

HARPER CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOLS *Newsletter*



EDUCATE • EMPOWER • EQUIP
Students for Life

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Message from Superintendent Rob Ridgeway



Exciting News! Our Harper Creek Community Schools family is growing. Not only are we growing in achievement levels, our student populations are having a growth spurt, too. New housing developments and families moving into homes where only couples once resided have increased our student populations at every district school building. Marked increase of in-district growth allowed our Board of Education to cap the schools of choice program for at least five years. It is clear that our HC community is special with so many families choosing to put down roots and stay.

Growth is exciting and welcome presenting us with opportunities to increase the size of our school buildings and infrastructure accordingly, to alleviate the stretches and shortcomings of such growth spurts. Shortcomings such as teachers without classrooms. Currently, our elementary schools have four teachers who teach art and Spanish from a cart, as we have run out of classroom space. These teachers do their very best moving from classroom to classroom with their materials on a cart. Still, we all know this is not the best practice, nor conducive to a world-class experience or education. Additionally, the growing population at the already full middle school, as well as two preschool classrooms running out of the high school add to the respective outcomes of growth.

With these factors in mind, and after much contemplation and deliberation, the Administration and Board of Education at Harper Creek Community Schools have decided to move forward with a building project requiring a bond election. The bond proposal would allow the construction of four classrooms at each elementary school, remodeling the vacant middle school pool area into four or five classrooms. In addition, it would allow improvements to playgrounds and parking lots, renovate the high school weight room, and add advised safety upgrades at all school buildings. Harper Creek Community Schools has not asked our community for a voted bond issue since 2008 and is only now asking for more needed space.

The Harper Creek Community Schools Administration and Board of Education respectfully ask you, our families, and the community, to support a \$24 million bond proposal in May of 2024. The bond would raise the debt millage by .6 mills. As a reference, homeowners of a \$200,000 house would see a \$5 increase per month.

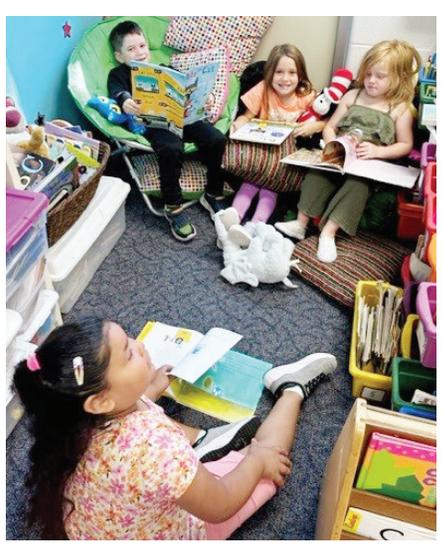
I am proud of our Board of Education's diligence with the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) money we receive from our friends at Firekeepers Casino Hotel. The PILT money has been dedicated to maintenance, technology, as well as bus and vehicle purchases. In addition, special projects are funded through PILT funds, including significant improvements to the heating and cooling system at the high school, which had plagued the district from the building's inception, as well as solutions for the district's Crosby Drive property. None of these projects used taxpayer dollars.

Growth is exciting, indeed. We look forward to sharing in full detail this information and answering any questions you may have about the potential bond proposal. We appreciate and value you, our Harper Creek Community, and the partnership and support you provide in raising and educating our children. Together, we make Harper Creek Community Schools the premier place to Educate, Empower, and Equip Students for Life.

Rob Ridgeway
Superintendent
Harper Creek Community Schools



Wattles Park Elementary



Wattles Park Elementary, Where Growth Flourishes

By Brent Swan, Principal, Wattles Park Elementary

Witnessing the remarkable growth of our students fills our staff with pride and joy. Each day, we observe the budding intellects and compassionate hearts within our school walls. It's a testament to the dedication of our teachers, the support of parents, and the resilience of our incredible students. From conquering challenging math problems to fostering friendships, every achievement is a step towards becoming well-rounded individuals. Together, we nurture curiosity, instill values, and celebrate accomplishments—big and small. Our school is not just a place of learning; it's a community where growth flourishes, setting the foundation for a bright future ahead.



