



Crossroads Monthly Report

February 2024



Administration Message

Dear Crossroads Family,

As we look back on the events of February, we are pleased to share the wonderful moments that took place within our school community. Valentine's Day was marked by our monthly themes of cooperation and friendship as students engaged in creative activities to celebrate the day. The students created and shared homemade cards with one another. In addition, students also

participated in a Valentines Day Dance and Ice Cream Social.

On February 15th, we celebrated a significant milestone – the 100th day of school. Staff and students embraced the theme by dressing up as centenarians and engaging activities focused around the number 100. February also highlighted the importance of oral health as we observed Dental Health Awareness Month. Collaborating with local dental professionals, students were provided with valuable information and resources to promote good toothbrushing habits.

On February 29th, both students and staff had the chance to "Leap Across Time" during a spirited school event. Participants were encouraged to don attire representing their favorite decade, transforming the day into a lively celebration of leap year. Watching the enthusiasm of the students and staff who took part in this event was truly a delightful experience.

As always, we are grateful for the collective efforts of our school community in making February a month filled with love, learning, spirit, and a commitment to health.

Warm regards,

General Information

Enrollment as of February 29 2024

Actual: 54

Changes: Entered: 2 Exited:0

Referrals: 7

Intakes Scheduled: 0

Accepted: 0

Fire Drills: 2/21/24

Emergency Drills: 2/15/24 (Shelter in Place)

Upcoming Dates

March 6, 2024 - Cub Scout Pinewood Derby (10:00 - 1:30)

March 7, 2024 - Parent Education and PTO Meeting - 1:00

March 28, 2024 - Spring Egg Hunt/Easter Bunny

March 29, 2024 -April 7, 2024 - School Closed - Spring Break

Crossroads Staff and Student Spotlight



Student of the Month - Yachin

Yachin is in Ms. Anna's classroom with his friends, Lyla, Josselin, Sidney and Aiden. He likes to work with his teachers, Ms. Karen, Ms. Diana and Mr. Yassine. He loves to play with cars and dinosaurs. Yachin enjoys playing tag with his friends on the playground. Yachin is very helpful in our class, he gets his friends lunches and helps them when they need something. Yachin enjoys listening to songs and sings along. His smile lightens up the classroom. Yachin is doing a great job being independent and navigating around the school when it is time to transition. He is a pleasure to have in our class, we love watching him grow and learn!



Staff of the Month - Marianny Amezcua - BCBA

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

I have been working at the commission for three and a half years.

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

I skipped the 2nd grade and ended up graduating with my undergraduate degree at 20 years old.

3. What is your dream vacation?

I would love to travel to the Phi Phi Islands in Thailand

4. What is your favorite meal?

My favorite meal would be anything seafood. I love a good paella or a seafood boil.

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

Other than my children, one of my greatest accomplishments is being a part of the 8% of Latinas with a Masters Degree.



Staff of the Month - Alison Serpico - Teacher Assistant

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

This is my fourth year working at the commission and Crossroads School. I have always been a part of the Middle School program and I live it that way!

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

Many people already know that I am a huge hockey fan and love the NJ Devils. Something that most people don't know is that I used to play ice hockey. Given my small size, that fact tends to surprise people.

3. What is your dream vacation?

There are a lot of places that I would love to travel to. One place in particular that has always caught my eye is Costa Rica. It would be a dream to travel there and explore the rainforests and waterfalls. I am super into nature and the scenery there looks breathtaking.

4. What is your favorite meal?

If we're talking about home cooked meals, favorite has to be my grandma's homemade stuffed shells and my grandpa's meatballs.

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

My greatest accomplishments thus far are the degree certificates and certifications that I have obtained. I am proud of the work I have completed and am enthusiastic for what I will continue to do in my professional career.

Honors and Accolades

Congratulations to Ms. Allison Gebler - Crossroads 2023-2024 Teacher of the Year





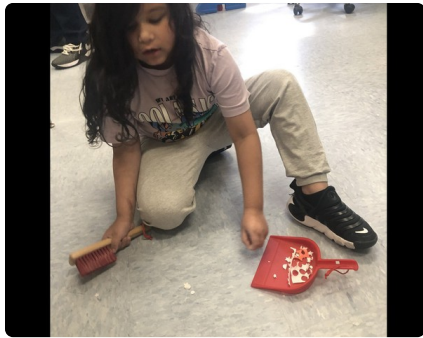
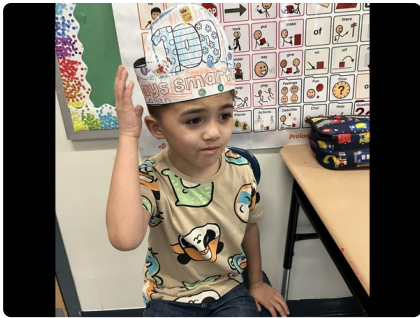
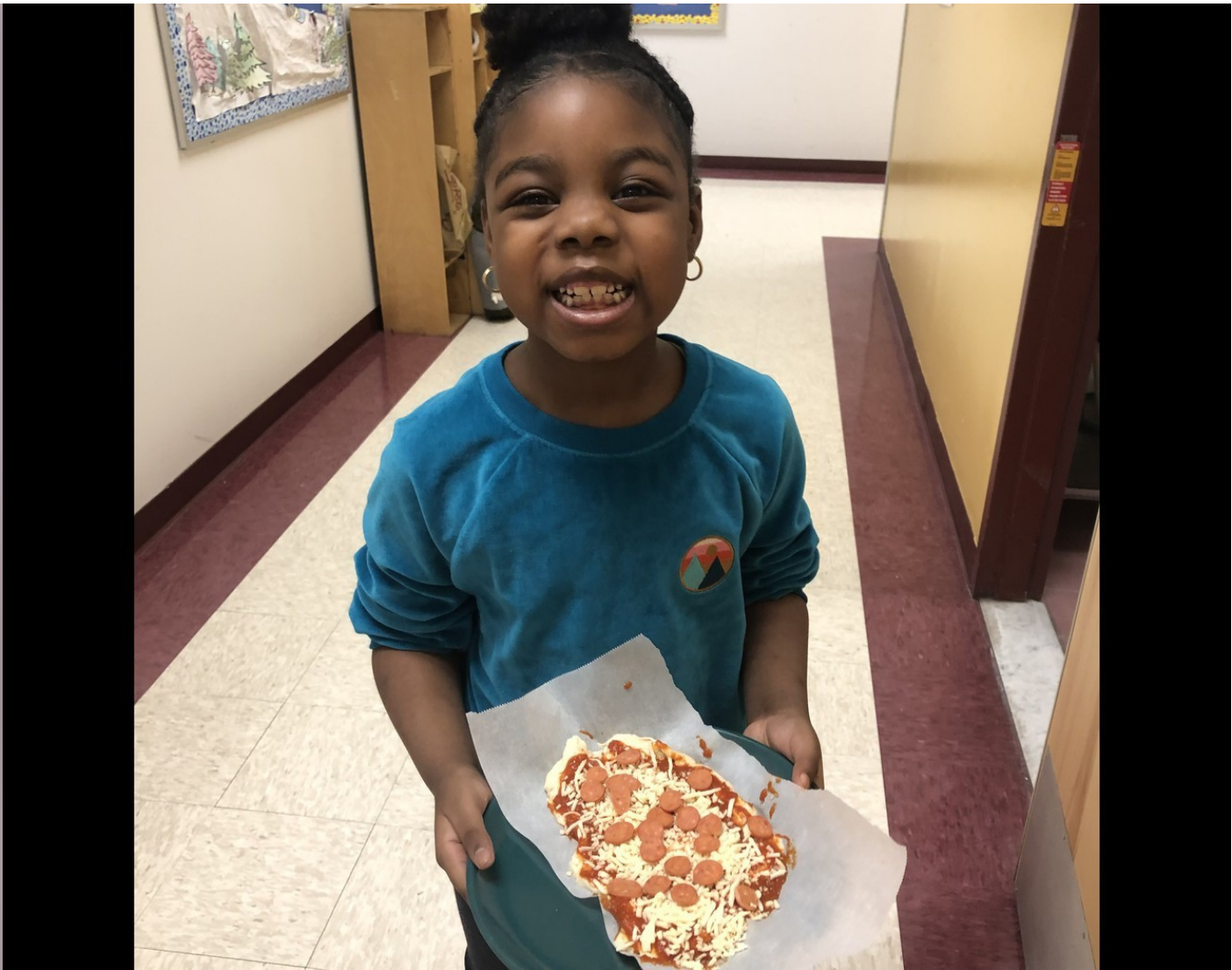
Classroom Spotlights

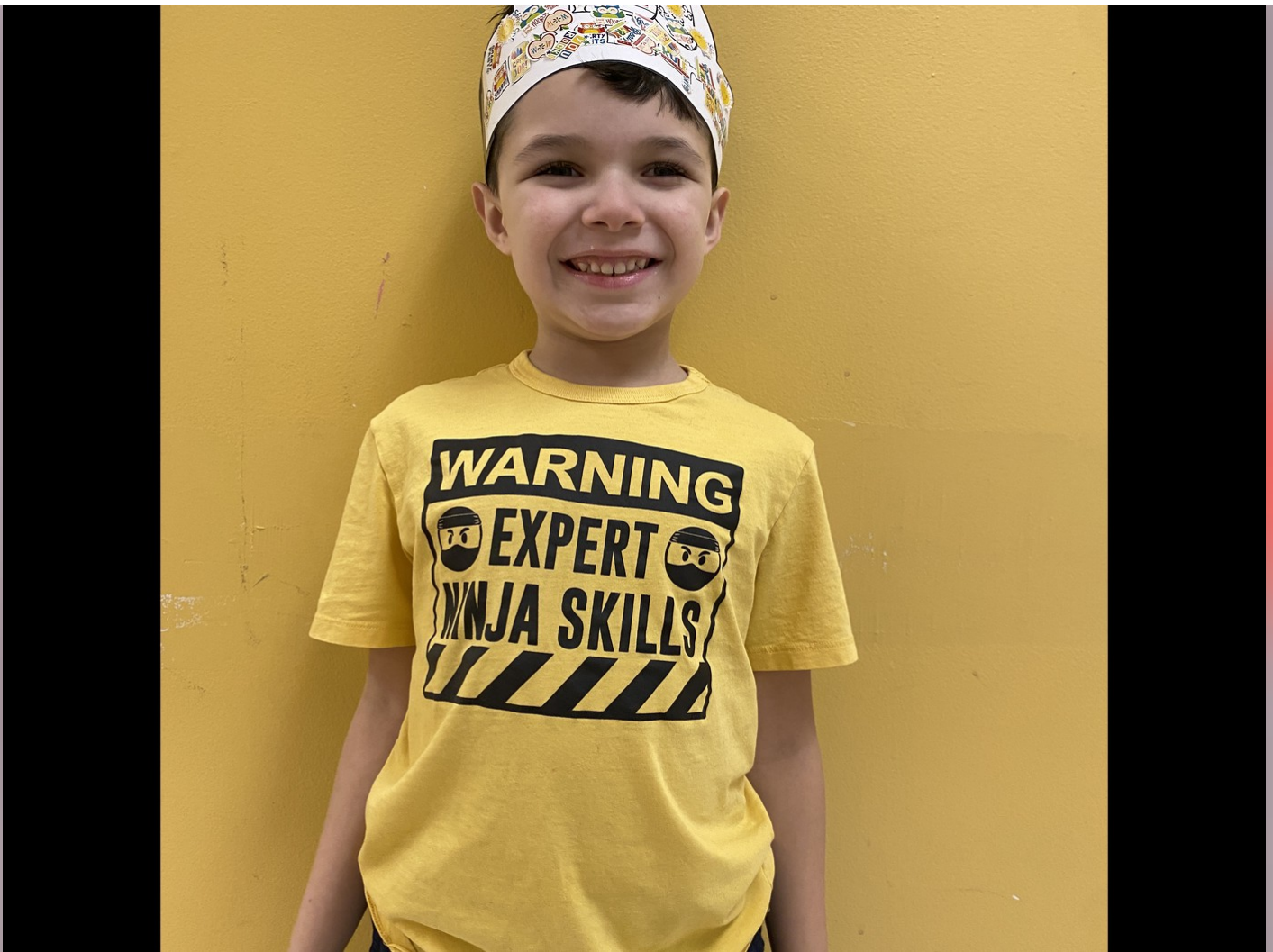
Ms. Allison's Room

February is filled with so many fun events, so we have been very busy!! Our gang got to celebrate Logan's birthday, Valentine's Day, and the 100th day of school. We learned about Black History, a variety of important figures and their accomplishments. During Morning Meeting each day, students were introduced to a different person via youtube videos including: Mae Jemison - the first African American woman to travel to space, Alfred Cralle - inventor of the ice cream scoop, Philip Downing - inventor of the mailbox, and Rosa Parks - civil rights advocate.



Our students have also been working hard on their academic and functional skills. Everyone has been making progress in their individual and group goals! We've been visiting the ADL room to learn about life skills, and we are now happily including those skills in our classroom. So far all the students enjoy cooking or cleaning tasks the most. Everyone is very excited for what these last few months of the school year will bring!





Ms. Gaby's Classroom

February in 105 was super exciting and filled with a lot of play skills and creativity. We got to celebrate Valentine's Day as a class during the ice cream social and dance party. We took a lot of silly pictures and listened to our favorite songs. Additionally, we got to celebrate the 100th day of school through various activities that were aided by our skip counting skills. In speech group and during the day we were counting various snacks in groups of 10 to get us all the way to 100. We are welcoming the warm weather by prepping fun activities and sensory crafts that will be done outside in our school garden. Our class is also beginning to learn about different animals that we don't see often because we will be heading to the zoo in April for our class trip. room 105 is also extremely excited to welcome our new staff member Sam! We can't believe half the year has flown by already and are excited to see what comes our way. With lots of love, Room 105.

