

# FOCUS ON EDUCATION



Quarterly newsletter of Lyme-Old Lyme Schools  
*A private school experience in a public school setting*

WINTER 2024



## Message from the Superintendent & Chair

Dear Members of the  
Lyme-Old Lyme Communities,

As we near the midpoint of the 2023-24 school year, we are pleased to share with you information about the Lyme-Old Lyme Schools. Please take a moment to read about some of the exciting activities taking place in and out of the classrooms.

As always, we want to thank the community for their support of education in our towns.

Sincerely,

Ian Neviaser  
*Superintendent of Schools*

Jason Kemp  
*Chair, Board of Education*

## Board of Education Meetings

Please join the Board of Education for the following meetings:

**Feb. 7** Budget Forum, 6:30 PM  
Regular BOE Meeting, 7:00 PM

**March 6** Regular BOE Meeting, 6:30 PM

**April 1** District Budget Meeting, 6:30 PM

**April 3** Regular BOE Meeting, 6:30 PM

Meetings are held in the Board of Education Conference Room at Center School, 49 Lyme Street, Old Lyme. Agendas, links to live-streams of meetings, and links to recordings of previous meetings are available at [www.region18.org](http://www.region18.org) under the "District Information" tab.

The Regional School District 18 Board of Education prohibits harassment and discrimination in educational programs, services, or employment on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, age, marital status, military or veteran status, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, genetic information, sexual orientation, or past or present physical or mental disability in accordance with Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1991, the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and appropriate state laws.





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Something is play if you have chosen to do it, have the capacity to pretend and change as you go, and enjoy it for the most part.

”



## Purposeful Play in School

“Something is play if you have chosen to do it, have the capacity to pretend and change as you go, and enjoy it for the most part.” This is the description given by the authors of the book *Purposeful Play, a Teacher’s Guide to Igniting Deep & Joyful Learning Across the Day*.

The State of Connecticut is requiring play-based learning to be part of the curriculum for all Pre-K and kindergarten students by July of 2024. Lyme-Old Lyme Schools were ahead of the curve and began exploring this concept with our kindergartners in 2022.

Play based learning, without explanation, can sound simplistic and obvious. So, what exactly is purposeful play? And how does it help students to learn? In short, purposeful play is an educational approach that prioritizes play as a critical method for learning and growth in children. This does not mean students running around playing in a free-for-all manner but rather teachers and students co-creating play experiences that lead to deep learning for children. Activities might include re-enacting a book, collaborating over building blocks, or negotiating the rules of a game being created by students themselves.

For example, kindergartners at our schools have collaborated on planning, building and running a pretend grocery store. As a part of this process, students write a plan, build a store, and create props. When the store is ready to open, they assign roles for playing (such as cashier, baker, customer, etc.) and students learn to decide who gets to go first, how to take turns, and other facets of collaboration and teamwork. This format also allows students to learn how to manage the disappointment of not always getting their first choice. Running a grocery store also teaches numbers, letters, reading, math and a host of other skills.

Freeze dance is another favorite game where students dance and move around the room while music plays. When the music stops, they must look at the pose on a card the teacher is holding, make that pose and hold it until the music starts again. This game teaches students self-control, working memory, and how to follow multi-step directions, among other important skills.

Studies have shown that play based instruction is more developmentally appropriate and can help kids learn skills faster and with less repetition. Renowned child development expert Dr. Karyn Purvis cites that “Scientists have recently determined that it takes approximately 400 repetitions to create a new synapse in the brain—unless it is done with play—in which case, it takes between 10 and 20 repetitions.” Lyme-Old Lyme Schools continues to expand their purposeful play curriculum, and teachers are seeing positive results.



## Community Partners

We are fortunate to have many wonderful organizations in our community that help our students learn in interesting and creative ways. Recently second graders at Lyme School had a visit from The Connecticut River Museum in Essex, CT.

The museum brought in a 6x20 foot floor map of the Connecticut River. Students used role playing, research, and hands-on activities to learn how the Connecticut River Valley developed, how communities were established, and how human relationships with the river evolved over time.



## Mile Creek School Starts Newspaper

Third through fifth graders at Mile Creek School had the opportunity to join the newly-formed Newspaper Club led by third grade teacher Erin Kennedy. This popular club, with 37 participants, is split into four smaller groups that meet before school or during the day. Working together, the students determined different sections of



the newspaper and chose topics to write about. They learned about brainstorming, drafting, revising and editing, as well as choosing photos and writing captions. *The Wildcat Times* was published in December, and the club plans to publish two more issues this school year.

## December Festivities

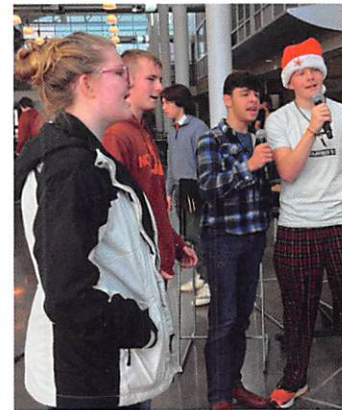
December break is highly anticipated by students and staff alike with each school taking a little time out before vacation for some fun.



Pre-K students enjoyed decorating gingerbread houses with family and friends.



Middle school students participated in a variety of "Reindeer Games."



High school students enjoy fun and games as a part of a Winter Carnival celebration.

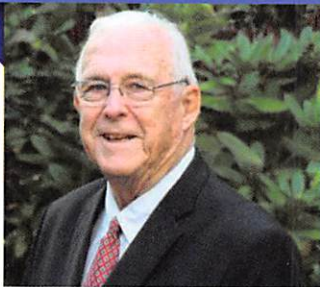




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## Welcome to our new Board of Education Members



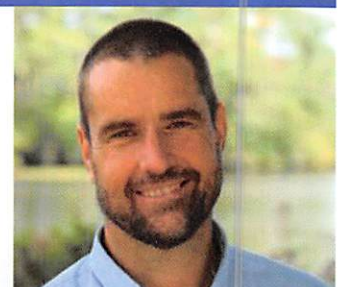
Scott Brown



Susan Fogliano



Gavin Lodge



Xander Lowry

*A sincere thank you to our outgoing board members for their dedicated service to our schools.*



Jennifer Miller



Mary Powell-St. Louis



Suzanne Thompson



Steven Wilson