



Thank you for reading the first edition of the Hamilton Monthly Newsletter. Our intent is to share more news and details than we are able to in our weekly bulletin. We would love to hear your feedback at HamiltonMSDenver@gmail.com!

From the Principal's Office

Dear Hamilton Huskies,

We are excited to launch a monthly newsletter for our community. We currently use our weekly call outs and blasts in English and Spanish as ways to communicate what's coming up each week. This new, monthly newsletter will be a more in-depth overview for our families. I'm very thankful to Tami Patzer, our PTA President, for helping lead our new tool for families. We hope this is a help to you!

Shout outs for several great happenings around Husky Town! There have been many great achievements in the last month by our scholars and teachers, including our Girls Basketball winning the Southeast division! Our Mathletics team scored many medals, showcasing their city-wide leadership in Math! A special shout out to 7th Grader Alyssa Robertson, who will be competing to win the State Semantics competition! Congratulations are owed to the progress our scholars have made in the arts, such as commanding performances in city-wide showcases and, now, preparations our theatre classes are making now for our Spring musical! Finally, I want to congratulate our

faculty and staff involved in obtaining many exciting grants for next year, including a new STEM grant to bring “Project Lead the Way” programming to Hamilton next year! We are also competing for a grant to issue laptops to all students next year (that they can take home, too!). These are only examples of how Huskies are leading the way with excellence in Arts, Academics, and Athletics!

Student government (SGA) is leading the charge to build a more inclusive, accepting school community. I am proud to see our young leaders step up and work with their peers to adopt a strong stance for a more inclusive school environment, taking a strong stance against bullying and exclusion. Student government leaders are working with the Anti-Defamation League’s materials for schools to help all of their peers feel more supported and safe in school. Young people making a difference!

We are working to grow on the DPS school performance framework. Hamilton scored “yellow” on the new measurement tool. We take this extremely seriously, and we have been strategically working to grow in our score, with the goal to “Go Green” again. See the full section below on SPF for more detail.

Thank you for all you do to support Hamilton. I look forward to continuing our work to improve communication for our families. We believe our school is made great through partnerships with families and honest dialogue about how we can grow!

Dr. Christian Sawyer, Principal

Scholar Success - School Culture

We work as a team to meet the needs of all of our scholars. Each week we have our Scholar Success meetings with small teams of teachers, Special Education teachers, English language teachers, and math fellows to discuss scholars that may be struggling in one or more of the following areas: academics, grades, or behavior. During the meeting we discuss interventions, what has been implemented in the classroom, and when needed, new interventions to put in place to support the scholar. Our Deans, social workers, counselors, nurse and psychologist also attend. Parents are also frequently invited

to participate in these meetings. We're a team at Hamilton!

Gwen Victor, Assistant Principal & Chief of School Culture and Special Education



PBIS - Making Positive Behavioral Choices

Our leadership team and faculty have been working hard to keep our scholars focused and making positive choices in school. In the coming weeks, we will be deepening our work with Positive Behavior in School (PBIS) initiatives, including rewarding students for making the right choices in our community. For example, we have heard frustration from student representatives about stairwell rules. Now scholars will be able to purchase stairwell passes with their Husky Stamps at the school store. Additionally, students who solve their conflicts peacefully can eat outside on nice days, enjoying lunch in the sun. We have also hosted our first PBIS social and dance. Our SGA scholars put pride and time into creating a fun time for their peers—it paid off! A HUGE shout out to the SGA, and thank you to the PTA for their financial assistance and time in supporting this program. This month, we will celebrated our scholars with an ice cream party. As we continue to celebrate the hard work

and good behavior of our scholars, please help us by asking for your scholar's feedback—feel free to send it to whitney_bradley@dpsk12.org.

As a reminder, scholars involved in fighting face the DPS discipline policies and, additionally, will serve Saturday school where they learn lessons on conflict resolution and are asked to apologize publicly to their classmates for disrupting our school environment. Fighting is not tolerated at Hamilton. We know young people can learn to step up and solve conflict through peaceful means.

Whitney Bradley, Assistant Principal of Teaching and Learning

National History Day

This month, Hamilton had its first annual school wide National History Day (NHD) competition. All 6th, 7th, and 8th grade scholars completed a project on a historical figure who “took a stand,” influencing history in some way, even in painful ways. Through this project, our scholars have been honing their research skills and growing their historical thinking skills.

Special thanks to our Social Studies teachers for launching this important project! A winner was chosen in each classroom in the categories of Best Historical Story, Most Visually Creative, and Best Variety of Evidence.

On March 4th, the district competition will be held at Hamilton. Then on March 22, all of our scholars will display their exhibit boards, websites, performances, documentaries and papers, during Parent/Teacher conferences.

