



SUPERINTENDENT'S *Brief*



SUPERINTENDENT ANIBAL SOLER, JR.

WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 18 2022 | VOLUME 1 ISSUE NO. 30

Good afternoon and happy Friday,

I'm sure you are ready and excited to get to your well-deserved winter break. If you are like me, you are looking forward to some rest and relaxation, time with family and hopefully, some fun.

This was an exciting week. Tuesday morning, we had a great event in which Mayor McCarthy, members of city council and the community, New York State's Assistant Commissioner of Education, board members, faculty, and staff from our schools, and more than 40 students came together to announce our commitment to the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative along with a call to action to the greater community. The focus is on building a community in which everyone plays role in the success of our students and in the work to close the opportunity gap for our students of color. As part of the presentation, Schenectady High School Seniors Nate Dale and Trey Tillman spoke about the MBK program and how it has impacted them over the last four years. They spoke from their hearts and were what many described as, "inspirational." As a district, we are taking steps to become an official "MBK Community" by August and are calling on representatives from all corners of our community to join us in these efforts. We will be holding a local action summit series slated for March 3, March 8, and March 15. We will be sharing more information soon. Thank you to Carlos Cotto and Brian Ledbetter for their hard work and commitment to our students and work to advance and celebrate this initiative. Watch the [full presentation](#) that took place Tuesday. We also have an abbreviated video compilation of the speakers [here](#). Check out the new logo for MBK Schenectady which was unveiled at the event on page 3.

On Wednesday, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) released the graduation rates of schools across the state. We are pleased to share that Schenectady High School's 2020-2021 graduation rate of nearly 78% is up 2 percentage points from 2019-2020 and 16 percentage points from five years ago. This is great news. We are moving in the right direction. While students were exempt from taking Regents exams the last two years, they were still required to demonstrate proficiency in the courses to earn credits required for graduation. This is an example of how removing barriers serves to narrow the achievement gap and increase opportunity. I'm proud of our students, their families, faculty, and staff who all worked hard to ensure that our students graduate, even during the most challenging of times. It is also encouraging that New York State is reviewing and revising graduation requirements to ensure equity for every student. We know when barriers are removed, it can be done. It's extremely encouraging that both Education Commissioner Betty Rosa and Board of Regents Chancellor Lester W. Young Jr. are approaching this work through a lens of equity and inclusion. Their remarks in the media, in response to recent graduation rates, certainly reflect that.

I wish to extend a huge congratulations to SCSD teachers who earned National Board Certification in 2021. NBC is the most respected professional certification available in education. Obtaining the certification takes hard work and time. Candidates must complete specific components and demonstrate advanced knowledge, skill, and practice. Congratulations to:

- Rebecca Benjamin, literacy specialist at Paige and teacher in the district for 6 years
- Donya Clute, reading teacher at Zoller and teacher in the district for 24 years.
- Julie Neugebauer, math teacher at SCLA and teacher in the district for 21 years.
- Jessica Kohout, science teacher at Schenectady High School and teacher in the district for 10 years.

I also want to say thank you and recognize all the teachers in our district who achieved National Board Certification. Over the years, 77 Schenectady educators earned this certification. This is the second highest number in New York State, second only to New York City. We should be very proud of this. I am grateful to you for your dedication and commitment to advancing your practice as a teacher in Schenectady.

Continued on next page



MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

On Tuesday, leaders from our district, Schenectady local government, and the New York State Education Department visited Mont Pleasant Middle School to hear about our My Brother's Keeper Schenectady initiative. The full presentation is available on our [YouTube page](#), as well as a [compilation of the guest speakers](#).

CONGRATS TO SCSD 2021 NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS



REBECCA
BENJAMIN



DONYA
CLUTE



JULIE
NEUGEBAUER



JESSICA
KHOOUT

Continued from Page 1

Thank you to those of you who participated in our budget survey. It will remain open through February 25. I encourage everyone in our school community to take a few minutes to participate. Your input will guide our work to prioritize and develop a 2022-2023 Budget draft. Click here to take the survey [now](#).

