



THE VOICE OF LONG ISLAND EDUCATION

FORUM

scopeonline.us | SPRING 2026

save the DATE

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION
WORKSHOPS - ZOOM, 4-6 P.M.

APRIL 21
MAY 28



VIOLENCE PREVENTION
WORKSHOPS - ZOOM, 4-6 P.M.

APRIL 23
JUNE 2



DASA WORKSHOPS

APRIL 20
JUNE 1



ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
AWARDS DINNER

MARCH 23



SPRING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COURSES FOR TEACHERS

APRIL 15-JUNE 17

Professional Learning Builds Leaders

Dear Educators, Families and Community Members,

At SCOPE Education Services, we are continually inspired by the dedication, talent and leadership of the educators and school leaders who serve Long Island's school communities. We are equally mindful of the essential role parents and community members play in shaping strong, supportive school environments. At the heart of our work is a shared belief that leadership in education is not defined by position or title, but by influence, consistency and the way we show up each day for students, staff, families and our communities.

Two recent highlights – the SCOPE Women in Leadership Conference and our ongoing professional learning offerings – reflect this belief and our continued commitment to leadership that prioritizes people, purpose and service.

In January, SCOPE was proud to host the Women in Leadership Conference, a powerful and affirming two-day experience that brought together educators, administrators, aspiring leaders, board of education members and colleagues from across the region. Guided by keynote facilitator Fran Prolman, participants engaged in thoughtful reflection and meaningful dialogue about leadership rooted in authenticity, empathy and courage. These conversations reinforced that leadership is built through daily actions that foster trust, strengthen school culture and positively impact students and families.

While the conference focused on advancing and supporting women in leadership, it was strengthened by the active participation of men and board of education members, underscoring a shared responsibility for inclusive leadership. The collegiality and openness among participants led to meaningful professional connections, and several districts have already begun planning to extend this work by bringing Fran Prolman into their schools for continued leadership development. These efforts support leadership growth that reaches beyond school walls and into the communities schools serve.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the

superintendents and boards of education who supported their administrators' participation, as well as to our valued vendor partners whose generosity helped ensure broad access. Special thanks to Renu-Milburn for underwriting the keynote speaker and to ESG for hosting the networking event.

Beyond this conference, SCOPE Education Services remains a trusted source for high-quality teacher professional learning. We offer a comprehensive catalog of New York State CTLE-approved professional development courses throughout the fall, winter, spring and summer semesters. These offerings are designed not only to meet certification requirements, but to support effective teaching practices that directly benefit students and classrooms.

With courses offered across all disciplines and grade levels, and available both in person and asynchronously, SCOPE's professional learning programs reflect the understanding that growth and

leadership are shared responsibilities. Teachers, administrators, board members, parents and community partners all contribute to the climate and culture of a school district through their interactions, decisions and collective commitment to students.

As always, SCOPE remains committed to listening to school communities and responding thoughtfully to the evolving needs of educators, leaders, parents and community members across Long Island. Through leadership development grounded in genuine care, integrity, accountability and kindness, and through meaningful professional learning opportunities, we strive to strengthen the schools that are central to our communities.

Thank you for your continued support of SCOPE Education Services and for the important role you play in supporting students, schools and the communities they serve.

With appreciation and respect,

George L. Duffy, Executive Director

A Message from the Executive Director GEORGE L. DUFFY



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SCOPE Education Services, a not-for-profit organization, is permanently chartered by the New York State Board of Regents to provide services to public-school districts on Long Island and in New York State.

BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS: Professional Development Powers SCOPE's Universal Pre-K Classrooms

Across Long Island, more than 3,200 3- and 4-year-olds walk into SCOPE universal prekindergarten classrooms each morning in 29 Nassau and Suffolk school districts. While each classroom has its own personality, one aspect unites them all – a deep commitment to professional growth behind the scenes. Great early childhood education does not happen by chance. It happens because teachers are continuously learning, refining and aligning their practice with the most current research and New York State expectations. At SCOPE, professional development is not a single workshop; it is a yearlong commitment to excellence.

Creating Environments Where Young Children Thrive

UPK classrooms are guided by ECERS-III, a nationally recognized framework that ensures learning environments are intentional, engaging and developmentally appropriate. From clearly labeled learning centers to thoughtfully arranged furniture and materials, every detail is designed to promote independence, exploration and meaningful teacher-child interaction.

The goal? Classrooms that are as nurturing as they are academically purposeful.

Laying the Literacy Foundation

Research shows that strong literacy skills begin long before children formally learn to read. UPK teachers are trained in the Science of Reading and supported in implementing Foundations and Heggerty to build phonemic awareness through listening, speaking, rhythm and sound play. SCOPE's literacy coach provides annual training and refreshers to ensure instruction remains aligned with best practice.

Listening, speaking, singing and storytelling – these are not

small moments but rather are the building blocks of reading success.

Math, Science and the World Around Us

UPK classrooms integrate Core Knowledge Language Arts and Eureka Math, threading math, science and social studies concepts throughout the day. Workshops during the year deepen teachers' understanding of units of study from the New York State Office of Early Learning, ensuring lessons are engaging, hands-on and developmentally appropriate. Music and fine arts are not "extras," but are essential tools for expression, cultural celebration and sensory learning.

A Commitment to Social-Emotional Growth

The early years are about more than letters and numbers; they are about learning how to be part of a community. Through the Pyramid Model, SCOPE educators receive training in positive behavior supports tailored specifically to preschool learners. Teachers are coached on transition routines, tone and language, and proactive strategies that help children build confidence, regulate emotions and develop social skills that will carry them into kindergarten and beyond.



Why It Matters

Every workshop, every model and every refresher session ultimately serves one purpose: to meet the unique developmental needs of 3- to 5-year-old children. Professional development is the invisible architecture behind joyful classrooms. It ensures that when a child builds with blocks, sings a song, listens to a story or practices sharing the moment is intentional, aligned and grounded in research.

At SCOPE, the belief is that strong teachers build strong beginnings. And strong beginnings build bright futures.



