

# Our Schools

The Community Newsletter of the Farmingdale Public Schools • Fall 2011

## Math in Focus

### Giving Our Elementary Students the Understanding and Skills for Success

*Math in Focus* is the district's new mathematics program for K-2 elementary students, implemented at the start of this school year after a very successful pilot program last year in Northside first grade classes. Recommended by the districtwide Math Committee, the curriculum is based on what educators worldwide have called the "Singapore Math" philosophy.

Addressing all of the new Common Core Standards, the *Math in Focus* series emphasizes key instructional strategies, including asking effective questions, model drawing, mental math, and higher-level thinking skills that develop problem-solving proficiency. Dr. Joan Ripley, Assistant Superintendent - Curriculum and Instruction, explains, "*Math in Focus* has more hands-on and critical thinking aspects. Students not only learn all their math facts, but learn how to model the concepts."



**"I love the Math in Focus program. The kids at Northside really benefitted last year, because it teaches understanding of math concepts. Once a child understands the concepts, you can build upon that knowledge."**

- Jacqueline Wedner, math specialist at Northside Elementary

Topics are carefully sequenced, and instruction is paced to introduce fewer topics in greater depth at each grade level, ensuring that children master one topic before moving on to the next. Students gain an understanding of the concepts through concrete examples and pictures, while a variety of approaches – including hands-on activities, visual modeling, and group

discussion – address the different needs and learning styles of each child. This "differentiated instruction" strategy enables teachers to meet children's learning needs whether they are struggling or are prepared to take on greater challenges. The district plans to extend the *Math in Focus* program to students in grades 3-5 in the future.

### What is Singapore Math?

The term comes from a program begun in Singapore in the early 1980's, when the Singapore Ministry of Education brought together a team of experts to write a new curriculum. The series developed by the team was used exclusively in Singapore until 2001. Subsequently, the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) ranked Singapore as number one out of approximately 50 countries in 1995, 1999 and 2003. These rankings brought significant attention to the Singapore curriculum in other nations, including the U.S., where it has been introduced as *Math in Focus*.

## Did You Know...?



- Farmingdale High School was selected to host Harvard College's annual guidance counselor seminar. Counselors from the middle and high schools joined other guidance counselors from all over Long Island in this unique opportunity to explore the inner workings of the college admission process. Harvard Admissions Officer Dara Granoff conducted a morning workshop for counselors, which was followed by assemblies for our 11th and 12th grade students.
- Two Farmingdale alumni, Jessica Carvo (Class of 2005) and Andrea Lopez (Class of 2007), performed in September and October on NBC's hit new vocal show *The Sing Off*. The girls spent all summer in Los Angeles taping the shows.

### Spirit Week & Homecoming 2011



See feature on back cover!

Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Farmingdale Union  
Free School District

SCAR-RT SORT  
RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

Farmingdale Public Schools  
Administrative Offices  
50 Van Cort Avenue,  
Farmingdale, New York 11735

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Shari Bardash-Eivers  
Stephen G. Wilson  
John E. Capobianco • Russ Catanzaro  
Tina Diamond • Kathy Lively • Rick Morrison

For School District Information  
and Board Meeting Agendas,  
Sign on to: [www.farmingdaleschools.org](http://www.farmingdaleschools.org)





# A Message From Your Board of Education

Dear Friends:

In the first several weeks of the 2011-2012 school year, our students at all levels have been learning and growing. It was wonderful to see the energy and enthusiasm across the district during Spirit Week and Homecoming festivities, as highlighted on the back cover of this newsletter. As we move ahead, the Farmingdale Board of Education and administration continue to work diligently to enhance the district's ability to serve our students and the Farmingdale community. This year, several new initiatives are in place – all with the goal of helping students reach the highest levels of achievement.

On the recommendation of the districtwide Math Committee, a new mathematics program has been implemented for K-2 elementary students this year. *Math in Focus*, piloted last year in Northside first grade classes, is based on the highly regarded Singapore Math philosophy and addresses all of the new Common Core Standards. This wonderful program will be extended to grades 3-5 in the coming years. Please read the article on page 1 to learn more about the program.

