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Jason Chevrier Named Next Superintendent

Impressed by his leadership and work for Schodack Central School District over the past 12 years, the Board of Education named Jason Chevrier the next school superintendent on Mar. 8.

“I am truly honored to be selected Superintendent of Schodack Central School District. We have such talented faculty and staff who take good care of our kids. We’ve got a wonderful community that is so supportive of our schools. I look forward to continuing to help make sure our students have the best education possible,” said Mr. Chevrier.

Mr. Chevrier is expected to start on July 1. He will succeed Lee Bordick, who has served the past year as interim superintendent following the death of Superintendent Bob Horan on July 4, 2016.

“Working so closely with Bob for 11 years, he was a friend but also an inspiration and I learned a lot from his leadership. His personality, his energy, his innovation, his passion for education, and his love for family, those are pieces of Bob that I will hold on to, to cherish, and take with me as I move forward into this role,” said Mr. Chevrier.

For the past year, Mr. Chevrier has served as the district’s Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment. For the previous 11 years he served as Principal of Castleton Elementary School. Mr. Chevrier also taught fifth grade and special education at Watervliet and Rochester City School Districts.

Mr. Chevrier said it is an exciting time for the district with the Capital Project improvements and transition to two school buildings in 2018. He said he looks forward to talking with parents about what the educational program will be for their children and thanked superintendents he has worked with for their guidance.

“Mr. Hamlin, Mr. Horan and Mr. Bordick all brought with

them great qualities that we all respect and appreciate,” said Mr. Chevrier. “I hope to continue that great tradition of leadership that has been the foundation of Schodack throughout the years.

Their strengths and qualities that will remain with me embody what Schodack Central School District is all about. It is continued improvement, high expectations and caring for one another in our community that makes it the best place it can be.”



Board of Education President Michael Hiser said Mr. Chevrier impressed the Board both during the search process and his career in Schodack.

“Jason is very articulate and knowledgeable about education, particularly in the area of curriculum. He is also very enthusiastic, especially when it comes to students,” said Mr. Hiser. “His time at Castleton Elementary School brought him into contact with nearly every student in our district.”

Mr. Hiser thanked community members for their help in the search process. A search committee helped identify attributes important to the community, which were used during the Board’s final interviews, and an interview committee provided useful insight about candidates as well, Mr. Hiser said.

The district had 22 applicants for the superintendent position. A community committee interviewed six candidates and the Board of Education interviewed five finalists.

“I know many highly qualified candidates would be interested in the opportunity to lead a high performing district like Schodack,” said Mr. Chevrier. “To be selected and chosen amongst such a strong candidate pool certainly is an honor.”

Mr. Chevrier is married to Carrie Nyc-Chevrier. They have three children, Sophia, Brody and Dean, all whom attend Schodack schools.

Maple Hill High School Has Highest Graduation Rate

Maple Hill High School had a graduation rate of 99% in 2016, the highest in the Capital Region according to figures released by the NYS Department of Education in February.

“Congratulations to the administration, faculty and staff for making Schodack Schools one of the highest performing school districts in the Capital Region and State,” said Interim Superintendent Lee Bordick.

Another highlight in the state Education Department’s graduation figures was that more than half (51%) of Maple Hill graduates in 2016 received an Advanced Regents Diploma.

Students must pass Comprehensive English, all three Mathematics, Global History, US History, a Physical Science, a Life Science, and Language Other than English exams to receive an Advanced Regents Diploma.

Connected Learning Integrates Technology and Education

When Maple Hill Middle and High School students were recently surveyed about the 1-to-1 Chromebook initiative, nearly 90% said it helped them be more successful in school.

That wasn't surprising to teachers or administrators who see the collaboration, organization and instant access to resources that connected learning brings to classrooms each day.

"The most important thing in a classroom is still the teacher," said Principal Ron Agostinoni. "But if we can give our teachers and students such a powerful tool to improve instruction, why wouldn't we?"

The 1-to-1 initiative that began this year is going so well that all grade 7-12 students will have a device next year, instead of the original target of 2018. A key reason is how responsible students are with the devices; only 1% have been damaged while other districts see rates as high as 20%.

"Students are becoming much more skilled using the Chromebooks," said Principal Jacqueline Hill. "They're using the calendar and Google Drive to stay organized. It also encourages communication. Students are emailing teachers more often with questions or thoughts from home or school."

In her English classes, Teacher Caitlin Colwell is impressed by how seamlessly students have taken to technology. Not only are her assignments and grades available online – just as they will be when students reach college – but students have resources immediately available to them.

"We're reading 'The Crucible' and 'The Great Gatsby' this year. We have the real books but we also have the pdfs so there's no more 'I forgot my book at school'," explained Ms. Colwell. "And if I'm teaching and I think of a short story that Fitzgerald wrote about the Lost Generation, I can instantly share it with them to read."



Connected learning also creates engaged learning opportunities. Students in Ms. Colwell's class, for example, wrote and created their own podcasts this year.

