

September 2021



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

# *Parent Newsletter*

Dear Dragon Families,

Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year. I hope this newsletter finds you had a wonderful summer as well as a great start to this school year. It is wonderful to be back and moving toward what we traditionally expect regarding school. There is a positive energy that can be felt in every building with excitement from students and staff.

Each year the Teaching and Learning Department publishes four parent/guardian newsletters. The purpose is to highlight some of the many things happening throughout our district. Our website is also a place where information can be found on various topics.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight a few bond projects that took place during the summer months. All elementary classrooms received new furniture (with the exception of Blanche Sims which will receive the new furniture when the building is completed). While this was a huge task for all involved, the look and squeals from students was worth every bit of work. Webber Elementary received a major renovation with one whole wing being replaced and the other significantly updated. Paint Creek and Stadium Drive Elementary received new front offices including secure entries. Every high school classroom received an interactive flat panel to enhance their instruction and the new Early Childhood Center opened earlier this month. Bond work will continue. Click [here](#) for updated information which is posted on our website regularly. Thank you to our community for supporting these upgrades and additions to our school buildings and classrooms.

Thank you for your continued partnership in education. We are looking forward to an awesome school year!!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heidi Mercer". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Heidi Mercer  
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning



# FROM THE TEACHING & LEARNING OFFICE

## Parent University - Early Literacy (Grades DK-1)

Lake Orion Community Schools is kicking off its Parent University events for the 2021-22 school year with a focus on early literacy for the youngest students.

At this session, you will make games and hands-on tools to support your beginning reader and writer.

We will be addressing skills such as:

- Phonemic awareness (the awareness of sounds)
- Sight words (high frequency words)
- Alphabet (letters and sounds)
- Concepts of print (the way print in books work)

The session is the same as previous years and each of the three in-person events will be the same, so please choose the one that fits your schedule the best.

Choose only ONE session to attend!

- October 4, 2021 from 6:30-7:30 p.m. @ Carpenter Elementary
  - Tickets available until October 1, 2021 @ 10:00 p.m.
  - [Sign up here](#)

OR

- October 11, 2021 from 6:30-7:30 p.m. @ Orion Oaks Elementary
  - Tickets available until October 7, 2019 @ 10:00 p.m.
  - [Sign up here](#)

OR

- October 18, 2021 from 6:30-7:30 p.m. @ Blanche Sims Elementary
  - Tickets available until October 15, 2021 @ 10:00 p.m.
  - [Sign Up here](#)

This is a parent-only event. Physical tickets are not required. Masks are required to attend. If you have any questions, please contact Kerri Anderson at [kerri.anderson@lok12.org](mailto:kerri.anderson@lok12.org) or Beth Bruce at [beth.bruce@lok12.org](mailto:beth.bruce@lok12.org).



# DATA AND ASSESSMENT

Missy Butki, Data Specialist/Instructional Coach

## LAKE ORION BALANCED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

A balanced assessment system is necessary to gather information about the growth of students; measure their achievement; gauge the effectiveness of curriculum, programs, and instructional planning; and then provide feedback to the district and stakeholders including staff, parents, students and the community.

Fall

**Benchmark**

**Diagnostic**

More information  
CLICK HERE



Michigan Department  
of Education

### Benchmark



General achievement measure to monitor progress toward end of year goals and identify students or curricular areas needing additional attention, content covers full year standards.

### Formative

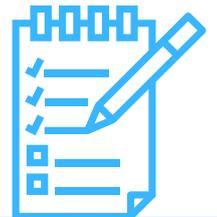


A multi-step interactive process in which students and teachers engage in instructional activities, gather evidence of learning and use feedback to adjust teaching and improve learning.

**Benchmark**

**Diagnostic**

### Diagnostic



Assessments used to diagnose specific skills/benchmarks that require immediate intervention to get students back on track.

**Statewide**

Guides to Parent  
Reports



### Statewide



General achievement measures used for accountability and demonstration of progress. Can identify underperforming areas or schools and adjust long-term educational strategies.

**Benchmark**

Fall

Formative Assessment

Spring



# DIVERSITY

*Michelle Cureton, Diversity and Equity Coordinator*

Hello and Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year. I am excited to have the opportunity to continue to serve as the district's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Coordinator for the fourth year. **Our district goal: ensure that in our increasingly diverse and multicultural society, we are focused on cultural proficiency, culturally responsive teaching practices, DEI, and Social Emotional Learning.** We are hopeful through intentional training and practice; we will continue to create and maintain "Safe, Brave, and Inclusive Spaces" for all.

