



Giving grade 9 students a boost

Ninth Grade Study Team has developed several ways to ease the transition to high school

It seems like a stroke of common sense that shouldn't *have* to be spoken: if a student doesn't come to school, pay attention in class or do homework, he or she is not going to do well.

In fact, that student is likely to fail the grade.

Over the past five years, there has been a growing trend in American high schools that students entering ninth grade are less prepared for the transition to high school.

Despite the fact that S-G's freshmen classes have many top-notch students – many of whom are on the honor roll each quarter – a number of students struggle upon entering grade 9.

About 20 teachers, guidance counselors and administrators on the Ninth Grade Study Team have been concerned about the number of students failing two or more classes as freshmen.

SEE "GRADE 9 STUDENTS STRUGGLE DURING TRANSITION," PAGE 2

Keeping your schools safe places

Scotia-Glenville schools continue to practice safety programs and maintain security for the nearly 3,000 children who come through the school doors every day.

"Though I believe schools remain one of the safest places for children and staff, the tragic events in Pennsylvania, Colorado, and

SEE "BUILDING SAFETY," PAGE 4

These stories are inside...

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Grade 9 students struggle during transition, from page 1

For the past two years, 20 percent of freshmen – 58 students in June 2006 and 62 in June 2005 – have been forced to repeat some courses or all of grade 9.

While some students struggled, 36 percent of freshmen were on the high honor or honor roll in June.

“When they enter high school, some kids hit a wall,” said Lynda Castronovo, high school principal. “If students are not well prepared to study, do not understand that the stakes are higher and don’t have strong study skills, they are going to have problems. In addition, if they have problems outside of school or do not have support from home, they will struggle in 9th grade.”

Higher stakes at the HS

As they will have to do in college, students have to accumulate credits each year in order to advance to the next grade. For example, a grade 9 student must complete at least 5.5 credits in order to advance grade 10.

Patricia Clausi, a 20-year S-G teacher and member of the study team, teaches four class of grade 9 students in Course 1R, Applied Math I and works with freshmen in math lab.

“Ninth grade is a tough adjustment year for a lot of kids because they leave the somewhat nurturing environment at the middle school and come here to an environment where

they *have* to be independent,” said Clausi, who taught middle school-level math for 17 years.

Middle school students take most of their classes in “teams,” in which the same 110-120 students have the same main teachers. This becomes an informal support group for them.

Grade 9 student Ryan Schmitz said he also noticed the change right away.

“It seems like you have a lot more independence, you are on your own a lot more,” said Ryan. “You have to do your own work and get it done on time.”

In grade 8, he said teachers would often be more flexible on due times and would give more guidance and help on *how* to do things.

While he’s sure his teachers would give him extra help, he knows he has to be personally responsible to ask for the help.

Assignment notebooks have helped him keep better track of his homework, as they had in the past.

While he hasn’t tried the peer tutoring program, he said it was a good idea.

Ryan knew of some students who struggled in middle school. “They will probably have the same results unless they change their attitude,” he said.

Getting students off to a stronger start

The study team has stressed these initiatives:

► **Assignment notebooks:** all grade 9 students were given assignment notebooks. Castronovo plans to use notebooks for grades 9 and 10 next year. They are a good way for parents to communicate with teachers.

► **The team has re-searched the different ways that boys and girls learn.**

“Some research suggests that boys and girls do not learn in the same way,” said Castronovo. “Teachers are trying to design lessons to engage kids in different ways to fit their learning styles and needs.”

► **Peer tutoring program during lunch periods.**

Older students stationed in the library offer help to underclassmen.

► **Email initiative:** teachers using electronic grade books email parents about a child’s progress.

► **Getting kids to join activities.** This year, there was a club sign up day.

► **Cumulative grade 9 midterm examinations** will be piloted this year in math.

► **Parent Connect.** This will allow parents to obtain a user ID and password to log into their child’s attendance and academic records. The district is working on this program and hopes that it will be available this year. 🌟

Why do students struggle?

