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Message from the District Superintendent

Nurturing our roots



In the age of artificial intelligence, virtual realities, and cloud-based storage, an interpersonal exchange of information remains one of the most powerful communication tools. Scientists have even discovered that plants must interact with each other to thrive. According to a study conducted at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, plants can “talk” in several different ways: via airborne chemicals, soluble compounds exchanged by roots and networks of threadlike fungi. While communication is a basic premise for us, scientists are just beginning to understand the complex ways that plants exchange information with one another.

To humans, interpersonal relationships are a simple part of daily life that require consistent attention. Unlike our leafy-green friends, we often get distracted by the world happening around us. So, to strengthen our roots at Erie 1 BOCES, we’re reserving more time to listen to our partners and nurture our staff.

This fall, educational leaders from Erie 1 BOCES’ 19 component school districts gathered at the Potter Career & Technical Center for a “Build Your BOCES” event. The occasion spurred lively conversation between the cooperative’s membership and service providers. Dedicated time to reflect on the needs of Erie County schools created new connections and identified shared opportunities.

Internally, Erie 1 employees with supervisory duties recently attended a workshop on emotional intelligence. Participants learned how a portion of the brain called the amygdala can hijack our emotions and alter our intended impact. Roseann Bayne, assistant superintendent at CiTi BOCES, explained how frequent amygdala activation can cause people to question trust and reliability. Attendees gained valuable insight regarding the emotions under the surface of all interpersonal exchanges.

Quality service depends on listening and an honest exchange between people who strive to make a difference. We must always remember that the best communication is rooted in a nutrient rich soil of understanding. We look forward to growing stronger in 2019!

Sincerely,

Lynn M. Fusco, Ph. D.
District Superintendent/CEO



BUILD YOUR BOCES

Erie 1 BOCES’ Elizabeth Freas, left, talks with David Evans, assistant superintendent, and Timothy Wiles, high school principal, of the Cleveland-Hill School District during the Build Your BOCES event.



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Supervisors learn about the brain, emotions and new approaches from Roseann Bayne, assistant superintendent at CiTi BOCES.

Background photo: Peter Beardsley, a project manager for Energy Enterprises, changes out a bulb at Erie 1 BOCES' Education Campus.

Powering up efficiently

Erie 1 BOCES collaborates with Energy Enterprises to significantly reduce energy costs

Over the past three years, Erie 1 BOCES has collaborated with Energy Enterprises to reduce thousands of dollars in energy costs and a carbon emissions reduction equivalent to powering over a hundred homes in a year.

Energy Enterprises has provided a multitude of services to Erie 1 BOCES. Along with the Education Campus, each career and technical center under the Erie 1 BOCES' umbrella undertook extensive replacement of their lighting, moving from fluorescent and ballast bulbs to energy-efficient LED ones. Energy Enterprises also conducted an audit and determined which areas could maintain optimal lighting while reducing the number of lights used.

"Our organization investigates projects like the lighting upgrade constantly," said James Fregelette, executive director, administration and operations. "By continually looking at ways to not only maintain but improve the physical environment of our buildings, we hope to make them places where our employees and our students want to come to work and school. This project was as much about improving the lighting of the workplace as it was energy efficiency."

Overall, the partnership has been an outstanding success. Energy Enterprises says that 3,130,264 watts of power are saved daily and that costs have been reduced by \$228,030 each year. In under three years, Erie 1 BOCES has reached a return on investment in the project.

"It was a privilege to work with Energy Enterprises on a lighting upgrade project," said Fregelette. "They were extremely professional and committed to helping Erie 1 BOCES through the project. The project manager kept the project moving forward and was organized. They finished the project in a timely manner and delivered better than anticipated results."

Not only has the Energy Enterprises partnership provided a cost containment for Erie 1 BOCES, but there has been a significant environmental impact as well. Since the partnership began, around 688 metric tons of carbon dioxide have been diverted. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, that



Jim Fregelette, executive director, administration and operations at Erie 1 BOCES, (left) accepts the Lighting the Way Forward Award from Peter Beardsley of Energy Enterprises.

amount of reduced carbon dioxide emissions is enough to power 103 homes for the span of a year. It's also the equivalent of using over 77,000 gallons of gasoline.

Reducing energy costs through light replacement is only part of the array of services that Energy Enterprises offers. They've also helped Erie 1 BOCES receive rebates from the electric company to reduce costs even further.

"The company filed all paperwork for rebates and kept on top of timelines and filing requirements," said Fregelette. "We also had an issue with erroneous billing from the utility company and Energy Enterprises was able to work with the utility company, the public service commission and Erie 1 to find an amicable settlement. I would recommend having them represent anyone who has billing errors that might have been created by the utility company."

With proven cost savings and a positive influence on the environment, Erie 1 BOCES

is just one of many organizations taking advantage. Cheektowaga-Sloan Union Free School District, an Erie 1 BOCES component school, recently decided that the opportunity was extremely advantageous for both parties. Their district is in the early stages of their very own lighting upgrade project, joining a growing list of now-22 districts, as well as companies and towns trusting Energy Enterprises with their energy reduction needs.

If Erie 1 BOCES component schools are interested in a collaboration like this, then Amy Ceronie, an energy analyst for Energy Enterprises, recommends to simply pick up the phone.

"We have been working with school districts around the state since 1988," Ceronie says. "Just pick up the phone. We will walk you through the process that ultimately will show you what options are available to you, as well as the costs, savings, rebates and payback period."



Reducing embarrassment in the lunch line

An Amherst Middle School student inputs his student number to purchase lunch.

