

GOOD NEWS



SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Porter Student Equity Team Leads Efforts to Boost Inclusion & Combat Absenteeism

What does it mean to be respectful, responsible, and safe in the cafeteria, auditorium, hallway, bathroom, and playground?



Last year, the **Porter** Student Equity Team – or “SET” – assembled with the goal of figuring that out. The SET – rare at the elementary level, believed the school’s new student behavior matrix should be designed for students, by students. So, through biweekly meetings of kindergarten through fifth graders selected to represent their classmates, they worked together to come up with their own guidelines.

Their focus this year: a You Bee-Long Campaign! The SET hopes to make sure that everyone at Porter feels respected, included, treated fairly, and feels that their voice is heard. The SET leaders pledge to listen to their classmates, celebrate their differences, stand up for fairness, spread kindness, and create a welcoming school environment.

“I like being on the SET team because I like helping everyone and making

other peoples’ lives better by making fun activities for them to do in school,” 4th grader **Dipti Karki** shared.

To help reach their goal of celebrating all students who support the ‘You Bee-Long Here’ mission, the SET has planned a series of monthly initiatives. To attend, students must earn a certain number of Panda Paws (which they earn for following directions, doing their best, helping others, and more) and they must be PAX Leaders. At November’s Harvest Bar incentive, students were invited to select two items from a special fall-themed display, including toys, jewelry, snacks, cider, and more. As SET leaders, students not only came up with the incentive ideas, but also help with event set up and clean up.

“I like getting to help teachers and students with our monthly incentives,” 5th grader **La’Rhaynia Gurrola** agreed. “These things

make the school better. When I go to middle school next year, I want to bring the idea of a SET with me... it makes a difference!”

We’re so proud of the student leaders who are working hard to create a more inclusive culture at Porter!



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

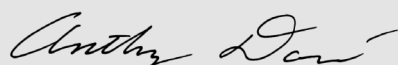
Dear Families,

Happy New Year! On behalf of all of us in the SCSD, I wanted to thank you for trusting us with your child's education. We look forward to finishing off this school year strong! Please let us know if there's anything we can do to better support your child and your family by visiting syracusecityschools.com/LetsTalk.

Our students and school communities have been generous in their efforts this season, and in return, they have been blessed by the support of our greater Syracuse community. Ed Smith School raised more than \$2,300 to support the United Way of Central New York; Syracuse Latin students collected toiletries to begin a new Hygiene Closet in their school; HW Smith students rang bells and caroled to collect funds for the Salvation Army; and Meachem students contributed to the Epilepsy Foundation in memory of a classmate they lost last year. Likewise, members of the Syracuse Fire Department community donated winter coats to students at Franklin; the Wladis family and others gave hats and gloves to thousands of our young students; and more. We have much to be grateful for this winter!

Of course, our students and staff continue to achieve in academics and in their areas of interest, too. In this newsletter, you'll read about our talented fine arts performers, Career and Technical Education students who are preparing for their future, and so much more. Our students are at the heart of what we do every day, and we are so proud of them.

Sincerely,



IMPORTANT DATES

January 2025

- 15 Elementary and Middle School Marking Period 2 Ends
- 17 High School Marking Period 2 Ends
- 20 **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday— No School**
- 21-24 Regents Exams
- 21 Winter 2 Modified Athletics Begin
- 21 Superintendent's Parent Council
- 22 BOE Quarterly Finance Work Session— 4:30 PM
- 27 BOE Work Session— 4:30 PM
- 28 High School Report Card Distribution
- 28 BOE Policy Committee Meeting— 12 PM
- 28 Elementary and Middle School Report Card Distribution
- 29 **Asian Lunar New Year— No School**

February 2025

- 8 All City Band, Henninger HS
- 12 BOE Meeting— 5:30 PM
- 13 All City Orchestra, Grant MS
- 13 Black History Celebration
- 17 **President's Day— No School**
- 17-21 **Winter Recess**
- 24 BOE Work Session— 4:30 PM
- 25 BOE Policy Committee Meeting— 12 PM

Student & Staff Spotlights

Ed Smith Community Supports United Way

For the past four years, the United Way has recognized the **Ed Smith** community for their efforts in building student awareness around the importance of giving back. This winter, the school once again rallied behind this effort – far surpassing their goal and fundraising more than \$2,360 to support the United Way of Central New York!



