



Parent
LAKE ORION COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
TEACHING AND LEARNING NEWSLETTER
2018/2019 ~ March



Dear Parents/Guardians, Partners in Education,

Happy Spring! 😊 Let's hope we have all of winter's snow and ice behind us. It was a rough winter with a significant number of snow days. Teachers have been working hard to adjust their curriculum as necessary due to the number of school closing days.

After spring break, our students enter into the period of state testing. You will see several tips and bits of information in this newsletter in addition to the communication from your principal. Please also check out the LOCS website, <https://www.lakeorionschools.org> for various summer opportunities for students. Have a safe and fun spring break!

Heidi Mercer

Heidi Mercer
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning



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Science

“What are you figuring out?” Vs. “What did you learn today?” Science Talk in the Elementary Classroom and At Home

The New Face of Science Education

Science education at the elementary level has taken on a dynamic new approach since the adoption of the [Michigan Science Standards](#). This three-dimensional approach not only addresses science content with the [Disciplinary Core Ideas](#) (scientific principles), but also addresses [Cross Cutting Concepts](#) such as patterns, cause and effect, systems and system models and other concepts that are applicable in all disciplines of science. In addition, they include [Science and Engineering Practices](#) that call for students to engage in the practices or skills of real scientists. Students investigate real-world phenomena, beginning with asking questions. Next, they may plan and conduct investigations, develop and use models, and engage in argument from evidence to name just a couple of the practices. At the heart of this new way of learning science, is the collaboration among students rooted in their discussion or discourse.

How is This Different from Other Science Instruction?

Students are presented with a phenomenon such as seeds from a dandelion plant blowing in the wind. They ask questions pertaining to this phenomenon. Rather than the teacher providing the reason(s) the seeds are blowing away from the plant in the wind, they will provide a series of opportunities for students to explore, discuss ideas, and gather evidence to form explanations. During this process of exploration and investigation, evidence collection, and explanation building, students are frequently engaging in dialogue with one another, to share ideas and further the process of figuring out the explanation for the phenomenon.

Conversations during this process of uncovering explanations for scientific concepts may take place with a partner, with a small team of three to four students, or among an entire class as they share their thinking and come to a consensus or common explanation of these new scientific ideas. As students continue to explore and share ideas, they may revise their thinking based on new evidence or the shared ideas of others.

Talking About Science At Home

Gone are the days of, “Read this chapter and answer the questions,” as we begin preparing our students from the very start for the future. So, how do you talk to your child about science at home? Rather than asking the go to: “What did you learn about science at school today?”

Try these questions instead:

- What are you trying to figure out in science?
- What do you wonder about that?
- Why do you think that is?
- What is your evidence? or How do you know?
- What other questions do you have?
- What other questions do you need to answer to figure this out?

In the careers that lie ahead for our children, they will not be called upon to recite knowledge, but instead asked to solve problems, ask questions to figure out why things work the way they do, and to come up with solutions to problems based on the answers they figure out. Most often they will be called upon to do this with teams of their peers just as they are doing in their classrooms today. You can support this learning by engaging in conversation about science with your child at home. Be sure to remember not to give away the answers, but instead ask questions that will make them wonder, explore, and explain on their own.

English Learner and English as a Second Language

My Child Took the WIDA, Now What?

English Learners in grades K–12 have finished the 2019 WIDA ACCESS for ELLs. WIDA ACCESS monitors a student's progress in learning academic English, is administered online, and assesses the four language domains of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. You will receive your child's WIDA results in the mail this summer.

As the school year continues, your child will continue to be supported by his/her English Learner teacher. Support may include individual instruction, small group instruction, push-in EL support, and/or use of the EL resource room. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's progress or services, please contact his/her EL teacher or Jennifer Howe at jennifer.howe@lok12.org.

Acquiring English as a Second Language: What's Normal?

