



# Chatham Connections

WINTER 2013

A NEWSLETTER FOR CHATHAM STUDENTS, PARENTS & COMMUNITY



## Keeping Our Schools Safe

AT CHATHAM CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, the safety of our students and staff is a primary concern, and the District has a detailed safety plan in place designed specifically with their health and well-being in mind.

“While statistics show that the safest place a child can be is in school, the disturbing events at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown Connecticut are a stark reminder of the need for all schools to be vigilant about safety and security,” said superintendent Cheryl Nuciforo.

As a result, the District has reinforced current procedures and is re-evaluating all building safety plans in an effort to improve safety even further. Visitor access to buildings and classrooms has been tightened, and the District is in the process of conducting a safety audit of each of our schools.

In the coming weeks, the District’s Safety Committee will be reviewing any recommendations pursuant to school safety that arise from the events at Sandy Hook, and will also be exploring safety upgrades, such as installation of additional security cameras, as part of a potential capital project.

The District remains committed to providing our students and staff with a safe and healthy learning environment. Here are just a few of the measures we have in place:

- During the school day, all exterior doors are locked to the outside, and visitors must use a single, monitored entry/exit point at each school. Visitors must identify themselves and their reason for being at the school, and must sign in and wear a visitor badge. As an added security measure, sign-in vestibules were installed at both the Elementary and High School in 2011.
- Visitors may no longer access the District offices through the Elementary School entrance, and must now use the entrances along

the District office parking lot. The District Offices are separated from the rest of the Elementary School by a locked door.

- We work closely with our local law enforcement, fire departments and other emergency responders to coordinate safety efforts and evaluate emergency response procedures.
- An on-site health & safety officer from Questar III BOCES works directly with school staff to ensure District safety and security measures are carried out effectively and meet all federal, state, and local guidelines.
- Our schools conduct numerous emergency drills that include fire, lockdown, and bus evacuation scenarios.
- Our K-12 character education program teaches students respect, tolerance, and responsibility while also focusing on eliminating bullying and harassment in our schools. All staff – from teachers, to bus drivers, to secretaries – are trained to recognize and respond to bullying or other forms of harassment that happen in school, on the bus, or online.
- Prior to working for the District, all employees are fingerprinted and must pass a criminal background check. Staff are also required to wear a photo ID while on school premises.
- Each morning, custodians conduct a walk-through inspection of both the inside and outside of each school, as well as the playground, and perform bi-weekly inspections of all fire exits, rescue windows, fire extinguishers and other safety equipment.
- Our school computers have filtering software that screens inappropriate online material.
- Staff are trained to recognize individuals who may be a risk to themselves or to others. Each school has counselors and a psychologist available to provide support for students in need, and any potentially criminal behavior is reported to police for investigation.

# A Different Kind of English Class at CHS

AT CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL, a new course is preparing seniors for success after graduation. The class, called English 12: College and Career Readiness, offers students real-world 21st-century literacy skills as they relate to college and the workplace.

“This is a different kind of English class that the students have really embraced,” said Terry Bordell, the instructional study team leader for the High School’s English Department. “They are having discussions with each other and their teachers that they have never had before, and are more focused on getting ready for life after high school.”

Class exercises include drafting strong resumes and professional communications like letters, speeches and emails, as well as developing interviewing skills. Introspective assignments task students with writing personal narratives focusing on significant experiences that have shaped their post-high school plans, or writing a letter of recommendation (for themselves) appropriate for college or employment applications.

“These sort of assignments make students stop and think, ‘Who am I?’ to colleges and prospective employers,” explained Bordell.

“I think writing the letter of recommendation and narrative essay has helped me,” said senior Katheryn Young, who plans on attending a four-year university to study mathematics and statistics. “I can definitely use those guidelines for my college essay.”

Other assignments revolve around building personal confidence by exploring themes like success and failure, persever-

ance, goal-setting and achievement, and professional and personal improvement.

