

TRANSCRIPT

HAMILTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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AWARD OF
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Hamilton Community Schools

for outstanding achievement in the Newsletter category for

Transcript Newsletters



DEPUTY KNAPP SAVES CHRISTMAS AT BLUE STAR!



**5TH GRADE 'DIG-IN DAY'
GIVES
STUDENTS A LOOK AT
SKILLED TRADES**



**DR. LUSK RECEIVES
NATIONAL
RECOGNITION**

Also Inside...

- HHS plays first-ever Unified basketball game
- Behind the scenes of a Hamilton Snow Day decision
- HHS students earn direct college credit
- Four female wrestlers paving the way at HMS
- Non-Homestead millage vote information
- Work Based Learning continues to provide opportunities

HCS SUPERINTENDENT, DR. BRADFORD LUSK RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR LEADERSHIP & COMMUNICATION

Hamilton Community Schools superintendent Dr. Brad Lusk has been named to the National Schools Public Relations Association (NSPRA) 'Superintendents To Watch' list, which recognizes 25 superintendents nationally with fewer than five years of experience who demonstrate dynamic leadership and communication.

Lusk, who took over as superintendent at Hamilton Community Schools in July of 2022, has worked to instill two-way communication and transparency in the district through bi-weekly community forums, improved newsletter and email communication, as well as website updates.

One anonymous HCS parent wrote in a letter of support, "I have been impressed by the many positive changes he has made in just over a year here. Dr. Lusk has shown refreshing transparency to parents and stakeholders to make sure we're informed and understand the process of decision making."

Lusk, who was nominated by staff and community members for the award, was notified via email. In his answers back to the association for a future release, he mentioned his commitment to remaining approachable in our community.

“The community needs to understand that their voice is valuable, will be heard, and considered in decision making processes,” he added. “While it may not be acted on, individuals know their voice has been heard and will know the rationale behind the decisions. Earning trust is a valuable process which cannot be taken for granted. We want to ensure the bridge built with the community was a two-way street with a strong culture of collaboration.”



Bradford Lusk, Ph.D.
Hamilton Community Schools
Hamilton, Mich.

From Dr. Lusk's nomination:
"Dr. Lusk has shown refreshing transparency to parents and stakeholders to make sure we're informed and understand the process of decision making."



SCAN THE QR CODE ABOVE TO SEE THE NSPRA PRESS RELEASE!



DEPUTY KNAPP SAVES CHRISTMAS AT BLUE STAR ELEMENTARY!

As Blue Star Elementary students were walking the hallways on Friday ahead of Holiday Break, they noticed a green creature smashing presents, stealing Christmas ornaments, and trying to ruin other holiday decorations.

The students immediately ran to Blue Star principal, Kari Huckaby and reported the intruder. After a call to School Resource Officer, Deputy Joe Knapp, the creature was apprehended and arrested. Upon the arrest, Deputy Knapp found the stolen Christmas ornaments and brought the suspect out to his patrol car, much to the joy of the Blue Star students. Reports are the creature sounded like HCS superintendent, Dr. Brad Lusk but we're still working to confirm those reports!



CAROLING AT BENTHEIM!

On Monday, December 18, all students and staff at Bentheim Elementary came together for their annual caroling assembly! As a wise man once said, the best way to spread Christmas cheer, is singing loud for all to hear!



SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE BENTHEIM CAROLING VIDEO!



13 HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR DECA STATE FINALS

Hamilton High School DECA just completed at their District II Conference at Grand Valley State University on December 18. Hamilton was one of 20 schools, with over 700 students competing in multiple business pathways. Hamilton has 13 DECA State Qualifiers and 16 total students won medals! Way to go, Mr. Dan Meiste and students!

Jacob Dirske - Test Medal, Role-Play Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Tanner Schipper - Test Medal, Role-Play Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Abigail Heneveld - Test Medal, Role-Play Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Roman Klinger - State Qualifier Medal
Caleb Grunst - Test Medal, Role-Play Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Isaac Dykstra - Role-Play Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Brianna Hernandez - Role-Play Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Brandon Olsen - Role-Play Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Michael Olsen - Role-Play Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Alec Peck - Role-Play Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Landon VanderZwaag - Test Medal, Role-Play Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Wyatt Wilson - Test Medal, Role-Play Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Nathan Vriezema - Test Medal, State Qualifier Medal
Jude Christenson - Test Medal
Keegan Johr - Test Medal
Keegan Ziemann-Bell - Test Medal



MS. ORR'S SANDYVIEW FIRST GRADERS PUBLISH "WHEN WE GROW UP" BOOK



SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE SANDYVIEW "WHEN WE GROW UP" READINGS!