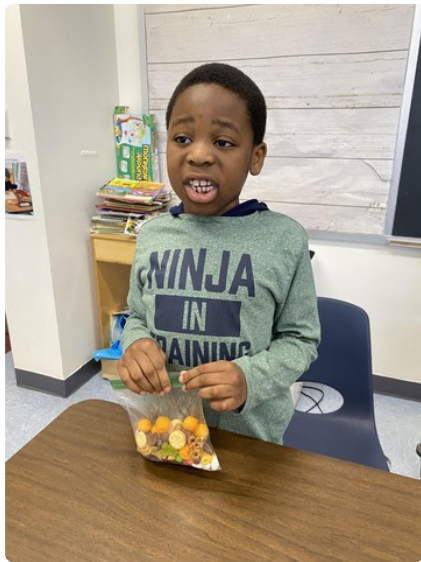




Therapy Spotlight - Speech Department

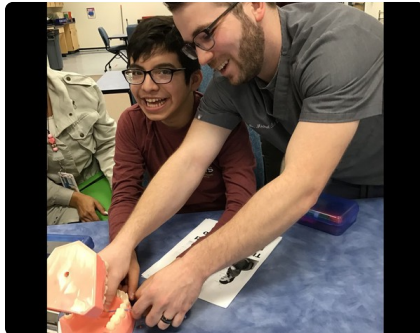


The Speech Department had a fun February! From guessing if there would be six more weeks of winter, to Valentine's Day, to celebrating the 100th day of school! Our students had the most fun making a "100th day snack mix" in speech groups this month. This activity was a unique opportunity to target making choices, tolerating textures, and being open to seeing new foods in front of them. Students were not required to eat the treats (although some did enjoy them!), but they practiced counting each of the 100 pieces of the snack mix.



February is Dental Awareness Month

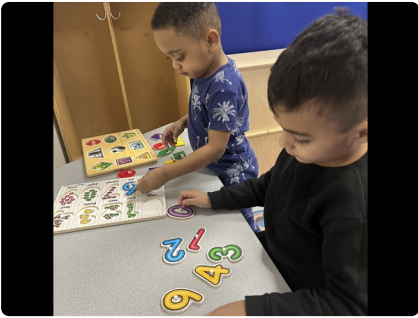
This month we celebrated Dental Health Awareness Month with our local dentists, teaching the students about oral hygiene and the importance of taking care of their teeth. We are so happy to collaborate with Dr. Beck and Westfield Pediatrics to bring this to Crossroads!

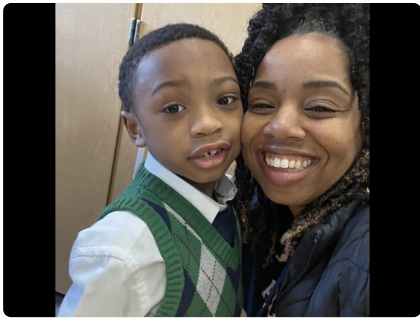


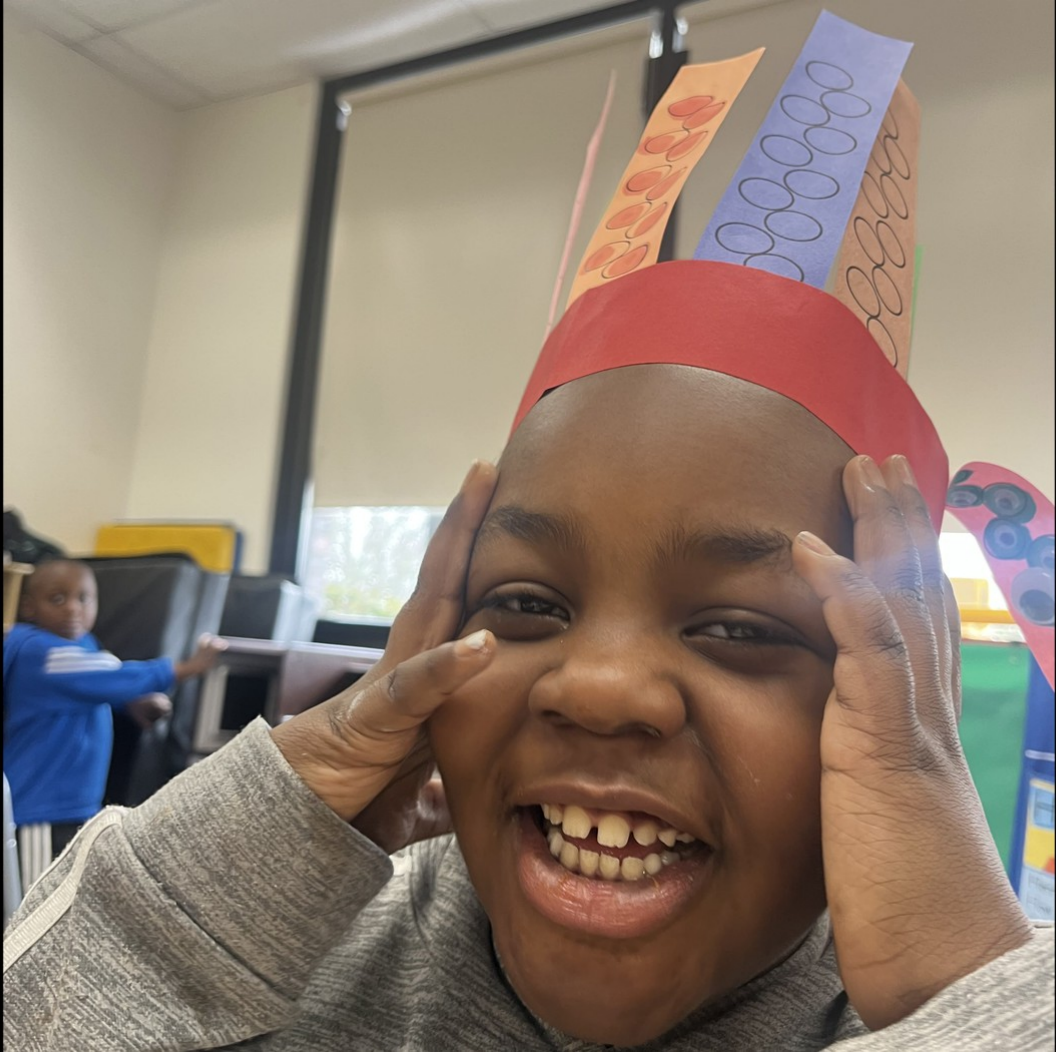
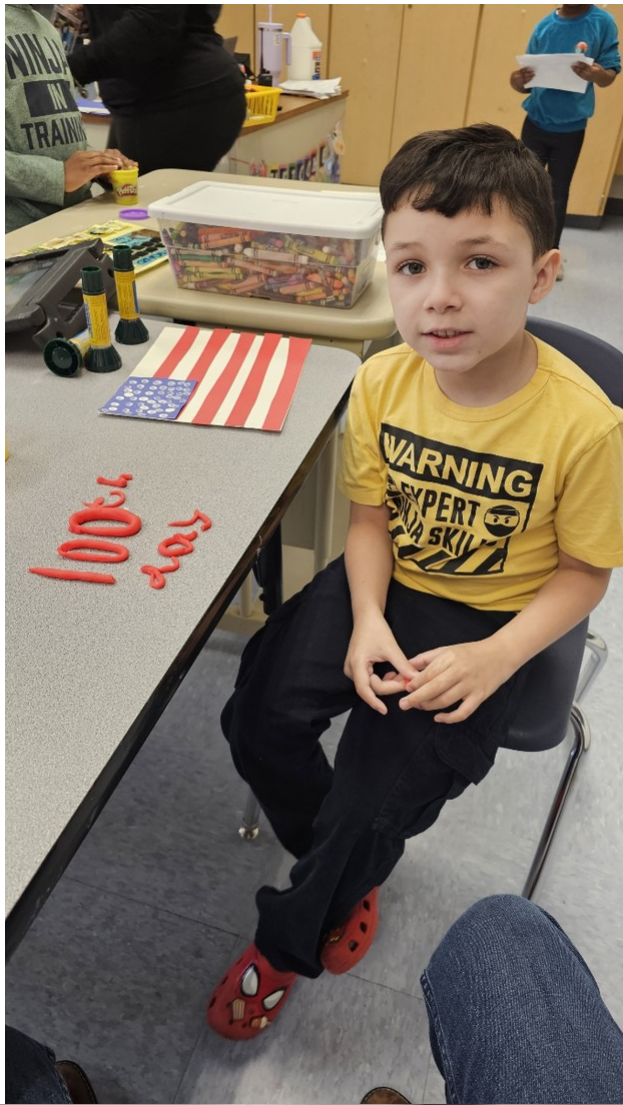


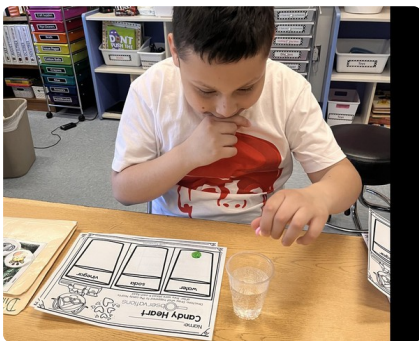


February at Crossroads



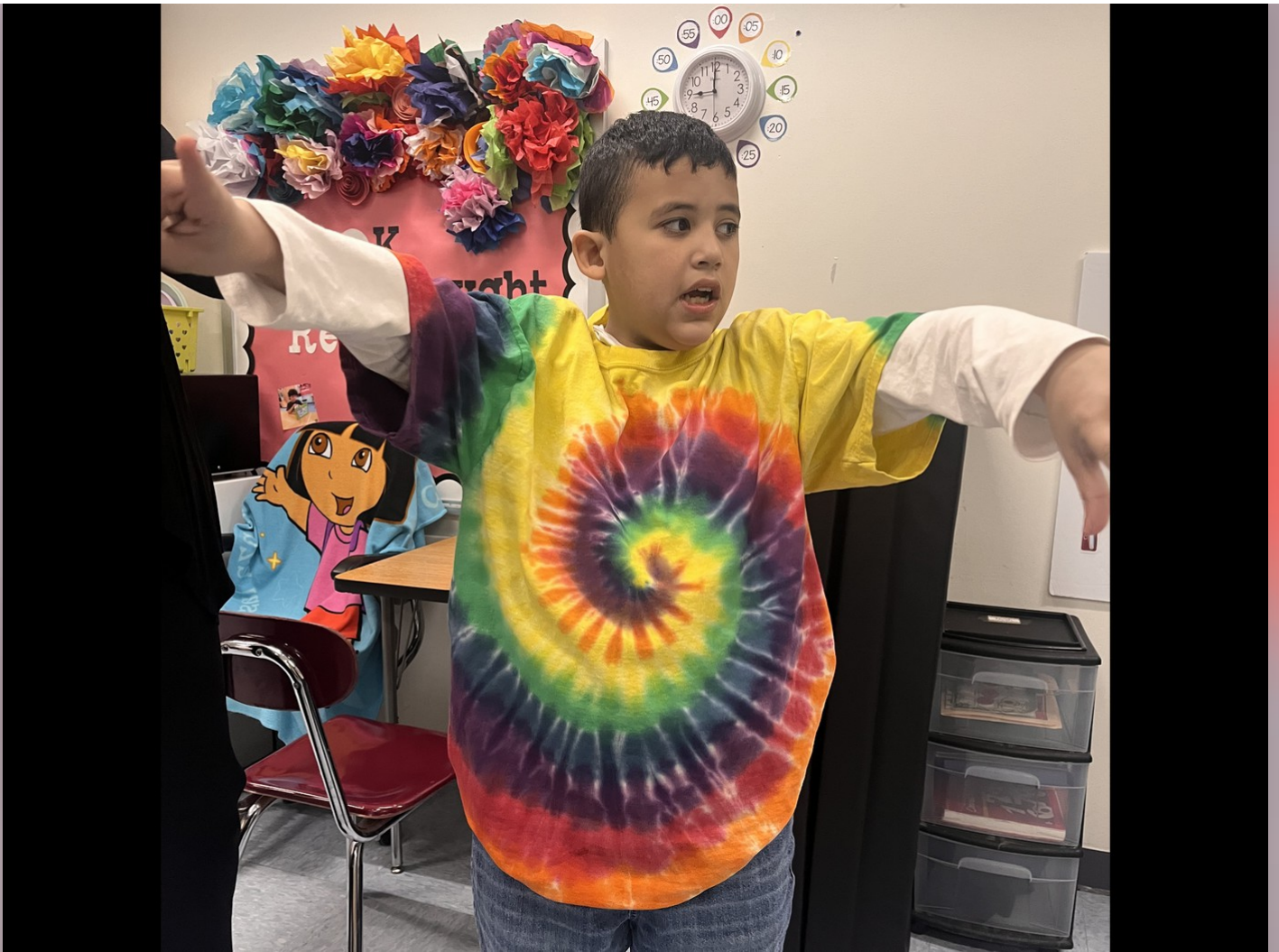












Crossroads in the Community



Staff Culture and Climate



100 Days of School Celebration



Leap Across Time Spirit Day





Parent Resources

Stem Event with former Crossroads Speech Therapist Hope



FREE STEM PROGRAM

FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2024



SESSION 1: 11-11:30 AM (AGES 5-8)
SESSION 2: 11:45 AM-12:15 PM (AGES 9-12)



AT THE KENILWORTH PUBLIC LIBRARY
548 BOULEVARD, KENILWORTH, NJ 07033

Registration is required-space is limited to 5 per group

Register at www.creationsofhope.net/events

For questions email info@creationsofhope.net

This event is not a library-sponsored program

Caregiver Support Group at the JCC



with Lisa Afflito,
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 Afflito, 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 Afflito 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 together 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.



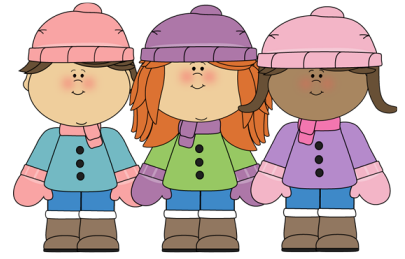
Help us stock and fund
Bagged with Love for the
food insecure. Food or
fund donations welcome
at this event!



