



# PATHWAYS NEWSLETTER

Honoring God through creative learning & strong academics in a caring, fun-filled school.



## Picture of the Month:

Students have been enjoying outdoor winter recess! Moving bodies, breathing fresh air, and sparking imaginations is the goal of this unstructured, outdoor time.

## Upcoming Events

- \* **February Break - NO SCHOOL**  
February 16-20
- \* **Spiritual Emphasis Week**  
February 23-27
- \* **Someone Special Dance**  
March 14, 6-8pm
- \* **Development Day - NO SCHOOL**  
March 20
- \* **Africa Day (K-8)**  
March 27
- \* **Deadline for April Vacation Program Sign Up**  
March 30
- \* **Term 3 ends**  
April 2
- \* **Good Friday - NO SCHOOL**  
April 3
- \* **IOWA Testing Week (2-7)**  
April 6-10



A message from our Principal

## Mrs. Cleveland's Spotlight:

### Why Accreditation Matters at Holden Christian Academy

You may have heard me mention that this year is a re-accreditation year at HCA. But what does this really mean—and why does it matter for your child and our school? Accreditation is a comprehensive process that helps ensure a school is delivering high-quality education while remaining faithful to its mission.

For Holden Christian Academy, accreditation communicates that we are meeting high standards as an educational institution. The rigorous and detailed process of accreditation also celebrates a growth mindset that serves to strengthen the education we offer our students, build up our community, and honor God with excellence.

**"SHOW ME YOUR WAYS, LORD, TEACH ME YOUR PATHS. GUIDE ME IN YOUR TRUTH AND TEACH ME, FOR YOU ARE GOD MY SAVIOR, AND MY HOPE IS IN YOUR ALL DAY LONG.  
PSALM 25:4-5**



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## “Mrs. Cleveland’s Spotlight” continued...

Holden Christian Academy is accredited through the **Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)**, an organization that supports Christian schools around the world. As a distinctly Christian organization, ACSI accreditation integrates rigorous educational best practices with a strong biblical worldview, helping schools remain academically excellent while distinctly Christ-centered.

Through accreditation, our school participates in an ongoing cycle of self-study, reflection, and improvement. This process examines every aspect of school life, including academics, spiritual formation, student support, governance, finances, and school culture. It allows us to celebrate what we are doing well while also identifying areas where we can grow.

One important benefit of accreditation is accountability. External reviewers—experienced Christian educators trained by ACSI—will visit our campus in April, observe classrooms, review policies, and speak with staff and leadership. Their feedback helps ensure that our practices align with both professional educational standards and our shared biblical values.

Accreditation also supports long-term stability and growth. Accredited institutions are recognized as trustworthy and credible. For families, it provides confidence that HCA is committed to continuous improvement and responsible leadership.

Most importantly, accreditation ensures that our foundation is solid so we can focus on meeting our students’ needs. The ACSI process helps ensure that we are creating a safe, nurturing, Christ-centered environment where every child is supported and challenged to grow academically, spiritually, and socially.

We are grateful for your partnership as we engage in this important work. While accreditation is a rigorous process, we are thankful for all of the ways it strengthens us as we build faithfully for future generations at Holden Christian Academy.

By His Grace,  
Mrs. Nikki Cleveland, Principal

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**HONORING GOD THROUGH CREATIVE LEARNING &  
STRONG ACADEMICS IN A CARING, FUN-FILLED SCHOOL**

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From the School Committee

## School Committee Says...

It's so hard to believe we are at the halfway point of the school year! Time is on the move, as is Mrs. Cleveland & the faculty and staff who are diligently preparing for this April's Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) reaccreditation, which is right around the corner! In preparation of the upcoming reaccreditation, the School Committee has been actively supporting our Principal as she leads the self-study process with strength & dignity.

