

South Colonie Schools

EXPECTING EXCELLENCE — DELIVERING RESULTS

Taking Time to Celebrate Our Successes

South Colonie Schools have a lot to be proud of ...

Dear South Colonie Parents, Staff, Community Members,

As we begin 2017, the entire South Colonie school community takes pride in sharing our accomplishments and upcoming initiatives. The South Colonie Board of Education, staff members, and parents are committed to providing a quality education for South Colonie children. The question is: How are we doing? Please take a moment to browse through this special "year in review" publication, which presents some interesting facts regarding South Colonie's educational program, as well as on-going initiatives, cost avoidance efforts, and overall financial efficiencies.

Jonathan Buhner, Superintendent of Schools



Ground was broken in December on the new Forest Park Elementary School library, part of the Colonie 2020 Capital Improvement Project. This project will also add a new library to Roessville Elementary School, and modernize facilities for Art, Music, and Technology at Colonie Central High School.



A brief review of our overall achievement as a school district

▶ The District continues to monitor all students carefully to help each individual child succeed. We know all students can be successful if high expectations are aligned with thoughtful resource allocation and support. As a District, we are proud of the fact that we work with all students and their families and that we are a diverse high achieving Suburban Council school district.

▶ South Colonie is currently ranked 11th out of 83 Capital Region school districts in an analysis performed by Buffalo Business First's "Guide to Upstate School Districts."

▶ South Colonie's graduation rate regularly reaches or exceeds 90 percent.

▶ While all students are now required to graduate with a New York State Regents Diploma, nearly 50 percent of the Class of 2016 earned an Advanced Regents Diploma, and 32 percent of the class had a Grade Point Average of 90 percent or higher.

▶ Nearly 9 out of 10 graduates go on to attend two- or four-year colleges and universities. Graduates were accepted into excellent schools such as: RPI, Marist, Tulane, Binghamton, SCCC, Niagara, Manhattan, Fordham, Cleveland Institute of Music, Emerson, St. John's, UNC-Chapel Hill, LeMoyne, University at Buffalo, University at Albany, SUNY-Oswego, Albany College of Pharmacy, Colgate, Syracuse, New Hampshire, RIT, Hartwick, Ithaca, Saint Rose, Siena, HVCC, and Russell Sage.

▶ Colonie Central High School students are well rounded with 65 percent of students, on average, being involved in athletics, clubs, and various organizations. The District takes pride in providing a wide range of opportunities for all students.

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Nearly 50 percent of the Colonie Central High School Class of 2016 earned an Advanced Regents Diploma, and 32 percent of the class had a Grade Point Average of 90 percent or higher.

- ▶ Pupils start learning about careers in elementary school with exposure to career fairs and Junior Achievement projects. By high school, many of our students have focused their interests and are taking upper level courses, Advanced Placement offerings, STEM electives such as Forensic Science, Biotechnology, Aerospace Engineering, CISCO Networking, Web Art & Design, and a variety of rigorous courses in fine arts such as Computer Graphics, Music Theory, Art History, Graphic Arts, Advanced Studio in Drawing and Painting, and Digital Photography. Colonie Central High School continues to run on a nine-period schedule to enable students to earn additional credits including college-level courses prior to graduation.
- ▶ The District is one of the original 10 Project Lead the Way schools. The nationally-recognized pre-engineering program, founded in 1997, also offers curricula in General Engineering and Biomedical Engineering.
- ▶ Four Colonie Central High School seniors were named Commended Students this fall in the 2017 National Merit Scholarship Program.
- ▶ The District has broken ground on the Colonie 2020 Capital Improvement Project. This work is modernizing facilities for Art, Music, and Technology at Colonie Central High School. New libraries are also being constructed at Forest Park and Roessleville Elementary Schools.
 - ▶ Another important part of the Colonie 2020 project involves the installation of WiFi in all instructional areas as well as voice-over Internet phone systems.
 - ▶ South Colonie pupils are offered opportunities to earn a number of college credits while in high school by taking classes in English, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies through U-Albany, HVCC, The College of Saint Rose, RIT, and SUNY-Adirondack. The District continues to develop a variety of college credit agreements to support and assist our students and their families with reduced credit costs and expanded “College in High School” opportunities.
 - ▶ CCHS students are very competitive at US FIRST Robotics – a national event where young people solve engineering design problems in teams. Parents with careers related to the fields of Science and Engineering have guided and supported Team 250 for many years.

