Southern Westchester BOCES

Board Links

BOARD TO BOARD NEWSLETTER

FALL 2026

Center for Professional Learning & Curriculum Support



NY Inspires: From Statewide Vision to Regional Action

As New York State advances NY Inspires, a multi-year initiative to transform teaching, learning, and high school graduation measures, the Center for Professional Learning & Curriculum Support (PLCS) at Southern Westchester BOCES is partnering with component districts to prepare for implementation.

PLCS will act as a thought partner, bringing districts together to learn from one another and coordinate next steps. Through professional learning pathways, expert guidance, and structured collaboration, PLCS guides district leaders and educators as they connect the state's vision to local priorities and translate the NY Inspires vision into meaningful changes in teaching and learning.

Building on recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures, NY Inspires seeks to ensure every student graduates with the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to succeed beyond high school. The initiative invites districts to build on existing strengths, examine current practices and consider how best to prepare students for an evolving future. PLCS helps districts navigate this work thoughtfully, connecting statewide priorities with local goals and aspirations.

Understanding the Vision and Preparing for Change

Four interconnected transformations are at the heart of NY Inspires:

- *Portrait of a Graduate:* Establish a shared vision of the knowledge, skills and competencies students need to learn, grow, work and contribute.
- *Credits Based on Learning:* Create opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know and can do, rather than relying solely on time spent in courses.

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P7 **Special Services** New Leaders Welcomed

A Message from the Board President



Two Opportunities to Partner with BOCES

Greetings fellow Board of Education members,

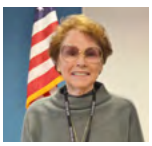
Got Space?

One of Southern Westchester BOCES' primary functions is to provide specialized programming for students with disabilities that, for a variety of reasons, cannot be provided by their home district. Currently, SWBOCES serves 334 students from our component districts and beyond. Periodically, we seek school district partnerships to utilize shared space in your schools for these specialized programs. Shared spaces provide inclusive learning environments for children while providing lease revenue for unused or underutilized instructional space in your schools.

Adding Space?

Anyone who has sat at our side of the boardroom table knows the balancing act all too well. We want modern facilities and top-tier instructional spaces for our students, but we are also keenly accountable

Greetings continues on Page 2



Dr. Joan Weber, VP
Hawthorne Cedar Knolls



Sheryl Brady
White Plains



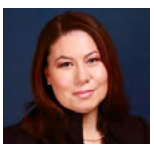
Lynn Frazer-McBride
Mt. Vernon



Nilesh Jain
Edgemont



Robert Johnson
Greenburgh-North Castle



Nan Eileen Mead
Scarsdale

Greetings fellow Board of Education members

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to our local taxpayers and the realities of bond debt. When your district begins early conversations about long-range facilities planning, capital improvements, or a potential bond referendum, I encourage you to reach out to Southern Westchester BOCES to explore the potential for a space-sharing partnership as part of your capital project.

Too often, BOCES is brought into capital conversations late in the game—after architectural drawings are drafted, community committees have made recommendations, and bond propositions are set in stone. By pulling BOCES administration in from the start, your district may be able to partner with BOCES to partially offset future capital project debt service.

An early partnership can help solve the space puzzle while potentially lowering the financial burden on taxpayers. Many of our component districts wrestle with future enrollment projections versus immediate footprint needs, while SWBOCES often requires quality classroom space close to the students and families we serve in our communities. If we identify space within your upcoming bond project that BOCES can utilize, there may be opportunities for cost sharing.

BOCES was founded on the fundamental principle that our schools achieve far more by working together than we ever could alone. As your board begins to plan for upcoming facility committees or architectural studies, let's talk early. We welcome the opportunity to sit down together, explore creative solutions, and build something lasting for all our kids. Superintendents are encouraged to contact Dr. Brendan Lyons, Deputy District Superintendent, with questions at blyons@swboces.org.