Last but certainly not least ... I hope you have a fantastic winter recess. Please take time to unplug, relax and rejuvenate. Everyone has been working extremely hard and you are appreciated. Please remember self-care. Enjoy your week. I look forward to seeing everyone on February 28.

Anibal Soler, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools

WINTER RECESS NEXT WEEK

FEBRUARY 21 – 25

*DISTRICT OFFICES WILL BE
CLOSED FEBRUARY 21*

MARCH 11

HALF DAY

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
CONFERENCE DAY**

STUDENTS ATTEND A HALF DAY

Reminder: Please see the note on our COVID-19 update and resource page about testing students before return after break. We want to do everything possible to keep our schools healthy and safe following the recess.

A graphic featuring a laptop screen displaying a survey form with several checkboxes, some of which are marked with red checkmarks. Overlaid on the image is the text "We want your input" in large white letters on the left, and "BUDGET DEVELOPMENT SURVEY" in large white letters on the right. Below the "We want your input" text, it says "We are seeking input from the school community regarding what should be prioritized as we work to build the budget." In the top left corner is the Schenectady City Schools logo, which includes a stylized 'S' and the text "Schenectady City Schools Est. 1854".

We want your input

We are seeking input from the school community regarding what should be prioritized as we work to build the budget.

BUDGET DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

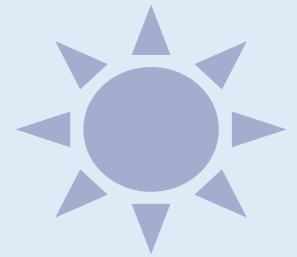
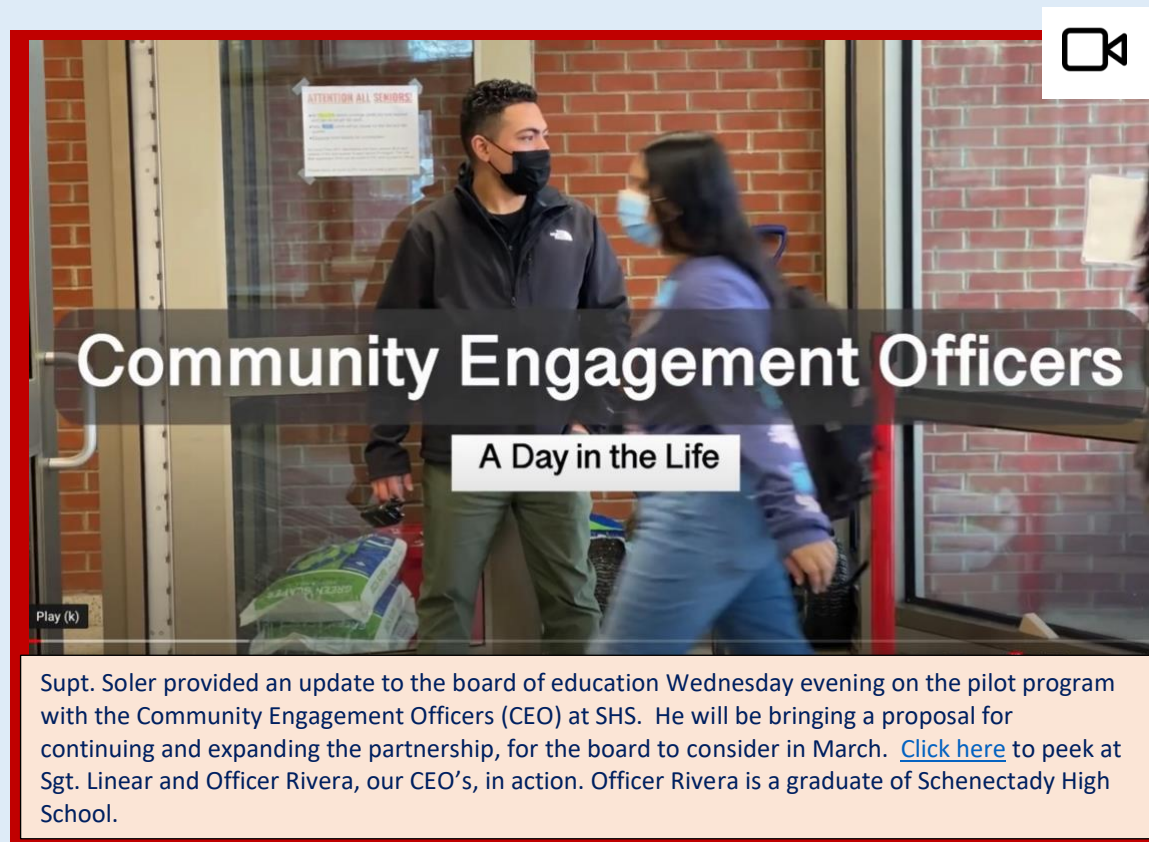


