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A Special Supplement to the Sullivan County Democrat

A look at
activities in the
Eldred Central
School District

SCENE



Advancing the capital bond project

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

In a bid to enhance its educational and athletic facilities, the Eldred Central School District is entering into a capital bond project.

The project will serve as a catalyst for growth and development within the community for years to come. The project, greenlit by voters in December 2022, encompasses a comprehensive overhaul of the district's infrastructure, including new athletic facilities, ADA-compliant amenities, and upgrades to the high school library and George Ross Mackenzie Elementary School's roof.

The improvements will be made without raising taxes in the district. According to Eldred Superintendent Traci Ferreira, the district will have finished paying its current bond obligation right when the new bond payment begins, thus, no increase to taxpayers

However, a critical juncture in the project timeline is facing unexpected delays due to prolonged reviews by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Initially estimated at 14 to 16 weeks, the NYSED approval

process has now stretched to an extended 22 to 24 weeks, presenting an obstacle to the district's timeline.

Despite the setbacks, Superintendent Ferreira and School Business Administrator Caleb Russell maintain an optimistic outlook.

The project's pre-bid walkthrough, a crucial step in engaging potential bidders, is scheduled to proceed, offering a glimpse into the transformative changes planned for Eldred Central School District's educational and athletic facilities.

For the George Ross Mackenzie Elementary School, a new roof will be installed to replace the aging and leaking one, along with the sidewalks that need repair.

Furthermore, the library in the Elementary School and the Junior-Senior School will get an updated look and function as a "global learning center" that helps foster collaboration, communication, and academic growth, according to the district.

Also, a "maker's space" was created at the Elementary School, combining the computer lab and office space into a large open area. In this space, the furniture can be moved and changed into different configurations to fit the activity in



Eldred Central School District Superintendent Traci Ferreira is eager for the upcoming capital bond project, which marks the beginning of a new phase for the district.

the room, from a parent-teacher conference to a teaching-staff meeting, or hosting one of the many after-school clubs.

As for the Eldred Junior Senior High School, the upgrades will include installing a wider all-weather football and soccer field, plus a six-lane track that can host larger meets and be open to the community.

According to Ferreira, one-third of the home sports games had to be canceled in recent years due to the field being unsafe for the students to use after a weather event. Some of the games were played at neighboring fields.

Ferreira said there had not been a home track meet for the past five years due to the current track field condition.

While the new field is being installed, the restrooms will also receive a much-needed upgrade that will make them more

accessible and ADA-compliant.

Ferreira emphasized the importance of inclusivity and community engagement, envisioning the new facilities as venues for various events, from graduations to fundraisers.



The capital bond project will bring a new roof to the elementary school.

School Scene

'A Look Inside the Eldred Central School District'

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Mackenzie Elementary excels with dynamic clubs and literacy innovations

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

One of the standout features at George Ross Mackenzie Elementary is its diverse range of extracurricular clubs, offering students an opportunity to explore various interests, cultivate new skills and build lasting friendships.

Michael Carpentieri, Principal at George Ross Mackenzie Elementary School, explained that each trimester, the school hosts clubs for five weeks, allowing for flexibility and accommodating the unique needs of its younger students.

Carpentieri says about 75 to 80 percent of the students participate in clubs.

The clubs cover a wide spectrum, from the adventurous Rock Climbing Club to the creative Dance Fitness Club and even a Taylor Swift Club, where the ideals of friendship and loyalty are promoted.

The dedication of the staff is evident as teachers bring their passions to the table, enriching students' experiences beyond the regular curriculum.

The introduction of a Sign Language Club and a Puzzle Club showcases the school's commitment to diversity and inclusivity, providing students with a platform to explore and appreciate different forms of expression and problem-solving.



Craft Club is one of the many being offered at the George Ross Mackenzie Elementary.



Principal Michael Carpentieri at George Ross Mackenzie Elementary assisting 2nd Grader Grayson Fincham in choosing his new book from the Book Vending Machine.

Book Vending Machines and Read-A-Thons

Eldred Elementary School places a strong emphasis on literacy, recognizing its pivotal role in shaping students' academic success.

Carpentieri said the Book Vending Machine is a unique initiative that rewards students for their reading achievements.

"We introduced the book vending machine this year, [which] has been a big hit. We did a read-a-thon in October through the PTA, and we had students read over 40,000 minutes in the month of October," said Carpentieri.

The engagement sparked by the read-a-thon was palpable, with students earning the opportunity to cover their principal in slime during a monthly assembly.

This interactive approach not only promotes literacy but also creates a lively and enthusiastic learning environment.

Collaboration with parents, facilitated by the active Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), has been crucial to the success of these initiatives. The involvement of parents in events like the read-a-thon and their support for after-school clubs demonstrates a strong partnership between the

school and the community.

Carpentieri expressed optimism about the future. The school's commitment to providing a well-rounded education, fostering creativity, and addressing individual student needs position it as a beacon of educational excellence in the region.

Eldred Elementary School's story is not just about academics; it's about creating an environment where students thrive, forge connections and build a foundation for a lifetime of learning.

