

Know Your Schools

Important Information for the Residents of Lower Dauphin School District

Superintendent Message



By Dr. Robert Gildea
Superintendent

It has become a long-standing tradition in the United States for the sitting president to annually deliver a State of the Union address. It is usually made in January and provides an overview of the current

condition of the country, typically addressing the status of the economy, domestic and international affairs, and other pertinent news related to the president's goals.

"The state of the district is bright thanks in large part to our dedicated and talented staff, our amazing students, and the unconditional support of our community."

I have used this same approach as Superintendent of Schools to deliver my State of the District address to the faculty of our Lower Dauphin schools as well as through brief presentations at township and borough council meetings. This year, my message included a brief overview of the progress we have made toward our district goals related to facilities planning, curriculum, instruction, and student wellness.

Facilities Planning - The Superintendent will work with the board and administrative team to develop a facilities plan addressing both short-term and long-term facility needs that will ensure the instructional needs of our students and staff are met in a safe and secure environment.

(Continued on page 2)

LDSD Structured Literacy continues to take shape



East Hanover students enjoy a reading activity.

By Mrs. Amy Sell
Instructional Specialist

At Lower Dauphin, we are dedicated to helping every child become strong readers and writers. That's why we are making exciting updates to our reading and writing instruction through the Structured Literacy Strategic Plan. This multi-year plan is grounded on the science of reading.

The science of reading is based on years of research into the best ways to teach kids how to read and write. Structured literacy is an approach that supports this research by teaching reading and writing skills in a clear and organized way.

Pennsylvania's new education guidelines require teachers to be trained in a structured literacy framework. Lower Dauphin is committed to meeting these standards and ensuring every student gets the best possible start in reading. Reading and writing instruction has changed over the years from traditional, phonics workbooks to basic readers, like the *Dick and Jane* series. Reading instruction later developed into a Whole Language approach. Whole Language instruction focused on literature experiences, but overlooked the importance of phonics to decode words. We now know that the best way to teach reading and writing is with explicit phonics instruction for decoding, alongside instruction to build comprehension, vocabulary and background knowledge. This structured approach is grounded in the science of reading and ensures that all students, including those with reading challenges, develop the skills they need.

Choosing the Best Reading Materials

To make sure our students receive the highest quality instruction, Lower Dauphin is piloting a new reading and writing program: Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA). This program is designed to teach skills in a logical way, while also expanding students' knowledge about the world with interesting topics and themes.

The pilot program began with teacher training over the summer, followed by classroom instruction at the start of the school year. During the eight-week pilot, teachers received support from CKLA trainers and worked together to ensure

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LDSD Structured Literacy continues to take shape

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the materials were effective for students. Based on the positive results, the team unanimously decided to continue using CKLA for the rest of the school year.

Who is Involved?

The pilot program includes teachers from all elementary schools and grade levels:

Kindergarten: Kristian Haver and Kim Wise

Grade 1: Alycia Randall and Steph Zahora

Grade 2: Sam Irvin, Adelynn Lingle, and Jen Solomon

Grade 3: Jamie Ketty and Carrie Twaddell

Grade 4: Ruby Gourley, Shannon Guevarez, and Shelli Jones

Grade 5: Scott Montgomery and Pam Waters

With the pilot going well, the team is excited to recommend CKLA to be used in all K-5 classrooms for the 2025-2026 school year. This adoption supports our Structured Literacy Strategic Plan, ensuring that all students receive consistent, high-quality instruction. Lower Dauphin is committed to helping



Lower Dauphin school district students enjoying reading and writing lesson.

every student become a confident and skilled reader and writer. By using the best materials and teaching methods, we are giving our children the tools they need for a bright future!

Budget, Equity, Student Wellness Update

(Continued from page 1)

A detailed Facilities Assessment was completed in October by RLPS Architects. The comprehensive study assesses the condition of all district buildings and presents various options for a long-range capital improvement plan. The study can be found on the "Our District" tab of the school website (www.ldsd.org) under "Facility Study."

The Lower Dauphin School District Board of Directors is moving forward with Phase 1 of what is planned to be a multiple-phase project addressing long-standing facility needs. Phase 1 projects will include HVAC replacements at East Hanover Elementary, South Hanover Elementary, Londonderry Elementary, Nye Elementary and Lower Dauphin Middle School, as well as athletic site improvements at Falcon Fields and the High School track. The Board has approved a \$16.5M general obligation bond to finance the projects. Preliminary design work will begin within the next two months with completion projected by December 2027.

Curriculum/Instruction - The Superintendent will lead the administrative team through an analysis of current instructional practices

with the goal of developing a student-centered, equity-focused and future-driven curriculum and instructional platform which aligns with the school district mission of maximizing the potential of each individual.

