

## **“SHARE THE POSITIVITY”**

### **(A School Year like no other)**

**Overview/Introduction:** Below are a number of “Share the Positivity” examples from each of our eight schools, forwarded by members of the Superintendents’ Teaching Circle (STC) and their colleagues over the past academic year. The underlying commitment remains to educate our students to achieve their maxim potential as they navigated their fears, concerns, challenges, hopes and goals during the pandemic. Conversations were had, support was offered, strategies were developed and, ultimately, Hazlet moved its staff, students and community forward during these unusual times.

#### **SDECLC (Pre-K and Kindergarten)**

- This year, I have experienced so much collaboration and support amongst the kindergarten staff at Sycamore. Under the guidance of Mrs. Dorozynski, a "Scope and Sequence" was created for all Kindergarten teachers in order to guide our instruction and keep each classroom on a similar and realistic academic pace. This was created by staff and discussed thoroughly under the impression that the students learning through a pandemic will be learning at a different pace than previous years.
- Seeing teachers support other teachers is truly amazing and acknowledging while this year is different than previous years, each classroom within the same grade level can also be vastly different.
- Student resiliency should not be overlooked. Kids as young as 5 understand the pandemic, mask wearing, social distancing, and the danger of COVID more than we ever imagined. You can hear kids tell each other in the hallway that they need more space or ask them if they are feeling okay because they were absent yesterday.
- Learning takes place everywhere, every day! On the floor, outside, or even under a table. Preschoolers learn to count to 100, remember alphabet sounds with Letterland Phonics, and cooperate with one another, while making and having fun with friends all day long!
- In June, we look forward to Kindergarten celebrations as those youngsters prepare to enter First Grade come September.
- The awareness of young children is truly astounding. I love working at Sycamore!

#### **Raritan Valley School (grades 1-4)**

- Back in November my class was working on a writing assignment, telling me what they were thankful for. One of my students told me that he loves writing and now he wants to become an author. Since then, each week when I give a writing assignment, he tells me how proud he is of his writing. I continue to tell him that he is an amazing author.
- We had a special visit from the Hazlet Police Department last Thursday when Chief Wittke and two of his officers spoke to students about how important it is to keep Hazlet safe. During the visit, the officers handed out their trending police “baseball” cards and helped kids understand that a police officer is your friend.

- One of my students told me that he hates wearing a mask. Then he followed that by saying, “it doesn’t matter how much I hate wearing a mask, I love being in school!”
- The pandemic got me thinking of all the negative emails that we all receive when people are unhappy. These days, I regularly go through my emails and highlight the ones that were sent to me that put a smile on my face this year. These are the ones that mean SO much!!!

### **Lillian Drive School (grades 1-4)**

- The other day I had a parent come up to me and say thank you for helping her daughter start her day off with a smile. When she gets out of the car in the morning, she knows that her daughter is going into a place that’s happy where everyone cares about her. During these stressful times, the mom told me that this gave her such a feeling of happiness for her daughter.
- My grade level colleagues share EVERYTHING! It gives me such a sense of unity in my school. I never feel alone as I try to navigate educating my students in this way. The support is endless and effortless.
- At LDS we have shared a google doc for staff to jot down these moments that have helped to lift our spirits and remind all of us of the good things that happen around us every day. In sharing this document, as people add moments in time, they are also able to see the moments that others experience.
- Students and staff were camera-ready and smiling when TV crews from NJ.COM arrived two Thursdays ago. Following-up on a two part story, [NJ.COM](#) visited classrooms to speak with students and staff and learn how things have been since their first visit on opening day back in September! TV crews filmed and took pictures and met with members of the LDS community to learn how the return of many virtual students, changes in CDC guidelines, and the smaller classroom sizes have influenced education during the pandemic. We are all eagerly awaiting the yet-to-be announced air date. . . On a related note, NJ.COM was the *sixth* news agency this year to produce a feature story on Hazlet.
- Our principal, school nurse, and secretary are true angels on earth! Whether you need a copy made, bathroom break, anything-- even an ear to talk to, they are always there for you. The social and emotional piece for us educators lies with those that we see day in and day out. They all go out of their way to make sure we are taken care of with whatever we need to be successful for our students. It fills our hearts to work with such wonderful humans.
- Our special teachers such as gym, music, art, Spanish have a special place in the educational system. They have never once complained when asked to cover for a homeroom teacher who is out for the day. They do it with grace and try their hardest to teach our subjects while still maintaining their own specials. Kudos to the specials team!

