

Niskayuna Schools at 50 Rosendale Elementary School

Thank you to all the past and present contributors to this history, including: Brian Aylward, Jeanne Sosnow, Bart Spoor, Betty Shaver and Pearl Marie Frosch

The original Rosendale School, named for its location off Rosendale Road, was one of the four “common schools” that served Niskayuna from their inception shortly after 1812 until the early 1900s. Until 1915, students in the Rosendale Common School District attended school at the building now called “The Grange.” In that year, the use of this building as a school was discontinued and the children of the Rosendale Common School District began attending the Van Antwerp School. The Grange building, still on Rosendale Road, is now owned by the Town of Niskayuna. “Rosendale” is from the Dutch word *rozendaal*, meaning “valley of roses.”



The Grange Building is located on Rosendale Road and owned by the Town of Niskayuna. It was the original Rosendale School, used as such until 1915.

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Construction of the present school began in April 1955 on a 24-acre plot of land. The school welcomed its first students in September 1956, with Miss Laura Enders as principal. Within two years, enrollment increases forced the kindergarten class to be temporarily relocated to the high school for a year to provide more classroom space for students in grades one through six. As enrollment grew, it again became necessary to expand the facilities and house students in other buildings. In 1959, the sixth grades were moved to Van Antwerp Junior High School, and Rosendale became, as it is now, a K-5 school. During the next decade, the school population continued to increase and more classrooms were added.

1970s

By the mid-1970s, District enrollment had declined and it became necessary to close an elementary school. Birchwood School was closed in 1977, and students were reassigned to Rosendale, necessitating the addition of classrooms. In the 1980s, enrollment began to grow and Rosendale experienced overcrowding again. Construction in 1989 involved the addition of two new classrooms, a computer center, and the expansion of the library. Art was delivered on a cart, and music took place on the

stage in the cafetorium. Lunch periods began earlier in the day, and extended well into the afternoon to accommodate the numbers of students in the school. In response to the increase in the elementary population and the desire for neighborhood elementary schools, voters in 1990 approved a referendum to re-open Birchwood Elementary. The Rosendale School population decreased from 600 in 1991-92 to slightly more than 400 in 1992-93 after Birchwood's reopening. Rosendale held its first fifth-grade graduation on June 24, 1993.

Rosendale has a superb academic program staffed by excellent teachers. The numerous opportunities for creative expression, during the school day and in after-school enrichment programs, through writing activities, school-wide art projects, chorus, plays and filmmaking, have all added to a wonderful school environment. The school also has an extremely supportive and caring parent group who, among other activities, in 1987 volunteered their time and raised funds to build a community playground on the school grounds.

Rosendale in Colombia

The entire Rosendale community—staff, students, and parents—has always been a caring, involved group. In 1963, the school community learned of the need for more schools

in Colombia, South America. Through the leadership of a parent, the school raised funds and sponsored a school building in Casa Blanca, Colombia, with the assistance of CARE and the Peace Corps. Letters of appreciation by President

Lyndon Johnson and Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver were sent to the school. Besides construction monies, the students raised funds for school supplies and exchanged materials with students of the new



In 1971 volunteers added a greenhouse to the school for students to observe a “growing laboratory.” (Photo taken in 1993)

Colombian school, also called Rosendale.

Through the years, area residents have donated trees to enhance the school property, and parents developed the Rosendale Nature Park in 1962-63. In 1971, volunteers added a greenhouse to the school for students to observe a “growing laboratory.” In 1987, parent and community volunteers raised funds and built a community-wide playground.

A decade ago, in conjunction with the middle schools, Rosendale developed a peer tutoring program between sixth-graders and elementary students that still operates today. Within the elementary school, peer tutoring combined with a team teaching program was introduced to help facilitate cooperative learning between two grade levels. Rosendale third-graders have written and published their own mini-books on computer, sharing their program and trading books with a third-grade class in Arbor Hill.



Visiting artist Colin Coats inspires Rosendale students in this spring 2002 photo. He helped students create bird weather vanes for the school’s garden.



Rosendale second-graders collected and donated pet supplies to the Animal Protective Foundation of Schenectady in fall 2000. Above, students surround the foundation's truck that hauled away the supplies.

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Fifth-grade students added a term paper unit to their studies, learning the rudiments of in-depth research. Students presented their findings to their classmates and received tapes of their presentations to be shared with their families.

Working together

Rosendale has a history of teacher collaboration in which specialist teachers (art, music and physical education) work with classroom teachers to integrate the curriculum. In 1993, the Native American Unit was taught in the classrooms, and supplemented with units developed by the art and music teachers. In 1991, students participated in a week-long international festival celebrating the visual and performing arts of the world's many cultures. Students incorporated writing and math into their social studies unit on New York by writing epochs about certain historical times and events, and using principles of math to make

maps and build cities.

New programs have been added to address the specific needs of certain students. The "K-2 Program," introduced in 1998, helps students with language and cognitive difficulties reach grade level standards and join a regular classroom. The Alpha Program, available throughout the District, is designed to provide academic enrichment for qualified fourth- and fifth-graders.

Community service

Throughout the years the school community has continued its practice of doing for others. In 1993, a fifth-grade class raised funds for the Somalia relief effort through bake sales, raffles and a fun fair.

Other student efforts have supported Cocoa House, a safe house in Schenectady where children can do homework in a secure environment. Students have also volunteered time at Bethesda House. When a Latham playground was destroyed by fire,

Rosendale students responded by raising money to help rebuild it. Food drives and coat drives are annual events. Last year, Rosendale students donated more than 300 coats to children in Schenectady.

Character education has been the District theme of the last several years. The principles of respect, responsibility, self-control, independence and tolerance have been incorporated into all aspects of Rosendale school life. In 2002, Rosendale was honored with an award for Excellence in Character Education, presented by New York Lt. Governor Mary Donahue.

Rosendale PTO

At Rosendale, parents remain an important resource. They serve as tutors, support the reading program, and volunteer their services for a variety of tasks. The Parent Teacher Organization remains a vital part of the school and sponsors many activities, including after-school enrichment programs, cultural events, bake sales and book fairs, family fun nights and dinners, roller skating parties, the Fun Fair and the Ice Cream Social.

Rosendale Principals:

- Laura Enders, 1956-70
- Stephen Israel, 1970-85
- Patricia Price, 1985-88
- Thomas Buckley, 1988-92
- Brian Aylward, 1992-present