- ▶ In May of 2016, 248 CCHS students completed 366 Advanced Placement exams with 78 percent earning a score of three or higher.
- ▶ South Colonie continues to focus on early literacy initiatives including Pre-Kindergarten, Full Day Kindergarten, and the Summer Literacy Academy. These strategies have been successful in helping children attain literacy skills sooner.
- ▶ Our teachers and administrators continue to set the bar high with on-going regional training, authoring books and curriculum material, presenting at national and state conventions, and participating on local boards related to education.
- ▶ South Colonie is annually ranked amongst the top Districts for staff members who have acquired Advanced Degrees. Six middle school and high school educators have also been named NYS Master Teachers.
- ▶ South Colonie educators have been named Teachers of the Year by business and professional organizations for leading and mentoring today’s youth.
- ▶ Colonie Central High School was ranked 5th in the area in 2016 for having the best teachers.
- ▶ South Colonie’s business administrator earned 2016 Business Administrator of the Year honors by the NYSASBO, and a Colonie High School administrator was named NYS Assistant Principal of the Year by SAANYS.
- ▶ South Colonie student athletes have been named Scholar Athletes for numerous years. Last fall eight varsity teams were recognized with Scholar Athlete distinction with GPA’s above 90%.
- ▶ Students benefit from a wide range of fine arts programs such as the CCHS Line & Cue Theater Group, middle school drama clubs, music programs at local, regional, and state levels, and art work featured in local galleries, libraries, and businesses.
- ▶ South Colonie recognizes and welcomes its senior citizens by offering evening courses at reduced or free rates, granting free admission to student athletic events, plays, dinner theaters, concerts, as well as transportation to theater events.

▶ The District celebrated its 10th annual Toys For Tots “Stuff the Bus” campaign in December, helping the U.S. Marine Corps provide gifts for needy children during the holiday season. School organizations have also been honored for their Character Education efforts to assist the community in events such as CCHS iCARE’s efforts to combat poverty. Additionally, students from many schools regularly visit and volunteer with senior citizens in the Town of Colonie.

▶ The District hosts a Regional Safe Schools Committee which monitors safety procedures and emergency plans for many schools in the Colonie area. This is an excellent opportunity for our school officials to train and receive assistance and advice from EMS and police professionals.

▶ Safety systems at all schools have improved as a result of new technology and appropriate adjustments to safety plans.

▶ Safety is a theme that runs throughout our UPK-12 school programs. This includes bus safety, bicycle safety, offering Driver’s Education, providing year-long, and research-based anti-bullying programs. Additionally, we have promoted partnerships with the Town of Colonie and the Colonie Police Department to provide the DARE program District-wide, as well as a School Resource Officer at the high school. Working together, we strive to keep all students on a positive pathway.

▶ South Colonie school bus drivers have been honored over the years for driving safety and acts of heroism with awards from the Albany County Traffic Safety Division and Hudson Valley AAA. Dedicated bus drivers also coordinated with local businesses this winter to provide coats, hats, and gloves to 1,000 children living in the upstate region.

▶ The District website has earned several electronic communications Awards of Excellence from National and New York State School Public Relations Associations. The site is also in the process of being redesigned and updated.

▶ South Colonie has a District-wide emergency alert information system that automatically notifies parents by telephone in the event of an unforeseen school closing. Also, School News Notifier (SNN) — an “opt-in” email news alert system for parents and community residents. This currently has nearly 3,000 subscribers.

▶ The District has transitioned to an online student information system, ASPEN, to further improve parent and student engagement.

Examples of Cost Effectiveness

▶ South Colonie is moving toward full implementation of one of the largest operating solar energy systems of any public school district in the state. The program is projected to save the taxpayers more than \$1.7 million in energy costs over a 20-year period. One thousand (1,000) solar panels are already in full operation with many more planned for installation.

