Dear HCS Community,

It’s hard to believe that the year is almost half over. With that said, I want to take this opportunity to bring you up to speed on major initiatives that are currently being addressed within our District.

School Safety

In light of the recent event that has so impacted the Hamilton community, the Board and I are exploring any and all options which address the safety of our children and the adults entrusted to our care.

Coincidentally, efforts had already begun surrounding the employment of a school resource officer and tightening the security of our facilities, most notably our school entrance.

Additionally, we are scheduling a community forum for Friday evening, February 1st at 6 pm in the school’s auditorium.

The purpose for the forum is to provide you with any information we have about the incident, to answer any questions we can and to elicit suggestions and ideas about improving school safety as we go forward.

Strategic Planning

A mid-year progress report was provided to the Board at its January 10th meeting. That progress report is on our district’s webpage under “News.” There remains additional work to be completed, but current kudos to our planning and implementation teams.

Capital Project

Thanks to an 81% yes vote on December 18th, 2018, our district is embarking on a $15.3 million capital improvement project, primarily designed to replace and repair infrastructure like the roof and boiler systems for heating, ventilating, and air conditioning.

Staff Recruitment and Retention

One of our Board’s concerns has been HCS’s ability to recruit and retain staff and faculty to our district. I am currently reviewing and analyzing 11 years of information regarding this subject. I will provide a written analysis and report to our Board at its February meeting.

Student Test Results and Future Testing

Recently, HCS received information from the New York State Education Department that, based on last April’s grades 3-8 test results, we are now a “district in good standing.” That is great news and is a tribute to all who contribute to our success. This achievement and recognition cannot be attained without the hard work of our community, parents, administrators, faculty and staff.

There is a challenge ahead of us, however. A little more than 60% of our students in grades 3-8 completed the tests last April. In order to avoid being placed on a state district or school list for needing improvement, we must either have the 60% who take the tests achieve a score of four (4), or increase our participation rate towards the federal/state requirement of 95%. This data has been provided to our faculty and the PTO at their last meeting. I will keep you posted as I ask for your help so that we “strive for 95.”

Peter Punzo
Interim Superintendent of Schools
Dear HCS Parents:

Hamilton Central School, like many other schools, has seen a recent increase in incidents involving student **Vaping** or **JUULing**. As a means to inform you of this issue and to give you resources if you feel your child is involved in this kind of behavior, we have partnered with BRIDGES of Madison County and the Hamilton Coalition to host an information night on February 13\textsuperscript{th} at 6:00 PM in the Auditorium.

**Vaping** or **JUULing** is the act of inhaling a vapor produced by an electronic vaporizer or e-cigarette. Vaporizers/e-cigarettes come in all different shapes. Some common styles look like regular cigarettes; however, the ones most commonly used by teenagers look like a thick pen, a stylus for an iPad\textsuperscript{®}, a USB flash drive, and other everyday items. The devices are very small and can easily be hidden on a person or blend in with normal backpack items. The vapor, which is odorless and evaporates much more quickly than smoke, can contain nicotine and other substances such as THC (crystallized marijuana), which is highly concerning. The liquids, or **vape juices**, are sweet and come in flavors such as cool cucumber, fruit medley, mango and mint. According to the 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey, there has been a 78% increase in e-cigarette use among high school students and a 48% increase among middle school students in the last year. A recent study by the National Institute of Drug Abuse found that nearly 21% of high school seniors say they vaped a nicotine product within the last 30 days, up from 11% a year ago - the largest one-year increase of any substance use in the survey’s 43-year history. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that e-cigarette use among U.S. youth and young adults is now a major public health concern and is now the most commonly used form of nicotine among youth in the United States, surpassing conventional tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, and hookahs.

Although we continue to learn more about e-cigarettes and **vaping**, we currently know enough to take action to protect our students from being harmed by these products. Our code of conduct prohibits the use of e-cigarettes, and any student found possessing and/or using any vaping supplies will be subject to the enforcement of the code of conduct.

As parents, we ask that you parents partner with us to help support our students in making positive decisions for themselves and their futures. We encourage you to have a conversation with your son(s) or daughter(s) about this topic and attend our informational workshop on February 13\textsuperscript{th}.

**Thank you...**

William Dowsland

William Dowsland • Secondary Principal

Below are some links to additional information regarding vaping and its associated health risks.

**RESOURCES FOR PARENTS ON VAPEING:**

On Saturday, December 15th, 2018, the Hamilton FFA Chapter participated in our 3rd annual “Thank-a-Farmer Baskets” tradition. This occasion is where Hamilton FFA members gather on the weekend and pack up food and other items to deliver to farmers. The crates consisted of ham, corn, stuffing, rolls, cranberry sauce, Chobani yogurt, potatoes, all the fixings to have a holiday meal. Most importantly, inside each crate was a hand-written thank you letter signed by everyone who came on Saturday to help. This year, there were 26 crates delivered with the help of 14 eager FFA members.

