education news

an official publication of the Little Falls Township Public Schools

LITTLE FALLS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

July 2024

Instructional and facilities improvements for 2024-25

NOTABLE upgrades are coming in 2024-25, both to the district's educational program and school buildings.

Curricular highlights

New math curriculums will be used at both the middle school and elementary levels. Little Falls will become one of the first districts in New Jersey to use MidSchool Math. Designed for grades 5–8, MidSchool Math is a proven and innovative curriculum that answers a student's most common question about higher math: What use is this?

Engaging scripted stories, often with a dose of humor, show how the math that students are learning is used in the world. It could be a tale that asks students to determine whether a guard in Ancient Roman can afford his vacation (https://vimeo.com/898671434) or to calculate the number of yaks needed in a climb of Mount Everest.

Interactive games are also used to immerse students. For example, Fate & Fortune puts students in the role of a seafaring spice trader and asks them to build ships on a budget (https:// vimeo.com/898713592).

At the elementary level, the district will use Eureka Math², one of the most popular math curriculums in the country. Eureka takes a similar blended learning approach as MidSchool Math, with digital lessons and interactive games showing students context.

The use of physical and digital manipulatives (e.g., cubes, shapes) allows students to go hands-on to move and combine objects, helping them use concrete examples to understand abstract concepts. This promotes a deeper understanding of math, one that transcends the simple memorization of problem-solving strategies.

Teamwork and resilience

The eighth grade class celebrated the culmination of its Little Falls School District experience with outdoor activities that fostered teamwork, resilience, and camaraderie.

The day-long excursion to Camp Bernie in Warren County featured opportunities for students to learn archery, navigate a mid-air jungle gym, gain survival skills such as shelter creation, and practice working together in teams.

"The activities were so much fun," said eighth-grader Ariana Gonzalez. "They really allowed us to bond."

An eighth-grader takes on Camp Bernie's vertical jungle gym

Also at the elementary level, grade 2 will begin using a different reading curriculum. Schoolwide, a program that has proven to be successful in grades 3 and 4 at School No. 3, will move down to School No. 2.

Facilities highlights

Two major facilities initiatives are now underway. Contractors are currently installing new flooring at School No. 2 and School No. 3, replacing the old floors which have been cracking and separating. And in all three buildings, crews are replacing the old worn furniture with new desks, tables, and chairs.

All work is expected to be completed by the start of school on September 3.

Little Falls
Board of Education
32 Stevens Ave
Little Falls, NJ 07424

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Paterson, NJ
Permit No. 32

*********ECRWSS****

Residential Customer

WATCH THE VIDEO!

In September, schools will begin to provide lessons and activities to encourage the essential life skills in Portrait of a Hornet, a description of the ideal Little Falls student. Hear kids talk about what these skills mean to them: **https://youtu.be/N0nNGTpGp7Q**

SCAN WITH CELL

Colors light up hallway

SWATHS of color splashed the eastern second floor hallway at School No. 1 when morning sun filtered through the faux stained glass. Red. Orange. Yellow. Green. Blue. The painted windows were created by students in the Expeditions Club. They're the culmination of a study of the history of stained glass, which featured a walking field trip to the First Reformed Church in Little Falls.

The students worked in teams to create designs; each team masked off sections of window and then applied textured tempura paint. When the tape was removed, the designs were revealed. The students, however, weren't prepared for the solar magic in store. The sun cut through the clear portions of the glass and transferred the designs onto the floor.

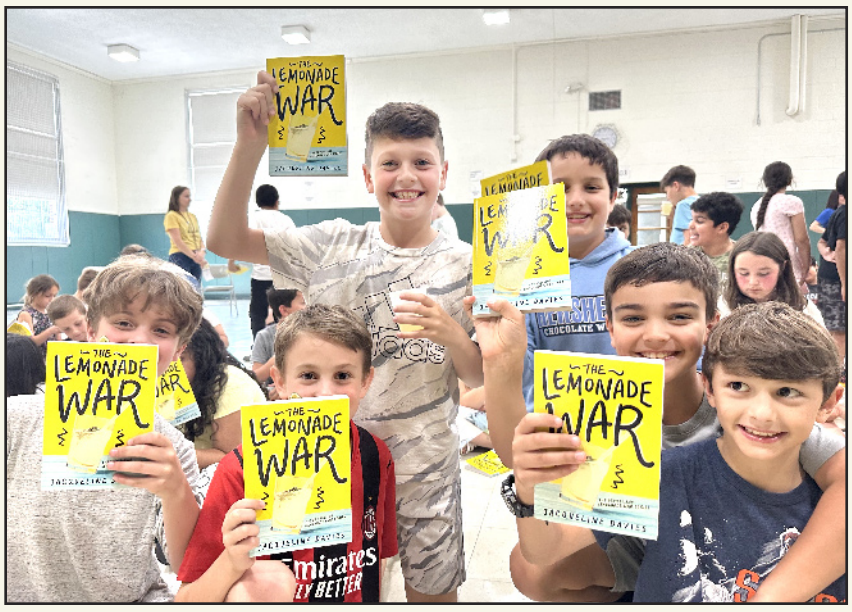
Visitors to School No. 1 check out the patterns made by the glass art

"The kids came in amazed and you could hear them say 'That is so cool,'" said teacher Christine Fiorendino, club adviser. "The effect really is magical."

