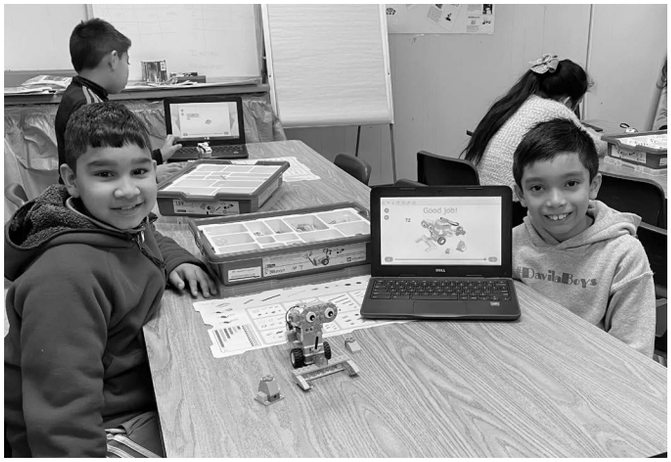
It's Elementary

VALLEY STREAM UFSD THIRTEEN

SPRING 2020

Innovation Labs at Valley Stream UFSD 13 Unlock Children's Imaginations

Innovation Labs are now set up at every school in the Valley Stream UFSD 13. These spaces offer students an opportunity to explore their creativity and ingenuity with state-of-the-art learning tools in a free-flowing, less-structured environment. Innovation Labs can lead students to create almost anything; at Wheeler Avenue Elementary School, for example, students worked with various programs to create a robot that can drive and make turns. Technology that was solely the stuff of science fiction a generation ago is now possible in our third grade classrooms.



Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, or STEM, subjects are such an integral part of a public school curriculum, from kindergarten right up to senior year. Innovation Labs help Valley Stream UFSD 13 educators to make the possibilities of STEM instruction nearly endless.

Innovation Labs are just one component of Valley Stream UFSD 13's commitment to using emerging technology to augment and enhance instruction. Other initiatives include the expansion of personal laptops to all Valley Stream UFSD 13 students in kindergarten and first grade; a dedicated district app for smart phones; and the use of programs such as Wakelet, Gimkit, Google and Flipgrid. At Willow Road Elementary, students used the social learning platform Flipgrid during class to create and record video to set up their own escape room for a presentation on the life of 19th century Haitian general and president, Sylvain Salnave. Another group of students coded with Metaverse, a learning tool that used augmented reality, to create a presentation on Bessie Coleman, the first African-American woman to hold a pilot's license.

With schools nationwide now relying on digital instruction during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, a proficiency and comfortability with technology and remote learning tools are more vital than ever. The Valley Stream UFSD 13 believes that the implementation of technology in the classrooms is something that will greatly assist students as they progress through their educational careers.

FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING VALLEY STREAM UFSD 13'S COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RESOURCES, SEE PAGES 2 AND 3

COVID-19 COMMUNITY UPDATE

A letter from the Superintendent

This has been a challenging and unprecedented time for all us. People are rightfully afraid for their family and loved ones, and generally unsure of what the future may hold. All of us hope for a return to normalcy as soon as possible, but until that time, please know we are committed to being your partner in managing the road ahead of us. Throughout this crisis, district administration and the Board of Education have been working to keep you informed of all developments, cancellations, safety regulations, and more. For up-to-date, crucial information regarding the coronavirus and Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen's responses to this pandemic, please visit our website, www.valleystream13.com.

Our school buildings may be closed for the time being, but your district will continue to be focused on providing the highest levels of service for our students and families in meeting both educational and social/emotional needs.

Stay safe and practice careful social distancing whenever you leave your house. Consider using this time to your benefit by reading as much as you can, playing games with your family, or learning a new skill you can do at home.

We can best get through this by maintaining a positive attitude and knowing that we are all in this together.

Sincerely,

Constance D. Evelyn, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION REGARDING VIRTUAL LEARNING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As of the writing of this newsletter, schools in New York are closed indefinitely. The District Administration and the Board of Education would like to assure the community of Valley Stream UFSD 13 that state-mandated school closures do not mean learning has stopped. Easily accessible and equitable virtual learning is available to all. For complete, up-to-date information, click here.

Until schools reopen, students should participate in remote learning by accessing and completing instruction as provided by their individual teachers. Parents can email their students' teachers if they have any questions. Teachers will be available to support student learning during the regularly scheduled days and regularly scheduled school hours. Teachers will respond during this time and using the same methods as they had been doing throughout the year. The expectations for students is that they should complete all assigned work to the best of their abilities.

