



## Board Postpones Consolidation

### DISTRICT WILL FOCUS ON LONG-TERM PLAN

At its December 2nd, 2014 meeting, the Board of Education adopted a resolution to develop a new consolidation proposal for the Chatham Central School District based on the District's long-term plan. The unanimous vote officially withdraws the Board's June 25, 2013 decision to consolidate Chatham Central School District into two school buildings and repurpose Chatham Middle School by September, 2015. The Board will revisit consolidation planning during the 2015-16 school year, after the new long-term plan is adopted. The Board elected not to set a deadline for completion of the consolidation plan to allow it ample time to develop a proposal that best supports the future of education in Chatham.

Development of a new long-term plan is expected to begin in the spring of 2015 and will focus on addressing the needs of students and addressing long term financial strategies for the District. The Board plans to include community stakeholder groups in the planning process.

"As we develop this plan, I want our community members to know that the Board wants to hear from you about what is important for our school going forward," said Board president Melony Spock.

Opportunities for community participation will be announced over the coming months.

## Advanced Placement® Biology at Chatham High School

Chatham High School is giving science students a leg up on college with the addition of Advanced Placement® (AP®) Biology to its list of electives. A new offering at Chatham, this course provides students with an opportunity to take on the challenge of a college-level course with an in-depth exploration of biological systems and living organisms.

In this course, students study the key principles and theories surrounding biochemistry, genetics, evolution, and ecology while also learning to think like scientists by conducting their own experiments, studying scientific journal articles, and producing formal laboratory reports.

"All of the students in this class are interested in pursuing biology as a career on some level. This is a valuable learning experience for them and a reminder of how college level classes are very, very different than high school classes," said CHS science teacher Paul Vachirapapun, who teaches the course. "We have an extremely rigorous curriculum. Students are exposed to scientific reading and writing, college-level note taking, and equipment that is being used in genetics labs across the country."

CHS junior Jaina Wollowitz wants to pursue a career in science, either doing research in a lab or as a medical doctor, and says she was thrilled when she learned CHS would be offering AP Bio

this year. She had already taken biology at the Regents level and jumped at the opportunity to pursue it further.

"I think AP courses are important because they give you insight into what college courses are like and allow you to fuel your individual curiosity," she said.



With the class spending quite a bit of time studying molecular biology, Jaina and her classmates are also learning how to use instruments like micropipettors, which allow them to extract liquids down to the exact microliter, centrifuges that separate molecules from one another based on size and density, and electrophoresis gel boxes capable of isolating strands of DNA for study.

"There really is a lot that we can do because we have this equipment," said Jaina. "I need a challenge and this course is much more in-depth and allows us to ask questions that you are not able to in other classes."

The course is an accredited College Board Advanced Placement Program®, meaning students can not only further their studies and stretch their potential through rigorous coursework, but also have an opportunity to earn college credit, advanced placement, or both, for successful performance on AP exams. Along with Biology, CHS offers AP courses in United States History, World History, English Literature and Composition, and Calculus.

# Chatham CSD Goals 2014-2015

ADOPTED BY THE CHATHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION ON NOVEMBER 18, 2014

## 1. Develop a long-term plan for the District that:

- ◆ Includes stakeholder groups (administrators, faculty and staff, community, parents, teachers, students, Board members) in the planning process.
- ◆ Addresses the needs of students at all ability levels, including supporting struggling learners and challenging highly able students.
- ◆ Addresses long-term financial strategies for the District.
- ◆ Addresses the involvement of community members in the educational program.

## 2. Improve student achievement through:

- ◆ Focus on District targets.
  - Increase achievement on NYS Regents Scores.
    - 90% passing rate, or a 10% increase over the previous year.
    - 50% mastery rate, or a 5% increase over the previous year.
  - Increase achievement on NYS 3-8 ELA and math assessments.
    - Improve passing rate by 10% over previous year.
    - Improve mastery rate by 5% over previous year.
  - 85% of our K-8 students will demonstrate literacy proficiency—
    - The percentage of students reading at or above grade level will increase by 5% over last year.
    - 85% of students will write at grade level as measured by the District rubric.
  - 90% of our high school students will pass all of their courses.
- ◆ Implementation of a quality targeted pre-k program.
- ◆ Strengthening our models of delivering Academic Intervention Services to be most effective in meeting the needs of our students.
- ◆ Expanding opportunities for highly able students.

