

# FLEX ACADEMY

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



At the end of March, the Flex Academy celebrated Spirit week with fun dress up days. Our staff picture represents numerous decades!

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# SCHOOL YEAR REFLECTIONS

## CLASSROOM TEACHERS

What an unusual year that has brought so many blessings! This school year has presented each of us with challenges, but also SO much growth. It has been wonderful getting to spend each day with students both in-person and virtually creating relationships and lasting memories. With such a unique year, it has made me feel even more grateful to be a part of the Flex Academy Community.

*Kelly Samers, K-1 Teacher*

This has been a challenging year full of growth and learning. I have witnessed grit and perseverance in Flex students and I continuously feel proud of each and every child. The amount of teamwork we had as a staff as we navigated through these unparalleled times was incredible. We remained focused on our goals and made it a year that we will never forget.

*Kaitlyn McDaniel, 2-3 Teacher*

What a year! Our patience and grace have been tested, creating the most unique school year yet! But we made it! Learner Coaches held strong and students continued to be optimistic, and the love of learning continued.

Students persevered through an unforgettable school year and I am so proud of them!

*Shelby VanSambeek, 2-3 Teacher*

My first year at Flex Academy has been amazing! I am proud of all the accomplishments my students have made throughout the school year and the respect they have for each other.

*Holly Lamm, 4-5 Teacher*

This school year has taught me the true meaning of the word flexibility. Navigating synchronous teaching was no easy task, but it has made me a stronger educator knowing I can handle any challenge thrown my way. I am so thankful for the amazing team and wonderful students at Flex who have helped to make this crazy school year one of the most enjoyable!

*Brooke Stormer, 6-8 Teacher*

It has been a blessing to join the Flex team this year! Getting to know and build relationships with the students, families, and staff has been the highlight of my year. The close relationships and meaningful conversations make Flex such a unique community.

*Sarah Sheleski, Spec. Ed. Teacher*







We will Learn,  
Serve, and Be  
Well!

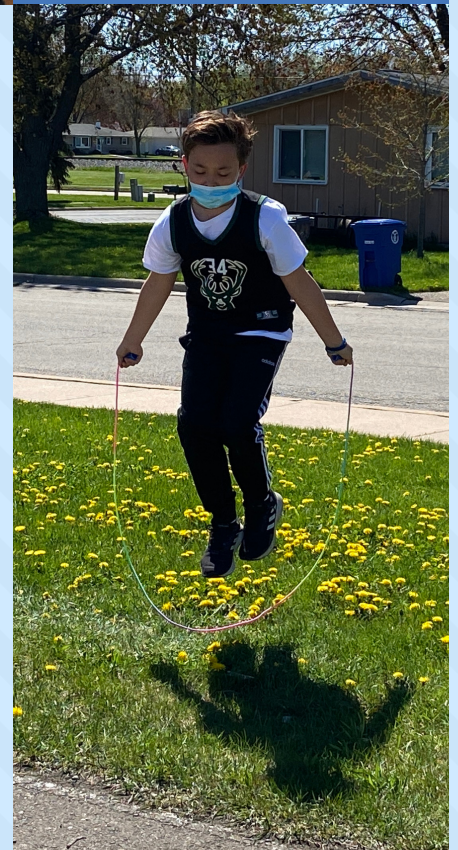
## STAYING TRUE TO OUR PILLARS

SHELBY VANSAMBEK, 2-3 TEACHER  
KAITLYN MCDANIEL, 2-3 TEACHER

One of the pillars at Flex is Personalized Learning. The focus of this pillar is on student learning. Students are formatively assessed three times throughout the year and given an online individualized curriculum that best fits their needs. We believe in mastering the curriculum, not just completing it, while targeting students' specific learning styles. On days when students are at Flex, they have personalized learning time or PLT. During this time, teachers focus on each student's needs through one on one or small group instruction. We also offer a variety of project-based learning opportunities for students where they can demonstrate mastery in a variety of ways. For example, one of our second and third-grade social studies standards focuses on economics. We asked each student to create a business model including resources needed, special talents that they would bring to their business, and a Venn diagram comparing their business to a similar, well-known business. The students demonstrated mastery through final projects including posters, videos, models, etc. With this PBL, students were able to showcase their interests and entrepreneurial skills. Along with this pillar, we take pride in our awesome science curriculum. During at-home learning days, students work on offline interactive notebooks, hyperdocs, or projects.

