

## **MIDLAKES JOURNAL**

PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

**YOLUME XXVII, ISSUE I** NOVEMBER 2021

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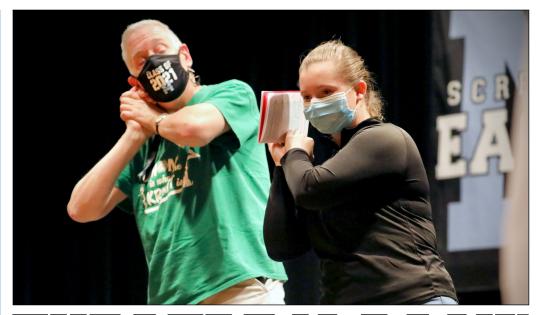
## FIND MORE AT MIDLAKES.ORG



**VIDEO:** Students celebrate school spirit and their Midlakes pride during Homecoming.



**VIDEO**: Meet Midlakes' newest instructional staff in a welcome to school video.



## THEATRE IS BACK!

Midlakes' next theatrical production – set in the tiny town of Digalittledeeper during the California Gold Rush – promises to wash away your troubles with good humor and a few loads of laundry.

"The Villain Wore a Dirty Shirt ... OR ... Always Wash Your Long Johns 'Cause It Makes a Lotta Cents" follows the light-hearted tale of Olympia Klenz and Sweet Sally, who run the town's only "Tub and Scrub."

They manage to accumulate a small fortune by collecting gold flakes from miners' laundry, which catches the eye of Phineas Flatworm who starts developing his own getrich-quick plans.

Can Sheriff Jack B. Nimble turn back his blabbering ways to save the "Tub and Scrub" and win over Sweet Sally? Find out what happens next in this family-friendly show picked by students of the award-winning Midlakes Theatre Experience.

"The Villain Wore A Dirty Shirt" is directed by Midlakes High School English teacher Keith E. Childs. Carol Byron, Nancy Denisi, Susie Bonawitz, Tracy VanDamme, and Betsy Tuxhill are designing the costumes. The set is designed by Charlie King and Jon George. King also serves as the technical director and is assisted by Jason Dunham. Ross Gifford

## The Villain Wore a Dirty Shirt ...

**WHEN**: 7:30 p.m. Nov. 19; 2 p.m. & 7:30 p.m. Nov. 20.

**WHERE:** Midlakes High School Auditorium, 1554 Route 488.

**ADMISSION:** \$8, adults; \$7 for students and senior citizens.

**TICKETS:** Midlakes High School Office, Phelps Hometown Pharmacy, and Sandy's Floral Gallery in Clifton Springs. Tickets cost an additional \$2 at the door.

serves as lighting designer and Cris Brown, a graduate of the Midlakes theatre program, designs publicity graphics for the show.

Students in the cast include Heather Belcher (Sweet Sally), Trinity Dean (Phineas Flatworm), Jennifer Petracchi (Olympia Klenz/Ophelia), Gabe White (Coyote/Mayor Haggle), Nicole Szalay (Lola-Lola), Carter Maslyn (Sheriff Jack B. Nimble), Sarah Brown (Mrs. Mugwump), Alaina Krenzer (Ida), Karen Heffron (Little Lavania), Allison McMillin (Mayor Haggle), and Hannah White (Irma).





for the latest news, photographs, videos and more.













Find the latest announcements, job postings, aquatics center operations, lunch menus, sports and events calendars. and much more!



# APPROVED

The five-year plan will help Midlakes schools focus on four key goals to improve student success.

n April 2019, the Phelps-Clifton Springs Board of Education and the District's administrative team pursued a strategic planning process to shape and align our work of improving student achievement, experiences, and opportunities.

The preliminary work of gathering data and community feedback to guide our strategic planning process occurred several months later but the entire process was put on hold when schools across the state were forced to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Work on the plan resumed this summer after the District collected updated community feedback and a 20-member Strategic Planning Council analyzed the data and drafted plan. The Strategic Planning Council represented all of our stakeholder groups. After several revisions and updates, I am excited to announce that the Board of Education formally adopted the Midlakes Strategic Plan at its October 18 meeting.

