

Bulletin Board

Middle Country Central School District

ISSUE IX OF DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

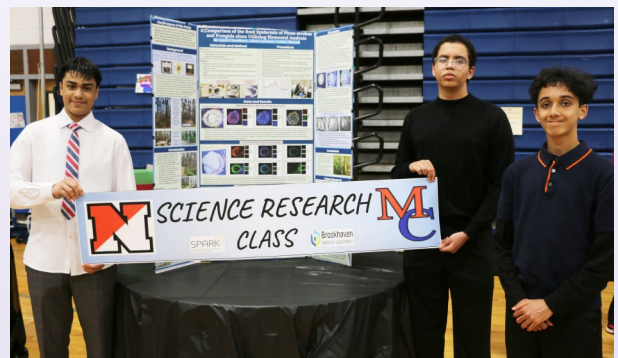
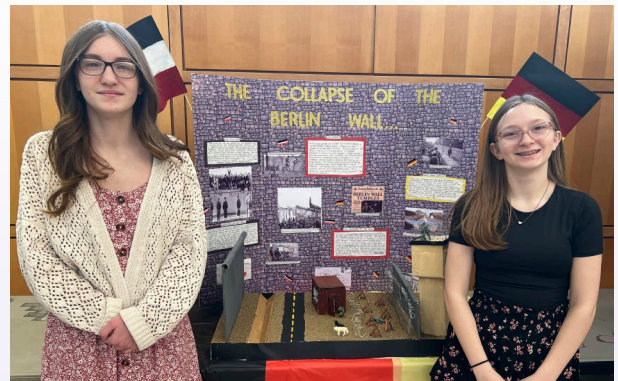
THE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE AT MIDDLE COUNTRY

The Middle Country Central School District is proud to mark its eleventh year offering the Capstone Experience to all students. The Class of 2024 was the first to graduate with the Capstone as a mandatory component of their graduation requirements. This program was thoughtfully designed to engage students at every grade level, encouraging them to deeply explore a research topic of their choosing. Through their research and culminating presentations, students showcase the knowledge and skills they have gained throughout their studies.

A true community effort, the program involves teachers, administrators, and Board of Education Trustees, as well as local business owners and neighbors. This collaboration brings a valuable community aspect to the Capstone program, providing students with enriching opportunities and experiences beyond the classroom. Through this partnership, we continue to ensure that students receive a high-quality education that meets the evolving demands of the 21st century.

“As we spearheaded this initiative, we designed the program to support students’ incremental growth from elementary through high school, and that has been key to its success,” said Board Trustee Robert Feeney, chair of the Educational Advancement Committee, which focuses on student achievement in the District.

As a result of the Capstone program, the District has seen a drastic increase in enrollment in rigorous science research courses and high-level AP courses. In support of the valuable opportunities these courses provide to our students, the Board and Administration ensure that annual budgets provide the funding that make these AP and research-based classes possible.



Immediate Employment Opportunities



The Middle Country Central School District has immediate needs for the following positions, both full-time and substitute:

Teaching Assistants - Contact Linda Vigario at lvigario@mccsd.net

Teacher Aides and School Nurses - Contact Fran Hagicostas at fhagicostas@mccsd.net

For more information, contact the Human Resources Department at 631-285-8030.

The Capstone Experience at the Elementary Level

Character Education: Citizenship Service Projects

At the elementary level, our youngest learners participate in citizenship service projects as part of their Character Education lessons, as overseen by Heather Fitzgerald, Middle Country's Character Education Teacher. As the first phase of the District's research initiative, the goal is to prepare students to find answers to questions that interest them. Each year, our students lead school-wide efforts in each building to benefit those in need, such as a mitten tree drive at Unity Drive Pre-K/Kindergarten Center and a Thanksgiving food drive at Bicycle Path Pre-K/Kindergarten Center. The students are responsible for managing their collections, sorting and organizing the donations as they are received.



"I'm excited to help people or animals in need, and I am looking forward to working as a team on this."

- Averie Cruz, Jericho Elementary School



"I want to be a part of this project to help people in need because it makes me feel really good and proud to help out."

- Cathleen Cullen,
Hawkins Path Elementary School



"I am excited to do this project because I like helping people and it gives me the opportunity to be responsible and give back."

- Zara Naqvi, New Lane Elementary School



"I look forward to helping other people because they might not have as much as us. I want to work together with my 5th grade team to help the community."

- Stefan Marzovilla,
Holbrook Road Elementary School



"It is important to give back because some people don't have a lot of money. I want to make a difference in peoples' lives so they can be happy."

- Frankie Borja, Stagecoach Elementary School



"The people can still have a nice celebration or get something that they can really enjoy and use. I think it is a wonderful experience and I hope everyone can contribute and help out with the new projects. With everyone's help, we can make it a great community."

- Madison Lazar, Oxhead Road Elementary School



"I look forward to this leadership project because we need to give back to the community. If people are struggling, we need to help them. If we were struggling, we would count on our community to help us."

- Wahaab Rafiq,
North Coleman Road Elementary School



"I am excited to participate in the service project at my school so I can help my community grow in great ways."

