

TRANSCRIPT

HAMILTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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MERIT

Hamilton Community Schools

for outstanding achievement in the Newsletter category for

Transcript Newsletters



ONE MOTHER'S COMMITMENT OF 35 MINUTE TRIPS TO HAMILTON



**A LOOK INSIDE THE COLD
CASE RESEARCH CLASS AT
HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL**

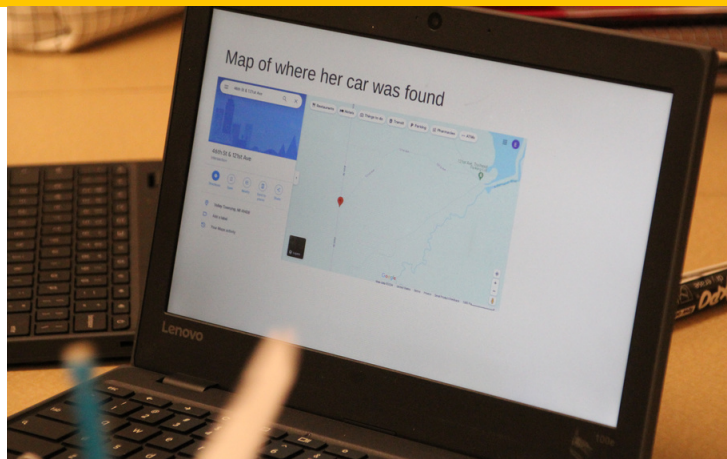


**HAMILTON HOSTS
FIRST-EVER UNIFIED
BASKETBALL ASSEMBLY!**

Also Inside...

- 8th Grade Agriscience day teaches students about farming & agriculture
- HHS Band & Vocal Music continue their success
- A look at the Reading Month fun around the district
- Parents share their perspective of the Hawkeye Kids Before & After School Childcare programming
- Details of the May 7 Non-Homestead Millage Renewal

HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL COLD CASE RESEARCH CLASS PROVIDES REAL-WORLD OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS



Hamilton High School believes in providing real-world opportunities to our students to help identify their passions early on, and it doesn't get any more "hands-on" or "real-world" than Mark Behnke's Writing for Exploration Cold Case Research class at HHS.

Students who signed up for the class entered the school year with expectations to maybe watch Law & Order and solve some fictional cases. They quickly realized it was much more than that.

"I went into it thinking we would be researching cold cases and how investigating works, and things like that," HHS sophomore Karly Wendt explained. "I never expected it to be this hands on."

The cases taken on by our Hamilton High School students are very real, very complicated, and of course, very difficult to solve, even for professionals with decades of experience. Therefore, the students are taking it case-by-case and accruing all of the information they can to try to help rule out possibilities and assist law enforcement any way they can with realistic expectations.

"We're not necessarily trying to solve the case, even though that would be great," said Hamilton High School sophomore Evelyn Boeve. "Realistically, we're just trying to get more information for the police and what we do here in this classroom can help future classes work with local law enforcement and colleges for years to come."

And the partnerships between the class and local law enforcement have already begun to grow, thanks to the hard work and professionalism of these students. Cold Case Research students now have several connections to the Michigan State Police, the Allegan County Sheriff's Department, and the highly achieving Cold Case Research program at Western Michigan University.

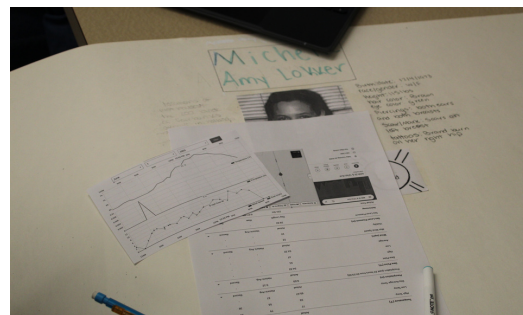
"I feel like I've built a bit of a network here to help my students find answers when I don't know them, but it's also an avenue for them to reach out and communicate with professionals in a way that high school students should," said teacher Mark Behnke.

One of those professionals now supporting the class is Western Michigan University criminal justice professor and Director of the Cold Case Program, Dr. Ashlyn Kuersten who was astonished by all of the work going into the program at HHS.

“Mark Behnke is putting Hamilton High School on the map for their [Cold Case] program,” Dr. Kuersten wrote in a letter to the district. “I don't know a single other high school that has done so much work. Mark has opened his students' eyes to a completely new career possibility and has done it with grace and enthusiasm.”

Students receive an English elective for taking the class but more importantly, they feel accomplished as they continue to make a difference for local agencies.

"It's really cool to have the police want to help you out and come in and talk to you," senior Abby VandenBerg added. "It's a great opportunity that I never thought we would have in high school."



SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH A VIDEO INSIDE THE COLD CASE RESEARCH CLASS!

THE DRIVE FOR SUCCESS: ONE MOTHER'S COMMITMENT TO 35 MINUTE TRIPS TO HAMILTON



Every single day of the school year, Ashley Imes and her five kids get in the car and make the trip from their home in Allendale all the way to Hamilton. After selling their home in Holland and moving there in September of 2022, Ashley's first concern was whether or not she could keep our children in Hamilton Community Schools.

"I literally called the Hamilton administration office and said, 'I can still keep my kids there right?' I wanted to make sure there wasn't some boundary or something where they couldn't stay at Hamilton, because that might have changed things," Imes said about the move.

Despite the drive to school nearly tripling in distance, Ashley made the commitment to make the drive for her five students (Iris - 1st, Navaeh - 3rd, Noah - 5th, Paige - 7th, and Arianna - 9th) both to and from school.

