

# HONEY BUNCHES OF NOTES

HONEY CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOL



Dear Families,

It was a pleasure to see so many parents turn out for the recent meeting on our school's financial health. While challenges continue, it is encouraging to see our community support continue to grow.

If you were unable to attend, you will soon be able to see a video recording of the presentation on our website. I will email you once it becomes available.

Last week I attended a presentation on the state's new student assessment program. The assessment is called the M-STEP, and it is based on the Common Core Standards in mathematics and language arts. The social studies and science portions are based on the Michigan Standards. Students in grades three through eight will be assessed in language arts and mathematics. Fourth and seventh grade students will be assessed in science, and fifth and eighth grade students will be assessed in social studies. The assessment will be administered in the spring, and once I have the exact dates I will forward them on to you.

Have a pleasant and safe holiday season!

Al

**STEM FAIR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0a4baaad2aa31-stem1>

## December

Mark your  
calendar

### EVENTS

Dec. 5

**STEM FAIR**

Dec. 11

**CRAFT FAIR**

8:30-2:30

**WINTER  
PERFORMANCE**

3:30-5:30

Dec. 17

**Board Meeting**

5:30

Dec. 19

**Wellness Meeting**

Dec. 20-Jan 4

**Winter Break**

January

Events

Jan 16th

Curriculum

Celebration

Jan. 19th

MLK Day

## ***Legomaniacs win an award!***

On Saturday, November 22nd, two teams from Honey Creek Community School traveled down to Monroe, MI to compete in the FIRST LEGO League regional tournament "Mission Possible". They were evaluated both on their preparation and performance that day in four areas, Core Values (teamwork skills), Project Presentation, Robot Design, and Robot Performance. Both teams worked extremely hard since September, meeting every Monday and Thursday and even adding in extra time these past weeks. Congratulations to both teams as you represented Honey Creek Community School and our motto, "Try hard, never give up!". Extra congratulations are in order for our middle school team, as they won the "Mechanical Design Award". Out of 35 teams, the judges felt that our middle school team displayed the most impressive design for our robot to complete the missions!

## **THE 2014 STEM FAIR**

The STEM committee would like to invite you to an afternoon of FUN with your family at Honey Creek! Please join us on Friday, [December 5 between 4-6 pm](#) for the STEM fair! Your student does not have to be bringing a project to come to the STEM Fair - there are several activities planned for everyone to do and enjoy! Fire the Honey Creek Trebuchet! Play a vintage video game! Challenge yourself with math problems! All this and much, much more is going to be available for you and your family!

NEW THIS YEAR - Between 3:15-6 pm, Mathnasium ([www.mathnasium.com](http://www.mathnasium.com)) will organize math games and challenges. Kids must be registered for aftercare, or be accompanied by an adult to participate. If [Friday](#) is not one of the days your student is in aftercare, you can use the "drop in" option, but please notify the aftercare team at least three days in advance, to ensure we meet State of Michigan requirements. Last but not least, a kind reminder that aftercare ends at 6 pm, so all kids in their care MUST be picked up by that time.

Details -

3:15 - 6:00 Mathnasium activities in the Cafeteria.

4:00 - 5:30 STEM Fair in the gym; student projects, games and demonstrations. Snacks and coffee will be available.

5:30 - 6:00 Raffle for project prizes.

## **K-1**

As we work through our current theme unit, My Journey Through School, students are working on gaining the following understandings:

- Understand that learning about myself and my school helps me to see the patterns in our school community and my role within it.
- Understand that I can make observations to discover school patterns.
- Understand that when I see patterns at school I can make informed choices.

The verse from the large theme poem we use throughout the year that addresses this unit is as follows and can actually be sung to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It":

My second journey is through school  
I'll make maps and learn to help because it's cool  
There are patterns I'll see if I know Honey Creek  
My second journey is through school ("Honey Creek!")

The children will be working toward the aforementioned understandings with various activities. They'll be doing many mapping activities to not only get more familiar with our classrooms, school building, playground, and grounds but also to aid them in observing possible issues around the school that could be improved or fixed with Service-Learning projects.

Along with this work, students will engage in generating questions based on their observations, planning and conducting some simple investigations on germs and the journeys they make from one person to another to make people sick in our school community, and recognizing that scientific investigations are done more than one time. Once students learn more about germs and how they journey we'll discuss the patterns they've noticed and talk about how they can make informed choices to help stop germs.

## 2-3

Please check out our blogs on the Honeycreek website!

<http://honeycreekschool.org/2-3/>

## 4-5

Later elementary students have been journeying through adventures. We are ten chapters into our class novel from the genre, Hatchet by Gary Paulsen. Students are engrossed in the story and are building a portfolio of reflections to demonstrate their understanding of it. They are also diligently working on adventure book projects at home. We'll all be excited to check these out at curriculum celebration. On December 8 we will also be celebrating students' hard work from our poetry unit by having a poetry reading in the cafeteria from 1-2:25. Join us if you are able!

