



# ICHABOD CRANE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## RIDER PRIDE: More than just a catchphrase

A new school year is always energizing, as our diverse community of staff and students come together once again, united under the colors of blue and white and our shared and strong Rider Pride.

We see Rider Pride in the faces of students as they continue their educational journeys in an array of subject areas; at sporting events, where both the Rider players and spectators support each other through the competition; and across state lines, as our extraordinary Marching Band performs under the scarlet, amber and tangerine-colored fall foliage.

This school year, the autumn breeze has seemed to bring a renewed sense of normalcy. We know in life tough times and challenges will always happen, but we also know that our ICC community will continue to be Rider Strong.

"We have had such a positive and exciting start to the 2022-23 school year in every way," said Superintendent Suzanne Guntlow.

"We are literally able to work side-by-side again – our children can eat meals in our cafeterias and play together on our playgrounds as they create life-long friendships," she continued. "And our staff across all departments can work collaboratively in-person, to ensure that every one of our 1,700 students gets the high quality education they deserve and are entitled to."

We are once again truly united as a proud Rider family.

In September, we invited the public to our Capital Project Showcase to mark the official completion of our \$27 million project. Since the project finished, our staff are using these transformed spaces in a myriad of ways, including for new courses in the STEAM Center. None of this would have been possible without the ongoing support of the community, beginning with the project's approval in 2018.

"We are grateful for your support then, and your continued support over the past several years," said Superintendent Guntlow.

### UNITY ACROSS K-12

Last year, staff and students committed to a district-wide theme of Unity, celebrating different "character traits" throughout the year.



In our first quarter of this school year, we focused on acceptance.

We see acts of acceptance on a daily basis. Sometimes, these acts are clear to see, like at the Primary School's Unity Parade and our Spirit Week. Other times, these acts of acceptance are barely noticeable, or talked about, but they are always there.

It was a kindergartener befriending a quiet, shy boy, who wouldn't play with anyone at school. Now, the duo are often caught on the rug laughing together.

It was a group of high school students discussing current events and politics in class. They respected one another. They listened and learned from each other.

For the second quarter, which began in November, the students chose appreciation. One student said we all need to show our appreciation for each other, especially for the teachers and staff who have worked so hard during the pandemic.

Every Friday, bags full of food are sent home with students district-wide. At the Primary and Middle Schools, it is called the Backpack Program. About 30 PS students participate weekly. Last school year, 930 backpacks were distributed, equating to 11,974 meals. At the MS, about 30 students receive food weekly. Last year, 708 backpacks were sent home, translating to 7,651 meals.

This year's Coin Wars, a "competition" at the High School, raised about \$500 for Ichabod's Table. That money, coupled with a generous donation from a HS staffer in honor of her mother, brought the total to over \$1,000. Ichabod's Table provides food for about 25 students. The money was used to buy ready-to-make Thanksgiving fixings, including turkeys, potatoes, stuffing, cranberry sauce and green beans. Additionally, during the holidays, each school adopts numerous families, donating presents that are distributed to Rider families.

"We have so much appreciation for our Ichabod Crane staff and students, for all they do for each other, especially when one of our Riders is in need," said Superintendent Guntlow. "We are always here for each other, whenever and whatever is needed."

# The Capital Project & its Academic Impact

It all started when ICC district residents voted in December 2018, approving the Capital Project. The project included big changes for our three-building campus, involving a series of complex renovations and construction that would enhance our academic programming, athletics, health and safety, and infrastructure.

Nearly four years later, ICC officials announced the project's completion. After years of intensive planning around utilization and academic programming, some of the well-thought-out ideas have come to fruition.

"The Capital Project has required and continues to call for input from staff district-wide, training on brand-new, complex machines, introduction of new academic offerings, and a very holistic and deliberate approach about how we continue to grow into what the project created," said Assistant Superintendent Lucas Christensen.

The High School guidance suite was one of the first projects completed, which was transformed into a more welcoming space. This space and its staff are a critical part of the district's continued success related to our graduation rates. In fact, last school year (2021-22), the district surpassed its goal of 95 percent by 2024 – with a 97.8 percent graduation rate.

From the High School's rear exterior, you can see the outside of the state-of-the-art STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Arts and Mathematics) Center. The center was created to empower our students to ask thought-provoking questions and for our teachers and students to collaborate using project-based learning that crosses each of the five disciplines. No longer are these core subjects in their own silos.

"I just love our high school," said HS Principal Craig Shull. "The new additions and renovations are allowing us to provide new experiences and greater opportunities.

The center has a Computer Assisted Design lab, and automotive, metal, and wood shops. This year, the High School added two new courses: Automotive Technology 1, a full-year course; and Materials Processing/Production, a half-year metals course.

Math and Technology teachers collaborated and co-taught a lesson to build trebuchets. The High School also has a Tech Club, which has expanded its projects and activities. Students have practiced tungsten inert gas (tig) welding and are working with the Primary School to create a new building sign. After growing interest, an Auto Club was approved by the school board in November.



