

Work Readiness Academy

May 2025 Newsletter



Dear WRA Families & Supporters,

Honest self reflection opens your mind to reprogramming, change, success, and freedom - Vikas Runwal

As our journey together this school year inches closer to an end, this month we have taken the opportunity to look back at not only our successes, but also our challenges to ensure that growth and discovery remain at the forefront of our minds and in the foundation of our hearts. Prioritizing ourselves as well as working on our confidence to express our thoughts and stay true to our personal goals has opened doors to limitless possibilities.

Reflecting on who we are and where we are going has provided the clarity and focus needed to stay the course, overcome adversity and most importantly to be proud of our individuality. Whether it is painting personal mantras to create a self-esteem garden or finding the right words to express ourselves during interviews, this month's instruction has taken the time to look inward to have the strength to continue to look ahead. Our team here at the Work Readiness Academy is beyond proud of our students' willingness to reflect on ways to improve all aspects of their lives and how to ask for help to become the very best version of themselves.

This month we are honoring "**Ben**" - another student who will be exiting our program this year and entering adult life. Ben is not one to love having his picture taken, so we've respected this by sharing a wide-view shot of him hard at work learning new tasks during his "job trial" training with Peak Sports Academy in Mountainside, New Jersey. Ben is being considered for a paid position supporting the operations manager at the facility which hosts basketball leagues and tournaments. Our team developed this opportunity as a potential "best fit" job since it incorporates Ben's love for basketball, his ability to perform a variety of tasks (including those that involve manual labor), and he gets to wear his favorite outfit...athletics shorts, a t-shirt and his sneakers! We're very proud of you, Ben.

Please enjoy the rest of this month's newsletter including a classroom spotlight on Project SEARCH, our Student of the Month, our Community Business Partner of the Month, a closer look

at our Photography elective, and important reminders about **Graduation at Project SEARCH on June 16th** and our **Graduation and End of Year Ceremony at the WRA on Wednesday, June 18th!**

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at jbornstein@ucesc.org or 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



Mark Your Calendar!



June 16, 2025 - Project SEARCH Graduation Ceremony at 3:00pm

June 18, 2025 - Last Day of School for Project SEARCH

June 18, 2025 - WRA Graduation Ceremony at 6:00pm

June 19, 2025 - Last Day of School for WRA

June 30, 2025 - Extended School Year Begins*

*For eligible and approved students only.

Graduation & End of Year Awards Ceremony

This year's Graduation and End of Year Awards Ceremony for the Work Readiness Academy will be held on **Wednesday, June 18th from 6:00pm to 8:00pm** in our Cafegymatorium space at 970 Suburban Road in Union, New Jersey. We will be honoring **all** students, while also providing special recognition for our graduates!

Family & extended family of all students are welcome and strongly encourage to attend!

Refreshments will be served.

***Graduates should arrive no later than 5:30pm.**

We are looking forward to this special day and joining with you to celebrate another successful year!



Attendance Reporting

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

before 8am, please leave a message.



May Student of the Month

Erin

The staff at the Work Readiness Academy have unanimously agreed to award **Erin** with the honor of being selected our student of the month! **Erin** consistently goes above and beyond for others. Her demonstration of empathy, kindness, and compassion is an inspiration and should be celebrated. **Erin** independently organized an event this month to recognize our teaching staff during staff appreciation week. Her thoughtfulness and passion to support and motivate those around her is not only present within our program, **Erin** has been used as an example at her internships sites

as well! Her mentors have highlighted her positive attitude and productivity for other employees to learn from! Keep up the great work **Erin**! We are all so proud of you!



May Classroom Spotlight

Project SEARCH at Overlook Medical Center

This month, our Project SEARCH class has been hard at work developing essential career skills. We've covered topics such as phone interview etiquette, personal vs. workplace injury, following up

after interviews, understanding employment forms like the I-9 and W-4, building self-confidence, and raising mental health awareness.

We also took an exciting trip to the Atlantic Health System Corporate Office, where we joined two other Project SEARCH classes for a scavenger hunt. We met with senior leadership, delivered snacks and information using the Rolling Resiliency cart, toured the studio, and even had professional headshots taken.

On May 16th, we proudly hosted our annual Reverse Job Fair. Students met with local employers to showcase their skills and share highlights from their internships at Overlook Medical Center. We also participated in a cultural event celebrating Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

Families joined us this month for our third Employment Planning Meetings to review student progress and set future goals. We can't believe graduation is just around the corner!

We look forward to celebrating our incredible students on **June 16 at 3:00 PM in the Bouras Auditorium at Overlook Medical Center.**

For more information about Project SEARCH, please visit our **newly update website at:** <https://www.atlantichealth.org/professionals/residencies-fellowships/project-search>

Jourdan Spencer
Project Search Teacher



Shannon has become more confident in communicating with professionals from Atlantic Health System and the community.



Students got to participate in a scavenger hunt. Visiting the studio was a highlight of the day.



Project SEARCH students visited the AHS Corporate Office.



Andy is proud of all he's accomplished this year and is excited to present himself at the Reverse Job Fair.



Layla & Sadiyah are prepared for the Reverse Job Fair



Christian is ready to highlight his strengths and internship experience at our special event.



WRA Staff Spotlight

Rose Makris

Current position at UCESC?

Teaching Assistant/CDL Driver

How long have you worked at UCESC?

I am finishing my 22nd year!

What do you love most about your job?

The students! They make me smile every day! And, our wonderful staff who make working here a pleasure.

What do you like to do in your free time?

Take walks in different neighborhoods and look at different houses!



What is one thing that would surprise people about you?

I love listening to country music, a far cry from my clubbing days!

Work-Based Learning Snapshots



Penelope at Walgreens in Cranford



Nick at Salon Villa Roch in Cranford



Izzy at Cake Artist Cafe in Cranford



Nicky at DSW in Union



Larissa at Jewish Family Service in Elizabeth



Benji at Summit Health in Berkeley Heights

Work-Based Learning Community Business Partner Spotlight

This month we are pleased to spotlight **Barnes & Noble Booksellers located at Union Plaza**. We previously partnered with the company for many years when it was located further down Route 22 West in Springfield. We were so happy to see the store reopen in its new home in Union Plaza a little more than two years ago. Student interns at this Work-Based Learning site get the chance to learn how to conduct "zone maintenance" - a procedure using a handheld scanning device (PDT) and V-Card to determine if books are "due out" (return to vendor) and/or in the correct location by interpreting audio/visual information from the device. Interns also learn how to alphabetize and merchandise bookshelves to store visual guidelines, as well as apply discount stickers and security tags. We're very grateful to Nicola and her team for their continued support and for providing opportunities for our students to learn valuable skills for work - both hard tasks and soft



behaviors! One of the B&N associates, "LJ", who serves as a student mentor, tells us "...Izzy makes my my work day easier...she is such a big help!"

To learn more about the Barnes & Noble store in Union, including upcoming events, please visit: <https://stores.barnesandnoble.com/store/3424>



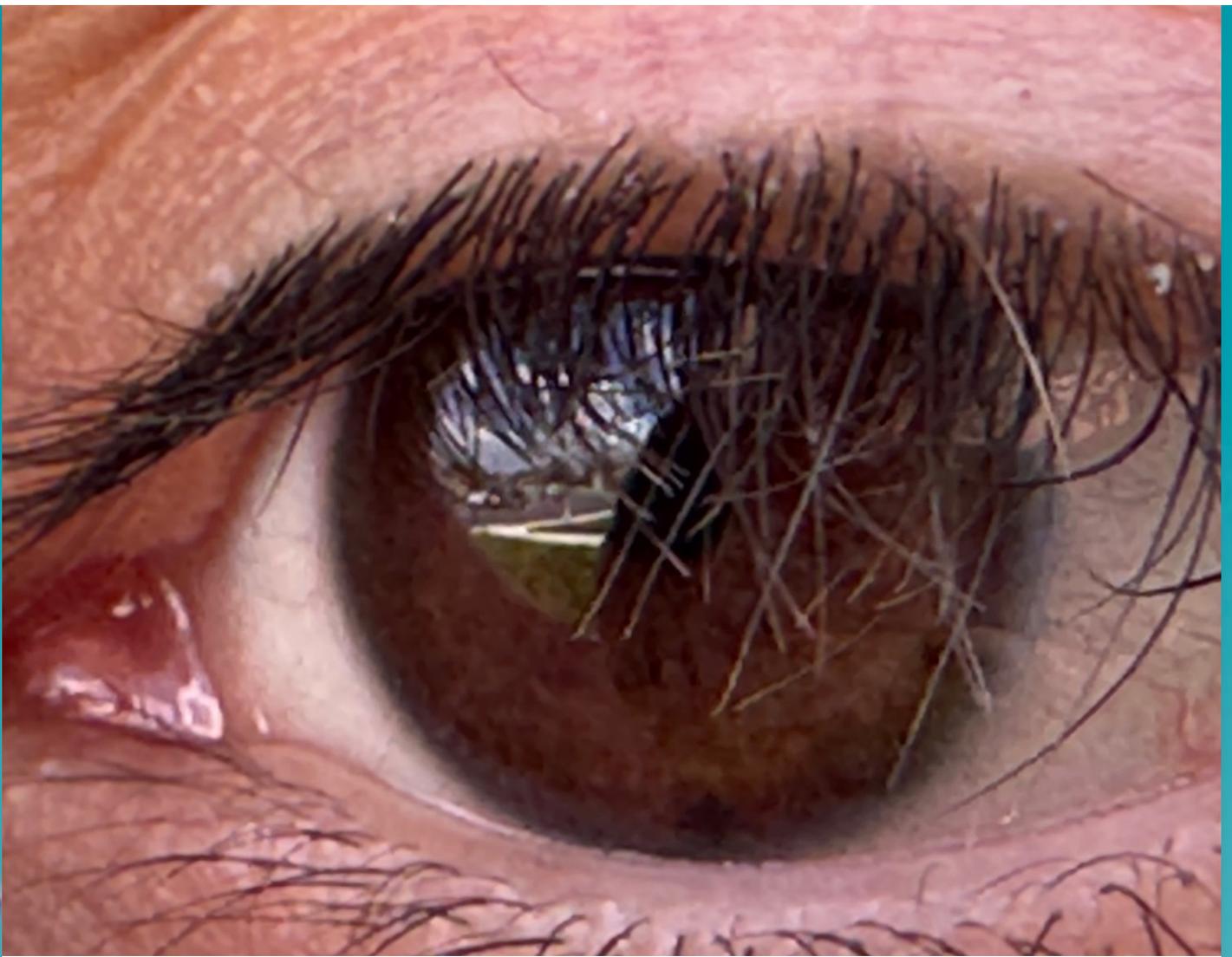




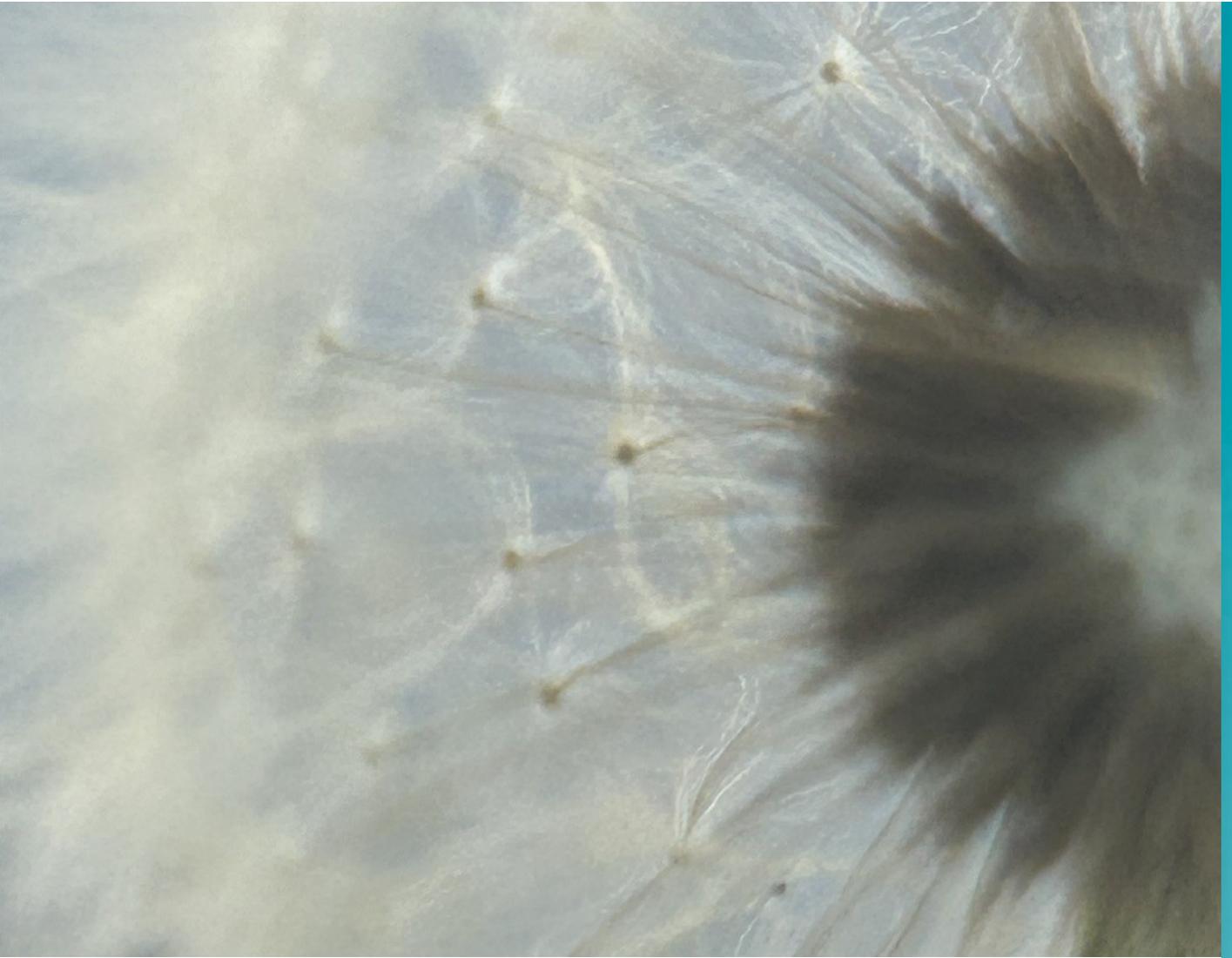
Capturing the Moments...

