



"Winter is a season of recovery and preparation." - Paul Theroux

Supervisor's Message

A Message from Mr. Lopreiato

Greetings,

I hope this newsletter finds you healthy and well as we enter the Holiday season, and wind down the final days of 2023. In my own reflections of 2023, I am proud of the LMA school community (students and staff) for their hard work and dedication for this year. Each month we have new students joining the LMA learning community from all over the state, and each month students that have been here have been here are welcoming new students with great enthusiasm. Even on student intakes, LMA students are embracing potential students with genuine interest and warmth. That truly is great progress for our school community and culture,

and I'm proud of the LMA staff and students for continuing to build and grow. Even though the Winter Solstice was yesterday, I encourage all readers of this newsletter to use the beginning of the New Year and the dark, winter months to self-reflect on 2023. Think about the



successes you had, consider creating short term and long term goals for the New Year, and think about setting up the foundation and framework for success in 2024. I can proudly say these activities are being done in the classroom, group therapy and individual therapy all year with LMA students and staff.

Please enjoy this newsletter as we showcase all the monthly activities, learning opportunities and growth at The Mill!

Mr. Lopreiato

Monthly Data

- 1. Enrollment 46
- 2. Acceptances 2
- 3. New Students 2
- 4. Intakes 4
- 5. Referrals 6
- 6. Disenrollment's 1
- 7. Fire Drill 12/4/23
- 8. Emergency Drill (Bomb Threat) 12/8/23

Upcoming Events

January 2024 Important Dates

January 2 - Back to School January 15 - NO SCHOOL - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day January 24 - Field Trip - Union County Food Bank



LMA Student of the Month - December 2023

Angelise P.

LMA is proud to announce our December Student of the Month, Angelise P. She has joined the LMA school community this past September, and has shown tremendous growth in all of her classes. Each and every month staff vote on the student who has made the biggest impression, and shown the most growth in class, and this month Angelise had the most amount of votes. She continues to focus on her academic school work, while displaying behaviors of a



LMA Student of the Month such as acting kindly to her peers and staff, and helping assist them whenever she can. We are proud and honored to have Angelise as part of our LMA School community!

LMA Staff Spotlight

Meet Mr. Bell - Social Studies Teacher

Fun Facts about Mr. Bell

- -Has worked at Lamberts Mill Academy for the past 6 years teaching multiple, different courses.
- -Previously was a Director at an overnight summer camp.
- -Was inspired to become a History teacher by going to college in Washington D.C.
- -Enjoys watching his wife compete in marathons.



Classroom Spotlights



Mrs. Van Cliefs Mathematics Class applying math to the Holidays!

Students in all classes are working on budgeting holiday projects. They are researching for items that they would like to pretend to have or have for the holidays. They will be using a discount of a percentage and or coupon on that item and will calculate the difference.



Ms. Schneider's Music class gets festive!

During December, students have been busy creating original songs with lyrics, keyboard and drum parts. They have learned how hooks catch a listener's ear, the differences between chorus, verse and bridge, as well as how to use motifs throughout the song. Additionally, students have been busy practicing singing and playing seasonal songs



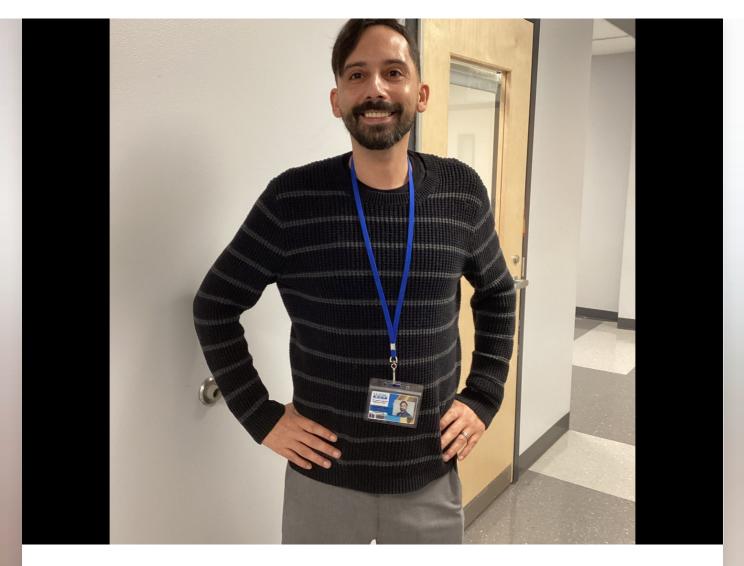
Mr. Bell's Social Studies classes continue to assist the Westfield Food Bank

A number of 8th & 9th graders went again to help at the Union County food bank in Westfield on December 7, 2023. Our group sorted cans & dry goods, packed some order boxes, and prepared empty boxes for recycling. Again it was an energetic group and received

measuring wrapping paper to review for area, perimeter, and volume for holiday decorations. In Consumer Math and Transition Math, discussions for random acts of kindness could lead to volunteer work opportunities. Students will discuss how those experiences and opportunities can lead to careers and various jobs. Geometry students are encouraged to practice the Pythagorean Theorem._Algebra 2 students will be encouraged to continue work on slope. Algebra 1 and Middle School students are encouraged to practice decimals and percentages to help with budgeting projects.

that they will be looking forward to performing at the school celebration before break. many thanks from the workers for their efforts.

Mr. Soto - LMA Registered Behavior Technician (RBT)



LMA would like to congratulate Mr. Soto for his recent accomplishments. He has completed all his required hours in order to be a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT), and has successfully passed his RBT Certification Assessment this month! In addition to now having his RBT Certification, he also has his NJ Substitute certification and Safety-Care Specialist certification too!

Learning Experiences at The Mill

Students at LMA Climb to New Heights!

A group of students participated on a wonderful field trip to the Gravity Vault in Chatham, NJ this month. Students learned about the safety precautions about rock climbing and then were able to climb high on the walls to see who could get to the top. This allowed LMA students to face, and overcome both physical and mental challenges. Students also provided motivation and positive praise to their fellow peers as each student began their ascent!









Lincoln Tech & LMA: Part II

LMA students, primarily seniors, post-graduates and a couple juniors had the learning experience to visit Lincoln Tech's Union, NJ campus during the month of December. This was a follow up learning experience, as Lincoln Tech visited LMA last month. This guided tour really allowed LMA students to see the facility, and all the different programs actually in action. Students we're grateful for the opportunity, and asked plenty of great questions regarding programming, schedules and requirements in order to attend



Lincoln Tech after high school. Being able to speak and discuss with current students, and staff members gave LMA some great perspective on what Lincoln Tech offers, and how it aligns with their own personal goals.

https://www.lincolntech.edu/campus/union-nj







LMA students get 'hands on' with small engines

Students at LMA we're able to apply skills learned in mathematics class, and their social skills from group therapy to work together to complete an engine swap. An old snowblower with a blown motor, and a new pressure washer with a broken water pump we're the primary focus. Students worked together using basic, hand tools to successful remove both engines, compare the measurements, and install the new engine on the old snowblower. The task required students to work together by coming up with a plan, communicating with one another and working together.

This project took two afternoons, but was a great way to use skills learned in the classroom, to an outside project.









LMA Monthly SEL Theme: Kindness/Patience (Holidays Around the World)

During the month of December Life Skills groups enjoyed targeting the the SEL theme of kindness and patience using various activities and insightful group led discussions. Students were encouraged to tie this theme into the holiday season while also discussing holidays around the world from different countries and cultures. Staff and students shared their holiday experiences and traditions with the group, and what they were most looking forward to. Lastly we wrapped up the month sharing out how we plan to spend the holiday break while getting some much needed rest and relaxation.

