

APRIL, 2021



TEACHING AND LEARNING

Parent Newsletter

Dear Dragon Families,

Happy spring! I hope you were able to enjoy spring break last week. We are starting to experience nicer weather days, which is wonderful.

Fourth quarter is right around the corner, which will soon lead to the closing of our 2020-2021 school year. This has certainly been a year that we will not forget. As the end of the school year approaches, it is important to encourage our students to finish strong while celebrating and reflecting on all of their accomplishments. This goes for our families as well. LOCS sincerely thanks you for your partnership this year as we worked to provide the best educational experience possible during a pandemic. It is critical to focus on the positives that resulted from this past year. Be sure to commend yourself and celebrate as a family for managing during a very difficult time. We have all grown and learned in ways that we would not have otherwise.

Please be sure to take a few minutes to read this quarter's newsletter. There is important information regarding student testing along with several articles with many helpful tips to support student learning. Please be sure to reach out to your child's teacher and/or school administration if your child/family needs assistance as we approach the end of the school year and the different stages of how our society is handling the pandemic. It is very important that we continue to keep a close eye on our student's social-emotional well-being as restrictions are lifted in dealing with the pandemic. There may be students that have done well throughout the pandemic but may start to show signs of needing additional support as they now attempt to process the past year. We have and will continue to focus on the whole child including not only academics but also our student's social, emotional and mental health.

Thank you again for your support, partnership and understanding. We are very fortunate to have a community that takes pride in our youth and their education. We are Dragon Proud and Orion Strong!

Sincerely,

Heidi Mercer
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning



FROM THE TEACHING & LEARNING OFFICE

Parent University Update

If you missed a Parent University Event, you can find the recorded session on the district webpage: <https://www.lakeorionschools.org/teaching-and-learning/parent-university>.

Past topics for the 2020-2021 school year have been recorded and include:

- Academic Vocabulary (Grades K-8)
- Building a Culture of Literacy (Grades 6-12)
- Supporting Reluctant Readers (Grades K-2)
- Teaching Kids Cultural Competency (Grades K-12)
- Early Literacy (Grades DK-1)
- Reluctant Readers (Grades 6-12)
- Everyday Mindfulness (DK-12, Post-Secondary)
- More than Just Pressing Play: Ways Kindle Can Make a Difference in Your Child's Life (Grades K-8)
- Executive Functioning (Grades 3-5)
- Executive Functioning (Grades 6-12)
- Mathematical Foundations (Grades K-2)
- All About Microsoft Teams/Seesaw

Upcoming topics for the 2020-2021 school year are:

- May 4 (6:30-7:30 p.m.)
 - Fun Summer Reading: Resources and the Latest Books (Grades 6-12)
- May 11 (6:30-7:30 p.m.)
 - Kindergarten Readiness (DK)



DATA AND ASSESSMENT

Missy Butki, Data Specialist/Instructional Coach

Student Testing

What Parents Can Do to Help Students Prepare

As a parent and your child's first teacher, you can help your child understand and prepare for the assessments they will take in school. Here are some points that will help your child perform their best:

Find out the facts: To start, review the Michigan Department of Education website for the test(s) your child will take. These pages include valuable information on state assessments and the Spring testing calendar:

- Michigan Merit Exam (MME) (www.michigan.gov/mme)
- M-STEP (www.michigan.gov/mstep)
- MI-Access (www.michigan.gov/mi-access)
- WIDA web page (www.michigan.gov/wida)

Talk to your child about testing: Let them know that assessment is a regular part of learning. Make sure they understand why they are being tested and how it is important to their future.

Keep state tests in perspective: Reduce your child's anxiety about the test by reminding them that it is just one measure of learning, and another way to find out where their academic strengths and weaknesses are. Remind them of what they do well, and how they have improved with effort.

Take a look at the state practice opportunities and encourage your child to practice at home: Note only will this help you better understand the types of questions your child will be answering, it will help familiarize your child with the test format and features. If your child is struggling, let the teacher know so when your child takes the test, the focus can be more on test content and less on test navigation.

