

Schalmont News

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

Teaching Digital Learners

Her eyes lock on the digital display as she selects a button. Is she texting on a cell phone? Listening to an iPod? Playing with a PSP? No. She's answering a question from last night's homework assignment.

Almost instantly, her selection joins that of 20 other classmates whose selections are now posted on the large screen at the front of the classroom. As the teacher reveals the correct answer, he quickly realizes how many students fully understand the concept and how many need to spend more time on it.

Similar scenes are playing out in several local classrooms thanks to new technology. In recent years, Schalmont Central School District has invested in a variety of electronic learning tools that help teachers reach chil-

dren with different learning styles, increase class participation and prepare students for the competitive, modern job market.

Electronic Learning Tools

In 2005, foreign language teacher Kathy Fagan decided to shake things up a bit in her classroom routine. The educator with over 30 years of experience applied for a grant to add a document camera, SMARTboard and projector to her classroom. She didn't do so just for new 'toys'; she did it to reach students at their learning level.

"I asked myself, 'How can we reach out to these new digital generation kids?'" said Fagan. "I want to know what makes these kids tick."

continued on page 2 ---->

What's inside

pg.2 ■ **Math and Science Academy 2008**

See it with your own eyes on Schalmont Web site

pg.4 ■ **Budget Vote Exit Poll Recap Part I**

First in a series of Q&A



Visit www.schalmont.org to register for Schalmont School News Notifier and receive e-mail updates on the district, schools and emergency closings or delays.

GOING TO EAT THAT?

Schalmont Food Service Department Offers Healthy, Affordable Meals

On a recent rainy morning, there was an explosion of color and happy chatter as students spilled into the Schalmont High School cafeteria.

Thus began a lunchtime ritual that Food Service Department employees regularly see throughout Schalmont Central School District. Each day, they face the difficult challenge of providing healthy meals that students will eat and parents can afford.

"Did you get some milk with that?" queried Dori DeCarlo, a mother of two and FS employee since 2000. She sat at a cash register and stared at a ninth-

grader who had two silver-wrapped packages in his hands. "It's not a full meal. You need some milk."

The student's mother might be happy to know that DeCarlo tried to make sure her son got his daily dose of calcium. In fact, the push to provide students with healthy meals starts much earlier, when FS Director Marcy von Maucher plans menus for all five Schalmont schools.



Feeding Our Youth: Dori DeCarlo, one of 20 Food Service employees, helps prepare and sell lunch at Schalmont High School.

"We must follow strict guidelines to ensure the foods we serve have minimal

continued on page 2 ---->



See It With Your Own Eyes

Math and Science Academy Summer 2008:

This summer, elementary students discovered the fun side of math and science at the Schalmont Math and Science Academy. Join them in their discovery at www.schalmont.org/seeitwithyourowneyes.htm. Throughout the school year, the district will add new content to this Web site to help parents and community members become more familiar with Schalmont and 21st century education.

Schalmont Food Service

– continued from pg. 1

sodium, sugar and fat content,” said von Maucher. “Being healthy doesn’t have to put kids off, though. We offer many choices of foods that kids enjoy, prepared in a healthy way.”

Students snatch up quite a few salads and bottles of water, according to DeCarlo. Of course, their favorites still tend to be pizza, chicken nuggets and tacos. That’s why FS serves whole grain versions of pizza crust, breading on chicken nuggets and patties, hamburger and hot dog buns, dinner rolls, and sandwich bread.

Snacks haven’t been left out of the equation either. Those sold at Schalmont schools generally contain less fat, sugar and sodium than traditional vending machine snacks and are often baked instead of fried. In recent years, von Maucher also has expanded school menus to offer more choices in the areas of fruits, vegetables and milk.

This push toward healthier foods helps fight childhood obesity, but it comes with a higher price tag. For example, the price of a single lunch for all grade levels increased by 25 cents from last year to this year as a result of increasing food costs.

“Parents are seeing an increase in grocery bills, and the same increases affect our department,” said von Maucher.

Despite the increase, school meals are still a great option for parents who want their children to eat well at a reasonable price.

Breakfast at all three elementary schools and Schalmont Middle School costs \$1.00 per day, and at Schalmont High School, breakfast costs \$1.30 per day. Lunch at all three elementary schools costs \$1.75 per day, and at the MS and HS, lunch costs \$2.00

per day. There are discounts for purchasing several meals in advance, and children from households meeting federal income guidelines are eligible for free or reduced price meals.

