SOUTHERN WESTCHESTER BOCES

Board Links

BOARD TO BOARD NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2026

Center for Career Services

Students bring experience, greater preparation to Film Festival production

The FirstDance Film Festival will return in Spring 2026



Eastchester senior Jake Olivier is excited for the return of the Center for Career Services' FirstDance Film Festival. He's the only returning student who had a film featured in SWBOCES' inaugural video showcase.

"I'm extremely excited to take everything I've learned and apply it to the movie I'm making now," said Jake, who earned Best Screenplay honors last year. "I'm definitely a lot more confident in my abilities."

The festival will be held in the spring at Westchester Community College once again. Some returning students worked in support roles last year or assisted seniors with their entries.

"I definitely think we are more prepared than they were at this time last year," senior Alan Arizmendi of White Plains said. "I spent all summer brainstorming ideas and preparing. I even wrote a draft of my screenplay. I feel like we had a big head start."

This year, Instructor Michael May has moved up deadlines, requiring students to complete their films by January to allow time for Audio Production students to assist with soundtracks and for Mr. May to promote the event.

"We had to rush to get things done (last year) because it was the first time," Mr. May said. " If the work is the same or better, great, but we want to make sure we allow time to create more awareness of the festival, too."

Students have been shooting and editing scenes and navigating creative and technical challenges. Given their involvement in last year's projects, they understand what to expect.

"I was in one of the films, and I really gained an understanding for what the production process is like," Alan said. "A lot of things will happen that can interrupt you. I learned that you just have to push through until you can get everything done the way you want it."

A Message from the Board Vice President, Dr. Joan Weber



Greetings fellow Board of Education members,

Starting this school year, school districts and BOCES in New York must include at least one student member on their boards of education. The purpose is to encourage student leadership, promote civic engagement, and provide students with meaningful opportunities to participate in school governance. Student board members offer valuable and unique perspectives that enhance board discussions and decision-making.

We are proud to have three student board members: Luke Ambrogio, a senior from Eastchester studying Automotive Technology at our Center for Career Services; Leilani Mack, a junior from Irvington enrolled in our Center for Special Services; and Grace Fiorenza, a senior from Edgemont studying Emergency Medical Services at the Center for Career Services.

Luke writes, "I took this position because I hope to make a positive change in the campus community. I believe that my fellow student board members and I can help the campus continue to grow and

Greetings continues on Page 3



John Filiberti, President Eastchester



Dr. Sheryl Brady White Plains



Lynn Frazer-McBride Mt. Vernon



Nilesh Jain Edgemont



Robert Johnson Greenburgh-N.Castle



Eileen Miller Pelham

Lawmakers, education advocates see value of SWBOCES programs firsthand

Student, staff speakers shine at annual Careers Services campus gathering



Elected officials and education advocates toured Southern Westchester BOCES' Career Services campus in Valhalla, learning firsthand about the impactful programs there.

The annual Legislative Advocacy Breakfast, presented in partnership with the BOCES Teachers' Association, featured breakfast served by Culinary Arts students under Chef Instructor John Damiani. Speakers included District Superintendent Dr. Harold Coles, Deputy Superintendent/COO Dr. Brendan Lyons, Board of Education President John Filiberti, BTA President Mairead Schuelein and NYSUT President Melinda Person.

Dignitaries included state Board of Regents member Dr. Frances G. Wills; state Senators Shelley Mayer and Peter Harckham; and Assembly members Chris Burdick, Matthew Slater, Mary Jane Shimsky and Dana Levenberg.

Two students addressed the event: Automotive Technology student Luke Ambrogio from Eastchester and Fashion Design/Merchandising student Lucie Oh from Edgemont. Luke is one of three student members of the SWBOCES Board of Education.

"SWBOCES gave me a chance to explore things I would not have been able to explore otherwise," said Luke.

"Going to school here is hands-on, and it gets me excited to come here and learn every day," added Lucie.

SWBOCES graduate and present-day Video Production instructor Michael May, shared his journey from former student to teacher. "SWBOCES changed my career twice," Mr. May said.

Tours brought visitors into classrooms across the campus. Brand new Welding and HVAC programs, launched this year, were highlights of the tours. Visitors remarked on the wide variety of offerings and the high level of instruction provided to so many students.

Valhalla campus hosts 70 speakers in 26 fields for annual Career Conference

Nearly 1,200 students from across the Southern Westchester BOCES' component district region heard presentations on varied fields from aviation and animal science to law enforcement, nursing, construction and more.

