



OUR COMMUNITY SCHOOL REFLECTION

SEPTEMBER 2025

Celebrate Success!

Share What We Learn!

Updates on Projects!

Community School Coordinator - Appreciation Week



Our **Community School Coordinator** helps bring the heart of our school to life!

Together with Families, Staff Students, and Community Partners he helps connect our community with resources and opportunities so people feel supported and included.

From **Family Nights and the Food Pantry to Shared Leadership, Family Voice & Engagement to Celebrations and Special Field Trips**, Mr. Z helps us create moments that make our school stronger, brighter, and more welcoming for all.

We're grateful for his care, dedication, and kid-first mindset. Helping our community grow stronger together.

We're so thankful for Mr. Z!





We kicked off the school year with a wonderful Open House on Tuesday, August 19! Families enjoyed meeting Teachers, exploring classrooms, and connecting with Community Partners. The evening was filled with music by DJ Brettly, a delicious free meal, and fun activities like a scavenger hunt with gift card prize drawing.



Open House



Families also had the chance to drop off supplies, get health questions answered, update student information, and learn more about the many resources and events our school offers—including Family Nights, the Food Pantry, and Community Celebrations. Thank you to everyone who joined us in making it such a warm and welcoming start to the year!

Favorite Pet - This year the kitten had twice the votes of the dog half-way through the evening, but in the end the dog won by a single vote. Thank you to the **League of Women Voters** for hosting this activity!





FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL



The first day of school was filled with excitement as students walked down a red carpet and through a balloon arch, greeted by smiling staff. This special welcome set the tone for our theme of the year: Make Every Minute Count. From the very first moment, students were reminded that each day is a new opportunity to learn, grow, and shine. It was a joyful start to a year full of meaningful moments together!

STAFF WELCOME & SHIRTS



One of our favorite traditions is when all School Staff wear matching t-shirts on the first day to highlight the year's theme.

This year, the shirts proudly displayed

Make Every Moment Count, reminding everyone of our shared purpose. Seeing Teachers and Staff united in the same message helps students feel part of something special. It's a simple but powerful way to start the year with school spirit and community pride.



SNACKLE BOXES



Our team now has “**snackleboxes**” to enjoy throughout the year! We'll keep them filled with treats as a little boost, thanks to **Jenn Speckeen's Golden Apple Award grant** from the **La Crosse Public Education Foundation**.



TACO TOWN AT STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Thank you to **Taco Town** and **Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA)** for providing delicious food for our Staff as they prepared for the new School Year!





PBIS SCAVENGER HUNT

Students jumped into the year with a **fun PBIS Scavenger Hunt** that took them all around the school. Each clue led to a new location where they practiced how to be **Safe, Respectful, and Responsible**. Along the way, classes worked together to solve riddles and share what those expectations look like in different spaces.

The hunt was a playful reminder that **Making Every Moment Count starts with Positive Choices every day.**



SEPTEMBER ASSEMBLY

In September, our PBIS Assembly brought all Hamilton classes together for one big **Morning Meeting**.

Students and Staff gathered to celebrate our school expectations and community spirit. The activity for our morning meeting was an exciting **"Minute to Win It"** game that had everyone cheering and laughing. The energy and teamwork showed how we can **Make Every Moment Count** when we learn and have fun together.



September Family Night



September Family Night was a lively celebration, marking our 3rd Annual Kickball Game with Emplify and honoring Hispanic Heritage Month.



A huge THANK YOU to all of our Staff & Volunteers!



Students and Families enjoyed a traditional Hispanic supper, participated in crafts, and had a blast breaking open a Piñata.





I wanted to say thank you for the awesome celebration you organized for the Hispanic heritage month, we always enjoy family nights at Hamilton and this one was extra special, thanks for welcoming us, we are proud of being a Hamilton family. **Muchas gracias, Hamilton es la mejor escuela de La Crosse! Estamos orgullosos de pertenecer a Hamilton.**

Sincerely,
Villabona-Viviescas Family



The **League of Women Voters** helped run a fun voting booth where families tasted fresh versus canned mangoes, and fresh mango was the clear favorite.



Families cheered on Students during the Kickball game, creating an energetic and joyful atmosphere, where the **Students ended up winning 18-17!**



The evening combined culture, literacy, healthy choices, and family fun, making it a night to remember.

Family Night

ATTENDANCE TRACKERS



Good Attendance is smart!

Did You Know?

