

A SLICE OF TOAST

Newsletter for Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology: A Community School February 2021

A note from Principal Sophia A. Newell ...

The month of February has been historically designated as Black History Month. This year's theme is, "Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity."

As a school, we are celebrating Black History Month with daily lessons. Students will learn about Black individuals who have made important contributions to the fields of science, art, technology, literature, music, politics and activism.

We also are providing some historical context for major events in American history such as slavery, the Underground Railroad, the Civil Rights Movement, World

War I and local connections.

A choice board will be available through your child's Google Classroom for further celebration and exploration of Black History Month while at home.

I hope the month of February serves as a reminder that the conversation and celebration of Black History goes beyond one month, it is 365 days a year.



TAKE THE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Your feedback is important in our efforts to improve Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology! That's why we ask you to complete this year's family engagement survey.

It's easy to complete online; just follow the link below and enter the password.

- **Link:** albanyschools.org/FamilySurvey
- **Password:** TOAST2020

(Please note that the password is case-sensitive.)

The survey will be open through March 12. Paper copies of the survey are available at school upon request.

There are 25 survey questions that are rated on a five-part

scale. There also are three open questions for you to offer your comments.

All survey responses are anonymous; respondents are not identified.

We ask that there be one survey per household. If you have students in more than one school, then one survey per household for each of your children's schools; you will receive a similar letter from those schools with the password to login to that survey.

Your input will help us make our great school an even better one!

SAVE THE DATES!

FEBRUARY

15-19 Winter Recess,
no school

MARCH

2 Family Literacy Night,
6 p.m. (see right)

SIGN UP FOR FAMILY LITERACY NIGHT

Please join us as we celebrate Read Across America Day during Family Literacy Night! The event is March 2 at 6 p.m.

We will be listening to "The Snowglobe Family" by Jane O'Connor and making our own snow globes. Books and materials will be provided for each family. Space is limited to the first 15 families. **Please respond by Tuesday, Feb. 16** to Mrs. Binder at pbinder@albany.k12.ny.us.

STAFF PROFILE

Meet Community School Site Coordinator Micaela Townsend

Get to know our TOAST staff better! Each month an employee will answer eight questions. See the responses below from Community School Site Coordinator Micaela Townsend, who joined the school district in August 2020.

1. **What is your favorite food?** A lobster roll
2. **What is your favorite season?** I love spring. The trees and flowers are filled with beautiful colors and there is a sense of optimism in the air.
3. **What is your favorite quote?** "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." – Ferris Bueller
4. **What was your favorite subject in school?** History
5. **Who has been the biggest influence in your life?** My mom, dad and grandmother. My mom influenced my work ethic, my dad influenced my love for the outdoors and my grandmother influenced my love for family and dancing.
6. **What are you most proud of?** Finishing a marathon. It took a lot of dedication and mental strength.
7. **What teacher had the greatest impact on you and why?** My second grade teacher, Mrs. Judge. She encouraged all of her students but was also very strict. She taught me about responsibility after I missed my first school assignment with her.
8. **What do you like most about working at TOAST?** I love working with my colleagues.

LEARNING WITH SNOWMAN MATH

Do you want to build a snowman? The answer was a resounding "yes!" on Feb. 3 for fifth-graders in Katie Chainyk and Maran Person's classes. It wasn't just fun and games – there was plenty of math and competition involved. The two classes headed outside, and students worked in teams to build snowmen, snowwomen and snowbabies.

Once their creations were constructed, they measured the height and circumference for each one, and later returned to the classroom to calculate and tabulate their findings. The two classes vied to see which made the biggest snowman and which made the most snowpeople in a 30-minute time period.



HAVE A WONDERFUL WINTER BREAK!

STEAMing along at TOAST

FAMOUS AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN STEAM PROFESSIONS

KATHERINE JOHNSON

Katherine Johnson is known as the first African-American woman in aerospace engineering. She assisted an all-male team of engineers to find solutions to America's space-flight navigation problems. She calculated the trajectory for Alan Shepard, the first American in space. When NASA began using computers, she was asked to verify calculations for John Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth. She also tracked the flight landing for Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on the moon's surface.



