

Our Schools

The Community Newsletter of the Farmingdale Public Schools • Winter 2013-14

The goal of the Farmingdale public schools is to establish ourselves 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.



Congratulations to our fall varsity student athletes; **EVERY TEAM** was named a **Scholar-Athlete Team!** This distinction is awarded to teams that have a cumulative grade point average over 90 percent. Our Dalers also had great success on the field... (See page 4).

Math in Focus

What the Common Core Standards Mean for Your Child's Math Education

What am I ever going to use this for? It's a familiar question. Teachers have no doubt heard it countless times. Most people reading this article probably asked it once or twice during their school years. In no subject is the question more frequently asked than it is in math class, where complicated and difficult equations and formulas can sometimes seem as though they don't have a practical application in the world.

Teachers in Farmingdale schools, in accordance with the new Common Core Standards, are exposing students to the concrete application of mathematical processes, clearly demonstrating the real-world value of math. In all grades from elementary school to middle school, teachers are helping their students understand abstract concepts through practical exercises and visual representations. For example, third grade students are using hands-on methods to learn about addition and subtraction of fractions; they're using pictures and graphs that illustrate what the fractions actually represent, allowing them to understand their function. Through these kinds of activities, students are actively engaging in their math classes as they apply their knowledge and understanding to solve practical problems.

NYSED Modules Guide Students Through Common Core Changes

For all students in kindergarten through ninth grade, teachers will be using the New York State Education Department's (NYSED) curriculum modules. These modules assist in the implementation of the Common Core, enabling a smooth transition for our older students who began their math education under the old curriculum. The NYSED modules increase conceptual understanding of math processes by having students answer problems in a sequential, logical order. Teachers using the modules can modify them according to student needs; Farmingdale educators are adapting the modules to match the learning styles and skill level of the students in their classes.

Exciting New Technologies and Programs in Our Middle School Classrooms

New this year, every math classroom at the middle school level is equipped with iPads to assist teachers in instruction. The iPads are used primarily by groups for collaborative assignments, but apps that provide students the opportunity to work at their own level make the iPads great for one-on-one work with teachers as well.

Also new at the middle school is a math elective called Project-Based Learning (PBL). PBL, exclusively for eighth grade students, is entirely focused on the application of math processes. Students who take this course design projects that strengthen their understanding of the practical applications of math.

The changes to the mathematics curriculum are helping students gain a clear understanding of math concepts and how to apply them, and they are able to appreciate the value of the skills they develop.

Farmingdale School District Earns Prestigious Distinction on AP District Honor Roll

The Farmingdale School District has been named to the 4th annual Advanced Placement (AP) District Honor Roll by the nonprofit organization College Board. Selected school districts were recognized for expanding access to Advanced Placement coursework while increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP exams, AP exams are scored on a scale of 1 to 5. Only 477 school districts throughout the United States and Canada earned this distinction.

Selection on the AP District Honor Roll signifies that a school district is successfully identifying motivated, academically gifted students who would benefit from rigorous AP coursework. "Expanding access to AP courses while improving student performance is a difficult balancing act," said College Board Regional Vice President Bob Alig. "The commitment [Farmingdale School District] has shown to these students is to be commended." Farmingdale will receive a certificate of recognition and posters to display at all schools. Congratulations to everyone within the District who worked so hard to receive this honor.

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Safety at the Forefront for Farmingdale Schools

Four times during the school year, Farmingdale community members from a wide range of occupations meet at Howitt Middle School for Districtwide Safety Committee meetings. Representatives from every Farmingdale school, Nassau and Suffolk County police departments, local fire departments and the PTA, as well as other District staff members, all meet to discuss one of their most important responsibilities: to ensure the safety of Farmingdale school children.

At the meetings, the committee discusses safety issues, with an emphasis on enhancing safety Districtwide. They also set safety goals for the District, and brainstorm the best courses of action to meet those goals. In addition to the large District meetings, building-level safety meetings are held once each month. At the building meetings, which include the assistant principal, security aids, guidance counselors, teachers, parents and occasionally a Nassau or Suffolk County police officer, members take the goals set at the District level and create a plan to incorporate those goals at the school level. The safety meetings illustrate a fundamental truth about our community: safeguarding our children is a responsibility shared by all.

State-of-the-art LobbyGuard System Installed at All Farmingdale Schools

If you've visited a local school lately, you've had to go through our new LobbyGuard System, a revolutionary piece of technology that is keeping our schools safe and secure. LobbyGuard gives a security officer at each school the ability to pre-screen all visitors to ensure that only appropriate people enter the school. When visitors arrive, they must display a government-issued ID and consent to having their photograph taken. The ID is scanned into the LobbyGuard, which cross-references the information, alerting the security officer to any red flags. The LobbyGuard System will greatly assist us in ensuring school safety.

