

The West Hempstead Educator

Published by The West Hempstead Union Free School District

Fall 2013

West Hempstead Works to Raise the Bar

New outlooks on some traditional academic programs are promising to lift West Hempstead staff and students alike to new levels of achievement this year.

Teachers and administrators worked during the summer months and continue to meet as they seek to improve instruction around the new Common Core standards, with an “honors for all” goal.

Taking center stage are:

- The EnVisions and Digits math programs, full of 21st Century skills and based on the standards and practical use;
- A vocabulary emphasis for reading and writing that is based on Greek and Latin roots and centered around themes teachers and their students select;
- Social studies upgrades to prep all students for the 10th grade World Advanced Placement test;
- Library programs and technologies that support and enrich learning from kindergarten right through high school.

The Common Core standards are thoroughly reflected in West Hempstead’s new math programs. EnVisions, for grades K-5, has learning animations, hands-on learning and lots of practice to reinforce skills, yet it challenges students to strategize too. The grade 6-8 Digits program uses technology to double teaching time and truly engage middle schoolers. It’s based on Common Core, and uses whiteboards to foster student collaboration, but still provides an individualized “pathway” for each learner.

The district begins its “Honors for All” push-in 7th through 9th grade social studies classrooms. New, more difficult curriculum will be taught to all students – with the goal of all students taking the Common Core-based AP exam in 2014.



New math programs designed to improve instruction around the Common Core standards are inspiring students this year. Manipulatives help students understand numeric concepts in elementary classrooms.

Libraries and literacy

Students are having their language muscles stretched with some innovative additions to the curriculum. The “Building Vocabulary from Word Roots” program is now in its third successful year for grades 3-5. This year, students in grades 6-12 are building their knowledge of words with strategies that help them learn independently. They use the meanings of Greek and Latin roots, from which 90% of the multisyllabic words in English are drawn, then “unlock” the English meaning -- and reinforce their new knowledge with interesting activities. The program was developed by nationally recognized researchers to encourage curiosity and improve overall achievement as it expands vocabulary.

Using technology for effect and efficiency are the high school library, and a new grade 1-5 library program called STELLAR.

(continued on next page)

Dear Community Members,

As I write this brief message to you, the 2013/14 school year is well underway; in fact, the first parent/teacher conferences have been held. I am pleased to report that the start has been a good one for all. Certainly, as we commemorated the first anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, we sent our best wishes and promise of continued support to our families in the Island Park community, who are still dealing with the aftermath of that storm.

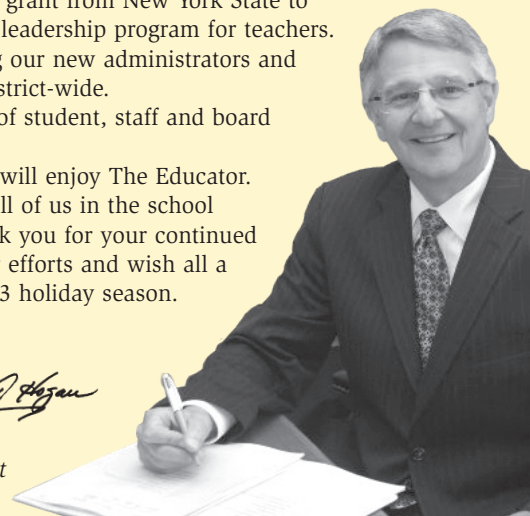
This edition of The Educator focuses on a number of items that will be of interest to you. These include:

- Academic initiatives such as curriculum writing based upon the Common Core, our new math programs, “Honors for All” beginning with our social studies offerings at the secondary level, and technology-based library resources.
- A \$271,000 grant from New York State to establish a leadership program for teachers.
- Introducing our new administrators and teachers district-wide.
- Highlights of student, staff and board activities.

I trust you will enjoy The Educator. On behalf of all of us in the school district, I thank you for your continued support of our efforts and wish all a wonderful 2013 holiday season.