New policy defines protocols about unpaid meal debt

School districts throughout New York State have enacted new lunch policies that bring a huge benefit to students. Students are now protected from the embarrassment that could stem from unpaid meal charges after Gov. Andrew Cuomo required it in this year's state budget.

"No child should ever go hungry – especially at school – and students should never be humiliated or denied a well-rounded meal just because they can't pay," Gov. Cuomo said. "This significant milestone in our No Student Goes Hungry Program will ensure all children get a healthy meal in school even if they don't have lunch money and provide a supportive learning environment so every student can succeed."

Each school district received a draft policy from Erie 1 BOCES Policy Services based on the guidance of the state-approved prohibition against meal shaming policy template. School districts should customize this template policy for their own district needs.

"The biggest benefit of this goes to the students," said Laura Bosinski, school business administrator for Amherst Central School District. "They don't have to worry about being embarrassed if they get up to the line and there's not enough money [in their account]. Even though it can be financially difficult for school districts to manage this; it's a great benefit for the kids who truly need it."

Each district will have different protocol that meets New York State guidelines, but every policy should ensure that all communication about unpaid meal debt will strictly be with parents. Amherst, for example, covers the policy in annual development meetings for their food service staff and makes ample effort to make sure parents are aware of the situation and know their options.

"Our food service staff participates in professional development annually," said Bosinski. "They go over all of the HR stuff, review policies and are given guidelines

on how to handle students who don't have money on their account.

"We send home a free and reduced lunch application in the back-to-school newsletter every year. Once the family's account goes negative, they receive a negative balance letter every two weeks. We include free and reduced lunch applications with the letters as well. Once we reach a certain level, it's turned over to the building principal and they make contact with the parents."

Along with no longer having to worry about embarrassment, Bosinski also said that an added benefit is that students won't have to be involved in adult problems.

"In the end, feeding children shouldn't be a child problem; it's an adult problem," she said. "With the percentage of students who don't have any money for food, we make sure that the child is cared for and keeping the adult problems as adult problems."

Like Mother, Like Daughter

Board member credits BOCES for helping her family explore career dreams



*For Renee Wilson,
being on the Erie 1
BOCES Board of
Education is personal.*

Renee found herself on a path to success thanks to her instructors. Now, not only does she sit on the boards of both Erie 1 BOCES and Cheektowaga Central Schools, she can say BOCES has changed her life not just once, but twice – once as a student, another as a mother. “I know firsthand how much BOCES does for people,” she noted. “I believe from my heart and soul that there is no better place to be.”

Renee graduated from West Seneca West High School in 1983. She wanted to become a nurse ever since she was five years old, so she could follow in her godmother’s footsteps.

Growing up, Renee’s parents both worked three jobs and times were tough for the middle-class family. Renee realized her parents would not be able to afford a college education for her. After hearing about a Health Assistant program at the Potter Career & Technical Center, she visited the guidance office to register.

“The most amazing woman taught me; her name was Annmarie Battista and she was phenomenal,” Renee recalled. “I kept going into the LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) program. My instructor there,

Mrs. Gunnerson, was the most amazing lady I’ve ever met. She was tough, firm and supportive and she did everything to the ‘t,’ and I was set that I was not going to stop.”

After graduating, Renee worked in a post-graduate internship at Mercy Hospital in Buffalo, where she held clinical responsibilities and formed relationships in the field. She walked right into the workforce as a result.

Ultimately, Renee was able to put herself through college. But through it all, she never forgot where it all started.

“Every year, I went back to see my instructors,” she said. “For a while it was at school, and I always took them a bouquet of flowers because they touched my heart. They made my life, my dreams, what I wanted, come true. I did that every year until I couldn’t anymore – one is no longer here.”

Renee eventually started visiting her instructors at their homes every May on National Nurses Day to deliver the flowers.

Now, with her own family, Renee is proud to say her 20-year-old daughter, Taylor, has also found her calling because of BOCES. Taylor is a junior at Buffalo State, but she did not always like school.

“While she was in middle school, I tried everything to make her think it’ll get better,” Renee said.

One day, Renee brought Taylor to the Harkness Career & Technical Center for a tour. As they walked through the building, Taylor’s eyes lit up.

“She walked into the Fashion Design and Merchandising room and it was like her world just changed,” Renee said. “And mine did too. We met her teacher, Darlene Meek, and she completely changed my daughter’s world.”

Taylor enrolled in the program and developed a passion for fashion design. She created nine pieces for the annual fashion show, though she only had to make four to six. With a “Defying Gravity” theme – based on the musical “Wicked” – Taylor’s set brought things to a magical finale.

“Every outfit she put out was incredible,” Renee noted. “At the end of the show, they walked out with their models and she came out with the most amazing presence I’ve ever seen her have. Her smile was huge. She said afterward, ‘I finally had my moment.’”

After the show, an audience member asked Taylor if she could help with costume design for a production of “The Wizard of Oz” in Niagara Falls. Another person bought one of her gowns for his wife.

Renee said she can’t help but brim with pride over her daughter’s accomplishments.

“It’s amazing to see how much good BOCES can do from generation to generation, and Taylor and I are living proof,” she concluded.

Taylor Wilson (pictured center, in green dress) found her calling in the Fashion Design and Merchandising program at Harkness, thus continuing the family tradition of discovering one’s passions in Erie 1 BOCES Career & Technical Education classes. Taylor’s mother – Erie 1 BOCES Board of Education member Renee Wilson – attended a Health Assistant program at Potter.

TAKING

Aviation Students Help

Tatiana Forbes never thought she would be building an actual airplane while still in high school.

The Amherst senior got that chance after she and her Erie 1 BOCES Aviation Technology classmates beat out 129 other high school teams from 39 states last May in the sixth annual Aviation Design Challenge, sponsored by the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA).

