



Blind Brook Public Schools  
SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

# THE EXCHANGE

November, 2010

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

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### 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.*

## Welcome Back! New Teachers, New Programs



Photo/Colin Byrne

Blind Brook welcomes (from left to right) Danielle DeLaurentis, Susan Foss, Liz Ellis, James Amodio, Gina Healy, Samantha Anderman, Ann Ribuffo, Heather McDowell, Kaitlin Carey, Christina Caringi, Edith Cacho, and Deirdre Dillon.

## Differentiated Instruction 101

When I enter the science classroom, students are getting out of their seats and finding their way to one of three designated areas of the classroom. A unit on genetics is beginning, and the teacher wants to assess the students' prior knowledge on the topic before launching into the traditional introductory material. She has asked students to form clusters in each of the areas according to what they already know about genetics.

A few students determine that they already know quite a bit about the topic. One has a parent who works with a geneticist, and the parent often talks to the child about the amazing things that the doctor can do to help young expectant couples who are concerned about genetic health issues in their family. Words like "chromosome," "trait" and "gene" are very familiar ones to this student. Another read all of his older sibling's science materials on Gregor Mendel last year when he was in this grade, and found it really interesting. Students in the next group feel they know a little bit about the topic. One watches "Sponge Bob Square Pants" all the time and knows that in Squidward's family, a blue body color is dominant to green. Another is a Harry Potter fan and knows all about the Muggles who carry the recessive wizard gene. The third cluster of students are excited about beginning the unit because they really don't know anything yet about genetics but can't wait to learn about it because they heard it is a really exciting unit in science class. Some of the

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## Message From the Board President



**Steven M. Kaplan, President  
Board of Education**

As another school year begins, I welcome you to the Year of the Classroom! September 1st I had the privilege of addressing the faculty and staff for a third consecutive year, continuing an ongoing dialogue with them. My comments were directed towards the Board and administration's focus for the coming year - accountability and differentiated instruction being high on the list.

Looking inside the classroom, we know and recognize that as learners, our students learn in different ways, some visually and others linguistically. For instance, students vary in the speed in which they learn, and also in their degree of brain development at any given stage. Collectively these speak to the need for moving away from the one size fits all model. While educators have known and recognized this for years, greater emphasis today is placed on meeting the needs of a diverse student population through use of differentiated instruction targeted to specific student needs and abilities, and through greater understanding of brain development

as it relates to learning. Thus, much time will be spent this year by teachers and educational leadership alike learning and refining differentiated instruction techniques. The Board and faculty are joining together in a group reading endeavor dedicated to differentiated instruction. All community members are welcome to join in the initiative, and can contact the Superintendent's office if they are interested in borrowing a copy of the book we are reading.

On the accountability front, the Board is working with the administration to create authentic, meaningful measures of performance, coupled with the means to mine that data and use it to influence curriculum and instruction. While state assessments are mandated and have their place, other authentic measures of performance and achievement are important and necessary, to enable us to meet local requirements that are more stringent or more relevant to our student body, and to enable us to gauge the whole child on a moving, longitudinal basis. You will note these changes over time, one such initiative being increased emphasis on portfolios of student work. Accountability also is prominent in our continuing efforts on the character education front. This fall, much of our discussion at Board of Education meetings is focused on student conduct both in terms of harmful behaviors and in terms of integrity. A more defined code of conduct - to be coupled with enforcement - has been adopted to cover inappropriate student behaviors such as substance abuse tied to the school day and/or events for those involved in athletics and extracurricular activities. We hope parents will join with us in this endeavor, as our success is dependent upon parents taking a prominent role in reinforcing the message.

On the personal integrity front, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty is a problem both

locally and nationally. Thus, our discussion of conduct this fall will include honor codes as a form of dealing with expectations concerning student behavior. Bullying is also an issue of concern to all, with too many stories featured in the national media on a regular basis. Among the most serious of issues, the Board of Education has set a high bar in this area, signaling to the administration, our students and the community at large that this is a behavior that cannot be tolerated. Education, discipline and understanding what is behind the behavior all play an important role in both preventing and addressing bullying issues.

Lastly, as we continue to discuss important issues, with financial concerns prominent among them, community participation in our discussions and policy determinations is important. To that end, much effort has been dedicated this fall to reaching out to the community to fill various committees established to advise the board. We are grateful for the unprecedented expressions of interest to serve the district, and also to those who have already provided service to the district. Committees' meetings are open to the public and will be publicized on the district website and calendar. Whether it be attending a Board of Education meeting, advisory committee meeting, or a PTA meeting or event, we encourage all to get involved and to be informed - during this spirited year of political debate, it is an integral part of our democratic process.