There is no doubt in today's education climate there are a new set of challenges. The world has changed, kids have changed, and so has the way we teach. Lower Dauphin administrators and lead teachers have been working diligently to set a system in place that will streamline the curriculum evaluation process, thus making it easier for our leadership teams to ensure our curriculum is aligned with current educational research on best practice, that the curriculum is aligned with state standards, and that our teachers have the materials available to them to make sure that the needs of each and every student are being met. The preceding article on the improvements made by our literacy team is one example of the progress Lower Dauphin School District is making toward our Curriculum and Instruction goal.

Equity/Student Wellness - The superintendent will work with teachers, parents, students, support staff, and

administrative leaders to guarantee a supportive learning environment where all students are valued.

Various levels of support are in place to make certain the academic and social/emotional needs of every student are being met. The district has contracted with Franklin Covey Education for use of the *Leader in Me* program; a comprehensive PK-12 framework that nurtures student leadership, fosters a culture of trust and boosts academic success. The program, aligned to The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, empowers students, educators, and families with essential leadership and life skills, preparing them to excel. *Lighthouse* teams have been formed at every district school as part of a comprehensive professional development process, thus enabling a personalized plan to be developed for each school for the start of the 2026-2027 school year.

The state of the district is bright thanks in large part to our dedicated and talented staff, our amazing students, and the unconditional support of our community.

LD Falcon Fling celebrates 15th Year with community

The Lower Dauphin Falcon Foundation held their annual Falcon Fling on February 15th. This year's event was "Share the LD Love." The night helped raise funds for local student programs and scholarships, all while celebrating community contributions.

The Fling was held at the Hershey Lodge, and honored two influential community members for their dedication to Lower Dauphin. Kevin Busher, an active community member, was recognized for his tireless commitment to local initiatives, while David Kugle, a custodian at Nye Elementary School, was celebrated for his unwavering support and dedication to students and staff at Nye.

Kevin has served in many roles as an advocate for the Lower Dauphin School District. He previously served as a school board director and is currently an advocate for the district on the PSBA. Kevin is an active participant in all things South Hanover Elementary and also provides voluntary counsel for a local child care center to ensure quality care and preparedness for the Lower Dauphin School District experience. Kevin exudes a selfless commitment to South Hanover and the Lower Dauphin School District at large with his strong involvement in extracurricular activities, fundraisers and other township planning.

David goes above and beyond his job

duties to make Nye a special place. His attention to detail to create a clean, safe, and engaging space for our staff and students is unparalleled. With a splash of Falcon blue paint, he has added touches to the hallways and doorways which help stimulate and create a space that is welcoming.

When it comes to the outside grounds, he has poured his own time, money and energy into creating and updating artistic details such as birdbaths, elevated gardens and special flowers. David's touch truly makes Nye Elementary a place our students and staff love.

"I am honored to receive the Flying High Falcon Award from the Lower Dauphin Falcon Foundation alongside Mr. Kugle," said Busher. "I continue to be humbled by the support of the people of South Hanover who have supported me through my time on the Lower Dauphin School Board and the South Hanover Board of Supervisors. None of this would be possible without the love and support of my family and friends.



Honoree Kevin Busher along with his wife Amy Busher celebrate his Flying High Falcon award with Falcon Foundation President Dr. Lia Book.

I am truly grateful to be part of this Falcon family and community."

The Falcon Foundation also received generous support from event sponsor Capital Blue Cross, which contributed a \$5,000 sponsorship. Over \$22,000 total were raised from the event. These funds will help further the foundation's mission of providing grants for programs and projects that benefit Lower Dauphin students, as well as scholarships for graduating seniors.

To support the LDFF mission, visit www.ldfalconfoundation.org.

Student-Musicians named to PMEA honor ensembles

12 Lower Dauphin student-musicians successfully auditioned for honor ensembles hosted by the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association.

Named to the PMEA District 7 Orchestra were junior Micah Fox, horn, and freshman Levi Dickinson, string bass. The PMEA Orchestra festival was held on January 10-11. The Lower Dauphin High School director of orchestra is Mrs. Melody Cliff.

Named to the PMEA District 7 Band were seniors Dylan Kreiss, percussion, and Adam Little, alto saxophone; juniors Micah Fox, horn and Mia Pegher, oboe; sophomores Savannah Ogle, clarinet, and Chris Brenneman, flute; and freshman Lorelei Hoffer, alto saxophone. The PMEA Band festival was held on January 24-25. The Lower Dauphin High School director of bands is Dr. Keith Richardson.