### **Middle Road(grades 1-4)**

- Third grade classes are working on nonfiction animal reports. They are researching animals and creating digital booklets.
- Miss Caruso's class is surveying their classmates to gather data about favorite hobbies & interests. They will then represent the data using tables, charts & graphs. Afterwards, they will analyze the data in a presentation to their classmates.
- Fourth-grade students started planting the school garden last week and tomorrow, Hazlet's own Sue Kiley, Deputy Director of the Monmouth County Board of Commissioners, will visit to plant a tree and listen to students read poems in honor of Arbor Day.
- Miss Orfanitopoulos' class used breakout rooms on Google Meet to collaborate and practice multiplication facts. This allowed virtual and in-person learners to play review games together.
- Students in 3rd & 4th grade have created their own songs using Chrome Music Lab in Mr. Patti's class.
- I saw the below tweet last night from Maddie Arecchi ! She is definitely a teacher worth celebrating: During yesterday's virtual school day her first grade students read about the first Black female astronaut, Mae Jemison, took a virtual field trip to the Kennedy Space Center, and wrote about how they'd feel about going to space! Dr. Mae Jemison even engaged with her tweet!

### **Cove Road School (grades 5 & 6)**

- This year, Cove Road Mustangs have made it their mission to embrace and celebrate mask-wearing. At the start of the year, I think teachers and students were a bit uncomfortable with this new normal - both literally and figuratively. It took some time to get used to this new habit but the students and staff at Cove Road have done an amazing job wearing masks at all times to keep each other safe.
- As a school community, we have embraced this new normal by incorporating mask-decorating contests throughout the school year. This has brought fun and excitement to a not so comfortable situation.
- Congratulations to our Odyssey of the Mind team for advancing to the Virtual World Finals this Friday! The team was required to create and perform their script as well as design scenery and costumes to solve a problem virtually and they rocked it!
- In June, NJNG will honor Jaiden D'Alessio for his award-winning Conservation poster. Jaiden will receive an i-Pad and the school will earn a \$1,000 grant.
- Both students and staff at Cove Road have really worked together this year to "Be the Good," our pandemic motto.

### **Beers Street School (grades 5 & 6)**

- The entire student body and staff have been reading *The Goldfish Boy*, a novel which promotes unity and a sense of community while fostering a love of reading. Students are making announcements over the PA system sharing highlights and experiences from each

chapter. They are also updating interactive bulletin boards in the halls and, next month, the author will visit virtually to discuss the novel firsthand with students and their teachers.

- Next week BSS is excited to host their first *in-person* book fair since before the pandemic began. The goal is to keep kids reading and to capitalize on the fun students had during the schoolwide reading event from last month.
- Field Day *outdoors* will be held in June, complete with the return of the Dunk Tank. Word has it Mr. Collis (principal) has volunteered for this event!
- Students are participating in the 1% Better Everyday campaign. For this initiative, students set a personal goal, wrote it on the bulletin board in the main hall, and signed their names. That's their commitment to improving a little bit each day.
- This month Fifth grade students completed the L.E.A.D. program. In a partnership with the Hazlet Township Police Department, Officer Megan Quinn came to Beers Street and delivered valuable lessons that focused on resisting drugs and forming healthy friendships.

