Binghamton City School District

B TODAY

Winter 2020

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#BPatriotProud

EDUCATE EMPOWER CHALLENGE

Winter 2020

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Superintendent
Tonia Thompson

Board of Education
Brian Whalen, president
Korin L. Kirk, vice president
Timothy Ames
David V. Hawley
Liz Rosenberg
Steve Seepersaud

Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Tonia Thompson

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A letter from

Superintendent Tonia Thompson

Dear Binghamton Families,

The holiday season is upon us, and I am completely consumed with gratitude, admiration, and appreciation for our entire school community. It took tremendous planning and preparation to bring our students back into our buildings. From administrators, to teachers and support staff, to food service professionals, the effort and dedication shown this school year has been commendable, and all of this work has been for the benefit of our students. It has been incredible watching adults getting creative and innovative to provide opportunities for our children that would not otherwise be possible – such as virtual field trips for elementary students, and a virtual winter concert performed by the talented musicians at Binghamton High School, pre-recorded and streamed online for their families to enjoy. You will read about both these unique experiences in this issue of BToday.

Much like our faculty and staff, our students have shown great flexibility and resilience since the onset of this pandemic. They are adapting to new routines and overcoming challenges they never imagined they'd face. It is incredible to see such young people show such acceptance and strength. The hope and resolve of our children serve as wonderful reminders of the fact that we can, and will, get through this. Here, you will learn about how students and volunteers came together to make the 25th annual BHS Community Thanksgiving a reality, despite all the obstacles. This is just one example of the resilience, creativity and innovation that has been the result, and the silver lining, of this global pandemic.

One of the challenges our district has faced since returning to school was New York State's requirement to test a percentage of students and employees each week, as the result of our area's "yellow zone" designation in October. While implementing in-school testing was not an easy task, it is a strategic, effective measure to promote health and wellness within our buildings. Our school district no longer falls in a yellow zone, and therefore, we are no longer required to conduct testing. However, we are committed to continuing to offer testing for as long as the state continues to provide rapid testing kits.

We know that our work is far from over. Keeping our facilities open, and our students in school, is a collaborative effort. The holidays, and the upcoming winter months, will be a true test. We all have the power to make a positive impact by demonstrating care, concern, and discipline. For the good of our children, their educations, and the health and safety of our community, we must take that duty seriously. I urge you to stay the course, take responsible action, and do your part to slow the spread of COVID-19.

The pandemic has caused a great deal of financial stress for many – locally, regionally and statewide. As a result, school districts around the state are facing significant concerns regarding New York State aid. As a community, we will be forced to reduce spending during the upcoming school year in order to continue the district's mission and cover operating costs. There are difficult decisions ahead, and it is critical to hear from you about where funds should be allocated, and what should be our top priorities as we work to develop our 2021-2022 budget. Please share your thoughts by participating in an online survey that can be found on the district's website.

Thank you for being a valued part of the Binghamton City School District and continuing to show support and patience throughout these challenging times. We could not do this without our students, parents, and employees. I appreciate your efforts and contributions more than I can say.

With Patriot Pride,

Tonia

Dr. Tonia Thompson
Superintendent of Schools

Binghamton names new director of personnel

Dawne Anna-Adams

Director of Personnel

We welcome back Dawne Anna-Adams to the Binghamton City School District. Anna-Adams is the new BCSD director of personnel.

She joined the Binghamton City Schools in 2014 as the P-TECH Coordinator, overseeing the New York State grant that provides pathways for STEM careers for students in schools across the region. She then transitioned from that position to the Department Chair for Science and Technology for grades 6-12. In 2018, she became the associate principal at Binghamton High School. During the 2019-2020 school year, she served as principal of the Fallsburg Junior Senior High School in Sullivan County, New York.

"I am thrilled to be back at Binghamton," she said. "I feel like I am returning home to family and this is where I am supposed to be."

Anna-Adams said she is looking forward to the opportunity to support all employees in the district who work so hard to support our students and families every day.

Franklin ESL teacher named Outstanding Teacher by NYS TESOL

We are Patriot Proud of Ben Franklin Elementary ENL teacher, Brigitte Pittarelli, who was awarded the Outstanding Teacher Award from NYS TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) during a virtual ceremony in November. This award honors a teacher who motivates and encourages students, as well as engages them in productive and challenging learning with effective lesson strategies, fair evaluation techniques, and community involvement.

