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# The LITCHFIELD PRIDE

SPRING 2021

Official Newsletter of Litchfield Public Schools

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

CENTER SCHOOL • INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL • MIDDLE SCHOOL • HIGH SCHOOL

## Letter from the Superintendent

By: Christopher Leone, Superintendent

Dear Litchfield School Community,

For nearly two decades I have had the honor to complete school-based, and district level budgets. The 2021-2022 budget brings unique obstacles never previously imagined.

Over the last twelve months, we have endured the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on society, community, and education. We opened in person on August 26, 2020, and have transitioned day-to-day to face many obstacles. I am beyond proud of our students, staff, parents, and community. I also realize that the challenges from this pandemic are not over.

What we know and what we don't know changes daily. Will there be social distancing in 2021-2022? Will we be able to provide onsite after-school enrichment? What is the social-emotional impact of this Pandemic? What is the future of remote learning? These are the lasting questions. Meanwhile, through everything, we know there are learning gaps to close. In summary, yes there are obstacles but we are stronger today than we were before this pandemic. We have proven that together anything is possible and we will continue to adjust, focus on our children, and refuse to settle.

This budget presented to the Litchfield Board of Education on March 11, 2021, represents a 0% change for the total local contribution from the Town of Litchfield. It is our second consecutive flat budget and we continue to work with our town leaders to stabilize the annual changes and also address ongoing needs. This proposed budget continues our promise to the future and invests \$250,000 in capital needs. We remain vigilant on funding for our children, our schools, and preserving long-term sustainability.

On April 8, 2021, the Board of Education was expected to take action on the proposed budget. The Town of Litchfield is expected to hold its annual budget vote on May 13, 2021.

Stay healthy. Stay strong. We continue to live forward.

Chris

## Changing Lives One Kind Act at A Time

By: Kristen Della Volpe, Kathy Johnson

For over ten years, Litchfield High School's Acts of Kindness Club has been organizing and participating in activities that support their mission, which is to foster a safe, more tolerant, kinder school environment by focusing on encouraging kindness and tolerance in the LHS community and creating a positive learning environment.

The Acts of Kindness Club began in 2011 after a very successful and popular All-School Student Council activity for the National Random Acts of Kindness Week. Since then, each February during Random Acts of Kindness Week, the club organizes a variety of activities for students and staff, such as bathroom mirrors and lockers decorated with inspirational quotes, and beaded necklaces handed out by students and staff when an individual is "caught" doing something kind.

Now 50 members strong, the club is best known for its "Cast of Characters," in which students dress as well-known princesses and superheroes, and hold breakfasts, ice cream socials, or visit and perform for local children. The club never charges for the cast to appear, and relies on the generosity of our community for their costumes and transportation costs. Over the past 8 years, the group has been invited by the Make-A-Wish Foundation to participate in their "Walk for Wishes" fundraiser.



LHS Acts of Kindness Club's Cast of Characters performs for Goshen School, Goshen.

They have also been invited for several years to perform for the Family Literacy Night for a local Head Start program. Former Club advisor Kathy Johnson notes that "I hear all the time from adults who see our students that they can't believe how kind and engaging our kids are with young children." Of the many mantras she's delivered to her club over the years, one heard many times was "on the school bus you are a high school student; off the bus, you are that character."

New Acts of Kindness club advisors, LHS teacher Catherine Pennell and LHS teacher Kat Germano, are looking forward to continuing this important work at LHS and extending activities to LMS. By no means have they let COVID-19 guidelines hinder the club's kindness mission. For the 2021 Acts of Kindness Week, the club provided a list of kindness-themed videos for students and staff to view during advisory and provided an activity that structured conversations around the importance and benefits of kindness in a community.



Acts of Kindness Club and last year's Power Princess Group.



Acts of Kindness Club sponsors school-wide activities for Random Acts of Kindness Week.



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# Litchfield Intermediate School

## What's Happening in Fourth Grade

By: **Tori Gagnon, Pip Sansing, Karis Beebe & Grant Parker, 4th graders from Mrs. Stevenson's class**

The fourth-grade classes have been learning about extreme weather and natural disasters. We did a lot of research on how weather works and what natural disasters are. We learned about tornados, hurricanes, tsunamis, blizzards, haboobs/dust storms, and droughts.

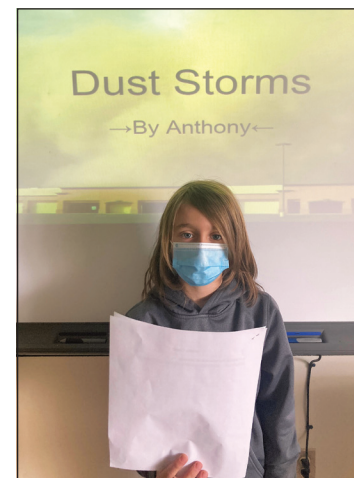


Fourth Grader Chailyn Fearon proudly displays her colorful hat design following a lesson on *Tiara's Hat Parade* by Kelly Starling Lyons.