The school's commitment to clubs, literacy initiatives, and a personalized approach to education is undoubtedly making a lasting impact on the students of Eldred.

George Ross Mackenzie Elementary School Winter After-School Clubs

Tee-Ball Club: Introducing Pre-K and Kindergarten students to tee-ball fundamentals with Mr. Jack Kearney.

Play-Doh Club: Unleashing creativity for Pre-K and Kindergarten students through Play-Doh artistry and crafting.

Puzzle Club: Engaging 1st



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While engaging in the Lego Club at George Ross Mackenzie Elementary School, students unleash their creativity.

CONTINUED FROM 4E
through 3rd graders with collaborative large puzzles, brain teasers and fun challenges.

Taylor Swift Club: Focusing on friendship, kindness, artistry and female empowerment through activities inspired by Taylor Swift's music.

Directed Drawing Club: Creative space for 2nd through 4th graders to learn and interpret step-by-step drawing tutorials.

Prodigy Club: Interactive computer-based game sessions for 1st through 4th graders to strengthen English Language Arts and Math skills.

Lego Club: Encouraging collaboration among 1st through 6th graders through shared play with Legos.

Newspaper Club: 5th and 6th graders creating an informative newspaper covering school and community events.

Checkers Club: Teaching check-

ers and strategic thinking to 3rd through 6th graders.

Board Game Club: Exploring traditional game boards for ultimate fun, open to 3rd and 4th graders.

Painting Club: Creative afternoons exploring acrylic painting on canvas for 5th and 6th graders.

Sign Language Club: Learning sign language basics, fingerspelling and simple conversation for 5th and 6th graders.

Weaving Club: Enhancing fine motor skills in a relaxed environment for 2nd and 3rd graders.

Rock Climbing Club: 3rd and 4th graders face thrilling challenges to reach the top of the new Rock Climbing Wall on Tuesdays, while 5th and 6th graders scale heights on Thursdays.

Dance Fitness Club: Fitness through dance for 3rd through 6th graders on Wednesdays.

Pokémon Club: Comparing Pokémon card collections and learning more about Pokémon, with the disallowance of trading, for 3rd through 6th graders on Mondays.



Together, we are empowering a healthier generation at Eldred CSD!



Principal Michael Carpentieri of George Ross Mackenzie Elementary getting slimed as a reward for the students achieving their goal of reading over 40,000 minutes.

Success found with the 8:1:1 model



5th grader Jonathan McGarvey gives a thumbs up, highlighting the success of the 8:1:1 model that provides students with the necessary tools, resources and skill sets.

STORY AND PHOTO BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

The Eldred Central School District is pioneering an innovative model for special education with its 8:1:1 classroom setup.

This special education initiative, designed to cater to the diverse needs of students, has not only proven to be a beacon of inclusivity, but has also demonstrated significant cost savings for the district.

The 8:1:1 classroom, an acronym denoting its unique structure – eight students, one teacher and one assistant – is breaking away from traditional models of special education.

“We’re trying to provide students with the tools and resources, and the skill sets to be successful,” said Michael Carpentieri, Principal at George Ross Mackenzie Elementary School.

Eldred Superintendent Traci Ferreira explained that the program covers multiple grade levels and is strategically designed to keep special education students within their local community.

School Business Administrator Caleb Russell said the program has cost savings for the district.

According to Russell, sending five students out of the district would cost around \$350,000. The personnel costs for their in-house 8:1:1 classroom, including a dedicated teacher and assistant, are approximately \$110,000.

Ferreira also highlighted the importance of maintaining familiarity for these students, reducing behavioral issues and keeping the students on schedule.

In an age where technology is omnipresent, the Eldred Central School District has successfully struck a balance between traditional teaching methods and modern technology within the 8:1:1 classroom. Smart boards, Chromebooks, and a one-to-one device program have been seamlessly integrated into the curriculum, ensuring students have access to diverse learning resources.

The success of the 8:1:1 classroom is not just measured in numbers but resonates in the gratitude expressed by parents. Keeping their children close to home, coupled with a tailored educational experience, has fostered an environment where students thrive.

As educators and administrators look to the future, the Eldred Central School District’s 8:1:1 classroom model offers valuable insights and inspiration.

It encourages a reevaluation of traditional approaches to special education, urging stakeholders to explore innovative methods that not only cater to individual learning needs but also contribute to the overall well-being of students.

The Eldred example becomes a rallying cry for a more inclusive, cost-effective and technologically adept educational landscape — one where every student has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

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Eldred adopts 'Leader in Me' for student leadership

STORY AND PHOTO
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

In the quiet halls of the Eldred Central School District, a transformative initiative is quietly taking root, poised to redefine the educational landscape for both students and staff.

Known as "Leader in Me," this concept is rooted in Franklin Covey's best-selling book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People."

According to the program's website, Leader in Me is an evidence-based, comprehensive model designed to instill leadership and life skills in students, foster a high-trust school culture and set the stage for sustained academic success.

Inspired by the success witnessed in the Liberty School District, Eldred Superintendent Traci Ferreria and her team embarked on a journey to implement Leader in Me within their own educational community.

