



Wallkill Students Learning American Sign Language in After-School Class



Kindergarten teacher Sara Ellison teaching student Emilie Boyd the sign for "like" during an after-school sign language class at Ostrander.

MANY GRADE 5 AND 6 STUDENTS THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT are learning to "speak" a fun and interesting new language during an after-school program. But if you visit, you won't hear much speaking. That's because the students are learning the important, practical skill of sign language!

At Ostrander, the class is being taught by Kindergarten teacher Sara Ellison on Mondays and Wednesdays. Ms. Ellison said she first studied American Sign Language in college. Last year, Melissa Mourges, a Teacher of the Deaf for the District, accompanied her in class to support a hard-of-hearing student. Afterwards, Ms. Ellison began to make sign language a part of her classroom. Sign language became so popular that it was then made into an enrichment class last summer, and eventually led to an after-school class for Grade 5 and 6 students this year.

The same class is being offered to elementary students at Plattekill and Leptonedale, with Mrs. Mourges as the teacher.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Dear Wallkill Community,

This issue of *Learning at Wallkill* highlights the balanced approach we take in our District regarding programs we offer to our students. You will find articles with a focus on positive youth development and academics. This approach to learning is preparing our students to have long-term success both in and outside of the classroom. They are acquiring the skills the future workforce is requiring, such as analytic and critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, and emotional intelligence. All of this hard work by our learning community has resulted in our high school earning a spot on the *U.S. News and World Report's* listing of the best U.S. high schools in 2019.

Over the next couple of months, we will be developing our 2020-2021 budget with the goals of preserving programs and staying within the tax cap. In May, we will be presenting our budget to the community in preparation for the May 19, 2020 Budget Vote. We are so fortunate to have a community that supports the education we are providing to our students. We will continue to make every effort to improve upon what we are offering students, as well as being fiscally responsible to our taxpayers.

I would like to thank our parents for the high level of participation at our open houses, parent forums, athletic events, and music concerts. Together, we will continue to make our schools the best educational experience for our students.

Thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely,

Kevin Castle, Superintendent of Schools

Wallkill Students Learning American Sign Language in After-School Class

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“Sign language is great because it is a kinesthetic way to activate the brain,” Ms. Ellison said. “It is also as valuable as learning any other language, like Spanish, because you can communicate with more of the population.”

Ms. Ellison said she teaches her Kindergarten students many phrases, including “Thank you” or “Can I get a drink of water?” She said it helps discourage children from “calling out” and also helps with crowd control. That’s because students don’t need to disrupt others when they have personal questions, and she can use sign to get their attention. She also teaches her students the Pledge of Allegiance and uses sign to play games.

The after-school class is filled with many of the students who enjoyed the summer class, as well as many newcomers. Students enter the room excitedly, and Ms. Ellison already has a plan. They often start with “the alphabet game.” Once the students know the signs for all of the letters, they can “fingerspell” anything, which is useful if they don’t know the sign for a particular word.

Ms. Ellison then reviews things that they have learned already, such as the signs for colors and verbs. Students determine what she is “saying” as she signs sentences using these words. Then students sign some of their own, and the rest of the class must read their meaning. They also play games and learn to sign

songs of their choice using YouTube videos. Class ends with everyone signing the Pledge of Allegiance. It is a lively and active class, where students have fun and take much of the learning with them.

Grade 6 student Julian Lugo said he has already been able to use some of what he has learned with a friend of his mother’s, who is deaf.

Ryder Kilpatrick, also in Grade 6, told a humorous story about how he has utilized his new skills. “We were told to be quiet during lunch, so I started to use sign language with another student from the group!” he said.

Ms. Ellison hopes that eventually, sign language will become a language choice for students in Grade 8 or High School. If the success of her after-school group is any indication, the choice would be a popular one!



Ostrander student Ryder Kilpatrick demonstrating his sign-language skills during an after-school class as Lillian Kilpatrick (far right) and Austin Webman look on.

Bug Math at Leptondale Elementary

This past Halloween, Jane O’Donnell’s Grade 4 Math classroom at Leptondale Elementary School was invaded by bugs—highly educational ones, of course. “The bugs represented different place values,” explained Mrs. O’Donnell, referring to the rubbery creatures used as teaching tools during her hands-on math lesson.