Our research was focused on where these natural disasters are most common, how they form, ways we can prepare for their impact and reduce it, and well-known storms in history. We read books about these storms and researched on the internet. We then transferred our research notes into Google Slides and typed them into essays. We also had a choice of doing extra credit projects by making models, posters, or dioramas and we presented them in front of the class.

Fourth graders also celebrated "Read Across America Day" by reading magazines, chapter books, nonfiction books, poetry, and picture books. In our classroom, we listened to the story *Tiara's Hat Parade*, by Kelly Starling Lyons. We designed our own hats and decorated them with pictures that describe each of us. They were all very unique.

We also talked about how Tiara and her mom suffered after a new hat store opened and sold lower price hats. Through this story, we realized how we can "wear someone else's hat" and feel what they feel, just like we have been discussing through our Second Step lessons. We also learned that sometimes things don't always go the way you planned or wanted, and that's okay! We highly recommend this book!



Anthony Mauro prepares to present his research on dust storms in Mrs. Stevenson's fourth grade class.

## 5th Grade Scientists at Work

By: **Grade 5 Team at Litchfield Intermediate School**



Cayden Zayas from Ms. D'Amore's fifth grade class displays his food chain collage.

Our 5th grade Science unit, The Web of Life, helped students understand the importance of the food chain and decomposition. The students' first experiment involved creating mold terrariums. Students analyzed and interpreted data to explain how different conditions impacted mold growth.

The young scientists also observed worms' behavior and investigated to test if worms prefer damp or dry places. Students concluded the worms' preferred environment as well as how useful they are to our gardens.

We've used several interactive games that show how to build a healthy ecosystem. Students enjoyed playing "Big Fish," a card game that requires students to create

a healthy environment for their fish. Big learning takeaways included students recognizing the living organisms in a habitat as an ecosystem. If one organism were to disappear, the whole ecosystem would break down.

Students also identified the sun as the ultimate source of energy in an ecosystem. The sun's energy is used by plants to grow and transfer through an ecosystem in the form of food. As a culminating activity, students shared their understanding of the food chain by designing a food chain collage. Requiring both critical thinking and creative abilities, these collages were a sight to behold!



Hayden Huntley examines a handful of worms in Mrs. Rooney's classroom prior to determining the type of habitat they prefer.

## Kindness is Contagious in Grade 6

By: **Grade 6 Team at Litchfield Intermediate School**

Grade 6 students at Litchfield Intermediate School continually strive to spread kindness within the community and to make a difference in our world. Most recently, each sixth-grader created a "Virtual Valentine" for our neighbors at Brandywine Living. Together the valentines created a special slideshow that was played for residents and was sure to brighten their day.

Students also recently found inspiration in researching quotes by African Americans that encourage us on a daily basis. Their learning and reflections are displayed on our classroom doors as reminders for our grade level.



6th Graders created virtual Valentine's Day cards for the residents at Brandywine Living. The virtual cards were combined together into a presentation for Brandywine to enjoy.

In addition, students are committed to our local environment and are enthusiastic to continue learning more. With the support of the Litchfield Garden Club, sixth graders and Mrs. Brutting welcomed White Memorial Education Director, Carrie Szwed, to our online science classes. In the first online session, students learned about the history of northwestern Connecticut's geology and why the landscape looks the way it does today. In the second session, Ms. Carrie introduced the students to several species of plants and trees that dominate our landscape. Students learned the importance of what makes these plants and trees so special and how to identify them in their own backyards.



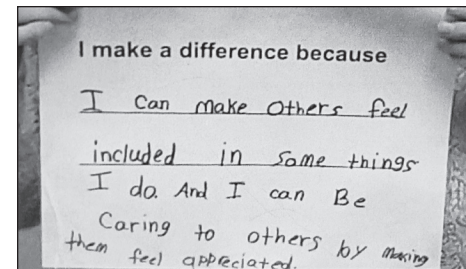
# Litchfield Center School

## I Make a Difference

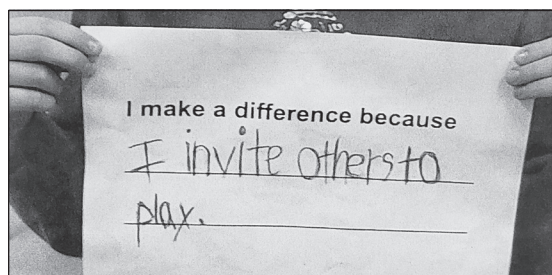
By: Lisa Deltano, Principal, Litchfield Center School

Center School uses the Second Step program in our classrooms. The Second Step program is a classroom-based program designed to increase students' school success and decrease problem behaviors by promoting social-emotional competence and self-regulation. It teaches skills that strengthen students' ability to learn, have empathy, manage emotions, and solve problems. Equipping students with Second Step skills creates a safer, more respectful learning environment that promotes school success and helps build classroom community. The Second Step lessons are taught by the classroom teacher, as well as the school counselor, Rachel Caporuscio.

