Dear Members of the Lyme-Old Lyme Community,

Happy New Year! All in the Lyme-Old Lyme school community are looking forward to 2010 as a year of hope and recovery. The slumping economy and threat of a flu pandemic have been an added burden to our lives. Yet, at the same time, the challenges we faced in 2009 provided new impetus for thought and reflection. We remain committed to the good work of the district.

This January newsletter will update you on both current activities and events and those scheduled to unfold in the coming months. We trust that it will give you a sense of the scope and development of our work.

The one constant in our arsenal of resources are the people of our school community. We are grateful to have you among the students, families, staff and community who support and advocate for quality education in the towns of Lyme and Old Lyme. May 2010 be a year of continued success for all.

Sincerely,

Ledge Light Health District to Conduct H1N1 Clinic

Here’s a reminder to all that the Ledge Light Health District will conduct an H1N1 vaccination clinic in Old Lyme on Monday, January 11. Vaccine will be available to middle and high school students during the school day at their respective schools. Parents need to complete and submit a consent form if they wish their children to receive it. Consent forms are available at both the middle and the high schools. They may also be downloaded from our district website.

Vaccine will be available to elementary students at Christ the King Church from 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. Parents must accompany their children and complete consent forms. Forms will be available on site or may be downloaded from our website.

An information sheet is available on our website. Parents are encouraged to consult their children’s pediatricians about any questions they may have in regards to individual cases.

There is no charge for participation in the vaccination clinic. The district is grateful to Ledge Light Health District, Ellen Maus (district nurse-coordinator), and Ron Rose, Old Lyme Health Official. All were instrumental in arranging for this clinic.

2010-11 Calendar

Work on the 2010-11 school calendar is underway. Review and comment from administration and the District Parent Council will take place prior to adoption. The intent is to have an adopted calendar no later than the first February Board of Education meeting.

Policies on Web

All Connecticut districts are required to make certain Board of Education policies available to families. The Lyme-Old Lyme district meets this requirement by making all Board policies available through our website.

Policies can be found at http://www.region18.org/page.cfm?p=32. The policies are organized through a distinct numbering system. Article continued on page 4...
Lyme-Old Lyme High School Building Project

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John Schieb, architect from BGW Architectural Services of Middletown, recently presented the most current set of design drawings to the Board of Education. Refinements on the front entryway and common spaces were highlighted in the presentation. The Board expects to receive updated cost estimates at its January 20 meeting. Completion of this design and cost estimating phase will pave the way for a Plan Completion Test meeting with the Bureau of School Facilities scheduled for February 1.

James Wygonik, new Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School, has been familiarized with the project scope and plans. He is currently working with the construction manager to review phasing plans. During each phase of construction, certain areas of the facility will be unavailable for programs. Mr. Wygonik is confirming which programs will need to change location or be modified during the construction project. Safety and program integrity are high priorities.

The Superintendent has been working with Committee and Board members, legislators and the Bureau of School Facilities to ensure that state reimbursement and finance preparations are developing. Notice was received in the fall that the project has been placed on the list for the state’s school construction agenda for 2010. State Representative Giuliano has met with district representatives several times to help champion the project. We expect that the project will be approved during the 2010 session of the Connecticut General Assembly. We continue to seek necessary waivers that would allow the project to be categorized as a “Renovate as New” project (higher level of state reimbursement), even though we have been cautioned that the austere economy is likely to have a negative impact on waiver requests.

Favorable financing terms have thus far relieved the district of high borrowing costs. The outlook for 2010-11 continues to be encouraging in this area.

Enrollment and Space Needs Committee to Resume Work

The enrollment and space needs committee resumes its work on January 11 in a quest to study available space and projected enrollments for the elementary and middle school levels. The committee is a special ad hoc group appointed by the Board of Education in the fall of 2009. The committee is charged with the task of studying and recommending the best use of district space resources.

Thus far, the committee has studied the adequacy of buildings to accommodate enrollment projections given current school boundary lines. The committee has also studied information on the space needs and costs of leasing central office space, program equity and the regionalization plan.

Next steps will involve the committee in proposing and evaluating alternatives to the current use of space. Evaluation criteria will include maximized and balanced use of resources, program integrity, sustainability, cost, complexity/transition and acceptability to families and the community.

The committee’s work is scheduled to be completed in late spring.
Information Sources in the LOL Schools

The Lyme-Old Lyme Public Schools transmit information to our families and community in many different ways. Here's a summary of what, when and where to find information on the district and schools.

Focus on Education

Focus on Education is a publication of the Region 18 Board of Education, guided by the Board’s Communications Committee. The publication is intended to update the general public on developments and accomplishments within the school district. It is published and mailed to residents three times per year.

District Website

The district website can be found at www.region18.org. The website is a comprehensive storehouse of information. Each school features its own linked page. Among the vast array of resources is a complete set of Board of Education policies. You can find many useful documents and contacts. The website contains information essential to families and also of interest to the community at large and beyond.

News Archives on Website

The district website also features a front page section with special news items and notices. Brief articles are written and posted as news and events occur. We encourage all to skim the articles for items of interest.

Superintendent’s On-Line Newsletter

The Superintendent’s on-line newsletter is posted in September, November, January, March and May on the district’s website. The newsletter is aimed at families, although is available to all visitors of the website. The newsletter focuses on progress on district goals and projects, information about district operations, and news on events and activities.