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](tel:908-233-9317)

[Visit us on Instagram](#)



CR Smore

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HILLCREST ACADEMY NORTH

FEBRUARY 2024

Principal's Message



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

Wow! I can't believe that we have now started the second half of the school year. Where does the time go....

The second semester of the school year started on February 1st and is certainly off to a good start. I, as the principal, always enjoy conducting a Midpoint Review with students in small groups.

During that time I review what we, as a school community, have done well, celebrate a bit, and set goals for the remainder of the year. I also review that the second semester should be considered a "clean slate" and a "new beginning" for them to thrive even more than they have since the first day of school. I firmly believe that students appreciate me "checking in" with them and find value in our review and discussions. You will be reading about highlights in our classrooms and community service activities in this Newsletter. We at HAN are very proud of our school culture that allows teaching and learning to take place on a daily basis.

Keep up the good work, HAN!

Sincerely,

Mr. Marquet

Monthly Data

Enrollment - 81
Enrolled - 10
Disenrolled - 0
Fire Drill - 2/21
Shelter in Place Drill - 2/8

Upcoming Dates

March 11th-15th - State Testing for Select Students
March 29th - April 7th - Spring Recess - School Closed

Staff Spotlight - Mrs. Rehwinkel



Mrs. Rehwinkel, or Mrs. Reh as the students call her, is one of the Mathematics Teachers at Hillcrest Academy North. Mrs. Reh has been teaching at HAN for two years. Mrs. Reh is able to teach the students mathematics concepts with passion and veracity. Several students are always looking to talk with Mrs. Reh because of how funny she is. Mrs. Reh was awarded a grant for her Computer Science class to use a 3-D Printer in the beginning of the year and we are excited to see the cool projects students create using the new equipment!

Classroom Spotlights

Ms. Picciano, Art Teacher

Hillcrest Academy North's students have art class for the first time in a year! We have been very busy with observational drawing exercises; a skill that lays the foundation for all other mediums and practices. Students learned about still life and how to use a variety of techniques to create a 3 dimensional feel on a flat surface. They can now break down forms into smaller pieces, estimate size and proportion, observe details and create a composition influenced by physical arrangements in front of them. Although practice can be repetitive, observable improvement builds confidence.



We just wrapped up shading and highlighting and are moving on to applying what we have learned from drawing to painting.

Mrs. Schulhafer, Guidance Counselor

This month was the start of the second semester at both Hillcrest North and South. Most students received a new credit retrieval course or a new semester course. Ms. Schulhafer ensured the transition into the new semester went smoothly and was available to answer any scheduling concerns for all of the students. In addition, Ms. Schulhafer organized a field trip to Overlook Hospital with Mr. Bornstein to explore career opportunities in health care. On this trip, students from North and South were able to ask



professionals in the healthcare field questions about their job responsibilities, education required, and important skills to be successful in their jobs. This helped motivate the seniors interested in health care to pursue their goals. The school counselor also prepared for the administration of the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment with the building administrators which will take place in early March. Ms. Schulhafer continues to schedule intakes and create new schedules for the new students. Ms. Schulhafer met with all potential seniors to discuss their post secondary plans and made sure each student is on track to graduate. Ms. Schulhafer will continue to monitor each student's progress and address any academic or social emotional concerns.

Teacher of the Year - Mrs. Machado!



Mrs. Machado going above and beyond and making smores on a rainy delayed opening morning.



Mrs. Machado providing 1:1 assistance and ensuring every student is able to succeed in math class.



Celebrating a successful year, signing yearbooks and sharing memories with Mrs. Machado.

February at HAN



Valentine's Day

Students enjoyed taking pictures with a custom made photo frame by Mrs. Rivas and writing Valentine's Day notes to their friends! Each student and staff member had an envelope with their name on the HAN Tree and everyone received nice, individualized notes at the end of the day!



Outdoor Fun!

After several Delayed Openings and a Snow Day, HAN students and staff were able to enjoy time outside when the weather allowed. Students were able to play basketball, walk around the track, and hang out with friends!



Guidance Counselor Day!

February 5th was National Guidance Counselor Day! HAN wants to give a huge thank you to Mrs. Schulhafer for all of the hard work she puts in year round to make sure the students have what they need to graduate!

Pathful Explore

HAN rolled out the Pathful Explore program this month! Pathful Explore is an online platform that allows students to take surveys to discover potential career interests and paths they can take to get their desired career. Students are broken up into grade levels and are working on assignments based on their immediate needs, with graduating seniors working on resumes and cover letters and underclassmen researching about different careers that are of interest to them. Pathful Explore will allow each student to have a solid plan for after they graduate from high school. Thank you to Ms. Lederman for rolling out this program at HAN!

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 and parents/guardians 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](https://www.google.com/maps/place/2630+Plainfield+Ave,+Scotch+Plains,+NJ+07076)

Phone Number: (908) 233-9366

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

[Visit Us On Instagram](#)



Mission Statement

It is the mission of Hillcrest Academy North that all graduates have demonstrated the following attributes: Responsibility and accountability for themselves by routinely producing quality work 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



John Marquet

John is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



Hillcrest Academy South Campus

February 2024 Monthly Report



Dr. Balsamello's Message

This February Hillcrest Academy South Campus (HAS) focused on the social-emotional themes of cooperation and friendship as well as Black History Month activities. Support staff and administration met with a Rutgers University representative as we implement a three year mental health grant. Students who earned second marking period honor roll status were rewarded with a field trip to the movies. Also, the Westlake Sunshine cafe continued to offer HAS students snacks during their lunches as

well as our weekly visitation on Wednesdays.

February 2024 Enrollment Data

Enrollment-87 (as of 2/28/24).

New Students-5.

Disenrollments-6 (1-moved, 1-GED, 1-Residency, 3-Conduct).

Emergency Drill-Shelter In Place 2/8/24.

Fire Drill-2/12/24.

People Spotlights!

Student of the Month for January!

Congratulations to our Student of the Month for January, Keilyn! When asked about her work ethic, her teachers replied;

- Very dedicated, kind, and respectful
- Hard worker who prioritizes her grades and quality of work

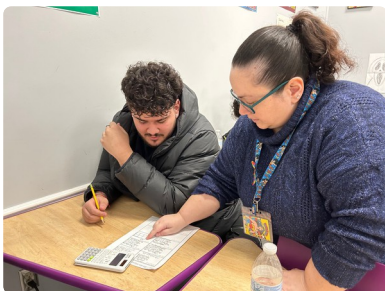


Staff Spotlight Ms Schulhafer!

Mrs Schulhafer has been a guidance councilor with Hillcrest South and North for the past 6 years. When she is not working with UCESC students, she spends time with her husband, beautiful baby boy, and her 2 crazy dogs, who she loves more than anything! Her favorite pastimes include traveling as much as possible and going hiking. However, once summer starts, you will most likely find her at the beach relaxing in the sun. And finally, when she is not doing all of that, she will find the time to curl up with a good book!

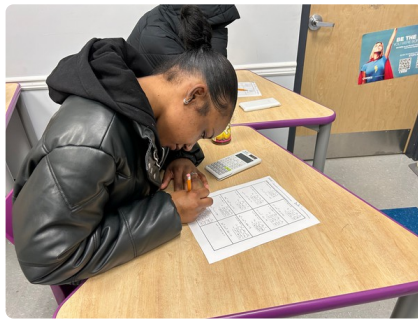
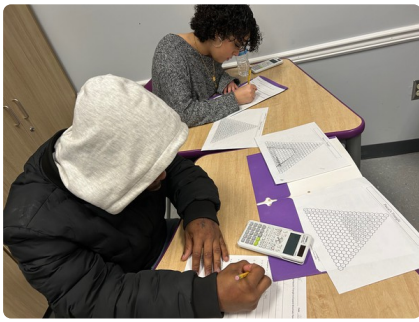


Classroom Spotlights



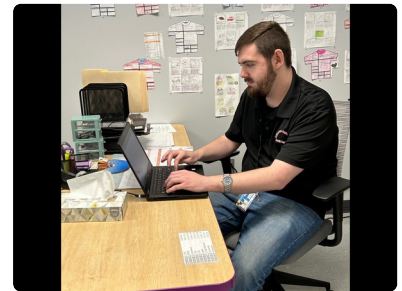
Mrs Fernandez-Siejack's Math Classroom

In all math classes, seniors began the month of February with completing math portfolios as part of a graduation requirement. The portfolio focuses on four (4) domains of math taught in high school; Algebra, Geometry, Functions, and Number Sense which were co-taught by both Mrs Fern and Mrs Ferrari. Once those were complete, classes resumed to normal curriculum. In Algebra 2, students practiced how to multiply polynomials in 3 groups; FOIL for binomials, Special Cases of binomial multiplication, and trinomial multiplication. Once those were completed students began to Factor or "unFOIL" trinomials. In Probability & Statistics, students created their own Pascal Triangles where they filled in the triangle through addition. The classes then used this triangle to begin completing binomial expansion problems and find singular coefficients of a particular term.



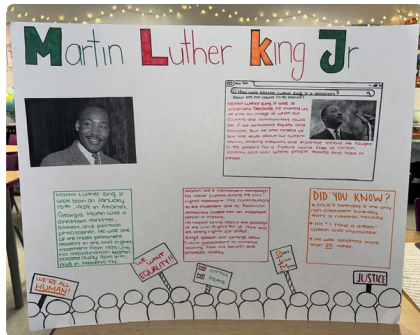
Mr Fritz' History Classroom

For the month of February Mr Fritz' classes have worked through many interesting topics. In history they have analyzed the effects of the Great Depression, The Dust Bowl and finally the New Deal. The classes will be watching Cinderella Man next week to give these topics a wonderful send off. In the Economics classes they are going to be creating their own countries each with a flag, motto and economic system so the students can make them their own.



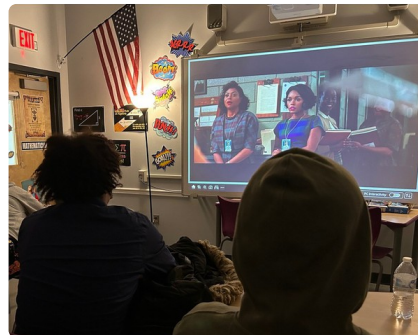
Black History Month

										12	GF	George Foreman	1.10.1949
										10	JZ	Jay-Z	12.4.1969
										9	AC	Alexa Candy	11.7.1950
										8	OB	Ota Boykin	9.29.1920 – 9.15.1982
										7	EB	Edward Bouchet	9.15.1852 – 10.28.1918
										6	DB	David Blackwell	4.24.1919 – 7.8.2010
										5	BB	Blanche Bruce	3.1.1841 – 3.17.1890
										13	JB	Josephine Baker	6.3.1896 – 4.12.1975
										14	SC	Stacy Chisholm	6.20.1924 – 1.1.2005
										15	GC	George Caruthers	60.1.1889
										16	AE	Amae Easley	4.29.1933 – 6.25.2011
										17	MMD	Marie Maynard Daly	4.16.1921 – 10.28.2003
										18	GM	Garrett Morgan	3.4.1877 – 7.27.1963
										36	ATM	Annie Turnbo Malone	8.9.1877 – 5.10.1957
										35	BWG	Betty Washington Greene	3.20.1935 – 6.6.1995
										34	GWC	George Washington Carter	1.5.1964 – 5.5.1943
										33	JL	John Lewis	2.21.1940 – 7.17.2020
										32	BJ	Barbara Jordan	2.22.1930 – 1.17.1996
										31	LC	Laverne Cox	5.29.1972
										30	HB	Haki Berry	9.14.1966
										29	RG	Rubene Roy	9.10.1904
										28	RE	Ruth Brown	5.18.1918 – 6.22.1986
										27	Ta-NC	Ta-Nehisi Coates	9.10.1975
										26	LC	Lucie Clifton	6.17.1908
										25	OB	Octavia E. Butler	6.22.1947 – 4.4.2006
										24	JB	James Bevel	9.2.1924 – 11.19.1988
										23	MA	Malcolm X	5.19.1919 – 2.21.1966
										22	KA	Karen Johnson	9.10.1961
										21	TA	Tamara Jenkins	4.10.1961
										20	MA	Maya Angelou	2.2.1929 – 2.28.2014
										19	FLH	Fannie Lou Hamer	9.10.1917 – 7.1.1978
										18	MJ	Mary McLeod Bethune	6.1.1875 – 12.1.1955
										17	TA	Tamara Jenkins	4.10.1961
										16	MA	Maya Angelou	2.2.1929 – 2.28.2014
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										3	FLH	Fannie Lou Hamer	9.10.1917 – 7.1.1978
										2	MJ	Mary McLeod Bethune	6.1.1875 – 12.1.1955
										1	TA	Tamara Jenkins	4.10.1961



Projects

Within the academic classes, teachers created projects and assignments that coincided with Black History month. These assignments were designed to highlight Black and African-American people, who paved the way and fought for equality. One project assignment came from Mrs W's history class where each student picked a different visionary and showcased their achievements.



Movie Incentive

What month is complete without a movie incentive? This month in honor of Black History Month, movies were selected that were about a historically significant movement or an issue that still is prominent today. Afterwards, the students wrote a response to the following question: How did the movie you watched deepen or challenge your understanding of Black History?

The movie choices were:



Daily Quotes

Every day during Black History Month, as a part of the daily announcements, quote from Black and African-American visionaries were read as a way to inspire our student population. The quotes came from

- historic figures like Frederick Douglass.
- activists like Dr Martin Luther King Jr.
- poets like Maya Angelou.
- athletes like Serena Williams

"We are not makers of history.
We are made by history!" - Dr
Martin Luther King Jr.

- Selma
- Harriet
- Hidden Figures
- The Hate U Give
- Just Mercy

- those who passed like
Medger Evers.
- political leaders like
Nelson Mandela.
- actors like James Earl
Jones.

All who have done so much in
the fight for equality!

