

GOOD NEWS



SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT



job! Whatever I end up doing, these things will help me.”

“They’ve talked to us about very practical, real-life situations,” PSLA sophomore **Jayda Southworth** added. “They’ve gone over how to make a resume and what it takes to get a job – what we can say in an interview. These are things that we don’t always learn in school, but they are a real necessity for life. I’ve always been stressed about interviews, but they have helped me rehearse what to say and what to put on my resume, and I absolutely feel more confident in myself now.”



SCSD Students Learn Life Skills & Career Readiness through Skills Win! Program

“We’d like to open an event planning and catering company that primarily hires low income or homeless people,” the PSLA sophomores shared. “Our business would benefit the Syracuse community while also serving as a source of income for those who need it.”

It was their final meeting, and **PSLA at Fowler** sophomores were presenting their business pitches to investors.

The ‘businesses’ were hypothetical ideas developed through group brainstorming over the course of just half an hour, and the ‘investors’ were two Syracuse University student volunteers.

Through the Skills Win! program, high school students at PSLA at Fowler and **ITC** received weekly lessons in people skills, time management, life skills, budgeting, business, and more.

The program, developed from Professor Bill Coplin’s book, ‘10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College,’ is led by Syracuse University student volunteers.

“We’ve learned life skills,” PSLA sophomore **Ella Foresti** shared. “We’ve planned out our week to help us stay organized. We’ve practiced interview skills. These are very important life skills that everyone should know! The budgeting was helpful, because now I can save for college or for a house, instead of blowing my money when I get a

In addition to the school-based curriculum, this year, for the first time, SCSD middle school students were also introduced to the Skills Win! curriculum, thanks to the Syracuse Police Department’s PAL program. Over the course of a month, sixth through eighth grade students from Clary, Ed Smith, ELMS, Grant, Huntington, Roberts, Salem Hyde, Syracuse Latin, and Syracuse STEM at Blodgett participated in a Skills Win! Tournament for Youth – evening coaching sessions to help them learn these same valuable skills. In partnership with the Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, students learned skills to enhance their personal and professional success, including time management, study skills, typing skills, and more.

**STAY CONNECTED
STAY INVOLVED**



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A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Families,

With the new year comes a renewed focus. As we begin 2024, our team does so with a clear goal in mind: supporting our students so they can finish this school year on a high note. If we can support your child or your family in any way, please reach out to your school's main office directly, or contact our Office of Family Engagement at (315) 435-6459.

In this newsletter, you'll learn how our middle and high school students are looking ahead – and how they have been preparing for their future. The Skills Win! program is providing them with time management and life skills; and our CTE Expo, Manufacturing Day, and CTE programs are exposing students to the possibilities that lie ahead for them, no matter what path they end up pursuing.

We are also placing a renewed focus on meeting students where they are and making sure they feel included and valued as part of our community. Some of our middle school students who are native Spanish speakers recently had the opportunity to attend a mentoring event at OCC which took place entirely in Spanish; our Native American Program students at Webster and Huntington enjoyed celebrating their heritage with a special visitor from a local museum; and English as a New Language students at Dr. Weeks are being supported on the school playground thanks to a creative communication tool developed by their own classmates.

Our Office of Diversity, Equity, and Belonging is also hard at work supporting communities of belonging in our schools and district. Learn about what that looks like in some of our school building in this newsletter, and then learn more about the DEB team and their work throughout the district by visiting www.syracusecityschools.com/DEB!

Sincerely,



IMPORTANT DATES

January 2024

- 15 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday— No School
- 16 Superintendent's Parent Council
- 22 High School Marking Period 2 Ends
- 22 Board of Education Work Session— 4:30 PM
- 23-26 Regents Exams
- 24 Elementary and Middle School Report Card Distribution
- 24 Board of Education Work Session— 4:30 PM
- 31 Board of Education Finance Work Session— 4:30 PM
- 31 High School Report Card Distribution

February 2024

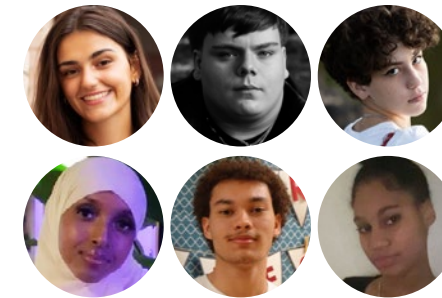
- 10 All City Band Concert— 2:00 PM, Corcoran
- 14 Board of Education Meeting— 5:30 PM
- 15 All City Orchestra Concert— 6:30 PM, H.W. Smith
- 16 Elementary, Middle and High School Interim Report Card Distro
- 19-23 Winter Recess— No School
- 26 Board of Education Work Session— 4:30 PM
- 28 Board of Education Work Session— 4:30 PM

Student & Staff Spotlights

SCSD Students Named Area's Best & Brightest

Six SCSD students have recently been named among this year's Syracuse.com Best & Brightest!

