

CommunityLink

Summer 2014

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We did it!



White Plains High School graduated 480 students on Thursday, June 26th at the Westchester County Center. Speaking to the graduates, Principal Ellen Doherty said: **“I invite you to crash head on into dogma. Challenge static thinking. Look at what is, and, if it’s not what it should be, change it. Seize every opportunity to do the right thing.”**

In her valedictory address, Louisa Abbott shared advice from a freshman year teacher, to try to enjoy each day rather than simply waiting for or anticipating the future. She encouraged her fellow graduates to seek happiness, make themselves proud and “to remember where you came from and who has helped you along the way.” Louisa will attend the University of Michigan, where she will be part of the Shipman Society scholarship program.

Salutatorian Rachel Okun spoke about the role curiosity plays in our lives and said that she is confident it will “help us discover what we want to do for the next four years and beyond.” Rachel will attend Lehigh University and participate in the rigorous Integrated Business and Engineering Program.

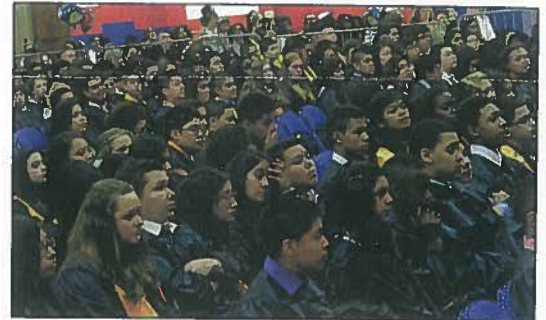
Superintendent’s Update

On June 9th the Board of Education approved a one-year contract with Timothy P. Connors, who will stay on as Interim Superintendent of Schools for the 2014-15 school year. Rosemarie Eller, Board President, said “The Board is very pleased to have Mr. Connors with us for another year. We know that he will continue the fine work he began this past year and will move the district forward toward its goals.”

Headed to High School

Earlier in the day on June 26th, 509 Highland Middle School eighth graders participated in the Moving-Up Ceremony at the County Center, to celebrate their transition to high school. Students were involved in every aspect of the event, leading the Pledge of Allegiance, performing the National Anthem and other musical selections, and presenting awards to retirees.

This class is the first to graduate from the redesigned middle school structure, now unified as one group that came from two middle schools. It’s a challenge they met well, according to Highlands Principal Ernie Spatafore.



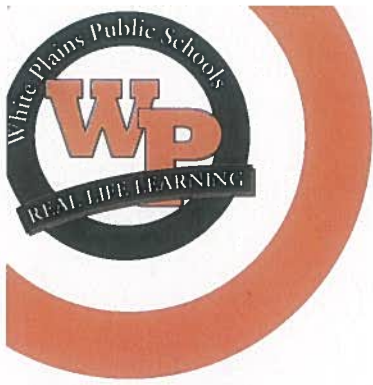
“Entering high school is an opportunity for each of these students to continue their education and focus on their individual talents and potential, and to hopefully make their dreams come true. We have prepared them to be lifelong learners and worked hard to prepare them to succeed in every step of their education; we have no doubt that they will,” he said.

“I am honored that the Board of Education has asked me to serve as the Interim Superintendent for the 2014-2015 school year. I also appreciate the positive comments from across the school district that parents, teachers, staff and administration look forward to working together for another year on behalf of our students.”

Timothy P. Connors,
Interim Superintendent of Schools

Salutatorian Rachel Okun (left) and Valedictorian Louisa Abbott





Post Road's "New" Principal

A familiar face will take over the position of Principal at Post Road Elementary School, effective July 1st: Assistant Principal Jesimae Ossorio. Mrs. Ossorio has been in her current position for two years; prior to that, she was the Assistant Principal at Church Street for 5 years, and in the NYC Public Schools for 3 years. As a Literacy Coach in NYC she worked to support and improve teacher practice. Mrs. Ossorio also was an ESOL teacher for several years, serving the needs of English language learners.



