

TRANSCRIPT

HAMILTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

#GreatThingsHappenHere



**HAMILTON
COMMUNITY
SCHOOLS RANKED
AMONG
MICHIGAN'S BEST**



**HONORING UNITED
STATES MARINE &
BENTHEIM EMPLOYEE,
MR. BRYAN COGAR**



**BLUE STAR
ELEMENTARY BEGINS
'SALMON IN THE
CLASSROOM'**

Also Inside...

- 50 Years Later: A look at the Hamilton High School Class of 1974 Reunion!
- Meaningful Work helps elementary students find leadership in their buildings
- Hamilton theatre department wows crowds
- Hamilton varsity football celebrates impressive season
- Cyberhawks robotics team gears up for another important season ahead
- More prestigious accolades: HCS recognized for success in MTSS Data
- Making a Moo-ve: Bentheim Elementary principal makes good on promises
- Save The Dates for HCS Community Events!
- STEM teacher Andy Losik calls it a career

HAMILTON CYBERHAWKS ROBOTICS TEAM SHINES AT WEST MICHIGAN INVITATIONAL

Scan the QR Code to watch the news segment from WZZM!



SCAN ME

The Hamilton Cyberhawks robotics team put on an impressive performance at the West Michigan Invitational on October 26, hosted at Zeeland East High School. The off-season competition gave the Cyberhawks an invaluable opportunity to prepare for the upcoming season starting in January, and the team took full advantage. With an influx of new talent ready to fill the roles left by last year's graduating seniors, the Cyberhawks are setting their sights on making it to the state championship.



For sophomore Elijah Young, this competition was a chance to gain critical experience in coding and operations. "Today is more of a 'figure it out day' so we can get more driver, more human players, and more experience in doing the game," he explained. His excitement for robotics stems from a passion for coding and the challenges that come with learning new programming languages. This focus on skill development is a key component for the Cyberhawks as they prepare for January's rigorous build season.

The team's veteran members, including junior Kasey Thomas, see the off-season event as a valuable time for newer team members to learn the ropes in the pit and behind the controls. "Right now we are in an off-season competition and it is a shortened version of an actual competition, so we can get people who haven't had a lot of experience in the pits or driving get time under the controller and running the matches," Kasey shared. He added that the real season brings its own unique intensity: "The game will be introduced early in the year, we have a really intentionally short timeframe to build a bot and put it together. It's a blast to do it; it's very hard and takes a lot of time and effort."

Senior Emily Bittner is looking forward to the season's challenges with confidence and enthusiasm. "I am really excited," she said. "I can't wait for the problems that will come because I know it will help us grow as a team. It's a lot of fun, I just need to prepare myself for the challenges that will come as well."

With a mix of seasoned members and newer students ready to step up, the Cyberhawks are optimistic about their potential to make it to states. "The Cyberhawks team had a lot of seniors leave last year," Kasey said, "and that group was very beneficial to this team. They really got it up and off the ground from where it was. We would not be where we are today without them. This year will be a lot of filling in big shoes, but I think we have plenty of people who can do several different things. I think we'll do great this year too."

Emily echoed Kasey's optimism, adding, "I think we're actually applying ourselves, and we have a shot at making states this year, I think."

As the January season approaches, the Cyberhawks are not only focused on refining their skills but also on building a team that can overcome obstacles, adapt under pressure, and make Hamilton proud in the highly competitive world of robotics.

SANDYVIEW LEARNING CENTER WELCOMES IN NEW SECRETARY

Hamilton Community Schools is excited to welcome Madalyne Dekkinga as its new secretary at Sandyview Learning Center! Madalyne is already bringing a warm smile and positive energy to the school community. She will be assisting with Hawkeye Preschool as well as Hamilton Virtual School in her new role.

Madalyne, who is married to Hamilton School Resource Officer John Dekkinga, is currently pursuing a degree in early education with aspirations to one day teach third or fourth grade. Her role at Sandyview provides invaluable experience as she works toward her goal of becoming an educator.



“ I hope to make everyone who enters Sandyview feel welcomed and appreciated,” Madalyne shared. “Whether it’s a student starting their day, a parent stopping by, or a staff member in need of support, I want to make their experience as positive as possible.”



HAMILTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS RECOGNIZED FOR SUCCESS IN STUDENT SUPPORT

Hamilton Community Schools recently received the following recognition for Multi-Tiered System of Supports successes in the 2023-24 school year from the MiMTSS Technical Assistance Center.

Congratulations on your ongoing efforts to implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports(MTSS)! Specifically, our district has been recognized for MTSS implementation in the following areas:

MTSS Data Utilization

Hamilton Community Schools has earned the MTSS Data Utilization award for collecting and using the District Capacity Assessment during 2023-2024.

