

IT'S FULL STEAM AHEAD FOR NEW HIGH SCHOOL

By Sara Isaac

The new LECS-affiliated high school is on track to open its doors in fall 2009, offering a specialized curriculum emphasizing science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM), said LECS director Ronnie DeNoia, who also will be principal of the high school.

The new DaVinci High will begin the school year with about 25 ninth and tenth graders. Students will attend classes Monday through Thursday, and on Fridays will work as interns at participating local organizations. So far, internship agreements have been signed with the Orlando Science Center and the Orange County History Center, Ms. DeNoia said.

The school most likely will be at the educational building of the Downtown Baptist Church, although negotiations are still under way. The church sits on East Pine Street at South Rosalind Avenue, just a few blocks south of the current LECS building.

Classes will run 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., and DaVinci High will follow the Orange County Public School calendar. Upper grades will be added in coming years.

Ms. DeNoia said the school's name symbolizes the learning environment the high school will offer.

See *STEAM*, page 10

WHY I'M EXCITED ABOUT DAVINCI HIGH

By Katelyn Moloney, 8th Grade

What I like about DaVinci High is simple: how small the school is, and the fact that I will be going to work every Friday -- change it up, get a little fresh air, you know? I've been going to small schools my whole life -- why break the chain now? As for the internships, that just sounds like fun. Get your hands dirty at the pottery studio, take some nature walks at Langford Park, and play at being an adult for seven hours. I've known the people at the city of Orlando's Pottery Studio and Langford all my life; it will be just like going home, but I'll be at school. Also, you get 15 college credits by the time you're done with DaVinci.

Maybe I will miss some of the traditional high school experiences, but, hey, the law actually says that you can play with your home-school team, or participate in extracurricular activities, or go to dances with a friend.



LECS sixth-grader Matthew Shinner balances a spinning plate during the Cirque du Cure fundraising gala at the Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando. The gala raised more than \$280,000 for the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation.

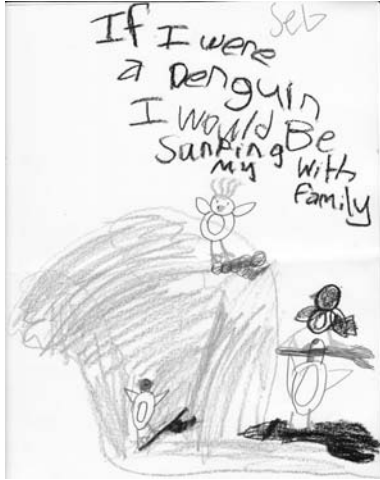


Illustration by Sebastian Newell

Sebastian Newell drew this picture of surfing penguins in Christie Shelton's first-grade class.

CLUSTER I:

First Grade

If you were a penguin. First grade is having a great time learning about penguins. We are learning about their habitat, how they survive, how they care for their young, and the different kinds of penguins. We also drew pictures of what we would look like if we were penguins.

Second Grade

Holiday reflections. We are studying holidays of many cultures. Children brought in items from home that have special meaning to them, something reflective of their culture during their holiday.

Olden times. We are studying how the present and the past are different. We will be interviewing our grandparents or older adults to find out what life was like long ago and compare it with life today. We will have some grandparents or friends come to class to help us share those experiences.

Bear necessities. We have started our first research project - on bears. There are more than six different kinds of bears. We will be doing our group presentations. We have just finished writing books on herbivores and carnivores and will be working on writing our book on omnivores.

Resolute start. We are very excited that the New Year is here, and are writing our resolutions. Happy New Year!

Third Grade

Small, smaller, smallest. We have been studying Asia, and we looked at a 15-piece nesting doll. The students ooh-ed and aah-ed and laughed and were astonished at how small it became.

Civics lesson. Orlando businessman and civic leader Charlie Stuart visited our school to talk to our class (and some of Cluster II teacher Katie Joerg's students) about how to become involved in the government, and to take an interest in what is going on in the community. This was part of our civics benchmarks. Mr. Stuart, who ran in the Democratic primary for U.S. House District 8, spoke to us on Nov. 21.

CLUSTER III:

History

LECS goes to the polls. No surprise, Democratic Sen. Barack Obama was the easy winner of Cluster III during the mock election held at the school before Election Day. The presidential candidate's appeal to youth was underscored by the 66 to 18 vote in his favor. Among other results: Democratic challenger Alan Grayson defeated Republican incumbent Ric Keller 41 to 28 for U.S. House District 8. And students preferred Republican incumbent Tom Feeney to Democrat Suzanne Kosmas 3 to 2, though Kosmas won the seat for U.S. House District 24 (six other students apparently voted in the wrong district).

