



WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Unveiling Our New Strategic Plan for the Year



Dear Cato-Meridian School Community,

As we embark on a new year, I am thrilled to share with you the culmination of our latest strategic planning efforts for the school district. Recognizing the pivotal role strategic planning plays in charting our educational course, we have endeavored to create a roadmap that not only addresses the unique needs and challenges of our district but also ensures sustained success in the long run.

Engaging in a thoughtful and comprehensive strategic planning process has empowered us to pinpoint the distinctive requirements of our district, set clear objectives, and prioritize initiatives aimed at enriching the overall learning experience for our students. This proactive approach enables us to allocate resources efficiently, anticipate potential obstacles, and unite the efforts of administrators, teachers, and staff under a common vision.

Collaboration with all stakeholders has yielded significant outcomes, including the formulation of our new mission and vision statements, along with the identification of core organizational values. Our mission is succinctly captured in the statement, "We prepare all students for success through a variety of opportunities that help them learn and grow toward their potential." Complementing this, our vision statement reads, "We are a welcoming school community that prepares all students by providing individualized and challenging experiences."

The newly identified core values serve as the bedrock of our organization. They are:

- Put all students first
- Act with kindness and empathy toward all
- Model and foster respect
- Approach our work with positivity
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity
- Create opportunities for collaboration and cooperation
- Hold ourselves accountable

Our strategic plan highlights three key priority areas: The Student Experience; Community Connections; and Operations. For more in-depth information on these priority areas, we invite you to explore the Strategic Planning tab on our district website.

I extend my sincere gratitude for your valuable feedback and unwavering support throughout our strategic planning process. Your collaboration and teamwork are instrumental in making a positive difference in the lives of our children and ensuring the continued success of our school district.

Best Regards,
Dr. Terry L. Ward
Superintendent

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SMALL COMMUNITY, BIG IMPACT

EXCITEMENT IN THE *Elementary*

Welcome 2024, Year of the Dragon!

Happy New Year! As we step into 2024, we are excited to welcome the Year of the Dragon, a symbol of strength, wisdom, and good fortune. We embark on this new year filled with opportunities for growth, learning, and success.

As we enter the Year of the Dragon, we reflect on the incredible journey we have shared and look forward to the adventures that lie ahead. Last fall we brought our Back to School BBQ, Special Friends Days, Open House, Junior Drama, Veterans Day celebration, parent-teacher conferences, Devils' Dare assemblies, Walk-a-thon, concerts, and many classroom activities and celebrations. As we look to the spring, we are preparing for swimming in PE, roller skating, reading challenges, the science fair, our multicultural event, state testing, the solar eclipse, spring showcase, concerts, field trips, field days, kindergarten celebration, 6th grade graduation and Moving Up Day. These events take considerable organization and support. Families and community members are welcome and encouraged to join us as we provide these opportunities for our kids.

All of these activities also require healthy, happy students and families. We have four programs that help provide health and happiness to our community. Our school based Backpack Program provides small bags of food to 50 children every weekend. Applications were sent home at the beginning of the school year. If you would like more information about the Backpack Program, please contact our main office. Our local Christmas Bureau was able to provide for approximately 24 families at Christmas. (Thank you to Eric Robinson, Jr-Sr HS teacher, for coordinating

this event, the staff who shopped for and wrapped presents, and all those who made donations.) On the third Wednesday of each month, the Food Bank of Central New York brings a mobile pantry to our elementary school parking lot. There are no income requirements for families or individuals wishing to receive food. Anyone in need of food assistance is encouraged to attend and receive a free box of food. Another program offered to our community is Food \$en\$e, also through the Food Bank of Central New York. Food packages and monthly specials are posted on the Cato-Meridian PTO website with orders typically taken the second week of each month. Food is typically picked up on the last Thursday of the month. More information can be found on our school website under the Parent Resources tab.

Just as a dragon soars to new heights, we encourage our students to set ambitious goals, embrace challenges, and strive for excellence in their academic and personal pursuits. May the Year of the Dragon bring prosperity, success, and happiness to each and every one of our families. Thank you for being part of our school community, and we look forward to a year filled with achievements and memorable moments.



