

HARPER CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOLS *Newsletter*

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EDUCATE • EMPOWER • EQUIP
Students for Life

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Rebecca Schneider
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Message from the Superintendent



As we turn the calendar from October to November, let's take a moment to look back on strategies we've been using to support student success. Like the seasons and daylight savings time, the change is perfect for exploring what is working and transform what is not. Here are a few ideas for us to ponder.

Assume Positive Intent - Assuming positive intent is choosing to believe people are well-meaning and want to do their best. Situations may arise that upset us but let us put emotions aside and ask ourselves if we know the whole circumstance – is what we know 100 percent true. Try using affective statements, "I" statements that help others understand the impact their words or actions have on us.

Stay Informed - We have built a network to keep you connected. Visit our website and webpages, Facebook pages or follow us on Twitter. Teachers use various social platforms, including Bloomz and Remind, to keep you up to date on classroom happenings. Read school newsletters and attend conferences.

Build Relationships - A faithful partnership with teachers and schools is one of the greatest things parents can do to assure student success. It's a powerful, symbiotic partnership – schools rely on parents to send their children prepared to learn and parents rely on schools to educate, empower and equip them.

Foster Attendance - Attendance matters. Students who miss more than ten days in one school year have a higher likelihood of not reading proficiently by the third grade and risk being held back - or not graduating from high school. Every day counts. A missed day is a missed opportunity.

Be an Active Participant in Your Child's Education - Talk with your child about their school day - what they learned, and if they have homework. Help them find resources to answer questions. Check for legibility, quality work, complete sentences, and ask about understanding. Remember, it is always better for students to complete assignments or projects. True learning often begins with making mistakes and learning from those mistakes.

Read Every Day - Read every day. Read with your children. Listen to them read. Share good books that spark curiosity and wonder. Take them on new adventures and travel to new places without leaving your house. Just read. There is no greater gift you can give your child than access to good books.

Employing these strategies will strengthen our partnership as we Educate – Empower – Equip Students for Life.

Rob Ridgeway,
Superintendent

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STUDENTS FOR LIFE

Calming Corners and Sensory Toolboxes

By Mrs. Nneka Daniels, Principal, Beadle Lake Elementary



Helping students become empowered and learn how to self-regulate is a priority at Beadle Lake Elementary. Calming corners have been incorporated into our classrooms as a school-wide support for all learners. These beneficial spaces give students an opportunity to de-escalate and reset.

A calming corner is a small, designated spot in each classroom where students can go when they have either started to shut down or are having trouble focusing because of hyperactivity and learning has become difficult. It is a goal for teachers to try to give students this safe place while keeping them in the classroom. These areas can have many names: Zen Zone, Peace Place, Calming Corner, or Peace Corner. In these identified spots, our MTSS teacher and School Social Worker have created special toolboxes for all students to utilize. They contain things like liquid and sand timers, squishy sensory balls, liquid sensory bottles, glitter balls, emotional feelings sheets with mirrors for students to identify emotions, breathing activities and reflection recording sheets. These spaces give students a private area to use these tools to calm themselves so that they can rejoin their classmates. The sensory boxes may also contain beanbags, pillows, or a tapestry or "roof" to add a cover over the area to give students comfort and privacy. Our goal is to transform the culture of the classroom. These calming areas are not consequence-based, but instead used as an option for all students, and provide an opportunity for students to find the best strategies to regulate their emotions.

Our Spanish teacher, Mrs. Kenney, has witnessed many positive reactions from students and parents. After talking with families during conferences who heard a lot from their children about the Peace Corners at school, she was pleased to learn that some students have actually implemented a "Peace Corner" at their own homes as well!

Kindergarten student David says, "When I squish the green ball, I feel happy. I see all the colors mixing and it feels cool."

Fourth grader Lorenzo shared, "My favorite tool is the magnet liquid because it helps me feel better when I am mad. It makes me feel calm."