"To be recognized for one's passion and commitment in educating English Language Learners is something I never dreamed possible," Pittarelli said of this honor. "I believe I was destined to become an ENL (ESL) educator and advocate for ELL learners and their families from the moment I connected my own childhood reality to that of others."

As the daughter of parents who immigrated from Italy, Pittarelli's career was inspired by her own experience as a second language learner.

"I remember growing up bilingual - the struggles of learning how to read, our American next-door neighbor teaching us how to write in English. I had a desire to fit in, and not feel inadequate because of how I pronounced things inaccurately," Pittarelli said. "All of that played a part in who I am. Today, my pride in being bilingual, in being an Italian American, in being a daughter of immigrants embodies everything about my life."

Pittarelli has been teaching at Franklin since 1998, and currently works with students in grades 1-3. We are lucky to have her at Ben Franklin!

BCSD Ho

liday Concert
BINGHAMTON HIGH SCHOOL
EMPOWER

Franklin student caught being good on Halloween

Lazarus Perry, a fifth grader at Benjamin Franklin Elementary and a member of the school's BF Gents club, had his gentlemanly skills on full display on Halloween night.

Perry was Trick-or-Treating in Endicott when he approached a residence with an empty candy bowl. Upon realizing that there were no more treats, Perry selflessly took candy from his own bag to fill the bowl for future trick or treaters. The homeowner caught the act of kindness on their video doorbell, and shared the video on Facebook, in hopes of identifying the child and rewarding him. The video was shared more than 700 times.

"This has been an awesome experience for him, and a lesson as well," Lazarus's mom, Erica Rayne O'Brien, said. "Being kind is cool."

Lazarus was able to meet, and be rewarded by, the homeowner. He was also recognized with the district's Patriot Pride award at the November board meeting. Way to go, Lazarus!

Pictured above: Lazarus Perry

Celso Green and Tammy Napierella awarded Patriot Pride Awards

Tammy Napierella was awarded the Patriot Pride Award for September. Napierella is a groundskeeper at MacArthur Elementary School. She has worked tirelessly keeping the grounds around MacArthur looking amazing. She always has a great attitude and is willing to help when needed.

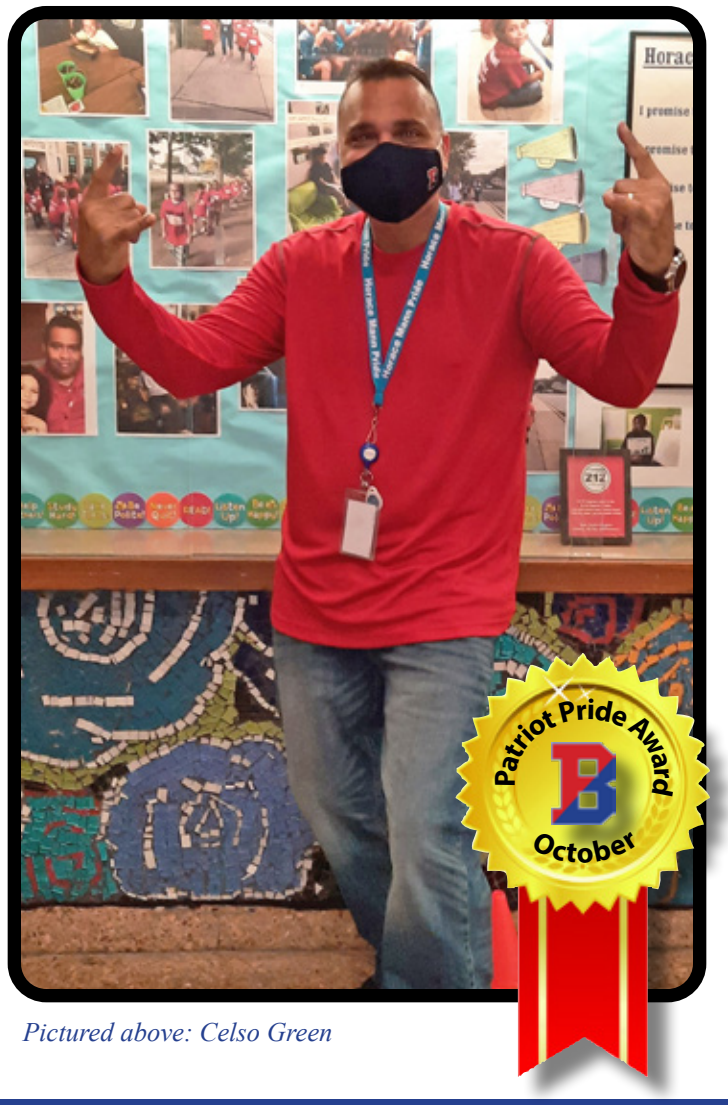
In October, Celso Green was awarded the Patriot Pride Award because of his hard work at Horace Mann Elementary School.

