coffee
- ATM
- Soft ice cream
- Bagged ice
- Gasoline

Enjoy fresh-made hot breakfast items, pizza, burgers, chicken, and more!

Follow us on Facebook to see our game specials!



Lakeland EZ Stop

Phone: 712-837-5414 • Ruthven



DATES AND TIMES

Thursday, Feb. 15-Saturday, Feb. 17

9 a.m. Boys State Wrestling at Wells Fargo Arena

Friday, Feb. 16

No School

Monday, Feb. 19

No School

Wednesday, Feb. 21

6 p.m. School Board meets

Sunday, Feb. 25

2 p.m. Dance Showcase

Wednesday, Feb. 28

2:30 p.m. Early Out

Thursday, Feb. 29

7 p.m. HS Pops Concert

Friday, March 8

End of 3rd Quarter

7 p.m. HS Spring Play

Saturday, March 9

7 p.m. HS Spring Play

Tuesday, March 12/Thursday, March 14

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Friday, March 15

No School

Monday, March 25

4:30 p.m. Early Bird Track B/G at SCC

March 28-29-April 1

Spring Break - No School

Monday, April 8

4 p.m. First Golf Meet of Season

Monday, April 29

7 p.m. HS Band/Vocal Concert

Monday, May 6

7 p.m. MS Band/Vocal Concert

Tuesday, May 7

7 p.m. Elementary Concert

Tuesday, May 14

5:30 p.m. First Baseball Game of Season

Sunday, May 19

Graduation Day

Tuesday, May 21

Last Day of School

All activities subject to change.
Spectator guidelines vary
by location. Please view our
website for updates.



HOME PLATE

Chocolate Marshmallow Mug Cakes

To make a batch of four mini-cakes: whisk 1/2 cup each sugar and butter-milk, 1/4 cup vegetable oil, 1 egg and 1/2 teaspoon vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in 1/3 cup flour, 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder, 1/8 teaspoon baking soda and a pinch of salt.

Butter 4 small microwave-safe mugs and divide the batter among them. Microwave, one at a time, until a toothpick comes out clean, about 2 minutes. Make a slit in the center of each cake and pipe marshmallow cream or whipped cream into the slit. Top the cake with warmed chocolate frosting. For fun, pipe white frosting squiggles on top.

Valentine's Day Word Search

february
poem
friendship
holiday
fourteenth
balloon
hug
be mine
love
hearts
lovebirds
gift
doves
party
card
kiss
red
presents
chocolate
roes
candy
romantic
cupid
valentine
beloved
tulips
date
envelope
pink

E	M	P	S	M	C	B	T	Y	U	E	Q	C	U	A	E	E	M
L	B	A	D	S	J	V	P	A	T	P	C	A	R	D	L	W	H
O	C	R	F	E	B	R	U	A	R	Y	A	Q	W	K	A	L	E
V	U	T	V	S	D	G	L	K	K	D	S	L	H	H	Y	O	A
E	P	Y	A	E	P	O	B	S	N	E	K	T	C	O	H	V	R
T	I	J	R	R	C	M	P	E	V	C	N	M	D	L	V	E	T
D	D	E	D	O	O	I	P	O	L	E	A	W	E	I	A	B	S
A	B	Y	H	X	L	M	D	N	E	O	J	N	V	D	L	I	M
T	X	C	U	U	X	F	A	T	X	B	V	N	D	A	E	R	L
E	M	L	T	C	S	V	R	N	F	Z	S	E	Z	Y	N	D	Y
R	Q	U	B	O	U	U	H	B	T	C	A	U	D	U	T	S	S
M	A	M	Y	R	O	S	E	U	G	I	R	H	L	Z	I	E	E
O	M	M	O	F	I	H	R	J	G	A	C	A	W	R	N	C	J
F	R	I	E	N	D	S	H	I	P	A	Z	R	S	K	E	H	C
L	Z	G	V	M	M	P	R	E	S	E	N	T	S	G	I	F	T
H	M	U	E	G	P	I	N	K	Y	B	Y	C	A	R	D	S	F
J	E	O	B	E	M	I	N	E	B	A	L	L	O	O	N	U	S
X	P	M	A	J	X	W	F	M	R	E	N	V	E	L	O	P	E

*****ECRWSSDDM****

POSTAL CUSTOMER

Toad Loder Knew He Would Stay in his Hometown

His grandmother nick-named him Toad, and that is a name that stuck for Mike Loder of Ruthven. He is a 2003 R-A graduate who enjoyed playing baseball, football and track.

"I liked knowing everybody," he said of his school years. "The teachers were fun and being a small school it is easy to know everybody."

"I guess I always knew that I wouldn't be too far away from my hometown."

Mike is married to Amy and they have three daughters, Maci age 7, Blakeley age 4, and two-month old Laney. Amy works in the lab at Estherville Foods.

Toad is the Street Superintendent for the City of Ruthven, a job he has held since 2011. Before that he worked for Midwestern Mechanical in Spencer. He likes being able to work in town where he can be close by to his daughters in school. Amy is in her second year serving on the R-A School Board.

For fun, the Loders enjoy taking their daughters for fun outings. Last year they enjoyed a trip to Branson and the rides at the Mall of America are also a fun activity.

"I think the school will give my kids what they need. The smaller classrooms mean every kid has a better opportunity to learn. The teachers are better able to focus on each kid."

His oldest daughter has been active in tumbling, soccer and t-ball. Blakeley was involved in tumbling and youth wrestling this last year. Toad says he is looking forward to his kids being active in sports as they get older.



As a senior, Toad played in the Shrine Bowl in 2003. "You play with some really good kids during that game. They picked 80 seniors out of the state and you spend a week practicing and the week ends with a game. Some of them went on to play at Iowa or Iowa State. That was quite an experience."

Newsletter published by the Ruthven-Ayrshire Community School District. Articles and photos by Connie J. Reinert, Beyond Broken, unless otherwise noted.

