



Dedicated to Excellence

Elmsford NY 10523

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RAIDER BITES

Making Learning Fun

On Oct. 12, teachers at the Carl L. Dixon School held a "Making Learning Fun" parent workshop. The 40 or so parents who participated had an opportunity to make a variety of educational games to take home and share with their children. All of the materials were provided by the district's PTA.



ESL Parent Meeting Off to a Great Start

The ESL parent meeting, where parents are introduced to the district's ESL staff, as well as the high school principal and assistant principal, was well attended Oct. 12. The annual meeting is a chance for foreign-born parents to find out how school in the United States works and how that will affect their children. A PowerPoint

presentation, in Spanish, explained details of the district's ESL Program. Topics included the strategies used in selecting ESL students; how their growth in the program is measured; the courses that are offered; New York State graduation requirements; progress reports, report cards, attendance and late policies; as well as extracurricular activities available to ESL students.

Hispanic Heritage Celebrated

Students from the ESL Program, shown below, helped the district commemorate Hispanic Heritage Month by performing a traditional Latin-American dance, part of a special assembly held Oct. 14. The event was organized by music teacher Harry Rios and ESL teacher Erica Carrasquillo, and was sponsored by the PTA.



AHHS Partners with Manhattanville

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and Shelley Wepner, dean of the college's School of Education.

The professional development school is an initiative that puts together PreK-12 schools with local colleges, such as Manhattanville, to prepare teacher candidates, provide faculty professional development, improve instructional practices, and enhance student learning.

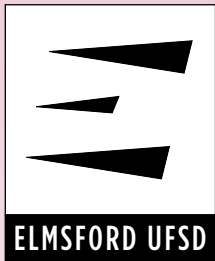
For AHHS, this means that not only will the school act as a kind of laboratory for aspiring teacher candidates currently studying at Manhattanville's School of Education, but it will also mean a one-third tuition discount for Elmsford faculty interested in furthering their education at the college and a 50 percent discount on tuition for AHHS students who qualify for admission to Manhattanville.

To the 100 or so students attending the morning ceremony in the school's auditorium, Principal Baiocco said, "You all need to acquire the skills that will allow you to be competitive in society. This initiative will provide you with the means to do that and will also prepare you for college and careers."

"For all of you, today's ceremony symbolizes our bond with this school and the beginning of our work together as professional partners," said Dean Wepner.

## Mission

Our mission is to enhance the teaching and learning process and to raise achievement for all students while developing mutual respect in our diverse community.



*Dedicated to Excellence*

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## From the Desk of the Superintendent

### Dear Elmsford UFSD Parents and Community Members:

Welcome to the new school year! I hope that by now your children have settled comfortably into their classrooms and that they are off to a great start, eager and willing to pursue their studies and any other projects that their teachers may be assigning them.

As we have reported in the past, the district established a Facilities Task Force that met during the last school year to review our facility-related needs. We have received the group's report and will consider the recommendations they have proposed, including the creation of a new pre-K to grade 1 facility and the renovation of the existing grade 2-6 facility on the current Alice E. Grady School site.

Architects are currently investigating the various options available to us, and we will soon be looking for members of the community to serve on a committee to help explore potential plans.

The onset and aftermath of Hurricane Irene caused our Strategic Planning committees to postpone their initial meetings. We were, however, able to reconvene in late October and discussed Race to the Top (RTTT) requirements, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and the new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) and how we can realign our academic

programs. Our plans are posted on the District website at [www.elmsd.org](http://www.elmsd.org). I encourage you to look at this information and become familiar with the plans for both the district and individual buildings.



While we have been steadily improving in many academic areas and have had numerous accomplishments for which we can be extremely proud, we are still not happy with some of our scores on selected New York State assessments. We firmly believe that the establishment of a guaranteed, viable curriculum will assist in enhancing improved academic achievement for all students.