The Center for Career Services hosted 70 speakers who shared their professional stories, detailing their educational and training paths, and answering students' questions.

Students selected from two different sessions to attend, with popular careers like nursing and business attracting more than 100 students each session.

Following the Conference, presenters were invited to a luncheon prepared by students in the Culinary Arts program.

"We have received great feedback from our speakers," said Director of Career Services Dahlia Jackson. "The students were engaged and asking great questions, and they look forward to coming back each year."





SWBOCES School P.R. team earns statewide awards

Honors reflect diverse skill set of communications team



Award-winning photograph by Daniel O'Reilly titled: Dobbs Ferry High School performance of "Alice by Heart"

The Southern Westchester BOCES School communications team was awarded in six categories in the New York School Public Relations Association's annual contest. The awards were announced in early November.

The announcement follows the National School Public Relations Association recognizing the SWBOCES team with 24 communications awards in July.

The Office of Public Information supports BOCES programs and school districts across Westchester, guiding strategic communications on print and digital platforms and helping to tell the stories of our students and education partners.

"Awards are always welcome," said Director of Communications Brian Howard, "but the recognition of our peers makes these honors so appreciated. Being able to spotlight our vital BOCES programs and our district partners only adds to that. We promise the highest level of support, commitment and innovation in our work. These awards help to validate our delivery on that promise."

Public Relations Specialist Cara Tomao
Strategic Campaign
Hastings-on-Hudson Schools' successful $38.4 million bond campaign

Public Relations Specialists Cara Tomao and Anthony DiNoto
Video
"Hastings-on-Hudson Bond 2024: A Vision for Students and Community."

Graphic Designer Jeffry Braun (with Anthony DiNoto and Nicole Reis)
Strategic Campaign
"Focused and Future Ready: The Ossining Building Blueprint," $210 million bond campaign

Public Relations Specialist Natalia Baage
Community Newsletter
Valhalla Voyages Newsletter 2024-25: "Sharing Viking Pride, Joy and Unity"

Public Relations Specialist Daniel O'Reilly
Photography
Dobbs Ferry High School performance of "Alice by Heart"

Director of Communications Brian Howard
Excellence in Writing
"Irvington music students learn to 'stand by' one another"

Greetings continued from Page 1

better meet the needs of students."

Luke is also involved in theater and dance, plays football and lacrosse, and is a wrestler.

Grace's interests include volleyball, skiing, track, surfing, guitar, and riding with the Ambulance Corps in Port Chester and Yonkers. She became a student board member to make a difference in her program, which she loves. She admits she didn't know what it would be like at first.

"All the members of the board actually wanted to hear my opinion and cared," Grace said. "That's what makes BOCES so great, all the people behind the scenes that care so much."

Leilani's teachers and principals describe her as a student with a strong sense of purpose. She participates in school affairs and contributes to discussions and school initiatives. She aspires to be a news journalist. Her curiosity and confidence will serve her well as she gives voice to critical issues. She is an asset to her school community and will continue to be that in her chosen profession.

These students make outstanding contributions to school board discussions. At each meeting, they share their observations and experiences in their programs. Recently they discussed the new "bell-to-bell" cell phone policy, saying it has encouraged more face-to-face communication and interaction among students.

We have learned from them that Southern Westchester BOCES students feel supported, comfortable, and empowered to take on responsibility and leadership roles. As a board, we value the authentic, firsthand perspectives of our student members. Their participation reinforces the idea that civics goes beyond the classroom and is an avenue for improving our schools and community. Civic engagement lays the foundation for a strong system of governance that reflects and responds to the needs of those it serves.