For many of us, it's normal for memories from elementary school to randomly come flooding back at different points of life. For the current Sandyview Elementary first grade students, those memories will be much easier to remember in the future thanks to their new published book!

At the beginning of the school year, first grade teacher, Ms. Danielle Orr had her students work on their writing skills by crafting letters to their future self. Once all students had finished their writings and drawings to go along with their page, Ms. Orr sent them off to 'Studenttreasures Publishing' who published the book.

On December 19, Ms. Orr surprised her students with their own copies of their book and had them read their page aloud to their classmates and Mrs. Kim Glupker's fourth grade students.

"We decided to write letters to our future selves, I hope this is an opportunity for them to look back on and see how much they've grown," Orr said.

The writing prompts began, "Dear Future [name]," and included the profession they would like to have some day, if they would like pets, a family, and "I hope future [name] knows ___."

"I hope this all serves as a good reminder to them as they look back in the future," Orr added. "The students have been amazing during this, they were super resilient. This boosted their energy and confidence in their writing because they saw they could actually write and publish a book."



A MESSAGE FROM DR. LUSK

Good day everyone,

As we reflect on the last couple of months, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible spirit and resilience that defines our Hamilton community. From a wonderful holiday season, to the wintery storms endured, to the renewed hopes of Spring on the horizon, excitement is in the air within Hamilton as we navigate each step along the path together.

I hope this message finds you well and that you had a joyous holiday season surrounded by loved ones. These moments of celebration are not only a time for personal reflection, but also an opportunity to appreciate the strength of our community bonds. Throughout the festive season, it was heartening to witness the unmistakable spirit of togetherness that defines Hamilton.

Our schools were adorned with an infectious sense of school spirit that resonated through the hallways. From spirited pep rallies to the harmonious sounds of our talented musicians, the energy was incredible. Our students showcased their talents and dedication, reminding us of the vibrant and talented community we are privileged to be a part of every day.

Equally inspiring was the unwavering support from our stakeholders. A special thank you to the many who volunteered during this wonderful time. From PTO's, to Booster clubs, to grandparents, it was awesome to see the number of people who wanted to contribute to making HCS a better place. Your commitment to the success and well-being of our students is truly commendable. Whether it was through volunteering, attending school events, or simply offering a helping hand, your involvement speaks volumes about the strength of our collaborative efforts.

As we embark on the second half of the school year, let us carry forward this sense of unity and camaraderie. Together, we can continue to create an environment where every student feels supported and empowered to succeed. Please participate in the Strategic Plan survey (more information is provided in this Transcript later) as our collective commitment to excellence is the driving force behind the success of Hamilton Community Schools.

I am excited about the possibilities that the coming months hold for us as a community. Let us embrace the challenges and triumphs that lie ahead with the same enthusiasm and determination that have defined us so far. Thank you for your continued support as HCS looks forward to a successful and fulfilling second half of the school year together.

Take care and as always #GoHawkeyes,

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 our upcoming 'Scoop with the Supt.' community forums, all held at Hawk's Nest Restaurant (3420 M-40):

Thursday, February 15 | 9:00-10:00 AM

Thursday, March 7 | 9:00-10:00 AM

Thursday, March 21 | 9:00-10:00 AM

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



District Facebook



District Website



Bond Updates

DR. LUSK GOES BACK TO HIS GLORY DAYS!

HCS superintendent, Dr. Brad Lusk agreed to go back to his glory days and take part in Hamilton wrestling practice on Tuesday, December 19. Lusk did everything from the warmup jogs, burpees, push-ups, etc. all the way to wrestling and grappling with the team.

"Well, it has been 16 years since I put these wrestling shoes on. Sometimes, you still think you are what you were but I realized a couple minutes into this today that I am not," he chuckled.

Very few people know that Dr. Lusk was an all-state wrestler at Hartland High School before becoming a collegiate walk-on at The University of Michigan. However, after taking nearly two decades off, much changed.

We're 25 or so minutes into practice, I get three timeouts and I'm calling the first one but things are good, the boys have been great and been great sports so far," he added.

Lusk has been a special guest in theatre performances, practiced with the tennis team, has emceed Hamilton's Got Talent and senior banquets, but this might be his most humbling experience yet.

"It's all about connecting with the kids, putting yourself out there a bit, showing some vulnerability and at the end of the day, just having fun."



QR CODE TO DR. LUSK'S WRESTLING VIDEO



HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL UNIFIED BASKETBALL TEAM PLAYS FIRST-EVER GAME

Photos via Travis Williams



On Friday, January 19, the Hamilton High School Unified basketball team played its first-ever game against Holland Christian High School at the Holland Civic Center. Unified Basketball incorporates students with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team, helping to build friendship and understanding.