- M-STEP and MI-Access Online Tools Training and M-STEP sample test items can be found on each test's web page.
- PSAT and SAT sample test items can be found on the College Board website (<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat>)
- WIDA offers family encouragement resources on the WIDA website (wida.wisc.edu/teach/learners/engagement)

Make sure that your child is well rested and eats a high protein, low sugar/carb breakfast: Children who are tired, hungry or have too much sugar and carbs are less able to pay attention in class or to handle the demands of a test.



Testing Facts to Share with Your Child

- Tests are just one way teachers, schools, districts, and states use to measure what students know and how well they are learning what is taught.
- The purpose of a state assessment is to ensure our state's schools do the best job possible in preparing students to become successful, based on a set of agreed-upon standards.
- Because the state test is exactly aligned with Michigan's standards, test questions should be a natural extension of what students are learning every day in their classrooms.



ELA

Beth Bruce, Kelly Day & Kate DiMeo, Instructional Coaches

Supporting Reluctant K-2 Writers

It is important to have a space carved out for your child to write.

This doesn't have to be anything fancy – you could just sit on the floor with a clip board. Make sure they have some paper with lines to help them ground their letters. If you do not have lined paper, don't worry, just make sure they have paper to write on. Our kids are used to writing on a single side. They will end up revising, cutting, and adding on. If they write on both sides of the paper, they could cut off the writing on the other side.

The best activity to improve writing is reading. If your child reads good books, they will become a better writer. Reading exposes students to general vocabulary, word study, and content-specific vocabulary. Through reading, students see a variety of authors' techniques that they can use in their own writing.

Be a writing partner for your child. Talk to them about their writing. You do not have to give them prompts ("Why don't you write about..."). Your job will be to help them mine their own lives for the type of writing they want to create. Instead of telling your child how to spell a word, give them resources (alphabet charts, word walls, etc.) and suggest they stretch the word and listen for the letters they hear. We accept approximated spellings.

Helpful ways to come up with writing ideas. Remind them of a shared experience. For example, you could prompt with: "Do you want to make a story about the day we went to the zoo, or an information book to teach about the zoo"... or "I remember you weren't happy about the bears small enclosure maybe we can write a letter to the zoo to make a change about that bear's enclosure". Give them a choice; let them know it is up to them. If they make the choice, their energy and enthusiasm will be higher.

Before they write anything...

- Help them think about the parts of the book.
- If they are writing non-fiction, ask them what pages or chapters will be in their book.
- It is helpful if they write a more focused moment. Instead of writing about the entire day, encourage them to write about their favorite part of the day. Avoid a long laundry list of everything that happened that day and zoom in on one small moment.

How long, how much?

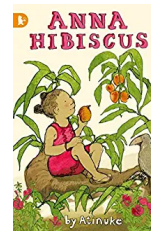
Volume standards and expectations for the END of year...

- End of Kindergarten -- We are thrilled for 3 pages a day of 1-3 sentences.
- First grade -- 2-3 pages of writing with about 12-15 sentences per day.
- Second Grade -- 2-5 pages per day. They are spending more time thinking, planning, editing and revising, so we are hoping 2nd graders' writing looks like an entire notebook page filled up.

From our bookshelf to yours...



The Desmond Cole Ghost Patrol
By Andres Miedoso and Victor Rivas
Level M



Anna Hibiscus
by Atinuke
Level P



History Smashers
By Kate Messner
Level X



Three Keys (sequel to *Front Desk*)
By Kelly Yang
Level X



How We Roll
By Natasha Friend
Upper middle school to high school



Concrete Rose
By Angie Thomas
High School



ENGLISH LEARNER DEPARTMENT

Jen Howe, EL District Coordinator

My Child Took the WIDA, Now What?

English Learners in grades K-12 have finished the 2020 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 or early next fall.

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.

