From the Principal’s Desk: Great Things Ahead

Greetings Oriole Families,

As we move into a new decade, the faculty and staff of OJ DeJonge Middle School is excited to continue moving forward to live our vision of providing students with an experience-rich school environment that promotes independence and responsibility. One of our main focus areas across the building for the 2019-2020 school year is essential literacy practices. Educational leaders here in Michigan have recently published a document that explains best practices for literacy across all disciplines in secondary schools. This particular document continues to drive several professional development initiatives for our faculty and staff in providing real-world opportunities for students to engage in discipline-specific literacy. Our staff will also take time to continue learning best practices from one another through our professional learning communities.

Another means by which we are promoting literacy across all disciplines is through our academic vocabulary. An academic vocabulary word is any word that may be seen in multiple subject areas, and are words that are most often used on standardized assessments like the PSAT 8/9 or the M-STEP that students will take in the spring. Teachers recently identified ten of the most commonly-used academic vocabulary words that are seen across subject areas. Once these words were identified, teachers collaborated to create common, student-friendly definitions that will be used in all classrooms. Ms. Schaperkotter and I will spend some time in our weekly video messages to students talking about these academic vocabulary words and posters will be available in classrooms to serve as anchor charts for student use. We look forward to continuing our practice in enhancing literacy across OJ.

February brings one of the most-anticipated events of the school year to OJ: Beat the Blahs Week. Beat the Blahs Week, our annual charity/spirit week, allows for our students to create an atmosphere of Oriole Spirit while also demonstrating to students the role that they can play in helping our community through raising funds for a local charity. During the week, students will participate in spirit dress-up days and will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of fun games during our daily mini-assemblies, culminating in our main event on Friday. There will also be raffles available to students at their lunch periods and a silent auction will take place. Much of the funds raised for charity comes through the grade level penny competition, in which each grade level hopes to collect the most pennies, while silver coins count as a negative towards that grade level's total. This week allows students to shed some of the winter blahs in a fun atmosphere while also promoting community and school spirit. Please contact Student Council Co-Advisors Teresa Eriksen or Julie Keson if you are interested in assisting throughout the week.

On another note, students have recently finished the Winter NWEA Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments. Students use this assessment to create their own academic goals. The staff of OJMS continues to use the data from the NWEA assessments in reading and mathematics to help meet students’ individual learning needs.

We wish you the best for 2020 and beyond.

With Oriole Pride,
Mike Hart
Counselor’s Corner

Listening With Understanding and Empathy
by Amy Marsh, School Counselor

I’m worried that we have an empathy deficit in our society. I don’t personally have data or research to support this, but the evidence is all around us. Every day on the news, at the grocery store, in our schools, in our world and in our homes, we can observe examples of individuals acting without first attempting to hear and understand the other’s point of view and the stress, conflicts, and acts of aggression that often follow.

Listening with understanding and empathy is not as easy as it might sound. An inability to practice this skill, however, is at the root of all forms of mistreatment of others. It is my firm belief that the bullying and violence epidemic in our country would be resolved if we could all learn to strengthen this habit of mind. Listening with understanding and empathy means paying attention to another person’s thoughts without dismissing them, even when I don’t agree — especially when I don’t agree. It means first putting myself in another person’s shoes so that I can understand their experience, even if I don’t share it. It means looking for ways to relate to another’s feelings, even if I feel differently in the current situation. It means asking good questions, and then really listening to the answers. Real empathy requires holding my own thoughts, feelings, and experiences at an intentional distance — if only for a moment — in order to create the space to hear and respect another’s point of view before deciding how to respond.

Movies, books, and television shows all present us with great opportunities to teach empathy. For example, model putting yourself in another person’s shoes by thinking out loud about a character’s emotional response on a favorite tv show while you are watching with your son or daughter: “Man! If I was her, I would be so mad!” or, “Look at his face. He must be devastated.” There’s no need to over-explain, or turn the simple act of watching tv together into a lecture — just identify the feeling word and speak it out loud. By “talking out loud to yourself” without expecting any sort of response, you open the door for your son or daughter to begin identifying the emotional states of others more frequently and more accurately, encouraging them to begin understanding things from another person’s point of view.

