



Board Links

BOARD TO BOARD NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2025

A Message from the Board President



John Filiberti, Board of Education President (Eastchester)

Greetings fellow Board of Education members,

As we approach the final stages of the New York State budget negotiations, I wanted to take a moment to share some important considerations that directly affect our districts and our students. With the state budget set to be finalized shortly, now is the time to ensure that our voices are heard regarding the funding and resources that are critical for the continued success of our public schools.

First, we must continue to advocate for an increase in Foundation Aid. This year, we are hopeful that the state will approve additional funding in this area, which is crucial for ensuring that our schools are adequately supported. Right now the one-house budgets call for an additional \$680 million (Senate) or possibly \$569 million (Assembly), so let's hope for a good result here.

Additionally, we're cautiously optimistic that BOCES and Special Services will receive additional funding, although the final numbers are not known yet. Appropriate funding for Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs,

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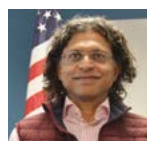
Robert Johnson, VP
Mount Pleasant Cottage School



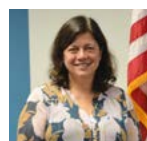
Sheryl Brady
White Plains



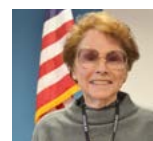
Lynn Frazer-McBride
Mt. Vernon



Nilesh Jain
Edgemont



Eileen Miller
Pelham



Joan Weber
Hawthorne Cedar Knolls

Center for Career Services

Career Services Campus hosts first SkillsUSA regionals



SkillsUSA competitors take part in a written exam as part of the day-long regional event hosted by SWBOCES' Career Services Campus in Valhalla.

More than 400 students competed Feb. 1 in the SkillsUSA's Area IV Regional Competition, hosted for the first time at the Center for Career Services campus in Valhalla.

The annual competition featured SkillsUSA students from 12 schools and districts across the Hudson Valley competing in various career and technical education fields.

"Hosting the SkillsUSA competition here at the Center for Career Services was incredible. Our staff was extremely dedicated and ensured this event was a success," said Principal Jaclyn De Lao, Area IV Administrator Trustee for SkillsUSA. "You could feel the excitement around campus once students started to arrive for the competition."

Students raved about the competition.

"This was like nothing I had experienced before," said **Patricia Abad of White Plains**, who competed in Cake Decorating.

"During the studying process to get ready for the competition, I realized that I was capable of so much more than I thought," said **Rachael Espinoza of White Plains** who participated in Animal Careers.

Southern Westchester BOCES students who earned the highest honor of gold included:

Nahdi Naheem of New Rochelle (Automotive Service Technology), **Logan Pierre of New Rochelle** and **Shane Gordon of Byram Hills** (Digital Cinema Production); **Louisa Salvador of Rye** (First Aid/CPR); and **Abraham Suarez of New Rochelle** (Related Technical Math).

At an awards ceremony at Highlands Middle School in White Plains, 22 students and student teams from the Center for Career Services placed in the Top 3 of their respective competitions. Winners advance to New York's SkillsUSA Championships in Syracuse in late April. In addition to the gold medalists, they include SWBOCES students from Irvington, Port Chester, Ardsley, Pelham, Harrison, Valhalla, Greenburgh, Byram Hills, and Rye Neck.

"This was a familiar environment," said **Jake Olivier of Eastchester**, who placed third in Digital Cinema Production with **Eugene Egbivwie of Eastchester**. "I think that allowed us to have a better understanding of the equipment here and just overall feel more comfortable."

"It was definitely nerve-racking at first, but I felt good about myself going into it," said **Elizabeth Torres of New Rochelle**, who competed in the Job Interview competition. "We all really helped each other prepare so we were ready." *See more photos on page 2.*

A Message from the Board President

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which continue to grow in both importance and participation, can't be glossed over. By expanding access to these training programs, we can help meet this urgent need while offering our students valuable career opportunities.

As more and more of our students seek to enroll in CTE courses, it is critical that the reimbursement rate for CTE instructors aligns more closely with their pay in order to recruit and retain highly skilled educators. (The Senate's one house budget calls for an increase here from \$30k – \$60k, and hopefully it will get the support of the Governor in the final version). We must also work to leverage a portion of this funding to expand and enhance our CTE offerings, ensuring that we have the courses and the student capacity to meet the growing demand for career training and workforce preparation. Furthermore, we must work closely with the business community to identify where workforce needs will be in the next five years, allowing us to adapt our programs to ensure our students are prepared for the careers of tomorrow.

Finally, I want to highlight an exciting development in the state's educational planning—there is now a proposal to allow 9th-grade students to enroll in CTE programs. Although this appears to only be for districts running their own CTE programs, let's hope it opens the door for future 9th grade students to attend BOCES courses in the years to come.