What's going on under our feet? Students in 4/5 science are pondering this question as they create an illustration of what they know or think is going on underground. They are thinking about a "Journey to the Center of the Earth." This is a pre-assessment for the beginning of our geology unit. We'll be looking at the basics of plate tectonics, what's happening under the ocean, the rock cycle, the geology of Michigan, the fossil record and many other geology topics. Students will be participating in many labs that focus on these topics, recreating the systems of the earth through lots of different hands-on methods.

The students have done a fantastic job completing their Wint-O-Green Lifesaver projects. They are showing their knowledge about thinking scientifically and using good techniques through the design and implementation of their project. The many labs we did really helped them focus and think about how to think like a scientist and I am so pleased to hear so many of them still talking about topics we covered. This would make it a natural follow-on to participate in the STEM fair! Hope to see more of your experiments there! Great work!!

In 4/5 Social Studies, we have taken all that we've learned in our mapping and geography units, and have started applying it all to what we know of the history (geologic and current) of Michigan. As mentioned before, all the other sub-disciplines of SS (history, economics, government, civics, resources, etc.) are all linked through geography. After learning about Michigan's geography, we are moving onto building large Michigan maps that will show multiple layers of information, from resources to major highways.

Finally, we have also started working on our technology multimedia project of creating Pure Michigan Ads. Look for all of these projects at our Winter Curriculum celebration.

## **Middle School**

### Science

Oh the weather outside is frightful...

In the middle school science classrooms, we've finished up our ecosystem projects and continuing onwards in our theme of Homes & Habitats with another unit that follows closely behind. "What's the weather?" is a two month unit that helps students understand the science behind atmospheric conditions and why certain areas of the world experience their respective climate conditions. We will use Ann Arbor, MI as a starting point and use those weather forecasting skills for another location. Be on the look out for some amateur meteorologists!

### Language Arts

In December, students will continue to focus on reading biographies and finding unique ways to tell the stories of the people they have been reading about. We are engaged in our yearly multi-genre project, and it is exciting to see these projects start to build as ideas are developing. Students are tasked with telling the story of their subject through 5 different pieces of writing, each focusing on a different aspect of the biography. Look for these at curriculum celebration in January!

## Happy Holidays from the Honey Creek Wellness Committee!

November's "Farm to School" featured kohlrabi and apples with minted yogurt for the kids to try. Thanks to all who are helping to keep the fruit bowls filled in the classrooms, so our kids have healthy snacks! And, please join us for our next Wellness Committee meeting, which will be on Friday, December 19 at 8:30a.m. at Panera Bread on Jackson Rd.

Thanks for all you do to support wellness in our community!

**The Fine Arts Committee** is seeking a parent volunteer to help create our annual Talent Night program. Each year, we create a free printed program to accompany the dinner and show. Over time, the show program has grown from a handwritten flyer to a professionally-made keepsake for students and families (it's also turned into a real money maker, with paid advertising that supports the 8th grade trip). We're looking for someone with word processing and graphic design experience who can help produce this year's program. Most of this effort takes place during late Feb/early March. Contact Adam Druckman at [honeycreek@email.com](mailto:honeycreek@email.com) if you're interested.

The Fine Arts Committee is also looking for parents willing to help set-up Honey Creek's portable stage and curtains at various events throughout the year (including Talent Night, graduation, etc). Basically, we'd like to assemble a pool of willing parents in advance - so we don't need to ask the whole community each time the stage is needed. A team of 4-6 parents working together can easily set-up or break-down the stage in less than an hour. No tools are needed; and we will train you! Contact Sherri Borer at [drsborer@gmail.com](mailto:drsborer@gmail.com).

## **Board News**

The Board of Trustees met on November 19, 2014 at 5:30 pm. Present: Board: Yvette Atkinson, Christine Kelley, John Lonsway, Nina Nabors, Pamela Reister, Angela Tracey, Greg White; Community: Al Waters, Shellee Almquist, Mary Bassett, Karen Giltrow, Sue Hofbauer.

**Director's Report:** Al Waters reviewed the following:

Honey Creek Community School Criminal History Record Information Policy and the corrective action plan were submitted to the Michigan State Police in October 2014. Notice was received on November 6, 2014 that both the Honey Creek CHRI Policy and the corrective action plans were accepted.

LGBTQI Policy and Religious Expression Policy are currently in the process of being drafted, and will be shared with the board when completed.