"I told myself, if I can drive 30 minutes to work every day, I can drive a little bit further to make sure my kids are getting a great education in a district we love," Imes added.

Now with kids at Blue Star Elementary, Hamilton Middle School, and Hamilton High School, Ashley has seen a consistency in all buildings with individual support, communication, and a family-like atmosphere.

"Seeing the care and the time that the teachers take with each of the students, it's very reassuring to a parent. You know when you drop them off that they're safe, they're taken care of, they're going to get the attention they need. Hamilton is just great, it really is."

Ashley's daughter and Hamilton High School freshman Arianna chuckled when asked if her mom talks about Hamilton in public.

"Almost every family event she brings it up," Arianna, who started at Hamilton this school year, said. "I do really like it here, it's a very welcoming and friendly place, the people are really nice and I can't see myself anywhere else."

Driving a vehicle with two Hawkeye stickers around northern Ottawa, Ashley says she has gotten a lot of questions and odd looks in public when she tells people where they live and where her kids go to school.

“People really do think I am crazy for driving my kids 35 minutes to school each way every day,” she smiled, “But I do it because I love this school district, I love the small-town feel, and the reassurances that I need to know my kids are well taken care of.”

When the out-of-district enrollment window opens on May 7, Ashley offered unsolicited advice to those considering Hamilton Community Schools.

"Just make the drive, you won't regret it. Your kids will love it here, and you'll know your kids are loved. Your kids are going to get the education that you want and that they need and the support they need, I honestly just love Hamilton."



Ashley's daughter Iris with 1st grade teacher, Megan Reilly at Blue Star Elementary.

WORK FOR US!



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Apply Today using the QR Code or at HamiltonSchools.us



LORI LOHMAN RETIRES FROM HAMILTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AFTER 26 YEARS



After 26 years on the job at Hamilton Community Schools, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, Lori Lohman retired at the end of February. Not only is Lori a proud graduate from Hamilton High School, her two daughters attended as well. She says it's not easy to walk away from a place she loves so much, but it's time for something new.

“It was a very difficult decision and I'll miss all of the people the most,” Lohman said. “I made a lot of friendships, it's hard to walk away from that, but it's time for a new adventure.”

Lohman's role in the administration office has changed over the years. Originally serving as a secretary at the front desk, her role grew into pupil accounting, community engagement, and lead secretary of the district, as well as overseeing student onboarding and processes.

“Day-to-day, my job has been different every day, which is what I've loved about it,” she added. “And it has changed so much, the pupil accounting part is really fun for me. I enjoy working through the data and spreadsheets.”

As the head of community engagement, Lori oversaw the district community events, including the inaugural Hawkeye Hometown Tailgate in 2021, inaugural 5K in April of 2023, and Academic Basketball nights in the winter.

“It has been super fun to see how the community has rallied around these events. How businesses have financially supported these events is awesome over the past few years.”

And community is how she sums up the place she loves.

“Hamilton Community Schools says it all, because it is a community, it's a family here, no matter if you go to school here, work here, or live here, it's a close-knit community and that makes all the difference in the world for a place you work.”

Thank you for everything, Lori. You will be missed!



Scan the QR Code to watch
Lori's farewell video!

WELCOME AMY VALKEMA

While Lori's 26 years of experience and knowledge of experience is hard to replace, Hamilton Community Schools is very excited to hire Amy Valkema into the position as Executive Assistant to the Superintendent! Amy graduated from Hamilton High School in 2000 and has lived within the community for years, moving back in 2010 to enroll her children in Hamilton Community Schools.

For the past 12 years, Valkema has been working in pupil accounting for West Ottawa Public Schools.

“I always thought it would be nice to work in Hamilton,” Valkema added. “When this posting came up and it was nearly the same thing I did at West Ottawa, I couldn't pass it up.”

Valkema will work side-by-side with superintendent, Dr. Bradford Lusk and the district secretaries to oversee pupil accounting, enrollment, the Board of Education, and other areas for the district.

“I'm really looking forward to it, because I know a lot of people across the district and am looking forward to getting to know those I don't know. I'm excited to be close to home and still doing what I love.”

Welcome to Hamilton Community Schools, Amy!



HMS STAFF AND STUDENTS COME TOGETHER DURING READING MONTH WITH 'ONE SCHOOL, ONE BOOK'



Throughout 'March is Reading Month', Hamilton Middle School came together with a 'One School, One Book' initiative. All students and staff read the book 'Enemies in the Orchard' by local author, Dana VanderLugt which is a World War 2 historical fiction book based on a true story and centered around a POW camp in Allegan County, just 14 miles from Hamilton Middle School, which made the story realistic and enjoyable to read for the students.

"Every teacher received a copy of this book and the classes would read together, all along the same timeline," said Hamilton Middle School principal, Liz Morehouse. "A really cool thing that came out of it was we would have four different students from all four different grades not know each other, but having conversations about the book. It was a great way to build community at HMS."



VanderLugt came to visit HMS to explain the background of the story, her process of writing a book, and much more with the students and staff. Thank you to Dana and all HMS teachers for making this a huge success!



BENTHEIM ELEMENTARY READING MONTH FUN!

All of our schools had a blast during March is Reading Month, and that includes Bentheim Elementary! Every week had a special theme for 'Reading Through The Decades', beginning with the 1950s and going all the way to the 2000s at the end of the month. The days were filled with fun activities and dress-up days such as 'Hat Day', '50s Day' (top right), 'Tie Dye Day', 'Glow Day', flashlight reading (bottom left) and 'Be A Character Day' (bottom right), to dress as their favorite book characters!



