



*Striving for Excellence*  
**Canastota**

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## A Message From The Superintendent



As we start the second half of this most unusual school year, I know we're all holding out hope that 2021 will be a much better year than 2020. As we assess our progress toward district goals at the midpoint, one word in particular keeps coming to mind – balance. It has become abundantly clear that finding a level of balance will be key for our success moving forward. Balancing our focus on COVID while at the same time addressing all of the non-COVID priorities of our school community is a must. We don't have the luxury of saying "we'll deal with this" or "we'll address that" when the

pandemic is over. We are nearly one year into the pandemic, and it looks like we'll be dealing with at least some level of chaos for the foreseeable future.

While COVID has dominated most of my correspondence to the Canastota school community for the past year, I'd like to spend some time in this newsletter outlining some of the important initiatives happening in the district that allow us to find a level of balance in our operation. Something that I'm particularly excited about is the groundbreaking on our \$25.89 million capital project. Overwhelmingly passed by Canastota voters back in December 2019, the project is now full steam ahead. After months of working with our architects and securing approval from the State Education Department, contractors will shortly begin the work in late Winter/early Spring. The entire project will be completed over the course of the next two years, and I think our community will be very pleased with the results. The vast majority of the work will be focused on significant infrastructure needs, including new roofs on many of the district buildings, upgrading mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems, and enhancing security systems in each building. Along with all of the infrastructure needs, we're also eagerly anticipating the installation of an all-weather athletic field and track that will allow more students to play in much better conditions for a variety of athletic endeavors. Again, you'll be hearing a great deal about our capital project in the coming months.

On the academic front, the district is moving ahead with a focus on building a strong foundation to pave the way for student success in the classroom. Even as we adjust to the COVID reality, we are actively engaged in establishing systemic practices that will promote achievement. This past Fall, the district conducted a voluntary instructional audit to assess our overall strengths and areas in need of improvement within our K-12 academic program. The findings of the analysis are in the process of being shared with staff, with the goal of sharpening our focus on prioritized areas. Of particular importance will be our emphasis on coordination and consistency throughout our K-12 system, leading to more efficient and clearly articulated grade level, department and building goals. At the heart of our approach is a utilization of data that can serve to inform our subsequent action plans.



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## MEET SSES PRINCIPAL MRS. MCCLOWRY



Vanessa McClowry joined the district in December as the new principal of South Side Elementary School, and one of her first acts was to help stock the Canastota Community Cupboards around town with winter gear and personal hygiene products.

McClowry was most recently an assistant principal in the Fayetteville-Manlius district and began her career as a school psychologist. She has extensive experience with special education, early literacy, overseeing state assessments, coordinating master scheduling, coordinating anti-bullying programs, delivering professional development to staff and building school-community relations.

## K-3 Completes Kindness Challenge

Students at PSES and SSES are working on their annual Kindness Challenge, aiming to have 100 acts of kindness on display in their schools by the 100th day of school.

The Kindness Challenge, led by K-3 Social Worker Amelia Berezein, encourages students to not only treat each other with kindness but to recognize other people's kind acts. Teachers and students who see kind acts around school can fill out a paper heart, which Berezein will put on display.

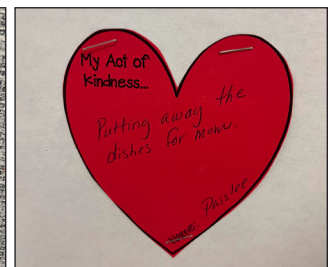
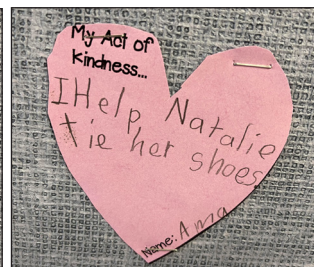
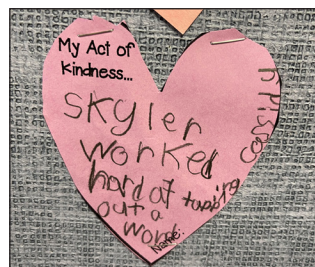
South Side has a bulletin board by the cafeteria and Peterboro Street displays them on the windows in the front hall. Hearts note things like helping someone log onto the computer, tie their shoes, carry their backpack or clean up a mess.

