Volume 3

November 13, 2026

EDUCATION MATTERS

Rockaway Township Public Schools



@ROCKAWAYSUPER

Upcoming Events:

Coffee Chat with Superintendent

March 16 9:00 am
April 13 6:30 pm
June 8 9:00 am

Please RSVP with the link.

Conferences - Early Dismissal

November 19 - Evening
November 20 - Afternoon
November 23 - Evening
November 24 - Afternoon

November 25 - Early Dismissal
November 26-27 - **District Closed**

December 2 - Early Dismissal/Staff In-Service



Superintendent's Message

On behalf of the Board of Education and our entire school district community, we would like to recognize and celebrate Veterans Day. To the brave men and women who have served in the United States Armed Forces, including the veterans among our staff, families, and local community, we extend our deepest gratitude. Your dedication, sacrifice, and commitment to protecting our country set a profound example of service and civic duty for our students every single day. We honor your service and thank you for all you have given for our freedom. Happy Veterans Day!

The Rockaway Township Board of Education and community would like to welcome Ms. Brooke Benavides as the new principal of Birchwood Elementary School, effective July 1, 2027. She was able to address the community during the November 11 board meeting. We were delighted to have her join us when we celebrated our outstanding Birchwood students.

The community is invited to the second **Listening Session,** which will take place on November 16 at 6:00 pm in the CMS Library, focusing on screen time.

At the October 13 **Coffee Chat**, eight attendees participated in a lively discussion on the state of education. The next Coffee Chat will take place on March 16 at 9:00 am in the Board Office.



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Department of Curriculum & Instruction

Please see the linked NJSLA-A presentation for the 25-26 school year. As you navigate your child's scores please be sure to celebrate your child's achievements regardless of the scores. It is important to celebrate your child's hard work and progress. Every student has unique strengths and areas for growth, and we are committed to helping each child reach their full potential.

Curriculum Updates

District Curricula
Health & PE Updates/Opt-Out Information
Health & PE FAQ
Assessment Calendar

LinkIt!

How to Register for LinkIt! (If you have not done so already)
LinkIt! Paper Tutorial
LinkIt! Video Tutorial

Department of Student Services

The SEPAC meeting on October 27 was highly successful, with 12 participants in attendance, including Katie Pietrowski, Ellen Gianakis, Lisa Mezik, Jamie Gorman, and parents from the KDM PTA special education committee. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with parents expressing strong enthusiasm and appreciation for the opportunity to collaborate.

Department of Human Resources

The district is always ready to work with any member of the community in the recruitment and hiring of staff in high-needs positions and we could use your help. We are always seeking the following:

1. Bus drivers
2. Staff Assistants/paraprofessionals
3. Substitute teachers and substitute nurses.

If you or someone you know is interested, please apply on the district website.
If you have any questions, please contact Anita West directly at awest@rocktwp.net or at the school 973-627-8200 ext. 6346



We welcome Ms. Brooke Benavides to Rockaway Township. The Board of Education recently approved her as Birchwood's new Principal, effective July 1, 2027

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Copeland Middle School

Throughout October, Copeland Middle School continued to emphasize school culture, student engagement, and opportunities for students to build meaningful connections within the school community. Students participated in the Week of Respect, Unity Day, and Red Ribbon Week, with activities and spirit days promoting kindness, inclusion, healthy choices, and positive decision-making. Red Ribbon Week concluded with the "Scare Away Drugs" Halloween celebration, during which students and staff dressed in costumes to show their school spirit. These activities reinforced Copeland's H.E.A.R.T. values and encouraged students to contribute to a positive and welcoming school environment.

October also provided several opportunities for students to explore their interests and become involved in school activities. The first session of after-school clubs continued, and students participated in music assemblies and enrichment opportunities. Students also had the opportunity to participate in a basketball clinic, where they could develop their skills, practice teamwork, and build confidence on the court. Preparations began for this year's spring musical, Beauty and the Beast Jr., with students attending an informational meeting and participating in auditions. Additionally, the Rockaway Township Fire Department visited Copeland to provide fire safety presentations to students in grades six through eight, reinforcing important lessons about safety and preparedness. Family and community engagement remained a priority throughout the month.

The Copeland PTA hosted grade-level Halloween socials, giving students opportunities to connect with their peers outside the classroom. Families were also encouraged to provide feedback through the district's Climate and Culture Survey. We were also excited to announce plans for our eighth-grade class trip to see Wicked on Broadway in June 2027, providing students with a memorable opportunity to celebrate their final year at Copeland.

Together, these experiences reflect our ongoing commitment to fostering a supportive school environment in which students feel connected, families remain engaged, and every student has opportunities to participate, grow, and succeed.