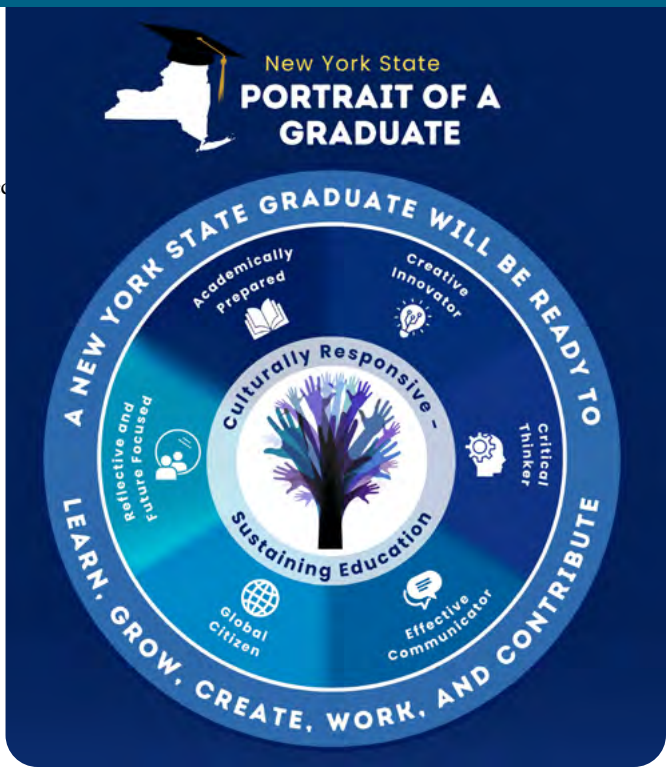
John Filiberti

Board of Education President (Eastchester)
Southern Westchester BOCES

Center for Professional Learning & Curriculum Support

NY Inspires

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- *Rethinking Assessments:* Rec of required assessments in graduation while continuing to value assessment as a way to gather evidence of learning.
- *One Diploma:* Establish one New York State high school diploma with seals and endorsements recognizing additional accomplishments and learning.

Together, these shifts challenge districts to consider how curriculum, instruction and assessment can support deeper learning and better prepare students for life beyond high school.

During the *Installation Phase* (Fall 2025 – Summer 2027), current graduation requirements remain in effect as districts focus on building capacity and preparing stakeholders for implementation. PLCS is assisting district leaders as they use this time to examine curriculum, instruction, assessment and student experiences through the lens of the Portrait of a Graduate.

From Shared Vision to Classroom Practice

Through a range of professional learning opportunities, PLCS brings educators and leaders together to explore the implications of NY Inspires. The Center shares effective practices and develops strategies for moving from concept to actualization. Program offerings include *Project-Based Learning; Leading Leaders: Portrait of a Graduate; Portraits of Possibility: Inquiry, School Libraries, and Lifelong Learning; Portrait of a Graduate: From Vision to Student Experience; and NY Inspires: From State Vision to District Action.* The NY Inspires Transformation Coalition further supports regional collaboration around this important work.

PLCS also facilitates monthly NY Inspires work sessions through its Curriculum & Leadership Council. Recent areas of focus include developing and communicating a district philosophy of assessment and creating communication plans that build understanding and engagement among educators, students, families and communities.

Coordinating Regional Action

PLCS has adopted a project management approach to advance NY Inspires regionally, helping districts identify priorities, organize work, establish next steps, coordinate efforts, and monitor progress. To support this approach, PLCS developed a suite of NY Inspires tools featuring a Portrait of a Graduate self-reflection, an NY Inspires-focused school visit protocol, a communication plan, an action plan, an Assessment Philosophy & Strategy Development Tool and classroom strategies for deeper learning.

As NY Inspires continues to evolve, PLCS is providing component districts with the expertise, resources and collaborative opportunities to approach the work with purpose and confidence.

For more information about NY Inspires programs, resources and upcoming convenings, contact Dr. Mary Elizabeth Wilson, Senior Director of PLCS, at mwilson@swboces.org.

Students and educators highlight the value of SWBOCES programs during Legislative Breakfast and Tours

Dignitaries saw firsthand, and heard about, programs' benefits, impact on students

Visiting members of Southern Westchester BOCES' legislative delegation and other dignitaries received a firsthand look at programs and heard directly from students and teachers at the annual Legislative/Advocacy Breakfast.



Hosted by SWBOCES and the BOCES Teachers Association, the event included tours of programs offered by the Centers for Special Services, Adult & Community Services and Career Services.

"There's been a lot of talk lately about artificial intelligence, and there is a lot of fear about what AI may or may not do to the future job market," said John Filiberti, SWBOCES' Board of Education President.

