



# GATES CHILI

## CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Winter Newsletter 2020

## Gates Chili educators working towards *equity for all*

For years, schools have focused on equality, aiming to provide an educational environment equal for all students. In recent times, that paradigm has shifted to equity, that is, giving everyone what they need to be successful. This shift is due in part to a better understanding of the importance of culturally-responsive education and the identification of disproportionality.

Culturally-responsive education (CR-E) is an approach that recognizes the importance of including various cultural references in all aspects of learning. CR-E ensures that instruction and learning environment reflects the needs of all students to support their overall success. Currently, Gates Chili students are achieving at disproportionate, or different, rates.

The work to overcome this disproportionality at Gates Chili has been methodical and strategic. It began in 2018, with administrators and building principals. The circle of educators widened in the summer of 2019, with more administrators being added to the team for training. This fall, Gates Chili teachers, school-related professionals, Board of Education members and parents came together to form the Root Cause team.

**“ This work is crucial to the success of every student. When we create an equitable school system, every student benefits. ”**

- David Lopez, Founding Senior Equity Associate, New York University

“Through the Root Cause process, we are co-identifying the beliefs, policies, and practices contributing to disproportionality and providing solutions through an iterative process,” said David Lopez, founding senior equity associate with the New York University: Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools.

Since September 2019, the Root Cause team has been working with Lopez to identify the underlying causes of disproportionality at Gates Chili. By spring of this year, the team will create a strategic, multi-year plan to improve outcomes for all students.

“David is helping us analyze our data and create a plan specific to Gates Chili so that we can create equitable opportunities that help all children thrive,” said Jason deJong, director of pupil personnel services. “Creating and cultivating relationships with our students and

families will further this work over the next three to five years and beyond.”

Gates Chili’s efforts around culturally-responsive education fit into the New York State framework for Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CR-SE). A core tenet of CR-SE is high expectations and rigorous instruction for all students.

“A common misconception is that when districts work on addressing academic disparities, individuals assume that they are lowering expectations for students,” Lopez continued. “We are not looking to lower our expectations of students. In fact, just the opposite; we seek to create a system that is culturally-responsive and sustaining.”

“The district’s focus on cultural responsiveness has given me a new lens to view myself and the world,” said Carol Stehm, assistant superintendent for instruction. “I’ve come to understand that we all have biases that shape words and behaviors. We can change our thoughts, words and behaviors or the lens in which we view the world, by becoming more aware of the life experiences and situations of those around us.”

You can read more about the CR-SE framework at [gateschili.org/CRSEresources](https://gateschili.org/CRSEresources).



*Together we teach and inspire excellence for all learners.*

## Letter from the Superintendent



Dear Gates Chili Community,

On behalf of the Board of Education, administration, faculty and staff of the Gates Chili Central School District, I would

like to welcome you to the spring semester of the 2019-20 school year. I hope that the fall semester was enjoyable, enriching and positive for everyone in our community.

Our secondary students have started their new courses with a renewed focus on high academic achievement. At all levels, our outstanding faculty and staff will be challenging our students to exceed expectations for another successful

year. Our drive towards excellence is a continuation of the work that has been done by our district and supported by our community for generations. In the subsequent pages of this newsletter, you will find examples of the successes we have seen so far.

Over the next few months I will be working closely with the Board of Education and district administrators to develop a student needs-based budget focused on learning, achievement and safety for all our students today and into the future. We will balance the high expectations of our community for services and programs, while recognizing changes in property values, income levels and economic uncertainties. We are committed to efficiency and finding every opportunity to provide an

education that prepares our children to be career- and college-ready when they graduate from Gates Chili.

Working together, we will arrive at a spending plan that will continue to support our goal of incrementally improving student learning, while being sensitive to our community expectations. We need and value your input. Please do not hesitate to email me at [Christopher\\_Dailey@gateschili.org](mailto:Christopher_Dailey@gateschili.org).

Go Spartans!

Christopher J. Dailey  
Superintendent of Schools

 @GatesChiliSuper

### Register for Kindergarten at Gates Chili!

**Neil Armstrong:**

Feb. 25-26 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Florence Brasser:**

Feb. 27-28 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Walt Disney:**

March 3-4 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Paul Road:**

March 5-6 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Evening registration for all schools will be held on March 10 and 12 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Gates Chili Administration Building, 3 Spartan Way.



