



Discovery

GREAT NECK PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Grease photos (above) by South High students Alice Tirakian & Victoria Monroy. Into the Woods photos (below) by North High faculty member Scott Eckers.



MUSICAL PERFORMANCES RETURN TO THE STAGE

North High School and South High School celebrated the return of live musical performances in November with professional-caliber productions of *Into the Woods* and *Grease*, respectively.

“The exuberant energy was palpable from the stage,” said Ilana Meredith Schikler, drama teacher and director for Theatre South. “Many of the actors had not performed live in almost two years.”

During the 2020–2021 school year, the dedicated performing arts faculty at each of the District’s secondary schools found creative ways to provide performance opportunities for students while working within strict health and safety protocols. For high school theatre productions, students filmed their roles individually and performances were edited together to create a complete ensemble production. The virtual performances were then presented online to a remote viewing audience.

Andrew Wagner, drama teacher and director for the North High Junior Players, said this year’s cast and crew were “all in to do whatever was needed to be up on stage and tell a story to a live audience,” adding that some actors even created their own face masks to mirror their costume pieces. “It speaks to how much live theatre and performance means to our students and this community.”

Each high school presented three sold-out performances with audiences following social distancing and mask requirements to ensure a safe and enjoyable theatre experience for all.

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESIDENT

by Rebecca Sassouni

As you peruse this newsletter celebrating the achievements of students and faculty, one hopes you, too, will feel pride in the breadth of offerings here in Great Neck. I am grateful to see smiling faces, the resumption of sport, music, arts, research and more. I recently had the pleasure of seeing performances of *Grease* and *One Acts* at South High and North Middle schools, respectively. What fun!

In December, the Board of Education honored retired principals of North High and Parkville schools, Bernard Kaplan and Debra Shalom. Reflecting on the span of their careers underscored the Great Neck Public Schools' centuries of commitment to lifelong learning from the littlest Pre-Kindergarten learners through to high schoolers and adult learners.

The Board takes great pride in our community's support of educational opportunities for all students. We welcome your participation in our public action meetings, in person or on livestream.

This holiday season, we send our best wishes for warmth, continual growth, and learning, to the students, families, administration, teachers, and staff who each make Great Neck Public Schools great. We approach 2022 with excitement and hope.

Board Meetings Available Online

School Board meetings are now available via livestream. Links to watch live meetings are posted on the District homepage, and recordings are available for viewing after the meeting at www.greatneck.k12.ny.us/meetings.



2021–2022 BOARD GOALS

In October, the Board of Education adopted the following goals for the current school year. Board trustees worked collaboratively to develop goals that are measurable and attainable, with a focus on enhancing the services and operations of the district.

- To evaluate the status of bond and capital projects.
- To engage in a demographic study, evaluate enrollment, and the optional zone.
- To support the social-emotional and mental well-being of students and staff.
- To evaluate the feasibility of a strategic planning process.

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

by Dr. Teresa Prendergast

With a continued focus on health and safety, we opened our doors in September and welcomed all students back to the classroom for daily, in-person instruction. This return to the classroom provides our talented and caring educators with the ability to offer not only individualized academic instruction, but also the social and emotional support that simply cannot be replicated in a virtual setting.

In spite of the many challenges facing schools during this pandemic, our Board of Education, administration, and teaching staff remain committed to our District's highest standards for academic excellence. Within the first few months of this school year, our District, our students, and our faculty have already received recognition for achievements in various

content areas, including the arts, athletics, and overall academic performance.

The Great Neck Public Schools was recently ranked by Niche as the best school district in New York State and the third best school district in the country. Individually, our schools also placed among the top in the county and the state for their respective grade levels. Our community values education, and we are proud to provide the exceptional programs that our students deserve.

This newsletter includes a few of the impressive regional and national accolades recently celebrated within our District. I thank the entire community

for your ongoing support of our students, our programs, and our schools, which makes these accomplishments possible. Together, we will continue to provide every student with the opportunities and tools they need to be successful in school and in all future endeavors.



GREAT NECK PUBLIC SCHOOLS NAMED BEST SCHOOL DISTRICT IN NEW YORK; THIRD IN NATION

The Great Neck Public Schools is honored to be recognized as the Best School District in New York State, according to the 2022 Niche School Rankings. Great Neck also appears third on the Niche list of the Best School Districts in the Nation.