The Life Skills themes for the month of December included Kindness, Patience, and Holidays Around the World. The groups engaged in different activities and games that highlighted acts of kindness, group discussions where students spoke about their own experiences with patience, and competed in holiday trivia. We ended the month with a showing of the classic episode of *The Twilight Zone* - "The Night of the Meek" all the way from 1960. These episode brought the three themes of the month together, and provided excellent discussion starters for the students.







LMA Students Outside the Classroom

Myasia sings in her local church choir.

Myasia is a newer LMA student starting with us only last month, but she has shared with us some of her interests, and activities she enjoys outside of school. One activity that jumped out during the Holiday season, is her long, commitment to singing in her church choir. Myasia has been singing with the choir at the church; Calvary Gospel Assembly in Newark, NJ for the past 14-15 years! Myasia informed LMA that she been singing gospel songs, and even her own songs every 3rd Sunday of the month. LMA hopes to



incorporate Myasia's singing experience into her music elective in the future. When asked what she enjoys the most about singing, Myasia said, 'bringing happiness to everyone'.

School in the Community

- 1. Post-Graduate Program is fully engaged in WBL with students going to Walgreen's and Chili's on a consistent basis.
- 2. Monthly Community Meetings to celebrate student progress and growth.
- 3. Students go out in the community to Chester to visit Alstede Farms, and to Edison for Top Golf field trips.
- 4. Students have been visiting and helping out at The Westfield Food Pantry with retired LMA Teacher, Mr. Convery.

About Us

Contact Information:

Phone: (908)-233-7581

Address: 1571 Lamberts Mill Road, Westfield, NJ, 07090

Website: https://ucesc.org/schools/lamberts_mill_academy_ Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_lma/?hl=en_

Lamberts Mill Academy is a school within the Union County Educational Services Commission. We are an out of district public school for students with psychiatric disabilities. We continue to partner with RWJ Trinitas Regional Medical Center to provide clinical services for our students. Our school community prides itself on our relationships with all stakeholders: students, staff, parents, families and community partnerships. Being a public school, we adhere to all NJDOE assessment and curriculum mandates. Our professional learning community strives to increase student achievement and improve classroom instruction to provide students with the most effective educational, social and emotional learning environment possible.





Director's Message



Dear WRA Community,

As the 2023 calendar year comes to an end, I am also aware that we are closing the chapter on our first full year at our new home here in Union, New Jersey. It has been so wonderful to watch our program grow and blossom in our newly expanded space here in Union, New Jersey. Our "cafegymatorium" was the perfect setting for our annual holiday party this past Friday. You'll see some festive pictures a little further down in the newsletter. It was a wonderfully fun and joyful way to finish what has been a truly productive first four months of the school year.

We once again wish everyone a wonderful rest of the holiday season and an early Happy New Year! We hope our students enjoy their well deserved time off for Winter break. See everyone on January 2nd!

Please enjoy the rest of this month's newsletter including a short clip from our impromptu caroling session at the holiday celebration on the 22nd!

Sincerely,

Josh Bornstein & Rachel Richer
Administration at the UCESC Work Readiness Academy





December 2023 Data

Enrollment as of December 22, 2023

Actual: 30

Changes: Entered: 0 Exited: 0

Referrals: 4

Intakes Scheduled: 4

Accepted: 2

12/11 - Shelter in Place (Reported Bomb Threat)

12/21 - Fire/Evacuation Drill





December 25-31, 2024 - Winter Recess (WRA Closed)

January 1, 2024 - New Year's Day (WRA Closed)

January 2, 2024 - WRA Re-opens

January 15, 2024 - WRA Closed for MLK Jr. Day **February/March 2024** - WBL Intership Rotations

How to Contact Us!

As a reminder, in the event that your child will be absent, arriving late, or picked up early, please call our main number at (908) 633-2704 and speak with our secretary Maureen Wakeman. If it is



before 8am, please leave a message. You can also email Maureen at mwakeman@ucesc.org

December Spotlights



Congralutions to Paul Schiumo our Student of the Month for December 2023! Paul's positive attitude and willingness to try new things makes him a role model here at WRA. He is always looking for opportunities to brighten someone's day or lift their spirits, whether with a joke or a smile, you can always count on Paul to remind you to view the situation with an optimistic mindset!



Meet **Jessica Suckerman**, Teaching Assistant (Part-Time)

How long have you worked for UCESC?

I have worked at WRA for almost 4 months!

What do you love best about your job?

I love my job because of all of the wonderful staff and students I get to work with everyday. The positive environment at WRA makes me excited to come to work.

What do you like to do in your free time?

In my free time I love spending time with my husband, kids and dogs. I enjoy traveling and going down the shore.

What it something that people would be suprised to know about you?

People may be surprised to know that I love roller coasters that go upside down! Batman at Great Adventure is my all time favorite



Keating Physical Therapy,

based in downtown Cranford. is one of the WRA's newest business partners to host a student Work-Based Learning experience! Karen Keating opened her practice with the goal of giving her clients a oneon-one, hands-on experience that is centered around each individual. Our student intern is helping with reseting treatment rooms, scheduling appointments, folding towels, and completing other maintenance tasks. Whether you want to train for your next endurance event, or be able to do your daily activities painfree, they want to help you achieve these goals... and even surpass them. Looking for outpatient PT services? Or if you have specific questions about your injury, please feel free to give them a call at (908) 276-0294.

What's Happening in the Classroom?



December at the Work Readiness Academy has been filled with lessons on empathy, kindness and diversity. Our kindness challenge has given students the opportunity to put others' needs before their own and seek out ways to brighten someone else's day, in turn creating a domino effect of joy and giving! As the holidays' approach our students have been sharing their families' traditions while learning about others not only in our program, but around the world. We are continuing to grow by opening our minds to new ideas and concepts, becoming more aware of others'

needs and learning to celebrate individuality. Our student interns have continued to explore and practice both teamwork and productivity while they are hard at work in the community everyday. Students have been encouraged to support fellow interns in completing tasks as well as seek out opportunities for new experiences at their Work Based Learning job sites. We are so proud of their growth and development and are excited to support them in continuing to achieve their goals. As our holiday celebration quickly approaches, we are all looking forward to being able to spend time sipping homemade hot chocolate, munching on a variety of cookies and listening to the sounds of the season from our WRA carolers!

Rachel Richer
WRA Supervisor of Instruction









WRA Holiday Celebration!



























What's Happening at Project SEARCH?

During the month of December the students at Project SEARCH participated in their second

Employment Planning Meetings. The students facilitated their meetings and apply about their

current internships, their strengths and areas for improvement, and their placement for the next rotation. Families also heard feedback from Jourdan Spencer, the program Instructor, and Fonati Julu and Eileen Michie, the two Skills Trainers. In the classroom, the students learned about many important topics. Some included

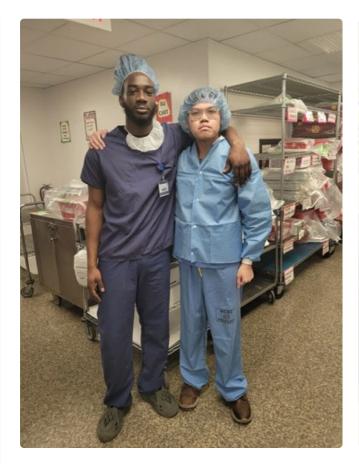


networking, resume writing, receiving feedback and dealing with change. During Workshop Week we took a walk into downtown Summit for hot chocolate and donuts. We also got to visit the Work Readiness Academy for a holiday celebration. We look forward to starting 2024 in our second internship rotations!