#SCSDGivesThanks to the Ed Smith team – as well as CTE teacher **Danielle Forbidussi** and her United Way Fundraising Team – for their generosity! We love seeing a school community come together for a great cause.



SCSD Celebrates Our Diversity!



This November – Native American Heritage Month – **Roberts** students hosted students from the Onondaga Nation School to perform in an inaugural Native American Celebration! The visitors performed traditional smoke dances for the Roberts students. They also answered students' questions about their culture, talking about dance, food, sports, and family. They wrapped up their visit by teaching the Roberts students a group dance. Our diversity makes us great!



One of the SCSD's core values is that the diversity of our students and families is a strength of our district. Learn more about our values, mission, and vision by visiting: www.syracusecityschools.com/strategicplan.

SCSD Music Teacher Receives Honor



#SCSDThanksTeachers like **Henninger** High School Music Teacher (and SCSD Marching Band Director) **Holly McCoy!**

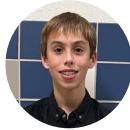
Ms. McCoy was named the WCNY Classic FM Music Educator Award Honoree for November. In addition to receiving a trophy in a surprise presentation, Ms. McCoy was also invited to bring an ensemble of her students to perform a recording that will air on Classic FM.

Photo courtesy of WCNY

SCSD Student Musicians Perform in All-County and All-State Ensembles



We're proud of all of the talented SCSD musicians who worked hard to audition for this year's All-County and All-State Festivals! The following students were selected to participate in the NYSSMA Zone 3 Junior High Area All-State Festival in Homer: **Ed Smith** student **Joseph LaClair** (Mixed Choir); **Nottingham** students **Ila Robinson** and **Gloria Colegrove**, and **Veronica Ebner** (Treble Choir); **Akira Keech** and **Addie Zhe-Heimerman** (Mixed Choir); and **Theo Benjamin** (Orchestra).



In addition, the following Nottingham students were selected to participate in the 2024 All-County Band, Choir, or Orchestra: **Abby Carello** (Trumpet), **Angelina Gomez** (Orchestra), **Luca Grifasi** (Soprano), **Genevieve LaClair** (Alto), **Sophie Scanlon** (Alto), **Samuel Lockwood** (Tenor), **Djumbe Nshimirimana** (Tenor), **Jonah Sahn** (Tenor), **Thomas Leonard** (Bass), **Lucian Manwaring** (Bass), **Rowan Murphy-Weissman** (Bass), **Evan Paradise Mastroccio** (Bass), **Reid O'Hara** (Bass), and **Luke Scanlon** (Bass). Congratulations to these students – and their teachers, **Eric Petit-McClure** and **Mary Juman!**

Tis the Season – for SCSD Arts!



This fall and winter, we were pleased to see our talented SCSD musicians and performers thriving as they engaged in fall plays, musicals, and All-City events.

Nottingham and **Henninger** students both performed **Clue: On Stage**; **PSLA at Fowler** students performed **Six: The Musical (Teen Edition)**; and **Corcoran** students performed **She Kills Monsters** as their fall plays. In addition, more than 80 SCSD students participated in the All-City Jazz Concert at **HW Smith** School. Middle school and high school ensembles performed; as well as a Vocal Jazz group.



*Don't miss our upcoming
All-City events... mark your
calendars now!*

All City Band

Saturday, February 8th at 2 PM
Henninger HS

All City Orchestra

Thursday, February 13th at 6 PM
Grant MS

All City Chorus

Saturday, April 5th at 2 PM
HW Smith

All City Art

Saturday, May 3rd, 10 AM – Noon
Frazer

WINTER 2025



Elementary & PK-8 News

Slam Dunking Stress: Mental Health Takes Center Court in Klinik Kids Program



Thanks to the Klinik Kids program, SCSD elementary and middle school students have enjoyed the chance to engage with professional basketball players, coaches, and trainers from around the world. Over the course of six weeks of sessions, the students participate in basketball drills and competitive games, enhancing their skills and strengthening their mental fortitude. Perhaps more importantly, thanks to a partnership with an organization called Half Hood Half Holistic, the students are also introduced to mental health and wellness concepts.

Each session, in addition to the basketball instruction, students

are introduced to concepts including gratitude, meditation, paced breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, goal setting, and more – all in an engaging and fun way.