The Hamilton FFA wanted to show our area farmers how much we appreciate them and all that they do for us throughout the year. Farmers put in a lot of effort every single day of the year, never get a day off, and provide for everyone. Moreover, it is a really hard time for farmers around the holidays. When the weather gets colder, the to-do list for farmers grows and grows. Not only that, but since farmers are so busy during the holidays with farming, they do not get a lot of family time or just time off in general. So we wanted to make a difference and show farmers that we are grateful and extremely thankful for them. Our goal was to give back to them.

After we packed all of the food and other items, we split up a list of farmers throughout the community. From there, we would go to their farms and deliver the food to them. This year we took on this experience with a twist. Instead of cardboard boxes to transport the food in, the HCS Ag Mechanics class constructed wooden crates by hand out of recycled pallets. And, it doesn’t stop there; HCS Art in Agriculture students worked together to create hand painted barn quilts. If you don’t already know, barn quilts are handmade, painted, wooden blocks that are generally display on the front or the side of a barn. The barn quilts that our HCS students painted for our farmers were meant to be displayed indoors.

Personally, every time I went to a farmers property to give them the crate, I would see a sense of joy heap over them. From my perspective, I enjoyed seeing the smiles on the farmer’s faces after showing up to their farms and giving them their basket. For me, this was a great experience and I am so glad I set aside time for this. I believe that it is safe to say that everyone who participated had the same feelings. At the end of the day, not only were we happy for doing a good thing, but the farmers were very happy as well because they knew people were thinking of them this holiday season.
SSAE After School Program

The Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant after school classes are underway at HCS! At the end of November, students in grades K-8 began participating in Lego® Robotics, Jr. and First LEGO® League teams. Coaches Allison Forth and Chris Rogers are leading the teams through creating, coding and problem-solving opportunities. Both teams are receiving support from Colgate Computer Science Professor and HCS Parent Hiva Samadian. The SSAE grant aims to partner teachers with outside professionals to forge relationships and strengthen pedagogy for all. Students in grades 3-5 are also learning the basics of the Spanish language from 4th grade teacher Patricia Rowland and HCS BOE member and Director of Colgate’s Keck Center for Language Center Cory Duclos in an Hola! Español class.

Many more after school opportunities are upcoming in the next session beginning in February. The wildly popular Lego® Robotics, Jr. will be offered again, along with a Toy Take-Apart class, Digital Art and Animation, Board Games, a Brightknights Club, Model UN for Middle School, and an Introduction to 3D Printing class. Check out the SSAE tab on the Hamilton Central web page for more information!

STUDIO ART

By: Ryan Bane

Studio in Art one students worked collaboratively on a large scale mural for their Color Theory unit of study. Each student was assigned one column out of 27, each being required to paint 35 separate squares that correlated to a strip of paper they were assigned. Each strip made up 1/35th of the overall image they were assigned, which at the time they did not know was the Mona Lisa. This collaborative assignment brought together two separate sections of the course to work together on a large scale temporary mural. The 2x2” squares were mounted on a large paper backing after the students completed them in acrylic paint. This large scale work of art reinforced the concept of stepping back from their artwork as they are creating it to gain a different perspective on what they are making; not get mired down in the close up aspect of the assignments. Both classes really appreciated being able to step WAY back from the project and gain a different perspective on what they had completed. If you happen to be in the building, the Mona Lisa mural is located outside the MS/HS Main Office. To get a clearer image, walk to the opposite end of the hallway!
Hello HCS Families,

The elementary school staff has been extremely busy this year making sure we are providing a well-rounded education for our students. This year we have implemented several new initiatives, many of which have been a direct result of needs identified through the strategic planning process. Our decision-making is a systemic process in which all students, PreK-5, receive programs and practices that are similar in design and instructional methods.

The Character Education Team has developed a year-long program of activities and monthly themes designed to support our student’s growth in both social and emotional learning. Themes already practiced include gratitude, joyfulness and self-control. Each theme is introduced in a school-wide assembly. Activities for our student community are taught and reinforced in and out of the classroom. Many of you have participated in the home activities which help to reinforce a common goal. Throughout each month students are recognized for displaying each trait and a school-wide assembly highlights students and their positive actions. Additionally, the Character Education team is researching and exploring PreK-5 programs for social and emotional learning. The team will select a program that best meets the needs of our students. The plan is to have a program selected for implementation in the 2019-20 school year.

This year we have also introduced new curriculum based supports for helping our students as they learn to read. In grades Pre-K through 2nd, students spend about 30 minutes each day studying phonics utilizing a program called Wilson Fundations. This provides all students in K-2 classrooms with a systematic approach in acquiring the foundational skills for reading and spelling, emphasizing phonemic awareness, phonics-word study, high frequency word study, fluency, vocabulary, handwriting, and spelling.

