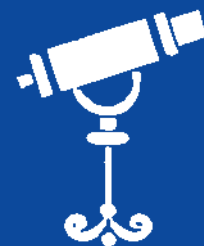




FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Saratoga Springs City School District

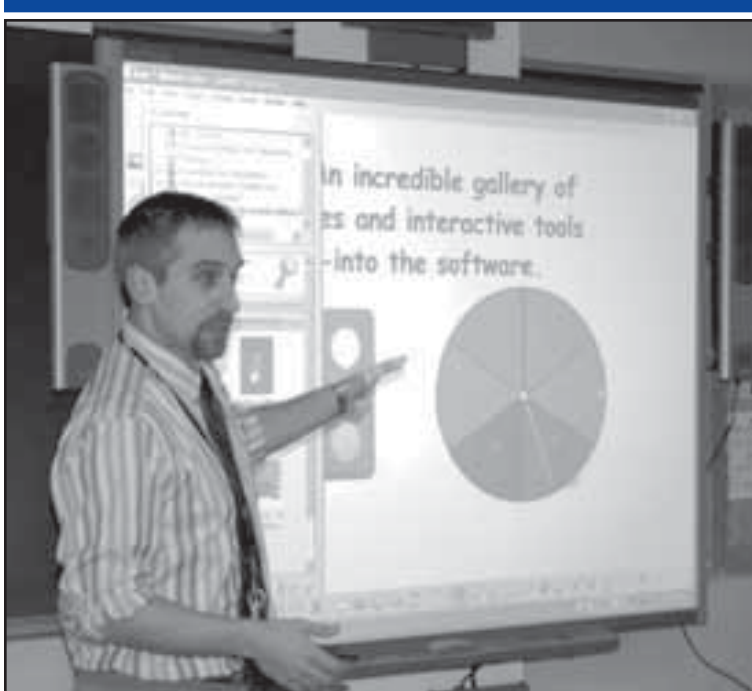


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SMARTBoards enhance learning



Kevin Wolpert, math department head at the high school, demonstrates one of 60 SMARTBoards in use this year in all fifth-grades and middle and high school math classes. Also known as interactive white boards, they are touch-sensitive devices that combine with computers to allow teachers and students to collaborate, draw and interact with information on the screen. In a Jan. 13 presentation to the Board of Education, Wolpert, math teacher David Gibbs and high school junior Amy Coon described how the whiteboards have transformed the teaching of math, enabling students to quickly visualize and comprehend complicated concepts that once took much longer to master. About 80 additional SMARTBoards will be installed at the high school this year through the EXCEL Capital Improvement Project, which was approved by voters in 2007 and is funded almost entirely with state aid. The SMARTBoard project is coordinated by David L'Hommedieu, the school district's director for information technology, and his staff.

Second-graders and high school students team up for poetry project

Second-graders in Carl Luciano's class at the Division Street Elementary School and high school freshmen in Johanna Friedman's and Kate Thompson's English class collaborated on a poetry project in December. The "big kids" and "little kids" interviewed each other about interests and hobbies, then wrote poems about their subjects. The program was intended not only to teach the students about reading and writing poetry, but to foster lasting relationships between the older and younger students. Below, from left, are second-graders Rebekah Barusch and Sofia Mangino with ninth-grader Emily Parrish.



MAKING THE HOLIDAYS BRIGHTER



Students and staff throughout the school district opened their hearts and rolled up their sleeves to make the holidays merrier for those in need. Above, left to right, Dan Marshall, Amy Marshall and Chris Card were among about 40 National Honor Society members at the high school who wrapped 1,200 gifts for area senior citizens on Dec. 17. The gifts were provided through the efforts of Home Instead, an organization that offers services that enable the elderly to remain in their own homes. Below, fourth-graders at the Lake Avenue Elementary School prepare bagged lunches for the Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council's soup kitchen during Thanksgiving week. The project was linked to the character education theme for the month of November. Left to right are Sophie Hrebenach, parent volunteer Martha Dexter and Bill Moore.



