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# SCHODACK

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



SEPTEMBER 2012

## District Receives \$600,000 Grant for MHMS

Schodack CSD has been tentatively awarded a \$600,000 grant from the State Education Department to create a program at the Middle School over the next three years that will expand learning opportunities for students.

The district is one of only a few in the region to be awarded the competitive grant and was the only district out of 22 component school districts in Questar III's three-county (Rensselaer, Columbia and Greene) region to apply for the funding.

"This is great news for our students at Maple Hill Middle School and throughout our district," said Superintendent Bob Horan. "The funding will help us build on the enhanced educational opportunities we started this past year at the Middle School."

The grant will provide \$200,000 in each of the next three years to develop a program specifically for the Middle School. The competitive grant program was part of last year's state aid that required districts to create a specific proposal to receive the funding. The grant will become final



once the Office of the State Comptroller and Division of Budget sign off on it.

Mr. Horan credited the work of Middle School Principal Michael Bennett and Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Pupil Personnel Services Donna Watson for putting together the eight-page proposal.

"Mike and Donna put in a lot of hours developing a detailed program for the Middle School that will help our students become better writers, readers and expand STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) opportunities," Mr. Horan said.

In order to qualify for the grant, the district had to select one of four areas to target. Mr. Horan said the Middle School was selected to help students be more prepared for High School and help with the transition to those grades.

"While the program is targeted for the Middle School, the grant funding to support these opportunities for students will really help the entire school district," Mr. Horan said.

## Districts Decide Not to Move Forward With Merger

After studying the Merger Feasibility Report and listening to community members at public forums, the Schodack and Ichabod Crane CSD Boards of Education have decided not to pursue a merger this year.

Superintendent Bob Horan explained that the report showed merging the two districts would increase taxes significantly for Ichabod Crane residents due to a difference in tax rates on true value between the two communities.

"We've said all along that a merger had to do two key things: maintain or increase student opportunities and reduce costs," said Mr. Horan. "Because it didn't reduce costs for Ichabod Crane residents, a merger doesn't make sense at this time."

If the districts decide in the next two years to look at a merger again, Mr. Horan noted that the study could still be used. He added that the study, which is available on the

district website, includes detailed data about finances, demographics, programming and much more that is still useful to both districts.

Ichabod Crane CSD Interim Superintendent Lee Bordick noted that the conversations about a merger already have led to positive relationships and opportunities to work together.

"One of the many positive outcomes of the merger study is the establishment of a close working relationship between the Ichabod Crane and Schodack School Districts' Administrative Staffs and Boards of Education," Mr. Bordick said. "I anticipate many creative program opportunities being developed in the next year or two because of that collaboration."

"We want to sincerely thank the members of our committee who put so much time and effort into this study," added Mr. Horan. "Their dedication to their communities was outstanding."

VISIT THE DISTRICT WEBSITE TO LEARN MORE: [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us)

## District Calendar Available Online

Schodack Central School District's 2012-13 school calendar is now available on the school website, [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us), in an easy to print format.

Please note, due to the district's efforts to cut costs, the calendar will again not be mailed to residents this year. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause; however we feel this is a prudent cost-saving measure given the current cost of mailing and printing.

If you would like a calendar and do not have access to a computer, please stop by any one of Schodack schools' main offices to pick up one of a limited number of printed copies. You can also contact the District Office at 732-2297 if you need one mailed to you.

## School Lunches Healthier This Year

This school year, school lunches at Schodack CSD will offer a larger variety of vegetables, less sodium and no trans fats as part of new school meal requirements set by the USDA.

Food Services Director Tom McNay noted the schools' lunches already offer whole grain and locally grown vegetables but that the new changes will make lunches even healthier.

"We are dedicated to providing quality nutritious meals that students will enjoy and choose to eat," said Mr. McNay. "We hope parents will encourage their students to try new fruits and vegetables."



