

Work Readiness Academy

November 2024 Monthly Report

Message from the Administration



To our WRA & Project SEARCH Community,

Thank you to all of our families who attended our November online Parent Workshop on "**Applying for SSI & Medicaid**" in New Jersey. We also want to thank our presenter, Ms. Jerisa Maseko, the Director of Planning for Adult Life at the Arc of New Jersey's Family Institute and WRA Social Worker **Nicole DellaVecchia** for coordinating this informative event. We have two other events planned for early 2025. You can find more details in our

Community Resources section below.

This month we were excited to launch a new partnership with Ty and the team at **DSW Discount Shoe Warehouse** in Union Plaza. This new Work-Based Learning site will provide our students with the chance to learn entry-level skills needed to be successful in a retail clothing environment including re-stocking items, organizing and displaying merchandise, taking inventory, and greeting and assisting customers.

We would like to congratulate WRA Teaching Assistant **Sarah Cooke** for passing her Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) Certification Test and Competency Test! Sarah will be the WRA's first ever RBT and a valuable new support to our entire staff.

As the holiday season approaches we have taken time this month to not only look to the future by setting both short and long term goals, but also to reflect on the incredible journey we have had up until this point. Gratitude has been at the forefront of our discussions as well as the inspiration for activities we have planned. Students have begun to develop an intentional awareness and appreciation for the positive aspects of life. This is ever present in our elective classes where students continue to explore and deepen their interests in the areas of art, design, and mindfulness during weekly yoga classes. Although we are always looking for ways to improve and grow, we have taken time this month to focus on staying present, feeling positive, and staying grounded in

the now. This has allowed us to learn how to become thankful for the everyday moments that we are lucky to experience.

Please enjoy the rest of this November edition of our newsletter and we at the Work Readiness Academy wish all of our families a happy Thanksgiving! Enjoy the small moments with each other, make new memories, and celebrate all that is yet to come!

With Gratitude,

Josh Bornstein, Director ("Sully")

Rachel Richer, Supervisor of Instruction ("Mike")

UCESC Work Readiness Academy

November 2024 Data

Enrollment as of November 26, 2024

Actual: 26

Changes: Entered: 0 Exited: 0

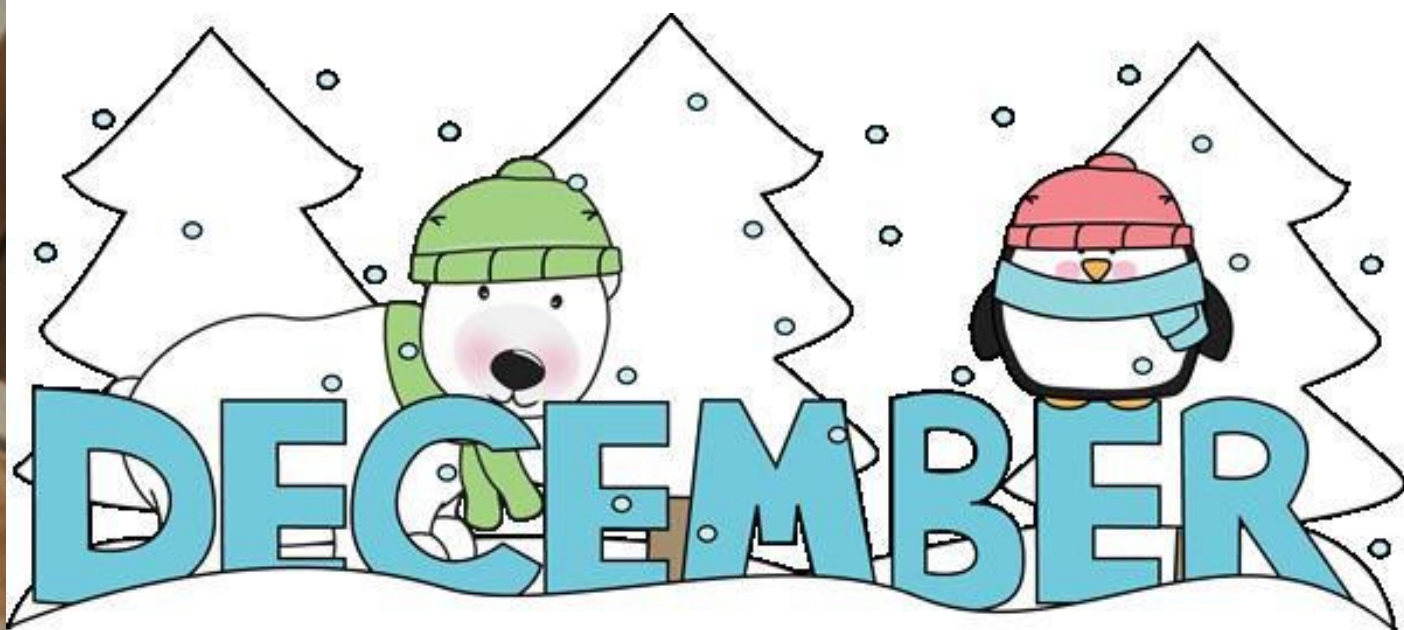
Referrals: 2 (SY 2024-25)

Intakes Scheduled: 2

Accepted: TBD

11/13/24 - Fire Drill

11/14/24 - Shelter in Place



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

December 13, 2024 - WRA Community Trip to the Jersey Gardens Mall

December 19, 2024 - WRA & SEARCH Student Holiday Party

December 20, 2024 - Early Dismissal - 1:00 PM

December 23, 2024 - January 1, 2025 - School Closed - Winter Recess

January 2, 2025 - School Reopens



New Attendance Reporting Email!

In the event that your child will be absent, arriving late, or picked up early, **please send us an email at AttendanceWRA@ucesc.org.**

You may also call our main number at (908) 633-2704. If it is before 8am, please leave a message.

November Student of the Month

Nicky

Congratulations to **Nicky L.** for being selected as the Work Readiness Academy's November Student of the Month! **Nicky** has demonstrated both flexibility and open mindedness this month as he transitioned to a new work-based learning experience. **Nicky** has been dedicated and hard working as he has learned new tasks and routines. **Nicky** asks for help and clarification when he needs it, and is always willing to help his teammates both in the classroom and out in the community! Well done **Nicky**! We are all very proud of you!





November Classroom Spotlight with Project SEARCH

The interns at **Project SEARCH** participated in their first Employment Planning Meetings of the new school year. The students facilitated their meetings and spoke about their current internships, their strengths and areas for improvement, as well as possible placements for the next rotation. Families also heard feedback from our on-site team that includes myself, **Fonati Julu** and **Eileen Michie**, our two on-site Skills Trainers.

In the classroom, the students learned about many important topics including similarities and differences between jobs and careers. They also studied self-advocacy and voting rights for individuals with disabilities. Other topics discussed included wants vs. needs, and various types and pros and cons of different types of employment. Just in time for Thanksgiving, the students read an article called *The Science of Gratitude* and found that being grateful can promote good health and well being. The students are also looking forward to learning about Native American Heritage Month.

The students will begin working on their resumes and interviewing skills in the next few weeks. This will help prepare them for informal interviews with Overlook Hospital managers before their second internship rotation begins. We are looking forward to practicing and role playing these important skills.

- Jourdan Spencer. Project SEARCH



Procrastination

When we delay or put off doing something we need to do, even though we know it's important.

I can avoid procrastinating at home/work by...

Set an alarm
right at the desk
-sallyh

Don't waste
your time on
a phone

Stop waiting for
the last minute to do
the kitchen

Set a screenshot
for your phone
when you're done
-sallyh

Check the time
when you're
about to return to work

Do one task
right away

Don't waste
time in the
break room

Do not use the
Internet to escape
your task.
Don't let things
in your way
be done



Work-Based Learning Snapshots



Penelope at the Overlook Food Cart



Izzy at Barnes & Noble



Nicky at DSW



Larissa at Cake Artist Cafe



Ben at South Ave Dental



Nick at Sweet & Fancy

Project SEARCH



The Project SEARCH Program at Overlook Medical Center is now in its 9th year. Applications for the Class of 2026 (cohort begins in the Fall of 2025) are now open. Applications for the Project SEARCH program are accepted on a rolling basis between November 1st and May 1st.

We are offering virtual information sessions prospective students, families, or referring school district staff on the following dates:

Tuesday, December 10th from 7-8pm

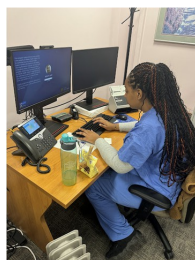
Tuesday, January 28th from 7-8pm

Tuesday, February 25th from 7-8pm

Please email us at projectsearch@ucesc.org to register and we will send you a Google Meet link.

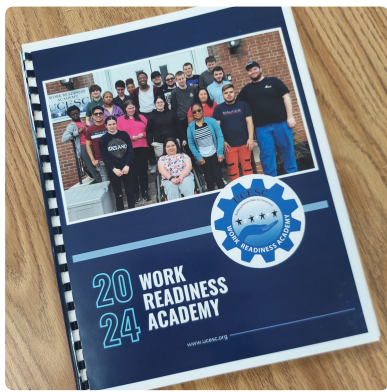
For more information about Project SEARCH, or to access the application for the Class of 2026, please visit:

<https://www.ucesc.org/schools/the-work-readiness-academy/project-search>

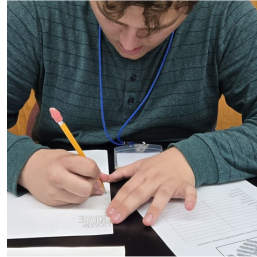


Friday Electives are Underway!

Yearbook Elective



Last year we launched a Yearbook Elective class and it was a huge success! A creative team of students worked hard to design and assemble a final product that showcased highlights of our program. This year, we hope to use last year's template, and a new team to create an even better masterpiece!



Staff Recognition

We have begun a new initiative this school year by recognizing our faculty and staff for their countless efforts and unconditional support, encouragement, compassion, and kindness towards our students, their families and each other. Staff selected will each receive a special pin for their ID lanyard that represents that month's theme. Building administration will choose staff members that exemplify the monthly theme as well as contribute in moving their programs forward with positivity and commitment to excellence. We were pleased to recognize the following staff this month:

Tracie Wiebush, Teaching Assistant (pictured)

Jodi Klimko, Teacher (pictured)

Deb Italiano, Teaching Assistant (pictured)

Carina Servello, Teaching Assistant (pictured)

Shalini Ascalon, School Nurse (not pictured)

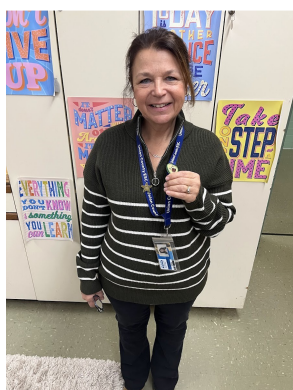
Sarah Cooke, Teaching Assistant (not pictured)



Tracie, Teaching Assistant



Jodi, Classroom Teacher



Deb, Teaching Assistant



Carina, Teaching Assistant

Look Who Was Spotted in the Community!

It was great to run into former WRA student **Melissa** who is now in her 5th year working in the laundry and housekeeping department at the Hilton Garden Inn in Springfield, New Jersey!



