



# *Morris-Union Jointure Commission Board of Education*

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Dear DLC Parents:

Re: Welcome to the 2018 – 2019 School Year!

The Morris-Union Jointure Commission (MUJC) is pleased to welcome you and your child to the Developmental Learning Centers' (DLC) 2018 – 2019 school year! We have been busy planning for the new school year and are excited to share upcoming events and features with you.

### **DLCs' 2018 – 2019 Theme**

As this year's theme is "Make a Difference," DLC – New Providence and Warren students will be involved in community service projects throughout the year that will provide opportunities to give back to the community and help others. DLC – New Providence students will continue to benefit by the Junior League of Summit grant that was received this summer and their first community service project will include shopping for ingredients at the local ShopRite and then preparing a meal to donate to a local shelter. DLC – Warren students are involved in several projects which include working with Operation Shoebox, Color A Smile, the Community Food Bank, St. Hubert's Animal Shelter, and Creature Comfort. The "Make a Difference" theme will also be taught during social skills groups and will be the underlying theme for our special events.

### **DLC – New Providence Renovation**

As you may know, the MUJC has been planning a renovation project at the DLC – New Providence for its heating, ventilating, and air conditioning units (HVAC). This is a major structural renovation which will immeasurably enhance the heating, ventilating, and cooling of the DLC – New Providence. The project began at the close of the Extended School Year ("ESY") program, and it is anticipated that this project will be ongoing and conclude by late winter. As we did with the renovations of the DLC – New Providence during the ESY 2017, we will move student classrooms to various sections of the building that are not being renovated. This will be done in a safe, organized, and planned manner so that disruption is minimized. As the construction proceeds, I will provide updates to DLC parents and staff.

## PCAST Project

As a recipient of the “Preparing Students with IEPs for Life in the Community, Integrated Employment and Post-School Success” grant, the MUJC has a wonderful opportunity to join a cohort of schools that are working with The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities as participants in the “Person Centered Approaches in School & Transition” (PCAST) project. PCAST project staff will collaborate with students, family members, and school district staff to explore the use of person centered approaches through a variety of collaborative activities and practices. A person centered approach strives to understand each person as an individual, so that support can be designed specifically around the person, taking into account what works best and leads toward the life envisioned by that individual. The primary objective of the PCAST project is to positively impact post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. There are no costs involved in this project and all training and technical assistance is free to the MUJC.

## DLCs’ Fall Calendar of Events

- First Day of School

The first day of school for students is Wednesday, September 5, 2018. We look forward to welcoming your child to the 2018 – 2019 school year!

- Back to School Night

Back to School Night is Wednesday, September 26, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. This is a wonderful opportunity for parents to meet teachers, therapists, behavior specialists, and other staff who work with their child.

- Monthly Parent/Administration Chat Conferences

Another informational venue in which parents and administrators may share information is our monthly Parent/Administration Chat Conferences. This is a monthly telephone call-in hour that will take place on one Wednesday per month from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. To participate in the monthly “Parent/Administration Chat Conference,” you will be provided directions to call in and conference with MUJC and DLC administrators. Administrators will be available to discuss and answer general questions pertaining to events in the Superintendent's Spotlight or about other general school events or procedures. The monthly teleconferences are meant to keep lines of communication open between parents and administrators and maintain a positive, productive school community. A schedule of the 2018 – 2019 Parent/Administration Chat Conference meetings can be found in the Electronic Bookbag and is posted for your convenience on our website by using the “Parent/Administration Chat Conference” link under the “Parent” tab. Please note that the November 14, 2018 conference will be held in the evening at the MUJC’s Professional Development Center and will provide parents with the opportunity for discussion with DLC principals, MUJC administrators as well as the MUJC Board of Education President.

- Parent Awareness Workshops

We continue to offer “Parent Awareness Workshops” each year on topics related to students with special needs. Our first Parent Awareness Workshop is scheduled for October 18, 2018, at 7:30 p.m. in the Professional Development Center in New Providence, and the topic is “How the Practice of Mindfulness Can Help Children With Special Needs Learn to Navigate the World More Effectively.” Our second Parent Awareness Workshop will be held on March 7, 2019, and the topic is “Technology: Uses for Language and Communication to Social Skills and Independence.” We hope you can join us!

- Parent Training Series

Additionally, our “Parent Training Series” is offered both in the fall and spring and gives parents information, guidance, and assistance regarding the developmental, social, and communication needs of our students and also provides support for all parents in similar situations. More information on these valuable trainings can be found on our website at <https://www.mujc.org/domain/89>.

