



The Panther Press

WINTER 2026

MILLER PLACE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

"Empowering excellence today, developing tomorrow's achievers, forever Miller Place proud."

www.millerplace.k12.ny.us

College Panel Day Connects Students With Alumni

Miller Place High School business students participated in an engaging College Panel Day, welcoming alumni home from a wide range of colleges and universities. Students had the opportunity to hear firsthand about managing coursework and time, navigating campus life, prioritizing mental health, handling finances, and planning for future careers. Through thoughtful questions and candid conversations, alumni shared honest, meaningful advice rooted in their own experiences. The event served as a powerful reminder of the strength of the Miller Place community and the value of learning from those who once walked the same halls and are now thriving across the country.



FIELD TRIP ENHANCES STUDENT LEARNING

The Foreign Language Honor Society students at MPHS recently took a field trip to New York City to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rockefeller Center, and Bryant Park. The experience allowed students to engage directly with world-class art, architecture, and cultural landmarks, making their classroom learning tangible through firsthand exploration of history, language, and global culture.

A Message From Superintendent Seth Lipshie

Happy new year. The academic year is progressing as students have acclimated to their new schedules and are actively seeking opportunities into winter. Winter extracurricular programs are underway and available for student participation. In the fall we had a remarkable academic and extracurricular start to the 2025-26 school year. Here are some of the highlights:

IN ATHLETICS:

- All nine varsity teams qualified as Scholar-Athlete teams. To qualify, 75% of the total varsity roster must achieve a 90+ GPA.
- Six Panther teams qualified for the county playoffs: Girls Tennis, Field Hockey, Boys Soccer, Boys Cross Country, Girls Cross Country, and Football.
- Six student athletes were recognized as All-Long Island or All-New York State: Nicholas DiCaprio (BXC) - 2nd team All-LI and "Class B" All-NYS, 3rd team; Shane Kiernan (FB) - 2nd team All-LI and "Class B" All-NYS, 3rd team - quarterback; AJ Rudolf (FB) - 2nd team All-LI and "Class B" All-NYS, 2nd team - wide receiver; Bradyn Ellis (FB) - "Class B" All-NYS, 6th team - offensive line; Camryn Hardy (FB) - "Class B" All-NYS (honorable mention) - all purpose offense; Stella Musso - 2nd team All-LI and All NYS "Class B" selection.

IN MUSIC:

- The Miller Place music program at LADSBS, NCRMS, and MPHS performed ten concerts.
- MPHS freshman Clarence Yue was selected as the concertmaster for the Long Island String Festival Association (LISFA) grade 9-10 orchestra.
- LADSBS students Charlotte Ferrara, oboe player, and Korben Manfre, violin player, were selected to perform in the All-County Suffolk Music Educators' Association (SCMEA) Division I Festival in March.

IN ART:

- MPHS students Amelia Avalos, Judith Snijders, and Catherine Worcester were selected to participate in the New York State Art Teachers Association Legislative Virtual Art Exhibit.
- LADSBS fifth graders Hannah Murray and Emma Head were selected to show their artwork at the Long Island Museum exhibition in Stony Brook.

AT ANDREW MULLER PRIMARY SCHOOL:

- Eighty-seven first and second graders participated in the Summer Reading Challenge, facilitated by the AMPS SIT Committee.

AT LADDIE A. DECKER SOUND BEACH SCHOOL:

- Students were introduced to a new building initiative, "ROAR." Teachers and staff nominate two students per class to be recognized for consistently demonstrating ROAR: Responsibility, Optimism, Acts of Kindness, Respect.
- In the Long Island Stock Market Game, students finished in the top three; 1st place was Emma Head, fifth grade; 2nd place was Logan Thurston, fourth grade; and 3rd place was Aiden Delaney, fourth grade. Students learn a fundamental understanding of investing and the capital markets and have the opportunity to invest a hypothetical \$100,000 in stocks, bonds, and mutual funds.
- Mrs. DeFrank and Mrs. Autino, third-grade teachers, were part of an innovative cultural experience through a program called Level Up Village. It is an educational program that connects classrooms of students in different countries to collaborate on projects through video exchanges. This experience allows students to be more global citizens.