Thanks to the thoughtful work of the Planning Council, the Midlakes Strategic Plan identifies four key goals that will guide the work of the District for at least the next five years. Those areas are:

Academic Excellence: To provide programs and supports to improve student achievement.

Midlakes Community: To connect with parents and community members to support our students, create new opportunities for excellence, honor and sustain our traditions, and ensure success for every member of the Midlakes Family.

Strong and Empowered Staff: To ensure that all Midlakes employees feel valued in their commitment to student success.

Student Life: To provide a wide variety of inclusive opportunities that foster the development of student character and well-being through education, athletics, and other programs.

Collectively, these goal areas include initiatives that prioritize the academic, social, emotional, and post-graduate success of all Midlakes students.

The plan is rooted in the belief that we can and

must do better for our students. Since standards of student success are always rising, the District must remain committed to continuous improvement

Even when student achievement improves, for example, the mission to get better

must continue. The Planning Council, administrative team, and Board of Education are confident that the Strategic Plan includes the initiatives and accountability measures necessary to support this improvement process.

Implementing the Strategic Plan will be a collaborative effort. While facilitators have been identified to lead specific initiatives, our efforts will involve students, faculty and staff, parents, community members, and Building Improvement Teams at both the

Elementary School and the Middle/High School.

Working together, we will establish the processes, resources, and opportunities that will improve student outcomes and enrich their experiences as Midlakes students and graduates.

The Strategic Plan is a living document with adjustments made as needed in response to evidence of progress, changing circumstances, or new opportunities. Just as we anticipate that the standards and expectations placed on our students will continue to rise, we must be prepared to adapt our approach to help students succeed in the face of new challenges.

Overall, the Strategic Plan provides a solid foundation for supporting the whole child, but we are prepared to be flexible in our approach while remaining focused on our four key goals. We look forward to keeping families informed of our progress through public presentations to the Board of Education and information posted on the school website and published in the Midlakes Journal.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the strategic planning process by providing feedback and/or serving on the Planning Council and, as always, thank you to the entire Midlakes community for its continued and tremendous support of our students.

-Matt Sickles, superintendent

#### HIGHLIGHTS



#### LOCATION **CHANGE FOR BOARD MEETING**

Due to a demand in auditorium space, the Phelps-Clifton Springs Board of Education will host its regularly scheduled meeting at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 15, in the Middle School Cafeteria.

Those planning to attend in-person should enter through Exit 14, located at the northeast entrance of the building, adjacent to the parking lot near the Ollie Cook Memorial Field.

The meeting will be streamed on the Midlakes School YouTube channel. Those with questions can call the District Clerk at (315) 548-6420.

#### **LIFTING** THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY'

The Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District partnered with the Finger Lakes Area School Health Plan to invite the entire school community to join the Lifting the School Community initiative to provide families, staff and community members health and wellness tools and tips to living a happier life.

The free Lifting the School Community initiative features seven lessons over seven weeks that shares evidenced-based methods to feel better, live more, and take charge of personal well-being. For more information, visit Midlakes.org or theliftproject. global/flashp.

## BACK TO

While ensuring the safe opening and return of nearly 1,550 students back to school under enhanced health and safety protocols was a top priority of the Midlakes schools in September, the District also moved forward on a number of fronts at the start of the new academic year.

Some of the highlights included:

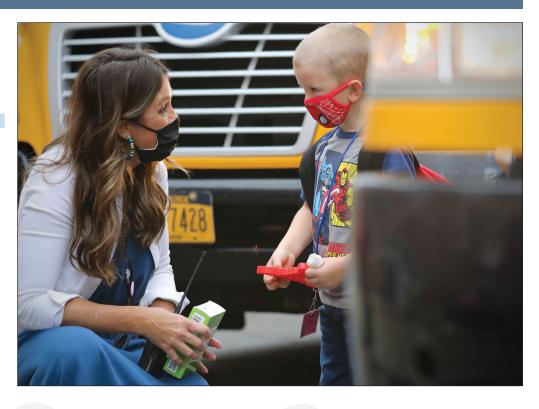
#### SAFETY FIRST

A full Back to School '21 Plan was posted to Midlakes.org/BacktoSchool2021 in August, with updates added as needed. Some important highlights and reminders included:

