

GOOD NEWS



SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Grant Students Celebrate Diversity as Language Ambassadors



When Helene Sahiriza arrived from Congo, speaking Swahili, the transition to American schooling was a challenge.

But this year, in 8th grade and speaking fluent English, Helene volunteers as a Language Ambassador. In that role, she volunteers to be paired up with new students – who also speak Swahili – to serve as a translator, tour guide, and friend. She also serves as a translator for families at certain school functions.

“I like helping out,” Helene shared. “It’s great when you’re new to school and someone can help you translate. When I first came here, no one could help me understand – so I enjoy being that person for someone else.”

It’s the first year the Language Ambassador program is underway at Grant, but already 37 student

ambassadors are involved – representing 17 languages.

At the school’s International Coffee Hour – and other parent events – the ambassadors are on hand to help welcome families and provide translations where necessary.

“I saw a lot of parents smiling,” Helene said of her experience at an International Coffee Hour event. “They felt welcome. I know many parents don’t come to school events because they feel like they won’t be able to understand the teachers because they speak a different language. Now, we can help them feel included.”

Grant English as a New Language teacher Tiffany Duquette, who oversees the Language Ambassador program, said this experience not only creates a welcoming culture – it also helps set these students up for success in their future.

“The goal of the Language Ambassadors program is to develop and celebrate the multilingualism of the students at Grant while also bridging home and school through the use of language to support connections to families,” Ms. Duquette explained. “And in supporting the use of students’ home languages, the hope is to also bring awareness to the Seal of Biliteracy program.”

The New York State Seal of Biliteracy is a seal of recognition that students can earn on their high school diploma, recognizing that they have attained a high level of proficiency in both English and one or more other languages.

In the SCSD, a districtwide ‘Pathways to the Seal of Biliteracy’ program is being implemented this year – aiming to help foster interest and pride in earning the Seal of Biliteracy. The program recognizes students in Pre-K, 5th grade and 8th grade who are on the path to developing their existing language proficiencies and/or are acquiring new languages!



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Families,

This newsletter is called 'Good News' – and in this issue, you'll see so many reasons why that is so. Our students are truly extraordinary – serving as leaders, changemakers, and ambassadors both within their school buildings and beyond.

In this issue, you'll hear how Ed Smith students are creating a more inclusive environment for students through their Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA); and how Grant students are creating a more inclusive environment for students and families through their Language Ambassadors program. You'll hear how Clary students are giving back to the Syracuse community through monthly service projects; and how STEAM at Dr. King students are giving back to their school community through a state-of-the art hydroponics system.

Our students are making a difference! Of course, they are being encouraged by great mentors, too. Local Latina leaders are working with PSLA students each week through the new Latina Mentoring Initiative; and the CHOICES group at ITC connects young women with the people and experiences that will help empower them for success.

If you or someone you know would like to get involved in supporting our students through mentorship, please visit www.syracusecityschools.com/mentor!

Sincerely,



IMPORTANT DATES

March 2023

- 20 First Day of Spring
- 21 Superintendent's Parent Council Meeting
- 22 BOE Work Session
- 26 CNY Science & Engineering Fair
- 27 BOE Work Session
- 28 Elementary and Middle School Marking Period 3 Ends
- 31 High School Marking Period 3 Ends

April 2023

3-7 Spring Recess

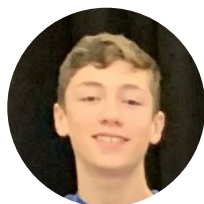
- 10 Spring Modified Athletics Begin
- 12 BOE Meeting
- 14 BOE Audit Committee
- 14 Elementary & Middle School Report Card Distribution
- 17 NYSESLAT Begins
- 18 Superintendent's Parent Council Meeting
- 18 High School Report Card Distribution
- 19 BOE Finance Work Session
- 19-26 NYS ELA Assessment Grades 3 - 8
- 24 BOE Work Session
- 26 BOE Work Session
- 29 All City Chorus

Student & Staff Spotlights

Syracuse Latin Students Compete in Regional Spelling Bee



Sam



Theo

Syracuse Latin seventh graders **Sam and Theo Benjamin** recently represented the SCSD as they competed in the Regional Scripps Spelling Bee at the University Sheraton! Theo qualified for the tournament after placing first in his school's tournament, and

Sam followed in 2nd place. We're proud of their hard work!