This award recognizes high school seniors who have at least a 3.0 grade point average. Students applied by submitting an essay, letters of recommendation, and details of their academic and extracurricular successes and community service. They were also asked to write a personal narrative about their experiences. A panel of judges selected the winners. Congratulations to ITC seniors **Miranda Azemi, Anthony Davis, and Angelina Grevi**; PSLA at Fowler seniors **Ayan Dahir and Deangelo Manna**; and Corcoran senior **Lee'Aizha Snow**.



SCSD Families Receive Gratitude Meal Kits



We love to see the ways **#SCSDGivesBack!** Prior to the Thanksgiving Recess, the SCSD Offices of Student Support Services and Food and Nutrition, in partnership with the Food Bank of CNY and Upstate Medical University, worked together to prepare and deliver 300 Gratitude Meal Kits for families experiencing temporary housing and food insecurity.

Each meal kit included two non-perishable dinners that can be prepared 3 different ways each. Included in the box were recipe cards for each dinner kit, complete with pictures and written directions so both children and adults could follow recipe directions easily and safely.

Nottingham Teacher Recognized with Music Educator Award

For the last year, WCNY Classic FM has been presenting a monthly award to deserving music teachers across the area. In December, Nottingham High School teacher **Eric Petit-McClure** was selected – recognized as the Classic FM Music Educator Award honoree! Mr. Petit-McClure received four separate nominations, all from his students! He was surprised with the award after school one day, when a group of his student musicians volunteered to stay after school to be part of the celebration. He was then invited to bring an ensemble of his students to the WCNY studios to record a performance to be aired on the radio!



Elementary & PK-8 News

Dr. Weeks Students Brainstorm – and Bring to Life – Communication Board



Watch – me – slide.

Dr. Weeks students point to icons on a board displayed on their school playground. Their classmates nod along; and then the students run off to play.

Thanks to a special 'communication board' developed by Speech/Language Therapist Jessica Charboneau and her third grade class last school year, the whole school now has a new way for students to communicate with each other.

Students initially came up with the idea after reading the book 'Kamala and Maya's Big Idea' by Meena Harris – in which

the main characters, children, wrote a letter to the head of their housing complex, asking for a playground to be built. Ms. Charboneau's class was inspired.

The class settled on their project: a Communication Board – a collection of icons with photos, similar to the ones used on the digital communication platform that their ENL classmates use – printed on a sandwich board that would be displayed on the school playground for anyone who wanted to use it.

Now, the Communication Board is officially a beloved part of the playground – not just for ENL students, but also for Pre-K students who are still developing their language skills; as well as for students who are working on their language through Speech Therapy.

Thank You For Joining The Conversation 2.0!



The Syracuse City School District was proud to host The Conversation 2.0 – a critical conversation about the state of education for our Black and Brown students.

Members of the Syracuse community came together in November for panel discussions, workshops, and keynote speeches

– all with the goal of engaging the community as we seek to build, support, and sustain school communities through the lens of what our children are owed, and the dream makers we need today. It was a wonderful event where hundreds of Syracuse stakeholders came together to support our youth!

SCSD Students Foster Science Interest at 'Girls Going Tech Espanol' Event



"We need more women in STEM." April Arnzen, Micron Senior Vice President and Chief People Officer, and President of the Micron Foundation, recently gave opening remarks to 60 young women from **Ed Smith, ELMS, Lincoln, and Syracuse STEM at Blodgett.**

At Girls Going Tech Espanol, an event organized by OCC and La Liga and sponsored by Micron, the native Spanish speakers in a day of hands-on STEM learning and mentorship, all in Spanish.

"I'm excited to be here so I can see what kinds of jobs I can get when I graduate," Syracuse STEM at Blodgett 8th grader **Lillian Estrada** said. "I'm interested in Science – it can tell you a lot about the Earth and how things are made. Being here around so many Spanish speakers makes me feel comfortable. It makes me more interested in what they have to say because I can understand them so well."

Following the hands-on activities, where students built "wobble bots" and created binary bracelets, they broke into small groups and had mentoring sessions with women working in Architecture & Interior Design, Construction Project Management, Digital Accessibility, Semiconductor Industry Operations, Micron's Expansion Team, Engineering and Aerospace, Renewable Energy, Emergency Medical Technology, and more.