“We talked about things like learning from experience, overcoming hardship and learning from it, about conformity and how it’s not always good to be like everyone else,” added Katheryn.

Guidance staff work closely with the class, helping students research college or career opportunities and become familiar with common applications for colleges or potential employment. In December, the department arranged for both a college professor and a human resources professional to visit the class and explain what universities and employers expect from prospective students and employees.

“Hearing somebody come in and talk to us about what to expect next year was kind of huge,” said senior Aaron Jackson, who plans on learning electrical

construction maintenance after graduation, and already has an internship lined up with National Grid. He said the class has really helped realize what he needed to do to be successful in the real world. “I learned there was more out there than I ever knew. I wouldn’t have my resume; I wouldn’t know what a cover letter is, or the proper etiquette for interviews. You learn so much about both college and the workforce, so you feel prepared and ready to go.”

This half-year course is a graduation requirement for all seniors except those taking AP English, leaving the second half of the year open for the students to choose an English elective course.





## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY?

If you haven't checked out Chatham Public Library recently, you should! Dozens of exciting new titles, both books and movies, are hitting the shelves every month, and borrowing materials from the Library just got easier. The Library is also offering a variety of exciting new programs for both adults and children.

As an added convenience for patrons, the Library has installed a self-checkout station opposite the downstairs circulation desk. If you are in a hurry and there is a line, or you simply prefer checking out your own books, give this new option a try!

The popular Authors and Artists Series, sponsored by the Friends of the Library, will bring historian David Rubel, author of the new book Lincoln: A Cinematic and Historical Companion, to the Library on February 23 to discuss the making of the film Lincoln. On March 16, author Jon Katz will talk about the dogs in his life and why so many of his books are about them, and on April 6, illustrator and author Jacqueline Rodgers will lead an interactive workshop at the Library. Adults can also catch the library's new "Reading Live" series with local theater director and actor Kate Gulliver, who reads aloud short stories, poetry, and other literary selections on the first and third Tuesdays of each month.

Older children can enjoy the Library's Wii, Xbox and board games with friends on Teens/Tweens Game Day each month, or they can bring a snack and catch a free movie at the Library's monthly Movie Matinee. For younger patrons, the Library has started a new Spanish Story Hour, offers children's craft programs each month, and holds a regular preschool story hour on Friday mornings.

Chatham Public Library is also seeking local artists, craftspeople, and experts of all kinds to be part of its growing offerings to the community. Do you have a skill, talent, vocation, or body of knowledge that you would enjoy sharing with your neighbors via a talk or workshop? If so, the Library wants to hear from you! Send an email to: [chathampubliclibrary@chatham.k12.ny.us](mailto:chathampubliclibrary@chatham.k12.ny.us)

The Library is located at 11 Woodbridge Avenue in Chatham. For a complete list of events and more information on the many programs and services Chatham Public Library provides, visit the library's website at <http://chatham.lib.ny.us> or call 392-3666.

# District Prepares 2013-2014 Budget

CURRENT ECONOMIC FACTORS pose a formidable challenge to the development of Chatham Central School District's 2013-2014 budget. While Governor Cuomo recently proposed modest increases in State education aid, preliminary numbers indicate that Chatham will see the same, if not slightly less than the already low state aid we saw this year. Meanwhile, inflation, rapidly increasing health insurance premiums and state retirement system contributions, as well as other State and Federal mandates, continue to drive up costs for schools. At the same time, a property tax cap now limits the District's ability to raise revenue through taxes.

"There are two sources of revenue for schools: state aid and taxes, and both are now limited, yet costs continue to rise," explained Chatham school business administrator Michael Chudy. "This economic situation is a long-term problem, and how we are approaching the 2013-2014 budget

reflects that. We need to be looking at not only 2013-2014, but also where we will be five years from now."

In an effort to provide our students with the best educational program possible, while at the same time manage the long term fiscal health of the District in a way that is sensitive to taxpayers, the District is again focused on reducing operating costs.