Project SEARCH Application Now Available

The online application for the **Project SEARCH at Overlook Medical Center Class of 2025** is now available and can be accessed by clicking the link below:

https://forms.gle/JJmq3rnpPeV1zXA97

Interested students and their families <u>must</u> attend one of our upcoming virtual information sessions:

Upcoming Dates:

Tuesday, January 16th at 7pm Tuesday, February 13th at 7pm Tuesday, March 12th at 7pm Tuesday, April 16th at 7pm

Please email Josh Bornstein at jbornstein@ucesc.org with your preferred date and we will send you the Google Meet link for the requested session.

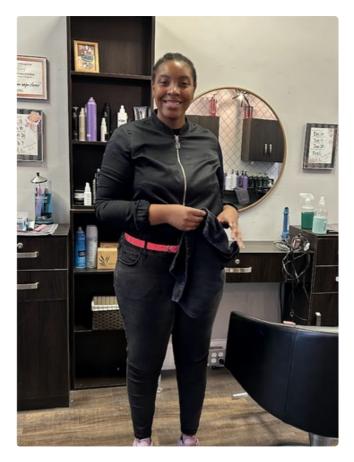
















Director's Award



I am pleased to recognize Jadira Gomez with the Director's Award for the month of December (2023)! Jadira has been working hard at her internships and in the classroom. She is becoming more comfortable asking for help for herself and has been spotted helping peers numerous times. She is always looking to shout out others during our community meeting which demonstrates her committment to making others feel good - a behavior that we love to see at the WRA. She also won the holiday spirit award with her incredible outfit (see pic below). Way to go, Jadira!



Community Resources/Events

Special Needs Resource Fair Sunday, February 25, 2024 • 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

FREE and open to the community!

In honor of Jewish Disabilities Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month (JDAIM) in February, the JCC of Central NJ is hosting a Special Needs Resource Fair and publishing its 4th annual Special Needs Resource Directory.

Wide variety of specialties: ABA services • Adaptive programs (karate, aquatics, arts, etc.) • Dentists and orthodontists • Recreational programming • Residential services • Sensory supportive interior design • Special needs attorneys • Special needs products • Summer camp programs • Supported employment • Synagogues • Therapy services • Travel training

Caregiver Support Group at the JCC



with Lisa Afflitto, Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

Wednesdays

October 18, November 15, December 20, January 17, February 21, March 20, April 17, May 15, June 19

7:30 - 8:45 p.m.

Raising a child with special needs is challenging and requires a unique approach.

Join Lisa Afflitto, LCSW, for a monthly support group where caregivers can learn strategies to support their own mental wellness, share their experiences and meet/connect with other caregivers. This monthly group is free.

Lisa Afflitto is a seasoned Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), a

NJ certified Special Education teacher and the owner of Integrative Therapy Solutions, LLC.

Her clinical focus is in supporting adults (18+) and families, who are navigating life either as an individual with a disability, or as a caregiver to a child or adult with a disability.

Lisa has a passion for facilitating support groups and bringing caregivers togethers to connect in a supportive space.

For questions and registration, contact Beth Mitchell, Director of Inclusion and Diversity, at BMitchell@jccnj.org.

The JCC of Central NJ is committed to accessibility and inclusion.

To request accommodations, please contact Beth Mitchell
at bmitchell@jccnj.org at least two weeks prior to an event.



Help us stock and fund Bagged with Love for the food insecure. Food or fund donations welcome at this event! Scan and learn more!





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Understanding Supported Employment Options Available AFTER Graduation

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT IN NEW JERSEY

Supported Employment helps individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) secure and maintain **competitive employment**, or work in a setting to prepare for competitive employment. An individual's interests, likes, and dislikes are important factors when considering a job or career path.



KEY TERMS EXAMPLES OF SERVICES EMPLOYMENT

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Federal legislation signed in 2014 to help individuals access education, training, and support services to succeed in the workplace.

Competitive Employment

Work performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting that is compensated at or above minimum wage.

<u>Division of Vocational</u> <u>Rehabilitation Services</u> (DVRS)

The state agency which provides vocational services for individuals with IDD or other barriers to employment.

Check out our DVRS Go Bag: bit.ly/DVRSgobag

"Employment First" State

An initiative that outlines that competitive employment is the preferred post-education activity. It presumes that all individuals, including people with IDD, are capable of integrated employment.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

 Offered to high school students to plan and prepare for entering the workforce.

Job Development

 Assists individuals with a job search, interview skills, and resume development.

Job Sampling

 Gives the individual the opportunity to explore different types of employment and identify areas of interest and ability.

Job Coaching

 Provides assistance with learning essential job tasks, transportation training, social skills, and can act as a liaison between the employer and employee.

Long-Term Follow Along

 Ongoing support through worksite visits designed to help individuals maintain skills built during job coaching.

Trial Work Experience

 A workplace readiness assessment administered by a Supported Employment provider agency, such as Project HIRE.

*This is not a fully inclusive list. Services may vary between agencies, school districts, and funding sources.

NJ WORKABILITY

NJ WorkAbility offers people with disabilities who are working, and whose income would otherwise make them ineligible for Medicaid, the opportunity to receive full Medicaid coverage.

Wages

Individuals are compensated at or above minimum wage, and at a comparable rate to coworkers without IDD performing similar duties with similar experience and education.

Benefits

Individuals receive the same benefits as other employees in a similar position with a similar level of service.

Scheduling

The schedule is determined by the needs of the employer, not the availability of the individual.

<u>Integration</u>

Employment takes place in a setting where individuals with and without disabilities have the opportunity to interact and work alongside each other.

Advancement

The same opportunities for promotion and advancement are available for employees with and without disabilities in similar positions with similar experience.

Through NJ WorkAbility, individuals can earn up to \$65,196 of gross annual income and maintain less than \$20,000 in assets without threatening their Medicaid status. A couple cannot exceed \$87,900 in gross income and \$30,000 in assets. Learn more about NJ WorkAbility and eligibility requirements at: bit.ly/njworkability

April 2022

Supported Employment Fact Sheet Final.pdf

Click the link to download the attachment

Download

641.9 KB

WRA Spotted in the Community!

Former Project SEARCH Student Cynthia Offiah (now working in Food Services at the Overlook Cafeteria). Cynthia makes an amazing salad!



Picture of the Month

WRA's Can Do Food Services Group - re-creating Alex's favorite panini sandwich from his old high school!





About the Work Readiness Academy

The Work Readiness Academy serves students ages 18-21 with disabilities and provides a comprehensive employment training experience that incorporates both classroom-based instruction and community-based work-learning experiences. While in the

training classroom, students work cooperatively with similar aged peers to learn critical skills related to employment and socialization. Students also work on career exploration and planning, including the development of a person-centered, post-secondary vision and plan with clear goals and action steps. Program staff remain on-site during the internships to provide and fade support and assistance as needed. Students also participate in field trips focused on career discovery, independent living skills, recreation and independent travel training.

For more information or to make a student referral, please email Josh Bornstein at jbornstein@ucesc.org

Email: jbornstein@ucesc.org

Website: https://www.ucesc.org/schools/the_work_readiness_academy

Location: 970 Suburban Road, Union, NJ, USA

Phone: 908-633-2704









Principal's Message

Dear Crossroads Family,

As we approach the much-anticipated holiday break, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible community we have here at Crossroads School. I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere appreciation for the hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm that both our students and staff have demonstrated throughout the first half of the school year.

