

Pompton Lakes School District
A Curriculum Report to the Board of Education



**Lakeside Middle School
Highlights of the Academic Program
2017-2018**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Lakeside School academic program offers a wide variety of learning experiences to students. The teaching staff prides itself in providing a well-rounded curriculum in the core academic, practical arts and physical education/health courses. This year to further enhance the existing curriculum a number of technology based initiatives have been implemented. Students in grade six through eight have received a 1:1 Chromebook computer. This integration of technology has had a vast impact on the daily learning process as teachers are utilizing digital resources in a variety of ways to support their instruction. This infusion of technology has empowered students to learn through inquiry and exploration while completing complex learning tasks.

In the practical arts classes, teachers have placed an increased emphasis on providing students with personalized learning experiences. In particular, 7th grade students spent a fifteen day rotation researching and acquiring a skill of their choice. Teachers approved the topics and monitored progress as the students explored at their own pace. The culminating activity required students to showcase their newly acquired skill to their peers.

Lakeside is constantly looking for character education programs that will ensure that all students learn in a safe and nurturing environment. This year a new online curriculum entitled “Stand Up and Say No” has been incorporated into 6th and 7th grade health classes. Taught by Mrs. Tanis and Mrs. Reynolds, the class has provided students with strategies to solve conflict while opening up lines of communication. The below report highlights the influence of technology on daily instructional practices, summarizes the implementation of personalized learning experiences in the practical arts classes and describes the continued effort to enhance the Lakeside character education program.

II. TECHNOLOGY AS A LEARNING TOOL

It is an exciting time at Lakeside School as staff and students go through a significant transitional period. The infusion of technology over the past three years has had an enormous impact on instructional practices and student learning. During the 2017-2018 school year, Lakeside officially became a 1:1 school when students in every grade level received an HP Chromebook computer. Students are now learning in an environment where technology is incorporated into every lesson. Through the use of digital materials and online “open sources” students are a click away from an endless amount of resources and information. Below is a small sample of the 21st Century learning activities that are taking place in the Lakeside classrooms:

- Mrs. Gaddis, computer literacy teacher, utilized Codecademy to teach the Python programming coding method to 8th grade students.
- Mr. Clarke, 6th grade social studies teacher, utilized Google Draw to create timelines about the lost colony of Roanoke.
- Ms. Lee, 8th grade mathematics teacher, utilized Desmos to help students graph linear equations and coordinate points.
- Mrs. Serra, 6th grade language arts teacher, utilized Padlet to create an online collage of pictures and symbols related to the novel that they are currently reading in class.
- Ms. Corbett, 7th grade science teacher, during the upcoming volcanic unit will have her students skype with a park ranger in Mount Rainier to discuss the warning signs of an explosion.
- The mathematics department assigns four Tenmarks challenges per month. The online program provides personalized practice problems that are aligned with state standards.

- The language arts basic skills teachers utilize Achieve 3000 to provide differentiated reading instruction that improves students' Lexile reading levels.
- Mrs. Ortega, 6th grade science teacher, utilized the online textbook to complete an interactive lab on cells. The students used a virtual microscope to further examine the cells.
- Mr. McCleery, 8th grade social studies teacher, had students watch several videos that were posted on his Google Classroom page. After answering a series of questions, they utilized a blog to comment on each other's work.

Google Classroom has been the centerpiece of the 1:1 implementation. Lakeside teachers use Classroom as a management system that enables them to post, collect and grade assignments. Teachers also display videos, blogs, and documents related to the content they are teaching. Additionally, there is a calendar feature that allows staff to post due dates, field trips, and other important events. Classroom has become an important communication tool for both teachers and students inside and outside of the school.

The creation of the new technology coach position has greatly assisted staff with the implementation of the 1:1 initiative. Mrs. Gaddis has provided daily professional development to individual teachers and grade level teams. Many of the trainings have had a strong focus on Google Classroom and the programs available in Google Drive. Each training session has increased the comfort level of staff and the repertoire of tools that they have at their disposal. As a result, the teachers are planning lessons that enable students to be more technologically skilled and better prepared for high school, college and careers. Moving forward, Lakeside will continue to utilize professional development opportunities to keep teachers informed of the latest initiatives and advances.

III. A FOCUS ON PERSONALIZED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Personalized learning experiences empower students to take ownership of the learning process. Students are given the choice of what, how, when and where they are learning. In this self-regulated environment, the responsibility of the learning shifts from the teacher to the student. Students choose activities that are meaningful and relevant to their interests. Benefits of this approach include increased motivation and confidence, increased enjoyment of learning the curriculum and improvement of overall academic performance.

