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# SCHOOL

A Special Supplement to the Sullivan County Democrat

# SCENE



A look at  
activities  
in the  
Roscoe  
Central  
School  
District

A SPECIAL SECTION OF  
**THE SULLIVAN COUNTY  
DEMOCRAT**  
MARCH 2023  
CALLICOON, NY



# Emphasizing early literacy skills for student success

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

**R**oscoe Central School District Pre-K Teacher Brenda Dahlman says she wants to prepare her students for success when they are starting this new chapter in their lives.

"We are preparing them to read and allowing them to develop the skills and tools that they need to be successful in school and their everyday lives," said Dahlman.

This includes a language and print-rich environment where children can experience talking, singing, reading, writing, and playing.

Pre-K students, according to Dahlman, need to develop three essential early literacy skills: alphabetic knowledge, print awareness, and vocabulary.

Alphabetic knowledge is knowing the letters of the alphabet, recognizing them in print, and understanding the sounds that correspond with each letter.

Furthermore, the students learn about print awareness, which is understanding how to hold a book correctly, turn pages from front to back, read from top to bottom and left to right, and that print on a page has meaning.

"[We] provide them with a rich vocabulary- a variety of books and language used, expose them to new words, be able to describe objects [and] retell story events.

Building a foundation for a lifetime of learning is Pre-K Teacher Brenda Dahlman's mission.



Pictures help tell the story," said Dahlman.

In addition to early literacy skills, Dahlman also focuses on developing social and emotional skills.

"A child's social and emotional wellness affects their development and learning. So it is very important to build connections and a trusting relationship with my students," said Dahlman.

Developing social and emotional skills includes teaching students how to get along with others, develop relationships with peers and adults, identify and manage their feelings, focus their attention on tasks, problem-solve, and achieve their goals, according to Dahlman.

"In the morning, I greet my students at the door with a good morning and a smile. Get down to their eye level when they are talking to me," said Dahlman.

Dahlman also uses books to praise her students and uses it for spot interventions and modeling.

"Students like individual time – when I'm working one-on-one with students, I always have a few students ask when am I going to call them over or when am I going to work with them," said Dahlman.

Some of the books Dahlman uses are ...

Sharing- Rainbow Fish – lonely and sad with his shiny scales,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10R

## School Scene

*'A look inside the Roscoe Central School District'*

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# 'A change will do you good ...'

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

At right: Roscoe's Music Teacher, Kelly Bullis, expands her students' horizons beyond the recorder by exposing them to a wide range of musical opportunities.

Roscoe's Music Teacher, Kelly Bullis, emphasizes the importance of diverse musical experiences for her students, allowing them to develop into life-long musicians.

After spending 16 years as Roscoe's Band Director, Kelly Bullis was welcoming of the change Principal Janice Phillips suggested, with her moving from choir to general music.

"I jumped at the idea," said Bullis.

"As Sheryl Crow would say, 'I think a change will do you good.' Not only is it a change for me, but it's a change for our students as well," added Bullis.

She said there was some confusion in the beginning, but now Bullis says things are settling in and has turned into an "atmosphere of fun and camaraderie."

Bullis said thanks to the help of some fantastic teacher aides, the transition to teaching younger students has been excellent.

"I can't tell you how much I love working with the younger grade levels," said Bullis.

She says that joy begins at the start of classes when she is greeted by a class of five-year-old students who are ready to sing and dance.

"It's unlike anything I have ever experienced," said Bullis.

Bullis is also part of the Drama Club at Roscoe and is the director for the upcoming play, Alice's Adventures In Wonderland, an adaptation of C.S.Lewis' classic tale. It will be held in the RCS Auditorium.



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**Melodious learning: Roscoe Elementary School students embrace the recorder.**



on March 24 and 25 at 7 p.m.

"It's a beautiful story filled with laughter and creativity," said Bullis.

The play will showcase students from grades 3-6 and feature students from not only Roscoe but also from Livingston Manor.

"At first, I was concerned about working with such a young cast, but all I can say is, wow! The energy, dedication, and focus of the elementary students are outstanding!" said Bullis.

While Bullis is the director, she is not managing the production alone; she has Jackie France as the assistant director and volunteers Jacky Day, and Laurie Kuehn, who Bullis says have been "surprised with the professionalism and enthusiasm the students have shown thus far."

When teaching general music to her students, Bullis meets them at whatever level they are when they come to her class.

She gave an example if a student says they can't sing, she helps change their mindset and way of thinking.

"I would rather they say, 'I don't like to sing.' I think there's a difference," said Bullis.

