A Message From the Superintendent

Dear Members of the Clark School Community,

The most remarkable aspect of being an educator is that each year we get to start anew, building on the strengths of the past but making the necessary adjustments to become even stronger as we move ahead. I am very excited as a result of the successful first two months of our new school year. Our twelve-month and ten-month/two-week administrators and support staff worked diligently throughout the summer to ready us for an outstanding opening in September. Our maintenance team led by Mr. John Pingor is deserving of a special acknowledgement for our buildings and grounds being in such good shape. They engage in projects throughout the year so that our students and staff are provided with enhanced facilities. The importance of this physical upkeep of our schools should never be devalued.

As you know, schools reopened for students on Thursday, September 7. This first day of school is always a most special one and one that we, as a district, were excited for. These expectations for a strong opening that we had were not only met but they were exceeded. Getting to see a large number of our parents and guardians at our various Back-to-School Nights was equally rewarding. Please know that we, as an administrative team, have an open-door policy throughout the year and are here to address any concerns that you may have. It is our sincere hope to “inspire greatness” through the work that we do.

During these first few months of school, we have already been fortunate enough to see several examples of “greatness.” For instance, on the evening of Tuesday, October 17, our eighth-graders at both CHK and Lincoln School in Garwood and their parents were able to see the superiority of our high school program at the ALJ Open House. These students are being invited to be “Freshmen for a Day” so that they can see our various offerings during an actual school day. Any interested parents are being encouraged to connect with Mrs. Babis who leads our Office of Student Support Services to arrange for such a visit. At CHK, our new afterschool Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) program, Coding for Cougars, is off to a great start. This offering is an excellent companion piece to our new STEAM program at FKH and VRS along with our new K-5 science program Knowing Science. Our two new high school special education programs are up and running seamlessly. It is so very rewarding to get to see our special needs students in these programs, along with our younger ones who participate in our Special Olympics program on Saturday mornings, engage with their peers and fellow students who are in regular education settings. Both student groups learn from and have fun with each other and that is where the true “magic” lies.

Members of our school community have recently been honored. For example, ALJ Senior Emma Knutson was named as a National Merit Commended Scholar based on her impressive PSAT results. Senior Joseph Turek received the NJ12 Scholar Athlete of the Week award and, as a result, was featured on channel NJ12 and is eligible for a $5,000 scholarship at the end of the year in addition to being invited to a luncheon at the Pines Manor in Edison. Senior George Visconti was selected as a National Wendy’s High School Heisman State Finalist and will be receiving a $1,000 scholarship while still having two additional phases to possibly move through for additional honors. Carl H. Kumpf Middle School was re-designated for an additional three years as a School to Watch through the New Jersey Association for Middle Level Education. Grade six language arts teacher Victoria Sasso was selected as the 2017-18 Union County Teacher of the Year. This honor is an extremely noteworthy one for Vicki, CHK, and our entire school district and we are most proud of her for this beyond well-deserved recognition. I am also happy to report that teaching teams at CHK, FKH/VRS, and CPA were awarded with Clark Education Fund (CEF) grants. We, as a district, have a tremendous gratitude to the CEF for continually providing our teachers, students, and schools with additional resources through their grant program.

If you have yet to do so, please “like” us on Facebook at “Clark Public Schools – Inspiring Greatness.” We will be using this page as another means of communicating with our school community. In addition, we will be using the page to offer some virtual Parent University sessions via Facebook Live. We are eagerly anticipating this third year of our Parent University initiative and,

Continued on pg 2
Several students were honored as the Columbus Day Essay Contest winners at the Clark UNICO Festival held on October 8. Winners included Emma Herko, fifth grader at Valley Road Elementary School, Nicholas Cardoso, fifth grader at Frank K. Hehnly Elementary School, John Fleckenstein, eighth grader at Carl H. Kumpf Middle School, and Michael Buttelmann, tenth grader at Arthur L. Johnson High School. Students shared their essays and were presented with certificates as well as Barnes and Noble gift cards. The contest, sponsored by UNICO, asked students to write about an Italian who made a positive contribution to society.

Superintendent Edward Grande stated, “We are most proud of our student author winners and are beyond appreciative of Clark UNICO for their ongoing support of our students and schools.”

John Gregorio, twelfth grader at Arthur L. Johnson High School, was also recognized for singing “The Star-Spangled Banner” and the Italian National Anthem, “Il Canto degli Italiani” at the event.

