

FAMILY NEWSLETTER

May 2009

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

As the conclusion of the academic services component of the year approaches, we at Lighthouse School, Inc. hope that you and your family are doing well. We hope that you will find the following information helpful to your scheduling for upcoming events and planning for the school weeks remaining. It has once again been a very busy and productive year for Lighthouse School as we continue to work hard to provide the highest quality and most comprehensive services possible to your family and to your children. We remain greatly appreciative for the privilege of working in partnership with you and your family. The following information is important for you to note:

FAMILY HANDBOOK

Every family whose child attends Lighthouse School has received a copy of the Family Handbook. This Handbook is very comprehensive and contains information regarding Lighthouse School that is essential for students and their families to know and understand. We very much appreciate your having taken the time and carefully familiarizing yourself with the contents of this publication.

TARGET FITNESS GROUP

This year ten students were once again selected to participate in a Target Fitness Group which is coordinated through our Physical Education Department. This group attended Gold's Gym in Chelmsford on Wednesday's from 9:15 – 11:15. Eight of the ten students participated on a rotating basis. This group began on January 16th and ran through March 20th for a total of nine weeks. The students focus on cardiovascular fitness, weight training, and learning about healthy lifestyle choices. The participating students were very successful and received a great deal of praise and encouragement for their commitment to improving their health and fitness. As a result of this experience, two of the participating students joined a gym in their community.

E-MAIL IS NOW AVAILABLE

To further facilitate communication with families, Lighthouse School has added an electronic communication option so that families can contact their Family Therapists directly via e-mail. Having received feedback from many families requesting access to this form of communication, we are pleased to now make this available to you.

This certainly should not replace face to face or telephone conversations, however, when possible, please use e-mail during the busy school day while our Family Therapists are working with your children. Family Therapists will be checking e-mails during normal business hours and will respond to you within 24 hours.

Please obtain your Family Therapist's e-mail address directly from them or use the e-mail directory on our website.

SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR

For the third year in a row, Lighthouse School was fortunate to be able to host a Scholastic Book Fair. The staff enjoyed sharing their love of reading with our students during the week of March 9th-13th. Students used their hard-earned tokens to purchase books that were of interest to them personally or that contributed to a project they were working on. Many of them were very motivated as they anticipated the book fair and saved their tokens for weeks for a special book or item. Some students also chose to buy books for family members, which was certainly encouraged. All of the students were very excited to share their choice of book(s) with their teachers and friends alike. The book fair was again expanded this year, which certainly contributed to its overwhelming success.

STATE MANDATED TESTING

Most families are now aware that their children must participate in state mandated testing. At the heart of both state and federal education reform laws is an increased emphasis on standards and assessments. Knowing the link between standards and assessments is a key to understanding how standardized testing can be a valuable tool.

Standards spell out what all students should know and be able to demonstrate through testing as a result of their education. In Massachusetts, these standards are called "Curriculum Frameworks". Standards are the first step toward ensuring that schools establish high academic expectations for all students. For New Hampshire and Maine students, similar assessments are conducted in order to achieve similar results.

How can the results of these assessments help students? Each year families receive a Test Report from Lighthouse School. Parents of students with disabilities who participate in the MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) receive two Reports. The Report(s) describe in detail how each student did on the previous spring's state tests. You can ask Lighthouse School staff to help you use the Report to better understand where your child did well and where more help may be needed.

Each fall, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education publishes the MCAS test questions and answers on its Website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html. The educational standard that relates to each question is listed with each test question. Local libraries often have printed copies of the test questions and answers as well.

We hope this synopsis of state sponsored standardized testing has been helpful. If you have further questions regarding your state's respective testing, please contact your family therapist.

2009 G.B.B.L. TOURNAMENT: THE FOLLOWING TEXT IS A VERBATIM REPRESENTATION OF A LOWELL SUN NEWSPAPER ARTICLE dated Monday, March 23, 2009

The phrase March Madness triggers feelings of excitement and memories of great moments. The NCAA Basketball Tournaments are great. The atmosphere created is unique and distinctive. But another tournament, one I'd describe as the March Mission, opened my eyes this past week to another unique basketball experience. The Greater Boston Basketball League Tournament took up residency at UMass Lowell's Costello Gymnasium this year. I know you're probably not familiar with the tournament. You're wondering what makes it so special. What is this tournament's grand mission?

