



JCSA *Jonas Clarke School Association Newsletter*

Jonas Clarke Middle School
17 Stedman Road ♦ Lexington, MA 02421-7210
781-861-2450 ♦ <http://lps.lexingtonma.org/clarkems>

Principal: Anna Monaco
Assistant Principals: Jennifer Turner
Jonathan Wettstone

November/December 2013 *Print edition*

Online at www.clarkenewsletter.org

FROM THE PRINCIPAL



Dear Jonas Clarke Community,

First Quarter is completed already! As I have said so often this fall, it's hard to believe how quickly time passes. However, it has been an extremely busy but smooth start to the school year. A few weeks ago we had our Rachel's Challenge assemblies, and as I mentioned in my letter immediately following the event, it was an emotional but powerful day and week. In the weeks since our assembly we have had students sign the banner, now hanging in our front

entryway, stating that they have accepted Rachel's Challenges. There has been a lot of conversation about finding the best in others and using small gestures to make a big difference in someone's day. As a result, we have students and staff that have been busy with community service events such as supper clubs with the seniors, leaf raking, trail clean up, decorating the senior center and much more. Our Chain Links club and Linked Up (formally Linked In) are also in full swing. I would like to express my gratitude to all of the teachers and staff dedicated to leading these events. It is truly heartwarming to see the many students who work to give back to their school, peers, and community. It is just one of the many things that makes Clarke so special.

This month we have also implemented our door locking process. Thank you to all of you for your support as we become accustomed to this security protocol. Many parents have expressed their satisfaction about our doors being locked at all times during the school day, and all staff have been assigned badges that serve as identification and allow them to access the building. We are appreciative of the district support in implementing these new procedures.

We also just recently concluded our magazine drive. It is always exciting to see students proudly turn in their order forms and choose incentive prizes. Thank you to all of you for your participation and support with this fundraising event. The monies raised will help to fund our JCSA and their very generous support of the Clarke community.

Hopefully, you have received communication from us regarding parent conferences and the online sign ups. As I expressed in my communication to the community, please contact your child's team leader if you are not able to secure a conference time. Each year we aim to improve the process a little bit and hopefully you will find the sign ups to be a relatively easy process this year. Although we are aware that a 10-minute conference does not always allow for enough conversation, we have tried to provide as many time slots as possible so those who would like a conference are able to schedule one.

This past month we have begun to pilot our new *Intervention and Enrichment* block. On Thursdays when there is not a scheduled assembly, our third block is dedicated to intervention and enrichment. Team teachers meet in one classroom to work with students that need additional time for academic tasks, or require further instruction in order to master a curricular concept. Simultaneously, other students participate in an enrichment class taught in a different location by non-team teachers. This is an opportunity for teachers to work with students they may not otherwise get to see and teach a lesson that students wouldn't otherwise get to experience. Each week, students are exposed to a different teacher and different enrichment lesson. We are still working out some of the details of this process, but overall the feedback has been largely positive from both teachers and students.

We look forward to seeing you here at conference time and as always invite you to communicate your questions and concerns. Happy fall!

Sincerely,
Anna Monaco, Principal

FROM THE JCSA

The 2012-13 school year is off to a great start! The staff enjoyed the lunch provided by the JCSA on the day before the first day of school and a pizza dinner on Back to School night. The New Families Night was a great way to welcome newcomers to Clarke. There were food and games for kids, and Ms. Monaco and Mr. Wettstone were on hand to speak to new parents. Thank you to Cindy Carver and Becky DesRoches for organizing this event and helping us extend a warm welcome to new families. The 6th, 7th, and 8th graders had the opportunity to celebrate being back at school and get to know one another at their socials. They were treated to great food, a rockin' DJ and wild (but not too wild) dancing. It wouldn't have happened without our JCSA Social Coordinators, so thank you to Carrie Pitts, Susie Lee-Snell and Claire Sheth. The Magazine Drive, one of our two fundraisers, was a big hit as always. Students enjoyed some friendly competition for prizes, and the proceeds will allow the JCSA to continue to support our wonderful staff and teachers. Thank you to Huayu Xiong for coordinating the volunteers, who all did an outstanding job running the drive. It was also great to see students showing their Clarke pride by wearing spiritwear; thanks to Alison Arshad, Leslie Forg, and Sue Wilner for organizing the sale.