- · Masks are required on school buses and indoors when the county's COVID-19 transmission level is "moderate" or higher.
- Physical distance of three feet was implemented in classrooms, and other indoor spaces.
- The Ontario County Department of Health is handling decisions regarding quarantines. The District will assist in communications to families.
- All special cleaning and ventilation protocols have been continued.
- The District will be prepared to switch to remote learning as needed. Students should keep school-issued tablets in backpacks and take these devices home daily.
- The District will work with Ontario County Public Health to offer COVID-19 testing, pending parent consent, to students. Check the District's website for further updates.

Also, the District has created a COVID-19 snapshot page on Midlakes.org to help keep parents, students, teachers, staff, and the public informed of school-related positive cases and quarantines.

The snapshot will be updated Friday afternoons while school is in session. Individual families will be notified as needed. The District will communicate larger guarantines or mass outbreaks affecting school operations separately as they occur. Find the page at Midlakes.org/snapshot.



#### **HOT MEALS RETURN** TO SCHOOL MENU

Midlakes Food Service team serves as many as 8,000 in any given week and now they are working a bit harder after reintroducing "hot" items back to the school menu for students in September — a move made weeks earlier than expected.

Also, the District continues to offer free meals to all students through support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Free meals are available regardless of income: however, families should submit a Free and Reduced Priced School Meal Application to Jil Swarthout, Café Building No. 3, 1550 State Route 488, Clifton Springs, NY. 14432.

Families may email completed forms to foodservice@midlakes.org. The form can be found in the "Food Service" tab under "Departments" at Midlakes.org.



## NEW PHOTOGRAPHER FOR SCHOOL PICTURES

The Board of Education approved a contract with The Country Studio of Photography to take and provide portrait services for families of students at Midlakes schools.

Led by award-winning photographer and owner Todd Jennings, the Shortsville-based business has provided a variety of schoolfocused photography services for schools, students, and athletic teams since 1993 and has taken photographs at Midlakes in the past.

In addition to taking photos, The Country Studio of Photography provides digital photo editing services that allow families to customize, order, and review portraits of students in a secure digital environment at TheCountryStudio.com.



## District moves forward in several areas as students of all grades return for the start of the new academic year.





## SCHOOL FACILITY

The District continues to move ahead with several facility upgrades and updates as it plans for the ground-breaking of the \$15.6 million capital improvement project approved by voters nearly two years ago.

The capital improvement project is scheduled to begin in 2022 with work on the Elementary parking lot and fueling station slated to be tackled first.

Separately, a new digital marguee was installed at routes 96 and 488 and two new scoreboards went up in the Middle School Gymnasium. Lighting repairs were made at the Ollie Cook Memorial Field and the varsity softball field. Important technological, safety, and security upgrades will begin soon as part of the District's "Smart Schools" investment paid for with \$1.74 million from the state.

## **DUAL PARTICIPATION**

Student-athletes can now participate in two separate sports during the same season under a pilot program approved by the Phelps-Clifton Springs Board of Education.

Midlakes pursued new "dual participation" rules after Section 5 and the Finger Lakes High School Athletic Association left the decision up to local schools.

Student-athletes in Grades 9-12 must fill out a request form and designate their primary and secondary sport. They will also be required to meet with coaches, parents, and the athletic director, and sign a contract. The primary sport will take precedence in deciding all conflicts.

Student-athletes must follow all Code of Conduct and academic policies, attend a minimum number of practices, and take part in safety check-ins to monitor for overuse.

## **OVERWHELMING**

Midlakes continues to be overwhelmed by a supportive community working to help students during the pandemic.

While most do not seek attention, the District wanted to thank:

**Midlakes Parent Teacher Organization:** For donating approximately 1,550 water bottles and helping to raise about \$2,500 for student activities through Penny Wars. Learn more at MidlakesPTO.org.

