STEM emphasis spreads through District

**HMS students embrace STEM**

In its second year with a STEM program, Hockinson Middle School’s curriculum has grown to include four elective courses that give students opportunities to explore applications of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. This semester brought the addition of STEM 4, which features Lego Robotics.

“We need students learning how to do these hands-on things,” said HMS science teacher Mark Muckerheide, who added a CTE—Career Technical Education—certificate to his qualifications, so the program would be eligible for state funding this year.

The STEM courses give middle schoolers opportunities to create, plan, design, troubleshoot and recreate their projects—skills beneficial to all students, whether pursuing careers or college after high school.

In January, 21 HMS students served as STEM Ambassadors at the school’s first-ever “STEM Evening of Growth.” They showed off their dragsters and catapults, wind turbines and eco columns, levitating cars and bridges, and Rube Goldberg machines—which accomplish a simple task, like popping a balloon, using multiple steps.

“We need students learning how to do these hands-on things.”

—HMS science teacher Mark Muckerheide

They also invited their families to take part in STEM challenges, building airplanes and toothpick bridges. The goal was to get everyone engaged with science.

Muckerheide and his students are taking STEM to the Vancouver Mall for an April exhibition. Then watch for another STEM Evening at HMS later this spring.

**STEM Network expands offerings**

Hockinson’s schools are enhancing STEM education for all grades, K-12, as part of a new partnership with the Southwest Washington STEM Network.

“We are creating a culture that connects our students to science, technology, engineering and math through problem-solving and applications in the world around them,” said Slade McSheehy, Hockinson’s assistant superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction.

Among the Network’s offerings is the AP Connect Program. One Saturday a month, AP Connect brings together teachers of Advanced Placement (AP) STEM courses, STEM industry experts and area AP students—including HHS’s AP calculus, physics, statistics and biology students—to the Washington State University Vancouver campus for instruction, tutoring and mentoring.

HSD is also working with the Network to plan next year’s K-12 STEM curriculum, incorporating problem-based learning, college- and career-related learning, work-based learning, and mentoring and coaching in support of students and teachers.
Dear Community Members,

With spring arriving, I reflect on the past few months with a sense of gratitude.

In February, for the second year in a row, our community cast its votes to support our schools. In 2015, you voted to approve a construction bond that is being used to make much-needed improvements to the High School and will enable our district to build a new, state-of-the-art Middle School—groundbreaking in June!

The levy you approved this February has empowered us to retain key educational staff and give our students opportunities, from special education to athletics, and to upgrade equipment that has outlasted its life expectancy.

As we begin our journey toward the end of the school year, I hope you will join me in cheering on our students and athletes, artists and scientists who are benefitting from your support.

It is such a pleasure to be part of a community that cares so deeply about its young people and wants them to have every opportunity to pursue their dreams.

Sincerely,
Sandra Yager

Improvements at Hockinson High School are on schedule, and the Middle School construction project is nearly ready to begin.

Recent highlights include:
- The county issued land-use and building permits for work on the High School in mid-March.
- Foundations have been poured for the band room and sports pavilion, and walls are beginning to rise.

The grandstand is expected to be ready by the beginning of April, and the band room and sports pavilion will be ready by autumn.

“It’s going to be one great facility,” said Damon Roché, district capital projects manager.

As for the Middle School, the district is putting the project out to bid April 4 with bid opening in May. The schedule calls for groundbreaking in June, and if all goes according to schedule, students will start classes in the new building in January 2018.

These projects, which are carefully planned to enhance learning opportunities for our students, are only possible due to the generosity of our community, which approved a construction bond in 2015.

New facilities projects proceed on schedule

Our very popular 5/6-grade Girls’ Volleyball program is back again this year. Fliers have been sent to students through the schools, and the season begins April 20. If you did not receive a flier and your daughter is interested in participating, please contact Community Education or visit our website at www.hocksd.org/Community/Community_Education.

Upcoming Spring Classes:
- LEGOS®
- Flag Football
- Success through Chess
- Mad Science
- Art Club

Our summer camp lineup is rolling out, and current information is posted on our website. Keep checking back for updates.

