

Principals' Reports for September 2020

Celebrations

ALBANY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

We are open again! Students and staff are back in the building, and everybody is happy to be back. The transition to our new safety routines just took a couple of weeks, and now we are settled to new routines and customs. One of the benefits of the masks and all the hand sanitizer is that we have quite a bit less respiratory illness in the building than in years past, which means less absenteeism. This also makes it easier to focus on symptoms that might actually be problematic.

We are also celebrating that we have been able to sustain our soccer team for a second year. Anything that contributes to a feeling of normalcy is a positive.

BARTON ACADEMY AND GRADED SCHOOL

Students and staff are happy to be back in the building. Everyday, we have a virtual schoolwide "Tiger Time" to build community and integrate mindful practices and movement breaks into our day. Although we started a couple weeks late, we are thankful to be able to offer soccer to our middle school students.

BROWNINGTON CENTRAL SCHOOL

BCS students and staff were excited to return - even to a changed school. By the end of September, the systems had been tweaked and smoothed. Things feel pretty close to normal at BCS these days.

Brownington Central School will receive a VTPBIS Certificate of Recognition for maintaining and sustaining the PBIS framework during COVID-19 school building closures. This is a great recognition of the hard work of so many staff during the shutdown. One key highlight was the weekly Virtual Bear Cave Weekly Meeting (videos available on our youtube channel).

GLOVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Glover staff and students have had a very positive start to the school year. The focus has been on setting routines and expectations, building positive relationships, understanding learning styles, accepting all members of the staff and student body, and social-emotional wellbeing. Students have outlined their hopes and dreams for the year, helped to create classroom rules, and have started to set goals.

IRASBURG VILLAGE SCHOOL

Irasburg had a great reopening of school. Planning over the summer certainly helped alleviate some anxiety of staff and students. Everyone is very happy to be back in the routines of learning, even if those routines look different. IVS took advantage of an opportunity to obtain and distribute boxes of produce to families that requested them. We had 60 Farmers' Food Boxes that were composed of 25 lbs of produce (sweet potatoes, onions, squash, celery, etc) and were able to share some of them with other schools' families.

ORLEANS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Orleans has had a great start to the school year. We quickly fine-tuned procedures such as arrival, dismissal, lunch, and mask breaks. Everyone is happy to be back in school. Our soccer team began with two wins and students are thankful for that piece of normalcy. Teachers are focusing on what we CAN do rather than what we CAN'T do.

OCSU REMOTE ACADEMY

The ORA staff worked together in August and September to start a brand new school. The work was not easy, but this team works really well together and they are very positive.

Focus on Learning & Equity

ALBANY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Our emphasis in the first weeks has been on social emotional well-being, and on teaching kids to use Google Classroom and other apps so that they are self-sufficient in the event of short-term or long-term closure. The students relaxed, there are fewer behavior problems, and I anticipate that all of this will be time well spent as we pivot into our academic program.

We have a tremendous teaching staff, which is mostly intact for a second year, and we have some new paras who are off to a great start. With a full-time school counselor, 4 days/week of school-based clinicians, and Project WeRHope coaches on campus, we have the supports in place for kids to be successful accessing the curriculum. These supports are a key component of establishing equity for our students. At ACS, we do the foundational work to assure learning.

BARTON GRADED SCHOOL

At Barton, we strive to create a learning environment in which students, staff and families feel welcome, safe, valued and heard. We see self-care and mindful practices as central to an integrated approach to not only teach students academically but also provide social emotional skills and techniques that build resilience and wellness--essential qualities in these challenging times. One of the top priorities to start the school year has been social-emotional learning. Schoolwide, we are continuing to implement a restorative approach. Students and staff have been engaging in restorative conversations. With this approach, everyone can learn how to have a conversation that leads to engagement, peaceful resolution, learning, and repair instead of escalation, disengagement, and/or exclusion. This newsletter was sent out to families to share the work we are doing around restorative practices <https://www.smores.com/jfv9g>.

We have also used Titles and Medicaid funding to partner with [WeRHope](#) this school year. We have a part-time coach who works one on one with students to help them build strategies and work through everyday anxiety.

We recently administered literacy and mathematics assessments to all students and have begun to analyze this student data. Our goal is to identify essential learning objectives and make decisions about instruction models and targeted interventions.

I have met individually with all teaching staff to discuss their TEP goals for the 2020-2021 school year or our formal evaluation process. Many teachers have one goal focused on restorative practices.

BROWNINGTON CENTRAL SCHOOL

Teachers in grades K-8 are in the beginning stages of implementing Expeditionary Learning. EL is a humanities program with a strong social justice component appropriate to the grade level. We have engaged with Teaching Lab to provide ongoing training and support for EL. In addition, the middle school humanities teacher is developing additional lessons concerning racial justice in the USA. Finally, every staff member participated in OCSU Anti-Bias Training and additional building-based discussions.

All grades spent the beginning weeks of school reestablishing relationships and school culture before assessing student skills and achievement. Now that the first round of testing is complete, the faculty will have a better understanding of the learning needs of the students.

GLOVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

See Glover's second newsletter at <https://www.smore.com/749c6-the-eagle-s-eye>.

IRASBURG VILLAGE SCHOOL

As is true in other schools, we started the year concentrating on the social-emotional needs of students, knowing that after the long time out of school, the students needed additional support. Teachers then began assessing students to determine what skills they needed to spend extra time on due to the extended time away, and also to determine individual accomplishments and progress. Teachers have also been instructing students using Google Classroom to ensure that they will have those skills if schools need to go completely remote again this year.

Our new, full-time guidance counselor has been able to begin developing relationships with students and staff and will be able to provide ongoing support as needed.

ORLEANS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Orleans teachers led the SU in Equity training before school started and are providing ongoing resources for all staff. All staff are dedicated and doing an amazing job every single day. Students are eager to share their learning experiences and I'm so proud when I walk around and visit classrooms. Staff are using a variety of online resources to connect students to learning that they will be able to continue in the event of a closure.

OCSU REMOTE ACADEMY

Learning: The ORA teachers are providing a mix of synchronous and asynchronous lessons to students. All teachers have a Google Classroom where they post schedules, assignments, and meeting links. Students use Google Classroom to upload their work and to access teacher feedback.

Teachers have spent the last couple of weeks assessing students so that they can group them for instruction purposes. They're using assessments like Fountas and Pinnell benchmarking, the POA, Star Math, and Star Reading.

Equity: Families with health concerns have access to a learning option that doesn't involve entering a building with others. These families have been provided devices and can also pick up 2 free meals for their school-age children each day. However, families without proper internet access cannot choose the OCSU Remote Academy as an option. They must choose in-person instruction or home study.

Staffing

ALBANY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

ACS has a full complement of teachers, and an effective mix of new and experienced people. With the exception of a single special educator, the teaching staff is together for the second year in a row, which is a real plus for a school. We have sufficient paraeducators. We are using a long-term sub for kitchen assistant.

BARTON ACADEMY AND GRADED SCHOOL

At this time, we are short one paraprofessional at Barton. Kye Randall has been filling in as a substitute. He has applied for this special education paraprofessional position and we hope to offer him a full-time position. We have had two teachers quarantining for extended periods of time and have been doing our best to fill this vacancy. The CEC program is also short-staffed. They still need and are advertising for two paraprofessional positions.

BROWNINGTON CENTRAL SCHOOL

Our new Nurse Assistant started a couple weeks ago. She is making great progress getting to know the kids and the protocols.

We are planning on hiring our current long term substitute teacher, Noah Racine, to be a full time teacher so that we can alleviate overcrowding in the middle school. While the exact configuration has not been determined yet, we will make a change at the end of November when Noah is fully available.

Our part-time, day custodian has given his notice. Joe Houston is searching for a replacement.

GLOVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

We had to withdraw an offer to hire a school counselor at the end of September. The candidate kept pushing back her start date, and hadn't yet committed to moving to Vermont.

We advertised for a school counselor and within a week we had a viable applicant who grew up in OCSU. She's committed to working in the area. We ask that the Board approves her hiring so that we can get her into the building right away.

Because students cannot be grouped together other than in their cohorts, it takes a lot more staff members to cover lunch and recess duties. We are stretched really thin. I've been covering duties that are assigned to the school counselor position, which means that until this person starts, there is no backup for student coverage from 11:15-12:30 each day. Generally we would have more than one specials teacher in the building on certain days of the week which helps with coverage, but this year Glover only ever has one specials teacher in the building. If we have staff members out and cannot find a sub, it is likely that we'll need to initiate a short-term closure for at least part of the student body.

IRASBURG VILLAGE SCHOOL

Our new 4th/5th math and science teacher needed to resign his position and we have advertised, but have not received any applications to date. Frank Daigneault has agreed to a long-term sub position for the month of October and we hope to fill the permanent position by that time.

We are also interviewing for a paraeducator to fill a mostly 1:1 position in the early grades.

Our full-time nurse is now working only 3 days a week at IVS due to a need at another elementary school. Hopefully, they will be able to hire someone soon.

Thank you for making full-time guidance counselor positions at the elementary schools a priority. We can already see the impact of having someone in this position here every day.

ORLEANS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Nothing new to report. All new hires are in place and happy to be working at OES!

OCSU REMOTE ACADEMY

ORA is fully staffed. We will begin planning for a parental leave in May that we are aware of.

Hazing, Harassment, Bullying Investigations

Principals and some designee attended training with Heather Lynn on September 16th and October 7th.

ALBANY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

No investigations.

BARTON ACADEMY AND GRADED SCHOOL

One unsubstantiated investigation.

BROWNINGTON CENTRAL SCHOOL

Two investigations: one substantiated for bullying, one unsubstantiated.

GLOVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

No investigations.

IRASBURG VILLAGE SCHOOL

No investigations at this time.

ORLEANS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Two investigations: one substantiated for harassment, one unsubstantiated.

OCSU REMOTE ACADEMY

No investigations.