In addition to our normal monthly meetings, the School Committee has been conducting additional training provided by ACSI titled, "The Flourishing Board," which outline foundational, relational, and strategic practices, as well as leadership traits, to better prepare all of us to serve our HCA community. These training sessions have assisted all of us greatly in working towards updating school policy, conducting future financial planning, resource development, and building our strategic improvement plan for the future of HCA. We are in the process of analyzing data we have collected through Iowa Standardized Testing, surveys from former students and staff, as well as current parents, and other data we have received from a variety of sources to build our School Improvement Plan to best align resources to meet the needs of our students and faculty. We are incredibly thankful for all the insight you have provided to assist us with the prioritization of resources to maximize our school's improvement! The School Committee has also been actively seeking areas where we can make improvements now to ensure the wellbeing, safety, and security of all who are at HCA.

HCA's continued success is because of the dedication of our Principal, faculty, staff, students, and all of you! Our School Committee is committed to the ongoing success of our students, both now and in the future. It's been such a blessing to witness the parent-led electives that have been such a HUGE success this year. As we are now in reenrollment season, our teachers look forward to the continued blessing of being able to teach your children next year. HCA is a family, and together, we continue to grow! God bless!

Enrollment Reminder

## Re-enroll for the 26-27 School Year

NOW is the time to reserve your child's spot for the 26-27 school year, or to apply for admission for any siblings of current students! We are actively screening new students, and look forward to making plans for a wonderful next school year. If you are a current family that did not take advantage of Priority Re-enrollment in January, it's not too late! Re-enrollment will continue through May 31<sup>st</sup> (after which a late fee will be applied). To re-enroll please visit [www.factsmgt.com](http://www.factsmgt.com) and log into your Family Portal. Have questions? Please email Ms. Graham in the office and she will be glad to help.

## REFERRAL PROGRAM REMINDER:

Our amazing School Committee has brought back the HCA Family Referral Program for the 26-27 school year. Word of mouth is one of our most effective tools for growing enrollment, so we hope our current families will help us for the upcoming school year.

Here are the details: If a new family names a current family on their application, once the new family has been accepted and pays their first 3 months of tuition, & the referring family is up-to-date on tuition payments, they will receive \$250 per new student!

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From the PTC

## Parent Teacher Council to host a "Someone Special Dance"

The Parent-Teacher Council will host a "Someone Special Dance" for all students in Grades PK - 7th grade on Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm here at HCA. This is an opportunity for daughters to invite their dads, grandfathers, uncles, or some special person & sons to invite their moms, grandmas, aunts, or some special person. PLEASE click [this link to RSVP](#) and let us know if you would like to contribute to the refreshments.

**AFRICA DAY IS COMING!**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**March 27th**

Sign ups coming March 2nd

### HCA GOES TO THE WOOSOX!

It's time to mark your calendar for an annual HCA Family Fun night at the WooSox. This year, the game will be on Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup> (the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last Friday of school) and information & tickets can be purchased using [THIS LINK](#).

**Space is limited; make plans to join us now!**

### ART SUPPLY REQUEST:

Mrs. Randall is looking for 2'x 2' squares of fabric, empty/clean water bottles, scraps of lace/trim.

Please send these in to school to help our students make African wrap dolls in Art class! Questions?

Email Mrs. Randall

[mrandall@holdenchristianacademy.org](mailto:mrandall@holdenchristianacademy.org)

Enrollment Reminder

## April Vacation Program: Registration now open!

Calling all current HCA families! Now is the time to sign up for our April Vacation Program. Details were sent out via email to current families, and the link to register can be found [here](#). This program is only for current HCA students & we are offering a sibling discount! Please make sure to sign up by March 30<sup>th</sup>!

Details regarding our Summer Vacation Program will be emailed to current families next week! Stay tuned for more information....and some Early Bird Pricing for summer sessions!

## Spiritual Emphasis Week is coming!

Following our February break, Matt Huffman of [Purposeful Connections](#) will be visiting us! He will bring a team of friends who will intentionally pour into our students throughout the week! We will welcome Monica McKeen to teach our elementary students. Another team member, Maddie Rice, will be joined by teen helpers Faith, Mackenzie, Alex, and Caleb. We also expect some familiar local volunteer faces as well. Please be praying for SEW, and for those who would like to financially support the ministry Purposeful Connections does with our students, please [donate](#).