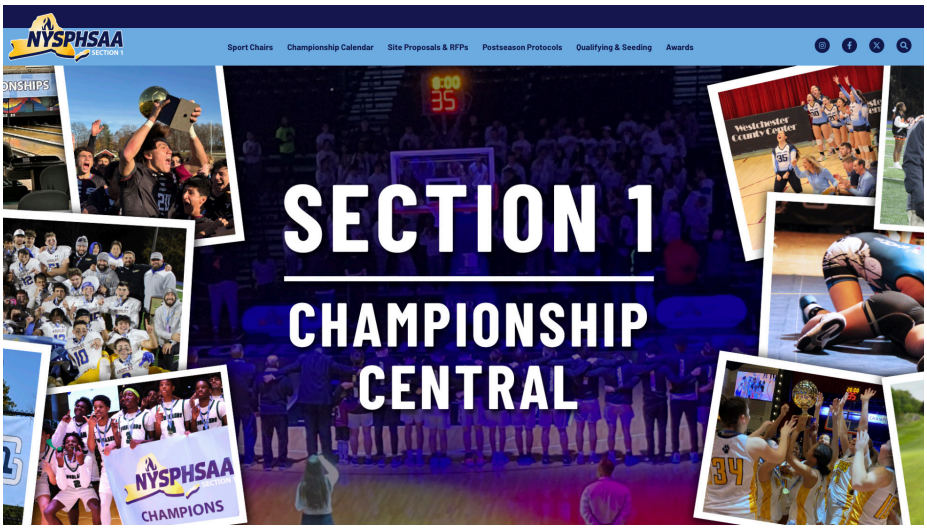
Dr. Joan Weber
Board of Education Vice President
(Hawthorne/Cedar Knolls)
Southern Westchester BOCES

Section One Athletics launches Championship Central

New web portal provides up-to-the-minute details on postseason competition

There is a new online home for Section One Championships.

Section One Athletics has launched Championship Central, a website dedicated to highlighting sectional championship events and providing an easy-to-navigate information hub for athletes, coaches, families, fans, officials, and news media.



The new website, sectiononeathletics.org, provides a clean, mobile-friendly layout with improved navigation and in-depth resources, including championship calendars, tournament brackets, seeding information, and postseason protocols and awards.

Visitors will also find easy access to sport- and team-specific sections, including schedules and results as well as links to purchase tickets to championship events, watch live broadcasts, and browse merchandise at Section One's online store.

This centralized resource was developed to strengthen communication and engagement within Section One. It will showcase the outstanding accomplishments of member schools, teams, and student-athletes.

"We believe this new website will provide everyone in the Section One community with the tools and information they need in one centralized place," Executive Director Todd Santabarbara said.

"The website creates a user-friendly platform to both inform the public as well as celebrate the achievements of our teams and student-athletes."

The Center for Interscholastic Athletics is a division of Southern Westchester BOCES, providing 78 high schools in four counties support with the organization and management of athletic programs. Section One of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Inc. is a non-profit organization that provides equitable and safe competition for students of public, private and parochial member schools.

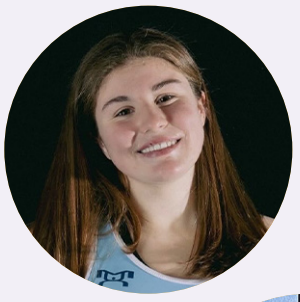
sportsengine play
sportsengineplay.com

Section One Athletics partners with SportsEngine to stream championships

Section One Athletics is partnering with SportsEngine to stream championship events, providing student-athletes and schools with greater exposure and fans with a high-quality viewing experience. Subscribe and watch by searching Section One at sportsengineplay.com. Section One's 2025 Fall Championships in six sports, including football, soccer, and volleyball, were streamed live on SportsEngine Play.

Section One Student-Athletes join NYSPHSAA Advisory Committee

The New York State Public High School Athletic Association announced its 2025-26 Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, welcoming one male and one female student-athlete from each of the 11 sections to provide input on programs and promote a positive athletic experience. Section One's representatives are Julia DiMichele of Putnam Valley, who competes in track, volleyball and wrestling, and Owen Wagner of Rye Neck, a record-holding runner and soccer player.



Julia DiMichele



Owen Wagner

Computer Science/STEAM Playdate series provided a journey of joyful, purposeful play







Purposeful play and creative exploration were the themes of a series of Computer Science/STEAM playdates hosted by the LHRIC's Instructional Technology team.

Educators immersed themselves in strategies and tools to make learning fun and creative.

The three-part professional learning series began in October with a day of workshops tackling challenges in launching STEM programs. Attendees learned how to select tools and equipment that align with learning objectives and the New York State Computer Science and Digital Fluency Standards, considering factors like grade band, teacher skills, and school environment.

A month later, a CS/STEAM Masterclass provided a full day of creative exploration and collaboration. Led by retired Katonah-Lewisboro teacher Tina Russo, more than 17 educators engaged in hands-on, analog and digital activities focused on coding, computational thinking, and design-based learning. Discussions centered on sustaining a spirit of play in STEAM, building durable coding skills in the age of AI, and balancing screen-free and digital learning.