Our membership drive is going well. There were 441 families and an amazing 32 staff members who have joined the JCSA! These numbers are great, but we would love to have the entire Clarke community be a part of the JCSA. If you haven't joined yet, don't worry, because it's never too late and this year it's easier than ever with our new on-line system! You can sign up at <http://bit.ly/clarkejcsa>.

Happy Holidays.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2013 CALENDAR

- 11/1/2013 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM Grade 8 Social -Gym/Auditorium
- 11/4/2013 8:00 PM Parent Conference Online sign ups begin
- 11/5/2013 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM Challenge Team Parent Sponsored Staff Breakfast
- 11/5/2013 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM New Families Welcome Event
- 11/7/2013 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM MARC parent presentation on Bullying
- 11/11/2013 **NO SCHOOL** Veteran's Day
- 11/12/2013 Aspen Portal Opens for Q1 Report Card viewing
- 11/14/2013 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM JCSA Meeting - 3rd Cafe
- 11/15/2013 **NO SCHOOL** Conferences
- 11/20/2013 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM Gr. 7/8 Instrumental Concert
- 11/21/2013 **NO SCHOOL** All Day Professional Development
- 11/26/2013 7:30 PM Grade 6 Band/Orchestra Concert in the auditorium
- 11/27/2013 11:45 AM - 12:00 PM **HALF-DAY DISMISSAL** Thanksgiving Holiday
- 11/28/2013 - 11/29/2013 **NO SCHOOL** Thanksgiving Holiday
- 12/6/2013 - 12/13/2013 Clarke Book Fair
- 12/6/2013 11:45 AM - 12:00 PM Clarke - **HALF-DAY DISMISSAL** Conferences
- 12/9/2013 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM Clarke Choral Concert
- 12/10/2013 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM Discovery and Curiosity Teams Sponsored Staff Breakfast
- 12/12/2013 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM JCSA Meeting - 3rd Cafe
- 12/13/2013 11:45 AM - 12:00 PM Clarke - **HALF-DAY DISMISSAL** Conferences
- 12/23/2013-1/1/2014 **NO SCHOOL** Winter Break

******* TEAM NEWS *******

ATLANTIS 6

Atlantis team teachers have a great deal to be thankful for this year.

Our Top Ten reasons, in no particular order . . .

1. The wonderful start to the 2013 - 2014 school year with our new Atlantis students.
2. The beautiful fall weather, which has given us the chance to have lots of recess.

The foliage around Clarke is amazing!

3. The beginning of our yearly Atlantis homework club. We meet in Room 367 from 3 pm to 4 pm on Wednesday afternoons. Students can work independently, with friends from any team, or with LHS students and 8th graders as tutors.

4. The creativity of Atlantis students in finding fun and interesting ways to demonstrate their learning, and share with others.

5. The enthusiasm and spirit shown at our annual Team Breakfast. The willingness to participate openly in team building games as students made some new friends.

6. Our homeroom representatives as they coordinate our homerooms in another successful Can Drive.

7. Our devoted junior astronauts and their work to explore our universe. World Wide Telescope is so cool!

8. OUR SLEEVES HAVE BEEN SAVED... (for now)

The Tissue donations have been so helpful. Kids have been able to use nice soft tissues in each of their Atlantis classrooms all year. (We hope we have enough to get use through November. More donations would be much appreciated.)

9. The RED SOX are World Series Champions!!!

Boston continues to be The City of Champions for sports fans.

10. The health and happiness of our families and friends.

*Bonus item #1 - The cafeteria has awesome chicken parm sandwiches! School lunch rules in Middle School.

