

# Anchored Life

**SHOWCASE WINNER**  
**JAN/FEB 2025**

## **Congratulations to Fort Dix Elementary School**

### About Our School

#### **Fun Facts about Fort Dix Elementary School**

- We are a 100% military-connected school housing six Pre-K rooms (ages 3 & 4 years) and two sections of each grade from K - 5th grade.
- Our students come from all branches of the military, as we are housed on the military installation Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst.
- Our school is exceptionally multicultural with many of our students being first-generation Americans and many more have been born on military bases throughout the world.

- Fort Dix Elementary has twice been named a National School of Character and a New Jersey State School of Character. Our methodologies have twice been awarded as “promising practices” by the National Schools of Character. Last year, US News and World Reports recognized us as one of the Best Elementary Schools for 2024.
- We have been an Anchored4Life school for the past three years.



## School Liaison Spotlight

**Nikelea Naida - School Liaison**



Nikelea Naida is one of our School Liaisons. She helped us become the first Anchored4Life school in all of New Jersey! Miss Nikki Noodle loves attending our A4L trainings and meetings as well as arranging wonderful guest speakers, trips, and events for all of the area schools.

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## Adviser Spotlight

### **Why do you have three Advisers?**

Having three Advisers allows us multiple views of our school as a whole. As specialists, we see the entire student population, which allows us to identify Team Leaders and monitor classroom climate. Having our school counselor as an Adviser, provides us with an additional depth of knowledge of our student population.

### **How do you split up tasks?**

We sometimes split responsibilities such as submitting our monthly reports, training students for Activity Groups, and taking charge of service projects to stay organized. Our Adviser team meets to collaborate at least one period per week to discuss upcoming meetings and the state of what needs to happen next.

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**Ian Doyle** - Adviser (K - 5 Health & PE Teacher)



A4L is not just a part of our culture at Fort Dix Elementary, it is our culture. Being 100% military-connected creates a culture of transition, character, leadership, and community. I am so proud to be a part of a club that supports our military-connected students and gives them the skills and confidence they need to be leaders in their community. I pride myself on being an engaging teacher, but like I tell all our Team Leaders, peer interaction is powerful. The positive interactions our Team Leaders have with other students are impactful in a way that we, as teachers, can't mimic.

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### **Jennifer Quinlan - Adviser (Counselor)**



Anchored4Life has unified so many of the initiatives I was previously attempting to develop as a school counselor. Being a 100% military-connected school, we have lots of tours, students arriving, departing, and deployments. The Anchored4Life program maps it out perfectly and provides wonderful materials and training at our fingertips. Anchored4Life is a big initiative at our school. I really enjoy mentoring our students as an Adviser. Helping them develop their confidence and public speaking skills is a highlight of the position.

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## **April Donovan - Adviser**

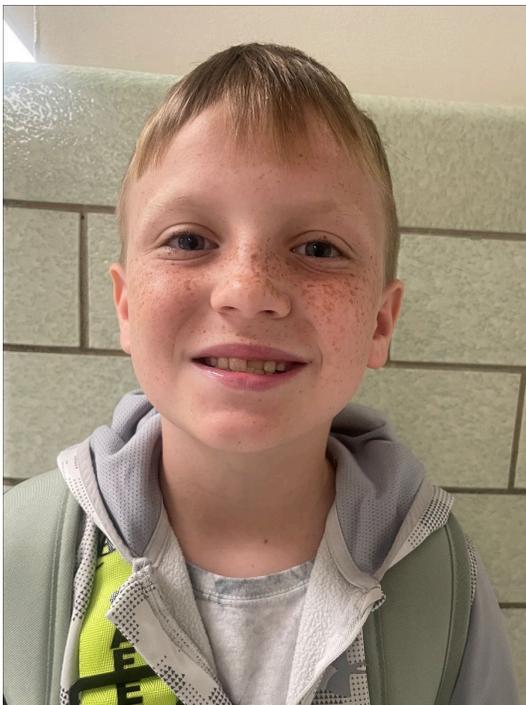
(K-5 Media Specialist & Innovation Lab Teacher)



Anchored4Life Advisers are sailing smoothly together! Each member brings unique talents to the table, creating a vibrant community where collaboration thrives. Our enthusiasm for the Anchored4Life program carries over to our Team Leaders for sure. The best part of working with the Team Leaders is watching their self-confidence take off! Early in the year you can see the uneasiness in their face and hear it in their voice, but as the year progresses they grow into their role and develop into confident leaders. It is also a privilege to develop connections with them outside of being their classroom teacher. Anchored4Life principles tie in nicely with our core values at our school, so it is nice that they complement each other.

