

VOLUME 12: PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE COMPONENT – BEING A CREATIVE INNOVATOR DECEMBER 2025 & JANUARY 2026

THE ESSENTIALS

ENHANCING EDUCATION WITH Educational Support Services

Dear Colleagues,

In today's rapidly changing world, creativity and innovation are more essential than ever. This month, we're spotlighting the Creative Innovator, a key attribute in the New York State Portrait of a Graduate. As educational leaders, we have the opportunity to foster environments where students think critically, imagine boldly, and bring new ideas to life.

Across our schools, creativity thrives through design thinking, problem-based learning, and district initiatives that inspire curiosity and confidence. By nurturing creativity and innovation, we prepare graduates to become adaptable thinkers and visionary leaders in their communities and beyond.

Let's continue to spark creativity in every learner, and in ourselves, as we shape a future driven by innovation.

In Appreciation,

Kate Davern, Director of Educational Support Services at Eastern Suffolk BOCES



Designing Curriculum That Aligns with New York State's Portrait of a Graduate Using Artificial Intelligence

Presented by Angela Di Michele Lalor

January 13, February 10, and March 10, 2026 • 8:30 am – 2:30 pm
Instructional Support Center at Sequoya, 750 Waverly Ave, Holtsville



New York State's Portrait of a Graduate outlines the skills, knowledge, and attributes students need to thrive in college, careers, and life. At the same time, **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** provides educators with powerful tools to design curricula that are responsive and personalized to students.

This workshop integrates these two powerful drivers of change. Participants will explore how to align their curriculum with New York State's Portrait of a Graduate while leveraging AI to streamline curriculum development, integrate multiple learning outcomes, and create performance assessments and student learning experiences. Grades 6-12 educators, curriculum designers, and instructional leaders across all content areas are encouraged to attend.



Scan or click
[HERE](#) to register

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For more information contact Bernadette Gentile, Program Administrator, at bgentile@eboces.org.



STEVE BOLLAR, known as “Stand Tall Steve,” is an author, speaker, and leadership expert who inspires schools and organizations to embrace creativity and innovation. Through his books *Stand Tall Leadership and Ideas, Ideas, Ideas!*, he equips educators with practical strategies to boost morale, transform culture, and spark fresh ideas that empower students and staff to thrive. **AREAS OF EXPERTISE:** Leadership Development, Innovative Ideas to Engage Students and Staff, School Climate Strategies

UPCOMING WORKSHOP: [February 26, 2026 • Innovative Schools SUMMIT NYC](#)



JACK BERCKEMEYER, a nationally recognized presenter, author, and humorist, is known for bringing creativity and optimism to middle level education. A former teacher and long-time leader in the National Middle School Association, Jack has inspired educators across the country with innovative, research-based strategies that transform classrooms and school culture. His books, including *Managing the Madness and Deliberate Optimism: STILL Reclaiming the Joy in Education*, encourage teachers to embrace fresh ideas and joyful approaches to learning. **AREAS OF EXPERTISE:** Teaming, Mentoring Leadership, Organic Advisory Programs, Understanding Adolescents, Middle School philosophy.

UPCOMING WORKSHOP: [January 9, 2026 • Annual NYS Middle School Association \(NYSMSA\) Regional Conference](#)



MYRON DUECK is an educator, author, and international presenter who empowers schools to rethink grading, assessment, and student voice through innovative practices. Drawing on 25 years of experience, he helps educators embrace creative solutions that motivate and engage learners. His books, *Grading Smarter, Not Harder* and *Giving Students a Say!*, inspire fresh approaches that elevate student learning. **AREAS OF EXPERTISE:** Smarter Assessment Practices to Empower and Engage, Generative AI, Using AI sequencing from learning standards to assessment, Presenting with a Purpose. Contact the Professional Development Team at pdreferrals@esboces.org to have Myron work with your district.

WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITIES – REGISTER TODAY!