MTSS Teacher Mrs. Ledbetter stated, "The students have been really receptive to using the calming corners and all of the tools in the kits. Part of Restorative Practices is processing through difficulties kiddos have in their day, so that they can be part of the solution. The use of calming corners has made the process much easier because once kids have had the chance to regulate, they are in the space to be able to talk about their feelings and choices. The other piece I love with the "time-in" practice is that kids aren't sent out of the room. Instead, it reassures them that they are always an important part of the classroom. They know that having big feelings are ok and that there are safe ways to work through them in the classroom! Brain science has shown that behavior is a clue and a form of communication. So once students are able to calm down and think rationally, we can begin being proactive conversations together and make a plan with the child to help them be successful academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally."



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HARPER CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOLS – “The Cornerstone of the Community”



The Power of the Read Aloud

By Mr. Brent Swan, Wattles Park Elementary Principal

At Wattles Park Elementary students recite one of our mottos, "Reading is My Superpower". While much of our work is around learning to decode words and understand various genres of text, we also stress the importance of reading stories aloud to children. When children hear books read aloud, a different phenomenon occurs. Instead of using their mental energy to decode words, they can focus their thoughts and feelings into the story line. Students can find deeper understanding of complex texts when they hear the text read aloud. At Wattles Park Elementary, teachers read aloud to their students almost daily as a scheduled part of their language arts block. They also introduce students to the ever-growing number of websites and apps that offer e-books that will read stories aloud.

At a recent parent-teacher conference, parents were introduced to a video by Rebecca Bellingham called "Why We Should All Be Reading Aloud to Children". This video illustrated the power that reading aloud to children has on their attitude towards literature. Reading aloud is great for children that are avid readers as well as for children that are less motivated to read. The power of the read aloud for parents is that it creates times and space for electronics to be set aside, and for deeper connections and conversations to occur between children and their parents about literature and what is going on in their lives.



Harper Creek Educational Foundation/ Beaver Boosters 2019 Golf Outing a Success

By Rachel Chapin Zapf

Despite a soggy start to Homecoming Weekend 2019, the Harper Creek Educational Foundation/Beaver Boosters Golf Outing was a success. Forty dedicated Harper Creek supporters braved the cold weather to golf on Saturday, October 12, 2019. Thanks to our golfers and sponsors, we were able to raise nearly \$6,000 to support the Harper Creek programs, scholarships and athletics. If you would like to be on next year's list to receive information about the Homecoming Food Truck Tailgate, class reunion coordination, or the golf outing, please contact Tina Kyger at Tina@ctimechanical.com or 269-209-3419.



Producing Great Thinkers Toolbox: Questions Parents/Guardians Can Ask

By Laura Williams, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

Our district is frequently thinking about ways to better engage parents/guardians and community members to develop life-long learners that will give back to society. If I could only pick one area for us to collectively work on, it would be to develop strategies that produce great reflective thinkers. When we consider the many benefits of developing young minds to tackle all of the problems they encounter, we might quickly agree that problem solvers are those who identify a situation needing change and they respond by thinking of many possibilities.

INSTEAD OF...	TRY....
I'm bad at this	What am I missing?
I give up	I'll try a different strategy
This is good enough	Is this my best work?
This is too hard	This may take some time
I got it wrong	I learn from mistakes
I'll never be that smart	I can train my brain
I don't get it	I don't get it <u>yet</u>

As a parent and as an educator I frequently have to pause to identify how can I better help our youth to strengthen their problem solving muscles. In our district we are in the middle of our curriculum review process. This requires us to identify priority standards about the content knowledge (want learners to know) and procedural knowledge (want learners to be able to do) for each content area. Once standards are clearly identified by teaching teams, they will use research based resources to craft engaging learning experiences that promote thinking. A common thread of learning experiences in the revised units will be inquiry based learning. Inquiry-based learning environment is stretching kids to think beyond their initial curiosity to think critically about the problem at hand and identify possible solutions or answers. This type of instruction can be seen as a culture shift in education.