The cost of breakfast will remain \$1 but lunches will increase by 10 cents to \$2 at CES and \$2.15 at MHMS and MHHS. The increases are necessary to meet rising food prices, the new school meal requirements and to keep the food services budget self-sustaining without support from the general budget.

For more information, visit [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us) for a letter from Mr. McNay explaining the changes.

## New Teacher and Principal Evaluations This Year

Starting this school year, all teachers and principals will be evaluated annually as part of New York State's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) requirements.

The statewide evaluation system, which requires reviews based in part on measures of student achievement, was phased in last year for classroom teachers of English Language Arts and Math for grades 4-8 as well as their principals. This year, it will expand to include all teachers and principals.

"Our administrators have trained extensively to become certified Lead Teacher Evaluators. Beginning this fall, they will be in classrooms observing teachers and students more than ever," said Superintendent Bob Horan. "That's good because that's where they should be. Parents also need to know that principals will not be as available as they have been in the past given the time involved for all these evaluations."

Mr. Horan noted that classroom observations are not a new practice in Schodack schools, as they historically have been a major component of the evaluation process for non-tenured teachers. In addition, administrators perform periodic unannounced drop-in observations of tenured teachers. New York State is now mandating many more observations and the use of rubrics outlining the specific criteria to be used.

The process requires administrators to first meet with each teacher to discuss the lesson for the class which will be observed. Next, the principal observes the teacher in the classroom, taking evidence-based notes to document teaching practice. A post-observation meeting is then required to discuss the observation.

Principals will then have to file paperwork with the state for each teacher.

"The evaluations will be evidence-based," Mr. Horan said. "Instead of simply saying a teacher is doing a great job, they have to provide detail as to what the teacher did in the classroom."

Teachers will also be required to write Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), which will detail what they expect their students to learn by the end of the year. All SLOs will have a pre-test and a post-test. The assessment will determine if student growth was achieved for that specific course. The SLO's are also used as part of the APPR.

In the end, each teacher will receive a composite effectiveness score, out of a total of 100 possible points.

Principals will similarly be evaluated each year by the school superintendent. Principal performance will be connected to teacher and student performance.

For more information, visit [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us) to read the district's APPR plan.

**"The evaluations will be evidence-based."**

## District Ranked #15 in Capital Region



Schodack CSD was ranked #15 out of 87 school districts in the Capital Region in the Business Review's annual "School Reports Publication" published in June.

The school rankings are based on New York State Education Department performance measures for language and reading, social studies, science, math, and graduation results.

Schodack moved up two spots from #17 last year. It was the second highest ranked district in Rensselaer County. Most of the districts scoring higher than Schodack were much larger districts.

Despite the high academic ranking, Schodack CSD ranked #46 in per pupil spending, below the state average for spending.

## Common Core Learning Standards Guide Instruction

This school year, parents will hear a lot about Common Core Learning Standards.

The standards are part of a national effort to provide a clearer understanding of what students are expected to learn so that teachers and parents can better prepare them for college or the workforce.

Common Core Learning Standards were an initiative led by the National Governors Association for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The standards have been adopted by most states across the country, including New York.

As a result, public school districts are changing what they teach and how they teach to align curriculum with the Common Core Learning Standards.

In New York State, the standards apply to English Language Arts and Mathematics for pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The standards also will be the basis of the state assessments beginning with the new school year.

For more information about Common Core Learning Standards, visit [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us) for a parent brochure that explains the specific content changes and provides guidance on how to help students become more proficient in English Language Arts and Math.



## District Newsletters Earn National Awards

The district's budget newsletter and regular newsletter have been honored with national awards for excellence in communications.

The publications received third-place awards in the Finance Publication and Print Publication categories from the National School Public Relations Association.

Each year, NSPRA judges hundreds of communication pieces from school districts across the country. This is the fourth year in a row the budget newsletter has won an award. It won a first place award from the New York School Public Relations Association in 2011 and 2010 and a second place award in 2009.