The Greater Boston Basketball League is comprised of alternative high schools or schools with programs specializing in educating students with special educational needs. For nearly 30 years, the tournament has provided an opportunity for students to interact with students from other schools as well as letting them compete, experience success, experience defeat, and learn about sportsmanship and teamwork. "For a lot of my guys, it's the only thing they really belong to," Lighthouse School coach Chris Linskey says of the basketball game.

Lighthouse School and the Merrimack Education Center (MEC), are both located in Chelmsford and are just two of the members of the league that includes Dearborn Academy, the Newton Pilot Program, the Curtis-Tufts School, Seaport Campus, the Holden School, the Harbor School, the Bay Cove School, the LABB Collaborative Program and others. Paul Hourihan from Dearborn, Paul Connolly from the Newton Pilot Program and Linskey has each been involved with the program for 13 years or more. They've taken over the duties of organizing the yearly endeavor.

The Horace Mann School, Boston University and Bentley University each served as previous homes for the tournament. UMass Lowell and facilities director Amy Lisavich opened the door for the tournament to take place at Costello Gymnasium this year. Linskey, a former basketball player at Wilmington High School and a graduate of Plymouth State College, got involved with the program shortly after being hired as a teacher at Lighthouse School. He recalls getting started because, "I played basketball my whole life and got an opportunity to work with kids that needed a little bit extra."

This year's tournament features 16 teams spread out into four evenly matched divisions. The tournament is divided that way purposely in order to create more chances to compete for a tournament title. A three-point shooting competition and a slam-dunk competition are also part of the festivities, and there are definitely some marksmen and several high-risers to rival the NBA All-Star Weekend. While trophies were given for tournament champions, tournament all-stars and tournament MVP, sportsmanship was also rewarded with a trophy. Each trophy also held added

significance. Names of former players and coaches who have passed away appear on the awards. Original tournament organizer Lou Bianchi, former coach John Erickson and former players Bill Thurston and Jamal Ball each have awards named in their honor. Thurston's design serves as the logo on the tournament T-shirts.

The coaches and referees create a competitive environment, but one which simultaneously keeps the overall mission in the forefront. That is to say they stress having fun, fair play, working as part of a team and respecting opponents as a way of building a foundation on the court that can lead to achievement in the classroom. Clearly, the student-athletes aren't the only ones who benefit from the experience. "I've been involved in basketball one way or another for 25 years," Linskey says. "This (working with Lighthouse School and coaching basketball) is the most rewarding thing I've ever been involved with."

It has been confirmed. March really is a magical month.

"DOG THERAPY" PROGRAM

This year Lighthouse School was pleased to once again make available to the students in the 200 Cluster the "Dog Therapy" Program. Lighthouse School's therapy dog handlers name is Janis and her dog, Sunny, is an Australian Shepherd. They make a great team. Sunny is specifically trained as a therapy dog. It is amazing to observe how much joy and pleasure Sunny brought to the younger students during their visits throughout the year. Sunny has a great personality, loves kids, and is just perfect for the purpose of helping kids.

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS MONTH

April was Prevention of Cruelty to Animals month. The American Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) sets aside this month to make people more aware of animal welfare issues and encourage them to reach out to their local animal shelters. At Lighthouse School, we took part by having a token drive to support the ASPCA. As students donated their tokens to the cause, Lighthouse School would in turn purchase supplies for the Lowell Humane Society. Our students worked especially hard for their tokens as they were invested in helping their "furry friends". Having a token drive gave students an opportunity to give back to the community and to "invest" in others. In addition, we also offered two workshops for our high school level students and incorporated them into their academic work. One workshop involved basic pet care and the other provided instruction on careers working with animals. The month ended with a community visit involving students bringing their donations personally to the Humane Society.

PHILOSOPHY AMPLIFICATION PROJECT

As we have shared with you, **A**ssimilated **P**ersonal **E**nrichment **E**Xperiences, or **APEX**, is Lighthouse School's treatment technology. The **X** in **APEX** recognizes the value of the "treatment experiences" that we provide to our students. Everything that a student does, says or is involved in represents an opportunity for treatment. This notion reflects the belief about the strong influence that the environment and culture play in Lighthouse School's treatment philosophy. In order to enhance the culture and its influence on the treatment environment, we have therefore developed the **Philosophy Amplification Project**.

When you visit Lighthouse School, you have by now seen artwork on the hallway walls. This phase of the project focuses on emphasizing the treatment experience "from a child's perspective" and illustrates how staff experiences and student experiences are inexorably related. Many mediums of expression are being used to represent this phase.

The following project components have recently been completed. They are in place for all to see.

