

# EAST ISLIP

UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2025

## EAST ISLIP SCHOOL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP GIVES STUDENTS AN EDGE



The East Islip School Business Partnership is an advisory board that has been in existence since the late 1990s. The mission is to bring business professionals, educators and students together to create curriculum to enhance the education of our students. The partnership runs many programs, including the Catch a Career Breakfast, Mentor Me Mocktail Party, Mentor Me Shadow Day, STEAM Day/Night, the Speed Career Event and the Wellness Event. Each year, guest speakers from the partnership also visit classes to share their expertise with students, helping to connect learned subject matter to the real world. The partnership also serves as the umbrella organization for

other district initiatives such as the Work-based Learning and Department of Labor programs.

“Our partners are terrific, and they give the students of East Islip an edge over many other schools,” School Business Partnership Coordinator Bridget Lopiccolo said. “Many students who have participated in the programs and achieved career success have come back as working adults to serve as partners. We are very fortunate to have so many partners that continue to make a difference for our students, year after year. Each partner adds a unique set of skills that help us prepare our students for their future career choices and builds a workforce that is ready and able to work.”

“The partnership has been one of the most amazing experiences I have had in my professional career, affording me the opportunity to share my knowledge of the business world to students interested in entrepreneurship,” Allstate agent Stephen Foray said. “In addition, as a parent, I have been fortunate to see my own son become a student member of the partnership and participate in the programs that the partnership has created, helping him to navigate his future career choices.”

If you are a professional looking to join the East Islip School Business Partnership, please reach out to Bridget Lopiccolo at [blopicco@eischools.org](mailto:blopicco@eischools.org) or call 631-793-7998.

# Message *from the* SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dear East Islip School Community,

I hope your New Year is off to a wonderful start and that the holiday season provided you with valuable time to relax and enjoy the company of family and friends.

As we look ahead to the second half of the school year, our Board of Education, administrative team and all staff remain committed to providing our students with exceptional opportunities in academics, extracurricular activities, and experiences that foster both personal and academic growth. Together, we

will continue to inspire and support their journey toward success.

Here's to a wonderful year with progress, achievement and shared pride in all that makes East Islip exceptional.

Thank you for your continued partnership and dedication to our community.

Best wishes,  
Paul Manzo  
Superintendent of Schools

## Mock Trial Team Shines at Chicago Competition

This November, East Islip High School's Mock Trial team traveled to Chicago to compete over four days in the prestigious Empire World Mock Trial Championship, an international tournament that brings together top high school teams from around the globe. Ten students from grades 10, 11 and 12 represented the school, including team captains Michael Collina, Delaney Demasi, Niko Stavropoulos and Olivia Stepanenko. After receiving the case in July, the team dedicated countless hours to preparation, guided by Patsy Lester, a dedicated social studies teacher who has coached Mock Trial since 2000.

The Empire World Mock Trial Championship is not just a competition but a global educational experience. This year, 44 teams from countries including the U.S.,

Canada, U.K., Ireland, South Korea and China competed. Participants argued a case that was both legally complex and socially relevant, centered on a sheriff accused of political corruption and interfering with a witness in a criminal trial. The case challenged students to explore the balance between law and order, justice, and governmental power. Over four mock trials, held in the historic Everett McKinley Dirksen Federal Courthouse, East Islip's students presented their cases against top teams from California, Tennessee and Ireland, ultimately placing 16th



overall, a remarkable achievement on an international stage.

According to Lester, the Chicago experience was more than just a competition – it was a platform for growth, collaboration and inspiration. While some students aim to pursue careers in law, others were inspired to explore fields like teaching, law enforcement and business. The lessons learned in Chicago will undoubtedly serve them well in preparing for the New York State Mock Trial Tournament.



# 70 NAMED 2024 AP SCHOLARS

As a result of hard work and determination, East Islip High School recognized 70 current students for earning the College Board's AP Scholar designation for 2024, recognizing their academic excellence and diligence in college-level achievement in AP courses and exams. Thirty-five seniors and one junior, Liam Eichler, were named AP Scholars, granted to students who receive scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams. Thirteen seniors were named AP Scholars with Honor, granted to

students who receive an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams. Twenty-one seniors were named AP Scholars with Distinction, granted to students who receive an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams. In addition to AP Scholar honors, seven seniors will graduate in June with AP Capstone Diplomas, and 11 seniors will graduate with AP Seminar and Research Certificates.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE *Brings Exciting Changes*

Artificial intelligence is one of the top technologies expected to bring big changes to education in the coming years. AI can personalize learning, give helpful feedback and assist teachers with daily tasks. To support our educators, the district is introducing MagicSchool AI, a tool designed to make everyday tasks easier, giving teachers more time to focus on what matters most: teaching and connecting with students.