Three additional members of the winning team from the Harkness Career & Technical Center in Cheektowaga joined Tatiana in traveling for free to Glasair Aviation in Arlington, Washington, to build a Sportsman 2+2 single-engine aircraft: Maryvale graduate Jacob Bell, Williamsville North grad Aidan Hurley and John F. Kennedy grad Christopher Kozak – all three of whom were seniors last year.

Their instructor, Thomas Leach, and Erie 1 BOCES English teacher Lisa Reidy – who has a bit of aviation experience – accompanied them on the trip.

“For me, it’s a big accomplishment because most people haven’t done that, and a lot of people who are in aviation haven’t really gotten hands-on work as much as they would like to,” Tatiana noted. “So for me, being as young as I am, this was a really big start to how I want my career path to look.”

“This was undoubtedly the coolest thing I’ve done in high school,” Aidan said. “It’s one of those things that I can confidently assume nobody else in the room has done.”

For the Aviation Design Challenge, teams used simulation software to modify and fly a virtual aircraft. Scores were given based on several factors, including payload, flight length and amount of fuel burned. GAMA allowed four students from the 11-person Harkness team to fly out to Washington for the Glasair experience.

“I knew they had built a solid plane for the competition, but winning still came as a shock, not only to me, but also the students,” Leach admitted. “The experience in Washington was a dream come true for them. They were able to get an in-depth look at how much really goes into building a plane.”

The four students and two teachers worked with manufacturing professionals from Glasair over the course of two weeks in June to build the Sportsman for aerospace fastener manufacturer Click Bond. The group had a hand in almost every aspect of the build, from loading the wings and rigging the control system to installing the engine and assembling the tail.

“It was almost surreal at first; every second was filled with something new to do and every hour we learned something new,” Christopher stated. “Together as a team, we worked long hours to ensure the aircraft had triple redundancies on every system.”

As the only junior who went, Tatiana is still in the Erie 1 BOCES Aviation Technology program. She explained the hands-on opportunity over the summer prepared her for the more immersive second half of the two-year program.

“The trip taught me how to work with tools and how everything works together in an aircraft,” she added. “Seeing the internal parts and putting them together helped me understand the bigger picture.”

All four students are aiming to build lives in the aviation or aerospace engineering industries. Aidan is attending Alfred State College, Jacob is at Bowling Green State University and Christopher is studying at Auburn University. Christopher said that while he has always wanted to fly, Erie 1 BOCES helped focus him and put him on his current path.

The Sportsman debuted with a sleek red paint job at the Reno Air Races in September. Even though they left the plane with Click Bond – which is using it as a working display model – the students can track where it is flying by going online. And wherever it is flying, it will forever carry their signatures on its bulkhead cover.



Everyone who worked on the Sportsman 2+2 airplane signed the bulkhead cover before it was installed.

GLASAIR™
AVIATION™

FLIGHT

Build Plane after Competition Win



From left, Erie 1 BOCES Aviation Technology students Christopher Kozak, Aidan Hurley, Jacob Bell and Tatiana Forbes work to install an engine on the Sportsman 2+2 airplane.




From left, Erie 1 BOCES Aviation Technology students Jacob Bell, Christopher Kozak, Aidan Hurley and Tatiana Forbes help load a wing onto the Sportsman 2+2 airplane.



The Sportsman with its sleek paint job. It debuted at the Reno Air Races in September.



From left, Erie 1 BOCES Aviation Technology students Tatiana Forbes, Jacob Bell, Christopher Kozak and Aidan Hurley pose with the Sportsman 2+2 airplane they helped build after winning a national aviation design competition.



Grand Island senior Collin DeMartin has enjoyed his time working as a paid intern at Basil Ford of Niagara Falls, thanks to a newly expanded summer co-op program at Erie 1 BOCES.

Ahead of the Curve

Summer Co-ops Expand to Auto Tech Students

Grand Island High School senior Collin DeMartin never thought he would be as interested in cars as he is now.

Collin originally joined the Auto Technician program at the Kenton Career & Technical Center in Tonawanda because he figured knowing how to fix cars would help him out in life. As time went on, Collin's eagerness to dive into the field grew; he ultimately picked up a paid internship at Basil Ford of Niagara Falls.

"I started doing that back in late July, early August, and it just stayed with me," Collin said, noting his teacher helped drive home the advantage of getting work-based experience. "I like the atmosphere here; it's fun working here, being able to work on cars at such a young age."

The summer co-op program allows students to gain work as a paid intern after school hours. It is separate from the unpaid internships that take place during the regular school day, according to Casey Gielow, service manager at Basil Ford.

"We allow high school students to come into the dealership and do everything from remove tires, change oil and work side-by-side with an aide technician to learn the ins and outs of the

trade – just really learning about the trade and seeing if this is something they want to do when they get older," she explained. "This is the first year that the service side is doing this with the high school programs. The body shop has had great success with it and they've brought it over to our side now."

Laura Basil O'Shea, recruiting and talent development director for the Basil Family Dealerships, echoed Gielow's sentiments. She added the co-op partnership has been a huge advantage, especially for participating students.

"Our goal is to offer work-based learning opportunities at an early age where the student has a strong understanding of their career direction, as well as the potential to participate in skills development from the provided training," Basil O'Shea stated. "Our industry desperately needs qualified workers to take over for an aging workforce, so partnering with our local schools gives us the chance to train students who'll already be ahead of the industry learning curve by the time they graduate high school."

Gielow stated she is seeing success in the summer co-op program since it helps immerse students in the more hands-on aspects of the trade. She noted it is the

dealership's choice to keep the student on board after the summer is over – something that makes the summer co-op program stand out.