"Our students who are becoming carpenters, plumbers, electricians, sheet metal workers, iron workers, who are working on HVAC systems, they are not going to be afraid. They will come out of these training programs and move into employment opportunities that pay very, very well. And they are going to be ready."

Mr. Filiberti noted that enrollment at the Career Services campus, where the event was held, has doubled in the last decade to over 900 students this school year.

Honored guests included Congressman George Latimer, Assemblymembers Dana Levenberg and Chris Burdick, and county legislators Jenn Puja and Anant Nambiar. Representatives from the offices of State Senators Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Shelley Mayer; Assemblymembers Steve Otis and Amy Paulin; County Executive Ken Jenkins; and county legislator Nancy Barr were also on hand.

Students and instructors in SWBOCES' Culinary Arts program prepared and served breakfast. Chef John Damiani highlighted the many staff roles his students already fill at restaurants and country clubs in the region.

One of those students, Dawson Matthews, credited the skills he learned at SWBOCES for the summer job he landed at Quaker Ridge Golf Club in Scarsdale and his student-owned catering business, "Faith and Flavor."

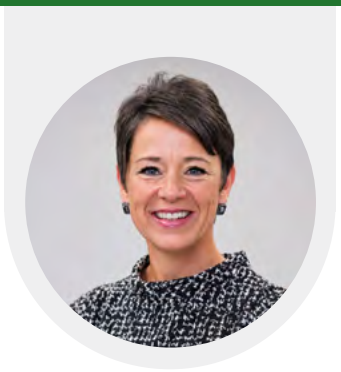
"These programs and the people who run them are the reason why I have so much confidence in my future," said Dawson, who is also a senior at New Rochelle High School. "By continuing to support and upgrade CTE programs like Culinary Arts, it will produce more people who are ready to take on the job market and develop into future leaders in their industries."

SWBOCES District Superintendent Dr. Harold A. Coles, Deputy Superintendent/ COO, Dr. Brendan Lyons, NYSUT Executive Vice President Jaime Ciffone and BOCES Teachers Association President Mairead Schuelein also spoke, each advocating for the continued support for BOCES programs.

"If you talk to some of the students here, the leadership skills they acquire are things that are lifelong — and it all starts with their interaction with their teachers and looking at how they develop their skills," Dr. Coles said. "I want to make sure you are aware that this is the future of education, and we are in the middle of accomplishing that right now."

Center for Adult & Community Services

Southern Westchester BOCES names Nicole Eschler as Director of the Center for Adult & Community Services



Dr. Nicole G. Eschler, Southern Westchester BOCES' new Director of Adult & Community Services, aims to expand vital educational programs for adult learners in the region.

Dr. Eschler was appointed by the Board of Education in June. She served previously in leadership roles at several BOCES, making the opportunity a natural fit. She was drawn to the position by its alignment with her experience and core values, as well as by SWBOCES' reputation for excellence.

"Who wouldn't be attracted to work on a team that has all the right value systems and commitment to the work?" Dr. Eschler said.

Center for Interscholastic Athletics

Section One launches new professional learning series for athletic departments

The new school year brought expanded learning opportunities for athletic directors and administrative assistants under the direction of Section One's new Supervisor of Athletics and Physical Education, Rebecca DiSisto-Leslie.



The professional development began in September with, "Game Plan: An Athletic Director Professional Learning Series." Two additional sessions will follow in December and March.

The new series was designed to support ADs in navigating their increasingly complex and evolving responsibilities. During the initial session, Executive Director Todd Santabarbara outlined the responsibilities of both Section One Athletics and the Center for Interscholastic Athletics. He aimed to broaden the understanding of the role SWBOCES plays in the day-to-day scheduling, assigning and payment of officials, the section's role in overseeing compliance with NYSPHSAA bylaws and eligibility standards, and facilitation of championship events.

"We've seen a growing number of newer athletic directors across the region, and many tell us they feel overwhelmed and want more guidance, especially after that first year," Mr. Santabarbara said. "That's where we, as a BOCES, can step in. By continuing to support them throughout their administrative journey, we help ensure they have a solid foundation in the rules and regulations that guide their work."

