SOUTHERN WESTCHESTER BOCES

Board Links

BOARD TO BOARD NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2026

Center for Adult & Community Services



Adult learners explore American history ahead of 250th Anniversary celebration

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary of independence, Southern Westchester BOCES adult learners have a unique vantage point as they learn English, pursue their High School Equivalency diploma, and prepare for the Citizenship Exam.

Students at the White Plains Public Library are exploring key moments in American history during their lessons. Offered by the Center for Adult & Community Services, the class is taught by Instructor Beatriz La Serna, who guided students through a timeline leading up to the present day.

"This will be a big celebration nationwide, all year long," Ms. La Serna said. "I talked to the students about different places they can watch events and how they can participate throughout the year."

The lessons help students connect historical events to the civic knowledge they are acquiring.

"I really enjoy this class," said Tatyana Ermolenko, who attends with her husband, with whom she moved from Belarus to be close to family. "Our teacher is very positive."

One student wrote about the Declaration of Independence; another researched the U.S. Constitution.

At St. Gabriel's School in New Rochelle, Arlene Novich prepares students for the High School Equivalency exam. The 250th anniversary is a great reference for teaching history. "I like to give them a bit of the background of what happened 250 years ago," she said.

Student Sheryl Grant came to the U.S. from Jamaica. She turned to SWBOCES seeking to advance professionally.

"It's been wonderful," Ms. Grant said. "We work hard. I've already passed two classes since I started in September, so I'm looking forward to going the full distance."

Success gives students confidence, Ms. Novich said, and opens up opportunities. The 250th anniversary is a unique chance to learn about the nation's founders.

"So here we are, 250 years after the signing," Ms. Novich said, "and we want to see what was it that really propelled them to take such an important step."

A Message from Board Member, Dr. Sheryl Brady



Greetings fellow Board of Education members,

Welcome to our Spring Board Links newsletter! In anticipation of the SWBOCES Annual Meeting on April 8, it is a perfect time to highlight our accomplishments and ongoing initiatives. We are energized by the SWBOCES Strategic Plan, A Blueprint for Excellence (adopted in Spring 2025 and featured in the Fall 2025 Board Links Special Edition), which moves us into the future and is the lens through which our goals are created, aligned, and measured.

The SWBOCES Center for Career Services hosted more than 400 visitors at their Spring Open House on our Valhalla campus and provided an experience of the wide range of career and technical education programs we offer, demonstrating the value of hands-on learning and future pathways to success for our high school students.

More than 800 students attended their annual Job Fair, which attracted 22 local businesses representing diverse industries and career pathways. This event provided opportunities to ask questions, receive information, and share contact information as a first step toward connecting with a potential employer.

Greetings continues on Page 2



John Filiberti, President Eastchester



Dr. Joan Weber, VP Hawthorne/Cedar Knolls



Lynn Frazer-McBride Mt. Vernon



Nilesh Jain Edgemont



Robert Johnson Greenburgh-N.Castle



Eileen Miller Pelham

Greetings fellow Board of Education members

Greetings continued from Page 1

Eighteen SWBOCES students, in a field of more than 500 competitors, earned medals in 12 different events during the SkillsUSA Area IV Regional Competition in February. We hosted the competition, which culminated in an exciting, nail-biting awards ceremony at White Plains' Highlands Middle School, where I had a front-row seat to experience the palpable sense of camaraderie and support among all the participants!

A personal highlight was my honor of presenting the NYSSBA Champions of Change Award to our EMS program, in my role as NYSSBA Area 10 Director. This recognition highlights programs and initiatives that bring positive, meaningful change to the students, communities and districts of New York.

The SWBOCES Center for Special Services invested in accessible playgrounds at two locations, Rye Lake Lower Campus and Transfiguration School, sites of relocated programs. These playgrounds ensure that our school environments are suited to our students' learning needs and abilities.

