

# CommunityLink

Fall 2017

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## A Strong Start for a Successful Year

The new school year is well underway and off to a great start thanks to the many events and activities districtwide that helped prepare our students and staff for the best year possible.

The first day of Kindergarten is always very exciting and a bit anxiety-provoking for both children and their parents, so before the new year began each of our elementary schools hosted fun and informal **Meet & Play** events on school playgrounds. Along with school staff, members of the PTA welcomed families and answered questions **“It’s a great way for incoming kindergartners to meet some of their classmates and check out their new school, and for parents to meet one another,”** said Post Road Principal Jesimae Ossorio.



Principal Jesimae Ossorio with new kindergartners at Post Road.



Getting ready to start at Post Road!



Coffee & Conversation

Superintendent Dr. Joseph Ricca has been hosting Coffee & Conversation events to encourage communication within the district. At the first meeting, which drew about 40 parents and community members, topics included the district’s plans and goals for the new school year, including the establishment of strong and productive partnerships with city groups and other community organizations.



At a four-day New Teacher Orientation 37 new staff members were introduced to the school district. Administrators met in a three-day retreat to plan another challenging and engaging school year, using basic district goals as a starting point.

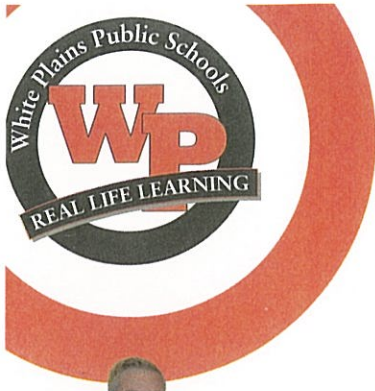
New staff excited to join the White Plains School District!

## Welcome, New Administrators

A warm welcome to our new administrators, left to right: Sergio Alfonso, Transportation Director; Sara Hall, in a new position as Assistant Principal/Guidance; Kahli Murrell, House Administrator High School; and Gaetano Vitiello, High School Activities Director, Homebound Instruction and Superintendent’s Hearings.



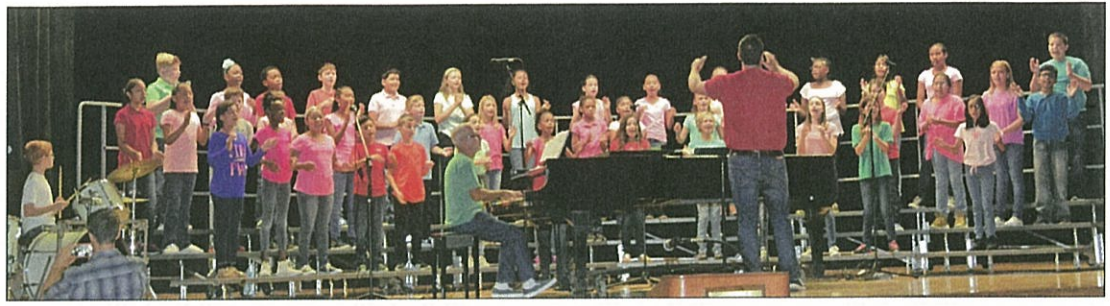




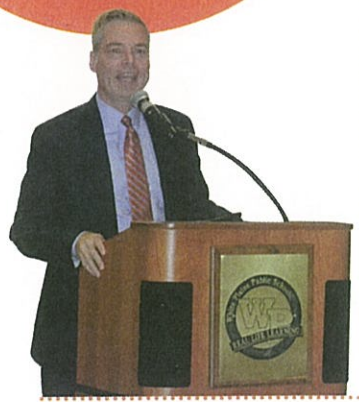
### A Strong Start (continued)

At the annual Superintendent's Conference Day on August 31st, district staff gathered at the High School to kick off the new school year. After a moving performance by the Mamaroneck Avenue School Chorus,

School Board President Rosemarie Eller cited this as an example of why the arts are so important in schools. She also called on attendees to model the District mission and meet children where they are and then elevate them to reach new heights of learning.



