



Welcome to the 2009 – 2010 School Year

The school year was off to a wonderful start and there are many exciting changes taking place in the Elmsford UFSD. Our teachers, staff and administrators are working together toward the common goal of improving learning and re-culturing our schools.

Together, as a community, we have the ability to ensure that our mission is accomplished: To enhance the teaching and learning process, and to raise achievement for all students while developing mutual respect in our diverse community. Elmsford celebrates students taking responsibility for their learning; parents being partners in educating their children; and a faculty and staff dedicated to their ongoing professional growth and development, to ensure that collectively we have a positive impact on student learning.

We value your input and have listened to the comments you have made through surveys, coffee hours, PTA meetings, and information discussions. Many of the suggestions made during the past year have assisted us in making positive changes for the upcoming school year.

We are creating a common planning time for teachers throughout the school district so they have time to collaborate and create Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) where they can learn how to assess student data and use it to inform instruction.

At the high school level, we have moved to a closed campus for students in grades 7 – 11, and instituted senior privileges for 12th grade students. We are also excited about offering many additional electives for students, including a number of advanced level courses.



To guarantee that our District continues a commitment to student achievement, we have engaged in a strategic planning process. Through this process, we are working with faculty, staff, administrators, parents and students to obtain input on our current strengths, as well as on areas for improvement, and plan to use this information to develop a five-year plan with defined goals, objectives and action plans to help us maximize the potential of each and every student.

As your Superintendent of Schools, I am privileged to guide the District in that process, and to produce positive outcomes for each of our students. I welcome you to visit our schools and see firsthand the wonderful learning environment in the Elmsford UFSD. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at (914) 592-6632 or e-mail me at: bpeters@elmsd.org. I also encourage you to explore our website: www.elmsd.org.

Sincerely,

Dr. Barbara Peters
Superintendent of Schools

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Meet Our New Teachers and Staff

Music Teachers



Mr. Stanley Indig, formerly a band teacher in the Tuckahoe School District, now teaches band in fourth, fifth and sixth grades, and recorder in the third grade.

A clarinetist and saxophonist himself, he is “here to help the kids be better musicians,” he said. “I’m looking forward to it.”



He is joined at the high school level by **Mr. Harry Rios**, who in another life is a producer of hip hop and R&B, and a multi-instrumentalist and vocalist with a

master’s from Purchase College. He’s a member of a professional marching band as well. Mr. Rios has joined us to conduct the Hamilton Concert Band. He is teaching music technologies, piano, guitar, percussion, and music appreciation in the classroom. This year, he has already coordinated our first well-received assembly of the year for the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration, complete with student performances and a live band. A former music teacher at SWBOCES in Valhalla and in the South Bronx, he said he has a pretty tough act to follow because Elmsford’s student musicians are terrific. “I listened to the recordings made last year and was blown away by the Beethoven piece,” he said. Before long, he hopes he can form a District marching band.

Physical Education Teacher

Mr. Anthony Shallo joins the high school Physical Education Department as a teacher. “I’m excited to get to know the students,” he said. Formerly a teacher in the towns of Dover and Newburgh, N.Y., he said he expects



to get to know all his students well and is looking forward to becoming a part of our close-knit community. He will coach girls’ soccer and basketball. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Education from S.U.N.Y. Brockport. Mr. Shallo was also a student at Dutchess Community College, where he was part of the baseball team that came in third in the 2003 College World Series.

Athletics Director



Mr. Robert D. Pollok has served in the roles of physical education and technology teacher for the Elmsford UFSD since 2007. His coaching experience was originally

acquired across the river in the Clarkstown and Ramapo Central Schools, where he coached Boys Varsity Football, W. Track and J.V. Lacrosse. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Education from S.U.N.Y. Cortland, and a Master of Science in Special Education from C.U.N.Y. City College of New York. His passion is enabling the disabled to participate in sports, and he has volunteered for the Special Olympics in West Nyack, N.Y., and Wheelchair Sports in Cortlandt, N.Y.

“I truly believe that fate brought me to Elmsford,” said Mr. Pollok. “Now, two years later, I’m the Athletic Director. I’d like to thank the entire Elmsford family from the bottom of my heart, but for the Elmsford family my heart has no bottom.”