The Transfiguration School held their own Winter Olympics with a week-long series of Olympic-themed activities! Our students had myriad opportunities to demonstrate their efforts, talents, and collaboration.

Students at Rye Lake Campus Middle-High School learned about radio technology through hands-on projects, a hallmark of BOCES programs, building working radio receivers with great enthusiasm!

I had the pleasure of attending the celebration of Black History Month and Culture Day at the SWBOCES program at the Rochambeau School in White Plains. Music, singing, and student research/presentations on influential Black-Americans of their choosing were featured in a program that empowered and engaged our students and brought the community together.

The SWBOCES Center for Professional Learning and Curriculum Support has partnered with the Jacob Burns Film Center (JBFC) to expand regional school districts' access to the JBFC school programs, sharing a commitment to strengthen literacy, foster empathy, and engage students through the experience and creation of films.

The Center is continuing its work around library intervisitations, providing professional learning opportunities for librarians to observe, share, and reflect on practices with colleagues across districts, strengthening the understanding of how libraries can support teaching and learning in meaningful ways.

The Institute for Opportunities in Education this coming July will be a joint effort with the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS), bringing together educators and leaders from across New York State, expanding access and providing new opportunities for shared learning experiences with dynamic speakers and practical workshops, connection, collaboration, reflection, growth, and impact.

The LHRIC has been leading the AI conversation in K–12 education with the development of leadership cohorts, providing and expanding differentiated learning opportunities to support educators and administrators, and supporting district-based AI committees. Moving into the future, this work includes anchoring AI integration in the Portrait of a Graduate and building AI literacy by expanding opportunities for teachers and students, ensuring every learner understands, uses, and questions AI ethically and effectively.

The LHRIC continues to strengthen SWBOCES and district relationships by expanding support through robust technology services, procurement, instructional technology, data services, and software services.

The Center for Adult and Community Services has been responding to emerging and sustained employment trends, adapting schedules and course offerings, building relationships with community partners, and improving their ability to design, deliver, and expand programs at off-site locations to meet the needs of employers. Students and alumni were welcomed to their Spring Connections Open House at the Valhalla Campus, enhancing connections with employers from industries across the region.

The Center has been analyzing data related to the Incarcerated Youth Program and Adult Literacy Program to increase academic proficiency while also working on expanding partnerships/community programs to provide off-site training opportunities for skill development and career advancement.

The award-winning **Office of Public Information** continues to grow and increase services to a larger number of school districts. The department expects to expand in such areas as athletics communications and sports streaming services, and expanded graphic design capacity. A new website platform has been adopted, and the Office's expertise is being shared with districts who are updating their own websites for digital accessibility and compliance.

The Center for Interscholastic Athletics has grown its Interscholastic Program sports and team offerings. A redesign of the Sports Chair model is being examined, and the Center continues to develop initiatives and provide increased opportunities for district students' participation in Student-Athlete Leadership programs.

Another highlight of this past year, and featured in our last newsletter, was the welcoming of our three student Board members who contribute to Board discussion and provide insight into the student experience. We look forward to the participation of next year's cohort!

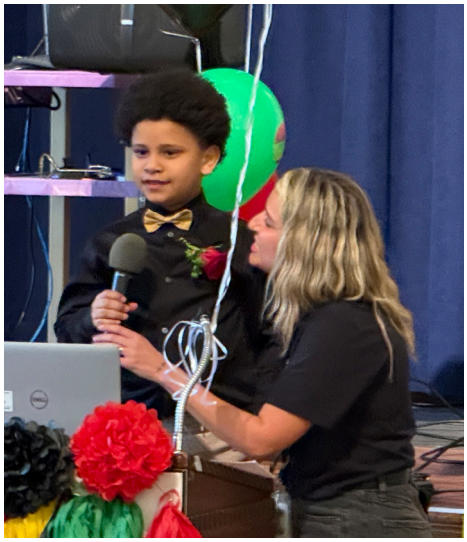
This column is a reflection of what I consider to be some of the highlights of SWBOCES this past year, and I am sure you have your own! I hope you are reminded of our many initiatives and successes as well as our commitment to providing effective, impactful services and support. SWBOCES continues to maximize the potential of each of our students through high-quality learning experiences and opportunities that foster growth and achievement. We provide ever-expanding cost-effective and efficient services to our school districts. The Board is very appreciative of our component districts' unanimous approval of our previous three budgets. With your partnership, SWBOCES will continue to identify emerging needs and to innovate and enhance our programs through the future-focused lens of our Strategic Plan, which will guide us as we move confidently into the coming year.

