

# The STANDARD

ISSUE 2

WINTER-SPRING 2020

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEER PARK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Districtwide Flexible Seating Enhances Student Engagement

Bringing meaningful student choice and enhanced engagement, flexible seating implementation has taken root across Deer Park in classrooms and other learning spaces at each of the district's buildings.

"Our teachers have found that when students have a choice of where to sit or what to sit on, they are more engaged in the lessons," said JFK Principal Kelly Benson. "Flexible seating works great for students that have trouble sitting still as some of the options permit movement. It allows them to get their extra energy out and focus on the lesson being taught."

"The move toward flex seating at May Moore has happened organically because teachers see

the benefit of allowing students to choose where they learn best," said Principal Philip Paniccia. "Classrooms in the 21st century are dynamic spaces, and flexible seating can play a large role in

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**"Flexible seating encourages collaboration and community within the class."**

*-Christopher Molinelli, JQA Principal*

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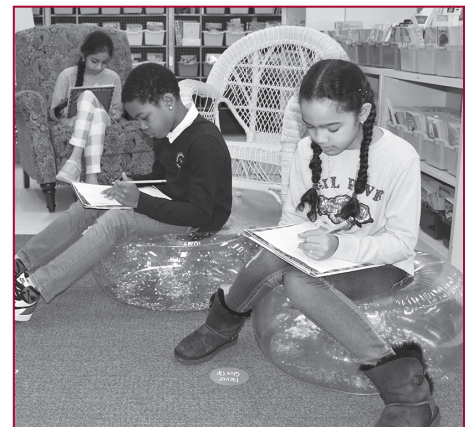
meeting the needs of our diverse learners."

"Students love the ability to choose from a variety of seating options," said JQA Principal

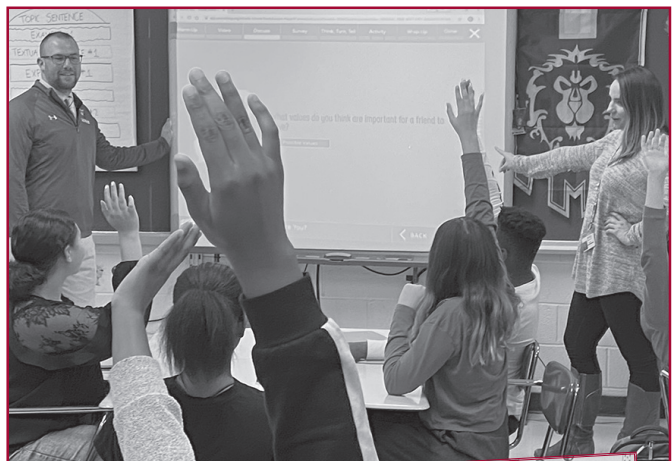


Christopher Molinelli. "Flexible seating encourages collaboration and community within the class."

"We wanted to create a space where students could work collaboratively in different types of groupings," said Robert Frost Principal Eliana Levey regarding the school's new library flexible seating area. "The hope is that student creativity will be sparked, and students can engage in more outside-the-box thinking if they are in a different seating experience. Students like the novelty of having somewhere different to do their work, which leads to increased focus."



# SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL INITIATIVE TAKES SECOND STEP UP TO FROST

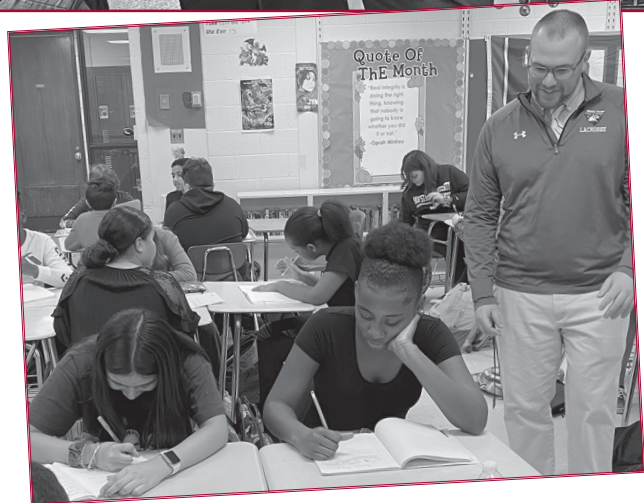


The district's social-emotional initiative, utilizing the research-based learning program Second Step and aligning with New York State mandates, was implemented in the three elementary buildings last October and began being phased in at Robert Frost in December.