The "Understanding New York's Property Tax Levy Cap" newsletter, which Schodack CSD Communications Specialist Jason McCord helped write for Questar III and Capital Region BOCES for use by school districts across the state, also won a first-place national award.

"It is extremely important we have strong communication with our community," said Superintendent Bob Horan. "We need to keep them informed about the challenges in education and provide a clear understanding of what is being mandated by the state and how we at Schodack will continue to enhance programs and work to ensure our students are competitive academically."

# The Schodack Central School District provides continuing education

## General Information and Registration

**Eligibility** — Registration is open to all residents of the Schodack Central School District. Nonresidents may enroll in courses on a space-available basis.

**Senior Citizens** — District residents who are age 60 or older may attend many courses tuition free or at a reduced rate. Courses that are not free or offered at a reduced rate are noted in the course description. All materials fees are the responsibility of the participant.

**Continuing Education** is self-supporting, with no bearing on the district's tax rate. It is only through the continuing support of the community that this program is possible.

**Fees** — All course fees must be paid by the first course meeting. Registrations are binding because financial commitments are made based on the number of registrants for each course. We are sorry, but no refunds will be made unless the class is canceled due to insufficient enrollment or the class is filled to maximum capacity. Each class must meet a minimum enrollment. If a course is canceled due to insufficient enrollment, or over-enrolled, notifications and refunds will be sent by mail.

**Registration** must be made in advance. Mail registrations are due by Sept. 10. On site registration is held Thursday, Sept. 6, from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Maple Hill High School lobby.

**Early-Start courses** — Please call or send in registrations now for early start courses.

To register, please fill out a separate registration form provided for each course, enclose tuition and any materials fee (if noted in the course description) with a check payable to **Schodack Central Schools to:**

**Continuing Education Coordinator  
Schodack CSD District Office  
1216 Maple Hill Road  
Castleton, NY 12033-1699**

*You will be notified only if a class is canceled.*

## Sports, Fitness & Fun!

*\* Please check with your physician prior to beginning any new physical activity*

### YOGA I

Yoga I is for beginners who are looking for an introduction to yoga or people with experience who prefer a slower, more gentle class. This course is taught by White Lotus-certified Hatha yoga teacher Ellen Sadowski. Yoga I classes meet for eight weeks on Tuesdays from 7:00 to 8:15 p.m. beginning Sept. 18 in the CES auditorium (old gym). Tuition is \$60. No senior discount. Participants should wear comfortable clothes and bring a yoga mat.

### YOGA II

Yoga II combines a range of postures from gentle to challenging. This class is designed to help you create a practice of stretches that strengthen the body and calm the mind. Students who want to further develop the style and pace that Ellen uses in her yoga classes should sign up for this class. Yoga II classes meet for eight weeks on Thursdays from 7:00 to 8:15 p.m. beginning Sept. 18 in the CES auditorium (old gym). Tuition is \$60. No senior discount. Participants should wear comfortable clothes and bring a yoga mat.

### CARDIO KICKBOXING

Cardio-kickboxing is a workout that's fun for everyone! This class incorporates kickboxing-style cardio movement and toning exercises into a power-packed 45-minute class. The class is taught by Aileen Flach, who holds a BS in physical education and adult fitness. Classes meet for eight weeks

on Mondays and Wednesdays from 7:30 until 8:15 p.m. in the CES auditorium (old gym). Classes begin Monday, Sept. 13. Tuition is \$60. No senior discount.



### OVER 30 BASKETBALL

There are a limited number of openings in Over-30 Basketball, which meets at 7 p.m.

in the Middle School gym on Mondays and Wednesdays starting Oct. 22 and Oct. 24. The cost of the course is \$50. Please call to register, as space is extremely limited.

### HALL WALKERS

Walk in a safe, warm place — Maple Hill Middle School! The middle school is open from 6:45 to 7:45 a.m., Monday through Friday, when school is in session, for district residents who wish to walk. The program is free and self-monitoring — walk when you wish, at a pace that is comfortable. Walkers no longer need to sign in and out, but will be issued a special visitor's badge to wear while in the building. To register and receive a badge, call Lisa Smith-Auer at 732-2831.