“The value of a school lunch is incomparable,” said von Maucher. “With prices at the grocery store, I don’t think it’s possible to feed your child a healthy, hot meal consisting of a minimum of 4 ounces of protein, 1.5 cups of vegetables and fruit, a serving of bread, and 8 ounces of milk for less than \$2.”

“It’s really a good deal for your money,” agreed DeCarlo, who starts each day by preparing meals behind the scenes. Her favorite part of working in FS? The students. “I think we have the best job.”

“It’s really a good deal for your money.”

Digital Learners

– continued from pg. 1

She now uses technology to make test reviews, classroom notes and lectures more interactive and engaging.

“For example, if a kid forgets his textbook, I can just put one up on the document camera for everyone to see. It especially helps kids with a delay to figure out where they’re supposed to be,” said Fagan.

Her long-term goal is to use technology to offer simultaneous learning centers rather than a single classroom lecture. Such an environment might have one group of students matching images with words projected on a SMARTboard, another group listening to a foreign language podcast, and a third group charting grammar rules on the whiteboard – all at the same time.

In 2008, Fagan received a grant to cover the cost of five desktop computers and several iPod shuffles. She is combining those tools with shared instructional tools from the Schalmont Teachers Institute (STI) to develop and maintain students’ language proficiency, improve their digital literacy, increase their use of higher-order thinking skills, and have them work collaboratively and reflectively with peers.

Using Those Tools Wisely

Social studies teacher Bronson Knaggs is the director of STI, a New York State Teacher Center dedicated to providing high-quality, meaningful professional development opportunities. It also provides teachers with access to a variety of digital learning tools – document cameras, SMARTboards, Mimios, student response systems, etc. – which are shared by staff members.

continued on page 3 →

“Through STI, we have the opportunity to network and bring the latest educational practices to Schalmont,” said Knaggs. “This technology also cuts down on a tremendous amount of photocopying.”

These tools offer cost-savings, but their initial purchase must be built into an annual school budget if not secured through a grant. With that in mind, Knaggs and other district administrators carefully consider how often teachers make use of shared tools before purchasing enough to assign them to specific classrooms.

The district engages in a variety of security measures to protect the investment in electronic learning tools. All tools are included on an inventory that is regularly reviewed by members of the Information Technology (IT)

Department, who physically check on each item. There are secured rooms in which to lock certain items, and IT also secures items through digital locks, weighted lock boxes, security cameras, and staff supervision.

Digital learning tools may seem strange to those who didn't grow up immersed in a digital world, but their use doesn't mean that classic learning tools get left behind.

“I need to be high-tech to keep up with these kids,” said Fagan. “That doesn't mean I've forgotten the traditional methods. I'm just trying to find a nice blending of both.”

Don't know the difference between a Mimio and a “clicker”? Look to the list below for information on some of the new electronic learning tools in many Schalmont classrooms.



Everyone Has a Say: Schalmont Middle School teacher Donald Brandt uses a Student Response System to give all students the opportunity to participate in a science homework review.