The Gift of Language

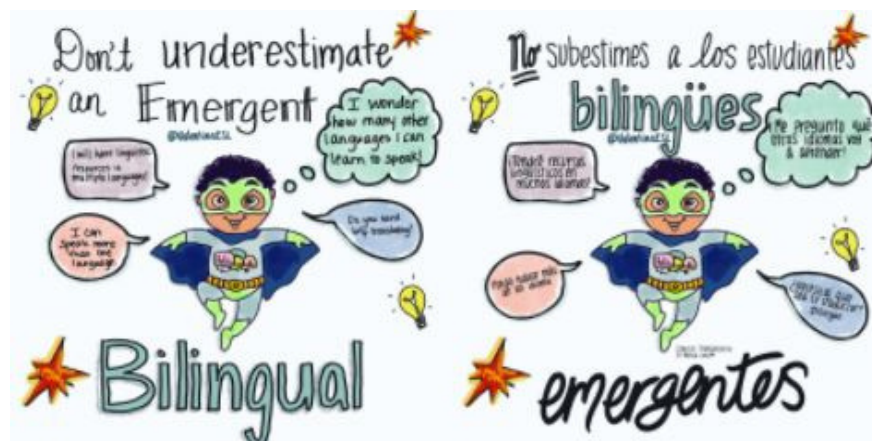
Raising bilingual or multilingual children has many benefits. Children who speak more than one language often experience:

- Important connections to family, extended family, culture, and heritage
- More active and flexible brains due to switching between two language systems
- Stronger academic skills across content areas
- Greater job opportunities across the world

As you speak your native language with your children, you are fostering their connection to you, your family, your culture, and world and building the basis for their social and academic success at school. Your conversations help your children learn new things, describe their experiences, count, and recognize words.

You might wonder if you should speak English at home to support your child's English proficiency. Young children can learn multiple languages at the same time and will sometimes combine words and phrases from both languages. This is completely normal and a great sign that they are learning the rules of both languages. Speak the language you are most comfortable with and encourage your children to build strong skills in both languages.

For more information on home language and the benefits of being bilingual, click [here](#).





MATH DEPARTMENT

Brent Cubitt and Emilie Schiff, Instructional Coaches

Kids' math skills have taken a hit during the pandemic. Here's how parents can help.

By Susan Levine and Michelle Hurst

Even as more children across the United States head back to in-person school — some for the first time in nearly a year — hybrid and virtual models mean that in many cases, kids are doing at least some of their learning at home. The extended break from full-time in-person learning has left many parents worried about how the coronavirus pandemic has affected their children's education, and what they can do to help bridge learning gaps. As developmental psychologists who study early math learning and how families can support it, we have also been thinking about these challenges.

Although bedtime stories — an important way to support reading development — are a ritual in many homes, math learning is typically not part of home routines. Parents tend to see math as the responsibility of schools, much more so than literacy. Also, many parents back away from math because of their own negative feelings about the subject. As a result, math engagement in the home is relatively infrequent, and it varies markedly across families.

It is not surprising then that children's math learning is taking a particularly big hit because of the pandemic. In fact, recent studies indicate that the "Covid Slide" is more severe in math than in reading. Fortunately, there are many ways families can include math in their daily routines to help counter some of that pandemic-related math learning loss, much like they include story time to support their children's language and literacy skills. Here are some ways to incorporate math in your child's life at home.

Jigsaw puzzles and blocks can also bolster math skills by building children's spatial thinking. In all of these contexts, talking about math increases children's skills. Extend the conversations by asking children questions such as "How should we divide the pizza so it is fair?" or "How did you get your answer?" By asking questions and giving hints, rather than immediately providing the answer, parents can help children actively engage in math thinking. Supporting the math learning of school-age children can be a bit trickier. It's more effective to start by asking the child to explain the problem, as explaining sometimes leads to them solving it. Or suggest doing some research, using the resources on the Internet to learn together. Productive struggle, with support and guidance, can be more helpful than solving the problem for your child.