Another pillar is Health & Wellness. For this pillar, we focus on student improvement in physical, social, emotional, and intellectual wellness and how this leads to increased individual student performance. Flex Academy encourages students and families to strengthen their health and well-being through educational opportunities, integrated programs, and wellness activities. We also offer Health & Wellness days at school where we focus on physical wellness through indoor and outdoor activities, mindfulness, nutrition, and so much more. The students love engaging in these activities that promote a healthy body and mind.

The final pillar at Flex is Service Learning. Through this, we integrate community service with skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, decision making, and communication. Flex Academy realizes that real-world experiences lead to academic success. Student's community service options will lead to a deeper understanding of themselves and empathy and respect for others. We incorporate direct service, indirect service, research, and advocacy as part of this pillar. This allows students to engage in service in a variety of ways whether it be going out directly into the community or researching and advocating for a cause through posters, videos, etc. We also have Service Learning Days while students are at school. On these days, we focus on one or multiple community organizations and participate in a service project for them. Some examples include folding diapers for Jake's Network of Hope, creating flyers for Pillars, and bagging dog treats for Journey Together Service Dogs.



# FLEX GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

HUNTER THIEL, 2019 GRADUATE  
BROOKE STORMER 6-8 TEACHER, INTERVIEWER



## How long were you a student at Flex Academy and where are you currently at in your schooling?

I was a student at the Flex Academy for 2 years (7th/8th grade). I am currently a sophomore at Little Chute Career Pathways Academy.

## What is one of your favorite memories from Flex Academy?

One of my favorite memories of the Flex Academy was spending time with my friends on school trips and group projects. I feel like it is not a single experience or memory I had at the Flex, but just my entire time going there was enjoyable.

## Why did your family choose Flex and why did you choose a charter school for high school?

We chose the Flex Academy because I was getting bored with classes at my previous school because I would get everything done, then sit there for class.

I did not do that at Flex. Both the Flex and LCCPA allowed me to work ahead on curriculum and get things done a lot faster and learn a lot more than I would have if I had stayed at my previous school.

## How do you feel Flex Academy prepared you for the next step of LCCPA?

It definitely prepared me for LCCPA. Getting used to working at my own pace really helped, and I was able to get farther ahead than others that didn't have that experience going to "normal" school.



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## Why do you think more students should choose LCCPA after Flex Academy?

If you are comfortable with the self-paced learning environment and are able to work really well independently, you will do so much better in the LCCPA than I think you would at a "normal" high school. The Flex allowed me to start my high school math early with LCCPA and now I am a year ahead compared to others that didn't go to the Flex.

## Any last thoughts you want to share with families about how Flex Academy prepares you for your future?

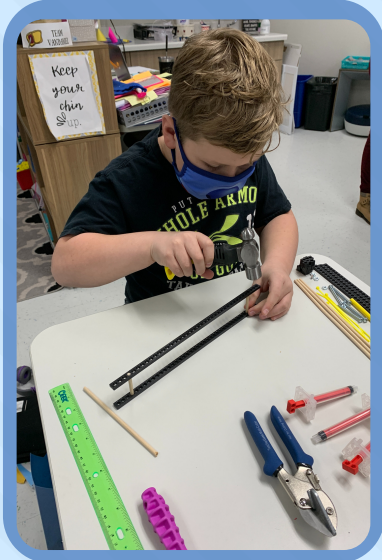
My experiences of falling behind had taught me early on that working hard and having a good work ethic throughout school at Flex will pay off in the future. The independent learning skills you acquire will help a dramatic amount in high school and beyond, as long as you make the most of it.





# SUPPORTING LEARNER COACHES

KELLY LAMERS, K-1 TEACHER



Sunshine, swimming, and schools out! Summer is a time for students and teachers to rest, rejuvenate, and recuperate from the previous school years demands before they venture into the next year of expectations and tasks. Though there may be many mixed feelings on how to spend that time it is still critical to continue to keep our minds motivated and gears turning.