Any family that needs support with technology should email their teacher, who will work with the technology department to solve any issue. **If you do not have internet at home, Altice is offering a free internet product, with installation fees waived. Parents should call 866-200-9522.**

Update on Free & Reduced School Lunch Program

The New York State Commissioner of Education has approved continuation of the free and reduced lunch program during school closures due to COVID-19. Valley Stream UFSD 13 will provide take away lunches for students participating in our free and reduced lunch program for the duration of state-mandated school closures. The lunch packages will also contain a breakfast cereal for the following day. Lunch will be available at the following locations:

Memorial Junior High School
320 Fletcher Avenue
Valley Stream, New York 11580

North High School
750 Herman Avenue
Franklin Square, New York 11010

South High School
150 Jedwood Place
Valley Stream, New York 11581

Lunch will be distributed in the parking lots, please follow appropriate signage.

Families who wish to apply for the free and reduced lunch program can find the application on our website. Applications may be dropped off at any of the lunch distribution points or mailed to the address on the application. Please know that the Valley Stream UFSD 13 will continue to look for opportunities to assist our students, families and community during this time. The wellness of our students is paramount to us all.

BOND UPDATE

Work continued unabated on the Valley Stream UFSD 13 bond work over the summer and fall of 2019. All four of our schools have seen a whirlwind of activity including much-needed and well-deserved facelifts. Highlights include:

James A. Dever Elementary School
- Kitchen addition
- Bathroom renovations
- Fire alarm system replacement
- Classroom unit ventilator replacements
- Classroom case work replacements

Howell Road Elementary School
- Kitchen addition
- Bathroom renovations
- Fire alarm system replacement
- Classroom unit ventilator replacements
- Classroom case work replacements

Wheeler Avenue Elementary School
- Bathroom renovations
- Fire alarm system replacement
- Classroom unit ventilator replacements
- Classroom case work replacements
- Staircase

Willow Elementary School
- Kitchen addition
- Bathroom renovations
- Fire alarm system replacement
- Classroom unit ventilator replacements
- Classroom case work replacements

In addition, since 2018, all four schools have received the following improvements: • New exterior and classroom doors • Playground resurfacing • Renovated student bathrooms • New P.A. systems

Furthermore, as many of you have no doubt noticed, Valley Stream UFSD 13 has improved safety and security procedures, including the addition of contracted security personnel, and the installation of cameras and security vestibules to allow for proper screening and access control of visitors. We have also implemented a swipe-card employee ID system in all four of our district schools for an additional layer of security.

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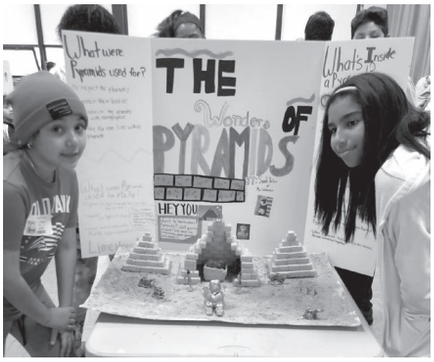
Checking in Around the District

HEART HEALTH IN FOCUS AT DEVER

Getting exercise, staying fit and caring for your heart health are important whether you're a child or a senior citizen. One of the best, most fun ways to do this is to participate in group sports; that's why Hoops for Heart, a national fundraising program that works with the American Heart Association, promotes heart healthy living through fun, accessible basketball activities. Students in Mr. Schwasnick and Mrs. Lundgren's classes at **James A. Dever Elementary School** this past winter participated in their own Hoops for Heart event, even inviting parents to come to the school and watch children participate. With health and safety now on the minds of people across the world, events such as Hoops for Heart remind us of how important it is to take care of ourselves, stay active, and be well.

HOWELL'S ANCIENT EGYPTIAN EXHIBITION SHINES A LIGHT ON MESMERIZING CULTURE

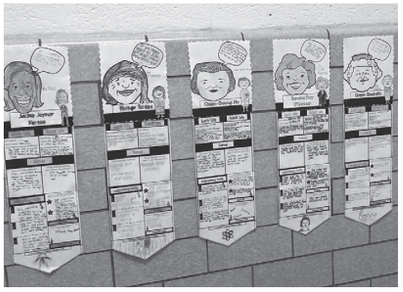


Ancient Egypt is a subject of endless fascination for students of all ages, and studying the culture is a rite of passage for many American children. Sixth graders at **Howell Road Elementary School** have embraced this tradition, holding another iteration of their ancient Egypt exhibit, a science-fair like exhibition of various ancient Egyptian research projects. The wonders of the ancient pyramids, the customs and fashions of the beguiling civilization, and the mysteries of mummification were all on display at Howell's ancient Egypt exhibit, making for a memorable day at the school. Thank you to all who participated and attended!

