

February 2025

Houghton-Portage Township Schools

Houghton Elementary School



Volume 12, Issue 6

Cole Klein— Principal

Patrick Aldrich—Assistant Principal

March is Reading Month—Supporting Reading for All

Upcoming Events:

- February 6th—Wing Ding Assembly
- February 7th—Water Street Dance Company Assembly
- February 13th— Classroom Valentines Parties
- February 14th—**NO SCHOOL**—Professional Development Day
- February 17th—**NO SCHOOL**—Mid-Winter Break
- March 4th—10th—Star Lab at HES
- March 7th—**NO SCHOOL**—Professional Development Day
- March 14—6:00—7:30pm— Family Reading Night
- March 24—28th —Spring Break **No School**
- April 8th—School Resumes

March is quickly approaching, and with it comes our school-wide reading celebration “March is Reading Month!”. All throughout the month of March, we will be finding fun ways to celebrate and promote reading both at school and at home. The more that parents and families join this celebration by reading throughout March, the more that students will see the value in it as well! We will have more information come home soon on this.

Reading is an essential skill needed in all areas of education. We put a heavy emphasis on

teaching all children to read proficiently. This means students work hard every day to practice and improve their reading skills.

Your child’s reading progress is closely monitored starting when he/she is in kindergarten. If your child is having reading difficulties, a plan to improve reading is created. This means your child’s teacher and school will work with your child to find where your child needs support in his/her reading development and create a plan to support him or her.

This plan includes extra instruction or support in areas of need, ongoing

checks on reading progress and a read-at-home plan that encourages you and your child to read and write outside of the school day.

Extra supports in your child’s reading improvement plan will occur in small groups during the school day. Your child will not miss regular reading instruction.



Counselor's Corner

Micah Stipech

Miracle Grow for the Brain

What if there was a miracle grow for the brain? Something we could sprinkle on and “poof” we are able to learn more, perform faster and age slower? What if there was an easy-to-achieve, scientifically proven, way to make yourself smarter? It turns out this is exactly what happened when researchers sprinkle a protein called Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF) on brain neurons in a petri dish. Similar to fertilizing a plant, the neurons sprout new branches, make new connections and literally take off.

A massive amount of research is highlighted by Dr. John Ratey, a clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School in his book *SPARK: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain* (Little, Brown, 2008).

How it works is BDNF binds to receptors in synapses that connect the neurons in our brains. It increases the voltage of those electric connections. In other words, it boosts their signal strength.

Inside the cells BDNF goes to work activating genes that create more BDNF, other important proteins and neurotransmitters. One of those neurotransmitters, Serotonin, is crucial in regulating mood and feelings of well-being. Pharmaceuticals that create anti-depressants target serotonin attempting to artificially improve mood and curb depression.

So how do we create more BDNF in our brains so that we can learn more, retain more, combat stress and feel better? The answer, researchers agree, is free. Daily exercise, in particular, bursts of high intensity exercise. Those who exercised vigorously for short bursts of 3-5 minutes create more BDNF than individuals doing something like a moderate 40minute jog.

In a recent German study, volunteers who did two 3 minute sprints (separated by 2 minutes of lower intensity) during the course of a forty-minute treadmill session demonstrated higher increases in BDNF than non-sprinters. Not only that, the sprinters learned vocabulary words 20 percent faster than non-sprinting exercisers. It seems even a small amount of high-intensity exertion can have a profound effect on your brain!

BDNF production is most crucial in children. Children’s brains are rapidly creating connections enabling them to learn at a staggering rate. By their teen years brains are already going through neural pruning, cutting out those connections that are not being used. It is critical that children utilize these windows of trainability and create neural connections that will last a lifetime. When children are sedentary, looking at screens and not moving and playing, they are missing out on tremendous cognitive development.

Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor, a fancy name that tells us what people have known for ages; a healthy body, mind and spirit are inseparable. Include plenty of activity and play in our children’s day and sprinkle miracle grow on their brains.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/22/magazine/how-exercise-could-lead-to-a-better-brain.html?pagewanted=all>

SPARK: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain (Little, Brown, 2008).



Houghton Elementary

Kindergarten Registration

2025-2026



Houghton-Portage Township Schools is in the process of registering kindergarten-aged children for the 2025-2026 school year.

Who can register?

- Children who will be five years of age by September 1st, 2025.
- Children who will be five years of age by December 1st with a waiver signed by a parent.
- Students currently attending Young 5's are automatically registered for kindergarten!

Kindergarten Screening Event

- Wednesday, April 23rd from 5:00—7:00pm @ Houghton Elementary
- Thursday, April 24th from 3:30—5:30pm @ Houghton Elementary

Please call 482-0456 ext. 3040 to pre-register your child and received additional information about the registration process and screening event.



Attendance Matters

DID YOU KNOW?

- Starting in Kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) can make it harder to learn to read.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college and at work.

attendance
MATTERS[®]

When Do Absences Become a Problem?



Note: These numbers assume a 180-day school year.

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**EVERY
MINUTE
IN SCHOOL
MATTERS**

Two missed days a month adds up to being a half a year behind by the time your child reaches 4th grade.

And once a child falls behind, they rarely catch up.



Building Healthy Communities PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BREAKS

February

CALMING ACTIVITIES

Mindfulness

Square Breathing

Practice square breathing as a good way to calm down and relieve overwhelming emotions. To do this, deeply breathe in for a count of 4, hold the breath for a count of 4, exhale slowly for a count of 4, and hold the emptied lungs for a count of 4. Repeat as many times as needed.



Calming and Stretching

Brain Break: Stretching

This 4-minute guided stretching video gives students a chance to get out of their seat and refocus their attention. This activity requires no equipment and can easily be done anywhere in the classroom. Give students time to stretch!



View the video [here!](#)



ENERGIZING ACTIVITIES

Manipulatives

Physical Activity Dice

Use dice for an interactive physical activity break that allows students to practice leadership skills. Start by writing out physical activity actions onto a notecard with a number 1 through 5. Have two students lead the classroom by one picking a notecard and the other rolling the dice. Have the classroom add the dice together, and then multiply that sum by the number on physical activity card. Perform the chosen physical activity by the total number.



Energizers

[Yoga Freeze Dance](#)

[5-Minute Move](#)

[Cha Cha Slide Dance](#)

[ABC Kids Workout](#)



January TEAM Students

Every month we are recognizing a student in each class that exemplifies our TEAM goals. These students will enjoy a treat with the principal and a certificate.

Y5's: Maeve Archer Mira

K: Corvid Young, Callie Brey, Ruby Nave, Aliina Helminen

1st : Brooks Jarvi, Leo Luoma, Vaughn Viola, Kennedy Peterson, Carson Woodford,

2nd: James Folcik, Liam Zimmerman, Nathan Jukkala, Bella Bishop, Otto Saaranen,

3rd: Edy Lieburn, Jenni Michaelson, Wyatt Bates, Mitchell Gagnon, Avery Gruver,

4th: Ivy Juntunen, Ryder Flachs, Sam Campaign, Emery Wiitanen, Juri Saleem

5th: Drea Durocher, Eero Maki, Elise Primeau, Mason Weathers, Claire Hillstrom

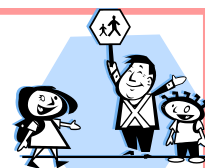
Congratulations to our Gremlin TEAM Students!!

TEAM Students



Dropping Off Students at School

I would like to thank everyone for slowing down, pulling up as far forward as possible, and making the drop-off / pick-up transition quick. We know that parent drop-off and pick-up is a stressful time and appreciate that you are patient and calm. This helps to keep everyone safe!



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Mission Statement:

Every Student, Every Day!