Critical to students' success is the ongoing professional development of teachers. To that end, the New York State Department of Education requires all school districts to develop an Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). A comprehensive means of supervising teachers using multiple sources of evidence, this review process will aid Farmingdale in enhancing teacher effectiveness across the district.

In addition, our Response to Intervention Committee met throughout this past summer to create a plan for student academic support. The committee comprises more than 30 committee members, who collectively represent all interest groups within the district. On September 26 and 27, a Response to Intervention training was conducted for 42 members of the RtI Building Teams who, in early October, began the screening of students from kindergarten through sixth grade in Reading and Early Literacy skills.

The Districtwide Operations Department has been in the process of completing projects as part of our overall facilities plan. At the high school, the window replacement project is underway and three art rooms have been reconstructed. The computer lab at Albany Avenue and the library at Northside Elementary School have been refurbished. At Howitt Middle School, the cafeteria was renovated from floor to ceiling lights. A new support services area and occupational and physical therapy/speech area were completed. A new teacher work area at Howitt was also completed over the summer. All of these projects have been completed in support of our students' academic growth.

The district has also come to an agreement with the Farmingdale Federation of Teachers, settling the most recent collective bargaining negotiations. Both parties worked together diligently to come to a mutually beneficial agreement that recognizes the economic challenges facing our district and community, while acknowledging the vital role teachers play in educating our children. The three year agreement includes the following: in year one, a 1.25% wage increase and a half-year savings in step; in year two, a wage and step freeze; and in year three, a 1.25% wage increase and – once again – a half-year savings in step. The agreement also includes an annual professional performance review appeals process that brings the district into compliance with the new NYS Education Law 3012(c).

We'd like to close by commending all 29 of our varsity sports teams for earning the prestigious Scholar/Athlete status for the second year in a row. By maintaining a combined GPA of at least 90% during the season, our athletes not only triumphed on the field, they set an impressive example in the classrooms.

We are excited about the continued progress taking place within our district and look forward to a productive and enjoyable school year for all of our students and their families!

Very truly yours,

The Farmingdale Board of Education

# Fresh Farmingdale Faces

The Farmingdale School District is proud to welcome two new administrators for the 2011-12 school year.



**William Brennan**

Mr. Brennan joined Farmingdale School District this fall as the district's new director of instructional technology, vocational and business education. Mr. Brennan's career started in the Island Trees School District where he served as a teacher, administrator and coach from 2000-2007. Mr. Brennan also served as director of technology for Port Jefferson

Schools, and as the divisional administrator for instructional technology at Western Suffolk BOCES. Mr. Brennan received his B.A. from Marist College and his M.A. in instructional technology from Long Island University. He received his state certification as a school administrator from Touro College. Mr. Brennan is currently pursuing his doctorate in educational leadership, administration and policy from Fordham University.

Mr. Brennan has been invited to present at numerous conferences on leadership, learning and creativity in education and creating a powerful learning network through technology. He has served as a moderator for the Global Education Conference and was invited to be a panelist this summer for the Long Island University Social Media Panel Discussion.

## Goals

- Improve student academic achievement through the effective use of technology in elementary schools and secondary schools
- Support professional educators individually, and in teams, through technology that connects them to data, content, resources and learning experiences that enable and inspire more effective learning environments for all students
- Research, develop and pilot emerging technologies aimed at improving student and staff learning
- Collaborate with faculty and administration on the use of student data aimed at continuous improvement



**Clifford B. Swezey**

Formerly the Supervisor for Secondary Mathematics at the Harrison Central School District in Westchester County, NY, Dr. Swezey comes to the Farmingdale UFSD as the director for K-12 mathematics. He has been working in the field of education for over 27 years. Dr. Swezey started his career as a teacher of elementary-level music in Monticello, NY, and then moved to Queens, where he taught middle school mathematics for 14 years. He moved on to teach high school mathematics at Benjamin N. Cardozo High School in Bayside. In 2000, he began his administrative career at one of the highest-performing middle schools in the state, Louis Pasteur Middle School 67 in Little Neck. During his tenure, he earned his doctoral degree in instructional leadership at St. John's University in 2004. At St. John's, Dr. Swezey had the good fortune to work closely with the world-renowned Professor Rita Dunn in the area of learning-styles interventions, developing strategies to meet students' individual needs, raising achievement levels and improving students' attitudes toward learning.