Through the Lens: A Look at Our Photography Elective

Students participating in the photography elective have an opportunity to have fun, and showcase their creativity while taking pictures of objects of their choice. The use of different techniques helps the students enhance their vision shared with you below.











WRA Students "Bee-lieve in Themselves!"



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Staff Appreciation Month!

We were proud to celebrate our amazing team at the Work Readiness Academy and Project SEARCH during Staff Appreciation Week - the first week in May. Our staff enjoyed an assortment of "self-care and rejuvenate" themed gifts, including a 15-minute massage! Thank you to all of our parents for your donations and contributions...both monetary and the many yummy treats!

Our staff also enjoyed attending the new and improved "Staff Night Out" Trivia and Fundraiser organized by the Union County Educational Service Foundation (UCESF). So much fun and over \$15,000 was raised to support the school and classroom mini-grant program!









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Look Who Was Spotted in the Community!

Deb spotted former student, Joe at Greta's 5K Run in Westfield



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Picture of the Month

Layla and Sadiyah - Project SEARCH Buddies!



Community Resources/Events

PLAN | NJ 5th Annual Family Night Out

Mark your calendars, and please join us on Wednesday, June 25th, 2025, at the PLAN|NJ Family Night Out at the Somerset Patriots baseball game!

The Patriots will be playing the Erie SeaWolves, beginning at 6:35 pm. Suggested Arrival at 5:30 PM

Every year, more than 500 family, friends, and supporters gather to raise community awareness of PLAN|NJ and its services for individuals with disabilities and their families. The PLAN|NJ family of board members, staff, social services partner agencies, businesses, local officials, and ballpark celebrities enjoy this summer pastime together.

“This is the ultimate family event – a chosen family of disability rights advocates,” said Kerry Lee, Director of Operations for PLAN|NJ. “Everyone is welcome!”

LINK to purchase tickets: <https://plannj.org/events/>





*Annual Family Night Out
at the Somerset Patriots
Wednesday, June 25, 2025*

The Union County Board of County Commissioners & The Dept. of Human Services Invite you to Apply for:

2025 SENSORY FRIENDLY SUMMER CAMP

FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS AGES 12 TO 21

AUGUST 18 -22, 2025
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Trailside Nature & Science Center
452 New Providence Rd.
Mountainside

Eligibility requirements for all participants:

- Union County resident
- Have a documented disability
- Does not engage in threatening or aggressive behaviors
- Are able to independently use the toilet and feed themselves
- Does not require 1:1 staffing



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

Space is limited and application does not guarantee enrollment.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE
UNION COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Department of Human Services
Office for persons with Disabilities and Special Needs

For more information
call 908-527-4781
or email opdsn@ucnj.org

The Sensory Friendly Summer Camp will run from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. during the week of August 18th through August 22nd, and will be held at the Trailside Nature and Science Center, located at 452 New Providence Road in Mountainside.

LEARN MORE...

Prospective campers must be Union County residents with a documented disability, demonstrating independence in basic self-care tasks, such as using the toilet and feeding themselves. While the camp warmly welcomes individuals who may require occasional prompting or redirection, it is not suitable for those with a history of fleeing, aggressive, or threatening behavior, who require

restraints to manage or stop behaviors, or who require 1:1 staffing.

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN and space is limited. The application does not guarantee enrollment. In order to ensure compatibility and accommodate individual needs, the camp administration will conduct interviews prior to admission. The administration reserves the right to determine whether they can adequately meet the needs of the applicants.

Union County Office for Persons with Disabilities & Special Needs (OPDSN)

The Office for Persons with Disabilities & Special Needs offers a range of social and recreational opportunities to help individuals with disabilities connect with others and engage in meaningful activities.

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

WELCOME TO 2NDFLOOR
Welcome to your safe space

- Chat**
Connect privately with our trained counselors through chat or phone calls
- Anonymous**
Communicate anonymously about anything that is on your mind
- Support**
Send and receive support on our community boards
- 24/7**
Our counselors are here for you any time, day or night.

Continue

IT ONLY TAKES A SECOND TO GET 24/7 TALK OR TEXT SUPPORT

GET IT ON Google Play
Download on the App Store

2ND FLOOR

2ND FLOOR

UNION COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Understanding Supported Employment Options Available AFTER Graduation

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT IN NEW JERSEY

Supported Employment helps individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) secure and maintain **competitive employment**, or work in a setting to prepare for competitive employment. An individual's interests, likes, and dislikes are important factors when considering a job or career path.



KEY TERMS

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Federal legislation signed in 2014 to help individuals access education, training, and support services to succeed in the workplace.

Competitive Employment

Work performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting that is compensated at or above minimum wage.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)

The state agency which provides vocational services for individuals with IDD or other barriers to employment.

Check out our DVRS Go Bag: bit.ly/DVRSgobag

"Employment First" State

An initiative that outlines that competitive employment is the preferred post-education activity. It presumes that all individuals, including people with IDD, are capable of integrated employment.

EXAMPLES OF SERVICES

- **Pre-Employment Transition Services**
 - Offered to high school students to plan and prepare for entering the workforce.
- **Job Development**
 - Assists individuals with a job search, interview skills, and resume development.
- **Job Sampling**
 - Gives the individual the opportunity to explore different types of employment and identify areas of interest and ability.
- **Job Coaching**
 - Provides assistance with learning essential job tasks, transportation training, social skills, and can act as a liaison between the employer and employee.
- **Long-Term Follow Along**
 - Ongoing support through worksite visits designed to help individuals maintain skills built during job coaching.
- **Trial Work Experience**
 - A workplace readiness assessment administered by a Supported Employment provider agency, such as [Project HIRE](#).

*This is not a fully inclusive list. Services may vary between agencies, school districts, and funding sources.

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

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.

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.



About the Work Readiness Academy

The Work Readiness Academy serves students ages 18-21 with disabilities and provides a comprehensive employment training experience that incorporates both classroom-based instruction and community-based work-learning experiences. While in the training classroom, students work cooperatively with similar aged peers to learn critical skills related to employment and socialization. Students also work on career exploration and planning, including the development of a person-centered, post-secondary vision and plan with clear goals and action steps. Program staff remain on-site during the internships to provide and fade support and assistance as needed. Students also participate in field trips focused on career discovery, independent living skills, recreation and independent travel training.

For more information or to make a student referral, please email Rachel Richer at rreicher@ucesc.org

Email: jbornstein@ucesc.org

Website: https://www.ucesc.org/schools/the_work_readiness_academy

Location: [970 Suburban Road, Union, NJ, USA](#)

Phone: [908-633-2704](tel:908-633-2704)



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WRA on Instagram!**



WRA Smore

WRA is using S'more to create beautiful newsletters





CROSSROADS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

May 2025

Message from the Administration

Dear Crossroads Community,

It's hard to believe that in just a few short weeks, we'll be wrapping up another incredible school year! This time of year is always packed with activities and celebrations, and I'm so grateful for the energy and enthusiasm that fills our school. This month, we had the pleasure of welcoming the Caldwell University Women's Soccer Team to our school. They set up some exciting soccer activities, and it was wonderful to see our students actively engaged, trying new skills, and sharing their voices on the field. Their visit perfectly captured our theme for the year, *Let Every Voice Empower*, as our students found joy and confidence through movement and teamwork.



May is also Better Speech and Hearing Month, and our dedicated Speech Department planned a fantastic day filled with engaging activities. The focus was on core words, "I" statements, and sequencing—encouraging our students to reflect on how they communicate and share their ideas. The blow pops were an extra sweet treat that made the day even more memorable! Additionally, several of our classes visited Rutgers Dental School for teeth cleaning and screenings. This was our first trip as part of this new partnership, and it was a great success! We look forward to continuing this collaboration next school year to promote health and wellness. As we reflect on the month of May, the theme of self-reflection has been woven throughout all that we do. Our students and staff have taken time to celebrate their growth and progress this year, and it's truly inspiring to see how every voice—no matter how big or small—can make an impact.

Looking ahead, we have so many fun events coming up in June! We hope you'll join us for our Crossroads Field Day on **Friday, June 6, from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM**. There will be food, games, bounce houses, bubbles, and plenty of opportunities for families to join in the fun. We are also busy planning our Preschool Stepping Up Ceremony for our youngest learners on **Thursday, June 12, at 1:00 PM**. Finally, to cap off their journey at Crossroads, we will celebrate our 8th graders at the **8th Grade Commencement Ceremony on Wednesday, June 11, 2025 at 1:00PM**.

Thank you for being part of this incredible school community. Let's continue to lift each other up and empower every voice as we close out this wonderful year together!

Warm Regards,

Matt, Danielle, and Stacey

Upcoming Dates

June 6, 2025 - Field Day

June 11, 2025 - Crossroads 8th Grade Commencement (1:00 PM)

June 12, 2025 - Pre School Stepping Up Ceremony (1:30 PM)

June 16, 2025 - 1:00PM Student Dismissal

June 17, 2025 - 1:00PM Student Dismissal

June 18, 2025 - 1:00PM Student Dismissal (Last Day of School)

June 30, 2025 - First Day of ESY (student hours 9:00-2:00)

Crossroads Staff and Student Spotlight



Student of the Month - Logan

Here comes Logan-the fastest little boy in Room 104! Logan has been at Crossroads for almost 3 years now. When he's not reading a book or playing with puzzles, you'll find him practicing for a 5k on the playground. Logan makes sure to ask for what he wants and works hard to get it. He is learning all his friends names and using more and more language to express himself and the world around him. We love watching him grow and explore everyday!



Staff Spotlight - Lauren Lieberman - Classroom Teacher

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

I have been at the commission since February of 2025.

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

Although I have only been working at the commission for a few months, this is my 12th year of teaching!

3. What is your dream vacation?

Anywhere that is warm and sunny. I would love to go to Greece one day.

4. What is your favorite meal?

I am a big foodie, so I have many favorites! These days, I really love sushi and Thai food but I also will always love pasta, ramen, and any breakfast food!

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

My greatest accomplishment is becoming a Mom to my 2 sons. They make me feel fulfilled everyday!



Staff Spotlight - Lisa Bailey - Teacher Assistant

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

I am about to complete my second year working at Crossroads. I love working here and I find everyday to be a new learning experience.

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

I think that you would be surprised to know that I was employed by Tommy Hilfiger for 10 years. While there, I worked my way up to being a corporate buyer. That position came with a lot of fun perks where I had the opportunity to meet and have lunches with so many famous actors, models, sports players and singers which included N'SYNC, Jennifer Lopez, and Lenny Kravitz to name some. Getting the 85 percent discount wasn't too shabby either.

3. What is your dream vacation?

My dream vacation would be to visit Greece. I really want to see Mykonos Island. I have been to many islands but I hear nothing compares to the beauty of Mykonos.

4. What is your favorite meal?

Now that summer is approaching I would say my favorite meal right now would be colossal king crab legs.

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

My greatest accomplishment is definitely my kids. They are my pride and joy. My daughter Madison just graduated college last week and my son Connor has one more year of high school left. I am extremely proud of their achievements but even more proud of the good humans they have become.