Post Road School Principal Mrs. Ossorio

“My past experiences have prepared me well for the rigors of being a Principal. I’m very excited and am looking forward to serving as a strong instructional leader,” said Mrs. Ossorio. “Post Road is in a good position and I am ready to take the school to higher levels of student achievement.”

Library Visits a Big Hit with 6th Graders

More than 500 sixth graders from Eastview Middle School enjoyed visits to the White Plains Public Library during the month of May, thanks to a generous grant from the Shinnyo-en Foundation which supports a partnership between the White Plains Public Schools and the Library.



Teachers, librarians and administrators planned the full-day field trips with the Public Library team in order to introduce all Eastview students to the many resources available at the Library and to welcome them to its new space for teens, called The Edge.

Students rotated to different activities throughout the day, including a scavenger hunt, a graphic novel workshop, an introduction to 3-D printing and one station dedicated to making something to benefit people in need. The students made hundreds of bookmarks for The Trove children’s library, origami and letters of encouragement and support for children at the Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital and colorful flower bouquets for senior citizens. The service activity was a great hit with the students and their teachers.

For information about the Library’s programs and resources for students, visit www.whiteplainslibrary.org.

School Budget Passed By Large Margin

The 2014-2015 school budget was passed by the voters on May 20th with 81.6% of the vote in favor. We are once again grateful for the support of the community as we strive to provide an exceptional education to the more than 7,000 students in our district. Thank you, also, to the staff members, parents and others who provided input throughout the budget process, and to Fred Seiler, Assistant Superintendent for Business, for his leadership.

Rosemarie Eller and Randy Stein were re-elected to the Board of Education.

Fun and Friends at 5th Grade Field Day



Fifth graders from all five White Plains elementary schools took a trip to the High School on May 30th for 5th Grade Field Day, where they participated in a variety of team-building activities with their future Eastview classmates. Next year will be the second in the redesign of the Middle School, with all sixth graders going to Eastview.

The day was planned by elementary school Physical Education teachers Joan Behrends, Chris Dethwick, Jamie Dowd, Brian Golden, Lamont McCormick, Howie Rubenstein, Bari Slatas and Marybeth Stefano.



Excellence at GW STEM Fair

GW's First Annual STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Fair was held on May 15th, a collaboration between the school and PTA. Students from the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades, with projects ranging from bird studies to earthquakes to acid base reactions, presented their findings to other participants, parents and teachers during daytime and evening sessions. Thanks to the Digital Arts Experience of White Plains and to Fujifilm USA for joining the fair and illustrating to students how STEM skills are important for their careers.



Girls Lacrosse Excels On-Field and Off

The White Plains High School Girls Lacrosse team won the League 2A Championship for the first time in school history, finishing the spring season with a 13-2-3 record. Led by Senior Captain Mary Lynch, they advanced to the Section semi-finals for the second straight year and finished the season ranked 4th in Section 1, the highest end-of-season ranking in school history. Nine players were recognized with All League honors and 5 were honored with All Section. The team's excellence on the field was further matched by their excellence in the classroom; *ALL 17 members of the team were named New York State Scholar Athletes!* In addition, Mike Leone was named the Conference 2 Coach of the Year for the second year in a row.

“Our sports teams were incredibly successful this spring. Every team made the playoffs, the Golf team tied for the League championship, school records were broken, and we received many post-season awards. Most importantly, our students once again represented White Plains with great pride and sportsmanship.”
Jennifer DeSena
Director of Athletics

First Year of AVID in 9th Grade

Advancement Via Individual Determination – known as AVID – is a two-part program in the White Plains School District that focuses on writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading (WICOR) skills as a means to foster student success among middle and high schoolers. A lot of time is spent on goal-setting and on preparing all students for college readiness and success.

AVID works in two ways: as an elective class and as a school-wide strategy. The AVID elective targets students in the academic middle who have the desire to go to college and the willingness to work hard. These students are capable of completing a rigorous curriculum but are falling short of their potential. Oftentimes, they will be the first in their families to attend college.