MARK E. DEAN

Mark E. Dean is an African American inventor, engineer and computer scientist. He was part of the team that developed the ISA bus that allows printers, speakers and scanners to be plugged into computers. He also led a team that made the one-gigahertz computer processor chip and helped to create the color monitor. He is also the co-creator of the IBM personal computer that was released in 1981 and owns three of nine patents of the original PC.



JAMES EDWARD MACEO WEST

Dr. James Edward Maceo West is known for co-developing the foil electret microphone. It improved hearing aids and has also been used to aid with blood pressure readings and in the United States space program. It is now the standard in cell phones, computers, hearing aids and audio recording equipment.



STATE TESTS ON THE HORIZON

Each year the New York State Education Department requires schools around the state to administer tests that measure student skills in English, math and science.

The tests begin in third grade in English and math, and students take them every year through eighth grade. Students in fourth and eighth grade also take science tests. Students throughout the state take the same test at the same time.

Other exams State Ed issues include:

The testing schedule for our school for this year follows:

- **English Language Arts:** April 20-21
- **Math:** May 4-5
- **Grade 4 Science performance:** May 25-June 4
- **Grade 4 Science written:** June 7

Please make sure your child comes to school well-rested and with a good breakfast so he or she is prepared to do his or her best on the days of the exams.

Save those BoxTops!

The TOAST PTA continues to collect BoxTops for Education to support school programs and activities.

BoxTops is moving to digital submissions using their app. When you buy a participating product, please underline the item on your receipt and use the app to scan your receipt so TOAST gets credit for it.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

10 tips for teaching and talking to children about race

At a time when racial conflict shows up in everything from politics to play-dates, engaging our children constructively on race is abundantly important. These tips are designed to help parents of all backgrounds talk to their children about race early and often.

Start early – By 6 months of age, babies are noticing racial differences. By 4 years, children may show signs of racial bias. Human beings were designed to detect patterns and categorize information in order to make sense of their world. Let your child know it is okay to notice skin color and talk about race. Start talking about what racial differences mean and don't mean.

Encourage – Encourage your child to ask questions, share observations and experiences and be respectfully curious. Expose your child to different cultural opportunities – photographs, films, books or cultural events - and discuss the experiences afterwards.

Be mindful – You are a role model to your child. What children hear from us is less important than what they see us do – the diversity of your friendship circle, for example, is likely to have a bigger impact than your words.

Face your own bias – Let your child see you acknowledge and face your own biases. We're less likely to pass on to others the biases we identify and work to overcome.

Know and love who you are – Talk about the histories and experiences of the racial, ethnic, and/or cultural groups you and your family identify with. Tell stories about the challenges your family has faced and overcome.

Develop racial cultural literacy – Learn about and respecting others. Study and talk about the histories and experiences of different racial, ethnic, and/or cultural groups.

Be honest – Tell your child, in age-appropriate ways, about bigotry and oppression.

Tell stories – Tell stories of resilience and resistance. Every big story of racial oppression is also a story about people fighting back and "speaking truth to power." Teach your child those parts of the story too.

Be active – Help your child understand what it means to be, and how to be, an agent of change. Whenever possible, connect the conversations you're having to the change you and your child want to see, and to ways to bring about that change.

Plan for a marathon, not a sprint – It's okay to say "I'm not sure" or "let's come back to that later, okay?" But then do circle back to the topic when ready. Make race talks with your child routine. Race is a topic you should plan to revisit again and again.

Phys Ed Students of the Month



Aaron Jacob Malaza



Delia Singbai

Each month, teachers Alicia Arasim and Pete Porcelli choose students who exhibit positive attitude and are role models during phys ed class. February's students are fourth grader Aaron Malaza and first grader Delia Singbai. Congratulations to them!

Building opens: 8 a.m.
In-classroom breakfast starts: 8 a.m.
Classes for all students begin: 8 a.m.
Bus students dismissed: 1:30 p.m.
Walkers dismissed: 1:45 p.m.

OUR SCHOOL DAY

WHO'S WHO at TOAST

Ms. Newell, principal
Mrs. Stalker, assistant principal
Mrs. Campbell-Beazer, office manager
Mr. Hoffman, psychologist
Mrs. France, social worker
Mrs. Jordan-Tello, nurse
Ms. Townsend, community school coordinator

Need to reach us? Call us at (518) 475-6875.