

SUMMER 2010

# It's *Elementary*



VALLEY STREAM DISTRICT THIRTEEN NEWSLETTER

## District Adopts the *Houghton Mifflin Science Program*

After careful review, the district has adopted the Houghton Mifflin Science Program in grades kindergarten through six. The hands-on, inquiry-based program incorporates a powerful integration of reading, vocabulary and writing. The program provides opportunities for students to develop understanding and skills necessary to function productively as problem-solvers in a scientific and technological world. Elementary school students learn science best when they are involved in firsthand exploration and investigation. Parents will enjoy visiting the website, which is comprehensive and provides interactive resources to expand the science concepts. These technology resources offer valuable tools in acquiring a deeper understanding of meaningful scientific literacy and scientific inquiry. The district looks forward to implementing this program in September 2010.

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### **District Works to Fill Board of Education Trustee Vacancy**

The Board of Education has received the resignation of Trustee Thomas Speranza, who will no longer be able to serve on the Board as he is moving out of town. It is the intention of the Board to appoint a qualified candidate to fill this vacancy until the Annual School District election, which will be held on Tuesday, May 17, 2011. Information regarding the application process for this volunteer position was mailed to residents this June and is available on the district's website. Those meeting the criteria and interested in serving as a Board Trustee are encouraged to apply by September 1, 2010.

### **Math Program Review**

In an effort to continually improve mathematics achievement and growth, the district conducted a Math Program Review for both the HSP (Harcourt School Publishers) Mathematics Program (grades K – 5) and the Holt Mathematics Program (grade 6). Both programs were implemented in September 2008. The review was facilitated by Linda Roth, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, and Darren Gruen, Principal of the James A. Dever School. The review process consisted of surveying teachers, students and parents. Survey questions focused on content, process, technology, instructional tools, assessment, parent support and teacher support. Survey results were compiled and analyzed. From the data analysis, strengths and limitations were identified and addressed. Survey results were shared with the Board of Education, the Leadership Team, teachers and students. Principals will present the results to the PTA at the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year. The survey results indicate an overwhelming satisfaction with both mathematics programs.

## *A Special Note From Your* **SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

Dear Residents,

I am amazed at how fast this school year passed by, and at the same time, proud and impressed with all that we have accomplished together. Our students continue to excel in all academic areas, as well as in the arts and physical activities. We remain committed to continuous improvement of our curriculum and instructional strategies, and to promoting the success of all students.

In District Thirteen, we are fortunate to have an excellent faculty, staff, and Leadership Team who work together to educate our students and serve as role models for our young learners. We are also fortunate to live in a supportive community that holds high expectations for the students' success in all areas of their education and development. Furthermore, our district has dedicated and hardworking Board of Education members who take their

role of stewardship for student education and community interests very seriously.

This summer, while our students are enjoying vacation time, our district Leadership Team is preparing for the new school year, and eagerly looking forward to welcoming our students and families back on September 8.

I know I speak for the Board of Education and the entire staff when I say it is a privilege to work on your behalf in providing the very best education to your children. I wish you and your family a wonderful summer and thank you for your steadfast partnership in educating our children.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Lison, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

## *Focus on Finance* – Summer 2010 Update

The district takes very seriously its commitment to spend tax dollars wisely. Over the years it has implemented a comprehensive system of internal controls to ensure that funds are properly allocated to support the instructional programs. In addition to exhibiting a high degree of integrity, ethics and competence, the key aspect of these controls is the segregation of duties. This is achieved through a series of procedures that assure that no individual can receive or spend funds without at least one other person checking and approving the transaction. These procedures, which can include as many as nine steps, are used for the receipt of funds, the purchase of goods and services, and personnel expenditures.

In order to assure that effective internal controls are maintained, the district contracts with three separate auditors. The Internal Claims Auditor is charged with the task of reviewing all purchase orders before payments are issued. This assures that proper supporting documentation is provided and that the requirements of the district Purchasing Policy are met. The Internal Auditor assesses the internal controls in business operations including budget development, accounting, revenues and cash management, grants, payroll, personnel and information technology. Both of these auditing functions are ongoing throughout the year. The Independent Auditor examines the year-end financial statements of all district activities and funds and issues a report attesting to the accuracy of the statements.

