



## TIGER NATION NEWS

MARCH 2019

### MAKING SENSE OF ALL THESE CANCELLATIONS

Curt Bisarek | Superintendent



I think we have all reached the point of being ready for spring. So far this school year, we have had 11 cancellations and 3 delays due to weather. I wanted to use this time to provide a little more information about the decisions we make.

What goes into a decision to cancel or delay? First of all, we closely monitor the National Weather Service for anticipated inclement weather. The NWS-La Crosse does a great job of sending out updates and bulletins to aid in our decision-making process. As technology has advanced, we can access information that is generally pretty accurate, but still subject to last minute changes in storm tracks. We also communicate with neighboring districts, township patrol crews, and even drive the roads ourselves to make decisions that are in the best interests of students and staff.

We trust that our methods of communicating cancellations and delays is sufficient notice for students, parents and staff. In addition to the traditional TV and radio station announcements, we also communicate this information via the school district's Facebook page, text messaging and app notifications (these are also visible on the school website). The text messaging tool has changed and you should now be receiving notifications from a 98901 number. If you are not, please contact the school to make sure that your cell phone information is up-to-date with our student information system.

Historically, the state of Wisconsin has had a requirement that schools have 180 days of classes, but in 2017 that was eliminated and we now have an obligation to meet expectations for "hours of instruction". PI 8.01 states the following: "Each school district board shall annually schedule and hold at least 437 hours of direct pupil instruction in kindergarten, at least 1,050 hours of direct pupil instruction in grades 1 through 6, and at least 1,137 hours of direct pupil instruction in grades 7 through 12." There has been some speculation that the days cancelled January 28, 29, 30 and 31 might be forgiven by the state of Wisconsin but since the hours of instruction are a state law requirement, we are not expecting forgiveness of days to become a reality. It is important to note that State Assemblyman, Tony Kurtz, has been looking at the possibility of forgiving at least some of these days since Governor Evers declared a state of emergency due to the Polar Vortex.

We closely monitor our hours of instruction and thus, when we reached the point where our cancellations and delays brought our projected hours below the state requirement, we presented some options to the board. As a result, the 2018-19 school calendar was revised at the February 11, 2019 school board meeting. Included in this newsletter is a calendar that identifies the changes that were made. As you will see, we are planning for the last day of school to be Friday, June 7. Not only do we have significant summer projects to complete, but we also have many students and staff who will be leaving for New York as part of this year's choir field trip on June 10.

# UNDERSTANDING THE FORWARD EXAM

Chris Koopman | MS/HS Principal & Missy Herek | Elementary Principal



What a winter we've had and it's not even over yet! It is hard to believe that we are even thinking about spring, yet here we are. Most view spring as warming weather, longer days, and finally, some color outside. In the education system, spring also means it is time for the state assessments. Every spring, all schools in the state of Wisconsin administer the Forward Exam to their students in grades 3-8 and 10.

The Forward Exam is part of the Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS), which also includes the ACT Aspire for grades 9-10, as well as the ACT with Writing and the ACT WorkKeys for grade 11. These assessments that make up the WSAS are used as part of the state report card accountability system.

## **Assessments By Grade:**

- Grade 3 - ELA and Math
- Grade 4 - ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies
- Grade 5 - ELA and Math
- Grade 6 - ELA and Math
- Grade 7 - ELA and Math
- Grade 8 - ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies
- Grade 9 - ACT Aspire
- Grade 10 - ACT Aspire, Forward Exam Social Studies
- Grade 11 - ACT with Writing and WorkKeys

## **Forward Exam At A Glance**

The Forward Exam is a summative assessment that provides information about what students know and can do in relation to the Wisconsin Academic Standards. The assessment gauges your child's achievement compared to other students in the state. The scores from this exam are factors that help determine the district's overall State Report Card score.

The Wisconsin Department of Instruction (DPI) describes for parents the different types of questions their child will see on the exam.