The better your child's attendance is, the more likely they are to:

- develop healthy friendships
- have positive self-esteem
- develop more skills for life
- earn good grades
- graduate high school
- enjoy their adult career

IF your child will be absent:

- Please call the school office at **608-789-7695** before 8am.
- Turn in doctor's notes to the office if seen for illness. (Medical Excuses from providers do not count towards the "10" absences.)

Planned Absence

- Request a Pre-Approval Form from the Principal and return completed form to the office before the planned absence.

(Child's Name) _____

School Year Absences

☐	1st Absence
☐	2nd Absence
☐	3rd Absence
☐	4th Absence
☐	5th Absence
☐	6th Absence
☐	7th Absence
☐	8th Absence
☐	9th Absence
☐	10th Absence

For Attendance Policy and Information:
WWW.LACROSSESCHOOLS.ORG

Reminder

When a student misses more than 10% of the school year or has 10 or more absences, we'll reach out to schedule a meeting to discuss how we can support regular attendance.

Families are encouraged to reach out sooner if they need support or anticipate challenges with attendance.

If absences continue, a truancy referral may be submitted to the court.

We know that regular school attendance is one of the most important ways to help your child succeed now and in the future.

We also understand that life can get busy and that our attendance policy can sometimes feel tricky to navigate. That's why we introduced Attendance Trackers to make things simpler for everyone.

At the start of the school year each Hamilton & SOTA student received an Attendance Tracker to use at home to increase:

- **Clarity** – Make sure families know how and when to report absences.
- **Awareness** – Give you and your child an easy way to track how many school days they've missed.
- **Teamwork** – Strengthen the partnership between school and home.

Our goal is to have a 93% Daily Attendance Rate (DAR) at school. Through September, Hamilton & SOTA I average DAR is 94%.

Keep up the great work!

We're here to help! If you have questions or would like support with your child's attendance, please reach out to the Hamilton/SOTA I office or contact our **School Social Worker - Stacey Oliphant Deal** at 608-789-5068 OR soliphan@lacrossesd.org



Here Today, Ready for Tomorrow!



Here are two Hamilton students (**Sherri & Gabriella**) showing off their Attendance Trackers at Home!

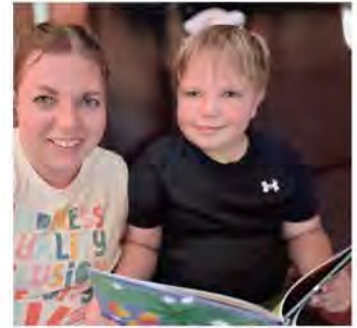


HOME LIBRARIES

As part of our **Family Engagement Plan**, we are working hard to help families expand Home Libraries and highlight the value of access to books.

The book ***How to Eat a Mango*** was shared with Hamilton Families and was featured at our September Family Night. Families had the chance to vote on their favorite mango, and the fresh mango came out as a clear winner! This activity also celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month, bringing culture, reading, and family fun together while showing how important it is for every child to have books at home.

If you would like to donate to support our **Home Library Program**, cash or checks can be dropped off to the Hamilton office.



NEW SUPPORT ROLE AT HAMILTON!

We are excited to introduce a new role at Hamilton:
Family Engagement Coach!

Jenn Speckeen, who many of you know as our Title I Teacher, has graciously stepped into this position. In her role, Jenn is here to help Teachers, Staff, Students, and Families build stronger ways to connect, communicate, and collaborate. She has already supported staff and students with conflict resolution through the Peace Path, coordinated back-to-school and take-home materials, and guided multiple Teacher-Family communications.

If you would like support in strengthening school relationships, you can reach Jenn at 608-789-5061 or jspeckee@lacrossesd.org.



Hixon Forest Hike: More Than a Walk in the Woods

Hamilton students had an exciting hiking adventure at **Lower Hixon**, exploring the trails, going on a scavenger hunt, and learning in the great outdoors. A special highlight was having **Governor Evers** join one of our hiking days, making the experience even more memorable. Older students showed **Teamwork, Kindness, and Leadership** by helping younger classmates navigate the trails and complete activities. Thanks to the **generosity of Lee Goodhart and Karla Stacey**, our students were able to enjoy this hands-on learning experience again—an opportunity that can't happen in a classroom.



BASKETBALL NIGHTS

Coach Mo, Coach Angel, and the UW-La Crosse Women's Basketball team are back for our 3rd year of Basketball Nights!

The team is hosting "Basketball Nights" in collaboration with the **Boys & Girls Club** working on: **Sportsmanship, Community Building & Social Emotional Skills** while having **FUN!**

You can still be a part of "Basketball Nights" on Mondays from 3:10-3:55pm for K-2nd graders and 3:55-4:40pm for 3rd-5th graders.