“Centipedes represented 10’s, and flies represented 1’s,” she said. “The students were illustrating partial products of multiplying 3×14 in expanded form.”

Breaking down the math problem, Mrs. O’Donnell said that the students used three centipedes to depict 3×10 , and used three groups of four flies to illustrate 3×4 . They then added the two products together to get the final answer.

The lesson was creepy, crawly, and just right for Halloween!



During a Halloween-inspired lesson, Grade 4 students Allyssa DePew (left) and ZoeyAnne Bates used rubber centipedes and flies to represent different place values.

Middle School “Show and Tell” Night Showcases Student Learning

WHAT DO RAP SONGS, ROBOTS, AND RUBBER BAND-PROPELLED RACERS HAVE IN COMMON?

These were just some of the many learning tools on display at an action-packed “Show & Tell” event hosted by John G. Borden Middle School on November 20.

The educational evening, which was sponsored by the school’s Parent Engagement Committee, showcased a wealth of innovative student projects, displays, and performances. An enthusiastic crowd stopped by to see students engage in hands-on learning activities and show off some of the many things they had learned this fall.

In the Library Media Center, Grade 7 student Daisy Noble screened a video slideshow she created for her English class. “The assignment was to make a trailer, like a movie trailer, to try to convince people to read a particular book,” she explained. Daisy’s moving presentation promoted *A Long Walk to Water*, the story of a Sudanese refugee’s harrowing journey from his war-torn homeland to safety in the United States.

In a different part of the Media Center, students and their family members engaged in a “breakout room” activity facilitated by ENL (English as a New Language) teacher Melissa Charlesworth. To find their way out of the digital breakout room, the participants used Chromebook computers to hunt for clues and solve the puzzle that would unlock the room’s door.

In Health teacher Brian Mahan’s classroom, Grade 7



During the Middle School’s “Show & Tell” event, Grade 8 student Isabella Torres (right) explained how the “air racers” she and her classmates made in technology class work. Listening intently were her mother, Stefanie Hixon, and brother, George Hixon.

students gave information-packed presentations on the opioid crisis as well as on vaping, which has been linked to lung diseases and a rising number of deaths among young people.

In the school’s Active Learning Space, Grade 8 student Isabella Torres showed her mother and brother how student-designed “air racers” worked. “We made them in tech class,” she said. “We put rubber bands on them, flung them down the hallway, and measured how far they went. Mine traveled 75 feet!”

Nearby, Grade 8 student Nick Parisi used coding to program a robot to follow designated colors. He also demonstrated his knowledge of the electronic building blocks called littleBits. “They’re like little robotic pieces,” he explained. “You connect them together, and you can make them do what you want.”

Grade 7 students Ella Rydell and Mayah Simon wrote and recorded a rap song inspired by a math lesson on subtracting positive and negative integers.

Principal Marjorie Anderson was enthusiastic about the event’s success. “This evening’s Show and Tell was a terrific opportunity for our students to showcase for their families the wide range of creative, problem-solving activities and projects that they have made this Fall,” she said. “And, the delicious pizza was also a hit!”



Grade 8 student Nick Parisi (right) programming a robot during the Middle School’s Show & Tell event as his sister, Leptondale Grade 5 student Gianna Parisi, looks on.

Seasonal Sounds at Leptondale Elementary School

THE SOUNDS OF THE SEASON FILLED THE AIR AT LEPTONDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL in December, as the school's young musicians shared their skills, talents, and holiday spirit during several festive winter concerts.

The Fifth and Sixth Grade Choirs and Bands held two performances on December 12. The first, a daytime event, was staged before an enthusiastic audience of students and teachers. The second, held at night, wowed an overflow crowd filled with parents, grandparents, siblings, and assorted music-lovers.

More than 80 students participated in the evening performance, according to Music teacher Elizabeth Groth, who directs the Sixth Grade Choir. "This did not include our 32 string students, under the direction of Edie Duncan, who had their own Districtwide concert on December 11 at the High School," she noted.

