BREWSTER CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Inside Brewster

EVERY STUDENT A SUCCESS • FALL 2026

A COMMUNITY BOND:
Wells Career Day



TWENTY-TWO PRESENTERS FANNED OUT ACROSS WELLS MIDDLE SCHOOL FOR CAREER DAY, giving sixth- and seventh-grade students a chance to explore a wide range of professions. Presenters included a fly fisherman, a fire captain, a librarian, a chief legal officer for Clean Energy, a city planner and an athletic director. Two working dogs also joined the visitors: Prince, a black Lab therapy dog from Good Dog Therapy, and Sully, a German shepherd from a K-9 unit. Their common bond: a close connection to Brewster.

"In case you were wondering," said Keith Rusinko, "yes, my mother is Mrs. Rusinko. I graduated from BHS in 2020. I played baseball and was a platoon commander in NJROTC and was an Eagle Scout. I highly recommend getting involved with things you enjoy after school."

"Career Day is an exciting opportunity for students to explore different career paths and discover what sparks their interest," said organizer and guidance counselor Joanna Biagi. "By asking thoughtful questions, we hope students will better understand what a job is really like, what skills they might need in the future and how people found a career they love."

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BOARD'S CORNER

Dear Brewster Community,

Welcome back! We hope this school year is off to a positive start, and we look forward to all that the year will bring.

Our District's capital improvement project is nearing completion, and we are excited to see the many improvements made to our school facilities. Thanks to the generosity and support of our community, we have been able to make significant investments in our schools, including a new STEM Lab and renovated NJROTC classroom at BHS, as well as a new cafetorium at C.V. Starr. We look forward to the completion of the BHS field house this spring and are grateful to our community for making these improvements possible.

We remain committed to ensuring that all of our students feel valued, supported, and connected to their school community. We encourage all students to get involved in the many clubs, music programs, athletic teams, and other activities offered throughout the District. These experiences provide wonderful opportunities to make friends, discover new interests, build meaningful relationships, and develop a true sense of belonging.

We are incredibly grateful for our dedicated teachers and staff, whose hard work and commitment make such a difference in the lives of our students each day. We also recognize and appreciate our parents and guardians, whose support and partnership are essential to student success. It truly takes a community working together to help our children grow, learn, and reach their full potential.

We encourage all members of our community to stay informed and involved. We also welcome your questions, comments, and feedback. You can reach the Board and the Superintendent at boe@brewsterschools.org.

Thank you for your continued support of our schools and, most importantly, our students. We wish everyone a happy, healthy, and successful school year!

Sincerely,
Kerry Cunningham

ON BEHALF OF THE BCSD BOARD OF EDUCATION

A Historic Day at C.V. Starr



THE C.V. STARR CAFETORIUM IS OFFICIALLY OPEN!

On the morning of November 4, 2026, the entire school community gathered together for the first time ever in the new space, along with Brewster Central School District administrators, Board of Education members, town dignitaries including Southeast Town Councilman Eric Larca, task force members, architects, planners and contractors.

"This is an exciting day!" said Principal Paul Stellacci. "This is the first time ever in school history that we are all gathered in our own school together. It will be used as a breakfast and lunchroom space, to host the band, orchestra, chorus and C.V. Starr plays. And to host school community events."

The space—which is part of the Brewster Vision Capital Project—has high ceilings, big windows, a stage, a new cafeteria, cushioned seats, round green and blue ceiling clouds for better acoustics, roller tables and extra classrooms down the hall. In the past, students have had to walk to Wells Middle School for all school gatherings. Now, they will be able to stay at home for all school events. The old cafeteria will be transformed into classroom learning space.

Dr. Michelle Gosh, Superintendent of Schools, stood up to thank the countless members of the community who made the project a reality.

"Thank you to the community who had to vote on this to build it. They support you and believe in what you do every day."

"This project started in 2014, when a task force started planning. Ten years later and 18 months after we broke ground, the dream is a reality," said Victor Karlsson, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

The student body was excited to hear from Cathy Hancock, Director of Child Nutrition Services.

"Lunch is ready–we are serving mozzarella sticks–and we are excited to serve you in the new cafeteria!"

Before lunch was served, C.V. Starr Safe School Ambassadors did the honors and cut the Brewster green ribbon on stage in front of the school.

The crowd went wild!

WHY ITALIAN?

HERE ARE SOME OF THE EXCELLENT REASONS WELLS STUDENTS ARE ENROLLED IN ITALIAN: family connection; the food; fashion; warm culture; the traditions; dreams of traveling to Italy one day.

"50% of my family is Italian," said Chris Calamari, "my mom speaks Italian."



"My grandmother yells at me in Italian," said Madison Johnson, "I'd like to know what she's saying!"