Picture of the Month

We all loved **Ben's** "Bad Biker Dude" costume for our Halloween Party!



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Halloween Fun at WRA!





Community Resources/Events

The Shining Stars Network's Annual Christmas Spectacular is next week! Several former WRA & Project SEARCH students continue to perform with the group. You won't want to miss this show! Ticket information is below.



PROVIDER FAIR

Life After 21

Please join us for an in person provider fair. Connect with different agencies offering supports and services to our students as they transition to adulthood. All UCESC families are welcome to attend!

When

January 15, 2025
7:00 pm

Where

Work Readiness Academy
Holy Spirit Church
970 Suburban Rd, Union

Register Here



Contact Us
908-838-0613

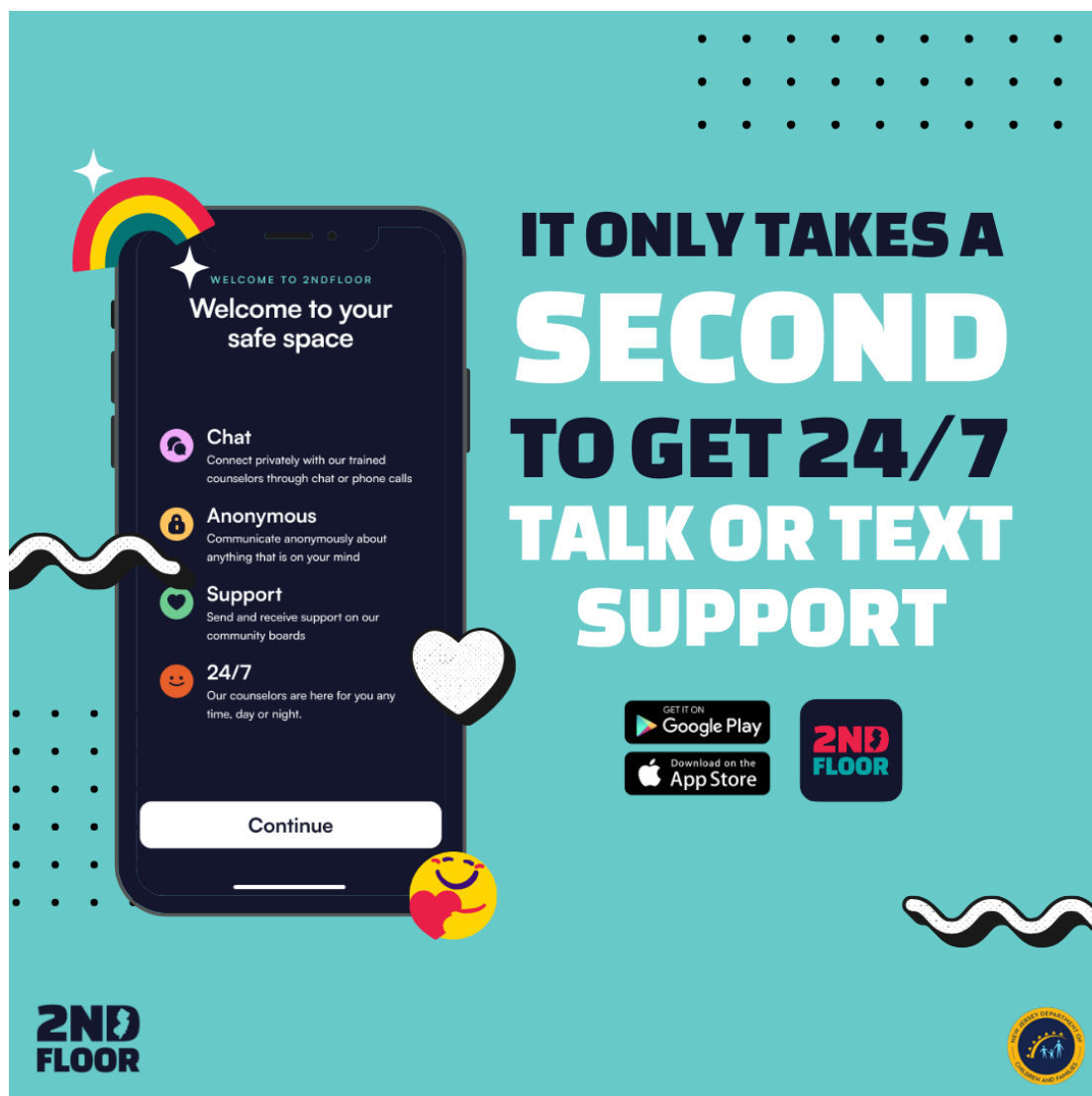


Email
ndellavecchia@ucesc.org



Our Location
970 Suburban Rd. Union

The new **#2NDFLOOR app** for NJ youth is here! It only takes a second to get free 24/7 mental health support with one-on-one chat, helpline, community conversations, and more. Get started at 2NDFLOOR.org/download #mentalhealth #support.



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



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 Rachel Richer at rreicher@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



HILLCREST NORTH NEWSLETTER

November 2024

Principal's Message



Dear Hillcrest Academy North Campus (HAN) Students and Families:

As we are gearing up for the holiday season, students and staff members are certainly finding ways to celebrate the successes at HAN. With the end of MP1 last week, we are happy to generally announce that a large percentage of students did very well in their classes, while a select group made Honor Roll and High Honor Role. This is a result of coming to school regularly, working hard

in the classrooms, and meeting building expectations that involve being a part of our positive school culture and taking school seriously by ensuring they are ready to learn on a daily basis. Students planned a "Spirit Week" where they celebrated their school by having fun together which strengthens our school community. Students and staff are feeling safe, supported, and empowered everyday which makes my job so rewarding!

Keep it up, HAN!

Please feel free to contact our main office with any questions.

Sincerely,

John Marquet

Upcoming Dates

December 20 - Early Dismissal at 1
December 23-31 - School Closed - Holiday Break
January 1 - No School - New Year's Day

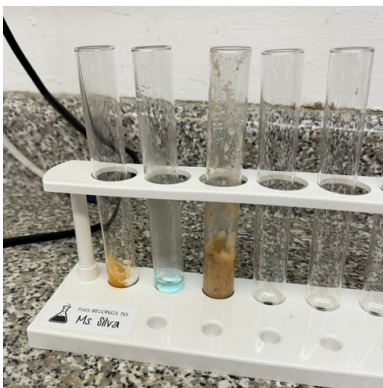
Teacher Spotlight

Ms. Silva's McMush Lab

HAN students participated in the McMush Lab. See Ms. Silva's "In the Classroom" to see more about it.



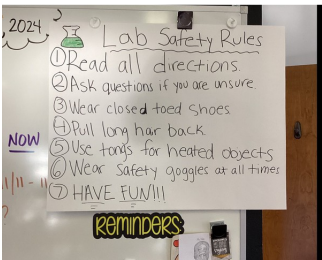
Well Plate Testing Tray



Test Tubes



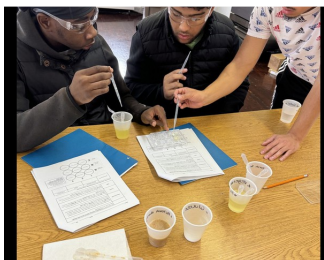
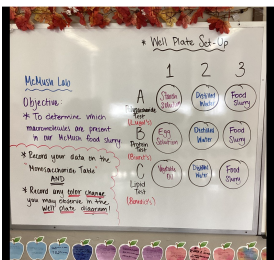
Set Up



Safety Rules



Lab Set Up



In the Classroom



Dominica Killeen, English Teacher

In November, Ms. Killeen's students worked hard to finish marking period 1 strong! In addition, students put their writing skills to the test by completing a research project. Students composed research on someone they believe to be the most influential person of Generation Z, and while doing so, students showcased their skills by writing strong claims, providing evidence, and analyzing why their person is influential. In the second half of November, Ms. Killeen taught her classes the 6 main conflict

types. Students then completed assignments by reading different passages and writing which conflict type the passage is and why. Ms. Killeen is preparing her classes for her novel unit that she starts in January by going over different literary techniques, and she is going to start teaching plot after Thanksgiving!

Madeline Silva, Science Teacher

In November, Ms. Silva's Biology students participated in a fun, hands-on experiment called the "McMush" lab. The purpose of this lab was for students to learn and explore the different confirmation tests in order to determine if one or more of the four major macromolecules were present in the mystery slurry given to them. Students worked together to test the different samples given to them and to figure out what the mystery slurry actually was. Using class discussions, students were able to explain their data results and the reasoning behind them. Lastly, students were able to guess what the mystery slurry was for a special prize. Surprise! It was in fact a....McDonald's Kids Happy Meal. The students had a blast with their first lab of the year and can't wait for more to come in Ms. Silva's Biology classes this year!



Spirit Week

HAN students and staff celebrated Spirit Week November 18-22. As usual, the staff was dominating in spirit, but there were some students who brought it everyday! Thanks to all those who participated, and we look forward to doing another with more student participation.



Twin Day



Twin Day



Jersey Day



Switch Up!



Pajama Day



Pajama Day

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.hillcrestacademy.org/2630-Plainfield-Ave-Scotch-Plains-NJ-07076)

Phone Number: (908) 233-9366

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

Visit Us On Instagram



No preview yet

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



Westlake's NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

Message from the Principal

THE MONTH OF GRATITUDE!

Gratitude is a positive emotion that involves recognizing the good things in your life and acknowledging the role that others play in those positive events. Every day we wake up feeling gratitude for our next day and what our journey brings to each of us. We know that people come into our lives for a reason and that each one of us has special bonds and memories we hold dear to our hearts within our own families.

We are especially grateful for our Westlake Family. This is a special place where we feel grateful for working with students, their families, staff and staff's families, community partners, CST's and anyone else who steps foot into our building and into our lives. Teachers and staff are individuals who are passionate about helping students with special needs reach their full potential. They often go above and beyond to provide individualized support and create a positive learning environment.



We would like to "shout out" our **Media Liaison and Newsletter Coordinator, Ms. Jennifer Pavlik** who we are very grateful and lucky to have. Jen has become Westlake's Lead RBT and plays a

crucial role in our behavior department. Always keeping to task, Jen is able to support everyone's needs in an effective manner, leading us to a continued positive school climate.

"I'm incredibly fortunate to work alongside such dedicated professionals: Mr. Peneno, Ms. Kodack, and Ms. Koch. Their unwavering commitment to our program and support for our staff truly makes a difference."

This month, show your gratitude to someone else. Pick someone that you might not necessarily know or talk to often and let them know you are grateful so they feel that gratitude the next morning when they wake up !

Enjoy The Power of Gratitude - Inspirational Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75RjgtZ2tj0&ab_channel=EddiePinero

Happy Thanksgiving!

Claudine

*Media Liaison, Newsletter Coordinator and
Lead RBT, Ms. Jennifer Pavlik*



Westlake Information

Dates to Remember!

November 27, 2024 - 1:00 pm Dismissal

November 28th and November 29th - School Closed:

**December 13, 2024 - Westlake Movie Night - sponsored by the
Parent Organization**

December 13, 2024 - School Spirit Day - Wear Your Westlake shirts

December 13, 2024 - 1:00 pm - Westlake Student Holiday Shopping

December 18, 2024 - 10:00 am - Holiday Sing-along - Parents invited

December 20. 2024 - 1:00 pm Dismissal



October Spotlight!

