EAST ISLIP

UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

FALL NEWSLETTER 2026







BETTER TOGETHER.
VICTORY TOGETHER.

East Islip High School kicked homecoming spirit into high gear on Oct. 16 as students packed the gym for an energetic pep rally featuring fall team introductions; performances by the band, cheerleaders and kickline; and plenty of EI pride throughout the bleachers.

The following morning, the school community came together for a spirited homecoming celebration, beginning with a chilly but lively morning parade down Main Street. The procession showcased the breadth of the district, with students and staff from each school joined by marching musicians, cheerleaders, football teams, high school clubs and organizations, administrators, Board of Education members, local fire department vehicles and other community participants. Families and neighbors along the route cheered them on as the parade filled Main Street with school colors and East Islip pride.

The celebration continued on the football field, where East Islip delivered an exciting 27-7 victory over longtime rivals West Islip.

"We were excited to see so many students and families out and enjoying the parade," Principal Anthony Montemarano said. "We enjoy helping to create opportunities for meaningful memories and any opportunity to show off our East Islip pride."

From the energy along the parade route to the excitement in the stands, the day reflected the spirit, tradition and sense of community that make homecoming a highlight of the school year.

Better Together
East Islip School District









Message *from the* SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

As we come to the close of the fall season, I want to take a moment to reflect on what has been a fantastic start to the school year. It was truly refreshing to see the faces of our students light up on the first day of school, bringing our buildings and entire district to life with their energy, excitement and enthusiasm.

A huge thank you to all our EI staff for an outstanding opening to the school year. From our custodial and grounds crews, cafeteria and security teams, teachers, teaching assistants, paraprofessionals and administrators, everyone played an important role in making this a successful start. Your dedication, hard work and commitment demonstrate what it truly means to be Better Together!

We have already had so much to celebrate! From academic achievements and recognitions to the incredible talent and creativity showcased through our visual and performing arts programs, our students continue to make us proud. We also congratulate our fall athletic teams on their outstanding seasons and thank our coaches and families for their continued support.

We are extremely proud of the many opportunities we provide our students to learn, grow, discover their talents and pursue their passions both inside and outside the classroom. These experiences are what make our district such a special place.

As we look ahead, I am excited to build on this strong beginning and look forward to many more moments to celebrate across our schools and community in the months ahead.

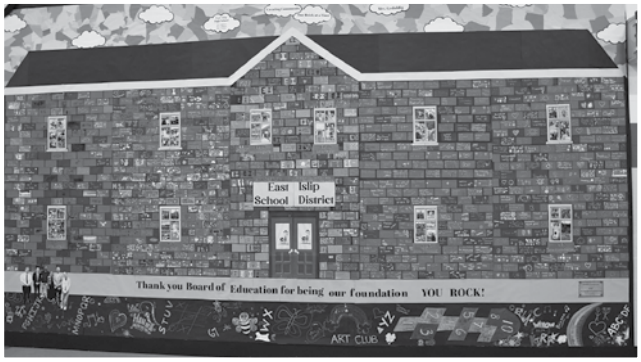
Wishing everyone a happy and healthy holiday season!

Best wishes,
Paul Manzo
Superintendent of Schools

DON'T MISS OUR WINTER CONCERTS

HS #1	12/2 • 7:30 pm
RCK	12/7 • 6 pm
HS #2	12/8 • 7:30 pm
MS #1 (Gr. 6)	12/9 • 7 pm
JFK	12/14 • 6 pm
MS #2 (Gr. 7)	12/16 • 7 pm
MS #3 (Gr. 8)	12/17 • 7 pm

TOGETHER IN SERVICE



The Board of Education's October meeting highlighted School Board Recognition Month. Superintendent Paul Manzo thanked the district's dedicated Board members for their service to the district and its students.

"We appreciate all the time, dedication and commitment you give to our schools, our staff, our families and, most importantly, our students," Manzo said.

Director of Careers and Student Services Dr. Jason Stanton presented Board members with gifts created by students, including personalized nameplates made in technology classes at the high and middle schools and cookies baked by high school students, while Director of Art and Music Dr. Caitlin Hale unveiled a large collaborative collage. Students from all six district schools, guided by their art teachers, contributed individual panels representing their school communities, which were brought together to create one districtwide work.

