



HORIZON LINE

Montessori for the 21st Century—a place to learn, a place to belong.



FHM's School Resource Officer, Jamie Guess and Ferdinand the Fox enjoy Walk to School Day

**A Jefferson County
Charter Public School.**

**Serving children in
Preschool through 8th
grades**

**Office Hours:
7:45 am—4:00 pm**

**Attendance:
303-231-9801 x300**

**Website:
FreeHorizonMontessori.org**

Principals Ponderings

Kresta Vuolo, Principal

What a wonderful start to the school year! As I visit classrooms, I am always amazed at the work students engage in and the vibrant learning opportunities our teachers provide. Some of my favorite moments so far this school year include observing a Primary teacher provide a lesson about how to make a new friend, hearing stories from 6th graders about their adventures at Outdoor Education Week, and watching our Middle School students grow in confidence each week as they conduct burrito sales to support their co-curricular travels. The most touching event so far this year was our International Day of Peace Assembly in September. Our Upper Elementary students presented a tableau of the book Peace Around the World and our Middle School students shared quotes from peacemakers, including Dr. Maria Montessori. The event concluded with all 409 students singing "Light a Candle for Peace" accompanied by Mr. Tony Schiess. In doing so, we joined more than 150,000 children from 65 countries participating in Sing Peace Around the World (www.singpeacearoundtheworld.com). As you can imagine, this filled my eyes with tears, my heart with love, and my spirit with hope.

As a school that deeply values cultivation of peace and a sense of community, we need your help.

School Safety

One aspect that has stands out as a notable exception to our otherwise positive school culture is that of our afternoon carline. While we had made many strides with families honoring the Golden Police Department's request for FHM families to come into the corporate center until 3:20, we have slid in recent weeks with many of our families arriving well before our dismissal. This results in the GVCA carline getting stuck and unable to exit their lot, and creates a back-up on Corporate Circle that prevents our After Care staff and those who run our After School Enrichment Programs from arriving to receive children at the time school dismisses. This also creates a dangerous scenario in which emergency responders would be unable to get to our school. **Please** wait to enter the corporate center until 3:20 pm, and assure you are in the carline no later than 3:35 pm. We ask that you follow all traffic laws and assure you are courteous and kind to fellow drivers. Please help us by displaying your carline number until it's entered by our staff member at our parking lot entry, then flipping the card so that your child's name is visible as you enter the parking lot. Should you wish to park and walk to the gate to pick up your child, please remember that neighboring parking lots are private property and our families may not use them to park or drive through. We thank you in advance for following these guidelines, as they are in place to maximize both safety and efficiency.

Speaking of safety, we appreciate everyone's understanding in utilizing the hug and go zone in the front entry for students walked into the building. One of the requirements under Colorado law is for schools to exercise prudent duty of care to ensure safety of students while at school. One aspect of this requires that we assure all who enter the school and have access to classrooms have a legitimate right to do so, and that each of these people are tracked through signing in upon arrival and out upon departure.

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More than
50 walkers
joined
Ferdinand
the Fox at
Walk to
School Day
on October
5th!

FHM's Financial & Facilities

Beth Helmke, Director of Finance, Facilities & Advancement

Annual Audit

Free Horizon successfully completed our annual independent financial audit for FY16, the results of which can be found on the FHM website under the Financial Transparency link on the FHM website's home page. The Board and the Finance Committee are currently evaluating opportunities for FHM to refinance its outstanding debt on the building and beginning the 2017-2018 budget development processes. If you're interested in the annual budgeting process or in being a part of the long-term strategic financial discussions, we encourage you to attend Finance Committee meetings and/or submit finance and budgeting thoughts, questions, or suggestions to Beth Helmke, FHM Business Director, at ehelmke@jeffcoschools.us or Hilary Hobson, Board Treasurer, at hhobson.fhmboard@gmail.com.

