

NORTH COLONIE CENTRAL SCHOOLS
91 Fiddlers Lane
Latham, New York 12110-5349

August 24, 2017

Dear Parents of Kindergarten and Elementary Students:

On behalf of the faculty and staff in North Colonie, I'd like to welcome you to the 2017-18 school year, a new year filled with promise as we continue to grow and expand opportunities for all students. I renew and recommit the district's promise that your children will be valued, supported, and provided the highest quality education. The North Colonie Central School District is unconditional in our commitment to treating all members of our community with kindness, respect, and compassion. We proudly and joyously embrace the values of peace, diversity, and inclusion.

As many families choose the North Colonie community to raise and educate their children, we have a tremendous opportunity to embark on a building project that will have profound positive effects on North Colonie students for decades to come. I believe we are headed in a direction that will yield incredible academic benefits for our current and future students in North Colonie. The opportunities that are ahead of us are exciting, and at the same time, imperative to being able to continue to foster one of the top educational environments in the state.

Capital Project: A look toward the future of education in North Colonie

I am grateful for the continued support of parents, staff, students and our community as this year we prepare to enter an exciting time of profound change in our district that will transform not only our buildings and learning spaces, but will elevate our educational program to an even higher standard than we currently maintain. Since receiving public approval on the capital project referendum in May, faculty, administrators and staff have been working closely with the district's architects to develop plans for innovative and modernized learning spaces that will deliver the high-quality, relevant and necessary 21st century education that our students require and deserve.

Facilities improvements include the creation of new and flexible learning spaces that will allow for hands-on, project-based learning in science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) and will allow both small and large groups of students to master new skills that they can apply immediately in interactive and experiential ways. These new learning spaces will be equipped with the tools and technology necessary for instruction to meet the demands of the 21st century workforce, as well as the pursuit of higher education. Equally important, this project allows us to address the ongoing enrollment crunch at the elementary level that has resulted in many classrooms reaching or surpassing capacity in certain buildings. It will also provide for security updates that will strengthen safety at all of our school buildings.

I strongly believe we are headed in a direction that will yield tremendous academic benefits for our current and future students in North Colonie, and I again thank everyone for their support of our students and our schools.

Newcomers' Picnic and First Day of School

Please note that if you are new to the district, each year all new families are welcomed at the Newcomers' Picnic. It will be held beginning at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 31, 2017, at Shaker High School. Food and beverages are provided by the district, and we hope to see all new families then. We look forward to meeting our new families at this exciting event!

The opening of school and the first day of attendance for students in grades 1-6 will be Thursday, September 7, 2017. For kindergarten students, the first day will be Friday, September 8, 2017.

Immunization Requirement Changes

Recently there have been changes made to the immunization requirements for New York state public schools. The changes primarily relate to the Meningitis, Tdap, and Varicella immunizations, and the new requirement that students have their full series of those immunizations prior to entering school. Our school nurses are in the process of calling families and/or sending notification home regarding missing immunizations. We ask that parents contact their child's doctor to make sure they have met the requirements for the start of the year. Parents are also reminded that a copy of their child's immunization record must be given to the school nurse prior to the start of school. If you feel your child may need an immunization feel free to call her/his school nurse and leave a message. She will return the message once she is in the office.

Disclosure of Individual Teacher and Principal Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) Ratings and Individual Composite Effectiveness Scores

All parents/guardians have the right to obtain Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) quality ratings and composite effectiveness scores for their child's current year's teacher(s) and principal(s) once the scores are officially available and in accordance with state law. Additional details will be posted on the district website.

Safety a Priority

Please assist us by reinforcing safety consciousness as students go to and from school. A safe and secure school environment is one in which student learning is enhanced. Our district strives to provide our students with a safe and secure learning environment. Our safety rules will be reinforced by our teachers and bus drivers during the first days of school.

Planning and preparation for possible emergencies is critical. To prepare for a possible emergency, periodically, children participate in bus safety drills. Please stress to your children that they need to be conscious of traffic and other vehicles when at the bus stop and when walking to and from school. In addition, please remind them that crowding or pushing into a bus line can result in an accident. When traveling to school, sporting events, or extra-curricular activities on the bus, children are expected to remain in their seats, keep conversation at a moderate level, and exhibit proper behavior.

Each student also will receive the "Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities," which explains the district's policies and procedures. The book summarizes the district's behavioral expectations, as well as our disciplinary code. Cooperation among school faculty, principals, students and parents is critical to promoting a positive, safe school climate.

The Town of Colonie Police, in collaboration with the district, has developed a policy regarding sex offender notification. District residents may visit the Town of Colonie website at www.colonie.org/departments/police to obtain this information. If the Colonie Police Department

deems a sex offender to be a serious threat, the district will initiate a mailing to inform all district parents of this threat.