Another workshop was offered to administrative assistants, who play a key role in athletic departments. The workshop helped to bridge gaps between those departments, SWBOCES, and Section One.

Attendees were trained on the section's scheduling platform then broke into groups to discuss best practices with one another and with SWBOCES staff. A second workshop in January will address topics based on feedback from schools.

"We're providing different ways that we can offer support for our member schools and their athletic offices," said Ms. DiSisto-Leslie. "We want to hear from the member schools and discuss the topics they find the most challenging to manage."

The goal is to provide the resources and support athletic departments need to be successful.

"We want it to be a meaningful opportunity for them to learn from one another, build connections, and grow together," Mr. Santabarbara said.

Center for Adult & Community Services



Partnership celebrated with donation of materials for SWBOCES Adult Education programs

Community Resource Center provides textbooks for English language learners

The Southern Westchester BOCES Center for Adult & Community Services, in collaboration with the Community Resource Center in Mamaroneck, is providing English language learners with the practical skills they need to participate in the workforce.

Several classes of students and their teachers celebrated the partnership on Oct. 5, 2026, with brand new textbooks donated by CRC.

"What we do in partnership with BOCES is to provide students with important skills for them to be able to succeed in this country," said Marco Bohorquez, Director of Operations and Programs at the CRC."

The course and textbooks are aligned to federal adult education standards and supported by a federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act grant and the New York State Education Department.

"The whole point of this is to advance their skills so that they're ready for the workforce," said Nicole Eschler, Director of Adult & Community Services at SWBOCES.

New faces strengthen growing programs at Center for Career Services

The Center for Career Services welcomed four additions in key roles this fall. Tracy Larson, Starr Felicia, Ann LoBosco and Anthony Ferdinandi talked about the career journeys that brought them to the Valhalla campus and their hopes for this school year and beyond.



Starr Felicier



Ann LoBosco



Tracy Larson



Anthony Ferdinandi

Social Worker Starr Felicier spent the last six years at Lower Manhattan Arts Academy. She managed a steady stream of crisis intervention throughout the day.

"I called my office Grand Central," Ms. Felicier said.

At the Center for Career Services, she has found a different rhythm—one she says allows for more meaningful, individualized connection.

"I think, for one, I offer students just a cool, calm demeanor," she said. "I think there is also an opportunity here to be more creative, to help push them … and help build their identity, their character."

Teacher Ann LoBosco covers career paths in education and helps students hone vital skills through the Center's new Pathways in Education program.

Ms. LoBosco designed the curriculum and counts 16 careers under the education umbrella—from teacher to guidance counselor to administrator.

"Sometimes students don't realize that education has a vast amount of people that create the student experience every day," Ms. LoBosco said.

She also teaches about the history and philosophy of education, lesson planning, and differentiated instruction. There will be guest speakers and potential opportunities to shadow educators.

"We're going to have different types of students and different types of teachers when they get into the field," Ms. LoBosco said.

Teacher Tracy Larson, before becoming a nurse, envisioned a career as a teacher. After two decades in health care, she made that a reality.

Ms. Larson teaches the Nursing Assistant program, which prepares students to sit for the Certified Nursing Assistant state exam. With that, she said, they'll have their pick of jobs, roles and even work hours.

"The opportunities far outweigh the number of people that are trying to fill those positions," Ms. Larson said.

She's recently served in similar roles at Dutchess BOCES and Capital Region BOCES. Ms. Larson aims to help students develop critical thinking, communication and professional skills while harnessing their empathy and compassion for patients.

Science Teacher Anthony Ferdinandi has joined the Center for Career Services' as its first full-time consultant teacher.

Mr. Ferdinandi, who taught in Washingtonville in Orange County, supports eight CTE programs, through which students earn science credit. He ensures lessons meet state standards and include sufficient science hours, while working with program instructors to design hands-on activities that teach science in their area of study.

Science can show up in unexpected places, he said, for instance the chemistry involved in Cosmetology or Culinary Arts. Mr. Ferdinandi said he was eager for the challenge of building unique lessons for students in different programs.