FHM Drinking Water: Lead Test Results

You may have recently heard discussion in the media and from the district about lead levels in drinking water at many Jeffco schools. As a charter school that independently owns and manages our campus, Free Horizon was not included in the comprehensive Jeffco facilities testing. However, Free Horizon worked directly with the City of Golden water quality lab to conduct heavy metal tests of Free Horizon water samples in late September. The results indicate no concerns with FHM's drinking water. FHM's lead level results ranged from <0.1 ppb (below the method detection limit) – 0.2 ppb and copper level results ranged from 62.4 ppb – 100.9 ppb. Actionable levels are 15 ppb (0.015 mg/L) for lead and 1300 ppb (1.3 mg/L) for copper, thus FHM is well below the threshold of concern. According to analytical chemist at Golden's water quality lab, Stephanie Crabtree, Free Horizon "looks good!" If you'd like more information on lead in drinking water, this Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment [fact sheet](#) is a good resource.

Walk to School Day & FHM [Fire Up Your Feet](#)

Thanks to the dozens of FHM students and families who joined in FHM's 4th annual Walk to School Day on October 5th. We had a record turnout, with over 50 enthusiastic walkers heading up the circle to school! Thank you to SPOT Brand bikes for being our gracious host once again and to Golden Police officers and Councilor Marcia Claxton for joining us in the fun, active morning!



As of October 19, Free Horizon is also in [second place](#) in the state-wide [Fire Up Your Feet/Safe Routes to School](#) healthy movement contest. You can help add to FHM's tally by registering and logging the physical activities you and your kids have done during the month of October; activities can be added retroactively, but all entries must be in by November 3rd. FHM has a good chance of making it to #1 with your entries! Prizes are awarded in part by the number of participants relative to overall enrollment, so the more active FHM foxes who register any activity, the better the school's chances of winning an award! Check out details at <http://co.fireupyourfeet.org/>.

Specials

Music Notes— Tony Scheiss, Music Teacher



It has been a wonderful fall in the music room here at FHM!

Primary students have enjoyed learning about different instruments and singing songs from many different cultures. Lower elementary students have been learning about folk music as well as using movement to understand fundamentals of music. Upper elementary students just completed a lesson on the music of jazz legend Charlie Parker that is always so much fun to teach. Our middle school choir and jazz band are working hard on music for the Special's Gala on Dec.15th; we hope to see you there!

Also, the Upper Elementary Choir has been invited to perform at the Golden Vocal Festival at Golden High School on November 2nd at 7 p.m. They will be performing three ensemble pieces and have been asked to perform solo as well! Hope to see you there!
Mr.Tony

Tech Time— Luke Mund, Technology Teacher

Lower Elementary is working basic internet skills. This includes an internet scavenger hunt, practicing drag and drop, answering questions on websites and more. Up next our LE students will be making comics using Google Slides. Instead of learning slides using a basic presentation we will learn how to use animations, images, and information in Slides to make a comic. I'm really excited to see what comics the students come up with!

Upper El is in the process of a research unit on atoms and molecules. We starting by learning tips and tricks for Google searching, then progressed to making fact-sheets off of the information we found online using good digital citizenship. Now we are in the process of writing short essays using our research. After we finish our research unit we are moving onto coding! Each student will make their own programs using Scratch. Scratch is a coding platform developed by MIT to teach their students the skills of coding without having to memorize large amounts of code. Scratch is going to be a lot of fun with everyone!



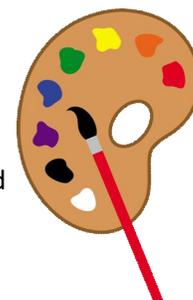
Art Studio Stories - Heather Smith, Art Teacher

Welcome to another dynamic year in the Studio!

In order to transition to a higher level of critical thinking and understanding of process in Art, the Studio classes are transitioning to an increased Choice Based philosophy. A Choice Based Studio is multifaceted; it aligns with Montessori pedagogy, aligns with standards based learning, offers critical thinking and problem solving opportunities, and most importantly, benefits the student.

My goal for the Studio this year is to be a mix of Boundary Choice, Emergent Choice, and Abundant Choice, depending on the grade levels and student needs. Of course there is still a great amount of foundational, skill building work. But philosophically, in the Choice environment, students are guided to think like artists- working through the planning process, playing and practicing with materials of their own choosing, and developing skills to problem solve. This Process focused environment develops independent thinking, intrinsic motivation, and ultimately authentic works that the students actually value because of the process that they, as artists, have undertaken to create their work.

Thanks to everyone for your support of the Studio and our young artists. We are all looking forward to a great learning year!