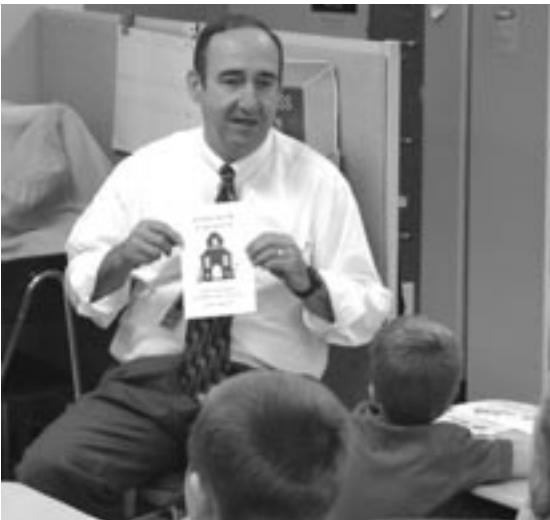
The Ninth Grade Study Team has identified issues that hold students back in grade 9. Among the major issues:

► **Students fail to come to school every day** and/or are **absent for many days;**

► **Students can’t keep up with the work.** That is either because they don’t know how to study, how to take notes or don’t complete homework;

► **Course requirements are more stringent.** Students cannot move on to the next level of a course in any discipline without passing the first course in that subject. In addition, science and lab requirements are more rigorous. A science lab is a separate period from the lecture part of the course. All students must complete the science labs and cannot sit for the Regents if they have not completed the labs. 🌟

Opening Day at Scotia-Glenville



Grades 3-8 testing results, 2006

Scotia-Glenville's elementary, middle school and high school students continued to do well on a variety of standardized tests given in the spring. Beginning last school year, all grades 3-8 students took state tests.

Scores in levels 3/4 and above 650 mean that students meet the state standards. The maximum score is 800. These figures include out of district student placements.

Gr. 3-5 English Language Arts (administered in February 2006)

Gr.	# tested	% level 1	% level 2	% level 3	% level 4	% at levels 3/4	Mean scale score
3	186	3.8	15.6	72.6	8.1	80.7	678
4	196	3.6	27.0	59.2	10.2	69.4	671
5	225	1.8	13.3	60.4	24.4	84.8	682

Gr. 3-5 mathematics (administered in March 2006)

Gr.	# tested	% level 1	% level 2	% level 3	% level 4	% at levels 3/4	Mean scale score
3	187	1.1	6.4	64.2	28.3	92.5	685
4	196	1.0	10.7	61.7	26.5	88.2	683
5	225	3.6	16.0	55.6	24.9	80.5	674

The mean ELA and math scores at the four elementary schools were:

School	ELA 2006 (gr. 3-5)	Math 2006 (gr. 3-5)
Glendaal	677.0	684.7
Glen-Worden	677.0	678.7
Lincoln	674.0	677.0
Sacandaga	679.3	681.3
2006 average, all elem. schools	676.8	680.4

Gr. 6-8 English Language Arts (administered in February 2006)

Gr.	# tested	% level 1	% level 2	% level 3	% level 4	% at levels 3/4	Mean scale score
6	242	5.0	26.9	52.1	16.1	68.2	664
7	227	4.0	36.6	54.2	5.3	59.5	655
8	261	7.3	42.5	46.0	4.2	50.2	652

Gr. 6-8 mathematics (administered in March 2006)

Gr.	# tested	% level 1	% level 2	% level 3	% level 4	% at levels 3/4	Mean scale score
6	236	6.8	20.8	54.7	15.6	70.3	662
7	220	6.8	36.4	45.4	10.1	55.5	652
8	252	4.8	22.6	59.9	10.3	70.2	664

The mean ELA and math scores at the Middle School were:

School	2006 ELA (gr. 6-8)	2006 math (gr. 6-8)
Middle School	657.0	661.3

Building safety, from page 1

Wisconsin have caused me to think about what we do on a daily basis to keep our schools safe," Superintendent Susan Swartz said in a letter to parents Oct. 27.

"Though I know we can not *guarantee* anyone's safety, I am confident that we are vigilant in our efforts to prepare for possible emergencies."

S-G maintains working relationships with local police and fire agencies and county emergency personnel.

Here are some of the procedures that staff practice and follow every day:

- ▶ Each school visitor must sign in and be issued a visitor's badge.