## 3. As a Board, develop strategies to further engage the community in discussion of District issues.

# "Parent Portal" Offers New Way to Connect

Chatham Central School District parents and guardians can keep up-to-date with how their students are doing in school through our new online "Parent Portal." Launched in September, the "Parent Portal" gives our parents secure, twenty-four hours a day online access to their students' educational records.

"It allows parents to more easily track their students' progress. They can see what we are doing every single day in class," said sixth grade support teacher Kristine Mackowski, who, along with every teacher at the middle school and high school, lists her students' assignment, tests, and scores on the portal. "Parents can see what was due in class and the grade their student received for each assignment."

"It's nice to see a comprehensive view of all the grades, which gives you a detailed account of where they stand," said April Mountain, a parent of four Chatham students. She uses the portal to log on every few weeks and do a "maintenance check" on her children. She says being able to see exactly where they stand in regards to their assignments has put her in a stronger position when it comes to having conversations with them about their school work. "It's very nice to have a starting point for that conversation, and knowing exactly what they need to be doing as opposed to just what they tell you is very helpful," she explained.

Along with assignments and test grades, parents can view their child's schedules, attendance, and discipline records. Families can also view the contact information their school has on record, such as phone numbers and email addresses, to make sure all are up-to-date.

"We are very pleased to offer this convenient new way for our parents to stay engaged in their children's education," said superintendent of schools Cheryl Nuciforo. "Our Parent Portal provides a new level of communication that connects parents with what is happening in the classroom and allows our teachers, administrators, and families to work more closely together to help students succeed."

High school and middle school students also have the option of signing up for an account of their own so they can keep track of their progress themselves.

To protect the confidentiality of student information, accounts are only given to parents or legal guardians of CCSD students (or to students themselves) and account holders are given access only to information pertaining to their child. Also, parents may only obtain their account login information in person and must provide the school with positive identification at the time of request.

More information about the CCSD Parent Portal is available on the District's website or by contacting your child's school office.

# Off to a Good Start at MED Pre-K

MED is getting youngsters ready for school with a new prekindergarten program targeting the students who need it most. The program provides a high quality early educational experience for Chatham Central School District four-year olds who would otherwise be entering kindergarten next year underprepared for school.

“Having this program is really going to have an impact on their readiness for kindergarten,” said MED’s pre-k teacher, Jessica Alliger, who taught kindergarten at MED last year and also has a background in special education. “The class has a diverse group of learning needs and learning styles and the students have all different things they are working on. It’s great seeing how much they have grown already in such a relatively short period of time.”

Pre-K at MED, which was launched in September of this year, consists of a single class of twelve students who are all ‘learning school’ with Mrs. Alliger and teaching assistant Natalie Hanson. Just like the big kids do, pre-k students attend a full day of school, ride the bus, eat lunch in the cafeteria, and visit the library and gym for specials. Classroom activities are similar to those found in a kindergarten setting. They focus largely on building early literacy and math skills, like learning about letters and numbers, words and books, and concepts like more and less. Lessons are presented in fun and engaging ways, with lots of games, hands-on activities, and singing and dancing to reinforce key concepts.

“There is a song for every letter in the alphabet,” assured Mrs. Alliger.

Story time is an important part of class too. Reading to the students not only familiarizes them with books and words, but also reinforces lesson topics and helps expand students’ view of the world.



“We do multiple stories a day, and they just love it. Whenever I pull out a book, they sit exactly as they are supposed to and their eyes are glued to me,” said Mrs. Alliger.

