

“SPEEDY PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS **December 2021**



Ms. Monica's Class

Last week we did some Christmas shopping at Five Below! The students purchased Christmas presents for their families. After Five Below, we went to Wendy's for lunch! In Money Management, we are learning about budgeting, a lifelong skill that comes in handy, especially around the holidays. Recently, we have spent quite a bit of time decorating for the holidays. We made ornaments and gingerbread houses. It's an exciting time around the Academy.



Ms. Jeanne's Class

This past month our class has been getting into the holiday spirit. In Second Step, we have been discussing the importance of being thankful for who and what we have. In Daily Living, we discussed organizing and decluttering our homes and what to do with any items that we no longer needed. Students especially noticed the importance of donating items like winter apparel to people in need during this cold time of year. They took special care preparing them for sale at ALLURE.



Students enjoyed planning, prepping, and decorating for our Academy Family Thanksgiving Feast. One student commented that she loved having thanksgiving with her “school family”. It was a great time enjoyed by all and so much to be thankful for this year.

We took a community trip to Five Below and stopped for lunch at Wendy's. Students and families were provided with a sales paper and were able to make a gift list of items to purchase for family and friends. Students had to practice their money management skills, of course the hardest part was staying within their holiday shopping budget. Students then wrapped and labeled the gifts for all their special family and friends. Students have been continuing to provide their assistance to the Bag Lady Outreach Program. They just recently completed 240 toiletry bags that will be going to students in need

PAES LAB

As we enter the last month of the year December the Academy students are exploring a new career area in PAES. The students are currently working on Construction and Industrial work. The students have been learning about certain tools used in this field. Two important tools they are learning about are wrenches and bolts. This process is helping them with parts identification.



Thanksgiving Friendship Feast

Early Learning Center recognized Thanksgiving by hosting a “Friendship Feast” on Tuesday, November 23, 2021. This awesome event was chaired by none other than our very own Mattie Gardner (paraprofessional in Rm #120). The friendship feast kicked off with a Universal movie every day, students logged onto Zoom with Assistant Principal Antoinette Williams and enjoyed sharing out their favorite thanksgiving foods, what they plan to do to stay healthy and fit over the Thanksgiving break, and most importantly what they are personally thankful for. The Friendship Feast provided each classroom with a special treat to enjoy with their peers and teachers. Thank you again to Ms. Gardner for hosting this very special event for our Early Learning Center students and staff. Please stop by the ELC office so that you can see our Thankful Turkey, he will be on display for November and December.



Early Learning Center Coat Giveaway

The hearts and bodies of our Early Learning Centers students and staff were warmed by the generosity of The National Association of University Women (Chicago Branch) and the Saint Rest Masonic Lodge #5 - Chicago Heights, IL. Through the efforts of our very own Jean Johnson (ELC Social Worker), we were blessed with BRAND NEW coats for all of our ELC students (including Satellites)!!!! To show our appreciation we are requested that each classroom create a card, poster, and/or project to show their appreciation.



Holiday Spirit Week December 13th - 17th

The Early Learning Center will end the 2021 School year with a Holiday themed Sprit week. The festivities include Holiday Head Gear Day, Holiday PJ and Popcorn Day and a visit from Slingshot Santa.

Classroom shout-outs

Heather Hill - It is a tradition to decorate classroom doors for the holidays at Heather Hill. The students wrote cookie reports and made Gingerbread Men and decorated the outside of our classroom door.



Room #A136 - Shout outs to Rm #A136 for engaging our students in a wonderful lesson on Kwanzaa. The students learned about the seven principles of Kwanzaa and created wreaths.



What's on the Horizon???

Progress reports and report cards will be sent home with students on Friday, January 21, 2021.



We are wrapping up our 17th week of the 2021 - 2022 school year. We are so excited to be getting ready for Holiday Break! As of December 14th, we have 67 students registered at Independence and their home districts and 7 students attending our Satellite School, James Hart.

Happy December!

We are excited that we ended November with fewer acts of aggression than in October. Check out the aggression thermometer in the fishbowl. Ms. Murrell's and Ms. Henley's class had the lowest acts of aggression in November and were celebrated with a pizza party. We also celebrated the entire student body with a school-wide treat for lowering the number for the entire building! This month the PBIS team launched a kindness initiative. Our PBIS team provided teachers with kindness lesson plans for Social-Emotional and teachers also created kindness trees outside of their classrooms. Each time a student is caught being kind their kindness is written on a portion of the tree!



We rolled out a comprehensive level system plan with detailed information about how each student can make their day by following the behavior expectations. The plan included the definition of major and minor behavior offenses and the consequences. The incentive cart has also been revamped to include sweet snacks, novelties, and coupons. To ensure the efficacy of the incentive cart there is a schedule and specific rewards for each level!

C	CONVERSATION How loud can my voice be when I am speaking?
H	HELP How can I get my teacher's attention or answers to questions?
A	ACTIVITY What should I be doing? How am I learning today?
M	MOVEMENT How and when am I allowed to move around the classroom?
P	PARTICIPATION What does active participation look like?
S	SUCCESS Follow CHAMPS for a successful learning experience.

We continue to push instructional growth by leveraging Ms. Ferris, the technology coach. Each week Ms. Ferris meets with four to five teachers to support them in using a variety of technology to enhance instruction. Additionally, she leads a learning series after school for teachers and paraprofessionals on CHAMPS, a positive behavior management tool/system!

The administration has created a schedule and tool to support teachers' lessons plans and ensure high-quality instruction based on the Charlotte Danielson Doman 1 and 3. Also, the administration does daily classroom walkthroughs with a Charlotte Danielson tool to provide feedback to teachers.

We continue to put the health and safety of our students and staff first and move swiftly to respond to COVID-19 cases without stopping instruction for students. It is great to see students join remote learning if needed and return to school as soon as it is possible.



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Professional Learning

PAL staff participated in Professional Learning that will help support instruction and Social- Emotional Learning. They enjoyed learning through active engagement and being able to collaborate with their colleagues. The trainings provided our staff with strategies that they can immediately incorporate into their classrooms. Randy Tracy, PAL Paraprofessional and Certified Devereux Physical Management Trainer provided refresher training to our staff.



Focus Teacher of the Month: Rebecca Bruckner

Students in Ms. Bruckner's Transition MOVE classroom work hard every day. While Ms. Bruckner and her team provide daily living skills instruction, nurses and service providers provide therapy simultaneously. Ms. Rhonda Glover, Paraprofessional, works with Taylor Watts from District 227 on identifying pairs of shoes, while Ms. Bruckner works with Skyla Brownlee from District 201u on cleaning and organizing a bookshelf. Taylor also uses his 3-plate switch to answer questions.



Focus Service Provider of the Month – Maureen O'Malley

Ms. Maureen O'Malley, Speech-Language Pathologist provides Speech Therapy to our Transition students on developing their communication skills. She provides both individual and group therapy sessions. Ms. O'Malley works with Dyllan Carr from District 206 in the classroom on increasing his vocabulary skills. She provides group therapy to Mr. Priests transition class in the PAL House on creating and following recipes. She encourages students to use their Assistive Technology devices to communicate.

