Dear friends,

As we embark on the second half of the 2019-2020 school year, it is truly amazing to see the progress our students have made in the first half of the school year. We look forward to finishing the academic year strongly, in partnership with our families and community. As a District, our focus continues on rounding out the rich academic rigor in our schools with community-based partnerships that address the growing social and emotional needs of our students. Collaboration among our community partners has never been stronger and we are grateful for the impactful relationships that endure to aid students in achieving their goals.

Our schools, district and community leaders focus planning on the most important subjects for shaping the future of education. Critical topics like literacy and effective instructional strategies for struggling readers, career and college readiness in our secondary environments, teacher preparation and professional learning, and capital improvements to classroom infrastructure are key to building successful and sustainable educational programs. Striking the right balance over academic years and cohorts, is key to addressing the challenges of 21st century learning. The educational landscape of today’s classroom includes a balance of digital curricula versus traditional lessons, emotional learning alongside the core curriculum domains, the role of data juxtaposed with the experienced intuition of our educators, and effective student engagement in an increasingly global world. Our outside-of-the-box approach to reaching student needs is impressive.

As you read through this community newsletter, we hope you’ll gain an insider-understanding of the many positive dimensions of public education and the resulting achievements of our student population. The year 2020 brings exceptional vision to our planning and we always appreciate the opportunity to showcase the diversity of Elmira!

Go Express!

Hillary Austin
Superintendent of Schools
Elmira City School District

Our Ernie Davis Academy math students recently participated in The Career Development Council’s Architectural Awareness Program and presented their re-imagined designs of both the Kmart and Tops Plaza’s. Together they combine creativity, critical thinking and technical skills to explore the reuse of properties within the community. As an architecturally based project, the disciplines of Science, Mathematics, Art, History and English are woven into the curriculum. Thank you to The Triangle Fund, the Southern NY Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and Hunt Engineering for this wonderful opportunity!

Thank you to the Elmira Enforcers who recently visited Broadway Academy to greet students with early morning high-fives and fist pumps to get their day started on a positive note!

CAPTION FROM COVER

Mrs. Stanton’s Pre-K class at Pine City Elementary School is busy painting! Do you have a child turning four before December 1st? Read more about Pre-K Open Enrollment on Page 9.

Mrs. Kozemko’s Pre-K class at Riverside Elementary School pictured just after a “Restorative Practice” circle where they sat on the carpet for storytelling and sharing of ideas.
OUTSIDE OF THE BOX
TEACHING AND LEARNING

Pictured below is Ivan Miranda. Seven-year-old Ivan is a second grader in the Elmira City School District. He is an English as a Second Language (ESL) student and is working very hard to learn the English language. Ivan’s Dad is from Mexico and speaks Spanish. As part of Ivan’s ESL curriculum, he began writing stories about himself and his family. Then, he began to write fictitious books from his imagination. His favorite animal is a tiger. Ivan worked with his teacher’s to write a story entitled “The Tiger Broke Out!”

Ivan illustrated the book with imaginative pictures and worked with the school library technician to ‘publish’ his book! As a way to encourage his love for literacy, Mrs. Dutton in the library worked with Ivan to create an ISBN number and catalog the book officially in the library’s collection! Students can now check out Ivan’s book - and they have!

This inclusive program was inspired by Ivan’s passion for reading and writing. He hopes to become an author some day and have his books available in public libraries! Go Ivan!

MUY BUENO!

From left: Pine City Library technician Mrs. Dutton with Ivan Miranda in front of the shelf where his own book is displayed.
As part of our Community Schools initiative, social and emotional learning is a key response strategy to the growing needs of our students. Research studies have repeatedly proven that people who are mindful are not only happier, they are also healthier. Mindfulness is the concept that a person notices, without judgement, in the present moment. We accept the moment for what it is. With a calm mind, we are empowered to handle the situations in which we find ourselves, even when they are difficult or uncomfortable.

SENSORY PERCEPTIONS

One of the easiest ways to practice being mindful is to use our sensory perceptions. What do you see in the moment? What can you smell? What are you able to hear and what can the sounds tell you about your environment? What can you taste in the moment? What are you able to touch in this moment? And how do you feel in this moment, where is your energy directed? What kind of mood are you in? Knowing how you feel, without judgement, helps us to make conscious decisions as to how we will respond.