During 2009, the New York State Comptroller's Office conducted an extensive examination of the operations of the district from July 1, 2007 through January 31, 2009. During this audit, no instances of fraud, misappropriation of funds, professional misconduct, or other wrongdoing were found.

### *Seeking Alternative Funding Sources*

Throughout the school year, the district works to secure alternative funding sources. To help with this mission, the "Grants Committee," facilitated by Meredith Brosnan, Assistant Superintendent for Business, and Linda Roth, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, meets on a monthly basis to discuss potential grant opportunities. The committee welcomes any and all parents who are interested in researching, writing, and partnering with teachers to complete and submit grant applications to both private and public organizations.

This year the committee was successful in securing grants from a number of sources, including the Nassau Educator's Federal Credit Union and the Long Island School Media Association. The funding will enable Roxanne MacDonald, librarian at the James A. Dever School, to establish a pre-school lending library. Carole Anne Gravert, librarian at the Willow Road School, will use grant funding to support a "Book of the Month" initiative. Both initiatives will support our ongoing literacy programs.

As part of a countywide environmental initiative, the district received a tree from Nassau County. The tree has been placed at the Wheeler Avenue School.

Additionally, grant proposals were written to request federal funding through our congressional representative, Carolyn McCarthy. We are awaiting the outcome.

The district looks forward to expanding its efforts to access as many grant opportunities as possible to provide supplemental programs and materials without impacting the district's budget.

# Students 'Buddy-Up' for Empire Games

Fifteen young student-athletes and fifteen student 'buddies' from the district teamed up to compete at the Long Island leg of the Empire State Games for the Physically Challenged, held at the Mitchell Field Athletic Complex in Uniondale in early June. The Games offer competition in a variety of adapted sports, including fitness for young people with physical challenges, and emphasize the development of confidence and positive self-esteem in these students.

The students trained for the event for approximately six weeks with the help of physical education teacher Lisa Asaro and physical therapist Shoshana Bazini. During the event, the students competed against schools and teams from not only across New York State, but also from further locations, including Massachusetts and Ireland. Medals were given to the first through third-place winners. Fourth and fifth-place athletes

received commemorative ribbons, and the remainder of competitors received participation ribbons.

*Congratulations to the following students and their buddies:*

Competitor	Buddy
Daniell Aresta	Victoria Long
Brianna Carlino	Nina Alamo
Jack Kalb	Brian Milone
Abdullah Rashid	Shafiq Rashid
Schubert Castaneda	Christian Toy
Catherine Donovan	Stephanie Barkoukis
Brian Chalas	Thomas Elbert
Asharib Iqbal	Anthony Bautista
Toni Melbourne	Matthew Brand
Kashif Rafiq	Nick DiClementi
James Davi	Amanda Davi
Linda Langton	Gina Maniscalco
Scott Langton	Nicole Evangelista
Kiara Johnson	Sierra Vincent
Emmanuel Nwade	Ken Nwade



## FOCUSING ON SCIENCE



Willow Avenue School students were focused on science lessons and concepts when they participated in the school's "Space Walk" science fair. With the help of school librarian Carole-Anne Gravet, students in Shannon Kranz's sixth-grade class worked with the third-grade students in Nanci Brochhagen's class to study and create informational displays on the solar system's planets, the sun, and a variety of constellations. Students and their parents enjoyed viewing the different projects and enthusiastically learning new ideas and knowledge about the space program.

## Music in the Parks

In addition to the beautiful musical performances they gave during the school's concerts, the James A. Dever Elementary School concert band, orchestra, jazz ensemble, and chorus performed flawlessly during this year's Music in the Parks program held at Dorney Park. Competing against other music students from several states, the James A. Dever ensembles triumphed over the competition and captured several trophies. Congratulations to the concert band, jazz ensemble, and orchestra for placing first, and the chorus for their second-place win.

As noted on the Music in the Parks website, the program "provides amusement park music competitions and student music festivals for student bands, student orchestras, student choirs and other student music groups. As fellow music educators, our mission is to bring together students and adjudicators in a positive learning environment that will inspire the students to strive not only for excellence, but to make music a lifelong activity."



