



Blind Brook Public Schools  
SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

# THE EXCHANGE

This Issue...

BMPRSS  
Construction Update

EDLINE -  
Improves Classroom  
Communication

Character Education

THE EXCHANGE IS ISSUED BY THE BLIND BROOK  
BOARD OF EDUCATION AS AN INFORMATION  
SERVICE TO TAXPAYERS AND PARENTS

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FOR THE LATEST SCHOOL DISTRICT INFOR-  
MATION, LOG ONTO WWW.BLINDBROOK.ORG

## A New School Year at Blind Brook High School

It is another school year and as in previous years, there are many wonderful happenings at BBHS. One of our students, Justin Cohn, has been recognized as a National Merit Semi-Finalist. In addition, 8 students: Daniel Berkowitz, Kristina Creadore, Sharon Friedlander, Rachel Lumish, Diksha Nagia, Daniel Newmark, Sarah Sgro and Justin Starr have received commendations for their achievements on the SAT.

Regarding school life, the fall semester sports teams: boys and girls soccer, tennis, cross country, volleyball, football and JV and modified sports teams are all in action. We had a very successful club sign up day with more than two dozen clubs and activities up and running. There have been class meetings as well as student Senate and Congress meetings. Also, auditions are underway for the fall theater production, "The Miracle Worker". (See page 4 for details.)

The format for implementing Shared Decision Making is under consideration and when active should have a marked effect on the school environment.

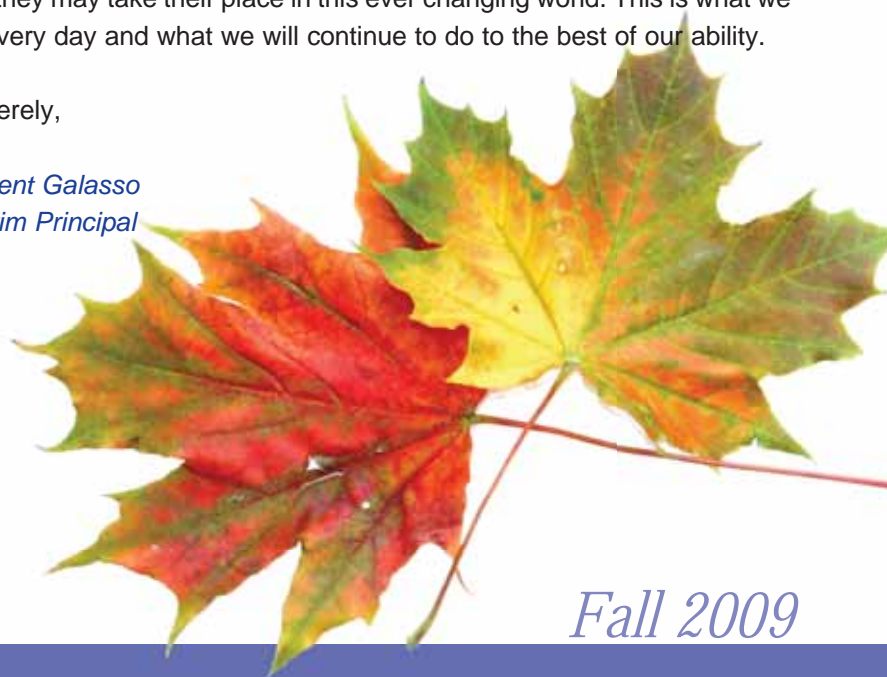
In all this flurry of activity, however we cannot forget that the primary responsibility of Blind Brook High School is to educate our students so that they may take their place in this ever changing world. This is what we do every day and what we will continue to do to the best of our ability.