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From the classroom

# What's Happening in Preschool with Ms. Michelle

We have been very busy over the past two months! Our class has learned all about water and its many forms, explored snow and ice through hands-on play and we are developing the skills to put on our winter gear independently. We have also built some amazing sledding tracks!

We have been working hard practicing how to write our names and numbers 1-5, while filling our days with lots of crafts and activities. We are halfway through our Community Helpers unit, and the children are absolutely loving it!! A big thank you to all of our parent volunteers who took the time to come in and share their important roles within the community—it has been such a meaningful experience for the class.

Over the past two weeks, the children's bikes have been put to great use! This past month, we have been learning all about wheels and the many ways they are used. The children have loved making connections between what we are learning in the classroom and riding their bikes.

When we return from vacation, our Preschool has been invited once again to participate in Spiritual Emphasis Week. This is a special and enriching week of Bible study that both the children and teachers truly enjoy.

Looking ahead, March will be a celebration of cultures! We are inviting families to share traditional foods, clothing, or activities that represent your family's culture. Please keep an eye out for a SignUpGenius with more details coming soon.



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From the classroom

## Kindergarten News

### With love from Mrs. Coombs

Dear Kindergarten Families,

We are excited to share what has been happening in our classroom! We have wrapped up our unit on Israel and have now begun learning about the beautiful country of Kenya. The children are enjoying discovering where Kenya is located on the map and learning about its flag, culture, and people. We have been talking about the Maasai tribe, learning about their colorful clothing, beautiful beadwork, and strong sense of community. The students were especially interested in how the Maasai people care for cattle and live in homes called manyattas. We are also exploring daily life in Kenya—how children go to school, what families eat, and how communities work together.

In Science, we are learning about the wonderful savanna—its warm climate, wide grasslands, and the incredible animals that call it home. We are exploring how animals survive in this habitat and what makes the savanna such a unique ecosystem. The students are fascinated by animals like lions, elephants, giraffes, and zebras!

At the end of the term, we will be having our school wide Africa Day on Friday, March, 27th. This is a wonderful opportunity for the Kindergarten class along with the rest of the school to showcase all they have learned about African culture. More information to come from classroom teachers and the office.

In Math, we have started learning addition! The students are beginning to understand how numbers come together to make a new number. We are using hands-on activities, manipulatives, and especially games to help build this important skill. Playing math games is a wonderful way for children to practice addition in a fun, engaging, and meaningful way. You can support this at home by practicing simple addition stories or using everyday objects to add together. After February break we will jump right into subtraction and teen numbers.

We are also continuing to develop our reading skills. The children have started learning how to sound out simple words and are building confidence as beginning readers. Practicing reading at home—to a parent, sibling, or even a favorite pet—can greatly strengthen their skills and boost their confidence. At the same time, it is just as important for children to continue being read to. Listening to stories helps build vocabulary, comprehension, and a lifelong love of reading.

We are still learning, and will continue to learn till the end of the year, about the attributes of God. Through stories, discussions, and activities, we are helping the children understand more about who God is and how His attributes are reflected in our daily lives.

It has been a joyful and busy time in Kindergarten, and we are so proud of how the children are growing and learning each day!



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From the classroom

## First Grade News: Mrs. Plourde’s Perspective

Hello families,

Welcome to term three! We’ve finished learning about Israel and desert biomes and now we’ll be studying Kenya and savanna biomes. First graders will also be taking a special look at Kenyan and East African folk tales. I’m so excited to delve deeper into the characters that show up in folk tales.

In FUNdations, we’ve added glued sounds and have just started learning about r-controlled vowels. Students have been doing lots of hard work learning how to mark up sentences and we’re reading more and more. In Math, we learned a new strategy to take apart word problems and we’re going to be starting to learn about fact families.