Upcoming Summer Camps:
- UK Soccer Camps
- Safe Sitter
- Kids for Kids
- Hawks Football Camp
- Basketball Camps
- Girls Volleyball Camp
- High School Girls Volleyball Camp
Focus fuels HSD’s champion

When Cameron Loos pinned his opponent at the state wrestling tournament in February, Hockinson High School earned its first-ever state wrestling championship.

For Cameron, it was the grand finale to years of hard work.

The HHS senior began his wrestling career as a 5-year-old preschooler and wrestled nearly every year thereafter. Beginning in middle school, he worked with a personal trainer, and in January he embarked on an ambitious conditioning regimen, jogging and sprinting for miles at a time.

Down 6-0 in his final match, Cameron remained focused on his goal. “I could have stayed there and figured I was losing—and lose,” he said. “But I just stayed relaxed. I knew I’d be fine, because I could go to a whole other round with my conditioning.”

When Cameron and his opponent fell on their backs, Cameron bounced up and pinned his opponent. The referee called the match.

Cameron’s legacy will be to inspire other Hawks.

“He’ll have other wrestlers now knowing they could be a state champion, because we’ve got one now,” his coach Ralph Bever said. “And they don’t come that easy.”

Read more and see news coverage at www.hocksd.org/news/in_the_news.

Hockinson hosts an evening of many cultures

Hockinson’s younger students are well on their way to seeing themselves as global citizens.

This winter, Hockinson Heights Elementary embarked on a study of world cultures that culminated in a multicultural emphasis to this year’s Arts, Science & Poetry night, held Feb. 25.

For a couple of months leading up to the event, each grade focused on a different continent, diving into its music, art, food and culture. Students then shared what they learned with the more than 700 community members, family members, students and teachers who attended.

“It was really neat to see the community come and enjoy a multi-cultural event like that,” said music teacher Megan Miles, who organized the multicultural program with art teacher Nancy O’Neill-Bratt and music teacher Rebekka Ramirez.

Community members helped the students prepare by loaning artifacts and providing snacks, and some came dressed in the attire of their families’ traditional or favorite culture. Third through fifth graders led attendees in song and dance.

“We try to get kids to see outside their own little town, their own little world and notice the big world around them,” Miles said. “It’s a good eye-opener, and it sparks conversation, and it sparks interest, and it gets them asking parents, ‘Where did we come from, where did Grandma and Grandpa come from?’ It’s neat to have those conversations.”

Special thanks to WEA-Riverside for the grant that made it possible to purchase cross-cultural snacks and to Hockinson PWT for a grant to purchase multicultural children’s nonfiction and fiction books, which are available for checkout at the HHE library.

HMS penny drive sets record

For the second year in a row, Hockinson Middle School students have soared past their goal in the Pennies for Patients drive for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

What makes Hockinson’s achievement especially remarkable is the per-student average. In the three-plus state region, students collect an average of $1.68 each.

Hockinson’s average? $12.63.

Drama offers opportunities

For his senior project, Matthew Phillips wrote a full-length script titled “Always Blame the Butler” and co-directed the play with classmate Anna Uusitalo.

They had only five weeks from casting to the rising of the curtain.

“We did it! It’s something we all accomplished,” Matthew said.
Everyone—young and old—knows what it’s like to feel at loose ends.

Last month, Hockinson Heights Elementary installed a tool to help students find a solution: a buddy bench.

This inviting wooden bench sits on the school playground and gives students a place to find a friend. When other students see someone sitting there, they can go and sit with that student or invite him or her to join their activities. So far, it’s working.

HHE social worker Vickie Hermann said the bench has become a popular meeting spot for all sorts of children. Recess aides report that students run out of the building for recess, race to the buddy bench, and soon other children run over to meet them, and they all take off together.

“You’d think they’re just out there jumping rope,” Hermann said. “But they’re watching the bench. They’re rising to the occasion.”

The buddy bench was truly a community effort. Inspired by a news story, parent Kelsey Chappelle suggested the idea, and Hockinson PWT—People Working Together—and Eastside Steel donated materials for the bench. Jon Siebert, husband of HHES teacher Jennifer Siebert, and his uncle Shaun Siebert donated their time and craftsmanship to build the bench, and Hockinson School District employees installed it.

Now the students are enjoying it.

“It’s giving that sense of safety,” Hermann said. “That’s a good culture, whether it’s in a classroom or on a playground. It’s a safe place to say, ‘Hey, I need a friend.’ Our kids are seeing that and responding to it.”