



# Alfred-Almond Central School District Newsletter

## January 2021

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## Message from the Superintendent

There’s no way around it, 2020 was a year like no other. When COVID-19 stormed into our lives last March, it necessitated us to adapt rather quickly. We implemented remote and hybrid learning, prepared and delivered thousands of meals and instructional work, conducted an annual budget vote with absentee ballots, held in-person graduation despite obstacles, found ways to adapt extra-curricular activities, and much more. In the midst, we supported student and staff safety and their emotional needs to the best of our ability while maintaining a sense of community and care.

I have reflected on our course of action throughout this pandemic. It is no secret these past nine months have had ups and downs, frustrations and celebrations, and discouragement and happiness. I am well aware that the difficult decisions made do not work for everyone, as each family situation is unique. The varied concerns about health and safety, remote learning, the importance of in-person education, parents needing to work, and all the other consequences of school looking very different are well understood and shared.

We have faced challenges and cleared many hurdles together. The Alfred-Almond faculty, staff and supervisors deserve accolades for all they have accomplished. I am so proud of their hard-work, determination and the depth of care shown toward our students and one another. Our parents, guardians, extended families and childcare givers are also very deserving of these accolades. They have helped with Zoom lessons, maintained communication between home and school, adjusted schedules at the last moment and provided support and encouragement for their children.

Although this pandemic is unwelcomed and life-changing, I hope we use it to teach lasting lessons and not justify accepting less than our very best because of it.

Wayne Dyer said, “If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.” More than ever, we must teach our children the importance of a positive mindset and how looking at things with positivity can alter the outcome. So, is the glass half-full, or is it half-empty? I hope our children will view it as half-full and see their future through those eyes and realize they have abundant opportunities ahead. We must also teach and model resiliency, the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity and recover quickly from difficulties. This skill will help them through difficult times in their lives. Our responsibility as educators is to provide our students with these lessons to strengthen their ability to cope with future life challenges. Ironically, and unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has created such an experience. However, no pandemic can alter their future as long as they are resilient, optimistic and open to doing things differently.

Thank you for your continued support and positivity as we strive to do what is best for ALL of our students, employees and community during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

**Tracie Bliven**

Superintendent of Schools

## Campbell wins Prudential award

Each year, schools across the country can nominate a student who has given back to his/her community to compete for state and national recognition through a Prudential program that honors youth volunteers. This year, Alfred-Almond student Allyson Campbell earned the Prudential Spirit of Community Award for her volunteerism.

Allyson has been volunteering for Catholic Charities for three years, working in the food pantry. From volunteering she gets “a sense of purpose, like I’m on this Earth to do more than just sit and do nothing. From my volunteering experience I learned that not everyone is lucky enough to have the ability to be self sufficient and independent.” Allyson says she “would tell other young people that it’s worth it to volunteer at your local food pantry or Catholic Charities location. Helping someone put food on their table or clothes on their back is an experience that you’ll never forget. The most memorable part of this was seeing the smiles I put on people’s faces by talking to them, helping them out, and how grateful people were to receive help.”



Allyson Campbell

## COVID-19 reminders

A few points to remember:

- If anyone in your household has a test result for COVID-19 pending, please keep your student(s) home until you receive the test result(s). During this time, we require remote attendance for students.
- If you have a student with symptoms, he/she cannot attend school until the doctor has cleared him/her. During this time, students may participate in remote learning if they are well enough to do so.
- If anyone in your household tests positive for COVID-19, you will be required to provide the district with quarantine/isolation orders, as well as the release date before your student(s) will be permitted to attend school in person.

We ask that every family please adhere to these guidelines to help protect others’ health and safety. Thank you in advance for your consideration and cooperation.

## Secondary update

While it is easy to focus on the challenges we have encountered since the school year started, there is much to celebrate. The traditional First Honor Roll Breakfast for the first quarter of the school year had a new twist this year. While families were not able to celebrate in-person, the event was live-streamed and remote students had their donuts delivered! Student-athletes earned multiple honors from Academic All-Stars to MVP and Co-MVP status in boys’ and girls’ soccer, to the cross-country runners who ran for Arkport and won the Section V title, and the boys’ varsity soccer team winning Co-County Championship.