Acquiring a second language is a process that happens in stages. As language develops, parents and educators may worry that a child has a language disorder, when in fact the child is engaging in completely normal behaviors. According to the ¡Colorin Colorado! article, <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/whats-normal-whats-not-acquiring-english-second-language> "What's 'Normal,' What's Not: Acquiring English as a Second Language," here are some of the most common phenomena when learning a second language:

- English Learners go through a silent period when first exposed to a second language. During this time, learners focus on listening and comprehension. The younger the child, the longer the silent period may last.
- English Learners transfer knowledge of structures from their first language to their second language. This results in errors when languages do not have similar structures.
- English Learners codeswitch. They may begin a sentence in one language and finish the sentence in the second language.
- English Learners may seem to lose skills and fluency in their first language while acquiring the second language. Continue to reinforce both languages.

When children learn English while maintaining and reinforcing their first language and culture, they become fluent bilingual speakers.

Reading to Your Kids in Your Home Language Helps Them Become Better Readers

Parents may wonder whether to read to English Learners in English or in their home language. According to Lydia Breiseth, it is important to support your child's efforts to learn English and reading to your child in your home language makes it easier for the child to learn English.

In "Why Reading to Your Kids in Your Home Language Will Help Them Become Better Readers," <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/why-reading-your-kids-your-home-language-will-help-them-become-better-readers>, Breiseth sums up some important research findings about reading to your child in your home language including:

- Young children who were exposed to age-appropriate books in their native language developed stronger pre-literacy skills than children exposed only to books in their second language.
- Children who learned to read in their native language first have an easier time learning to read in English.
- Children who do not have a strong cognitive foundation in their first language take longer to acquire academic language in a second language.

Breiseth also suggests several tips to create a language-rich environment at home in your native language. Her top tips are:

- Read books in your native language daily.
- Talk about the stories you read together.
- Sing, rhyme, do puzzles, and play games in your native language.
- Encourage your child to write in your native language.
- Keep books, games, and other print materials in your native language in your home.

Help Your Student Prepare for State Testing (SAT, PSAT, MME, M-STEP)

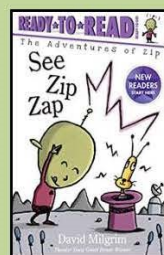
Following Spring Break, schools will begin the process of state testing. Although this can be a high-stress time for students, there are some ways that you can help your student prepare.

- Make sure your student gets enough sleep the night before. This should be followed with a healthy breakfast the morning of testing.
- Your student should come prepared with several sharpened pencils, an eraser, a calculator, and a form of photo identification (High School students only).
- Remind your student to read the questions and ALL options carefully.
 - ◇ Pay close attention to “EXCEPT” questions.
 - ◇ If you come across an unfamiliar word, pay attention to the context clues.

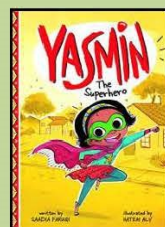
SAT-Specific Tips

1. General Information for the SAT -- It is composed of 5 sections – Reading, Writing and Language, Math – No Calculator, Math – Calculator, and Essay.
2. Encourage your student to log into Khan Academy (www.khanacademy.org) and practice prior to the test. Students can link their Khan Academy account with their College Board results, which will then allow Khan Academy to tailor practice and instruction to their individual needs.
3. If you don't know an answer, then guess. You are NOT penalized for an incorrect answer. If you are starting to run out of time, make sure that you still bubble in an answer for every question.
4. When you get to the writing portion of the test, take a few minutes to plan before you begin writing. Then, leave a few minutes at the end to read through your essay.

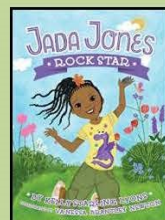
From our bookshelf to yours...



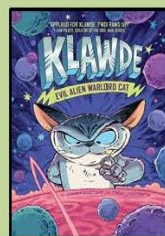
The Adventures of Zip (series)
By David Milgrim
Level E/F



Yasmin (series)
By Saadia Fasqui
Level KLM



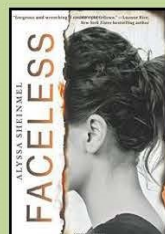
Jada Jones (series)
By Kelly Starling Lyons
Level NOPQ



Klawde (series)
By Johnny Marciano
Level RST



Flames of Olympus (series)
By Kate O'Hearn
Level UVW



Faceless
By Alyssa Sheinmel
Level XYZ

Elementary and Middle Level

Are you tired of dragging answers out of your student when they are working on homework? Do you feel like you overdo it with the help? Here are some questions that you can ask that will give your child an entry point into the problem, and all of these questions should apply to just about any math problem. Be aware, however, that different approaches may or may not work well for different students.

