

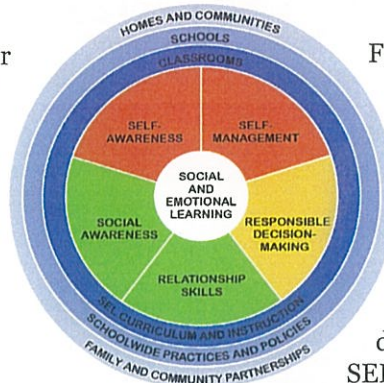
# CommunityLink

Winter 2020

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## SEL: The Foundation of a Positive Educational Experience

Children learn best when their emotional needs are met and they feel safe, supported and happy at school. To help the White Plains School District implement and strengthen best practices that support the emotional development of children, we have partnered with the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the nation's premier resource for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). CASEL recently conducted a review of the SEL practices in the District, meeting with more than 100 teachers, teaching assistants, students, support staff, and administrators throughout the district, as well as representatives from our partners in the community, including parents, the Youth Bureau, El Centro Hispano, Andrus and Family Services of Westchester.



Following this thorough review, CASEL will return its recommendations for short- and long-term goals that support the integration of SEL into all aspects of the school day, across every grade level. The next step in this process is to create district and building level SEL committees which will work collaboratively with all stakeholders to review the goals and implement the appropriate recommendations.

Deborah Augarten, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Pupil Services, who is overseeing this initiative, said, **“ We look forward to working with our District stakeholders to refine our SEL supports and services to continue to provide an excellent educational experience for every student we serve. ”**

### UPCOMING DATES

**February 7-9**  
High School Musical

**February 10**  
Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 pm

**February 17-21**  
Winter Recess

**February 24**  
Budget Meeting 7 pm

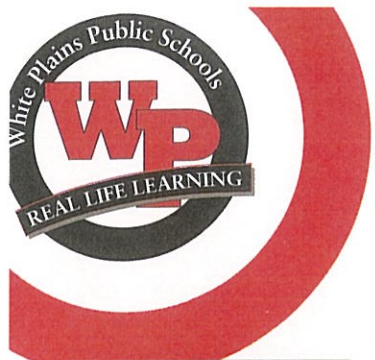
Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

## WP Swimmer Heading to Olympic Trials!

Alexa Reyna, an 8th grader at Highlands and member of the WPHS Girls Varsity Swim Team, has qualified for the Olympic Trials in the 1500 meter. Competing at Rutgers University, Alexa swam an amazing 16.48.25-minute time, making her eligible to compete in Omaha on June 23, 2020. Congratulations on this incredible accomplishment!

Read more about recent achievements, on the field and in the classroom, on page 4 of this issue.





## Responsible Planning for the Future

Two District committees — Long-Range Planning and Master Planning — have been meeting this year and creating a roadmap to ensure that the District is prepared in every way to meet the needs of students and staff for many years to come.

constituents and partners, including the Youth Bureau, Recreation and Parks and the PTA, comprise three subcommittees — education, infrastructure and athletics/physical education — that recently developed their initial recommendations.



Superintendent Dr. Joseph L. Ricca presents the Long-Range Plan to the Board of Education.

Long-Range strategic planning is an annual process that uses data collected over the course of each school year to plan for the next five years of programming. The committee works alongside others, like Equity, Safety and Security, and Wellness, to develop recommendations that support existing programming and offer opportunities to improve access for all students, to great educational programs.

**“ Our District and Board of Education are committed to being proactive, not reactive, when it comes to decision-making that affects our ability to provide the very best programming and safe, comfortable facilities that enable high-quality learning and experiences, ”** said Superintendent Dr. Joseph Ricca. **“ These long-range predictive processes allow us to be fiscally responsible so that we are prepared to implement necessary updates and handle any unexpected occurrences. ”**

Master/capital planning will result in a comprehensive plan for the District’s infrastructure, facilities and grounds over the next 15 years. Internal and external

## Highlands Mentor Program

There’s an exciting new initiative at Highlands Middle School, spearheaded by Assistant Principal Michael Eaton and teachers Raquel Benitez, Cindie Lembo and Jaclyn Sette, all of whom earned mentor certification last year. More than 20 other staff members are serving as mentors for 40 students, meeting weekly during the school day for one-on-one conferences and twice a month after school as a full group.

**you feel you can always go to or talk to can change a child’s life. ”** Early results are promising — among the mentees, attendance is rising and grades and behavior are improving.



Participants in the Highlands Mentor Program enjoy a pot-luck Thanksgiving feast.

Mentor/mentee meetings are free form and conversations range from academic or social topics to just a chat or check-in about how the day is going. The larger gatherings focus on team-building exercises and fun activities, like a pot-luck Thanksgiving feast where each mentor brought a dish to share.

**“ The goal of this program is to facilitate a meaningful connection between each of the students and an adult in the school, ”** said Assistant Principal Eaton. **“ Having one person**

A second cohort of up to 40 students will be accepted into the mentoring program after February break and there are plans to add field trips. Parents who feel their child would benefit from this program can contact Michael Eaton at [michaeleaton@wpcsd.k12.ny.us](mailto:michaeleaton@wpcsd.k12.ny.us).