### •*Multiple-Choice (MC)*

- Questions that have four answer choices, including three distractors and one correct answer

### •*Enhanced Selected Response (ESR)*

- Questions that may contain combinations of MS, short-answer, and technology-enhanced

### •*Evidenced-Based Selected Response (EBSP)*

- Question which has two parts. The student answers Part A, then provides evidence in Part B to support answer in Part A

### •*Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA)*

- Question used on the ELA test. The TDA is a text-based analysis, based on a passage that is read by the student during the assessment.

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Students must draw on basic writing skills while inferring and synthesizing information from the passage in order to develop a comprehensive, holistic essay response. Students have up to 5000 characters to formulate their response

- *Technology-Enhanced (TE)*
  - TE questions allow for a more engaging, interactive assessment. A wide variety of TE questions are present on the Forward Exam, including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Clock Input</li> <li>■ Angle Draw</li> <li>■ Short Input</li> <li>■ Bar Graph</li> <li>■ Number Line</li> <li>■ Coordinate Graph</li> <li>■ Line Graph</li> <li>■ List</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Drag and Drop</li> <li>■ Drop-Down List</li> <li>■ Pictograph using Drag and Paste</li> <li>■ Circle Graph</li> <li>■ Matching</li> <li>■ Highlighting Text</li> </ul>
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As you can see, this is a very rigorous exam for students to take. Because of this, the MS/HS will be spreading the exam out throughout the month of April rather than have it completed in 1-2 weeks of full-day testing. The benefit is having students fresh and focused on the days the exams will be administered. Although the test is not timed, we have developed this schedule for testing. All students will be given ample time to finish each test as needed.

#### **MS/HS Forward Exam Dates**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Content Assessed</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> April 2	9:40 - 12:00	8th Grade Science
<input type="checkbox"/> April 9	9:00 - 11:30	6-8th Grade ELA
<input type="checkbox"/> April 10	9:00 - 11:30	6-8th Grade ELA
<input type="checkbox"/> April 16	11:00 - 12:00	8th Grade Social Studies
<input type="checkbox"/> April 24	9:00 - 11:30	6-8th Grade Math
<input type="checkbox"/> April 25	9:00 - 11:30	6-8th Grade Math

#### **Test Preparation**

At Hillsboro, we understand the importance of doing well on this exam. Studies show that students who are well-rested and fed have a higher level of focus during test. Please make sure your child gets plenty of rest the night before a testing date (this is important any school night, really). Students will have the opportunity to have a snack before the testing sessions begin, provided by the district. It is also very important that your child attends school on the days the exams are administered.

There are other ways parents can help prepare their child for the exams. An Online Tools Training (OTT) is available for students at <http://dpi.wi.gov/assessment/forward/sampleitems>. The OTT is intended to give students the opportunity to practice with the tools available on the Forward Exam, as well as allow them to familiarize themselves with the testing platform.

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It also gives students a chance to work with the different question types they will encounter on the exam. The OTT is not scored, nor is it intended to provide practice on test content. This is a great way for students to practice the skills necessary to navigate the exam while providing parents with an opportunity to see what the exam will look like.

### **Test-Taking Strategies**

- You as a parent can also go over test-taking strategies with your child that will help them do their best on the exam.
- Arrive to school on time so your child doesn't feel rushed
- Encourage your child to stay relaxed during the test
- Encourage your child to answer all the test questions
- Guessing is okay - it is best to eliminate answers they know are incorrect first then choose the best answer from the remaining list
- Skip a question - better to skip a question than to remain stuck on it. Flag it and come back to it later
- Leave time to look over the exam before submitting
- Being in the right mindset can make all the difference. Encourage your child to think positively when heading into an exam
- Remind your child that this exam is not a race. Don't worry if others finish ahead. Focus on the test in front of you.

### **Conclusion**

There is much debate about the amount of testing that is mandated for our students. While both sides can make compelling arguments for or against testing, the reality is that it isn't going away and our schools will be measured against other schools based off of the tests administered as part of the Wisconsin Student Assessment System. We want to give our parents the information they need to help understand the importance of these exams.

Thanks to all you parents for helping the district make learning a priority and preparing your children for these high-stakes assessments. The encouragement you give your child to do their best is greatly appreciated.

