



# On The Line

Garden City Public Schools  
Winter 2020, Vol. 21, No.2

Dear Community Members,

The 2019-2020 school year is moving along, and we have made solid progress in addressing the priorities that were established during our budget process last school year. I encourage you to read this edition of *On the Line* and learn about the work that is taking place in and around our schools.

To the right you will find a summary of our Student Achievement Report, which was presented to our community at the Jan. 7 Board of Education work session. This summary provides a brief look into student achievement, the measures used to assess our work and areas where we can do even better. Inside, we have included updates on four key priority areas: mental health and social-emotional learning in our schools, our comprehensive approach to reading through the Readers Workshop and Foundations program, our facilities study which includes building utilization and capacity for each of our schools, and on-going safety and security improvements at all of our buildings.

You will also find important dates for upcoming Board of Education budget workshops on the back. We invite you to attend these meetings, as well as our regular public Board meetings, and learn more about the development of the 2020-2021 school district budget. This edition also represents a small sampling of what students are experiencing in the classroom and professional learning our staff has been engaged in to better serve our students.

Without a doubt, visiting our buildings and classrooms, speaking with students and witnessing their growth is always the highlight for me. It is a joy to see their hard work and the support they receive in school and at home all come to fruition.

Sincerely,

Kusum  
Kusum Sinha, Ed.D.



*AP and college-level course enrollment is on the rise, as evidenced by the popularity of AP art class.*

## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT REPORT:

### Students Excelling & Capitalizing on College-Level Opportunities

On Jan. 7, the Board of Education presented the 2019 Student Achievement Report to the community. A balance of assessment and instructional data shows that students continue to perform at high levels and are taking advantage of AP and college-level opportunities.

Students are performing well above the state averages in ELA and math in grade 3-8 testing. In most cases, they are achieving more than 20 points higher than the New York State average – 30 points higher in seventh grade math. Concurrently, exam opt-out rates have declined considerably in recent years and are nearly half of what they were in 2016. This is a positive trend, as higher opt-out levels can negatively impact education aid.

Curriculum writing, lesson and

assessment piloting, and professional development are well underway in preparation for new New York State Education Department Next Generation standards in ELA, math and science. New ELA, math and science assessments are scheduled to begin in the spring of 2021, with English, math and science Regents scheduled to begin in subsequent years. While the new eighth grade science assessment will be administered in the spring of 2021, the fifth grade exam will not be given until the spring of 2022.

In addition to preparing for the Next Generation standards, the ongoing focus remains on strengthening intervention services for struggling learners wherever possible while differentiating instruction to

*continued on back...*

# Inspiring Readers, Enhancing Literacy

Students continue to develop their literacy skills and reading comprehension through the Readers Workshop and Foundations program. Teachers are benefiting from extensive professional development opportunities available this year, and greater consistency is being established across grades K-5 to ensure that every student becomes an avid, engaged and successful reader – as reading is the foundation for all learning!

This includes each school having its own staff developer, in concert with regular collaboration and idea sharing. Teachers discuss specific strategies for developing solid foundational skills and phonemic awareness in their students, and classroom teachers are working closely with special



Locust students team up to read.

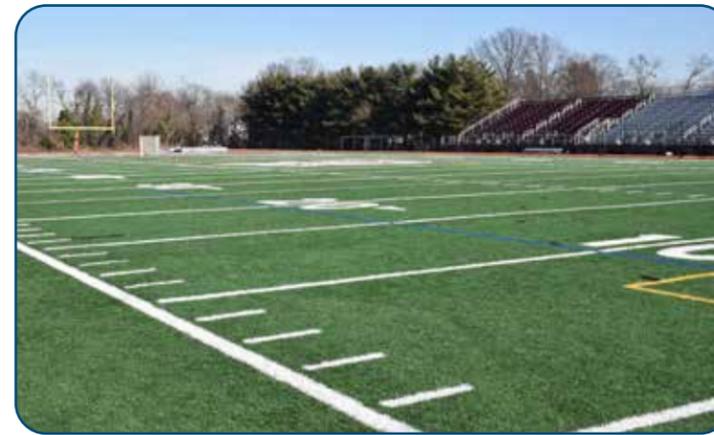
education teachers and reading specialists. “Teachers are excited with the tools and guidance they are receiving and bring forth thoughtful ideas to inspire children to be avid, engaged and effective readers,” Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Ted Cannone said.

The K-2 Foundations program provides essential learning in phonemic awareness, phonics and letter formation. At every level, K-5 teachers conference with individual students and small groups and differentiate instruction to address the individual needs of each child.