Practice, and lots of it, is key to the musicians' success, said Mrs. Groth. Band, choir, and strings students voluntarily miss recess on the days they have a scheduled practice. The instrumental students also have a small group lesson once every six school days.

The Fifth Grade Choir members, under the direction of Kirsten Rolon, displayed their skill at expressing emotion through singing with their renditions of "Celebrating Hanukkah" and "For the Winter." Another performance, "I Hear Those Jingle Bells," displayed the students' ability to combine two



Leptondale's Sixth Grade Choir performing during one of the school's winter concerts.

different melodies into one harmonious "partner" song.

During the Sixth Grade Choir performance, Mrs. Groth's students showed off what they had learned about tone production and singing in harmony. "They showcased their developing skills, singing "Shalom to You My Friend," "Carol of the Bells," and "Rockin' Holidays," she reported.

The Fifth Grade Band members, under the direction of Meredith Rubinstein, have been playing their instruments since September. "They were very excited to share with the audience what they have learned up to this point," said Mrs. Rubinstein. The band's clarinet section played "Aura Lee," the saxophone section played "Love Somebody," and the trumpets performed a duet with the tuba/trombone section called "Lightly Row."

A well-known folk song, "My Grandfather's Clock," provided the inspiration for "The Tick Tock Song," which was one of the highlights of the Grade 6 Band performance. The band, under the direction of Mrs. Rubinstein, also performed two other crowd-pleasers, "Festival of Lights" and "Diary of a Grumpy Elf" (which featured Grade 1 teacher Daniela Salemo as the ill-tempered elf).

The concerts, which got toes tapping and hands clapping, sent audiences home with an increased appreciation for the hardworking young musicians and their dedicated teachers!



Grade 6 student Ian Hollibush playing the tuba during a holiday concert at Leptondale.

Plattekill Teacher Focuses on Exploration and Play With First Grade Students

THIS YEAR, PLATTEKILL GRADE 1 TEACHER BARBARA BOUCK IS IMPLEMENTING A NEW MODEL IN HER CLASSROOM that combines Science, Technology, Research, Engineering, Art, Math, and Social Studies (STREAMS). Just as importantly, it combines exploration and play.

The idea behind the model, explained Plattekill Elementary School Principal Monica Hasbrouck, is that “Learning comes from exploring.” Much of this exploration is conducted through hands-on activities and structured play. “It’s really through play that children learn,” she asserted.

Shortly before Thanksgiving, Mrs. Bouck’s classroom was a beehive of activity, with students hard at work on projects inspired by the Plymouth Colony. At one table, children fashioned Pilgrim dolls out of clothespins and scraps of yarn and fabric. At another table, young artists sketched out designs for a landscape like the one Pilgrims inhabited, which was later painted into a wall mural in the block area.

Nearby, two boys sat on the floor, using blocks to make a model of a one-room English cottage (the preferred architectural style in Plymouth). The blocks, which were made by Mrs. Bouck’s father, expose the children to math and fractions, while also helping them to learn about balance, stabilization, and arches.

“Our classroom’s engineering station was turned into a toy-making shop, where we made hook and loop games with sticks and string,” Mrs. Bouck continued.

“These items needed to be measured according to directions. We also made applesauce, and homemade butter from cream.”

Earlier in the year, the class had immersed

themselves in an investigation of monarch butterflies. “We had about 30 monarch larvae in different stages of their life cycles when the year began,” said Mrs. Bouck. “There were mason jars throughout the room, on their desks, on the windowsill, and at the art table.”

Through the course of the learning unit, the students painted, sketched, and wrote about the butterflies. “We used insect puppets and made a puppet theater from an empty box, and painted it in our art center,” said Mrs. Bouck. “We studied their migration, we read poems, and we learned songs. We learned about gender identification, the life cycle of the milkweed plant, and how to care for and raise milkweed.”

In Mrs. Bouck’s view, the model is a big success. “The students get to explore the learning station that suits their learning style, and they

are learning how to budget time, work together, and make choices,” she said. “They choose from ramps and pathways for marble shoot blocks, a paint area, a block-building area, art collage, reading, and dramatic play stations. We open and close our centers with a mini-meeting, where we plan or share our discoveries and frustrations or ‘wonderings.’ I can tap into what we worked on throughout the rest of our day.”



