



THE VOICE OF LONG ISLAND EDUCATION FORUM

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save the **DATE**

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION
WORKSHOPS - ZOOM, 4-6 P.M.

**OCTOBER 28
DECEMBER 9**

• • •

VIOLENCE PREVENTION
WORKSHOPS - ZOOM, 4-6 P.M.

**NOVEMBER 13
DECEMBER 11**

• • •

DASA WORKSHOP
NOVEMBER 12

• • •

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
JANUARY 9-10

• • •

ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
AWARDS DINNER
MARCH 23

Let Us Lead With Kindness

Dear Educators, Families and Community Members,

As we open the doors to another school year, we are reminded that education is far more than lesson plans, tests and policies. What truly endures are the people, the teachers, the staff, the parents and, most of all, the children, who bring our schools to life. At its heart, education is a human endeavor, built on relationships, trust and care.

Over my many years in education, I have had the privilege of working with both our older students and, for the past two decades, our youngest learners. And what I have come to realize is this – children have much to teach us, if only we are willing to learn. They meet the world with wonder, forgiving hearts and authenticity. They remind us that life is meant to be lived with honesty, openness and joy. If we as adults relearned how to forgive quickly, wonder freely and live authentically, we would not only enrich our own lives but also build stronger, more compassionate communities.

Teachers, you carry an awesome responsibility. Each day, you do far more than deliver instruction – you inspire, you mentor and you nurture. A great teacher is both compass and lighthouse, pointing the way forward while shining light on the possibilities that lie ahead. Long after facts and figures fade, students remember how you made them feel – valued, respected and capable of greatness. Your influence

extends far beyond the classroom and into the very fabric of the future.

And so, as we begin the 2025-2026 school year, let us embrace one simple yet powerful truth: *In a world where you can be anything, be kind.*

Kindness is not weakness, it is strength. It is the daily choice to see and value others, to listen, to forgive and to lead with empathy. From history, we know that kindness has changed lives and even the course of nations. In our schools, kindness creates safe spaces where children can grow, thrive and learn without fear. In our communities, it builds bridges of trust and understanding.

This year, let us commit together, educators, families and community members, to make kindness, empathy and respect the hallmarks of our work. Let us model them for our children so that they, too, can carry these values into the world they will one day lead.

Wishing you a year of inspiration, meaningful connections and opportunities to see the lasting difference your dedication makes. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to education and for shaping a future rooted in compassion and hope.

With gratitude and respect,

George L. Duffy
Executive Director/CEO

A Message from the Executive Director

GEORGE L. DUFFY



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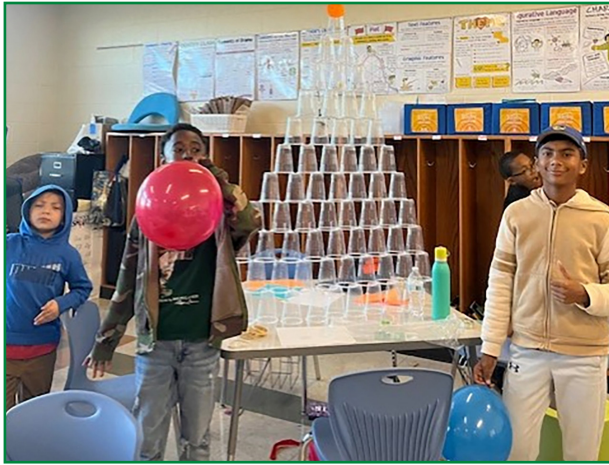


SCOPE Annual Dinner Meeting...**PAGE 4**

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SCOPE Enrichment in Full Swing: New Fun Begins This Fall

This September, as the air was filled with the first hints of autumn, SCOPE Education Services launched a new season of daily before- and after-school enrichment across Long Island. The fall program welcomed more than 1,000 students into a world of discovery, creativity and fun.

Districts including Comsewogue, East Moriches, Floral Park, Garden City, Great Neck, Hauppauge, Herricks, Jericho, Merrick, New Hyde Park-Garden City Park, North Merrick, Northport, Quogue, South Huntington, Valley Stream, Wantagh and Wyandanch are partnering with SCOPE this season to provide young learners with a structured, teacher-led space to grow both academically and socially.

Each day begins with a homework center – giving students time and support to complete assignments – before moving into a rotating schedule of engaging lessons in fine arts, literacy, movement and STEM. Teachers from across Long Island, who not only guide the classes but also help design curriculum, bring their expertise into every activity. The result is an after-school experience that feels both structured and joyful,

a place where students know what to expect but never quite know what delight might be waiting for them that day.

The fall season is already bursting with festive projects. In October, children dipped their brushes into watercolor palettes, sculpted spooky ghosts and tested their engineering skills with a candy corn catapult challenge. Science lessons are wrapped in the whimsy of autumn, as students predict whether pumpkins and gourds will sink or float.

In literacy, classrooms have come alive with beach-ball sentence making and collaborative story writing, while young artists transform coffee filters into butterflies and paper plates into grinning pumpkin faces. Budding writers explore cartooning and comic book creation, while aspiring engineers work with string lifters and straw rocket designs.

What sets SCOPE enrichment apart is its project-based, teacher-led approach. Each day follows a curriculum crafted by a talented team of Long Island educators. Teachers arrive with a clear plan and meaningful lessons but also bring their own creativity

to make activities come alive. “It’s curriculum with soul,” one teacher shared, noting that students often ask if they can take materials home to keep creating after the session ends.

