

## Carol's Corner

### 2016-17 School Year Wrap Up

June 2017

Dear Schalmont Faculty and Staff:

As the 2016-17 school year draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on the year, thinking about all that transpired while at the same time planning ahead for 2017-18.

#### A Look Back and a Look Forward

On opening day in September of 2016, we kicked off the school year with a discussion about what it means to us collectively when we make the statement, "We are Schalmont." In my opening address I talked about teamwork and having a growth mindset, inspired from the 2016 summer Olympics and a workshop I attended over the summer in Lake Placid. Between watching the Olympics and being in Lake Placid, I was reminded of that great moment in Olympic history when the U.S. hockey team beat the U.S.S.R. in that game where Al Michaels asked "Do you believe in miracles?"

I shared a clip from the movie *Miracle* depicting the scene where, following a terrible performance of the team in a practice game, coach Herb Brooks keeps the team late making the already tired team to skate sprints back and forth over and over. While they are doing this, he asked repeatedly, "who do you play for?" The members would respond one after another with the name of their college until one player, Mike Eruzione responded "I play for the United States of America." It was in that moment that Coach Brooks released them for the night because they had finally understood that "the name on the front of the jersey, is a hell of a lot more important than the name on the back."

I liken that to our collective work here in Schalmont. While we are all individuals with our own talents, knowledge, and interests (the name on the back of the jersey), what is more important is that we work for one team-the Schalmont team (the name on the front of the jersey), where each person has to do their part for the good of the all, that being our students and their success. This spirit of looking at what is good for all of our students in Schalmont will continue to be necessary as we move ahead into the 2017-18 school year and beyond facing fiscal uncertainty.

As costs accelerate at a pace that our revenues cannot keep up with, we will continue to face the challenge of deciding on either increasing taxes, reducing program or both as we look to balance future budgets. I implore you to stay involved in this process. Each year I ask for help in reviewing our budget circumstances and there are many ways you can become involved. We have a Budget Advisory Council that will be meeting more regularly in 2017-18.

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This past year, two teachers sat on this committee and I truly believe that was beneficial for the whole team. This group studies the annual budget exit surveys, delves into the government funding and our annual budgets over time, and discusses the pulse of the community in an effort to plan for balancing the upcoming budget. We have hosted several opportunities for the staff as well as the community to learn about and share their ideas related to budget development but will plan for many more in the 2017-18 school year.



Please watch for upcoming communications on how you might be able to learn more/become involved. Now, more than ever, we truly need to exemplify the “We are Schalmont” motto and collaborate in ways we have not previously considered. If we can put our heads together to make changes or reductions in small ways across many areas, we can go a long way to keep our priorities intact for as long as possible.

### **The Good News**

We continued to expand our 1:1 technology initiative at the HS, providing Chromebooks to all incoming freshmen in September. We now have 2 classes with their own Chromebooks and will add the new 9th grade students this summer. We finally received our SMART bond funding for technology and were able to purchase

Chromebook carts for the MS and Jefferson schools.

We continued to expand our technology plan work by integrating innovative teaching methods and to forge global connections in the classrooms and at home. Our students continued to learn about digital literacy and a new learning management system for assignments, and used new e-texts for learning. The Makerspace movement has taken a solid hold at the MS level, to the point where students and librarian Linda Fasano share their work and methods with many others through presentations and workshops all around the capital region. During the year, Jefferson librarian Mary Shands and students also spent time learning from the MS and building their own space in the library at the elementary school.

The MS scheduling task force spent the year researching and developing priorities for schedule design at the MS level. This dedicated group of individuals worked in earnest to learn the framework of the “Middle Schools to Watch” essential elements as a basis for the work. The team spent time working to identify priorities in scheduling with the larger MS staff and a smaller committee pulled ideas together to create a draft of a schedule that will be put into place for next year. While some of the identified priorities were addressed in the new schedule, others remain that the MS will continue to look at going forward. I thank all the members of this team for their efforts and look forward to seeing this work carry on into the future.



Our community graciously helped us to pass a bond vote in December 2016 that will allow us to provide a safe facility for our buses, upgrade infrastructure at both the MS and Jefferson that is way beyond its useful life, and re-work the main entrance of the HS so it is both safe and accommodating for everyone.

We sold Mariaville School and have purchasing interests right now in Schonowe. With voter approval we purchased land just beyond our HS/MS campus with the intention of building a roadway to provide emergency and alternative access off-campus.

We got through all the testing at various levels; from 3-8 Math and ELA to Regents thanks to the efforts of so many teachers, administrators and staff. Our testing procedures have solidified into what is now a very smooth process and we so appreciate all the attention to detail that is necessary to make this happen.

Our students continued to demonstrate their talents and skills this year in many ways. From the well-attended concerts throughout the year, to the drama club productions, Java Jive, the annual art show at BOCES, to the talent shows at the middle school and Jefferson, Schalmont students demonstrated a great passion and aptitude for the arts.

Our athletic teams continued to prove the Sabres are a force to be reckoned with, as many teams continued into post-season playoffs. Our students proved once again to be academic scholars and were recognized throughout the year by the Board of Education for their achievement in the classroom.