Collin takes advantage of both the paid and unpaid experiences. During school, he goes to Churchville to help work on firetrucks. While at Basil Ford, Collin has worked his way up from oil changes to helping take transmissions out of cars and put in new clutches.

"For the co-op program, we really try to get the students involved in the nitty-gritty work and have them earn their paycheck," Gielow said. "Collin has been great as our first student doing this with."

While at Basil Ford, Collin can work up to four hours a day, 20 hours per week. In terms of his future, Collin hopes to find a full-time job working on diesel vehicles and semi-trucks, but he added he is definitely keeping his experience working on cars in his back pocket.

"This internship actually shows you what's going on in the real world, something you might not get from just being in a classroom," he pointed out. "This is live work coming in that people are paying for and you usually have to figure things out and problem solve on your feet."

R.A.C.E. to the Finish



P-TECH R.A.C.E. co-instructor David Krawczyk demonstrates to his students how to solder.

Ninth-graders on their way to free college degree thanks to new program

For the next six years, 35 students will work toward graduating high school with an education in auto technology and collision repair and earning an Associate of Applied Science degree through SUNY Erie Community College – all at no cost to them or their families.

The new Erie 1 BOCES P-TECH R.A.C.E. program has hit the ground running this year with its inaugural high school cohort of freshman students from Frontier, Hamburg, Lackawanna and West Seneca schools.

P-TECH R.A.C.E. stands for Pathways in Technology Early College High School Route to Automotive Career Excellence. It merges high school, college and work-based learning for participants.

“It’s great for them to be able to start at such a young age and already have a career path. They basically have a job lined up for them, so they won’t have to wonder what they’re going to do after they graduate,” co-instructor David Krawczyk noted. “The kids are eager to learn. They like the hands-on lessons, they like being busy around the shop and they like trying things out.”

“We need to make sure these kids are well-prepared to fill in as people retire, so this

program helps give them a thorough training when they go out in the world,” co-instructor Robert Mroz added. “Getting these students learning early allows us to rear them into the field and instill in them what the auto tech and collision repair fields are like, especially when it comes to the soft skills needed in the business.”



Ninth-grader Robert Conrad of Frontier High School works on soldering as part of a P-TECH R.A.C.E. class.

Robert Conrad of Frontier High School hopes P-TECH R.A.C.E. helps him operate his own shop out of his garage someday. His initial plan was to join the regular two-year programming his junior year, so getting himself on that path two years early has been an added bonus for him.

“I’m learning how to use tools that I own and never used before,” he pointed out. “I liked using the sandblaster and the cutting torch because I’ve always had a sandblaster sitting in the back corner of my garage and I never knew what it did until now. As for the torch, I know how to use it properly now.”

Josh Howard of Hamburg High School said he enjoys the community aspect of the program.

“Everyone likes talking and learning about cars and we all have the same interest of working on cars,” he added. “Once we start actually working on cars, it’s going to be very cool to see how everything comes together.”

Students begin P-TECH R.A.C.E. exploring the Automotive Technology and Collision Repair programs at the Potter Career & Technical Center in West Seneca. Once they become juniors, they choose which of the two paths they wish to pursue.



From left, ninth-graders Raymond Roach (Frontier), Oscar Nestorowicz (behind; Hamburg), Robert Conrad (Frontier), and Josh Howard (Hamburg) practice soldering during one of their P-TECH R.A.C.E. classes.

The program gives them real-world experience working in paid internships with industry partners, including the following:

- Basil Family Dealerships
- Gabe’s Collision
- Auto Collision & Glass
- Carubba Collision
- West Herr Automotive Group
- Northeast Collision
- Northtown Automotive Companies
- Fisher Auto Parts
- Niagara Frontier Automotive Dealers Association
- Towne Automotive Group

The P-TECH R.A.C.E. program launched after a \$3 million New York State grant was awarded to the local consortium of Erie 1 BOCES, Lackawanna, Frontier, Hamburg and West Seneca schools last school year.



WOMEN OF INFLUENCE AWARD

Melody Jason, executive director for instructional services, at Erie 1 BOCES was selected as one of Buffalo Business First's 2018 Women of Influence. She was one of 25 women honored for contributions in the workplace.



MENTORING DAY AT ROSWELL PARK

Organized by Erie 1 BOCES Community Employment Specialists who provide support to school staff on transition related activities for the students with disabilities, 58 students from multiple districts saw the inner workings of the RPCI agency.



WELCOME TO EDGE ACADEMY

Robert Boccaccio, principal of EDGE Academy, welcomed the community to the renovated building where a new alternative education program for high school students offers a complete curriculum and five different pathways.



EDGE ACADEMY OPENS

(LtoR) Dr. Lynn Fusco, Erie 1 BOCES superintendent; Kristina Groff, Cheektowaga Chamber of Commerce; Mary Morris, superintendent of Cheektowaga Schools; John Sherman, Erie 1 board president; and Melody Jason, executive director for instructional services.



CUPCAKE WARS

Seventh-graders Skylar Fess and Faith Dillon race against the clock to bake cupcakes during the annual Cupcake Wars competition. The event introduces Tonawanda Middle School students to the Kenton Career & Technical Center.



AND THE WINNER IS...

Tonawanda Middle School seventh-graders Alex Braun, Theresa Beras, Matthew Chudy, Skylar Fess, Isabella Varecka and Faith Dillon won first place for their blue snowflake cupcakes during the annual Cupcake Wars competition.



A STRONG START

Mrs. Szarfrank's Center-Based Learning classroom at Northtowns Academy started the school year constructing a dodecahedron in math class.