*Children must be 5 years old by Dec. 1 in order to attend kindergarten during the 2020-21 school year.*

### UPK LOTTERY applications now being accepted

Gates Chili CSD offers a free exploratory Universal Pre-Kindergarten program that teaches kindergarten readiness, early math and literacy skills. Children must be 4 years old on or before Dec. 1, 2020. A lottery for admission will take place at the Gates Chili Administration Building on April 1 at 5 p.m. The deadline to apply for the lottery is March 31. You can find the application at [gateschili.org/UPK](http://gateschili.org/UPK).



### Reminder for elementary families

Gates Chili will share your child's progress report online through the SchoolTool Parent Portal. To learn more about how to access the SchoolTool Parent Portal, go to [gateschili.org/ParentPortalAccess](http://gateschili.org/ParentPortalAccess). If you have questions, contact your child's classroom teacher.

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# Capital Project Update

Several phases of the Gates Chili CSD Capital Project are moving ahead on schedule in the new year.

Work at Gates Chili Middle School is progressing with crews currently working in multiple areas of the building. All concrete foundations were backfilled and compacted this fall, allowing work to advance in the boys' locker room, classrooms and the core area of the building.

In the boys' locker room, crews completed abatement of flooring, rough-in of the underground plumbing and new ductwork is being installed. Crews are wrapping up the flooring and drywall work in science classrooms and underground plumbing and electrical in the FACS classroom. Structural steel in the core area was finished up just before the new year and crews are continuing roofing work in that area.

Construction is underway on the next phase of the project involving Gates Chili High School—the auditorium. Site work, including work on the parking lot, abatement and demolition began in mid-January. From now until early spring, contractors will be severing utilities to the section of building that will be demolished. Crews will begin working on new foundations in that area this spring and summer.

Work on Walt Disney and Neil Armstrong elementary schools is scheduled to begin in the spring. The entire project is scheduled to be completed in fall 2021. The latest developments can always be found on the Gates Chili website at [gateschili.org/capitalproject](http://gateschili.org/capitalproject).



## Meet our new business official

Mitchell Ball, Ed.D. has joined the Gates Chili team as Assistant Superintendent for Business. Dr. Ball comes to Gates Chili from Naples Central School District, where he served in the same capacity for the past seven years. He brings to Gates Chili extensive experience in financial management, capital project oversight and school operations.



*Mitchell J. Ball, Ed.D., SFO*

## Save the Date



Thursday, Nov. 5, 2020  
Gates Chili Field House

## GC Pride meets Pride Rock at *"The Lion King"*

As the familiar first notes of "The Circle of Life" rang out in the Auditorium Theatre, hundreds of elementary, middle and high school students cheered and watched in amazement. Within moments, students and teachers alike were captivated while the theatre was filled with a parade of animals and Pride Rock rose from within the stage.

Students spent months preparing to attend "The Lion King," the third-longest running Broadway show. Themes of the show, which include circles of community, deciding their unwinding path through life and mood through music and word choice, were embedded into existing curriculum. Creative and critical thinking, along with problem solving, were also key elements embedded into the work. As with every ARTS Partners experience, lyric and literary analysis were also key in pushing student thinking.

"Embedding the arts into our classrooms not only builds relationships, but helps our students realize they are an important piece of the picture and they make a difference," said Holly Valentine, RBTL director of education and coordinator of ARTS Partners. "It brings a new love of learning to everyone involved and enhances their curiosity, creativity and confidence."

A total of 31 buses transported students, staff and parents to the two performances of "The Lion King." Matt Helmbold, Gates Chili transportation supervisor said it was "no easy feat."

"It took a lot of careful planning and attention to detail. In the end, we helped to make sure that these students were safely transported to and from this wonderful experience," Helmbold continued.

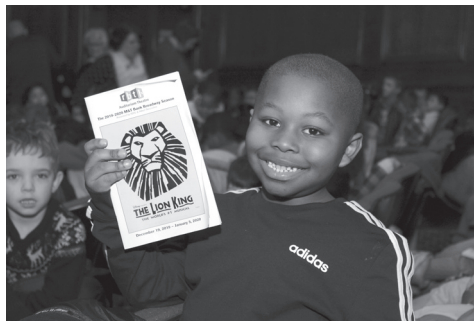
Earlier in the season, Gates Chili Middle School students traveled to the Auditorium Theatre for a performance of "Come From Away." This true story about 7,000 stranded passengers and the small town in Newfoundland that welcomed them, tied into themes about kindness and gratitude, which middle-schoolers have been focusing on this year.