December 11, 2025: [Struggling Older Readers-Foundational Literacy Support for Older Students](#)
Lucy Volkmar, Director, School Support ANET

January 21, 2026: [The Neuroscience of Learning](#)
Dr. Linda Jordan, The Successful Practices Network Team, a Dr. Bill Daggett Company

To access the Professional Development Calendar and the Consultant Catalog:
www.esboces.org/programs-services/ess/pd

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ARTS-IN-EDUCATION



For more information contact Loretta Corbisiero-Drakos, Administrative Coordinator, at lcorbisi@esboces.org.

Brookhaven National Laboratory

Preparing the next generation of scientists, engineers, technicians, and teachers by leveraging the unique scientific tools and intellectual resources of Brookhaven National Laboratory.

Through its cutting-edge research initiatives, Brookhaven Lab inspires K–12 students and educators to explore and engage deeply in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), fostering creativity, curiosity, and the innovative thinking essential for solving the challenges of tomorrow.

Programs: Build a Better Battery Through Chemistry • Discovering Solar Panels • Electrochemistry for Better Batteries • Modeling Electron Microscopy • Power of Python • Virus Infection Lab • Graphing Solar Energy with Python • Encryption Cyber Security

Click below or scan for more info.

Spotlight (flyer): [BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY](#)



Zoda LLC, Mad Science LI

Mad Science offers curriculum-aligned, hands-on workshops for preschool and elementary students that reinforce classroom concepts while sparking curiosity and creativity. Each session engages young learners in active discovery, helping them think like scientists and inspiring them to become the creative innovators of tomorrow—all without ever leaving the classroom!

Assembly: Fire and Ice • Marvels of Motion

In-Class Workshop: Bugs! • Rocket Science • Walloping Weather



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SCHOOL YEAR ENRICHMENT



For more information contact Danielle Hudek, Program Administrator, at dhudek@esboces.org, or, Nancy Dowdy-Adams, Assistant Administrative Coordinator, at ndowdy@esboces.org.

Creative Innovators Spread Kindness at Norwood Elementary in Comsewogue

Kindergarten, First, and Second Grade students at Norwood Elementary in the Comsewogue School District demonstrated what it means to be creative innovators by designing kindness posters to brighten their school community. Aligned with the Being a Creative Innovator component of the NYS Portrait of a Graduate, students used imagination and empathy to create positive change, showing that **innovation can be as simple as using creativity to make the world a kinder place.**



Creative Innovators at Ruth C. Kinney Elementary in East Islip

Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grade students at Ruth C. Kinney Elementary embraced their inner creative innovators through hands-on building with dominoes and crafting spooky trees for the fall season. These projects exemplified the Being a Creative Innovator component of the NYS Portrait of a Graduate, as students used **imagination, problem-solving, and persistence** to bring their ideas to life. Through planning, experimentation, and collaboration, they transformed simple materials into imaginative creations that showcased both **creativity and innovation in action.**



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MODEL SCHOOLS



For more information contact Heather Ciccone, Program Administrator, at hciccone@esboces.org.

This month's theme, Being a Creative Innovator, highlights how purposeful technology use can transform students from passive learners into active creators.

Our Model Schools Educational Technology Coaches work with teachers to design lessons where students:

- Brainstorm ideas using tools like **Book Creator**
- Build real-world solutions with Tinkercad or **drone technology**
- Share their learning through videos and digital stories

EXAMPLES IN ACTION



Students explored STEM concepts with **Tello Drones**, learning flight safety, basic coding commands, and aerial perspectives before capturing aerial photos of classroom objects, gaining hands-on experience with problem-solving and real-world applications of technology.

Second Graders demonstrated their creative innovator skills by using **Book Creator** to transform their animal research into engaging digital books. They used imagination, curiosity, and flexible thinking to organize information, add multimedia elements, and creatively share their discoveries.



Both projects support the **Portrait of a Graduate** by empowering students to use technology as a tool for imagination, exploration, and problem-solving.