Save the date for Friday, February 16 when the HHS Unified basketball team takes on Holland Christian again at Hamilton High School at 4:30 PM to start Academics, Basketball, Community Night! We hope to see a big crowd in attendance!

Hamilton Community Schools is once again hosting 'ABC' (Academics, Basketball, Community) Night in 2024! ABC Night has been **RESCHEDULED** for Friday, February 16 due to inclement weather on the original date of January 12. 'ABC Night' recognizes the academic achievements of our Hamilton High School students while watching the Hawkeye varsity and unified basketball teams take on Holland Christian!



EVENT SCHEDULE:

- 4:15 PM: Doors open
- 4:30 PM: Unified Basketball game vs. Holland Christian
- 5:30-6:00 PM: Boys basketball poster signing
- 6:00 PM: Girls basketball game vs. Holland Christian
- After the girls basketball game: Academic awards
- 7:15-7:45 PM (roughly): Girls basketball poster signing
- 7:45 PM (roughly): Boys basketball game vs. Holland Christian

*Save
THE
Date*

ABC Night will feature a photo booth, autograph sessions, t-shirt tosses, raffles, face painting, academic awards, rec basketball fun, and more!



HHS STUDENTS EARN DIRECT COLLEGE CREDIT

By: Dan Meiste
HHS Business Teacher

Business Development is a year-long Career and Technical Education (CTE) elective offered to all students. As a CTE class, there are many benefits that come along with taking this course: exposure to multiple business career pathways; 4th year math credit; a Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts (VPAA) credit; a Work Based Learning credit; an Entrepreneurship Certification; Davenport University articulate college credit (12 credit hours); and now direct college credit from Muskegon Community College (MCC).

What sets Business Development apart from other college opportunities is that as an Adjunct Professor of Business through MCC, I am able to grant college credit for two courses at no cost to your student. There is no exit exam that is needed, and any student that takes my course will have the opportunity to receive credit for the following MCC courses:

BUS - 121 Intro to Business (3 credit hours)

BUS - 131 Intro to Entrepreneurship (1 credit hour)

These two classes will transfer to any future institution that accepts MCC courses. They can also replace needed business courses, or fill elective requirements at another university.

Your student can take advantage of all these benefits, at no cost to you. Please consider having your student sign up for Business Development as an elective course. It does not compete with the Tech Center, Co-op, or Dual Enrollment. Students are encouraged to take advantage of all these opportunities.

HAWKEYE KIDS WRITE LETTERS OF APPRECIATION TO DEPUTY KNAPP

January 9 was Law Enforcement Appreciation Day and while we celebrate our amazing School Resource Officer, Deputy Joe Knapp often, our Hawkeye Kids Before & After School Childcare students wanted to make sure he felt appreciated!

Hamilton Elementary site supervisor Laura Bruursema told the students to write a letter to a local police officer. To nobody's surprise, most of the students wanted to write their letter specifically to Deputy Knapp.

"The students were very, very excited to write a letter to Deputy Knapp," Bruursema smiled. "Many people in our community know Deputy Knapp and his roles in our district, but it's incredible to know that these children, all the way down to young fives, are so happy to have Deputy Knapp around."

Knapp, who was invited to the Hawkeye Kids classroom but didn't know why, was extremely surprised by the letters and began reading them one-by-one.

"Thank you for keeping our Hamilton Schools safe, also thank you for my birthday card that you gave me on my birthday. It makes me happy when you visit our school. Happy Law Enforcement Day," Knapp read.

For more information on our Hawkeye Kids Before & After School Childcare programming, email Morgan Koops: mkoops@hamiltonschools.us or visit the Hawkeye Kids website: HamiltonSchools.us --> 'For Parents' --> 'Hawkeye Kids'



UNIFIED PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS HELPS STUDENTS BETTER THEIR SWIMMING SKILLS



SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE VIDEO!

Hamilton Middle School teacher Liz VandeWege has a passion for her Unified physical education class. Every year, VandeWege takes special education students and pairs them with peers selected by HMS teachers for their leadership qualities. Together, the students make magic and memories, as well as friendships that will last for years to come.



In December, VandeWege's classes took place at the Hamilton Community Pool as the students worked together to better their swimming skills.

“We are working on some kicking, blowing bubbles, getting our face wet, and swimming skills, all skills they need in life,” VandeWege said. “With Lake Michigan right there, it’s a very important skill that they need to have.”

The peers enjoy teaming up with their students. Eighth grader Kendall says seeing the progression of the students is her favorite part.

“It’s a lot of fun helping out in this class, especially seeing how far they’ve grown,” Kendall smiled.

The four-week unit was filled with big leaps by all involved, VandeWege said.

