

# 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 2018, 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 W. Buhner, Superintendent of Schools



*Students work in the new Forest Park Elementary School library (also shown on right). Crews put the finishing touches on the new Roessleville Elementary School library (top right photo).*



## Colonie 2020 Phases I & II Near Completion

Thanks to the support of our community, South Colonie is nearing completion of Colonie 2020 Phases I and II. We are pleased to report that both phases are under budget and on track for completion within the next few months. While many regular maintenance issues were addressed within this capital project, some critical improvements were also made including District WiFi access, updated phone and clock systems, updated boilers at the high school, new libraries at Forest Park and Roessleville Elementary Schools, and renovated Art, Music and Technology rooms at the high school. Board of Education President Ed Sim shared that "WiFi access now allows for the widespread use of new tools for learning such as Chromebooks and iPads. We thank the community for giving our students and staff members access to these important tools. Additionally, we are so pleased that the improved facilities will benefit South Colonie students for many years to come."

## 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. We are proud of the fact that we are a diverse, high achieving Suburban Council school district.

► An analysis conducted by Buffalo Business First's "Guide to Upstate School Districts" ranked South Colonie 11th out of 83 Capital Region 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, 56 percent of the Class of 2017 earned an Advanced Regents Diploma, and 33 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. The Class of 2017 was accepted into excellent schools such as: Aesthetic Science Institute, Albany College of Pharmacy, Arizona State, Binghamton University, Boston University, Cazenovia, Clarkson, Colgate, College of Saint Rose, Cornell, Eckerd, Endicott, Farleigh Dickinson, Hofstra, HVCC, Liberty, Mount Ida, UNH, Northeastern, RPI, Rhode Island, Roberts Wesleyan, RIT, Roger Williams, Russell Sage, SCCC, Siena, St. John Fischer, UAlbany, Union, University of Buffalo, Utica, and Vermont.

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

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*(Top photo) one of the new Art rooms and (bottom photo) Music spaces at Colonie Central High School — part of Colonie 2020 Phases I & II which is nearing completion.*



► Pupils start learning about careers in elementary school through 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 credits 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.

► Two Colonie Central High School seniors were named Commended Students this fall in the 2018 National Merit Scholarship Program, and one student is a Semi-Finalist.

► South Colonie pupils are offered opportunities to earn a number of college credits while in high school by taking classes in Art, English, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies through UAlbany, HVCC, The College of Saint Rose, RIT, Schenectady County Community College, and SUNY-Adirondack. The District continues to develop a variety of college credit agreements to support and assist our students and their families by providing reduced credit costs and expanding our “College in High School” opportunities.

► Our 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, which calls Colonie Central High School its home.

► In May of 2017, 261 CCHS students completed 402 Advanced Placement exams with 70 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 resource commitments have been successful in helping children attain strong literacy skills early.

► 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.

► South Colonie is annually ranked among the top districts for staff members who have acquired Advanced Degrees. Seven middle school and high school educators have also been named NYS Master Teachers.

► South Colonie educators have been named Teachers of the Year by local business and professional organizations for leading and mentoring today’s youth.

► Colonie Central High School was ranked 5th in the Capital Region 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.

► Students benefit from a wide range of Fine Arts programs such as the CCHS Line & Cue theater group and middle school drama clubs. They also engage in music performances at local, regional, and state levels, and have art work featured in area galleries, libraries, and local 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 and concerts.

► The District celebrated its 11th 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. Schools have also been honored for their Character Education efforts to assist the community. The CCHS iCARE team has worked diligently to combat poverty. Additionally, students from many schools regularly visit and volunteer to assist senior citizens at the Town of Colonie Senior Programs.

▶ 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 are being improved as a result of new technology and refinements made to existing structures.

▶ Safety is a theme that runs throughout our programs. This includes bus and bicycle safety, Driver's Education, year-long anti-bullying/character education programs. Additionally, we have initiated partnerships with the Town of Colonie and the Colonie Police Department to provide the DARE program. District-wide, we also have a School Resource Officer at the high school. Working together, we strive to keep all of our schools moving forward on a positive path.

▶ South Colonie school bus drivers have been honored over the years for their safe driving and acts of heroism with awards from the Albany County Traffic Safety Division and Hudson Valley AAA. This winter, dedicated bus drivers also coordinated with local businesses to provide coats, hats, and gloves to 1,500 children living in upstate New York.

▶ 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, the District's School News Notifier (SNN), an "opt-in" email news alert system for parents and community residents, has more than 3,000 subscribers.

▶ The District continues to transition its online student information system, ASPEN, to further improve parent communication and engagement.

## Examples of Cost Effectiveness

▶ 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 in the lower third in cost per pupil (64th of 84), while being ranked near the top 10 for academic performance on an annual basis — strong academic results are connected to the strategic allocation of resources.

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

▶ The District Board of Education and Facilities Committee inspect 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 centrally controlled from a computer or 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. This yielding saves on premiums and administrative fees. The District also self-funds its Worker's Compensation program and participates in a cooperative to purchase Worker's Compensation excess insurance providing savings on administrative costs.



### South Colonie solar grant work continues

While the project has taken some time, steady progress continues on South Colonie's 1.69 megawatt solar panel initiative. Over the last three and a half years, the District, in concert with a solar power provider, has installed and commissioned approximately 4,000 panels on campus and at numerous remote network locations. The District is now producing power at the following locations: District Bus Garage, CCHS Athletic Fields, Cordell Road in Schenectady, Troy-Schenectady Road in Latham, Pine Hill Road in Seward, Big Boom Road in Queensbury, and Route 9 in Saratoga Springs. With a projected annual solar kilowatt generation of 1,797,334 and an estimated annual utility inflation rate of 1.5 percent, the District conservatively estimates a savings of \$2.1 million over 20 years. When fully completed, this renewable clean power production will be one of the largest dedicated to a NYS school system.

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## More Examples of District Cost Effectiveness

- ▶ 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 school district and New York State contract cooperative bids.
- ▶ The District purchases technology 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.
- ▶ Ongoing 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.
- ▶ Out-of-district transportation routes are doubled up and consolidated whenever possible to lower transportation costs.
- ▶ Colonie 2020 Phases III & IV, approved by residents in November, allows for a consistent “capital debt off, capital debt on” approach to address maintenance issues while having little or no impact on the local tax levy. This timed approach was also utilized in Phases I & II of the Colonie 2020 capital project.

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

## Join us for a 2018-19 Budget Meeting

<b>DATE/TIME</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>
Tuesday, March 6, 7:00 p.m. Roessville Elementary School	Regular Board Meeting (first draft of the budget presentation)
Tuesday, March 20, 7:00 p.m. Shaker Road Elementary	Regular Board Meeting (second draft of the budget presentation/community budget forum)
Tuesday, April 10, 7:00 p.m. District Office	Regular Board Meeting — Budget Adoption
Tuesday, May 8, 7:00 p.m. Saddlewood Elementary School	<b>Public Hearing on Recommended Budget</b> — Regular Board Meeting — Immediately following the Public Hearing on the budget
Tuesday, May 15 11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.	<b>District Budget Vote &amp; School Board Elections</b> Voting at all five district elementary schools ONLY

*More community budget meetings listed on the District website*