



DISTRICT WRAPS UP CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: A Timeline Summary (May 2022 – Fall 2024)

The majority of work included in Schodack Central School District's latest capital improvement project is now completed. District residents approved this proposed project in a public vote on May 17, 2022, the same day they approved the 2022-2023 School Year Budget.

Over the last two years, extensive planning, maintenance, renovations and improvements occurred at all the district's primary locations: Castleton Elementary School, Maple Hill Jr./Sr. High School, the Schodack District Office and the Bus Garage.

This project was an investment in the success of Schodack's students and the district wishes to thank the entire community for its support and patience throughout the multi-year process.

Updates have been included in each district newsletter since voter approval and here you can find a timeline summary of the last few years. For more detailed information visit www.schodack.k12.ny.us/district/capital-projects/

Planning & Phase 1 Construction

After voters approved the project in May 2022, construction planning took place over the following year. Site work was scheduled in two phases to cause minimal disruption to school operations. Phase 1 Construction began in late May 2023 and was completed in Fall 2023. Highlights From Phase 1 included a large amount of major exterior work in the project, including but not limited to:

- Maple Hill Parking Lot Resurfacing
- Maple Hill Tennis Courts Replacement
- Castleton Elementary Parking Lot Expansion
- District Office Sidewalk and Exterior Stairs Replacement

Phase 2 Construction

The second and final construction phase (Phase 2) began in early 2024 and included the remaining site work at all the district's primary locations. The majority of Phase 2 is now completed and highlighted components included additional exterior work and much of the interior work in the project such as:

- Bus Garage Door Replacement
- New Fuel Island Tanks Installed
- Maple Hill Technology Suite Renovation
- New Ventilation Equipment in Maple Hill Kitchen
- New Lighting in Maple Hill Gym Atrium
- New Boiler Installation at Maple Hill
- Rooftop AC/Heat Installation for Maple Hill Auditorium
- Selective AC Installation in Maple Hill Science Wing
- Selective Exterior Door Replacement at District Office & Castleton Elementary
- Improved Heating/Cooling Controls at Castleton Elementary



Maple Hill Technology Suite Before



Maple Hill Technology Suite After



< District Office
Entrance Before

District Office >
Entrance After



Maple Hill Introduces Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) Program

A new hands-on learning program is now available at Maple Hill Jr./Sr. High School. The school's new Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) program is facilitated by two Maple Hill employees – Rachael Kerner (Art Teacher) and Michelle Stilson (School Social Worker) – and is available for eligible grades 7-12 students.

The program started this fall and runs in two separate ten-week sessions during the school year – one in the fall and one in the spring – and each session will have a different group of student participants. EAL is a learning approach built on developing and practicing life skills through horse-partnered activities. In this first year of the program at Maple Hill, the focus is building confidence through partnerships with horses Thor and Jelly Roll.

The EAL program centers on learning through direct interaction with the horses, allowing students to explore behavior patterns of themselves and another in a non-traditional but guided way. Each week is planned around a different life skill. For example, some

exercises during the fall session have focused on setting boundaries, with students working with the horses to learn, teach and respect one another's space. Other activities have focused on leadership awareness, displaying confidence and practicing trust, to name just a few. After each activity, the students reflect on their experiences and consider how they can apply them to real situations in their own lives.

Ms. Kerner proposed the idea of a Maple Hill EAL program after spending time studying, training, and receiving certification in it. As someone who's taught in the district for years, Ms. Kerner saw an opportunity for an EAL program to benefit Maple Hill students and district administration supported her in developing one.

If you would like to learn more about the Maple Hill EAL program or feel your Maple Hill student(s) could benefit from it, contact Ms. Kerner (rkerner@schodack.k12.ny.us) or Ms. Stilson (mstilson@schodack.k12.ny.us). Students will be placed on a waiting list in consideration for one of the future ten-week EAL sessions.



Strengthening Community Engagement and Communications

Schodack Central School District is currently working with Capital Region BOCES Engagement & Development Services to conduct an independent, voluntary audit of its community engagement, including seeking school community input on current communications practices.

During October, school families and employees had an opportunity to share their perspectives on current communications and future engagement needs through an online survey. In early November, community members and school families were invited to attend two communications

focus groups. Additionally, focus groups were also held with district faculty, staff and students. These stakeholder focus groups were led by Capital Region BOCES facilitators who guided conversations with the school community on communication preferences, successful engagement strategies and areas for improvement.

The community engagement and communications audit will be completed this winter and a formal presentation of the findings will be presented to Schodack's Board of Education in January.

