

HARPER CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOLS *Newsletter*



EDUCATE • EMPOWER • EQUIP
Students for Life

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- Kim Thayer, *Middle School*
- Nneka Daniels, *Beadle Lake Elementary*
- Shalen King-Short, *Sonoma Elementary*
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- Rebecca Schneider, *Communications*

SCHOOL DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION

7454 B Drive North
Battle Creek, MI 49014
Telephone: 269.441.6550
Fax: 269.962.6034
Website: www.harpercreek.net
Facebook: Harper Creek Schools
Twitter: Harper Creek Schools

NEWSLETTER CONTACT INFORMATION

Rebecca Schneider
schneiderr@harpercreek.net

In This Issue...

Message from Superintendent, Rob Ridgeway.....1

Bring on the Snow – WPE1

Building Healthy Communities through Fitness and Learning1

Beadle Lake Elementary2

Countdown to Kindergarten.....2

Harper Creek Board of Education2

Team H, Team C, Virtual Team3

When Educating the Whole Child: Love is Essential.....3

Reading: A Lifelong Journey4

Calendar of Events4

Important Announcement4

Harper Creek Educational Foundation...4

Message from Superintendent Rob Ridgeway



We are leaders. We lead with safety, we lead with integrity. From the beginning we've partnered with parents and staff putting in the hard work and securing resources to bring our kindergarten through fourth-grade students to school daily, and our fifth through twelfth-grade students to school in a hybrid format, as well as offer a 100% virtual option for students and families not comfortable attending school face-to-face, doing what is best for students and families. Nonetheless we cannot rest on our laurels, we must continue to assess and adapt where and when necessary.

For this reason, the time has come for deep conversations regarding when and how to transition our fifth through twelfth-grade students from hybrid learning to in-person learning. I have not been shy in stating that our number one goal is to get students back to in-person learning more days, and your responses and feedback to our monthly surveys corroborate and reflect this desire. However, our goals and desires come with complications and barriers to consider.

The major barrier in bringing fifth through twelfth-grade students back to school daily is distancing. We simply lack the physical space to bring middle and high school students back to school more days while guaranteeing six-foot distancing. While we must do what is right for students, we also must be mindful of the comfort level of our community – students and families, teachers and staff.

As a school district and community, are we comfortable with bringing students back to the classrooms if social distancing is done to the greatest extent possible with a minimum of three feet? This is the subject of a brief but important survey we sent out to stakeholders last week. Ultimately, the decision to change our learning plan and consider a timeline of return rests with our Board of Education.

In the event the Board of Education approves a plan to bring students back to school more days, a return to the buildings would not happen overnight. Plans for daily operations, including transportation, class schedules, lunch procedures, cleaning protocols, and more would need to be vetted. In addition, staff members will need to have the opportunity to receive their two-dose Covid-19 vaccinations through the Calhoun County Department of Health – a five to six-week process.

Let us lead with optimism and hope as we delve into the deep conversations of returning all of our students back to in-person instruction - our children are counting on all of us to solve this complex situation. I applaud and commend the efforts of our teachers, staff, parents, and community members for Educating, Empowering, and Equipping our students during a pandemic. It has truly been a community effort and remarkable partnership.

Bring on the Snow! ~ Wattles Park Elementary

Paul Cotts, the Physical Education teacher at Wattles Park Elementary, would like to recognize the amazing people that have provided financial support for an exciting new program. Students at WPE are going to have the opportunity to participate in cross country skiing for years to come, thanks in part to generous donations from the following people and organizations:

- Wattles Park PTC
- Harper Creek Optimist Club
- Brent Walker and Family---Pennfield Shell Station

A special note of appreciation to WPE principal, Mr. Brent Swan, for his help and support in making this project possible!

Thank you all! Bring on the snow...the kids are ready to ski!



Building Healthy Communities through Fitness and Learning

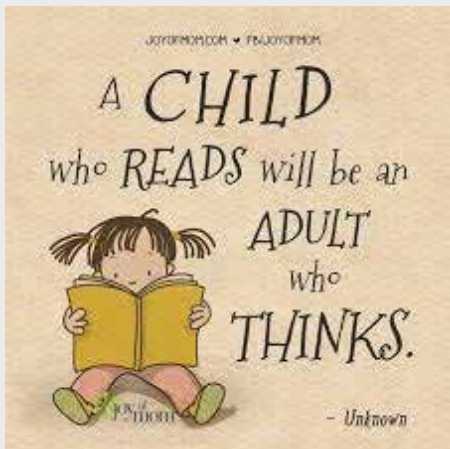
By Shalen King-Short,
Principal, Sonoma Elementary

Sonoma staff worked hard to complete and receive the Building Healthy Communities Grant through Blue Cross Blue Shield. This is a school-based initiative that is designed to prevent childhood obesity and create healthy school environments. We are excited to build upon our understanding of teaching and meeting the needs of the whole child. The BHC grant will also allow Sonoma Elementary to have time and the financial resources to implement well-being and to educate staff on social and emotional health and learning.