# HILLSBORO HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS WILL GRADUATE WITH 19 MORE COLLEGE CREDITS

Anna Madden | MS/HS English Teacher/Advisor

To be career and college ready, seniors at Hillsboro High School now have the opportunity to build their capacities in reading through a new class.



For the first time, Hillsboro High School has partnered with the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh to offer ACAD 169: College Reading Strategies. This course is taught on campus at UW-Oshkosh, but through the Cooperative Academic Partnership Program (CAPP), Ms. Anna Madden is able to facilitate this course at Hillsboro as an adjunct professor.

Success in college is in large part determined by how well students read, process, and remember information. This course has been designed to offer opportunities to improve skills essential to meaningful study of academic texts. Course objectives focus on improving comprehension, increasing reading rates, and building academic vocabulary.

The course is twelve weeks in length, beginning January 28 and ending on April 17. The course is a blend of online and face-to-face instruction. Classes meet twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays, during Tiger Time.

ACAD 169: College Reading Strategies is a one-credit course, and students will earn one college credit and a transcript grade through UW-Oshkosh, as well as 0.25 English credit at Hillsboro High School. This college credit is transferable to UW System schools, as well as other institutions of higher education. With 19 students enrolled in the class, that means Hillsboro High School seniors will be graduating with 19 more college credits.

This partnership also opens up other opportunities for Hillsboro High School students in the future, including ENG 101: College English I, a 3.0 credit, dual credit course. In this class, students will develop their writing, critical reading, critical thinking, and information literacy skills by exploring a single topic in depth.

# SOLO & EMSEMBLE SEASON

Paula Parker | MS/HS Choir Teacher



The music department has begun its preparations for solo & ensemble season. All of the events will be held at Weston High School this year. Solo & Ensemble is an invaluable experience that helps students with not only their music reading skills, but life skills such as time management, self-discipline, responsibility, teamwork, self-reflection and self-confidence. They learn how to manage performance anxiety, and learn how to take constructive criticism.

We will begin on Wednesday, February 27th, when the JH (7-8) and HS (9-12) bands and choirs will travel to Weston to perform for 3 judges at concert festival. Parents are welcome to attend these performances between 8am-4pm (a schedule will be sent home with students), but don't worry if you can't make it that day. We will be doing a repeat performance at our concert on Tuesday, March 5th at 7:00 pm. Listed below are the dates and times for solo & ensemble. We hope to see many of you there to support these fine musicians.

- ***Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2019 (8am-4pm) - Concert Festival @ Weston***
- ***Tuesday, March 5, 2019 - Spring Concert at HHS (7:00 pm)***
- ***Tuesday, April 2, 2019 - Large Group Solo & Ensemble @ Weston (4-9 pm)***
- ***Saturday, April 6, 2019 - District Solo & Ensemble @ Weston***

# THERAPY DOGS

Jamie Gates, Danica Polk and Stacy Sosinsky | Special Education Teachers

Meet Bailey, Millie, and Gus! These three adorable pups are the therapy dogs at the Hillsboro School District. Bailey came to the middle school/high school in November 2017. Bailey is a one and a half year old goldendoodle. Millie and Gus came into the district January 2019. Millie is a ten month old doo-dle mix, and Gus is a four month old golden retriever. Millie works with students at the middle school/high school. Gus works with students at the elementary school. The three dogs go to school each day, and at night they go home to their handlers: Mrs. Gates, Ms. Polk, and Mrs. Sosinsky.



While at school, these pups work with the students. They are a friendly face, a slobbery welcome, and a non-judgmental listener. They help ease anxiety, dry tears, and bring smiles to the faces of many students and staff. Other school districts with therapy dogs have noted that having that canine comfort helps to create a positive atmosphere and aids kids with social and emotional learning. Hillsboro's experience with their therapy dogs has echoed these statements. The calming presence of Bailey, Millie, and Gus helps students open up and talk about how they are feeling. Learning how to approach the pups and tell from their body language if they are happy, stressed, tired, or hungry allows students the opportunity to build their social and emotional skills. The respect and kindness that Bailey, Millie, and Gus help to foster in the youth at Hillsboro schools is invaluable.