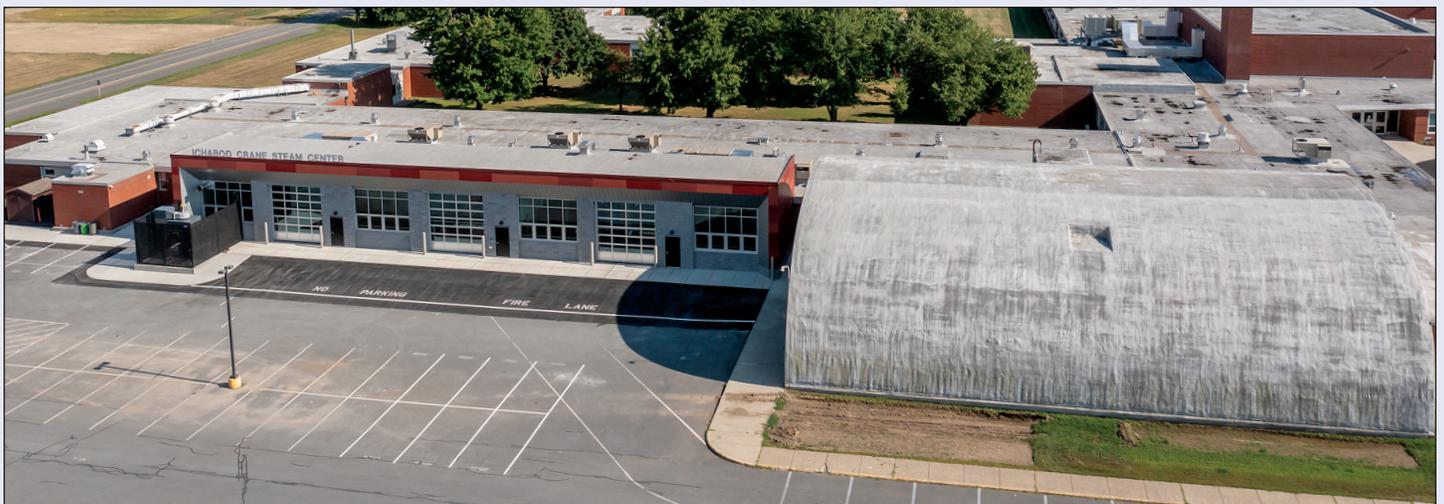
The STEAM Center also inspired the new Internship Program, as staff recognized our students' need for outside experience in their interested fields of study and employment. This semester, seven students are embedded in local institutions of education, real estate, business, sports information, and physical therapy.

In a different section of the High School, eight science rooms were extensively renovated so labs and lectures can be taught in the same spaces, by the same teachers.

"It has made a huge difference for me and my fellow science teachers," said Cori Drummond, science teacher and department head. "It allows us to keep the curriculum and labs at the same pace, resulting in a greater educational impact, and more accountability and consistency."

At the Middle School, the building's wings, known as pods, were completely renovated, resulting in stunning new learning spaces. The former gymnasium was also gutted to make way for a new, enlarged, premier gymnasium. For the first time, the entire MS student body and staff have a space where they can all gather. In September, everyone attended an assembly hosted by Chris Poulos, a world champion athlete and youth motivational speaker.

"It is overwhelmingly gratifying after so many years of planning, meetings, and hard work by so many to see our spaces come to life," said Superintendent Suzanne Guntlow. "This is just the beginning. The possibilities are endless, and I cannot wait to see where our planning and commitment takes us and our students."



# If You See Something, Say Something: Keeping ICC Safe

A school safety consultant that spoke to the entire ICC High School body wanted them to take away one message the most – “if you see something, say something.”

Malcolm Toffolo, from Needham Risk Management, spoke to the student body and staff about school safety. In July, Needham started working for the district as the new school health and safety consultants.

This summer, Needham conducted a series of trainings for all staff. At the recent HS assembly, Malcolm shared some of the same information that was presented in the summer sessions, bringing the students and staff on the same page when it comes to various school safety measures and policies – a critical component to keeping our ICC family safe.

This assembly was just one of many efforts that ICC has undertaken to maintain school safety as one of the district’s top priorities.

During the summer, Needham worked side-by-side with our administrators to review individual building safety plans as well as the district-wide plan, which was adopted at the Aug. 16 school board meeting. This new partnership with Needham allowed the district to greatly expand professional development around safety, not only with our staff but also our substitutes. The additional training opportunities focused on playground safety, CPR, first aid and more.

On September 8, we hosted a Community Safety Forum, where Needham representatives gave an overview of the SAVE (Safe Schools Against Violence in Education) law, summarized the collaborative work they have done district-wide over the last several months, and discussed future plans at ICC.