The American Heart Association's Kids Heart Challenge begins in February. Sonoma staff and students are excited to support movement, heart healthy learning on various topics, and to promote a healthy community and culture at Sonoma.

Sonoma Elementary is grateful for these opportunities to support our students in their health and well-being, and hope these programs encourage them to create lifelong healthy habits.





Reading Takes us Places

By Nneka Daniels, Principal, Beadle Lake Elementary

Beadle Lake’s motto is “Reading Take Us Places.” It even takes us places in our imagination when we can’t physically go there. This past year has been full of restrictions, full of ups and downs. We have had to wear masks and physically distance ourselves from others. Sometimes out of struggle...comes good things. One of those things is that all generations of adults are reading more. Of course, this makes my heart smile because I truly believe that many of the books being read by adults were those being read to their children. Reading to your child is one of the most important things that you can do as a parent to support critical thinking and language development. Here are few facts that will help you support your child’s reading development. Here are a few facts...

Did you know?

- Reading aloud to young children is not only one of the best activities to stimulate language and cognitive skills; it also builds motivation, curiosity, and memory. Bardige, B. Talk to Me, Baby!(2009), Paul H Brookes Pub Co.
- The most important aspect of parent talk is its amount. Parents who just talk as they go about their daily activities expose their children to 1000-2000 words every hour. Hart and Risley (1999) The social world of children learning to talk.
- Early literacy encompasses all of a child’s experiences with conversation, stories (oral and written), books, and print. Rebecca Parlakian, Before the ABCs: Promoting School Readiness in Infants and Toddlers. Washington, DC: Zero to Three, 2003.
- The single most significant factor influencing a child’s early educational success is an introduction to books and being read to at home prior to beginning school. National Commission on Reading, 1985
- The only behavior measure that correlates significantly with reading scores is the number of books in the home. The Literacy Crisis: False Claims, Real Solutions, 1998

Remember to Read, Read, Read. “Read wide and read abundantly.” BEADLE LAKE...let’s build our reading brains.



Countdown to Kindergarten

Countdown to Kindergarten is a one-hour monthly evening program for children who will be attending kindergarten in the fall of 2021 and their parents or guardians. **Children must be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2021** in order to attend kindergarten.

- Dates:
- Wednesday, March 175:00 – 6:00 PM
 - Tuesday, April 206:00 – 7:00 PM
 - Thursday, May 206:00 – 7:00 PM

- Please register by calling:
- Beadle Lake Elementary269-441-3250
 - Sonoma Elementary.....269-441-7800
 - Wattles Park Elementary.....269-441-5850



Stop the Silence. Help End the Violence.

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

Harper Creek Community Schools

The Harper Creek Community Schools Board of Education at the annual organizational meeting held on January 11, 2021 elected the following board officers for January – December 2021:

- Beau Bess President
- Lisa Hubbard Vice President
- Tim Martin Secretary
- Don Myers..... Treasurer



- Dr. Dale Borders Trustee
- Barry Smith..... Trustee
- Jason Smith Trustee

The Board of Education set meeting dates for February 2021 through January 2022. Meetings will be held on the second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom until in-person meetings are allowed. All are welcome to attend. Meeting information is posted on the Board of Education page of the District’s website. Questions or comments? Contact the Board at hcboe@harpercreek.net

- February 8, 2021
- May 10, 2021
- August 9, 2021
- November 8, 2021
- March 8, 2021
- June 14, 2021
- September 13, 2021
- December 13, 2021
- April 12, 2021
- July 12, 2021
- October 11, 2021
- January 10, 2022

Thank you Harper Creek Board of Education!

Harper Creek Community Schools truly appreciates the Board of Education’s dedication to our students, staff, district and community as we **Educate, Empower and Equip Students for Life.**



Team H Team C Virtual Team

All 3 need a strong Home-School Team

By Kim Thayer, Principal,
Harper Creek Middle School

We all learn best when we feel safe and know that the people that guide us are working together to encourage and support our education. Team H and Team C attend school two days a week and are virtual three days. The Virtual Team is all virtual. With so much school happening outside of the school walls, the need for a strong partnership between families and school is vital.

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, everyone understood how school worked. As we have adapted new ways to do school, and keep everyone as safe as possible, we have all had to become good learners. And while we are temporarily doing things differently, we have to remember how powerful it is for our children to hear the same message from teachers and parents about how important learning is for them.

Children learn about values and relationships in the classroom, just like they learn and develop an attitude about learning at home. We all have the same goal at school and home to make the very best decisions for our community's children.

