



Our Schools

FARMINGDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT | SPRING 2019 | FARMINGDALESCHOOLS.ORG

Official Opening of the Weldon E. Howitt Middle School Athletic Field Complex



After years of planning, the Farmingdale School District has officially opened the athletic fields at Weldon E. Howitt Middle School. The beautiful new complex includes a baseball field, a softball field, a multi-purpose field (track and field, football, lacrosse, soccer), the Daler Training Center Area, and a Future Daler Field Area—a space where young Dalers can safely play while their older siblings compete in various sports.

We expect construction of the comfort station and installation of the stadium lights to be completed before the end of the school year, and parking is available on school grounds in several lots between Van Cott Avenue and Cherry Street.

Residents are welcome to walk the track from dawn until dusk during non-student occupied times. Organized groups can book fields during non-school hours via our online facilities usage system, available on the district's website—www.farmingdaleschools.org—under the Community tab located at the top of the page.

Please review and respect the rules we have put in place. Signs are located in and around the field areas that denote specific guidelines regarding the use of our new fields. This will ensure that the athletic fields are kept in the best condition possible for our continued use, and can be safely enjoyed by all. “We are thrilled to share this long-awaited moment with you all and hope that you enjoy your new Farmingdale School District Athletic Field Complex!” said Superintendent of Schools Paul Defendini.

THOUGHT EXCHANGE RESULTS

We wish to extend a big thank you to all the community members who participated in our first Farmingdale School District Thoughtexchange. The question—which asked about your preferred methods for communication—garnered nearly six thousand ratings from more than five hundred participants. We've analyzed the results and are strategizing ways to implement your thoughtful suggestions into our district-wide communication plan. The biggest takeaway is that most of you are partial to the immediacy and convenience of text messages. We heard you, and we thank you for your valuable input! You can explore the results of the exchange by visiting <http://bit.ly/DalerThoughtExchange>

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS

Students *Dare to Draw 3D* at Albany Avenue Elementary School

Students at **Albany Avenue Elementary School** were treated to a hands-on assembly with Emmy Award-winning illustrator and host of PBS' *Imagination Station*, Mark Kistler, who taught them how to draw 3D cartoons geared to their grade levels. The excited students arrived in Heritage Hall, equipped with paper, pencils and a clipboard. As a group, they sat on the floor, drawing alongside Mr. Kistler, who used a document camera and computer-projected animations to guide them step-by-step. While he taught them to draw, he entertained them with stories and educated them on the importance of bringing imagination and creativity into their daily lives.



Red Trunks Arrive at Northside Elementary School

The delivery of several red trunks to **Northside Elementary School** had third-graders brimming with excitement! They were sent by the Red Trunk Project—a cultural initiative that encourages children to Respect Every Difference (RED). The goal is to give children a better understanding of the lives of their fellow citizens around the world, particularly children their age. “The cultural exploration involved in the Red Trunk Project allows students to immerse themselves in the lives of others,” said Samantha Black, director of social studies K-12. Ms. Black and the third grade teachers at Northside were involved in beta-testing the program last year and officially unveiled it for students this year.

The cultural wonderland of Oaxaca, Mexico is the first region to be highlighted in the Red Trunk Project. They were packed with dozens of cultural artifacts—arts and crafts, clothing, currency, musical instruments—plus mini-documentary videos; booklets detailing the lives of children; immersive 360-degree virtual reality footage; and a comprehensive, experiential lesson plan for teachers to create a deep and lasting cultural experience for all their students. The focus of the lesson plan asks the question, *Are the children of Oaxaca, Mexico like me?*



Saltzman East Memorial Elementary School's Drama Club 'Off to See the Wizard'

The **Saltzman East Memorial Elementary School** Drama Club staged two wonderful performances of *The Wizard of Oz*. Younger grades were treated to a morning performance, and the older grades—plus parents—were invited to an afternoon show. The fabulous cast included two students [redacted] and [redacted] playing the role of Dorothy. The first Dorothy was dressed in muted tones to pay homage to the beginning sequence of the black and white classic film. The second Dorothy made her entrance when the character lands in the colorful world of Oz and attains the iconic ruby slippers. The show was co-directed by teachers Angela Gross and Susan DeSario.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS

