

Summer 2013



Guilderland Central School District



Using available resources efficiently... GCSD to conduct district-wide building capacity study throughout the fall

A commitment to balance the mission of a school district with the resources available to it is critical at all times, but particularly so when financial times are tough. School leaders, including those at Guilderland, must constantly examine their use of available resources and look for ways to use those resources more efficiently.

To that end, the Guilderland Central School District is undertaking a district-wide building capacity study later this fall in order to evaluate its use of space and to determine whether or not there may be more cost-effective ways to deliver its K-12 programming.

“Our mission as a district is to inspire all students to be active life-long learners, able to achieve their highest potential in a demanding and ever-changing global community,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Marie Wiles. “Undoubtedly, there are multiple ways in which we can reach these goals and the study we are about to begin will help us to identify the most efficient options before us.”

Please join us for a community meeting on Tuesday Sept. 3 in the GHS LGI to learn more about the study.

—Additional details may also be found at www.guilderlandschools.org

Led by Dr. Paul Seversky, a consultant with the Planning Service at the Madison-Oneida BOCES, the building capacity study will look at the district’s current use of space and scheduling patterns as well as current enrollment and future enrollment trends.

Based on the data resulting from the above analysis, Dr. Seversky will then present the district with several options for use of existing space and program delivery models.

Please join us on September 3, beginning at 7 p.m. in the Guilderland High School LGI, for a community meeting to learn more about the goals of the study as well as the methodology that will be used throughout the process. Additional information about the study may also be found on our website: www.guilderlandschools.org. ♦

District reviews building improvement recommendations

At a meeting on July 2, the Guilderland Central School District Facilities Committee presented a report to the Board of Education and community outlining its recommendations for a November building project referendum. Recommendations included up-grades to aging infrastructure in the district’s seven school buildings and improvements for safety, security and technology systems district-wide.

To view the complete report and presentation, please visit www.guilderlandschools.org.

The Board will be reviewing the committee’s recommendations throughout the next several weeks and is expected to approve a plan by mid-September to put before voters later this fall. A community meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, October 29 at 7 p.m. in the Guilderland High School LGI to review the finalized plan and to answer any questions the community may have in advance of the November vote. Please save the date and look for more details about the meeting later this fall. ♦

Welcoming Michael Laster

Middle School names new building principal

At its meeting on April 23, 2013, the Guilderland Board of Education unanimously approved the appointment of Michael Laster to the position of Farnsworth Middle School Principal. He officially assumed his new administrative duties on July 1, following the retirement of Mary Summermatter at the conclusion of the school year.

Laster began his career in education as a sixth grade teacher in Glenwood, Colorado before returning to New York to teach at the Neil Hellman School at Parsons Child and Family Center in Albany. He comes to Guilderland after serving most recently as the principal of Greenville High School in Greenville, NY.

In addition to his professional duties, Laster is an active presenter and volunteer with the Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA) and has served as a board member, vice chair and chairperson of the CASDA Principals' Policy Center. He also served as a baseball and basketball coach at his former school districts.

Throughout his career, Laster has earned numerous honors and distinctions including being named the 2002 Glenwood Springs Middle School Educator of the Year.

He is a graduate of Siena College, where he earned his bachelor's degree in political science with an education concentration, and of the University at Albany, where he received a master's degree in educational administration. ♦



In his own words: Q & A with Principal Michael Laster

What drew you to the position of FMS Principal?

I have been a high school principal for the past nine years in the Greenville Central School District but Guilderland is my community. My home is here and my children attend Guilderland schools. To be able to live, work and serve the district you call home is something you wish for and work for as a school administrator. When all of the stars align, you have to take the opportunity.

What are your goals for the first few weeks of school?

First and foremost, my goal is to get to know as much as possible about the students, parents, staff and program at Farnsworth Middle School. I'm looking forward to meeting with everyone and building a strong foundation of open communication. In addition, I want to learn about what the school community values; what makes this an Essential Elements School to Watch and how can we keep that momentum going. I want to learn how to make an awesome school even better by bringing my strengths to the table.

What are the biggest challenges you see heading into your new position?

One of the most immediate challenges I see will be to help the school community navigate any changes related to the reduction of a house principal at the middle school. The administrative structure will undoubtedly look a bit different in the coming year, but out of every challenge is an opportunity. We will need to monitor the impact of the change throughout the school year to make sure that it is working for students and teachers. On a larger scale, I also see the Regents reform agenda—things such as increased accountability and testing, the new Common Core learning standards, and the Annual Professional Performance Review for teachers and principals—as major challenges facing not only FMS, but schools throughout the state. While these items require everyone's attention, we cannot lose sight of the fact that we are still teaching children and shaping the minds of the future leaders of our community.

What would you like the students, staff, and parents of FMS to know about you as the school year gets underway?

I would just like them to know that I am very approachable. If I can help a student, parent or staff member in any way, I would like to be given an opportunity to try. In addition, I don't want anyone to be surprised if they see me playing basketball with the kids or participating in a school variety show. My leadership philosophy is very student-centered. I enjoy learning about and being involved with my school community both inside and out of the classroom!