Growing Together . . . We value our Parents as Partners!

By Laura Williams,
Assistant Superintendent,
Harper Creek Community Schools



Here at Harper Creek Community Schools, we are dedicated to fostering a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. In this edition, we focus on our commitment to preparing students for both career and college readiness, while ensuring a holistic approach that emphasizes the well-being of the whole child.

Career and College Readiness:

At Harper Creek, we believe that education goes beyond textbooks and classrooms. Our K-12 programs are designed to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in both their academic journey and future careers. From innovative curriculum enhancements to real-world application projects, we are dedicated to preparing our students for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Our teaching teams are working collaboratively to review units of study and the scope and sequence of the unit delivery for each course offered in our district. The early release Wednesdays are spent in professional dialogue around priority learning and student proficiency towards that identified learning. Teachers also spend the time sharing instructional strategies that are working in their classrooms. Our counselors and student support specialists are working together to identify improvements to better support our learners around career and college readiness from Kindergarten through Graduation.

Whole Child Emphasis:

We understand that academic success is just one facet of a child's development. Our commitment to the whole child approach means that we prioritize the social, emotional, and physical well-being of our students. Through a variety of extracurricular activities, mindfulness programs, and personalized support services, we aim to nurture confident, resilient, and well-rounded individuals.



Relationship Building as Our Foundation:

Strong relationships are the bedrock of our school community. Our educators, staff, and administrators are dedicated to creating a supportive and caring environment where students feel seen, heard, and valued. By forging meaningful connections, we create a foundation for effective learning and personal growth. We are continuing our learning on how to improve this foundation.



Empowering Our Learners:

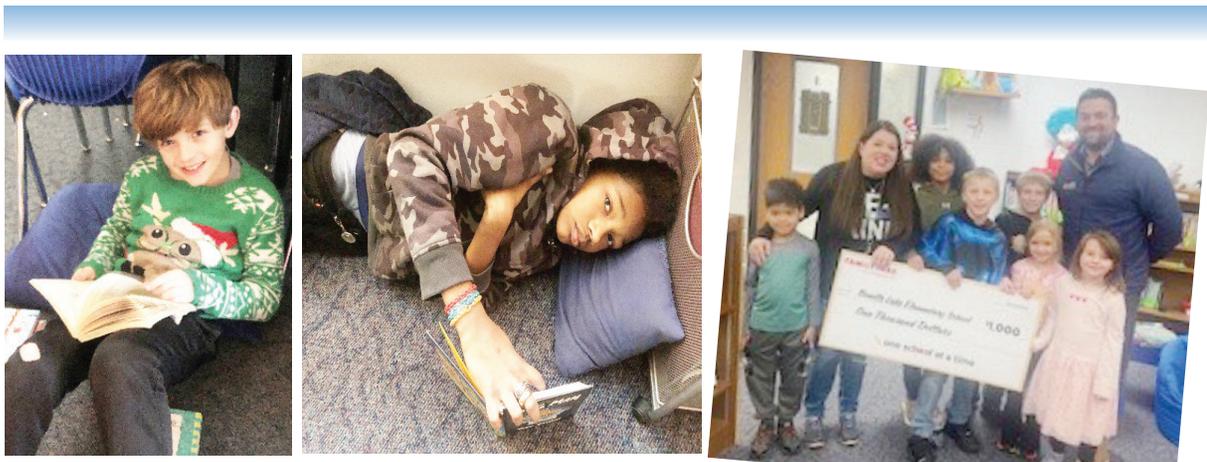
Empowerment is at the core of our educational philosophy. We provide students with opportunities to take ownership of their learning journey, fostering a sense of agency and independence. Whether through project-based learning, leadership programs, or mentorship initiatives, we encourage our students to explore their passions and develop the skills needed to succeed in a rapidly changing world.



Student Voice and Agency:

We believe in the power of student voices. Our commitment to student agency ensures that learners actively participate in shaping their educational experiences. From advisory councils to student-led initiatives, we encourage our students to express their thoughts, opinions, and ideas, creating a school community where every voice is heard and valued.