Parents, too, are noticing the difference. With a daily rhythm of enrichment, homework and movement, students leave the program not only caught up on assignments but also energized, inspired and ready to share what they’ve learned.

SCOPE’s enrichment programs are reminders that learning doesn’t have to end when the dismissal bell rings. In fact, for more than 1,000 students this fall, some of the most exciting learning happens after school – whether through launching a paper rocket across the gym, inventing a new comic book character or laughing with friends while sculpting a Halloween ghost.

As October’s projects unfold and the pumpkin spice season settles in, one thing is clear, SCOPE’s after-school enrichment is a teacher-led, project-based adventure that Long Island students can’t wait to be part of each day.

EXPLORING OUR WORLD AND BEYOND: OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTAL ADVENTURES

Since 1969, SCOPE’s Outdoor Environmental Education Program has been dedicated to bringing the outdoors and beyond into students’ lives through hands-on, discovery-based learning. This spring, OEEP is excited to share three immersive programs that spark curiosity, deepen understanding and build teamwork – right in your school gym or at one of the local state parks.

STARLAB: A UNIVERSE UNDER YOUR GYM OR CAFETERIA

Transform your gymnasium into a planetarium! The 12-foot inflatable StarLab accommodates 25 students and teachers and features high-definition 4K visuals. Students from pre-K through high school can explore the night sky as it is today, travel back in time, view upcoming celestial events or even take a virtual trip to other planets.

EARTH BALLOON: WALK AMONG CONTINENTS AND OCEANS

Visit the 17-foot-tall Earth Balloon for an up-close tour of Earth as seen from space. Using crisp, cloud-free satellite imagery, students engage with geography, geology, ecosystems and global change through interactive programs. Available themes include:

- Welcome to Your Planet (oceans, landforms, solar system).
- Blue Planet Biomes (habitats, adaptations).

- Shakes, Quakes and Plate Tectonics.
 - Earth Math (scale, time zones, climate).
 - Around the World (mapping, cultures, global issues).
- Custom designed sessions can also bring in literature, art and other subjects.

TEAM BUILDING AND LOW ROPES COURSE: GROW TOGETHER

Through the low ropes course at Sunken Meadow State Park, students work in teams to solve challenges, build trust, develop leadership and sharpen communication skills. Combine this with orienteering for an adventurous, compass-based learning experience.

For booking, custom program design or more information contact Peggy Unger, SCOPE director, at punger@wsboces.org, or John Shiels, OEEP coordinator, at jshiels@wsboces.org.



Child Care Staff Is All Smiles at Opening Conference



SCOPE Executive Director George Duffy presented a 30-year service award to Jennifer Bellamy.

About 500 attendees arrived at SCOPE’s annual welcome back kickoff meeting for child care and day care staff with great enthusiasm and left even more energized for the new school year. The event was held on Aug. 19 at the Crest Hollow Country Club, featuring an awards presentation, keynote speaker and workshops.

The theme for this year’s conference was “Enriching the Lives of Children, One Smile at a Time.” There were opening remarks from Executive

Director and CEO George Duffy and Senior Director of Student Services Mindy Labriola.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Sherone Smith-Sanchez. Her “Joy in the Journey” presentation featured interactive activities and reflective exercises designed to help SCOPE’s child care and day care staff find joy in their work, support children effectively, and foster a collaborative environment with colleagues, parents and school administration, all while celebrating personal and professional

growth. Throughout the day staff participated in numerous workshops such as CPR/First Aid, Exploring the Power of Play and Planning Power Because Even Superheroes Make a Game Plan.

SCOPE also handed out years-of-service awards to 12 employees who were recognized for their dedication to the organization and celebrated milestone anniversaries – 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 years – from December 2024 through August 2025.



Dr. Sherone Smith-Sanchez was this year’s keynote speaker.



Several child care employees were recognized for years of service milestones.



About 500 people attended the SCOPE child care conference at the Crest Hollow Country Club.



George Duffy recognized the work of Senior Director of Student Services Mindy Labriola.



THE SCOPE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM: SERVING LONG ISLAND’S YOUNGEST LEARNERS

NURTURING AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

All children feel safe and loved. Emotional security is provided for children to feel safe and confident. In our classrooms, the environment is welcoming to children of all backgrounds and abilities. Children are encouraged and helped to manage their emotions, foster their independence and curiosity.

PLAY-BASED, DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM

Play is our primary mode of learning. Activities are hands-on and aligned with the developmental stages of 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children. Classrooms are divided into clearly defined areas for different learning activities. Science, reading and dramatic play are just a few of the classroom centers. Play is interactive and hands-on, allowing children to explore, experiment and learn concepts at their own pace. Curriculum is balanced with both teacher-guided and child-choice activities and incorporates both group and individual work. Our curriculum includes lessons and activities rich in literacy and numeracy.

QUALIFIED AND CARING STAFF

Each classroom has a teacher and teacher assistant. Staff are knowledgeable in early childhood development and provide nurturing guidance to all children. Teachers facilitate learning experiences and create classrooms that are active and engaging. Individual time is taken to connect with each child and develop a learning plan to suit each child’s needs.