Sincerely,

John J. Hogan
Superintendent
of Schools



WH Works to Raise the Bar

(continued from page 1)

STELLAR is designed to promote independence in students when it comes to information gathering, evaluation and research. At the same time it gives students technological strength and familiarity with library/media resources and possibilities.

The elementary program is an acronym for Success in Technology, Enrichment, Library, Literacy, Artistry and Research.

It exposes younger students to the Internet and databases, graphics and digital photography, and also to traditional books and periodicals.

These library resources are bound to enrich the upgraded elementary language arts instruction, which provides each grade a choice of an interesting theme to pursue with reading, writing, and research activities. For example, 2nd graders have chosen "folk tales" and 6th graders "natural disasters." These modules emphasize academic vocabulary-building and Common Core content.

Today's West Hempstead High School Library is not just a place of quiet contemplation. It is "buzzing" with the excitement of technology in use!

Students use library passwords to connect to academic resources on any device that has Internet access. The WHHS Library subscribes to multiple databases -- valuable websites that contain reliable information useful for school purposes. A large number of iPod "Playaway" books (pre-loaded digital audio players) give users simple and immediate access to audiobooks on-the-go.

Teachers give and get updates



Teachers helped write new curriculum and train their peers on best classroom practices.

Teachers and administrators attended presentations this fall about the ELA Common Core curriculum upon which students will be tested for the second year. The new math programs were presented to staff by the publisher,

and subsequently by West Hempstead's new math director, Kimberly Ferina. In addition, the staff is in the process of writing a Common Core algebra curriculum. This will prepare 9th graders and honors-level 8th graders for a new, more difficult Regents test to be given for the first time in June.

In an effort to increase the availability and opportunity to take Advanced Placement courses to all students, and align social studies with the rigorous academic expectations of the Common Core, this year Social Studies classes in grades 7-9 have been heterogeneously grouped. Teachers spent hours during the summer working on curriculum writing, also working with AP teachers to prepare for instruction at an advanced level.

Parents are in on it too

All of these programs have a strong home connection -- made possible in many cases by the district's technology. Parents have been invited to learn about how to bring the classroom to the family computer and other devices, where their student's classroom and homework await. Lessons can and should be reinforced at home. For example, both math programs offer parent accounts that support learning in the home.

Chestnut St. Principal Well Versed in Technology



As a leader and trainer in curriculum and technology for more than a decade, Amy Sullivan is also an in-demand presenter on the effective use of 21st Century devices in early elementary school classrooms. Now, Sullivan brings that expertise to West Hempstead as she takes the helm of the district's Kindergarten Center at Chestnut St. School.

"One of my goals as principal," she says, "is to support teachers and allow them to re-invent the classroom using best practices in instruction and technology."

Sullivan spent 15 years in the high performing Garden City School District, teaching kindergarten and first grade, training her colleagues, and innovating with the use of iPads and iPods in learning. She even wrote the grants that provided the technology. She currently serves as a course developer for the National Education Association. A believer in strong parental involvement in education, Sullivan has also had success in promoting leadership and responsibility in her very young students.

She holds no less than four bachelor's and master's degrees from Hofstra University -- in elementary education, psychology, literacy and special education. She also has earned a professional diploma in school administration and supervision, from St. John's University.

"I strive to integrate 21st Century skills into the curriculum," Sullivan explains. "These skills will be integral to the success of the students in my care."

New Math Director an Intellectual and Physical Athlete



Kimberly Ferina has taught computer science and math in classrooms ranging from primary grades all the way up to honors calculus and Advanced Placement. With 16 years of teaching and consulting experience under her belt, Ferina comes to West Hempstead from Plainview/Old Bethpage, where she was the mathematics chairperson.

Ferina is a skilled curriculum writer, trainer, administrator and data analyst who is also an expert in the math Common Core standards. She has wide experience in virtually every area of teaching, supervising, and implementing math and technology programs and systems. For example, in Montauk she planned, designed and set up the computer network and taught elementary students computer science; in Harborfields, she taught AP calculus and statistics; in Plainview/Old Bethpage, she worked with parents, and advised student Mathletes and other math contest competitors.