Thanks for all that you do for students in our state each and every day, and best wishes for a successful end of school year.

John Filiberti

Board of Education President (Eastchester)
Southern Westchester BOCES

Center for Career Services

Career Services Campus hosts first SkillsUSA regionals



Competitors work at Culinary Arts stations in the Career Services campus's kitchens.



Student applies make-up during SkillsUSA Cosmetology competition.



Student works on electrical framing project during SkillsUSA competition.

Office of Public Information



Natalia Baage named NYS Communicator of the year

Veteran SWBOCES Public Relations Specialist Natalia Baage has been named 2024 Communicator of the Year by the New York School Public Relations Association (NYSPPRA). She was honored at the organization's annual conference in Saratoga Springs in February.

Wrestlers competing at Section One's first girls championships called "pioneers"

Winners competed at states in another first for growing high school sport



Wrestlers grapple during the first-ever girls state championship competition.



Top-ranked girls take the podium for the first time following the girls state championships.

Throughout her high school career as a wrestler, Adriana Palumbo envisioned participating in a Section One Girls Wrestling Championship event. When the time came this winter, she soaked in the moment.

"It's an emotional day for me," said Palumbo, a nationally ranked senior from Pleasantville, who competed in the boys championships and won an unofficial state girls title last year. "It's great to see all these girls come out and compete."

Thirty-four athletes participated in Section One's first girls tournament on Feb. 12

at the Westchester County Center. They competed on mats adjacent to boys in the Division 1 competition and later climbed the same podium and wore the same medals around their necks.

The winners advanced to NYSPHSAA's first official state championships, on Feb. 27 at MVP Arena in Albany.

"You know, life can be tough for pioneers," Chappaqua Athletic Director and Section One Wrestling chairperson Jamie Block said. "But they have done a great job and built a lot of great relationships through this. And that's really what this is all about."

Section One officials hope the first girls championship will encourage more girls to participate.

"Thankfully, we don't have to hope that girls wrestling will grow," said wrestling official Kerry Ghanie. "It will absolutely continue to get bigger and bigger."

Sophomore Gianna Cruz, who was one of the event's winners, is a national jiu jitsu champion. To compete, she had to start a team at Ursuline and join the Eastchester High School varsity.

"I'm just really glad I was given the opportunity to compete here," Cruz said.



SWBOCES Director of Athletics Todd Santabarbara and Section One Leadership has been awarded the John Martino Service Award by the Lower Hudson Basketball Coaches Association for supporting and elevating the County Center as host of the Section One Tournament. Meanwhile, Assistant Director of Athletics Jesse Merchant was honored at the NY State Athletic Administrators Association conference in March with a 2025 Apple Award, given to those who play a vital part in the success of the association, especially at the grassroots level.

Transfiguration School in Tarrytown to provide new home for Special Services programs

Search to replace Tappan Hill School ends just down the road



The Transfiguration School in Tarrytown will be the new home to two SWBOCES programs following the departure from the nearby Tappan Hill School.

Board members attend D.C. Advocacy & Equity Conference



Board of Education members Robert Johnson, Lynn Frazer-McBride and Sheryl Brady represented Southern Westchester BOCES at the National School Boards Association's 2025 Advocacy & Equity Institute in Washington D.C. February 2nd-4th.



Two of three Center for Special Services Programs housed at Tappan Hill School in Tarrytown for the last decade will relocate a short distance away in the 2025-26 school year.

With SWBOCES' lease expiring and the Tarrytown Schools' growing need for space, a search began in late 2023 for a new home that will provide continuity with the supportive community and expert programs provided at Tappan Hill. After a meticulous search, a new home that will serve those goals was found just a mile away.

The Transfiguration School presented an opportunity to relocate the Applied Intensive Intervention Model (AIIM) program serving students with Autism Spectrum needs as well as the intensive day treatment (IDT) programs now housed at Tappan Hill. Meanwhile, the program for students with multiple disabilities (MD) at Tappan Hill will move to SWBOCES' Rye Lake Campus.

Preparations for these changes began with the formation of a Committee in fall 2023 to study program needs, potential locations, finances and communications around the changes. Potential options were explored, including contacting

component districts in the region. By late last summer, a timeline was established to enter into agreement with Transfiguration. Plans were submitted in the fall to the New York State Education Department for approval. Renovations began soon after at Transfiguration School and at Rye Lake Campus.

An eight-year lease with Transfiguration will provide stability for programs. SWBOCES will share space at the Transfiguration School, which will continue to maintain a first-floor pre-K program and off-hours basketball programs in the gymnasium. Renovations include additional restrooms, new office spaces, flooring, new rescue windows, technology upgrades, a new playground, and various additional repairs. At Rye Lake, existing classrooms are being outfitted to support students in the MD program.