Coordinator of Data

Mr. Jeffrey J. Olender uses such phrases as “data driven decision making processes.” For those of us who are not so tech-savvy, it simply means he is the new “go-to” professional for information management in Elmsford. With an understanding of school ad-



ministration – having been an assistant principal for the Yonkers Public Schools – he makes numbers meaningful as they translate to initiatives such as Academic Intervention Services and evaluation of testing data. Mr. Olender’s background also includes eight years in the New York City Public Schools, where he was a science teacher and Dean of Discipline. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the City College in N.Y., and a Master of Special Education degree from Manhattan College in Riverdale, N.Y. “I have only kind words for the Elmsford family that has embraced me and taken me in,” said Mr. Olender. “Working together, I am confident that Elmsford will continue its improvement efforts until we are a world-class institution.”

Executive Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools

Diane M. Caperna has over 20 years experience as a senior level executive assistant, working alongside such notable executives as the Senior V.P. of Pepsico, Inc. in Purchase, N.Y., and the Senior V.P. of The Boston Consulting Group in New York City. A graduate of the Wood Business



School in New York, Ms. Caperna is particularly adept at creative marketing presentations and preparing detailed reports. “Coming from the corporate world, it is a fresh and rewarding experience to be able to work with the schools and community,” she said.

Acting Business Official

School districts are similar to small corporations from a business perspective, therefore it is necessary to engage the services of a professional with knowledge of a comptroller’s regulations, state law, and Department of Education guidelines. With 30 years of public education experience, **Robert L. Celente** brings a plethora of information about finance, administration and auditing to the Elmsford

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A Good Teacher Shares Her Secrets

Teachers, like parents, sometimes need a boost, and a new trick here and there to get through to students, or just to get through the day. That's what they got in Annette L. Breaux, who spoke at Superintendent's Conference Day on Sept. 2 in the Alexander Hamilton auditorium. They got a little more, too, including a lot of laughter and a great deal of recognition for the hard work they do, and the important part they play in every student's life.

Teachers are "on" all the time, their every movement watched and cataloged by students. "What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say," said Breaux. And over the next two hours she proved it, with demonstrations and direct speech.

Teachers sometimes forget that all of their students are still children, no matter how tall and mature they appear to be. And teachers let students get to them. Students will try to find their teachers' buttons and push them, she said.

A professional can't let that happen, she said. And a professional knows how to keep students tuned in to what is being taught. "You know you've done your job when the bell rings and the students say, 'already?'" she said. And that's exactly what happened. After the first hour, she took a break and the audience couldn't believe it had gone by so quickly.

What had she done to hold her audience? First, she smiled. All the time. Breaux later pointed out that it is pretty difficult to avoid a happy face, no matter how hard a student may try. How well does anyone respond to a sourpuss? A student confronted with negativity will be negative. A student met with passivity will be passive. A student met with happiness will be happy.

Does a teacher's smile always come naturally? Of course not, she said. But it's a great trick. As is standing erect, not putting furniture between teachers and students, and keeping up the pace even when the students try to throw you off.

Whether a student comes from what appears to be a per-

fect home, or from a troubled one, children want to do well, she said. They send out signals when there is a problem and a teacher must find out what is going wrong. "There is no such thing as a lazy kid," said Breaux, in the soft Louisiana accent of her home state. "They may exhibit behavior that looks lazy," but what's needed is a diagnosis, she said.

And as her own well-paced lesson continued, Breaux turned to the emotions of teachers themselves, and spoke of what it is to be a professional, to put personal problems away during the teaching day. A professional, she said, is formal but friendly, informed, patient, accessible and calm.

In the end she laid out a few guidelines for teachers that spoke volumes for parents and guardians as well.

- Remember that you are a role model and actions speak louder than words.
- Organize time. If you give a child a vacuum he will fill it in his own way, and "that way may not be what you had in mind," she said.

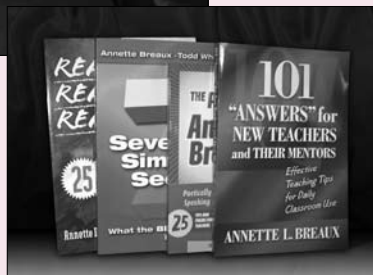


Annette L. Breaux addressing the teachers of the Elmsford UFSD

- Treat every child with respect. Greet each child and let him or her know how happy you are to have them with you every day.
- Teach enthusiastically, even when you feel less than enthusiastic.
- Remember that a good teacher will save more lives than a good surgeon.

