



# Hillcrest North February 2025 MR

February 2025

Si usted desea leer "The Newsletter" en otra lengua que no sea inglés, hay un botón para traducir la página en la parte superior de la computadora (Translate). Le llevará a la siguiente página para que presione (Translated) y escoja la lengua en que usted desea leer.

## Principal's Message



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

February has been a very productive month at HAN. Students are actively engaged in their studies as they work on projects in the classroom. We celebrated the success from the first semester by taking an "Incentive Trip" together as a school community. Several of our students made Honor Roll and a large percentage of them missed it by a grade or two.

Our community service project of the month was students helping Crossroads School assemble Pine Wood Derby cars for an up and coming event they are having. We received wonderful feedback from Crossroads School about the work we did and how much it was appreciated.

We also, as a school community, worked on our Student Success Plans during advocate periods and participated in Restorative Circles. These two school wide initiatives have had a real impact

on students and staff. We will continue to plan these activities throughout the duration of the school year.

HAN continues to be a safe space for students where they can thrive academically and socially while individually soaring to new heights!

Keep it up, HAN!

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

Sincerely,

John Marquet  
Principal

## Monthly Data

Enrolled - 88

Accepted - 3

Disenrolled - 1

Fire Drill - February 24th

Lockdown Drill - February 19th

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## Upcoming Dates

March 10th - Students Early Dismissal at 1PM

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## Monthly Awards



**Principal's Awards for January**



**Perfect Attendance Awards for January**



**Honor Roll for Marking Period 2**

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# *Teacher Spotlight*

*HAN Teacher of the Year - Lilian Flores*



*HAN Support Staff Members of the Year - Logan Castro*



## *Restorative Circles*

### **In Mrs. Rehwinkel's Class**

My classes participated in a restorative circle on February 14, 2025. We discussed the Super Bowl halftime show. The students were engaged and some students that usually don't talk were willing to participate. It was a very good activity for Valentine's Day.

For one student, it was the first time she participated in a restorative circle. "It was a bit awkward for the first time doing a circle."

Other students wrote:

"I liked the restorative circle because it was fun to hear and express other people's opinion about the Super Bowl."

"It's fun to participate in an academic game."

### **In Ms. Lederman's Class**

We watched a video on Instagram about why it is only books that are banned when movies, TV shows and video games have the same content that books have. The answer was that books



provide the opportunity to think and internalize. We then discussed why this generation does not seem to like long-form reading - decreasing attention spans. We also discussed if Generation Z is really the "Fight Generation".

"I loved the restorative circle that I participated in class because I think it's very important to hear others' opinions. Hearing the opinions of my classmates made me open my mind to new perspectives and made me realize I have more in common than I thought with my classmates." - Sofia

"Throughout this year I've felt as if I don't really know my classmates. I usually mind my own and keep to myself. However, the restoration circle has shown me the difference of when I know I'm not alone and has helped me getting to know the people around me and the environment that I am put into. This activity, it makes me feel safe and as if I can finally express myself, but also getting to see others express themselves so freely without judgment makes me feel good, knowing that I can understand them little by little." Katie

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## *In the Classroom*



### **Media Literacy Class**

In media literacy class, we've been closely watching the interaction between the White House and the Associated Press News wire service regarding the use of the Gulf of Mexico/America. We reviewed the definition and purpose of Media Literacy [building an understanding of the role of media in society, as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy ([www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org))].

We also reviewed the First Amendment and discussed whether freedom of the press also includes press access, which the White House contends that it does not. We discussed if the White House had retaliated against AP News for viewpoint discrimination.

Students then became the judge in the now official lawsuit the AP News is bringing against members of the White House. They are evaluating and determining who is on the constitutional side of the First Amendment: The White House or AP News.

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### **Physical Education Class**

During the month of February, students in the HAN Health/Phys Ed department have learned the ins and out of CPR. Students are now able to identify when CPR needs to be administered, having the ability to spot symptoms or signs of cardiac arrest. Students will continue to physically practice

CPR in class, learning proper steps to ensure the scene is safe, call for help, secure an AED machine and physically administer CPR as needed.



## *Incentive Trip - Bowling*





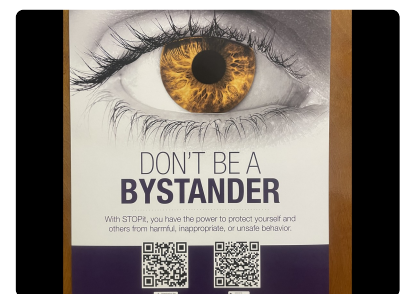
# *Bake Sale & Valentine's Day & Spirit Week*



## *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://ucesc.org/schools/hillcrest_academy_north)

Phone Number: (908) 233-9366

Website: [https://ucesc.org/schools/hillcrest\\_academy\\_north](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](https://ucesc.org)



**John Marquet**

John is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





## Message from the Administrators

**“A day without a friend is like a pot without a single drop of honey left inside.”-Winnie the Pooh**

February may be few in days, but at Westlake School, it's jam packed with activities, events and impactful lessons throughout the month. February began with students hypothesizing and participating in a survey whether Spring would come sooner or later based on the Groundhog seeing his shadow. Unfortunately, it seems we'll have to keep the sweaters out a bit longer.

One of the many prevailing themes planned, practiced and applied throughout instructional and social groups this month was the concept of cooperation and the art of being a good friend. Some in-school activities that classes participated in that promoted these ideals were reading “Rainbow Fish” and discussing “good friend” traits, as well as recognizing classroom peers when they exhibit these traits by placing a “Friendship” ticket into a student's mailbox. High School classes used the concept of self-reflection to identify what friendship traits they feel they embody and how they can use them during social situations. Some classes made baked “Goody Bags” for loved ones, while others creatively addressed “friendship” by creating a paper chained “link” of at least 1 word a day that describes a good friend. These interlocking links with words like “kind,” “generous,” “patient” and “helpful” were connected to form a beautiful paper



“friendship chain” that runs across the classroom. On Valentine’s Day, the gymnasium was decorated with red, pink and white decorations and hearts, while Kids Bop dance music had us all moving and grooving during our “Friendship Day Dance.”

Presidents’ Day was addressed in various ways through discussions on accomplishments of historical past Presidents and informative lessons on why we honor them. Inspirational and courageous African-Americans who inspired and advocated for inclusion, diversity, equality and social justice were part of active discussions and incorporated into Black History lessons highlighting historical events and movements, and inspirational leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Jackie Robinson and Rosa Parks.

Till next time my friends, be good to yourself and each other!

Bobby P and Claudine T.



## Westlake Information

- Current enrollment: 53
- Referrals: 4
- Acceptances: 1
- Fire Drill: February 7, 2025
- Emergency Management Drill: February 11, 2025



## February Spotlight!

### Student of the Month!



## *Student of the Month*



E.K. was so excited to be our Student of the Month! E.K. works hard at the Sunshine Cafe and at two jobs in the community. He works at Overlook Hospital and at Complete Care Nursing Home. He is always willing to help a friend.

## **Principal's Award Winner!**





## *Principal's Award*



J.C. is a new student at Westlake. Since starting, J.C. has made new friends and a hard worker in the classroom!

## Staff Member of the Month!



## *Staff Member of the Month*



Ms. Claudia is our Staff Member of the Month. Ms. Claudia is such a great mentor to our Work Based Learning Students. She takes students to a variety of job sites in Westlake School and out in the community!

## **Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!**

# SUNSHINE CAFE EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



M.M. is the Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month for February! He has worked very hard and made a lot of improvements since September! He is very respectful to customers and his coworkers! When he heard the news, he said, "You guys have made me so happy! The happiest in the world!".



## The Sunshine Cafe!







**Thank you to our fantastic Friendship Dance Committee! Ms. Marrelly, Ms. Sakeenah, and Ms. Sagal decorated, baked cupcakes for the kids, and handed out stuffed animals to the kids.**

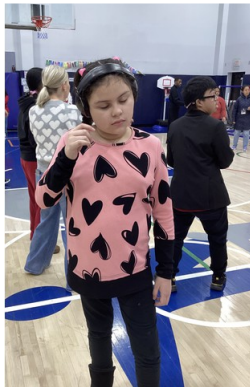
**Thank you to our DJ, Mr. Peneno!**













## Westlake OT Department





## Empowering Students, One Skill at a Time

Empowering Students, One Skill at a Time

Welcome to this month's edition of the newsletter's Occupational Therapy Department (OT) section! Our team is dedicated to supporting students in developing the skills they need for independence in school, at home, and in the community. We're excited to share updates, success stories, and helpful tips to support our students this month.

### What's Happening in OT?

#### 1. Focus Skill of the Month: Fine Motor Development

This month, we are working on fine motor skills to improve handwriting, self-care tasks (like buttoning, zipping, and brushing teeth), and classroom tool use (scissors, glue, and utensils).

Activities include:

- ✓ Hand-strengthening exercises using therapy putty and playdough
- ✓ Precision tasks like bead stringing and pegboard designs
- ✓ Adaptive tools for students needing extra support

#### 2. Life Skills Update

Our students have been working on daily living skills, such as setting the table, folding laundry, and making simple snacks. These hands-on experiences help foster independence and confidence!

#### 3. Sensory-Friendly Strategies in the Classroom

We have introduced sensory-friendly strategies, including:

- ✓ Quiet corners with fidget tools for self-regulation
- ✓ Alternative seating options, like wobble cushions and therapy balls
- ✓ Movement breaks to support focus and engagement

### **Parent Tip: Strengthening Independence at Home**

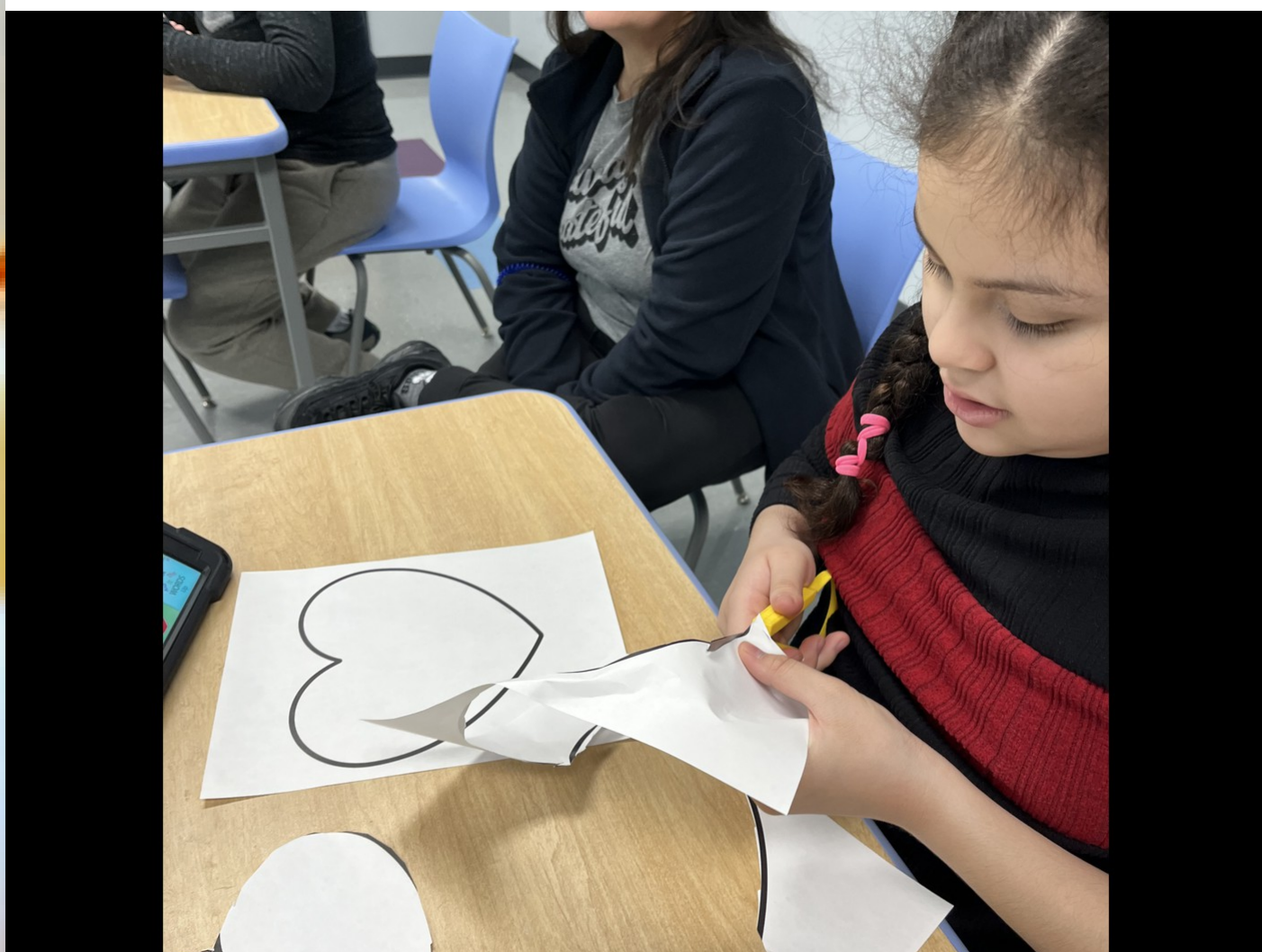
Encourage your child to participate in daily routines! Here are some ways to promote independence:

- ✓ Morning Routine: Let them practice getting dressed with minimal assistance.
- ✓ Mealtime Skills: Have them help set the table or pour their own drink.
- ✓ Organizing & Cleaning Up: Use labeled bins to help with toy or clothing organization.

