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Union Free School District
BETHPAGE Newsletter
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In This Issue...

P. 1-3 Where Creativity Takes Center Stage
P. 4-5 Girls Sports
P. 6 Student Voices
P. 7 Making Their Mark
P. 8 Welcome

Where Creativity Takes Center Stage

Fine and Performing Arts Thrive Across Bethpage UFSD

Walk the hallways of any of the Bethpage campuses and you'll find evidence of a community that deeply values creative expression. Colorful student artwork adorns the walls. The sound of instruments warming up drifts from rehearsal rooms. Crew members learn how to paint scenery alongside actors perfecting their lines. From the earliest elementary grades through senior year, the Bethpage Union Free School District has built a fine and performing arts program that doesn't just check a box, it opens doors.

Under the direction of Mr. Brent Chiarello, Director of Fine and Performing Arts, the district's programs span music, visual arts, theater and media, offering something for every student, whether they're discovering a new interest or honing a serious passion.

A Visual Arts Education *for Every Student*



Art instruction begins the moment students walk through the door. Starting in kindergarten, all students attend weekly art classes as part of their regular schedule, a foundation that encourages creativity alongside building technical skills. In middle school, the program becomes more specialized. Students in grades 6 through 8 explore painting, drawing, clay, collage and digital art, with art history woven throughout. High school students can go considerably deeper, choosing from a rich menu of courses that includes Architecture and Interior Design, Drawing and Painting, Photography and Media Creation, and Sculpture – courses that reflect the real and varied ways art intersects with the modern job market.



Some of these offerings are truly distinctive. In Architecture and Interior Design, students learn to draft architectural plans using one- and two-point perspective and explore eight different fields within the discipline. Pop Culture in Cartooning invites students to examine comics, graphic novels, gaming and branding as legitimate and evolving art forms.

For students ready to pursue art at the highest academic level, the pathway culminates in Fine Arts and AP 2-D Art and Design, where students build professional-quality portfolios, take field trips to museums, and may submit their work to the College Board for potential college credit. AP Art History, open to grades 10 through 12, provides a college-level survey of artistic expression across world cultures and history.

This year, 27 Bethpage students had artwork selected for the prestigious All-County Art Exhibition – a testament to the quality and dedication the program inspires.

Recognition, Honors and a Culture of Excellence

Bethpage is proud to be a BCME (Best Communities for Music Education) district, and its students consistently earn recognition beyond the school walls. In music, students regularly audition for and are selected to NYSSMA All-County and All-State ensembles. In the visual arts, students are regularly chosen for the All-County Art Exhibition, with the work displayed publicly each spring.

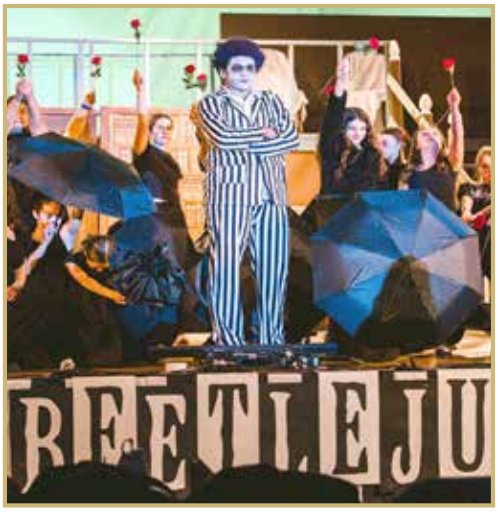
The district has several arts-focused honor societies recognizing student achievement. The Tri-M Music Honor Society hosts cabarets and recitals throughout the year. Bethpage High School recently launched its inaugural chapter of the National Art Honor Society, and the BHS chapter of the International Thespian Society was established last year, which recognizes students for outstanding participation in theater. Art shows at both JFK and the high school each spring showcase the breadth and depth of student work.

Underlying all of it is the support of a dedicated Arts and Music Booster Club and an administration that treats the arts not as an add-on, but as essential to a complete education. CCS Principal Ms. Inghilterra noted, "Early exposure to music and the arts nurtures problem-solving skills and personal growth, benefits that ripple far beyond the stage or the studio."

"It's a privilege to work with such talented students and dedicated teachers in Bethpage," Director of Fine and Performing Arts Mr. Brent Chiarello said. "Our community's strong support for the arts makes it possible for our programs in music and visual art to thrive, and I'm proud to work with this team as we continue to reach for even greater heights."

