TRANSCRIPT

HAMILTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

#EachWillThrive

HAMILTON'S DECA PROGRAM WINS 53 MEDALS AT DISTRICTS

HIGH SCHOOL CLASS CREATES STRONG, WELL-ROUNDED SWIMMERS

STREAM SCHOOL HELPS STUDENTS FALL IN LOVE WITH THE COMMUNITY

MARCH 2021

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FINISHING A UNIQUE SCHOOL YEAR

By: Dave Tebo

I don't know about you, but I am ready for SPRING! COVID has made this year unpredictable and the only constant has been change. We continue to appreciate all of the feedback we receive from parents, students, staff and the community. It is helpful to know people's thoughts as we make complicated decisions. I also want to say **THANK YOU** to our amazing Hawkeye staff and how they have worked through this year. We couldn't do what we do without each of these dedicated individuals.

We also want to affirm that we will continue to work to improve our communication with as much detail in regards to things that will impact learning for your child. Below are some important things to note as we finish this school year:

While COVID won't be gone when we start the 2021-22 school year, we know that we will be in a very different place as we continue to learn how vaccinations will impact our day-to-day lives and what we will be able to bring back into our day-to-day lives at school and in the community.

The Board of Education will be working to craft a more detailed six-year plan that will further clarify the work we will be doing to meet our strategic planning goals. Look for opportunities to share your thoughts and feedback in the coming months. We do not plan to run a "teacher-paced" virtual learning plan for students like we have run this year. We will be in school five days a week.

We will continue to offer a virtual option for students through Hamilton FLEX. Students will need to commit to that model by trimester or semester, whichever is applicable for the level of your student(s). As we finish this year we are looking for creative ways to have our students experience some of the time-honored rights of passage that they traditionally experience. We are planning to hold graduation, creating a protocol to get volunteers back in our buildings, planning for field trips after Spring Break, working on theatre/choir performances, looking at a creative solution for Prom and other end-of-the-year celebrations.

Thank you for your continued understanding as we work toward completing one of the most unique school years ever.

YOUNG FIVES, KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION NOW AVAILABLE

Kindergarteners in **Jana Zweering's** class at Hamilton Elementary take a break after reading time to dance and stretch during a fun February morning. Registration for Young Fives and kindergarten is now available. Contact one of the elementary schools to register:

Bentheim Elementary: (269) 751-5335
Blue Star Elementary: (269) 751-5630
Hamilton Elementary: (269) 751-5413
Sandyview Elementary: (269) 751-5372

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HAMILTON BUSINESS PROGRAM OFFERS STUDENTS COMMUNITY, LIFE SKILLS

By: Jeremy Gonsior

Walking into the Business Development class last year, **Reaghen Behnke** was nervous.

The junior at Hamilton High didn't know what to expect.

But after nearly two years of work, including participation in the DECA program connected to the class, Behnke can't imagine her life without it.

The class changed her perspective about her future career, her approach to business environments, and how she communicates with business professionals.

Now the Hamilton senior recommends Business Development and DECA to everyone she knows.

"I have never been so thankful for a class," Behnke said.

"The Business Development course teaches students the process of taking an idea and turning it into a business through the entrepreneurship process," according to Teacher **Dan Meiste**.

DECA is a significant part of this journey as it teaches students the needed soft skills and problem solving skills to excel in the workplace. It helps prepare emerging leaders and entrepreneurs in areas of marketing, finance, hospitality, and management.

This year's DECA program had 24 members who participated in the annual district competition. Of that group, 21 qualified for the state competition in March.

"As a teacher, I am proud of them," Meiste said. "And as a teacher I am excited that I have an outlet to be able to give to students to succeed."

Meiste said he thrives on teaching his students new skills and offering them new opportunities. He wants to help even more students in the future, not just a select few.

"I will help make you successful," he said. "That's what drives me."

Hamilton Community Schools Podcast, Episode 4

Hear the full DECA story by listening to Episode 4 of the new Hamilton Community Schools Podcast. **https://open.spotify.com/show/2blyfYkgpp2KorvXql3cqZ**

DISTRICT COMPETITION SUCCESS

53 Medals earned in total

17 Students took a top 8 medal on their comprehensive exam

15 Students took a top 5 medal on their role-play

21 Students earned a medal as a State qualifier

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TEACHERS WHO COACH THANKFUL FOR EXTRA INFLUENCE

By: Jeremy Gonsior

"It is such an important way to reach kids"

HS Girls Varsity Basketball Coach Jacquelyn Schwark

When **Jacquelyn Schwark** played basketball at Hope College she loved the experience, but thought she might like coaching even more.

