

VOLUME 15: JULY & AUGUST 2026

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE COMPONENT – REFLECTIVE AND FUTURE-FOCUSED

THE ESSENTIALS

ENHANCING EDUCATION WITH EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

A Personal Note,

As we share this summer edition of The ESSentials, centered on the sixth element of the New York State Portrait of a Graduate, Reflective and Future Focused, I find it especially meaningful to share that this will be my final newsletter as Director of Educational Support Services, as I will be retiring on July 31.

This element speaks to the importance of self-reflection, recognizing strengths, identifying areas for growth, setting meaningful goals, and using social awareness to build and sustain supportive relationships. It also reminds us of the importance of making thoughtful decisions that prioritize social, emotional, and mental well-being.

In many ways, this moment allows me to do just that. I find myself reflecting with deep appreciation on the work we have done together, supporting districts, learning alongside one another, and building a strong, collaborative community grounded in service to students.

I am incredibly proud of what ESS has accomplished and confident in the path ahead. The care, professionalism, and commitment that define this work will continue to guide the ESS department forward in meaningful ways.

Thank you for your partnership, your trust, and the opportunity to be part of this community. It has truly been an honor. Wishing you a restful and enjoyable summer.

*Warmly,
Kate*



22ND ANNUAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

JULY 8 & 9, 2026 • 8:30 AM – 2:30 PM • ISCS, HOLTSVILLE

FEATURING PRESENTATIONS BY

Yong Zhao, Ph.D., and, Nicole Moriarity, Ed.D.

What does it really take to move the Portrait of a Graduate from vision to reality? Join internationally recognized education leader Dr. Yong Zhao and systems design expert Dr. Nicole Moriarity for a powerful two-day Leadership Academy focused on redesigning learning for future-ready students through inquiry, performance-based learning, and meaningful system change. A copy of *Fix the Past or Invent the Future* by Yong Zhao, Ph.D., is included.



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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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



YONG ZHAO, PH.D. is a Foundation Distinguished Professor of Education at the University of Kansas and Professor of Educational Leadership at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. An internationally recognized scholar and author, his work focuses on global education reform and personalized learning. He has authored more than 30 books, including *Fix the Past or Invent the Future*, and advances future-ready systems of learning worldwide.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE: Global education reform; Future-ready learning and the Portrait of a Graduate; Personalized and student-centered learning; Educational leadership and change management



NICOLE MORIARITY, ED.D. is a former Assistant Superintendent with twenty-five years of experience leading PreK-12 curriculum, instruction, and systems design. She partners with districts to build human-centered instructional systems that strengthen adult practice and student outcomes.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE: Seal of Civic Readiness; NYSED Portrait of a Graduate; K-12 Social Studies Content



ERIC SHENINGER Eric works with schools around the world, helping educators improve outcomes for learners. He is the founder and CEO of [Aspire Change EDU](http://AspireChangeEDU.com), a consultancy that provides personalized support to educational systems. Previously, he served as a teacher and award-winning principal of New Milford High School, where he led sustainable change initiatives that transformed the school's learning culture and increased achievement, earning global recognition for innovative practices. Through his work with thousands of schools, Eric has become a recognized educational leader, best-selling author, and sought-after speaker. His work focuses on practical, research-based strategies that empower educators and learners while transforming teaching, learning, and leadership.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE: Leadership development focused on instructional improvement; Learning Transformed: 8 keys to Designing Tomorrow's Schools, Today; Pedagogical Leadership: Seeing the Bigger Picture; Four Keys to Effective Blended Learning The Power of Personal Learning Networks



[Professional Development Events Calendar](#)

[Professional Development Consultant Catalog](#)

[In-District Professional Development Inquiry](#)

Click for direct access or scan for all Professional Development Program Resources.



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MODEL SCHOOLS



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



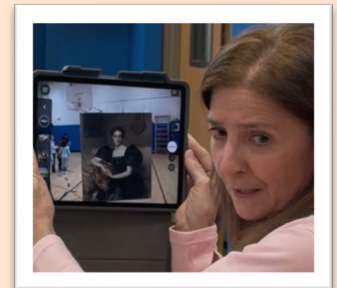
EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY COACH *SPOTLIGHT*

With over 25 years of service as an Educational Technology Coach, **Debbie Gerken** brings a sustained commitment to innovative instruction and meaningful technology integration. Her work has been featured on News 12 for engaging students in tracking monarch butterfly migration, and more recently, she has incorporated augmented reality experiences that transformed a school gymnasium into world renowned museums.