MODEL SCHOOLS 3D PRINTER LENDING PROGRAM

The Model Schools 3D Printer Lending Program helps students bring ideas to life. By designing and creating with 3D printing, learners think critically, problem-solve creatively, and develop the skills of a true Creative Innovator.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS



CODE, CREATE, AND INNOVATE: SPHEROS AND OZOBOTS INTO YOUR CLASSROOM

Two opportunities to attend: [December 8, 2025](#) OR [April 30, 2026](#) (click or scan the QR code to register)



This hands-on, interactive workshop is designed to equip teachers with the practical skills and confidence to integrate coding and robotics into their curriculum using **Sphero and Ozobot robots**. By the end of this session, teachers will be prepared and excited to introduce robotics and coding to their students, transforming the classroom into a dynamic, tech-infused learning environment.



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SCHOOL LIBRARY SYSTEM



For more information contact Carl Vitevitch, Administrative Coordinator, at cvitevit@esboces.org.



Enhance your school library's resources with engaging tools from our Gadget Collection! School Library System offers **VR Headsets, Breakout EDU Boxes, Cubelets, Button Makers, Dinosaur Bones, and Merge Cubes**—ready for checkout and perfect for hands-on learning and creative exploration.

Students at Boyle Road Elementary School using the Cubelets, which are **robot blocks that help teach important problem-solving skills**—like collaboration, engineering, design, and computational thinking.



Questions? Please call us at 631-286-0891
or email SLShelp@esboces.org.

SCHOOL DATA BANK SERVICES



For more information contact Vanessa Biagioli-Dittrich, Program Administrator, at SDBS@esboces.org.

HARNESSING DATA TO EMPOWER CREATIVE INNOVATORS

The Eastern Suffolk BOCES School Data Bank Services team partners with district leaders to transform data into actionable insights that inspire innovation and creativity in teaching and learning. Through collaborative inquiry and customized data support, our staff helps educators move beyond numbers, by supporting the use of data to spark new ideas, design inventive learning experiences, and foster environments where students think critically and create with purpose. By strategically collecting, analyzing, and translating data into meaningful stories, we support districts in realizing the **NYS Portrait of a Graduate** vision, developing learners who are Creative Innovators, ready to explore, and experiment in an ever-evolving world.

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THIRD PARTY ASSESSMENTS



For more information, contact Jonathan Marron, Asst. Administrative Coordinator, at jmarron@esboces.org.

USING ASSESSMENT DATA TO FOSTER CREATIVE INNOVATORS

Third-party assessments empower teachers to use data in creative ways that inspire student growth. By turning insights from tools like **i-Ready**, **NWEA**, **Renaissance Learning**, and **AimswEB** into personalized learning experiences, teachers can spark innovation in the classroom. These tools also provide students with feedback to reflect on their learning, set meaningful goals, and adapt their approaches over time, helping them take ownership of their learning journey and develop the curiosity, flexible thinking, and problem-solving skills of a true creative innovator.

This fall, teachers participated in multiple user meetings and trainings to explore data-driven instruction and innovative classroom strategies, including i-Ready, Renaissance, and NWEA. These sessions focused on **analyzing student data, setting goals, reviewing new reports and tools, and learning how to use assessment results to inform instruction and support all learners**. Building on this momentum, in December we are offering a LAS Links Data Dive Training (see below) on Wednesday, December 3rd, to continue deepening teachers' skills in using assessment data to guide instruction.

12/3/25 LAS LINKS DATA DIVE TRAINING (ESBOCES LAS LINKS COHORT ONLY)

Participants will review the **LAS Links Interactive Reports**, and the **LAS Links scores** and the interpretation of those scores as found on an individual student's Proficiency Report, as well as School and District reports. Participants will discover the ease of using this tool to learn how to:

- Identify areas where students need targeted instruction
- Identify instructional strategies to support student language development
- Create and interpret reports from numeric data, charts, and graphs
- Aggregate or disaggregate data
- Download/Export reports
- Track student progress over multiple administrations with longitudinal reports
- Create reading links/Lexile reports
- Utilize lexile.com to increase student's reading opportunities in English and/or Spanish.



