

Growing Opportunities: HMS Athletics Expands to High School

Growth can feel exciting, scary, out of control, and amazing all at the same time! This year the HMS Athletic program took a new step by offering high school athletic opportunities for our students. In conjunction with a co-op with Conestoga Christian, HMS Venture Program students now have opportunities to play on eleven PIAA sponsored sports teams. The first year brought many exciting experiences and notable accomplishments for our Venture Program students.

The HMS gym was lively for our last boys' volleyball game of the season last spring. It was senior night, and as I watched our first year of high school sports come to an end, I was struck by the amazing development each player made over the course of the season. Through the discouragement of

defeat and the joys of victory, the growth that happened with this team was amazing! They showed tremendous resilience, were competitive, and represented Jesus in a way that other teams noticed. We are excited about the growth that will continue to happen as we build this program, and are

so thankful for God's presence with us this season!

With growth, come many things that feel uncertain and even a little scary. When applying for PIAA membership, setting up district power rankings, budgeting for an athletic trainer to be at our home games, and working on scheduling, there were many times when I felt unsure of how things would turn out. In these moments, I found God's presence to be comforting as I was reminded that He's in control of this process. From the early stages of talking about a co-op, God has been opening doors and leading us as we grow into something new and exciting! As we wrap up our first year of high school athletics, we thank God for leading our program into growth and being with us through the journey! We are looking forward to seeing how God continues to guide and for all the new things yet to come!

– Justin Weaver, Athletic Director, Alum and Patron



Pictured clockwise: **Hannah Lowenthal '24** played lacrosse as part of the co-op with Conestoga Christian School. **Alex Murillo '23** played soccer while **Valerie Martin '23** and **Hailey Powell '24** joined the volleyball team.

Other Venture Program athletes not pictured:

Soccer

Daniel Poplavskyy '26

Basketball

Katie Denlinger '26

Paul Hurst '24 (All Conference Team Honorable Mention)

Volleyball

Matthew Degan '25

Ian McAdams (Conestoga Christian)

Alex Murillo '23

Daniel Poplavskyy '26

Jacob Smoker '24

Matthew Tlumach '25

Daniel Zimmerman '23 (All Conference Second Team)

When it comes to growth, numbers aren't everything

Hinkletown Mennonite School has seen a steady increase in student enrollment numbers over the past several years (see graph on page 3). People are attracted to a school of academic excellence, where there is a strong sense of community and the presence of the Lord is evident.

Numerical growth is one benchmark that schools use, but at HMS we get excited when we see students growing in the Lord and their understanding of the Bible. Jeremiah 12:2 reminds us that, ***"You have planted them, and they have taken root; they grow and bear fruit."*** When we put this in the context of students growing, we know that parents have the responsibility to plant the Word in the hearts of their children where it

takes root and, as they grow, continues to bear much fruit throughout life! We are passionate about coming alongside parents to reinforce Biblical values that will serve these students as they experience life.

Recently, I had the opportunity to listen to our Venture Program graduates share their Capstone presentations at the end of the school year. It was encouraging to hear clear Biblical values come through that evening. It was obvious that parents played a huge part in laying the spiritual foundation which these students could build their lives upon. Other

adult mentors like grandparents, pastors, and extended family members were also mentioned as key influencers who helped them grow spiritually on the journey. Teachers, too, had a major impact on the lives of these Venture Program students who were reflecting on how far the Lord

had brought them through their formative years of schooling.

Thank you for partnering with HMS as we continue to experience growth at the school and in the lives of our students. 2 Peter 3:18 sums it up well, ***"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*** Our heart's desire is to see all of our students come to faith and grow in the ways of God!

— **Miles Yoder, HMS Administrator**



Jordis Patterson '23 shares at Capstone Night in April 2023 about the growth she experienced as a student. Jordis completed the Photography & Digital Imaging program at Career & Technology Center (CTC) and celebrated her graduation early because the CTC-Brownstown and HMS Venture graduation were scheduled for the same evening.



