FALL 2026

SMITHTOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

DIGEST

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY

SOCIAL STUDIES:

Exploring the Past. Understanding the Present. Shaping the Future.

In the Smithtown Central School District, social studies classrooms are places where students learn to ask important questions, examine the world from multiple perspectives and develop the skills to become informed citizens and thoughtful leaders.

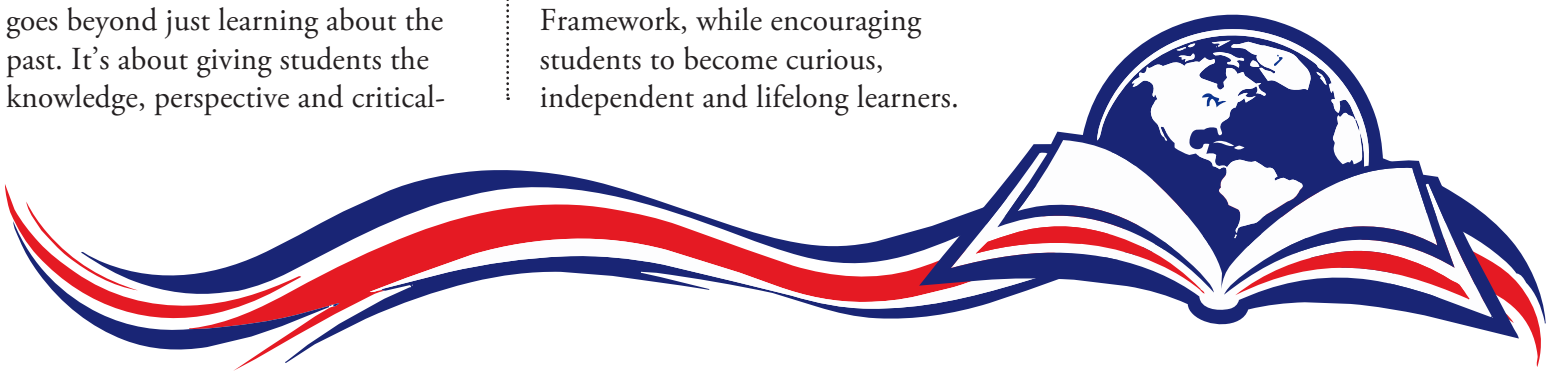
"Our students aren't just learning about history and government; they're living it," Director of Social Studies Dr. Charles Benvenuto said. "Whether they're meeting with town leaders, producing a podcast on 9/11 or launching service projects in their own communities, Smithtown students are discovering why civic engagement matters and learning that their voices can make a real difference. That happens because of our social studies teachers, whose passion and creativity bring this work to life every day. I couldn't be prouder of what our students and teachers are accomplishing together."

In Smithtown, social studies goes beyond just learning about the past. It's about giving students the knowledge, perspective and critical-thinking skills to understand their world and help shape its future. Through courses in world history, United States history, government and economics, students learn to think critically, evaluate evidence and make meaningful connections between the past and the world they experience today.

Students learn to think like historians, examine primary and secondary sources, evaluate evidence and consider multiple perspectives. These skills help students become more informed citizens who can thoughtfully engage with their communities and better understand the complex issues they will encounter throughout their lives.

Behind this learning is a dedicated team of educators committed to providing students with rigorous, engaging and meaningful experiences. Instruction is aligned with the New York State K-12 Social Studies Framework, while encouraging students to become curious, independent and lifelong learners.

> **"Our students aren't just learning about history and government; *they're living it.*"**
>
> **Director of Social Studies Dr. Charles Benvenuto**





Seals, Snacks and Service

Social studies teachers and Seal of Civic Readiness coordinators June Tener and Joan Havranek used a portion of a $4,000 NYSUT Civic Readiness Grant they earned through the Classroom to Community initiative to launch Seal, Snacks and Service, an after-school program designed to help students brainstorm, plan and kick-start their own impactful, 25-hour service-learning projects.