Every day, ICC administrators and staff use the district’s safety plan as a blueprint to ensure that all of our buildings are safe and secure. This includes having a “closed campus,” which means all school buildings are closed to the public during school hours. Every day, a School Resource Deputy, employed by the Columbia County Sheriff’s Office, is also on



campus. Additionally, the district adheres to a strict policy regarding locked doors.

Each school building is required by state law to perform 12 emergency drills each year. Of those 12 drills, eight must be evacuation drills (fire drills), and the remaining four must be lockdown drills.

## BEING PROACTIVE INSTEAD OF REACTIVE

Mental health awareness, interventions and in-district professionals continue to be essential components of each of our buildings. We strive to be proactive, rather than reactive.

Using grant funds to support this ongoing mental health initiative, the district has hired

an additional school psychologist and school counselor this year, on top of a social worker who was hired in 2021-2022.

We continue to partner with the Columbia County Department of Mental Health, who has provided a social worker onsite one day each week. Counselors went into classrooms in September, and we continue to finetune our social and emotional learning curriculum to use with the students.

During the back-to-school professional development days, the Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA) provided Middle and High School staffers with presentations and workshops focusing on student mental health and engagement. They emphasized how to build community district-wide, to best support our children’s mental health, to identify potential needs, and how to connect children and families with area resources and treatment.

“Teaching and normalizing mental health in our schools is essential,” said Superintendent Suzanne Guntlow. “Our students spend most of their days here in our classrooms. Prioritizing mental health makes sense as it leads to better outcomes both from a social and emotional perspective, as well as an academic one. It empowers our students to seek help when they need it.”

## Wall of Fame is accepting nominations

We are accepting applications for the Wall of Fame! We want to continue to recognize and honor the contributions of the diverse group of graduates, former employees, volunteers and friends of the district. These individuals have achieved noteworthy accomplishments in their fields or in service to the district.

Eligible candidates can be nominated by anyone (except themselves). Nominees can be living or deceased. Application packets must be completed and turned in by the deadline, February 27, 2023.

For more information, visit <https://www.ichabodcrane.org/district/wall-of-fame/>

## Supt. Guntlow announces retirement

Superintendent of Schools Suzanne Guntlow recently announced her plans to retire from ICCSD at the end of the 2022-23 academic year. Her retirement will conclude a 23 year career in education with a nearly decade-long tenure in the district, including roles in several leadership positions.



During transitions involving several superintendents, Superintendent Guntlow stepped up and provided consistency in leadership through critical times, ensuring that administrators and staff stayed focused on their students and the district’s comprehensive goals and innovative initiatives.

The Board of Education has started a collaborative process to search for the next district superintendent and is committed to engaging stakeholder input.

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Jennifer Allard  
Elaine Berlin  
John Chandler  
Kelly Firmbach  
Meghan Lafferty-Brown  
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**CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION**

Suzanne Guntlow, *Superintendent*  
Lucas Christensen, *Assistant Superintendent*  
Michael Brennan, *Business Manager*

**DISTRICT OFFICE**

518-758-7575

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## Postal Customer

**NON-DISCRIMINATION COMPLIANCE STATEMENT:** The Ichabod Crane Central School District hereby advises students, parents, employees, and the general public that it offers educational opportunities including vocational opportunities without regard to sex, race, color, national origin, handicap or religion. Inquiries regarding this non-discrimination policy may be directed to: Title IX Compliance Officer, Suzanne Guntlow, and Section 504 Compliance Officer, Peg Warner, at 758-7575, Ichabod Crane Central School District, Valatie, NY 12184. A copy of the "In Compliance with Section 1.4 (a)" is available in the Superintendent's Office.

*Produced by Questar III Communications Service*



## Fall Athletic Teams exemplify our Rider Pride

We are so proud of ICC's Fall Athletic Teams, who came together to represent our district, consistently exemplifying respect, acceptance, unity and Rider Pride, on and off the fields and courts.

*Some noteworthy items from the Fall Season (as of November 4):*

- Varsity Girls Tennis won the Sectional and Regional Championships, and competed in the State Semifinals on November 4.
- Varsity Boys Golf won the sectional team Class C championship.
- Varsity Boys Football competed in Sectionals at Schuylerville. This is the second time that the team has made sectionals since the program started in 2009.
- Varsity Girls Volleyball was awarded the #1 seed and won Section 2 Class B Semifinals.

## ICC Musicians excelled this fall

*Here are some highlights:*

- The Riders Marching Band performed in the North Adams Fall Foliage parade in October. The theme of this year's parade was "Holiday's On Parade" which our group took to the next level and decorated their instruments in Halloween costumes.
- The Marching Band attended the UMass Amherst Band Day, where they joined over 2,000 other students on the field to play at the halftime show for UMass vs. Liberty University.
- Members of the Marching Band and Chorus performed at the Capital Project Showcase in September.
- Six members of the High School Chorus were selected for the annual Area All State Music Festival.

