



# Chatham Connections

WINTER 2011

A NEWSLETTER FOR CHATHAM STUDENTS, PARENTS & COMMUNITY

## District to Undertake Facilities Study

The Chatham Central School District will be undertaking a facilities study this spring to determine the feasibility of consolidating the District from a three-school building system into a two-school building system. Like other schools across the state, Chatham faces dwindling resources and challenging economic times. In order to preserve educational programs and continue to provide students with the quality of education they have come to expect, the District is tasked with reducing costs and finding operating efficiencies wherever possible. Through reductions and efficiency initiatives implemented over the last two years, the District has been able to cut \$4.3 million from the school budget, but more steps are needed.

The Board of Education has approved a resolution to hire an outside consultant to perform an operational study of all Chatham CSD buildings. This study will provide logistical data on how District facilities are currently utilized, the potential cost savings closing a building would realize, and the impact closing a building would have on the buildings that remain. The study will begin this spring and take place over several months.

In order to assess our educational program needs, a representative group of staff, parents, and students are currently working together to create an outline of the skills and knowledge our students will need to be successful in the 21st century. This outline will be used to keep focus on the educational needs of our students and guide decision making on the use of our buildings when the data from the operational study is reviewed.

Once the study has been completed, the District will hold community discussions during the 2011-12 school year to determine the best actions for our students, our educational program, and our community. No decisions have or will be made about consolidating buildings until the study has been completed and these discussions have occurred.

The District is committed to keeping this process as open as possible and our stakeholders informed. A link providing information and documents specific to the facilities study will be available on the District website at [www.chathamcentralschools.com](http://www.chathamcentralschools.com).



## Young Explorers at M.E.D.

Mary E. Dardess is offering students more ways to explore art, music, computers or the library through a new initiative called Young Explorers. Designed to enrich student learning and supplement curriculum, the program benefits students by allowing them expanded instruction in areas in which they have demonstrated talent or interest. Young Explorers is an inclusive approach to academic enrichment and is open all students, regardless of learning level.

“We want to provide every student with an opportunity for enrichment,” said M.E.D. principal Kristen Reno. “Giving students a way to explore their interests in more depth helps foster a love of learning and develops personal strengths or talents they may not otherwise realize.”

Examples can be seen in the art room, where first graders learn about spatial use and three dimensionality by forming objects out of clay. Through music, second grade boys are finding their voices by singing and performing, in the computer lab students are given time to learn new Internet and software functions, and in the library, young explorers gain a broader view of their

world by reading and comparing tales from around the globe.

These extra opportunities are woven into the regular school day, and the units are linked to the classroom curriculum. Class time scheduled specifically for enrichment eliminates the need for students to stay late or come in early to be involved.

Giving students a choice is a key component of the program. Students were asked to identify the areas they would like to pursue. With help from teachers and parents, younger or unsure students are steered toward areas they have demonstrated talent or aptitude.

“Students often feel they are told what to learn. In Young Explorers, they decide where they want to learn more,” explained Reno.

Young Explorers is presented as a pilot program for 2010-2011, and its implementation is still under development. Plans exist to expand opportunities in math and science in the future. Young Explorers enrichment initiatives are in addition to, and not a replacement for, traditional enrichment programs offered at M.E.D.

# Gaining Political Experience through Model Congress

In January, students in Chatham High School's Model Congress club traveled to American International College in Springfield, MA to compete in the 71st Annual Model Congress, a three-day academic competition that simulates the activities of the United States Congress.

While there, students from throughout New England and New York assumed the roles of senators or representatives to debate the merits of bill proposals they created. Following parliamentary procedure in committee rooms and general assemblies, these future leaders proposed domestic policy and debated real world issues ranging from the death penalty to health care.

Chatham brought two bills to the competition: one designed to reduce human trafficking, and another to offer tax incentives for Americans to maintain healthy habits. With each bill came a team of two primary delegates and two secondary delegates, who were responsible for defending their bill in committee and in the house or senate. Twelve additional students from Chatham attended as observers.

"Everyone is trying to find flaws with your bill and make objections. It gives you a good idea why it takes so long for the real Congress to make decisions," said Livia Clandorf, a junior who acted as a secondary delegate.