Question 1: What is the problem asking? (re-read the problem for clarity)

This might seem rather basic, but it is surprisingly effective. Asking your child to identify the goal of the problem will help them to frame it correctly in their mind, which can turn what looks like word soup into a reasonable problem. This is especially helpful with wordy questions.

Question 2: What do you already know?

This should help your student to sort through words and diagrams to better understand the problem itself. Establishing what they already know should also help your child to situate the question within content from class. They may realize there are vocabulary words from that day's lesson, or numbers that lend themselves to a particular formula. This question is helpful with lengthy word problems and for problems that contain complicated diagrams.

Question 3: Where have you seen something like this before?

While teachers occasionally give students unfamiliar problems in order to help them to learn how to approach something brand new on their own, homework problems usually have something in common with material presented in class. In more traditional math classrooms, class and homework problems often look nearly identical.

In other classrooms, this is less likely to be the case. But there will still be similar phrases, graphs, or word problem structures. Taking time to make connections will not only help your student to figure out what approach to use, but will also help them to have a deeper understanding of the material. It is highly recommended to ask this question about problems with visual components or algebraic equations.

Question 4: Can you brainstorm 5 different ways you could try to solve this problem?

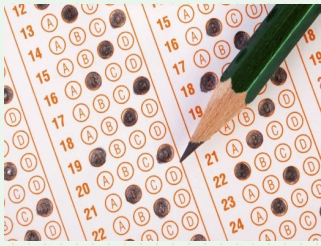
Sometimes students are paralyzed at the start of a problem because they are worried they are not doing it the 'right' way. Remove that pressure by just asking them to list lots of ways they could start working on the problem. Some ideas might be tedious, some might require luck, and some might just be silly. The point is to loosen up your child's thought process. This allows them to ponder the question in a less intimidating manner, which should help them to discover that they know something useful. This is especially helpful for problems that look particularly novel to your child.

Question 5: Can you make a guess? How would you know if it was right?

Guessing the answer, and then checking that guess, has many benefits. First of all, it's an approachable way to start thinking about a problem. Coming up with a reasonable guess might even be enough for your child to recognize the underlying mathematical concepts. If it is not, the checking process lets your child walk through the problem with a concrete number, instead of with an abstract variable, which is often much easier. In some cases, your child might even guess the correct answer, or something close to it. Guessing and checking is especially useful for word problems and just about any other problem that has a number for an answer.

Math class is at least as much about the content itself as it is how to think about that content. Your job during homework time is not to teach your child the nitty-gritty details (that is what their teacher and tutor are for), but to help them to identify what they already know and apply it to the problem at hand.

Math (cont.)



SPRING INTO TESTING

Parent Tips: How to Help Your Child Prepare for Standardized Tests.

While many students and parents (and teachers) are looking forward to a relaxed Spring Break, students in grades 3–11 will be faced with a standardized test when they return to school. These assessments are crucial not only to you and your child, but also to the teachers, administrators, and school your child attends.

Students may feel the pressure of performing well on these tests, especially the SAT, which is now the assessment juniors take and is considered in college admissions. The following test-taking tips are suggestions to assist your child to perform well on the day of the test.

Before the Test

- Know the test your student is taking. What is the name of it? When are they taking it? Is it timed or not timed?
- Talk about the assessment with your child. It's helpful for your child to understand why schools give standardized tests and why it's important to try your best.
- Are there practice tests? The PSAT and SAT have practice tests through the College Board website (www.collegeboard.org). Create an account or log into an existing account to utilize the practice and partnership with Khan Academy. If you do not have access to a computer, your child's school can hand out copies of practice tests for PSAT and SAT.
- Ensure that your child gets a decent amount of sleep the night before the assessment and a good breakfast the morning of the assessment. Lack of these essentials can cause students to lose focus.