In addition, the following schools in your district have earned the MTSS Data Utilization award for collecting and using MTSS fidelity data:

- Bentheim Elementary School: Reading & Behavior
- Blue Star Elementary School: Reading & Behavior
- Hamilton Elementary School: Reading & Behavior
- Hamilton High School: Behavior
- Hamilton Middle School: Reading & Behavior

MTSS Implementation and Impact

The following schools in your district have earned an MTSS Implementation and Impact award:

- Bentheim Elementary School - Tier 1 Behavior: Silver, Tier 2

Behavior: Silver, Tier 3 Behavior: Silver, Behavior Gold, Tier 1 Reading: Silver, Advanced Tiers Reading: Silver, Reading Gold

- Blue Star Elementary School - Tier 1 Behavior: Silver, Tier 2

Behavior: Silver, Tier 3 Behavior: Silver, Behavior Gold, Tier 1 Reading: Bronze, Advanced Tiers Reading: Bronze

- Hamilton Elementary School - Tier 1 Behavior: Silver, Tier 2

Behavior: Bronze, Tier 3 Behavior: Bronze, Tier 1 Reading: Silver, Advanced Tiers Reading: Silver, Reading Gold

- Hamilton Middle School - Tier 1 Behavior: Silver, Tier 3

Behavior: Silver, Tier 1 Reading: Bronze



ALL HAMILTON SCHOOLS RECOGNIZED AMONG STATE'S BEST

Hamilton Community Schools are celebrating a remarkable achievement as all district elementary and middle schools have been named among the best in Michigan by U.S. News & World Report! The rankings, released in mid-November, showcase the academic success of Hamilton Community Schools. While the high school rankings have yet to be released, Hamilton High School was recognized in the last year's list as one of the state's best.

The 2025 Best Elementary and Middle Schools rankings are calculated based on student proficiencies and performance in mathematics and reading, as measured by state assessment tests. This distinction highlights the dedication and hard work of Hamilton's students, staff, and families in maintaining a strong culture of learning and achievement. Congratulations to Blue Star Elementary, Bentheim Elementary, Hamilton Elementary, and Hamilton Middle School for this outstanding recognition.



DRIVING SINCE 2000, VICKI DEJONGE CONTINUES TO SHINE

For over two decades, Hamilton Community Schools bus driver Vicki DeJonge has greeted students with a warm smile every morning and afternoon. Since starting in 2000, she's been dedicated to ensuring students have a safe, welcoming start and end to their school day.

Vicki's roots in Hamilton run deep. A proud 1983 Hamilton High School graduate, Vicki's connection to the district extends through her family. "I am a Hamilton grad, and all of my children—three boys—graduated from Hamilton. I've lived here my whole life and enjoy living here," Vicki shared, reflecting on her ties to the community.

Her career as a bus driver started out of a desire to be present for her kids. "I became a bus driver because I wanted to be on my kids' schedule. I got to know a lot of the kids really well, and I've stayed because it's been a great job. Hamilton transportation has been great; we're one big happy family and we all get along, enjoy being with one another, and helping each other out."

Vicki also wants to remind drivers about being safe around school busses and being aware of your surroundings. "Our bus drivers would appreciate you being mindful of us turning on our yellows and being prepared to stop and wait for kids to cross in front of the bus," she reminds the community, always focused on student safety.

When asked what keeps her passionate about her work, Vicki doesn't hesitate. "What's special about Hamilton is we're a community. Everyone watches over each other and helps each other; we're a big family. Hamilton Schools is a wonderful place to work, and I've enjoyed it tremendously."



HAMILTON FOOTBALL MAKES THE PLAYOFFS FOR FIRST TIME SINCE 2016

The Hamilton varsity football team found success this season behind 23 senior leaders, qualifying for the playoffs for the first time since 2016. The Hawkeyes finished the regular season with a 5-4 overall record and 3-2 in conference play, defeating Wayland, Grand Rapids Christian, and Spring Lake. Though their playoff journey ended with a tough 56-20 loss to top-ranked Unity Christian in the first round, the Hawkeyes' accomplishments this season highlight a program on the rise. For Koops, the season carried personal significance.



“Success breeds success, so we hope that qualifying for the playoff is just another stepping stone on the road upwards for our program,” Koops shared. “I’m so proud of this group of seniors, 23 of them stuck with football all the way through high school after a winless eighth-grade season. The program as a whole only won four games in 2020 in grades 7-12, and this year we won 23!”

Koops, who played during the team's playoff streak from 2001 to 2004, is passionate about revitalizing the program. "Personally, this means a lot to me," he said. "As a Hamilton guy, I've always had great reverence and respect for the program. To feel like I'm helping get the program back on track toward being a consistent winner again gives me great satisfaction."