We want to partner with you to collectively develop young minds simply by reframing how we engage students in thinking about their learning experiences. Below is a list of questions that you can ask to promote thinking and self reflection:

- 1) What will you do to challenge yourself today?
- 2) How might you be a part of a solution for this problem?
- 3) What did you do today that made you think hard?
- 4) What happened today that made you keep going?
- 5) What might you learn from this experience?
- 6) What mistake did you make that taught you something?
- 7) What did you try hard at today?
- 8) What strategy are you going to try now?
- 9) What are some things you have done to improve your work?
- 10) What are some problem solving strategies that you used today to solve a problem you encountered?



All of us can be the eyes and ears of the community and ensure that our children are safe. Everyone—students, staff, parents, and community members—is encouraged to report potentially harmful or criminal acts using OK2SAY.

- To submit a confidential tip:
- Call 855-565-2729
 - Text 652729 (OK2SAY)
 - Email ok2say@mi.gov

- Download the Mobile App search OK2SAY
- Visit the OK2SAY website at www.ok2say.com



Sonoma Elementary’s Sensory Space

By Mrs. Shalen King-Short, principal of Sonoma Elementary

“I really love being human. But some days I really wish I could be a fairy.”
~ Greta, age 5

Some days it is easy to forget that when we walk into the doors at Sonoma that we are walking into a space where students struggle to stay focused and on task, to learn and to grow. This year we have created different spaces where students can move in different ways. In Sonoma’s lobby we have a sensory space where students from Kindergarten to 4th grade, and even teachers, go to jump, balance, and move in different ways. The success of this space, prompted physical education teacher, Mrs. Valenzuela, to create a “Take10” space in each hallway of the building. These are countdown movement breaks that students and staff can use, rather than having students sit and think about their choices, or regulating their bodies. They can move and then take time to reflect on what they need to do to get back on track. Staff, students and families are enjoying the success of these spaces, and we look forward to improving and growing together through healthy movement!



HARPER CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOLS 2019-2020 DISTRICT CALENDAR

