



## Change is Ahead in NYS Concerning Public Education

**Over the past several months, a lot has been happening at the state level concerning common core standards, state testing, and teacher evaluations. Due to the advocacy of parents, educators, and lawmakers to improve our education system and roll out the Regents Reform Agenda in a way that makes sense, a number of important initiatives are now taking place.**

**Common Core:** The NYS Education Department's new commissioner, MaryEllen Elia, is spearheading a comprehensive review of the state's common core learning standards in English language arts and math. The review kicked off in October with an online survey that asked the public to weigh in on the current standards. The survey closed at the end of November and its results will be used to inform any changes that NYSED may make to the standards. In the coming weeks, plan on NYSED announcing additional opportunities for educators, parents, and other stakeholders to engage in the next steps of their review.

At the same time, in late September, Governor Andrew Cuomo launched his Common Core Task Force comprised of educators (including Commissioner Elia), parents, and state representatives to undertake a similar review of NY's learning standards and the assessments the state uses to gauge students' proficiency. This review is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Both initiatives will be used to inform one another and are an encouraging step in the right direction, as they seek to make any necessary improvements to NY's learning standards.

**Standardized Testing:** Also encouraging are changes taking place concerning state testing. Over the past several years, NYSED contracted with a company named Pearson to provide the standardized tests it uses to measure students' proficiency in ELA, math and science in grades three through eight. Among other concerns, educators and parents had complained that the Pearson tests were not developmentally appropriate for the children taking the tests and that too many students were unable to complete the assessments in the time allotted. In 2015, NYSED contracted with a different company, Questar (not to be confused with Questar III BOCES), to produce new standardized tests, which the state will begin using in 2017.

For the 2016 testing cycle, which takes place this spring, the state will be using Pearson tests, however they will be shortened so that students are expected to answer fewer questions in the same amount of time. Perhaps most importantly, teams of teachers from throughout the state will be working with NYSED to review the Pearson tests and select the best and most appropriate questions to include in the 2016 tests.

**Teacher Evaluations:** In April, 2015, the Governor signed education law 3012-d which created a new evaluation system for classroom teachers and building principals, to be administered by NYSED in accordance with regulations formed by the commissioner. Individual school districts were required to update their existing annual teacher and principal evaluation plans (APPR) and provide them to the state for approval by November 15, 2015.

While aspects of 3012-d have been controversial, over the past

several months the Board of Regents has worked to develop regulations within the law that make it more manageable and meaningful for schools. One example is the introduction of a hardship waiver that gives districts more time to develop their APPR plans. Chatham applied for and received a hardship waiver, giving our District a more appropriate time frame to conduct thoughtful negotiations between our administration and the unions who represent our educational staff. Doing so allows Chatham to determine how our local APPR plan can support best leadership and teaching practices in a way that works for Chatham and most benefits our students.

**Advocacy Matters:** Many of the positive initiatives taking place at the state level are the result of advocacy efforts by parents and educators for a more effective state educational system that better reflects what our communities want for our children. Many individuals in our district have taken opportunities through professional organizations and grass root efforts to advocate for what is best for our students.

At Chatham, district officials have supported the opportunities for improvement offered by high standards and the Regents Reform Agenda while advocating at the regional and state level for changes that would support more effective implementation by local schools. The Board of Education has been active in advocating the State for positive, effective change through resolution statements as well as through the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA). As recently as October, board members and superintendents from schools in our area met with Commissioner Elia to discuss the future direction of the Regents Reform Agenda and the need for increased state aid.

A major responsibility of the superintendent is to advocate through state agencies and professional organizations for educational changes that would improve education for Chatham's students. In 2013, superintendent Cheryl Nuciforo invited then-NYSED commissioner John King to visit Chatham to see first-hand how the Regents Reform Agenda was working in our schools and how it was hindering delivery of education here. Nuciforo also serves on the House of Delegates and the Curriculum Committee for the New York Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS), where she has opportunity to weigh in on how NY can create a more effective system. She also serves as chair of the Questar III APPR, Common Core, Leadership & Professional Development Committee which has helped shape regional support for schools and shaped the direction of advocacy efforts on behalf of schools in our area.

As any new changes to education take shape in Albany, Chatham representatives will continue to work for positive change so that our students can enjoy the best education available to them.