PHOTO OF THE WEEK



The 100th day of school was Wednesday, February 16, and we saw many great photos celebrating the day from across the district like this one from King Elementary.

A video thumbnail showing two men, Supt. Soler and Officer Rivera, standing in front of a brick building. Supt. Soler is wearing a black jacket and a black face mask, and Officer Rivera is wearing a blue jacket and a blue face mask. They are both looking towards the camera. The text "Community Engagement Officers" is overlaid in large white letters, and "A Day in the Life" is overlaid in a smaller white box below it. In the top right corner is a video camera icon, and in the bottom left corner is a "Play (k)" button.

Community Engagement Officers

A Day in the Life

Play (k)

Supt. Soler provided an update to the board of education Wednesday evening on the pilot program with the Community Engagement Officers (CEO) at SHS. He will be bringing a proposal for continuing and expanding the partnership, for the board to consider in March. [Click here](#) to peek at Sgt. Linear and Officer Rivera, our CEO's, in action. Officer Rivera is a graduate of Schenectady High School.



Alumni Profile

"My experience in Schenectady schools ultimately prepared me for success in college and later in my career as an environmental scientist. That foundation of challenge, hard work, and reward led me to open my own business, one that celebrated my roots and was a source of community pride."

Caroline Bardwell

**Owner, Schenectady Trading Company
SHS Class of 1997**



This week's featured alumna is Caroline Bardwell, a local business owner and 1997 graduate of Schenectady High School, who remembers the special connection she had with her teachers and classmates.

"I would say my fondest memories of high school were with the different friends that I made from classes, sports, chorus, etc., many of which remain my closest friends to this day. The Gazette wrote an article about me and my favorite teacher (Dr. Wolos, Honors English), who had a way of connecting with students on the same level. I also often reflect on my appreciation for the diversity of urban schools and I'm proud to have my kids enrolled in Schenectady schools."

Did you graduate from Schenectady Schools?

If you are a graduate of Schenectady Schools, we would love to feature you in an alumni profile. To share your information, [click here](#).

School community team photo taken at the MBK event held Tuesday.



Right: Our MBK Schenectady Logo



COVID-19 UPDATE

Here is the report on COVID-19 positive cases for the period February 11 – 18 (8 a.m.)

Total of 24 cases

8 Staff | 16 Students

- Central Park: 2
- Hamilton: 1
- Howe: 4
- Keane: 1
- MPMS: 2
- Oneida: 5
- Paige: 3
- Pleasant
- Schenectady High School: 5
- Van Corlaer: 1

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

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Schenectady County continues to offer free COVID-19 vaccinations at a variety of locations throughout the month. All PODS are open to walk-ins. **The January schedule is available [here](#).**

New York State [Vaccination Schedule](#)

VACCINATION RESOURCES

All you need to know about COVID-19 Vaccine and Children [English](#) [Spanish](#)

10 Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine Answered [Here](#)

COVID-19 RESOURCES

- [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)
- [New York State Department of Health](#)
- [Schenectady County Public Health](#)

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

To better streamline communication with Lindsay Baroody, please follow the new guidelines AND self-report using this [link](#) when you have:

- have tested positive
- have COVID symptoms and need to test
- have been directly exposed and need to quarantine

STUDENTS

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

COVID TESTING

TESTING BEFORE RETURNING AFTER WINTER RECESS

We sent COVID-19 test kits home with students this week. We are asking that you consider testing your children prior to their return to school as follows:

- Friday, February 25 (the Friday before break ends)
- Sunday, February 27 (26 hours later)

If your child tests positive or has any symptoms, please do not send them to school and be sure to follow the protocols for returning to school depending on vaccination status.