- Sakina Zeshan, Eugene Auer Elementary School

Students at **Jericho Elementary School** last year collected gently used shoes as part of the Soles for Souls Shoe Drive. The donations were sent to communities in need around the world and kept out of landfills, helping to fight poverty and protect the environment. **Oxhead Road Elementary School** students assembled "Birthday Boxes" as part of their service project that were distributed to Middle Country Central School District families in need. Families donated birthday supplies, and each box contained the items needed to bake a cake and celebrate a birthday, like cake mix, frosting, candles, balloons, and a birthday card. The extra boxes were given to local shelters.

Students at **New Lane Memorial Elementary School** participated in the Ronald McDonald House Charities Craft-in-a-Bag drive. They collected crafting supplies and sorted them to create Craft-in-a-Bag packages, which were donated to children at Stony Brook Children's Hospital. **North Coleman Road Elementary School** classes took part in the Cohen Children's

Hospital Toy Drive. Students collected toys for the holidays that were donated to Cohen Children's Medical Center in memory of Vincent Gentile, a former student at North Coleman Road Elementary School. Students at **Stagecoach Elementary School** collected pet supplies that were donated to the Save-a-Pet Animal Shelter Supply Drive in Port Jefferson.

Holbrook Road Elementary School students conducted a book drive, collecting over 2,000 books. Donated books were distributed to the school library and classroom libraries. They were also given to Unity Drive Pre-K/Kindergarten Center, Eugene Auer Memorial Elementary School, Oxhead Road Elementary School, and Holbrook Road Elementary School students to take home. At **Eugene Auer Elementary School**, students organized a toiletry collection to benefit the Ronald McDonald House Charities. **Hawkins Path Elementary School** students collected travel-sized games that were donated to children at Stony Brook Children's Hospital.

The Capstone Experience at the Middle School Level

National History Day Symposium

Each year, Dawnwood and Selden middle school students present their research projects as part of the middle school's National History Day Symposium, as coordinated by Ms. Amy Pacifico, Director of World Studies, PK-12. Students are able to harness their creative skills and explore different formats for their projects, including websites, papers, and digital presentations. Participating students are invited to dive deep into their history studies. The latest theme was "Turning Points in History." Select students also participate in Long Island History Day, which culminates in a regional competition. Looking ahead, this year's theme is "Rights and Responsibilities."



"Don't be afraid to put your own spin on your project. It's more rewarding when a topic interests you and you can spread knowledge about that topic with a flair of originality that no one else can compete with!"

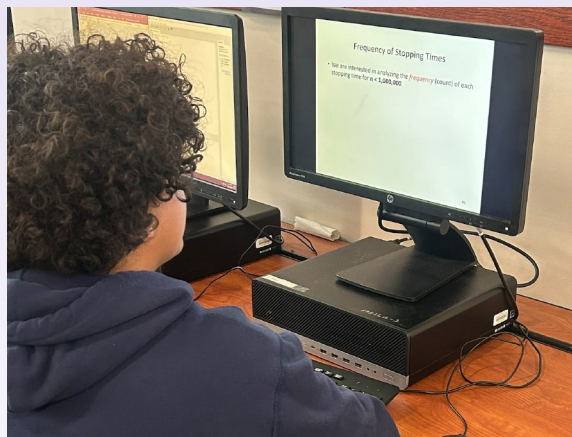
- Sylvia Zhao, former Selden Middle School student and 2024 Long Island History Day participant who won the Long Island History Day Special Award for Outstanding Junior Entry on Radio or Television History for her documentary titled "The Magic Behind the Music: How Guitar Pedals Changed Sound Forever."

"Our experience participating in the 2024 National History Day competition was both fun and educational. We learned more efficient ways to research topics and use the research for projects, like the National History Day. We also had a great time putting together our project and competing at Hofstra University."

- Grace Bender and Julia Mahoney, former Dawnwood Middle School students and 2024 Long Island History Day participants.

Brookhaven National Lab

The Scientific Computing Club at Selden Middle School has partnered with Brookhaven National Laboratory to give students the opportunity to learn valuable coding and scientific computing skills from experts in the field. The club aims to teach programming and computer science, preparing students for entry-level research tasks at the college level or in research labs. As part of the District's collaboration with Brookhaven



"The Selden Middle School students were fearless and imaginative. They tackled and solved scientific computing problems I normally assign to high school seniors. They had the right combination of grit and a natural curiosity. We aim to show students how to solve science problems by writing custom software."

- Dr. David Beirsach, Scientist, Brookhaven National Lab

National Laboratory, scientist Dr. David Beirsach has joined forces with club advisor Ed Miller to plan lessons and provide instruction, making this incredible opportunity possible for the students.

Throughout the course of about 21 after-school sessions, a group of students were taught introductory computer science, code breaking, and how to manipulate sensors in order to customize data collection. The genesis of the club was borne from Mr. Miller's experience at Brookhaven National Lab as part of its Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists (WDTS) Pathway Summer Institute. The program is designed to help build awareness of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Science mission to transfer real world technology and coding-based skills into the classroom.