Grade 1 teacher Barbara Bouck guiding students Timothy Vertullo and Shae Styles as they make “Pilgrim” dolls out of clothespins and scraps of yarn and fabric.



Jeffrey Pushman and Alijah Newkirk playing with blocks in one of the play-based learning centers in Mrs. Bouck's Grade 1 classroom.

Districtwide Talented and Gifted LEGO Leaguers Prepare for Competition

EVERY WEEK, MEMBERS OF THE DISTRICT'S TALENTED AND GIFTED (TAG) LEGO LEAGUE TEAM

practice the art of “coopertition”—a core value that the global FIRST LEGO League program instills in its participants. A team that practices “coopertition” not only focuses on competing, but also assists others when possible.

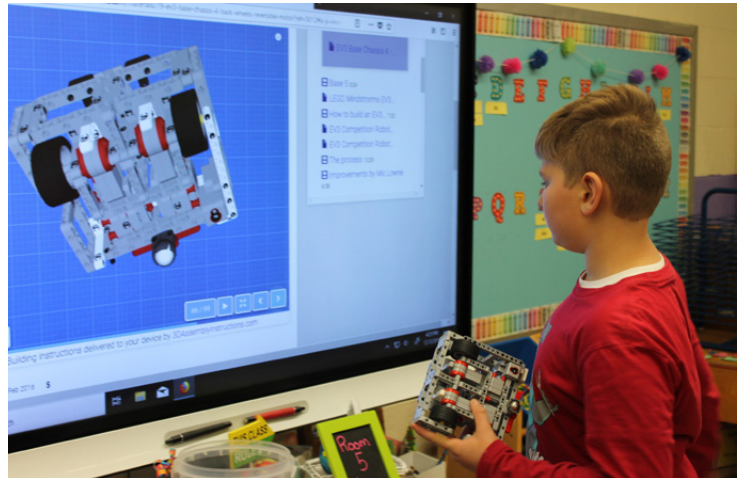
During a recent meeting at Ostrander, a team atmosphere was very much in evidence. Functioning like a well-oiled machine, students were busily immersed in activity. There were groups of builders, videographers, PowerPoint designers, writers, and artists—all working in harmony.

“Everyone here is using their own special skills,” said LEGO League Coach Sara Ellison, who also teaches Kindergarten at Ostrander. “Not everyone does everything, but everyone does something,”

Ostrander’s LEGO League team has a challenging task at hand, and they are using skills in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) to tackle it. They are preparing for the FIRST LEGO League’s global competition, “City Shaper,” which takes place in January. They will go armed with a specialized robot they built together and an informative presentation about pollution in the Wallkill River.

Each year, students are presented with a new challenge to engage them in thinking about a real-world problem. This year, teams were asked to problem-solve an issue they care about and make visual and computer presentations. They also were challenged to design, build, and program a LEGO Education Mindstorms EV3 robot to perform “missions” on a themed playing field.

To construct their EV-3 Chassis robot, builders Zachary Groth and Cody Zavodsky, both Grade 6 students, followed directions from a 95-slide PowerPoint presentation. Wallkill Library Media Technology Integrated Specialist Stephen Cabarcas and Ulster BOCES Model Schools Content Specialist Emily Russo will coach the students in coding the robot to perform the missions required of the competition. Everyone on the team built a LEGO piece for the classroom obstacle course on which the robot will “practice” these moves.



Grade 6 student Cody Zavodsky, a member of Ostrander's Talented and Gifted LEGO League Team, is using PowerPoint directions to build a robot.

As for a real-world issue, the students chose to focus on pollution in the Wallkill because it was an issue that was close to home, and it was something that local people could help with.

“People in the community can participate in cleaning up the river,” said Grade 5 student Maria Warren. Maria, along with Willow Noble (Grade 4) and Shaelynn Decker (Grade 6), were the writers who put together content for both the poster and PowerPoint presentation. The poster will reflect the team’s application of all the FIRST LEGO League Core Values—discovery, innovation, impact, inclusion, teamwork, coopertition, and fun.

