



SMITHTOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

# DIGEST

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY

FALL 2016

## Leading THE WAY

Recognizing the ever-changing nature of education, the district continues to embrace initiatives aimed at keeping its students ahead of the learning curve. The district has implemented Project Lead the Way, the nation's leading provider of STEM programs, into the curriculum for all students in grades K-5. It is also being integrated into all seventh grade technology classes and added as an elective course to replace grade seven study hall.

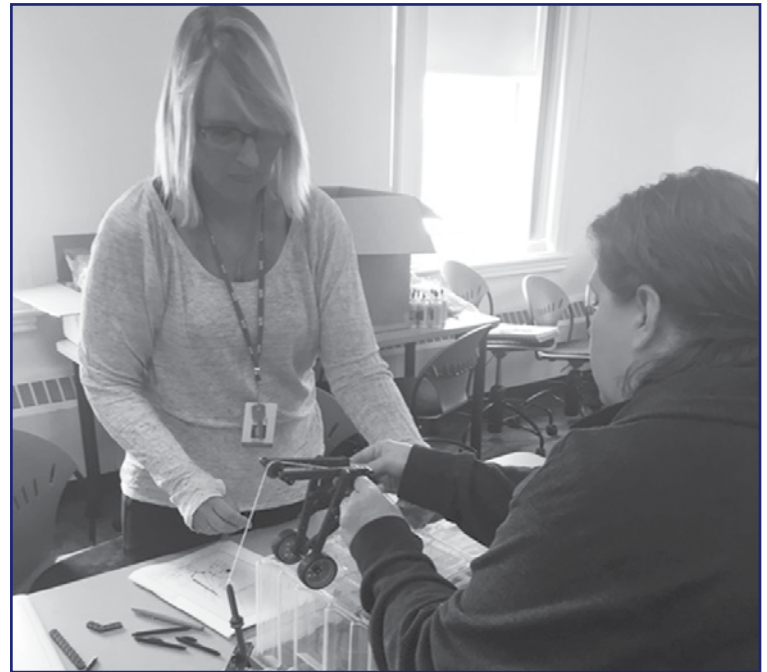
Project Lead the Way guides students to work collaboratively, identify problems and persevere through their challenges to find solutions, thereby leading their own learning. The program's instructional design focuses on real-world activities, projects and problems that help students understand how the knowledge and skills they develop in the classroom may be applied to everyday life.

At the elementary level, the PLTW Launch program taps into students' exploratory nature, engaging them in learning that feels like play and encouraging them to keep discovering. Twenty-four modules in the Launch

program are aligned to give students a design-thinking mindset through compelling activities, projects and problems that build upon each other and relate to the world around them.

These school-wide, hands-on activities enrich instruction in areas such as computer science, engineering, and biomedical science and allow students to become creative, collaborative problem-solvers. For example, kindergarten students learn about structure and function by exploring the human body. They learn to assemble a skeleton and create a model X-ray of a hand. Fifth-grade students delve into robotics and automation by building and programming an autonomous robot designed to solve real-world problems.

PLTW further encourages exploration in the middle school years. The Gateway curriculum challenges and inspires middle school students with creative problem-solving activities. Smithtown has implemented the Gateway program for seventh-graders through the technology class Design and Modeling. It is also offered as a grade 7 elective in two specialized units:



Automation and Robotics and Flight and Space.

In the automation and robotics unit, learning includes designing, building and programming traffic lights, tollbooths and robotic arms. In the flight and space unit, students explore the science behind aeronautics, eventually building and designing an airfoil.

"The PLTW program helps build students' problem-solving skills through the application of language and math skills as well as technology, design, engineering and science," said

Jennifer Bradshaw, assistant superintendent for instruction.

Thirty-one teachers and seven administrators throughout the district were provided with the training and resources of PLTW to engage students in the reinvention of the classroom experience. The district was able to support this initiative using one-time funding sources, turning short-term revenue into an exciting program that will continue to enrich instruction long after the funding is gone.

# A Message from Your Superintendent

Dear Residents,

Welcome to the 2016-17 school year! It was a pleasure welcoming our returning students and staff and the newest members of our district, including the Class of 2029 and approximately 50 new teachers.

The school year is already off to a great start. Nearly 400 high school students were named Advanced Placement Scholars, 11 students were selected as National Merit semifinalists, 33 students were chosen to perform at the Suffolk County Music Educators Association All-County Festival and 14 students will perform at the New York State School Music Association Winter Conference. We've also celebrated two successful homecomings. It is always a pleasure to see our community come out to cheer on our students.