Mary Hicks Preston Foundation: For a grant to purchase Midlakes branded swags, bags, and other items for students.

**Clifton Springs Rotary Club:** For donating school supplies and other items for student use. Rotary continues to plan several roller-skating parties at Midlakes Elementary School for the spring. Stay tuned for more details!









#### HIGHLIGHTS

#### **BOARD OF EDUCATION CELEBRATES** RETIREES

The Board of Education celebrated teachers, nurses, bus drivers, and other staff members who retired during the last two academic years.

School administrators joined the Board in September to congratulate 18 individuals, who worked a combined total of approximately 510 years, for their dedicated service to students and staff at Midlakes schools. Each retiree was also wished the best in retirement.

Each retiree will received a plaque from the District marking their service. In addition to hosting an in-person celebration for those retiring during the 2020-2021 academic year, the District also recognized those retiring in 2019-2020 who could not be recognized in-person due to various pandemic restrictions

Those retiring in 2020-2021 included:

- Peg Carlson, nurse (26 years)
- Gail Cayer, nurse (25 years)
- Siobhan Connor, elementary teacher (28 years)
- · Richard Jones. psychologist (28 years)
- · Ann Leverty, secretary (20 years)
- Lorraine Manning, bus driver (24 years)
- Mariana McWilliams. bus driver (27 years)
- Terry Pulcheon, bus driver (26 years)
- Denise Reynolds, bus driver (24 years)
- Patricia Teed, bus driver (26 years)

## ADMINISTRATORS

Karl Dubash and Matt Palmer bring extensive experience in education to the District.

he Board of Education approved the appointment of a new school Business Administrator and a new Director of Operations/Assistant Business Administrator during its October 4 meeting.

Karl Dubash was named as Business Administrator and fills a vacancy created over the summer. He spent a total of five years in the Victor and Brockport school districts as an assistant principal and 12 years as a secondary math teacher in the Rush-Henrietta Central School District. Dubash is completing his School District Business Leader certification through the College of St. Rose.

Also, during its Oct. 4 meeting, the Board approved the appointment of Matt Palmer as Director of Operations/Assistant Business Administrator. Palmer, who began his career as a long-term substitute at Midlakes. Palmer spent 13 years as a secondary math teacher at Marcus Whitman, where he also served as a grade-level team leader, varsity soccer coach, and varsity tennis coach.

Palmer completed his School District Business Leader certification at SUNY Brockport. He will assume responsibilities related to facility and operational management and lead the Transportation Department upon the retirement of Kitty Rhow in December.

Dubash and Palmer have already joined the District in their new roles.



KARL DUBASH



**MATT PALMER** 

#### **NEW INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF**

Prior to the start of the new academic year, Midlakes schools hired nearly 25 new instructional staff members. The hires filled positions left vacant by retirements or created as a result of pandemicrelated funding to address learning gaps and the social-emotional needs of students.



## TEACHER PENS CHILDREN'S BOOK

"How Much Longer" was written to get students and adults talking.

Debbi Socha never planned to write a book until one sleepless night in the early days of the pandemic when she found herself in the kitchen scribbling away in a notebook.

She wrote a story about a young boy stuck at home, like so many others, during the pandemic wondering "How Much Longer?!" The theme became the title of a 41-page book she authored and distributed with Olympia Publishers (\$9.99).

"We were away from school, and I just had this entire story in my head," said Socha, a kindergarten teacher at Midlakes Elementary School. "I couldn't sleep. I just had to write this down."

She completed the story the next day and found a publishing company and an illustrator to help with the book. Socha hopes her efforts results in conversations between adults and children about sometimes difficult situations, instead of adults simply dismissing certain topics brought up by children.

Socha dedicated the book to her 19 kindergarten students during the 2019-2020 school year.

"I want to show that emotions can be a two-way street — adults can have feelings and express them to children and children can express their feelings to adults," she said. "I hope the book initiates conversations in families to help them talk about what they were feeling during the time (we weren't) in school and what could be done better if something similar happens again."