Sophomore Joins the Board of Ed



East Islip High School sophomore Anna Humann was welcomed to the Board of Education this year as the new ex officio student Board member.

This nonvoting, uncompensated position, mandated by New York State law, allows high school students to serve on a school board in an advisory capacity and make student voices heard.

Anna served as secretary of her freshman class; is a member of Tri-M, SADD, the JV soccer team, and the winter and spring varsity track teams; and has earned her Girl Scout Bronze and Silver awards.

"I have learned so much as the student board member about what it takes to put on all the amazing events in our school, the importance of the connection between the Board and the student body, and just how much the Board does for our school district," she said. "I am so grateful to have been chosen for this position, and I hope to improve the district with my feedback and reports."

District Welcomes Four New Administrators

The district welcomed four new administrators for the 2026-2027 school year, adding experienced educators and leaders to its administrative team. The appointments include two building principals and two district directors, each bringing a strong background in supporting students, staff and school communities.



GAVIN RODGERS
PRINCIPAL
Connetquot Elementary School

Gavin Rodgers is the new principal of Connetquot Elementary School. He previously worked as assistant principal at Brookhaven Elementary School and Hillside School in Queens, dean of Robert F. Wagner Middle School in Manhattan and a middle school math and math exploration teacher at Manhattan Academy of Technology.

"I am looking forward to sharing my passion for early elementary education and supporting teachers, families and students as we continue to build on the great work already happening at CES," Rodgers said.



JANET JONES
Executive Director of STEM, MTSS and Accountability

Janet Jones was named to a new role as executive director of STEM, MTSS and accountability. She had served as principal of Ruth C. Kinney Elementary School since 2018 and previously worked as the district's K-12 math and science director and as assistant principal at the middle school and high school.

"I look forward to collaborating with an incredible team, aligning district priorities with innovative practices and ensuring every decision keeps student success at the center of our work," Jones said.



ELIZABETH WEIS
Director of Innovation and Instructional Technology

Elizabeth Weis was appointed as the new director of innovation and instructional technology. She previously served as director of instructional technology in the Connetquot Central School District and worked at the South Huntington School District as a humanities coach, Tutor Cats coordinator, summer learning program administrator and technology coach, and as a literacy specialist at South Huntington and St. Edward the Confessor School.

"My goal is to build upon the district's strong foundation by continuing to promote innovative thinking while ensuring that technology is used with purpose, to strengthen instruction, deepen student learning and support the outstanding work of our educators," Weis said.



TOM SALLEE
PRINCIPAL
Ruth C. Kinney Elementary School

Tom Sallee is the new principal of Ruth C. Kinney Elementary School. He had served as principal of Stoneham Central Middle School in Stoneham, Massachusetts, since 2022 and previously worked as an assistant principal at Lynnfield Middle School in Lynnfield and a world history teacher and curriculum leader at Wilson Middle School in Natick, both in Massachusetts; and a U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer.

"I look forward to learning in detail about the strengths and traditions of the school and community, and helping to create a school where all of our students can thrive," Sallee said.



The district also welcomed

28 New Teachers

for this school year.



What Does "Better Together" Mean to You?

BetterTogether
East Islip School District

"Better together means that when we are together, we can help and support each other."

-JFK fourth grader
KEELYN SONDGEROTH



"Better together meansto include everyone."

-RCK fourth grader
DILLON MCCALL



"Better together means we are all stronger together, and almost everything is better with a friend."

-RCK fourth grader
ROWAN LEWIS

"Teamwork makes the dreamwork and we are better when we work together. When you are with your friends it makes you feel better."

-JFK fifth grader
AIDAN BARTO

"Better together means celebrating one another and showcasing the amazing things happening across our district. When we share successes, recognize the great work of others and highlight the positive impact happening every day, that energy becomes contagious and inspires others to do the same."

-EIMS Assistant Principal
NICHOLAS SPIEGLER



"When we work together, I feel happy."

-RCK fourth grader
MOLLY GREENSIDE-BURGOS

"What better together means to me is feeling supported by my teachers, friends and staff throughout the school. It means encouragement, support and well-being."