RCK School Library Specialist Bianca Rivera has been an innovative pioneer in using this technology. Her students are using "Character Chatbot" to have conversations with virtual characters that represent historical figures or fictional characters. Some of our fourth grade students chatted with individuals they

studied for a previous wax museum project. "Quiz Me!" allows students to be quizzed on a topic they consider themselves experts on. The difficulty level and question types are adjusted based on the students' performance or learning preferences, and the program incorporates game-like elements such as scores, levels and badges to make learning more fun. Students have also been challenged with "Debate Partner," which simulates debate scenarios by presenting counterpoints, supporting arguments and engaging in dynamic discussions on a variety of topics. Students brainstormed some ideas, such as "homework should be canceled" and "students should exercise more rather than spend time gaming." Other successful uses of AI include book suggestions, idea

and image generators, and language learning tutoring.

The District Technology Committee has been working on developing guidelines and best practices to support enriched learning experiences, prepare students to use AI tools effectively and ensure ethical use that aligns with academic integrity.

"We are having powerful conversations about balancing the use of AI both inside and outside the classroom," Executive Director for Student Achievement and Instructional Technology Richard Zwycewicz said. "We want our students to master these tools to enhance their acquisition of knowledge without circumventing the learning process."

# NEWS AROUND OUR SCHOOLS



## Connetquot's Turkey Trot Donates 495 Pounds of Food for Holidays

Students from Connetquot Elementary School participated in the annual Turkey Trot this holiday season. In the days leading up to the trot, they learned about the meaning of Thanksgiving through reading, activities and class discussion, and created Thanksgiving-themed crafts. The students then wore those crafts as they "trotted" around the building. Upon reaching the main lobby, each student placed canned or boxed goods in bins to reinforce the themes of kindness and charity. Connetquot partners with the Long Island Cares nonprofit food bank in Hauppauge, which accepts the school's donations and delivers them to needy families throughout Long Island.

"The education of our students is much more involved than learning math and reading," Principal Nicholas Bilotti said. "One of our goals is to teach them about kindness and charity. This year, our students donated 495 pounds of food at the Turkey Trot that will go to needy families for the holidays. This longstanding tradition helps dozens of people each year to celebrate the holidays with food and family."



## A Fun and Festive Trunk or Treat Tradition

Nearly 600 students as well as teachers and staff members attended the annual Trunk or Treat hosted by the Connetquot and RCK PTAs, visiting close to 40 different cars and trick or treat stations. A sensory-friendly early admission kicked off the event, with the help of the district's SEPTO and Leaders Club, and the East Islip Public Library and East Islip High School's Cosmetology Club, Key Club and hockey team joined in on the fun to help make it a real community affair.

"This has become a fun and festive yearly tradition thanks to our hardworking PTA and outstanding community support," RCK Principal Janet Jones said.

## Timber Point First Graders

### 'SPREAD THE BREAD' to Those in Need

This Thanksgiving, first graders at Timber Point Elementary School participated in a Spread the Bread initiative to give back and assist those in need across Long Island. The students baked loaves of holiday bread with their parents, which were then donated to St. Mary's Food Pantry in Ronkonkoma.



## JFK and RCK Third Graders Raise Over \$2,717 for Food Pantry

This fall, two East Islip STEAM teachers – JFK's Jodie Macher and RCK's Carol Wilson – organized the second annual pumpkin creation project for their third grade students. The project, which benefits Mercy Haven Food Pantry, was done in partnership with the students and their families at home. The two schools, combined, raised over \$2,717 to support the community.

"This was a great way for families to spend time together and share in their creativity," Wilson said.



# Monthly Meetings Prepare East Islip's

## NEW TEACHERS

Elementary and secondary new teachers both participate in monthly meetings presented by Jodie Macher and Wendy Frees, with the support and collaboration of District Administration, Building Administrators and Directors. These orientation meetings provide our new teachers with opportunities to advance their professional development, connect with colleagues, participate in school events, and navigate and embrace East Islip's school culture. After a year of mentoring and

new teacher workshops, the new teacher is prepared to continue growing and flourishing in their craft.

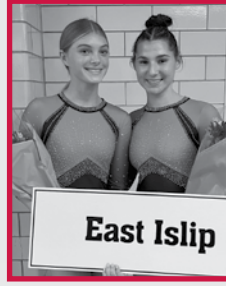
"East Islip fosters a school community where students, teachers, staff and families work collaboratively to create a supportive and inclusive environment that advances growth, respect and well-being for everyone involved," Frees said. "Our new teachers are well on their way to a successful career in the East Islip School District."

