



SUPERINTENDENT'S *Brief*



SUPERINTENDENT ANIBAL SOLER, JR.

WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 15 2021 | VOLUME 1 ISSUE NO. 13

Our focus as a school district is to ensure that our students are educationally successful, prepared, and that they graduate from high school ready for the next chapter in life whether it be to go to college, enter the workforce, military or other. To that end, we must ensure that we have a healthy culture and school environment in which teachers can teach, and our students can thrive and learn. We must have clear expectations, support of parents, and we must work in partnership with our families and community.

You may have heard in the news lately, that schools across the country are struggling with student behaviors as kids re-adjust to regular socialization, interaction, and school norms. It is no different in Schenectady. In local recent news reports, there has been much shared about the culture and some of the disruptive behaviors at Schenectady High School. I want to share some of changes and how our high school team is responding. The shift we are working toward can only happen with your awareness, understanding and support.

Please keep in mind, when we returned to in-person learning, most of our secondary students had not been inside their schools with their teachers and classmates for about a year and a half. We knew that coming back to school would be an adjustment for everyone including students, and staff. We also knew that we would have to keep a close eye on the pulse of our environment at all levels and be ready to respond as needed.

Most of the behavior issues including student disruptions, verbal altercations, or physical fights, don't begin inside the school. They often start outside in the community or on social media, where kids could say what they wanted and be able to hide, until now. External conflicts are now sometimes manifesting in our hallways. I want to be clear these aren't groups of kids or brawls. We are talking about two kids going at one another or one student targeting another for one reason or another.

Our students are learning the rules all over again. They are learning to socialize all over again and on top of it, some are dealing with grief, mental health issues and anxiety. There is nothing easy about this and we must work together to help our students work through these challenges. It is equally important that we, as a school community, build and reinforce a culture of high expectations, respect, and accountability. Parents, guardians, and caregivers play a crucial role in making this happen.

Schenectady High School has announced a school wide "reset" in which the school is going back to basics to connect, educate and provide understanding around expectations and consequences of behaviors.



Students at Keane Elementary School have a new favorite staff member this year. His name is Zumi and he is a 2-year-old facility dog from Canine Companions for Independence. Zumi works with school counselor, Ameera Crellin, a Licensed Master Social Worker, who has been working for our district for 14 years and completed an intensive training program to work with Zumi. *More photos on page 5.*



[Video message](#) outlining expectations and changes at Schenectady High School.



Continued



www.schenectady.k12.ny.us
518-370-8100

The high school leaders have communicated the plan with parents and have held student assemblies throughout the week to engage students and talk about upcoming changes and expectations. Chris Chank, executive principal, and Dennis Green, acting high school principal, sent a [letter to high school families](#) outlining the expectations, changes that will take place, the purpose and how behavior will be monitored. This information was also shared through [a short video message](#).

Among the changes being implemented next week at the high school is a shift to a block schedule. A student's teachers and courses will not be changing but they will only have four classes a day, each 90 minutes long. This shift will reduce the number of transitions and times in the school hallways, where the disruptions often occur.

We will also be tightly implementing the "closed campus" policy which means only those with senior privileges approved by the administration will be allowed to leave the campus for lunch.

Our work with students also includes mediation strategies and restorative circles for conflict resolution, problem-solving and relationship-building. Our goal is always to identify an issue and to provide resources and emotional support before an issue escalates to a serious situation.

We will continue our work through a lens of equity and trauma-sensitivity but it is important for students and parents to know that there are consequences for inappropriate behavior. These are clearly outlined in our [Code of Conduct](#).

While the fights and disruptions are often highlights in the news, most of our student body is coming to school ready to learn, doing the right thing every day and are pushing their classmates to do better. They are disheartened when they hear about a fight or see a media report that casts a dark cloud over their school because of a small portion of our population. Our students deserve to hear about the positive accomplishments of their classmates, good news of the day, and feel proud about where they go to school.

Families play an important role in shaping the culture and climate of, not just our high school, but each of our schools. As we reset and re-engage our school community, please partner with us by communicating and talking about expectations for your child at school. We will keep you posted as we move forward.

Thank You

Thank you to our parents for your continued trust in us during the pandemic. We remain grateful for your patience and swift response when things need to change quickly due to the many variables impacting school right now.

