



Community Link

White Plains Public Schools
Unlocking the infinite and unique potential of each student, every day.

Visit the District's website (whiteplainspublicschools.org), Facebook page (facebook.com/wpschools) and YouTube channel (search WPCSD videos) for the latest information.

FALL 2022

Welcome Back, Tigers!

The rain didn't dampen our enthusiasm on September 6th as we welcomed our students to a new school year! It's off to a great start and there are amazing things happening in every building, at every grade level.



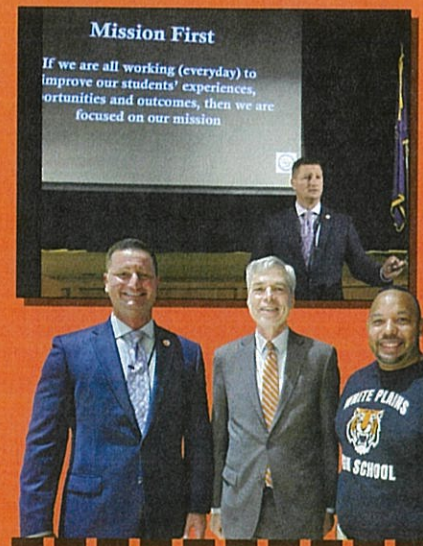
◀ Students at Ridgeway Elementary School were eager to see their friends and shared that they were most excited for reading, science and... recess!

Annual Kickoff Event

District staff gathered for Superintendent's Conference Day on September 1st and were treated to an exceptional keynote address by Dr. Gholnecsar (Gholdy) Muhammad, Associate Professor of Literacy, Language and Culture at the University of Illinois at Chicago, an award-winning researcher, educator and best-selling author. In her presentation, entitled "Cultivating Genius and Joy Through Culturally and Historically Responsive Education," Dr. Muhammad discussed the history, theory and practical application of her work. Soon, her lesson plans will be made available to teachers districtwide. Visit the District's YouTube channel to watch the address. (Search WPCSD videos.)

Superintendent Dr. Joseph L. Ricca, Board of Education President Rosemarie Eller, White Plains Mayor Tom Roach, WPHS Principal Emerly Martinez, and Union officials also addressed attendees, sharing words of welcome, wisdom and thanks. Rosemarie Eller said: *"You prepare our students for the challenges that lay ahead, for careers that don't even exist yet. Every one of you in every single role works together, doing whatever is necessary to support social and emotional needs and ensure that our students find their voices, to advocate for what they believe is right and just. We know how generous you are with your time and resources. Please accept the Board's most sincere and deep gratitude for doing everything you can to support our students and their families."*

District teachers and staff at Superintendent's Conference Day ▶



▲ Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Ricca, White Plains Mayor Tom Roach, White Plains High School Principal Emerly Martinez

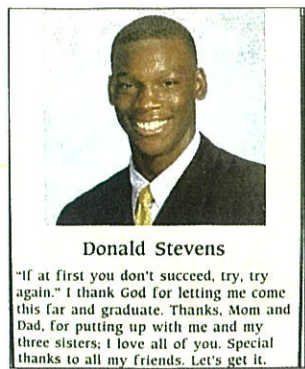
Alumni Spotlight: Where Are They Now?

With this issue, "Community Link" begins a new feature on our White Plains High School alumni. To suggest a graduate for a future spotlight, email micheleschoenfeld@wpcsd.k12.ny.us.



Donald Stevens graduated from White Plains High School in 2004, an accomplished musician and track and field star. In fact, he was a two-time All-American and Olympic hopeful. He graduated from Southern Connecticut State University and was inspired to become a Music Therapist after serving as a mental health worker at New York-Presbyterian Hospital. He earned a Master's Degree in Music Therapy from New York University, one of only a few Black American males to do so.

Now, as a Music Therapist at the Westchester Conservatory of Music, Donald uses his love of music to bring hope and joy to children and adults with disabilities. Over the past 10 years he has worked in numerous school districts to help patients cope through music. He also works with military veterans through the Healing Our Heroes program. White Plains Mayor Tom Roach gave him an award for "creating positive changes in White Plains," he was named to the White Plains Police Reform Committee, and he was selected by the Business Council of Westchester as a "Rising Star 40 Under 40." Recently Donald won an Emmy for his song, "You Can Change the World." You can listen to it here: <https://youtu.be/HVzNqWCWo1c>. Donald lives in White Plains with his wife and three children, two of whom attend White Plains schools.