Connect-Ed Alert System

The Connect-Ed Alert System is used to send out emergency or outreach messages that are deemed to be important or urgent enough to require immediate contact. All district and school administrators have authorized codes that allow them to send out general or select group messages via phone and/or email contact. The system is most frequently used for weather events but can and has been used for other matters. In consideration of families, the system is judiciously used and routine communications are forwarded through other less intrusive systems.

E-Notify

The district maintains a voluntary directory for email notifications from a variety of district related student and parent groups. Parents voluntarily go to the district’s website and sign up for those groups they wish to receive notices from. Notices are processed through Jeanne DeLaura, the district’s web master. The system is not open to outside organizations or individuals wishing to send messages.

Middle/High School Electronic Newsletters

Both Lyme-Old Lyme High School and Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School publish and send electronic newsletters to families of their students. The schedule and content of these newsletters is determined by the building administration.

Elementary Newsletters

Each elementary school publishes a concise and informative newsletter each Friday. The newsletters are carried home with students.

Traditional Mailings

The benefits of electronic communications have so outweighed those of traditional mailings that this mode of communication is relatively infrequent. You will occasionally receive communications from the school or district via U.S. Mail but should know that because of environmental concerns and high costs of preparation and postage, mailings are done selectively.
Reminder about Winter Weather

Winter is well underway. As you’ve come to expect, we will be calling you through our Connect-Ed system regarding cancellations, late starts or early dismissals as needed. Connecticut TV stations and local radio stations will also carry messages about weather related interruptions. You can also call up our website where the message will be posted.

We fully appreciate how difficult it can be to rearrange family schedules when weather interruptions occur. The call may sometimes be difficult to understand as conditions can vary widely over the many miles of terrain in our two towns. Further complicating the call can be changing forecasts or ones that threaten to catch us in the middle of our transportation schedules. We need approximately 2.5 hours of safe travel time in the morning and in the afternoon. Both towns have excellent highway departments, and our own maintenance crew works hard to ready walkways and entrances. However, each storm has its own unique features and, therefore, each decision must be carefully rendered.

Respecting Religious Holidays

The Lyme-Old Lyme Schools recognize and respect the religious diversity of our families. The Board has set policies in regards to religious holidays and recently reviewed and reaffirmed them. They are set forth in policy #2705.

The policy assures students that they will not be penalized for absences related to religious holidays. Although the Board realizes it is not reasonable or practical to schedule all activities, events and assessments around all religious holidays, it does ask staff to consider them in making plans and to accommodate make-up work for students so needing.

If your family celebrates religious holidays that fall on school days, you may wish to review the policy. Questions can and should be directed to your child’s teacher or principal.

Race to Top Initiative

The State of Connecticut is planning on submitting a grant application to the Federal Government under a stimulus plan initiative entitled “Race to the Top” (RTTT). The initiative is designed to spur major educational reforms in poorly performing schools. Although all Connecticut districts have been invited to consider participation, Lyme-Old Lyme may decline. Its schools are not regarded as poor performing schools and, as such, would be eligible for a very small portion of the grant.

The Lyme-Old Lyme district is committed to ongoing renewal and improvement. We believe the district is best served in setting its own goals and priorities and is committed to using best practices and research in determining them.

Policies continued from page 1...

Most of the policies that families are likely to need access to are found under “Students” or “Instruction.” The following policies represent those the districts must make available.

- Academic Assessment and School Accountability (3050, 3060, 3340, 3350)
- Attendance/Absence/Truancy (2110, 2130, 2140, 3130)
- Bullying (2305)
- Conduct/Suspension/Expulsion (2200, 2230)
- Grading, Graduation Requirements, Promotion, Progress Reports (2502, 2510, 2530, 2560, 3300, 3320, 3330)
- Harassment (2610)
- Hazardous Materials (6550)
- Homeless Students (2155)
- Homework (3360)
- Internet Safety (3410)
- Limited English Proficiency (3525)
- Migrant Students (3565)
- Military Recruiting (2165, 2720)
- NAEP Participation (3355)
- Non-Discrimination Statement (2100, 3010)
- Parent Involvement (2505)
- Pesticides (6560)
- Pledge of Allegiance (3120)
- Psychotropic Drugs (2180)
- Reporting Child Abuse (2615)
- Severe Food Allergies (2735)
- Student Health (2625, 2635, 2640, 2645, 2650, 2655, 2660, 2665, 2670, 2685)
- Student Records and Confidentiality (2160, 2175)
- Substance Abuse (2350, 2360)
- Suicide Prevention (2605)
- Surveys of Students (2715)
- Title I (3525)
- Transportation Complaints (6630)
- Weapons and Dangerous Instruments (2210, 2220)

If you would like a print copy of any of these or other policies, please contact our central office.
Accolades and Accomplishments

At this mid-point in the 2009-10 school year, it is good to note some special distinctions earned by our school district:

- Lyme-Old Lyme High School designated as a silver medalist high school by U.S. News and World Report.
- Lyme-Old Lyme High School identified as an efficient Connecticut High School in an economic study conducted by the University of Connecticut.
- Lyme-Old Lyme High School Girls Soccer team earns title as Class S State Co-Champions.
- Lyme-Old Lyme High School Girls Cross Country team earns title as State Class S Champions.

Congratulations to all contributing to these special honors!