- #1** Best School District in New York
-
- #2** Safest School District in New York
-
- #3** Best School District in the Nation
-
- #5** Best Teachers in New York

“This is a wonderful recognition for our entire school community,” said Dr. Teresa Prendergast, Superintendent of Schools. “It is especially rewarding in light of the challenges schools have faced during this pandemic. We are tremendously proud of our students, our dedicated staff, and the exceptional programs we offer for our learners in Pre-K through grade 12 and beyond.”

The 2022 Niche School Rankings are based on a “rigorous analysis of academic and student life data from the U.S. Department of Education along with test scores, college data, and ratings collected from millions of Niche users.” The District earned top ratings for academics, teachers, co-curricular activities, and safety.

In addition to the District’s overall rating, each school in the District also appears on the list of best public schools in New York for its respective grade level. Factors in determining an individual school’s place on the list includes an analysis of data, user reviews, test scores, student-teacher ratio, teacher quality, diversity, and the overall quality of the District.

The list of Best Public Elementary Schools in New York, which ranked more than 2,800 schools, includes E.M. Baker School (#3), Lakeville School (#12), Saddle Rock School (#17), and the John F. Kennedy School (#23). Parkville School, which serves Pre-K and Kindergarten students, is classified by Niche as an early childhood center and does not meet the criteria for a school ranking.

The list of Best Public Middle Schools in New York, which ranked over 1,400 schools, includes both South Middle School (#3) and North Middle School (#4).

The list of Best Public High Schools in New York, which ranked almost 1,400 schools, includes South High School (#6), North High School (#13), and the Village School (#388).

GNPS/TV RECEIVES NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

2021 Hometown Media Awards

GNPS/TV is the winner of three 2021 Hometown Media Awards, which recognize the best community and local media projects from across the country.

- **Best Music Video:** “December 2020 Holiday Music Video” featuring students and staff from North Middle School and South Middle School.
- **Best Public Service Announcement:** “No One is a Virus,” created by South High student Sophia Leong as a class assignment for an Advanced Filmmaking course.
- **Best Web Based Program:** “2020 Great Neck South High Virtual Graduation,” produced by the GNPS/TV team to celebrate the Class of 2020 while schools were closed due to the pandemic.

42nd Annual Telly Awards

GNPS/TV is the recipient of three silver trophies and one bronze trophy in the 42nd annual Telly Awards, an international awards program that honors excellence in video and television across a variety of platforms. All four awards were presented in the Television: General-Student area of competition.

- **Best Television Event Broadcast:** Two Silver awards for “South High Cultural Heritage Night” and “South High Opera: Die Fledermaus”.
- **Best Short Film:** Silver award for “Doubt,” an original film produced by South High student Ashley Wu.
- **Best Educational Video:** Bronze award for “Robotics,” a television segment about the District’s exciting robotics program for students in grades 5–8.



NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM HONORS 79 STUDENTS



NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALISTS

The Great Neck Public Schools is pleased to announce that 31 seniors have been recognized as Semifinalists in the prestigious 2022 National Merit Scholarship competition.

Semifinalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program represent less than 1% of all high school seniors nationwide. These students scored among the highest in New York State on the Preliminary SAT/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), which they took last year.

Best of luck to Great Neck's Semifinalists from North High (pictured above left, with Principal Dr. Dan Holtzman) and South High (above right, with Principal Dr. Christopher Gitz) as they advance in the competition for National Merit Scholarship awards.

North High School

Victoria Guan
Shifan He
Joshua Li
Claire Luo
Brandon Maher
Maya Slobin
Alicia Sun
Sahar Tartak
Kenneth Xiao
David Zeng

South High School

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Amaar Alwani | Matthew Moy |
| Karly Chan | Matthew Tsui |
| Rena Chen | Alexander Voses |
| Iris Cho | Isabel Wang |
| Farah Daredia | Katherine Wang |
| Amy He | Ross Williams |
| Sophia Hunter | Jansen Wong |
| Eden Katz | Mengyu Amy Wu |
| Jeremy Kotlyar | John Xie |
| Andre Lungu | Rick Xu |
| | Erin Yim |

NATIONAL MERIT COMMENDED STUDENTS

The National Merit Scholarship Program has named 48 seniors as Commended Students. These students placed among the top 50,000 of the more than 1.5 million juniors who took the 2020 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.