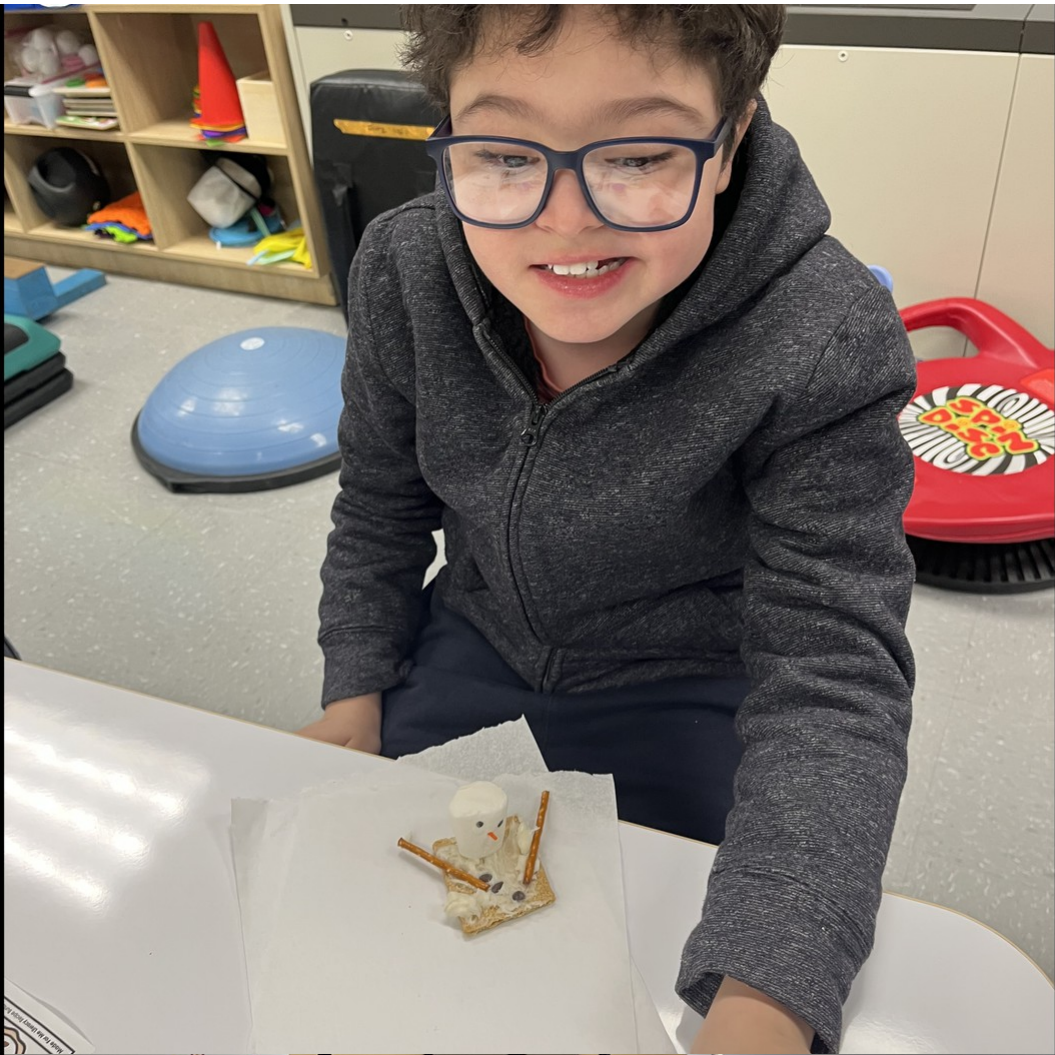
These small steps build confidence and real-world skills!

### **Success Story Spotlight**

This month, we're celebrating **V.G.**'s mastery of using a fork. With persistence and practice, he is on his way to achieving his goal—way to go!









# Work Based Learning!



J.B. and L.W. worked with Ms. Claudia to reorganize the Valentine's Day section at Walgreens. They saw how busy a store can get and how important it is to keep restocking the shelves! Awesome job!







# Ms. Dayna's Class



Throughout February, we've been focusing on Friendship and Cooperation! We've explored what it means to be a good friend and how working together helps us achieve our goals. A perfect example of this was our class-run card-making business! Coming off a huge success during the holiday season—selling over 180 cards—we kept the momentum going with Valentine's Day, selling nearly 80 cards. From designing to assembling to delivering orders, every student played an important role, showing incredible teamwork and cooperation!

That spirit of teamwork continued as we began participating in a new mentorship program with one of our neighboring schools, Lamberts Mill Academy! This gave us a great opportunity to put into practice everything we've learned about being a good friend—whether through playing games, having conversations, or working together on activities.

February was also a time to celebrate Black History Month. We learned about influential Black leaders who made a difference through courage, kindness, and determination. Their stories inspired us to think about how we, too, can make a positive impact in our school and community.









Ms. Wilson's Class!



February was a fantastic month filled with learning, discovery, and celebration in our classroom. The highlight was our Spread the Love party to celebrate Valentine's Day and the plethora of February birthdays within our classroom, where students enjoyed music, movement, and social bonding. Anticipation leading to Valentine's Day also allowed for a mix of fun and meaningful activities; we incorporated social-emotional learning (SEL) activities focused on self-love and appreciation, outlining their strengths and what makes them unique, and what they love most. They also shared positive messages with classmates, reinforcing a culture of kindness and support.

In honor of Black History Month, we dedicated time to learning about powerful leaders who have made lasting impacts on the world. Students shared both previous and newfound knowledge about influential figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, and Ruby Bridges. They also explored the talents and contributions of artists, musicians, and athletes like Wilma Rudolph, Louis Armstrong, and Josephine Baker. Through engaging discussions and multimedia resources, students reflected on the courage, perseverance, and brilliance of these individuals. We also incorporated creative projects and posters into these discussions, where students highlighted the achievements of their chosen leaders. Students also shared their knowledge through making connections (TJ dances like Josephine Baker, JC wears leg braces like Wilma Rudolph), artwork (JK colored figures rainbow to represent equality), and dramatic reenactments.

Students also explored the process of crystallization. Using simple materials like borax, water, and pipe cleaners, students carefully followed steps to create their own beautiful crystals. They made predictions about the perfect steps to making perfect crystals grow and by the end of the experiment, they were looking forward to teaching others!





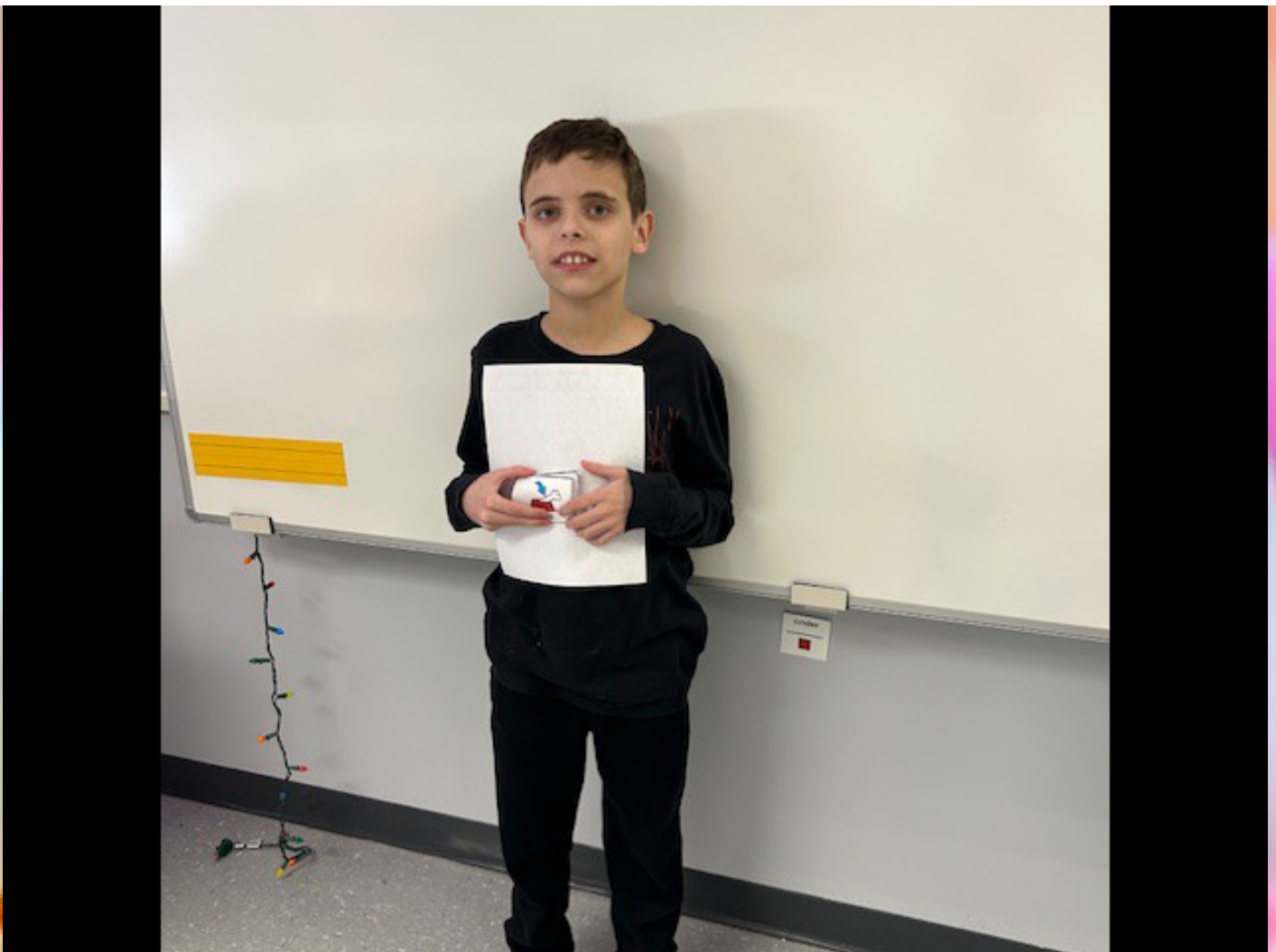






Ms. Amanda's Speech Group!





February might be the shortest month of the year, but we certainly packed it full of fun, learning, and meaningful activities! The students accomplished a lot of wonderful things this month in speech therapy.

The students started the month off learning about Groundhog Day. The students and staff took a poll to predict whether or not the groundhog would see its shadow. Students enjoyed making their predictions and sharing their reasoning, which helped build confidence in expressing opinions and engaging in group discussions.

We also kicked off February with a friendly competition by taking another poll to see who everyone was rooting for in the Super Bowl. Students practiced important social communication skills by interacting with peers and staff, asking, "Who do you think will win?" It was a great opportunity to work on initiating and maintaining conversations, as well as practicing reciprocal questioning. Valentine's Day was a hit in speech therapy! We went on a scavenger hunt, using descriptive clues and teamwork to find hidden treasures. To further work on inferencing skills, students answered Valentine-themed riddles, challenging them to think critically and make educated guesses. These activities not only targeted language goals but also added a lot of love and laughter to our sessions.

Throughout February, we honored Black History Month by learning about important figures in history. Students practiced answering comprehension questions, identifying key details, and expanding their vocabulary. These discussions fostered meaningful conversations and helped students connect with history in a thoughtful and engaging way.

We wrapped up the month by celebrating Presidents' Day! Students learned about presidents from the past and present, working on language goals such as answering "WH" questions, sequencing historical events, and describing the role of a president. This activity helped expand their knowledge while targeting speech and language skills.

Despite being a short month, February was filled with opportunities for our students to grow and shine in speech therapy. We can't wait to continue our fun and engaging sessions in March!

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## Chinese Lunar New Year!





## Happy Chinese New Year!

Our January Employee of the Month, Ms. Valerie helped Westlake celebrate Chinese New Year! Her class coordinated a parade for everyone to watch. She worked with staff and families to provide a lunch for staff! Below is her email that was shared with staff. Thank you to everyone who worked to make this holiday special.

**This holiday is not only celebrated by the Chinese but also by many other Asian communities, including those in Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, and Japan. Even though we come from different cultures at our school, this celebration is a wonderful way for us to connect and share traditions with one another.**

**When I thought of bringing traditional food to school, I shared the idea with Jeremy's mom and Liam's mom, and they were excited to help. Ms. Yoomi also enthusiastically joined in and assisted with the details. Their support has made this celebration more meaningful. It's not a fancy party, but a warm gesture from us to celebrate this occasion together.**

**Please stop by the staff lounge at 11:30 to grab some lucky food. Wishing you all a wonderful Year of the Snake!**





# Mr. Shaw's Class Cooking!



Ms. Shaw's class also celebrated Chinese Lunar New Year. They made Chicken Lo Mein and also learned about the difference between fresh ingredients and processed ingredients. Ms. Shaw and A.F. each made a batch to see which tastes better. The class voted on the fresh ingredients!









# WolfPack Press













# Sunshine Club!



Our amazing Sunshine Club, set up a SNACKfest in honor of the Super Bowl. Staff brought snacks and desserts. The Sunshine Club coordinated the sandwiches and decorations!

## Parent Resource!



and Special Needs

# Programs and Social Events for all ages

## PROGRAMS

- Yoga
- Karate
- Zumba
- Ceramics
- Golf
- Spray Park & more

## SOCIAL EVENTS

- Fishing Derby
- Paint by the Pond
- Summer Festival
- Summer Camp
- Barn Dance
- Skating with Santa & more



For more information or to be placed on our mailing list to  
receive brochures and program details:

call: (908) 527-4781

email: [opdsn@ucnj.org](mailto:opdsn@ucnj.org)

visit our website [www.ucnj.org/opdsn](http://www.ucnj.org/opdsn)

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Bwo pou moun ki gen ankap ak bezwen  
espesyal

# Pwogram ak Evènman Sosyal pou tout laj

## PWOGRAM YO

- Yoga
- Karate
- Seramik
- Dans Zumba
- Gòlf
- Espre Pak ak plis ankò

## EVÈNMAN SOSYAL

- Konpetisyon Lapèch
- Penti bò Lak la
- Festival ete
- Kan ete
- Dans Granj
- Patinaj ak Santa akplis ankò



Pou plis enfòmasyon oswa pou yo mete sou lis adrès nou an  
pou resevwa bwochi ak detay pwogram yo:

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Oswa eskane kòd QR la!