QUILT MADE BY FASHION DESIGN STUDENTS

Kelly White, assistant superintendent, Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda School District, won the quilt giveaway during the Build Your BOCES event where Erie 1 BOCES reps were on hand to listen to districts to learn what needs they have.



STARTING THE DAY WITH BREAKFAST

Culinary students at Potter Career & Technical Center gave participants at the Build Your BOCES event a nutritious breakfast.



TECH FEST 2018

Over 50 schools enjoyed the displays and presentations from 39 technology vendors at the 2018 WNYRIC Tech Fest in October.



SCHOLARSHIP EARNED

Isela Barker, 23, of Niagara Falls received \$2,500 for her LPN classes from the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans. In her application, Isela cited how nurses in her family inspired her.



A TOUR OF EDGE

Area high school counselors were provided guided tours of the new EDGE Academy by Erie 1 BOCES administrators. This was part of the annual Career & Technical Education counselors breakfast.



STARRY NIGHT

Eighth-grader Aaron Biggie puts theatrical makeup on during Starry Night, a new partnership between Tonawanda Middle School's art department and the Cosmetology program at the Kenton Career & Technical Center.



THE POWER OF MAKEUP

Learning to apply makeup to simulate aging, from left: Kiara Shanks; Ana Fusco, E1B instructor; and Adeline Ford, during a summer Hamburg Central Schools-Erie 1 BOCES STEM Camp.



DRONES AND ROCKETS!

Tom Leach, right, E1B aviation instructor, and Robert Musilli, Hamburg instructor, taught foam rocket building and flew drones with students enrolled in Hamburg STEM Camp, a partnership between Erie 1 BOCES and Hamburg Central Schools.



COMMITTED TO EDUCATION

Lafayette High School alum Al Shammari Saif received one of three Distinguished Alumni awards as part of the Career and Technical Education's Commitment to Education awards for his professional achievements through the Barbering program.



DISTINGUISHED BOCES GRAD

Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District alumna Cara Giglia earned an Erie 1 BOCES Distinguished Alumni award for her professional success after graduation in the baking/pastry arts field.



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Lancaster Schools alumnus Anthony Kozlowski was recognized by Erie 1 BOCES for his professional success in the construction field after graduating through the Building Trades program.

Gaining an **EDGE**

Offering five pathways to a high school diploma

The innovation of Exceptional Education at Erie 1 BOCES took a big step forward in September when the EDGE Academy opened its doors to students.

The EDGE Academy is an alternative education program for high school students with a complete curriculum. While making progress toward their Regents diploma, students will explore and choose from five different pathways: art, business, career and technical education (CTE), drama and music. The pathways are designed for students to find their passion in a supportive environment and help them succeed in obtaining their education.

“EDGE was designed to give the alternative student pathways to explore,” said Robert Boccaccio, principal of the EDGE Academy. “The type of kid we get here isn’t of a traditional sense. This is a kid where school may not be working for them and they may enjoy the arts, music, or business fields better than their traditional core classes. They may be kids that are school avoiders or kids that have some sort of trauma in their backgrounds, so their home district decides to send them to a more alternative school.”

Students in the program spend their first two years getting a feel for those five different pathways. For their final two years of high school study, they’ll choose one to focus in on. All of the pathways will be housed directly at the EDGE Academy, with the only exception being the CTE pathway. Students who want to study under one of the 20 CTE programs offered by Erie 1 BOCES will do so

EDGE - which stands for Explore, Develop, Grow and Experience, is located at 1635 East Delavan Avenue in Cheektowaga.

at the Harkness Career and Technical Center.

But the program doesn’t just offer that unique innovation of tailoring to the individual. It offers the necessary resources for each teacher, pathway and student to succeed. Students are getting the benefit of individualized counseling, having social workers on staff and top-notch class materials, while teachers are getting the support and time needed to succeed at their jobs.

“A lot of resources have been dedicated to make this program work,” said Boccaccio. “Moving programming to this building made [alternative education] more centrally located and also allowed us to re-envision and jumpstart this program. For instance, we just ordered ukuleles for our music class to bring something new to them in that program. We have 3D printer up in the art room now. We also have more teachers along those pathway lines now. We have a half-time business teacher and another full-time art teacher. We’ve really put resources around making students interested in these pathways.

“I think teachers are feeling appreciated and that they have the resources to do the job they need to in terms of the different pathways,” he added. “We also changed our bell schedule to provide that common plan time for teachers to talk about student outcomes, struggles they may be having with certain students, and to see what’s working and what’s not. When we look at countries like Finland and the other Scandinavian countries, we see they’re knocking it out of the park in terms of education because they spend more time planning.”

Boccaccio says that students are adapting well to the program, despite there being a mix between old and new students to

alternative education.

“We’ve never had an enrollment at this level in the last few years,” he said. “There’s a lot of new kids who didn’t know what the program was prior to this year. Change for anyone is difficult, but we’ve seen the kids quickly adapt. Students are coming around to being here and it’s such a positive that we’re centrally located unlike in the past.”

Students like Hannah Binaizeski say they’re doing much better under this program as opposed to their old school. Binaizeski also attributes her newfound success to the tight-knit community fostered within the halls of the EDGE Academy.

“I’m doing a lot better with the program at this school than I did with my old school,” she said. “By now, I’d be failing a lot of classes at my old school, but now I’m passing everything with an 85 [percent] or above. I didn’t fit in with my old school and I don’t have to worry about that here.”

Faith Pellici, another student at EDGE, also attests to that sense of community.

“It’s a little smaller, but I like it,” she said. “Everybody has seen a lot here and have gone through a lot of the same things as you. We can all be here for each other.”