Additional senior citizen tax relief approved by Board of Education

A proposal that makes a partial school tax exemption available to more senior citizens was unanimously approved by the Saratoga Springs Board of Education on Nov. 18.

The revised exemption increases the income eligibility guidelines for senior exemptions to the highest level allowed under state law. Under the revision, seniors with an annual income less than \$37,400 are eligible. Partial exemptions are available on a sliding scale, from 50 percent for incomes up to \$29,000 to five percent for incomes ranging from \$36,500 to \$37,399. The exemption applies to those 65 and over, and will be effective beginning with tax bills for 2009-2010.

The senior exemption is in addition to any STAR exemption to which taxpayers may be entitled.

"Our commitment to the community includes supporting the needs of our senior citizens, particularly in this challenging fiscal environment," said Superintendent of Schools Janice White.

The income guidelines for partial senior tax exemptions were last updated by the Board of Education in November 2004, when the income limit was set at \$32,400.

Senior citizens must submit applications to their local assessor's offices by March 1, 2009, to be eligible for the exemption in 2009-2010.

For more information and applications, please visit the school district's Web site at www.saratogaschools.org or the Web site for the New York State Office of Real Property Services at www.orps.state.ny.us/.



Superintendent's Column

By Janice M. White
Superintendent
of Schools

The new year is a time for reflection and renewal. A recent book I read framed a perspective on the times we are facing both individually and collectively. *Our Iceberg is Melting* by John Kotter is a simple fable about a penguin colony in Antarctica that must face a potentially devastating problem that threatens its existence, and how the colony adapts to the ever-changing environment in order to survive.

Like the penguins, we face a major problem this year: the fiscal crisis that is affecting virtually everyone in our state and nation. Under Governor David Paterson's proposed budget, we are confronted with a reduction of \$3.4 million, representing a 13 percent cut in the state aid package for 2009-10. The development of next year's budget will build on the economies we have already established. To contain costs we:

- ▶ Participate in a 28-district BOCES Health Insurance Consortium that has reduced expenses in this area from the national average of 11 to 12 percent increase to 7.8 percent last year.
- ▶ Save 18 to 22 percent on supplies each year through cooperative bidding with a consortium of 300 school districts in the state.
- ▶ Reduce energy costs in all district facilities through prior and current capital projects focused on energy-efficient solutions.

The current situation in the district requires a process that creates awareness of the difficult times ahead, an understanding about the possibility of different ways to achieve our common goals, and recognition that we are dealing with a multi-year issue.

To begin this process, we will hold several community forums in district schools this winter, where cost containment strategies will be discussed and audience input welcomed. For the schedule, please visit our Web site at www.saratogaschools.org.

As we meet this challenge, and I believe we will, it is important to remember our core mission. Bob Wise, Alliance for Education President stated in *From No Child Left Behind, to Every Child a Graduate*, "The best economic stimulus package is a high school diploma," (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008).

Historic election and inauguration generate spirited student response



From a mock election in November to inaugural activities on Jan. 20, students around the district were enthused about the process of choosing and swearing in a new president. In November, 5,678 students in kindergarten through grade 12 voted in mock presidential elections, choosing Democrat Barack Obama by better than a two-to-one margin over Republican John McCain. On Inauguration Day, students had the opportunity to watch the live inauguration during the school day, and many geared up for the historic event with pre-inaugural activities. At the high school, students in history teacher David Patterson's classes studied previous inaugural addresses. At the Maple Avenue Middle School, Literacy Week included books and events related to the civil rights movement and black history, as well as a schoolwide viewing of the inauguration. Above, Corey Osberg, left, and Chris Charboneau, eighth-graders at Maple Avenue, display posters they made for the inauguration. Below, students at the Geyser Road Elementary School vote on computers linked to a Web site that tallied balloting by students nationwide, and showed state-by-state results on a national map. Front to back in the photo are Jenna Conroy, J.D. Ralston and Savannah Brooks.



The research report concludes that our national capacity to be competitive in the global economy is dependent on an education system that can produce graduates who can meet the growing demand for high-level skills. In the development of the 2009-10 school district budget, that outcome will remain the priority.