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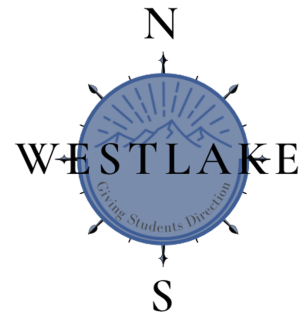


# Contact Us!

**Website:** [www.ucesc.org/schools/westlake\\_school](http://www.ucesc.org/schools/westlake_school)

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

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



## INSTAGRAM!

Visit us!



**Robert Peneno**

Robert is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



## February Monthly Report 2025



# Lamberts Mill Academy



*"How you love yourself is how you teach others to love you."*

-Rupi Kaur

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## Administrators' Message

### February 2025

Good Morning,

We hope this Newsletter finds you well as we officially close out February 2025. Hopefully this past winter has allowed for a time of rest, introspection and renewal. I also hope the start of 2025 has allowed for meaningful goal setting as we count down the next 20 days to the start of Spring. The month of February has been quite active with multiple LMA initiatives taking place; both academically and therapeutically. We are proud of all the positive initiatives, student voice, and student council meetings taking place at LMA on a consistent basis. This month's theme was Cooperation and Black History month, and as you review our newsletter you will see how that it was incorporated into different learning settings.



Administratively, all parents/guardians are reminded that LMA, and the UCESC will be participating in the NJ School Climate Improvement Platform through the State of NJ Department of Education



and Rutgers University. This is the second consecutive year LMA will be participating in this survey, and hope we can have as many parents/guardians complete it. This anonymous data, helps us to continue our school climate strengths, and gives us areas to shift attention for growth. This survey should take no more than 15-20 minutes, and will be sent out digitally for you to complete in the convenience of your home. Additional formal letters will be sent out in the near future.

Please take some time to review the Newsletter below. We are proud of the continual student voice, and increase Student Council involvement each month. If you have any questions, or concerns, please reach out! We are here to assist you!

John, Danielle & Reed

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## Monthly Data

1. Enrollment - 45
2. Acceptances - 1
3. New Students - 1
4. Intakes - 2
5. Referrals - 4
6. Disenrollments - 0
7. Fire Drill - 2/7/2025
8. Other Drill EM: Active Shooter 2/11/2025

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## Upcoming Events

### Mach 2025 Important Dates

March 3 - Field Trip - Shop Rite (Shopping for School Store)  
March 4 - Field Trip - LMA to Central Office (Bulletin Board Contest)  
March 10 - Early Dismissal (1pm)  
March 11-12 - NJGPA Testing for 11th Grade Students (1571 & NP)  
March 14 - Field Trip - Union County Teen Arts Festival  
March 25 - NJ4S School Assembly (Marijuana Use, Addiction & Coping Skills)  
March 28 - Community Meeting



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## Staff Spotlight

### Ms Finver - ELA Teacher

- Long distance walker with totals of 50 miles in a day

- Avid weekly hiker with a daily distance record of 20 miles with 3600 ft elevation
- Been a member of the UCESC for over 25 years
- Rutgers Alumni
- Loves to end the day with a daily tea and Biscotti



## LMA Student of the Month - February 2025

### Dennis E.

We are proud to present Dennis as our February Student of the Month! Dennis consistently demonstrates a strong work ethic and a positive attitude in and out of the classroom. Dennis has also proven to have athletic talent as he made it to last month's badminton tournament finals. In his free time, Dennis enjoys video games and drawing. Dennis is currently working on different art pieces to submit to the Teen Arts Festival later this year. Great job Dennis!



## LMA Student Council - Valentine's Dance

On Friday, February 14th, students dressed up for our first ever Valentine's Day Dance, sponsored by the Student Council. Students requested their own music to be played, which set the tone for an exciting time. Student Council helped make snacks for the school community to purchase with their points. Snacks made were chocolate covered pretzels and strawberries. Cupcakes were also served. Special shout out to Jordyn, Dex and Laniyah for helping and sharing their creativity with the snacks. We received some amazing feedback about the dance.



"I was very happy that everyone enjoyed the dance. I'm glad that we can actually have an activity like that. My favorite part was dancing to "Born to be Alive" by Patrick Hernandez." Alex C.- 10th Grade Student.

"I felt like the dance went very well and it was a joy to see everyone come together." Jordyn M.- Student Council Vice President.

Student Council is looking forward to planning future events for our school community!





## Classroom Spotlights



## PG Students

The Post Grads have been very busy as we have begun 2 new initiatives throughout the school building. The goal of these initiatives is to give our students hands on work experiences in preparation for post secondary success. Students are now taking daily lunch orders for the building and submitting these orders to Maschio's each morning. The Post grads are also in the process of starting up Lamberts Mill Academy's Lions lunch! Each week students have the opportunity to earn a special treat during their assigned lunch period, and the Post grads will be working to prepare and serve the food!!! Gabe B. who has his ServeSafe Food Handler, and Emili who is presently working on her license, are helping with the initiative. Our Post grads are working hard each day to make both of these initiatives a success!



## Updates from ELA

We have begun our Historical text and informational writing Unit with reading about the history of Immigration in America and comparing this to a video about the history as well. Students are beginning to research about their ELA&L and Social Studies collaborative projects on Women in History emphasizing the skill development of research and Historical accomplishments of women. Students spread the love of Valentine's Day by making and delivering personalized created cards to each other. Students have also embraced the month's theme of Friendship with grand discussions about friendship in various short story pixar videos. Students attended a trip to the New Jersey State Theatre to embrace the Arts through viewing a classic production of Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors.



## Ms. Miller's Social Studies class learning about Black History Month

Social Studies students completed a Black History Month Project for the month of February. Students chose from a list of influential Black Americans and spent time researching the person and their contributions to society. Middle School and World History students made Biography Boxes where they answered six questions about their person in six boxes. Then folded the paper to form a cube. US I History, US II History, and Economics students created Flip Books about their person, focusing their research on important dates, interesting facts, history, famous quotes and accomplishments of the person. Students ended their projects by answering reflection questions and presenting their projects.

## Updates from WIN

This month in "WIN" (What I Need), we celebrated Black History Month by watching the movie "Hidden Figures". Each class learned about laws that were in place during segregation and how the lives of African Americans were impacted daily. During "Circles" we opened up each week by reading a poem from a famous African American poet like Langston Hughes, Amanda Gorman and Toni Morrison. In The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens we started learning about "the personal bank account". How you feel about yourself is like a checking or savings account, you can make deposits or withdrawals to and from your account by the things you say and do. Students came up

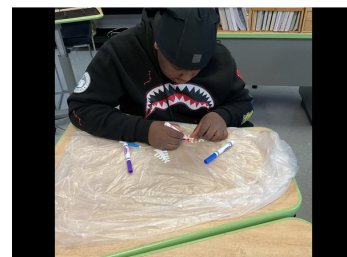
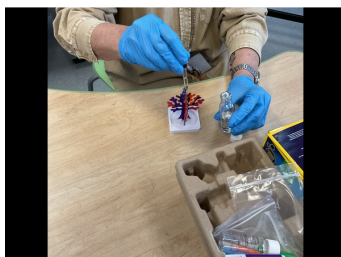
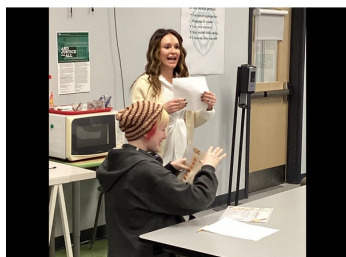




with their own examples of “deposits and withdrawals”. The students continue to use their time productively to study for quizzes, complete assignments and work on projects and essays. We also created our new school-wide PBIS “Shout Outs” for the upcoming season. Since we are looking forward to spring and warm weather we decided to “plant” our own “shout out” gardens above each classroom door.

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## February at The Mill



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## Clinical Corner

Cooperating with others can be challenging at times, but with the right strategies, it's possible to create a collaborative and understanding environment. Here are 5 approaches you might find useful:

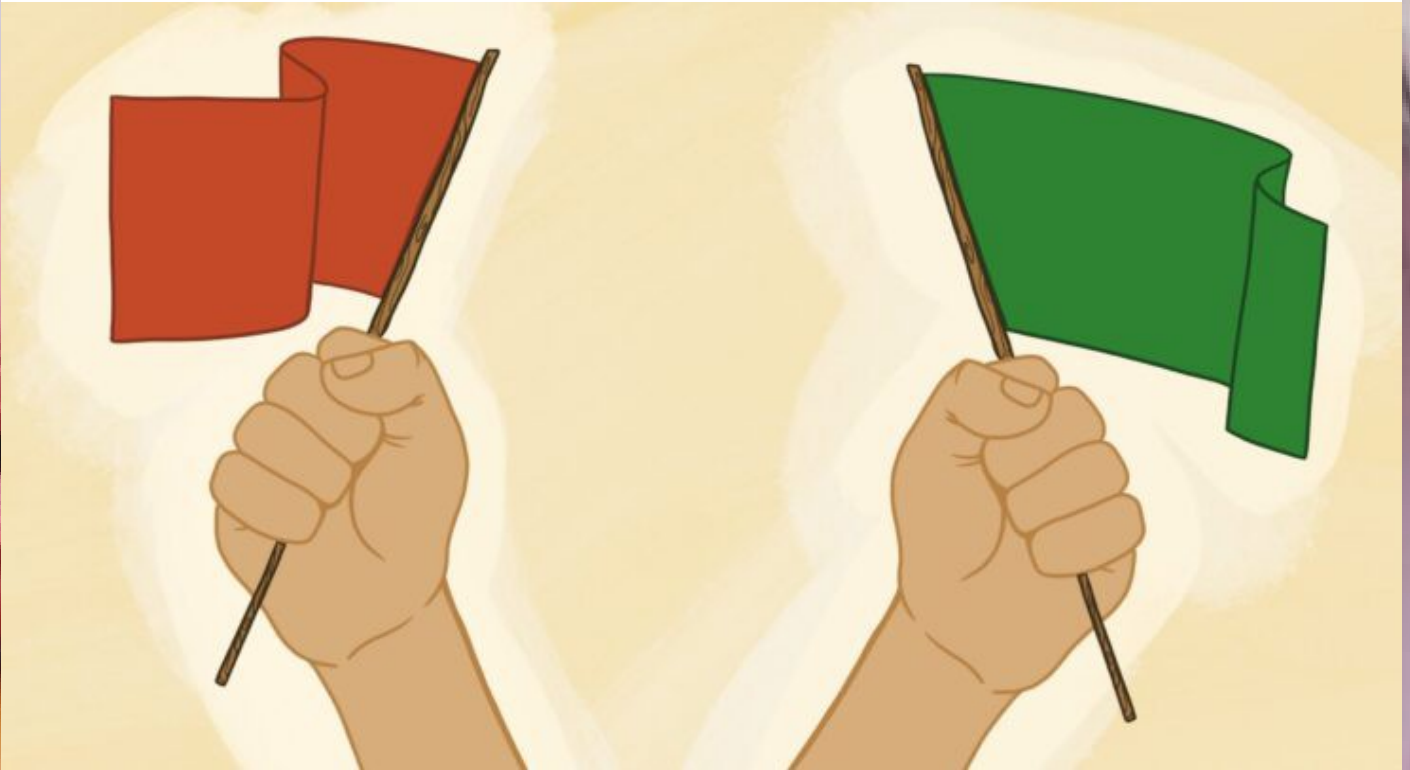
1. **Define Clear Goals:** Establish common objectives and clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party to ensure everyone is on the same page.
2. **Respect Differences:** Acknowledge and respect each other's differences in viewpoints, working styles, and backgrounds.
3. **Focus on Solutions:** Keep the focus on finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems or assigning blame.
4. **Compromise and Flexibility:** Be willing to compromise and adapt to find mutually beneficial solutions.

**Seek Mediation:** If conflicts persist, consider involving a neutral third party to mediate and help resolve the issues.

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## Group Therapy

Students continue to eagerly participate in group therapy and look forward to collaborating with peers during sessions. With this month's theme as cooperation and friendship the students have discussed relationship building, social skills, and boundary setting. Therapeutic activities included identifying *green and red flags* in relationships, verbalizing conflict and discussing possible resolutions, and kindness cards. We also had Creature Comfort visit LMA for an afternoon of pet therapy. These activities in group motivate them to continue to attend and build rapport with each other.



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## Students Outside of the Classroom / Alumni

### Student Voice - Briana B. (Outside The Mill)

I am working at a barber shop right now, but I am going to hopefully be interning at a hospital soon. At the barber shop I cut people's hair, shampoo hair, and do braids and dreads. My favorite part about the barber shop is learning the names for different hair styles and types.

At the hospital, I hope I can help people. I'll be working with patients and helping give out medication. In the future I was to become an art therapist and work at hospitals for kids with cancers and mental health facilities for children.



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## Upcoming Community Events



# SMART PHONE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

## ADDICTION



**Sean Foley MSW, LCSW**

**March 25, 2025  
7:00PM- 9:00PM**

**RWJ Fitness and  
Wellness Center, 2120  
Lamberts Mill Road,  
Scotch Plains, NJ  
07076**

[namiunioncounty.org](https://namiunioncounty.org)



<https://namiunioncountynj.org/event/a-conversation-on-smart-phone-and-social-media-addiction/>

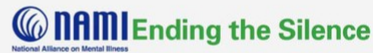
# ENDING THE SILENCE: A Mental Health Presentation for Teens

NAMI Ending the Silence gives you the opportunity to learn about mental health through an informative presentation that includes hearing firsthand about the journey of a young adult living with mental illness and their recovery.

**Saturday, January 25, 2-3:30 pm  
OR Tuesday, March 18, 6:30-8 pm**

## About NAMI

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI NJ works tirelessly to raise awareness and provide essential education, advocacy and support group programs for people in our community living with mental illness and their loved ones.



