



BRENTWOOD BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

WINTER 2026

HONORING BLACK HISTORY AND LEADERSHIP



Across our schools and throughout the Brentwood school community, students, families and staff came together to celebrate Black History Month through programs that honored achievement, mentorship and culture and celebrated the individuals whose contributions continue to shape our community.

Board of Education Honors Black Leaders

The Brentwood Board of Education honored outstanding Black leaders and community members during its March meeting, celebrating Black History Month and the lasting impact of service, mentorship and excellence across the district.

The meeting kicked off with lively performances by the Freshman Campus's Choir, led by Joshua Bedell, West African and Nigerian traditional dances by high school students, led by Joseph Mato, and a heartfelt poetry reading by North Middle School student Jenaya Munroe.

Later, the Board recognized Cindy

"Our students come from many cultures and backgrounds, and that diversity is one of Brentwood's greatest strengths. By honoring the leaders and stories that shaped our nation, we help our students see their own potential to lead, inspire and make a difference."

Wanda Ortiz-Rivera, Superintendent of Schools

O'Pharrow, a North Amityville native, Army veteran and longtime community leader who has bridged youth and law enforcement through Cops N' Kids Long Island and supports programs like the Starrett City Boxing Club and Black Voters of Long Island. Rodini Almonacy, born in Haiti and raised in Brentwood, was honored for creating a travel basketball program and iLuvBBall.com to uplift local youth and foster mentorship that continues through his children. Marcus Love, a Brentwood High graduate and district employee for nearly a decade, was recognized for his dedication to students' day-to-day success – whether it's helping

students with their lockers or purchasing yearbooks for students who don't have the means.

Thomas Allen, a Brentwood graduate and U.S. Navy veteran, was recognized for decades of service that has strengthened the Brentwood community. Through 31 years of coaching and mentorship with the Brentwood Youth Association (BYA) and as a board member of Brentwood Cheer-Football (BCF), Allen has helped guide and inspire generations of Brentwood students both on and off the field.

The Board also celebrated David Barnes, whose career spans public service and security, and Steven Davis, district athletics coordinator, for their commitment to creating safe, equitable and student-focused environments.

Through these recognitions, the Board highlighted not only individual achievement but the power of leadership and community engagement, reinforcing that Black History Month is a living legacy that shapes students, families and the entire Brentwood community.

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STEM CARNIVAL!



A gymnasium turned into a laboratory of laughter and learning as young scientists dove into robots, rockets and slime during Brentwood’s K-5 STEM Carnival.

“This annual event continues to be a highlight in our district, and this year was truly exceptional,” said Superintendent Wanda Ortiz-Rivera. “The pictures truly say it all. The smiles, engagement and excitement on our students’ faces reflect the impact of our educators’ hard work and dedication.”

Hosted by the Brentwood High School STEM Honor Society, the event brought together students and families for a day of hands-on discovery designed to make science accessible and exciting for all.

High school students guided children through interactive stations featuring robotics demonstrations, slime-making experiments, boat races and rocket-building challenges. Each activity encouraged problem-solving and creativity while showing that STEM learning can be both rigorous and fun. Face painting and other festive touches added to the high-energy atmosphere.



Brentwood Schools Roll Out Five-Year Plan to Boost Student Success

The Brentwood Union Free School District is proud to share its Five-Year Core Strategic Plan, a roadmap designed to strengthen opportunities and support student success for all Brentwood students from Universal Pre-K through high school graduation.

Inspired by the vision of the Brentwood Board of Education, the plan was developed through a collaborative process that brought together educators, families, students and community members who share a deep commitment to the future of our district.

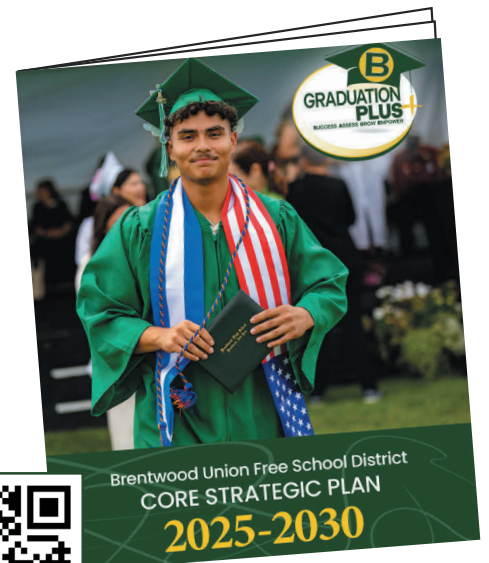
At the heart of this work is Graduation PLUS+, Brentwood’s vision to ensure that every student graduates not only with a diploma, but also with the knowledge, experiences and skills needed to succeed in college, careers and life.

