

Everybody counts.

Everybody learns. www.schenectady.k12.ny.us

Dear Schenectady Community.

I am proud and excited to be your new Superintendent of Schools. First, I want to thank the Schenectady Board of Education for their confidence in me. I recognize the long journey they have endured in finding the right leader for Schenectady. I know the process was at times unpredictable but I believe now it is time for ALL of us to move forward together, as one district focused, with one focus – student success.

I consider it a true privilege and honor to be selected as your next Superintendent. I come to Schenectady as a 21-year New York educator with both educational and leadership experiences in Rochester, Buffalo and most recently Superintendent of Schools in Batavia, NY. Throughout my professional journey, I have been a teacher, instructional technology specialist, academy director, principal at both the elementary and secondary levels, and an associate superintendent.

Personally, I am a father of four amazing kids and husband to a supportive and loving wife. I am also extremely proud of my Latino culture and heritage. I grew up in Rochester, New York to a loving mother and wonderful grandparents who all helped raise me. However, like many children who grow up in first generation urban

environments, if it wasn't for loving and caring educators, coaches, and mentors, I would never have taken the path that leads me here today. I look forward to the community getting to know me and to learning more about all of you and the City of Schenectady.

After only a few weeks in Schenectady, I know there is much to celebrate and build upon within the district. I know of the resilience and passion of Schenectady teachers, staff and administration who worked through a global pandemic to support the children of Schenectady. I know that the growing financial impact on the city of Schenectady caused by COVID-19 at times seems unsolvable. I am aware that the national polarized landscape on the work around equity, inclusivity and diversity but am also committed to ensuring that all students and members of our district have a voice and feel represented in our curriculum, decision making and path forward.

I also know there is a significant amount of work ahead in Schenectady. It is my goal to unite our district and to build upon our current successes, but to also address the areas that need to be improved upon to move our district forward. Under my leadership, I want our district to be known for providing students high quality educational experiences, boundless opportunities, dynamic and equitable supports while also being fiscally sound and responsible.

As we come out of this pandemic and return to more "normal" activities, I look forward to working with key stakeholders. As a school district, we will engage our community and have the necessary conversations about what our children need with our students, our staff, our educational leaders, our business owners, and our elected officials. As we challenge ourselves to re-imagine the critical work around our students and in our schools, I will need you to help me make Schenectady the finest district in the Capital Region. I unequivocally believe that collectively, and by working together, we will be able to make a difference in the lives of all children.

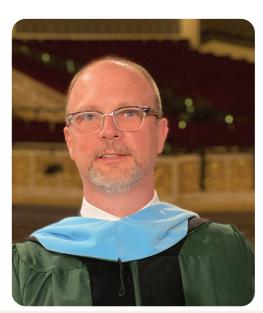
Yours in service,

Anibal Soler, Jr.

- » Anibal Soler Jr. was announced as the new Superintendent of Sthe chenectady City School District at a press conference on Wednesday, July 7, 2021.
- » If you would like to sign up to receive Superintendent Soler's weekly brief, visit our website. Under community, select "Sign up for eNews."







» Thank you to Dr. Aaron Bochniak for his leadership and empathy over the last year as Interim Superintendent. The 2020-2021 school brought many challenges and unknowns and Dr. Bochniak worked diligently to provide the safest and best education possible. The students, staff, and teachers of the Schenectady City School District wish you the best in your new position.

Supporting Students During COVID-19

439,743
MEAL KITS
distributed during the 2020-21 school year.

STRATEGIC PLAN: FOUR PILLARS*





PARTNERSHIPS





*Stories about work that directly supports the pillars of our Strategic Plan will be identified by one or more of these icons.

A Year Like No Other...

The 2020-2021 school year, from summer planning through high school graduation day, was like no other year. District staff worked tirelessly the weeks before school opened to prepare for both virtual and in-person instruction. Every aspect of reopening was different including scheduling and lesson planing, setting up classrooms for both in-person and virtual learning, cleaning and sanitizing learning spaces, socially distancing desks and seating, testing ventilation, special spacing and seating charts for buses, meal kit preparation and distribution, daily health attestation for staff and students and purchasing and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE). All was part of a larger reopening plan to provide healthy and safe environments for staff and students.