"At Bentheim, we believe in the power of reading," said principal, Jared Randall. "March is Reading Month is a great way to instill passion and a love for reading in our students. From author visits, to dress up days, to Drop Everything And Read time, we have been celebrating books and their magic all month!"

HHS "CONNECTED LUNCH" ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO PUT PHONES AWAY & REMAIN PRESENT

Scan the QR Code for the video!



“ The big idea behind it is to help students feel more connected with those around them. ”

The "Connected Lunch" at Hamilton High School on Wednesday, March 27 had a simple focus: put the phones and technology away and be present. It's the first one held at HHS in several years, stressing the importance of making connections with those around you, rather than scrolling through social media or being on a phone.

To add to the day and fun, HHS principal Mitch Bosch and School Resource Officer Deputy Joe Knapp set up to make burritos for students and there was also free ice cream! In fact, Bosch and Knapp served 216 burritos throughout the two lunches, breaking a record previously held by former HHS principal Doug Braschler!



HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE DEPARTMENT PRESENTS 'INTO THE WOODS'

On March 21-23, the Hamilton High School theatre department presented 'Into The Woods'. With a Tony Award-winning book and score, 'Into the Woods' is both enchanting and touching, as it tells the magical tale of a baker and his wife, who in their quest to have a child, make a bargain with a vengeful witch. Their journey into the woods brings them in contact with a host of fairytale characters including Cinderella, Jack, Rapunzel, a wolf, a giant, and even a handsome prince or two. Ultimately, the characters are forced to experience the unintended consequences of their actions. One of Broadway legend Stephen Sondheim's most popular works, 'Into the Woods' is a masterful, musical journey for a wide range of audiences and our students did an incredible job with their performances!



“ We've put a lot of work into this, it's been hours of our days for weeks on end,” said Kaden DeWys, who played Repunzel's Prince and The Steward in the production. “We all really enjoy working together to make the shows as good as possible for our audience, it was a great show.”

11 HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL BAND MEMBERS RECEIVE A 1ST DIVISION RATING AT MSBOA STATE!

On Saturday, March 16, the Hamilton High School Band program sent 15 events to the MSBOA State Solo & Ensemble Festival at Portage Northern High School. In order to qualify, the events needed to earn an overall 1st Division Rating at District Solo & Ensemble Festival a little over a month ago. The events that participated include:

- Evan Talsma- Alto Sax solo
- Caroline Johnson- Tuba solo
- Ethan Csapos- Clarinet solo
- Drew Van Houten- Trombone solo
- Evan Talsma, Josh Bush & Tristan Patch- Saxophone trio
- Annika Johnson- French Horn solo
- James Andersen & Ricky Towne- Trombone duet
- Alyssa Frank, Kenzie Pelletier, Alyssa Bittner, Bri Carpenter, Evan Talsma- Woodwind quintet
- Avery VanDerMeulen, Annika Johnson, Drew Van Houten, Joey Oppenhuizen, Tyler Michielsens- Brass quintet
- Joey Oppenhuizen- Trombone solo
- Alyssa Frank- Flute solo
- Alyssa Weber- Flute solo
- Ella Oppenhuizen & Leah Elkins- Flute duet
- Karley Riddle & Libby Bickel- Trumpet duet
- Tyler Michielsens- Trumpet solo



“ This is by far the best showing at State Solo & Ensemble Festival that Hamilton has ever had since I've been here and I couldn't be more proud of ALL of our young musicians who took part!” said band teacher, Joe Herrick. Way to go, Hawkeyes!

Of the 15 events that participated, 11 earned a 1st Division Rating and 4 earned a 2nd Division Rating! Some events did such a great job that they earned state-wide recognition. This is extremely rare and a very, very high honor. These include:

- Caroline Johnson and Evan Talsma were nominated to participate in the State of Michigan Outstanding Soloist competition for their solo performances.
- Evan Talsma, Josh Bush and Tristan Patch were nominated to participate in the State of Michigan Outstanding Ensemble competition for their saxophone trio performance.
- Caroline Johnson was selected to be a member of the State of Michigan Honors Brass Chamber Ensemble. This means she was one of the top 3 tuba performers in the entire state of Michigan!

The Outstanding Soloist Competition will take place at Eastern Michigan University on Friday, April 5th. The Outstanding Ensemble Competition is done by recording over the course of the next two weeks. The State of Michigan State Honors Brass Chamber Ensemble as well as the winners of the Outstanding Soloist and Outstanding Ensemble competitions will perform at the MSBOA Spring Honor Showcase at Western Michigan University on Friday, May 10th.

HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL VOCAL MUSIC DEPARTMENT MAKES SCHOOL HISTORY



Scan the QR code to listen to their performances!



Our Hamilton High School vocal music department is having a historic year! On Wednesday, February 21, both the Hamilton High School Honors Choir and Women's Chorale earned Division I "Excellent" ratings and qualified for the State Choral Festival, with many commendations from the judges.

This is only the 6th time in our district's history that both choirs have qualified in the same year, along with 2010, 2012, 2017, 2018, and 2020.

"All of these students worked VERY hard to earn this, and I am very proud of each of them," said vocal music teacher, Holly Israels. Way to go, Hawkeyes!

BOTH HHS & HMS SCIENCE OLYMPIAD TEAMS QUALIFY FOR STATE



For the Hamilton High School Science Olympiad program, success is nothing new. The program has been a state qualifier for several seasons in a row, and this year is no exception. Mr. Jake Klinger and the Hawkeyes picked up the program's fourth consecutive regional championship on March 16 at Western Michigan University while medaling in 19 of 23 events and finishing first in Disease Detectives and Tower categories.

