

# The STANDARD

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## Change Provides **NEW** Experiences *at Life Skills Center*

Positive changes have come to the district's long-running life skills program, with a successful relocation to enhance the acquisition of both job skills and life skills, and an expansion to the community with a food pantry affiliated with Island Harvest.

The Life Skills Center moved this year from the Washington School to the Lincoln building, making full use of the new space's multiple rooms to create four different learning experiences: a sunny studio apartment, including a kitchen and living room; a "retail store," donated by Dressbarn, where the students learn shopping, money and budgeting skills; the former Lincoln main office, converted into a functional office space for the life skills students; and the food pantry, where the students can learn skills like sorting inventory in a grocery-type setting.

The district currently has 10 students enrolled in the life skills program, which runs from kindergarten through 12th grade.

"The program provides many functional opportunities for our students to develop the skills that they will need in their everyday lives," said special education

teacher Maria Devitt.

The 10 currently enrolled life skills students are at the Lincoln Life Skills Center on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, rotating through the apartment, food pantry, retail center

and office. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, they participate in vocational training at an increasing number of off-site job placements such as Walmart, Party City, Shop Rite and FragranceNet.com. On Friday afternoons, the life skills program features community-based instruction; according to Devitt, this involves educational instruction in naturally occurring community environments such as soup kitchen volunteering, which provides students with real-life experiences.

"We are trying to give our kids a wide range of experiences to transition from a Deer Park High School student to a contributing member of our community," said Kimberly Skillen, the district administrator for secondary curriculum and instruction. She added that as the life skills program has grown, it is fortunate that it has been so strongly supported by both the Board of Education and the Deer Park community.



## New Pantry Program Debuts

The district's new food pantry program, run as part of the Life Skills Center, is a certified Island Harvest pantry, which means resulting support from that organization. The pantry will involve the students' participation, providing a unique opportunity to have Deer Park students help Deer Park families. It will enhance job skills for the students in a real-life application of what they are learning while responding to growing food insecurity in Deer Park.

The idea for the pantry stemmed from last summer, when special education and ENL summer school students were offered free lunch through Island Harvest. The life skills students enjoyed organizing the lunch program and saw firsthand the need in the community.

The pantry is open to any local family in need who requests food. "We can do it in a respectful way," said Skillen, who noted that a discreet pickup procedure will be put in place. Social workers will input requests in a Google form, and the life skills students will create the boxes of food, based on social worker entries. Monthly food drives will be held to replenish the pantry, and members of the high school's student council will work in the pantry as mentors to the life skills students.

## PLANNING BEGINS FOR Smart Schools Bond

When the Smart Schools Bond Act, intended to improve learning opportunities in schools, was approved by voters in the November 2014 election, Deer Park was set to receive significant funding based on the proportion of school aid the district receives.

The district's share is a \$2,636,151 one-time allocation that never expires, and Deer Park has already begun researching needs in technology infrastructure and security that might be addressed through use of the Smart Schools funds.

The planning process is still in the very early stages, but according to Anastasia Tzortzatos, the new district administrator for instructional technology, some of the work on the district's want list includes updating infrastructure for its computer network, shifting to 100 percent wireless, and adding Smart Boards and a second Internet service provider. On the security end, the district is researching door-ajar systems as well as ID scanners. The plan will include intensive discussion with all necessary stakeholders in the community.

"We are looking to build and grow as a district through supporting this initiative," said Tzortzatos.

Once planning has been completed, the district will submit an application and detailed plan to New York State. Marguerite Jimenez, assistant superintendent for business and operations, notes that when the application has been approved by the state's review board, a work timeline will come into clearer focus, and as the work is completed, the district will submit for reimbursement.

### *Bond Thank You*

The district's capital bond referendum was approved by district voters on Oct. 20. The tally was 291 yes votes and 91 no votes, including absentee ballots.

The total bond is \$17 million for projects that address security, building improvements and grounds enhancements. Approximately 62 percent of the costs will be covered by state building aid, and there will be no additional tax impact on residents.

"We thank the Deer Park community for its continued support of our schools," said Superintendent Eva J. Demyen.



## Building Momentum with Fourth Health Fair

The district held its fourth annual Health & Wellness Fair on Oct. 24, in conjunction with the high school's Varsity Leaders Club Halloween Carnival and a Deer Park Fire Department open house. The free event, sponsored by the district's health and physical education department, took place at a new double location on Lake Avenue – at JFK as well as across the street at the firehouse – with representatives of the Suffolk County police and sheriff's departments also on hand.

This year's fair was the most heavily attended to date and featured numerous health-related activities and more than 50 informational booths, including a mobile blood drive, dental and orthodontic care, fire safety and CPR, healthy eating demonstrations, health screenings, sports clinics, child safety and car seat inspections, martial arts and kickboxing, and Zumba, Pilates and yoga.

"We seem to be building momentum with each passing year," said the district's health administrator, Dominick Fontana. "Our goal is to continue adding activities and vendors in years to follow."

