

ELWOOD HIGHLIGHTS

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ELWOOD UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Camila Avila and Ava Haddad Announced as 2026 Val and Sal

Elwood-John H. Glenn High School's Class of 2026 valedictorian is Camila Avila, and the salutatorian is Ava Haddad. Both seniors have made Glenn's school community proud with their exceptional academic and extracurricular accomplishments.

An AP Scholar with Distinction and Commended Student in the 2026 National Merit Scholarship Program, Avila serves as John Glenn's all-school secretary and holds leadership positions in the National Honor Society and World Language Honor Society. She is also a committee member for the Freshman Buddies program, secretary of the Medical Club, treasurer of Knights for Nature, captain of the varsity girls

volleyball team and an accomplished violinist. As a junior, she was named a Grand Prize winner of the Optimum and Univision Foundation Hispanic Heritage Essay Contest, earning a \$3,000 scholarship.

"I am thrilled to accept this honor, and so thankful to all of my family and teachers who helped make this a fun and exciting process and supported me along the way," Avila said.

Haddad also earned AP Scholar with Distinction honors, and currently serves as all-school vice president, National Honor Society secretary and co-president of the Best Buddies program, reflecting her commitment to leadership and inclusion. Beyond school, she completed



internships with BAE Systems, where she represented and advocated for women in technology, and at Huntington Hospital. She is also working toward her Girl Scout Gold Award by raising awareness about human trafficking.

"I am so honored to receive this recognition," Haddad said. "Thank you to all the family, friends and teachers who have helped me throughout high school."

SENIORS EARN CUM LAUDE DISTINCTION

Elwood-John H. Glenn High School honored 59 exceptional seniors from the Class of 2026, recognizing their dedication and excellence in academics. This year, 26 students earned summa cum laude designation for achieving a weighted GPA between 96.50 and 100, 15 earned magna cum laude designation for achieving a weighted GPA between 95 and 96.49 and 18 earned cum laude designation for achieving a weighted GPA between 94 and 94.99.

"To graduate with honors in June 2026 requires more than just intelligence; it requires an incredible amount of grit," Principal Irene McLaughlin said. "Our summa, magna and cum laude honorees have navigated a rapidly changing educational landscape with significant grace and unwavering focus. We aren't just celebrating their GPAs – we are celebrating their discipline, their curiosity and the bright futures they have built for themselves. Congratulations to our fine students!"



Message from the Board and Superintendent

Dear Elwood Community,

As the days grow longer and the first signs of spring emerge around us, we are reminded that this season represents growth, renewal and new beginnings. It is a fitting time to reflect on the many accomplishments and milestones our district has achieved so far this school year.

Together, we have seen our students excel academically, artistically and athletically. From outstanding classroom achievements and innovative learning experiences to inspiring performances and competitive successes, our students continue to demonstrate curiosity, resilience and a commitment to excellence. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our exceptional educators and staff, whose passion and care nurture each student's potential every day.

This year has also been marked by meaningful progress across our schools. We have expanded opportunities for student engagement, strengthened community partnerships, worked toward long-term goals and continued to invest in programs and resources that support the whole child. These efforts reflect our shared vision of providing an enriching, inclusive and forward-thinking educational environment.

Spring invites us to look ahead with optimism. Just as nature renews itself, we too embrace the opportunity to continue growing – in our successes and striving for even greater achievements in the months and years to come.

Thank you for being part of our Elwood community. Together we look forward to all that is to come for the remainder of the school year.

Warm regards,

James Tomeo, Board President

Dr. Gayle Steele, Superintendent of Schools

New John Glenn HS Principal

Lindsay Fritch has been appointed as the new principal of Elwood-John H. Glenn High School, effective July 1. Fritch has served as John Glenn's assistant principal since 2023. She came to Elwood from the South Country School District, where she served first as a special education teacher and finally as special education chairperson and teacher on special assignment. She also previously worked as a high school history teacher in the School District of Philadelphia.

"I feel incredibly fortunate to continue my professional journey within a district as dedicated and

supportive as Elwood," Fritch said.

"Having served as an administrator in this district, I've seen firsthand the heart of the John Glenn community. I am eager to embrace the responsibilities of principal and look forward to hitting the ground running as we work together to support the achievement of every student."

"Congratulations on your new role," Board of Education President James Tomeo told Fritch. "You have made a great impact thus far, and we are appreciative of your willingness to take that next step in your career journey at John Glenn High School."



CAS Administrator of the Year

Elwood Middle School Principal Dr. Christina Moran was recently presented with the Administrator of the Year award at the Council of Administrators and Supervisors annual dinner. Administrators are nominated by their peers and selected by the award committee for exemplifying the highest qualities of school administrative achievement, innovation and collaboration with parents, students, staff and administrators in their school community.



SCOPE Honors Elwood Professionals

Three of the district's dedicated professionals were honored for their outstanding service at the annual SCOPE Awards dinner on March 23: Director of Humanities Pam Fine (who was unable to attend the event), District Clerk Mary Lou Marx and Harley Avenue kindergarten teacher Martha DeMartini.