Sincerely,

Vincent Galasso  
Interim Principal

### *Mission Statement*

*The Blind Brook Rye Schools are the cornerstone of our community. Our mission is to prepare our students to be active, life-long learners who have the skills and confidence necessary to achieve their highest potential. We encourage our students to be curious, compassionate and strong in their ability to face challenges. We are committed to preparing our students to be reflective, adaptable citizens with an open world view. We aspire to instill integrity as a core value and to influence our students to be ethical and responsible members of society.*



*Fall 2009*

# Message From the Superintendent

## From the Superintendent's Desk

Of late much has been written about being prepared for the 21st century world. The notion that we have now entered an era that will require new skills and strategies for survival, let alone success, has kept the printing presses and blogospheres humming along. Thomas Friedman's, *The World is Flat* and its updated version sold exceedingly well creating a sense of anxiety that we as Americans have always thrived on. Critical to this concept of the necessity for gaining an understanding of a new world order and developing a "how to guide" has been the modifications that American education must make to give our students a fighting chance to maintain their economic and social well-being. Part of this "they are gaining on us" movement can be seen in Tony Wagner's book, *The Global Achievement Gap*, with the sub-heading *Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach The New Survival Skills Our Children Need – And What We Can Do About It*. Being the Superintendent of what I believe is one of our country's best school districts I have to wonder exactly what those skills are that are necessary to meet the challenges of the 21st century and to what extent we are having our students master them. Here are some recommendations from Mr. Wagner's recent book.

"Schools need to let kids be much more curious instead of learning to pass tests."

"Kids just out of school have an amazing lack of preparedness in general leadership skills and collaborative skills."

He also speaks about developing the skills of agility and adaptability, learning to take the initiative, the lack of effective communication skills, accessing and analyzing information, curiosity and imagination. In short, Mr. Wagner is rallying against the so-called rote memorization of facts and the accompanying drill which I believe is a common practice in many of the competing industrial nations we find ourselves combating and to which, according to Messrs. Friedman, Wagner, et al, we are losing the battle.

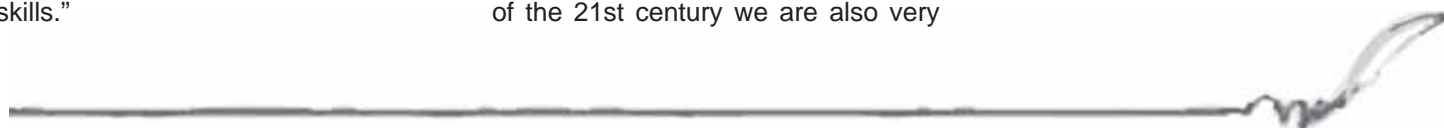
The Blind Brook School District with the assistance of all of its constituencies has a plan that is designed to meet realistic expectations for our student body allowing our children to become successful adults in a new and changing world. That plan includes heavy emphasis upon content with a goal of developing a core curriculum as well as implementing educational processes that allow students to absorb and retain that core of knowledge. Recently, we have instituted courses in effective communication and leadership, strengthened our science research program and are presently focusing on a K-12 review of the English Language Arts program in the district which will serve as an exemplar for how to develop other disciplines in a unified fashion. Inquiry, problem based learning, interdisciplinary study and team building activities are pedagogical strategies that are an inherent part of the process. At the same time as we are addressing the instructional aspect of the 21st century we are also very



William J. Stark  
Superintendent of Schools

much concerned with what has not seemed to be emphasized in futurist writings, namely character education. Hopefully, the 21st century also has room for making people more ethical and socially responsible than those who have come before them.

Accomplishing these goals and doing it with a greater sense of fiscal responsibility is not an easy task; but, it is one that we must devote our full energies to. Our student body deserves no less.



# 3 BMRSS Construction Update

During this past summer, roof replacements were completed on the BMRSS main building, old gym, and 1965 wing as scheduled. The roof gutters, leaders, and fascia board sheet metal coverings were also replaced. Overall, this project was a success – the workmanship was good and the total cost came significantly under projected budget.

As a result of recent discussions, the administrative team charged with reviewing construction options for BMRSS has recommended to the Board that the scope of the project include replacement of the 1960 wing, cafeteria, and kitchen. This recommendation would result in a proposed borrowing (bond vote), substantially less than the estimated \$25 million figure discussed last fall. While the specific cost estimates are not yet firm it is believed that the figure should be less than \$20 million for the replacement of these structures (using current cost data). In the weeks ahead KSQ and Triton plan to discuss these implications along with the potential cost of doing a “Green” project with NY-CHPS certification using LEED guidelines. The purpose of doing a NY-CHPS project is to provide a framework that will help our team design and build a sustainable school building that enhances the educational environment and facilitates learning.