Clark Students Honored at UNICO Festival

Hehnly Fifth Graders Participate in Knowing Science Activity

Students in Mrs. Caplette’s fifth grade class at Hehnly Elementary School in Clark worked collaboratively to create substances during a science activity. Using the “Fundamental Building Blocks” kit from the new Knowing Science program, groups were provided with guidelines and the same amount of connectors, red and orange balls (atoms). Students had to adhere to four guidelines while constructing their substance. In the end, students learned that using the same atoms in various configurations would result in different substances being formed. During the Physical Science Unit, students have also been studying the three states of matter and the Periodic Table of Elements. Ms. Caplette stated, “It was great to see the students working together to apply what they’ve learned about substances in this hands-on activity.”
The Clark Public School District has made strides this year in supporting healthy eating habits and continues to acknowledge the growing number of students with serious food allergies in the community. This past school year, both Frank K. Hehnly and Valley Road Schools worked together towards a healthier, safer school environment.

Students’ birthdays are now recognized with non-food celebrations and may include parents coming into classrooms to read a story or participate in an activity. In addition, the PTAs continue to sponsor three celebrations a year where snacks are selected from a list of foods which not only follow the State’s nutritional guidelines for sugar content and other unhealthy ingredients but are also free of the top allergens affecting school-aged children. This list was most recently updated after a meeting in May with parents, teachers, administrators, and school nurses and is monitored regularly.

To further support these efforts, these schools have joined the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and have action plans in place to make their school communities even healthier. The goal is for them to become one of the 35,000 schools recognized nationwide as a Gold, Silver, or Bronze National Healthy Schools Recipient.

The Clark Schools look forward to a healthy, productive year ahead and will continue to work towards their goal of receiving a National Healthy School Award.

The Crusader Athletic Leadership Council is an organization founded to help educate ALJ student athletes on the expectations we have for them as they compete in a variety of athletics. We hope that by informing this council of some of our expectations, we will be able to foster an open and healthy relationship amongst our student athletes, the school culture, and the community of Clark.

The organization meets monthly to discuss a variety of topics and issues. Future meetings will include guest speakers, coaches and administrators of the Clark School District, a visit to the Children’s Hospital, and more.

The C.A.L.C.’s 1st meeting was held on Wednesday, October 04, 2017. The C.A.L.C. was lucky enough to have Michael Spence come in as a guest speaker to discuss leadership as it pertains to all student athletes. “The C.A.L.C. would like to thank Michael Spence for coming in to share his thoughts on leadership. His vast experience was not only interesting, but useful in our quest to develop better leaders amongst our student athletes,” commented Athletic Director Gus Kalikas.

Below are the members of the 2017-2018 Crusader Athletic Leadership Council:

Frank K. Hehnly Students Help Hurricane Victims

The Frank K. Hehnly Elementary School Student Council partnered with the Clark Fire Department and Shoprite of Clark to sponsor a diaper drive to help the youngest victims of the recent hurricanes across the country. The Student Council, led by Mrs. Hayes and Ms. DeVita, collected hundreds of diapers and wipes from Hehnly’s generous students and families. The items will be donated to the American Red Cross and distributed to families in need who were affected by the latest hurricanes.

Frank K. Hehnly Students Walk Against Drugs

Frank K. Hehnly Elementary School students gathered together to promote Red Ribbon Week’s annual anti-drug message. This year’s theme is “Your Future Is Key, So Stay DRUG FREE.” In addition to wearing red, students of all grades were encouraged to wear sneakers to show that they were “RED-y” to be drug free. Buddy classes teamed up and participated in the school’s annual “Walk Against Drugs,” around the school’s neighborhood.

Guidance Counselor Sarah Badillo stated, “Frank K. Hehnly School continued its tradition of having its buddy classes walk in a sea of red against drugs. It is always great to see the students come together for a worthy cause. This year, we had more parents come to the event to support the students and staff as they walked to promote a healthy life away from illegal drugs.”

Fifth Graders in Clark Enter Red Ribbon Contest

Fifth grade students at Frank K. Hehnly Elementary School and Valley Road Elementary School participated in a poster contest sponsored by Prevention Links. The contest, open to all fifth graders in Union County, asked students to draw their anti-drug(s) and create a catchy slogan.

Mrs. Badillo, elementary school guidance counselor and organizer of the contest, was very pleased at the number of students who participated. She stated, “This year we have almost tripled the number of entries from previous years.” Students at both schools are anxiously waiting to hear if a Clark student will be one of the winners.