Named to the PMEA District 7 Choir were senior Jaxon Umidi, Bass 2 and junior Rachel Linnell, on Alto 1. The PMEA District Choir festival was held on February 7th-8th. The Lower Dauphin High School director of choirs is Dr. Elizabeth Colpo.

East Hanover Reads continues to thrive

East Hanover Elementary School's *East Hanover Reads* program, which began in 2016, is continuing to bring families together through reading, thanks in part to the support of the LD Falcon Foundation. The program, designed to foster a love of reading among students and families, is set to kick off its seventh year in March 2025.

In its first year, the school provided families with a single book and a reading schedule that encouraged reading aloud together at home.

"We wanted to create a low-cost way to promote family reading," said East Hanover Elementary's program coordinator Jennifer Solomon. "Our goal was to provide a meaningful experience for families without the high cost often associated with such programs."

The *East Hanover Reads* program provides each family with a copy of the same book, along with a calendar that outlines which chapters to read each night. Families are encouraged to read aloud together, averaging 10-15 minutes of reading each evening. The program is designed to strengthen family bonds and promote language development among students.

In addition to the nightly reading, students participate in related activities at school including a kickoff assembly, daily trivia questions, and in-class projects. These activities enhance

the overall reading experience and encourage students to actively engage with the material.

The program's success relies heavily on the community's support. In previous years, the program was able to purchase books through a partnership with Scholastic Book Clubs, which offered books at a discounted price. However, due to rising costs, new funding sources were needed.

"The Falcon Foundation has been instrumental in helping us continue this program," said Solomon. "Thanks to their generous \$600 donation this year, we are able to purchase one book per family, ensuring that every child has access to the program."

The partnership allows *East Hanover Reads* to maintain its mission of providing an affordable and enriching reading experience for the entire school community.

East Hanover Reads will officially begin in March, with activities running throughout the month. The book title will be kept secret until the kickoff assembly on March 3, adding an element of surprise and excitement for students.

Families are encouraged to participate and celebrate the power of reading as a community.



East Hanover students break out their books during a reading session.

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Junior Keaton Wagner wins National Journalism Award

Lower Dauphin High School junior Keaton Wagner is a national award winner after having received an Excellent Rating in Yearbook Copy/Caption: Sports Division at the Journalism Education Association and National Scholastic Press Association Convention. His award marks the first for the Falcon Flash and Falcon Broadcast Group at Lower Dauphin High School.

Wagner stood out among more than 3,700 student journalists from across the country in multiple categories.

"I was surprised to win the award; there were so many student journalists there," Wagner said. "I wasn't too familiar with Yearbook Caption Writing, but since it was in sports, I was able to do well and felt

pretty good.”

Falcon Flash advisor and English teacher Lena Russell expressed her excitement for her student as well, “This award is so exciting for Keaton and our entire group,” said Russell. “We are just so happy for Keaton, and for it to be our first time competing makes it even more special.”

The National Convention, sponsored by the Journalism Education Association and National School Press Association, brought together student journalists from all over the country.



Junior Keaton Wagner shows off his certificate from the Journalism Education Association and National Scholastic Press Association Convention.



Veterans Day celebrations across Lower Dauphin School District featured many events for those who fight for our country. From our Veterans Day walks to Veteran Day breakfast, Lower Dauphin School District made sure to thank our many vets around the district for their service.

Lower Dauphin schools celebrate 'Hour of Code'

Elementary school students across Lower Dauphin worked with different teachers and lessons during the second week of December. To celebrate National Computer Science Education week, high school students visited each elementary school to teach students about different computer science disciplines. Their visits, featured multiple different stations packed into the time known as the "Hour of Code"

"We have been doing this for a couple years now, and I think the one thing that surprises me the most is that the start of each new year, I get someone asking if we will be returning to the elementary schools," said Nancy Kiscadden, High School computer science teacher "The High School students love to go back to their home elementary school to see their former stomping grounds and to share their knowledge of computer science. The great thing about the unplugged activities is that it demonstrates 'big' concepts in computer science in a less threatening way."

The Computer Science Honor Society created this year's theme around how data is stored in computers as binary values, how computers can sort through data, and the importance of information security such as cryptography(encryption). Students learned, through unplugged activities, the fundamental concepts around these ideas, in an "escape room" style, and applied their knowledge to solve puzzles that led them to opening locks



Conewago students working on different situations and lessons during Hour of Code.

on a box to get a treat. With different activities for the students to learn and adapt to, these real-world applications students were offered the chance to get a jump start and create interest for potential future coders.