At this point, the Board has determined that the time is appropriate to authorize a bond vote in February 2010. At its October 19th meeting it approved a contract with the Western Suffolk BOCES to perform an update to the 2004 long-term planning study to determine enrollment projections for the years ahead. This will provide information as to whether or not to include additional classroom space in the project. That evening the Board also authorized the Superintendent to commence the process for obtaining an energy performance contract. Moving forward in this manner will facilitate removal of several million dollars from the total proposed bond as energy related systems would be replaced or rebuilt using non-bond resources.

Information and future updates relative to the BMRSS construction project can be found at this link on the District’s Website:

[www.blindbrook.org](http://www.blindbrook.org)

*Jonathan Ross*  
*Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Facilities*

## *Blind Brook Rye Schools Welcomes Our New District Treasurer – Philip Silano*

This past summer Philip Silano was appointed by the Board of Education to become its next School District Treasurer effective August 3rd. Phil takes the place of Cathy Lynch who left to accept the same position with the Bronxville School District. He is a life-long resident of Harrison where lives with his wife and two daughters and has served on the school board for many years. Prior to coming to Blind Brook, Phil was the District Treasurer at Manhasset School District on Long Island and has had a long career in business and accounting. He received his Bachelor’s Degree from Pace University and plans to pursue graduate studies there in the near future. Best of luck Phil!



District Treasurer – Philip Silano

## *The Miracle Worker to be Presented at Blind Brook High School*

*On Friday, November 20th at 7:30pm and Saturday, November 21st at 7:30pm, Blind Brook High School Drama will be presenting William Gibson's THE MIRACLE WORKER directed by High School English and Drama teacher Christina Colangelo. Colangelo's assistant director will be senior Elana Levy, the production will be stage managed by junior Thomas Ferrer and the lighting designer will be junior Jason Kaye. The role of Helen Keller will be played by BBHS senior Jacqueline Mamorsky and her teacher, Annie Sullivan, will be played by sophomore Nora Fisher. The cast features 20 additional talented high school actors: Sarah Ackerman (Penelope/Understudy), Nick Brasesco (James Keller), Alyssa Davis (Aunt Ev), Blythe Duckett (Kate Keller), Sydney Grau (Doctor), Melanie Greenwald (Martha), Katie Hanson, Nicole Heney, Julia Joseph, Rachel Joseph, Tyler Ketchabaw (Captain Keller), Elana Levy, Diksha Nagia (Dr. Anagnos), Lindsay Nuckel, Alyssa Piperis (Viney), Karen Rind-Siegel, Jason Rosenzweig, Cynthia Segal, Olivia Weinshank, Sage Yockelson and 10 members of the backstage crew. At the performance on Saturday, November 21st, ASL Interpretation will be provided. When you are purchasing tickets, please let us know if you will be utilizing the ASL Interpreter services at the performance. There will also be an open dress rehearsal on Thursday, November 19th at 4pm at which ASL Interpretation will also be available. All tickets are \$10 and can be purchased in the lobby of Blind Brook High School on November 16th - 20th from 11am-1pm and 3pm-4pm or by e-mailing your reservation to [bbhsdrama@blindbrook.org](mailto:bbhsdrama@blindbrook.org).*

This year, BBMS has welcomed five new teachers, a guidance counselor, teaching assistant and a shared security monitor to our faculty and staff. Each has brought something different to our school community.

Getting connected and learning as much as possible about a new learning environment starts well before the bell rings on the first day of the school year. During the summer, our new teachers came in to set up their rooms and gather materials to prepare curriculum. Here in the middle school, they could be seen toting in cushions to create a cozy reading corner in the classroom, lugging home armloads of textbooks and teachers' guides, and meeting with colleagues and coordinators to get acquainted and participate in curriculum work that was underway.