We think it is extremely important to make sure that DEI and culturally responsive teaching practices are foundational in LOCS, so moving forward we will continue to be transparent with our DEI practices. Please view our DEI webpage on our district website for information regarding what we are doing and what we have done, [www.lakeorionschools.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusion](http://www.lakeorionschools.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusion). Each year, we will have a comprehensive Dragon District DEI Plan with action items, details, and metrics to ensure that our DEI efforts are actionable, sustainable, and measurable. The foundation of our district work is rooted in the BELE Framework <https://belenetwork.org/> with curated resources that Oakland Schools supports and recommends for DEI work for Oakland County districts and is tied directly to the BELE Framework.

In helping to lead the efforts alongside me is a group of educators, the DEI building leaders, along with a supportive DEI building committee in place in each building.

Our DEI goals align directly with parts of our Board of Education's Belief Statement: All learners deserve equity and opportunity in their education, exemplary education is the result of professional growth and continuous school improvement, all learners are entitled to a safe learning environment, education promotes a healthy sense of self and encourages personal achievement, and learning is lifelong.

We are Stronger Together because of our Dragon Diversity and I look forward to leading, serving, and learning.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Cureton

## **September-October (Hispanic and Latino Heritage Month)**

From September 15 to October 15, we celebrate histories, cultures, and contributions of Americans whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Hispanic and Latino/Latina/LatinX are often used interchangeably though they actually mean two different things. Hispanic refers to people who speaks Spanish and/or are descended from Spanish-speaking populations, while Latino refers to people who are from or descended from people from Latin America.

<https://www.parents.com/latina/how-to-celebrate-hispanic-heritage-month-with-kids/>

<https://www.oprahdaily.com/life/g36651645/hispanic-heritage-month-activities/>

<https://www.hispanicheritagemoth.gov/about/>

<https://www.gpb.org/blogs/education-matters/2021/09/14/hispanic-heritage-month-resources-for-teachers-parents-kids>

<https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/central-america/>



# ELA

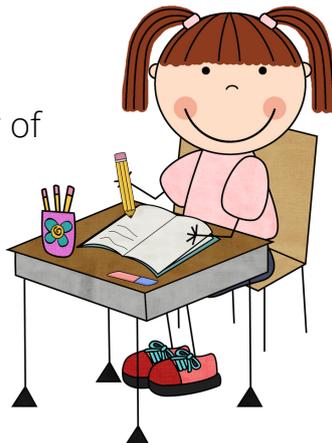
Beth Bruce, Kelly Day & Kate DiMeo, Instructional Coaches

## Supporting Your Readers and Writers At Home



As we launch into the new school year, it is important that we consider ways to build a culture of literacy outside of the classroom. There are a few routines and activities that you can do at home to support your child's reading and writing development.

- **Create a home library** -- This does not have to be an elaborate bookshelf. Instead, it could just be a basket of books from the library.
- **Be a literacy role model** -- Let your kids catch you reading a book, watching the news, or writing in a journal.
- **Establish family reading rituals** -- Try to carve out 20 minutes a day for reading. Reading just 20 minutes a day can have a profound impact on brain development.
- **Read aloud together (or offer alternatives)** -- Try audio books and podcasts. Listen to them in the car on the way to practice, before bed, or during dinner.
- **Slow down, share stories, and talk about current events together** -- Sometimes the power of a conversation can be even more valuable than reading.



### From our bookshelf to yours...



*Big Hair, Don't Care*  
By Crystal Swain-Bates  
Level: ages 4-7



*Just Ask*  
By Sonia Sotomayor  
Level: ages 5-9



*Survival Tails: The Titanic*  
By Katrina Charman  
Level: RST



*Red, White, and Whole*  
By Rajani Laroocca  
Level: UWW



*History Smashers: The American Revolution*  
By Kate Messner  
Level: XYZ



*The Firekeeper's Daughter*  
By Angeline Boulley  
Level: High School



# ENGLISH LEARNER DEPARTMENT

Carol Burke, EL District Coordinator

## Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year!



The English Learner Department services over 250 students and families in Lake Orion Community Schools. In addition to English, our families speak over 30 different languages and we are proud to partner with you and your children.



