

## **In Session with the “Oriole” Superintendent**

*This week's Oriole Corner has been written by guest columnist*

*Mr. Mark McGarry, Charlotte Upper Elementary Principal*

### **Whole Child Education**

21st century education has evolved to include more than just helping students learn to read, write, and do math. Education today has grown to encompass academic, social, and emotional learning. Charlotte Upper Elementary strives to provide a well-rounded education that supports the whole child.

Academically, Charlotte Upper Elementary is consistently in the top third of schools in the county. We strive to be even better though. We want to be known not only for our academics, but how we support our students socially and emotionally. To that end we have begun implementing many new initiatives for the 2018-2019 school year.

First among them is our reimagined PBIS system. The system centers around a matrix outlining what specific behaviors we're looking for in all areas of the school. When we see students practicing these expectations they can earn tickets. Tickets can be used to enter into drawings or move up on a classroom color chart. When students make the choice to move up the color chart they earn more privileges. PBIS supports two main ideas. One, that by consistently rewarding positive actions we encourage more positive actions. Two, the program teaches that meeting expectations earns more responsibilities and freedoms.

Another program we are proud to introduce is Second Step. Second Step is a curriculum we teach every Monday that helps with emotional identification and conflict resolution. By helping students understand how to identify and deal with their emotions and conflicts, we support the development of self-awareness and create a safer school.

These programs would not be possible without the Student Support Specialist and Dean of Students who work tirelessly to support students socially and emotionally. Whether we talk about the many different support groups run by Caroline Wiersma, the Student Support Specialist, or the PBIS rewards supported by Fred Koning, the Dean of Students, we are always talking about helping students grow socially and emotionally.

One other offering which is helping to build students socially and emotionally is our Health class, run by Joanna Schultz. This course, which follows the Michigan Model for Health curriculum, reinforces the lessons we teach in Second Step and the expectations of PBIS.

School should prepare students for more than just reading and math. It is also a place to learn about how to interact and work with others. It is a haven to explore how to deal with conflict and learn how to cope with the stresses of not only work, but social interaction. We aim to be that haven for our students. We are proud of the changes we have implemented, and proud of the positive impact we're seeing in the students because of them.