Corcoran Basketball Player Joins 1,000 Point Club



Corcoran senior **Amir Reaves** reached 1,000 career points in a basketball game versus Ithaca on January 24th, joining his older brother, DeJour Reaves, who earned the honor

a couple of years ago. Amir now joins an elite group of high school athletes and we are proud of his achievements!

Henninger & ITC Student Athletes Receive All-State Honors

Henninger senior **Sean Hunt, Jr.** was recently recognized on the New York State Sportswriter Association's list of Section III football players receiving All-State honors. Sean, a running back, was selected as a sixth team pick and was one of just 28 athletes to be recognized.

The New York State Sportswriters Association also released its small school all-state selections for the fall 2022 season, and three **ITC** students were recognized. Congratulations to ITC seniors **Tre'Juer Sledge** and **Tyshawn Taylor**, who were named second team selections – and senior **Nathaniel Treska-Prince**, who was named an Honorable Mention!

Seymour Music Teacher Inducted into SAMMY Hall of Fame



Seymour Music Teacher **Kevin Dorsey** has been selected for induction into the Syracuse Area Music Award (SAMMY) Hall of Fame! This the first time an elementary music specialist has been recognized, and is also the first time an SCSD Music educator has been recognized for this award.

"There are so many great music educators, past and present, who have taught in the Syracuse area and in the SCSD," Mr.

Dorsey shared. "The fact that there are people out there that think that what I have done over the last quarter of a century is worth recognition is humbling. I'm grateful to all my colleagues past and present, because without them, this wouldn't be happening. Most importantly, I have been honored and grateful to have taught over 3,000 students (and counting) at Seymour Dual Language Academy. And they are as much responsible for making me the educator and human being I am today. Throughout all the struggles and challenges, it comes down to the students opening their minds and hearts for me to help create opportunities for them to be successful!"

Shout Out A Student!



Hey, SCSD Community: do you know a SCSD student who deserves a public pat on the back? We'd love to hear from you. Send a photo of the student, along with their name, grade, school, and a couple of sentences about what makes them wonderful to goodnews@scsd.us.

We look forward to highlighting some of these students on our SCSD social media channels featuring their achievements, improvements, good character traits, positive attributes, and more!

PK-8th Grade News



Ed Smith Students Find Solace and Support through Gender and Sexuality Alliance

"We celebrate Black History Month and other marginalized groups... why don't we celebrate Pride Month?"

An **Ed Smith** student posed this question to English teacher **William Wright** two years ago. It was a question that Mr. Wright said spurred action.

Fast forward to June 2022, when Ed

Smith parent and PTO member **Karly Grifasi** received word that her grant request had been approved. Through the It Gets Better Project, Ms. Grifasi had applied for \$10,000 in funding that would allow the school to form a Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) group. The student group provides a safe and supportive environment for Lesbian, Gay,

Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Asexual youth and their allies.

Students are vocal in saying the group has given them a place where they feel fully accepted.

"I wanted to hang with others who are like me, and I don't have a group like that outside of school," 8th grader **Constantine Torres Bravos** said. "Schools generally don't do a lot when it comes to LGBTQ representation, but we need more of it. This group gives us the opportunity to show people what we're about."

Each month, the Ed Smith GSA meets after school in Mr. Wright's classroom. In addition to hosting meaningful discussions, the group has enjoyed visits from the Q Center, GLSEN and other local groups that support school GSAs. They have even benefitted from the support of former Ed Smith students – now at Nottingham – who return to Ed Smith to serve as mentors to the GSA students.

Dr. King Students Learn Hydroponics, Become Garden Ambassadors



This year, thanks to grant funding secured by **Mike Atkins**, and support from several community organizations and higher education institutions, **Dr. King** students have had some unique opportunities to expand their green thumbs.