Any non-BGC student interested in Basketball Nights, simply needs to join BGC at no-cost to the family.



NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

We had a fantastic evening at the **American Legion** as the **Washburn, PPH, and Downtown Associations** teamed up with the **La Crosse Police Department** for some community fun!

A big thanks to the **Boys & Girls Club** and **Hamilton/SOTA I Staff** for bringing the fun with games and prizes for the kids.



Building community, one game and smile at a time!



FOOD FOREST - CLEAN-UP



Shout-out to the amazing **United Way staff!** On a hot and humid July day, you rolled up your sleeves to pull weeds, prune bushes and trees, and clear pathways in our Food Forest. Because of your hard work, this space became a summer favorite for our community and Summer School students alike!



From weeds to wow—thanks, United Way, for making our Food Forest shine this summer!

Cheers to our fearless **Day of Caring - Volunteers**, including many from our very own **School District Administration!** They rolled up their sleeves to clear pathways, cut back overgrown bushes and trees, and transform our Food Forest into a beautiful and inviting space for the first day of school.

BUTTERFLY HOUSES

Thank you to the **Washburn Neighborhood Association** for including us in your **Monarch Project!** Several of our Teachers planted the milkweed seeds you shared with us, helping create a welcoming space for pollinators. And a special shout-out to our neighbor, **Ed Burgess**, for building beautiful **Butterfly Houses** for the neighborhood—including one for our Food Forest!

Growing milkweed, giving Monarchs a home,
Thanks, Washburn Neighbors!



TIME CAPSULE

Ms. Testers 4th and 5th Graders created an “about me” write up to use in our time capsule. We then will retrieve it at the end of the year to see how much we’ve grown!



Service Saturday

On **August 23rd**, 13 Viterbo Service Saturday volunteers gave their time and energy to support our teachers. Whether cutting, laminating, sorting, or cleaning, their efforts ensured we were ready to welcome Students back for a great year.



Become a Mentor. Make a Difference.

Join Hamilton's Mentoring Program

The Hamilton Mentoring Program is looking for caring adults who are interested in volunteering one hour a week to foster a friendship with an elementary school child at Hamilton Elementary for the 2025-26 school year.

The program is grounded in Adverse Childhood Experiences which has tied

WHAT DOES MENTORING LOOK LIKE?

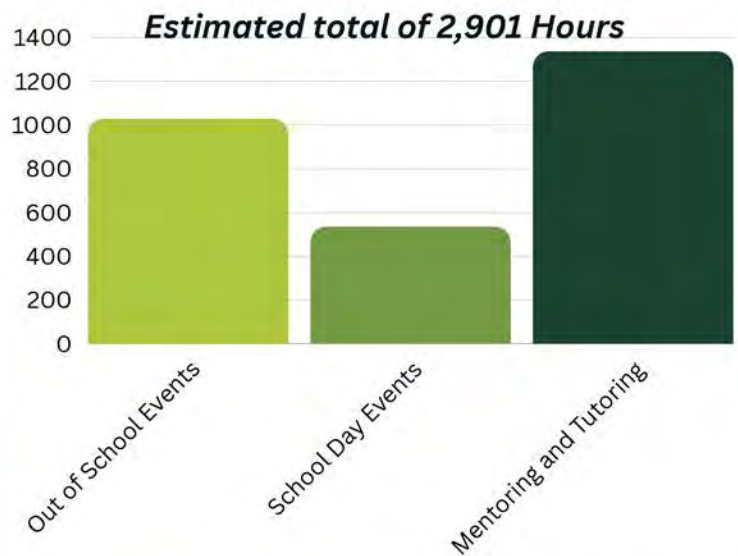
The commitment includes meeting with a student (K-5) one day per week during their breakfast/recess or lunch/recess for about 45 minutes.

mentoring at Hamilton

Thank you to our Amazing Community for stepping up, we have close to 50 mentors this year!



Volunteer & Tutoring hours in 2024-2025



- Reading Buddies
- Basketball Nights
- Soccer Camps
- Family Nights
- Service Saturdays
- Food Forest Clean-ups

- Cupcake Baking
- Food Pantry
- Junior Achievement
- Financial Literacy
- UWL Gymnastics
- Veterans Day
- Field Day
- ABC Feast

- Gundersen Mentors
- Reading & Classroom Tutors
- Spanish Tutors
- Ujima Mentors
- Readers Creating Readers