Ms. Gerken consistently designs learning experiences that thoughtfully leverage technology to deepen student engagement and understanding, including multi-disciplinary initiatives such as ***"A Day in the Life of Fire Island."*** As part of this annual citizen science initiative, students act as stewards of the Great South Bay, collecting and analyzing data to better understand local water quality and the ecosystem. Ms. Gerken supports Fire Island students with documenting their findings and sharing insights through digital tools, connecting classroom learning to local environmental issues.

Ms. Gerken brings this same passion to her work with the Title III Consortium and L.I. RBERN. She remains forward-thinking and responsive to district needs, guiding educators in the use of high-impact digital tools. Known for her thorough preparation, original resources, and consistent support, she continues to build educator capacity and elevate student learning. Her work reflects the core mission of the Model Schools program and exemplifies excellence in service to the districts she supports.



Long Island Technology & Education Summit
(LITES)

October 23, 2026

Hilton Long Island, Huntington

SCHOOL DATA BANK SERVICES



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

The **School Data Bank Services** Administrators, Staff Developers, and Shared Data Expert team continue to provide impactful, regionally aligned professional learning that supports districts in meeting instructional, reporting, and accountability priorities. Sessions are designed to align with District and State initiatives, ESSA requirements, and the growing need for data-informed practices.

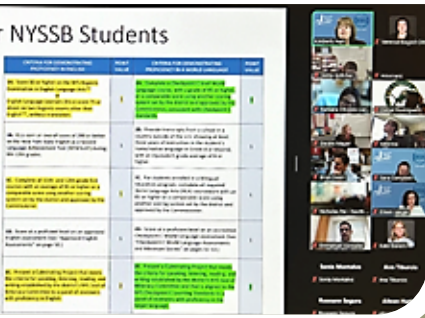
Recent workshops focused on connecting data to instruction. **James Dentel's BARS Instructional Reports Workshop** helped educators analyze BARS reports to identify learning gaps and strengthen lesson planning for the 2026 NYS assessments and Regents exams. **Sara Campbell's Benchmark Assessment Data Workshop** guided participants in using benchmark data to identify student needs, form strategic groups, and evaluate instructional effectiveness.

Additional sessions supported student achievement initiatives and compliance efforts. **Kimberly Hart's New York State Seal of Biliteracy Workshop** provided guidance on tracking student progress and meeting graduation requirements, while **John Lytell's 2026 Out of Certification Verification Workshop** focused on accurate course coding, certification alignment, and compliance reporting.

Together, these professional learning opportunities demonstrate the value of School Data Bank Services in helping Suffolk districts strengthen data-informed decision-making, maintain compliance, and improve instructional practices to support student outcomes.

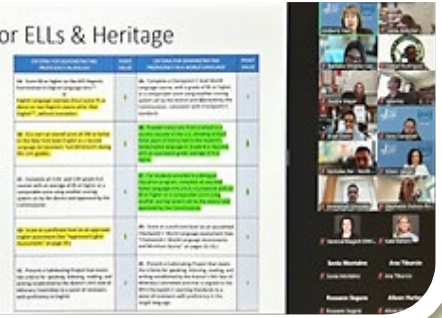
Common Pathways for NYSSB Students

- Students can earn any combination of 3 points in each language to earn the NYSSB.
- Highlighted here are the most common pathways in **English (yellow)** and **World Language (green)**.
- 70% of the NYSSB earners earn the 2 points for a Culminating Project.



Common Pathways for ELLs & Heritage Speakers

- ELLs can earn a 75 or better on two Regents exams not in translation (other than the ELA).
- NYSESLAT exam score must be earned while the ELL is in high school (grades 9th-12th) for 1B.
- Certain assessments are reserved for ELLs (e.g. TOEFL).



Photos from the NYS Seal of Biliteracy Workshop

To learn more about how Staff Developer/Shared Data Expert service can support your district, please contact School Data Bank Services at SDBS@esboces.org.