## College Acceptances Rolling In

We’re proud to share that many of our WPHS seniors have already received acceptance letters from some of the finest institutes of higher learning in the state and nation, including:

- |                       |                       |                           |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Binghamton University | Harvard University    | Stanford University       |
| Brown University      | Lehigh University     | Syracuse University       |
| Bucknell University   | Niagara University    | University at Albany-SUNY |
| Colgate University    | Penn State University | University of Delaware    |
| Fordham University    | Providence College    | University of Vermont     |
| Hartwick College      | St. John’s University |                           |

## Welcoming Newcomers to Our District



Students new to our country, from all of the District's elementary schools, participate in a program designed to support their language development. At the Saturday Newcomer Academy, they have fun and get to know one another while learning and practicing English with the help of Teachers Michelle Nisianakis, Yarina Sencion and Frances Carlo, Teaching Assistants Maureen Fargo and Sonia Gomez and several student volunteers from the Middle and High Schools. Post Road Principal Jessie Ossorio and Assistant Principal Suzanne Lasser oversee the program. The Academy met for seven sessions in the fall and will meet eight more times between January and March 2020.

## 7th Graders Explore Effects of Technology

In a learning unit called "This is Your Brain Plugged In," Dr. DeLanoy's and Ms. Federico's 7th grade English Language Arts students have been learning about – and debating – the impact that technology like social media and video games has on the lives of children and teens. Each Friday they debate for or against a topic related to their weekly reading. At the end of the quarter, they will write a research paper with their determination about whether the use of screens has improved or damaged our society.



## "Night of the Arts" at Post Road

Post Road Elementary hosted its inaugural Night of the Arts event in December, showcasing a piece of artwork from every student in 3rd through 5th grade. The evening featured guided tours by 4th grade docents, as well as a family art table. This was followed by the school's winter concert where the 5th grade band and orchestra and 4th/5th grade chorus performed for their parents.

**"We are proud to promote inclusivity and to celebrate every child's artistic talent,"** shared Principal Jessie Ossorio. **"We look forward to having every K-5 student showcase their work next year."**



## Inspired by The Mitten Tree

Each year, Mamaroneck Avenue School hosts a schoolwide read-aloud of *The Mitten Tree* by local author Candace Christiansen and collects donations of mittens, scarves, gloves and hats to hang on the Mitten Tree that the PTA created outside the library. They are later donated to families in need. One MAS student worked with his aunt and grandmother to knit 65 scarves and hats!



## A Colorful Twist on Fitness at Ridgeway

The Ridgeway Wellness Committee, comprised of parents, teachers and administrators, hosted the first annual Polar Color Dash in the school's parking lot in December. More than 40 families participated, getting a dose of mess and color along with their exercise! There will be a similar event in the spring. The Committee continues to meet monthly to discuss health and wellness issues pertaining to the Ridgeway School community.



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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## White Plains Athletes Excel



Coach Gilmartin with Luisa Nierhoff, Ava Iannetta, Alexa Reyna, and Claire Weinstein.

### SPOTLIGHT: Varsity Girls Swim

The Girls Varsity Swim Team, led by coach Patricia Gilmartin, was undefeated League Champion in the fall. Seven girls swam at the State Championships, setting eight new records in 13 events.

**Lizzy Tirado** (10th grade) - new six and eleven dive records and qualified for States.

**Salma Reyna** (10th grade) - member of 200 medley relay, swimming back stroke.

**Margaux Reyna** (12th grade) - member of 200 medley relay, swimming freestyle, elected a State captain by the Section.

**Luisa Neirhoff** (10th grade) - member of 200 medley relay, 200 freestyle relay and 400 freestyle relay all of which set new

school records, also swam at States in the 100 fly.

**Ava Iannetta** (11th grade) - member of the 200 medley relay, 200 freestyle relay and 400 freestyle relay, set new school record in the 50 freestyle and placed 8th in the state.

**Claire Weinstein** (7th grade) - member of 200 medley relay, 200 freestyle relay and 400 freestyle relay, placed 9th in 200 freestyle and 5th in the 500 freestyle.

**Alexa Reyna** (8th grade) - State Champion in 500 freestyle with a time of 4:47.80, setting a new school and Section 1 record, and All-American swimmer in the 500, placed 5th in 200 freestyle with a time of 1:51.49, also a member of 200 medley relay, 200 freestyle relay and 400 freestyle relay. In January, Alexa qualified for Olympic Trials in the 1500! See the cover of this issue for details.

### Scholar Athletes

At the end of each sports season the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) honors teams and individuals who excel in the classroom. The White Plains School District is proud to congratulate our 178 varsity athletes and seven varsity teams who were recognized for the fall 2019 season.

### Team Victories

Congratulations to our Fall League Champs: Varsity Girls' Swim (undefeated in their league!), Varsity Field Hockey and Varsity Football. Several varsity teams – Football, Boys Soccer, Girls' Soccer, Field Hockey, and Volleyball – reached the Section 1 AA Quarterfinals in the Section 1 AA tournament.

**Wrestling Success** Wrestler Sebastian Garibaldi took second place in the 220-pound category in the Eastern States Classic. In the championship match, he lost to the top-ranked 220-pounder in the country. The junior was selected as Journal News/lohud Wrestler of the Week for January 14th.

