

October District Newsletter

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Important Dates:

- 10/15 - Apple Fest, Sponsored by the Mothers' Club, at Leicester HS, 10am-3pm
- 10/27 - Visit by Kuwaiti administrators
- 10/31 - Happy Halloween!
- 11/8 - Election Day
- 11/11 - No School, Veterans' Day
- 11/15 – School Committee Meeting, 6:30 pm Town Hall Selectmen's Mtg Room

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Fall Happenings

Now that school is in full swing, there's lots happening in Leicester schools. While school newsletters provide information specific to a particular school, this newsletter, which is distributed between the 10th and 15th of each month, will keep you informed of district news.



Judy Paolucci
Superintendent

Kuwaiti Visit

On October 27th, approximately 24 Kuwaiti school administrators will visit Leicester to learn about American education and practices for school improvement and supervision. Through a contract with the World Bank and working with the Ministry of Education, MESPA (Massachusetts Elementary School Principals' Association) has provided leadership training to almost two hundred principals in Kuwait over the past three years. While much of the training takes place in Kuwait, this visit will provide these individuals with up close observations of American schools.



The administrators in Kuwait do not go through training to become principals and supervisors and they receive little to no professional development while in the role. MESPA has begun to change this by preparing principals to become instructional leaders. Principal supervisors visiting the U.S. will be learning how the central office works with local schools around managing and overseeing schools, curriculum and oversight, and supervision. This group has been trained for three years as Master Trainers so that they may go back to Kuwait and train other principals in these areas.

Kuwait is a tiny, oil-rich country at the northern edge of Eastern Arabia at the tip of the Persian Gulf, adjacent to Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The population of Kuwait is about 60% of that of Massachusetts while its size is a little over 65% of our size. Kuwait is an ally of the US since the 1991 Gulf War that ended the Iraqi occupation there. Shiites and Sunni Muslims largely live in peace in this Islamic and chiefly democratic country.

The group will shadow Leicester educators conducting a learning walk at the middle school then will have lunch before meeting with LHS students.



Staff Spotlight: Dan Case

On July 1st, Dan Case began his tenure as Leicester High School's assistant principal. Prior to coming to Leicester, he taught middle and high school math for 19 years, all in Worcester. For 6 years he was the Math Curriculum Liaison for the City of Worcester. From a family of educators, his mother was an elementary principal, his sister is a college dean, and his brother is an assistant principal.

Mr. Case is an adjunct professor at Anna Maria College, where he teaches graduate education courses such as Data Analysis for Educators and Using Data to Inform Instruction. He also has taught an undergraduate statistic course.

Mr. Case holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics from UMass Amherst and a master's in educational leadership from Worcester State University. He is currently working on a doctorate in education leadership at Nova Southeastern University.

Outside of work and studies, Mr. Case is a football referee and a softball umpire and was elected into the USSSA softball Hall of Fame in 2007. Additionally, he holds a black belt in Kenpo Karate.

Mr. Case is married and has 5 children, aged 25 to 33, and 3 grandchildren.

Facilities Update

It's hard not to notice the work being done on the high school roof, which began in early June. The project is now at substantial completion and solar panels are being returned to operation. Within a couple of weeks work should be complete and safety rails taken down. Since the renovations costs hit the threshold to require investments in ADA compliance projects, the concrete entryway leading to the front doors will be replaced (hopefully) before the winter weather. Nearly 60% of the costs of the roof and entryway will be reimbursed by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA).

CORE applications to the MSBA for each of our other three buildings were resubmitted in January 2016. Apparently, two times is the charm, since MSBA notified the district that they will be conducting a senior study at the middle school this month. A senior study helps MSBA gather data that will be used to decide whether or not to invite the district to conduct a feasibility study for an eventual building project. This decision is expected in early January.

School Committee Policies

The role of School Committee members is focused on policy development and budget oversight, while the role of administrators is on school management and instruction. In a well-led district, administrators are given autonomy to lead school operations while School Committee members influence their decisions through well-developed policies. The Leicester School Committee has an up-to-date, online policy manual available at <http://lpspolicies.wikispaces.com/home> and from a link on the School Committee webpage.

Policies identify notices that must be provided to the public on a yearly basis, procedures to follow for hiring new staff, codes of conduct for students, fiscal procedures, and other practices for the School Committee and for schools.

At each School Committee meeting we bring forward 2-5 policies for a first reading and another 2-5 policies for a second reading/approval. All policies go through this 2-step process so that the public has the opportunity to provide input. Agendas for meetings are posted by the town clerk and are available on our School Committee webpage.

Accountability Status

Under the state accountability system, ESE uses statewide test scores over time, student growth percentiles, annual dropout rates, graduation rates and participation rates to classify schools into Levels 1-5 as follows:

- Level 1: Meeting gap narrowing goals
- Level 2: Not meeting gap narrowing goals or less than 95 percent participation rate
- Level 3: Among lowest performing 20% of schools or subgroups or less than 90 % participation on statewide assessments or persistently low graduation rates
- Level 4: Among lowest achieving and least improving schools
- Level 5: Chronically underperforming schools

There were no changes in accountability levels for Leicester Schools: Leicester High School remains in Level 1 status, Leicester Middle School remains in Level 2 status, and Leicester Memorial School remains in Level 3 status.

At the high school, assessments from high needs, white, and all students are evaluated. The results from special education students are not assessed separately at LHS because there are fewer than 20 students in this group. This is peculiar to the high school because the testing at the high school is only one grade and because we are a small school, many student groups are suppressed. This actually puts us at an advantage (for our other schools as well but to a lesser degree). Larger schools with many different groups (i.e. black, Hispanic, IEP) are assessed on more measures. Particularly, they look at how well the school is meeting gap reducing goals. Since our special education group at LHS is increasing, this group will most likely be assessed in future accountability determinations. The target for gap narrowing goals for is 75. At LHS, for all students, this value was 75; for high needs students this value was 76; and for white students this value was 79.

Therefore, the school met all targets and was deemed Level 1.

The middle school has 4 groups that are evaluated: all students, white students, high needs students, and special education students. Gap narrowing goal was 75; for all students the value was 71 (not met); for high needs, the value was 79 (met); for special education the value was 60 (not met); for white students the value was 66 (not met). Since the school had some groups that did not meet their target, they were classified as Level 2.

The Memorial School has the same 4 groups as the middle school and no groups met the target of 75 for gap narrowing. For all students and for high needs students, this value is 48; for special education students this value is 36 and for white students this value is 52. Since the school had groups that did not meet their target AND they are in the lowest 20 percent of schools statewide (in their particular grade configuration, which is not all schools with elementary grades), they are classified as Level 3.

Administrators and staff have been busy analyzing data to identify specific areas to focus improvement efforts. Unfortunately, PARCC test results were released without item-specific data. Without knowing how students answered specific items, local educators cannot adequately focus improvement efforts in each grade. Previously, state assessment results had also included this level of data, allowing educators to better understand the misconceptions and skill gaps of their students. Despite these shortcomings, much of the work that has been done over the past 2 years are geared toward long-term gains, so district and school leaders believe that continuing with current initiatives will serve town schools and students well.

Regardless of whether students took PARCC or MCAS, parents should receive their students' scores from their school by mid-October. School- and district-level student assessment results are available on ESE's website.

ANNUAL NOTICE

The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of a controlled substance, is prohibited in the District's workplace, and employees in violation of such prohibitions will face disciplinary action that may include dismissal.