

# The Lions' Roar



## From the Principal's Pen

I hope that this newsletter finds you healthy and safe, and that you had a nice Thanksgiving break. I appreciate the partnership we have in our students' achievement, and I have been grateful for the high level of participation in parent conferences and volunteering (Fall Ball, field trips, PTA events).

Part of the Maryland Report Card (how schools are rated) focuses on attendance. The state guideline is 90% or better for good attendance. Attendance is crucial for learning, and the data from the first marking period show that we have 119 students whose attendance is less than 90%. This means that while many of our students are attending classes every day, about 24% of our students have been absent for more than 10% of the school year. I know that this can be so challenging during virus season, and I am asking that you send your child to school on time on days when they are well. Students who are not present during class are missing out on solid instruction, assistance, and feedback from their teachers. In order to help to incentivize attendance, we are holding a contest for the month of December. The class in each grade level at the end of the month will get to attend a dance party on December 22.

Our academic goals for the school year have both math and literacy components. In math, we are using the new curriculum, Reveal, with an a continued focus on student dialogue, supported by resources in the classroom such as manipulatives and math talk boards. Our literacy goals include phonological awareness instruction in grades K-2, and using data points to develop need-focused small group instruction in all grades. We are providing support for our English Learners with sentence frames and visuals, which are best practices for all learners. In November, parents received iReady diagnostic scores in math and reading for their students, and all students who scored 1 or more grade levels below their current grade in either subject area are required to use iReady for at least 30 minutes each week, and pass at least 2 lessons.

Some celebrations to share: ALL Grade Levels 1st- 5th met or surpassed the District Average for percentage of students Proficient on a recent math Checkpoint, which is an end of unit assessment. All grade levels increased the percentage of students 2 or more grade levels below (math) in meeting their iReady weekly usage/lessons passed target. Teachers' dedication to learning and implementing the new curriculum coupled with in school and at home iReady work is going to make a difference for our students.

Parents of students in grades 3-5, please help to ensure that your student brings a charged Chromebook every day. We have a limited number of loaners, and we often run out. If your child's Chromebook is broken or missing, please contact the office.

I am grateful for all that you do to partner with us to support your children and our school. I appreciate the parents who reach out with questions or concerns, and the teachers who are ready to answer or solve a problem. Please reach out if we can assist you in any way. Whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, or the Winter Solstice, I wish all of you a happy and healthy winter holiday season.

## Lothian Elementary School's Mission and Vision

### Mission Statement

All staff will use culturally responsive practices to prepare every student with the academic and social-emotional skills needed to guarantee success in the next grade level.

### Values

- ◇ We always choose to participate in solution-focused problem-solving in order for our students to grow
- ◇ We always choose to seek and use feedback in our professional and behavioral practices.
- ◇ We always choose to build positive relationships through our words and actions with all stakeholders for student-focused success.



Lothian Elementary  
School Newsletter  
December 2023

Volume 16 Issue 3

## Attention!!!

December 11 6:30 pm  
Winter Concert: Students  
should report to Southern  
High by 6:00

Dec 12-18: PTA Holiday  
Shop

December 25-January 1-  
School Closed; Christ-  
mas/Winter Break.  
School Opens on January 2

### Spirit Days

December 8:  
Lothian Colors  
(red/yellow)

December 15:  
Ugly Sweater Day

December 22:  
Holiday Colors (Pajama  
Day in grade 1)



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## December News from the School Counselor

Kimberly Pletcher

Unity Day: December 5, 2023



We celebrated our second Unity Day on Tuesday, December 5. Students wore orange on that day to show their commitment to eliminating hate and bullying and promoting acceptance, inclusion, and kindness. Students participated in activities that encourage unity so please ask your students about the day's events.

### Substance Abuse Lessons for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders

School Counselors are required to teach Substance Abuse lessons in the intermediate grades. I will be doing the lessons in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades during their guidance time. Parents should have already received a letter that I sent home with students in November regarding the lessons. They are mandated by the "Start Talking Maryland Act". Parents can preview the lessons online on the Anne Arundel County Public Schools website. Go to [www.aacps.org](http://www.aacps.org) and click on Students>School Counseling>Elementary Core Curriculum>Start Talking MD Lesson (3, 4, or 5) or you can call to set up a time to preview the lessons with me. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call me at 410-867-3900 or [kpletcher@aacps.org](mailto:kpletcher@aacps.org).