Best wishes for a fantastic Year of the Dragon!

Mrs. Danielle Mahoney
CMES Principal



JR.-SR. HIGH SCHOOL *Happenings*

As we begin to embrace the chilly winter season, I am delighted to bring to you the latest news and highlights from the Jr.-Sr. High School. Students have been busy over the last few months here and I am proud to share some of the success. Our students continue to excel academically, with notable achievements in various subjects. At the end of the first quarter we celebrated over 200 students for achieving honor roll or higher in grades 7-12.

Our commitment to the success of each student remains unwavering and we understand that some students may be facing academic challenges. The teachers and administrators are digging deeply into the data and identifying areas of need during their professional learning team meetings. The information gleaned provides an open dialogue about children's strengths, areas for improvement, and strategies for success. We are taking steps to ensure that all students are being successful.

Students are encouraged to stay after school or seek assistance from teachers in whom they need support. We believe in the power of collaboration between parents and teachers.

Regular communication between home and school is vital to understanding a student's unique needs. Please contact your child's teacher if you have any questions or concerns.

Coming Soon...SmartPass

We are also excited to share some fantastic news that will undoubtedly enhance the educational experience for our students and their families. Beginning at the end of January, students in grades 7-12 will be piloting a comprehensive tool that leverages the power of technology in real-time access. Here are just a few benefits to the program.

Safer School Spaces

SmartPass shows school leaders student movement trends to help them make informed decisions about areas of the building that require additional supervision, improving overall school safety. Areas of campus that are less supervised during the school day can be hidden from student view, meaning students can't go there without permission, preventing unsafe gatherings.

Students can still access all of the spaces that they need throughout the school day, like restrooms, drinking fountains, and offices.

More Instructional Time

With fewer disruptions from pass requests and less time spent digging through paperwork, your school's teachers can spend more time focused on teaching. And with students less inclined to wander the halls, they'll maximize their learning time.

We believe that using SmartPass will ensure a safer and more efficient learning environment and will be a positive student experience. If you are interested in more information, please check out SmartPass online.

As we navigate the winter season, let us express our gratitude for our families and students. We know that together, we will continue to foster an environment where students can learn, grow and thrive. Thank you for all you do. Please feel free to contact us with any questions via email, parent square or a phone call.



Warm regards,
Ms. Jennifer Kelly
Junior-Senior High
School Principal



ATHLETICS UPDATE

Dear Cato-Meridian community:

We are currently in full swing with our winter athletic season. This winter our students can choose from basketball, cheerleading, wrestling, indoor track and unified bowling at Cato-Meridian. Our athletes have been participating in several tournaments and meets over the month of December. Our girls' junior varsity and varsity basketball teams went to Williamson and our boys' teams went to Tully for their Holiday Tournaments. Our indoor track team competed at the West Hill Invitational and at Utica College. We hosted the Cato Dual Wrestling Tournament and had a great turn out while bringing back this community tradition. Unified bowling will start at the end of February.

All teams will use [Schedule Galaxy](#) to post games and practice schedules. Please use the following link for this information:

**SCHEDULE
GALAXY**

Click to view
Schedule Galaxy

It will also be important for parents and students to get set up in ParentSquare as all coaches will use this tool to communicate. Please download the app today.

We are looking forward to an exciting season of Spring Sports! Varsity and junior varsity fall sports practices began on Monday, March 11th. [Registration](#) will open on Sunday, February 11th for Spring Sports.

**SPRING SPORTS
REGISTRATION**

Click to view Spring
Sports Registration

Varsity Sports Awards will be Tuesday, June 11, 2024 at 6:30 PM (location TBD).

Sports Boosters needs your help! Please do your best to help out in one of the following ways:

- Attend a CM Booster Meeting
- Work during a game in one of the concession stands
- Give a donation

We could really use your help. Please email Mrs. Vonda Wheeler in the athletic office if you can help or have any questions (vwheeler@catomeridian.org).