This holiday season is a time for reflection, joy, and connection with loved ones. I encourage each of you to take a well-deserved break, recharging your spirits and creating lasting memories with family and friends. Whether you celebrate Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, or another meaningful tradition, may the holiday season bring you warmth, peace, and moments of happiness.

Looking ahead to the new year, I am excited about the continued growth and success that awaits us. Your ongoing support and collaboration are instrumental in creating an environment where every student can thrive. Together, we will build upon the achievements of the past and embrace new opportunities for learning and development.

Wishing you all a joyous holiday season filled with love, laughter, and relaxation. Thank you for being an essential part of the Crossroads family.

Warm regards,

General Information

Enrollment as of December 22, 2023

Actual: 51

Changes: Entered: 0 Exited:1

Referrals: 10

Intakes Scheduled: 2

Accepted: 2

Fire Drills: 12/4/23

Emergency Drills: 12/8/23 (Bomb Threat)

Upcoming Dates

December 23, 2023 - January 1, 2024 - School Closed for Winter Recess

January 2, 2024 - School Reopens

January 4, 2024 - Parent Education/PTO Meeting - 1:00PM (Speech Presentation)

January 15, 2024 - School Closed (MLK Day)

January 18, 2024 - 1:00 PM - Middle School Parent Meeting to Discuss Transition to High School (more info to come)

Crossroads Staff and Student Spotlight



Student of the Month - Matthew

Matthew in Alexis's room is such a sweet and loving boy. He comes into school with a smile everyday. Matthew is working hard on all of his academic skills and is showing great strides on his following directions and reading skills. Matthew loves playing catch with his teachers and classmates. Matthew is always ready to try new things in class and does it with a big smile. This month we made cupcakes in class and Matthew really enjoyed all the steps in preparing the cupcakes and really enjoyed the finished product. Matthew enjoys looking at books and playing

such a pleasure having Matthew in class and we are looking forward to watching him grow and succeed.



Certified Staff of the Month - Brianna Reich - Speech

1. How long have you been working at the commission?

I started at the Commission on November 1st, so I have been working at the Commission for a month and a half!

2. What would we be surprised to find out about you?

I have run two full marathons and 6 half marathons. I also played college basketball!

3. What is your dream vacation?

My dream vacation is going to Hawaii. I have always wanted to go there.

4. What is your favorite meal?

My favorite meals are pizza and pasta!

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

My greatest accomplishments are earning my Master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology and completing two marathons!



Staff of the Month - Andres Amador - RBT

1. How long have you been working at the commission?

I've worked at the Commission for about two and a half years. I was a Teacher's Assistant for two years then became an RBT (Registered Behavior Technician). The job of an RBT is endless, but I truly enjoy the hustle and rush during the day.

2. What would we be surprised to find out about you?

I am a volleyball player and I used to compete in swim meets. I played club volleyball for one season and played all four years in high school. I continue playing to this day.

3. What is your dream vacation?

My dream vacation would be to visit Africa. I've always loved animals, so going to Africa would be the trip of a lifetime. My ideal excursion would be a horseback safari. It's all outdoors on the back of a horse. I love to do things that are considered out of the ordinary.

4. What is your favorite meal?

My favorite meal is a difficult question. I love most foods, but the food that I never get tired of is Korean BBQ. They have so many options, and the food is cooked right on your table. It's an experience, especially with the Korean music playing in the background.

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

My greatest accomplishment is becoming an RBT and working hard to try and make everyone's life easier (both kiddos and staff). I feel that all of my interactions with the kids and staff have been amazing. Each day I get to learn about different teaching styles and strategies to help children when they are having a hard time. I enjoying playing with the students and participating in the fun activities.

Classroom Spotlights

Mr. Steve's Class

Holiday Science

Room 108 celebrates the holidays in multiple ways, but one of our favorite activities is making crystal ornaments to send home to our families. This science lesson is a staple of Mr. Steve's class every December.



First, the students twist red and white pipe cleaners together to make candy canes. They also design trees, stars, and snowflakes with the help of their teachers. Next, the children add 4 tablespoons of Borax into glass jars. Carefully, the children learn to boil water. They pour the boiling water into each jar and stir with a spoon until the Borax is completely dissolved. Then, the pipe cleaner decorations are tied to a popsicle stick and lowered it into each glass jar. Finally, the students wait overnight for their creative ornaments to crystallize. They are wrapped and delivered home for the holidays.

Try engaging in this fun, cool, holiday experiment at home!









Ms. Jennifer's Classroom

Happy Holidays from 220A! It has been a busy and exciting December for us! In Middle School the focus has been on functional academics and communication skills, while building peer relationships and student independence.

Every Tuesday, we have the opportunity to go out into the community where we apply the skills learned in class to real life settings. This month we have gone to the Cranford Movie Theatre and to Clark Commons. At the movies, the students get to rotate between being an employee and customer. As an employee the



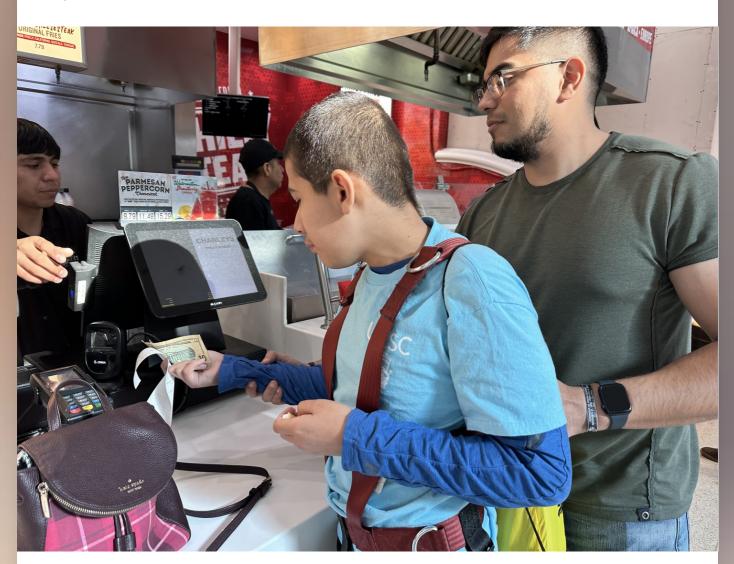
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and direct students to the theatre. While taking on the role of the customer, students get to purchase tickets, snacks, and then sit down together to enjoy a show.

During our Pre-Voc class we have been working hard helping to run the school store, as well as collecting, fulfilling, and distributing various orders from the school classrooms such as utensils or office supplies. Earlier in the month we took a trip to Costco in order to restock our school store. The students did a great job using their shopping lists to locate all of the needed items and then pay for them. We even had time to enjoy a snack from the concession stand!

In social studies we have studied and completed crafts for all the different holidays in December. We also enjoyed a field trip to the Menlo Park Mall where we went holiday shopping for friends and family. We ate lunch in the food court and even had a visit with Santa!

We are looking forward to the Winter Break and all the fun and learning we will have when we return in 2024.





Specials Spotlight - Ms. Grace - ART

Hi, I am Grace Ahern, the new art teacher. I graduated with my degree in Art Therapy and am super excited to be working at Crossroads! I have been working with the students for the past few weeks creating projects related to monthly themes and events. The holiday season is finally upon us! We have been focusing on Holidays around the World, along with the themes of kindness and patience. The students have been practicing their fine motor skills by creating holiday crafts like Christmas Trees, Hanukkah Dreidels, and more. As the season begins to change, we have also begun to



focus on winter-related crafts, including snowmen and wreaths. The students have been using a mix of paint, gluing paper, and beading, along with many other creative activities to explore their preferences in the Art room. We also implemented Art Enrichment groups that take place on Fridays. This consists of experimenting with different art materials and playing games with peers. Plus, the groups are mixed with different classes to give new social opportunities!