STRONG COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Teachers and staff build strong relationships with the families of their students. Families and children attend meet-and-greet events at the beginning of the year and continue to participate in various celebrations and parent-teacher conferences throughout the year. Involving families in the learning process is a key component to a successful experience for preschool-age children.





Educational Leaders Renew Commitment to Children at Annual Meeting



Long Island's public school educational leaders attended SCOPE Education Services' 40th Annual Dinner Meeting for school superintendents and newly elected Board of Education trustees, held at the Bourne Mansion in Oakdale on Aug. 13. This important event served as a valuable and informative networking opportunity for new and returning superintendents and board of education trustees.

During his introductory remarks, SCOPE Executive Director George Duffy introduced 36 newly installed school board members and six newly appointed superintendents and wished them well in their positions. In addition to stressing the importance of SCOPE's programs and services in maintaining the quality of education on Long Island, Mr. Duffy encouraged educational leaders to make "kindness" a central theme of the 2025-2026 school year.

"Kindness is a strength, not a soft skill," Mr. Duffy explained. "It builds safety, belonging and trust – the very foundation of learning and human development."

Mr. Duffy honored the late Dr. Charles Rudiger, a former SCOPE board member from 1973-2011. Dr. Rudiger was also a former Huntington School District superintendent and was responsible for setting up SCOPE's retirement plan. Mr. Duffy presented Dr. Rudiger's wife, Lucille Rudiger, and his daughter, Kristine Rudiger, with the Challenge Coin in commemoration of his contributions to the educational field and his commitment to excellence.

Robert Vecchio, executive director of Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association, encouraged members to focus on students, as well as governance and finding consensus in an educational climate that is under attack. "Set short-term and long-term goals and focus on the big picture," Mr. Vecchio said. "Focus on your 'why.' Keep it focused on the kids, and commit yourselves to excellence and building consensus."

New York State Council of School Superintendents Executive Director Dr. Charles Dedrick noted that NYSCOSS and SCOPE are "compatible partners" in educating children in New York State.

SCOPE Board of Directors president Dr. Lorna R. Lewis was also applauded for her educational contributions. She asked the question, "What are you going to do to make moments in your districts precious moments?" She also encouraged districts to focus on students and to move their agendas forward to prepare the Class of 2038, which begins kindergarten this year.

The Honorable New York State Regent Felicia Thomas-Williams told attendees that "every student has a spark worth igniting." She explained that her mission is for every student, despite zip code, to receive the education they need to thrive and to provide an equitable, high-quality education for all students.

"Long Island can lead the way," she said. "We need to think about ways to collect, collaborate and innovate."



NEWS INSIDE OUR SCHOOLS



RIVERHEAD

Former NFL Player and Riverhead Alum Returns to Inspire Students

Former NFL offensive tackle and Riverhead High School graduate Ethan Greenidge visited Phillips Avenue Elementary School to inspire students and donate school supplies. He spoke with students, encouraging them to pursue their dreams, as he joined physical education classes, as well as the class of his former fifth grade teacher, Jaimie Draskin. Since 2021, Greenidge has collaborated with Riverhead CAP board president and local businessman Brian Stark to annually donate school supplies, with the combined contribution reaching \$5,000 for this school year.



EAST ISLIP

Orientation Prepares Class of 2029 for High School Success

East Islip High School threw open its doors on Aug. 28 for an eager group of incoming freshmen, marking the first step in their transition from middle school to the high school years ahead. The members of the future Class of 2029 were greeted by administrators, met with guidance counselors and received their schedules, then embarked on a tour of the building, visiting classrooms and learning how to use their lockers. Upperclassman volunteers served as guides, offering directions and helping the freshmen get comfortable in their new surroundings.



BRIDGEHAMPTON

Athletics Expand With New Varsity Soccer Team

The Bridgehampton Killer Bees boys varsity soccer team played its first-ever match on Sept. 9, marking the start of a new chapter for Bridgehampton sports. The game, at Southampton High School against the Mariners, included recognition of Athletic Director Michael "Bubba" DeRosa for his strength, perseverance and vision in expanding Bridgehampton athletics. The packed stands of families, staff and community members reflected the excitement of this historic milestone. Adding to the evening's energy was a family connection, as the Mariners are coached by DeRosa's brother, Christopher.

LEVITTOWN

Engineers Shine at Camp Invention

Third, fourth and fifth graders in the Levittown School District were guided by their imaginations in Camp Invention this summer, hosted at Jonas E. Salk Middle School.

The program challenged students with tasks that required engineering-based solutions. At various stations, pairs problem-solved as they crafted ramps for



toy cars and skateboards, made cardboard claw machines, created DNA strands with bendy wire or found the best way to balance a ping pong ball while walking. Volunteer peers help guide each session.

BALDWIN

Meadow PTA Recipient of Family-School Partnership Award

National PTA recognized Meadow Elementary School of the Baldwin Union Free School District with the 2025 Phoebe Apperson Hearst Outstanding Family-School Partnership Award, the highest honor bestowed by the association. Meadow was one of three schools from across the nation to receive this honor, the only New York school, and the sole recipient to receive the top designation of



Outstanding.

Meadow was also recently named winner of the New York State PTA PARP Award. Additionally, both Meadow and Plaza elementary schools were designated a National PTA 2024-2026 School of Excellence.