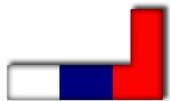
### Tips For a Successful School Year:

- Have a set routine for completing homework (Elementary schools do not assign homework.)
- Complete work daily
- Take frequent breaks
- Ask your primary and EL teachers for help as needed
- Try out some of the resources below
- Celebrate your accomplishments



### Resources:

- Learning Ally accounts (where applicable)
- Rewordify – simplifies difficult English <https://rewordify.com/>
- Natural Reader – text to speech <https://www.naturalreaders.com/>
- Immersive Reader (also in Teams) – text read aloud <https://youtu.be/wHJJCLV-DNg>
- Dictate – speech to text for writing and spelling: [Click Here For Link](#)
- Let us know how we can help you. Here are your teacher contacts:



Staff Member	Buildings	Email
Samina Ata – EL Teacher	Orion Oaks, Webber (K-2)	Simina.Ata@lok12.org
Carol Burke – EL Teacher	Oakview + District Coordinator	Carol.Burke@lok12.org
Pamela Haines – EL Teacher	Paint Creek, Webber (3-5)	Pamela.Haines@lok12.org
Gabby Hanna – EL Teacher	Scripps, Waldon, Blanche Sims	Gabriella.Hanna-Breneau@lok12.org
Annmarie Lo – EL Teacher	High School, Learning Options	Annmarie.Lo@lok12.org
Melissa Ostertag – EL Teacher	Carpenter, Stadium	Melissa.Ostertag@lok12.org
Albina Simoni – EL Teacher	Scripps	Albina.Simoni@lok12.org



# MATH DEPARTMENT

*Brent Cubitt and Emilie Schiff, Instructional Coaches*

## Starting the Year off Right with your Mathematician

Do you remember how excited your children were about math when they were young? How they were excited by patterns in nature? How they rearranged a set of objects and found, with delight, that they had the same number? Before children start school they often talk about math with curiosity and wonder, but soon after they start school many children decide that math is confusing and scary and they are not a “math person”. This is because math in many schools is all about procedures, memorization and deciding which children can and which cannot.

Mathematics has become a performance subject and students of all ages are more likely to tell you that math is all about answering questions correctly than tell you about the beauty of the subject or the way it piques their interest. Given the performance and test-driven culture of our schools, with over-packed curriculum and stressed-out students, what can parents do to transform math for their children? Here are some steps to take.

- Encourage children to play math puzzles and games. Award winning mathematician, Sarah Flannery reported that her math achievement and enthusiasm came not from school but from the puzzles she was given to solve at home. Puzzles and games – anything with a dice really – will help kids enjoy math, and develop number sense, which is critically important.
- Always be encouraging and never tell kids they are wrong when they are working on math problems. Instead, find the logic in their thinking – there is always some logic to what they say. For example: if your child multiplies 3 by 4 and gets 7, say – Oh I see what you are thinking, you are using what you know about addition to add 3 and 4, when we multiply we have 4 groups of 3.
- Never associate math with speed. It is not important to work quickly, and we now know that forcing kids to work quickly on math is the best way to start math anxiety for children, especially girls. Don't use flashcards or other speed drills. Instead use visual activities like this one. Never share with your children the idea that you were bad at math in school or you dislike it – especially if you are a mother. Researchers found that as soon as mothers shared that idea with their daughters, their daughter's achievement went down.



Mathematics was chosen to be plural to reflect all the many parts of mathematics – drawing, modeling, asking questions, communicating, etc. Math sounds more singular and narrow (Do the math, usually means do a calculation!), and I prefer to keep the idea that mathematics is a multidimensional and varied set of mathematical forms and ideas.

Adapted from [Parent-Night-Handout-vF-1-2.pdf](https://www.youcubed.org/parent-night-handout-vf-1-2.pdf) ([youcubed.org](https://www.youcubed.org/))



# MINDFULNESS

Stephanie Harris, Certified & District Mindfulness Instructor

## Getting Back into the Mindfulness Groove

Summer has come to an end and so has our unstructured lives. It is always sad to see the “fun in the sun” days fade, and at the same time, we do look forward to getting back into a routine. For me, an important part of getting back into that routine involves tightening up my mindfulness practice. Along with a relaxed daily schedule comes a relaxed mindfulness schedule that, let’s be honest, doesn’t always happen. This may not seem like a big deal in the beginning until I start to notice my patience running thin, my ability to regulate my emotions decline, my focus scattered, and life just feels uncentered.