Virtual Reality, Real History

Social Studies High School East teacher Joe Toth and High School West teacher Jen Keller were awarded a Model Schools grant which they used to bring the Spirit of Triumph organization to their students in a truly memorable way. Using virtual reality technology, students took an immersive tour of Auschwitz, experiencing the grounds of the historic site in a way that would otherwise be impossible.





Young Voices, Big Impact: Eighth Graders Take on Civic Issues

An exciting new opportunity is being extended to all Smithtown eighth grade social studies students. Originally developed as an honors Capstone project, the initiative allows students to earn credit toward the New York State Seal of Civic Readiness. Students will investigate a meaningful civic issue, conduct research using multiple sources and present their findings to an audience. By expanding the Capstone project districtwide, students are provided with an authentic opportunity to take ownership of their learning and recognize their potential to make a positive difference in their communities.

Students Tell the Stories That Matter

The High School West Leadership program is expanding its community outreach through several high-impact Service-Learning Projects this school year. Among this year's standout initiatives is the launch of a monthly student-produced podcast. The debut episode commemorates the 25th anniversary of Sept. 11, featuring highlights from the Leadership team's memorial ceremony alongside moving interviews with those affected by 9/11.

Local Government In Action

Students from Mrs. Tener's Advanced Civics class at High School East and Mrs. Geldmacher's class at High School West recently took their learning beyond the classroom with an immersive visit to the Suffolk County Legislature. The experience offered a firsthand look at how county government operates, giving students the opportunity to step into the role of legislators and gain a deeper understanding of the decision-making process.



Teacher of the Year

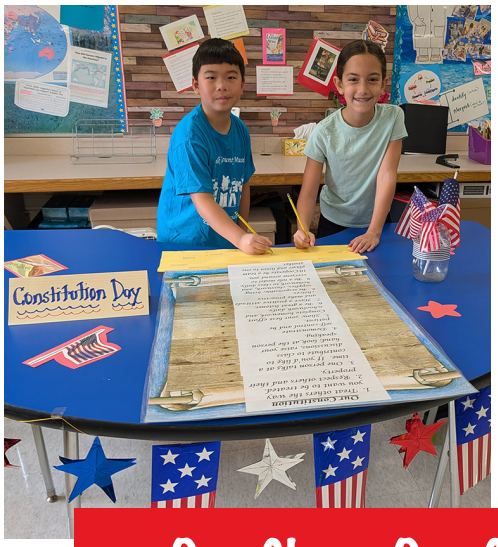
Congratulations to Smithtown High School East teacher June Tener for being recognized as the Outstanding High School Social Studies Teacher of the Year by the Long Island Council for the Social Studies (LICSS) during a special ceremony at Long Island University. The LICSS Outstanding High School Social Studies Teaching Award honors educators who demonstrate exceptional classroom instruction, meaningful student engagement, and a deep commitment to the field of social studies.



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A Blast from the Past

Fifth graders at Mills Pond Elementary became history detectives as they traveled through time to uncover the story of three remarkable civilizations, the Aztec, Inca and Maya. Students read about each civilization, located them on maps and explored the unique characteristics that helped these societies thrive.



Our Class, Our Constitution

Elementary students in the SCSD celebrated Constitution Day. At Mt. Pleasant and Tackan Elementary, students learned about the importance of rules and how they help create a safe, respectful and positive classroom community. Each class discussed its classroom rules and why it is important for everyone to do their part in following them. Students then proudly signed their very own class constitution, making a personal commitment to help make their classroom a great place to learn and grow.



Smithtown El Project

Students in Ms. Grace's third grade class at Smithtown Elementary School created cereal box suitcases before beginning their "travel" to different countries. Students are going to learn about Colombia, India and Nigeria and will create a collection of projects in their suitcase to share at a celebration at the end of the year. They will also create passports to track where they have been and what they have learned about those countries.

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Published by the Smithtown Central School District

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