When we are being mindful we are not regretting the past or anxiously awaiting the future. Our minds are calmer, and our emotions are more easily regulated in a peaceful presence. The breath is the gateway to being mindful. Taking slow deep inhales, pausing, and allowing full exhales, then pausing again has a calming effect on the nervous system. When our nervous system is calm, we are better able to think clearly, and we make better decisions.
"I teach our students, when feeling agitated or angry, to take a few S.T.A.R. breaths. Stop. Take a deep breath. And ...(pause)... Relax and release. When you feel calmer, you will be better able to handle your difficult situation with kindness and compassion, making you feel happier and healthier," says Yoga Teacher, Jessica Janowsky.
Mrs. Klotz is promoting PAWSITIVE reading with first graders of Fassett Elementary! Just before Winter Recess, students adopted ‘pets’ and have committed to reading 20 minutes every day to help care for them. Mrs. Klotz’s classroom aide donated the stuffed animals and the classroom was introduced to their pets during their ELA circle time. Students selected their own animals and spent time learning how to care for their new pets! Of course, stories are the best for their new friends!
The experiences that students have in primary schools are supporting the students in being successful in intermediate schools and beyond. The curriculum in our K-2 schools provides students with a chance to build their reading skills while greatly expanding their background knowledge. Teachers have spent over 1000 hours working together to ensure that the instruction is being used in a way that builds student literacy skills. The curriculum helps students build their skills while also building their knowledge and it’s helping our students be totally ready for jumping into third grade curriculum.

Continuing to support literacy in our intermediate schools is also a big focus. Based on their needs, students can receive additional support in building their comprehension skills or in identifying the words (decoding). Students who are able to read but need support in comprehension receive Read 180 instruction. Students who need help identifying words receive System 44. Both programs allow students to interact with their teacher in a small group setting, read independently and work on the computer at their own level. These programs do an excellent job of providing the students with exactly what they need while also encouraging them to read terrific books. This process has truly made a tremendous difference in our students’ reading abilities.

Focusing on literacy in the Elmira City School District is critical for student success! We’re so excited to have a program that supports students at every level in becoming truly ready for high school and beyond!
New this year, the Elmira City School District has submitted a proposal for a grant to address persistent opportunity gaps facing boys and young men of color and to ensure all youth can reach their full potential. The “My Brother’s Keeper Alliance” program will focus on building safe and supportive communities for boys and young men of color where they feel valued and have clear pathways to opportunity.

“My Brother’s Keeper” prioritizes programming that helps boys and young men of color to reach their full potential. In Elmira, the grant will fund the Check and Connect Project (C&C), serving young men of color at the secondary level. The C&C Project will support participants with proactive interventions, tiered for each students’ needs.

A team of trained community and student mentors will help guide students through a transition program to graduation, internship opportunities, college preparation and job experiences. The program includes academic tutoring, credit recovery and college/career awareness and readiness activities. These new supports will include both individual and small group counseling.

Elmira’s Community Schools initiative utilizes strong community partnerships to provide mental health and social services to students and families as well as extended learning enrichment. From after-school programs to promote the development of positive character traits to social-emotional assets, students will participate in Adventure-Based Learning, which fosters qualities such as resilience, tenacity, and teamwork; and small group and individual sessions that teach conflict resolution, decision-making, and study skills. Our well-established Community Schools partners will play a critical role in the “My Brother’s Keeper” grant program.

ABOUT THE NEW YORK STATE ‘MY BROTHER’S KEEPER’ INITIATIVE

In 2014, former President Barack Obama established the My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) Task Force at the federal level. The Task Force was an interagency effort focused on closing and eliminating the opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color so that all young people have the chance to reach their full potential.

With the adoption of the 2016–2017 New York State Budget, New York became the first state to accept the President’s challenge and enacted the My Brother’s Keeper initiative into law. The budget included a $20 million investment in support of the initiative to improve outcomes for boys and young men of color.

The New York State My Brother’s Keeper Community Network includes more than 20 member communities that have joined the growing initiative to improve outcomes for boys and young men of color.
“We believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to achieve their dreams, regardless of their race, gender, or socioeconomic status”

My Brother’s Keeper is Focused on Six Milestones:

GETTING A HEALTHY START AND ENTERING SCHOOL READY TO LEARN
All children should have a healthy start and enter school ready – cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally.

READING AT GRADE LEVEL BY THIRD GRADE
All children should be reading at grade level by age 8 – the age at which reading to learn becomes essential.

GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL READY FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER
All youth should receive a quality high school education and graduate with the skills and tools needed to advance to postsecondary education or training.

COMPLETING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OR TRAINING
Every American should have the option to attend postsecondary education and receive the education and training needed for the quality jobs of today and tomorrow.