Safety, Compliance and Care are Hallmarks of SCOPE

Professional development also ensures every child is safe and supported. Throughout the year, staff participate in:

- Updated child abuse prevention training (including ACEs awareness and virtual safety).
- Violence prevention workshops aligned with Project SAVE.
- DASA training to support inclusive, respectful classrooms free from bullying and discrimination.

These trainings are not checkboxes. They reinforce SCOPE's belief that safe, nurturing environments are foundational to learning.

WHY FAMILIES TRUST SCOPE: TRAINING, SAFETY AND HEART

At SCOPE, the true strength and heart of before- and after-school child care programs lie in the people. By investing in staff through comprehensive training and ongoing professional development, the benefits are reflected in the daily experiences of the children. Students are safe, engaged and nurtured by confident, well-prepared professionals who care deeply about their growth and well-being.

From the very first day, every team member is welcomed into the SCOPE family with a thorough orientation program. This initial training introduces the mission, policies and OCFS regulations, while also addressing essential topics such as child development, behavior management and program safety. By the conclusion



Team members arrive each day ready to learn, grow and provide care that is safe, nurturing and enriching. They build strong relationships with children, celebrate individual accomplishments and guide students through challenges with patience and compassion.

of orientation, staff members feel supported, informed and ready to begin their work with confidence.

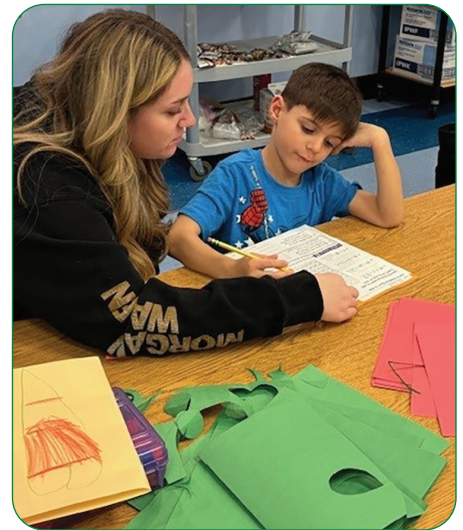
The health and safety of the more than 8,200 children entrusted to SCOPE's care remain the highest priority. All SCOPE directors and assistant directors complete medication administration training, ensuring medications are administered safely and responsibly. In addition, staff maintain current CPR and first aid certifications, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to respond effectively in any situation. Throughout the year, safety procedures and protocols are reinforced because preparedness is not simply a requirement, it is part of the culture.

Professional growth at SCOPE is continuous. Each staff member completes a minimum of 15 hours of professional development annually through virtual and in-person workshops. Training topics range from behavior management and safety practices to enrichment programming. Staff also participate in sessions focused on social-



emotional learning, STEM exploration, literacy development and the creative arts. These learning opportunities encourage collaboration, reflection and the sharing of best practices, ensuring that every child's experience is meaningful, engaging and developmentally appropriate.

At SCOPE, professional development is more than a mandate; it is a commitment to excellence. It represents the investment in people, programs and the families that SCOPE serves. Families can feel confident knowing that when they choose



SCOPE, their children are cared for by trained professionals who are not only skilled, but genuinely passionate about their work.

This dedication to training, growth and excellence is what sets SCOPE apart. It provides parents with peace of mind and offers children a safe, supportive environment where they can learn, grow and thrive. That is the SCOPE difference!

Celebrate America at 250 With SCOPE Summer Enrichment

This summer, the SCOPE Education Services Enrichment Department is bringing something truly special to Long Island. Students entering grades K-12 can spend their summer days learning, creating, performing and exploring, all in a way that's fun, hands-on and unforgettable. The theme for SCOPE Enrichment 2026 is "Salute to America at 250," a nod to the United States' milestone birthday.

Summer learning doesn't have to feel like school, and with SCOPE Enrichment, it doesn't. The five unique programs give students the freedom to follow their passions, and weekly refreshed curriculum keeps things exciting all summer long:

- Stars, Stripes and Showtunes – A two-week, Broadway-inspired musical theater experience, celebrating America's anniversary on stage.
- Summer Circus – Hands-on art, character and creativity inspired by the colorful



tradition of American circus arts.

- Build and Thrill STEM – Engineering, problem-solving and amusement park design challenges for curious minds.
- American Mini Warrior – Physical fitness, movement and fun challenges that channel energy, grit and teamwork/communication skills.
- All-American Eats – A culinary adventure exploring the flavors and diversity of American food, from classics to creative twists.

Students can register by the week and mix and match courses in any way they like.

SCOPE programs are offered across Long Island in the following school districts: Babylon, Eastport-South Manor, Floral Park-Bellerose, Garden City, Huntington, Island Trees, Levittown, Manhasset, Mattituck-Cutchogue, Middle Country, Miller Place, New Hyde Park-Garden City Park, North Bellmore, North Merrick, Northport-East Northport, Rocky Point, Sachem, Sayville, Smithtown, William Floyd and Wyandanch.

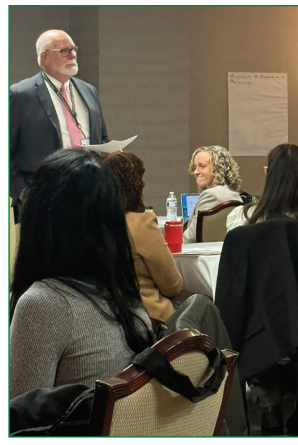
Why SCOPE Enrichment? Because summer should be filled with learning and fun! Kids come alive around what they love, make new friends and head back to school in the fall confident, inspired and full of memories. Summer 2026, the year America turns 250, is the perfect time to make learning fun for your children and students.

SCOPE Women in Leadership Conference Creates Powerful Connections

The SCOPE Women in Leadership Conference, which was held on Jan. 9 and 10, was a powerful and affirming gathering of educators, administrators and aspiring leaders from across Long Island. Over two engaging days, participants came together to reflect, connect and deepen their understanding of leadership through a lens grounded in purpose, authenticity and courage.

Guided by keynote facilitator Fran Prolman, the conference challenged participants to examine not only how they lead, but who they are as leaders. Fran's facilitation created space for honest reflection, meaningful dialogue and practical strategies that resonated across roles and career stages. Her message reinforced that leadership is not defined by title, but by influence, intention and the ability to build trust and connection in the schools and communities.