Month of Love



Of course during the month of February, with Valentine's Day for a holiday, love was definitely in the air! Mrs Ferrari's students created affirmations on ways they could be kinder to and love themselves more. Ms V had students fill out hearts with inspiring, caring, and loving notes for all to read on their way to class. On Valentine's Day, students received a special treat on their lockers with the encouraging message of "You are loved!". Students also got into the spirit of the holiday by celebrating with gifts and candy.

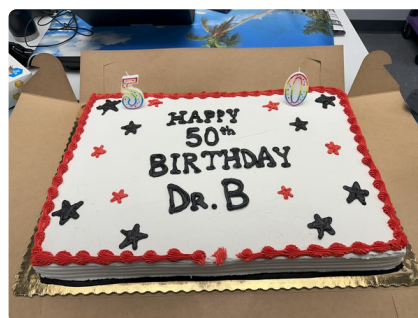
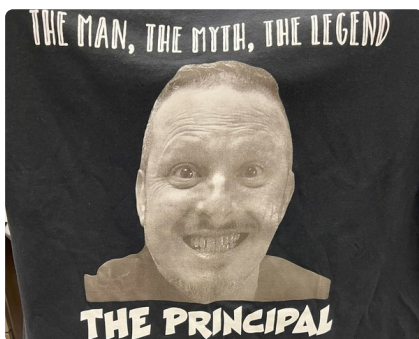


Happy Birthday Dr B!

What a crazy day! HAS got to celebrate Dr. Balsamello for his milestone birthday this month. It all began when a few faculty and staff members stayed late the day before to gift wrap Dr. B's ENTIRE office; the computer, the table, the chairs, the fridge, even the stapler! Accompanied by balloons and steamers, his office looked like a birthday wonderland! The morning of his birthday (aside from the surprise of his office), faculty and staff pitched in for a breakfast filled with music, cards, and t-shirts with his face, in honor of Dr. B's special day!

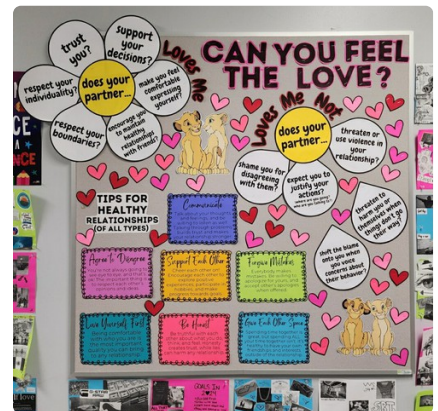
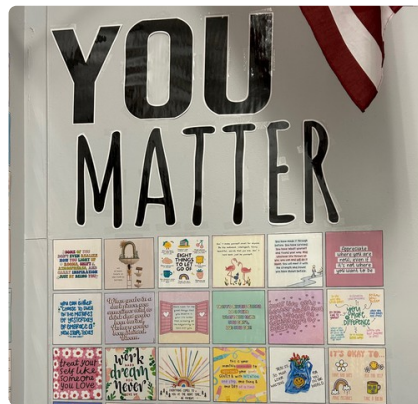


Lastly around 4th period, all students were lined up in the hallway as they sang to Dr. B and all received a slice of cake! It was a day we are sure Dr. Balsamello will never forget!



TEACHER OF THE YEAR!

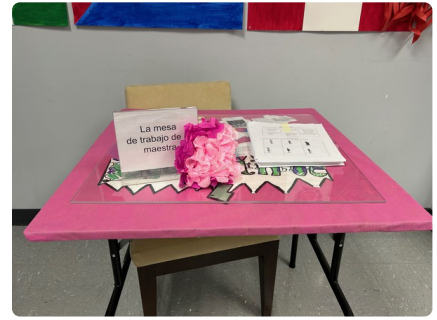
There are many words that can be used to describe Ms Vlastaras; eager, creative, caring, talented, thoughtful, natural leader, friend, mentor, etc. Now, we can add Teacher of the Year to that list! This year, Ms V has done so much to help brighten up the facility, faculty, staff, and students of HAS. For our "Month of Peace" she created the mural with the hand prints of our HAS family signifying our promise to keep the peace within our walls and hearts. Ms V creates bulletin boards with loving and meaningful messages for all those who walk our halls. She reminds students everyday that they are welcome here and that they are loved, and encourages them to love themselves. Faculty and staff also benefit from Ms V's love of creating and fun loving personality as well as her insightful assistance. Congratulations Ms Vlastaras!



Welcome Back Mrs Flores!

The beginning of this month marked the start of our 3rd marking period and of our second semester in the 23-24 school year. As we entered the new semester, we welcome back our Spanish Teacher, Mrs Flores. Mrs Flores began her school year working at Hillcrest North for the first semester as Hillcrest South had Art; both being semester courses. Now that she has returned for the remaining half of the year, we are eagerly waiting to see what excitement she will bring! From being lovingly welcomed back by those that remember her from last school year to already winning over those who are new to her charms, Mrs Flores has already made an impact on students and staff in this short month.

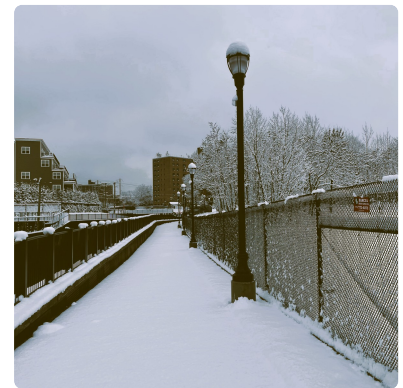




Our Students In and Out of School

A Photo is Worth a Thousand Words

In life, sometimes we are told what sports to play or what hobby to be active in. Sometimes, the activity tells us as it did with Juan. Three years ago on a young beautiful night, Juan happened to look up and saw the full moon and was moved to photograph it. Then, he saw a nearby tree where the branches looked like they were holding the moon. From that photo on, he kept taking photos, improving and honing his craft. Aside from the beautiful array of colors and moods of the sky Juan also discovered a love for photographing animals in nature and cars. When asked how does being a photographer make him feel, Juan said "it makes me feel accomplished as I'd be able to put not only my skills to the test, but put all I have into what I love to do!"



About Us

Hillcrest Academy South is an alternative high school for students from the Elizabeth Public School District. 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_has](https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_has)

Facebook: [Hillcrest Academy South](https://www.facebook.com/HillcrestAcademySouth)

Location: [1571 Lamberts Mill Road, Westfield, NJ, USA-Door 3B](#)

Phone: [908-233-9317](tel:908-233-9317)

Visit us on Instagram



HAS Smore

HAS is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



Lamberts Mill Academy

FEBRUARY 2024 MONTHLY REPORT



"February is a reminder to practice self-love and prioritize our own well-being before spreading love to others."

-Anais Nin

Supervisor's Message

Good Morning,

I hope this newsletter finds you well! The month of February, although shorter than the rest, has seen lots of activity at the LMA school community. Students have been working hard on their academics, with SEL themes integrated in different lesson plans. As a school community students and staff we're able to complete the New Jersey School Climate Improvement (NJ SCI) Survey which was developed from both Rutgers University and the NJDOE this month. LMA students have been preparing both academically and mentally for the NJGPA, NJSLA, as well as one dedicated student preparing for his PSAT assessment. During this month all LMA staff spent a professional development day receiving further education from a representative of The Trevor Project, receiving more training about the LGBTQ+ community, and how to best support members within.



I want to personally thank all the staff at LMA for stepping up, and being flexible with their daily responsibilities as LMA continues to support both the 1571 campus, and our satellite school located within New Point Specialty. All staff continue to support, and work with all LMA students to provide them the academic education they need; along with the therapeutic supports to continue to be successful members of our school community, and their hometowns.

Please read, and learn about all the different events that took place at LMA this month.

Sincerely,
Mr. Lopreiato

Important Message for Parents/Guardians

NJ School Climate Improvement (NJ SCI) Survey

The LMA school community would like to THANK all parents/guardians who have already completed the NJ School Climate Improvement (NJ SCI) Survey earlier this week. If you still have not completed it you have until tomorrow, March 1 to submit it.

Parents and guardians please utilize the link below.

NJ SCI Platform

NJ SCI Platform

🔗 platform.njschoolclimate.org

Password: parent



Monthly Data

1. Enrollment 45
2. Acceptances 1
3. New Students 0
4. Intakes 2
5. Referrals 5
6. Disenrollments 2

7. Fire Drill - 2/12/24 1:45pm

8. Emergency Drill - 2/8/24 - UCESC Shelter In Place (Called on County Radio)

Upcoming LMA Events

March 2024 Important Dates

March 4 - Field Trip (Lincoln Tech Tour)

March 5 - Field Trip (Bulletin Board Contest @ Central Office)

March 11-12 NJGPA State Testing @ New Point

March 12 - Field Trip (State Theatre)

March 12 - New Point Specialty Variety Show (Evening)

March 13-15 - NJGPA State Testing @ 1571

March 29 - NO SCHOOL



Upcoming Community Events

RUTGERS
University Behavioral
Health Care

NAMI Middlesex County

in collaboration with

Intensive Family Support Services of Middlesex County (IFSS)

Invites you to attend a Winter Speaker Series

Virtual Presentation via Zoom 5:30-7:00pm

Monday, March 4, 2024

Mindfulness and Meditation

Speaker: **Lydia Fulton, MA, LPC, NCC, ATR-BC, Mental Health Clinician III,**
Intensive Family Support Services, Rutgers UBHC

Please join us for this educational and interactive program which aims to teach the basics and benefits of mindfulness and meditation practice, as well as dispel some misunderstandings about mindfulness. This presentation includes the opportunity to engage in a relaxing group mindfulness meditation and guided imagery exercise with discussion afterwards. All are welcome!

Register in advance for the March 4th event at:

https://rutgers.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMIdu6sqj4vGte5kZYcZn-tE_M3jSa71Cfk



[Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

THE SECRET'S OUT...

DDD OPEN HOUSE

The Alliance Center for Independence (ACI) is an independent living center serving people with all disabilities in Middlesex, Somerset, and Union counties. But did you know that since 2016, ACI has offered opportunities for people with developmental disabilities?

Come to ACI's Spring DDD Open House and take a tour our facility, meet our staff, and learn how our services can benefit your consumers and families!

**Wednesday,
March 27th**
4:00 to 6:00 PM

**ACI
(Conference Room)**
629 Amboy Ave
Edison, NJ

Our Services Include

- Community Inclusion
- Supportive Employment
- Community Based Supports
- Career Planning
- Pre-Vocational Training

Additional Programs

- Living My Best Life
- Food Prep Skills
- ACI CommUnity Market
- Sex Education
- Recreation Opportunities
- Community Living Skills

Who Should Attend?

- Support Coordinators
- Parents
- Family Members

*Snacks & refreshments
will be served.*

Presentation by Morgan Reed

Support Coordinator Manager
Disability Services & Advocacy, LLC

 **Disability Services & Advocacy, LLC**
Support Coordination Services Improving the Lives of People with Disabilities and their Families

Questions & RSVP

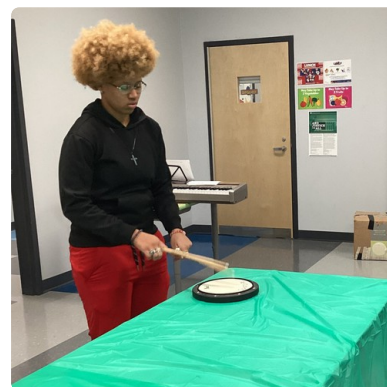
- adacil.org
- 732-738-4388
- trowe@adacil.org



LMA Student of the Month - February 2024

Briana B.

LMA is proud to announce our February student of the month, Briana B. After all staff voted, Briana won by a large margin. Starting with LMA 1571 campus in January of 2023, she has been an active learner in our school community, showing a great deal of progress. An active participant in music class, and often incorporating her artistic capabilities in various projects, she embraced the LMA school community. Displaying leadership qualities for the month of February, we are proud to name Briana our student of the month for February!



LMA Staff Spotlight

Mr. Phil Acosta - LMA's 2023-2024 Teacher of the Year

Getting to know Mr. Acosta,

This is my seventh year as a special education teacher in New Jersey. I started working for UCESC in September of 2019 as a SLE teacher that supported the district programs in Elizabeth, Plainfield, and Summit. We would pickup students from those respective high-schools and take them to and from their internships sites. For the past three years, I worked for the Work Readiness Academy as a teacher helping to support students and their transition to adulthood. This is my first year coordinating the post-graduate program here at LMA, but I am thrilled to be a part of it. In less than a year, we have developed meaningful relationships with local businesses and the students have benefited from travel training, interview practice, and exposure to a variety of jobs and careers.

The LMA school community, and the UCESC is fortunate to have such a driven, educator in our WBL programs!



Classroom Spotlights



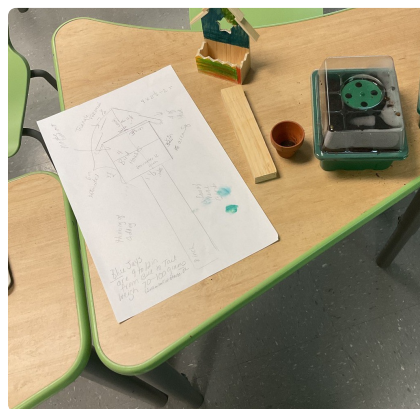
Ms. Finver's ELA students visit the theatre.

Students have been working on a Historical Fiction unit researching various prominent African American authors. They will be presenting their Google slide presentations to their peers to extend their knowledge of these amazing authors. We acknowledged our monthly theme of friendship by creating friendship silhouettes pieces containing their depictions of friendship. Students additionally played friendship games and made poems based on friendship.



Mrs. Matusz's Science classes

Environmental/Earth science students are learning about Earth and moon systems, climate vs weather. Biology students are studying Protozoans, protists and fungi. Chemistry students will be doing a chemical reaction project with a class-made volcano; Marine Biology students are studying the effects of humans on ocean organisms.