Administrators Appointed at District Schools

We're pleased to welcome seven new administrators to their new roles, as well as 60 new teachers and 36 new civil service members, and look forward to working with them to make it a great school year.



Michael Eaton
Principal, Highlands Middle School



Tara Daly
Assistant Principal, Highlands Middle School



Jessica Maracallo
Assistant Principal, Highlands Middle School



Meredith Lee
Assistant Principal, Church Street School



Dr. Todd Maguire
House Director, White Plains High School



Justine Shewbarran
House Director, White Plains High School



Dr. Kimberly Crawford
Interim Principal at Ridgeway

A Proud Partnership with LUCA



Our District is lucky to partner with Latino U College Access, a local nonprofit organization known as LUCA, to support our Latino students and their families throughout the college exploration and application process. LUCA staff participate in our FAFSA Boot Camps and community info sessions, helping families understand the college application process and complete financial aid applications, and offer additional services beyond what our guidance counselors can provide.

"They create a family-like environment for our Spanish-speaking families," said Sara Hall, Assistant Principal - Guidance Services. "They are team players, very responsive, and provide an extra level of care and love to our students, many of whom represent the first generation in their family to pursue a college education. Working with LUCA, kids are more likely to persevere through the daunting college application process, and parents feel supported and comfortable. It's a very positive partnership all around."

Beyond the support offered to all Spanish-speaking families, about 20 students who demonstrate academic excellence are selected as Latino U Scholars each year. They are the first generation to attend college (in the United States) and receive intensive one-on-one mentoring starting in their junior year of high school. This includes SAT/ACT test prep, school visits, application support, financial aid award review and more. Since 2014, more than 100 WPHS students have been selected as Latino U Scholars, and have gone on to enroll in American University, Cornell University, New York University, Stanford University, and many more. And, it doesn't end there. LUCA's First-Gen Forward program provides six years of support to Scholars – helping them transition to college, select courses, adjust to life on campus, and get career-ready. They also ensure the college student's family at home has a support network.

"White Plains is an amazing partner," said LUCA Executive Director Cosette Gutierrez. "There is great communication and a lot of thoughtfulness in terms of how we can help support students' needs."

New District Clerk

Michelle Melendez has been appointed as the new District Clerk. She comes to the District from 20 years in education, in the Middletown and Newburgh, NY, school districts. She replaces Michele Schoenfeld who retired from the position. Ms. Melendez says she looks forward to working with the Board and community in this role. Board President Rosemarie Eller said, *"We welcome Michelle to White Plains and expect to benefit from her service for many years to come."*



Dr. Joseph L. Ricca
Superintendent of Schools

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Rosemarie Eller, *President*
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James F. Hricay
Rose Lovitch
Charlie Norris
Randy Stein

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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Students in Dr. Chetcuti's tech classes at Rochambeau are excited to be working with physical computing tools, to learn the real-world applications of computational thinking. They are using the Raspberry Pi Microcomputer as a tool for a programming and automation.

Free Pre-K for White Plains Families

This year we welcomed **321 four year-olds** into our full-day (6-hour) Pre-Kindergarten Program, offered free of charge in partnership with community-based organizations throughout White Plains. In our Pre-K classrooms children engage in experiential learning through purposeful play, develop their knowledge and vocabulary in our theme-based curriculum units and build positive relationships with their peers and teachers. Each center has designated outdoor space for recess and physical education, and meals are provided. Additional grant funding has allowed us to add two new classrooms to the program this year and we continue to expand to meet the needs of all our White Plains families. Registration for next year's Pre-K Program will be held in April/May of 2023 for all children who will turn four by December 21st of 2023. Visit www.whiteplainspublicschools.org/Page/20996 for more information.



Summer Sports Academy

Nearly **170 WPHS student athletes** joined the District's inaugural 5-week Summer Sports Academy. Three afternoons a week from 4:30 to 7:00 pm, they participated in speed and strength drills, received SAT/ACT prep and refined their study skills. They worked hard, gave the program rave reviews and plan to come back next summer!