Our Schools

Bentheim Elementary

☎ 269-751-5335

Jared Randall, Principal
Cindy Schipper, Secretary

Blue Star Elementary

☎ 269-751-5630

Kari Huckaby, Principal
Deb Scholten, Secretary

Hamilton Elementary

☎ 269-751-5413

Dean Kramer, Principal
Kim Sale, Secretary
Stacey Heneveld, Secretary

Hamilton Middle School

☎ 269-751-4436

Liz Morehouse, Principal
Sean Deiters, Asst. Principal
Kris Henrickson, Secretary
Shawna Cozzello, Secretary
Ken Lentz, Dean of Students

Hamilton High School

☎ 269-751-5185

Mitch Bosch, Principal
David Sheppard, Asst. Principal
Eric Talsma, Athletic Director
Tracy Haverdink, Secretary
Connie Yonker, Secretary
Bob Hippey, Student Support

Hamilton Virtual School

☎ 269-751-5372

Mary Wilkinson, Principal
Madalyne Dekkinga, Secretary

Hawkeye Preschool

☎ 269-751-5372

Whitney Hobbs, Hawkeye Preschool Coord.
Madalyne Dekkinga, Secretary



HONORING HAMILTON GRADUATE, MARINE & BENTHEIM CUSTODIAN, MR. BRYAN COGAR

In this Transcript edition, we proudly spotlight Mr. Bryan Cogar, a distinguished 1995 graduate of Hamilton High School who dedicated his life to serving our nation. Bryan embarked on an extraordinary career in the United States Marine Corps directly after high school, serving multiple tours overseas and achieving the prestigious rank of Master Sergeant. His unwavering commitment to duty and country exemplifies the core values of courage, honor, and service. Cogar spent several years deployed overseas in Iraq, Afghanistan, Japan, Thailand, and South Korea, just to name a few.



“The Marine Corps is a brotherhood and sisterhood, if I had to do it all over again, you know I would. Being a Veteran, it’s not about me, it’s about those who came before me who served and we did what we did for those who will come after us, it’s all about giving back to your country but I’m glad to be back home here in Hamilton,” Cogar said.

Following his retirement from active duty, Bryan found a new way to continue giving back—right here at home. He now works part-time as a custodian at Bentheim Elementary, where he embraces his role in supporting the Hamilton Community Schools family. His daily presence and dedication help ensure that students and staff have a clean, welcoming environment in which to learn and grow.

“It’s all about helping out and giving back, it was instilled by my parents way back, it’s not about receiving, it’s about giving,” Cogar added. “Giving to my country in the Marine Corps was one way and now that chapter is over, so this is just another way to do that.”

Bryan’s transition from a career in the military to a role within Hamilton Community Schools reflects his enduring commitment to serving others. After spending decades giving back to his country, he is now giving back to his community, embodying the spirit of service and resilience that characterizes both his military career and his ongoing role at Bentheim Elementary. Bryan’s impact is felt not only in the halls of our schools but also in the hearts of all who know him.

Thank you, Master Sergeant Bryan Cogar, for your sacrifice, your service, and your continued commitment to our community. You are an inspiration to us all!

HAMILTON CLASS OF 1974 REUNITES 50 YEARS LATER

In October, the Hamilton High School Class of 1974 came together for the first time in ten years at The Trestle Stop. 45 classmates attended, sharing stories, laughter, and memories of their days at Hamilton Community Schools. The event was organized by Mary Wedeven with the assistance of Carol Nagelkirk, Kathy Brink, and Karen TerHaar.

“It was so much fun seeing everybody,” Wedeven smiled. “At first, I didn’t know if I wanted to plan it but as time went on, everyone was getting so excited about the reunion and it made me even more excited.”

There were local attendees and some who flew in from hours away, including Florida and Utah. Once a Hawkeye, Forever a Hawkeye!



Upcoming Appreciation Days!

January 18: National Maintenance Worker Day

February 3: School Counselor Appreciation Week

February 15: School Resource Officer Appreciation Day

March 5: School Social Worker Appreciation Day

April 3: School Librarian Appreciation Day

April 6: Assistant Principal’s Association Day

April 20: Volunteer Appreciation Day

April 23: Admin Professionals/Secretaries Day

HAMILTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS’
**HAWKEYE
HOMETOWN**

5K  **'25**

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2025 | 10:30 AM START
HAMILTON TRANSPORTATION BUILDING



Sign up today! All runners receive a free t-shirt. \$20 per runner. Register by scanning the QR Code!



STEM TEACHER ANDY LOSIK RETIRES AFTER 27 YEARS AT HAMILTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Scan the QR Code to watch Mr. Losik's retirement spotlight!



SCAN ME

After 27 years of service, STEM teacher Andy Losik is retiring from Hamilton Community Schools. His final day in the district is December 20, marking the end of a fantastic career at HCS that began in 1997 at Bentheim Elementary.