"We enjoyed seeing the 'lightbulb

moments' during the lessons. That was inspiring to the work and effort we put into the event," said high School Senior Owen Giampetro "We want the students to see how computer science applies in different aspects of their lives through the themes we choose each year."

South Hanover students earn Do The Right Thing award

Lower Dauphin school district continues to emphasize the importance of community involvement with our students, "Do The Right Thing" is a program provided by LD's Communities that Care

Although it spans across the entire district, five South Hanover elementary School students stood out recently with their initiative.

Second-graders Lakelyn Mitchell and Avery Clark, along with third-graders

Vivian DeMartini, Lyla Mitchell, and Delaney Morse, were honored for organizing a hot chocolate stand to raise money for Zoe's House Rescue in Sinking Spring, PA. The students raised over \$100, which was donated to the rescue organization. As part of their recognition, the students received \$20 gift cards, t-shirts, and framed certificates.

"Do the Right Thing" program, now in its 18th year, honors students in the Lower Dauphin community for

exemplary behavior, accomplishments, or attitudes. The program aims to highlight the positive actions of young people and reinforce good deeds, showcasing the "good kids" of the community.

Nominations for the program are typically submitted by school staff or local police officers, but any adult can submit a nomination. A volunteer committee reviews the nominations and selects monthly winners.

Senior Cam Bashore named PA Champ of Powerpoint

Lower Dauphin senior Cameron Bashore has been named the Pennsylvania State Champion in Microsoft PowerPoint (Office 2019). Bashore scored a 970/1000 on her certification exam that put her in rarefied air as the best in the state. Bashore will now take her talents to compete in Certiport's 2025 Microsoft Office Specialist U.S. National Championship at the Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center in Dallas, Texas.



Lower Dauphin senior Cameron Bashore prepares for Certiport's 2025 Microsoft Office Specialist U.S. National Championship during class.

"This opportunity is amazing that they give students," said Bashore. "It's awesome to represent the school in Texas and it's going to open a lot of doors for me, it's just really cool." The competition takes place June 16th-18th.

There, Bashore will compete against other elite scoring students from across the country to win scholarships, prizes, trophies, and certificates. If she qualifies, she will have a chance to win an all-expenses paid trip to

the World Championship in Orlando, Florida in July. "Cameron has excelled in both Microsoft Word/PowerPoint certification and Excel certification classes. I am impressed with her ability to master the Microsoft programs with ease," said business education teacher Christie Stankiewicz. "I am excited to see how she will use her acquired skills to compete in June at the Microsoft Championship in Texas as well as for her future career opportunities."

This award comes as a surprise to

Bashore, while taking one of her final tests, she decided to put her skills up against the best to see what could come of it.

"In one of the final projects there was a pop-up asking if I wanted to enter for a chance to go to the national competition in Dallas," said Bashore. "I clicked it and I walked into class one day with an email to Mrs. Stankiewicz saying I was invited to represent Lower Dauphin and the state of Pennsylvania."

Londonderry Teacher Pam Waters gets KEYTA Grant

*By Dr. Jared Wastler
Londonderry Principal*

Pam Waters, a 5th grade teacher at Londonderry Elementary School, received a classroom grant from the Keystone Teachers Association (KEYTA). KEYTA offers classroom grants to support educators in "bringing their innovative ideas to life and positively impacting their students' learning journeys." Classroom grants are funded through the Keystone Teachers Association Foundation, a nonprofit organized to support teachers in the classroom.

Mrs. Waters applied for the grant to

purchase additional 3-D pens for her classroom. The pens allow students to create 3-D print designs and functional items using a free-hand process. Students used the 3-D pens as part of the before school STEM Club organized by Mrs. Waters for students in grades 3-5. Experiences in the STEM Club led Mrs. Waters to seek the grant to additional 3-D pens for her classroom to enhance student learning opportunities.

KEYTA Executive Director Carol Yeagy traveled to Londonderry Elementary in early February to provide Mrs. Waters with a check for \$250, the

maximum available grant amount, and a certificate recognizing the classroom grant award. As part of the award presentation, Mrs. Waters demonstrated the pens for Mrs. Yeagy, illustrating how the funds will support her students' learning. Congratulations to Mrs. Waters on receiving this classroom grant!

"I am so grateful to the Keystone Teachers Association for their support of teachers and students," said Waters. "My kiddos will be engaged and excited about using 3-D pens to create structures. We will use them in engineering challenges, for artistic applications and as a reward or brain break for starters, but I expect to continue thinking of new and different ways to use them."



Londonderry 5th grade Teacher Pam Waters receives KEYTA grant for 3-D pens.