Ferina is confident that "through supervision of instruction and assessment of curriculum, I can empower the staff to surpass current levels of achievement."

The new math director holds two bachelor's degrees in mathematics from SUNY Stony Brook, and earned her master's in educational leadership from CUNY Brooklyn College. She has consulted in the New York City public schools, and is a founding board member and current treasurer for the Challenge Prep Charter School.

Ferina has national athletic standing, ranking 12th in the U.S. in women's racquetball and 9th as a professional-level triathlete. She has completed 11 marathons.

New Staff Members Are Enthusiastic Educators



West Hempstead's new teachers were welcomed at the beginning of the year. Above are, front, from left, Melissa Levison, Kate Gleeson and Laura Schreiber; back, Deputy Superintendent Rich Cunningham, Melissa McCabe, Melissa Modica, Superintendent John Hogan and Assistant Superintendent Ann Peluso. (Pictured Inset, Patricia Trillo, Kerry Anderson and Allyson Grossman.)



Bringing their education, expertise and enthusiasm to the West Hempstead Schools this year are these well rounded new staff members.

Katie Gleeson is a special education teacher for kindergartners and first graders. A former autism researcher and clinical psychologist, Gleeson “realized I could make a bigger difference in the lives of students day-in, day-out in the classroom.” She comes here from the AHRC Brooklyn Blue Feather Academy, where she was a classroom teacher. Gleeson has a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Johns Hopkins, and a master’s in general and special education from Columbia. She plays volleyball and is a stand-up paddle boarder.

Allyson Grossman has a class of kindergartners at Chestnut St. School and aims to inspire them. She has taught in Syosset and Jericho, and earned her bachelor’s degree at the University of Maryland and her master’s from Queens College. Grossman believes that “a mediocre teacher tells, a good teacher explains, a superior teacher demonstrates, but a great teacher inspires.” A music lover of “all genres and varieties,” she enjoys travel, and has loved her work at a summer sleepaway camp for the past 17 years.

Melissa Levison, also teaching kindergarten at Chestnut St., prizes the experience of “taking children through the learning process and observing their growth.” Levison earned a B.A. degree in elementary education and a master’s in literacy studies at Hofstra University, and taught primary grades for five years in Baldwin. She wants her students to become active and contributing citizens by building relationships with local community members. Levison likes baseball, singing, physical fitness activities – and community outreach.

Patricia Trillo is the bi-lingual school psychologist at West Hempstead’s kindergarten center. She held a similar position in the New York City schools working in Queens and Brooklyn. Trillo looks to her own experiences as she works with Chestnut St. children: “English was my second language, and intervention and support opened doors for me educationally and emotionally.” She has a bachelor’s degree from New York University and a master’s and certification in school psychology from Queens College.

Melissa McCabe has a classroom of Cornwell Avenue School fourth-graders to instruct each day. “I knew I always wanted to help students learn and grow,” she says, inspired at an early age by watching her mother. Before coming to West Hempstead, McCabe was a grade 1-5 teaching assistant for five years in the Herricks Schools. She holds a bachelor’s degree in childhood education and a master’s in literacy, both earned at Hofstra University. In her spare time, McCabe likes traveling and reading.

Kerry Anderson is teaching “the lifelong skill of strategic reading” and providing academic intervention services to students at George Washington School. Anderson, who says, “My own love of learning makes me passionate about teaching students of all ages,” comes to WH with experience in the Uniondale and Huntington districts. She holds a bachelor’s degree from C.W. Post and a master’s in teaching literacy from Touro College. Anderson is part of a book club, and enjoys running, photography and skiing.

Laura Schreiber is helping students at the High School hone their critical reading abilities and enrich their thinking in all of their other subjects. “I want to help my students find academic and personal success both inside and outside of my classroom,” says Schreiber, who taught social studies in Northport-East Northport, and also worked in the Bellmore School District. She was awarded a B.A. in adolescent education and social studies by Manhattan College, and her master’s in literacy education by Queens College.