Updates from Mrs. Van Clief's Math Classes

Students have been working using the SEL in cooperation with problem solving. In all classes students have been participating in explaining problems on the board to their classmates. Many students are cooperating more together by working in small groups to solve equations and problems. All students are learning about real world math outside the classroom and finished learning about data and

Lastly we went on two field trips to experience various plays. Some students had never been to a play before. We interacted with the actors posing intriguing questions both about the play and working in the theater.

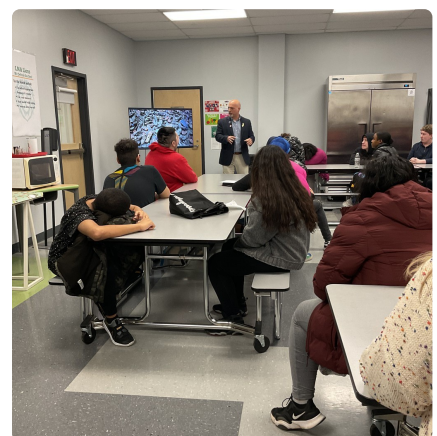
graphing . In 12th grade, students have been discussing financial futures by discussing stocks, bonds and personal investments. Algebra students in 11th grade are discussing functions. Middle school and 9th grade students are working on decimals, fractions and percentages. 10th grade Geometry students are continuing on angles, coordinates and parallel and perpendicular lines. All students are going to start measurement this month to get ready for the LMA garden.

Learning Experiences at The Mill

Mr. Joe Nappi, NJ Teacher of the Year 2023-2024, visits the LMA school community

NJ's Teacher of the Year Joe Nappi visited LMA recently. He spoke about the need to remember the societal elements that led to the Holocaust. He shared that we must always be on watch to avoid acceptance of severe ideas that might lead to another situation that could grow and stimulate another disaster for humanity. Our students were wonderfully intent on his presentation and followed with valuable questions and answers.

<https://www.nj.gov/education/recognition/educators/geoy/2024.shtml>



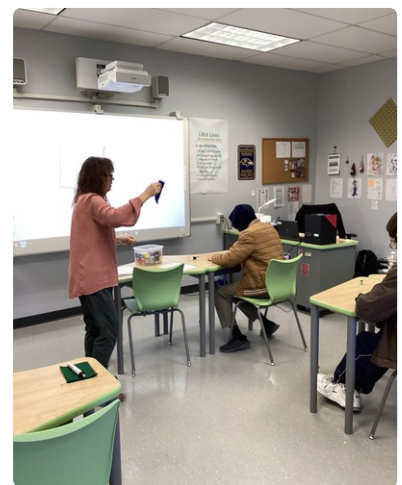
Mrs. Ramirez, District Student Assistance Coordinator, tackles addiction with LMA

During the month of February, students continue to learn about addiction, focusing on the ways in which they can prevent themselves from falling into the dangerous trap of this disease. Students have been actively participating in lessons and have recently learned about risk factors versus protective factors for addiction. Students have been asked to examine and identify the various risk factors that may be in play in their own lives as well as what protective factors are available to counterbalance these since they now know that this disease is entirely preventable and treatable.



LMA students learn the lost art of sewing

In today's day in age most individuals are a few clicks away from ordering just about anything including a replacement glove, or shirt. With endless options such as Amazon, Temu, and Mr. Lopreiato's personal favorite: Kohl's, it's hard to remember the days of repairing a garment with a simple needle and thread, let alone a sewing machine. Thanks to Mr. Acosta's coordination with retired UCESC employee, Mrs. Betsy Whitehead, LMA students are being shown the basics of sewing which we're more prevalent prior to Amazon. Mrs. Whitehead has been pushing into Mr. Acosta's transition preparation classes showing LMA students the proper techniques for sewing everyday items such as buttons on a garment, and making small pillows. A majority of students have shown a great interest in this lost art, and look to add it to their many ways of de-stressing while maintaining focus on a task.



LMA Monthly SEL Theme: Cooperation, Friendship and Black History Month

Life Skills in the month of February included the topics Cooperation, Friendship, and Black History Month. Students were able to practice their interviewing skills and reviewed common questions asked by employers regarding cooperation and teamwork. Students engaged in discussions on friendship and spoke about the importance of healthy boundaries, limit setting, and qualities they value in friendships. The theme for Black History Month 2024 was African Americans and the Arts. Students learned about how mental health and treatment can be viewed as healing through the use of art, poetry, music and other creative outlets.

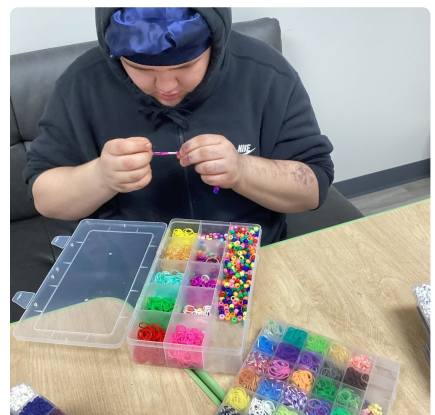
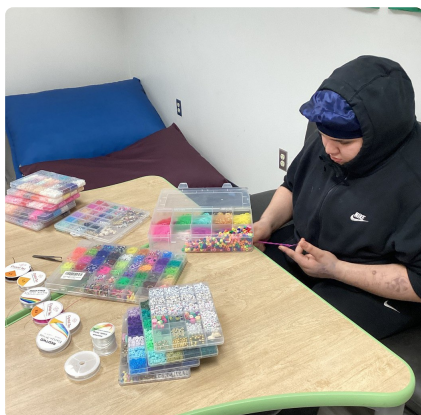
We would like to announce the newest clinician to the LMA clinical team, Ms. Jacky Altamirano!!



LMA Students Outside the Classroom

Getting to know DJ

LMA is proud to introduce Sharon "DJ" A. On her free time, DJ has been busy making bracelets and other crafts and learning the ins and outs of starting an online shop where she plans to sell her creations. DJ also has a lot of experience working with nails and hair. After high school, DJ plans to pursue a career in cosmetology or in the culinary field. DJ has been an excellent student and we are very excited to see where her talent and creativeness will take her



Community Resources

988
**SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE**

If you or someone you know
needs support now,
CALL OR TEXT: 988
CHAT: 988lifeline.org

Talk with us.



<https://988lifeline.org/>

When your child is facing challenges to their functioning and well-being, finding the right services and support can be overwhelming.

If you have concerns about your child's mental health and/or are interested in learning more about what help is available, call

Performcare @ 1-(877)-652-7624

or visit

www.performcarenj.org.



<https://www.performcarenj.org/>

[1-877-652-7624](tel:1-877-652-7624)



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**A CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVING
MIDDLESEX, SOMERSET, AND UNION COUNTIES**

<https://www.adacil.org/>

732-738-4388

adacil@adacil.org

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, while Mr. Acosta establishes new partnership with local organizations in the community for future WBL experiences.
2. Monthly Community Meetings to celebrate student progress and growth.
3. Students go out in the community to State Theatre for an ELA field trip.
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

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.



LMA Smore

LMA is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



February

MONTHLY REPORT

Supervisor's Message

**"Love is the only force capable of turning an enemy into a friend."-
Martin Luther King Jr.**

The month of February embraced, engaged and educated students on the concept of love by highlighting courageous and inspirational African-Americans who inspired, fought and advocated for equality, social justice, diversity and inclusion and overcame adversity and made positive impacts on our society. Inspirational leaders and role models such as Barack Obama, Jackie Robinson and Martin Luther King were researched, discussed and incorporated into lesson activities as well as significant historical events and movements that fostered empathy, understanding and critical thinking amongst the students and further supported the overarching message of unity, acceptance and inclusion across diverse backgrounds and cultures within the Westlake community.

That bond of community and connection was further strengthened and celebrated leading up to and during Valentine's Day, offering students opportunities to recognize and appreciate friendship, positive relationships and learn about the qualities of being a good friend through various activities. These activities included a "Tree of Hearts" identifying good deeds that students did to help their peers and "Love Notes" encouraging students to reflect on people that they are grateful and appreciative of, participating in Valentine's Day Mad Libs to create funny and unique stories as well as participating in a Valentine's Day Dance to wind down the holiday.



Students were provided engaging creative, vocational and work based opportunities through creating and selling Valentine’s Day cards, taking orders, packaging and selling Valentine’s Day “Treat bags” and baking and selling theme based desserts, such as red velvet brownies in the Sunshine cafe.

Till next time my friends, be good to yourself and each other!
Best,
Mr. P



Westlake Information!

- Current Enrollment: 57
- Referrals: 5
- Acceptances: 0
- Fire Drill: 2/12/24
- Emergency Management Drill: Shelter in Place 2/8/24 -Hazardous Materials Spill



Westlake December Spotlight!

Student of the Month



Student of the Month



G.R. is always there to help a friend and cheer them up!

Principal's Award



Principal's Award



We are so proud of E.A., he has learned to cooperate with his teachers and friends!

Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!



E.K. has made great progress learning new skills through feedback by management.

K.O. improved herself by taking orders and communicating well with customers.



Westlake Teacher of the Year!



Congratulations Ms. Pajewski! Westlake students are lucky that you are part of our staff!

.....

Therapist Spotlight - Ms. Sara

During February, our speech therapists worked hard to address our students' communication needs while having fun! Throughout the month, we integrated winter and valentine themes into our sessions. Some of our students worked on increasing their receptive and expressive language skills while reading books about snow and cold-weather activities. We targeted core vocabulary while engaging in various games. Our speech therapist, Kristen, was the chair for the Valentine Dance. The students helped out by making decorations to add to the festivities. We are looking forward to an awesome spring!



Valentine's Day Dance!

Ms. Kristen our Speech Therapist and Mr. Jeff our Physical Education teacher worked to set up a fun and festive dance party!













Sunshine Cafe!

Sunshine CAFE

ESPRESSO, COFFEE AND MORE

COFFEE	1.50
HOT CHOCOLATE	1.50
TEA	1.50
ESPRESSO	2.00
AMERICANO	2.50
LATTE	3.00
CAPPUCCINO	3.00
ICED COFFEE	2.00
ICED AMERICANO	3.00
ICED LATTE	4.00
COFFEE OF THE DAY	2.00
ADD SYRUP (VANILLA, FRENCH VANILLA, CARAMEL, HAZELNUT)	1.00



PASTRIES

CHOCOLATE CAKE	1.50
LEMON CAKE	1.50
PUMPKIN CAKE	1.50
GLUTEN AND LACTOSE FREE BLUEBERRY MUFFINS	1.50
CAKE OF THE MONTH	1.50

1571 LAMBERTS MILL RD,
WESTFIELD, NJ 07090
908-232-4181

The Sunshine Cafe happily presents our new menu starting March. Our students worked diligently to be trained to craft espresso drinks this month.

We would like to continue working on mastering various espresso and coffee beverages. Additionally, if anyone wants to purchase any snacks and drinks, we are currently operating snack carts (chips, cookies, brownies, candies, iced coffee, soda, etc.) from Monday to Friday (except Wednesday) from 12:15 to 1:00 at the cafe. You can also stop by the Sunshine Cafe on Wednesday and Thursday from 9:30 to 11:00 to purchase espresso drinks.

Thanks for supporting the Sunshine Cafe and we look forward to seeing you soon!

