

# CLINTON

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW | NOVEMBER 2024

## CCS Runs on Duncan

Introducing Duncan, the newest member of the CCS family and student support team. This school year, we are excited to launch the CCS Therapy Dog Program, and we are thrilled to introduce certified therapy dog Duncan to Clinton Senior High School as our very first therapy dog.

Duncan is a specially trained golden retriever whose role will be to provide comfort, companionship and support to students and staff in the high school. Therapy dogs like Duncan are known to reduce stress, improve moods and even enhance social interactions. Whether it is during a stressful moment or a typical day at school, Duncan will be available to provide unconditional, non-judgmental support to students and offer his calming presence to anyone in need.

While at school, Duncan will be on a leash at all times and will work under the direction of his handler, Mrs. Alison Eisenhut. Mrs. Eisenhut has been a special education teacher at CHS since 2022 and recently worked with Duncan to complete special obedience and behavior training to certify him as a therapy dog. In his new role, Duncan will work alongside Mrs. Eisenhut during the day and provide support to students who choose to engage with him. Duncan's presence in the building will complement our efforts to cultivate a supportive, inclusive environment where every student can thrive academically and socially.

Duncan's first day in his new role was Tuesday, October 15, 2024. We are excited to welcome him to our campus and introduce him to our school community. In the future, we hope to welcome additional therapy dogs to our other school buildings to provide support to our middle and elementary school students.



## WELCOME BACK, STAFF AND STUDENTS!



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**Mission Statement:** Clinton Central School proudly educates and empowers all students to realize their potential in becoming thoughtful, empathetic and contributing members of a global society.

**District Vision Statement:** Our students are prepared for the future through engaging, meaningful and challenging learning opportunities delivered by motivated and inspired professionals, and supported through collaborative partnerships with our community, businesses and organizations, and institutions of higher education.

# So Far This Year

## Dear Clinton Community,

As we embrace the fall season, I am excited to share several updates on the initiatives and projects that continue to enrich our school district. This is a time of growth, innovation and new opportunities for our students, staff and community.

First, I am pleased to report that we continue to make great progress on our capital improvement project that was approved by voters in December 2022. In the short time since construction began in August 2024, many enhancements to our facilities are already evident. Please be sure to check out the project images later in this newsletter. These updates reflect our commitment to providing the best possible environment for our students and staff, and we look forward to sharing more milestones as the project advances.

We also remain focused on developing meaningful educational opportunities and pathways for our students. As you will see in this edition of our newsletter, we are introducing a new and exciting academic pathway for students to demonstrate their knowledge in visual arts. The Independent Arts Assessment Pathway, which was introduced by the New York State Education Department, allows students with a passion for the arts to fulfill graduation requirements while pursuing deeper, individualized learning experiences in the visual arts. Additionally, we are expanding opportunities through the NYS Seal of Biliteracy. This prestigious seal celebrates students who attain high levels of proficiency in multiple languages, a valuable skill in our increasingly global society. Both of these initiatives underscore our commitment to recognizing and nurturing the unique talents of each student.

Finally, I am thrilled to introduce a special new member of our school family: Duncan, our therapy dog. Duncan joined us this fall as part of our new therapy dog program, and he is already making a positive impact, particularly at the high school. His presence is an exciting addition to our ongoing efforts to support our students, and we look forward to seeing the lasting benefits he will bring to our district.

Thank you for your continued partnership in making our district a vibrant place to learn, grow and succeed.

Sincerely,

**Christopher M. Clancy**  
Superintendent of Schools

## SUPERINTENDENT'S CONFERENCE DAY

On October 11, teachers and staff attended morning sessions of Superintendent's Conference Day that included a Portrait of a Graduate Exercise. Elementary and middle school staff received training on the BIMAS screener and the Science of Reading. Faculty discussion in the high school was led by staff members who had participated in a Grading for Equity book study. The afternoon was devoted to wellness offerings by community organizations that could translate into classroom strategies to help students.