District welcomes new staffers to Lower Dauphin

Noelle Conrad

***4th Grade Teacher
Nye***



Mrs. Conrad will serve as a 4th grade teacher at Nye. She comes to Lower Dauphin after previously working in Millersburg and Palmyra school districts. She earned a special/elementary education degree from Slippery Rock along with a Master's degree from Temple University. Her main goal is to help her students feel safe and be creative. In her free time, she coaches basketball and spends time with family.

Denise Haas

***Social Worker
District Wide***



Mrs. Haas comes to Lower Dauphin School District as a fresh face to the area. She attended the University of Maryland where she earned her bachelor's degree. Mrs. Haas also has a master's degree in social work. Her main goal is to help all students and families with any needs. In her free time, she likes going for walks and spending time with her family.

Adam Mason

***4th Grade Teacher
South Hanover***



Mr. Mason will serve as a 4th grade teacher for Lower Dauphin after previously teaching at Cumberland Valley school district. He earned his bachelor's degree in elementary education from Shippensburg University and a master's degree from Cabrini College. His main goal is to help his students gain confidence and reach their full potential. In his free time, he likes to golf and is a big Philly sports fan.

Emily Parrish

***Autism Support
Londonderry***



Ms. Parrish comes to Lower Dauphin School District from the Catherine Hershey School in Harrisburg. She graduated from Messiah University with a bachelor's degree in early childhood/special education. Her main goal is to get to know her new Lower Dauphin family and finish out the school year strong. In her free time, she coaches and likes to go on hikes with her dog.

Colette Sauflay

***Reading Specialist
East Hanover***



Mrs. Sauflay takes on the reading specialist role after serving as a long-term substitute in the district. Prior to that, she spent 15 years as a home school mom and educator, while also teaching in Elizabethtown. She has a bachelor's degree from Bucknell University in education and a master's in education from Bloomsburg University. Her main goal is to help her students find their love of reading.

Kimberly Zuck

***Family
Consumer Sciences
Middle School***



Mrs. Zuck comes to the Lower Dauphin School District from Elizabethtown High School and substitute teaching. She graduated from Mansfield University with a bachelor's degree in home and education. Her main goal is to help students become more comfortable in the kitchen and develop healthier eating habits. In her free time, she likes to spend time with her family.

Lower Dauphin is hiring. For more information:

<https://www.applitrack.com/ldsd/onlineapp/>





Lower Dauphin School District's holiday concert season brings out the smiles and cheers. Students across the district put their skills on display, culminating in concerts from elementary to high school.

Nye Celebrates school-wide P.R.I.D.E

By Mrs. Lindsay Adams
Nye Principal

Throughout Lower Dauphin School District the words Falcon PRIDE are more than just words. Schools celebrate and apply Falcon Pride in different ways. For Nye elementary, one of their celebrations include students striving to exude Falcon Pride each day.

On Friday, January 31st the students of Nye celebrated 99 days of making great choices during their mid-year PRIDE celebration. If you ask any Nye student what PRIDE stands for; They will tell you, Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Discipline and Excellence!

Nye teachers collaborated with high school Art Honor Society students and high school student-athletes to plan some fun opportunities celebrating Nye students and their PRIDE characteristics.

High school art students helped each Nye student create and decorate a snowflake that is unique to each individual.

Students showcased their snowflakes on their lockers for all to see and enjoy.

The High School student-athletes joined the elementary school students in some



Lower Dauphin High school students visit NYE Elementary School to work with students on their PRIDE project and help them celebrate Falcon Pride.

dancing and movement fun as students let loose and enjoyed being active.

Knowing that the Middle School and High School also celebrate the same PRIDE characteristics makes for a great opportunity to celebrate all the good choices students are making district-wide.

"This is something that is near and dear

to not only the district, and we just want to truly dive into Falcon PRIDE at Nye elementary school." said Principal of Nye Lindsay Adams. "Our young students getting the chance to not only celebrate within the school, but with our older students and leaders, just shows how committed we are to this initiative and how we try to put a purpose behind everything that we are doing."

7th grader Sarah White wins LDMS Spelling Bee

Lower Dauphin Middle School seventh-grader Sarah White is this year's queen of spelling after outlasting her 20 classmates in the annual middle school spelling bee.

White's championship word was "equality" which she performed flawlessly and quickly to earn the spelling bee title this year.

