



ICHABOD CRANE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- ▶ Emotional Well-Being as a Safety Measure
- ▶ New College-Level Automotive Course
- ▶ ICC Musician Chosen for All-State

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Rider Goals 2027: Charting the Course for the Future



Our mission at ICCSD is to prepare students to become contributing members of society in an ever-changing world. This is no small feat for a school district and requires a school community to carefully articulate strategic priorities and a vision for the future.

Currently, our strategic priorities are expressed through the Board of Education's Rider Goals 2024. Through these goals and the targets that are designed to support them, the administration, faculty and staff focus on improving academic outcomes, increasing access to social and emotional supports, technology integration, sustainable facilities planning and fiscal responsibility.

"Setting long-term goals allows us as a district to reflect on the progress we have made and to implement programs to keep us on track in order to achieve our goals," said Lara Marotta, an 8th grade social studies teacher, who sits on the Riders Pathway 6-12 Team. "The district's robust, inclusive long-term planning process has yielded numerous outstanding programs, including various initiatives designed to provide essential support to K-12 students in need."

It is now time to start thinking about our next set of strategic priorities: Rider Goals 2027 and it is essential that each member of our Rider community – students, families, faculty, staff and school leaders – share their perspectives and contribute to the design of our path forward. This updated roadmap will inform our decisions, and as always, will be rooted in best practices, research and data.

"The future at ICC is certainly bright, thanks in large part to the strategic thinking that went into developing our previous set of Rider Goals. As a school community, we've taken a proactive approach, leveraging our accumulated knowledge, while remaining open-minded to new ideas and approaches," Superintendent Marie Digirolamo said.

"Our goal is ultimately to design learning experiences and environments that foster innovation, creativity and curiosity. I look forward to hearing what our Rider community envisions for our future, especially our students, who continue to impress me with their thoughtful perspectives about the path ahead," Superintendent Digirolamo said.

As we think about the future of teaching and learning at Ichabod, we know that our 1,700 students deserve the highest quality instructional program that we can offer. A collaborative design of Rider Goals 2027 creates an incredible opportunity to reflect on our instructional programming, curriculum resources, and student and adult spaces for learning – **to ask ourselves a few of the following questions:**

- What are some of the most important things for us to keep in mind as we plan together for the future of our academic programs and facilities?
- What are some important ways we can ensure that Ichabod is a future-focused district?
- Imagine we're 5-10 years in the future and we've become the very best district we can be. What does it look and feel like to be part of our school community and how did we make it happen together?
- **Students:** What skills and knowledge do you want to have when you graduate? What are the careers/ways in which you want to impact the world?

Community engagement is key to building a shared vision of the future of teaching and learning together. In the near future, we will reach out to connect with members of the ICC community to pose these and additional questions, marking the beginning of the design process of Rider Goals 2027. We are eager for the collaboration and goal-setting ahead.

PRIORITIZING EMOTIONAL WELLNESS: A Fundamental School Safety Strategy at ICC

Several times each week, Amy Stephenson, Primary School counselor, visits classrooms in our K-3 school to teach our students about social-emotional learning (SEL), using interactive and hands-on lessons based on Second Step, a research-based curriculum.

During a session with one of our third-grade classes, Ms. Stephenson gathered the students in a circle. She emphasized the significance of meaningful conversations, especially with their peers, and introduced the concept of empathy. The students engaged in exercises where they conversed with their classmates, posing questions like, “What makes you feel proud,” and “What makes you feel angry?”

This is one of the many ways that the district supports the emotional wellness of our students and staff. This primary emphasis serves as a proactive and preventative measure that contributes to a safer learning environment. It fosters a culture of well-being, deep connections and open communication.

“School safety is about taking care of students’ and staff’s physical and emotional needs,” Superintendent Marie Digirolamo said. “When we teach our students how to care for each other, how to process big feelings in productive ways and how to manage conflict, we are giving them valuable tools that ultimately help to build safe and supportive school communities.”

Every day, the dedicated professionals in our K-12 Counseling Department, including psychologists, school counselors and a full-time social worker, work collaboratively and diligently to ensure that both our students and staff receive the necessary support and interventions for them to thrive in safe and nurturing environments.

This takes on many different forms in our three buildings – individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, risk assessment, ongoing professional development in research-based programs and referrals to necessary out-of-district services.

At the Primary School, the Counseling Team also hosts lunchtime social skills groups for students. These sessions include feelings check-ins and provide opportunities for students to learn about emotional expression and self-regulation. This safe and nurturing environment provides a place where our Lil Riders can share personal stories about their lives.



The Counseling Team at the Middle School also visits classrooms in grades 4 and 5, where they cover a diverse range of topics including perseverance, friendship, study skills, emotional control and addressing bullying. Counselors meet individually with all students in grades 6-8 for goal setting, as well as a general assessment to gauge each student’s progress and well-being.

Last year, the High School introduced “Circles,” an instructional strategy that fosters connections between staff and students by facilitating discussions in a circular format. This approach encourages open conversations in our classrooms about important and timely topics. This year, students have also shifted from short five-minute Homerooms to longer Advisory sessions, with the main goal of strengthening bonds between students.