“The progress we saw was amazing. From the connections built, swimming skills, and just how supportive the gen-ed students are with the students to motivate them to push themselves, it has been fantastic.”



HAMILTON JV GIRLS BASKETBALL VOLUNTEERS AT SPECIAL OLYMPICS



On Saturday, January 20, the Hamilton junior varsity girls basketball team took a trip to the Special Olympics Michigan Inclusion Center in Grand Rapids to partner with the Area 11 Comets basketball team! The Hawkeyes helped run drills, scrimmaged with the Comets, and most importantly, developed incredible relationships and memories.

“Running a practice with the Comets is a highlight of our season,” said JV basketball coach and Hamilton High School teacher, Mary Ayres. “We try to do our best to provide the Comets with the opportunity to learn new basketball skills and get some good coaching from our girls. It’s a wonderful experience to learn their athlete’s stories, share our love of basketball with them, and just have a really good time. Building human connections is invaluable, and what better way to do so than through sports.”



BEHIND THE SCENES OF A HAMILTON SNOW DAY DECISION

It's no secret that a decision to call a snow day isn't always an easy one. Throughout the winter, all across the state of Michigan, school administrators have the difficult choice of keeping students, staff, and busses off the roads, or sending them to school. At Hamilton Community Schools, it's a decision that superintendent Dr. Bradford Lusk doesn't take lightly.



“The past several weeks have been tough as far as snow day decisions go,” said Dr. Lusk. “Do we look at forecasts and the weather? Yes, but the key thing for us is getting boots on the ground in our district, actually driving our roads and experiencing the conditions ourselves.”

In order to get boots on the ground, it's to have a structure and consistent plan in place, which Hamilton Community Schools does. Every morning when roads and weather could be treacherous, Dr. Lusk and transportation supervisor, Kathy Dykema are out the door by 4:00 AM, driving as many district roads as they possibly can.

“I head out at around 4:00 AM and drive through Bentheim, down side roads, and work my way towards the lakeshore, all while being in constant communication with Dr. Lusk,” said Dykema. “As a bus driver, you keep your eyes out for many things, including icy conditions, drifts over the road, and the condition of the backroads, we know what busses can and can't make it through.”

Dykema does this all while Lusk begins driving the north side of the district to Sandyview Elementary, down M-40, and around Hamilton Elementary, Middle School, and High School. Throughout his drive and communication with Dykema, Dr. Lusk is also communicating with other local superintendents to see what they're experiencing.

“We communicate with local superintendents, absolutely,” said Lusk. “We text between Allegan and Ottawa County administrators to make sure we're being consistent but at the same time, we keep our district as the main focus throughout those conversations.”

Regardless of if there is or isn't school, Lusk makes a decision by roughly 5:15 AM. If school is closed, the communication begins with phone calls, emails, news outlet notifications, Facebook and Instagram posts, digital signage, and a website notification. If school is open, that's when the transportation department gets to work.

“The first drivers into the office in the morning take a handful of keys and start as many busses as they can so that they're warm and fired up,” Dykema added. “We all help clean busses, making sure snow is cleaned off, everything is working properly, and leaving five to ten minutes early for our routes if we need to. Drivers all pick each other up and make sure the students and busses get to where they need to go, our team is amazing.”

Not only is the decision about student safety on school busses, but also the 16 and 17-year-old students who are first-time drivers trying to get themselves to-and-from school safely. Another consideration is the six snow days per year allotted by the State of Michigan without having to make up days at the end of the school year. While the state could grant three days of forgiveness if districts go over the six, it's another item to take into consideration without ever jeopardizing student, staff, and family safety. Dr. Lusk knows that parents and community members can get frustrated one way or another about a snow day, and he understands why.

“If we can get to school safely, that's in the best interest of everybody to have consistency and learning occur,” Lusk added. “I understand I will never make everybody happy, the best I can hope for is that I can explain my thought process to parents and community members can at least understand where I come from. They may disagree, but I will always give my rationale behind it.”

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Apply Today using the QR Code or at HamiltonSchools.us



BOARD OF EDUCATION APPRECIATION!

Our Hamilton Community Schools Board of Education works tirelessly to serve our students, staff, district, and community. Thank you to our current board members for all that you do for HCS!

Craig VanBeek - President
Morgan Maul - Vice President
Carl Marshall - Trustee
Loren Joostberns - Secretary
Deb Brower - Trustee
Lisa Theodore - Trustee
Ross Miedema - Trustee



SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BOARD OF EDUCATION



MR. KRAMER THE ELF GREETS STUDENTS AHEAD OF HOLIDAY BREAK

Students at Hamilton Elementary are greeted with a big surprise before every Holiday Break! Principal Dean Kramer dresses as one of Santa's elves and gets on the roof of the building to greet the students as they walk in to start their day. It's a great way to spread Holiday cheer! Way to go, Mr. Kramer!