We have been working on strengthening our community, both in the classroom and in our school. Each member of our community is valued and important. Being a member of a community also means being responsible for our words and actions.



Maddie makes a difference.



Liam makes a difference.

Students have been learning about people who have influenced and inspired others. We have learned about Presidents Washington and Lincoln, Tapping Reeve, Sarah Pierce, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. All of these people have made a difference in their communities and beyond.

The students reflected on how they can make a difference in the lives of others. Students wrote an "I make a difference" statement that was then posted in the hallways of the school. Examples of student statements include: "I help others", "I ask others to play", "I cheer up friends who are sad."

The students are proud of the ways they can contribute to their classrooms, school, and the community at large.

## Grade 3 Students Use Technology to Connect with Students Across the Country

By: Evelyn Archibald & Sarah Finn, Student Reporters Mrs. Smith's Class

Mrs. Smith's third-grade class had their first Mystery Hangout session. A Mystery Hangout is a class video meet where you connect with another class from around the United States. You have to ask questions to figure out what state they are in. When you figure out what state they are in you get to do a Q and A, which stands for "question and answer". We met with a class in Texas. They lived in a city called Rockwall, which is located outside of Dallas, Texas. Dallas is one of the largest cities in Texas. We noticed that the people from Texas had a different accent. We learned that the seasons are shorter than ours. Their time zone is one hour behind our time zone. In the Mystery Hangout, we learned that when we work together it helps us to figure out the other state. We also learned that when we work together we get more things done. We are so happy we had our first Mystery Hangout session!

## Using Technology to Improve Our Learning

By: Grade 3 Students: Emily Augustyn, Nora Ceella, Leah Sobek

How do we use technology in school?

The third graders have been using a lot of technology this year, not just because of COVID, but also because of all of the new ways we can learn. Not just third graders use a lot of technology, but a lot of the school does it, too. Each student in our building has his/her own device.

### Emily - Breakout Rooms:

Breakout rooms in Google Meets allow our teachers to split us into small groups that usually have three to four people in them. Our teachers split us into breakout rooms when we have a celebration for completing something, and even for testing sometimes. There are many different good sides to breakout rooms, such as a group of students can talk and it won't get very glitchy or a group can talk about a topic that they all researched or have written about. We even used breakout rooms yesterday for teaching each other about an animal. Breakout rooms are useful and fun.

### Leah - Library:

In the Library, we go on our library/media specialist, Mrs. Moore's Website. There are a lot of links in there. There are Kodable and ABCYa and typing challenges! Sometimes Mrs. Moore lets us try out new games in Kodable. Sometimes we have to do some research on Mrs. Moore's website and when we do that, we can go on Pebble Go, BrainPop Jr., National Geographic Kids, and other things. Other than Mrs Moore's Website, we can go on Google Earth. Sometimes we have to go in Google Slides to work on slide shows!

### Nora - Reading & Writing:

We as third graders have been working so hard lately in school for writing and reading and I would like to tell you guys how we do it! So let's start with reading. Reading is a very important subject in school, and though we read regular reading books we can also read on these two reading sites called Epic and Raz-Kids. Sometimes we will also go on Lexia in reading. Now let's go onto writing. Writing is just as important as reading and what we do in writing is we can write in our notebook or Google Docs in our virtual writing folder.



Thoren loves seeing the snow fly!



Nora and Julianna practice their snow angel skills.



Juliana, Avery, and Sadie enjoy playing in the snow together.



Charlie enjoys some time in the snow.



# Litchfield Middle & High School

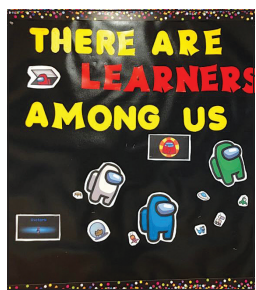
## LMS Students Gain Perspective of the Revolutionary War Through *Chains*

By: Melissa Swanson, 8th grade Language Arts teacher

If an entire nation could seek its freedom, why not a girl?

