

A SLICE OF TOAST

Newsletter for Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology

Winter 2022

A note from Principal Sophia A. Newell ...

The first half of the 2022-23 school year at TOAST has been great! It has been a pleasure to see our families at Open House, Trunk or Treat, Spooky Science Night, and the Winter Concert and Art Show.

In the classroom, students have been busy pursuing their academic goals and enjoying hands-on activities. On a weekly basis, teachers in each grade participate in a Common Planning Time meeting. These meetings give me the opportunity to discuss curriculum with teachers and academic coaches. I look forward to these meetings as we continue to raise our academic rigor.

December was a busy month for our students. Our fifth-grade Student Leadership Team hosted a can drive. Donated items were brought to the Trinity Alliance Food Pantry (see page 4 for photo). Students learned about the food pantry and helped stock donations. Thank you to those who participated! Congratulations to our calendar student, third grader Grace Jewett! She was recognized

along with other calendar students in the school district at a ceremony on Dec. 19 (see photo below).

In January, we will welcome back monthly school-wide assemblies. Each grade level will host an assembly where students will review PBIS expectations and focus on a character word. Students will also be recognized for their hard work and achievements in PBIS expectations, attendance and ELA goals.

During the weeks after break, your child's teacher will be reaching out to schedule a parent teacher conference. Conferences will occur on Feb. 9th and Feb. 10.

I hope you and your loved ones have a joyful holiday break, and I look forward to seeing you in the new year!



SAVE THE DATES!

DECEMBER

23-31 Holiday Recess, no school

JANUARY

1-2 Holiday Recess, no school

16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day, no school

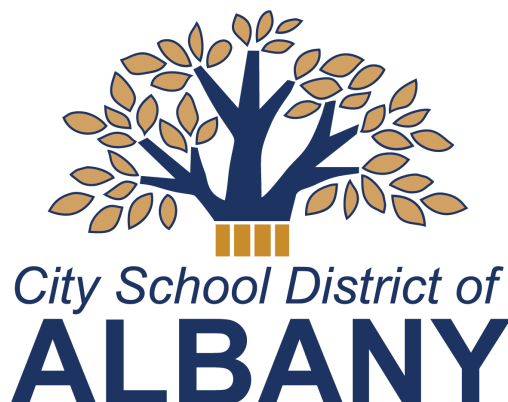
FEBRUARY

9 Parent-Teacher Conferences

10 Parent-Teacher Conferences and PD Day, no school

20-24 Winter Recess, no school

The City School District of Albany celebrated the students featured in our 2022-23 wall calendar Dec. 19 at a reception hosted by Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams. Among the students recognized was TOAST third grader Grace Jewett, pictured at right.



STEAMing along at TOAST

This fall, TOAST renewed its commitment to STEAM teaching and learning, inspiring passion for questioning, inquiry and discovery along, and equipping students with skills for success! (STEAM is short for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math.)

Autumn saw the launch of a variety of projects! Pre-K and kindergarten classes “adopted” trees from our school grounds, made scientific observations, took measurements and will be tracking changes in our trees over the seasons. Fourth graders were inspired by a visit from the one and only Captain Barrington Irving of Flying Classroom, and our friends from Radix worked across grades with students, preparing our gardens for winter.



And who can forget our epic Spooky Science Night, which saw record crowds and the return of TOAST’s very own StarLab portable planetarium! Attendees enjoyed a Trunk or Treat event courtesy of the PTA and a plethora of activities from bots and coding to live animal demonstrations. Some may or may not have had an augmented reality experience where they held a tarantula!

November saw the start of TOAST’s new Saturday Morning Science Stream -- a.k.a. Science In Our Pajamas -- with a lesson about center of gravity. Every participant made their own demonstration toy from the comfort of their own home! Be on the lookout for future Saturday Morning Science Stream dates!

Classes in the Science Lab worked with a variety of live organisms during their life science unit. They also participated in a National STEM Day Challenge, building freestanding towers with the ceiling as the target and turkey getaway contraptions. Lab work extended to classrooms with sessions on coding KIBO in prekinderg popcorn science projects in second grade. Fourth graders utilized Beebots to support math learning, and fifth graders attended their first potions class to work on mixtures and solutions!

Your opinion matters: Family Engagement Survey

The relationship between your family and our school is central to your student’s success, and your feedback is important for our school improvement efforts. That’s why we encourage you to take this survey.

Here’s how to access the survey for our school online:

- Visit albanyschools.org/FamilySurvey OR
- Use the QR code at right from your smart phone

The password to login to our school’s survey is: **TOAST2023**

Please note, this password is case sensitive.

The survey will be open through Jan. 6.

It’s easy to complete online – just follow one of the two links and enter the password. There are 25 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. 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 log in to that survey).



Attendance matters

Students benefit in many ways from being in school: in their academic and social-emotional growth, and in the supportive relationships they build with peers, teachers and staff members.

Attendance matters in a student's success starting as early as kindergarten.

Missing even two days every month causes students to fall behind. By sixth grade, chronic absence is a leading predictor that a student will drop out of high school. By ninth grade, regular attendance is a better predictor of graduation than eighth-grade test scores.

Students are expected to be in school every day unless they are sick, have a medical appointment or have a religious reason. If your student is absent, you must provide a written excuse for every absence or late arrival. The excuse must be signed and dated and reasons for the absence or lateness.

Being on time for school is part of having good attendance! Missing 5-10 minutes of class might not seem like much, but it adds up. Every time your child comes in late, they start the day playing catch-up. Help your child be successful and get them to school on time. TOAST is committed to working with you to help your student have great attendance!

Wintry weather reminders

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

The City School District of Albany will 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 or switch to distance learning for the day.

The district also shares information about weather-related changes on Facebook (@albany.schools), Twitter (@albany.schools) and, new this school year, Instagram (@albany.schools).

You also can find information on the *Times Union* website, and on 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.



Our very own TOAST choir, under the direction of Mrs. Kim Reynolds-Hoffman, performed holiday songs for Superintendent Kaweeda Adams and her staff at Academy Park on Dec. 21.

We read across America and around the world!

TOAST's Read Across America challenge kicked off in October! This year's theme is Read Around the World. From October to April, students receive a monthly reading log and travel the seven continents through reading. In addition to reading, we are asking students to use their map and research skills to answer a monthly challenge question about each continent visited. As they travel to each continent, they are earning prizes along the way, such as pencils, bracelets and pop-it keychains. There were 65 students submitting reading sheets for October and 69 students submitting reading sheets for November.

SEEN AROUND TOAST



Kindergarten and first grade get introduced to coding and robotics using KIBO.



TOAST's student leadership team helped give back Dec. 21, delivering cans and nonperishable food items to our community partners at Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region.



THOMAS O'BRIEN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



Students in Jill Flood's class meet up every Tuesday with sixth grade reading buddies from Hackett Middle School.



Pre-K and magnet lottery applications will be available Jan. 5!
albanyschools.org

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.