SUCCESSFULLY ENTERING THE WORKFORCE
Anyone who wants a job should be able to get a job that allows them to support themselves and their families.

KEEPING KIDS ON TRACK AND GIVING THEM SECOND CHANCES
All youth and young adults should be safe from violent crime; and individuals who are confined should receive the education, training and treatment they need for a second chance.
As we look ahead to Pre-K Registration for the start of the 2020-2021 school year, we sat down with four of our Elmira Pre-Kindergarten teachers to learn more about what they, as veteran educators, want parents to know when preparing their little tikes for big school! With a combined 81 years of teaching, this group of pre-k teachers is a treasure trove of knowledge and understands exactly the most valuable ways children should spend the first few years of their lives.

Maybe surprising, most of our educator’s thoughts weren’t about the ABC’s but were more about the social and emotional development of your littles. Let’s face it, children ages three and four have the rest of their lives to focus on academics. Research, time and time again, has proven that the most successful students aren’t pushed too hard too early, they have an opportunity to interact with their peers, and their parents and family nurture them with love and support.

Starting school is a big step for a child, and parents can play an essential role in preparing their children for this new experience. What we want most is for you to encourage a love for learning with your little ones! Here are a few simple strategies to ensure a smooth transition to school!

**SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

Children learn social and emotional knowledge at home first by observing what’s happening around them. Most of what they will learn how to do socially, emotionally, academically and behaviorally will come through imitating others.

- **Sharing** is a vital life skill. It’s something toddlers and children need to learn so they can make and keep friends and play cooperatively.

- **Taking turns** is an important part of communication development for young children. When children learn to take turns, they learn the basic rhythm of communication.

- **How to be a friend** is something children need to learn in order to build friendship skills. These are skills like sharing, taking turns, cooperating, listening to others, managing disagreement and negotiating different ways of thinking about things.

- **Self-Regulation** is the seed we plant that allows children to grow into adults who can manage their emotions, thoughts and behaviors. If we give children strategies to stay calm in stressful situations, they develop strong habits that they can apply in the future.

- **Problem Solving** is foundational to a child’s learning capacity. Independence is key, encouraging creative play and teaching kids problem solving skills by presenting a few age-appropriate options for them to choose from with guidance.
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

As educators, first and foremost we want our children to love learning new things. After all, where there’s a will, there’s a way. Instilling a love for learning by engaging with your children daily will prove beneficial over their entire lifetime.

Reading to your child is one of the most engaging ways to connect. Reading aloud has clear cognitive benefits too, strengthening the part of the brain associated with visual imagery, story comprehension and word meaning. Spend time together reading at bedtime and throughout the day.

Singing to children is a proven strategy for engagement and communication. Singing encourages a child to express their emotions and sharpens their ability to communicate with you!

Nursery rhymes are important for young children because they help develop an ear for language and promote pre-literacy skills. And they are fun to sing together.

Creative play helps a child develop skills that enable them to share their thoughts, feelings and ideas. Let them be kids by playing in a safe and creative environment!

Storytelling is one of the best ways to teach lessons, encourage conversation and promote your child’s imagination. Telling stories is a great way to improve children’s oral fluency and help them understand concepts that underpin literacy and literature.

Coloring with your child is a fun activity that encourages hand strength and dexterity! Hand strength is important for fine motor skills, especially handwriting. Writing takes strength, and coloring helps exercise these muscles.

APPROPRIATE CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Early childhood development begins at birth. A child’s ability to explore and think about the world around them helps them to develop wonderful skills optimized for learning. A walk in the woods or down a city street together offers lots of opportunities for stimulating a child’s mind. Cardboard boxes offer more opportunities for developing creativity than many toys purchased (especially digital screens). The lists above are all skills and activities that will help your child develop fine and gross motor skills as well as life skills. From independent dressing and toileting, to age-appropriate “jobs” around the house, safe creative play and generous encouragement will help your children to develop positive self-esteem.

We can’t wait to welcome you to the Elmira Express family!

Open Enrollment for Elmira’s Pre-K

Open Enrollment begins March 23 and runs through April 3, 2020 from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Registration will be held at the District Administration Office located at Washington Ave. School (430 W Washington Ave, Elmira NY). After April 3, 2020, enrollment will be ongoing at the District Administration.

Children must be four years of age before December 1, 2020 to qualify for pre-kindergarten.