"I love the way Italian culture connects with people," said Emma Sheini.

"My family speaks Spanish. I thought it would be cool to learn a new language," said Sophia Diaz.

"Someday I want to visit Italy. I'd like to go to the beaches in Sicily," said Gabriel Scozzaro.

The Italian program at Wells is small but mighty. There are two teachers, Isabella Di Marco and Noelle Lewis, and two sections of Italian 8 and 7 and four sections of Italian 6. The classrooms are decorated with student reports on cutouts of the country, Italian flags, and large photographs of gondoliers paddling the Venetian canals. The classrooms are bursting with joy and activity. On Fridays, they sample Italian delicacies.

During Italian Heritage Month, students played bocce, interviewed family members, and created projects exploring Italian culture. This week, students are learning food vocabulary: agnello arrosto, il pesto, gli gnocchi, la mozzarella, gli spaghetti alla carbonara, i ravioli, and il tiramisù.

Students then put those words into sentences:

"Mi piace cucinare gli spaghetti," said Michelle Akerele.

"Mi chiamo Talita. Mi piace cucinare," said Talita Lumaj.

At the end of class with a few minutes before the bell, students play an interactive game by connecting food terms with pictures. An Italian song, "Lontano," plays in the background.

"Senora Di Marco, do you understand what the words mean?" asked one student.

"Of course! I grew up in Italy for 17 years!" said Di Marco.

A Wild Start to Reading and Writing



"WHAT IS A ZOOLOGIST?" ASKS KINDERGARTEN TEACHER CLAIRE FAIA.

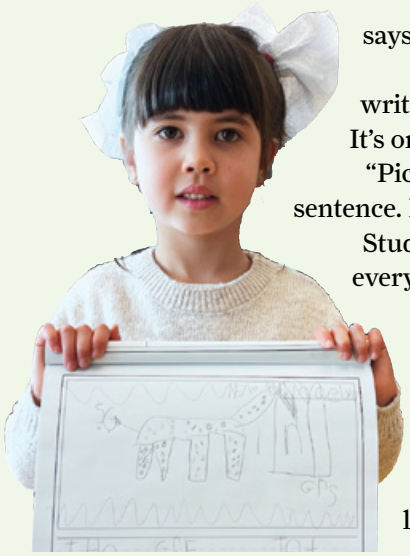
As she looks through pretend binoculars, she takes answers from the room.

"A scientist who studies animals," says Philip Rodriguez.

The class is beginning a reading, writing and science unit on zoology—kindergarten-style.

Through books, read-alouds, discussions and research notebooks, students build literacy skills while discovering the animal kingdom and learning to ask questions about the world around them. The unit is part of the American Reading Company's curriculum, which combines early reading and writing instruction with hands-on science exploration.

What is the difference between wild and domestic animals?



"You can keep domestic animals at your house," says Emma Rodriguez Tavarez. "Wild animals are wild."

After a discussion of the differences and a story, the kindergarten students sit down to write about animals. But how are such young students expected to write about animals? It's only October!

"Picture a zoo animal in your head, draw and label the animal, and then grow the sentence. If you are going to draw a giraffe, grow a sentence to 'Giraffes eat leaves,'" says Faia.

Students take their seats and get to work. Drawing comes naturally and comes first for everyone: monkeys in trees, elephants drinking water and giraffes eating leaves.

Then comes the labeling.

One student draws a giraffe eating leaves and writes "et." Another draws a hippo and adds an "h."

Some students incorporate sight words into sentences: "The gff et lf." In other words, "The giraffe eats leaves."

By the end of class, the young zoologists, just like real scientists, have drawn, labeled and written about their animals—and shared their observations.

A COMMUNITY BOND: **Wells Career Day**

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Students came ready with thoughtful and engaging questions: What kind of training did you get for your job? What's the most beautiful location you've gone fishing? What's the most interesting ultrasound you've done? Have you ever handled a poisonous snake case? What extracurriculars did you do in high school? Did you ever imagine being part of a K-9 unit when you were growing up?

At the end of the presentations, students got a closer look at the tools of the trades. They tried on fire helmets and bulletproof vests, checked out ultrasound equipment and examined the flies used by the fly fisherman.

From learning about career paths to trying on the gear, students had opportunities to picture themselves in roles they may never have considered. The morning offered a glimpse of what their futures could hold—and how their interests today might help shape the work they do tomorrow.



COMMUNITY LUNCH:
It's a Throw Back That Works

THERE'S A NEW OLD-SCHOOL VIBE AT BHS THIS YEAR. If you wander into the school mid-morning, you will find students in hallways at high top tables talking, in practice rooms playing instruments, on the floor of the ILC playing chess, making up work in a classroom or eating lunch in the cafeteria. What's it all about? Is it working? The overwhelming answer is: yes.