The students say:

- “The girls (Bailey and Millie) make our learning environment feel less overwhelming”
- “They teach us responsibility and how to understand their emotions along with ours. I will truly miss them after I graduate.”
- “When you need some support, they are there for us.”
- “Dogs know how you are feeling, they just know.”
- “I love Gus! Can we keep him forever?”
- “Gus helps me go to class when it’s hard to go.”



# SCHOLARSHIP SEASON

Kelli Sullivan | MS/HS Guidance Counselor



As the snow slowly begins to melt, and yet another winter storm moves in, so arrives scholarship season.

Scholarship season is the time of year when all the seniors start to lose their minds because all of the scholarships that they have been working on are suddenly due and they are completely overwhelmed with the process. I am here to say that there is no need to fret, here are some tips for students and parents to get through the scholarship season:

**Tip 1:** Determine what scholarships you can apply for by reading the requirements, this will help narrow down what you need to focus on. Parents, each senior was given a local scholarship packet and is e-mailed additional scholarships weekly. The Local Scholarship Guide is posted on the school website.

**Tip 2:** Get Organized! Find the best way for you to organize your papers and what needs to be done. One strategy is to organize your scholarship in a binder by due date. Each scholarship has a folder or plastic sleeve for you to place completed paperwork in. Make a “to-do” list to go with each folder and cross things off as you get them done.

**Tip 3:** Know your due dates, then write them on your calendar as due a week earlier than they are actually due. This avoids you handing them in late and gives you a few extra days in case of emergency.

**Tip 4:** Make sure you have ALREADY asked your references for your letters of recommendation. Make sure you give them at least two weeks to write them, and give them a copy of your resume.

**Tip 5:** Have someone else proofread your work and FOLLOW DIRECTIONS. Many scholarship applications are thrown out because students don’t follow directions, there are spelling errors, or they are missing required information.

**Tip 6:** STOP PROCRASTINATING ALREADY! Get going. You can do this!!! Don’t be afraid to ask for help.

This can be a very trying time for seniors and parents but with a little planning, organization, and hard work, scholarships can be earned. If you have any questions or concerns, please e-mail me at [kelli.sullivan@hillsboroschools.org](mailto:kelli.sullivan@hillsboroschools.org).

# CHESS CLUB VICTORY

Anna Madden| MS/HS English/Chess Club Advisor

Hillsboro High School's varsity chess team took second place in a three-school tournament against Royall and New Lisbon at Royall High School.



# ROLLER SKATING AT ELEMENTARY

Becky Farra| Elementary Physical Education Teacher

Elementary students are excited to be getting lessons in how to roller skate during physical education class. Phil Wallace from Galaxie Skate Center in Richland Center is the instructor. The kids are on their feet right away and moving around the gym. Depending on age and skill, some of the things they are learning are forward skate, toe stops, low skate, back skate, and crossover step. There is no cost to students because of the generosity of Tiger Pride and the milk moola fund. Students in grades 3-5 had the opportunity two years ago and enjoyed it tremendously.



Students in K-2 are new to skating this year. They said they were scared at first, then it was fun. This is a great opportunity for some life skills and to get plenty of exercise. We are thankful to Tiger Pride for their support of this program.



# DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Teresa Krajco | District Librarian

Digital devices and media have come to play a large part in the lives of our kids these days. Internet safety statistics from Online Safety Site ([www.onlinesafetysite.com](http://www.onlinesafetysite.com)) report:



- 92% of teens post their real name on their online profiles
- 58% of teens don't think posting personal info online is unsafe
- 69% of teens regularly receive personal messages online from strangers and most of them don't tell a trusted adult

iPads, Chromebooks, online games, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, websites, and apps are in many of their hands daily. As Uncle Ben told Peter Parker, 'With great power, comes great responsibility.' These devices and tools can be powerful. Our students at Hillsboro are learning how to be responsible with them by means of lessons in digital citizenship.

Digital citizenship for our students doesn't just consist of lessons about what websites they should avoid and a long list of don'ts. Through lessons about:

- the importance of strong passwords,
- a positive digital footprint,
- internet safety,
- strategies about protecting personal information,
- how to search and evaluate website information,

students are learning and practicing how to use technology efficiently and effectively.