In grades 3-5, teachers are implementing Spelling Connections. This program uses carefully-curated spelling lists to teach patterns, build vocabulary, and develop the skills students need to become proficient spellers. This will lead to improved skills in other areas, including more fluent writing. Spelling Connections incorporates hands-on activities, motivating online resources, and differentiated instruction to make our students savvy spellers.

We have also begun servicing identified students with Orton-Gillingham. This is a teaching approach specifically designed to help struggling readers by explicitly teaching the connections between letters and sounds. This highly structured approach introduces the idea of breaking reading and spelling down into smaller skills involving letters and sounds, and then building on these skills over time. It is a multisensory approach to teaching reading and is considered highly effective for teaching students with dyslexia. Instructors use sight, hearing, touch and movement to help students connect language with letters and words.

With the support of a $943,000 Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) Grant, we have implemented an array of after-school enrichment clubs that are designed to provide all students with access to a well-rounded education. Some of the many clubs include Spanish, Lego® Robotics and Lego® Robotics Junior, Toy Take-Apart, Board Games, Self-Esteem and Homework Club, Middle School Model UN, Introduction to 3D Design, and Mindful Heart and Art Journaling. The grant not only financially provides for the clubs to happen but also provides the district funds to purchase materials. In addition, the grant provides funding for needed professional development in Project Based Learning and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) for the entire staff. A brochure of upcoming clubs will be sent home this month. Clubs run from 2:45pm to 4:30pm Monday-Thursdays. This is a tremendous opportunity for both our students and staff. This summer, the grant will allow us to provide a K-8 summer program that delivers many of these same opportunities. Information on the summer program will be available to parents in the coming months.

It is our goal to provide the best education for every learner so that they have the experiences necessary to be successful in the twenty-first century. None of this would happen without the passion, expertise and dedication of the teachers and support staff here at HCS. I am grateful to work in a community that is committed to giving so much to our students.

Dedicated to serving the needs of all of our learners,

Regards,

Kevin Ellis

Kevin Ellis • Elementary Principal
Fourth Grade

Fourth grade students received a visit from a therapy dog during their reading class. They enjoyed reading to the therapy dog and learning about its important job.

2019-2020

UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN

The Hamilton Central School Universal Pre-Kindergarten/Targeted Pre-K program is currently accepting applications for our 2019-2020 school year.

The UPK program is FREE to children who live in the Hamilton Central School District and will be age 4 by 12/1/19. Applications must be submitted by March 29th, 2019. A lottery will be held as per UPK guidelines, for all students who have registered by the deadline. Students that are not accepted into the UPK program, may then be eligible for our Targeted Pre-K program, if their families meet the entrance criteria. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of openings within our Pre-K program, acceptance will be based on eligibility and Pre-K guidelines.

Applications may be found on-line on the HCS website (hamiltoncentral.org) or picked up at the school. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Kevin Ellis at 315-824-6330.

2019-2020

Kindergarten Registration

Kindergarten registration has begun for the 2019-20 school year. To apply, parents of children who will be five (5) years old by December 1st, 2019 are invited to visit the Hamilton Central School website under “Parents”, “Forms” (application form and health forms) or call or stop by the elementary office. Your child’s birth certificate, official immunization record and proof of residency will be required for registration. If you are a new family to the district, please contact the District Office, Debbie Kirley 315-824-6310, in order to establish proof of residency first.

Please submit Kindergarten applications by Monday, May 1st, 2019 in order to be scheduled for a screening. Screenings for incoming kindergarten students will take place in May. An appointment letter will be sent to you in May, with a time and date to bring your child in for screening.

For more information call Lynda O’Keeffe, Elementary Secretary, at 315-824-6330.
PTO Update

We’ve been busy carrying out our mission to support community building, enrichment and equity for all students at Hamilton Central School. We ended last year with a logo contest in which a winning logo was selected from each level. Congratulations to our winners - Neveah Mensche for elementary school, Isabella Bonini for middle school and Ian Wilson for high school. And a special thank you to Mr. Bane for combining the three pieces of artwork together to make our fabulous new logo!

In September, we kicked the year off with presentations from Mr. Punzo, Mr. Dowsland and Mr. Ellis. Administrator support for the PTO has been phenomenal! Literacy Coordinator, Sheila Catania, managed our first major fundraiser, the Scholastic Book Fair, during the first few weeks of school. Family participation helped fund fall field trips and teacher requested resources like weekly Scholastic readers for all Kindergarten and third grade students.