In the online-based middle school Second Step program, teachers in all four core subject area classes – math, social studies, English and science – teach one social-emotional lesson per month in a specific area. Over the course of the entire year, students receive 24 social-emotional learning lessons based on the five core competencies of self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and social

awareness.

“The overarching goal is to help students become better learners and more successful in school,” said Associate Principal Jack Bixhorn. “Research suggests that students who receive these lessons have increased achievement scores and improved attitudes, and it leads to fewer disruptive classroom behaviors. The entire school is dedicated to this, and both teachers and students have given positive feedback. It provides the students opportunities to better understand how they are feeling, come up with strategies to manage themselves and set goals. We also hope it will help students get to know each other better and reduce peer conflicts.”



## Focusing on Black History Month

Black History Month was celebrated around the district during February. JFK featured a bulletin board and daily inspirational quotes from influential African Americans. Robert Frost focused on the many contributions made by



African Americans throughout the country's history, including inventions, scientific innovations, entertainment, literature, politics and sports, and continued an annual tradition by showcasing an informative display case in the main lobby. The high school's Black Student Union hosted a viewing of the film “42: The Jackie Robinson Story” and presented the inaugural Black History Month Extravaganza, with community members and district administrators in attendance. The event featured an exciting blend of song, dance and poetry in celebration of African American history and achievement.

Finally, a dozen district staff members and students – JFK Associate Principal Shaun McLeod;



teachers Lynne Connors, Brianne Hertzog, Amina Kennedy and Kevin Marner; social workers Kescha Correa, Francine Fair, Carol Miller-Douglas and Andrea Nelson-Williams; and high school students Kamani Clinkscales, Brandon Gilbert and Jonathan Gordon – were recognized at a Black History Month Celebration at the Community Presbyterian Church.



# Connecting *with* Careers

Deer Park is focusing on career readiness, with students around the district being introduced to types of careers and what's needed for job success.

More than 300 freshmen participated in the high school's long-running annual Career Day, designed to set them on a possible career path. This year's event included a job interview workshop and mini career presentations by 55 volunteer guests, with each student meeting 10 different professionals including lawyers, financial experts, marketers, police officers, firefighters, physician's assistants, physical therapists,

nurses, dental hygienists, DJs, geologists, forensic scientists, psychologists and speech pathologists.

JFK's inaugural Career Day helped students make a connection between school and the workplace by speaking with visiting volunteers from fields including law, banking, the military, entrepreneurship and law enforcement. Students rotated through 21 tables in the gym, learning about what each guest's career entails and asking them questions.

Dress for Success, held on two separate days at JQA and

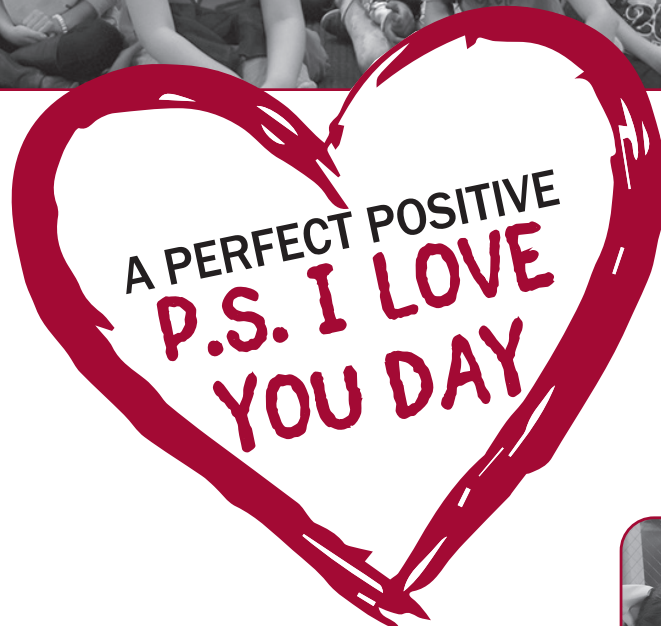
May Moore, introduced career exploration to the district's youngest students while stressing the importance of working hard to achieve academic and career goals. A lesson plan, video and assignment were provided to the students to help connect educational achievement and a strong work ethic with career success. Kindergartners through second graders were encouraged to dress for the career that they want, and during lunch periods, students were able to pose with career props in a mini photoshoot.



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Deer Park, NY 11729

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**Students and staff at the high school, Robert Frost and JFK wore purple – symbolizing love, acceptance, antibullying and suicide prevention – to show their support for P.S. I Love You Day on Feb.14.**



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