## SPOTLIGHT ON MS. HUGHES

BY JULIANA FOLEY, MRS. HEINTZ'S 5TH GRADE CLASS



Juliana Foley sat down with fourth-grade teacher Ms. Hughes to talk about her new position at Clinton Elementary School.

How do you like working at CCS?

"I LOVE it!! All of the staff has been very warm and welcoming."

What is your favorite part of your job?

"My favorite part of my job is working with the 4th graders and building relationships with them."

Prior to coming to CCS, Ms. Hughes worked at Morrisville-Eaton Elementary School. Ms. Hughes grew up in New Hartford, is engaged to be married and has two wonderful sons.

## SPOTLIGHT ON MS. GOMEZ



Students from the club Project LIT had the pleasure of sitting down with Mrs. Gomez, our new ELA Strategies teacher. Here's a look into what makes Mrs. Gomez such a special part of our community.

"The students!" Mrs. Gomez loves the energy her students bring, making each day an exciting new challenge. Growing up, Mrs. Gomez enjoyed school, particularly because of her math and chemistry teachers in Florida. "I wasn't perfect, and that was ok," she recalls. They taught her that making mistakes was part of learning, a lesson she passes on to her own students today.

Mrs. Gomez feels incredibly welcome here, noting that "everyone is so welcoming and friendly with smiles and introductions." She appreciates the warm, inclusive environment that our school offers. Outside of the classroom, Mrs. Gomez loves spending time with her family, including her husband and their three children -- ages 11, 8 and 5. She's an avid reader of historical fiction and is currently on a quest to read all of the Newbery Honor Award books. Her adventurous side comes out in her love for water and snow skiing -- a passion she's enjoyed since childhood.

"I have always taught my students to work hard at everything they do and to be kind to everyone around them." This advice has guided her both in and out of the classroom. "My students show me how different perspectives can be," she reflects, noting how her students continually offer her new ways of seeing the world.

Mrs. Gomez brings a lot more than just knowledge to her classroom -- she brings warmth, passion and a dedication to teaching that leaves a lasting impact on her students. We are lucky to have her as part of our school family!

## SPOTLIGHT ON MS. CIOTTI

BY NORA REID



Mrs. Stephanie Ciotti is Clinton High School's new Special education teacher. She grew up as a student in Whitesboro where she was inspired by the work she did with her many family members who taught there. She has a passion for education and helping other students, which is greatly reflected in her job as she works with students to celebrate their growth and success. "The best parts so far have been the students and staff," says Ciotti. "Everybody's been very friendly and welcoming and helpful to me so far, it's been very nice." When she's not in school, Mrs. Ciotti enjoys movies, reading books, spending time with her family, music and volleyball.



## Pep Rally

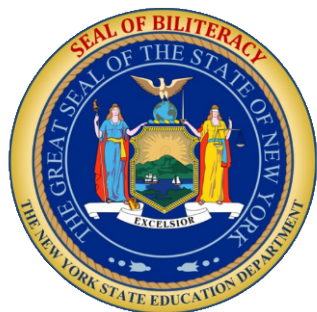
A homecoming pep rally, organized by Clinton High School Student Council members and Madame Hogan, was held at the end of the school day on September 20. Fall sports teams were recognized and students enjoyed friendly competitions. Other activities included an evening family bonfire, athletic competitions and a high school dance. It was a wonderful to start the 2024-25 school year!



## CLINTON CSD NOW OFFERING NEW YORK STATE SEAL OF BILITERACY PROGRAM

This year, Clinton Central School District is excited to offer the New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) program to our students. The Seal of Biliteracy recognizes high school graduates who have demonstrated proficiency in English and at least one other language. Earning this prestigious seal shows a commitment to cultural understanding and effective communication skills, qualities that are increasingly valuable in our interconnected world.