Picture is Mrs. Badillo with some of Hehnly School’s participants and their entries.
Valley Road Students Complete STEAM Activity

Mrs. Petela’s second grade class at Valley Road Elementary School recently completed a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) activity. First, the class listened to the story, *Pete the Cat…I Love My White Shoes*. Then, students were divided into small groups and given the STEAM task of designing a bridge that would safely carry Pete over a patch of strawberries. Given only tape and plastic straws, students had to work collaboratively and think outside of the box. Pete’s new white shoes stayed nice and white as all of the students successfully built bridges that carried Pete over the strawberry patches. Mrs. Petela stated, “It was great to see the students work cooperatively and apply their STEAM skills to achieve a common goal.”

Booster Club Kicks off School Year

On Wednesday, September 06, 2017, the Arthur L. Johnson High School Crusader Athletic Booster Club held their first meeting of the year. In attendance at the packed house were coaches, players, and parents who had the opportunity to meet the coaches and listen to them speak on behalf of their teams in addition to listening to a guest speaker who talked about maximizing the high school athletic experience.

The following coaches attended and spoke on behalf of their teams: Fall Cheerleading Head Coach Lindsey Barrett, Cross Country Head Coach Robert Cahill, Gymnastics Head Coach Brianna Ferdinandi, Girls’ Tennis Head Coach Chris Raguseo, Volleyball Head Coach Michelle Zaleski, Girls Soccer Head Coach Kenneth Leeder, Boys Soccer Head Coach Dan House, Field Hockey Head Coach Katrina Poskay, Football Head Coach Anthony DelConte, Winter Cheerleading Head Coach Lindsey Barrett, Bowling Head Coach Michele Zaleski, Boys’ Basketball Head Coach David Kennedy, Girls’ Basketball Head Coach Joseph Marino, Ice Hockey Head Coach Brian Klimchak, Swimming Head Coach Robert Cahill, Winter Track and Field Head Coaches Christopher Marcin and Stephen Barry, Wrestling Head Coach Michael Siter, Baseball Head Coach David Kennedy, Golf Head Coach Daniel House, Lacrosse Head Coach Lou VanBergen, Softball Head Coach Christopher DiNucci, Boys’ Tennis Head Coach Christopher Raguseo, and Spring Track and Field Head Coaches Christopher Marcin and Stephen Barry.

The program featured Chris B. Williams, a guest speaker who has inspired audiences across the country through keynote addresses, corporate training sessions, student leadership conferences, awards ceremonies and other events, with his powerful, insightful and relatable messages of leadership development and personal growth. As a positive energy coach, motivational speaker, entrepreneur and mentor, Chris B. Williams captures with an optimistic outlook on life. Whether working with teenagers, college students, athletes, and organizations or anyone seeking inspiration, he engages and elevates everyone he encounters. Born and raised in Philadelphia, he was an AllCity and AllState basketball player, before receiving a full scholarship to Manhattan College where he led the team to NCAA tournament, winning the MAAC Championships in 1993.

“The Booster Club was thrilled to be able to bring Chris B. Williams into our school district to talk to our student athletes, parents, and coaches. The messages of the evening resonated with our audience in all aspects of one’s life. I am sure that everyone in attendance will implement some of these valuable ideas and incorporate them into their everyday lives,” commented Athletic Director Gus Kalikas.
Sixth Grade Helps out Hurricane Harvey Victims

Under the direction of Language Arts teacher, Ann Mahoney, the 6th grade adopted a classroom in Houston, Texas that lost everything due to Hurricane Harvey. The class that was adopted is an 8th grade science class from C.E. King Middle School in Houston. The 6th grade homerooms collected supplies such as: composition notebooks, colored pencils, glue sticks, tape, highlighter, and pencils.

Students, Sophia Downing, Giovanna Drajin and Cassandra Consentino helped Mrs. Mahoney pack up three boxes of supplies that were shipped to Houston. Mrs. Mahoney is planning a Google Hangout with the adopted classroom and one of her classes.

Carl H. Kumpf Teacher Recognized as Union County Teacher of the Year

Victoria Sasso, teacher at Carl H. Kumpf Middle School, was recently honored at the Clark Board of Education Meeting for being named the Union County Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Sasso is among twenty-one educators in New Jersey to receive this recognition by the New Jersey Department of Education.

“Mrs. Sasso is an exemplary educator who is most deserving of this recognition. We are honored to have her as a part of the Clark Schools family,” said Superintendent Edward Grande.

Mrs. Sasso began her teaching career in 2002 joining the Clark Public School District in 2006. She was initially hired as a Gifted and Talented Instructor at the elementary school. Four years ago, she began teaching sixth grade language arts at the middle school.