As we move through the school year, there are many exciting opportunities for our students to explore. New to our curriculum this year is Project Lead the Way for all students at the elementary level. We are also integrating the STEM program into all seventh grade technology classes and adding it as an elective course to replace grade seven study hall. The program's instructional design focuses on real-world activities, projects and problems that help students understand how the knowledge and skills they develop in the classroom may be applied to real-life situations.

At the secondary level, we have implemented the Challenge by Choice initiative. This program

was developed to assist our students in selecting courses that will help them reach their highest potential. We encourage all of our students to pursue excellence and rigorous academic experiences, and this new initiative is just one way for a student to expand his or her knowledge.

Quality instruction is of utmost importance to the success of our students. PLTW and Challenge by Choice are just two of the initiatives that we have implemented over the last few years in an effort to propel our students' academic growth.

As a district, we are constantly evolving and researching areas where we can best support our students, one of which is by supporting our highly skilled staff. As part of the Board's adopted 2016-17 goals, we will continue to develop and update our three-year professional development plan to support teachers as they implement the New York State Learning Standards across all disciplines. To see all of the Board's goals, please visit [www.smithtown.k12.ny.us](http://www.smithtown.k12.ny.us).

As part of the goals, we will be developing and presenting budget proposals at Board meetings within the coming months. For updates on the budget, please visit the website.

With such a successful start to the school year, I look forward to being a part of and observing the great things to come.

Sincerely,  
James J. Grossane, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

## MEET THE New Trustees



**DANIEL LYNCH**

**Years in the district:** 38

**Connection to Smithtown**

**Schools:** I am a parent of four children all currently attending Smithtown.

**Vision for the future:** Being a new Board member, I plan to quickly learn all school board-related matters and duties in order to effectively represent the students, parents and residents of the Smithtown Central School District community.



**MICHAEL SAIDENS**

**Years in the district:** 10

**Connection to Smithtown**

**Schools:** I was an elementary teacher at both Accomsett and Mills Pond elementary schools. My son Jake is in first grade attending Tackan Elementary School. I have

been involved in education since 1996 in various capacities. I am in my 12th year as an elementary school principal.

**Vision for the future:** I look to serve our community and help ensure that the Smithtown Schools continue to provide well-rounded, excellent educational opportunities for all students.

## Parent University

On Oct. 27, the district will host its fall Parent University - Creating a Resilient Community. Partnering once again with the Suffolk County Police Department, information about drug and other substance abuse, including how to protect your children, how to identify risks, and how to respond, will be available.

**Save the Date!**  
Parent University  
Oct. 27 at 7 p.m.  
High School East

# Meet the New Administrators



**Michael Cestaro**, *Assistant Principal, Great Hollow Middle School*

**Prior educational experience/employment:** I taught social studies for 11 years to high school and middle school students. For the last two years, I worked as a dean of students in Queens.

**Educational background:** Bachelor of Science from St. John's University in history and education; master's degree in liberal studies from Stony Brook University; advanced certificate in educational leadership and administration from The College of St. Rose's CITE program.



**Neil Katz**, *Assistant Superintendent for Personnel*

**Prior educational experience/employment:** I was a business teacher in Smithtown and taught business education in the Valley Stream Central High School District and Hillsborough County School District. I also held the positions of middle school assistant principal, elementary principal and assistant superintendent for

human resources in the Patchogue-Medford School District.

**Educational background:** Business management and educational degrees from Dowling College; administrative certification studies from Stony Brook University.



**Daniel McCabe**, *Principal, Nesaquake Middle School*

**Prior educational experience/employment:** I have been in Smithtown for the past 18 years, working as a high school business teacher, instructional specialist and coach for eight years. I served as assistant principal at the high school for five years and middle school for four years.

**Educational background:** Bachelor's degree in business administration and marketing from Daemen College; master's degree in special education from Dowling College; school leadership professional degree from Stony Brook University.



**Kevin Simmons**, *Principal, High School East*

**Prior educational experience/employment:** Since 2008, I served as principal of Nesaquake Middle School. Prior to 2008, I served as an assistant principal at both Nesaquake Middle School and Smithtown Middle School. I was also a social studies teacher and the administrative assistant for English and social studies in the Syosset Central School District.

**Educational background:** Bachelor's degree in history from SUNY Cortland; master's degree in elementary education from Dowling College; advanced graduate certificate in school district administration from Stony Brook University; doctorate in administration and supervision from St. John's University.