You are a most valuable part of your child's academic and social-emotional success and we are eager to meet with each of our parents/guardians. As conferences approach in February, we look forward to meeting to learn from you about your child and share their progress in school. Please be sure to sign up for a time for conferences so we can continue the parent/school partnership.



Beadle Lake Elementary

Beadle Lake is Growing Readers!



Sonoma Elementary

Growing Our Community

By Shalen King, Principal, Sonoma Elementary School

In the six years that I have been principal at Sonoma Elementary, there have been many opportunities for growth in getting our parents involved to Educate, Empower, and Equip Students for Life. One area that we have grown is in our Parent Teacher Association. Our PTA at Sonoma has grown from a few members to a full board of parents and community members. The PTA went from having only eight members, in 2018, to having over 50 participating members this year. Our monthly meetings are bursting with ideas and conversation, rooted in how to grow our students and staff here at Sonoma. We are fortunate for the members of our PTA and the hard work that they do to make each day an opportunity for all students to feel loved and supported. The PTA has taken on many events that help our students and staff. Trunk-or-Treat has brought in hundreds of families to partake in a safe and fun trick-or-treating experience for the past two years. Movie Mornings are a new tradition in the winter for our PTA and families. The PTA sponsors a movie at a local cinema and Sonoma students can go to watch a free movie on a designated Saturday. Popcorn Friday, Family Carnival, book fair, classroom wish lists, conference meals for teachers, and so much more! These are just a few of the ways that the Sonoma PTA has grown and helped to make Sonoma Elementary a place where families can blossom.





Harper Creek Middle School

The Arts are Growing at Harper Creek

Kim Thayer, Principal,
Harper Creek Middle School

Harper Creek Community Schools offer students many opportunities to explore the arts in middle school. We believe it is essential for whole child development that students are exposed to different art forms. The arts can foster creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. We have always offered visual arts and music classes and will continue to support and grow these programs.

Harper Creek Middle School is excited to announce a continued partnership with What A Do Theater. In December, Harper Creek Middle School hosted a What A Do Theater production of *The Christmas Schooner*, which included Harper Creek Middle School students.

The partnership will continue as we collaborate with What A Do Theatre to provide an after-school drama experience for 5th through 8th graders that will culminate with performances of *Seussical Junior* on Friday, March 8, Saturday, March 9, and Sunday, March 10.

Harper Creek Middle School is excited to offer this new experience to our middle school students and will continue to collaborate with guest artists and organize workshops to expose students to professionals in the arts.



Harper Creek High School

Creating a Sense of Belonging with After-School Clubs in the High School

By Ed Greenman,
Principal, Harper Creek High School

Currently, there is an initiative at the high school to create a sense of belonging for all of our students. During the school day, we lose a lot of our students to Kellogg Community College, the Battle Creek Area Mathematics and Science Center, and the Calhoun Area Career Center. We also have students taking virtual classes, so some are out of the building more than in our school. We do have hundreds of kids involved in athletics, band, choir, musicals, and plays, but we are also being intentional in trying to get them involved in after-school clubs and organizations.

At present, we have 18 after-school clubs that students can join. Some examples are Art, Bible Study, Dungeon and Dragons, Equestrian, Fantasy Book, Guitar, RACE, Ski, Robotics, and Clay Target Shooting. We have plenty more and want all of our kids to be involved in some type of extracurricular activity. We believe in educating the whole child and want every student to have a connection to the school that goes beyond the normal school day.

We currently have a large bulletin board located at the top of the stairs in our academic wing that helps promote our clubs. We hope our kids stop by, check it out, and get involved in what is going on at school. If there isn't something that students are interested in, we are always open to starting something new.

It's a great day to be a Harper Creek Beaver.





Countdown to Kindergarten

• **MONDAY, MARCH 18** • **THURSDAY, APRIL 18**
Testing Dates: April 29, April 30, May 1, and May 2
 WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION AT www.HarperCreek.net



In the summer of 2023, Harper Creek Community Schools received 1.74 million dollars from the Future Proud Michigan Educator Grow Your Own Grant, offering a pathway for district staff to seek an initial teaching degree or to earn additional endorsements. Funding covers tuition, fees, testing costs, books, travel, and more. HCCS is happy to announce we are one of 96 schools to receive a second round of funding from the GYO Grant, bringing the total awarding to \$2.6 million. These additional funds are to help districts increase the number of teachers in areas of education that are experiencing shortages. For HCCS these shortages are in areas of special education.