Last year, the Klinik Kids program was rolled out in four SCSD schools... to such success that this year, it has expanded to reach eight! Now, students at **McKinley-Brighton, Webster, Seymour, Grant, Dr. Weeks, Delaware, STEAM at Dr. King, and Syracuse STEM at Blodgett** are invited to participate in the free program each week.

"It's an amazing opportunity," **HW Smith** 6th grader **Lovell Sims**, who participates in the program at McKinley-Brighton, shared. "I love basketball, and the sense of community here is so good. It's a healthy environment. If we come in and we're in a bad mood, one of the coaches will help us feel better. I just love it. Every day I come back, I learn more and I do better. This really makes me feel like I can do anything!"

"I love to play basketball with my friends," Grant 7th grader **Angel Viamontes** added. "They train us on how to pass and shoot, and also why we should stay hydrated and how to take deep breaths to stay calm. Being here helps me be better in life. It's taught me how to control myself and my emotions when things are tough."



Tune In and Stay Connected! *Scan the QR to visit our YouTube Channel*

Have you ever wondered what our high school students are learning about, or what Career and Technical Education looks like in the classroom? Would you be interested in seeing our students celebrating their athletic wins, hearing staff talk

about why they chose SCSD, or catching a Video Chat that you may have missed?

Find all this and more on our SCSD YouTube channel. Content is updated regularly... please check back often!

Turning Pages with Tokens: Book Vending Machine Inspires Love of Literacy at STEAM at Dr. King

"One book, coming right up!"

The vending machine in the **STEAM at Dr. King** Foyer spoke as it dropped a book into the slot.

"I've always wanted one!" a student exclaimed with delight as he pulled out a National Geographic Kids book called 'Superstars of the Seas' and hugged it to his chest.



The book vending machine – an innovative concept – was donated to the school last year by Park Central Church. Now, Dr. King Library Media Specialist **Rebecca Shaffer Mannion** notifies the church when the

selection is getting low and is provided with funds to hand-pick new books to stock the machine.

"It's been such a great thing," Ms. Shaffer Mannion shared. "We have kids, family members, and even community members come in and ask if they can use their own money to purchase the books!"

The machine isn't powered by money, though – students must have a special gold token in order to make a selection. Coins can be earned by demonstrating good behavior during students' library time and by demonstrating good PAX behavior schoolwide. It's an incentive that Ms. Shaffer Mannion says benefits the school culture as well as students' skill development.

"Studies show that if kids read every day, they'll do better in school," she explained. "Some kids are put off by chapter books, and they think that's all there is. I'm big on stressing the different kinds of reading out there – there are magazines, comic books... there are so many options. Reading ultimately helps them find and develop their interests. I try to instill in them that any kind of reading is good... any kind of reading helps build their reading muscles!"

SCSD Students Receive Hats & Gloves in 28th Wladis Giveaway

The Wladis Hat and Gloves Foundation, Inc. donated free hats and gloves to SCSD students this winter – for the 28th straight year! Each Pre-K through sixth grade student in 19 SCSD schools received the supplies this year. #SCSDGivesThanks to Mark and Steven Wladis and the Wladis Hat and Gloves Foundation, Inc. for their continued support!



HW Smith Students Commit to Ongoing Service Projects

Each month, **HW Smith** staff and students work together in a community give back project. In October, they raised more than \$1,600 for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. In November, they participated in the Paige's Butterfly Run Pajamarama; they also held a Turkey Trot and food drive for the Food Bank of Central New York. In December, they celebrated the holiday season as 7th and 8th grade Student Council and Chorus representatives volunteered as Salvation Army bell ringers and carolers at Destiny USA. We're so proud of the HW Smith community



for giving back, supporting charitable organizations, and showing that it truly means to give back!

Franklin Students Receive Winter Coats, Hats & Gloves

#SCSDGivesThanks for the generosity and support of our community! Since 2016, the Syracuse Fire Department has distributed more than 3,000 coats to SCSD students through a partnership between IAFF Local 280 and Operation Warm.

This winter, off-duty Firefighters and on-duty crews distributed coats, hats, and gloves to 575 children at Franklin Elementary - reaching each child in Pre-K through 3rd grade!



