



# American Sign Language Program Is Silently Growing Steady

In November 2023, the Hicksville High School Repertory Company presented three performances of “Mother Hicks,” a play written by Suzan Zeder, which features a deaf main character, a boy named Tuc, who helps to narrate the story that takes place during the Great Depression. Tuc was played by Hicksville junior John Ryan Chaplin who signs his dialogue while other actors on stage speak the words.

Chaplin is one of the current 300 Hicksville middle school and high school students learning American Sign Language (ASL) offered through the district’s World Language Department.

“Through the program, our students embrace the beauty of silence to amplify their voice.”

**--Hicksville Supervisor of World Languages, ENL and Bilingual Programs Janet Suarez-Lovett**

The ASL program became a part of Hicksville’s World Language Department in 2016, and has been growing ever since. Initially, ASL (level 1) was offered to seventh graders in the middle school. Sixth graders are exposed to ASL through the school’s FLEX class, where they learn to sign the alphabet, numbers and colors and decide if they would like to further pursue ASL.

Today, the program has expanded considerably, and now offers courses up to level 3 at the high school. Students who continue to level 3 are eligible for an Advanced Regents Diploma. Additionally, in 2021, with continued growing interest in the program, the high school added college-level ASL courses, allowing Hicksville students to acquire college-level language credits affiliated with Stony Brook University.

“Through the program, our students embrace the beauty of silence to amplify their voice,” said Hicksville Supervisor of World Languages, ENL and Bilingual Programs Janet Suarez-Lovett. “The program explores enriched vocabulary and linguistic rules with its own grammatical structure. Students participate in daily expressive and receptive language activities and learn about the rich history and culture of the Deaf community.”

Students learning at all levels are invited to participate in various ASL

field trips and activities outside of class. For example, an ASL club is offered at the middle school to all students starting in sixth grade. When students reach level 2, as they complete their second year at the high school, they can apply for the American Sign Language Honor Society. To date, there are more than 50 members in the ASL Honor Society.



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# Hands-On Experiences for Virtual Enterprise Students

Hicksville juniors and seniors are thriving in the high school's Virtual Enterprise (VE) course which offers numerous advantages to students through project-based and collaborative learning. The VE program, offered since 2022-23 through the High School's Business Department simulates a virtual business environment. Through Virtual Enterprises International, students gain practical, hands-on experience in running a business within a global network of student-run businesses in more than 40 countries.

The program includes trade fairs and interactions with business professionals, and provides students with valuable networking opportunities that can be beneficial for future career endeavors. Students attend virtual and in-person events. They are responsible for creating a product, marketing the product and selling the product to other business students. This year, the students' virtual company, Bello, is a hair care subscription package.

VE is the capstone course for the district's CTE Business Management and Entrepreneurship Pathway. Through VE, students practice entrepreneurial skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity and financial literacy, as well as develop communication, teamwork and technology integration skills.

Last October, Hicksville students attended a VE Leadership Conference at Long Island University, meeting peers from more than 100 schools across Long Island and New York City. Members of the executive board of Bello, CEO Mayuri Kumar and Chief Technology Officer Patrick LaBarca, presented at the conference and were awarded certificates in recognition of their leadership skills during breakout sessions.

In January, VE students are scheduled to attend a Long Island Trade Show to compete in the business plan/presentation competition. Last year's VE students advanced to the state finals and finished in the top 15 overall

for their presentation of a virtual monthly subscription breakfast food service called Morning Delight.

"The VE course is not just a program; it's a journey into a virtual business world where learning comes to life," said Dr. Linda Pfaffe, Hicksville's Supervisor of Math, Business and Computer Education. "Imagine gaining hands-on business experience without leaving the classroom. With VE, theory meets practice, creating a dynamic learning adventure that doesn't just teach but immerses students in the exciting world of entrepreneurship. It's not your typical class – it's a hands-on business bonanza!"

The skills and experiences gained through VE are assets for both higher education and entry into the job market.





# Congratulations!



Congratulations to the Hicksville High School varsity girls tennis team for an undefeated 14-0 season, winning the Conference 3A championship for the first time in recent school history. The unprecedented season matches the same accomplishment by the varsity boys tennis team last spring.

This year the varsity girls swimming and diving team moved up to Conference II, defeating some top-tier programs and finishing the season eighth in the county.



In October, Hicksville proudly welcomed back the Tournament of Bands, hosted by the Hicksville Music Parents Association and a team of dedicated volunteers. The event showcased 11 high school marching bands from across the New York State Field Band Conference. In November, Hicksville's marching band finished the season in Syracuse participating in the New York State Field Band championships, placing first in their division. This was the third year the marching band was named New York State Field Band champions.



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## Staying Connected to Our Community

Members of the Hicksville community can select their preferred language to translate the district's website. Users can choose among 150 languages! Simply select "Language" from the top-left menu of the homepage to select your preference.

Additionally, families are invited to opt in to School Messenger, a free text messaging service, as a way to stay up to date with school and district news. Text "Y" or "Yes" to 67587 to opt in.

## Alumni Spotlight

### Returning to the Hicksville Family

Hicksville physical education teacher Julia Bentrewicz has been part of the Hicksville school community since her academic journey began as a student at Lee Avenue Elementary School more than two decades ago. Julia is a proud Hicksville High School graduate of the Class of 2018, and she student taught at Woodland Elementary School before receiving her bachelor's degree in physical education from Queens College.

At the start of the 2023-24 school year, she began teaching physical education at Hicksville Middle School and is an adaptive physical education teacher working in several schools throughout the district while pursuing her master's degree

in health education. Prior to returning to teach in Hicksville, Julia worked for the New York City Department of Education, Syosset School District and The Henry Viscardi School in Albertson.

The former college basketball player enjoys coaching her middle school students who participate on the school's girls and boys basketball and soccer teams as well as the high school girls junior varsity lacrosse team. In addition to coaching in the district, she is a clinic coordinator and trainer for the Hicksville Police Athletic League. In her spare time, the Hicksville resident stays busy refereeing basketball games and spending time with family and friends.