Student of the Month!



Student of the Month

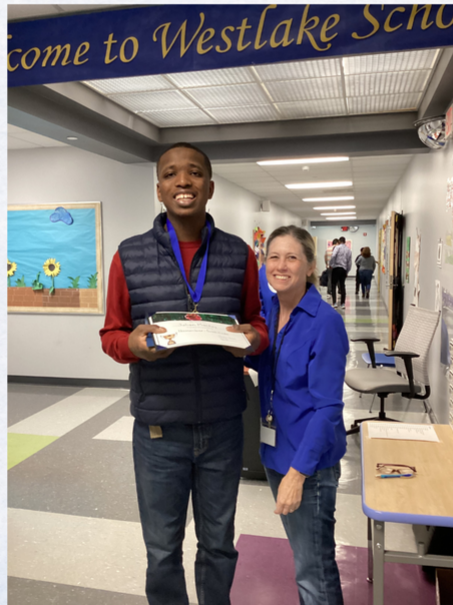


J.L. was nominated for being helpful and showing respect to staff and students!

Principal's Award Winner!



Principal's Award



J. M. was nominated for always being so polite. He is always saying Please and Thank You!

Staff Member of the Month!



Staff Member of the Month



Ms. Anne was nominated for always being so willing to help everyone!

Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!

SUNSHINE CAFE EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



J.D. was chosen because of his initiative, excellent work, his willingness, and flexibility to do whatever task is asked of him. He is always courteous and friendly with our customers. Jonathan works at Westlake's Sunshine Cafe and Snack Shack, as well as Lido's Cafe in Roselle Park every Thursday morning.

Holiday Express!



Westlake and Crossroads were treated to an amazing program, lunch, and presents from the Holiday Express!

The Holiday Express mission is to deliver music, food, gifts, financial support and friendship to those with the greatest need for the gift of human kindness during the holiday season and throughout the year.

Founded in 1993 by Tim McLoone, Holiday Express believes no one should be alone at the holidays. Our programs use the healing power of music and friendship to improve the quality of life for those often forgotten. This season, we will again be visiting 100 organizations in the metropolitan tri-state area, hosting special charitable events and bringing hope and joy to nearly 30,000 people. Of the charities Holiday Express serves, the majority are registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. For many of them, traditional sources of funding are not sufficient to provide their basic needs.











Ms. Shaw & the Sunshine Cafe!



By recognizing Native American Heritage month, the students learned about various Native American heroes such as Sean Sherman, Sitting Bull, John Herrington, and Maria Tallchief. Then the Sunshine Cafe made savory corn muffins and banana bread as our cakes of the month to celebrate Native Americans.

The students learned and discussed the origins, establishment, and traditions of Thanksgiving. To show our gratitude, the Sunshine Cafe made a Thankful poster "We have a latte to be thankful for..." decorated with the thankful messages from our customers.

This month, the students got a chance to learn different techniques to decorate desserts using a piping bag as well as prepping ingredients using a knife to chop vegetables. The baking lesson was focused on using different kitchen measuring tools correctly.

The students have been very busy working at the Snack Shack every day. The students are learning how to operate the cash register using the POS (Point of Sale) system and learning how to

process payments correctly.

November is a time to be thankful and to fill your heart with gratitude and your days with joy!











Halloween at Westlake!



Thank You Ms. Karen, Ms. Meghan, and Mr. Jeff

We celebrated Halloween with a dance in the gym! It was set up with lots of decorations and props to take photos!







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Ms. Swisher's Work Based Learning!



Work Based Learning students, are busy at Walgreens and Complete Care Nursing Home. J.B. and L.W. learned to fill the balloons. G.R. and J.K. putting puzzles together with patients.



Mr. Kurt's Class!



Our students have been keeping very busy in W79 (Mr. Kurt's class)! We have incorporated the Fall theme into our classroom activities of Math and Language Arts. Lessons observing Veterans Day and Native American Heritage Month were completed by our class as well. We also had lots of fun on Halloween and during the Holiday Express celebration.

The class recently went to Esposito Park and enjoyed the beautiful weather. Students really enjoyed being outdoors, which included a walk on a path around the park, playing soccer in the field and spending time on the playground.

In Gym, the class has been working on an obstacle course and developing their hockey skills. The students have also been enjoying Art and Music.

Our class would like to wish everyone Happy Thanksgiving! Enjoy family and friends, and safe travels to all!







WolfPack Press

Hello,

Recently we learned that November 16th is National Fast Food Day! In honor of this holiday, we thought it would be a good idea to take a survey of staff & students asking what is your favorite fast-food restaurant?

The responses ranged from Burger King to Wendy's, and everything in between. It was a tight finish, but here are the results.

The number one choice with 12 votes was ... Wendy's!

A close second was ... McDonald's with 11 votes!

And in third place was ... Dunkin with 10 votes!

Thank you everyone who participated!

Reporter: Ashanti

Recorder: Mohammed

Editor: Jonathan



Mr. Kristen our Speech Therapist!





This month in speech therapy, our sessions focused on engaging students with a variety of cultural and social themes while reinforcing speech and language goals. Key topics included Native American Heritage Month, Thanksgiving, and Election Day, which allowed us to integrate meaningful, real-world themes into our speech therapy activities. Students explored Native American culture through stories, pictures, and discussions. We focused on key aspects such as traditional cuisine, clothing, history, and important events in Native American history. In honor of the Thanksgiving season, we facilitated discussions around the concept of gratitude. Students reflected on what they are thankful for, fostering both expressive and receptive language skills. We practiced answering questions such as, "What are you grateful for?" and "Why is it important to show gratitude?" These activities supported the development of social interaction skills, with a focus on turn-taking and appropriate responses.

To connect with the theme of Election Day, we introduced activities that involved voting on everyday interests, such as favorite sports, food, and restaurants. Students created their own ballots, participated in class voting, and tallied the results on a graph. We also worked on differentiating activities to match students' individual needs, allowing for both verbal and AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) use during the voting process. A major focus throughout the month was supporting students' AAC skills by introducing new core vocabulary and encouraging the expansion of utterances. Students practiced using their AAC devices to answer questions, make requests, and engage in conversations. We emphasized the use of complete sentences and worked on answering questions in full, rather than just single words or phrases. Activities were carefully differentiated to meet each student's unique needs, ensuring that they were able to access and communicate as effectively as possible. We continued to foster social interactions by playing games, engaging in group discussions, and conducting school-wide surveys. Our older students worked on job-related social skills. These

activities were designed to help them prepare for future job sites by practicing problem-solving, appropriate communication, and navigating social situations in the workplace.

Parent Resource!



2024-25

PARENT WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

ALL WORKSHOPS BEGIN
AT 7PM!

Wed
Oct 16

DDD SERVICES: **ONLINE!**

What is DDD and How Do I Apply?

Thurs
Nov 14

SSI & MEDICAID: **ONLINE!**

The Key to Unlocking Adult Services

Wed
Jan 15

"LIFE AFTER 21" PROVIDER FAIR **IN PERSON!**

Representatives from 21+ Programs
will be in attendance

Wed
Feb 19

GUARDIANSHIP: **ONLINE!**

Is Guardianship right for my family?
What options are available?

To register for any of the events above please email [Phyllis Sandrock](mailto:PhyllisSandrock@ucesc.org) at psandrock@ucesc.org

CRANFORD THEATER

2024 SENSORY FRIENDLY PAJAMA SERIES

Lights up
Dim Lighting

Hands Busy
BYO Stimming Devices

Rules Relaxed
You and your loved ones are free to move and vocalize as long as everyone is safe

Sound Down
Movie volume decreased with attendees encouraged to bring headphones and other sensory aids

DEC. 7TH
9:00AM



THE
POLAR EXPRESS

DEC. 15TH
9:00AM



The Grinch

\$9 PER
TICKET

Santa will be making a special appearance to see some of his favorite movies!

The Cranford Theater will be collecting Toys for Tots donations to bring to the Cranford Fire Department. Donate a new, unwrapped toy or book!

Please visit Cranfordtheater.com to purchase tickets

No refunds or exchanges on the Pajama Series



CRANFORD MOVIE THEATER
25 North Avenue West
Cranford, NJ 07016



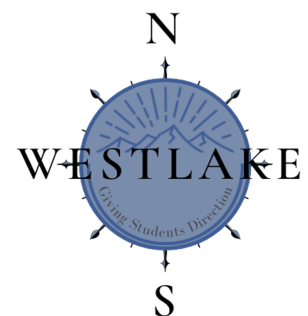


Contact Us!

Website: www.ucesc.org/schools/westlake_school

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

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



INSTAGRAM!

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Robert Peneno

Robert is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





Lamberts Mill Academy



November Newsletter
2024

"There is a calmness to a life lived in gratitude, a quiet joy."

— Ralph H. Blum

Administrator's Message

November 2024

Good Morning,

We hope this newsletter finds you well. It seems like just yesterday LMA was in full swing with Halloween activities, and just as quickly November draws to a close with the LMA annual Turkey Trot. Everyone at LMA wanted to take a moment to reflect on the month's activities and extend a warm welcome to 2 of our new staff members.

November Highlights

- **College & DVR Assemblies:** We hosted informative college and DVR assemblies to inspire our students and provide them with valuable insights into the college application process.
- **Student Council Elections:** Not only has LMA finally got Student Council off the ground this year, allowing another venue for student voice, we also completed elections. Congratulations to our newly elected Student Council officers! We look forward to their leadership and contributions to our school community.



- President - Jabari, Vice-President - Jordyn., Secretary - Laniyah, Treasurer - Angelise, Historian - Grayson

Welcoming New Staff

We are excited to welcome our newest staff members to LMA. Their expertise and enthusiasm will undoubtedly enrich our school community. Please join us in extending a warm welcome to:

- Nicole Mendelsohn - Spanish Teacher
- Michael Guidice - PE/Health TA

We believe that a strong partnership between home and school is essential to student success. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns. We are always here to support you and your child. Please take a minute to enjoy this newsletter, and we hope you have a great Thanksgiving!

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,
Reed Leibfried - Principal

Upcoming Events

December 2024 Important Dates

December 2 - Union County Vo-Tech Assembly @ LMA
December 3 - NJ4S Aces, Grief & Loss Assembly @ LMA
December 9 - LMA Field Trip (Splatter Craze)
December 19 - KEAN University Assembly @ LMA
December 20 - Early Dismissal 1pm
December 23-31 - NO SCHOOL - Winter Recess
January 1 - NO SCHOOL - New Year's Day



Staff Spotlight

Mr. Acosta

It is bittersweet that LMA share Mr. Acosta has departed his role at LMA, and the UCESC for a promotion in another school district. LMA will miss his dedication to the students and school program, and wish him nothing but the best of the luck in his future. LMA does have a new teacher taking over the Post Grad program in January 2025 who comes to us with a wealth of experience working in WBL programs, and extensive experience with special needs students.