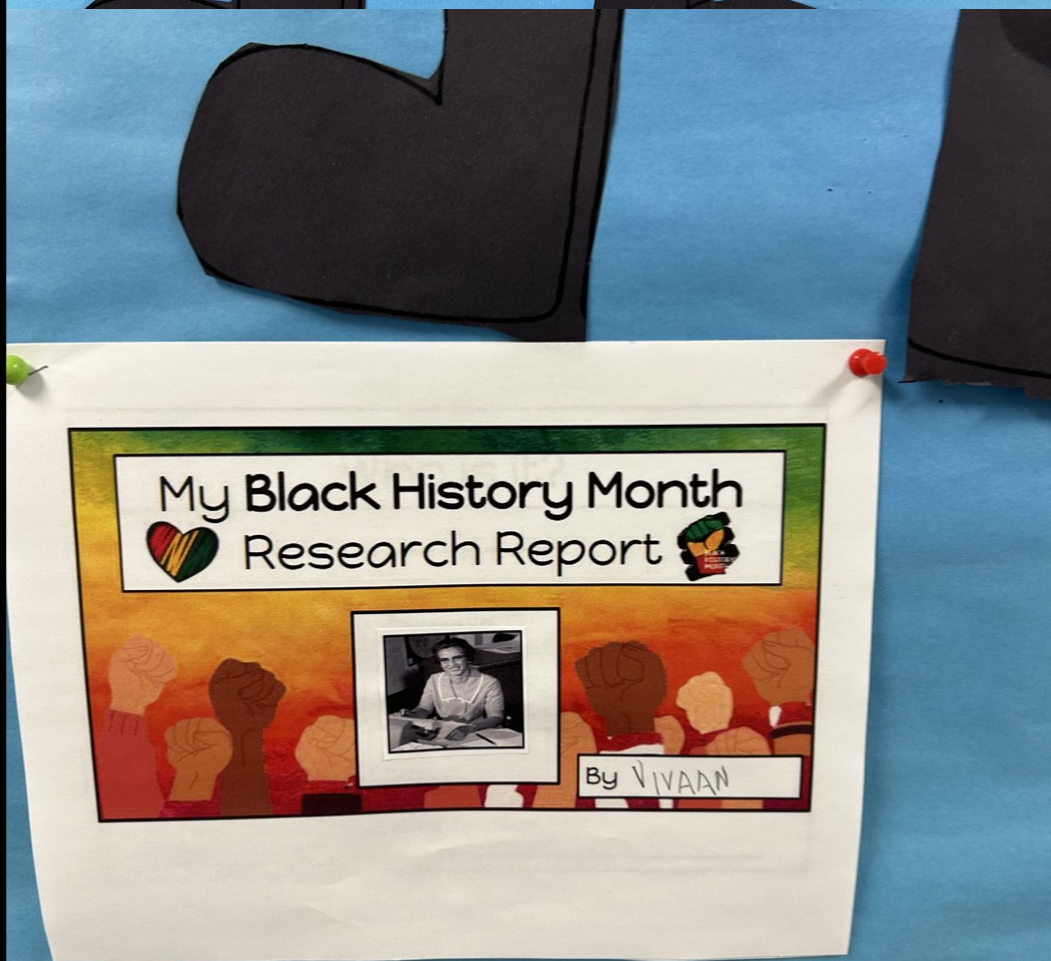


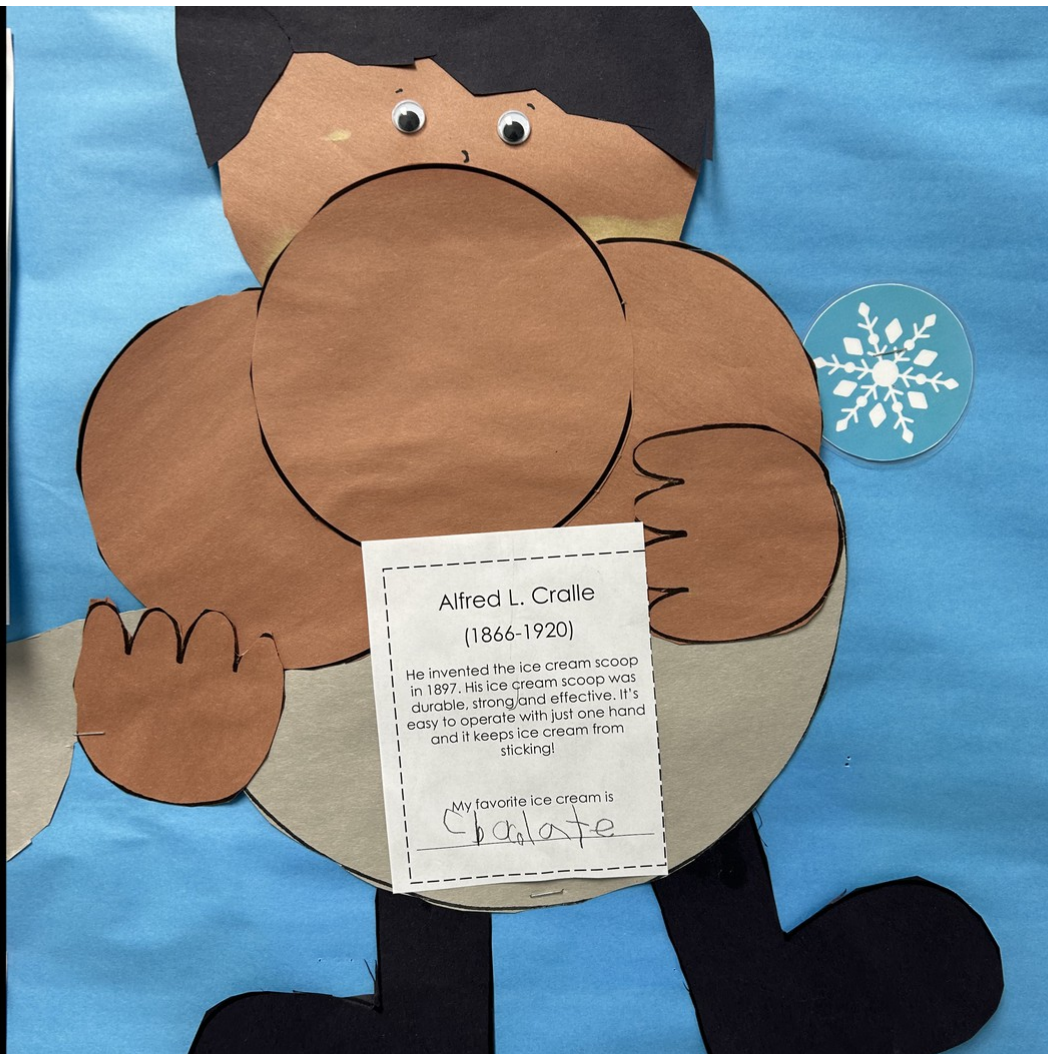


Our classes spent the month exploring Black History. They learned about historical figures and celebrated their accomplishments



Garrett Augustus
Morgan, Sr.
(1877-1963)
He invented a traffic signal that
made streets safer for drivers and
pedestrians.
Red light means _____
Yellow light means _____
Green light means _____



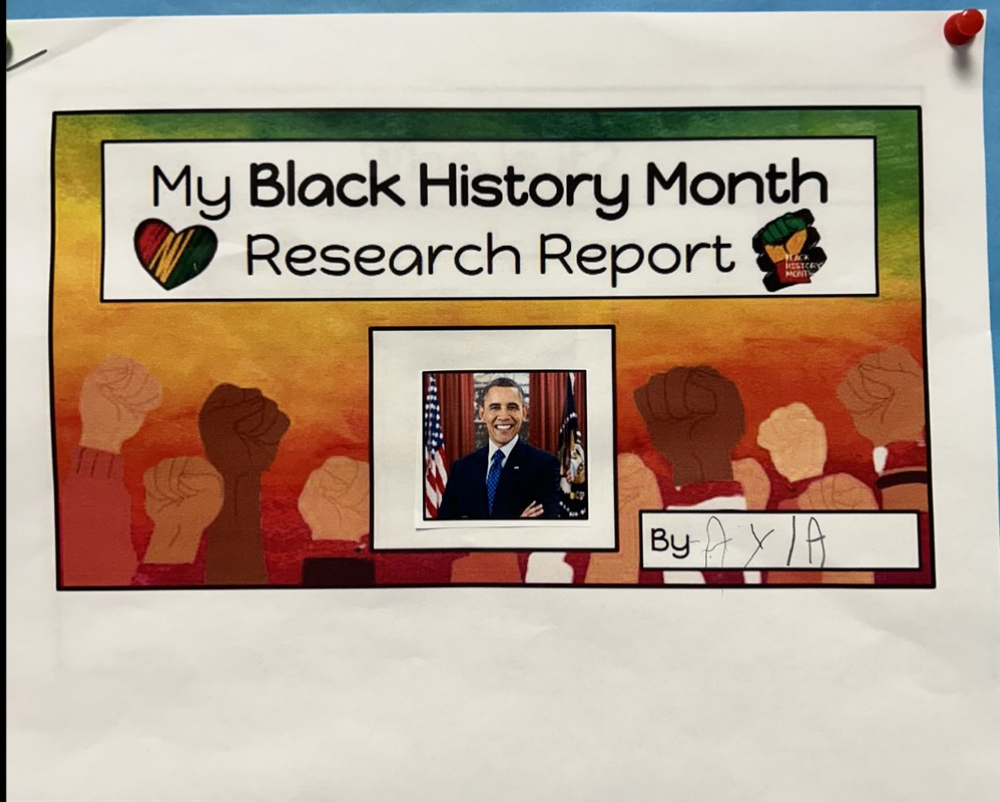


Alfred L. Cralle
(1866-1920)

He invented the ice cream scoop
in 1897. His ice cream scoop was
durable, strong and effective. It's
easy to operate with just one hand
and it keeps ice cream from
sticking!

My favorite ice cream is

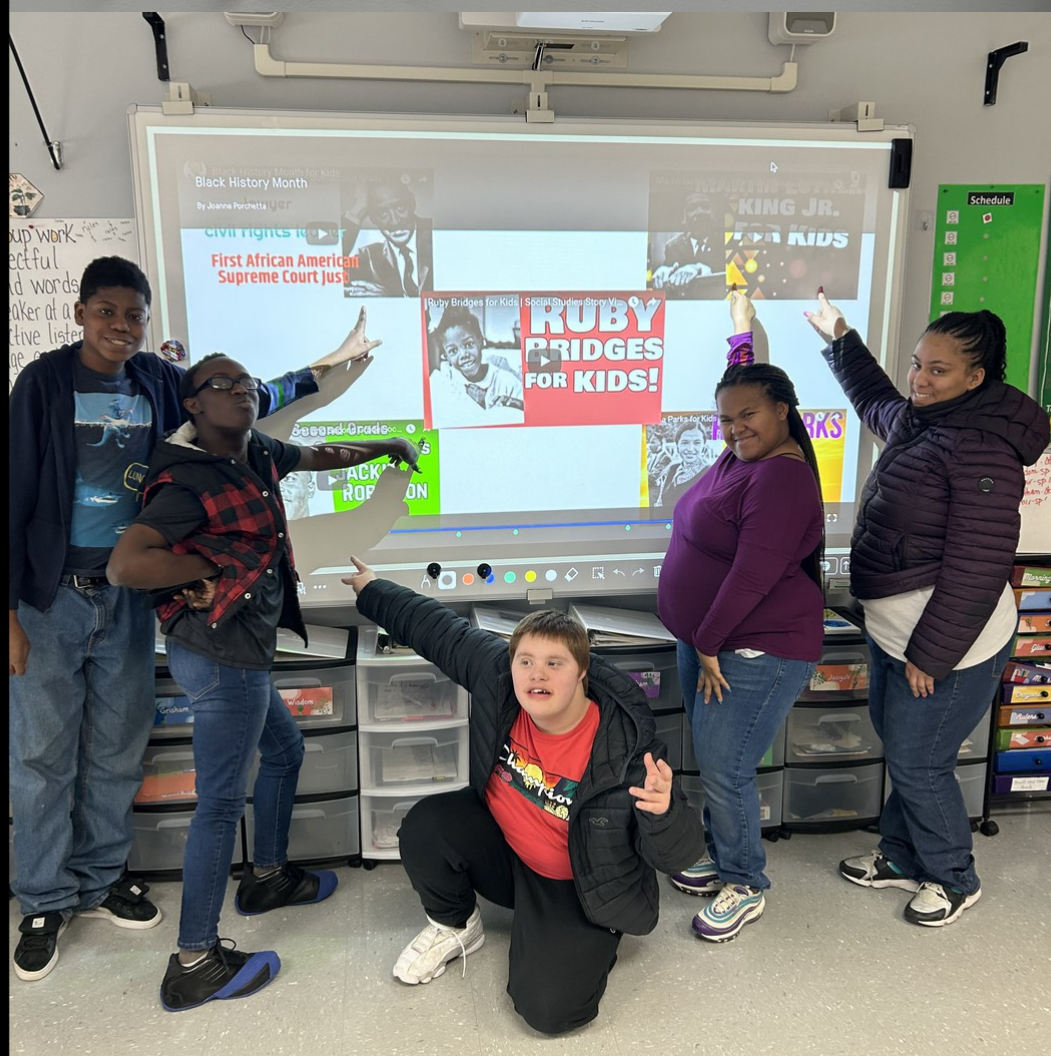
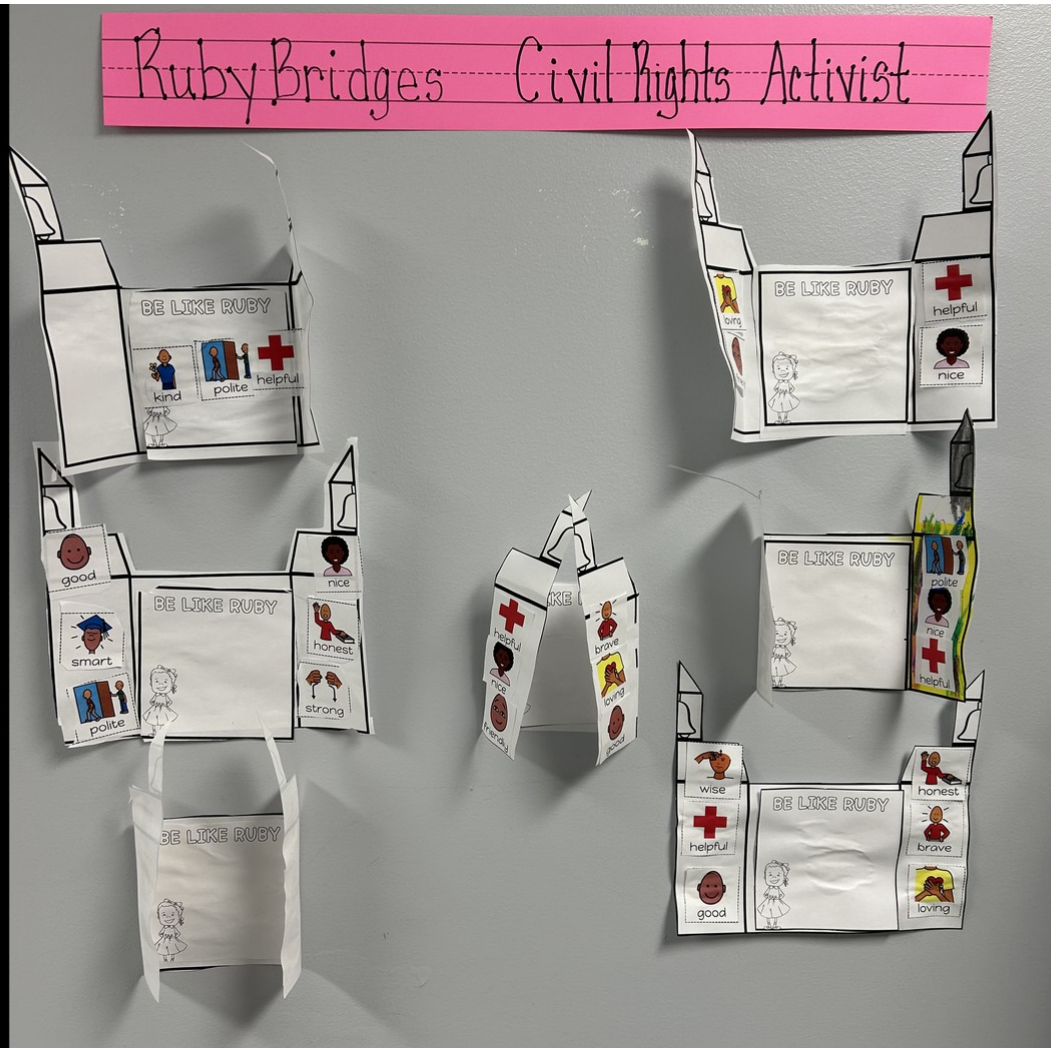
Chocolate



My Black History Month Research Report



By A x I A



February was a month to celebrate our friendships and working together!





