

A SLICE OF TOAST

Newsletter for Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology

First trimester 2023-24

A note from Principal Sophia A. Newell ...

Dear TOAST Families,

It has been a wonderful and productive first trimester at TOAST. Thank you to students, families and staff for making TOAST the community that it is and for your continued support. I have enjoyed seeing our families at events this year including New Family Orientation, Open House, Trunk or Treat and Spooky STEAM Night, the Winter Music Concert and Family Movie Weekend. Our events continue to have increased attendance, and we are always looking for ways to improve as we expand.

Each year, our Building Leadership Team submits a School Comprehensive Education Plan to the state Education Department. This year, we

are continuing to focus our efforts on English Language Arts (ELA), math, attendance and equity. In ELA, we are focused on the importance of small group instruction. In math, we are supporting our staff and students as our new math curriculum is implemented. In equity, we are hosting monthly events that students take ownership of and have a voice in. Academically, our students have had consistent Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) growth in ELA and math. I look forward to our students making more gains in their academics.

Earlier this month, I sent home a letter with information on our annual family engagement survey. Your feedback is important for our school improvement efforts. There are 25 survey questions,



and all survey responses are anonymous. The survey will be open through Jan. 5, and you can learn more on page 3 of this newsletter.

I hope you and your family have a peaceful and happy holiday break!

SAVE THE DATES!

DECEMBER

25-29 No school, Holiday Recess

JANUARY

1 No school, New Year's Day

15 No school, Martin Luther King Jr. Day

FEBRUARY

8 Parent-Teacher conferences, 3:30-6:30 p.m.

9 No school, parent-teacher conferences, noon-3 p.m.

19-23 No school, Winter Recess

29 Camp Constellation & Invention Convention, time TBD

MARCH

23 March MATHness, time TBD



TOAST third- and fourth-graders recently became authors in their English Language Arts classes! Students wrote a draft of their story, including the characters, setting, problem and solution. Students met with their classroom teacher and reading teacher to edit their books. The stories were centered around a problem students could face in their community with the corresponding solution. Their hard work and the release of the books were celebrated at a publishing party, where authors read their books to their classmates and teachers.

STEAMing ALONG AT TOAST

Young Engineers at Work

Our kindergarten and first-grade STEAMsters have been busy using engineering design process skills to plan, construct, test and troubleshoot earthquake-resistant structures in the Makerspace with Coach Marlena Klein. Their creativity and critical thinking skills are sure to guarantee a safer future for themselves and their peers.

New Bots on the Block!

Through a generous donation from the Renaissance Corporation of Albany, we acquired several class sets of coding bots geared to all grade levels. "Ozobots" and "Sphero Indi" offer opportunities for no-screen coding and get student coders thinking about precise language acquisition and usage to articulate needs and actions. These skills are then applied to show learning across content areas and open the world of future skills to students across all grades!



Kindergarteners in Stephanie Siciliano's class recently took part in the Hour of Code!

Hour of Code

We celebrated Computer Science Education Week Dec. 4-8. Students participated in coding sessions run by their classroom teachers and an after-school hour of code was offered to second- through fifth-grade students. Keep an eye on the second- through fifth-grade STEM Google Classrooms

for more coding practice!

We encourage you to engage with your child about their experiences in STEM. Together, we can inspire the next generation of innovators, problem-solvers, and leaders in science and technology.

Wintry weather reminders

When bad weather hits, New York school districts have the option to hold either a distance learning day or a traditional snow day.

For the 2023-24 school year, the City School District of Albany will consider distance learning days only after first using all three snow days. We will continue to evaluate these decisions on a case-by-case basis, including whether a two-hour delay may be an option.

The simplest way for families to find out about weather-related decisions is to sign up to receive a text message through our SchoolMessenger communication system. Just text "Y" or "yes" to 67587. Families also will receive a SchoolMessenger email if weather causes the district to close, delay or shift to distance learning.

