SOUTHERN WESTCHESTER BOCES

Board Links

BOARD TO BOARD NEWSLETTER

FALL 2024

Center for Professional Learning & Curriculum Support

5th Annual DEI Institute tackles bias, allyship and otherness in schools

Daily keynotes, workshops and a documentary screening drive conversation among teachers and school leaders



▶ Through compelling keynotes, personal narratives and group discussions, the 5th Annual Summer Institute for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, presented by SWBOCES' Center for Professional Learning and Curriculum Support, highlighted over four days in July the vital role of DEI in education.

Senior Director Dr. Mary Elizabeth Wilson welcomed attendees as Dr. Alexandria Connally, SWBOCES' Assistant Director of Special Services, opened with an address on implicit bias. Dr. Connally engaged attendees in exercises to help them examine racial anxieties. She recommended they take the Harvard Implicit Bias test to identify personal biases. She concluded with a powerful assignment: "Be a thermostat, not a thermometer," she said. A thermometer measures a room's temperature; a thermostat changes it.

Keisha Bell, Managing Director and Head of Talent Management and DEI at DTCC, led off day two by illuminating the concept of "Allyship." Ms. Bell shared personal stories and experiences to underscore the role of allies in promoting DEI. Her examples of effective and ineffective allyship sparked recognition among attendees and commitment to fostering allyship in their schools.

Tarrytown Superintendent Dr. Raymond Sanchez shared with attendees his personal experiences of otherness, emphasizing that true inclusivity starts with the individual. Using stories of transformative impact, Dr. Sanchez highlighted each individual's personal responsibility in advancing DEI initiatives.

The Institute covered all areas of diversity, including race, ethnicity, sexual identity and orientation, and special needs. Through more than 15 individual and joint presentations, speakers combined personal narratives with educational practices.

In a first, the Summer Institute was captured on video by Samuel Burgos and Nyla Walker, graduates of the TV/Video Production program at SWBOCES' Center for Career Services.

The week was punctuated by a screening of "The Right to Read," a documentary highlighting urgent issues surrounding literacy education in the United States. A subsequent panel discussion addressed deficiencies in literacy education and initiatives to address them.

The attendance of District Superintendent Dr. Harold Coles and Deputy Superintendent/COO Dr. Brendan Lyons underscored SWBOCES' commitment to DEI.

Organizer and DEI Coordinator Sadika Clarke was instrumental to the Institute's success. "I am thrilled and deeply grateful for the enriching learning experiences we shared," Ms. Clarke said. "Our collective passions united us, and I am excited about the opportunities and advancements ahead."

Added Dr. Connally, "In this significant time in our history, we have the ability and a responsibility to do what is right," she said. "Our children's future is at stake."



WELCOME

Welcome **Michael Setaro**, who joined the PLCS team this spring as a Supervisor of Teaching, Learning and Student support. Mr. Setaro is a former principal, CSE Chair, MTSS Coordinator, and K-12 Social Studies Chair. He brings to his new role expertise in crafting comprehensive professional development programs in MTSS, data analysis, Social Emotional Learning, and curriculum design and alignment.



A Message from the Board President

Fellow school board members:
We in public education know summer is anything but quiet. It's a time to prepare for the coming school year and to present unique learning opportunities. This was certainly true for our BOCES, to the benefit of our component districts.

The Center for Professional Learning and Curriculum Support presented its Fifth Annual DEI Institute, bringing together educators and leaders from the region and beyond to focus on challenges that confront our schools. The Center also presented the Summer Literacy Symposium, spotlighting explicit and systematic literacy instruction across the curriculum.

The Center for Career Services launched the Career Exploration Summer Camp in Valhalla, offering younger students from 12 districts a glimpse of the programs that will be available to them as juniors and seniors. The Center for Interscholastic Athletics created a Community Service Award to honor athletes' outstanding off-field achievements. The Lower Hudson Regional Information Center deployed 42 student interns in 15 districts to support critical technology projects. At the Center for Special Services, educators created learning plans around a new greenhouse on the Rye Lake Campus, while the Center for Adult & Community Services celebrated its recognition by New York State for the robust programs it operates in schools and locations across our region.

Looking ahead to 2024-25, Southern Westchester BOCES and the LHRIC continue to lead the way in exploring the impacts and opportunities presented by artificial intelligence in education. Unique and insightful learning opportunities will help ensure a deep and shared understanding of how AI can be leveraged safely and effectively in classrooms.

Lastly, I'd like to remind all board of education members of your eligibility to take advantage of the Westchester Schools Federal Credit Union. Check out westchesterschoolsfcu.org to learn about their many benefits.

On behalf of the SWBOCES Board of Education, I wish everyone a successful 2024-25 school year.

John Filiberti

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Center for Adult & Community Services

SWBOCES' Adult Literacy programs recognized, rewarded by New York State

▶ Analida Wolfie of **New Rochelle** came to the U.S. from Peru and studied English as a Second Language at Southern Westchester BOCES, later enrolling in its Citizenship Exam preparation course.