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Worries about the economy. In the run-up to the national election, students' No. 1 concern and their No. 1 spending priority was the economy. This closely mirrored the general electorate in the last weeks of the campaign.

Bring back Jack. Cluster III students also choose a past president they would like to have return. That voting went as follows:

John F. Kennedy: 31, the overwhelming plurality winner

Bill Clinton: 16

(tie) Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt: 13 each

Ronald Reagan: 5

Teddy Roosevelt: 4

(tie) Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. "Ike" Eisenhower: 1 each.

Democracy's roots. With the elections over, students have been studying two benchmarks: the American Revolution, and the emerging strong European states (and "big-shot" leaders) in the 16th to 18th centuries: England, France, Spain, Prussia, Russia, the Netherlands and the Ottoman Empire.

Language Arts

The Holocaust. Cluster III students studied the Holocaust through literature by reading poems, memoirs, diaries, and novels. Every student read at least one book about the Holocaust and gave a booktalk about it. In class, students read poetry and viewed photographs and videos to learn more about this tragic time period. As a final project, students researched a historic photograph of pre-war Jewish life and compared it to one of their own family photographs. Their projects are on display in the 2nd floor hallway.

Battle of the Books. Congratulations to the new Battle of the Books Team: Taylor Scribner, Amber Sheldon, Callie Jensen, Olivia Talton, Olivia Crawford, and team captain Devan Spear. The team was selected in October and has been practicing twice a week since then. They will go to "battle" in the spring, competing with other middle school teams based on their intimate knowledge of the details of this year's 15 Sunshine State Young Readers' books.

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

January 2009

Dear Parents:

Welcome to a new year with all the possibilities that it holds for us. There is so much to tell you about and even more to look forward to.

First, we have been accepted as a participant in Oprah Winfrey's O Ambassadors Club. The community service club posts activities on the O Ambassadors website and interacts with other schools while raising money and awareness for global initiatives. The club will meet on Tuesdays and be open to a limited number of students in grades 5-8.

Second, as many of you know, I am enrolled in the certification program at the Rollins College Philanthropy & Nonprofit Leadership Center. In recent courses, we have spent significant time on fundraising and the loss of donor dollars. One of the things we have learned is the concept of "shifting the paradigm," which basically means doing things differently than in the past with a different expected outcome. We have learned that many nonprofits have cancelled their annual galas and silent auction simply because they fear not being able to cover expenses. We have decided to do the same and go to an online auction. We have already begun the process by purchasing the auction site and are beginning to amass items and postings. We also have sponsors for advertising, which will defray, if not pay for, the site. The online auction will give us much broader exposure, so we have great expectations on how much money we will be able to raise. This is a significant departure from the past when the Silent Auction served not only as a fundraiser for our arts program, but also an adult social gathering. With that in mind, we are seeking to do an informal survey. Please choose one of the following two options: a) given the economy, should we go strictly with an online auction, forgo the in-person event, and reassess next year? Or b) given the economy, let's go with the online auction, but I would like to see an adult event such as cocktails and hors d'oeuvres with the class baskets for auction. Email your preference no later than Jan. 31 to info@lecs.org.



Next, on Tuesday, Dec. 9, we held an informational meeting and pre-application session for students who are interested in attending the new high school, DaVinci Charter. We had about 35 people in attendance. There were many great questions about the school and how it would function. I am very clear with the parents that the beginning will not be without some bumps, but just as LECS survived the initial rocky road, so will the high school. There were applications available at the meeting and we will have enrollment projections by February. For any parent who was unable to attend, please email me with any questions you might have and an application for admission. This next phase is a very exciting one and I look forward to many LECS parents come on the journey with us.

Finally, I wish I had more to tell you about the status of the LECS building, but I don't. We thought we would have a sealed deal by Dec. 1, but there was a glitch in the negotiations that we hope to have ironed out very soon. I will schedule a meeting once I have something definitive to report to you. In the interim, please remember the LECS Foundation in your charitable contributions. The more money that we can put toward purchase and/or renovation, the less our debt service will be.

Respectfully,

Ronnie DeNoia

CLOWNS FOR A CURE

By **Matthew Shinner, 6th grade**

Lake Eola Charter School students clowned around for a good cause recently, spinning plates and juggling scarves to help raise money for the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation.



The Orlando Youth Circus – an offshoot of the LECS after-school circus club – entertained guests during the Cirque du Cure fundraising gala at the Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando.

