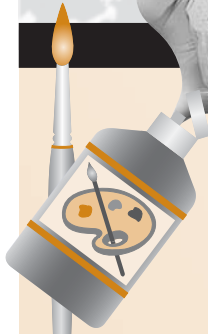


ELEMENTARY edition

A PUBLICATION FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS



Readin', Writin' and Surfin'...the Web Elementary school-21st century style

Today, with just a few keystrokes, children have ready access to such web sites as Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia with more than a million articles that users can learn from and add to. Multi-media software such as Power Point (used in many upper elementary classrooms), helps make a project on the ancient Mayans come to life with words, music, photos, even rotating 3-D diagrams of ancient ruins.

Although these tools for learning may seem a little foreign to families—particularly those whose memories of school research projects include the heavy-duty Encyclopedia Britannica and pyramids constructed from sugarcubes—the foundations of elementary school learning are still much like those of days gone by.

Old school meets new school

We can only guess at the types of technology and jobs that await today's kindergartners. The Internet and e-mail, staples in many homes and workplaces today, were cutting-edge just a decade ago.

What teachers do know is that a solid understanding of the basics—reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies and the arts—is still what young children need most.

To help children be truly successful in an ever-changing world, elementary school learning needs to offer



children practice with the tried and true, plus provide them with opportunities to use technology and to sharpen the skills that are essential to everyday living and working. Consider these examples of how old school is meeting new school at the elementary level:

▲ As our neighborhoods and work worlds become more diverse, an ability to speak a language other than English and understand the world's many cultures is becoming a necessity—both for employment and citizenship. So, although kindergarten still includes finger painting and practice with the ABCs, these experiences may incorporate early foreign language skills such as combining azul, rojo and amarillo (Spanish for blue, red and yellow) to make new paint colors or

learning that “A” is for abuela (grandmother).

▲ Elementary mathematics, which many adults remember as mostly the skill-and-drill memorization

of addition and multiplication tables, now involves abstract thinking, answering open-ended questions, and seeing math's connection to the everyday world.

For example, fifth graders may be given this problem: “How many half gallon cartons of ice cream can fit in a freezer?” To find the answer, students first need to figure out what they already know (e.g., what a half gallon of ice cream is shaped like). They then begin to brainstorm about how to solve the problem. “What

tools will I use to measure the half gallon and the freezer?” “What size freezer do I need to fill?”

This type of lesson allows children to practice traditional math skills such as geometry, measurement, fractions and multiplication.

It also requires them to think creatively, to problem-solve, to work with classmates, to experiment, and to know where to go for more information.

These “soft skills” will help them as they move ahead in school—whether juggling

the increased school workload, friendships and extracurricular activities that come with middle school (goal-setting, time management) or collaborating with teens and teachers in other school districts on web-based research projects (people skills, problem-solving). “Soft skills” are also what today's employers say they look for in the people they hire.

▲ Even writing, which seems like a fairly straightforward skill, is now taught to help students understand its many real-world purposes, both traditional (personal communication and essay) and modern (composing brief, but informative e-mail and text messages.)

Tools for schools

Technology, especially computers, is becoming commonplace in most elementary classrooms. Students may use computers to compose written work, find answers to questions, learn about places around the world and practice basic skills, such as reading, listening and math.

Increasingly, computers and other technology will play an increasingly important role in creating rich learning environments in which students to learn.



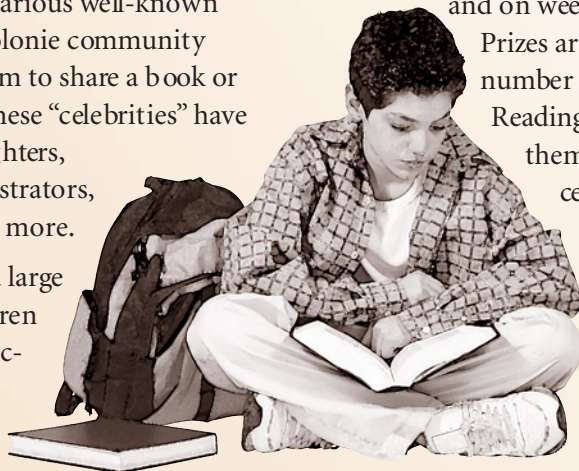
South Colonie children celebrate their love of reading

It's probably the most basic of all the educational skills that elementary children learn in school - to READ.

Cultivating a lifelong love of reading at a very young age is critical to a child's development and South Colonie Schools are continually looking for fun and creative ways to do just that. Some of those programs over the years have include:

- **The celebrity reader.** Over the years, various well-known people from the school and South Colonie community have joined students in their classroom to share a book or two during a daylong read-a-thon. These "celebrities" have included town officials, police, fire fighters, emergency personnel, district administrators, McGruff the Crime Dog, parents and more.

The "celebrity readers" choose from a large stack of books to share with the children with each based on the school's character education theme. The books tell stories of honesty, respect, trust, cooperation, perseverance and other important traits. The children often dress up in clothing and uniforms symbolizing the type of careers they'd some



day like to pursue. They also have an opportunity to ask the "celebrities" questions about their careers and learn more about their personalities.

- **Parents As Reading Partners:** This is perhaps the most popular program in our elementary schools. Throughout the school year, parents are encouraged to turn off the TV at home and read with their children during the evening and on weekends during a multi-week period. Prizes are awarded based on the minutes and number of books read. Most Parents As Reading Partners campaigns are based on themes and wrap up with a special celebration in each school.
- **Scholastic Reading Challenge:** At various times, students and their families are invited to participate in the Scholastic Reading Challenge where they join students from around the world welcoming the new year.

Other reading initiatives are continually being planned each year to promote reading in youngsters and make it a fun activity for children and their families.

SAFE SCHOOL continue to be a top priority

With continuous threats of school violence dominating the headlines these days, it's important for parents and residents to know that the South Colonie Safe Schools Committee is in place to monitor district buildings and facilities.

The role of the committee, made up of administrators, teachers, support staff, parents and South Colonie citizens, is to continually review the district's Safe Schools Plan for dealing with and avoiding a crisis in our schools. The committee has an Emergency Management Plan in place that meets the requirements of New York State's Project SAVE legislation. There are district policies and penalties addressing everything from codes of conduct to procedures for removing disruptive students from the classroom to policies for fingerprinting all new district employees.

"The plan is quite comprehensive," said Superintendent Michael Marcelle. "We want our staff, our parents and the public to know that we are taking every precaution to keep our buildings safe and conducive to learning."

FREE AND REDUCED MEALS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS

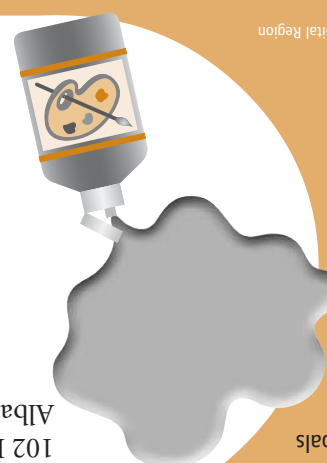
The South Colonie Central School District participates in the National School Lunch Program providing nutritious meals for students free or at a reduced price of 25 cents. Free or reduced priced meals are provided daily based on household size and income. All information submitted by applicants is kept strictly confidential.

To see whether your family qualifies for this program all you need to do is complete an application available at your child's school or contact the South Colonie Food Service Department at 869-3576. The application is also available on the district web site under Food Services at www.southcolonie-schools.org. You will be notified within a few days if you qualify for the program.



Produced in cooperation with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service.

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