

Students “Roll” in Classmate’s “Wheels”

“It was something I had dreamed of for a while,” said Jaxon Yoder, referring to the introduction he gave his classmates to the sport of wheelchair basketball. Jaxon’s passion for the sport has grown since he began playing for the PA Lions Wheelchair Basketball Team in 2022. He said it has taught him teamwork and supported his faith by increasing his diligence and communication.



Coach McMinn of the PA Lions gave instructions to the students before turning them loose to try wheelchair basketball drills during an interactive experience.

In April 2024, Jaxon shared that passion with the help of his coach Keith McMinn during a special class. Coach McMinn, whose passion for increasing awareness, support, and accessibility for adaptive sports in Central PA led him to start the PA Lions. He helped Jaxon plan the interactive demonstration and brought ten sports wheelchairs for the eighth graders to try out. He also surprised Jaxon by inviting Coach Tom McNaughton, who played for the Philadelphia Magee Spokesmen (NWBA). The class learned the basics of using a sports wheelchair by participating in various drills in the gym, and then they competed in a fun scrimmage.

Eighth grade students proved to be eager participants and quick learners, but most importantly, supportive friends. Austin Bauman’s favorite part was seeing Jaxon’s expertise. “Jaxon

makes it look really easy,” he shared. “It’s harder than it looks, but once you get the hang of it, it’s really fun. He’s a great coach!” Austin also gained a new perspective, noting, “Jaxon has a lot that he has to go through just to play. It encouraged me to be more aware of how people with disabilities live their everyday lives.” **Ashlyn Kanagy pointed out that playing wheelchair basketball also strengthened the class community, saying, “I think that what brought our class together was being able to experience something that one of our classmates was very passionate about, and being able to do it all together. It meant a lot that we were able to share this activity and experience with him.”**

“The whole class supporting me was amazing,” said Jaxon, who hopes his story will inspire and encourage others to share their passions and build positive connections. “If you have a dream you want to share with someone, don’t let anything stand in your way.”

– Jeremy Horning, Middle School Coordinator & Teacher



As Jaxon Yoder (pictured in front) introduced fellow eighth graders to his favorite sport, some classmates discovered that while his skills looked “really easy” they were actually quite challenging!

Transformative Teaching: Making Christ-Centered Connections Beyond the Classroom

HMS faculty make the spiritual, intellectual, social, and physical development of all students a high priority. To be successful at this, we need the indwelling Holy Spirit to help us discern how to fulfill our vision of seeing “*Students Learning and Living God’s Purposes.*”

In John D. Roth’s book, “*Teaching That Transforms: Why Anabaptist-Mennonite Education Matters,*” the author makes a case for the tremendous value in sending children not only to Christian schools, but particularly ones centered on Jesus and taught from a Mennonite/Anabaptist perspective. **Roth highlights the value of the “hidden curriculum,” a philosophy which extends beyond subject matter to encourage Christ-centeredness in all of life. HMS intentionally helps students make connections between classroom learning, their faith, and life outside the classroom.** Teachers do this in many ways, from bringing community members into the classroom to share personal stories, to giving students experiences outside of the school building. I experienced this myself in my youth when athletic coaches who invested in my life connected their faith and values to our experiences on the courts.



Myron Stoltzfus, second-generation owner of Stoltzfus Meats, shared a personal testimony about how his family’s faith influenced both the founding of the company in 1954 and the way he continues to lead it today.

I enjoy seeing students make these connections to their own lives when I have the opportunity to join class trips. I recently traveled with the high school Venture Program students to Stoltzfus Homestead and Gardens in Intercourse, where Myron Stoltzfus, owner of Stoltzfus Meats, shared stories from his experience and how his faith influences his leadership. Business partners like Mr. Stoltzfus, who are committed to investing in students and demonstrating how to integrate faith into one’s profession, are incredibly valuable.