Forty-five at high school win AP Scholar Awards

Forty-five students at Saratoga Springs High School have earned the designation of AP Scholar by the College Board in recognition of their exceptional achievement on the college-level Advanced Placement Program (AP) Exams.

The College Board's Advanced Placement Program offers students the opportunity to take challenging college-level courses while still in high school, and to receive college credit, advanced placement, or both for successful performance on the AP Exams.

About 18 percent of the more than 1.6 million high school students in over 16,000 secondary schools worldwide who took AP Exams performed at a sufficiently high level to merit the recognition of AP Scholar.

Students took AP Exams in May 2008 after completing challenging college-level courses at their high schools. The College Board recognizes several levels of achievement based on student performance on AP Exams.

At the high school, one student – 2008 graduate Ariana Vacs Renwick – qualified for the National AP Scholar Award by earning an average grade of 4 or higher on a 5-point scale on all AP Exams taken, and grades of 4 or higher on eight or more of these exams.

Nineteen students qualified for the AP Scholar with Distinction Award by earning an average grade of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken, and grades of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams. These students are: Duncan Boehle, Lara Bryfonski, Anna Card, Sean Doescher, Lena Geraghty, Monica Ginsberg, Kenneth Hammond, Chloe Holgate, Andrew Kesner, Joseph Lombardo, Stephanie Lowe, Jeffrey Pawlick, Christopher Reepmeyer, Caitlin Richter, William Roberts, Jonathan Rosebrook, Peter Snyder, Laura Tremblay, and Ariana Vacs Renwick.

Fifteen students qualified for the AP Scholar with Honor Award by earning an average grade of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken, and grades of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams. These students are: Nichole Baldwin, Kathryn Clements, Robert Colpoys, Nicholas Cortese, Patrick Donworth, Kurt English, Alexandra Higgins, Nathan Hopper, Ryan Koella, Bryan Marco, Bradley Martin, Kathleen Ronayne, Benjamin Sullivan, Juliana Wakeman, and Mary Willems.

Art gallery at district offices



Proud artist Alex Toma, 5, a kindergartner at the Caroline Street Elementary School, holds her creation during an "art gallery" reception in the MacFadden Administration Building on Dec. 3. With Alex are her dad, Chris, and sister, third-grader Jordan, 8. Art created by 139 students from the elementary, middle and high schools is on display throughout the first- and second-floor hallways of the building until the spring. Michael Piccirillo, assistant superintendent for secondary education, and Marcia Martin, art department head, organized the event.

Eleven students qualified for the AP Scholar Award by completing three or more AP Examinations, with grades of 3 or higher. The AP Scholars are: James Anderson, Kathleen Conley, Kathryn Dana, Angelica D'Aiello, James Dooley, Patrick Holland, Gregory Jacot, Caitlin Kelley, Edward Petrak, Matthew Suprunowicz, and Benjamin Uris.

Of this year's award recipients at the high school, one student was a junior last year, Nicholas Cortese. This student has his senior year in which to complete AP college-level course work and possibly earn another AP Scholar Award next year.

Fashion show to raise funds for Lend-a-Hand Program

The Parent-Teacher-Student Organization at the high school will host the second annual Pre-Prom Fashion Show at 7 p.m. Friday, March 6, in the Meade (teaching) Auditorium. The event will benefit the Lend-a-Hand program, which provides assistance to Saratoga high school students with limited financial resources.

In conjunction with the show, the PTSO is collecting donations of cleaned, gently used prom and tuxedo attire, which can be dropped off at either the Guided Flower Thrift Shop, located at 238 Church St., across from the Saratoga Hospital, or at the high school's main office, to the attention of Beth Morris. The items will be distributed to students in need, who may keep them and wear them during prom season.

For more information, please contact Linda Bye, PTSO president, at 577-2439, or Peggy Connolly, PTSO vice president, at 577-8256. Financial donations to Lend-a-Hand can be made payable to the SSHS PTSO, and sent to SSHS PTSO, 3 Blue Streak Blvd., Saratoga Springs, N.Y., 12866.