"They're really simple things, which is a great place to start. At this age, kids are pretty kind to each other," Berezein said. "They really get excited to see themselves recognized or to see something they submitted about someone else up on the board."

Due to remote learning, the Kindness Challenge began a little earlier this year, on January 19, and it will run through the end of February. And fully-remote students are also included, with teachers filling out hearts for kind acts they see and hear through virtual meetings.

At the end of the challenge, Berezein will return the hearts to teachers so they can distribute them to students to take home.

She also distributes a school-wide reward to encourage everyone to work together to meet their goal of 100 kind acts. She typically gives students bookmarks to help transition into March, which is Parents As Reading Partners month. This year, students will be able to color and cut out their own bookmarks.





# Digital Badging Initiative Set to Launch

This spring, Canastota will formally launch its new credentialing and digital badging initiative, which will help students develop and demonstrate character and employability skills and increase student engagement in school.

Retired CHS Business Teacher Liz Garofalo has been spearheading the Engage Canastota badging initiative, developing the criteria for earning badges, designing the badges themselves, and creating a website to provide information and updates to students, parents, staff and community members on the effort.

Garofalo previously met with local businesses and community members to introduce the program. She also met with the Superintendent's Cabinet to solicit feedback on the entire process.

"It was really our first opportunity to talk in detail with students, so we were excited to meet with them," she said. "They're very interested in it, and even this year's seniors will be able to earn some badges this year before they graduate."

Currently there are 11 badges ready to launch for the secondary level, including Career Exploration, Interpersonal Skills and Aspects of Business and Industry. Each badge has a list of demonstrable tasks and competencies to earn the credential. Earned credentials will be placed into students' digital portfolios, which they can show to colleges, employers and other agencies to help highlight their skills and preparedness for their post-secondary pathway.



"I'm a firm believer in CTE. It is so crucial for kids no matter what direction they go in in life," she said. "Health, science, math, foreign language – there's always a CTE component to everything. It's those employability skills."



Badges at the elementary level will focus on character development, as a foundation to future employability skills. At the K-3 level, each grade will work on one trait – Kindness, Respect, Responsibility and Fairness. At RSES, students will work on skills like Leadership, Citizenship and

Goal Setting. For students in grades 4-8, there will be Local History badges, which emphasize the Erie Canal and local events.

Garofalo is also finalizing a Club Badge series, which will allow students to earn badges for active participation in extracurriculars and community service. She is currently working with teachers and businesses on two different Mentoring badges, and beginning work on a Senior Legacy Badge.

"The ultimate number of badges is unlimited, but we don't want to sacrifice quality for quantity," she said. "We want to make sure all the badges have rigor and relevance, demonstrate something significant for the students, and really mean something."

## CABINET ADVISES SUPERINTENDENT

The elected officers of each class at the JSHS are part of the Superintendent's Cabinet and meet twice a month to discuss key school issues and offer a student voice to the administration. This group recently met with district leaders to share their thoughts on the digital badging initiative.

This year's Cabinet members are:

- Avery Austerman
- Adeline Debrucque
- Audrey Moody
- Brooklyn Becker
- Bryson DeMott
- Carly Becker
- Cole DeKing
- Connor White
- Ethan Debrucque
- Emma Wood
- Gloriana Stumpff
- Jenna Gustin
- Kyle Evans
- Kolby Evans
- Kendra Evans
- Luke Ackerman
- Lucas Piatkowski
- Meilyn Becker
- Mackenzie Snyder
- Maya Tucci
- Nicole Aumell
- Payton Alpaugh
- Ryan Aumell
- Sophia McCann

# Partnership Provides Additional Public Library Access

Canastota students now have access to the entire Mid-York Library System digital collection using their school library account through an expansion of an e-books partnership with Madison-Oneida BOCES.

Last year, Canastota signed on to the SORA digital book service, which was rolled out across the region to secondary students from participating school districts. Over the summer, it was expanded to include elementary students. The SORA service is a web-based catalog of e-books and audiobooks that can be streamed or downloaded.

In December, Canastota finalized an agreement with the Canastota Public Library to allow students access to their online catalog – which searches the entire Mid-York collection – with only their school credentials.