Visit our website at ESBOCES.org/SDBS

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STAFF DEVELOPER/SHARED DATA EXPERT SPOTLIGHT



Celebrating Excellence in Data-Informed Leadership: John Lytell



For over six years, **John Lytell** has served as a **Staff Developer/Shared Data Expert** with Eastern Suffolk BOCES, partnering with Suffolk County school districts to turn complex data into clear, actionable insight. Working closely with district administrators and data teams, he helps identify priorities aligned to strategic goals, uncover areas for growth, and support instructional decision-making that drives continuous student improvement.

John is known for his ability to synthesize large, multi-source datasets and translate them into accessible reports, dashboards, and visualizations that educators can readily use. His work spans attendance, demographics, discipline, English Language Learner compliance, graduation readiness, and assessment performance. He has also developed innovative tools, including a student course calculator to ensure students remain on track for graduation.

With NYSED certifications in Art (K–12), Mathematics (7–12), and School District Administration, along with extensive experience in instructional technology and data systems, John brings a unique blend of technical expertise and educational insight. His contributions continue to add significant value to Suffolk districts, his colleagues, and the broader Eastern Suffolk BOCES community, helping to ensure that data is collected with fidelity, and is meaningfully used to improve outcomes for all students. *To learn more about how Staff Developer/Shared Data Expert service can support your district, please contact School Data Bank Services at SDBS@esboces.org.*

SCHOOL LIBRARY SYSTEM



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



L.I. Students Read

LI Students Read is a free collection of eBooks available through the SORA app. This collection is supported with federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated to the New York State Library by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The materials available in this collection are based on utilizing the NYSED Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework.



To see a listing of all of our upcoming events for 2026-2026, as well as handouts and videos of our previous events, check the **SLS LibGuide**. <https://esboces.libguides.com/handouts>.

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

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ARTS-IN-EDUCATION



For more information contact Loretta Corbisiero-Drakos, Program Administrator, at lcorbisi@esboces.org.

PINOCCHIO POP



Incanto Productions is a theatrical company specialized in creating captivating multilingual and multicultural events that celebrate diversity and creativity. Performances address world events and history, world languages, and the Arts. This year Incanto performed an original version of the classic *Pinocchio*, with music by the Italian Rock band Pooh. *Pinocchio Pop* is not only a performance, but also a complete immersive educational pathway. This year 4 performances were held at the Bayway Arts Center with over 1,000 students from 9 schools in attendance.

This performance immersed students in a multilingual, multicultural narrative inviting them to examine identity, consequence, and transformation. Pre-show, during, and post-show study guides structured student engagement with questions that prompted personal goal-setting and ethical decision-making. Encountering a story centered on honesty, belonging, and the courage to grow, students were supported in developing their social and emotional awareness and “promote global sustainability and contribute positively to a culturally diverse, democratic society.” (NYSED, Portrait of a Graduate)

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD AT THE SUFFOLK

Based on the award-winning novel by Harper Lee

More than 1,500 students from 12 schools attended the daytime performances of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, an experience that brought classroom learning to life through live theater. The production explored themes of race, class, equality versus inequality, and morality while supporting ELA, Social Studies, and Arts Standards. Each performance concluded with a live talk-back session, giving students the opportunity to engage directly with cast members, ask questions, and reflect on the performance in meaningful dialogue.

Through this experience, students were able to:

- analyze how live performance clarified or complicated character motivations and relationships using evidence from both the novel and theatrical portrayal;
- evaluate how theatrical choices emphasized central themes and moral conflicts within *To Kill a Mockingbird*; and
- synthesize textual and performance analysis to develop a deeper understanding of the novel’s meaning and relevance.

The program also aligned closely with the **Portrait of a Graduate** by encouraging students to engage in active moral reasoning through the exploration of race, class, justice, and moral courage. Students were challenged to examine their own values, question assumptions, and consider how they might respond in the face of injustice—skills that contribute to responsible decision-making and social-emotional growth. The live cast talk-back further extended these reflections into authentic, real-time conversations, allowing students to connect the themes of the story to their own lives, perspectives, and futures.

Access the catalog for a complete listing of Arts-In-Education Programs, <https://artsined.esboces.org/AIESearch.aspx>.



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SUMMER ENRICHMENT

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



2026 EASTERN SUFFOLK BOCES SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Summer Enrichment | Grades 1–9



The Eastern Suffolk BOCES Summer Enrichment Program offers engaging STEAM experiences for students entering grades 1–9. Through hands-on courses in science, technology, engineering, arts, math, and literacy, students explore, create, and collaborate while building critical thinking and communication skills. Popular classes include Drones, Coding, Video Production, Mock Trial, Cooking, and Video Game Design. Students also enjoy swimming at local pools and participating in educational field trips throughout the summer.