# For Chatham Graduate, the World is at Her Fingertips

(well, Europe anyway)

During an email interview from Italy, the Class of 2015's Kaitlyn Menegio-Stahl shares where life has taken her in the short while since her graduation in June. The Syracuse University freshman, who will be majoring in neuroscience and linguistics with a minor in Italian language, is spending her first semester studying abroad in Italy.

"I live in the middle of Florence, near Piazza Savanrola which is where my school is, with a host mother. Giovanna is the sweetest woman I have ever met. She takes such good care of me and she makes the best pasta," Kaitlyn says.

There, Kaitlyn is taking courses that allow her to learn about where she is living as well as fulfill her general education requirements.

"When I realized that I got accepted to my first choice school, I was ecstatic. When I realized I was also accepted to study in Florence, Italy for my first semester after a very nerve-wracking phone interview, I was even more nervous," she remembers. "It was a huge leap out of the very small comfort zone that I have but I'm happy that I took the leap because there are not a lot of people who can study abroad during their first year of college!"

Studying in Italy has put Kaitlyn in a great position to travel, meet new people, and learn about different cultures. So far, she has visited twenty cities and towns in Italy, including Venice, Bologna, Rome, and Naples. She has seen a lot of greater Europe as well, places such as Budapest and Vienna, as well as Salzburg, where *The Sound of Music* was filmed. "We did this show during my junior year of high school! I was so excited to see everything in real life," she says. Kaitlyn also recently toured the Auschwitz concentration camp, hiked Mount Vesuvius, and was inside the crater of an active super volcano, Campi Flegeri. "My favorite trip was the one to Paris, France. I have dreamed of going to Paris for as long as I can remember and that dream intensified when I studied French for five years at Chatham. It was the most beautiful city I have ever been to."

Kaitlyn says her hard work and the experiences gained as a student at Chatham prepared her well for undergraduate level work and have put her in an advantageous position amongst her college peers.

"I've heard so many people say that high school didn't prepare them for college. I think the standard of education at Chatham is amazing and all of the teachers that I had cared so much about their students and what they are teaching," she says. "I just finished writing the most detailed research paper of my life on an interpretation of the Basilica di Santa Croce, a church here in Florence, for my architecture class. I think that the research I did for my senior exhibition helped me to do the research for this paper. I was able to manage my time while writing it and I did more than enough research because I knew how to use databases, the library, etc..."



Kaitlyn in front of the *il Duomo di Firenze* (Cathedral of Florence) wearing her Chatham Track and Field shirt.

Kaitlyn says that her taking more challenging AP classes in high school has also proven to be a big help for her in college.

"AP World History saved me this semester. Mr. Pearson taught in a way that made me remember things from sophomore year. My architecture class also covers Mediterranean history and I never thought that I would remember anything about the Ottoman Empire or Constantine."

Next semester when she begins taking neuroscience classes, Kaitlyn will be relying heavily on the scientific note taking skills she learned in AP Biology. She also feels the AP calculus and English courses she took in high school have put her in a strong position to meet the demands of her college studies. "You really do not realize how important these classes are until they help you in little ways along the road," she says.

Kaitlyn's advice for college-bound students? First, don't let the cost of a college stop you from applying. "I was so worried about the cost of Syracuse University that I almost didn't apply. Don't worry! The cost will work itself out. I promise. Colleges aren't trying to filter out people who can't pay full price."

Also, visit the colleges you are interested in and schedule an interview. "I visited Syracuse five times before applying. After sending in my application, I went for an interview and it benefited me so much. The man interviewing me played jazz saxophone and ran cross country, just as I did. Also, I brought my CV binder with me," she adds, referring to her portfolio of personal accomplishments that all Chatham students must compile as a graduation requirement. "He was impressed. That binder isn't as ridiculous as you think!"

Kaitlyn says it's important not to be afraid to ask for help with school work when you need it, and don't worry if you don't know right now what career path you want to follow, take fun classes and figure out what you like to do.

"We have a great tone set in Chatham and not a lot of schools have that. The students of Chatham are so lucky that the teachers are eager to help, the resources are there, the extra-curricular activities are there, and that the Chatham community is there. The local community supports the school and students endlessly, and it is such a beautiful thing. That is something that I have here in Florence as well. SU Florence is the oldest American university in the city of Florence so it is famous (in a good way!) among the Florentines. People are willing to help you if you explain, in Italian of course, that you go to Syracuse."

And Kaitlyn's final piece of advice? "Study abroad! Just get out into the world and expose yourself to new things, new people, and new places. The people you meet while you're abroad will stay with you for the rest of your life."

