

The STANDARD

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Cultural Awareness: Deer Park's *Pride and Joy*

In a district comprised of so many diverse people, cultural awareness throughout Deer Park is more vital and important than ever, enriching the school community and curriculum and creating an environment of cultural exploration, acceptance, appreciation and tolerance.

JFK promotes acceptance through the daily morning Words of Wisdom readings over the PA system that focus on promoting kindness, empathy and acceptance of different cultures. The school's third-grade social studies curriculum focuses on cultures around the world, enriched by classroom visits from family speakers who deliver firsthand information on their cultures.

The ENL programs are a core source, with staff members working alongside classroom teachers and other faculty to ensure that cultural awareness and tolerance are themes that unite the schools' diverse student populations. Earlier this year, ENL students performed on Family Fun Night as a celebration of love and unity. At the recent districtwide International Poetry Festival, ENL and world language students of all ages, some wearing traditional attire, recited original poems in their native languages and sang songs using sign language, cultural props and flags. On World Language Exploration Day at both primary schools, high school seniors studying Spanish, Italian and French visited classrooms to teach language lessons to the younger students.

"We began the year discussing our native countries and languages," said ENL teacher Vanessa Pizzo. "We made passports and suitcases displayed in the hallways, recognizing the different countries and languages spoken."

"Creating safe, multicultural environments for our ENL students is one of our primary goals," said ENL teacher Ashley Rosenberg. "Within our classroom, students are encouraged to share their backgrounds and use their native languages in order to better understand content. We also strive to use a diverse body of multicultural texts so that information is accessible to all students. All our students have become more tolerant global citizens."



"We talk about how we celebrate holidays in our homes. My dad wears a tuxedo and my mom wears a Guatemalan dress. I like to talk about it with my friends and teachers." – JOA second-grader Bayron Bulux-Hernandez

"We celebrate different holidays together, like Cinco de Mayo. I taught everybody how to dance and we got to eat salsa and chips." – JOA second-grader Moises Moreno Elvir

"Our culture is our pride and joy. It's a beautiful thing to express and be proud of, and makes us a nation united." – JFK fifth-grader Julia Holland



Special Education Committee

Chaired by Board Vice President Donna Marie Elliott and trustee Keith Rooney, the Special Education Committee meets to discuss different ways to enrich the lives of the district's special needs students through such activities as school dances, clubs, talent shows, district internships, and sports and socialization groups. By integrating general education students as helpers in these endeavors, the committee has fostered disability awareness and acceptance within the school community.

"Our committee is important to the school community because we have provided skill-based programs, social and athletic programs, and safe social outlets for our special needs students to find acceptance and foster friendships," said Elliott.

"This is critical for Deer Park students to be successful, learn important life skills and build their self-esteem," added Rooney. "The committee tries to give every child a chance to be successful, regardless of any

obstacles they may have to endure."

Rooney and Elliott see their roles as being a voice for the committee as a whole, bringing light to issues and communicating requests and suggestions to the superintendent and other Board members.

"My approach is collaboration," said Rooney. "No idea is off the table. We follow tasks and try to drive positive change in the community."

Their goals for special needs students include building confidence and self-esteem, instilling real-world life skills, and helping them push themselves to reach educational goals, network and form relationships, and ultimately find a place in the workforce. Among their proudest achievements are secondary school dances, provided in conjunction with the Special Education Parent Faculty Club, and the after school social skills program, funded by an annual grant, and sports groups such as the bowling league and an after school athletic club.

"Together as a team, we have



Donna Marie Elliott



Keith Rooney

provided moments of fun and structure and have fostered social interaction and friendships that have allowed our students with special needs to feel valued and accepted," said Elliott.

Your Committees at Work

Board members, administrators, district staff and parents play a vital role in the district's five committees, working to address necessary issues and support important projects.

ENL Committee

The ENL Committee, chaired by trustees Donna Gulli Grunseich and Kristine Rosales, is a forum for both staff and community members of the ENL community to come together to help improve the experiences of and offer suggestions to the district's ENL students and families. The committee's goal is to help ease the educational transition of these students and their families into the school and community, empowering them to succeed.

"Deer Park has a growing ENL population and we need to make sure we enable, to the best of our abilities, a good educational experience for all," said Rosales, who noted that she and Gulli Grunseich approach their committee roles more like moderators, providing structure to attain goals.

One goal that was successfully achieved was expanding the Propio on-call translation phone service to make it available for all district staff members, improving communication abilities for the school community.