Guided by this strategic framework, Brentwood continues to expand academic opportunities, strengthen career and technical education

pathways and provide additional resources that support the whole child. The district is also investing in modern learning environments, enhancing athletic facilities and creating innovative spaces such as the new culinary arts center, which will provide students with hands-on career training and real-world learning experiences.

These investments reflect Brentwood’s commitment to preparing every student for success beyond high school while continuing to strengthen programs that support both academic and extracurricular excellence.

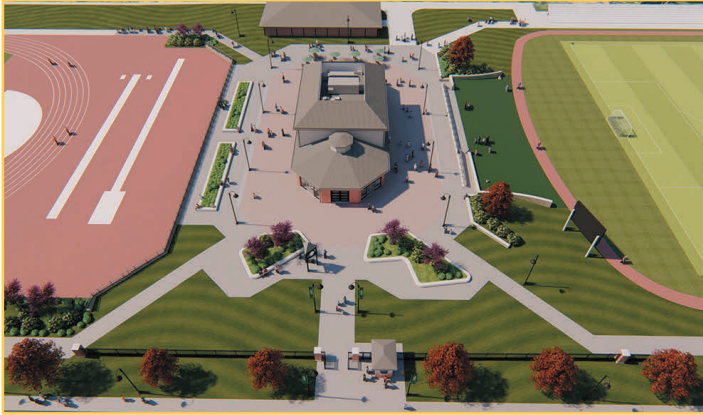
The Five-Year Core Strategic Plan reflects the pride, dedication and partnership that define the Brentwood community. When we work together with a shared purpose, we create meaningful opportunities that empower all Brentwood students to succeed.



Brentwood Union Free School District
CORE STRATEGIC PLAN
2025-2030

A Recipe for Success

At Brentwood High School, a two-story culinary center will expand career training, athletics and community life



Construction crews are preparing to break ground on a new two-story, multiuse culinary facility at Brentwood High School designed to expand in-house career training while transforming the campus into a hub for school and community life.

District leaders say the project supports the district's Graduation PLUS+ initiative, which emphasizes earning a high school diploma alongside Career and Technical Education (CTE) credentials. The approach is intended to prepare students for both college and the workforce by pairing academic coursework with hands-on training.

"I think what's really key here is how it connects to Graduation PLUS+," said Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Matthew Gengler. "I think it speaks volumes of our community, our Board of Education, our superintendent, that we're looking to expand these opportunities without students needing to leave the campus. The program is right here."

Though the high school's culinary course has enjoyed high enrollment for several years, the 2025-26 school year marks Brentwood's first official year offering the New York State-approved CTE Culinary Pathway, allowing students to specialize in culinary arts while still in high school. Students follow a structured sequence of courses, including Careers and Finance, Culinary Arts, Gourmet Foods, Hospitality, and International Foods, building technical knowledge alongside business fundamentals. Participants may also earn college credit and graduate with a seal of distinction and a New York State CTE endorsement on their diplomas, credentials designed to strengthen both college and workforce readiness. This pairing of academic instruction with career preparation is the heart of Brentwood's Graduation PLUS+ initiative.

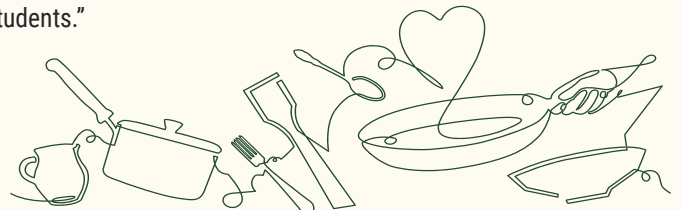
"This project truly began with our students and teachers," said Superintendent Wanda Ortiz-Rivera. "Over the years, we saw how passionate our students were about culinary arts and how dedicated our teachers were to nurturing that interest. The new culinary center will allow our students to develop their talents in a professional setting while earning CTE credentials and opening doors to meaningful careers in the culinary and hospitality industry."

The new building will house a full commercial-grade culinary kitchen, flexible seating areas and two upstairs classrooms that can be used for culinary instruction or general education courses. Representing a \$4 million investment in the district's future, the facility's architecture pays homage to local history with an octagonal shape inspired by the Modern Times Schoolhouse. As a fully decarbonized building, the facility will be entirely electric for heating and cooling, eliminating the use of fossil fuels through Energy Star-certified equipment and an Energy Recovery System that maintains air quality while reducing total HVAC energy consumption. Inside, the kitchen is engineered for professional-grade instruction with individual workstations, specialized pastry equipment and an open layout that ensures instructors have clear sightlines to provide immediate feedback to students.