This morning, Mont Pleasant Middle School called a half day dismissal due to the number of staff members who called out. School administrators did the best they could but were not able to secure enough substitutes or coverage for a full day of instruction. It's worth noting that all schools in the region face similar issues and pull from the same teacher substitute pool. While it's the first time this year that one of our schools was forced to do this, I'm confident it won't be the last. There is no indication that today's absences are COVID-related.

Thank you Mont Pleasant families, for your patience and quick response to our notification. This morning was a perfect example why we need to stay connected and prepared to act when unexpected issues come up. We are planning for a regular full day at Mont Pleasant on Monday.

Finally, we continue to honor and celebrate our principals this month. Today, join me in celebrating and thanking Christina Howard (Pleasant Valley), Job Thomas (Lincoln), John Perreault (Woodlawn) and our newest principal Tanya Delamater (Van Corlaer). See page four for more. Thank you for all that you do.

Anibal Soler, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools



[Mr. Chank and Mr. Green meet with students to discuss changes.](#)



COVID-19 UPDATE

Here is the report on COVID-19 positive cases for the period October 8 through October 15 (9 a.m.)

Total of 53 cases

47 students and 6 Staff members as follows:

- Central Park: 1
- Hamilton: 2
- Howe: 4
- Keane: 2
- Lincoln: 1
- Mont Pleasant: 6
- Oneida: 1
- Schenectady High School: 28
- SCLA: 1
- Van Corlaer: 4
- Yates: 3

Approximate Percentage of School Population COVID-19 Positive this week:

- Students: . 50%
- Staff: . 38%
- Percentage of Students and Staff: .48%

IMPORTANT REMINDER

If you are experiencing any symptoms of illness or are waiting for COVID-19 test results, do not come to school or work. You should instead do the following immediately:

STAFF MEMBERS

CONTACT

Stay home, contact your supervisor and email Lindsay Baroody at Lindsay.Baroody@neric.org or call 518-312-8848

STUDENTS

Parents please keep your child home and contact your school nurse.

If your child is exposed to a person who tested positive, you will receive a phone call immediately.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Schenectady County offers vaccinations at several locations on a variety of days and times. No appointment needed. Just walk-in. The schedule is posted [here](#).

[New York State School COVID Report Card](#)



Mont Pleasant Middle School invites you to...
Parents' University!

At our Parents' University, we come together to collectively find solutions to challenges many parents are facing in the Schenectady City School District.
At this upcoming Parents' University meeting, we will identify Barriers, Challenges, and New Opportunities such as:

- Introduction to Parents' University - Anna Robinson
- Infinite Campus - Miriam Rendon / Kresia Bustillo
- Let's Talk - Anna Robinson
- Conflict Resolution - Monique Wade
- Guest Speakers: Dr. Carlos M. Cotto, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
- Questions and Answers

We need to help our children win!

As Parents working together we can all make the difference

Date: 10/26/2021
1:00pm at The Bridge Church, 751 Crane Street (Refreshments served)
and
6:00pm virtually at [www.mpsd.org](#) or by phone at
(518) 655-4766 (PIN - 536 631 189 7)

Contact: Anna Robinson, Parent Engagement Liaison, (518) 265-0986

Mont Pleasant Middle School

1121 Forest Rd.
Schenectady, NY 12309
Phone: 518-370-8180
Principal: Nicole Biette



[CLICK TO OPEN](#)

FINANCIAL AID NIGHT

If you missed Financial Aid Night at the high school, [click here](#).

COVID-19 VACCINES AVAILABLE AT SHS ON OCT. 19

Schenectady County is holding a vaccination clinic on Tuesday, October 19 at Schenectady High School. [SIGN UP HERE](#). There is no cost. Parent or guardian consent is required by filling out the [consent form](#), accompanying the minor to the appointment or being available by phone at the time of the appointment. Second doses will be scheduled for Tuesday, November 9 also at SHS.

We require that winter and spring student-athletes be fully vaccinated by November 14.

**WINTER
SPORTS
REGISTRATION**

Winter sports registration is now open. [Log In to FamilyID](#) and select your team from the menu. Remember all student-athletes must be vaccinated by November 14 to participate.

LINCOLN ELEMENTARY

Meet the Principal

Job Thomas

Lincoln Lion 🦁

What do you love most about your job?



"I love being able to celebrate the achievements of our students"

PROFILE

- 🕒 4th year as principal of Lincoln
- 🎓 PhD in Educational Psychology from U Albany



WOODLAWN ELEMENTARY

Meet the Principal

John Perreault

Woodlawn Wildcats 🐾

What do you love most about your job?