LECS parent Staci Baker, whose sixth-grader, Delani, has juvenile diabetes, recommended the Youth Circus to organizers, who adopted a circus theme for the Oct. 25 event.

Youth Circus director and LECS parent Grace Helfrich rounded up six veteran club members for the performance. During the event, students Jessica Lindquist, Patrick Fleming, Matthew Shinner, Burk Helfrich, Halsey Helfrich and Ian Bishop were stationed around the hall, and rotated positions so that all guests could see them.

Jessica twirled ribbons, Ian was on stilts and Matthew was spinning plates. Patrick juggled scarves. Halsey was on stilts and spinning plates. Burk was juggling and on stilts.

After their performance, the students sat down to a feast of lasagna, noodles and cannoli.

The auction was one of two major fundraising events of the year for the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, and it raised over \$280,000. The Orlando Youth Circus was very proud to have been involved in this cause. Will they continue to do performances like this? Ms. Helfrich says, “definitely!”

STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

Carissa Hamilton, P.E./Health

Devan Spear, Spanish

Courtney Alakan, Language Arts

Jacob Howton, Mathematics

Katelyn Moloney, Science

Olivia Crawford, History

OCTOBER

Zachary Glaser, P.E./Health

Olivia Crawford, Spanish

Kyrstin Mays, Language Arts

Allyson Driggers, Mathematics

Courtney Alakan, Science

Taylor Scribner, History

NOVEMBER

Drew King, P.E./Health

Leah Bisbee, Spanish

Patience Deochand, Language Arts

Amy Welch, Mathematics

Carissa Hamilton, Science

Katelyn Moloney, History

IMAGINE

I can only imagine

The faint cough of the train, like a dying Jew surrendering to winter.

I can only imagine

The children starving, barefoot and wearing rags, growing down instead of up.

I can only imagine

The gratification in dying, evading the desolation of living.

I can only imagine

The intolerant souls, waiting to be released from isolation.

I can only imagine

The innocent inquiry, where do the trains come from, and where are they taking us?

I can only imagine in my dreams,

The never-ending tears, freezing crisp skin wiping them away.

This is the question yet to be answered.

Will we ever be able to imagine?

—RACHEL GOLDENBERG, 6TH GRADE

WHAT I LOVE ABOUT MY SCHOOL

What I love about school is I can be my shy, sweet self.

I have sweet, nice friends, who will be there for me if I am down and even give me great advice.

What I love about school is the hot, fun, sweaty football games.

The kind of games that I am totally into, or the kind of games that I am so into that if I fall and wound myself I will just brush it off even if I fall really hard.

These are the kind of games that makes me feel so powerful that I could do anything.

What I love about school, are my amazing teachers, whom I look up to the most next to my mom.

My teachers teach me things that I might need to know in the future.

They help me the most when I need the help. What I love about school, is that I can be my pleasant but timid self, or play the kind of football games that make me feel so powerful, and most of all my most wonderful, thoughtful, nice, sweet teachers whom I love. That is why I love my amazing school.

—PATIENCE DEOCHAND, 7TH GRADE

TUBBY PANDA SEARCHES FOR DESTINY (AND SNACKS)

By Amber Sheldon, 8th grade

KUNG FU PANDA

Rated: PG

Amber's rating: ★★★★★

Genre: Animation/Comedy

Directed by: Mark Osborne and John Stevenson

Written by: Jonathan Aible and Glenn Berger

Starring: Jack Black, Dustin Hoffman, Angelina Jolie, Seth Rogen, Lucy Liu, Jackie Chan, David Cross, and Ian McShane

"Legend tells of a legendary warrior whose kung fu skills were the stuff of legend..."

Po is a kung fu-loving tubby panda who dreams of someday leaving his noodle shack and becoming a great kung fu warrior. But when Master Oogway, a wise 1000-year-old turtle, has a grim vision depicting the villainous snow leopard, Tai Lung, escaping from imprisonment, someone must be selected to defeat him and bring harmony to the Valley of Peace. This someone will be given the Dragon Scroll and become the legendary Dragon Warrior.

Po, excited by the news, goes to the Jade Palace to see Master Shifu's elite students, the Furious Five, compete to be worthy of the Dragon Scroll but is accidentally selected

to be the Dragon Warrior instead of one of the five. Now Po must train hard with the impatient, stone-hearted Master Shifu and learn to believe in himself and in the power of the Dragon Scroll in order to fulfill his destiny: become the Dragon Warrior and defeat Tai Lung. (And hopefully grab a tasty snack along the way.) But will he?

