

Merrick Messenger

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF KINDNESS AND CONFIDENCE

Lions Quest at the heart of social and emotional learning

This year, the New York State Education Department established new regulations for schools to embed mental health literacy into the curriculum and promote mental well-being. In recent years, there has been greater focus on promoting self-esteem, empathy, mindfulness and other positive traits to instill positive character in students. The Lions Quest program, now beginning its second full year as a districtwide program in Merrick, is making a positive impact on students' personal growth, development and collaboration.

"Social emotional development is as important

as academic learning is for preparing students for happy, productive and resilient lives," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Dominick Palma, who chairs a Nassau County subcommittee on mental health and substance abuse issues. "The Lions Quest program has been a valuable tool for teaching students social emotional skills. Lions Quest's lessons are reinforced throughout the school day and can be applied to daily life."

Levy Lakeside School was the first in the district to pilot Lions Quest during the 2016-17 school year. All grades begin with a unit that focuses on building a positive learning community, with subsequent units covering personal development, social development, health and development, and finally, leadership and service. This culminating unit serves as the springboard for a host of grade-level service learning projects for the benefit of others in the community. There's also a culminating schoolwide celebration at the end of the year in which each grade level discusses its projects with the school.



Along the way, there are regular lessons that incorporate fun, team-oriented activities and discussions to strengthen student self-esteem. Randi Walsh's fifth-grade class recently held a lesson on shaping "better versions of ourselves" by setting short- and long-term goals and discussing, then role-playing, how to attain these goals. They incorporated a game in which a student attempted to hit a bullseye target while his classmates cheered him on, then remained silent, to demonstrate how different types of motivation affect people.

Down the hall, Kerin Smolin's first-grade class held lively discussions about what makes them proud about themselves and practiced complimenting one another. Ms. Smolin began by sharing her first experiences of riding a bicycle without training wheels, which generated conversations and student illustrations

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touting soccer prowess, dance skills and other talents, followed by a reinforcement of how they set out to achieve these things and how they can set future goals.

“Lions Quest helps me get along with my classmates well and work as a community,” said Rachel, a Lakeside fifth-grader.

Another example of how Lions Quest is fostering a sense of community was recently on display at Chatterton School. Second-grade classes brainstormed age-appealing ideas on which they could work together to achieve a common goal. In a recent exercise, they used paper props and a balloon to help a frog from falling off its lily pad. At the end of the lesson, they evaluated what worked well and what didn't.

“This is the kind of teamwork that we expect from our students and value as a school community,” said Chatterton Principal Dana Bermas. “Lions Quest reinforces the school philosophy of kindness and respect for all and gives us a common language that all students are aware of.”

Chatterton technology teacher Traci Colfer is leading the effort to bring technology into the fold. She is overseeing a project with sixth-grade classes to create a short stop-motion

animation movie to create a positive story using Legos and Lego characters. She shared examples of how a Lego character can be manipulated, frame by frame, to perform acts of kindness, honesty and even courage.

“Lions Quest has influenced me because it has reminded me that I have to stay confident when I am doing something,” said Chatterton sixth-grader Adriana. “It has really helped me in so many ways, but my favorite is confidence.”

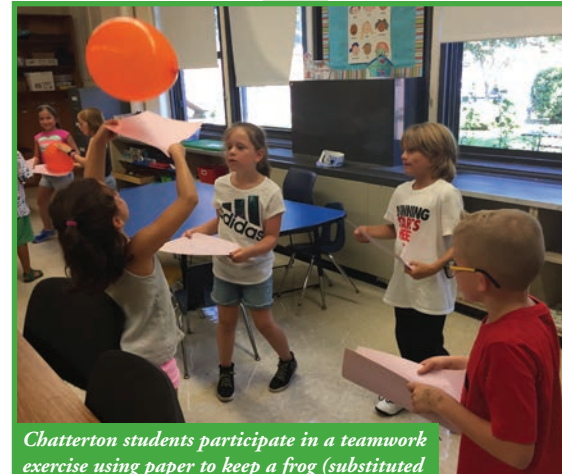
“Lions Quest reinforces the school philosophy of kindness and respect for all and gives us a common language that all students are aware of.”

- Dana Bermas, Chatterton Principal

Lions Quest is teaching many life skills and strategies, according to Birch School sixth-grade teacher Jessa Kolar. They can even reference strategies in

other aspects of the curriculum, including listening skills.

“We can use the strategies and language [from Lions Quest] when having reading discussions or any conversations within content areas.”



Chatterton students participate in a teamwork exercise using paper to keep a frog (substituted by a balloon) from falling off its lily pad.

While the program is having a positive effect on the school community, the service learning component is also driving the positive impact on the greater community as well. For Childhood Cancer Awareness Month (September), Birch sixth-graders teamed up with the Heart of Gold Foundation to collect \$2 donations from families in all grade levels to benefit pediatric cancer research at Memorial Sloan Kettering. Students raised close to \$3,200, and each participant received a gold heart that was displayed as part of a larger heart in the school hallway. The school's student council members also participated in the Lace Up for Kids Cancer Foundation fundraiser, raising money and handing out gold shoelaces to inspire schoolmates to get involved.

Ryan, a Birch sixth-grader, felt the service learning really taught him the importance of values.

“I think Lions Quest has really helped me to be a better person,” Ryan said. “I thought the lesson about peer pressure helped everyone. It taught us that when someone wants you to do something, it doesn't mean you necessarily have to do it. I also liked the service learning project because it taught us to put others first.”