Teachers are nominated for Educator of the Year at the school level through the Governor’s Educator of the Year Program. They then go on to compete for the county and state recognition. As Union County Teacher of the Year, Sasso will collaborate with other educators and bring valuable information back to the district.

Carl H. Kumpf Middle School Participates in Stuck on You Activity

Carl H. Kumpf Middle School recently celebrated Red Ribbon Week, a campaign to promote drug, alcohol, and violence awareness and prevention. Through the week of October 23rd, Carl H. Kumpf students and staff participated in various activities to educate students about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. One activity was called “Stuck on You,” where students paid $1.00 for each piece of tape to “stick” Miss Nardoza, Mr. Peitz, and Ms. Sundo to the wall. The idea was to teach students not to get “stuck” on drugs or alcohol. All proceeds will be donated to The Ronald McDonald House to help fight childhood illness. Students also signed a “Too Smart to Start” banner, where they pledged to refrain from using drugs or alcohol.

Top Donors of the 6th grade who helped get Miss Nardoza, a teacher, to stick to the wall.
Carl H. Kumpf Middle School Earns Schools to Watch Redesignation

On Wednesday, September 20th, Carl H. Kumpf Middle School in Clark, NJ, was redesignated as a School to Watch during a banner ceremony held at the school. The event, a celebration of achievement for the entire school community, was attended by students, parents, faculty, administration, and board members. Ms. Gail Hilliard-Nelson, Schools to Watch State Director, presented the school with a banner representing the school’s redesignation.

Assistant Principal Amanda Davidson stated, “We are so excited to receive our Schools to Watch Redesignation Banner. I’d like to thank the teachers, students, and parents who worked tirelessly on the application process and site visitation. It was wonderful to see the entire building come together for this.”

Kumpf Middle School was first designated a School to Watch in 2014. Schools to Watch is an initiative launched by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. Through the Schools to Watch initiative, the National Forum identifies schools across the United States that are well on their way to meeting the Forum’s criteria for high performance. According to the Forum, high-performing middle-grade schools are:

*Academically Excellent* - These schools challenge all students to use their minds well.

*Developmentally Responsive* - These schools are sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence.

*Socially Equitable* – These schools are democratic and fair, providing every student with high-quality teachers, resources, and supports.

**The Forum believes:**

To achieve this level of performance, high-performing schools establish norms, structures, and organizational arrangements to support and sustain their trajectory toward excellence. They have a sense of purpose that drives every facet of practice and decision-making.

Principal Rick Delmonaco stated, “It is an honor to be recognized as a School to Watch. It is a testament to the dedication of the teaching staff and all they do to make Kumpf School a great place for students to learn.”

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Board of Education Member Henry Varriano, Superintendent Edward Grande, Schools to Watch Director Gail Hilliard-Nelson, Assistant Principal Amanda Davidson, Principal Rick Delmonaco, Content Area Supervisor Yuri Diaz, Content Area Supervisor Anthony Emmons, Board of Education Member Steven Donkersloot, Supervisor of Educational Initiatives Christine Casale Broski

Principal Rick Delmonaco, Katelyn Van Clief, Juliana Rama, and Assistant Principal Amanda Davidson
Valley Road Holds Parade of Characters to Begin Reading Incentive Program

Students at Valley Road School were treated to a parade of characters from their favorite literature. The teachers and administrators took on these roles and paraded through the gym. Students cheered as they saw storybook characters come to life. This was the Kick Off for this year’s reading incentive program. Students are asked to read each month at home and log their reading. If they achieve their monthly reading goals they receive a reward. At the end of the year all students who achieved their rewards each month attend an end of program dance party. A committee of teachers and parents run the Reading Incentive Program. The committee is led by Mrs Peitz, a grade one teacher at Valley Road School.

Pictured is Mrs. Peitz, as a character from "The Cat in the Hat", with Superintendent Grande.
Visconti Wins Wendy’s High School Heisman

On Oct. 18, George Visconti Jr., senior at ALJ, was named a High School Winner of the Wendy’s High School Heisman award. He will receive a certificate in recognition of his leadership both on the courts and in the classroom.

George has been a stand-out athlete throughout his years at ALJ. His contributions to the basketball program are significant, most notably leading the 2016-2017 team to the Central Jersey Group 2 State Championship game, a first for the Crusaders. George has been a starter for the basketball team since his freshman year, and amazingly holds the school record for most points with one year remaining in his playing career.