She asks the students if they can ask a question and notice how their voice pitches change when that happens. Doing that is an example of how the student learns different techniques that can help improve their singing or find music that suits their voice.

"If you can expose students to that ability to access their feelings, maybe process their feelings with music, express themselves with music, that's an integral part of the pie. But it's not any more or less important than math and science, social studies or

P.E. ...without music, you're not going to get a well-rounded [education]," added Bullis.

### What is the Pops Concert?

According to Bullis, the Annual Pops Concert takes place every March as part of the Music in our School Month, and she said it's a chance for the Roscoe Music Department to "let its hair down."

"The Pops Concert exposes students to music you might hear on a radio station," said Bullis.

This year the choir will be performing with local rock band RUKKUS, and they will be playing a medley of Fleetwood Mac and Stevie Nicks.

Furthermore, Bullis said the band director, Dr. Brian Kauth, "has quite a selection prepared of fun and entertaining music as well."

Bullis says as a music educator in Roscoe, she wants to expose the students to as many musical opportunities outside of Roscoe as possible.

"Dr. Kauth and I take the musical integrity of our program very seriously, and Roscoe is a diamond in the rough for sure, but when you work in a small rural district, it's imperative that students go beyond its borders to learn and grow."

And they do this by participating in the All-County Music Festival, NYSSMA Solos, summer music camps, and even the Forestburgh Playhouse.

Bullis said, "They receive the attention and focus of a small school as well as the diversity and inclusion of larger performing ensembles. These opportunities challenge our students to learn and grow to be lifelong musicians."

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# Empowering students through science

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

Taso Pantilieris, a science teacher, wants his students to find their voice in the field of science.

Below: Looks like someone's been hanging around in the Roscoe Science room!



**A**s education continues to evolve, science teachers must adapt and update their teaching methods to meet the changing standards.

Taso Pantilieris, who has been teaching science for 14 years, says that while standards have changed, the core principles of science remain the same.

He says the emphasis is still on teaching students to think critically and scientifically, to question assumptions, and to learn from their mistakes.

While new standards are being introduced, the focus remains on encouraging students to think scientifically and critically.

"In science, it's all about making mistakes and then learning from your mistakes and growing," said Pantilieris.

Students are encouraged to drive their learning rather than just receiving information from their teachers.

"Be the captain of their ship, as opposed to us being the one steering," said Pantilieris.



One of the ways Pantilieris has been able to adapt to this changing landscape of science education is through technology.

With every student having a Chromebook, he can take advantage of teachable moments more easily. If a student expresses interest in a particular topic, the teacher can pivot and delve into it more deeply rather than being constrained by pre-set materials.

"It does give you that ability to just take advantage of teachable moments, a little easier than before," said Pantilieris.

Pantilieris is also involved in a parent engagement club that focuses on dissection. The club was created in response to the school's call for more parent involvement, and the teacher saw an opportunity to engage parents in the learning process.

The club meets once a month for four months, and parents and students work together to dissect various specimens.

The club has been a success, with 16 participants at the last meeting, including parents and

students.

"It's really cool. They [parents and guardians] get the opportunity to get hands-on with their kids," said Pantilieris.

For Pantilieris, the emphasis on critical thinking in his classes, inquiry-based learning, and technology integration are all key aspects of science education.

By adapting to these changes in science education and encouraging engagement from both students and parents, teachers can create a more dynamic and effective learning environment for their students.

Pantilieris added, "Anytime that I've really ever experienced true learning, you know, it's been where I've kind of been able to make decisions. And so, with inquiry and learning, the goal is to give them a problem. Then they have to try to find a way to solve it. And so they're ultimately making decisions, and when you're in control of your own learning, I think engagement follows. I think that they are motivated if they feel like they have a voice."



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# Grants supporting positive change

STORY AND PHOTO BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

**R**ebbecca Ackerly, the Grants Administrator for the Roscoe Central School District, says that grants support positive opportunities at their school.

Grants bring extra funds into the district and help support literacy, STEM, curriculum, technology, equipment, materials, and even enable the school to provide additional staffing.

Furthermore, Ackerly says that the grants allow for, “Professional development/training to occur and even bring presenters/assemblies to increase awareness on topics like social/emotional learning, trauma, and safety.”

Ackerly, who has been a teacher for 20 years, took on her current role during the height of the pandemic.

Currently, the school district is using state title grants that have been awarded towards salaries, professional development, and training along with health and wellness, the Pre-K program, Special Education and additional development and programs for school improvement with a focus on the four core content areas, as well as health and wellness.

