Back to School 2023

It's Elementary

VALLEY STREAM UFSD THIRTEEN

Welcome to the 2023-2024 School Year

James A. Dever Elementary School

Wheeler Avenue Elementary School

Howell Road Elementary School

Willow Road Elementary School

The Arts in Valley Stream:
How the District's Wide-Ranging Art Program Fosters Creativity in Students

Think back to your time in elementary school. What are some of your fondest memories? Chances are, they include the wonderful and diverse art projects that are a staple of grade school: painting, sculpting, collage-making and more. In Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen, our art educators are keenly aware of how important art is to young students and invest time and effort into making our art programs as exciting, and memorable, as possible.

"The arts are so vitally important to the development of our youngest students," said Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen Fine Arts Coordinator Janis Boremski. "Clay, drawing, printmaking—all of these disciplines encourage children to explore the world around them while fostering creativity and building imagination."

In each of our four schools, students receive a first-class art education, reinforced by dedicated instructors and state-of-the-art learning spaces. The district's emphasis on arts education is deliberate and critical; studies have consistently shown a strong correlation between a robust arts curriculum and success in academics. According to the National Dropout Prevention Center in a 2017 study, arts education not only lowers dropout levels, but improves academic outcomes and develops social-emotional skills in students. Schools with vibrant arts programs have more student engagement and attachment to school as well as higher graduation rates.

The Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen Art Department exhibited over 50 student works in various local and regional student art exhibits in the 2022-2023 school year:

- NYSATA Art in HeART Exhibit, Long Island Children's Museum
- NYSATA NYS School Boards Exhibit, virtual, displayed in Albany at the annual convention
- NYSATA Legislative Exhibit, virtual, displayed in Albany at the Capitol building
- Colors of Long Island, LI Museum & Carriage House, Stony Brook, NY
- Art Supervisors Association All-County Art Exhibit, Long Beach High School

Our highly skilled art teachers are involved members of the arts education community, serving as active players in various local associations:

- New York State Art Teachers Association (NYSATA)
- Art Supervisors Association (ASA)—Valley Stream art educators receive professional development from this organization and others to help reach the diverse needs of all learners.
- Balanced Mind Conference
- NYSATA Conference
- Art Supervisors Workshops
- Art League of Long Island

Top-Tier Art Educators Guide Our Students

Students in Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen receive top-quality instruction from the finest, most accomplished art educators in the country. Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen Fine Arts Coordinator Janis Boremski recently received the Educator of the Year Award from the New York State Art Teachers Association (NYSATA). NYSATA recognizes members of the art education community who are committed to excellence in art education with various awards presented at the annual New York State Conference. The award brings attention to how Ms. Boremski has dedicated a substantial amount of time and effort to enhancing art education in the community throughout her 20 years of teaching art.

A longtime focus of Ms. Boremski's teaching has been to use art to foster a strong sense of community within the school. Her students at James A. Dever Elementary School often collaborate in artwork projects such as rock gardens, murals, and hallway displays. She is valued for her leadership qualities, and has served on the executive board for the Art Supervisors Association in Nassau County and as co-chair for the New York State Art Teachers Association (NYSATA) Region 9 Nassau County. She has been the recipient of the Valley Stream Interschool Grant and twice received the Valley Stream Board of Education Commendation Award and PTA Founder's Award for her work with our students. Ms. Boremski will be recognized by the National Art Education Association at the NAEA annual National Convention in the spring for receiving the Educator of the Year Award.

Celebrating Our Health and Safety Heroes

There exists a group of quiet heroes within our district. Day in and day out, they work to keep our students safe and our facilities healthy, clean and vibrant. We're talking, of course, about our custodial and maintenance staff. These dedicated individuals play a critical role in Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen.

The work that our custodial and maintenance staff does enables everyone else in the district to do the important work they do. Our educators require a safe and healthy learning space in which to teach, and our students need to work in an atmosphere that is conducive to effective learning. And it's not just cleaning and repairing, maintaining our fields and school grounds; these valiant district staff members have for years been friendly faces to the children in our district—people whose warm demeanors help our youngest students acclimate to their new schools and feel safe and welcome.

The past few years have crystallized the importance of a front-line custodial and maintenance staff in our school district, and it's time that their demanding work gets fully recognized.

> "I love service work and want all of the children to have what I had as a child. Watching the students walk off the bus and saying hello is the best part of my day. When they say, 'Hi, Mr. Centore,' it really hits home for me.
>
> **— Mr. James Centore, James A. Dever School**

> "We all are here to help. I started as a summer helper 30 years ago, had a chance to work both days and nights and in all four schools, and I still love to help and make sure the building always looks its best and is safe for the kids.
>
> **— Richard Trafficanda, Howell Road School**

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Learning Outside the Classroom: School Garden Fosters Growth Among Our Students

The classic image of American public schools has for years been rows of students sitting at their desks inside a classroom. However, as educational practices and principles evolve, that well-worn scene is transforming. Educators in the Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen and across the country are recognizing the importance of diverse learning experiences—such as holding class outside—and incorporating this philosophy into their lesson planning. And it certainly doesn't hurt living in a place as beautiful as Long Island.

Research has long shown the benefits that outdoor classroom instruction has on students—particularly younger children. These include improved school performance; improved mental, social and physical health; and support of children's developmental growth. Students who learn and play outdoors regularly are happier, healthier and stronger, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Last year, Willow Road Elementary School received two grants through ReWild Long Island, a local environmental conservation organization, to encourage students and teachers to bring their lessons into nature. Through this grant, students and their teacher, Jeanette Walters, spent a day creating a beautiful garden. They dug, spread topsoil, planted native plants, installed an irrigation/drip system, and finished off the garden with a top cover of mulch. In addition to being a whole lot of fun for students and teachers alike, this garden project also allows for students to learn about sustainable landscaping practices, responsibility and basic botany principles.

Board of Education meetings for the 2023-2024 school year:

September 26 | October 24 | November 28 | December 19

January 23 | February 27 | March 26 | April 16 | May 28 | June 25