

CommunityLink

Fall 2019

Sign Language Course	2
ENL Summer Experience	2
Surprise Donation	2
Kudos	3
New Equity Committee	4
Free for Seniors	4

A Great Start to the New School Year

We love to ask our youngest learners what they're most excited about on the first day of school. This year there was a clear winner among boys and girls in first to fifth grade at Mamaroneck Avenue School: Math! And we even had a kindergartener who said she was excited to get homework!



Superintendent Dr. Joseph L. Ricca and Mayor Tom Roach rode a school bus to Mamaroneck Avenue School to greet families on the first day of school.

To prepare for 2019-20 and ensure a productive year, District staff was hard at work all summer.

Strategic planning is a continuous process in our District. All stakeholders – teachers, students, staff, administrators, community members, the Board of Education – are involved as we revisit our goals and progress every summer and make any necessary adjustments to ensure we're doing all we can to unlock each student's unique potential.

We welcomed 60 new staff members to the District this school year, including four WPHS graduates. We also welcomed two new Principals: Daisy Rodriguez at Eastview Middle School, who comes to us from Perth Amboy High School, and Jessica Torres at Ridgeway, who was previously a Principal at schools in Washington Heights and the Bronx.

Director of Facilities and Operations Frank Stefanelli oversaw many **improvements to the District's buildings and grounds** over the summer. From restroom renovations to athletic field improvements and sidewalk repairs, more than 70 projects were completed. We thank Mr. Stefanelli and his team for helping us to maintain

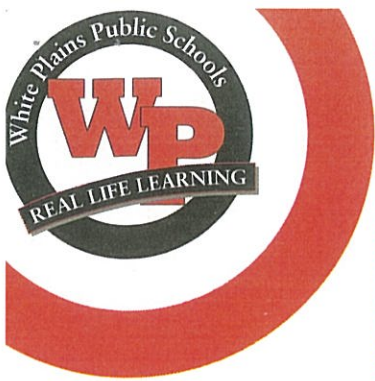
a safe, comfortable learning environment.

At the annual **Superintendent's Conference Day**, Superintendent Dr. Joseph L. Ricca, White Plains Mayor Tom Roach, Board of Education President Rosemarie Eller, WPHS Principal Ellen Doherty, and Union officials addressed hundreds of staff. Mayor Roach noted the excitement in the room and reminded the audience **“that there is no more vital service government offers than public education.”** Dr. Ricca asked everyone to read the District's mission out loud together (see the back cover of this newsletter) and reiterated our commitment to serve every child. He then introduced special guest David E. Kirkland, Ph.D., J.D., Executive Director of the NYU Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools to talk about advancing equity in White Plains. Stories about his own experiences illustrated that **“what we do in the classroom has deep consequences.”**

Staff at Superintendent's Conference Day.

New Principals Daisy Rodriguez (left) Jessica Torres (right)





Popular American Sign Language Course Expanded

In response to great demand from students, the American Sign Language (ASL) course that was introduced last year at the High School has been expanded for 2019-20.

“This is a perfect example of how we were able to create a program based on student interest,” said Lisa Panaro,

Director of LOTE (Languages Other Than English) and ELL (English Language Learners) Programs K-12. Student interest level was fostered by Teacher Jennifer Montgomery who hosts a popular ASL club at WPHS.

In this club, hearing, hard of hearing and deaf students learn to communicate with one another and share in deaf culture. The participants’ enthusiasm led Ms. Panaro and Ms. Montgomery to successfully propose an elective course for last year. **“As a teacher of the deaf, I have created these inclusive activities for the friends, families and classmates of my students so they didn’t view it as something different,”** said Ms. Montgomery. **“American Sign Language is for everyone. It’s about a language and a community, not a disability.”**

Now, more than 75 students are enrolled in two sections of ASL 1, while last year’s cohort has moved on to ASL 2. This year, all ASL classes will be taught by new teacher Conniree Francis. Ms. Montgomery will continue working with our hard of hearing and deaf students as well as advising the ASL club.



Students in the American Sign Language class.

Summer Experience for ENL Students



The ENL Summer Experience included the Museum of Natural History, Ellis Island, the Brooklyn Bridge, and more.

This summer, ten newcomers to our District participated in a 3-week elective program to learn language and leadership skills, get to know some of their new classmates and become more familiar with White Plains and New York City. This special experience for English as a New Language (ENL) students, which involved classroom work and field trips, was the innovation of Lisa Panaro, Director of LOTE (Languages Other Than English) and ELL (English Language Learners) Programs K-12 and Spanish Teacher Catalina Restrepo. They were inspired after attending a professional development conference that focused on supporting multilingual learners. Ms. Restrepo, a WPHS graduate and former ENL student herself, wrote the curriculum and led the program, with the assistance of her colleague Maribeth Milkowski. Ms. Restrepo shared, **“They learned a lot about American History, bonded with one another and developed leadership skills and confidence they will take with them into the school year.”**

Surprise Donation to Eastview

In a surprise to staff members, Eastview Middle School teachers received a \$10,000 AdoptAClassroom donation in celebration of a new Burlington Store in White Plains. The funds will be used to purchase classroom supplies through AdoptAClassroom.org.