"We are pleased to have found the Transfiguration School and are confident that once building updates are complete, our learning community will continue to grow and thrive as it occupies its new home," said Director of Special Services Jessica Walker.



Honoring Innovation in Education

2025 TELL Awards Celebrate Excellence in Teaching and Technology

Educators and district leaders from across the Lower Hudson region gathered on March 6 at the Edith Macy Conference Center for the 2025 TELL (Technology in Education through Leadership and Learning) Awards.

Hosted by the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center's (LHRIC) Technology Leadership Institute, the event recognized outstanding educators—teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators—nominated by their peers for demonstrating innovation and best practices, and having implemented systemic change in teaching and learning while incorporating and embracing technology.

Each awardee spoke to an audience of colleagues and family, reflecting on their journeys and expressing gratitude to those who've supported them.

"All of my projects have been absolutely amazing... I've learned so much from them," said Eastchester Teacher Elizabeth Bruni. "This award is the result of that relentless commitment, and it's really such an honor to receive."

Peekskill Director of Technology Janice Reid shared, "Technology all by itself is just technology. But you have to have a purpose. You have to have a vision."

Suffern Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Lee Weber echoed this commitment to purposeful integration, saying, "As educators, we have a responsibility to ensure

every student has access, not just to devices, but to knowledge, whether it's keyboarding, coding, cybersecurity, digital citizenship, and AI."

The event featured a keynote address from Dr. Gene M. Kerns, Chief Academic Officer at educational technology company Renaissance. Dr. Kerns challenged attendees to rethink the origins of talent and expertise,



Keynote speaker Dr. Gene M. Kerns,
Chief Academic Officer at Renaissance

with a message centering on the idea that genius is not born but made—a concept supported by extensive research presented in the book *The Talent Code* by Dan Coyle.

Referencing the book, Dr. Kerns highlighted communities and institutions that have cultivated extraordinary talent through a culture of deliberate practice, motivation, and master coaching.

"This same culture we must bring to our schools," he said. "We must stoke the fire every day to keep kids motivated."

The 2025 TELL Awardees:

Outstanding Innovative Teacher

Elizabeth Bruni, Middle School Teacher and Educational Technology Facilitator, Eastchester

Deb Romaine, Eighth Grade English Teacher and Instructional Technology Specialist, Brewster

Richard Bertrand, English Language Arts Teacher, Clarkstown

Outstanding Innovative Instructional Technology Coach

Caroleann Bombace, Instructional Technology Coach, Rye

Dr. Stephanie Peborde Burke, Instructional Innovation Coach, Irvington

Alicia DelMastro, K-12 Instructional Technology Specialist, Pelham

Katheryn Gambino, Technology Facilitator, Blind Brook-Rye

Jenifer Vazquez, Technology Staff Developer, Blind Brook-Rye

Outstanding Innovative Leader

Jennifer Mazza, Director of STEM and Instructional Technology, Clarkstown

Janice Reid, Director of Technology, Peekskill

Lee Weber, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Suffern

Middle School Week introduces students to CTE programs

Nearly 300 middle school students from Port Chester, New Rochelle and Sleepy Hollow visited



Before she visited the Center for Career Services this week, Cynthia Paute was familiar with Cosmetology. She has an aunt who performs salon services for a living, giving her first-hand insight into the art and science of beauty treatments. However, there is a difference between observing and doing, and nearly 300 middle school students from **Port Chester**, **Sleepy Hollow** and **New Rochelle** had the latter opportunity during the third week of March.

The Center for Career Services hosted Middle School Week at its Valhalla campus this week, giving students like Cynthia, an eighth grader in Sleepy Hollow, a first look at the school's programs, including her preferred Cosmetology.

"I really like this a lot," she said while using a curling iron on the hair of a mannequin. "This is something that can benefit me and my potential career path."

She and other students who participated pre-selected a program to visit. They spent approximately an hour with that program, experiencing interactive lessons in Cosmetology, Barbering, Culinary Arts, Architecture, Automotive Technology and other programs.

Each day, the visitors received an introductory message from School Counselor Anna Macchia, who was joined by colleagues Monica Mann and Kevin McAllister. Macchia's address introduced students to how the Center for Career Services operates — providing career-centered, skill-based learning in a program where the costs for transportation and instruction are funded by the student's home district.

After listening to the overview, the students dispersed to visit the class of their interest.

"We've been doing this for a few years," Ms. Macchia explained. "This event really is about career exploration for middle school students. It introduces them to our programs, so when they get to high school it's already in their minds."

CCS students don't enroll until their junior year of high school, but the middle school students were able to gain valuable insight into career-based learning during their visit. In Culinary Arts, students partnered with a high school student enrolled in the class to make cookie dough. Visitors to the Certified Nursing Assistant program practiced using a pulse oximeter and a stethoscope, either on enrolled students or on one another.

