



# SUPERINTENDENT'S *Brief*



SUPERINTENDENT ANIBAL SOLER, JR.

WEEK ENDING AUGUST 13, 2021 | VOLUME 1 | ISSUE NO. 4

## SUPERINTENDENT'S NOTE: **Our approach to reopening**

As you are probably aware, it was announced that school reopening guidance from the New York State Department of Health will not be forthcoming. While it is possible that at some point that will change, we currently do have guidance and recommendations from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Schenectady County Department of Health, the American Academy of Pediatrics and yesterday received a [health and safety guide](#) from the New York State Education Department (NYSED). We will be keeping close watch for any changes and updates but as we work to develop our 2021-2022 school reopening plan, we will rely on the recommendations from these sources. I will be discussing our approach and planning at the board of education meeting on August 18 and then expect to communicate our reopening plan with you and the Schenectady community shortly thereafter.

Each of the above-mentioned sources reference developments regarding the Delta variant, which is the predominant strand of the COVID-19 virus, and the determined cause of the recent increase in positive cases around the country.

According to the CDC, unvaccinated people remain the greatest concern and that breakthrough infections, meaning infections in fully vaccinated people, are mostly mild and happen much less often than infections in unvaccinated people. Furthermore, the greatest risk of transmission is among unvaccinated people who are much more likely to contract and transmit the virus.

Since the vaccination is only approved for those over 12 years of age all sources are recommending that schools implement layered protection strategies such as indoor masking, screening/testing, room and space ventilation, handwashing, contact tracing, cleaning, disinfection as well as others. NYSED's guide is based on the CDC Guidance and the American Academy of Pediatrics and includes the same recommendations for masking. The guide also addresses social distancing, sports and activities, transportation, COVID-19 testing, screening, contact tracing, healthy practices and more. We are reviewing the guidance closely as these recommendations are designed to support and ensure that school districts can fully open and safely return students to in-person learning as well as be responsive to student needs. That is the top priority of our district.

I realize and understand that there are mixed emotions about the start of school and what it should look like for students. I know many of you are excited for in-person school to start. I also know that others are anxious and concerned about potential risks. We have heard from some of you who don't want students wearing masks in school and others of you insisting that everyone does. Everyone has their own set of experiences, beliefs, and reasons. I promise you are being heard. But there are two things driving our decisions. Students need to be in school with their teachers. And we must protect the health and safety of students and staff, above anything else. It is to that end we are strongly considering the advice and recommendations of medical experts as we prepare our plans and move forward.

We will continue to pay close attention to any changes or updates provided by New York State, especially as state leadership transitions in the next weeks. Circumstances regarding COVID-19 continue to evolve. We promise to make decisions that are centered on ensuring that we provide a safe, healthy, and supportive in-person learning environment, so all our students have the best opportunity to academically thrive this upcoming school year.

I look forward to sharing more. Once we have our reopening plans developed and communicated, I will be holding town halls to discuss and answer questions. Thank you for your continued patience.

### Congratulations to our latest graduates

Congratulations to our Schenectady High School Class of 2021 **August graduates** who received their diplomas yesterday. More information & photos on next page. Link to [video](#). 📺



**Days until the first day of school**

www.schenectady.k12.ny.us  
518-370-8100



## 2021-2022 CALENDAR SNAPSHOT

We made changes to the presentation of the 2021-2022 calendar simply to provide clarity and to distinguish recess days from holidays in which the district is closed. There were no changes made to the actual dates. Click [here](#) to open.

September 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Sept 6 Labor Day/District Closed  
 Sept 1, 7, 8 Superintendent Conference Days  
 Sept 9 First Day of Classes K-12

## EDUCATIONAL EQUITY & INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

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The department formerly known as "Educational Equity and Instructional Support (EEIS)" has been renamed the **"Teaching and Learning Office."**

### STAFFING UPDATE

We are pleased to share that **Erika MacFarlane** has joined the Teaching and Learning Office team as the *Director of Student Intervention Services* and **Kurt Redman** as the *Assistant Director of Enrichment, Special Areas and Secondary Programming*.

Leah Akinleye, one of the assistant directors, is on a one year leave of absence. We look forward to her return next year.