As a result, we are focused on the improvement of literacy across all content areas. To make this happen, we ask that you encourage your children to read and write often. We expect every student to read and write in every subject area. Together, we will help each child achieve success.

And, as always, if you have any questions or concerns, please call my office at (914) 592-6632.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Barbara Peters*

Superintendent of Schools

## AHHS Partners with Manhattanville

There were smiles on the faces of teachers, students and administrators from Alexander Hamilton High School Oct. 4 as the school officially acknowledged the creation of a professional development school partnership with Manhattanville College.

This is the first time that Manhattanville has partnered in such a capacity with a Westchester County public high school. The event was celebrated in the form of a ribbon-cutting ceremony, which was attended by Superintendent Barbara Peters; AHHS Principal Marc Baiocco; Assistant Principal Andrea Hamilton; William Zimkin, Elmsford's deputy mayor;

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# District Appoints Three New Administrators

The Elmsford School District has added three highly qualified educators and administrators to its executive team. They include Susan D'Angelo, assistant superintendent for instruction and pupil personnel services; Elsa Kortwright-Torres, principal of the Alice E. Grady and Carl L. Dixson schools; and Gladys Pagan-Baxter, assistant superintendent for finance and operations.



## Susan D'Angelo

Mrs. D'Angelo, a native of the Buffalo area, was appointed Sept. 26. Her job is to collaborate with the Elmsford faculty and administrators

to strengthen the academic program for all students. Prior to her appointment, Mrs. D'Angelo served 13 years in the Tonawanda City School District in upstate New York.

In this new position, Mrs. D'Angelo will bring her years of experience in reading instruction, together with a master's degree in professional studies, to the table. Mrs. D'Angelo also served as a teacher on special assignment in the Tonawanda School District's Office of Instruction, Assessment, Staff Development, and Technology.

In her new role, she is intent on helping students become more capable across all disciplines, but is mindful of the needs of teachers, too. "There are so many mandates coming from the state Education Department these days that I think we need to support our teachers just as much as our students," said Mrs. D'Angelo.

That support might include additional professional development workshops, especially in the recently adopted federal government initiative, Race to the Top, which requires that states design and implement a set of internationally benchmarked common standards and assessments that better prepare students for college and career readiness.

Part of Mrs. D'Angelo's job will be to help clarify all of the information that comes from the state and make sure that the district is in compliance with such initiatives.



## Elsa Kortwright-Torres

An experienced bilingual teacher and administrator, Mrs. Kortwright-Torres comes to Elmsford with more than 20

years of experience as an educator. She takes over from Jeffrey Olender, who acted as interim principal for a year. Mr. Olender is now the director of technology and certified staff.

Mrs. Kortwright-Torres began her teaching career as a first-grade teacher at the Bilingual/Bicultural Mini School in Harlem, where she remained for five years. At BBMS, Mrs. Kortwright-Torres developed programs that were especially suited to the school environment, including a Spanish language initiative, which she encouraged parents to take, as well as different types of enrichment programs for children and their families.

"Some of the children there were very needy while others were extremely bright and needed more challenging work," said Mrs. Kortwright-Torres, referring to the demanding environment in which she thrived.

She later replicated that program at John Paulding Elementary School in Tarrytown, where she spent several years as a first grade teacher. After completing an administrative degree at Mercy College, she was appointed assistant principal at the Washington Irving School, also in the Tarrytown School District.

She gained further administrative experience in the Newburgh Enlarged City School District, first as an assistant principal at the South Junior High School, later as an assistant principal at Meadow

Hill School and then as a principal of the Gitney Avenue Memorial School, where she worked for six years before taking the position in Elmsford.

Mrs. Kortwright-Torres is excited to be in Elmsford and to embrace its diverse community. "I love children, I love working in urban settings, I totally embrace diversity, and I feel I belong here," she said.