At the district level, our Wellness Committee consistently assesses our health, physical education and SEL curricula. They also administer a mental health check-in survey sent to all students in grades 6-12. Additionally, the district has a Crisis Response Team, complete with a corresponding Crisis Response Plan that can be activated as needed. Each school has a social service dog, who has become a beloved member of the Rider family.

“Prioritizing healthy social skills, empathy and emotional intelligence helps build positive relationships and fosters an open, supportive culture that encourages help-seeking when needed,” said Beth Ruiz, psychologist at the High School. “All of us in the K-12 Counseling Department work collaboratively across grades and buildings to ensure our students feel supported and safe on a daily basis.”

Get to Know Superintendent Marie Digirolamo

- I’ve salsa danced for the past 15 years, one of my favorite ways to exercise. I love being a part of the large Latin dance community in the Capital Region.
- I do yoga every Sunday morning. It helps me manage stress and is a key part of finding balance in a busy life.
- My husband is from Paris, France. We speak French at home and he makes me laugh in multiple languages!
- I am very close with my family. I see my mom, sisters, their spouses, and my niece and nephew most Sundays for dinner.
- I’ve visited my family in Sicily four times with different American relatives. I continue the traditions I learned there, like Sunday dinners surrounded by family.

Wall of Fame is Accepting Nominations

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 26, 2024.

For more information, visit

<https://www.ichabodcrane.org/district/wall-of-fame/>

Full STEAM Ahead: Power of Partnerships

The addition of our brand-new STEAM Wing at the High School has continued to foster collaborations and partnerships in and out of the district, providing our students greater access to a wide array of courses.

One of the notable partnerships has taken place with Columbia-Greene Community College. Since September, nine ICC students have been enrolled in Introduction to Automotive Repair, AU 128, a Columbia-Greene Community College course, being taught at the High School by Joseph Zink, one of our technology teachers.

Upon successful completion, ICC students will earn four credits through CGCC's College in the High School Program (CIHS). The course is taught in ICC's new STEAM Wing in the High School – a key accomplishment of the district's most recent Capital Project, which concluded in September last year.

"It continues to be amazing to see the STEAM Wing come to life. I am so grateful to the team at Columbia-Greene who worked tirelessly with us to make AU 128 a reality," **High School Principal Craig Shull said.** *"Since the STEAM Wing's inception, we have added new courses and created new collaborations that have benefited our students greatly as they approach their final years at Ichabod Crane."*

The completion of the STEAM Wing gave ICC the infrastructure it needed to bring this college-level course to our High School, as well as new courses in metals, robotics and beginner programming.

"This was a multi-year, collaborative project that would not be possible without the strong support we received from the school district and Columbia-Greene's Automotive Technology department," **said Christy Ward, Director of Columbia-Greene's CIHS Program.** *"We're excited for this unique opportunity to offer a technical education course at one of our local high schools. We hope the experience will help students solidify their interest in the field of automotive technology offering them many exciting career opportunities that are in high demand."*



The course introduces students to the field of automotive technology, helping them develop the skills, knowledge and professional ethics necessary to begin as an entry-level technician. This course is one of several available to Ichabod Crane High School students through Columbia-Greene's CIHS program.

In a recent Introduction to Automotive Repair class, the Ichabod Crane students were introduced to tire machines. Mr. Zink guided them as they removed the tires from the vehicle, which was suspended in the air on a lift.

ICC senior Scott Bertram said he values the opportunity to learn more about automotive repair, a topic he is interested in, before college. If he does decide to pursue the field, he will have the advantage of four college credits upon successful completion of the course.

"I really like the course," **Scott Bertram said.** *"It is very interactive and hands-on."*

This partnership is just one example of ICC's recognition of the diverse interests of our student body and our unwavering commitment to ensure that every Rider student has a HS pathway that provides them with the knowledge and skills needed for college, careers, the military - or wherever their journey leads.

Each year, dozens of our High School students are enrolled in CTE (Career and Technical Education) programs hosted by Questar III and Capital Region BOCES, where they delve into an extensive array of subjects, such as aviation, health care, construction technologies, cosmetology, criminal justice, culinary arts, visual and performing arts, education, and many other fields.





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Produced by Questar III Communications Service



ICC Junior Selected for All-State Chorus

ICC Junior Lauren Stigi was selected for the prestigious All-State Mixed Chorus as an Alto I.

She will rehearse and perform with students from across New York at the acclaimed Eastman Theatre in Rochester during NYSSMA's annual Winter Conference that begins in late November.

To be considered for the ensemble, Lauren performed a solo audition and sight read for an All-State adjudicator. Only those with a perfect or near perfect score are up for consideration. NYSSMA, the New York State School Music Association, is the largest state affiliate of the National Association for Music Education.

We are so proud of Lauren for this amazing achievement!

Enhanced Access to Rider Sporting Events

Effective in September, ICC no longer charges entry fees at home athletic events – a change made possible through a district-wide collaboration.

ICCSD sporting events provide an excellent opportunity to support our student-athletes and coaches, and to show off our Rider Pride. Our athletic competitions also foster and promote teamwork, community engagement and the importance of physical activity on our overall health.

This decision is part of our commitment to enhancing accessibility to our sporting events for the entire community.

FYI: Fees will be collected by Section 2 in the event that we host sectional competitions on campus.



For additional information, visit the District's Website at WWW.ICHABODCRANE.ORG