Melissa Modica is a high school psychologist and special education committee chair. “I want to inspire and motivate my students to dig deep and reach their full potential,” Modica says. Previously a psychologist in the Monroe-Woodbury schools, she holds a bachelor of science degree from Syracuse University, and a master’s from Columbia University Teachers College. Modica aspires to “stay current and help implement new programs to best serve our students.” She enjoys horseback riding and biking.

Public Participation Welcome!

The community is invited to participate in upcoming budget and planning meetings, all in the WHMS cafeteria at 7:30 p.m. Planning and input on the 2014-15 budget is beginning. Budget Cafes that gather information and suggestions from the community were scheduled for November 21 and January 16.

The Strategic Planning Council will meet December 4, January 22 and March 19 to review and revise the current three-year plan. Anyone who would like to participate can do so by emailing Assistant Superintendent Ann Peluso, apeluso@whufsd.com

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Karen Brohm, *President*
Vincent Trocchia, *Vice President*
Jennifer Kurko
Pamela Lotito
James F. Mariano
Carole Rilling
Rudolf Schindler

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

John J. Hogan
Superintendent of Schools
Richard Cunningham
Deputy Superintendent
Ann V. Peluso
Assistant Superintendent
Photos by Steve Orlando

West Hempstead District Highlights

Soccer honors for team and coach



West Hempstead's Girls' Varsity Soccer team finished the season with a record of 12-2-1. The Rams won the Conference ABC3 Championship for the third time in 6 years! Several team members were honored by Nassau County Girls Soccer Coaches Association: Nina Boria, All County and Conference Player of the Year; Taylor Freiermuth and Lisette Palomo, All Class; Jackie Christenson, Taryn Squicciarino and Brittany Schimmenti, All Conference; Jamie Rodriguez, Senior Scholar Athlete. Coach Mike Scaturro was named Conference Coach of the Year.

Board president goes to NYSSBA

West Hempstead Board of Education President Karen Brohm attended classes this past fall at the New York State School Boards Association Conference. Of particular value, she said, was the Walgreen's diversity officer's keynote address, and learning sessions related to law and board procedures and policies from around the state.

On the expo floor, Brohm said, "I learned about many new programs that I was able to bring back for discussion with our board and administration."



Board of Education President Karen Brohm shared knowledge with her colleagues that she gleaned from special classes she attended at the New York State School Boards Conference. From left are: back, Rudolf Schindler, Pam Lotito, Carole Rilling, James Mariano; front, President Brohm, Vice President Vincent Trocchia, Jennifer Kurko.

A WH astronomer and her asteroid

WHHS Senior Jamie Rodriguez spent 39 intense days and nights last summer studying, tracking and documenting an asteroid with three dozen other gifted young scientists from around the United States and the world. Jamie was tapped for the summer science program at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California, spending days hearing college-level lectures by prominent guest speakers, and nights peering through the College's telescope at the asteroid and writing her own software to measure its position and calculate its orbit.

Jamie, at center in photo, toured the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Caltech, and the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics.



WH Wins NYS Leadership Grant

The district has been awarded the \$271,000 "Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness" Grant from New York State for a two-year period starting in November 2013. The grant proposal was written and submitted by Assistant Superintendent Ann Peluso.

The funds enable West Hempstead to offer some outstanding staff members the option to stay in their current positions while at the same time taking on more challenging leadership roles and responsibilities. The goal is that a selected group of highly qualified teachers and principals in West Hempstead's five schools will lead as the initiatives established by the district's Strategic Planning Council are implemented. These relate to offering higher level courses to a larger percentage of students and closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities and English language learners.

Overall, the program is designed to retain the district's most effective educators by offering them leadership opportunities, and extend the "reach" of these highly qualified staff members to more students. It will ensure that the best teachers are engaged in instructional leadership and can contribute to curriculum, assessment and policy.

If you suspect that your child has an educational disability, call the Director of Pupil Personnel Services at 516-390-3242.

To Learn More Visit Our Website www.whufsd.com for the Latest District News!