Green started at Horace Mann in September after the head custodian went on leave. Green went right into action the day he started. He quickly became familiar with the building and staff and always made sure everyone had what was needed.

"I can truly say this man has changed the entire dynamic at Horace Mann," said Horace Mann Secretary Kristy Spencer. "He has a smile from ear to ear (under his mask of course) each and every day and won't hesitate to help anyone that needs him. He has followed all safety procedures without hesitation to help keep the Horace Mann staff and students safe during these scary times."

Green has been working on the COVID team and has brought new energy to Mann. His coworkers say that he is excited to work and proud of what he does.

"This man has made Horace Mann feel safe and staff feel more protected than ever from COVID-19 thanks to Celso," Spencer said.



Pictured above: Celso Green

EMPOWER

Homecoming Court

BCSD 2020

BHS Community Thanksgiving Meal goes on in pandemic-friendly fashion

Binghamton High School students and volunteers got creative to make the school's 25th annual Thanksgiving Dinner possible. While BHS could not welcome guests inside for the school's traditional community meal due to COVID-19, volunteers served approximately 500 cold to-go dinners on Thanksgiving Day.

Community members were able to walk up to the school's Oak Street entrance to pick up meals or drive up to the back loading dock. There were also shuttle buses from three community sites.

"Reimagining our annual Thanksgiving community dinner was a challenge, but once again, BHS students and volunteers went above and beyond for the betterment of the community," Kevin Richman, principal of Binghamton High School, said. "We were proud to continue this time-honored Binghamton tradition, and thanks to our students and volunteers, it was an incredible success."

The demand was so high that all 500 meals were all claimed in just over an hour. Thank you to all who worked hard to make this year's event possible!

"BHS students and volunteers went above and beyond for the betterment of the community."

-Kevin Richman, Principal

EMPOWER

BCSD celebrates school board of education

The New York State School Boards Association recognized October 19 - 23 as School Board Recognition Week. This was a time to promote awareness and understanding of the important work performed by school board members. The Binghamton City School District joined all public school districts across the state to honor local board members for their commitment to Binghamton and its children.

"It takes strong schools to build a strong community, and our board devotes countless hours to making sure our schools are helping every child learn at a higher level," Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Tonia Thompson said. "They make the tough decisions every month and spend many hours studying education issues and regulations in order to provide the kind of accountability our citizens expect."

Thompson said the key work of school boards is to raise student achievement by:

- Creating a shared vision for the future of education
- Setting the direction of the school district to achieve the highest student performance
- Providing accountability for student achievement results
- Developing a budget that aligns district resources to improve achievement
- Supporting a healthy school district culture in which to work and to learn
- And much more!

"School board members give the Binghamton citizens a voice in education decision making. Even though we make a special effort to show our appreciation this week, their contribution is a year-round commitment," Thompson said.