Below are some final thoughts from Mr. Acosta,



It has been an honor and privilege to serve as the transition teacher here at Lamberts Mill Academy. In a short period of time, we have developed several meaningful relationships with businesses in the community and provided all of the students with valuable work experience. I am fortunate to have worked for the commission for the past six years and have spent time working with WRA, Project Search, and LMA. I will miss working with the students, staff, and administration every day, but I look forward to hearing about all of the wonderful things they will accomplish in the future. A huge thank you to Mr. Leibfried and Mr. Lopreiato for welcoming me to LMA and supporting the important work we are doing.

Congratulations to the 1st Marking Period Academic Honor Roll!

Lamberts Mill Academy
First Marking Period
Academic Honor Roll
2024-2025



High Honors

Gabriel B
Samantha G
John G
Mariah G
Skye G
Rahzier H
Emili H-G
Evette L-C
Jordyn M
Emma S
Amir W
Daniell E

Honors

Na'Kier B
Alexander C
Alyssa F
Logan K
Brynne M
Rhea P
Angelise P
Jack T
Janelle C

Honorable Mention

Angelique C
Jabari F
Riley G
Maria H
Brianna S
Iris W
Laniyah Y

LMA Student of the Month - November 2024

John G.

LMA is proud to announce our November student of the month as John G. John started with LMA last November, showing high levels of growth both academically and behaviorally. He was

promoted to the high school this past Spring, and has done really nicely with the transition. Staff at LMA vote each month for student of the month, and he won a majority of the votes for his improvements in class, and overall growth at LMA. We are proud to have him as our student of the month, and as a member of our school community.



Classroom Spotlights



Ms. Matusz leads LMA students to the Turtleback Zoo

10 Science students participated in a field trip to Turtleback Zoo on 11/11. The students were able to see up to 850 different wild animals up close and personal in their natural habitats. The "Touch Tank" is an interactive area where students are able to touch several different species of Sting Ray and a small Epaulette Shark in a 1,600 gallon shallow tank. There is an area where students were able to feed a giraffe, which is always a fun activity. The day would not have been complete without a ride on the famous train of the zoo, which all students and faculty truly enjoyed! This was truly a wonderful experience for the students, as many of them



Ms. Miller's Social Studies class learn about the Election & Veteran's Day

All Social Studies students spent time learning about the elements of the election process. Students viewed and engaged with an interactive map to understand the Electoral College and analyze the viewpoints of Presidential candidates on six major issues. Students were able to cast unofficial ballots and practice in a mock election. For Veterans Day, students learned about the history of Veterans Day and how it has changed since its start after World War I. Students then made cards for veterans in the community. Students thanked the veterans for their service and drew pictures that represented America.



Updates from Mr. Peter's PE/Health Class

For Physical Education, we have been participating in the Floor Hockey Unit. We began the unit with the lead-up activity of Pillow Polo where students practiced the basics of floor hockey using soft, cushioned sticks. Now the students will be using full-length floor hockey sticks. The classes all learned about the history of the sport and the background of what is now known as the NHL. Students are currently practicing skills such as passing, stickhandling, and shooting. We will also be learning about goaltending skills and game strategy as we head into the final weeks of the unit and participate in lead-up activities and games. The school also participated in the 9th Annual Lamberts Mill

have not had the opportunity to visit a zoo nor to see animals not native to New Jersey.

Academy Turkey Trot. The 5K has become a hit and the students and staff all love to be a part of the activity. Students walked/ran 5 kilometers around the parking lot the morning before Thanksgiving while listening to music and having fun with all staff and students. We even had visitors from other Commission schools join us for the walk. The event was a great success!!! For Health class we continue to study and perfect our personal hygiene routines. We have been reviewing by playing the game "Personal Hygiene Bingo". Students are learning why it is so important to have good hygiene as it relates to social and emotional health. We will continue to reinforce healthy hygiene to finish out the unit.

Halloween at The Mill

LMA celebrated Halloween with a Halloween party in school, and select students visited Crossroads school to help the students celebrate Halloween.

Below is one LMA student's experience visiting Crossroads school on Halloween day.

"My experience with Crossroads was kind of scary at first. I was scared to trigger some of the kids, but then I saw one little boy, and he was so cute. I helped him paint a pumpkin and then he laid in my lap and it melted my heart. The staff was very welcoming and appreciative that we visited. All in all, I loved it and I would do it all over again".

- Laniyah Y





LMA 9th Annual Turkey Trot

LMA Students participate in the Annual Turkey Trot

See LMA students and staff in action at the Annual Turkey Trot. Students and staff walked or ran 5km around a square setup in the parking lot. Students enjoyed music, drinks, snacks and more importantly the company and support of one another. What a great way to enter the Holiday weekend on a beautiful, fall day!





Clinical Corner - Gratitude

Gratitude is a wonderful way to strengthen relationships and show appreciation. Here are five meaningful ways to express your gratitude to your friends and family:

1. **Write a Heartfelt Note:** A handwritten letter or card expressing why you are thankful for someone's presence in your life can be a cherished keepsake.
2. **Verbal Acknowledgment:** Simply telling someone in person or over the phone how much you appreciate them and what they mean to you can have a powerful impact.
3. **Acts of Kindness:** Doing something nice for your friends or family, such as helping with chores, cooking a meal, or running an errand, shows your gratitude through action.
4. **Quality Time:** Spending time together, whether it's going for a walk, having a meal, or just chatting, shows that you value their company and enjoy being with them.

5. **Small Gifts:** Thoughtful gifts, even small ones like their favorite treat or a book they've wanted to read, can be a tangible way to show appreciation.

Each of these gestures can make your friends and family feel appreciated and valued in unique and heartfelt ways.



gratitude

[gra-ti-tude] noun.

the positive state of being grateful; an overwhelming feeling of appreciation and thankfulness, and the desire to return kindness to others.



NAMI
National Alliance on Mental Illness

Spokane

LMA 'The Mill' Merch

Show your LMA Pride!



If you would like to buy your own The Mill T-shirt for the upcoming Holiday season, you can order directly from the Custom Ink below.



Custom Ink Design 'Ima24'

View this Custom Ink design, make changes, share it with friends, or order for yourself.

[customink.com](https://www.customink.com)

Learning Experiences at LMA



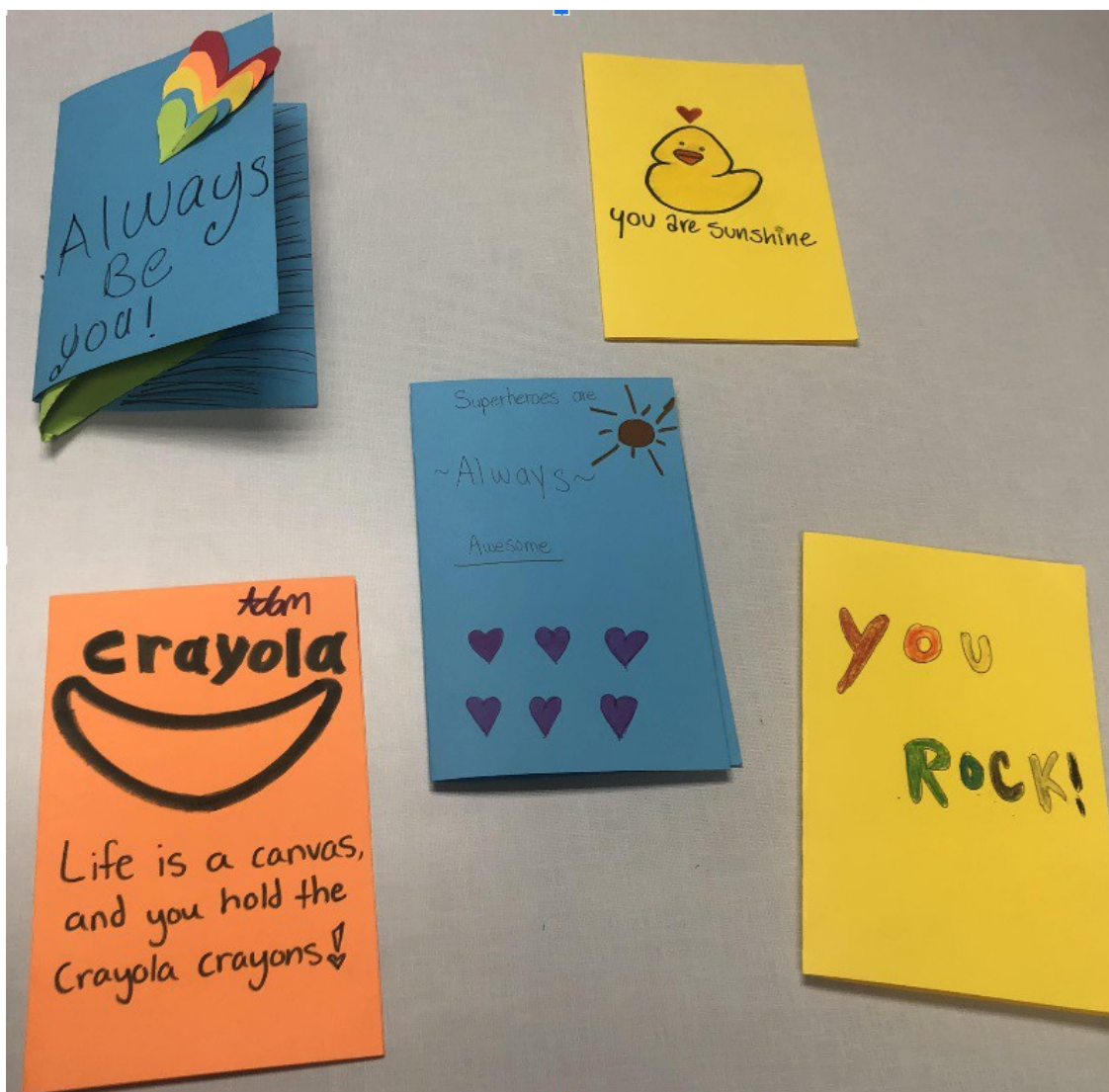
Ms. York's WIN classes
start Community Building
Circles

Ms. Floroff has DVR
Representative meet with
LMA students.

LMA student Alex gets
musical guidance from
Ms. Schneider

Group Therapy

During the month of November, we focused on gratitude and kindness. Students are learning to implement active listening skills and being respectful and supportive of others. Students also created cards and letters of love to be sent to children with terminal illnesses/disabilities. Students learned communication strategies to spread kindness and deliver positive messages to these children. We're looking forward to implementing new activities to increase student engagement in groups.



Coping with Holiday Stress - A Message from the Mental
Health Association in NJ

COPING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS

When does holiday hustle and bustle amount to too much stress?

Yes- the holidays are meant to be a time of joy and togetherness but for some, they can be a trigger of mental health challenges. Mental and substance use conditions may be exacerbated during the busy holiday season. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness or (NAMI) 64% of people with an existing mental illness say the Holidays will make their conditions worse.

Preparing meals, gift shopping, decorating and hosting family and friends, in addition to our normal responsibilities, can be overwhelming.