December at Crossroads



































The Holiday Season at Crossroads











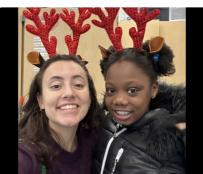














Special Thanks!!!



Thank You to Heritage Mortgage Banking Corp. of Morristown for the generous food donation!



Thank You to the students, families, and staff at Wardlaw Hartridge School for their giving tree service project to benefit our students!

Parent Resources

Caregiver Support Group at the JCC



with Lisa Afflitto, Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

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NJ certified Special Education teacher and the owner of Integrative Therapy Solutions, LLC.

Her clinical focus is in supporting adults (18+) and families, who are navigating life either
as an individual with a disability, or as a caregiver to a child or adult with a disability.

Lisa has a passion for facilitating support groups and bringing caregivers
togethers to connect in a supportive space.

For questions and registration, contact Beth Mitchell, Director of Inclusion and Diversity, at BMitchell@jccnj.org.

The JCC of Central NJ is committed to accessibility and inclusion.

To request accommodations, please contact Beth Mitchell
at bmitchell@jccnj.org at least two weeks prior to an event.



Help us stock and fund Bagged with Love for th food insecure. Food or fund donations welcom at this event! Scan and learn more!



1391 Martine Avenue, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076 908-889-8800 • www.jccnj.org

Reminders!

As we enter the winter months please be sure to pack warm weather clothing for your child. As long as it does not get too cold we will make every attempt to have the students enjoy recess outdoors.



About Us

Website: https://www.ucesc.org/schools/crossroads_school

Location: 45 Cardinal Drive, Westfield, NJ, USA

Phone: 908-233-9317





DECEMBER 2023

Principal's Message



Dear Hillcrest Academy North Campus (HAN) Student sand Families:

December has certainly been a productive month at HAN. The Supervisor of Instruction, Mr. VanCleef, and I have conducted many "walkthroughs" in all of the classes here at North. We have seen so many wonderful connections being made with staff and students involving content, teaching, and learning. Students seem eager to learn from their teachers and one another. Our school

climate and culture is stronger than ever here at HAN. Students and staff are feeling safe, supported, and empowered everyday! It has been a celebratory end of the month with the holidays right around the corner. We celebrate success well here at Hillcrest Academy North!

I wish everyone a very Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,

Mr. Marquet Principal

Monthly Numbers

Enrollment - 70
Enrolled - 1
Disenrolled due to Attendance - 1
Fire Drill - 12/19
Bomb Threat Drill - 12/8

Upcoming Dates

December 23rd - January 1st - Winter Recess

January 2nd - School Resumes

January 15th - Martin Luther King Jr. Day - School Closed

January 30th - Second Marking Period Ends

Staff Spotlight - Mrs. Schulhafer



Mrs. Schulhafer is the Guidance Counselor at both Hillcrest Academy North and South. She has worked at HAN for five years and creates all of the schedules for each student, maintains records of credits earned and needed to graduate, meets with students to discuss post graduate plans. Mrs. Schulhafer's favorite memory of HAN is the end of the year BBQ where students and staff spend the day outside signing Yearbooks and reminiscing about the past year! Mrs. Schulhafer is dedicated to making meaningful connections with each student and guiding

them through thier high school experience.

Classroom Spotlights



Ms. Killeen, English Teacher

Throughout the month of December, Ms. Killeen's classes have worked hard on understanding the key elements of story writing. First students learned the five main conflict types and showed their mastery of the skill by watching clips from various movies and identifying the correct conflict type. Next, students learned the components that make up a story's plot. Students really enjoyed watching different Pixar shorts and filling out the plot diagram. Students read the short story "The Landlady" by Roald Dahl and

completed an additional plot outline to show their mastery of the skill. These lessons and skills will be a major component for the next unit in January which involves reading the book Holes by Louis Sachar. She has also engaged the students with social emotional learning days by encouraging them to work together when playing games, or coloring holiday decorations.

Mrs. Goldenberg, Social Worker

This month in SEL has focused on Healthy Relationships and Friendships, based on the UCESC theme of the December: "Kindness/Patience". Students started the month by watching a TED talk on Healthy Relationships, which can be found here: The Difference Between Healthy and Unhealthy Love. Students then



discussed ways people can show healthy love, and how they can begin to have a language to use when a relationship they are in may be unhealthy. In subsequent sessions, students reviewed a pamphlet on traits that Healthy Relationships have and discussed some ways that they are able to create and maintain healthy boundaries. Finally, we discussed "I Statements" as a way to establish healthy forms of communication.

We will continue to build on this throughout the year with other SEL topics.



Mrs. Rehwinkel, Mathematics Teacher

December in Algebra 2 was full of exponents. We completed a thorough review of the Rules of Exponents and practiced the rules with a few days of competitive Exponent Bingo. We learned about the use of Scientific Notation to represent very large and very small numbers and used calculators to calculate the distance between the planets and stars. Did you know the distance from our sun to the nearest star is 25,000,000,000,000 miles? It's much better to use scientific notation: 2.5x1013 miles. The class worked

hard to master the rules of exponents as the basic skill is critical for upcoming units, especially quadratic functions and factoring. Our students need to work hard every day to master new skills and recover any lost skills due to the Covid disruption in learning. I am especially proud of one student who learns skills quickly and is happy to help the other students.

Bowling Incentive Trip

HAN had a school wide Incentive Field Trip to the Bowling Alley! Students and staff grouped off into lanes and were able to bowl a couple of games before heading back to school for a special lunch. Everyone had a great time and cannot wait for the next trip!





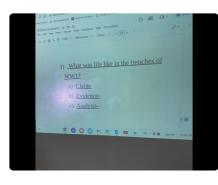




December at HAN



Monopoly!



History Assignments!



Smores on Rainy Days!

Ms. Miller's Economics
students played Monopoly to
learn about investments,
property rentals, and money
management. It was a great
way to spend time before
Winter Break!

Mr. Kaplan's US II History classes have been learning about World War I and how trench warfare was used. Mr. Kaplan had the students respond to a prompt question using the Claim, Evidence, Analysis writing style.

Mrs. Machado and students made Smores for everyone on a gloomy, rainy day. Everyone loved the treat and it made the day a little brighter!

Happy HANidays!



Spirit Week!

Everyone looks forward to Spirit Weeks as a chance to have fun and be creative with their outfits. This year's Winter Break Spirit Week included Holiday Sock Day, Ugly Sweater Day, and Pajama Day!



Door Decorating!

Homeroom classes competed in a Door Decorating Contest.
Students designed and

decorated the doors and voted on their favorites! The winner is pictured below but check out our Instagram to see all the doors! Instagram @ucesc_han



Staff Holiday Treats!

The Annual HAN Holiday
Celebration took place with the
tradition of homemade
cookies and tiramisu!

Door Decorating Winner - Mrs. Flores' Homeroom!



STOPit Solutions

Students and staff were introduced to STOPit Solutions, a program that allows students and staff to report any concerns about unsafe, harmful, or inappropriate behavior to the HAN Safety Team.

Students are encouraged to download the STOPit App onto their phones.



About HAN



Hillcrest Academy North assists students from the Elizabeth Public School District in reaching their full potential by providing an alternative to the traditional high school setting. We offer smaller class sizes with a rigorous and challenging high school curriculum that is aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and prepares students for college and career. Our goal is to provide a safe, supportive, and empowering school

environment that fosters lifelong learning, mutual respect, creativity, and the joy of learning, with an effective, caring, innovative staff, in partnership with home and the community.

