



*Hello Millbrook Families!*

*How can it be February already? As we continue to battle this permanent whitewater we have been living in since last March - vaccines, staffing, testing, high-risk sports, contact tracing, quarantines, changing guidance, and more - there are constants that we can take some comfort in, including the care and attention our teachers, administrative team, and staff give to your children on a daily basis and the ongoing support of families, community members, and the Board of Education. Thank you to those who have reached out to share concerns, frustrations, suggestions, and good ideas. Please remember that my door is always open (in-person and virtually).*

*Stay well. Stay in touch. Laura, Your Proud Superintendent of Schools*



## STUDENT ATHLETES READY TO PLAY

High-risk sports were recently approved to be played again New York State and Millbrook CSD is ready to get back in the action. The sports offered at Millbrook CSD for the Winter Season includes Boys' and Girls' Varsity and Junior Varsity Basketball which started February 4 and ends February 28. Typically, Cheerleading and Indoor Track are also offered, but it was decided to push those sports to the Fall II and Spring seasons.

The athletics staff is looking to begin coach-directed workouts for the Fall II and Spring sports as soon as possible. Those sports include 8-Man Football, Boys' and Girls' Soccer, Volleyball, Golf, Baseball, Softball, and Boys' and Girls' Lacrosse.



Due to ever-changing guidance and executive orders, Millbrook CSD is unsure of what the future holds for athletics. It will take one season at a time. Athletic Director, Al Hammell stated, "We hope Fall II sports and Spring sports will be offered and will operate within the revised sports calendars

set forth by the New York State Public High School Athletic Association's (NYSPHSAA) Section IX Constitution."

Hammell stated, "I will let families know that the Intent to Play forms for all Fall II and Spring sports are now available through FamilyID." Hammell and the students will strictly follow all NYSPHSAA, New York State Department of Education, and Section IX COVID-19 guidelines for all three seasons.

In order to participate in any sport, student-athletes and parents are required to complete a health history form, which can be found on Millbrook's FamilyID webpage and must be cleared by the school nurse. The dates that the forms will be available for each sports season will be announced by the Athletics Department.

"We want all to be safe as we return to play," Hammell said. "Our goal will be to do this in the safest manner possible for our students, coaches, staff, and community."

Students and staff are excited for sports to come back after being away from them for so long. "Millbrook has a strong tradition of having a very competitive sports program," Hammell stated. "I am so happy for our student-athletes".

In addition to bringing back sports, Hammell is looking into whether it is possible to have spectators at some point, and if so, how many will be able to be in attendance. The option to start live-streaming games was recently established.

"Everyone will be able to see the action even if they can't be in attendance," Hammell said.

## Congratulations Arlene Looney!!



As of January 30, 2021, Arlene Looney is officially retired. She has been a committed member of the Millbrook Central School District for 35 years, and she will be greatly missed.

Arlene stated, "It is hard to believe that thirty-five years ago I took a part-time job here so that I could work the same

schedule as my son while he attended school, and here I am, thirty-five years later.

Arlene worked side by side with School Lunch Manager, Holly Heady, and the School Food Service team in making sure our students received nutritious and tasty meals on a daily basis. The pandemic brought a whole other level to the work. Thousands of meals had to be prepared and distributed, and Arlene was there every step of the way. She always showed up and gave her work, her team, and the community her all. "This past year has been particularly trying for everyone, and I am proud to be a part of such a dedicated team," Arlene said.

Superintendent Laura shared, "Regardless of the busyness of any day she always had a bright smile and kind word ready for anyone who she crossed paths with. Arlene is one of the most dedicated, hardworking, community-minded people I know. She is going to be incredibly missed by so many."

Arlene always helped out where and when needed. Her reach went well beyond the cafeterias. She was a Student Council Advisor, assisted with fundraisers, and attended numerous district events. In June of 2020, she was awarded the Anderson Award, an award designed to honor faculty or staff who inspire children from all backgrounds and abilities.

Assistant Superintendent, Brian Fried, shared, "Arlene has provided stability, profound knowledge, and tremendous amounts of care for our students literally for decades! I remember when we were in transition, filling the Manager position when Holly's predecessor resigned without notice. Arlene unsurprisingly provided all the leadership we needed until Holly was hired! So typical. I wish Arlene decades of health and happiness in her retirement!"

School Lunch Manager, Holly Heady, said, "Congratulations to a gem! An amazing journey, fond memories, and great laughs! Thank you for all you have done for our department, our kiddos, and our community in the last 35 years. Best wishes as you soar into your new adventures ... it has been my pleasure!"