Farmingdale High School is Proud to Announce the Valedictorian and Salutatorian for the Graduating Class of 2014!



With a weighted GPA of 106.417, Leah Ragno is the Class of 2014 valedictorian. Pictured with Leah is guidance counselor Cara Molina.



Elijah Mas is the salutatorian of the Class of 2014, with a weighted GPA of 105.465. Pictured with Elijah is guidance counselor Lisa Jensen.

New Breakfast Menu at Farmingdale Schools: Focus on Nutrition

Good nutrition is the foundation of any productive school day. A healthy diet improves cognitive function, increases energy and helps keep kids healthy. In December of 2010, President Obama signed into law the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act (HHFKA) to ensure that all children in public schools receive the highest quality diet. Many of the changes that are included in the HHFKA are now taking effect here in the Farmingdale School District.

HHFKA-approved changes were made to our lunch menu at the beginning of the 2012-13 school year; this year will see revisions to our school's breakfast program. The changes affect mainly the types of food being offered and the portion sizes. Calorie limit and portion sizes for breakfast have been established for grades K-5, grades 6-8 and grades 9-12. The food served will be selected from the four breakfast components, which are fruits, grains, meats or meat alternatives (soy, tofu, etc.) and milk. For elementary students, breakfast will not exceed 500 calories, and the sodium will be kept at or under 450 milligrams (mg). For middle schoolers, the calorie limit is 550, and the maximum allowable sodium is 470mg; high school students are allowed up to 600 calories with sodium capped at 500 mg. For all grade levels, according to HHFKA guidelines, less than 10 percent of the daily calories are to come from saturated fats. At the start of the 2014-15 school year, we will be making changes to our a-la-carte menu.

Ensuring that all of our students have the opportunity to enjoy a nutritious and appetizing breakfast at school is not only a health-conscious move; it also contributes to increased productivity, clearer thinking and a more rewarding school experience. If you would like additional information about your child's daily menu, please visit the District website at www.farmingdaleschools.org. For more information on the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, visit www.usda.gov and search "HHFKA."

What's Happening in Our Schools

Albany Avenue Elementary School

Educators at **Albany Avenue Elementary School** know the importance of a healthy diet. In late December, the school invited representatives from the award-winning program *The Power of Food* to give a day-long demonstration to all Albany Avenue students on preparing and cooking healthy and delicious meals. Culinary researchers Dr. Robert Dell'Amore and Elaine Medin visited the school to teach students about a variety of cooking procedures and assist them in preparing and serving their own dishes. After the meal, students provided feedback in a group discussion and written assessments. This was a fantastic event, one that taught the students the importance of eating nutritious foods, while allowing them to have some fun.



Woodward Parkway Elementary School

Fourth graders at **Woodward Parkway Elementary School** are learning about one of the most fascinating facets of U.S. History: Native American culture. As part of an interdisciplinary lesson combining ELA and social studies, the students are learning about the Iroquois people and their symbols, traditions, family life and customs. The children are also reading the nonfiction text *The Iroquois* by Mary Englar and the fiction piece titled *Eagle Song* by Joseph Bruchac. After reading and studying the texts, the fourth graders worked in small groups and created charts detailing what they learned. The charts were displayed around the classroom.



Howitt Middle School

In November of last year, students, teachers and parents gathered at **Howitt Middle School** to induct 118 academically gifted students into the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS). Selected by a faculty committee, only students in the eighth grade were eligible for the NJHS. In order to be considered for this prestigious society, students must have maintained a final grade-point average of 92 percent or above by the end of the fourth marking period last year. At the ceremony, Stanley Pelech, director of integrated academics and technical studies, spoke to the inductees, commending them for their considerable accomplishments.



Northside Elementary School

Students at **Northside Elementary School** recently worked with speech-language pathologists to create their very own lesson, which they then taught to first graders in the school. The fourth and fifth grades students designed fall-themed activities, lessons and experiments. The students visited first grade classrooms to teach their lessons, answering any questions the younger children had. Lessons included making predictions and estimations, practicing measuring skills, and using creativity. The students were wonderful leaders and role models for their younger peers.



Saltzman East Memorial Elementary School

Teachers at **Saltzman East Memorial Elementary School** are using an exciting new program geared toward improving phonological and phonemic aptitude. Intended for students in the primary grades, it's called Foundations, and it serves as a complement to the existing curriculum. Each day, students participate in practical lessons that focus on letter awareness, print knowledge, handwriting, alphabetic awareness, vocabulary, spelling and other skills. By using the Foundations program, teachers have access to valuable, measurable student learning objectives that align to Common Core State Standards.