Reflecting on his time, Losik shared proud moments, including his role in creating innovative programs. "Back in 1999, the administration asked me to help create a new elementary technology special called InfoTech," Losik said. "It was a blast to take that from nothing and become one of the first districts to have wifi and laptops for elementary students, combined with literacy in the library."

In 2014, InfoTech evolved into the district's STEM program, which Losik helped develop and lead. "It's been incredible to build the STEM class into something I've always strived to make world-class. I wanted our kids to have the best program anywhere in the world," he said.

Losik credits the district's support for his ability to innovate. "Hamilton is a great place where I knew I had earned trust and freedom to create. That's a rare thing these days," he said. "I've always appreciated that trust."

Though there's never a perfect time to retire, Losik looks forward to new opportunities, including trips to France with his mother and Spain with his wife. "I'm excited for what's next, but I'll deeply miss the kids and the wonderful adults I've worked with at Blue Star and Bentheim."



HHS HONORS CHOIR SPREADS HOLIDAY CHEER

Scan the QR Code to watch their performance at Resthaven!



SCAN ME

Our Hamilton High School choirs have been busy spreading Holiday Cheer around our community! On Friday, December 6, the HHS Honors Choir stopped by Blue Star Elementary to perform at their assembly before an hour of performances all throughout the building at Resthaven Care Center in Holland (seen in the photo to the right)! Residents were filled with smiles and sang along to classics like "Joy to the World!", "Silent Night", and "We Wish Your A Merry Christmas".

The Women's Chorale also joined the Honors Choir twice throughout December for the Hamilton Dentistry Christmas Tree lighting and Vintage Car Club Christmas Banquet while also caroling at Royal Park Atrium Assisted Living! Well done, Mrs. Israels and all of our choir students!



HAMILTON THEATRE DEPARTMENT KICKS OFF 2024-25 SEASON WITH STELLAR PERFORMANCES, GEARING UP FOR SPRING MUSICAL

The Hamilton Theatre Department didn't waste any time getting things going in the 2024-25 school year, kicking it off in early November with 'A Night of One Acts' which featured 'Bad Auditions' by Bad Actors by Ian McWethy, 'Selfie' by Bradley Hayward, and '10 Reasons You Should Have Stayed Home Sick Today' by E.M. Bell. Just weeks later, the students put together three more performances of 'The Giver', adapted by Eric Coble from the Newberry Award-winning book by Lois Lowry.

All of our students, along with theatre director Paul Connelly, work extremely hard to put these shows together! A job well done to all and be sure to mark your calendars for March 27, 28 and 29 as the department performs 'You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown'! You can purchase tickets and learn more on our theatre website by visiting HamiltonSchools.us and clicking 'Theater' under the 'Fine Arts' tab.

"Theatre provides our students with an incredible opportunity to explore creativity, teamwork, and personal growth," said Paul Connelly, Hamilton Theatre Director. "Our students work so hard and I'm so proud of their dedication and passion in bringing these stories to life for our community, and I can't wait to see what they accomplish with 'You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown' this spring!"



Photos via HHS student, Ally Pelon



'MEANINGFUL WORK' HELPING HCS ELEMENTARY STUDENTS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY IN THEIR BUILDINGS

Take a look at our YouTube video for a look at the BSE Job Fair!



Hamilton Community Schools is fostering a new culture of responsibility, leadership, and pride with its Meaningful Work program, now thriving at all elementary buildings. Designed to teach valuable life skills while instilling ownership in school environments, the program has already seen enthusiastic participation and impactful results.

Blue Star Elementary set the tone with its first-ever job fair on October 4. Students applied for positions ranging from assisting with cafeteria clean-up and playground supervision to delivering items, caring for plants, and even producing school news.



“We’ve used the job fair to launch our Meaningful Work and Blue Crew, which are kids demonstrating leadership in the school and community,” said Blue Star Elementary social worker and organizer of BSE Meaningful Work, Tricia Sal.

The program's success is evident in numbers. Of the 121 students who completed Meaningful Work applications, 93 are currently filling one of the 10 available roles. Soon, a new position requiring at least 10 more participants will be added, bringing the program closer to having nearly half of the student body involved in meaningful roles.

Students are not only excelling in their positions but taking immense pride in their contributions. They’re ensuring punctuality, fulfilling duties with care, and even stepping up to help peers when needed. They’ve shown initiative by seeking guidance from supervisors, kindness in going above and beyond, and leadership in setting positive examples. Their efforts are having a visible impact, with many staff and community members expressing gratitude and even writing thank-you notes for their hard work. A special shout-out goes to the Hamilton Lion’s Club, whose \$250 grant awarded last spring has helped purchase supplies like gardening tools, bird feeders, gloves, and more at Blue Star Elementary.

“It’s really cool that we get to help out and do our jobs,” shared a third-grade student. “It’s awesome that we can be helpful.” From Blue Star to Bentheim and Hamilton Elementary schools, students are not just learning—they’re thriving. As they grow in confidence and contribute meaningfully, this initiative is shaping engaged, responsible leaders ready to make a difference.