Turns out she does.

Schwark graduated with a teaching degree and received a job offer from Hamilton Middle School. Soon after the freshman girls basketball coach position opened up, she applied, and got the job.

She was a teacher and a coach, just like that.

"I got my dream right at the beginning," Schwark said. "I feel really lucky I am already doing what I wanted."

Many Hamilton teachers have found coaching sports provides another avenue to positively impact students.

Brian Grabinski, Hamilton High School social studies teacher and varsity baseball coach, said he encourages younger teachers like Schwark to get involved with coaching as soon as possible. When students see teachers in the hallways and on the field, the impact deepens.

"It is such an important way to reach kids," he said.

Melinda Bronkhorst, a fourth grade teacher at Bentheim Elementary, has coached basketball in the district for 15 years. She always connects with her players quickly and the relationship lasts long after.

"You develop a special bond even though it's only 8 or 9 weeks," said Bronkhorst, girls basketball coach for the 8th grade A Team at Hamilton Middle School.

Teaching and coaching, however, has its challenges.

"It's a lot of planning ahead," Grabinski said. "It can be overwhelming if you let it be."

Schwark said she is on all day, often 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. There is a 15-minute window between her middle school teacher role and high school basketball coach role.

"I have to be super organized to keep all the balloons in the air," she said.

HS Varsity Baseball Coach Brian Grabinski

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STRENGTH AND MOVEMENT CLASS GIVES ATHLETES AN EXTRA EDGE

By: Jeremy Gonsior

Hamilton's state runner-up girls swimming and diving team received a crucial boost from an unexpected source this year.

Many swimmers and divers signed up for the **Strength and Movement class**, a physical education course taught by **Phil Koops** and **Dan VanHekken**.

While swim practice improved their technique, the class increased their strength and fitness and athleticism.

Senior swimmer **Hannah Fathman** noticed surprising gains in the weight room after signing up for the class.

Fathman, who finished second in the 50 freestyle and third in the 100 freestyle at states on Jan. 17, said Strength and Movement gave her an extra edge.

"It's made a huge impact," Fathman said. "I think my season was totally turned around because of it."

IDEAL FOR ATHLETES

The energy in the weight room was upbeat and loud and exciting. Right before class started, senior divers **Grace Overbeek** and **Ashley Ritsema** took time to reflect on their experience.

Overbeek said Strength and Movement helped her believe in herself more, boosted her confidence, and kept her motivated. Last year's quarantine brought athletics to a standstill and she felt "weak and unhealthy" before the class turned things around. Ritsema said Strength and Movement is one class that "all athletes should take."

Girls Swim Coach Eric Talsma said the swimmers and divers taking Strength and Movement have seen tremendous improvements in their strength and mobility. It has also added durability to thrive during their long season.

"What they gain from the class translates well to their training and competing on the boards and in the pool," Talsma said. "Possibly the most important benefit is the confidence and self awareness that they gain from being well-rounded athletes."

NEW INTEREST

The perception of the Strength and Movement class has improved among female students, Koops said. With less of a stigma, more have signed up for the class.

"It's been great to see the increase in the number of females taking the Strength and Movement class the last few years," Koops said. "I think we are seeing a transition away from female students being intimidated by the class or worried about somehow becoming less feminine, and a movement towards girls being proud of their physicality and liking some of the changes they see in the mirror throughout their time in the class."

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VOCAL MUSIC STUDENTS USE VIRTUAL MASTERCLASS TO LEARN FROM EXPERT

By: Holly Israels

This year's Solo & Ensemble Festival was virtual, but that didn't stop **Austin Geerlings, Annika Van Buren,** or **Kennedy VanHouten** from signing up. Even when they found out in November that school was going to be fully remote, meaning they would have to learn all of their music and do their rehearsals with Teacher Holly Israels via Zoom, they stayed committed. Learning this style of music is always a great challenge, and over Zoom, even more so.

One of the best aspects of Solo & Ensemble is the clinic portion. After the student performs his or her pieces, the judge works with the student and tries some things with him or her to help with his or her singing technique and/or songs.

This year, with the judges' feedback being recorded, we didn't have that opportunity, so we asked **Dr. Charsie Sawyer**, a voice professor from Calvin University, if she would do a masterclass with Austin, Annika, and Kennedy over Zoom. We were so grateful when Sawyer agreed, and also grateful to Paul Prins for working the technological magic to make it all work smoothly for us.