HMS faculty are intentional about building relationships with students from elementary through high school. Pictured here: Mr. Yoder connects with elementary students at the 2022 Chicken Chase Fun Run during auction weekend.

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43rd Annual HinkleFEST & Benefit Auction

Friday & Saturday
October 13 & 14, 2023

FRIDAY

**Family Fun Run
Auction Item Preview
Pork BBQ dinner**

SATURDAY

**Live Auction
Kids Activities
Food and more!**

CALLING ALL ALUMNI!

Come and find your picture in a HMS yearbook and receive a free ice cream cone!

See our website for complete details: [HinkletownSchool.org/events/HinkleFEST](https://www.hinkletownschool.org/events/HinkleFEST)

Growing in Leading & Feeding

Equipping 5th graders to lead in faith

Earlier this year, for the Lenten season, the 5th grade class participated in daily student-led devotionals. The class journeyed through Jesus's life before, during, and after the cross in the book of Mark. Each student was responsible for studying about 10-15 verses, twice a month. They were

tasked with leading the class through the verses, and doing so in a few different ways. Students were instructed to discuss the theme or purpose behind the verses and then demonstrate their (and their classmates') understanding of the passage by creating a game and/or craft and to also tie a worship song into the theme.

The idea of these devotionals was the result of a personal God moment as I was prayerfully preparing for the next unit in the Bible Curriculum. I felt in my heart that not only did the students need some sort of spiritual boost, but so did I. The

need to recharge by getting in Word, the only thing that can ever truly fulfill us, was impressed upon my heart.

When I introduced the idea to my students, they were completely onboard. The level of preparation, dedication and time that was invested into each and every lesson was inspiring. The way the students implemented interactive games, created their own crafts to demonstrate the theme verses, and worshiped together was extra special.

Teaching has always made me excited for the future of our community, instead of "worried for the future of our country". The families at HMS have built this firm foundation for their children, and have raised faithful, Christ-following, children of God who are hungry for the Word. To be able to teach these students is a true gift, and this particular experience has made me even more grateful for the position I hold here at HMS. What a blessing to teach for just a short period of time in these students' educational journey. I am grateful.

— **Chelsea Reinford,**
5th grade teacher and Patron

Your sweet boy kicking off our devotions today! He's killing it!



Awesome! He worked all evening on it 🙌. He is LOVING the book projects and devos style of learning!! Somehow you've encouraged his hesitant-to-speak-up-front side in a way I wasn't sure he'd ever get to...I think he's legit enjoying it 💙. Thank you!

This makes my heart SO happy! 💖💖



Mrs. Reinford with her 5th grade class at the 2022 Christmas Program

Feeding the (not quite) 5,000: Hot lunch service grows over the years

Every Wednesday of the school year, the kitchen at HMS is bustling as moms are hard at work preparing lunch for students and staff. What started many years ago as a once-a-month option has grown into the weekly option that HMS families and staff have come to rely on. There is a rotation of 11-13 pre-planned meals each trimester to give a variety of choices and also distribute responsibilities. We do our best to offer meals that are nutritious and manageable for our small school kitchen and mom-chefs, but also ones that students want to eat! Each meal has a team leader who is responsible for grocery shopping for their meal, and I coordinate helpers to assist with preparation, service and clean-up each Wednesday. While it takes lots of planning and can get a bit hectic, it's a creative way to get into the school to serve.

As our HMS family continues to grow, so have our hot lunch numbers! We typically serve anywhere from 160 to 225 people each week. Holiday meals (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentines, and Easter) are consistently the favorites. As we gear up for another year of yummy meals, we'd gladly welcome more willing helpers, including grandparents!

— **Nicole Hurst, PTF President, Alum and Patron**

1986



1986: Once a month, hot lunch service provided by moms (L to R) Marilyn Weaver, ???, and Alice Reiff in the current Early Childhood wing. *If you know who the Mystery-Mom-in-Red is, please call us at (717) 354-7100.