“I love to research different topics,” said Emma, a fifth grader at Stewart School. “For example, I researched about plastic bags and it was very interesting. Also, I find book clubs super fun because I enjoy talking

about books with my friends. I just love reading in general!”

“Readers Workshop is a really good way for me to learn,” added Sofia, a fourth grader at Stratford School. “I like read alouds and that my teachers use the read aloud as their book to read and jot about. I feel it has helped me grow by using old drafts and changing them into better ones and seeing my progress.”



The Garden City High School main athletic turf field.

## FACILITIES PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

The district’s architectural firm recently conducted a facilities study to assess the district’s school buildings and provide recommendations for the future. The study includes an analysis of building capacity and building systems, as well as core instructional spaces and safety conditions. The study helps us structure our long-term planning for capital projects throughout the district.

Long- and short-term recommendations were made for addressing communications, electrical, HVAC, plumbing and masonry work at every school building, including restrooms in need of renovation. The study also evaluates access to resources across schools, as

well as space conditions to allow for current and future student enrollments to thrive.

The reports identify core facility areas for potential improvement. Areas for instructional and operational technology upgrades were identified.

“The Board of Education will thoroughly review and discuss the study and look at all areas to preserve our buildings and enhance instructional spaces,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kusum Sinha. “Projects that ensure a healthy and safe environment will always be prioritized, and making resources equally accessible across the district is a top priority.”

### ADDRESSING OUR PRIORITIES

Prior to the start of the 2019-2020 school year, we identified several priorities for the year. They include:

- Fully implement Teachers College Reading Project K-5.
- Identify and implement programs to meet students’ mental health and social-emotional needs.
  - Conduct a comprehensive facilities study.
- Continue to improve safety and security throughout the district.

Here is an update on how we are addressing these priorities.

## Safer, More Secure Schools



Security scanning kiosks have been installed in elementary and secondary buildings.

The district continues to upgrade security in the schools, combining new technology with training and refined visitor protocols.

A new Visitor Management System has been installed, highlighted by new, user-friendly security kiosks located in the vestibules. The kiosks allow visitors with proper identification to self-check into Garden City High School, the middle school and Stewart and Stratford elementary schools. Information is cross-referenced with the appropriate law enforcement databases prior to the visitor entering the building. The system is designed to strengthen screening, improve efficiency and provide

some convenience for welcomed visitors. Greeters will still be utilized at all district buildings, with primary school personnel conducting the screening using similar systems.

Security-technology infrastructure, including camera software, is being upgraded to improve surveillance. Over the past few years, the district has installed hundreds of cameras throughout the district.

In addition, school buses have been equipped with GPS tracking systems, a one-button lockdown has been installed, every door has been equipped with a universal locking system and a full-time supervisor was

hired to oversee all building security. Staff and students continue to undergo training on important emergency and security protocols.

“New technology and new information are resulting in safer schools,” said Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance Dana Di Capua. “Everyone should feel safe when they come here every day, and we continue to take important steps to ensure that.”

## More Mindful, Thoughtful Schools

Schools are providing myriad programs to increase mental health education and promote social-emotional learning.

One major boost has been the district’s participation in a mental health consortium through Nassau BOCES, which gives educators access to various speakers and programs in the field on a monthly basis. Teachers, support staff and other personnel gain new information and tools to share with colleagues.

“We want to ensure that all kids are getting the same resources, experiences and equal support,” said Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Leadership Development Nanine McLaughlin, who said a districtwide Mental Health and Wellness Team has been established for this purpose.

Every school is practicing mindfulness, as well. Stewart and Stratford have added sensory paths and regular movement breaks. Teachers utilize breathing boards and calming tool kits, including sensory materials to help students destress.

The primary schools are also engaged in kindness lessons and mindfulness activities. Students participated in a reading of the

book *Ruby’s Worry* and participated in “Worry Busters” exercises. Elementary students also read and discussed *Ruby’s Worry*. Sensory paths help encourage sensory play.

At the middle school, the major focus is on anti-bullying and resiliency. Lessons provide students with practical tools to normalize and harness feelings of stress. A student-driven LEADERS group provides interested students with training to deliver lessons during home base periods on topics ranging from academic honesty to how to be an upstander.

The high school also continues to host a Peer Educator group in which students undergo training in areas such as suicide prevention and substance abuse and provide lessons to their peers. In May, the school will engage in activities for Mental Health Awareness Month.

