

## NEWCOMERS' PICNIC – SEPTEMBER 3, 2009

Good evening and welcome to North Colonie. I begin tonight by thanking everyone who worked to organize this event - - the planning committee led by Assistant Superintendent Joe Corr, the P.T.A. volunteers, our administrators and our custodial, maintenance, and food service employees. Thank you all very much.

The North Colonie district is committed to giving all students a top quality education. The adults who work with your children will get to know them well and become advocates for them. We are very proud that 96% of our high school graduates this year earned Regents diplomas, with 70% earning advanced Regents diplomas. Seventy-four percent of our special education students earned Regents or Advanced Regents diplomas, which I believe, is the highest in the state. This is the result of work done throughout our K-12 district.

The district is an award winning school district. It has been recognized repeatedly by The Business Review as a top performing district of the eighty-five districts in the Albany area. This past June we learned that our district was again selected the number one district by The Business Review. Over the past nine years, we have been named the number one district six times; the other three years, we were second twice and third once.

During the past few years, Shaker High School has also been selected by the New York State Education Department as one of the ten New York State high schools and by the Council of Chief State School Officers as one of the seventy-five high schools nationwide which has a “promising” model of success based on innovative thinking and best practices. Standard and Poor’s also selected North Colonie as one of the forty-seven “outperforming” districts in New York State because our students’ academic achievement significantly exceeds that of other districts in the state that have families of comparable income levels, educational levels, and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, we are very proud that in North Colonie the high academic achievement of our students does not vary with either their socioeconomic backgrounds or with their race and ethnicity. Further, we have the best bond rating of any school district in the Capital Region, thus permitting us to save monies when borrowing funds for capital construction projects.

As important as these accomplishments are, the fact that this is a district of great joy and strong commitment to each student’s success is what is so very powerful. I believe it is almost magical, and, from my remarks, you will get a sense of why I am so delighted to be the Superintendent of this school district.

This district has been well managed for its almost sixty year history. Decisions about all aspects of the educational program have been made with careful deliberation.

People like coming to work here. Colleagues become friends. Our teachers are truly professionals who are committed to the district and to our students. We have many qualified teachers who apply to work here, and new teachers are well supported. Educators are supplied with the teaching materials and support that they need to be successful.

School board members are informed individuals who keep up to date about what is happening in our schools and who are passionate about their roles; they serve five year terms, and this assures continuity and a good sense of history. Our school board members attend many events in the schools and want to hear your thoughts. Our board members support our work. A number of them are here tonight, as they are with us on so many nights at so many different events. We also are most appreciative of the exceptional work of our P.T.A. organizations in each of our schools, and we urge you to consider joining the P.T.A. at your child's school.

In addition, our teachers work tirelessly on behalf of our students. Students report that their schools are places where teachers are here to assist them and that teachers are always available for them. Students also report that they feel safe in our schools.

Among some of our recent activities, we are proud of our K – 12 reading and writing initiatives which are leading to the creation of life-long readers and writers, and of our globalization initiative which is providing our students and faculty with a better understanding of the diverse community and society in which we live. Over the past two years, we have made substantial improvements in the infrastructure, software, and hardware for classroom technology. New hardware and software will be introduced throughout the school year. Last year we initiated an elementary foreign language program, with exploratory courses for our 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Throughout our elementary schools, students are now participating in two blocks of instruction in foreign languages. In the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, students participate in units in Spanish and French. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade program features German and Russian.

I urge you to become part of the entire K – 12 school community and work with us as equal partners in your child's education. Become involved in our schools and programs. Remember that we are all only a phone call away. I look forward to getting to know you and your children.

If you have young children here tonight and are also attending the secondary school orientation, please remember to pick the children up before going to those programs.

The video you are about to see is meant to introduce you to our nine schools and give you an overview of a number of our programs. It was filmed by Mike Cavaleri, our district's multi-media specialist.

Thank you for joining us tonight.