Annual notifications for parents/guardians

The Guilderland Central School District is required by law to provide the following notifications to parents on an annual basis. Additional notifications on topics such as body mass index screening, sex offender notification, and pesticide applications may be found on the district website: www.guilderlandschools.org.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT

The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allows school districts to release student information (name, grade, photograph, address, academic interest, artwork, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, terms of school attendance and graduation, awards received, and future educational plans) for use in school district publications and within district websites and social media sites, or to the media for public relations purposes. Parents who object to the release of their child's information and/or photograph should notify both their child's building principal and the district's communications office in writing by September 15, 2013.

In addition, as required under FERPA, the district would like to inform parents/guardians and students 18 years of age or older, currently in attendance of their right to:

- Inspect and review the student's education records,
- Request that records be amended to ensure that they are accurate and not misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy or other rights, and
- Control disclosures from the student's education records, with certain exceptions.

RELEASE OF STUDENT INFORMATION TO MILITARY RECRUITERS

Pursuant to the federal No Child Left Behind Act, the school district must disclose to military recruiters and institutions of higher learning, upon request, the names, addresses and telephone numbers of our high school junior and senior students. However, parents or students may request, in writing, that the district not release such information. Parents, or students who are at least 18 years old, wishing to exercise their option to withhold their consent to the release of this information must contact the high school principal's office by October 15, 2013.

ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

All parents/guardians will have the right to obtain the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) quality ratings and composite effectiveness scores for their child's *current year* teacher(s) and principal once the scores are officially available in accordance with state law. As this newsletter goes to print, scores have not yet been released for the 2013-14 school year. For information on how to request your child's teacher(s) and principal scores and ratings when they become available, please visit the district website.



On Saturday, June 22, 398 Guilderland High School students walked across the stage of the SEFCU Arena at the University at Albany to receive their diplomas and begin the next chapter of their lives beyond of the halls of Guilderland High School. Congratulations to all of the members of the Class of 2013 and best wishes to as you enter into a bright and exciting future!
To see more photos of this year's graduates, visit the district's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/GuilderlandCSD.

TAX RATES TO BE SET AUGUST 20

The Guilderland Central School District Board of Education is scheduled to adopt the district's 2013-14 tax rates as its regular meeting on Tuesday, August 20. Additional information about the rates will be posted to the district website as soon as it becomes available.

BOARD MEETINGS TO BEGIN AT 7 P.M. IN THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Please note that beginning in the 2013-14 school year, all Board of Education meetings will now begin at 7 p.m. in the Guilderland High School Large Group Instruction (LGI) room. This is a change from the previous 7:30 p.m. start time. As always, all meetings are open to the public and will also be televised live on Time Warner Cable channel 16 in the Town of Guilderland.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Barbara Fraterrigo, President
Allan Simpson, Vice President

Catherine Barber
Jennifer Charron
Christine Hayes
Rose Levy
Colleen O'Connell
Judy Slack
Gloria Towle-Hilt

SUPERINTENDENT

Marie Wiles, Ph.D.

EDITOR

Amy McGeady

Published by the Guilderland Central
School District in cooperation with the
Capital Region BOCES Communications
Service.

Guilderland

Central School District

8 School Road, P.O. Box 18
Guilderland Center, NY 12085



Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Albany, NY
Permit No. 730

ECRWSS

POSTAL CUSTOMER

Summer 2013

4

New in 2013-14...

District introduces new emergency telephone notification system for parents: One Call Now

Beginning in the new school year, Guilderland Central School District officials will be able to contact all district parents in case of emergency with just a push of a button through the One Call Now telephone alert system. This is the first time the district has partnered with such a company to provide nearly instantaneous telephone notification in the event of school closings and delays, early dismissals, or other emergency situations.

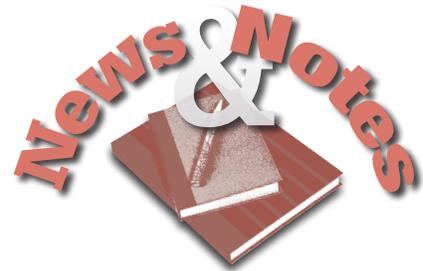
"This is a very important step for our district to take," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Marie Wiles. "Not only will the system be invaluable on days when school schedules are affected by the weather but it will also be a critical tool for school leaders to reach out to parents should an emergency situation ever arise in our buildings."

All GCSD parents with students currently registered in school

have already been automatically entered into the One Call Now calling system based on contact information contained in the district's student management system, SchoolTool. Parents do not need to sign-up for this service.

Parents should know that the One Call Now system will only be used in case of school closures, delays, or other serious emergencies. Parents will not receive phone calls about fundraisers or other school events that do not impact the regularly scheduled school day.

"Our hope is to use the system as little as possible, meaning, that we will make it through the school year with minimal changes to the scheduled school day and without any serious incidents," said Wiles. "However, if and when those situations do occur, we are confident that we will now be able to reach all district parents in a timely and efficient manner."



A test run of the service took place last spring, when a power outage at Lynnwood Elementary forced an unexpected closure at the school. Using the One Call Now system, the district was able to deliver more than 1,500 messages about the closure to school parents and staff. The majority of those messages were received by users within the first 15 minutes of distribution.

"One Call Now is an investment in the safety and security of our students and schools," said Wiles. "With nearly 5,000 students in seven school buildings, the system also provides peace of mind for our parents. They can be reassured that the district now has a quick, easy and reliable method of mass communication between our schools and home in the event of a true emergency." ♦

GCSD