Dr. Sheryl Brady

Board of Education Member
(White Plains)
Southern Westchester BOCES

Center for Special Services





Rochambeau School celebrates Black History with presentations and performances

The celebration of Black History Month at Southern Westchester BOCES' Rochambeau School program brought together students, educators and families for a culminating event featuring songs and presentations about famous and accomplished Black Americans.

The event also highlighted students' research on influential individuals they selected, while celebrating culture and bringing the community together in recognition of both Black History Month and Culture Day.

From renowned activists Rosa Parks and Frederick Douglass to actor Idris Elba and President Barack Obama, the famous figures chosen spanned eras and industries, not to mention walks of life. The common thread was their contribution to the American story.

"The efforts of our students and teachers was so inspiring, to see their work come to fruition for our honored guests means so much," said Assistant Principal Maria Almeida, who emceed the event. "We were so glad to commemorate Black History Month with such rich cultural and instructional presentations. Thank you to all who participated and to those who attended."

SWBOCES officials on hand included Board of Education member Dr. Sheryl Brady, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Brendan Lyons, Director of Special Services Jessica Walker, Assistant Director Dr. Alexandria Connally, and Principal Julia Dolan.

Students in Ms. Danielle's Class performed "My Girl" by The Temptations. Music Teacher Andrew Ruoti led an audience that included more than two dozen family members in a rendition of Bill Withers' "Lean on Me." White Plains Technology Teacher Dr. Steve Chetcuti closed out the event by performing a variety of numbers on the saxophone.

Center for Professional Learning & Curriculum Support



PLCS and NYSCOSS Launch The Institute for Inclusive Learning

The Center for Professional Learning & Curriculum Support and the New York State Council of School Superintendents have partnered to launch **The Institute for Inclusive Learning**. This statewide initiative merges two long-standing programs—the Institute for Opportunities in Education and the Diversity Symposium—into a unified, three-day event, July 27–29. Focusing on equity and inclusion, the Institute blends research-based learning with practical application. A new **satellite model in Ithaca** will pilot a hybrid approach, combining virtual sessions with regional field visits to increase accessibility.

"This partnership allows us to explore innovative models while delivering the impactful, hands-on experiences that are our hallmark," says Dr. Mary Elizabeth Wilson, PLCS Senior Director. Program lead Sadika Clarke said the collaboration "reclaims the 'why' of our work," equipping leaders to turn vision into action. By elevating diverse voices, the Institute empowers educators to foster inclusive cultures and advance equitable student outcomes.

SWBOCES students shine at SkillsUSA regionals

Second year hosting at Career Services campus as big a success as the first

Eighteen students medaled in 12 competitions at the SkillsUSA Area IV Regional Competition on Feb. 28. The event welcomed more than 500 participants to Southern Westchester BOCES' Career Services campus., which hosted for a second straight year.

Students from 14 schools competed in 40 Career and Technical Education contests, from Animal Careers and Culinary Arts to Digital Cinema Production and Nail Care, where SWBOCES students earned first place. A Career Services team also took first in the Culinary Quiz Bowl competition.



The competitions were held throughout the day, using Southern Westchester BOCES' state-of-the-art facilities. Including spectators, more than 700 people attended.