On Test Day

- Make the morning of the assessment a pleasant one. Do not add to your child's stress. Do not argue or bring up a touchy subject. Try to do extra things to make them laugh, smile, and relax.
- Make sure your child dresses in comfortable clothing. Students will need to sit for a long period of time and it's important that clothes are comfortable. Also, be prepared that the room may be warm or cold, plan accordingly. You may even consider laying these clothes out the night before.
- Get your child to school on time the day of the assessment. You may need to give yourself extra time to get to school that morning. Getting them there late will throw off their routine and add stress as the test begins.
- Make sure your child is prepared with supplies. Some schools will provide the tools needed such as pencils and calculators. If your child has a particular pencil/pen they prefer, make sure that it is packed and a backup is packed in case it runs out of ink or the pencil breaks.

After the Test

Know when the results will be shared with you and your child. This varies from test to test, but check with your child's teacher or school administrator for this answer. If you have created an account with College Board, your student will receive their PSAT or SAT results prior to the school receiving the results.

When you get the results, review them with your child. Find out if the assessment can be taken again. If so, when are those opportunities and how can they better prepare?

Resources:

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/parent-tips-how-help-your-child-prepare-standardized-tests>

<http://www.metrofamilymagazine.com/April-2013/Advice-to-Help-Children-Prepare-for-Standardized-Tests/>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/essential-standardized-test-taking-tips-for-parents-3194598>

Mindfulness

The Science of Mindfulness

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and without judgement according to Jon Kabat-Zinn, creator of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). It is a balance between relaxation and alertness. A Harvard study concluded that we spend up to 47% of our day lost in thought and not present to what it is we are actually doing (Bradt, 2010). This leads to unhappiness and discontent. Research and experience have concluded that we are happiest and most content when we are in the present moment and focused on exactly what we are doing even if it is as simple as brushing our teeth.

So, what exactly happens to our minds and bodies during and after mindfulness?

Using Dan Siegel's model of the brain, imagine a hand in a fist with the thumb tucked underneath the fingers. The wrist is the spinal cord and the palm is the reptilian brain (amygdala), the oldest part of the brain since it is the first to develop in utero and the first to develop over 300 million years ago. This is the part of the brain that responds in a very primal way such as fleeing, fighting, or freezing in the presence of a threat. The thumb that is tucked under the folded hand is the limbic system, the second part of the brain to develop. It is responsible for emotions and connections that have been developed in life. The folded over fingers, specifically the tops of the second and third fingers, on top of the thumb, is the prefrontal cortex. This is the last part of the brain to develop and is responsible for managing and mentioning emotions as well as picking up on others' emotions. It is the part of the brain that is responsible for executive function and attention control but does not fully develop until the mid-twenties, in contrast to the limbic system (emotions) which is fully developed at a very early age.

Scientifically, mindfulness regulates the nervous system by making the amygdala (fight, flight, freeze response) less active during mindfulness.

Scans have shown this part of the brain to have less gray matter density following mindfulness training. Conversely, the hippocampus, which is a part of the limbic system, and the prefrontal cortex are more active during mindfulness, showing an increase of gray matter allowing for more regulation of emotions and behaviors, positive influences on learning and memory, greater increase of attention control, a greater sense of compassion for oneself, and an overall sense of well-being. The greatest gift to be gained through a steady diet of mindfulness is the ability to create space and replace impulsive reactions with thoughtful responses.

Our bodies benefit in many ways as well. The ability to better cope with pain and illness was discovered using Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction with cancer patients. According to Jonni Pollard, a meditation teacher and co-founder of a global non-profit, 1 Giant Mind, some measurable changes include increased immune function, decreased heart-rate, decreased blood pressure, and higher brain functioning.

The research and the science of mindfulness is compelling. Getting started is simple, especially with so many resources available via the internet and apps. A commitment of just a few minutes a day, living in the present moment, can set up a foundation for a healthier mind and body allowing for our happiest and most content selves.