Lincoln Teacher Receives Funding to Start Classroom Hygiene Closet

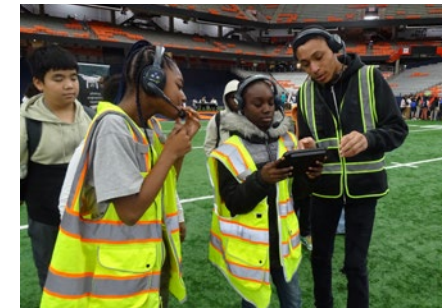


Thanks to a Wishes for Teachers giveaway sponsored by the Northern/Countryside Credit Unions, **Lincoln** 8th grade Social Studies teacher **Alicia Whitmore's** holiday wish has been granted!

Ms. Whitmore has long had an Amazon Wish List to collect hygiene items for students in need. One of her friends sent her a link to the Wishes for Teachers giveaway, which she entered. She was ultimately selected as a winner – and was gifted \$500 in donations, clearing her entire Wish List! Her granted wish has enabled Ms. Whitmore to create a hygiene closet in her classroom – complete with hair care and skin care products, shower and dental care products, laundry and soap products, and more.

"Middle school kids want to come to school and fit in," Ms. Whitmore shared. "They don't want to be called out for anything – whether that be for how their hair looks or how they smell. There are so many distractions at that age that they can't control... so I wanted to remove one of the distractions that we can control to give them one less thing to worry about when they come to school. This is such a blessing!"

Middle School Students Enjoy Manufacturing Day at JMA Wireless Dome



Micron, IST/Schneider Packaging, SRC, the MOST, and MACNY were all on hand at an Advance Manufacturing/Innovation Fair at the JMA Wireless Dome recently – an event organized by the SCSD Career and Technical Education Department, Department of Science and Technology, and STEAM School. Students from **Brighton Academy, Clary, Ed Smith, Oasis Academy, ELMS, Frazer, Grant, Huntington, HW Smith, Lincoln, Roberts, Syracuse Latin, and Syracuse STEM at Blodgett** all attended.

The students rotated through stations in the Dome, participating in hands-on learning and asking questions of professionals working in STEM and manufacturing fields.

Students used a remote to operate a Fanuc ER-4 robot arm; collaborated in a manufacturing effectiveness challenge to see who could create the most functioning pens in three minutes; practiced operating a drone; and more.

"This was interesting," Lincoln 7th grader **Savannah Murray** said as she walked between one station and the next. "I've learned more about how things are built and how companies work!"

Native American Students Celebrate Heritage with Special Guest



Students in the SCSD Native American Program at **Webster** and **Huntington** recently enjoyed a special visit from the Ganondagan Cultural Museum, in celebration of Native American History Month. The guest showed the students how their Native American ancestors used different parts of white tail deer to help sustain themselves through



our area's harsh winters. They'd use fur for coats or blankets; the sharp edges of bones to scrape; the shoulder blade to cut squash; the antlers to create handles for tools; and more. We love seeing schools taking the time to celebrate students' heritage and honor our **#SCSDDiversity!**

Meachem Community Supports Pediatric Cancer Research

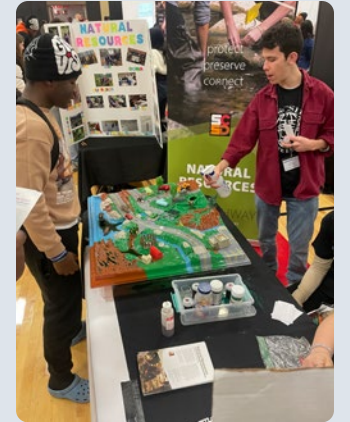
We're so proud of the ways **#SCSDGivesBack!** In the school's annual fundraiser for the Upstate Foundation, organized by 4th grade teacher **Jon Lamon, Meachem Elementary School** students, staff, and families collectively raised more than \$1,610 to support pediatric cancer research. Because the school surpassed their \$1,000 fundraising goal, several staff members volunteered to dye their beards blue – voted as the students' color of choice!



Explore Your Future with Our CTE Pathways!

All SCSD 8th grade students had the opportunity to attend the annual SCSD Career and Technical Education (CTE) Expo at PSLA at Fowler this fall. Students were invited to engage in hands-on activities and speak with current CTE students about the various pathways available to high school students.

To learn more about the CTE pathways and P-TECH programs offered in the SCSD, visit www.syracusecityschools.com/CTE/



High School News

Girls, Inc. Lunch Group Empowers Young Women with Life Skills



Thanks to Girls, Inc. at the YWCA, for three to four days each week, girls at **PSLA at Fowler** and **Syracuse STEM at Blodgett** gather over their lunch breaks to connect over a curriculum intended to help set them up with the skills and confidence they need to be successful in life – whatever it is that they choose to do.