The team’s PowerPoint, called “Solution to Pollution,” provides practical ideas for cleaning up pollution, as well as a video produced by Grade 5 student Sylas Houser that highlights progress the Wallkill community has already made in cleaning up its river.

“In 2018, a clean-up crew made up of community members pulled 83 tires out of the river! And there are still more!” Sylas said.

Ms. Ellison said there could be a “Clean Up Club” in the works for students to participate more in this important issue.

For now, students will be concentrating on their upcoming competition, using “coopertition,” and having fun while doing it!

Leptondale Students Celebrate Fire Prevention Week

FOUR FIRE TRUCKS, THEIR LIGHTS FLASHING AND SIRENS WAILING, ARRIVED ON THE LEPTONDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL campus on an October afternoon. A crew of local firefighters, volunteers from the Cronomer Valley Fire Department, visited the school in honor of National Fire Prevention Week.

Students in Grades 3-5 assembled in the auditorium, where they listened to Fire Department Captain Frank Patterson as he talked about the importance of knowing and planning two ways to escape from any room in the event of a fire. Afterwards, the youngsters peppered Captain Patterson with questions like “Where do people live when their house burns down?” and “Do firefighters get bored sitting in the fire station when there aren’t any fires to fight?”

Outside, students in Kindergarten, Grade 1, and

Grade 2 learned about fire hoses, oxygen tanks, and other pieces of fire-fighting equipment. They eagerly climbed into the cab of a fire truck, hugged “Sparky” (the fire department’s mascot), and cheered Principal Scott Brown as he climbed onto the school roof

alongside of Deputy Chief Rob Dormmann, using a fire truck’s giant ladder.

The firefighters’ visit was fun, yet educational. “We learned that if a door is hot, then there is fire on the other side,” said Grade 1 student Kylie Meyer. Her classmate, Lily Cababe, agreed. “If the door is hot, then don’t go through that door,” she counseled. “Always get out fast, and then call 911 as soon as you can so the fire doesn’t spread.”

Principal Brown was appreciative of the fire department’s efforts. “We are so grateful for all that these volunteers do to help keep our students—and our community—safe,” he said.



Firefighter Richard Tuttle, a volunteer with the Cronomer Valley Fire Department, shows off his fire truck's equipment to students from Leptondale Elementary School.

High School Students Learn How to “Escape the Vape”

Escape the Vape! That was the urgent message conveyed at an anti-vaping event held in the Wallkill Senior High School library this fall. Approximately 55 students attended the informational sessions, which were held during lunch periods.

Nationwide, an increasing number of young people have been using e-cigs (electronic cigarettes) to “vape,” or vaporize, nicotine, various flavorings, and THC (the ingredient in marijuana that gets people high). Wallkill’s event aimed to educate its students about the serious health risks associated with the practice.

Facilitated by the Ulster Prevention Council with assistance from Wallkill Prevention Services Provider Sandi Hecht-Garcia, the educational program tasked students with “escaping the vape” by meeting a series of challenges. “A variety of fun props and clues helped inform the students about the risks and dangers of vaping,” Ms. Hecht-Garcia explained.

To students like senior Alison Gerow, the warnings about vaping came through loud and clear. “Vaping is really dangerous,” she said. “It’s something people need to be informed about, especially in today’s society. It [the industry] is targeting kids.”



Wallkill Senior High School Grade 12 students Michael Friedle and Nevaeh Price working on a puzzle during their school's “Escape the Vape” event.

Middle School Assembly Focuses on Inclusion, Community, and Culture

IN EARLY DECEMBER, GRADE 7 AND 8 STUDENTS AT JOHN G. BORDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL met for a frank discussion on inclusion, community, and culture. In no time at all, it became clear that many of the issues related to this topic came down to one thing: the way we speak to and about one another.

Led by the Middle School's Dean of Students and Dignity Act Coordinator, Craig Ramsay, and Ulster BOCES Youth Development Coordinator Joakim Lartey, students began by discussing their ideas of community and what it means to belong to one. Everyone agreed that as members of a community, they spend an enormous amount of time together, so it would follow that how everyone treats each other really matters.