2011



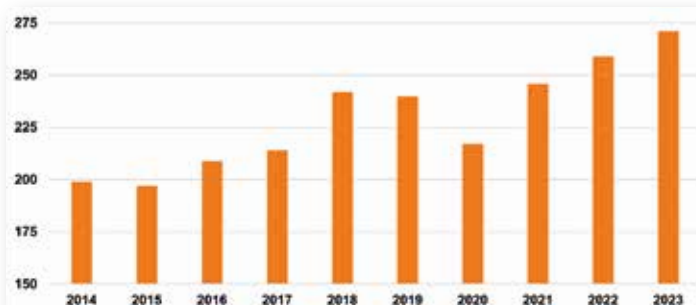
2011: (L to R) Moms Michelle Brubaker, Beth Boll, and Sharon Hoover serve lunch to hungry 2nd graders

Today



Today: (L to R) Moms Nicole Hurst, Debby Rissler, Rebecca Sensenig, and Bethany Zimmerman serve alongside Facilities Manager, Michael Sable.

By the Numbers: 10 Years of Enrollment Growth



Expanded hands-on learning means getting your hands dirt(ier)

Hands-on learning has always been a distinctive part of an HMS education. Jon Scott Bender, the first principal of HMS, wanted to make sure both teacher and student were given the flexibility to teach and learn from their strengths. In order to offer that kind of experience, he encouraged teachers to be creative and give students opportunities to experience learning in different ways. Today, we can see that distinctive worked into so many aspects of the HMS educational experience in and out of the classroom.

One of the ways hands-on learning has taken place and grown over the years is through gardening and raising chickens. HMS already has an established **vegetable and herb garden** as well as a brood of egg laying hens. The produce of which are used for the Middle School Canning Club, Family Consumer Science classes, and Venture Program breakfasts.

A **Native Pollinator Garden** was just a dream until HMS received a grant from

Wild Ones: Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Program in early 2023. A triangular area was mapped out with the help of Mr. Michael Lichty and a list of native plants including buttonbush, bee balm, elderberry, echinacea, red buds, winter berry and milkweed was submitted along with how we envisioned students using the area. Students will be able to observe and learn about native plants and the living things that benefit from them. Gardening is educational and allows children to develop new skills such as cooperation, responsibility, reasoning and discovery. Pollinator gardens are becoming more popular among schools because they are easy to establish and maintain and greatly benefit the ecosystem.

In addition to the new native pollinator garden, a designated **bird area** was also created this spring in the existing courtyard as a result of the Celebrate Urban Birds Grant awarded by Cornell Lab of Ornithology. A feeder station in addition

to several other feeders, water sources and bird houses have been added to the area to attract birds. Flowers and trees have been planted that attract birds and beneficial insects. Students helped to plant bee balm, cone flowers, black-eyed susan, astilbe and sunflowers to name a few. Families were given bird identification packets and sunflower seeds at the Academic Fair to promote bird watching at home.

These grants have given Hinkletown even more hands-on opportunities to take learning outside of the classroom as well as provide numerous ways to encourage cross grade level interactions and community building among students and staff.

— **Erin Lichty, Pre-K Teacher and Patron**



2013

2013: The former vegetable garden was at the bottom of the hill. Pre-k students (now 9th graders) helped to lay out the planting grid.



2016

2016: Elijah Lichty, as a 1st grader, inspects the current coop area and flock of six white chickens established by Mr. Lichty's Chicken Cluster.



2017

2017: The vegetable garden was moved to the back of the building to simplify watering & care. Pictured are **Steffy Sensenig, Luke Horning, Drew Burkholder & Lucas Akinin** as 1st graders helping to prepare the new space.



2021

2021: Four new chicks were raised in the main lobby in conjunction with a school giving project to donate chicks to families in Cambodia. Along with the rest of the student body, then 5th graders, **Rae Good, Jule Kuhn, Alicia Bauman** and **Mae Beidler** learned how a flock could help families in need through eggs to eat and sell.



2022

2022: A greenhouse, purchased through the 42nd Auction Special Giving Project, expanded the opportunities for classes to garden year-round. The Soil, Seeds, & Sprouts Cluster started seedlings that were transplanted into the outdoor gardens (pictured: **Michaela Weaver, Sarafina Zimmerman & Kinsley Nolt**).