In the classroom kitchen, overhead instructional screens and specialized ventilation systems will support culinary training, while outdoor eating and viewing areas will overlook upgraded athletic fields.

Strategically located at the convergence of the newly renovated soccer and football fields, the facility will serve as a central hub for athletic and community events. It will replace portable restrooms, introduce a permanent concession area and significantly enhance the spectator experience. The upgrades also position Brentwood to host regional competitions and commencement ceremonies, drawing families and visitors to campus.

Stacy O'Connor, assistant superintendent for finance and operations, said she's already witnessed our alumni athletes remarking on the complex's impressive upgrades. "They can't believe it's happening here because these improvements have been a long time coming," she said. "There's a real sense of pride and excitement in the community, and people are truly impressed with the progress and what it means for students."



A Season of Success FOR BRENTWOOD ATHLETICS

It has been an outstanding stretch for Brentwood athletics. Our student-athletes continue to compete at the highest levels and represent the school community with pride, determination and excellence on and off the field.

We are incredibly proud of our students and grateful for the dedication of the coaches, mentors, teachers and administrators who support them every day. We also recognize the important role that families play in encouraging and uplifting our student-athletes as they pursue excellence both in athletics and in the classroom.

The winter season brought historic achievements and championship performances across multiple programs.

The boys and girls bowling teams competed at the Section XI Wild Card Tournament, showcasing determination and Brentwood pride. Both teams delivered strong performances, capping a truly competitive season.

At the Section XI championships, the boys and girls fencing teams competed with focus and sportsmanship. The boys swimming team delivered a historic performance, finishing 10th out of 17 teams, the highest finish in school history.

The wrestling team finished second overall at the League One Tournament. Kevin Rivas won the League One championship. Manaen Cappellan, Jedwin Espinal, Andy Martinez, Dandre Miranda and Judah Peters earned finalist honors. The program secured co-League Champion recognition. Manaen Capellan, Galileo Mejia and Judah Peters earned All-County honors.

Track and field continued Brentwood's tradition of excellence. Gabriella Asare placed second in the 55-meter hurdles at the Section XI championships. Brandon Salazar earned third in the 3,200-meter run. Both qualified for the New York State Track and Field championships. The boys 4x200 relay team of Shakur Beavers, Kedrick Francois, Aaron Mitchell and Daniel Muñoz Pineda finished fourth overall.

On the girls side, Gabriella Asare, Zoreya Berry, Cynae Harris and Claire Mathews earned All-League recognition. In boys winter track and field, Eduardo Angel Reyes won the All-County championship in the 1,000-meter run, and earned the same title in the mile run in the freshman-sophomore division. Brandon Salazar won League One titles in the 1,600- and 3,200-meter run and later captured the county championship in the 3,200-meter run. The 4x800 relay team of Zadrian De Jesus, Giovany Gonzales, Andrew Miranda and Brandon Salazar won the League One title. Shakur Beavers won the League One high jump title.

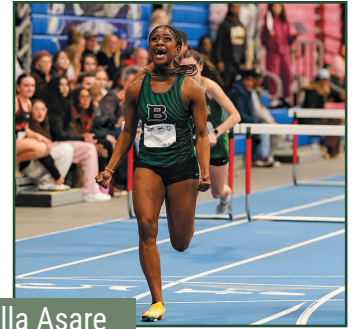
Basketball standouts received postseason recognition. Isaiah Berrios earned All-League honors. Abraham Donovan earned All-County and All-Conference honors. Steven Gomez was named Academic All-County. On the girls side, Angelina Almonacy and Janessa Love earned All-League honors.

In another milestone, Brentwood's first coed varsity cheer team placed third, closing out the season with a strong finish. The team's success marks a new chapter for the program.

Brentwood soccer also celebrated major milestones. Senior Diego Argueta earned All-American recognition from United Soccer Coaches and committed to play at Long Island University. Senior Esteban Loaiza earned All-Region honors and will continue his academic and athletic career at SUNY Plattsburgh.



Gabriella Asare



Brandon Salazar



LOOKING AHEAD: A New Home for Softball

Brentwood continues to invest in the future of its athletic programs. Construction is underway on a new Brentwood softball field, which will provide a durable turf surface that allows for consistent play and fewer weather-related cancellations.