### What is the "Start Talking Maryland Act"?

The act, passed by state lawmakers and signed by Gov. Larry Hogan, requires public schools to offer drug education that includes the dangers of heroin and other opioids starting as early as third grade. Students in grades 3 - 5 will receive lessons from the School Counselor. These lessons will focus on:

- o **Third grade:** Recognizing prescription vs. non-prescription drugs; how to use them safely, choices and problem-solving, and an introduction to what opioid drugs are. They will be using a book: *Charlie and the Curious Club: Candy or Medicine*.

- o **Fourth grade:** Learning about the physical effects of drugs, understanding why substance abuse is a problem, understanding what addiction is, and understanding how they can contribute to solving the problem of substance abuse on a community level. They will be working with materials from *Kids Health* and recent news clips to be a detective, understand the problem and design a PSA, video clip, poster, or other activity to address the problem.

- o **Fifth grade:** Learning and practicing strategies to deal with peer pressure, using refusal skills to build confidence to deal with uncomfortable situations when they might be asked to do drugs, recognize the effects opioids have on their brains. Students develop a list of strategies and will receive a pocket card with strategies and resources on it.

### Why is it important that children receive this instruction in school?

School provides a safe place where children can learn what to do in unfamiliar or uncomfortable situations. Trusted adults will provide students with an opportunity to practice handling these situations so that the first time a young person is faced with an unsafe situation, he or she knows what to do and has practiced doing it. Students will identify trusted adults, both inside and outside of the school, where they can go for help.

### Lothian School Counseling Website

Just a reminder.....Parent Resources including food/mental health resources can be found on my google site: <https://sites.google.com/aacps.org/lothiancounseling/home> (Please sign into Google to access).

### **STAFF CHANGES**

We bade farewell to Ms. Jennifer Seymour, who is now teaching second grade at Shady Side Elementary, Ms. Casey Ichimura-Snead who is working at Davidsonville elementary, and Ms. Jazzae Puyol, who is now teaching in Washington, DC.

Welcome to new staff members:

Ms. Liz Zarate, Special Education

Ms. Becky Murphy, Kindergarten TA

Ms. Cassandra DeLaRonde, Special Ed TA

Ms. Linda Sullivan, IEP Clerk



Congratulations to Ms. Catherine Haas on her new role as Principal's Secretary!

### **From the Health Department:**

As a result of recently revised Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance regarding the process for documenting and treating COVID-19 illness, the following steps should be followed for students who are suspected or confirmed to have been infected with COVID-19: "Students who come to school or an early care and education (ECE) program with symptoms or develop symptoms while at school or an ECE program will be asked to wear a well-fitting mask or respirator while in the building and be sent home and encouraged to get tested. Symptomatic people who cannot wear a mask will be separated from others as much as possible."

Regardless of vaccination status, students who test positive for COVID-19 should be isolated from others. The isolation should begin on the day of symptom onset or, for asymptomatic individuals, the date of the positive test. The aforementioned dates are Day 0.

Students may return to school on Day 6 provided they are asymptomatic and have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication. Should symptoms persist past Day 5, students should remain home until the above criteria are met.

The current CDC guidance calls for students to mask for an additional five days when returning to school. This is a guideline and not a mandate. For additional guidance, families of students should consult with a healthcare provider.

As per the AACPS Parent Handbook, whenever a child is absent, the parent/guardian must provide a note of explanation to the school within three days of the child's return to school. Absences due to illness in excess of five consecutive days require a physician's note.

For more information about COVID-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, see this link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html>

# PTA NEWS

Holiday Shop will take place Dec 11th through Dec 15th. Items will cost 25 cents up to \$12 and students can shop for family members, friends, or teachers. There will also be a section where students can use their cub cash from school to "purchase items" if they do not have money.

We have some spirit wear in select sizes still available if you are looking for holiday gifts: [Givebacks \(memberhub.com\)](https://memberhub.com).

We have gotten sponsorships from some great local companies (Scapes, Blue Horizon Renovations, Class Act Performing Arts, Stan and Joes Riverside). If you know a local company interested in sponsoring, please direct them to our website: [Lothian Elementary PTA \(google.com\)](https://lothianelementarypta.org)

Read-A-Thon was successful. Thank you to all those who participated.

No PTA Meeting in December. We are looking forward to reconvening in January.