GREAT NECK

Leaders Participate in Brandeis Educators' Institute

A team of six Great Neck Public Schools educators traveled to Boston to attend the Brandeis University Middle & High School Educators' Institute on Israel and Antisemitism. This intensive, weeklong program is offered to a select group of educators from across the country. Participation was awarded through an extremely competitive scholarship, which required an extensive application.

Great Neck educators engaged with leading scholars to explore the historical roots and present-day realities of antisemitism, the role of media and algorithms in shaping public perception, and the complexity of civic discourse around global events.

Participants represent each of the district's secondary schools: South Middle social studies chair Frank Bua, South High social studies chair Alexander Redito, North Middle social studies chair Patti Crisafulli, North High English teacher Sal Casto, North High library department chair Maya Lerner and Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Dr. Dan Holtzman.



ROCKY POINT

'I Am We' Read Aloud Emphasizes Kindness

Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School Principal Nicole Pletka joined Mrs. Arnesen's class to share a special read-aloud of "I Am We: A Book of Community" by Susan Verde. The book, which was a signed copy, felt even more meaningful knowing that the author herself lives right here on Long Island. Through the story, students reflected on the importance of kindness, mindfulness and connection. They discussed how taking care of themselves allows them to be more compassionate and supportive toward others, and how even small acts can strengthen their classroom community and show Eagle Pride.

If you have information about your school district that you would like to share, please send it to Jill Gierasch at jgierasch@scopeonline.us or Andrew Hackmack at ahackmack@syntaxny.com.

NEWS INSIDE OUR SCHOOLS



EASTPORT-SOUTH MANOR A Display of Patriotism Through Footprints

Dayton Avenue School third and fourth graders participated in a Patriots Day Footprint Project in which they wrote thank-you notes on paper footprints to first responders for their courage on Sept. 11, 2001, and for continuous assistance in keeping the community safe. The footprints were placed on a large poster for the community to read. The project was a valuable lesson in gratitude.

PORT JEFFERSON Middle School, High School Earn High Rankings

The Port Jefferson School District proudly announces that both Port Jefferson Middle School and Earl L. Vandermeulen High School placed in the 2025 U.S. News & World Report education rankings, distinguishing the district as a leader in academic excellence at both the state and national levels.

Port Jefferson Middle School achieved an impressive No. 72 ranking in New York State and is ranked No. 3 in Suffolk County, recognizing its commitment to rigorous academics, strong student outcomes, and dedicated faculty.

Earl L. Vandermeulen High School received equally notable accolades, ranking No. 734 nationally out of thousands of high schools across the country. In New York State, the high school placed No. 77 overall and No. 4 in Suffolk County. Additionally, the school earned a prestigious spot on the list of Best STEM High Schools, ranking No. 51 nationwide, underscoring its strength in science, technology, engineering and math education.



BRENTWOOD Graduation PLUS+ Initiative Showing Results

The Brentwood Union Free School District's revolutionary Graduation PLUS+ initiative, which prepares students for college and careers, is already making a big impact. The Class of 2025 included more than 900 students who earned at least one college credit before graduating, and 20 who left high school with the equivalent of a full semester completed.

Unlike traditional postgraduation planning models that begin in high school, Graduation PLUS+ starts in UPK and continues through grade 12. During last year's districtwide college and career week, 10,000 secondary students completed a Naviance Interest Inventory – a career assessment that helps match students with potential paths for the future. This year, that experience will be offered to all 18,000 students, K-12.

SEAFORD

Seniors Prepare for the Future at College Boot Camp

During nine summer sessions, Seaford High School seniors received guidance and support to get their college applications ready during the third annual College Boot Camp. Led by the high school's guidance counselors, topics included Beginning the Application Process, the Common Application, the College Essay, Financial Aid, Submitting Free SUNY Applications and more.

At the College Essay workshop, seniors were able to meet with



admissions representatives from three area colleges, who gave students individualized feedback on their essays. Dozens of students took advantage of College Boot Camp, with many attending more than one session.

BETHPAGE

A Day of Fun at Summer ESY Social

Bethpage recently hosted the Summer ESY Social, designed to bring together students and staff from ESY programs in neighboring school districts for a day of community-building. Held at Bethpage High School, the event welcomed ESY participants from Great Neck, Oceanside, Plainview-Old Bethpage and Syosset.

Luau attire was encouraged, and



teachers handed out colorful leis to kick off the day's tropical theme. The event offered a range of age-grouped activities as well as a pizza lunch and sweet treats from Uncle Louie G's Italian ice truck.

DEER PARK

Elementary Students Line School Grounds With Flags to Honor Patriot Day

In remembrance of the 9/11 attacks, students from each class in Deer Park's three elementary schools – John F. Kennedy Intermediate School, John Quincy Adams Primary School and May Moore Primary School – took part in the annual flag planting ceremony on Sept. 11. This Patriot Day tradition, in which children



place small American flags in front of their school buildings, helps students reflect on the day's significance.

MALVERNE

Summer Program Focuses on Reading

Malverne students traveled the world through books as part of the district's summer reading program. The elementary students enjoyed reading adventures, tracking their journeys with special "passports," creating art, playing games and visiting local libraries – sparking a love of



reading and learning in a fun, engaging way.