Classroom Spotlights



Ms. Peggy's Classroom

This month, our class had an exciting field trip to LifeTown! The LifeTown Shoppes is a simulated city where children can explore life like stores and practice real-world skills in a fun and supportive environment. With the help of amazing adult volunteers acting as storekeepers, our students had the opportunity to navigate the “city” and apply what they've learned in the classroom. The children especially loved buying movie tickets at the theater, shopping for snacks at the ShopRite, and getting pampered at the nail salon! It was a memorable and enriching experience for everyone.

We've also started a new unit based on *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. As part of this theme, we are observing five real caterpillars as they go through the life cycle. Right now, they are busy building their cocoons. We are all eagerly waiting for the day we can release our butterflies! This unit also gives us the opportunity to reinforce early math skills such as identifying colors, comparing sizes, and understanding sequencing—all in a fun, hands-on way. Our students are almost finished learning about the sounds of the alphabet—just a few letters to go! They are also continuing to work on recognizing and spelling their names, which is a big milestone in early literacy development.

Each day, we practice one-to-one correspondence while counting during our calendar routine. We also review the days of the week and months of the year to help build time awareness and sequencing skills. Building strong social relationships remains a big focus in our classroom. Children continue to learn how to take turns, share, express themselves, and support one another. Alongside this, they are also receiving individualized instruction to help them grow at their own pace in all areas of development.

We're so proud of everything our preschoolers are accomplishing and can't wait to see what next month brings!



Ms. Daria's Classroom

Room 220A has continued to be busy with Community based Instruction trips going to places such as Clark Commons, the Cranford movie theater, one of our other schools (Westlake), Shoprite and Costco. We also got to go to a new location called LifeTown where they have a mini town set up where we can practice buying things, using the crosswalk, and riding a bike all in the safety of the facility. They also have a pretty cool playground area! We have also welcomed the spring weather, being able to play outside on the playground, learning about the life cycle of butterflies and we even had a visit from the Caldwell Girls Soccer team where we got to participate in many activities. Since May is

Better Hearing and Speech Month we also got to hang out with our speech department and play some cool games!

With it being near the end of the school year we have been starting to prepare for our 8th Grade Commencement and our Preschool Stepping Up Ceremony! We have been learning about the Cricut machine and using the heat press to iron on vinyl to graduation stoles for our students that are participating in the ceremonies.

We are excited for the end of the school year and getting a little break before coming back to start ESY!



Speech Therapy Report

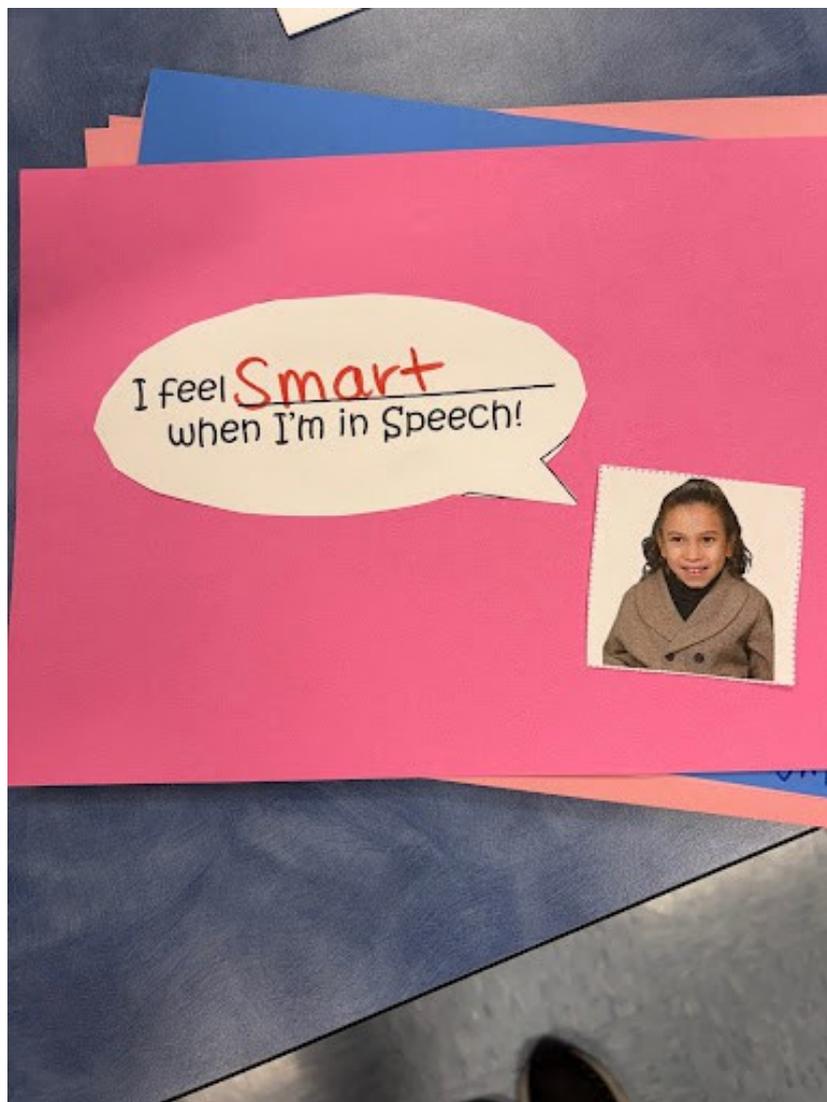
Crossroads May Newsletter - Speech Therapy Spotlight

It is hard to believe that the end of the year is here! May is Better Speech and Hearing Month (BSHM) and the speech-language therapy department celebrates by educating both the staff and the students on all things communication. To kick off the month, Blow Pops with vocal hygiene handouts were displayed by the front office for the staff. Educators are more likely to have voice disorders than any other occupation. Providing our staff with tips like, drinking water regularly, vocal rest, and reducing whispering or yelling are simple ways to encourage vocal hygiene.



For the students, the speech-language therapy department planned a morning full of fun activities! These activities included speech and language skills targeted during weekly therapy sessions. The students used puffy paint to decorate the first letters of their names, used core words "stop/go, my turn/your turn" during an obstacle course, built flowers by sequencing steps, and used "I" statements to talk about how they feel during speech. With the help of the occupational therapy department, the morning was filled with learning, socializing, and fun!





Specials Report - Mr. Rich - Health/Physical Education

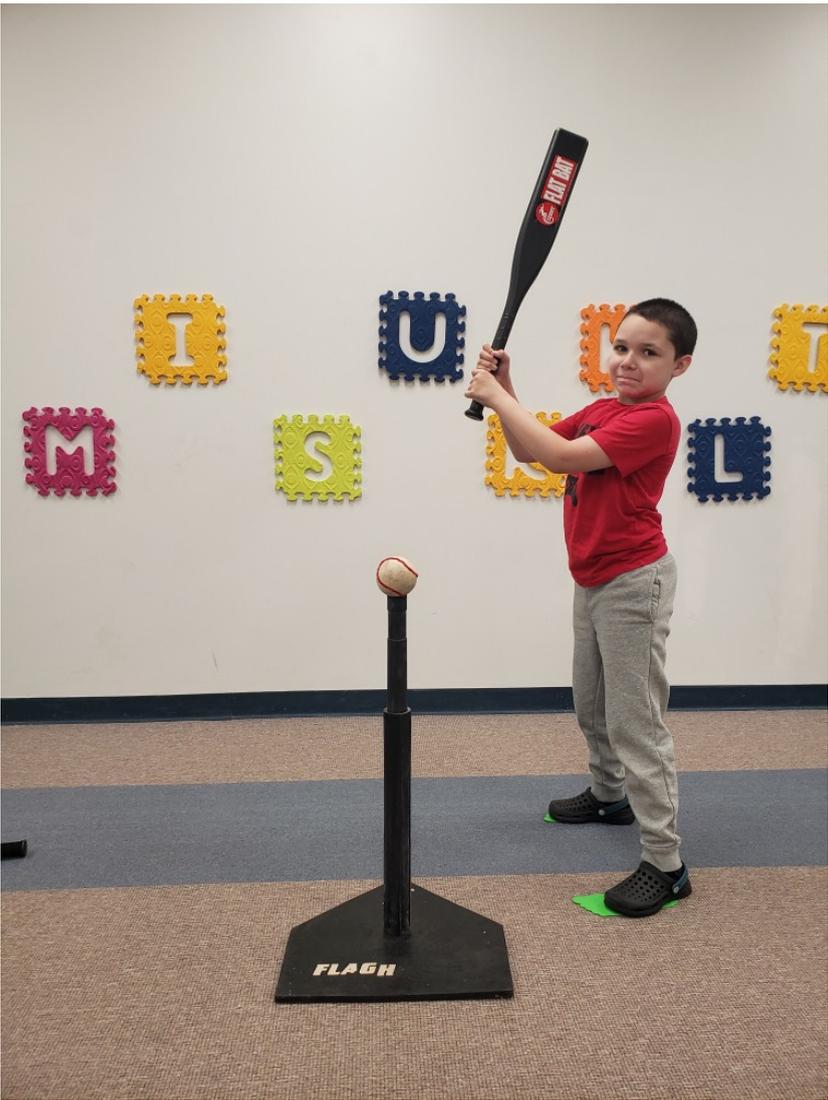
This month in physical education, students have continued participating in various activities that improve cardiovascular fitness, hand-eye coordination, balance and strength. Since the weather has been nicer, we have tried to extend our outdoor walking during the beginning of each class. We have increased the amount of laps and the pace at which we complete them. We have a few new students that started recently and they are adjusting well and are making friends.

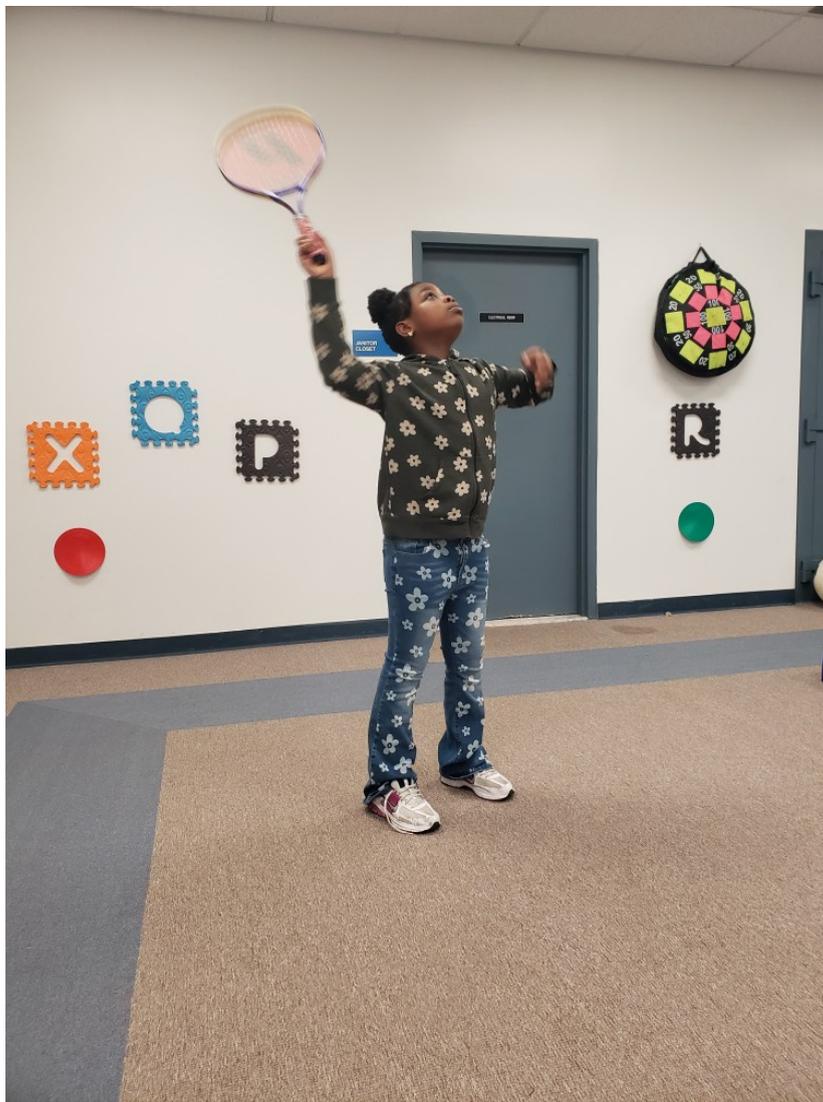
In health class we were learning about the 5 senses. Students have continued to work in a group setting and practiced following directions and turn taking while playing various games as well as answering questions on large flash cards, ipads and a touch screen monitor.



Fitness groups/individual sessions are going well and are giving students a chance to participate in certain activities that they might not necessarily get to in a typical physical education setting. Students have been engaged and are enjoying the extra time in the gym. They have also had the chance to be more independent and are practicing making choices on what activities they

participate in. This has helped to keep them on task and take more of an interest in the activities they do.