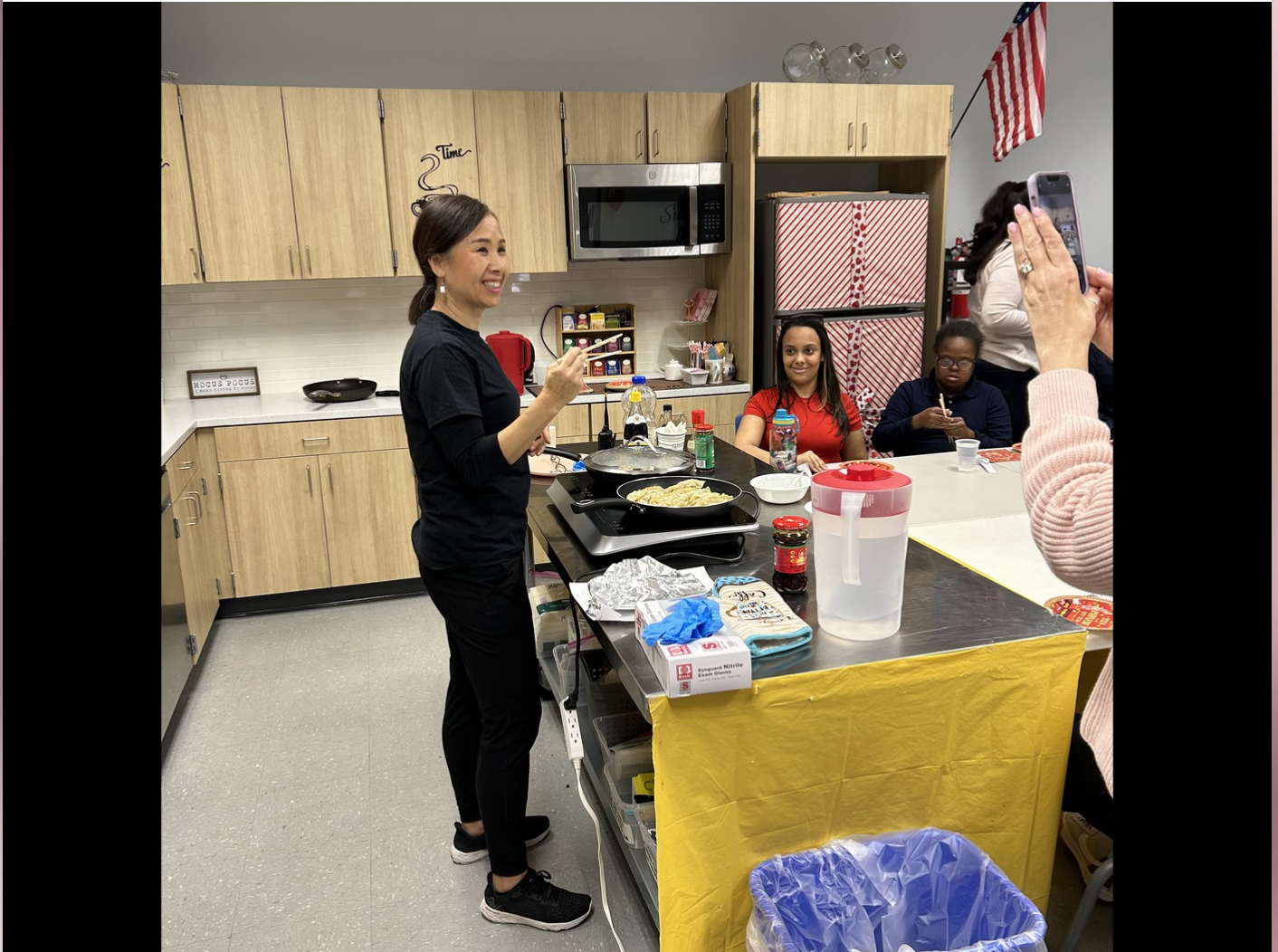


Ms. Shaw's Class



In February, at the Sunshine cafe, the students started an online course called "Basics of Barista Work" learning about hospitality and customer service skills as well as using an espresso machine. Currently, the students started crafting lattes and cappuccinos to limited customers as practice. Our cafe also extended additional opening hours to the Hillcrest Academy South students daily to sell snacks and beverages. This gives our students a great opportunity to practice money skills and learn how to operate a small business. This month, the students enjoyed learning about various holidays. For Valentine's Day at the cafe, the students contributed their ideas to develop the cake of the month, red velvet brownie. After serious practicing and tasting, the students chose one of the 4 recipes and served them to the customers with great reviews. For Lunar New Year, the students learned about the Chinese tradition of making vegetarian dumplings. The students will continue to work on mastering various espresso beverages for the

future menu. The students are gaining more knowledge of the Soft Skills that are essential for success in the workplace such as teamwork, flexibility, communication, work ethic, problem solving, etc.









Mr. Carten's Class



This Month in Mr. Carten's room the students were very busy making chocolates for Valentine's Day and dog biscuits to sell. They put in many days of hard work to achieve this goal. For a local business, we packaged lollipop sticks in batches of 50. The students had to count them, put them in plastic bags and finally add labels. The class also went on a CBI trip to ShopRite. Each student had a picture grocery list of products that needed to be located in the store for purchase. We bought the groceries that we need to cook breakfast every Thursday morning. This a an OT group with Ms. Sara.





Social Media!

Follow us on Facebook!

Log into Facebook

Log into Facebook to start sharing and connecting with your friends, family, and people you know.

[facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/ucesc_westlake/)

Follow us on Instagram!

https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_westlake/

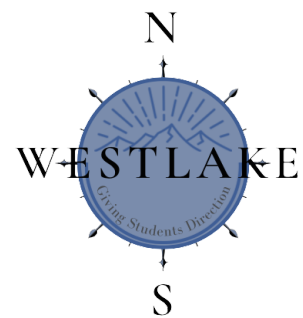
[instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_westlake/)

Contact Us!

Website: www.ucesc.org/schools/westlake_school

Location: [1571 Lamberts Mill Rd, Westfield, NJ, USA](#)

Phone: [908-232-4181](tel:908-232-4181)



Robert Peneno

Robert is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



Work Readiness Academy

February 2024 Monthly Report

Message from the Director



Dear WRA Community,

The month of February seemed to fly by in a flash! This month students rotated into new Work-Based Learning experiences in the community. The rotation will provide them with the chance to learn and practice new tasks and explore new job pathways. It also allows our staff to observe and assess them in a different environment.

Earlier this week we sent our students, parents and staff an email informing them that our school is participating in survey data collection using the **New Jersey School Climate Improvement (NJ SCI) Survey** to help obtain multiple perspectives on aspects of school climate. Collecting data is important for understanding strengths and needs in our school and how it feels to be a member of the school community. Your voice is important to us, and your opinions will help us to address current priorities. The survey is anonymous and it is voluntary. The results will be used to help create a plan to address school climate needs and make improvements to the school. You may submit a separate survey per child in the school building if you feel their experiences are different, but you do not have to.

The email we sent out included a link and password for you to complete the survey. Thank you in advance for your participation and feedback. We appreciate your ongoing support and look forward to exploring new ways to continue working together to create the most supportive and engaging learning environment for your child.

If you have any questions about the survey, or need it resent to you, please feel free to reach out to me or Rachel Richer, our Supervisor of Instruction.

Please enjoy the rest of this month's newsletter including more detailed updates about our instructional program from Ms Richer and the latest from our Project SEARCH program!

Sincerely,
Josh Bornstein, Director
UCESC Work Readiness Academy

February 2024 Data for the Work Readiness Academy

Enrollment as of February 27, 2024

Actual: 30

Changes: Entered: 0 Exited: 0

Referrals: 2

Intakes Scheduled: 2

Accepted: 0



2/8 - Shelter in Place (Hazardous Spill)

2/29 - Evacuation Drill (Fire)



Dates to Remember

Friday, March 8, 2024 - School-wide Trip to Cranford Movie Theater

Friday, March 29, 2024 - School Closed (Good Friday)

Monday, April 1 through Friday, April 5, 2024 - School Closed (Spring Break)



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

February Spotlights



Congratulations to **Sophia Miller** our Student of the Month for February! We are recognizing Sophia for her consistent perseverance in the classroom and at her internship sites. Sophia has been open to learning and accepting that not everyday is a good day. She continues to work through challenges and is willing to have difficult conversations and accept feedback. Finally, Sophia can often be seen brightening someone's day with her compassion and kindness.



Meet **Betty Mack**, Teaching Assistant (Part-Time)

How long have you worked for UCESC?

I just started in January, but everyone has been so welcoming and helpful it truly feels like I've been around much longer than 2 months!

What do you love best about your job?

My favorite thing about working at WRA is undoubtedly the focus on community-building and creating an uplifting and positive environment for the students and the staff. It's really special to be a part of a program that genuinely encourages everybody involved to be the best version of themselves and bring new ideas to the table both on the job and as part of the community. There's so much heart and happiness, it makes coming to work a joy!

What do you like to do in your free time?

I'm a creative-type by nature so I spend my time doing all kinds of artsy stuff! I have a children's edu-tainment series on YouTube called "Betty, Set, Go!" that's a lot of fun to make and work on in my free time. I also really enjoy creating miniatures, trying out new craft



This month we shine the spotlight on **Walgreens**, an American company that operates the second-largest pharmacy store chain in the United States. Walgreens has been a long-standing partner with our program hosting Work-Based Learning experiences for our students at three different local stores! Thank you to Erica and her team at the Cranford store, Debbie and her team in Westfield, and Christian and the team at the Union store for always being so welcoming and supportive to our students and staff!

Walgreens specializes in filling prescriptions, health and wellness products, health information, and photo services.

The company was founded in Chicago in 1901, and is headquartered in the Chicago suburb of Deerfield, Illinois. As of June 2023, the company operated almost 9,000 stores in the United States!

projects and making custom gifts for friends and family. Also, my evenings are often spent in rehearsals for a musical at one of the local theaters - recently I was the Scarecrow in Wizard of Oz at the CDC Theater!

What is something that people would be surprised to know about you?

Well I'm pregnant and due with a little girl on the 4th of July! (Although the baby bump is making that a bit less surprising these days) I think people might be surprised to know that my bachelor's degree is in Musical Theatre and before moving to Cranford 3 years ago I lived and worked in the city as an actress and comedian!

Director's Award



I am pleased to recognize **Charlie Hasbrouck** with the **Director's Award** for the month of February 2024. This is Charlie's first year at the program and he has made a very smooth transition. He has displayed self-advocacy skills and demonstrated growth in so many areas. After receiving feedback in a one specific area from

staff, Charlie took steps to move out of his comfort zone and made progress in this area. Has has shown significant growth at his internship. He has started having conversations with his mentors and even volunteered to on-board a classmate who was starting a new experience with him in the mailroom. Way to go Charlie!



Supervisor's Spotlight on the Classroom



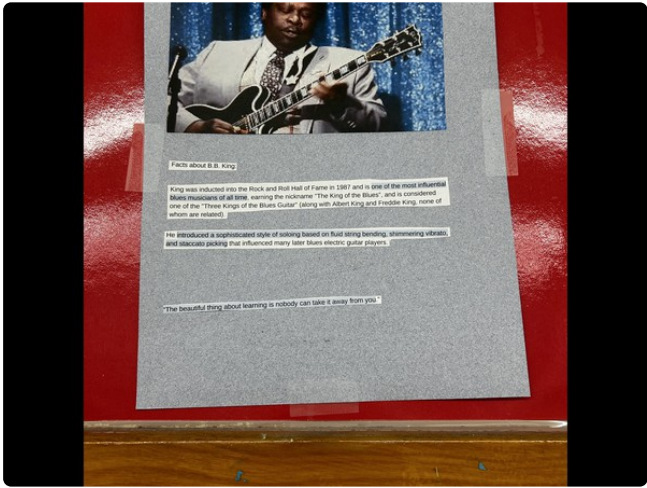
Our hard working students at the Work Readiness Academy have been exploring, creating and demonstrating a wide variety of new skills this month! Our career readiness classes have been taking a closer look at their communication skills and applying new ideas and concepts learned to their internships. While in class they have begun to practice the use of effective communication while interviewing as well as analyzing real real-life situations for opportunities to improve their communication skills.