In October, we were fortunate to have HCS parent, Dr. Jennifer Meyers, and HCS alum, Dr. Travis Hall, lead a discussion about screen time challenges parents face in the digital age. PTO Coordinator, Kathleen Catania, with help from Ms. Briggs, ran the “Pick a Reading Partner” (PARP) program. Students read over 108,500 minutes and the top classes were rewarded with slime making parties! The PTO also provided funds to support the 3rd-5th grade Prize Speaking contest. We supported Mrs. Bossard’s vision to have a school-wide Pumpkin Walk by donating funds and organizing the many volunteers that were needed to make the event a success. Health and Wellness Coordinator, Tara Langel, worked on fulfilling a request for an upgraded playground cart for recess fun. Garden Coordinator, Amy Sommers, enlisted volunteers for “Weeding Wednesdays” to clean up the gardens around the school grounds.

In November, HCS Business Manager, Matt Crumb, presented an overview of the Capital Improvement Project proposed by the Board of Education. Karli Murray organized one of our major fundraisers, Yankee Candle and many families chose to participate in our alternative fundraiser. Thank you to everyone who supports our fundraising efforts. Box Tops Coordinators, Jackie Cleary and Ms. Briggs, submitted nearly 3,000 Box Tops and began sending home monthly collection forms. To close out the fall, Sheila Catania initiated a Book Swap. With the help of Ms. Briggs, Ms. Forth and Ms. Jerome, five large tubs of books were collected, sorted by age and redistributed to build home libraries for interested HCS families.

December was a bit slower, as we took some time to reflect on the past and to build momentum for the future. We teamed up with SADD on a Fun Run and sock collection. We also supported the elementary art department in providing gift boxes that were used to send home gifts to families. Thank you to Mrs. Kowalski for organizing both activities.

At our January meeting, Guidance Counselors Ms. Cabas and Ms. Daoust shared a glimpse of the extensive resources available to students through their office: from career and college application guidance, to social emotional support and everything in between. In partnership with the Counseling Department, the PTO has recently funded care bags for students in crisis, as well as need-based academic scholarships.

All year long, our Hospitality Coordinators, Julie Hengst and Melissa Cassulis, have been organizing efforts to show teachers and staff how much their work is appreciated - from a back-to-school breakfast and a winter chili luncheon, to writing thank you notes to all in December. In January, we arranged a spirit warming hot chocolate bar. Many families have baked and sent in contributions to express true widespread support for our wonderful teachers and staff - Thank you!

As we look towards the Spring, we’re excited to find new ways to support teachers, staff and families so that everyone may have the best possible experience at Hamilton Central. Stay tuned for information from Fundraising Coordinator, Danielle Bikowsky, on a silent auction that she has just started planning. Please keep your eyes open for other exciting events, as well. Let us know if there is something that interests you and we will be sure to look into it.

Follow us on Facebook (@hamiltoncentralschool) and note our upcoming meetings:

- February 13th at 6 pm
- March 6th at 3 pm
- April 3rd at 6:30 pm
- May 1st at 3 pm
- June 5th at 6:30 pm

Please join us!

Jennifer Jones
President

Kathleen Stahl
Middle/High School Vice President

Karli Murray
Elementary Vice President

Carey Hay
Secretary

Jennifer Chouinard
Treasurer
**2019-20 BUDGET CALENDAR of EVENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 14</td>
<td>Regular BOE Meeting - 6 p.m. Preliminary Budget Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 28</td>
<td><strong>Budget Coffee</strong></td>
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<td>Mar. 1</td>
<td>Petition forms available (online or at District Office) for Board of Education Candidates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 14</td>
<td>Regular Board of Education Meeting - 6 p.m. Budget Review</td>
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<td>Mar. 21</td>
<td>Deadline for submission of petition to be placed on ballot</td>
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<td>Mar. TBD</td>
<td><strong>Budget Coffee</strong> - 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. TBD</td>
<td><strong>Budget Coffee</strong> - 9 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Apr. TBD</td>
<td>Preliminary Budget Hearing - 6 p.m. Possible adoption of 2019-20 Budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 11</td>
<td>Petitions for Board of Education candidates are due by 4 p.m.</td>
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**Direct Phone Numbers:**

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<tr>
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<th>Phone Number</th>
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<td>Superintendent/District Office</td>
<td>315-824-6310</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary Principal Main Office</td>
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<td>Purchasing</td>
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<td>Elementary Office</td>
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<td>Business Manager</td>
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<td>District Treasurer</td>
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<td>Technology Department</td>
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<td>HS/MS Counseling Office</td>
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<td>Transportation Department</td>
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<td>Cafeteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receptionist/Attendance/Main Entrance</td>
<td>315-824-6300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tax Collector</td>
<td>315-824-6310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transportation Requests**

Transportation requests for children attending private, parochial schools or places other than their home, for the purpose of day care, in 2019-20 are due to the District Office by April 1st.