-EIHS senior
CAYLEE SMITH

"When we support one another and celebrate what makes us unique, we create a place where everyone belongs – we are better together."

-EIMS Principal
TARA SCULLY

"When we work together it is better because you can say WE did it instead of saying I did it!"

-RCK fourth grader
EMMA UMANA-SORTA





"When all of the students and staff come together, we can accomplish great things – we are truly better together!"

-EIHS Principal
ANTHONY MONTE-MARANO

"For the PTA, 'Better Together' is the foundation of everything we do. We believe that educating and supporting our children is a shared responsibility, and the greatest things happen when families, educators, and our community come together. East Islip has always had a tremendous sense of pride and a willingness to step up for one another. 'Better Together' captures what makes our district special. We may all play different roles, but we share one common goal – giving every child the opportunity to succeed. Together, we can accomplish so much more than any of us could alone."

-PTA President
CHERYL PEPE



"Better together means to always work together, be kind and include others."

-JFK fifth grader
JOE DELANEY

"The start of this school year has been truly outstanding. Our students, staff and families have embraced the year with excitement, energy and a shared commitment to learning. We are grateful for the strong partnerships that make our school community so special. We truly are better together."

-Timber Point Principal
DANIELLE NACCARATO

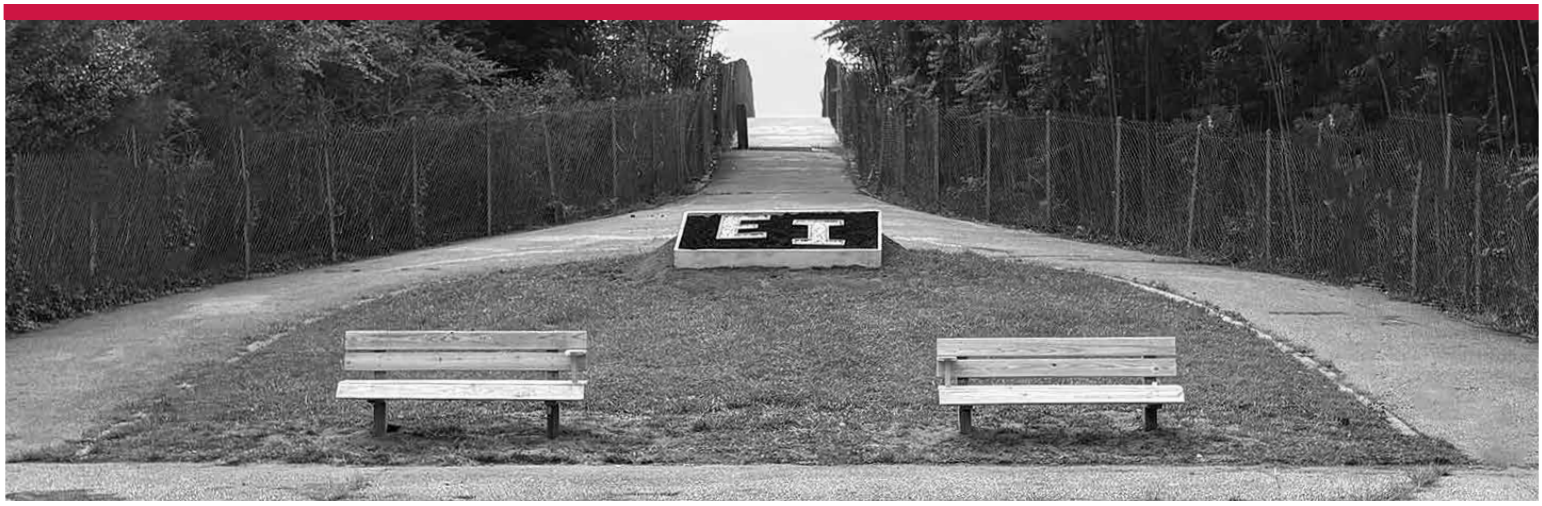


"Better together means we are stronger, smarter and better as a team."

-JFK fourth grader
JACOB COYLE

"Better together means we are one TEAM, where Together Everyone Achieves More. We pride ourselves on the kindness we share with one another and the community that supports us. We certainly are at our best when we include all the rest!"