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS VISIT WHEELER FOR A LESSON IN SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sportsmanship is an integral part of being a student athlete. It's a lesson that sixth-graders at **Wheeler Avenue School** know well, thanks to their friends at Valley Stream Central High School. As part of the Athletes Helping Athletes (AHA) program, high school student-athletes visited Wheeler Avenue School students to teach them about what to expect in middle school and high school. AHA comprises a series of three workshops. During the most recent visit, the student-athletes focused on the importance of civility and how these behaviors relate to sportsmanship on and off the field. They also used their personal experiences and problem-solving scenarios to highlight and discuss the positive choices while combating negative behaviors such as bullying and teasing. At the end of the session, Wheeler Avenue students in the class were given an opportunity to ask the high schoolers questions. The athletes serve as positive mentors and role models to the younger students.

WILLOW ROAD CELEBRATES INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN



Every March 8, on International Women's Day, countries around the world pause to praise the countless advancements and achievements of and obstacles overcome by women. International Women's Day inspires special events and activities, many of which can be brought to elementary school classrooms. At **Willow Road Elementary School**, Mrs. Lepe's fourth grade class researched inspirational women who made a difference in politics, science, human rights, athletics and more. Using their research, the students created posters to display in the halls of the school, spreading these women's powerful stories of success in the face of adversity to all grades.

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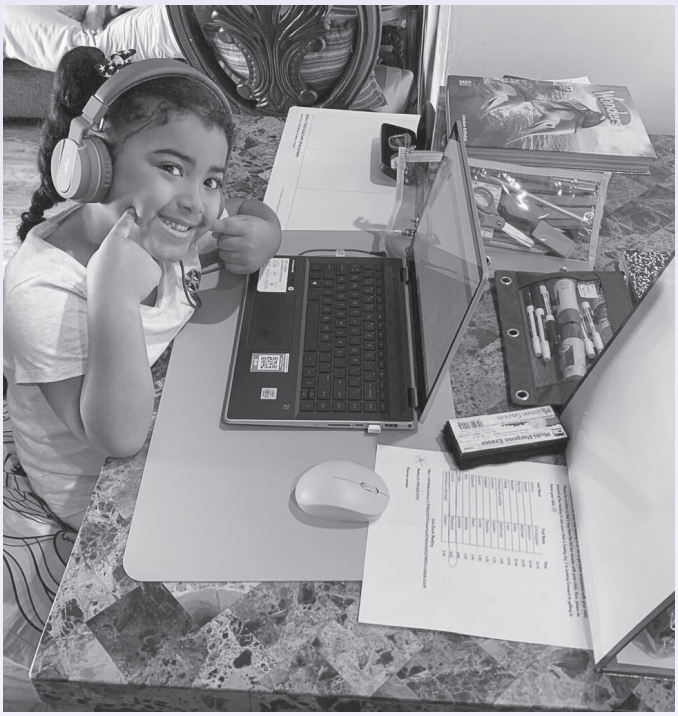
Valley Stream Union Free School District 13
"Where Children Come First"

It's Elementary

VALLEY STREAM UFSD THIRTEEN

FALL 2020

Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen Welcomes Students and Staff Back to School



All back-to-school days in the Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen are special, but the start of the 2020-2021 school year was one for the ages. For the first time since last spring, when schools all across the country closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we welcomed our students and staff back into our facilities. With excitement and anticipation—and with masks on and protective barriers in place—we opened our doors for in-person instruction. Students eagerly entered Willow Road, Wheeler Avenue, Howell Road, and James A. Dever elementary schools, ready to begin a new year of learning. It was a bittersweet moment to be sure; a joyous reunion for our community, but also a reminder of the many challenges still ahead and how the world has dramatically changed.

It was a long and strenuous planning process that required all hands-on deck. On the first day of school, procedures and protocols that had been meticulously designed to ensure a smooth opening unfolded successfully. What was most notable on the first day back was the protocols in place to help ensure the health and safety of all students and District staff. These protocols included the wearing of masks, desks positioned at six feet apart, multiple hand-washing opportunities for students and staff, hand sanitizer availability, and many more as stipulated by the CDC and state and local health departments. In addition, and as outlined in the District's reopening plan, teachers and staff were engaged in robust professional development to enhance virtual learning to help ensure high-quality instruction for students, whether in school or during their remote sessions.