It is now time for a renewed commitment. A commitment to self-care, a healthier outlook, emotional balance and furthermore, reminding ourselves that caring for our mind is just as important as caring for our physical bodies.

- Setting aside time is the most important step in getting back into the routine of practicing mindfulness. It is best to set aside the same time every day if possible. I prefer the morning, but anytime that can be put aside is a good time.
- Using a Mindfulness App is a great way to kickstart a practice until natural motivation takes over.
- Reading about various mindfulness techniques or listening to mindfulness podcasts like 10% Happier by Dan Harris, is a great way to regain excitement in mindfulness.
- Try out different topics while practicing mindfulness, like self-compassion, embodiment, and/or visualization.
- Try setting an intention at the beginning of a mindfulness session and return to it at various points during the day.
- Incorporate small mindful moments throughout the day. This will help regulate the nervous system creating a desire to want to continue.

Whatever the method chosen to reignite your mindfulness practice, be kind, gentle, and patient. Avoid seeing it as another thing to check off of your to-do list. Remember the benefits and overall balance that can be experienced when mindfulness becomes a non-negotiable in your day and in your life.

3-minute audio practice by Peter Morgan:

[Breathing Space Meditation - 3 minutes | Mindfulness Exercises](#)

More information and resources can be found here:

[Mindfulness - Lake Orion Community Schools \(lakeorionschools.org\)](#)

Follow me on Twitter: @LOmindfulness





# SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

*Andrea Brook, Jamie Kimber, Pam Moreman, Allison Webb, Instructional Coaches*

## **We are off to a great science start here in Lake Orion!**

We have a couple new things to be excited about here in LOCS. With the Lake Orion Bond, each elementary school will have a STEM Lab. We look forward to having three elementary schools with functioning STEM Labs this year. Orion Oaks' lab has been operational for some time, Carpenter's lab opened last year. This year we will welcome Webber Elementary to the STEM Lab family.

### **Orion Oaks STEM Lab**



### **Carpenter STEM Lab**



### **STEM Coaches**

To support students and staff, we have three elementary STEM coaches:

- Andrea Brook will provide science support to Orion Oaks and Paint Creek.
- Pam Moreman will provide science support to Webber and Blanche Sims.
- Our new addition to the STEM coach team is Allison Webb! She will provide science support to Carpenter and Stadium Drive. Allison joins the team after teaching 4th grade at Blanche Sims.

We look forward to opening the three remaining STEM Labs as the Bond progress continues.

### **Middle Level Science**

At the middle level, teachers have been working with a new science resource, Mi-STAR, for the past couple years. Teachers revamped the curriculum map last Spring and will be adding a new unit to each grade level for this school year. This will give students more opportunities to interact with additional content, using those science skills and scientific ways of thinking.

### **K-12 Science**

Over the past few years, LOCS has made it a priority to bring cohesion to the K-12 science program. With the additions of more science support and opportunities at the elementary level, up to date and rigorous science resources in our middle schools and upgraded lab equipment at the secondary level we are continuing to see this vision evolve. Our work in the science department isn't finished. We look forward to sharing more science opportunities for students as we go through the school year.



# ORION TOWNSHIP PUBLIC LIBRARY

Katie Perkey, Youth Librarian

## Reading Challenges for All Ages

How would you like to be rewarded just for reading? Now you can! The Orion Township Public Library has reading challenges for all ages. Just record the books you read and receive prizes as you go along. By encouraging reading for fun, we are helping to develop strong reading skills that last and fostering lifelong learning. Visit our website to sign up today!

- **1000 Books by Kindergarten**
- **500 Books by 5th Grade**
- **75 Books Before High School**
- **100 Books Before Graduation**

## Think Link After School (Grades 6-8)

LOCS middle schoolers can register with their school and receive a special bus pass to come to the library Mondays after school. Students can hang out, study, use the library, and participate in the day's planned activity like art projects, board games, video games, makerspace projects, and more!

**\*Special registration with school required\***

## COMING SOON

### Halloween Escape Rooms

Saturday, October 30

Registration Required

### Winter Workshop

Saturday, December 11

No Registration Required

Sign up for library programs at [orionlibrary.org/calendar](http://orionlibrary.org/calendar)  
or call **248-693-3000**