

## The HCA Way

This document is designed to give you a better sense of how HCA 'does school'. Included are one-page descriptions of the following topics:

- ★ Standards-Based Teaching and Learning
- ★ Wearing Many Hats
- ★ Student as Worker
- ★ Blended Learning & Technology Integration
- ★ Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs)
- ★ Student Voice & Choice
- ★ Future Map
- ★ Wellness
- ★ Passage
- ★ Character Development and Restorative Justice
- ★ Faculty Collaboration
- ★ Extended School Day & Extended School Year
- ★ Rituals & Traditions
- ★ Autonomy in Learning

## **Standards-Based Teaching and Learning**

At HCA, students work towards mastering national and state standards of learning. Standards-Based Teaching and Learning (SBTL) requires students to demonstrate evidence of standards proficiency in order to advance academically. There are no averages, no extra credit worksheets, and no promotions for age. Instead, students are presented with a map of learning targets, derived from the Common Core, the Next Generation Science Standards, and the Maine Learning Results, which they must master.

In a Standards-Based classroom, teachers clearly communicate the standards and skills under development to their students, provide clear rubrics explaining what evidence is required to show mastery, and coach their students to revise and improve their work to a level that meets each standard. Teachers provide several opportunities to meet standards using multiple modalities to ensure learners with varied learning styles can achieve.

Standards-Based teaching fosters collaboration, rather than competition in students. The focus is drawn away from who got the highest percentage and redirected towards reflecting on what was learned and what is required to improve and revise work to meet the standard. Students in Standards-Based classrooms are frequently teaching one another material, helping each other find resources, and giving each other peer feedback to achieve the shared goal of proficiency. Furthermore, the frequent use of formative assessments, which let students know their current level of mastery without a penalty in the gradebook, help develop growth mindset in students of all academic backgrounds.

SBTL also supports student autonomy by increasing transparency in the assessment process. All HCA students have access Project Foundry reports which display individual academic progress, outstanding assignments, and student goals in real time. At the end of each trimester, Proficiency Reports from Project Foundry also aggregate assessment data in a user-friendly document so that students, teachers, and parents can easily understand a student's academic status. Proficiency Reports function much as report cards or progress reports do in other schools with the dual purposes of providing feedback to families and reporting out to communities such as employers or college admissions committees on a student's academic profile. As schools across Maine and the United States increasingly adopt SBTL as best practice, these other constituencies are increasingly accustomed to reading Proficiency Reports, which obviate the need for traditional report cards.

## Wearing Many Hats

At HCA, it is expected that all adults will 'wear many hats'. This expectation is both a necessary reality of our small by design school, and also something we believe is important to the long term health and effectiveness of our community. In wearing many hats, faculty are given the freedom to explore more than one narrow area of their passion, and this freedom brings valued diversity and vitality to our community.

Wearing multiple hats looks different for different people in our community. While one faculty member teaches advanced math, coordinates our sailing program, and manages our facilities, another spends her days teaching science and coordinating our assessment programs; one faculty member coordinates entrepreneurial educational activities for students, manages communications, and also drives a van, while another is our Health Coordinator, teaches health, and coordinates Special Education services. We work with faculty to find roles that fit them well, and are open to an organic development of these roles over time. We have found that someone we thought would be our Assessment Coordinator, turned out to be better suited as our Student Voice and Choice Coordinator, and that transition benefited our teacher and our community.

These varied responsibilities allow for faculty to dedicate their energy to more than one area of interest. They also allow faculty to develop, professionally, in ways typical teaching jobs do not usually allow, promoting dynamism. We find that this often results in a higher job satisfaction, as narrowly focused jobs can result in burnout and fatigue.

Students at HCA benefit from seeing faculty in a variety of different roles as well. They learn that people are multi-faceted, and that there is value to pursuing a wide array of interests. The 'many hats' roles also support better relationship building between students and teachers. For example, a student who may feel shut off to the prospect of a relationship with a math teacher, due to high anxiety about learning math, can get to know that faculty member in an entirely different environment—like on a sailboat. The relationship and trust built on the water carries over into the math classroom, resulting in better student learning outcomes.

There is also the practical element of wearing many hats that benefits HCA. In an effort to dedicate as many resources as possible directly to student learning, HCA minimizes administrative expense with this structure. This structure also encourages faculty to gain a better understanding of the complex nature of our school, fosters a collaborative team approach, and demonstrates a universal commitment to HCA.

