

A Heartfelt Appreciation

The League School of Greater Boston lost a beloved family member this past month. Leona Vetstein, one of the school’s cofounders, passed away in late April.

Mrs. Vetstein was instrumental in the founding and development of the school. Working closely with her husband, Dr. Arnold Vetstein, she served as an influential sounding board for and contributor of innovative ideas and concepts that fueled the school’s success. She was a member of the school’s Board of Directors for many years. She also was the founder and president of the Friends of the League School, the fundraising arm that significantly contributed to the school’s growth and development.

For the past 40+ years, Mrs. Vetstein was an inspiration to parents as an early advocate of mainstreaming people with autism into society and preparing them for independent living.



Mrs. Vetstein was the heart and soul of the school. Her strength and dedication will be sorely missed but her contributions will always be remembered.

Building Program Update - The Educational Learning Center (ELC) Is Now Finished

Our new student educational learning center was recently completed. As the images below will attest, it is a wonderfully bright and inviting facility in which to teach our students.



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Judy Smith is League School's Art Teacher

League School's Art Teacher Attends Council for Exceptional Children Convention in Philadelphia

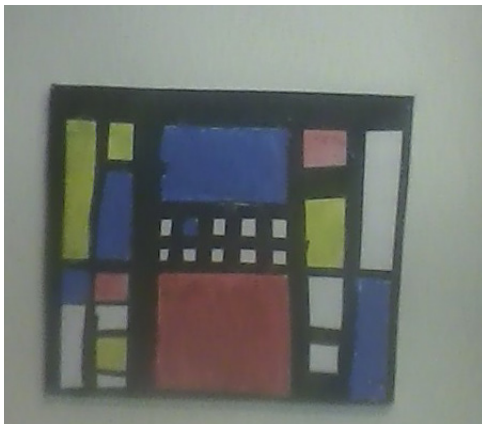
(This is a first-person account of Judy Smith's trip to Philadelphia.) While searching for professional development classes and workshops related to art and autism, League School's art teacher, I discovered that the Council for Exceptional Children offered several pre-convention workshops in Philadelphia. "Understanding Students with Autism through Art" was conducted by Beverly Levett Gerber (Southern Connecticut State University) with Juliann Dorff (Kent State University), Susan D. Loesl, Milwaukee Public Schools and Lynne Horoschak, Moore College of Art & Design. Ms. Gerber, President of the National Art Education Association Special Needs division, has written extensively about art education for special needs students, and has established a website for special needs resources. Since Ms. Gerber's work was integral to my Master's thesis, I was excited to be able to attend the hands-on workshop. The other presenters were equally helpful, particularly Ms. Loesl, who brought a number of materials including adaptive scissors, talk pads and paint supplies for our perusal. She also emailed all of her resource materials. Ms. Horoschak led a lesson and pointed out the various interpretations of directions that may happen when teaching special needs students or those with autism.

At the end of the day, I received an autographed copy of "Reaching and Teaching Students with Special Needs through Art" (edited by Ms. Gerber) and shared a League School calendar with the group which included a consultant for the Kennedy Center Arts Education department.

Since literature focused on teaching art to students with autism is limited, the workshop provided validation that I was "on the right track" in my art room at League. I was even able to make some suggestions (the green/red board) based on strategies that are used at League School on a daily basis. I was also able to sign a petition requesting the formation of a Special Needs Arts division of the CEC. The over-arching theme of the workshop confirmed the importance of art education to special needs students as a communication and learning strategy.

On the second day of this international convention, I was able to go on an educational site visit to Aim Academy on the outskirts of Philadelphia on the banks of Schuylkill River. The academy relocated to an old factory mill building which was reconfigured to meet the needs of students who have dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia. The curriculum provides an arts-infused education designed to intensively remediate reading, writing and mathematical skills for students with "language-based learning differences." Evidence-based interventions and progress monitoring are seminal to instruction given by highly trained teachers. Interdisciplinary lessons were of great interest to me, particularly those given by the Visual Science teacher using the STEAM philosophy (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art/Design, Math). Three-dimensional teaching truly helps students to comprehend and learn.

Other highlights of the convention included presentations on "Arts Assessment for the Exceptional Child: Entering Uncharted Territory," "Reading in Children with ASD: Overcoming Barriers to Comprehension" and "Separating Fact from Fiction: A Critical Analysis of Popular Autism Treatments." Keynote speaker and award winning author Andrew Solomon, author of *Far From the Tree: Parents, Children and the Search for Identity*, set the tone with his stories from parents and children who have found deep meaning and love in their daily struggles. It was an overwhelmingly inspiring experience to attend such a large gathering of professionals dedicated to educating special needs children in our country and overseas. I am grateful to League School for making it possible for me to attend.