"We are only as strong of a community as our commitment to one other," Mr. Ramsay told the students.

Words—especially the potentially hurtful kind—then took center stage. Students were encouraged to think more deeply about the vocabulary they use, and the effect their language may have on others.

"You have a choice every day," Mr. Ramsay told his students. "Ask yourselves, 'Am I going to be a blessing to someone today, or am I going to be mean and hurtful and ruin someone else's day?'"

Mr. Lartey shared stories about various words that have caused him pain during the course of his own life, and that sometimes cause pain among the students he works with daily. Young people

and adults alike may often use hurtful words in jest without knowing just how serious they really are, he suggested. He gave examples of slurs from the past as well as the present, emphasizing that "no one should be picked on because of appearance, sexuality, ethnicity, race, or disability."

"Words mean things. And you can't take them back," echoed Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Lartey also used a simile to illustrate the effect we have on others. "It is like a stone in a pond. You throw that stone in, and it sinks. Ripples come out. You may say something to someone and think nothing of it. But that person can sink like that stone. Those ripples are the effects they feel from your hurtful words," he said.



Ulster BOCES Youth Development Coordinator Joakim Lartey speaking to Middle School students during an assembly that focused on inclusion, community, and culture.

Students were engrossed by the assembly. Grade 8 students Ben Diemoz and Alanna Martinez said they enjoyed the discussion and thought the topic was relevant. Ben found it "new and interesting," and Alanna thought it was "very powerful."

Principal Marjorie Anderson said that students will have many more opportunities to explore the ideas of inclusion, community, and culture, thanks in part to an Ulster BOCES-sponsored series for teachers focusing on culturally relevant pedagogies. "We want to empower teachers to facilitate culturally responsive classrooms," she said. "Our overall goal is to ensure that all our students have voice, choice, and connection to our school community."

"It is like a stone in a pond. You throw that stone in, and it sinks. Ripples come out. You may say something to someone and think nothing of it. But that person can sink like that stone. Those ripples are the effects they feel from your hurtful words."

— Joakim Lartey, Ulster BOCES Youth Development Coordinator

Wallkill Grade 5 and 6 Teachers Embrace New Educational Approach

AT PLATTEKILL, AS WELL AS THE DISTRICT'S OTHER ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, Grade 5 and 6 teachers are taking a new approach to delivering educational content. It's called the "Content Specialty ELA + 1" model.

Rather than one teacher teaching the same group of students all day, each teacher is specializing in either Math, Social Studies, or Science. The content specialists, in turn, are teaching every student in that particular grade level.

Regardless of their content specialty, each teacher is also responsible for teaching English Language Arts (ELA) to their homeroom class while also infusing ELA into their content area classes. The students are switching teachers two times a day.

There are a number of advantages to this new educational approach, according to Plattekill Principal Monica Hasbrouck. "It allows teachers to go more in depth in their teaching," she declared. "As a result, the students are diving into topics more deeply than they ever have before."

"The students are also getting an introduction to what it will be like when they get to Middle School, and it's helping them learn to be more organized," Mrs. Hasbrouck suggested. "The students love it, because they get to move, work with different teachers, and they feel their day seems to fly by."

According to Grade 5 teacher Alyson Haas, whose specialty is Science, Plattekill's teachers are fans of



Plattekill Grade 5 student Isaac Cordova working on an ELA assignment.

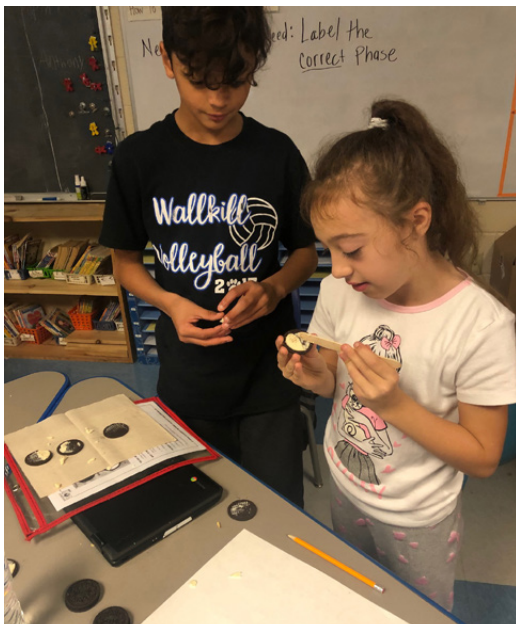
this new way of teaching. "We love it, especially for Science and Social Studies," she said.