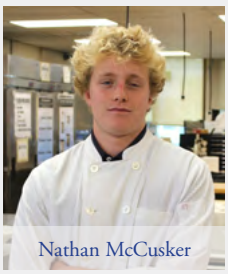
SWBOCES Board of Education welcomes two new student representatives

Trinity Wilson, a senior at Pelham Memorial High School, and Nathan McCusker, a senior at Rye Neck High School, are serving this school year as student representatives on the Southern Westchester BOCES Board of Education. Both are enrolled in the Culinary Arts program at the Center for Career Services.

Trinity has discussed changes that might benefit the school with friends. Now she can bring those things up with board members. She describes herself as naturally social and believes that will be a benefit in this new role.



Trinity Wilson



Nathan McCusker

"I love talking to people," she said. "I enjoy seeing what's on their mind and trading ideas back and forth. The people we will work with are knowledgeable, and that will help me learn and grow as a person."

Nathan says the role is a natural fit. He has long been involved in student government at Rye Neck, serving this year as the senior class treasurer.

"I enjoy meeting with people," he said. "I enjoy discussing topics and solving problems that need to be solved."

He plans to advocate for new technology in the kitchens of the Culinary Arts program. He places high value on the chance to learn from board trustees and district administrators.

"This will help me with communication, public speaking, and working with others," Nathan said, "and I can try and help our school community at the same time."

Lower Hudson Regional Information Center (LHRIC)

LHRIC hosts Annual Open House and Technology Leadership Institute kickoff

Event marks 30 years of leadership and innovation in instructional technology

School and district leaders from across the region celebrated 30 years of leadership and innovation in instructional technology on Oct. 23 at the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center's annual Open House and Technology Leadership Institute Fall Kickoff.

TLI launched in 1997 with a mission to provide a professional forum that brought educational leaders together around the exciting possibilities and challenges that technology brings to K-12 instruction.

"What began as a collaborative effort to learn and lead together has grown into a thriving professional community," Instructional Technology Manager Mary Lynn Collins-Callanan said. "When we sat in our director's office at the time, we had no idea it would endure for three decades, but here we are, celebrating 30 years of collaboration, innovation, and leadership."

Dr. Ellen J. McDonnell recalled how TLI programming intertwined with her own career as an educator almost from the start.

"Now, as Executive Director of the LHRIC, I see TLI's region-wide impact firsthand," Dr. McDonnell said. "I am proud of what the program has accomplished and excited about its promise for continued innovation."

Veteran educational technology leader and keynote speaker Jerry Crisci shared the same appreciation for TLI's impact on his own career as a teacher and administrator.





Between the leading experts it brought to the region and the opportunities it provided to connect with fellow educators, TLI fostered an ideal environment for professional learning and collaboration, Mr. Crisci said.

"TLI continues to be an engine of innovation in the Lower Hudson Valley," he added. "It offers an outstanding model for professional learning and collaboration that, frankly, should be replicated in other regions across the country."

Mr. Crisci's keynote addressed increasing concerns surrounding screen time and technology bans while exploring what meaningful technology experiences should look like in modern classrooms. Drawing on his own professional experience, Mr. Crisci unpacked the rapidly evolving role of generative AI in teaching, learning, and assessment.

In 1999, he said, the TLI topic was the humanness of technology. Today, there's a pushback—Dr. Crisci called it a techlash—that has the nation's largest school districts, and some smaller ones, putting boundaries around students' use of technology.

Drivers include anxiety over AI taking jobs and causing cognitive surrender as well as fostering misinformation and online bullying.

"We support EdTech because we believe in what it can do for kids," he said. "I question how effective bans will really be as we work to prepare students for the future."

For one thing, he noted, AI is embedded everywhere, from web searches to the backbone of many platforms.

The preceding Open House offered district partners a unique behind-the-scenes look at how LHRIC teams support their local schools. Attendees participated in dynamic, small-group, tabletop discussions with the LHRIC leadership team on critical educational topics.

Later, a regional panel and networking lunch allowed leaders to share practical strategies and exchange ideas on managing complex technology decisions in their districts.

Center for Special Services

Welcoming new Teachers, TAs and Teacher Aides to SWBOCES!

Check out our social media welcome campaign of short videos introducing the many new faces in our Center for Special Services classrooms for the new school year.

Search the hashtag **#WelcometoSWBOCES** on our Facebook and Instagram pages.