The core of Leader in Me lies in teaching students the seven habits derived from Franklin Covey's principles:

Habit 1: Be Proactive (You're in Charge)

Habit 2: Begin with The End in Mind (Have a Plan)

Habit 3: Put First Things First (Work First, Then Play)

Habit 4: Think Win-Win (Everyone Can Win)

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, then to Be Understood (Listen Before You Talk)

Habit 6: Synergize (Together Is

Better)
Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw (Balance Feels Best)

As the Eldred Central School District begins to introduce Leader in Me, the focus is not solely on students but extends to the entire school community. Teachers, bus drivers, secretaries and nurses all undergo training to internalize the mindset shift embedded in the program.

The objective is clear: encourage responsibility, perseverance, grit and resilience — qualities deemed crucial in a post-COVID educational landscape.

Vanessa McWilliams, the elementary school psychologist and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) coordinator, plays a pivotal role in driving Leader in Me forward.

Leading the Lighthouse Committee, she oversees the initiative's implementation across the district. Notably, the committee is composed of volunteers who genuinely believe in the program's philosophy and dedicate their time to its success.

What sets Leader in Me apart is its grassroots approach to change. Unlike a top-down mandate, it is teacher and adult-driven. This approach fosters a sense of ownership, commitment, and, most importantly, a cultural shift within the school community.

Scott Krebs, Director of Instructional Services and a key player in bringing Leader in Me to Eldred, explains the comprehensive support provided by Franklin Covey. The program encompasses



Scott Krebs, Director of Instructional Services, was pivotal in introducing Leader in Me, which is backed by comprehensive support from author Franklin Covey.

not only the seven habits but also offers resources, online coaching and virtual support to guide the district through its implementation.

The framework, though demanding, promises long-term benefits by nurturing individualized learning and fostering a sense of responsibility among students.

The impact of Leader in Me extends beyond the classroom walls. The initiative encourages a holistic approach, focusing on improving attendance rates and enhancing the overall school culture.

The Lighthouse Committee spearheads subcommittees like the Culture Committee, which introduces initiatives like Eldred Pride Day, fostering a sense of

community and school spirit.

"Our ultimate goal is to develop kids, [for them] to leave high school here and be successful," said Michael Conklin, Principal at Junior Senior High School.

The Leader in Me initiative in Eldred Central School District is still in its early stages, with the first year dedicated to training and familiarization.

The subsequent years will witness a deepening integration, particularly in the elementary levels, paving the way for a cultural shift that transcends the traditional boundaries of education.

Through this initiative, Eldred Central School District is cultivating leaders, one habit at a time.

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Eldred District's MTSS: transforming student success



Eldred School District's adoption of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) departs from traditional models, emphasizing a holistic approach in the classroom to address academic, social and emotional aspects of student development.

**STORY AND PHOTOS
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO**

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, Eldred Central School has embarked on a groundbreaking initiative to bolster student achievement and well-being.

The district's commitment to a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) marks a departure from traditional models, signaling a holistic approach that addresses academic, social, and emotional

facets of each student's development.

Formerly rooted in the Response to Intervention (RTI) paradigm, the state has increasingly advocated for MTSS, emphasizing a tiered intervention system categorized into three levels.

"It's important to try everything you can in the classroom and see what works and see what clicks," said Eldred Junior Senior High School Principal Michael Conklin.

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The first tier focuses on “good teaching,” incorporating diverse instructional modalities to cater to individual learning styles.

Eldred Superintendent Traci Ferreira notes, “tier two” involves targeted interventions based on benchmark assessments and progress monitoring, while “tier three” provides intensive support, primarily tailored for special education students. This tiered structure ensures a tailored approach to each student’s needs.

MTSS Addresses Post-Covid Era

A critical aspect of Eldred’s MTSS initiative is its comprehensive view of education, going beyond traditional subjects to encompass behavioral considerations and support services such as counseling, speech therapy, and occupational therapy.

In a post-COVID era, where educational gaps have become more pronounced, Eldred’s commitment to addressing these challenges has become paramount.

Benchmark assessments in literacy have shown marked improvement, attributed to the district’s emphasis on explicit instruction.

Teachers have actively participated in professional development programs, focusing on literacy initiatives like Really Great Reading, which have garnered positive feedback.

“I’ve seen it implemented in the classroom, and I’ve seen [teachers] go above and beyond,” said Ferreira.

Dr. Bethany England, the Director of Special Education at Eldred Central School District, spearheaded the MTSS initiative. Ferreira underscored that MTSS is not a rigid program but a mindset that requires ongoing adaptation.

The success stories emerging from the district, particularly in the early grades, highlight gains in test scores and positive teacher feedback. The fluid nature of the tiered intervention



Students at George Ross Mackenzie Elementary are enjoying their music class, where they learn about various tones.

system allows for continuous progress monitoring, aligning with the district’s commitment to adapting support based on student needs.

As Eldred Central School District navigates the uncharted waters

of post-COVID education, their proactive stance on professional development, literacy programs and mental health support positions them as a beacon for other schools seeking to enhance their student support systems.

Eldred’s MTSS initiative stands as a testament to their commitment to the holistic development of each student, setting a new standard for educational excellence in the region.



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