

Fall 2009

## **NEWSLETTER**

Dear Parents(s) Guardians(s):

We at Lighthouse School, Inc. hope that everything is going well for you and your family. With the 2009/2010 on site services portion of the year well underway, we want to take this opportunity to update you on a few of the many activities occurring at Lighthouse School and information that will be important for you to know.

### **SCHOOL HOURS OF OPERATION**

Please be reminded of the times for your child's daily schedule. Students are admitted into the building at 8:25 a.m. and released at 2:30 p.m. Lighthouse School always conducts a full day schedule. There are no half days or partially scheduled days. As is always the case, we understand that prevailing weather and traffic conditions will affect travel schedules on a daily basis.

### **SUMMER OPERATIONS**

Throughout the summer months, unlike traditional programs, Lighthouse School remains very actively involved with administrative, student and family services. Lighthouse School's Clinical Department staff provided families with hundreds of hours of support services. Included in that was the crisis support services which are available to all families 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Lighthouse School is very proud to be able to have yearlong continuity and to provide important involvement with families throughout the summer months.

## **ANNUAL FAMILY CONSENT FORMS**

Every September, Lighthouse School is required to have many consent forms completed and signed by parents. This is a time-consuming task for both families and for Lighthouse School. Besides needing to update critically necessary information for each student's file, students are also not able to start school on opening day unless these forms are completed as required by regulatory statutes.

We would like to formally thank all of the families that worked so hard to get these forms signed and returned to Lighthouse School in a timely fashion. This was the best year we've ever had receiving these forms back, and as a result, the startup of the year went much more smoothly. Thank you so very much for your help.

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN TOURS OF LIGHTHOUSE SCHOOL**

If you would like to have an individualized tour of Lighthouse School in order to better familiarize yourself with the extensive services available for your child, please contact your Family Therapist and they will work with you to make those arrangements. The staff at Lighthouse School is very proud of the broad range of services that are provided for all students and would be delighted to share them with you. This is an excellent opportunity to see firsthand the many changes that have occurred throughout the building over the summer and to see the excellent programming that is available for all students.

## **FLU VACCINES**

As you are all aware, the flu season is upon us. In Lighthouse School's closely-knit community, over 400 people interact together on a daily basis. Our best defense against the influenza is prevention.

There are three major sources that help us to defend against the flu. They are: limiting exposure, good hygiene, and having as many people as possible being vaccinated for the Seasonal Flu and the H1N1 Influenza Virus.

Being vaccinated for the flu is not a requirement for anyone. This is a decision that each family will make for themselves. However, to the extent that people are vaccinated; it will help greatly in reducing the extent to which organizations such as Lighthouse School are able to effectively operate. Please work closely with your family physician in order to discuss the need for your family to be vaccinated for the Seasonal Influenza and H1N1 Influenza.

## **PEP RALLY**

In September, Lighthouse School celebrated its varsity and junior varsity football and soccer teams with an all school pep rally. The staff and students assembled on the ball field and cheered on all of the players as they ran together as a team onto the field. With Lighthouse School's cheerleaders leading the cheers, we rallied the football and soccer teams and encouraged them to have another great

year. This year we also held a contest to determine which classroom could come up with the best cheer and to perform it. The judging was very close, but in the end, the best cheers of the day was awarded to the 200 Cluster.

### **ANNUAL HALLOWEEN PARTY**

For well over three decades, the Tyngsboro, Massachusetts National Honor Society students have sponsored a Halloween Party at Lighthouse School. This event will be held during the week of October 26<sup>th</sup> for those students for whom this experience is developmentally appropriate. For those students who will be participating, scheduling and further information will be forthcoming. As is the tradition, everyone will be in costume and there will be many treats and activities. The Tyngsboro students provide the food and beverages for the occasion and are most gracious and accommodating of the needs of the students. You will be contacted prior to this event if your child will be involved so that you can provide them with a costume should you so choose. If you are unable to provide your child with a costume for any reason, staff will be creative and put something together so that no child participating will feel left out.

### **THANKSGIVING DINNER**

On Wednesday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, Lighthouse School staff will be hosting the Annual Thanksgiving Dinner for all staff and students. A complete turkey dinner with all of the trimmings will be served family style for everyone to enjoy.

The food prepared for this dinner is donated by the staff and by Lighthouse School. The staff takes great pleasure in being a part of this long-standing tradition, which began with one turkey 31 years ago. The preparation for this dinner now takes place over three days and is a wonderfully cooperative effort of all of the staff and students. This year the staff will cook approximately 80 turkeys. This wonderful event is reflective of Lighthouse School's well-developed culture and its strong family values especially when over 450 people sit together and enjoy a great meal.

If your child has any dietary restrictions, please contact Peg Thibault, R.N., the Supervisor for Medical Services, and let her know of your concerns.