Half of the elementary schools were temporarily closed for the year and combined with other school sites as approximately half of the families with students in K-6 opted for all virtual instruction. The others attended a hybrid schedule (attending in-person in the morning and virtually in the afternoon). All students in grades 7-12 attended school fully virtual.

As the school year moved along, additional in-person opportunities were created at the elementary level. While students in grades 7-12 continued to attend virtually, opportunities were created for students to attend virtual classes from a location on campus, called a learning pod.

As the COVID-19 infection rate improved, opportunities for sports, other activities and in-person gatherings were allowed with appropriate protocols such as masking and social distancing. While the originally scheduled high school indoor prom was cancelled, the high school was able to hold an outdoor event. The year concluded with two outdoor graduation ceremonies with family and friends of students in attendance.

About us and Our schools

The Schenectady City School District serves nearly 10,000 students in grades pre-k through 12, making it one of the largest school districts in the Capital Region.

Our incredibly diverse population of students speak more than 30 different languages. Our schools, filled with culture and richness, foster awareness and acceptance. Students not only learn to value and respect people of all races, backgrounds and cultures, they appreciate the differences and are prepared to be citizens in a multicultural world.

The district is comprised of 11 elementary schools (pre-k through fifth grade), three middle schools (grades 6-8), one high school with a satellite campus (grades 9-12) and an adult education center. The neighborhood school that a student attends is based on residence.



Class of 2021 Graduation

"The highlight of my four years at Schenectady High School was deciding to attend and commit to a high school that chose me. I will miss nothing more than the diversity that came from my friends, classmates and peers. We are not a typical high school and I couldn't see myself as proud of my time here if we were."

Elizabeth Tchako-Tchuambe President, Class of 2021



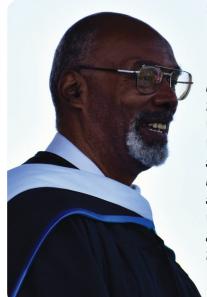
» Makaila Adair Class of 2021 Co-Valedictorian

"It was important to be able to graduate together. We've been separated for over a year and this is our moment to celebrate. Graduation is a milestone that marks the end of our high school experience and the beginning of something new for all of us. I would like to remind my classmates that your value as a person does not come from what you have accomplished in high school. I've learned that value comes from who you are as a person, how you treat others, and most importantly, how you





treat yourself."



» Aaron MairClass of 2021 GraduationKeynote Speaker

"Today is your glory. Rising up, being resilient and taking your diplomas. I want to thank you and I wish upon you continued success, but equally as important, continued struggle. Because you're woke, you're paying attention and you're taking action."











Smart Transfer

Graduates

Students First to Graduate From SUNY Schenectady Program

Seven Schenectady High School students crossed the stage as members of SUNY Schenectady's Class of 2021 a month before graduating from high school.

This group of high school students is the first class to graduate from college as part of the Schenectady Smart Transfer Early College (ECHS) Program.

The ECHS Program is a partnership between SUNY Schenectady, the University of Albany, SUNY Delhi, and the Schenectady City School District. Enrolled students can earn 60 college credits or an associate's degree by the time they finish high school. They then have the opportunity to transfer to a partner school, University of Albany or SUNY Delhi, or transfer credits to a number of post-secondary schools.

The journey for these seven Schenectady High School students began when they started taking courses at the college during the summer of 2018 as sophomores in high school. Then, in fall 2019 they began taking courses full-time at SUNY Schenectady. Upon completion of college coursework this year, the students earned their associate degrees.



» Congratulations to: Preetish Arjune, Science, Ethan Depoo, Criminal Justice, Devishti Jainarain, Criminal Justice, Ram Madani, Science, Brady Petrie, Criminal Justice, Gunesh Sahaman, Math/Science, and Halle Fletcher.



"One of the things that truly had an impact on me in high school was having a teacher that I identify with. I cannot stress enough the importance of feeling represented in your school. It is important that we see ourselves in the staff, the teachers, the guidance counselors and the principals." — Halle Fletcher, Class of 2021 Co-Valedictorian, Schenectady Smart Transfer Program.