While the conference centered on advancing and supporting women in leadership, it was strengthened by the presence and engagement of men and board of education members who participated alongside their colleagues. Their involvement reinforced a shared commitment to



inclusive leadership and to creating school cultures where all leaders feel supported, valued and empowered.

The sessions were marked by thoughtful conversation, shared experiences and a strong sense of collegiality. Participants engaged openly with one another, building meaningful connections and professional networks. As a result of

these conversations, several districts have already begun planning to bring Ms. Prolman back to their schools to support professional development for leadership teams, extending the impact of the conference well beyond these two days.

SCOPE extends sincere gratitude to the superintendents and boards of education who supported

their administrators' participation in this conference. That support speaks volumes about a shared belief in the importance of leadership development and investment in the people who serve Long Island's schools and communities every day.

The event was made possible through the support of vendor partners, whose generosity helped offset the cost of the conference and ensured broad access for participants. Special thanks to Tim Peycke from Renu-Milburn for underwriting the cost of the keynote speaker and to Michael Ryan from Energy Systems Group for hosting the networking event, creating additional opportunities for connection and collaboration.

As always, SCOPE remains committed to listening to districts and responding thoughtfully to the evolving needs of educators across Long Island. The Women in Leadership Conference reflects that commitment by bringing people together, fostering meaningful dialogue and supporting leadership growth that strengthens school communities. SCOPE thanks all who contributed to making this conference a meaningful and successful experience.

LEADERSHIP ROOTED IN CARE: Honoring the Stewards of SCOPE's Mission

At the heart of SCOPE Education Services is a mission grounded in service to children, families, school districts and the dedicated staff who make this work possible. That mission is brought to life each day through the leadership of individuals who combine professional expertise with deep compassion and a steadfast commitment to those they serve. Among them are three department leaders whose tenure and impact reflect the very best of SCOPE's values: Mindy Labriola, senior director of student services; Mellisa Krauss, senior director of instructional services; and Peggy Unger, senior director of outdoor education.

Mindy, who has been with SCOPE since 1997, oversees the child care program and brings decades of institutional knowledge along with steady, value-driven leadership to one of SCOPE's most complex service areas. The breadth of her responsibility is substantial, impacting children, families and districts across numerous settings, yet she never loses sight of the individual child or staff member at the center of the work.

Her leadership is defined by consistency, empathy and an ability to balance significant operational

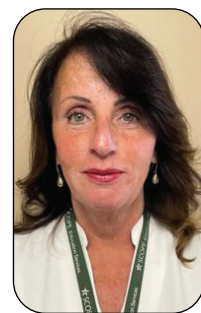
demands with genuine care for people. Mindy understands that high-quality child care depends not only on strong systems and compliance, but on trust, relationships and a supported workforce. She is deeply committed to ensuring staff feel prepared, valued and empowered to do their best work, creating programs that families and districts can rely on with confidence.

Mellisa has been a guiding force within SCOPE since 2011 and currently oversees the universal prekindergarten program. Her leadership reflects a deep understanding of early childhood development and the profound responsibility entrusted to SCOPE by families and districts. She leads with intention and care, ensuring that programs are not only compliant and well-run, but nurturing, inclusive and developmentally responsive to the needs of young learners.

Equally important is Mellisa's commitment to the staff who bring these programs to life each day. She fosters a culture of collaboration, trust and professional growth, recognizing that strong early learning experiences begin with supported and respected educators. Through her thoughtful leader-



MINDY LABRIOLA
CHILD CARE



MELLISA KRAUSS
UNIVERSAL PRE-K



PEGGY UNGER
OUTDOOR ED

ship, Mellisa ensures that the UPK program remains a trusted, high-quality foundation for children's earliest school experiences.

Peggy's tenure with SCOPE began in 1987 – almost 40 years ago – and her leadership of the BOCES Outdoor Education Program reflects both longevity and innovation. Peggy has cultivated programs that prioritize experiential learning, environmental stewardship and student engagement, while maintaining a strong focus on safety and staff expertise. Her leadership demonstrates how passion for learning and respect for people can coexist and thrive over time. She is and will always be the gem of this program.

Together, these leaders exemplify what it means to lead at SCOPE: a commitment to mission, respect for children and adults alike, and a belief that care and compassion are not extras, but essentials.

Ronda Strong Joyfully Leads Enrichment Theater

When Ronda Marie Strong joined SCOPE Enrichment in the summer of 2022, she arrived at exactly the right moment. Fresh on the heels of the COVID pandemic, SCOPE was launching its first summer enrichment program in Wyandanch, and the students needed someone who could help them process what they had lived through. Ronda gave them that gift.

Working with middle school students, she guided them in writing their own theatrical performance, exploring how the COVID pandemic had affected their social and emotional wellbeing. Through art, music, dance and raw expression, those students created something extraordinary. The performance they put on was masterful, something that would have held its own on a New York City stage. It was healing, it was powerful and it set the tone for everything Ronda would bring to SCOPE in the years that followed.

From that first summer, Ronda's impact only grew. She moved on to

run summer theater programs in the Connetquot School District, bringing Disney shows to life with K-8 students. What sets her apart is how she blends grade levels together, creating an environment where younger students learn from older ones and everyone finds their place on stage. Over the past few summers, she has led theater programs across Long Island, including New Hyde Park-Garden City Park and Valley Stream 30, touching countless young lives in the process.

But Ronda's commitment to SCOPE doesn't end when summer does. Every day after school, she works in SCOPE's EDM program in Valley Stream, teaching pre-K through second grade students. Her curriculum weaves together social emotional learning, literacy, fine arts and STEM-based programs, giving youngest learners a strong foundation. On Saturdays, she teaches enrichment theater classes in Garden City, ensuring that even on the weekends, students have



access to the arts.

What makes Ronda truly exceptional is not just her tireless schedule, but the way she shows up for every single child. She is amazing at parent communication, keeping families informed and engaged. More than that, she is a kind soul, meeting each student where they are and helping them discover what they're capable of. Her academic credentials – a bachelor's degree in drama, theater and dance from

Queens College, a bachelor's degree in business administration, a master's degree in educational administration, leadership and policy studies from Hofstra University, and her current pursuit of a doctoral degree in Christian Counseling Psychology – provide the foundation. But it's her heart that makes the difference.