AT NORTH COUNTRY ROAD MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- Sixty-five eighth graders were inducted into the National Junior Honor Society. The ceremony recognized students who demonstrated scholarship, service, leadership, character, and citizenship. Social Studies Teacher, Mr. Sullivan, was honored as this year's honorary member, a recognition chosen by the students.
- Seventh grader Milania Ciullo, in support of the school's annual toy drive, personally selected and donated a wide variety of toys for children of all ages, filling an entire collection box. Her significant contributions helped ensure that many local children experience a brighter holiday season. Seventh grader Tyler Williams independently organized a donation effort, collecting new gloves, hats, and scarves to support families in need. This student-led initiative reflects a deep commitment to our community and the spirit of giving.

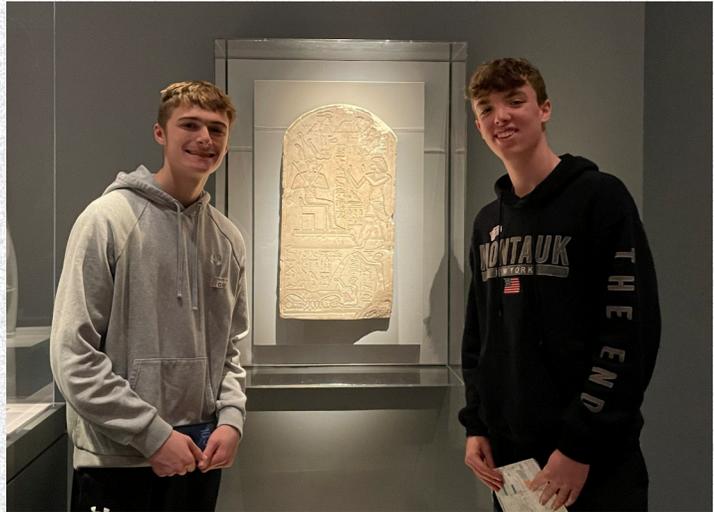
AT MILLER PLACE HIGH SCHOOL:

- Sophomore Fei Shi Zhong accomplished impressive work this past summer at the Brookhaven National Lab Stem Prep Summer Institute. In this research program, she completed a competitive three-week program that gives students real experience in advanced scientific research in environmental science, biochemistry, physics, and engaging in hands-on investigations in each area.
- ELA Teacher Ms. Caperna and Library Media Specialist Ms. Lynch were selected to present "Reviving the Reader" at the Long Island School Library Systems Regional Institute. They outlined the format for their monthly collaborative lesson for an audience of other librarians and educators.

A Message From the Board of Education

Happy new year and welcome to 2026. As we begin the second half of the school year, we do so with pride in what we have accomplished and a shared responsibility for the work ahead. This is a time not only to reflect, but to stay engaged, connected, and committed as we continue to support the growth, success, and well-being of every student in our District.

Across our District, our students shine as resilient, creative leaders who give back to their schools and community. Whether in the classroom, on the stage, on the field, or in service to others, they reflect the values we strive to instill and the high expectations that define our District. Their most current achievements, celebrated at our November Board of Education meeting, underscore the strength of our educators, families, and school community in fostering well-rounded, successful students.



Guided by our strategic plan and building on these achievements, the Board is actively engaged in key planning initiatives to ensure continued excellence and strong leadership for years to come. The Board of Education remains committed to our core priorities of academic excellence, health and wellness, responsible District finances, and strong communication and collaboration. These pillars ensure we are meeting the needs of today's students while preparing for the future.

As we plan ahead, I would also like to share an important update with our community. The Board of Education has begun the superintendent search process to prepare for the retirement of Mr. Seth Lipshie at the end of this school year. This thoughtful and deliberate process is already underway, and community voice is central to this effort. We have been gathering input from parents, teachers, administrators, students, and community members through in-person meetings with our search firm as well as through an online survey. This feedback will play a critical role in helping the Board identify the leadership qualities and vision of our next superintendent that will best serve our District in the years ahead. This is just the beginning of our search and we will continue to keep the community informed throughout the process.

In the coming weeks, the Board of Education will also begin developing the District's budget for the next school year. Community participation is an essential part of this process, and we encourage residents to attend upcoming budget meetings and workshops. Your insights and perspectives help us strike the important balance between fiscal responsibility and maintaining the high-quality programs and opportunities our students deserve.