“Not every student has a library card, so when I heard that this was a possibility, I thought ‘We have to have this,’ RSES librarian Mary Laverty said. “The kids are loving it! The public library has a digital collection that’s about five times as big as the schools, and now that is open to all kids without requiring a library card.”

Laverty said the benefits of the SORA platform are numerous, including automatic returns, personalized book collections and recommendations, audiobooks and read-along books, and bookmarking a student’s place in their book. She said the school Chromebooks that students have provide them digital access anytime they need it, so they don’t have to worry about forgetting their book somewhere.

All of those benefits now apply to Mid-York titles checked out through the student’s school account.

JSHS librarian Amanda Sgroi said she often talks with her students about using the Mid-York digital media collection. She created lessons and videos last spring, when schools first closed, to help students and teachers access online material from both the school and public library more easily.

“When the Madison-Oneida SLS created a connection for our kids to borrow from both systems without a public library card, I rejoiced!” Sgroi said. “Our kids now have so many books to choose from, both fiction and non-fiction, in all sorts of reading levels and genres.”

K-3 librarian Tracy Mammone said she has introduced all third-graders to SORA and will talk about it with younger grades more and more as the year progresses. She also introduces students to four other e-book resources the district access through an agreement with MOBOCES – Arbordale Books, Bookflix, Tumble Book Library and Worldbook. She also continues to provide print books to her young readers.



Although some students prefer to read print books, particularly at younger grades, remote and hybrid learning have increased interest in and the need for online books. But even without remote learning, the dual SORA and Mid-York catalogs provide students with access to a wider range of titles than a single school could keep in print, Laverty said.

“Even if we were not in a COVID situation, having a robust digital library collection can fill a lot of niches for users,” she said. “This has really helped fill a gap for independent and leisure reading.”



## Congrats to our Scholastic Art Winners!

Congratulations to the seven CHS students honored in this year's Scholastic Art Awards regional competition! Their work was judged alongside more than 2,000 submissions, earning them places in a virtual exhibit.

- Senior Kaitlyn O'Dell, Gold Key, drawing "Home" (qualifies for national level)
- Senior Jade Garcia, Silver Key, digital drawing "Self Portrait" & Honorable Mention, digital drawing "Dream World"
- Sophomore Katherine Snyder, Silver Key, painting "A Chat with M"
- Junior Chloe Wells, Silver Key, drawing "Cheez It"
- Junior Laurel VanLone, Honorable Mention, digital drawing "Unfortunately Me"
- Senior Bailey Agerter, Honorable Mention, photo "Think Before You Do"
- Junior Chase Moore, Honorable Mention, photo "Blade of an Axe"

All of the pieces are posted on our Facebook page (January 19).



## Holiday Drive Benefits Local Residents

The CHS National Honor Society and the Village of Canastota teamed up this holiday season for a COVID-safe Winter Gear & Hygiene Products Drive that benefitted 25 local residents in needs!

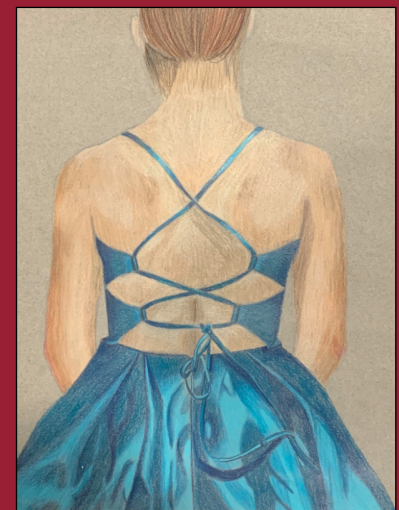
The Canastota Police Department and village hall helped collect items by putting out a donation drop box for community members to donate coats, boots, gloves, hats and personal hygiene items. The local VFW also made a generous donation to the drive from its members. Our NHS students worked to sort out the donations and fulfill requests, which local residents picked up by appointment.



## VIRTUAL ART SHOW

Fifteen CHS students from Kristie Boisen's classes were selected for a Virtual Student Exhibit at the NYS Art Teachers Association virtual conference this fall. To see all the pieces, visit our Facebook page (November 14).