Kristine Rosales



Donna Gulli Grunseich

Facilities & Grounds Committee

The Facilities & Grounds Committee, chaired by trustee Robert Marino, reviews the educational needs of the district's students and ensures that the facilities are able to accommodate those needs through constant improvements and the recommendation of upgrades and enhancements. The committee, which also includes trustee Al Centamore, conducts walk-throughs of the buildings and grounds on a regular basis.

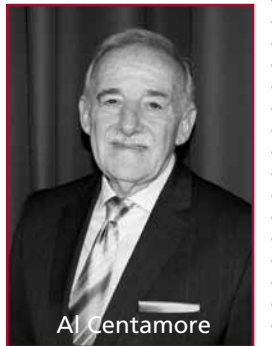
"We try to provide and maintain an appropriate space to enable our educators to teach our students," said Marino. "Whether it be science or sports, language arts or athletics, orchestra or marching band, they all need appropriate spaces. As chairman, I focus on the progression of current projects, then inquire about additional or new projects."

The committee's proudest recent achievements include the new turf field at the high school, the district office grounds on Deer Park Avenue and the new security systems that were put in place.

"Our primary goal is to ensure the health and safety of our children," said Centamore. "We also consult with the experts, engineers, architects and our facilities administrator about our roofs, curtain walls, heating, lighting, science labs and parking lots, and collaborate with our principals, staff and community members to prioritize the needs of our students and the costs associated with each project."



Robert Marino



Al Centamore

Technology Committee

The Technology Committee is jointly chaired by Board President John Gouskos and Christopher Kauter, the district's administrator of instructional technology. The committee discusses all of the district's technology-related initiatives, developing and reviewing timelines and goals at each meeting, with continued follow-up on existing projects to ensure they are meeting the district's current needs.

"Our goal is to collaboratively plan a strategic roadmap to ensure the school district is future-ready," said Gouskos, whose approach to his role as co-chairman begins with obtaining direct feedback from stakeholders. He then seeks to align the needs of each building to common-sense solutions and address any concerns which may arise.

The Technology Committee is particularly proud of its role in supporting the increased use of social media by Deer Park staff members to showcase events and student achievement throughout the school district and community.



John Gouskos

Wellness Committee

Chaired by Board Vice President Donna Marie Elliott, the Wellness Committee serves as a crucial forum to allow each building representative to bring up concerns and suggestions from their building's safety and health response teams, and communicate these concerns to upper management.

"This committee provides the ability to bring building concerns to light, enabling our district to continue to keep the safety and health of all students, staff and visitors at the forefront of our operations," said Elliott. "Our goal is total districtwide communication, from buildings to district office."

As chairwoman, Elliott leads meetings and ensures that enough time is provided for sufficient discussion so that any building and community concerns can be heard.

"I am most proud of facilitating discussion among community members, building representatives, the district office and our facilities administrator, allowing for identification and resolution to district concerns and issues," she said.



Donna Marie Elliott

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High School Artist Andres Colon Chosen for *'Long Island's Best'*

High school student Andres Colon was selected for the 21st annual “Long Island’s Best: Young Artists” at the Heckscher Museum gallery show. His photo “Conquer” was one of only 84 works of art chosen by the Heckscher for the annual competition, which serves to encourage Nassau and Suffolk high school art students to find inspiration in works on display at the museum, using the experience to create their own original works of art. Colon attended the Long Island’s Best opening reception and awards ceremony at the museum, accompanied by his family and art teacher Derek Mainhart, and his work remained on exhibit for a month.



Frost NJHS Inducts 67 New Members



Frost’s National Junior Honor Society inducted 24 new eighth-grade members and 43 new seventh-grade members at an April 3 ceremony. Each of the eighth-graders received the medals they will wear at their June moving up ceremony. The annual ceremony also honored the organization’s current members for their outstanding work during the 2016-17 school year.

Too Good for Drugs Program Helps JFK Students Make Good Choices

JFK introduced the Too Good for Drugs prevention program this year, designed to reduce risk factors for alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. The program, provided through a Hope for Youth grant, developed the social and emotional skills that students need for making healthy choices, building positive friendships, communicating effectively and resisting peer pressure. It ran over a 10-week period, with an instructor presenting a weekly 40-minute lesson to JFK’s fourth- and fifth-grade classes. The students learned how to surround themselves with positive influences and make good choices when negative ones are presented.

“Our students really enjoyed role-playing and discussing some of the pressures of being a kid today,” said Associate Principal Kelly Benson, who initiated the program at JFK.