DEB JAGER CONTINUES TO SHINE BRIGHT IN BENTHEIM ELEMENTARY FOOD SERVICE DEPARTMENT

Since 2000, Deb Jager has been an important piece to the Hamilton Community Schools food service department. For a number of years, Jager drove the food trucks around to district buildings to deliver food.

However, in 2016, Jager found a home at Bentheim Elementary where three of her children attended. Since then, she has been a smiling face and positive presence for all students, addressing them each by name and asking about their day or any happenings.

"I started when my kids were in school, I really enjoy this job and working here at Bentheim," Jager smiled.

Jager says she thoroughly enjoys working with her coworkers Lisa Brown and Missy Ulberg every day in the kitchen and cafeteria.



“I've stayed in the department for so long because I like who I work with, everyone is so nice and caring and we have a great time,” she added.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH DEB'S VIDEO SPOTLIGHT!



PAVING THE WAY: FOUR FEMALE STUDENTS SHOW TOUGHNESS ON HMS WRESTLING TEAM

Hamilton is known for a few different things: a tight-knit community, people who care for one another, work ethic, and of course, wrestling. Phil Koops has seen all of those things as a proud graduate of Hamilton High School. In fact, he has been coaching middle school wrestling for 15 years now, many of those coming at his alma mater.

Koops says over the years, he has seen a few female students show interest in wrestling and come out for meetings. However, when it became time to hit the mat and take part in practices with the boys, they had a hard time following through. That is, until last season when Lilly Jacobs and Abbi Verhoeven joined the team and were ready to put in the work.



“ I spent a lot of time reaching out to parents and discussing with them some of the physical and social concerns with having their daughter participate,” Koops explained. “What made it easier was that Lilly and Abbi could wrestle each other in practice, they’re both athletic, they’re both tough.”

What Abbi and Lilly potentially didn’t realize was the example they were setting with their work ethic, dedication, and perseverance. This year, the number of girls on the middle school wrestling team has doubled with the addition of fellow seventh graders Roxy DeVries and Mykayla Provance.

In the first meet of the season at the Gobles Girls Wrestling Tournament, the Hawkeyes wrestled hard and showed their potential and toughness. DeVries wrestled three incredible matches and had a single-leg takedown that nearly resulted in a pin while Provance took second place in her bracket after just two practices under her belt.

“ Coaching female wrestlers is a great experience,” said coach and middle school teacher, Ben Engelsman. “It’s great to see girls finally wrestling and it’s becoming easier to recruit fellow girls when they know they will have other females to practice and compete with.”



April 27, 2024 | 10:30 AM

HAWKEYE HOMETOWN

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



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. 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.



WATCH: HHS HONORS CHOIR SINGS 'LEAN ON ME' WITH BLUE STAR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS!



The Hamilton High School Honors Choir joined Blue Star Elementary School on Friday, December 3 for their assembly about compassion. To finish the assembly, the students sang 'Lean on Me' by Bill Withers together to show what it means to be a friend to one another. This video has over 31,000 views on Facebook and over 220 shares!



BLUE STAR 'WINTER GEAR OLYMPICS' CREATES FUN COMPETITION GETTING READY FOR RECESS

The winter months can always provide a challenge for young elementary school students preparing for recess. From changing from shoes to boots, getting into coats and snowpants, and keeping the hallways clean and clear, this process can require a lot of patience.

That's when Blue Star 3rd grade teacher Lisa Marcus struck an idea. A genius way to get students to hustle a bit while getting their winter gear on... the answer was 'Winter Gear Olympics.'

After weeks of preparation, each classroom held a competition and the fastest student went on to the main whole-school competition, with one student ready to go in just 22 seconds! The winners of the prestigious trophies were Brealyn Weaver and Wyatt Jacobs!



SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE WINTER GEAR OLYMPICS VIDEO!

“Blue Star hopes to teach students life skills by creating an atmosphere of fun, laughter, and cherished memories just like this,” said Mrs. Huckaby.



HHS CHOIR'S "HALLELUJAH CHORUS"

The annual tradition of the Hamilton High School choir lives on as they welcomed community members, HCS staff, their family members, and choir alumni up to the stage to sing Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" together during their Christmas Coffee Concert on December 14!

“Everybody sounded great, it was awesome to have three generations singing together and expand our choir family with some new faces as well,” said vocal music teacher, Holly Israels. What a touching moment! Well done, Hawkeyes!