2023

8th and 1st graders worked together to plant the new Native Pollinator Garden at the bottom of the hill. This & other gardens were funded through Mrs. Lichty's successful grant applications.

The Venture Program: Launched, Established, & Growing

After a season of prayer and planning, HMS launched the *Venture Program: A New Approach to High School* in January of 2017 with one student and three teachers. For the past six years, it has strived to be a continuation of excellence already established in our Pre-K through 8th grade experience in a high school setting. ***Rooted in being Christ-centered, offering hands-on, individualized instruction with ample opportunities to grow in service and leadership development are all hallmarks of an HMS-distinct education.*** Similar to all other grade levels at HMS, the Venture program endeavors to keep class sizes smaller than those seen in traditional high schools, allowing teachers to really know

and disciple students. Students receive two report cards: one evaluating their academic progress and another their soft skills or ability to take initiative, work in teams, and receive correction when needed. They are given opportunities to exercise those skills through job shadowing and internship experiences. Finally, the flexible program allows students to take college courses in their junior and senior years and, if they choose to, finish high school early.

The Venture Program held its first graduation ceremony in 2020, with five students. As of 2023, 28 students have graduated and either joined the workforce directly, entered into gap years or ministry

experiences, or pursued further education.

This pilot program took root and has steadily grown into what it is today, which now includes more traditional additions such as high school sports and drama opportunities.

What began as a small program has grown to become a highly-considered option for younger HMS students and their families. In the last two years alone, we have seen a dramatic shift with more HMS students wanting to enroll. Please pray for the Venture Program as it continues to develop.

— **Maria Chase, Director of Advancement, and Patron**



2017

2017: The Venture Program was piloted in January 2017 with student **Dominic Answer '20** and teachers Megan Ament and MJ Smith, pictured with Dawn Landes, Administrator.



2018

2018: Making & eating breakfast together on Monday mornings is one way that the Venture community flourishes.



2020

2020: Students explore their vocational interests through job shadowing and internships. **Jack Stover '20** shadowed, and eventually worked for, HMS community business partner, Conestoga Wood Specialties.



2021

2021: In the outdoor classroom, **Juliana Umble '23** and **Micah Hoover '21** experience a hands-on Biology unit.



2022

2022: When students' vocational goals require higher education, they can take dual-enrollment classes through various local colleges to get a jump on their degree. **Reia Welch '22** was thrilled to receive her acceptance package from Millersville University to study psychology.



2023

"...Because of Venture, my faith will never be the same. Venture has taught me what it means to be a follower of Christ. Following Christ requires you to lay down your worldly desires. It means doing what the world may look at as not cool. It means being called a 'goodie goodie' because you choose to live differently from the rest of the world. It means wholeheartedly seeking after the Lord even in times of trouble or hardship because you know God is your rock and will stay by your side through it all. Venture has also taught me that it is so important to surround yourself with people who will build you up. I am so thankful for all that I was able to experience in the Venture Program."

— **Ashley Hoover, 2023 Venture Program Graduate**

Ashley graduated early as a junior and will spend a year serving with YWAM-Montana.

Congratulations

TO THE
CLASSES
OF 2023!



8th Grade Graduates: (L to R) Jada Bauman, Alayna Horst, Madelynn Horning, Katie Zimmerman, Hannah Martin, Rosene Weber, Weston Martin, Cole Eshleman, Elijah Lichty, David Umble, Garrett Hess, Evan Horning, Caleb Martin, Josiah Tlumach, Trevor Shirk, Judah Stuafter, Natalie Burkholder, Hadassah Benedick, and Amilia Chuprin.



Venture Program Graduates: (L to R) Valerie Martin (graduated early), Alexi Murillo, Ashley Hoover (graduated early), Timothy Martin, Michael Vizcarrondo, Daniel Zimmerman (graduated early), Anastasia Poplavskyy, Joseph Hoover, Juliana Umble, and Samuel Corronado. Not shown: Jordis Patterson – see photo on page 2.