***Be sure to talk to your Husky about his/her
National History Day project.***

Planning for Next Year

Our work to launch our International Baccalaureate Middle Year Programme next year is off and running. Our MYP Implementation Team of teachers has been writing our official application over the past two months, and training the faculty and stakeholder groups. We have sent several groups of teachers to key trainings and IB community roundtables to prepare for our launch next school year, and we are planning summer professional learning for our faculty.

We have been working hard on developing our master schedule for next year. After months of study, we reached consensus on a new daily schedule for next year. Our new schedule will be a “block schedule,” meaning longer class times on staggered days. This will meet the needs of our shift to the IBO/MYP Program and also increase learning time and decrease time out of the classroom (i.e. passing periods). We are also looking closely at building in an “advisory” program next year, which would provide a time for all scholars to have an adult staff member who works with them on their studies, community service, and issues middle school children face. Start and end times for the school day will remain the same next year.

We have learned a lot from the work we did to create an accelerated Honors math program this year. Many students, teachers, and families have praised Hamilton’s willingness to “think outside the box” in our math programming and sequencing. Likewise, we are building out an accelerated Honors literacy sequence for next year and aim to share the plan with our families in the coming months.

In our budget work for next year, Hamilton plans to expand the critical whole-child supports we have, adding more mental health supports for next year. Additionally, we will expand our community supports, adding a full-time community and family liaison to serve our families each day and improve communication and partnerships. We also plan to reduce class sizes for next year. This led to difficult decisions, but our stakeholder groups agreed that we must prioritize mental health and reducing class sizes.

CMAS testing is coming up in March and April

English Language Arts and Math each have 3 sections/days with testing.

English Language Arts will start before Spring Break
7th/8th graders testing March 14-16, and 6th grade testing March 21-23.

Math testing will start after Spring Break
7th/8th grade testing April 11-13 and 6th grade testing April 18-20.

Science testing for 8th graders will take place April 19-21.

All tests will be taken on a computer.

Please see the full CMAS testing schedule on the school website.

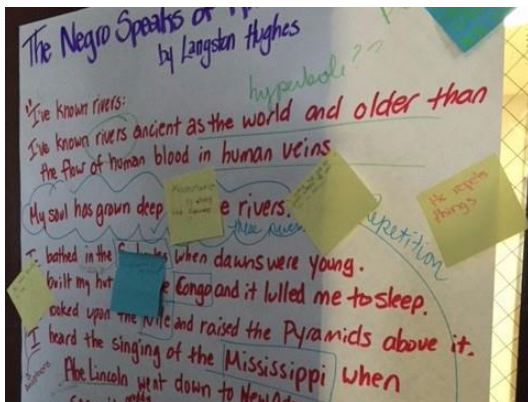
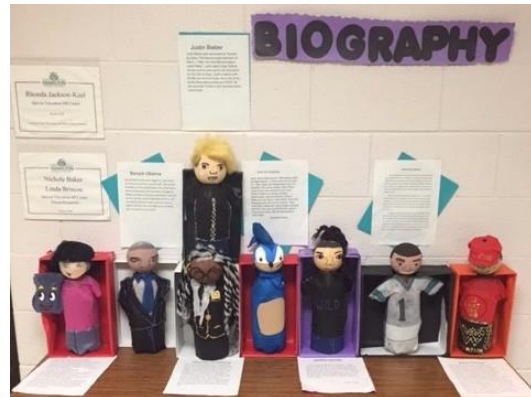
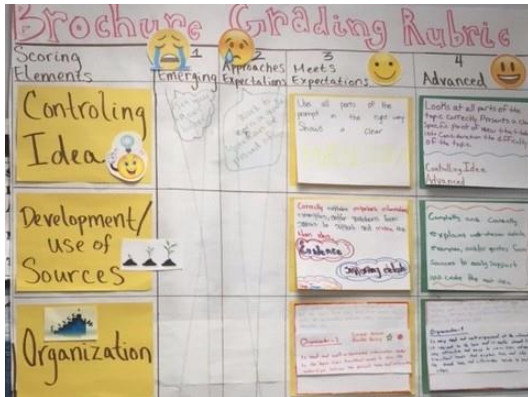
HELP YOUR SCHOLAR ACHIEVE HIS/HER "PERSONAL BEST" ON CMAS

To help your Husky prepare, please work with your scholar to focus closely in his/her classes, read at home for at least 45-minutes per night, and use all of the resources we have for our scholars, such as myON Reader and Dreambox Learning. Your scholar should know how to log into Dreambox. 30 minutes of math practice per night on Dreambox can make a significant difference in accelerating your scholar's math achievement, in addition to his/her math studies.