CLASS OF 2021

561 GRADUATES

77% GRADUATION RATE

CLASS OF 2021

Top 10 Students

- 1. Co-Valedictorian Makaila Adair
- 2. Co-Valedictorian Halle Fletcher
- 3. Grace Lindenfelser
- 4. Emily Fredericks
- 5. Caroline Canty
- 6. Josefina Casper
- 7. Hemnarine Basdeo
- 8. Ahmed Al Zaydan
- 9. Abdullah Sanaullah
- 10. Tabatha Adair



A national award-winning district **Schenectady City School District**



"Culturally responsive education is a teaching and learning experience where we all matter, we all are valued, and our differences are seen as assets and not deficits. More importantly, it is a mindset that leads to equitable outcomes for all learners across the world," — Patrick Jean-Pierre, Director of Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity

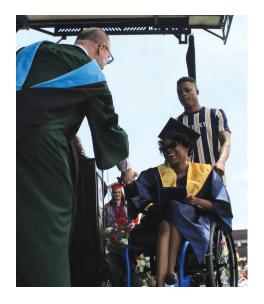
THE ADVOCATE

A Monthly Newsletter From the Office for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

To kickoff the new year, the Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion started publishing a monthly newsletter highlighting the work that our teachers and staff are doing in our schools.

All district employees receive the newsletter packed with information about culturally-responsive education. Shout-outs are often given to faculty and staff who are leading difficult conversations and embracing the work of anti-racist educators.

The newsletter also has links to the district's culturally-responsive education calendar, that aims to celebrate various heritage and history months in the classroom. "THE ADVOCATE" also invites staff members to join one of the district's many Affinity groups, like LGBTQ, LatinX, and Guyanese Affinity groups.



Use an Anti-Racist and Equitable mindset when creating norms in your classroom. Reflect on who benefits from this norm and who is affected by it?

— Anti-Racist Challenge featured in THE ADVOCATE



Anti-Racist Book Week

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School of Excellence Celebrates Diverse Titles for Young Readers

Around the district, many classrooms had unique ways of celebrating Black History Month, but one staff member at King Elementary went the extra mile and planned an entire week celebrating diverse titles.

Anti-Racist Book Week was started in 2020 by Victor Rose, a social worker at Dr. MLK Elementary, who started the celebration in an effort to celebrate and lift up the voices and experiences of people of color and other underrepresented groups.







the student's role in equity and inclusivity.

Tough conversations are happening in schools all around the Schenectady City School District and students at Oneida Middle School are taking the lead.

The student group "Oneida Students for Anti-Racism" (OSAR) was started in January of 2021 with help from teacher, Yacouba Sangare. OSAR immediately hit the ground running with meetings, a student newsletter, a social media presence, and a goal to create safe spaces where all can learn and grow without fear of punishment or embarrassment.

The students speak frankly about the need for students of all races to understand racism and inequity from an early age.

"OSAR is a place to speak your truth and feel comfortable knowing you won't be judged for feeling or believing something different than others," said Liza, a member of OSAR.

In its short existence, OSAR has already left its mark on Oneida Middle School, literally. As the school year was winding down, OSAR teamed up with Mrs. Manning, Oneida's art teacher, to create a colorful mural celebrating the message the club stands for, as well as the diversity that makes our school district special.







OSAR Students Live by Four Agreements

- Stay Engaged
- Speak Your Truth
- Expect to Experience Discomfort
- Expect & Accept Lack of Closure



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The 2020-21 School Year presented challenges unlike any other year. From staffing cuts and fiscal unknowns, to remote learning and closing the digital divide. To then bringing students back to our learning pods safely, and finally concluding the year with two Class of 2021 graduation ceremonies held outdoors at Schenectady High School for the first time in 29 years.

 All district administrators went through a hybrid model development day in late August. Socially distanced classroom plans were created School districts were advised that aid payments could be withheld up to 20%. When portions of payments to the district were withheld, the district took immediate action to lay off more than 400 employees before the start of the school year Students at Oneida Middle School mask up and social distance as they await entering on the first day of the 2021-21 academic school year





SUMMER

PLANNING REOPENING

- The school year began with Schenectady High School fully virtual and the pre-k program put on pause, while K-6 students were given the option of hybrid or fully virtual learning
- Each school created a daily routine to check temperatures and pre-screen students and staff before they entered the buildings



FALL

SPORTS RETURN

- Low-risk fall sports were allowed to start practicing in late September for a season that began in October
- SCSD begins increasing elementary in-person class sizes after the first marking period, allowing more students to attend in-person learning
- The district launches the student technology help desk in November.
 More than 2,200 service tickets were processed through the student help desk in 2020-21



Follow Schenectady City School District



Check us out:

@SCSchools



Instagram account: schenectadycityschooldist



YouTube Channel: Schenectady City School District

*Stories with this icon can be found on our YoutTube chanel.