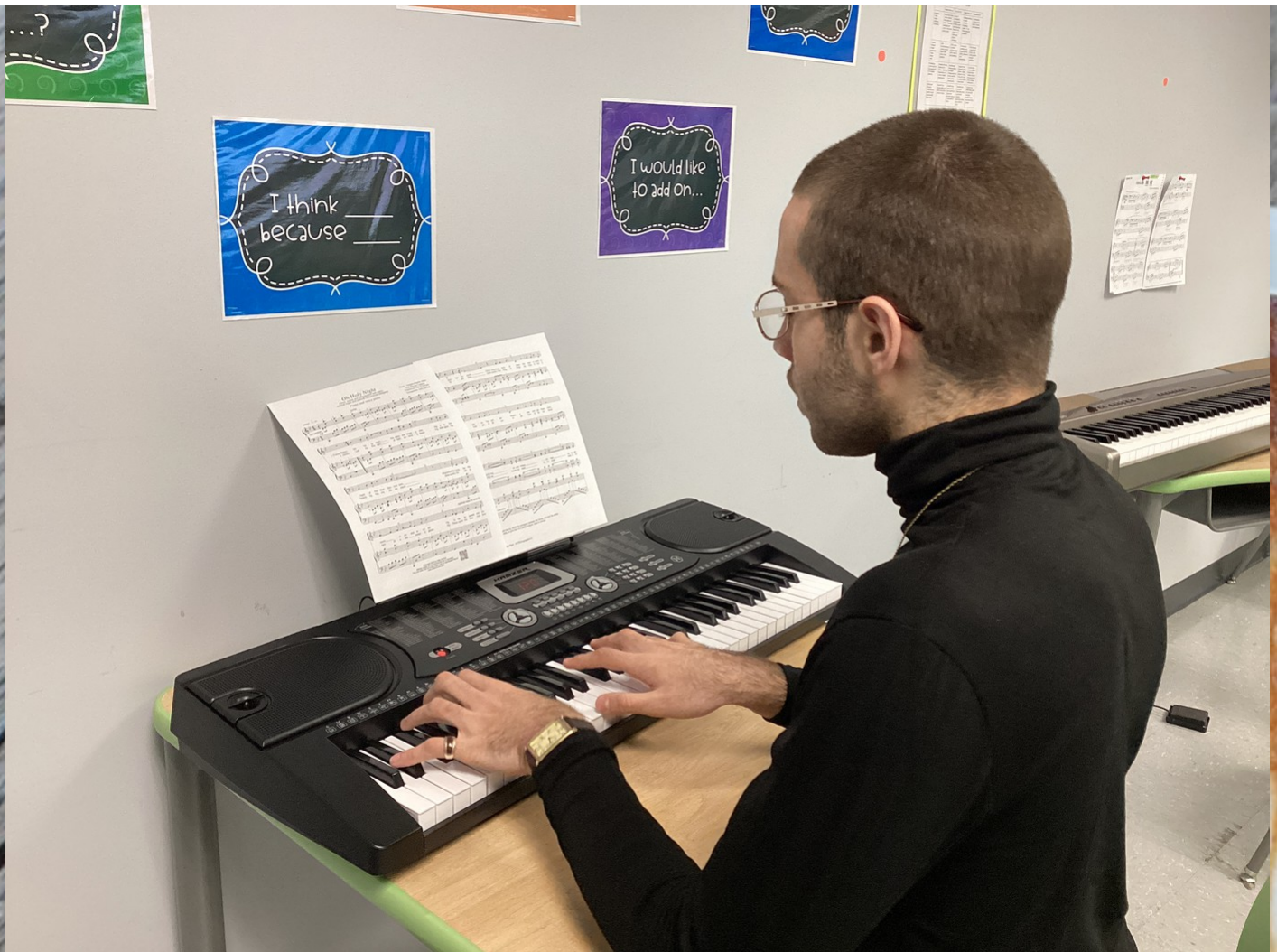
General Tips for Managing Holiday Stress

Although stress can seem to be accelerated during the holidays, there are simple steps that people can take to help remain calm, re-focus and enjoy the essence of this time of year.

1. Prioritize your schedule to include some of the activities that you enjoy the most whether that be baking cookies or reading a meditation book.
2. Incorporate others into your activities; this could include asking everyone to bring a dish instead of taking on the burden of cooking a whole dinner, or asking a friend to join you while you shop.
3. Take some time each day to be mindful of your surroundings, such as a walk in the brisk air or enjoying nature.
4. Allow yourself to remain present in the moment and enjoy the here and now. Try not to think ahead or about your "to do list".
5. Give yourself a break by making time for activities you enjoy that are not related to the holidays.
6. Use Mindfulness practices, meditation, yoga and exercise to relieve stress.
7. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, isolated or sad, do not hesitate to enlist professional help.

<https://www.mhanj.org/holiday-stress/>

Students Outside of the Classroom / Alumni



Charles W. -

Recent LMA Graduate, Charles, is now a member of the workforce. He is employed by the Institute of Music in Elizabeth, N.J., teaching music to children. This is no surprise to any individual who has had the pleasure to be in Charles's presence by his musical gifts, and strong knowledge of music history that was shared with everyone on a daily basis.

Upcoming Community Events

PROVIDER FAIR

Life After 21

Please join us for an in person provider fair. Connect with different agencies offering supports and services to our students as they transition to adulthood. All UCESC families are welcome to attend!

When

January 15, 2025
7:00 pm

Where

Work Readiness Academy
Holy Spirit Church
970 Suburban Rd, Union

Register Here



Contact Us
908-838-0613



Email
ndellavecchia@ucesc.org



Our Location
970 Suburban Rd. Union

THE UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
& THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES INVITE YOU TO JOIN US FOR

Skating with **SANTA**

for Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14TH, 2024 • 2PM – 4PM
WARINANCO SPORTS CENTER • 1 PARK DRIVE, ROSELLE

OPEN TO UNION COUNTY RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR LOVED ONES!
PRESENTS PROVIDED FOR CHILDREN AGES 12 AND UNDER BY THE MOVING NJ FORWARD FOUNDATION



A SERVICE OF THE
UNION COUNTY BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



UNION COUNTY
Department of Human Services
Living in Best Community Health



MOVING FORWARD
FOUNDATION

ELIZABETH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Every child, every learning, together.

FREE EVENT

REGISTRATION REQUIRED. SCAN
OR VISIT [UCNJ.ORG/OPDSN-REG](https://ucnj.org/opdsn-reg)



<https://ucnj.org/press-releases/public-info/2024/11/19/union-county-welcomes-the-holiday-season-with-special-skating-with-santa-event-for-residents-with-disabilities-and-special-needs/>

A flyer for the NJSave Presentation. At the top, a smiling couple is shown. Below them, the text "NJSave PRESENTATION" is in a green box. Underneath, it says "Your One-Stop Application for Benefits and Savings in New Jersey!". There are two event details: one for Wednesday, November 20, 2024, at St. Paul Senior Housing, and another for Tuesday, December 3, 2024, at ACI. Each event detail includes a photo of a group of people. At the bottom, there is a section for "Questions & Registration" with links to the website, a phone number, and an email address.

**NJSave
PRESENTATION**

Your One-Stop Application for Benefits and Savings in New Jersey!

Wednesday, November 20, 2024
1:00 to 3:00 PM
St. Paul Senior Housing
635 Amboy Ave, Edison, NJ

We will also be covering the changes coming to Medicare in 2025.


Tuesday, December 3, 2024
1:00 to 2:30 PM
ACI, 629 Amboy Ave, Edison, NJ

Questions & Registration

[adacil.org/njsave](https://www.adacil.org/njsave) 732-738-4388 NJSave@adacil.org

<https://www.adacil.org/upcoming-events-list/njsave-presentation-dec-2024>

Community Resources

A logo for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. It features the number "988" in large, bold, dark blue letters. Below it, the words "SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE" are written in smaller, bold, dark blue letters. The entire logo is set against a light blue background with a dark blue border.

988
**SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE**

A section providing contact information for the 988 Lifeline. It includes text about calling or texting 988, and a chat link. Below the text, there are two icons: one showing a speech bubble with a question mark and another showing two overlapping speech bubbles.

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

Talk with us.

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>



<https://www.2ndfloor.org/>

(888)-222-2228

1. Grounds for Sculpture Field Trip
 2. Gravity Vault Field Trip
 3. Monthly Community Meetings celebrating student awards.
 4. WBLE at Clark Public Library, Hilton (Springfield) and Chili's in Clark.
-

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.



LMA Smore

LMA is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



CROSSROADS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

November 2024

Message from the Administration

Dear Crossroads Community,

It's hard to believe that November is already coming to a close and the holiday season is upon us! It has been a fantastic month filled with learning, growth, and memorable experiences for our students. One of the highlights of this month was the **Holiday Express Party** at Westlake on November 12th. The students had an amazing time listening to the band play and dancing along to festive holiday music. Watching their faces light up as they met Santa, the Grinch, Elmo, Cookie Monster, and other beloved characters was truly heartwarming—a memory we won't soon forget!



This month, we also focused on **gratitude** as part of our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) theme. It has been wonderful to see students and staff reflecting on and sharing what they are thankful for. Gratitude is an essential skill that helps build stronger connections and foster positivity in our school community.

As we look forward to December, there are many exciting activities planned! On **December 12th**, our Kindergarten through 5th-grade students will take their first trip to **Lifetown**. This incredible facility provides a safe and supportive environment where individuals with special needs can practice essential life skills. Lifetown's simulated indoor city allows our students to explore tasks like navigating a bank, handling money, and making purchases in a controlled yet realistic setting. Beyond the city, students will enjoy sensory exploration rooms, art and dance spaces, and adaptive recreational areas, including a bowling alley and gym designed to meet their unique needs. These

trips are part of our ongoing efforts to build independence and confidence in our students, empowering them to thrive both inside and outside the classroom.

We are also thrilled to announce that our **Crossroads Holiday Event** will take place on **December 18th**, and we would love to have parents and families join us! A detailed schedule for classroom times will be shared as the date approaches. We're keeping our fingers crossed that a special visitor (hint: Santa!) will make an appearance to deliver presents to the students and take photos. As we embrace the holiday spirit, we remain grounded in our schoolwide theme, **Let Every Voice Empower**. Whether through music and dance at the Holiday Express event or practicing life skills at Lifetown, every experience is an opportunity for our students to express themselves, grow, and shine in their own unique ways.

Thank you for being such an integral part of our Crossroads community. Your support and partnership continue to make all of this possible. Wishing you and your families a joyful and peaceful start to the holiday season.

Warm regards,

Matt, Danielle, and Stacey

Upcoming Dates

November 27, 2024 - Early Dismissal (1:00 PM)

November 28, 2024 - School Closed (Thanksgiving)

November 29, 2024 - School Closed (Thanksgiving)

December 11, 2024 - Parent Education Meeting with Speech Department (12:30 - 1:30)

December 18, 2024 - Crossroads Holiday Event (Parents Welcome)

December 20, 2024 - Early Dismissal (1:00 PM)

December 23, 2024 - January 1, 2025 - School Closed for Holiday Recess

January 1, 2025 - School Reopens

Crossroads Staff and Student Spotlight



Student of the Month - Jacob

This month, we have so many reasons to name Jacob B our student of the month. He is one of the students at Crossroads with a perfect attendance record. In class Jacob enjoys pretend play and at times you can see him become a Policeman, a Firefighter, a Doctor, or an Artist. He demonstrates his talents during free play where he gets dressed on his own using clothing of his own choices.

