

Our Schools

The Community Newsletter of the Farmingdale Public Schools • Winter 2011

Quality Teachers are Key to Success

New Teacher Institute Shines a Light on Effective Education

The Board of Education recently established an overarching goal of establishing Farmingdale as a high-achieving school district, and a growing body of research shows that the quality of a classroom teacher is the single most important factor in determining a student's academic achievement. As such, the district has taken measures to update and improve its hiring and professional development practices for the 2010-11 school year. These enhancements are a critical component in realizing that goal and ensuring the long-term success of our students.

One aspect of the district's renewed commitment to educational quality is the New Teacher Institute, a comprehensive three-day workshop held prior to the start of the school year. Twenty newly appointed teachers attended the inaugural New Teacher Institute in 2010 and were engaged in learning four key understandings designed to foster their growth as educators. These four understandings, which have been identified as highly effective teaching practices, include: 1) planning and curriculum design, 2) classroom management, 3) instructional practices and 4) reflection on teaching and learning. Using Charlotte Danielson's *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* as a road map, the new teachers examined each of these four principles.

The teachers studied effective classroom management and instructional practices using the *First Days of School* by Harry Wong. How a teacher conducts the first days of school sets the tone for effective classroom management for the entire school year. Procedures and routines must be established early on to run an effective classroom. The participants reviewed their opening day procedures and discussed a number of ways to ensure a great start.

Teachers make many decisions regarding how best to approach instruction, and our new teachers reviewed ways to accommodate different kinds of learners while supporting high standards for all students. Using *Understanding by Design* by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, they discussed unit and lesson plans that support the district's goal for learning and succeeding at high levels. When designing unit and lesson plans, they will begin with the deep understandings, knowledge and skills that they want their students to learn. They will also design the assessments that will determine whether their students have learned, and build future learning experiences around the most successful practices. The participants had time to practice lesson and unit design and will continue throughout the year in additional professional development sessions.

Reflecting on teaching and student learning must become a regular habit for our educators. Reflective teaching means looking at what teachers do in the classroom, thinking about why they make the decisions they do, and thinking about what works – a constant process of self-observation and self-evaluation. By collecting information about what goes on in their classrooms and by analyzing and evaluating this information, our teachers identify and explore their own practices and underlying beliefs.

Support for these new teachers does not end after these three days. The New Teacher Institute is less an orientation than the first link in a chain of professional development programs in which teachers will participate throughout the year. Each new teacher is also assigned a mentor – an experienced teacher who helps navigate school policies, classroom procedures and instructional decisions. (You can learn more about this mentoring program in the spring 2011 issue of *Our Schools*.)

The response from our new teachers has been very positive, and many found great value in having a clear understanding of district expectations, as well as the tools to carry them forward. Their enthusiasm and dedication continues to shine through in their classrooms.

Four Key Components of Highly Effective Teaching

1. Planning and curriculum design
2. Classroom management
3. Instructional practices
4. Reflection on teaching & learning

Did You Know...?

- Woodward Parkway has implemented a Book of the Month program to further the district's Character Education curriculum. As a community, we are aware of the transformative power of literature to convey important messages for individuals and society. Each month, a book is selected that will highlight a specific character trait, and a copy will be given to each class. Through conversations about the books' rich characters and poignant themes, we will make personal connections to the texts, build relationships and infuse literacy into the life of our school. The school launched this exciting program with the book *How Full Is Your Bucket? for Kids* by Tom Rath and Mary Reckmeyer, emphasizing good character and the traits of respect and responsibility.
- Farmingdale High School was the number-one money contributor of all Long Island high schools for the American Heart Association's Hoops for Heart fund drive!
- Students and staff at Saltzman East Memorial collected more than 200 coats that were donated to Island Harvest during the holiday season.

