

The STANDARD

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEER PARK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Next Phase of Reopening: INCREASING IN-PERSON LEARNING

In light of students' academic and social-emotional needs, Suffolk County's falling COVID-19 positivity rates, an increase in vaccination opportunities for adults, warmer weather, and survey results and feedback from all parts of the school community, the time was right for the district to begin a new phase of its reopening plan. As March approached, the Deer Park Board of Education, administration and teachers developed a plan to increase in-person learning opportunities at the secondary schools while continuing to safely provide as well as resume a variety of extracurricular activities and events.

A survey allowed parents to choose their child's learning method for the remaining months of the school year, selecting from three options: A full virtual schedule of five days with livestreaming from home, a hybrid schedule of two days in person and three days livestreaming from home, or four in-person learning days plus Virtual Wednesday. Parents were asked to commit to one model for each child for the remainder of the school year to protect the continuity of each model and maintain an accurate count of students in a room for social distancing.

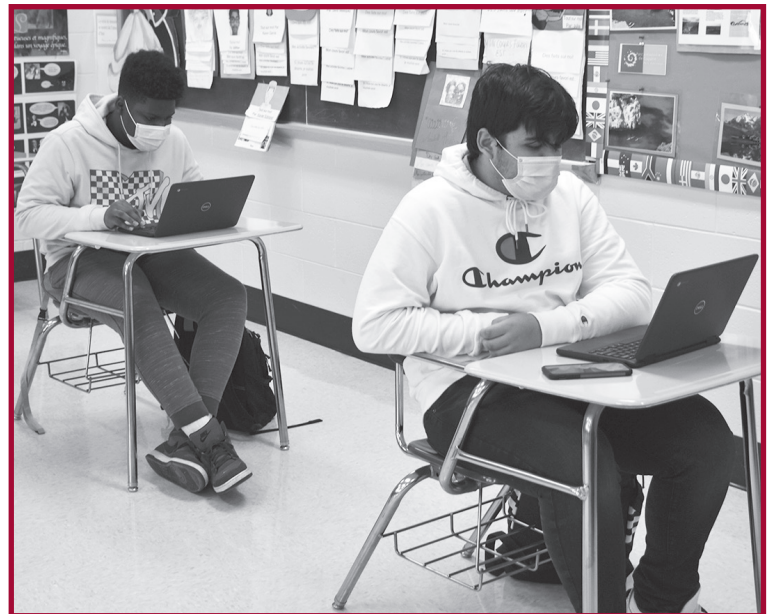
On March 8, all secondary classes switched to a livestreaming model. Students at home logged in period by period to each class throughout the day. In a phased-in approach to increase in-person learning, for students who opted for the four-day in-person model, seniors returned to school on March 15; eighth and ninth graders on March 22; and sixth, seventh, 10th and 11th graders on April 6.

In this endeavor, the district is prudently using what staff and

administrators have learned about safety over the last year. By waiting until March, windows and monitored exterior doors can be opened to promote fresh air circulating throughout the buildings, and as weather permits, outdoor spaces will be used for physical education, music, lunches and other activities.

The following safety protocols will remain in effect:

- Virtual Wednesdays will continue to be used to deep clean and sanitize the buildings.
- Masks must still be worn at all times, except for lunch and teacher-designated mask breaks.
- Daily temperature checks and weekly health screenings will still be required.
- Hallways will still be clearly marked for one-way directional traffic.
- Stairwells will still be designated as up or down only.
- Grade levels at Frost will continue to operate on staggered schedules in the building to alleviate hallway congestion.
- Students will not be able to congregate in hallways.
- Lockers will continue to not be utilized.
- Symptomatic individuals will still be asked to remain at home.



- Anyone displaying symptoms in the buildings will be isolated.
- Contact tracing and quarantine orders will continue as needed.

Although the number of students in each building will increase, social distancing will remain in the majority of classrooms. Individual barriers may be used in some project-based rooms such as technology and art. Based on surveys and the number of people opting to remain virtual or hybrid, most sections will have no issues with space. Classes that have a greater in-person learner count than seats in the classroom will utilize an overflow room. If necessary, students will report to the overflow room on a rotating basis for the period/course in which 6 feet of social distancing cannot be maintained. Individual students will not be placed in the overflow room more than once a week, and each classroom will create a

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schedule to rotate students in an equitable way. Students will be required to have their Chromebook and headphones and will log-in to join the livestream of the class.

“This has been an extremely challenging year, to say the least, but there appears to be a light at the end of the tunnel,” Superintendent James Cummings said. “Our goal is to continue our road back to normalcy. As we keep moving forward in this endeavor, steps must be taken

to ensure that our staff, students and community remain safe. If we continue to work together, we can get our schools back to the way the children of this great community deserve and need them to be. I want to thank the parents, the students, the teachers and the staff of Deer Park for working together to help us get to this point.”

In one highlight of this new phase, Deer Park High School’s Class of 2021 was

able to officially kick off their senior year activities with a surprise welcome back celebration upon their return to in-person learning on March 15.

