



WC Wildcat Connections

Wheatland-Chili Central School District

Winter 2023

Students Together Against Racism (STAR) Looks to Make Lasting Impact

Students Together Against Racism (STAR) is empowering students to be forces for change.

As part of its commitment to lifting all voices and removing all inequitable barriers, Wheatland-Chili is proud to facilitate STAR clubs at both T. J. Connor Elementary and the High School. While the clubs — established in 2021 — operate differently at each school, the mission is the same: to create a safe, inclusive space for students of all backgrounds to come together to improve their school environment.

At the High School, STAR advisors focus on building strong connections and engaging students in conversations on race, racism, anti-racism, injustice, privilege and other critical topics. Students work together to address each other's concerns and develop plans to make the school community a positive place where everyone feels welcome and safe.

"We're very motivated to try to change things in the school. I think our main goal is to change things for the better," said senior Laryssa Smith.

"I like learning about other people's experiences. As a person that is not of color, it's very important to educate myself on those struggles and see a different perspective on things," added senior Taylor Moore.

Last year, the club hosted a food drive for the victims of the racially motivated grocery store mass shooting in Buffalo. Members also attend biannual ROC2Change Student Summits on Race. Currently, they are collaborating with the International Club and the District's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee to plan the return of Cultural Diversity Day on May 22.

With many of STAR's most active participants getting ready to graduate at the end of this school year, members and advisors are looking to drum up interest among younger students. On February 1, the club invited T. J. Connor STAR members to the High School so the two groups could learn more about each other.

T. J. Connor's STAR Club is offered to fourth and fifth graders. Club members learn about diverse cultures through projects, guest speakers and developmentally appropriate conversations. They use what they have learned to educate fellow students on cultural events during morning announcements. The goal is to increase students' cultural competency to encourage them to stand up to injustice. The school's psychologist, counselor and social worker serve as club advisors. Their team has put together a calendar of diversity, equity and inclusion-related holidays and observances, which is used districtwide.

Plans are currently in the works to expand STAR to the Middle School. The club is looking to launch next school year.

"I think it's important for younger kids to join so they can get a better understanding of other people's experiences from a younger age. I think it builds character," said Smith. "As you get older, you get more stuck in your own ways. When they join younger, they can get a better understanding and grow with that."



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- *Pirates! The Musical*
- Damar Hamlin Day

Meeting Students Where They Are:

Tools Help Personalize Learning, Bolster Supports

The Wheatland-Chili Central School District is utilizing several resources to bridge learning gaps and to meet the social and emotional needs of students.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) at T. J. Connor

Nearly three years later, the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic continue to affect students everywhere. Understanding and responding to the academic, social, emotional and behavioral needs of each individual student in the wake of the health crisis is a difficult undertaking, but T. J. Connor Elementary School has a strategy to do just that.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is a framework that helps educators tailor support for each student through increasingly targeted interventions. It is an evolution of the Response to Intervention (RTI) strategy that educators have been using for years. RTI utilizes assessment results to monitor learning progress and identify students who may need additional academic help. MTSS uses the same structure, but it extends beyond academics to help provide social, emotional and behavioral supports as well.

While this marks the first official year of MTSS, the district has been establishing the foundation for some time.

“Members of our team have been training in the most effective MTSS practices, and we are very excited to take what we have learned and apply it to support the Wildcats of T. J. Connor,” said T. J. Connor Dean of Students Gregory Burns.

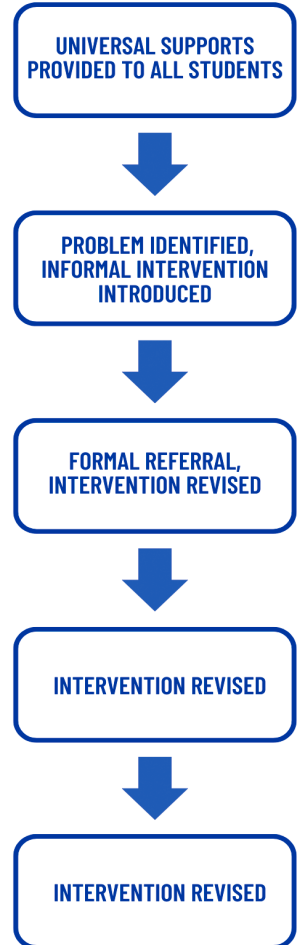
T. J. Connor’s MTSS team includes teachers, instructional coaches and the school psychologist.