In Bible, we’ll be going back to the basics and learning more about the character and names of God, how to pray and reflect, the fruits of the spirit, and finishing the term by looking at Judges, Ruth, and Jericho. We’ll also be having Spiritual Emphasis Week, we are so looking forward to diving deeper into the word that week.

Looking forward, we’re going to be having Africa Day at the end of the term; I’m excited to be part of my first “big day” at HCA. Next week we will have February vacation; I pray you have a restful and safe vacation.

Mrs. Plourde



From the classroom

## Second Grade News: Miss Theodoss' Tales

Hello Parents,

Since our last Pathways, we have finished Term 2. Students had so much fun learning about Israel and the desert. Your students did an excellent job presenting their animal projects in front of their classmates.

As we jump into Term 3, students have begun to learn about our new biome: the savanna. This is one of the most fun biomes as it is home to some of the most recognizable and exciting animals of our planet such as the lion, giraffe, cheetah, and so many more! Term 3 also brings a new continent and country to our students: Africa. Team A will be studying Kenya. 2nd Grade has enjoyed listening to a song and learning all 54 names of the countries of Africa. At the end of Term 3 HCA will be having its Big Day of the year: Africa Day.

This will be an all day event on March 27th. Please be on the lookout for upcoming emails from myself and the office for more details about this fun day.

In Bible, we have continued to go through the stories of the Old Testament and have reached the New Testament! This term we will be looking at the life and teachings of Jesus. Also, students will be learning the names and order of the 39 books of the Old Testament.

Finally, next week is February vacation! I hope you are all able to make fun memories with your families. Enjoy the break from school.

Blessings,  
Miss. Theodoss



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From the classroom

## Third Grade News: from the Desk of Ms. Rennie

Third grade started their studies of Africa, and even though our focus is on Uganda we could not pass up the opportunity to have Mrs. Freeman come in and share her missions time in Rwanda with us. What an amazing and beautiful culture! We are so grateful for her sharing her journey with us!

We are looking at the Bible as a whole and seeing Jesus within the whole story, as we continue to read the Storybook Bible.

Keep practicing those multiplication facts, especially as we continue to learn to master them during Math class. We are half-way through the year and we want to be ready for 4th grade. Mastering those and reading every day is a great way to be ready.

We are on our 3rd desk pet, now in the grasslands and savanna of Africa for our study of the biomes. We have been researching and presenting our facts of the various animals and their habitats.

Their February book report on a famous missionary is due Friday, February 27th, but if they want to do their presentation early, they certainly can.

We are really improving in writing in cursive. This term's story will have two full paragraphs in cursive. I am so proud of them!

Thank you for all of your continued support and I pray you have a wonderful time with family during February vacation.

Blessings to you all,  
Ms. Rennie



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From the classroom

## Fourth & Fifth Grade News: A few notes from Mrs. Velarde

Hello 4th and 5th grade families. 4th and 5th have been very busy since the last installment of Pathways.

We have moved from studying the Middle East to studying the countries and biomes of Africa. We will be centering our focus on Ethiopia and the grasslands biome.

In Language Arts, we are integrating our studies of some aspects of African culture with our literature and have turned our reading and writing focus toward folk tales. So far, the students have particularly enjoyed Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories. We have been enjoying hearing the stories that give answers to questions like "How did the leopard get its spots?"

We have been comparing these stories with our biblical worldview and have been discussing how God's character is reflected in His creation.

In Math, both classes are currently conquering fractions and we are looking forward to a delicious project integrating Math and Science the week after February break!

Enjoy some pictures from our recent field trip to Woo Jung, a Korean restaurant in Ayer. The students really enjoyed being able to try a variety of things from the menu, and everyone exclaimed their delight especially with the egg drop soup! It was a wonderful way to celebrate learning about Korean culture, practicing math, money, and life skills... and spending time in fellowship with one another!



From the classroom

## Mr. Shea's Shenanigans: Middle School Language Arts 6th Grade Homeroom

Hello Middle School Families!