Beyond SCOPE, Ronda serves as a certified dance educator at the William C. Hughley School, director of fine arts at Perfecting Faith Church, a certified liturgical dance instructor for the Word in Motion Dance Company, and CEO of The Anchored Strong Foundation LLC. She balances all of this with grace, bringing her full self to every role.

SCOPE Enrichment is lucky to have Ronda Strong. She is an educator who goes above and beyond every single day, someone who understands that enrichment isn't just about learning new skills. It's about helping children heal, grow and discover the best versions of themselves.

Connecting Today's School Leaders

In January, SCOPE Education Services hosted "Fiscal Leadership: Navigating Budgets, Risks and Resources," facilitated by Ryan Ruf, assistant superintendent for business in Massapequa. The session brought together superintendents, business officials and district leaders from multiple school districts to examine the complexities of school budgeting, financial forecasting and responsible resource management.

Building on the success of that session, SCOPE will continue its professional development series for administrators throughout the spring. Upcoming workshops will focus on key leadership topics, including school safety, human resources, school board relations, and developing a vision and strategic plan for 21st-century schools. These sessions provide an opportunity for district



leaders to connect, exchange ideas and strengthen the leadership skills needed to guide their schools forward. Please visit the SCOPE website at www.scopeonline.us for more information on upcoming workshops.

Learning That Fits: PD for Teachers

High-quality professional learning matters, especially when it is practical, flexible and designed to meet the needs of today's educators. SCOPE Education Services offers a wide range of New York State CTLE-approved professional development courses to support teachers across Long Island throughout the fall, winter, spring and summer semesters.

SCOPE is one of the few remaining providers on Long Island to offer extended learning opportunities in 15- to 45-hour formats, with courses available for 1-3 in-service credits that offer professional growth, engaging content and meet certification requirements.

With offerings across all discipline areas and grade levels, SCOPE's courses focus on current best practices, emerging instructional trends and strategies educators can use immediately. Courses

are available in person and asynchronously, providing flexibility for busy schedules and varying learning preferences.

Each semester, districts receive a comprehensive course catalog to support planning and registration. If a desired course is not listed, SCOPE will work with districts to identify a qualified professional and explore additional offerings based on interest, ensuring professional learning remains relevant and responsive.

Affordable fees, flexible formats and high-quality instruction make SCOPE's professional development program a strong option for districts looking to invest in their educators.

To explore course offerings or discuss additional professional learning opportunities for your district, please contact Michael O'Brien at mobrien@scopeonline.us.

A Proud Connection to the New York State Board of Regents

By DR. JOHN STIMMEL

SCOPE Education Services has a long and distinguished history rooted in New York State's educational system. The organization received its initial charter from the New York State Board of Regents on Sept. 24, 1964, a milestone that continues to shape its mission today.

Established by the New York State Legislature in 1784, the Board of Regents serves as the governing body of the University of the State of New York. The 17-member Board is responsible for creating educational policy and is empowered to charter, register and inspect schools and institutions across the state. From its inception, SCOPE has valued, and continues to be proud of, the collaborative and supportive relationship it enjoys with the Regents.

For two decades starting in 2005, Roger Tilles served with distinction as Regent for Nassau and Suffolk counties. In April 2025, the Long Island region welcomed Regent Felicia Thomas-Williams, who stepped into this important role.

Did you know that Regents are appointed by the New York State Legislature, serve three-year terms and carry out their extensive responsibilities on a voluntary basis? These extraordinary individuals deserve recognition for the countless hours they dedicate in service to the students, educators and citizens of New York State. SCOPE is incredibly grateful for the outstanding leadership provided to the educational community of Long Island by Regent Tilles and Regent Thomas-Williams.



UNIONDALE

High School Celebrates AP School Honor Roll Recognition

In honor of Uniondale High School being named to the AP Honor Roll, the school hosted a ceremony and unveiled a new banner. The AP School Honor Roll recognizes schools whose Advanced Placement programs deliver results for students and broaden participation at a high level. Uniondale received a bronze designation. Students and staff delivered remarks about the growth and success of Uniondale's AP courses and the positive impact these educational experiences and opportunities have had on students.



LAWRENCE

VE Team Impresses at Competition

Tornado Watch, Lawrence High School's Virtual Enterprise class, had an exceptional performance at the New York State Northeast Regional Business Plan Competition and Trade Show. Demonstrating exceptional professionalism, creativity and business acumen, Tornado Watch achieved remarkable success by selling more than \$378,000 in cybersecurity protection plans during the competition. This impressive accomplishment highlights the students' hard work, preparation and ability to apply real-world business skills in a competitive environment.



EAST MEADOW

Literacy Expert Sees Science of Reading Efforts

At Parkway Elementary School in the East Meadow School District, Krystal Mancuso's first grade class showcased how the district is applying the Science of Reading through the Core Knowledge Language Arts curriculum. During a visit from literacy expert Susan Lambert, host of "Science of Reading: The Podcast," students demonstrated phonics and decoding skills from CKLA's Skills strand. The lesson emphasized understanding the logic of language, not just memorization. With intentional instruction and evidence-based practices, East Meadow is positioning itself at the forefront of national literacy efforts, equipping students with strong foundational reading skills for future success.



WYANDANCH

High School Hosts Inaugural Medical Career Day

Wyandanch Memorial High School recently held its first-ever Northwell Medical Career Day, giving scholars the rare opportunity to interact with Northwell Health professionals and learn about the wide range of career possibilities in the medical field. In addition to physicians, students also met with specialists from departments such as human resources, foundation work and computer science/data analysis to explore the variety of workplace opportunities within a medical setting. The event also featured a series of impactful presentations from doctors and other medical experts.



HALF HOLLOW HILLS

Senior Named Regeneron Scholar

High School West senior Benson Lu Huang was named a Scholar in the 2026 Regeneron Science Talent Search, one of the nation's most prestigious science competitions. Benson was one of just 300 students selected nationwide from more than 2,600 applicants. He earned this recognition for developing a low-cost force sensor for robotic

surgery that helps surgeons apply gentler pressure to delicate tissue, such as nerves, and detect potentially abnormal tissue, including tumors, even when it is not visible. His innovation delivers these capabilities at approximately 98% less cost than current commercial systems.