"The Millbrook school district may be small but we stand together for the youth of the community," Arlene said.

Congratulations from your Millbrook Central School District family. We wish you happiness, relaxation, and adventure!!

# EDUCATION ELEMENTS WORK

## TO HELP DISTRICT WITH EQUITY

Bringing equity to all is a crucial element in the running of a school and school district. The Millbrook Central School District started partnering with national consulting firm Education Elements in January to help achieve this goal.

Millbrook CSD Superintendent, Laura Mitchell, Assistant Superintendent Caroline Hernandez-Pidala, and the administrative team were first introduced to Education Elements while developing the school district's Re-Entry Plan during the summer. They were reintroduced to the firm during presentations hosted by Dutchess BOCES. Superintendent Laura shared, "Millbrook CSD leaders found Education Elements to be progressive and innovative in their thinking and processes. We were impressed with their authentic team approach, responsive planning, and reflective practices." Assistant Superintendent, Hernandez-Pidala, stated, "They think of everything, and are true designers of learning and inquiry, and it is evident in their visually appealing aesthetics and deliverables."

Education Elements Associate Partner Gabrielle Hewitt describes educational equity as recognizing barriers that exist for marginalized students and then looking for ways to remove them.

"If you can design systems that marginalize students, then those same systems can be redesigned," Hewitt said. "If we're saying equity is a priority that should be reflected in our spending; that should be reflected in our strategic planning."

There was great interest in collaborating with other districts in the County around equity. As a result, BOCES assisted in creating the first Equity Consortium with Education Elements leading the way. At this time, partners in this work include Red Hook and DC BOCES. During the Dutchess Equity Consortium Kickoff last month timelines were reviewed, team structures were created, and participants were introduced to the consultants that each district would be working with throughout the process. Millbrook CSD will be working side by side with Education Elements Design



Principal, Alain Balan. After the Consortium's Kickoff, Millbrook's Equity Project Team consisting of Superintendent Laura, Assistant Superintendent Hernandez-Pidala, and Elm Drive's Principal Mike Setaro had its own kickoff that was facilitated by Balan. During this time they identified members of the Leadership Team which include members of the Project Team and the Administrative Team.

When Education Elements partners with a district it goes through five phases of equity work which includes Inventory, where the firm learns as much as it can about a district. The other phases that follow are *Connect*, *Include*, *Create*, and *Action*. Superintendent Laura and Assistant Superintendent Hernandez-Pidala were asked to choose the district systems they wanted to do inventory on. The superintendent and assistant superintendent chose Academics and District Culture as focus categories for the Inventory phase.

Currently, district employees are being interviewed, while administrative leaders are taking personal reflection surveys.

"We're going to use all of this data collected and basically say, this is where we see Millbrook's current state being, and this is our recommendation approach," Hewitt said.

Balan will then reach out to other staff members, who may have been previously left out of decision-making to give their input on the information gathered.

"We want them to start identifying some problems and some challenges they want to solve," Hewitt said. "Something we're really proud of is this idea of redesigning student experiences at the classroom level".

Students will be an integral part of this work and will be asked to share their experiences. In Millbrook, Education Elements and the MCSD Administrative Team are looking to create increasingly equitable experiences for students from diverse economic backgrounds.

Once challenges are identified, the firm will test out and create solutions to be implemented later. The firm does not rush to create solutions as they are tailored to each district's needs.

"That's what is leading Millbrook through this year," Hewitt said. "The outcomes are really going to be dependent on each district's contexts, each district's system."

While school leaders have talked about equity issues for years, Hewitt found that the COVID-19 pandemic expedited the process of solving them.

"Districts are really using this year as almost like a reset," she said. "We have to address these issues now while we have the ability to think about reopening schools in a different way anyway."

"District's opt to work with Education Elements because the firm has no bias and its representatives can suggest ideas they've tried in other districts," Hewitt said. "It's always really helpful too when you can have someone who is a thought partner."

Assistant Superintendent, Hernandez-Pidala shared, "Equity is a journey, not a destination. We will never be finished with our work, and we have always been working in the effort to provide equity of access and experience for all of our students regardless of how they are unique as individuals."

## BE IN THE KNOW WITH THE PTO



### Have questions?

Email PTO President Loredana Ingenito at [ingenito7779@gmail.com](mailto:ingenito7779@gmail.com)

### Picture Day Dates:

**Elm Drive Elementary School:** Tuesday February 23 & Thursday February 25

**Picture Day ID:** EVTCJKBMZ

**Alden Place Elementary School:** Monday March 1 & Wednesday March 3

**Picture Day ID:** EVT22CMTM