Jacob's communication skills are progressing nicely. Jacob demonstrates his skills during manding sessions by using full sentences to request his favorite toys, foods, or activities using Proloquo2go. During morning arrival, he locates a tablet and requests crayons and paper to create innovative art work, his favorite activity. Jacob enjoys playing with his classmates, adults, and peers from other classrooms during recess time.

Jacob is very proud of all his achievements in all areas of development, especially daily living, play, and communication. He has also been strong in his pre-academic readiness skills. Jacob is very independent and determined to get adult's attention in order to get what he wants.



Staff Spotlight - Sara Winter - Occupational Therapist

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

This is my second year working at the commission.

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

Most people are surprised to find out that, before I was an occupational therapist, I was as an editor in educational publishing working on reading programs.

3. What is your dream vacation?

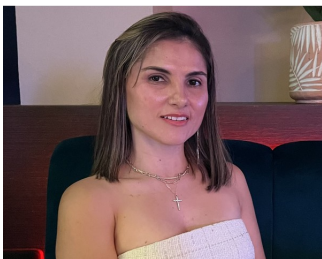
My dream vacation to go to Tuscany and the Amalfi coast

4. What is your favorite meal?

Really good sushi

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

My greatest accomplishment is raising my two sons, Sam (9) and Adam (6).



Staff Spotlight - Gloria Molano - Teacher's Assistant

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

I started working in October 2023 as an ESS sub but in March 2024 I started working directly with the commission at Crossroads.

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

I studied aesthetics and cosmetology before getting my license to work on the care of children.

3. What is your dream vacation?

One of my dreams is to go to Italy and enjoy the food and the culture

4. What is your favorite meal?

My favorite food is Pasta

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

First of all, I would like to thank God and you for the wonderful opportunity to work in this beautiful institution, where every day I learn new things. I am happy and proud to be here despite English not being my primary language.

Classroom Spotlights



Ms. Hannah's Classroom

Happy November!

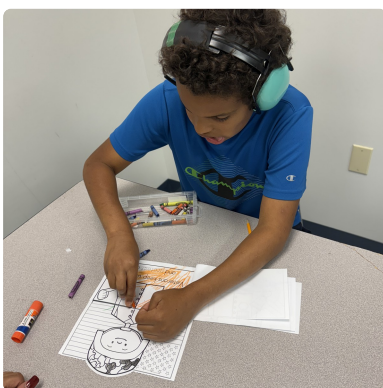
This month in 104, we have been practicing our independent skills and getting ready for the upcoming holidays. Earlier this month, we had a chance to go to a Holiday party where we got to do crafts, see some fun characters, and listen to some great music. In the classroom, our students have been working on skills like greeting others, staying on task at the table, identifying their own names, and potty training. Every morning, we start going through our daily routines as soon as they walk through the door. We also do a cooking lesson and craft each week as a special treat but

also to practice our listener responding along with other skills. In November, we made turkeys out of rice cakes and some of our favorite sweets as well as pumpkin pie from paper plates to hang on the refrigerator. This week we are making placemats that highlight what we are thankful for like our families, friends, and teachers.





Ms. Daria's Classroom



Room 220A has been busy with Community based Instruction trips going to places such as Clark Commons, the Cranford movie theater, one of our other schools (Westlake), Shoprite and Costco. We are learning about being safe in the community and being appropriate in stores and the movie theater. We are deep into our routine at school, participating in morning meetings, working on academics, delivering breakfast to our classmates and setting up lunch for the middle school. We got to celebrate the holidays a

little early with The Holiday Express at our Westlake school. It was so much fun and we hope that we continue to participate every year. It was a great way to kick off the Holiday season.

We are learning all about what it is like to be a Middle Schooler! Being part of middle school brings much more responsibility to us. We deliver breakfast, set up lunch, run a school store, and collect

orders for things such as utensils, office supplies, gloves and tissues. After we collect the orders we work hard on filling them and delivering them to the classrooms. We are developing our social skills even more when we get to eat together as a middle school program and sit with friends that are not in our classroom. We are looking forward to our holiday break and spending time with our families! Hope everyone has a great Thanksgiving break!



Therapy Spotlight - Ms. Aliza - Physical Therapist



We are having a great time in physical therapy (PT) this month! During PT we work on functional mobility to help our students navigate their school environment safely and confidently. For example we practice negotiating the stairs, walking in the hallways and sitting with upright posture in our chairs. We also work on gross motor skills such as running, jumping, hopping and ball skills. Obstacle courses are often utilized to work on multiple skills at once in a fun and engaging way.

In addition the PT department has been providing movement groups with an emphasis on gross motor skills to our preschool classes. Our students are having a great time moving together with obstacle courses, ball games and movement songs! In particular they love our new turtle balance stones!

Overall our students are having a great month in PT and are continuing to make steady progress towards their PT goals!



Specials Spotlight - Behavior Team




Happy November!

Our team has been hard at work supporting our students and teachers! This year, we're thrilled to welcome two new Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs), Thomas Dorans and Danielle Johnson, to the behavior team. In addition, we're proud to share that Jennifer Bace has been promoted to Lead RBT. In her new role, Jennifer will focus on training and supporting new students and staff.

Three of our current RBTs—Andrew Weiler, Halley Daniels, and Spencer Powers—are advancing their skills by pursuing Master's degrees in Applied Behavior Analysis, working toward becoming Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs).

Professional growth remains a priority for our team. All staff members have completed certification as specialists in crisis management procedures, with additional advanced training for those working with younger children or students with specialized needs. During recent professional development days, we conducted workshops on topics such as:

- Neurodiversity
- Token economies

- 
- Functions of behavior
 - Differential reinforcement
 - Direct instruction methods
 - Safety and classroom awareness
 - Antecedent supports
 - Graphing and analysis techniques for RBTs

Additionally, our BCBAs, the Supervisor of Behavioral Services, and our Lead RBT completed Safety Care Trainer certification, which they turn-key to the entire Crossroads staff annually.


Last month, we had a blast participating in Halloween group activities, dressing up as the Toy Story crew, and winning the award for Best Group Costume! Looking ahead, our RBTs will begin rotating into new classrooms next month to support even more students and staff.

Parent Support

We value collaboration with our Crossroads families! Parents seeking support, resources, or consultation are encouraged to reach out to the behavior team. Whether you have questions about the services we provide or need assistance, we're here to help. You can contact:

- Karly Barreto: kbarreto@ucesc.org
- Andrew Weiler: aweiler@ucesc.org
- Stacey Kodack: skodack@ucesc.org

Thank you for your continued support of our amazing team as we work to make this year a success!





Nurses Corner - Nurse Lynn

Vision Screening for Crossroads Students

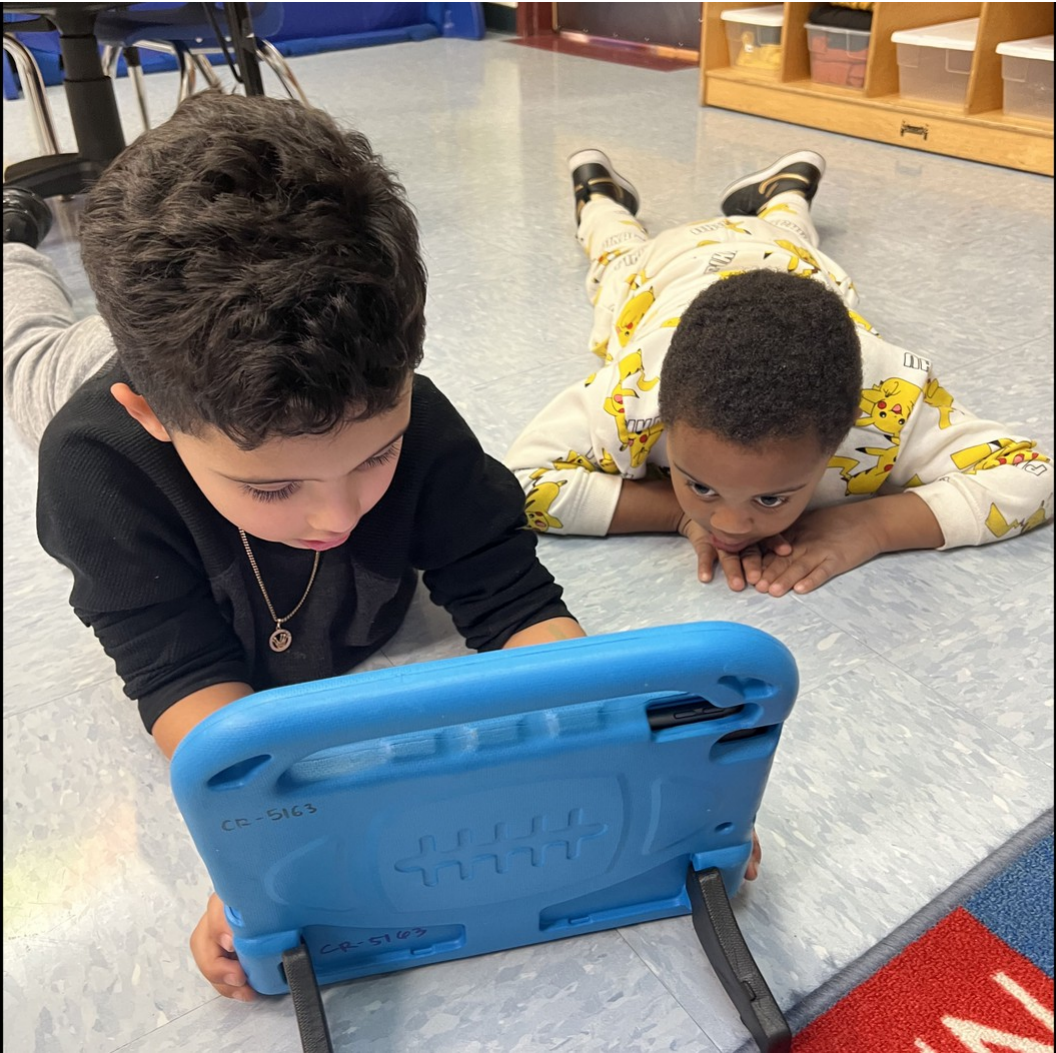
We are excited to announce that we will be hosting a **two-day vision screening** for Crossroads students. The screenings will take place on **January 15th and 16th, 2025** at the school.



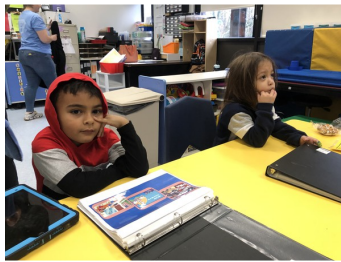
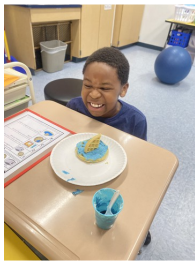
To ensure your child can participate, please keep an eye out for the **consent forms** that will be sent home soon. We encourage all parents to complete and return the form to allow their child to take part in this important health initiative.