Planting Seeds at Woodward Parkway Elementary School

An environmental club has taken root at **Woodward Parkway Elementary School**. On Tuesday afternoons, students from the high school have been meeting with K-3 students from Ms. Monahan's class and Ms. Breuer's class to teach them about hydroponic gardening. Children were shown an animated video that introduced them to all the benefits of growing a garden. Each table was given a different packet of seeds, which they planted in little pods that were later placed into a hydroponic tower garden. The tower garden has grow lights and a regulated hydration system that is able to triple the speed of plant growth. When it was warm enough to plant outside, the students transferred the vegetables—lettuce, tomatoes, arugula, basil—into raised beds in the school's courtyard garden.



Say Something Week at Weldon E. Howitt Middle School

Weldon E. Howitt Middle School recently took part in the Sandy Hook Promise's *Say Something* Call to Action week, with activities organized by the Building Safety and Building Wellness Committees. Sandy Hook Promise is a national nonprofit organization founded and led by several family members whose loved ones were killed during the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. The mission of the week-long initiative is to teach students how to look for warning signs—especially on social media—of an individual who may be a threat to themselves or others and to *say something* to a trusted adult to get help. The week was also used to reinforce established procedures for maintaining building safety.



"We want to continually remind our students that 'Dalers protect Dalers' by saying something," said Principal Luis Pena. "If a student is—or knows of another student—going through a tough time, we want them to know that the faculty and staff are here for them and will do everything in their power to support them through whatever it is."

To show support for school safety, students, faculty, staff, and parents were invited to purchase and wear a Sandy Hook Promise Pin and wear "as much green as they could." Green necklaces were also sold during lunch periods for 25 cents. All monies raised go toward funding similar initiatives in the future. Students were also invited to sign the *Say Something Promise Banner* in the cafeteria.

S.M.I.L.E. Day at Farmingdale High School

Farmingdale High School's Fourth Annual S.M.I.L.E. Day, hosted by the S.M.I.L.E. Club, took place on Friday, April 12, 2019. S.M.I.L.E. stands for Something More In Life's Experiences. The club—made up of nearly seventy 9th through 12th grade students—meets twice a month to participate in activities like Twister, basketball, and karaoke.

"The only prerequisite for joining is a smile!" said teacher and club advisor Diana Rossi, who plans the event every year with co-advisors Danielle D'Aponte and William Sperduto.



When students arrived for school in the morning they were greeted by chalk outlined smileys and yellow smiley-face balloons. In the Commons during lunch periods, club members sold t-shirts and handed out smiley-face stickers and pins. They were joined by Farmingdale's enthusiastic mascot, Dale, aka Alayna Camisa.

FARMINGDALE NEWSMAKERS

Farmingdale Legislative Action Committee Meets with Albany Lawmakers



Twenty-six members of Farmingdale’s Legislative Action Committee—students, teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and members of the board of education traveled to the New York State Capitol in Albany to present the group’s 2018-2019 legislative proposals and to discuss the impact of pending and future legislation on public schools. Fourteen high school students were selected for the trip—determined by teachers Jim Hughes and Jennifer Theo—based on the courses and clubs they participate in. Students knocked on the doors of more than 15 legislative offices to lobby for the urgent need for dependable and equitable school funding, safety in our schools, and more support for the needs of a shifting student population. Throughout the day, Board of Education members Kathy Lively, Suzanne D’Amico, and Anthony Giordano were on hand to help students articulate their advocacy efforts.

“The ride there and back was full of important dialogue on future direction, and a continued recognition and gratitude for the wonderful school and community we serve,” said Assistant Superintendent for Innovation and Organizational Development Dr. William Brennan. The students met with Assemblyman Lipetri and Assemblyman Mikulin, had impromptu hallway meetings with Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone and Assemblyman Steve Stern, took a guided tour of the Capitol and saw the chambers where their state government convenes.