Director of Science/Research PK-12 Dr. Rachel Ndembera and Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Mr. Jonathan Singer provided support and assisted Mr. Miller with the launch of the club. The District is thrilled to be able to offer these valuable opportunities to students and prepare them for a technology-driven future.

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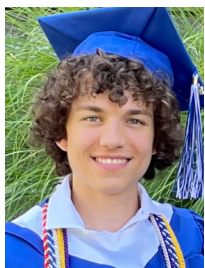
The Capstone Experience at the High School Level

High school students in the Middle Country Central School District are encouraged to lead individual research projects before they graduate. The students select topics that captivate their interests and they explore them in depth, using an inquiry-based learning approach to showcase their research skills as they seek answers to key questions. Their culminating Capstone Experiences include access to a diverse range of courses that demand extensive research.

Much of the research conducted by the students occurs in the library research centers under the guidance of Library Media Specialists Ms. Lisa Cook, at Newfield High School, and Ms. Karen Stephan, at Centereach High School. The District recognizes that libraries have, in recent years, evolved into full-blown media centers rather than facilities that only house traditional books and media. With the support of Ms. Cook and Ms. Stephan and the research activities they lead, students are able to use state-of-the-art digital tools to conduct their research. This equips them with the skills needed to use the latest technology and prepares them for an ever-changing world.

What sets us apart is that this is a universal requirement for all students, not just a select few. Every student must complete a Capstone project to graduate, and in the 2023-2024 academic year, every student fulfilled this requirement.

- Centereach High School graduates Maegan Michaelis and Vincent Scarpelli completed a food truck project with a business plan as part of the College Virtual Enterprise course with their teacher Traci Bernadino.
- Centereach High School graduate Gregory Mears earned a College Board AP Capstone Diploma for his scores in AP Seminar, AP Research, and four other AP courses. The skills he acquired from AP Seminar prepared him for AP Research as well as discussing paper topics.
- Newfield High School graduates Sinia Little and Lily Moran completed their projects with the guidance of their teacher Chris Flood. Sinia’s project, as part of the Leadership course, focused on the pitfalls of celebrity worship in the digital influencer era. As part of the Contemporary Issues course, Lily, along with junior Allison Gonzalez, presented her Capstone project on the issue of sexual assault.



“I honestly learned a lot from it — it showed me how much really goes into opening a business, especially a food business: the cost, the employees, actually buying the product and equipment needed to run the food truck successfully. The Capstone really prepared me for future projects by showing me how in-depth I have to go into research and how I have to check every detail, even the very minor ones.”

– Vincent Scarpelli



“Completing the Capstone project taught me how to better handle larger projects and connect information from many different sources to construct a larger goal for my own research. While I had done many other smaller research papers and projects, the Capstone project helped prepare me for the greater depth expected in college.”

– Gregory Mears

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT

Many Middle Country alumni expand their Capstone work and community service efforts beyond their school years. This is true for Dillon Gurciullo, a 2011 graduate of Centereach High School, who recently joined a team of surgeons in Jamaica to perform life-changing surgeries for those in need. While the Capstone program wasn’t in place at the time, the spirit of service was the same, and our alumni continue to embody the mission that is now ingrained in the Capstone experience. This inspires students not only for academic success but also for thriving in their careers after high school.



The Capstone Experience, Continued

National History Day Symposium



Last March, when former Selden Middle School student Sylvia Zhao won the Long Island History Day Special Award for Outstanding Junior Entry on Radio or Television History for her documentary on guitar pedals, part of her award was an invitation to explore behind the scenes of the 90.3 WHPC studio at Nassau County Community College.

Sylvia shared, “[It] was a wonderful, eye-opening experience. In the past, I’d only just listened to the radio and was never fully aware of what went on behind the scenes to bring the awesome radio to us. I learned a lot and had a lot of fun on this trip. Thank you to everyone who made this possible!”

Sylvia’s remarkable achievement comes after competing against students from across Long Island. Her documentary, which explores the impact of guitar pedals on the evolution of music, stood out for its depth of research and compelling storytelling. Her research not only highlights the technological advancements made in music production but also underscores the artistic implications of these innovations. Thank you to Sylvia for representing Middle Country in such impressive ways!



The Capstone Experience, Continued



Additional participants of the 2024 Long Island History Day offered their feedback on the experience:

“My experience with National History Day taught me valuable research skills. I’m able to apply what I learned to my current schoolwork. Both researching my project and seeing everyone else’s taught me about important and interesting topics I never even realized existed.”

- Rhiannon Kearney,
former Selden Middle School student

“Make your research out of this world, with intriguing details and out of the box ideas! Make it your own and if you falter, just know that that idea will come shining as bright as the sun!”

- Safina Afroz,
former Selden Middle School student

High School Capstone Projects

Centereach High School graduate Nolan Rocco conducted his Capstone project as part of the advanced drawing and painting course with teacher Shelby Petruzzo. Newfield High School graduate Safi Faridi participated in the Long Island Science Congress research competition and won an award for his work, as part of the Middle Country science research course with teacher Jim Nelson.

