A Letter from our Superintendent  |  Late Winter 2022

Dear Friends,

This has been an extraordinary year filled with a variety of challenges that our school and communities are facing. In Elmira, we are leaning into our Community Schools programming now more than ever for familiar connections and sustainable support. For the last decade, we have collaborated with our community to build a robust and sustainable Community Schools catalog of services. These programs and partnerships are critical now more than ever before.

I invite you to read more about these programs in the pages that follow within this newsletter. We are particularly proud of the services that are available inside our schools from community agencies. As a way to round-out supports in our buildings for students and families, our community partners are making invaluable contributions to our school communities. Housing agency staff inside our schools not only provides necessary access to students, but also allows the programs to intervene in a time efficient manner.

We have found a home for many community agencies inside our schools – knowing that when we break down barriers and seamlessly present services to students and families in a unified way, we can spend our efforts and energy getting to the important work. Agencies who work inside our schools have access to students in need and are able to intervene at the appropriate level. Ideally, having community agency representation in our schools leads to proactive and preventative-style programming for our students.

Our programming with The Glove House has been particularly active this year as many families are facing loss and related trauma. The Glove House Grief and Trauma Counseling Program provides direct support for all youth in the Elmira City School District Grades K – 12. Grief Support Counselors provide immediate individual support to students that have experienced the loss of a loved one or a significant traumatic event. This individual support is aligned appropriately with the family’s needs, after the counselor meets with the student and family, to determine the level of support needed. After initial loss and connection, the Grief Support Counselor is maintained through ongoing support groups during the school year. The Grief Counselor can also provide guidance for families and connect them to services in our community. This support may be in the form of counseling, connecting them to natural supports, or simply just spending time with the youth to act in a mentoring role.

This is just one of many examples of how the District is supporting our students’ social and emotional needs. As we continue to work toward a brighter future, we know that we are stronger together.

Hillary J. Austin
Superintendent of Schools
Elmira City School District

FROM THE COVER

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is part of the New York State curriculum standards. From lesson planning to empathy training, it is all hands on deck for staff and students to come together to learn how to resolve conflict positively, relate to others in an understanding way and to develop habits that are healthy.

Winter’s white blanket of snow this January and February has allowed students to take their SEL outside and enjoy the healthy benefits of fresh air, warm sun and lots of physical activity.

Our students are learning that playing together is fun, nature is the best playground and that laughs and giggles are needed in order to prepare for learning.

DID YOU KNOW?

Family-school-community partnerships are a shared responsibility and reciprocal process whereby schools and other community agencies and organizations engage families in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways, and families take initiative to actively supporting their children’s development and learning.

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What is the best way to connect with students during a developmentally difficult time? RELATIONSHIPS. Middle school students thrive on relationships and we have a high priority of connecting with students in meaningful ways in Elmira. Our teachers and staff, in addition to our community partners, are connecting from the beginning. Relationships are built on trust and our restorative practices help in mitigating conflict and preventing misguided behavior. Our community partners, inside our school buildings, play a vital role in the healthy development of youth.

“As an active partner housed inside our school building, CASA-Trinity is a powerful example of high quality relationship building. With a classroom of their own among the halls of Ernie Davis Academy, confidants and specialists are accessible to our students throughout the school day. Ms. Laura, a Trinity staff member in our school, has developed strong relationships with students. Ms. Laura and CASA Trinity programming is critical to helping our students navigate difficult situations they face,” says Mr. Werfelman, Principal of Ernie Davis Academy.

Ms. Laura, a CASA Trinity Prevention Specialist, works in Ernie Davis Academy with students in grades 7-8. Broadway Academy and Elmira High School also have CASA Trinity Prevention Specialists. We sat down with Ms. Laura to talk about her role and how she serves as a positive mentor for students to check-in with during the day.

WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY FOCUS?

“Students come to me with a variety of issues. CASA Trinity has a focus on drug and alcohol related issues and prevention is a primary focus. Most of the time, students need someone neutral to talk with about their emotional struggles. I work on getting to know the students and help identify what programs might help them. Learning about each of their individual needs is most important. I utilize my background and education in psychology and early childhood development every day.”