## "COMMANDING" Language Students Recognized for Proficiency



Christian Seifert, East Islip's director of world languages, English as a New Language and assessments, hosted the district's annual ENL Commanding Night ceremony on Nov. 13 in conjunction with ELL Parent Night. During the event, East Islip students who earned a Commanding score on last year's New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test were recognized for achieving proficiency in English. After a brief speech by Seifert recognizing the students' achievements, teachers awarded their students with certificates.

# A Successful Postseason for EI's Fall Teams



East Islip's proud athletic teams enjoyed successful fall postseason play this year, the result of the many student-athletes' determination and teamwork.

It was another remarkable year for the varsity football team. The defending county champions proved undefeated in the regular season, going 10-0. They eliminated Bellport in the first round, then defeated North Babylon in the Suffolk Division II semifinals, earning them a spot in the county finals against eventual champions Half Hollow Hills East.

Following a successful 9-4 regular season, the varsity girls tennis team had outstanding results in the Division 2 Individual Tennis Tournament, held here at East Islip. Ella Tantillo finished in fifth place, while the top-seeded doubles team of Kaelin Burnett and Lea Farley won all their sets on their way to becoming division champions. The team received seven individual postseason awards: Burnett, Farley and Tantillo earned All-County; Annelise Eichler, Erin Fredrickson and Ruby Micali earned All-League, and Erin Fredrickson was named Senior Sports Award Winner.

The girls varsity soccer team finished the 2024 season in second place in League 5 with a 10-2 record, scoring 53 goals with only 14 goals against and seven shutouts. In postseason awards, Danika Tidridge was selected for 1st Team All-State and Class AA Offensive Player of the Year; Krista Deutsch and Tidridge earned All-County; and Alivia Ancona, Lauren Glynn, Caylin Talt and Peyton Tidridge earned All-Division.

The boys varsity soccer team had another very competitive season, ending in a tough lose to Comsewogue. A major highlight was senior Anthony Mariani scoring five important goals in a win against West Islip. The program will return 10 starters for the 2025 fall season.

The boys varsity volleyball team finished in third place, making the playoffs for the fourth time in eight years. They then went on to win the semifinals in a 4-1 set victory against the second-place team, earning a spot in the county finals.

The boys varsity cross-country team finished third in the league and ninth in the Section 11 championship meet. In postseason awards, captains Anthony Liedtke-Merida and Joseph Norrby earned All-League, and Liedtke-Merida also earned All-County and All-Division.

The girls varsity cross-country team went 5-0 and were League V champions. In postseason awards, the girls had five All-League members in Danielle Birner, Grace Micali, Victoria Scandale, Danielle Simonetti and Kathryn Simonetti, with Danielle Simonetti also earning All-County and All-Division.

The varsity gymnastics team had an outstanding season, going 4-2 in league meets. Senior Sophia Pepe and junior Chloe Garatina both qualified for the Section XI individual championship meet, where they posted career-high scores. Pepe's 9.3 vault qualified her for the Section XI state team competing at the New York State Championship meet in Buffalo in March.



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## East Islip HS Hosts Township's Unity Ambassador Program

The Town of Islip Unity Council organized a four-session Unity Ambassador program for the high schools within the township, with the goal of heightening awareness of biases while reducing incidences of bullying and bias. On Nov. 13, East Islip High School was honored to present the kickoff event, hosting multiple school districts, guest speakers, district leaders, administrators and students. Students heard from a range of special guest speakers – including Holocaust survivor Edith Gross, Deputy Vanessa Overland from the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office's HEAT Unit, Detective James Mosby from the Suffolk County Police Department Hate Crimes Bureau and Alisty Keneth of Human Being 101 – who shared their personal stories of overcoming prejudice and how these speakers now use their voices to promote a more inclusive environment.



## SACHIN KAMATH: *Eagle Scout and Robotics Club Founder*

East Islip High School freshman Sachin Kamath was recently named the 114th Eagle Scout in the history of Troop 205 of Great River, East Islip and Islip Terrace. His Eagle Court of Honor was held Nov. 19 at Timber Point Elementary School. For his required Eagle Scout service project, he created successful robotics clubs at both JFK and RCK elementary schools. Kamath currently has earned 41 merit badges (only 21 were required for Eagle Scout) along with numerous awards and accolades, and logged more than 45 hours of additional community service hours.



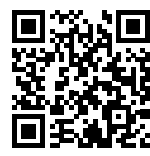
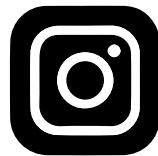
## STAY CONNECTED!



To help community members keep informed of district happenings, upcoming events and more, we invite you to sign up for our East Islip School District Community Contact email blast and follow us on social media!

Scan the QR code to the left to join our community email blast. If you are a parent of a current student you are already enrolled in our district eblast system.

Be sure to hit the like, follow and subscribe button for each of our social media pages. They include the following:



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Visit our website at [www.eischools.org](http://www.eischools.org)

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