# With Consolidation Planning Off the Table, Board Focuses on Development of Long-Term Vision

In August of this year the Board of Education adopted a District goal to study the impact of our school's shrinking enrollment and looming financial challenges, and investigate all the possibilities for addressing that impact. As a part of that goal, the Board unanimously voted on September 29 to take consolidation planning off the table so that it could step

back and revisit what is most important to our school and community.

During the winter and spring of 2015-16, the Board will focus on engaging the community in the development of a long-term vision for Chatham's overall educational program. The Board plans to use this common vision to guide its decision making as it explores all options available

to maintain and improve Chatham's educational program, address the impact of our shrinking student enrollment, and manage the District's finances. The Board is currently developing plans to involve as many community stakeholders as possible in this visioning process. Opportunities to participate will be announced by the Board in the coming months.

## Chatham Central School District Goals: 2015-2016

The Board of Education formed goals for the 2015-2016 school year with guidance provided by a workgroup of parents, students, community members and staff. This group met five times during the spring of 2015 to provide their perspective on the full spectrum of District programs and operations. Their comments on Chatham's strengths and possible areas of improvement were a critical part of the Board's goal setting process. The Board officially adopted these goals in August, 2015.

- During the 2015-2016 school year, collaborate with the community by engaging stakeholders in development of a shared vision for the future of the CCSD that informs our long term goals and planning.
- Define the potential impact of enrollment and financial challenges facing us, and explore strategies that address these issues, while maintaining CCSD's cultural

and programmatic strengths, and offering opportunities for future improvement.

- Engage in a collaborative process to update the vision for use of instructional technology, and present an updated plan reflective of that vision for Board consideration by February, 2016.
- Set and monitor progress toward building and/or department achievement targets that support a strong academic program that prepares our students for college/career and allows them to maximize their individual potential.
- Align current wellness initiatives with the new Wellness Policy, with a 2015-2016 focus on resources and programming related to student mental and emotional health.

## Safe Routes to School Sidewalk Project

Students and visitors to Chatham Central Schools are enjoying improved sidewalks, thanks to the Village of Chatham's Safe Routes to School sidewalk project. The project, which was entirely paid for by a Department of Transportation grant to the Village of Chatham, replaced or installed sidewalks and curbing along the Chatham Middle School side of Woodbridge Avenue, from the train crossing all the way down to Kinderhook Street. The most notable improvements can be seen from the tracks to the softball field, where there had been no real sidewalk to speak of before. The project also replaced the sidewalk along School Road, which is the drive leading to the elementary and high school campus. The construction took place from October through December of this year by Hudson Hills Contracting and makes for attractive, safer pedestrian access to all our schools!





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# Social Media Curriculum Helping Students Become Digital Citizens

Providing students with applicable skills for the world that they interact with is a big part of the CCSD educational mission. There can be little argument that in today's world, social media has become a major aspect of our everyday lives. Unfortunately, with the opportunities offered by increased social media also come risks. New for the 2015-16 school year, Chatham CSD is rolling out a Social Media Safety Curriculum for students from kindergarten to the twelfth grade.

"We wanted the kids to understand not only social media safety, but also

learn how what they do online follows them through when they graduate, apply to college, and go to get a job," explains Chatham High School social worker Tracy Kelly, who helped develop the social media curriculum.

Topics include safe online practices, privacy, cyberbullying, scams and predators, digital footprints, online gaming, networking, online portfolios, and social media's role in applying to colleges or looking for work. Because the District could not find one strong comprehensive program that focused on social media safety, curriculum

writers drew from a number of effective teaching resources from trusted providers like **Commonsense-media.org** and **Netsmartz.org**, and then created original lessons for topics where no resources were available. Depending on the grade level and topic, our instructional staff are delivering these lessons through special programs, school-wide assemblies, and regular classroom instruction.



### 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>Mary E. Dardess Elementary School Principal</i>	392-2255
Lindsay Morris <i>Mary E. Dardess 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 HS Assistant Principal</i>	392-4142

### BOARD MEMBERS

	<i>Term Expires</i>
Melony Spock <i>President</i>	2016
Teri Conte <i>Vice President</i>	2017
Denise Barry	2018
Muriel Faxon	2016
Beth Hover	2018
Chris Kelly	2017
Edward Knight	2017
David O'Connor	2018
Craig Simmons	2016
Jack McKeon <i>Student Representative</i>	2016