Boccaccio believes that the program has already been a success and that this is the future for the field of alternative education. He said that as the field continues heading in the direction of tailoring for each individual, it will succeed at ever-improving levels.

“I think the future of alternative education is really thinking about the individual,” he said. “I think we’ve taken the step in the right direction by thinking about what makes each individual tick. Every alternative education kid is different, and we’ve taken the right step in offering five different pathways, but I think until we meet the needs of each individual, we haven’t quite arrived to where we need to be. But, we’ve done a lot in the positive.”

To learn more EDGE Academy, contact Boccaccio at rboccaccio@e1b.org.



All the right questions

Related Services' self-advocacy push helps student choose path



Frontier senior Madelyn “Maddy” Horucy is headed to college at SUNY Brockport, using research and advocacy skills taught by Tina Wyant, teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing from Erie 1 BOCES.

High school juniors and seniors usually weigh class sizes, dorm rooms and cafeteria options in their choice of college. Frontier senior Madelyn “Maddy” Horucy needed to ponder different questions in her search, such as, “Will I be able to hear in class?”, “What are the policies on students with disabilities?” and “What do I need to do to set up accommodations?”

For four years, Maddy received Hearing Services from Tina Wyant, an Erie 1 BOCES teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing. Just as Wyant helped her students learn their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wyant helped Maddy think critically on what will be important in the next steps in her education.

“When I came to Frontier, my students were performing at their peers’ level academically, so I knew advocacy would be an important lesson I could teach them as they navigated life’s milestones. Over the years we have done many projects that focus on the ADA, jobs, getting a driver’s license; college is just another component of that,” Wyant explained.

A self-guided project to identify local business’ hearing accommodations in Maddy’s sophomore year helped prepare her for the research involved in choosing a college that would meet all of her needs.

She narrowed her search from five schools to two by the end of her junior year, based on the criteria she developed.

“I quickly ruled out the larger schools because it would be harder to hear in larger classes. I function better in smaller classes with fewer distractions,” she explained. “When I went to visit my first choice college, I was impressed to see signs marking accessible classrooms and hear about an accelerated program that would ensure I am in smaller classes with more hands-on learning.”

Maddy’s checklist is just one way Erie 1 BOCES’ Related Services personnel are helping students with self-advocacy.

“Independence is important for our students. Whether it’s walking to their appointments alone, being prepared with their augmentive device, or knowing what to do if their batteries are dead. Our staff teach these important self-advocacy skills to students at every level,” Related Services Director Alane Seeger explained.

When it came time to pick her top school, the dorm rooms and food were still factors, but it came down to Maddy feeling comfortable that she could be successful on her path to become an elementary special education teacher.

“I know after high school I will be responsible for myself, for knowing what accommodations are available and making sure that I get what I need to be successful. What I learned with Ms. Wyant has helped me know to speak up for myself. I will take what I learned with me to college and beyond,” Maddy said.

Optimistic on Exceptional Education

Canfield shares his journey to his new position and vision for the future of Alternative and Special Education programs



After 30 years of working in education, Patrick Canfield is pulling from his diverse experiences to affect education on a more regional scale as Erie 1 BOCES director of Exceptional Education.

Patrick Canfield's career path reached full circle when he joined Erie 1 BOCES this fall. Little did he know that how he spent his free time in high school would inspire his professional path toward a new role as director of Exceptional Education.

"I was originally interested in art [in high school]. I saw myself getting into an advertisement gig and becoming some rich graphic artist in New York City when I wasn't really as talented as I thought I was," said Canfield, laughing as he reminisced.

Despite that passion for art, which is still a hobby of his, his life went in a very different direction when he was looking for something to do in his free time at high school.

"I had the great fortune of graduating from Kenmore East High School and Erie 1 BOCES had two functional special education classes there, one of which is still there to this day," he said. "Instead of study hall, I'd volunteer in that room as something to do and they were really fun kids to be around, so I got bit by the special ed bug."

Canfield was so enthralled when volunteering in a BOCES classroom that he couldn't stay away as he progressed through his high school education.

"I found more opportunities to volunteer in that room and by my senior year I was there every minute that I could be. I even went on their class camping trip. The teachers at Erie 1, who have since retired, were hugely inspirational to me and that's what changed the course of my whole life in a lot of aspects."

Becoming a special education teacher was a given at that point, which led Canfield to the Cantalician Center, a nonprofit educational, rehabilitative and occupational facility, after he attended college. After years of being a

teacher, another big change came to his life.

"I was very fortunate early on in my teaching career to have a principal that recognized my leadership qualities and I naturally sort of became a teacher-leader among my colleagues. Those attributes were fostered by the administrators I worked for and I was encouraged by them to explore administration. I never thought I'd be in a role like this," he said.

"I always thought I'd be a classroom teacher with kids with special needs," he added. "I loved it and still do. In the big picture, I've always wanted to make a big difference and kids with exceptionalities are my passion."

Canfield took on coursework at Buffalo State to receive his administrative degree and soon became a principal of school-age programs at the Cantalician Center. He later moved to the public school system to take a director of special programs position at Niagara-Wheatfield Central School District.

After 30 years of working in education, Canfield is now ready to pull from his diverse experiences to affect education on a more regional scale. He says he's excited about what's already happening in the organization and that it's at a great point to keep building from.

"We have some very exciting and diverse programs going on here. I think there's been a great vision ahead of my arrival of what some of the needs are out there and trying to be responsive to them. We also have some good collaborations going on even within divisions in BOCES with Career and Technical Education and Workforce Development," he noted.

"There's a desire for innovation and growth going forward here. It's talked about all the time. What are the needs that we're not meeting yet? How can we get there? What do we have to do? The forward thinking is tremendous. We're already talking a year or two out on certain ideas and what we need to address with programming. I find it very exciting."