"I think this is the way that schools have to operate now," said Mr. Agostinoni. "If you want technology to be a seamless part of your curriculum you can't bring students to it, it has to be part of the classroom."

In 7th grade Social Studies, Teacher Ed Finney's students use Chromebooks to collaborate with schools in Kansas and the Bronx.

One recent lesson challenged students to consider a scenario based on the sinking of the USS Maine during the Spanish American War. Working in small groups, students took on roles of national security advisors, defense secretaries and diplomats to chart a course of action. They then joined an online group discussion with students from other schools to compare their solutions.

"The lesson really gets students thinking critically and helps them see different perspectives and regional differences," said Mr. Finney.

For Teacher Rico Frese, he sees the opportunities connected learning creates even though he admits he prefers grading papers on actual paper and doesn't integrate technology into his lessons as much as some other teachers.

"I use it for add-ons and enrich learning they're interested in," said Mr. Frese. "For example, we're going down to the FDR museum. There's an hour and a half biography video. I'm not going to show the whole video in class but I'll show a 10-minute clip and tell students if they're really interested, here's the full video. I think it's great. The students are more engaged with the technology."



MS Play a Hit with Community

The Middle School Drama Club returned on Mar. 23 and 24 with performances of "Rumpelstiltskin – Private Eye".

Students spent months afterschool rehearsing the spoof play, where a crime wave hits Fairytale Land and it's up to Rumpelstiltskin and his wise-cracking partner Ugly Duckling to solve the crime.

Congratulations to our students for a wonderful production! And thank you to Regina Maier, Doe Warland and members of the High School Drama Club for all their work putting together the play.

Middle School Students Enjoy Author Visit

Maple Hill Middle School students learned first-hand what it is like being a writer when author Steve Sheinkin visited the school in January.

While Mr. Sheinkin's new book "Undeclared: Jim Thorpe and the Carlisle Indian School Football Team" had not yet officially been released at the time of his visit, students were able to order advanced copies and received them during his visit.

Students who read at least one of Mr. Sheinkin's books had an opportunity to ask him questions in the library. A group of nearly 20 students who read more than one of Mr. Sheinkin's books earned a pizza lunch with the author.

"Some students read many, many of his books," noted teacher Christine Fowler.

During the question and answer session, Mr. Sheinkin explained to students how he started writing history books but turned to writing historical non-fiction where he could write more interesting and fun stories. Students asked questions about writing, including the difference between writing history books and non-fiction.

"This is awesome. This is the first time I've had a chance to talk about this book," Mr. Sheinkin told students.



CES Students Celebrate Research with World Gala

Third graders capped months of research with a World Gala Celebration on March 22 where students pretended to be from different countries and shared what they learned.

The event drew nearly a hundred parents, grandparents and other family members who enjoyed student presentations and food representative of each country.

"We researched 25 different countries as part of our 3rd grade Social Studies World Communities curriculum," explained Teacher

Christina Yager. "We had a wonderful turnout. The library and common area were filled with students and families."

The research project and gala event were a way to engage students, said Mrs. Yager, as they created informative poster boards and learned how citizens of their chosen countries dressed.

"I think it's something students will always remember," said Mrs. Yager.



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Capital Project Renovations Ahead of Schedule

The district's Capital Project is steadily moving forward with steel beams for a new music and art wing soon to be in place in the back of Maple Hill High School and foundations poured for new science classrooms in the front of the building.

"We're ahead of schedule," said Director of Facilities Matt LaClair. "The foundations weren't supposed to be done until this summer. Our faculty, staff and students deserve a lot of credit. They've put up with some dust, dirt, and noise and taken it all in stride. That really has helped work move quickly."

Inside the High School, the old main office, guidance and nurse area were gutted. New electrical, plumbing, heating and sprinklers were installed in the basement.

While workers have been busy since the ground breaking in November, this summer the community will notice the pace of work increase at the High School and start at Castleton Elementary.

"Once they have full blown access to the buildings, without students and staff, they'll be hubs of activity," said Mr. LaClair. "We expect CES to be completed by the start of the school year and the new entrance, music and art rooms, and library to be done at the High School."

Renovations at Castleton Elementary will include a more secure entrance, expanded parent lobby, a K-6 science lab, and renovated art and music classrooms. Additional renovations at the High School building, including finishing the science class-



Architectural rendering of corridor in upstairs of High School building.

rooms and new student areas, will be completed for the start of the 2018-19 school year.

Jason Chevrier, the district's next superintendent, expects the community will be impressed by the Capital Project's student-focused improvements and innovative design. But he stressed the most important piece for parents is what the new K-6 and grade 7-12 school alignment will look like.

"We know a Capital Project is more than just bricks and mortar to parents," said Mr. Chevrier. "Parents want to know what the programs inside those buildings will look like for their children. We look forward to those conversations with parents next year so they have a good understanding before we move grades in 2018."