She read the book to her students last year, and they have all taken to it. Some of the other teachers at the elementary school have also



#### HIGHLIGHTS



#### **STUDENT** RECRUITS **BLOOD DONORS**

Senior Emily Balch helped with an immediate need by working with the American Red Cross to host a successful blood drive at Midlakes High School last month.

The American Red Cross offers student coordinators scholarships depending on how many people donate, and while Balch is planning to host other blood drives, and may donate the money back to school for either materials, class activities, or something else to benefit students.

"I don't want people to feel left out or embarrassed not to have certain things," said Blach, a second-year criminal justice student who attends the Finger Lakes Technical and Career. She plans to study forensic psychology or criminal justice in college.

Check Midlakes.org for updates and future blood drive dates as information becomes available.



#### HIGHLIGHTS



#### **BOARD FILLS VACANT SEAT**

The Phelps-Clifton Springs Board of Education appointed Lindsay Marino during its August 23 meeting to fill a seat on the Board left vacant after the resignation of Sheri Scherbyn.

Scherbyn, who was first elected in 2008, had resigned her post on July 15.

"We thank Sheri for her several years of outstanding service and dedication to our students, families, teachers, and staff at Midlakes," said Jake Amidon, Board of Education president. "While we will miss Sheri's input and experience on the Board, we are excited to welcome Lindsay, who is a parent, active volunteer, and member of the community, to continue our important work moving the District forward."

Marino is a registered pediatric nurse and the assistant nurse manager of the Pediatric **Emergency Department at the** Golisano Children's Hospital in Rochester. The Phelps resident has three children in the District

Marino, who ran for the Board in May, took the oath of office during the August meeting. She was unanimously appointed by the Board to hold office until the May election.

EAGLE TIME

idlakes Middle/High School has established Eagle Time, a new 15-minute period in the daily schedule to increase student engagement, strengthen school culture, and build student-teacher connections.

Eagle Time was formed after a committee examining a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support explored ways to address students' academic and social-emotional needs.

"We were talking about what school would be like post-pandemic and how some students may struggle to adapt back to a normal routine and need additional social-emotional support," said Assistant Principal Jim Giancursio. "We also realized that much of our culture was lost during the last 18 months, and we needed to find a way to bring back the family feel that we pride ourselves in providing. Eagle Time seemed like the most logical way to accomplish both."

The program builds upon the idea that student success in these areas has the best chance of occurring when students feel connected to caring adults invested in their learning.

Incorporating Eagle Time early during the school day provides students and staff a regular check-in to address student needs and concerns, work on team-building activities, and explore common interests.

Eagle Time is a component of a district-wide effort to establish a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. The larger effort incorporates evidence-based core instruction, intervention, and assessment practices to help ensure that every student receives the level of support needed to be successful.

"Eagle Time will provide a space for our secondary students to connect with others, something they so desperately need as part of their continued social-emotional development," said Director of Curriculum and Instruction Michelle Robinette. "We hope Eagle Time will provide students with the opportunity to build deeper relationships with each other as well as Midlakes staff, giving them another avenue for advocating for their social, emotional, and academic needs."



#### **WE ARE MIDLAKES!**

Congratulations to Madisyn Archer, Sydney Bell, Libby Pane, Evan Quade, and Cadence Spence for designing a new logo for Eagle Time!! These students developed the logo with teacher Emily Houston. The winning design was picked by staff and students during an online vote. Awesome job!!





#### **PARENT MEETING**

The District plans to hold a Title I Parent meeting at 6 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 14 in the Elementary School Cafeteria (prior to the PTO meeting at 6:30 p.m.) to discuss the MTSS plan in further detail and answer questions.



## SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

The Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District is implementing a "Multi-Tiered Systems of Support" to address the academic, behavioral, and individual needs of every Midlakes student.

The data-driven framework aligns the District across grade levels to bring a consistent way of setting classroom and school-level expectations, delivering quality instruction, and establishing quality relationships.

Michelle Robinette, director of curriculum and instruction, shares more on how MTSS has already impacted Midlakes Schools and what's to come for students and staff.

## Question: How far along is the District in implementation?

Answer: We have come quite a long way. We have been focused on reconnecting and developing strong relationships with students who are back on campus. We've added Eagle Time, which allows our Grades 7-12 staff to gauge how students are doing daily while working with them on some fun and creative projects. They participated in a pumpkin decorating contest sponsored by PTO, played Loteria (a traditional Mexican bingo game), decorated fall-themed cookies, and connected in many other ways.

## Q: So the District is really trying to hit that social-emotional component?

A: Yes. We have added a Character Strong social-emotional curriculum, a "What I Need" time for students to get help in reading, math and other areas, morning meetings with students to go along with regular parent/student communications, and extracurricular activities. Also, each month, we reinforce a different social-emotional character trait. For instance, in November we are focused on "gratitude" with students and in December it'll be "honesty."

## Q: What are the "tiers" or levels of support that make up the framework?

A: Think of it as a pyramid with three main sections. The bottom tier is the primary level of instruction and support delivered to all students. We want to lay the foundation and then build upon it. Tier II focuses on a secondary level of interventions, which includes small group and individualized support for students. Tier III focuses on the most intensive support for students.

## Q: What are some examples of support in Tier I?

A: In part, it's the social-emotional piece under building quality relationships. Setting school-wide expectations has us talking to students about being kind, following directions, keeping our schools neat and organized, and making safe and healthy choices. But it also goes further by setting expectations for Zoom meetings — if we ever need them again — and the appropriate use of SeaSaw (K-6) and Schoology (7-12). Tier 1 academically

represents our core math and reading components. Of course, these are just a few examples.

### Q: What about delivering quality instruction?

A: It's another key focus area. We developed a direct instruction checklist of researched-based practices and lessons. We also have an "If ... Then" toolkit. An example might be, if a student is struggling in math computation, then use manipulatives as counters, hundreds charts, or number lines. These are the first lines of intervention at the classroom level.

#### Q: How will the District place students?

A: Through a variety of measures, including assessments and other data, that have been delineated in flow charts. For Reading and Math, each grade level has its own flow chart K-8. For social-emotional needs, there is a K-6 flow chart and a 7-12 flow chart. If a teacher notices an area of concern they can follow the flow chart for the next level of support, which could involve working with other school personnel and family members.

## Q: What other data will the District use to measure success?

A: We are working to create a dashboard of information, that includes our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, attendance information, and demographic data, behavioral information as well as academic and other benchmarks. This will help us pinpoint those students needing more support and provide those supports more quickly.

#### Q: What's next?

A: We had another MTSS session during our October 27 Superintendent's Conference Day and will have other grade-level and internal staff meetings. We will continue to add and update as needed. I'm hopeful that the implementation of our MTSS plan and having students back in school will have a significant positive impact on their success. As some students grow and need less support, we will be able to intensify the level of intervention other students receive who aren't showing as much progress.

## MIDLAKES JOURNAL PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

#### LOOKING AHEAD



NOY. 11 HOLIDAY

Veteran's Day Holiday (No school).



#### NOY. 15

#### **VARSITY & JV SPORTS**

Winter Sports Practices Being for Varsity & Junior Varsity Sports.



#### NOY. 15

#### **BOARD MEETING**

The Board of Education will hold its regularly scheduled meeting at 6:30 p.m. in the Middle School Cafeteria. Enter through northeast entrance.



#### NOY. 19-20 FALL DRAMA

"The Villain Wore a Dirty Shirt ... OR ...Always Wash Your Long Johns 'Cause It Makes a Lotta Cents



#### NOY. 24-26 HOLIDAY

Thanksgiving Recess (No School)



#### CONFERENCE DAYS

Elementary School Parent/Teacher Conferences. Early dismissal.



#### CONCERT

Middle/High School Band & Chorus Concert, 7 p.m.

\*All dates are subject to change. For more information and updates, visit Midlakes.org/Page/2.



#### PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Send tips and suggestions to: Newsletter, 1490 State Route 488, Clifton Springs, NY 14432





#### PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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