The Seal of Biliteracy provides our students with a competitive edge, making them more attractive to both colleges and future employers. It highlights their ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts and their readiness for a global workforce. Additionally, participating in the program can foster a deeper appreciation of different cultures and the power of language in building bridges between communities.



Currently, 14 of our students are on track to earn this esteemed recognition by the time they graduate.

"This is an incredible opportunity for our students to celebrate their bilingual skills and prepare for the future. It showcases their hard work and dedication," said Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Michelle Gabree-Huba. "The Seal of Biliteracy not only honors their

achievements but also aligns with our District's vision of fostering well-rounded, globally-minded graduates."

We look forward to celebrating the accomplishments of these students as they work toward earning the NYS Seal of Biliteracy!

## Drama Club Presents!

Students in grade eight through 12 delighted audiences with the CCS Drama Club's production of "James and the Giant Peach" based on the book by beloved author Roald Dahl and dramatized by Richard R. George. Thank you to directors/advisors Jenna Wratten and Keith DeStefanis for helping our students display their amazing talent! And kudos to Mr. DeStefanis for set construction.



## Overcoming Obstacles

Ninth grade students were inspired by a visit from teacher and author Erin Gruwell, whose impact on "unteachable" students' lives was transformative. Accompanied by her former student Tony Becerra, who is now a published author, Ms. Gruwell explained how through writing their stories – which led to the publication of "The Freedom Writers Diary" – students were enabled to rethink rigid beliefs about themselves and others, reconsider their own daily decisions, and ultimately rechart their future in order to become aspiring college students, published authors and catalysts for change.



## Elevating Student Voices Program at OHM BOCES

Now in its second year, the Elevating Student Voices program at the Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES aims to train students to facilitate and offer programs in their home districts that embrace diversity, equity and inclusion, and create a sense of belonging for all students. Clinton is one of 12 local districts participating in this initiative.

Students are encouraged in this forum to discuss issues they face within their school communities and potentially grow into leadership roles to facilitate some discussions of their own. Participating students include Andrew Bashant, Sam Bender, Ella Kelly, Zoe Pieri, Emily Roy, Gemma Spadea, Mia Torre and Maren Wohnsen.

Thank you to our students for taking on this important task, and to advisor Madame Hogan for organizing Clinton's participation.



## INDIVIDUAL ARTS ASSESSMENT PATHWAY

The Individual Arts Assessment Pathway (IAAP) is a graduation pathway option in which students complete a locally determined, three-unit sequence in the arts and demonstrate, through a collection of creative works, growth over time that meets the High School II Accomplished Performance Indicators in the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts.

The first alternate pathway opportunity currently available through the New York State Education Department (NYSED) that the District is pursuing is the Visual and Media Arts. The completion of a three-unit sequence in the arts and submission of a portfolio replaces one of the five Regents exams necessary for graduation. The NYSED Individual Arts Assessment Pathway prepares students who are pursuing further educational opportunities and/or careers in the arts. Currently, about 50 CCS students will have the opportunity to participate. The hope is to continue adding other available pathways in the future, allowing more equitable graduation opportunities for diverse learners. An application has been submitted to the Board of Regents for approval. Thank you to art teacher Mindy Pavone for her hard work toward making this happen.



# Comets are Streaking Through the Fall Season

BY BOB BENTLEY

*Director of Athletics, Safety and Wellness*

Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer and Girls Field Hockey are all Center State Conference Division Champions again this fall! The Field Hockey team entered their final contest as winners of 14 straight! The girls brought a very balanced team to the field as they prepared to make another run at a sectional title, this year competing in Class D. The Boys Soccer team was prolific as one of the top goal-scoring teams in all of Section III. They positioned themselves for a home contest for Sectionals. Girls Soccer entered their final contest of the regular season as winners of 11 out of 13. They were ready to meet the challenge that Sectional play presents.