MS 7/8 Student of the Month Breakfast	Library	November 7, 2019.....	7:15 AM
Harper Holly Days Craft Show.....	Middle School	November 9, 2019.....	9:00 AM
WP Parent Teacher Community Meeting.....		November 11, 2019.....	5:30 PM
SO- Watchdog Kick Off event.....	Sonoma Gym.....	November 12, 2019.....	5:30 PM
WPE WOW Walk for Veterans Day.....	Wattles Park Elementary	November 13, 2019.....	11:20 AM
MS Mid-Term		November 15, 2019	
SO- PTA Meeting	Sonoma Library.....	November 19, 2019.....	6:00 PM
SO- Parents Night Out PTA event	Sonoma Gym.....	November 22, 2019.....	5:30 PM
HS - Blood Drive.....	High School Auditorium.....	November 26, 2019.....	8:00 AM
Half Day Students and Staff		November 27, 2019	
No School Students and Staff.....		November 28, 2019.....	9:34 AM
WP Holiday Project Breakfast	WPE	December 3, 2019.....	7:30 AM
SO- Musical at the High School.....	High School Auditorium.....	December 4, 2019.....	6:30 PM
MS Band Concert 6-8th grades.....	High School Auditorium.....	December 5, 2019.....	7:00 PM
HS - Boot 'Em to the Curb - Holiday Fundraiser.....	High School.....	December 6, 2019	
WP Parent Teacher Community (PTC) Meeting	Wattles Park Elementary	December 9, 2019.....	5:30 PM
HS - Winter Band Concert	High School Auditorium.....	December 9, 2019.....	7:00 PM
MS Choir Concert 5-8 grades.....	High School Auditorium.....	December 10, 2019.....	7:00 PM
MS 5/6 Student of the Month Breakfast	Library	December 11, 2019.....	7:15 AM
MS 7/8 Student of the Month Breakfast	Library	December 12, 2019.....	7:15 AM
HS - Winter Choir Concert	High School Auditorium.....	December 12, 2019.....	7:00 PM
SO- PTA Meeting	Sonoma Library.....	December 17, 2019.....	6:00 PM
MS 5th Grade Band Concert	High School Auditorium.....	December 17, 2019	7:00 PM
WP WOW Walk	Wattles Park Elem. Track	December 18, 2019	11:20 AM
Half Day Students.....		December 20, 2019	
Winter Break Begins		December 23, 2019	
Winter Break Ends - School Resumes		January 6, 2020	
MS Qtr 3 / Semester 2 Begins	MS.....	January 6, 2020	
HS Conferences.....		January 11, 2020.....	4:00-8:00 PM
HS Conferences.....		January 13, 2020.....	4:00-8:00 PM
WP PTC Meeting	Wattles Park Elementary	January 13, 2020.....	5:30 PM
MS 5/6 Student of the Month Breakfast	Library	January 15, 2020.....	7:15 AM
MS 7/8 Student of the Month Breakfast	Library	January 16, 2020.....	7:15 AM
No School Students		January 20, 2020	
WP Grandparent Ice Cream Social & Book Fair.....	Wattles Park Cafeteria	January 27, 2020.....	6:23 AM
WP Parent/Teacher Conferences K-4.....	Wattles Park Elementary	January 28, 2020.....	4:00 PM
WP Book Fair	Wattles Park Elementary	January 28, 2020.....	4:00 PM
WP Parent/Teacher Conferences K-4.....	Wattles Park Elementary	January 30, 2020.....	4:00 PM
WP Book Fair	Wattles Park Elementary	January 30, 2020.....	4:00 PM
HS - Senior Pictures Due Yearbook/Video		February 3, 2020	
MS 6th Grade Camp.....		February 3, 2020	
MS 7/8 Student of the Month Breakfast	Library	February 5, 2020.....	7:15 AM
MS Student of the Month Breakfast 5/6	Library	February 6, 2020.....	7:15 AM
MS Mid-Term	MS.....	February 7, 2020	
HS - Blood Drive	High School Auditorium.....	February 7, 2020.....	7:00 AM
WP PTC Meeting	Wattles Park Elementary	February 10, 2020.....	5:30 PM
HS - P/T Conferences.....		February 11, 2020.....	3:00 PM
HS - P/T Conferences.....		February 13, 2020.....	3:00 PM
WP Family Dance	Harper Creek High School.....	February 13, 2020.....	6:00 PM
No School for Students.....		February 14, 2020	
No School for Students.....		February 17, 2020	
HS - Band Concert	High School Auditorium.....	February 18, 2020.....	7:00 PM
BL Conferences		March 10, 2020.....	4:00-8:00 PM
BL Conferences		March 18, 2020	4:00-8:00 PM

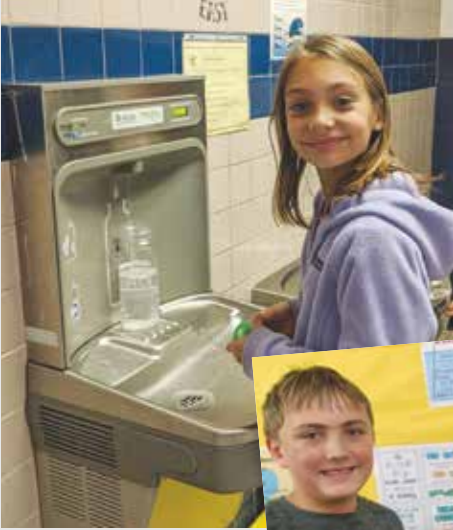
Please refer to our district calendar at www.harpercreek.net for more events and information.