**Timothy Hellmuth**, *Assistant Principal, Accomsett Middle School*

**Prior educational experience/employment:** I began my career working in Smithtown. During my 14-year tenure, I worked as an elementary teacher and an instructional coach in mathematics. I also worked as an assistant principal in the Amityville School District.

**Educational background:** Bachelor of Science in elementary education from SUNY Oswego; master's degree in literacy from LIU Post; professional certificate SBL/SDL from Stony Brook University.



**Daniel Leddy**, *Director of Facilities*

**Prior educational experience/employment:** For the past two decades, I have amassed health care and educational experience in all aspects of facilities operations. My experience in the field of educational facilities management includes: capital project planning, introducing green cleaning protocols, code enforcement officer/

asbestos inspector, and addressing the maintenance and repair required in all district buildings.

**Educational background:** Bachelor of Science in general engineering and facilities management from SUNY Maritime College.



**Matthew Prah**, *Assistant Administrator for Special Education*

**Prior educational experience/employment:**

I began my career teaching high school at an international school in London. Upon returning to Long Island, I worked as a teacher assistant in the West Babylon School District, high school special education teacher in the Deer Park School

District and, most recently, a curriculum associate in the Deer Park School District and an assistant supervisor of special education in the South Huntington School District.

**Educational background:** Bachelor's degree in elementary education and special education from SUNY Plattsburgh; master's degree in liberal arts and educational administration from Stony Brook University.



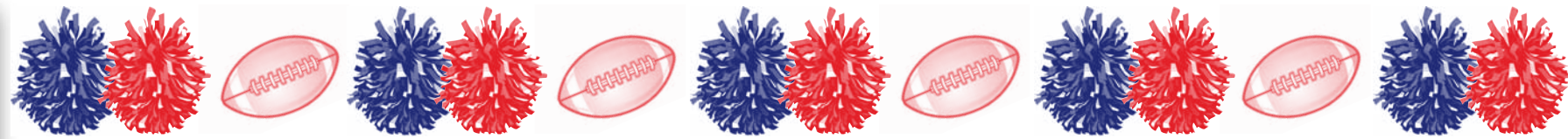
**Mona Tobin**, *Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services*

**Prior educational experience/employment:**

I have worked as an assistant principal in the Nassau BOCES Special Education Middle School Program and in the Lawrence School District's middle school. I also held the position of director of special education in the Plainedge,

Port Washington and West Babylon school districts. Mostly recently, I have been an interim administrator in the Middle Country, West Hempstead and North Babylon school districts.

**Educational background:** Bachelor's degree from Hofstra University; master's degree in special education from LIU Post; certificate of advanced study in educational administration from Hofstra University.



# HOME COMING 2016

School spirit soared in Smithtown on Sept. 24 as both high schools celebrated their homecoming.

High School East kicked off its festivities with a parade beginning at St. James Elementary. Heading down Lake Avenue, sports teams and clubs from East, Nesaquake and Great Hollow middle schools marched down to the East football field.

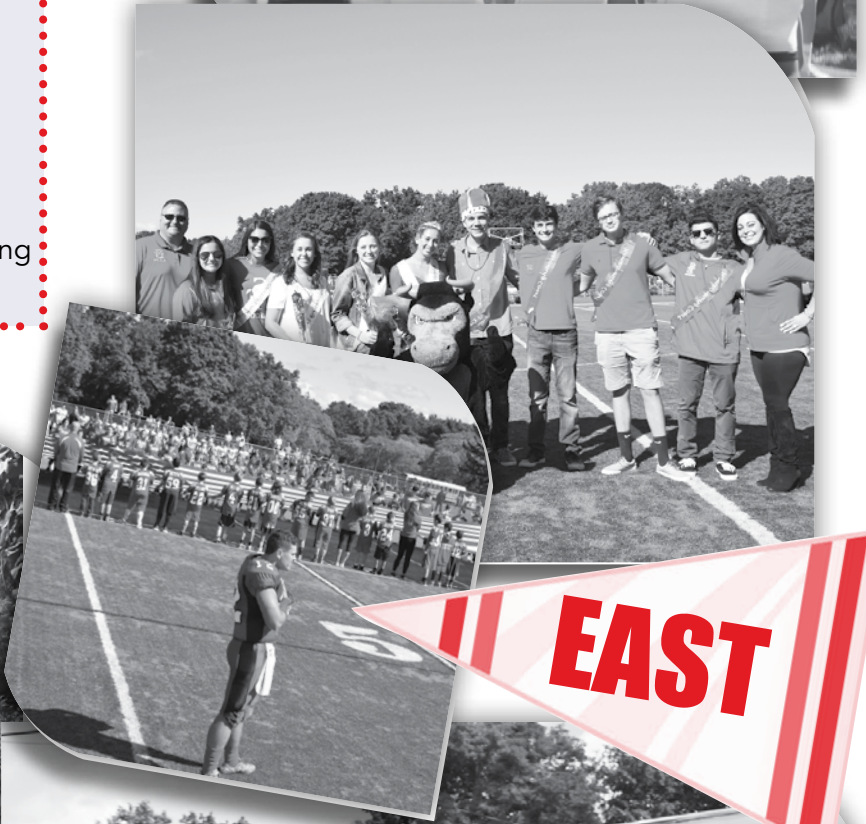
In lieu of a parade, High School West treated students and younger guests to a pre-game carnival. Games, face painting, rock climbing, an obstacle course and a dunk tank – complete with West faculty and administrators – were organized by many of the school's clubs and organization.

