FALL 2021

EXPRESS

ELMIRA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

INSIDE

UNITY DAY, PUMPKIN PATROL, HEALTHY PLATES

LOOKING FORWARD TO A HEALTHY FUTURE

ALSO INSIDE

THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

NEW YORK FARM TO SCHOOL

TEACHING ART BEHAVIOR

A Letter from our Superintendent | Fall 2021

Dear Friends,

The changing of the seasons is always a time of great reflection in education as students and faculty return to school. The leaves are changing color and the temperatures are cooling. Fall is upon us and is one of the most beautiful times in Upstate New York. I am personally grateful and proud to watch our community come together again in true Express spirit.

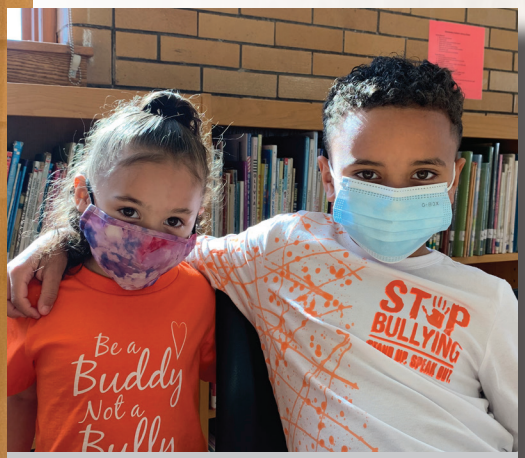
We have all lived through some very challenging times amidst the COVID-19 pandemic which continues to flip our worlds upside down. The challenges that we have faced together from the virus have also given us a unique opportunity for reinvention. As Victor Hugo once wrote, 'emergencies have always been necessary to progress.' This current crisis has taught us how vital education is to our students and staff. We have learned how precious physical and emotional health really is - the health of ourselves and our social fabric. Staying strong in our Express values, we have realized how much work is required to maintain them. We have gained perspective and persevered despite the challenges. Together, we are reimagining education in Elmira.

Balancing academic rigor alongside the emotional needs of our school communities has proved to be our greatest challenge. Throughout this newsletter, I invite you to read about the good work being done in our schools and by our students. We are working to improve the overall educational experience for our students, carefully creating a sense of normalcy while being sensitive to the state in which we find ourselves after the challenges faced in the last two years. We are creating new pathways for our students to find success. The effects of the pandemic are too great to ignore -- therefore we find strength in strategic planning for a steady effort to rebound. I am so proud of the way Elmira meets our students where they are and takes them where they need to go, changing their lives in the process.

Schools are places to engineer ideas - welcoming common, open and robust conversations. From our students' first moments in Pre-K to the day they walk across the stage for graduation and join the ranks of our distinguished alumni, we will be with them every step of the way.

#GoExpress

Hillary J. Austin
Superintendent of Schools
Elmira City School District



FROM THE COVER

Two of our Riverside Dragons pose for a picture in their orange for Unity Day.

Two of our Diven Dolphins wearing Orange for Unity Day! Unity Day, the signature event of National Bullying Prevention Month, has been recognized in the United States since 2011. Students and staff across Elmira wore orange on October 20, Unity Day, to unite for kindness, acceptance, and inclusion to prevent students being bullied.

On Unity Day people come together — in schools, communities and online —to send one large ORANGE message of support.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE OFFICERS

Our Community Resource Officers are friends, confidants, mentors and helpers in our schools. Having a friendly face at the front door can have a huge impact on kids, it can help them develop positive opinions of officers. The value of having kids interact with the officers is a way to build relationships with them at an early age. Their positive impact is immeasurable. We are so pleased to share the story below from Office Tyler pictured below with Officer Oakes (thank you to Tyler's Mom for sharing)!

