



A look
at
BOCES

SCHOOL

A Special Supplement to the Sullivan County Democrat

SCENE



The strategic plan

STORY AND PHOTO
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

According to Maria Sommer, Assistant Superintendent of BOCES, the new BOCES strategic plan was implemented this year and has multiple components to it, including a new mission statement that was revamped to include more modern concerns and purposes.

The plan also has a vision statement developed through a process that includes four elements. These elements include valuing and empowering all stakeholders, increasing student expectations, expanding relevant opportunities, and practicing supportive and efficient business and finance.

Each division has goals, and one of them for the instructional division is to ensure a welcoming and affirming environment for every student. This means that students feel that they belong and are safe and supported when they come



Maria Sommer, Assistant Superintendent of BOCES, highlights the implementation of the new strategic plan with a revamped mission statement catering to modern concerns and purposes.

Through the conversational processes and protocols that the district used, they were able to hear what everyone had to say and then come to a consensus about what they were going to do.

"It's not a one-year plan. It's a three-to-five-year plan," Sommer explained. "And we've worked on it for a year, and then every year, we'll take a look at where we are and tweak that and revise it and go out another year."

This plan is a "living document" that is revised as necessary. "Maybe we need to work on something that wasn't on our radar two years ago," Sommer said. "It is definitely a working document."

The district's strategic plan is focused on building equity and a foundation for the lifelong success of all students in Sullivan County.

The plan has actionable goals, some of which are longer than one year, that are coordinated to ensure the district is achieving those goals.

"The strategic plan kind of helps everyone stay on track and keep moving in a direction that we've predefined," Sommer said. "Otherwise, you get scattered."

As Sommer concluded, "We want to make sure that we're always looking at ways that we can continue to grow and develop and meet the needs of our students and families."

to BOCES.

To increase family and community engagement, BOCES implemented a new messaging platform called ParentSquare, which allows for interactive communication between parents, teachers, and administrators.

Sommer highlighted the platform's translating features, which makes communication easier for non-English-speaking families.

"It's really made a positive impact on a lot of the parents," she said.

Sommer said there were some

challenges while developing their three-to-five-year strategic plan.

"Anytime you're working with lots of different groups of people, scheduling the conversations was part of the problem," Sommer explained. "And also keeping up momentum, because it was so hard to schedule, we would have like one meeting a month or every few weeks."

Despite the scheduling difficulties, Sommer said that everyone was invested in the process and knew that the plan was going to be good for the organization.

BOCES School Scene

'A look inside the BOCES School District'

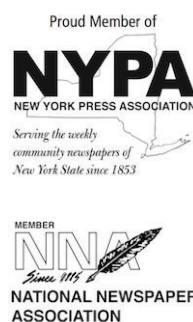
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Preparing the future workforce

STORY AND PHOTO
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

Daryl Emmett, the Construction Technology teacher at Sullivan BOCES, is thrilled to see his students graduating from the Career Technology Education program and securing employment in the construction industry.

Some of his students have been placed in various construction jobs after joining a union.

In fact, in May, Sullivan BOCES will be holding a job fair for all the CTE students, and Emmett said there would be unions there along with other organizations, which will allow students to interact with different organizations and regions and learn more about their interests.

The job fair will be an excel-

lent opportunity for students to explore various career paths and understand the requirements for union jobs.

Emmett also mentioned that BOCES is partnering with SUNY Sullivan to offer a college credit program to its construction students. This program will provide a much-needed boost for students who are attending BOCES.

Students will earn college credits while they work and attend classes. This program will help students to gain a competitive edge in the industry and pursue higher education in the future.

Emmett is passionate about connecting students with the union industry and notes that the initiative has been successful so far.

The CTE program is expanding and is bridging the gap between education and the industry,



Sullivan BOCES Construction Technology teacher, Daryl Emmett, expresses joy as his students graduate from the Career Technology Education program and secure employment within the construction industry.

providing students with opportunities to explore their career paths and gain valuable skills and knowledge.

Emmett believes that this program has been successful in preparing students for the workforce and helping them achieve their goals.

The program has been an excellent resource for students interested in pursuing careers in the construction industry or any other industry requiring specialized training.

Emmett added, "It's been really good."

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Career and Tech catalog expanding

STORY AND PHOTO
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

According to the Executive Principal of Career & Tech, Jeff Molusky, one of the expanded programs is Electrical Trades. Molusky explained that the electrical program would focus on residential electrical, with a touch of commercial electrical in the second year.

He stated that the program would help produce entry-level workers who would build on their skills to become part of the future workforce, adding that the program's success would depend on the skills of the students and the community's needs.