“THINGS TO KNOW FROM SRO JOE”



Understanding Artificial Intelligence and Deepfakes: Keeping Our Kids Safe Online

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, a new challenge has emerged that is important for us to address as a school community: the rise of artificial intelligence-generated deepfakes. Deepfakes are videos or photos that have been altered using technology to make people appear to say or do things they never did. Creating deepfakes doesn't require as much technology as most people would think, presenting a growing challenge in distinguishing between what is real and what is not. As your partners in education and child development, we want to equip you with knowledge and tools to help you protect your children from this rapidly growing threat.

Awareness and Vigilance: It's important to understand what deepfakes are and the potential risks they pose to help you spot them and keep your family safer online. Deepfakes can be used to create false representations of individuals, including students, potentially leading to misinformation and harm. Sometimes, people use them to create fake news or bully others by making it look like they're doing or saying things that aren't true or real.

Talk and Share: One of the best things you can do is talk with your kids about what they see on the internet. Ask them about the videos and photos they come across and if they think they are real or not. It's not just about telling them what's right or wrong; it's about helping them think and decide for themselves.

Useful Tips and Help: We have some great tips and tools for you and your kids on the 'Things to Know from SRO Joe' web page on our district website: HamiltonSchools.us and at OASSN.org. These include guidance on how to identify deepfakes, tips for safer internet usage, and where to report suspicious content. These resources are designed to empower you and your children to navigate the digital landscape with confidence and caution.

We understand that this is a complex and potentially concerning issue. By working together and engaging in conversations, we can create a safer and more positive digital environment for our students and families.

Deputy Joe Knapp | Hamilton Community Schools SRO | Allegan County Sheriff's Department

HCS NON-HOMESTEAD MILLAGE ON MAY 7 BALLOT

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.



The non-homestead millage vote is a pivotal decision that can shape the future of Hamilton. While the term "non-homestead" might sound complex, it essentially refers to properties that are not primary residences, such as businesses, industrial facilities, and second homes. Unlike homestead properties, which have a capped tax rate, non-homestead properties are subject to the full millage rate.

This vote holds paramount importance as it directly influences the funding of essential services and amenities that contribute to the overall prosperity of our school district. This vote is for a renewal of the current millage, which means that it is not an increase, but rather a continuation of the millage. Approving the non-homestead millage is not just about taxation but also about ensuring the continued excellence and growth of Hamilton.

Our schools, the bedrock of our community, heavily rely on this millage to maintain high standards in education. A favorable vote will secure necessary funding for teachers, educational programs, and facilities, ensuring that our children receive the best possible education to thrive in an ever-changing world.

In conclusion, the non-homestead millage vote on May 7, 2024, is an opportunity for us to sustain the same level of financial investing in the future of Hamilton. By supporting this measure, we are voting to continue the safety and prosperity of our community. Let us come together as a community and make a choice that reflects our commitment to building a brighter and stronger future for Hamilton.

EXCITING WORK BASED LEARNING HAPPENINGS IN HAMILTON!

By: Ashley Meyer, Work Based Learning Coordinator

5th graders provide design ideas through Construction projects

Hamilton 5th graders used the design thinking process and worked with GMB to redesign the playground spaces at the Hamilton elementary buildings in order to provide ideas to make them safe and fun. This work not only helped to improve playgrounds throughout the district, but also began their journey in career exploration. In 5th grade, students are focused on the construction career pathway.

On December 4th, over 80 construction professionals were a part of Hamilton 5th grade DIG IN! Day. Professionals worked as mentors and engaged with our students in hands-on activities in the areas of interiors, electric, marketing, construction management and administration, carpentry, safety, plumbing, estimating, HVAC, and architecture. Industry professionals that created hands-on experiences for our students came from Ritsema Associates, GMB Architecture and Engineering, Buist Electric, Town and Country Group, DHE Plumbing and Mechanical, Owen-Ames-Kimball, EV Construction, and Godwin Plumbing.

In addition to DIG IN! Day, 5th graders worked with professionals to get feedback on their playground ideas and presentation skills and pitched their ideas to members of the Hamilton School Board/Facilities committee and the GMB team working on the Hamilton playgrounds.



6th graders Kick off Business PBL Projects

6th graders at Hamilton Middle School are focused on the career pathway of business. In addition to partnering with the Grand Rapids Griffins and learning about front office operations in sports and marketing and attending a hockey game, students began PBL projects with a local business in January.

Each homeroom is partnered at one of seven local businesses who have given the students a problem or driving question to solve. Throughout the next couple of months, students will visit their business three different times to tour and learn more about the company, interview a panel of professionals to ask questions related to their driving question, and get feedback on their solutions. Finally, on March 18, students will present their ideas to each business at the “Business Solutions Showcase” and determine winning ideas that each business will consider as it relates to the driving question given. Thank you to Cento Anni, Evoqua Water Technologies/Xylem, Gentex, K&R Truck Sales, Holland Energy Park, JR Automation, and West Michigan Regional Airport for their partnership with our 6th grade students!

