



Outreach

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Mineola Middle School: *A School to Watch*

Mineola Middle School is one of a select group of schools nationwide to be named to the National Forum's Schools to Watch roster for 2019. The honor recognizes schools for their continued commitment to enhancing school programs and practices.

To be considered, the school had to complete a rigorous application process that included a self-assessment on academic excellence, social equity, developmental responsiveness,

and organizational structure and processes. Based on that initial application, the organization then visited the middle school and interviewed students, staff, administration, parents and members of the Board of Education on these criteria. The committee observed instruction, school culture and events as they aligned to this criteria.

The Schools to Watch designation is good for three years and then the school must requalify.

"Mineola Middle School is part of a remarkable learning community," Principal Andrew Casale said. "This recognition really epitomizes the hard work of our students and staff, and we are honored to be on a list with these neighboring districts."

There are only 30 schools designated as Schools to Watch in New York State and only six in Nassau County. Teachers and administrators will be representing Mineola



Mineola Middle School and accepting this designation in Washington, D.C., at the end of June.

WHAT MAKES US A SCHOOL TO WATCH?

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- 1:1 iPad initiative in grades five, six and seven fosters creativity and access to materials, apps, web-based activities and various multimedia.
- We leverage instructional technology to provide personalized learning paths for students according to their individual learning needs.
- Our Integrated Humanities curriculum affords students an opportunity to synthesize their knowledge of content through skills-based AKAs (Applications of Knowledge Assessments) and choice of creative challenge projects in each unit.
- Students complete a minimum of four coding projects per year on the kidOYO platform in their major academic subjects, earning badges as micro-credentials for successfully completing a challenge.
- Exploratory rotation includes project-based electives promoting design thinking in FabLab, coding, research, performance and communication.
- Our hands-on science lab section is offered as a rotation, similar to art and music, with a science curriculum aligned to the Next Generation Standards through "Knowing Science."
- Students create meaningful goals through the use of digital applications that benchmark and demonstrate growth.

DEVELOPMENTAL RESPONSIVENESS

- The growth mindset initiative reframes student thinking when approaching challenges.
- The Mineola PRIDE program embraces character education and encourages students to continue to be active members of society with a commitment to life-long learning.
- All students participate in enrichment, electives and/or performing music groups and fine arts.
- The peer mentoring program, facilitated by the school social worker, trains students to engage in conflict resolution and to serve as buddies for students in our Life Skills program.
- We have a partnership with local law enforcement to discuss cybersafety in alignment with the digital citizenship curriculum.
- We provide a diverse offering of over 25 clubs and extracurricular activities.
- Students contribute positively to the community through service initiatives.

SOCIAL EQUITY

- The support network for students and families includes a school psychologist, social worker, nurse, guidance counselors and a variety of special education support personnel.
- Teachers hold Lunch Lab as an opportunity for students to receive additional personalized academic support during their lunch periods.
- A "Meet and Greet" is held for all incoming fifth graders, where students are introduced to the fifth grade teachers and current students conduct tours of the building.
- Targeted extra help sessions are held before and after school.
- Our annual District Multicultural Night celebrates our diverse community.
- Parent Academy workshops offer valuable information and resources to parents.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

- We are an Apple Distinguished School (2013-present).
- We are a member of the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools.
- We hold a shared vision driven by the district goals.
- District Instructional Leaders (ILs) provide professional development and curriculum supports.
- We host domestic and international school districts that share best practices.
- Teachers attend conferences and pursue outside opportunities for continued learning.

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Four Levels of Life-long Learning With FIRST



"Every time you move up a level, there's something new to learn and more communication skills are needed. We are learning what is needed to enter the engineering workforce, which is what I plan to do."
- Jillian Parrino, Grade 10

This is the second year in a row in which Mineola is the only district to support not only the four levels of FIRST Lego League competition through School-Business Partnerships of Long Island, but also many coding initiatives at the primary level. We are committed to preparing our students for 21st-century challenges and life-long learning, and we are excited to offer these opportunities across all levels for them. Take a look at this overview of each level and how it is benefiting our students.

It's Elementary

It starts with the foundation of coding in pre-K through grade two and the use of various hands-on technology aids like KidOYO, Osmo Coding, and Ozobot, Sphero and Dash robots to introduce and engage students in a fun and age-appropriate way. Students complete their pathways to mastery badges while learning to work as a team and building the vocabulary that will be used at the next level.



Kingsley, a second grader at Hampton Street School, codes Xylo, an attachment with Dash, to play music.

Level 1: FIRST Lego League (FLL) Junior at Jackson Avenue

Eight teams of six in grades three and four showcased their talents this year on Mission: Moon, where students needed to address a problem they would encounter if they lived on the moon. At this level, students must research, create a poster and devise a plan on how they will solve the issue, and then illustrate their solution using Legos. FLL Junior has been at Jackson Avenue for four years.

Exemplifying FLL's core values, high school robotics students mentor their Jackson Avenue peers in building a water tank for Mission: Moon.



"FIRST is about more than just robots; it's a community that offers a one-of-a-kind experience. I've learned how to solve problems on the spot, to be creative and the importance of teambuilding."
- David Batista, Grade 11

Level 3: FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC), Grades 8-10 at Mineola High School

Currently in its fourth year, one team of 10 students has competed under advisers Kuri DiFede and Andrew Woolsey. Three of those four years, they have made it to the LI Championships, and this year they centered on a "Rover Ruckus" theme. The season runs from September to March and students must build and code a robot to complete a task on a 12-by-12-foot field. Skills learned here are then used to compete at the FRC level.



Level 2: FIRST Lego League (FLL) at Mineola Middle School

Under the guidance of Kelly Clifford, Melissa Fusco and Vincent Interrante, MMS has been participating in FLL for the past six years. With more than 100 students involved, four teams of 10 participate in the competition, which Mineola School District hosts. They have had a team make the championships twice, and this year three of the four teams received recognition – two for Best Project Research and one for Most Innovative Solution. This year's Mission: Moon competition focused on how being in outer space affects astronauts both physically and mentally.

"I really like the teamwork and how everyone can grow throughout the season and develop something new."
- Timothy Granados, Grade 6



Level 4: FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC), Grades 10-12 at Mineola High School

Despite it only being the school's second year competing at this level, Team #68016, with about a dozen students, has made it to the World Championship both years. Beginning in January, the team is given six weeks to build a robot that will complete a task on a 54-by-26-foot field. Set this year to a "Deep Space" theme, the team earned the Engineering Inspiration Award at regionals for their work in spreading engineering appreciation through their community outreach and mentorship with Jackson Avenue students. Last year, the team received the Rookie All-Star Award.

As a result of the team's successes NASA paid their entry fees for the 2019 World Championship, which was held on April 24 in Detroit.



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