Birchwood Elementary

Twelve students from Birchwood who demonstrated H.E.A.R.T. were recognized during the November board meeting. In addition, all Birchwood students will show off their musical talent on December 8 at 9:30 am during the annual Winter Concert. The Birchwood Student Council is conducting a holiday food drive. Each grade will collect a different category of food items. The community is excited to see what the Bulldog Thespians have in store for us at their December 15 performance. Meanwhile, the Birchwood artists have been busy creating works of art aligned with the school theme of "ocean," with each grade illustrating a variety of marine life. Red Ribbon Week was observed October 26 - 30, focusing on kindness. To kick the week off, students were invited to wear red on Monday, October 26. Finally, Birchwood is looking forward to its annual book fair from November 11 to November 13.

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Catherine A. Dwyer Elementary

October was filled with hands-on learning, creativity, and collaboration at Dwyer!

Our fifth graders partnered with their kindergarten buddies for a fun fall activity, working together to measure the height, width, and circumference of pumpkins. It was a wonderful opportunity to practice math skills while strengthening connections across grade levels.

In fourth grade, students explored bird beak adaptations through an engaging, hands-on science investigation, learning how different beak structures help birds survive in their environments.

Our third graders became authors, writing and publishing their own spooky stories. Students focused on building their characters and describing the story's setting, presenting the conflict the characters experienced, and using language to paint a picture in the readers' minds rather than telling the reader what is happening directly with words. They celebrated their hard work with a special Campfire Tales author's chair, sharing their stories and practicing expressive storytelling.

Finally, our second graders enjoyed pumpkin-themed learning stations that brought together math, science, and creativity. Students rotated through pumpkin graphing, scooping and counting pumpkin seeds, and a colorful pumpkin-painting activity using baking soda and vinegar.

Dennis B. O'Brien Elementary

Throughout the month, DBO students and staff participated in several activities and initiatives that promoted kindness, respect, positive character, and healthy decision-making. They celebrated Week of Respect, emphasizing the importance of treating others with kindness and consideration. This was followed by "Bee" Kind Week, which encouraged students to spread kindness throughout the DBO community through positive actions and thoughtful gestures. They also participated in Healthy Choices Week, which focused on making healthy decisions and developing habits that support well-being. The DBO community enjoyed several exciting events and activities during the month. The PTA sponsored a successful Walk-A-Thon, which brought together students, staff, and families. DBO hosted its annual Trunk or Treat, which provided students with the opportunity to celebrate Halloween in a safe and festive atmosphere. Monthly student recognition assemblies recognize students for their accomplishments, positive character, and contributions to the school community. These assemblies provide an opportunity to celebrate student success and reinforce the values that make DBO a special place. The month concluded with the annual Halloween Parade, where students and staff enjoyed showcasing their creative costumes and celebrating together. The month was filled with opportunities to promote school spirit, recognize student achievements, and strengthen the DBO community.

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Katharine D. Malone Elementary

The fall season has been off to a wonderful start at KDM, where activities kicked off with celebrating National Week of Respect. Students participated in themed dress-up days throughout the week to reinforce the importance of showing kindness and respect to one another. In grades K–3, students participated in diagnostic screenings, while teachers across all grade levels used i-Ready Inform to begin identifying individual learning needs and developing targeted learning pathways for their students. The KDM PTA hosted another successful Walk-a-Thon, bringing students and staff together for a wonderful day of school spirit and community building. The KDM community is excited about the new recess equipment made possible through the PTA's fundraising efforts.

KDM welcomed Rockaway Township Fire Marshal Ed Nunn, who led engaging Fire Safety Assemblies to teach our students important lessons about fire safety and prevention.

In addition, KDM celebrated Red Ribbon Week, encouraging students to make healthy choices. KDM has received more than 63 positive office referrals recognizing students who exemplified October's Character Strong trait of Respect. October wrapped up with a fantastic Halloween Day Parade, bringing plenty of excitement and smiles throughout the building. Looking ahead, KDM's Student Council is partnering with the PTA to host the "Stuff the Turkey" food drive, supporting neighbors in need. Donations will be collected through November 20th. Students are also looking forward to the KDM PTA book fair, and our teachers and staff are busy preparing for upcoming Parent-Teacher Conferences.



Stony Brook Elementary

October was another busy and exciting month at Stony Brook School with students participating in several schoolwide initiatives, including the Week of Respect, Safe Schools Week, Unity Day, and Red Ribbon Week. These activities provide opportunities to reinforce the importance of kindness, empathy, respect, and making positive choices throughout the school community. Beautiful weather made both the annual Stony Brook Walk-a-Thon and Halloween Parade especially enjoyable. Students and staff had a wonderful time participating in these events. A special thank you to the PTA and parent volunteers for their time and support in helping make these activities successful. Stony Brook also welcomed members of the Rockaway Township Fire Department for their annual visit. Students in grades K–5 participated in an informative presentation on fire safety, learning important information about fire prevention and what to do in an emergency. Throughout the month, students continued to make excellent academic progress, participating in meaningful lessons and learning experiences across all subject areas.