Southern Westchester BOCES

Board Links

BOARD TO BOARD NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2024

AI focus provides the direction, collaborative thinking district partners seek in a changing world

Lower Hudson Regional Information Center (LHRIC)

As Artificial Intelligence continues to grab headlines globally, local school districts face the challenge of navigating its impacts, both positive and negative, while preparing students for an AI-driven world. Throughout the 2023-24 school year, the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center, the Hudson Valley's leader in education technology, is tackling the questions, challenges and exciting opportunities that AI presents for teachers and students alike.

The "Embracing AI" series was created in partnership with the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). It seeks to help local district leaders understand the exponential growth that has already occurred in AI. Guest speakers from schools around the country share how they have already shaped AI policies and provided working sessions to craft guidance and professional learning locally. It is a transformative journey where participants dive deeply into key considerations of AI integration and its implications for teaching and learning, safety, and operational efficiency.

"There are opportunities for teachers to use these (AI) tools to create lessons, but how do we support them in using them in a way that makes sense and meets the needs of our students?" asks Dr. Nattrass, Managing Director of Innovation Strategy at ISTE and ASCD.

Meanwhile, the Technology Leadership Institute conference series has made AI a focus of virtual and planned in-person events. Chris Dede from Harvard University addressed attendees at our Harrison campus in October. Upcoming AI-focused events include a February keynote with Jean Twenge and Active-Con, featuring John Spencer, in March.

What's more, LHRIC's Model Schools offers a Learning Pathway focused solely on AI: Learning in the Age of AI. This pathway has three entry points: Build Your Knowledge; Apply to Practice, Reflect and Collaborate; and Lead and Learn. Model Schools is also working with districts, providing professional learning for their teachers focused on Artificial Intelligence.

Questions continue to arise, but by driving into the storm and bringing along experts to share their experiences, the LHRIC hopes to give educators tools and knowledge to make the best decisions for their communities.

A Message from the Board President

Greetings fellow Board of Education members,

It is with pride that I present you with this first edition of Board Links, a quarterly publication produced on behalf of the Southern Westchester BOCES Board of Education for the benefit of you, our component district school board members. I can't tell you how often I have heard the words, "I didn't know SWBOCES did that!" Whether it's leading the way in the field of Artificial Intelligence in Education, providing regional crisis support to districts in the wake of tragedy, or training coaches and athletic directors in building a culture of support for student athletes, SWBOCES leads the way! There's no reason to be the best kept secret when we can share with you all the ways we support your students, teachers, leaders and school communities. Please enjoy this newsletter, and do not hesitate to reach out to us to learn more about how our programs and services can support your mission.

John Filiberti

Board of Education President (Eastchester)
Southern Westchester BOCES

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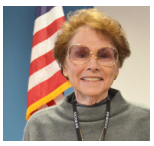


Joan Weber
Hawthorne/Cedar Knolls

Center for Special Services

Business partners provide students with learning opportunities

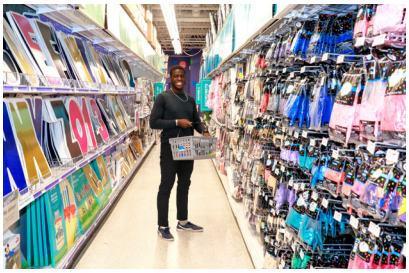
Local businesses are serving as classrooms for Special Services students in a handful of Southern Westchester communities.

The settings vary from White Plains Bakery and Raymond Opticians, both a quick walk from the SWBOCES program at St. Matthew's School, to Party City in Elmsford, a quick bus ride from SWBOCES' Valhalla Center campus.

The benefit is mutual to students and businesses alike. The businesses receive help with tasks necessary to their operation. Students, meanwhile, learn and practice a variety of skills, including critical thinking, interpersonal communication, and social interaction. Even the walk to the bakery is a teaching opportunity in navigating local streets and crosswalks to arrive on time. Students are accompanied and supervised by SWBOCES educators but also look to business staff for direction.

In practice, these partnerships are collaborative and well established by this time in the school year.

"We can't thank these community partners enough for the opportunities they provide our students," Director of Special Services Jessica Walker said. "The diverse environments allow us to match students with the right settings and learning experiences for them. The result is that they thrive, growing in their roles and developing pride in the work they are able to do."



Center for Career Services

Annual Career Conference returns to CTE campus, drawing 1,100 attendees

The Center for Career Services hosted the in-person return of its Annual Career Conference — the first since 2019 — at its campus in Valhalla in the fall. The event featured 100 speakers and attracted nearly 1,100 students from Southern Westchester BOCES component district high schools. Topics ranged from sports careers, veterinary medicine and engineering to education, automotive and computer science. Presenters shared their experience and expertise on a range of career fields. Nearly every space on campus was utilized, from classrooms and conference rooms to automotive garages and studios. Several current and former SWBOCES faculty and staff were among the presenters. The conference fulfills New York State Education Department career awareness requirements and educates students on opportunities available to them after graduation. "It was exciting to see students and presenters from the various career pathways back on our campus," said Dahlia Jackson, Director of Career Services. "The conference provided students an opportunity to hear from professionals and gave them a chance to get a feel for the various careers available to them."

747 There are 747 students from SWBOCES-region high schools enrolled in one of 18 Career & Technical Education programs on the Valhalla Career Services campus.