- ▶ All school staff have been issued photo ID badges.

- ▶ All new staff are fingerprinted and checked for a criminal history.

- ▶ During the school day, exterior doors are kept locked except for the main school entrance.

- ▶ Students and staff practice fire drills, "lock-in" and "lock-out" drills (*in which all doors and windows are locked*) and general evacuation drills. For example, middle school students were evacuated to Sacandaga Elementary on Oct. 24 as part of an emergency safety practice.

- ▶ Staff received safety awareness training at the Oct. 10 Superintendent's Conference Day.

- ▶ Student codes of conduct indicate improper behavior and the consequences for violating those guidelines.

- ▶ Once a year, fire officials perform a detailed room-by-room inspection of all schools and buildings for hazards.

- ▶ All school computers use filtering software that protects students from inappropriate online material. ❌

Expectations are clear in the middle school's ✓ Check for Success program

Educators know that students need clear-cut rules, expectations and consequences.

When middle school students returned this year, they encountered 'Check for Success' banners and teachers sporting 'Check for Success' shirts.

Check for Success outlines rules and expectations to promote positive behavior and work habits as well as consequences for violating the rules.

Principal Shari Keller told the Board of Education that the expectations should not be a surprise to students.

"We have been doing a lot of this already; this will reward students for following the clear guidelines about proper behavior at school and help motivate those students who have a more difficult time behaving in school," she said.

Time Out room

The program includes a time out room for students who disrupt a classroom and ignore the teacher's request to behave.

Keller said students who have gone to the time out room aren't anxious to go back. "We feel this is an effective deterrent to bad behavior," she added.

Assistant Principal Herb Tedford said students in time out don't simply sit around.

"They have to write about why they are there and how they can handle the situation in a more positive manner to avoid time out and future discipline," said Tedford.

All students have also been given a white card that tracks their "points" or violations of the rules. There will be rewards for students who do not exceed a certain number of points. 🎉

✓ for Success

Middle school students are asked to follow five basic rules:

- ✓ Be on time.
- ✓ Bring all materials.
- ✓ Behave and dress appropriately.
- ✓ Respect people and property.
- ✓ Do your best work.



Motivational speaker Jeff Yalden mixes common sense and values in talk to middle school students

Jeff Yalden – who is 6 feet tall, sports a shiny scalp and looks tough as nails – used humor and wit to win over the more than 700 middle school students who saw him as part of the 'Check for Success' program.

"We can't be upset or angry about what happened yesterday," said Yalden. "But you *can* change things for the future."

That was his overall theme: don't fret about what people think of you, don't worry about the past and plan for better in the future.

His hour-long talk, sponsored by the Student Council and PTA, was peppered with phrases like "you're special," "if you settle now, you'll settle in life," "value life more than yesterday" and "just because somebody is different doesn't mean you have to treat him differently."

Yalden, who has written six books, is probably best known to students as the six-year host of MTV's MADE program. He has created wristbands that say simply, "Take Time to Think."

He had students in tears when he talked about his alcoholic father who, on his high school graduation day in June 1989, kicked him out of his house by putting his belongings on the front lawn.

He also told students about his sister, a flight attendant, who had switched places with a friend and co-worker who died in the Sept. 11, 2001 World Trade Center attack. Yalden's sister, who had a special needs child, committed suicide weeks after that attack out of despair and guilt.

Yalden said he turned his life around when he enlisted with the Marine Corps, where he quickly learned the virtue of self-reliance and teamwork. He became a two-time Marine of the Year and played on the All-Marine-Corp basketball team. 🎉

Three parent focus groups consider elementary redistricting options

Parents review four proposals for easing space issues at two Glenville schools; plan effective in Sept. 2007

Having to find space for an unexpected 18 Glen-Worden kindergarten students this summer brought the problem into clear focus.

For years, as growth in the Glen-Worden and Glendaal zones continued, the district has been able to find spaces at the other two schools for students.

At this point, approximately 45 children attend school outside of their home attendance zones because of historic space issues at the two Glenville schools.