A former classroom teacher and curriculum coordinator, Breaux is now Teacher Induction Coordinator for Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, La. She developed the FIRST Program, an induction program for new teachers that has been adopted as a statewide model by the Louisiana Department of Education.

How good a teacher is she? "She's good and what she is saying is accurate," said Richard Julius, Alexander Hamilton Student Assistant Counselor. "If as individuals we do just half of what she suggests, we'll all do great."



Literature from the Superintendent's Conference Day

Meet Our New Teachers and Staff *continued from page 2*



UFSD. He served in business roles for the Greenburgh Central 7, North Salem, Irvington, Peekskill, New York City and Pelham School districts, in addition to Rockland Community College

and the New Jersey Department of Education. Mr. Celente majored in accounting at S.U.N.Y, Buffalo, where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree. His Master of Business Administration degree is from Manhattan College in N.Y. "Working in the Business Office usually does not feel like you are working in a school district. However, in Elmsford,

having the Business Office in the High School allows the central office staff to feel like part of the educational community," said Mr. Celente.

Update on Strategic Planning

The Strategic Planning Committee has begun to meet and the climate is exciting. Since June, the committee – arranged by teams according to strategy – has faithfully carried out the rigorous task of researching and then evaluating the proposed initiatives for the Elmsford UFSD. Students, parents, faculty and administrators contribute to the process of creating the final Strategic Plan while facilitated by Prism Decision Systems, a consulting firm providing decision support to schools and other organizations.

The group reached a strong consensus for the 2009 – 2014 Plan at a meeting on Oct. 1 during voting sessions. Priority issues such as monitoring at-risk students to provide appropriate intervention; developing a plan to upgrade, repair and maintain facilities; increasing academic rigor; and improving the literacy readiness skills of pre-school children were among the important initiatives discussed.

“I am pleased with the enthusiastic response from participants,” said Dr. Barbara Peters, Superintendent of Schools. “There is a high level of engagement and articulation of com-

ments, which are thought-provoking and will help move the District forward to improve the quality of education at Elmsford.”

Lest one think that it is difficult to vote without intimidation in such a collegial setting, Prism utilizes state-of-the-art technology in the form of “response keypads” – radio powered remotes which allow participants to contribute their opinions – feeding into the PowerPoint-based charts. This anonymous approach engenders honest and thoughtful feedback from all participants; the playing field is level and there is no rank amongst participants.

Perhaps the one umbrella goal covering all the others is that of re-culturing the Elmsford UFSD to become a true Professional Learning Community (PLC).



Strategic Planning Committee



Superintendent of Schools Barbara Peters talking with a Strategic Planning Committee member

A PLC is defined as one that focuses on learning rather than teaching. Dr. Richard and Rebecca DuFour, founders of the PLC concept, ask that educators explore three crucial questions:

- What do we want each student to learn?
- How will we know when each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

“We are creating a learning environment that promotes critical thinking and higher level learning,” said Dr. Peters. “Seventeen members of our staff went to a PLC conference in November, which will provide the groundwork for implementing the program in Elmsford. These educators will then serve as turnkey trainers for others in the District.”

The Winds of Change

There is something in the air at Alexander Hamilton High School, and it is bringing a new vibrancy to the building. In addition to the physical changes that the structure is undergoing – such as the painting of stripes in the cafeteria – the staff is developing common planning times, higher level interdisciplinary lessons, and a Professional Learning Community.

“Every student from grades 7 through 11 is taking Singleton courses,” said Marc Baiocco, the new high school principal. In addition, the secondary team of educators is discussing an offering of more rigorous courses to provide students with a “means of competition” when they graduate.

Mr. Baiocco, who also is a New York State Youth Court consultant, is addressing at-risk students and beginning interventions at the school level. In providing students with an awareness of how the legal system works by building a mock trial team, he is hoping to “run interference” with any students who might be headed down the juvenile court path.

“We are providing the kids with a second chance by utilizing an Offenders Code of Conduct and the Core Youth Program (CYP) model.” CYP is a community-based program that offers strategies for working with troubled youth using such methods as redefining the culture of a school community to discourage gang behavior and lawlessness.

