**Message from the Acting Superintendent**

**DEAR COMMUNITY MEMBERS:**

It’s amazing how fast this school year is moving. Just a few months ago, we were dusting off the bookshelves and welcoming students back to the classroom. Now we are weeks away from a new year and a new decade. We have accomplished so many great things this fall and I look forward to the many learning opportunities and activities coming this winter and spring.

In this edition of Excelsior, you will find academic and athletic highlights, a profile of our AVID program and a look at one of the concepts that makes Suffern Central unique. I am overcome with pride as I reflect on our experiences in the District, especially in how our older students pass this feeling to younger generations. We refer to this as “#PassingDownThePride.”

I have enjoyed getting to know more of our community and I look forward to continuing my Wellness Wednesday “meet ups” throughout the year, with the next one scheduled for the evening of December 18 at Suffern Middle School. During this season and year-round, I am grateful to lead a District in which teachers, administrators, support staff and our community can all work together to provide a premier education for Suffern Central students.

Sincerely,

Lisa Weber
Acting Superintendent of Schools

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**SUFFERN HIGH SCHOOL THEATER**

The Suffern High School fall play, “The Diary of Anne Frank” opened on November 7 and featured an outstanding cast and crew. Director and teacher, Christopher DeRosa, was grateful to all who participated in its success including producer, auditorium director and crew director Daniel McCarter, set manager Richard Murry and assistant director Laura Alessi. Their hard work and dedication made the production a huge success.

Pictured below are the two casts:

**Pictured left (top row):** Anthony Ricciuti, Frankie Tinelli, Lucas Vaval, Julia Procter, Racquel Buonocore, Nijel Dubuisson, Cio Gelardi, Alexis Gunderson.

**Pictured left (bottom row):** Toby Coombs, Frank Witt, Robert Slovakowski

**Pictured right (top row):** Juliana Licei, Zisa Broner, Taylor Gray, Reilly Xu, Zack Schwartz, Cara Guilbert, Julia Ravenna, Lucas Vaval, Emily Gerges, Finola Dickson

**Pictured right (bottom row):** Aiden Devereux, Sam Kantrowitz

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**Pictured on the cover:** Suffern High School Child Psychology sophomore Christina Addessi, working with two of the preschool students.

**On the back:** Fifth-grade helpers visit the UPK classroom for purposeful playtime.
Hispanic Heritage Month
Suffern High School students demonstrated their appreciation for Hispanic heritage and culture throughout several weeks in September and October. This included a potpourri of activities such as trivia contests, art projects, food samplings, dance lessons and an all-school Spanish spelling bee, crowning sophomore Ron Guter as the winner. To culminate their celebration, the Spanish Honor Society and ASPIRA clubs hosted a lunch reception for our new Hispanic students to learn about their journey to the United States.

Three Suffern High School seniors were named 2020 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists, placing in the top 2 percent of the 1.5 million students across the country who took the October 2018 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. Congratulations to Scott Fleischman, Eric Rao and Reilly Xu who also advance for Finalist and scholarship consideration through the National Merit Scholarship Clearinghouse. In addition, eight Suffern High School seniors earned Letters of Commendation for scoring in the top 5 percent of the students nationwide who took the PSAT last year. They are Matthew Audi, Brian Echavarria, Hannah Jay, Sophia Lukavsky, Amala Mathew, Christopher Olsen, Luke Schaarschuch and Benjamin Zhan.

Welles Crowther’s sister comes to Suffern Middle School
Known as the Man in the Red Bandana, Rockland County native Welles Crowther became a national hero for his selfless acts of service on 9/11. His sister, Honor Fagan, spoke to our seventh-grade students about her brother, the legacy he left behind and the importance of always being kind. It was a powerful presentation on the long-lasting effects of always doing the right thing.

Celebrating our Veterans
In honor of Veterans Day, RP Connor Elementary School hosted a celebration for 23 veteran relatives of our staff and students, all of whom received a certificate of recognition. Three guests spoke and representatives from RCC, The Village of Suffern and the American Legion also took part in the festivities.

The second District-wide Chinese Culture Night was a huge success. Organized by the Chinese language students, the event included traditional cultural activities, food, games and presentations with dancers, actors and music.