Mr. Rob Wren
Athletic Director & Student Services Coordinator

Let's Go
BLUE DEVILS!



BUSINESS OFFICE *News*

Capital Project Update: Cato-Meridian Central School has submitted the 2023 Capital Project to NYS Department of Education Facilities Planning for approval. While this review is completed, the architectural team and construction management team continue to refine design and specifications. We anticipate that these significant capital improvements will take place over two years. Please refer to the Capital Project tab on the website for timelines and specific areas of focus.

Federal Grant Update: Cato-Meridian Central School continues to utilize Federal Stimulus Funds as originally presented to the public. The district has amended the grant for the replacement of our Elementary Playground. A new playground will be installed with ADA Accessible Equipment and Surfacing to ensure that all of our students can enjoy the playground safely. We anticipate that construction on the playground will begin in the spring of 2024. For more specific information regarding the Federal Stimulus Plan please refer to the Cato-Meridian Central School website (www.catomeridian.org) under Required Notices.

Capital Outlay Project: As part of the 2023-2024 Budget, the voters approved a \$100,000 project. This year's project will consist of renovation of the side auditorium steps to address a tripping hazard. This project is currently in the queue at NYSED for approval. We anticipate that work will begin in the spring of 2024.

Emergency Project (Hot Water Generation System): The district is currently in the process of completing an emergency project to replace our hot water generation system at the Elementary School. Work is currently underway with an anticipated completion time by the end of January 2024.

Safety Upgrades: The district is currently in the process of upgrading our emergency response equipment, specifically to meet the requirements of Alyssa's Law, which requires the adoption of panic alarm systems.

Infrastructure Improvements: In addition to these specific building projects, the district is also in the process of planning for Smart Schools Project which would allow us to begin the process of upgrading our camera system. This would be funded through Smart Schools Funds that were allotted to all school districts.



Ms. Elizabeth Kupiec
Assistant Superintendent



CURRICULUM Update

Empowering Student Success: Enhancing Multi-Tiered System of Support Through BIMAS Data and Dedicated Intervention Time

We are excited to share the latest strides in our commitment to student growth and achievement. Our dedicated team, including the Behavior Specialist and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Coordinator, have been hard at work integrating valuable insights from BIMAS (Behavior Intervention Monitoring Assessment System) data into our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

In our continuous efforts to foster a positive learning environment, we are thrilled to announce the integration of targeted intervention time

into our school schedule for all students in grades P-8. This intentional time is designed to provide data-driven support, ensuring every student receives the remediation, intervention, or enrichment they need in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Math.

Through this proactive approach, we aim to nurture the unique strengths of each student and address areas that may benefit from additional attention.

Navigating the Future: Overview of New York State's Next Generation Learning Standards Implementation Schedule for Regents Examinations in Mathematics, Science, and English Language Arts

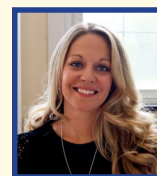
Please review the New York State Education Department's implementation schedule for new Regents Examinations in mathematics, science, and English Language Arts. These exams will measure student achievement in terms of the NYS Next Generation Learning Standards (NGLS) in Mathematics and English Language Arts and NYS P-12 Science Learning Standards. The chart below shows the timeline, by school year, for the rollout of each of the new Regents Examinations.

2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Algebra I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geometry Earth & Space Sciences Life Science: Biology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Algebra II Chemistry Physics English Language Arts

Similar to the Elementary- and Intermediate-level Science Tests, the Regents Examinations will be written tests consisting of multiple-choice and constructed-response questions. There will no longer be a Performance Test (Earth Science) or Laboratory Activities for Part D (Living Environment). Instead, authentic, hands-on scientific and engineering experiences, called Investigations, will be part of the assessment strategy for high school science. Like the written tests, the

Investigations are aligned with the New York State P-12 Science Learning Standards, but provide the opportunity for performance-based assessment of students' science knowledge and skills. The Investigations are designed to be embedded into classroom instruction and assessment and can be offered any time during the school year, dependent on local curricular planning.