"The magic of these experiences is indescribable," Valentine added. "To see and hear the pure joy from students and teachers at all grade levels is the reason this program is so important."

The ARTS Partners program at Gates Chili is now in its third year. Last year, the program was awarded the 2019 Magna Award for equity in education by the National School Boards Association (NSBA).



Walt Disney fourth-graders were ready to take in the sights and sounds of "The Lion King."



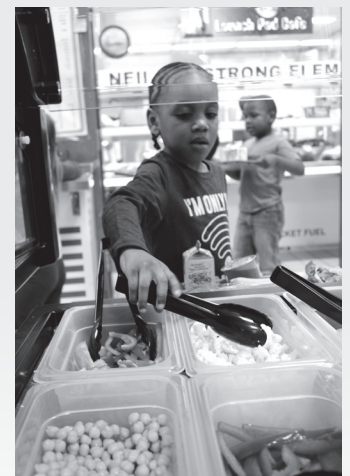
Paul Road kindergartener Kendrick Gause was among the hundreds of students who saw "The Lion King" on Dec. 19.



Gates Chili Middle School students attended the Nov. 21 performance of "Come From Away."

## More fresh fruit, veggie options for elementary students

Gates Chili Central School District is proud to offer self-serve salad bars in every elementary school. This service, included with the purchase of a lunch meal, exposes children to a variety of fruits and vegetables. Children will order a meal in the cafeteria and then check out at the register as usual. Children are then encouraged to add to their tray with the fruits and vegetables from the salad bar located in the dining area. The salad bars were made possible by Salad Bars to Schools (SB2S), a grant program aimed at making sure every child has daily access to fresh fruits and vegetables.





# Nurturing the GC community through peer leadership

School was closed to students on Superintendent's Conference Day, but that didn't stop Gates Chili High School peer leaders from spending their day learning.

The county-wide Special Olympics Conference, held at the Gates Chili Field House on Jan. 24, brought in students from approximately 30 local schools. Students attended breakout sessions about fundraising for the Special Olympics, increasing involvement in Unified Sports, person-first language and moving to whole-school inclusion, which involves having students of all backgrounds participate in any given club, activity, etc.

Some Gates Chili High School students already participate in one such program through their Peer Leadership I and II classes: Lunch Buddies. For four years, peer leaders have been building a culture of inclusivity during lunch. They find students in the cafeteria who may be sitting alone and make a connection with those students. This open-table policy has resulted in dozens of friendships and an immeasurable amount of confidence-building for all parties involved.

Participation in these activities only scratches the surface of what peer

leaders do at Gates Chili. Led by teacher Janell Bernass, peer leaders spend two semesters in their 11th- or 12th-grade year focusing on service learning. By the end of the two courses, students complete 210 hours of community service.

"This exceptional group is motivated, creative and really cares about our community," said High School Principal Ken Hammel. "They help with everything from freshman orientation to Relay for Life. They organize projects that boost morale and campaigns about important topics such as epilepsy and suicide prevention."

As the spring semester gets underway, peer leaders are busy with their newest project: placement in middle school classrooms helping Gates Chili teachers.

"This class has been a key element to my time at Gates Chili," said 12th-grader Katelyn Weeks. "It's given me the opportunity to help out my school and my community during and outside of my school day. Everyone should take this class."



Peer leaders don't just focus on bettering our community; they also focus on bettering themselves. With each project, students work on interpersonal skills, time management and building a professional portfolio; something that many alumni have said was a useful tool in their job hunts. The experience is also shaping the way current students view their school community.

"This class was eye-opening for me," said senior Nick D'Imperio. "Earlier this year we painted the Spartan Way values in the hallways in 16 different languages. It made me realize that something as small as that can make a big difference. We all came together to work on it and now students of different backgrounds can know they are represented at Gates Chili. That builds our community."

## Hobby becomes club at Gates Chili Middle School

Sixth-grader Adam Cardenas loved spending the summer days out fishing with his dad. When the new school year began, he started looking for ways to continue that hobby. When he told his counselor, the two hatched a plan; to start the school's first Fishing Club.

Through that conversation, he met his classmate Fabian Nazario Maldonado. The two are now co-founders of the club, which officially began in September 2019. Since that time, the two have been busy planning meetings and events while also recruiting new members. Currently, the club has 15 active members and is continuing to grow.