Healthy Habits Are the Key to Success at Harper Creek Middle School

By Mrs. Kim Thayer, Middle School Principal

HCMS Staff works together with families to practice two kinds of good habits to be successful in school:
Physical and Social/Emotional

Physical Habits	
At Home	At School
Get Enough Sleep <ul style="list-style-type: none">Children ages 10-14 need 8-11 hours of sleepStick to a sleep schedule, even on the weekendsEstablish a relaxing bedtime routineTurn off electronics at least an hour before bedtimeStore electronics in a different room from where your child sleeps	Healthy Eating <ul style="list-style-type: none">Breakfast and Lunch offered dailyChoose from the healthy choices in the cafeteriaWater bottle filling stations to encourage hydrationWater bottles provided to all studentsAfter school snacks available for clubsHealthy snacks available when needed
Establish Homework and Organization Habits <ul style="list-style-type: none">Have a designated place at home to work on assignments or to readEstablish a reading routine – every dayPack backpack at night so it is ready to go in the morning	Physical Education <ul style="list-style-type: none">Integrating Michigan Model for HealthRequired in 5th GradeAvailable as an elective 6th-8th gradesMHSAA Sport Program 7th & 8th grades
Social/Emotional Habits	
At Home	At School
Help Reduce Stress <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discuss real life scenarios and help develop “I” messages (I feel frustrated/sad when...)Develop realistic goals with your childUse guided meditation videosEstablish clear expectations<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Write down schedules-Create routinesAllow your child to solve their own problems<ul style="list-style-type: none">-listen to your child and validate their feelings-let them brainstorm possible solutions-step in when necessaryletting children solve issues on their own gives them a feeling of control, builds self-esteem, and helps them learn to solve conflict on their own	Space for Emotions <ul style="list-style-type: none">Three calming rooms throughout the buildingStudent Support Specialists and CounselorsStaff trained in Restorative PracticesStaff trained in Trauma Informed Practices
Practice Self Control <ul style="list-style-type: none">Use “I” messages when talking to your childMake sure your child is cared for by people they trustModel good self-control for your childPractice impulse control by using reasonable wait time for things they wantModel de-escalation skills when there is dramaPlay board games (Jenga, Operation, Blurt, Twister, Go Fish-Swimming Toward Self Control, Simon Says)	Teach Self Control <ul style="list-style-type: none">Strategies from Michigan Model for Health5th Grade - ACT <p>Acknowledge how you feel</p> <p>Calm down so you can think</p> <p>Talk to the other person about your feelings using an “I” message (I feel, It hurts me when, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">6th Grade – COOL Down Strategies <p>Calm down</p> <p>Observe how you feel</p> <p>Observe what is happening</p> <p>Listen and talk to people that can help in some way</p>



Educate, Empower, and Equip – in the Kitchen: A Visit to Mrs. Allen's Culinary Arts Classroom

By Rebecca Schneider, Communications

High school teacher, Mrs. Suzanne Allen, has her hands full managing seven classroom kitchens for eight groups of students in her Culinary Arts class. The class is open to all high school students. Students learn about the entire process of creating a dish. Each student takes care to make sure their workspaces are clean and ready to use before getting started. Prior to cooking, they must submit their plan to Mrs. Allen for approval. When it is time to start preparing their dishes, the students are careful to use proper measuring techniques such as spooning in flour into a measuring cup and leveling carefully. Students work with a partner or in small groups in their tiny kitchen space. Mrs. Allen teaches them to clean as they go in order to manage the tight quarters.

A designated hostess sets tables and does laundry during class, creating a very homey atmosphere. A Keurig is available for the students to make a cup of cocoa to sip on as they work. Coffee is offered to visitors.

Students also get lessons in applying math skills in everyday life since recipes may have to be adjusted for the size of their group or measuring equipment available to them. Mrs. Allen walks them through the calculations needed for their recipes to work out. When things don't work out as planned, she is there to reassure them that it can happen to anyone and she shares examples of her own experiences.

As students' dishes finish, they sit down with their group to enjoy their creations family-style. Students' cleaned kitchens are inspected, leftovers are packed in donated to-go containers and plastic bags for the students to take home. "I love my job and have wonderful students who make every day great," boasts Mrs. Allen and it shows in her warm classroom climate she has created.



Strong Connectedness to School and Family are Key to Student Success – Now and Later!

By Dennis Anthony,
High School Principal

Maybe you have heard it before from others. Maybe you have even said it before. As high school educators at Harper Creek, we have often heard from concerned parents about their frustrations in trying to support their struggling students. While the answers may be unique to each individual student, recent research and some past practices can help us understand that connecting with schools and families on key values is key to short and long-term well-being.