Recently the Flex Academy Staff held its fourth and final Learner Coach Development for the school year. The focus for the day was to discuss how to help their students avoid the “summer slide” and fun STEaM activities to incorporate at home. The teachers teamed up and put our minds together to create activities that Learner Coaches could incorporate into their days.

Summer slide, what is that? It is widely believed that if students are not working on particular skills, they may lose some of the knowledge they had gained during that school year. According to an article written by NWEA - Northwest Education Association; they observed recent developments in the research they did. “In NWEA’s research, summer learning loss was observed in math and reading across third to eighth grade, with students losing a greater proportion of their school year gains each year as they grow older—anywhere from 20 to 50%.”

In helping prepare our Learner Coaches for the upcoming summer season and students being out of school teachers put together some ideas to avoid losing the gains students have made over the school year. The ideas included activities within each of the academic categories, but not limited to, such as reading, math, science and social studies, and STEaM activities. The majority of the ideas included hands-on every day learning activities that can be easily prepared. Things such as creating a meal from recipes and going to the grocery store to gather the ingredients, journaling and sending mail to friends and family, creating a story, going to state and national parks, and reading a map to get there. Other suggestions included getting involved with their community; participating in reading programs or sports, and helping the nature around them. There was much great discussion amongst those involved in gaining insight as to how to prevent the students' summer slide.

In addition to Summer Slide, Learner Coaches were also given a chance to find ideas of how to incorporate STEaM activities at home. STEaM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics. Our STEaM days here at school are one of our students' favorite days, so we were sure that this would be a hot topic for Learner Coaches to find more information about. Similar to the Summer Slide presentation, the teachers put together their minds to create a list of activities and resources for Learner Coaches. The importance of STEaM is to allow students to explore the world around them, getting involved in learning how things happen or operate.

As many things happen around our world, STEaM is something that can incorporate many different areas, so with the ideas provided, we made sure to make note of that. A few of the activities shared are Circuit Cards, building a marble run, creating a sculpture of outdoor items, and/or creating a simple tessellation. The conversation was wonderful with sharing ideas, what questions to ask students as they work through their projects, and how they can support their learners at home.

A focus of the Flex Academy staff is supporting our Learner Coaches in as many ways as possible. Each quarter our Learner Coach development focuses on areas that we feel will support them in the best way possible. This recent one focused on exactly how we can prepare them for the summer.





# GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

HEIDI SCHMIDT, FLEX ACADEMY PRINCIPAL

Our Governing Council will hold their last meeting on June 9 at 5:00. Our final meeting will include an update on this year's strategic plan which has focused on the following three areas:

**Strategy 1: Fidelity to Our Pillars- Personalized Learning, Health and Wellness, and Service Learning**

1. Staff will continue to reflect on the alignment of our practice with the three pillars
2. Governing Council will have an understanding of the three pillars

**Strategy 2: Sustainability**

1. Communicate through multiple measures to retain current Flex Academy families
2. Communicate through multiple measures to attract Flex Academy families

**Strategy 3: Work towards Model PLC**

1. Staff will identify data points which will become the focus of PLC work
2. Identify and build our capacity in the essential components of Model PLCs