WEST BABYLON

Science Olympiads Off to States

West Babylon Senior High School's Science Olympiad team finished sixth overall in the regional tournament on Jan. 31. The intense competition featured 65 teams from across Suffolk County, and only the top eight schools advanced to the state tournament in March. In an outstanding showing, West Babylon's three teams earned medals in 15 of the 25 events, demonstrating exceptional skill, preparation and teamwork across a wide range of scientific disciplines.

LEVITTOWN

East Broadway Students Explore the Career of a Doctor

Students donned lab coats to take on the role of doctors on Jan. 16 as part of Levittown's districtwide Career Exploration initiative. The program introduces students to a variety of professions, such as doctors, firefighters or dentists, to help them see how classroom learning connects to real-world careers. The program offers a unique, hands-on experience through engaging,



age-appropriate activities. At East Broadway Elementary School, kindergartners learned about the various tools and practices of doctors using stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs and thermometers designed for children to attend to their teddy bear patients.



ISLAND PARK

Building a Culture of Kindness and Respect

At Francis X. Hegarty Elementary School in Island Park during No Name Calling Week, students learned to think before they speak and reflected on how words can make others feel welcome or hurt. Activities such as the toothpaste lesson and age-appropriate read-alouds helped bring these concepts to life.

NEWS INSIDE OUR SCHOOLS



AMITYVILLE

Youngsters Gain Appreciation for First Responders

Pre-K and kindergarten students at Northeast Elementary School in Amityville welcomed Officer Kathy Hawkins from the Suffolk County Police Department for a special schoolwide assembly. Through an engaging slideshow, Officer Hawkins introduced students to the roles of police officers, firefighters and other first responders, emphasizing community safety and teamwork. Many children wore decorative police crowns and actively participated in the presentation. The visit ended with fist bumps and high fives, giving students an age-appropriate introduction to police safety, while strengthening positive connections with local law enforcement.

FRANKLIN SQUARE

District Boasts Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year

Dr. John Trotta, assistant principal at Polk Street School in the Franklin Square School District, has been selected as the 2026 New York State Elementary School Assistant Principal of the Year. This award is presented annually by the School Administrators Association of New York State and the National Association of Elementary School Principals to a leader who demonstrates exceptional leadership, strengthens school culture and ensures high-quality educational opportunities for all students.



Dr. Trotta has served as assistant principal at Polk Street School for the past 10 years. One of his most significant accomplishments is the establishment of the “Better, Not Bigger” initiative, a student, teacher and family-focused problem-solving program that has become embedded in the school’s culture.



MALVERNE

Two Seniors Selected for QuestBridge Scholarship

Dayami Guaman and Lorraine Akou have been selected as recipients of the highly competitive 2025 QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship. Chosen from more than 20,800 applicants nationwide, they are among just 2,550 students to earn finalist status and secure a full four-year scholarship. The award covers tuition, housing and meals, books and supplies, and travel expenses. Dayami matched with Johns Hopkins University, where she plans to study biology on a pre-med track. Lorraine matched with Emory University and intends to major in neuroscience and behavioral biology on a pre-med track.

GARDEN CITY

HS Promotes Healthier Screen Habits

Garden City High School and the GC PTA launched a new digital wellness initiative, “NoSo (No Social Media) November,” to promote healthier screen habits among students and families as part of the district’s ongoing technology and digital citizenship efforts in partnership with the PTA. The campaign encouraged students to reflect on their screen time and set personal reduction goals during physical education classes, which were anonymously shared within the school



to build awareness. Parents were also engaged in conversations about screen use, with the initiative aiming to build long-term self-regulation and healthier digital balance beyond the monthlong challenge.

GREENPORT

Virtual Enterprise Students Make Meaningful Connections

Greenport High School’s Virtual Enterprise class launched a virtual company called Iluzio, featuring an innovative Smart Mirror that seamlessly blends advanced technology with modern design. The mirror’s dual-display system adapts to user interaction – up close, it functions as a high-tech smart mirror offering wellness insights, reminders, outfit suggestions and personalized assistance; from a distance, it transforms into a digital art display or family photo wall. Powered by AI and Bluetooth connectivity, Iluzio

enhances both daily routines and living spaces.

Under the guidance of program facilitator Lauren Kollen, students also benefit from working with community and industry partners. They receive valuable mentorship from Bloom Nutrition, a leading wellness company, with regular feedback sessions with the executive team. Students gain rare insight into professional business operations and leadership. Beyond the classroom, the Iluzio team participates in multiple trade shows across Long Island, and they will attend the prestigious International Youth Business Summit at the Jacob K. Javits Center.

WANTAGH

Middle School Redesignated as a School to Watch

Wantagh Middle School was recognized in the Essential Elements: Schools to Watch program for the second time, receiving the designation through the 2028-2029 school year. Following its initial three-year designation in 2023, the school received a report listing areas of strength and recommendations for improvement. The 2026 redesignation followed a 46-page application, prepared by Principal Anthony Ciuffo and Assistant Principal Rachel Quattrocchi, to spotlight the school



in four core areas – academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, organizational structure and social equity. The school also had a site visit during which evaluators toured the building, visited classrooms and had discussions with central administration, teachers, student services professionals and students.



CENTRAL ISLIP

Students Attend Sheriff Toulon’s Inauguration

Many Central Islip students were in attendance as Dr. Errol D. Toulon Jr. was sworn in for the third time as Suffolk County Sheriff on Jan. 16. The Central Islip High School Concert Choir, under the direction of John Anthony, performed during the sheriff’s inauguration ceremony and received a standing ovation.

Reed Middle School was also represented, with multiple participants from the Sheriff’s Student Ambassador Program present. Also in attendance were Superintendent of Schools Dr. Sharon A. Dungee, Director of Music and Technology Philip K. Voigt and Reed Principal Anthony Coggiano.

