



The Bulletin Board

News from the Hicksville UFSD



Focusing on MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

While many things are looking different this school year, one thing remains a constant – putting students' mental health at the forefront. The Hicksville School District is adding an additional layer of support this year for students and staff with a new Mental Health and Wellness Coalition. The coalition works to identify resources and implement initiatives to boost the school community's overall well-being. It's comprised of professionals and community members, including:

- Teachers
- Parents
- School social workers and counselors
- District leaders
- Health professionals and providers
- Community organizations
- Board of Education members

Todd Benjamin, a former school social worker, is spearheading the group, alongside Supervisor of Guidance Services Efthymia Rafaelides and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Anthony Lubrano.

Mr. Benjamin states the coalition's motto is an African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." It describes how the coalition brings together so many different members of the Hicksville community.

"It's an 'it takes a village' kind of idea," he said.

The Mental Health and Wellness Coalition plans to help students and make the community safer, healthier and more restorative through a number of means:

- Providing training for teachers and school leaders on how to help students' mental well-being.
- Offering training for parents through Parent University sessions.
- Identifying existing resources such as counseling, organizations, specialized school staff, etc.
- Creating new classroom initiatives.

Schools have been expanding their mental health services over the past few years. But now, due to added stress from the COVID-19 pandemic, it's even more important to offer support to students. Social-emotional learning has been a focus of the coalition's efforts since it started in August, helping students to understand and process their feelings.

"It would provide more support in a time when students and staff might need more support," Mr. Benjamin said.

At the elementary level, the coalition provides teachers with "First Aid for Feelings: A Workbook to Help Kids Cope During the Coronavirus Pandemic." It's a

free downloadable book that teachers can use to help their students understand their feelings during this unprecedented time. The coalition organized a training with elementary staff and the book's author on how to use it with students.

At the secondary level, a training was held for staff focused on what Mr. Benjamin calls, "watering the seeds, not the weeds." The training showed teachers how they can promote student growth and plant positive messages, despite the negative impacts of the pandemic.

The coalition meets monthly to brainstorm more ways to address students' emotional needs. Resources are available on the district website.



Capital Project PROGRESS:

Voters approved a bond back in November 2017 for capital work to be done throughout the Hicksville School District at no additional tax impact to our residents. We are happy to announce some of those projects have been completed for the 2020-2021 school year, like the library media centers at our elementary schools:

- East Street
- Lee Avenue
- Woodland

Meanwhile, other projects are making good progress and are currently under construction, like the Aquatic Center at Hicksville High School.



Students at East Street will be able to check out books at the new circulation desk, as well as take advantage of the media resources the library offers.



Improvements to the elementary library media centers, like this one at Lee Avenue, created more space for students to learn and explore.



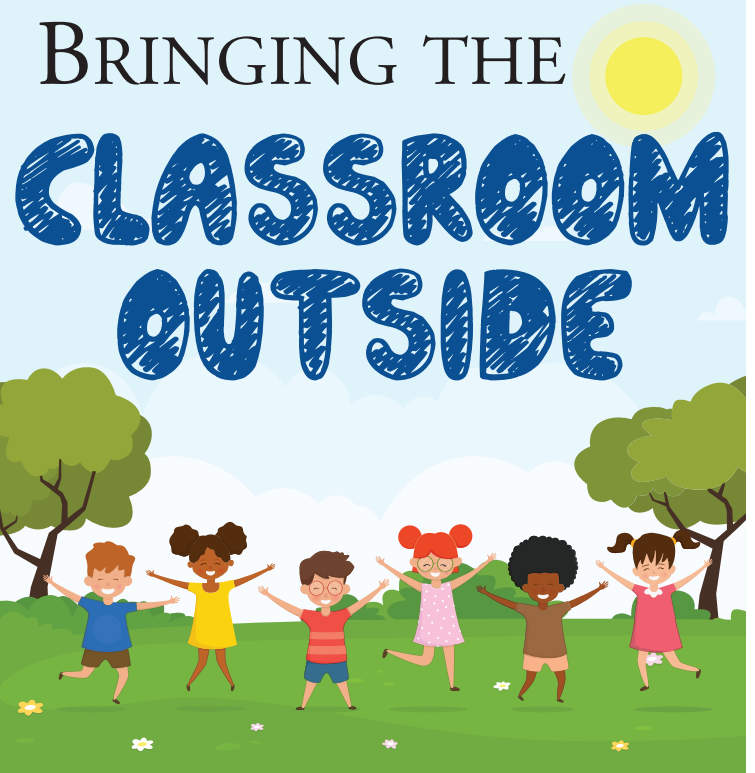
The state-of-the-art library media center at Woodland has new shelving for books and more flexible seating options for students.

The Aquatic Center is under construction at the high school. Upon completion, it will be a competition 6-lane, 25-meter indoor swimming pool.



The Aquatic Center will be a great community asset as well as a resource for instructional and extracurricular activities.





While we are happy to have students back in our school buildings, our classrooms look different than they have in years past. Desks are spread out for proper social distancing and students and staff are wearing masks. Our teachers are still finding ways to make learning fun and exciting, despite all the changes.

Many of our classes are taking advantage of the fall weather and utilizing the outdoor spaces at our schools. Elementary and secondary students have been participating in outdoor activities during physical education classes, such as socially distanced obstacle courses and sports. Classroom teachers have also been taking students outside for lessons in other subject areas like reading and art. While it's not the typical classroom, the district's use of outdoor space is helping to contribute to a safe and educational environment.

THE HICKSVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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IS NOW MOBILE



The district has launched a new mobile app, available on the Apple App Store or Google Play. The app features push notifications, directory and contact information, calendars, lunch menus and information on late buses, extra help and more – all at your fingertips.

ALUMNI *Spotlight*

THALIA BARTOLONE

Hicksville High School Class of 2013

After high school, I attended Dowling College to major in psychology. At the end of my second year of college, I decided to switch to a dual major in psychology and special education. However, during the summer going into my third year, Dowling closed. I made the decision to transfer to LIU Post. It had accepted the majority of my credits, but I couldn't continue my major in special education because I didn't have enough credits to graduate within the year like I was supposed to. If I had decided to stick with special education, then I would've

done another five years, so I decided to put that on hold and do it as my master's.

I eventually graduated LIU Post with a bachelor's in psychology, and I took a whole year and a half off from college to gain some experience in the teaching field. I worked at day cares and a special needs pre-K school, and I've done ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis). Currently, I am working in a public high school on Long Island as a teacher assistant, and I am attending graduate classes at LIU Post at night. I am doing my master's in childhood/special education grades 1-6,



and I am only a semester away from graduating and becoming an elementary school teacher.

During my high school years, I wasn't the greatest student. I've had certain people think that I wasn't going to further my education due to my grades. I knew that I was going to succeed no matter what

I planned on doing. It's important to never give up on yourself. Hopefully, my success motivates those who are struggling and think there's no hope, because there's always a light at the end of the tunnel.

Sincerely,
Thalia Bartolone
Class of 2013