MTSS starts with universal supports provided by teachers to every student. When a teacher identifies a student struggling with a particular problem, the process advances with an informal intervention spanning four to six weeks. If the problem persists at the end of the initial intervention, a teacher makes a formal referral to the MTSS team, and together, they develop a new intervention. If the student is not progressing after another four to six weeks, the intervention is revised. Progress is assessed again after four weeks, if the problem continues, the intervention is revised again. This process continues until a student is improving adequately and the intervention is no longer necessary.

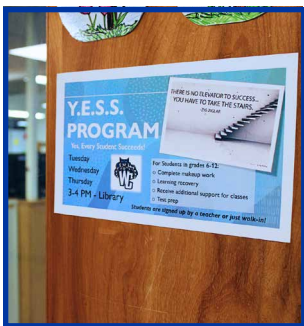
“Instead of waiting for failure to provide more intensive supports, MTSS takes a proactive approach to identifying students with academic or behavioral needs. Early assessment and intervention for these students can help them catch up with their peers sooner and reduce negative behavior,” explained Burns.

With many students positively responding to interventions and meeting or exceeding their goals, MTSS is already proving to be a success.

“Seeing students who have struggled make such progress is extremely motivating and evidence of the power of working together. I am excited to see how our school’s Multi-Tiered Systems of Support can help more students and teachers achieve victories as we continue to work towards June,” said Burns.



Yes, Every Student Succeeds (YESS)



“Yes, Every Student Succeeds.” That’s the name and motto of a new after-school program at Wheatland-Chili Middle/High School.

Held in the library every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 3 to 4 p.m., YESS offers students an opportunity to complete makeup work, catch up on learning, get extra help from teachers and prep for tests.

“There are lots of things happening in class, and some students are needing some extra one-on-one time,” said library media specialist Jennifer Vogt.

YESS — staffed on a rotating basis by Vogt along with teachers Matthew McCabe and Amanda Petrella-Christ and school counselors Karen Adams, Kara Hiltz and Andrea House — is also a component of the school’s new grading policy. Instead of receiving a failing grade, students will now receive an “incomplete” and be required to follow a learning recovery plan, which includes a referral to YESS. If students complete the plan within five weeks, they earn a passing grade.

For some students, the program also serves as an extra push to stay on top of their schoolwork.

“The YESS program is a unique opportunity for students to get individualized academic support or extra time to complete assignments. Our certified staff is proving to be an invaluable asset to our students. I urge families to encourage their students to participate,” said Middle/High School Principal Camille Zitz.

YESS is open to students in sixth through 12th grades. While many are referred by teachers or counselors, students are also free to walk in.

Valerie Savage Named New York State Art Educator of the Year

Wheatland-Chili High School art teacher Valerie Savage has been named the 2022 New York State Art Educator of the Year!

The New York State Art Teachers Association (NYSATA) presented Savage with the prestigious award during the organization's annual conference on November 20. Candidates are nominated by students, parents or colleagues and must be members of NYSATA who have practiced exemplary teaching, strong advocacy and made an impact on their school, region and state as well as within the association.

Savage began her teaching career at Wheatland-Chili in 1985. She currently teaches studio art, computer graphics, photography, drawing/painting, portfolio and AP studio art and is advisor for the High School Art Club and National Honor Society. Savage is an active member of NYSATA, serving in many roles, including association president from 2019 to 2021. She is also a member of the New York State Education Arts Content Advisory Panel (CAP) and the New York State Art Coalition.

Please join us in congratulating Mrs. Savage for this well-deserved honor!



Middle/High School Welcomes New Assistant Principal

Jason Shetler is Wheatland-Chili Middle/High School's new assistant principal. Shetler began his tenure in November.

With 20 years of experience in education, Shetler comes to the district after working in various school administrator roles. Most recently, he served as assistant principal in the North Rose-Wolcott Central School District.

Shetler spent the first 10 years of his career as a social studies teacher in the Rush-Henrietta Central School District.

"I am excited to be part of the Wheatland-Chili team. Since starting in late November, the students, staff and community have been extremely welcoming," said Shetler. "It became apparent right away that we have a dedicated staff, supportive families and hard-working students of high character. I look forward to meeting many more members of our community in the coming months."

Shetler, who lives in Avon, is married with one child and two dogs. When not in school, he enjoys spending time with his family, camping, playing the guitar and cheering for the Bills.

Cultural Diversity Day:

Call for Volunteers

Cultural Diversity Day returns to Wheatland-Chili on May 22!

The district is seeking community members to share their diverse cultural heritages.

If interested in participating, please contact Karen Lee Wilson at Karen_Lee_Wilson@wheatland.k12.ny.us.