Whether a student goes on to study design or engineering, medicine or business, the skills developed through Bethpage's arts programs travel with them. Collaboration, creative problem-solving, public speaking, the discipline to practice something until it's right – these aren't just artistic skills, they're life skills. But the arts also fill a different kind of need: a place to take creative risks, find your voice and belong to something alongside others. In Bethpage, that opportunity is part of every student's education from day one.







Theater at Every Level

The Masquers Guild is Bethpage's storied theater program, and it operates at every level of the district. The high school produces two full productions per year, the middle school presents one, and the three elementary schools collaborate on a joint production each spring. This year, Bethpage High School's Masquers Guild mounted "Frankenstein" in the fall and is currently in rehearsals for "Legally Blonde." JFK Middle School recently held a masterclass with actor Andrew Kober, who understudied the role of Beetlejuice on Broadway, in preparation for their own production of the show. The elementary schools will bring "Frozen" to the stage this spring.

For students who want to be part of the magic from behind the curtain, Stage Crew offers hands-on training in technical theater at both the middle and high school levels.





Music: From First Notes to All-State

Bethpage's music program has deep roots and wide reach. Like art, music begins in kindergarten, where students attend weekly music classes as a core part of their school week. At JFK, the program begins to specialize, with students choosing from chorus, band, orchestra or music appreciation and developing their skills through regular performance. That foundation carries into a robust high school ensemble program. Last year, more than 60 students districtwide were selected to perform in the All-County Music Festival, and one student earned the distinction of participating in the All-State Festival, with an additional four chosen as alternates.

At the high school, performing ensembles go beyond the standard offerings. The Bethpage High School Marching Band performs at every home football game and at the annual Newsday Marching Band Festival and participates in both the St. Patrick's Day and Memorial Day parades. Jazz Ensemble, an audition-based group, has entered multiple competitions and performs at festivals throughout the year. Vocal Versatility, the select choral ensemble, covers a wide variety of styles in three- and four-part harmony and performs both in school and at regional events.

Additionally, every school from elementary to high school presents winter and spring concerts, which highlight the talents of all our music students.

Beyond the classroom, students have attended Broadway shows, visited the New York Philharmonic and listened to live jazz at The Jazz Loft in Stony Brook, experiences that bring classroom learning to life.

Ceramics, Community and a Cause

One of the most beloved traditions in the arts program is the annual Empty Bowls Fundraiser, organized through a thriving ceramics club at Bethpage High School. Led by Ms. Cardo, students in sculpture and college pottery classes, along with other art students, come together each year to create handmade ceramic bowls for the Empty Bowls Project, a grassroots initiative dedicated to ending hunger. Last year students produced more than 230 individual bowls. For students in the college pottery course, the work also carries academic weight: The course is offered through a secondary college agreement with LIU Post's High School Scholars Program, enabling eligible students to earn three college credits.



GOLDEN EAGLES LEADING TH
Bethpage Girls Redefi
What's Possible in High Scho





On the Mat: A Nassau County Powerhouse, and Now, a State Champion

When girls wrestling officially became a New York State sport for the 2024-25 season, Bethpage didn't scramble to catch up. They were already there.

Much of the credit goes to senior Gabrielle Severin, who spent years competing on the boys wrestling team before founding the dedicated girls program at Bethpage, making it one of the first districts on Long Island to establish one. In 2025, Bethpage hosted the inaugural Nassau County Girls Wrestling Championship. This year, the Golden Eagles built on that foundation in a big way.

At the 2026 Nassau County Girls Wrestling Championship, Bethpage finished fourth overall as a team and brought home two individual champions. Severin (120 lbs.) didn't just win her weight class – she was named Champion of Champions and earned the distinction of Most Pins in Least Time, recording four pins in a combined 1:07. It was her second consecutive county title. Senior Jess Marzano (145 lbs.) was equally dominant, pinning her way to her own second straight championship in 1:20. Addy Moerler (94 lbs.) took third, and Autumn O'Britis (107 lbs.) finished fourth, giving Bethpage four total placers on the day.

Both Severin and Marzano advanced to the NYSPHSAA Girls State Wrestling Championship on Feb. 26 at MVP Arena in Albany – and Severin made the most of her moment.

Third Time's the Char

Twice before, Severin had stood
state title and come away with silve
leaving without gold.

Competing at 120 pounds in the
Monroe-Woodbury's Gail Sullivan
ranked girls wrestlers in the countr
herself trailing 4-3 midway through
With 24 seconds remaining, she ap
match, but the point was reversed
running out.

She didn't panic.

"The biggest thing for me was to
immediately try to go crazy," Sever
knew it was going to be a tough six
I was going to give up points. I just
did and it finished in my favor."