Hearts showing student support for the Heart of Gold pediatric cancer project are displayed at Birch School. Gold shoelaces (inset) were handed out for participation in the Lace Up for Kids Cancer fundraiser.

Facilities and Security Update

All site work, including a new playground, basketball court, and parking and bus loop improvements at Chatterton School, have been completed. Field work will continue through the winter season.

At its November meeting, the Board of Education expects to award bids for work associated with a major classroom addition at Chatterton School. Construction is expected to begin early this winter, based on weather conditions. The New York State Education Department approved the project in September.

Also in November, the Board expects to advertise bidding for the installation of new heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems and restroom renovations at all three schools. The Board hopes to award bids this winter. Some work will commence this spring and continue through the fall of 2019, with the bulk of this work taking place over the summer.

All of these projects are being funded through the district's facilities bond.

Enhanced Safety and Security

In the interest of student and staff safety, the district is reviewing options for installing resilient window film and stronger classroom doors at all schools. This work will be funded through the approved 2018-19 school district budget. Security personnel hours and requirements were also expanded this year. Each school now has an on-campus security presence from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., and every member of the security personnel meets the new law enforcement background requirement.

Please stay tuned to future editions of Messenger, as well as the district website, Facebook, Twitter and upcoming Board of Education meetings and agendas, to stay informed about developments with our facilities projects.

Chatterton's new playground



Welcome Aboard

NEW STAFF FOR THE 2018-19 SCHOOL YEAR

Birch School

Renee Boritz.....	FLES teacher
Christopher Cabeza.....	Substitute teacher
Jacqueline Civello.....	Substitute teacher
Caterina Como	Leave replacement speech teacher
Allison Cooney.....	Teaching assistant
Maryjean Ferrara	Substitute teacher
Lexi Fishman.....	Teaching assistant
Allison Gaffney	Substitute teacher
Stephanie Lamanna	Teaching assistant
Nicole Mauro.....	Substitute teacher
Samantha Mendolia	Substitute teacher
Melissa Montgomery.....	Nurse
Maria Petrolekas.....	Leave replacement psychologist
Kerri Walsh-Stork.....	Teaching assistant

Chatterton School

Renee Boritz.....	FLES teacher
Michelle Botesazan.....	Substitute teacher
Emily Campay	Substitute teacher
Michael DeLuca.....	Assistant Principal
Aileen Dominguez-Perez	Teaching assistant
Tatianna Flores.....	Leave replacement special education teacher
Jessica Giovino	Substitute teacher
Joi Kravitz	Nurse
Christine Seaman	Substitute teacher
Rachel Sudran	Substitute teacher
Daniela Vernice.....	Special education teacher

Levy Lakeside School

Christina Cascione	Substitute teacher
Denise Crowley.....	Leave replacement special education teacher
Nicole Cunningham.....	Substitute teacher
Robert Fallarino	Substitute teacher
Justin Gabrus.....	Assistant Principal
Sanna Hattar	Teaching assistant
Rachel Hayden.....	Teaching assistant
Lindsay Lippolt	Substitute teacher
Dena Pizzurro	Teaching assistant
Karen Riccio	Teaching assistant
Jacqueline Rossi.....	Substitute teacher
Olivia Russell	Teaching assistant

NEWS Around the Schools



Celebrating Creativity

Kudos to Birch School student Patrick Lee, who recently made the trip to Albany to accept his music composition award at the New York State PTA Reflections awards ceremony and reception held at the New York State Education Department building.

Patrick earned recognition for an original composition he wrote and performed on the trumpet, titled "Reach for the Stars," which inspires others to realize their full potential in pursuing their dreams. Patrick said his personal inspiration came from wanting to reach his goal of hitting higher notes on the trumpet. Last spring, Patrick, along with Chatterton School student Ryan Levinter and Levy Lakeside School students Lindsay Nashtatik and Sam Schwed, were honored for excellence in the competition.

Patrick was excited to receive his award and represent Birch School and the Merrick School District community during his visit.

To kick off the school year, Chatterton students and faculty gathered in the gymnasium for their first Book Celebration of the year. During the month of October, they celebrated the book "When Sophie Thinks She Can't..." by Molly Bang.

Students and teachers discussed the importance of perseverance, working together and overcoming challenges, all positive themes emphasized in the book and in everyday life at Chatterton, which is why the book was chosen.

"Students are always encouraged to believe in themselves and have confidence in who they are as individuals," said Chatterton Principal Dana Bermas, pictured at right with Assistant Principal Michael DeLuca and students displaying copies of "When Sophie Thinks She Can't..."

Throughout the year, Chatterton will continue to celebrate different books that demonstrate to children key life lessons and ways of thinking, providing teachable moments to help them in their life's journey.

Yes, You Can



Welcome to Lakesideville

Lakeside's Makerspace Club has grown by leaps and bounds since its launch last winter. What began as a small group of second-graders using their recess time to brainstorm and strategize creative solutions to challenging problems has since evolved into a larger group of students applying design and engineering principles to create a small replica community known as Lakesideville. Students selected upcycled materials (for example, they used plastic packaging to create a skylight and egg cartons for movie theater seats), managed their time, worked cooperatively to listen to each other and built upon the ideas of their group. They also learned the importance of selecting the correct materials to carry out their ideas and being flexible to redesign and make changes when necessary. This year, the club has been expanded to include third-graders.

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