High School Students Inducted Into National Honor Society

Thirteen Wheatland-Chili High School students were inducted into the National Honor Society during a ceremony in the Middle/High School library on December 20. Congratulations to the 2022 inductees:

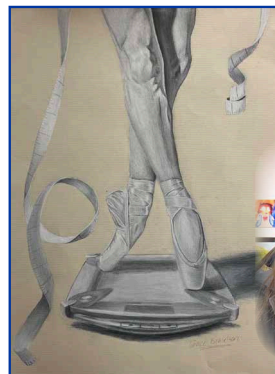
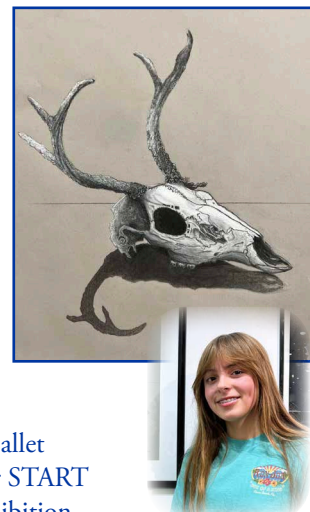
<i>Benjamin Allen</i>	<i>Ashley Gottorff</i>	<i>Tera Milazzo</i>
<i>Owen Alquist</i>	<i>Madison Gushue</i>	<i>Humza Muhammad</i>
<i>Marena DeBruyne</i>	<i>Ethan Hallock</i>	<i>James Nolan</i>
<i>Alison Farrell</i>	<i>Julia Lynch</i>	<i>Kyle Otto</i>
	<i>Julia Shelton</i>	



Student Artists Featured in Exhibit at RIT

Two Wheatland-Chili High School students recently had their artwork featured in an exhibit at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT).

Sienna Mekker's charcoal drawing of a skull and Grace Braselton's charcoal drawing of a ballet dancer's feet were both selected for START HERE, an invitational student exhibition which ran January 20 through February 4.

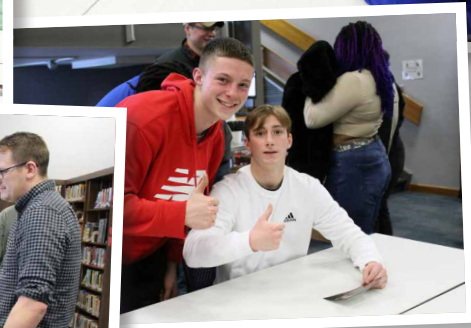


In addition, Mekker's piece won the School of Art Medical Illustration Award. She was presented with the honor during a ceremony kicking off the exhibit.

The artwork featured in START HERE is selected by high school and middle school teachers across New York State.

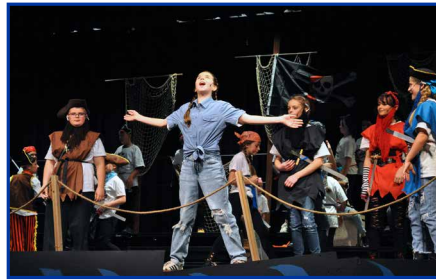
Alumni Spill the Tea for the Class of 2023

On January 13, Wheatland-Chili alumni and the Class of 2023 gathered in the Middle/High School library for some tea, cookies and conversation. Past graduates included several members of the Class of 2022 and Paul Hogue, who graduated in 2011 and now teaches science at the Middle School. They were invited to share their post-high school experiences and insights on the transition to college and careers with this year's seniors.



Pirates! The Musical Takes the Stage

The Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Grade Drama Club delighted audiences with its production of “Pirates! The Musical,” presented November 17 and 18 at the Middle/High School. Written by Roger Emerson and John Jacobson, the musical follows a colorful crew of singing pirates who set out on a swashbuckling adventure after discovering a stowaway aboard their ship. “Pirates!” featured a cast of more than 50 students and was produced and directed by Beth McDougall, Nicholas Roche, who also served as accompanist, and Alexis Waite, who also served as choreographer.



Photos by Shanna Fraser

*The 25th Annual
Putnam County*
Spelling Bee

March 17 and 18
7 p.m.
Tickets available at
wheatland.k12.ny.us

T. J. Connor Gets Ready for Kids Heart Challenge

T. J. Connor students have a lot of heart, and they’re about to show it.

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade will participate in the Kids Heart Challenge starting February 27. The weeklong event is meant to highlight the importance of heart health and to raise money for the American Heart Association.

With more than \$5,000 raised so far, the school has already surpassed this year’s fundraising target. But organizers are working to reach another goal: to have 50% of students register for the challenge. If they succeed, the school will receive \$500 worth of physical education equipment.

Registration is free. Families who would like to raise or donate money can sign up at heart.org/khc or through the Kids Heart Challenge app. The school will be collecting donations until March 3.

Questions regarding the event can be directed to Christine Fisher at Christine_Fisher@wheatland.k12.ny.us or Derrick Biehl at Derrick_Biehl@wheatland.k12.ny.us.

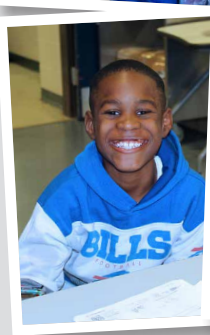
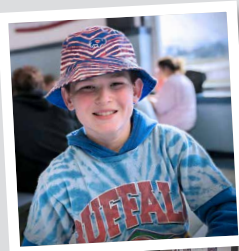
T. J. Connor Goes Ice Skating

T. J. Connor Elementary School students in third, fourth and fifth grades got the opportunity to go ice skating for phys ed. Classes took a bus to the Scottsville Ice Arena and laced up their skates during the first two weeks of February.



Wildcats Celebrate Damar Hamlin Day

Wheatland-Chili rallied in a show of support for Buffalo Bills player Damar Hamlin. After the safety suffered cardiac arrest during a game, the Wildcats declared January 6 “Damar Hamlin Day.” Students and staff came to school in their best Bills gear in honor of Hamlin, his family and the team.



Celebrating our athletes in the Class of 2023!

Boys Varsity Basketball

Seniors (L to R):
Tahquan Smith,
Karnage Napier,
Terrance
Bayly-Henshaw,
Demetrius
Singletary



Girls Varsity Basketball

Seniors (L to R):
Christina
Schwenebraten,
Lauren Nelson



Wheatland-Chili Musicians to Perform with All-County Band

Three Wheatland-Chili High School students have been selected for the All-County Concert Band. Grace Gocher, Lauren Nelson and Katie Smith were chosen through a competitive audition. They will perform with the group during the Senior High All-County Music Festival at Eastman School of Music on March 4.



Ski Club Members Hit the Slopes in Record Numbers

The Middle/High School Ski Club is hitting the slopes with record numbers. Eighty student skiers and snowboarders are participating this year — the largest membership in club history! The club, which kicked off the first week of January and runs through March, travels to Swain Ski Resort every Thursday. Members also made a special trip to Holiday Valley in Ellicottville. The club is open to skiers and snowboarders of all skill levels.



Celebrating the Holidays at Wheatland-Chili

Art Students Make the Holidays Brighter for Military Families

Middle School art students helped make the holidays merry and bright for service members and their families. They created Christmas tree tags to donate to Trees for Troops. Mrs. Melville's students have proudly participated in the program for the last four years, illustrating over 1000 tags for the trees that Stokoe Farms sends to military families!



Winter Concerts



Jazz Band Performs at Senior Center



The Middle School Jazz Band spread some holiday cheer. The group travelled to the Wheatland Senior Center for a special performance on December 21. Bravo!

High School Band Featured at Monroe County Tree Lighting

The High School Band was proud to perform during the Christmas tree lighting at the Monroe County Office Building in downtown Rochester on

December 5. Congratulations to the musicians on a wonderful performance, and a big thanks to Monroe County Executive Adam Bello for letting the group join in on the fun!



Wheatland-Chili Central School District

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Upcoming Events

February

20-24 Winter Recess - No School
27 Board of Education Meeting 7 p.m.

March

1 District Concert 7 p.m.
5 International Club Pancake Breakfast 9 a.m.
9 Board of Education Visitation Day
PTA Meeting 6:30 p.m.
10 Middle/High School Progress Reports Mailed
13 Board of Education Meeting 7 p.m.

16 Kindergarten Screening
Spring Musical Senior Citizen Reception 3 p.m.
Spring Musical Performance for Senior Citizens 4 p.m.
17 Spring Musical 7 p.m.
18 Spring Musical 7 p.m.
27 Board of Education Meeting 7 p.m.

April

3-7 Spring Recess - No School
10 Budget Workshop 7 p.m.
13 PTA Meeting 6:30 p.m.
14 Middle/High School Report Cards Mailed
17 Board of Education Meeting 7 p.m.
19-21 NYS Grades 3-8 ELA Assessments

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

**Family and
Community
Engagement
Survey**



Scan to take survey now or
visit wheatland.k12.ny.us

Please submit responses by March 24

STAY CONNECTED

Check out our District website for the latest updates:

wheatland.k12.ny.us

And be sure to follow Wheatland-Chili on Social Media:



@wheatlandChiliCSD



@WCCSD



@tjcelementary