New Teacher University, which was held on Tuesday, September 1, is a day devoted to workshops and discussions to inform and acclimate teachers joining our district. Our middle school folks found the day to be a great way to connect with other new teachers and administrators, learn about district technology, and gain a better understanding of the culture and goals of our school. Colleen Pylilo appreciated the opportunity to ask questions and learn about everything from Open House to the observation and evaluation process. She enjoyed the opportunity to exchange ideas about assessment, behavior management and creation of a positive classroom environment with other teachers, who came with valuable insights and instructional strategies to share. And no Blind Brook orientation would be complete without the experience of boarding one of the school buses for a guided bus tour by Jonathan Ross. His informed commentary and the camaraderie on the 'tour bus' is an experience all new staff remember for years to come.

Here is a brief glimpse at our new middle school faculty and staff:

- Amanda Arzt is our sixth grade counselor, who brings extensive experience as a counselor and a parent to her new role. She has appreciated the warm welcome from her colleagues and hopes to help her sixth graders to grow personally and academically this year. She sees an excellent middle school as one built upon a "strong sense of community, fellowship and respect among students, faculty, administration and parents." A big sports fan (Yankees, Giants, Rangers and any team her kids are on), Mrs. Arzt is an avid reader and music lover who knew from an early age that she wanted to work with young people in a way that would allow her to have a positive impact.

# *BBMS Welcomes New Teachers!*

- Eamon DePeter's effectiveness as a teacher and ability to relate well to students was clear when he was substituting for us last year, so he was already a familiar face to some of our students who were very happy to see him in his new role as a math teacher. Mr. DePeter's goal is to address the individual learning needs of all students and to create a classroom environment marked by mutual respect and the sense of safety which encourages students to participate and take chances. Besides coaching lacrosse and reading historical fiction, Mr. De Peter is a world traveler who had just returned from a safari in South Africa when the school year began.
- Colleen Pylilo is another familiar face to many of our students because she taught AIS math last year in grades 6,7 and 8. Getting her sixth graders excited and interested in math, and appreciating the applications and importance of math in our 21st Century world, is Colleen's goal. When Colleen was growing up, she helped her classmates and tutored her brother and nephews, and she still recalls the good feeling of hearing, "I get it now!" Colleen, who once attended school in the Netherlands and can speak Dutch, enjoys gardening, reading, cooking, fishing and the outdoors.
- Ellen Kapsiotis is another global traveler whose studies in Greece and participation in an excavation of an ancient Minoan town has given her valuable experiences abroad to enrich her students learning in social studies. A "passion for history" combined with a commitment to create a classroom environment where students are engaged and active participants in their own

learning motivates Ellen to help students reach their full potential. Her former students in the middle school classroom where she had filled an extended leave position wrote warmly about how knowledgeable Miss K was and how her teaching style made social studies their favorite class.

- Abby Schwittek understands the need of middle schoolers to become more independent while still needing to know they are safe and cared for in the classroom environment. Her goal is to establish a strong and unique classroom culture in her ELA classes where students feel comfortable and motivated to learn. Abby, who enjoys dance and has experience as a dance teacher and choreographer, understands the importance of confidence and comfort with her new "audience" of students, and appreciates the warm and supportive welcome she has received from faculty and staff here at Blind Brook.

This year we are also happy to welcome new support staff to our middle school. Erica Cialovella is a Teaching Assistant leave replacement whose enthusiasm to support students is palpable and contagious. Joe Funigiello, our new MS/HS Security Monitor, has already made good connections with students and staff. Joe brings thirty seven years experience as a postman, and extensive experience as a coach for modified baseball and varsity hockey to his current role. When asked what he enjoys most about his new position, Joe's response was, "Most of all it's the kids. They come first." We couldn't have said it any better than that.

Karen Bronson, Principal - BBMS



*New teachers from left to right:*

*Glenn Klugherz  
Jennifer Girone  
Margarete Goett  
Ellen Kapsiotis  
Laraine Pirie  
Lisa Muoio  
Abby Schwittek  
Brian Lazere  
Amanda Arzt  
Eamon DePeter*

# Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street Elementary School

## CHARACTER EDUCATION

Character Education is a focus of 21st Century learning communities and a subject that will be incorporated into our instructional program this year at the Ponterio Ridge Street School.

Dr. Thomas Lichona, Director of the Center for the Fourth and Fifth R's, defines character education as a deliberate effort to develop behaviors that are good for the individual and good for society. Character education involves teaching children about human behaviors that support our ability to understand, care about and act upon a core set of values which contribute to our children's ability to be productive members of society.