Checking In: New Castleton Elementary Assistant Principal

In July 2024, Schodack Central School District welcomed Megan Sullivan as the new Assistant Principal of Castleton Elementary School. When Ms. Sullivan started in the summer, we did a Q&A to introduce her to the school community and hear how she was helping CES Principal James Derby plan for the 2024-2025 School Year. Now a few months into the school year proper, we checked in with her again to see how things have been going.

For those who missed the Q&A when you started, could you summarize your background and how you came to Schodack?

Before coming to Schodack, I spent 16 years in the classroom, where my passion for education grew daily. Because of my husband's career, we moved around, but that let me experience a variety of schools and grade levels in different states. Last spring, when I finished my School Administration program through Stony Brook University, I was eager to apply for this position at CES. I'm local to this area and I've always been impressed by Schodack schools, so it's been an honor to be embraced by this community.

You started during a quiet time of the year (summer), how was that helpful and how's it been now with everyone back?

Starting in the summer gave me time to get to know the district and



the school better and meet people who dropped in during it. Now the building is always busy and I'm always learning so much about our students, like how to help them grow and learn from their mistakes and conflicts. I also learned I can survive being in a dunk tank from my time at the CES PTO Community Fair this fall!

What've you found most rewarding about this job and working in Schodack?

What I've loved most so far about being the AP of CES has been the new relationships I've formed. Our district is such a warm and close-knit community that

I've felt very welcomed and embraced since starting. I love seeing our students smile as they get off the bus and I'm very fortunate to witness the wonderful teaching taking place in our classrooms.

It's still early in the school year, so what else are you looking forward to as it continues?

I am excited for any and all Spirit Weeks, as I've heard they're pretty awesome here! I'm also excited about the Flag Day ceremony in June that I've heard so much about. Beyond those specific events, I'm happy just to continue learning more about the community and meet more people.

National CBS Mornings Show Visits 6th Grade

On October 18 Castleton Elementary School 6th-grade students and teachers were featured on the national CBS Mornings show in a *Kindness 101* segment with broadcast journalist Steve Hartman and his children, Meryl and Emmett! You can watch the segment on the district website (www.schodack.k12.ny.us) and the 6th grade is featured at around the 4-minute mark.

Some background on how CBS Mornings came to visit CES. 6th-Grade Teacher, Allison Streeter, has been a longtime fan of Steve's work and this year decided to incorporate his *Kindness 101* video stories into her class work. While looking online for videos to use, she saw a CBS Facebook post asking teachers if they used or planned to use the videos in school and, if so, would their class be interested in being featured in a future story. Mrs. Streeter responded over the summer and a CBS producer let her know they would get back to her after the school year started if the CES 6th-grade class was selected.

When 6th graders returned in September, they watched a few *Kindness 101* videos daily in class and wrote journal entries responding



to them. The videos were a big hit with the students. They loved watching and journaling their thoughts about each, often requesting to watch their favorite ones again.

It was only a week before Steve, Meryl and Emmett ultimately visited CES on September 23 when CBS reached out to let the district know the 6th graders had been chosen for part of the segment! Mrs. Streeter and other faculty/staff quickly planned for the visit, all while keeping the students in the dark about it. On the day of the visit, CES Principal James Derby brought the 6th graders together for what he told them was a presentation by him. The students were

surprised and overjoyed when after just a few minutes of Mr. Derby speaking, Steve, Meryl and Emmett walked into the room! Along with the final news segment, you can watch a clip of the 6th graders' surprised reactions on the district website.

Many thanks to Steve, his children and CBS Mornings for visiting with our 6th-grade students and teachers – they still can't believe it happened!



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Produced by Questar III Communications Service



2024 Castleton Elementary Halloween Parade

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES: Join Us in Supporting Our Students!

Whether you're a school parent, an alumni or a community member who just wants to be more involved with their local schools, Schodack CSD welcomes new volunteers year-round! There are multiple ongoing opportunities and groups you can be involved in to support our students and make a positive impact on your school community.

Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization (PTO): Plan/organize and help at popular events for students and families. Examples include the Fall Community Fair, the Holiday Bazaar, the Science Fair, the Strawberry Festival and many more! Email amyg_teach@yahoo.com to learn more.

Music Parents Association: Support and expand music education in Schodack and help at annual district music events! Email mhmusicpa@gmail.com to learn more.

Athletic Booster Club: Help support Maple Hill student-athletes at some of the district's year-round games/matches and tournaments! Contact Booster Club at mhboosterclub@gmail.com to learn more.

Schodack Wildcat Foundation: A New York State Not-For-Profit Corporation founded by local members of our school community with a passion for helping Schodack students. This can take many forms, like organizing student programs/activities, holding fundraisers, helping locate grant opportunities and more. Contact the District Office at **518-732-2297** to learn more.