### AEROBIC DANCE AND FLOORWORK

Tone, strengthen and flex your body as you dance your way to better health. Also floorwork with optional pilates and miniball movements. Learn daily stress reducing and energy lifting techniques. Classes meet Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7 to 8 p.m. in the Middle School gym. Classes begin Sept. 13. Tuition is \$60. Register directly with instructor Debi Filkins at 708-9238.

### CO-ED VOLLEYBALL

Join other intermediate players for an evening of fun and competitive volleyball play. This course offers no instruction, coaching or officiating — warm-ups and games will be self monitored. Players should play at an intermediate to advanced-intermediate level to participate and must wear kneepads. Volleyball meets for 10 weeks on Sundays from 6:45 to 8:45 p.m. in the High School gym beginning Sept. 16. Participants must pre-register by calling 732-2831 as class size is limited. Tuition is \$45 plus a \$2 materials fee. Single week play sessions are available for \$5 each.



opportunities to promote lifelong learning in the community.

## Cake Decorating, Financial Planning and More!

### INTRODUCTION TO CHINESE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

This class explores the basics of Mandarin Chinese, the most widely spoken language in the world. Students will also learn about the simplified writing character system that is taught to all Chinese students in mainland China. Schodack Chinese Language and Culture Instructor Mark Hoyt teaches the course. Classes meet for four weeks on Wednesdays from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the High School distance learning lab. Classes begin Oct. 9. Tuition is \$40.

### CHINESE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE II

This four-week course is a continuation of Introduction to Chinese Language and Culture class. Students will continue to explore the Mandarin form of communication. Some basic knowledge of Mandarin Chinese is required. Schodack Chinese Language and Culture Instructor Mark Hoyt teaches this course. Classes meet on Wednesdays from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the High School distance learning lab. Classes begin Nov. 13. Tuition is \$40.

### DAY TRIP TO NEW YORK CITY – NEW!

Join us for a day of discovering New York City during the holiday season! The city has something for everyone – museums, theatres, sightseeing and the best shopping possible. This trip is not tour-escorted so individuals are on their own to enjoy all that the city has to offer.



We will be traveling with Yankee Trails Charter Bus and anyone under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult. No smoking or alcohol consumption is allowed on the bus. Seats will be first come, first served, although special consideration will be given to individuals with medical needs. There will be a short comfort stop on the way to NYC and on the way home (if needed).

The trip will be Saturday, December 8 with the bus leaving Maple Hill High School at 7:00 a.m. and arriving at Bryant Park in New York City around 9:30 a.m. The return bus leaves Bryant Park at 7:00 p.m. and arrives at Maple Hill High School around 9:30 p.m. Cost is \$45 per person. All registrations and payments must be received by November 9.

### MOTHER / DAUGHTER BEGINNERS CAKE DECORATING – NEW!

Learn the basics of cake decoration for your next family celebration or birthday! This fun and easy



class will teach you and your daughter how to level and ice a two layer cake and make an assortment of flowers to decorate your cake. Instructions and equipment lists will be provided at sign-up. Enrollment is limited. Classes meet for four weeks on Tuesdays starting Oct. 9 in MHHS Room 203. The course is taught by Karen Casey. Tuition is \$50. No senior discounts.



### FINANCE & INVESTMENTS – FREE WORKSHOPS

These Continuing Education classes will address issues relating to the investment or expenditure of personal financial resources. The information or advice provided by the course instructor is not to be considered as information or advice provided or endorsed by the Schodack Central School District. The District does not assume any responsibility for the consequences of any decisions a class participant may make regarding the investment or expenditure of personal financial resources.

**Would you like to take a course you don't see offered? Would you like to teach a course?**

Please contact the Continuing Education Coordinator with your ideas!