## Student as Worker

"The governing practical metaphor of the school should be 'student-as-worker,' rather than the more familiar metaphor of 'teacher as deliverer of instructional services.' Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves." – Coalition of Essential Schools Common Principles\*

Students at HCA are encouraged not only to learn content, but to acquire the skills necessary to make learning a lifelong passion, goal, and habit. In order to encourage learning as a long-term goal, students are given autonomy and ownership in their learning; they are encouraged to take charge instead of merely fulfilling set assignments.

At HCA, we often say that students are at work when they are at school, and everything from our Community Agreements to our schedule, facilities, and integration of technology reinforces this idea. Self-direction is key to success for students, with faculty playing the role of coaches and mentors, leading students on a journey of self-discovery. Students at HCA take the lead on planning their path towards passage, with developmentally appropriate support from their Crew Leader. Our Community Agreements set expectations that one would expect in a traditional working environment—respect, kindness, patience, and safety. Our facility is designed to support individual work spaces, small group, and large presentation areas, much as office spaces are designed for adults in the workforce.

In traditional schools, students are cooked for and cleaned up after. When something needs to be built or bought, the facilities or purchasing departments carry that out. At HCA, we believe that regular work experiences, including what used to be called "chores," are a vital element of teaching students the habits needed to thrive in both educational and non-educational settings. Our students have regular rotations: help grow, prepare, and serve food; clean the building; and maintain and improve the physical plant.

These non-traditional work experiences at HCA foster an understanding of what it means to be part of a community, and build a feeling of ownership and responsibility in our students. This engagement increases students readiness to learn, and to take an active role in their learning.

\*<http://essentialschools.org/common-principles/>

## Blended Learning & Technology Integration

Technology is essential to 21st century work and learning. At HCA, we are committed to careful instruction in both digital citizenship and intentional technology usage. HCA participates in the MLTI (Maine Learning Technology Initiative) and provides devices for each of our students. Students have access to HCA's computers, networks, and internet services for educational purposes and research, and use them consistently with HCA's educational mission and curriculum.

Walk into a classroom at HCA and you may see something unfamiliar: students engaged in a variety of learning experiences, such as accessing geometry lessons online, watching a TED talk, or researching current events, while the teachers move through the room offering thought-provoking questions and suggestions. This model, known as "blended learning," enables students to control the direction and pace of their learning beyond the classroom using digital media. Rocketship Education describes the model of blended learning as a way of "creating a flexible space where teachers leverage tools—tutors, online learning programs and their peers—to engage kids in a truly personalized learning experience.\*" In addition to providing digital resources to support students' learning in class, students must digitally document their progress and mastery, and may work towards goals beyond the standard curriculum or chart an individualized path within the standard curriculum. The following tools allow students, coached by teachers, to control what they learn, when they work, and to track the pace of their learning.

- **Google Apps for Education** - Students at HCA are set up with a Gmail account that acts as a center point for most of their technology use at school. In addition to using Google Drive as a collaborative workspace and digital storage platform, students use Google Sites to create digital portfolios to track their development at HCA. Each teacher manages a Google Classroom that gives students access to instructions, assignments, class updates, checklists, and resources.
- **Project Foundry** - HCA engages teachers and students in planning, organizing, and assessing their learning through Project Foundry. An online, collaborative workflow, portfolio and reporting solution for student-centered learning, Project Foundry emphasizes voice and choice in both teacher-guided and student-led learning experiences.
- **Khan Academy** - Individualized math and science goals can be met using Khan Academy. After working with a teacher to develop a goal related to strengthening a specific skill, moving ahead of the class, or pursuing an individualized interest, students can use Khan Academy practice and tutorials to learn and produce evidence of proficiency.
- **NewsELA** - NewsELA is a website that provides current news articles on a variety of topics, formatted for a range of reading levels. Readers can adjust the Lexile rating of any article in accordance with their needs, and document their understanding through comprehension assessments at the end of each article. NewsELA provides robust content in science, technology, health, and other topics, and is used across the curriculum.
- **Rosetta Stone** - HCA's subscription to Rosetta Stone allows students to focus their foreign language study around their interests. Rosetta Stone offers tutorials in 24 languages that students can choose to study outside of school, during guided study, or in dedicated language blocks.
- **OpenEd** - an educational resource library, offering over a million assessments, homework assignments, videos, games and lesson plans for every Common Core math and English language arts standard, as well as the Next Generation Science Standards.
- **MobyMax** - Moby Max is a differentiated and adaptive learning platform that allows students to build skills and meet standards in disciplines including math, science, English language arts, and social studies.