NEW STAFF - MAKING OUR TEAM EVEN STRONGER



Meghann Blakstad
Title I Teacher



Ryan King
SPED Teacher



Alyssa Kromke
SPED Teacher



Margit Speckeen
Strings Teacher



Yasser Ahmed
Teacher Assistant



Caden Pohnl
Teacher Assistant



Gracee Hartung
Teacher Assistant



Kylah Frederixon
School Psychologist



Stacey Oliphant-Deal
Social Worker



Izzy Rottier
Speech & Language
Teacher



Jordan Skrove
Assistant Kitchen
Manager



FESTIVAL BRAT BARN - FUNDRAISER

Shout out to our amazing Hamilton PTO Presidents, **Jane Benzschawel** and **Becca Gnewikow**, for their leadership (and to their families for pitching in!) to make the Brat Bar a success. Huge thanks to **Brooke Newberry** (SOTA Parent) for lending her skills and time, and to Hamilton Parent - **Ben Hadley** for donating a case of Festival brats. Add in the generosity of so many community members, and we had one fantastic day!



DAIRY QUEEN

Our students are stepping up to support their own learning experiences! During their **Dairy Queen Fundraising Night** many of our 4th & 5th grade students volunteered to greet guests, share information, and help make the evening a success.

Their efforts go directly toward funding a coach bus for the 4th and 5th graders' **field trip to the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison**—making the journey extra special and comfortable. We're proud of their commitment to pitching in for their own education and grateful for the community's support!



HEALTH TALKS



Emplify visited our school to teach students about Healthy Hearts and smart eating choices. Students explored real X-rays to find the heart, examined a realistic model showing the heart's four chambers, and even listened to their own and classmates' heartbeats. They learned how to find their pulse and understand how their heart works. To wrap up the lesson, students played a fun game rolling large dice and completing heart-healthy activities from a chart, combining movement, learning, and teamwork.

"It was so wonderful to spend time with the students, sharing our love for medicine and seeing how excited they were to learn about the heart!"



OKTOBERFEST FAMILY VISIT

Our school was honored with a special visit from the Oktoberfest Royal Family! They performed, shared traditions, and celebrated with our students, bringing joy and festive spirit to our building.



ATTENDANCE AWARDS

To celebrate weekly attendance, we use an online spinner with all the names of students who have had amazing attendance for the week. The spinner chooses 5 students from each school to pick a prize from the prize case. Our students look forward to Friday mornings when this is announced.



Birthday Baking

Each month at Hamilton, students come together for Birthday Baking, a special tradition where we bake and celebrate all the birthdays of the month. This fun and hands-on activity fosters a sense of community while allowing students to practice teamwork, measuring, and kitchen skills—all while enjoying a homemade treat!



RISE & SHINE

with Hamilton PTO

7:45-8:45 A.M.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR DONUTS AND COFFEE IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM! COME AND SEE HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED IN HAMILTON'S PTO! WE ARE LOOKING FOR PARENTS WHO WANT TO JOIN OUR TEAM.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3RD, 2025

LEVANTATE Y BRILLA

Con la Asociación de Padres y Maestro de Hamilton

7:45-8:45 A.M.

ÚNETE A NOSOTROS PARA DISFRUTAR DE DONAS Y CAFÉ EN LA SALA COMUNITARIA! VEN Y DESCUBRE CÓMO PUEDES PARTICIPAR EN LA ASOCIACIÓN DE PADRES Y MAESTROS DE HAMILTON! BUSCAMOS PADRES QUE QUIERAN AYUDAR A NUESTRO EQUIPO.

LUNES, 3 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2025

HAMILTON & SOTA I FAMILY NIGHT

TRICK or TREAT



TUESDAY
OCTOBER
28
5:30-7:00PM



ENJOY DINNER
&
TRICK OR TREAT AT OUR INDOOR TREAT TRAIL

ENTER THROUGH DOOR A

Children must have a guardian present to attend.

thank you Donors

- Anonymous - school supplies
- Megan Shay - school supplies
- Toyota of La Crosse - groceries for food pantry
- Mary Pat McGuire - clothes for closet
- Linda Lee - pet food for pantry
- Our Saviors Lutheran Church - teacher appreciation bags
- Faith United Methodist Church - school supplies
- Emplify Population Health - student snacks and school supplies
- Gorski Family - snacks and sanitizing wipes
- Our Redeemer Lutheran Church - snacks, clothes, and school supplies
- Bridges Church - school supplies and student snacks
- Washburn Neighborhood Group - student snacks and glue

Your Voice Matters

We want to hear from you!

If you would like to learn more, ask questions, share your insights, or volunteer please contact Jon Zinniel, Hamilton Community Schools Coordinator at 608-789-5092 or jjinniel@lacrossesd.org