Weldon E. Howitt Middle School Hosts Genre Con 2019

The library staff at Weldon E. Howitt Middle School hosted its first building-wide Genre Con in March. It was a celebration of all the different genres of storytelling. More than a hundred children participated, many in costume! Visiting author Melissa Kuch—*The Hypothesis of Giants* series—led



a dystopian writing workshop in the library. Author and illustrator Dave Roman—*Astronaut Academy* series—hosted a comic and graphic arts demo in the Makerspace. Howitt Genre Con is the brainchild of Library Media Specialist Jennifer Bleicher, who was inspired by Comic Con to create a school initiative that would promote books and reading among the middle school student body.

6th Annual Connected Learning and Leadership Summit



Nearly 300 educators, parents, and community members from the greater New York area attended the 6th Annual Connected Learning and Leadership Summit this past March at Weldon E. Howitt Middle School. This year’s theme was *Preparing Kids for Real World Challenges*. Dr. William Brennan, assistant superintendent for innovation and organizational development, founded the summit in 2014 to advance the conversation around innovation in education by connecting like-minded, passionate educators for a day of collaborating ideas in a way that infuses new possibilities into our schools.

FARMINGDALE NEWSMAKERS

The Addams Family a Frightfully Good Time at Howitt Middle School



The talented Howitt Players performed the musical comedy *The Addams Family* at Weldon E. Howitt Middle School. It was directed by teacher Susanne Ferguson.

A Midsummer Night's Dream at Farmingdale High School



Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was performed by the Farmingdale Playcrafters "in the round" at Farmingdale High School. It was directed by teacher Glen Beck.

Farmingdale Students Recognized for their Participation in St. Baldrick's Day

In early May, Superintendent Paul Defendini and the Farmingdale Board of Education hosted a ceremony in the middle school to celebrate the many students who shaved their heads or cut their hair in support of St. Baldrick's Day. The St. Baldrick's Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that raises funds to help find cures for children with cancer. This past March, the Farmingdale School District helped the greater community achieve—and well exceed—the million-dollar fundraising milestone for the St. Baldrick's Foundation. Each student was given a certificate, proudly recognizing them for their participation.



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MULTICULTURAL SHOWCASE PREMIERS AT FHS

Farmingdale High School’s first Multicultural Showcase was held in the Commons this past April. It was the creation of members of an emerging club called R.E.A.L. Harmony (Respect, Education, Awareness, Love). The goal of the club is to bring ethnic and multicultural awareness to the high school and the greater Farmingdale community. Founding club members [redacted] and [redacted] organized a series of student performances that featured different cultures via song, dance, and fashion displays. Students enthusiastically gathered to watch all the different cultures on display. The acts included performances of Indian and Italian songs, a display of Muslim fashion, and choreographed dance routines derived from traditional Afro-Caribbean Fusion, Hip-Hop, Latin, African dance, and, of course, the FHS Steppin’ Dalers. “This amazing and positive event grew from efforts to celebrate cultural diversity,” said Farmingdale High School Principal Dr. Samuel Thompson. “Hats off to the students!”



FROM THE SPORTS DESK

Ten Consecutive Years of Scholar-Athlete Status for Varsity Teams at Farmingdale High School

For the 30th consecutive season—marking ten years— all Farmingdale High School varsity teams have achieved scholar-athlete status! The spring teams include 321 students, participating in the sports of: boys lacrosse, girls lacrosse, baseball, softball, boys spring track, girls spring track, boys tennis, and badminton. At the end of each season, the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) recognizes varsity teams that have a total grade point average of 90.00 or above for 75 percent of the team’s roster. “Ten years is an amazing accomplishment! Our student athletes are to be commended for reaching this momentous milestone. My thanks go out to all the coaches, teachers, and administrative staff who have been behind our students every step of the way,” said Director of Athletics Jeanne Berkoski. “Go Dalers!”

