

COPIAGUE *Connections*

A GREAT PLACE TO LEARN



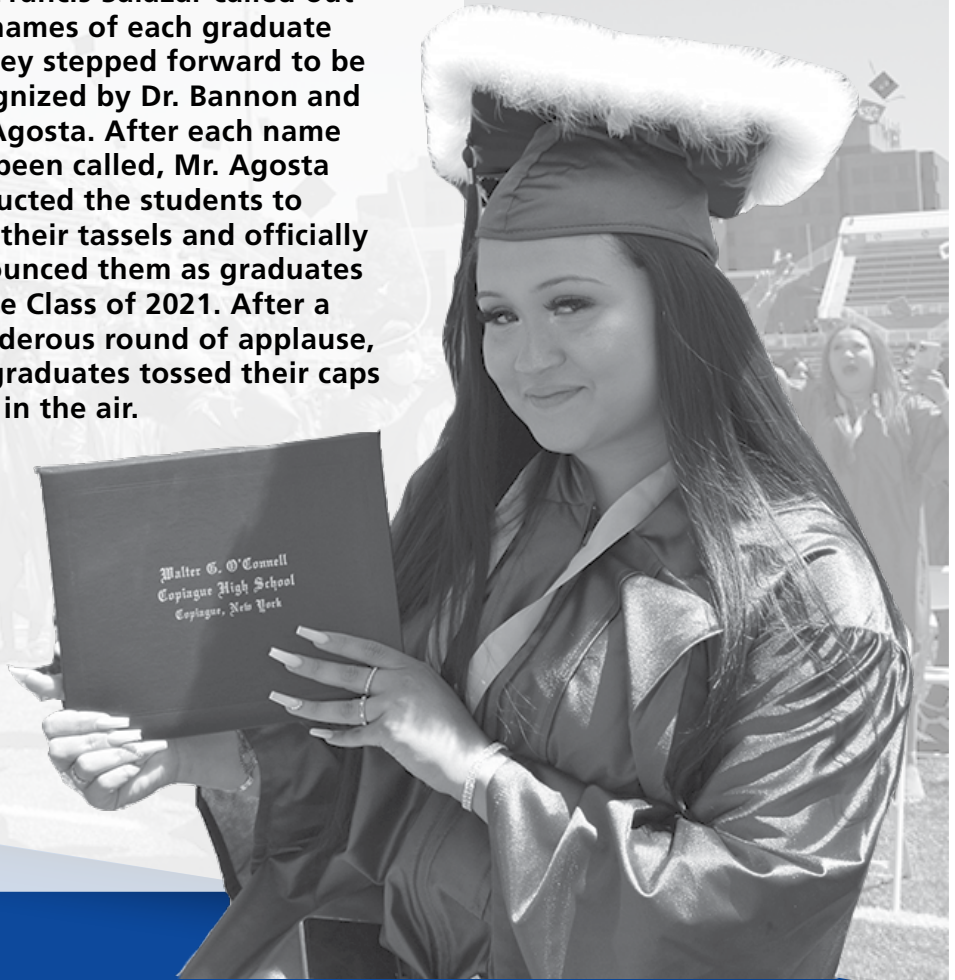
New Beginnings FOR THE CLASS OF 2021

The Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School Class of 2021 was celebrated at the 62nd annual commencement exercises held on June 24 at Kenneth LaValle Stadium at Stony Brook University.

Board of Education President Brian J. Sales offered congratulatory remarks on behalf of the Board, and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kathleen Bannon welcomed the soon-to-be graduates and commended them on the resiliency they have shown during the last two years.

Reflecting on the past 13 years, Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School Principal Joseph Agosta acknowledged the hard work and dedication of the class. Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School assistant principals Jonathan Cutolo

and Francis Salazar called out the names of each graduate as they stepped forward to be recognized by Dr. Bannon and Mr. Agosta. After each name had been called, Mr. Agosta instructed the students to turn their tassels and officially announced them as graduates of the Class of 2021. After a thunderous round of applause, the graduates tossed their caps high in the air.



Words of Wisdom FOR THE GRADUATES

"They say that adversity builds character, and clearly you have gotten your share over the last year and a half. You have all persevered through it all to be here today. You had to adapt to be successful. You had to use what you learned going through the pandemic and look forward to the future. Your life today is a result of your attitudes and choices made in the past. Your life tomorrow will be the result of your attitudes and choices that you make today and every day moving forward."