Congratulations to our Suffern High School students who were selected by the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) to perform in the Area All-State Festival on November 22 and 23. In addition, Sarah Katz, Mataji Baguio, Robert Slowikowsky, Hannah Jay, Luke Schaarschuch and alternate John Lancia will represent Suffern Central in the 84th Annual NYSSMA Winter Conference in Rochester in December.

Digital Citizenship Lessons for Elementary School Students
Thanks to our Instructional Technology Consultant, Jamie Haug, students across all our elementary schools have been learning about the dos and don’ts of being online and the ways in which we use the Internet and various devices.

Students in our National Art Honor Society are published artists! They worked with the Rockland County Sheriff’s Office to design a Mounted Unit coloring book that was published this fall.
**Pride Outside our School Days**

Pride is a feeling that extends beyond the school walls. This is evident in the Town of Ramapo’s summer camps in which 80 percent of the counselors and campers are Suffern Central students. They spend the summer forming bonds that last a lifetime.

“Some of these children (including mine) talk about their counselors all year long and parents (including me) request to have the same staff the following year,” said Town of Ramapo Parks & Recreation Director Michelle Antosca. “It’s amazing to watch the younger kids grow up and learn from the older staff who have such an impact on them.”

The young campers see their counselors as role models and look up to them. They witness and feel the pride they have for their school and community and ultimately want to emulate the same.

“They inspire, challenge and have fun with their campers,” adds Antosca. “It’s a win-win situation for everyone in our community.”

**Cherry Laners Share Their Stories**

The Kindergarteners at Cherry Lane Elementary School finished their “show and tell” writing unit by having a bookstore celebration! Fourth and first grade students and their teachers were invited to the “store” and paid the Kindergartners (with toy money) to read their book with them.

**Student Volunteers Teach Lessons**

During Fire Prevention Week in September, the students of Sloatsburg Elementary School learned about fire safety from their local fire department. Among the firefighters helping with the lesson was Suffern High School senior Tucker Kanasky. “It was fantastic to witness a former Sloatsburg Elementary School student volunteer his time to speak to the students about fire safety,” said Sloatsburg Principal Dr. William Castellone. “The most impactful part of the day for me was when Tucker demonstrated how to use the fire hose to the Kindergarten students. It truly showed how our community supports each other and continues to give back to the younger generations. This is what the Passing Down The Pride motto and hashtag is all about.”

**Fifth-graders Mentor Pre-K Students**

Being in a new school can be scary, especially if you’re in Pre-Kindergarten. One of the ways Viola Elementary School makes its youngest Mounties feel welcome is through a buddy program where fifth-grade students spend their recess engaged in play with the Pre-K students. Teacher Renee Dawson rotates the students so that all fifth graders have a chance to volunteer throughout the year. “The students form great friendships with each other,” said Dawson. “They bring such good energy to the classroom. They are leaders and friends and show the young ones how to play and work together.” In addition, being a Pre-K buddy also helps the older students feel more confident. Viola graduate Sophie Ferber said that she enjoyed participating in the buddy program because she loved watching the kids grow and learn throughout the year. “It has also taught me to embrace learning and to be invested in education and growing as a student!”

**Learning Through Game Play!**

At RP Connor Elementary School, a group of fourth and fifth-grade student leaders are helping younger students learn to love and talk about math while building better number sense both for themselves and the students they serve. They “play math” with students in grades K-3 during their lunch period and without even realizing it, they are passing down a sense of pride in the way they learn and grow.

“It’s fun to play games with the kids, especially when they realize what they can do. Whenever they learn something, it teaches them and it feels good for us.”

– RP Connor 5th grader
opportunities our younger students have to learn from our older ones. Some are deliberate and direct, few of the ways in which we see our #MountiePride being passed down through the generations.