Discover more about the research and science of mindfulness:

Aware, Daniel Siegel, M.D., New York Times Bestseller, available on Amazon

Wandering mind not a happy mind, Steve Bradt, The Harvard Gazette, Nov. 2010

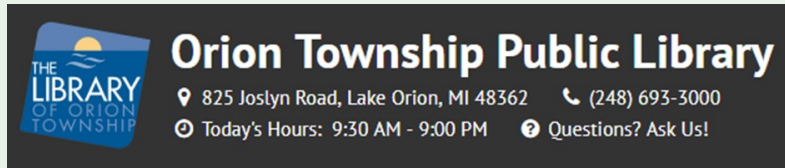
Tedx Sunset Park, Diana Winston, The Practice of Mindfulness

Mindful.org

Special Education

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What can parents do to help with homework or practice reading?



Want to make learning and homework fun? Tired of struggling with your child with homework? Do you feel your child needs to learn how to deal with their emotions or to learn how to talk to friends? Check out this free resource. Make learning fun at home and start building their skills today. All you need is a library card to access all of the resources on the Lake Orion Library website. It's free to you and your child.

Accessibility & Special Needs

Check out this site <https://orionlibrary.org/accessibility-special-needs/>. There are many great resources to assist you with picking books that interest students but more importantly matching their reading level. Reading an interesting book each night can increase student reading and also their love for books. There are also sites for you to provide your child with audio books. Need more information for a report but you struggle with reading at home, check out this site for ways to get the information without struggling with reading it.

Other great features include...Braille books, large print books, social skill kits, discovery kits, and more.

Homework & Database Help

Many great resources for your middle and high school student. All the information they need for learning is available here: <https://orionlibrary.org/teens/homework-database-help/>

One great example is *Learning Express Library*.



Learning Express Library features online tutorials, practice tests, and audio books. It offers job search and workplace skills improvement, skill building in reading, writing, math, and basic science, and more. All you need is a library card and then you can create an account for all access to the supports.

Student Resources

Need to find information for a report? Struggling with a homework assignment? Explore an online library resource or librarian recommended website! Students need help reading? Check out the great sites that read the words to your child. <https://orionlibrary.org/youth/student-resources/>

One great example is Pebble Go. Pebble Go is database for reading ad research, includes database options for animals, earth and space and biographies. Students can read the information or have the option to hear it read to them. This is a great way to build vocabulary.



Teaching and Learning



Read by Grade Three Law

In 2016, the Michigan Legislature passed a law that requires schools to identify learners who are struggling with reading and to provide additional help. The law states that third graders may repeat (be retained) if they are one or more grade levels behind in reading. Beginning with the 2019–2020 school year, this law will affect LOCS current second grade students.

Three times a year, fall, winter and spring all students in grades kindergarten, first, second and third are given an assessment screener. This screener helps teachers identify which students need an individual reading improvement plan (IRIP) in grades K–3. If a student receives an IRIP, that plan is updated throughout the school year by the classroom teacher in order to keep parents informed. During third grade students take the M-STEP in the spring, the state of Michigan will use the ELA portion of the M-STEP to decide if a student is one or more grade level behind in reading. If a student is one or more grade level behind a notification from the state of Michigan will be generated for the family and the school that the student **may** need to be retained in third grade.

The state of Michigan has put together a Read by Grade Three – Parent Awareness Toolkit, https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753_74161-490688--,00.html to access that toolkit. There are short videos along with easy to read question/answer documents.



Since the last parent newsletter in November 2018, Lake Orion Community Schools has presented five Parent University events.

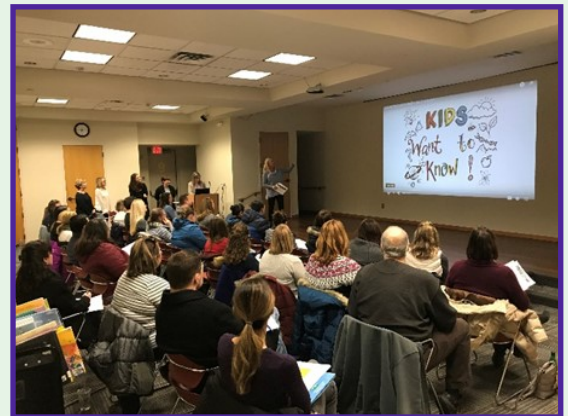
The topics were:

- What science courses should my high school student take? Is my child on the right Math track?
- Angst Movie
- PSAT for middle school students
- Coping Skills and Conflict Management for elementary students
- College Prep

All of these events were well attended by parents and are available at <https://www.lakeorionschools.org/departments/teaching-and-learning/parent-university> There is one more Parent University event planned for this school year; Kindergarten Readiness on June 4 at Webber Elementary from 6:30–7:30 p.m.