### **Board of Education**

Mr. Steven M. Kaplan, President  
Mr. Glen Schuster, Vice President  
Ms. Nancy Barr  
Mr. Lawrence D. Engle  
Ms. Sheri Zarkower

[emailtheboe@blindbrook.org](mailto:emailtheboe@blindbrook.org)

## From the Superintendent's Desk



**William J. Stark**  
Superintendent of Schools

The subject of education has received much attention in the press both national and local. The American educational system has been described in various iterations of being in crisis. Essentially, the crises that are spoken of revolve around three issues, namely, what is being taught, what is being learned and how much does it cost. These are not new concerns to what the American educator Horace Mann referred to as the great experiment of public education. Hand wringing about our inability to compete with the Russians and then the Japanese dominated much of this conversation in the latter part of the 20th century now eclipsed by the Asian economic ascendancy and questioning whether America is spending its money wisely in this endeavor. At the heart of the argument is data. Numbers, some with dollar signs in front of them, have taken center stage. Many people have expressed the view

commonly stated that there are lies, lies and statistics. Albert Einstein said it best when he remarked, "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." On a more cynical note Charles Seife's new book, *Proofiness - The Dark Arts of Mathematical Deception*, addresses those who reference as fact things that one wishes to be true rather than what is known to be true.

An essential goal of the Blind Brook School District administration has been to communicate with the community the factual information necessary to allow knowledgeable decision making on the part of the residents of this school district. There are many avenues for the dissemination of this information. Foremost, is the regularly scheduled Board of Education meeting which has as a component a public comment segment. There are, however, other less visible avenues available to all. Emailing the Board of Education or the Superintendent is another way to better access understanding of the operation of the school district. A new initiative is the Community Conversation. One evening each month of this school year, I will be in the Monroe Haas Instructional Media Center at 7:00 PM to take questions about the school district's operation, educational, organizational and financial. I invite the community to participate in this endeavor.

There are many

things that are truly remarkable about this community. Its quest for knowledge and civic interest is on the list of things that make it so. Please join me in this conversation.

Below you will find the dates for the Community Conversations. Every effort will be made to adhere to them; however, due to unanticipated events there may be a necessity to reschedule. All dates will be placed on the District website, reported in the local newspapers and, if you provide either your name and address or email address a reminder will be sent of the next meeting date.

I am looking forward to our conversations.

- Thursday, November 18, 2010
- Thursday, December 16, 2010
- Thursday, January 13, 2011
- Thursday, February 17, 2011
- Thursday, March 24, 2011
- Thursday, April 28, 2011

### Board of Education Meetings

11/15/10	Regular Board Meeting
12/06/10	Board Workshop
12/13/10	Regular Board Meeting
01/10/11	Board Workshop
01/24/11	Regular Board Meeting
02/07/11	Board Workshop
02/14/11	Superintendent's Proposed Budget - BBHS Auditorium
03/05/11	Community Budget Review
03/07/11	Community Budget Discussion
03/21/11	Community Budget Discussion & Regular Board Meeting
04/11/11	2011-2012 Budget Adoption
04/26/11	Regular Board Meeting & BOCES Vote
05/03/11	Candidates' Night
05/09/11	Budget Hearing/Board Workshop
05/16/11	Regular Board Meeting
05/17/11	Annual Election and Budget Vote
06/06/11	Board Workshop
06/20/11	Regular Board Meeting

# A Matter of Integrity

“If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. Where there is order in the nation, there will be

peace in the world.” – Confucius (551-479 B.C.)

What is integrity and why is it important to have it? Students in Honors Student Leadership Seminar, a year-long course provide insight.

“Integrity is standing up for what you know is right. It involves doing what may not be considered as ‘cool’ or ‘popular’ because you know it is the right choice and will benefit you and others in the long run.”

“Integrity is having good character and morals and maintaining them. It is leading a consistent life of honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility and respect. Those who have integrity stay true to themselves and do not conform to peer pressure.”

“Character is doing the right thing even when you are the only judge of your actions.”

“Many will follow a leader who stands up for himself, his rights and his beliefs because he has his priorities straight. He knows right from wrong and can guide others on the right path. Integrity is at the very core of every great leader.”

“Integrity allows you to see who a person really is. It allows us to form meaningful and trusting relationships.”

“Integrity is not taking the short cut.”

“By having integrity, people will become more willing to trust your decisions and will want to be on your team more often.”

When asked, what gets in the way of demonstrating integrity on a day to day basis, the students responded: ambition, the feeling that a shortcut will yield a higher reward, a higher value being placed on efficiency than ethics, fear of not being able to meet standards in an honest way, the emphasis on grades, competition, an inability to get everything done within a deadline, and the feeling that work is not relevant.