A strongly written proposal is important for a bill to be successful. Chatham students prepared for months



prior to the competition, meeting regularly afterschool to develop their bills and study the rhetoric and procedure used for debate.

Even with a solid proposal, passing a bill lies in the hands of the student delegates who must present and defend it. On the floor, a proposed bill is open to debate and criticism from competing teams, criticism that can often sink it.

"It can be a really cutthroat model congress, you can never really be fully prepared for what people are going to say,"

said Ellen Pierce, a senior and one of Chatham's primary delegates. "You have to be able to think quickly on your feet and use logic and fact to support your bill."

Despite these challenges, both of Chatham's bills passed committee and went on to debate on the house and senate floor, where Chatham's bill limiting human trafficking was successfully passed. In Model Congress terms, that's a win.

"Competition is tough and the students who attend are sharp," explained social studies teacher Darren Rosenbaum, who along with fellow social studies teacher Stephanie Campbell, advises Chatham's Model Congress club. "Only about forty percent of all bills submitted pass through committee and general assembly."

Chatham's Model Congress club has enjoyed a fair share of success since first competing in 2008. In that time Chatham students have brought home the competition's "Best Bill Award" twice, along with legislative knowledge and experiences to enhance their potential as future leaders.

In addition to Model Congress, Chatham High offers a sister club, Model U.N. Chatham Model U.N. students will participate in Dartmouth College's Model United Nations Conference, held April 1st to the 3rd at Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H. Both Model Congress and Model U.N. are made possible through a grant from the Chatham Education Foundation.





2011-2012

## SCHOOL BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

The past few years have presented significant financial challenges for Chatham Central School District and other school districts across the state, and 2011-2012 will be no different. Through efficiency measures, rightsizing of staff to match declining enrollment and other cost saving measures, the District has reduced its budget by \$4.3 million over the last two years, but more cost reductions are needed.

Governor Andrew Cuomo's state budget proposal calls for a \$1.5 billion reduction in state spending for schools. Under Mr. Cuomo's proposal, Chatham faces a \$751,414, or 13.52 percent, reduction in NYS aid for 2011-2012. Faced with this significant loss of funding, CCSD officials are tasked with finding new ways to reduce costs and bring expenses in line with projected revenues. District officials are carefully reviewing every line item of the school budget to identify all areas where savings can be realized.

As we look to further reduce expenses, our priority is to preserve Chatham's core educational program and secure the long-term financial future of the District, but addressing these challenges will require careful planning and difficult decisions.

Budget presentations will be held at each of the regularly scheduled School Board meetings between now and the May 17th budget vote. Additional Town Hall meetings in each of the District's townships will also be scheduled. Additionally, organizations interested in scheduling an individual budget presentation may contact the superintendent's office at 392-1501 to schedule a meeting.

A public hearing on the budget is scheduled for May 10, at 6:30 p.m. in the High School Library. Voting on 2011-2012 School Budget will take place on May 17, from 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at the MED Elementary School in Chatham.

A schedule of budget meetings and other important dates is posted on the budget link of the District website ([www.chathamcentralschools.com](http://www.chathamcentralschools.com)) and will be updated as the schedule develops. Board presentations and other budget information will also be regularly posted to this location throughout the budget development process.

## Building Projects Update

### Solar Panels to be Installed

Installation of photovoltaic (solar) panels on the roof of the M.E.D. Elementary School building is expected to take place in March or early April, depending on the weather. Installation will take about a week and will not disturb classes or school operations.

Once operational, the panels will provide the District with clean, renewable electricity at a cost savings, and act as a learning tool for students to study solar energy.

The District applied for and received a \$297,648 grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to fund this project.

### \$5 Million Capital Improvement Project: Phase Two

Phase Two of the Capital Improvement Project is scheduled to begin in June. After gaining approval by the New York State Education Department, the project went out to bid in February, 2011. Construction will take place throughout the summer and is expected to be completed by the time students return in the fall.

Some highlights of the project include installing energy efficient lighting, refurbishing the M.E.D. cafeteria kitchen and new equipment for the High School cafeteria kitchen, remodeling locker room and weight training areas at the High School, repairing the bus garage roof and portions of Middle School roof, upgrading science classrooms at the High School, adding more parking at M.E.D., installing better lighting for the football field, replacing lockers throughout the High School, encapsulating tile flooring at M.E.D., and various upgrades required to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Phase One construction was completed in the fall of 2010.