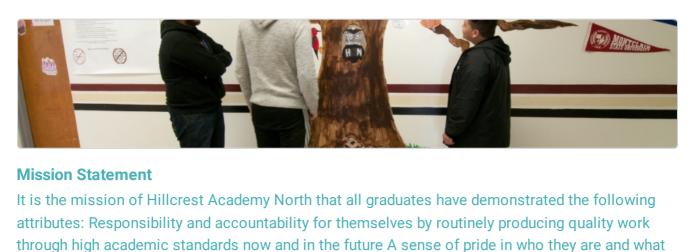
Mr. John Marquet, Principal Mr. Thomas Van Cleef, Supervisor of Instruction

Location: 2630 Plainfield Ave, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

Phone Number: (908) 233-9366

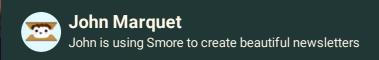
Website: https://ucesc.org/schools/hillcrest_academy_north

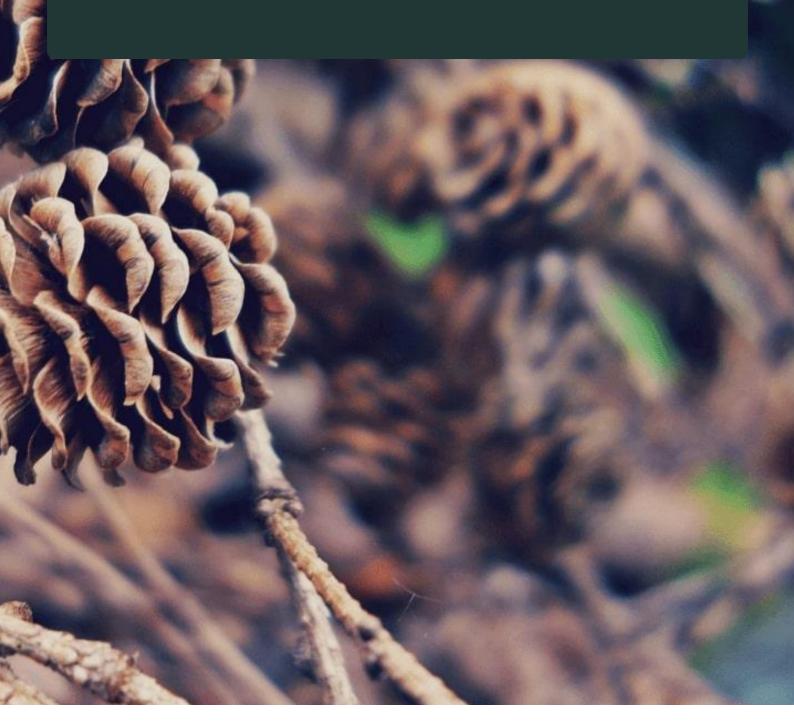
Visit Us On Instagram



through high academic standards now and in the future A sense of pride in who they are and what they can contribute as a

☑ ucesc.org











Dr. Balsamello's Message

Hillcrest South had a number of exciting activities this month fro developeing and voting on a new logo, visiting the Westlake Sunshine Cafe, extra school spirit days, and aChristmas/Holiday incentive on 12/22/23.

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and a New Year!

December 2023 Enrollment Data

- Enrollment-89 (as of 12/22/23).
- New Students-10 with two scheduled to start the week of 1/1/24.
- Intakes-6.
- Disenrollments-Two (One-conduct & One-attendance).
- Emergency Drill-Bomb Threat.
- Fire Drill-12/4/23.

People Spotlights!

Student of the Month for November!

Congratulations to our Student of the Month for November, Nathan! When asked about his work ethic, his teachers replied;

- Nathan is a pleasure to have in class as he is always willing to participate in classroom discussions, he is kind and polite to others, and exhibits an exceptional work ethic.
- Nathan is very bright and always ready to participate in class.
 He is usually first to finish his work correctly which gives him time to help others in class who need it.
- Nathan is a good student and he completes all assignments given to him.
- Nathan is an excellent student cooperative, thoughtful



Ms Gilchrist is our School Social Worker who has been a part of the HAS family for the past 23 years! Not only does she help take care of the students of HAS, she works as a therapist outside of school. Ms Gilchrist's love of children extended to her personal life as has raised 6 girls of her own and currently has 2 grandchildren that live in London. When she's not working or with her family, she loves to read as a hobby and take care of her loving dog.





Classroom Spotlights



Ms Picciano's Art Classroom

Art students began December finishing work in color theory and painting. Through mini projects and exercises, they learned to mix secondary and tertiary colors from the three primary colors, create tints, tones, and shades by adding different amounts of black and

white, and applied this knowledge to a mini pop art painting. Some students continued "Surreal Landscapes" that challenged them to create an environment in paint for an antique portrait presented in a mixed media. Later in the month, students began the "Special Projects: 3D Design" unit where the focus is to create a product. This unit includes hand sewing, needlepoint, designing felt characters and ornaments, and online graphic design for use with the Cricut cutting machine. Each student had the choice to begin with the project and skill of their choosing. This created a large number of students wanting to learn a new skill so classes were grouped into two parts: students who wanted to sew and those who wanted to learn graphic design/ cricut applications. Hand sewing was new to all and included threading and sewing with embroidery floss, using a running stitch, cross stitch and back stitch. Cricut design required the class to cut and paste graphics and use/ change fonts in Google Slides. This was also a great opportunity to introduce

many students to using Google Slides, most of which were either out of practice or completely unfamiliar. Cricut also is a great tool for teaching components of fashion/graphic design including sizing, font, estimating size through length x width in inches, and acknowledging different types of textiles including their behavior under intense heat (while ironing on a decal). All of this is offered in the month of December specifically in the event students wish to create a hand-made gift for the holidays. The projects teach sewing and design but also resonates for many, the importance of art in everyday life. I find most of my students find these projects most rewarding since they are learning practical skills and many are interested in creating their own logos and clothing line in the future.









Ms Ferrari's Math Classroom

During the month of December, the vast majority of students have advanced on their IXL Numbers & Operations and the five other categories in the Assessment Arena. These categories include Fractions, Algebra and Algebraic Thinking, Geometry, Measurement and Data, Statistics and Probability. The Algebra 1 students were assessed on the following skills: plotting points on

the coordinate plane, graphing linear equations, graphing equations on a calculator, graphing intercepts, finding slope and rate of change, graph using slope-intercept form, and graphing linear functions. The Geometry students were assessed on the following skills: parallel lines and transversals, proving lines parallel, and parallel lines on the coordinate plane.







New HAS Logo!



Using our bulletin board at the UCESC offices as inspiration, the urge to update our mascot and logo has now become a reality! On November 27th, a contest for a new logo was sprung into action. The criteria was the following; using the school colors of red, black, and white, using the name of the school and our motto Hillcrest Academy South celebrates **H.O.P.E.** (Hillcrest **O**pens **P**ossibilities for **E**veryone). To also be included is our new mascot, the phoenix, as it represents what HAS does for its students. Students and faculty sent submissions, which were due on December 15th, then put in a Google form where the whole school voted. The logo pictured above we are proud to say is our winner!

Celebrating Holidays!