Over the last few years, Lakeside has implemented multiple activities that follow this approach. Specifically during the current year, the practical arts team conducted an independent learning project with all 7th grade students. The students chose a topic of interest that was aligned with one of the practical arts classes. Potential topics were submitted through a Google Form for teacher approval. Once approved the students were given a fifteen day period to work in a class of their choice to plan, design, and execute the project. Each step of the way, the teachers provided guidance, feedback and support. At the conclusion of the personalized learning period, the students presented their completed projects to their peers. During the presentation phase, the students focused on the process that they followed to learn the skill and were also provided time to showcase their end product. Below are a sample of the student personalized learning projects that were completed:

- A student experimented with potential and kinetic energy by utilizing recycled materials and rubber bands to build a car powered by a propeller.
- A student designed the body of a finger skateboard by utilizing CAD software and the 3D printer.

- A student learned the traditional woodworking process by designing and creating a birdhouse. To assemble the birdhouse the student learned how to operate the band saw, disk sander and drill press.
- A student utilized several online resources to teach themselves the art of modern calligraphy and hand lettering.
- A student learned how to create a stop motion animation by designing a flip book. They then photographed each drawing to make the animation using iMovie.
- A student researched and studied techniques for playing the classical piano piece Minuet in G by Johann Sebastian Bach. She is practicing to play the piece in a performance.
- A student utilized paper, Popsicle sticks, and other recycled materials to design an amusement park layout and construct the physical rides.
- A student researched the Disney artist Mary Blair. After learning about her painting techniques, she recreated her original pieces.
- A student is studying anatomy and learning how to draw body parts such as hands, feet, and legs. She is working on drawing exact proportions and will create a final drawing of a person.
- A student is learning various shading techniques and how to use shading tools to create a black and white piece of artwork. She is researching the parts of the eye and for the final will put the concepts together to create a realistic black and white image of an eye.

Moving forward, Lakeside School will continue to incorporate personalized learning experiences into all areas of the curriculum. The 1:1 initiative gives teachers and students the resources needed to engage in the meaningful and self-initiated projects. This will be an area of focus for future professional development provided by the technology coach.

IV. CHARACTER EDUCATION

According to the Commissioner's Annual Report to the Education Committee of the Senate and General Assembly on Violence, Vandalism, and Substance Abuse in New Jersey Public Schools, bullying incidents peak in middle school, with 85% of middle schools reporting one or more affirmed incidents of bullying. Luckily for our students, the Pompton Lakes School District has strong policies and procedures in place to combat bullying, making it the 2018 Safest School District in New Jersey. Lakeside School and the Pompton Lakes School District, continue to take pride in maintaining a positive school culture and strive to create, support and implement policies, procedures and programs designed to eradicate such behaviors that prevent a supportive and inclusive school environment.

At Lakeside School specifically, the School Safety Team develops initiatives to provide students with a well-rounded character education program as a preventative measure to counter bullying-type behaviors. This year, the Team selected the "Stand Up Say No" character education curriculum to implement. This online curriculum was designed by the NJPSA with the producers of the movie *Contest* to provide students with vocabulary, information and skills to identify bullying behaviors; with an understanding about their role in a bullying situation; and, with strategies to solve conflicts peacefully and respectfully. The intended outcome of the curriculum is to assist in maintaining a positive school climate and culture where bullying behavior is not acceptable. Instead, norms of respect and inclusion are fostered. Students learn how to solve normal conflict before it escalates into bullying-type behaviors. During cycle one, Mrs. Reynolds and Mrs. Tanis taught the program to all 6th and 7th grade students. Mrs. Tanis also shared parts of the program with members of the Future Leaders of Lakeside group so they, too, can continue to spread the message that bullying behavior is not acceptable.

Adults understand how imperative it is to provide students with guidelines and strategies to create a kind and safe community for all. Our goal as a school community is for students to understand how important their behavior matters. This message has been reiterated in countless other character education programs implemented at the middle school level including the Cardinal Commendation Program, The Cardinal Conversation Tree, Kids Care Program, and the 6th and 7th Grade Charity initiatives. This year alone Lakeside has also teamed with outside organizations such as Mallory's Army, The Don't Press Send Campaign, and NY Finest Speakers to teach our student population that kindness truly matters.

V. CONCLUSION

The academic program at Lakeside school continues to provide students with a wide variety of learning experiences and a well-rounded curriculum that prepares them for the next phase of their educational career. This year, the staff of Lakeside School has made the incorporation of technology into daily lessons a priority. With the support of the technology coach, students are being exposed to lesson activities that increase motivation and confidence. The staff of Lakeside School has also worked diligently to ensure that students are learning in an environment that is safe and supportive. The addition of a new anti-bullying curriculum and several character educational program has provided students with the tools they need to help create a community that is kind and safe. In the coming years, Lakeside looks forward to making continued improvements to all programs while continuing to enhance the student learning experience.