FREE  
REGISTRATION!  
OPEN TO ALL UNION  
COUNTY  
RESIDENTS

For registration, please  
see the Westfield  
Memorial Library  
Website event calendar  
908-789-4090

  
*Westfield Memorial Library*  
550 E Broad St, Westfield, NJ 07090  
[www.wmlnj.org](http://www.wmlnj.org)

<https://namiunioncountynj.org/event/nami-ending-the-silence-2/>





## 2025 Ice Skating Exhibition

**BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY TO ENJOY THIS FREE EVENT!**

**There will be group acts, synchro skating acts and single program skaters—a mix of competitors and recreational skaters of all ages.**

Following the show, the rink will resume its public ice skating session from 3-5 pm.



**PLEASE CALL THE WEATHER HOTLINE BEFORE COMING TO THE RINK AT 732-745-4484**

### **REPLENISH & FEEDING MIDDLESEX COUNTY: HELPING THOSE IN NEED**

Please bring a non-perishable food donation with you to the park, your support is greatly appreciated! For details, visit [middlesexcountynj.gov/replenish](https://middlesexcountynj.gov/replenish)



**REPLENISH**  
NOURISHING NEIGHBORS

**FEEDING MIDDLESEX COUNTY**  
PARTNERING TO END HUNGER

**Sunday, March 9, 2025  
12:30 PM**

**Roosevelt Family  
Skating Rink  
151 Parsonage Road, Edison**

**For more information contact:  
Tracie Reed  
732-494-2980  
[tracie.reed@co.middlesex.nj.us](mailto:tracie.reed@co.middlesex.nj.us)**

### **BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Ronald G. Rios, *Director*  
Shanti Narra, *Deputy Director*  
*Chair, Community Services Committee*  
Claribel A. Azcona-Barber,  
Charles Kenny, Leslie Koppel,  
Chanelle Scott McCullum,  
Charles E. Tomaro

SCAN FOR  
PARK INFO



[middlesexcountynj.gov](https://middlesexcountynj.gov)



<https://www.middlesexcountynj.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/7829/638719470096430000>

## Community Resources

## HOW 988 WORKS



**988 Crisis Line**

<https://988lifeline.org/>





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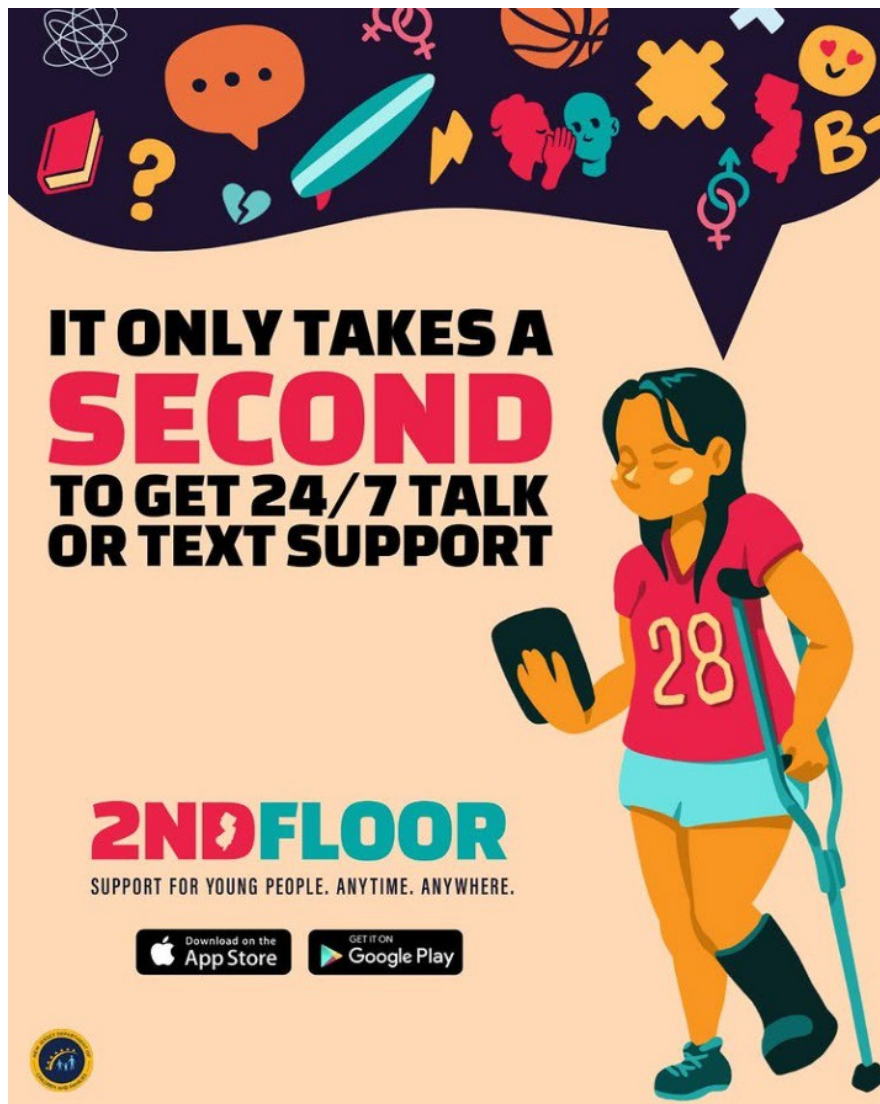
# PerformCARE<sup>®</sup>

[www.performcarenj.org](http://www.performcarenj.org)

**877-652-7624**

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

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<https://www.2ndfloor.org/>  
(888)-222-2228

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## School in the Community

1. NJ State Theatre in New Brunswick
2. NJ4S Assemblies at 1571
3. Monthly Community Meetings celebrating student awards.
4. WBLE at Clark Public Library, Hilton (Springfield) and Chili's in Clark.
5. Field Trip to ShopRite of Clark

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## About Us

### Contact Information:

Phone: (908)-233-7581

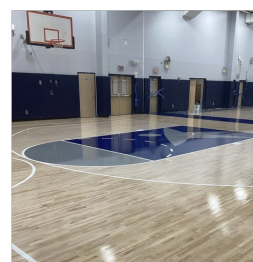
Address: 1571 Lamberts Mill Road, Westfield, NJ, 07090

Website: [https://ucesc.org/schools/lamberts\\_mill\\_academy](https://ucesc.org/schools/lamberts_mill_academy)

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/ucesc\\_lma/?hl=en](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 REPORT

February 2025

## Message from the Administration

Dear Crossroads Community,

Even though February is the shortest month of the year, it certainly didn't feel that way with all the exciting activities we packed into these past few weeks! We started the month with School Picture Day, and it was wonderful to see our students dressed in their best, smiling for the camera. Their bright expressions truly captured the warmth and joy that fills our school each day! If your child was absent on Picture Day, information on how to schedule a makeup session with the studio is included in this Newsletter.



Speaking of smiling, this month, we also focused on healthy habits, as February is National Children's Dental Health Month. We were lucky to have a visit from Dr. Beck, who spoke with students about the importance of brushing and flossing. Students even had a chance to practice fun activities to reinforce good dental hygiene!

February was also a time for friendship and celebration. Our students had a blast at this year's Ice Cream Social and Dance Party for Valentine's Day! It was wonderful to see so many parents join us for the fun. This year, Valentine's Day was extra special because it also marked our 100th Day of School—where we are able to reflect upon how much we have grown and learned together.

As we honored Black History Month, classrooms created beautifully decorated doors and bulletin boards, celebrating the achievements and contributions of Black leaders. Staff also wore inspirational clothing throughout the month, reflecting our commitment to the theme "Let Every



Voice Empower." This tied in perfectly with our February focus on Cooperation and Friendship, as we continue to build a school community where every voice is valued and uplifted.

Speaking of "Let Every Voice Empower," We Want to Hear Yours! We are excited to invite parents to participate in the New Jersey School Climate Improvement (NJSCI) Survey, which will be available from March 3 through March 17. Your input is essential in helping us create the best possible program for your children. The survey is available in multiple languages, ensuring that all voices in our community can be heard. Please be on the lookout for an email next week with the survey link—we truly appreciate your participation!

Though February has come to an end, the excitement doesn't stop here! We can't wait to kick off March with Read Across America Week, celebrating the joy of reading together.

Thank you for your continued support in making Crossroads a place where students thrive.

Warm regards,

Matt, Danielle, and Stacey

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## General Information

### Enrollment as of February 26, 2025

**Actual:** 57

**Changes:** Entered: 1 Exited:0

**Referrals:**2

**Intakes Scheduled:** 0

**Accepted:** 0

**Fire Drills:** 2/25/25

**Emergency Drills:** 2/11/25 (Active Shooter)

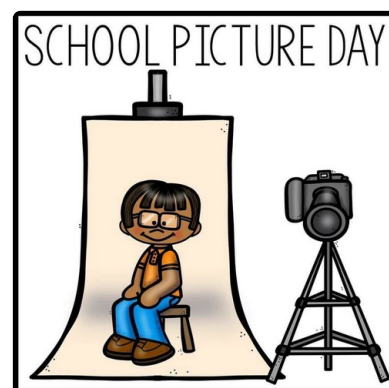
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## Picture Makeup Sessions

Unfortunately Reflections Studio will not be able to return to Crossroads this year for a makeup day. If your child was absent for picture day, you can register for a makeup session and go to the studio in Scotch Plains.

The address is 1812 Front St, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

Please use the link below to sign up for an appointment.



## Upcoming Dates

**March 3 - 17, 2025** - Parent window to complete the NJSCI Survey

**March 3 - 7, 2025** - Read Across America Week

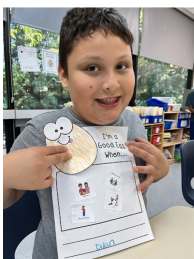
**March 7, 2025** - Pinewood Derby (Parents welcome during your child's race time)

**March 10, 2025** - Early Dismissal for Students (Staff Professional Development Day)

**March 12, 2025** - PTO/Parent Education Support Meeting (12:30) - Behavior Team Presentation

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## Crossroads Staff and Student Spotlight



### Student of the Month - Dilan

220B is excited to shine the student spotlight on one of our vibrant and energetic friends, Dilan! With his infectious personality, Dilan always brings a spark of joy to every class, outing, and interaction! Dilan starts every morning on a positive note, greeting his teachers and peers with a big smile on his face! This has been Dilan's first year in middle school and he sure is blossoming! Dilan is eager to help and loves to joke around! This past month the middle schoolers had field trips to Westlake School and the Cranford Movie Theater! Dilan is super helpful on these trips and is always excited to be out in the community! He completes jobs in the community and at school that include serving food and drinks at the movies to his friends, and delivering items like utensils and school supplies to other classrooms throughout the school!

He is a bundle of joy no matter where he is. Dilan also has a love for music! We often catch him listening to music on his breaks and singing and dancing! Dilan enjoys making his own musical sounds too on different music apps on the iPad and Active Floor! His creativity and enthusiasm add to what makes him an incredible and special student! If there is one thing for sure about Dilan, it is that he loves his family! Dilan's excitement and love when talking about his family is truly unmatched! We're excited to see him continue to grow and thrive in middle school, and we can't wait to see all the wonderful things he will accomplish in the future!!!





## **Staff Spotlight - Jessica Trelles - Occupational Therapist**

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

This is my second year working as a school based OT. Before I started graduate school I was a teacher assistant at Westlake for 3 years.

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

A fun fact about me, I was featured in a children's book called Windy Days.

### **3. What is your dream vacation?**

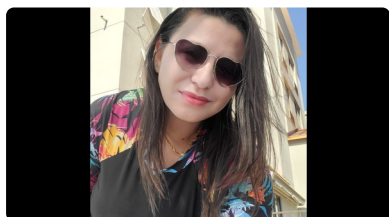
My dream vacation would be to travel to Greece and visit the different islands!

### **4. What is your favorite meal?**

This is a hard question to ask because I love to eat anything and try new foods! However, I could never get sick of eating a good hamburger(medium rare) with lots of french fries!

### **5. What is your greatest accomplishment?**

Being a mother to my daughter is my greatest accomplishment by far. As a first time mom, I'm learning how to navigate into this role as it can be challenging but very rewarding. Earning my master's degree for occupational therapy is my second accomplishment I am most proud of.



## **Staff Spotlight - Sofia Elouadili - Teacher Assistant**

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

This is my second year working at Crossroads, and it has been a rewarding experience filled with learning and growth.

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

Many people are surprised to learn that I speak four languages and am always eager to learn more! I enjoy exploring different cultures and connecting with people through language.

### **3. What is your dream vacation?**

My dream vacation is to visit Bora Bora or the Maldives, where I can relax on the stunning beaches and stay in an overwater bungalow, soaking in the beauty of nature.

### **4. What is your favorite meal?**

I absolutely love Moroccan cuisine, especially tajines. The rich flavors and slow-cooked perfection make it a dish close to my heart.

### **5. What is your greatest accomplishment?**

My greatest accomplishment is raising my three wonderful sons—Adam, Dean, and Yannis. Watching them grow, learn, and develop into their own unique personalities is the most fulfilling journey of my life.

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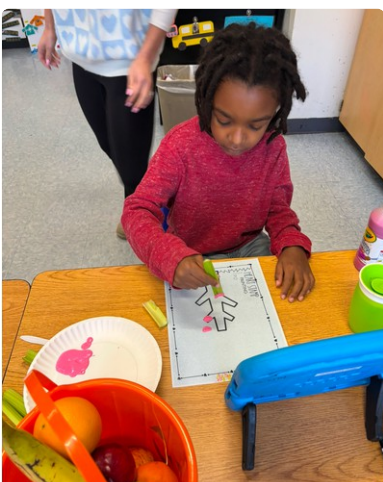
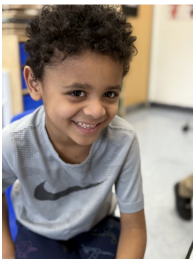
## Classroom Spotlights



### Ms. Jennifer's Classroom

February has been a fun and busy month for 110!! From guessing if there would be six more weeks of winter and who will win the Superbowl to celebrating Valentine's Day and the 100th day of school. We have enjoyed all the books, crafts, cooking and sensory activities that we have done together this month. Valentine's Day was especially fun with making cards for our families and classmates, exchanging valentines and enjoying the ice cream social and dance party!