BENTHEIM ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL JARED RANDALL KISSES A COW, WORKS ON THE ROOF TO FULFILL HIS PROMISES

As we told you in the last edition of the Hamilton Community Schools Transcript, Bentheim Elementary Principal Jared Randall had some promises to make up on after the students raised over \$18,000 for their school. Randall took student motivation to new heights—literally—after the school's annual Hawk Walk fundraiser, which resulted in a record amount of funds being raised. On Thursday, October 3, Randall spent the day working from the school's roof, much to the delight of students and staff.



The fun didn't stop there. On Friday, October 4, Randall made good on a promise to kiss a cow in front of the entire school. Randall's enthusiasm and willingness to step outside of the box helped build excitement and motivate students throughout the fundraising campaign. With students eager to see their principal follow through on these unusual promises, the energy around the event was electric.

The Hawk Walk fundraiser has long been a tradition at Bentheim Elementary, with the proceeds supporting various school activities, classroom resources, and extracurricular programs. Thanks to Randall's creative approach, this year's event became even more memorable, and the school's community rallied together to exceed expectations once again.

Lucky You! We got both on video!



HAMILTON BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM PREPARES FOR UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY AT VAN ANDEL ARENA



Scan the QR Code for Tickets!

SCAN ME

The Hamilton Hawkeyes boys varsity basketball team is set to take on Covenant Christian in an exciting matchup at Van Andel Arena in downtown Grand Rapids as part of the Grand Rapids Gold Court of Dreams Game showcase. The game, hosted at the home of the Gold, will take place on Thursday, January 2, with tip-off scheduled for 3:30 PM.

Tickets are in conjunction with the Grand Rapids Gold and get you in the Gold game on either January 3 or January 4. The ticket for the Hamilton game is either \$10 to sit in the lower bowl for the Gold game, or \$5 if you wish to sit in the upper deck for one of the Gold games.

Special thanks to the Grand Rapids Gold for making this opportunity possible! Scan the QR Code for tickets or visit our website: Hamiltonschools.us for more information.



HAWKEYE Preschool

2025-26 Open Houses!

Questions about Hawkeye Preschool and/or Hawkeye Kids?
Contact Whitney Hobbs: whobbs@hamiltonschools.us

THURSDAY, JANUARY 16 | 5:30-6:30 PM
MONDAY, JANUARY 20 | 6:00-7:00 PM

Hawkeye Preschool still has openings for the 2024-25 school year and is also looking ahead to 2025-26! Join us at Sandyview Learning Center (4317 46th Street, Holland) to learn more about our 3-year-old and 4-year-old programming, meet our amazing educators, and see what Hawkeye Preschool can offer you and your family! Hawkeye Preschool focuses on developing the whole child, including through academics, as well as communication, early literacy, and building a foundation for continued learning through play-based learning.

HMS STAFF COMES TOGETHER TO PROVIDE MEMORABLE SCRIMMAGE FOR 8TH GRADE B VOLLEYBALL TEAM

The West Gym at Hamilton Middle School was buzzing with excitement on October 2, as the 8th Grade B Volleyball Team faced an unexpected challenge: a scrimmage against their very own teachers and staff! The idea for this surprise match came together after the team's scheduled game was canceled, leaving them with a gap in their calendar. Determined to keep the energy alive, staff members like Mitchell Niewoonder rallied to create a fun and memorable experience for the players.

"Our girls have had two games get cancelled this year because of other schools not having B teams, so we scheduled a students vs. staff game to try to make up for that experience," Niewoonder said.

The students were unaware of the plan until just before the game, adding an element of excitement and suspense.

"It was such a fun way to connect with the students outside of the classroom," said 6th grade teacher, Jeremy Luhmann. "The energy in the gym was incredible, and everyone had a blast!"

While the final score wasn't the focus, the event proved to be a great success, fostering community and camaraderie. Both students and staff left with smiles on their faces, and the volleyball team gained a memorable highlight for their season.

This impromptu Staff vs. Student Showdown is a reminder of the unique and meaningful ways Hamilton Middle School brings its community together. Whether it's through competition or connection, the Hawkeye Family shines bright!



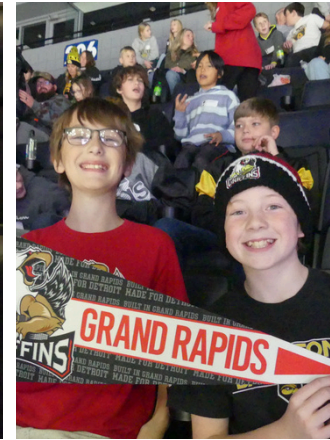
HAMILTON STUDENTS ENGAGED WITH WORK BASED LEARNING

Prepared For Life.