199 Last school year, 199 students from SWBOCES-region high schools who completed one of our CTE programs received Technical Endorsements on their diplomas.

859 Additionally, students in SWBOCES CTE programs participated in over 859 authentic, work-based learning experiences throughout Westchester County.

Center for Interscholastic Athletics

Section One partners with NY Giants, InsideOut Initiative, NFL Foundation to support student-athletes

Section One, Inc., of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association is in year two of a three-year partnership with the New York Giants and the InSideOut Initiative to provide its 77 member schools with the tools and a framework to build a culture of belonging and support the needs of all student-athletes.

This partnership has provided many unique opportunities to support member schools in ensuring a welcoming and affirming environment through education-based sports. The InSideOut Initiative connects student athletes to transformational coaches in a culture of belonging for their growth and development. The planned training allows participants to develop shared language centered on leading a purpose-based athletics program.

In year two of the partnership, Athletic Directors engaged in training with their newly designed School Implementation Teams, composed of an additional building and/or district level administrator, and a male and female coach of influence. The focus has been to assist in developing a school-specific strategy and action plan for creating a purpose-based culture. The InSideOut 2.0 experience has also featured additional trainings focused on developing student leaders, onboarding coaches, making time to lead, parents as partners, and celebrating culture.

"It is our core belief that there is no better way to prepare student-athletes to become better global citizens and enhance their overall growth and development than to develop necessary skills and values through athletic competition," Todd Santabarbara, Director of Interscholastic Athletics at Southern Westchester BOCES, states.

"This partnership with the Giants and InSideOut Initiative helps us leverage the power of transformational coaching to foster student-athletes' sense of belonging and social emotional development as they journey to become moral and ethical members of society."

PLCS

Regional Crisis Response Team

Southern Westchester BOCES

Newly launched crisis support team ensures schools get help when needed most

The Center for Professional Learning & Curriculum Support this school year launched the Regional Crisis Response Team, a collaborative consortium of school districts in the Southern Westchester region that provides mutual support and assistance in the aftermath of a school crisis. Events like natural disasters, acts of violence, or the death of a student or staff member require a coordinated professional and clinical response to support students and staff. RCRT members are trained and prepared to provide key support post-crisis. Those members from local school districts, bolstered by a partnership with the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health seek to provide in-district clinical support and connections to community agencies on short notice when the need is greatest.

Brandon Cruz, Supervisor of School Safety and Facilities

"We formed the RCRT to ensure our schools are provided with the support they need to regain stability and heal following a traumatic event," said Brandon Cruz, Supervisor of School Safety and Facilities. RCRT services are provided at no charge, ensuring that schools have support when they need it most. The team is ready to respond to any school in the region when a crisis arises. Additional information on the program can be found at www.swboces.org/RCRT.

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SWBOCES NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Southern Westchester Board of Cooperative Educational Services, its officers and employees, does not discriminate against any individuals, including but not limited to students, employees or applicants on the basis of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, creed, sex, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, citizenship status, marital status, partner status, genetic information, predisposing genetic characteristics, weight, military status or service, political affiliation, or domestic violence victim status.

This policy of nondiscrimination includes access by students to educational programs; counseling services for students; course offerings and student activities; recruitment, appointment and promotion of employees; and employment pay and benefits. This policy also provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

Inquiries regarding this policy should be directed to the Compliance Officers at Southern Westchester BOCES, 17 Berkley Drive, Rye Brook, NY 10573. (914) 937-3820.

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SWBOCES IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

The job of BOCES is to support learning in schools and communities by providing services and supports they are not able to provide individually.

Follow @SWBOCES on Facebook, X, Instagram and LinkedIn to keep up with all we do to support our region's schools!

Center for Adult & Community Services

Adult Literacy Program community partnership continues in new learning space

El Centro Hispano's sleek new home on Central Avenue in White Plains is an edifice to the vision of founder Isabel Villar and to the longstanding partnership with Southern Westchester BOCES. Three glass-walled classrooms in this former motorcycle dealership house ESL, Citizenship Exam Preparation and High School Equivalency Exam Preparation programs. El Centro's previous location had only a single classroom. The $4.4 million purchase and renovation was unveiled last June. In the view of Tracy Racicot, SWBOCES Director of Adult & Community Services, the elegant space conveys respect for the students and the learning that takes place here. SWBOCES Adult Literacy Program classes are held here days, evenings, and weekends. The partnership with El Centro Hispano goes back decades and is a model for the kind of collaboration SWBOCES seeks in all the communities it serves.

377
Number of students enrolled in SWBOCES GED programs last year. There were **48** GED diplomas awarded.

1,300+
Number of students enrolled last school year in SWBOCES English as a Second language classes.

30
Number of new American citizens sworn in last year in after taking SWBOCES Citizenship Exam preparation classes.

LHRIC Instructional Technology
LOWER HUDSON REGIONAL INFORMATION CENTER

Learning Pathways

Building Your Knowledge

Apply to Your Practice

Reflect & Collaborate

Lead & Learn

1,107
Registrants in Model Schools and TLI events this school year, many of them embracing our online learning pathways

61
Number of school districts from which educators come to participate in these offerings

200
Number of diverse Professional Learning opportunities offered by Model Schools and TLI this school year.