WORDS OF GRATITUDE: EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES SHINE



Third Party Assessments

- "This training put on by Sarah Springer was just perfect!" (i-Ready training)
- "This workshop was very helpful. Please continue to keep up the good job you are doing!!" (AimswEB Plus training)
- "This was good, particularly for administrators implementing i-Ready for the very first time." (i-Ready Leadership Training)

School Library Service

- "Thank you for the great workshops! I always learn something new that I can bring back to my district!"
- "I appreciate having the ability to view the Zoom sessions on the LibGuide. I can't always attend meetings depending on the timing, so being able to view the recording after the fact is very helpful."

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SUPPORTING OUR DISTRICTS

ARTS-IN-EDUCATION

October 10, 2025 *Bringing Science to Life* Brookhaven National Lab

Science teachers recently attended “*Bringing Science to Life: Field Trips at Brookhaven National Lab*” for a hands-on exploration of field trips through the eyes of their students. BNL instructors guided them through engaging, NYSSLS-aligned activities that bring Brookhaven's science to life and highlight diverse STEM careers.



MODEL SCHOOLS

October 24, 2025 • 20th Annual Long Island Technology & Education Summit (LITES)



ESBOCES was honored to once again co-sponsor the 20th Annual Long Island Technology & Education Summit. This premiere event brought together K-12 educators to share innovative ideas and trends in education technology.

ESS IN THE NEWS

Model Schools Education Technology Coach Jennifer Sauter was featured in **Riverhead Local News** for her work supporting students and staff. Click [here](#) to read the full article.



Jen Sauter, an educational technology coach with Eastern Suffolk BOCES, has been instrumental in implementing the drone educational programs for third and fourth graders in all of Riverhead's elementary schools. "We're preparing them for 21st century careers," Sauter said, pointing out that the array of industries using drones is only becoming more expansive...now [drones are] everywhere, in every industry from the military to film, construction, environmental conservation," she continued. "It lends itself to a lot of different areas."

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UPCOMING EVENTS: DECEMBER 2025 & JANUARY 2026



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ANY OF THE EVENTS LISTED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES,
PLEASE USE THE COLOR-CODED KEY BELOW TO CONTACT EACH PROGRAM DIRECTLY. **CLICK THE EVENT TITLE
TO VIEW DETAILS AND REGISTER ON FRONTLINE, OR SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS THE ENTIRE CATALOG.**

PROGRAM	CONTACT
Arts-In-Education	artsined@esboces.org
Curriculum Development	curriculumservice@esboces.org
Model Schools	mspd@esboces.org
Professional Development	pdonlinesupport@esboces.org
School Data Bank Services	sdbs@esboces.org
School Library System	slshelp@esboces.org
Third Party Assessments	thirdpartyassessments@esboces.org

DECEMBER 2025

START DATE	EVENT	PROGRAM
12/1	NYSCAME Suffolk- Functional Piano Skills in 5 Minutes A Day with Jessica Chen	Arts-in-Education
12/2	Exploring the NYSSLS Chemistry Investigations Session 1: The Fast and the Furious - Evaporation and Intermolecular Forces - Kathleen Dinota	Professional Development
12/2	Follett User's Group	School Library System
12/3	Educating Students with Down Syndrome: A Practical Guide for Teachers - Bill McNally and Donna Greenberg	Professional Development
12/3	LAS Links Data Dive Training (ESBOCES-LAS Links Cohort Only)	Third Party Assessments
12/3	Frontline User Group Meeting	Professional Development
12/4	Empowering Financial Futures: Teaching Financial Education in Middle and High School - Philip Dituri, PhD	Professional Development
12/4	OPALS' User's Group Meeting	School Library System