Tool	Use in Schalmont CSD	Educational Benefits
Computers	Computer labs at Jefferson Elementary School, Schalmont Middle School and Schalmont High School. Laptop carts for shared classroom use at Mariaville and Woestina elementary schools. In-classroom computer for teachers at all schools and some in-room computers for students at elementary schools and HS.	Teachers can enhance lessons, record grades, track student performance, and communicate with parents. Students can complete classroom assignments and research projects. District can offer distance learning classes.
Document Cameras	Projects the images of flat or 3-D objects – a textbook page illustrating a scientific theory, coins for a lesson on counting, a picture of a famous piece of art, etc. – onto a wall or screen at a significantly larger size. Can also be used to share documents via distance learning. <i>District Count = 79</i>	Provides all students a closer look at a particular object. Teachers can do spontaneous demonstrations to further illustrate concepts or to show all students how to get over a particular stumbling block. Students can share their work with the class. Reduces amount of photocopying.
Mimio, Onfinity CM2	The Mimio turns any standard whiteboard (similar to a chalkboard, but written on with markers) into an interactive workspace. The Onfinity CM2, or “magic wand,” does the same for a wall, projection screen or chalkboard. Computer-based activities and presentations are projected onto the applicable surface, and teachers and students manipulate the projected images as if doing so directly on a computer. Can capture writing in interactive workspace and turn it into an electronic document on the computer. <i>District Count = 7, 1</i>	Provides all students a closer look at a computer-based activity or presentation. Interactive and visual lessons appeal to different learning styles. Improves record keeping and note taking. Easily transportable and can be used in any classroom with a standard whiteboard.
SMARTBoards, Promethean Board	An interactive whiteboard that offers learning opportunities much like those offered by a Mimio (see above). <i>District Count = 4, 1</i>	Similar to a Mimio (see above)
Student Response System	An SRS records student responses and turns them into real-time data captured on a computer or projected on a screen or whiteboard. The learning tool, or “clicker,” used by students looks like a small remote control or cell phone. Students press different buttons on their clickers in response to questions posed by a teacher, projected on a screen or whiteboard, or displayed on the screen of a clicker. Clickers can be programmed to have different questions based on students' individual ability levels. The SRS can capture data anonymously or track data by users. <i>District Count = 3 SRS units and 71 clickers</i>	Allows teacher to quickly determine if students understand lesson and to redirect instruction as necessary. Interactive lessons appeal to different learning styles. Can help track an individual student's performance. Increases participation of students, especially those not likely to raise their hands.



School Board Calendar

Schalmont Board of Education public meetings are held at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

Monday, Oct. 27

Middle School LGI Room
2 Sabre Dr.

Monday, Nov. 10

Woestina Elementary School
1292 Main St.
Rotterdam Junction

Monday, Nov. 24

Middle School LGI Room
2 Sabre Dr.

Reunion Calendar

Class of 1988

Saturday, Nov. 29
Mallozzi's Clubhouse
2354 Western Ave., Guilderland
kids02der@gmail.com

Class of 1998

Saturday, Nov. 29
Mallozzi's Restaurant
1930 Curry Rd., Schenectady
schalmont1998@gmail.com

Budget Vote Exit Poll Recap Part I

The annual budget vote exit poll gives voters another opportunity to share their concerns with the Schalmont Board of Education. Almost 60 percent of those who voted last May chose to complete an exit poll. While reviewing the results, the school board discovered some common concerns and misunderstandings. Following is some clarification on issues addressed in voters' comments on last year's exit polls.

Q. Why buy new buses? Why not just fix the old ones?

A. Because replacing older buses is safer and more cost-efficient in the long run. The 2008-09 budget vote included a separate proposition asking voter permission to purchase three large buses and two small buses. *The proposition, which passed, did not increase Schalmont's current fleet because older buses were traded in towards the purchase of new buses.* (Schalmont was eligible for state aid reimbursement on a portion of the total cost.) The proposition was part of an ongoing five-year bus replacement plan designed to keep the district transportation program up-to-date and buses in safe, working order. In the previous school year, Schalmont buses together racked up over 617,000 miles transporting students. The replacement plan takes advantage of the trade-in values of older, heavily used buses before they exceed their life expectancy. It also provides students with new buses constructed based on the latest safety standards.

Q. Why can't you have a zero tax increase?

A. Because the cost of education increases every year, usually at a greater rate than increases in aid. Just like homeowners, school districts see increases from year to year in basic staples such as food, energy and fuel. Districts also must meet contractual obligations for employee salaries and benefits and cover the costs associated with unfunded mandates. Schalmont administrators look to all other available revenue sources – state and federal aid, interest earnings, facility rental fees, etc. – before turning to local taxpayers to help cover the costs associated with providing all area school children with a free, quality education as required by law. The district currently receives less than one-third of its funding through state and federal aid, and any loss in that aid means the district must rely more on the local community. *If costs increase while the percentage of aid relative to those costs decreases (as with the 2008-09 school year), the district must increase the school tax levy to balance the annual school budget.*

More exit poll Q&A coming soon...



Produced in cooperation with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service.

Schalmont

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

401 Duanesburg Road, Schenectady, NY 12306

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 203
Albany, NY

Board of Education

Robert Sheehan
President

Kevin Thompson
Vice President

Sandra Beloncik
Michael DellaVilla
Albert Falcone

Denise Pendt
Carl Strang

Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Valerie Kelsey

School Business Administrator

Mark F. Kellett

Communications Specialist

Melissa Braham

Phone

(518) 355-9200

Postal Customer