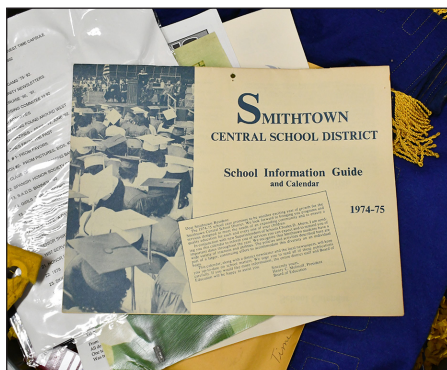


HAUPPAUGE

High School Gathers in Tribute on Patriot Day

On Sept. 11, Hauppauge High School students gathered on the football field to observe Patriot Day. Alongside faculty and staff, they unfurled a massive American flag across the field. The entire student body stood in a unified moment of silence to honor those lost in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The chamber choir, led by Leanne Contino, followed with moving performances of the national anthem and "An Irish Blessing." The ceremony served as a powerful tribute to the strength and solidarity of the Hauppauge community, echoing the enduring spirit of a nation coming together in remembrance.

NEWS INSIDE OUR SCHOOLS



SMITHTOWN High School West Time Capsule Discovered and Opened

Smithtown Central School District students were met with a blast from the past for the start of the new school year. Two athletic trainers found a time capsule inside a storage room at Smithtown High School West that was supposed to be opened in 2017.

The capsule had photos, old school banners and other relics ranging from 1973 to 1992. A lunch menu from 1992, “looks pretty much the same” as today’s menu, Principal William Holl noted. Items from the time capsule will be displayed so students can see their school’s history.



CONNETQUOT Motivational Speaker Encourages Students To Be ‘All In’

Connetquot High School students were inspired on Sept. 16 as renowned motivational speaker Gian Paul Gonzalez delivered his message of being “All In” during a special assembly focused on purpose, commitment and personal growth. Gonzalez, best known for motivating the New York Giants before their 2012 Super Bowl victory, challenged students to live with intention and give their full effort in school, in relationships and in life.

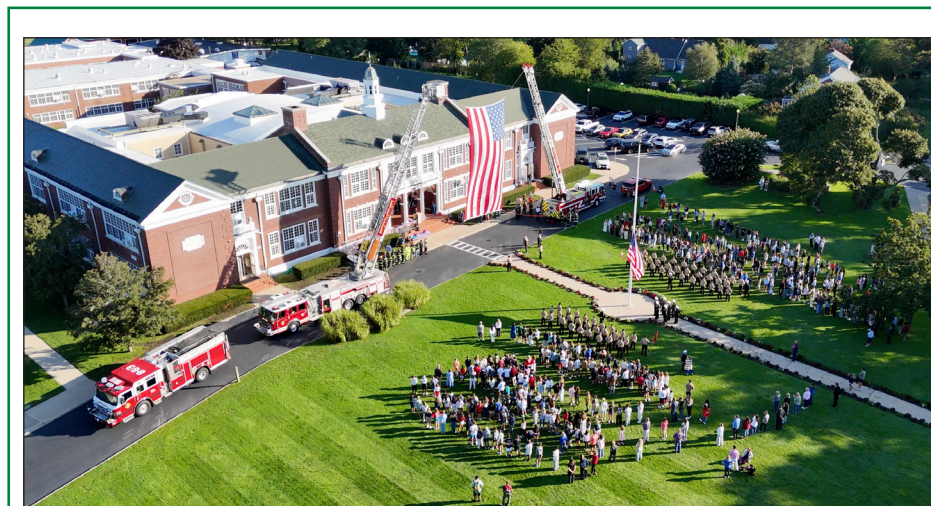
His message, which has reached professional athletes, leaders and educators across the country, made a lasting impact on the Connetquot High School community.

UNIONDALE District Hosts Pre-K and Kindergarten Jamboree

The Uniondale School District joined with community partners to host a pre-K and kindergarten jamboree to welcome students to the 2025-2026 school year and help them acclimate to the District. Students and their families had the opportunity to meet staff, learn about District programs and bond with their peers before the school year begins. The event kicked off the exciting year ahead with games, face painting, crafts, music, storytelling and additional activities



with the district, PTA members and community partners, including EPIC, Precision Boxing School, Prodigy School of the Arts, SCOPE and the Uniondale Public Library.



MATTITUCK-CUTCHOGUE Ceremony Marks Patriots Day

Mattituck Junior-Senior High School held a special ceremony for Patriots Day that included honored guests from local fire departments and the Southold Town Police. The NJROTC held a flag detail and

performed taps, followed by comments by honored guests. The school also held a Tunnel to Towers Walk around the track and participated in social studies classes programming: a 9/11 Digital Learning Experience provided by the 9/11 Memorial Museum.

SHOREHAM-WADING RIVER Important Lesson of Patriotism at Miller Avenue

Kindergarten students at Miller Avenue School were celebrating color week, and Sept. 11 happened to be Red, White and Blue Day. The students sang “You’re a Grand Old Flag,” made patriotic crowns and talked about the importance of the Pledge of Allegiance. Even though they were too young to discuss the meaning of



Patriots Day, the students learned an important lesson about patriotism.



HERRICKS Searingtown First Graders Dive Into New School Year

First graders at Searingtown Elementary School in the Herricks School District kicked off the year with a surprise Pop-Up Pool Party. They read, played musical rafts and enjoyed a special visit from the school’s reading specialist. Laughter, teamwork and fun made it the perfect start to an exciting year of learning.