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START DATE	EVENT	PROGRAM
12/5	How to Build the Master Schedule in Ten Easy Steps and Build Your Own Master Schedule - Dr. Steven Kussin	Professional Development
12/8	Introduction to Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) Presented by Kristina Seeley	Professional Development
12/8	Code, Create, and Innovate: Spheros and Ozobots Into Your Classroom	Model Schools
12/8	Word-Level Reading Problems: Implications for Instruction and Intervention - Dr. David Kilpatrick, National Presenter	Professional Development
12/9	Algebra 2 Collegial Circle - Dr. Trish Scavuzzo Despaghi	Professional Development
12/9	LLA: LAZEL Raz-Plus (must subscribe to LAZEL)	School Library System
12/9	LLA: LAZEL Raz-Plus ELL Edition (must subscribe to LAZEL)	School Library System
12/9	LLA: LAZEL Science A-Z (must subscribe to LAZEL)	School Library System
12/9	LLA: LAZEL Vocabulary A-Z (must subscribe to LAZEL)	School Library System
12/9	LLA: LAZEL Writing A-Z (must subscribe to LAZEL)	School Library System
12/10	ELA CURRICULUM WRITING: A THREE-DAY INSTITUTE - Victor Jaccarino	Curriculum Service
12/10	High Impact Instructional Practices - Amy Benjamin	Professional Development
12/10	Cultural Exploration: Enhancing Asian Social Emotional Understanding - Farrah Mozawalla	Professional Development
12/11	Struggling Older Readers: Foundational Literacy Support for Older Students - Lucy Volkmar, Director, School Support ANET	Professional Development
12/11	LLA: World Book Online for Secondary	School Library System
12/11	Model Schools Liaison Meeting	Model Schools
12/11	LLA: World Book Online for Elementary	School Library System
12/11	PEACEout: Ma's House	Arts-in-Education
12/12	Learning Technology Grant: Project-Based Learning and Artificial Intelligence Academy (For participants in the ESBOCES Learning Technology Grant; Cohort 1 Teachers Only: Comsewogue, Sachem, Riverhead, South Country, and Victory Christian)	Model Schools
12/15	Supporting ELL: A Strategies Approach to Scaffolding for Success - Pamela Solomon	Professional Development
12/15	The IMSE Comprehensive Orton-Gillingham Plus Course - Aaron Franklin, IMSE Instructor	Professional Development

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START DATE	EVENT	PROGRAM
12/15	Exploring the NYSSLS Chemistry Investigations Session 2: Just a Drop-Properties of Acids & Bases and Band & Stretch-Structure & Function of Designed Materials - Kathleen Dinota	Professional Development
12/16	Does My Assistant Principalsip Benefit My School Academically? - Principal (Baruti) Kafele, National Presenter	Professional Development
12/16	21st Annual Special Education Collegial Circle with Debra Winter (Virtual)	Professional Development
12/17	Essay Writing - Kirsten Widmer, The Living Literacy Network	Professional Development
12/17	PEACE Critical Community of Practice (CCoP) December	Arts-in-Education
12/18	Implementing Numeracy Briefs: Best Practices for Effective Math Instruction (Grades K-2 Series) - Dr. Nicole Hersey-Bertram	Professional Development
12/19	Implementing Numeracy Briefs: Best Practices for Effective Math Instruction (Grades 3-5 Series) - Dr. Nicole Hersey-Bertram	Professional Development

JANUARY 2026

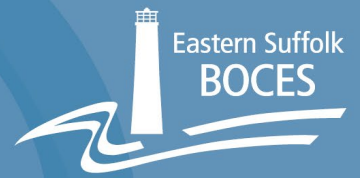
START DATE	EVENT	PROGRAM
1/5	Explore Mathematical Concepts with GeoGebra (4-week course)	Model Schools
1/7	LLA: Hackersjack (morning session)	School Library System
1/7	LLA: Hackersjack (afternoon session)	School Library System
1/7	Support the Science of Reading with Nearpod for the Elementary Classroom (K-6)	Model Schools
1/8	AI for Special Education: Enhancing Instruction and Student Support	Model Schools
1/8	Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Educators: Practical Strategies and Hands-On Learning - Matt Molloy	Professional Development
1/9	ANNUAL NYS MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION (NYSMSA) REGIONAL CONFERENCE Deliberate Optimism – Choosing the Mindset	Professional Development
1/12	High-Impact Mathematics Workshops - Grades K-5, Session 2: Scaffolding Problem Solving and Reasoning – Dr. Paul Riccomini	Professional Development
1/12	Understanding Dyslexia: Research Supported Screeners, Strategies and Methods that Work Presented by Michelle Stone, The Living Literacy Network	Professional Development
1/12	NYSCAME Suffolk- Feldenkrais for Musicians with Dr. Stephen Gorgone	Arts-in-Education
1/13	Designing Curriculum That Aligns with New York State's Portrait of a Graduate Using Artificial Intelligence - Angela Di Michele Lalor	Curriculum Service