QUEST 6

As we enter into 2nd quarter of English, students will start reading our first class novel: Flipped, by Wendelin Van Draanen. The story follows two protagonists, Bryce and Julianna, as they recount their own stories of how they met. As we read, we will focus on noticing and tracking how each character develops and matures. We'll examine how point of view can affect how a story is told, and how using multiple perspectives can mold the message of a story. In addition, we will continue or study of Greek and Latin root words as well as common grammatical errors and how to fix them.

Quest Math is currently studying integers and how they relate to the Real Number System. One important distinction is the difference between rational and irrational numbers. A rational number is one that can be made by dividing one integer by another. The word comes from "ratio". Here are some examples:

- $1/2$ is a rational number (1 divided by 2, or the ratio of 1 to 2)
- 0.75 is a rational number (3/4)
- 1 is a rational number (1/1)
- 2 is a rational number (2/1)

.....continued on page 4

QUEST 6 (continued from page 3)

- 2.12 is a rational number ($212/100$)
- -6.6 is a rational number ($-66/10$)
- But Pi is not a rational number; it is an "Irrational Number".

Quest Students of science have wrapped-up our measurement unit and are moving to bigger (MUCH BIGGER) things as we are contemplating the size of our universe. We are coming to realize that the light year is a necessary unit of measurement where the universe is concerned. Students have picked topics such as exploding stars, black holes and solar systems and begun collecting information as they research those topics. Soon we will begin working with astronomers from the 'World Wide Telescope' ambassadors program. They will help us to create 'Tours' using 'World Wide Telescope' software, which will be presented to their classmates.

Team Quest continues to gobble up Ancient Civilizations knowledge each day. With an understanding of what it takes to be an archaeologist firmly under our belts we are setting off on a magical tour of early humans. Members of Team Quest will soon be able to identify the several stages of human development and the progress early humans made over many years. The Ancient Civilization gods have also smiled upon our curriculum this year with the recent discovery of an intact skull in Georgia (the country, not the state). This amazing discovery not only sheds more light on how early humans developed over time, but also raises new questions about our family tree. Perhaps the highlight of term two is the research project we will be working on together. Members of Team Quest will learn and sharpen their research paper writing skills as we practice identifying reliable sources, note taking, outlining and thesis writing. Looking forward to a great term two!

VOYAGER 6

Voyager math students are using number lines to model addition & subtraction of positive & negative integers. Additionally, they are learning simple transformations of geometric shapes using ordered pair graphing. Also discussed was that the computer graphics used in video games include more sophisticated application of translations, reflections and rotations to create motion.

Voyager science has had a wonderful start to the year! Students increased their scientific literacy by designed controlled experiments to test the effectiveness of different sunscreens. The Students came up with wonderful experiments and learned the importance of using sunscreen, but also increased their understanding of scientific information. Students learned how to use a number of tools for measuring matter, for example, triple beam balances and graduated cylinders. This week we are beginning our astronomy unit. As part of our exploration, we will be doing a project with World Wide Telescope where the students will create a tour of the Universe. I am pleased to share that all of the students have been very helpful in creating a safe and collaborative learning community.

Voyager ancient civilizations is off to a great start. The students have been learning about archaeology and early humans. We are studying about Otzi, the Iceman, right now. He was a perfectly preserved mummy found in the Italian Alps. Next, we will be analyzing how early humans evolved over time.

Voyager English students started the school year with the reading of an award winning novel and the making of a book jacket for a class presentation of the book. We can now find books of interest based the recommendations of our classmates. We learned about the writing of memoir and after having read some examples and generated some ideas from our own past experiences, we wrote a personal memoir. We have also learned how a story develops by identifying the conflict and using the stages of plot development. Our next unit will include the reading of the novel *Boy of the Painted Cave* about early humans, coordinating with early human study in Ms. Richmond's ancient civilization's class.

ADVENTURER 7

We hope that the students are enjoying recess twice a week, when the weather permits us to go outside!

In English, we worked hard to create our memoirs; the vivid imagery brought readers to the author's special time and place. Now we're turning our attention to the elements of literature such as plotline, conflict, and characterization. After reading a few short stories, we'll start our first novel of the year, where we'll focus on the power of setting. This unit asks us to read closely and write as all academics do: to prove our claims with sound evidence from the text. We're striving for rigorous thinking and meticulous writing.