The list of spelling bee words are compiled from the National Scripps Spelling Bee and students are given these lists to begin studying at the end of October. The final rounds consisted of words that the students were unfamiliar with during their preparation. Sarah, as well as the three other top finishers, will all move on to the WITF Central

PA Spelling Bee. This next round involves taking a written test along with a vocabulary test in January. The top finishers on the written test then qualify for WITF Central PA Spelling Bee's oral test and from there have a chance to compete in the National Scripps Spelling competitions

"I am grateful for all of the spelling bee participants this year and their willingness to tackle a very challenging spelling list," said 8th grade English language arts teacher Kim Reeder. "I am especially proud of our spelling bee winners Sarah, Samaya, Randa, and Mason. We wish them good luck as they prepare for the regional spelling bee."

7th grader Sarah White greeted by Dr. Gildea after winning spelling bee.





The high school's fall play "Before Oz" follows the life of L. Frank Baum. The show features seniors Hunter Myers, Jaxon Umidi, Jordan Braman, and Beth Tylwalk. Daphne Linn served as the stage manager for the show.

LD CTC reminder: Parents who host lose the most

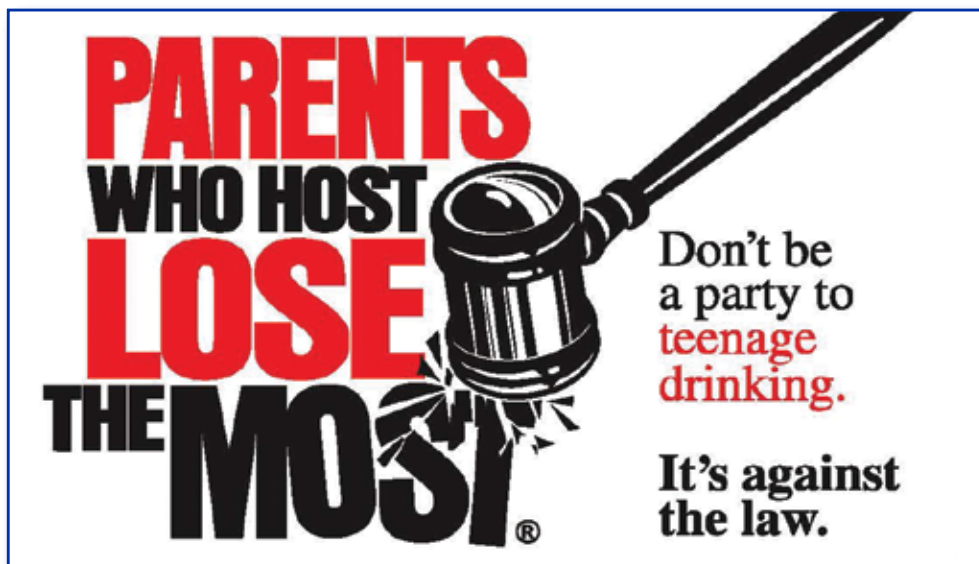
*By Mrs. Angela Durantine
LD CTC Program Director*

With prom and graduation around the corner, Lower Dauphin Communities That Care is promoting their “Parents Who Host Lose the Most” public awareness campaign to remind parents that it is illegal to provide alcohol to minors. The campaign’s goal is to provide parents (and anyone over the age of 21) with accurate information about the health risks of underage drinking and the legal consequences of providing alcohol to youth.

Parents play a major role in their children’s choices about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

According to the 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS), Lower Dauphin youth who reported alcohol use in the past year said the two most common sources for obtaining alcohol were my “parents/caregivers provided it to me” and I “took it without permission (from home, store, etc.).”

As a parent/caregiver, some steps that you can take to protect your child and yourself is to be at home when your teen has a party, refuse to supply



alcohol to anyone under 21 and make sure that alcohol is not brought into your home or property by your child’s friends.

Instead, create alcohol-free opportunities and activities in your home so teens will feel welcome.

On a positive note, almost three quarters of the LD students surveyed (6, 8, 10 & 12th grades) have never tried alcohol and only 11.3% of students surveyed

have had alcohol in the past 30 days. We want to see those numbers continue to decrease each year, and with your help and awareness, it can happen!

This campaign partners with the Hummelstown Police Department and the High School’s Youth Advisory Committee, with support from Penn State Health.

For more information on the biennial PAYS survey, please visit ldctc.org/programs/payouth-survey/.

LDSD earns Great PA School Honor from PSBA

Lower Dauphin School District has earned the prestigious “Great PA School”

designation from the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. This honor recognizes the district for its commitment to providing rigorous

programming, fostering a community-centered environment, maintaining financial well-being, and demonstrating resilience in the face of challenges.

To receive the nomination, public school districts must meet high



standards in these key areas, making Lower Dauphin a standout example of excellence in education.

The district’s focus on student success, community engagement, and sound financial practices were all highlighted in the award.