Nurse Note with Nurse Lynn

Back-to-School Forms for 2025–2026

Keep an eye out for the 2025–2026 Medical Back-to-School Forms, which will be sent home in your child's backpack within the next two weeks. This packet contains important information and documents that need your attention. Please take the time to read through everything carefully.

If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact Nurse Lynn.



SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES HANDBOOK
Promoting Wellness and Academic Success
2025-2026 School Year

May at Crossroads

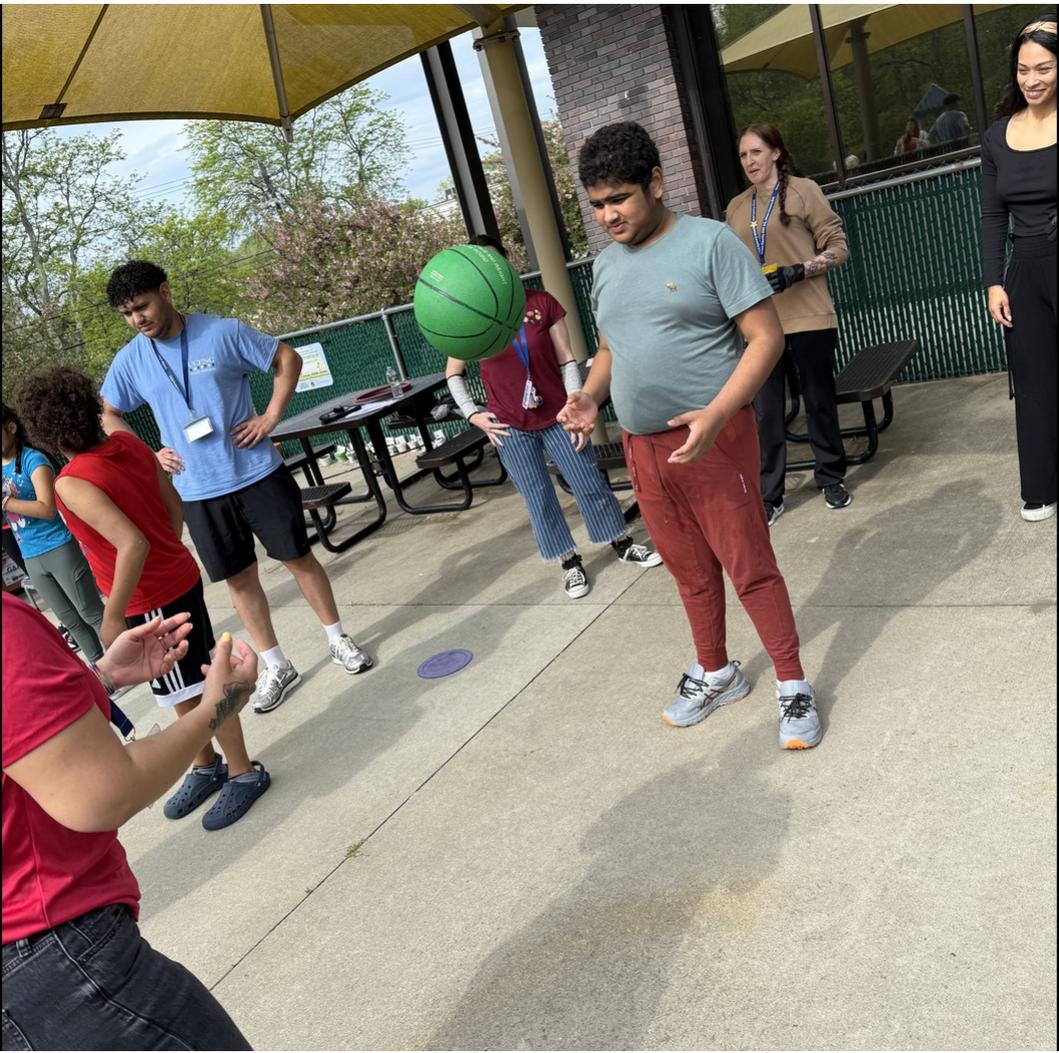


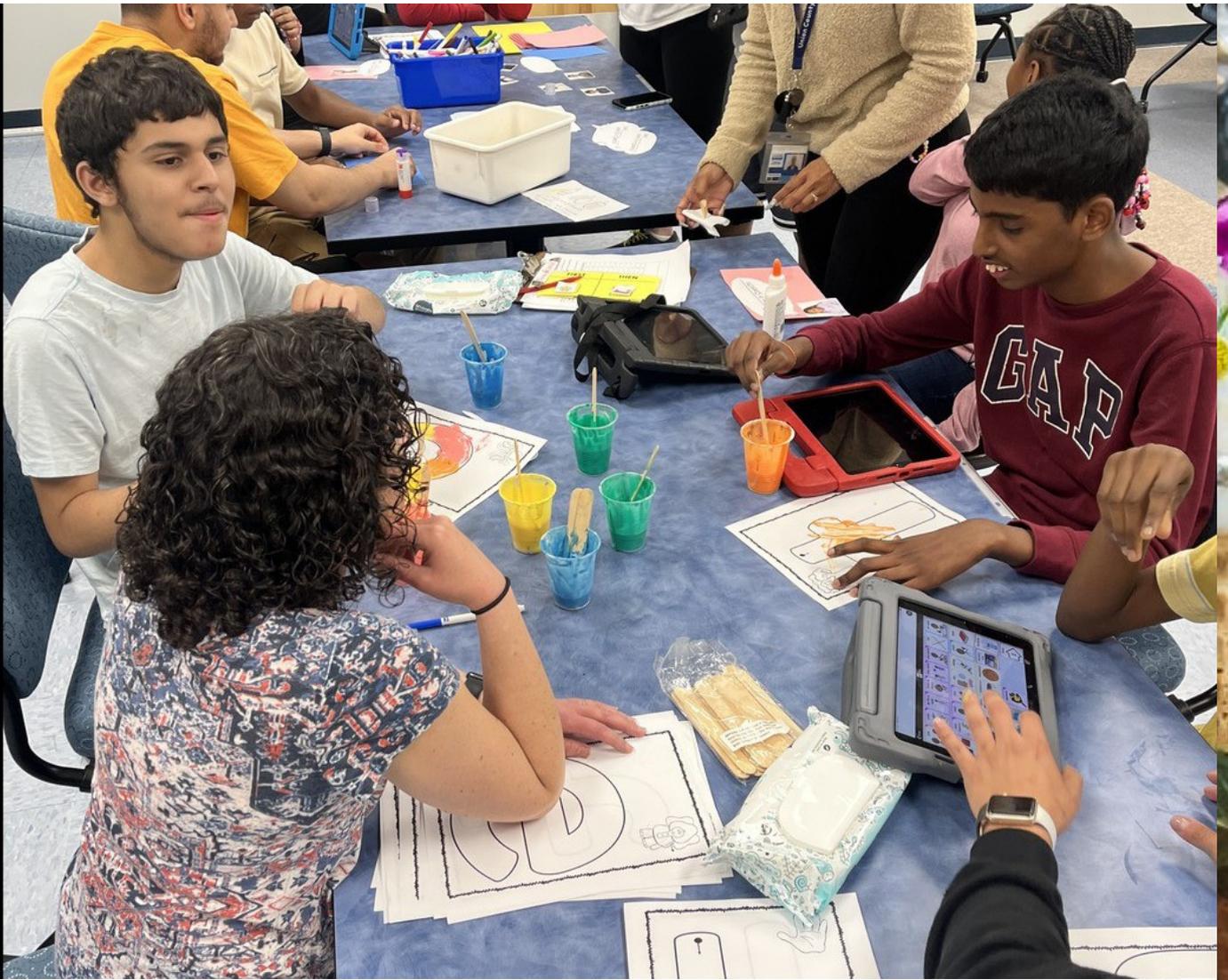


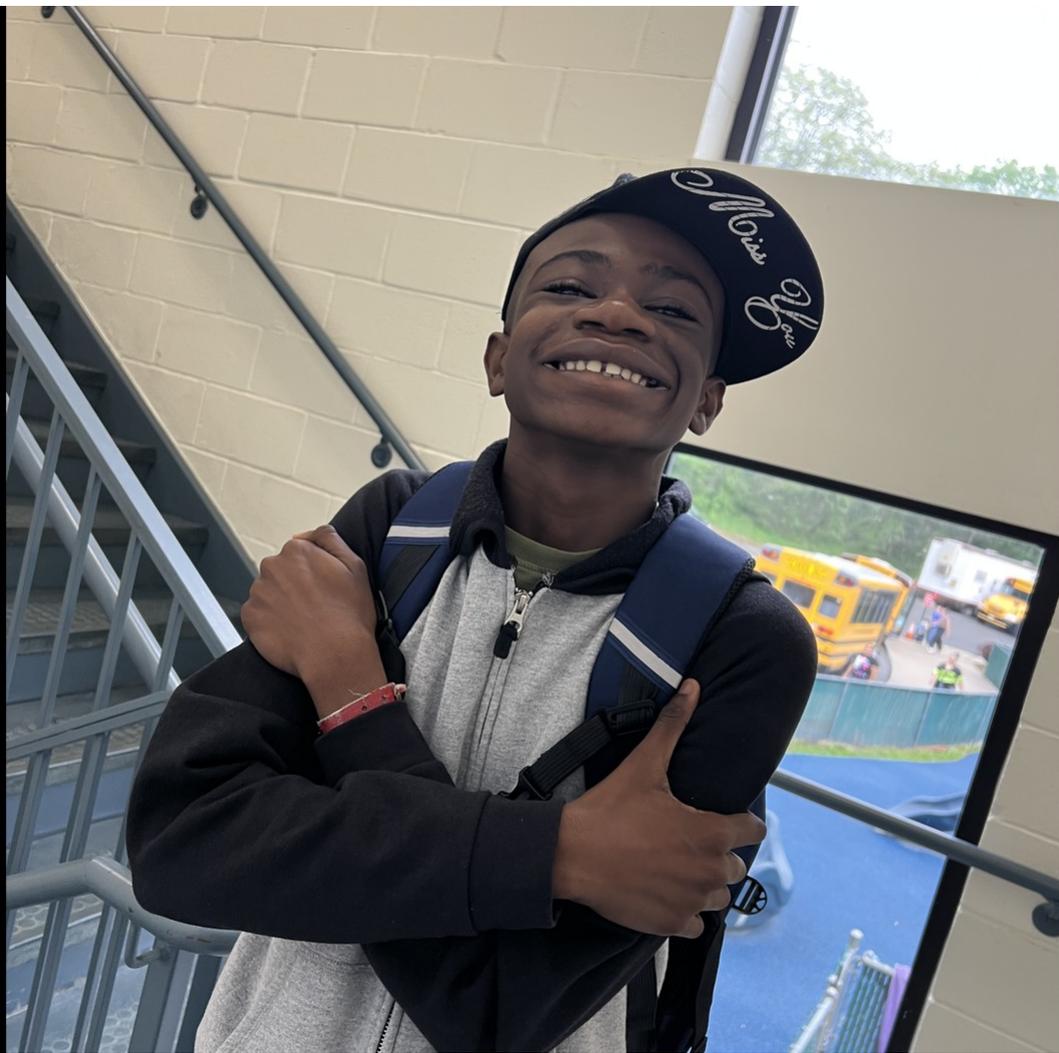












Crossroads In the Community

Lifetown Trip





Community Trip to Westlake





Community Trip to Panera/Costco



Caldwell University Soccer Team Visitation



Visit to Rutgers Dental School







Parent Resources

Tips and Tricks for home from the Crossroads Behavior Team - May

Summer Safety: Fireworks & Water

May Tips and Tricks from the Behavior Team

As summer approaches, families look forward to fun activities like fireworks shows and days at the pool or beach. For families of children with autism and other special needs, these events can bring unique challenges related to **sensory sensitivities**, **elopement risks**, and **changes in routine**. Here are some tips to help your child enjoy a safe and successful summer.

Fireworks Safety with Sensory-Sensitive Kids

While fireworks are exciting for many, they can be overwhelming or even frightening for children with sound sensitivities or anxiety around unpredictable stimuli.

Tips to Consider:

- **Prepare in advance:** Use a visual schedule or social story to explain what to expect. Include details like crowds, loud sounds, and lights.

- **Noise protection:** Offer noise-canceling headphones or earplugs. Allow your child to try them in advance in a calm setting.
- **Safe space:** Identify a quiet, less crowded spot or create an exit plan so your child knows they can leave if overwhelmed.
- **Practice and desensitization:** Watch fireworks videos together ahead of time and pair them with preferred activities.
- **Celebrate differently:** If public events are too overwhelming, consider alternative celebrations like glow sticks, bubble machines, or watching from inside a car.