\*<http://www.rsed.org/blended-learning.cfm>

## Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs)

In most schools, student participation can artificially inflate or deflate academic grades. Good study habits, responsibility, and self-advocacy are critical skills for success in life, and are necessary for success at HCA. We assess and track Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs) separately from academic content mastery to help students grow all-around as learners; this practice in turn affords teachers, parents, and students a clearer and more honest picture of academic progress.

For instance, a student who misses two weeks of school for sickness won't be penalized for missing participation points on their academic progress report, and a student can't pass with a "C" by skipping all the tests but turning in homework and extra credit. Students who demonstrate strong and consistent mastery of HOWLs may be eligible to start taking on more responsibility, structure their own learning opportunities, or gain special privileges during the school day. Ultimately, HCA's approach to HOWLs increases fairness in assessment, and increases student accountability.

Our HOWLS are:

- **Participation in the Learning Community** - A student who meets their participation HOWL consistently demonstrates a willingness to try new things and contributes positively to the learning community. Participation is also demonstrated by accepting responsibility for personal decisions and actions and using class time effectively.
- **Preparation and Work Completion** - Students who meet this standard show diligence in tackling academic work and planning for success. To meet this HOWL, a student must be prepared for class, ask questions necessary to understand the task and complete the assignment, and plan her time to complete assignments. Students must also meet deadlines and adhere to the established criteria of the assignment.
- **Perseverance and Revision** - Meeting the standard for perseverance and revision requires that a student seek solutions to problems. Students may demonstrate this by learning from feedback and improving work with each draft. When confronted with challenging tasks or situations, successful students continue to problem solve and are not paralyzed with frustration.
- **Reflection** - A reflective student is able to consider her performance and identify strengths and weaknesses in the work she produces. A student meeting this standard should also be able to identify obstacles to learning or habits of work, and develop strategies to overcome them.

## Student Voice & Choice

Thomas Jefferson believed a well-informed citizenry to be the most essential component of a successful democracy; at HCA we create micro-democracies through a number of school initiatives designed to cultivate students' authentic voices, and to empower them to make choices about their learning, their community, and their lives. This not only serves students by nurturing important life skills, but it also serves the broader community. According to Kathleen Cushman, of What Kids Can Do, Inc., "Whatever our roles, we tend to think of a successful high school as something adults pull off ... But I like to think of school as an enterprise with partners who also invest – and our most important investment partners are students...that partnership fosters learning on both sides, and a more positive school climate and culture."\*

HCA's small size enables us to facilitate forums for students to routinely voice concerns, and help generate ways to address those concerns. One such forum is Community Meeting, a full-school gathering which happens weekly at both Division 1 and Division 2. Community Meeting provides all members of our community - teachers, students, and staff - a space to celebrate acts of kindness, examples of perseverance, and instances of social bravery and upstanding. These meetings also offer HCA community members the opportunity to publicly air grievances about behaviors negatively impacting the school. Sharing concerns serves to validate student voice in a meaningful way, as well as facilitate student ownership of those behaviors which detract from the health and vitality of HCA.

Students are also introduced to developmentally-appropriate opportunities to practice civic engagement over the course of their careers at HCA. Some students arrive at HCA having never practiced self-advocacy or giving input into group decision-making processes; our small Crew groups offer students a low-stakes, accessible avenue for working on these skills recursively, such that even the most public speaking-averse students are able to feel safe speaking their minds during Crew meetings. Other students arrive fully prepared to speak on their own behalves, and to lead other students. HCA responds by providing the chance to design and lead extracurricular workshops for other kids, to represent their peers on our student Cabinet, and to represent the entire HCA community at the annual Maine Model United Nations Conference. However confident a student feels in the use of her own voice, HCA provides multiple venues for practicing these skills, and the scaffolding needed for students to feel empowered in their learning and in their lives.

Finally, Student Voice and Choice is reinforced in our core Government, Policy, and Civics curriculum. At HCA, students can expect to discuss current issues related to civil liberties cases before the courts, and experience the complexities of the United States electoral process firsthand through field research each election season. All HCA students will become intimately familiar with state and federal lawmaking, as well as citizen activism by completing a rigorous public policy proposal in their Division 3 year, culminating in a substantial research task and presentation before a community audience.

At HCA we know that our students' faith in the democratic process is contingent upon their successful experience of that process; we therefore endeavor to provide students multiple opportunities in their years at HCA to observe, participate in, and critique democracy in action.