Our students have also been working hard on their academic and functional skills. Everyone has been making progress in their individual and group goals and the staff has enjoyed celebrating each of their individual achievements. We are looking forward to seeing what the upcoming months will bring!

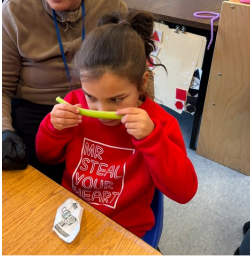


### Ms. Alison's Classroom

Happy February everyone! This month has been filled with exciting activities in room 111. Exploring new foods is a daily practice we have in the classroom. We start off the morning with different cut up fruits. These fruits include oranges, apples, bananas and pears. A new piece of produce was introduced this month which was celery! We were curious about this new piece of produce, some of us touched, smelled, and even tasted it! We then used the celery to complete a Valentine's day craft. Did you know that the end of the celery looks like a heart? We dipped untouched celery into different colored paints to create hearts. We created a heart tree



that we later gave to our parents to show them how much we love them. We love trying new things and exploring different foods!



## Specials Spotlight - Ms. Elaine - Social Worker

The SEL theme for the month of February is Cooperation, Friendship/ Black History Month.

In our Social Groups the students are practicing taking turns and cooperating while playing a group game. We love to play Zingo and jumbo connect four! We are building friendships in and out of the classrooms throughout the day with the pairing of some peers buddies from different classrooms and forming new friendships inside our classrooms. The





students are continuing to work on identifying their feelings and learning self regulation. The students love working with The Little Spot of Emotions program.

We had a great time at our ice cream social on Valentine's Day! Classrooms were grouped together for a fun day of crafts, ice cream, and dancing! The students had an opportunity to spend time with students that are not in their classrooms, engage in some parallel play activities, and sit with some new friends for a special treat. It was also so wonderful to see so many families joining us for our Valentine's Day event.

In February we also decorated classroom doors/bulletin boards to honor and celebrate Black History Month. Staff also wore clothing to represent someone or something that has been inspirational to them.



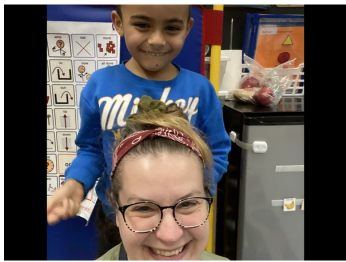


# February at Crossroads



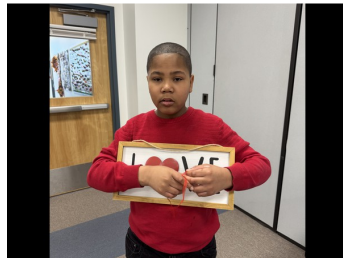


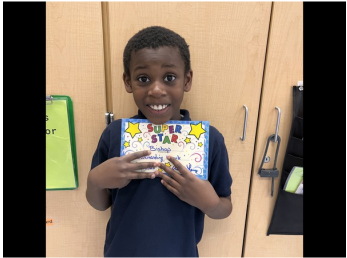




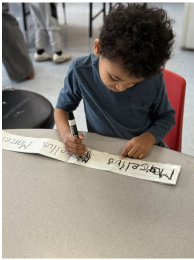






















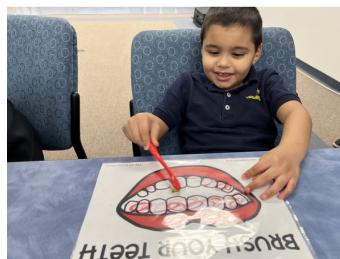


## Dental Health Month Visit with Dr. Beck









## Crossroads in the Community

Community Trips to Westlake School and the Cranford Theater







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## Parent Resources

### Tips and Tricks for home from the Crossroads Behavior Team- February

#### February is American Heart Month: Supporting Heart Health for All

February is not only about Valentine's Day, but also about raising awareness for **heart health**. It is a time to remind ourselves of the importance of taking care of our physical and emotional well-being. For individuals with autism, focusing on heart health can be especially beneficial in promoting a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

#### Why Heart Health is Important for Individuals with Autism:

Heart health is essential for everyone, but children with autism may face unique challenges in managing stress, engaging in physical activity, or understanding how nutrition impacts their overall health. They may also engage in restrictive eating patterns. Establishing healthy habits early on can help set the foundation for a lifetime of well-being. Regular physical activity, managing stress, and eating heart-healthy foods can all play a significant role in supporting both emotional and physical development.

## Tips & Tricks for Promoting Heart Health:

1. **Use Reinforcement for Physical Activities:** Focus on reinforcing engaging in physical activities like walking, dancing, or playing. Start small by setting clear goals and rewarding your child for participating in these activities, gradually increasing the time or difficulty as they get more comfortable.
2. **Create Structured Routines for Healthy Habits:** Establish routines for exercise, meal times, and relaxation to promote healthy heart habits. Visual schedules or social stories can help children with autism understand and anticipate these activities. For example, you can create a “heart-healthy routine” using visual supports to encourage exercise or healthy eating.
3. **Incorporate Stress-Relief Activities:** Managing stress is crucial for heart health. Practice calming techniques such as deep breathing or gentle stretching exercises. Positive Reinforcement and Modeling the skill can help your child use stress-reduction techniques when they feel overwhelmed.
4. **Model Healthy Eating Habits:** Your whole family can model trying new healthy foods or for following simple meal routines. Visual aids like food charts or picture menus can also help children understand and engage in healthier choices.

By Reinforcing positive health-related behaviors, we can create lasting habits that promote heart health and overall wellness. It’s all about finding fun and motivating ways to support your child in staying active, eating well, and managing emotions. Let’s take this month as an opportunity to nurture both the hearts and minds of our students!

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A Message from the Union County  
Board of County Commissioners

The Office for Persons with Disabilities  
and Special Needs

## Programs and Social Events for all ages

### PROGRAMS

- Yoga
- Karate
- Zumba
- Ceramics
- Golf
- Spray Park & more

### SOCIAL EVENTS

- Fishing Derby
- Paint by the Pond
- Summer Festival
- Summer Camp
- Barn Dance
- Skating with Santa & more



For more information or to be placed on our mailing list to  
receive brochures and **program** details:

call: (908) 527-4781

email: [opdsn@ucnj.org](mailto:opdsn@ucnj.org)

visit our website [www.ucnj.org/opdsn](http://www.ucnj.org/opdsn)

Or scan the QR Code!



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE

**UNION COUNTY**  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Department of Human Services

Yon mesaj ki soti nan  
Konsèy Komisyone Konte Union

Biwo pou moun ki gen andikap ak bezwen  
espesyal

*Pwogram ak Evènman Sosyal  
pou tout laj*

<p><b>PWOGRAM YO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yoga</li> <li>• Karate</li> <li>• Seramik</li> <li>• Dans Zumba</li> <li>• Gòlf</li> <li>• Espre Pak ak plis ankò</li> </ul>	<p><b>EVÈNMAN SOSYAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Konpetisyon Lapèch</li> <li>• Penti bò Lak la</li> <li>• Festival ete</li> <li>• Kan ete</li> <li>• Dans Granj</li> <li>• Patinaj ak Santa akplis ankò</li> </ul>
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Pou plis enfòmasyon oswa pou yo mete sou lis adrès nou an  
pou resevwa bwochi ak detay pwogram yo:

Rele: (908) 527-4781  
Imel: [opdsn@ucnj.org](mailto:opdsn@ucnj.org)  
vizite sit entènèt nou an: [www.ucnj.org/opdsn](http://www.ucnj.org/opdsn)  
Oswa eskane kòd QR la!



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE  
**UNION COUNTY**  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
Department of Human Services

## Reminders (Cold Weather)

During 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

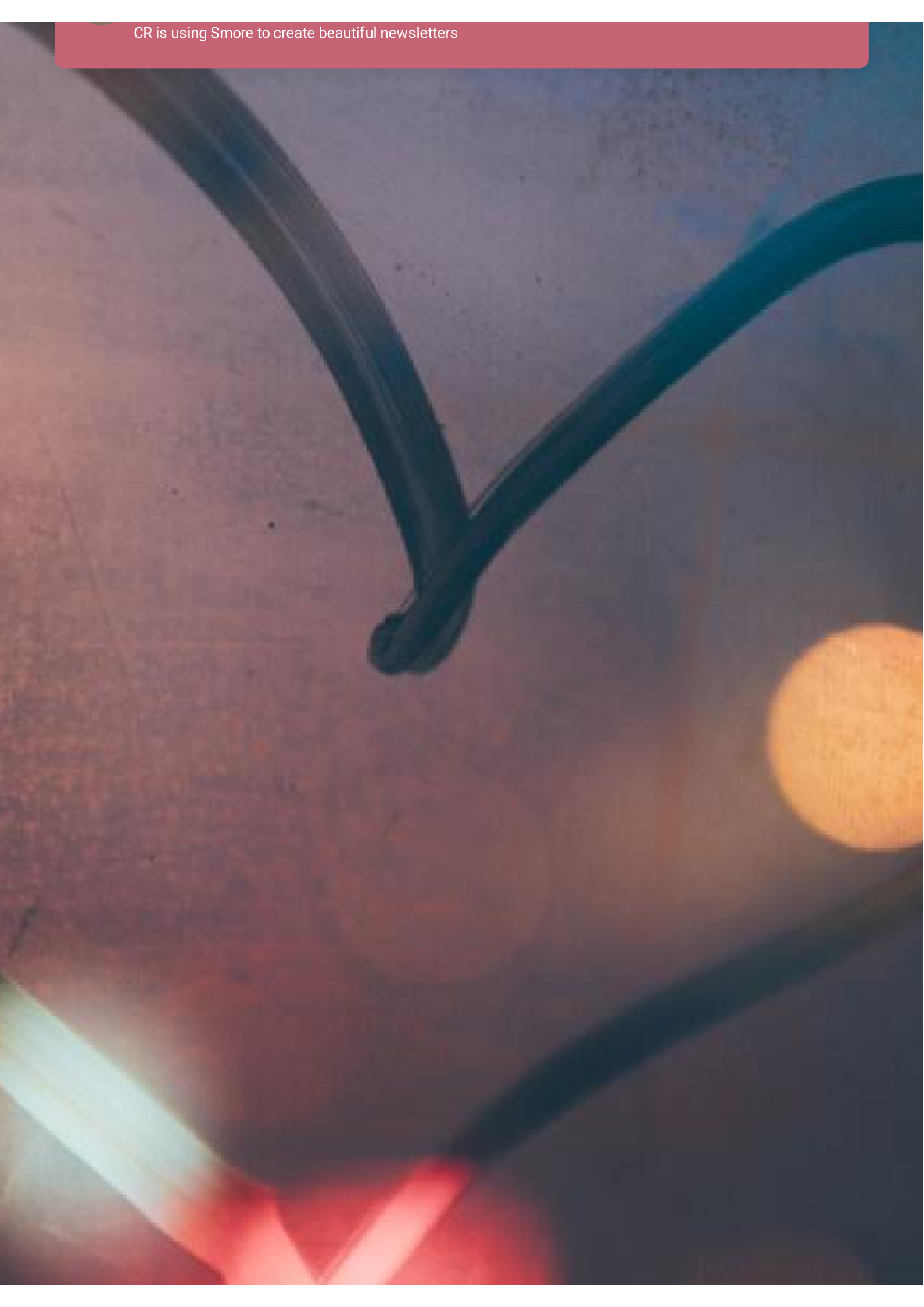
Website: [https://www.ucesc.org/schools/crossroads\\_school](https://www.ucesc.org/schools/crossroads_school)

Location: [45 Cardinal Drive, Westfield, NJ, USA](#)

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

Visit us on Instagram





Let Every Voice Empower



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### February 2025 Monthly Report Enrollment Data

Enrollment-97 (2/25/25).

New Students-Two with three intakes scheduled.

Disenrollments-2 (Pursue GEDs and work).

Emergency Drill-2/11/25, Active Shooter.

Fire Drill-2/7/25.

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## *A Message From The Principal: Dr. Balsamello*

Please enjoy our February 2025 newsletter. It is filled with wonderful activities that have engaged our students throughout the month. It also provides insight on interesting information about our school, staff, and the students who call HAS their home.





# February Important Dates

february 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3 -beginning of 3rd marking period -national school councilor's week	4	5	6 delayed opening	7 spirit day: superbowl/sports	8
9 superbowl sunday	10 NJ4S assembly	11	12 NJ4S assembly	13 NJ4S assembly	14 -spirit day: valentine's day -black history month movie day -100th day of school ice cream	15
16	17 no school: presidents' day	18	19	20 marking period 2 honor roll field trip	21 spirit day: college day	22
23	24	25	26	27 happy birthday dr b!	28 spirit day: national pink shirt day	

## Student of the Month

### February - Jessica

Congratulations to Jessica 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!

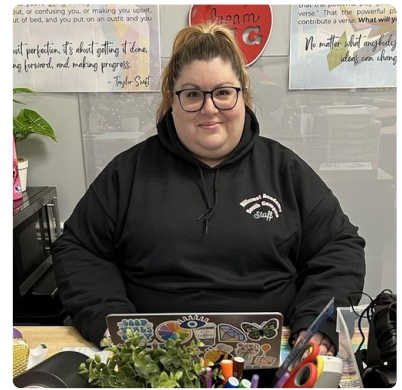


## Faculty "Getting to Know You"!

### Ms V's Favorites:

Favorite movie: The Dead Poets Society

Favorite food: Lobster rolls  
Favorite color: Black  
Favorite book: The Great Gatsby  
Favorite travel spot: Wildwood/Cape May  
Favorite animal: Penguins  
Favorite movie quote: "Always"



## *"Let Your Voice Empower" Teacher Recognitions*

### **February - Actions**

This year's district wide theme of "Let Your Voice Empower", teachers are awarded pins in different areas of empowerment. The February theme was 'Actions'. 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 put into action the qualities of being an HAS staff member. Congratulations!