For the big game, East took on the Riverhead

Blue Waves, shutting them out 24-0. Despite their best efforts, the West varsity football team fell to the Thunderbirds from Half Hollow Hills East 41-14.

At West's halftime celebration, Ava Witonsky and Tom Bernard were crowned the homecoming queen and king. The West varsity cheerleaders kicked off the halftime show, followed by the five-time champion Whisperettes.

The East varsity cheerleaders kicked off their halftime show, followed by a performance by the 17-time National Champion East Whisperettes. The homecoming court nominees were announced and called on to the football field where Gabby Meyers and Kyle DiPietrantonio were named homecoming queen and king.





During July and August, the district was filled with activity as hundreds of students participated in programs at Smithtown Elementary School and Accomsett Middle School.

At Smithtown Elementary, K-8 students worked in small class settings as part of the Extended School Year Program. Students focused on academic goals and social-emotional skills in an effort to keep their educational and social abilities active during the summer months. This year's program was based on the Summer Olympics, which included activities such as an Olympic Field Day and carnival.

More than 100 K-8 students also participated in the summer reading program, which gave them an extra boost and helped hone their reading skills in preparation for the school year.

Four different camps were housed at Accomsett – Middle School CAMP (Character Academics Mindset

Preparedness), English as a New Language, SCOPE Summer Enrichment and lessons through the Friends of Music of Smithtown.

Students sharpened their musical skills with one-on-one and group lessons sponsored by the Friends of Music of Smithtown. Students who are new to the English language polished their expertise during the summer months as well. The SCOPE program mixed fun and learning as students participated in hands-on activities in the arts, technology and science.

CAMP students spent the summer building their academic, creative, social and emotional skill sets. They learned about creative arts, mind-body medicine, positive psychology, nutrition, relationship development, resilience training, stress reduction, and movement and exercise. They practiced yoga, meditation, biofeedback technology and working collaboratively.



## Wellness Corner

Today's tip from the Wellness Corner is to consider the areas of your life that need some nurturing and set one or two specific, achievable goals that create more balance.

Put them into your calendar, whether it's a date night with your significant other to nurture a relationship, a 10-minute quiet walk for some peaceful alone time, a weekly savings plan to reach a financial goal, or one healthy food that you will add to your diet this week.

Search online or consult a local health or wellness practitioner for a "wellness wheel" that matches what

you value in a fulfilling life. Use it as a tool to identify areas where you want to focus your time and efforts.

To participate in Smithtown's wellness initiatives or in our upcoming School Start Times Committee, scan this QR code or call 631-382-2032.





# Accolades and Achievements

Although it's only a few weeks into the new school year, Smithtown students are already achieving recognition for their accomplishments in the arts and academics.

## National Merit Scholars

Eleven seniors are among 16,000 students across the country who were named semifinalists in the annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

From High School West, Samantha Catalano, Stephen Kyranakis, Victoria Savage, Adam Wang, Catherine Whang and Cory Zhou have been recognized as NMSP semifinalists.

Five High School East seniors have also made the list: Sanjana

Eranki, Emily Knott, Carley Rowe, Natalie Swiacki and Ruisi Zhong.

To be considered for a Merit Scholarship award, semifinalists must fulfill several requirements to advance to finalist standing. Merit Scholars will be announced in February. These high school seniors will move on through the competition to potentially earn one of 7,500 National Merit scholarships worth about \$33 million that will be awarded next spring.