We also recommend that you have your scholar take the official practice tests. Even if he/she has seen some of these questions before, having your scholar work through them again and get familiar with the practice test procedures will help your scholar show his/her knowledge on the actual CMAS. Here is the website where you can find the official practice tests. <https://parcc.pearson.com/practice-tests/>

SGA stands for Student Government Association. We are an association that advocates for students' rights. We are trying to make Hamilton a better school for all. Our school is a diverse, multi-ethnic school that tries to make a difference. At SGA, we usually plan socials and school events, but we are trying to expand. We are trying to help the community, not just the school. In the future we would like to do a food drive or a clothing drive. Recently, we had a Valentine's day pop sale and we made \$129 and we want to reinvest that into the community. We thank you for reading this article and being a part of the Hamilton community!

David Christos, Representative of the 7th grade



What's Happening with Hamilton's SPF Rating?

As you may know, Hamilton's overall rating is "yellow" on the new School Performance Framework (SPF) measurement tool, averaging the last two years of scores (2014-15 and 2015-16). This rating means that we are accredited and on watch. There are important lessons within the overall rating that we are strategically addressing. Here are some of data-based insights we have found most important to our work in "going green" again!

- **Overall, Hamilton needs to improve our student achievement and growth in the new set of Colorado Academic Standards, which are now aligned to the Common Core.** Our new set of common core standards tested on the CMAS requires higher levels of thinking and rigor than the previous standards.
- **One of our key values at Hamilton and within Denver Public Schools is ensuring that ALL students are afforded the excellent education they deserve.** Our SPF rating boldly indicates that we have a lot of work to do to improve equity of achievement outcomes at Hamilton. Specifically, our data shows us that our CMAS achievement scores are inequitable for our students of color, students living in poverty, and students who are English learners.
- **Hamilton must improve our student engagement and parent satisfaction.** We are working to improve our communication with families, as our data show us that we are not meeting our families' expectations for communication. Additionally, for next school year, we will have a school-wide online platform that will allow our families much more information about class homework and assignments.
- **Equally important, we want to highlight bright spots within our SPF report,** as we achieved "green" on both literacy and science status, which means that Hamilton met DPS expectations for the percentage of students meeting grade-level standards in literacy and science. We also were "green" on the SPF rating for our percentage of students who met grade-level expectations in Literacy, Math, and Science, when compared to schools similar to Hamilton. Moreover, we were green in our growth for students with disabilities and also in our English Learners' rate of English acquisition. We are studying from what is working at Hamilton and expanding these practices to other areas that need improvement.

What can you do to help improve our SPF rating?

1. **Please check your scholar's planner** nightly and make sure you support the completion of his/her assignments for classes.
2. **Ensure that your scholar is reading each night for at least 30-45 minutes of independent reading.**
3. **We have launched a nationally-recognized online math program called Dreambox** that will help your scholar achieve higher in math. If you have internet access, please have your child work on Dreambox for 30-minutes per night, every weeknight.
4. **Ensure that your scholar is attending school regularly and is not tardy.**
5. **Closely monitor your scholar's behavior in school.** If your child is having continued behavior challenges, please partner with our team to set up a plan to help him/her grow.
6. **Share with Hamilton leaders your concerns so we can address them and grow in our partnership.** We are working very hard to meet your needs and grow as a middle school. Please share with us your needs so that we can work to grow. We'd love for every family to feel Hamilton meets their expectations. That is our steadfast goal!

New Graduation Requirements

Did you know the state of Colorado and DPS have changed the requirements for graduating from high school, starting with our current 8th graders (Class of 2021) and beyond? The school counselors presented the new information to all 8th graders last month in their Social Studies classes. They were each given a printout of the new requirements.

The following criteria shall entitle a student to a high school diploma from Denver Public Schools:

Successful completion of 24 units of credit

Demonstration of College and Career Readiness in English and Math

Completion of the requirements and goals as listed on a student's Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) and/or Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

You can see the full detail of requirements

at <http://www.boarddocs.com/co/dpsk12/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=ABRQR56A824E>.

Hamilton Husky PTA - We Need YOU!

Your involvement in the Hamilton PTA is important and appreciated. We are successful because of your behind-the-scenes contributions, large and small. It all adds up to a stronger community. An engaged parent body is nearly always associated with higher test scores, a stronger school community and more successful students.

Little time or no time? You can still make a difference. Attend a meeting. Volunteer. Donate. Sign up. It's easy to find ways to help the school that also work with your schedule.

- Provide goodies for a staff luncheon.
- Donate your time to support a special event.
- Serve on a committee that suits your time and talents.
- Become a member of the board or simply attend meetings.
- Contribute financially to support our goals and mission.
- Connect the school to important community resources and opportunities.

Our next events are the **Spaghetti Dinner on March 1**, and **Multicultural Celebration on April 26**. We have a fundraiser night at **Chipotle on March 15**. And in **late March the Plant Sale**, one of our big fundraisers, will return with order taking (for delivery around

Mother's Day). We welcome help for any of these events! Please join us at our next **PTA meeting on March 14**. Contact us with questions or ideas at

HamiltonHuskyPTA@gmail.com



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