As we approach February Break, our students are diligently wrapping up their self-reflective poetry unit with a "Who Am I?" poem. This has provided a wonderful season of introspection, allowing the students to explore who they are and who they wish to become. I am hoping that students will take what they have learned about themselves to heart and chase the future that they identified for themselves based on God's word and will!

When we get back from break, we will be shifting our focus to the rich and vibrant traditions of African Folktales. Our Grade 6 students will be diving deep into the stories and culture of Nigeria, while Grade 7 will be exploring the folklore and stories of Ghana. Throughout this unit, we will be analyzing the specific plot and theme structures found in these tales and comparing them to the Parables of Jesus found in the Gospels (It is amazing how much the two genres have in common!). By examining these stories side-by-side, we hope to help students identify universal storytelling patterns while also highlighting the profound spiritual truths and moral lessons conveyed through Christ's teachings, especially in light of verses like Romans 1:20:

"For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God."

I hope you all have a wonderful, refreshing, and restful February break with your families. I look forward to seeing the students recharged and ready to dive into our new studies when we return!

Thanks for your partnership!

In Christ,

Jeremiah Shea



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From the classroom

## Mr. Curtis' Corner: Middle School Bible & History 7th Grade Homeroom

Welcome back, readers! It has been a little while since the last publication of this Middle School news compendium. I trust you have found other literary works to keep you informed and entertained.

My book recommendation this month is 'Heads You Win' by Jeffrey Archer, in the genre of historical fiction the conclusion was an 'aha moment'.

I also trust you are taking in some of the events of the Winter Olympics in Italy and cheering on Team USA. Currently, in World Geography, we have been studying the diverse countries and peoples of Africa. Seventh grade has begun our in-depth look into the nation of Ghana, as sixth grade is discovering Nigeria. We hope to learn much about the unique cultures and histories of each of these African nations.

All of our learning this term will culminate in a giant celebration we affectionately call 'Africa Day', where each grade helps to teach the others about what they have learned about their particular African nation. There will be food, games, presentations, and so much more. I love this aspect of learning at H.C.A., where we take all we have learned and share it with our community to enrich our lives and appreciate God's whole creation.

Stay tuned for more information about this school-wide celebration and event later this term.

Bible class has continued our exegetical look into Scripture. This term, we are unpacking Jesus' parables, not only their greater context within Jewish culture and society, but their spiritual application for our lives today. We are looking forward to Spiritual Emphasis Week after February break. This is a wonderful opportunity to be challenged in our faith and press into the mentorship provided by Matt Huffman and his team. I would ask you to pray for our students and staff, as well as the Spiritual Emphasis team, as we prepare for this opportunity to go deeper in our faith. Looking forward to discovering all that God has to teach us this term in and outside of Bible class.

Maranatha,  
-Mr. Curtis



Good News! The Spiritual Emphasis Week team will be back Feb. 23-27!