TELL US ABOUT A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY.

“Students can be referred to me or seek me out on their own. My work is based off of referral forms that come from within the school or from the CASA Trinity referral system outside of school. Parents and guardians do provide consent for me to work with students. Often, sensitive topics are discussed so parental engagement is important. During the day, students can get a pass to come see me. They stop by and visit, leave me notes and will often spend their lunch period with me talking individually or as a group. Students tell me that even a few minutes of time together can change the trajectory of their day.”

~MS. LAURA

WHAT PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE?

“At Ernie Davis Academy, we focus on three primary offerings of CASA Trinity – Too Good For Drugs, Life Skills and Girls Group. These programs are fully explained https://casa-trinity.org/. But in essence, we are focused on prevention of the use of drugs, alcohol, and healthy coping skills for emotional struggles. Our programs typically begin with three informative sessions during the initial in-take phase, including one session with parents/guardians and two sessions with the student. This is how we measure where a student is in order to identify the appropriate level of intervention needed.”

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO WORK FROM INSIDE THE SCHOOL?

“Accessibility. Having direct contact with students is critical to engaging with the students who need our services the most. My classroom at C104 inside Ernie Davis Academy is just beyond four corners and on the way to the cafeteria. I am easy to find and students know where to find me when they need support. I am able to build relationships, developing connections every day, by being apart of their school experience.”

MS. LAURA ANGLADA
TRINITY PREVENTION SPECIALIST
ERNIE DAVIS ACADEMY
OUR STUDENTS ARE LOOKING UP TO ONE ANOTHER

Broadway Academy + Broadway Elementary Connections

Something magical occurs when you invite older students back into the classrooms of elementary buildings - students naturally assume the role of mentor and younger students instantly look up to their older peer role models. This natural phenomenon has occurred between groups of ninth grade students of Broadway Academy and a classroom of third graders next door at Broadway Elementary School throughout this school year.

“The joint building itself, our 9th graders sharing a campus with intermediate students in grades 3-6, lends itself naturally to a fluid and strategic partnership. Mentoring is an increasingly popular way of providing guidance and support to young people and we are finding the students, on both ends of the age range, are benefiting greatly,” says Mrs. Carrie Rollins, Building Principal of Broadway Academy.

Much of the success of a mentoring program is dependent on the structure and consistency of service delivery so pre-planned visits and thoughtful lesson planning is key.

“We try to pre-plan the lessons and projects in a way that pull in the interest of both groups of students. Our focuses so far have been in ELA (English Language Arts), ABL (Adventure Based Learning) and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). Our 9th Grade Academy mentors are not shy about sitting down and helping their younger mentees and our younger students are eager to spend time with our older students,” continues Mrs. Rollins.

Mr. Reidy’s 9th Grade Social Studies students visited Mrs. Morrell’s third grade classroom several times throughout first semester. Students wrote together while reflecting on MLK Day and the historical relevance of the observed holiday. Together, students wrote essays, presented their ideas to their peers and worked together on self portraits now displayed in the hallway.

Ninth Grade Broadway Academy National Junior Honor students created a Minute to Win it fair for all fourth grade classrooms at Broadway Elementary. Adventure-based learning projects were available for students to explore. From cart races to popsicle balancing, students worked collaboratively in a positive and fun atmosphere.

Students dissected a traditional turkey dinner to determine what nutrients are found in foods from the holiday feast. Everyone enjoyed the collaboration and are looking forward to doing more science projects together.
Elmira is a city with rich athletic pride. This new stadium not only represents the District’s vision to uphold our strong sports programming — the new athletic complex also represents a commitment to upgrade our community’s assets and facilities. From energy performance savings to state-of-the-art features, the new stadium is both a smart project and an endeavor to unite school spirit. I personally can’t wait to enjoy games under the Friday night lights with long time friends and family,” says Josh Palmer, ECSD Board of Education member.

To promote our physical education and athletic programs, the District is building a new athletic complex at Elmira High School, including a new turf field, track replacement, new bleachers, scoreboards, bathrooms and sound system.