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A Message From Your Board of Education

Dear Friends:

In the last issue of *Our Schools*, we announced the Board's overarching goal of establishing the Farmingdale School District as a high-achieving district, as evidenced by high levels of student performance in all areas, including New York State assessments and Regents examinations. Through the first half of the 2010-11 school year, the Board and district administration have been constantly striving toward that goal, and the fruits of our labor are evident.

Our efforts to improve student achievement permeate all aspects of the district. Throughout the year, we will be highlighting our administrators' and teachers' professional development activities, including the New Teacher Institute (see story on page 1), a teacher mentoring program, and reading/writing workshops to enhance Farmingdale's literacy program. We are also working with professional consultants in preparation for the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). Under this New York State Education Department regulation, each school district must adopt an annual professional performance review plan for all teachers and administrators.

The Board is already hard at work developing its 2011-12 school year budget proposal. Our long-term goals include maintaining our excellent programs, insulating our programs from fluctuations in state aid and other revenue, and adopting a tax levy acceptable to our residents. We strongly encourage all residents to take part in the budget process. Please see the calendar of events below for more information.

Very truly yours,

The Farmingdale Board of Education

Important Upcoming Budget Dates

All budget workshops and Board meetings are scheduled to take place at 8 p.m. in Howitt Middle School east cafeteria unless otherwise noted. For more information on voter registration, please contact District Clerk Josephine Murray at (516) 752-6552.

Wednesday, March 23

Budget Workshop

Thursday, March 24

Community Summit Expo
& Health Fair

Voter Registration

6-8 p.m. at

Farmingdale High School

Wednesday, March 30

Budget Workshop

Wednesday, April 6

Budget Workshop and
Public Input Session

Wednesday, April 13

Board of Education
Special Meeting Adoption
of 2011-12 Budget

Saturday, May 7

Voter Registration

3-9 p.m. at

Howitt Middle School

East Lobby

Tuesday, May 10

Board of Education

Special Meeting

Public Hearing

on 2011-12 Budget

Tuesday, May 17

Budget Vote and Election

6 a.m. - 9 p.m. at

Howitt Middle School

Farmingdale Scholars Recognized in National Programs

Farmingdale High School senior **Roberto Cantos** has been named a semifinalist in the 56th annual National Merit Scholarship Program. More than 1.5 million juniors entered the 2011 program by taking the 2009 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). The nationwide pool of semifinalists – about 16,000 – represents less than one percent of all U.S. high school seniors. To pursue the competition to the finalist stage, Roberto will submit a detailed scholarship application, including an essay and information about his participation and leadership in school and community activities.



Roberto Cantos

Roberto was also recognized by the College Board as a 2011 National Hispanic Recognition Program (NHRP) Scholar. The NHRP was created in 1983 to identify outstanding high school students of Hispanic/Latino heritage. Each year, the NHRP identifies approximately 5,000 of the highest scoring Hispanic or Latino students from a nationwide total of more than 200,000 juniors in the United States and U.S. territories who take the PSAT/NMSQT. Students with a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or higher are designated as NHRP scholars; those with a GPA of 3.0 to 3.49 earn honorable mention.



*(L-R) Saniya Khan
and Meghan Hassett*

Additionally, seniors **Meghan Hassett** and **Saniya Khan** were honored as commended students in the 2011 National Merit Scholarship Program. Meghan and Saniya were selected based on their excellent performance on the PSAT/NMSQT, ranking among the top three percent of the 1.5 million students who took the test in 2009. Each received a letter of commendation in recognition of her outstanding academic promise.

Congratulations to Roberto, Meghan and Saniya on these great achievements!