"I just wanted to share with you the experience that my son Tyler had with Officer Oakes at Pine City. First, a little about Tyler - he's in 1st grade at Pine City Elementary School and he's in awe of police officers. In fact, he aspires to be a police officer when he grows up. So, one Friday morning I told him to get dressed for school and he came out dressed like an officer. He said he has to show Officer Oakes his uniform. I agreed to let him wear it and let him know he may be asked to take it off when he gets to class. We get to school and he immediately began looking for Officer Oakes. Officer Oakes was kind enough to pose with Tyler for a picture and told him to visit him in his office later for a badge. Tyler was so excited and couldn't walk into school fast enough -- he even forgot to give me a kiss and hug goodbye! I was completely blown away when I heard about his day at pick-up. Officer Oakes took Tyler under his wing and let him be a "real" officer for the day. He put a police badge on Tyler's hat and put him to work. He accompanied Tyler on class room checks, monitoring the cafeteria on and off and doing rounds throughout the day. I believe Officer Oakes deserves some recognition. He didn't have to go that extra mile but Tyler and myself are so grateful he did! He went way above and beyond for my son and made his day so incredibly special.

In Tyler's own words "I had the best day ever today and I'm sad that I don't have school tomorrow (Saturday)!" That is saying a lot since Tyler always counts down until his days off!" ~Submitted by Rachelle Purvis.

THANK YOU TO OFFICER OAKES AND OUR ENTIRE TEAM OF CHEMUNG COUNTY SHERIFF'S COMMUNITY RESOURCE OFFICERS!

PARTNERING FOR POSITIVE RAPPORT

CREATING PATHS OF LEAST RESISTANCE

Discover Your Own Path to Success

Elmira City School District is part of a group of leading districts across New York State that are creating a variety of schooling options designed to remedy the problems that lead many students to drop out, such as failing key courses, interruptions in schooling caused by personal and family problems or transfers from one district or school to another. Creating multiple pathways to graduation provide new opportunities for many students. Elmira's graduation pathways add flexibility for those interested in options other than a four-year college degree, such as the military or a technical profession. In Elmira, we recognize graduation as our top goal for students and we also know that a single path won't accomodate all students. Our goal is to celebrate each of our students' graduations! And we know taking the path of least resistance will help them to acheive this milestone!

Express Academy at Elmira High School, a New Pathway to Graduation

Express Academy is a new night school opportunity for our Elmira High School students that offers a flexible way for select students to achieve academic success. Express Academy offers a unique environment for students to learn in their individually best way. Express Academy is a NEW pathway to graduation. The Express Academy offers all coursework needed for students to graduate and can sometimes offer creative solutions to students willing to put in effort into education.

Access to Advanced Courses | ACE + Plus Project

The Greater Southern Tier (GST) BOCES is leading a consortium of eight component school districts (Arkport, Canaseraga, Elmira City, Elmira Heights, Hornell, Spencer-Van Etten, Watkins Glen, and Waverly) in the ACE Plus project, a differentiated dual-credit program that will increase access to advanced course work for 4,841 8th-12th grade students in the southern tier region of New York State. Each of the 8 consortium districts and GST BOCES CTE programs offer access to advanced courses such as Advanced Placement (AP) classes and/or Accelerated College Entrance (ACE) dual-credit classes offered in conjunction with local colleges such as Corning Community College, Alfred State, and Tompkins Cortland Community College.

Looking Forward | After School ACE Courses at Elmira High

Elmira City School District + Corning Community College -- a valued partnership continuing this fall! Elmira High School is offering two free ACE courses after school at EHS through the ESAP program (an after school enrichment program for secondary students). These courses are FREE and provide college courses to secondary students. These credit courses have given hundreds of students a head start on their college career.

SUNY CORNING COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Newly offered this year through Corning Community College, students will have the opportunity to join the *First Year Experience* course designed to provide a general orientation to the resources of college, essential academic success skills to better understand the learning process, and career exploration.

Goals

-To provide personalized pathways to graduation.

-To give students flexibility.

-To make the high school experience relevant to students.

-To give students something of value in their next step after high school graduation.

-To ensure diploma requirements are workforce-aligned.

-To ensure rigor.