The MAS Chorus performs on opening day.



White Plains Mayor Tom Roach greets gathering.



School Board President Rosemarie Eller addresses staff.

White Plains Mayor Tom Roach spoke and complimented Dr. Ricca's commitment to communication by lamenting that he has been overthrown as the "Twitter King" by the new Superintendent! On a more serious note, he recognized the district's commitment to educating every child and ensuring that no one falls between the cracks, making note of how important it is to be able to **“ afford all children an opportunity to succeed and to change the world. ”** Mayor Roach also pointed out that education is a team effort and recognized the contributions of not only teachers, but those who work in facilities, security, guidance, health, and administration throughout the District.



Dr. Ricca addresses the District on opening day.

In his first opening day address, Superintendent Ricca thanked the Board of Education for its commitment to kids, welcomed all new teachers and staff at each school and recognized the contributions of the WPTA, CSEA and ASA leadership, among others. He said that while he is now Superintendent, he is and always will be a teacher. He truly believes in the power of public education and trusts our teachers to know what's right for our kids in the classroom. **“ Don't let anything get in the way of teaching our kids the way you know they need to learn, ”** Dr. Ricca said. He also stressed the importance of positive relationships and open communication.

On the **first day of school**, principals, teachers, administrators, and staff were outside our schools to greet and guide new and returning students. Dr. Ricca rode a school bus to George Washington School, where students were excited to see their old friends and make new ones. Many also said they were looking forward to Math and Science!



Superintendent Ricca made a new friend on the first day of school at GW.

Stella is starting first grade and is most excited about opportunities to write and said she usually writes stories about animals.



Kindergartener Mateo is ready to learn Math and excited to play with his new classmates.





## From Budget to Classroom

With the passage of the 2017-2018 school budget last spring, we are able to implement some exciting curriculum enhancements this year. Highlights include expanded STEM enrichment, the addition of Math Specialists in the elementary schools and additional Computer Science offerings at the High School.

Elementary STEM enrichment is part of the ongoing expansion of the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) curriculum throughout the district. **“If we expect our students to perform and contribute at a high level, we have to prepare them throughout the K-12 continuum to engage in that level of work and thought,”** said Dr. Debbie Hand, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. **“Through the PLTW engineering design model, students are empowered to develop increasingly in-demand, transportable skills by exploring real-world challenges.”**

PLTW STEM learning teaches students to develop solutions to a problem they could imagine encountering in their daily lives. Third graders are working with robotics to learn about

stability and motion, and force and interaction. They are on a field trip at the zoo where their goal is to apply design theory and engineering to construct a mechanism to safely move a tiger that has become trapped. Second graders are studying properties of matter and are tasked with designing a solution to a very realistic challenge: how to keep ice pops cold during a soccer game.

Three new Math Specialists have joined the district and are being shared among the five elementary and two middle schools. They serve all students at every level of academic need, providing both support and enrichment in small group settings. Students benefit from more personalized instruction and individual attention and we hope to inspire them to enjoy mathematics as it's made more relevant and exciting to them.

The addition of a full time Computer Science teacher at the High School enables us to offer five full sections of Computer Science in order to meet student demand, including courses related to programming languages, game design and software engineering. Our goal is to offer the AP Computer Science course next year, allowing students to earn college credit.

## KUDOS

### National Merit

National Merit Commended Students announced in September are Andreas Alexandrou, Aaron Ditzkoff, Thomas Hughes, Frederick Kara, Amy Rosenblatt, and David Terry. Students named in the National Hispanic Recognition Program are David Terry, Anna Tender and Julia Wisell.

### Coach Receives Award

Coach Patty Gilmartin has been named the 2016-17 Girls' Swimming & Diving Coach of the Year for New York by the National Federation of High School Sports. This is a regional award of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association. A Phys Ed teacher here since 1983, Gilmartin has coached for 32 years in Swimming, Soccer, Tennis, Basketball, and Softball.



