

# Shenendehowa

## Central Schools

### Changing demographics of Shenendehowa

*“Cultural competence is the ability to successfully teach students who come from a culture or cultures other than their own. Culturally responsive teaching is how instructional staff (and schools) demonstrate—or implement—their cultural competence,” National Education Association*

Over the past decade, the number of non-white students attending Shenendehowa has more than doubled and the number of students from non-English homes has more than tripled.

Currently, 21% of the population at Shen is identified as non-white, with the largest growth among the Hispanic/Latino, Asian and mixed race populations.

It's a shift that underscores a host of opportunities as well as challenges including more students whose life experiences differ from many of their teachers and more students and families who require English-language services.

#### Culturally Responsive Education

The demographics of the district's instructional staff has not changed much in the past decade, the overwhelming majority being white.

That's why the district has embarked on efforts to improve the collective “cultural competence” of staff. This does not mean that staff should be culturally blind. In fact, after interviewing many Shen students from different cultures, district officials found that they feel better connected to school when their teacher appreciates who they are and where they come from.

“The purpose of culturally-responsive education is to show that cultural differences between students and their teachers can positively impact the learning process,” said Rachel Stead, academic administrator for world languages and ENL. “Real-world experiences, inclusive of cultural knowledge, enhance the quality of classroom instruction

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*Okte's first graders used the Interactive Whiteboard to turn an image of a spider web into one inspired by Kente Cloth, the author of the book Anansi the Spider!*

*Supporting the mental health of our students:*

### Each child deserves to be healthy, safe and supported

Mental health issues can affect learning and performance in profound ways and often provide barriers to student success if not addressed. It requires a multi-faceted approach for the purposes of early intervention, crisis intervention and prevention, treatment, and promotion of positive social and emotional development. Schools serve as the first line of defense for identifying and addressing student mental health issues.

#### District-provided services

**Counselors** - With counselors in every building, Shen's program is focused on academic success for every student. Shen counselors serve as student advocates to help ensure that the doors of opportunity are open for every student upon graduating from Shen. They interact with students as often as possible throughout the school year individually, in groups and in classrooms on things such as course selection, post-secondary plans, anti-bullying, study skills, character education, conflict resolution and much more.

**Psychologist** - Shen psychologists are highly trained and certified in both psychology and education. They provide counseling and develop interventions for students struggling

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in all subjects.”

In March, the entire Superintendent’s Conference Day was dedicated to Culturally Responsive Education training for staff. That training has continued with...