Eastview Principal Daisy Rodriguez, Superintendent Dr. Joseph L. Ricca, Burlington Store Manager Henry McCadden, Board of Education Member Rose Lovitch, and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction Debbie Hand.

Cross Country Girls Break Record



Abby (left) and Sophie (right) on their record-breaking run.

Two students on the Varsity Girls Cross Country team, coached by Kaylin Fitzsimons, broke a WPHS record on the 3.1-mile Somers course in September. Freshman Sophie Ginsberg is the new record holder with a time of 19:46.70. Eighth grader Abigail Roman completed the course in 20:42.90. The previous record was held by Lisa Burg — 21:10.38.

National Merit Competitors

Six White Plains High School Seniors were recognized in the 2019-2020 National Merit Scholarship Competition. Uriel M. Korin and Owen S. Kris were named Semi-Finalists and in the Commended Student category are: Olivia R. Duvanich, Ella M. Einstein, Miya I. Haynes and Lily Nguyen. Semi-Finalists will now compete for the Finalist category which will be announced in February. Scholarships will be granted in April. Six WPHS students were also honored in the National Hispanic Recognition Program: Esteban J. Barrero-Hernandez, Camila De Valencia, Uriel M. Korin, Emmanuel Pena, Stanley F. Plaza, and Matthew A. Salonich. The National Merit Scholarship Corporation, a not-for-profit organization, was established in 1955 specifically to conduct the annual National Merit Program, to honor the nation's scholastic champions and encourage the pursuit of academic excellence.

Summer School Graduates

Congratulations to our Summer School graduates who received their diplomas at a ceremony in the High School Media Center on August 26th. This accomplishment is just the beginning; we expect great things from you!



WPTA President on State Education Commissioner's Council

Seventh grade teacher Kara Lyons, President of the White Plains Teachers Association, was named to the Commissioner's Advisory Council for New York State Teachers. The Council is a forum for meaningful discussion of current policies, best practice implementation strategies and other critical issues that impact education policy decisions. **“It's really important for practitioners to know that the State Education Department is listening to those of us who do the actual work in the field,”** said Ms. Lyons. **“I look forward to the opportunity to engage in this dialogue and advocate for what our students, schools and colleagues need in order to provide outstanding educational opportunities for all.”**



Kara Lyons

Exciting Classes at Rochambeau

In Intro to Technology, students learn how computers work by taking them apart and putting them back together. If you need to know the difference between RAM and ROM memory or how to install a new hard drive, just ask the students!



In a new guitar class, students work on a Beatles tune while improving their strumming and chording skills. Dr. Steven Chetcuti teaches this class as well as Intro to Technology.

“Stop the Bleed” Training

In a training session led by White Plains Hospital doctors and staff, more than 65 District staff, including school nurses, coaches, teachers, and administrators, recently learned techniques to stop excessive bleeding in the case of a major injury. Skills learned include identifying and packing wounds and applying tourniquets, which would help reduce blood loss during a bleeding emergency. Like CPR and the Heimlich maneuver, Stop the Bleed empowers citizens to potentially save lives by providing critical intervention in the important minutes before an ambulance arrives. **“While I hope our staff never need these skills, I feel good knowing that they are trained and capable,”** said Superintendent Ricca, who participated in the training.

KUDOS

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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Participants Sought for New Equity Committee



Superintendent Dr. Joseph L. Ricca has announced the formation of a District-wide Equity Committee to analyze our organization and environment regarding inclusivity for all of our students, faculty/staff and parents/guardians. Members have been solicited among the community for the last month and the interest and response have been overwhelming. A committee of 30 will be announced shortly.

The committee will work with the NYU Metro Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools and will consider all aspects of equity and access. Its mission will be to identify any structurally embedded policies, practices and/or beliefs that may generate and/or sustain instances of educational inequity. The group will then work to develop strategies that change those policies, practices and/or beliefs in order to reduce and eventually eliminate any identified inequities.

The District has a long history of commitment to equity for all, dating back to 1964 when it was one of the first school districts in the nation to voluntarily desegregate its schools.

Seniors Attend Free of Charge

Senior citizens in White Plains are invited to attend District events free of charge. To obtain your Gold Pass, call 422-2071 or stop by Education House at 5 Homeside Lane.