Please take a look at the included articles celebrating the achievements and opportunities for our students. We are in the midst of our swim and ski seasons and had a virtual holiday sing-along that combined our junior high choir with the senior high bands. The school musical is going virtual this year. Academic All-Stars are participating in virtual competitions, too! SAT prep starts in February and will include a virtual component.

The Eagles’ secondary students, faculty and staff are truly rising to the challenges every day.

**Dr. Melissa Rivers**  
Secondary Principal

## Alum shares experience with A-A Math Team

This year, the Alfred-Almond Math Team invited A-A alumni to discuss their occupations in math and science career fields with team members. On November 16, Sami Woughter, A-A Class of 2015, joined the Math Team on Zoom. Sami shared about her experiences working as a Data Discovery Engineer. After graduating from Alfred-Almond, Sami went on to major in mathematics and computer science at SUNY Fredonia. Recently, she was accepted to Georgia Tech for their online Analytics masters degree program. Her insight provided valuable information for students looking to pursue a career in mathematics and computer science. If you are an alumni working in a mathematics or science field and are interested in sharing your experience with the Alfred-Almond Math Team, please email Mrs. Bensley at [jbensley@aacsapps.com](mailto:jbensley@aacsapps.com).



A-A alum Sami Woughter shared her post-grad experiences with the Math Team.

## Elementary news

As this school year started, the Alfred-Almond faculty and staff were looking ahead and hopeful about the opening of school. COVID-19 has completely changed the world around us, and we have all been challenged with these changes. These difficult times give us an opportunity to develop hope. “Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace.” Now, a half-year into the school year, we embrace these new beginnings moving forward, together. We have had to be flexible and resilient. This year, the district focus has been on the importance of self-care and listening to support each other, including, and most importantly, our children. Our first priority has been the safety of our children and staff as we bring back students in our hybrid model and provide for some families opting for the 100 percent virtual learning option. Your child’s well-rounded education is central to the return to school plans. Although the schedule and opportunities may look different, you can be assured that the student is a central piece.

Many times educators are asked by parents, “What can I do at home to help my child be successful at school?” The answer to this is quite simple: read with your child every day. Throughout the reading process, praise your child, ask questions about the story, visualize the story, offer information, share personal feelings and relate the story to real life. Most of all, enjoy the story together and let your child see that reading is fun. This is a special time together!

Some important upcoming dates to remember:

February 15-19: Winter Recess – No School  
March 11-12: Parent/Teacher Conferences (Elementary), dismissal at 11:50 a.m.  
March 15: Superintendent’s Day – No School

Parent communication is crucial to student success.

Feel free to contact the school with any questions or concerns at 276-6525.

**Brett Dusingberne**  
Elementary School Principal

The Alfred Almond Performing Arts Department is proud to present:

# THE SHOW MUST GO

## ONLINE!

A Virtual Children’s Musical

Book by JESSICA PENZIAS    Lyrics by DAVID HUDSON    Music by DENVER CASADO

A Musical Written to be Rehearsed and Performed Remotely!

Coming Spring 2021

## Kindergartners “adopt” trees

Mrs. Cady’s remote kindergartners have been exploring trees as part of their STEM class. Students have “adopted” a tree near their home, which they will visit throughout the year to observe the changes from season to season. To record their observations, the young scientists are learning to make scientific models of their trees (labeled drawings).



Students shared their scientific models during an online meeting.

## Christmas around the world

Second-graders learned about different holiday traditions and customs people celebrate in December. Topics included Germany and trees decorated with candles, Mexico and Las Posadas, Hanukkah, Christmas and much more. Students enjoyed one afternoon of gingerbread house making.



Second-graders had fun creating gingerbread houses as a culmination of their study of holiday customs.





## Alternative questions to replace "How was school today?"

Parents frequently ask their child, "How was school today?" Often children reply with one-word responses such as "good" or "fine". Such responses often lead to the need for parents to ask probing follow-up questions to gather more information. In some instances, the child's one-word response may signal the end of the conversation. Sometimes it may be difficult for parents to know what specific questions to ask in order to spark a conversation about their child's school day. Reframing questions we pose to children can open the door to conversations that allow parents to celebrate their child's learning and growth and provide avenues of support.