The new field will feature:

- A full synthetic turf infield surface.
- A solar digital scoreboard.
- Upgraded fencing and field enhancements.



The project reflects Brentwood's commitment to providing safe, high-quality facilities for student-athletes and the broader community. From championship performances to college commitments and facility improvements, Brentwood Athletics continues to build a culture of excellence, opportunity and pride.



Continued from page 1...

Trailblazers in Education at South Middle School

South Middle School students honored remarkable educators through moving video tributes. Stacey Powell, a Brentwood alumna, teacher and retiring assistant principal, was recognized for her leadership and mentorship. Ithiel Lloyd, former assistant principal and scholarship supporter, was celebrated for expanding opportunity. Beloved math teacher Anika Dietrich was applauded for fostering confidence and a love of learning, while the late Mary Guilfu was remembered for her enduring kindness.

The Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps presented the colors, and the Xplosive Stepperz energized the crowd with a powerful performance. Joining students and families were members of the Brentwood Board of Education, New York State Regent Felicia Thomas-Williams, members of the Guilfu family and other community supporters, highlighting the living legacy of Black excellence in Brentwood classrooms.

Musical Journey at Laurel Park Elementary

Students at Laurel Park Elementary were swept into the rhythms and stories of Black history with a visit from Jamel Hudson, Ph.D., a Baruch College lecturer and Long Island advocate. Through soulful renditions

of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," Marvin Gaye classics and Bob Marley favorites, Hudson transformed the gym into a vibrant classroom where music became history. Students laughed, danced and connected with the cultural and historical significance of the songs, leaving inspired and energized by the experience.



Black History Month Homecoming Inspires

Brentwood students, staff and families joined the vibrant Jack and Jill/MBK HBCU Homecoming Classic in February, a celebration of Historically Black Colleges and Universities that brought culture, community and opportunity to the district. The event featured breakout sessions covering education, entrepreneurship, the arts and law, giving participants a chance to explore pathways and connect with professionals

across fields.

Adding to the energy, Brentwood's AFJROTC captivated the crowd with a spirited halftime exhibition, and the high school's Xplosive Stepperz step team delivered a thrilling performance that echoed the tradition and rhythm of HBCU culture. Together, these experiences highlighted the legacy of Black higher education and empowered our students to envision their own futures with confidence and pride.

Classroom Spotlight: AP African American Studies

Brentwood High School is in its third year of offering Advanced Placement African American Studies, a rigorous, yearlong course that explores the full spectrum of African American history, culture and intellectual traditions.

Designed by the College Board, the course challenges students to analyze primary texts, engage in historical debates and connect past struggles to contemporary issues. Instructors emphasize critical thinking and meaningful dialogue, creating a classroom where students appreciate the richness and diversity of African American contributions.

By embedding this course in its curriculum, the Brentwood Board of Education reinforces its commitment to providing a lasting academic space where students can explore identity, history and culture, fostering lifelong learning and awareness.

East Elementary kindergartners shine With screen-free fun



At East Elementary School, kindergartners know that the best learning sometimes happens when screens are set aside. In honor of the National Day of Unplugging, students and families dove into a night of hands-on exploration, imagination and fun.

From building with Legos and crafting homemade Play Doh to creating musical instruments, practicing yoga and designing in the art studio, children were fully immersed in activities that sparked curiosity and creativity. The Boxitects, board and physical education games added even more excitement – and the only rule

was: No electronic devices allowed!

Parents joined in the fun, laughing, building and discovering alongside their children. The energy was contagious, and students were so engaged that many didn't want the night to end.

Events like this highlight the Brentwood kindergarten experience: A nurturing, playful environment where young learners explore, create and grow – while building skills that last a lifetime. Special thanks to our amazing teachers who make all this happen!

Look Who's Back! Brentwood High School Edition

They walked these halls as students, and now they lead them as educators. We're proud to feature Brentwood alumni who chose to give back to the community they call home. They are living proof of the strength, pride and collaboration that define the Brentwood family. Check our social media pages for a weekly celebration of alumni educators across our entire district!

Manuel Méndez, '03
Bilingual social studies teacher

Ana Morales, '97
Bilingual algebra teacher

Joseph Cleary, '99
U.S. history and criminal justice teacher

Betsy Rosario, '13
Bilingual social studies teacher

Dany Espinal-Davila, '03
Bilingual social studies teacher

Delia Melendez, '97
Math teacher

Johann Montero, '95
Guitar teacher

Kristy Delaney, '15
Math teacher

Kenia Benjamin, '03
Cosmetology teacher