NEWS INSIDE OUR SCHOOLS



BELLMORE-MERRICK Middle School Student Leads Adaptive Wheelchair Basketball Lesson

Eighth grade student Austin Bird led a powerful two-day adaptive wheelchair basketball lesson at Merrick Avenue Middle School in the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District on Nov. 24-25, teaching nearly every physical education class.

Supported by staff and administrators, Austin shared his personal journey and demonstrated wheelchair basketball skills, allowing peers to experience adaptive athletics first-hand. Students learned about inclusion, empathy and resilience through hands-on activities and discussion.

Reaching more than 900 students across 19 classes, the experience highlighted that true strength lies in perspective, positivity and understanding others.



WESTHAMPTON BEACH Virtual Enterprise Students Showcase at East End Networking Event

Westhampton Beach High School's Virtual Enterprise firm participated in the 10th annual East End Networking Event, held at the Atlantis Sea Star Ballroom in Riverhead. The program, organized by business teacher Amy Demchak, brought together students from across Long Island to demonstrate their entrepreneurial skills.

This year's event featured participation from 29 school districts. VE students showcased their innovative virtual businesses at trade show-style tables, complete with marketing and sales materials. Westhampton Beach's VE firm, Vervida, marketed self-sustaining indoor gardening planters.

HAUPPAUGE Senior Named 2026 Coca-Cola Scholar

Hauppauge High School senior Jacob Wolmetz has been named a 2026 Coca-Cola Scholar, earning a \$20,000 college scholarship and recognition as one of the nation's most outstanding student leaders. The Coca-Cola Scholars Program honors students across the country for their academic achievement, leadership and service to their communities.



PATCHOGUE-MEDFORD High School Unveils Special Olympics North America Banner

Patchogue-Medford High School earned national recognition for its Special Olympics Unified Sports program. The school received a Special Olympics North America banner – the highest level of achievement for a Unified Champion

School – which recognizes excellence and leadership in school inclusion. The high school unveiled the banner at its winter pep rally, honoring its Unified program and celebrating its winter sports teams and school spirit. Patchogue-Medford High School is one of only 45 schools in all of New York State recognized as a banner school.

SHOREHAM-WADING RIVER At Miller Avenue, It's "7-6"

To celebrate America's 250th birthday, Miller Avenue School second graders are dedicating the school year to special activities, the first being a tribute to the 76th day of school, a reminder that the country was founded in 1776. Students personally designed a "76" T-shirt and created a "Declaration of Day 76" to resemble the Declaration of Independence. This document stated that the 76th day of the school year should be celebrated, asks that no tests be given



on the 76th school day and declared that students should say "7-6" instead of "6-7." The declaration was also presented to Principal Claudia Smith to be ratified.

DEER PARK New Podcasting Program Takes to the Airways

DPHS Speaks, a new podcasting program, has taken off at Deer Park High School. Guided by school librarian Evan DeNaro, the club provides students with a fresh and exciting way to communicate with their peers and invaluable debating, public speaking and production experience. Senior Parleen Kaur and junior Anabella Lindsay serve as co-presidents of the club, which boasts 15 members and records episodes every Friday, fea-



turing different themed episodes on topics relevant to teens and interviews with community members and club officers.



WILLIAM FLOYD Senior Nominated to Service Academies

Andriana Perez, a senior at William Floyd High School, has received congressional nominations for two United States service academies – the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and the U.S. Naval Academy – two of the nation's five military service academies that prepare the leaders of tomorrow to become professional officers of character, compassion and competence. If selected for either academy, Andriana will undergo a rigorous four-year education before earning a commission as a U.S. military officer.



HICKSVILLE Let the Games Begin at Burns Avenue

Burns Avenue Elementary School students in Hicksville celebrated the anticipation of the 2026 Winter Olympics with a spirited opening ceremony on Feb. 5 in the gymnasium. Students proudly raised handmade flags from countries around the world as members of the Student Council paraded in with the U.S. flag and Burns Avenue banner, culminating in the passing of a handmade Olympic torch to the presentation podium.

OCEANSIDE High School Earns National Honor

Oceanside High School has been named to the College Board's AP School Honor Roll, earning a Silver designation. It is the third consecutive year that OHS was recognized.

The honor recognizes schools that expand access to and achieve success in Advanced Placement courses. Oceanside achieved Platinum-level performance in College Credit and College Optimization and scored within 1% of Gold in College Culture. The school offers 32 AP courses, including AP Capstone, and partners with several local colleges for dual enrollment.



NORTHPORT-EAST NORTHPORT Middle School Students Explore Ancient Egypt Through Virtual Reality

Sixth grade students at Northport Middle School recently brought their study of ancient Egypt to life through an immersive virtual reality experience in the school library. Led by Future-Focused teacher Nick Raio and school librarian Annmarie Jenkins, students used Meta Quest 3 virtual reality headsets as a culminating activity for their ancient Egypt unit to visit iconic historical sites, including the Great Pyramid of Giza and King Tutankhamun's tomb. The interactive experience provided students with a unique perspective on ancient history while reinforcing classroom learning through innovative technology.

GLEN COVE

Award-Winning Actor Leads Immersive Media Experience

The Glen Cove City School District, in partnership with Friends of Arts and Music Enrichment and the Finley Middle School PTA, recently hosted award-winning actor Luis Guzmán for an immersive cultural arts experience. This collaboration transformed the school into a professional media set, bridging the gap between classroom and career. GCTV students led the way with multicamera filming, while journalism and podcast students conducted professional-grade interviews.



NEW HYDE PARK-GARDEN CITY PARK District Earns Prestigious Technology Award

The New Hyde Park-Garden City Park Union Free School District earned an Innovative Technology Integration Award from the Center for Digital Education and the National School Boards Association. It was one of only seven districts nationwide to receive this honor. The district earned the award for its effective use of technology to modernize instruction and operations while maintaining a strong commitment to equity, accessibility and instructional coherence across schools.

A 25-member technology advisory committee of teachers and administrators, as well as a board representative, is responsible for setting multiyear priorities for instructional technology, professional development and digital citizenship.



