



Reopening Schodack Schools

Since March, our teachers, students, staff and community members have faced numerous trials in school and at home while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the course of the first few months of the 2020-2021 school year, we have seen many great things happening throughout our buildings, though that does not mean that our staff has not faced great challenges.

Teacher Mrs. Kerner has classes that are both in-person and virtual. Adapting to the situation, she only uses supplies that students can easily obtain at home.

"The past eight months have been anything but normal," Mrs. Kerner said. "We were doing the best we could in the spring. Now, I treat virtual learning very much as though it is our normal class time. I think that structure has helped them a lot, knowing that it is art class now whether they are at home or not, they have to get on, they have to be there for that hour, and they have to be working for that hour. Students are still producing artwork that exceeds my expectations for them being at home. I'm really excited about that."

Many teachers are responsible for two separate classrooms simultaneously at Castleton Elementary School. To successfully



Assistant Principal Mrs. Rosher checks a student in after getting off the bus.

accomplish this, teachers are in-person for one group and use Google Meet to virtually teach a classroom next door with the help of another teacher or aide.

"I have 17 students in two cohorts, switching off every day with another teacher," Mrs. DeMassio said. "It's not ideal, but it's working. It's definitely challenging."

Mrs. Yager is in the same position.

"We have had many challenges. We need to make sure that I am spending an equal amount of time in each classroom. We have different needs in each group, and it is very important that I meet those needs while also offering enrichment opportunities," she said. "We know that what we went through in the spring, there are expected learning gaps and there is no time to be wasted. We want to make sure that the students are fully engaged and that they're having fun learning, which I truly think that they are."

At the Jr./Sr. High School, Health and Physical Education have been remote early in the year.

"We are completing several different mobility sessions that really focus on the social emotional well-being of our students in a time where social emotional learning is really at the forefront of education from the

health and physical education realm," Mr. Larkin said. "We're also able to complete different cognitive assessments on a regular basis to really see how students' progress in their learning."

At CES, PE is in-person and students are outside whenever possible.

"Kids have been doing a great job as far as complying with all the rules," Mr. Biehler said. "A lot of our curriculum has to do with teamwork and being in close quarters with one another, so we have really been doing our best to come up with activities where you can socially distance but still get some rigorous activity in."

Student-athletes were able to get onto the field this fall. Despite competing in masks and having a delayed, shortened season, teams competed well.

The girls' varsity soccer team and a doubles tennis team won Patroon Conference Championships.

"We were really happy that we were able to provide the opportunity for students to participate in athletics, although to a limited extent. Spectators have been doing a great job, and our athletes have been doing a great job following the protocols," Athletic Director Mr. Silver said.



Students enter the elementary building on the first day of school.

Congressman Tonko Donates Surplus Books

United States Congressman Paul D. Tonko delivered surplus books from the Library of Congress to the Jr./Sr. High School in mid-October.

Congressman Tonko was originally scheduled to deliver the books on March 17, but school buildings were shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic just days before the visit.

Among the books delivered to the District was "New Kid" which has the distinction of being the first graphic novel to win the John Newbery Medal. Nearly 30 books were donated and will be added to the library, valued at \$594.

The Congressman spoke to a group of students about the surplus book program and answered a number of questions, including what it is like to be a politician. He also congratulated Maple Hill High School teacher, Mr. Finney, for being named the New York State History Teacher of the Year.

This was the Congressman's 57th location in which he has delivered books since 2017, totaling more than \$40,000.



Congressman Tonko poses for a photo with a seventh-grade student.

Delgado, Peter Visit Students Virtually

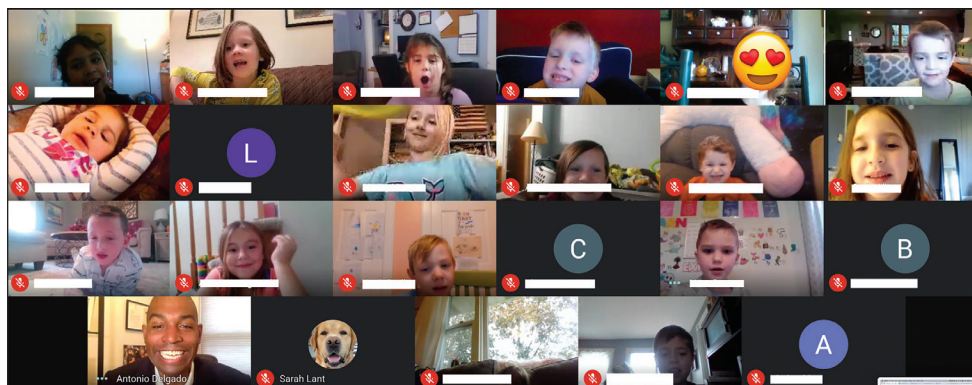
Congressman Antonio Delgado and Mr. Chuck Peter, a SCSD Board of Education member and Rensselaer County Legislator, visited virtually with Ms. Lant's Kindergarten-First Grade remote students at Castleton Elementary School.

Congressman Delgado spoke to students about his job and answered questions about his favorite breakfast food (pancakes), if he knows karate (no, but his children do), and if he plays an instrument (he played the violin in 3rd grade), among many others.

Congressman Delgado was also asked if someone can rule the world, to which he answered, "no one can rule the world. Everyone gets to have a say, and everyone gets to have a voice." He also told students that we can all help people by telling the truth and loving others.