SEPTA President to present workshop on Guardianship Training

Carolyn Laskaj, president of the Southern Westchester BOCES Special Education Parent Teacher Association, will lead a workshop on Guardianship Training for families of students in our Center for Special Services programs on Nov. 19, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

Meeting information can be found under News on the Center for Special Services homepage at specialservices.swboces.org.

Center for Special Services welcomes new leaders for 2026-2027

New Principal, two APs bring experience, passion to key program roles



Patricia Melcher
Principal

Rye Lake Middle-High School

Patricia Melcher has joined Southern Westchester BOCES as principal at Rye Lake Middle-High School, bringing a passionate approach and an educational philosophy centered on teaching and leadership.

Ms. Melcher got her start in New York City's Teaching Fellows program, going on to teach high school English in White Plains before earning a master's degree in school administration.

"I like to tell people that I'm primarily a teacher first," she says.

A mother of three, she once hosted her own cooking show on Facebook, sharing her love of Haitian and Caribbean cuisine. She hopes to develop a chili recipe worthy of Rye Lake's popular Super Bowl cookoff.

Ms. Melcher describes herself as a lifelong learner who is always eager for new challenges.

Her immediate priorities have been to listen to and learn from staff, to get to know the Rye Lake community, and to build upon its shared sense of identity at Rye Lake.

"How do we build culture so that there is a greater sense of belonging?" she says. "What is it that identifies who we are as a school community?"



Michael Guida
Assistant Principal

Rye Lake Lower Campus

Michael Guida's path to becoming an assistant principal at Southern Westchester BOCES' Rye Lake Lower Campus wound first through kitchens then classrooms.

Mr. Guida spent nearly 20 years in the food service industry, helping restaurants solve operational challenges and improve their businesses. He routinely invited local BOCES students into his restaurants, seeing firsthand how much they enjoyed the experience but wishing he could give them more.

His wife, herself a teacher, encouraged him to consider a career in education.

That led him to the New York City Teaching Fellows program and a degree in special education. Teaching in the South Bronx, Mr. Guida brought his restaurant experience to bear, transforming a special education classroom into a culinary café.

The experience gave him a new perspective on his own potential. He earned his school leader certification and joined SWBOCES in July. Where he once helped students learn employment skills, he now helps them develop life skills, increase their independence, and expand their possible options after they leave school.

"I really like what I'm doing now," he said. "I love the ability to be able to pay forward the tremendous amount of opportunities I've been given in life."



Kathryn Meyers
Assistant Principal

SWBOCES at Rochambeau School

Kathryn Meyers spent 11 years as a special education teacher and instructional coach in District 10 in the Bronx before arriving in August as assistant principal at Rochambeau School.

Ms. Meyers was drawn to Southern Westchester BOCES by the opportunity to support students with disabilities on a broader scale.

"I was ready to take on that leadership role," she said. "That drew me to BOCES."

A Rockland County native, Ms. Meyers earned degrees in childhood education and special education from St. Thomas Aquinas College, followed by a master's in literacy from SUNY New Paltz and building leader certification from Molloy University.

Ms. Meyers sees a natural connection between her special education background and the students at Rochambeau.

"I like making more of an impact within a whole building," she said. "As a teacher, it's predominantly your classroom that you're affecting. And when you're an instructional coach you have certain classrooms and certain teachers that you're affecting. I think as a leader then, you're affecting a whole building, systems and structures, different teachers, different staff members."

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Stephen Tibbetts, *Assistant Superintendent for Business and Administrative Services*

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Brian Howard, *Director of Communications*
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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.

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, *Senior 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

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



SWBOCES recognizes its tenure recipients and Years of Service honorees





The Board of Education and Administration of Southern Westchester BOCES recognized 17 tenure recipients and 56 staff members with 10, 20 or 30 years of service.

A celebration was held at SWBOCES' Harrison location, where colleagues, family members and friends were invited to cheer those recognized for their dedication to our students, schools and wider community.

Board President John Filiberti remarked about the impressive turnout, which he said was rewarding to see.

"There is nothing more gratifying than to see people choose BOCES for their place of employment, and to see those people that choose BOCES stay for so long," Mr. Filiberti said. "It's a testament to not only you but also your peers, the administrators, the programs, and the students you support regardless of the areas you work in."

"Thank you all for choosing BOCES," he added.

See more photos on our Facebook page at facebook.com/swboces.

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.