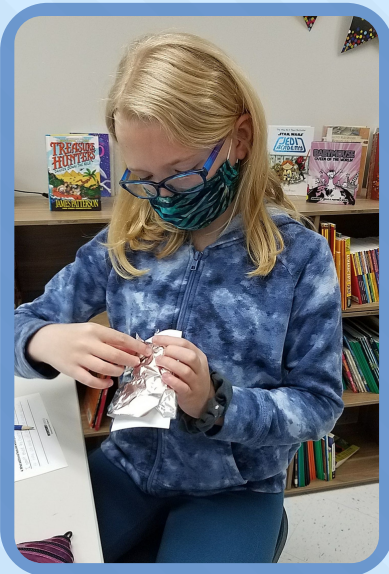
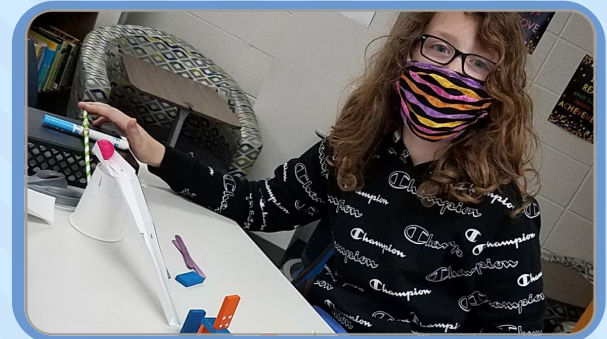
As we reflect on the work this past year, we will look to the Governing Council to provide feedback from their individual perspectives. This summer the Governing Council will have a retreat which will give Mr. Bird and Ms. Schmidt has an opportunity to work collaboratively with the members to create focus areas for the upcoming year as we revisit our norms, individual contracts and alignment of the pillars which define Flex Academy and LCCPA.

## INCREASING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

HOLLY LEMM, 4-5 TEACHER

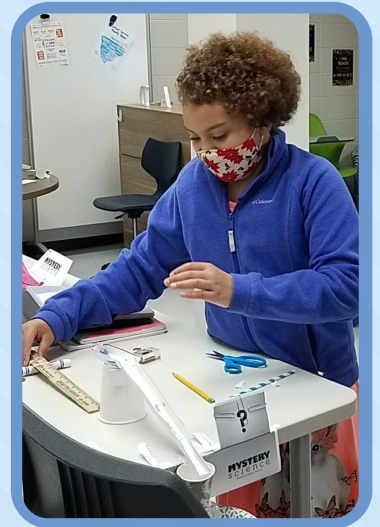
Mystery Science offers open and go lessons that inspire children to love science. The interactive online lessons provide students with a good understanding of the lesson goals and supplies needed before getting started with the core lesson.

Each lesson starts with a driving question that engages the student. They are then led on a guided exploration with videos and other questions related to the topic.



This provides students with enough information for them to create a hypothesis for the experiment that follows. The experiments are very well designed with simple supplies and procedures for the students to follow. They encourage students to work together with hands-on activities to solve the mystery.

This process promotes critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving skills in students. Mystery Science does a wonderful job of driving creativity through scientific discovery through the use of the Scientific Method and students love completing them.



# HIGHLIGHTS



## LEARNER COACH THANK YOU!

During Teacher Appreciation Week, our Flex team made sure to celebrate our Learner Coaches as well, by creating a video of thanks from the staff and students! We are so grateful for the commitment our Learner Coaches make to help our students succeed!



## QUARTER 4 SERVICE LEARNING

To kickoff our Q4 Service Learning days, we had three volunteers from NAMI virtually join our Gradebands to discuss mental health. Our young learners decorated placemats for a local elderly care center, while our older students painted rocks with inspirational messages to place around the community.



## FIELD DAY

To end our year with a BANG, our final day of school will include activities to get our students moving. Some activities will be individually focused (i.e. obstacle course), while others will be a team effort (i.e. relay race). We are excited to get students outside while still focusing on our Pillars.

## IN-PERSON FLEXCURSIONS

Flex students were fortunate to attend two outdoor Flexcursions in April. A trip to Fallen Timbers allowed students a chance to enjoy the outdoors learning about habitats while also helping clean up our local Environmental Center. We also visited The Vande Hey Company, Inc. where students learned about the environment, plants, and planted their own succulent to take home!



## QUARTER 4 HEALTH & WELLNESS



This year the Flex Academy celebrated a full week of Every Kid Healthy Week during the first week of May! This celebration has occurred in schools since 2013 with each day of the week having a different wellness focus.

## GRADUATION & AWARDS NIGHT



We are looking forward to our yearly celebration on June 11th, to honor 8th Grade Graduates, Service Learning awards, Flex Strong Students, and classroom award winners. Our Awards Night is a wonderful time to get families together and send student's off to summer on a positive note!

