

Spring 2017

Dear Families and Staff,

Welcome to our first District Newsletter! We plan to send out a newsletter 3 or 4 times during the school year as another way to keep you informed about district events and what's happening in our schools. This issue contains information about end of year events in each building, along with some pictures from throughout the year. There is also information about what's happening in Special Services.

As the school year comes to a close, I'd like to thank you for your continued support of our students and schools.. All of our students have accomplished so many wonderful things this year, and we couldn't have done it without you. Have a wonderful summer!

Best,

Sherri Turner, Superintendent



Photo of the Week:

Center School Students Celebrate Dr. Seuss' Birthday

Litchfield Public
Schools

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Litchfield, CT

06759

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LHS GRADUATION

JUNE 22, 2017

CONGRATULATIONS
CLASS OF 2017!!!!!!



Center School

On Thursday, June 8, 2017, Center School students and staff came together to show their support and recognition to law enforcement officers running in the annual Connecticut Law Enforcement Special Olympics Torch Run. The Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Connecticut is more than just an event. It is a mission, a serious commitment by the law enforcement community to pay homage to our heroes - Special Olympics Connecticut athletes and their families. Center School students and staff were humbled to have the opportunity to be part of this wonderful event and show their support to an important cause.



We have also included a few pictures of some end of the year events. We had a beautiful day for our Flag Day celebration on June 14, as students and staff walked up to the Green from Center School. Teachers and students gave thanks to our Literacy Volunteers for the many hours spent reading to students.

Mr. Parker didn't disappoint as he planned for another fabulous Field Day with plenty of fun activities and team work.

Events



Find more news and events at www.litchfieldschools.org

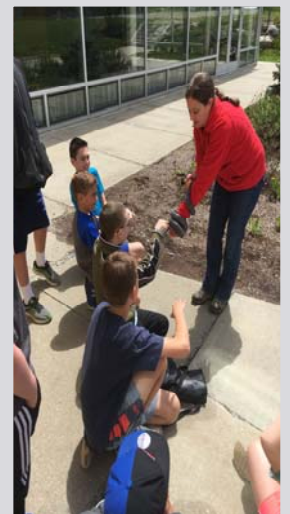
Intermediate School

On Wednesday, June 14, LIS held its first Enrichment Day for students. Parents and teachers presented workshops on various topics outside of our standard curriculum. These topics included coding, contemporary art, cooking and cake decorating, Zumba, yoga and meditation, movement and physical therapy, “icky” chemistry, pitching and running, and caring for your dog. We would like to thank our parent volunteers and teachers for creating such a fun and positive experience to celebrate learning at LIS.



Mrs. Murphy

As we close out the school year, we wanted to say good-bye to Mrs. Murphy, and thank her for being such a great principal for the past 10 years. She has provided us with many memories and traditions that will live on in the years to come. We wish you well, Mrs. Murphy, and will miss you so very much!



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Middle School

The Eighth Grade Class Researched and 'Persuaded' Their Way To Make Changes To Their Classroom Environment!

Mrs. Swanson's eighth grade English classroom is bright and welcoming. Nearly every day, she moves the 22 unwieldy desk/chair combos to accommodate a variety of activities such as pairs and small group work, whole class discussions, performances, independent reading, and more. Although there is a variety of seating options for students - such as yoga balls, a low table with cushions, and an area rug to lounge on - the desk/chair combos take up a lot of space, make the room feel cramped, and aren't easily moved to accommodate seating variations which are a hallmark of the Workshop Model. This year's eighth grade students, however, would have the opportunity to help change the situation.

Mrs. Swanson worked with Mrs. Kubisek over the summer to develop a lesson that would allow students to research and then write a persuasive essay to support their wishes for how their classroom environment could change. First, students designed a survey about the impact of classroom environment and seating on learning. The results of their survey prompted discussion about whether or not choice is important and how a middle school classroom should look, sound, and feel. Second, we read many articles about flexible seating and its impact on learning, as well as piloted as many different seating options as available. Groups of students then brainstormed ideas for their "ultimate" classroom, researched furniture options and costs, and created to-scale layouts, including seating, lighting, organization, and decor. Students then hung blueprints and artistic renderings on the walls for inspiration.

Their research complete, students then wrote persuasive letters to Mrs. Kubisek. Their purpose was to explain the importance of seating choice and flexibility, and ask for her support in devising a plan to procure furniture that better suits the needs of an eighth grade English classroom.