Stacey Samora bleeds Suffern blue. As a graduate of Suffern High School, she now works here teaching Geometry, Algebra 2 and Business Math. She is also the head coach of the Varsity Girls Soccer team, advises the DECA and Heroes and Cool Kids clubs and is on the Women in Sports event committee. Samora is grateful to be back in the District she grew up in and feels it’s a dream come true. As a student, she remembers many teachers who had a positive impact on her life, some retired and some she now gets to work beside. Helping shape young people’s lives and having a positive impact on them is why she teaches and coaches. It’s given her a purpose and being at Suffern makes it that much sweeter. Here’s what else she had to say about the idea of #PassingDownThePride.

“Mountie Pride means embracing life with a sense of loyalty, integrity and character. It means knowing where you came from, building relationships and friendships and living the tradition of excellence that embodies our school. I want students to know that high school isn’t just about tests, geometry lessons and homework. It is about the life lessons, memories and friendships that are built along the way. Being able to give back to the community that helped shape my path to success is a feeling that is difficult to describe in words. It is an honor to have this opportunity and I am excited to continue to see what the future holds.”

“Coach Samora really embodied everything I wanted in a coach. She was tough on us when she needed to be, but was always there for the team. It was comforting to know she was a Suffern graduate. Her experience speaks for itself and enhances her coaching ability.”

— Kaitlin Hirsh, Girls Varsity Soccer Captain

Suffern High Schoolers as Mentors
Growing up, we learn lessons from different people in our lives. There are parents and teachers, family members and friends, but some of the most impactful people we can learn from can actually be our peers. At Suffern High School, there are many programs that pair older students with younger ones. Two of them are the Peer Leadership class and the Heroes and Cool Kids Club.

Peer Leadership is a half-year course for seniors to learn a variety of soft skills such as empathy, assertiveness and problem-solving. In addition to learning these skills students put them into practice when they meet with ninth-graders on a monthly basis. Over the course of two semesters, seniors work in small groups with our younger students to help ease them into the high school culture. They are trained to workshop a variety of situations unique to these students.

Suffern High School Students Teach Preschool
Did you know that Suffern High School runs a developmental pre-school that acts as a lab for high school students to gain practical experience in planning, managing and working in a childcare program? Students enrolled in Child Psychology and Early Childhood Development work with the youngest members of our community to understand basic concepts and prepare them for our Pre Kindergarten program. For more information on the program, please contact Shawna Strenfel at strenfel@sufferncentral.org.

Topics this year include academic pressures and anxiety, vaping, peer pressure and self-esteem. Our younger Mounties feel comfortable talking to older students and form friendships that will help them throughout the year. All Peer Leaders go through an interview process to be selected for this course.

The Heroes and Cool Kids Club consists of eleventh and twelfth-graders who have been known to make a positive impact on the Suffern Central culture and who want to share that way of thinking with our younger Mounties. A few times a year, these students will visit the sixth-graders at Suffern Middle School to talk about topics that range from peer pressure to sportsmanship. Through interactive games and conversations, our younger students get to know the high schoolers and form relationships that impact their ways of thinking as they grow up and head to high school.
WELCOME TO AVID

AVID stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination and is an elective course offered in our secondary schools (grades 7-12). This national program supports students in acquiring the skills they need to be successful in high school and beyond. Traditionally, AVID students are the first in their families to attend college and as part of the program, teachers guide students through the entire application process. AVID teachers also work with students on study and organization skills, collaboration, writing strategies and social and emotional lessons to further enhance their academic growth.

WHO IS THE AVID STUDENT?

“An AVID student is intrinsically motivated to do well in anything that he or she accomplishes. They are willing to go the extra mile to achieve success. What distinguishes the AVID student from others is that they may not have the tools and resources to achieve that success, but still have the willingness to. They are very active in their school and local communities as well.”

– Colleen Annunziata (pictured right advising a senior on college applications)

Elsa Mazariego, Class of 2020

“I have been a part of the AVID program since I was a freshman. This year, we are working on applying to colleges and scholarships. The AVID program has helped me become a better student. I’ve realized that I wanted more for my education and I began to prioritize my school work and manage my time. I’ve learned so much from this program and I will continue using these strategies after graduation.

If I didn’t take AVID, I feel like I wouldn’t have done the things that I have done. I’ve accomplished so much with the help of this program. It has helped me prepare for college. Now, I feel more comfortable with the whole idea of college and I’m less afraid of the future. AVID is a great program and more students should join it.”

