



## Celebrating 100 Years of Castleton Elementary School!

### The Castleton Elementary School 100 Years Celebration

Did you know that this fall the Castleton Elementary School building celebrated its centennial when it turned 100 years old?! The district celebrated the 100th birthday of the building at the Castleton Elementary School 100 Years Celebration on Tuesday, October 24, at a special edition of the school's Monthly Assembly.

All of Castleton Elementary's kindergarten-6th grade students were in attendance, along with all the school's faculty and staff. Many CES families also joined the 100 Years Celebration where they were treated to some special musical performances by the students, one of which was the grade 4-6 students singing the school's alma mater.

An event highlight was when Mrs. Golden's 1st grade students (most dressed to look 100 years old) led the "What Does 100 Look Like?" activity where groups of 10 students came up to the front of the gym until there were 100 students up front visualizing the sheer size of a century! It being the CES building's birthday, all 100 students held big paper birthday candles and sang a birthday song in honor of the building.

Some of the special guests at the 100 Years Celebration included several local elected officials: Castleton Deputy Mayor Jenifer Pratico, New York State Senator Jake Ashby, Rensselaer County Executive Steve McLaughlin and Schodack Town Supervisor Charles Peter. The district thanks them for taking time from their busy schedules to celebrate 100 years of Castleton Elementary School with us!

### A Bit of Castleton Elementary Building History

Leading up to the 100 Years Celebration, the district shared history of the building now known as Castleton Elementary School on its social media. For those not on social media, a bit of the building's history is available here. All information is sourced from Schodack Central School District: History of a Rural School District in the State of New York by Alice P. Walsh, Castleton Village Historian (published in 1986 by Stuyvesant Press in Kinderhook, NY).

In the 1910s, as enrollment at Castleton's village school grew, the need for a larger school became apparent. The Castleton School District Trustees decided to build a new school on Campbell Avenue, with construction starting in 1917 and finishing in the Fall of 1923. Ruth Steele and John Van Ort, 8th-grade students, laid the cornerstone for Castleton Union Free School #10, later known as Castleton Elementary School, at a cost of approximately \$160,000 (about \$2,856,055 today).

Designed by Albany architects Fuller and Robinson, the school had 15 classrooms, a combined gym/auditorium, a principal/guidance office, and nurse quarters. It initially served students in grades 1-8, offering subjects like science, math, history, French, Latin, and English. The school's academic level increased yearly, reaching a full 12th-grade curriculum in 1928, with the Class of 1936 being the first to matriculate entirely within its walls. The building is pictured above in 1924.

In the 1940s, Schodack's population increased with no new classrooms being built and the Castleton Union Free School building (now known as Castleton Elementary) was at capacity. To address this issue, eight districts were centralized into "Central School District #1" in 1951, eventually renamed "Schodack Central School District" in 1954. In 1953, voters approved the construction of Maple Hill Jr./Sr. High School and an addition to the Castleton School building. The Class of 1955 was the last to graduate from the Castleton School, and Maple Hill Jr./Sr. HS opened in 1956, accommodating grades 7-12. Due to the post-WWII Baby Boom, student numbers continued to rise, leading to the 1966 construction of Maple Hill Middle School (now the District Office), which then opened in 1967. Grade levels shifted a bit between schools over the years and they are now split entirely between Castleton Elementary (grades K-6) and Maple Hill (grades 7-12).



## Capital Improvement Project Updates

Below is an update about Schodack's capital improvement work approved by voters in May 2022. Voters approved this capital project work the same day they approved the 2022-2023 Budget. The scope of work for this project covers necessary maintenance, renovations and improvements at all primary district sites.

Site work for this project is broken into two phases. PHASE 1 construction began in late Spring 2023 and is now complete. It included site work at Maple Hill Jr./Sr. High School, the District Office building and Castleton Elementary. Highlights from Phase 1 are listed below.

PHASE 2 construction will begin in 2024 and is expected to be completed within that same year. It will include the remaining site work at Maple Hill Jr./Sr. High School, Castleton Elementary, the District Office and the Bus Garage. For more information about specific improvements included in this project visit [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us).

**Castleton Elementary School Parking Lot:** 25 new parking spaces have been added to the Castleton Elementary School Parking Lot.

**District Office Sidewalks and Exterior Stairs:** The concrete sidewalks and exterior stairs at the District Office have been completely replaced.

**Maple Hill Jr./Sr. High School Tennis Courts:** The Maple Hill Tennis Courts have been completely replaced and are open for use. Half of the new tennis courts have also been lined for pickleball. Before and after pictures of the tennis courts are below.



**Maple Hill Jr./Sr. High School Parking Lot:** The Maple Hill Main Parking Lot has been completely resurfaced and the parking/directional markings have been repainted. Before and after pictures of the parking lot are below.