EAST ROCKAWAY Students Explore Future of Food at Hydroponics Farm

East Rockaway High School science research students recently visited Scholars Academy's hydroponics farm in Far Rockaway, getting hands-on experience seeding, transplanting and harvesting crops, including basil, kale and romaine lettuce. Organized by science Chairperson Jennifer Belfiore, the trip gave students insight into how hydroponics technology addresses food security challenges. Students also learned to monitor nutrient levels in the water systems that feed the plants.

PORT JEFFERSON

Ensemble Performs at Stony Brook Basketball Game

The Port Jefferson Middle School string ensemble had the honor of performing the national anthem at the Stony Brook University men's home basketball game prior to the matchup against Hofstra University.

The student musicians delivered a memorable performance in front of a packed arena, showcasing

their talent, dedication and musical excellence on a collegiate stage. The opportunity provided students with a unique and inspiring experience, connecting music education with a major university athletic event. This special performance was made possible with the assistance of August Fortugno, coordinator of ticket operations for Stony Brook University, whose support and coordination helped bring the event together.



WEST HEMPSTEAD

Secondary Students Design Road Safety Board Games

West Hempstead Secondary School hosted its first Game Jam on Feb. 13 as part of the Games for Change Student Challenge. A total of 43 students collaborated to design 11 original tabletop board games centered on the theme "Own the Road." Inspired by the memory of student Tomas Molina, who died in a 2022 car accident, the event focused on promoting road



safety awareness. Students continued refining their projects over winter break, using creativity and compassion to develop games that educate others and encourage safer communities.



SOUTHAMPTON

Intermediate School Students Tops in Mac and Cheese Challenge

Southampton Intermediate School is celebrating a win in Cornell University's New York Agriculture in the Classroom Mac and Cheese Challenge. The school's student team, Mac Island Mariners, earned top honors in the middle school division. The statewide competition featured more than 260 submissions, with the Mac Island Mariners impressing judges with their mac and cheese chicken pot pie that combined culinary skill, innovation and an understanding of agriculture and nutrition. Students were required to develop an original recipe, create a marketing component and design a slogan. The team's marketing piece included a custom T-shirt inspired by a fishing theme, reflecting the community's connection to the water.

If you have information about your school district that you would like to share, please send it to Jill Gierasch at jgierasch@scopeonline.us or Andrew Hackmack at ahackmack@syntaxny.com.



RIVERHEAD District Hosts Annual Black History Month Celebration

The Riverhead Central School District hosted its 17th annual Black History Month celebration, showcasing the achievements, culture and history of Black Americans. The event featured student artwork and a poetry showcase, as well as performances by Riverhead students, the

Butterfly Effect Project and a local jazz musician.

The celebration also highlighted the district's connection to Pfc. Garfield M. Langhorn, Riverhead's only Medal of Honor recipient. The winners of Pulaski Street School's Pfc. Langhorn essay contest were recognized, and a preview of "PFC Garfield M. Langhorn," a new documentary, was shown.

CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER

APPOINTMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

BRIDGEHAMPTON

Superintendent of Schools to Retire

Dr. Mary T. Kelly will retire as Bridgehampton superintendent of schools effective June 30, following five years of service to the district.

During her tenure, Dr. Kelly led the district through a period of significant academic improvement and programmatic growth. Key initiatives included curriculum alignment to Next Generation State Standards, expansion of academic and career and technical education opportunities, the implementation of a Science of Reading-based literacy program, expansion of Advanced Placement and dual enrollment offerings, and new partnerships supporting college and career readiness. In addition, Dr. Kelly oversaw the implementation of the Future Scholars program in partnership with Stony Brook University, launched an annual college tour for 11th and 12th graders, and implemented real-time classroom translation technology to better support English language learners.



"As I look ahead to the next chapter, I do so with deep gratitude, pride and confidence in the future of the Bridgehampton School District," Dr. Kelly said. "I am grateful to have had the privilege of serving this remarkable community. I will always remember my time here with tremendous fondness for the students and families; the Hive will always hold a special place in my heart."

EAST ISLIP

Interim Assistant Supt. for Curriculum and Instruction

The East Islip School District appointed Richard Zwycewicz as interim assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in January, replacing the retiring Dr. Lisa Belz. Mr. Zwycewicz served as East Islip's executive director for student achievement and instructional technology since 2013. In this capacity, he led districtwide efforts in data-driven instruction, instructional technology, library media programs, assessment systems, ESSA and ARP grant management,



BAYPORT-BLUE POINT

Superintendent of Schools to Retire

Dr. Timothy P. Hearney has announced his retirement as superintendent of the Bayport-Blue Point School District, effective July 31. He has served in public education for 34 years, including the last 18 in Bayport-Blue Point.

Before becoming superintendent in 2017, Dr. Hearney was the district's assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction and high school principal. Under his leadership, Bayport-Blue Point High School earned the prestigious National Blue Ribbon School recognition. Additionally, the district implemented its first universal prekindergarten program and expanded supports and connec-



tions for students, staff and community, including developing wellness centers throughout the district.

"Serving as the superintendent of BBP has been the highlight of my professional career," Dr. Hearney said. "I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such dedicated educators, staff, students, families and community members. As a school learning community, we have forged connections, created a learning environment where students and staff feel they belong, where they believe in themselves and where anything is possible. I am deeply proud of what we have accomplished and of the strong foundation that has been built for the future."



COMMACK

Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations

The Commack School District appointed Kelly Nevin as assistant superintendent for business and operations in January. Ms. Nevin succeeded Laura Newman, who retired as associate superintendent for business and operations after nearly 20 years with the district.

Ms. Nevin previously served in the Longwood School District since 2012. From 2020 until her arrival in Commack, she managed Longwood's more than \$300 million budget as business manager, safeguarding the district's financial integrity and ensuring compliance with state and federal reporting regulations. She previously served as payroll supervisor as well as principal account clerk with Longwood.



and professional development, while collaborating closely with district and building administrators to support continuous improvement. The School Administrators Association of New York State recognized him as one of its 2025 administrators of the year.

NORTH BELLMORE

Assistant Superintendent for Business

The North Bellmore School District appointed Brigid Siena as the new assistant superintendent for business, effective Feb. 23. An experienced business official, she has served as the assistant superintendent for business and operations in the Hauppauge School District since 2021. Ms. Siena has also held positions as assistant superintendent for business

and operations in the Connetquot School District, assistant business administrator and deputy purchasing agent in the Hempstead School District, and district clerk in Hauppauge.