[\\*http://whatkidscando.org/index5.html](http://whatkidscando.org/index5.html)

## **Future Map**

HCA's curriculum prepares students for life after high school - whether they choose higher education or entry into the workforce - through a standards-based approach to teaching and learning. That means that students are required to meet the same academic standards in math, English language arts, social studies, science, health and physical education and fine arts as do all Maine public middle and high school students. While most schools enact standards-based learning by offering a series of siloed content-specific courses, HCA offers academic coursework through an interdisciplinary, project-based model that challenges students to go beyond the traditional acquisition of facts and skills, to truly learn where those facts and skills come from and contextualize them in their real-life applications. Project-based education relates knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge to authentic activities and is thus often contrasted with "Direct Instruction" or "rote" learning.

HCA's curriculum seeks to meet the dual mandates of providing differentiated instruction for all learners, and producing learners who consistently demonstrate core skills and knowledge needed for success in the 21st century economy. To this end, our curriculum is anchored by several core projects that all students can expect to complete, at some point, in their HCA journey. Our annual oral history investigation, for example, allows us to match students with community members who share stories over the course of multiple lengthy interviews. This project draws on a variety of English language arts and social studies, as well as media and technology standards, and can be thoroughly differentiated for students at all levels of readiness. Similarly, our climate change investigation weaves together curricular strands from biology, earth science, statistical analysis, creative writing and geography, while simultaneously providing diverse learners with multiple pathways towards content mastery. Both of these projects recur on a biannual basis so that regardless of when students enter HCA, they can expect to participate in them prior to graduation.

In order to honor the strengths of project-based learning - rich, multi-dimensional, long-term, authentic, and community based - while maintaining the rigor and content coverage demanded by our standards, HCA has developed a document called the "Future Map" which displays all our investigation and core academic offerings within any two year span of a child's HCA career, and aligns those offerings to the standards our students must meet for passage. The design and sequencing of projects such as oral history and climate change are carefully laid out to ensure that all students can fulfill the needed requirements through our standard academic program. But HCA also recognizes the importance of providing alternative routes for certain students who may not follow the Future Map. In many cases, HCA students will craft individualized learning plans which may include Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs) such as internships, college courses, or independent projects which allow them to meet passage requirements on their own terms.

The Future Map creates accountability on the part of teachers and curriculum designers, and ensures that each HCA student is fully informed of the pathways available to passage.

## Wellness

At HCA, we take a unique approach to Wellness. In an effort to acknowledge the many facets of what it means for students and adults to be "well", we approach the topic from multiple angles including: physical health and fitness, mental health, emotional learning/health, nutrition, sleep habits, personal hygiene, and stress reduction. These concepts are addressed during specific instructional blocks, as well as woven into the everyday fabric of our school.

HCA believes that personal wellness must be habitual, and that the adults in our school should actively model the habits that we expect our students to develop. For example, each member of our staff supervises and participates in frequent movement breaks designed to enhance student and teacher productivity, and increase student outcomes. Movement breaks may include walks through the woods, field games, skateboarding clinics, throwing a frisbee, or yoga class. Movement breaks are also designed to give students a chance to develop socially, emotionally, and physically through free play. These activities allow students to explore and learn in a way that fosters creativity, bolsters social learning, and allows for proper personal and interpersonal development.

As an academic discipline, wellness integrates content around nutrition and physiology, written reflections on stress and emotional health, healthy relationships, and healthy decision-making, among other topics.

We feel that a multifaceted approach, with involvement from every faculty member and student aids our students and faculty in building lifelong habits that will promote Wellness at HCA, in our time outside of school, and for the rest of lives.

## Passage

A student's journey through Harpswell Coastal Academy is built around "Passages," a series of significant transitions signifying the development of increasing mastery of skills and standards, autonomy, and individuality. HCA breaks students into 3 divisions with different academic foci, levels of support, and learning opportunities:

- ★ *Pioneers: For students new to HCA and those in need of extra skills development in order to be successful in Division 1.5*
- ★ *Division 1.5: Typically considered middle school, and includes grades 6, 7 & 8. Focus on literacy and scientific and mathematical thinking the context of investigations.*
- ★ *Division 2: Typically considered grades 9, 10 & 11. Focus is on developing college-ready writing and math skills and a wide-ranging understanding of science, social studies and the arts in the context of investigations.*
- ★ *Division 3: Typically considered grade 12. Focus is on ensuring that students have meaningful experiences with and are ready for citizenship, work, and post-secondary learning.*

Passage from one division to another is not automatic with the conclusion of a school year, but rather dependent on a student meeting the standards associated with the division, showing evidence of quality completion of the investigations, and demonstrating consistently strong Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs). We believe that students should progress through the divisions as they are ready, which in some cases may mean completing a division at an accelerated pace, or with extra time. For example, it may take a student 2, 3, or 4 years to complete Division 1.