The \$5 Million Capital Improvement Project was approved by voters in January, 2009 to address energy efficiency, program needs, health and safety, infrastructure, and accessibility concerns. The project is paid for through NYS building aid, federal stimulus dollars, money left over from a previous capital project, and funds the District set aside in a capital reserve.

# UNSUNG HEROES:



Naureen Perkins



Patricia Schlegel



Colleen Dodge

**I**t takes a special kind of person to be a school secretary. Holding down an office that manages the everyday needs of hundreds of students, parents and staff is no simple task. The job requires a diverse set of skills coupled with a people-oriented personality that makes Chatham Central School District's building secretaries truly special people.

The main offices are the hub of their schools and very busy places. Chatham's building secretaries are in early each morning to assure the school day starts right and stay long after students go home to tie up loose ends. With the phones ringing and a constant flow of people coming and going with questions and requests, juggling assignments and multi-tasking are a regular part of their day.

"One time a teacher told me I looked busier than an air traffic controller," said Debi Layton, secretary to the assistant principal at the high school as well as to the District's athletic director, as she described just how busy her day can get. "I thought that was pretty funny."

Aside from regular clerical duties like scheduling appointments, typing memos, keeping student records and logging payroll, their day can include anything from wiping the tears of an upset student, to organizing special events like concerts and graduation ceremonies, to tracking down lost mittens and lunch boxes.

These hardworking ladies are the go-to people for the answers to a myriad of questions or concerns. They know their schools inside and out, and if they don't have an answer (which they almost always do), they know where to find one.

"I'm busy from the moment I walk in," said Patricia Schlegel. As secretary to the assistant principal at Chatham Middle School, she deals with a large share of the requests that come to the school's main office. "Teachers, students, parents, they are all coming in or calling with questions or requests, and we make sure that everybody is helped."

"It's nice to know you helped to make a parent or student's day easier," added Colleen Dodge, secretary to the principal at

# BUILDING SECRETARIES



Debi Layton



Alma Kelly



Pamela Verenazi

M.E.D. Elementary School. “I like helping people, and that is a lot of what this job is about. It’s not just clerical, there is a lot of interaction with the school community.”

Come snow days or summer recess, these secretaries can still be found hard at work. Operating a school is a year-round business and that means coming to work even on days when students and teachers are off. In fact, summers are a busy time, spent preparing for when students return in September.

Chatham secretaries also play a large role in keeping our schools safe. With school doors locked to the outside during school hours, they make sure that only people who have legitimate business in the school enter the building.

“Having the office run smoothly helps the school run smoothly,” said M.E.D principal Kristen Reno. “The secretaries know the children and their needs, and the building could not run without them.”

These contributions and more make Chatham’s secretaries our unsung heroes. Their skill, professionalism, and heartfelt dedication to helping others play a key role in making our school community the special place that it is today.

## Chatham’s building secretaries are:

### Chatham High School:

Naureen Perkins  
Debi Layton

### Chatham Middle School:

Pamela Verenazi  
Patricia Schlegel

### M.E.D. Elementary School:

Colleen Dodge  
Alma Kelly

# Building Global Citizens at the Middle School

At Chatham Middle School, students are learning to become global citizens by studying a second language. As the economy becomes increasingly globalized, an important aspect of learning in the 21st century is the ability to communicate with, understand and appreciate other cultures. Perhaps the most important aspect of any culture is its language.

Taking a language other than English is a requirement for seventh and eighth graders, who can choose to study either French or Spanish. These languages are offered because of their importance both world-wide and locally. Along with English, French is the official language of the European Union, is a language of business and diplomacy, and is spoken in the neighboring Canadian province of Quebec. Spanish is spoken throughout Latin America, in Europe and in Asia, and increasingly, across the United States and here in New York. Having a working knowledge of these languages is a valuable tool to students.

Studies show the benefits of learning a second language are numerous. Multilingual students have been shown to perform better on standardized tests, better grasp the mechanics of their own language, have a larger view of their world and are provided with greater college and career opportunities.