Kung Fu Panda is an excellent movie filled with fun, action, and good lessons to learn along the way. This movie also has many of our favorite stars including Jack Black, Angelina Jolie, Jackie Chan, Lucy Liu, and the great Dustin Hoffman. The movie gets a little serious at times but balances it out with humor and the animal characters are guaranteed to delight.

The movie conveys the invaluable message of the utter importance of being yourself and believing in yourself and others even if the odds are against you. I love this movie and could watch it a million times and never get sick of it. In my opinion *Kung Fu Panda* is the best animated film ever made. Definitely five-star worthy. A must see for any form of living organism, which means you!

KNEE-SLAPPING CHICK FLICK KEEPS HOLIDAY SPIRIT ALIVE

FOUR CHRISTMASES

Rated: PG-13

Callie's rating: ★★★★★

Genre: Comedy

Directed by: Seth Gordon

Written by: Matt Allen & Caleb Wilson

Starring: Reese Witherspoon, Vince Vaughn

By Callie Jensen, 7th Grade

The holidays are over, but you can relive the Christmas cheer with one of the season's funniest movies.

Four Christmases stars Vince Vaughn and Reese Witherspoon, otherwise known as Brad and Kate. Once they met each other they quickly fell in love. They have many things in common. They have divorced parents, hate family vacations, have no desire to get married, and never want to have kids.

Continued on page 9

WHERE'S THE 'FREE' IN FREE DRESS?

When Lake Eola Charter School holds free-dress days, students shouldn't have to pay for wearing their own clothes to school.

First of all, the name itself causes misconceptions. Although free dress means that you do not have to wear your school uniform and can instead choose any clothes that meet dress code, many people think that it means that you can wear non-uniform clothing for no cost.

It also isn't fair to make us pay for free-dress days because that is something that most middle schoolers get every day. Regular public schools do not require uniforms. Meanwhile, LECS students who have been here since kindergarten have been wearing the same uniforms for years.

Other students agree that charging for free-dress days is not fair.

"I think that it's stupid because we have to wear uniforms. When we free dress we actually have to pay," said eighth-grader Erik O'Conner.

I think that our school should think of new uniforms (especially for boys), or should only charge for charity/fundraiser free-dress days.

—YOUSSEF BENBRAHIM, 8TH GRADE

WHAT'S UP WITH THE SOAP DISPENSERS

I think that the soap dispensers were a waste of money. They bought them and have never filled them.

I think that they were a waste of plastic, too.

So start filling them up and keeping track of them.

—GRACYN LINDBORG, 3RD GRADE

LITERATURE AND REVIEWS

Continued from page 7

Ever since they've been together, they lie to their families so they don't have to go to family reunions and get-togethers. On their third Christmas together they get stuck in a situation where they must visit all four parents in one day. They learn many things about each other and each other's families, and some of it isn't always normal. How will they ever survive?

I would recommend this movie to girls and women 12 years and up who are in the mood for a knee-slapping chick-flick.

While parts of *Four Christmases* were funny, other moments were touching. But at times it was extremely unrealistic. I would give this movie four stars.

STUDENTS ARE THIRSTY FOR TWILIGHT SAGA

By Patience Deochand

TWILIGHT

By Stephenie Meyer

544 pages

Megan Tingley/ Little, Brown

Ages 12 and up

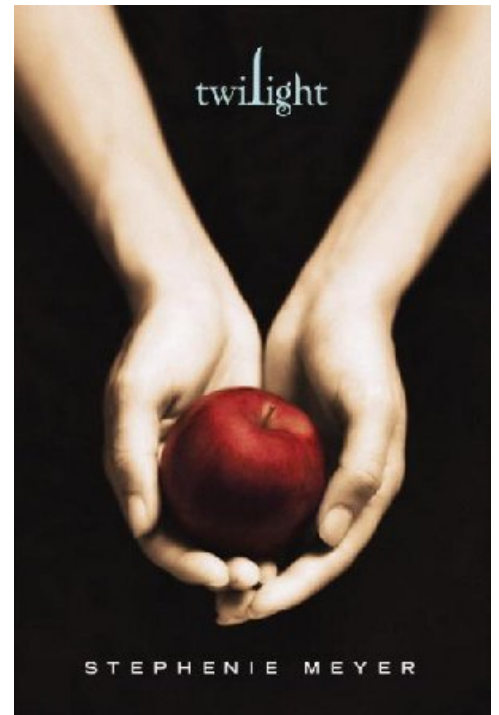
Have you heard of a book called *Twilight*? If you haven't, you must not go to LECS. This book is by the author Stephenie Meyer. She has a series called the *Twilight* saga. It starts with *Twilight*, then *New Moon*, next comes *Eclipse*, and then the last book *Breaking Dawn*.