Each honoree received a Letter of Commendation in recognition of exceptional academic promise. Although Commended Students do not continue in the competition for National Merit Scholarships, some become candidates for scholarships sponsored by corporations and businesses.

North High School

Michael Bornstein
Ryan Chen
Claire Cho
Jamie Fleshel
Kevin Khadavi
Reyna Kim
Gregory Leung
Zachary Levine
Jason Mei
Ernest Pang
Hailey Toch
Sarah Tsai
Trinity Wu
William Wu
Christopher Yang
Olivia Yeroushalmi
Han Zheng

South High School

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Laura An | Joshua Magidson |
| Tristan Atreides | Sana Merchant |
| FeiFan Cao | Eileen Mou |
| Chloe Chan | Daniel Niu |
| Andrew Choe | Preeti Shaji |
| Hannah Fisk | Shruti Shaji |
| Sophie Galperin | Kate Shaw |
| Jonathan Guo | Neal Sodhi |
| Nicole Kam | Grace Song |
| Joonhyuk Ko | Charrei Sung |
| Johann Lee | Yiqi Tan |
| Aileen Li | Lydia Wang |
| Collin Li | Derek Yu |
| Jessica Lin | Kevin Zhang |
| Samantha Lin | Andrea Zhou |
| Samuel Lurvey | |

Follow us on Facebook!

Follow the Great Neck Public Schools on Facebook for updates about educational activities and academic achievements across the District.

www.facebook.com/greatneck.k12.ny.us
#DiscoverGreatness



MUSICIANS SELECTED FOR 2021 ALL-STATE, ALL-NATIONAL CONFERENCES



North High musicians are congratulated by (top row, left) Dr. Pamela Levy, fine & performing arts department head/vocal music teacher, and Joseph Rutkowski, instrumental music teacher (not photographed).



South High musicians are congratulated by (back row, left to right) Mark Boschen, band teacher; Michael Schwartz, performing arts department head/instrumental music teacher; and Dr. Janine Robinson, vocal music teacher.

The Great Neck Public Schools was well represented at the 2021 New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) All-State Winter Conference in Rochester from Dec. 2–5. Eleven highly talented musicians from North High and South High were selected to perform with All-State ensembles, and twelve students were named as Alternates.

North High School All-State Musicians

- Shuyuan (Julie) Sun
flute, Symphonic Band
- Tiantian (Emily) Wei
violin, Symphony Orchestra
- Samantha Becker
alto, Mixed Chorus
- Sara Rafeail
alto, Mixed Chorus

South High School All-State Musicians

- Karly Chan
soprano, Mixed Choir
- Joy Song
Bb clarinet, Symphonic Band
- Katherine Wang
alto sax, Symphonic Band
- Mengyu Amy Wu
bassoon, Symphonic Band
- Sophia Wotman
trumpet, Jazz Ensemble

Alternates

- David Zeng - *violin*
- Jonathan Kim - *Bb clarinet*
- Hwi-On Lee - *violin*
- Emely Renteria - *alto*
- Chantal Sadighpour - *soprano*
- Maverick Williams - *bass*

- Joy Yang
violin, Symphony Orchestra
- Dayoung Yu
violin, Symphony Orchestra

Alternates

- Jillian Chang - *cello*
- Drew Kim - *violin*
- Lauren Kim - *soprano*
- Johann Lee - *violin*
- Sebastian Lennox - *viola*
- Sidney Wong - *violin*



North High junior Hwi-On Lee is one of only 12 students in the entire state invited to perform in the 2021 NYSSMA Piano Showcase, part of the All-State Winter Conference.

Four students have been honored through the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) All-National music program. Three students have been selected for 2021 All-National Honor Ensembles, and one student has been named as an Alternate.

Candidates for this prestigious program must qualify for All-State ensembles and complete a rigorous audition process for a spot in these national ensembles. All-National Honor Ensembles will be conducted virtually in January.

North High School All-National Musicians



Sara Rafeail
alto, Mixed Choir



Chantal Sadighpour
alternate, soprano, Mixed Choir



Mengyu Amy Wu
bassoon, Symphony Orchestra



Dayoung Yu
violin, Symphony Orchestra

South High School All-National Musicians

NEW FACES, NEW PLACES

The following administrators are new to their positions for the 2021–2022 school year. Some are familiar faces within the school community, while others are new to the Great Neck Public Schools.