In Geography classes we have spent the past few weeks investigating Climate and the impact that different climates have on the people who live in them. Soon, we will begin our European geography unit, in which we will focus on the physical, cultural, and economic impacts geography has had. Throughout all of this, we are continuing to collect information for our country projects and using those countries as examples for practicing the various skills and knowledge we are gaining.

In math, we have been focusing on problem solving and strategies to help solve multi-step problems. Students will be working on explaining and discussing mathematics, both in verbal and written form. This will be something we will be working on all year long. You can help your child practice these skills by discussing the problems they are working on in their homework assignments. We are nearly finished with the Fraction and Decimal Unit, and starting the Expression and Equation Unit. Students will learn how to write, simplify and solve algebraic expressions and equations. Students will be taking the first CML on November 7th and the second in early December.

In science, Adventurer students have been introduced to microscopes and are currently learning cell parts and functions. Examining, analyzing and drawing real cells have been a highlight. What do the cell analogy project and play-doh have in common? They both help students learn more about cells! Our next unit will be Ecology, which will help prepare us for our field trip to the Aquarium on Dec. 20. Adventure on!



NEXT SUBMISSION DEADLINE

The next newsletter is a combined *January/February issue*. Submission deadline is **Monday, January 6, 2014**.

Please email your articles to clarke.newsletter@gmail.com.

Thanks!
Grace Clackson
Irina Gritsevskaya



ENDEAVOR 7

Endeavor students are continuing to select Choice Books and regularly update their NoodleTool accounts. Many readers are managing the required thirty minutes per night with greater ease and some are even going beyond! Student writers have completed their individual memoirs. Polished final products were presented to classmates and positive feedback was provided to all following the exchange of personal narratives. Students will be bringing home their stories to share before returning documents to their Writing Portfolios.

In math, we have been focusing on problem solving and strategies to help solve multi-step problems. Students will be working on explaining and discussing mathematics, both in verbal and written form, which we will be working on all year long. You can help your child practice these skills by discussing the problems they are working on in their homework assignments. We are almost done with the Fraction and Decimal Unit, and starting the Expression and Equation Unit. Students will learn how to write, simplify and solve algebraic expressions and equations. The students will be taking the first CML on November 7th and the second in early December.

In Endeavor World Geography, we are about to conclude the Introduction to Geography Unit. The students have learned and applied the Five Themes of Geography to Lexington and are now prepared to apply these concepts to other places throughout the world. Climate patterns, time zones, and types of government are among the other topics that we have covered during this unit. The students have completed several country profiles and will begin to explore their selected countries in greater depth by applying the skills and concepts we learn in class to a case study they develop outside of class. Our next academic travels will take us to Europe!

In Endeavor science, students have been learning about the characteristics of living things. Students studied the 4 organic compounds that are found in all living things and tested for the presence of simple or complex carbohydrates in a sample of food they brought in. In our next unit, we will be using microscopes to study the differences between plant and animal cells.

EXPLORER 7

With the first quarter having just closed, The Explorer Team thought it might be a good idea to review with everyone our top 10 tips for being a successful student. Follow these simple guidelines and it could open up a world of academic success.

- 1) Keep an accurate HW log
- 2) Organize your binder daily (or at a minimum weekly)
- 3) FOLLOW DIRECTIONS
- 4) When no homework is due, review the past few days of class work
- 5) Ask clarifying questions when you are confused
- 6) FOLLOW DIRECTIONS
- 7) Redo problems you missed on hw/tests/quizzes to ensure you understand the content.
- 8) FOLLOW DIRECTIONS
- 9) Read a variety of material for enjoyment / Take a little time to relax
- 10) FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

CHALLENGE 8

The weather's getting colder, but the action in the classroom is heating up on the Challenge team. In English, students have been delving into various literary elements and devices, prying deeper understandings from stories such as *The Outsiders*. With a focus on tracing the development of theme, English classes are forging ahead and learning how close reading is more *meaningful* reading.