Through a proactive approach, we aim to nurture the unique strengths of each student and address areas that may benefit from additional attention. Our community's commitment to fostering a culture of growth and inclusivity remains steadfast, and we look forward to seeing the positive impact these enhancements will have on the journey of every student in our district.



Sincerely,

Mrs. Jennifer Dorschel

Director of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING Update



I would first like to take the opportunity to show my appreciation towards the Cato-Meridian students, faculty, staff, and community. In my first few months interacting with everyone, it is apparent how family oriented this community is. I am beyond grateful to be a small part of the great things that are happening in this district and community.

Characteristics That Every Person Needs

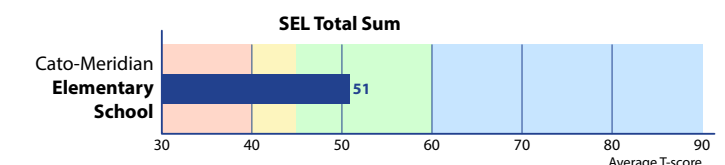
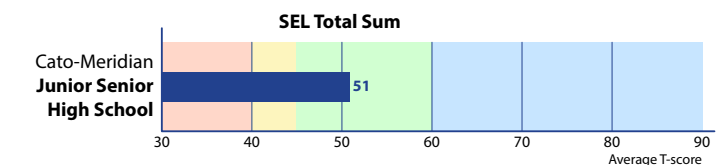
The Positivity Project (P2) is thriving in both the Elementary School and Jr/Sr High School. Throughout the academic year, classrooms in both schools actively focus on the 24 characteristics highlighted by P2. These characteristics become a topic of district-wide discussions, enriching the classroom and school environment. At the conclusion of each month, students are recognized and celebrated in various ways among their peers. In the Elementary building, this acknowledgment takes the form of the "Devil's Dare" award, presented in front of the entire school population. Meanwhile, in the Jr/Sr High School, students are nominated by staff members who have observed their embodiment of the word of the month, aligning with the discussed characteristic in classes. The deserving students are then honored during the Monday morning forum in front of their peers. As the school year progresses, the focus will shift to the remaining months and their corresponding characteristic traits...

January	Perseverance
February	Love/Caring
March	Fairness
April	Humor
May	Enthusiasm
June	Leadership

BIMAS- Assessing the Whole Child

The district-wide implementation of the Behavior Intervention Monitoring Assessment System (BIMAS) plays a crucial role in evaluating the social and emotional well-being of our students. Aligned with the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) competencies, the BIMAS system provides a comprehensive assessment framework. It enables students to

showcase their strengths in specific areas while pinpointing areas that require growth. With this insightful data, we can strategically form groups aimed at fostering development in the five crucial social and emotional learning (SEL) areas. These areas, as outlined by the CASEL competencies, encompass self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The fall data, along with insights gathered from other districts, indicates that our students are measuring at a "typical" level across total SEL, as illustrated in the accompanying graphs. As we delve deeper into the presented data, targeted interventions will be crafted to elevate the overall well-being of every student, focusing on the holistic development of the whole child.



Going Forward- Data Driven

Moving forward, we are continuously striving to enhance the growth of each student. This is done not only academically, but social-emotionally as well. By leveraging data, educators can pinpoint specific areas of emotional intelligence that require attention, allowing for a more personalized and targeted approach to SEL development. The collection and analysis of relevant data enable us to track students' progress, providing valuable insights into the impact of SEL interventions on overall well-being. Moreover, a data-driven approach allows for informed decision-making regarding resource allocation, ensuring that interventions are directed where they are most needed.

Sincerely,

Mr. Tyler Baker

Elementary Assistant Principal/Social-Emotional Learning Coordinator

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Upcoming Events

Feb. 19-23	Winter Recess - No School	April 4.....	National Honor Society Induction 7 PM, Auditorium
March 8-10.....	Jr.-Sr. High School Musical "The Spongebob Musical" 7 PM Mar. 8-9 & 2PM Mar. 10, Auditorium	April 8.....	P.D. Day - No School For Students
March 29	Good Friday - No School	April 22-26.....	Spring Recess - No School