A letter from the Superintendent

While it is true that the 2020-2021 school year at the Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen is a year unlike any other it is also apparent that there is a mainstay to many of our good practices. Our incredible teachers remain as committed and dedicated to our children as ever. Our Board of Education and District administration remain resolute in their mission to better our community through education and public schooling. And, of course, our bright and talented students remain as curious and as committed to learning, growing and high achievement as they've ever been. We are still learning to cope with the myriad challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic—indeed we will be dealing with these issues for some time yet to come. But we owe it to our children to not let these challenges become distractions or impediments to the provision of a quality education. This will be the primary goal of all administrators and teachers for the foreseeable future.

One issue facing educators not just at Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen but across the country, is how to combat the "Digital Divide"—the inequities that remote learning exposes among families with access to high-powered technology devices and those without. This is a critical undertaking for all educators, as ignoring it guarantees inequitable access to public education. At Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen, we are tackling this problem, as described in the article below. As we indicated at the start of this pandemic and would like to reinforce now; ***any family with children learning remotely that is struggling to keep up with the demands of this learning environment should contact us immediately.*** We are here to help.

As the year progresses, I ask all our families to remain patient and present. We are learning how to navigate this uncertain time together, and we will need to collaborate to succeed. I wish you all health and happiness this holiday season.

Sincerely,

Constance D. Evelyn, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

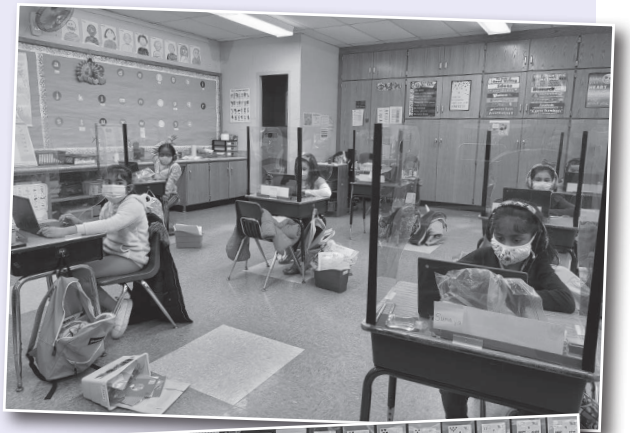
VALLEY STREAM UFSD THIRTEEN FIGHTS THE 'DIGITAL DIVIDE'

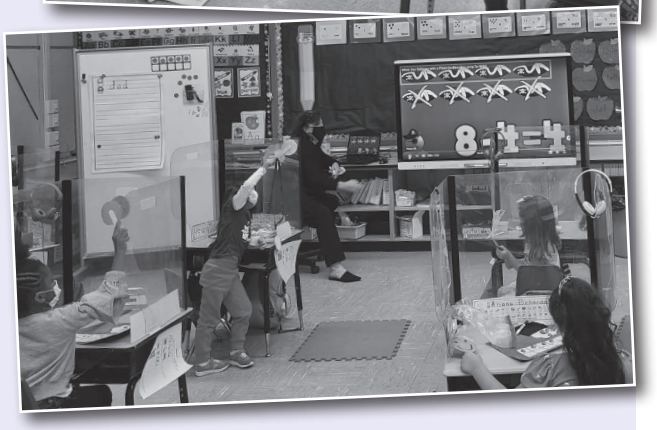
1:1 CHROMEBOOK PROGRAM AND INSTALLATION OF SMART BOARDS

With the closing of schools and the resultant surge in remote learning, 2020 has underscored the serious need for technology as part of modern curriculum in a major way. The year has also amplified the conversation surrounding the "digital divide" and how inequitable access to technology can become a barrier to a fair and full education for all students.

Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen has worked hard to combat the digital divide by working to make sure that every student in our District has access to the tools he or she needs to succeed. A major component of this work is the District's 1:1 initiative, which aims to provide Chromebooks to all students in the District who need them in a way that's both economical and seamless to implement. In the first picture, elementary students work on laptops as part of their regular lessons.

As part of the District's ongoing bond work (see page 4), smart boards are being installed in more and more classrooms. These interactive teaching tools are vital as they allow our teachers access to the best programs in their classrooms, making sure that even those students without immediate access to laptops are not cut off from any instruction. In the second picture, a District teacher uses her smart board for an interactive arithmetic lesson.