Building character in children can be reinforced through modeling, literature, and through instructional strategies which provide opportunities for children to see the impact of their decisions and actions on others. Dr. Lichona through his foundation, Character Counts, has identified six pillars of character education that are important to focus on in schools.

They are –

**TRUSTWORTHINESS** – Be honest. Don't deceive, cheat or steal. Be reliable – do what you say you'll do. Have the courage to do the right thing. Build a good reputation. Be loyal – stand by your family, friends and country.

**RESPECT** – Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule. Be tolerant of differences. Use good manners, not bad language. Be considerate of the feelings of others. Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone. Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.

**RESPONSIBILITY** – Do what you are supposed to do. Persevere: keep on trying! Always do your best. Use self-control. Be self-disciplined. Think before you act – consider the consequences. Be accountable for your choices.

**FAIRNESS** – Play by the rules. Take turns and share. Be open-minded; listen to others. Don't take advantage of others. Don't blame others carelessly.

**CARING** – Be kind. Be compassionate and show you care. Express gratitude. Forgive others. Help people in need.

**CITIZENSHIP** - Do your share to make your school and community better. Cooperate. Get involved in community affairs. Stay informed; vote. Be a good neighbor. Obey laws and rules. Respect authority. Protect the environment.

*Deborah Weisel, Principal*

*Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street Elementary School*

### BLIND BROOK-RYE PUBLIC SCHOOLS RYE BROOK, NEW YORK

All meetings held in the BB/MS/HS Library unless otherwise noted.  
BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE 2009-2010

Monday	11/02/09	Board Workshop
Monday	11/23/09	Regular Board Meeting
Monday	12/07/09	Board Workshop
Monday	12/14/09	Regular Board Meeting
Monday	01/11/10	Board Workshop
Monday	01/25/10	Regular Board Meeting
Monday	02/08/10	Board Workshop
Monday	02/22/10	Superintendent's Proposed Budget-BBHS Auditorium
Saturday	03/06/10	Community Budget Review
Monday	03/08/10	Community Budget Discussion
Monday	03/22/10	Community Budget Discussion & Regular Board Meeting
Monday	04/12/10	Community Budget Discussion
Monday	04/19/10	2010-11 Budget Adoption
Monday	04/26/10	Regular Board Meeting
Wednesday	05/05/10	Candidates' Night
Monday	05/10/10	Budget Hearing/Board Workshop
Monday	05/17/10	Regular Board Meeting
Tuesday	05/18/10	Annual Election & Budget Vote
Monday	06/07/10	Board Workshop
Monday	06/21/10	Regular Board Meeting

*Character education involves teaching children about human behaviors that support our ability to understand, care about and act upon a core set of values which contribute to our children's ability to be productive members of society.*

### Board of Education

Mr. Steven M. Kaplan, President  
Mrs. Sheri Zarkower, Vice President  
Ms. Nancy Barr  
Mr. Lawrence D. Engle  
Mr. Glen Schuster  
William J. Stark, Superintendent

## Message From the Board President

Lately we've heard much about "teachable moments" – those isolated events and news stories that are deemed unique opportunities to observe and learn. In public education, the task of our educators is so much more complex, using every moment – rather than just random moments - to teach and prepare our students for the global 21st century world they will face after graduation. After using the last school year to build processes and protocols, Superintendent Stark and the administrative team, in conjunction with the Board of Education, are now keenly focused on implementation of a five year strategic plan to fulfill our vision. The work will not be easy, and change will be discomfoting and ill received by some. Nevertheless, changes must take place for us to fulfill our mission and meet our goals – we owe our students nothing less. We expect our students to become life long learners, and as educators and an educational institution, we must likewise change and adapt to the times, mirroring the values and behaviors we wish to instill in our graduates.



