

Achievement

Our launch of Project-Based Learning (PBL) was a tremendous success. Our trainer from PBL Works began by modeling the classroom conditions and cultures necessary to successfully implement PBL. From there, he guided teachers through the complex process of planning a “Gold Standard” PBL. Finally, teachers developed a fully articulated PBL unit they will implement in their classrooms within the next few months. Teachers were engaged and energetic. Many developed very creative PBL units to improve our students’ experience. This is the start of a K-12 transformation of our instructional practices. All staff who participated, were reinvigorated and motivated.

It was a successful fall season for the Rocks. The Varsity football team made the playoffs. Varsity Volleyball won the Nassau County Class C Championship. 14 Cross Country runners made it to the NYS Qualifier meet and 1 student, Erin Lynch, moved on to the NYS Championship meet. Congratulations.

Seventh-grade students in Spanish engaged in a research project around music in Spanish culture. This was a collaborative effort between the World Language department and the English department, supported by our library media specialist, Ms. Murray. This cross-disciplinary approach guided students through their research and writing journey, fostering global awareness, digital literacy, and strong communication skills.

In seventh grade ELA classes, students wrote personal vignettes to demonstrate their learning in their first unit on *The House on Mango Street* and *The Last Lecture*. Many students also shared their work with their peers to celebrate their individual experiences.

32 Music students in grades 5-12 have been selected to participate in this year's All-County Music Festival. Bands, Choruses, and Orchestras composed of the highest achieving NYSSMA performers from last year will hold their annual concerts at the Tilles Centre for the Arts in January 2024.

Thinking Maps Level 2 Portfolio Submission is a tremendous accomplishment for Ms. Kelly and her staff. They have dedicated numerous professional development hours to make this achievement possible. They met a number of rigorous requirements including an 84-page PowerPoint highlighting numerous benchmarks that were accomplished.

Superintendent's Conference Day

Our November Superintendent's Conference Day took place on Tuesday, November 7. In addition to the 34 teachers assigned to the inaugural PBL training cohort, the program included AM workshops on Artificial Intelligence, Canva (presentation software platform), and Instructional Feedback. In the afternoon teachers worked in grade-level or departmental groups to collaborate on how to apply the morning learning, updated curriculum guides, and/or new programs in their classrooms. Teachers were fully engaged in the learning on Tuesday. An in-depth survey about their experience on Tuesday will be conducted next week; and when the results are completed, they will be shared with the Board.

The day's itinerary included:

- A morning team building activity with Mr. Gregory
- Canva, 70 minute interactive session with Ms. McClelland
- Workshop on the effectiveness of feedback with Grades K-4 teachers
- PBL training for teachers in Grades 5 and 6
- PBL training for business, English and Social Studies teachers at the High School
- Data analysis using last year's regents results and this year's iReady results for high school math department teachers.
- So proud of this staff!

Opportunity

Students in Centre Avenue's KKids and Student Councils worked together on the Thanksgiving Food Drive. During their meetings they discussed outreach and how they would promote the event. Centre Avenue KKids created a public service announcement that was featured during Newscasters.

Grade 6 students at Centre Avenue supported families during our most recent Parent Teacher Conference. Students led families around the building and answered questions about the school. Centre Avenue 6th graders also worked with newly admitted Kindergarteners to support the transition. One 6th grader facilitated a play group with students even though there was a language barrier. At the end, there were only smiles.

11th and 12th graders traveled to the University of New Haven on November 1st. Students participated in an admissions session and also had the opportunity to tour the campus, sit in lecture halls, observe classrooms, and learn all about the various majors offered at the university. Many of the students reported that this was their first time on a college campus and look forward to our spring tour.

On October 18th, all 10th and 11th grade students were administered the first entirely digital PSAT. During this time, all 12th grade students had a post-secondary boot camp to work on college essays and resumes while working with our counseling, English, and Business Department staff.

Students in Mrs. Forbes and Mr. Crowley's Marine Biology Classes, and AP Environmental Science Classes performed a scavenger hunt at Lister Park. The students were able to explore the wildlife and learn about the upgrades in the park such as the porous concrete.

Students in Mr. Crowley's AP Environmental class were able to participate in the "A Day in the Life of a River" program. This marks the first time since 2016 that the Mill River was explored. Students were able to catch and catalog marine wildlife, collect water samples, and learn about the river itself with the help of a visiting scientist from the Department of Environmental Conservation. The data collected by the students will be added to the state's database on the health of the Mill River.