Follow the district on social media for videos and photos from inside the classroom and livestreamed special events.



 SHS boys and girls varsity basketball teams held senior night in early March, after the season was pushed back

- Our learning pods brought hundreds of students back to our buildings for the first time in nearly a year when they opened in early March
- Class of 2021 graduation was held as two ceremonies outside at Larry Mulvaney Stadium to abide by health department guidelines









WINTER

HYBRID LEARNING PAUSED

- As winter break approached, the district was forced to go fully remote due to staffing shortages caused by quarantines and positive COVID tests.
 The district welcomed hybrid students back on January 11
- Low-risk winter sports competed December through February

SPRING

LEARNING PODS OPEN

- More students are welcomed back to in-person learning at all grade levels.
- The district launches virtual tutoring on nights and weekends, as well as virtual counseling services
- Section II football season begins
- The 2021-2022 school budget is passed by voters, adding 40 teachers and extending the school day for 8th graders

JUNE

PROM AND GRADUATION

- SHS prom took place in early June, outside and socially distanced on the athletic field. Food and entertainment were both provided by SHS alumni
- Our graduation ceremony is livestreamed to more than 2,000 families

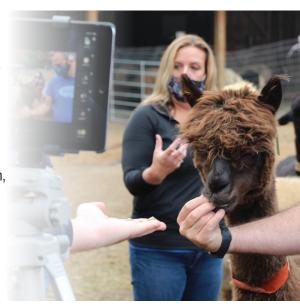
Virtual Field Trips

Schenectady High School Biology Teachers Bring New Meaning to Distance Learning.

Teaching and learning looked very different in 2020-2021. From planning lessons for virtual classes to teaching students who were learning from their kitchen tables or bedrooms, teachers were challenged to find new strategies to engage their students. The creative 9th grade biology team at Schenectady High School met the challenge head on when they embraced the opportunity and took virtual learning to a new level.

"When we found out we were going all remote for the start of the year we took it as an opportunity to give students a break from their repetitive virtual day, and show them something they can't see within the four walls of their homes," said Leigh Feguer, a Schenectady High School biology teacher.

A trip to Woodland Meadow Farm in Wilton, NY, found students learning all about how alpacas and llamas are being studied for their natural immunity to coronaviruses.









District Teacher of the Year

» The SHS "Bio9 Crew" says their "PHENomenal Friday" Trips provided students with a needed brain break during the 2020-21 school year.



Richard DeCarr a 6th grade English
Language Arts/Social Studies teacher at
Oneida Middle School, was named the
Schenectady City School District 2021
Teacher of the Year. Interim Superintendent
Aaron Bochniak, made the surprise
announcement during DeCarr's online class
in early January.

"I am extremely proud to be recognizing Mr. DeCarr today," said Bochniak. "I have seen, firsthand his commitment, innovation and

creativity, care and kindness, and most importantly, the impact that he has on his students."

DeCarr, who has been an educator in Schenectady since 2008, was nominated for the honor by Tony Farina, principal of Oneida Middle School. Farina noted that DeCarr is a leader at both the building and district level. He has been integral in the district's transition to remote learning in response to the pandemic, is a leader on the district's technology committee, and is the 6th grade-level leader.

National Board

Certification

SCSD features 75
National Board
Certified teachers.
That is the most in
any district across
the state, with the

exception of New York City. Three SCSD teachers earned their certification in 2020. National Board Certification is considered the gold standard in education.



2020 SCSD NBCT

- » Jennifer Clift
- » Richard DeCarr
- » Michael Sheridan

A **School Bus** Gets An Upgrade

Donated bus transformed into library on wheels. The Bookmobile is our district's mobile library. After years of operating out of the cars of volunteers, a vision was realized when a Northland Transportation bus was donated to the district, wrapped in student art and fitted



with bookshelves and reading benches.

The Bookmobile, helmed by the district's team of library media specialists, aims to build excitement around reading and introduce new books from diverse authors and with diverse characters to our young readers.