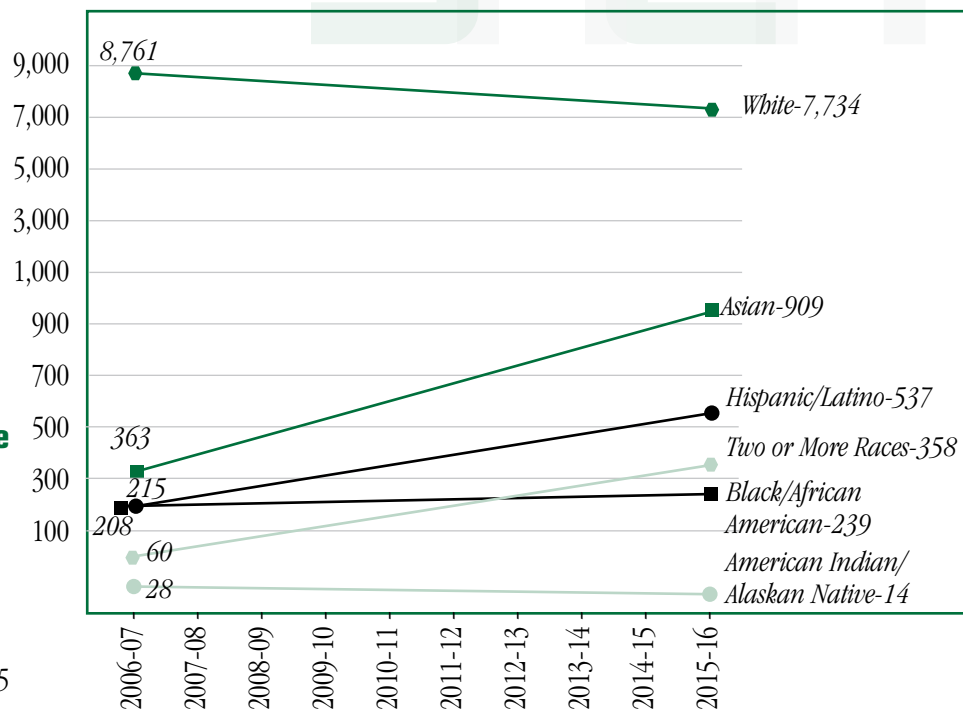
### English as New Language Learners

Perhaps the most dramatic transformation to the Shen landscape has been the rise in students whose first language is not English. In 2010, there were 55 English Language Learners (ELL). In five years, that number has more than tripled to 183 in 2015.

The district must help these students learn enough English to ensure that they are able to be successful in all content areas (math, science, social studies and ELA). The state expects non-English speaking children to have the same level of academic success on standardized tests as their English-speaking peers.

Shen offers three ENL instructional program; stand alone ENL, integrated ENL/ELA and integrated ENL/content. The type of instruction is dependent on the student’s English proficiency using the following scale: entering, emerging, transitioning, expanding, or commanding.

Finding teachers who are able to teach English to non-native speakers and communicate with parents who speak no English is not an easy task. “With an increasing ENL population statewide, ENL teachers are in



high demand, but short supply,” said Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources Jill Bush.

With an increasing number of families indicating that a language other than English is spoken at home, the relationship between school and home presents challenges as well. Communicating with non-English speaking parents, keeping them informed and making them feel comfortable coming to school for open houses, activities, etc. requires a greater effort.

The district has added Google Translator to its website and schools are looking at translating key documents for families.

“At the end of the day, we are preparing students to assume leadership positions in a multicultural democracy and global marketplace,” said Dr. L. Oliver Robinson, superintendent.

“Exposure to those things that set us apart is a growth opportunity. It expands a person’s capacity to understand and view problems from different perspectives, making them much more marketable in a global society.” ■

## SHEN UPdates

### Signage Plan

Shen is rolling out a new signage plan to improve directions to campus facilities. The new signs will be more visible. All fields will be numbered and there will be map kiosks located on campus. New LED communications signs will be placed at the Moe Road and Rte 146 entrances announcing major events.

### Administrative Positions

The district welcomed new administrators this year. Andrew Hills was named principal at Arongen. Renee Young was named academic administrator for special education gr. K-6. Rebecca Hull was named district treasurer.

### New Courses Offerings

**Aerospace Engineering** - This course introduces students to the fundamentals of atmospheric and space flight, physics of flight, basic orbital mechanics and the application of robotics.

**English 10 Honors** - Students study fiction and nonfiction texts, are expected to demonstrate the ability to analyze texts at a sophisticated level. ■



For the first time, the PSAT was administered to every sophomore and junior during the school day to increase access and participation in Advanced Placement courses.



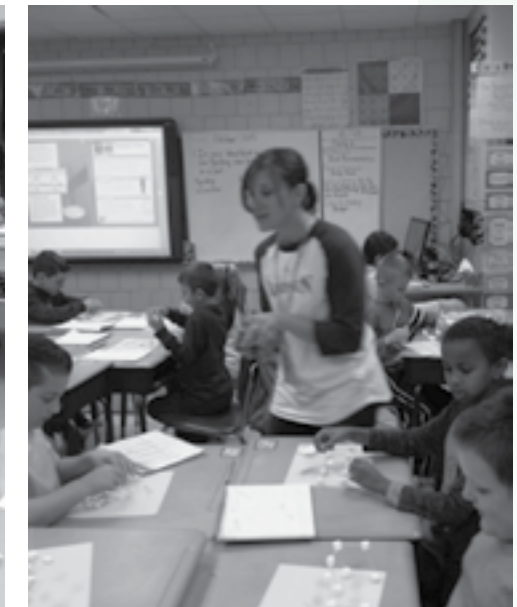
Gowana Seventh Grade Science students use Molecule Maker kits to learn about molecules that make up living things.