## Checking in with Our New Maple Hill Principal & Athletic Director

During the Summer of 2023, Schodack welcomed two new administrators to its leadership team. Robert Santarcangelo joined as the Maple Hill Jr./Sr. High School Principal and April Smith transitioned from a full-time teaching position to Athletic Director/PE Teacher.



**Robert Santarcangelo**  
Maple Hill Jr./Sr.  
High School Principal

**Could you briefly sum up your background and how you came to Schodack?**

I've been working in education for 14 years, starting as a social studies and psychology teacher before moving into administration. For the last few years, I was a dean of

students and assistant principal before coming to Maple Hill. I was drawn to Schodack for the small-town feel with a large community presence where the school district is the heart of the town.

**What are some of the most rewarding things so far about working at Schodack?**

The students. Hands down they are my favorite part of being principal at Maple Hill, they're an incredible group who make this job very enjoyable. It's clear the faculty and staff here really love what they do, are always willing to do what is best for our students, and they are just a fun group to work with. I am reminded daily I made the right choice to come here.

**How have your experiences helped you be an effective leader at Maple Hill so far?**

I've spent my entire career so far in some form of leadership role. Whether in the classroom, leading a department or leading a building. All those roles in their own way helped prepare me for the role of principal. Experience has taught me establishing and maintaining expectations is an integral part of leadership. I'm fortunate to have had amazing mentors who taught me that being present, visible, and willing to listen are key characteristics that make a successful principal.

**What are you looking forward to as your first year as principal continues?**

Focusing on the finer points here at Maple Hill. Part of my role and responsibilities is focusing on improving the efficiencies of our school systems and I'm excited I get to help move this wonderful school forward. More importantly, I'm simply looking forward to continuing to be the principal here as I wholeheartedly love it. On a daily basis, I see our students thrive and I am thrilled I get to keep doing that.



**April Smith**  
Athletic Director

**What's your background and how did you come to the athletic director position?**

My family has lived here for a long time and I love this district. I've spent the last six years teaching in Schodack (Phys. Ed & Health) and I've been a coach for 18 years in both New York State and

Baltimore. As athletic director I felt I could give back to this school community on a larger scale and work directly with more of them. You also don't see a lot of women athletic directors and I hope that my being in this role can show some of our young female athletes that they can work in this field too.

**You started in the summer and now we're a few months into the school year. How have you adapted to that shift and continued learning as a first-time athletic director?**

I've been learning all I could from the community, students, Schodack faculty/staff and the Maple Hill Booster Club about what they need in an athletic director. I've also been learning from athletic directors in other districts who have been in the role longer than I have. Maple Hill's coaches are a wonderfully supportive group of colleagues. Each of our teams has its own specific traditions and needs, so the coaches are crucial in helping me understand what their particular student-athletes need to feel supported.

**What do you find most rewarding about the role so far?**

Before I became the athletic director, I was often coaching my own teams while other student-athletes were playing or practicing. The best part of my day in this job is now having a chance to see all our student-athletes competing, working as a team and having fun.

**What are you looking forward to as your first year as athletic director continues?**

I'm looking forward to overseeing our winter and spring seasons for the first time. I also can't wait to be part of more Senior Nights for our teams and other Maple Hill Athletic traditions.



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## School Safety Spotlight

Creating a safe environment to learn is one of the top priorities in Schodack CSD and we wanted to remind our school district community about two safety initiatives put into effect within the last year.

#### STOPit Online Anonymous Reporting

In September Schodack began using STOPit, an online anonymous reporting system designed to deter bullying, discrimination and other inappropriate or unsafe behaviors among students. STOPit can be used to reach out for help if a student or one of their peers is facing a personal crisis, experiencing bullying, or are otherwise in need of assistance. STOPit consists of a website, a mobile app and a back-end incident management system for our school administrators to review submissions. No personal information is needed to use STOPit. The only way personally identifiable information will be accessible through STOPit is if a student or family member voluntarily includes it in their submission.

Parents/guardians are also encouraged to download the STOPit app and search for your student's school using the directory. They can privately ask for help for their student, a family member or any Schodack student they feel may need help. More information about STOPit is on the district website at [www.schodack.k12.ny.us/stopit-anonymous-reporting/](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us/stopit-anonymous-reporting/)



*Stop Arm Camera on Schodack Buses*

#### Stop Arm Cameras on Schodack Buses

In Spring 2023, stop-arm cameras were installed on all Schodack CSD buses to deter drivers from illegally passing them when their stop arms are extended, meaning students are entering or exiting the bus. Now if a car illegally passes a Schodack bus, the cameras automatically record a video of the incident and capture the vehicle's license plate number. Footage of this traffic violation is then sent directly to BusPatrol, the company that installed and monitors the cameras. BusPatrol reports the incident to the Rensselaer County Sheriff's Department which then sends a ticket to the registered owner of the vehicle. Camera installation came at no cost to the district thanks to funding from a grant partnership with Rensselaer County.