



WESTBURY UFSD

FOCUS ON DIVERSITY

Research Studies Prove that Minority Students Perform Better When Exposed to Minority Educators

Westbury is Leading the Way in Hiring of Minority Educators

In a recent study conducted by Hofstra University titled *Teacher Diversity in Long Island Schools*, the authors wrote about the benefits a diverse teaching staff has on students. The writers came to a powerful and enlightening conclusion: Black and Hispanic students perform better when they have teachers and mentors of color. The Hofstra report referenced studies that concluded:

- Black students were significantly less likely to drop out of high school if they had even a single black teacher in elementary school.
- The rate of high school completion and college attendance among Hispanic students increased as the number of Hispanic teachers in a district increased.

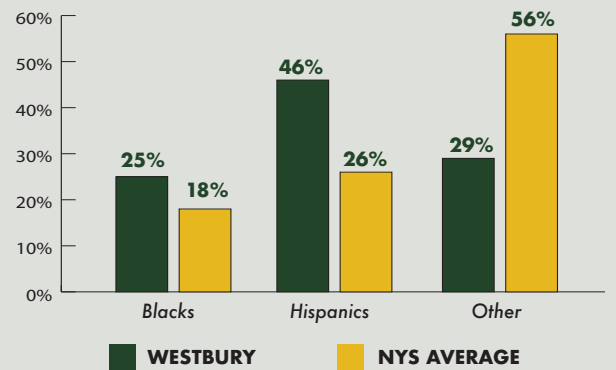
Despite the benefits to students from hiring minority teachers, most districts on Long Island and throughout New York State have fallen short in this area. In 2017, non-whites accounted for nearly 45 percent of Long Island's public schools students, but only 8 percent of its teachers. But, Westbury is determined to provide role models for its students of color. Over the last three years, 72 percent of teachers hired in Westbury are minorities which far exceeds statewide averages. We are providing a model of diversity for other districts to follow.

In 2017, Westbury Superintendent Eudes Budhai and Dr. Roger Bloom, the Assistant Superintendent for Personnel, created a diversity hiring plan to attract a more diverse group of applicants. Strategies included:

- Going to local universities and colleges that had a diverse demographic of students.
- Meeting with leaders at universities to outline what the District is looking for in teacher candidates.
- Creating a "matching" system with potential candidates.
- Holding diversity recruitment fairs and strategically using social media to advertise these fairs.

"We want students to see themselves in their teachers," said Superintendent Budhai. "It's not just about hiring for the position, it's about creating and fostering a culture of caring in our schools and in our community."

Westbury's Hiring of Minority Teachers Exceeds Statewide Average



DATA FROM 2019-2020

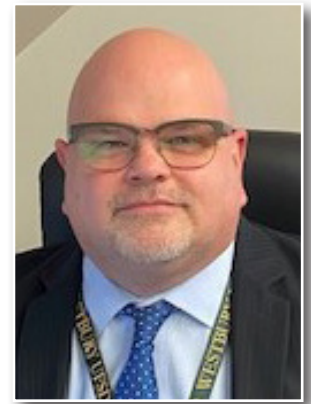
GRADUATES OF WESTBURY MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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Eric Banks, Class of 2009. *As a proud alum, the Westbury School District means a great deal to me. I take great joy and pleasure in being a Westbury Green Dragon. The Westbury School District has cultivated my development, not only as an educator, but as a well-rounded human being. The Westbury School District fostered a sense of belonging, acceptance, support, and a place that I can call FAMILY.*



Westbury Introduces Dr. Thomas DeNicola



Earlier this school year, the Westbury School District welcomed Dr. Thomas DeNicola as the new Director of Instructional Technology and Information Services. Bringing the expertise he gained with over 25 years of experience in the field, Dr. DeNicola aims to revolutionize both the technology instruction and infrastructure in our schools. We sat down with Dr. DeNicola to discuss his career and his goals for the District.

What brought you to Westbury?

Dr. DeNicola: I've been in a number of positions during my career. I started teaching in the South Huntington School District before moving to Nassau BOCES, where I was able to oversee several programs, particularly as they pertained to developmental support and integrating technology into the curriculum. From there, I went to the Amityville School District, where I served as assistant superintendent of technology. What really drew me to Westbury was the forward-thinking approach of the Board of Education and the superintendent. They want to put Westbury on the map in terms of technology, and they are committed to working collaboratively with families, teachers, administrators, students and the community to make that happen. That vision matched my vision.

What are your goals in regards to technology for the Westbury School District?

Dr. DeNicola: These are obviously unprecedented times. We know that, more than ever, our students, families and teachers need support when it comes to technology, access to devices, internet connectivity, etc. We need to make sure that every student has access to their own device. So my main goal, right from the start, was working to connect our students to the technology they need. We accomplish this through our ambitious 1:1 initiative. Our 1:1 initiative is a program that ensures all of our students have their own internet-connected device and, for those students who need it, access to WiFi through a partnership with Altice for purposes of remote instruction.

What's next for the District's technology initiatives and programs?