"We are taking a close look at every budgeted item in order to identify areas where we can realize efficiencies and savings. We will also need to apply reserves and fund balance in order to help close the gap." said Chudy.

Difficult decisions may lie ahead as the 2013-2014 budget is developed. To help our community follow the budget building process, a schedule of important dates is provided below. All Board meetings are held in the High School library and all interested community members are encouraged to attend.

## 2013 BUDGET CALENDAR

<b>March 5</b>	Board Meeting, 6:30 p.m. (Instructional, Library & Cafeteria, Phase 2)
<b>March 15</b>	Petitions for Board of Education candidates made available
<b>March 19</b>	Board Meeting, 6:30 p.m. (Transportation & Benefits)
<b>April 9</b>	Board Workshop, 6:30 p.m. (Special Education & Budget Adjustments)
<b>April 16</b>	Board Meeting, 6:30 p.m. (Adoption of Proposed 2013-2014 Budget)
<b>April 22</b>	Last day for Board of Education candidates to submit petitions (District Clerk performs drawing of names for position on ballot 5:00 p.m.)
<b>April 24</b>	Copies of proposed 2013-2014 budget and required documents made available
<b>April 25</b>	Voter Registration, 4-8 p.m. MED Lobby

**May 14 Annual Budget Hearing, 6:30 p.m. – CHS Library**  
**Voter Registration, 2 – 7 p.m. – MED Lobby**

**May 21 Annual Budget Vote and Board Election**  
**9 a.m. – 9 p.m. – MED Gymnasium**

To view our complete budget calendar, along with copies of Board presentations and other budget information, please visit our budget information page at [www.chathamcentralschools.com](http://www.chathamcentralschools.com).



# UNSUNG HEROES: CHATHAM'S SCHOOL NURSES



VALERIE PERSONS – CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL



KRISTIN HANNA – CHATHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL



MARY-NOELLE FABIANO – MARY E. DARDESS ELEMENTARY

Children need to be healthy to learn, and school nurses play a big role in supporting student achievement by offering the care that students need to stay healthy, safe, and successful in school. Statistics show schools with professional nurses on staff have lower absenteeism than schools that do not, and each school in Chatham Central School District has its own dedicated nurse.

“Our job is about caring for the kids, wanting the best for them and making their education the best they can have,” said Kristin Hanna, the nurse at Chatham Middle School.

Along with Hanna, Mary-Noelle Fabiano at Mary E. Dardess Elementary and Valerie Persons at Chatham High make up the District’s nursing staff. All three women are registered professional nurses (RN), and as the District’s health care experts they are responsible for meeting the medical needs of over 1,200 students.

Being a school nurse means providing care and assessment for the daily cuts and scrapes, runny noses, and stomachaches that come through the door. It also means constantly updating procedures to safeguard children, managing emergency care plans for every child with a serious medical condition or disability, and making sure teachers and other staff are aware of the ever-changing health issues within the District. School nurses also provide families with referral information and available community resources to improve access to health care.

Our nurses also provide medical care to a growing number of children with allergies

or chronic illnesses, such as asthma and diabetes. They help children monitor their blood sugar, administer medications prescribed by a doctor, and make sure students don’t come in contact with certain allergens. For the most fragile children, that sometimes means going the extra mile – literally.

“We will go on field trips with the kids, specifically to allow those kids with specific medical needs to be able to take part in what the other kids take part in,” explained Hanna.

School nurses also take a proactive role in helping prevent illnesses and injuries at school. They manage the schools immunization records, provide general health screenings for new students, and carry out a full host of state mandated screenings for vision, hearing, body mass index, and scoliosis.

They work to curb the spread of sickness and promote a healthy school environment with one-on-one conversations with students and staff, as well as providing education through messages on school bulletin boards, websites, posters and newsletters.

“I take every opportunity I have to teach the kids,” said Fabiano. “I provide hand washing posters for every classroom, and I show them how when they come in (to the health office). I also send out a newsletter to parents talking about things like flu and cold season, being dressed appropriately for cold weather, and other general health education.”