"Working with the staff at Woodlawn to support our students' personal growth and success."

PROFILE

- 🕒 5th year in the district
- 🍎 Former high school and middle school administrator
- 🕒 5th year as Woodlawn principal



ATTENDANCE

OCTOBER 15
OVERALL AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:	81.74%
MIDDLE SCHOOL:	82.66%
HIGH SCHOOL:	76.68%

STAFF NOTES

NOMINATIONS FOR TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Nominations are currently being accepted for the 2022 SCSD Teacher of the year. [Click here](#) for more. Nominations are due by November 5, 2021.

CPR/AED TRAINING

Tuesday, October 19
6:15 – 8:15 p.m.
SHS Commons

Registration is required. Please call Anne Osborne at 518-881-2044 Ext. 44801 or email osbornea@schenectady.k12.ny.us to register.

Be sure to include the school in which you work. Only 20 participants per class.

CPR/AED Certification is required for all staff who work in after-school and summer programs.

FARM TO SCHOOL

If your school is doing any work around farm to school, school gardens or related, please contact Elaine Reynolds. We are looking to align efforts across the district.

THANK YOU TO OUR PRINCIPALS

PLEASANT VALLEY ELEMENTARY

Meet the Principal

Christina Howard

Pleasant Valley Penguin 🐧

What do you love most about your job?



"The students, staff, and families that I work with are what I love most about my job."

PROFILE

- 🕒 3rd year as principal of Pleasant Valley
- 🕒 7th year in district
- 🍎 Previously Instructional Supervisor at Van Corlaer
- 🇸🇪 Lived in Sweden and speaks Swedish



VAN CORLAER ELEMENTARY

Meet the Principal

Tanya Delamater

Van Corlaer Tigers 🐯

What do you love most about your job?



"I love the opportunities to empower students and staff for continued growth. Our community connection is dear to my heart."

PROFILE

- 🕒 2nd year in the district
- 🍎 Spent 14 years as a special education teacher
- 🏈 Loves football at recess
- 🗓️ First month as Van Corlaer principal



FOOD SERVICE



Upcoming Event

Friday, October 22
4-5 p.m.

Warm Welcoming Drive-Up
Schenectady High School
Fine Arts Wing

We will be dressed up in our scariest costumes and handing out warm apple cider, donuts and raffling off tickets to Double M Haunted Hayrides. Come in your Halloween attire.

BOOK FAIR

Mont Pleasant Middle School
Book Fair
October 18 – 31
[Go here to shop](#)

SECOND STEP

[Click here](#) to read a letter to K-5 Families about the Second Step Program and Bullying Prevention Month.



Phishing may be “one of the oldest tricks in the book,” but it is still incredibly effective. And although it may be hard to spot when you may be in the midst of a phishing attempt, by exercising caution and deploying these few fundamentals, individuals and organizations more broadly can drastically mitigate the chances of falling victim to a phishing attack.

Verify the Source

Phishing content comes in a variety of ways, however, many phishes will try to impersonate someone you may already know -- such as a colleague, service provider or friend -- as a way to trick you into believing their malicious content is actually trustworthy. Don't fall for it. If you sense any red flags that something may be out of place or unusual, reach out directly to the individual to confirm whether the content is authentic and safe. If not, break-off communication immediately and flag the incident through the proper channels.

Be Aware of Vishing and Other Phishing Offshoots

As more digital natives have come online and greater awareness has been spread about phishing, bad actors have begun to diversify their phishing efforts beyond traditional email. For example, voice phishing -- or vishing -- has become a primary alternative for bad actors looking to gain sensitive information from unsuspecting individuals. Similar to conventional phishing, vishing is typically executed by individuals posing as a legitimate organization -- such as a healthcare provider or insurer -- and asking for sensitive information. Simply put, it is imperative that individuals be wary of any sort of communication that asks for personal information whether it be via email, phone or chat -- especially if the communication is unexpected. If anything seems suspicious, again, break-off the interaction immediately and contact the company directly to confirm the veracity of the communications.



Dr. Mason and members of our transportation team promoting anti-bullying on the school bus.

Left: Ameera Crellin, licensed master social worker and Zumi



Will your family need food for Thanksgiving Dinner? [Click here](#) for information and how you can sign up.

Are you able to donate and help others? [Click here](#) to learn how you can help.

#SchenectadyRising

