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# SCHODACK

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



APRIL 2011

## Second Graders Learn Research Skills

How do you encourage second grade students to get excited about a research project?

At Castleton Elementary School, just ask them to learn about animals. This year, second graders were taught research skills such as where to find information, how to take good notes, and how to present what they learned to classmates as part of the English Language Arts curriculum.

Teacher Christine Charsky explained students first picked out animals such as gorillas and giraffes that they were interested in. Students then researched their animals in the school library with the assistance of Library Media Specialist Stacey Rattner. Ms. Rattner noted students used both encyclopedias and online resources to learn about the animals, such as their habitat and how they protect their young.

Students were taught how to take notes about what they discovered and then wrote about their animals. They put everything together along with photos of their animals on posters and shared them with classmates.

"They worked so hard. I'm really proud of them," said Mrs. Charsky. "This sets them up for when they reach upper grades and they'll already have some research skills."



# State Aid Cuts Cause District to Cut Spending Further

After three consecutive years of lower budgets and two years of state aid cuts, school officials are working to develop a budget that reduces spending while minimizing the impact on programs.

The budget is still under development and will be adopted April 14. But with state aid to be cut by a proposed \$879,616 this year – and nearly \$1.9 million the last two years – the district still needs to make significant cuts to the budget to reduce the impact on taxpayers.

Sherrri Fisher, assistant superintendent for business and support services, noted the district also hasn't increase the tax levy, the total amount of money collected in school taxes in two years. Residents did experience a tax rate increase in 2011-12 but that was due to a loss in property assessment. In the past three years, the district's assessment base has dropped by \$28.1 million.

"We've cut spending the last three years and our tax levy hasn't increased in two years," said Mrs. Fisher. "We can't continue to do that without significantly harming our programs."

In the more than half a dozen public meetings on the budget so far this year, the district has received outstanding feedback from the community, noted Superintendent Robert Horan.

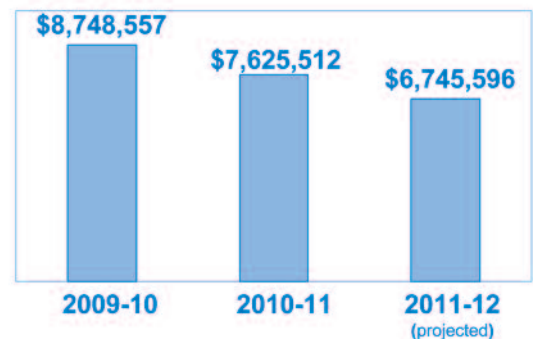
Much of the discussions at Community Budget Advisory Team and Board of Education meetings have been on what the community values in its schools and how to provide opportunities for students in a different, more cost effective way.

Because the district has reduced the budget by nearly \$900,000 over the last two years, Mr. Horan explained there is little left to cut that won't impact programs. The district's challenge is to find ways to cut spending further with the least impact to students.

"Our community's concerns and ideas have been very informative as we continue to develop our budget," Mr. Horan said. "We have some difficult decisions to make and it's essential we hear from our community."

For updates on the budget process and public meeting dates, please visit [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us).

State Aid Revenue for Schodack CSD



# Students from all Three Schools Honored for Artwork

Students from all three Schodack schools celebrated their artwork with family and teachers during a reception in their honor on March 2 at the 21st Annual Legislative Student Art Exhibition.

Students posed for photos with family members alongside their artwork which was selected for the exhibit, held at the Legislative Office Building in Albany. Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin also met with students and congratulated them on their work.

“Our students explained how they made their artwork to him and what their inspirations were,” explained High School art teacher Theresa Hovish. “(Art teachers) Mrs. Paziienza, Mrs. Gregoire and myself are very proud of their artistic accomplishments.”

Honored at the event were second grader Aiden Fletcher, fifth grader Payton Ferriera, eighth graders Nathaniel Coleda and Eleanor Hasse, and seniors Mary Hadden and Sarah Walling.

The art exhibit, organized by the NYS Teachers Association in collaboration with the NYS Alliance for the Arts in Education, is held each year in Albany. The weeklong exhibit offers students from the elementary

through the high school level an opportunity to showcase their artistic achievements and meet their state legislators.

To see more photos, visit the school website, [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us). Congratulations to our students!



## Senior Earns College Credits



Maple Hill High School senior Scott Rapp doesn't seem to know the meaning of the word "senioritis".

Three days a week, Scott starts his day at Hudson Valley Community College taking English Composition. Last semester, he completed General Psychology.

By the time he graduates from Maple Hill High School in June, he will have earned six college credits. That will help him if he continues at HVCC or another college as the general education credits will transfer to most schools.

"I like it. It's good to be able to go in the morning and come back to school," Scott explained. "I'm getting these courses out of the way."

Attending HVCC has also given him a sense of what college will be like. "It's a different setting. They give you a lot more responsibility," Scott explained.

While Scott spends part of his day away from Maple Hill, he still feels a part of the High School student community. It didn't stop him, for example, from playing on the varsity basketball team.

In the last few years, a small number of students have similarly taken courses at HVCC, noted Principal Ron Agostinoni. The school encourages students to consider the option and will help arrange student schedules if they're interested.

With the financial challenges facing Schodack and all public schools, Mr. Agostinoni said helping students take college electives is one way Maple Hill hopes to expand opportunities for students at no cost to the district.

"I think it's great for students to do that if they're interested, to see what lies ahead," Mr. Agostinoni said. "It can also give them the opportunity to take things we can't offer."