The first group of students to experience the AVID elective in White Plains began in 6th grade at Eastview and the program came with them to the high school for the first time in the 2013-14 school year. During the year the students made trips to two colleges and to a career-in-sports seminar and a college fair.

All of the students who entered the 9th grade AVID program will continue into 10th grade, where most will be placed in one or more honors/AP classes. The students hosted an orientation for the 8th graders, to help the incoming cohort get acclimated to the high school.

Students who don't take the elective also benefit from AVID, as the principles of this national program are shared with all teachers and administrative staff, so that every class and activity are infused with WICOR skills. Staff members have attended educational conferences and the schools have hosted trainings by AVID staff. The more experienced teachers help mentor colleagues to incorporate AVID strategies.

“We want our students to be able to meet the challenge of a rigorous curriculum, including the requirements set forth by Common Core,” said Doug Cronk, English Coordinator/AVID District Director. “This program is the ‘how’ behind those goals – it gives us the tools and strategies we need to make it all happen.”



This spring, 6th grade English Language Arts classes at Eastview participated in the Young Playwrights Program, funded by The Foundation for Public Education in White Plains, where they learned how to adapt Greek and Roman myths into plays under the direction of Artist-in-Residence playwright Wendy Baker. Students began the unit by playing theater and acting games as well as learning the importance of the use of improvisation when writing dialogue for a play.

Young Playwrights Program at Eastview

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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KUDOS

TEACHER HONORED

Lisa Messina, 6th Grade Science Teacher at Eastview, was awarded a Teacher of the Year Honorable Mention from Barnes and Noble. Mrs. Messina was nominated by Shannon Rogers, who said in her essay that Messina **“...is the most dedicated and helpful teacher”** she’s ever had.



Thank You For Your Service!

The Board of Education honored 26 retirees and fifteen 25-year staff members at its June 9th meeting.

Board President Rosemarie Eller and Superintendent of Schools Timothy P. Connors congratulated and thanked these staff members for their years of service to the students of White Plains. They presented certificates to the following:

25 Years of Service

Joan Behrends
Michael (William) Braswell
Eilish Buckley
Barbara Caridi

Wendy Dale McSheller Edwards
Cynthia Evans
Antonietta Farago
Phoebe Gilman
Lisa Giordano

Dalia Gonzalez
Alicia Lopez-Jantzen
Sara Montalvo
Rina Slavin
Shabnam Tapia
Evelyn Ulmer

Retirees

Carlos Alvarez
Elsa Berman-Price
Karen Buckley
John Burch
Laverne Carroll
William Cradle
Elisa DeBernardi
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Barbara Parolini
Mary Perri
Wendy Podell
Angelina Preston
Lester Roby
Jane Turk
Karen Watson
Edward Weinstock
Susan Wiener
Susan Zicca

Walk/Bike to School Day



The White Plains PTA Council’s Walk/Bike to School Day in May, part of the **“Safe Routes to School”** initiative, had the highest involvement ever this year. The program hopes to increase physical fitness, reduce traffic and improve air quality, foster a sense of community among those who travel together and reduce transportation costs for district families. The day is also intended to bring attention to the importance of safety skills for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers. Students from several schools participated and were offered drinks, snacks and goodie bags upon arrival.

WPHS Academic Team Places 3rd in National Competition

The WPHS Academic Team traveled to New Orleans over Memorial Day weekend to compete in the National Championship Tournament. The A-Team went 4-2 in the preliminaries and was seeded 6th. They defeated North Forsyth (#11) from Indiana,

then turned the tables on Jesuit B (#3) after a preliminary loss to that team. Jesuit went on to win the National Academic Championship, with White Plains placing #7 in the nation.

A-Team Captain Arielle Hazi was selected as a moderator for next year’s National competitions, the third WPHS student to win this honor. Teacher Lester Roby was advisor to the group.

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