“In learning a new language, students gain so much more than just how to speak that language. They learn how to learn a language, and gain critical thinking skills that can be applied to many aspects of their lives,” said French teacher Erin Gansowski.

Aside from learning the vocabulary and structure of French or Spanish, middle schoolers gain insight into the customs and lifestyles of the regions where these languages are spoken.

“It’s not just language and grammar anymore, it’s also learning about and appreciating other cultures. You have to know the cultural aspects behind the language,” said Spanish teacher Jennifer Eckler.

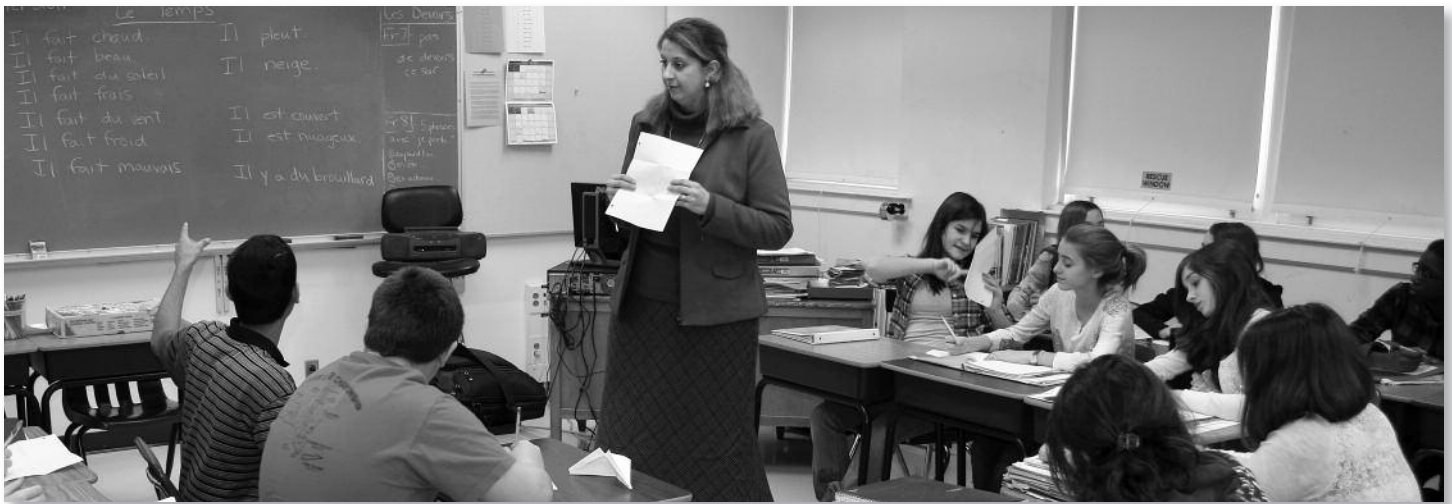
Students learn about clothing, currency, holidays and social customs. Their favorite subjects? “Anything to do with food is



“Students who study a language other than English are ready to listen and respect other people, their culture, customs, and way of life.”

always a favorite, and students always want to know what life is like for kids their own age in other countries,” said Eckler.

“Students who study a language other than English are ready to listen to and respect other people, their culture, customs, and way of life,” continued Gansowski. “In this way our students’ minds are open and are ready to accept new ideas that will come with the future.”



TAYLOR WENK:

# Student Representative to the Board of Education

Taylor Wenk is a senior at Chatham High School who has made it a point to be as involved in her school community as she can. It should come as no surprise then, that she was one of the first students to seek the position of Student Representative to the Board of Education when it became available last spring.

“I was interested in being on the Board because I had never been involved in this aspect of my school and wanted to know more,” said Taylor. “I thought it would be a great opportunity to see what goes into making a school run,” she adds.

In May of 2009, Chatham CSD voters approved a proposition to allow a student representative to sit on the Board of Education as a nonvoting member. After interviewing for the position and being recommended by the student government, Taylor officially became the District’s first Student Representative to the Board of Education on July 1st, 2010.

Like the elected members, Taylor sits on the Board during all regular meetings and workshops, makes regular reports, and has the opportunity to comment on any topics discussed at meetings. As the liaison between the student body and the Board, she also keeps the board informed on the happenings at Chatham High School and the activities of the student government.