Parent Communication

The district has several ways to communicate to families, both in emergency and non-emergency situations. First and foremost, our website, <http://northcolonie.org>, is a valuable resource for information pertaining to your individual school as well as the entire district. News stories and announcements are posted often, so be sure to check the page frequently. Another one of our most often used communication systems is the School News Notifier (SNN). This can be accessed through the district website to sign up. SNN allows parents to receive updates about school events, closings, or emergencies via e-mail or text message. A third system, The Parent Portal, can also be signed up for through the district website, and provides parents with access to their child's academic progress as well as other valuable information. Finally, our social media audience has grown immensely in the past year. The district's Facebook page is titled, "North Colonie Central School District," and currently has almost 4,000 followers. In addition, the district has a Twitter account, titled @NorthColonieCSD. I encourage all of our families to explore and use the many communication options we provide.

Parent Involvement

Involvement in your child's learning can take many forms and can incorporate experiences both inside and outside of school. Try to incorporate some of these positive experiences in your child's life by way of simple activities such as reading, visits to museums, and attendance at cultural events, including concerts and plays. These are excellent family events that do much to nurture a child's growth and development.

Parents are also welcome to become involved in their child's school. Each school has a building council that works directly with the building principal and faculty on key issues. Your school principal will be able to tell you about the building council and how to become involved with it. The district curriculum steering committees are another venue for participation. Should you be interested in participating in one of the major subject area committees, please contact our Deputy Superintendent, Ms. Kathleen Skeals, at 785-8591, ext. 3177, or email us for more information. Finally, the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) remains yet another venue for parental involvement. Each school has an active PTA which serves to support each school's comprehensive education program. Each school's PTA president is listed on our website; contact them if you are interested in becoming a member.

The Board of Education meetings are held monthly and committee meetings on topics such as curriculum, budget, and long range planning are regularly held between these monthly meetings. We encourage you to attend these meetings as they provide our school community with a way in which to gain familiarity with important issues concerning the district. The district web page lists the dates and location of all Board of Education meetings.

We encourage you to check the website and participate actively in the budget process. You may also wish to participate as a part of the district budget committee. Please contact us through the website or by phone at 785-8591 if you wish to be a part of the committee process.

Dignity for All Students Act

North Colonie is committed to maintaining, sustaining, and growing a respectful and caring school community. The Dignity for All Students Act (Dignity Act) was established with the broad

legislative intent to provide a school environment free of discrimination and harassment. The goals of the Dignity Act follow:

- to provide elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, on a school bus, or at a school function
- to promote a positive school climate through an awareness and sensitivity to different races, weights, national origins, ethnic groups, religions and religious practices, mental and physical abilities, sexual orientations, genders, and sexes
- to promote a positive school climate through instruction in civility, citizenship and character that teaches tolerance, respect, and dignity for others

All district employees are responsible for contributing to a safe and supportive school environment. Each building principal is named as the Dignity Act Coordinator for his or her building. He or she can then delegate the investigation and remediation as appropriate. The Deputy Superintendent, Kathleen Skeals, is the Dignity Act Coordinator for the North Colonie Central School District. Each school has a coordinator and one team responsible for reviewing and discussing on a quarterly basis issues related to bullying and harassment. You may visit our district website to access a confidential reporting form, view the list of coordinators for each school, or acquire additional information.

Furthermore, our faculty and staff work with our students at developing the qualities of character and integrity. We have developed programs that target the issues of bullying and harassment. In these programs, attention is directed toward teaching students about the negative consequences of bullying and harassment and providing them with the strategies to effectively deal with these behaviors in a positive and proactive manner. Should you have any concerns about bullying behavior or if your child has voiced such concerns, please feel free to contact the district. You are strongly encouraged to report this behavior to an adult at your child's school building.

As an additional reminder, New York State's Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) was expanded to include cyberbullying as a form of prohibited harassment and bullying. Under this provision, cyberbullying is defined as "harassment or bullying by any form of electronic communication, and include incidents occurring off school property that create or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment." With this addition to the original legislation, schools' purview is expanded beyond the walls of the building and beyond the hours of the school day.

We, as a school community, must work together to continually remind students about Internet safety and the lasting impacts of their digital footprint. The online activities or postings they may consider to be private are often quite public. These interactions always have the potential to extend into the school environment and cause distraction and disruption. Any instances of cyberbullying which come to the school's attention will be addressed through the District's DASA policy and/or through the Code of Conduct. Communication or posting which may constitute a criminal act will be reported to law enforcement.

Please work with your child on recognizing that their Internet conduct, in school and out of school, has consequences. We will continue our efforts to educate students about this issue as well. Together we can help create a positive, healthy and safe learning environment for all students in the District.

I wish the best to you and your family for a successful and healthy school year. I look forward to working with you and your children. May this one be the best one yet!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Joseph Corr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "D".

D. Joseph Corr
Superintendent of School

DJC/msc