The school received a compost system, as well as a hydroponics system, to help expose students to the concepts and experiences of growing their own food and creating a sustainable ecosystem. Their first trial run is growing Buttercrunch Lettuce, which they check on daily – measuring the pH of the water to make sure the plants are staying healthy.

Third, fourth and fifth grade students were encouraged to apply to be the school's Garden Ambassadors – where they manage the hydroponic system on a daily basis. They learn about the growing cycle, initiate schoolwide composting, and are ready and willing to discuss the program with their classmates and school visitors!

"I wanted to be a Garden Ambassador because I like planting stuff," fourth grader **Reyniel Santos** explained. "My grandpa used to plant things and I'd help him in his garden. We planted a star fruit. I've learned some cool stuff as a Garden Ambassador – like you can use clay pebbles in the planters to help allow the roots to grow better!"

"The goal of these projects is ultimately for the kids in this neighborhood, where there is a food desert, to become interested in growing their own food," Art teacher **Andrea Buckvold**, who oversees the school garden and related projects, said.

Syracuse Latin Students Spread Good News through Newspaper Club



Hot off the press!

Every month, **Syracuse Latin** students read the latest about sports, history, photography, and of course – social news – in 'The Latin Legend,' the school's newspaper.

Created for students and by students, a group of dedicated student journalists gather weekly to write their columns. They submit their work to their editors for approval, and the editors organize the pages into the final layout. The group of journalists grew from a small group last year to about two dozen 7th and 8th graders this year.

"In our school [being a K-8 building], the grades can feel separated in some ways," 8th grader **Kayshon Fields**, now an Editor's Assistant, said. "In Newspaper Club, we want to feature all grade levels, the administration... we want to let everyone know about all the great things happening all throughout our school."



Clary Students Rewarded with – and through – Giving Back

Thomas Royal used to lead college students on outreach projects. Now, as School Counselor at **Clary Middle School**, he arranges monthly service project incentives to allow the school's student leaders opportunities to give back.

"My family did this with me when I was growing up," Mr. Royal explained. "It's always been part of my DNA. I want our kids to realize how fortunate they are!"

This year, students who earn the school's monthly incentive – by having good grades, positive behavior, and more – have the opportunity to participate in service projects where they can give back to

the community. The group has made sandwiches for the Rescue Mission, decorated the lobby of Valley Vista, a nearby senior apartment building for the holidays, and more.

"I've liked these activities because I love helping people," Clary 8th grader **Ny'Cristi'Ye Wink** shared. "These projects have shown me that as we grow up, we can do big things. Things like this help us get recognition from others that we're doing good things. I would tell other students to stay focused, and when opportunities like this are presented, contribute to them!"

As the school year continues, students look forward to continuing their service projects. They plan to volunteer at the ASPCA, do cooking and cleaning at the Ronald McDonald House, and more.

Middle School Students Forge Positive Relationships with Syracuse Police through Assemblies

This winter, Syracuse Police Department Officer Brandon Hanks and former Syracuse Police Chief Frank Fowler visited all SCSD middle schools to speak with students about youth violence in the community.

They hosted grade-level assemblies for all middle school students, focusing on building positive and trusting relationships, being an upstander, and strategies to help promote safe and healthy behaviors.

But these weren't the standard lecture-style talks: they aimed to create genuine connections with students – person to person, not officer to student.

"Usually when a police officer comes to school, they talk about protocol," **Huntington** 8th grader **Alessia Dee** said. "But Officer Hanks was cool. He made it feel like we could bond

with him in different ways – it felt like he could be our friend. I'd feel more comfortable running into him on the streets instead of another officer because I feel like I can trust him."

Brighton Academy Math Teacher **Janae Greene** said that exposure to seeing police officers can be beneficial not only for students but for officers as well.

"Anytime that students get to see and interact with officers in a positive light, it's a good thing," she said. "For a lot of our kids, their personal experience may not have been positive. So for them to have a conversation with an officer who's out of uniform, it gives them to be able to interact and joke and see them in a different light than someone who's coming to get them in trouble."



