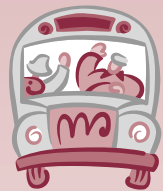


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south
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focus

Preparing World Class Citizens



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December, 2005

District web site gets information upgrade

Many new categories added to home page

If you haven't surfed the South Colonie web site recently, you haven't surfed at all.

Since the beginning of the school year, the district home page has received a major upgrade with several new categories added to the list of information offerings. The changes are meant to give South Colonie parents and residents instant access to their schools, with information that's complete, current and available at their fingertips when they have time to access it.

"In today's hectic world it's increasingly important for our district stakeholders to have access to information when their busy schedules allow it," said Superintendent Michael Marcelle. "The web is a powerful communications tool for schools. We want to build a culture here where district parents, staff, students and community residents look to our web site as their first source for news."

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Forest Park kindergartners celebrate Thanksgiving.

New technology speeds up district communications

Network now running faster and more efficiently

Whether you send an occasional email to friends, shop on the Internet for a bargain or head up your company's Information Technology department, the key to electronic happiness is simple — I want it now!

There's nothing more frustrating than a web site that crawls across the computer screen when you're scurrying for information or an application that crashes on your boss's deadline. To prevent these annoyances and keep things productive it's imperative that companies, and school districts for that matter, stay on the cutting edge of technology.

South Colonie is doing just that. This school year, the district has converted its technology system to a fiber optic Wide Area Network (WAN) that is now operating at gigabit speed. Translation: It's making things *real fast* for the district's 1,000 employees who log their computers on each day.

Continued on page 2 ... tech upgrades



John Murphy receives his PTA award from Veeder Elementary School PTA Vice President Bonnie Bellas.

State honors for PTA parent

John Murphy, a former PTA parent at Veeder Elementary School, was honored this year by the New York State PTA as an outstanding leader. Murphy received the Jane Skrzypek Volunteer of the Year Award in recognition of outstanding PTA contributions. To earn the award, the recipient must be a member of a PTA, volunteer above and beyond the scope of his or her PTA position, and exhibit leadership qualities. Every year since 1991, the New York PTA recognizes an outstanding leader who, by his or her actions, inspires others to volunteer and assume leadership positions.

Murphy, over the years that his children Emily and Joshua were students at Veeder, volunteered in many areas — chairing events from beautification to hospitality, helping out in the classrooms, and serving as both Veeder's PTA Council representative and secretary for the South Colonie PTA Council.

... tech upgrades

Continued from page 1

"This faster type of connectivity is enabling our electronic applications to run much more quickly and efficiently," said South Colonie Information Technology Director Jack Adams. "System users are experiencing virtually no waiting time between screens and Internet users virtually no delay time when they access web sites. It's everything we had hoped for."


The district began researching the upgrades last spring when the local BOCES put the project out to bid. During the summer, fiber optic cables were run and switches installed at the district office, transportation department and eight school buildings. These buildings were connected to the district's network center at Colonie Central High School and the new system became operational in October.

The WAN network now moves data eight times faster from building to building and the Internet speed is five times faster than on the T1 line the district had been using. Students, teachers, staff and administrators using the PC network are now experiencing quicker response times for Internet and emails use and accessing student records and electronic attendance and grading.

Cost-wise, the district's system upgrades are eligible for state aid because they were completed through BOCES. Two other school districts have this type of connectivity in the area — Bethlehem and Niskayuna — and are also saving on the cost.

From the perspective of the IT Director, Adams said, "This is an extremely important step for our technology infrastructure because it gives us the flexibility to deploy simultaneous electronic applications on the network at any time without degrading the network (crashing it). We can also use remote software to manipulate PC desktops from off site locations like the network center."

In the future, these improvements will enable the district to engage in computer video streaming to classrooms as an educational tool — something that couldn't be done with the old system — and participate in live webcasts from classroom to classroom and outside the district.