This year was our first year since Covid that we had the pleasure of celebrating the holidays in 1571! Faculty, staff, and students had a really great time getting into the spirit of things. We had a week of spirit days beginning with dressing in blue for the first day of Hanukkah and included wearing Ugly Christmas Sweaters. Students got to send candy grams to their friends and favorite

teachers. Of course no holiday season would be complete without a movie day! Even faculty and staff got to participate in their own Secret Snowman gift exchange. Mr Van Cleef even fell victim to "trickster elves" known as Thing 1 and Thing 2 when his office was secretly decorated with The Grinch! This holiday season, for the first time in three years, finally felt like home.





Blue for Hanukkah

Faculty, Staff, and students wore blue out of respect to the first night of Hanukkah! It was really nice to see the participation since we do have some staff members who celebrate!



Ugly Christmas Sweaters!

Oh they were ugly alright! Who doesn't love a spirit day where everyone can be silly! No one had to worry about wearing the latest trend, just wearing the ugliest and most festive outfit!



Secret Snowman

HAS Staff filled out forms that were put in a bucket and picked out at random. On the last day of school before break, everyone gathered for breakfast before school and was able to receive their gifts revealing who picked their name.



Candy Grams

The students really got into the spirit of these candy grams!

Not only were they happy to send one they were surprised.



Movie Day

- The Grinch
- The Christmas Chronicles
- Medea Christmas
- Polar Express
- Home Alone

مامعما مامعنا



Mr Van... Grinch?

Mr Van Cleef was such a good sport and even appreciated his office being decorated. He also got a few gifts in the mix; a mug saying "The Grinch is my

to get ones themselves. One student even wrote out candy grams for every faculty and staff member at HAS!

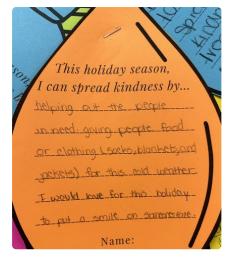
- The Nutcracker and the Four Realms
- Jingle All The Way
- Elf

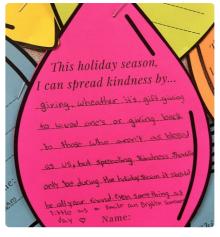
stuffed Grinch, and a Grinch bobble head!

Lighting Up The Season With Kindness: Food Drive

During our month of Kindness and Patience, students participate in a food drive. From November 27th until December 13th, students brought in canned and boxed foods for those who were in greater need. All food items were donated to St Agnes Parish in Clark, NJ. Great thanks to all those who participated!





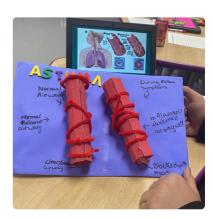






Science Exhibition

Ms Arora's and Mr Lund's classes presented their science projects that they worked on so diligently. Faculty and staff were able to visit during those class periods where students explained what their topic was about and how it affects our lives. From cell reproduction, to cancer, to viruses, to our respiratory system, so many aspects of biology, chemistry, and forensics were covered. Students did such a great job they impressed the faculty and staff!





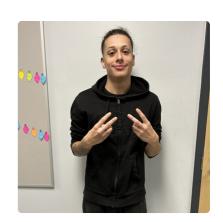




Our Students In and Out of School

Lights, Camera, YouTube!

With the age of technology booming the way it has, it is no surprise that Marlone jumped on the bandwagon. For the past four years, he has been focusing on improving his video skills on YouTube. It all started when Marlone would watch public interviews on social media. They were very entertaining and intriguing to him, so he decided to try it himself. He video records interviews with people and then edits those videos with a comedic twist. Marlone loves doing this because it makes those who watch the videos laugh and he has so much fun doing it!



About Us

Hillcrest Academy South is an alternative high school for students from the Elizabeth Public Schools. Students are referred to HAS by their Elizabeth Academy guidance counselor and administration for an interview at HAS. We provide a small educational learning setting with opportunities to make up courses through our Credit Retrieval Program in a caring environment in order to meet Elizabeth's graduation requirements.

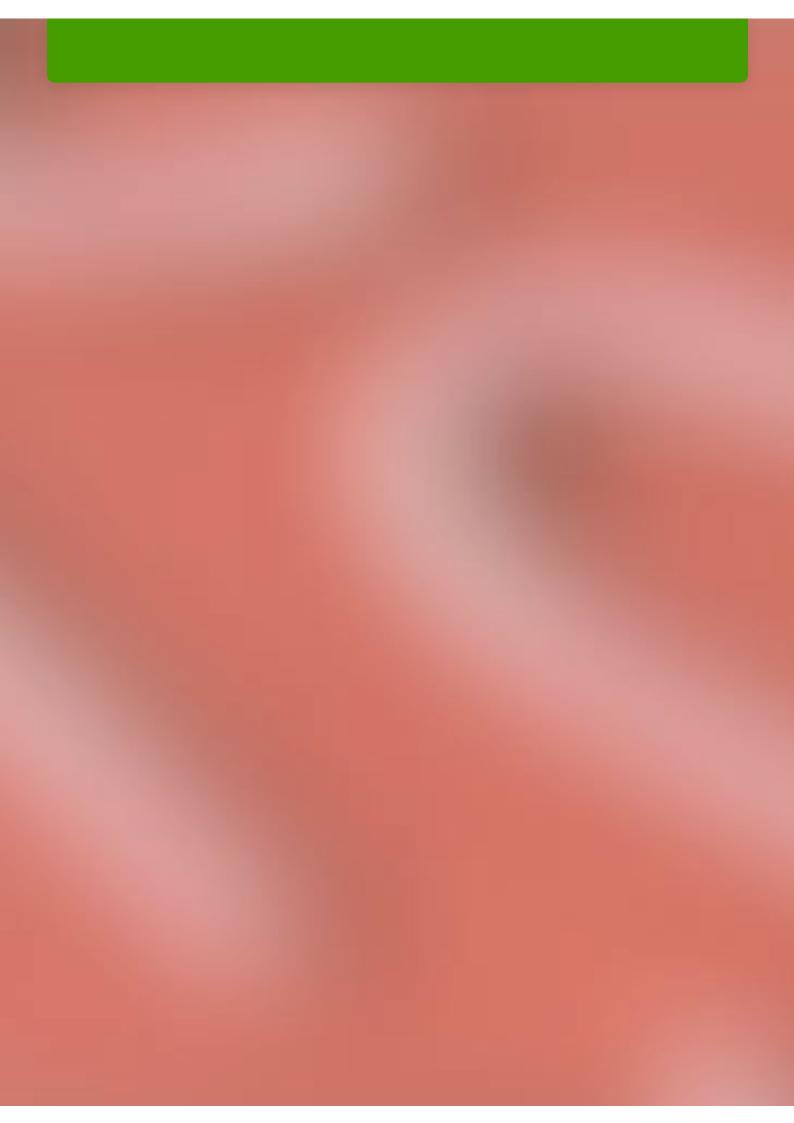
Website: www.ucesc.org
Instagram: ucesc.org

Facebook: Hillcrest Academy South

Location: 1571 Lamberts Mill Road, Westfield, NJ, USA-Door 3B

Phone: 908-233-9317

Visit us on Instagram







Principal's Message

December always holds a special significance for many people for a variety of reasons. At Westlake school, it's all about celebrations, appreciations, reflections and aspirations. The Westlake community embraced the festive fun by adorning the school hallways, classrooms and the Sunshine Cafe with student-created seasonal and holiday decorations and embodying the winter wonderland theme through various participatory themed activities to bring in the festive fun. Some of the events that took place were a seasonal door decorating contest, our traditional staff and students sing-along and a special visit from "Jolly Old Saint Nick" himself, Santa Claus, who shared good tidings and presents for all the students. Another event that spanned two plus weeks was "The Twelve School Days Before Break". This school wide event allowed all to showcase their holiday and winter spirit by wearing theme based outfits, such as dress like your favorite winter character, dress like a candy cane, ugly sweater day and, of course, to wrap up the 2 week event, wear your coziest Pajamas.