**2016—2017 FHM
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*Backup to the
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*Ex Officio Member,
Principal*

From the Board of Directors

Neil Belstock, Vice President

It has been a fast start to school year at Free Horizon Montessori . The entire community has done fabulous job kicking off the 2016-2017 school year. The Board of Directors would specifically like thank everyone, especially the staff, for the efforts around the changes to our drop off and pick process. The implementation of changes by the staff has been very positive and minimized the impact to our community.

In case everyone has missed it, this is an election year, and there are important ballot measures that could have significant impacts for our school. We would like to urge everyone to get educated about ballot measures 3A and 3B. You can visit the [Jeffco Public School Site](#) or [Chalkbeat](#) for more information. Please take the time to understand the issue and make sure you vote.

In addition to preparing for the potential impact of 3A /3B for our school, the Board has spent a significant amount of time looking into options to leverage low interest rates and refinance our existing bond debt. We have been working quickly to understand our options and determine a course of action that will allow the school to reduce our interest payment and take full advantage the opportunity those savings may provide.

The School Accountability Committee and Administration completed our 2017 Unified Improvement Plan (UIP). Notable goals for this UIP include: Sustaining and nurturing a school culture conducive to student and staff growth, increasing inconsistent writing scores, continuing to enhance math instruction, and improving READ plan goals.

The Board has a number of strategic initiatives and special committees that we will focus on this year. Committees include a Branding / Communications committee and a Facilities Committee. Strategic development plans for our Middle School is also a significant focus of the Board this year.

Participation on the school Board of Directors and committees is voluntary and we are always looking to welcome new members to our leadership groups. Also please consider becoming a Board member, as this year some members are completing their term and seats will be opening. Please contact us if you are interested in becoming a member or want to participate on a board Committee.

Our Board meets the second Thursday of each month from 6:00 – 9:00pm in the Free Horizon front offices. We welcome everyone at the meetings and value all ideas and contributions. More information on dates as well as agendas and minutes of past meetings can be found on the Free Horizon website .



Specials—Continued

Physical Education

Bree Boldt, PE Teacher



Physical Education (PE) this year has started off strong! Each class is doing amazing work.

Primary has been practicing following directions and locomotor skills (running, skipping, etc). We just completed playing with the parachute. Coming up, Primary will be working on hand-eye coordination, different ways to move their whole body, and stretching.

Lower Elementary is working on safety in play and learning about activities that improve our cardiovascular (heart & lungs) health. Coming up next for Lower Elementary will be working on different ways to move our bodies and some fun classic PE activities.

Upper Elementary has been focusing on honesty and good sportsmanship in play this year. They will be practicing using sport skills in game situations and working on different game tactics. Middle school PE is enjoying having the 6th years join this year. In PE they are learning about different sports and concepts of fitness (target heart rate, muscle strength and endurance, and flexibility).

Don't forget to record your family's active minutes for the month of October and submit them on the Fire Up Your Feet website: <http://fireupyourfeet.org>. All activities must be logged by November 3rd to help FHM win cash prizes.

Happening in the Library!

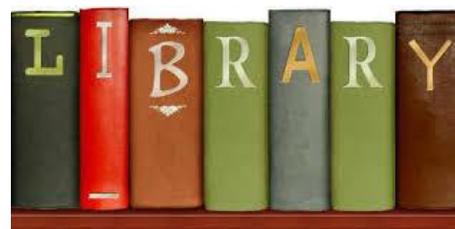
Lynne Sekou, Library Resource Teacher

All is going great in the library!

Primary students enjoy story-time while Kindergarten students have excitedly started to 'check out' books of their choice to their classrooms. We have enjoyed fall themed books and books by Eric Carle (the subject author for October/November in Primary). LE and UE students are checking out books all the time for their personal enjoyment as well as class room book clubs!

Our new library software now gives our students and staff access to our library website to locate books in our collection: the website is www.freehorizon.org/library. I am also very excited about the new set of World Book Encyclopedias in the library and the new online World Book database students can access through the FHM library website. UE students also attended a workshop in our tech lab hosted by the librarian from the Golden library on how to access Jeffco's library database for kids. It is great and you don't need a library card to use it. Simply go to www.jeffcolibrary.org/kids/homework-help and use the login name: **Database and Password: 291179590**. It is exciting that our children's learning and exploration is supported with an abundant amount of free resources at their fingertips!