Call Lisa Smith-Auer at 732-2831, or e-mail at [lsmith-auer@schodack.k12.ny.us](mailto:lsmith-auer@schodack.k12.ny.us).

**COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL PLANNING**

During the peak earning years of life we often set aside assets that are earmarked to provide for our retirement needs. Unfortunately, very few people establish a financial plan that covers every aspect of their financial life. This informational seminar will focus on the importance of financial planning and show you how each piece of your financial life works together toward attaining your retirement goals. The seminar will focus on developing your own financial plan. Other topics discussed will include a general understanding of investing, strategies to limit risk in your retirement portfolio as well as techniques for generating income in retirement. Instructor Richard L. Lane is the Vice President-Investments and an Accredited Investment Fiduciary® with Madison Wealth Managers. The workshop will be offered Wednesday, Oct. 10 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the High School Distance Learning Classroom.

**SAVVY SOCIAL SECURITY PLANNING: WHAT BABY BOOMERS NEED TO KNOW**

You've been conditioned by popular opinion to believe that Social Security may not be there for you once you retire. The truth is it might be and although it may have a different look by the time you begin your benefits, the lifetime value to you and your family may be substantially larger than what you think. In fact, Social Security is a benefit that some people take for granted and discount as inconsequential in the context of their overall wealth management plan. These attitudes can result in the underutilization and potential wasting of a benefit that can have real and dramatic impacts on the lives of the recipients and their heirs when proper benefit planning is done. Come learn the "ins and outs" to help maximize your Social Security benefits, as we discuss why you should begin thinking of social security as more than just a political hot potato and what the true value of this misunderstood benefit can be. Instructor Richard L. Lane

is the Vice President-Investments and an Accredited Investment Fiduciary® with Madison Wealth Managers. The workshop is offered Thursday, Oct. 18 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the High School Distance Learning Classroom.

**SEEKING NEW CO-ED VOLLEYBALL COORDINATOR**

We are looking for new coordinator for this program. The coordinator works with the Continuing Education Coordinator to run the program by taking attendance, collecting payments and looking after the equipment. Please contact Lisa Smith-Auer at 732-2831 if you are interested.

**SUGGEST A CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSE OR BECOME AN INSTRUCTOR**

Do you have a talent, interest or skill that you could share with the community? We are always looking for new courses and instructors! Please call the Continuing Education Coordinator Lisa Smith-Auer at 732-2831 for more information.

**SCHODACK  
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
CONTINUING EDUCATION REGISTRATION**

Please use a separate form for each course. Payments may be combined. You will receive a confirmation of enrollment or we will notify you if the course has been cancelled due to lack of enrollment. Make check or money order (no cash through the mail) payable to **Schodack Central Schools** and mail to:

Director of Continuing Education  
Schodack Central School District  
1216 Maple Hill Road, Castleton, NY 12033-1699

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Tuition: \_\_\_\_\_ Fees (if any): \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Resident of Schodack Central School District: Yes  No

*All information must be completed (address, including zip code, etc.) before this registration can be processed.*

## Booster Club Supports Modified Sports

Maple Hill Middle School students will play in a full modified sports program this year thanks to fundraising efforts by the Maple Hill Athletic Booster Club.

Last year, as part of the district's efforts to reduce costs in the face of state aid cuts, school officials proposed replacing the modified sports program with an organized intramural program.

But the Maple Hill Athletic Booster Club offered to raise the additional money needed to support the program through fundraising efforts. Over the summer, for example, the Booster Club held a dinner/cruise and has an October 8 raffle scheduled.



"This is yet another example of our community stepping up and helping us provide opportunities for our students," said Superintendent Bob Horan. "I would like to thank the Booster Club and everyone in our community who supported their efforts and our students."

For information, about the October 8th raffle, visit [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us).

## Tax Levy Set for 2012-13

The Board of Education set the 2012-13 tax levy at its August 16 meeting at \$11,771,071, a 2.47% increase over the previous year.

Tax rates (per \$1,000 of assessed values) are \$20.011435 for Schodack and \$21.445923 for Stuyvesant.