Honey Creek Community School Replication/Expansion: Al Waters is exploring the possibility of either replicating or expanding the Honey Creek model. He is talking with Washtenaw ISD Assistant Superintendent Sarena Shivers, reviewing public school academy legislation, and consulting with the Michigan Department of Education. He is also conferring with local commercial real estate agent Jeff Harshe, to look for properties for repurposing or building, and with David Feinberg of Turner-Agassi (an organization that works with investors to provide financial and societal returns). The board discussed the possibility of expansion or replication, and agreed that a more complete review of finances and opportunities is needed at this point. Yvette Atkinson and Pamela Reister volunteered to head teams and to complete the following for the February 2015 board meeting: Establish a team and determine the scope and needs of an additional K-8 campus. Establish a team and determine the scope and needs of a high school campus. Estimate costs and capital requirements and determine feasibility of expansion and/or replication. Determine next steps.

**Branding:**

Al Waters is working with a Catchafire volunteer on the project of revisiting Mission, Vision, and Beliefs in order to better market Honey Creek.

**Title 1 Audit:**

Honey Creek will be audited for Title 1 compliance. Title 1 funding is currently at \$11,000. We are out of compliance in the following areas: Need to have a program/policy in place for children of migrant workers.

Need to have a before-school, afterschool, and a summer school program (would cost \$25,000).

Need to have parent education programs.

Need to have professional development for teachers to increase parent involvement.

Need to network with Washtenaw County early education programs (Headstart, etc.).  
Al Waters will review the audit and will report back to the board whether or not it is worth the \$11,000 we would receive from Title 1.

**Finance Committee:**

The committee met on November 12, 2014 to review the budget and the 90-day committee goals. The current fund balance is at 18% this year, and a 3% bonus for returning staff would bring the fund balance to 16%, then down to 15.5% with stipends and reimbursements. The committee will continue to look at the possibility of returning tuition reimbursements and stipends and the additional 2% bonus later in the year. Al Waters would like to see reimbursements and stipends covered next year as several teachers have been very involved in training, curriculum alignment, and training other faculty. The Finance Committee recommended a 3% bonus to all returning staff with stipends to be determined later. Motion was approved by all board members present. Faculty liaison Mary Bassett will notify the staff regarding the 3% bonus to all returning staff.

**Foundation Liaisons:**

Christine Kelley reviewed the report and noted approximately \$10,000 has been donated to the foundation since the beginning of the school year. Grants committee is stalled. The fundraising committee is currently gearing up for the end of the year appeal to the Honey Creek community. Letters have been sent, signs have been posted around the driveway to the school, and three state of the school presentations are scheduled December 2, 2014 in the High Point Reception room at 8:30a.m., 3:30p.m., 5:30p.m. Board discussion centered on hiring a professional fundraiser or administrator of the Foundation, and the importance of improving contact with alumni for fundraising purposes.

**Governance Committee:**

Nina Nabors reported the committee reviewed the bylaws that focused on Al Waters' role on the Foundation board. The committee recommended adding a line to the director's duties stating: The director may serve in some capacity on the Honey Creek Foundation. Three prospective 9th board members from the community with financial backgrounds have declined the membership invitation, however they will serve on committees. The committee recommended calling out to the Honey Creek community for additional board members. The committee recommended a comprehensive director evaluation every three years, followed by two years of a simpler annual evaluation of the director's goals. Nina Nabors will begin work on the evaluation at the beginning of the year.

**Communications and Outreach:**

The committee continues to work on liaising with PTO and faculty/staff, including working on a faculty needs assessment. A family contributions survey was sent out to the community to build skills database; committee continues to encourage response. Committee is working on improving orientation to communications at Honey Creek by educating room parents, presenting at enrollment meetings, revitalizing the parent mentor program, and looking at parent pledge. This committee is



also focusing on improving Honey Bunches of Notes, the website for internal and external users, and is engaged (with Al Waters) on a rebranding project. The committee is also looking to begin a video project.

**Faculty Liaison:**

Mary Bassett thanked the board for the 3% bonus for returning staff.

**Old Business:**

Board Self Assessment: Nina Nabors highlighted changes the current board has already made to address some of the concerns from previous board, and focused on continuous improvement/board development. Discussed having Tony Derezinski, former MASB and former Honey Creek board member, or Diana Kern from the NEW Center in to speak to the board; also discussed attending or going online to MASB for new board member orientation.

Parent Handbook needs to be reviewed every year.

**Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation:**

Nina Nabors reviewed items for discussion with WISD attorney and will bring back to board meeting for adoption.

**Other Items by Consensus of the Board:**

Christine Kelley asked the question how Honey Creek Community School would handle the open carrying of a gun by a person on the school campus if you are picking up your child? A discussion followed and Al Waters replied the school would follow the lockdown procedure.

Yvette Atkinson noted Dr. Patricia Deldin appreciated the board invitation to present the middle school sleep study during a board meeting.

**Next meeting will be held December 17, 2014 at 5:30 pm in the Pit. Public participation is always welcome!**