100 Cluster

- I Can Become....
- Tree Mural
- Emotional Raincoat
- I Spy
- 5 Bulletin Boards
- Art Gallery Board

200 Cluster

- Storybook
- I Spy
- Garden of Children
- Feelings in Motion Train
- Bubbler Tiles
- 5 Bulletin Boards
- Art Gallery Board

300 Cluster

- Friendship Wheel
- I Spy
- Anthony Williams Granite Piece
- 7 Bulletin Boards
- Art Gallery Board

400 Cluster

- Graffiti
- I Can Become....
- Respect Posters
- I Spy
- 5 Bulletin Boards
- Art Gallery Board

ACADEMIC RECOGNITION CEREMONIES

The Academic Recognition Ceremonies are a wonderful opportunity to publicly recognize the efforts made by our students toward the achievement of their academic goals. The recognition categories are: Great Time Management Skills, Demonstrated Strong Effort, Most Improved Student and Communicated Needs Well. Each honored student will receive a certificate and a recognition gift.

Parents/Caregivers of students being honored for demonstrating investment in their learning will receive an invitation to attend these ceremonies. The Academic Recognition Ceremonies are held on the following dates:

Tuesday, June 2	200 Cluster
Wednesday, June 3	300 Cluster
Thursday, June 4	400 Cluster
Friday, June 5	100 Cluster

We look forward to celebrating the students' achievements with you.

ATHLETICS AWARDS CEREMONY

On Wednesday, June 10th, Lighthouse School will be recognizing its student athletes and their individual and team achievements this year. In all sports, varsity and junior varsity, travel teams or intramurals involving soccer, basketball, track, football and softball, it has been an extraordinarily successful year. It is with great pride that Lighthouse School recognizes the achievements of our student athletes for their hard work, sportsmanship, teamwork and the character growth they have achieved through their participation in Lighthouse School sponsored sports.

GRADUATION/TRANSITION CEREMONY

Lighthouse School's Annual Transition Ceremony for students leaving Lighthouse School will be held on Friday, June 12th from 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. On that day, we have the privilege of recognizing the many accomplishments of the students who are moving on and whom we are very proud of. Each of these students and their families worked very hard during their time spent at Lighthouse School. It is with great pride that Lighthouse School has had the opportunity to be an important part of the lives of these students and their families. Our hope is that their experiences at Lighthouse School will serve them well in the years to come.

For all of those families and their children who are moving on, please know that you are always welcomed members of the Lighthouse School family. We wish the best of success to all of you.

ANNUAL FIELD DAY

This year's Field Day will be held on Thursday, June 18th with Friday as a backup if it rains on Thursday. This event involves a full day of activities tailored to the needs and interests of all of the students. To name just a few of the activities, we will have a dunk tank, moonwalk, karaoke, t-shirt decorating, face painting, softball, soccer, slip'n slides, tug-of-war, street hockey, obstacle course, baseball pitch, ice cones, basketball and bubbles. Each student will also receive a Lighthouse School commemorative Field Day T-shirt in the color of his or her cluster. Please send in a dry change of clothes if your child would like to use the slip'n slides or sprinkler.

This is an event that the students thoroughly enjoy each year. On that day we will also be having a hamburger and hot dog barbeque, as a result, your child will not require a lunch that day. If, however, your child has any special dietary restrictions, please contact Peg Thibault, R.N., Supervisor for Medical Services, and she will be happy to work with you regarding your child's specific needs.

Please have your child dress casually that day, as there will be both indoor and outdoor activities.

LAST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS

The last day of school for on-site services, barring any unforeseen circumstances for this academic year, will be Friday, June 19th. June 19th will be a full day of school for the students. After June 19th and until resumption of on-site services for the 2009-2010 school year, all of Lighthouse School's summer support services will be available, and the majority of Lighthouse School's staff team will be working on projects to support the upcoming 2009-2010 school year. If you have any further questions regarding this information, please feel free to contact your family therapist.

SUMMER SERVICES

Throughout the months of July and August, Lighthouse School continues to provide many services. Lighthouse School staff involved during the summer months provide services, such as family support, agency involvement, case management, and program development, etc. Lighthouse School is pleased to provide this continuity of support to your family throughout the summer and look forward to working with you.

In closing, we would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you for entrusting Lighthouse School with the responsibility for your child's treatment and educational programming. We take this obligation very seriously and hope always to do the best job possible.

From all of us at Lighthouse School, may you and your family have a safe and enjoyable summer. If anything comes up during the summer that you feel is important to share with us, please don't hesitate to call.

Warm regards,
The Staff at Lighthouse School, Inc.