She holds a bachelor's degree in business from SUNY Potsdam, a master's degree in education from LIU Post and a school district business leader certificate. Ms. Siena is the recipient of the 2019 New SBO Leader of the Year Award from the Association of School Business Officials New York and the 2019 Frank Fiumano Scholarship Fund from the Nassau chapter of the Association of School Business Officials.

Time to Advocate for More Realistic State Aid

By **BOB VECCHIO**

Executive Director

Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association

Gov. Kathy Hochul has released her preliminary budget, so let the advocacy work begin. More than 61% of school districts on Long Island are slated to receive only a 1% increase in Foundation Aid under her proposal. In Suffolk County, 80% of the districts will receive the minimum 1% increase. We must tell our legislators the guaranteed minimum increase needs to be higher. The rate of inflation has far outpaced the new revenue we have received from the state and the tax-cap limit.



It's also time to totally revamp the Foundation Aid formula. More than 50% of the districts statewide are now on save harmless or off formula. They need to conduct a new cost study similar to the successful schools model study

they conducted when the Foundation Aid formula was first created more than 20 years ago. That old study back then does not accurately reflect the current reality of what it costs to deliver a sound basic education in our state with new mandates and expectations. The costs associated with mental health needs, safety and security are just some examples that are not reflected in the current amount.

Although the new mandate of universal prekindergarten for all 4-year-olds by 2028-2029 along with the increased per-pupil grant reimbursement is welcomed and appreciated, it's important to note a few things. The mandate is a full-day UPK program. The reimbursement does not appear to have flexibility to cover costs for expenditures such

as leasing new space or transportation costs, which in high-needs communities could be the difference between families taking advantage of the program or not.

Another major issue we are facing is the looming zero-emissions busing mandate. The first deadline of 2027 for the purchase of any new buses being zero emissions is upon us. The state did offer some extensions to this deadline, but with the loss of federal subsidies, the continuing questions of grid capacity and logistical capacity with the utility companies, and the overall effectiveness of the battery technology, it certainly warrants "pumping the brakes" on this large, unfunded mandate.

The other major issue for our region is the expansion of charter schools across Long Island. Charter schools have no accountability to the voting public, and we strongly believe the final say in approvals and reauthorizations of charter schools should rest exclusively with the State Education Department. These are just a few issues that are paramount this legislative session at the state level.

When advocacy is aligned our message is more effective. So, here's to "One Island, One Voice" to benefit all the children on Long Island.

SCSSA Strengthens Partnerships With Local Colleges

By **TIM EAGEN**

SCSSA President

Superintendent, Kings Park School District

The Suffolk County School Superintendents Association was established more than 75 years ago to provide leadership, professional development and support for our members. This year, one of SCSSA's areas of focus has been on strengthening partnerships with Long Island colleges and universities.

To date, 10 Long Island institutions have engaged with SCSSA and that list includes: Adelphi University, Farmingdale State College, Five Towns College, Long Island University, Molloy University, Nassau County Community College, New York Institute of Technology, Stony Brook University, Suffolk County Community College and SUNY Old Westbury.

Every spring for the past several years, SCSSA has partnered with Stony Brook University and SCOPE on a professional development workshop. This year's workshop will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn on the Stony Brook University campus on Thursday, April 23. The overarching topic of discussion will be workforce development.

The conversation will center on New York State Portrait of a Graduate, academic rigor and preparedness in the form of high school dual-enrollment course offerings, and artificial intelligence. The program will include high school dual-enrollment course offering examples, short presentations on unique offerings by our college and university partners, a "big picture" presentation on the impact of AI on education, sharing of best practices on AI implementation in K-12 schools, and discussions between and among superintendents and higher education administrators on these important topics and issues.

Thanks to the leadership of our Ed Practices Committee, we have a great day of learning planned for our members, and we are excited to be able to learn with our college and university colleagues.

Exploring Community Supports and Student Learning: Nassau Leaders Connect

By **MARIE TESTA**

NCCSS President

Superintendent, North Bellmore School District

The February general membership meeting of the Nassau County Council of School Superintendents strengthened connections between schools and the community resources that sustain students and families. As trusted community anchors, school leaders play a vital role in ensuring families have access to essential services – especially in times of crisis.

Superintendents engaged with representatives from three key organizations serving Nassau County:

American Red Cross (Long Island Chapter) – Based in Mineola and serving Nassau and Suffolk counties, the Red Cross provides emergency assistance following home fires, floods and other disasters, including shelter, food, clothing and emotional support, at no cost. Through preparedness education and health and safety training, the organization helps communities respond proactively to emergencies.

Ronald McDonald House Charities (New York Metro Area) – The New Hyde Park House supports families of children facing serious illnesses by providing housing and comprehensive wraparound services so families can remain close during treatment. Its programs address emotional, practical and financial needs during challenging medical journeys.

YES Community Counseling Center – With locations in Massapequa and Levittown, YES delivers trauma-informed counseling, substance misuse prevention and family support services that promote healthy, resilient communities throughout Nassau County.

The Council extends its appreciation to Su-



perintendent Paul Defendini of the Farmingdale School District for elevating the importance of strong community partnerships, informed by his leadership during a traumatic district event.

The meeting also featured a visit to the Long Island High School for the Arts, a Nassau BOCES Career and Technical Education program in Syosset. Hosted by BOCES District Superintendent Larry J. Leaven and Principal Lindsay Rogan, superintendents toured classrooms led by students representing districts across the Island.

LIHSA offers programs in performing arts, visual media arts, production-managerial arts, game design, 3D animation and multimedia film and television. Through professional partnerships with the American Ballet Theater, Joel Foundation, Norwalk Conservatory of the Arts, NYU Verbatim Performance Lab and SUNY Brockport, students gain authentic, real-world experiences that prepare them for creative careers.

The visit underscored the rigor, innovation and student-centered culture that define LIHSA and reflect Nassau County's commitment to expanding opportunity.

Through strategic collaboration with community organizations and innovative programs, NCCSS continues to champion safe, connected and thriving school communities.



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