



It's Elementary

VALLEY STREAM UFSD THIRTEEN

FALL 2018

A SOLAR-POWERED FOUNTAIN WATERS HOWELL'S READING GARDEN—AND IT'S ALL THANKS TO STUDENTS

When Mrs. Best, a teacher at Howell Elementary School, introduced her third grade class to solar panels last year, it had a profound and lasting effect on young Mikayla Aziz. Then in the third grade, Mikayla found the lesson fascinating—no doubt that the exciting possibilities of solar power had piqued her natural curiosity. She became determined to learn more. Focusing her passion for education and remarkable determination, Mikayla launched the Nature Crew and set about recruiting other students and rapturously devouring nature books from the school's library. Less than a year later, an environmentally friendly solar panel

“We have this sun and we don't really have any use for it. Why not use it for electricity?”

— Mikayla Aziz

fountain waters Howell Elementary School's Reading Garden, all thanks to the work of Mikayla and her classmates in the Nature Crew. “Ever since I was little I loved nature,” Mikayla said. “Why not help other kids love nature just as much as me?” Mikayla is clearly a student who means what she says.

After she discovered her passion for solar power, Mikayla worked with Mrs. Best to recruit other children for a solar-based project, ultimately teaming up with nearly a dozen other Howell students to form the Nature Crew. During recess and free



Members of the Nature Crew (back row, left to right): Tamina James, 6th grade; Erika Leus, 6th grade; and Sareah Dingle, 4th grade; along with (front row, left to right) Katelyn Ramanad, 4th grade; Jade Collins, 6th grade; and Eshal Ikram, 4th grade.

periods, members of the new club would read books on nature, the outdoors, science and solar power in the Reading Garden, discussing what they had read and engaging in rich dialogue. When they started to read about the particular plants in the reading garden, an idea struck Mikayla.

“We have this sun and we don't really have any use for it—except for sunburns,” said Mikayla. “Why not use it for electricity?” Along with Mrs. Best, Mikayla and the Nature Crew came up with an idea to build a solar-powered fountain to water the Reading Garden. The students set about learning how to put together the fountain—how to add a motor and how to ascertain just how much sun was needed to operate the fountain. Needing a little extra help, Mikayla recruited fifth grade students to assist in the project. In just a few months, the fountain was complete, and it faithfully watered the Reading Garden over the hot, dry summer months, Mikayla's passion for learning and commitment to seeing projects through is now being used to inspire other students in the school. Her journey from lesson to real-world application can serve as a roadmap for other curious learners—and adults as well.



Mrs. Best and Mikayla stand near the Reading Garden and the new, solar-powered watering fountain.

EXCITING CHANGES ARE HAPPENING

Summer Construction Transforms Facilities in Each School

PHASE III BOND WORK CONTINUES TO TRANSFORM THE DISTRICT

The summer was filled with excitement, as the Phase III Bond Work progressed at our four schools. Although our start was delayed due to the receipt of late project approvals from the NYS Education Department, the work scheduled for completion was accomplished by the opening of school.

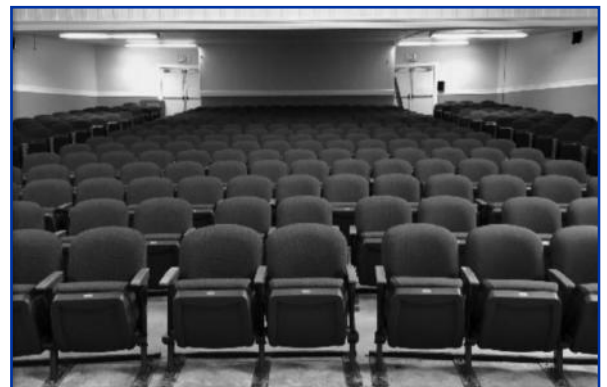
We broke ground with the finalization of a project from last school year, including the crawlspace abatement at Willow and Howell. This remediation effort allows safe access for service work in our basements whenever repairs are needed. Dever's crawlspace was abated last summer and Wheeler's abatement was finished years ago under our first Energy Performance Contract. The floor in Howell's General Purpose (GP) Room at Howell was also abated, and new floor tile was installed, providing this room with an overall renovated appearance.

The playground areas at all four schools were also worked on over the summer. Rubber matting was installed underneath some of the existing play areas to enhance the safety of these surfaces. Drainage and borders were also reestablished to ensure that our new play areas are up to code.

Additional work includes the renovation of the Wheeler Avenue Auditorium, involving the removal and replacement of seating; installation of new floor tile and carpet; fresh paint and polyurethane on the stage floors; and steps that have a new, crystal-clear shine. New lighting and stage curtains are part of the last steps to closing out this project. Lastly, the auditorium will be outfitted with a new heating and air conditioning unit to make the auditorium suitable for every season. We look forward to returning this learning space to our students and staff with its new modern look and feel.

The front entrance at Wheeler received a major facelift to both improve its curb appeal and meet new American Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. The front steps, the new ADA accessible ramp, and new railings are some of the renovations that have enhanced the exterior of the building. We encourage community members to pass by to take a look at the transformation to this 90 years young building.

We continue to renovate bathrooms district-wide and construction will be complete by the end of next summer. This fall, we will complete four bathrooms at Dever, Willow and Howell and three bathrooms at Wheeler. As you may remember, four bathrooms were completely renovated last year at the Wheeler Avenue Elementary School as well. All bathrooms will be renovated from top to bottom including new fixtures, floor and wall tiles, fresh new paint and lighting. We are thrilled that our children will be advantaged by these upgrades and look forward to Phase Four of the Bond that will accomplish among many other things, including the long-awaited kitchen makeovers.



OPENING IN VALLEY STREAM!