Rensselaer County Legislator Chuck Peter spoke with virtual elementary students.



Congressman Antonio Delgado visits with virtual elementary students.

Mr. Peter spoke to students about his work. When he isn't working in the Rensselaer County Legislature, he is attending Board meetings as a member of the Schodack CSD Board of Education. Mr. Peter sent a letter after the meeting in which he stated, "I enjoyed sharing some of what I do as a County Legislator with you and answering your questions. Getting the opportunity to meet so many of our future community leaders is one of the high points of my job, and I look forward to seeing what you all accomplish in the future."

Mr. Finney Named NYS History Teacher of the Year

Maple Hill High School teacher Mr. Ed Finney has been selected as a Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History 2020 New York History Teacher of the Year and is in the running for the National History Teacher of the Year.

A panel of teachers, administrators and scholars from around New York State selected Mr. Finney for his achievements in American history education.

"I was surprised and very honored to have been selected," Mr. Finney said. "There were a fabulous group of social studies educators nominated across New York for this award."

Mr. Finney has been a teacher in the district for more than two decades.

"I have been fortunate to follow my affection for US history by working as a middle and high school social studies teacher for the past twenty-three years. I did not realize when I was growing up as a son to parents that owned and operated an antique auction house, that I was surrounded in a world of primary source documents and artifacts," he said. "To me, it was just interesting junk! I spent my summers and weekends searching through attics, basements, old barns, a home that was part of the underground railroad, an old farmhouse with a fake wall that served as a speakeasy, and my favorite was an Adirondack camp that was shuttered since World War II. These experiences allowed me to see history as it happened and realized the importance that documents and artifacts play in telling the story of American History. I want my students to appreciate history as much as I



Mr. Finney assists a student working on a computer.

did, and I make it a goal each year to find ways to motivate and build my students interest in history and to help create future historians."

Mr. Finney has seen a lot throughout the past three decades of being a teacher, but this past year has been especially challenging for all educators with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I feel strongly that the US History classroom must evolve and adapt to the changing needs and interests of our students. It was also important to reinforce the idea that we are living through tomorrow's history," he said. "The current Covid-19 crisis is an example of how US history teachers must change with the times. During the shutdown, I offered my students live synchronous classes utilizing the same technology that

they were familiar with in the classroom."

Mr. Finney is currently rewriting his lesson plans to incorporate strategies he learned from remote learning and will utilize the best practices in ed tech that will allow him to seamlessly prepare and transition from the live classroom to a remote learning environment, and vice versa.

"What worked last year at this time may not work this year," he said. "I have spent a great deal of time this summer working on creating digital icebreakers and methods to build a rapport with my new students if we have to teach virtually. The most difficult piece of online learning for me was building a stronger relationship with my students. It was difficult to joke around with them or notice their mood and interest level. Overall, the transition to online teaching was not too difficult. I began transitioning my traditional paper-based lessons to tech-based lessons about eight years ago."

With the Gilderman award comes a \$1,000 prize, a Certificate of Recognition, an archive of books and historical resources, an invitation to attend a 2021 Gilder Lehrman Teacher Seminar and recognition at a ceremony.

Congratulations Mr. Finney! Thank you for all of your hard work and for the impact that you have on our students. He was recently named the 2019-20 New York State Outstanding Middle School Social Studies Teacher of the Year; is the chair of the NYCSS Tech Committee; and a member of the NCSS Technology Leadership Committee.

Health and Safety is a Top Priority

Getting to the point of being able to safely reopen our school district was no easy task, and the work has only gotten bigger.

Prior to the start of the school year, the facilities crew went through COVID-19 training with the Needham Group. This training included learning how to properly use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and proper cleaning and sanitizing techniques following CDC guidelines.

The team cleans and sanitizes the schools each time the cohorts move, as well as after lunch periods. Everyone keeps daily logs of what has been cleaned, what has been sanitized and the time that it was done.

At night, all classrooms, bathrooms, offices, gyms and all other areas are cleaned and disinfected according to CDC guidelines.

"On top of all that, the team has had to move large amounts of furniture to storage, cone off areas, put tape on the floor so desks are not moved, and continue to supply PPE supplies to staff and faculty," Director of Facilities, Matt LaClair, said.

Staff members continue to complete their normal, everyday duties, and have taken on the extra workload in stride. Thanks to the facilities crew, our students and staff have remained safe while participating in in-person learning throughout the fall.



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Jenna Hoffman Earns High School Heisman



Jenna Hoffman

Maple Hill High School senior Jenna Hoffman was selected from an applicant pool of thousands of high school scholar-athletes graduating this year as a Heisman Trophy Trust and Acceptance Insurance 2020 School Winner for the Heisman High School Scholarship.

Hoffman competed on the varsity tennis team this fall and won a Patroon Conference doubles championship.

The Heisman Memorial Trophy is annually awarded to the most outstanding college football player in the nation. The Heisman High School Scholarship extends the Heisman prestige to the nation's most esteemed high school seniors by recognizing and rewarding outstanding scholar-athletes who understand that the most important victories not only happen on the field, but in their schools and communities. These remarkable young leaders set the example and make a game-changing difference every day, paving the way to greatness for everyone around them.

To apply, students must be graduating with the class of 2021, have a cumulative weighted high school grade point average of a B (3.0) or better, participate in at least one of the 48 sports recognized by the International Olympic Committee and/or the National Federation of State High School Association and be a leader in his/her school and community.