Another 50 or so children from Glendaal and Glen-Worden attend schools outside their home attendance zone (*also typically the two village schools*) because their daycare is in those zones.

That's a total of at least 100 students – 8.4 percent of the total 1,183 elementary students – who are at schools other than their home school.

“We can't continue to do this,” said Superintendent Susan Swartz. “It isn't fair to new families who buy a home here only to be told that their child will be bused miles away where there is a seat available.”

And yet, for years, that is exactly what would happen when families moved to the Glen-Worden and Glendaal elementary school zones. Those students would typically opt to stay at that school after the first year and would continue their elementary career there.

Swartz was scheduled to propose an option to resolve the issue to the Board of Education Nov. 13. A public hearing before the board would be held in January. The date has not been set; parents will be notified through the principal newsletters. Whichever option is selected would be effective in Sept. 2007.

Trying to reach three goals

Swartz talked to three focus groups of parents about her three goals in this redistricting process:

► **Maintain equity between the four schools** in class size to ensure that all children have access to the same quality of education and special services.

► **Maintain a minimum of two sections** at the four elementary schools. Educationally, at least two sections allow for more collaboration between teachers and also makes it easier to regulate class sizes.

► **Stay within the class guidelines ranges.** Those guidelines recommend 22 students per class in grades K-1, 23 in grade 2, 24 in grade 3 and 26 in grades 4 and 5.

She also compared the four schools: test scores are similar, class sizes are smaller at Lincoln and Sacandaga (*even with the “overflow” students from G-W and GD*) and each school has the same academic program and grade level expectations and similar library media centers and computer labs.

What are the options?

The focus groups explored four basic options:

► **Do Nothing.** Under this option, S-G would continue to bus children when there are not enough seats at their home school.

► **Redistrict Some Streets.** With this option, 38 students in the Sunnyside/Washington/Irving road areas would be moved from Glen-Worden to Lincoln and 58 students in the Pine Street/MacArthur Drive/Vernon Blvd./Vley Road “triangle” areas would be moved from Glendaal to Lincoln or Sacandaga.

A variation on the option extends the redrawn zones east on Sunnyside Road to Freeman's Bridge Road (*an additional 18 students*) in the Glen-Worden-to-Lincoln case and west on Vley Road to Route 5 in the Glendaal-to-Lincoln/Sacandaga case (*an additional 11 students*).

► **Establish swing zones.** This option would involve the same streets as redistricting, above. Under this option, students currently in the zone would remain at their current school. Siblings of current students would also attend the current school. New families would be switched to the new zone. After a number of years, the area would be effectively redistricted.

► **Close an elementary school.** This would most likely be Lincoln due to the size of its enrollment and location. Lincoln students would be sent to Glendaal, Glen-Worden and/or Sacandaga.

Swartz noted that, under any of these options, she plans to over time end most special permissions that allow families to select daycare outside of their home attendance zone. Families would have to find daycare in their home attendance zones.

As well, she would request an additional two staffing positions in S-G's budget to allow her flexibility in case there were surges of new students in a single grade as happened this year. In that case, she'd be able to add grade sections where needed. 📍



S-G Recognitions

A small sampling of the many wonderful things happening among the students and staff in your school district.



600 S-G students and community members create Christmas ornaments

Just call it “Christmas in October” at Scotia-Glenville. More than 600 Scotia-Glenville students and six community organizations made ornaments that will adorn the New York state Christmas tree in Washington in December.

Scotia-Glenville is the *only* organization in the state to create and send 50 ornaments to be placed on the state Christmas tree in Washington during December.

Each group at the school selected one ornament to be sent to Washington. The remaining ornaments have been displayed on Christmas trees at locations around the district. The ornaments are sold for \$1. The proceeds benefit Free the Children.

“We have had a wonderful response from our students and community,” said Elle Taubner, coordinator of the district-wide event and a teaching assistant at Glendaal. “It is a chance for everybody to put their own mark on a national symbol.”

Students were asked to create ornaments that reflect the character of New York and the unique ways students bring peace to their school and community.

The overall program is called The Christmas Pageant for Peace. The Christmas Pageant of Peace is a month long exhibit of the National Christmas Tree and 57 smaller trees representing the states and US territories.

