

# Ka Lau

August 2, 2017

2017/2018, Issue 1



## Middle School Transitioning to Project-based Learning

Director Garcia and the middle school teachers are excited about bringing project-based learning (PBL) back to LCPCS this year. Our school's mission includes an emphasis on "hands-on" learning, and Director Garcia's experience and success with project-based learning make PBL a logical next step for LCPCS.

Four LCPCS teachers, along with Director Garcia, attended a PBL training in California earlier this summer. Electives teacher Todd Otake said it was probably the best training he's ever been to, and he's feeling positive and excited. Several teachers new to LCPCS this year, along with the new Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Mahea Yamashita, have experience using project-based teaching methods. The middle school team leading the PBL effort consists of Carrie Edgil, Clifton Johnson (6<sup>th</sup> grade homeroom/language arts/history), electives teacher Todd Otake, Malory Romero (7<sup>th</sup> grade homeroom/math/history), technology teacher Skye Silverman, Aaron Mickelson (8<sup>th</sup> grade homeroom/science/history) and Jeff St. Pierre.



Last year's 6<sup>th</sup> grade cooking in Mr. Johnson's class.

8<sup>th</sup> grade class, which ran a concessions stand at last spring's music festival, explore the cost/benefit ratios of concessions, with the ultimate goal of making LCPCS concessions more lucrative, exciting and healthy.

Students won't necessarily be working on projects all the time. Depending on the teacher and the subject, classroom time generally will be divided between more standard lessons (guided by State standards for the grade level), and the application of skills to the various projects.

Over the next few years, the goal is to extend the PBL teaching method to the high school and elementary grades. Why start with the middle school? As a time of transition to adulthood, middle school years present some very specific challenges. "The middle school environment has to be uniquely qualified to address these needs, or students can slip through the cracks," said Director Garcia recently. "Eleven-year-olds shouldn't be hanging out with seventeen-year-olds at school," he continued, emphasizing the desire to keep our kids "kid-like" for as long as possible. PBL can be used to encourage creativity in the middle school kids, while giving them a sense of cohesion and identity apart from the older grades.

The bell schedule for middle school students will not change, and they will still go to regular-length classes in math, English, science, etc. However, each of the teachers will use projects as a way both to teach and showcase student work. "We want what we do to have meaning, to have a tangible effect on our community," said Mr. Johnson. For instance, he will be spearheading a project for which the driving question is *Can we reduce Type 2 diabetes in our community in a way that's fun?* Students will use a variety of skills to explore the nature of the disease and lifestyle habits that help prevent it, and will exhibit their work during an "Eat to Live" festival for the community.

In other cases, the projects will be more specific to an individual class. Kumu Luz (Ms. Romero), for example, plans to have the

## Calendar

- Tuesday, August 1 — First day back for teachers.
- Monday, August 7 — First day back for students.
- Monday, August 7, 5:00 pm — Girls' Volleyball: Informational meeting for athletes and parents, LCPCS gym.

### ➤ 2017/2018 Bell schedule:

Mondays — School starts at 8:00 am, and ends at 12:30 pm.

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays — School starts at 8:00 am and ends at 2:15 pm.

➤ **Elementary School Supplies:** LCPCS will be charging a one-time fee of \$65 per elementary student to cover the cost of school supplies and four field trips. This school fee must be paid by August 4, via either cash or check payable to LCPCS. If you need financial assistance or have any questions, contact the LCPCS front office (962-2200) between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm.



Middle and high school students should purchase basic supplies individually. Teachers will inform them of any special needed supplies once school starts, and field trip costs will be charged as needed.

➤ **Lunch and breakfast:** Like last year, LCPCS will be taking part in the CEP Program, meaning that all students will be eligible for free lunch and breakfast every school day. For more information, click on the Announcements tab on the school website ([www.lcpcs.org](http://www.lcpcs.org)).

➤ **After school:** There will be no after-school program during Quarter 1. Several grant proposals have been submitted, and LCPCS hopes to offer an after-school program soon.

## A Message from Director Garcia

Welcome 'Back to School' Seaside family and friends! I hope that you had a great summer filled with quality family time, relaxation, personal growth and maybe some travel. I was able to visit my family and friends in Oakland and Berkeley and then come back to settle in more to my new home, Hawai'i Island. I am excited about being here to celebrate and lead the opening of the 2017-2018 school year!

This year, we will be moving to a more intentional separation between the different grade levels: elementary, middle school, and high school. Developmentally, students experience a lot of growth in these three periods. Making these grade level changes will enable staff to serve our students better.

At the end of last school year, elementary school teachers participated in a Responsive Classrooms training that provided strategies for responding to needs of students in class. Engaging our youngest students in healthy decision-making, by equipping our teachers with ways to support their social and emotional well-being, will help students be more successful as they move into middle and high school.

While in California, I attended an amazing project-based learning (PBL) conference with four of our middle school teachers. PBL focuses on giving students more of an opportunity to choose topics and projects that they will work on to demonstrate their understanding of what they have learned in school, how they will apply it to their lives, and the impact their new learning will have in their community. More of our teachers will receive professional development to help implement PBL school-wide, over the next 3 years.

In our high school, we will be providing students with more support to help them identify career and college opportunities. Our high school enrollment has increased, so word seems to be out that LCPCS has great opportunities and a vision for helping older students prepare for success after high school.

Please join us this year through our various volunteer opportunities so that we can be the best school for our keiki! Mahalo e Aloha.