High School News

PSLA at Fowler Students Celebrate Their Heritage through Latina Mentoring Initiative

Thanks to assistance from the New York State Mentoring Program, the Governor's Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Office of Women's Affairs, and interest from local Latina leaders, Latinas at **PSLA** at Fowler are embarking upon a weekly journey to celebrate their heritage through the Latina Mentoring Initiative (LMI).

"It's a great opportunity for Latina girls to see that there are Latina leaders here in Syracuse," Fanny Villarreal, Executive Director of the YWCA of Syracuse, said. "We have to connect students to these leaders in order for them to really see what they can do themselves. The LMI shows them that they can do it – they can do anything."

The LMI group meets weekly during the school day. Each girl is paired with a mentor, who she works with every week to build that relationship. Each month, the group focuses on a different goal. Ultimately, they hope to build cultural connections, build trust, and set the tone for empowerment, healthy boundaries, and social skill building.

"We talk about how to put our community out there, how to show our culture, and what it means to be a Latina," senior **Emily Aponte** shared. "I talk to my mentor about what I'm struggling with and how I can make things better."

Group leaders are hoping to gradually expand, so eventually there could be LMI groups offered at Syracuse STEM at Blodgett and Seymour Dual Language Academy as well. Then, the program could 'follow' girls as they grow – with both mentors and the PSLA LMI members serving as constant supports for the younger girls as they advance through their schooling!



Young Women at ITC Gain Self-Empowerment through CHOICES Group



"I'm dedicated to graduate and I'm determined to get into Howard University," a young woman, gathered in a circle with her peers, shared.

Since 2015, Creating Heightened Opportunities in Community, Environment, and Self – CHOICES – has been offering young women exactly that: heightened opportunities.

Twice a month, a group of about 15 young women gather to engage in workshops focusing on higher education, community activism, self-development, literacy, financial management, performance art, and more.

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Together, the young women discuss personality traits, people that inspire them, who and what they aspire to be, and even choose personal affirmations – all in an effort to help them connect over shared feelings and experiences.

“My favorite thing is when I come in and see girls I don’t know, but we

connect in so many ways,” **ITC** junior **Janiah Shadreem** said. “It’s important for us to have a group like this because as girls, it’s easy for us to get overwhelmed, and it’s important for us to have someone to talk to. CHOICES motivates me, because even if I’m sad, it makes me feel really happy just to step into this classroom. It takes

my mind off of whatever might be bothering me.”

CHOICES is open to any SCSD students in grades 8-12 – interested students should reach out to their School Counselor. The group is hosted by The Image Initiative – learn more about it by visiting www.imageinitiative.org.

Henninger Students Qualify for State-Level DECA Competition

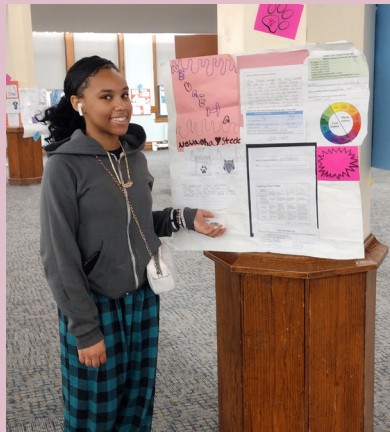


Henninger DECA students traveled to Rochester this March to compete in a state level competition – thanks to their strong performance at a regional competition held at Le Moyne College! DECA, an entrepreneurship program, aims to help prepare students for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality and more.

Congratulations to senior **Aubrey Skinner**, who placed first in Accounting Applications; junior **David Nguyen**, who placed 4th in Restaurant & Food Service Management; junior **Anish Waglay**, who placed 4th in Principles of Business Management & Administration; sophomore **Myrna Riegelman**, who placed 4th in Apparel & Accessories Marketing; junior **Brigith Shabani**, who placed 4th in Human Resource Management; and **Hager Almarie**, who placed 4th in Retail Merchandising. The Henninger team also took 2nd place in Penny Wars, a competition in which teams raised money to support the McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center!

Congratulations to these student leaders (and their DECA Advisor, **Mindy McCarthy**)!

Brighton Academy Students Master Math and Promote Positivity



At Brighton Academy, students work each day to demonstrate **PRIDE**.

Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Dedication, and Excellence – character targets that the school refers to as their Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs) – are part of every grade, every class, and every student’s daily experience.

And this winter, in **Ms. Rocio** and **Ms. Harnett**’s math classes, 7th grade **Brighton Academy**

students had an opportunity to show what these traits look like to them. Thanks to a creative math project, students were tasked with creating a t-shirt design to demonstrate the traits. Ultimately, the winning t-shirt design would be printed as the 7th grade’s pride shirt for this school year!

Students had to master various math concepts as they calculated the costs associated with ordering their designs, including the cost based on the amount of ink used, the area to be printed, the cost per shirt, the cost for tax, and the total cost of ordering shirts for the school’s entire seventh grade student body and staff.

“We learned about how much the details matter,” **Mark Beach** explained. “One mess up can cost you a lot! This project was fun because people were working together and not acting immaturely in class – because they wanted to win! We all chose to put all our focus on this. I learned that in life, you have to work. You’re not going to get what you want until you put in the effort. I had to work hard to get my grade up because I wanted to be one of the people whose design got chosen!”

After their designs and math work were complete, students were asked to create a polished poster to convince their peers and school staff of why their shirt is the best choice. Students who earned a grade of 80% or above qualified to have their shirt entered as a finalist, with staff ultimately voting for the winning design to be printed! After a staff vote, **Dey’Vion Cogger**’s t-shirt design was selected – featuring a variety of motivational quotes. Great work, Brighton scholars!

Alumni Spotlight: Zanderland Dixon Asante



SCSD Schools Attended: Fowler ('80)

College and Major(s): I graduated from Morgan State University, where I earned a Bachelors degree in Telecommunications. I also ran track, and I had the opportunity to be part of a team that produced Olympians. I received

a 2nd-4th year track scholarship, competed in Penn Relays, Olympic Invitational, Millrose Games, and NCAA. I was a 4-time All-American, and received the 1984 Female Athlete of the Year Award. I received my Master's degree in Public Relations from Boston University.

Career Path: After earning my Master's, I worked as a talk-show producer before accepting a position as professor in the Telecommunications Department at Morgan State University. Having a love for music, in 1999, I launched my own music label and began writing/producing projects (3 albums made the Grammy Awards 1st round ballot). I also served as a Recording Academy (Grammy Awards) voting member for 10 years. For nearly 20 years, I have helped children through my

community outreach organization (Blooming Compassion), a mission inspired by my late grandmother, who raised me. I also serve as CEO of Poems in Bloom Media and Creative Seasons Music Publishing.

The coolest thing about my job is... I get to write, produce, and market inspiring music.

The most valuable thing I learned in school is... to set your goals and remain focused.

I'm proud to be a SCSD graduate because... of the strong foundation of support and encouragement I received from teachers and coaches at Fowler. My gifts and talents were nurtured!

One piece of advice I'd give to SCSD students is... You have gifts and talents. Develop them by doing the work with focus, discipline, confidence (believing you can do it) and courage (doing it even when afraid)!

Finally, maintain an attitude of gratitude, align yourself with great friends and mentors; and as you grow, make a commitment to give back by mentoring those who are coming behind you.