The Expeditions Club, new in 2023-24, brings outdoor and local learning experiences to students. During one expedition, the group walked through town and along the Morris Canal with John J. Veteri, president of the Little Falls Historical Society, to learn some of the area's rich history. In another outing, the club visited the Laurelwood Arboretum in Wayne.

A tasty reading program

STUDENTS in School No. 3 took on the One School, One Book initiative by reading the novel, "The Lemonade War." One School, One Book is a program designed to encourage a love of recreational reading by creating a shared reading experience across the grades.



"This is a celebration of reading that involves the whole school community," said Principal Elba Castrovinci. "It truly motivates students and gets them into the routine of reading a bit every day."

The PTA provided lemonade during the program's kickoff. Then throughout the subsequent 2 1/2 weeks, other associated lemon and lemonade-themed activities kept the focus on the novel. In Financial Literacy, for example, students calculated the costs and revenue potential of opening a lemonade stand. Each day, a trivia contest tested each class's knowledge of the book. And the student council organized a lemon pucker face challenge. Students were encouraged to bite into a lemon and take photos of their pucker faces for posting on a bulletin board.

This is the second year in which the school has run One School, One Book. The Little Falls Education Foundation purchased a book for each student, as it did in 2023.

Making monsters

SCHOOL No. 1 students in Handcrafting Hornets brought to life the imaginations of their younger peers. After the students in School No. 2 drew colorful creatures, the seventh- and eighth-graders selected two from each homeroom to create. The young artisans translated the designs into three dimensions using the sewing skills learned earlier in the year.

The middle schoolers traveled to School No. 2 this spring and presented the creatures to the students whose artwork was selected for production.

Handcrafting Hornets is an elective new for 2023-24. Students completed a variety of hands-on projects that involved skills such as crocheting, quilling, and pillow-making.

"What was fascinating was how often the students said 'This is so satisfying, this is so relaxing,'" said teacher Elisabeth Billig. "I think that's been lost in the world. Sure it's utilitarian, you can sew your own button on, but it can be calming and fun."

Handcrafting Hornets will be offered again this coming school year.

Students learn digital citizenship

All students at School No. 3 received a lesson on digital literacy and digital citizenship through a new state program.

Prevention specialists and mental health professionals from the county office of the New Jersey Statewide Student Support Services network recently visited every third- and fourth-grade classroom to conduct the training. The lesson included tips on responsible internet use, online security, and appropriate social media conduct.

The NJ4S network, launched by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, provides wellness services to support students and their parents. Workshops and information is offered in topics such as substance use prevention, suicide prevention, anti-bullying, and violence prevention.

District says farewell to longtime school psychologist

a message from the **SUPERINTENDENT**
Tracey Marinelli

AT the end of June, we said farewell to Dr. Sherri Glassman, our longtime school psychologist. Throughout an exceptional career spanning 37 years with the district, Sherri's dedication and unwavering commitment to the well-being of every child have left an indelible mark.

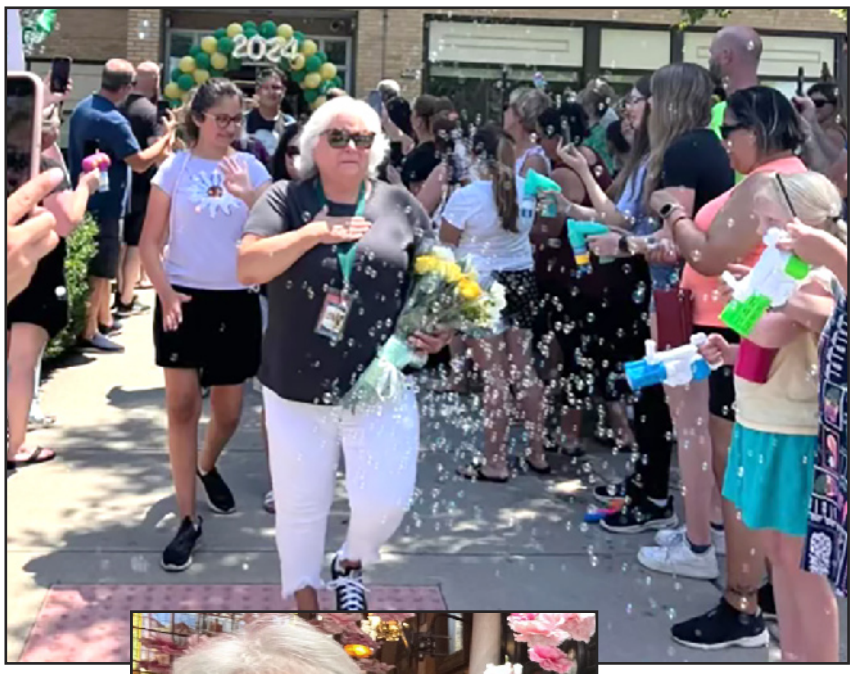
Each school celebrated her retirement in different ways. At School No. 2, she was honored by Principal Jill Castaldo and led the processional of second-graders into the building for the very last time at the conclusion of their moving-up ceremony; at School No. 3, she was honored with balloons and a retirement sash during a school presentation; and at School No. 1, staff members and parents wished her off with bubbles and applause as she exited the building.