Another big focus is on students’ social and emotional development. The program seeks to develop a certain level of independence in the youngsters as well as teach them appropriate ways to behave in a school setting and interact with their peers. Mrs. Alliger explained that, “for many of them, this is their first time being with a larger group of kids other than their siblings. We work on sharing, being good sports, how to win and lose in socially appropriate ways, how to take turns, those kinds of things.”

Mrs. Alliger works closely with her students to make sure they are physically ready for school as well. A lot of her learning station activities, like having the stu-

dents form shapes out of clay or play pick-up with teeny-tiny pompoms, are designed to help them tune up the fine motor skills needed for things like tying shoes and holding pencils.

“This class also provides a lot of opportunities for parents to share in our activities and learning in the classroom. We have several parents who come in on a regular basis to help with the class, and the more parents and the school are working together, the stronger, the better it is for the child,” said Mrs. Alliger.

MED created this Pre-K program in response to a noted increase in the number of students coming into kindergarten needing remediation. Studies indicate that students who start school significantly behind are likely to fall further and further behind as they progress through school. Early intervention has shown to be an effective strategy in reversing this trend. MED’s Pre-K program targets students who need this extra help getting ready for school and whose families have barriers, socio-economic or otherwise, that limit their access to other preschool services in our area. Student eligibility for the program is determined through a screening process conducted by MED staff in the spring. If you believe your child may be eligible for this program, contact the MED main office at 392-2255.

## Chatham CSD Now on Twitter

For the convenience of our social media users, Chatham Central School District is now on Twitter. You can follow our Tweets about school news and updates by visiting <https://twitter.com/ChathamCSD>. Superintendent Cheryl Nuciforo is also on Twitter and you can follow her feed at [https://twitter.com/Supt\\_Nuciforo](https://twitter.com/Supt_Nuciforo). A link to both Twitter feeds can also be found on the homepage of our District website, [www.chathamcentralschools.com](http://www.chathamcentralschools.com), just look for the birdie.



## FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY: Schools Working Together to Save

Over the past several years, CCSD has helped keep our costs down by pooling our buying power with other school districts to get lower prices on items like energy, school supplies, and employee benefits. Most recently, our District was able to realize approximately \$105,000 in additional savings through our participation in the Rensselaer-Columbia-Greene Health Trust, a consortium of over twenty local school districts who work in partnership with Questar III BOCES to get lower prices on health insurance benefits. This fall, the Trust explored using a Pharmacy Benefit Manager as an additional cost saving strategy, which has yielded significant results.

“The Pharmacy Benefit Manager continually compares costs and leverages our economy of scale to get us better prices on prescription coverage,” said Chatham business administrator Mike Chudy. “When

the numbers came in they showed that it will save Chatham almost ten percent on our employee prescription benefit costs. That’s a big chunk of change.”

The \$105,000 in savings came with no increase in out-of-pocket expenses for employees and no change in benefit. Changes to benefits can only be made through negotiations with the district’s representative employee unions.

These savings represent only the most recent way the District has been able to reduce costs. Chatham has focused on shared services, efficiency measures, and other cost saving initiatives over the past six years that have realized millions of dollars in savings without negatively impacting our educational program. In fact, Chatham has used these savings to improve our academic program and increase opportunities for students, and at the same time minimize tax increases.

## School Resource Deputy at Chatham CSD

Chatham Central School District now has a School Resource Deputy (SRD) as part of our educational program. Columbia County Sheriff’s Deputy Todd Hyson has been with us since September, and in the time since then he has become a familiar face in the hallways and classrooms of Chatham High School, Chatham Middle School, and Mary E. Dardess Elementary School. His role here is to work with our school staff, students, and community to provide a safe and secure learning environment.

“What I like most is interacting with the kids,” said Deputy Hyson. “I want them to see that I’m approachable and feel comfortable talking to me about everyday things.”