During Sleepy Hollow's visit to campus, 11 students joined the Barbering class, practicing how to perform a hot shave (on a balloon) and how to use an electric razor (on a mannequin).

"For many of them, this is probably their first time touching this equipment," said Barbering instructor David Biviano, whose program was first introduced to CCS this school year. "They all seem like they are eager to see what's going on in our class."



Educators and leaders from the greater region gathered at Southern Westchester BOCES in Harrison for the second in a multi-part series on Creating Inclusive School Communities.

SWBOCES hosts session on inclusive communities

Multi-part series on Advancing Equity makes stops across the region

The Joint Management Team of the Lower Hudson Valley, which includes leaders from Southern Westchester BOCES, Rockland BOCES and Putnam-Northern Westchester BOCES, convened the second session of a multi-part initiative at Southern Westchester BOCES on Jan. 8 with “Creating Inclusive School Communities in a Changing World.”

The daylong session focused on advancing equity through actionable strategies.

Dr. Brendan Lyons, SWBOCES Deputy Superintendent/COO, opened with a call to action, emphasizing the importance

of turning intentions into impact. White Plains Superintendent Dr. Joseph Ricca’s keynote address inspired attendees to lead with courage and purpose in addressing inequities in education.

Sadika Clarke of SWBOCES, Keturah Proctor of PNW BOCES, and Lisa Collopy of Rockland BOCES collaborated to create a meaningful and practical experience for educators and administrators. Under their guidance, the session showcased three exemplary districts—White Plains and The National SEED Project, East Ramapo and Chappaqua—presenting their efforts

to embed equity into practice:

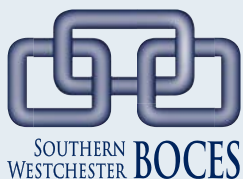
Attendees left the session with comprehensive resources, including tools and guides to implement strategies in their own districts.

The initiative began in October by establishing a shared purpose and celebrating best practices. The culminating session in March aimed to highlight districts that have successfully implemented equity strategies. The final meeting, at Rockland BOCES, was designed to inspire continued regional efforts and explore opportunities for future collaboration.



Catherine Graybosch named SLS Supervisor

SWBOCES welcomes Catherine Graybosch as Supervisor of the School Library System. A former Library Media Specialist, curriculum leader and administrator, Ms. Graybosch brings a passion for inquiry-based learning, technology integration, and professional development. “I am beyond excited to begin this new journey,” Ms. Graybosch said. “Libraries are the heart of our schools, and I am eager to collaborate with educators, librarians, and students to foster innovation, access, and a love of learning.”



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Lynn Frazer-McBride
Nilesh Jain
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Stephen Tibbetts, *Assistant Superintendent for Business and Administrative Services*

Board Links is compiled and designed by:
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SWBOCES NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

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

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

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

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SWBOCES IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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

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



Center for Adult & Community Services

Partnerships extend SWBOCES' reach to adult learners

Programs across Westchester make an impact in several communities

Southern Westchester BOCES is extending its reach to adult learners across Westchester by leveraging relationships with a growing number of community partners.

"We rely on and deeply appreciate the partnerships we've built throughout the county," said Director of Adult & Community Services Tracy Racicot. "Our programs have long made an important impact for our students. However, the ability to push into a business and provide expert employee training or to be the training provider for grant programs and local nonprofits raises our capacity to new levels."

SWBOCES is a training provider for the Westchester County Association's Healthcare Talent Pipeline Program (HTPP), which has helped more than 100 students overcome barriers to employment through education and training.

As a result of the program, student Michelle Colman was offered a job at Montefiore Hospital after her temporary position ended, giving her newfound financial stability.

"I'm so happy to kickstart my career at Montefiore," Ms. Colman said. "Thank you to SWBOCES for giving me a second chance in my education."

Meanwhile, at Youth Shelter Program of Westchester in Mount Vernon, SWBOCES provides community-based training, initiating an on-site program last fall called Culinary Fundamentals and Food Safety. Jordan Cormier, Director of Programming, said the collaboration was vital in advancing the agency's mission.

"This training fostered a sense of discipline, creativity, and self-sufficiency, which are essential qualities for personal and professional growth," Ms. Cormier said. "We are grateful to SWBOCES for their dedication to equipping our youth with practical, career-focused education that enhances their potential and strengthens their pathway to success."

At Neighbors Link in Mount Kisco, SWBOCES provides Introductory Construction Trades Training on-site, teaching immigrant workers foundational skills and safety awareness.

"This collaborative effort enhances job prospects, confidence and access to specialized training," said Kelly Martinez, Program and Advocacy Manager. "It also drives economic mobility and career advancement, which is part of our vision and mission at Neighbors Link."