"This recognition by SCOPE is a testament to their individual contributions to the success of our students and the entire district," Superintendent Dr. Gayle Steele said.

Elwood Earns Gold Distinction on AP School Honor Roll

Elwood-John H. Glenn High School achieved Gold-level recognition on this year's AP School Honor Roll, a prestigious distinction awarded to schools whose Advanced Placement programs demonstrate both broad access and strong student performance. The AP School Honor Roll, replacing the former AP District Honor Roll, celebrates schools that successfully expand opportunities for students to engage in rigorous coursework while preparing them for college success. To earn Gold distinction, John Glenn met these key benchmarks related to student access, achievement and long-term academic engagement:



- **College Culture:** At least 40% of the graduating class participated in one or more AP exams during high school.
- **College Credit:** At least 25% of graduates earned a score of 3 or higher on at least one AP exam.
- **College Optimization:** At least 2% of graduates completed five or more AP exams during high school, including at least one taken in ninth or 10th grade.

Elwood Theater Students Thrill Audiences

With colorful costumes, big laughs and plenty of fairytale fun, Elwood Middle School's talented young performers transported audiences to the swamp during their lively production of "Shrek the Musical Jr." The musical brought together a large cast of dedicated student actors who spent weeks rehearsing songs, scenes and choreography to bring the beloved characters to life on stage. Their hard work paid off with two entertaining performances that delighted family and friends.

Meanwhile, in a continuing community tradition, Elwood-John H. Glenn High School's theater students provided the district's senior citizens with an exclusive sneak peek of the school musical, "Mean Girls." The cast's high-energy performance that evening and during the two subsequent public performances was filled with talent and cutting humor.



Musicians Shine at LISFA and SCMEA Festivals

Showcasing the strength of the district's music education program, 29 outstanding student musicians were selected for the Suffolk County Music Educators' Association All-County Festivals, and 13 orchestra students were chosen for the Long Island String Festival Association's All-County festivals. Congratulations to all of these dedicated Elwood musicians!



Elwood Embraces AI to Enhance Learning While Maintaining Responsible Use

The district's journey to bring artificial intelligence into the classroom has been guided by the work of its dedicated AI Committee. Recognizing that this innovation required a collective voice, the district formed the committee with a diverse group of administrators, teachers, parents and, at times, students.

"Our committee's primary goal has been to develop a vision that empowers educators to transform the learning experience while protecting the district's 'digital border' through a secure framework and ethical best practices," Director of Instructional and Information Technology Christopher Onorato said. "We believe that integrating AI into the school day has the potential to transform the learning experience for our students."

Over the course of two years, the committee met regularly to research and explore a range of AI tools that aligned with the district's needs. Various platforms were piloted in classrooms across the district, and feedback was collected from both teachers and students. Based on that input, the district selected a tool that best matched its objectives. MagicSchool AI was chosen for its strong commitment to data privacy and security, its ability to provide staff with insight into student interactions with chatbots, and its flexibility in allowing teachers to deploy AI tools as needed. At the same time, the district made a deliberate decision not to provide students with unregulated or open access to artificial intelligence.

Today, AI is being used in thoughtful and purposeful ways to support instruction and student growth. Through MagicSchool AI, teachers can personalize the learning experience, providing every student with a tailored learning path. Students can use AI as a dedicated "study buddy" or coach to receive immediate feedback on writing and skill practice. The platform also allows students to engage in interactive Q&A sessions with historical figures, making social studies more immersive, while teachers can use "Quiz Me" tools within MagicSchool to create instant skill-reinforcement activities that adapt to students' needs. Teachers also upload their specific classroom rubrics, and the AI provides students with immediate, targeted feedback based on those exact standards. This gives every student a set of clear, actionable steps to improve their drafts in real time, allowing them to refine their voice and structure before submitting their final piece.

Additional tools further enhance instruction and engagement. Platforms such as NotebookLM reinforce lesson concepts by allowing students to transform their notes into engaging podcasts, videos or infographics. Students can quickly generate practice quizzes, flashcards or interactive mind maps to help them visualize complex relationships between ideas. By "grounding" the AI in specific sources, students can summarize difficult texts or adjust reading levels to ensure they fully grasp the material before moving forward.

Google Gemini is being used by teachers

to personalize learning and create more engaging instructional materials. Across all subjects, teachers use Gemini's design features to "beautify" standard slides, transforming static decks into vibrant, interactive visual experiences that capture student attention and increase engagement. Gemini's "Story Book" feature also supports English Language Learners by creating content-specific graphic books in students' native languages, using visual storytelling to help them master complex concepts while continuing to build English proficiency.

Equally important is the district's focus on teaching students to use artificial intelligence responsibly and with integrity. Students are guided in understanding when and how to use AI as a tool to enhance their work rather than replace it. Instruction emphasizes proper citation of AI-assisted work, clear expectations for appropriate use, and the development of strong prompting skills to ensure meaningful and accurate results.

Through this balanced approach, which prioritizes innovation, security and ethical use, Elwood continues to explore how artificial intelligence can enrich teaching and learning while preparing students for the future.

To view the
Elwood AI video,
please click here:



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