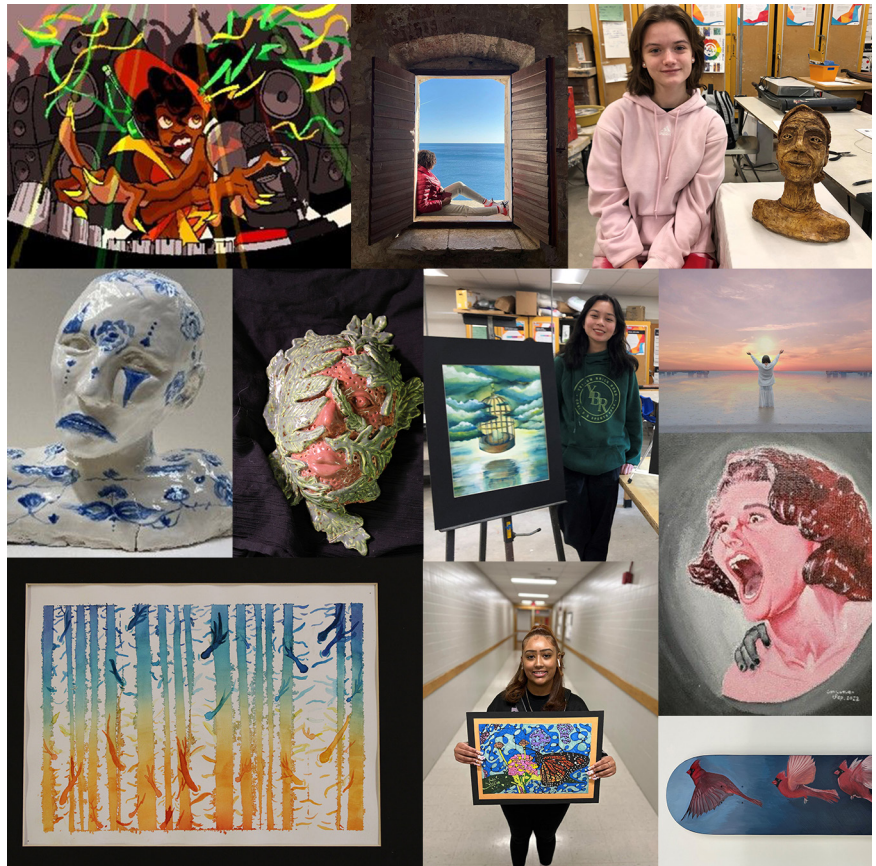
Scholastics

High School Students Recognized in Scholastic Art Awards

Each year, talented SCSD student artists submit their artwork to the CNY Scholastic Art Awards. This year, students earned a collective 23 awards – an impressive accomplishment for these students, their teachers, and their schools.

Congratulations to PFLA student Brianna Cruz; Henninger students Hager Alamarie (2 awards), Romina Mendoza Olvera (5 awards), Michael Taylor (2 awards), Anh Minh Verity, Grace Holtsbery, Taylor Sampson; Corcoran students Leah Nowak, Sophia Posadas (3 awards), La’Nya Dunn; and Nottingham students Selaci Butoto (2 awards), Amiah Crisler, Maya Montena, and Ronaisia Martiin-Suggs!

We're proud of their talent, and we appreciate the support of their Art teachers: **Susan Marcus, Lori Lizzio, Megan Rombel, Annie Smith, Jeanette Capria-Lazzaro, Lisa Teater, Christina Ferlenda, and Lynette Spencer.**



SPRING 2023





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MISSION

To build, support and sustain school communities that provide all students with a high-quality education that prepares them to graduate as responsible, active citizens ready for success in college and careers and prepared to compete in a global economy.

VISION

To prepare and inspire all of our students to innovate locally and contribute globally.

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725 Harrison Street • Syracuse, NY 13210
(315) 435-4131
Email: CivilRightsCompliance@scsd.us



>> Share your questions, comments or concerns 24/7 using the Let's Talk tool at www.syracusecityschools.com



My Say Yes Story:

Martine Dosa –
Nottingham HS Class of '22

What college are you going to & what is your major(s)/minor(s)?

I am a first year student at Yale University in Connecticut. I do not need to declare a major until the end of my sophomore year, so I am still exploring academic programs. Right now, I am considering an American Studies major and Education Studies certificate! I may try some data science classes too.

What do you like most about college?

It's cliché, but I think the people make college so worthwhile. I am studying and living with students from all walks of life, from all around the world. We have so much to learn from each other.



What advice would you give high school students who are considering seeking a college degree through Say Yes?

Absolutely pursue this opportunity with Say Yes! So many of our peers across the country don't have a scholarship like Say Yes—it's truly something special. My biggest advice in general to SCSD students is to be your own best advocate. The program is a strong pillar for education in our community, and something that everyone should take advantage of.

Read Martine's full spotlight at sayyessyracuse.org.

Learn more and sign up for the Say Yes newsletter at SayYesSyracuse.org