The day concluded with an awards ceremony at Highlands Middle School in White Plains. Career Services Principal Jaclyn De Lao emceed the ceremony, announcing each medalist and recipients of special recognitions. One such honor went to Career Services' own SkillsUSA Advisor Howard Hamilton, who was named an Advisor of the Year.

Medal winners can now compete in New York's SkillsUSA State Championships April 22-24 in Syracuse.



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Annual TELL Awards honor the region's very best in instructional technology

Keynote urges educators to focus beyond the tech and on 'vintage innovations'

The educational technology landscape changes fast, but the 2026 TELL Awards, honoring innovative educators who create systemic change through technology, was a chance to pause and focus on the present.



"Today we honor not what is next, but what is best," said Mary Lynn Collins-Callanan, manager of Instructional Technology at the LHRIC in her opening remarks at the Edith H. Macy Conference Center in Briarcliff Manor.

Keynote speaker, Dr. John Spencer, looked back at the teaching and learning practices that make a lasting difference in students' lives.

"For years, we were taught a formula," said Dr. Spencer. "Go to school, get good grades, graduate from a university, and climb the corporate ladder. But with the advent of generative AI, the ladder is gone and our students will instead navigate a complex maze."

He recalled the story of a middle school research project of his to illuminate ways to prepare students for the future. Using a typewriter, accessing interlibrary loans, making long distance phone calls and recording on a reel to reel were slow and frustrating, "and I loved it," he said, highlighting the power of a productive struggle.

"Finding my voice changed my world forever," Dr. Spencer said.

He encouraged his audience to see beyond ever-evolving technology and cultivate what he called vintage innovations: curiosity, focus, adaptability and empathy.

"This is the tool kit that will empower students in the present, and prepare them for the future," he said. "These are the competencies that will help them navigate the maze."

LHRIC TELL AWARD WINNERS 2026

Technology in Education through Leadership and Learning



Outstanding Innovative Teacher
Angela Carrasquillo
New Rochelle City Schools



Outstanding Innovative Teacher
Mr. Paul George
Brewster Central School District



Outstanding Innovative Teacher
Elizabeth 'Liz' Hamboussi
Brewster Central School District



Outstanding Innovative
Instructional Technology Coach
Katie Kelley & Christina Amendola
Clarkstown Central School District



Outstanding Innovative
Instructional Technology Coach
Nicki Fischetti
Hendrick Hudson Central School District



Outstanding Innovative
Instructional Technology Coach
Kaitlyn Shields
North Rockland Central School District



Outstanding Innovative Leader
Jennifer Harriton-Wilson, Ed.D.
Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES

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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*
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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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Center for Interscholastic Athletics



Girls & Women in Sports Day at MetLife Stadium opens career doors for Section One athletes

In honor of National Girls & Women in Sports Day, nearly 150 Section One student-athletes visited MetLife Stadium to learn about potential career paths.

Hosted by the New York Giants, the event welcomed coaches and athletes from 28 flag football programs. An opening panel discussion featured female sports executives. Students then talked with Giants employees about their chosen fields.

"This event really opened my eyes up to how many opportunities are in front of me and encouraged me to take advantage of them," New Rochelle senior Stella Ziogas said. "It also showed me the value of creating relationships and always being respectful to others."

"We learned so much about how careers for women in sports have evolved," Yorktown senior Kenzie Meola added. "There are so many opportunities now."

The panel discussion focused on career paths — from panelists' first jobs in sports to insights into positions with teams, leagues and other organizations. Students also met Giants staff working in social media, communications, ticket sales, content production, and more.

Inviting flag football players to the event was fitting. The Giants first partnered with Section One five years ago to help launch the sport in the region. Flag football is now the fastest growing sport in the section.

"Our partnership with the Giants is second to none," Section One Assistant Director Dan Belfi said. "It started five years ago as an outreach to introduce girls flag football. We can't thank the Giants enough for all that they continue to do for Section One and these student-athletes."

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.