“This recognition is an acknowledgement of the dedication of our staff and community

to maintaining a high quality and rewarding educational experience for every student,” said Superintendent Dr. Robert Gildea “This designation is also a reflection of our hard-working and respectful students who display their Falcon Pride on a daily basis.”

The chief membership officer Megan Orehek from the PSBA will present this honor at the March 10th school board meeting.

Some brief remarks about the recognition along with a presentation box of celebratory items will be given to the board.

The final signoff for the award came from Superintendent Dr. Robert Gildea and School Board president Debra Macut. Lower Dauphin will hold this Great PA school designation for four years. Lower Dauphin is one of only eight school districts to receive the honor in 2025.

12 student athletes announce college choices



12 Lower Dauphin high school student-athletes enjoy a moment together after announcing their college decisions during signing day in November.

12 Lower Dauphin seniors student-athletes announced their college decisions and next steps during their signing day ceremony in the gym in November.

Field Hockey

Elizabeth Day- Lizzie is the daughter of Steve and Michelle Day. She is a 4-year member of the field hockey team and also participated on the basketball team. She was named a Mid Penn Commonwealth all-star as a senior. Lizzie plans to attend Sacred Heart University to major in business management.

Ellie DeHart- Ellie is the daughter of Jessica and Jason Dehart. She is a 4-year member of the field hockey team and 3-year member of the lacrosse team. Ellie was named a Mid Penn Commonwealth All-Star, and captain as a senior. Ellie plans to attend Appalachian State University to major in business management.

Alexis Hengst- Lexy is the daughter of Suzie and Dan Hengst. She is a 4-year member of the field hockey team and is also involved in the PA Revs All-Starz program. Lexy plans to attend Kutztown University to major in biology.

Laney Johns- Laney is the daughter of Todd Johns, and Alyson and Joe Urban. She is a 4-year member of the field hockey team and played lacrosse for

one year. Laney was named captain of the field hockey team as a senior. She plans to attend Monmouth University to major in business.

Kai Killian- Kai is the daughter of Brent and Shannon Killian. She is a 4-year member of the field hockey and track and field teams. Kai was named Mid Penn Commonwealth Player of the Year as a senior. She plans to attend Indiana University Bloomington to study biology.

Dani Murphy- Dani is the daughter of Steve and Jen Murphy. She is a 4-year member of the field hockey team and also participated on the lacrosse and basketball teams. Dani earned Mid Penn All-Conference accolades and is on the U18 Women's National Team. She plans to attend Saint Joseph's University to major in business.

Addison Whitmyer- Addie is the daughter of Thomas and Jessica Whitmyer. She is a 4-year member of the field hockey team. She plans to attend Longwood University to major in communications sciences and disorders.

Volleyball

Haylee Arnold- Haylee is the daughter of Paul and Emily Arnold. She is a 4-year member of the Girls volleyball team. Haylee plans to attend Desales University to major in sports management.

Madison Lehr- Madi is the daughter of Michelle Pheasant and Mike Lehr. She is a 4-year member of the girls volleyball team. She plans to attend St. Petersburg College and major in marketing while continuing her volleyball career.

Soccer

Ashley Economopoulos- Ashley is the daughter of Karen and Steve Economopoulos. She is a 4-year member of the girls soccer team. Ashley is a two-time Mid Penn Keystone Player of the Year. She received all state recognition her sophomore and senior years. Ashley plans to attend Old Dominion University to study business.

Lacrosse

Katelyn Horwitz- Katelyn is the daughter of Alex and Andrew Horwitz. She is a 4-year member of the girls lacrosse team and also participated on the soccer and basketball teams. She is a two-time Mid Penn All Star. Katelyn will attend Lock Haven University and major in health and physical education.

Ashlyn LaGray- Ashlyn is the daughter of Amira and Shane LaGray. She is a 4-year member of the girls' lacrosse team and earned Mid Penn All star accolades as a junior. She plans to attend Lock Haven University to major in biomedical sciences.

Senior Ashley Economopoulos wins PA. Girls Soccer Player of the Year by PSCA

Lower Dauphin senior Ashley Economopoulos has been named the PSCA Pennsylvania Girls Soccer Player of the Year, capping off a remarkable high school career. Economopoulos' impressive performance this season included 35 goals and 21 assists, while leading the Falcons to a 22-3 record, propelling the team to both the Mid Penn and PIAA District 3 titles. Her contributions also helped Lower Dauphin reach the state championship game for the second time in school history.

Economopoulos' accolades didn't stop there as she was also named United Soccer Coaches' Pennsylvania State Player of the Year and earned All State honors as well. Despite these individual accolades, Economopoulos' primary focus throughout her career has been putting the team first.