Interning in the library - Middle School and 6th grade students have been instrumental in keeping the library running smoothly in a variety of ways during their elective time as interns. They help to shelve books, prepare books for circulation, and keep the environment prepared for all! I value their work ethic and their energy as well as the creativity that goes into various projects!



From the Programs Director

Jennifer Levy, Program & Enrollment Director

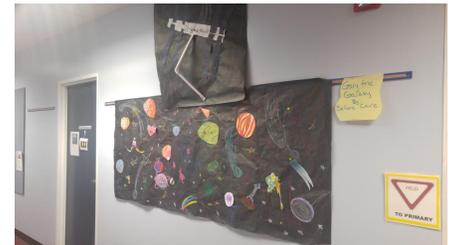


Mr. Seth's AC 3 class is working on a Lego Stop Motion project incorporating STEM components into play time!

Our students have been busy after school, participating in clubs, enrichment programs, sports and Before and After Care !

The 2016 Fall Activities Session saw more student participation and after school options than ever before. Free Horizon offered 26 after school activities this session, including technology, visual arts, music, athletics, academic and social activities. Our Middle School Flag Football team participated in their first season of competitive sports and held their own against other local middle school teams. We are excited to offer Middle School Track again in the Spring. Play On! will be performing their Goosebumps play on Wednesday, October 26th. All are invited to attend but seats are limited, please email Ms. Jennifer at JeMLevy@jeffcoschools.us to reserve seats if your child is not enrolled in Play On!. FHM welcomes back many returning activities, as well as several new ones, in Winter Session - **DEADLINE for Session 2 activities registration is Tuesday, November 1st.** Please see the website for detail!

Before and After Care have found their rhythm with great new staff and themes in place. Before Care studied space and has a super cool poster in the hallway of "Gary the Galaxy" (see photo). AC1 has been playing games and singing songs surrounding their "Friendship" theme, and also made some neat artwork aligning with the Primary study of Mondrian's art. AC2 has also been studying "Friendship", including a variety of multi-player games and collaborative dramatic play. AC2 is also reading The Boxcar Children.



Mr. Seth would like to share about the happenings in AC3: Since AC3 is starting to really get in the swing of things, I'd definitely like to share some of our activities and projects. Mainly, the Lego Stop Motion project is taking shape, and a wide variety of students are participating in the set design, photo shooting, and editing process with me while learning some basics of Adobe Premiere. Lot's of STEM components come into play during our stop motion time. In addition to the art side of things, students are learning basic architecture concepts, elements of photography/animation, and video editing through Adobe Premiere.



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Our Middle School day officially begins at 8:00, and thus all those who enter the building after that time must sign in at the office, wear a visitor badge while on site, and sign out before departing.

District Initiatives & FHM

As many of you know, Jeffco Public Schools recently updated their Facilities Master Plan in preparation for the 3A and 3B ballot initiatives. One aspect of the Facilities Master Plan that will be implemented regardless of whether the ballot initiatives pass is the reconfiguration of grade levels at the elementary and middle school levels. On June 16th, the Jeffco Board of Education approved moving 6th graders to the middle school level district wide, starting in the 2017-18 school year for those in the Chatfield articulation area, with the majority of other articulation areas transitioning during the 2018-19 school year.

What does this mean for us here at Free Horizon Montessori? We are in the midst of deep work to take a comprehensive look and formulate a plan forward. This work includes:

Financial Modeling – Beth Helmke, our Director of Finance, Facilities, and Advancement, and I worked with our Board's Finance Committee to evaluate various grade configuration models based on our historic choice enrollment application and enrollment data, matriculation trends, and predictions based on point of entry for other choice options. We plugged these numbers into our 5-year financial model to assess long-term sustainability, as anything we do must work financially viable both as an independent program and within the context of the school as a whole.

Program Evaluation – In August, we formed a Middle School Committee comprised of teachers and FHM Board members charged with evaluating and strategizing what shifting 6th graders to our Middle School might mean for our students and school. In late September, our team visited one of the two metro area Montessori middle school programs that are accredited through the American Montessori Society and we are working out plans to visit the other. Interestingly, both of these programs have a 6th – 8th grade middle school. We are also looking at curricular adjustments that would be needed, and more importantly looking at ways to support the social, emotional, and pragmatic needs of the early adolescent. Of course we must simultaneously consider the impacts and opportunities this would provide to our Upper Elementary program as well.