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With the help of the African American Read-In of the Southern Tier, NY, our schools are celebrating Black History Month by reading and listening to African American literacy. Volunteers from Corning Incorporated and the Corning Museum of Glass (and others), are reading stories based on African-American themes to elementary-level classrooms. The African American Read-In Program in the Southern Tier is a volunteer-based organization that visits schools as a way to offer African American literacy as a traditional part of Black History Month. Each participating Elmira classroom has a book that has been purchased for their class and a volunteer reads the book aloud to students. This year, the program is split between in-person and virtual to accommodate pandemic planning. Teachers incorporate a short pre-lesson activity specific to each grade level so students are prepared to think deeply and critically about the story.

At the end of the lesson, the students discuss the essential questions of the text and share ideas that are important to the theme of diversity and friendships despite differences. Volunteer readers ask students questions like “Why is it important to be kind?” “Do you think it’s important to be a good citizen?” Most often, our students impress the volunteers with their inclusive insight and global thinking.

Essential Questions
1. What is courage?
2. What is kindness?
3. What is a hero?
4. Why does kindness matter?
5. What can I learn from the story that can help me be a better citizen?

January Super Power Word of the Month
re·flec·tive
/reˈflektiv/
 adjective
1. providing a reflection; capable of reflecting light or other radiation, “reflective glass”
2. relating to or characterized by deep thought; thoughtful, “a quiet, reflective, astute man”

Each month at Diven Elementary School, students in grades Pre-K - 2 focus on Super Power words of the month! As a kick-off to each month, students gather in the gymnasium in their Super Power capes to listen to a lesson and story about the word of the month. Our Diven Super Scholars are all working to be examples of each of these words every month as the while building school culture and climate.

All throughout the month of January, Diven Dolphins focused on the word reflective. Reflective means “I look back to plan for success ahead.” It’s a very important power to use because it allows you to help set goals based on what you have already learned in the past and what you want and need to learn in the future. Being REFLECTIVE also means that you think about what kind of person you want to be and how you want to treat people. Ms. Legare read a story in January’s Town Meeting that helped our Dolphins become more REFLECTIVE.

The Super Power Word for the Month of February is GRIT, which means “I work hard and when I struggle or fail, I persevere.” We know that even if you “fail” at doing something, it is OK — we keep working hard and we don’t quit. In Town Meetings in February, Diven Dolphins read a story called “Rosie Revere, Engineer” who learns GRIT even though her first attempts at doing same things do not always work out.

During each month’s Town Hall meeting, Diven Awards are handed out to students. Awardees are presented a certificate that they can bring home to show their families! These awards are meaningful and recognize students for showing great effort.

Our Hendy Huskies are engaged in a virtual story read by African American Read-In of the Southern Tier, NY volunteers from Corning Incorporated (a retired engineer) in February during Black History Month.
Social and Emotional Stadium of Learning

SEL (Social Emotional Learning) is an integral part of child development and is a process that helps develop healthy self-image, manage emotions, feel empathy for others, maintain supportive relationships with friends or family members as well as make responsible decisions.

When integrated with an academic curriculum, SEL facilitates engaged classroom participation and retention of concepts. Social Emotional Learning is happening across the District and is being incorporated into both traditional classrooms and, like Pine City’s gymnasium take-over, in the specialty areas as well.

The Pine City SEL Stadium is a student-centered experience for our pre-K - second grade students in the gymnasium. During PE class, or throughout the day when students need a calming atmosphere, the SEL Stadium is being used as a restorative space for students to regulate their emotions.

From cooperative play games like relay races to reading and tactile experiences, the Pine City SEL Stadium offers space for children to play together with shared goals. In a skilled and strategic way, students are learning to agree on rules and organize their play with each other.

“When schools implement Social Emotional Learning programs like Pine City’s SEL Stadium, the impact is felt community-wide. Our Pine City teachers observe students regulating their emotions with skills learned from the Social and Emotional Stadium in physical education class. They gymnasium space is used to develop an atmosphere for students to relax and grow through the challenges they find in school,” says Mrs. Rhonda Baran, Pine City Principal.