### **Electronic Communication**

Throughout the year, we will post important and meaningful information about events at the DLC via our Electronic Bookbag (“EBB”). The EBB will be posted each Friday, and you may access it on the MUJC’s website ([www.mujc.org](http://www.mujc.org)) under the “Schools” tab at the top of the main page by clicking the link for your child’s DLC. The link to the EBB folder is located on the left hand side of the page. You may also find links to the Electronic Bookbag under “Site Shortcuts” on the main page. To receive an email notification when information is posted in the EBB, please register for a parent account using the “Parent” tab on the website to access registration instructions. Additionally, we will continue to utilize the parent portal at both locations, which will enable parents to access student forms and permissions online. If parents do not have Internet access, they may contact their principal to receive paper copies.

Finally, please visit the MUJC Facebook page and Twitter account, which feature events and activities in which your child participates. Both can be accessed via the MUJC website by clicking on the respective icons at the bottom of the main page.

### **What’s Happening at the DLCs**

#### **Week of Respect**

Throughout the school year, the MUJC will be providing age-appropriate instruction on preventing harassment, intimidation and bullying in accordance with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act requires that the week beginning with the first Monday in October be designated as “Week of Respect.” The dates for this year’s “Week of Respect” are October 1 – 5, 2018. School districts in New Jersey are required to observe the week by providing activities focused on preventing harassment, intimidation, and bullying. These activities should pertain to social and

emotional learning as well as character education. More information on these activities will be included in the October Superintendent's Spotlight.

### **DLC Online Shopping**

Please visit our online store, DLCreations, to purchase products made by DLC students! Simply go to the MUJC website at [www.mujc.org](http://www.mujc.org) and select your child's DLC location, then click on the DLCreations link to view the store page. Some of the items for sale include autism awareness bracelets and keychains, note pads, thank you cards, and many more items. Happy shopping!

Additionally, the official DLC – Wildcats online store is now open for the 2018 – 2019 school year. Items such as t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, pants, blankets, and much more with a variety of designs may be purchased online by visiting the DLC Wildcats Locker at <https://www.mylocker.net/shops/developmental-learning-center-wildcats>. You can save \$10 on any order by using promo code 52PAM2MH. All proceeds go to the Autism Foundation of New Jersey, Inc. This is a great way to show school spirit and support for the DLC!

### **DLC – New Providence**

Lots of special events and educational activities are planned for our DLC – New Providence this year with the goal of providing students with the opportunity to experience different activities and then generalize learned skills to new situations and environments. Information will be sent to parents and guardians throughout the year on various events along with invitations to join us at many of them.

Two new items have been added to the Sensory Room! In addition to light-up jellyfish, “Musical Squares” provides colored squares that light up on the wall or on the floor. Students match the color that lights up by pressing on the corresponding square. Be sure to see these additions on Back to School night!

In September, DLC – New Providence students will begin their second year of martial arts. Each of the classes is scheduled weekly and will be working on gross motor directions in a group, taking turns, and modeling various martial arts sequences through imitation.

Dr. Michael Selbst, a psychologist from Behavior Therapy Associates, will be consulting with our program throughout the school year to provide his expertise on how to work toward increasing functional communication as well as fine tuning behavioral strategies for our students. We look forward to Dr. Selbst's contribution to our program.

### **DLC – Warren**

I am pleased to announce that the Wildcats' Café, located in the former outside playground area, will be ready for our students at the beginning of the school year. Brightly colored bistro tables and benches are attractively placed in the outdoor venue

which gives a beautiful view of the countryside in Warren Township. Umbrellas for the tables will be placed outside in the near future as well as garden boxes and flower boxes. The Wildcats Café will be a wonderful outdoor venue for our students to relax as well as learn many social as well as functional skills.

Monthly visits to the Reeves-Reed Arboretum will expand DLC – Warren students' science learning in a hands-on, outdoor environment. Each month students will learn about a seasonally appropriate topic that incorporates a hands-on activity. Students will not only acquire gardening techniques through working in the gardens and greenhouse at Reeves-Reed Arboretum, but they will also be able to put their knowledge to work transplanting plants and caring for them at home.

Students will also have the opportunity to continue to visit with therapy dogs from Creature Comfort. Creature Comfort visits our students each month allowing students to learn about caring for a pet and walking a pet while developing social skills and communication skills.

The MUJC, once again, received the Artist in Residency Grant for the upcoming school year. Last year's artist, Marilyn Keating, will be returning to continue working with our students to expand and enhance the beautiful mural, which is located on Main Street. DLC – Warren students will meet weekly with the artist, continuing to learn different art techniques and art mediums as well as social skills.

As always, we appreciate your interest and support of the DLCs. If you have any questions, please contact your principal or me. Thank you and we look forward to welcoming your child back on September 5.

Sincerely,



Janet L. Fike

JLF:kgb