Teachers feel more confident in their teaching, Miss Haas suggested, because they can focus on their two content areas. "My team meets monthly to bounce ideas off each other," she said. "We also get the opportunity to get to know all of the students."

The new format allows students to engage in lots of hands-on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) activities, said Miss Haas. For example, during one Friday lesson, the students used toilet paper to make a scale model of the solar system. "We did math to shrink the solar system down to toilet paper squares and then we built it down the hallway," she explained. "Seeing that visual helped the students to understand the size of the solar system, the distance between the planets, and the planets' distance from the sun. They came up with so many questions!"

During their solar system unit, the students also spent a month studying, observing, and documenting the changes of the moon. They watched videos, and they did various activities to help them learn more about the moon's phases. "After our investigation of the moon, we used Oreos to represent the different phases of the moon," Miss Haas recalled. "The students had a blast!"

One student, Raymond Meyer, was particularly fond of the moon-phases project. "I liked the Oreo experiment because you got to cut the Oreo cream and make the moon phases and show how the moon phases look," he exclaimed.



Plattekill Grade 5 student Michaela Bailey (right) scrapes off the cream filling of a cookie to represent a phase of the moon as her classmate, Trotskeye Brown, looks on.

Wallkill Earns Place on List of Best U.S. High Schools

WALLKILL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (WSHS)

has earned a spot on the *U.S. News & World Report's* listing of the best U.S. high schools in 2019.

Among the factors taken into account in Wallkill's ranking was the school's Advanced Placement (AP) participation rate, graduation rate, mathematics proficiency, and reading proficiency.

An important factor in determining the rankings is how well schools prepare their students for college. WSHS Principal Joseph Salamone is proud of his school's success in helping to ensure that students are college-ready.

"We offer many dual-enrollment college classes here, in subjects ranging from Biology to Physics to Business Law," he said. "We also offer three courses through SUNY New Paltz—two in English, and one in Math. Overall, we offer 24 college courses for our students to choose from."

"Many of our students are graduating with up to 30 or more college credits," Mr. Salamone pointed out. By offering these college courses in high school, he noted, the students pay tuition rates that are much lower than if they had taken the same courses on campus as matriculated students.

"Every year, we've had graduates come back for our Alumni Day and tell us that the most important part of their high school experience was having had the opportunity to earn so many college credits before graduating," Mr. Salamone said. "We've had students who essentially entered college as sophomores in their first year!"

Congratulations to all the hardworking students, family members, and educators who help make WSHS an award-winning school!



Students in the AP U.S. History class pose for a picture with WSHS Principal Joseph Salamone (far right, back row) and a plaque commemorating Wallkill's placement on a list of America's best high schools.

Plattekill Students Learn Anti-Bullying Skills at 'Don't Be a Monster' Assembly

Plattekill School students Madysen Fuller (left) and Kasey Garzione visited with "Frank Shelley," the star of an anti-bullying video shown during an assembly in October. The assembly was in keeping with the school's "Be A Bucket Filler" theme, which was inspired by the book *How Full is Your Bucket? For Kids*. During a previous assembly, students learned that we all have a "bucket" over our heads that needs to be full to feel good about ourselves. Students are encouraged to fill their peers' buckets, rather than depleting them.



High School's Mixed Choir Spreads Holiday Cheer at Radio City Music Hall

TO KICK OFF THE HOLIDAY SEASON, 45 MEMBERS OF THE WALLKILL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (WSHS)

Mixed Choir took the stage at one of America's most celebrated music venues—Manhattan's iconic Radio City Music Hall.

The talented vocalists, led by WSHS Choir Director Dawn Amthor, performed three songs—"It's Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas," "I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas," and "Jingle Bells"—during the Music Hall's Sounds of Christmas program. The program, Mrs. Amthor explained, offers choruses the opportunity to showcase a five-minute a cappella performance before the curtain opens on the Music Hall's annual Christmas Spectacular.