Questions? Please call our Registration Services Office at 607.735.3055.
Mr. Maloney and Mr. Hughes’s fourth graders of Beecher Elementary and Mr. Stoner’s first graders of Fassett Elementary enjoy taking care of the trout - feeding, cleaning and general maintenance.
The New York Trout in the Classroom program is a conservation-oriented environmental education program for elementary, middle, and high school students. Trout in the Classroom fosters a sensitivity about the importance of our shared water resources by engaging students on both ends of the water tunnel in incubating trout eggs and raising trout from eggs to fingerlings. Students closely monitor water temperature, water clarity, dissolved oxygen, ammonia levels and pH to ensure the survival of their trout.

Beyond an academic understanding, students grow to love and care for their trout. As the program progresses, students learn to see connections between trout, water resources, the environment and themselves. They also study the nearby forest habitat.

This coming spring, students will gather together at watershed streams to release their trout after a school year filled with lessons about watersheds, the source of their drinking water and the need to work together to protect water quality.

ABOUT THE TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM

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WHAT STUDENTS ARE DOING

- Raising trout from eggs to fingerlings
- Monitoring tank water quality
- Engaging in stream habitat study, with lessons provided by NYSDEC
- Appreciating water resources
- Fostering a conservation ethic
- Understanding ecosystem connectivity

GETTING Schooled ON FISH

With support from the local Catherine Creek Trout Unlimited, Elmira City School District students are raising brown trout provided by the NYSDEC to be released this spring into the local waters of our Finger Lakes region.

First graders at Fassett Elementary School, in partnership with fourth graders at Beecher Elementary School, are housing tanks in their classrooms and are responsible for raising 150 brown trout. Ninth graders of Ernie Davis Academy, studying Environmental Science, will release the trout this spring during a school field trip.

During the year each teacher tailors the program to curricular needs. Therefore, each program is unique. Trout in the Classroom has interdisciplinary applications in science, social studies, mathematics, language arts, fine arts and physical education.
Footlighters of Elmira High School Present The Wedding Singer

MARCH 27 & 28 AT 7:00

THE WEDDING SINGER
The Musical Comedy Based upon the New Line Cinema Film by Tim Herlihy

A totally radical musical based on the hit film, this romantic comedy is a feel-good party that will have you dancing in your seat! The year is 1985, and wannabe rock star Robbie Hart is New Jersey’s favorite wedding singer. When his own fiancée leaves him on the eve of their wedding, only the kindness of a winsome waitress can get him back in the groove. The only problem? Her upcoming wedding to a Wall Street shark. This retro gem features a lively and fun original score, and is a high-energy celebration of the 80s that you’re sure to love!

Adults: $12
Students: $8

Tickets available online at showtix4u.com/event-details/37607 or at the door

The Wedding Singer is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.

CREDITS
Book by Chad Beguelin and Tim Herlihy
Music by Matthew Sklar
Lyrics by Chad Beguelin

Family, School, Community: Together We Succeed!

Every Wednesday, volunteers from the ARC of Chemung visit Hendy Elementary School to deliver “backpack” food items to classrooms. We are so appreciative of their service to our students and families. Recently, Hendy’s Family and Community Outreach Coordinator (pictured far left with ARC volunteer) gifted a Hendy Husky swag bag to show appreciation and school pride to these special volunteers!

THANK YOU!
Are you a **Cyber Safe** Parent?

**ONLINE RISK & DIGITAL PARENTING**

As parents, we are navigating unchartered territory when it comes to raising children in the digital age. Join us for this free event to learn more about online safety risks and tips from tech experts, teachers, gamers, other parents and students.

**MARCH 10, 2020 | FREE | 5:30 - 7:00 P.M.**

**LOCATION:** **ERNIE DAVIS ACADEMY**

**INFORMATION & ADVICE FOR PARENTS**

**5:30 P.M.**

WELCOME AND REFRESHMENTS

ERNIE DAVIS ACADEMY LIBRARY

**5:45 P.M. - 6:45 P.M.**

15 MINUTE SESSIONS

+ 5 MINUTE Q&A

DESIGNATED CLASSROOMS

**6:50 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.**

CLOSING REMARKS

PRIZE GIVEAWAY

ERNIE DAVIS ACADEMY LIBRARY

**SESSION TOPICS**

WHAT’S YOUR STUDENT’S DIGITAL FOOTPRINT?

FUN AND EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL APPS AT HOME

DIGITAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE MY KIDS ONLINE? STUDENT AND PARENT PANELS
Meet Jaden Burchard, a senior at Elmira High School and a young entrepreneur who is already making his dreams come true. Jaden is the Owner and CEO of his company “Convenience To Go,” a personal shopping delivery service designed to benefit the elderly, disabled and anyone who does not have the time or ability to shop for themselves.