While the high school achievements are extremely impressive yet again, perhaps Mr. Ryan Morris' team at Hamilton Middle School is stealing some of the spotlight, and rightfully so. After not having a program since the 2014-15 school year, 7th grade science teacher Ryan Morris brought it back in a big way, but it wasn't without a lot of effort from both Morris and all of his students.

“ These Science Olympiads have been working since December to learn, test, and build for their events,” Morris explained. “The relief they felt when they all won an award for their event was unbelievable.”

The Hawkeyes would finish 3rd out of 19 teams at regionals on March 16 which qualified them for the state competition on May 4! In fact, the event coordinator told the team, “Thanks for bringing Hamilton Middle School back - it has been a while.”

Students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade competed in over 20 difference science-related events and while finishing 3rd place overall, they were 1st for the your school size division.

"This is such an amazing group of students," Morris said. "I am so proud of them and the hard work they have done to get to this stage - the state competition is a whole separate beast but they are excited and ready to go."



100 DAYS WISER: MRS. SLAGH'S YOUNG FIVERS CELEBRATE THE 100TH DAY OF SCHOOL!



February 6 was the 100th day of the school year across the Hamilton Community Schools district. At Hamilton Elementary, Mrs. Liz Slagh's young five students went all out dressing as wise and disguised adults as part of their '100 Days Smarter' celebration!

"We made a book with drawings of our 100 year old selves, worked in centers with 100 objects like pipe cleaners, cups, popsicle sticks, counting bears, and googly eyes. I love any excuse to dress up and this day is no different. The kids get a kick out of wearing something out of the ordinary and it's a great way to get some of the more reserved students to come out of their shells a bit," said Mrs. Slagh. What a fun day!

HAMILTON WRESTLING COACHES HONORED WITH REGIONAL AWARDS

Congratulations to two outstanding Hawkeyes and wrestling coaches, Trent Holyfield and Andy Cook on their Regional Coaching Awards from the Michigan Wrestling Association!

"We take pride in the tradition that Hamilton Wrestling holds," said head coach Trent Holyfield. "Multiple coaches, parents, and wrestlers have paved the way for us and we are grateful to be a small part of the journey and success. With that being said, this award goes to everybody that has been involved with Hamilton wrestling in some way shape or form. It is so much more than just myself. Without them, it could never be done!"

Meanwhile, former Hamilton state champion wrestler and now assistant coach Andy Cook has been working with many of these wrestlers for years.

"It has been an honor to get the opportunity to coach the kids on this team," Cook added. "I have had the opportunity to coach most of the kids on the team since they were on the youth team, some as young as 6. Having the opportunity to coach with the coaching staff that we have and seeing the love they have for Hamilton wrestling and the kids in the program tells me more good things are still to come for our program. Working with Trenton over the last couple of years has told me that him and I want the upmost success for our program. There aren't many days that go by that we aren't talking about what we have to do to compete with the next team. Looking forward to the years ahead."



Hamilton head wrestling coach, Trent Holyfield. (Above)



Hamilton assistant wrestling coach, Andy Cook. (Left)

Join us for the Hawkeye Hometown 5K! April 27, 2024 | 10:30 AM



Hamilton Community Schools is proud to present the 2nd annual Hawkeye Hometown 5K event beginning and ending at the HCS transportation/operations building on Saturday, April 27, 2024 beginning at 10:30 AM! The cost is \$20 per runner and includes a free 5K t-shirt. Registrations after Friday, April 12 at Noon are NOT guaranteed a t-shirt due to order lead times. We will also have the food truck from IDK Kitchen at the event from 10:00 AM to Noon! This event is rain or shine, except for severe weather.

Proceeds will help support the HCS Community Engagement team and future family-friendly events in the district.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO SIGN UP FOR THE 2024 5K!

HAWKEYE HOMETOWN



AGRISCIENCE DAY GIVES 8TH GRADERS A LOOK INTO THE HIGH-DEMAND CAREER FIELD



Scan QR code to watch the video of the day!



There aren't many schools out there doing something like this.

~ Bryce Jipping, Hogquest Farms

Hamilton Community Schools believes in providing opportunities for all students to find their passions and interests at a young age. Each grade 5th through 9th has a unique career field they explore throughout the school year. On Monday, February 26, the Hamilton Middle School 8th graders were able to learn more about careers and opportunities in agriscience.

"It's pretty cool they're doing this," said 2020 Hamilton High School graduate and Hogquest Farms employee, Bryce Jipping. "Obviously, this is an agricultural community, a lot of people know about farming and stuff around here but they don't always know about the work that goes into it."

Jipping returned to his alma mater on Monday to help teach the students about Hogquest Farms and agscience careers. He also says the experiences throughout high school was something he realized had a big impact on him after graduating from Hamilton.

"Not many schools are doing something like this, not even related to ag, just business tours in general. I remember as a student here, I was part of classes that toured different places. These opportunities set you up for the future and what you want to do in life."

The entire 8th grade class split into two groups, with one going to the Critter Barn in Zeeland and the other starting at Cultivate Church where ten local businesses led stations on their lessons.

"The goal of a day like this is for the students to gain awareness around agscience careers and different options that are right here in our community," said Hamilton Community Schools Work Based Learning coordinator, Ashley Meyer. "Also, we want students to gain a greater appreciation for animal care and how food goes from farm to table."

8th grader Tyler Statler is one of multiple students who entered the day with an interest in farming and agscience in general.

"Today has been very interesting and fun to learn about all of this," Statler said. "I learned a lot about farming and how it helps our community and the world."