Ava Baker  
Kaitlyn Crandall  
Ethan Debrucque  
Zachary Doxtater  
Kendra Evans  
Jade Garcia  
Kaitlyn O'Dell  
Ezekiel Percival  
Amaya Salerno  
Alex Seeber  
Katherine Snyder  
Gloriana Stumpf  
Laura Suppa  
Gabrielle Tyler  
Quinn VanLone



## KINDERGARTEN & PRE-K REGISTRATION

### KINDERGARTEN

**Kindergarten registration will be completed by mail or drop-off this year.** Application packets will be available on the district website for download and may be requested by mail from the PSES main office. Anyone who needs assistance can contact the Registrar's Office at 315-697-6326. Additional information will be coming from the PSES principal.

Children must be 5 years old on or before December 1, 2021, to qualify for kindergarten.

In addition to the application packet, parents will need the following items for register their children: parent photo ID, original birth certificate, immunization record from doctor, proof of residency, and other relevant documents as needed (custody orders, IEPs, etc.).

### PRE-KINDERGARTEN

Pre-kindergarten registration will be held on **Wednesday, March 3, 2021, from 7:30am-3:30pm by phone** with MOBOCES by calling 315-361-5903.

Children must be 4 years old on or before December 1, 2021, to qualify for pre-k.

Application packets may be downloaded from the MOBOCES website or requested by mail from MOBOCES.

To register, you will need: a completed application packet, birth certificate, immunization record and proof of residency.

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## Superintendent's Message

As we move forward, you will notice that our goals are much more specific, measurable, and evidence-based - a hallmark of all high-achieving districts.

Along with the focus on the fundamentals, we're committed to building a structure that allows for learning and achievement that reaches beyond simply meeting the minimal standards established by the state. In an effort to provide opportunities for students to pursue interests and connect to the regional business and economic community, a K-12 badging/micro-credentialing initiative is being launched this semester. In this newsletter, and in many forthcoming communications, you will be hearing about the unlimited potential and countless benefits of such a program. The launch of this initiative means that our kids will have a chance to access and demonstrate a level of learning that is simply not available to students in most schools in upstate New York. This is an opportunity to truly help our students separate from the pack as they move to their next challenge.

The above examples describe just a few of the exciting initiatives happening in our district. They all serve as a reminder that even as we spend much of our time navigating through the COVID puzzle, we are still finding balance in our commitment to overall district growth and prosperity. We're building a strong foundation for learning by paying attention to the basics, creating meaningful connections to the outside world to motivate and challenge our students, and making sure that we maintain our facilities, which have long served as the center of the Canastota community. Without question, 2020 was a challenging year. However, as we get closer to the end of the COVID crisis, I can't help but think that we are positioning ourselves well to enjoy a long stretch of collective success for our school community. By doing the hard work now, we'll ensure that high achievement in every phase of district operation is not a hope, but rather, an expectation. Much more to come, stay tuned. Go Raiders!

Sincerely,

Shawn Bissetta, Superintendent

## Playing is Learning in Pre-K!

Pre-kindergarten students at PSES have learned about holidays, winter, animals and more through songs, stories, crafts and other play-based activities.





## Students Practice Life Skills

Seventh graders at the JSHS had a practical lesson this winter on the ins and outs of owning a home and a car in their Life Skills and Career Exploration class. Business teacher Jacob Smith taught students to check their car's oil level, jump-start a car, understand the dashboard symbols, repair holes in sheetrock, change a doorknob and install an outlet cover.

Smith, a first year teacher in Canastota, said the Life Skills course is a precursor to the Career and Financial Management class at the high school. So far, students have discussed communication, online etiquette, resume building, job interviews, credit cards, loans, banking and investing. Students also had an opportunity to begin exploring career interest and taking skills assessments, meeting with special guests from different fields as part of their research.



## DISTRICT BEGINS EXTENDED DAYS

The district has begun offering students in grades 4-12 an Extended Day Program to provide academic and enrichment learning opportunities for students. The program will be held afterschool, from 2:55-3:55 pm, and busing will be offered to ensure that transportation is not a barrier to participation.

At the JSHS, the program offers academic extra help. Students can sign up on either Monday or Tuesday, depending on their cohort, to stay after school and work with staff.

At RSES, the program meets on Wednesdays and Thursdays to provide additional programming in art, physical education, and educational technology. The program is aimed at increasing student engagement in school as well as academic and social emotional success.