Water Safety for Kids with Elopement or Impulse Challenges

Water activities can be both therapeutic and fun, but children with special needs are often at increased risk of water-related accidents—especially if they tend to elope or are drawn to water. Safety Strategies:

- **Constant supervision:** Always use active adult supervision—this means being within arm’s reach, not just nearby.
- **Use visuals and clear rules:** Establish visual boundaries and practice simple rules like “Stop at the edge,” or “Wait for the grown-up.”
- **Life jackets are a must:** For any boating or open water activity, a Coast Guard-approved life vest is essential—even for kids who can swim.
- **Teach water safety skills:** Consider swim lessons tailored for children with special needs, and use reinforcement-based teaching for safety behaviors.

(In Union County, NJ, adaptive swim lessons for special needs individuals are offered by several organizations. The [County of Union itself offers recreational swim sessions for people with disabilities at two of its pools](#). Additionally, YMCA branches in the area, like the [Westfield Area YMCA](#), offer adaptive swim programs. Private swim schools, such as [Into The Swim](#), also provide adaptive lessons.)

- **Address elopement proactively:** If your child is an elopement risk, secure fences, use door alarms, and talk to your behavior team about teaching “stop” or “come back” responses.

Final Thoughts

With planning and support, children with autism and other special needs can safely participate in summer fun. Collaborate with your behavior team to individualize strategies, and don’t forget to reinforce calm, safe behavior with lots of praise and preferred reinforcement.

If you have additional questions or are looking for specific support please reach out to the Crossroads Behavior Team: skodack@ucesc.org, kbarreto@ucesc.org, awailer@ucesc.org

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

visit our website 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 Komisyonè Konte Union

Biwo pou moun ki gen andikap ak bezwen
espesyal

*Program ak Evènman Sosyal
pou tout laj*

<p>PWOGRAM YO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoga • Karate • Seramik • Dans Zumba • Gòlf • Espre Pak ak plis ankò 	<p>EVÈNMAN SOSYAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Konpetisyon Lapèch • Pentè 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:

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



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Department of Human Services

About Us

Website: https://www.ucesc.org/schools/crossroads_school

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

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

Visit us on Instagram

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HAN North May 2025

May 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:

I can't believe that we have just a few weeks left of the school year! We, at HAN, are very proud of our students and staff for having such a meaningful and enjoyable year of teaching, learning, and celebrating! As you will read in the Newsletter, HAN continues to grow and strengthen our school community by creating learning opportunities for students that might be considered to be "outside the box."

Students that take US History II attended a field trip opportunity at the Vietnam Veteran Memorial where they were guided by real US veterans who were so informative, transparent, and full of energy. They were able to use what they learned in the classroom and were able to transfer that knowledge to ask pertinent questions, which opened up a

great dialogue between the veterans and our students. They left with a deeper understanding of the reasoning behind the war, what took place, and what affects it had on our nation.

Next you will read about how HAN is using the game of "chess" to teach Algebra and Geometry concepts which include; problem solving techniques, logic and reasoning skills, increase patience and persistence, and improve decision making. Students will participate in an organized and structured school wide tournament that has always been a meaningful activity for our students to take part in at the end 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

Upcoming Dates

June 4th - Senior Recognition Dinner

June 6th - Career Day

June 11th - Awards Night

June 16th-18th - half days

June 16th - School BBQ

June 18th - Last Day of School

Graduation Dates

June 24th - Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy - 8:30am

June 24th - John E. Dwyer Technology Academy - 11:30am

June 24th - Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughn, Mary Jackson STEM Academy - 2:30pm

June 24th - Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr. Health & Public Safety Academy - 5:30pm

June 25th - Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Academy - 8:30am

June 25th - Thomas A. Edison Career and Technical Academy - 11:30am

Elizabeth High School - Frank J. Cicarell Academy - 2:30pm

J. Christian Bollwage Finance Academy - 5:30pm

Union County Scholar's Breakfast

Congratulations to our Valedictorian Jasiel Castillo and our Salutatorian Yariana Torres, who were celebrated at the Union County Scholar's Breakfast.



Jasiel is attending Union Community College in the Fall to study Chemistry



Yariana is attending Kean University in the Fall to study Business

In the Spotlight



Vietnam Memorial

Our class recently had the incredible opportunity to visit the Vietnam Memorial at the PNC Arts Center. This experience left a lasting impact on both the students and teachers who went. Veterans led the tour and generously shared their firsthand accounts, offering deep insights into the war and its complexities. Students were captivated by their stories, gaining a profound understanding of the historical event. Exploring the museum inside and the memorials outside provided a powerful visual

connection to the past, and the detailed discussions during the tour further enriched the students' learning. One of the most interesting aspects to the trip was the Q&A session. The Q&A session allowed students to engage directly with the veterans, asking meaningful questions and hearing personal reflections. Overall, it was an unforgettable trip that fostered respect, curiosity, and a deeper appreciation for those who were affected by this war.





In the Classrooms

CHESS

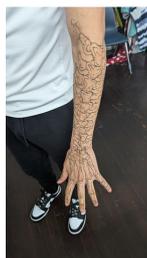
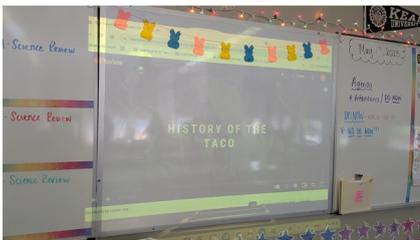
All Algebra and Geometry classes at Hillcrest Academy North have revolved around an abstract strategic board game that involves no hidden information and no elements of chance, while exercising the same cognitive elements that makes a person stronger in mathematics. Chess! Chess is used to improve problem solving techniques, logic and reasoning skills, increase patience and persistence, and improve decision making skills. Students can practice spacial relativity on a two-dimensional grid, while planning multi-step attacks, simultaneously assessing minimal risk, and building a strong defense.

Many students resisted learning the game believing it was “too difficult”. However, Mrs. Gomes’s lessons related each piece and power to real-life, helping students build courage and become eager to start. Students even created their very own chess pieces and board using the new 3D printer. They are currently watching the game come to life as they practice for the school-wide tournament that is about to start on May 27th with the championship match played during our school picnic. The winner enjoys bragging rights for many years. In classes, everyone can witness students of all levels engaged, working together, teaching others, communicating their strategies and practicing new intimidating moves. As with any game, students continue to grow in self-awareness and discover that they need to mature in self-control, respect, accountability, or other areas that directly benefit their character.



Cinco de Mayo

Cinco de Mayo Day highlights the cultural diversity of our Spanish and American community through music, dance, art, storytelling, research and more. Cinco de Mayo celebrations at HAN usually involve a blend of educational activities and cultural music performances. Spanish class incorporates historical lessons about the Battle of Puebla, the significance of the holiday, and Mexican culture. Students participate in projects, like creating pinatas, flowers, learning about Mexican history, or even having a special Mexican theme. The students work hard on the "Cinco de Mayo" celebration. They distinguished the similarities and differences between the patterns of celebrations, family and food of the target Spanish and American cultures that celebrate Cinco de Mayo. The Spanish classes prepared 8 different stations with different activities like: Research about Cinco de Mayo, games, art and crafts, mini sample foods donated by the students and staff, music performance, debates, face painting/henna, designs, and other activities. This celebration fits precisely in the social studies component of high school standards, where students are exposed to different experiences, family traditions, foods and lifestyles of other people around the world with "Cinco de Mayo". Students are able to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between practices of the culture studied. For instance, students have multiple opportunities to facilitate their knowledge during the stations where all the HAN community have the opportunity to participate and enjoy the celebration visiting each station for 20 minutes. Therefore, the students are able to engage in conversations, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions and compare and contrast different Mexican traditions and the United States during the "Cinco de Mayo" celebration.



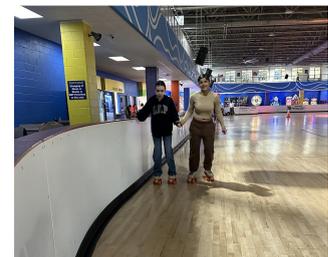
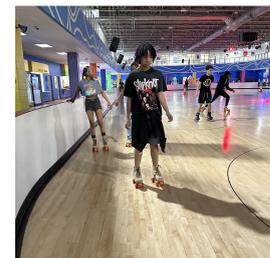
Taxes in May

Students in Ms. Walgren's class recently completed a comprehensive unit on taxes gaining practical experience on completing the full tax cycle. The unit began with an exploration of the W-4, where students learned ways to plan ahead to help avoid getting any unexpected tax bills. They also analyzed tax documents such as W-2s and 1099s determining their purpose in income reporting. To conclude the unit, students applied their knowledge by completing both paper and digital simulations of W-4s and tax returns, reinforcing their understanding of real-world financial responsibility.

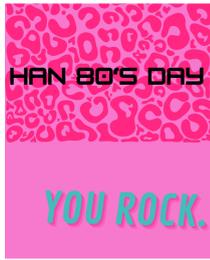
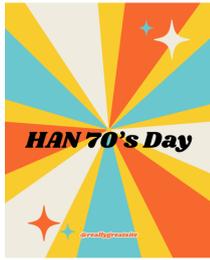


Roller Skating - Incentive Trip

Students who have been excelling in their academics and have strong attendance went to the Woodbridge Community Center to celebrate their success.



Spirit Week - Decades





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

Visit Us On Instagram



Mission Statement

It is the mission of Hillcrest Academy North that all graduates have demonstrated the following attributes: Responsibility and accountability for themselves by routinely producing quality work through high academic standards now and in the future A sense of pride in who they are and what they can contribute as a

ucesc.org



John Marquet

John is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



Let Every Voice Empower



A Message From The Principal: Dr. Balsamello

May was an exciting time for HAS students and staff. Seniors prepared for the prom and were looking forward to graduation. Everyone began to feel the effects of summer weather so our PE classes began to visit the outdoors and we all looked forward to our incentive activities. Please enjoy our Newsletter that explains everything in detail!



May Important Dates

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 Happy Pirogals Day	2 Spirit Day May the 4 th Star Wars Day	3
4	5 Teachers Appreciation Week Begins Spirit Day Cinco de Mayo	6 Teachers Appreciation Day NFLA testing	7 School Nurse Appreciation Day NFLA testing	8 NFLA testing	9 Spirit Day Piyanas Day NFLA testing	10
11	12 Hillcrest Unplugged week begins	13	14	15	16 Spirit Day International Day of Poetry	17
18	19	20	21 NHS Peer Safety Assembly	22 Soccer Trip	23 Music Day Spirit Day Wear Red White and Blue	24
25	26 Memorial Day No School	27	28	29 Soccer Peen	30 Spirit Day Charade Day	31

Student of the Month

May - Marvin

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



Faculty/Staff "Getting to Know You"!

Mr DiOrio' Favorites:

- Favorite movie: The Godfather parts 1 & 2
- Favorite food: Chicken
- Favorite color: Blue
- Favorite book: Books by Harlan Cobin or James Paterson
- Favorite travel spot: All Inclusive Resorts
- Favorite sports teams: The Mets & The Cowboys



"Let Your Voice Empower" Teacher Recognitions

May - Teamwork

This year's district wide theme of "Let Your Voice Empower" was incorporated by teachers being awarded pins in different areas of empowerment. The May theme was 'Teamwork'. 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 been such a team player, working well with others to make HAS a place both staff and students want to come to.



Ms Fern



Ms Ferrari



Ms Gilchrist

Teacher's Corner: Science

Mrs Arora - Biology/Forensics

In biology, students learned about biotechnology. In this unit, students explored how living organisms are used as tools in technology. For example, bacteria can be used to produce genetically modified foods that offer higher nutritional or economic value. To deepen their understanding, students participated in hands-on experiments, such as making yogurt from milk and extracting DNA from strawberries.



In forensic science, students learned about determining the time of death and the decomposition of bones. They studied various postmortem stages, including pallor mortis, rigor mortis, livor mortis, and algor mortis. To make the topic more engaging, students also wrote creative poems about bones.

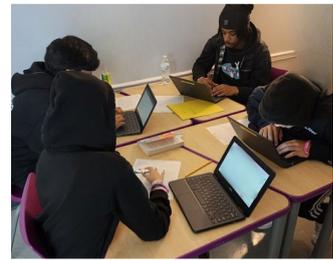


Ms Lund - Environmental/Computer Science

In Environmental Science, students compared and contrasted nonrenewable energies such as oil and gas with renewable energies like nuclear and solar. Students then created PowerPoints to present their research on important innovations in the Renewable Energy Space.

In Forensic Science, students explored ethical considerations in crime solving and law enforcement, compared forms of justice, such as liberal, social, retributive, and restorative.

In Computer Science, students launched a campaign to warn teenagers on the dangers of AI including overreliance and loss of human connection.



Scholars Breakfast

This month, two HAS students were celebrated for their outstanding achievements. On Monday, May 19th, this year's Breakfast for Outstanding Scholars took place to recognize and award those deserving students who have diligently worked the entire school year. Johanna F. and Martha A. were nominated due to their excellent grades, work ethic, determination, achievements, and their overall positive impact on our school community. This accomplishment will not only improve their resume, but is also a great honor!



