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Dear Darien Community,

As the Festival of Lights begins on Sunday, December 14, I wish all students, staff, and families who celebrate a joyous and meaningful Hanukkah filled with peace and light.

Please forgive the length of this week's community update. There is so much to share and so many events and programs to highlight.

Parent University

Thank you to everyone who joined us at our inaugural Parent University yesterday. It was fun to see close to 25 parents learning more about the Science of Reading and experiencing our K-3 literacy practices through fun, interactive learning centers. Additional thanks to Kate Dimoulas, MMS Principal, and her custodial team for hosting the event and setting up the space. Many thanks to our team of presenters and organizers from the elementary schools who collaborated with Dr. Jennifer Falcone to bring the program to life.

BOE Meeting

At the Board of Education meeting that was held on Tuesday, December 9, Dr. Amy Fedigan, Dr. Jennifer Falcone, Ms. Roni Rodier, Ms. Kristen Colonies and Dr. Scott McCarthy presented an overview of our district efforts in developing MTSS. Earlier this fall, I shared a description of MTSS in my community update. I am including it again as it is a very important topic.

The Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is a framework designed to ensure that every student in Darien Public Schools receives the support they need to learn, grow and thrive. Across our schools, our staff work together and keep a close eye on how all students are doing with academic, behavior, social and personal learning skills and work habits. The goal is to ensure each child gets what they need to be successful. MTSS is organized in 3 Tiers to make sure all students get the right level of help at the right time.

- **Tier 1 - All students** across the district get strong, high quality instruction and support in their classrooms.
- **Tier 2 - Some students** might need a bit of extra help in certain areas like reading, math, social skills, and we provide additional small group instruction and extra practice.

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- **Tier 3- A few students** may need more individualized support.

Our staff (teachers, school psychologists, administrators, literacy and math specialists, etc.) meet regularly to review student progress, consider what is working, and adjust our support for students as needed. This work is one part of the amazing and essential work our staff do when they meet altogether. MTSS helps us make sure that every child can reach their full potential.

If you are interested in learning more about this topic and viewing the presentation, please click on this [LINK](#).

Unified Sports - Basketball

Unified Basketball has their first game of the season on Wednesday, December 17, at 3:00 pm at DHS against New Canaan- Stamford. As I mentioned this fall, this incredible experience is a must-see for all student-athletes and one of the most impactful experiences you can have as a spectator.

Hanukkah Celebration & Menorah Lighting

Darien Parks and Recreation's annual Hanukkah Celebration & Menorah Lighting, takes place on Wednesday, December 17, at 6:00 pm in Grove Street Plaza. This event will feature the lighting of the six-foot-tall menorah, along with songs, food, giveaways and children's crafts. They will also be accepting new, unwrapped toys for donation to the Open Doors Shelter to help ensure every child has a gift this holiday season.

DHS' Holiday Spectacular

Don't miss your chance to get into the holiday spirit at the DHS Holiday Spectacular Concert on Wednesday, December 17, at 7:00 pm in the DHS Auditorium. This annual, free family-friendly program will feature performances of popular holiday music by the DHS Band, Chorus, and Orchestra.

Community Connection: Spirit of Giving

To embrace the spirit of giving, our District is participating in events and hosting various drives this holiday season to support local families in need.

- Hindley Elementary School is collecting hat, gloves and socks from December 15 through December 19 to benefit Person to Person
- Holmes Elementary School's Kids Care Club made cards last week for the At Home in Darien holiday wreath delivery
- Ox Ridge Elementary School is collecting new, unwrapped toys for Toys for Tots until December 19 and gently used toys until December 16
- Royle Elementary School's third grade is collecting new items for Brady's Smile pediatric ICU comfort bags through December 15
- Tokeneke Elementary School's Student Council is collecting new, unwrapped toys for their annual Holiday Toy Drive benefiting Open Doors in Norwalk through December 15 and some classes are participating in Lego's #BuildToGive campaign on December 19
- Middlesex Middle School's eighth grade class is collecting new, unwrapped toys for Toys for Tots until December 19

- Darien High School is collecting new, unwrapped toys for Toys for Tots through December 19 and gently used clothing for the Domestic Violence Crisis Center through December 22

Please check your school's communications for specific details on how you can help make this a special holiday for all members of our community.

Depot Wrap-Up

Let The Depot elves assist in your holiday wrapping needs. Drop your unwrapped gifts off at The Depot Thursday, December 18 through Tuesday, December 23 and the elves will get to work. There is a \$40 minimum for wrapping or a suggested \$4 per gift. You can bring your own wrapping paper or go with the provided paper, bows and tags. This is the Depot Student Governing Board's biggest fundraiser of the year, so all funds go directly back to The Depot. Gift drop off/pickup dates and times can be found [here](#).

Around Town

The annual National Wreaths Across America Day event, dedicated to the mission of "Remember, Honor, and Teach," is scheduled for tomorrow, December 13, at 12:00 pm at Darien's Spring Grove Veterans Cemetery. This ceremony honors the service and sacrifice of our nation's veterans by placing wreaths on graves at over 5,200 locations nationwide. Thanks to Darien's generous spirit, all 2,200 veteran graves will be honored with a wreath this year.

Darien TV

Jim Cameron, Co-Founder and Program Director of Darien TV is conducting a survey to get a sense of how, when and why Darien residents watch coverage of Town meetings and special events. The brief survey will take about two minutes to complete and can be found [here](#).

DHS Sports

The winter athletics season is officially underway with a busy weekend ahead! Today, girls jv basketball tips off against Lauralton Hall at 4:00 pm in the DHS Main Gym, followed by boys varsity hockey facing Xaverian Brothers in a scrimmage at 5:00 pm at the Canton Ice House, and boys varsity squash playing City Squash at 5:30 pm at Msquash Norwalk. Girls varsity basketball will then take the court against Lauralton Hall at 5:30 pm in the DHS Main Gym, while girls varsity hockey meets Stamford-Westhill-Staples at the Darien Ice House at 6:10 pm, and boys varsity basketball wraps up the day with a scrimmage against Fairfield Prep at 7:00 pm back in the DHS Main Gym. The action continues tomorrow with a varsity wrestling scrimmaging against Fairfield Warde at 9:00 am at Fairfield Warde High School, girls varsity hockey challenging Hall at 1:30 pm at Veterans Memorial Ice Rink, and boys varsity hockey taking on St. John's Prep in a scrimmage at 2:50 pm at the Essex Sports Center - Middleton Ice Rink. Go Big Wave!

Sincerely,



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