The second program discussed was the Fire Science Program. Molusky explained that the program was initiated because of a recruitment push in the county for firefighters, especially young ones.

The Fire Science Program is aimed at helping the community by building positions for the fire department. Molusky mentioned that this program offers a great opportunity for students to get involved in the community and gain valuable experience that they can use later on in life.

He says that classes are typically held at night for volunteer firefighters and can be challenging for students who are involved in sports or have other evening commitments.

To address this issue, the Fire Science Program will be offered during school hours, making it easier for students to enroll and participate.

Moreover, Molusky noted that the fire science program is a bit different from other BOCES programs, as it is primarily focused on volunteer work. Nonetheless, students who complete the program can take their certification anywhere in the United States and even become paid firefighters.

"It's definitely a great opportunity for kids. I think it's a little different than the typical programs



Executive Principal of Career & Tech, Jeff Molusky, emphasizes the benefits of established partnerships and collaborations, which offer students opportunities to earn college credits, engage in community service, and prepare for their future careers.

that we offer," said Molusky adding, "we went a little bit outside the box here and did something where it's volunteer, so it's kind of cool."

After finishing the Fire Science Program, students become eligible to take the Basic Exterior Firefighter Operations (BEFO) exam administered by the New York

State. Successful candidates can then proceed to take the SCBA/Interior Firefighting Operations (IFO) exam. The program adheres to the curriculum set by the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control. Upon passing the aforementioned exams, students are qualified to take the National Firefighter 1 exam.

Furthermore, Sullivan BOCES is introducing the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program. The EMT program is a one-year course that comprises 216 hours of Health Science Core and 108 hours of clinical experience and theory.

This program equips students with the necessary skills to provide pre-hospital emergency medical care as ambulance service workers, whether as paid professionals or a volunteer. It also equips students with the skills and knowledge required to pass the state-required written and skills exams to obtain New York State EMT certification.

Molusky also highlighted the significance of soft skills, such as being polite, prepared, and presentable, which are often lacking in today's society. He explained that many of the programs at BOCES require uniforms and proper attire, and students need to understand the importance of these aspects in making them more employable.

Soft skills such as answering the phone with a simple "hello" and "thank you" can make a significant difference in employability.

"Soft skills are extremely important," said Molusky.

With the partnerships and collaborations in place, students can earn college credits, participate in community service, and prepare for future careers.

What is CTE?

Career and Technical Education is a valuable opportunity for students to learn practical skills that will serve them well throughout their lives. Rather than solely focusing on academic learning, CTE programs provide hands-on training and real-world experience in a specific trade or industry. These skills can be used in various settings, including personal projects or in a professional capacity. CTE programs also equip students with problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork skills, which are highly sought after by employers in today's job market. According to Sullivan BOCES, CTE, students can develop a strong foundation for their future careers while gaining confidence in their abilities to succeed in any field they pursue.

STUDENT COUNCIL: BUILDING A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO



At right: Sullivan BOCES student council hosts Pi Day; rewarding students caught displaying acts of kindness or exceptional behavior with a voting ticket for a staff member to receive a pie in the face.



Above: Student council member photos line the hallway at Sullivan BOCES.

At left: Student council members Joshua Lutz (left) and Michael Weiss stand by the Pi Day wall featuring staff members at Sullivan BOCES. The Pi Day event awards students for demonstrating kindness and exceptional behavior with voting tickets, offering a chance to pie a staff member in the face.

Student councils are a valuable asset in schools as they represent the students and provide a platform for them to voice their opinions and make changes. At Sullivan BOCES, this newly formed Student Council has started the year off strong with ideas about how their leadership group could make a few changes to ensure all students and staff experience a positive, welcoming learning environment.

Stephanie Cavet, a school psychologist, said the council looks for ways to change the school to increase morale and positivity. The council has 18-20 members, and they try to represent different students from different programs, including middle and high school.

The council primarily works in subcommittees to work on rolling out their ideas. Two of their most recent activities included the February Kindness (K.I.S.S.) Event and Pi Day.

During the K.I.S.S. event, students were awarded K.I.S.S. certificates for going above and beyond basic behavior expectations; a staff member can give them a certificate. Students can earn multiple certificates. When students earn a K.I.S.S. certificate, their designated ALC will have them turn in their certificates for a few Hershey kisses.

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Sullivan BOCES student council initiates a suggestion box as a means to gather and address student concerns.

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The council also organized the Pi Day tickets, where students who were caught being kind or doing something exceptional got a ticket and a chance to vote for a staff member to get a pie in the face. The staff member with the most votes will take the pie.