We are thankful for the strong value HMS puts on students’ broad, extra-curricular experiences such as field trips and bringing creative resources into the classroom. It is clear that through our holistic “hidden curriculum,” HMS students are making personal connections between classroom learning and everyday life – for their growth and God’s glory!

– *Miles Yoder, Administrator/Principal*



HMS has enjoyed a vibrant partnership with the local Lancaster County business community since the school’s beginning in 1981. Thanks to Stoltzfus Meats for hosting our high school Venture Program students.

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Help Spread the Word:

Enrollment is now open for the 2025-2026 school year!

Families can tour the campus, see classes in action, and meet with teachers.

Drop-in during a Family Visit Day or schedule your visit!

www.hinkletownschool.org/visit



Contact Melissa Beidler, Director of Enrollment, at 717-354-7100 or office@hinkletownschool.org for scheduling & details.

A Fruitful Field Trip: Accomplishing Educational Objectives in an Apple Orchard



Kindergartner Zaida Brown, with help from her mom, Shiresa, picked an apple of her own during the fall outing to Brecknock Orchard. Field trips are great opportunities for parents to engage in learning alongside their children, and this popular excursion is a memorable highlight for all ages.

"I don't know how you do it" is a common response when someone hears that I teach kindergarten. They wonder how I get a roomful of five year olds to learn what they need to in an engaging way. At HMS we are encouraged to teach in creative ways so our students learn while having fun.

Every fall our class goes to Brecknock Orchard in Mohnton PA. We take a tractor ride to the apple orchard, and hear about different varieties of apple trees, and then the delighted children each pick an apple to take home. Next, they learn about pumpkins and how they grow on vines in the fields. Each child, after a seemingly hours-long search for just the right one, carefully selects a pumpkin of their own. Our guide then leads us through the gift shop where an active beehive is on display. Students learn about bees and how important they are to the orchard, and end the trip with playtime in the barn or playground.

While this trip just takes a day, preparation for it begins two weeks prior. In kindergarten, students need to learn about food sources, plant growth and life cycles, the production and sale of goods, and how citizens contribute to a community. **I could teach these topics by simply talking about them, giving out worksheets, and calling it a day. However, that is not how children learn best. When students are able to engage in meaningful, real-world experiences, the learning has a much greater impact.** They have a new appreciation for the bag of apples from the store. They are not as quick to squish a bee buzzing by, and can appreciate the work that went into growing their porch pumpkins.

I am so glad I work in a school that encourages taking students out of the classroom to explore their community. Teaching is much more enjoyable when you can watch students discover how things work. So, when someone says, "I don't know how you do it," I just smile and know how blessed I am to teach these precious little people.

– Jennifer Myers, Kindergarten Teacher

Pumpkins, Roots, and Crayfish, Oh My!

"Life is learning. The more interactive we can be, the more real learning becomes." Renita Denlinger, third grade teacher at HMS, believes in the power of hands-on learning, and has witnessed this truth year after year. Using a curriculum that emphasizes interactive learning, she has led her students in activities such as investigating fibrous roots in the school yard, dissecting pumpkins, and studying live crayfish.

Mrs. Denlinger lit up as she shared her appreciation for HMS's location, a setting that allows students opportunities to explore outdoors. These encounters help them appreciate their environment, such as the memorable time students were exploring roots and realized that a root held all the soil together as it was pulled up.

In addition to experiential learning, teamwork and creative thinking are also highly valued in Mrs. Denlinger's classroom. During an activity with pumpkins, students worked together to estimate and then count how many seeds were inside. She was fascinated by how various groups approached the task differently, worked collaboratively, and nurtured relationships with one another.

In another unit, students got to handle crayfish and discovered that these little creatures taught them about God's awesome creation through their skeletal system. In past years, some of Mrs. Denlinger's students had an out-of-the box idea to set up crayfish races to see who would cross the finish line first! "It's fun to see students make connections between subject areas," she expressed, sharing a favorite moment during a math lesson when a student had the idea to measure a crayfish's mass!

