

HONEY CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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August 27, 2013

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As many of you know, the State of Michigan implemented a new accountability system last year. This system is a result of the state's waiver to the 100% proficiency requirement in the "No Child Left Behind" legislation. Under this new accountability system, Honey Creek Community School has been identified as a "focus school." A focus school is a school with an achievement gap. This gap is measured by comparing the average Michigan Educational Assessment (MEAP) scores of the lowest performing 30% of students with the scores of highest performing 30% of students. The 10% of schools in the state with the largest gap are identified as focus schools. Honey Creek Community School had gaps in the areas of Mathematics, Writing and Science. At the same time, the accountability system rated Honey Creek student achievement in Reading, Social Studies, and Science as superior. Mathematics achievement is rated as significantly above average and Writing achievement is rated as slightly above average.

Our previous school improvement plans placed great emphasis on reading. The results of the fall 2012 MEAP indicate that our gap in this area has been significantly reduced. Of the 47 students in the lowest 30%, 37 of the students are ranked as proficient. We will continue our efforts to support all students in developing their reading skills.

This August, faculty and administration invested a great deal of effort in reviewing the achievement data in the areas of Mathematics and Writing. This data review revealed some significant trends in both Mathematics and Writing that we will be addressing this year. Identifying those content expectations where fewer than 60% of our students are proficient revealed the trends. In the areas of Mathematics, you will see an increased use of both manipulatives and movement to reinforce the concepts of numeracy and place value as well as develop mastery in the basic operations. Additionally, our 4/5 Mathematics program will be transitioning to a workshop approach to better target instruction to the specific needs of the student. We will be taking the same approach with Course One in the middle school.

Our Intervention Specialist will support the instructional changes. Both State and Federal regulation require us to use our Title I funds (\$11K) to address gap areas; therefore, the funding that was targeted toward providing reading intervention will now be used to support Mathematics intervention. (We will continue to use general funds to support our struggling readers.) Our Intervention Specialist will be providing both push-in and pull-out services to help students master specific learning targets necessary for success in the classroom.

In the area of writing, our faculty has established common expectations that will be reinforced in all subject areas. This will include both horizontally and vertically aligned checklists. Teachers at all levels will increase the use of prewriting strategies including graphic organizers such as maps, webs, and Venn Diagrams. Please note that this is only a brief summary of our Single Building District Improvement Plan. You will be able to access the complete plan from our website in early October.

Under the "No Child Left Behind" waiver, we were required to offer a "choice/transfer and transportation" option to families for the 2012-13 school year. This option required "focus schools" to provide transportation to students whose families opted to move their child from Honey Creek to another school not identified as a focus or priority school. Modification to this waiver removed that requirement for the 2013-14 school year; therefore, Honey Creek Community School will not provide transportation for those families who choose to transfer to another school.

With all of the emphasis being placed on the achievement gap, many parents come to me with concerns that their high achieving student's academic needs will not be addressed. At Honey Creek, we have always strived to meet each child at his or her academic level and guide that child toward making a minimum of one year's progress each year that child attends our school. Honey Creek is committed to this goal, and we will not compromise our efforts to meet the needs of high achieving students to reduce our achievement gap.

We also recognize that each student is endowed with unique gifts and challenges, for those students who find learning to be more challenging, we are committed to finding ways to help them succeed. During the past year I have been asked by some parents if they should remove their child from Honey Creek to help eliminate the gap. My answer to this question will always be **NO**. Children of all abilities are welcome at Honey Creek Community School.

We are honored that you have chosen Honey Creek to facilitate the social and academic growth of your child. If you have questions or concerns regarding our focus school status, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Al Waters". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Al Waters
Executive Director