"Now I'm a U.S. citizen, thanks to SWBOCES and my teacher," Ms. Wolfie said.

Her success story is one of many among students in SWBOCES' Adult Literacy Program, which was recognized this past school year by the New York State Education Department.



A mid-year review by NYSED determined that the high quality of SWBOCES' programs warranted a 30 percent increase in Employment Preparation Education funding, or $459,625, which supported more than 46,000 additional hours of instruction in 2023-24. SWBOCES demonstrated improvements in its intake and orientation processes and in its close attention to data management. A second review in May led to a further increase in state support.

The Center delivered a third more hours of instruction in 2023-24 than in the year before.

"This vote of confidence by New York State, as demonstrated by its financial support of our vital community programs, is not simply about the number of students enrolled in our programs but rather the number of hours of instructional services provided to our students," Director of Adult & Community Services Tracy Racicot said. "It's a matter of quality over quantity. NYSED is looking to see gains in language acquisition skills; not how many students start but how many students persist in our programs over the longer term."

Student success stories abound. **New Rochelle**'s Gloria Mendoza and her son, Yhostin Duran, came to the U.S. a year ago from Peru and enrolled in teacher Jose Bohorquez's class.

"Today, we stand triumphant, having successfully achieved our goal of obtaining our GED diplomas," Ms. Mendoza said. "We feel grateful to SWBOCES for the opportunities they gave each of us."

Center for Career Services

CTE Summer Camp gives younger students a preview of programs

▶ Eighth-grader Lucciano Mantino from **White Plains** enrolled in the inaugural Career Exploration Summer Camp at SWBOCES' Valhalla campus to learn how to build a fence for his family's dog.

"I wanted to know how to use a saw, how to properly use a hammer and nails," said Luis, who enrolled in the Construction course. "I've already learned a lot of new skills that I didn't know before."

Students like him explored 10 career tracks over three weeks, including 3D Modeling and Printing, TV/Video and Sound Production, Cosmetology and Culinary Arts.

The camp gave participants a glimpse of the CTE options they'll have as juniors and seniors.



"It's giving them a good feel, a taste of what we do in our program," Construction/Plumbing teacher Kurt Boysen said. "This way, if they decide to enroll here in the future, they know what they can expect."

In Sound Production, Teacher Sean Harty Rivera urged students to be creative while dubbing voices and using available materials to create sounds. Culinary Arts teacher Omar Laaraj demonstrated knife skills while demonstrating how to prepare Vietnamese Spring Rolls.

"I spend a lot of time baking with my mom," said Port Chester rising freshman Giuliana Cicirielo. "I wanted to try this out and also see how I liked the program."

Chef Laaraj said the Culinary course offered new creations each week for repeat students. "This is better than advertising," he said. "Hopefully we will have some students who realize, 'OK, this is what I like to do.'"

Students attending the camp also came from **Hasting-on-Hudson**, **Mount Pleasant, Mamaroneck**, **Elmsford**, **Valhalla**, **Blind Brook, Scarsdale**, **New Rochelle**, **Pleasantville**, and **Irvington** as well as Trumbull, Conn.



WELCOME

Welcome new Career Services Principal **Jaclyn De Lao**, who joins us from Orange-Ulster BOCES where she was an Assistant Principal at the Career & Technical Education Center. At OUBOCES, Ms. De Lao helped usher in a restorative practice approach to discipline, created a TCIS team and implemented professional development for all staff. Jaclyn is the Administrative Trustee Area IV for NYS SkillsUSA. She worked previously for the New York City Department of Education. She studied education at St. John's University and received her School Building Leader and School District Leader certifications from Bank Street College.

Center for Interscholastic Athletics

Section One to honor athletes with new Community Service Award in 2024-25

The Athletic Council of Section One voted to approve the creation of a Community Service Award to recognize the outstanding charitable work of student-athletes and coaches.

Beginning this fall, a winner will be selected each season by the section's Sportsmanship Committee. Administrators, coaches and student-athletes can apply on behalf of their team or school.

The award will fill a void. In applications for the section's Sportsmanship Award, committee members often learned about impressive acts of community service.

"Many of these teams that had shown great sportsmanship were also submitting applications that touted these outstanding community service projects," said Jesse Merchant, Assistant Director of Interscholastic Athletics for SWBOCES and Section One. "For some, there were tens of thousands of dollars raised throughout the year toward good causes."



The committee saw that some communities offered more opportunities than others for such acts of service.

"Not all kids have the opportunity to do that level of community service," Sportsmanship Committee chair and Greenburgh-North Castle Athletic Director Anthony Nicodemo said, "and those efforts were trumping teams that exhibited good sportsmanship."

The new award will allow teams and student-athletes to be honored for more worthy achievements.

