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MEMORANDUM

TO: Eastern Suffolk BOCES Staff
FROM: David Wicks
DATE: August 29, 2024
RE: School Opening – 2024

I am happy to have the opportunity to welcome you to the 2024-25 school year. Our agency has been working hard over the summer to be sure that all of our programs are ready to continue to provide *Educational Services That Transform Lives* to the students and the school districts that we support.

Celebrating 30 Years of Transforming Lives

On July 1, 2024, Eastern Suffolk BOCES proudly celebrated a significant milestone, marking 30 years of dedicated service as an educational agency. Over the past three decades, the organization has grown and evolved, consistently providing innovative programs and services to meet the diverse needs of students and educators across the region. This anniversary not only honors the Agency's longstanding commitment to education, but also highlights the collaborative efforts of its staff, leadership, and community partners who have contributed to its enduring success. As Eastern Suffolk BOCES reflects on its past achievements, it also looks forward to continuing its vision of providing educational services that transform lives.

New Board Members

We are delighted to announce the addition of two members to the ESBOCES Board: Angelo Cassarino from the William Floyd Union Free School District (UFSD) and Kelli Anne Jennings from the Patchogue-Medford UFSD. Both of these individuals bring with them valuable experience as current members of their respective component school boards. Their dual roles provide them with a distinct and comprehensive perspective that will greatly benefit our Board's work. Angelo and Kelli Anne's insights, drawn from their ongoing service at the local level, will enhance our ability to address the needs of the communities we serve. We look forward to their contributions and are confident that their unique viewpoints will be instrumental in guiding our mission forward.

District Superintendent

At the August 21 regular meeting, our Board appointed Dr. Jasmin Varela as the next District Superintendent of Eastern Suffolk BOCES. This was the culmination of an extensive search process that included many highly qualified educational leaders.

Dr. Varela's impressive career includes her recent role as Deputy Superintendent for Community School District 9 in the Bronx, where she led initiatives to improve the experiences of families and students. She effectively engaged diverse stakeholders, and consistently championed educational equity. Her leadership has led to better student outcomes and stronger relationships between educators and the community.

Dr. Varela will serve as the direct representative of the Commissioner of Education for New York State in our region. Through that role, she will lead the implementation of the initiatives of the State Education Department and the Board of Regents. She will also work together with me to support the leadership of the 51 school districts that we serve. Dr. Varela's and her extensive experiences will help to develop and improve the services that we provide to our component school districts.

Below, I have listed various updates from around the agency. I hope that you find them helpful as we enter this new and exciting school year.

Strategic Planning

The annual ESBOCES Strategic Planning Council Meeting took place on August 7, serving as a key event in the Agency's Strategic Planning process. The meeting began with a presentation that showcased the wide range of services provided by ESBOCES, using informational videos to highlight key achievements and initiatives. Participants were then divided into small groups to engage in collaborative discussions aimed at updating the Agency's goals. These discussions focused on identifying emerging needs and opportunities, with the input gathered being instrumental in guiding the Agency's strategic direction for the coming years. This work is particularly significant as ESBOCES prepares for its reaccreditation process, ensuring that the Agency remains aligned with its mission, and continues to deliver high-quality services to the region.

Leadership Changes since August 2023

There have been many administrative changes in the Agency since the school opening memo of August 2023. Please join me in welcoming and celebrating new administrative staff as follows:

Administrative Council:

- Katelyn Fretto joined us as the Director of Business Services, a position previously held by Wendy Tromblee, who resigned.
- April Francis-Taylor recently resigned from her position as the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity. The vacancy has been posted so that there will be someone in place to lead this important work as soon as possible. The Agency is dedicated to finding a leader who will drive our DEI efforts to new heights.

Educational Services:

- Kevin Bernier was appointed Principal at Harry B. Ward Technical Center. This position was previously held by Marie Davis, who retired.
- Cynthia Davis was appointed as Assistant Principal of Sayville Elementary School. This position was previously held by Kristyn Kealey, who transferred to Islip Career Center.