Jaden, now in his final year of high school, began in the Elmira City School District as a pre-kindergarten student and has taken advantage of the many extra opportunities that our District offers. With an early interest in business and communication, Jaden participated in the Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) sponsored by the Corning Chamber of Commerce and is most recently enrolled in the National Academy of Finance program at Elmira High School. Jaden is most impressively a New Visions Honors Academy student of the Greater Southern Tier BOCES Career and Technical Education Program. With a focus on Innovation, Leadership and Business, the program courses are designed for motivated, accelerated, college-bound seniors. Jaden has already completed an internship with Corning Credit Union. To stack on top of his already impressive resume, Jaden is currently a Student Representative on the Board of Education for the Elmira City School District. He has plans to attend college to study global business and communication.

Jaden owns his own car, has employees that work for him and is planning to expand his business in his college community. As a young business person, Jaden’s also displayed his sense of community by sponsoring a student window unit at the Elmira Downtown offices. Community means a lot to Jaden.

He already shops and delivers to Elmira and the surrounding communities of Horseheads, Painted Post, Corning and Lowman but wants to build his business systemically and slowly. For a $10 fee + 10%, Jaden will shop and deliver to those in need within a 20-30 mile radius of Elmira.

ONWARD JADEN!

“My goal is to expand from Elmira and the Twin Tiers to the East Coast to eventually nationwide. I’ve seen people struggle and I want to help make their life as easy as possible. I have a mentally disabled aunt, age 57, and my Dad and I help her shop every holiday season. I see how much she appreciates it and I want others to feel the same -- she’s not the only one who needs help,” explains Jaden Burchard, Owner and CEO of Convenience to Go.
INTRODUCING UNIFIED BOWLING!

A SPECIAL OLYMPICS PROGRAM

Unified Sports creates opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to participate on school teams with mainstreamed student-athletes. The Elmira Express Athletics Department is pleased to join three other STAC Districts this year in introducing bowling as a Unified Team Sport!

Bowling is a particularly beneficial sport to people with intellectual disabilities, irrespective of their age or sports abilities, since it ensures physical exercise and at the same time participation and social integration. Plus, it’s great fun!

Visit elmiracityschools.com/athletics for a sports schedule!

MARCH BRINGS BASKETBALL MADNESS

Express Varsity Girls Basketball has experienced a hallmark season, going 17-1 and undefeated within Section IV. As the #1 seed heading into sectionals, the Express Varsity Girls Team has high hopes of playing at home for the Championship Game on March 6 at 6:00 p.m. on their home court at Elmira High School. #GoExpress

#GOEXPRESS
SCHOOL TAXES

Taxes can be paid in two installments.

First installment due Oct. 31, 2019
Second installment due by March 31, 2020

PAY YOUR TAX BILL ONLINE

Pay your tax bill online using your Visa, Mastercard, American Express, or Discover card. A convenience fee of 2.65% for credit card payments and $1.50 per e-check transaction will be collected by the online payment provider, not by the Elmira City School District.

Payments can also be mailed to School Tax Collector, P.O. Box 5504, Binghamton, NY 13902-5504.

elmiracityschools.com/district/department/business_office/tax_information

COUNTING EVERYONE ONCE, ONLY ONCE, AND IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Local government officials use the census to ensure public safety and plan new schools and hospitals. Mandated by the US Constitution, America comes together once a decade to count every resident in the United States.

Federal funds, grants and support to states, counties and communities are based on population totals and breakdowns by sex, age, race and other factors.

Everyone counts and your data is confidential. The 2020 Census is important for you and your community, and you can help. Taking part is your civic duty!
February 1 - Today marks the beginning of Black History Month. Over the next four weeks of February, schools across the District will focus on aspects of Black history and culture as well as recognize the many ways in which Black people have contributed to, inspired and created American culture while also leading the way in advocating for justice.

Black History Month is an excellent time to remind young people of their power to be change agents. At Broadway Academy, seventh grade students are creating posters with their favorite quotes from influential Black people, music students are currently working on compositions by Darryl Johnson II, an African American composer, Diven students will ‘read their hearts out’ with guest readers from Corning Incorporated, field trips are planned to the John W. Jones Museum in Elmira, and many social studies projects are planned throughout the month.

"Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education." Martin Luther King, Jr.

#GoExpress
FAMILY, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY: TOGETHER WE SUCCEED