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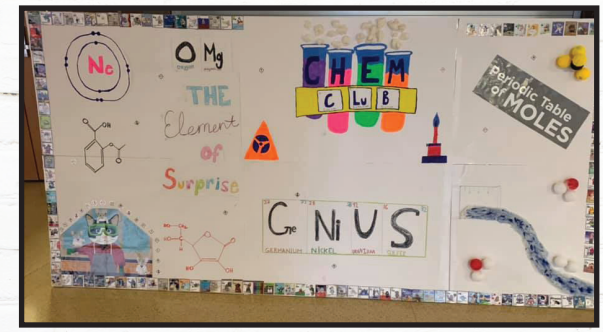
New Spirit Week Tradition at Elmira High School

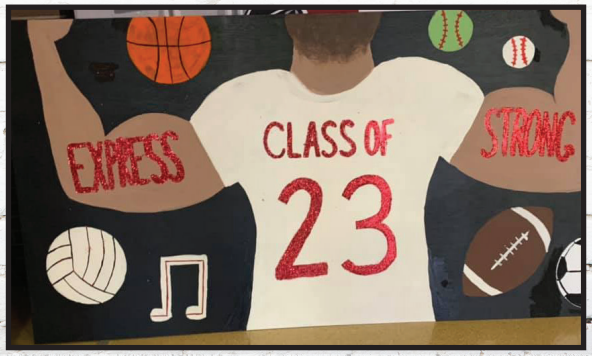
School spirit is at the core of our Express Strong community. And Spirit week, each fall at Elmira High School, is filled with colorful-themed days, a pep rally and a homecoming football game and dance. This year, staff and students added to the festitivites to include a Spirit Board competition. Ten participating student groups within the school came together to create unique canvas board representing their collective interests. Check out the creativity by our students! Congratulations to first, second and third place winners!

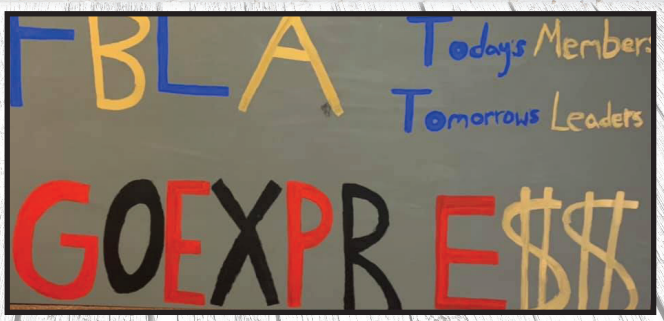
First Place, Class of 2022 Seniors

Second Place, Marching Band

Third Place, Spirit Club







GARDENING FOR A GROWTH MINDSET

Mr. White, School Counselor at Pine City Elementary School, is developing a gardening and composting program for his Pre-K - 2 grade students! A composter, already on the grounds of Pine City Elementary, has been rediscovered and rehabilitated to a functional machine that students are using during their school day. A new raised bed will be built in next year and seedlings are already planted and will be ready to sprout for spring!

As Mr. White recognizes, a school garden is a wonderful way for students to physically connect with nutrition education, understand the process of growing healthy foods, and recognize environmental stewardship. A school garden can also be integrated into many subjects such as math, science, health, literacy and social studies. Most important to Pine City? A sense of community collaboration and pride for a collective effort!

GOALS OF PINE CITY'S GARDEN PROGRAM INCLUDE:

Providing opportunities for hands-on learning, inquiry, observation and experimentation across the curriculum.

Although science and nutrition are the focus of many garden programs, curriculum ties can also be made to the subjects of language arts, math, science, social studies and art. Additionally, the garden is an excellent location to model sustainable practices and present environmental education lessons.

Motivating kids to eat and love fruits and vegetables.

Gardens help get students excited about fruits and vegetables and provide countless opportunities to experience and try the foods that are often the hardest to get kids to eat.

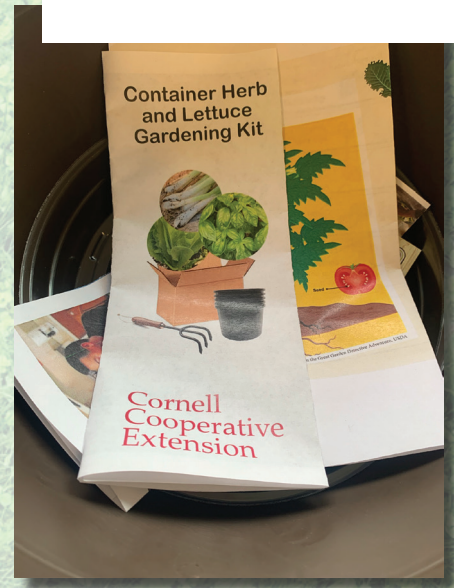
Promoting physical activity and quality outdoor experiences.