The seniors were greeted in the lobby – which was decorated in their class colors – by a live musical performance by members of the school’s band and a welcome banner signed by the high school staff, and were invited to have their picture taken in front of the senior display.

Student-Athletes Make Responsible Return With Renewed Enthusiasm

With the district working overtime to ensure safety amid the change of seasonal scheduling, Deer Park’s high school student-athletes participated in their sports with a strong sense of renewed enthusiasm and purpose.

During the winter season in February, the boys basketball team was a major success, going 5-0 in League IV play and 6-2 overall on route to earning their seventh league championship since 2012. They also qualified for the Suffolk County playoffs for the 12th season in a row. Freshman Preston Edmead was named All-County and League IV Player of the Year, while sophomore Anthony Daley, junior Kyle Jefferson and senior Jalen Van Dorn were named All-League. The Falcons return 13 lettermen from this year’s squad and have already begun working on their 2021-2022 campaign. Other participating

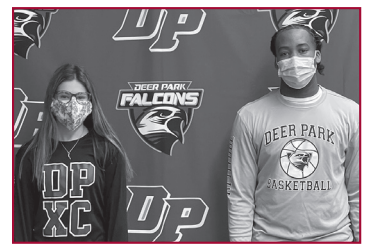
winter teams included boys bowling (a playoff qualifier), girls track (winning all four meets), girls basketball, swimming, wrestling, cheerleading and kickline. Six winter teams earned Scholar-Athlete recognition. Following the winter session, the fall season began in March and will transition to spring in April.

“It was a very busy month of February trying to get all of the necessary procedures in place in order for athletics to happen, but well worth it to allow the athletes to get back to competing again,” said Dominick Fontana, district administrator for athletics, physical education, health and recreation. “I want to thank all of the coaches and athletes for their assistance and for following all of the protocols.”

For high-risk sports such as JV and varsity wrestling and girls and boys basketball,

weekly COVID-19 testing was necessary. Five staff members – nurses Holly Giovi, Pasqua Girani and Monique Hornik and trained staff members Jeanne-Marie Kavanaugh and Dan Stevens – came in every Saturday for three weeks to conduct testing using the Binax Now Rapid Antigen Nasal swab. A total of 80 athletes were tested, with zero positives. The same process will take place for fall sports such as football and volleyball.

“COVID-19 rapid testing is a new process that has been introduced to the Deer Park High School Athletics Department,” Girani said. “We are happy to play a part in navigating new ways to help our students return to their favorite sports in a safe and responsible manner. The testing has been going seamlessly. Our students have been extremely cooperative and courageous as this is new to



them as well.”

Adding an enhancement to the proceedings is a new NFHS Network camera system, livestreaming from the gym and turf field. The system was purchased last year at the end of the 2019-2020 basketball season, but wasn’t able to be used until this year. The district decided to purchase a subscription for the balance of the year to provide free access for parents, showing basketball and wrestling in the winter season and football, volleyball and soccer in the fall season. The district’s information technology department also provided livestreaming for bowling and swimming.



HS THEATER STUDENTS

Record Memorable One-Act Plays

This was a different but positive year for the student directors and actors of the high school's annual One Act Play Festival, traditionally a fall theater showcase for different short plays directed by students. Delayed due to snow and COVID-19, it nevertheless persevered and was recorded for viewing by the students' families in early 2021. The festival, co-directed by Michael Moriarty and Catherine Singer, featured five memorable comedies: "Wine, Candles, and Anthrax," "Rumple Schmumple," "Zombies R Us," "Graceland" and an original play by senior Alexa Arbore, "En Garde."

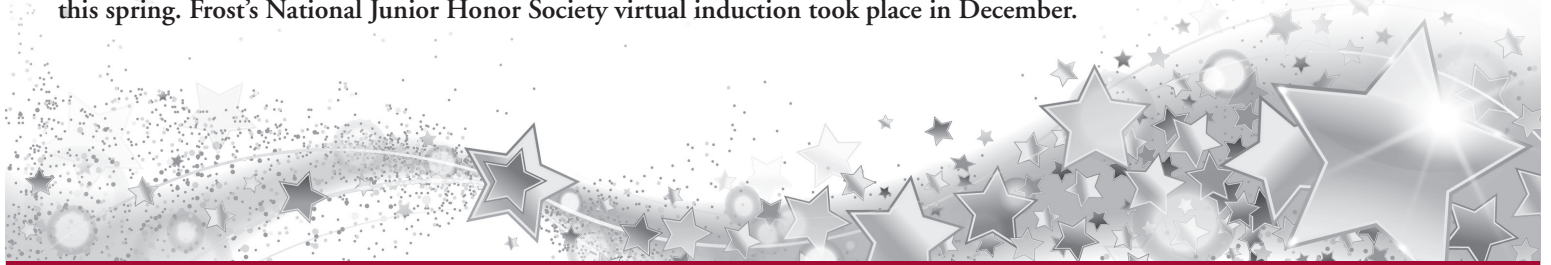


DPHS Virtually Inducts

65 New National Honor Society Members

The high school inducted 65 new members into the National Honor Society in February. The virtual ceremony was led by President Jasleen Kaur and included speeches from National Honor Society adviser Seth Margolin, Principal Charles Cobb and District Administrator of Instructional Technology Jay Murphy. The inductees were also congratulated by Suffolk County legislators Susan Berland, Tom Donnelly and Steven Flotteron, as well as Town of Babylon Supervisor Rich Schaffer and Deputy Supervisor Tony Martinez.

