



Return to Familiar Routines & Starting Anew in 21-22

It is still early in the 2021-2022 school year, but the first few months have been notably different from the same time last year.

"We were very excited to see the return of a much more traditional looking school year in September," said Superintendent of Schools, Jason Chevrier. "Last year everyone did an outstanding job; teachers, students, parents, administrators, nurses, bus drivers, the list goes on. I'm proud of the work we did together in 2020-2021 but I'm looking forward to the first academic year since 2018-2019 where all our students are back in school every day. Necessary safety protocols are still in place but after a long time they get to experience school in a way that allows them to engage in social activities and begin making new memories with their classmates again."

We spoke with additional members of the Schodack staff to hear firsthand how in just two months, the 21-22 year has already brought back a long-missed sense of familiarity in the schools.

ART EDUCATION:

Janel Gregoire & Rachael Kerner, Art Teachers

"Art education definitely looks more normal this year," said Castleton Art Teacher Janel Gregoire. "Last year I went class to class with an art cart since we needed to limit student movement around the building. Students were limited in art media choices and we had to get creative if I forgot to bring something on the cart. It was a challenging year."

"This year we have returned to the art rooms! The classrooms have visual references for inspiration, there's a wider variety of materials to use and it's easier to take chances on what works best for their individual art. Students are back together at group tables so they can see each other's work again and problem solve challenges with their peers."

"Other than our masks and keeping some distance between us, art classes look pretty normal again," said Ms. Gregoire.

Maple Hill Art Teacher, Rachael Kerner, started a project that would have been impossible last year: student made Artist Trading Cards. "When students finish assigned projects early or have extra time, they can create these Trading Cards," said Ms. Kerner. "You leave them around the school for others to find or give them to classmates and teachers. The building has loved it so far and it's been a great way to spread cheer and art now that there's more flexibility for activities this year."



ATHLETICS:

Mike Silver, Athletics Director

Last year, the fall athletics season was not played until springtime and like all the other 20-21 seasons, it was abbreviated.

"This year all of our fall teams have played full season schedules again and we look forward to the same in the

coming winter and spring seasons. Plus, our Sectional, Regional and NYS competitions have returned this year," Mr. Silver said.

"Being able to hold our annual Fall Sports Weekend Tournaments and Invitationals again in recent weeks was so great. It brought the school community out and together in a way we haven't seen for a long time."

While understanding times are still a bit uncertain, Mr. Silver added that he looks forward to similar experiences with this year's Wrestling, Basketball and Baseball/Softball Tournaments as well as the Track & Field Invitational.

MUSIC PROGRAMMING:

Christina Gibney, Music Teacher/Choir Director

We checked in with Ms. Gibney, who works in both Schodack schools, to see how some of the district's music programming has come back strong. Last year the buildings were a little quieter with all the Maple Hill HS chorus classes going virtual and no concerts. Castleton ES had no chorus classes at all last year.

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Update On District Use of Federal Stimulus Funds

As with other districts across the nation, Schodack has received one-time federal funding through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Act (CRRSAA) in a total amount of \$1,853,345.

Near the end of last school year the district surveyed families about their preferences for how the district uses these federal relief funds. Based on that gathered community feedback the district has begun using those funds for the following purposes.

Isolation Room Support

With all students back for in person instruction five days a week, extra isolation room support is crucial while COVID remains a concern. Funds are being used to provide extra staffing support in both schools' isolation rooms. These rooms are used to separate students who come to school displaying COVID symptoms or become symptomatic while in school. With more students back in school this becomes a more likely possibility and school nurses need extra staff support to manage the increased numbers of students sent to them this year.

Technology Integration Specialist

The district has used funds to create a new position - a Technology Integration Specialist (Ed Finney) - who is actively working with staff and school families. Mr. Finney has been assisting teachers with incorporating instructional technology (IT) into the curriculum and helping them become more self-sufficient using that technology long term. Additionally, Mr. Finney is currently working as a support for parents/guardians to assist them with the increasing use of IT in their students' education and helping them navigate online platforms used by the district, such as Canvas for grades 7-12.



Social/Emotional and Mental Health Supports

The district has purchased additional screening and testing services to gauge student mental wellness. The district is also discussing the possibility of hiring a third School Psychologist to provide added services and social/emotional support for students.

Summer School Programming

Funds were used for 2021 summer school programming (K-8 Summer Academy and the Extended School Year Program) which ran out of Castleton Elementary during July-August.

Additionally, funds were used to provide summer students with district transportation services to and from school.

Hiring a District Data Analyst

The district is in the process of hiring a Data Analyst who will work with teaching staff to analyze instructional data. This will help teaching staff and school administrators utilize data to identify and close student learning gaps.

Additional Reading Teacher at CES

An additional AIS (Academic Intervention Services) Reading Teacher was hired and is currently working at Castleton Elementary.

Behavioral Training Services for School Staff

The district has purchased training services from Questar III BOCES to strengthen staff conflict resolution techniques to use for more effective de-escalation of student conflicts in school.