Dr. Swezey has worked to promote equity and access for all students by successfully implementing Regents-level algebra for all eighth graders in Harrison, and opens doors for all students who want to study higher-level mathematics in high school – up to and including Multivariate Calculus. His goal is to influence the way mathematics is taught here in Farmingdale and to have a positive impact on the quality and variety of “pathways in mathematics” that will become available to our students. Dr. Swezey said, “I am so excited and honored to be in such a wonderful District where everyone is so warm and ingratiating.”



# What's Happening in Our Schools

## Albany Avenue Students off to a "Smooth Start" for the 2011-12 School Year

Thanks to PTA volunteers from the Smooth Start Committee, Albany Avenue kindergarten students got a helping hand throughout their first day of school in September. With the assistance of Smooth Start volunteers, kindergarteners were able to find their classrooms easily; later in the day, the volunteers returned to guide them in navigating through the cafeteria. All of the Albany Avenue students had a busy day, as readers', writers' and math workshops took place in their classrooms.



## Northside Students Participate in Jump Rope and Hoops for Heart

Northside Elementary has received word from the American Heart Association that it was the eighth largest donor on all of Long Island to the 2010-2011 Jump Rope and Hoops for Heart Program. It's quite an accomplishment for a school of 500 to raise \$6,496.00! Participants were Northside's 3rd and 5th graders – 172 students in total. Northside is proud of these students and their families, as well as physical education teachers Mrs. Satriano and Mr. Stein, who were the coordinators of the event.

## Saltzman East Memorial Students Rise to the Challenge!

Students from Saltzman East Memorial Elementary School are challenged to read all year long. Two students from Angela Gross's first grade class accepted SEM's Summer Reading Challenge, and each read more than 25 books between the end of June and the start of school in September! More challenge sheets continue to pour in daily, with students' names announced in the morning. SEM students are readers! Pictured are Spencer Rustyak and Arianthe Mastakouris from Angela Gross's first grade class.



## Woodward Parkway Continues Character Education

With the support of the PTA, Woodward Parkway is excited to continue its character education project with the Book of the Month initiative. Each month, a book will be selected that highlights a specific character trait, and copies of the book will be handed out in each classroom. September's selection was *One Smile*, by Cindy McKinley. The book inspires children to think about how their actions, kind or unkind, affect other people. There was a lot of excitement among staff and students as the characters and themes of the book brought this message to life with an enduring impact. Pictured is fifth grader Bernard Raifer holding September's book of the month, as well as a picture he created for submission to the CAPS Bully Prevention Poster and Poetry Contest. Bernard's poster was chosen to become part of the 2011-12 CAPS calendar.

## 9/11 Firefighter Speaks to Howitt Students About Courage and Selflessness

Every year, Ms. Baltch's seventh grade ELA students recognize the heroes of September 11, 2001 by writing letters to them. This year, the class chose to write letters to the father of one of Howitt's own seventh graders. Lieutenant Matthew Komorowski, F.D.N.Y., was a member of Ladder 6 in Chinatown on the day of the attacks. Ladder 6 was the only New York City Fire House whose members all survived while inside the towers. When he spoke with Howitt students, Lieutenant Komorowski explained that a true hero's courage isn't the absence of fear, but the ability to act in the face of fear. "We were all afraid that day," he said. Howitt students and staff agree that Lieutenant Komorowski's courage and selfless actions make him a real American hero.



## FHS Students Learn to Make Smart Driving Decisions

Farmingdale High School hosted the *Choices and Consequences Program*, sponsored by the Nassau County District Attorney's Office on Monday, September 12. This is the fourth year FHS has worked with the DA's office to bring this powerful message about driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol to our students and their parents. Over 750 FHS seniors and their parents came to the evening assembly – mandatory for any senior wishing to receive a school parking permit. "The safety of our students is paramount to us," said Principal Glen Zakian. "We hope this seminar encourages parents and students to talk about safe driving habits and practices. We have had nothing but positive feedback so far."