Interviewing tips from the pros



Brandon Myers, project manager for Stewart's Shops, interviews high school student Jeannette Pendergast, a participant in the high school's Career Exploration Internship class for seniors. Students practiced their interviewing skills in January with business representatives who volunteered their time to conduct mock interviews. The one-semester class provides students with hands-on experience in careers of their choice through non-paid internships, combining up to 75 hours at work sites with a classroom component. Business teacher Stacey Ralston is the instructor.

Promoting tech careers for girls



Ten eighth-graders from the Maple Avenue Middle School attended a Nov. 7 program at Russell Sage College, which encouraged girls to pursue education and careers in technical fields. The GEMS program (Girls Excited About Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science) was an all-day event that combined hands-on workshops with panel discussions by current Sage students and women engineers. Teresa Ostwald, math department head at Maple Avenue (in the photo at far right), said as a result of the day's activities, many of the students in her group are considering technical careers. In the back row from left to right are students Cassie Blunt, Angelina Vella, Meg Roberts, Allison Carswell, Isabel Palmetier, and Caroline Murphy. In the front row, left to right, are Monette Carli, Kerri Wegner, Kate Kolbe and Cassandra Bull.

SAT prep course at high school

Saratoga Springs High School will offer a six-week, 12-session SAT Preparation Course beginning Wednesday, March 4, for juniors preparing for the SAT exam in May or June.

Classes will be held from 3:30 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 8:30 p.m. Students will take 90-minute classes on two afternoons or evenings each week. The fee, including the cost of the textbook, is \$40.

Fees for both classes may be paid during sign-ups at lunch periods from February 23-27. Please make checks out to "Saratoga Springs High School." Sign-ups are on a first-come basis. A minimum number of registrants is required to conduct the class.

Budget planning under way

Districtwide vote slated for May 19

Development of the 2009-10 school district budget is under way, and will culminate in a districtwide vote on Tuesday, May 19.

District residents are invited to attend the Board of Education meetings and budget workshops listed below:

▶ 7 to 9 p.m., Tuesday, March 3, in the Meade (teaching) Auditorium at the high school: Budget workshop featuring the preliminary budget, including an overview, new proposals and the bus bond proposal.

▶ 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 10, at the Caroline Street Elementary School: Budget workshop during a regular meeting of the school board. Topics include facilities and transportation.

▶ 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, March 17, high school teaching auditorium: Budget workshop concerning the instructional program, including program goals, staffing, enrollment/class size, building allocations, technology, special education/pupil services, and staff development, academic intervention services and assessments.

▶ 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 24, high school teaching auditorium: Budget workshop during a regular school board meeting. Topics include bonding resolutions and continuing discussion of the proposed budget, as appropriate.

▶ 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, March 31, high school teaching auditorium. Agenda items for this budget workshop include decisions regarding new proposals, as well as budget updates and finalization.

▶ 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 7, Greenfield Elementary School: Regular school board meeting, including a final review and discussion of the budget before board members vote concerning its adoption.

▶ 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 12, high school teaching auditorium: Public disclosure hearing on the proposed budget before regular school board meeting.

School district residents will vote on the budget and elect three members to the school board on Tuesday, May 19. Polls will be open at the six elementary schools from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Sponsor-a-Scholar grant



Saratoga Sponsor-A-Scholar (SSAS) received a \$1,000 grant from the Saratoga Gaming and Raceway Foundation in December. On hand to accept the grant award were, left to right, SSAS Board Chair Lewis Titterton, Sponsor-A-Scholar students Stephanie Charboneau and Dylon Wilson and SSAS Acting Executive Director James LaVigne. The new program is working with 10 students at Saratoga Springs High School this year to help them realize their dream of attending college.

Outstanding high school students honored in November

Saratoga Springs High School, in partnership with the Saratoga Springs Rotary Club, honored outstanding juniors and seniors Nov. 6 during the fifteenth annual Academic Recognition Program.