Maple Hill Gym Roof Repair Vote Set for December 14, 2021

There will be a public referendum in December to approve the use of \$350,000 in Schodack's capital reserve funds to repair and update the Maple Hill High School Gym Roof. **Voter approval of this project would not impact or raise taxes for district residents.** The district already has the money available for the proposed work, it just needs voter approval to use it for these purposes.

The approximately 10,000 square foot roof is over 20 years old and has exceeded its useful life. It is important it be replaced as soon as possible since large areas of the existing fully-adhered rubber roof have already delaminated from the structure. Currently the district has stabilized the roof with concrete pavers as ballast though this is not an ideal long term solution.

Should voters approve use of the district's reserve funds for this project, the scope of work would include the full removal and complete replacement of the current roof.

The timing of the December 2021 referendum is important since it factors in enough time for the NYS Education Dept. permissions and enough time to accommodate the anticipated delay of raw materials currently affecting the construction industry. If voters approve the roof repairs this December it will mean construction can be completed before Winter 2022-23.

Turner Construction and Synthesis Architects presented plans for the project in a slideshow at the October 21, 2021, board of education meeting. This presentation is available on Schodack's

BoardDocs page which can be accessed via the district website: www.schodack.k12.ny.us.

Voting will take place from 6:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. in the Maple Hill Gym on Tuesday, December 14, 2021.



Delaminated Areas of Gym Roof

Return to Familiar Routines...

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"I'm so excited that all levels of Schodack Chorus have returned this year: Grade 5 Chorus, Grade 6 Chorus, Grade 7-8 Chorus and High School Chorus. Plus, our extracurricular Swing Choir is also back," said Ms. Gibney.

The music faculty is also working on the possibility of bringing back chorus concerts after a long absence. "Concerts are a possibility again this year, we are working out what form those could take under current safety protocols," said Ms. Gibney. "Ultimately though the most heartening thing for me and one of the biggest changes this year is just being able to sing in person again!"

SCHOOL BUILDING ENVIRONMENT:

James Derby & Jacqueline Hill, School Principals

Mr. Derby and Ms. Hill are in high spirits about the improvements in their respective buildings' environments and the moods of those in them. "Everyone's mood has been great! The students are excited to have their special classes (Art, Music, etc.) in their actual rooms again," said Mr. Derby of CES this year. "They love eating lunch with their entire grade level again and maybe most importantly to them, they love being altogether at recess again after being in small cohorts for it last year."

While the students are a little older, Ms. Hill spoke of a similar feel over in Maple Hill. "We've been able to bring back more traditional school events this year, including a strong showing of

student pride during Fall Spirit Week and the Color Wars Pep Rally. We have moved some events outdoors, but the students have not minded that since it gives them the freedom to socialize with their peers at school again," said Ms. Hill. "After school activities have also made a strong comeback which is a huge plus for the students. With the return of our late bus runs this year they again have opportunities to stay after for academic support and participate in extracurricular clubs."

SPECIAL EDUCATION:

Michael Bennett, Asst. Superintendent & Special Ed. Director

The pandemic has affected all Schodack students' schooling but those who struggle academically or have learning disabilities face unique challenges. Mr. Bennett noted that one of the most important changes from last year is that all special education staff are back with their full classes in place. "That's key because it allows us to provide the consistent necessary attention to each grade level," said Mr. Bennett.

This means these students now once again have the full extent of the district's reading & math help available and are getting regular access to their speech, OT, PT and counseling sessions. Mr. Bennett concluded saying that "for me, greeting all the students every day again as they come to school and giving them a returned sense of continuity and safety is very rewarding."



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Food Backpack & Holiday Giving Programs for SCSD Families

Schodack Central School District is very fortunate to live in such a generous community that truly cares about our school and its students. We wanted to make you aware of a couple of programs that we offer. Please know that these programs are **CONFIDENTIAL**.

- **Food Backpack Program** – Our school has been selected as a site for the Backpack child nutrition program by the Regional Food Bank. This allows any student and their families with food insecurities to take a backpack full of food home with them on the weekends and breaks. Backpacks are already being sent home with students and will continue through late Spring.

- **Holiday Giving Program** – The holidays can put a strain, financially, on families. This program allows families to supplement their gift-giving to their children. Wish lists are made (typically 2-3 items) and faculty/staff/community members donate these wish list items. You also have an opportunity to request a free turkey for Thanksgiving. This program will begin in mid-November.

If you are interested in having your child(ren) participate in one or both of these programs, please reach out to our School Social Workers. Their names and contact information are listed below. We look forward to working with you.

Michelle Stilson – Maple Hill JR/SR HS (Grades 7-12)
Email: mstilson@schodack.k12.ny.us
Phone: 518-732-7701 x1256

Jennifer Sober – Castleton Elementary (Grades K-6)
Email: jsober@schodack.k12.ny.us
Phone: 518-732-7755 x3445



The triumphant return of the CES Halloween Parade last month!