Still trailing with seconds on the
attacked and scored three points in
to earn a 6-4 decision and the state

For Gabi, the victory was the cul
sacrifice – competing on the boys t
program from scratch and absorbi
runner-up finishes.

"More than anything, losing the
really crushed me," she said. "To co
do it against the best girl I've wrest
amazing. All the hard work finally

She was named Most Outstandin
tournament.

There's one more milestone wort
recently recorded her 100th career
only the 12th wrestler in Bethpage
mark. For a senior who founded he
competed against boys for years an
title on her third attempt, it feels lil
number.

"The level of effort and skill on th
tremendous," coach Ryan Pingitore
back him up.

HE WAY: ne ol Sports

Something historic is happening at Bethpage High School – and it's happening on the mat and on the field.

While conversations about girls in sports often center on equal opportunity, Bethpage has moved past conversation and into action. With a nationally recognized girls wrestling program and one of Long Island's pioneering girls flag football teams, the Golden Eagles are proving that when girls are given the chance to compete, they don't just show up, they excel.

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On the Field: Making History Since Day One

In 2023, Bethpage launched its girls varsity flag football program – one of the first on Long Island – and the team has been writing its own story ever since. Under coaches Shanahan and Agovino, the program was built on heart, hustle and a willingness to compete in a sport that had never existed at Bethpage before.

In that inaugural season, the Golden Eagles made the playoffs in their very first year. "It's truly an honor to be the first-ever girls flag football team in Bethpage history," said then-junior Ava Thomaidis, and that sense of pride has only grown. Now heading into their fourth season, the Golden Eagles have established themselves as a legitimate competitive force in Nassau County. Last season, the team advanced to the county championship game, and expectations are high heading into 2025-26.





A BIGGER PICTURE

Together, these two programs reflect something meaningful about Bethpage as a community. Girls wrestling and girls flag football are not traditional offerings; they require commitment, resources, coaching and vision. Bethpage has delivered on all of it, and the results speak for themselves: a state championship, county titles and young women discovering what they're capable of when given the space to compete.

The Golden Eagles aren't waiting for the future of girls sports. They're building it right now.

Follow the Bethpage girls wrestling team on Instagram @bethpagegoldeneagles_wrestling and the girls flag football team @bethpageflagfootball.

STUDENT **VOICES:**

Who is someone at school who has made a difference for you this year?

Interviews and photos by Bethpage High School student press corps members Luke Baumbach, Casey Christensen, Tara Gyaltsen and Paridhi Miglani

"My friend Jaden Sharma because he makes me laugh and puts me in a good mood every day."
– LIAM SWEENEY, GRADE 4 (CCS)



"Mr. Lynch. I really like him. He's my favorite teacher. He's the type of teacher that any student immediately becomes really comfortable around because he's super friendly and he isn't trying too hard to appeal to the students. He's just genuinely a nice person. He's really easy on the students as well, like he really understands you. If you need a test pushed back, he pushes it back. He does his best to support us for our AP exams and he always makes the notes interactive and he makes jokes throughout. He quickly became the favorite teacher of most of the students in my grade. He definitely made class fun as well."

– CARYN CHO, GRADE 11 (BHS)



"Mrs. Christensen has made a big difference for me this year. She is very patient and understanding, and she makes learning fun."
– ANNA GRACE WEST, GRADE 5 (CBS)



"Someone I look up to is Mrs. McMullan, because she's always checking in on everyone, and if I'm having a bad day, she's someone I talk to. I've known her since junior year, and I look up to her."

– ISABELLE RICHMOND, GRADE 12 (BHS)





"Mrs. Marinaccio made a difference for me. She made a difference because she truly cares about students and always wants to make sure we do our best and have fun. She is always looking to make her lessons fun but also helpful. She not only teaches us Italian, but also Italian culture. Thanks to her I feel like I learn more and more each day."

– ALEXANDRA CHRISTENSEN, GRADE 8 (JFK)

"My friend Tyler. I got in an argument with another friend a while ago, and he helped me get through it. It made a big difference for me."

– BRADY IOVINE, GRADE 5 (CCS)



Making Their Mark:
Bethpage Students in the Spotlight

Bethpage Senior Named National Merit Finalist

Bethpage High School senior Aaryan Rupesh has been named a National Merit Finalist – one of just 15,000 students selected nationwide from a pool of approximately 1.3 million entrants. Earning this distinction requires not only an exceptional PSAT score, but also strong SAT results, an outstanding academic record, a school recommendation and a comprehensive application.