**Ms Ramirez**



**Ms Gilchrist**



**Mrs W**

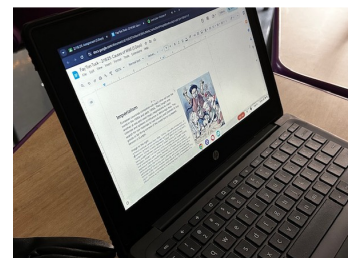
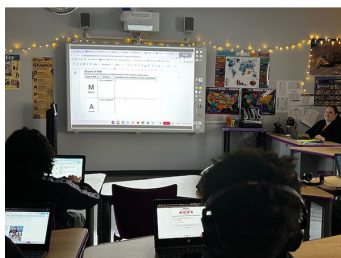
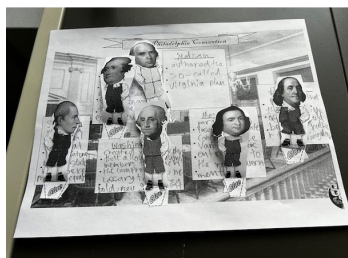
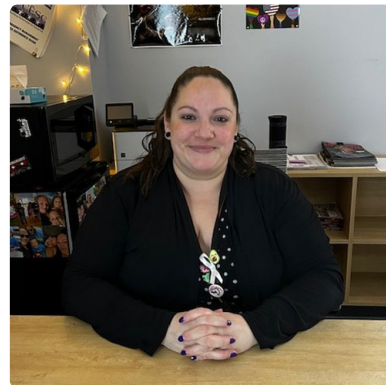
## *Teacher's Corner: History*

### **Ms Wrzesinski - World History/US History I**

Mrs. Wrzesinski's US History I classes have been learning about the foundations of American government. They started the month of February by creating Constitutional Convention pop up organizers to represent the founding fathers and their visions for a new America. Students then moved on to the branches of government and their function then the idea of checks and balances. World History classes learned about the causes of WWI. Students reviewed how such ideas such

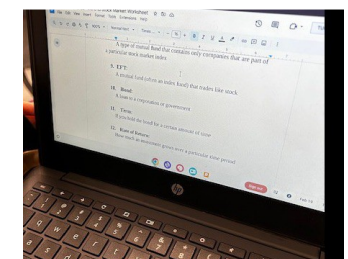
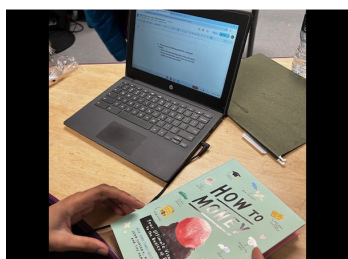


as militarism, alliances, nationalism, and imperialism led to the start of WWI. 20th Century history classes just concluded their Cold War unit and now have moved on to the Korean War to better understand how and why there is a North and South Korea today.



## Mr Fritz - US History II/Economics

Mr Fritz's US History II classes have been learning about the Second World War using maps, photos, and archival footage to get a better understanding of the events. As for Economics classes, they wrapped up the unit on credit cards and moved into learning about how the stock market works. Students worked with hands on projects and choose what stocks to analyze. They were able to witness what happened to them over a few weeks.



## Welcome Back Ms Picciano!

The beginning of this month marked the start of our third marking period and of our second semester for the 24-25 school year. As we entered the new semester, we welcome back our Art Teacher, Ms Picciano. She began her school year working at Hillcrest North for the first semester as Hillcrest South had Spanish. Now that Ms.



Picciano has returned for the remaining half of the year, we are eagerly waiting to see what creativity she will bring to the students!



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## *National School Counselors' Week*

According to Google, a counselor's job is:

- Work with students who need help managing their behavior, keeping up academically, or planning for the future.
- Develop a comfortable, healthy school environment free of bullying or illegal activities.
- Design and deliver school counseling programs that improve student outcomes.
- Support the psychological, academic, and social development of students.
- Resolve conflicts between all actors in school life.
- Help students face personal problems.
- Consult with students, parents, teachers, and principals.
- Coordinate various school activities.
- Provide academic, career, college readiness, and social-emotional support for all students

Our counselors at HAS do all of this and so much more! All of us at HAS would like to thank our counselors for their hard work and dedication to our staff and students.



**Ms Gilchrist - Social Worker**



**Ms Schulhafer - Guidance Counselor**



**Ms Ramirez - SAC**

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## *Happy Retirement Ms Clark!*



Ms Clark has been HAS's hidden treasure for over 20 years. Ms Clark was Dr B's very first hire (back in 2005) when he became principal of HAS. She has been a major help throughout the years in the many roles she took on. First of all, she was a great asset to our Special Education program as a resource for her students. She continuously worked with staff to help keep the students on track. Ms Clark facilitated our Student Council that provided different activities for HAS. All of our students had their community services hours completed for their graduation requirement because Ms Clark was on top of it. She would have gum and snacks for students and cared for every one of them like they were her own children. During the times HAS needed coverage for classes, Ms Clark wore the hats of a Math teacher, Science teacher, French teacher, Spanish teacher, English teacher, Health/Physical teacher, Business Education teacher, and Art teacher. When the HAS staff were asked about what they thought of Ms. Clark, they had only the nicest things to say, such as:



- Ms. Clark is one of the best people you'll ever meet!
- She has a servant's heart!
- Loving!
- Fabuloso!
- THE BEST! She is missed!
- Emotional support, multitalented, good speaker, and advocate.
- Dedicated!
- Tough love with a mothers touch!
- Caring!

Thank you so much Ms Clark for the time, care, love, and support you have shown to the HAS staff and students over the years! You are loved, missed, and we wish you all the best!



## 100 Down!

To celebrate our 100th day of school, students and staff got to enjoy an ice cream break. Mr DiOrio, HAS' Safety & Security Monitor, had the idea to celebrate this day and our recently retired teacher's assistance with a nice frozen treat. He went out and purchases the supplies which consisted of vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry ice creams, whipped cream, chocolate syrup, and rainbow sprinkles. A cart was decorated and named for Ms Clark who was in charge of Student Council and would facilitate events like this with hot chocolate, noodle cups, and ice cream. Student



volunteers went from class to class with Mr DiOrio and Ms Fern to ensure every student was treated.



## Black History Month

### Periodic Table of Black History

Black History Month is a month long celebration of those in the Black/African American community who have made strides and advancements in our world. To help celebrate, our bulletin board depicts those from the past and present that spans from scientists to actors, doctors to athletes, etc. Every day our students walk past this to admire and hopefully be inspired to do their best and maybe one day change the world.



### Black History Month Movie Day

Students were able to watch a movie that shows some aspect of Black Culture/History. Then they wrote a reflection based on one of these questions:



1. In what ways are the characteristics of the protagonist or antagonist like your own or those of someone you know?
2. Who was the protagonist? What conflict did they face and how did they approach it? What is your reaction to their experience and the decisions made along the way?
3. In films, the personal qualities that help the protagonist solve his or her problem are often a part of the lesson to be learned in the film. Based on the film that you watched, what is the lesson to be learned? What qualities did the protagonist possess that helped them overcome their conflict?
4. Which character did you [admire, hate, love, pity] the most? What was it about that character that caused you to have that reaction?
5. What life lessons can be learned from the choices made by the characters in the film that you watched?
6. Culture plays a big part in everyone's life, sometimes in small ways that we might not realize until we stop and think about it. How did culture impact the characters, their relationships with one another, and their life in the movie you watched?

**Daily Quotes from influential Black/African American figures were read by select students in the morning to encourage everyone to do their best!**



**2/3** - "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." - Martin Luther Kind Jr.

**2/4** - "Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe." - Frederick Douglass

**2/5** - "I believe we are here on the planet Earth to live, grow up and do what we can to make this world a better place for all people to enjoy freedom." - Rosa Parks

**2/6** - "He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life." - Muhammad Ali

**2/7** - "You can kill a man, but you can't kill an idea" - Medger Evers

**2/10** - "What you're supposed to do when you don't like a thing is change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it. Don't complain." - Maya Angelou

**2/11** - "I'd rather regret the risk that didn't work out than the chances I didn't take at all." - Simone Biles

**2/12** - "Challenge yourself; it's the only path which leads to growth." - Morgan Freeman

**2/13** - "You're never wasting your time as long as you learn from every single thing you do, whether you feel like those attempts are successful or not." - Tomi Adeyemi

**2/14** - "We're strongest when we cheer each other on. A champion isn't about how much they win, it's about how they recover from their downs. A champion is defined not by their wins but by how they recover when they fall. You have to believe in yourself when no one else does." - Serena Williams

**2/18** - "Kindness eases change. Love quiets fear" - Octavia E. Butler

**2/19** - "Don't be afraid of failure. This is the way to succeed." - LeBron James

**2/20** - "If you live in an oppressive society, you've got to be resilient. You can't let each little thing crush you. You have take every encounter and make yourself larger, rather than allow yourself to be diminished by it." - James Earl Jones

**2/21** - "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." – Nelson Mandela

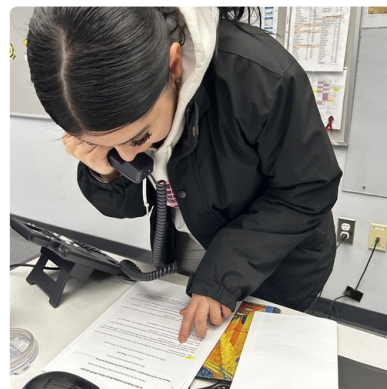
**2/24** - "History has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own. – Michelle Obama

**2/25** - "The great disease of mankind is ignorance." - Sidney Poitier

**2/26** - "In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute." – Thurgood Marshall

**2/27** - "Hate is too great a burden to bear. It injures the hater more than it injures the hated" - Coretta Scott King

**2/28** - "It isn't where you come from; it's where you're going that counts." – Ella Fitzgerald

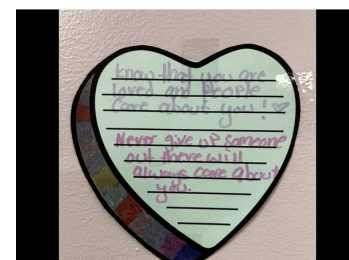
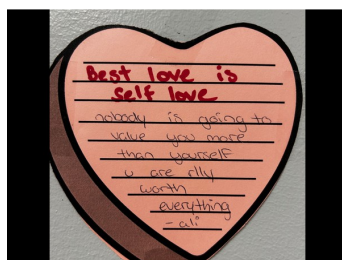
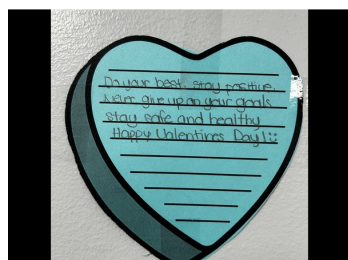


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## *Happy Valentines Day*

This month, HAS celebrated friendship and spread love to the students and staff of HAS with an uplifting message of love, support, or encouragement! Everyone filled out the heart shaped note

provided to write their message that was displayed in the hallway for everyone to see. These words could have made a difference in someone's day!



## February Spirit Days



**Superbowl**  
content



**Valentine's Day**  
content



**College Day**



**National Pink Shirt Day**

## NJ4S Returns

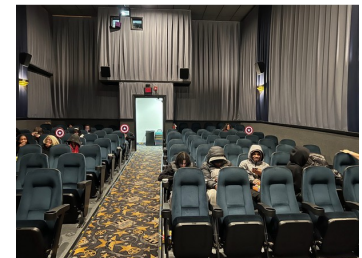


The brain of a high school student is still maturing so drug use can have a major impact on a child's life. NJ4S made several appearances at HAS conducting assemblies for our students. This time, they graciously gave a talk on marijuana use, addiction, & healthy coping skills. Thank you Ms Ramirez for setting up this informative assembly!



## *Honor Roll Field Trip*

Congratulations to all those students who made the second marking period Honor Roll! These students were treated to a trip to the movies for all of their hard work, dedication, and good behavior. Once they received their popcorn, drink, and other snacks, the students sat in their very own theater to watch the recently released Captain America: Brave New World movie.



## *Students Outside of School*

### **Whip Your Hair Back and Forth!**

Chrisiyah is a pro when it comes to braiding hair. Not only does she do her own, but she also does braiding for other people. Chrisiyah wanted to learn how to braid her own hair, so she watched videos about braiding and five years later she continues to do a marvelous job. When asked about this she stated "I honestly love to braid other peoples hair and have a strong passion for it. I love seeing my work finished as well, even though I don't really like doing my own hair because it's very hard to see the back of my head."



## 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](http://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



# Work Readiness Academy

## February 2025 Monthly Report



Dear WRA Families & Supporters,

Love is in the air as we wrap up month two of 2025! Our dedicated students at The Work Readiness Academy continue to work on both their individual and collective journeys towards independence, achieving personal goals, and active community engagement. This month has been filled with vibrant classroom activities, collaborative projects, and the shared spirit of growth that defines our school community. Later in the newsletter you will

hear (and see) more about learning this month, as well as some special activities centered around practicing appropriate social skills; including our annual trip to Linden Lanes and the 1st ever WRA "Mocktail" Party!

February reminds us to stop and appreciate those individuals in our lives that hold special places in our hearts. We have taken the time this month to acknowledge how important friendship is, learning positive ways to express our feelings and show our admiration for our family and friends that support and encourage us to become the best version of ourselves. We have worked hard to learn the value that love can add to our lives, not just for ourselves, but for the world around us. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. famously said:

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."*

This powerful reminder continues to inspire us as we work together to create a community rooted in kindness, friendship, understanding, acceptance, and unity.

Coming up in March...**our next Parent Workshop focusing on Guardianship and Supported Decision-Making**. More details below including information about how to register for this virtual event.

Some other important dates to pass along...

Barring any further snow or emergency closing days, the last day for each of our programs will be: **Wednesday, June 18th for Project SEARCH** and **Thursday, June 19th for the Work Readiness Academy**.

The dates have also been released for this summer's **Extended School Year Program at the WRA**. The program will begin on Monday June 30th and run through Friday, August 8th. We will be closed on Friday, July 4th. ESY Hours are 9am to 2pm daily. ESY eligibility is subject to district approval and is typically available to those students who have previously attended and have as a service in their IEP.