By: Ashley Meyer, Work Based Learning Coordinator

6th graders attend the Grand Rapids Griffins School Day Game:

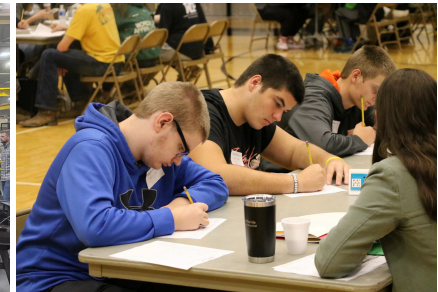
Hamilton 6th graders enjoyed a day of hockey on November 13 attending the Grand Rapids Griffins School day game. This experience was part of the 6th grade Work Based Learning experience building off their learning from Griffin's front office staff in September. Students continued to learn about all of the careers that make up a professional sports team (aside from the coaches and athletes). Thank you to all of the parent chaperones that went along to the hockey game to help ensure its success.



7th grade students immersed in Manufacturing

Each grade level at HMS has a high wage, high demand career pathway focus for Work Based Learning. To kick off 7th grade Work Based Learning, all 7th grade students toured 3 different manufacturing facilities on October 9. Students learned about manufacturing processes, careers, and products made right here in West Michigan from Buhler, Fogg Filler, Koops Automation Systems, Metal Flow, Mission Design and Automation, Tiara Yachts, and Transmatic.

To build on the manufacturing tours, on October 21, students participated in hands-on activities highlighting manufacturing skilled trades they saw while at the manufacturing facilities. Set up a Cultivate Community Church, business professionals led stations on topics such as Tool and Die, Automation and Robotics, Quality and Assembly, Safety, Die Casting, Injection Molding, CAD, Engineering, and Stamping Die. We are thankful for the following local businesses who spent the day teaching our 7th graders about manufacturing: Artiflex Manufacturing, Buhler, Haworth, Mission Design and Automation, Plascore, Royal Technologies, and Transmatic.



9th, 10th, and 11th graders "Prep4Success"

On Wednesday, November 6th the Hamilton High School gym was transformed for Work Based Learning. Each student was placed at a table with 4-6 other students and a business professional who worked with students in a small group mentoring them in areas related to professional and employability skills. 9th grade students focused on "getting a job" and "keeping a job". Topics included career ladders and steps to reaching career goals, interview attire, mock interviews, top reasons for getting fired, cell phone usage in the workplace, job attendance and punctuality, and professionalism.

While both 10th and 11th graders worked on matching career goals to their skills, interests, and values, tenth graders also focused on professional communication and eleventh graders worked on the various components of a good resume. Both 10th and 11th grade students also had the opportunity to learn from Mr. Harig on tips and reminders of using social media.

Hamilton Summer PBL: June 16-20

WHO: Hamilton students going into 9th and 10th grade

WHAT: Students work in a small group at a local business to solve a problem given by the business.

WHEN: June 16-20, 2025
M-TH 8am-3pm
Fri: 8am-10am

WHY: To satisfy a WBL graduation requirement for the training category and to practice employability skills



- All transportation is provided
- Lunch and snacks are provided
- Sign up as soon as possible to guarantee a spot



Sign up by emailing Ashley Meyer (ameyer@hamiltonschools.org)



BLUE STAR ELEMENTARY 4TH GRADERS GET UNIQUE 'SALMON IN THE CLASSROOM' EXPERIENCE

The fourth-grade students at Blue Star Elementary are immersed in an exciting hands-on educational journey with Salmon in the Classroom, a Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) initiative. Generously sponsored by The Big Red Foundation, a group of Holland-area fishing enthusiasts and salmon charter captains, the program allows students to nurture salmon from eggs to fry before releasing them into a local river connected to Lake Michigan in May.

A Unique Learning Opportunity

Led by fourth-grade teacher Andrew Szczerowski, the program combines science, math, and environmental education. Students receive the salmon eggs from MDNR's Wolf Lake State Hatchery in November and will care for them through their life cycle, hoping to grow the fish to over five inches. Along the way, they explore:

- Life Cycle Studies: Watching salmon develop from eggs to fry.
- Fisheries Management: Learning about the MDNR's efforts, including how salmon were introduced to the Great Lakes to control the invasive alewife population.
- Aquatic Chemistry: Conducting daily water tests to ensure optimal living conditions for the salmon.
- Mathematical Applications: Monitoring fry size, tracking dietary needs, and analyzing mortality rates.

School-Wide Collaboration

The program includes monthly visits from other grades at Blue Star, blending science with character-building initiatives. This approach reinforces teamwork, responsibility, and a love for learning across the school community.

The Grand Finale

The project culminates in two memorable events in May:

- Salmon Release: Students will release the fry into a nearby river to contribute to local conservation efforts.
- Fishing Charter Trip: On May 28, interested fourth-graders will join a salmon fishing expedition on Lake Michigan, experiencing the thrill of the sport and connecting their classroom lessons to the real world.

"This program is a lot of work and sometimes stressful, but seeing the kids' excitement and growth makes it all worth it," shared Szczerowski.

The combination of real-world science, teamwork, and outdoor adventures creates a lasting impact, making Salmon in the Classroom a cornerstone of Blue Star Elementary's innovative education programs.



We Love our Principals!

October was Principal Appreciation Month! At Hamilton Community Schools, we are blessed with the best principals you will find anywhere. Thank you all for your commitment to our students, staff, and community!

Back Row (Left to R): David Sheppard (HHS Assistant Principal), Mitch Bosch (HHS), Jared Randall (Bentheim Elementary), Liz Morehouse (HMS), Sean Deiters (HMS Assistant Principal).

Front Row (L to R): Dean Kramer (Hamilton Elementary), Mary Wilkinson (Hamilton Virtual School), Kari Huckaby (Blue Star Elementary)

AN UPDATE FROM DR. LUSK!



Bond updates can be found on our district website under 'Our District' or by scanning the QR Code!

Hello Hawkeye Community,

I hope this Transcript finds you and your family well. As the leaves have all fallen, snow has blanketed the ground, and our first snow day is in the books; the Winter Wonderland of Michigan is upon us and all the joys that accompany it are here! With a memorable Thanksgiving holiday behind us and Christmas music everywhere we go, Andy Williams is correct in that, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year."

As we approach the merriest of holiday seasons, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support throughout the year. I recently read a social media post that had a comment thread that was truly humbling. To see how kind and supportive our stakeholders were about the students and staff of HCS was incredible. Thank you! Your commitment to our students, staff, and schools is what makes Hamilton such a special place to work, learn, and grow.

This time of year reminds us of the power of generosity and community spirit. The amount of generosity which has been on display this year from the Hometown Tailgate, to classroom supplies, to the awesome items supplied to the buildings from PTO's is impressive. Your support echoes in our hallways and continues to help drive HCS to being the best district possible for our community. In the light of giving back and serving, I want to extend a special thank you to Craig Van Beek for his six years of dedicated service to the Hamilton Community Schools Board of Education. Craig's leadership and passion have left a lasting impact on our district and we are deeply grateful for the time and energy he has invested in shaping our district. An impressive note about Craig's service is that he served as board president for three years. Serving as board president requires a great deal of time and patience as the position asks the person to wear many hats while in the role. Craig has helped make Hamilton a better place and his efforts will not be forgotten for a long time. Please offer a sincere Thank You to Craig when you see him around town.

On behalf of everyone at Hamilton Community Schools, I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a joyful holiday season. May this season of giving bring you peace, happiness, and meaningful time with loved ones.

Thank you for being an integral part of our Hamilton family.

Dr. Bradford Lusk
Proud Superintendent



Upcoming 'Scoop with the Supt.' Dates:

'Scoop with the Supt.' community forums are an opportunity for parents and community members to discuss any district happenings, ask questions, and enjoy free coffee and light breakfast in a relaxed setting. All will be held at Hawk's Nest Restaurant (3420 M-40).

Thursday, January 16 | 9:00-10:00 AM
Thursday, January 30 | 9:00-10:00 AM
Thursday, February 6 | 9:00-10:00 AM



'Like' Hamilton Community Schools on Facebook to stay up-to-date on all district happenings!



Or visit our website: HamiltonSchools.us

We're also on YouTube!



PROMOTING ONLINE SAFETY: EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO MAKE SMART DIGITAL CHOICES

In early December, Hamilton Middle School students were engaged in an essential discussion about the power of their digital footprint and the importance of online safety. Led by School Resource Officer John Dekkinga and District Communications & Marketing Coordinator Zach Harig, the presentation during the 7th and 8th as well as the 5th and 6th grade assemblies, is part of the district's ongoing commitment to preparing students for the digital age.