"We talk about girl power, human rights, things like that," PSLA junior **Kabebe Mukambabazi** explained. "The best part is the conversations that we've had. It feels amazing. In the morning, we have so much work to do. It feels good at lunchtime to have the opportunity to come in here and talk with other girls like this."

"For me, the best part has been the college visits," **Sadia Uwase** shared. "These experiences give us choices. We're juniors and we need that experience. These have been my first experiences on college campuses!"

The basic Girls, Inc. curriculum touches on healthy relationships, financial literacy, media literacy, leadership and advocacy, nutrition education, and more.

At Syracuse STEM at Blodgett, the 6th through 8th graders who participate in the lunch group focus more on financial literacy and – because the group happens to meet in a space that has a full kitchen – cooking and life skills!

"It's been fun to make new things and help others," 6th grade student **Yanelis Natos** explained. "My favorite part of the lunch group has been learning to cook – I've even learned how to use my senses to improve cooking by adding spices. We've made smoothies, bagel pizza, empanadas, and more. We have also talked about how much food ingredients cost, and how much more it can cost to eat at a restaurant. You can save a lot of money by cooking yourself, and I know how to cook at home now. These are good skills to have."

PSLA Students Compete in National CyberPatriot Competition



“We’re basically securing the system,” PSLA at Fowler junior **Ollievia Brantley** explained. “We’re changing passwords, stabilizing the firewall and updating the system.”

Ollievia and her peers in the PSLA Computer Forensics and Navy National Defense Cadet Corps (NNDCC) programs recently teamed up to participate in the Air Force Association’s annual CyberPatriot Competition – a national cyber defense competition.

The competition is the nation’s largest, putting students in charge of securing virtual networks. Teams aimed to score as many points as possible by finding and repairing vulnerable code, solving forensics-based questions, adding or removing users, setting password requirements, patching applications, removing harmful applications, and more. They also tried to avoid losing points by making negligent decisions.

High School Art Students Participate in National Portfolio Day



Henninger Art teacher **Ann Smith** recently took seven talented SCSD student artists to the Rochester Institute of Technology for National Portfolio Day! The students were able to participate in a campus tour, visit select programs within the School of Art & Design, and enjoy four hours of art portfolio reviews – conducted by representatives from 23 colleges throughout the U.S.!

We’re proud of **Nottingham** student **Selaci Butoto**, **Corcoran** student **Arianna Williams**, **PSLA at Fowler** students **Puja Monger** and **Chheku Tomong**, and Henninger students **Then Say**, **Kim Nguyen**, and **Agape Uwezo** for taking advantage of this opportunity to make connections and show their talents!

Diversity, Equity & Belonging

SCSD Schools Focus on Celebrating Diversity, Creating Equity, and Ensuring a Sense of Belonging for Students



at school. What makes them feel like they don’t belong? Our demographic is mostly black and brown students. The system was not designed for students like ours. We need to be the whistleblowers.”

At **Syracuse Latin**, staff plan to begin including students in their analysis of the school’s annual climate survey data.

At **Dr. Weeks**, the school’s equity goal is for staff to be mindful of how they speak to and speak about their students and families. This means being cognizant of a student or family’s cultural background – which prompted DEB Lead **Madison Korytkowski** to initiate the ‘I Know My Full Name’ project last school year and continue it again this year.

“It’s a way for their voices to be uplifted,” Ms. Korytkowski shared. “What they have to say is really important, and we want to stop and celebrate them for who they are. This project has helped students realize that they are appreciated for who they are – their whole identity.”

In an effort to celebrate all students and their unique backgrounds, **Syracuse STEM at Blodgett** is incorporating weekly ‘Inclusion Monday’ activities this year. In the school’s twice-daily CREW meetings, students talk about diversity and how they can provide inclusion in their building. The school is also starting three new affinity groups for students who may have felt underrepresented before: an American Sign Language Club, a Latine Student Union, and a group for indigenous students, led by the school’s first indigenous teacher.

To learn more about the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Belonging – or the initiatives within your child’s school building, please visit www.syracusecityschools.com/DEB!

You belong here.

It’s the message that each SCSD school building wants students to hear – and feel.

It’s also the mission of the SCSD Office of Diversity, Equity, and Belonging – DEB. The office, led by Director **Dr. Reba Hodge**, also includes Assistant Directors **Sophia Burden** and **Jasmine Price**. Together, their mission is to build, support, and sustain communities of belonging in SCSD schools, departments, and offices through efforts, policies, and practices that drive diversity, elevate equity, and build belonging.