It is in moments like these, where learning is brought to life that HMS's values of academic growth, personal development, and appreciation for God's creation are on vivid display!

– Morgan Batson, Advancement & Marketing Assistant



In Mrs. Denlinger's third grade class, (L to R) Alyssa Martin, Moriah Martin, and Chanelle Hurst weren't afraid to get their hands sticky as they estimated and then counted all the slimy seeds they found in their group's pumpkin.

Cooking Up Culture: Middle Schoolers Discover Puerto Rican Cuisine & Heritage

Middle schoolers are always excited about food! Learning about Hispanic culture while getting to prepare and taste authentic Puerto Rican food made for a pretty special combination in an elective held last winter. HMS patrons Ashley and Nelson "Sepi" Sepulveda shared from Sepi's Puerto Rican heritage by teaching middle school students how to prepare traditional dishes during their elective class period. Each week students were able to learn about the ingredients, help to prepare authentic dishes, and most importantly, taste them. They tried foods like traditional Spanish rice, empanadillas, tostones, and a chicken stew. In addition to discovering what the foods taste like and how they are prepared, students learned about seasonings used to flavor them, and differences between making them in Puerto Rico versus the U.S. Sepi told stories of how his parents prepared the dishes when he was young, and Ashley shared how they make them at home now. Students were captivated knowing that when the dishes were ready, they would be able to give them a try. They also got to hear a bit of Spanish language sprinkled in for extra flair! A celebration was held at the end of the trimester that included taste-testing traditional desserts purchased from a local store.



Students experienced HMS patron Ashley Sepulveda's passion for Puerto Rican cuisine during a demonstration in the Hispanic Food and Culture elective.

This delicious learning experience developed from an elective that was offered to students in grades 6-8, to allow them to learn more about Hispanic culture than we have time for during Spanish class. Since my knowledge of these dishes was quite limited (as is my kitchen expertise), I reached out to the Sepulvedas to help me enrich the experience for the students. They were eager to assist, teaching the students more about the culture than what I alone could have done. Ashley recently reflected, "One of our favorite parts of this opportunity was that the kids were not afraid to ask questions and try new things. This made it exciting to teach and share a different cultural experience with them, because the desire to experience new cultures draws people to the missionary field!"

Teachers at HMS seek out opportunities to make learning relevant and applicable to students' lives, which allows us to go beyond what a student learns from a book or video and creates a personal connection to what they are learning. **Like inviting the Sepulvedas to this elective, having guests share their experiences extends our normal curriculum, beyond a teacher's knowledge and deeper than any textbook. The impact on our students of these memory-making opportunities will continue long after their time here at Hinkletown is complete.**

– Jessica Hoover, Curriculum Coordinator & Spanish Teacher



During their elective, students helped make and sample freshly fried tostones, a beloved Latin American snack made from thickly-sliced green plantains with a crunchy golden finish!

**MARK YOUR
CALENDAR!**

HMS Middle School
Performing Arts
Presents:

**Bringing Down
the House**

A Musical Without Songs

By Todd Wallinger

Produced by special arrangement with Pioneer Drama Service,
Denver, Colorado

Friday, February 28, 2025

Dinner Theater: 5:30 pm

Reservations Required

Saturday, March 1, 2025

Shows: 2:00 pm & 7:00 pm

Reservations Recommended

**Tickets available in February at
www.hinkletownschool.org/events/drama**



Learning Across Time



Fourth and fifth grade students participated in an all-day History Fair focusing on Pennsylvania and U.S. History. Under the direction of teachers Harriet Douple (fourth grade) and Wanda Helmuth (fifth grade) students researched and dressed as prominent historical figures. Each student created artifacts, slideshows, and videos to enhance their presentations. Andrea Buchen dressed as Betsy Ross for her project.



At an all-school assembly, Lisa McLeod from NASA explained developments in the space program. She demonstrated how astronauts strap food trays to their bodies and then chase weightless food with a spoon. Miranda Eberly got to try on a space suit from the Apollo Mission.