Where's the game?
Wondering who the CCHS Raiders are playing this week? Why not visit the South Colonie web site? All CCHS sports schedules are posted under the Athletics category. Take a look at www.southcolonieschools.org



Sand Creek Middle Schoolers show their pride at this year's School Spirit Day and pep rally.

... district web site

Continued from page 1

What's new to the South Colonie web site?

- **Administration** – Under Administration there are new categories for Athletics (contact information, sports schedules and directions to athletic events), Budget (information on the current budget, tax rate, upcoming vote, voter information), Board of Education (budget development information, meeting schedule/minutes, news), Continuing Education (contact and general program information, course book and registration form), Food Services (contact information, free and reduced meals, school menus and news items), and Transportation (contact information, bus vote information and results), rules of the bus and route information, transportation news).

- **Capital Project** – Under Capital Project there are new categories for History of the \$22.8 million project approved by voters in December, 2003 including details for work at each school and an Update categories with news and photos of how the work is progressing.

- **For Parents** – Comprehensive information, helpful articles and downloads on topics such as anti-bullying, attendance, health services, learning standards, NCLB, NYS testing, school closings, parent newsletters, learning tips, enrollment, school schedules, student behavior and more.

- **Publications** – All district publications are now available to download and print with Adobe Reader or Microsoft Word. They include district, staff and parent newsletters, school curriculum guides, budget publications, the district calendar, high school profile, standards book and more.

- **School news** – An abundance of school news and pictures updated and published regularly. Anyone there that you recognize?

NYS students scoring above the national average

New York State's fourth and eighth grade public school students are showing steady improvement on national standardized tests. Both grades are also producing test scores above the national average in math and reading performance.

According to 2005 results released recently by the New York State Education Department:

For New York State fourth graders

- The average reading score was 223, compared to 222 in 2003 and 215 in 1992. The national score in 2005 averaged 217.
- 81% scored at basic or better in math, up 17% from 1996. The national 2005 average is 79%.
- Overall, 33% were proficient in math and reading compared to 34% in 2003 and 27% in 1992. The national average is 30%.
- 69% were at or above basic level of competency, compared to 67% in 2003 and 61% in 2002.

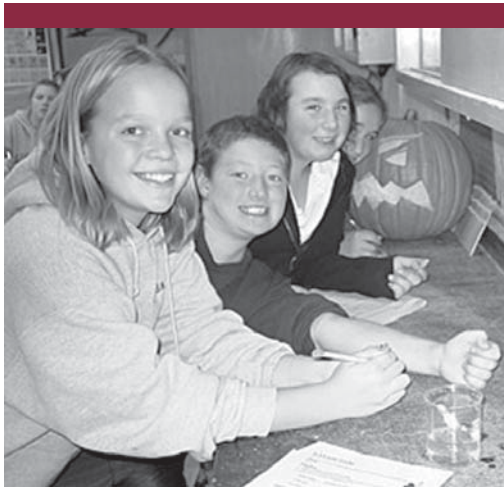
For New York State eighth graders

- The average reading score was 265, the same mark as 2003 and 1998. The national score in 2005 averaged 260.
- 70% scored at basic or better in math, a 9-percentage point gain since 1996. The national 2005 average is 68%.
- Overall, 33% were proficient in math and reading compared to 35% in 2003 and 32% in 1998. The national average is 29%.
- 75% were at or above basic level of competency, compared to 75% in 2003 and 76% in 2002.

New York State raised its academic standards in 1999 as part of a push to improve all levels of instruction. The results shown here are part of a national report required under the federal education reform law known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The tests are given to samples of students nationwide. About 4,000 to 4,500 New York students take the test. South Colonie releases its results each spring in its Report Card issue of the *In Focus* district newsletter.

10,000 Books campaign

South Colonie would like your help in collecting new books to donate to the schools rebuilding in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The 10,000 Books campaign — *because a good story revives the spirit* — is being run in cooperation with the area BOCES. As each school library media center collects books, children from grades K-12 will have their reading interest and levels represented. Please help us restock the schools devastated by the hurricane by encouraging your child to help others in need by donating a new book.



