

**Mt. Lebanon School District
School Board President Report – March 21, 2016
Lawrence M. Lebowitz**

Good evening. First of all, congratulations to the 71 seniors who, on March 3rd, were inducted into the Mt. Lebanon High School Chapter of the Cum Laude Society. Some brief history is appropriate here. In 1962, Mt. Lebanon High School was honored to be granted a charter for the establishment of a Cum Laude Chapter in one of eight national districts. At the time, Mt. Lebanon was the tenth public school to be granted a chapter. Today, and of the 353 chapters in the United States, 327 are in private schools and only 26 are in public secondary schools—Mt. Lebanon being one of them. In fact, Mt. Lebanon is the only public High School in Pennsylvania to be granted a charter. This year, and to qualify for membership, a Mt. Lebanon High School student had to have at least a 4.8 GPA. This is a remarkable achievement and our most sincere congratulations and thanks to our 71 inductees and their teachers who continue to make us proud.

Speaking of academic achievement, I want to thank the various representatives of the District for their work in the extremely successful STEAM K-12 showcase held at the High School earlier in the month. STEAM, which stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics, is, of course, our District and grade-wide program which focuses on these hugely important areas of our curriculum. The most exciting part of the evening was the fact that, of the 1,000 people who attended, a significant number were both parents and children either in our elementary schools or planning to be in the next few years. This kind of enthusiasm about our "cutting edge" program is exactly in line with what the School Board hoped for when we supported our teachers and District in implementing this program a few years ago. It was, yet again, another "showcase" of our District and we thank all 70 teachers who not

only participated that evening, but have also played such a key role in implementing the program.

Continuing with this same theme, we will once again welcome the community into our schools for a Celebration of Education where the community is welcome to get a "first-hand" look at the exceptional learning experiences of our students in grades K-12. The celebration will take place from 12-5 pm at the High School on Saturday, April 2nd. A display from each school will be set up in Center Court and fine arts performances will be held in the auditorium. Please mark your calendars, save the date and plan to attend so as to experience the best of what Mt. Lebanon education has to offer. This is, of course, also a great opportunity for the community to visit our new High School.

Please also remember to mark your calendars for the 2nd Annual "Taste of Lebo" event entitled "Battle of the Appetizers" to be held on Saturday, April 16th from 2-5 p.m. at Clearview Commons on Washington Road. In addition to sampling wonderful appetizers from several of our fine local restaurants (which, by the way, we thank for participating), guests will also be able to enjoy student musical performances scheduled throughout the afternoon. More information about this important MLFE fundraiser is available on the website at www.mtlsd.org/mlfe.

Finally, I had the opportunity to spend some of the morning with Principal Wolfson, teachers and students at Mellon Middle School on March 3rd. As has been the case in every single visit I have enjoyed during my tenure as President, my morning at Mellon provided some very good insight into many of the exciting things going on in our academic buildings. A few examples are:

- The Writing Lab at Mellon is part of a larger program that supports writing throughout the middle school curriculum. Parent volunteers play an integral part in the process by offering one-on-one conferences with students throughout the school day. These volunteers receive training developed by both the MMS and JMS Writing Coordinators so as to provide the type of valuable feedback students need to improve their writing skills. Thanks to both our two Writing Clinicians and, very importantly, our many parents who volunteer their time for this important program. We always hear that our students are better writers (and better prepared for college) than students from other schools and part of this success is undoubtedly the work resulting from this program.
- Mr. Holliday's 8th grade U.S. History class was utilizing a computer lab to participate in a game of Fantasy Geopolitics. The format is similar to the popular Fantasy Football format but, instead of football players, students draft countries and receive points—both positive and negative—for mentions of their selections in the New York Times. In the end, this game fosters a global awareness and familiarizes students with the means to locate and evaluate current events affecting countries throughout the world.
- Cindy Brone's 8th grade Conceptual Physics class was building student-designed windmills for an experiment where they will ultimately measure the output of their windmill design. PVC tubing and electrical motors that will be used to measure output were purchased through a grant from the Mt. Lebanon Foundation for Education. This type of lesson therefore exemplifies both the key role which MLFE can play in our academic programs and the

"hands-on" approach which takes place within our STEAM curriculum.

- Finally, and although not as exciting as seeing Fantasy Geopolitics or the creation of windmills, I observed something equally important—teachers on each of the teams getting together on a daily basis to collaborate and problem solve with respect to issues related to student performance on both an individual and group level. This level of collaboration is essential not only to ensure that we are indeed making every effort possible to identify and resolve problems which a student may be experiencing but, more generally, essential to the middle school model and what makes it successful.

Thanks again to Principal Wolfson and his team for a most enjoyable morning at Mellon Middle School. I look forward to my final visits at the High School over the coming months. Thank you.