I hope we have all been good role models for how decisions are made and how problems are solved. If we have been successful in this, it will be one good thing that came from this difficult time.

When Educating the Whole Child: Love is Essential

By: Laura Williams, Assistant Superintendent of Harper Creek

As we move into February, we continue to focus moving our efforts towards educating the whole child, which means that we recognize the health and well being of our youth. During the past year our staff, teachers, and administrators have worked hard to provide a balance of academic and social emotional learning. Love has been the essential ingredient to help us get through this past year.



EDUCATE • EMPOWER • EQUIP

Students for Life

Lead By Example

Encourage Kindness

Act Respectfully

Do the Right Thing

When considering the wellbeing of each child we are working to implement a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support System (PBIS) and continuing to develop instructional units that will help our students better love themselves and others. The foundation of our PBIS system is developing common language and expectations, and teaching the behaviors that align with what is expected. LEAD is our word that serves as a reminder to guide us through the day. Our elementary staff have recently been trained in PBIS and are starting to implement the strategies together. All teachers will be trained by 2023. The foundation of this work is rooted in our core value "heart for people". Parents are encouraged to use this same language at home and discuss these characteristics when you see them in books or shows you watch. If you want to learn more about PBIS, go to this website to download a parent guide to PBIS. <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/supporting-families-with-pbis-at-home/>. In addition to our learning and work around PBIS we are administering mental health screeners for our secondary students in order to respond to their needs that are identified and we have elementary strategies to monitor their well being also. We recognize that relationships and supports bundled in love are essential in order to best serve our students and families.



When you start looking at people's hearts, instead of their face, life becomes clear.

Academically we are doing deep thinking about what we want our students to know, understand and be able to do as they exit our K-12 system. These goals are then aligned to priority academic standards and engaging learning experiences. Our elementary teams are currently learning research-supported instructional practices and schoolwide systemic practices. These instructional practices will result in our learners loving to read, write and communicate.

These two highly focused improvement strategies will take a few years to fully implement but we believe when rooted in love and passion for learning we will see the fruits of our collective labor. We invite our families to help us with these improvement



strategies by using the LEAD language at home and providing many opportunities to read a variety of books. We are requesting that our community members continue to donate gently used books for students K-12 to add to our classroom and community library stations. Please contact 441-6564 if you have books to donate.

HARPER CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

NOW HIRING

BUS DRIVERS

We are hiring passionate individuals who have a desire to work with children and want a flexible schedule aligned with the school calendar.

Ready to Drive School Bus Drivers

\$1000 signing bonus

- \$500 31st Day
- \$250 91st day
- \$250 121st day

New School Bus Drivers

\$600 signing bonus

- \$100 with temp permit
- \$300 pass CDL tests
- \$200 91st day of employment

www.HarperCreek.net/departments/hr



HARPER CREEK
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

DISTINGUISHED CITIZEN ALUMNI AWARDS

Do you know an outstanding Harper Creek citizen or alumni? We are seeking and accepting nominations for alumni and community leaders as candidates for the 2021 Harper Creek distinguished awards through March 5, 2021. Information and nomination forms may be found at www.harpercreek.net on the Board of Education page.



Reading: A Lifelong Journey

By Dennis Anthony, Principal, Harper Creek High School

“Tell me, Muse, of the man of many ways, who was driven far journeys, after he had sacked Troy’s secret citadel.” - Homer

These words are the opening lines of my favorite story, The Odyssey, by Homer. It’s the timeless story of Odysseus’ journey to return home, and the adventures and the lessons learned along the way. An allegory of life itself, it’s been shared and read for nearly 3,000 years. How is that even possible!

Not all stories will age as well as Homer’s, but there are stories that have been told and are being told all around us. As many of us faced the reality of quarantines and being at home more this past year, we turned to stories to pass the time, to problem solve, to cope and find comfort, or even escape from reality. To make sense of life, or to find inspiration in it.

You probably read a lot - you’re reading this right now! However, does your daily reading center around Twitter, Facebook, and other social media? When was the last time you read a book, or even an enriching magazine article? Reading has a significant number of benefits! If you’re someone who hasn’t made a habit of reading regularly, consider this. Like lifting weights for our brain, research shows that reading keeps your brain young and healthy and keeps it from losing its power. Like steroids for your muscles, reading not only equips you with more knowledge, it can improve your memory as you work to remember the multiple storylines, characters, subplots, and more, for each story. It stretches your critical thinking skills as you analyze the story for meaning or try and figure out the next chapter or plot twist. Readers also see improvements to their vocabulary and, not surprisingly, in their writing - qualities that help everyone be more successful.