Tools and information are also provided to parents, with the support of the PTA, SEPTA and other parent groups. A K-12 Climate Survey will be administered this spring to learn more about how students, staff and parents feel about our schools.



The sensory path at Stewart gives everyone a chance to take a movement break.

Garden City Public Schools  
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Garden City, NY 11530

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Superintendent of Schools

**Resident**  
**Garden City, NY 11530**

# BUDGET Development Underway

The district is in the early stages of developing a proposed budget for the 2020-2021 school year. The Board of Education and administration are identifying needs and reviewing priorities to establish a fiscally responsible budget that maintains a high-quality education. Budget workshops have been scheduled at the Garden City High School library. All workshops will begin at 8:15 p.m. Residents are encouraged to attend. For information about registering for the vote, please call 516-478-1040.

## BUDGET WORKSHOP DATES

**March 10:**  
Budget Workshop  
8:15 p.m. @ GCHS  
(library)

**April 7:**  
Budget Workshop  
8:15 p.m. @ GCHS  
(library)

**May 5:**  
Budget Hearing  
8:15 p.m. @ GCHS  
(library)

**March 24:**  
Budget Workshop  
8:15 p.m. @ GCHS  
(library)

**April 21:**  
Budget Workshop  
Budget Adoption  
8:15 p.m. @ GCHS  
(library)

**May 19:**  
Annual Budget Vote /  
Board Member Election  
6 a.m. - 9 p.m.

## Desarrollo presupuestario en curso

El distrito está en las primeras etapas de desarrollar un presupuesto propuesto para el año escolar 2020-2021. La Junta de Educación y Administración están identificando necesidades y revisando las prioridades para establecer un presupuesto fiscalmente responsable que mantenga una educación de alta calidad. Se han programado talleres presupuestarios en la biblioteca de Garden City High School. Todos los talleres comenzarán a las 8:15 p.m. Se alienta a los residentes a asistir. Para obtener información sobre cómo registrarse para la votación, llame al 516-478-1040.

## FECHAS DEL TALLER DE PRESUPUESTO

**10 de Marzo:**  
Taller de Presupuesto  
8:15 p.m. @ GCHS  
(biblioteca)

**7 de abril:**  
Taller de Presupuesto  
8:15 p.m. @ GCHS  
(biblioteca)

**5 de mayo:**  
Audiencia de  
presupuesto  
8:15 p.m. @ GCHS  
(biblioteca)

**24 de Marzo:**  
Taller de Presupuesto  
8:15 p.m. @ GCHS  
(biblioteca)

**21 de abril:**  
Taller de Presupuesto  
Adopción de Presupuesto  
8:15 p.m. @ GCHS  
(biblioteca)

**19 de mayo:**  
Presupuesto anual y  
elección  
de los miembros  
de la Junta  
6 a.m. - 9 p.m.

## KINDERGARTEN Registration Is Open

Kindergarten registration for the 2020-21 school year is open. Anyone wishing to register their child should contact the registrar at (516) 478-1067 or email [registrar@gcufsd.net](mailto:registrar@gcufsd.net). Forms are available on the district website, [www.gardencity.k12.ny.us](http://www.gardencity.k12.ny.us), under the Resources tab.

## School Calendar Online

You can look at next year's school schedule by referring to the single-page school session calendar on the website, [www.gardencity.k12.ny.us](http://www.gardencity.k12.ny.us), under the Calendars tab. Please note that classes begin Sept. 2, prior to Labor Day.

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## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT REPORT

meet individual student needs and developing more interdisciplinary, project-based opportunities for all learners. Additional steps are also being taken to increase vertical alignment of the K-8 ELA and math programs.

Our Regents passing rates continue to hold strong in the 95% to 100% range. Enrollment in college-level courses continues to climb, up from 431 in 2016-2017 to 755 last year! Last year, 28% of seniors enrolled in both college-level and AP courses. Of the 1,354 AP exams taken by students ranging from freshmen to seniors, more than 50% achieved a 4 out of 5 or higher on their exams.

Efforts are also underway to expand and develop new relationships with colleges and universities to offer more challenging courses that appeal to our students.

Of the 278 graduates of the Class of 2019, 98.6% earned Regents status or higher, with 49% earning an Advanced Regents Diploma and another 42% earning an Advanced Regents Diploma with Honors. An alumni survey is being planned to analyze how to best prepare students to succeed in their postgraduation lives.

To review the entire 2019 Student Achievement Report, please go to [www.gardencity.k12.ny.us](http://www.gardencity.k12.ny.us) and refer to the Curriculum and Instruction page, under the District tab.