

## Hernandez Pidala Appointed as Superintendent

Caroline Hernandez Pidala was officially appointed Millbrook Central School District’s Superintendent effective July 1. The initial term is three years.



Millbrook’s recently appointed Superintendent Caroline Hernandez Pidala is ready to continue serving the needs of both students and their families.

When Hernandez Pidala started at Millbrook eight years ago, she did not imagine becoming a Superintendent so early in her career, but has enjoyed her role as interim superintendent because Millbrook’s small environment allows her the chance to interact with students more often than if she was in a bigger district.

For Hernandez Pidala, being relatable to students as they walk through the hallway makes them more comfortable to come to her if they need anything.

“I want them to see us as human because then they understand that we’re all just here to help them,” Hernandez Pidala said. “Sometimes when you move up the ladder, you move away from the reason you got into education in the first place – to impact children’s lives. However, in Millbrook, we are fortunate to be in the same buildings.”

Some of Hernandez Pidala’s goals and priorities include an increased focus on financial and environmental sustainability, introducing reforms to bring greater efficiency to the curriculum and having input from students and their families, where appropriate, into decisions that will affect their school experience.

“Our goal is to partner with the community more,” the superintendent said. “We look for transparency from our families so that we can best serve them and I know that they expect transparency from us.”

Education took a back seat during COVID and Hernandez Pidala wants to make up for lost time now that classes are back in-person. The superintendent finds that focusing on students’ social-emotional needs will help them become better learners in the future.

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## Intentional Center Based Learning



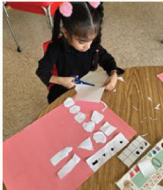
Centers designed to support whole-group instruction



Centers are designed around thematic units, students’ interests, and various concepts (science, math, literacy, fine motor, etc.)



Centers are choice based and “free-flowing”



Three Elm Drive Pre-Kindergarten teachers shared how the revised curriculum has helped students start their school career on the right foot at a recent Millbrook Board of Education meeting.

One of the points highlighted was Intentional Center Based Learning (ICBL), which is designed to support instruction for the whole group and is centered on student interests and various math and literacy projects that change frequently. This concept is free flowing and students can pick different areas to learn about for a time before moving on to another.

“ICBL is really centered around the students and what they’re interested in doing and learning about that day,” Teacher Samantha Hale said. “It’s really nice to have a lot of choices in our classroom every week.”

Teacher Alessandra Suriano and her colleagues rely on Eureka Math and the New York City Department of Education’s Pre-K for All units that meet the state’s Early Learning Standards for unit plans and they modify them for their students’ needs. The units are focused on one subject for four weeks in a row making for more effective learning.

“ICBL really gives the students so many different entry points and an immersive experience in whatever that unit is,” Suriano said. “Everything in those units are linked back to New York State standards.”

Hale also discussed the concept of Mindful Movements, where students have had breaks throughout the day to move their bodies and sing songs teaching them about letters of the alphabet and when it’s time to clean up. Suriano added that this helps students manage their emotions.

“Moving their bodies while also learning this much stuff is so important,” Hale said. “Throughout the day, they are constantly moving.”

Executive Director of Instruction and Community Relations Dr. Amy Watkins can attest to the effectiveness of Hale’s, Suriano’s and Alissa Cleveland’s efforts and praised them for overhauling the Pre-K program where they’ve worked with consultants to make it better.

“They’ve signed up for additional workshops with the consultant and they’ve done so much extra work on their own,” Watkins said of the teachers. “Students’ exploring their environment is truly what’s been happening in Pre-K.”

It appears to be effective because Watkins provided data from Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning Score Report showing that of the 25 MCSD students who attended the district pre-K program last year, 92% have the skills appropriate for their age, which helps to plan their education.

Of the 11 students who didn’t attend MCSD’s pre-K program, 81% had skills appropriate for their age.

### What does the data show?

DIAL 4	MCSD (25)	% ready	Other (11)	% ready
Motor	21	84	6	54
Concepts	24	96	9	91
Language	23	92	8	72
Total	23	92	9	81

Executive Director of Instruction and Community Relations Dr. Amy Watkins speaks during the April 18 Board of Education meeting with data on display.

Registration for pre-K is open now.  
Students must turn four on or before Dec. 1 ,2023.



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“Before you can take those calculated risks that help you grow, you have to feel secure,” Hernandez Pidala said. “It’s important to do that first and foremost.”

Her appointment came at the April 18 board meeting. Hernandez Pidala is confident that she and other administrators can work together to reach their goals, be transparent, strategically plan and remain realistic. “The best is yet to come for Millbrook,” she said. “We have all the conditions to be the very best District in New York State.”

Outside of work, Hernandez Pidala loves reading suspense novels and doing hot yoga, which is performed under hot and humid conditions. She finds this helps her decompress after a long day.

## Bonelli Earns BOCES’ Honors as CTI Valedictorian, Student of Distinction

Millbrook High School Senior Anna Bonelli is having a busy month. On top of being Dutchess BOCES’ Student of Distinction, she was also named 2023 Valedictorian of its’ Career & Technical Institute.



“I was not expecting it at all,” Bonelli said of the honor. “The principal announced it, I was very stunned.”

While art has always been a part of Bonelli’s life, she became interested in pursuing filmmaking after taking a media design production class in her first year at MHS with Art Teacher Jillian Barnes, who she said encouraged her to do her best.

“I got just a little taste of it and then decided that that’s what I wanted to do,” Bonelli said.

Bonelli then joined CTI’s TV & Film Production course in her junior year where she learned about everything from operating a camera to editing.