Caitlin Sergi



Shakira Uculmana

### WP Science Students Recognized

Science Research Program students from White Plains High School achieved important recognition over the summer. Senior Caitlin Sergi was awarded the Acorda Scientific Excellence Award for her research last summer at Regeneron Pharmaceuticals. Seniors Angelina Shoemaker and Shakira Uculmana were recognized for the research they conducted at Memorial Sloane Kettering Cancer Center's (MSKCC) Human Oncology and Pathogenesis Program (HOPP) summer program, into which they were accepted after a very rigorous application process. Kimberly Fleming teaches the Science Research Program.

### Retired School Nurse Publishes Book

Barbara Santarelli, who recently retired from the White Plains School District after 25 years as a School Nurse, has just published her memoir. Titled *Everything I Never Wanted, A Memoir of Excess*, it includes Barbara's reflections on the important and positive role the District played in her life.



### WPHS Alumna Sloane Crosley Honored

Acclaimed author Sloane Crosley, a White Plains High School graduate, Class of 1996, was the honoree and keynote speaker at the White Plains Library Foundation Fall Gala on October 21st. Her most recent publication is the bestselling novel *The Clasp*. Her essay collections, *I Was Told There'd Be Cake* and *How Did You Get This Number*, were both New York Times bestsellers and the former was shortlisted for The Thurber Prize.



The mission of the White Plains City School District is to educate and inspire all students, while nurturing their dreams, so they learn continually, think critically, pursue their aspirations and contribute to a diverse and dynamic world.



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## Dads Take Your Child to School Day



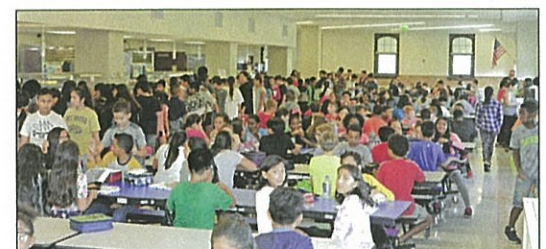
Superintendent Ricca emceed the kickoff for the County's 8th annual Dads Take Your Child to School Day initiative, which was officially launched by Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino at Ridgeway Elementary School on September 14th.

Dads Take Your Child to School Day took place on September 19th in school districts throughout the County and at all White Plains schools. The event encourages fathers and significant male caregivers to be positive role models throughout the year.

**“Today is about the special relationship between dads and their children,”** said Dr. Ricca, addressing community representatives from the school district, the White Plains Youth Bureau, PTA, local clergy, and others. **“Research shows that students who enjoy support from a father or a male caregiver excel in school. They earn higher marks, participate in positive social activities, have fewer instances of behavioral difficulties, are less likely to use drugs and alcohol, and are less likely to be persistently absent.”**

## Facilities Upgrades

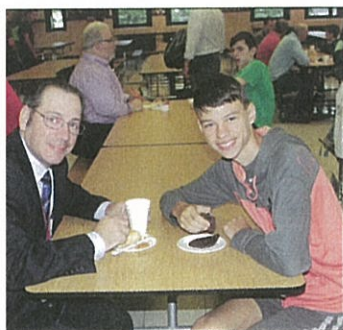
Over the summer, facilities upgrades were made indoors and out, throughout the District, in order to maintain our high standards of education, health, efficiency, and safety. Eastview Middle School, which has been undergoing long-term rehabilitation, had many exciting projects completed this year. Highlights include the cafeteria, which underwent a total overhaul, including new kitchen, larger service lanes and storage facilities; enlarged classrooms that allow full teams to meet together and where students can spread out and work in groups based on different learning styles; larger and more modern science labs and music facilities that enhance learning; and a remodeled gymnasium.



Lunchtime in Eastview's new cafeteria.



Students working in their modernized science lab.



One of the 120 dads/parents who attended Dads Take Your Child to School Day at Highlands Middle School. Mayor Roach, Superintendent Ricca, Executive Director of the WP Youth Bureau Frank Williams, PTA representative Kristin Mulvey and members of the Highlands administration and staff were there to greet parents.