### **Hazlet Middle School (grades 7 & 8)**

- Physical education students have been completing daily challenges at home. The physical challenges are various tasks involving household items. The students watch a short video on Youtube explaining and demonstrating the challenges. Brothers, sisters, moms and dads also take part in the activities. Students have been engaged, enthusiastic, and highly resourceful during all of hybrid learning.
- The art students at Hazlet Middle School have been finding silver linings everywhere this year:
- Imagine this: bright pops of colorful artwork on the walls and the meditative sounds of classical music welcome you into the recently renovated art studio. The creative new interior landscape is so inviting, and a beautiful patio addition whispers the inquiry, "Shall we go outside to paint today?"
- On virtual days we have had fun learning how to draw the correct proportions of the human face. Drawing eyes, noses, and mouths is easier than we thought when following along with Mrs. Toal's YouTube video tutorials.
- Our social emotional learning is enhanced when we create abstract Neurographic Artwork, a technique that connects the acts of drawing and watercolor painting with the neurons in our brains, helping us to actively find a place of calm. The results are both surprisingly striking and a promotion of peacefulness.
- My seventh-grade English classes participated in a poetry writing competition through the Young Writers poetry contest, *Through Their Eyes*. The contest challenged students to write a poem from someone or something else's perspective.
- Out of over 5,000 entries, 38 of my students' poems were selected to be published in *Through Their Eyes - Word by Word* which was published on November 30, 2020. Due to the pandemic, the publication was delayed, so those seventh-grade students had the privilege to celebrate their writing this year as eighth-graders. Having your work

published is a great way to boost confidence and showcase writing skills. I am so proud of them!

- Our Odyssey of the Mind team won their state level competition and will be advancing to the World Finals. The team competed in a category called "It's a Trap," which required them to design and build a balsa wood structure weighing no more than 15 grams that was able to hold as much weight as possible. Their structure supported almost 300 pounds, the most weight in the Division! Using robotics and coding, their project received the highest score for creativity among all entries!
- Additionally, HMS has an outdoor Spring Arts Showcase planned for May 20th! They'll be using their courtyard patio as a stage for chorus and band students to perform compositions written by the kids themselves. Student photographs and Art projects will also be on display. Parents and guests will be invited to bring their own chairs or picnic blankets and will be seated in socially-distanced pods—with masks-- to enjoy the events.

### **Raritan High School (grades 9-12)**

- Spring Athletics are in full swing with softball, baseball and tennis competing and track about to begin. In the wrestling season just concluded, RHS senior Mia Lazaurs won a State Championship, pinning her opponent in the second period!
- MC3, the Monmouth County Curriculum Consortium meets monthly to review and discuss all things curriculum. Last week, MC3 announced their 10 scholarship recipients from more than 70 applicants. Raritan High School senior Eric Gibney was one of the winners!
- And-- this past weekend the Drama Department staged an event 23 years in the making when they produced, rehearsed, and performed a musical revue with songs from Raritan musicals over the last two decades, complete with videos from 60 RHS graduates introducing each segment. This tremendously successful show practiced socially-distanced seating, a web-accessed program, and fully-masked patrons. A tip of the hat to Ms. Melanie Taylor and Mr. Ray LaHaye for their efforts during this amazing production.

From former RHS students to their teachers:

- Just a quick note to say thank you for all you do. Cole was just talking about your class today and he said you were such a great teacher! It really helps him stay engaged when he connects to his teachers!
- I'm now in my second year of college and my English teacher just introduced the concept of SoapsTONE. It took me a while to remember where I first heard that one from, but then I remembered a few other things about your class. I still use the concise note-taking style you pushed on us to this day, and it's led me to be an awesome note taker.
- Your teachings on how to analyze a source also stuck with me, as that's been something I've been able to use in analyzing real information that I'm trying to learn from.

- I just wanted to write this to show some appreciation for having a very positive impact on my academic journey. In hindsight, I credit a lot of my educational success to the core values I learned in the class. To start, adapting the intensity of that class really set the tone for what to expect in terms of difficulty in my future. Then I learned how to research, take notes on the research, and discuss it with others during class.
- I could've written nothing and never acknowledged our crossing of paths for that short year ever again. But, in the off chance that you read this, I hope it makes you feel a bit better. I really appreciate the impact you had on me so early in my journey, and I urge you to keep doing you. You were a relatively new teacher in 2015, so your methods were pretty raw and basic. I can't imagine the classroom today looks anything like it used to.
- I can imagine you still make a big impact on your students every day. Thanks for your time, and I do hope we cross paths again someday.
- I was recently invited to read for the APWH Modern exam for the 2021 exam administration. I was a reader back in 2017 and last year (2020) which was interesting because the exam went from being a 3h15m ordeal to a 50-minute essay question taken completely online due to the onset of the pandemic. As always, I look forward to the grading process!