Dr. DeNicola: Simple, we want the Westbury School District to be on the cutting edge when it comes to technology. We are working closely with building administrators to make sure tech is at the forefront of instruction, that it is embedded in the curriculum, and that our tech initiatives are aligned with our strategic plan. Additionally, we are doing everything we can to keep the costs down and risks low. We are constantly looking for grant aid, buying through BOCES, and making sure that our privacy and security networks are up to date. As for the future, the sky is the limit. That's the exciting thing about technology, you never know for sure what's next. From a curriculum standpoint it means increasing the type of programs and software available in the District, including virtual reality, game design, competitive E-sports, and robotics in all grades. All options are on the table. It's an exciting time to be involved in the Westbury School District.

Work is Underway at Westbury Middle School!

We will be sending out a flyer giving an in-depth look at all the progress being made at Westbury Middle School. Keep an eye on your mailboxes!



TRANSFORMING EDUCATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

The landscape of public education has been transformed over the past year. Schools have adopted and fostered technology-rich learning environments. The four “C’s” of 21st century learning—critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity—have now become the basic skills that are being taught in all classrooms.

Technology such as interactive flat panels allow students to collaborate like never before as they display mastery of new content in meaningful and relevant ways. Through the use of digital tools such as Google Meets, students can become the facilitators of their own learning as they communicate and collaborate, any time day or night, about specific content in breakout rooms. Software such as Nearpod, which allows teachers to embed checks for understanding throughout their lessons, has transformed the way teachers gather and analyze student achievement data.

This new educational environment has also transformed the way parents/guardians interact with schools. Virtual learning environments such as Google Classroom and Google Meet have provided parents/guardians with the ability to engage in their child’s education like never before.

Technology is a powerful tool that transforms education in many ways, from making it easier for teachers to create and share instructional materials to enabling new ways for students to learn and work together. While we all look forward to the day we can return all students to our buildings full-time, Westbury’s embrace of technology and software has enabled teachers and administrators to break down the traditional walls in education and continue to offer seamless, high-quality education.

Some highlights of this technology initiative include the following:

- Committed 2 million dollars to the District’s 1:1 implementation to purchase over 4,000 Chromebooks to be loaned to students.
- Distributed iPads to all pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students.
- Distributed Chromebooks to all first-grade students.
- Distributed over 2,500 Chromebooks and 300 MacBooks to students as part of the District’s 1:1 initiative.
- Provided WiFi access to those students who did not have access at home through a partnership with Altice and T-Mobile.



Devices are only as good as the software running on them. Critical education software has the potential to transform education by enabling students to engage in self-instruction to supplement traditional teaching. To this end, our teachers are using a variety of software to make learning come to life. This includes Google Suite, Nearpod, KAMI, Jamboard and Flipgrid. Live video conferencing (synchronous) and/or videos (asynchronous) are also a staple component of remote instruction.

Other vital programs include:

- Think Central (reading, math and science), IXL (math), Castle Learning, Read 180, IREAD, Independent Reading Level Assessment, NEWSLA, among others.
- Project Learning (inquiry and problem-based learning).
- Assignment choice boards.
- Brain Gym activities to foster movement and health.

**WESTBURY UNION FREE
SCHOOL DISTRICT**
2 Hitchcock Lane
Old Westbury, New York 11568

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MEET SOME OF THE GRADUATES OF WESTBURY SCHOOL DISTRICT WORKING AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS

At the Westbury School District, we pride ourselves on our alumni. And when a former student comes back to the District as a teacher, it sends a powerful message to all students: *Anything is possible for you.* We asked several alums of our District who came back to teach what makes the Westbury School District so special to them. Here's what they had to say.



Laura Caines-Giralde, Class of 1997. *I am a proud product of the Westbury School District. Westbury has always been home to me. I returned to further my career here and to pour back into lives of the students in my home district. I will forever be grateful for Westbury and the many authentic educators who once poured into my life, assisting me in becoming the strong, confident, and determined woman I am today!*



Edi Corea, Class of 2015. *Westbury is la esperanza (the hope) of many immigrants who settle in our community looking for opportunities. As a first-generation American, I witnessed how my Honduran parents struggled to assimilate, which influenced me to become a social studies teacher. Fostering a culturally inclusive environment allows students to feel accepted, increases motivation, and aids in developing their self-efficacy.*



Gabriela A. Cuellar, Class of 2011. *While I was a student at Westbury I didn't recognize the importance or impact the community had on me. But after school, I came to understand that being a part of this community was an integral part of who I have become. The Westbury teachers, staff, and community established in me the ability to push, fight, and work hard until I achieved my dreams.*



Ashley Hinton, Class of 1987. *My desire to work for the Westbury School District has forever been my personal journey. My late father, John Hinton, got his start in Westbury as an assistant superintendent. As a young child he would bring me with him to work, and his love for the Westbury community inspired me to pursue a career that gave back to my community. I realized not only how important it is to give our children the best education, but also to receive it from professionals who look like them.*



Jenny Jaramillo, Class of 2008. *Westbury will always have a special place in my heart. This community raised me to be the person that I am today. My teachers, friends and family have always made me feel loved, cared for, and prioritized. I always took pride in making my immigrant family and my teachers proud. Westbury continues to give me the confidence to succeed in life and supports me to be anything I can dream.*

SOME OTHER RECENT GRADUATES POSITIVELY INSPIRING OUR STUDENTS TODAY:



Drew Harrison
Class of 2004



Jessica Euceda
Class of 2014



Karla Aristy
Class of 2009