

Shenendehowa

Central Schools

Striving for excellence through continuous improvement

What's new in 2014?

When chasing excellence, you can never settle for the status quo because the excellence bar is forever changing. Shenendehowa's commitment to excellence means a commitment to continuous improvement. With that said, the 2014-15 school year brings some exciting changes at Shen.

High School

At the high school, instead of electives, most juniors will now take English 11 to further develop their reading and writing skills in preparation for college (e.g., entrance exams, application process, college courses) and/or career readiness. The district will also offer Siena College Physics, SUNY language courses for seniors and a freshman algebra class that offers an additional lab period with the teacher every other day.

When asked about the new physics class, student Anthony Sedotto said "The Siena physics class gives me the opportunity to challenge myself and achieve more."

Middle School

Naviance -- the tool used by the district to help high school students with the college/career process--is being pushed down into the middle schools this year. It will be used to help align the academic strengths and interests of middle school students with their future college and career goals. By providing Naviance 6-12, students will have a continuity of experience to help ease the transition between middle school and

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Shen budget meets requirements for the

Property Tax Rebate

Shenendehowa Central Schools complied with its property tax levy cap making residents eligible for the property tax rebate.

New York's property tax rebate was signed into law in April 2014 as part of the 2014-15 New York state budget. The measure is designed as a short-term tax relief program that reimburses qualifying homeowners for increases in local property taxes on their primary residences.

Homeowners may be eligible for tax credit on their school taxes in each of the next two years based, in part, on budget decisions made by their local school district.

Homeowners are eligible:

- if they meet the requirements for the STAR property tax exemption. Specifically, the property must be the homeowner's primary residence and total household income must be \$500,000 or less.
- and the homeowner's primary residence is in a school district that has complied with its property tax levy cap

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Shen High School ranks number 183 out of more than 19,000 schools nationwide in Newsweek's list of America's Top Schools 2014

Rankings highlight schools that do the best job of preparing students for college.



Shen spirit rally and homecoming celebrated all the clubs and sports that make Shen shine!

What's new this year, continued from pg. 1

high school and high school counselors will now have a wealth of information on the incoming 9th graders based on their interactions with Naviance in middle school.

Elementary School

Students in grades 1-5 will be learning English Language Arts using a new literacy series entitled *Journeys*, which focuses on essential reading, writing, vocabulary and spelling skills.

The district has also expanded services for English Language Learners, helping students learning English master their new language and access their courses.

Student assessments

This year, to ensure students are only being assessed to measure their learning, assessments which were added for the sole purpose of generating APPR (teacher evaluation) scores, primarily pre-tests, have been eliminated. "Assessing student learning is a vital part of the cycle of instruction," said Dr. Elizabeth Wood, assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction and assessment.

"However, we want to reduce the amount of testing and make sure that appropriate assessment tools are provided to accurately gauge student progress."

Technology

WIFI is now available in all schools allowing students to use their personal devices in support of their learning. Mobile devices allow students to access information quickly through a filtered web-server. Students also are able to use a wide range of educational software, collaborate with each other, and ensure school replicates how they

access information in both college and the workforce.

An additional 40 elementary classrooms have received iPads to support student learning and an additional 30 middle and high school classrooms have received Chromebooks. More than 1,000 devices have been distributed over the past two years.

Staff training

This year, the district has developed an on-line review of the mandated policies and regulations for staff for ease and convenience and to ensure all staff members are informed.

The district continues to forge ahead with on-line, professional development piloting Teaching Channel Teams, a library of teaching videos with tools for meaningful collaboration to explore best teaching practices.

Facilities

The physical fitness center in H.S. East opened in October and will be used by all high school students, athletes and physical education classes.

The "buzz in" security system

Shen ranked #6 out of 432 upstate schools for cost-effectiveness by Biz Journals. This is a ranking of districts that offer the biggest educational bang for the buck. The cost-effectiveness scale compares each district's academic score against its spending habits.

used at the elementary schools and H.S. East has been installed at H.S. West. Buzz in systems for the middle schools will be implemented later this month. Replacing keys with pin pads is being piloted at H.S. West.

Services

The district is piloting on-line payment services for fees. This will allow students, parents and community members to pay for various fees (i.e. newspaper subscriptions, community education, driver's education) on-line using a credit/debit card.

Universal pin numbers for students' food services accounts has been implemented. Now a student's pin number will follow him/her from school to school. ■



Mrs. Francois' 2nd-grade class at Arongen are learning their math facts through an online interactive program called Reflex Math.