The questions and prompts listed below serve as alternatives to "How was school today?" They are designed to engage children in meaningful dialogue about their learning and social-emotional growth. We invite you to pose one or two of these prompts to your child as conversation starters.

1. What did you learn today? How do you know that you learned this?
2. How were you challenged in your learning today? What strategies did you use to help you with this challenge?
3. Did you make any mistakes at school today? What did you learn from them?
4. Tell me about a moment when you felt excited about what you were learning.

5. Tell me something that made you smile at school today.
6. What was the nicest thing you did for someone else today?
7. Tell me about a moment when you felt proud of yourself at school today.
8. What are you looking forward to tomorrow? Why?
9. Is there anything that you'd like to talk about that I might be able to help you figure out?
10. What did you learn about yourself today?

Timing of conversations matter and impact the amount of information you may receive from your child. Pose a question about your child's day when you have the ability to focus, so that your child feels he/she has your full attention. Once you identify a time that is ideal for such conversation, consider making it part of your routine.

During the course of a school day, children have multiple opportunities to engage in problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration and discovery. They have opportunities to make mistakes and to learn from their mistakes, to set goals, to be kind to others and to be creative. These opportunities are part of the fabric of a child's learning journey.

Posing thoughtful questions and/or prompts allows parents to share in their child's learning journey. Let your journey begin!

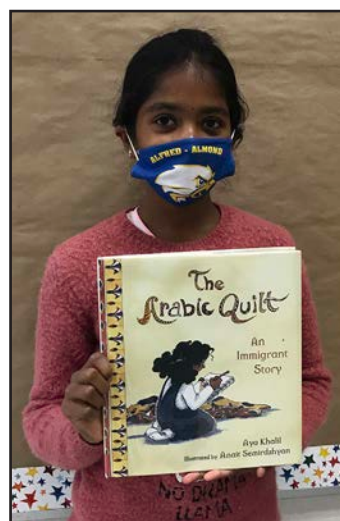
– Submitted by Stefanie Mayr, GST BOCES Staff Development Coordinator

## Sixth grade enjoys Book a Day

Sixth-grade students are participating in Classroom Book a Day again this year. Each day, the teachers and students enjoy a picture book together. Students have the opportunity to share their favorite books with classmates.



Bailee (above) and Sahethi (right) shared favorite books in Mrs. Oriend's class.



## Class seeking postcards

Sixth-graders in Mrs. Oriend's class signed up to receive postcards from classrooms across the USA this school year. Unfortunately, with many school shut-downs and different learning models, the classroom map is not filling up very quickly. If you know of someone who might be willing to send a postcard and tell the class a little bit about



The classroom map plots the locations from which postcards have been received.

their state, please pass along the address below. Thank you!

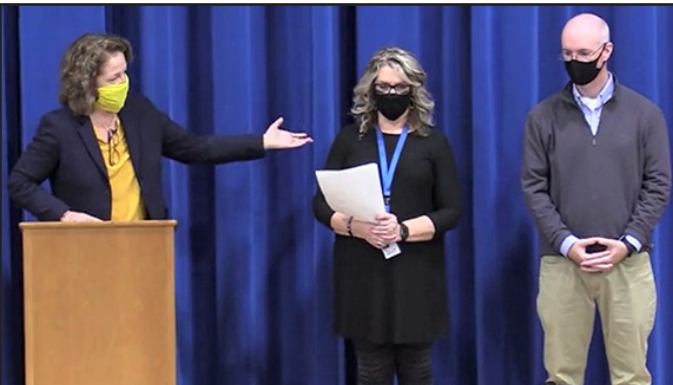
Mrs. Oriend's 6th Grade Class  
Alfred-Almond Central School  
6795 State Rt. 21  
Almond, NY 14804

## First Honor Roll Breakfast recognizes academic achievement

The academic achievements of students earning First Honors were celebrated in December with the ever-popular donut feast. Dr. Rivers offered students her congratulations and admiration for going above and beyond the expectations of their teachers to earn this honor, in spite of multiple obstacles. She also reminded students to thank their families, teachers and friends who helped support them.