Speaking of the November performance, Mrs. Amthor said, "The students were equal parts excited and terrified. Radio City Music Hall seats more than 6,000 people. When you are not used to singing for an audience of a few hundred, 6,000 is pretty daunting!"

The day was a memorable one for the young singers.

"The experience was surreal," declared Grade 12 student Madison Tremper. "Being in the city for the holidays and experiencing the atmosphere was unforgettable. There was a lot of excitement leading up to the performance from our friends and family. I remember looking up to the beautiful ceiling of Radio City from the stage and feeling so much pride in our

work and joy for our choir."

Like Madison, fellow choir member DJ Piperato credits Mrs. Amthor with making sure that the students were well prepared for their big concert. "We practiced the Christmas music for five months!" the

senior exclaimed. "That is by far the most time devoted to concert music I have ever seen in my three years in chorus. Because we practiced the music for that long, I knew the music well enough to just get on that stage and have fun."

The size of the crowd, DJ added, served as inspiration. "I have never sung in front of that many people before, and that motivated me to sing to the best of my ability," he said.

Making the performance all the more remarkable was the fact that in the months prior to the Radio City appearance, the students had also been preparing for a Pops Concert and a Variety Show. "It was very challenging trying to prep three shows at once!" Mrs. Amthor observed.

In spite of the challenges they faced, the singers were poised and professional during their Radio City debut, according to Mrs. Amthor. "I was very proud of the way they sang, how they handled themselves, and how they represented their school and community," she said.

To view the performances, go to the High School website or visit <https://www.wallkillcsd.k12.ny.us/radiocity>.



The WSHS Mixed Choir, led by Dawn Amthor, performed at Radio City Music Hall during the holiday season.

The Wallkill Central School District offers equal educational and employment opportunities, including career and technical education opportunities, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or other protected categories under state or federal law, in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Brian Devincenzi, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, 19 Main Street, Wallkill, NY 12589 or email Bdevincenzi@wallkillcsd.k12.ny.us.

Inquiries regarding discrimination on the basis listed above may also be made to the United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 32 Old Slip, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10005, (646) 428-3800, ocr.newyork@ed.gov.



Wallkill Central School District

Office of Educational Services

19 Main Street, PO Box 310

Wallkill, NY 12589

Non-Profit Org
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 8915
Newburgh, N.Y.

Postal Patron

www.wallkillcsd.k12.ny.us

Ostrander Students Celebrate National Walk to School Day

On a beautiful fall day, more than 200 Ostrander Elementary School students started off their school day on foot—skipping their usual bus or car rides. Instead, after a light breakfast in Popp Memorial Park the morning of October 2, they marched together to their school, happily participating in National Walk to School Day. The nationwide event, sponsored by the Partnership for a Walkable America, was organized locally by Wallkill Elementary School Physical Education teacher Tom Palazzo.



Among the 215 Ostrander Elementary School students participating in National Walk to School Day were (from left to right), Genevieve Arlt (Grade 3), Gavin DeGraw (Grade 4), Annalee Maiaro (Grade 6), Helen Bravo (Grade 6), and Shyanne Rahm (Grade 6).

“Learning at...Wallkill” is an official publication of the Wallkill Central School District.

Board of Education

Mr. Joseph LoCicero, *President*

Mr. Thomas Frisbie, *Vice-President*

Mrs. Kathryn Anderson Mr. Dustin Palen

Mrs. Donna Crowley Mr. Vincent Petrocelli

Mr. Tom McCullough Mr. Leif Spencer

Mr. Steven Missale

Student Board Member: Jerome Futia

Mr. Kevin Castle, *Superintendent of Schools*

Ms. Yvonne Herrington, *Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services*

Mr. Brian Devincenzi, *Assistant Superintendent for Support Services*

Important Telephone Numbers to Know

Leptondale Elementary School..... 895-7200

Clare F. Ostrander Elementary School.....895-7225

Plattekill Elementary School.....895-7250

John G. Borden Middle School 895-7175

Wallkill Senior High School.....895-7150