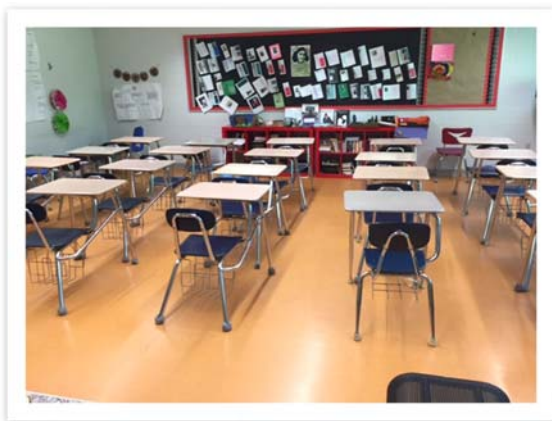
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Middle School

As a result of the students' hard work and Mrs. Kubisek's support, Mrs. Swanson was able to put flexible classroom furniture options in the budget for next year. Rolling, stackable chairs and folding, stackable table/desks on wheels will allow for quick and easy changes to accommodate any activity, whether it's to allow quick changes from pairs to groups during a student-centered learning activity, or to clear the room for a whole class performance of the *Romeo and Juliet* ballroom scene, or to make room for students to lounge on the yoga balls and beanbags during quiet reading time. We also couldn't have completed this year-long project without the support of Central Office Administration and the Board of Education

– thank you!

Before



After



High School

Senior Capstone Project

Writing and publishing a novel. Producing and directing your own film. Organizing a local concert to benefit cancer research. Learning to weld. Developing a unit plan for an elementary Language Arts class. These are just a few examples of the successful capstone projects our students have completed over the years. As early as 2012, the Connecticut State Department of Education was considering legislation requiring all students to complete 1 credit, or 120 hours, of independent research. That year, LHS began piloting the Senior Capstone Project as a full-year elective for any interested senior. Per LPS BOE policy, which is based on Connecticut State graduation requirements, the Senior Capstone Project is now a requirement for the graduating Class of 2018. The premise is simple: high school seniors have successfully completed 12 years (yes, kindergarten does count!) of public education focusing on core skills and essential content which builds the groundwork for success in careers and in college. As a culminating learning experience, students should identify an area of personal interest and develop a project that draws on their skills and their learning while enlisting the support or participation of members in the larger community. Students further hone their readiness for the next phase of growth as lifelong learners and flex their critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Ultimately, the capstone project will be a unique opportunity for high school seniors to reflect on their learning, their place in the larger community, and the processes they must undertake to become productive, self-reliant citizens.

by Patti O'Neill, Sandy Carlson, Andrew Schacht, Margaret Hartshorn, John Markelon and John Kassay. Thank you to all staff (and students) who have helped this graduation requirement evolve into an experience that best meets the needs of all of our students.

Spring Coffeehouse & Mabry Reception



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High School

For next year, all seniors in the Class of 2018 have been scheduled in one of 8 sections of Senior Capstone. Their advisor, who will be one of our existing staff members, will help them work through various phases that lead to their final project. The advisor is not meant to be a content expert but rather one who guides, directs and encourages students as they progress through this self-directed learning experience. In preparation, all students of the Class of 2018 participated this spring in a Senior Capstone Program Overview presentation, which included a question and answer session from the six seniors completing capstone projects this year. During advisory, they completed an “independent study roadmap” that is modeled after the Senior Capstone Project graphic organizer. Finally, they served as the audience for our six capstone presentations, where they could ask questions of the students about their particular projects, how they decided on a topic, and best advice for completing this type of independent project.

The Senior Capstone Project curriculum has been developed over the years through the contributions of many staff members, including: Carmela Westcott, Ed Lok, Jeff Sherman, Cindy Blazek, Dean Birdsall and Tyler Schuck most recently has been vetted.



Special Services

The special services department is excited to report that the district is wrapping up its first year of whole-child initiatives to support students, staff and families. Several exciting programs such as parent workshops, wellness for staff and an aligned PK-12 curricula supporting students social-emotional learning needs was at the forefront of a three prong approach.

First, our school counseling department, alongside teachers and other support staff, led the implementation of our new social-emotional learning programs. Students learned how to practice empathy, respectful communication, behavioral regulation, effective problem solving, as well as how to make safe choices amongst peers.

Second, in collaboration with Greenwoods Counseling Referrals, Inc., and the Litchfield Prevention Council, a staff and parent survey was developed which guided the design of a number of evening workshops held throughout the school year. Informational forums on topics such as cyber-safety, childhood depression/anxiety, and self-esteem were well-attended and offered parents an opportunity to interact with seasoned mental health professionals, a pediatrician, the town constable, a 6th degree black belt in Aikido and other experts who work with children and teens.

Third, over the Spring season, the Litchfield Prevention Council sponsored a wellness/ meditation/ yoga series for staff. This series was an important first step in heightening an awareness of proven strategies that foster behavioral regulation and a recognition that staff, through an understanding and use of these strategies, can help build student skill sets in this area.

During the next school year, the scope of this program is set to expand. We will be further collaborating with our partners in the community, as well as implementing school-based initiatives that support whole-child development. We are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to next year!

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