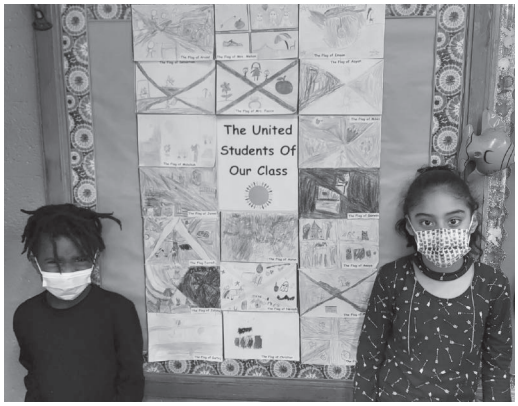


THE BAND PLAYS ON AT DEVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The halls are alive with the sound of music at **James A. Dever Elementary School**! Recently, instrumental music with Mr. Guidone and Mr. Spinks is up and running as students in grades four through six began small-group lessons. The lessons were made available to both in-person and remote learners.

With so much having changed for all of us in 2020, it's wonderful to see some things that have stayed the same. As in every year, the gifted music students at Dever are constantly impressing us with their talent, skill and ingenuity. Watching the children grow and improve in their instruments will be a particular highlight of the year. We are happy that all students are able to participate in instrumental music!

HOWELL ROAD STUDENTS CELEBRATE INCLUSIVITY BY MAKING PERSONALIZED FLAGS



At the **Howell Road Elementary School**, teachers are striving to ensure that classrooms are student-centered and that our students' cultural, linguistic, and ethnic identities are respected and honored. The cornerstone of this approach is New York State's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CRSE) Framework. The beginning of the school year naturally lends itself to highlighting one of the framework's principles of creating a welcoming and affirming environment. "The United States of Our Class," as created and displayed by Mrs. Faccio's and Mrs. Mehan's second grade class, is one such example wherein students created their own personal flag with symbols representing themselves. Students related to the concepts of symbols and their representation on flags after learning about those that they see within their own community. Throughout the upcoming year, the principles of the CRSE Framework will continue to be infused in all of our classrooms as we utilize text, current events and student cultural experiences to drive our discussions and learning.

CHIRP AT THE NEST: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A WHEELER BLUE JAY

What does it mean to be a Wheeler Blue Jay for a student, teacher or parent? At **Wheeler Elementary School**, our ambitious Character Initiative aimed to answer that question by looking for a common language around who we are, what we believe, and what we all strive for. Eventually the program—which included parents, teachers, and the principal—developed CHIRP at the NEST, which specified what it means to be a Blue Jay at Wheeler: It means being Courageous, Honest, Inspiring, Respectful, and Proud (CHIRP). It also means that school should Nurture, Encourage, Support, and work as a Team (NEST).

Even through our most challenging season, the COVID pandemic, this new language created the opportunity to rally together and stay connected through these core values.

LIBRARY ON A CART: BRINGING BOOKS TO STUDENTS AT WILLOW ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

For those of us who love to read, a delivery book service sounds like a dream come true! Well, the curious young students of **Willow Road Elementary School** love to read, and they certainly have been enjoying Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen's new *Library on a Cart* program. Developed by District librarians as a way to bring books to students in the classrooms, *Library on a Cart* affords students easier access to books by providing children with the opportunity to select from a pre-selected list of books and have them delivered to the classrooms. The selected books hit all the high notes: popular favorites to traditional classics. From occupations to ocelots, *Pete the Cat* and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *Wimpy Kids* and *Nate the Great*—choices abound for students! Returned materials will follow proper book care protocols and spend a week in the book spa before returning to circulation. All students, including remote, can take advantage of the local public library offerings, both in person and online. Ebooks can be downloaded for free, and print books can be ordered for curbside service.

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BOND UPDATE

Work as a Result of the 2015 Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen Bond Referendum Continues to Improve Facilities and Technology Across the District

The last several months have been a busy time for Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen relative to our bond work. At schools across the District, classroom facilities and shared spaces are being renovated, critical education technology is being upgraded, and security measures are being reinforced. For the latest information regarding our bond work, as well as many additional pictures, please visit the District's website at valleystream13.com/district/bond-2015/.

The art room at Dever Elementary (and all schools) has been completely renovated as a result of the 2015 bond. New cabinets, handicap accessible tables that also encourage collaborative work (when it is safe to do so again), and storage facilities have been included.

The 2015 bond allowed for Districtwide technology improvements, including the installation of new and improved smart boards. Here, a Howell Road classroom uses the new smart boards to learn about the birth of American government and the U.S. Constitution.

At Wheeler, children can enjoy this new, state-of-the-art playground, complete with safe equipment and soft, padded flooring that encourages physical activity in a safe, controlled environment.

New cabinets in all District classrooms were a feature of the latest round of 2015 bond work. In this Willow classroom, these cabinets maximize the space in the room, allowing for more space for students to work creatively and collaboratively.