## AP Scholars

The College Board recognized nearly 400 current and recently graduated students from both high schools as Advanced Placement Scholars.

The AP Scholar awards, which are divided into several categories, were bestowed upon the students based on their exceptional achievement on the AP exams given last spring.

- 157 students qualified for the AP Scholar Award by receiving a score of 3 or higher on three or more exams.
- 81 students received the AP Scholar with Honor Award by earning an average score of 3.25 on all AP exams taken and grades of 3 or higher on four or more of those exams.

- 143 students qualified for the AP Scholar with Distinction Award by earning an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP exams taken and grades of 4 or higher on five or more of those exams.
- 18 students received the highest designation of National AP Scholar by earning an average score of 4 or higher on all AP exams taken and scores of 4 or higher on eight or more of those exams.

AP courses completed with a score of 3 or higher on the final exam afford students the opportunity to earn college credit.

## All-State Musicians

Fourteen students from High Schools East and West were chosen to perform in the All-State Festival at the New York State School Music Association Winter Conference, to be held Dec. 1-4 in Rochester, New York.

Four students from High School

West – Blake Carey, Leighann Guardino, Christine McAleer and Caitlin Unkenholz – were selected for inclusion in the All-State concert.

From High School East, 10 students were chosen to perform in the All-State concert: Jack Furci, Kylie Lavrenchick,

Max Lippman, Ryan MacCarthy, Aaron Min, Lolita Nazarov, Keisuke Setsu, Max Sherman, Brandon Star and Justin Wei.

These students were chosen among thousands of students who auditioned at NYSSMA solo and ensemble evaluation festivals throughout the state last spring.

\*\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*\*\*

## SMITHTOWN POSTAL CARRIER

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Two award-winning and passionate teachers and researchers are at the helm of the district's science research programs at High Schools East and West. Their support and drive have taken the science programs to the next level by providing students with countless opportunities to succeed both in and out of the classroom.

### MARIA ZEITLIN: EAST SCIENCE RESEARCH COORDINATOR

Since East began its research program in the fall of 2005, Maria Zeitlin has been guiding and mentoring her students. In 2007, the students she mentored were seniors who were eligible to submit their science research papers to national collegiate scholarship competitions. Ms. Zeitlin has since mentored three Intel Science Talent Search finalists. Additionally, she has mentored 10 Intel STS semifinalists,

three regional finalists in the Siemens Competition for Math, Science and Technology, three International Intel Science and Engineering Fair finalists, four finalists in the Young Epidemiology Scholars Competition and three Long Island Science Congress state finalists.

This past summer, Ms. Zeitlin traveled to Washington, D.C., where she was honored for the work of her students who won the Department of

Energy BioenergizeME Infographic Challenge. Her students have recognized her contributions by nominating her three times as the Intel STS Most Influential Person for shaping their scientific careers. She has been awarded Teacher of the Year from Syracuse University Project Advance and received the Phi Delta Kappa Friends of Education Award from Stony Brook University.

### DR. JOANNE FIGUEIREDO: WEST SCIENCE RESEARCH COORDINATOR

Mentoring her students and guiding them to solve real-world issues are the main priorities for Dr. Joanne Figueiredo at High School West. The high school lab focuses on problems of emerging environmental relevance as well as evolutionary importance. Dr. Figueiredo assists students in developing projects that give them the ability to not only

conduct scientific projects, but also to get involved in impacting environmental policy at the local level.

A number of West students attended the Science Research Summer Institute at Brentwood High School, where they worked directly with Dr. Figueiredo and other mentors. West researchers collaborated with other high school

students on a grant from the Suffolk County Legislature directed at finding ways to mitigate nitrogen levels in county salt marshes, lakes and rivers and improve environmental conditions. Under Dr. Figueiredo's tutelage, several West students have been awarded Simons Fellowships and worked with mentors at Stony Brook University.

### NEW TEACHERS

## Welcomed Aboard

Prior to the start of school, the district hosted approximately 50 teachers for three days during new teacher orientation. Kicking off with a breakfast hosted by the Smithtown Teachers' Association, the new teachers were introduced to district and building administrators and departmental directors. Faculty members also received a tour of their building and had time to meet with their building principals, participate in staff development and view their classrooms.



### SCHOOL COMMUNITY DIGEST

Published by the Smithtown Central School District

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Smithtown Central School District does not discriminate on the basis of handicaps or on the basis of sex, race, or ethnic background in the educational programs or activities which it operates.