The district also shares information about weather-related changes at albany.schools.org and on Facebook (@albany.schools), X (formerly Twitter, @albany.schools) and Instagram (@albany.schools).

You also can find information on the Times Union website and the following radio and TV stations: CBS6 Albany (Ch. 6), Spectrum (Ch. 9), WTEN (Ch. 10), WNYT (Ch. 13), WROW-AM 590, WGY-AM 810, WFLY-FM 92.3, WYJB-FM 95.5, WTRY-FM 98.3, WRVE-FM 99.5, WPYX-FM 106.5 and WGNA-FM 107.7.

STUDENT VOICES LEAD SCHOOL



The team, L-R: Teacher Tahisha Richards, fifth-graders Benicio Seney, Elvena Wah and Diadalys Sierra and teacher Katie Chainyk

The fifth-grade Student Equity Leadership Team (SELT) — led by fifth-grade teachers Katie Chainyk and Tahisha Richards — has been hard at work this school year. They meet twice a month during their lunch to create school projects and celebrations. In November, team members participated in the electoral process by listening to their peers' campaign speeches and voting for the president, vice-president and secretary positions. Eight students ran for president, four students ran for vice-president and three students ran for secretary. These students ran on campaign platforms that tackled kindness, fairness, inclusivity, friendship, confidence, collaboration and student voice.

During December, our SELT is working on No Place for Hate activities for our school and a food drive to benefit Trinity Alliance.

Congratulations to SELT President Elvena Wah, Vice-President Benicio Seney and Secretary Diadalys Sierra.

Tell us what you think! Take the Family Engagement Survey

The City School District of Albany would like your input in our annual family engagement surveys.

Each school has a customized survey, which you can access from our website at albanyschools.org/familyengagement. You also can scan the QR code on the right and take the survey.

The survey only takes a few minutes to complete, and the feedback you provide will play a vital role in our school improvement efforts.

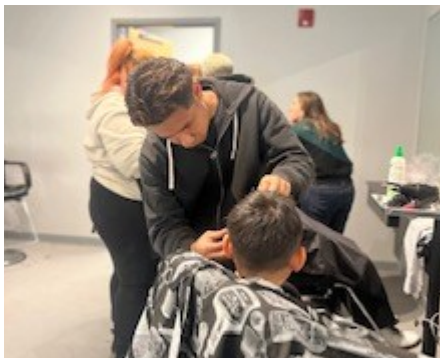
The survey will be open through Jan. 5.

If you have any questions, please contact our Office of Curriculum and Instruction at (518) 475-6060.

Thank you, and we look forward to your responses.



LOOKING GOOD, TOAST!



Dec. 12 was picture day at TOAST, and our students took a field trip to Albany High School on Dec. 11 to get their hair cut and styled for the big day. Students in LaQuita Love's cosmetology classes and Jonathan Wafer's barbering classes glammed up the TOAST kids in Albany High's beautiful cosmetology suite. The high school students are working towards their hours to sit for the state cosmetology and barbering exams.



Second-graders at recently spent time in lab studying worms and recording their squirmy preferences.

Breakfast starts: 7:40 a.m.
Classes for all students begin: 8 a.m.
Pre-K and bus students dismissed: 2:25 p.m.
Walkers and others dismissed: 2:30 p.m.

OUR SCHOOL DAY

Our mission

The mission of TOAST is to educate our school community through learning strategies that reinforce curiosity, discovery, observation, problem solving, inquiry and creativity across the disciplines.

Our vision

TOAST will be a community school that provides equitable educational opportunities and cultivates nurturing relationships within a safe environment for all students to be successful.

WHO'S WHO at TOAST

Ms. Newell, principal
Mrs. D'Alessandro, assistant principal
Mr. Harrell, home school coordinator
Ms. Townsend, community school site coordinator
Mr. Hoffman, psychologist
Mrs. Jordan-Tello, nurse

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