Many schools are searching for opportunities and space to offer movement to students. Gardening offers students ample opportunities to walk, lift, carry, dig, plant, and rake, as well as practice balance and dexterity, all while participating in an enjoyable and engaging activity.

The nation-wide growth of Farm to School programs and increasing USDA support of local and regional food systems have made serving local, sustainable produce in school meals a reality. (read more about our Farm to School program on Page 10).

"The school garden will offer a place to enrich teaching efforts with powerful hands-on experiences that make learning come alive for our students. There are so many lessons that are giving us many positive results, such as improvements with student behavior and an increase in school pride." contributes Mr. White, Pine City School Counselor.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



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AMPLIFYING STUDENT VOICES

finger lakes Youth Forum

2021-22 FINGER LAKES YOUTH FORUM, ELMIRA CHAPTER

The Finger Lakes Youth Forum is a safe space created by students and for students to engage in productive conversations on difficult topics that matter most to them. Beginning November 2021, the Elmira chapter of the Finger Lakes Youth Forum will host peer-led Zoom conversation for students to discuss important issues in their schools, communities, and beyond. The Youth Forum is open to all student grades 9-12 in the Elmira City School District.

Stay tuned for the Finger Lakes Youth Forum's podcast, *Amplify Voices: The Finger Lakes Youth Forum* on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and Spotify.

This program is sponsored by Corning Incorporated's Office of Racial Equality and Social Unity and the Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes.

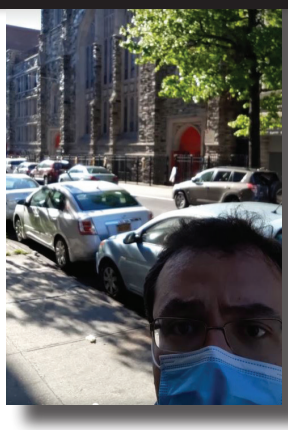
MEET THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION EDUCATION COORDINATOR

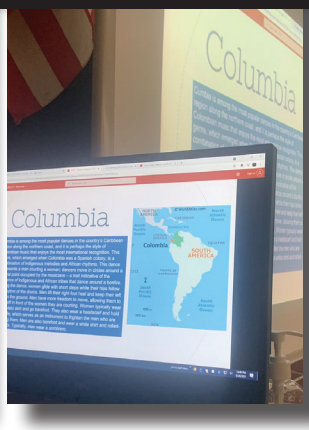
Jarvis Marlow-McCowin (pronouns: he/him/his) joins the Elmira City School District from Cornell University, where he was the Associate Director for Multicultural Student Leadership & Empowerment. He has served in various roles in higher education related to student success, multicultural affairs, faculty and staff development, and equal employment opportunity. As the DEI Education Coordinator, Jarvis will work closely with District and school leadership to foster an educational ecosystem based on a fundamental value of diversity, inclusion, equity, access, and opportunity.

Jarvis holds a bachelor's degree in History from Virginia Commonwealth University, a master's degree in Educational Policy and Leadership Studies from The University of Iowa, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Community Research and Action at Binghamton University.

