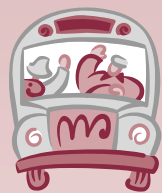


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# focus

Preparing World Class Citizens

February/March, 2007



Transitional Kindergarten (from half day to full day) was introduced in South Colonie this year at Roessville Elementary School, where children in this reading center are becoming more active participants in their daily learning and getting better prepared for first grade.

## South Colonie getting children off to a productive start in school

# Understanding the A, B, C's of the Transitional Kindergarten program

South Colonie's youngest students are making a smooth transition into their school careers these days thanks, in part, to the district's newest educational initiative known as Transitional Kindergarten.

The program was piloted at Roessville Elementary School in September in response to last year's New York Board of Regents discussion that all districts offer full day kindergarten by the year 2010. Transitional Kindergarten is a concept designed to ease youngsters into that full day setting and better prepare them for a full day of school in first grade.

### The program works like this:

In September, Roessville kindergarten children started the school year divided into AM or PM classes of 10-12 students. Those students attended school on a traditional half day schedule (2.5 hours per day) as they do in the district's other four elementary schools.

The change occurred at Roessville in January when each kindergarten class began an extended day schedule and transitioned into a full day kindergarten program at the end of the month. That full day schedule will continue for the remainder of the school year.

How does Transitional Kindergarten help youngsters? Smaller class sizes in the first half of the school year enabled Roessville kindergarten teachers to get to know students better, determine their learning tendencies and address the specific skill needs of each child.

Switching to a full day schedule in the second half of the school year provides longer periods to devote to concept development, reading comprehension, skills development and socialization time. It also offers more time for students to become active participants in their learning and become better prepared for a full day education in first grade.

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## ...Transitional K

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"The smaller class sizes in the beginning gave us the opportunity to work in small groups of three or four students and really individualize the program," said Roesseville Kindergarten teacher Colleen Leach. "That resulted in more individualized attention and gave us a chance to establish routines, develop social skills and set up important classroom management systems."

Roesseville's other two kindergarten instructors, Mary Ellen Pachucki and Katherine Rickert, say the full day classes are affording youngsters more opportunity to play together and broaden their social skills through various learning experiences.

"The children are now able to take the skills from their early introduction to school and put them to use with a new set of peers," Rickert said. "It's wonderful to see the progress they've made."

An added benefit, Pachucki said, is that the kindergartners now have time in their school day to delve into special instruction areas like health, music and art from different teachers. That just isn't possible in a half day program.

"Students are exploring learning opportunities in more depth than ever before," Pachucki said. "This will really help them adjust better to first grade."

### **What's next for the district?**

The district's goal is to debut Transitional Kindergarten at a second elementary school in September and add one school per year until all are on board. However, where and when that happens depends on such factors as building space, new student enrollments in March and cost. As the district puts together the 2007-08 budget it will be making a decision by April on where Transitional Kindergarten will be offered.



### **Transitional Kindergarten: How does it work?**

- **In September, each kindergarten class is divided into half day classes of 10-12 students under one teacher.**
- **From September to December, kindergartners attend school in a traditional half day schedule. (2.5 hours per day in an AM or PM class)**
- **In late January, children transition into a full day kindergarten program.**



### **Transitional Kindergarten: Program strengths**

- **Smaller class sizes in the fall enable teachers to get to know students' learning styles and address each child's specific and individual learning needs.**
- **Second half full day schedule offers longer periods to devote to concept and skills development, reading comprehension and socialization time.**
- **Children have time to be active participants in learning**
- **Students are better prepared for first grade.**



## CCHS student helps team capture 'We the People' competition

Colonie Central High School senior Heather Staats was among a team of high school students that captured first place in the regional "We the People" competition in February. The team is from the New Visions Law & Government program at the Capital Region BOCES Career & Technical School.

The "We the People" competition is a national initiative where students "testify" before a panel of judges in a simulated congressional hearing explaining the philosophical and historical foundations on which the American political system is based. In doing so, competitors demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles and have an opportunity to evaluate, and take and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues.

The statewide We the People: The Citizen and Constitution, an intensive curriculum that provides students with a fundamental understanding of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and directed by the Center for Civic Education in Los Angeles. The New York State Bar Association implements the program in New York. Nationwide, the program is offered at the upper elementary, middle, and high school levels and has reached nearly 30 million students during its 19-year history. Competing students studied for months with their teachers to prepare for their roles as experts testifying on constitutional issues in a simulated congressional hearing.

## King series features Lisha Kill artwork

Members of the Lisha Kill Middle School Human Relations Club attended a reception for participating in an art contest sponsored by The Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King Lecture Series at Siena College in January.

Club members drew pictures focusing on the theme — "The Future Belongs to Us." The reception included good food, speakers, African dancers and most importantly — a display of the students' posters for public viewing.



### Fun with science at Roessleville

Roessleville Elementary School students had a bit of fun with science at Mr. Fish's Super Scientific Circus assembly — The Anti-Gravity Show. Mr. Fish demonstrated routines with balance, centripetal force, gravity, the gyroscope effect, and musical sound. The children learned a great deal about science through the use of spinning plates, the Australian bull roar, peacock feathers, and a floating beach ball ... not to mention some terrific bubbles.



Members of the Lisha Kill Middle School Human Relations club attended a Siena College reception where their artwork honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was featured. Left to right are Club Co-Advisor Shana Marra, fifth grader Nina Williams, eighth grader Aly Ira, Siena College President Fr. Kevin E. Mackin, OFM; and Club Co-Advisor Rocky Tassie.



## Volleyballers net GPA award

The Colonie Central High School girls volleyball team was honored by the South Colonie Board of Education in January for outstanding academic merit. Girls Volleyball was named the Fall 2006 Scholar/Athlete Team State Champion by the New York State Public High School Athletic Association, Inc. The team earned a cumulative grade point average of 96.7. This is the third highest GPA for a team in the 16 years the Athletic Association has given out this award. The players (not all pictured above) are Elizabeth Cardella, Kelly Piche, Brittany Conroy, Angela Johanning, Meghan Dralle, Lindsay Branche, Lindsey Frazier, Alaina Ranalli, Alexandra Olsiewski, Brianna Welch and Nicole DiGiuseppe. Thomasa Nielsen is the Coach and Daniel DeMarco is the Assistant Coach.

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Superintendent of Schools

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**In Focus Editor:** John K. Noetzel

## Deadline for transportation request April 1

South Colonie Central School District residents who want transportation for their children to non-public schools during the 2007-2008 school year must file written requests with the district no later than April 1.

Written requests for transportation are to be made every year. Request forms are required for all actual and anticipatory (students on waiting lists) non-public school enrollments.

Request forms are available from the district's Transportation Department, located at 2 Winston Place, Albany, New York 12205. Forms may also be requested by calling 869-8527 weekdays between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m.

## Kindergarten registration

The South Colonie Central School District will hold kindergarten registration and screenings for the 2007-08 school year the week of March 12-16. To download "A Parent's Guide to Kindergarten" visit the district's web site under Publications at [www.southcolonieschools.org](http://www.southcolonieschools.org).

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