

# BRENTWOOD BULLETIN

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## REENVISIONING DISTRICT FACILITIES

### Ensuring Quality Education for Generations to Come

For more than a year, the Brentwood Union Free School District has been embarking on a roughly \$60 million capital improvement project, which touches nearly every aspect of learning for the more than 19,000 students currently enrolled in Brentwood schools.

From solar panels that will save district taxpayers money and portable learning devices for every student, to new sensory playgrounds, lockers, roof work, and drainage system replacement; Brentwood school facilities are seeing unprecedented levels of improvement and technological upgrades, and the work is only getting started.

“It’s my goal, and the goal of the members of the Board to rebuild our infrastructure and rebuild our facilities so that we have another 50 years ahead of us that we can have worry free,” said Brentwood Board of Education President Robert Feliciano.

Over the past summer 59 projects were completed, and another 95 are in various stages of completion. Already completed are various interior and exterior repairs and the installation of digital LED signs and upgrades at each school building. Over the next year, portable classrooms will be replaced with permanent facilities at the Ross High School, Freshman Center, Southeast, and Twin Pines elementary schools; a new turf field will be installed at the high school; and new playgrounds installed at each elementary and middle school, among dozens of other projects.

Taken together, these construction and technology infrastructure projects will leave Brentwood schools poised to meet the needs of the 21st-century child better than at any point prior and bring a renewed sense of pride in the Brentwood Schools Community.



Freshman Center Roof



Northeast Elementary School Gym



Ross High School Pool



Ross High School Showers



Ross High School LED Sign

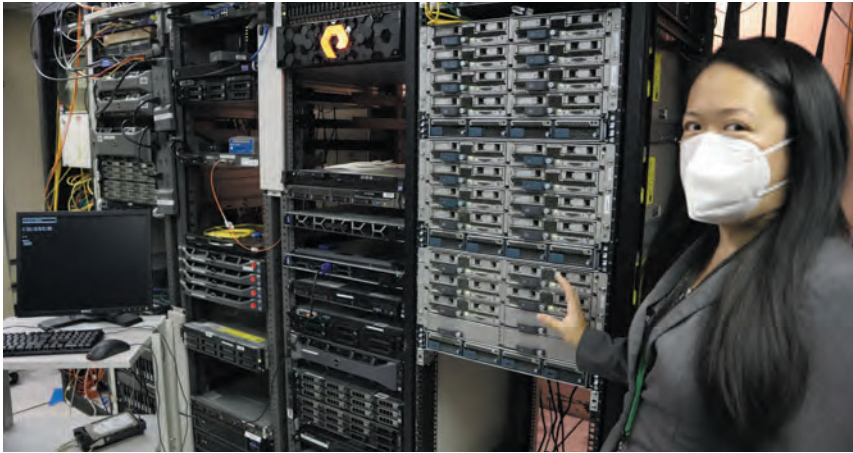


Solar Panels



BOARD OF EDUCATION: Superintendent of Schools Richard Loeschner, clockwise from top left, 1st Vice President Paula Moore, 2nd Vice President Maria Gonzalez-Priscod, Trustee Simone Holder-Daniel, Trustee Eileen Felix, President Robert Feliciano, Trustee Julia Burgos, Trustee Cynthia Ciferri

# BRINGING TECHNOLOGY INTO THE CLASSROOM



For the past two years, the Brentwood Union Free School District has been hard at work staying on the cutting edge of classroom technology. Since the start of the pandemic, laptops and iPads have been provided for each of the district's more than 19,000 students, and Aquos interactive instruction boards have been installed in each of the district's classrooms.

Over the past summer alone, 445 classrooms received new Aquos boards, and coupled with the portable learning devices, they have opened up new avenues for instruction.

In Debbie Agro's third-grade class at Southwest Elementary School this winter, for example, students worked on an interactive lesson about famed American paleontologist Barnum Brown. On their laptops the students read about Brown using a digitized textbook, and were given the opportunity to type out answers to Ms. Agro's lesson questions. The answers could then be shared on the touch-screen board, and discussed with the class.

"It makes the teaching more exciting because it allows you to share not just reading materials, but also videos on the subject matter," Ms. Agro said.

In Christine Fitt's fifth-grade class, students learned decimal places. Using the board, laptop and physical workbook, the lesson was broken into three segments in which Ms. Fitt demonstrated the lesson using the touch screen, and the students had the opportunity to practice through an interactive quiz on their laptop, and in an accompanying workbook.

Over at East Middle School, seventh graders in David Griffith's science class learned about the body as part of the elevateScience curriculum, and were able to study diagrams of the human lungs mirrored on both their laptop screens and the Aquos board in front of them.

In Dionne McMann's sixth-grade English Language Arts class, students read a short story on the screen and then had the opportunity to answer questions about the five W's (who, what, where, when and why) of the story on their laptops.

With the proliferation of the technology in the classroom comes the infrastructure needed to support it. In the basement of East Middle School lies a laptop servicing and distribution center in which hundreds of laptops are being repaired, updated and catalogued at any given time.

To provide power for the laptops, the district is embarking on a pilot program to install portable charging stations in classrooms.

In the district administration building, server racks line a secure room and serve as the brains of the district, according to IT Coordinator Candice Cheng. Everything from security, storage, fire alarms and Wi-Fi to PA systems, phones and even faxes are handled by the machines, with sub facilities in each school building.