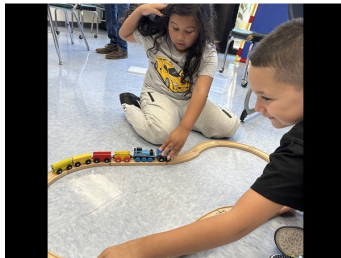
Thank you for your support in helping us promote the well-being of our students!

November at Crossroads



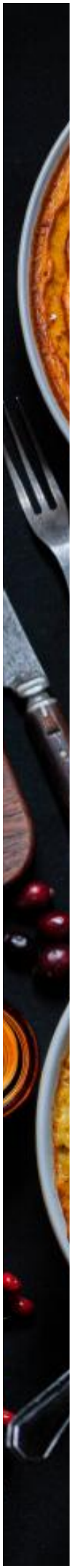


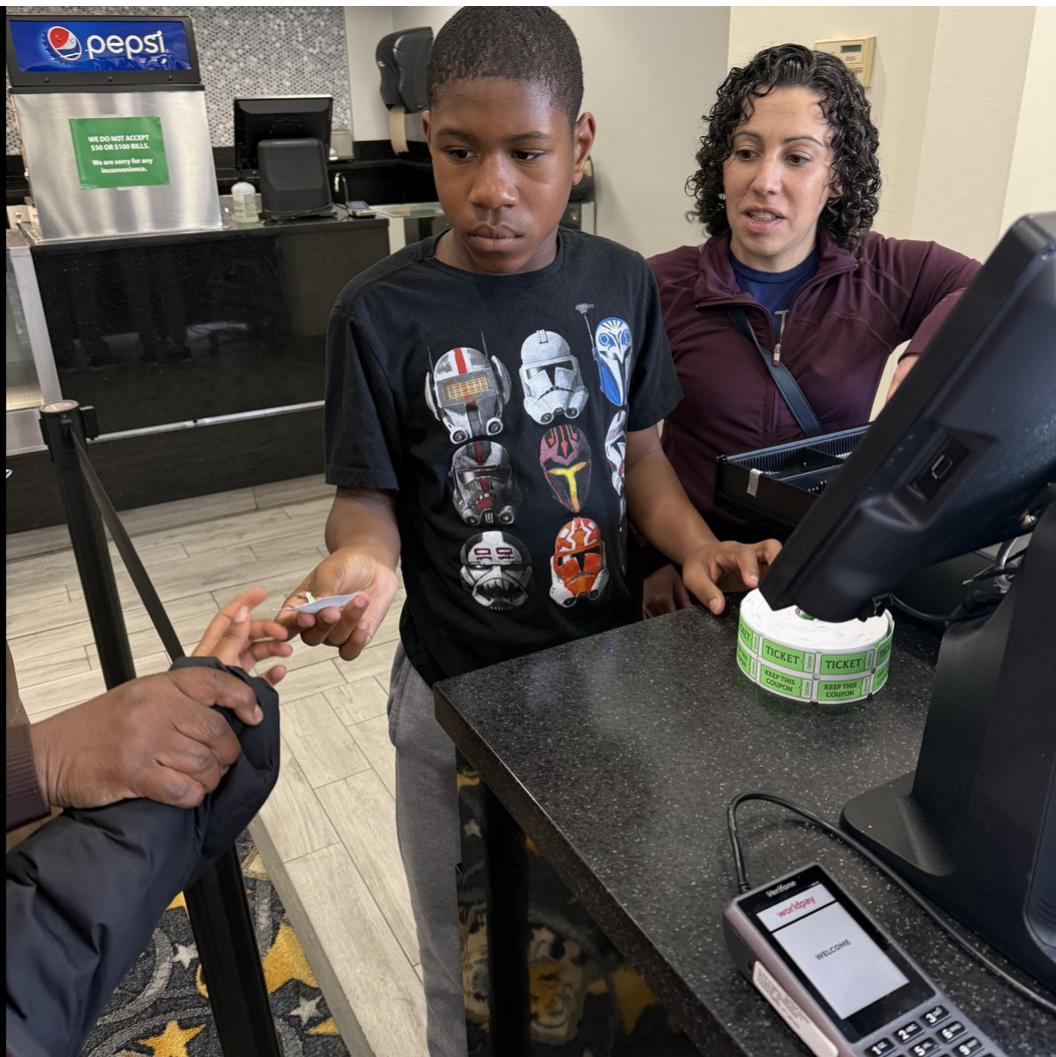




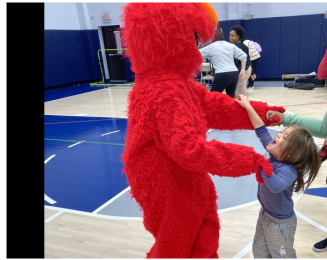








Holiday Express Party









Parent Resources

Thanksgiving Tips and Ideas from the Behavior Team:

Thanksgiving is a time for family, gratitude, and celebration. For children with autism, the holiday season can be both exciting and challenging. To ensure a joyful and inclusive Thanksgiving experience, it's essential to plan activities that cater to their unique needs and interests. The following activities are designed to make Thanksgiving more enjoyable and meaningful.

Sensory-Friendly Thanksgiving Crafts

Creating Thanksgiving-themed crafts can be an excellent way to engage children with autism. Consider setting up a craft station with feathers, construction paper, and safety scissors for making hand turkeys or Thanksgiving cards.

Thanksgiving Social Stories

Develop and read social stories about Thanksgiving traditions to help children understand and prepare for the holiday. This activity for children with autism can reduce anxiety and improve understanding.

Thanksgiving Sensory Bins

Create sensory bins filled with Thanksgiving-themed items like dried corn kernels, small pumpkins, and artificial leaves. This activity for children can help with sensory exploration and fine motor skills.

Quiet Zone Setup

Designate a quiet area where children can retreat if they feel overwhelmed. Stock it with comfort items, noise-canceling headphones, and calming activities for autism to provide a safe space during Thanksgiving gatherings.

Thanksgiving Scavenger Hunt

Organize a simple scavenger hunt with Thanksgiving-related items. This activity for kids with autism can encourage movement, observation skills, and family interaction in a structured way.

Adaptive Cooking Activities

Involve children in simple, autism-friendly Thanksgiving cooking activities like mixing ingredients, rolling out dough, or decorating cookies. This can help develop life skills and provide a sense of accomplishment.

Thanksgiving-Themed Sensory Play

Set up sensory play stations with materials like pumpkin-scented playdough, textured leaves, or a cornmeal sensory bin. These activities for autism can provide calming sensory input during the excitement of Thanksgiving.



Visual Schedule for Thanksgiving Day

Create a visual schedule outlining the day's events to help children with autism understand and prepare for the Thanksgiving activities. This can reduce anxiety and provide a sense of structure.

Gratitude Tree

Set up a "Gratitude Tree" where family members can add leaves with things they're thankful for. This activity encourages emotional expression and family bonding.

Thanksgiving Movement Games

Incorporate movement-based games with a Thanksgiving theme, such as "Turkey Tag" or "Pumpkin Roll." These activities for children with autism can help with gross motor skills and provide necessary physical activity during the holiday.

Creating an Environment During Thanksgiving Activities for Autism


While engaging activities can enhance the Thanksgiving experience for children with autism, it's essential to create a calm and structured environment to minimize sensory overload and anxiety.

Here are some tips to consider:

- **Prepare a Visual Schedule:** Create a visual schedule that outlines the sequence of events and activities for the day.
- **Designate a Quiet Space:** Identify a quiet, low-stimulation area where your child can take breaks or retreat if overwhelmed.
- **Limit Decorations and Lighting:** Excessive decorations, flashing lights, or strong scents can be overwhelming for children with autism.
- **Provide Sensory Tools:** Have a variety of sensory tools available, such as noise-canceling headphones, fidget toys, or chewable jewelry, to help your child self-regulate and cope with sensory input.
- **Communicate Expectations:** Clearly explain the expectations for the day, including any changes in routine or special events.
- **Involve Your Child:** Encourage your child to participate in the planning and preparation process.
- **Respect Preferences:** Respect your child's preferences for certain foods, activities, or environments.

Reminders (Cold Weather)

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](#)

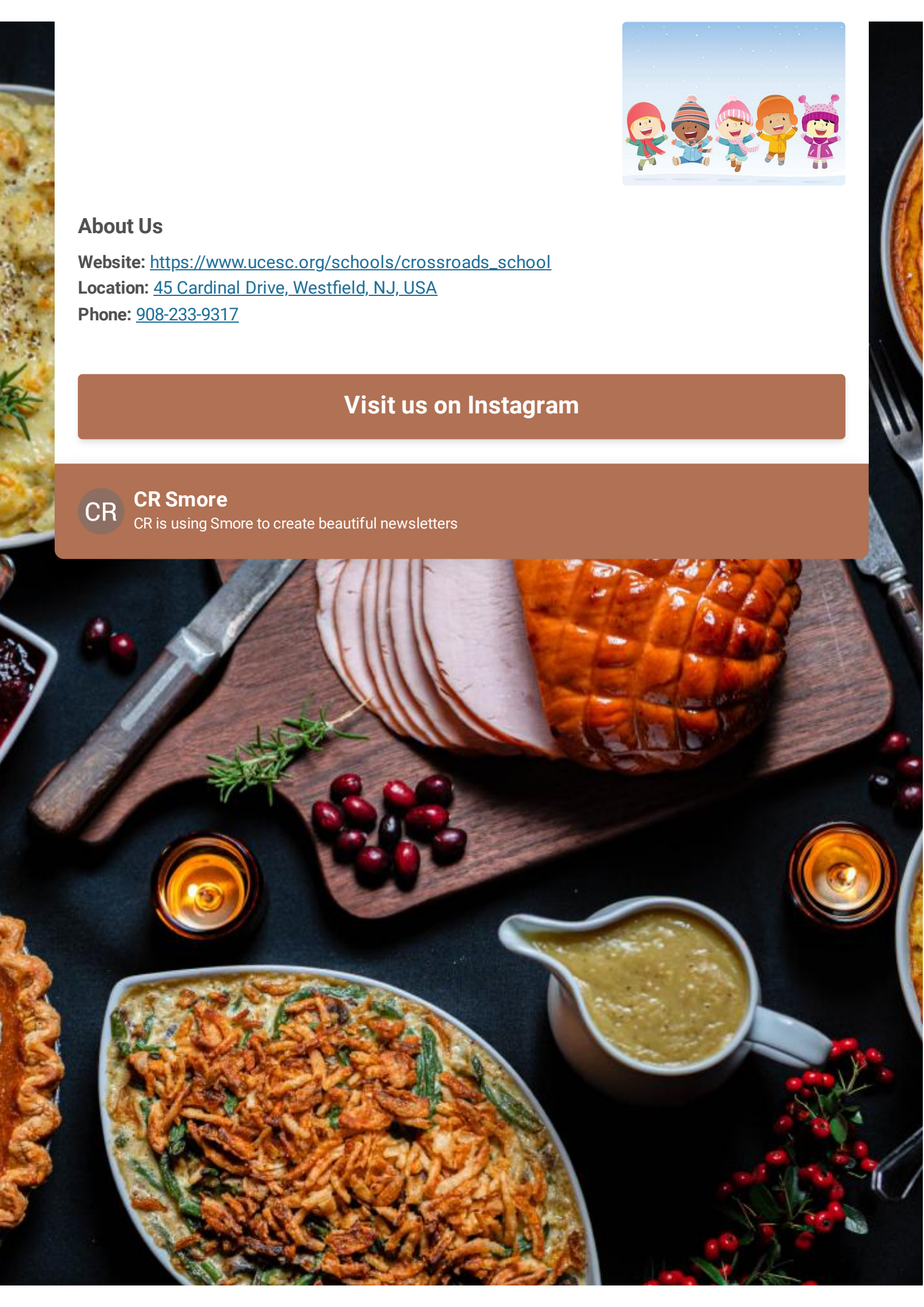
Phone: [908-233-9317](tel:908-233-9317)

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Let Every Voice Empower

Newsletter 24-25

November



A Message From The Principal

Dr. Balsamello presented at the UCESC Board of Director's meeting during the November meeting on 11/6/24. He discussed the successful opening of the school as well as new initiatives such as Student Success Plans as well as reviewed the October Newsletter. At Hillcrest Academy South Campus (HAS), students were able to enjoy two incentive days with activities in observance of Native American Heritage Month and Thanksgiving themes as well as a surprise attendance incentive so all students present on 11/27/24 were able to visit the Westlake Sunshine Cafe.



