

Capital Project Proposed: No Impact on Taxes

The Wynantskill UFSD is planning a Capital Project that would improve instructional space and address school infrastructure needs with no impact on taxes.

A community vote on the Capital Project is expected to take place in December. A newsletter providing details about the Capital Project will be mailed to all community members in November.

Superintendent Lee Bordick explained the need for a Capital Project stems from conversations with faculty, staff and the community last year as part of the Strategic Planning Committee. The committee identified district challenges such as insufficient space for programs, agreeing adequate space for all instructional groups was needed.

"The project is a future investment for the school district and community and we are able to finance it with no impact to our taxpayers," said Mr. Bordick.

Major elements of the Capital Project include adding classroom space for K-5 and a pre-kindergarten program, creating a stage off the gym for student performances and instruction, installing solar panels on the school roof at no cost to the district, and creating a walking/fitness trail around campus.

A number of building infrastructure needs would also be addressed including improving technology, lighting, plumbing, electrical and phone systems.

If approved by voters, work for the Capital Project is expected to be completed by the 2016-17 school year.

The Capital Project will cost no more than \$5.1 million. It would have no local tax impact for largely two reasons.

First, the district would receive 73% state aid on a Capital Project. Second, the local share for the project would come from a Capital Reserve fund that voters created last May by approving a proposition on the budget ballot.

Mr. Bordick noted that additional state funding may be available as part of a New York State bond referendum scheduled for November. Money for districts to build pre-kindergarten classrooms is part of the referendum.

To learn more about the Capital Project, community members are encouraged to attend Board of Education meetings where the project will be discussed. Meeting dates are available on the district website, www.wynantskillufsd.org, or on the district calendar. Regular updates will also be made on the district website, Facebook and Twitter pages.

School Garden Provides Students with Fresh Vegetables



Gardner-Dickinson students are enjoying fresh vegetables during lunch this year thanks to the school garden.

Each year, teacher Peter Mesh organizes a garden project behind the school which students help plant. Mr. Mesh and community volunteers help tend the garden. A special thanks to community member Janet Bodine who worked on the garden almost daily over the summer.

By the start of the school year, the garden produced tomatoes, onions, peppers and other vegetables that Food Service employees used in school lunches.

Food Service Director Lori Audi noted her staff was still using tomatoes and onions in chili, cucumbers in salads, and other vegetables from the garden in October.

"We try to encourage students to try different items and make healthy choices that hopefully carry on throughout their life," said Ms. Audi. "They're really great about trying new things."

New Reading Programs Help Prepare Students

This year, new reading programs at Gardner-Dickinson School are helping students build even stronger reading and writing skills.

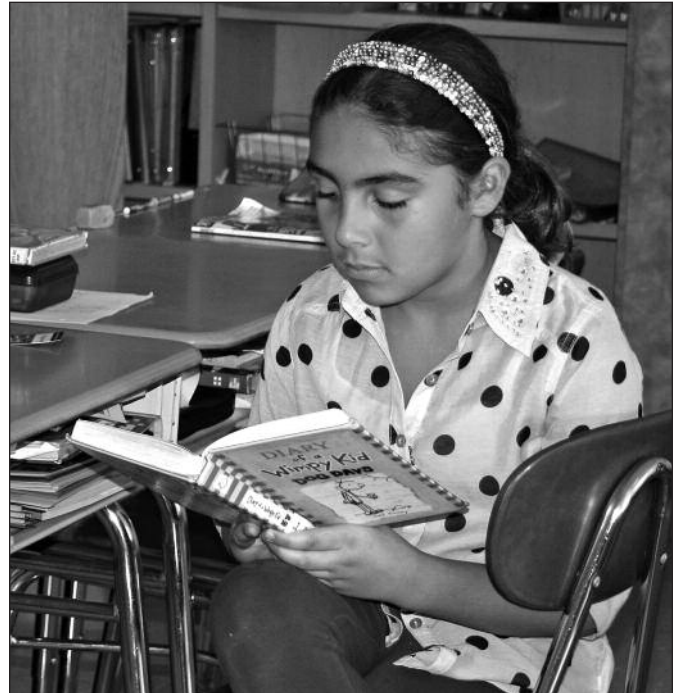
“Reading and writing is so important,” explained Principal Mary Yodis. “Every subject area relies on these skills.”

Students in grades K-6 are using new “Journeys” reading materials while students in grades 7 and 8 are using new “Code X” reading materials. Both materials are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, which challenges students by asking them to read more complex texts.

For example, elements of the K-6 reading program at Gardner-Dickinson School feature small group instruction using texts that are matched to each child’s reading level, independent student reading, and writing that uses both informational and narrative writing.

Seventh and eighth grades read materials that are novel-based, with students working in both large and small groups to deepen their critical reading and writing skills.

“We want to make sure our students can read and write proficiently and reach the benchmarks established for each grade level to ensure that all of our students are college and career ready by the time they finish 12th grade,” said Ms. Yodis.



Students Start Band in 5th Grade

Fifth graders at Gardner-Dickinson School got a chance to see the instruments they’ll play this year in band at the Grade 5 Beginning Band Info Night on September 25.

“It’s kind of a meet-and-greet for students and their instruments,” explained Music Teacher Mary Alice Newell.

Gardner-Dickinson students have the opportunity to learn an instrument in band starting in grade 5 and continue through grade 8 and into High School.

Parents also attended the Beginning Band Info Night, learning what they can expect for their children as they study how to play a musical instrument at school.