### **MASSACHUSETTS (MCAS) TESTING and OTHER STATES' MANDATED TESTING**

Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine all require standardized testing for all students. "MCAS", for example is provided for Massachusetts's resident students and stands for Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. It is a series of tests that students take to measure how well they are mastering basic academic subjects. This approach is called standards-based education. At the heart of both state and federal education laws is an 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 do as a result of their education. In Massachusetts, these standards are called “Curriculum Frameworks.” Standards are the first step toward ensuring that schools hold high expectations for all students. For New Hampshire and Maine students, similar standards and assessments are in place.

How can these assessments help me help my child? Early in each school year, many families receive a Parent/Guardian Report from Lighthouse School. Parents of students having certain disabilities and participate in the MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) receive two Reports. The Report(s) describe in detail how your child did on the previous year’s tests. You can ask Lighthouse School staff to help you use the report to understand where your child did well and where more help is needed.

When you receive the Report at home, 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](http://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.

## **HONOR ROLL PROTOCOLS**

Lighthouse School recognizes student achievement in many ways. Certainly, at school, academic success warrants recognition. The following reflects the formal structure in which this occurs:

**Criteria:** Student academic progress is reported in two ways: Quarterly Progress Reports and Report Cards. All students will qualify for Honor Roll recognition by receiving report card grades A, B, Advanced, Proficient or Passing in ALL subjects/courses.

At Lighthouse School, report card grades are assigned using a Grading Rubric which takes into account five areas: Attendance, Participation/Effort, Homework, Assignments and Tests/Projects.

Honor Roll recognizes strong performance in core academic subjects, as well as electives, Activities of Daily Living (ADL), Speech, Health, Adapted Physical Education and Occupational Therapy.

**Quarterly Recognition:** Students who meet Honor Roll criteria for any given quarter will be recognized in one of the following ways, as determined each quarter:

- Names posted on cluster bulletin board

- Tangible item, such as certificate, motivational ticket, AMP bucks, homework pass etc.
- Recognition at Academic Awards Ceremony for Honor Roll in one or more of the first three quarters in a current School year

**Recognition for Sustained Effort:** Students who meet Honor Roll criteria for all four quarters in a single school year will be eligible for participation in a recognition activity which is held in September of the following school year. This serves as a reminder of past success and a springboard for academic success in the current school year.

## **CONNECT-ED SYSTEM**

We are implementing a new alert and notification service at Lighthouse School. This new service is called Connect-ED® and will enable us to directly communicate with you about emergency situations, major school events and other important issues. It will allow us to send personalized voice messages to your family's home, work or cell phones, e-mail communications and even text messages. We will be able to contact all families within minutes. When a call comes from Lighthouse School, your caller ID will display Lighthouse School and/or the telephone number 978-251-4050.

It is important that Lighthouse School has all of your current telephone numbers and e-mail addresses so that you will not miss any important communications. Please help us to ensure that we always have your current information by notifying your family therapist anytime there is a change. Also, be aware that the Connect-ED service cannot dial an extension, so be sure the numbers you include are direct lines. We won't be able to have this system up and running until we have everyone's correct contact numbers. When we are ready to "test" activate the system, we will notify you.

## **FAMILY HANDBOOK**

During the next few months, you will be receiving a copy of Lighthouse School's newly revised 2009-2010 Family Handbook from your family therapist. This Family Handbook serves as a handy reference and important notification for many of the important policies, rules, procedures and expectations that have been developed to keep families informed and assist each student at Lighthouse School.

This Family Handbook was developed in compliance with The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. We are assuming that by receiving the handbook, you and your child (depending upon their age and developmental level) will have read and be familiar with this document. The high school age students will also be reviewing this document in their homerooms, and a

copy will be available to them upon request. If you have any questions regarding the contents of this handbook, please don't hesitate to contact your family therapist.

**LIGHTHOUSE SCHOOL INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY**

- Radio and television cancellation announcements for Chelmsford Public Schools during inclement weather DO apply to Lighthouse School.
- Following Chelmsford Public Schools' announcement of school cancellations due to inclement weather, Lighthouse School will post cancellation announcements on the television and radio stations listed below.
- Please use your own judgment concerning the weather in your city/town when deciding whether or not to send your child to school even in the event that Lighthouse School is open.
- Lighthouse School DOES NOT have delayed opening times due to inclement weather. This is due to circumstances involving the transportation providers that transport students to and from Lighthouse School.

<b><u>TV STATIONS:</u></b>	
<b>WBZ-TV – Channel 4</b>	<b>WCVB-TV – Channel 5</b>
<b><u>RADIO STATION:</u></b>	
<b>WBZ – 1030 AM</b>	

From all of us at Lighthouse School, please take good care.

Warm regards,  
The Staff at Lighthouse School, Inc.