Our annual surveys for interest in athletics will be upcoming. The JHS survey for current 6th & 7th graders will be given to 6th graders during their health classes on December 4 and 5 at Rhame Ave and on December 7 and 8 at Centre Ave. The 7th graders will be taking it in their PE classes and/or their own time as Mr. Schaffer will post in the school google classroom. The High

School survey for current 8th -12th graders will be given in PE class or can be done on their own time in google classroom as well. We filter out the 12th grade responses. See Mr. Gregory for questions.

Innovation

Centre Avenue had the Sky Dome presentation funded by our PTA. Students engaged in simulations where students learned about the solar system in the safety of our own school. All students were mesmerized by how Sky Dome brought space to life.

Students in Mr. Howard's Special Topics in Engineering class finished building and coding their robots to navigate a maze and pick up a ball at the finish line. The students get to pick the next challenge and have elected to create a game of Hungry, Hungry, Hippos with their robots. Students in Ms. Miah's 8th Grade Technology class are learning basic digital animation skills and are creating phenakistoscopes (fee - na - kiss - ti - scope), an animation device that creates a fluent illusion of motion.

Students in grades 7 and 8 recently completed their first round of assessments on iReady. Soon, all teachers who use the program will undergo another round of professional development, with a focus on utilizing the assessment results to inform instruction and improve differentiation.

Connection

Both Centre and Rhame Avenue schools honored our local veteran community by holding multiple events last week. Both schools worked with the VFW Post where veterans visited both schools to participate in unique events. Students honored our veterans by making cards, pictures, and even saluted the bravery and dedication of our veterans.

Centre - On November 8, George Catalanotto, a Vietnam Army veteran, hosted an assembly that taught about and helping other veterans. He talked about veterans' career benefits, military duties, and the ongoing security needs that America's servicemen and women provide. *Tell story of salute and walkie talkies*

Centre - On November 9 at 8:45 a.m. staff, students and local veterans will assemble outside for the Pledge of Allegiance led by 6th Graders. All veterans in the Centre Avenue community were honored.

Rhame - Students make "thank you" cards which are delivered to the local VFW. Stars honoring veterans are added to the Honor Wall. A whole school assembly on flag etiquette and bravery took place on November 9 at 10:30 a.m. in which students heard directly from our veterans.

ERHS - Students wrote letters to veterans which were delivered to the local VFW.

Counselors conducted classroom push-ins the week of November 6th to all 9th grade classes. The counselors used this opportunity to discuss their role as high school counselors. Students learned how to read a high school transcript and were also introduced to resume writing.

Mr. Robert Deutch, from the ERHS Class of 1973, spoke with students in Mr. Palermo, Mr. Duet, and Mrs. Poland's classes to deliver the message "You can do anything you want here at

East Rockaway. The only limits you will have are the ones you put on yourself". This was motivating and inspirational.

As part of the culmination of their first unit, students in the Spanish for Heritage Speakers class welcomed an award-winning media expert with an impressive track record at major industry giants such as HBO, Paramount, Telemundo, and Vogue. This accomplished speaker shared valuable insights with the students, emphasizing the significance and advantages of bilingualism and the preservation of one's culture and identity.

October was Italian American Culture month. Mr. Cuttitta with his students shared information during homeroom announcements which included songs in Italian, famous landmarks in Italy, cultural information and, of course, emphasized Italian foods.

Mrs. Forbes presented a workshop on modeling in the science classroom at this year's state science conference in Syracuse. This conference is attended by teachers and administrators from all around NYS. Mrs. Forbes, who serves as the section director for Suffolk STANYS and the Section Area Representative in Chemistry for this organization, proudly represented East Rockaway with her presentation, "Stop Drawing for them! Creating Skillful Effective Modelers." We are very proud of Ms. Forbes.

The Narcan training will be an in-person session for district staff to take part in on November 28 after school. Interested staff have been provided with a link to sign up for participation. Each person will be provided with a kit that includes Narcan. Additionally, anyone that is signed up will be asked to take part in the NYSDOH webinar to earn a certificate and be placed on a district list for being able to administer Narcan as needed. We plan to offer a training session for Mr. Duet's EMT class as well, however we will NOT have the kit with Narcan provided to the students.

In keeping with East Rockaway Schools tradition, every October, with schools across the nation, we stand together against bullying and unite for kindness, acceptance, and inclusion. East Rockaway Junior/Senior High School is committed to support the continuing movement to inspire, educate, and encourage all students to take an active role in bullying prevention.

Throughout this past month:

- Morning announcements with important educational facts
- Learning opportunities in our Advisory classes:
- Our school library has books on display and students will have the opportunity to create orange bracelets during lunch or if they have a study hall

On Wednesday, October 18th we celebrated UNITY DAY! Staff wore orange to make a powerful statement that we are united against bullying. All students in grades 7-12 were encouraged to sign a pledge banner during lunch periods in the cafeteria to support others who have been hurt or harmed, treat others with kindness, be more accepting of people's differences, and help include those who are left out.