As with younger children, there are plenty of opportunities to engage school-age children in math beyond homework. Incorporating math into everyday activities, such as measuring fractional amounts while baking or graphing the family's ice cream preferences, engages children in a low-stakes, non-stressful way.

But what if your child announces that they don't like math? Try pointing out that activities the child does like — art, blocks, cooking, shopping, games, sports — are related to math, which may lead the child to think about the subject more broadly and feel more positive about it.

No matter how you feel, do not make the all-too-common pronouncement, "I'm not a math person." This kind of statement tells kids that there are two kinds of people in the world: those who are math people and those who are not, and that there is not much that can be done about it. Even saying things that seem benign, like "You're good at math," can inadvertently create the idea that you either can do math or you can't. Instead, praise effort with statements such as, "Good job on that problem," to help children develop a growth mind-set — the belief that with effort you can learn, which will support math achievement.

There are also many free online resources to support math learning. We have worked on a few, including the [Becoming a Math Family](#) website and app, and the DREME ([Development and Research in Early Mathematics Education](#)) website. Both have early math resources and tips for families with young children. For children in early elementary school, the [Bedtime Math](#) website and app merge math with storytelling. Another great resource is [Wide Open School](#) offers tutoring in a range of math areas. In addition, every day activities such as buying groceries and planning schedules provide opportunities to ask questions and to engage children in math thinking. By sharing how you use math in your life, you can spark children's interest and learning. And beyond the home, local libraries, museums and other community organizations provide valuable resources and ideas that can help stem the "Covid Slide."

Susan Levine is the Rebecca Anne Boylan Professor in Education and Society in the Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago.

Michelle Hurst is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago.

Tiny moments of "being here" can add up to a whole lot of calm.



SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

Andrea Brook, Jamie Kimber, Pam Moreman, Instructional Coaches

LOOKING FOR SOME FAMILY SCIENCE?

For Families - Learning in Places is a great place to start!

These activities are designed to be used right outside your door. Take a wondering walk and use the science and engineering practices along the way. Make observations, ask questions, collect data, and look for patterns. Communicate your findings with family and friends. Each activity is explained in an overview document and then you can use the activity sheet to participate in the activity. What a great way to model life-long learning as a family.

Here is just one example:

What is the current season? How do you know? In this activity, you will take a walk to find evidence of the current season. You will find evidence by making observations using your five senses.

Activity Overview

As a family, decide where you want to go for a walk to look for evidence of the current season.

- Before you take your walk, make a prediction about what season you think it is.
- During your walk:
 - Record observations that are evidence of the current season (what do you hear, smell, and see for example?).
 - Record questions that you have. What do your observations make you wonder about?



What can you do to support learning?

- » The goal of this activity is to think about what evidence your family uses to figure out what season it is. Everyone should offer as many ideas, observations, and questions as they can (instead of there being one "right" answer).
- » If someone is having a hard time making observations, you may ask specific questions like, "What are three things you see that tell you it is [season], and why?" and "What do you hear that tells you it is [season], and why?"
- » Your family can use the questions and wonderings you come up with to support other activities. For example, if your family has questions and wonderings about something you saw, heard, or smelled, you can use those questions as an opportunity to find and watch related videos or read a related book together.



SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Julie Gutman, Special Education Director

Virtual Math Manipulatives

Looking for ways to help your child with math and make it more engaging? Here is a site that provides a simple way for your child to access virtual math manipulatives. Check out this quick resource from Julie Smith, the *Techie Teacher*. Find tools for shapes and geometry, counting and basic functions, and fractions or decimals, through time and money, and much, much more!

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1jadlg9nk64U9gWtj4QEbd-AEzVtCXQeH-y44LPXIF3M/present?slide=id.g27b693dca5_0_261

Pay Attention - Taking ADHD Characteristics and turning them into Superpowers

<https://www.playattention.com/>

If you have a child that has been diagnosed with ADHD, you are most likely aware of the impact this has on them throughout their day, both at home and at school. It can be challenging to know how to best help them navigate the difficulties they face. The website www.playattention.com has some great resources available at no charge. They offer webinars in addition to ebooks. The most recent webinar series focuses on Executive Functioning, and each of the webinars has a corresponding ebook available for download. The webinar topics in this series include the following: Initiation, Focus, Organization, Emotion Regulation, Mental Flexibility, Working Memory, Self-Monitoring, and How to Improve Executive Function and Self-Regulation.