Location Options:

- Bayport Blue-Point: Academy Street Elementary School, 150 Academy Street, Bayport
- Bay Shore: Gardiner Manor Elementary School, 125 Wohseepee Drive, Bay Shore
- Comsewogue: Clinton Avenue Elementary School, 140 Clinton Avenue, Port Jefferson Station

Grades: 1-9

Dates: July 6 – August 14, 2026

Registration: For Bayport, Bay Shore, or Comsewogue locations ONLY, click or scan the QR code at right.



Location: Francis J O'Neill Elementary School, 545 Clayton St, Central Islip**

Grades: 1-9

Dates: July 6 – July 31, 2026 • 8:30am – 11:30am, Monday–Friday

Registration: For Central Islip only, Scan the QR code at right

****NOTE:** The registration for Central Islip is being handled by the district, and is separate from the registration for the sites listed above.



Summer Enrichment Counselor-In-Training (CIT) | Grades 7–12

The Eastern Suffolk BOCES Counselor-In-Training (CIT) Program helps teens build leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills while supporting teachers and counselors with enrichment activities and events for younger students. Participants explore topics such as VEX Robotics, Digital Literacy, Financial Literacy, and Growth Mindset while developing responsibility, confidence, and independence through hands-on learning and a culminating community service project.

Location Options: (Based upon enrollment)

- Bayport Blue-Point: Academy Street Elementary School, 150 Academy Street, Bayport
- Comsewogue: Clinton Avenue Elementary School, 140 Clinton Ave, Port Jefferson Station

Grades: Student entering Grades 7-12 in September 2026

Dates: July 6 – August 14, 2026 (times vary based upon district)

Registration: Click or scan the QR code at right.



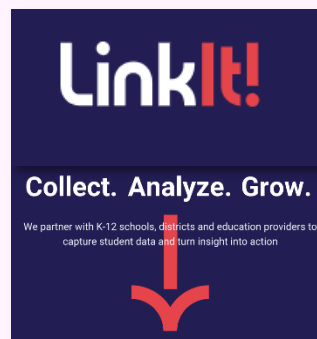
For more information or questions, contact via email at summerenrichment@esboces.org, or call 631-244-4293

THIRD PARTY ASSESSMENTS

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

Beyond Proficiency: Using Benchmark Data to Build Thinkers and Communicators

LinkIt! supports the Reflective and Future-Focused component of the New York State Portrait of a Graduate by providing educators and district leaders with clear, ongoing data about learning and growth. Through dashboards, goal-setting features, and progress monitoring tools, teachers and administrators can analyze performance trends, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and establish meaningful academic goals. This information supports data-informed conversations at the classroom, school, and district levels, enabling more strategic planning and responsive instruction. By making learning data visible and actionable, LinkIt! fosters a culture of reflection and continuous improvement. *For more information, contact Jonathan Marron, Assistant Administrative Coordinator, at jmarron@esboces.org.*



WORDS OF GRATITUDE: EDECATIONAL SUPPORTS **SHINE**

Professional Development

- “Really enjoyed every moment. Don’t change it, just keep tweaking it.” – a William Floyd UFSD participant in the Preparing for NYS Portrait of a Graduate Financial Literacy Requirements: Wealth, Risk, and Investing workshop, presented by Philip Dituri, Ph.D.

School Data Bank Services

- “We LOVE when you come here!” The building principal remarked, “I love when Ms. Hart comes by and breaks it down for us like this... We’re really working!” – A Central Islip UFSD teacher

Arts-In-Education

- “Thank you for an outstanding experience. Today’s performance exceeded our expectations, and our students had nothing but positive feedback to share. Please extend our sincere appreciation to the cast and director - we are truly grateful for the opportunity to see the show and engage in such meaningful conversations. It was really well done.” – a High School Teacher

School Library System

- “Thank you for the outstanding service you have provided over the 30 years of my career.” – a School Librarian



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



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SUPPORTING OUR DISTRICTS

MODEL SCHOOLS

Our 9th Annual Long Island Models Schools Forum, held on April 2, 2026, featured a presentation from Amanda Bickerstaff, CEO of AI for Education. Ms. Bickerstaff engaged participants in a timely and thought-provoking conversation on the role of artificial intelligence in teaching and learning. Her session underscored both the opportunities and responsibilities educators face as they navigate emerging technologies and consider their instructional implications. After the presentation, a panel discussion commenced and featured hearty conversation.