The recruitment and hiring of area content specialists is currently underway.

## Schenectady High School Class of 2021

The Schenectady High School graduating Class of 2021 grew by 20 members on Friday. These high school seniors spent their summer attending classes, completing coursework and taking necessary Regent's exams to meet graduation requirements. A ceremony and diploma presentation took place at Schenectady High School. Video is posted [here](#).

Congratulations to all the graduates. Thank you and congratulations to the high school faculty and staff for all of your hard work this summer. You make a difference.

## 20 Additional Graduates





## Chess Anyone?



Patrick Bergin, a 7th grade social studies teacher at Oneida Middle School runs a chess club for students with the help of a community volunteer. This summer, he brought the game to our Summer Enrichment Program. As you can see from the photos, it was a hit with the students. We will be keeping up with the chess club at Oneida throughout the school year. Thank you to Mr. Bergin for bringing this wonderful opportunity to our students.



## Did you know?

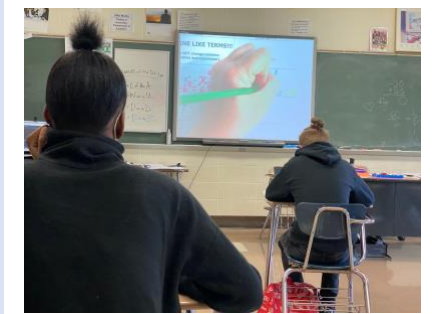
Chess gives the brain an exhilarating workout that is great for children and adults. Here are a few of the most commonly discussed benefits of playing chess:

- **Develops logic, critical thinking, and creativity**  
Chess requires "if this, then-that" scenarios in which players have to think about all of the potential moves, alternatives and possible outcomes.
- **Increases concentration & memory**  
Studies show that children who play chess regularly significantly improve their visual memory and concentration. When playing chess, the brain is challenged to exercise logic, develop pattern-recognition, and make decisions both visually and analytically and to test memory. An active brain is a healthy brain. The game gives a child's brain a fun incentive to stay focused while playing.
- **Develops problem-solving skills**  
The game is about problem-solving, planning and foresight. Players must think through changing variables and formulate a plan based on various possibilities. Chess helps to think ahead, not rush decisions and weigh the pros and cons of choices. These are skills that are important for life.
- **Improves reading skills**  
Chess requires kids to use cognitive functions such as decoding, analysis, thinking and comprehension which are all skills required for reading. Studies have shown that kids who play chess score an average of 10 percentage points higher on reading tests.
- **Engages the mind while off the screen**  
Chess is a powerful way of counteracting negative effects of this digital era by engaging kids in an activity improves concentration while serving as a fun activity away from the screens
- **It's a low-cost activity**  
Chess is a low-cost activity for children to become involved with at school.

## High School Summer School

500 students from Schenectady and Niskayuna participated in summer school at Schenectady High School this year.

Students attended a hybrid schedule Monday through Thursday. They attended in two groups. One group attended in-person on Monday and Wednesday and the other on Tuesday and Thursday. On the opposite days they attended classes remotely. Kurt Redman was the acting summer school principal.



## FINAL REMINDER

### Safety Plan Comment Period Closes August 17

The 30-day comment period for the Schenectady City School District 2021-2022 Safety Plan closes on August 17. You can review the document and submit any comments [here](#).

### BOARD OF EDUCATION

The next board of education meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 18 at 7 p.m. in the Schenectady High School Auditorium.

Superintendent Soler plans to discuss reopening of school and the district's organizational design.

The meeting will be held in-person and live-streamed. The link will be posted on the district website.

If you are not able to attend but wish to submit comment, please send your remarks to the [clerk of the board](#). Your comments will be read at the meeting.

### REGISTRATION FOR FALL SPORTS

Registration for Fall Sports is open.

Click [here](#) for required paperwork.

**Students in 9-12** are eligible to participate in the following fall sports:

- Cheer
- Cross-Country
- Football
- Golf
- Soccer
- Swimming & Diving
- Girls Tennis
- Girls Volleyball

**Students in grades 7 and 8** are eligible to participate in the following fall sports:

- Cross-Country
- Football
- Soccer