In school, George has been able to carry a high grade point average in honors and Advanced Placement level courses. He participates in the Crusader Athletic Leadership Council as well as many other school activities.

About Wendy’s High School Heisman

The Wendy’s High School Heisman was created by Wendy’s founder Dave Thomas in 1994. Dave Thomas dropped out of high school when he was 15 years old in order to work full-time and went on to become one of the most successful entrepreneurs in history. While this nontraditional path led to his prosperity, it always worried Dave that others would follow in his footsteps and expect to achieve similar fame and wealth by not finishing high school or attending college.

Faced with this dilemma, at 61 years old, Dave enrolled at Coconut Creek High School in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., and received his General Equivalency Diploma (GED). Inspired by this moment and with a desire to celebrate the outstanding achievements of youth in America, he launched the Wendy’s High School Heisman program.

Twenty-two years later, Wendy’s High School Heisman has honored more than 600,000 of the nation’s most esteemed high school seniors who share Wendy’s values of giving back to their communities, treating people with respect, continuing education and excelling on the athletic field.

The Wendy’s High School Heisman is a joint program between Wendy’s and the Heisman Trophy Trust, host and custodians of the Heisman Memorial Trophy®.

Arthur L. Johnson Senior is Honored as Scholar-Athlete of the Week

Joseph Turek, senior at Arthur L. Johnson High School in Clark, recently earned the honor of Scholar-Athlete of the Week by News 12 New Jersey & NJEA. Turek will be featured on Channel 12 News New Jersey and is eligible for a $5,000 scholarship at the end of the year. He will also be recognized at a luncheon at the Pines Manor in Edison.

In addition to excelling in both academics and athletics, recipients must demonstrate leadership skills as well as school and community involvement. Superintendent Edward Grande stated, “Joe is an exemplary student-athlete who we are most proud of. We are excited for what the rest of his senior year holds for him.”
Second Graders at Valley Road Elementary School Harvest Vegetables

Students in Mrs. Pinto’s second grade class at Valley Road Elementary School harvested their first round of vegetables from the school garden this week. From the beginning of the school year, the students watched each of the vegetables grow. They were very excited to pick yellow squash and green beans. The class is waiting for the carrots, corn, and pumpkins to ripen before they are picked. Students will be planting more vegetables in the spring and are hoping to donate their harvest to the local food pantry.

LINK Program Comes to Valley Road School

Valley Road Elementary School in Clark has recently started the Mentor LINK Program. Under the direction of Nicole Arpino, school psychologist, Sarah Badillo, guidance counselor, Lauren Ceccarelli, behaviorist, and Lisa Giandana, LDTC, the program promotes opportunities for positive interaction among students.

Doreen Babis, Director of Student Support Services, stated, “We are very excited to have this program at Valley. It’s a wonderful chance for the students to work together and learn from each other.”

The mentors, nominated by staff members, have volunteered to lead lessons and activities on various topics during the first meeting of the month. The second meeting of the month will consist of an activity with both mentors and mentees. Students are looking forward to one of the first activities planned, a picnic.
The children of Clark Preschool have been engaged and captivated since the beginning of the school year. In September, the children learned how to protect themselves against bad germs. The single most important task a preschooler can do to prevent illness is to wash their hands frequently and thoroughly. The preschoolers

In October, the children learned how to become “Bucket Fillers” for the “Week of Respect in New Jersey.” Bucket filling is a popular and effective character development program, focusing on the positive. An individual fills a bucket by actions or words that show that you care about someone. It focuses on creating culture, increasing kindness, respect and courtesy. The concept of a full or empty bucket gives understanding to the motivation behind behavior. A large bucket was posted within the Preschool and the children’s names were mounted as they filled someone’s bucket. At the end of each day, the children reflected on the ways in which they filled buckets.

Later in the month, the Clark Fire Department’s visited the Preschool for National Fire Prevention. This kicked off a week long of fire prevention activities in the classrooms. The fire department’s focus is on fire safety, prevention and overall personal safety at home and school from FIRE. The firemen dressed in full gear and demonstrated the sounding of the fire alarm.

The children marched in the 7th Annual Preschool Halloween parade to conclude October. In November, the Key Club led by Ellen Zamboni, School Counselor at the Arthur L. Johnson High School, will present to the children of Clark Preschool a unit on “Manners.” The Key Club, sponsored by Kiwanis International, supports the mission of serving the children of the world. The high school students provide hands-on-service to teach and reinforce manners, an important part of social skills at the preschool level. Children who develop manners at a young age will carry them without thought into adulthood.
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