-JFK Principal
DR. DEBORAH SMITH



Working Together To *Make A Difference On Campus*

Two new outdoor projects in the district are giving students more welcoming spaces to gather, learn and connect with their campus.

Eagle Scout Griffin Davis helped enhance the area across the pedestrian bridge after noticing that students frequently waited there for rides home. His project added benches to provide a comfortable place to sit, along with an "EI" design incorporated into the lawn to showcase school pride.

Elsewhere on campus, an idea first proposed by former Principal Mark Bernard and high school staff several years ago became a reality with the completion of a new outdoor classroom. Designed collaboratively by facilities staff, the space features Trex decking, composite railings, an ADA-accessible ramp, shade sails and outdoor furnishings. Rather than hire an outside contractor, the district completed the work in-house, bringing the project to completion in time for the start of the school year.

"We are extremely proud of the teamwork, dedication and hard work that went into making these projects a reality," Facilities Administrator Anthony Gagliano said. "Both projects demonstrate our commitment to improving our school environment, creating opportunities for our students and taking pride in our EI community."





THANK YOU

A special thank you to our maintenance and custodial staff for their hard work preparing classrooms and school buildings across the district for a successful start to the new school year. Their dedication behind the scenes helps ensure our students and staff have welcoming spaces ready for learning each day.

Coming Together to Honor and Pay Tribute

East Islip marked the 25th anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001, with a weeklong focus on courage, service and remembrance inspired by the legacy of Welles Crowther, known as the "Man in the Red Bandana." East Islip High School hosted a series of Red Bandana Games, and students quickly embraced the theme. Crowther, a former Boston College lacrosse player, equities trader and volunteer firefighter, was working in the South Tower of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. Wearing his signature red bandana, he repeatedly returned to help others escape before losing his life while continuing his rescue efforts. Throughout the week, students, staff, families and community members were encouraged to carry Crowther's example forward by looking out for one another, stepping up when others need help and recognizing service as an essential part of leadership. Donations collected during varsity games and at the middle and high schools benefited the Welles Remy Crowther Charitable Trust, with supporters receiving red bandanas in recognition of their contributions.

Red Bandana Week culminated on Sept. 11 with the district's 25th Commemoration of 9/11, held on the high school football field. Michael Barch of the Welles Remy Crowther Charitable Trust, a close friend of Crowther's, shared personal memories and firsthand accounts of the man behind the red bandana. Board of Education President Stephen Ruland encouraged students, many of whom were born years after the attacks, to learn more about the events of Sept. 11, and Town of Islip Supervisor Angie Carpenter echoed the importance of passing those memories to younger generations. Deputy Superintendent Dr. Aileen O'Rourke closed the ceremony with performances of "God Bless America" and "Proud to Be an American."











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BUILDING CONNECTION AND BELONGING...TOGETHER

The East Islip School District marked the 250th anniversary of the United States with a special tree planting ceremony on June 12 at Ruth C. Kinney Elementary School. Hosted by Director of Humanities Korin Scarles and attended by Town Supervisor Angie Carpenter, the event celebrated the nation's history while looking ahead to future generations. The ceremony featured musical performances by students from across the district.

As part of the commemoration and Suffolk County's "Planting It Forward to 2276" initiative, the county donated a swamp white oak tree, which was planted on the school grounds. The tree has been entered into the county's Living Legacy Tree Registry and will be permanently recorded in a ceremonial volume maintained by the county clerk's office.

"The planting of this swamp white oak is more than a symbolic act," Superintendent Paul Manzo said. "It is a reminder that while we honor the achievements and sacrifices of the past 250 years, we also have a responsibility to invest in the future."



Trunk or treat events bring out the Halloween Spirit

East Islip's four elementary schools celebrated Halloween with two combined Trunk or Treat events that brought together students, families, staff and volunteers for festive community gatherings.

Timber Point/John F. Kennedy elementary schools welcomed more than 900 students to an event featuring 60 creatively decorated trunks, while the Connetquot/Ruth C. Kinney celebration drew more than 500 children, 24 trunks and over 1,000 pounds of candy.

The two events offered families a fun and safe way to celebrate the season while strengthening connections across the school community.





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Visit our website at www.eischools.org

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