The BCSD Board of Education members recognized were as follows:

President - Brian Whalen

Vice President- Korin L. Kirk

Timothy Ames

Penelope Harper

David V. Hawley

Liz Rosenberg

Steve Seepersaud

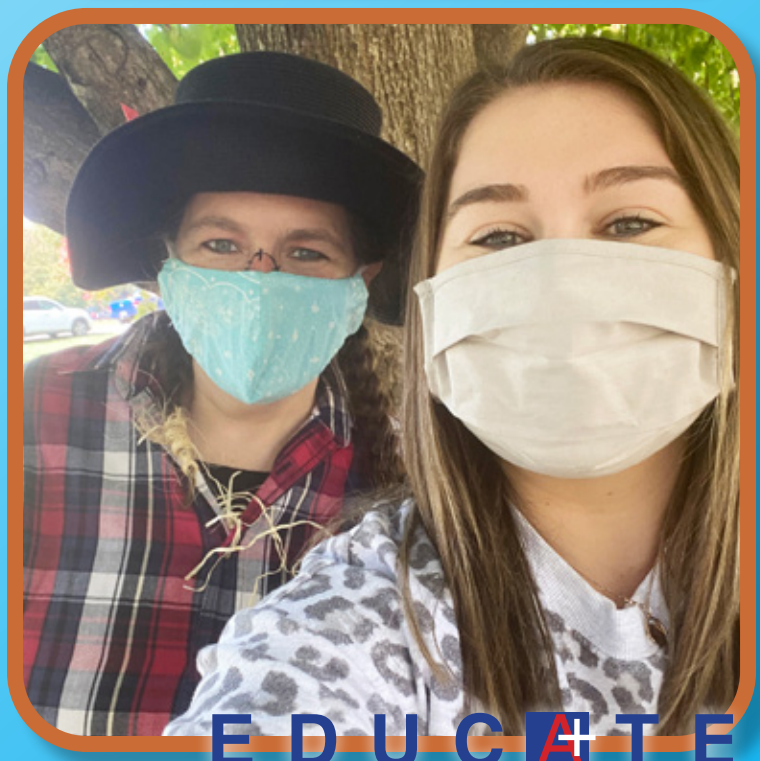
Teachers take students on a virtual field trip

With COVID-19 curtailing so many school activities Roosevelt Elementary, Teacher Julia Fiato and Secretary Kristen Walter wanted to do something fun and engaging for their students. Walter came up with the idea of a virtual field trip to Otsiningo Park to see the scarecrow display contest.

"Given the circumstances with remote learning, we wanted to bring local activities to the students especially because so many teachers at Roosevelt would usually take a field trip to the park each fall to see the scarecrows," Fiato said. "Kristen and I didn't want to lose this opportunity for students so we brought the scarecrows to them!"

The two went to the park and took photos and videos of the displays. Walter even dressed up as a scarecrow for the field trip. The duo then made a google slide presentation and sent it out to the other teachers in the building.

Both women also say they hope this is the first of many, adding that they are committed to making a fun and interactive learning environment for the students.



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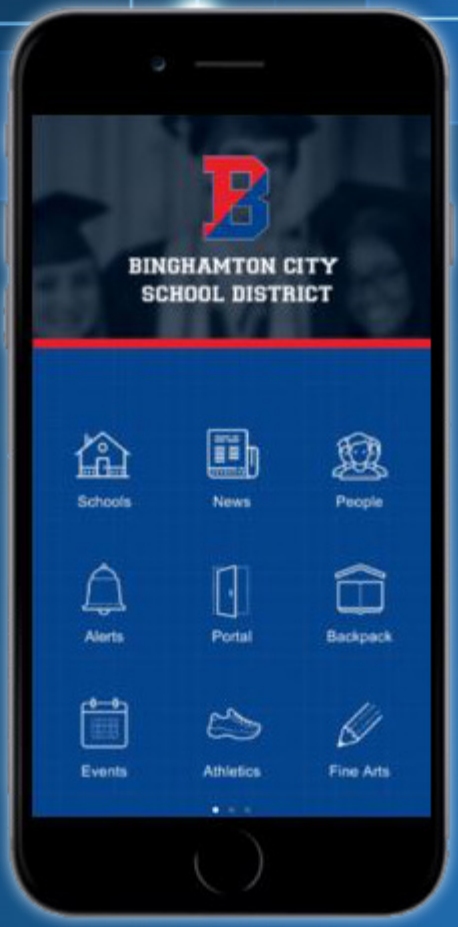

Now more than ever, it's important to stay in contact with your child's school.

- Download the BCSD app
- Visit www.binghamtonschools.org often
- Call your building to be sure your contact information is up to date

District website: www.binghamtonschools.org **Email: info@binghamtonschools.org**