Whether outside the Middle School monitoring the safe drop off and pick up of students on Woodbridge Avenue, providing classroom instruction to students at MED about online safety, or helping our Students Against Destructive Decisions (S.A.D.D.) chapter put on a fact-filled Teen Driver Safety Week at CHS, Deputy Hyson is here to help our students steer clear of trouble and find positive solutions to the issues they face at school and at home.

Even Deputy Hyson just dropping by the cafeteria or a study hall to chat gives students the opportunity to learn the positive role of law enforcement in our society, ask questions and get advice on a variety of issues, or share their concerns.

Deputy Hyson also works closely with school administrators and staff to help improve the security of our buildings and strengthen our schools’ preparedness for emergencies of all kinds. For example, this December he helped coordinate lockdown drills in all our school buildings involving law enforcement officers from the Chatham Police Department, Columbia County Sheriff’s Office, and the NY State Police. He also serves as an important communication link between law enforcement and our school concerning outside issues in the community that may affect students or staff who attend our schools.

Deputy Hyson grew up in Columbia County and has been a

deputy here since 2003. He attended specialized training through the NYS Police Training Academy’s School Resource Officer program and is also a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician, Evidence Technician, and member of the County’s dive team. Prior to becoming an SRD, he served as Resident Deputy for the towns of Chatham, Canaan and New Lebanon.

Deputy Hyson’s assignment to Chatham Central Schools is part of a program implemented by Sheriff David P. Bartlett to provide all public schools in Columbia County with SRD services. Deputy Hyson works twenty hours a week at Chatham CSD and twenty hours a week at New Lebanon CSD. His position is funded entirely through the Sheriff’s office and comes at no cost to our school district.



*Deputy Hyson teaching fifth graders about Internet safety.*

# CMS Honors Veterans with Ceremony

An annual tradition at Chatham Middle is the honoring of our local veterans and their families with a special Veterans Day Celebration held at the school. Area veterans and their families are invited to attend this meaningful event put on by students and staff in honor of all veterans of the Armed Forces.

The event is always held on a school day prior to Veterans Day itself, as schools are closed on this holiday. This year's program was held on November 6th and student Keon Armstrong began the ceremony by leading the audience in the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by opening remarks from school principal Amy Potter.

"As the daughter of a World War II veteran, a sister to a brother serving in the National Guard and a sister who is a navy nurse, I am honored to be a part of this ceremony," Potter told the crowd, adding, "On Veterans Day we honor the heroes we have lost and we rededicate ourselves to the next generation of veterans by supporting our soldiers, sailors, airmen and women, marines, and coastguardsmen and women as they return home from duty."

Dean of students Cynthia Herron then introduced eighth-graders Sophie Shea and Margot Marie Schassler, who gave a history of Veterans Day and shared the holiday's origin in an earlier holiday called Armistice Day, which commemorated the end of World War One on November 11th.

Select choral students then sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" while members of Ghent V.F.W. Post 5933 and American Legion Post 42 in Chatham proceeded into the auditorium to present the nation's colors. As the colors were retired, the Grade 7 & 8 Band played "America the Beautiful."

The V.F.W. and American Legion members then presented the flags of the United States, Army, Navy, Marines, Air Corps, Coast Guard, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and American Legion, individually. As each flag was brought forward, students Abby Hoag, Tyler Tuthill, Collin Blanck, Kaleb Taylor, Katherine Verenazi, Austin

Welch, Margot Marie Schassler, and Sophie Shea took to the stage, respectively, to share the history of the flags and explain the significance of the symbolism found in each.

Eighth grader Jenna Skype and sixth grader Hannah Kelly had the privilege of introducing the event's keynote speaker. For Kelly, the honor was extra-special indeed, as the speaker was her father, Sergeant 1st Class Christopher Kelly, himself a veteran of the war in Iraq.

Kelly, who is also a member of our Board of Education, spoke of the commitment of those who served before him, of his family members and friends who served and continue to serve in the Armed Forces, and about the sacrifice all veterans and their families make when deployment overseas means time spent away from home. Kelly later touched on his personal commitment to serving, speaking about his more than twenty years of service as a construction engineer in the Army Reserve and of his year-long deployment overseas building roads, bridges, and fortifications in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Thanks to every one of these special vets here today," he concluded. "You truly are the strength that drives us to complete

our mission and return home safely."