“We are also re-inventing the football program in Elmsford, and the Pop Warner League is helping us achieve this,” said Mr. Baiocco. Pop Warner is a non-profit organization that provides youth football programs that require its participants to maintain academic standards. In Pop Warner leagues, there are no tryouts or cutting of rosters, participants adhere to mandatory rules of play, and individual awards are given only for academic excellence. The hope is that, after identifying appropriate Elmsford students, the school may begin a modified football team this winter.

“The whole process is bolstering school spirit,” said Mr. Baiocco.

Eight Students Win Youth Business Skills Olympics

Absent for over six years in the county-wide Youth Business Skills Olympics, Alexander Hamilton High School overcame tremendous competitive pressure to secure First Place this fall. Saunders and Lincoln High Schools – both of Yonkers – tied for second, and Valhalla High School took third place. The winning team and their parents will be honored by event sponsors, African-American Men of Westchester County, at Berkeley College on a date-to-be-determined.

The Oct. 30 competition involved a problem-solving session, during which the students learned how to comprehend, analyze and define business problems by looking at case studies. Each group was assigned a mentor/facilitator, all of whom were corporate managers or executives from the area. During group competitions, students were required to present a case study, create a solution, and identify the resources needed to solve the problem, thus giving them the opportunity to focus on a real-world business scenario.

The winning eight students were: Javier Guzman, Jahlil Shabazz, Roniece Bridge, Derrick Vallejos, Crystal Davis, Eugene Bender, Seth Wolin, and Jesse Young.

The Elmsford UFSD wishes to thank Fitzgerald Georges, Alexander Hamilton Assistant Principal, who provided our

students with the opportunity to participate in the competition. The District also thanks Robin Osswald, Jason Reynolds and Bill Carter from the Theodore Young Community Center for their guidance and leadership.



From L to R: Jason Reynolds (Chaperone), Roniece Bridge, Eugene Bender, Crystal Davis, Seth Wolin, Javier Guzman, Derrick Vallejos, Jahlil Ptahsen-Shabazz, Jesse Young, Fitzgerald Georges (Assistant Principal)



RAIDER BITES

Budding Filmmakers Get Creative at the Jacob Burns Film Center

Grady Elementary's third-grade classes are embarking on a journey into the world of film.

The students are participating in "See Hear Feel Film," a literacy program run by the Jacob Burns Film Center (JBFC) in Pleasantville. The third-graders, along with teachers Leandra Fulgione, Gail Morrow and Carolyn Hopper, are learning about filmmaking, storytelling and more, thanks to an initiative of the film center, a non-profit educational and cultural institution dedicated to presenting Independent, documentary and world cinema.

"The children learned how different films are made and used story boards to

create a pictorial sequence of events that could become a film," said Ms. Fulgione. Her class visited the JBFC on Oct. 20 for the first of two sessions designed to teach active viewing skills and the techniques of storytelling through film.

JBFC faculty Anne Marie Santoro and Barbara De George, along with trained facilitators and outreach educators, use short international films to stimulate the children's creativity. "See Hear Feel Film" consists of five units, with the following educational objectives:

1. to learn that films are moving visual stories which can come from the child's own imagination;

2. to understand how conflict is created in a story and how to create characters that people care about ;
3. to learn how descriptive language makes people and places come alive;
4. to understand how sound works to build a story.

Students from the Elmsford UFSD attend this program free of charge with busing included due to a grant from the JBFC. The program meets the New York State Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Standards 1, 2, 3, 4 for the Arts.

According to Ms. Fulgione, third grade is a pivotal year for children, one during which they undergo many intellectual changes and begin critical thinking activities in school.



see • hear • feel • film



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RAIDER BITES

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“This is an ideal time to engage them in descriptive and sequential writing activities,” said Ms. Fulgione. For more information about See, Hear, Feel, Film, or other educational programs at the JBFC, visit them on the web at: www.burnsfilmcenter.org

Born to Read



Start your child on the road to reading early. Elmsford UFSD families may register their children born after July 1, 2007 in a new early literacy program adopted by the District. “Born to Read” encourages parents to read to their infants and children, and provides participants with a board book and crayons. The program culminates with a celebration in the spring of 2010, to which all participating families will be invited. Contact Dr. Barbara Peters at: 914-592- 6632 or bpeters@elmsd.org, for more information, or to register in the program.