A sample of a student's geometrical painting inspired by the artist, Piet Mondrian



This is a "Go Talk" communication device with programmed sentences for the art room. It looks like an art palette but is used by non-verbal students to make requests such as "May I wash my hands please?"



Marilyn Diamond, Transition Team Clinician

Meet Our League School Employees of the Month: For April - Marilyn Diamond

Marilyn is the clinician for the Transition Team. She is steadfast in her support of her team, students and their families. She is a great listener and follows up on students' needs and staff concerns regarding students. She goes above and beyond the call of duty. League School is fortunate to have such a caring, helpful and knowledgeable team player. Hats off to Marilyn!

For May - Lindsay Wagner

Lindsay is an amazing Occupational Therapist with tremendous knowledge, insight and experience to share. She has so many creative ways to help students stay regulated, become more independent and to generalize learned skills. Staff agree that Lindsay is positive, creative, helpful, and professional. She always has great advice that is delivered with a smile. She organized League School's first annual 5K road race. The effort of Lindsay and her team of organizers insured a very successful and well attended fundraiser. Congratulations to Lindsay!



Lindsay Wagner, Occupational Therapist

League School Students Win Art Awards

Every April, League School's Art Teacher, Mrs. Judy Smith, and her family sponsor an annual art exhibition and competition to honor the memory of her mother; school librarian Margaret Murray. This year, twenty-three students submitted original works of art with an essay explaining how art is helpful to their lives.

The competition is open to all, however most students participate in Ms. Smith's Talented Teens and Kreative Kids classes at the Children's Museum in Easton. This year, League School students Joshua Hebert and Kyle Dunne produced wonderful works of art and expressed interest in participating in the Teen Division of the competition.

Joshua, 18, placed 4th for depth of painting in his watercolor rose on paper (observational drawing done in advanced art class), while Kyle, 19, placed 5th for imagination and movement in his fantasy pastel drawing on paper which was created in class.

Both students attended the presentation of awards and opening reception with their families at the Stoughton Public Library on April 2. Each received \$25 checks and certificates of award. The work remained on display in the staircase gallery at the library for the month of April. You can see it now in the front lobby of League School in the waiting area.

Congratulations to all of our students for participating, and special kudos to our prize winners, Josh and Kyle, and well as to the Smith family for sponsoring such a terrific event.



Joshua Hebert (L) and Kyle Dunne (R), proudly display their award-winning efforts.

Providing Higher Visibility for Our School

Perhaps you've seen them on the roads, or, in our parking lot, but League School is now employing an updated fleet of well-marked vans to transport its students this year.

The vans are used throughout the school year to take our students on field trips and to enable them to participate in vocational experiences. We believe that reinforcing our presence with these stylish, color-coordinated vehicles will gain the school valuable recognition in the local community.





The First Annual League School of Greater Boston 5K Road/1 Mile Walk Race Was a Rousing Success

Late last month, a sun-drenched crowd of 260 runners and countless supporters and friends celebrated a glorious spring day with the running of the First Annual League School of Greater Boston's 5K Road/1 Mile Walk Race at the Old Post Elementary School in Walpole.

Friends and family members cheered runners and walkers young and old as their race route took them around the local neighborhood while raising thousands of dollars for the school from sponsorships and entry fees. Our valued sponsors included:

- Taco Bell of Southeastern MA
- Dunkin Donuts of East Walpole
- Norwood Bank
- Norwood Theater
- J.M. Electrical of Lynnfield, MA
- Walpole Cooperative Bank

League School's Executive Director, Dr. Frank Gagliardi, started the runners just after 9:00 from in front of the school - the race was won by Mark D'Amico of Saugus in a time of 18:40. Mark was followed across the finish line by runner-up, Adam Petti, of Raynham with Mark Capparella of Bellingham finishing third.

Congratulations to all of the runners and walkers for their efforts – race organizers are already looking forward to hosting next year's even – hope to see you there.



Upcoming Events at League School:

- Wednesday, June 11 - half day for students
- Wednesday, June 25 - half day for students

Please check the school calendar on the school website, leagueschool.com, for the latest announcements about upcoming events at the school.