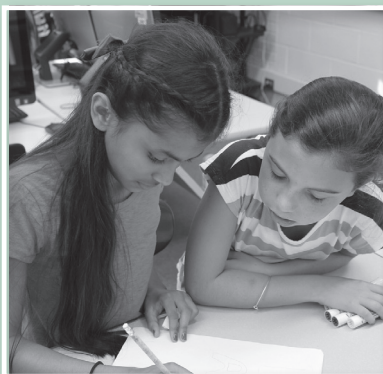
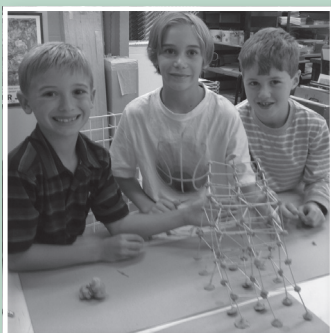
Mrs. Francois received a grant for her class to use the program

The district's Character Education Committee recognizes outstanding character. To nominate individuals who cultivate, foster and demonstrate the virtues and skills of civic engagement and social responsibility, please contact Rebecca Carman at carmrebe@shenet.org



High School West students take pride in their school during Freshmen Give-back Day!

Skano third-grade students work with clay to create architecture in art class. Designing and building creative structures!



Acadia Yearbook Club students working hard on the 2014-15 yearbook!

Student highlights

- Congratulations to the Shen students who were selected to perform in the NYSSMA Conference All-State in Rochester, NY in December. Thousands of students auditioned for this honor. The students are: Brenna Joyce, Zhenya Kniajanskaya, Connor Olney, Nicole Rizzo, Aaron Alsdorf, Aidan Gorby, Brian Halliday, Julie Lattanzio and Adam Chrzan. Marianna Miranda, Nick Arnold and Collin Rowe were selected as alternates.

- Shen High School has 22 students who have been named Commended Students in the 2015 National Merit Scholarship Program. Commended students are: London Brunell, Lindsay Caplan, Chad Charrette, Melanie Chen, Nicholas Demasi, Amy DePoy, Kevin Favaron, Sarah Feinland, Jack Gartner, Gregory Laymon, Kevin Lorch, Taylor Mellow, Alexander Rock, Emmett Neidhart, Paul Sargunas, Jamin Sim, Jared Slosberg, Natalie Strehl, Nadia Suguitan, Taylor VanTine, Anna Zavodsky and Shelly Zhang.

Shen ranked #17 out of 432 upstate schools for administrative efficiency by Biz Journals, winning the distinction of being a five-star district.

Property tax freeze credit, continued from pg. 1

for the 2014-15 school year.

Eligible homeowners do not need to do anything to receive the tax rebate. The New York State Department of Taxation and Finance reviewed eligibility data, calculated the credit, and mailed a rebate check to eligible homeowners this fall. Homeowners who did not receive a check and who believe they are entitled to the tax rebate (or who believe the credit should have been larger) should contact the Department of Taxation and Finance to have their case reviewed.

For more information, please visit the New York State Division of Budget website at: www.budget.ny.gov or the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance website at: www.tax.ny.gov.

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High School West students in Mrs. Lombardi's and Mrs. Sauer's Spanish classes had the opportunity to Skype with Nikki Rowley, a Peace Corps volunteer/teacher living in Ecuador. The students asked questions about the culture in Ecuador as well as the teacher's background in Spanish, how she learned it, and how she uses it in her work. As a result of this collaboration, the Spanish students will participate in a letter-writing exchange with English language learners in Ecuador.

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Announcements

Athletic Hall of Fame Induction

The Shenendehowa Athletic Department is pleased to announce the sixth class for induction into the Shenendehowa Athletic Hall of Fame: the 1990 Girls Basketball Team, George Angle, Robert Cloutier 1999, Dan D'Amboise, Matthew Jones, Paul Quigley, Bill Scanlon 1962, Kelly Scanlon Wild 1996, Carolyn Sloat Anderton 2003.

2014-15 Goals and Objectives

The Board of Education adopted the 2014-15 goals in August. The goals can be found on the district's website at www.shenet.org/DL_ProfileOfShen/GoalsBrochure.pdf.

Capital Project Update

In October 2012, residents approved a \$10 million capital project to address facility needs, provide WiFi access and renovate an existing PE room to provide a physical fitness center at the high school.

Exterior repairs to High School East and the middle school complex are near completion.

WiFi is now available in all schools allowing students who would like to use their personal devices in support of their learning to do so (see Bring Your Own Device-BYOD policy and guidelines).

Renovation of the PE fitness center is complete and a grand opening was held in October.

Tax rate increase lower than projected

The Shenendehowa Board of Education approved the 2014-15 tax rates. The tax rate for the two largest towns in the district was raised by .51% (or less than one percent). At the time of the budget vote, the district estimated the impact to be 1.39%, however it came in well under that projection making it one of the lowest increases in the past four years.

Grants

- Shen is part of a consortium that won a \$399,946 student assessment practices grant. The "Teaching is the Core" grant is from the NYS Education Department to review and improve student assessment practices. The consortium is led by Capital Region BOCES and includes 12 local school districts.
- Shen is part of consortium that won a \$348,311 leadership grant. The "Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Dissemination Grant: Principal Leadership" is from the NYS Education Department to enhance and expand the expertise of area principals. The consortium includes the Capital Region BOCES, Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego BOCES and 17 school districts.