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**Team Leader Spotlight**



## **Logan** - 5th Grade 2nd-year Team Leader

Hello, my name is Lobster Logan. This year in Anchored4Life I am looking forward to the service project.

Anchored4Life is important because we get to help most kids become happy and greet students if they're new.

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## **Abby** - 5th Grade

Hello, my name is Acai Abigail, but you can call me Abbi. This year in Anchored4Life I am looking forward to helping other children and the USO show. My favorite activity in school is READING!!!!

Anchored4Life is important because we help the kids who move in or out and also through deployment.





## **Persinna - 5th Grade**

Hello, my name is Pineapple Persinna. This year in Anchored4Life I am looking forward to helping others when their dad or mom is deploying. My favorite activity in school is reading in the library.

Anchored4Life is important because you help out a lot.

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## **Kyra - 5th Grade**

Hello, my name is Kiwi Kyra. This year in Anchored4Life I am looking forward to the Military Ball.

Anchored4Life is important because us kids help other kids go through a rough time and make friends.





## Zachary - 4th Grade

Hello, my name is Zebra Cake Zach. This year in Anchored4Life I am looking forward to trunk or treat.

Anchored4Life is important because we can help people.

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## Alaina - 4th Grade

Hello, my name is Apple Pie Alaina. This year in Anchored4Life I am looking forward to helping kids.

Anchored4Life is important because kids' feelings are important.





## **Gabrielle - 4th Grade**

Hello, my name is Gummy Bear Gabby. This year in Anchored4Life I am looking forward to learning about helping other kids and to learning about this program.

Anchored4Life is important because we get to help kids and their families.

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## **Cecilia - 4th Grade**

Hello, my name is Cantaloupe Cecilia. This year in Anchored4Life I am looking forward to Activity Groups.

Anchored4Life is important because we get to help kids like me.



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## **Recognizing Team Leaders**

This bulletin board is near the front entrance of our school. Students and family members are brought over to it on tours. It helps new students to see who the Anchored4Life Team Leaders and Advisers are. Very often our Team Leaders

also serve as safety patrol members and can be seen daily in the hallways developing character by helping students.



Team Leaders at Fort Dix receive a warm introduction at our Character Kick off Assembly.



## Club Feature Spotlight

# Activity Groups



### Pre-K Life Skills Lessons

Our Team Leaders love doing Activity Groups, especially when they can visit

their younger siblings. We have six classes of Pre-K (3 and 4-year-olds) at our school. Team Leaders prepared a lesson with their school Counselor Mrs. Quinlan, an A4L Adviser, that taught our youngest students how to calm down using breathing exercises. The Pre-K students learned "cocoa breathing" which is breathing in deeply to smell the pretend hot cocoa and breathing out to cool it down. In the picture below, our Team Leaders are teaching "roller coaster breathing" which is tracing your fingers while you breathe in (up) and out (down). When students make it all the way to the pinkie, they've done 5 deep breaths.



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## Wellness Week - March

During our Wellness Week, Team leaders teach Pre-K classes calming techniques. They especially love it when they can teach their own siblings!



Also during our Wellness Week, Team Leaders taught a health lesson to the K-2 classes. The students loved learning about their heart and blood cells from their peers!