Science with a spooky twist

Team 7-Up at Lisha Kill Middle School held its Science Haunted House Lab on Halloween. The lab consisted of seven learning stations, all pertaining to the seventh grade science curriculum. Students enjoyed working with Thermo Pad Prints, Dancing Bugs, Glow Sticks, Black Light Germs, Crushing Cans, Floating Magnets and the always favorite Fog Maker. Students learned about heat, density, chemical reactions, bacteria and viruses, air pressure, magnetism and sublimation.



Halloween march

Students from Roessleville Elementary School march in a costume parade to kick off Halloween festivities this fall.



Intergenerational Day at Forest Park Elementary

The fourth graders at Forest Park Elementary School held an Intergenerational Day this fall — inviting their grandparents into their classrooms for learning and refreshments. The activity combined English Language Arts with Social Studies as the students interviewed the senior citizens about historic events in their lives and used their writing and communications skills to prepare a report.



Veeder Elementary School PTA and staff serve up spaghetti to help a Louisiana school recover from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

Veeder community hungry to help hurricane victims

The Veeder Elementary School community including faculty, staff, their families, the PTA, students and their parents gathered this fall to raise awareness (along with a few bucks) for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Varnado High School, a small rural school with approximately 187 students, is located in Angie, Louisiana. Varnado suffered extensive damage during Hurricane Katrina and it has been an uphill battle ever since. They needed our help.

The Character Education Committee at Veeder School decided to hold a spaghetti dinner and silent auction to raise money for Varnado High School. In addition to offering their time, PTA members baked and donated dessert items. The school was decorated in a fall motif including linen tablecloths donated by Morgan Linens and beautiful fall foliage. The turnout was tremendous. Over 300 people attended the dinner and participated in the silent auction, which was available for bidding the entire week. The items donated included gift certificates to local restaurants and businesses as well as baskets of goodies. Many staff members also offered special outings including a shopping spree at Barnes and Noble, a day of ceramics at Color Me Mine and Laser Tag at Zero Gravity.

Veeder School worked in conjunction with SEFCU, WTEN-Channel 10, the *Times Union* and the National Education Association (NEA) to raise this money. SEFCU agreed to match any monies raised by Veeder. In all, the spaghetti dinner and silent auction pulled in an astounding \$4,348! That means over \$8,696 was sent to assist Varnado High School rebuild.

South Colonie News & Notes

Writing award for the *In Focus*

This newsletter — *In Focus* — was honored in the fall with an Award of Excellence in writing by the New York School Public Relations Association as part of the 26th annual Communications Contest. The contest, which includes more than 600 entries in 16 categories from across New York State, continues to be one of the largest competitions of its kind in the nation.

NYSPPRA is a chapter of the National School Public Relations Association. As a statewide group of professional school communicators, members are committed to the development and dissemination of communications designed to engage parents, staff, community residents and partners in education.

Fun with reading at Shaker Road



Shaker Road Elementary School students enjoy some new reading opportunities during the kickoff of their fall book fair. The event culminated with a school Family Fun Fair in the evening shared with parents and other guests.



A night out at Sand Creek Middle School

Sand Creek Middle School students enjoy a night out with friends at this year's grades 5 & 6 Family Fun Night. For more on this evening please visit at school web page at www.schoolcolonieschools.org.

Monteiro joins BOCES Board

South Colonie Board of Education member John A. Monteiro has been elected to the Capital Region BOCES Board of Education. A special election was held as required by law to fill the remainder of the three-year term left vacant due to the passing of BOCES Board member Joan M. Ricciardi of South Colonie.

Dollars for Scholars

South Colonie Dollars for Scholars brings thousands in scholarship money to Colonie Central High School seniors. Parents: We need your input to make this the premiere scholarship organization of South Colonie. For more information search the web at www.socoloniedfs.org or call or email Dennis Cafaro at 452-0689 - dfs@socoloniedfs.org. Meeting dates and times are posted on the web. Please join us at our next meeting.

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