Syracuse Latin Students Create Hygiene Closet for Classmates

Each year, **Syracuse Latin** students participate in their school's annual

Turkey Trot just before Thanksgiving Recess. For more than a decade, students collected canned goods to donate to the Salvation Army. This year, student leaders suggested collecting toiletries – with the goal of creating a new hygiene closet in their school. Together, they collected more than \$512 worth of products – enough to fill a large closet filled with shelves. Now stocked with toothbrushes and toothpaste, soap and lotion, shampoo and hair ties, feminine products, deodorant, and more, the closet is available for students as needed.

Meachem Community Supports Epilepsy Foundation



Meachem students and staff raised more than \$1,500 for the Epilepsy Foundation – in memory of a student the school community lost last year. Staff participated in No

Shave/No Cut November as their primary fundraiser, and in December, a guest from the Epilepsy Research Foundation visited the school to receive the donation (from staff complete with purple beards and hair!). They also spoke with students in grades 3-5 about Epilepsy and the impact of their donation.

High School News

Corcoran Fashion Club Provides Creative Outlet for Future Fashion Leaders



Corcoran senior **Janzel Santa** was a sophomore when he had the idea to create an after-school club where students could bond over a love of fashion through hands-on projects. He

approached English teacher **Amorie Green** with his idea, and soon after, the Corcoran Fashion Club was born!

Now in its third year, once a week after school, the group gathers to make friendship bracelets, tie dye, decorate tote bags, and more. This year, the group also hopes to implement a bigger project tied into the school's Black History Month celebration. Last school year, a local organization donated sewing machines to their group, and now their goal is to create upcycled fashion that they can display through a fashion show at the event.

We love seeing students show leadership and creativity!

Student-Led Podcast Highlights Henninger's Health Career Pathways



A group of students gathered in Health Professions Instructor **Christian Espinosa's** classroom one day after school. Each sat down at a desk, put on headphones, and leaned in toward the microphone perched in front of them.

"Welcome to **Henninger's** HPP OCC Adventures! Today, we're here with some of our seniors who are studying at OCC, and we're going to hear about their experiences," Henninger junior Emma Batuk said with authority.

Thanks to a grant from the SCSD Educational Foundation last year, Mr. Espinosa was finally seeing his vision come to life: a student-led, student-produced healthcare podcast. With the grant funding, he was able to purchase a mixer, professional microphones, top of the line headphones, and more – a complete professional podcasting setup!

Two Health Professions juniors hosted the podcast, and several of their Health Professions classmates in their senior year joined as guests. They were asked about how their Health Professions program has changed them, their goals for the future, how future students can prepare for the on-campus experience, and more. In an active discussion, the seniors' responses led the hosts to ask inquisitive follow-ups.

"I really like to make sure people are connected and that they are able to understand things," **Emma** explained of her diligence in hosting the podcast. "I want to share what I know, and this is a great way to help do that. It's important for people to have a community and to have opportunities to build that community of shared interests."

Moving forward, the Health Professions students hope to bring in outside speakers as podcast guests, including professionals they work with through their work-based learning experiences and connections they make through the HPP program. They also hope that the current group of podcast leaders will be able to train their successors as they prepare to graduate from high school.

After students edit their podcast, the finished product will be posted to YouTube and possibly Spotify and other platforms down the road. We can't wait to hear more of these engaging discussions – and for the greater community to learn about the wonderful real-world connections Henninger Health Professions students are making!

PSLA Knitting Club Stitches Together Creativity and Camaraderie



"So for the double crochet, we're going to yarn over, go inside, yarn over again... then we've got to get out of the loop... perfect!"

Tucked away in a classroom inside the **PSLA at Fowler** library, a group of students gathered after school. They huddled around two teachers, crochet hooks in hand, as they copied the teachers' hand movements.

It's called the Knitting Club – but this year, students chose to start with crochet lessons. As the year goes on and they become more comfortable with their crochet skills, they will have the option to expand to knitting as well.

"Most kids who come here are doing this for the first time, so there's a learning curve for sure," PSLA Math teacher **Lydia Nevin** said. "I've worn sweaters to school that I've knitted, and they always ask about it... so I knew there was an interest in a group like this! Crocheting helps them learn how to push through the experience of frustration. Having a tangible result helps keep them motivated. There's also a great sense of community here... we have quite a few 9th graders come to make new friends. This group provides a reason for them to talk to others and gives them a shared interest."

About 10-12 students regularly attend the group, where they are provided with all materials needed – crochet hooks, yarn, and of course – guidance from experienced instructors!

