



TIDE

Cultivating Family & Community Connections

The old proverb says, “It takes a village to raise a child,” and the Amityville Union Free School District values its relationships with its educational partners. Families and community members play an important role in supporting the great work of the district’s administrators, teachers and support staff.

Learning doesn’t stop when the school day ends, and families are an important part of the educational process. Parents, guardians, grandparents, aunts and uncles can support the curriculum by reading with children at home, helping with homework and reinforcing strategies.

Every year, the calendar is filled with informative programs, cultural presentations and classroom activities that families are invited to attend. Each September, back-to-school nights provide parents and guardians an opportunity to meet their child’s teachers and learn about the expectations for the new school year. Parent-teacher conferences allow for one-on-one

interaction to monitor student progress. Family learning nights give an insight into activities that can be done at home to support learning. Concerts, art exhibits, science fairs and literacy celebrations are just a few of the events in which student work is showcased for all to see.

The district’s five-year strategic plan, “Putting Amityville on the Map,” provides a blueprint for improvement in three targeted areas: student achievement, school culture and climate, and parent and community partnerships. Among the specific goals are providing excellent communication opportunities between the home and school, measuring and monitoring parent and student satisfaction, and increasing partnerships with community and regional organizations, colleges and universities.

Superintendent Dr. Mary T. Kelly has continued to articulate the message to the district’s staff about the positive impact each one of them can have on a child’s life. The keynote speaker

at the opening Superintendent’s Conference Day was Regina Calcaterra, an attorney and best-selling author who grew up in Suffolk County living in homeless shelters and foster care. She related her own childhood experiences about the teachers who inspired her to succeed to encourage Amityville’s educators to do the same for their students.

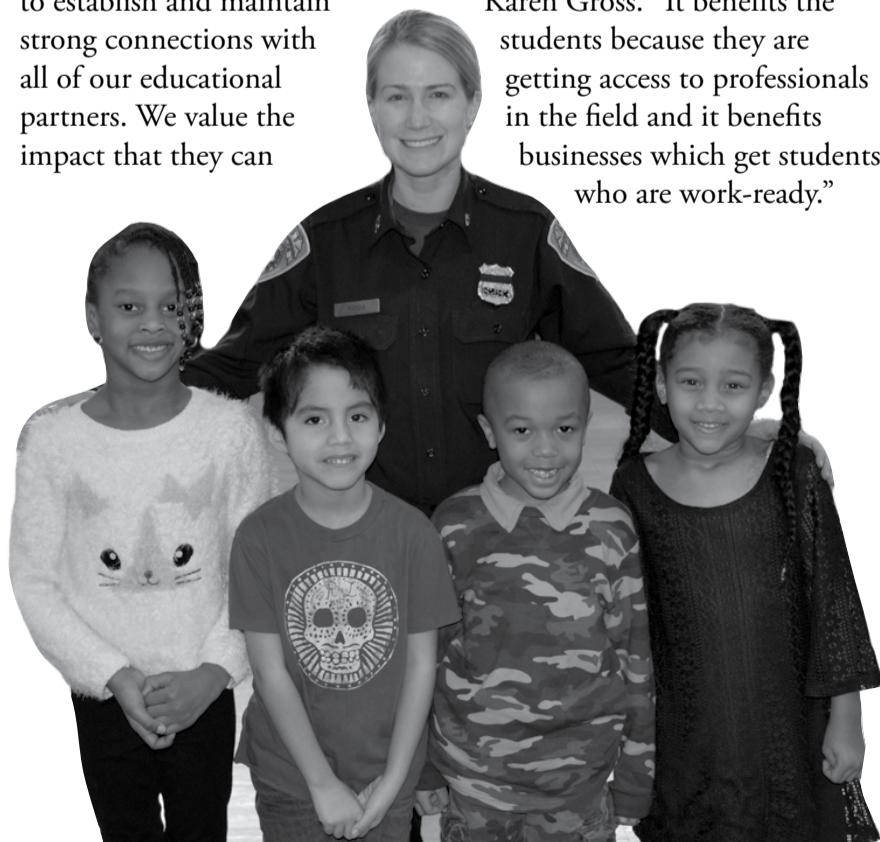
That inspiration can also come from a family member who emphasizes the value of a good education, or a local business owner who gives a teenager a job or internship opportunity.

“The Amityville community is filled with people who can make positive differences in the lives of our students,” Dr. Kelly said. “That is why it is so important to establish and maintain strong connections with all of our educational partners. We value the impact that they can

make as we prepare the next generation of innovators and leaders.”

Partnerships with local businesses, both big and small, are providing students with real-world work opportunities. The district’s Department of Pupil Personnel Services has established relationships throughout the community and beyond the borders of Amityville. High school students are thriving in their first experiences in the workforce. Many are using the opportunity to discover their passions and explore future career paths.