Aaryan, who counts AP Government, AP Physics II and AP Statistics among his favorite subjects, is deeply involved in robotics, band and the math team, and is the founder of Future Engineers Academy, a nonprofit dedicated to inspiring the next generation of engineers. He credits Mrs. Strauch's Principles of Engineering I course with solidifying his decision to pursue engineering in college and beyond. We celebrate Aaryan's outstanding achievement and wish him the very best in his future endeavors.





JFK 8th Grader Wins Gold in Prestigious Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

JFK eighth grader Sara Feng recently earned top honors in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, claiming a Gold Key, which is the competition's highest recognition, along with six additional awards for her short fiction. Sara, an aspiring novelist, submitted 11 flash fiction pieces to the competition, earning three honorable mentions, three Silver Keys and a Gold Key for her story "Safire."

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are the nation's longest-running and most prestigious recognition program for creative teens. Since its founding in 1923, the competition has launched the careers of many notable writers. As a Gold Key winner, Sara's piece advances automatically to the national-level competition.

JFK Middle School Students Earn Top Honors at Regional STEM Competition

Students from John F. Kennedy Middle School in Bethpage made a strong showing at the SAAWA (South Asian American Women's Alliance) BrightMinds Sparkle STEM Competition, earning top prizes across multiple categories in this year's Middle School Division.

The competition, designed to encourage creativity, scientific thinking and real-world problem-solving among young learners, drew 246 students from 19 schools across Long Island, with 178 projects presented.

In the seventh grade division, Diana Grindstaff, Amara Rahman and Diyaa Shah took first prize for Ecofit, a movement-powered smartwatch concept. Second prize went to Jonah Sfeir and Luigi Viscome for their Illegal Dumping Monitor Drone, a public safety solution designed to detect and document illegal waste disposal. Third prize was awarded to Aryanna He and Anthony Stefanou for their Heatstroke Prevention Wearable, a cooling hat designed to protect against dangerous heat exposure.

In the eighth grade division, Sureena Kaur earned first prize for her Proximity Activated Child Lock, an assistive safety device. Second prize went to Amiyah Kaur for A Walk to Footprint Zero, a project focused on environmental sustainability. Eugene Novik, Asher Rawlinson and Alexander Rebosa rounded out the podium with third prize for their Reading Assisting Glasses, a wearable technology concept aimed at supporting those with reading difficulties.



Eighth grade honorees



Seventh grade honorees

Bethpage Schools

Bethpage Union Free School District
Bethpage, NY 11714

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Bethpage Welcomes **ALYSSA KILDARE KAISER**

as New Director of Physical Education, Health and Athletics



Bethpage Union Free School District is proud to announce the appointment of Ms. Alyssa Kildare Kaiser as its new Director of Physical Education, Health and Athletics. Ms. Kildare Kaiser brings a wealth of experience to the role – and a deep, longstanding connection to the Bethpage community.

Growing up in Massapequa Park as one of four children in an Italian Irish family, Ms. Kildare Kaiser attended Farmingdale High School where she distinguished herself as a multisport varsity athlete and captain in soccer, basketball, winter track and lacrosse. She graduated in 2008 as a three-time USA Lacrosse All-American and Long Island Champion, before going on to compete at the collegiate level at Johns Hopkins University.

At Johns Hopkins, Ms. Kildare Kaiser studied public health with a minor in entrepreneurship and management, serving as a four-year starter and captain on the Division I lacrosse team while also earning the honor of representing the United States on the USA Lacrosse team. She continued her education at Adelphi University, earning a master's degree in health education – and simultaneously coached the LIU women's lacrosse team to a national championship in 2013.

Ms. Kildare Kaiser's career in education began right here in Bethpage. In 2015, she joined Bethpage High School as a health education teacher and coached junior varsity soccer, middle school volleyball and junior varsity lacrosse. The following year, she transitioned to JFK Middle School as a health and physical education teacher, where she taught adaptive physical education and launched initiatives including a teacher-student badminton tournament in support of the Special Olympics.

In 2017, Ms. Kildare Kaiser took on the role of varsity girls lacrosse coach, and in 2018 joined the Section VIII Girls' Lacrosse Coaches Association committee – continuing to advocate for student-athletes both on and off the field.

In 2023, Ms. Kildare Kaiser returned to Bethpage High School while pursuing her School Building Leader certification. During this time, she created the Peer Leadership program, which unites ACE students and general education seniors in a collaborative physical education setting. She also developed a comprehensive Emergency Action Plan for all athletic teams and facilities, ensuring preparedness for medical emergencies, including sudden cardiac arrest.

Throughout her career in the district, Ms. Kildare Kaiser has consistently championed inclusive, student-centered programming and the promotion of both physical and social-emotional wellness.