Thank you for your continued support, engagement, and partnership. Together, we will build on this year's successes and ensure the remainder of the school year is meaningful, impactful, and forward-focused.

Forever Miller Place proud!

Lisa Reitan
President, Miller Place Board of Education

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) SCHOLARS!

The Advanced Placement (AP) program honors high school students who have demonstrated exceptional college-level achievement through their performance on multiple AP exams. MPHS students achieving this prestigious designation include the following:



Jack
Abbott



Gabriel
Alvarado



Peyton
Anderson



Amelia
Avalos



Jonathan
Bang



Isabella
Buonconsiglio



John
Buonconsiglio



Samantha
Burke



Christian
Caccavale



Quinn
Cantone



Alyssa
Casalinuovo



John
Casalinuovo



Maksym
Chase



Angela
Chen



Sean
Creedon



Sophia
Cui



Emma
Davieds



Kyle
Diamond



Liam
Dunkin



Anthony
Galfano



Nicholas
Galfano



Isabella
Hayden



Gianna
Ingenito



Maksim
Klaric



Damian
Lankamer



Rae
Leahy



Marc
Lindemann



Nicholas
LoRusso



Ruth
Lynch



John
MacVicar

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) SCHOLARS!



Jake
Mancini



Vincent
Martino



Campbell
McCaffrey



Riley
McCormick



Devin
McGrath



Jordan
Miletti



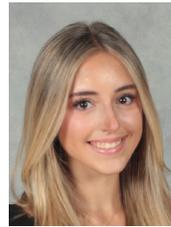
Yazen
Mohammad



Maya
Murphy



Colin
Murray



Hazel
Myers



Demetrios
Naimo



Nathaniel
Neri



Kayla
O'Brien



Jack
O'Neill



Brendan
Polak



Luke
Posner



Daniel
Rosequist



Faye
Sankerdial



Andrew
Schofield



Andrew
Shaw



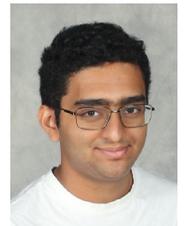
Vienna
Sigismondi



Brennan
Sock



Natalia
Soler



Amoghavarsha
Tenkabail



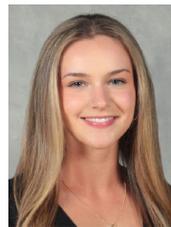
Addison
Vecchio



Madelayna
Vomero



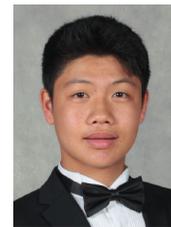
Ava
Walter



Evelyn
Weiner



Ellis
Worcester



Stephen
Ye



Kendall
Zakar

Not pictured: Rida Rizvi

AROUND OUR SCHOOLS

ANDREW MULLER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Kindergarteners enjoyed a special Thanksgiving celebration at AMPS. To prepare, students created turkey costumes, including hats with unique patterns. Students learned about the history of Thanksgiving as well as parts of a turkey. The kindergarteners turned heavy cream into butter to see the change in matter and cooked applesauce to see the change that heat produces. The students also made placemats for their shared meal in the cafeteria to try the food they made. Class parents attended and helped out, and they even dyed noodles so students could make patterned necklaces with them. The students performed a fun rendition of the “Turkey Hokey Pokey” together.



LADDIE A. DECKER SOUND BEACH SCHOOL

Fourth graders in Ms. Cronk and Ms. Losee’s class learned about the meaning and importance of Veterans Day with a special lesson from Mr. Cronk, who shared his experience serving 12 years in the military as a Sergeant in both the Air Force and the Marines. Students discussed what freedom means, explored the six branches of the U.S. military, and learned how service members help protect our country and support communities around the world. The class also reflected on ways they can serve others through acts of kindness and volunteering. To honor those who serve, fourth grade students from various classes wrote heartfelt letters of gratitude to thank service members for their dedication and sacrifice. These letters were delivered and distributed at the Westhampton Beach Air Force Base in celebration of the holiday.