Our 2010 AP Scholars

The College Board has announced that Farmingdale students and 2010 graduates earned 58 Advanced Placement (AP) Scholar Awards in 2010. Principal Glen Zakian and the entire Farmingdale community are proud to recognize the following award winners:

National AP Scholar - Granted to students in the United States who receive an average score of at least 4 on all AP exams taken, **and** scores of 4 or higher on eight or more of these exams: **Evan Cavallo, Kevin Chiu, Joshua Kantharia**

AP Scholar With Distinction - Granted to students who receive an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP exams taken, **and** scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams: **Taryn Boyle, Evan Cavallo, Kevin Chiu, Erin Entwistle, John Grossmann, Casey Grote, Kelly Grzinic, Katelyn James, Joshua Kantharia, Mary Linden, Jessica MacKenzie, Joanna McCoskey, Zachary Rouselle, Rachel Sferlazza, Allison Torlincasi, Derek Venezia, Jessica Waldman, Alexis Wohl**

AP Scholar with Honor - Granted to students who receive an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP exams taken, **and** scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams: **Kristen Czelusniak, Marisa Esposito, Leah Fishman, Meghan Hassett, Amy Lawrence, Marc Misuraca, Kaitlin Senk, Amanda Simms, Robert Sutherland, Kerri Yandrich**

AP Scholar - Granted to students who receive scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP exams: **James Anderson, Liam Bello, Marissa Boccio, Roberto Cantos, Brian Donaldson, Lisa Duddy, Scott Fritsche, Steven Furbush, Caitlin Gallagher, Michael Golebiewski, Saniya Khan, Deborah Kick, Jessica McCoskey, Jacklyn McKnight, Kelly O'Rourke, Vanessa Padilla, Connor Patterson, Rozina Portelli, Rebecca Reinold, Caitlyn Retinger, Jillian Roesch, Victoria Salvato, Jennifer Samson, Samantha Smith, Kristie Summus, Deigo Suriel, Robert Zeno**

The College Board's Advanced Placement program provides motivated and academically prepared students with the opportunity to take rigorous college-level courses while still in high school, and to earn college credit for successful performance on the AP exams. More than 3,800 colleges and universities annually accept AP scores, and most four-year colleges in the United States provide credit and/or advanced placement for qualifying exam scores. Only about 18 percent of the more than 1.8 million students worldwide who took AP exams in May 2010 performed at a sufficiently high level to earn an AP Scholar Award.

Congratulations to all of our AP Scholars on these tremendous achievements!

What's Happening in Our Schools

Activity Promotes Achievement at Albany Avenue

As we work to establish Farmingdale as a high-achieving school district, physical education continues to play an important part in our curriculum. Recent studies have found that increased activity levels correspond to better academic performance. As such, the districtwide Wellness Committee has instituted a new program called *Activity Works*, an easy-to-use DVD program that incorporates kinetic learning and cardio fitness in a 12-minute classroom experience for grades K-3. At Albany Avenue Elementary School, for example, students in grades K-2 walk, jog, skip and hop to increase focus, attention, neural development and cardiovascular health. Pictured are Patricia Schick and Felice Shapiro's first grade class participating in an *Activity Works* classroom activity.



SEM Students 'Step Up' for the Environment

STEP UP stands for **S**ave the **E**arth **P**lease and **U**nify **P**eople – and saving the Earth is part of the daily routine at Saltzman East Memorial Elementary School. In 2009, the STEP UP Club set a goal of establishing an official recycling program for the school; thanks to the efforts of more than 50 students and teachers, that goal has become a reality. Students have been collecting paper, plastic bottles and glass from all over the building to be recycled. The funds gained from recycling these materials will be used to give back to the Farmingdale community through food purchases and other charitable endeavors. Pictured here are third, fourth and fifth grade students who participate in the STEP UP Club, along with faculty advisor JeanMarie Papillo.

Science Keeps Imaginations Afloat at Northside

Melissa Tyler's third grade class at Northside Elementary School has been immersed in a science unit on buoyancy. To study mass, surface area, displacement, density and volume, the students created miniature boats out of aluminum foil and clay and tested how well their designs would float in saltwater as compared to fresh water. The young scientists worked in teams to complete these tasks and assess the accuracy of their early predictions. Nicholas DeFelice observed that a hexagonal weight floated in the salt water and sank in the fresh water. "Salt water will hold more cargo because it is more buoyant," he reported. Classmate Samantha Stoll found that she was able to make the clay float by using a flat shape instead of a round one.