The newest topic is a 5-part webinar series titled How to Make ADHD Your Superpower. You can find additional information about this series under the webinars tab on the site.

A new series is scheduled for April 8, 2021. Each of the webinars in this series includes strategies for both children and adults. Information on additional topics can be found in the many ebooks that are available as a free download. You can locate the ebooks under the resources tab.

The first series is already available for you.

Help, why can't I get started? Webinar 1

<https://www.playattention.com/webinars/executive-function-series-webinar-recordings>

How can I stay focused in a distracted world? Webinar 2

Additional topics include, organization, emotional regulation, change, working memory, and self-monitoring. All webinars also include a free ebook.



TECHNOLOGY & CAREER READINESS

Craig Schoon, Instructional Technology Coach & Rosa Everitt, Career Readiness, HS

Is your student career ready?

Lake Orion Community Schools, in partnership with Oakland Schools, has been working on expanding and developing new Career Readiness opportunities for students to find successes in a variety of avenues in their post-secondary path. From programs that have allowed our kindergartners to learn about careers in the community to our capstone Senior Interviews, we have been committed to continue giving our students options in Career Awareness, Exploration, and Preparedness at all levels.

Career Readiness is a lifelong process that we are committed to at Lake Orion Schools. Our students have Skyped with Scientists in the classroom and participated in a live industry chat with an IT Business professional and a few hundred other students across the county. In elementary, we will continue to help our students become more self-aware of who they are and the careers around them. With Xello, our K-5 students created goals, explored jobs in the community, and learned about different roles within those jobs. Next year, we will be introducing a 1,000 square foot STEM trailer to our students where they will have the chance to discover Advanced Manufacturing opportunities, IT, Robotics, and autonomous vehicles.

In the Middle School this year, our media specialists have been committed to helping our students make connections between what they love and who they are and connect them to potential career options. Our kids have become more self-aware of who they are a student and as a person by digging into their learning and personality styles. By continuing this work at the middle level, and introducing more hands on and exploration opportunities, students at the middle level have become more aware of their strengths and areas of improvements, skills, and goals to help identify career pathways or career interests.

At the high school, students are enrolled in Career Foundations as a 9th or 10th grader where we help students start to develop their high school plan, explore college and career options, working in a global world, and the skills necessary to be a successful student and employee. Also, students used Xello and Nepris to watch on demand videos from business professionals they were interested in learning more from and reading through interviews around the pros and cons of their job. Senior year, however, students are required to take Personal Finance, where the primary objective is to provide our students with the basics of finances, financial responsibility, and budgeting. Additionally, students are taught interview skills and are required to complete a senior portfolio and a senior interview which is typically in person and the community comes in to assist with delivering a truly professional feel for our students. This year, however, interviews were delivered virtually through SparkHire's One-Way Video Interview option. This allowed them to experience the pre-screening process of interviews done in a variety of companies and institutions across the US. Students were asked general interview "get to know you questions." The last question, however, we asked students, "Is there anything else you would like to share with us?" Here, Senior, Emma C. shares her thoughts with us.

We are very proud of our students here at Lake Orion Community Schools, and we strive to give our students opportunities to not only be college ready, but career ready. While this year has definitely offered up some challenges keeping us from our normal field trips, classroom visits, and our 11th Grade Career Day, we have been working on new ways to inform our students about careers and see their own potential.

To help support your student and Lake Orion Schools in our endeavor to make every student career ready, feel free to visit our [Career Center](#) website or reach out to Rosa Everitt, our K-12 Career Readiness Coordinator, at rosa.everitt@lok12.org.