“This partnership is great for everybody involved,” said Amityville Memorial High School Transition Coordinator Karen Gross. “It benefits the students because they are getting access to professionals in the field and it benefits businesses which get students who are work-ready.”



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Business Partnerships Prove Valuable

The district has partnered with the local business community to provide opportunities for students to explore potential careers.

The Work Experience and Job Development program at Amityville Memorial High School has helped more than 120 students find job placements, internships and volunteer opportunities at approximately 60 businesses and organizations. Much of this has been accomplished because of the Amityville School-Business Partnership, now in its third year.

The Partnership's advisory board is comprised of representatives from the school district, local government and businesses. They meet several times a year in the high school library to discuss labor trends and explore ways to provide students with meaningful work experience.

This past summer, the Village of Amityville welcomed interns from the high school in the court and administration departments to do work such as data input and file organizing. One student has since stayed on as a part-time worker, and the village has also started a work-study program. Village Clerk-Treasurer Catherine Murdock said students should have some experience in the workforce before they enter it, and village officials are happy to provide an opportunity.

Jill Green, with Security Dodge Chrysler Jeep Ram, said Amityville students interested in careers in the automotive field have worked in the shop to do routine work such as oil changes, or in the office to do clerical work.

"We get great employees," she said. "The students come in wide-eyed and eager to learn. It's something we can do to give back to the community."

Senior Jerinna Solages did a summer internship with Infinite Media in Amityville which gave her an introduction to web design, coding and marketing. She has continued working there this fall, and has since created blogs to promote upcoming events in the community.

"It was an amazing experience," she said. "It introduced me to the world of communications and put me in touch with a lot of people who are very knowledgeable in their fields."

Amityville Chamber of Commerce President Liz Fanning Holdorf said that the partnership between the school district and local businesses is "filling in the millennial gap" by giving companies an introduction to the future workforce. She said the feedback she gets from business owners has been nothing but positive and they have been noting the great work ethic of Amityville students.

At Park Avenue Memorial Elementary School, students get an introduction to job opportunities at the annual fall career day. Even though those fourth- through sixth-graders are several years away from entering the workforce, they get to learn about different options to help guide them through



the course selection in middle school and high school.

The school partners with the Amityville Chamber of Commerce and Amityville Parent Teacher Council to bring in speakers. Many of the same business owners who offer high school students job opportunities present at career day, along with parents and other area professionals. Children learn about careers in a wide variety of fields such as business, law enforcement, health care, government and education.

"It is never too early for students to start thinking about their futures," said Park Avenue guidance counselor Kimberly Balducci. "We want students to see the many different career options they will have, and understand that what they are learning now is important to have successful careers."

Visitors Enhance Learning

Special guests enhance the curriculum by visiting schools and sharing their expertise on a subject or relating history through personal experiences. The firsthand knowledge of guest speakers leads to engaging and meaningful discussions with students.

Edmund W. Miles Middle School and Amityville Memorial High School hold Veterans Day programs each November. Men and women who have served in different branches of the military and during different periods of conflict, as far back as World War II, visit classes throughout the day and tell their personal stories.

Many of the veterans live in the community and belong to local American Legion and VFW posts. They discuss potential careers in the armed services and their post-military lives.

"We just thought it was really important for us to recognize the work that veterans have done for the country and their community," said Middle School Principal Edward Plaia, "and we thought it was a great opportunity for our students to meet, talk with and ask questions of the veterans. The students learn that they have to set goals for themselves and have to be willing to take risks for things that they believe in."

Suffolk County police officers visit Northwest Elementary School to speak about the role of law enforcement agencies within the community. The goal is to teach students how



to make good choices and give them a positive interaction with police officers at a young age.

Holocaust survivor Werner Reich visits Amityville Memorial High School each year to not only speak about one of the biggest atrocities in history, but to relay a message to students about character. The Suffolk County resident and author uses his story to spread an antibullying message. He encourages students to be the "good people who do something" by standing up for others who are being treated unfairly.

Therapy dogs through Bide-A-Wee's Pet Partners and the Love on a Leash program have visited several Amityville schools to provide a therapeutic approach to literacy development. Many students find it relaxing by reading to dogs as it is a nonjudgmental way for the children to practice reading and build their confidence.

Starting Family Involvement Early

Families are an important part of the educational process in Amityville. They provide support at home to reinforce the lessons in school.

Northeast Elementary School holds several family learning nights throughout the year, each with a different theme. The programs begin with an information session for parents, followed by learning centers in the gymnasium in which students can make crafts, play literacy and math games, and participate in read alouds.

The centers are staffed by Northeast teachers and student volunteers from the Edmund W. Miles Middle School National Junior Honor Society. The goal of family learning nights are to provide parents and their children with fun yet meaningful activities to do together at home.