Our Football team, with the full support of our Cheerleaders, returned this fall, and started very strong. Winning their first three contests, the boys opened the season with an immediate impact in eight-Man Football, taking the opening kickoff at Sauquoit Valley back for a touchdown! Our Cheerleaders also

continued the mutual support with Field Hockey dating back to last fall, and supported their great event at a game in early October against Mount Markham.

Our Girls Tennis team featured a few returners and many new players this season who tried the sport for the very first time. The girls made great progress through the season, improving along the way, winning some matches, and just missing in many others, as most of their losses were by a very close margin. Eva Stone and Claire Morford qualified for Individual Sectionals, and left the tournament with a Sectional win in doubles against a team from South Jefferson. Charlotte Gale also qualified for Individuals, and notched a Sectional win over an opponent from General Brown.

Boys and Girls Cross Country teams have both competed extremely well all season, and both remained in the mix for Center State Conference titles as they approached the CSC Championship Meet at Westmoreland in the final weekend of October. The team's second home meet of the season was held at the Kirkland Town Park, which provided for a great course, despite the "challenging" weather of that day. The Cross Country program's continued strength and success comes from the "community" of the team and sport.

The Athletic Programs at all levels continue to foster opportunities for our student-athletes. This fall, Clinton has 266 different student-athletes participating, supported by more than 24 paid and volunteer coaches. A great thank you and congratulations to all of our student-athletes and coaches.

## REGIONAL PROGRAM FOR EXCELLENCE

The Regional Program for Excellence offered through the Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES provides career development and work-based learning experiences which inspire and enable students to make informed decisions about post-secondary and career opportunities. Students spend at least 72-75 hours in a work setting, completing an internship with respected professionals serving as mentors. Participating CCS students include:

Sophia Dunikova: Aesthetic Oral Arts  
Zeno Mummer: Clinton Middle School  
Beatrix Rioux: MVHS Wynn Hospital/Maternity  
Sean Schreppel: OMNI Surgery Center



GET READY FOR SOME HOLIDAY FUN!



**ELF JR.**

Middle School students are preparing to amaze and entertain audiences with their production of "Elf Jr." What better way to usher in the holiday season than to witness the result of the work accomplished, talent displayed and the cooperative spirit of our students. Thank you to director/producer Hilary Lopata, assistant director Giovanni Magagnoli, vocal director Lisa Jones, theater manager Keith DeStefanis, artistic director Amy Pape and set construction advisor Ryan O'Rourke for bringing this production to fruition.

FUTURE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

**MS BOCES Visit**

EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS EXPLORE OPTIONS

On October 8, the eighth-grade class went to tour the Career and Technical Education Center at the Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES. Students toured the various career programs, ranging from Culinary Arts to Conservation. Students also explored the Animal Science program and were able to see the horses that were brought in that day! It was a wonderful opportunity for students to explore future education opportunities!



WELCOME BACK DANCE

**LEO'S CLUB**

On September 27, Clinton Middle School's Leadership, Experience, and Opportunity (LEO) Club, a youth extension of the International Lions Club, hosted a Welcome Back Dance in the middle school gymnasium. Middle school students enjoyed listening and dancing to music with their friends, and snacks from the concession stand, giving them the opportunity to reconnect for the 2024-25 school year.



MS/HS PRINCIPALS APPOINTED

The Clinton Central School District Board of Education recently appointed two individuals to the positions of Middle and High School Principals. Congratulations to Ms. Amie Johnson, who will begin her new role as Middle School Principal on Monday, December 2nd, and to Mr. Eddie Waskiewicz, who will transition to the High School as principal effective July 1, 2025.



Ms. Johnson brings with her nearly two decades of experience as a teacher, coordinator of professional development and assistant principal, including several positions that she has held within the Clinton Central School District. She currently serves as a virtual learning specialist for the Mohawk Regional Information Center in Verona, New York; a position she has held since February 2024. Ms. Johnson's decades of experience in the field of education have included several positions in the Clinton Central School District. Ms. Johnson first joined the district in 2010 and remained until 2024, teaching Spanish to high school students and coordinating professional development related to instructional technology and best practices for primary and secondary teachers. During her tenure, she also worked as an assistant principal of Clinton High School and Clinton Middle School from 2022-2024.