We do not recommend testing your child if they have had COVID over the past 90 days, since their test result could continue to appear positive.

FREE TEST KITS FROM COVIDTESTS.GOV

Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order 4 free at-home COVID-tests. Order them now [here](#).

FREE TESTING SITE

To make an appointment at the Schenectady County Public Health testing site located at Ellis McClellan Campus (600 McClellan St.), click [here](#).

Please continue to watch for COVID-19 news and updates



WELCOME TO SCHENECTADY

Congratulations! If you are new to the district, welcome to our team.

Instructional

Erin Conklin, Special Education, Paige
Shealene George, Elementary, Mont Pleasant

Teaching Assistants

Raywattie Kellawon, Pleasant Valley
Audrene Parnell, King

Nurse

Sheila Smith, Woodlawn

Management Confidential

Brette Bateman, Executive Secretary II
Natalie Cable, Manager of Data & Information

Operations & Maintenance

Isaiah Harris, Cleaner, Zoller
Nicole Pallotolo, Custodian, Hamilton
Roopnarine Persaud, Custodian, Paige
Moises Sanchez, Cleaner, Oneida
Scott VanAmburgh, Custodian, Keane

School Safety Officers

Sonya Holmes-Horne, Districtwide
Wayne Russell, Districtwide

Tutor

Nureet Carmel, WIEC

Paraprofessionals

Ariyana Cotto, King
Antonia Daigneault, Hamilton
Subhagni Etwaroo, Pleasant Valley
Charisse Hicks, Schenectady High School
Dion Jones Torres, Van Corlaer
Sarah McGrath, Pleasant Valley
Tatiana Ragbeer, Paige
Lynn West, Lincoln
Keishaun Wheelings, SCLA
Nicolas Williams, Keane
Anna Young, Schenectady High School

Lunch Monitors

Donna Longhi, Woodlawn
Alexander Magiera, Yates
Jeanette Melendez Paulino, Keane

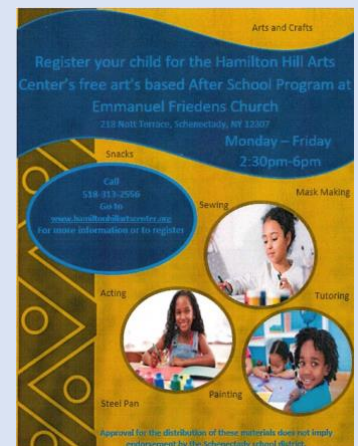
PARENT INFO

21st Century Program Update

Effective Monday February 28, the 21st Century Program at Mont Pleasant and Central Park will be **extended to 6:30 p.m.** each day

Hamilton Hill Arts Center After-School Program

The Hamilton Hill Arts Center offers a free arts-based after school program Monday-Friday from 2:30-6 p.m. For more information call 518-313-2556 or visit the [website](#).



PARENT INFO

Schenectady High School Parent-Family Night at the Bridge

An event for parents on March 4 at 6 p.m.

Click [here for more info](#).



Hamilton Hill Arts Center 2022 Martin Luther King Jr. Children's Art Contest

Open to all ages. Pick an MLK quote that speaks to you and illustrate "why" in a work of art. All mediums accepted. Deadline is March 15. [More](#)



For more information on Proctors Collaborative School of the Fine Arts, click [here](#).

#schenectadyrising



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

Pleasant Valley Celebrates 100 Years



On Friday morning, students from Pleasant Valley Elementary invited former students and staff members to the building to open a time capsule that was left a decade ago. A few of the students who left the capsule behind are now seniors at SHS and were on hand to reveal the contents. [Watch the reveal here](#) As part of the 100th birthday celebration, current Pleasant Valley students gave the audience a history lesson and slide show made up of 100 years of Pleasant Valley history. [Click here to watch!](#)



5th graders at Zoller Elementary tap a maple tree on February 9 as part of the annual Schoolyard Sugaring Program. The sap will be processed into maple syrup in March, which is also Maple Month in New York State. #FarmtoSchool. #SchoolyardSugaring. #NYAGITC