Junior **Jorge Almendra** is one of the most experienced in the class – noting that his most impressive project was a pair of mittens he made a couple of years ago. Now, he's working on making a dragon amigurumi crochet pattern.

"I wanted to try some new things," junior **Brayan Rubio Carrillo** shared. "It's hard... there's a balance between making the stitches too loose or too tight! But I want to keep working at this until I'm good at it."

Calling all SCSD Alumni!

Did you graduate from the Syracuse City School District? We'd love to hear from you! Please email us: goodnews@scsd.us with your name, graduation year (and high school), and your current job. We may follow up with you to potentially highlight you as a future Alumni Spotlight!

Say Yes Student Spotlight: Alysnn Lyons

NOTTINGHAM GRADUATE



Alysnn and her parents first became aware of Say Yes Syracuse through school channels and news outlets. With the guidance of the Say Yes program, she enrolled in as many Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) classes as possible, allowing her to earn enough college credits to

be regarded as a college sophomore by graduation.

Motivated by Say Yes's mission, Alysnn pursued her education at Medaille College in Buffalo. Initially, she opted for a major in education but later switched to communications during her sophomore year. Throughout her college journey, Alysnn remained actively involved in campus life. She offered her time and skills to various organizations, such as collegiate DECA, student activities board, and student ambassadors.

Reflecting on her choices through Say Yes Syracuse, Alysnn comments, "I got to go to an amazing college that fit my needs and offered small class sizes, a sense of community and ways to be involved. All while also being in a bigger city with many others from Syracuse."

Currently, Alysnn works as the marketing manager at Arch Amenities Group in Skaneateles, where she leads her team with enthusiasm and dedication, focusing on brand development and management.

Alysnn's story is a powerful example of the impact of Say Yes Syracuse. Her journey demonstrates how education can be transformative and provides endless opportunities for those who dare to dream and strive for excellence.

IMPORTANT SAY YES REMINDERS FOR SENIORS:

- Say Yes Syracuse Application Deadline: July 1, 2025
- FAFSA Application Deadline: August 1, 2025

Text SAYYES to 1(315) 562-7154 to receive announcements, reminders and Say Yes newsletters.

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



Alumni Spotlight: John Liddy



SCSD Schools Attended: Shea, Roberts, Corcoran '85

College and Major(s): I attended the University of Vermont for my undergraduate career, where I majored in Political Science and minored in Economics. I earned my MBA at Syracuse University in 2003.

Career Path: After college, I did real estate for a few years. I started a couple of businesses – which got my entrepreneurial juices flowing. I moved to Washington, DC for work – and I started another business on the side. I ultimately ended up moving back to Syracuse to start a business with

my mother, where we ran a natural languages processing company at Syracuse University. I went on to work in the business world for a while – ending up working for Suburban Propane, where I ran Operations and had nearly 300 employees working for me. In 2009, I was approached by SU and the Tech Garden – they asked me to start an incubator for students interested in starting their own businesses. Along the way, I've created my own consulting company, and I work with CenterState CEO, the U.S. Military, the Small Business Administration, and others to help people start and grow their businesses.

The coolest thing about my job is...

I get to work with people who are pursuing their dream. It's rewarding. I get to do something different every day. I get to learn a lot. I'm a knowledge guy – I enjoy learning new things. My job allows me access to a lot of great people and a lot of great information – and I get to help people along the way.

The most valuable thing I learned in school is...

Everyone has a story. Don't assume everyone operates the same way you do. There's an old quote from Alan Kay: 'Point of view is worth 80 IQ points.' When I went to Corcoran, I had a diverse group of friends – racially, economically, educationally. I learned not to assume things. Everyone has their own story.

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

When I went to college, I thought freshman year was easier than my senior year in high school! That was pretty rewarding. I felt well prepared for college. I got a bit of a worldview, even in Syracuse, NY, because of the diversity of folks I got to interact with here.

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

In entrepreneurial education, there are certain concepts... one is about risk taking. Entrepreneurs take known risks. My advice is to take the risk. Know what you're going to lose – will it be time, money, social status? Know the risk, and then do the thing. Take the jump.



SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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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



Syracuse City Schools

Let's Talk!



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



Syracuse City School District Open Enrollment *(Pre K-12)*, School Choice, & Transfers



NEW STUDENTS



SCHOOL CHOICE



TRANSFER PROGRAM

Now - March 31 | scsd.us/registration