Following Kelly's remarks, seventh grade social studies teacher William Richard asked all the veterans in the audience to stand and be recognized. To the crowd he said, "Everyone join me in honoring the 25 million living veterans whose selfless sacrifices ensure the freedoms we enjoy today and let us always remember the more than one million men and women who died in sacrifice for their country," after which loud applause erupted from the students.

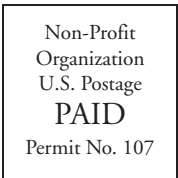
A flag folding ceremony was performed by the V.F.W. while Richard explained the symbolic meaning of each of the thirteen folds that create the triangular finished form, resembling the cocked hats worn by America's first soldiers.

Richard then asked for a moment of silence, followed by a playing of "Taps" from eighth grader Curtis Buchan.

The ceremony also included a slide show of photos collected from the CMS students and staff showing their family members, past and present, who served or are serving in the armed forces. A reception in the CMS Library followed with refreshments for the veterans, guests, and students who participated in the event.







## CAR-RT SORT POSTAL CUSTOMER

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### ADMINISTRATORS

Cheryl Nuciforo <i>Superintendent</i>	392-1501
Michael Chudy <i>School Business Administrator</i>	392-1534
Brian Simon <i>Director of Special Education</i>	392-2417
Kristen Reno <i>MED Elementary School Principal</i>	392-2255
Lindsay Morris <i>MED Elementary School Assistant Principal</i>	392-2255
Amy Potter <i>Chatham Middle School Principal</i>	392-1560
John Thorsen <i>Chatham High School Principal</i>	392-4142
Terry Bordell <i>Chatham High School Assistant Principal</i>	392-4142

### BOARD MEMBERS

	<i>Term Expires</i>
Melony Spock <i>President</i>	2016
Jennifer Lindberg <i>Vice President</i>	2015
Teri Conte	2017
Michael Clark	2015
Muriel Faxon	2016
Chris Kelly	2017
Edward Knight	2017
James Marks	2015
Craig Simmons	2016
Carly Rippel <i>Student Representative</i>	2015

## Board Considers Alternative Veterans' Tax Exemption

### Tax Implications Would Affect All Property Owners

The Board of Education is currently considering the adoption of a property tax exemption for certain military veterans living in the Chatham Central School District. If adopted, the Alternative Veterans' Tax Exemption would be available on primary residences as a 15% reduction in assessed value to veterans who served during specific times of war, an additional 10% reduction in assessed value to veterans who served in combat zones, and an additional reduction in assessed value for veterans who incur service-related disabilities, equal to one-half of their disability ratings. These benefits would be subject to maximum dollar limits set by the District.

The Board of Education has scheduled a public hearing on the Alternative Veterans' Tax Exemption for January 13, 6:30 p.m. in the Chatham High School Library. The Board encourages all District residents to attend this hearing to learn more about how this exemption would affect veteran and non-veteran taxpayers, and to make your opinions known to the Board.

There are approximately 425 veterans living in the Chatham Central School District who would be eligible for this exemption. This represents a potential exemption of approximately 1% of all the assessed property value in the District.

The tax break our veterans would see would not be reimbursed by the State, therefore, property owners not eligible for the exemption would see an increase in their tax rates to cover the difference. The actual amount of tax rate increase would depend largely on what maximum dollar limits the District chooses to place on the exemption itself.

The Alternative Veterans' Tax Exemption has been available for New York towns and counties for many years. Columbia County and each town within Chatham Central School District currently offer this veterans exemption. It has only recently become available for school districts to offer. The District is not required to offer the exemption, but may now do so if the Board chooses to.

### PUBLIC HEARING

**Tuesday, January 13, 2015**  
**6:30 p.m.**

CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY