

CUFSD NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2023

HOME OF THE HAMBLETONIANS



Chester welcomes students for 2023-24 school year

Teachers and staff greeted students as they entered the halls for the first time since June.

"On the first day of school, we extend a warm welcome to all students and their families," said Superintendent Catherine O'Hara. "Together, we prioritize our students, look to the future, and work collaboratively as a team."

Students were guided to the classrooms after they met and caught up with their friends.



"Be present, work hard, never give up and strive to reach your highest potential."

New staff was also ready for the new school year.

"My advice to students is to not be afraid to ask questions and have fun while learning," said Speech Pathologist Caitlin Reynar.

"I'm looking forward to starting the college search," said Evangelynn Perez, junior at Chester Academy.

"I am excited to be back with my friends every day and have classes with them," said Ariana Azeez, senior at Chester Academy. "I also get to use my senior privileges this year, which I am really excited about, like the senior lounge."

Chester Academy Principal John Flanagan had some advice for students.

"I love my math and science classes," said Maria Leon, fifth-grader at Chester Elementary School. "I want to be a teacher when I grow up."

"Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns, both this week and throughout the school year," said Ms. O'Hara. "Wishing our students, staff and families a successful week and a productive school year ahead!"



IMPORTANT DATES

October 9

- Columbus Day - No School

October 12

- CES STEAM Night

October 11

- Board of Education Meeting

October 24

- Board of Education Meeting

October 26

- Family Instructional Academy

October 31

- Half Day
- CES Halloween Parade
- Superintendent's Conference Day



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THE MAKERSPACE OPENS

Chester Academy proudly unveils the new Makerspace, designed to spark innovative learning experiences for all students. Here, creativity takes center stage, as students will have opportunities that extend from research, design, literature and media to 3D printing, robotics, and mechatronics. Varied presentation platforms and collaborative spaces support the District vision of developing global leaders, providing students with learning experiences that cultivate critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. It's a place where students engage in authentic, hands-on applications, supporting inquiry and innovation as we continue to partner with our community, local businesses, and higher education. Together, we're forging a path toward a future of limitless possibilities for our students.



ADVISORY PERIOD BEGINS AT CHESTER ACADEMY

The Advisory Program is a cornerstone of personalized support and community at Chester Academy. By maintaining consistent small groups with dedicated advisors, students benefit from a nurturing environment that spans their entire academic journey. The integration of The 7 Mindsets program underscores the commitment to their holistic growth, both academically and emotionally. In this close-knit setting, every student is recognized and valued, reinforcing their sense of belonging. As they progress through each grade, having a trusted adult and peer group by their side ensures that individual achievement is not just acknowledged, but actively supported. This program exemplifies Chester Academy's dedication to each student's unique path to success.

"In these small groups, we want students to find a comfort zone, have a trusted group, have that social and emotional education, to work on organizational skills and to really find ways to be successful as students," said John Flanagan, principal at Chester Academy.

"The advisory groups create a bridge that brings people together," said Mr. Flanagan. "Our goal is to see these groups grow together over the years."

CHESTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WELCOMES STUDENT CULTURE AND BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Chester Elementary School welcomes its new Student Culture and Behavioral Support Specialist, Doreen Carter Baptiste. Ms. Baptiste presented at the Board of Education meeting on Wednesday, September 13, 2023, explaining what her position will bring to the school district and how it aligns with initiatives already implemented, such as the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Choose Love programs.

While not in an administrative role, Ms. Baptiste will collaborate closely with the school psychologist and social worker to implement proactive measures and further strengthen the connection between families and the school. While the school psychologist and social worker typically have regular meetings with specific students, Ms. Baptiste will have a more flexible schedule, allowing her to provide tailored support to students, engage with teachers and foster a collaborative partnership with families to ensure student success.



Ms. Baptiste holds a New York State Professional Teaching Certification for grades 1-6. Her proficiency lies in cultivating strong family partnerships that are instrumental in achieving student success. Additionally, she possesses a Family Development Credential awarded by Cornell University.

[**Click here to read the full story**](#)

Superintendent's Conference Day

Chester Union Free School District held its two-day Superintendent's Conference, welcoming new staff and returning staff to the 2023-24 school year. The first day began with a breakfast followed by a presentation from Superintendent Catherine O'Hara and other administration.

The theme of the conference was "Reigniting Our Why."

Ms. O'Hara discussed the district's growth within the last year, crediting the entire staff's team-driven focus while also sharing how the district plans to continue to grow in the future.

[**Click here to read the full story**](#)



PBIS assemblies kicked off at Chester Elementary School
on Friday, September 9, 2023. PBIS is an evidence-based, tiered framework that supports students' behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health. PBIS engages students, families, and community members to co-create culturally responsive practices.



2023-24 SCHOOL DISTRICT GOALS

1. Promote an environment that prioritizes diversity, equity and inclusion, where every individual feels safe, valued, respected and empowered to achieve their highest potential.
2. Provide innovative, data-supported and engaging learning experiences that foster college and career readiness through highly qualified staff who are student-centered, future-focused and team-driven.
3. Expand opportunities for meaningful community engagement, communication and partnerships that support real-world application in learning.
4. Ensure the continual improvement and expansion of district facilities promoting safety, security and student opportunity in the most efficient and economical manner possible.
5. Create a fiscally responsible budget that effectively addresses the needs of the district while considering the concerns and input of the community.

Family Instructional Academy

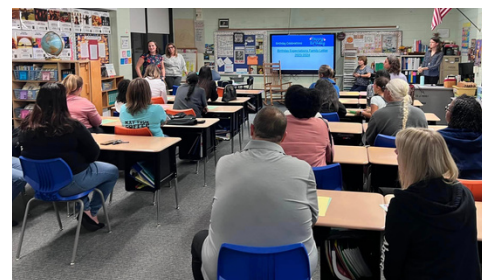
CUFSD Family Instructional Academy was created last year to provide learning opportunities for parents and family members. One of the main goals is to improve the communication between the district and the community and establish family input on topics they would like to learn more about. There will be five workshops conducted this year, with themes based on community input.

The first Family Instructional Academy of the school year was held on Tuesday, September 26, 2023. The theme was "Improving Communication" which covered topics on utilizing the district website, access to school tools, updating the phone directory, using Google Classroom, communicating with teachers, improving parent communication and identifying future workshop topics.



"Our goal is to have a team-driven approach to organizing the workshops," said Dayanara Garcia, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Communication and facilitator of the Academy. "I would love to incorporate teachers, staff and members of the community to co-facilitate workshops and develop creative interactive activities families will enjoy. We look forward to seeing the development of this initiative and how we can increase parental involvement in our school community."

The next workshop will be held on Thursday, October 26, 2023



Chester hosted Open Houses from Tuesday, September 19 to Thursday, September 21, 2023.

Parents followed their child's schedule and were able to meet all of the teachers. Farm to School Food Tasting was also available each night in the cafeteria, which provided families with fresh, local meals.



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