EAST ROCKAWAY District Launches Inaugural Summer B.O.O.S.S.T. Program

East Rockaway debuted its new Summer B.O.O.S.S.T. (Better Opportunities and Outcomes for Student Success Tomorrow) program in July to support students entering grades 1-6. Locally funded and built on spring i-Ready data, the program targeted literacy and math while offering STEAM enrichment to keep learning engaging. All instruction was led by East Rockaway teachers and interventionists, providing continuity and familiarity for students. Designed to curb the “summer slide,” the program saw strong student engagement, and the district looks forward to reviewing fall i-Ready results to shape its future.



COMMACK End-of-Year Pep Rally Goes Live on CBS

More than 600 Commack High School students enthusiastically arrived at school at 4:45 a.m. – with energy and bearing signs – for an opportunity to showcase their community on CBS.

In a live pep rally to close out the 2024-2025 school year, CBS New York anchor Chris Wragge hosted the network’s two-hour morning show from Commack High School’s south gym. In a mixture of live and prerecorded interviews, the network highlighted the district’s students as well as the high school’s signature spaces, including its Bloomberg financial lab, mock-trial courtroom, esports arena, and college-style cafeteria and courtyard.

NEWS INSIDE OUR SCHOOLS



BELLMORE

Officials Break Ground on Reinhard Classroom Extension

The Reinhard Early Childhood Center, which houses grades pre-K to 2 in the Bellmore School District, will soon have more space for its Rising Star Leaders following a groundbreaking ceremony. Administrators and trustees gathered ahead of a Board of Education meeting to dig the first scoops of soil with golden shovels. Construction has since commenced on an extension that will include four classrooms equipped with state-of-the-art educational tools. It is expected to be completed before the start of the 2026-2027 school year.

MIDDLE COUNTRY

Student Musicians Travel to Europe

Five talented music students from Newfield High School in the Middle Country Central School District attended a three-week international performance tour across Europe as part of American Music Abroad's Freedom Tour. Throughout the tour, the students performed in iconic locations, including historic amphitheaters, majestic cathedrals, charming gazebos and grand auditoriums in Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. These concerts brought together young musicians from across the United States to share their passion for music on a global stage.



ELWOOD

Middle School Recognized as 2025 National School of Distinction

Elwood Middle School has been named a 2025 National School of Distinction by the Association for Middle Level Education. This prestigious recognition – based on research-based best practices of its culture and community, curriculum instruction and assessment, and leadership and organization – highlights the school's commitment to being a responsive, challenging, empowering, equitable and engaging learning environment. The designation required comprehensive surveys of staff and students.



MINEOLA

Mustangs Marching Band Tunes Up in the Poconos

Keeping with a decades-long tradition, the Mineola Marching Band launched its 2025 season with a six-day immersive camp at Camp Towanda in the Poconos. A total of 123 student musicians and performers, along with their teachers, dedicated countless hours to rehearsing and perfecting every note and step of this year's imaginative and intricate show, "The Only Way Out."

Congratulations Are in Order

APPOINTMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

JERICHO

Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Robert L. Kravitz was unanimously appointed as the new superintendent of the Jericho Union Free School District. Having served as superintendent of the Fort Lee School District in New Jersey since 2021, where he oversaw eight buildings and more than 4,300 students, he brings more than 20 years of educational leadership experience to Jericho.

Prior to Fort Lee, Dr. Kravitz held superintendent roles in both Englewood and Englewood Cliffs public schools. Early in his career, he served as principal of Fort Lee Elementary School No. 3, which earned a National Blue Ribbon Award under his leadership. Interestingly enough, he was able to attain the exact same designation 14 years later at the same school in the same district as a superintendent.

Dr. Kravitz holds a doctorate in educational leadership from Seton Hall University, in addition to a master's in educational leadership, a master's of business administration and a bachelor's degree in management.



CARLE PLACE

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation

The Carle Place School District has appointed Leigh Shaw as the new assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction and innovation. Ms. Shaw comes from the Mineola Union Free School District, where she most recently served as principal of Hampton Street School. She has worked with district leaders, educators, families and students to implement programs, support special education and dual-language initiatives, and design curriculum that integrates literacy, social-emotional learning, executive functioning and writing.

Ms. Shaw earned her master's degree in childhood education from Hofstra University and an advanced certificate in educational leadership and administration from CUNY Hunter.



Congratulations Are in Order

APPOINTMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

VALLEY STREAM 13

Assistant Superintendent for Business

Valley Stream UFSD 13 announces the appointment of Gary Gentles as the new assistant superintendent for business and operations. He brings more than five years of leadership experience in school finance, budgeting, facilities and operational management.

Most recently, he served as the assistant superintendent for business and operations at the Roosevelt UFSD where, under his financial leadership, the district achieved its highest-ever Moody's credit rating. Mr. Gentles holds a Master of Business Administration degree from Touro University Worldwide, a master's degree in education policy and leadership from Long Island University, and a bachelor's degree in computer information systems and finance from Manhattan College. He is an active member of the New York State Association of School Business Officials and serves on the board of the Nassau Association of School Business Officials.



MASSAPEQUA

Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources

The Massapequa School District appointed Yvonne Knott as the new assistant superintendent for human resources and general administration. Ms. Knott was previously the district's director of information management and data protection officer.

Prior to Massapequa, she was an assistant principal of Kings Park High School and spent a decade as a general music teacher in Brentwood. Ms. Knott holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Kings College, a master's degree in special education from Dowling College and her administrative certification from the College of New Rochelle.



