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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Schools and Local Businesses Partner in Grand Haven's "Homegrown" Program

GRAND HAVEN, MI – What happens when you mix the imagination and enthusiasm of elementary students with the real-life challenges of local businesses? This fall, nine Grand Haven classrooms and five companies will show the community how this kind of collaboration addresses many of today's educational and economic challenges.

Homegrown, developed by Grand Haven Area Public Schools in partnership with the Chamber of Grand Haven, Spring Lake and Ferrysburg, brings design thinking and project-based learning to students by pairing elementary school classrooms with local manufacturers to solve actual design challenges. Automatic Spring Products Corp., Beacon Recycling, GHSP, Herman Miller and Klever Innovations are Homegrown's inaugural business partners.

The first classroom jumping into the three-week Homegrown experience is Beth Bolhuis's second grade class at Peach Plains Elementary. Students visited Beacon Recycling on Wednesday, October 3 for a tour so they could get to know the company and start thinking about their driving question: "How can we redesign a safer and more efficient entrance?"

"The best part of this is the authenticity," says Bolhuis. "The students are solving a real, authentic problem and taking ownership of the solutions. They're also highly engaged in the creative sequence and get to experience a sense of pride."

The creative sequence leads students from the driving question to a series of innovative ideas. Back in the classroom, Bolhuis guides her students through six defined stages: observation, investigation, incubation, solutions, decisions and validation. This sequence isn't new to the students – they've been practicing with classroom-focused driving questions and are ready to apply this kind of design thinking to Beacon's real-world project.

On Thursday, October 18, students return to Beacon Recycling for Showcase Night, where they will present their solutions for a safer, more efficient entrance to an audience of Beacon staff, parents, teachers and GHAPS leadership. In addition to the math, writing, science and critical thinking that went into the creative sequence, Showcase Night allows students to practice their presentation and public speaking skills – another set of essential skills for future careers.

"Education is extremely important to us," says Brendan Bolhuis, Vice President of Beacon Recycling. "We're having a hard time finding people for our skilled positions – but most of today's manufacturing companies provide lots of excellent career opportunities. Along with the creative ideas we'll get from students at Showcase Night, we want students and parents to see our space and start thinking about manufacturing as a great career choice."

Follow the GHAPS Facebook page for updates on Homegrown: <https://www.facebook.com/GrandHavenAreaPS/>

Grand Haven Area Public Schools is a district of distinction for students preschool through 12th grade. With a goal of providing exceptional educational experiences, GHAPS is committed to success for all students and strives to provide exemplary programs and opportunities to meet the diverse needs of students.

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