“It’s about teaching them the best choice to make, both for their own health and for

the people around them,” said Persons. “Every time a student comes into the health office is an opportunity for me to teach them how to take care of themselves, from a cold to a sprained ankle, to making sure they get enough sleep so they are mentally prepared for school.”

The nurses keep extra changes of clothes on hand for children who (particularly at MED) have accidents or come in from the playground wet and muddy. During the colder months, they also make sure they have warm gear like hats, mittens, and jackets on hand for students who come to school without them.

“We don’t want them getting cold,” said Fabiano. “We provide a lot of clothes, so something else we do is take in clothing donations from the community so we have them to give out.”

The nurse’s office is also responsible for making sure students who participate in sports have all their physicals, health history forms and other paperwork in place before they head out on the field, so coaches know students are healthy enough to play.

“The three of us all have the same goal in mind, the physical and emotional well-being of the students,” said Hanna. “We love being able to interact with the kids, and know that we make a difference.”

For these and the many other daily ways that our nurses support our students and provide a safe, healthy and nurturing school environment, the Chatham Central School District says “thank you.”

# Band and Orchestra Now at MED

The opportunity to develop musicianship through learning an instrument has proved to be quite popular with students at Mary E. Dardess Elementary. For many years, students could begin learning an instrument upon entering Chatham Middle School, but following the fifth grade's relocation to the elementary school in the fall, MED began offering lessons to both fourth and fifth grades.

"Learning an instrument is a great thing to do. It's a source of joy for a lot of people, and there are studies that show kids who play instruments are more apt to read well and score well on tests," said MED band teacher Lucas Christensen.

At the beginning of the school year, Christensen and strings teacher Cynthia Ogulnick introduced this next generation of musicians to the variety of wind, string or percussion instruments that make up the school's band and orchestra. They talked to the students about the program, demonstrated each of the instruments, and gave every child the chance to try out a few of their favorites. Later, the students decided if they wanted to play one seriously, and depending on which instrument they chose, join either band (wind and percussion instruments) or orchestra (violin, viola, cello and bass).

Between the two grades, more than ninety percent of the students now participate in MED's instrumental music program. Each attends a weekly small group lesson along with students who play like-instruments, as well as a weekly rehearsal involving the full band or orchestra.

Through familiar tunes like "Mary Had a Little Lamb," and "Hot Cross Buns," the students are learning how to properly hold their instruments and place their fingers to get a nice, even and characteristic sound. They are learning how to read notation on paper and to identify pitch, rhythm, and



melodies by ear, and they are using all these skills to play together in unison and harmony while learning new, more challenging songs.

"It takes extra time to learn a new skill, so they are also learning good study habits and how to budget their time as well," added Ogulnick.

MED's 5th grade orchestra and band performed their debut concert in January, along with the fourth and fifth grade choruses. The fifth graders will perform once again this May, while the fourth grade orchestra and band puts on their own show this coming June.

Instrumental music classes are in addition to the regular music classes already offered at MED.

## Board Sets Dates for Facilities Study Meetings

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION has set its June 25, 2013 meeting as the date it will decide whether or not to close Chatham Middle School and move the 6th grade to MED and the 7th & 8th grades to the High School building.

Over the past two years, the Board has been researching building consolidation as a possible way to address the District's dwindling revenue and enrollment, and protect educational opportunities for students by reducing costs. After a close look at all three schools, a facilities study team from Questar III BOCES determined that the Middle School was the most appropriate building to close if the District were to consolidate, based on its location, condition and age.

More information needs to be gathered before the Board membership can make a decision about consolidation, and the Board is committed to keeping its fact finding and decision making process open and transparent.

In January, the Board held its third Facilities Study Town Hall Meeting to share with residents what programs Chatham provides its students, and how downward trends in revenue and enrollment now threaten many of those educational opportunities. Also in January, the Board formed focus groups of parents, staff, students and community members to gather feedback on its facilities study process.