MANHASSET

Assistant Superintendent for Business & Operations

Gerard Antoine joins Manhasset Public Schools as assistant superintendent for business and operations. Mr. Antoine brings more than 20 years of experience to Manhasset Schools, having served in similar leadership roles within the Hempstead and Valley Stream 13 school districts. He holds a Master of Business Administration degree from Hofstra University, as well as a school administration certificate from the School of Business Administration at C.W. Post.



BALDWIN

Superintendent of Schools

Anthony Mignella has been appointed as the superintendent of schools for the Baldwin Union Free School District, effective Aug. 2, following the retirement of Dr. Shari L. Camhi. Previously, he served as the assistant superintendent for instruction for Baldwin for nine years, during which he played a pivotal role in shaping the district's innovative curriculum and enhancing student achievement.

With more than 25 years of experience in education, he began his career as a teacher at St. Edmund's Prep before taking a faculty position at Valley Stream South High School. He subsequently advanced to the positions of assistant principal of Valley Stream Central High School and principal of Valley Stream Memorial Junior High School.

Mr. Mignella holds a bachelor's degree in biochemistry, an advanced graduate certificate in educational administration from Stony Brook University and a master's degree in education from Long Island University. He is a Strategic Data Project Fellow from Harvard University's School of Graduate Education.



NORTH BABYLON

Assistant Superintendent for Business

The North Babylon School District has named Olivia Buatsi as its new assistant superintendent for business and operations, effective July 15. Ms. Buatsi has more than 28 years of experience as a school business official.

For the past three years, she served as assistant superintendent for business and operations for the Amityville School District. From 2003 to 2022, she was the assistant superintendent for business and personnel for the North Shore Central School District.

Ms. Buatsi holds a bachelor's degree in urban planning from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology as well as a Master of Business Administration from Hofstra University. She also holds certifications as a school business administrator and certified public accountant.



CENTRAL ISLIP

Assistant Superintendent for Business

The Central Islip Union Free School District welcomed Frank Bacchi as the new assistant superintendent for business, effective July 1. Mr. Bacchi joins Central Islip from the North Babylon Union Free School District, where he served as assistant superintendent for business since 2020.

He holds a school district business leadership certificate from Stony Brook University's School of Professional Development, and earned his master's degree in management studies from Duke University's prestigious Fuqua School of Business and his Bachelor of Professional Studies degree in business management from Farmingdale State College.



HEWLETT-WOODMERE

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation

Hewlett-Woodmere Public Schools has appointed Dr. Patrick Fogarty as assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction and innovation, effective Aug. 1. Dr. Fogarty brings more than 20 years of experience, most recently serving in Jericho Public Schools.

He holds a doctorate in education from Johns Hopkins University and multiple degrees from CUNY Brooklyn College, CUNY Hunter College and Fordham University. A frequent presenter and recognized leader in educational technology, Dr. Fogarty is poised to advance innovation and student achievement across the district.



Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Leadership Development

Hewlett-Woodmere Public Schools has named Dr. Lorraine Smyth as assistant superintendent for human resources and leadership development, effective July 1. A respected district leader for 18 years, Dr. Smyth most recently served as principal of Franklin Early Childhood Center.

She holds a doctorate in instructional leadership from St. John's University and advanced degrees from Stony Brook University and St. John's University. Known for her expertise in leadership development and human resources strategy, Dr. Smyth will focus on cultivating talent, mentoring leaders and advancing an inclusive, collaborative district culture.



Andrea Schalk Fosters a *Love of Learning*

The Instructional Service Department has identified Andrea Schalk as a SCOPE employee deserving of the highest level of recognition. Ms. Schalk began her employment with SCOPE in September of 2008. Over the years, she has been an outstanding prekindergarten teacher in the Commack, Elwood and Kings Park school districts. Her classrooms were always filled with joy, learning and laughter.

Prior to working for SCOPE Education Services, Ms. Schalk was co-owner and director of Tender Years Preschool in Huntington Station. She has committed herself to early childhood education for the past 35 years.

Ms. Schalk inspires her students by fostering a love of learning as she brings energy and enthusiasm to her classroom. Children's artwork is displayed throughout their room, creating a sense of ownership, comfort and belonging. Every child has a voice, and is seen and valued.

A strong partnership is created between Ms. Schalk and the families of the students she has taught. She is an active listener and offers open communication. Parents and guardians were always kept informed about their children's progress and daily activities. It was not uncommon to see Ms. Schalk out in the field at dismissal sharing stories with parents and

guardians about the recently released butterflies or the fabulous paintings created by her young aspiring artists. According to one parent, "Ms. Schalk creates a safe and warm environment which instills a love for school in her students."

Ms. Schalk has made a commitment to remain with SCOPE as a substitute teacher. We are fortunate now that her gift is being shared with many students each day rather than just one class. Her dedication and love for teaching will leave a lasting impression that will shape the future for many students. It is an honor to have Ms. Schalk as part of our Instructional Services Team.



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410,000 Reasons Why Good Governance Matters

By **BOB VECCHIO**

Executive Director

Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association

Wishing everyone a “Happy New Year” as we have reopened our doors with new hopes, dreams and goals. While our summers are too short, I always look forward to the start of a new school year as it always brought with it a renewed sense of purpose. For the nearly 410,000 students we serve, it’s a new year of firsts for them, even if it isn’t for us. It’s through this lens that I always reminded myself why our service matters.