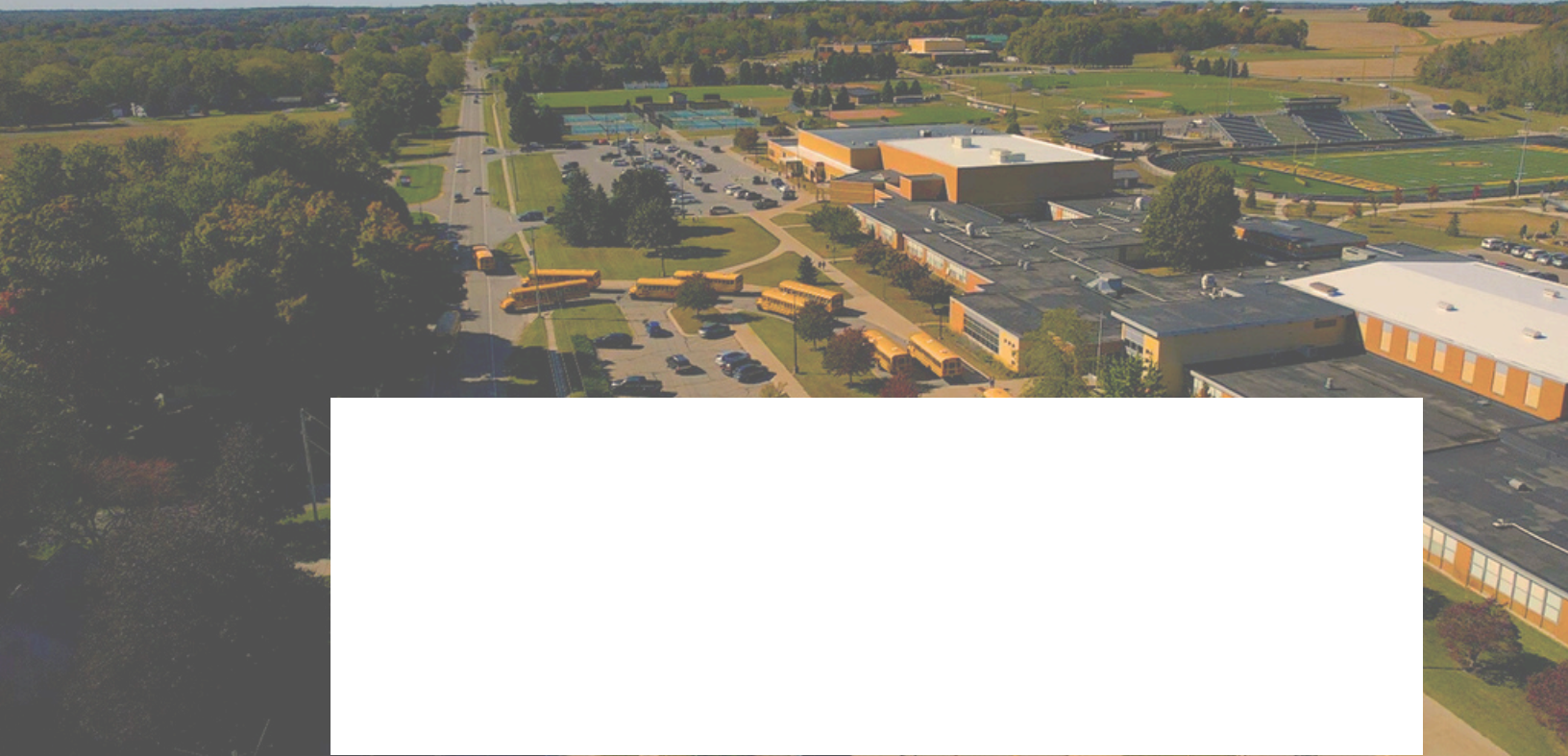
The sessions focused on the impact of social media and the lasting effects of online actions. Students are learning about the potential consequences of cyberbullying, how to protect their privacy online, and the importance of making smart, responsible choices on social media platforms.

"Online safety is more than just avoiding dangerous situations; it's about teaching students to value their future and understand how their digital presence can shape opportunities," Harig explained.

Officer Dekkinga emphasized the role of education in preventing online threats. "By understanding the risks and thinking critically about their actions, students can protect themselves and contribute to a safer online environment for everyone," he said.

The district's proactive approach to digital education reinforces its mission to empower students with the tools they need to succeed both in and out of the classroom. As technology continues to evolve, Hamilton Community Schools remains dedicated to equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the digital world safely and responsibly.





****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**

Our Students in Action!

Our Hamilton High School students continue to work hard every single afternoon in their Careerline Tech Center programs at the Ottawa Area ISD! Over the coming weeks on our district social media, stay tuned for student spotlight videos as they show us what they're learning in their programs! Below, take a look at our students in the Dental Careers program (top) as well as Connor Driesenga in the Diesel program (bottom left) and Evelyn Boeve in Construction (bottom right).



HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DO GREAT THINGS!



Hamilton High School senior Abatu Dykstra finished 16th overall in the state at the MHSAA Boys Cross Country state finals with a new school record 15:35.6! Abatu was named Academic All-State and also ran in the MITCA Meet of Champions in Kettering, Ohio, retaining the cup for Michigan over Ohio. Fellow HHS senior Noah Hernandez also ran in the MHSAA state meet, finishing 63rd overall with a 16:24! Great job, Abatu and Noah!



Congratulations to Hamilton High School sophomore, Charlee Hoover who won both the 50 & 100 yard paralympic freestyles at the MHSAA Girls Swim & Dive State Championship on October 23! **“Winning the state championship made me very happy, I am very proud and I am thankful for the opportunity to swim for Hamilton.”**