A recent study suggests teens who felt understood by their parents and teachers not only are better off in school now, but may grow up to be healthier adults years later. Roughly 10 years after graduation, the study found that study participants with higher levels of school and family connectedness in adolescence had clearly lower rates of risk factors which contribute to poor health and overall poor well-being.

Study author Kathleen Ethier, director of the division of Adolescent and School Health at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, explains, "These findings suggest that helping strengthen connections to schools and family during adolescence can have a powerful impact on an individual's health, potentially contributing to better adult outcomes in terms of mental health, experience of violence, sexual risk behavior, and substance use - areas that are directly related to major health crises we now face as a nation."

Additional researchers explain many behaviors we have as adults began during our school years, and the chances of getting on the right track with health behaviors are likely to be higher when teens have solid relationships and modeling of good behaviors both at school and at home.

We well know the benefits of connectedness (e.g. participation) in school activities as having a clear relationship to student success in school. This research suggests that the norms established by, for example a sports team, are more solidified when families share those same values with their children.

"A family that also models close relationships, healthy conflict resolution and healthy lifestyles helps a teen navigate how to integrate these important principles into his/her own life," explains Mercedes Carnethon, vice chair of the department of preventive medicine at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. She adds, "Connectedness at school and in the family are interrelated and reinforce one another."

Some of the values and strategies Harper Creek High School encourages families to share are simple and proven to be successful: 1) Come to school expecting to learn – students must attend regularly and come to school knowing they are expected to learn. If they arrive expecting any other focus besides learning, there may be struggles; 2) Growth Mindset/Always do your best – students can only grow and benefit by giving their best effort each day; 3) Get restorative sleep - our brain and bodies need time to rest and recover. Unplug and get the recommended amount of deep-cycle sleep.

We know raising an adolescent may not always be easy, however, we also know when schools and families work together and share common values, students are more likely to succeed now - and in the future.



Harper Creek Educational Foundation
Give • Grow • Achieve
www.bccfoundation.org/fund/hccsef

The Harper Creek Educational Foundation's sole purpose is to generate and distribute resources to Harper Creek Community Schools for scholarships, enrichment programs, and other projects aimed at enhancing the quality of education. If you would like to donate to this philanthropic organization, learn more about its mission and goals, or join the movement by volunteering, call 269.441.6555.

It's Easy to Create a Legacy at Harper Creek

By Rachel Chapin Zapf

Do you love the Harper Creek Community and would like to see it flourish? The Harper Creek Educational Foundation (HCEF) can help you do just that. HCEF supports student success programs and scholarships. We fund approximately \$40,000 in college scholarships every year, and support HC student success programs like the Harper Creek Middle School Homework Club. This could not have been accomplished without community members' support throughout the years. Whether you would like to recognize a retirement, remember a loved one, or donate annually, HCEF can help you support the Harper Creek community through charitable giving. HCEF is an affiliate of the Battle Creek Community Foundation (BCCF). BCCF brings its 45 years of experience to help individuals support Harper Creek.

Did you know that you can reduce your taxes by making a gift from your IRA to charity? If you are age 70 ½ or older you can roll over up to \$100,000 from your IRA to charity free from federal income tax. An IRA charitable rollover gift also qualifies as your required minimum distribution (RMD), permitting you to lower your income and taxes for the year while supporting the Harper Creek community. You must act before December 31st for it to apply to this year's taxes. Please contact Rachel Chapin Zapf at rachel@bccfoundation.org or 269-962-2181 for more information about donating this holiday season or starting a fund today!

Harper Creek Community Schools

NOW HIRING

We are hiring passionate individuals who have a desire to work with children and seek a flexible schedule.

Open positions include:

- *Bus Drivers
- Substitute Classroom Assistants
- Substitute Lunch/Recess Supervisors
- Substitute Teachers



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*\$500 signing bonus

www.harpercreek.net or 269.441.6567 for more details