## Our Board of Education's Overarching Goal for the District

**"We will establish Farmingdale as a high-achieving school district, as evidenced by high levels of student performance in all areas including New York State assessments and Regents exams."**





# Music Notes



## All-State Music Students

### Being Selected to Perform in This Prestigious Conference is No Small Achievement



(L to R) Row 1: Brian Entwistle - Jazz Band, Hannah Soluri - Symphonic Band, Olivia Gordon - Vocal Jazz, Amanda Senk - Symphonic Band alternate, Annais Sierra-Avalos - Chorus alternate, Carly Mignone - Mixed Chorus; Row 2: Rita Zirpolo Padden, Fine Arts Director; Gina Pelletiere, Wind Ensemble Director; William Picket - Mixed Chorus; Courtney Sack - Mixed Chorus; Emily Hynes - Chorus alternate; Brianna Iannello - Women's Chorus; Robert Ginsberg - Mixed Chorus, Michelle Lindsley, Chorus Director; Glen Zakian, Principal

The New York State School Music Association, known to teachers and students as NYSSMA, sponsors a festival every year where students play prepared pieces and receive ratings. NYSSMA levels range from 1-6, with Level 6 being the most difficult. Many students start this evaluation process in fifth or sixth grade. For each level, the music is more demanding, and students are judged on every aspect of performance – including tone quality, technique, musicianship, interpretation, musicality, dynamics and sight reading ability. When students reach tenth grade, they become eligible to compete for the All-State audition if they have achieved outstanding proficiency on Level 6 music literature.

The All-State competition is very rigorous. Students from across every county in New York State compete against each other, with only the most talented and accomplished performers chosen. Each of these students plays a piece for an adjudicator who issues a score and evaluation sheet; then, privately, the judges make a recommendation to the state committee. Students also need recommendations from their ensemble director, music administrator and high school principal.

Receiving the nomination to All-State is an extremely high honor – but being accepted only marks the beginning of much preparation. Students receive their music in October and must have it completely learned for the December NYSSMA conference. They arrive in Rochester and have intense rehearsals for three days with the All-State concerts, culminating in the annual state conference. Farmingdale High School is most proud of its All-State performers and alternates.

and have intense rehearsals for three days with the All-State concerts, culminating in the annual state conference. Farmingdale High School is most proud of its All-State performers and alternates.



## FARMINGDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS SPIRIT!



FHS kicked off Spirit Week on Thursday, September 22, with 80's Day, followed by Jersey Day on Friday. Continuing into the next week, students celebrated Graduation Year Day and Preppy Day on September 26 and 27, and concluded the festivities on September 28 with a pep rally and Green & White Day. At SEM, "Spirits Flying High" was the theme of the week. Students kicked off that Monday with Pajama Day, followed by Crazy Hat Day on Tuesday and Wacky Wednesday.



Homecoming 2011 was another wonderful testament to the enthusiasm of Farmingdale students, staff and community. Challenging Syosset High School, our football team came out victorious, winning 26-14. Much appreciation to the band, cheerleaders and other students who worked hard to make this day a success. With a standing-room-only crowd of 3400, it was an awesome day to be a Daler!

## FHS Seeks Nominations for 15th Annual Wall of Fame Induction

The Wall of Fame was established to honor distinguished Farmingdale High School alumni. Located in the FHS lobby, the wall displays the plaques of all honorees.

Candidates for the Wall of Fame must have graduated from FHS at least 10 years ago and been successful in their academic pursuits. They must also be role models to our current students, as evidenced by their achievements.

A nomination form may be obtained from the district website, [www.farmingdaleschools.org](http://www.farmingdaleschools.org), or picked up in the main office of any of our district schools, as well as in the Farmingdale Public Library. The deadline for the receipt of applications is January 6, 2012.