Makenna Parisi (front) tests the waters while Aidan Kelly records her findings.



Woodward Parkway Readers Search for Clues

If there's a mystery to be solved, the reading detectives at Woodward Parkway Elementary School are sure to crack the case! As part of a unit on nonfiction reading and writing, third grade students are using the strategies they learned during a reading workshop to find clues in the text that will help them better understand the books they are reading. They are then able to use these clues to write their own nonfiction pieces on such topics as animals, famous Americans and astronomy. The students will use characteristics of nonfiction texts, such as diagrams, captions and tables of contents, in their own works, which will be unveiled during a publishing celebration in January.

Third grade teacher Ruth Cupolo discusses nonfiction writing with her class

Howitt Welcomes U.N. Youth Champion Monique Coleman

On November 18, students at Weldon E. Howitt Middle School welcomed actress, entrepreneur and philanthropist Monique Coleman. Best known for her role as Taylor McKessie in Disney's *High School Musical* movies, Ms. Coleman was recently appointed as the United Nations' first-ever Youth Champion to raise awareness about the challenges facing young people. She was inspired to visit Howitt by the school's involvement with the charitable organization *rock CAN roll*, and Howitt's *ROCKtober Food Fest* food drive. The drive was organized by students in Lauren Castellane's and Jane Walsh's eighth grade classes and generated close to 4,000 healthy food items to be donated to local Long Island food pantries. The auditorium was buzzing with excitement as Ms. Coleman addressed issues that concern middle school students, such as bullying, self-esteem and youth empowerment. The program highlighted ways that children and teens can make positive impacts on their environment and our world.



Howitt students work with rock CAN roll to fight hunger.



At the Top of Their Class at FHS

Farmingdale High School is proud to announce that **Emily Dorso** and **Saniya Khan** have been named valedictorian and salutatorian for the Class of 2011. As drum major of Farmingdale's award-winning marching band, Emily is responsible for leading more than 200 band members. She is also president of the Spanish Honor Society and captain of the varsity softball team. Saniya is a National Merit commended student and an AP Scholar (see stories on page 2). As president of the school's Interact Club, she is working with Principal Glen Zakian to plan fundraising activities to help the citizens of Pakistan who were devastated by monsoons this past summer. Look for complete profiles of our valedictorian and salutatorian in the summer edition of *Our Schools*.

(L-R) Valedictorian Emily Dorso and Salutatorian Saniya Khan



Music Notes



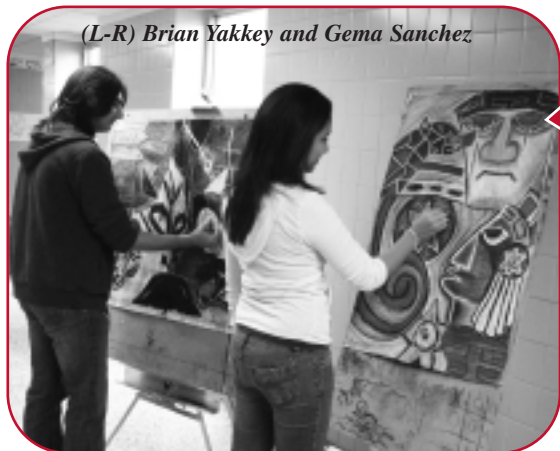
Farmingdale Rocks Newsday's Annual Marching Band Festival

On October 21, Farmingdale High School's Marching Band, along with the award-winning Dalerettes Kickline, Poms and Flag Team, amazed the crowd at Hofstra University's James M. Shuart Stadium on the final evening of *Newsday's* 48th Annual Marching Band Festival. More than 200 students participated in an impressive performance of the band's 2010 halftime routine, *Alive and Amplified*. The Dalerettes' creative and elaborate choreography perfectly complemented the band's exciting renditions of "Here It Goes Again" by OK Go, "I Want You Back" by The Jackson 5, "Bad Medicine" by Bon Jovi and "Time Warp" from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