As part of our expansion of the job coaching program for our skills and achievement students, our teaching staff partnered with Mr. Daly, our facilities director, to identify classrooms throughout the school day that would benefit from the hard work of our students. These young men, who have been developing their vocational skills over the last few years, naturally adapted

to the new work environment and did a fantastic job. Ms. Ostrander, who runs the job coaching program with Ms. Crowley, said the following about this new addition to the program: “It was so awesome!!! The teachers who were working in their room on their off period greatly appreciated it. We also left notes for those who weren’t in their room to brighten their day.” Thank you, Mr. Healy, Mr. Kennedy, the teachers and classroom aides.

Café 217 opened for the first time at Rhame Avenue Elementary School. Teachers were invited to either place a mobile order to be delivered to their classroom or to come visit the mobile café in the main lobby. Our students were all smiles as they connected with former teachers and met new staff who were eager to introduce themselves. Teachers throughout the building reported that it was the best part of their day, and everyone is excited for the Café to expand to Centre Avenue next, which happened last week.

Each school effectively began running our mandatory lockdown drills in conjunction with Joe Napolitano from Altaris and NCPD POP office. Debriefing meetings are held after each drill with the safety team in which recommendations are made in order to improve our practice.

At the Centre Avenue and Rhame Avenue faculty meeting, the agenda focused on supporting the roll-out of the RULER program. The faculty engaged in a “Charter Check-in” to monitor their progress towards the 6 key goals for the building culture. Teachers participated as if they were students and Ms. Kelly modeled the teacher’s role. The staff were engaged and positive and are strongly committed to helping RULER work best for students.

Dr. Nancy Kaplan and Mr. Lamar Lee finished their first set of workshops with students in grades 5, 6, 10, 11, and 12. As with last year, the workshops focused on facilitating students’ finding connections with one another and creating cultures of welcoming, belonging, and inclusivity from the student level up (rather than from the grown-ups down). They engaged in two specific activities, “All Squares Bingo” and “A Star is Born” that supported learning about others and taking pride in themselves, respectively. The following are a few quotes from students about the experience.

- I liked how connecting Lamar and Nancy made us and how we went out of our comfort zone to talk to other people and learn new things about them.
- Love the tips and advice. Makes me see things differently. Loved it!
- Very inspiring, truthful and powerful. Very well spoken and great advice.

The ERHS gym buzzed with excitement as the renowned Harlem Wizards visited the town to compete against the East Rockaway All-Stars on October 30th! The occasion successfully gathered more than \$14,000 for the Rhame Avenue PTA. These funds will be allocated toward acquiring a crucial new sound system for the Rhame all-purpose room, a space that multitasks as the school’s gym, cafeteria, and auditorium. The PTA in unison with Mr. Bixhorn successfully brought smiles to all in attendance! It should be noted that more than 28 staff members volunteered to play in the game against the Wizards. Thank you to Mr. Bixhorn, Ms. Fahrenkrug and Ms. Ippolito.

New this year is Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council. This council will consist of eight student ambassadors and four central office administrators. Student Ambassadors were chosen by their building principals for demonstrating strong leadership qualities that will bring positive

and productive ideas for discussion to the council that are representative of the student body. The council's work will be presented at the March 26 Board of Education meeting. We are proud to offer this leadership opportunity to the eight deserving students representing each school building.

Congratulations to the ERHS Canstruction team for another award-winning build! This year's design, "Ending Hunger Is As Easy as 1...2...3..." won the award for the student competition AND earned "Best Concept", for best use of labels. (The "Best Concept" category included adult teams from private corporations, so this is especially impressive!). All collected cans from the building will be donated to families in need. Thank you to Ms. Murano, Ms. O'Shea, Mr. Poland, Mr. Howard, and Ms Refino for supporting our students in this year's event.

Our Sources of Strength program launched its first campaign this week – "We Belong." Using a similar model to Spirit Week, each day will have a specific theme and students will be invited to dress in accordance with that theme. In addition to an orange and black school spirit day, themes include "denim day" and "anything but a backpack day" in which students are encouraged to get creative about how they carry their materials from class to class. The primary social media account for Sources of Strength saw our posting about the event and shared it nationally, giving East Rockaway's Sources of Strength chapter national recognition for their work.



I wish each and every member of our school community, students, school professionals, PTAs, Education Foundation and community groups a Happy Thanksgiving and my very best wishes for a holiday weekend filled with family, friends, love and laughter.