To help ensure that DEB initiatives are spreading quickly and effectively throughout the district, this year, each building has been equipped with a DEB Lead. This staff member has been tasked with attending DEB trainings, brainstorming with the school’s Equity Leadership Team, and working alongside staff and students to implement DEB programs and initiatives and address inequities when – and even before – they arise.

The DEB Lead’s role also includes developing an equity goal specific to their school building that can be tied to tangible results. These equity goals are intended to allow staff to analyze their

specific student population to ensure that they are meeting their students’ specific needs.

So what do DEB initiatives look like within SCSD schools?

STEAM at Dr. King DEB Lead **Ashley Burke** came up with the idea for a gender-neutral bathroom after attending a Supporting LGBTQIA+ training.

One of the practical ways that DEB practices have been implemented in school buildings this year is through placing a focused priority on incorporating student voice.

At **Brighton Academy**, staff plan to implement a schoolwide survey to gauge students’ feelings of belonging. Their goal is to enact initiatives throughout the school year that will lead to an end-of-year survey response showing that at least 75% of students indicate feeling that they belong in school.

“In order for our engine to drive, we have to have the people who are leading understand our students’ needs,” **Ms. Hobbs** shared. “We can’t come up with that ourselves – that’s why we need student input. We want to hear what students feel like they’re missing



Corcoran Football Team Receives Sportsmanship Award

The **Corcoran** Cougars Football Program was recently chosen as one of the two finalists to receive the 2023 Fran Clark Sportsmanship Award, presented by the Syracuse Chapter of the NYS Certified Officials Inc. This honor is awarded based on the officials’ weekly rating system and is given annually to the team and staff that has exhibited the highest level of sportsmanship throughout the season.

Alumni Spotlight: Kevin Younis



SCSD Schools Attended: Bellevue Elementary, Shea, Corcoran ('88)

College: BA in History – 1994; Master of Public

Administration at Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy - 2002

Career Path: I am currently the COO of Empire State Development (New York State’s economic development agency).

The coolest thing about my job is...

I work with a lot of great colleagues and we get to do work that is meaningful every day and that has impact on the lives of real people in NYS. And, because ESD is relatively small, we tend to be very nimble and can make decisions quickly and get things done efficiently and effectively.

I’m proud to be a SCSD graduate because...

I am proud to be a SCSD graduate because of the incredible diversity of the schools when I was there. There was always a great racial and socioeconomic mix of

students throughout my entire time in the Syracuse City Schools. From kindergarten at Bellevue Elementary to my graduate degree at Rockefeller College, I am proud to be a product of the public-school system.

One piece of advice I’d give to SCSD students is...

Read. Read. Read. Reading as much as you can gives broad exposure to so many different ideas and perspectives. It teaches patience and deeper thinking. It makes you a better writer and a better thinker. Read everything and anything you can.





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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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NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Syracuse City School District hereby advises students, parents, employees and the general public that it is committed to providing equal access to all categories of employment, programs and educational opportunities, including career and technical education opportunities, regardless of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, Native American ancestry/ethnicity, creed or religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, age, gender identity or expression, disability or any other legally protected category under federal, state or local law.

Inquiries regarding the District's non-discrimination policies should be directed to:

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Syracuse City School District
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



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



SAY YES STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Yeisha Núñez-Denson,
Corcoran High School
Class of 2009

In high school, Yeisha was involved in volleyball, lacrosse, and track and field. In addition, she was a part of the student government and president of the Latino Club.

Yeisha first learned about Say Yes Syracuse at informational meetings for students and parents at Corcoran. "Say Yes to Education helped me a great deal financially," she said. "The program helped my family and myself worry a little less about how I was going to afford higher education."

After high school, Yeisha attended Le Moyne College, majoring in accounting with a minor in philosophy. She studied abroad in the summer of 2013 at Esade Business School in Barcelona, Spain and interned in the accounting department for the Onondaga Historical Association.

Now, Yeisha works as an accountant at Central New York Community Foundation and aspires to gain her master's in business administration.

Read Yeisha's full spotlight at sayyessyracuse.org.

Important Say Yes Reminders for Seniors:

Students applying for early action or early decision will need to submit their college applications on or around **November 1**, depending on the school. Regular decision applications are generally due by **January 1**. Deadlines vary by school, so be sure to check dates for every college you are applying to.

All students seeking a Say Yes Scholarship must apply for Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). We highly recommend that you complete both applications prior to submitting your Say Yes Syracuse application, which is due by **July 1**.