All of it is being upgraded continuously to ensure Brentwood's students and staff have access to the technology needed to stay competitive in the 21st century.

# LEARNING THE ESSENTIALS AT BRENTWOOD'S NEW ADAPTIVE LIVING SKILLS KITCHENS



This November, the Brentwood Union Free School District celebrated the grand opening of its new adaptive living skills (ADL) kitchens at the Freshman Center and the North, West and South middle schools. The kitchens provide vital, hands-on experience for students with special needs in the district's life-skills program, and allow them to lead independent lives as they transition into adulthood.

"We care about every student no matter the background and no matter the need, and part of our goal is to ensure that each one of our children has the skills necessary to succeed," Brentwood Board of Education President, Robert Feliciano, said.

The new kitchen facilities feature ovens, stoves, sinks, refrigerators and dishwashers as well as washers and dryers to provide opportunities for the students to learn the basics of cooking and home care. They are an expansion of life-skills facilities already in use at the high school.

"Students in the life skills program typically require ongoing support in more than one major life activity to participate in an integrated school, home and community setting," Brentwood Special Services Director Rhonda Young said.

The program provides students with a full-day experience when they advance to the middle school program. This allows integration into the school community through a combination of academics as well as authentic life-skills experiences. Students will learn how to do laundry, prepare food, wash dishes, measure, and shop for groceries."

Construction on the new kitchens began over the summer, and are just one component of Brentwood's ongoing transformation.

"This is for special needs kids who really do need to learn life skills for when they leave us after they graduate," Brentwood Superintendent of Schools Richard Loeschner, said. "When they move on, they will have the life skills they need to live on their own and get a job, and we're very proud of the vision we have for these kids."

The facilities are already being put to good use, with students learning how to make homemade parfaits, rice crispy treats and chocolate dipped strawberries all while learning the basics of independent living.

"This has been an amazing opportunity for my students. They're learning kitchen etiquette, they're learning kitchen safety. They're even learning how to measure, and how to cut things," said North Middle School ungraded classroom teacher Allison Alfano. "This is basic daily living, and it's just been something that they're so excited about."



## SAVING THE ENVIRONMENT, ALONG WITH TAXPAYER MONEY

As technology increasingly becomes embedded in the classroom so too does the electrical demands it puts on school building infrastructure.

That is why for roughly the past seven years, the district has been engaging in an unprecedented energy performance project, that, when complete, will effectively take Brentwood schools off the electricity grid.

Upgrades planned for the project include the installation of high-efficiency insulation on all windows, the replacement of outdated lights with high-efficiency LED units, other assorted system improvements, and, most notably, the installation of solar panels at all schools. It is the largest solar initiative ever approved by the New York State Education Department!

When the project is complete, it will produce 6.5 megawatts of power district-wide. That will virtually zero out the district's electric bill. The improvements will bring about impactful offsets to the district's environmental footprint as it is expected to offset the emissions of more than 1,300 cars in terms of CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and save District taxpayers nearly \$2.1 million annually.



# MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE WHOLE CHILD AT BRENTWOOD SPECIAL SERVICES

The Special Services Department at the Brentwood Union Free School District serves a vital need, overseeing the individualized education programs of more than 2,700 local students with disabilities.

The department provides everything from speech, occupational and physical therapy to academic support, social-emotional and mental health counseling, and much, much more.

“The staff provides a continuum of services, oversees the individualized education programs for students and meets with them and their families annually,” Special Services Director Rhonda Young said.

“We work to support the whole child so wherever a need arises we try to provide solutions,” April Seneus, Assistant to the Director of Special Services said.

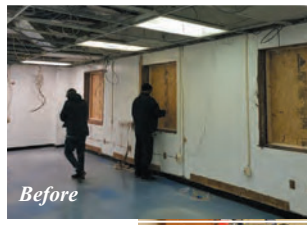
Now, as part of Brentwood’s transformation to continue providing the best possible education to its students, Special Services is undergoing its first major renovation in more than 30 years.



Before



After



Before



After

With the improvements, gone are the filing cabinets and large meeting spaces that Young says are no longer needed, and in are high-speed connectivity technology, and refurbished offices.

“With this space we are able to create more efficient programs and implement new digital systems,” Young explained.

Work on the building began in June 2020. Completed upgrades include refurbished CSE (Committee on Special Education) spaces, where staff meet with parents and students to identify and address their needs, as well as a handful of administrative and coordinator offices.

Looking forward, the district plans to continue the office renovations, and provide additional space to reintegrate its Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) program—which meets the needs of its pre-kindergarten children—back into the Special Services building.

The entire effort is one of many across the Brentwood Union Free School District that when completed will instill pride within the school community for generations to come.

“Among the teachers that are servicing our students, and the parents that live in this community, they can now look at the building and see what improvements are being made, and be proud of what is taking place within their community,” Special Services Assistant Director Seneus said.

“With these necessary improvements, I feel like it’s being communicated to a lot of people that they have an advocate here.”



## Coming up Next

As the Brentwood Union Free School District continues its transformation, construction is slated to continue throughout 2022. Projects scheduled for completion include:

- New playground facilities at each elementary and middle school.
- Hot water heating, and HVAC system replacement.
- Locker replacement.
- Gym floor refurbishment and electric gym partition replacement.
- New tiling in a majority of school facilities.
- Bus canopy repair.

All of it is to ensure that parents, students and teachers alike can look at Brentwood schools with pride that will extend forward for generations to come.