The SEL Stadium includes a meditation labyrinth, a reading amphitheater, stacking cups (with instructions), yoga cards, “Would You Rather” magnetic placards, anti-anxiety coloring books, a tactile tent (students in crisis sometimes benefit from the feeling of the brushing of the parachute across themselves) and a behavior reflection clipboard.

Stadium Stations

Behavior Reflection Zone: Students are utilizing a Zone Reflection Sheet to cool down while moving beyond the situation with a higher-level outcome.

Tactile Space: Classes are using parachutes as an activity that provides students in crisis an outlet for physical, emotional and social needs. The activity provides distraction or a new stimulus for refocusing. The parachute area is draped low for students to move through and underneath.

Would You Rather? Would You Rather Questions are placed in sleeves on the wall and changed out weekly. This popular activity provides students a unique opportunity to consider choices of things they may not typically think about.

Reading Amphitheater – The Pine City gymnasium provides its own little Reading Amphitheater Corner full of books related to social and emotional learning.

Cooperative Play: Utilize SEL and Cooperative Play activities from the Centervention website to help students de-escalate and refocus.


Labyrinth – Using Floor Tape we can create the labyrinth and this is a peaceful calming opportunity for students to slow down, breath and refocus.

“RECOVERING, REBUILDING, AND RENEWING

Ensuring intentional and meaningful inclusion of social emotional learning (SEL) across all aspects of operating strategies is critical to support the well-being and success of students, staff, and families. Along with physical health and well-being, Pine City as well as our other schools are prioritizing social emotional well-being – not at the expense of academics, but in order to create the mental, social, and emotional space for academic learning to occur.
Being college – and career-ready can support students for a lifetime of health and it’s never too early to talk about their future.

Fourth grade Beecher Elementary students recently got an inside look at trade jobs during a visit from the Journeymen Electricians, IBEW Local 139.

“There’s a huge need for the trades workforce and it’s a great option for students. School experiences like this allow students to see what’s available to them when they graduate,” said Jon Mazzaraco, Training Director of the Apprenticeship Program.

As part of the ELA unit on colonial trades, Journeymen Electricians, Masters of their Trade, came to Beecher Elementary to share their skill and background. From solar panels to Jacob’s Latter electrical transformers, students learned about the benefits [and dangers] of electricity and magnetism.

Students asked inquisitive questions around their electro-unit and science FOSS lessons and shared their own stories about members of their families who work as electricians, the kind of work they do, and the educational opportunities that are available to them.

A key career readiness skill is to get kids talking, encouraging them to talk with each other, reach out to others not in the classroom, and to engage in deeper conversations.

Innovation at Work
Beecher Students Spark Interest in the Trades

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Thank you to these Master Tradesmen for their time and talent. The impact of their visit is far reaching to our students.
Free College Courses for High School Students

Many of our Elmira High School students are getting a headstart on college credits during high school. This not only will save them money (ACE Courses are FREE for high school students), but college credits also impress higher education admissions departments. Earning college credits in high school is a great way for students to take initiative, strengthen their chances of admission, explore their interests, or try something new. By gaining credits toward a degree while still in high school, students can graduate faster, spend less money, and position themselves for success.

School counselors of high school students work regularly with Corning Community College and TC3 in order to provide access to ACE Courses to accelerated high school students. Accelerated College Education (ACE) is a concurrent enrollment program in which high school students take SUNY CCC courses at their high school, earning college credit through SUNY CCC.

Courses like Accounting Practices, Essentials in Art, Introduction to Biology, Environmental Science, Professionalism and Business Communications are generally designed as introductory courses for first-year college students. Both transfer and career courses are offered. Transfer courses are broadly accepted in many higher level institutions as credits. Many students of Elmira High School are on track toward already earning an Associates Degree in tandem with their high school diploma.