Perhaps the single best way to teach your child empathic listening is to show empathy while listening to them. This can be much harder than it sounds! We get stressed and busy ourselves. The demands of managing everyday life often make it difficult to slow down and listen fully when our kids are talking. Every now and then, however, try making a point of listening with empathy and pay attention to how it changes your son or daughter’s response. Empathic listening might look something like this:

• Your kid mentions something that happened at school that they have a strong feeling about...
• (Very important) PAUSE FIRST. Give it an extra moment of wait time. Take a breath, set down what you are doing, and in that moment, push away your temptation to give advice.
• Identify the feeling you hear — “I can tell you are really frustrated...” “You sound really sad about that...”
• Invite them to keep talking without jumping in — “Tell me more about that...”
• Resist the urge to ask a bunch of questions. That can feel like an interrogation.
• Follow their lead.
• Check for your own understanding. “You were disappointed because you thought she was going to work on the project with you. Do I have that right?”
• Offer only help that they ask for. “Is there anything I can do to help?”
• Support them in dealing with their feelings, rather than by getting involved in the situation itself. “You seem really sad about this. What makes you feel better when you are sad?” or “This is causing you a lot of stress, I can tell. What can we do together for some stress relief?”
• Remember, as Brene Brown tells us, empathic statements rarely start with, “At least…” (“At least you weren’t the only one not invited...” “At least you still have other friends...”)

Listening with empathy reduces stress, helps to build trust, and most importantly, it creates a sense of connection to others. If we have empathy for another person, we are less likely to feel negative emotions toward them or mistreat them. Let’s work together to build a culture of relatedness and support in our school community by showing empathy to our children, and by helping our kids to practice empathy with each other.
Lake Jump 2020: Feeding all kids

We are excited to announce that the Lake Jump 2020 beneficiary will be Lakeshore Food For Kids, now serving Ludington students K-12. **Save the date: Saturday, April 18** and consider the following ways to help out:

- Take the plunge and join a team!
- Sponsor the Lake Jump
- Pledge to sponsor a jumper.
- Donate prize items for kids or adults
- Watch for more information about a friendly building to building competition and join in the fun!

*For more information, please email Amy Marsh amarsh@lasd.net*

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Mrs. Gasaway's 7th grade ELA class participated in Peer to Peer with Ms. Boerema's WSESd Trailblazer class. We were able to visit the LHS shop class and assist the Trailblazers in building a bench. Thanks to Mr. LaDuke for allowing us to learn and work together.
Attention 8th grade Parents:

LHS Counselors support eighth grade transition to high school

The LHS and OJ Counseling staff will begin the transitional planning from 8th grade to high school by meeting with all 8th grade science classes in early February. During this time LHS counselors explain an overview of LHS course offerings, graduation requirements, and offer an informal Q and A session. All core courses (English, math, science, and social studies) are pre-selected for each student based on teacher recommendation or special education needs. Students will be given the opportunity to indicate what elective courses they would like to explore at these whole group meetings, but all final course selections are subject to parent guardian approval.

LHS counselors will then meet with each incoming freshman and their parents/guardians to review final course selections and create a 4 year academic plan. These meetings will occur throughout March and April. Invitation letters with appointment times will be mailed home after the LHS 9th Grade Orientation and Open House, which will be held February 12 at 7PM in Peterson Auditorium. Students are encouraged to attend this informal event with a parent guardian to meet teacher representatives from each LHS department as well as be given an overview of the LHS offerings and graduation requirements.

For questions about the transition to high school, please feel free to contact high school counselors, Michael Leikert (mjleikert@lasd.net) or Laura Powers (lpowers@lasd.net).