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START DATE	EVENT	PROGRAM
1/13	Book Study: The Anxious Generation - Dr. Kelly Zinn, DSW, LCSW	Professional Development
1/13	LLA: Quick and Easy Book Hooks from TeachingBooks (Elementary)	School Library System
1/13	LLA: Quick and Easy Book Hooks from TeachingBooks (Secondary)	School Library System
1/14	Creating a Culture of Care: How to Implement Restorative Justice Practices in Your School and/or School District - Adele Bovard	Professional Development
1/15	Take Your Small Group Reading Instruction to the Next Level - Lauren Kolbeck and Deborah Linscott-Feinstein	Professional Development
1/15	NYSCAME Suffolk: Choral Singing and Musical Theatre Singing with Steven Altinel	Arts-in-Education
1/16	Sensory Support: A Hands-On Workshop for Educators Presented by Deanna Powers OTR/L	Professional Development
1/21	The Neuroscience of Learning - Dr Linda Jordan Successful Practices Network Team a Dr. Bill Daggett Company	Professional Development
1/21	AI for Educators & Administrators: Practical Applications and Future Trends Session 3	Model Schools
1/21	LLA: Benchmark Education	School Library System
1/21	PEACE Critical Community of Practice (CCoP) January	Arts-in-Education
1/21	NYSCAME Suffolk- Hear to Improve: Enhance Ensemble Growth Through Recording with Dan DiPasquale	Arts-in-Education
1/22	Empowering English Language Learners by Implementing Effective Literacy Strategies - Pamela Solomon	Professional Development
1/23	Understanding and Addressing Challenging Student Behaviors: A Workshop for Educators and Clinicians - Michelle Levy, M.S	Professional Development
1/26	Empowering Your Learners with Accessibility Tools	Model Schools
1/27	Understanding The Experiences of Trans and Nonbinary Students - Micah Schneider, LMSW The LGBT Network	Professional Development
1/27	LLA: Beanstack (morning session)	School Library System
1/27	LLA: Beanstack (afternoon session)	School Library System
1/27	Creating a Safe, Supportive, & Affirming School Environment for Transgender & Gender Expansive Students: 2023 Legal Update & Best Practices – Micah Schneider, LMSW, The LGBT Network	Professional Development
1/27	NYSCAME Suffolk- Building Your Network: As Easy As Do-Re-Mi! with Nicole Davidson	Arts-in-Education
1/28	Unlocking Word Knowledge: Phonics and Word Study for Upper Elementary Students - Lauren Kolbeck and Deborah Linscott-Feinstein	Professional Development

Educational Support Services

Working Together for Excellence



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START DATE	EVENT	PROGRAM
1/29	The Reluctant Learner Toolbox: Techniques for Turning Resistance into Progress - William McNally and Denise Cappiello	Professional Development
1/29	Flocabulary Hidden Gems: Flow Deeper	Model Schools
1/30	Nourish to Flourish: Cultivating a Culture of Care in Schools - Dr. Kelly Zinn, DSW, LCSW	Professional Development



Follow us on our **Educational Support Services** Instagram Page for professional development opportunities and program highlights!





The Professional Development Listserv: PDESS

Interested in staying up to date on upcoming workshops, conferences, and events? Subscribe to the PDESS listserv today to receive the latest Professional Development opportunities from the Educational Support Services Department!

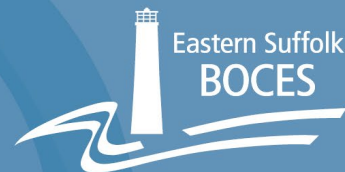


SCAN TO JOIN TODAY!



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www.esboces.org

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