Advisors Mary Ferrari and Melissa Conditorio are thrilled to be involved and look forward to working with the group.

The Fishing Club aims to learn about different fish and the sport of fishing during the winter months. In the spring, they hope to put all that new knowledge into action by going fishing together.

"This isn't just a club for people who like fish. We plan on learning as much as we

can so that we can go out together and fish when the weather is nicer," explained Cardenas.

Nazario Maldonado hopes to show his new friends part of his culture through the club, including favorite recipes from Puerto Rico that his family prepares with seafood. The club has already taken field trips and tackled projects around the district, including a tour of the aquariums at Gates Chili High School. Senior Katie Phelan gave the group a tour and talked to them about how to maintain the tanks. They're hoping to take that knowledge and use it for taking over the fish tanks in the middle school building. Any and all are welcome to join the club, with meetings held on Wednesdays once or twice a month.



## Staff Spotlight



**Katie Picha**  
Elementary-Level Counselor  
Walt Disney and Paul Road

Balancing her time between Walt Disney and Paul Road elementary schools, you'll find Katie Picha also guiding students to find their own balance; focusing on social-emotional development.

Picha started at GCCSD in February 2019. Not only is she newer to the district, but so is her position. She is the first elementary-level counselor for Gates Chili students. She creates

the curriculum, implements it within classrooms and acts as a support system for teachers and students alike.

"Every student is my student. I'm available to everybody," she expressed.

Her goal is to meet with every student individually by the end of the year, using what she calls Minute Meetings. Students fill out a form which asks them about their school year, including questions such as if they have two adults in the building they trust and can go to in times of need or for advice, if they feel safe at home and if they know how to contact her directly.

"They may not have a behavioral problem that gets them on the radar, so maybe no one realizes they're struggling. We want to get them the help they need, or the connection, before it

becomes behavioral or makes them feel like they don't belong," said Picha.

She has seen first-hand the importance of having a counselor at a young age. She recalled, "I've wanted to be a counselor since sixth grade. When we moved to a new district between fifth and sixth grade I was super nervous. As a little kid I remember the counselor was my go-to person those first few weeks. I was so thankful for her support and thought 'if I could be this person for just one student, I would.' love it."

“ Every student is my student.

I'm available to everybody. ”

- Katie Picha, Elementary-Level Counselor

## Gates Chili teachers chosen for *state-level honors*

Five GCCSD educators have been selected as New York State Master Teachers. The statewide program was created in 2013 to reward the highest performing teachers, improve classroom performance and strengthen our nation's K-12 STEM education. The NYS Master Teachers Program is part of the state's work to transform our education system and put students first. It aims to invest in great teachers who educate our students.



**Kevin Cleland**  
Gates Chili High School  
Mathematics Teacher



**Jason Picardo**  
Gates Chili High School  
Mathematics Teacher



**William McKenna**  
Gates Chili High School  
Science Teacher



**Erin McKenna**  
Gates Chili High School  
Mathematics Teacher



**Brian Romeo**  
Florence Brasser Elementary School  
Fifth-Grade Teacher

To read more about these outstanding teachers, go to [gateschili.org/masterteachers](https://gateschili.org/masterteachers).

## Join the GCCSD Team!

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information, visit  
[gateschili.org/hr](https://gateschili.org/hr)

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HIRING**



## GC PRIDE Award

Gates Chili CSD is proud to recognize students, staff and community members who go above and beyond on behalf of the district and its students. The GC PRIDE Award stands for and honors professionalism, respect, innovation, dedication and excellence. Congratulations to the all of the recipients for November, December and January.



Nov. 19 recipients (l-r): Innovation Coach Mike Munski, Neil Armstrong volunteers Bob Hewitt and Kathleen Toombs, Innovation Coach Christopher Amesbury



Dec. 10 recipients (l-r): Florence Brasser fifth-graders Madison Moreno, Joziah Vasquez, Nadia Leathersich and Milus Lane, Florence Brasser volunteer Kelly Conlon



Jan. 14 recipients (l-r): Gates Police Lt. Robert Long, Brasser volunteer Heather Lange and Gates Police Chief James VanBrederode

## Changes coming to Fitness Center

The district is looking for your input on improving the GCCSD Fitness Center to better meet the community's needs.

Gates Chili is one of the only districts to open up its fitness center to the public, and hopes to create a state-of-the-art facility for everyone to enjoy.