MICHELLE BELL
Principal, Parkville School

Michelle Bell started the school year as principal of Parkville School following the retirement of Kathleen Murray. Ms. Bell previously served as assistant principal of the John F. Kennedy School, and she has worked in the Great Neck Public Schools for more than 12 years as a teacher and an administrator.



JOE CANGIALOSI
Coordinator of Information Systems

Joe Cangialosi was promoted to Coordinator of Information Systems for Education following the retirement of Cathy Davidson. He previously served as the Coordinator of Technical Support Services, a position he held for 12 years. Mr. Cangialosi's career in the Great Neck Public Schools spans more than 20 years.



AI-HUEI CHANG-LAU
Asst. Principal, John F. Kennedy School

Ai-Huei Chang-Lau joined the Great Neck Public Schools in August as assistant principal of the John F. Kennedy School. Her career in education spans more than 20 years with the NYC Department of Education, including six years as an elementary assistant principal and 15 years as a teacher and staff developer.



STEPHANIE WILLIAMS
Coordinator of Technical Support Services

Stephanie Williams joined the District in August as the Coordinator of Technical Support Services. Ms. Williams was a member of the instructional technology team at the Oceanside School District for the past nine years. She most recently served as their Lead Specialist, overseeing a team of technicians that provided district-wide services.



BILL CASTORO
District Security Supervisor

Bill Castoro was appointed as the District's Security Supervisor in November. He comes to Great Neck from the Oyster Bay-East Norwich School District, where he served as the Director of Security. Mr. Castoro's career includes 20 years as a member of the New York City Police Department and more than 28 years of experience as a volunteer firefighter.



JAMES GOUNARIS
Director of Food & Nutrition Services/
Registration Coordinator

James Gounaris, who joined the Great Neck Public Schools in 2019 as the Director of Food & Nutrition Services, has taken on additional administrative responsibilities this year as the Registration Coordinator.

NORTH HIGH ALL-COUNTY ATHLETES

Boys Badminton
Melvin Thu

Boys Soccer
Ben Avakook *
Jack Kareff *

Boys Volleyball
Jadon Nikravesh

Girls Cross Country
Juliette Ahdoot
Natasha Khazzam
Maya Ohebshalom
Shuyuan (Julie) Sun

Girls Swimming
Sarah Tsai

Girls Volleyball
Claire Kamali *

**All-County honorable mention*

Sarah Tsai competed in the 100 backstroke & 100 freestyle events at the NYS Swim Championships

FALL 2021 ATHLETIC HIGHLIGHTS



North High Girls Soccer
Conference Champions



North High Girls Swimming
Conference Champions



South High Boys Cross Country
Division Champions



South High Boys Badminton
Runner-Up at the Team County Championships;
Ryan Wu won his third-consecutive Individual County Championship title

SOUTH HIGH ALL-COUNTY ATHLETES

Boys Badminton

Justin Choi
Aidan Din
Ryan Jacob
Carter Shea
Yang Wang
Ryan Wu
Haoran Xia

Boys Volleyball
John Fukuda

Girls Soccer
Cari Raphael *
Victory Voigt

Girls Swimming
Kaitlyn Liu

Girls Volleyball
Kelly Hom

Kaitlyn Liu competed in the 100 backstroke & 100 fly events at the NYS Swim Championships

The **John F. Kennedy School** celebrated Reading Week from Nov. 15–19. This year’s theme, “Books are Windows and Mirrors into Ourselves and Others,” focused on books that act as “mirrors” — where students see themselves in the characters — and “windows” — stories that introduce readers to different people and experiences. Each day of the week featured exciting activities to promote a love of reading, including virtual visits by authors and guest readers, interclass book shares (*pictured right*), and theme days.



Students at **E.M. Baker School** are exploring coding, robotics, and engineering in the school’s new Innovation Lab. An existing space within the school was transformed into a dedicated area for STEAM technology, equipment, and learning materials. Students of all grade levels are enjoying hands-on activities in this exciting new space!



Students at **Lakeville School** recently helped assemble more than 200 shoebox care packages for children in need around the globe. Members of Lakeville’s Shared Decision Making Committee organized the project, which included raising funds and purchasing toiletries and toys for every box. More than 700 Lakeville students had a hand in filling the shoeboxes and writing warm messages for recipients. Packages were shipped to Honduras and South Africa before the holidays.