In US History, students are well into their study of the American Revolution. They traced the buildup to the war carefully, studying the causes and effects that escalated tensions between Britain and the colonies and considering the role that perspective plays when studying history. They will soon see how the first attempt at a unified government nearly caused the country to split apart almost as quickly as it had formed.

Science classes have recently finished their study of density and are now onto learning about the transfer of thermal energy. They also have begun using the ever-popular Bunsen Burners for a variety of exciting lab activities. Next up will be a whirlwind tour of the states of matter.

Algebra 1A has tackled the foundations of algebra and equations, and is nearly done with inequalities; next up: functions. Algebra 1 has conquered the foundations of algebra, equations, and inequalities, and is now taking on the heart of algebra with a functions unit! Math 8 took on the foundations of algebra and is now tackling equations of all kinds!



CURIOSITY 8

Curiosity Team students have experienced a wide variety of coursework and extra events over the last several weeks. As a team, students attended both the Rachel's Challenge Assembly and the Magazine Drive assembly.

In U.S. History and Civics class, Curiosity students continue to study and investigate the Era of the American Revolution. Analyzing primary writings and visuals, reading a content related young adult novel, practicing writing thesis statements and doing online research to create an annotated bibliography are all actions taken in class. As students move through the study of this era, they have been challenged to become experts on selected topics and to pick a side to support in the American Revolution.

Students in English class are in the midst of our Theme Development unit. Students have spent the past few weeks reading and taking notes on the literary elements of their independent reading books. Now, we are finishing up an investigation into how these elements interact to create the themes of the novels. Next, we will be reading one book (either *The Outsiders* or *Of Mice and Men*) as a class and analyze its themes and their development.

In science, students just completed a unit on density, where we explored what factors influence the density of substances, and how the density of a substance can impact its behavior (such as whether it will sink, float, or suspend in a liquid). Up next, we will be moving into our unit on thermal energy, where we will answer questions such as, "What, exactly, is heat?", "How does heat transfer from one place to another?", and "How does thermal energy affect the behavior of substances?"

In math, Curiosity students recently completed units on solving equations and grappling with inequalities. They were challenging units, and our students worked really hard to master the required concepts and skills. Now we are transitioning to an introductory unit on functions, where we will learn how to recognize them, represent them symbolically and visually, and use them to solve problems.

DISCOVERY 8

In English, we are finishing up our unit on “Insightful Reading” and moving into a unit on Theme. We have been exploring how various literary elements (plot, setting, characterization, conflict...) and devices (irony, symbols, metaphors, foreshadowing...) are used in short stories. We’ve also been focusing on the parts of speech and have had several assessments to see if we can make progress using the spaced repetition method of studying (using Quia online). Some students who practiced regularly went up as much as 20%, which was encouraging. Some students didn’t have as much room for improvement. Students on Quia can be well connected to their data. We will have one more assessment to see if we can build on these gains.

How is matter predictable? This is the main question in science this year. So far we have discovered many ways that matter is predictable and behaves in predictable ways in regards to density. Students are now studying the topic of heat. All students should have returned a signed laboratory safety agreement. They will need to proceed with caution in the lab since we are using Bunsen burners for the first time this year. Upcoming topics include thermal energy, heat transfer and states of matter.

United States History students have kept themselves busy investigating the antecedents of representative government, dating back to the Magna Carta and Enlightenment philosophers. Ultimately, the Thirteen Colonies will inherit a long tradition from England regarding law, government, and the rights of the people.

In Mr. Owens' Algebra 1 and Algebra 1A classes we are beginning a unit on Functions. We will be using a Vernier Probe motion sensor in class to look at and interpret graphs of Distance vs. Time and Speed vs. Time. We will look at the criteria necessary for a relation to be considered a Function, the domain and range of a function, identifying a function by using the Vertical Line Test, and using Function Notation. We will end the unit with Arithmetic Sequences, which will lead into our next unit on Linear Functions.

***** OTHER NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS *****

THE WELLNESS CORNER: Greetings From the Gym!