...; New Teachers Bring New Perspectives to Our Students

DISTRICT WELCOMES EIGHT NEW EDUCATORS; OFFERS TENURE TO THREE TEACHERS

Valley Stream Union Free School District Thirteen welcomed eight new teachers to the District for the 2018-2019 school year. The teachers attended orientation in August and were familiarized with the District's policies, safety protocols, website resources, *eSchooldata* Parent Portal and the District's full complement of academic programs. The goal of new teacher orientation is to ensure that all new classroom faculty are fully prepped and ready for the first day of school and the important responsibility they have taken on in educating the students of Valley Stream Union Free School District Thirteen. We are enthusiastic about the wide breadth of talent that each of the new hires has brought with them to the District.

The District's eight new educators are:

- Cindia Alvarado, *Math AIS/Tech Coach*, **Districtwide**
- Yilijhoan Callahan, *English as a New Language*, **Districtwide**
- Fiona Hobbs, *Special Education*, **Wheeler Avenue Elementary School**
- Timothy Hynes, *Special Education*, **Wheeler Avenue Elementary School**
- Kristina Karouzakis, *Speech*, **Willow Road Elementary School**
- Kristine La Croix, *Special Education*, **Wheeler Avenue Elementary School**
- Tristen Simmons, *Classroom Teacher*, **Willow Road Elementary School**
- Denise Simone, *Math Coach*, **Districtwide**
- Jeanette Walters, *Special Education*, **Willow Road Elementary School**



Valley Stream Union Free School District Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Judith LaRocca (third to right) stands with the District's new hires (l-r) Timothy Hynes, Yilijhoan Callahan, Fiona Hobbs, Kristina Karouzakis, Jeanette Walters, Cindia Alvarado, Tristen Simmons and Kristine La Croix during a recent orientation seminar (not pictured: Denise Simone).

We are proud to announce that three teachers achieved tenure after a rigorous review process, which includes annual observations, administrative recommendation, and the creation of a portfolio outlining the teacher's contributions to their students and school over the four years of their teaching probation. Non-tenured teachers are supported through mentor/mentee experiences, professional development specific to new teachers, and guidance from their building principal. These up and coming professionals include Alyssa Bentz, Special Education teacher at James A. Dever; Marcella Capobianco, English as a New Language teacher at Wheeler Avenue; and Diane Gorman, Reading teacher at Howell Road. Congratulations to our newly tenured teachers!

New Guidebooks Outline the District's Commitment to Inclusivity

Valley Stream Union Free School District Thirteen's commitment to inclusive practices continues to be a focused initiative. The Inclusive Education Committee that comprises teachers, support staff, parents and administrators has been meeting regularly. Together, a Districtwide definition of inclusion has been crafted as has a philosophy of co-teaching. The committee recently developed a *Co-Teaching Guide* for teachers and a *Parent Guide to Co-Teaching*. These documents serve as a valuable resource to support the District's inclusive initiative and promote our District's mission. The guides outline the benefits of co-teaching, the expectations for staff and describe the various models of instruction. We are proud to provide high quality education that embraces all students' strengths and places value on equitable access to support. Doing so fosters success in school and in the community.

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HOT OFF THE PRESSES!

See who is making news in Valley Stream

BUDDY BENCH BUILDS NEW BONDS AT DEVER

Sometimes all it takes is a good place to sit to make a new friend. Visitors to **James A. Dever Elementary School** might have spotted a large and colorful new bench and wondered what its purpose was. Well it's not just any old bench; it's a Buddy Bench, a new addition that fosters new friendships and sparks conversation. The bench is part of the District's initiative to spread messages of inclusion and kindness to all students. District administrators, teachers and staff members will continue to inspire students to be friendly to all—with the Buddy Bench serving as a the perfect starting point.



AUTUMN-INSPIRED EXPERIMENT TEACHES CHILDREN ABOUT ACIDITY AND PH LEVELS.... AND APPLES

Sixth graders at **Howell Road Elementary School** recently conducted a science experiment using apples. The students cut the fruit and tested different liquids to prevent browning. The children tested lemon juice, vinegar, milk, and water. The experiment was a way for students to learn about acidity and pH levels. Students found that vinegar and lemon juice had enough acidity to prevent browning on their apples, while milk and water had higher pH levels, meaning they did not have enough acidity to keep the fruit fresh. The experiment allowed students to engage in their learning and experience science in new and exciting ways.



ON PATRIOT DAY, WHEELER AVENUE STUDENTS PAY RESPECT

No one alive on September 11, 2001 will ever forget the tragic events of that day, and as Americans we all have a responsibility to honor and celebrate the victims of the attacks. Students at **Wheeler Avenue Elementary School**



recently did their part, participating in a Patriot Day ceremony that saw the children line up in formation; share a moment of silence with their fellow classmates, teachers, administrators, and school staff; and learn about the significance of the day. This ceremony is part of the school's on-going commitment to help young students connect with history. By hearing about the September 11th events and the heroes of that day, the students gain a heightened respect for the selfless efforts of first responders and the importance of remembering the almost 3,000 souls who tragically perished that day.

WILLOW ELEMENTARY STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT CITIZENSHIP AND VOTING

Though the students at **Willow Road Elementary School** can't yet cast a vote, it's vitally important to teach them—and all children—about the importance of voting and active citizenship. Second graders at Willow recently took part in activities aimed at teaching them about voting and the responsibilities of being a citizen. Children cast pretend ballots at their voting booths and created their own presidential speech using Flipgrid, a video discussion platform. These activities created an engaging and fun way for students to learn about the topic. The second graders also learned about responsible citizenship, creating their own campaign posters and typing campaign speeches on their Chromebooks.



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