OJ Recognizes National Heart Month

February is national “Heart Month” and OJ DeJonge Middle School wants to make a difference and help fight the No.1 cause of death in our country, heart disease and stroke. On February 3rd our school, together with the American Heart Association, will launch our American Heart Challenge “No Vaping” event. Grades 6th-8th will learn the effects of vaping, not only on their heart health but also on their brain health. Then, on Friday, February 14th during exploratory classes we will be holding a fun event called Dodgeball for Heart where students and staff will face off to see who has the most spirit because we want everyone to be a survivor of heart disease and stroke. The cost is $10 per player and includes a red AHA shirt to wear at the game. The donations raised help fund lifesaving research, medicine, treatments and education.

So, get ready for the official kickoff of the American Heart Challenge at OJ!
From the Athletic Office:
To try out for any sport, students must have a current physical on file at the athletic office. Sports physical forms are available at the CBO, Athletic and OJ offices. Physicals that took place on or after April 15, 2019 are good for the entire 2019-2020 school year. Questions may be directed to the Athletic office at 845-3811.

Spring Sports
Before we know it, spring will be here! OJ Track is the spring sport for any 6th, 7th or 8th grader. It will start in March. Athletes must have a physical on file that was done on or after April 15, 2019, to participate. If you had the free physical done last May that is good for this year. Please call the Athletic office at 845-3811 with any questions. More information will be available in late February.

From the Attendance Office:
Beth Gunsell is our attendance coordinator. To help students and families with the attendance policy, here are a few important points:

1. If your student is going to be absent, please call into the attendance office at 845-3803 by 8:00 am.
2. If your student is absent due to an appointment, please provide a doctor's note.
3. If your student arrives late, please have them check in at the attendance office or front office to sign in.
4. If you need to sign your student out early, please have your student sign out at the attendance office.

You will receive a phone call from the school by 8:15 if your student is marked absent and we have not received a phone call from a parent verifying the absence.

If a student is absent a total of 13 days within the school year, the attendance committee will determine if a meeting should be convened. Any meeting will be held with a parent, student, police liaison officer, juvenile court staff, principal and/or school attendance specialist to sign an acknowledgement form. At the time of this meeting, juvenile court staff will inform the parent and child of the possibility of being petitioned to the court and being placed in the juvenile court’s Truancy Program if additional absences occur.

You are able to check your student’s attendance and tardy record on a regular basis through the Power School Parent Portal. (Contact the office you need your user name and password.)

Feel free to contact the attendance office at any time, 845-3803.
Coming up at OJ...

Feb. 3-7 - EDPS all 7th & 8th graders in Science classes
Feb. 4-5 - LHS counselors begin registration with 8th graders
Feb. 12, 7pm - Freshmen Orientation, Peterson Auditorium
Feb. 14 - Dodgeball for Heart
Feb. 17 – 21 - Beat the Blahs Week
March 5 - ½ Day – Health & Wellness Fair, sponsored by MMLI
March 6 - ½ Day
March 9 - T3 Begins
March 27 - No School; Spring Break begins

Frequently Used Contacts:

OJ Office – 845-3810
Attendance Office – 845-3803
Athletic Department – 845-3811
Central Business Office – 845-7303
Transportation Office – 845-3890

Principal, Mr. Mike Hart, mhart@lasd.net
Asst. Principal, Ms. Abby Schaperkotter, aschaperkotter@lasd.net
Secretary, Mrs. Lia Lux, llux@lasd.net
Secretary, Mrs. Shawn Groenhout, sgroenhout@lasd.net
Counselor, Mr. Steve Hull, shull@lasd.net
Counselor, Ms. Amy Marsh, amarsh@lasd.net

Math Help

Homework Headaches? WE’RE HERE TO HELP!
Do you need help with your math homework? We’ve got you covered! Math Help is available after school all year Monday through Thursday. It is from 3:00 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. It is run by the OJ Middle School math staff. Blue posters are all around the school that tell which math teacher’s classroom Math Help is in that day. Even if you don’t need help, Math Help is a great place to get your work done and there is support if you get stuck. We hope to see you there!

Monday – Rm. 124 Mrs. Bertucci
Tuesday – Rm. 128 Mrs. Hill
Wednesday – Rm. 126 Mr. Morgan
Thursday – Rm. 132 Mrs. Jensen