These emotional tributes underscore what a pillar of support and compassion Sherri has been, providing invaluable guidance to countless students facing academic, emotional, and personal challenges. Her insight and expertise have not only helped shape individual lives but have also contributed significantly to our school district's culture of empathy and inclusivity.

Sherri's ability to listen attentively, understand deeply, and offer guidance with warmth and wisdom has earned her the respect and admiration of students, parents, and colleagues alike. Her office was not just a place for assessments and consultations, but a sanctuary where students found comfort, reassurance, and the confidence to overcome obstacles.

Beyond her professional achievements, Sherri's kindness and empathy have touched the hearts of everyone she has worked with. She has been a mentor, a confidante, and a source of strength during difficult times. Her legacy will continue to inspire us all to uphold the values of compassion and care in our daily interactions.

As she embarks on the next chapter of her journey, we express our deepest gratitude for her years of service and dedication, and the profound difference she made in the lives of so many throughout her remarkable career. While her presence will be greatly missed, the impact of her work will resonate in our school community for years to come.



***Above**, retiring psychologist Dr. Sherri Glassman leads the outgoing eighth-graders as they are "clapped out" by staff members and parents; **left,** Dr. Glassman enjoys a moment with Superintendent Tracey Marinelli*

Solar car earns kids a trip to NJ finals

A team of seventh-graders in the gifted and talented program at School No. 1 earned a trip to compete in the state finals of a solar car competition. The students traveled to New Providence, New Jersey and faced 64 other middle school teams in the Junior Solar Sprint, a program made possible through a grant awarded by the Army Educational Outreach Program.

> ***"They see the positives in every experience and look to improve."***
>
> **Bethanne Strippoli**
> *Teacher*

The seventh-graders used hands-on engineering skills and principles of science and math to build their solar vehicle, Olivia Rodrigo. Named after the pop singer and inspired by her tour bus, the car was equipped with a speaker system that played several of her hit songs.

"Their teamwork really impressed me," said G&T teacher Bethanne Strippoli. "They see the positives in every experience and look to improve. That's so important in school and in life."

The cars were judged on craftsmanship, speed, and creativity. During the competition, the students spoke with working engineers about design and construction, and took notes on the best components of cars from other schools. They plan on entering the competition next year and have their sights on taking home a medal.

To earn their berth in the state finals, the students completed a video that described their entry in a fun, informative way. Julianna Genao, Olivia Barraco, Nina Fatzler, Samuel Mugleston, and Adam Stuber – pictured above – worked on the car and video.

Celebrate!

THE energy pulsed at School No. 2 and School No. 3, inside and out, during the end-of-the-year carnivals organized by the district's PTA. Students, many joined by their parents, reveled in games and treats such as popcorn and ice cream, creating lasting memories as the academic year drew to a close. The carnivals are among the many educational and recreational activities sponsored by the PTA throughout the year.

Infusing Spanish into the school day

Karina Martinez helps second-graders read announcements in Spanish

Use it or lose it.

The adage holds particularly true in education, perhaps most notably in the learning of foreign languages. The early elementary students in School No. 2 receive 45 minutes of foreign language instruction per week. It's enough to learn some words and phrases, and develop an appreciation for Spanish and Latin cultures. But much can get lost during the week between lessons.

Spanish teacher Karina Martinez takes every opportunity to weave the language into everyday school life whenever she can. She speaks to students in Spanish when she supervises breakfast time, during morning runs she takes with kids, during recess duty, and while subbing in the aftercare program.

In 2023-24, her efforts went schoolwide. The once monolingual morning announcements transformed into a seamless blend of Spanish and English messages read by second-graders. Early in the school year Martinez assisted the students, but by the latter half the kids were flying solo.

"It feels so natural now to hear both languages," said Principal Jill Castaldo. "Karina and world language teacher Katrina Lanza make learning and understanding a foreign language very comfortable. In our globalized society, language skills and the appreciation of multiculturalism and diversity are so crucial."

New Jersey, one of the most diverse states in the U.S., requires students to receive instruction in one or more world languages beginning in preschool or kindergarten, and continuing at least through freshman year of high school.

July 2024

education news

an official publication of the Little Falls Township Public Schools

Michael K. Cravotta, editor • mkc@flight19media.com

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dr. Rachel Capizzi, *President*
Vincenzo Miraglia, *Vice President*
Desiree DiBuono
Doug Jandoli
Patricia Lijoi
Nicole Smith
Michael Tullo
Lauren Verdi
Shannon Zurbruegg

Tracey Marinelli, *Superintendent*