Audrey Wandel, parent and part of the deaf community, along with teacher Cheryl Leaman (third grade) taught a Sign Language Enrichment Cluster to a group of first and second graders. The Enrichment Cluster inspired students to experience sign language and communicate with the deaf and hearing-impaired community. Students (L to R) Chelsea Weaver, Bethany Strock, Mitchell Gehman, and Quentin Martin learned songs, letter-matching memory games, and common phrases while exploring the diversity of languages spoken around the world.

This issue of Handprints is dedicated to

Jon Scott Bender

October 11, 1940 – November 29, 2024

Hinkletown Mennonite School

Administrator

1981-1988



We learned that HMS's first School Administrator, Jon Scott Bender, passed away in late November. Some of Mr. Bender's original dreams for the school continue to this day: He encouraged teachers to be innovative and personalize their teaching. He started the International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) partnership with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) because he believed it was important for students to be global citizens. I think he would be thrilled with the grading system the current Middle School and Venture Program teachers use which include not only academic grades, but also interpersonal and soft-skills grades. Did you know that those early students didn't receive grades, but a report on how students were progressing in their own development?

I took the opportunity to call the original HMS Board Members to share the news. Many are in their 80s now. As I shared about Mr. Bender's passing, I could hear in their voices how they were immediately transported back to another time when they sacrificially followed Jesus into the daunting work of starting a school. **I thanked them for saying, "yes" to Jesus and doing what needed to be done to get HMS going. I was also able to tell them how their "yes" has impacted so many students and families over the past 44 years and counting.**

We all are a part of the 44-year-old HMS story, each contributing and building on previous generations' work. Like Mr. Bender, we can all identify with his sentiment of "I believe God led me here." We thank the Lord for leading Jon Scott Bender to HMS and for all the efforts he started that we still cherish today.

– Maria Chase, Director of Advancement

Bringing Learning to Life isn't New at HMS Look Back: Fourth Grade Lessons from the Grocery Store

The year was 2014; the place was a local grocery store. Why did I have 22 fourth graders wandering through the store comparing prices for a meal they planned to make for their parents? To get my students to work together, notice information available in grocery stores (that they never paid attention to before), and calculate how best to stay within their budget.

One of the content areas of fourth grade math is ratios, specifically learning terms such as price/pound and miles/gallon. **The HMS belief that learning happens best in real-life situations inspired the idea to have the fourth graders plan a meal, create an ingredient list, shop for the ingredients, and then make the meal for their parents. The catch: they would need to stay within a budget.**

While shopping, the students engaged with the unit price labels on the shelves, which displayed the price per pound or per unit of each product. One student commented, "I always wondered what that (the unit price tag label) was for!" The students' challenge was to figure out which brand was the best value for their money. Sierra (Brubacher) Becker, recent 2024 Practicum Student at HMS, was in my class and reflected, "I remember [this] experience and that it was challenging but exciting to put our learning into action."

The end result of our endeavors: parents were happily fed and impressed with their student-made lunch, and students gained a new appreciation for what it takes to provide meals for a family that stay within their financial means. A few

even decided to help with their family's meal planning and preparation from then on. This was such a fun way to bridge classroom learning with real life!

– Anette Raiser

Current Instructional Coach & Fourth Grade Teacher (2004 - 2019)



Looking back to 2014: Mrs. Raiser took this fourth grade class (without their mustaches) through the process of planning a meal and shopping for its ingredients on a budget. They traveled to Oregon Dairy Farm Market for part of the application of this practical learning, but unfortunately, we don't have photos of their final projects – the meals they made! Parents of this class: If you have any pictures from this experience, share them with us by emailing mbatson@hinkletownschool.org.

“Mrs. Raiser inspires me as I currently study to become a teacher myself.”

– Sierra (Brubacher) Becker, 2024 HMS Practicum Student & Alumna
Fourth grade Sierra can be found in the above photo, back row, third from the left.