Northwest Elementary School holds a winter wonderland family fun night each year, which includes a read aloud, science activity and crafts. Similar to Northeast, parents leave with tips on how they can support instruction at home.

"We definitely encourage the parents to get involved," said Northwest Elementary School Principal Kathleen Hyland. "We are trying to promote a partnership between the home and the school."

Ms. Hyland said that parents are asked to either read with their children every day, or encourage their youngsters to read independently at home. She cited statistics that show that if students read for 20 minutes a day, it can make a significant difference in their literacy development and academic performance.

Park Avenue Memorial Elementary School celebrates Parents as Reading Partners each March. Guest readers from the school district and community visit classrooms to read aloud to students. There is also an annual PARP night in which parents and students come to the school for various literacy activities, such as writing and illustrating together.

For the past five years, Northeast has hosted an annual Grandparents Day in September. Principal Dr. Pauline Collins said that grandmothers and grandfathers are very involved in the lives of the children, often providing care before and after school. It is important for them to know what students are learning and how they can provide support.

On Grandparents Day, the special guests are invited to experience learning in action. They get to take part in the educational process by reading books to the children and helping with fall-themed craft activities.

"Important people in the children's lives should have the chance to come in and be a part of the whole learning experience," Dr. Collins said. "The grandparents really enjoy participating."



Information Nights

The five schools hold various parent information nights throughout the year that are designed to increase family participation.

A set of ENL parent nights are held in the fall and again in the spring at all five schools. Each workshop is not specific to that building, so parents of English language learners can choose whichever session is most convenient. They are able to find out about the services offered for the district's bilingual and multilingual students.

Mary Stephens, Amityville's director of ENL and world languages, said at the fall meeting parents receive information specific to their child or children about their level of English proficiency. ENL teachers are on hand to discuss the data and answer

questions. The spring meetings focus on preparing students for assessments.

New ENL parent workshops this year will focus on a variety of topics such as helping parents understand the role of the school as well as their role in supporting a child's education.

"We want them to know that they have a voice and where they can find information," Ms. Stephens said about the variety of informational programs that are offered throughout the year.

Other parent workshops throughout the year provide information on the district's literacy and math programs. These forums provide opportunities for parents to ask questions of teachers and administrators and learn ways to help their children at home.



WARRIOR PRIDE

a Two-Day Affair



Homecoming was a two-day celebration at Amityville Memorial High School, as the community gathered on Oct. 27 and 28 to celebrate Warrior pride.

The inaugural homecoming festival held on Friday afternoon was open to the community and all schools in the district were represented. There were activities for children including pumpkin bowling and face painting. All guests were able to take pictures at the Amityville Pride photo booth and enjoy hamburgers and hot dogs.

Saturday's homecoming celebration began with a parade, as marchers started their journey at the LIRR Amityville station and traveled down the local streets to the high school as onlookers cheered. Students dressed up and floats were decorated to represent this year's theme of ancient civilizations. The best float award was given to the freshman class for their depiction of the Great Wall of China.

The football game was an all-Warriors matchup with Amityville hosting Wyandanch. The home team

wasted no time establishing themselves once the game was underway, as a 14-0 lead after one quarter set the tone for a 33-6 win. The victory secured a place in the playoffs for Amityville.

At halftime, the crowd roared as Joshua Serrano and Irach'e Teague were named homecoming king and queen, and impressive performances from the cheerleaders and marching band capped off another homecoming celebration for Amityville.



Special Education Department Review

The New York State Education Department's Office of Special Education has initiated a Special Education Programs and Services Focused Review in the Amityville Union School Free School District for the 2017-2018 school year. The purpose of this review is to assess the district's compliance with selected federal and state laws and regulations governing the education of students with disabilities. This review is regularly conducted in school districts throughout New York State in order to assist districts in aligning their special education policies, practices, and procedures with federal and State standards.

The review will be conducted by the Special Education Quality Assurance (SEQA) Long Island Regional Office. The review process will involve a review of school records of a representative sample of students with disabilities, classroom visitations and surveys. In addition, meetings of the committee on special education will be observed. Further information may be obtained by contacting the SEQA Long Island Regional Office at (631) 952-3352 and/or by contacting Mr. Peter Paternostro, Administrator for Pupil Personnel Services for the Amityville Union Free School District at (631) 565-6552 or 6553.

Coming Soon: Adult Education

Following an overwhelmingly positive response to the recent online survey, the district will launch a Continuing Education Program in 2018 to serve the needs of the community.

A course content book is currently being developed, and there will be a variety of classes

on different topics based upon the feedback from the survey. Once the course book is complete and made available to the public, registration will begin. Please check the district's website, www.amityvilleufsd.org, for updates about the Continuing Education Program.



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