## SUPPORT THE ECEF!

Looking for a way to support school projects? Consider donating to the Engage Canastota Educational Foundation. The foundation was established this past summer to help provide funding for unique student programs. Donations can be made by cash, check or credit card. Visit the district website to find a link to the ECEF website, where you can learn more about what the foundation does, who is on the board and how to make a contribution.

## Baker Named XC Conference All-Star!

Congratulations to 10th grader Ava Baker on being named a Center State Conference All-Star for the 2020 Cross Country season!



# district

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**Mr. Shawn Bissetta**  
Superintendent

**Mr. Christopher Clancy**  
Assistant Superintendent for  
Instruction & Special Programs

**Mr. Nicholas Panuccio Jr.**  
Executive Director of Finance  
& Operations

**Mr. Jay Altobello**  
Jr./Sr. High School Principal

**Mr. Andrew Kennedy**  
Jr./Sr. High School  
Assistant Principal

**Mr. Stanley Congden**  
Athletic Director & Jr./Sr. High  
School Assistant Principal

**Mr. Michael Faustino**  
Roberts Street Elementary  
School Principal

**Ms. Jennifer Carnahan**  
Peterboro Street Elementary  
School Principal

**Ms. Vanessa McCowry**  
South Side Elementary  
School Principal

**Ms. Cynthia Clark**  
Transportation Supervisor

**Mr. Nick Campbell**  
Facilities Leader

**Ms. Kathie Palladino**  
Assistant Director of Special Programs

**Ms. Karen Henner**  
Instructional Support Services Director

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## 25 Inducted Into National Honor Society

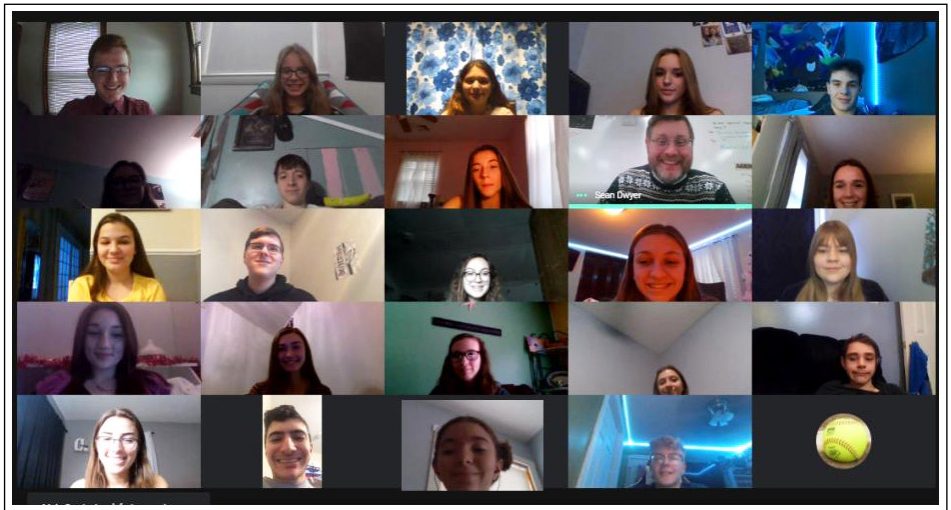
The Canastota High School chapter of the National Honor Society welcomed 25 new students into its ranks during a virtual induction ceremony in December.

During the virtual ceremony, NHS chapter advisers Sean Dwyer and Erin Tucci, CHS Principal Jay Altobello and Superintendent Shawn Bissetta congratulated students on their accomplishment. Inductees also heard from current NHS officers: President Luke Ackerman, Vice President Haley Michels, Secretary Carley Wood, Treasurer Bailey Doxtator, and Historian Richelle Brown.

Welcome and congratulations to:

Sophomores Jake Backus, Ava Baker, Mattingly Clarke, Brooke Congden, Kaitlyn Crandall, Ella DiVeronica, Nathan Engle, Jenna Gustin, Willow Heckerman, Adam Kitchen, Logan Mead, Audrey Moody, Clay Roberts, Bethany Rogers, Breeah Shaw, Katherine Snyder, Maia Snyder, Gloriana Stumpff, Adelyn Ward, Lillian Ward, Cassandra Wood, and Emma Wood.

Juniors Sophia Bolton, Corie Noti, and Kyler Oster.



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