CULTURE IN OUR CLASSROOMS

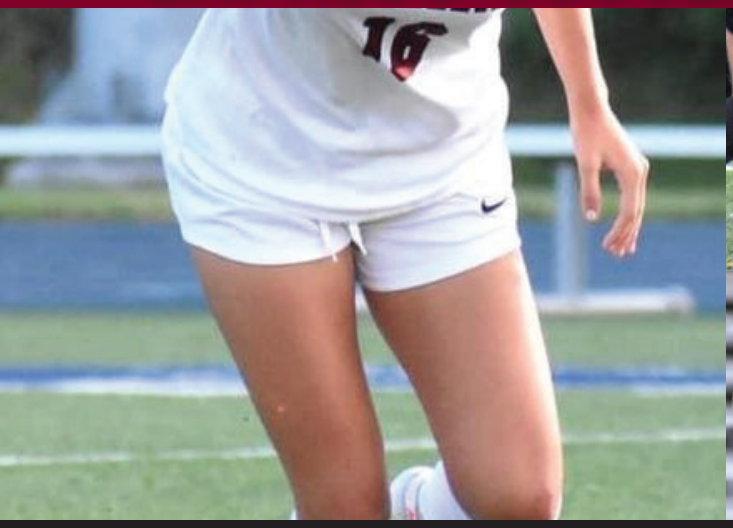
English Language Arts teacher, Mr. Mark Loftus, traveled to Harlem to film a virtual field trip for his students to access NYC and highlights of the Harlem Renaissance. This, coupled with use of 2Pac and Langston Hughes' poetry, is a model example of culturally relevant teaching.





Students celebrated Hispanic/Latinx Heritage Month in the music room of Ernie Davis Academy in September and October. Music teahcer, Mr. Shedd, used mainstream pop musical examples to highlight Hispanic/Latin American cultures. Students listened and then tried traditional dances from each country!

EXPRESS SOCCER IS DOMINATING



#EXPRESS SHOUT-OUTS

A WINNING SEASON!

EXPRESS SOCCER PROGRAMS COMPETE FOR SECTION IV CLASS AA CHAMPTIONSHIPS

Go Express!

ELMIRA FASHION FORWARD

Inspired by a Tradition of Fashion Icons from Elmira

Jordan Brooks is an Elmira native who graduated from Elmira Free Academy. He is currenlty a celebrity stylist in Hollywood, California who is back in Elmira for a short time to give back to our community. Jordan is partnering with the Ernie Davis Center and EOP to develop a Fashion Club for students ages 10-18 in Elmira! The Fashion Club is focused on fashion/design creation, modeling, influence modeling, styling/social media marketing, and fashion photography/creative director). This is a free program and is available to students who are interested in the fashion industry.

Jordan visited the cafeteria's of our schools in October to recruit members. Jordan spoke with students about fashion, his success, their dreams and how focusing on passion is the key to a successful career.

"Together, let's continue the legacy and breed more fashion talent out of Elmira," says Jordan Brooks, Elmira Native and Hollywood Celebrity Stylist.

"Anything I can do to help the community and my family here in Elmira I am willing to do," Brooks says.

FARM TO SCHOOL, FROM NEW YORK

Through the Farm to School program, our District Food Services department works with local and regional farms throughout New York State to bring NY grown produce and products to the school cafeterias in Elmira! Our goal is to make these fresh options available, provide opportunites for students to try new things and source more foods locally with in the State.

We are proud to say we offer New York items in all cafeterias! We highlight seasonal New York grown produce served fresh or in a scratch recipe; and we do a New York menu day once each month throughout the school year!

We are continually working to provide students with more local and state menu options every year, while supporting our local and state farms. This also links our students with the farmers and their products, while enriching their bodies and minds. By offering a variety of menu options, it has been proven to be a successful way to introduce students to New York items that they otherwise might not have the opportunity to sample.

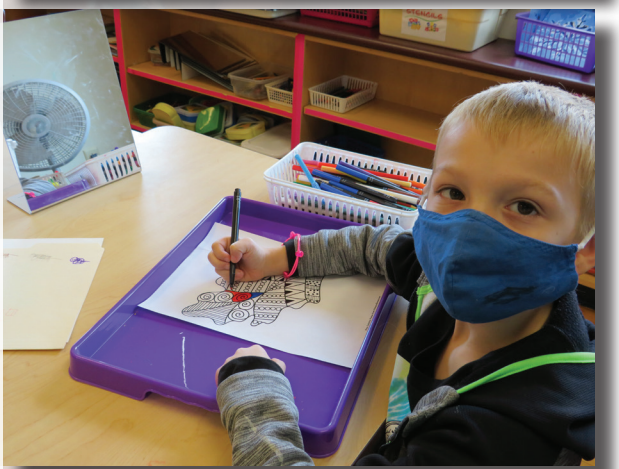
NY Mac & Cheese, NY Kale & Apple Salad, and NY Pears