From the classroom

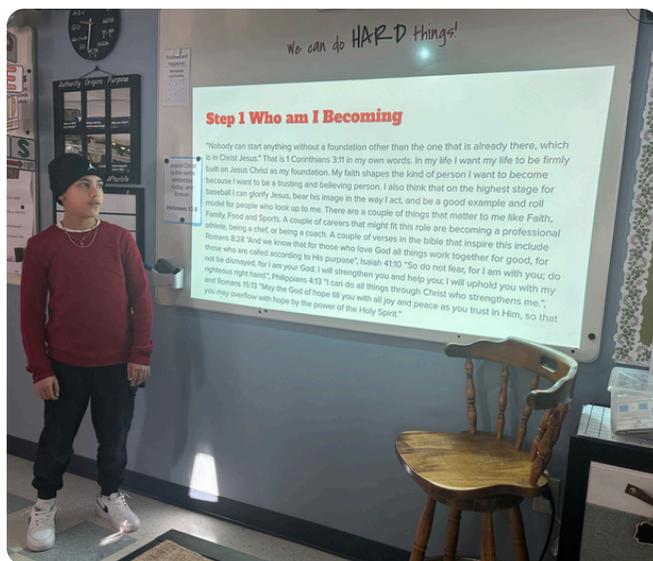
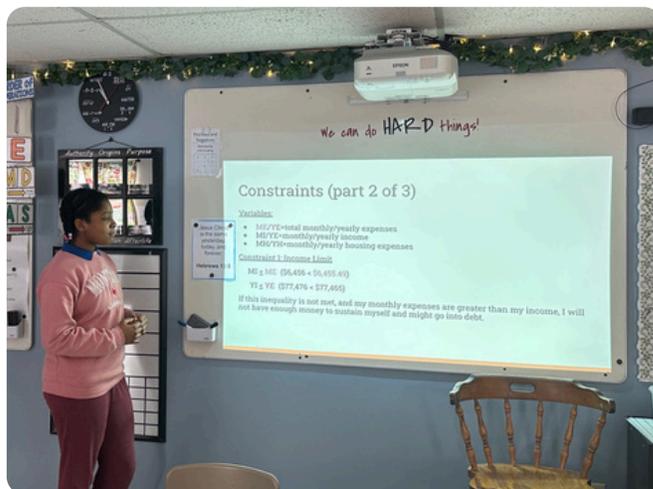
## Mrs. Jorritsma's Jam: Middle School Math

Middle School Pre-Algebra students have been working hard! Grade 6 students have been building strong foundations in percents, fractions, decimals, ratios, and unit rates. To apply these skills in a real-world context, they have completed a hands-on project called "Recipe for Success – Cooking with Ratios." Students choose a recipe, identify ingredient ratios, scale it up or down using proportions, and calculate unit costs to determine the total cost and cost per serving. This project connects math to everyday life through cooking, budgeting, and problem-solving, while encouraging independence and critical thinking.

Grade 7 students have been learning algebraic expressions, equations, and inequalities. They are now applying these concepts in their Faith & Life Planning Project, where they imagine their lives 10–15 years in the future. Students research careers, explore education paths, create realistic monthly budgets, write algebraic expressions to model expenses, and use inequalities to represent real-life financial constraints. Throughout the project, they reflect on wise decision-making, trade-offs, stewardship, and how faith and values guide thoughtful planning.

Both grade levels are working to see math not just as numbers on a page, but as a practical tool for wisdom, responsibility, and real-life decision-making.

As always, Math Help is available on Monday afternoons directly after school for any student who would like extra support.



From the classroom

## Mrs. Gordon's Musings: Middle School Health, Science, and Outdoor Ed

**Outdoor Education:** We have been practicing Friluftsliv together—the Scandinavian mindset of outdoor living that emphasizes fresh air and connection with nature, even in winter. Students created winter bucket lists of ways to spend time outdoors investing in their health. I hope these have been inspiring increased outdoor time!

**6th Grade Science:** We dove into ocean studies and have enjoyed learning not only about the wonders of Earth's waters, but also deepening our understanding of how the oceans impact climate all over the world. We recently explored how tides work and the incredible little ecosystems they create: tidepools! I hope students will recall these studies on a hot summer day when they have an opportunity to marvel at a tidepool. From here we head into our next biome, grasslands, which account for about half of the African continent.

**7th Grade Science:** Continuing our journey through the body systems, we moved from the digestive system to the cardiovascular, then respiratory, and now the muscular system. Next, we'll study the skeletal system. This progression leads us to stand in awe at the marvels of our bodies with gratitude that this whole complex and intricate system is held in such remarkable balance. When we remember everything our bodies are constantly doing for us, it can lead us to treat them well, which is my prayer for these students.

**Health:** Term 3 brings us to a unit on Rest & Recovery. Students will track their sleep and make recommendations to improve their rest and recovery. Teens have long struggled to get adequate sleep, but especially in this day and age, screens—phones in particular—have stolen even more hours that were once restful. I want to equip them with tools to honor their body's natural rhythms and make wise choices around sleep habits and caffeine use as they grow.

I wish you all a wonderful February vacation with plenty of Friluftsliv and cozy connections!



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