The council also created suggestion boxes where students can place their suggestions and concerns. During each student council meeting, the comments are reviewed and the students decide if the suggestion would move for-



ward to be implemented.

While the council focuses on students, they also try to include teachers in some activities. Currently, the students are trying to arrange lunch for staff. The students want to show their appreciation for all that the staff does throughout the year for the students.

The student council participated in the BOCES Backpack program. Members of the student council help the coordinators of the program by transporting the food to the various buildings throughout the BOCES campus so the students in need can easily grab the bags on their way to the bus.

A junior from Port Jervis, Michael Weiss, mentioned that they assist in distributing food to various classrooms with the aim

of making a positive impact on their community.

"I like helping other students," he said.

According to Joshua Lutz, a junior from Liberty, being part of the student council gives him a platform to express his thoughts on what goes on at Sullivan BOCES, and this, in turn, empowers other students to have a voice.

Weiss emphasized that the student council is crucial because it also helps students seek help when they have problems if they don't want to talk to the staff, and it gives them a voice.

Cavet highlighted that the student council had made everything happier and created a better sense of community this school year.

The council also plays a big

role in recognizing and rewarding students who are doing well and encouraging those who may not be displaying positive behaviors to work toward positive behavior.

Lutz stated that due to the pandemic, the absence of the student council made everything worse; there was no interaction between the students from different classes.

The student council plays an essential role in building a positive school culture. It creates a sense of community and helps students to recognize their potential. Involving students from all classes helps to promote inclusivity and unity within the school.

Above: Student council members Michael Weiss (left) and Joshua Lutz share how their roles provide a platform to voice their opinions on the happenings at Sullivan BOCES.

Top: Joshua Lutz (left) and Michael Weiss contribute to their community by participating in the Sullivan BOCES backpack program.

Left: The Sullivan BOCES backpack program assists students and families facing food insecurities by providing essential support.

Consolidated to one campus

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

The Executive Principal for the Elementary Programs K-6, Megan Becker, explained that the Elementary program had been looking to return to one campus for a while and had started slowly consolidating over the past few years.

Becker said the move had increased consistency in programming and made it easier to modify student placement between the different classroom structures (if needed).

She cited the example of students who might be struggling with mental health needs and how they could be moved to a different program that dealt specifically with mental health issues.

"It's been great because there's a lot more consistency in our programming," said Becker.

Furthermore, the consolidation has made school-wide activities, such as Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS), spirit weeks, and having one mascot (the black dragon), had allowed the school to work more cohesively.

Kristin Quintoni, a Special Education teacher at BOCES, said she was surprised at the number of staff members she didn't know before the consolidation and how being in the same place now makes it easier to work together.

Quintoni said that although the change didn't affect her particular students, they appreciate being dropped off in the same area and how having more people in team meetings now allows for more ideas to be shared and best practices to be addressed.

Quintoni said that the relocation efforts had started before the pandemic hit and the school had already undergone several phases of relocation; however, the pandemic forced the school

to close down, making it difficult to settle down and complete the relocation process.

Additionally, consolidating two schools has brought many positive changes, including the opportunity to work with new colleagues and to share ideas and best practices.

Stephanie Lark, who teaches kindergarten-first grade, said that the consolidation has been a good transition, especially since it feels like a community under the same house.

"My goal is to really make the class a warm, welcoming environment for my students that they want to come to, they want to engage and learn," said Lark.

Lark said that the best setup for herself and her students was important, which took some time.

Lark added that she believes consolidation has benefited teachers and students. The community spirit has helped create a warm and welcoming environment for students, encouraging them to engage and learn.

Cheryl Johnstone, a fourth and fifth-grade Special Education teacher who has been one of the first teachers to experience the transition, said transitioning to the school's new campus, where her classes were initially isolated from other students, has been beneficial in creating an elementary school atmosphere that fosters interaction and learning between different classes.

Johnstone said her students have unique needs, but it is still possible for her students to buddy up with other classes and learn from each other.

She added that being together on campus, the E-wing had become an elementary atmosphere since everyone was now together.

Executive Principal Megan Becker highlights the benefits of building consolidation, including increased programming consistency and easier student placement modifications across different classroom structures for Elementary Programs K-6.



BOCES Special Education teacher Kristin Quintoni says the newfound proximity has improved collaboration in the workplace.



Kindergarten-First grade teacher, Stephanie Lark, expresses positive feedback on the consolidation, citing a newfound sense of community among staff and students alike.



Fourth and fifth-grade Special Education teacher, Cheryl Johnstone, highlights the consolidation's role in cultivating a collaborative and interactive elementary school atmosphere.



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