"Our goal with the Playdates was to create a space where educators can explore tools firsthand," said LHRIC Customer Service Coordinator Leslie Accardo. "It's about making learning joyful and accessible for both teachers and students."

The series concluded in December with a LEGO® Education Science workshop.

Attendees built, tested and experimented as they explored strategies for sparking curiosity. Attendees saw how the LEGO® Science Learning System aligns with NYS standards, exploring robotics tools and considering how engineering design can enrich programming.

Kelly Nocca named Customer Service Coordinator

Senior Facilitator Kelly Nocca has been promoted to the role of Customer Service Coordinator on the LHRIC's Instructional Technology team, a recognition of her dedication and record of innovation for the LHRIC and member districts. In her new role, Ms. Nocca supports critical platforms—learning/content management systems, and district and school administrative programs—ensuring seamless communication and responsive service. Ms. Nocca joins Leslie Accardo and Caroline Calabrese in this key role, reporting to Instructional Technology Manager Mary Lynn Collins-Callanan.



Kelly Nocca

Coming up from TLI…

The Technology Leadership Institute's year-long program continues.

March 16

The annual TELL Awards, honoring excellence in educational technology in our region will be held at the Edith Macy Conference Center in Briarcliff Manor.

May 7 & 8

TECH EXPO *Leading with Joy, Learning with Purpose* will be held at Windrose on Hudson Conference Center in Ossining.

Learn more at lhric.org/tli.





Center for Special Services invests in interactive, accessible playgrounds

Two SWBOCES sites unveil new play facilities to enhance learning for students with unique needs

SWBOCES leaders cut ceremonial ribbons on accessible playgrounds at two Special Services locations, Rye Lake Lower Campus and Transfiguration School. These investments ensure students at these sites have facilities available that match their learning needs and abilities.

Both sites became home to relocated programs this school year, and existing playgrounds were not adequate to students' needs. The program for students with Multiple Disabilities moved to Rye Lake last summer. Programs for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders opened at Transfiguration School in Tarrytown in September.

The Rye Lake Lower Campus playground was unveiled in November, following months of collaborative planning.

"It has come to life as a vibrant space where children of all abilities can play, learn, explore, and grow together," Principal Jonathan Remeny said. "The inclusive design ensures that every student has access to meaningful play experiences, with adaptive equipment, sensory-friendly features, and opportunities for cooperative play and physical development."

Transfiguration School Principal Francesca Fernandez wielded the ceremonial ribbon-cutting scissors a few weeks prior.

"This playground has been designed for our students — really serving the needs of students from ages 5 to 12 with communication needs," Ms. Fernandez said. "We have a wonderful communication board, lots of spinning items, cool slides, and great adaptive swings."

Director of Special Services Jessica Walker said the administration looked hard at what equipment would best serve students at both campuses, working with the playground developer, the principals, "and our amazing Facilities team" on designs that students would learn from and truly enjoy.



We know that education can change the trajectory of an individual and the world. At the Center for Professional Learning & Curriculum Support (PLCS), we partner with districts and educators to make that vision a reality. We believe education is strongest when it is collaborative, innovative, and responsive to students' diverse needs.

To do this, we continue to learn.

Professional Learning team refines practice at Learning Forward's national conference



In December 2025, Dr. Mary Elizabeth Wilson, Adam Weinstock, Catherine Graybosch, and Sadika Clarke attended Learning Forward's Annual Conference in Boston, Mass. Committed to continuous growth, the PLCS team participates in conferences, workshops, and research-based institutes to refine its practice and model the high-quality Professional Learning Experiences (PLEs) it provides to districts. By learning alongside other educators, PLCS faculty gain first-hand insight into what makes professional learning engaging, memorable, and impactful.

The 2025 conference, themed "Bridging Professional Learning & Student Success," emphasized designing professional learning that drives measurable impact for educators and students. Sessions explored building a shared vision, fostering positive school culture, developing structured learning networks, advancing equity, and supporting well-being through social-emotional learning and health. The focus was on practical strategies that lead to tangible improvements in teaching and learning.

Overall, the conference deepened PLCS's understanding of what makes professional learning impactful and affirmed its approach to teaching, leading, and learning where state priorities, district goals, and classroom practice intersect—ensuring all students have meaningful opportunities to thrive.