At the end of October we completed the Mile Run and the Pacer Test. Both of these fitness challenges tested cardiovascular (aerobic) fitness and fit very well into our fall curriculum. The students’ mile times look great, which is a tribute to their hard work. As we approach the colder months students still need to maintain their aerobic fitness levels by engaging in activities such as: walking, jogging, biking, swimming (indoor pool!), team sports, or any activity that will keep your heart rate in the 145 to 176 beats per minute range for at least 30 minutes. You can view the Fitnessgram Healthy Fitness Zones on the Clarke P.E. Teacher Web page.

We will also continue to work on our next group of fitness challenges, which include curl-ups and push-ups. The students are working on their technique in class but we are encouraging them to practice at home. Parents can help the P.E. Team Teachers by asking their kids if they have done their “P.E. homework” which would be doing sets of curl-ups and push-ups every night. It only takes a few minutes and parents can feel free to join in!

As we move inside for the winter months we will be engaging in Project Adventure (PA) activities and working out in the fitness center. PA is a curriculum that encompasses the physical, social and cognitive realms of physical education by using non-competitive, team building activities that allow all students to grow and challenge themselves as both individuals and as members of a group. As we are working with PA, we will also enter our Fitness Center unit where we will introduce out 6th graders to all our equipment and how to properly use it. We will also cover the major muscle groups that are being used in various exercises. Our 7th and 8th grade students will review the equipment and expand on previous years’ learning by incorporating target heart rates during exercise and developing personal exercise plans. The Fitness Center is an excellent teaching tool and we are lucky to have it! As the cold weather of winter approaches remember to find ways to stay active and healthy!

Drama Happenings!

What an exciting start to the school year! The drama department has been very busy with workshops, a NYC trip, auditions for Willy Wonka and developing a documentary.

On Wednesday, October 2, 2013, 31 drama students went to NYC to attend workshops and to see the Broadway production of **Matilda**. The crew left Clarke at 4:00am and traveled to NYC. In the morning, half the group took a workshop with Thayne Jaspersen (a member of the **Matilda** company and a star of **So You Think You Can Dance**) where they learned a song and dance from the show. How exciting to cheer for Thayne later as he performed on stage!



Clarke Students with Thayne Jaspersen



Clarke students see the Broadway production of Matilda!

and also learned a bit about physics. What a great way to make learning fun!

In October, Ms. Brown conducted three audition workshops. These workshops were designed to give students an opportunity to develop the skills to have a successful audition. Acting techniques, singing skills, audition tips and dance combinations were used to help the students be more confident as they audition for shows at Clarke and outside of school.

The second group did a technical theatre workshop conducted by Steve Tewksbury, a member of the **Kinky Boots** company. In this workshop, the students had to create an entire production from start to finish including all of the technical elements. What a challenge!

After lunch at Planet Hollywood, the group attended the matinee performance of **Matilda**. What a treat! The show was energetic and very clever. With Clarke presenting **Willy Wonka** this year, another Roald Dahl story, the group was able to really appreciate the story and Dahl's unique storytelling. A lively discussion about staging a production took place on the bus ride back to Lexington that evening!

The drama department has had a variety of after school workshops this year! Our first workshop was a tap dance lesson with Ryan Casey (a Lexington native and also a star of **So You Think You can Dance**). Ryan worked with the students to teach the basics of tapping. In an hour and a half, Ryan had the entire group of students dance combination on the stage. Bravo!

On October 16, Sir Isaac Newton presented a workshop on using sword-play to teach Newton's Laws of Physics. (Sir Isaac Newton is from Guard Up in Burlington.) The students learned techniques to use sword play in staging

....continued to page 10

Drama Happenings *(continued from page 9)*

In November, we have two workshops scheduled: Improv with Mr. Parhiala (Mr. P. is a staff member at Clarke and a company member of Improv Boston) and a Q&A with a former Broadway casting director - Stephanie Diozzi. More workshops will be announced in the coming weeks. All workshop information and sign-ups can be found on Ms. Brown's TeacherWeb page.