Passages are significant events. In preparation, students are asked to describe their achievements, reflect on their challenges, and put forth goals for the next phase of their education. Afterwards, students are recognized and celebrated by the community. Students in danger of not passing are given the opportunity to make up missed standards during "Passage Camp," which takes place during Flex Friday time in the last trimester of the school year.

## Character Development and Restorative Justice

Harpwell Coastal Academy is a place to grow as a whole person. Character development both supports academic success and leads to vastly improved outcomes after graduation. As stated in the Expeditionary Learning Design Principles, "We are crew, not passengers. Students and teachers are strengthened by acts of consequential service to others, and one of a ... school's primary functions is to prepare students with the attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service."\* We cultivate character at HCA through Community Agreements, service, and Restorative Justice practices.

### **Community Agreements**

Our code of Community Agreements was developed in conjunction with our students during our first year, and calls on students to be patient, helpful, productive, honest, safe, leaders, upstanders, and respectful. Community Agreements are invoked in both praise and interventions with students, and are supported and strengthened primarily via the Restorative Justice system.

### **Restorative Justice\*\***

Restorative Justice (RJ) is a grounding philosophy that fosters a transformative process for individuals and the community in what are traditionally referred to as "student discipline" issues. Restorative Justice is based on the belief that through connection, not exclusion, balance can be restored to a community when harm has been done. Rather than dole out arbitrary punishments for rule-breaking, we bring the perpetrators of harm into conversation with the people they have harmed and members of their community to increase understanding and empathy. Once an understanding is reached, the group must decide what action is required to make amends. RJ practices at HCA include the use of Restorative Circles, mediated conversations, and community service to address behaviors and actions that violate community agreements.

### **Service**

Students learn that values such as collaboration, perseverance, and craftsmanship are essential to the production of high quality work. Service to the community is an ethic that permeates HCA. Students will experience authentic service to the community as an important element of their academic work, including investigations.

\*<http://eleducation.org/resources/design-principles>

\*\*<http://restorativejustice.org/>

## Faculty Collaboration

HCA seeks to prioritize interdisciplinary collaboration in thoughtfully constructed faculty teams over a traditional “close your door and do your thing” model. Our model is built on the practices and theory of the School Reform Initiative, as explained below\*.

### **Transformational Learning Communities**

*Professional Learning Community (PLC)* Educators routinely engage in collaborative learning in various settings such as grade level and content area teams, book groups, study groups, action research and data analysis teams, administrative or leadership teams and many others. Oftentimes these groups do not have the knowledge and skill to be highly effective and successful. SRI provides professional development for members and leaders of these PLCs around the use of multiple strategies and tools to help insure their success.

### **Intentional Learning Communities**

Learning Communities need to be intentional to help surface troubling issues of equity and examines assumptions about teaching and learning through reflective and collaborative practices. The tools and resources utilized should support educators and organizations to gain different perspectives about their students. They allow educators to build trust, take risks, and surface assumptions and insights about the students they serve by looking regularly and carefully at authentic student and adult work. SRI offers professional development for participants and facilitators of Intentional Learning Communities.

### **Facilitative Leadership**

Being an effective leader takes time and support. Facilitative leadership development provides current and emerging leaders with knowledge, tools, and resources to support the development of reflective, collaborative, and learning-focused schools and organizations. Facilitative leaders might be principals, department heads, coaches or others within a school, community, or organization. The knowledge and skills gained through SRI’s Facilitative Leadership work translate into every setting where adults strive to work collaboratively.

### **Collaborative Learning**

Educators routinely engage in collaborative learning in various settings such as grade level and content area teams, book groups, study groups, action research and data analysis teams, administrative or leadership teams and many others. Oftentimes these groups do not have the knowledge and skill to be highly effective and successful. SRI provides professional development for members and leaders of these learning communities around the use of multiple strategies and tools to help insure their success.

### **Customized Coaching and Support**

Sometimes organizations do not know where to start, and a customized support plan offers the best way to begin. SRI’s expert staff and facilitators works with educators and community members to understand current successes and areas for improvement within the local context, and help to devise a support plan that will successfully meet their goals.