Community Invited to Health and Wellness Fair

The entire community is invited to attend the Health, Safety and Wellness Harvest Festival on Thursday, Oct. 30 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Gardner-Dickinson School.

“We wanted to do something to promote health and wellness for our community and invite everyone to be a part of our school community, whether they have children or not,” explained Principal Mary Yodis. “The idea for a fair came out of our Wellness Committee and meets goals of our Strategic Plan, including strengthening community outreach.”

The free health and wellness fair will feature health-related information and activities including fitness classes, the YMCA, local dentists, the Northeast Kidney Foundation, HVCC Dental Hygiene students, local police, fire and emergency services and representatives from other area services.

A community flu shot clinic will also be available from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

There also will be plenty of fun events for families including a playground boot camp, basketball free throw contest, face painting, pumpkin decorating, raffles and more.

If you have a question about the Wellness Fair, please call School Nurse Tricia Gibbs at 283-4600 ext. 18.

Strategic Plan Helps Guide District

From the Capital Project to the community wellness fair, the district's Strategic Plan is helping the district reach its long-term goals this year.

Created by a team of community stakeholders including parents, teachers, administrators, Board of Education members and community members, the Strategic Plan helps the district develop a direction for the future of students in the Wynantskill UFSD.

A 22-member Strategic Planning Committee created the plan, with guidance from Superintendent Lee Bordick. Meeting four times beginning in January 2014, the team worked together to identify common beliefs about the district as well as its strengths and weaknesses.

The group then identified major initiatives that are needed in order for the Wynantskill UFSD to continue to offer the outstanding education that its community expects for its children.

Five major themes were identified by the committee.

- Increase Academic Achievement for All Students
- Develop Human Capital and Professional Capacity
- Ensure Wellness, Safety and a Positive School Climate
- Strengthen Communication and Community Outreach
- Explore Ways to Maximize All Available Resources During Fiscal Challenges

To read the entire Strategic Plan, please visit the district website, www.wynantskillufsd.org, or visit the District Office to request a copy.

4th Graders Learn About Electricity

Fourth graders learned about electricity as part of their science unit this year by experimenting on what materials would conduct electricity.

"We used a circuit tester and put clips to a battery," explained student Cooper Murray. "It took electricity all the way through and we put things in the path to see if it lights up or not."

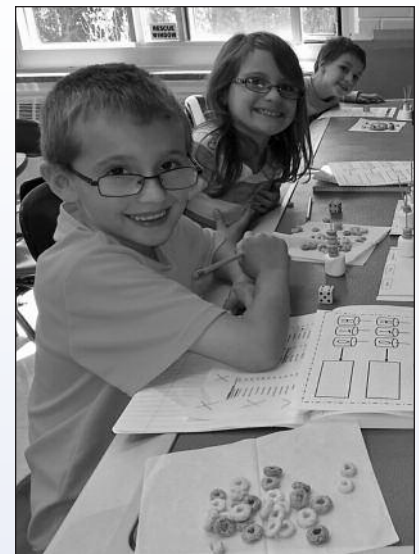
Students quickly learned that nails and paper clips would complete a simple electrical circuit, lighting up a small bulb, but marbles and pencils would not.

"What did things that conduct electricity have in common?" Teacher Kristin Gilooly asked her class.

"They were metal," responded the students.

Students will continue their studies of electricity this year by experimenting with open and closed circuits and later making a working flashlight.

"This type of hands-on activity really engages the students and helps all types of learners by getting them excited about science," explained Ms. Gilooly.



Hands-On Activity Teaches Math

To help 2nd graders learn place values, teachers Karin Carmody and Kate Cronin came up with a fun hands-on activity that helped students learn the concept that serves as a foundation for their math learning.

Ms. Carmody and Ms. Cronin first asked students to roll dice to create a three digit number. Students then had to write the number in three mathematical forms. For example, the number "526" was written in standard (526), written (five hundred twenty-six) and expanded ($500+20+6$) forms.

Students then placed toothpicks in marshmallows to create three small stands, representing hundreds, tens and ones. They then placed Froot Loops on each toothpick, representing each digit in their number.

Finally, students recorded on paper the number of digits in each group.

"Karin and I wanted an activity that got the students excited about math," said Ms. Cronin. "It was not only a hands-on exercise but it was also visual for them. It really seemed to work because they all did really well on the test the next day."

Superintendent
Lee Bordick

Principal
Mary Yodis

Board of Education
Ann Marsh, *President*
Andrew Lanese, *Vice President*
Katrina Dinan
Patricia Gray
Andrea Paone

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Produced by Questar III Communications Service

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Troy Lodge of Elks Donates Books

Third and fifth graders received dictionaries and thesauruses from the Troy Lodge of Elks 141 on September 25, something the organization does every year for Gardner-Dickinson students.

Members of the Troy Lodge of Elks 141 visited classrooms and talked to students about the history of their organization and how they help communities.

They then handed out a dictionary and thesaurus to each student and teacher, talking about the importance of learning.

“These are great educational tools that will help you build your vocabulary,” explained Lodge member Walter Hughes. “You learn to read and you read to learn. That’s very important.”

Thank you to the Troy Lodge of Elks for your generosity!

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As part of the district’s efforts to continue to improve communication with our community, Wynantskill UFSD now has a Facebook and Twitter page. Please note, these social media accounts are at no cost to the district.



Follow us at www.facebook.com/WynantskillUFSD or www.twitter.com/WynantskillUFSD to receive regular updates about upcoming school events and stories about Gardner-Dickinson students.