Sadly, we have also had reminders of the challenges we are facing every day in our world. The new year came with the news of more school shootings across our country. As members of governance teams, the safety and security of our students and staff are always front and center for us.

Also, political violence has once again taken

center stage. This terrible event served as a reminder to me why good governance and respectful, healthy discourse matter. To this end, I think it is incumbent upon all of us to commit our leadership teams to model good governance and respectful dialog, and not just make it what we do, but make it the culture of who we are always.

Now more than ever, with student board representatives at our table, we need this to be a priority. We need to show the next generation what exactly good governance looks like and how it operates. We need to train ourselves to accomplish this. Words matter, actions matter and servant leadership matters. The line from a song, “Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me,” comes to mind.

We must commit to building on common ground as opposed to highlighting our differences.

We must be laser focused on what we say and how we treat each other for the advancement of our mission in delivering high-quality education to the communities we serve. Respect and kindness need to replace disrespect and vitriol. We must commit to servant leadership, because for us, it’s about the children, period.

I believe opportunity and, yes, responsibility does begin with us. If not us, who? I love the saying, “It’s better to light one candle than curse the darkness.” Let’s commit to each of our boards and governance teams to being that one candle in our community, especially when confronted

with adversity and discord.

Let’s learn to disagree with dignity and remember good governance matters. On Long Island, we have nearly 410,000 reasons why we have to get it right.



Hope, Leadership & Learning: Suffolk County Superintendents Set the Tone for 2025-2026

By **TIM EGAN**

SCSSA President

Superintendent, Kings Park School District

On Friday, Sept. 12, the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association held its first general membership meeting of the 2025-2026 school year. With about 65 superintendents in attendance, the agenda included the presentation of the Friend of the Association Award and a presentation by Regent Felicia Thomas-Williams.

SCSSA Friend of the Association Award

Dr. Roberta Gerold and Dr. Harry Dean presented Michael VanDenBurg and members of the Promise of Hope Foundation with the 2024-2025 Friend of the Association Award. The Promise of Hope Foundation is steadfast in its commitment to uplifting individuals, families and communities during their most challenging moments. With compassion as their cornerstone, they offer financial support and meaningful assistance to those in need, including families enduring unimaginable loss and honoring the sacrifices of fallen police officers.



The foundation is driven by a shared belief in the power of hope. Through fundraising, charitable initiatives and collaborative outreach, the foundation strives to instill empowerment, provide relief and create lasting, positive impact in the lives of those they serve in Suffolk County. Superintendents spoke and shared their individual district’s experiences with Promise of Hope and how they had supported families in need.

Regent Felicia Thomas-Williams

SCSSA was fortunate to receive an update from Long Island’s newly installed Regent, Felicia Thomas-Williams. Regent Thomas-Williams is a retired principal (Brentwood West Middle School) and has been a passionate child and community advocate for the past 34 years. In her role as principal, Regent Thomas-Williams helped to bring cutting-edge organizations to the district with a focus on empowering students to hone in on their leadership skills and the importance of being globally aware and socially responsible. Regent Thomas-Williams is a fervent advocate for public education. She served on the Government Relations Committee for SAANYs, where she held a seat on the board in her role as the New York State coordinator of the National Association of Secondary School Principals until her retirement in 2024.



Regent Thomas-Williams serves on the board of directors of the Girl Scouts of Suffolk County and holds memberships in many organizations such as Long Island Black Educators Association, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, The Links, the National Coalition of 100 Black Women and several other notable organizations. She is most proud of her award as the 2020 New York State Principal of the Year. Regent Thomas-Williams addressed some current and upcoming important topics, including New York State Portrait of a Graduate, access to career and technical education, and dual-enrolled courses at the high school level.



Nassau County Superintendents Begin the Year United in Purpose and Partnership

By **MARIE TESTA**

NCCSS President, North Bellmore School District Superintendent

On Sept. 17, the Nassau County Council of School Superintendents convened its opening meeting of the year, setting a purposeful tone for the months ahead. The meeting reflected the council’s dedication to public education, student well-being and collaborative leadership across the county.

NCCSS is guided by a shared vision: Leading for the success of all students in Nassau County. Together, as “56 Strong” superintendents lead with purpose – ensuring every student is supported, empowered and prepared for a thriving future.

A central focus of the meeting was the safety and security of students and communities – including physical, emotional and social dimensions. NCCSS recognizes that academic success begins with a foundation of safety. This commitment was reinforced through the council’s ongoing partnerships with law enforcement and public safety leaders. Special guests included Deputy Commissioner Kevin Smith of the Nassau County Police Department, Lt. Robert Connolly, members of the Homeland Security team, and Patrick Pizzarelli, executive director of Section VIII Athletics – all united in a shared mission to protect and empower young people.

The meeting was celebratory as NCCSS welcomed new superintendents to the professional community and honored the retirement of Dr. Regina Armstrong, recognizing her legacy of service and leadership.

The Council thrives on its cohesive spirit, strong relationships and deep commitment to collective leadership. Our core pillars – advocacy, information sharing and professional development – ensure the success of all students in Nassau County.

We deeply value our collaboration with SCOPE and other educational partners and eagerly anticipate a successful school year.



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