Because residents have expressed a desire to know more about having grades 7-12 housed together in one building, the

Board has scheduled a Town Hall Meeting for February 26 at 6:30 p.m. in the CHS Auditorium to discuss ways the 7th and 8th grades could be accommodated at the High School building. District educational staff are currently visiting schools in our area (Greenville, Hoosick Falls, New Lebanon, Taconic Hills, Watervliet) that have 7-12 school buildings, and residents are encouraged to attend the February 26 meeting to learn more about their study, ask questions and provide feedback.

Another important part of the facilities study is a possible capital building project to allow the District to accommodate all of our academic and extracurricular programs in two buildings. The Board's Facilities Committee is now working with an architect to draw up plans for a capital project which would include the addition of space and certain refurbishments to MED and CHS, safety upgrades, and a reconfiguration of traffic patterns and parking. The details and cost estimates of this capital project will be shared at a Town Hall Meeting scheduled for March 28, 6:30 p.m. in the CHS auditorium.

Prior to making its decision whether or not to close the Middle School, the Board will host a final Town Hall Meeting on June 11 to provide residents with a full overview of the facilities study process and how consolidation would affect our students, our educational program, and our community.

For more information please visit our Facilities Study resource page at [www.chathamcentralschools.com](http://www.chathamcentralschools.com).



## CAR-RT SORT POSTAL CUSTOMER

Produced in cooperation with the Questar III Communications Service

# Adding Up the Clues at CMS

STUDENTS AT CHATHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL used math skills and a lot of imagination to create the perfect crime. Well, maybe not the perfect crime, because the whole idea behind the project was to create a caper that could be solved – using word problems.



As an enrichment project for highly able seventh graders, school librarian Donna Eager had students apply their math, language, and computer skills in a creative, meaningful way by challenging them to write a mystery book for their peers to read and solve.

Students first had to dream up a burglary scenario, complete with crime scene, forensic evidence, and a colorful cast of characters for witnesses and

suspects. Next, they created word problems using concepts like volume, proportional relationships, coordinates, geometry, statistics and probability to help the detective (reader) determine the value of the stolen goods, figure out suspects' proximity to the crime scene, and match clues like fingerprints, footprints and hair samples to particular individuals.

"The idea was to have them apply math to real-world problems," explained Eager. "They really had to plan and organize and think it through to make the outcome work."

By adding up all the clues, the detective could narrow the suspect field to catch the thief and follow the evidence to where the stolen goods were hidden.

Along with being aligned with core math curriculum, designing a crime scene book allowed students to utilize many 21st Century skills. They scoured the internet for facts and images to support their story, and laid out their books digitally using Power-Point software.

"My favorite part was when we went into Excel and made maps of the crime scene. It was awesome, I loved it," said seventh grader Autumn Bower. "This is definitely one the best projects we've done this year. We are learning something new every time we come in."

When the students had all finished their capers, they exchanged books so they could read and test each other's stories. Students also gave presentations highlighting their books, and parents were invited to join the class for an end of project celebration.

### ADMINISTRATORS

Cheryl Nuciforo <i>Superintendent</i>	392-1501
Michael Chudy <i>School Business Administrator</i>	392-1534
Jean Scheriff <i>Director of Pupil Services</i>	392-2417
Tamara Thorpe-Odom <i>Director of Special Education</i>	392-3104
Kristen Reno <i>Mary E. Dardess Elementary School Principal</i>	392-2255
Annemarie Barkman <i>Chatham Middle School Interim Principal</i>	392-1560
John Thorsen <i>Chatham High School Principal</i>	392-4142
Amy Potter <i>Chatham High School Assistant Principal</i>	392-4142

### BOARD MEMBERS

	<i>Term Expires</i>
Melony Spock <i>President</i>	2013
James Toteno <i>Vice President</i>	2014
Michael Clark	2015
Gail Behrens Day	2013
Muriel Faxon	2013
Jennifer Lindberg	2015
James Marks	2014
David O'Connor	2015
John Wapner	2013
Emma Roberts <i>Student Representative</i>	2013