The school's Math and Science Honor Societies and World Language Honor Society virtual inductions will all be held later this spring. Frost's National Junior Honor Society virtual induction took place in December.



SECONDARY CLUBS CONTINUE TO THRIVE

Despite the challenges of organizing extracurricular activities amidst a pandemic and social distancing, both the high school and Frost have managed to ensure that students are able to participate in vital activities and clubs, all held virtually.

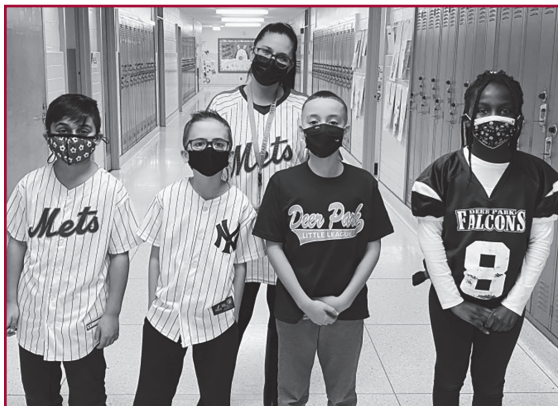
At the high school, extracurricular clubs are offered based on teacher availability. Students interested in a particular club can join that club's Google Classroom, using codes listed on the high school's webpage under DPHS Co-Curricular Clubs. Offerings include Academic Team, Art Club, Best Buddies Club, Black Student Union, Chamber Ensemble-Chorus, Chess

& Mind Games, Community Service, Cornerstone, DECA, Dungeons and Dragons, Environmental Club, Gender Sexuality Alliance, International Culture Club, Literary Magazine, Marching Band, Math Honor Society, Math Team, Mock Trial, Newspaper Club, Patriot Club, PEN Society, Plays (fall and winter), Red Cross Club, SADD, Science Honor Society, Science Olympiad, Social Issues Club, Stage Crew, Varsity Leaders Club, World Language Honor Society and Yearbook.

At Frost, virtual extracurriculars are likewise listed on the school webpage under Clubs & Activities, where students

can click on the activity they are interested in and join the relevant Google Meet. Offerings include Anime Club, Art Innovators, Audio Visual Assistant, Cabaret, Chamber Ensemble-Chorus, Chamber Ensemble-Orchestra, Drama Club, Fashion Club, Girls Who Code, Golf Club, Homework Club, Internet Club, Jazz Ensemble Band, Math Team, Mind Blasters, National Junior Honor Society, Newspaper Club, Science & Environmental Club, Sixth-Grade Intramurals, Social Studies Club, Step Squad, Student Ambassadors, World of Difference and Yearbook.

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READ Month Book Celebration Kicks Off at Elementary Schools

READ Month kicked off this spring throughout Deer Park's elementary schools, emphasizing the value and enjoyment of reading books.

At JFK, READ Week began on March 1 with daily themes, from wearing jerseys for Sport Your Favorite Book Day and wearing sunglasses on a beach towel for Beach Party Day, to Flashlight Friday where students read books with a flashlight and the lights off. For the entire month, March Book Battle Madness

– structured similarly to the basketball March Madness – gave JFK's teachers a chance to expose students to different books that they might not necessarily read in the classroom.

At JQA, members of the Board of Education and district office were invited to visit the school as guest readers. Each class at JQA enjoyed a special read-aloud – either in person or virtually – to share the love of reading and inspire students to read during Read Month. JQA also held a READ Race

in conjunction with the theme of “On Your Mark...Get Set...Go Read!,” challenging each grade level to read and record their minutes. Staff members representing each grade took part in a “race” to close out READ.

At May Moore, READ Month kicked off on March 2 with a virtual assembly with “Pete the Cat” author Eric Litwin. As a special treat for students, Pete the Cat himself visited classrooms and students were invited to dress in pajamas for afternoon milk and cookies.

Deer Park Offers Drive-Up COVID Testing Site at the HS

As a service for its constituents, the district has partnered with local health company Advanced Cardiovascular Diagnostics to offer voluntary, on-site, rapid COVID-19 testing for the Deer Park educational community. The initiative began on Feb. 2 and will continue through the school year. Drive-up testing is being offered every Tuesday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at a mobile site located at the back parking lot of Deer Park High School.

A nurse comes out, administers the test and provides immediate results from the rapid antigen test. ACD informs the district of any positive cases. All tests require an appointment made in advance, with payment processed through the individual's health insurance. The uninsured are also welcome under the CARES Act. Flyers are sent out every Thursday via school messenger and posted on the district website with a direct signup link.

“This provides peace of mind for the community, who don't have to stand on line at a local medical facility,” said Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Alicia Konecny.