## CES Earns ENERGY STAR

Castleton Elementary School recently earned ENERGY STAR certification from the U.S.



Environmental Protection Agency.

The designation means CES performs in the top 25 percent of similar facilities nationwide for energy efficiency.

Similar to the designation given to appliances, the ENERGY STAR certification is also given to facilities that meet strict energy performance standards. That includes using less energy, being inexpensive to operate and causing fewer greenhouse gases than similar buildings.

"Improving the energy efficiency of our nation's buildings is critical to protecting our environment," said Jean Lupinacci, Chief of the ENERGY STAR Commercial & Industrial Branch. "From the boiler room to the board room, organizations are leading the way by making their buildings more efficient and earning EPA's ENERGY STAR."

## Maple Hill Seeks Families to Host Exchange Students

In an effort to keep its longstanding student exchange program continuing, Maple Hill High School is seeking families who may be interested in hosting a foreign exchange student for three to six months or allowing their student to study abroad.

"For many decades, Maple Hill has had a very successful exchange program that has hosted students as well as sent our own students abroad following their senior year," said MHHS teacher Mark Hoyt. "A handful of us are trying to keep this fantastic cultural education functioning but we need your help to do so."

The student exchange program is organized through Rotary International. It is open to students ages 15 to 19 years old. A student lives with a host family for typically between three to six months and is required to attend school.

Each year, about 8,000 students from more than 100 countries and geographical areas participate in student exchanges through the Rotary International Youth Exchange program.

"Hosting a student can be an extremely rewarding experience for everyone in the family, although it is a role that requires a lot of responsibility," said Mr. Hoyt.

If you are interested in either hosting an international exchange student or in sending your own student abroad, please visit the school website at [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us) for more information or contact Mark Hoyt at 732-7701.

## Interested in Running for the BOE?

Anyone interested in running for the Board of Education is reminded that the deadline for petitions is April 18.

Petitions to run for a three-year seat on the Board are available on the school website, [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us), or by calling the district office at 732-2997.



## Where in the World is Mr. LaClair?

by 7th Grader Kerry Golden

Many of you may not know him, but he is an important part of our every day life at school. Who is this person? This person is Mr. Matt LaClair, Superintendent of Building and Grounds. He is the person responsible for keeping our buildings running and our grounds safe for students and ready for sports.

On March 28th, Mr. LaClair will be starting an adventure of a lifetime. He will be hiking the Appalachian Trail. The Appalachian Trail is the nation's longest foot path which starts at Springer Mountain, Georgia and crosses 14 states before ending in Katahdin, Maine. The hike will take an estimated five million steps and will take approximately six months to hike.

Mr. LaClair has hiked all of his life. He is a New York State licensed guide and every summer tries to hike at least 100 miles. Mr. LaClair decided to take a leave from work and take this hike because two of his friends have suffered life altering illnesses. He did not want to put off his lifelong dream until retirement because he feared he might not be able to walk the entire trail. Only 1,200 - 1,500 people attempt to hike the trail, and of those less than one-third complete it. According to Mr. LaClair nearly 25% drop out in the first 30 days.

To prepare for the hike, Mr. LaClair has been wearing his pack to get used to the weight, and walking outdoors in rain, snow and sun to test his gear. He is packing his gear, and has gotten the base weight of items he will carry down to sixteen pounds. This does not include food or water, which he will have to resupply as he goes along. Mr. LaClair will get his water from streams or ponds and put it through a filter to clean it and make it safe to drink.

Leaving home for 5 1/2 months will not be easy. Mr. LaClair's biggest fear is sustaining an injury that will prevent him from finishing his hike. He will miss his wife who is unable to go with him due to an injury she suffered while training for the hike. However, Mr. LaClair is very excited about the people he will meet, eating whatever he wants, and seeing 14 different states.

While he is away, people will be able to keep track of Mr. LaClair's progress. He will carry a GPS spotter while on the hike. It will send his location to a satellite which will then go to a website.

Mr. LaClair would like all students at Maple Hill to know that, "If you work hard, plan well, communicate and treat others as you would want to be treated, the sky is the limit."

Good Luck Mr. LaClair, the eyes of the WildCats will be watching!



# Chinese Delegation Visits Schodack Schools

A delegation from one of China's largest cities visited Maple Hill High School in February as part of a three-day trip to learn more about schools in the United States.

Superintendent Robert Horan explained educators from Tianjin High School No. 41 visited Maple Hill High School because it was one of the first in the region to offer Mandarin Chinese and is a recognized leader in Distance Learning.

The Chinese educators also visited Tech Valley High School and school districts such as Bethlehem and South Colonie.

"We're pretty humbled to be one of just five school districts in the Capital Region that they're visiting," Mr. Horan said. "This is a great opportunity when you look at what is happening globally. Graduates are going to be working directly with China in business and could go there to learn."

As part of the visit, Principal Xu Changqun and Assistant Principal Wu Jing visited a Mandarin Chinese class held in the Distance Learning Lab. Through an interpreter, they asked questions about how the school remotely shares class offerings with other school districts.

Mr. Changqun and Ms. Jing were impressed with Maple Hill students as they conversed with them in Chinese. The delegation also visited traditional classrooms, observing math, English, science and art classes.

Principal Ron Agostinoni said Schodack and Chinese educators both learned a lot from the visit. The delegation is interested in becoming a sister school to Schodack and Schodack students may visit their school when they travel to China on a future school trip.

"It's exciting because we think we do a lot of great things here at Maple Hill. Whenever we get a chance to share that with others it's exciting, especially an international group like this," Mr. Agostinoni said.



## Schodack Central School District

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