"It is an absolute blessing to be named the player of the year, but it truly wouldn't be possible without my great coaches and teammates," Economopoulos said. "My goal was just to be a leader for the team and play the way I'm capable of. This season was special in many ways and I couldn't have asked for a better group to be with."

Her success on the field is reflected not just in her statistics, but in her leadership and impact on her team. Head Coach Nic Amici praised Economopoulos for her work ethic, both

in soccer and in the classroom.

"For her to be the Player of the Year for Pennsylvania and an All-American is outstanding, and I'm happy so many coaches and committees recognized her," Amici said. "Ashley consistently showed that she was the best player on the field and highlighted her career at LD with so many special moments. Being a distinguished honor student shows that she works as hard on her studies as she does on the field. She is truly such an amazing person, and my coaching staff and I have been blessed to have her play with the great group of girls we have."

Looking ahead, she is committed to continuing her soccer career at Old Dominion University, where she will play Division 1 soccer.

Economopoulos is the first Mid-Penn player to win the PSCA Pennsylvania Girls' Soccer Player of the Year award since 2021, further cementing her legacy in Lower Dauphin sports history.

With her collegiate future on the horizon, Economopoulos leaves behind a lasting impact on both her team and the Lower Dauphin soccer program.

Lower Dauphin senior Ashley Economopoulos leads the Falcons to a stellar season en route to PA player of the Year.



LOWER DAUPHIN SCHOOL DISTRICT 2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

4 - Schools & Offices Closed

JULY '25						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

AUGUST '25

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

6-7 - New Teacher Orientation
19-21 - In-Service Days
25 - First Student Day
29 - Schools Closed

4 School Days - Year Total 4

1 - Schools & Offices Closed
26 - 2-hour Early Dismissal (In-Service)

SEPTEMBER '25						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

21 School Days - Year Total 25

OCTOBER '25

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

13 - Schools Closed (In-Service, Act 80)
29 - End of Marking Period 1 (MS/HS)

22 School Days - Year Total 47

4 - Election Day Schools Closed
(In-Service, Act 80)
20 - End of First Trimester (Elem)
25 - 1/2 Student Day
26 - Schools Closed
27-28 - Schools & Offices Closed

NOVEMBER '25						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

16 School Days - Year Total 63

DECEMBER '25

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

1 - Schools Closed
4 - 1/2 Student Day (In-Service)
5 - Schools Closed (In-Service)
23 - 1/2 Student Day
24-31 - Schools & Offices Closed

15 School Days - Year Total 78

1-2 - Schools & Offices Closed
9 - 2-hour Early Dismissal (In-Service)
19 - Schools Closed (In-Service)
21 - End of Marking Period 2 (MS/HS)

JANUARY '26						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

19 School Days - Year Total 97

FEBRUARY '26

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

13 - Schools Closed (In-Service)
- 1st Weather Make-up Day
16 - Schools Closed
- 2nd Weather Make-up Day

18 School Days - Year Total 115

6 - 2-hour Early Dismissal (In-Service)
- End of Second Trimester (Elem)
16 - Schools Closed (In-Service, Act 80)
30 - End of Marking Period 3 (MS/HS)

MARCH '26						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

21 School Days - Year Total 136

APRIL '26

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

1 - 1/2 Student Day
2 - Schools Closed
3 - Schools & Offices Closed
6 - Schools Closed (In-Service)
- 3rd Weather Make-up Day

19 School Days - Year Total 155

1 - 2-hour Delayed Opening (In-Service)
19 - Election Day, Schools In Session
(Community Service Day - HS)
25 - Schools & Offices Closed

MAY '26						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

20 School Days - Year Total 175

JUNE '26

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

4 - Commencement
5 - Last Student Day (1/2 Day)

5 School Days - Year Total 180



2-hour early dismissal- Elem @1:30pm; MS/HS @12:30pm
Lunches served- ALL buildings



Schools Closed



1/2 day- Elem @12:30pm; MS/HS @11:00am
Lunches served- Elementary ONLY

MARCH							APRIL							MAY							JUNE						
						1			1	2	3	4	5					1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30					
30	31																										

5	End of Second Trimester (Elem)	16	Schools Closed (Act 80) - 4th Weather Make-up Day	2	2-Hour Early Dismissal (In-Service Day)	5	Commencement
7	2-Hour Early Dismissal (In-Service Day)	17	Schools Closed	20	Election Day, Schools Closed (In-Service Day)	6	Last Student Day (1/2 Day)
17	Schools Closed	18	Schools & Offices Closed	26	Schools & Offices Closed		
27	End of Marking Period 3 (MS/HS)	21	Schools Closed				