Although he believes Exceptional Education

is in a good spot, he says that more work can be done to make sure that the field's biggest challenges are minimized and that every student can succeed in their educational pursuits.

"This isn't unique to BOCES, but there is a changing population in the types of students and the needs that they have that we're receiving from our districts. Kids today across the board have so many challenges. They're exposed to so much that is troubling and the way they think and operate is different than it was five or 10 years ago. One of our challenges is to keep adjusting to that," he said.

"The prevalence of children with mental health and emotional regulation issues as well as emotional attachment disorders is staggering. It's a significant challenge, but the most exciting opportunity because there's a tremendous need for that kind of support in Western New York. We're looking at that, to expand our programs to meet the needs and do it well," he added.

Two of those programs he points to are the EDGE Academy and RISE. EDGE Academy opened its doors this fall to innovate the approach to alternative education by giving students opportunity to explore a variety of subjects to specialize in. RISE also started this fall with a small group of students to help address students' behavioral, social, and mental health needs by consulting with psychiatric and behavioral specialists.

By instituting and expanding crucial programming like that, Canfield says that the future looks bright for so many more students in the Western New York area.

"We're here to educate kids, but so many can't get there because of all these other issues they're wrestling with. We're trying to tear down those obstacles for them and also connect them with the resources that are out there in the community for them as well. If we can do that, these kids stand a chance, and that's what we're shooting for."

MAKING IT

WNYRIC is part of first-ever STEAM day at Rochester Maker Faire

The Rochester Mini Maker Faire grew in size by one day this year, thanks in part to the Western New York Regional Informational Center (WNYRIC). For the first time in the event's five-year history the newly dubbed Maker Faire Rochester held a STEAM day for students in grades 3-8.

Since its inception, WNYRIC has had a connection to the state's largest mini maker faire. Staff Development Coordinator Antonio Scordo III is one of the founding organizers and has been on the NYSCATE Fall Conference Committee since March of 2014 as a Co-Chair for the Maker Faire event.

"My first experience with a maker faire was in bringing my own children to the Buffalo Mini Maker Faire. I wanted to bring the smiles I saw on their faces to more children and adults, to see students having fun learning about science, technology, engineering, arts and math," Scordo explained. "This year, I wanted to step things up and I proposed a 'Student STEAM Fest.' To my surprise NYSCATE and *Make*: magazine approved the idea."

For the past five years WNYRIC has allowed Scordo and other staff volunteers to attend the event. This year, the RIC's participation also stepped up and a team of 20 staff members attended to supplement the inaugural Student STEAM Fest activities. Scordo plans the logistics of the event, from mapping to scheduling and set up to tear down. Other staff development coordinators

assist with hands-on learning opportunities like make your own ice cream, lemon juice invisible ink, squishy circuits, robotics, and fun with oobleck (non-Newtonian cornstarch and water combination).

"One of our goals at WNYRIC is to maximize the quality of instruction and to improve learning. Our staff development coordinators work to do that every day in classrooms across 100

school districts in western New York. This event takes STEAM integration in the classroom to the next level and we at WNYRIC are proud to promote this opportunity for students," said Elizabeth M. Freas, director of instructional technology resources and professional development.

The day was filled with nearly 95 makers focused on STEAM and over 1,200 students from 50 classrooms in 28 school districts having fun learning concepts from coding to culinary arts, civic engagement to sustainability and do-it-yourself to design.

Students also were treated to the magic of science at a performance by Jason Latimer, curator of the Fleet Science Center in San Diego, Calif. and a multi-award winning magician.

"The Student STEAM Fest was a wonderful celebration of everything creative. Again today I got to see students come away feeling inspired with smiles on their faces. Fostering that sense of wonder and curiosity is the best part of my job and this event," Scordo said.



The WNYRIC team of volunteers poses for a picture after Student STEAM Fest at Maker Fair Rochester in November.



WNYRIC Director of Instructional Technology Resources and Professional Development Elizabeth Freas shows students the non-Newtonian properties of oobleck.



WNYRIC Tech Coordinator Valentina Rinow-Ess works with a student at Maker Faire Rochester.



WNYRIC Tech Coordinator Brittany Thoma shows students how to solder their own flashlight at Maker Faire Rochester.



Scott Pryzwara, chief of research, development and innovation at the WNYRIC, assisted students with creating robots powered by electric motors.

Computer-based testing is a state priority

WNYRIC offers support for schools

For years, the flow of paper test booklets and scannable answer sheets to and from school buildings has been honed to a science, but it is also a labor-intensive effort. The New York State Education Department (NYSED) remains steadfast in its commitment to shift assessments to computers.

At the Western New York Regional Information Center (WNYRIC) around 500,000 answer sheets are printed for state assessments and Regents exams in the course of a year. Those sheets make their way to students, then to a scoring site and then they are shipped again.

The New York State Education Department has its sights on reducing that flow of paper in the near future. According to its website, NYSED is committed “to both meeting the needs of 21st century learners and improving test delivery, test integrity, scoring validity, and turn-around time on testing results.”

“The number of districts opting for computer-based testing (CBT) in Western New York increases every year, but the percentage is still small compared to traditional paper testing,” Dennis Atkinson, WNYRIC test scoring, data warehouse, and data reporting manager, explained.

Atkinson leads a team of five who provide test scoring services for 100 districts in Western New York. In 2017-18, there were 85 individual schools using CBT in those districts.

“We are not all about paper, we also help districts with computer-based testing. We assist with data file processes, procedures and troubleshooting errors,” Atkinson said.