*Parent tips for raising strong readers and writers*

# Growing readers!

*Brought to you by Reading Rockets, Colorín Colorado and LD OnLine*

## Fluency Matters

If you've been around classrooms and teachers, you've probably heard the term "fluency." Fluency is something worth knowing more about! Read on to find out what it is and how to develop it in your young learner.

### Fluency: What is it? Why is it important?

If someone is fluent in speaking another language or in playing an instrument, there's a smooth, graceful and easy quality to it. The same is true with reading skills. Reading fluency is a child's ability to read a book or other text correctly, quickly, and with expression. A fluent reader doesn't have to stop and "decode" each word. Rather, most of the words can be read automatically. This means the reader can focus his attention on what the story or text means. For that reason, fluency is critically important — it's the bridge between decoding words and understanding what has been read.

### How can we foster reading fluency?

Parents can help their child develop reading fluency through a few simple and fun activities.

#### Paired or "buddy" reading

The easiest and best way to help your child develop fluency is to sit with your child and read! Read together every day, which is often called paired or buddy reading. To use paired reading, simply take turns reading aloud. You go first, as your reading provides a model of what good fluent reading sounds like. Then, ask your child to re-read the same page you just read. You'll notice that your child's reading will start to sound more and more like yours. Do this for several pages. Once your child is comfortable enough, and familiar enough with the book, take turns reading page for page.

#### Reread favorite books

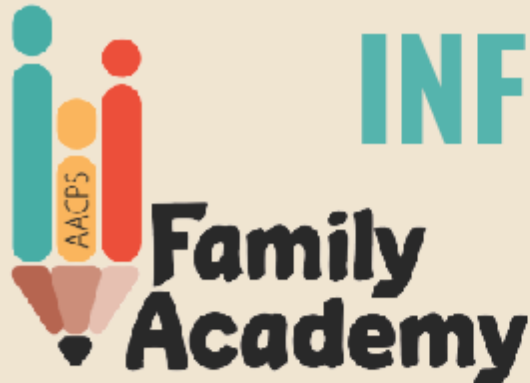
Another way parents can help develop fluency is to build a tall stack of books that your child can read quickly and easily. Encourage your child to reread favorite books over and over again. With each reading, you may notice your child reading a bit easier, a bit faster, and with a bit more confidence and expression.

#### Record It

Another fun way to practice reading and build fluency is to have your child create her own audio books. This can be done simply with a tape recorder or audio recording feature or app (like Audioboo) on your phone. Or, use something more sophisticated like StoryKit, where a user can create an electronic storybook and record audio to accompany it. Regardless of the method you choose, your child will be practicing what they want to record and that reading practice is critical. Sharing your audio recordings with family and friends is a great motivator too!

Reading Rockets, Colorín Colorado, and LD OnLine are national education services of WETA, the flagship public broadcasting station in Washington, D.C.





# INFORMATION FOR STAFF

## WHAT IS FAMILY ACADEMY?

A library of videos, classes, & resources to answer families' questions on student Wellbeing & Growth, Navigating AACPS, and Academics & Programs. Family Academy is available in English and Spanish, and accessible 24 hours a day.

## HOW CAN STAFF HELP?

Share with families!  
Get to know the site so you are familiar with the resources you can share with your families. There are tutorials, informational sessions, classes, guides and more.



**WELLBEING &  
GROWTH**



**NAVIGATING  
AACPS**



**ACADEMICS &  
PROGRAMS**



Website

[www.aacps.org/familyacademy](http://www.aacps.org/familyacademy)



YouTube Channel

[@AACPSFamilyAcademy](https://www.youtube.com/@AACPSFamilyAcademy)

## THE OFFICE OF SCHOOL & FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS PRESENTS

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**WELLBEING &  
GROWTH**



**NAVIGATING  
AACPS  
REPORT CARD**



**ACADEMICS &  
PROGRAMS**

A LIBRARY OF VIDEOS, CLASSES, AND RESOURCES TO ANSWER  
YOUR QUESTIONS ON STUDENT WELLBEING & GROWTH,  
NAVIGATING AACPS, AND ACADEMICS & PROGRAMS.

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**AVAILABLE AT AACPS.ORG/FAMILYACADEMY**

Visit [www.aacps.org/familyacademy](http://www.aacps.org/familyacademy)  
to access our video library.  
For more information, visit School  
and Family Partnerships at  
[www.aacps.org/family](http://www.aacps.org/family)



**SCAN  
ME!**