To be eligible for this award, a student must be a junior or senior who had an average of 90 or higher for at least three of the four quarters of the 2007-08 academic year. In the Class of 2009, there were 115 winners, including 84 who received the award for the second consecutive year. In the class of 2010, there were 116 winners.

For a complete list of award winners, please visit the school district's Web site at:

www.saratogaschools.org/NewsPublications/hsacademicawards.htm.



Two high school teachers achieve national certification

Charlotte Naples and Fran Lohnes, earth science teachers at Saratoga Springs High School, are among 93 teachers in New York State who became National Board Certified Teachers in 2008.



Charlotte Naples, left, and Fran Lohnes

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards announced the names of the new certified teachers on Dec. 9, and members of the high school science department recognized their colleagues at a surprise party the following day.

They join two others at the high school – chemistry teacher and science department head Thomas Shiland and his wife, Maureen, a Spanish teacher – as the Saratoga Springs City School District's only nationally certified teachers. The Shilands were certified in 2005.

The arduous certification process involves detailed portfolios, student work samples, videos, tests, and analysis of applicants' teaching skills and students' learning styles. The road to certification goes above and beyond New York State's requirements for certifying teachers, which are considered among the toughest in the nation.

Ms. Naples and Ms. Lohnes were among 9,600 teachers nationwide who achieved certification in 2008, setting a national record for the second straight year. A total of 74,000 teachers throughout the United States are nationally certified.

Rich Johns, head coach for boys' and girls' tennis at the high school, was invited to speak about the tennis program's "no cut" policy on Jan. 30-31

at the U.S. Tennis Association Eastern Leadership Conference in White Plains. Johns is a sixth-grade teacher at the Maple Avenue Middle School.

Four high school students were selected to attend the prestigious New York State School Music Association's All-State Festival, held Dec. 4-7 in Rochester. Rachel Hill, Emmet Golden-Marx and James Alexander, all members of the Choraliers, the high school's select chorus, participated in the All-State Mixed Choir Ensemble.

David Burns, a member of the Chamber Orchestra, was seated as the first chair cellist in the All-State String Orchestra. Golden-Marx was also selected for the All-Eastern Honors Choir, which will be held in March in Providence, Rhode Island. The choir features students from 14 states, Canada and Europe.

The New York State Public High School Athletic Association has recognized ten athletic teams at the high school as scholar-athlete teams for the 2008 fall season. They are boys' cross country, coached by Art Kranick; girls' cross country, coached by Linda Kranick; football, coached by Terry Jones; girls' soccer, coached by Adrienne Dannehy; boys'

soccer, coached by Doug Leininger; girls' field hockey, coached by Jo-Anne Hostig; girls' tennis, coached by Rich Johns; girls' swimming and diving, coached by Josh Muldner and Ellie Raymond; girls' volleyball, coached by Chris McMahon; and boys' volleyball, coached by Greg Goering. Teams must achieve a grade point average of at least 90 percent to qualify.

Alum on Broadway!



Michael Pfitzer, a 2005 graduate of Saratoga Springs High School, had the honor of conducting the exit music for the Broadway production of *Phantom of the Opera* on Dec. 13. Michael, son of **Mia and Gregory Pfitzer** of Wilton, is a senior at Tufts University in Boston, majoring in music and history. Mrs. Pfitzer has served on the Board of Education since 1999.



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Choraliers to be featured on public television program



The Choraliers, the high school's select chorus, will be featured a March public television special with acclaimed composer Tim Janis, along with other regional high school choral groups. In the photo above, the 46-member group performs at WMHT studios in Troy, where the song the Choraliers prepared for the event was taped with Janis. The program, called "Tim Janis, Celebrate America," is a fundraiser featuring a mix of traditional American songs and ones written by the composer. High school music teacher Kathleen McCarty directs the Choraliers.

Character Education

Elementary students throughout the district participated in a character development program in January led by Carol McCloud, a popular speaker and author of the award-winning children's book, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids*. Ms. McCloud also presented an evening workshop for parents.

Her message is simple: Being kind to others feels good.