Critter Barn executive director Tony McCaul had the students go through ten stations while on their campus, from learning about plants and natural resources, to holding chickens, petting goats, sheep, and rabbits, and every animal in-between.

"It's extremely important for the youth to realize where their food comes from and all of the careers that go into that," McCaul added. "It gets their eyes and minds thinking about agriculture and how math, science, STEM, and everything gets them connected to the real world."



HAMILTON WORK BASED LEARNING CONTINUES TO PROVIDE UNIQUE STUDENT EXPERIENCES

By: Ashley Meyer

HMS Students Present to the West Coast Chamber:

Hamilton Middle School students Ava Perdok (grade 5), Elliana Heap (grade 6), Kendra Bosch (grade 7), Addy Lamar (grade 8), and Emma Lamar (grade 8) presented to the West Coast Chamber Leadership Team consisting of about 40 local business leaders. During the presentation, students highlighted their experiences with Work Based Learning and the impact those experiences have made on them. In addition to presenting, students had to field questions from the adults in the audience. Local leaders loved hearing from students about the great things happening at Hamilton Middle School.

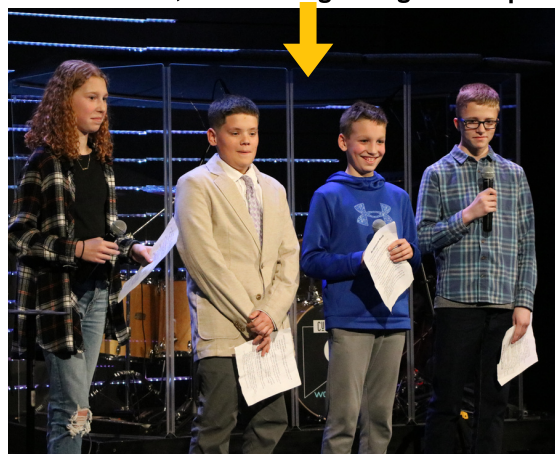
6th grade Business Solutions Showcase:

Beginning in January, 6th grade students were partnered at one of seven different local businesses to solve a driving question given to them by their business partner. On March 18, 2024, all 6th grade students presented their final solutions to their area business partner as they wrapped up their Work Based Learning PBL projects. Each group's pitch highlighted their knowledge of the business, the driving question, the process used to solve the problem, and their solution. Business professionals selected a winner to represent their business in the final pitch off at the Business Solutions Showcase.

Congratulations to the following students from Mrs. Schuiteman's class, Harper Lascari, Brycen Bailey, and Tyler Schurman representing Xylem winning the 2024 Business Solutions Showcase.



Thank you to the following 2023/24 business partners for this project: Cento Anni, Gentex, Holland BPW, K&R Truck Sales, JR Automation, West Michigan Regional Airport, and Xylem.



8th grade STREAM students give final presentations:

On February 29, 2024, 8th grade STREAM students gave their final presentations to professionals answering the driving question of, "How can we support the population of key species in an ecosystem? Throughout the process of gathering information to be able to come up with solutions, students asked questions and learned from local professionals. Professionals came from the Allegan County Conservation District, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the Outdoor Discovery Center. Those same entities were able to come back and be judges for the final presentations giving feedback on students' solutions.

"I think Hamilton leads in this regard by getting kids, especially at the middle school age, involved and getting them out to do more Project Based Learning. It's impressive to watch."

~ ED DENAVE, FOUNDER OF CENTO ANNI

TEACHER MS. LESLIE RUSSELL DISCUSSES THE FAMILY-FEEL INSIDE OF HAWKEYE PRESCHOOL



Scan QR code to watch Ms. Leslie's video spotlight!

With 35 years of experience in child care, Hawkeye Preschool educator Leslie Russell knows how to prepare students for elementary school.

“ I have worked in a variety of different places, from home daycare, to running summer camps and the family feel and the love here is fantastic,” Russell smiled.

As the teacher of both 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes, Russell says the growth throughout the year in each individual student is outstanding.

“When they're coming in, they do what we call parallel play where they might play next to each other but not necessarily interact and by the end of the school year, they're creating stories together,” she added.

Between Ms. Leslie, Ms. Carmen Dykstra, Ms. Amy Herrema, and Ms. Katie Post, among other helpers in the program, Hawkeye Preschool is an outstanding place for our youngest Hawkeyes.

“This has been my favorite place to work,” she said, “I feel valued here. People know it's important and that what we're doing is huge, it's a great program to be in.”

Registration is now open for the 2024-25 school year and we'd love to have your student(s) join the Hawkeye Family! Log onto our website HamiltonSchools.us and click 'Schools' for 'Hawkeye Preschool' information and registration!



BEN POPMA NAMED WOODTV STUDENT OF THE WEEK!

Hamilton High School junior Ben Popma loves nothing more than going to school at Hamilton High School. Despite ongoing challenges with his vision and multiple appointments, Ben has thrived at HHS with a 3.69 GPA and continues to work hard in classes, Unified PE, and on the HHS Unified Basketball team!



One year ago, Ben's mother Ginger Jones realized he was rubbing his eyes and having difficulty after riding his four-wheeler. What was initially believed to be something in his eye turned out to be keratoconus, a serious eye condition which can cause blurry and distorted vision.

“Legal blindness is around 2300, which he was at for a while,” Jones added. “He's slowly gotten a little bit better and he's learned how to adjust to it and roll with it, he says he's fine.”

Not only does he roll with it, Ben loves coming to school every single day. In his Intensive Resource Room, he is a tremendous role model for other students and helps lead the way with his infectious positive attitude.