In next month's newsletter we will be sharing finalized dates for our graduation and end of year recognition ceremonies for both programs. Stay tuned.

Please enjoy the rest of this month's newsletter and as always, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at [jbornstein@ucesc.org](mailto:jbornstein@ucesc.org) or [rricher@ucesc.org](mailto:rricher@ucesc.org) if you have any questions or want to discuss your child's program. We can also be reached at (908) 633-2704.

**Josh Bornstein, Director**

**Rachel Richer, Supervisor of Instruction**

**UCESC Work Readiness Academy**

Union County Educational  
Services Commission

## Virtual Workshop **Guardianship**

The workshop will cover the basics of guardianship, limited guardianship, conservatorship, and other surrogate decision-making options, with an aim towards attaining the maximum possible independence for your child while preserving vital protections for important decision-making.

We will discuss how to secure guardianship and the importance of medical directives and durable power of attorney for those with capacity to make some decisions, but not all. We will also discuss the role and responsibilities of the guardian, and how to pass guardianship to a successor when parents are no longer here. This 90-minute presentation includes a Q&A.

Date

**March 26th**

Time

**06.30 PM**

Please email  
Nicole DellaVecchia  
[ndellavecchia@ucesc.org](mailto:ndellavecchia@ucesc.org)  
to receive a registration  
link for the virtual  
workshop



**Hinkle Prior Fischer &  
Oberweis**





## February 2024 Data

Enrollment as of February 27, 2025

Actual: 26

Changes: Entered: 0 Exited: 0

Referrals: 6 (SY 2024-25)

Intakes Scheduled: 6

Accepted: 2

2/20/25 - Lockdown Drill

2/24/25 - Fire Drill



### New Attendance Reporting Email!

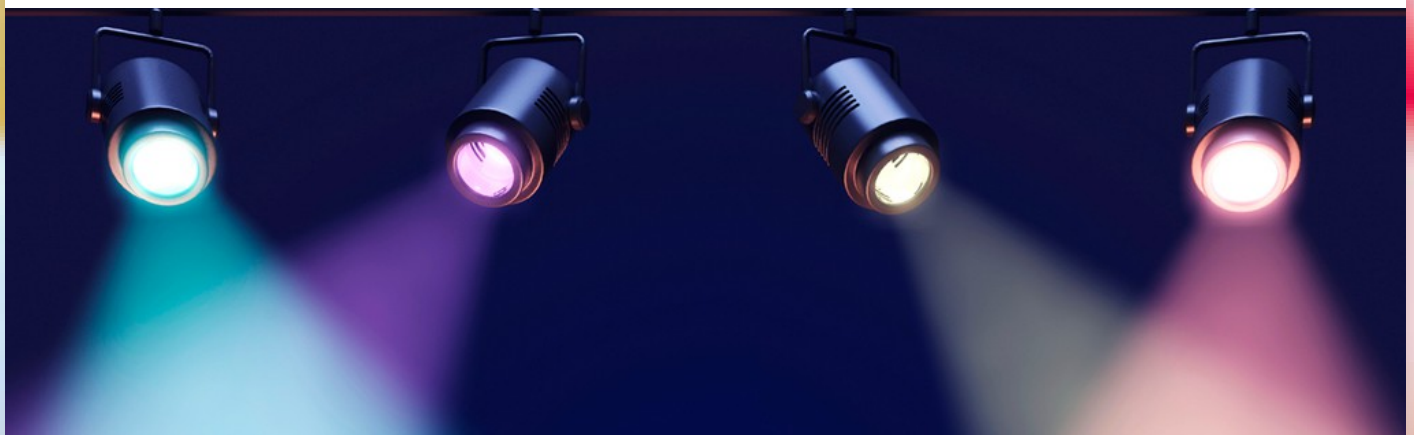
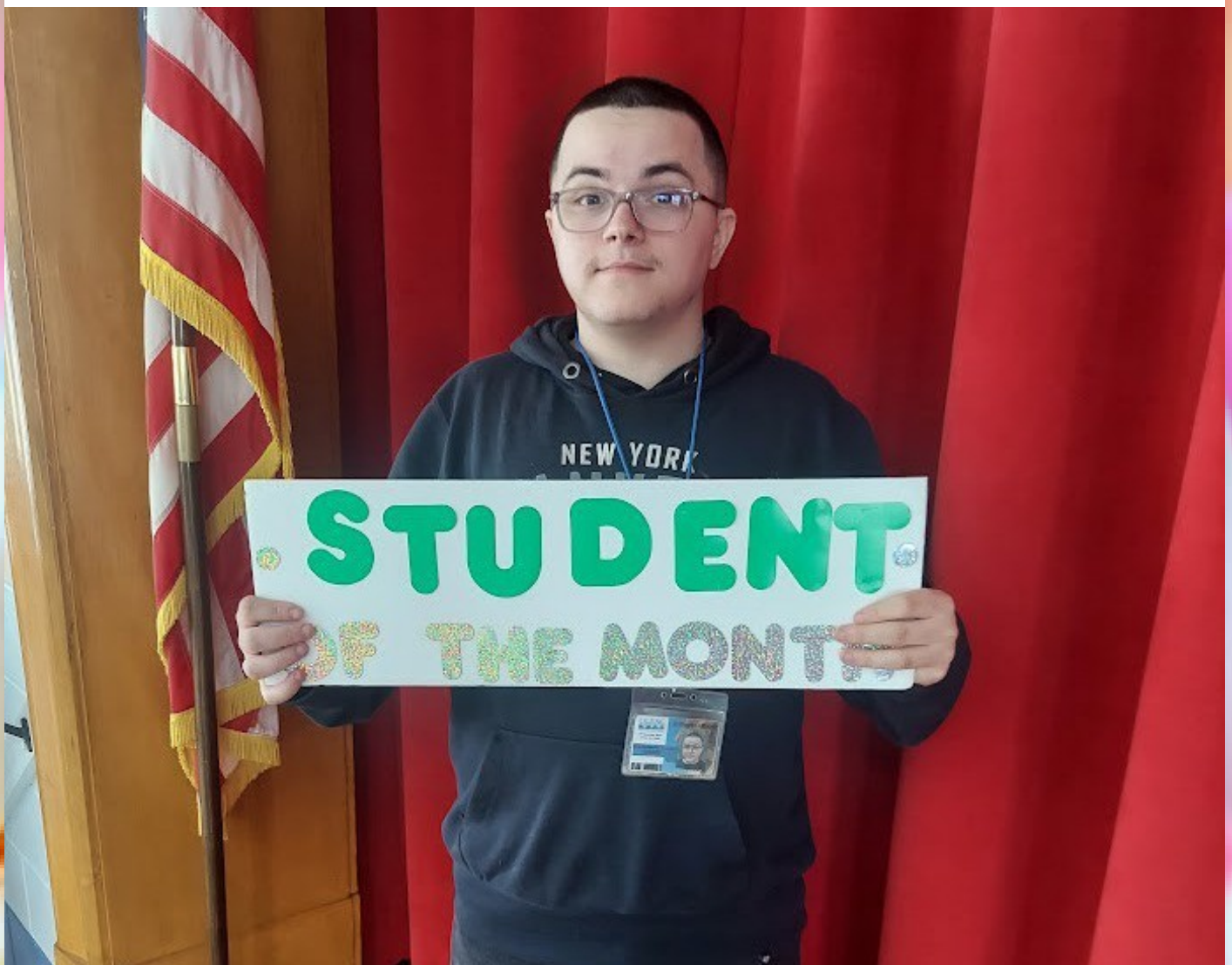
In the event that your child will be absent, arriving late, or picked up early, **please send us an email at [AttendanceWRA@ucesc.org](mailto:AttendanceWRA@ucesc.org)**. You may also call our main number at (908) 633-2704. If it is

before 8am, please leave a message.

## February Student of the Month

### Anthony L.

**Anthony** has worked incredibly hard to promote positivity, teamwork, and flexibility this month at WRA! Anthony is always first to offer his help to both classmates and staff while in the school building and out in the community. **Anthony's** upbeat and enthusiastic attitude is contagious and brings smiles to our school community. **Anthony** is always looking for ways to improve at his internships and willingly accepts feedback from staff, keeping an open mind and positive attitude while trying new things! Keep up the great work **Anthony!** *We are all very proud of you!*



## February Classroom Spotlight



### Project Search

In February, we participated in our second Employment Planning Meetings. We shared important information about our current internships, the skills we have been learning, and our strengths and areas for improvement. The job developers from Project Hire joined our meetings to discuss each of our goals for competitive employment. In the classroom, our lessons focused on financial literacy and banking, cognitive



flexibility and resume writing. We also had the opportunity to research important contributions that African Americans have made to history, culture and society for Black History Month. We enjoyed having the Respiratory Therapists visit to teach us more about the dangers of smoking and vaping. One of our favorite activities included participating in Overlook's Celebrating Culture Series, entitled "Tree of Hope." We worked together to write about what hope means to all of us.

**Jourdan Spencer, WRA Teacher**

**Project Search program at Overlook Medical Center**



### **Tree of Hope Event**

**Shannon** in Materials Management; **Christian** in Central Sterile; **Andy & Sadiyah** in Dietary and Catering; **Alvin** in Endoscopy



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## *Behind the Success...A Look at Our Exceptional Staff*



### **Marguerite Bennett, Teaching Assistant**

#### **Current position at UCESC?**

I am a Teaching Assistant at the WRA working with young adults at various internships out in the community.

#### **How long have you worked at UCESC?**

I am completing my eighth year with The Work Readiness Academy.

#### **What do you love most about your job?**

The best part of this experience is watching the transformation of each student from one year to the next. During this time they not only gain valuable transferable work skills, but also become more engaged and confident. They learn to use their voice and unique talents to forge meaningful relationships with their peers and effect positive changes in themselves and others. When they graduate, they definitely are not the same people who walked through our doors on day one!

#### **What do you like to do in your free time?**



In my free time, I like to play games and cards with my family as we are very competitive and I like to win! I enjoy visiting the Poconos a few times a year and in the summer, relaxing at the beach, my favorite place in the world.

**What is one thing that would surprise people about you?**

One thing that might surprise someone to know about me is that a few years back I was an extra in a short movie that was shown at film festivals around the country. My name is in the credits!

## Work-Based Learning Snapshots



*Penelope at Walgreen's in Cranford*





*Izzy at Barnes & Noble, Union Plaza*





***Nicky L** at Keating Physical Therapy in Cranford*



*Larissa at Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside*





*Benji in the Mailroom at Summit Health Berkeley Heights*



*Nick B in Food & Beverage at Hilton Hotel Newark Airport*

## Accepting Project SEARCH Applications!



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 actively being accepted and interviews scheduled.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis between November 1st and May 15th.

We are offering virtual information sessions and tours for prospective students, families, or referring school district staff. Please email us at [projectsearch@ucesc.org](mailto:projectsearch@ucesc.org) to schedule.

For more information about Project SEARCH, or to access the application for the Class of 2026, please visit our **newly update website at:**

<https://www.atlantichealth.org/professionals/residencies-fellowships/project-search>



# February is Black History Month



## Why do we have a special month to celebrate Black Americans?

Celebrating Black History Month is a time to pause and remember stories of the historic leaders in the black community and commemorate their achievements. We focus and learn about the narratives of many famous African Americans in history because of the impact they have made in this country. Honoring Black History teaches people of every race about the diverse story of this nation.

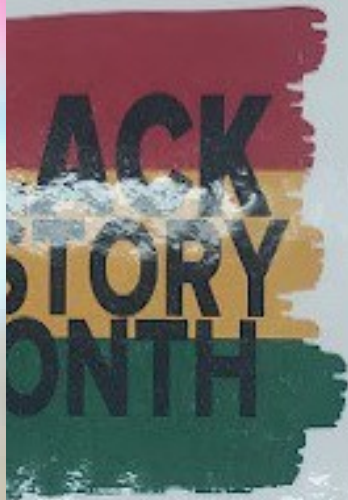
## Stevie Wonder

Stevie Wonder is one of the most successful singer and songwriters. Stevie Wonder is a humanitarian who has used his music to support many social causes. In support of making Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday a national holiday, he released 'Happy Birthday' a song celebrating Dr. King. The song became a hit and a rallying cry for the MLK Holiday.



[CLICK TO WATCH- Who is Stevie Wonder?](#)

[CLICK TO LISTEN- Happy Birthday](#) [CLICK TO LISTEN- Sir Duke](#)



Michelle Obama

Michelle Obama is 61 years old and was born on January 17 1964. She is famous for being the first African American first lady of the USA and helping charity programs in schools

A few fun facts is that she has written three books including her The New York Times best selling memoir Becoming (2018) and The Light We Carry (2022).



## Dental Health Awareness at WRA

As we embrace February, it isn't just the month of love and chocolate, but also a time to focus on a different kind of sweetness—our smiles. February marks National Children's Dental Health Month, with a crucial mission to promote the importance of a healthy oral care routine from a young age. This month-long national health observance brings together dental professionals, healthcare providers, and parents to ensure our little ones (and our "big" young adults) have the brightest, healthiest smiles.