## Gladys Pagan-Baxter

Gladys Pagan-Baxter, a native of Ellenville, N.Y., joined the Elmsford School District July 1. She will be in charge of

Elmsford's budget, including its revenues and expenditures. The position will also give Ms. Pagan-Baxter authority over transportation, food services and custodial staff.

Ms. Pagan-Baxter began her career in the public schools as a school accountant and quickly moved into a teaching position shortly after gaining her certification in social studies. As an instructor, she frequently became involved in the decision-making process, enjoying the management aspects of instruction more than the teaching itself. She was eventually drawn to an administrative position in the Ellenville Central School District, where she served as a school business official for four years.

She also holds a bachelor's degree in accounting and business from Elmira College, a master's degree in educational administration and a certificate of advanced studies degree in educational administration, both from SUNY New Paltz.

Part of what attracted Ms. Pagan-Baxter to Elmsford was its diverse community and the opportunity to become a more hands-on administrator. "I think I can really make a difference here," she said. "It feels like a good fit and in our business, that's important."

# Welcome to our New Teachers

## Alexander Hamilton High School



New instructors Marisa Marks, health, and Bruno Ribeiro, 8th grade Spanish

## Alice E. Grady School



Erica Van Patten  
(ESL teacher)



Samantha Hyman  
(TSP Program)



Barbara Cinquegrana  
(second-grade teacher)



Mayda Amabile  
(third-grade teacher)

## Early Success with District's Dual Language Program

On a recent Monday morning at Dixon Elementary School, first-grade teacher Mariana Ferreira gathered her students together for a fun guessing game. In the hands of each student was an index card, each one showing a different number, 1 through 10, in Spanish. To begin the game, Ms. Ferreira proceeded to count in Spanish. However, the sequence in which she counted was not always correct, and it was up to the students to complete that sequence by calling out the correct number, also in Spanish.

Lots of fun and laughter ensued. Sometimes the students got it wrong, other times they answered correctly. The intention was to encourage them to not only learn their numbers in Spanish but to communicate through the language as well, providing them with a total immersion experience.

The activity is just one of several being used in the district's Dual Language Academy, a choice-driven program for incoming kindergarten and first-grade students. The program, which is now in its second year, is being implemented through a five-year New York State Department of Education grant, explained Dual Language Project Director Marina Kelly.

Last year's kindergarteners (now this year's first-grade class) were the first to enter the Academy, and Ms. Kelly noted that for the most part, the initiative ran very smoothly indeed. The Elmsford program, which accommodates four kindergarten classes and four first grade classes, has a 50 percent participation rate from students who are monolingual, that is, only one language is spoken in the home, specifically English, and the other 50 percent are bilingual, which means they speak both English and Spanish in the home.

"The real purpose is to give the English-speaking students the opportunity to learn to speak Spanish, but it's also about giving each group the benefit of being truly immersed in a second language," explained Ms. Kelly.

Both the Spanish and English-speaking teachers must work very closely together to make this a success, added Ms. Kelly, with each of them creating curriculum that is similar in



Instructor Fabiola Diaz works with children in the ELL Spanish class at Dixon.

nature. The idea is to have both groups working on the same material at the same time, giving every student the opportunity to learn in English one day and Spanish the next.

"The key to it all is seamless planning," noted Ms. Kelly. Students do not re-learn the material they've studied in another language, but rather move on to the next day's lesson. The Academy offers children the chance to learn literacy skills and mathematics through both languages.

"It's really a fabulous program that has been very well received in our community," added Ms. Kelly. Despite its success to date, Ms. Kelly said there are always kinks to work through, such as changing the format of the Spanish homework assignments that were formerly given only in Spanish, but are now translated into English.

Before enrolling their children in the program, Ms. Kelly said that parents must sign a one-year contract that ensures their commitment to the initiative. "We do this because we really want everyone to succeed and we believe a full year commitment will help ensure that," she said. Parents interested in enrolling their children next year can contact Ms. Kelly at [mkelly@elmsd.org](mailto:mkelly@elmsd.org) or call 592-4038.