7th graders focused on Manufacturing

7th grade students at Hamilton Middle School visited 3 different manufacturing facilities in October followed closely by a Manufacturing Skilled Trades experience. Manufacturing companies taught students about various aspects and careers in manufacturing including: automation and robotics, welding and rollform, tool and die, quality and assembly, die cast machining, CAD and engineering, and injection molding. In the spring, students will visit 3 more different manufacturing companies to see these careers in action. We are thankful for the many companies that have been a part of our manufacturing experiences this year: Haworth, SHAPE Corp, Plascore, Royal Technologies, Buhler, Mission Design and Automation, Transmatic, GHSP, Tiara Yachts, Nelson Steel, Koops, Fogg Filler, and Metal Flow.

8th grade students preparing for Ag Day

On February 26, 8th grade students will be visiting the Critter Barn to learn about various aspects of animal care, genetics, plant propagation, beekeeping and honey production, and more. In addition, they will meet with local agriscience professionals to learn more about how food gets from the farm to your table, agriculture careers, and the importance of agriculture in our community and economy. Local partners include Hoeve Farms, Hogquest Farms, Heasley Seeds, Byron Center Meats, Raterink Farms, Sunrise Acres Eggs, Brink Transportation, Endeavor, Morren Brothers Ag Services, and Pickle Street Veterinary Services. We are so excited for students to have this opportunity and learn more about an industry so important to Hamilton!

9th and 10th grade students go on Job Shadows!

On February 1st, all Hamilton 9th and 10th grade students went on a job shadowing experience at a location of their choice. For any student that didn't have a job shadow arranged, they met at Hamilton High School for workplace tours that included: Code Blue, Holland Equipment Services/A&B Farms, DISHER, Allegan County Dispatch, Allegan County Jail, and Perrigo. All of these experiences are wrapped into career exploration as students continue to use these experiences to prepare for their future post secondary plans.

HMS & BLUE STAR STUDENTS AND STAFF SHOW SUPPORT FOR THE LIONS DURING 'HONOLULU BLUE & SILVER DAY'

The buzz about the Detroit Lions incredible playoff run certainly seeped into the classrooms and hallways all across our district throughout the month of January. Every week after a playoff game, the students and staff were decked out in their Detroit Lions gear and started the day talking about the game.

On January 24, ahead of the NFC Championship game against the San Francisco 49ers, Hamilton Middle School and Blue Star Elementary held a 'Detroit Lions Honolulu Blue & Silver Day', allowing their students and staff to show their support one more time before the big game! WZZM News even came out to do a story on the fun at HMS!

With a snow day before this particular day and no school on the following Thursday and Friday, the idea was all about increasing student engagement and excitement.

"Having structure and routine for the kids can be really difficult, especially after several snow days," said HMS Dean of Students, Ken Lentz. "We thought that with this being the last day of school this week, one of the ways we can increase attendance and enthusiasm in this building is to bring the Detroit Lions to the forefront today and letting the students wear their uniforms, swag, hats, and just be middle schoolers!"

Some classes even took it a step further. Middle school teachers Brooke Statema and Jodi Hansen allowed each student in their classes to write down a score prediction for the NFC Championship on their dry erase boards.



“When I first heard that we were wearing Lions gear, my dad told me and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, I am so excited,'" said Hamilton sixth grade student, Anabell Williams. "The first thing I did this morning was run into my closet and yell 'It's Lions Day!'"



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SANDYVIEW ELEMENTARY TO BE REPURPOSED IN 2024-25

By: Dr. Bradford Lusk

As many of you know, in the Fall of 2023, Hamilton Community Schools has decided to repurpose Sandyview Elementary (SV) into the Sandyview Learning Center due to the financial costs associated with the lower number of students attending SV. The repurposing of SV includes maintaining Preschool classes at SV, hosting the Virtual/Homeschool program, and redistricting the projected 38 students into the other elementary schools in Hamilton.

After much consideration, research, and conversations with staff and community members, the school district decided that the best course of action is for the entire Sandyview Elementary area to be redistricted to Bentheim Elementary. Through plotting the last four years of SV student address locations on a map, researching locations of possible growth in population between Bentheim and Blue Star, along with transportation drive times to each location, the decision has been made for the Sandyview area to be redistricted to Bentheim. SV parents do have the opportunity to have their student(s) attend a different elementary school as long as they communicate their preference to Dr. Lusk via email: blusk@hamiltonschools.us

While I know the decision to repurpose Sandyview brought with it mixed reactions and emotions, please know that your patience and understanding during this time period has been truly appreciated. During the numerous conversations with parents of impacted students and parents of former Sandyview students, your understanding and handling of the situation has been truly appreciated and commendable. Thank you.