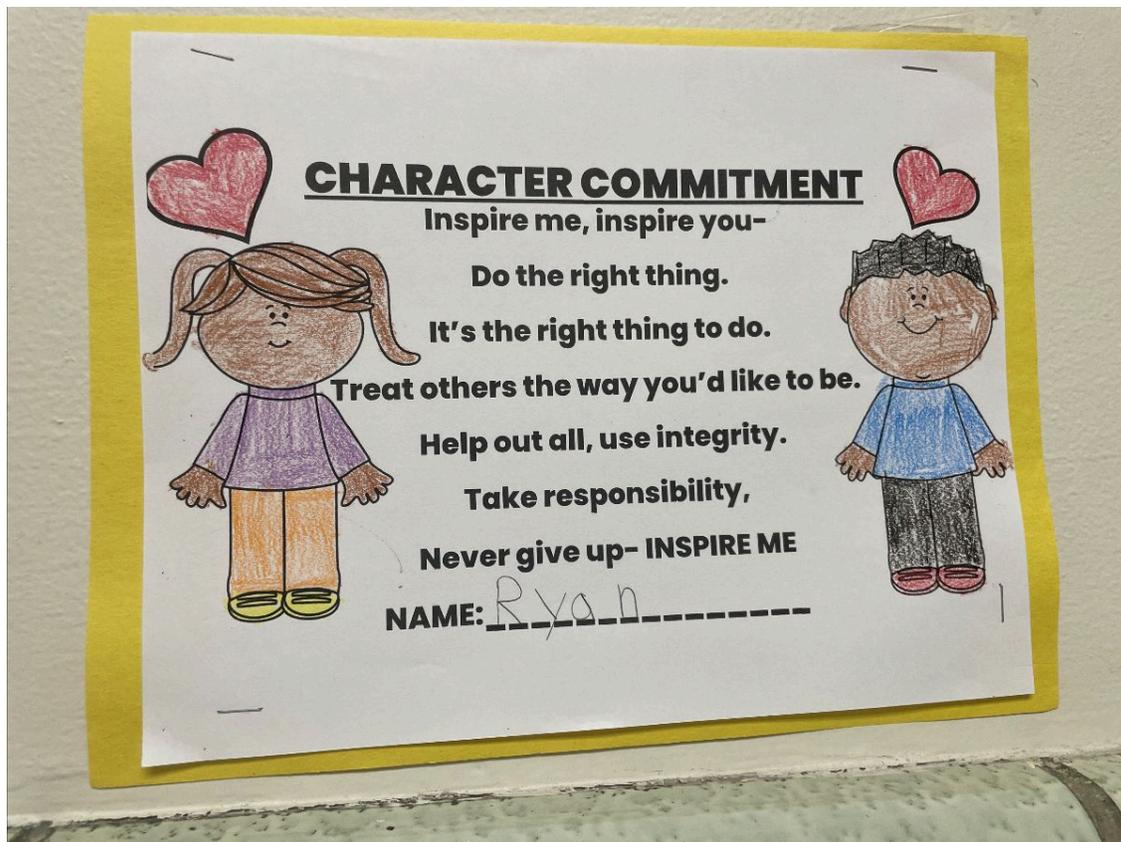
# Club Feature Spotlight

# Quotes



## Developing Character

At Fort Dix Elementary, we have one special quote that all of our students learn and recite daily. It is called our Character Commitment.



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## Quote Selection

Fort Dix Elementary Team Leaders spend their first meetings identifying

quotes they want to share throughout the year. We have set themes for each month and the quotes correspond with the themes. For instance, October's theme is RESPECT because we celebrate the Week of Respect in the 2nd week of October in New Jersey. April's quotes are about being MILITARY CHILDREN because we are 100% military connected.

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## Club Feature Spotlight

# Service Project



### **Cereal Box Challenge**

Service projects are a favorite at Fort Dix Elementary. We completed a cereal box challenge that benefited our own branch of the American Red Cross on JBMDL. It was so much fun and helped our service members and their families.



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## **Holiday Help Baskets**

We also completed 20 "Holiday Help" baskets. Students in every grade participated by donating snacks, comfort items, etc. for the troops. Our Team Leaders hand-painted ornaments that were included in every box.

# Holiday Help

## FOR OUR OVERSEAS TROOPS

Fort Dix Elementary School's Anchored4Life Team Leaders are looking for donations to create holiday care packages for our troops who are stationed overseas.

**Items Needed:**

**Candy Canes**

**Hot Chocolate Packets**

**Individually Packaged**

**Snacks**

**Chapstick**

**Stationary**

**Games (i.e., playing cards, crossword**

**books, etc)**

Please send items with your student to Mrs. Quinlan, Mrs. Donovan, Mr. Doyle, or Miss Joelle no later than December 18, 2023.



# Club Feature Spotlight

# Tours



## Virtual Tours

During virtual/hybrid learning, we created a virtual tour for new students that reflects a typical tour by our Team Leaders. We hope this helps you learn all about our school!



# Final Words from our Principal

## Darvis Holley - Principal



During my tenure as principal at Fort Dix Elementary School, the Anchored4Life program became an essential component in addressing the unique challenges faced by our military-connected students. Given the frequent relocations, separations, and transitions of military family life, many of our students arrived feeling isolated, uprooted, and in need of immediate support. Anchored4Life provided a structured, peer-led framework that met these needs directly, creating a warm, welcoming environment where new students could quickly feel at home.

Team Leaders were trained to extend empathy and guidance to newcomers, helping them navigate both the academic and social aspects of school life. This focus on easing transitions not only addressed the emotional and social challenges military children often face but also fostered a resilient, connected school culture where students could adapt and thrive. Anchored4Life thus became more than just a program; it was a lifeline that bridged gaps, offering stability and continuity in an otherwise transient lifestyle.



*If your location is interested in being selected for a future edition of The Showcase Newsletter, reach out to your Point of Contact Learning Consultant, Shannon Flaherty, at [shannon@anchored4life.com](mailto:shannon@anchored4life.com).*

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