

February 2017

Dear Middle School Parents and Guardians,

It is hard to believe that January has passed and we are at the midway point of our school year. Winter has definitely been inconsistent and I am constantly checking each morning to see if I need my heavy coat or light sweater. Let's hope the groundhog sees no shadow and we get an early spring.

One of the more recent and pertinent mandates from New Jersey's Department of Education involve the upcoming PARCC standardized assessments in math and language arts. In order to graduate from high school, all students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and lower must score proficiently in the Algebra 1 PARCC assessment and the Language Arts Grade 10 PARCC assessment. Since most of our 8<sup>th</sup> graders take Algebra 1, this mandate impacts our students at LFCMS. Over the last two years since PARCC was implemented, we have had a number of parents and guardians choose to opt out their children from the PARCC exams. This is no longer a viable option with the state's new graduation mandates. I have placed all information regarding the new PARCC mandates on our school's website and in the LFCMS February e-mail's link list. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns regarding the state's new regulations regarding PARCC. I will also address this topic during our February and March PTA meetings.

January was another great month at LFCMS. We completed our Coat Drive and tallied over 250 articles of clothing, which included coats, sweaters, boots, gloves and winter hats. This provided many families in the Fort Lee community with warm clothing for the remainder of the winter. I thank all of you who contributed to this worthy cause and for helping our students to understand the importance of charity. Our 8<sup>th</sup> graders also started planning for high school by selecting their electives to be taken in Grade 9. This is an exciting time for our 8<sup>th</sup> graders as they enter the final two marking periods of middle school.

In January, we also continued to focus on character education with two major events. The first event welcomed a Holocaust survivor and a Holocaust witness to speak to our 7<sup>th</sup> graders about the importance of acceptance and kindness towards others. This was funded solely by the Fort Lee Education Foundation. We thank them tremendously for their support and appreciate the time and effort put forth by our 7<sup>th</sup> grade language arts teachers to make this happen. This event coincided with the completion of the novel *Milkweed* in 7<sup>th</sup> grade language arts classes. The second event was titled "*Finding Kindness*," which was presented to our students on January 10 and parents at the January 11 PTA meeting. This event allowed our students to reflect on their peer relationships and develop skills to navigate away from negative behaviors. We are proud of our students for the kindness they display every day at LFCMS and know the lessons we teach them will translate to healthy relationships at the high school level.

February 1st will bring the beginning of the third marking period, which officially marks the end of the first half of our school year. There are some exciting things happening, so be sure to review the February Events Calendar to stay on top of everything. This includes the start of our

annual book drive for Project Cicero. This is the fifth school year that we are participating in this event, which seeks to equip underprivileged schools in New York City with classroom libraries. Please have your child bring to homeroom any new or lightly used books appropriate for school-aged children and we will make sure they get delivered.

Our school's PTA and Student Council will be hosting a Valentine's Day Dance on Friday, February 10 from 6:30-9 p.m. in our school's gymnasium. Permission slips will be sent home and are required for students to attend. There will be a minimal suggested donation of \$5.00 for this event. We thank the PTA for their continued support of our students and the school functions that are vital to our culture and climate.

Our Board of Education will honor our Teacher of the Year and Services Professional of the Year on Tuesday, February 21 at 7:30 p.m. in the high school auditorium. Mrs. Cevasco (Reading Teacher) and Mrs. Waack (7th Grade Guidance Counselor) are the respective recipients of these awards for the middle school's 2016-2017 school year. We congratulate both of them and appreciate all of their efforts to support our students and school. Also remember that there is no school on Friday, February 17 and Monday, February 20 for President's Day Weekend.

On Sunday, February 12, a bone marrow drive and fundraiser will be held in two locations for our 7<sup>th</sup> grade students Briana Lopez. Our PTA is also selling chocolate roses for Valentine's Day that will help to support the Lopez family financially. Informational flyers for both events are also attached to a link in the February e-mail. Please help to support Briana as she enters treatment for a second bone marrow transplant.

The February PTA meeting will take place on Wednesday, February 22 at 7 p.m. This meeting will focus on elections for next school year's PTA Executive Board. If you are interested in serving on next year's PTA, please attend or give your information to a PTA officer. Contact information can be found on our school's website.

Please be sure to access the February events calendar, February Middle Years publication and other important information through the links in the February e-mail or on our school's website at [www.flms.flboe.com](http://www.flms.flboe.com).

Thank you for all that you do to support our schools and community. I look forward to a great second half of the school year and know your children will continue to grow and prosper academically, socially and emotionally. Be well and have a great month!

Robert Daniello  
Principal  
Lewis F. Cole Middle School