“ Hamilton has been absolutely amazing with him, all of his challenges, no matter if he's in a good mood, or bad mood,” said Ben's mother, Ginger Jones. “It means the world to me that he'd rather be here than at home during the day, if he has to miss school he always tells me it's time for school and wants to be here.”

Ben was named WOODTV Student of the Week back in early February!

“He's been talking about it constantly, saying he's famous and on the news,” Jones laughed, “He loves the spotlight.”

Scan QR code to watch Ben's WOODTV segment!



A MESSAGE FROM DR. LUSK

Dear Hamiltonians,

I hope this message finds you well and rejuvenated after Spring Break! If you traveled, I hope that you had a great and memorable experience, all while experiencing safe and efficient travels. If you had a Stay-cation, I trust that it was relaxing and recharging for you and your family. As we dive back into the academic calendar, I am thrilled to share with you some exciting updates and plans for the remainder of this school year and beyond.

First, I want to express my gratitude for your continued support and engagement throughout this school year. Your partnership has been invaluable in creating a positive and enriching learning environment for our students. The elementary fun nights, shows and performances, and spring athletic attendance show the amazing support for our great students!

I am delighted to report that the school year has been progressing exceptionally well so far, with students showing growth in their assessments at elementary and middle school levels, to our high school showing another year of increasing graduation rates. The amount of students being involved in extracurricular activities is also great to see after the winter. These achievements and growth are a testament to their hard work and the support they receive from both home and school.

Looking ahead, we are already planning for the next school year to ensure it is even more enriching and successful for our students. We are exploring new academic programs, extracurricular opportunities, and initiatives to further enhance the overall educational experience. You can also see the start of bond work being done at Hamilton Elementary and other buildings. As you drive around the school district, you will see a lot of work going on to prepare our district for next school year and beyond. Our goal has been and will continue to use bond funds efficiently, appropriately, and conservatively to provide our students with the best education and experience possible.

As we gear up to finish this school year strong, I encourage both students and parents to remain focused and committed to academic excellence. Together, let's ensure that every student reaches their full potential and achieves their goals. Additionally, I want to draw your attention to an important upcoming event: the vote for the May 7th Millage. Your support for this millage secures funding for essential resources and programs that will benefit our school district. I would like to stress that the millage is not a bond, it is a renewal of the existing millage, and that it is on non-homestead property. By supporting the millage, you are investing in the future of our school and the success of our students. Find more information on the millage below!

Thank you once again for your unwavering support. Let's make the rest of this school year memorable and finish strong!

Dr. Bradford Lusk | Proud Superintendent, Hamilton Community Schools



Upcoming 'Scoop with the Supt.' Dates:

Join Dr. Lusk for great conversation, free coffee and light breakfast at one of the last 'Scoop with the Supt.' community forums of the school year, all held at Hawk's Nest Restaurant:

Thursday, April 18 | 9:00-10:00 AM

Thursday, May 2 | 9:00-10:00 AM

Thursday, May 16 | 9:00-10:00 AM

Thursday, June 6 | 9:00-10:00 AM



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Updates

MAY 7 NON-HOMESTEAD MILLAGE RENEWAL INFORMATION

As the heartbeat of our community, it is crucial to stay informed and engaged in decisions that directly impact the growth and well-being of our beloved community. On May 7, 2024, we have the opportunity to make our voices heard in a significant manner through a non-homestead millage vote.

Proposal A, approved in 1994, funds Michigan public schools. It shifted a large portion of funding from local property taxes to a sales tax increase and a state education tax on non-homestead properties. However, a part of school funding still comes from local property taxes.

So what is a non-homestead property? Any property that is not a primary residence or qualified agricultural property, such as a:

- Business
- Investment property
- Vacation home
- Rental property

To receive full State Foundation Grant funding, school districts must levy 18 mills on non-homestead properties. This would cost \$1,800 per year for the owner of a non-homestead property with a taxable value of \$100,000. Based on Hamilton's tax base, the millage generates \$5.9 million for the district's schools. Any registered voter who lives in the Hamilton Community Schools district boundaries are eligible to vote on this non-homestead millage proposal. Please visit www.michigan.gov/vote to determine your voting location.



This is not a new tax. The proposal would renew an existing 18 mill tax and includes protection against Headlee rollback. You do not pay this tax for your owned primary home, just for any non-homestead property you own.

How Does This Impact Me?

On May 7, 2024 we will ask the Hamilton community to vote on the non-homestead millage renewal. The proposal for a four-year millage renewal of the non-homestead 18 mills, plus a little less than 1 mill that may only be used to restore the 18 mills if Headlee rollbacks occur.

If the millage is not approved, the district would lose \$5.9 million per year beginning on July 1, 2025. The state doesn't replace this and Hamilton Community Schools would be forced to make cuts to programs and support services.

HAMILTON UNIFIED BASKETBALL TEAMS END SEASON WITH A LIVELY ALL-SCHOOL ASSEMBLY



Scan QR code to watch the WZZM segment!

The Hamilton High School & Hamilton Middle School Unified basketball teams have had a stellar first official season. Both teams played games and tournaments against other schools' Unified programs but the highlight of the season came on Friday, March 15 inside of the Hamilton High School gymnasium!

All students grades 5-12 attended the Unified assembly which featured an intrasquad scrimmage of athletes and peers! The athletes put on a show in front of their 1,500 classmates who all created an electric environment. In fact, one eighth grader returned to Hamilton Middle School and told media clerk Jen Stork, "That was the best basketball game I have ever been to." Another student said, "Every single shot was the most hype thing I've ever experienced."