Farmingdale High School

Student athletes at **Farmingdale High School** recently embraced the true meaning of holiday spirit by working together to provide for local families in need. The event, called the *Daler's Deck the Halls Breakfast*, was organized by the nonprofit organization Pay it Forward. FHS students helped in all facets of the breakfast, including the preparation of food. All proceeds from the event went toward providing local residents with clothing, food and gifts for the holiday season. The event was a great success; over 500 people were in attendance.

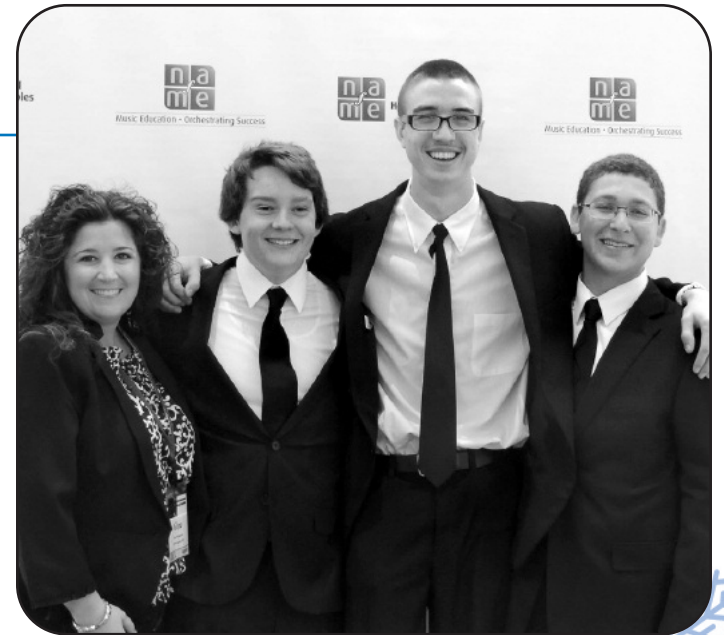


Three FHS Music Students Travel to Nashville to Play With the Best in the Country

There are millions of student musicians in public schools all over the country. If a student earns his or her way into a group that includes only 670 of those millions, that's a considerable accomplishment. Well, that's just what Farmingdale High School students Gregory DeAngelis, Brendan Hopkins and Matthew Malanowski did; they were selected as members of the 2013 All-National Honor Ensembles, and performed at a gala concert in Nashville, Tennessee, in late October.

Sponsored by the National Association for Music Education, the All-National Honors Ensemble featured a concert band, jazz ensemble, mixed chorus and symphony orchestra, and it taxed students with remarkably challenging music. Gregory performed with the concert band, Brendan with the mixed choir, and Matthew with the jazz ensemble. All students at the festival had the honor of performing under the baton of four of the most prominent conductors in the country: Dr. Peter Boonshaft, Miriam Burns, Rollo Dilworth and Rodney Whitaker.

The All-National Honors Ensemble was held in the Presidential Ballroom of Nashville's Gaylord Opryland Hotel. Thousands were in attendance. Congratulations to Gregory, Brendan and Matthew for this impressive achievement.



Farmingdale Student's Artwork Prominently Displayed at County College

If you've taken a drive through the Suffolk County Community College campus in Brentwood recently, you must have seen Elizabeth Pearl Corey's artwork: it measures 16 feet wide by 12.5 feet high. Elizabeth's artwork was one of the standout submissions in the Embracing our Differences program.

Embracing our Differences invites artists to submit work on the theme of appreciating one another and celebrating our uniqueness as human beings. The Suffolk Center for the Holocaust, Diversity & Human Understanding hosts the exhibit to foster stronger connections among individuals and raise awareness of the inequities in the world. Elizabeth's beautiful work, which you can see on the left, was selected for distinction, and was enlarged to billboard size, displayed for all Suffolk residents to admire. Congratulations to Elizabeth on her outstanding achievement!



FROM THE SPORTS DESK



Dalers Football Team Wins Nassau County Championship!

Late in November, before a roaring crowd of 4,000 family members, friends and fellow students, the Farmingdale High School Dalers football team defeated the Massapequa Chiefs by a score of 29-26, and were crowned the champions of Nassau County. The game ended in dramatic fashion: with seconds on the clock and the score tied at 26, the Dalers kicked the game-winning field goal, sending the crowd into a frenzy. The Dalers went on to play Sachem North in the Long Island championship game, held at Stony Brook University. Unfortunately, the Dalers lost a hard-fought game, coming up just short in their pursuit of the Long Island crown. That loss, however, does not put a damper on what was an exciting championship-winning season for the Dalers, and we couldn't be more proud. Congratulations to all involved in this accomplishment, especially our dedicated student athletes and coaches.