NORTH COUNTRY ROAD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Ms. Gomez’s orchestra class had the pleasure of hosting guest speaker Samuel Gelfer. A performer, educator, clinician, conductor, composer, and arranger from Brookhaven, Mr. Gelfer brings a wealth of experience to his work with students. He worked directly with students, offering feedback, guidance, and inspiration to enhance their musical growth.

Mr. Gelfer currently teaches orchestra in the Farmingdale School District while maintaining an active performing schedule across Long Island and New York City. With a strong background in traditional Celtic, Scandinavian, and American folk music, Mr. Gelfer incorporates these styles into the classroom through lessons on fiddle tunes and improvisation. He frequently performs and presents alongside his brother, fellow composer and educator Matt Gelfer, including appearances at schools across Long Island and the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) All-State Conference. He studied Music Education and Double Bass at SUNY Fredonia and earned his master’s degree in Music from Stony Brook University.



AROUND OUR SCHOOLS

MILLER PLACE HIGH SCHOOL



Criminal justice students recently attended the Y.E.S. (Youth Enlightenment Seminar) tour of the Yaphank Correctional Facility. Students observed powerful presentations from incarcerated individuals who shared firsthand perspectives on the realities and consequences of the justice system. It was an interactive way to bring relevant class topics to life.

The experience invites students to explore careers in law enforcement, courts, and corrections. As they observe elements of the criminal justice system in person, students garner valuable insight into some of the professions they may pursue in the future.

ATHLETICS NEWS

Two student representatives from the Miller Place School District, seniors Jack Abbott and Laney Vomero, attended the Section XI Nick DeCillis Student-Athlete Leadership Conference in December. About 175 student-athletes, coaches, and administrators from across Suffolk County were in attendance. The conference included a discussion on mental health, sportsmanship, school pride, communication, time management, and college recruiting. Panelists addressed questions related to staffing, culture, leadership, engagement, and recruiting.

Miller Place Athletic Director Ron Petrie shared his insights as a member of the Athletic Directors' panel. Additionally, Laney Vomero was a part of the student panel. Throughout the event, engaging presentations were made by Steve Webb (former NHL player/NY Islanders), Chris Wylie (Navy Seal), Andrew Cohen (GetRecruited/former college coach), Leah Jantzen (Mental Performance Coach/Ward Melville High School).



From left to right, Athletic Director Ron Petrie; Laney Vomero; Jack Abbott.

ARTS AND MUSIC NEWS

MUSICAL TURKEYS HELP SIXTH GRADERS LEARN INSTRUMENT FAMILIES

Sixth grade general music students recently enjoyed an engaging lesson exploring musical instruments, and the families to which they belong, including strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. The activity introduced students to a wide variety of instruments in a fun and interactive way. Each student created paper turkey feathers to represent different instruments, then collaborated with classmates to match each instrument to its corresponding turkey, or instrument family. This hands-on project not only reinforced musical concepts, but also encouraged creativity, collaboration, and artistic expression.



TEXTILE EXPLORERS CLUB INVOKES STUDENT CREATIVITY

The Art Club for third, fourth, and fifth graders launched an exciting new direction this year, expanding its focus from fashion design to a broader Textile Explorers Club. The shift aims to give students a deeper understanding of the many ways textiles shape art and culture. Instead of concentrating solely on clothing and accessory design, members will now explore weaving, fabric dyeing, fiber arts,



pattern-making, crocheting, and knitting. The expanded curriculum will help students develop new skills, spark creative curiosity, and build a richer appreciation for how textiles are created and used around the world.

The exploratory nature of the club will allow students to select media and art-making practices that pique their interest, allowing them to make personal and lasting connections to their skills. The club will also introduce students to the many careers that involve these practices, giving students a direct insight into how they can transfer their hobbies into future careers. The club will still capture the fun and creativity students love about fashion design—but now opens the door to an even wider world of artistic possibilities.

MILLER PLACE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

7 Memorial Drive, Miller Place, NY 11764

Board of Education: Lisa Reitan, *President* • Bryan Makarius, *Vice President* • John Galligan, *Trustee*
Jennifer Keller, *Trustee* • Andrea Spaniolas, *Trustee* • Stephen Ye, *Student Representative*

Superintendent of Schools: Seth A. Lipshie