“I like to see a story come together,” Bonelli explained. “Seeing everything come to life is magical.”

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## College & Career Fair Offers Students Plenty of Options

More than 75 colleges and businesses attended Millbrook High School’s College & Career Fair April 28 to talk with students about their post-high school plans.



Representatives from colleges including SUNY Cortland, Fairleigh Dickinson University and Dutchess Community College attended along with businesses including IBM, Ruge’s Auto Group and Millbrook Equine.

All high school students were welcome to attend, as were eighth graders from Millbrook Middle School.

MHS School Counselor Thomas Chanowsky finds the fair is especially beneficial for sophomores and juniors, who are starting to plan for life after high school.

“It’s a key opportunity for them to start thinking about it, because it’s their next step,” Chanowsky said. “But for ninth graders, it’s never too early to start thinking.”



Chanowsky invited the business owners and representatives from Dutchess BOCES’ Career & Technical Institute to give students alternative options if they choose to not attend college. “College isn’t the exact path for every single person,” Chanowsky said. “It’s nice to have other options here as well.”

Last year’s in-person fair received rave reviews from students as they found it helpful in their decision-making process. One piece of advice Chanowsky has for students who attend an event like this is to gather as much information as possible.

“They might see something that they never thought was even an option and then it sticks with them,” the counselor said. “Then they know it might be a possibility for them to pursue that.”

Out of all the vendors at the fair, Sophomore Brady Jenkins was most interested in speaking with representatives from Arts Mid-Hudson in Poughkeepsie because he wants to pursue graphic design. He found the fair helpful in narrowing down options for the future. “It helps us look at what we have available,” Jenkins said. “It’s really good for us at this age.”



Sophomore Liam Thompsett has interests in digital arts and computer science and said the fair gave him a good idea of what colleges he would want to apply to. He had this recommendation for students:

“Browse everything and take a bunch of pamphlets,” Thompsett said. “You’re never going to know what you’re going to be into until you read it.”

# Bonelli Earns BOCES' Honors as CTI Valedictorian, Student of Distinction

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Barnes enjoyed being Bonelli's teacher in middle school, but also for studio art, graphic design and as an independent course study where she has great passion and talent for art, both handmade and technology driven.

"She makes a real personal connection to her art, often doing portraits of pets or a documentary on her grandfather," Barnes said of the senior. "She loves learning more about art and what she can do with different mediums."

Bonelli will attend Purchase College in the fall to study theater design and technology, for which Barnes is excited to see her pursue her passion.



"I am excited to see her name in film credits in the future," Barnes said.

BOCES TV & Film Production Instructor Justin Brown, who nominated Bonelli for Student of Distinction, could not agree more and considers her one of his "go-to" students in class whose insight and personality will make her a success.

"Anna is a conscientious worker in class and always willing to help others," Brown said. "Her ability to grasp complex ideas and simplify them have helped her become a better student."

Outside of classes, Bonelli showed support for trade programs by helping recruit students for BOCES at the MHS job fair on April 28.

"I have seen the value of CTI and trade schools in general, even beyond high school," Bonelli said. "I think it's important for ninth and tenth graders to know that they have this option."

For Bonelli, she will most miss her friends and teachers at MHS and BOCES.

"I have made friendships here and just learned life experience in general," Bonelli said. "My teachers and my classmates helped make this happen."

# Rosenzweig to Be Graduation Speaker

Millbrook High School Math Teacher Cynthia Rosenzweig was recently chosen by students to be the keynote speaker for the Class of 2023's graduation on June 23.

While Rosenzweig is nervous to speak and is currently working on her speech, she is honored to be chosen by the same students she taught math to since freshman year.

"I'm still calming the nerves," Rosenzweig said with a laugh. "I thought it was a really nice gesture by the senior class; that was really touching."

Every year students vote on who they want to see as a graduation speaker and that is typically a district staff member. This makes Millbrook's commencement stand out from others.



"It's a nice reflection about the community spirit here and how close we are," Rosenzweig said.

For Rosenzweig, seeing her students graduate is a bittersweet feeling, but she is excited

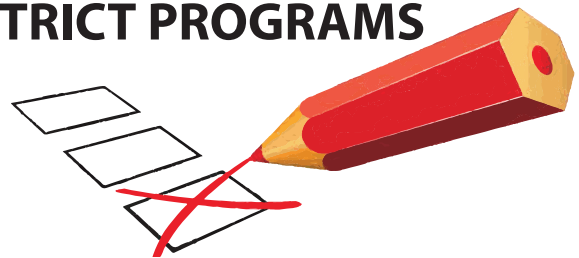
to be part of the celebration with students as they close the book on their high school career. Her favorite part of the ceremony is seeing students toss their caps in the air.

"That is pure celebration," she said of the graduation tradition. "I will miss them, but I'm really happy for them to move on and start the next chapter of their life."

Graduation begins at 7pm and will take place at the MHS Athletic Complex unless weather interferes, in which case it will be moved inside.

## HELP IMPROVE DISTRICT PROGRAMS

We want to hear your thoughts and ideas about ways we can improve Millbrook Central School District.



Please take a few minutes to answer seven questions about different ways the district can address student performance and needs. Topics include improving graduation rates, meeting students' academic needs, creating innovative programming and opportunities, creating an aligned positive school culture, and more.

Parents, teachers and other stakeholders are encouraged to respond to the Foundation Aid Survey before the end of May, so responses can be incorporated into the district's plan for the 2023-2024 school year. Seeking public input is a requirement since MCSD received an increase of more than 10 percent in State Foundation Aid.

You can access the survey at <https://bit.ly/mcsdaidsurvey23>

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