

# Merrick Messenger

## Schools Kick Off

## Pick a Reading Partner Programs



Birch



Chatterton

To celebrate their Pick a Reading Partner programs, all three schools hosted themed dress up days, peer-to-peer literacy activities, dance parties, guest author visits and guest reader events.

Lakeside and Chatterton hosted their Community Read Aloud events on Jan. 26 and Feb. 5, respectively, where local business leaders, politicians, community members and other school family members were invited to read to classes. Birch will hold its Community Reads event later this school year.

School librarian Ellen Widawsky organized community readers at an event that went along with the PARP theme of "A Book-Filled Birthday Bash" to commemorate the building's 100th birthday.

"As we continue to celebrate this milestone, we were thrilled to welcome in influential community members to read a birthday themed story and allow the children to hear firsthand how reading can bring joy and fun to

our lives and is the gateway to success," Principal Dana Bermas explained.

Birthday-themed books were selected for each community reader, which they in turn gifted their assigned class.

Lakeside kicked off its PARP 2024 with the theme of "Cheer On a Good Book" for the Super Bowl time of year.

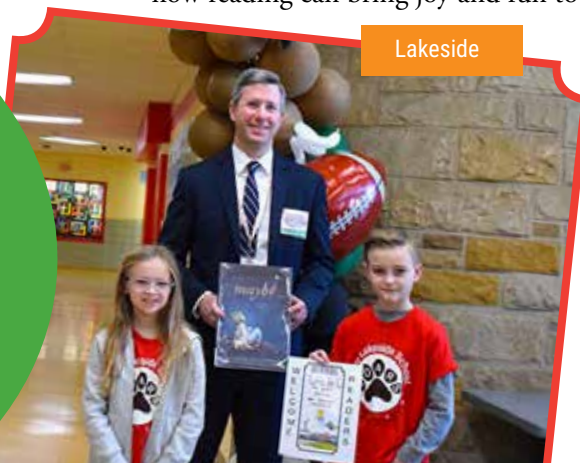
"Through imparting a love for books and reading, we can all make a difference and touch the lives of children through sharing meaningful messages, valuable knowledge and pure enjoyment from reading books," librarian Melissa Levine said.

Renowned author Alyssa Satin Capucilli visited students at Birch School on Jan. 25 as part of the school's Diving into Reading PARP program.

Capucilli penned Ready to Read books such as "The World of Biscuit" and the "My First..." series. She explained to the students the process of making of a book.

"The children were very excited to meet the author of the well known and loved Biscuit series and learn about how she comes up with her ideas for writing," school librarian Vanessa Schroeder noted. "It was incredibly interesting to see how a book is bound and to talk about just how long it takes to bring a book to life."

The programs and offerings were part of a joint venture between school administrators and librarians, and the PTAs.



Lakeside

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# SEL in Action at Merrick Schools

Students, staff and administrators from the Merrick School District met with New York State senator and education committee chair Shelley B. Mayer, as well as Sen. John Liu, the chairman of the New York City Education Committee, and Sen. Steve Rhoads on Dec. 1.

Guests observed four lessons/activities relating mental health and social-emotional learning.

From whole-class instruction that explicitly teaches SEL skills to small groups run by school social workers that allow students to practice those skills before generalizing them, Merrick has created its own blended program that fits various pupil needs while creating an inclusive environment that encourages a sense of belonging in every classroom.

“Every employee in this school district has an impact on how we function,” Dr. Dominick Palma, superintendent of schools, noted.

Regular classroom lessons and activities also foster these skills, and guests were able to view the district’s continuum of SEL work in action.

Visitors sat in on a morning meeting – the way each class in the district from pre-K through sixth starts their day – as well as

an optimistic closure, the way classrooms end the day.

“It’s a way that our students and teachers are able to reflect on their school day and set up learning for the next day,” Dr. Salvatore Dossena, the assistant superintendent for student services and technology, said. “No matter what happens during the school day, we find a way to reflect on our learning and social interactions, so we can set goals for the following day.”

Second grade teacher Lindsay Struss said this has been a new addition to her classroom routine over the last few years.

“It has proven to be quite effective,” she added.

During a push in with district school counselor Karen Alaimo, students worked on the executive functioning ability, flexible thinking. Given a paper bag containing everyday items, students were tasked to think of other uses for each item.

“You are able to look at something one way,” Alaimo addressed the class of fourth graders. “But you could also look at it in another way. These are some of the tools we need to be successful during the day.”

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–Dr. Salvatore Dossena, the assistant superintendent for student services and technology

Merrick pulled together a team of 40 school community members to develop the best practices to support students and their families.

“You have small enough classes that you can really feel the difference,” Sen. Mayer noted at the end of the visit. “You are doing fascinating work and I’m sure it will show longitudinally.”

“The foundation you’re laying here can really relate to the middle and high school level,” Rhoads added.

## Second Step Addresses Social-Emotional Needs in Classrooms

The Second Step program helps make social-emotional learning (SEL) part of children’s daily lives, in and outside the classroom. SEL can create positive systemic change that builds safe learning environments and addresses the needs of children, educators, and communities.

Second Step is a research-based curriculum, addressing all five CASEL core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

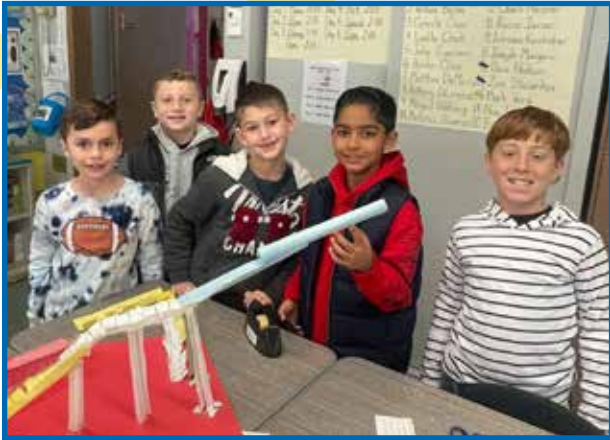
Second Step has been implemented across the grade levels at all buildings this school year, with classroom teachers delivering lessons in growth mindset & goal setting, emotional management, empathy and kindness, and problem solving.

“The program aims to strengthen the district’s commitment to the explicit instruction of necessary skills to be successful in life and in school,” explained Dr. Salvatore Dossena, the district’s assistant superintendent for student services and technology. “The entire school community will utilize the digital lessons multiple times throughout each week.”

In addition, the program supports service learning, parent communication and social-emotional learning skill development for adults within the school community.



# NEWS Around the Schools



## Birch STEAM Club Engineers Roller Coasters

Third grade engineers at Birch planned and designed roller coasters during their STEAM enrichment club. Using only paper, the teams had to collaborate to create the correct angle for operation. These teams were thrilled to show off their creations.



## Displaying Digital Citizenship at Lakeside

Lakeside students have been immersed in learning about digital citizenship by using Nearpod as an interactive tool. Students participated in self-assessing real-life situations that involved technology. Their answers fostered great conversations about appropriate time and use of digital tools.



## Chatterton Creates Mural to Commemorate 100th Birthday

Continuing its 100th birthday celebrations for the building, the Chatterton School community unveiled a mural. Money raised from the PTA Fun Run Fundraiser was put toward this bottle cap mural to commemorate the school's centennial anniversary. Each student and staff member autographed a cap for the mural.

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