John Chau, Class of 2021

“I feel that AVID has shaped my learning at Suffern High School tremendously. The AVID program and its teachers have helped me stay on the High Honor roll for two straight years. I would not have been the determined student I am today without it. I am so happy that I chose to take AVID as an elective my freshman year and that I stayed with it. AVID has taught me how to manage my time and has also taught me so many ways to prepare for the future ahead of me.

I have been able to take more challenging classes I would not have even thought of taking. AVID has helped shaped me into a more determined student-athlete. If I didn’t take AVID, I would not have even thought of challenging myself academically. I would also not have known anything about colleges or which college atmosphere I would prefer to be in.”

Ashley Gonzalez, Class of 2023

“This is my first year in the AVID program and I’m learning Cornell notes, the importance of being organized and advocating for myself. So far, we’ve been doing team building projects, note taking and learning time management skills. AVID really helps me stay organized and practice my skills to prepare for college. If I didn’t take AVID I know I wouldn’t be as organized nor would I be able to understand as much as I do now in my classes.

“AVID is a wonderful opportunity for students to grow academically by building skills and working toward behaviors that lead to success. Personally, I have witnessed my AVID students become strong advocates for themselves in their education. Seeing them find personal success is the greatest reward.”

– Eileen Stacker, ninth-grade AVID teacher (pictured right working with freshmen on a team building activity)
This year, the Suffern Boys Volleyball program completed one of its most successful seasons in program history. Winning the Section Championship and completing a perfect 17-0 record in section play, the Mounties advanced to regional play for the first time since 2016.

The Varsity Football team finished 7-2, winning the last five games straight.

The Girls Varsity Soccer Team finished 11-6-1 on the season and qualified for sectionals.

Suffern Girls Tennis had another successful season! The JV team finished with a perfect 10-0 record against other Rockland County teams. The Varsity team finished the 2019 season with 12 wins and 5 losses. The top three singles players, Emma Muchnick, Eunic Nelson and Ilena Feder, had amazing grit and tenacity and never gave up. Emma Muchnick, Suffern's first singles, advanced in the conference to secure a place in the Section Tournament.

The 2019 Varsity Field Hockey team (13-5-1) had an amazing season, advancing all the way to the section semi finals; while the JV program once again took home the County championship title. In addition to such a competitive season, the teams raised over $4,000 to distribute between supporting the military, soup kitchens and the Jami Erlich Scholarship Fund. In addition Kate McNally and Kate Burns were named All Elite, Harley Gold was named to the Golden Dozen and Grace Krebs was named All State, All Section, All Elite and to the Golden Dozen. In addition, earlier this fall, the Journal News recognized senior Grace Krebs as a Scholar-Athlete.

Congratulations to 11 Suffern High School athletes who have signed letters of intent to play sports at the collegiate level. Pictured top (L to R): Alex Morrissey (baseball, Fairleigh Dickinson University); Daniel Stysko (baseball, SUNY Plattsburgh); Adam Klamrowski (lacrosse, Lycoming College); Brandon Strey (cross country/track, Gettysburg College); Lou Saviano (baseball, College of Mount Saint Vincent); bottom (L to R): Lindsey Thyberg (softball, St. Thomas Aquinas College); Ana Maria Gragnani (lacrosse, Drexel University); Emily Ullman (lacrosse, Colgate University); Isabella Magnelli (gymnastics, University of Kentucky); Mary Hennelly (cross country/track, Georgetown University); Kaitlin Hirsch (soccer, Gettysburg College).

Congratulations to our top 40 Fitness Superstars! They competed in races and strength exercises to earn this top honor. This fitness competition has been a tradition at Suffern High School since the ’80s.

Save The Date: WOMEN IN SPORTS EVENT Friday, January 3 @ 5:30 - 8:00 pm • Suffern High School
Get Ready for Winter! Notifications for closings, delays and early dismissals are sent via ConnectEd phone and email messages, posted on the District website, Facebook and Twitter feeds and announced by local media outlets. Please be sure that your child’s school has up-to-date emergency contact information on file and have a family emergency plan in place in the event that school is delayed, canceled or dismissed early!