Parent & Guardian Input – As a charter school community, we place strong value in feedback from our families. In order to solicit high level input from parents and guardians, our Middle School Committee is developing questions to include in the annual Parent Welcoming Environment Survey, which is administered through our School Accountability Committee. Please watch the Fox Flash for links to this important survey. We also anticipate other mechanisms for community contribution to the conversations at other points in our evaluation process.

Be sure to watch the Fox Flash and future editions of this newsletter for periodic updates and avenues for contributing to this work.

Gratitude

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for allowing us the honor and privilege of working with your children. Our school is filled with passionate and dedicated educators who not only love teaching, but choose Free Horizon because of our community that includes supportive families who truly care about working in partnership to support the children we serve. The support of our families is immeasurable – whether in classrooms, on field trips, through service on one of our leadership teams, at Campus Beautification Day, or by providing food for staff meetings, completing at-home projects, or providing monetary support through fundraisers, your time and contributions are truly appreciated.

In Gratitude,

Ms. Kresta Vuolo

SAC Update

Rebecca Rivera

So far this year, the SAC group has been working on reviewing the BOY testing data and finalizing the 2016 UIP growth goals. We have also begun work on the 2016 parent survey, which will be a more condensed than last year's and will be sent in conjunction with the JeffCo Parent survey .

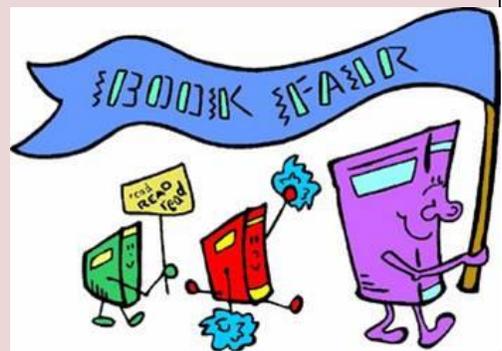
The School Accountability Committee (SAC) exists as mandated by Colorado's Education Accountability Act of 2009. The SAC at Free Horizon Montessori is comprised of parents, faculty, and the Assistant Principal and or Principal who collaborate with school leadership to ensure we are accountable to FHM's mission and vision.

FHM Book Fair

Remember: The Annual Scholastic Book Fair runs through Friday, November 4th. This community event is exciting for our children, and fun for families. We expect it to be fabulously fun and successful! Profits in cash and Scholastic dollars go directly to the library for books and other resources for our students., so stop by and remember, teachers have wish lists of books that would support their classrooms! Can't make it in person? Online shopping is available as well at www.Scholastic.com/fair. Online book sale profits also benefit FHM.

Thank you FHM families and friends for all of your support!

Ms. Lynne



NEWS FROM THE CSN

Hello Free Horizon Families!

Welcome to the 2016—2017 School Year!

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all back, and introduce myself. I am Jenn Berger, FHM parent and President of the FHM Parent group - the Community Support Network (CSN) .

For our new community members, the CSN, (or Free Horizon Montessori Foundation) is the parent group for the school — like a PTA or PTO, but you don't have to join, you are automatically a member!

The CSN organizes most of the school volunteer opportunities; we support the teachers and staff with fun treats at different times of the year, and we also do the fundraising, to the tune of anywhere between \$75,000 to \$100,000 per year. With this money we help to support the three tenants of Free Horizon: individualized instruction, engaging curriculum, and strong community

Our first fundraiser, the *Fox Trot Fun Run*, was already a huge success, raising more than \$14,185! Upcoming fundraisers for 2016 –2017 include the Book Fair, Colorado Gives Day on December 6, 2016, The Spring Fling which features live and silent auction items, on April 22, 2017, and Art to Remember, just in time for Mother's Day, Grub Club, [Amazon Smile](#), milk caps and box tops, and reloadable grocery cards.

If you are looking to get involved, we are always looking for volunteers! Please visit our website www.fhmcsn.org, or you can e-mail me president@fhmcsn.org to learn more about ways to support FHM.

I look forward to another successful year!

Jenn Berger