Senior Assembly

Going to the prom is one of those events that is a rite of passage that most high school students look forward to. It is a fun night of dancing, food, and being together at the last school event before graduation and many good memories are made this night! However, there can be instances where too much fun can lead to serious issues. So NJ4S has returned once more to speak with those seniors and underclassmen attending the prom about how to keep prom a night to remember for all the good reasons.



Annual Chess Tournament

Mrs. Ferrari's Math Classes are participating in the annual single elimination Chess Tournament. The students learned the decay model and an elimination bracket seemed like a great way to help them visualize that it follows the decay model $c(0.5)^r$. The c in the formula represents the number of contenders, 0.5 represents the rate of elimination and the r is the number of rounds. In addition, there is a great deal of mathematics when playing the game of Chess. Ricken wrote an article titled, "Chess and Mathematics." The article says that "Chess is a game based on mathematical concepts such as logic, probability, calculations, and strategic thinking. Players must perform complex calculations to predict possible moves and their consequences." In observing the students play the game it is evident that this description is accurate. Also, the students enthusiasm and desire to play a board game make the tournament fun! Jetzen was the HAS 2024-25 Chess Tournament Champion!



Science Trip

Ms Arora organized a trip to the Middlesex County College science lab with a few select students who may have an interest in majoring in science. After a short tour of the campus, the students were brought into a conference room where they watched a presentation on Middlesex County College before moving into the lab. Students got to walk around the lab observing different models that ranged from parts of the body to different body systems. Students even observed different dissection specimens like a grasshopper and the heart of a cow. HAS students really appreciated the interactive and hands-on activities of the science lab.





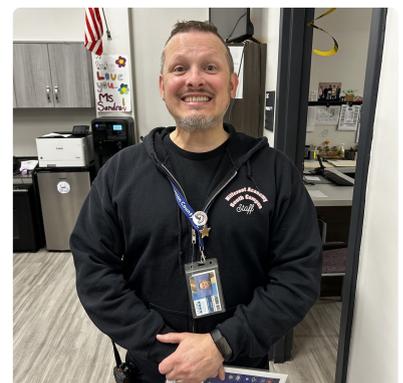
Administrative Assistant Appreciation Day

With a majority of the appreciation days in May, and this one in particular happened during spring break, we could not leave out a very important part of our HAS family. We are so grateful for our Administrative Assistant, Mrs D'Emilio! According to Google, the definition of an Administrative Professional are those who "provide essential office duties such as writing business correspondence, scheduling appointments, managing projects, maintaining paper and electronic files, and delivering customer service". Here at HAS, Ms D'Emilio is so much more than that! The students love her and look up to her for all the kind things she does for them. The staff appreciates all the work she does behind the scenes to keep our school running. Thank you Mrs D'Emilio for all you do for us here at HAS!



Principal's Appreciation Day

May 1st was Principal Appreciation Day and we are so grateful for Dr Balsamello. He is supportive of every single person at HAS from the staff to all the students. He is always welcoming to those that walk through our door. He fights for what is best for our school. He is our fearless leader, our biggest cheerleader, and one awesome boss! HAS could not have asked for a better principal!



School Nurse Appreciation Day!

Between illness and injury, wellness checks and health screenings, and the never ending game of "is it sickness or just allergies", our school nurse, Mrs. Rubin, handles it all with great care and consideration for the students and staff. Mrs Rubin takes great care of everyone here at HAS and is greatly loved! The past couple of months, we have also had the privilege of having both Ms Shirly and sometimes Ms Shalini be the HAS nurse and both women have been amazing subs! We at HAS definitely want to recognize all the nurses that crossed our doorways and came into our hearts! Thank you Mrs Rubin, Ms Shalini, and Ms Shirly for all that you do!



Mrs Rubin



Ms Shalini



Ms Shirley

Teacher Appreciation Week!

Guess That Baby!

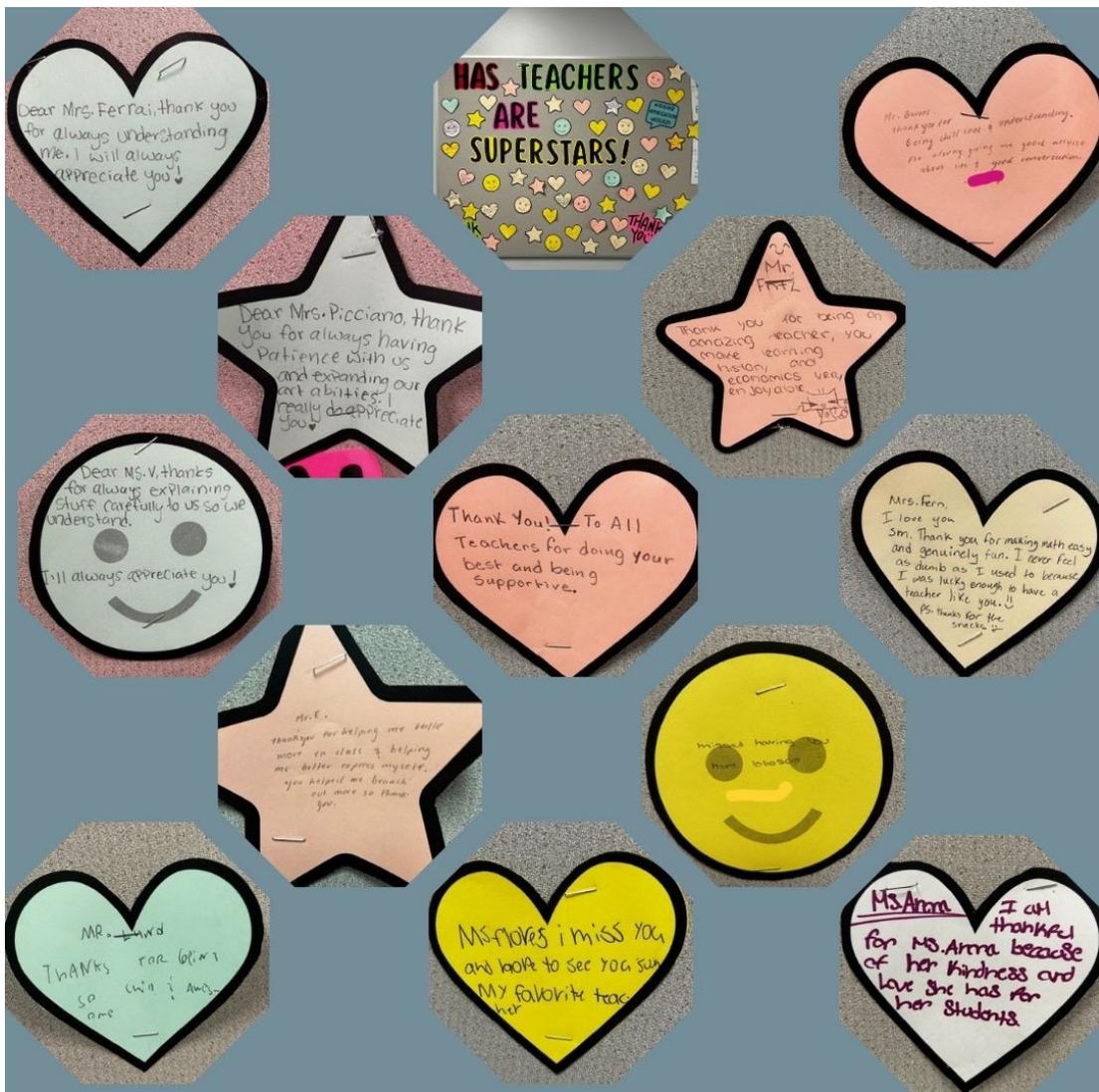
To kick off Teacher Appreciation week, teachers submitted baby pictures for students to "Guess that Baby". Teachers submitted their baby pictures for students to figure out which baby is which teacher. The winners got to have treats from the Westlake Sunshine Cafe. Congratulations to Martha for being the first to complete the challenge correctly!





Shout Outs!

Teachers at HAS were both surprised and thankful for the praises they received during Teacher Appreciation week. The week began with a bulletin board display with messages from the students of praise and thanks. Then on Tuesday, teachers received a nice break since department meetings were cancelled. On Wednesday was a special day because teachers got to enjoy a nice lunch from Chili's compliments of Dr. Balsamello.



Thank You Cards!

On Thursday teachers were showered with hand made cards from one of our scholar students, Martha. She personalized the cards for each of the teachers, thanking them all for the hard work, support, and patience they put into their lessons and their students.



Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month

Movie Day

Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is observed in the United States during the month of May and recognizes the contributions and influence of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islander Americans to the history, culture, and achievements of the United States. So for our movie day, movies that celebrate the strength and culture of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders were chosen;

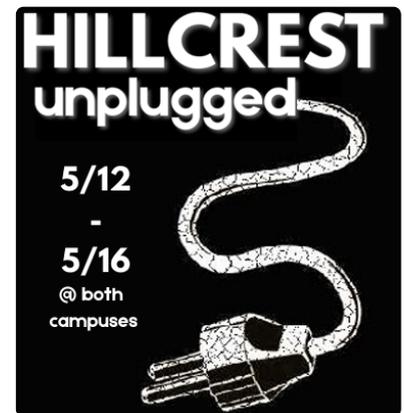


- Moana

- Moana 2
- Mulan (animated)
- Mulan (live action)
- Crazy Rich Asians
- Raya and the Last Dragon

Hillcrest Unplugged

For one week only, members of Hillcrest Academy North & South were invited to “unplug” - we did NOT use Chromebooks throughout both buildings. This gave our learning community an opportunity to have a week filled with meaningful human interactions, development of social skills and differentiated learning activities.



Do's

- Use one designated classroom computer for signing up for the bathroom
- Teachers can use computers for all traditional purposes (attendance, checking email, projecting on SMARTboard, etc)

Dont's

- Use classroom set of chromebooks for ANY reason (NO typing assignments, NO listening to music, NO watching videos, etc)
- Use computers or any other technology brought from home

May Spirit Days



May the 4th Be With You



Cinco de Mayo



Pajama Day



International Day of Peace



Red, White, and Blue Day

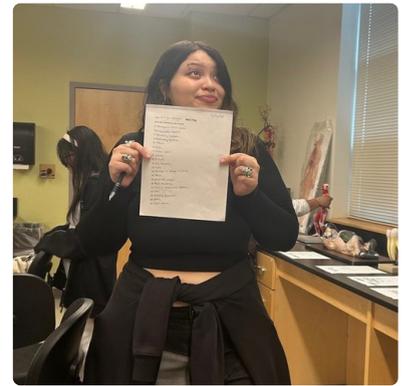


Character Day

Students Outside of School

Pulling Strings!

Music has a way of making people's emotions enhanced or changed. We use music to celebrate and dance. We also use music to calm down like a lullaby. Music also is used to convey emotions in movies and shows. So it is no surprise that we seek it out; just as Amaya did. Amaya not only has the need to listen to music, she has a need to play/create it. She took up playing the guitar when she was 9 years old and hasn't stopped. Music makes Amaya feel like she has a place to let loose or just be free.



About Us

Hillcrest Academy South Campus is an alternative high school for students from the Elizabeth Public School District. Students are referred to HAS by their Elizabeth Academy guidance counselor and administration for an interview at HAS. We provide a small educational learning setting with opportunities to make up courses through our Credit Retrieval Program in a caring environment in order to meet Elizabeth's graduation requirements.

Website: www.ucesc.org

Instagram: [ucesc_has](https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_has)

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

Location: [1571 Lamberts Mill Road, Westfield, NJ, USA-Door 3B](https://www.google.com/maps/place/1571+Lamberts+Mill+Road,+Westfield,+NJ,+USA-Door+3B)

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

[Visit us on Instagram](#)



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Lamberts Mill Academy



May Newsletter 2025

"You are not alone in your struggles, even if it feels that way."



Clinical Director's Message

May 2025

I hope this newsletter finds you well. The month of May has been quite eventful at The Mill. To begin, Spring has sprung and staff and students have been taking advantage of the outdoors while enjoying the wonderful change of weather. Being with nature offers a variety of benefits that helps reduce stress, improve mood, promote relaxation, and increase overall well-being.



May is Mental Health Awareness month and at LMA we believe in fostering a supportive environment where everyone feels empowered to talk openly about mental health challenges as well as nurturing our mental health. It is so incredibly important for individuals to take time to reset and prioritize their own mental health in order to feel like the best "version of you" each day.