"I am honored to return to Clinton Central Schools to serve a community that means so much to me," said Ms. Johnson. "I am grateful to be joining the middle school team of dedicated staff, enthusiastic students, and supportive families. I look forward to working collaboratively toward our shared vision for student success and to continue building a positive and engaging learning community for all. Go Comets!"



Mr. Waskiewicz has many years of experience in the education field, including several positions that he has held within the Clinton Central School District.

"I am honored to be granted this new opportunity to continue serving the Clinton Central School District and the community as the high school principal," said Mr. Waskiewicz. "My vast experiences as a teacher in Virginia and New York, along with my time as an administrator, have provided me with a unique perspective on engaging students in relevant educational programs pre-K through 12th grade. This transition to the high school is bittersweet as my time at the elementary school has been incredibly fulfilling. I will continue to strengthen the connections between our buildings as we develop meaningful pathways to support students' growth and prepare them to become productive, contributing members of society."

Mr. Waskiewicz currently serves as principal of Clinton Elementary School, a position he has held since July 2023. During his time as principal of Clinton Elementary School, Mr. Waskiewicz's many accomplishments include establishing monthly character education assemblies that contributed to Clinton Elementary receiving the Positivity Project's esteemed Green Shield Award for the 2023-2024 year; promoting a positive school culture through meaningful, enriching activities such as the "One School, One Book" Initiative and the Fun Run; helping to support collaboration, vertical alignment and professional growth by restructuring grade level teams and leadership; and refining the MTSS process at the elementary school to enhance supports for students. Under Mr. Waskiewicz's leadership, the elementary school also successfully launched its first two universal pre-kindergarten classrooms.

Mr. Matt Reilly, who is currently serving as Interim Middle School Principal, will assume the role of Interim High School Principal in January after Mr. Langone finishes his assignment in the building, and he will remain in that role through June 30, 2025. The District would like to extend a special thank you to both Mr. Langone and Mr. Reilly for their leadership, help, and support during this time of transition.



CODING WITH LEGOS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

During library time, students in multiple grade levels recently explored beginner coding concepts using LEGOs. Students in older elementary grades used the LEGO Education SPIKE Essentials kit and app on iPads to complete a learning challenge that involved building a camping scene, then coding a color sensor to recognize a blue monster and light a 3x3 color matrix to “alert” the LEGO mini-figure camper. Students in pre-K and kindergarten used the LEGO Coding Express to build a train track, an engine and car, and used LEGO action bricks to program the train to stop at a desired point.

Exploring coding at an early age can help students to develop problem solving and critical thinking skills, as well as an understanding of logic and algorithms. Providing students with the opportunity to code can lay a foundation for future success in computer science and beyond!



DOT DAY

Elementary students enjoyed DOT Day, or International Dot Day, a global celebration of creativity, courage and collaboration, inspired by Peter H. Reynolds’ children’s book “The Dot.” The day is celebrated annually on September 15, for the purpose of encouraging people of all ages to harness their creativity and make their mark in the world, much like the story’s main character.



P2 ASSEMBLY

Junior Comets celebrated the first of the 2024-25 P2 – or Positivity Project – assemblies, where students were recognized for demonstrating the character strength of teamwork. **Teamwork** means you work well as a group or team member and work hard to help your team achieve its goals. The assembly concluded with fifth grade students singing a song that reinforced the importance of teamwork. Awarded students received a certificate and congratulations from Principal Waskiewicz.



ELEMENTARY COMETS FUN RUN FUNDRAISER

We love to run for fun! The goal of this event was to raise funds to provide additional enrichment opportunities, field trips and assemblies that will enhance students’ learning experience. On October 17, students of all grade levels enjoyed a break in the weather and cheered each other on while contributing to the greater good.