The all-school assembly was the end vision of the entire Unified coaching staff since the start of the school year in August.

"Students from two secondary buildings emptied their classrooms and emptied their hallways for the most amazing, electric, magnetic basketball game," said Unified coach and physical education teacher, Megan Petersen.

It was especially heartwarming watching HHS senior Adam Lazarock draining several shots, including deep three-pointers which sent the crowd into a frenzy.

"A lot of our Unified athletes don't get moments like these in athletics," said HCS Unified Champion Liason, Zach Harig. "These moments are so rare and to get a packed gym and provide an experience like today, it's something the athletes, and students in the stands, will never forget."

And the day was much more than just basketball, but moments that provided a bigger blueprint of how to embrace differences and include those with different abilities.

"Watching the interactions with these students today and these real friendships coming along, that's what we want to continue," Petersen added. "Days like today spread into the classrooms and into the school days."

WZZM also covered the event and featured it on their News at 5 & 6 PM!



Photos via HHS student, Ainsley Sibble

INTEGRATED WORLD HISTORY & LITERATURE CLASS INCORPORATES LESSON TO FIGHT GLOBAL POVERTY

Hamilton High School's Integrated World History & Literature has over 60 students in the class over two class periods. The class, taught by History teacher Brant Haverdink and English teacher Kevin Everly, focuses on several different lessons throughout the centuries.

One specific recent lesson looking at global poverty as a result of the industrial revolution is a bit more hands-on for students.

For the fourth year of the lesson, Everly and Haverdink chose A-graded aid organizations Oxfam and UNICEF to donate funds to help those in need. Students were then given a choice to donate or not, but every dollar raised was going to be matched by Mr. Everly himself.

"They raised 465 dollars," Everly chuckled. "When we've done this in other years, it has been less than 100 dollars, I had to explain this all to my wife but she was so proud of the kids."

The lesson went a long way in bettering the students' understanding of world poverty but also gave them a chance to experience charitable giving and generosity.

"I donated 100 dollars because Mr. Everly said he was going to match it," said HHS junior, Izzy Troost. "It takes 200 dollars to help save one child from hunger, so I figured if I can save one child, it'll be worth it. I have the ability to better and change a life for at least one person," she added.



INSIDE THE HAMILTON ELEMENTARY 4TH GRADE CLASSROOM OF MRS. ERIN SLOTMAN

When you step inside Mrs. Erin Slotman's fourth grade classroom at Hamilton Elementary, you will find a sense of family. Slotman, a 2001 graduate of Hamilton High School, makes it a priority to communicate daily plans and expectations with her students ensuring they're all on the same page every day. Not only has Slotman fulfilled a childhood dream of becoming a teacher, she achieved it in her home district where she graduated in 2001.



"This is where I grew up, I went to Bentheim Elementary as a student and then middle school and high school and always wanted to teach," she added. "I consider it just a joy to teach in the same district that I grew up in."

18 years in to teaching in Hamilton, Slotman's goals have remained the same at the fourth grade level.

"I want to prepare them for the transition to middle school, fourth grade to fifth grade is a big jump, so I just want to equip them with the skills they need for when they get there."

However, it starts with relationships for Slotman, who is consistently checking in on her students to ensure that aforementioned family feel in her classroom.

"I would say that one of the best parts of my job is having the opportunity to connect with kids each day and build relationships with them," Slotman said. "Our students today have so many different needs, socially and academically, but making sure they feel safe and loved is one of the best tools to help them be most successful in my classroom."

Not only has she graduated from Hamilton Community Schools, but she also has three students attending in the district as well.

“It's the sense of community,” she said, “I just love the coworkers that I have here and love the small-town feel. I truly feel Hamilton has the most supportive and caring staff and families, which is why I also feel blessed that my own girls are able to be a part of this community.”



Scan the QR code to watch Mrs. Slotman's staff spotlight video!

SCAN ME

NEW TEACHERS MAKING AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT AT HHS

Kevin Annis and Abigail Bramlett both dreamed of one day getting back to teach at Hamilton High School. However, their backgrounds and paths to falling in love with the district and community are vastly different. Annis, a 2005 graduate of HHS, stayed living in Bentheim and remained involved in the community despite teaching just outside of Grand Rapids for 15 years.

"It's kind of always been a dream to come back to Hamilton and it's been a bit of a journey to come back here," said Annis, a first-year science teacher at HHS. "It has been great getting to know the kids and getting to know the staff and faculty. Just getting to be a part everything here has been terrific."



Abigail Bramlett
HHS Math Teacher



Kevin Annis
HHS Science Teacher

Bramlett, who grew up in Colorado before her family moved to Illinois in high school, never knew much about Michigan until attending Hope College to study education for four years. While in college, Bramlett found a student teaching role at Hamilton High School learning from two outstanding Hawkeye educators in Abby Ekkens and Becky Bierschbach. Despite loving her time as a Hawkeye, Bramlett moved to Phoenix after graduation and taught for one year before quickly realizing she needed to find a way back to Hamilton. Fortunately, a job for a math teacher opened up and she quickly pounced on it.

"The second that this job got posted, I knew I wanted to apply," she smiled, "I definitely missed the school, missed the community, and the staff here and their intentionality of getting to know you. It was a no-brainer to apply and hope to come back to the school that I loved so much."

Love for the Hamilton community and Hamilton Community Schools can happen in a lot of ways. Whether you attended school at Hamilton like Annis, or stumbled across the hidden gem of Hawkeye Nation like Bramlett, it's a special district to be a part of. It doesn't take long inside of Annis and Bramlett's classrooms to notice the authentic connections with students that have quickly been developed as well as their interactive teaching styles, which have made them instantly successful as HHS educators.