Additionally, Corning Community College offers students The High School College Education Online (CCEO) program—a separate program where high school students can take Online courses taught by SUNY CCC instructors. These are separate courses than what is offered at their high school and are college credit-bearing. What is Credit-Bearing Course? A Credit-Bearing Course is a college course that offers credits toward graduation.

Students heading to college or technical school benefit from the Greater Southern Tier BOCES Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program too. Hands-on experience raises your understanding beyond the level of textbook theory and gives you a practical advantage in the college classroom or laboratory. The CTE Program makes it easy for students to explore different careers and prepare for college. Students may receive college credit through this program and gain knowledge that will enhance their understanding of college courses. Successful CTE Program grads may even receive advanced placement through articulation agreements that GST BOCES has with many colleges. Students have a variety of choices to prepare them for college or their career. Students who are interested in learning more should contact their school counselor.

DID YOU KNOW?

Last year, the Class of 2021 Report Card for College Readiness:

151 students graduated with at least 1 college credit
4 students received an associates degree at their high school graduation (having earned enough college credits during their time as a high school student to earn a college degree)

Climb Your Way to Success

Strong relationships with teachers and school staff can dramatically enhance students’ level of motivation and therefore promote learning. And we know when we work toward developing strong relationships with students, they become more academically engaged, have stronger social skills, and express positive behavior.

What do you LOVE about these students? Our teachers and staff have a LOT to say! This February, Fassett Elementary teachers are spending time filing their students hearts with notes of love and appreciation. Each classroom has hearts displayed outside of their room where faculty can leave thoughtful sentiments to their students.

“Each day, I see teachers filling in hearts in the hallway for students, leaving little notes for them to read. Sharing positive praise not only makes our students feel loved, it is a wonderful opportunity for our staff to express their love,” says Mrs. Mary Cox, Fassett Elementary School principal.

Express Shout-out

On Thursday, February 10, 2022, Elmira High School hosted the Winter 2022 Graduation Ceremony. We wish to congratulate our 61 winter graduates for their many accomplishments. Commencement is a ceremonial event in which we are able to celebrate our student’s greatest achievement. Alongside their family, teachers and friends, our newest Elmira City School District graduates received their diplomas! Upward and onward excelsior, graduates!
SAVE THE DATES!

July 5 - August 4, 2022

Summer Boost for Grades K-6 -- The Elmira City School District is proud to be able to provide a fun and engaging opportunity to support our students learning this summer, featuring guest speakers, activities and all kinds of other fun things. The program runs Monday - Thursday (no program on Friday) each week. Breakfast, lunch and transportation will be provided. If you are already planning on being at Summer Cohesion, we will be able to have kids start there, come to Boost, then return to Cohesion and finish the day. Stay tuned for more information!

ICYMI You Tell Us

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Elmira City School District
February 8, 2022 at 12:02 PM

Renovations to the Ernie Davis Academy pool are well underway and we can’t wait to open it up to our community in August 2022! Updates include air handler systems and boilers, HVAC units, diving boards and touch pads, starting blocks, new pool filters and heaters, a new concession stand, restrooms and locker rooms.

While the updates are more structural in nature, we are excited to maintain the integrity of our swimming successes in Elmira. Chemung County Sailfish and Express Girls and Boys records have been preserved for display. The new and improved Thomas Natatorium is making a splash!

#GoExpress

National Compliment Day was on January 24th and our Beecher Elementary staff used the wonderful day to brighten someone’s day and to give credit for a job well done! Compliments are contagious and our students and staff are using their powerful effect to add sunshine during this darker winter month! You shine brightly, Beecher!

On Sunday, February 13, Ms. Shelle Green of Coburn Elementary organized a Valentine’s Skate Party at Joycrest for her students. Family, School, Community: Together We Succeed!

We’re listening. Please connect with us on social media and share your positive stories about the Elmira City School District. Use #GoExpress when posting!

@ECSD_Schools on Twitter, or Elmira City School District on Facebook.

STAY CONNECTED

#GOEXPRESS

@ElmiraCitySchoolDistrict

ELMIRACITYSCHOOLS.COM
The Reading Buddy Program at Parley Coburn Elementary School is improving comprehension and building a love for literacy!