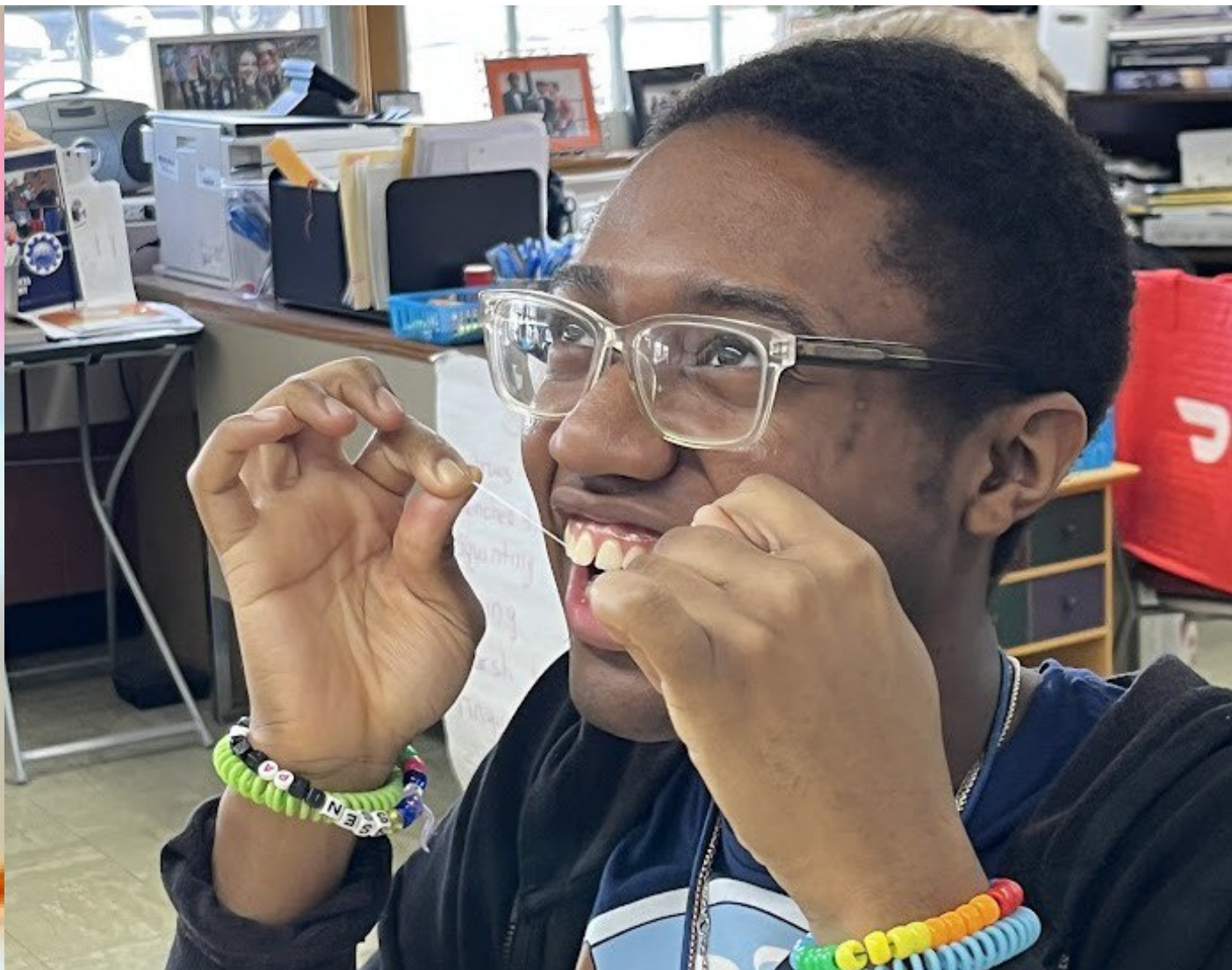
Students in Jodi Klimko's classroom learned about Dental Health Awareness via a science experiment. Students soaked eggs in Coca Cola overnight. They made predictions about what might happen to the eggs and then took them out for inspection the next day. They learned that the soda discolored the eggs to a brown color, however when brushed with toothpaste and a toothbrush - the discoloration faded. Discussion around how and when to brush teeth, along with a flossing lesson took place as well. Students were able to practice with 3 different floss options. Finally, the class made some connections to making healthy choices for drinks and concluded that drinking water is best for our bodies and our teeth.











## K-Pop/Anime Club



### K-Pop Meets Anime: A Fusion of Beats, Battles, and Beauty!

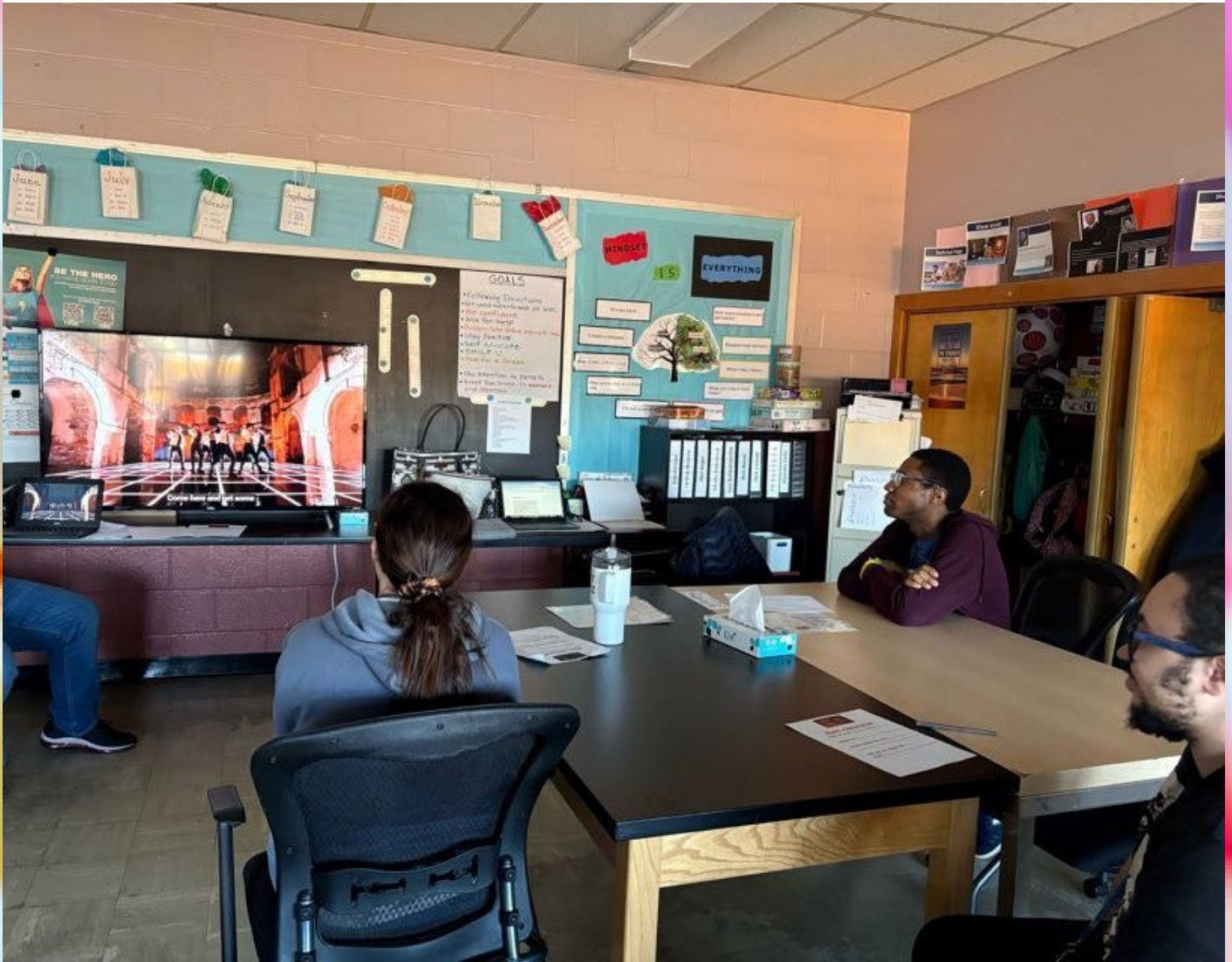
A group of passionate students at WRA have successfully launched a new club centered around their love for K-pop and anime. The K-pop and Anime Club, which meets every Friday, was created through the students' initiative and collaboration with school staff. The club provides a space for students to bond over their shared interests, listen to music, watch videos, and deepen their understanding of K-pop and anime culture.

The idea for the club came from two students who approached staff with a request to form a space dedicated to K-pop and anime. With support from faculty and administration, the students were able to bring their vision to life, and the club has quickly gained popularity among others.

Each Friday, the club gathers to enjoy a variety of K-pop songs and anime music. Students not only listen to their favorite tunes but also engage in thoughtful discussions and reflections. As part of the club's activities, members fill out music appreciation forms, where they record the name of the

song, the songwriter, the meaning behind the song, and the reason they chose it to share with the group. These forms encourage members to dive deeper into the music and better understand the artistry behind their favorite songs.

The club's founders are thrilled with the support they have received from both students and staff. With its welcoming atmosphere and focus on cultural appreciation, the K-pop and Anime Club has quickly become a hit among students, offering a unique space for self-expression and community.



***Bowling Outing Strikes Up Excitement!***

















Valentine's Day "Mocktail" Party







## DRINKS MENU

### Shirley Temple

Sprite, touch of Grenadine, Lime Juice  
Cherry and lime garnish

### Coconut BayBreeze

Coconut Water, Pineapple Juice and Cranberry Juice  
Lime slice and pineapple for garnish

### Tequiless Sunrise

Ginger Ale, Orange Juice, a touch of Grenadine  
Orange slice for garnish

### Cherry Lime Spritz

Ginger Ale, Cherry Juice, Lime  
Lime wedge and cherry garnish

Limited Quantity:

### Moscow Mule

Ginger ale, Sprite, lime  
Lime wedge for garnish







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## *Look Who Was Spotted in the Community!*

WRA Director **Josh Bornstein** represented the WRA and UCESC at this past weekend's **2025 Special Needs Resource Fair** at the **JCC of Central NJ**. The event was a tremendous success! 70 vendors and more than 425 families registered to attend.

The resource fair helped individuals with disabilities and their families connect with vital services, programs, and products that are often hard to find. We are proud to have convened an event of this magnitude that brought together so many dedicated professionals and families.

Below is a link to the 2025 Special Needs Resource Directory! We encourage you to review and share this incredible resource.

<https://www.jccnj.org/specialneedsdirectory/>





## *Picture of the Month*

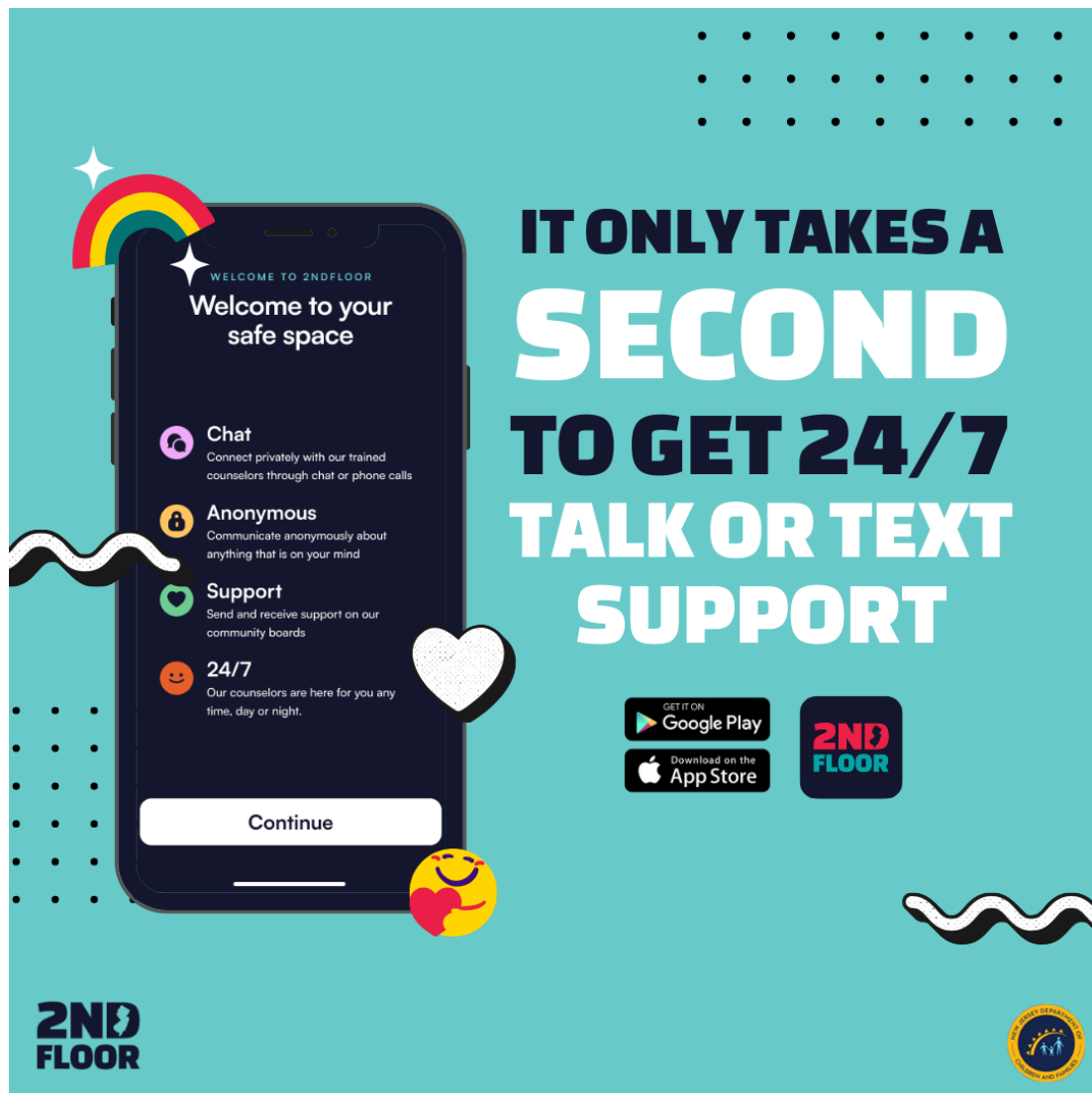
*Cheers from Penelope!*



## *Community Resources/Events*

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](https://2NDFLOOR.org/download) #mentalhealth #support.





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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](http://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](http://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](mailto:rreicher@ucesc.org)

**Email:** [jbornstein@ucesc.org](mailto:jbornstein@ucesc.org)

**Website:** [https://www.ucesc.org/schools/the\\_work\\_readiness\\_academy](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 Follow the  
WRA on Instagram!**



**WRA Smore**

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