▶ South Colonie is a member of the New York/Island Cooperative Bidding Program in an effort to save money on items it purchases. The EDS cooperative offers its members significant benefits associated with bulk purchasing.

▶ South Colonie is ranked 64th out of 84 Capital Region school districts (in the lower third) in cost per pupil or actual expense per student, while being ranked near the top 10 for academic performance on an annual basis — strong results with strategic spending.

▶ The District’s tax levy was below state tax levy limitations allowing for tax rebates for South Colonie residents.

▶ The District regularly inspects all facilities to address normal maintenance needs. This helps to reduce long-term capital project expenses.

▶ The District uses a computer-automated system to monitor and control heating and lighting in all of its schools. The system is zoned for specific rooms and can be controlled centrally from a computer, or from remote locations.

▶ Insurance savings: The District participates in a School District Health Care Consortium to help control health care expenses. The District also offers a self-insured program for dental and optical care, and prescription drug coverage, yielding savings on premiums and administrative fees. The District self-funds its Worker’s Compensation program and participates in a cooperative for the purchase of Worker’s Compensation excess insurance, providing savings on administrative costs.

▶ The District utilizes BOCES services when it is cost effective to do so. These shared services allow for a portion of costs to be reimbursed through state aid. The District also participates in BOCES cooperative bids.

▶ The District purchases technology such as computers, tablets, servers, copiers, and bandwidth cooperatively through BOCES to take advantage of group pricing and aid reimbursement.

▶ The District currently ranks in the top 10 percent for administrative efficiency out of 432 upstate school districts.

▶ Attention to school safety and potential safety risks has reduced premiums paid on liability insurance.

▶ The District purchases fuel for its school buses and vehicles through a cooperative bid, saving thousands over New York State contract pricing.

▶ Out-of-district transportation routes are doubled up and consolidated whenever possible to lower transportation costs.

▶ The District implemented a new school bell schedule in 2015 to save on overall transportation costs by lowering the number of daily bus runs and providing additional time for runs to ensure buses are on time.

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Upcoming 2017-18 Budget Calendar

DATE/TIME**TOPIC**

Tuesday, February 7, 7:00 p.m. District Office	Regular Board Meeting — <i>Topics</i> — Transportation, Operations & Maintenance, Secure Youth Detention Facility
Tuesday, February 28, 7:00 p.m. District Office	<i>Support Services</i> — Board of Education and Central Office expenses, Public Information/Printing/Postage, Legal Expenses, Insurance, Debt Service, Interfund Transfers, Continuing Education, and Interscholastic Athletics
Tuesday, March 7, 7:00 p.m. District Office	Regular Board Meeting — <i>Topics</i> — Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services
Thursday, March 16, 7:00 p.m. Saddlewood Elementary School Cafetorium	<i>Fringe Benefits & Instructional Program</i> — Enrollment Projections, Instructional Staffing, Support Staffing, Textbooks, Curriculum Development, Staff Development, Library & Media Technology, Building Budgets, Summer School, Alternative Ed and Information Technology
Tuesday, March 21, 7:00 p.m. District Office	Regular Board Meeting (first draft of the budget)
Tuesday, March 28, 7:00 p.m. District Office	<i>Budget Topic</i> : Work Session (to include budget adjustments)
Thursday, March 30, 7:00 p.m. Shaker Road Elementary	Special Budget Meeting — Community Budget Forum
Tuesday, April 4, 7:00 p.m. District Office	Regular Board Meeting — Budget Review — Second budget draft presented
Tuesday, April 11, 7:00 p.m. District Office	Regular Board Meeting — Budget Adoption
Tuesday, May 2, 7:00 p.m. Saddlewood Elementary School	Public Hearing on Recommended Budget — Regular Board Meeting — Immediately following the Public Hearing on the budget
Tuesday, May 16 11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.	District Budget Vote & School Board Elections Voting at all five district elementary schools ONLY

Thank you to all parents and community members for reading about your South Colonic Schools!