Therefore, staff and students participated in multiple activities in and out of the classroom centered around mental and emotional well being

- **Friday staff/student BBQ**– Each Friday, LMA administration has been doing a BBQ to bring the LMA community together to wrap up the school week. Students and staff enjoy this time to socialize as a community
- **Minding your Mind**–Presenter Tiffany Guerriero spoke to some of our students, and provided her personal experience highlighting the importance of resilience and transformation, touching on topics of loss, trauma, anxiety, and depression. The students were engaged in an interactive discussion
- **Kindness Rocks**–TRMC presenter Nicole Macaluso and Julia Hayes hosted a kindness discussion and engaged students in a creative arts activity painting Kindness rocks with inspirational words and discussed the importance of kindness. Our students love expressing themselves with their creative sides.
- **Pet Therapy**–Students continue to benefit from a visit from Creature Comfort Pet Therapy, and thoroughly enjoy being with the dogs

During this month our school community also took the time to celebrate our wonderful teachers during teacher appreciation week, and our school nurse during nurse's week. Our students are incredibly lucky to have such a genuine and dedicated team of educators!

It's so hard to believe another school year is coming to an end, and we are so proud of all of our student accomplishments thus far. Please spend some time reviewing our monthly newsletter, and see all the events and activities we are proud to offer the students at LMA!

Danielle Ruchaevsky
Clinical Director

Upcoming Events

June 2025 Important Dates

- June 2 - Mane Stream Field Trip
- June 2 - Teen Arts State Finals
- June 3 - Senior Field Trip (Medieval Times)
- June 4 - Creature Comfort (Pet Therapy) visit
- June 6 - End of the year BBQ
- June 13 - LMA Graduation Services (1571)
- June 16-18 - Early Dismissal - 1pm
- June 18 - Last Day of School



Staff Spotlight - LMA Clinical Team

LMA is spotlighting our Clinical Team for May. Our clinicians provide individual, group therapy and on-call counselling each and every day. Leading conflict resolutions, working with our students on SEL skills and assisting with transition are just some of the many things they do on a daily basis.



Ms. Kellers

I have been working as a therapist at Lamberts Mill Academy for 1 year and have enjoyed having the opportunity to connect with the students here. Before working at LMA, I worked at the Mercer County Public Defender's office as a



Mrs. Dalal

I have worked at Lamberts Mill Academy for the past 2 years. Prior to LMA, I worked with adolescents at a facility for Partial Hospitalization and Intensive Outpatient care. Throughout my career as a social worker, I enjoy engaging



Ms. Altamirano

I have had the opportunity to work as a therapist at Lamberts Mill Academy for 1 year and a half; I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the students here at LMA. Prior to my time here, I worked at a Partial Hospitalization Unit

social worker providing needed services such as housing and mental health/substance abuse assistance. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with family and friends, shopping, and traveling.

with and providing therapeutic services to teenagers. Outside of my professional experience, I have a passion for baking, traveling and spending time with loved ones.

and as an In-Community Therapist. Besides my passion for mental health, I love being physically active, spending quality time with loved ones, and traveling.



Mr. Leal

I have had the pleasure of working at Lamberts Mill Academy for 8 years as a School Based Clinician. Prior to this, I worked as an In Community/In Home therapist with children and adolescents. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with family, watching movies, and playing guitar.

LMA Student of the Month - May 2025

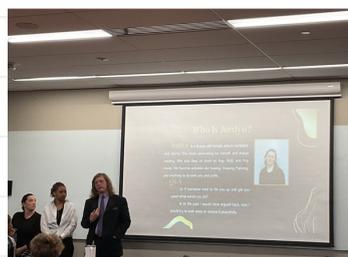
Angelise P. - May Student of the Month at LMA

We are proud to present Angelise as our student of the month for May! Angelise displays motivation in continuing to achieve her goals at LMA. She engages well with peers and staff in and outside of the classroom. Angelise has various strengths, one of which entails providing appropriate advice and support to her peers. Angelise has been able to maintain high grades throughout the school year due to her hard work in class and determination to earn Honor Roll. Angelise will ask questions to further her understanding of the topic and is always willing to share her voice by offering her opinion.



LMA Participates in Dare to Dream

On Friday, May 23, four LMA students went to Kean University to attend the Dare to Dream Student Leadership Conference. The Dare to Dream Student Leadership Conference is held at various universities throughout the state of NJ, and is sponsored by the NJ Department of Education's Office of Special Education. It highlights strategies to promote self-advocacy skills for middle and high school students with disabilities. Our very own, Jordyn M, delivered a keynote speech about how she's dealt with her disabilities and utilized her voice to advocate for herself and others. Right after the keynote speeches, she presented her own breakout session which was entitled: Own Your Voice: A Student's Guide to Confidence and Self-Advocacy. This was an interactive experience and gave realistic strategies for audience members to utilize to build confidence and skills for self-advocacy. Jordyn did an amazing job presenting and LMA is very proud of her!! Three other LMA students were able to enjoy and participate in the conference while supporting Jordyn. It was an overall great experience and we're looking forward to attending in the future.



May at The Mill

The month of May was Mental Health Awareness month and we not only had speakers, subject core and clinical activities, we had a vibe of support in the building This was seen at our Java Joint event by students supporting peers as they became vulnerable to perform or speak at the Open Mic. In ELA&A students prepared for the Java Joint, our own coffee house and created foldable mindful fortune tellers with positive affirmations for students to use for self encouragement. In Science they collected the recycling, but most importantly were cleaning up our garden area to prepare for our Zen garden creation. Our Work Based Learning program has been very successful by expanding our Lions Lunch program. Music class practiced and prepared for the Java Joint. Physical education embraced the spring fever by participating in a Baseball and Softball Unit. For the students WIN class, they focused on being proactive versus reactive as well as the importance of emotional hygiene for a focus on their mental health. Amongst the various activities in Group Therapy this month students were engaged in discussion questions regarding mental health such as coping strategies to utilize and the influence of social media on mental health.

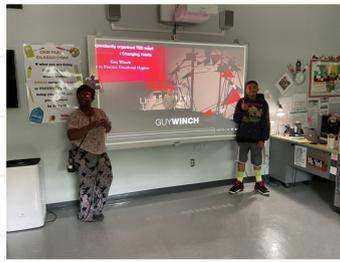


Classroom Spotlights



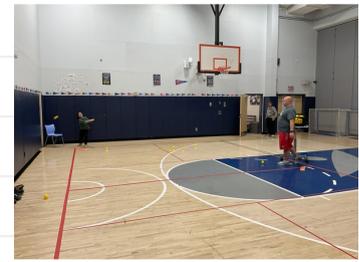
Ms. Finver's ELA Classes

Students have begun to analyze various poetry and lyrics through using the TPCASTT method. Through this explicit step by step process they are gaining a deeper understanding of the text. We supported Mental Health awareness month by giving each student in ELA&L a positive affirmation journal to write in and keep. We then created a foldable mindful fortune teller with positive affirmations for students to use for self encouragement. Our student publishers distributed our Lamberts Mill Academy Literary magazine, entitled the Mind's Eye. We ended the month of May with a correlation of a year's worth of student creation with a school wide coffee house experience called Java Joint. The students turned our cafeteria into a coffee house where we served pastries, coffee, hot chocolate and many more treats. Students used their own art to decorate the room and we had an open mic where students and staff sang, did comedy, read poetry and played music.



Ms. York's WIN Classes

This month in WIN (What I Need) students discussed what proactive behavior & proactive language looks like when compared to reactive behavior & reactive language. We talked about how proactive people are like a bottle of water and reactive people are like a can of soda. If life shakes you up, a water bottle remains the same while a can of soda explodes. Each class made a "T" chart and selected behaviors that fall under things people can control and things people cannot control. Students were then challenged while completing our mini project using personal examples of what they feel like they can control and what they feel like they can't control. For Mental Health Awareness Month we watched a TEDx talk by Psychologist Guy Winch on the topic of "emotional hygiene". Students filled out a corresponding sheet that focuses on the main points of the video. The presenter discusses why he thinks society should view mental health with the same importance as physical health. In restorative "circles" this month students were encouraged to make recommendations on topics. Students chose to discuss topics including, but not



Mr. Peter's Health/PE Classes

Take me out to the ball game,
Take me out with LMA!
Buy me some peanuts and
Cracker Jacks,
I don't care if I never get back!
Let me root, root, root for the
home team—
If they don't win, it's a shame!
For it's one, two, three strikes
you're out
At the old ball game!
Our students are swinging their
bats and getting their mitts
ready for another exciting unit
of Baseball and Softball! We've
been learning and practicing
key skills such as catching,
throwing, fielding ground balls,
tracking pop-ups, batting, and
understanding the rules and
history of both sports. Each
day, students are stepping up
to the plate for batting practice
as we prepare for the 2nd
Annual LMA Home Run Derby,
which will take place at the end
of the unit. We're also having a
blast playing traditional
wiffleball games!
In Health class, we've been
working diligently in our
CPR/AED/First Aid unit.
Students are learning and
practicing essential life-saving
techniques, including
performing CPR, using an AED,
and providing rescue breaths.
We've also covered how to
respond to sudden illnesses
such as strokes, seizures, and

limited to; boundaries within relationships, breakups, unfriending a person in your life, and peer pressure.

various environmental emergencies. Students are following along with American Red Cross training manuals and videos, and they're doing a fantastic job mastering these vital skills.

Java Joint at The Mill



LMA had it's biennial Java Joint this past month. This is a unique opportunity in which LMA students and staff prepare, decorate and transform the cafeteria into a coffee house with live performances, story telling, and poem reading for all students to get on stage and use their student voice. This event empowers students to perform in front of one another with staff support. As in previous Java Joints, this months event was a fabulous success. Here what our students are saying about it:

"I think it was really fun seeing what the kids at LMA can do, and showing off my drumming skills"

BB

"I really enjoyed seeing people's hidden talents! I never knew LMA was so artistically talented" RP

"I really enjoyed participating in the Java Joint. I found it very fulfilling to be up on stage performing with one of my friends." MH

"It was a nice day to see classmates play and sing, and to spend time with my friends." JH

"I enjoyed playing the trumpet. As well as eating pastries." AC



Clinical Corner

Here are a few simple strategies to help support and maintain Mental Wellness:

1. **Stay Connected:** Reach out to friends, family, or school counselors. Sharing your thoughts and feelings can be incredibly helpful.
2. **Prioritize Self-Care:** Take breaks, get enough sleep, and engage in activities that bring you joy, like hobbies or spending time outdoors.
3. **Practice Mindfulness:** Techniques like meditation, breathing exercises, and yoga can reduce stress and improve focus.

Ask for Help: If you or someone you know is struggling, speak to a teacher, counselor, or trusted adult. Seeking support is a sign of strength.

Group Therapy

Our students continue to enjoy attending group therapy. The administered survey to attain the student's thoughts/suggestions on the group counseling format were overwhelmingly positive! The students are also looking forward to attending other groups such as LGBTQ, healthy connections, creative expressions, etc. With this month being Mental Health Awareness, the students were able to utilize the support of group sessions to voice their thoughts and process their emotions. Therapeutic activities included anger management strategies, nature walks, and mindfulness through music. Students also engaged in discussion questions regarding mental health such as coping strategies to utilize and the influence of social media on mental health. We also welcomed a presenter from Minding Your Mind. The presentation focused on the presenter's trial and tribulations as a vessel to highlight the importance of resilience and undergoing profound transformation.



Students Outside of the Classroom / Alumni

Skies the limit for Ma'Kiah H.

LMA student, Ma'Kiah H. has successfully secured a summer job working at Sky Zone Trampoline Park in South Plainfield. We are proud that she has taken initiative and drive to enter the workforce, and use her natural leadership skills in a new workplace. We hope this provides a valuable experience for her, and to continue to work with younger individuals.



Upcoming Community Events



OCD WALK

CLARK, NJ

SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 2025
9:00AM-11:00AM
OAK RIDGE PARK

Proceeds benefit

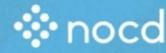


International
OCD
Foundation



New Jersey
IOCDF affiliate

Marquee sponsor



iocdf.org/walkclark

Additional sponsors



https://support.iocdf.org/event/clark-nj-ocd-walk/e673382?c_src=affiliate

THE UNION COUNTY BOARD
OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
PRESENT THE SECOND ANNUAL

PRIDE COLOR RUN

INCLUDING FAMILY ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY RESOURCE TABLES

SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 2025
OAK RIDGE PARK - 136 OAK RIDGE ROAD

**REGISTRATION AND BIB
DISTRIBUTION - 8:00AM**

5-K START TIME - 9:00AM
FUN RUN TO FOLLOW



VISIT
[UCNJ.ORG/LGBTQ](https://ucnj.org/lgbtq)
TO REGISTER NOW



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE
UNION COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

THE UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
INVITES YOU TO OUR



2025 Flag Raising

Monday, June 2 · 12:30pm
Union County Courthouse · 2 Broad St, Elizabeth

Featured Guests

Amanda Girardi
Owner, Sweet N Fancy Emporium, Cranford

Fertie Almonte
Author, Speaker, Singer

Dave D'Amico
Chief Investigator, Middlesex County Dept of Corrections
Co-Chair, NJ LGBTQ Law Enforcement Liaison Program



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE

UNION COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Department of Economic Development

<https://ucnj.org/press-releases/public-info/2025/05/02/union-county-celebrates-pride-month-with-flag-raising-and-second-annual-pride-5k-and-fun-color-run/>

Community Resources



<https://naminj.org/>



988 SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

988 will be available for
call, text, and chat on July 16.