There were 133 First Honor students recognized by their counselors. This comprises 49 percent of the student body. In order to receive First Honors, a student must obtain an average of 90 percent or higher and have no grade below 80 percent.

It also is important to note 181 students achieved first or second honors, or BOCES honors. This comprised 67 percent of the Alfred-Almond Jr.-Sr. High School student body. This is an amazing accomplishment! Congratulations to all of these students and their teachers and families for their dedication to education.



Students including Tayler Flaitz (top) and Ryan Washburn (center) were recognized by Dr. Rivers, Mrs. Decker and Mr. McAneney (above).

## STAR credit information

Eligible new homeowners will receive their STAR savings in the form of a check directly from New York State. New Basic and En-



hanced STAR applicants must register with the New York State Tax Department to receive a STAR check. Register anytime at [www.tax.ny.gov/star](http://www.tax.ny.gov/star) or by phone weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (518-457-2036). Register by July 1 to receive your STAR check in September. If you register after July 1, you will receive your check later.

### STAR eligibility requirements

If you own your home, it's your primary residence, and if your income is \$500,000 or less, you're eligible for the Basic STAR credit.

If you're 65 or older with an income of \$86,300 or less, you may be eligible for the Enhanced STAR credit.

### Before you register

You'll need this information to register for the STAR credit:

- names and Social Security numbers for all owners of the property and their spouses (you may be asked to enter this information more than once to show the relationships between owners)
- the primary residence of the owners and their spouses
- approximate date the owners purchased the property and the name of the sellers (this information is not required, but it can help us to smoothly process your registration)
- the most recent school tax bill, if the current owners received one
- address of any residential property owned in another state
- the legal name of the trust, if applicable
- 2018 federal or state income tax returns for all owners. If you weren't required to file a 2018 income tax return, you be asked to provide financial information for all property owners.

### STAR exemption recipients

You don't need to register with New York State for STAR if you're a longtime homeowner with an existing STAR exemption. If you're a senior citizen who has been receiving the Basic STAR exemption and has become eligible for the Enhanced STAR exemption, you should apply with your local assessor.

## Alfred-Almond KINDERGARTEN SIGN-UPS FOR SEPTEMBER 2021

In order to identify all children who will enter Kindergarten in September 2021, we are asking those parents who have eligible children who **DO NOT CURRENTLY ATTEND THE PRE-K PROGRAM** to complete this form and return it to the elementary school by April 16, 2021. Your child must be 5 years of age on or before December 1, 2020. This information is necessary when we initiate Kindergarten sign-ups in the spring. We will use this information below to generate a mailing list for sending the actual registration packets. Students currently attending the Pre-K will automatically be sent a packet. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Child's Full Name \_\_\_\_\_ M/F Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Maiden Last

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
House # Street City State Zip

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(If different from above)

Phone Number where you can be reached between 8:00AM and 3:00PM \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Middle Last

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
House # Street City State Zip

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(If different from above)

Phone Number where you can be reached between 8:00AM and 3:00PM \_\_\_\_\_

Child Resides With: \_\_\_\_\_

Alfred-Almond Elementary  
6795 State Route 21  
Almond, NY 14804  
607-276-6525

## Alfred-Almond PRE-KINDERGARTEN SIGN-UPS FOR SEPTEMBER 2021

In order to identify all children who will enter Pre-Kindergarten in September 2021, we are asking those parents who have eligible children to complete this form and return it to the elementary school by April 16, 2021. Your child must be 4 years of age on or before December 1, 2020. This information is necessary when we initiate Pre-Kindergarten sign-ups in the spring. We will use this information below to generate a mailing list for sending the actual registration packets. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Child's Full Name \_\_\_\_\_ M/F Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Maiden Last

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
House # Street City State Zip

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(If different from above)

Phone Number where you can be reached between 8:00AM and 3:00PM \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Middle Last