Tap Dancing with Ryan Casey

And finally, the drama department had auditions for this year's musical: Willy Wonka. What a terrific turnout! Fifty students were cast in the production and we will have another 30 students working tech. On rehearsal days, you will see students singing, dancing, acting, creating props and sets, and filming a documentary. We are excited about all of the opportunities and can't wait to share our work with you in February.



Sword play with Sir Isaac Newton from Guard Up

Ms. Brown has partnered with LexMedia to develop another opportunity for Clarke students - creating a documentary on how to put together a musical at Clarke Middle School. The students have taken classes with Mark McMinn at LexMedia on how to use the equipment and will be filming the entire process of developing our production of *Willy Wonka*. The students will film, narrate, interview company/tech crew and edit the ½ hour documentary to be shown on the LexMedia cable channel at the conclusion of the project. What an exciting opportunity for Clarke students to learn another facet of the entertainment industry.



CLARK EMBRACES “RACHEL’S CHALLENGE”

*Look for the Best in Others
 Dream Big
 Choose Positive Influences
 Speak Words of Kindness
 Start A Chain Reaction*

These principles form the basis of Rachel’s Challenge, a nationally acclaimed bullying prevention program inspired by the writings and legacy of Rachel Joy Scott, the first student killed in the 1999 mass shooting at Columbine High School.

Each year, LEF awards each school in the LPS system a School Community Grant to undertake activities that will strengthen learning and build community school-wide.

For three of the past four school years, Clarke Middle School has dedicated its School Community Grants to building a school culture, based on Rachel’s Challenge, that promotes positive behavior and celebrates and supports Clarke’s remarkable diversity. Clarke has become a community in which students, faculty, and staff put Rachel’s principles into practice every day in intentional and dynamic ways.

Rachel’s Challenge is described as an anti-bullying program, but Clarke principal Anna Monaco stresses that it is much more than that. “The program has been powerful,” she says. “Its core message - that we should focus on what each of us can do for others, on treating people with kindness, and on embracing diversity - has come to define the Clarke community.”

Clarke’s commitment to sharing Rachel Scott’s message and weaving it into the fabric of the school has ensured the program’s lasting impact. Its success demonstrates how a relatively modest investment of LEF funding can help transform an entire school.

Read on to page 12 to learn more about the impact of Rachel’s Challenge at Clarke.

More on “Rachel’s Challenge” (continued from page 11)

Rachel Joy Scott, the first student killed in the Columbine mass shooting, was known for reaching out to those who were different, who were picked on by others, or who were new at her school. After her death, her family found her journal in which she outlined her personal guiding principles and declared that she intended to change the world. “I have this theory,” she wrote, “that if one person can go out of their way to show compassion, then it will start a chain reaction of the same. People will never know how far a little kindness can go.” Rachel’s family established Rachel’s Challenge in her memory to provide programs and strategies to create safer learning environments, combat bullying, and counter feelings of isolation by creating a culture of kindness and compassion. The program has reached 20 million students nationwide.

Under the leadership of then-principal Steven Flynn, Clarke used its 2010-2011 LEF School Community Grant to adopt Rachel’s Challenge as a vehicle to promote pro-social behaviors, build community, and honor the diversity of Clarke’s student body. Under current principal Anna Monaco, Clarke has continued to place Rachel’s Challenge at the heart of Clarke’s community life, dedicating its 2011-2012 and 2013-2014 LEF School Community Grants to building and sustaining the program.

The Rachel’s Challenge principles are introduced and reinforced throughout the school year in grade-level assemblies and in the classroom, where teachers incorporate them into lesson plans and classroom discussions. In the school’s entryway and cafeteria, banners bearing the signature of every student at Clarke declare the community’s dedication to live Rachel’s Challenge. Students train to become peer leaders, and dozens participate in two clubs that are direct outgrowths of the program. The Chain Links Club (named for the “chain reaction of kindness and compassion” that Rachel Scott believed would change the world) undertakes a range of activities that build community and establish connections among diverse students. Linked In, a program based on Best Buddies, creates teams that bring together small groups of typically developing students and developmentally disabled students, building understanding and friendship between students who might otherwise feel they had little in common. In some cases, participation in these activities has led to striking changes in student behavior, bringing out positive leadership qualities in students who had been shy - or even troublemakers.