Meet the artist.

The Bookmobile carries the mark of student art as it travels through Schenectady. The bus was wrapped by AJ Sign Co., in a large print of digital art produced by Schenectady High School junior Alyssa Gangaram.

The student says her artwork depicts the faces she and other students see every day in school. "I thought it would be great to include the diversity of the community and the inclusivity of books," she said.

Many other students helped renovate the bus over the past two years by designing and renovating the interior of the Bookmobile.



The **Bookmobile** On Tour

The #SchenectadyReads initiative is designed to promote, provide access to, and celebrate reading! The team was out on Tuesdays and Thursdays in July and August bringing culturally relevant and high interest titles that are enagaing to young learners.



"Providing books
where students can
see themselves in
the characters is the
primary goal of the
#SchenectadyReads
Book Mobile," said
Carmella Parente, the
District Director of
Educational Equity and
Instructional Support.



YouTube Channel: Schenectady City School District

Check us out on Youtube or search #SchenectadyReads on social media platforms to see more from the Bookmobile.



Bookmobile 2020

863 TITLES

79%

of titles published since 2018



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Schenectady City School District

Schenectady

2020-21 Blue Roses Theatre Company virtual performance:

The Blue Roses Theatre Company didn't let the pandemic stop them from putting together their annual original production.

"After Before: An Unforgettable Year in Schenectady," is an original show written by Isaiah Woods, Ashley Zeissler, and Frederick Durocher, that chronicles life since the March 2020 shutdown. The students spent several weeks gathering stories through interviews, articles, and other sources. The stories were compiled into a play that illustrates the pain and triumphs experienced by people in and around our community during the pandemic.

Boynton Named Administrator of the Year

Retiring after 32 years

Schenectady City School District Director of Physical Education, Health, and Athletics, Steve Boynton, was named Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association Administrator of the Year for 2021, his final year as Athletic Director.

Before taking over as the district's Director of Physical Education, Health & Athletics, Boynton was a physical education teacher and principal. He also coached modified basketball and junior varsity lacrosse at Schenectady, and lent his coaching knowledge to the JV and varsity football teams.



Step To Vote
Thirty-three Schenectady High
School students spent the fall
STEPPING UP to get out the
vote! The "STEP TO VOTE"
video campaign, combining a

step routine created by Maxine Lyle of Soul Steps from SPAC's Online Learning Library with an inspiring message to encourage young, eligible voters to make their voices heard. » Twenty-two students were involved in filming the show. At the beginning of the filming process, the students took part in an acting workshop with a professional actor. They set up their own equipment and filmed their parts in the show themselves from their homes.



YouTube Channel: Schenectady City School District

Watch "STEP TO VOTE" on our YouTube Channel

Updated Track and Field

at Schenectady High School

» Schenectady High School's outdoor athletic facility received a face-lift, which included new turf on the Larry Mulvaney Field and a resurfacing of the track that surrounds it. Work on the facility began the first week of the summer and concluded in the middle of August. The turf replaced a ten-year turf surface that was installed prior to the 2009-10 school year. The new turf is expected to last 15-20 years.





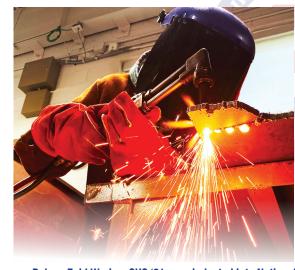
Career & Tech Education

Student sparks learning passion in welding program

Siddiq Lawang may only be 19, but he has been welding since he was a young child. In fact, one of his first paying jobs was a truck repairer and welder at the age of 10.

"I was a welder as a kid. We would weld and repair trucks. I can remember doing it when I didn't even have shoes," said the Schenectady High School senior who immigrated about five years ago with his sister to the United States from Afghanistan. Lawang said that while he knew the basics of welding, it was very different in his home country. He is glad to have a bright future in the industry.

"I love everything about this class," the Schenectady teen said. "I want to graduate and start work as a welder. I really like it."



» Below: Enid Waring, SHS '21, was inducted into National Technical Honor Society for excellence at Career & Tech and Schenectady High Schools.