While the total tax levy (the amount the district collects in taxes) increased by 2.47%, the tax rate for Schodack increased by 3.15%.

The discrepancy is largely a result of the total assessed value of properties in the town decreasing due to an agreement between Hannaford and the town of Schodack to reduce the value of the company's distribution center on Route 9 from \$38.7 million to \$28.3 million to settle a lawsuit filed by Hannaford.

"Essentially, Hannaford now has a smaller piece of the pie and other taxpayers have to share a larger portion of the tax burden," explained Monica Kim, Director of Business and Support Services.

The tax rate for Stuyvesant, however, increased by 10.55% because Schodack's equalization rate was higher than 100%, meaning the market value of properties within the Town of Schodack was less than their assessed value. Properties within Stuyvesant held their value so their equalization rate stayed at 100%. As a result, Stuyvesant's share of the tax levy increased. Equalization rates, like property assessments, are set by New York State, not the school district.

We also want our community to be aware that the state cap on STAR savings for homeowners, which went into effect last year, is still in effect this year. A homeowner can receive no more than a 2% increase in STAR savings than they received the previous year.

## Congratulations Class of 2012!

The Schodack CSD community celebrated the achievements of its newest class of alumni on June 22 as the district held its 57th Annual Commencement Ceremony for 113 members of the Class of 2012.

"We are extremely proud of our graduates and all the hard work and perseverance to reach their goals," said Superintendent Bob Horan. "I encourage all our graduates to keep in touch through e-mail or by calling us. We always love hearing what they're doing and everything they're accomplishing."

Graduates went on to such colleges as Virginia Tech, SUNY Geneseo, Hobart & William Smith, Hamilton College and Eastman School of Music.

The Class of 2012 earned a total of \$3,284,700 in scholarships and awards.

To see a photo slideshow of commencement, visit

[www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us).

Congratulations to our newest alumni!



## Postal Customer

*Produced by Questar III Communications Service*

## Opportunities for Parents

From open houses to parent-teacher conferences, Schodack schools offer opportunities for parents to meet with teachers about their children's education in the first few months of school.

Here is a list of upcoming events. For a full list of events, including parent organization meetings such as the PTO, download the district calendar from the school website, [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us), or call your child's school.

### Castleton Elementary School

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Sept. 5 & 6 | K & New Parents Coffee Hour, 9 a.m.    |
| Sept. 13    | Grades K-2 Parents Night, 6:30 p.m.    |
| Sept. 20    | Grades 3-5 Parents Night, 6:30 p.m.    |
| Oct. 2-4    | K Parents Luncheon with Teachers, noon |
| Nov. 6 & 8  | Parent Teacher Conferences             |

### Maple Hill Middle School

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| Sept. 19 | Grades 6-8 Parents Night, 6:30 p.m.          |
| Oct. 17  | Parent Teacher Conferences, 3:30 – 6:30 p.m. |

### Maple Hill High School

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Sept. 20 | Back to School Night, 6 p.m.                |
| Oct. 25  | Parent Teacher Conferences, 4:30 – 7 p.m.   |
| Nov. 15  | College Financial Aid Info Night, 6:30 p.m. |

## CES Survey Results Available

The results of the Castleton Elementary School online parent survey that was conducted in May is now available on the school's website.

"I would like to sincerely thank all our parents who shared their thoughts about our school," said Principal Jason Chevrier. "The responses were incredibly insightful and we'll use them to build on our successes and improve areas where parents shared concerns."

The survey was offered online for two weeks in May. The district received a total of 106 responses.

Mr. Chevrier stressed how appreciative the school is of the responses, but he noted that the school is also being careful with the results because the survey sample size was relatively small and the views of all parents were therefore not represented.

"We value every single response," Mr. Chevrier said. "But there are a lot of parents that we didn't hear from so we need to be careful not to take these results as necessarily reflective of all our parents. If parents ever have a comment or concern, we ask that they please let us know."