On January 21, the three well-prepared singers each expertly performed two pieces for Sawyer. Then, she worked with each one, giving them each feedback and having them try different things to take them to the next level as singers and performers. Sawyer was impressed with all three singers and enjoyed working with the students in Hamilton. VanHouten said she was nervous in the beginning, but calmed down quickly because Sawyer was so kind. "My favorite part was getting the feedback on how I can improve my singing because it helps me learn even more about music and singing," she said.

The class had less pressure than Solo & Ensemble, Geerlings said, offering a different way for the students to learn. "This gave us the opportunity to work on challenging pieces that are fulfilling to work on and perform, all without the worry of the ratings of Solo & Ensemble," Geerlings said. "This was a fantastic experience that I'd highly recommend to anybody interested in singing classical solo pieces."

ART IT'S OUT THERE: THE SHOW WILL GO ON

By: Cassie Pelon

The annual **Art It's Out There** show opening is a tradition that has become part of the natural rhythm of our school year in Hamilton. While COVID-19 restrictions have forced us to re-imagine what this year's show will look like, the show will go on. The format may have changed, but the inspiration and creativity that drive this event have not. Switching to a virtual show allows us to continue to celebrate the talent and hard work of the district's students, from students in Young Fives through high school. The artwork that is highlighted in the virtual Art It's Out There show was chosen by the district's art teachers during the previous school year.

The virtual venue provides both a unique way to showcase students' work and also broadens their audience to family, friends, and those outside of our community who may have otherwise been unable to attend the in-person show opening. **We invite you to celebrate our students' art by heading to hamiltonschoolsart.wordpress.com.** Make sure to congratulate the many talented artists for their involvement in this year's show.

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STREAM SCHOOL ENABLES CURRICULUM TO BLOSSOM

By: Jeremy Gonsior

Teacher **David Koning** taught traditional high school for 23 years at a high-achieving school in West Michigan, but started to see gaps where students weren't connecting with the content.

Koning is passionate about learning that takes place outside the four walls of a classroom, learning that is hands-on, teaches soft skills, and ultimately "allows the curriculum to blossom."

That's why he joined **Hamilton Middle School's STREAM School program** four years ago.

Alongside his fellow teacher, **Ted Malefyt**, Koning teaches valuable science and language arts content, plus 21st Century skills such as critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. The experience "places students outdoors and redefines what a classroom looks like," according to their Web site.

Koning remains excited about the non-traditional, interdisciplinary learning STREAM School provides.

"It allows us to do things that I think really engage kids in a much deeper way than I experienced before," he said.

STREAM School remains an important collaboration between **Hamilton Community Schools** and the **Outdoor Discovery Center** in Holland. In fact, the whole program hinges on support from many people including Superintendent Dave Tebo, school administration, and the school's transportation department. "It is an amazing team effort," Malefyt said.

The program is designed to provide consistent and meaningful access to valuable resources in West Michigan such as Lake Michigan, dunes, wetlands, and the Outdoor Discovery Center property. Malefyt said the experiences are not field trips, rather an extension of the classroom and hopefully unforgettable moments that keep students engaged in the area.

"We want our kids to fall in love with our community," he said. "...20 years from now they view this as a sticky moment. So much of the moments we create for people are like Teflon, they slide off. But can we create these sticky moments where it sticks with them for a lifetime?"

Hamilton Community Schools Podcast, Episode 5

To hear the full interview, visit Spotify at **https://open.spotify.com/show/2blyfYkgpp2KorvXql3cqZ** and listen to the STREAM School episode.

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HERE COMES THE BUS APP OFFERS RIGHT BUS, RIGHT STOP, RIGHT TIME

By: Jeremy Gonsior

The Hamilton Community Schools Transportation Department is excited to offer the **Here Comes the Bus app** to parents. The app, available for Apple or Android devices, provides real-time bus pickup and drop-off updates to parents. "It's going to give them a heads up when the bus is arriving at their home," Hamilton Transportation Director **Steve Meppelink** said.

For detailed tips about setting up the app, follow the instructions at https://www.hamiltonschools.us/Core/News/Article/13260.

Questions? Reach out to the Hamilton Transportation Department at (269) 751-5191.

NOW HIRING BUS DRIVERS!

Interested in an exciting career as a bus driver or mechanic with Hamilton Community Schools?

Our transportation department is now hiring team members for next school year. The jobs offer competitive pay, benefits, and time off.

For more information, call Steve Meppelink at (269) 751-5191.

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