HAMILTON ELEMENTARY RECEIVES RARE STATE RECOGNITION FOR I-READY STRETCH GROWTH



Hamilton Community Schools utilizes i-Ready for Common Core State Standards-based diagnostic and instructional tools for math and reading to help meet every student's needs. In the 2022-23 school year, Hamilton Elementary was recognized as one of only two schools in the entire state of Michigan (with more than 200 students) to have 55-percent or more of their students reach their stretch growth goal! This means that not only are Hamilton Elementary students meeting their academic goals set for them, they're going above and beyond.

On Wednesday, January 24, Hamilton Elementary students were surprised at lunch with a celebration for their hard work! Vikki Halstead of Curriculum Associates along with her mascot friend, Plory made a visit to explain to the students and staff exactly what they accomplished.

"When we look at student learning, we assess our students three times per year and as we look at growth throughout the year," Halstead explained. "Each student has a typical growth goal where the student should achieve a certain amount of growth throughout the school year, but then we also have a stretch growth goal above that."

Hamilton Elementary principal Dean Kramer was stunned to find out the news that they are one of two schools in the entire state to achieve the feat, but he says the work ethic of his staff is second to none.

"We're super proud of our students for all of their hard work and we also need to give a giant thank you to all of our educators who work so hard to make sure our kids are learning and putting forth their best efforts," Kramer added. "Keep up the great work!"

“To be one of the top two i-Ready Stretch Growth Schools in Michigan is not something that just happens,” said HCS Director of Teaching & Learning, Mat Rehkopf. “The teachers, staff, and students at Hamilton Elementary work incredibly hard and have a 'never say quit' attitude. When things are tough, they do not look around to see who is coming to help them, they dig in and figure out how to get it done.”

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR 2024-25

It's time to get ready to join the Hawkeye Family! If you or someone you know has a soon-to-be Preschool, Young Five, or Kindergarten student, log onto HamiltonSchools.us for more information on upcoming dates and details!

Preschool: Join the 2024-25 Hawkeye Preschool Contact List on our website!
Young 5s/Kindergarten: Information Nights!

Bentheim Elementary: Monday, February 19, 2024 6:00 - 7:00 PM
Hamilton Elementary: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 6:00 - 7:00 PM
Blue Star Elementary: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 6:00 - 7:00 PM
Young 5s/Kindergarten Screening Days:
Hamilton Elementary: Friday, April 19, 2024
Bentheim Elementary: Wednesday, April 24, 2024
Blue Star Elementary: Thursday, April 25, 2024



**Please note: The former Sandyview Elementary boundary is now part of Bentheim Elementary beginning in 2024-25.



TRANSCRIPT



HAMILTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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****This is a district-wide mailer sent to all residents of the Hamilton Community Schools district. If you live outside of our district and feel you received this mailer by mistake, please email your name and address to Hamilton District Communications & Marketing Coordinator, Zach Harig: zharig@hamiltonschools.us**

A NEW STRATEGIC VISION ON THE DOCKET FOR HCS



Exciting developments are underway in Hamilton Community Schools as we embark on a transformative journey with developing a new strategic plan designed to elevate the educational experience for our students. This initiative is a testament to our commitment to continuous improvement and ensuring that our schools remain at the forefront of excellence.



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO
TAKE THE STRATEGIC
VISION SURVEY!**

At the heart of this strategic plan development is community involvement. We believe that everyone's input is invaluable and that's why we launched an online community survey to gather diverse perspectives on the key priorities for our school district. Your responses will play a crucial role in shaping the roadmap for the future of education in Hamilton. If you haven't already, please take a few moments to share your thoughts and ideas through the survey link in this article and on our district website.

In addition to the community survey, we have engaged with our dedicated staff through interviews to gather insights from those who work tirelessly to nurture and educate our students. These interviews have provided invaluable perspectives, ensuring that the strategic plan reflects the collective wisdom of our entire school community.

As part of our commitment to transparency and inclusivity, we are thrilled to invite all community members to attend a drop-in meeting at the Hawk's Nest Restaurant on March 12 from 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm. This event is a unique opportunity for you to interact directly with the leader of our Strategic Plan initiative to offer input and gain a deeper understanding of the process to create the plan. Your participation in this meeting will contribute to a shared vision for the future of our school district.

In the spirit of collaboration, please take the time to complete the online survey (scan the QR code above) or attend the event at Hawk's Nest Restaurant on March 12th to share your thoughts. Your input plays a part in creating a brighter future for Hamilton Community Schools. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Dr. Lusk: blusk@hamiltonschools.us