November Important Dates

NOVEMBER 2024

| SUN | M | T | W | TH | F | SSN |
|-----|---|-------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|-----|
| | | | | 31 Halloween | 1 Dia de los Muertos | 2 |
| 3 | 4 1 PM Dismissal for Faculty Professional Development | 5 Election Day | 6 | 7 NJEA Teacher Convention | 8 NJEA Teacher Convention | 9 |
| 10 | 11 Veteran's Day | 12 Fire Safety Assembly | 13 | 14 End of 1st Marking Period | 15 Start of 2nd Marking Period | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 Incentive Field Trip for 1st Marking Period Honor Roll | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 Thanksgiving Movie Day/Early Dismissal | 28 Thanksgiving | 29 | 30 |

Student of the Month

November - Rosemary

Congratulations to Rosemary for being our overall Student of the Month! She has worked hard and been very dedicated in her classes to receive this honor. Keep up the excellent work!



Faculty "Getting to Know You"!

Mrs Wrzesinski Favorites:

Favorite movie: The Godfather Trilogy

Favorite food: Chicken Parm

Favorite color: Purple and Black

Favorite book: The Count of Monte Cristo

Favorite travel spot: anywhere near water

Favorite extra: History documentaries, craft fairs, my family, glitter



"Let Your Voice Empower" Teacher Recognitions

November - Appreciate

This year's district wide theme of "Let Your Voice Empower", teachers are awarded pins in different areas of empowerment. The November theme was 'Appreciate'. As role models for our students, it is important to be an example of what empowerment looks like and how we can empower others to do the same.

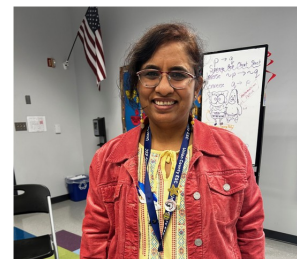
The faculty/staff picked for this month's honor have shown not only how to appreciate what they are given but also, we are appreciative for what they have done for HAS! Congratulations!



Ms Pradel



Mr Fritz



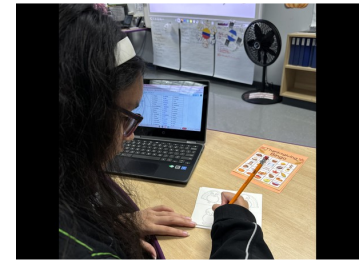
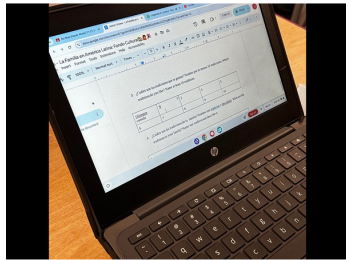
Mrs Arora

Teacher's Corner:

Mrs Flores - Spanish

The students worked on the unit "*La Familia y las Tradiciones*" in Spanish class. Students distinguished the similarities and differences between the patterns of celebrations, family and food of the target culture related to activities, family, and celebrations of the local culture in different Spanish countries. This unit fits precisely in the social studies component of high school standards, where students are exposed to different experiences, family traditions, foods and

lifestyles of other people around the world with *“Las Tradiciones Típicas”*. Students are able to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between practices of the culture studied. For instance, students have multiple opportunities to compare and contrast *“Las Tradiciones Típicas”*, which is one of the traditions in Spain and around the world, dating back since the rule of the Aztec Empire and *“Posadas”*. Students discussed and learned about the family tradition since it addresses multiculturalism; helping students develop a sense of diversity and respect for other cultures. Then, as an assessment students wrote and illustrated their own version of the *“Las Tradiciones Típicas”*. In addition, students worked in different projects in which they had to create a well-organized research about *“La Familia y las Tradiciones Alrededor del Mundo”* in the school/ home in order to describe their favorite Tradition in Spanish and then illustrate each tradition. Students are able to engage in conversations, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions and compare and contrast different family traditions from the Spanish-speaking countries and the United States.



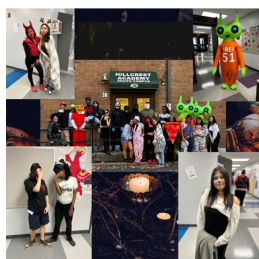
Mr Barone - Phys Ed/Health

In November, students have been participating in a basketball unit on days we have been in the Lamberts Mill Academy gym. Some mini games include 3 on 3 games and also a 3-point Shootout. When in the Fitness Center, the students have been completing workouts using the fitness equipment and also enjoying ping-pong tournaments as well as games of billiards. In Health, the students have just wrapped up their Understanding Health and Wellness unit.



Halloween

Halloween is a fun and festive time to kick off the fall season. Students this year really took the holiday seriously and came to school looking fantastic! From the creative face paint to the fun inflatable suits, our students came prepared to celebrate. During the first period of the day, students embarked on a creative virtual scavenger hunt created by Ms Vlastaras. Congratulations to the student winner Martha A. on being the first to complete correctly and submit the scavenger hunt! Then students broke off into different classrooms to enjoy an incentive Halloween themed movies that included The Addams Family, Nightmare Before Christmas, Corpse Bride, Beetlejuice, Hocus Pocus 1 & 2, Ghostbusters, and Monster House.



Diwali

One of the many things we love to do at HAS is share and celebrate our different cultures. Of course it was no surprise that Mrs. Arora, HAS's Science teacher, was excited to share about Diwali with staff and students. A classroom was decorated with traditional Diwali garland, trinkets, and sweets (candy). Students and staff came in groups to visit the room but not before Mrs Arora gave a traditional Diwali greeting at the door. Once everyone entered, Mrs Arora gave a brief explanation of the holiday, its significance, and what the different decorations represented. Before departing the room, the groups were offered to take sweets in celebration.



Fire Safety Assembly

Earlier this month, Ms Arora's Forensics classes attended a fire safety assembly. Captain Kelber from the Westfield Fire Department came to speak on safety tips for different fire scenarios. Some of the more common fire safety tips were about candles, carbon monoxide, cooking, electrical, smoke alarms, and what to do if the home catches on fire. Captain Kelber also explained how to use a fire extinguisher in case of an emergency.



1st Marking Period Honor Roll Field Trip

Our first marking period came to a close this month. Once grades were officially completed, the HAS honor roll list was completed into 3 tiers:

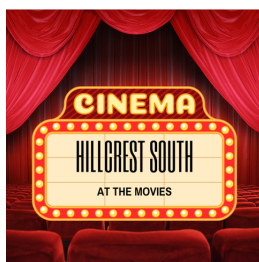
1st Tier - all A's

2nd Tier - Mostly A's and some B's

3rd Tier - Mostly A's & B's with 1 C

Students who were in great behavioral standing that made it into one of the 3 tiers celebrated their accomplishments by attending a trip to the Cranford Movie Theater. Students got to enjoy popcorn and a drink while they watched Red One.

Congratulations on your accomplishments and we all look forward to see what you all will do in the second marking period!

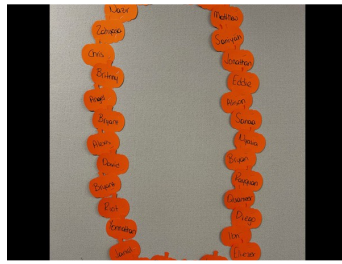
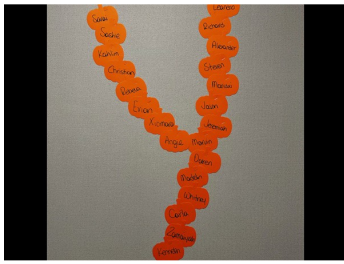


HAS is Thankful For:

Teachers are thankful for...

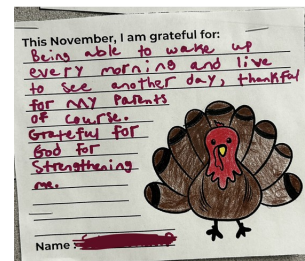
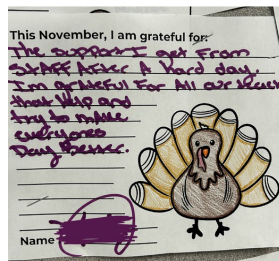
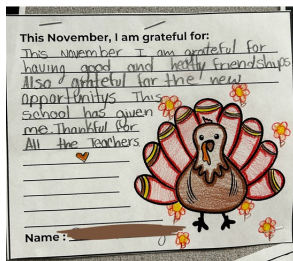
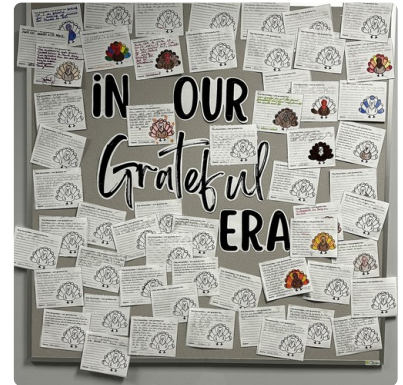
...our students! The students bring life to our school. They give the teachers a purpose and a reason to come to school every day. As all teachers know, education never truly ends. Even being a teacher, there is still a lot to learn and our students are a key element in that. The teachers at HAS are always looking to be the best role models they could possibly be for our students and by extension, trying to be the best version of themselves.





Students are thankful for...

...a lot! High school students are at that important age where they are trying to cross the gap from childhood into adulthood. It is so easy to get lost during this stage of their lives, so any support our students receive makes them feel secured and loved. In our display, students expressed their gratitude towards friends, family, and the faculty and staff at HAS.



Students Outside of School

Nailed It!

Alison has been an at home nail technician for the past couple years. She became influenced by social media that showed her that getting your nails done for a simple nail set was very expensive at the nail salon. She made a choice to save her money and get the supplies needed to do her own nails. As time passed, Alison began to take on clients and spread her business all over social media. Through the support of her friends and family, she has been doing nails ever since. When asked how being a nail tech makes her feel, Alison replied that it makes her happy as it has ignited her passion for creativity and also make some money in the process.





About Us

Hillcrest Academy South Campus 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)

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