“I've been inspired by the commitment from staff and lack of turnover among the staff here, you can tell they're all bought in,” Bramlett said, “I want to have that same impact on students and on the community, so I am definitely planning on sticking around.”



Scan the QR Codes to watch the staff spotlight videos on Annis (left) & Bramlett (right)!



HAWKEYE KIDS PROGRAMMING BECOMES A “LIFESAVER” FOR MANY HAMILTON FAMILIES

The Hawkeye Kids Before & After School Childcare program launched in August of 2023 for the first time in district history. A much needed resource for Hamilton families was quickly filled and many couldn't sign up fast enough.

"It has relieved my family of a lot of stress," said Rachel DeGood, parent to two Hawkeye Kids. "My husband and I both work construction and I work all the way in Grand Rapids, so I'm now able to work longer hours and know my kids are safe and taken care of."

The program runs five days a week with before and after school hours and also runs during two-hour delays, snow days, and scheduled no school days.

"I think this program has given Hamilton a wonderful opportunity to grow in a different way," said Hamilton Elementary Hawkeye Kids staff member, Heather Curtis. "This gives parents a much easier way to have kids before and after school and work whatever hours they need to."

Hawkeye Kids also gets the students engaged with one another with games and activities both before and after school.

"My son stomps off the playground if I get here before the end of their games," said Rochelle Bright-Verstrate, mother to two students at Bentheim Elementary. "They really love going every day."

Not only is it fun for the kids, it's affordable. Hawkeye Kids takes into account average prices of childcare in the Allegan and Ottawa County areas and ensures it's a good choice financially for families.

“ If you're thinking about Hamilton Community Schools, the Hawkeye Kids program is a great resource and has greatly improved my family's overall stress level but also, just think about cost. It's really affordable,” DeGood added.

Hawkeye Kids summer childcare will take place at Blue Star Elementary and registration is now open! Sign up today using the QR code or by visiting HamiltonSchools.us & clicking on 'For Parents'!



Hawkeye Kids mother Rachel DeGood (top left) with her two daughters and Hawkeye Kids staff member, Heather Curtis.



Learn more about Hawkeye Kids by scanning!

Mrs. Mary Buus and the Hawkeye Kids at Bentheim Elementary!



2024 WINTER ALL CONFERENCE ATHLETES!

Congratulations to our Hawkeye athletes who were recognized as All Conference this winter!

Front Row (L to R)

Jacob Chase-Wrestling, Zoe Hippey-Cheer, Leah Brink-Basketball, Kaitlyn Geurink-Basketball, Jennifer Lambers-Cheer, Korrayah Kapenga-Cheer, Brandon Olsen-Wrestling

Back Row (L to R)

Trace Lopez-Wrestling, Jack Langeland-Swimming, Carson McIntire-Swimming, Justin McIlwain-Basketball, Shane Dams-Wrestling, Remington Foster-Wrestling, Malachi Kapenga-Wrestling



SENIOR BETHANY BEHNKE RECOGNIZED BY THE WEST MICHIGAN OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

Hamilton High School senior Bethany Behnke received some prestigious recognition from the West Michigan Officials Association (WMOA) on Monday, March 25 at their annual banquet. Behnke was recognized for her sportsmanship towards officials on the basketball court, but it's much more than just sports. The WMOA takes into account the student's integrity and community involvement off the court as well. Behnke is the first HHS student to win the award since 2009 when David Ptacek was recognized.

"I am extremely grateful to be recognized for this award! There are so many incredible girls basketball athletes across West Michigan so to be chosen out of them all for this award is a huge honor," Behnke said. "We all work so hard to find a balance between academics and athletics so being recognized for my performance in both is extremely rewarding. I hope this shows younger athletes that it is possible to excel in both areas of your life and you can find a way to balance it all!"





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HAMILTON STUDENTS DOING GREAT THINGS!



Senior Joey Klein is in his first art class since 8th grade and teacher Lisa Riley says he is totally 'KILN' it in ceramics! It's not an easy skill to pick up on but he has dedicated himself and shown great determination on the wheel. Joey also helped replace the old kiln lid in the classroom!



Hamilton High School junior Colie Breuker is working for the Hawkeye Kids Before & After School Childcare program and making a difference in the lives of young Hawkeyes!



8th grader Nathan Eding is using his 3D printing skills to create useful items for his classroom and classmates. Recently, he discovered a need for better calculator battery covers in Mr. Bosma's classroom and went right to work creating them. He has also helped with directional signage on the disc golf course!



Hamilton High School senior Evan Talsma did a tremendous job performing the national anthem on his saxophone in front of nearly 3,000 fans at the MHSAA boys basketball state quarterfinal game hosted at HHS on Tuesday, March 18!

Hamilton High School senior Carson McIntire capped his high school swim career by breaking TWO school records with a 1:44.27 in the 200 freestyle to finish 6th in the state and a 4:53.74 in the 500m freestyle to finish 9th in the state!



What did we miss? Let us know by emailing Zach: zharig@hamiltonschools.us



Hamilton junior and broadcasting prodigy Aiden Lynch broadcasted the first-ever Unified basketball game on our YouTube on Friday, March 15. Two athletes from the Unified team, who love technology, watched intently as he pressed buttons and called the game. Afterwards, Aiden invited the students over to his broadcast table to touch the buttons, try on headsets, and learn more about his broadcasts!



Keep up on these stories by following our 'Hamilton Community Schools' Facebook page & visiting our website: HamiltonSchools.us!