The community lunch runs for one hour every day–after block 3 and before block 6. The idea: to balance the extended academic periods with fewer transitions between classes, encourage ties between students and teachers, and provide a social recharge for students.

Although it has taken a beat for students and teachers to adjust to the block of unstructured time, and there is a higher level of expectation for students, the school community has settled into the routine.

Students hanging out in the library play games–no cellphones allowed–interacting like teenagers used to.

"I feel so free," said one student.

"The time allows me to finish my homework," said Kaltrina Lekaj.

"It's fun to study with my friends," said Delaila Gutierrez.

There are so many options for students. Over 61 clubs meet after school and now during lunch-and-learn periods. From American Sign Language to coding, Model UN, Student Council and woodworking–students can gather to pursue their interests, while gaining more time after school. Students can go to teacher office hours, just like in college, using Securly Flex–an easy-to-use booking system.

For those who are not quite sure what to do, the guidance department has made an effort to have counselors walking



around the school to engage with students on how to make use of the time. The department has also purchased board games like Jenga, UNO, Headbandz, Perfection, Connect Four and Scattergories.

BHS School Psychologists Keesha Ortiz and Diana Phan are hosting a Wellness Wednesday for students where they can come and hang out in the guidance office and play games, color, talk, do table topics, etc.

Teacher Shane Carroll's classroom door is always open. He's got a regular crew of students who hang out, eat lunch and do the *New York Times* games like Wordle and Spelling Bee.

At BHS, this old-school approach is giving students something that never goes out of style: time to connect.



Pre-K Apple Investigators

ONE FALL DAY PRE-K SCIENTISTS learned about the life cycle of an apple, the different parts of an apple, varieties of apples, and even made applesauce. Students used magnifying glasses to examine the apple parts, made predictions on weight, compared different apple types, and measured with different non-standard measuring tools. The learning continued in the dramatic play area, where students went apple picking and shopped at the classroom apple stand. Along the way, they practiced sharing, taking turns, communicating, and working together—even teaming up to rake leaves. One day, many lessons-and plenty of apple filled fun.



THINKING BEYOND THE PAGE

AT THE TOP OF A SCIENCE NOTEBOOK PAGE, A QUESTION IS CIRCLED IN PURPLE MARKER: "WHAT IS MATTER?" A green arrow points to the answer beneath it: anything that has mass and takes up space. Farther down the page, pictures illustrate physical properties: a firefly for luster, a diamond for hardness, an ice cube for melting point and a tied ribbon for malleability.

Part artbook, part science notebook, the pages are an example of sketch notebooking—a teaching approach that asks students to turn what they are learning into a combination of their own written notes, pictures and symbols.

"I love sketch notebooking because it gives students a way to make sense of science in their own words and images," said science teacher Laura Preiser, "They have to decide what matters, how ideas connect and how to represent their understanding. Those choices move them beyond simply copying notes. Their notebooks become a place to think, ask questions and make their learning visible. And you don't have to be an artist! The value is in the thinking behind what you put on the page."

In Jessica Zhinin's chemistry class, the process is as important as the finished page. Students don't simply copy information from the board. They read, discuss, present and then decide how to organize what they have learned in a way that makes sense to them.

Their current subject is separation of mixtures. The assignment: create a notebook page explaining six separation techniques, drawing on a teacher-provided reading, classmates' posters and notes taken during a gallery walk.

"What core properties for separating materials do you remember hearing? Are all these properties measurable? Defend your response," she asks.

The questions give students something to work through as they build their pages: not just what a technique is called, but which properties make it useful for separating materials.

A box of supplies offers students choices as they begin translating the lesson into their own visual language: pens, markers and colored pencils.

"The work leaves room for different approaches. Students must decide which information matters, how ideas connect and what combination of words and images will help them explain those connections," said Zhinin.

"I like to draw and take notes. It helps me memorize information and study," said Ella Redei.

"When I choose a font or a color, I feel like it's an expression of my personality," said Carley Frost.

"The physical act of drawing helps me memorize the concepts," said Yahaira Tovar Martinez.

Proof that the value is in the thinking behind what students put on the page.

Safe School Ambassadors Take the Pledge

IT'S OFFICIAL. C.V. STARR NOW HAS 20 SAFE SCHOOL AMBASSADORS! On a sunny October afternoon, Deputy Martinez recited the oath with students pledging to represent C.V. Starr with pride; a promise to be safe, thoughtful, accountable, responsible and respectful; welcome others with kindness and be a role model. The students are all fifth graders selected from each class out of a large applicant pool. After training, they will get to help students off buses and in hallways. They have each been given a neon yellow ambassador belt to wear for identification purposes and will meet regularly to come up with new ways to help C.V. Starr students. We can't wait to see these role models in action!



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