This is the third year that districts and schools have been able to administer CBT



Fourth-graders at Grand Island Central Schools take a computer-based test in English Language Arts, for writing and listening comprehension.

for the Grades 3-8 English language arts and math tests.

“One of the assumed advantages is a reduction in paper handling, but this has been something schools have become efficient at managing. The real advantage we almost always hear from the districts that have gone to CBT is the ease of scoring for teachers. These tests are not all bubbles to be filled in, so teachers still need to read those short answers and essays, but the less time teachers spend scoring, the more time they spend teaching,” Atkinson added.

NYSED offered fall CBT Information Sessions across the state during the month of October, including a visit to WNYRIC at Erie 1 BOCES. In addition to technology readiness, best practices and tech tips, NYSED announced a new way for schools to

receive critical information during testing. When schools log into the NEXTERA admin website, they have the ability to add up to five names and email addresses that will be used for these critical messages.

“Schools should be confident to begin CBT,” said Karen Halbert, senior supervisor for test scoring and test scanning and filebound document management. “Between the support from the WNYRIC and NYSED, no school with questions will be left to figure it out on their own. There is a network of support documentation, communication and information available.”

To view NYSED’s presentation and webinar of the fall CBT Information Sessions, go to cbtsupport.nysed.gov, grades 3-8 ELA and math Computer-Based Testing, under CBT resources.

A New Course

Alumnus credits LPN program for his success

Looking back, Todd Cleckley can say his classes at the Erie 1 BOCES Workforce Development Center in Cheektowaga helped him land his current leadership role.

Todd is the center director of KEDPLASMA/Somerset Labs in Williamsville. Every day, he helps guide a team of dedicated staff in critical life-saving work, and he cannot imagine where he would be without the influence of his Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) instructors.

“When I started the LPN program, my career was in transition,” he said. “My initial goal was to attend the program, graduate and get a nursing job for a short period of time and take that experience back to where I spent most of my career. That changed for the better after BOCES laid the clinical foundation for me to find a new avenue of success.”

Before signing up for the LPN program, Todd worked in business development in the travel nurse staffing industry for over 20 years, promoting supplemental staffing services to hospitals around the country and throughout the world.

During this transition period, Todd decided to go back to nursing school through Erie 1 BOCES.

“My instructors were dedicated and experienced professionals and they brought that hands-on experience into the classroom,” he stated. “Not only were they teaching us what we needed to know from a textbook, they were making the textbook come alive with their real-life stories and examples. They helped us understand the importance of what nurses do.”

Todd graduated from the LPN program in 2015. After hearing a classmate talk about donating her plasma at KEDPLASMA, he applied and started working there two months after graduation as an LPN plasmapheresis specialist, collecting plasma from the blood of Rh-negative donors.

“I liked the idea that this opportunity was a less traditional path for graduates,” he said.



Todd Cleckley, KEDPLASMA/Somerset Labs center director, credits much of his success to the Nursing program at Erie 1 BOCES.

Plasma donated at KEDPLASMA is used to make Rho (D) immune globulin therapy, which is injected into Rh-negative pregnant mothers to prevent Rh-sensitization. This sensitization can lead to Hemolytic Disease of the Newborn (HDN), a life-threatening disease in which the mother's immune system attacks the red blood cells in her Rh-positive baby.

“HDN has been eradicated in the Western world as a result of this therapy, but it's still an issue in less developed countries, so that's one of our focuses to help people in those countries,” Todd explained. “We're the sole provider of the plasma utilized to manufacture the No. 1 Anti-D therapy in the country, which is distributed worldwide, so any mother anywhere in the world who receives our therapy, it's because of donors here in Western New York. That's something I'm proud of.”

The lab has a dedicated group of plasma donors who come in regularly. Most of them donate twice a week, and anyone who donates is compensated for their time.

Todd noted several other Erie 1 BOCES graduates work for KEDPLASMA, as well.

While his initial plan was to stay in a nursing job temporarily, Todd fell in love with the plasma industry, the one-on-one contact with donors and the importance of what KEDPLASMA does. In June 2017, Todd took on additional responsibilities as the community relations liaison to help promote the lab in the community and recruit donors. He became the center director last March.

“I'm excited about being here to not only continue the work, but help raise our level of exposure in the community,” he concluded. “Life had other plans for me once I stepped through the doors of Erie 1 BOCES. This is where I see myself until I retire.”



KEDPLASMA/Somerset Labs Center Director Todd Cleckley checks over a plasma donor's chart.

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Exceptional Education

Twilight student spotlight

*Going above and
beyond to start a
new school year*

Victoria Agard flourished when she came to the Erie 1 BOCES Twilight program, which offers small class sizes, individualized counseling and flexibility to students who need alternative placement. The program also offers credit recovery to students who fall behind in coursework before enrolling.

“Victoria deserves to be singled out for a few different reasons,” said Terry Ruh, principal of the Twilight program. “She’s had a really good start to this year, she’s doing well in each of her classes and she’s shown a great focus in her work. She’s already completed three credits of credit recovery.



Victoria Agard attributes her success to the way the Twilight program is structured with smaller class sizes and one-on-one help.

It’s remarkable because I have had students who don’t complete one course over the whole year and she’s been dedicated. She’s already earned credit for this year and the first marking period hasn’t even closed yet.”

Agard attributes her success to the way the program is structured. The smaller class sizes and one-on-one help was crucial because she often felt intimidated and had trouble concentrating at her former school. She also says her success came through motivation to

make her mom proud and to graduate on time.

“I promised my mom that I was going to do good this year,” she added. “I want to graduate on time.”

“She’s a real, great example to the other students and we’re super proud of her,” said Ruh. “She’s just doing everything that we need our students to do and is the perfect example of what we’re hoping our students to be.”