"I prefer hands-on learning. I don't like to sit at a desk or a computer ... I grew up visiting my grandfather's work sites and it just seems right to me."
—Enid Waring, SHS 2021, BOCES Construction Trades





Professional Development

SATURDAYS FOR SCHENECTADY

Professional development created and taught by Schenectady teachers, to Schenectady teachers. Sessions offered during this Saturday March, 6 conference included, "Techquity: Creating Learning Environments For Sustainability, Equity, and Cross-Cultural Connections" and "How to Make Your Virtual Space More Culturally Responsive." More than 250 SCSD faculty and staff attended this event in March.

Culturally Responsive Saturday Summit

In an effort to work towards our antiracist mission: "to identify, describe, and dismantle inequitable systems, and then replace with antiracist, equity-based culturally responsive systems that allow all stakeholders to thrive," staff and faculty participated in this professional development opportunity on Memorial Day Weekend.

TECH BYTE TUESDAY

Each week a "Tech Byte Tuesday" was produced by the SCSD Ed Tech Committee. A quick video and guide about one small tip to help everyone navigate their digital lives during distance learning. Tips were helpful to teachers and students. All of the school year's tech tips are available at www.schenectadylearns.com.



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Summer Enrichment Program

SEP WAS HELD VIRTUALLY IN 2020.

The Summer Enrichment Program is designed to help prevent summer slide, specifically around literacy. Students engage in project-based learning experiences that build natural curiosity, genuine inquiry and confidence.

The program is enhanced through partnerships with several community-based organizations that provide opportunities for real life, hands-on activities and field trips, and swim lessons.

The program blends computer-based math and literacy with fun activities. Students attend a mix of academic classes,

social-emotional lessons, and work on relationship building skills.

District data found that 60% of students attending SEP saw an increase in their reading achievement while enrolled. The program is designed to help combat summer slide, where students lose academic gains made during the previous school year.



TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

7,000+Devices

8,103

Technology service requests



During the 2020-21 school year, the Schenectady City School District Education Fund received a donation of \$32,000 from Hannaford Supermarkets designed to increase access to education and close digital equity gaps for Schenectady students learning from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The grant was used to secure laptops, headphones, books and underwrite internet access for students in the Schenectady City School District.



2020-21 Budget Summary

\$204,653,930 General Fund Budget

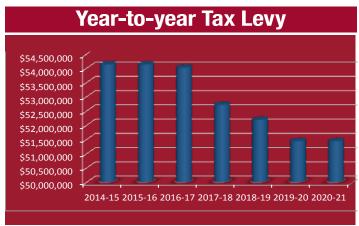
1.1%
Change from Previous

0%Change to Tax Levy



2020-21 Tax Levy

Despite a challenging fiscal year, the Schenectady City School District did not increase the tax levy for 2020-2021. The levy remained at its lowest level since the 2008-2009 school year.







Due to the impact of COVID-19 on the state budget, school aid was dramatically impacted, making 2020-2021 Budget development extremely challenging. In addition to not receiving an increase in Foundation Aid, the district was advised that aid could be withheld during the school year. Just prior to the start of school, when portions of certain aid payments made to the district were withheld, the district took swift action to reduce the spending plan by 20%. This led to layoffs of more than 400 employees. It was in early spring, when the district was assured that no further withholding would be imposed and that payments would be made whole, that the impacted employees would be recalled to work.

A full explanation of the 2021-2022 school budget is available on our website at **www.schenectady.k12ny.us**

LET'S TALK!

The Schenectady City School District is dedicated to fostering positive relationships, building trust and effectively communicating and engaging with our parents, staff, students and community members. In order to do this, we always maintain an open line of communication and hear what you have to say about important topics and current initiatives.

We are listening.

Let's Talk! provides you with an opportunity to share what's on your mind anytime, from anywhere. We are here to listen 24/7 and will respond to your questions, comments and concerns. There is a team behind each specific topic ready to assist you.



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Schenectady



Schenectady City School District

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www.schenectady.k12.ny.us

2020-21 Board of Education

- » John Foley, President
- » Cathy Lewis, Vice President
- » Andrew Chestnut
- » Nohelani Etienne
- » Princella Learry

» Bernice Rivera

» Ann Reilly

Students at Zoller learned all about farming, growing food, and gathering maple sap thanks to a NYSED Farm to School grant.

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ECRWSS



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Service. Aug. 2021

» Karen Corona, Editor » Justin Cortese, Editor