- Sharon Hayes joined the Suffolk Regional Information Center leadership team as an Administrative Coordinator.
- Kristyn Kealey was appointed Assistant Principal at Islip Career Center. This position was previously held by Dawn Scicolone, who is now the Assistant Principal at Ward Technical Center. She assumed this role following the vacancy created when Kevin Bernier was appointed as Principal of Ward Technical Center.
- Lauren Lewonka started her new role as an Administrative Coordinator for School Data Bank Services on March 1, 2024. Lauren was previously a Shared Data Expert for our School Data Bank Services program for one year.
- Tanya Long was appointed Program Administrator for Career, Technical and Adult Education. This position was previously held by Robert Van Brunt, who retired.
- Laura Makula was appointed as Assistant Principal of Sequoya High School.
- Michelle Mellilo was appointed as Principal of Sayville Elementary School. This position was previously held by Jennifer Solomon, who resigned.
- John Piteris was appointed Program Administrator for Health Sciences. This position was previously held by Andrea Pekar, who resigned.
- Mark Robins was appointed as Assistant Principal of the Westhampton Beach Learning Center. This position was previously held by Katelyn King, who transferred to Masera Middle School.
- Karen Smart was appointed Administrative Coordinator for Adult Career and Technical Education. This position was previously held by Millie Marchese who resigned.
- Kai Watkins was appointed as Principal of Masera Middle School.
- Nickeisha Wilson was appointed as Assistant Principal of the Brookhaven Learning Center. This position was previously held by Susan Gargan, who retired.

ENL/Bilingual Programs:

- Denise McAuliffe was appointed as Administrative Coordinator for ENL/Bilingual Programs to oversee the 21st Century Community Learning Center. This position was previously held by Megan O'Neill, who resigned.

Operations & Maintenance:

- Ryan Jacobellis joined us as an Assistant Plant Facilities Administrator, a position previously held by George Mootoo, who retired.

Masera Middle School

Eastern Suffolk BOCES has entered into a lease agreement with West Islip School District to lease their vacant building located at 650 Udall Road, West Islip. This new building will not only allow us to better serve our students at Brookhaven Learning Center, Premm Learning Center, and Sayville Elementary School programs, the larger space will also accommodate our increasing

enrollment for this population of students. The building has been named Masera Middle School, and will service students in grades 5-8 with severe to moderate developmental disabilities.

Safety and Security

The safety and security of our students, staff, and visitors will always be our top priority. For those of you working on the Islip and Bellport campuses, you will observe new entry procedures. The drivers of vehicles, including staff and parents, will be required to present photo identification to the security guard at the gate. Also, only one gate will be open after arrival and before dismissal. Visitors to all facilities must still present photo identification and be vetted by the greeter before gaining access to the building. As these procedures are new to some, please be patient during the first few days of school and allow for a little additional time to accommodate this new process.

The Agency also engaged the assistance of a third-party security vendor specializing in K-12 education, to make recommendations for the continued enhancement of our security measures. While it is important that some of these modifications remain confidential, you will begin to notice a few changes. Among them are the addition of security personnel, including an Assistant Security Coordinator. Policies and procedures are being refined, additional training specific to schools provided to all security guards, and new updated technology deployed. In addition, there will be upcoming site improvements to our buildings and grounds.

The evaluation of security and safety throughout the Agency is continuous. With the assistance of our local law enforcement partners and third-party consultants, we will continue to assess and reassess our practices, and make modifications as appropriate. The Agency has a standing security committee, as well as a security leadership team, who meet regularly throughout the year.

Eastern Suffolk BOCES Community Legislative Committee

We are excited to begin our ninth year of the ESBOCES Community Legislative Committee. We are thankful to Mr. William K. Miller, ESBOCES Board Vice President, for facilitating this unique committee made up of students, parents, staff, and community members. Information about the meetings for this school year will be forthcoming.

BEES Opening Day Meeting

Only union members of the BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk (BEES) who pay dues may attend the opening day meeting on Tuesday, September 3, 2024, beginning at 8:00 a.m. The opening day meeting this year will take place virtually via Zoom. The Zoom link will be sent directly to the email address you provided to your union. If you do not receive your Zoom link in the days leading up to the meeting, please email an Executive Board member for the link. You can locate the emails for the Executive Board on the BEES website at www.beesbeacon.org. Members can join the meeting from their homes prior to reporting to their assigned sites. Kindly report to your programs following the meeting.

Non-BEES union members, and all other employees, should report to work as directed by their supervisors.

Have a safe and enjoyable Labor Day weekend!

DW/km

c: Eastern Suffolk BOCES Board