

# The STANDARD

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEER PARK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

## *A New Vision* FOR DEER PARK SCHOOLS

Inaugurating a positive new era for the district, Superintendent James Cummings debuted an updated mission statement for Deer Park during his Sept. 3 address on Superintendent's Conference Day. Cummings redesigned the statement alongside other administrators in a carefully considered process of thinking about the district's purpose, writing down goals for this new vision and stating core beliefs that the district is committed to, such as inclusivity, diversity and responsibility.

"From here on out, other than state

mandates, the decisions that we make as a district will have this mission statement in mind," Cummings said. "How do we make the school a better environment for students? How do we help them become more successful in the future and teach them to be more collaborative and get along? Our students come from 43 different countries from five of the seven continents, and Deer Park has a unique opportunity to prepare students at an early age for a global world and how to interact with people from different cultures, backgrounds and beliefs."



### Mission

The Deer Park School District is a diverse and welcoming learning community that is committed to equity and excellence. We pledge to support our students in achieving academic and personal success while providing a safe and secure learning environment in every building, every classroom and for every child.

### Core Beliefs

#### The Deer Park School District is committed to:

The belief that a great education is not only a fundamental right, but is vital in order for our students to achieve future success.

Providing our students with a safe and inclusive learning environment.

Helping our students develop as critical thinkers, collaborative problem-solvers and lifelong learners who face both opportunities and challenges with integrity.

Embracing and celebrating the diversity of our great community.

Supporting students' social-emotional wellness.

The expectation that each member of the staff and student body should assume responsibility for their actions.

Developing positive relationships with students, families and the Deer Park community.

### Vision

Our goal is to create an inclusive learning environment while engaging students in a rigorous curriculum that prepares all students to become productive citizens in a global community.



# STEPPING INTO SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

In 2018, New York State introduced important social-emotional learning benchmarks, policies and programs designed to help students gain vital interpersonal skills and decrease disruptive behaviors. As Deer Park Superintendent James Cummings has said, "You cannot have a successful classroom if you're not supporting the social-emotional needs of your students."

To fulfill this mandate, which requires all schools at every level to include social-emotional learning as part of the curriculum, a group of district administrators and teachers met last year to look at various programs. The committee decided on Second Step, a research-based social-emotional learning program intended to help students build positive relationships, manage strong emotions, resolve conflicts on their own, and become more assertive and better prepared for academic achievement. Designed to be user friendly, Second Step utilizes videos and scenario role-playing. Teachers implement weekly lessons, reinforced by activities that follow through the week and posters visible throughout the buildings. The program is being phased in this year, first

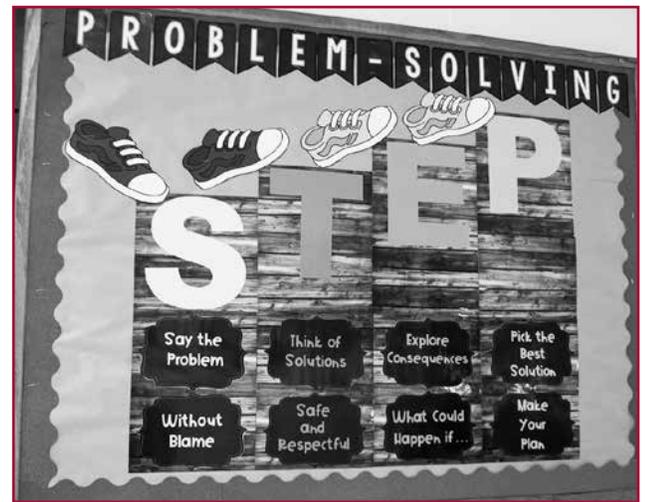
at the elementary schools, with a kickoff date of Oct. 2.

"It's a comprehensive push," May Moore Principal Philip Paniccia said. "I think what we are definitely getting right is giving everyone a role, from teachers to support staff, teaching assistants, aides, custodial staff, bus drivers and cafeteria workers. Anyone coming into contact with kids is going to be versed in the common language used in the program."

"It's an exciting time because we are addressing the whole child and not just looking at academics," JFK Principal Kelly Benson said.

"I think we are going to see a lot less behavioral issues, because with the strategies taught through Second Step, students will be able to better manage their emotions before acting out," JFK Associate Principal Marilyn Gutierrez said.

"Our students will have opportunities to role-play, discuss and practice skills such as problem-solving and calming down to use both in school, at home and in the community," JQA Principal Christopher Molinelli said. "We are excited to use this across schools and all grade levels, in addition to sharing these lessons and vocabulary with parents."



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# DEER PARK WELCOMES *Seven New Administrators*

Following the appointments earlier this year of James Cummings as superintendent, Alicia Konecny as assistant superintendent for pupil personnel services and Kelly Benson as principal of JFK, the district welcomed seven additional administrators in new positions for 2019-2020.



Philip Paniccia, an associate principal at Robert Frost since 2016, is the new principal of May Moore, replacing Konecny. He previously worked as a teacher for 10 years in the Sayville School District and as principal of Sayville Summer School, following a 15-year career in financial service.



Garret Noblett was named an associate principal at the high school. He recently worked as a special education teacher and alternative high school principal at Huntington's Walt Whitman High School as well as Western Suffolk BOCES Regional Summer School principal. Noblett's prior positions include social studies/special education teacher at Deer Park High School, Robert Frost Middle School and Abraham Lincoln Alternative High School, and social studies teacher at Rocky Point High School.



Jack Bixhorn was named an associate principal at Robert Frost. His nine years of classroom experience included working as a math and science teacher and elementary math specialist in the East Rockaway School District. He previously taught algebra and special education at the Dr. Richard Izquierdo Health and Science Charter School in the Bronx.



Marilyn Gutierrez was named an associate principal at JFK. She previously served for 11 years as an elementary classroom teacher in the Copiague and Brentwood school districts.



Tammy Alcalde was named an associate principal for JQA and May Moore. She previously worked for 15 years in the Longwood Central School District in Middle Island as a general education teacher in kindergarten and first grade as well as an instructional support teacher.



Jay Murphy was hired as the new district administrator for instructional technology, replacing Chris Kauter. He had served as the integration specialist for educational technology in the North Babylon School District and coordinator of the North Babylon Alternative High School. He previously taught social studies for 17 years at North Babylon High School.



Justin Uliano was named as the new curriculum associate for ELA, reading and library in grades 6-12, replacing Michelle Kwon. He comes to Deer Park from the Amityville School District, where he served as ELA department chairperson for the last year. He previously worked for three years as English, ELA and library department chair for Sewanhaka High School, and for 16 years as an English teacher in the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District.

Deer Park Union Free School District  
Deer Park, NY 11729

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# Construction UPDATE

Deer Park has continued to upgrade the district's infrastructure via important regular capital projects, including:

- The high school's tennis courts were redone.
- A new science lab and boiler were installed at the high school.
- Asbestos abatement was conducted at Robert Frost and JQA.

An additional improvement as part of the 2015 bond referendum was also completed:

- A safety-enhancing "door ajar" system was installed at the high school.



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