ELEMENTARY ALEBRIJES





**FIRE SAFETY DAY**

Thank you to the Clinton and Clark Mills Fire Departments for providing a valuable learning experience regarding fire safety. We are incredibly fortunate to have such dedicated individuals in our community who not only keep us safe, but also take the time to educate our young students on this important topic. Brave staff members even accepted the challenge of riding high in the ladder truck!



**COLGATE STUDENT SEMINAR**

The Clinton Central School District recently welcomed a group of Colgate University students as part of their seminar for education majors. This visit was part of a "road show" designed to give these aspiring educators a firsthand look at a variety of school districts. Clinton Central School District is proud to frequently host pre-service teachers for observations and internships from area colleges, including Colgate University, Utica University, Hamilton College and Mohawk Valley Community College (MVCC). By providing these opportunities, we remain dedicated to supporting the growth of future educators and promoting the teaching profession.



CLINTON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

**HAMILTON COLLEGE CARES**

We are grateful for our Hamilton College student neighbors who volunteer to act as mentors, sidekicks and tutors for our middle and elementary school students. Thank you!

**MIDDLE SCHOOL MENTORS**

Hamilton students are paired up one-on-one with local middle schoolers who may need extra support transitioning from elementary school. Mentors engage in a variety of activities with their mentees including homework help, games and workshops. Hamilton students apply to be partnered with middle school students who have similar interests and provide support, fun and engaging activities.

**HAMILTON SIDEKICKS**

Sidekicks is a mentoring program that pairs students from Hamilton College with children from Clinton Elementary School, creating bonds between Hamilton students and the children of the town of Clinton and their families. As a community of passionate young adults who care about the people in the larger community, volunteer college students are afforded this time and space to step back from their busy lives and provide mentorship and role modeling for young children at the beginning of their social lives.

**CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATE**

Construction work related to the Capital Project that was approved by voters in 2022 is well underway.

**Significant progress has been made on:**

- Back alley drainage and paving has been completed;
- Multipurpose turf field drainage & surface preparation;
- Elementary Library remodeling;
- Field work (pole vault, long jump, shot put).

**The next phase will include:**

- Secondary Media Center renovation;
- Ongoing Turf field construction;
- Ongoing lighting, flooring and classroom updates.





**Superintendent of Schools**

Mr. Christopher Clancy

**Clinton Board of Education**

Ms. Melinda Leising, *President*

Ms. Lisa Magnarelli, *Vice President*

Mr. Sam Catterson

Ms. Rachael Clark

Mr. Orlando Guitián

Mr. Patrick LaVeck

Ms. Erica Shaw



**Upcoming Events**

**NOVEMBER 15-16**

Middle School Presents "Elf Jr." 7:00 p.m.,  
Theater

**NOVEMBER 18**

JV and Varsity Winter Sports Begin

**NOVEMBER 19**

Board of Education Meeting, 5:30 p.m.,  
Secondary Media Center

**NOVEMBER 20**

National Honor Society Induction, 7:00 p.m.,  
Theater

**NOVEMBER 22**

Middle School Career Day  
Middle School Science Fair

**NOVEMBER 22-23**

Senior All-State Music Festival  
at Whitesboro CSD

**NOVEMBER 26**

Emergency Go-Home Drill

**NOVEMBER 27-29**

Thanksgiving Recess

**DECEMBER 5**

Elementary Winter Concert, 6:30 p.m.,  
Theater

**DECEMBER 12**

Middle School Winter Concert, 6:30 p.m.,  
Theater

**DECEMBER 17**

Board of Education Meeting, 5:30 p.m.,  
Secondary Media Center

**DECEMBER 18**

High School Winter Concert, 6:30 p.m.,  
Theater

**DECEMBER 23-JANUARY 3**

Winter Recess