The Christmas Pageant for Peace is held every year in Washington, D.C. on The Ellipse of The White House. The New York State Christmas Tree stands six to seven feet tall alongside other state trees.

In 1923, President Calvin Coolidge lit the First National Christmas Tree. The tree stood alone until 1954 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower introduced the Pathway to Peace featuring a row of smaller state trees. ❄️



Attention kindergarten parents

The Transitional Kindergarten program will be changed during the first three weeks of January.

Superintendent Susan Swartz told the Board of Education that the program day will *not* be extended from Jan. 2-19 as has been the custom in the past.

Current afternoon students will still come in the morning beginning Jan. 2. The combined classes of morning and afternoon students will be dismissed at 12 noon from Jan. 2-19. In the past, the classes were dismissed at 12:45 p.m..

Beginning on Jan. 22, *all* kindergarten pupils will attend school for a full day for the rest of the school year.

This is being done, she said, because the district added bus routes this year to accommodate students who were bused because of overcrowding at G-W (see page 6). That left the district with a shortage of buses and drivers to make the traditional 12:45 p.m. runs with Transitional Kindergarten and still get back in time for the out of district bus runs.

Parents will receive letters outlining this change. ❄️

2006-07 school tax rate reflects new assessments in Scotia and Glenville

Typical annual tax bill increases by \$86; STAR reimbursement rises dramatically

Scotia-Glenville's school tax rate in Glenville dropped by nearly \$10 per \$1,000 of assessment, reflecting higher property values and the reassessment of 11,000 properties.

The Board of Education unanimously adopted new tax rates in August for the 2006-07 school year.

Only Glenville is now at full-value; the other parts of the district are at partial value. The rates for the three areas in the Scotia-Glenville School District are:

- ▶ Glenville: \$19.21 per \$1,000 assessed value (2005-06 rate: \$29.11 per \$1,000)
- ▶ Amsterdam: \$173.83 per \$1,000 assessed value (2005-06 rate: \$162.59 per \$1,000)
- ▶ Charlton: \$22.87 per \$1,000 assessed value (2005-06 rate: \$21.54 per \$1,000)

Last year, the average school tax bill for a home assessed at \$100,000 in Glenville was \$2,911 before savings from the STAR program.

Because of the increase in property values, the average home in Scotia-Glenville is now assessed at an estimated \$156,000. That means a school tax bill of \$2,997, an increase of \$86 or 2.9 percent.

Of course, each property owner's tax bill was unique depending on the change in their particular assessment.

Scotia-Glenville's Calendar of Events

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thursday-Friday, Nov. 23-24
Thanksgiving Day recess ▶ Monday, Nov. 27
Board of Education meeting, Middle School ▶ Monday, Dec. 11
Board of Education meeting, Middle School ▶ Monday, Dec. 18
Board of Education meeting, Middle School ▶ Monday-Monday, Dec. 25-Jan. 1
Christmas/holiday recess ▶ Monday, Jan. 8
Board of Education meeting, District Office, Lark Street | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Monday, Jan. 22
Board of Education meeting, Lincoln Elementary ▶ Friday, Jan. 26
HALF DAY for students, gr. 6-12 ▶ Wednesday, Jan. 31
HALF DAY for students, gr. K-5 ▶ Monday, February 12
Board of Education meeting, Glen-Worden Elementary ▶ Monday-Friday, Feb. 19-23
President's Day/winter recess ▶ Monday, February 26
Board of Education meeting, Middle School |
|---|--|

All Board of Education meetings begin at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted. Please call 382-1215 if you have any questions about time or locations.

When voters approved the budget in May, the district estimated the typical tax bill would rise 3 percent or less.

The reassessment caused the state's reimbursement for basic STAR to increase to \$39,070 and for enhanced STAR (for property owners over age 65 with income qualifications) to increase to \$73,970. If a property owner is enrolled in the STAR program, the home's assessment is reduced by those amounts before the tax bill is computed.

In addition, the state mailed each S-G property owner STAR-based rebate checks of \$207.72 for basic STAR and \$346.89 for enhanced STAR. The state Legislature approved the rebate checks in the spring. 🍁

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