Farmingdale's marching band, one of the largest on Long Island, was one of 47 local high school marching bands to participate in the three-day exhibition at Hofstra. Many thanks are in order for Band Director Gina Pellettiere, Assistant Director Barbara Lieberman, Dalerette Coach Lauren Webb and Assistant Coach Marianna Munisteri and, of course, the many talented performers for an evening to remember!



Art News



(L-R) Brian Yakkey and Gema Sanchez

AP Artists Jazz Up Everyday Objects

Farmingdale High School's Advanced Placement (AP) Art program allows students to develop extensive portfolios for college credit. Students in Regina Nicholas's AP Art class recently studied and emulated the work of contemporary artist Jim Dine. The students created dynamic and active drawings of passive, mundane objects by emphasizing changes in the rhythm, speed and pressure of their strokes. Ms. Nicholas played music while students worked, explaining that good music and good art will both have changes in tempo and rhythm. Through this less traditional approach, the artist enlivens and infuses the object with meaning and expression.

Farmingdale Fashionistas Get a Head Start

Suzanne Germaine's Fashion Design classes at Farmingdale High School provide students with an important first step toward careers

in the world of fashion. A number of graduates have gone on to attend the Fashion Institute of Technology and Parsons School of Design to pursue majors in fashion, accessory design and textile/surface design. Pictured, ninth graders Cecelia Marcotte and Sydney McCoy create festive eveningwear for a New Year's Eve ball. To execute these garments, students learn to draw the fashion figure; create an original design using historical reference; paint their designs with watercolors; and use advanced tools and techniques to add the textures of velvets, satins and sheers.



Winners & Achievers



Community Pride Attracts Ducks

Joseph McGrath, a third grader in JoAnn Brancaccio's class at Albany Avenue Elementary School, was one of four winners in the "Take a Duck to Class" essay contest, sponsored by the Long Island Ducks and TD Bank. Joseph wrote an essay on the topic, "Why my community is important to me!" in which he expressed his appreciation for his teachers and friends at Albany Avenue, as well as the Farmingdale community's efforts to help those in need. "My community is special because they helped raise money for a boy my age who has cancer and they are helping his family, too," Joseph wrote. "I know that if I get sick, my friends and neighbors will help my parents take care of me."

Joseph won a Visa gift card from TD Bank, and will receive a visit from Long Island Ducks players and their mascot, QuackerJack, during a school assembly in his honor.



FROM THE SPORTS DESK



The Scholar/Athlete Tradition Continues!

Year after year, our student-athletes work hard to achieve success both on the field and in the classroom. That academic and athletic excellence was on display once again this fall. For the fifth year in a row, the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) has recognized every one of Farmingdale High School's fall varsity sports teams as scholar/athlete teams for maintaining a combined GPA of at least 90 percent during the season. The boys' soccer team was also named a scholar/athlete state champion with a 97.072 GPA, the highest among all soccer teams in the state. It is the 11th Farmingdale squad to earn this distinction since 2004. We thank each and every one of our talented student-athletes for another job well done!

| Team | GPA | Team | GPA | Team | GPA |
|----------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|------------------|--------|
| Boys' Soccer | 97.072 | Boys' Cross-Country | 94.844 | Boys' Volleyball | 94.015 |
| Girls' Cross-Country | 95.556 | Girls' Volleyball | 94.500 | Girls' Tennis | 93.611 |
| Football | 95.393 | Girls' Swimming/Diving | 94.416 | Cheerleading | 93.170 |
| Girls' Soccer | 95.116 | Dalerettes | 94.190 | Steppin' Dalers | 90.890 |
| Golf | 94.978 | | | | |