\*All above text excerpted from <http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/core-practices/>

### **Extended School Day & Extended School Year**

One the things that makes HCA fairly unique is that we are not just trying to figure out how to redo education within the current assumptions, we are actively seeking to implement strategies and approaches that question those assumptions.

Our approach to when and where school occurs is one example. We know that students who are more consistently connected to adults who they trust are more likely to succeed in school. We know that students who struggle can benefit from additional time with trusted adults. And we know that students have lots of opportunities to get into trouble or become disengaged when they leave school at 2:15 each day and attend school 180 school days a year or fewer. We also know that as students get older and either needs to or wants to join the workforce, they can benefit from a flexible school schedule.

Gradually, as we grow to our anticipated full size of 240-280 students in grades 6-12, we seek to implement the following strategies:

- A longer overall school day that starts later and ends later.
- School programming that continues until parents or guardians are home. That means developing programming ourselves and with partners such as Seeds of Independence, the local YMCA, academic tutors, and the Theater Project of Brunswick, so that a student can get help with schoolwork, engage more deeply with an extra-curricular interest, or benefit from an internship, among other things.
- Summer programming that enables students to maintain social connections and important supportive relationships with trusted adults throughout the calendar year.
- "Entrepreneurial Education" initiatives and partnerships such as the HCA Farm, The Coastal Commons for Arts and Media, and others that enable us to provide regular and meaningful opportunities for students to engage in "real world" work experiences.

HCA also seeks to implement a very different approach to the traditional 180 or 190 day teaching contract as necessary.

- HCA faculty work the equivalent of 40 hour on-site work week. In the future, we intend to be able to offer flexible schedules - for example, some teachers may at 7:30am while others start at 9:30am, or some staff may work 4 10-hour days instead of 5 8-hour days.
- HCA's faculty work an extended annual schedule comprised of 210 days, which includes a designated number of summer days and professional development days.



### **Rituals & Traditions**

Every adult recalls with fondness certain rituals and traditions that anchored her to school as a child. At HCA, we understand that these experiences are vital to cultivating a shared sense of community and belonging for all students and adults, and we intentionally build them into the school year.

Each day begins, for example, with a Morning Meeting ritual in which a community member shares a quote, song, or reading to set a tone of thoughtfulness for the day, and establish a collective sense of being intellectually awake. This sharing is followed by several minutes of silent intentional time in which every student and staff member lays down all distracting items, sits perfectly still, and prepares for the day. The conclusion of Morning Meeting signals everyone's readiness to begin the day on the same page.

In addition to Morning Meeting, HCA life is punctuated by weekly Community Meetings in which all students and staff gather for thirty minutes to celebrate the accomplishments and positive behaviors of each other, as well as voice concerns that affect the entire community. Community Meetings serve to both empower students to speak up in an appropriate way, and also hold them accountable for addressing the concerns of their peers.

While some rituals are firmly embedded in the foundations of HCA, others traditions are evolving as your young school grows and develops its identity. We have, in the past celebrated the abundance of fall and our communities agricultural roots with a day devoted to learning about apples and the process of cider pressing. We also celebrate the end of each school year with a day full of games, barbecuing, and playing outside. Each of these traditions serves to cohere our community identity, and foster the close, personal relationships among students and adults that so vitally support our school's mission to educate the whole child.

## Autonomy in Learning

"The school should focus on helping young people learn to use their minds well. Schools should not be "comprehensive" if such a claim is made at the expense of the school's central intellectual purpose."

–Coalition of Essential Schools Common Principles\*

Students at HCA are encouraged not only to learn content, but to acquire the skills necessary to make learning a lifelong passion, goal, and habit. In order to encourage learning as a long-term goal, students are given autonomy and ownership in their learning; they are encouraged to take charge instead of merely fulfilling set assignments.

This concept permeates HCA; student autonomy can be seen at every level of learning, and in every content area. A prime example of this idea appears in our math curriculum. Because that each student learns at their own pace and in their own way, students are encouraged to gain a knowledge of the standards they are expected to meet, and use teachers as coaches to guide them through the process of mastering each Standard. Electives provide further voice-and-choice for our students, allowing them to choose some courses based on how they would personally like to meet certain standards. At Division 2, choices in which Investigation they would like to study allows for a more student-centered approach.

Through utilization of the Standards as a long-term roadmap of skills and concepts students need to master before graduation, HCA's students are able to demonstrate a high level of autonomy in their education.

\*<http://essentialschools.org/common-principles/>