Student success continued outside the classroom as clubs and organizations worked to make a difference. As a result, Schalmont High School was once again designated a "No Place for Hate" school and was recently awarded for their work by the Schenectady Human Rights organization. At the same recognition event, the students in the MS club, Sabre Pride, were also recognized for their work on curbing bullying and building diversity in their school.



The high school environmental club continued their ongoing recycling program, raising money for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital with a bottle drive, and helped Assemblyman Santabarbara plant two beautiful new trees in the middle school courtyard. These are just a few examples of the many positive efforts our students continue to put forth.

We welcomed Scott Ziomek as principal of Schalmont MS and Kenneth Rizzo as our new MS Assistant Principal. We also sincerely thank Brian Sherman for his time with us this year - he was a great addition who came in when we needed him and wish him well in retirement for real this time! We said goodbye to Jason Thompson, Assistant Principal at Jefferson only to wish him the best in his new role as Principal of Pinewood School in Mohonasen. We were proud once again to recognize a Schalmont graduate by inducting Evan Christou to our Alumni Wall outside the HS library. Evan is the owner of Tops Restaurant and has been a wonderful partner with Schalmont throughout the years.

The Schalmont community approved a school budget and passed the proposition that allows us to continue our long term plan to replace buses. With the help of many, we saw an increased voter turnout with more than 1,000 voters coming out this year. In analyzing our budget vote exit surveys, we have discovered that the majority of our voters are either adults whose children are grown and not

currently in school, or adults who have never had children. The smallest percentage of people who vote are parents, HS parents being the demographic that votes the least. We need to continue our efforts to get parents engaged in the budget process. Now more than ever it is important for parents to pay close attention to what is happening as we plan for the future of our district!

We said farewell to some long-time teachers and staff members who spent so much of their time devoting their efforts to the students, parents and community of Schalmont and thank them for their service:

- Arthur Pinkham - HS Art teacher
- Rose Hochmuth - HS Science teacher
- Paula Della Villa - HS Science teacher
- Marty Rossner - Jefferson-Grade 4 teacher
- Roberta Albrecht - Jefferson Art teacher
- Jeanne Ramsey - MS Special Education teacher
- Arne Serapilio - Jefferson Head Custodian
- Ann Marie Pigliavento - MS Administrative Assistant
- Jane Luther - Bus Driver

We also send off our senior class of 2017, with the majority of students preparing to continue their educational careers at two or four year colleges this fall. Several students have won community, state and national scholarships and awards. We wish them the best as they move forward in life and smile a little at the thought that we, as a district, played a role in getting them to this point and preparing them for the road ahead.

### **Planning for the Future**

I have no doubt this momentum of innovation and success will continue into the next school year and beyond as we progress with the implementation of our technology and strategic plans, which will help provide the tools and technology necessary to support out-of-the-box instruction.

Our new learning management system, Schoology, will expand to include a full menu of options for parents and students to stay up on student information and student performance in real time.

Next year, we will begin to take an in-depth look at our 5 year strategic plan, "Schalmont Advance" as we reach 2018 and the need to look beyond to the next 5 years. I will be looking for individuals to serve on a Strategic Plan committee to study what has been accomplished thus far and identify ongoing priorities for the future, while at the same time considering our fiscal circumstance. Please consider this opportunity to have a voice in our future development as a district and look for communications about how you can be involved coming in September.

We will also return in 2017-18 to the discussion around the walk/ride vote for establishing a walk zone in the district. Based on community feedback, the Board of Education determined the scheduled vote date was too short a timeline for people to truly understand what they were voting on. We will focus on providing increased opportunities for voters to learn more about the proposal in the coming months and will reset the date for later in 2017-18.



Over the summer, we plan to work with a consultant on redesigning our approach to special education in the district; developing both a short term and long range plan for a more cohesive, research-based process for preparing for and conducting CSE meetings; including protocols and guidelines for every step in the CSE process. This three-year action plan will include corrective actions identified from our recent SED audit of our special education department and include key performance indicators to track implementation to monitor student progress. This plan will be shared with all staff but especially with those who work directly with students with disabilities. Professional development and training will be built into the plan which again will be phased in over a 3 year period. More to come on this when you return in September.



While you enjoy your summer vacation, please know we remain hard at work here at Schalmont, as we prepare for the next school year. I hope you will seriously consider taking time for many professional development opportunities both within Schalmont and around the capital region. In district we will have offerings in the areas of: technology integration, data analysis, writing, goal setting, and much more. Many of you have plans to update curriculum or teach summer school, and some will be back to coach athletics before you know it. Administrators are here all summer and will also spend time in professional development opportunities, required trainings and planning for school improvements and opening school for another year in September.

If you ever have any concerns, questions, or comments, my door is open, even during the summer. Of course I can be reached at any time through email or by phone.

You can keep up with happenings this summer by following me on Twitter. Information will also be posted on the district website, Facebook, and district Twitter account.

If you are a resident, be on the lookout for the district summer newsletter in your mailboxes next month, and the district calendar will be mailed out to parents in August.

I don't say it often enough, but I sincerely thank you for all you do as teachers and staff members of our district. Teaching is an awesome job and I am always grateful for those who choose to spend their careers in service to kids.

I wish you a happy and safe summer, and I look forward to seeing you back here in September!

Sincerely,

Dr. Carol A. Pallas, Superintendent