## Upcoming PFC Events

- Dec. 2 – RF PFC Meeting Canceled
  - Dec. 4 – RF PFC Annual Auction Dinner 7 p.m.
  - Dec. 8-9 – RF PFC Holiday Fair
  - Dec. 11 – DPHS PFC Hoodie Design Deadline
  - Dec. 11 – JFK PFC Holiday Flea Market/Drop & Shop 6-9 p.m.
  - Jan. 6 – SEPFC Meeting @ JFK 7 p.m.
  - Jan. 13 – RF PFC Meeting
  - Jan. 29 – SEPFC Fun Night Out Fundraiser @ Changing Times
- \*coming Spring 2016 – DPHS FC Color Run*

# HS MATH Adapts to the Common Core

The high school's math curriculum has changed and evolved over the last three years to better prepare students to succeed with Common Core State Standards exams and classes.

"The Common Core has been a big shift for the staff and the students," said John Watson, the district's curriculum associate for math and business in grades 6-12. "The challenge we have faced is assuring student success while at the same time meeting the expectations of the state."

Back in 2012, two years prior to the Algebra I curriculum being introduced at the high school, the district examined how the Common Core standards matched the existing Mathematics Core Curriculum 2005 standards, and the impact this would

have on the new course. As a result, Deer Park aligned the old standards to the Common Core standards.

From the EngageNY website, the state released curriculum modules for Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and Pre-Calculus, which the district then adapted to meet its needs, driven by the results of a data analysis of current students. Some students were lacking the prior knowledge they would need for the Common Core classes, necessitating grade-level shifts. For example, completing the square, which was previously taught in Algebra II Trigonometry in grade 11, would now be taught in Algebra I in grade nine.

On the staff side of the equation, teachers at the high school have participated in professional

development training with the module writers from Great Minds, formerly Eureka Math, as well as curriculum writing and professional development for the Common Core classes. A common prep period for these educators has led to collaborative work, and peer observations have also helped to enhance reflection and continually improve their teaching skills in delivering the Common Core standards.

"We've had personnel shifts over the past few years to place teachers in grade levels that will best meet the students' needs and success," said Watson. "The needs of the students have always come first, and we're continually adapting our teaching and the curriculum for student success."

## TERRIFIC 10 Seniors Celebrated



(Clockwise from top left): Michael Strenta, Lauren Lazarte, Tajriana Haque, Kevin Chang, Alexandra Jacullo, Theresa Grimaldi, Nicholas DiModica, Kathryn Block, Peter Demopoulos and John Santare were honored by Superintendent Eva J. Demyen and Principal James Cummings.

The high school's top 10 ranked seniors for 2015-2016 were announced during an Oct. 9 morning ceremony, with Kathryn Block and Peter Demopoulos named first and second, respectively.

Rounding out the list were Alexandra Jacullo (ranked third), Theresa Grimaldi (fourth), Lauren Lazarte (fifth), Tajriana Haque (sixth), Michael Strenta (seventh), Kevin Chang (eighth), John Santare (ninth) and Nicholas DiModica (10th).

With a weighted average of 105.62, Block earned top-ranked status as valedictorian for the Class of 2016. An AP Scholar with Distinction, she earned a perfect score

on the AP World History exam. She serves as captain of the school's swim team and is an award-winning Girl Scout. The senior will apply to Rochester Institute of Technology, Penn State, Lehigh University and Quinnipiac University, and plans to study civil engineering and architecture with the goal of developing sustainable housing from organic materials.

"Though Kathryn is respected by many for her academic prowess, I find it to be her character that truly sets her apart, making her a leader among her class," said guidance counselor Jessica Yawney.

The second-ranked senior and future salutatorian,

Demopoulos serves as editor in chief of the school newspaper, captain of the academic team, and president of the National Honor Society, Pen Society and Class of 2016. An AP Scholar with Honor, he was named treasurer of the school's DECA club, with which he placed fifth in county and state tournaments. Demopolous also participates on Deer Park's varsity golf team and

Chess Club, and volunteers at Good Samaritan Hospital in his spare time.

Each of the terrific 10 were given accolades by Deer Park faculty as they enjoyed a celebratory breakfast in the school library with their families.

"This group is going to make us proud in the future," said Principal James Cummings. "Congratulations to their parents and families."

## Board of Education

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# A Rousing **HOMECOMING** FOR THE COMMUNITY

Parading across town from JFK to the high school parking lot, the Deer Park community celebrated homecoming in style on a cold and crisp Oct. 17.

This year's floats were created around a video game theme, with entries from the freshmen (Donkey Kong), sophomores (Pac-Man) and juniors (Pokemon) topped by a winning Super Mario Kart float from the seniors on their "last lap" before graduation.

Principal James Cummings and Superintendent Eva J. Demyen addressed the audience at the football field, praising the efforts of the district's Booster Club and exhorting the Falcons to win.

Special guests for the day were Babylon Town Councilman Thomas Donnelly, a Deer Park resident; Suffolk County Legislator Lou D'Amaro, an alumnus of Deer Park's Class of 1976; and 2001 graduate John Cestaro, the president of the Deer Park Community Association.

Frank Cresciullo and Dominique Guttadauria were announced as this year's homecoming king and queen, taking a celebratory truck tour around the stadium. Rounding out the homecoming court were Ahmed Abdeltawab, Ryan Brennan, Tara Englehardt, Kayla Rios, Dan Sciarabassi, Alvin Sime, Stephanie Sinka and Kellee Washington.

Performers rousing the crowd included the marching band, the high school and Robert Frost Middle School kicklines, and cheerleaders from the high school, middle school and PAL.

When it came time for football, the varsity Falcons came up short in the end, losing a 22-21 back-and-forth contest, but the day was an exciting one for the entire community.