HCCS is offering a no-cost pathway to a master's degree from Western Michigan University in one of three needed special education endorsement areas, Learning Disabilities, Emotional Impairment, or Autism Spectrum Disorder, for qualified certificate carrying teachers.

HCCS staff will receive first consideration for these funds, but this opportunity will be extended to certified teachers wishing to go into one of the three mentioned areas of special education.

Contact Tammy Chapman at 269-441-6567 or ChapmanT@HarperCreek.net for more information on how you can be a Harper Creek Community School Proud Michigan Educator.



Harper Creek Community Schools Calendar of Events

February 6	HS Parent Teacher Conferences	3:00 – 7:00 PM	High School
February 7	Early Release		
February 7	HS & MS Choir Pre-Festival Concert		
February 8	HS Parent Teacher Conferences	3:00 – 7:00 PM	High School
February 9	Blood Drive	9:00 AM – 4:00 PM	High School
February 9	Sonoma Valentine's Day Dance	6:00 – 8:00 PM	
February 10	HS Winter Carnival Dance	8:00 – 10:00 PM	
February 12	Board Meeting	7:00 – 9:00 PM	Administration
February 13	Pre-festival Band Concert	7:00 PM	
February 14	Early Release		
February 15	BLE Spring Conferences	4:00 – 8:00 PM	Beadle Lake
February 15	Sonoma Parent Teacher Conferences	4:00 – 8:00 PM	Sonoma
February 20	MS Parent Teacher Conferences	3:00 – 7:00 PM	Middle School
February 20	HS Band Pre-Festival Concert	7:00 – 9:00 PM	
February 21	Early Release		
February 21	BL Parent Teacher Conferences	4:00 – 8:00 PM	Beadle Lake
February 22	Sonoma Parent Teacher Conferences	4:00 – 8:00 PM	Sonoma
February 22	MS Parent Teacher Conferences	3:00 – 7:00 PM	Middle School
February 23	End of Elementary Trimester 2		
February 23	Half Day of School		
February 26	No School		
February 28	Early Release		
March 6	Early Release		
March 11	Board of Education Meeting	7:00 – 9:00 PM	Administration
March 13	Early Release		
March 15	MS End of Quarter 3		
March 18	Countdown to Kindergarten		BLE SON WPE
March 20	Early Release		
March 20	HS NHS Egg Hunt	3:30 – 7:30 PM	
March 21	Beyond the Cereal Bowl	7:30 – 9:00 AM	High School
March 22	No School		
March 25 -29	Spring Break		
April 3	Early Release		
April 8	Board of Education Meeting	7:00 – 9:00 PM	Administration
April 10	Early Release		
April 12	Annie - Presented by HCHS Theate	7:00 PM	HS Auditorium
April 13	Annie - Presented by HCHS Theate	7:00 PM	HS Auditorium
April 14	Annie - Presented by HCHS Theate	2:00 PM	HS Auditoriu
April 14	HS Band Concert	7:00 – 9:00 PM	
April 17	Early Release		
April 18	Countdown to Kindergarten		BLE SON WPE
April 22	Blood Drive	7:00 – 2:00 PM	High School
April 24	Early Release		
May 1	Early Release		
May 4	Prom		
May 8	Early Release		
May 13	Board of Education Meeting	7:00 – 9:00 PM	
May 15	Early Release		
May 16	7/8 Grade Choir Concert	7:00 – 9:00 PM	
May 22	Early Release		
May 27	No School		
May 30	Half Day of School		
May 31	Half Day of School, Last Day of School		
May 31	Commencement		

Go to www.HarperCreek.net for more up to date information.

Join Our Team

Harper Creek Community Schools is looking for

- MTSS Coaches in Middle School and High School
- Bus Drivers
- Grant & Compliance Coordinator
- Before & After Care Associates
- Para-Educators and Aides

Go to www.HarperCreek.net for more information

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