Curriculum Council provides forum on cooperative services

At the most recent Curriculum & Leadership Council meeting, district leaders engaged in a focused review of SWBOCES CoSer offerings, discussing current usage, emerging needs and opportunities for deeper collaboration. Conversations highlighted strong interest in safety, crisis response, and mental health supports; expanded use of Arts in Education services; and continued demand for job-embedded instructional and leadership support through CoSer 555. Districts also raised questions about vendor access, communication and clarity around available services, and how CoSers can better support districts with limited internal capacity. The discussion surfaced clear next steps around follow-up, points of contact, and targeted outreach to ensure districts are able to fully leverage CoSer resources aligned to their priorities.

Our Mission

Southern Westchester BOCES supports students, districts and communities across our region through innovative, future-focused services, and forward-thinking leadership, centered on equity, access, and opportunity for all.

Our Vision

We aspire to be a proactive, responsive, student-centered, and centralized hub of support, expertise and innovation, that serves as a model for our regional and state-wide partners.

Our Core Values

We believe that we can achieve our vision and accomplish our mission if, in all of our work, we strive to uphold the following core values:

Service | We support our educational partners and stakeholders by maintaining the highest levels of responsiveness, expertise, and collaboration.

Integrity | We are committed to maintaining trusting and respectful relationships with all stakeholders.

Equity, Opportunity and Access | We embrace the importance of wellness, inclusivity, and dignity for each individual.

Southern Westchester BOCES
17 Berkley Drive
Rye Brook, NY 10573
914-937-3820
www.swboces.org

Board of Education
John V. Filiberti, *President*
Dr. Joan Weber, *Vice President*
Dr. Sheryl Brady
Lynn Frazer-McBride
Nilesh Jain
Robert Johnson
Eileen Miller

Central Administration
Dr. Harold A. Coles, *District Superintendent*
Dr. Brendan J. Lyons, *Chief Operating Officer/Deputy District Superintendent*
James A. Gratto, *Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services*
Stephen Tibbetts, *Assistant Superintendent for Business and Administrative Services*
Dr. Ellen J. McDonnell, *Executive Director, LHRIC*

Board Links is written and designed by:
Brian Howard, *Director of Communications*
Jeffry Braun, *Graphic Illustrator*

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.

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.

Civil Rights Compliance Officers

Suzanne Doherty, *Director of Human Resources*
Stephen J. Tibbetts, *Assistant Superintendent for Business & Administrative Services*
Tracey Lizzo, *Director of Personnel*

Contact Information
17 Berkley Drive, Rye Brook, NY 10573
complianceofficer@swboces.org

Complaints can also be filed directly with:

U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights
New York Office
32 Old Slip, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10005-2500
(646) 428-3800 (tel) • (646) 428-3843 (fax)
Email: OCR.NewYork@ed.gov

SWBOCES IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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

Adult Literacy Program supervisor celebrated as an 'Hispano de Impacto' at gala event

Maria Guerrero honored for her work on behalf of the Hispanic community



Maria Guerrero, Supervisor of Adult Literacy Programs at Southern Westchester BOCES, was honored at a gala event hosted recently by Kaffury Latin Magazine at the Morris Yacht Club in the Bronx. Ms. Guerrero was named by the influential community publication an "Hispano de Impacto 2025" in the category of Community Service.

"I am so grateful just for being nominated," Ms. Guerrero said. "This award is not just an acknowledgement of my work; it's a powerful affirmation of the mission we all share: empowering our people, our community, through education."

Ms. Guerrero was presented with official proclamations by the Westchester County Executive and Board of Legislators, as well as state Senators Nathalia Fernandez and Shelley Mayer.

Kaffury Magazine supports entrepreneurship in the Latino community, particularly among women. The magazine has nearly 50,000 online monthly readers. Its mission is "to celebrate, connect, and uplift the Latino community of Westchester through stories that inspire, inform, and empower."

In addition to the magazine, Ms. Guerrero thanked her students, Director of Adult & Community Services Tracy Racicot, and the center's teachers, administrators and support staff.

"Your passion is my constant inspiration," she said.

Ms. Racicot said the honor is well deserved, given the impact of the programs Ms. Guerrero oversees.

"I am thankful for the passion she brings to her work and echo the appreciation of Kaffury Magazine and our elected officials," Ms. Racicot said. "She exemplifies the SWBOCES mission and is a true ambassador for us."