Confidential, free, and available
24/7/365



<https://988lifeline.org/>



NJ4S

<https://nj4s.nj.gov/s/>

School in the Community

1. Dare to Dream Conference at Kean University
 2. NJ4S Assemblies at 1571
 3. Monthly Community Meetings celebrating student awards.
 4. WBLE at Walgreens (Clark), Hilton (Springfield) and Chili's (Clark)
 5. Field Trip to ShopRite of Clark
 6. LMA Recycling Initiative with Westfield Conservation Center
-

About Us

Contact Information:

Phone: (908)-233-7581

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

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

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_lma/?hl=en

Lamberts Mill Academy is a school within the Union County Educational Services Commission. We are an out of district public school for students with psychiatric disabilities. We continue to partner with RWJ Trinitas Regional Medical Center to provide clinical services for our students. Our school community prides itself on our relationships with all stakeholders: students, staff, parents, families and community partnerships. Being a public school, we adhere to all NJDOE assessment and curriculum mandates. Our professional learning community strives to increase student achievement and improve classroom instruction to provide students with the most effective educational, social and emotional learning environment possible.



LMA Smore

LMA is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





Message from the Administrators

May Newsletter: "Shining from the Inside Out" A celebration of self, strength, and individuality

Welcome Westlake Family and Friends,

During the month of May, our monthly theme is Self-Reflection and Mental Health Awareness. **"May, with its blossoming promise, invites us to cultivate our inner gardens. Take time for self-reflection; understand that nurturing your mental well-being is not a luxury, but a fundamental part of your growth and learning journey."**



Students have time to care for their hearts and minds. This month, we focused on:

Self-love and self-reflection through activities that are calming such as yoga, pet therapy, giving to others, teacher appreciation day and showing each other kindness.

Building confidence by working on jobs in school and in the community. (Such as, breakfast bags, passing out supplies, working in the Sunshine Café, making T-shirts, jewelry, greeting cards, chocolates, dog biscuits, horticulture, selling bagels, pizza and other daily jobs.

Westlake celebrates what makes students unique by embracing their successes when utilizing the AAC devices, using sign language, listening and all the successes whether they are large or small. This month, a student has a great success story of requiring a smaller, quieter environment while strategies were worked on to decrease the student's anxiety. The student has adjusted and is back

in the classroom with peers and doing wonderful. This is a great success for the individual student and all the staff working to help the student.

It's ok to take breaks: We have our Zen Den for any student who may need a quiet place for calming and a quiet area that will assist them in refocusing which does help them to go back to class and be ready to work again.

Student Voices are Heard: "How students can take care of their mind"

Short, guided quotes or drawings from students like:

- "I listen to music."
- "I talk to my teacher."
- "I play with my dog/cat."
- "I take deep breaths."

The big night is almost here! On Prom night, let's celebrate being ourselves, looking our best, and dancing with friends. Our night will be "Wicked" theme based and have a sensory-friendly dance space for students, a photo booth with fun props and a place where everyone is a star – everyone is celebrated!

Claudine, Bobby and Stacey



Westlake Information

Dates to Remember!

- May 30: Westlake Prom – "Wicked" Theme
- May 31: Clothing Drive at Westlake School (Clothing Drop off 10:00-1:30 pm)
- June 6: Westlake Carnival (9:30 am – 1:00 pm)
- June 16: Student Dismissal at 1:00 pm
- June 17: Student Dismissal at 1:00 pm
- June 18: Graduation at 9:30 am in the Westlake gym
- June 18: Last day of School – Student Dismissal at 1:00 pm



May Spotlight!

Student of the Month!



Student of the Month



T.A. is our Student of the Month! She has been making great improvements to her self-regulation skills! We are very proud of the work T.A. has done!

Staff of the Month!



Staff Member of the Month



Ms. Barbara is our Staff of the Month! She is so effective in the way she works with the students!
She builds a trust with them and helps them succeed!

Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!

SUNSHINE CAFE EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



J.D. is our Sunshine Employee of the Month! J.D. is hardworking and efficient. He is always trying his best and greeting his customers with a smile!



Work Based Learning!

J.B. is filling THANK YOU bags for our job sites! We wanted to show them how much we appreciate the opportunity to learn work skills in a job setting!



.....

Staff Night Out!



Westlake Staff at the Staff Night Out trivia and game night!



Congratulations to the Westlake Wisecrackers! They won the trophy for getting all trivia answers correct!



Teacher Appreciation Week!



Thank you to Ms. Grace who worked with the students on flower pot and books for Teacher Appreciation Week!

Behavior Department's Guide to Fun Summer Activities!



Summer is just around the corner, and that often means extra time for your family to have some fun together, and pass the time.

Whether you're looking for a theatrical performance or a family outing, these sensory-friendly opportunities are a great way to explore and enjoy the best of New Jersey, [together.New Jersey](#) offers numerous sensory-friendly activities for individuals on the autism spectrum and those with sensory sensitivities. These activities include modified performances at various theaters, sensory-friendly movie screenings at AMC and Regal, and special events at locations like the New Jersey Hall of Fame and Bierman Autism Centers.

Sensory-Friendly Theatrical Experiences:

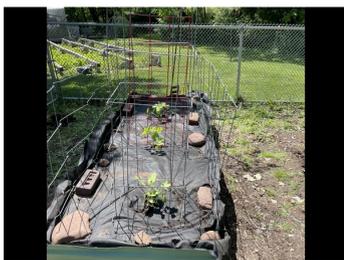
- [Union County Performing Arts Center](#) (Rahway): Offers sensory-friendly performances with modified lighting and sound.
- [BergenPAC](#) (Englewood): Provides sensory-friendly performances.
- [Mayo Performing Arts Center](#) (Morristown): Hosts sensory-friendly performances with adjusted sound and light levels, and a relaxed environment where audience members can move freely and talk.
- [Paper Mill Playhouse](#) (Millburn): Offers autism-friendly performances. [Saturday, June 21st at 1:30 PM](#)
- [State Theatre New Jersey](#) (New Brunswick): Provides sensory-friendly performances with modulated lighting and sound, and a judgment-free environment.
- [McCarter Theatre Center](#) (Princeton): Offers sensory-friendly performances.
- [Two River Theatre](#) (Red Bank): Provides relaxed performances.
- [Shea Center for the Performing Arts](#) (New Brunswick): Offers sensory-friendly performances.

Sensory-Friendly Movie Theaters:

- [AMC Theatres](#): Offers sensory-friendly film screenings on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays for family-friendly films and on Wednesday evenings for mature films.
- [Regal Theatres](#): Hosts "My Way Matinee" screenings.



Ms. Mund's Class



Ms. Shaw's Class!

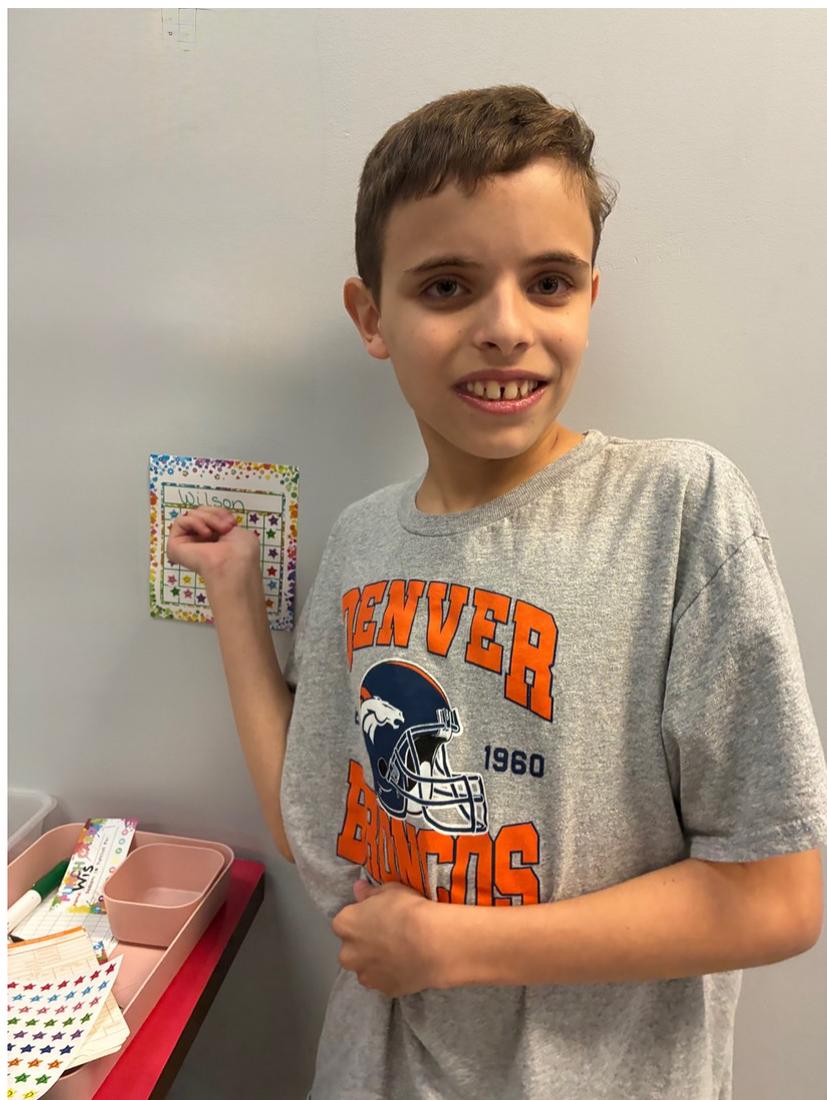


This month's focus was on self-awareness and emotional regulation. Students learned to identify and understand their emotions, recognizing how emotions influence their actions and behaviors. The class discussed and practiced healthy coping strategies for managing difficult emotions, including deep breathing, journaling, drawing, watching comedy, listening to music, and taking walks/exercising. Students worked on identifying the size of problems and learning to react and solve them appropriately and independently. JD shared that "washing dishes" became a therapeutic tool for him.

The students worked hard at the school cafe and Snack Shack. Throughout the school year, students earned money through their work as a reward. Students showed initiative and extra effort to earn bonus opportunities as well. Students learned about the 50/30/20 rule for budgeting, allocating 50% for needs, 30% for wants, and 20% for savings. The students are looking forward to lunch and shopping on the upcoming school trip.



Ms. Swisher's Vocational Class!



WESTLAKE PTO!

SUPPORT WESTLAKE SCHOOL

CLOTHING DRIVE

The WPO is hosting a used clothing donation event!

WE ARE COLLECTING: WEARABLE & USABLE CLOTHING, SHOES, BELTS, HANDBAGS, BEDSHEETS, TOWELS, STUFFED ANIMALS, SMALL HARD TOYS AND BIKES

OUR SCHOOL WILL RECEIVE MONEY FOR EVERY POUND WE COLLECT

DATE: Saturday, May 31, 2025

DROP OFF TIME: 10:00 to 1:30

LOCATION: Westlake School
1571 Lambert's Mill Road
Westfield, NJ 07090 (front of building)

CONTACT: Roberta Cadeau
908-494-1688

note:

Please put all that you are donating into tightly tied plastic bags

WolfPack Press



Homemade Cheese-Itz!

This week, we learned how to make home-made Cheez-It's after learning about the importance of healthy eating. We only used 4 ingredients. Cheddar cheese, flour, butter, and whole milk. We had fun cutting the dough into squares, cutting the indents, and poking holes in them just like the store bought kind. Some of my friends made different shapes of Cheez-It's, such as a heart, rectangle, and triangle. We had fun because they were easy to make. We learned we could make different flavors of Cheez-It's, too! Also,

making Cheez-Its at home is much healthier than the store bought one. You should definitely give these a try!





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

visit our website www.ucnj.org/opdsn

Or scan the QR Code!



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE

Biwo 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:

Rele: (908) 527-4781

Imel: opdsn@ucnj.org

vizite sit entènèt nou an: www.ucnj.org/opdsn

Oswa eskane kòd QR la!



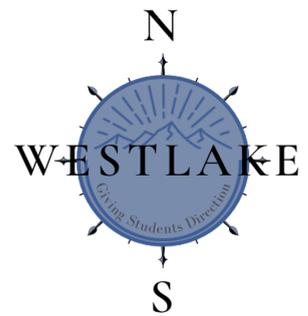
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Contact Us!

Website: www.ucesc.org/schools/westlake_school

Location: [1571 Lamberts Mill Rd, Westfield, NJ, USA](https://www.google.com/maps/place/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