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
House # Street City State Zip

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(If different from above)

Phone Number where you can be reached between 8:00AM and 3:00PM \_\_\_\_\_

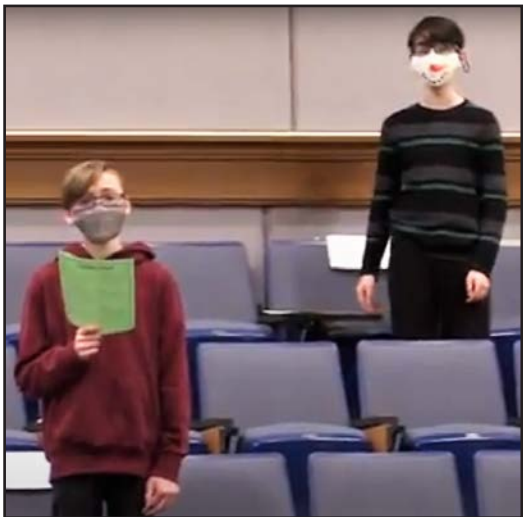
Child Resides With: \_\_\_\_\_

Alfred-Almond Elementary  
6795 State Route 21  
Almond, NY 14804  
607-276-6525



# Holiday Sing Along

In December, the Senior High Bands and Junior High Choirs teamed up to host a virtual Holiday Sing Along for the district. The bands played carols while the choirs sang and both performances were live streamed throughout the building for everyone to sing along to. It was a great way to send the students and staff into the holiday break on a high note.



POSTAL PATRON

Alfred-Almond Central School  
6795 Rte. 21  
Almond, New York 14804  
Return Services Requested

U.S. Postage Paid  
Alfred, New York 14802  
Permit No. 20  
Non-Profit Organization

## Mark your calendar

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day –  
No School..... January 18  
Superintendent’s Conference Day –  
No School for Students ..... February 1  
Winter Recess – No School ..... February 15-20  
Parent-Teacher Conferences ..... March 11-12  
Elementary dismissed at 11:50 a.m.  
Superintendent’s Conference Day –  
No School for Students ..... March 15

## Transportation requests

Any parent requesting student transportation to a nonpublic school must request such transportation in writing no later than April 1, 2021. The request should be submitted to the Alfred-Almond Central School District Office.

## ALCEN yearbooks on sale

It’s time to buy a yearbook!  
The ALCEN Staff has had their fair share of struggles this school year. We were unable to go out and sell business ads and we did not have a sales week in October. However, we are now offering the yearbook for sale online. This is something new that we are offering and we hope this makes it easier for everyone to buy a book. If you have any questions on this process, please email Kelly Valentine at [kvalentine@aacsapps.com](mailto:kvalentine@aacsapps.com). Sales will run through the end of April and there will be a very limited number of books to purchase in June.

The staff has been hard at work on page layouts, completing the senior portion of the yearbook and working on the sports pages. They have been working virtually and the pages are looking great. This book would not be possible without the support we receive from the Alfred-Almond community. If anyone has pictures of their children doing school work at home, sports photos or just candid that we could possibly use in the book, please send them to Mrs. Valentine at her email address above.

The online sales web address is:  
<http://jostensyearbooks.com/?REF=A05279600>

Thank you for your support!

## School closing information

As a reminder to parents, it is sometimes necessary to close school because winter weather conditions make it unsafe for students to walk or ride to school. Should it be necessary to close school, you will receive an automated message notifying you of this occurrence. For additional information on school closings, please listen to one of the following radio or TV stations:

WLEA 1480 AM    WLSV 790 AM    WKPQ 105.3 FM  
WCKR 92.1 FM    WJQZ 103.5 FM    WZKZ 101.1 FM  
WKBW-TV (Buffalo)    WETM-TV (Elmira)

## Follow us on social media



Have you liked us on Facebook yet? Be sure to click the like button at the top of the page to receive updates.  
<https://www.facebook.com/AlfredAlmondCentralSchoolDistrict>



You also can follow us on Instagram:  
[@alfred.almond.central.school](https://www.instagram.com/alfred.almond.central.school)