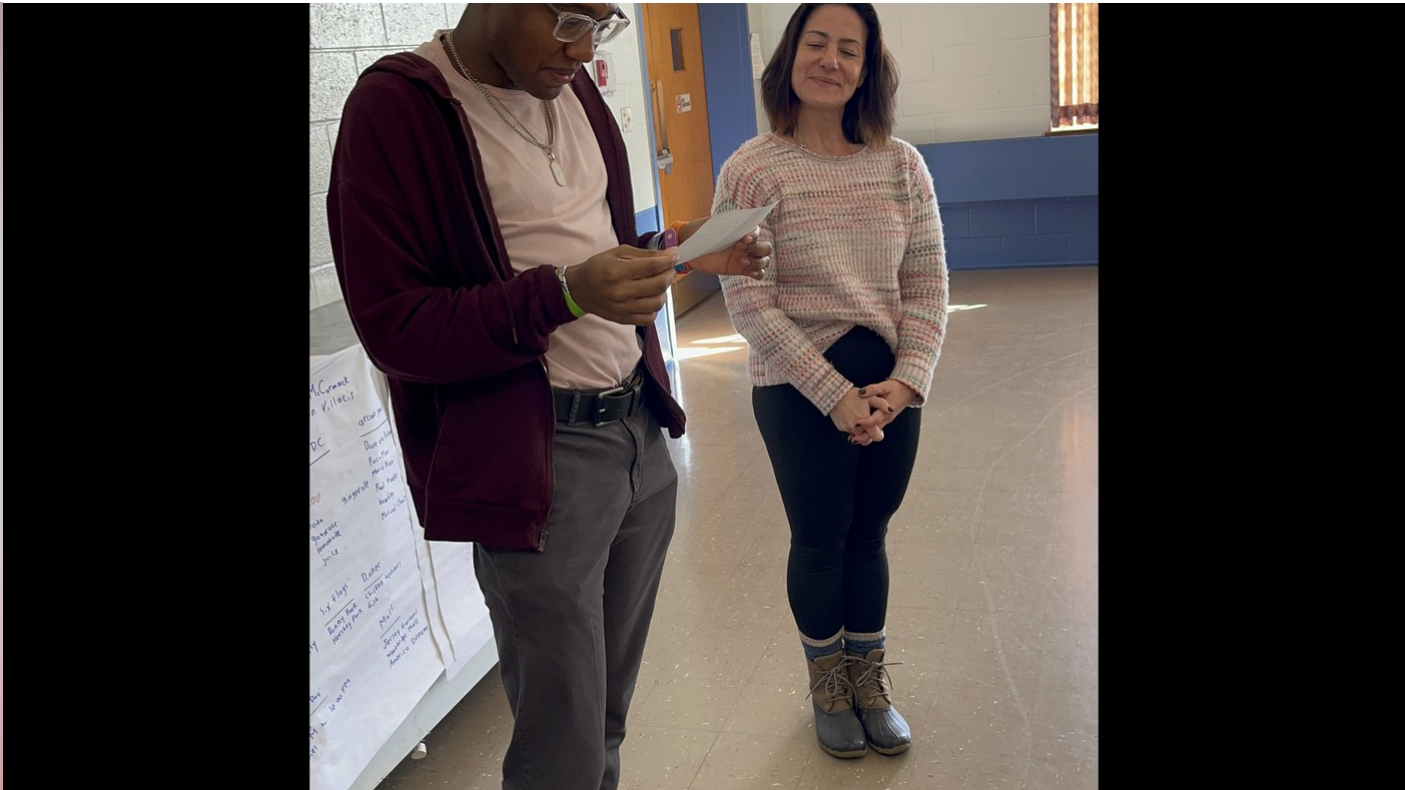
During our life skills classes, students have been learning all about navigating their communities independently with the use of public transportation and ride share options. Students are learning new strategies for how to plan for travel by reading schedules, and maps, as well as learning to budget for upcoming trips they have planned. Throughout the month our students have also been learning all about incorporating cooperation and friendship into their everyday lives. Students took the time to send positive messages to one another with our candy grams activity and brightened each other's days when they were delivered and exchanged as part of our Valentines day celebration.

To honor Black History Month at Work Readiness Academy, we have dedicated time each week at community meetings to discuss influential African Americans throughout history and have constructed a "Timeline Of Greatness" display in our cafeteria. Students have been expanding on their knowledge and understanding of these individuals and have created posters with information and visuals that they have shared while in class, be sure to stop by and take a look at all of their hard work!

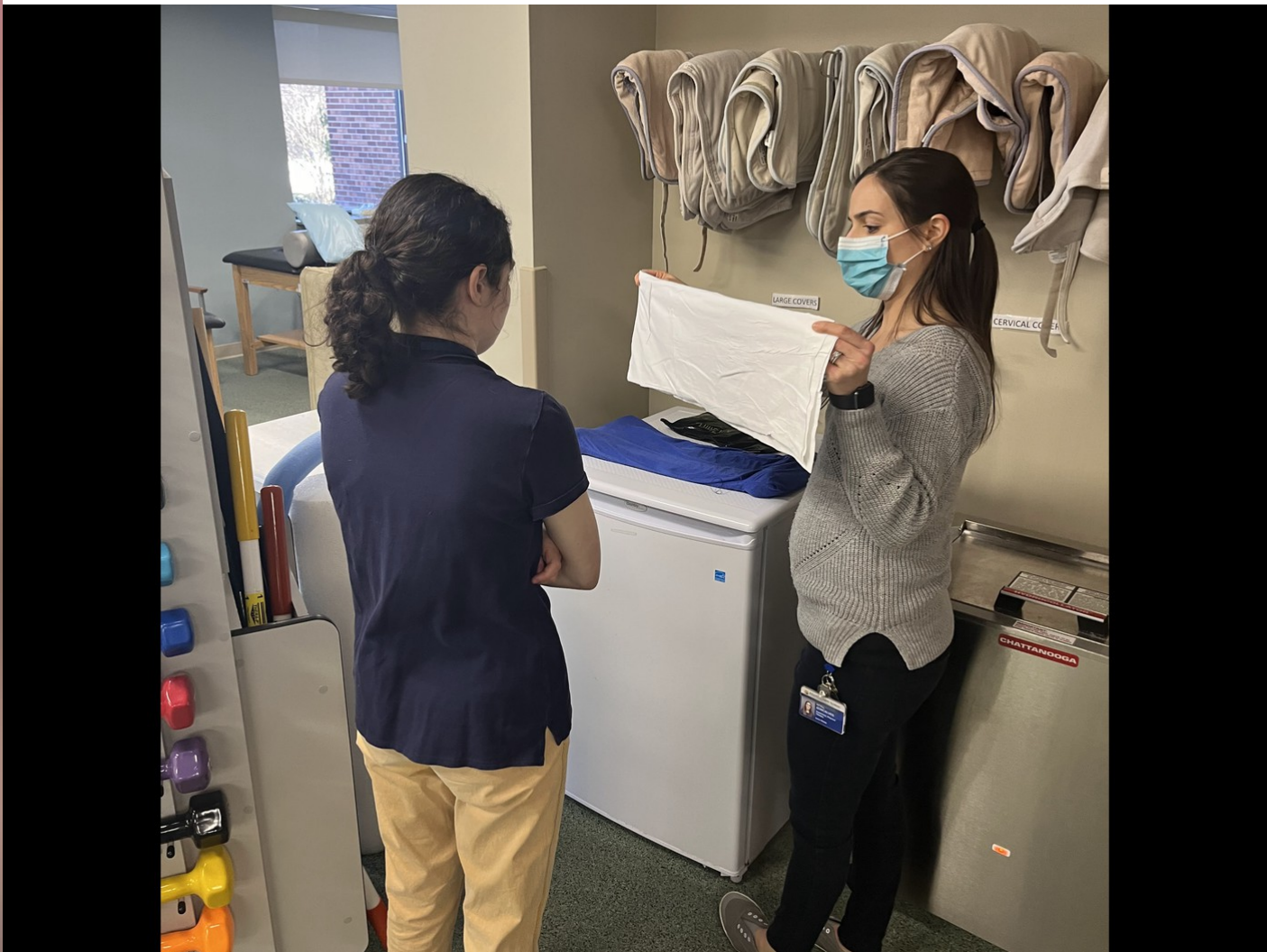
Rachel Richer
Supervisor of Instruction

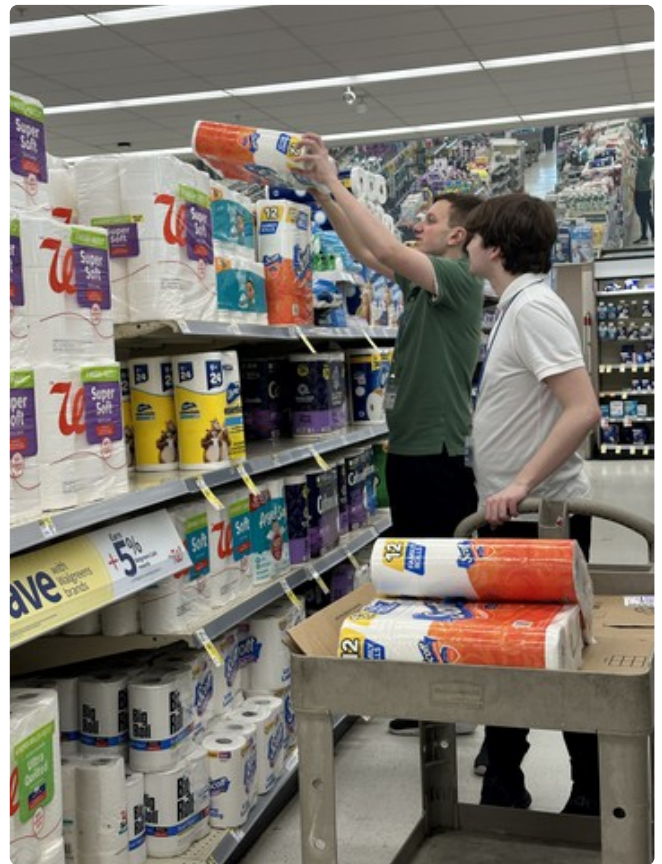
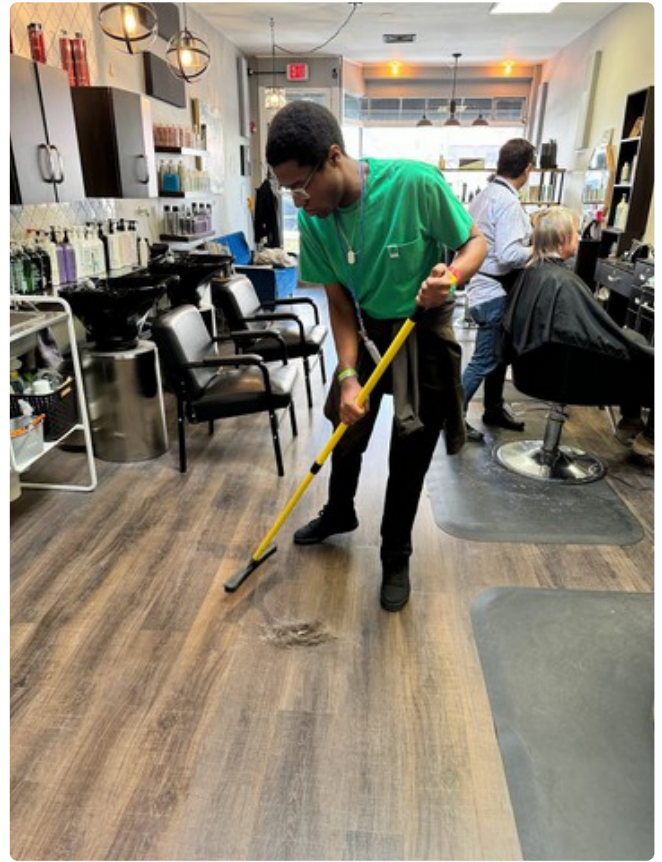


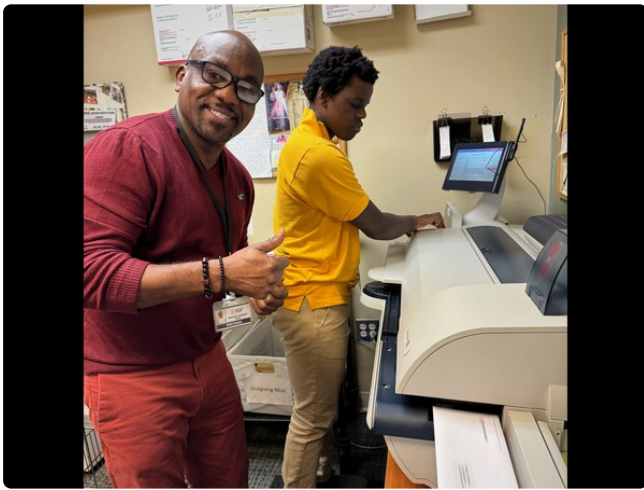




Snapshots from January Work-Based Learning







What's Happening at Project SEARCH?

In February the students at Project SEARCH participated in their third Employment Planning Meetings. The students and staff shared important information about their current internships, their strengths and areas for improvement. The team also discussed the students' goal for competitive employment. In the classroom, the lessons focused on taking initiative, problem-solving, workplace accommodations, and self-advocacy. The students also researched important contributions that African Americans have



made to history, culture and society for Black History Month. We look forward to visiting TD bank in March where we will tour the facility and learn more about financial literacy.

- Jourdan Spencer, Project SEARCH Instructor for UCESC





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 **must** attend one of our upcoming virtual information sessions:

Upcoming Dates:

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.

Teacher of the Year

Congratulations to Project SEARCH instructor **Jourdan Spencer** for her recognition as one of our district's teachers of the year for the 2023-24 school year! (Pictured below with UCESC Superintendent, Carrie Datillo)



Bulletin Board Showcase

February brought us Valentine's Day, but also a chance to share what each of us "loves"!



Art is Good for the Soul

Check out our new self-service Art station! Students and staff are welcome to grab a page and doodle & color...either just for fun or to help stay distracted to calm down.



Community Resources/Events

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 together 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!
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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

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.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (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.

EXAMPLES OF SERVICES

• **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.

REQUIREMENTS OF COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT

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.

Integration

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.

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.

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

Guardianship Resources

At 18 years old all individuals, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, reach the legal age of majority. This means that parents can no longer make decisions legally on behalf of their children. See the attached fact sheet from the Arc of New Jersey for more information about Guardianship and various alternative options.

Updated Guardianship Fact Sheet (3).pdf

[Download](#)

107.0 KB

ABLE Accounts

ABLE Accounts provide eligible individuals with disabilities a better way to save money for today's needs or invest for tomorrow. ABLE accounts:

- Do not jeopardize eligibility for most benefit programs, such as Medicaid and SSI.
- Are tax-advantaged, so earnings grow tax free.
- Can accept contributions from anyone: the account owner, family and friends.
- Include online account management tools and a top-rated mobile app.

For more information, click the link below.



- NJ ABLE Frequently Asked Questions

New Jersey Division of Disability Services answers some of the most frequently asked questions about ABLE accounts.

🔗 autismnj.org

WRA Spotted in the Community!

Former Project SEARCH Student Jasmine Garcia (now working in the Patient Transport department at Overlook) mentoring current SEARCH intern Steven Lopez!



Picture of the Month

Shannon was more than willing to demonstrate how to use the seated elliptical machine one her first day of her new internship with the Overlook-Union Rehab Department!



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](tel:908-633-2704)

Click Here to Visit the WRA on Instagram!



WRA Smore

WRA is using S'more to create beautiful newsletters