The **Model Schools Program** continues to serve as a catalyst for reflective practice and forward-thinking leadership. As we move toward the upcoming school year, the Model Schools Program remains committed to strengthening digital literacy and supporting the meaningful integration of technology to improve student outcomes.



The Professional Development Listserv: PDESS

The PDESS Listserv is a centralized platform for sharing information about upcoming Professional Development workshops, conferences, and related events offered through the Education Support Services Department. This listserv is open to all Educators, Administrators, and Support Staff.



**SCAN TO
JOIN TODAY!**



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UPCOMING EVENTS: JULY & AUGUST 2026



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

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

JULY 2026

START DATE	EVENT	PROGRAM
7/8	22nd Annual School & District Leadership Academy Future-Ready by Design: Leading the Portrait of a Graduate	Professional Development
7/13	LAS Links Brunch & Learn	Third Party Assessments

AUGUST 2026

START DATE	EVENT	PROGRAM
8/4	APPR RECERTIFICATION FOR PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER EVALUATORS - Dr. Anne Rullan	Professional Development
8/11	APPR RECERTIFICATION FOR PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER EVALUATORS – Dr. Deb De Luca	Professional Development
8/17	PEACE Forward Conference Day 1: Practice focuses on classrooms, collaboration, and the creative strategies that drive student success	Arts-In-Education

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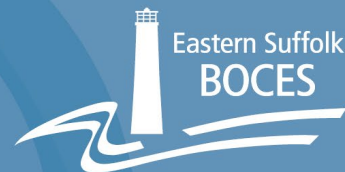
START DATE	EVENT	PROGRAM
8/18	PEACE Forward Conference Day 2: Policy connects those outcomes to broader systems-funding, sustainability, advocacy, and long-term impact.	Arts-in-Education
8/19	APPR RECERTIFICATION FOR PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER EVALUATORS - Dr. Anne Rullan	Professional Development
8/20	Building Momentum for NY Inspires & Portrait of a Graduate: Activate Your Team	Professional Development
8/25	Critical Leadership Questions for Inspiring Schoolwide Excellence (The Principal 50) - Principal (Baruti) Kafele, National Presenter	Professional Development
8/26	APPR RECERTIFICATION FOR PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER EVALUATORS - Dr. Deborah De Luca	Professional Development

Sneak Peek: Fall 2026

START DATE	EVENT	PROGRAM
9/8	Wilson Reading System (WRS) Level I Online Certification with Web-Based Practicum: Cohort 1 - Aimee Gandee, Wilson Certified Trainer	Professional Development
9/15	APPR RECERTIFICATION FOR PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER EVALUATORS - Dr. Deborah De Luca	Professional Development
9/24	Teaching All Five Personal Finance Topics for NYS Portrait of a Graduate - Phil Dituri, Ph.D.	Professional Development
9/24	APPR RECERTIFICATION FOR PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER EVALUATORS - Dr. Anne Rullan	Professional Development
9/28	NYSED Biology Refresher: Building Student Skills and Maximizing Student Agency - Glen Cochrane	Professional Development
9/28	LAS Links Brunch & Learn	Third Party Assessments
9/30	APPR RECERTIFICATION FOR PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER EVALUATORS - Dr. Deborah De Luca	Professional Development
9/30	Building Tier 1 Strategies to Reduce the Need for Intervention - Dr. Anne Rullan	Professional Development
9/30	Cracking the Code: Unpacking the Chemistry NYSSLS - Kathleen Dinota	Professional Development
10/1	The Phonics Workshop: From Sounds to Symbols - Michelle Stone, The Living Literacy Network	Professional Development
10/2	Hands-On with Required NYSSLS Physics Labs: Build, Explore, and Prepare for Implementation of Investigations - Richard Slesinski	Professional Development
10/5	Creating a Culture of Care: How to Implement Restorative Justice Practices in Your School and/or School District - Adele Bovard	Professional Development
10/7	Cracking the Cluster: Helping Students Make Sense of Earth & Space Sciences Regents Clusters - Brian Vorwald	Professional Development

Educational Support Services

Working Together for Excellence



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