The last book did not come out until August 2. The series has been so popular that Mrs. Stucker and Mrs. Friedman do not have enough books for all the students at LECS who want to read the series. They are all checked out by the LECS students, and kids who want to read the book are on a waiting list.

Have you read the books yet? What are you waiting for! If you need to know more read the rest of this article. *Twilight* is about a girl named Bella. She is moving to Forks, Washington, with her dad. She starts at a new school with new people. She makes a few friends, but in one of her classes her lab partner Edward is always tense around her. She can't figure out why, until she is almost crushed by a mini van and he saves her. She has a bunch of questions to ask him. She finds out that he is a vampire. He has a special gift -- he can read minds -- except for Bella's. He is in love with her, and she loves him too.

All the vampires in the world are not as nice as Edward and his family. There is a family of vampires who come along and are thirsty for Bella's blood, but Edward won't stand for that. What will he do? You have to read the book.

Even grown-ups are reading this series. *Twilight* has been made into a movie. But read the book first. It is a must!



STEAM *from page 1*

"There is no one in history who more embodies the philosophy of the school than Leonardo da Vinci. Most people hear his name and think *The Last Supper*, but in reality that was only a small part of who he was. He was a scientist, mathematician, and engineer whose inventions were far ahead of their time," Ms. DeNoia said.

"It seemed like the perfect name for a school where the expectation is for students to have amazing learning experiences," she said.

Although several students who plan to attend DaVinci High said they looked forward to having some of the LECS middle school teachers move up with them, Ms. DeNoia said no particular teachers have yet been tapped.

"That has not been determined, as it will depend on enrollment," she said.

The advent of the high school will not affect plans for Lake Eola Charter School's biennial space mission simulation, Ms. DeNoia said. Middle schoolers in next year's Space, Technology and Engineering Program will still have the opportunity to participate in the "sim."

Like LECS, DaVinci High students will not have an option for school sports -- at least at first, DeNoia said. Golf and volleyball may be added at a future date. Meanwhile, students will have physical education. Social gatherings, such as dances, will take place about as frequently as at traditional OCPS schools, she said.

Yes, Virginia There is a Santa Claus

By Ronnie DeNoia

Some of you may remember hearing about a famous editorial written in 1897, by Francis Pharcellus Church, one of the editors of the now defunct New York Sun, in response to a letter sent by 8 year old Virginia O'Hanlon. Virginia was asking if there really was a Santa Claus and in Mr. Church's reply is a line I would like to share:

Yes, Virginia there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exists.

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, or have participated in Ramadan, generosity is a trait that transcends named faiths and celebrations. It is what has sustained LECS more times than I can recount over the last ten years. It has come in many shapes and sizes and from sources known and unknown. It has come most often just when it was needed.

This year, it came in both November and December and the beneficiaries were our children. Due to a generous donation of Board Member Stacey Cole, which was matched by her employer, US Trust Company, our students in grades 1-5 were able to attend a performance of the Orlando Symphony at the Bob Carr for the very reduced rate of \$4.00. In these tough economic times, we appreciate the generosity of Ms. Cole and US Trust so that our students could enjoy the full range of all curricular experiences. If you have a moment, please email Stacey with your thanks.

In December, Board member and parent, Laura Sundburg, demonstrated both her devotion and generosity to the school by making a similar contribution that was matched by her employer, Greenberg Traurig. This donation allowed all of our students to attend the Nutcracker Ballet for only \$5.00 per child. When companies were forgoing their own end of the year celebrations, it is particularly meaningful that a contribution that would benefit children and give them the opportunity to extend their educational experiences was deemed worthy. Again, if you have a moment, or see Laura, a word of thanks would be great. To both Board members and their employers, thank you for your devotion to education and your generous spirit. We at Lake Eola Charter School are grateful.

SCHOOL SCHEDULE

- 1-9 **Geography Bee**
- 1-15 **School Science Fair**
- 1-16 **MLK Read-In**
- 1-19 **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day–No School**
- 1-29 **PTSA General Meeting 6:00-8:00**
- 1-30 **3rd-5th Medieval Times Field Trip**
- 2-18 **Katie Kaufman Black & White Photos**
- 2-19 **Noon Dismissal/Professional Development Day/
Second Trimester Ends (61 days)**
- 2-20 **Teacher Workday/Student Holiday**
- 2-23 **Teacher/Student Holiday**
- 2-27 **Report Cards Go Home**

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We appreciate contributions from students, staff, and parents. Email news and events to:

sara.a.isaac@gmail.com