Steven M. Kaplan, President  
Board of Education

In order to accomplish the goals of the district, we must serve our community well, and likewise be supported by the community. During these challenging financial times, we recognize that this requires not only enhanced diligence in use of financial resources, but also making our school's assets a resource for the entire community, not just those with children in the schools. Toward that end, we plan to devote discussion at our December 14th meeting to the subject of outreach to residents without students. Are you interested in an adult education program? In having better access to fitness center and gymnasium facilities? If you are, or if you have other ideas about ways we can make our district one that serves the entire community, please come out and share your thoughts that evening. If you cannot make it, you can email us at [emailtheboe@blindbrook.org](mailto:emailtheboe@blindbrook.org), or call your Board of Education representatives at the phone numbers listed in the Board of Education section of the website, [www.blindbrook.org](http://www.blindbrook.org).

Do you know that many school events are open to the public at little or no charge? Perhaps you are interested in football, soccer, basketball, tennis, and many more sports that our students participate in. Or you enjoy performing arts such as band and choral concerts, musicals and plays. Maybe your passion is fine arts, just as our students pursue and exhibit portfolios of their wonderful work. Our school calendar, posted online, in conjunction with notifications on our website, list many of these events. In addition, we continue to build an email list for notification of upcoming events. Please email us at [contactus@blindbrook.org](mailto:contactus@blindbrook.org) if you wish to be included in this list of upcoming events, as well as be informed about upcoming Board of Education meetings and agendas.

Your Board of Education believes that accountability on the financial and educational achievement fronts is

critical to the district and its students. Recognizing that upcoming budgets will be the most challenging yet, we have asked administration to undertake analyses of a myriad of programs, with an eye on identifying those which are most effective and those which are not, and to identify where your tax dollars provide the best the best return. Accountability, of course, also extends to the performance of personnel. Toward that end, we are pleased to have ratified a new contract with our administrators, which extends an administrator compensation model based entirely upon merit. The contract is also aligned with our retention efforts, extending eligibility for economic benefits to those who serve the district for a greater number of years. Likewise, the Superintendent's performance assessment is based upon a rubric of many factors, similar to those used and adjusted annually for administrators, and is also entirely merit based. This accountability model has been serving us well on the administrative front, and reflects the Board of Education's overall philosophy concerning employee performance assessment and compensation. Accountability, of course, also extends to the Board of Education. Believing that continual training and learning is paramount to providing leadership and direction to the district, board members have attended many conferences, seminars, and webinars this Fall, including those devoted to board officer leadership, professional learning communities, budgeting, teacher performance assessment, and fundraising. This, together with the Board's own self assessment program, will help us improve our own performance.

Many good things are taking place in Blind Brook. Whether it is through attendance at a student performance, participation in a discussion at a Board of Education meeting, or participation in one of our many committees, we encourage you to be involved.

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POSTAL PATRON

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# Technology

## Classroom Communication Improved Through EDLINE



In an effort to refine communication from classrooms, the district will be increasing the use of its Edline class pages. Edline is a web based program that allows teachers to create class pages that can host a variety of resources including homework assignments, reference documents, course outlines as well as discussion boards, links to external web sites and other resources and tools that can assist students in learning course materials.

This is the second year that Edline will be used in the Middle School and High School for posting class information. While the program was piloted at the Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street School, it was found not to be effective for the elementary school environment in this district. Edline requires a login for students, parents and teachers to access its pages, thus making it a secure environment for learning.

While the district's teaching staff has made ample use of the Edline web page system in the past, this year a concerted effort is being put forth to improve the frequency of use as well as the variety of information posted. The idea is to increase the number of resources that students have to refer to in order to assist in the learning of the material that is discussed during the day. The increase in Edline use will also help students who are absent from class and need to keep up with the material that they may have missed.

The beginning of the school year saw a combined effort of the Middle School and High School faculty along with the Technology department in making sure that all students had access to the Edline web sites. In addition, parents of Middle and High School students have been asked to activate their parent accounts in an effort to ease teacher access to parent contact information. Any parent of a Middle School or High School student who has not activated his or her account is encouraged to contact Colin Byrne at [cbyrne@blindbrook.org](mailto:cbyrne@blindbrook.org) to obtain information on the activation process.

*Colin Byrne, Director of Technology*



To contact District administration or staff, please dial the District's main phone line 914-937-3600.

A list of email addresses and extensions is available on the District's web site at:  
<http://www.blindbrook.org/contact.shtml>