—Brian J. Sales,
Board of Education President



"I stand before you today as the class valedictorian. But I've struggled, just like many of you. Like many of you, I come from an immigrant family. Like many of you, I am the first in the family to graduate high school. Like many of you, I will be a first-generation college student, and like all of you, I have dreams, hopes and aspirations. I would like to commend you all for overcoming your personal challenges, for proving that you are resilient human beings and for pushing through all the obstacles that were in the way of you being here today. Thank you for showing us that it's completely acceptable to stand out from the crowd, because there will always be individuals willing to accept you for who you are. I encourage you to never be ashamed of your challenges, but rather to recognize that your ability to face and overcome adversity is one of your greatest assets."

—Valedictorian Kiran Ahmad



"Over the years, I've learned how rewarding it is to step out of your comfort zone and do what scares you most because, afterward, you feel like you could accomplish anything. And we should all remember that nothing we aspire to achieve comes easy, because the reality is, you must work incredibly hard and put in your all, without any excuses. Maybe you didn't get the best grades in high school, or you didn't get accepted to the schools of your top choice. But that doesn't mean your journey to success stops. In fact, it's only the beginning. Sometimes, we need to feel the sting of rejection and failure in order to become much more willing to attack back with a greater ambition to succeed and conquer our dreams. Now as you all go on to start the next chapter of your lives, remember to keep looking forward, because the future is always something to hope for, and each day we are given is a new opportunity to better ourselves and to work toward the future we envision."

—Salutatorian Sofia Lounici

"When I think about this graduating class, I think about all the wonderful accomplishments you have had during your years at Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School, and they took place under very unusual circumstances. You've excelled in the classrooms, on the fields, on the stage and everywhere in between. You've certainly made an indelible mark on our high school. You are to be commended for your positive energy, effort, flexibility and dedication, which you put into everything that you did. I've watched you grow over the last 13 years, and I know that you're leaving us more than ready to embark on the next chapter in your lives."

—Dr. Kathleen Bannon,
Superintendent of Schools

Class Achievements

Number of Graduates: 391

Number of Students Entering the Military: 6

Percent of Students College Bound: 70%

"When you look back and reflect, you will recognize that for much of these 13 years you have been supported by loving families, caring and dedicated teachers and administration, and a Board of Education focused on providing you with the skills needed to help you reach your true potential. Stand on your own and take your place as productive world citizens. Looking forward, much is expected of you, and I have great confidence in your abilities."

—Walter G. O'Connell Copiague
High School Principal
Joseph Agosta



CONGRATULATIONS Graduates

CLASS

2021

ECRWSS

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Valedictorian: Kiran Ahmad

With a weighted GPA of 103.64, Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School's valedictorian Kiran Ahmad is an AP Scholar with Distinction and has received numerous STEM-related honors. She's been recognized for her participation in Farmingdale State College's STEP program and has received awards from the SUNY Research Foundation Program.

Kiran is a member of the National Honor Society and the school's Voice to Voice Women's Empowerment group. She's also a member of DECA, Global Ambassadors, Key Club, Mathletes, One Mind Club, SOUL Club, Student Council and many more. For her STEM research projects, which she has presented across Long Island, she has been mentored by professors at Farmingdale State College, where she's participated in summer college coursework since 2018. Kiran is also an American Red Cross volunteer and fluent in four languages.

"I've learned from these last four years that you have to believe in yourself," Kiran said. "And you always have to work hard and keep pushing your limits." Kiran will be attending Harvard University and plans to major in a STEM-related field.

Salutatorian: Sofia Lounici

Sofia Lounici is this year's salutatorian with a weighed GPA of 103.58. She is also an AP Scholar with Distinction and has been involved in numerous clubs such as Drama Club, Global Ambassadors, Key Club, Lost History Club, Math Team, Quiz Bowl and Voice to Voice Women's Empowerment group.

Sofia also has participated in lacrosse, soccer, and track and field during her time at Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School. She's participated in various community service opportunities such as the Black History Month program, Dominican Village Festival of Lights, Hispanic Heritage Month Festival and the Kiwanis Club Chinese auction.

Sofia will be attending Stony Brook University and plans to major in chemistry. She said her part-time job working at a fast food restaurant has helped her to be more efficient and hone her communication skills. During these past four years in high school, she said she has learned to "trust the process."

"Many times, a bad grade would get me stressed out," Sofia said. "Now I've learned it's just a small piece of the whole experience. I encourage everyone to go beyond their limits. Step out of your comfort zone, learn your potential, and it's amazing what you can accomplish."



Top 10: Heading Off to College

1. Kiran Ahmad: *Harvard University*
2. Sofia Lounici: *Stony Brook University*
3. Edinelly Peguero Rosario: *Harvard University*
4. Anna Carvajal: *Princeton University*
5. Ryan Bott: *CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice*
6. Aidan Murphy: *Cornell University*
7. Samantha Gonzalez: *Haverford College*
8. Sophia Bright: *University of Vermont*
9. Jayleen Garcia: *Stony Brook University*
10. Aniyah Woods: *American University*

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