"As we grow our strength and conditioning programs, while also uniting those fitness goals with our physical education program, we want to invest in a space that best meets the needs of our students and community."

"Part of that is in updating the space to reflect new trends and philosophies when it comes to modern fitness and movement," explained Athletic Director Patrick Irving.

In November 2020, the lease on the current cardio and cable machines will end. The Athletic Department is looking

into different vendors to update the facility and bring in new equipment.

In addition, they're gathering data from staff, students and community members on the set up and equipment in the fitness center. Members are being asked to rank the type of equipment they use the most, suggest new equipment they'd like to see and give input on how to improve the space.

So far this school year, 9,087 residents have signed up for the fitness center. Another 13,000 have signed up to use the fitness center, track and pool.

While the athletic department is redesigning the fitness center next November, it will remain open for community and student use. Gates Chili residents are able to use the facility for a one-time fee of \$15 after completing an orientation.

**“As we grow our strength and conditioning programs, while also uniting those fitness goals with our physical education program, we want to invest in a space that best meets the needs of our students and community.”**

- Patrick Irving, Director of Physical Education, Health and Athletics

## Introducing Spartacus!

Our Gates Chili Spartan officially has a name: Spartacus. Spartacus made his debut this fall, appearing at various school buildings on the first day of school. Since then he has appeared at many school and athletic events. He was presented with his official Gates Chili ID badge at the Jan. 14 Board of Education meeting.

Spartacus, named for the ancient gladiator from the first century, was the name chosen from 200 submissions from students, staff and community members. Thank you to all who submitted ideas for names.





## GATES CHILI CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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[www.gateschili.org](http://www.gateschili.org)

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*A NYSPRA award-winning publication*

## Les Misérables

Friday, March 27 at 7 p.m.

Saturday, March 28 at 7 p.m.

Sunday, March 29 at 2 p.m.

General admission tickets: \$13

Purchase tickets at [showtix4u.com](http://showtix4u.com)  
or one hour prior to showtime

*Purchasing tickets prior to event  
is suggested*

**Free Senior Citizen  
Performance - Ticketed Event**  
Thursday, March 26 at 4 p.m.

Tickets available at Continuing  
Education or by contacting  
[Christopher\\_Varlan@gateschili.org](mailto:Christopher_Varlan@gateschili.org)

## Stay Connected



@GatesChiliInfo



Gates Chili Schools

## March

2	Music in Our Schools Month instrumental concert	7 p.m.	HS
3-4	Disney Kindergarten Registration	10 a.m. to 2 p.m.	WD
5-6	Paul Road Kindergarten Registration	10 a.m. to 2 p.m.	PR
5	Grades 10-11 Student and Parent Night	6:30 p.m.	HS
6	Middle School Talent Show	6:30 p.m.	MS
9	Disney Book Fair Begins		
10	Evening Kindergarten Registration for all schools	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Admin Building
10	High School Choral Concert	7 p.m.	HS
10	Board of Education Meeting	7 p.m.	Transportation Facility
12	Evening Kindergarten Registration for all schools	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Admin Building
18	Districtwide Ready, Set, Learn Night	5:30-7 p.m.	NA
24	Board of Education Meeting	7 p.m.	Admin Building
27	<b>#GCPride Day</b>		
31	Deadline for UPK Applications		
31	Board of Education Budget Workshop	7 p.m.	Admin Building

## April

1	Music in Our Schools Month choral concert	7 p.m.	Admin Building
3	<b>Superintendent's Conference Day, No School for Students</b>		
6-10	<b>Spring Recess, No School</b>		
14	Board of Education Meeting	7 p.m.	Admin Building
15	Academic Varsity Awards	6:30 p.m.	HS
16	Paul Road Spring Book Fair and Art Show	5:30-7:30 p.m.	PR
16	Middle School Art Show	6-7 p.m.	MS
21	Board of Education Budget Workshop	7 p.m.	Admin Building
22	High School Band Concert	7 p.m.	HS
23	Paul Road Family Game Night	6-7:30 p.m.	PR
24	<b>#GCPride Day</b>		
28	Board of Education Meeting	7 p.m.	Admin Building
29	Middle School Fifth- to Sixth-Grade Parent/Guardian Info Night	6:30-7:30 p.m.	MS

For more events, including ways for families to get involved, go to: [gateschili.org](http://gateschili.org).