Though she is a nonvoting member, her position requires that she be familiar with the issues facing the District, and like all Board members she receives a packet of Board documents and reports the Friday before each meeting.

“I have a stack of reports I need to read that is this thick,” she said with a smile, holding up her thumb and forefinger to form a large C. “I definitely have learned a lot about how much really goes into running a school district. Being a board member is a really big commitment, you have to dedicate a lot of time to the job.”

Aside from being Student Representative to the Board, Taylor has sat on the District’s Strategic Planning Committee since she was in seventh grade and is currently the Chatham High School Student Government Secretary. She is involved with her school’s Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Team, yearbook committee, art and literature magazine, ecology club, and film club. She is also an athlete, playing for the varsity soccer team as well as being on the outdoor track team.



Due to her involvement and demonstrated commitment to her school community, Taylor was selected to represent Chatham and other Columbia County students by attending Governor Andrew Cuomo’s State of the State Address in January. At this televised event, Taylor and other students representing each county of New York were given special seating on stage with the governor.

Taylor said her experiences being active in her school and volunteering have been both rewarding and enjoyable. “I have volunteered since forever,” she explained. “It is part of who I am and helped make me the person I am today.”

Taylor’s term on the Board of Education ends June 30, 2011, at which point another student from the high school will be selected to fill her shoes.



## CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE

Visit our newly redesigned website at [www.chathamcentralschools.com](http://www.chathamcentralschools.com).

The new site boasts a modern, sophisticated design and functionality that reflects the District’s commitment to providing a first-class education in the 21st Century. You will find resources for parents, students and staff, links to Board of Education and budget documents, news of student and staff success, and information on the challenges facing the District. Our website is updated regularly and represents the best source of information available on matters pertaining to the Chatham Central School District.

## ADMINISTRATORS

Cheryl Nuciforo	392-1501
<i>Superintendent</i>	
Chuck Snyder	392-1503
<i>Interim School Business Administrator</i>	
Jean Scheriff	392-2417
<i>Director of Pupil Services</i>	
Kristen Reno	392-2255
<i>Mary E. Dardess Elementary School Principal</i>	
Gordon Fitting	392-1560
<i>Chatham Middle School Principal</i>	
Larry Burud	392-1560
<i>Chatham Middle School Assistant Principal</i>	
John Thorsen	392-4142
<i>Chatham High School Principal</i>	
Karen Bechdol	392-4142
<i>Chatham High School Assistant Principal</i>	

## BOARD MEMBERS *Term Expires*

John Wapner	2012
<i>President</i>	
Elizabeth Macfarlane	2011
<i>Vice President</i>	
Michael Clark	2012
Gail Behrens Day	2013
Francis Iaconetti	2011
James Marks	2011
David O'Connor	2012
Melony Spock	2013
James Toteno	2011
Taylor Wenk	2011
<i>Student Representative</i>	



## Public Library Advisory Committee at Work

Meet the Board of Education's newest committee, the Public Library Advisory Committee (PLAC). They have been meeting regularly since December to discuss and examine the policy, personnel and operations of the Chatham Public Library. The committee is tasked with making recommendations to the Board of Education regarding library matters.

The Board of Education oversees the operations of the Chatham Public Library, one of only two public libraries in New York State that are part of a school district. In August, 2010, the Board voted to establish the Public Library Advisory Committee to provide the Chatham Public Library with a level of oversight and support typical of other libraries.

Committee members were selected by the Board of Education in September and consist of five volunteer community members, two Board members, a representative from the Friends of the Public Library, and a designee of the superintendent of schools. Library director Luisa Sabin-Kildiss also attends PLAC meetings.

PLAC members are: Gail Behrens Day, Nancy Hammell, Karen Malina, John McGowan, Elizabeth Powers, Melony Spock, Al Vink and Karen Bechdol.

The PLAC meets the first Monday of every month, between the hours of 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. at the Chatham Public Library. These meetings are open to the public and information about the PLAC, including meeting minutes, is available on the library's website at <http://chatham.lib.ny.us>.

CHATHAM CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
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CHATHAM, NY 12037

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