"Overall, we thought it was important to recognize both (sportsmanship and community service)," Mr. Merchant said. "We continue to make a push to recognize student athletes for all of the awesome stuff they are doing on and off the court."



WELCOME

Welcome **Daniel Belfi**, new Assistant Director for the Center for Interscholastic Athletics and Section One. For the last 10 years, Mr. Belfi has been the Director of Health, Physical Education and Athletics for the Lakeland Central School District, supervising athletic programs at Lakeland and Walter Panas High Schools.

During his tenure, he was a member of the Section's Athletic Council and Executive Committee, and recently served as the chairperson for Girls Flag Football, the newest varsity sport. He also helped to organize and host section and regionwide competitions.

Center for Special Services

New greenhouse cultivates learning opportunities

Our Special Services programs continue to harness gardening and growing of produce to develop instructional programs with a bounty of benefits for students.

A new greenhouse on the Rye Lake Lower Campus will be the focus of lessons throughout the school year in horticulture, healthy eating, and work-based learning opportunities for students in the AIIM program. Those students come from school districts across the SWBOCES region and beyond.

The greenhouse will be a vocational learning station for students to grow, box and deliver fresh produce to classrooms on campus or for families to bring home. Students would hold various jobs, from planting, growing and tending to the produce and keeping the greenhouse clean.

At harvest time, students would package food boxes bearing student-designed labels. Students would also select produce for recipes to prepare in classrooms, closing the connection between nutrition and the origins of the food they eat.

Educators envision classrooms and families submitting orders for food boxes, not unlike popular food delivery services or the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model at many farmers markets.



The greenhouse enables instructional activity centered around the existing campus vegetable garden to continue year-round.

"It will provide students opportunities to perform different tasks throughout the school year," Ms. Dolan said.

"It takes it outside the classroom," she added.



Welcome to **Diana Dinzey**, the new principal at St. Matthew's School and Valhalla Center. Ms. Dinzey has been a teacher, team leader and assistant principal with the New York City Department of Education.



WELCOME

Welcome to **Jonathan Remeny**, the new assistant principal at Tappan Hill School. Mr. Remeny was a school psychologist and later held the roles of assistant principal, principal and director with the Westchester School for Special Children.

SOUTHERN WESTCHESTER BOCES

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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!

LHRIC internships provide valuable experience

Interns Brianna Valencia and Ashley Flores worked in the **Pelham** Memorial High School library on a recent morning, de-provisioning old Chromebooks. Brianna read off serial numbers as Ashley logged them on a spreadsheet.

"It's nice to be able to work to help the district get ready for the upcoming school year," Brianna said.

"As an elementary school teacher," Ashley added, "I had to set up my own classroom with computers, so I think this (experience) was a big help."

The LHRIC's summer internship program this year placed 42 students in technology support positions in local schools. LHRIC interns also worked in **Tuckahoe**, **Carmel**, **Eastchester**, **Valhalla**, **Katonah-Lewisboro**, **Mount Vernon**, **Mahopac**, **Hastings-on-Hudson**, **Pleasantville**, **South Orangetown**, **Rockland BOCES**, **Pearl River**, **Hendrick Hudson** and **New Rochelle**.

John Sebalos, Pelham's Director of Technology, said the program provides career preparation for students and staff support to districts at a critical time of year.

"It's a great way for these kids to learn while giving back to their community," Mr. Sebalos said.

The internship program was inspired 25 years ago by the need to complete key summer projects, explains LHRIC Project Manager Craig Fendrich.

"During the summer, when schools are closed, we do many projects so that by September all the new technology is



implemented," Mr. Fendrich said.

From the start, workplace skills were emphasized in addition to technology experience.

Increasingly, interns were made available to districts. Around 40 each year are provided as a cooperative service. The LHRIC handles recruiting, hiring, payroll and routine check-ins and sets high expectations for interns' work environment and assigned duties.

Most interns attend local high schools and return year after year.

"We have a lot of employees who were interns," Mr. Fendrich said. "Some of our top-level engineers were interns."

"I think it's a great opportunity for kids interested in technology," said LHRIC Network Specialist Kenny Gendron, a summer intern in 2015 and 2016. "The LHRIC is a great working environment and offers a good transition from school to work."

Tuckahoe High School intern Frank Loiacono will study finance at Quinnipiac University this fall.

"I'm interested in technology and the technical side of finance," Frank said "(Interning is) a great opportunity. I'm glad that it came up for me."

CrowdStrike Quick Response

When cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike pushed out a faulty global software update on July 19, LHRIC staff were alerted and in response mode long before most school district officials were even awake. By 9 a.m., a team of network and systems engineers led by Coordinator of Network Support John DiChiara had brought 95% of district servers back online and restored all centrally hosted LHRIC services. What was a historic IT outage, quickly became a problem solved for districts that rely on the LHRIC for server hosting and support. "We all took steps to solve the problem and promptly communicate the solution to our district partners," LHRIC Executive Director, Dr. Ellen J. McDonnell, said.