If you are interested in more information about digital devices or social media, Common Sense Media ([www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org)) is a great website for educators and parents that contains information for families about movies and tv shows, best websites and apps, and guides to some of the most popular websites such as Fortnite, YouTube, and Snapchat.

Digital devices and media are quickly ever changing. Technology is an everyday part of our kids' lives and can be a positive and powerful force. Let's help them interact positively in our digital world.

# SEE THE SOUND

Jill Smith | Elementary Instructional Coach



“See the Sound” is the term that we are currently using with our 4K, Kindergarten, and 1st grade students when we use the unique hand cueing system of Visual Phonics. Visual Phonics is a system of unique hand cues and symbols that represent the sounds in our English Language.

“See the Sound” is an auditory, visual, and kinesthetic version of the Alphabet. When we teach Phonics here at Hillsboro Elementary School, we are adding Visual Phonics, which is similar to American Sign Language.

See the Sound/Visual Phonics is a multisensory approach to our phonics instruction. A large body of educational and cognitive research supports the effectiveness of both phonics instruction and multisensory approaches to learning.

A person using See the Sound/Visual Phonics hears the sound (auditory), reproduces the feeling of the sound with a hand cue (kinesthetic), and writes a symbol depicting the hand cue (visual). It goes without saying that the more senses involved in learning, the easier, faster and more permanent the result.

A large body of reading research also identifies “motivation” as a common characteristic of good readers. It further identifies “interest level of reading material” and “fear of failure” as key factors influencing a person’s motivation to read and write.

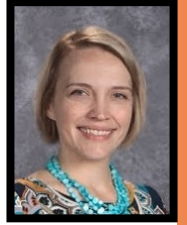
See the Sound/Visual Phonics also allows beginning readers and writers to spell independently earlier than students who are not exposed to Visual Phonics. And, the more interested the reader, the more motivated the reader. From there, meaningful practice leads to mastery!

# CHARACTERSTRONG TRAINING

Rose Davey | MS/HS Administrative Assistant

On a cold Saturday in February, seventeen Hillsboro staff members traveled to the Onalaska High School Performing Arts Center to attend elective CharacterStrong training.

As a new staff member, I had initially chosen to attend the training in order to familiarize myself more deeply with the theories and practices of our own servant leadership program at the high school, created by our middle/high school instructional coach and interventionist, Linda Bisarek, using the CharacterStrong curriculum. I was curious to hear the details of this holistic approach to education, and to investigate the program's goals in order to better understand the investment that our staff and students have made in order to build a safe and positive school through the framework of intention-based interactions within our district and in the community.



One major focus of our program is to infuse relationship-building not only into our classrooms, but beyond them, as the purpose of our program is precisely to extend these principles into all areas of students' lives in order to cultivate a strong personal foundation through building compassion, strength of character, resilience, and hopefully, joy.

Naturally, these tenets are not only valuable to our students; in fact, one should argue that in order to create an environment where students can build integrity, stability, and find personal balance, we need staff that are self-reflective and intentional, and are aligned with their purpose as educators, staff who are invested not in teaching a "student", but rather, an individual. I learned that over thirty-five Hillsboro staff members have attended CharacterStrong trainings since the district has implemented the curriculum, and many were attending for a second or third time, getting a "refresher", during my training.

As a district employee that isn't working as a teacher, one often wonders how applicable these type of professional development opportunities will be to their position, if the application will be restricted to classroom scenarios, but by virtue of the integrated nature of the program itself, I found myself immersed not only in compelling theory, but relevant, workable, personal practices that I could apply immediately in my position. Many of the exercises we carried out in training focused on helping us to realigning ourselves with our personal purpose in our roles, and asked us to consider how we can continue to grow as professionals in our commitment to the students of our district and the community. It was in these questions that I found my greatest personal takeaways, a growth framework that not only allows for self-reflection, but celebrates it as a fundamental component of personal and professional progress. I was happy to have devoted the time and energy to the training, and proud to be working alongside colleagues, a district, and a community so committed to serving the whole student.