LOCS is in the process of planning Parent University events for next school year.

If you have an idea that you would like considered please email Kerri Anderson at kerri.anderson@lok12.org by May 3, 2019.



Diversity and Education

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In **January**, Lake Orion High School had its first evening to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy. LOHS' Diversity Committee worked together to ensure that the evening was a time to reflect on the message of, *"What are you doing for others?"* Students across the district were invited to compete in various essay, poetry, and multimedia competitions focused on the theme, *"What are you doing for others?"* with the winners presenting their winning entry during the evening celebration. The evening also had various musical, dance, multimedia performances, and speakers all devoted to promoting the theme. In the future, the district looks forward to Dr. King's birthday being a meaningful observance and celebration that the Lake Orion Community continues to highlight and honor the legacy of this great man. Below is the link to a video montage of the evening:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmZslMQyWPo>



WOMEN were highlighted throughout the month of March. There were different learning activities to highlight women including pictures of examples of some of today's important women, as well as information about important women throughout history and in the present. Cultural Outreach held a women's job fair that included job booths created by LOHS girls, that middle school girls could visit to learn about different diverse jobs. It was a great evening to pique the interests of middle school girls and empower them to think about their future.

In the month of **February** we had the honor of highlighting African American history month throughout LOHS.

All students had the opportunity to participate in building a paper quilt that highlighted the contributions of African Americans throughout history, past and present. The paper quilt was on display for the entire month. The project was a month long initiative along with various learning activities during lunches.



SAVE THE DATE: Culture Night
Wednesday, May 15 at LOHS
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Reach out to me for questions or comments:
Michelle.cureton@lok12.org
Diversity and Equity Coordinator

If you would like to contribute in any way in the efforts of LOCS to spread diversity and equity please contact me.

Upcoming events:
Languages (April), Asian and Multiracial Appreciation (May), LGBTQ+ /Pride (June)





LAKE ORION COMMUNITY SCHOOLS 2019 Summer Skills Sharpener

Lake Orion's Elementary Skills Sharpener Program is designed to keep skills sharp over the summer to limit summer learning loss. Students will be engaged in a variety of fun activities as an extension of the curriculum from their recently completed grade.

- WHO:** Incoming Kinders—Incoming 6th Graders
- WHEN:** July 8, 2019— August 1, 2019 (Monday - Thursday)
- TIME:** 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
- WHERE:** Stadium Drive Elementary

To maximize the educational benefits of the Summer Skills Sharpener, sessions will be offered in two week blocks

(No single week registrations will be offered)

Session	1st child	Each additional child
July 8—18	\$200	\$150
July 22—Aug 1	\$200	\$150
July 8—Aug 1	\$375	\$275

Kinder Readiness: This course is designed for students who have completed one year of developmental kindergarten or preschool and would like to sharpen their skills. This course is designed to help children prepare for Kindergarten. Children work on reading, writing, and math skills that will help them be successful in kindergarten.

Skills Sharpener 1st—6th: This course is designed for students who have completed K, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade. Vocabulary is built, comprehension of written material is expanded, and word attack skills are strengthened to enable students to use reading skills more fully and with more self-confidence. Students will be immersed in writing activities that will help build their writing toolbox to become more creative, convincing, and compelling, writers. Students will also work on strengthening their mathematic skills. Problem solving strategies are also emphasized.

Registration forms can be downloaded at <https://www.lakeorionschools.org/departments/teaching-and-learning/summer-school-programs/elementary-school>

or

contact Gretchen Hynes for an emailed copy

Gretchen Hynes 248.391.3500 or gretchen.hynes@lok12.org