In November, **South Middle School** celebrated the return of the Thank a Veteran program. This annual event invites veterans within the Great Neck community to meet with students and share their experiences from military service. This year, South Middle welcomed veterans both in-person and virtually so that students would again enjoy this unique opportunity to learn about history and personally thank the men and women who served our nation.



Parkville School kicked off the school year with a new building-wide kindness initiative based on the book, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* by Carol McCloud. Throughout the school year, students receive a Kindness Coin each time they are “caught” being kind. Kindness Coins are deposited into Parkville’s Kindness Bucket and students receive a sticker they can wear proudly. The goal is to fill the bucket by the end of the school year.



Students and staff at **Saddle Rock School** collected more than one thousand non-perishable items to help feed local families in need this holiday season. The food drive was organized by the Saddle Rock Student Government with support from Physical Education teachers. Student representatives helped deliver all of the collected food items to the St. Aloysius Interfaith Food Pantry in Great Neck in time for Thanksgiving.

GNPS FACULTY PRESENT AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Great Neck’s exceptional teachers are often recognized as leaders in their field and share their expertise with educators across the country. In November, three faculty members presented a dynamic workshop at the 2021 National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) Conference. English teachers (*pictured above, left to right*) Victoria Andreacchi from North Middle, Kevin Parker from North Middle, and Dr. Theresa Walter from South High collaborated to develop a virtual workshop session and resources for a nationwide audience of secondary educators.

North Middle School students and staff joined schools across the country in celebrating Red Ribbon Week from Oct. 25–29. This national campaign spreads awareness of substance abuse prevention and healthy decision making. This year, the North Middle Health Department and Student Council Organization established a goal to create greater community awareness and student advocacy for the event. Together, health teachers and students designed a slogan to display on the Polo Road fence to demonstrate the school’s commitment to “Stand Up Against Drugs” and support this initiative throughout the entire year.





GREAT NECK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Teresa Prendergast

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Great Neck Public Schools
#DiscoverGreatness

Mission Statement

The Great Neck Public School District provides an innovative and collaborative educational environment that supports academic excellence and the social and emotional growth of all students so that they may become life-long learners and compassionate, productive members of a diverse, global society.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

SHARE YOUR SKILLS WITH OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY!

The Great Neck Public Schools has employment opportunities available for **full-time, part-time, and substitute positions**, including:

- **Bus Drivers**
- **Food Service Helpers**
- **Paraprofessionals**
- **School Nurses**
- **Security Aides**

These opportunities within the District are a great way to stay involved with the school community.

To learn more, scan the QR code or contact GNPS Human Resources:

✉ hr@greatneck.k12.ny.us



Kindergarten Online Registration Opens January 18, 2022

Kindergarten registration for the 2022–2023 school year will open on January 18, 2022. All applications are processed online. Any child who legally resides in the school district and will be five years old on or before Dec. 1, 2022, is eligible to register. All children who will attend kindergarten at a public or private school must register with the school district. *Note:* Students who currently attend UPK at the John F. Kennedy School or Parkville School do not need to re-register; parents of these students only need to complete a new Kindergarten application.

Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Online Registration Underway

Registration for the District's Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program started in October and online applications continue to be accepted on an ongoing basis. Any child who legally resides in the school district and will be four years old on or before Dec. 1, 2022, is eligible for admission to the 2022–2023 UPK half-day program. UPK is offered to District residents at no cost; a supplemental half-day, tuition-based enrichment program called "Fun for Fours" is also available with limited enrollment.

For information about registering a child for school:



🌐 www.greatneck.k12.ny.us/registration
✉ residency@greatneck.k12.ny.us
☎ (516) 441-4080

Community Ed Winter Session Starts in January



Registration is underway for the Winter 2022 session at Great Neck Community Education. Peruse the digital catalog to explore more than 80 different courses in the areas of creative arts and crafts, fitness and movement, world languages, literature and writing, history and our world, hobbies and technology, performing arts and entertainment, and more. Classes begin the first week of January. In-person classes take place at 30 Cumberland Avenue in Great Neck and online classes are offered via Zoom.

For program information and to register for Community Ed:



🌐 www.greatneck.k12.ny.us/ce
✉ gncontinuinged@greatneck.k12.ny.us
☎ (516) 441-4949