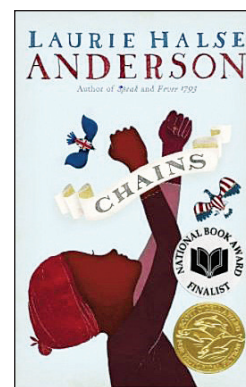
As is our tradition during the winter months, eighth-grade LMS students read the award-winning historical fiction novel *Chains*, by acclaimed author Laurie Halse Anderson. *Chains* is the first book from the Seeds of America trilogy. Students use this grade-level informational text to analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

This impeccably researched novel is set during the beginning of the Revolutionary War and is narrated by thirteen-year-old Isabel. Isabel is an enslaved girl who has been promised freedom but unexpectedly becomes the property of a malicious Loyalist couple in New York City. This compelling story shows the lengths people can go to cast off chains, both physical and spiritual.



Paired texts include excerpts from the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*, selections from the first African-American author of a published book of poetry, Phillis Wheatley, and other primary sources of the time period. Prior to reading the novel, students gain important background knowledge through their study of the American Revolution in social studies classes. Throughout the unit, students engage with the various assigned readings to determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

Be sure to ask your student what they know about the connection between the famous tearing down of the statue of King George III upon the reading of the Declaration of Independence in New York ... and our own Litchfield, Connecticut!



*Chains* is a new read for LMS 8th grade students.

## AP Environmental Students Making a Difference

By: Ava Atwood ('22), Anna Devaux ('22), Ellen McCarthy ('22)

LHS students Anna Devaux, Ava Atwood, and Ellen McCarthy are juniors currently enrolled in Advanced Placement Environmental Science. The three ambitious students are striving to make Litchfield High School and Middle School more sustainable. This includes changing recycling and disposal patterns around the building, along with introducing composting within the school.

Anna has been working tirelessly with the community Saving Money And Reducing Trash (SMART) Committee outside of school. This group has established a composting program at The Litchfield Recycling Center and has high hopes for the same opportunity to be available at Litchfield High School.

Ava and Ellen are planning “Earth Week,” which will take place April 19-23. This event has the goal of educating middle school and high school students about important environmental issues and ways to be more sustainable in school and at home. Along with planning “Earth Week,” Ellen and Ava have worked with the cafeteria staff at Litchfield High School to better understand where our school can improve environmentally as the global climate crisis continues.



AP Environmental students propose how to raise awareness on effective school recycling.

Additionally, their teacher, Dean Birdsall, has provided his support throughout the entire planning process as a mentor. His experience has enabled him to share his tremendous knowledge of the environment with students in the classroom. He has shown his students that the benefits of composting and recycling are often overlooked, which the three students plan on educating the student body of. While Anna, Ava, and Ellen have been tackling these goals, they have continued to work hard in their AP Environmental Science class to learn more on the subject. A large quantity of the waste in landfills can be composted or recycled. The separation of this waste is cost-effective and can even lower taxes due to a decrease in the amount of trash that needs to be transported.



Litchfield Recycling Center is working with students to support school recycling efforts.

The students are eager to learn more about the environment and educate others about this important topic. With the global climate crisis impacting today’s world, it is important that our school and community work simultaneously to preserve the planet. Together, our school system can move forward to a more sustainable future, but they need everyone’s help and effort to do so.



## 2 Districts, 1 Book, Litchfield & Region 6

By: Pam Vecca



Our “Two Districts, One Book” shared community literacy experience this year will include the reading of *Flying Lessons and Other Stories* edited by Ellen Oh, selected by an interdistrict book committee. This collection includes short stories by the following popular and award-winning authors: Kwame Alexander, Kelly J. Baptist, Soman Chainani, Tim Federle, Grace Lin, Meg Medina, Walter Dean Myers, Matt de la Peña, Tim Tingle, and Jacqueline Woodson.

A copy of the book was provided to each family to encourage a shared family literacy experience. The committee chose a short story collection this year in hopes that it could be accessible by all and provide families with flexibility where selections can be driven by time and interest. Board of Education, community, and staff members shared recorded read-alouds of each short story, and companion texts for younger students were also made available.



Although most of the stories in this collection feature characters of the middle school age range and are geared toward middle-grade readers, these “slice of life” stories are sure to resonate with our

older students and adult readers, too. Similarly, the universal themes in these stories (e.g. friendship, sibling rivalry, parental embarrassment, school challenges, and love) can be enjoyed by our younger students as well with the support of their family. The diverse characters, new perspectives, and common dreams give every reader something to identify with, learn about, and explore.

All students will have an opportunity to submit a short story of their own to be published in a collection. We invite families to promote and encourage their child’s writing for this publication. Our public libraries in each of the four towns are hosting a short story contest as a culminating celebration.

This year’s reading experience provides a unifying theme that everyone’s voice matters and everyone has a story. Within our collective communities, we want all students to feel a sense of belonging. We hope this text promotes discussion and provides a window into diverse people, perspectives, histories, and values. Perhaps with some “flying lessons”, our students will graduate ready to spread their wings and take flight into the wide-open world.