## Best in the County

This spring, fifteen art students from District Thirteen were selected to have their artwork displayed during the Sixth Annual All-County Art Exhibit, held at the Ruth S. Harley University Center at Adelphi University. The district congratulates the following talented student-artists and their teachers for representing the community at the exhibit:

### James A. Dever

Victoria Calabrese, Second Grade  
(Teacher Karen Martorana)  
Esmeralda Gomez, Sixth Grade  
(Teacher Janis Boremski)  
Alexander Zhuo, Second Grade  
(Teacher Karen Martorana)

### Howell

Angeline Diaz, Fourth Grade  
(Teacher Karen Martorana)  
Michael Faraone, First Grade  
(Teacher Karen Martorana)  
Kevin Velez, First Grade  
(Teacher Karen Martorana)

### Wheeler

David Lebron, Fifth Grade  
(Teacher Karen Martorana)  
Paola Parola, Sixth Grade  
(Teacher Nedab Monica)  
Matthew Santiago, Fifth Grade  
(Teacher Karen Martorana)

### Willow

Thomas Brino, Third Grade  
(Teacher Michelle Daddino)  
Camila Camacaro, Kindergarten  
(Teacher Stefanie Cacchioli)  
Eric Castrogiovanni, Kindergarten  
(Teacher Michelle Daddino)  
Nicolette Duggan, Fifth Grade  
(Teacher Michelle Daddino)  
Sarah McGrath, Kindergarten  
(Teacher Stefanie Cacchioli)  
Casey Woluewich, Kindergarten  
(Teacher Stefanie Cacchioli)

\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*\*

Postal Customer

## Honoring Retirees

Six district teachers were honored at the end of June for their many years of dedication to the district. Each teacher received a Certificate of Recognition for his/her contributions to the children of Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen. Flanked by Superintendent of Schools Dr. Elizabeth Lison (left) and Board of Education President Joseph DiSibio, the retiring teachers are pictured (L-R): Nora Martello, Cecelia Smith, Linda Balaban, Lorraine Howard, Nada Tannen, and Frances Achtziger. Congratulations to all of the retirees on your long, prestigious careers.



## Professionals Recognized and Granted Tenure



After a thorough review and evaluation process, five teachers in District Thirteen were honored for their hard work and dedication to students, as they were awarded tenure at the June Board of Education business meeting. The teachers are pictured here with Board of Education President Joseph DiSibio (far left) and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Elizabeth Lison (far right). They are (L-R) Lisa Asaro (Physical Education, Howell Road School), Mary Catherine Culella-Sun (Special Education, Willow Road School), Maura Lachance (Speech, Willow Road School), Johanna DeJose (Music, James A. Dever School), and Glenn Guidone (Music, James A. Dever), along with Neil Sklar, who met the requirements to receive tenure, however, is relocating and will no longer be teaching in Valley Stream Thirteen. Congratulations to all of the recipients.

## ENHANCED PARENT CONNECTION

It has been noted that a strong home-school connection leads directly to improved student achievement. Each year the school district communicates with parents in numerous ways. This year, monthly literacy letters were mailed home in grades K – 6. These letters focused on suggested ways parents could work with their children to further enhance literacy skills.

In addition, the district created a “Welcome to Kindergarten” booklet. The booklet was given to parents during the kindergarten screening. Linda Roth, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, and Stephanie Capozzoli, Willow Road School Principal, made visits to pre-schools to learn more about our incoming kindergarten students.

Another highlight was the opening of the “Parent Portal.” The portal provides teachers, parents, and students with a secure, complete web-based portal environment for the management and communication of student profiles, attendance, schedules, and report cards.

Our Interschool PTA continues to promote the district wellness initiative with our “Nutrition Nuggets” newsletter.

Ms. Roth attended PTA meetings at each of the schools to update parents on curriculum. Curriculum presentations at the Board of Education meetings have also kept parents up to date on all areas of curriculum. Additionally, both of the Mathematics programs have comprehensive websites to support parents.

The school librarians have connected with the public libraries in an effort to outreach to parents. Parents can obtain summer reading lists for their children by going to the district website and clicking on the “Parent Connection” link. A reading list called “Kids’ Favorites” has been added for each grade! The district knows the students will enjoy the opportunity of sharing the excitement of reading with their families.

As always, the district thanks the parents for all of their involvement and support.



## BOARD OF EDUCATION

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