While December is a time to celebrate, it also serves as a time of sharing, giving, and displaying kindness and patience towards others. Westlake students embraced these thoughts and feelings throughout the month by engaging in acts of kindness. Each kindness act was discussed and displayed while other classes calculated and graphed these acts throughout the month. Other ways that students demonstrated charitable contributions to the local community was to organize a winter holiday food drive, by collecting non-perishable food items for the Westfield food pantry and participating in a "Penny War," having each class collect coin donations to be donated to those in need.

As we look forward to the birth of a new beginning with the arrival of the new year and all the inspirations, aspirations and anticipations that come with it, let's be sure to take a "pause" on our daily and busy lives and celebrate, reflect and appreciate what truly is cherished and important to us personally. On behalf of the Westlake School community, I wish you all good health, love and laughter as we celebrate and ring in the new year :)!

Till next "year" my friends...... be good to yourself and each other!

Mr. P and Mrs. Tantillo



Westlake Information

Current enrollment: 56

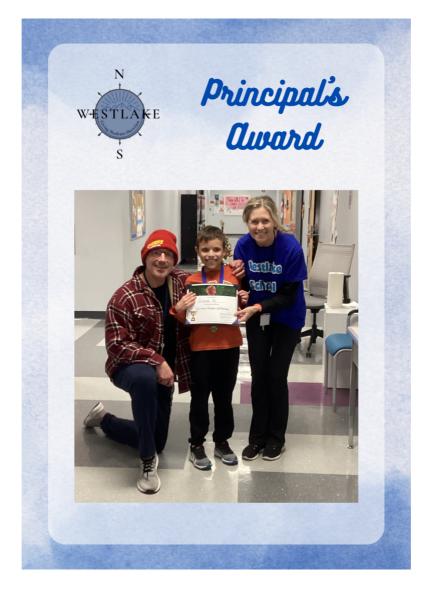
Referrals: 4 Acceptances: 1

Fire Drill: December 4

Emergency Management Drill: Bomb Threat: December 8

Westlake December Spotlight!

Principal's Award!



L.K. was so excited to be recognized for his kindness and patience!

Good Job L.K.!

Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!



T.R. was recognized for all of her hard work and dedication!

Ms. Shaw giving T.R her certificate!

Therapist Spolight - Ms. Donna

This month, the behavior department has continued to make lunch time a relaxing, enjoyable time for all. The behaviorists and RBTs introduced the Calm Corner in the beginning of the school year, and many students have benefited from it. The Calm Corner has a soft mat covered with sensory gadgets and cushions, as well as lots to do. Whether you're in the mood to read, color, listen to music using the new speaker and boom box, the Calm Corner is the place to be!

In the photos below, CV is excited to have some quiet time coloring before his lunch was ready.







Demember Activities!

Westlake staff and students spent the month learning about different holidays and tradiotions!















Everyone worked their creative magic to participate in the door decorating contest!

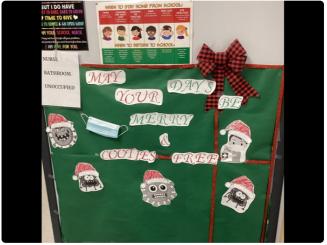
Congratulations to our winners Ms. Tracie's class!















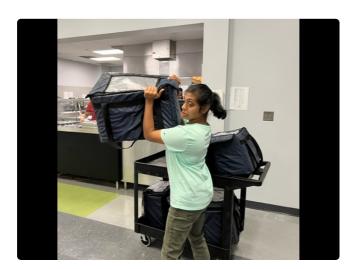




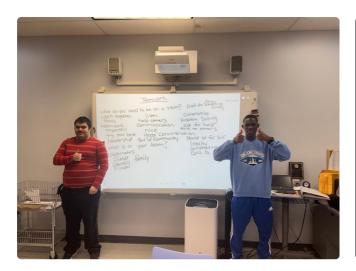
Vocational with MS. Swisher!

During the month of December our Work Based Learning students have been utilizing their "Skills to Pay the Bills" series to learn about teamwork. We are building upon our foundation of skills that began with enthusiasm, attitude, and communication. Our students are showing kindness and patience when working with others. We brainstormed some ideas during our class and we decided that a good team consists of the following skills - loyalty, patience, respect, kindness, leadership,

community connections, and the ability to work with others. The students are able to utilize their classroom knowledge while out at their Work Based Learning assignments. Some of the work completed this school year includes collecting breakfast coolers from the classrooms, packing breakfast bags for UCESC students, and selling snacks at the Children's Specialized Hospital. Students work as a team to get the job done!



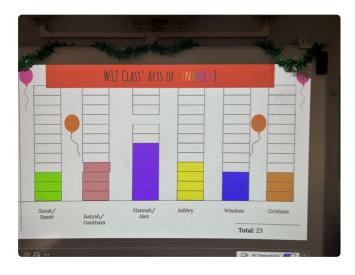






December - A time to show Patience and Kindness

Kindness and Patience were highlight all month in our classrooms. Ms. Schiumo's class created a tracker for acts of kindness. This helped them understand how those acts helped improve everyone's day. H.G. is showing kindness to our friends from Creature Comforts.





Mr. K's class chose a special charity to help for their acts of kindness. In December, they coordinated a Food Drive for the Westfield Food Pantry. They collected various food and personal care items. In addition to the Food Drive, they ran a Penny War contest. The classes collected change and put it in jars. The class who collected the most is getting a pizza party. It was very competitive. Mr. Kurt's class was the winner.









Class Trips!

Mr. Kurt's class went Bowling!









Ms. Schiumo's class went to Michael's and PetSmart for Community Based Instruction. At Michael's, they purchased supplies to make jewelry for the Holiday Sale. Next, there was a quick stop to visit the animals at PetSmart.





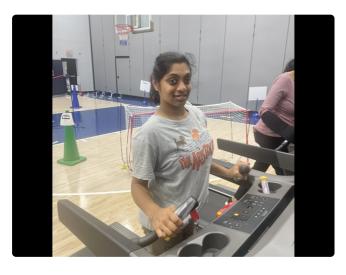
Mr. Shanfield - Gym

We lake students are having a great time in the reopened gym. All the new equipment is so exciting and fun!

















Holiday Sale Prep!

All the classes put in a lot of work to prepare items to sell at the Commission offices and in the Westlake Gym. Classes made cards by hand, sewed scarves, handcrafted jewelry and Christmas ornaments, made chocolates in various holiday shapes, and put together cute gift sets! All the gifts look amazing!

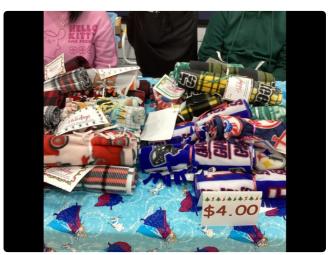




















Student Catch Up

J.D. is excited to share his letter to Santa!

Dear Santa, I know that writing leiters is almost getting old I think? But still, I am interested at Puzzle get for Chirstmas, like I'm interested at Puzzle Solving Shape's like the rubik's cube that has a 4x4 or 3x3. Plus I'm still tike reading books, mostly science Plus I'm still tike reading

Social Media!

Log into Facebook Log into Facebook to start sharing and connecting with your friends, family, and people you know. ☐ facebook.com Follow us on Instagram! https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_westlake/ ☐ instagram.com