Orenda students construct parachutes for “Gummy Bear Clients.” The lesson included planning, negotiating constraints, building, testing, and revising.



In Tesago, Fun Friday takes a twist with STEM challenges in engineering and mining.



After reading the story Pop’s Bridge, Arongen students become “engineers,” creating a scale model of a bridge from marshmallows and toothpicks.

## Building engineers from the ground up

Shen is integrating engineering activities into the current elementary science program in anticipation of the adoption of the NYS Next Generation Science Standards. This summer teachers worked to find grade-level appropriate engineering lessons that engaged students in the engineering cycle—ask, imagine, design, test, improve, test. The teachers used the following criteria when evaluating the lessons:

- Is the activity hands-on and engaging?
- Is there a connection between the activity and real-world problem solving?
- Can the activity be completed into a 60-minute block?
- Can the activity be done with inexpensive, readily-available materials?
- Does the activity take in to consideration one of the three main engineering constraints—time, materials, and money?

Classroom teachers participated in one of the engineering lessons during the elementary summits, a professional development opportunity provided to all elementary teachers each fall. “Teachers found the lessons to be fun, engaging and dynamic and brought them into their classrooms soon after summits.” said Rose Barra, academic administrator for elementary math and science. ■

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*Mental health services at Shen, continued from page 1*

with social, emotional, and behavioral problems. They also assess barriers to learning and determine the best instructional strategies to improve achievement and monitor progress. They evaluate eligibility for special education services and help coordinate community support services. There is a psychologist in every school.

*Social workers* - Shen has social workers at Arongen and the Middle School complex to work with students with significant emotional and behavioral disorders. Working with the child's special education team, the primary role is to support students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) access the curriculum. They provide counseling, social skill training and support the communication between school, home, and community-based services. At High School East, Shen has a social worker who supports general education students who have emotional issues that impact their functioning in school. The social worker provides crisis counseling, short-term counseling and outside resource recommendations to teach students coping skills to enable them to participate in school.

*Transition counselor* – Located at High School East, the transition counselor helps soon-to-be graduates with IEPs to obtain services to support mental health, daily living, employment and academics. The coordinator has two therapy dogs that are used as an additional tool for some students to support individual needs.

**R U OK**

R U OK - Last October, the high school launched R U OK, a text messaging hotline that allows students to anonymously discuss situations in which they are concerned

about their own safety or the safety of someone else. The text goes to an operator trained to provide advice and recommendations. The service is monitored from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. When closed, the message still goes through, however an automatic reply is sent with emergency information.

While the text is anonymous as far as names, the program would be able to get in touch based on the phone number in cases of emergency.

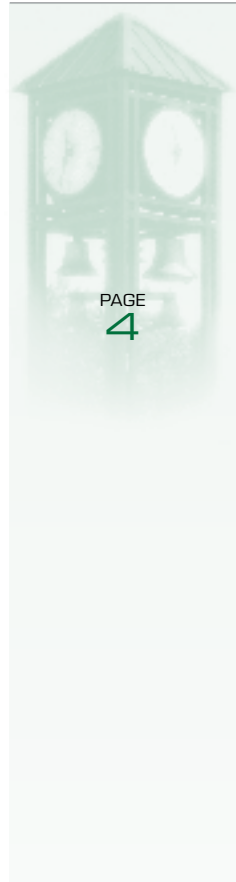
“Students today are much more likely to discuss things by text than to dial a phone, that is how they communicate,” said Craig Chandler, class assistant principal. “This program is interactive and conversational, students can text about issues such as cutting, bullying, suicide, and domestic violence.”

The program is a partnership with CAPTAIN with funding provided by All In One Wireless.

**Student Empowerment Services**

In addition to the support services provided by Shen staff, the district is collaborating with Saratoga Center for the Family to offer mental health services (with parental consent) in the school setting, provided by a master-level, licensed clinician. The cost is covered by the family's health insurance. No family will be turned away due to their lack of health insurance or their inability to pay, a sliding fee and/or financial assistance is available.

This program allows the center's therapist, school staff and the family to work together to build student success in school. It is more convenient for the student and keeps the issues from affecting emotional, academic, or physical development. ■



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