NY all-beef Hot Dogs made in Utica NY, NY cucumbers and tomato salad, and NY apples

WELCOME TO YOUR FASSETT ART STUDIO

Teaching Artistic Behavior

Teaching for Artistic Behavior (TAB) continues a long tradition in education where the student takes the lead in directing their own learning. The greater vision for this approach to art is to help shape a future led by creative change-makers who improve the lives of all. In our PreK-2 TAB classes at Fassett, students experience the visual arts as artists responsible for their learning. Following introductions to available media, student artists advance their individual artistic processes through exploration and discovery, inquiry and ideation, skill development and artmaking, reflection and revision, and self-evaluation.



TAB: Teaching Artistic Behavior

Ms. Diana, art teacher at Fassett Elementary, is taking a new approach to art class and students are loving it! This approach is called TAB: Teaching Artistic Behavior.

How does this change things in class? Instead of all students learning and drawing the same picture as everyone else in the class, students are now allowed to use their own imagination and creativity to make incredible individual art peices as real artists work.

Each student begins class with reminders:

I MAKE MESSES! I MAKE MISTAKES! BUT DEEP INSIDE....
I HAVE WHAT IT TAKES!

I AM AN ARTIST.

Students then take a bracelet to the studio-station they wish to do that day. They can choose from, drawing, painting, collage, recycled art, and card making. From there, they let their creative juices flow!

Thank you, Ms. Diana for this new-to-Fassett approach to art class.

A PROMISE OF BETTER TIMES AHEAD

GOLD ON BOTH ENDS OF THE RAINBOW

A scene captured at our Transportation Department and Bus Garage location in Southport, NY on October 14, 2021. Thank you to our Transportation Department for sharing this inspirational photo. #ExpressStrong #GoExpress

During National Bus Safety Week this fall, Fassett Elementary friends worked with students to practice the motto, **BUS SAFETY BEGINS WITH ME**! Fassett students made cards and gift bags for their bus drivers and presented them. Our bus drivers and aides have a big responsibility – we thank you for keeping us safe every day!

ICYMI You Tell Us

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

We're listening. Please connect with us on social media and share your positive stories about the Elmira City School District. Use #GoExpress when posting!

@ECSD_Schools on Twitter, or Elmira City School District on Facebook.

Elmira City School District

September 27, 2021 at 12:02 PM |

Congratulations to Express student athletes, coaches & families! Express Athletics was recognized on Friday by the Section IV for promoting and showing Exemplary Display of Sportsmanship, Ethics and Integrity.

This is a proud moment for our #ExpressStrong community. #GoExpress

#GOEXPRESS

STAY CONNECTED

#GOEXPRESS

Read-alouds with teachers, coping strategies with school counselors, music tutorials and concerts, physical education lessons and more can be found on the District's YouTube channel!

YouTube

@ElmiraCitySchoolDistrict

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EXPRESS SHOUT-OUT

To keep a school running, it takes a village- especially now. There are unsung heroes that walk the halls every day making sure our students have a safe space where they can learn and grow. School custodians are one group of support professionals that are those heroes.

Custodians are responsible for more than just sweeping floors, wiping tables, and hitting the lights at the end of the day. They are a schools' first line of defense against viruses (like COVID-19), harmful bacteria, and disease. In providing a clean and safe environment, custodians help enhance the physical well-being of all students. **THANK YOU TO OUR ELMIRA TEAM!**

ELMIRA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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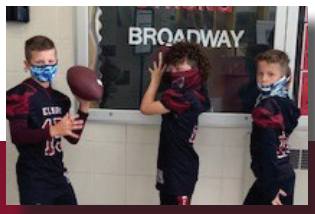

ELMIRA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

FAMILY, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY: TOGETHER WE SUCCEED

THE NEXT EXPRESS GENERATION ON THE SIDELINES CHEERING FOR THEIR HIGH SCHOOL HEREOS. THESE ARE THE FACES OF HOMETOWN PRIDE.