Ackerly added, “The district is also the Lead Educational Agency for a larger, five-district School Climate Transformation Grant which provides each of the districts involved with an additional Grant Interventionist.”

The interventionist works along with the counseling staff in the Roscoe Central School District to provide extra support when needed.

Furthermore, the grant will



**“Extra funds bring positive opportunities,” says Rebecca Ackerly, Grants Administrator for Roscoe Central School District.**

be able to provide SEL programs—Leader in Me, Positive Action, PBIS— and training in SEL along with team building experiences, different types of therapies, and interventions.

Moreover, any other materials/programs the districts need to help improve the climate in their schools.

“There are two school years left of this five-year grant,” said Ackerly.

Additionally, the district is also taking advantage of a health and wellness grant through Sullivan 180, which provides for an outdoor classroom, a celebration cart, and different programs to promote activity and healthier choices.

“Without the funding through these school grants, many of these resources would be difficult to obtain,” said Ackerly.

According to Ackerly, most school budgets are firm on how much they can spend each year while keeping the district in good financial standing while managing the cost to run the district.

“This is what makes school grants so important. Without the funding, many resources would not be able to be purchased,” added Ackerly.

In fact, the district is looking for a grant to help resurface the tennis courts on the lower athletic fields; that way, there is a safe space for students, as well as the community.

Ackerly said, “Having additional funds from grants allows for more opportunity to go outside the ‘normal’ spending in a school and gives the ability to get resources, programs, and materials that may not be able to be purchased by any other means.”





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Best Wishes to the Roscoe School Staff & Students.  
Especially, Pamela Carpenter,  
Robert & Emma Buck and Tyler Carpenter  
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# LITERACY: Skills for student success

FROM PAGE 2R

shared with his friends and felt happy.

Ruby Finds a Worry- had a worry, tried to ignore it, and it got bigger; better to talk to a friend or someone, and it helps.

Valentine's Day- Love Monster - a monster who wanted to be loved; he wasn't cute like the others, looked all over, decided to go back home, and found a friend.

"Students can often relate to how the character is feeling to their own experiences and asking meaningful questions for beneficial conversations," said Dahlman.

"When you do good things, you feel good; it makes you feel happy. It makes others feel happy. So we do those. And I also have puppets that go with them," Dahlman added.

Moreover, Dahlman said that

the work is on identifying feelings and how to manage and control them with either breathing exercises, taking a break, or some yoga.

Dahlman says that effective communication and collaboration with parents and families are essential to support student learning and development.

Dahlman works with families to help them understand how they can support their child's learning, such as practicing counting, reading books and asking questions, and identifying shapes, colors, and letters.

But the relationship starts before the school year starts.

"Spring before the new school year, we have Pre-K registration, so I get to meet the families and children coming into Pre-K," she said, adding that in the summer, she sends out welcome letters to the students telling them all

about what will happen in pre-k.

When the semester begins, "I give the parents a letter with ideas to help prepare their child for Pre-K (counting, reading books/asking questions, practicing fine motor skills, recognizing their name, shapes, colors, ABC's, hand dominance, etc)."

Weekly newsletters can also be an effective tool for keeping families informed about what is happening in the classroom.

Dahlman uses folders and communication books to keep families informed about their child's progress.

"Each day, I fill out the book letting the families know a few things we worked on for the day and how their child's behavior was," Dahlman said.

"Important dates and events happening go in the folder as well," she said, adding that she also encourages parents to ask

questions or leave notes in the communication books and is always happy to meet with them via phone calls, emails, or texts.

Dahlman also welcomes parent volunteers in the classroom, inviting them to read stories, help with crafts, or teach students a skill or hobby.

To make the learning environment warm and welcoming for students, the teacher establishes a relationship with each child from the beginning of the year.

"I send home the child information sheet asking about them, so when I do name tags, etc., I use their favorite colors," Dahlman explained.

She also sets rules and expectations early on, making sure students know what is expected of them and establishing routines.

"We repeat the schedule and follow the routines, allowing time for transitions, giving warnings, letting them know another activity is going to be starting, [when it's] time to clean up," she said.

Dahlman also creates a kid-friendly environment, with toys within reach, labeled items, and age-appropriate bulletin boards and visual supports.

"I want to make learning fun for them because they learn through play," Dahlman added.

"I love that they use their imaginations, and I give them a chance to be creative."

Dahlman helps students develop independence and social skills, encouraging them to try new things and to persist even if they encounter obstacles.

"I tell them you can if you try or you can't yet, but you can if you try- just try your best," she said.



PATRICIO ROBAYO | DEMOCRAT

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