This fall, some students at HCHS recognized the value in reading and suggested to Librarian Sam Roslund the idea of a book club. A few months and several ZOOM meetings later, after reading E. Lockhart’s modern suspense novel **We Were Liars**, the 20 members are now reading the murder mystery **City of Saints and Thieves**, by Natalie C. Anderson.

You can help your student out by reading, too. Reading and discussing together is a great way to spend quality time and model lifelong learning. When I think of reading and quality time with my own kids, I think of the story I read about Alice Ozma. A difficult period in her life lead to 10-year-old Alice and her dad spending a lot of time together, and so they pledged to read together every single night for 100 days. Spoiler alert - “The Streak,” as they called it, lasted over 3,000 days - nearly 10 years through sickness, sleepovers, and even prom - and only ended when she started her first day in college. The hardest part of the streak was not maintaining it but ending it.

Here in the cold days of winter, huddling inside to stay warm, and with *March is Reading Month* nearly here, consider starting a streak of your own - and don’t be afraid to bring your child along with you.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

SPRING BREAK 2022 March 28 – April 1

To better align with SAT testing, spring breaks will be moved to the last week in March.

Most schools in Michigan have already adjusted their calendars accordingly and Calhoun County schools will make the change in the 2021-22 school year.

Spring Break Schedules

2020-21	April 5 – 9, 2021
2021- 22	March 28 – April 1, 2022
2022-23	March 27 – March 31, 2023
2023-24	March 25 – 29, 2024
2024-25	March 31 – April 4, 2025

Harper Creek Educational Foundation Give – Grow - Achieve

The Harper Creek Educational Foundation (HCEF) is an affiliate of the Battle Creek Community Foundation and houses student scholarships and grants in the form of endowed funds for Harper Creek Community Schools. The funds are earmarked for students and staff of Harper Creek Community Schools. Currently there are 23 endowed funds under the HCEF umbrella of which 18 are scholarship funds and 5 grant funds with a total of over \$674,000 in assets. The goal of this local foundation is to maximize the amount of scholarships for Harper Creek students and support school programs through grant funds.

Anyone can Leave a Legacy by starting an endowed fund in remembrance of a loved one, as a family legacy, or just to simply support the students and staff of Harper Creek Community Schools. Endowed funds are also known as forever funds, in which investment income is used as spendable income for scholarships and grants. Funds must have \$10,000 to reach awarding status but can be started from much less and grow to awarding level. If you are interested in Leaving a Legacy by starting an endowed fund or contributing to an existing fund under the HCEF umbrella please contact Laura Zalle at Laura@BATTLECREEKCAN.ORG.

The Harper Creek Educational Foundation (HCEF) held their annual fundraiser in connection with homecoming weekend this past fall. The HCEF/Beaver Booster Golf Outing was a huge success raising over \$8,700 with proceeds building three endowed scholarship funds towards awarding level, supporting the Harper Creek Athletic Beaver Boosters, building the Fund for Harper Creek endowment fund, and funds to support outreach and future fund growth. A huge thank you to all that participated and volunteered for this worthwhile venture.

Please continue to help us grow the Harper Creek Educational Foundation as we support Harper Creek students and staff now and into the future.

Harper Creek Community Schools CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 8, 2021	Board of Education Meeting.....	7:00 PM
February 19, 2021	Half Day School	
February 26, 2021	No School	
March 8, 2021	Board of Education Meeting	7:00 PM
March 16, 2021	BLE Spring Conferences	
March 17, 2021	Countdown to Kindergarten	
March 16, 2021	SON Spring Conferences	
March 23, 2021	SON Spring Conferences	
March 24, 2021	BLE Spring Conferences	
April 2, 2021	No School	
April 5 – 9, 2021	Spring Break	
April 12, 2021	Board of Education Meeting	7:00 PM
April 20, 2021	Countdown to Kindergarten	
May 20, 2021	Countdown to Kindergarten	
May 31, 2021	No School	
June 4, 2021	Half Day of School	
June 4, 2021	High School Commencement Ceremony	
June 7, 2021	Last Day Half Day of School	
June 14, 2021	Board of Education Meeting	7:00 PM

Please go to www.harpercreek.net for more up to date information.



Harper Creek Educational Foundation

Give • Grow • Achieve

www.bccfoundation.org/fund/hccsef

The sole purpose of the Harper Creek Educational Foundation (HCEF) is to generate and distribute resources to Harper Creek Community Schools for scholarships, enrichment programs, and educational projects.

If you would like to donate or leave a legacy call Rob Ridgeway at 269-441-6555 or contact any HCEF Board Member.

2021 HCEF Board Members

Jeff Adams	Rob Ridgeway
Beau Bess	Barry Smith
Shawn DeYoung	Nate Smith
Deb Evans	Harold Vaive
Tina Kyger	Laura Zalle, BCCF Staff
Tina McNeil	