“Rachel’s Challenge gave us the grounding, the common language, that sets the tone for everything we do in the building,” guidance counselor Tessa Riley explains. “Kids reference it all the time. They bring it up whenever they see something unfair happening.” Students say they feel safe at Clarke, she says. New students have said that the Clarke community has made them feel welcome in a way their previous schools had not.

In 2011-2012, Clarke used its LEF School Community Grant to hire artist-in-residence Tova Speter to help students create a visual expression of their commitment to Rachel’s principles. Almost 150 students worked in design teams to create a mural that spans all four levels of Clarke’s central staircase, and virtually every student in the school contributed to painting it. One landing features a heart created from the handprints of every student and teacher in the school, another a celebration of the 51 countries represented in Clarke’s student body. Colorful gears adorning the walls between landings represent the chain reaction of kindness through which “we all help one another to reach our goals,” according to the student artists’ statement.

In 2013-2014 Clarke is dedicating its LEF School Community Grant to supporting Rachel’s Challenge assemblies and student activities.

Rachel’s Challenge works because “the kids can identify with Rachel,” says Tessa Riley. “They feel an emotional tie to her life and her message. They don’t just say, ‘I believe in Rachel’s Challenge’ - they live it.”

As seventh grader Devanshi Bhangle wrote, “I think that when you tell people what you expect of them, and give them guidelines, they will be nicer and better than if you just tell them, ‘Go be a good student.’ Rachel’s Challenge sort of acts like those guidelines to becoming a better person.”



for Clarke!!!

Take Advantage of the Stop & Shop A+ Rewards Program during the Holidays!

The A+ program is in full swing, and there is no better time to participate than during the holiday season. This time of year usually means additional shopping, including our purchases at the grocery store. If you haven't signed up already, please consider joining the program to make your grocery dollars count for Clarke. Every dollar spent at Stop & Shop earns money for our school!

It is not too late to join in this exciting program! So many members of the Clarke community have already signed up for the A+ Rewards program at Stop & Shop..... They have started earning money for Clarke, and you can too. Remember, you don't have to do the majority of your shopping there to make a difference.

Please help us earn money for Clarke and enroll today. **You must register your card for our school to reap the benefits.** Encourage your family and friends to sign up too! **The more participants we have, the more money we will earn.** You may register your Stop and Shop card using any one of these options:

- Log on to <http://www.stopandshop.com/aplus> to register online (Click "My Stop & Shop", "Register Your Card" and "Designate your school" - Jonas Clarke Middle School is #09297)
- Dial [1-877- 275-2758](tel:1-877-275-2758) (Jonas Clarke Middle School is #09297)
- Send your 13 digit Stop & Shop number and your last name to Paige Sabine clarkeaplusrewards@gmail.com and we will register your card for you

Some things to keep in mind:

1. It is Free - there is no cost to participate!
2. If you have children in multiple schools, you can register up to 2 schools on one card. Dual registrations should be done at the same time. Just search the city and state on the website to see which schools are enrolled.
3. You can participate in multiple Stop & Shop programs (such as the Gas Program, Rewards, etc.) at the same time - you earn full points for each program when you shop.
4. You can earn MORE POINTS for our school by taking advantage of various promotions during the program. Please see the Stop & Shop website (www.stopandshop.com) for details.

Thank you to all who have already signed up to participate! Please be sure to check the bottom of your receipt to see how many points you have earned for Clarke every time you shop. (If there are no points recorded, please feel free to email Paige Sabine at clarkeaplusrewards@gmail.com for assistance.) **We will soon find out the total amount of money we earned for Clarke during the month of October - please stay tuned to the Listserve notices for the update!**



As we strive to produce an informative and interesting newsletter, it would help us to get your feedback and ideas regarding the content. Please email your suggestions and comments to clarke.newsletter@gmail.com
Many thanks!

Jonas Clarke Middle School
17 Stedman Road
Lexington, MA 02421-7210
Address Correction Requested

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BOSTON, MA
PERMIT NO.172