Character is the foundation of a personality. It is what supports us and allows us to be strong or divides us causing us to fail. Integrity and character are inseparable. Integrity is about consistency in actions and words. It is about right and wrong, moral standards and adhering to a code of moral values. It is about giving what we intend to receive, principles, expectations and outcomes. The root of integrity is from the Latin word, integritatem, meaning soundness or wholeness. It is important to foster the significance of the common good in relationship to the concept of integrity. Individuals are part of the whole although they are dependent upon the whole and the whole is dependent upon them. We are all members of the Blind Brook Community and the community extends beyond the school walls. The goal is to act for the betterment of the community rather than solely the betterment of the individual; to act with the whole in mind. This is an important concept to cultivate in our children.

The mission of the Blind Brook-Rye School District is to “prepare our students to be active, life-long learn-

ers who have the skills and confidence necessary to achieve to 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 to influence our students to be ethical and responsible members of society.” The K-12 Character Education Committee created the following Vision of a Blind Brook Graduate. A graduate will:

- Accept and appreciate individual differences
- Respect others
- Value different points of view
- Embrace lifelong learning
- Understand and practice ethical behavior
- Act with the understanding of the effects and consequences of actions
- Respond with reflection, adaptability and resilience
- Take risks, make mistakes and learn from experiences
- Effectively problem solve
- Act with honesty, integrity, compassion and empathy
- Advocate for ideas and causes
- Understand democratic principles
- Practice good citizenship

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# Summer Building Improvement Projects

## Dr. Jonathan Ross Assistant Superintendent Finance and Facilities

At the end of each school year the Blind Brook facilities department gets into high gear and begins the process of cleaning and sanitizing every classroom and instructional space in each of the District's three school buildings. Furniture and equipment is removed from all classrooms,

re-installed after cleaning, and the process continues over the 10-week summer break until every room is finished. By September 1st all facilities are in first-class condition ready for faculty, staff and students and a new school year.

In addition to the thorough cleaning and outside grounds keeping that is performed there were a number of notable building projects completed this past summer. The following delineates the projects by campus.

### BMP Ridge Street School

- Replaced old gym floor
- Installed new wall pads in old gym
- Refinished new gym floor
- Converted Room 47 to a science laboratory-room
- A Kindergarten classroom
- A new occupational therapy room
- Moved 5th grade classrooms to 65 wing
- Painted 36 classrooms
- Installed new VCT flooring in 3 classrooms
- Installed 6 ceiling fans in multi-purpose room and cafeteria
- Installed new shades in five classrooms
- Commenced replacement of the P.A. system

This year the District's Five-Year Capital Facilities Plan is required to be updated, revised, and submitted to the NYS Education Department. The Plan is a tool utilized by the District to actively manage its capital facilities needs and used as a budget tool. It will identify the current condition of the District's facilities and prioritize the necessary improvements to each facility, including an estimate of the costs associated with each proposed maintenance action. At the January 10, 2011 Board of Education Meeting, a long-range capital facilities planning presentation will be conducted by Jonathan Ross and Armand Quadrini of KSQ Architects. All residents are invited to attend this meeting.

### Blind Brook MS/HS

- Painted diesel fuel tank at garage
- Painted exterior doors
- Installed boxwood plants in front plaza
- Groomed both athletic fields
- Installed new MS/HS sign
- Refinished MS and HS gym floors
- Completed driveway asphalt repairs
- Completed masonry work in rear of the HS
- Installed data and voice cabling in both buildings
- Commenced replacement of the overhead doors at the garage

## A Matter of Integrity

*Continued from Page 4*

- Demonstrate good sportsmanship, the ability to cooperate and teamwork
- Generate innovative ideas and products that tap interests, passions and curiosities

Throughout our lives communities may change but when acting with integrity the dynamics of how we work within the communities do not change. Our individual actions make a difference and others are influenced, positively or negatively by our actions. Character is learned and children learn from their role models. We need to set good examples. Words are a mirror of char-

acter but actions are a greater reflection of integrity.

Nothing is more important in life than having integrity, ethical thought and behavior. It is a quality that we want everyone else to have and one we look for within those we encounter each day. Academic excellence is valued but the higher standard of competence is in the manner in which we use our knowledge. It is a matter of character and integrity. As the year unfolds, let us challenge each other to achieve excellence with integrity.

**Mary Mediate**  
Director of Guidance K-12

## Strong Academics Combined With Opportunities To Serve Create Strong Foundations



This fall the BMP Ridge Street School opened its doors to welcome 739 students. Included in this group are 116 kindergarteners who will graduate in 2023. As I have been getting to know them over the last few weeks, I couldn't help but wonder what the world would be like when our youngest students graduate. How will school, as they experience it today, serve them in 2023 and beyond? Will the experiences they have during their years at Ridge Street strengthen their character, their competence, and their confidence?

At Ridge Street, we understand that the strength of our school lies in our focus on educating the whole child. As we watch our children grow academically, socially, and emotionally, it is our shared commitment to ensure that our students are taught, guided, and mentored to reach their potential as great thinkers, innovators, and future leaders. Within each of our classrooms, our students are learning to solve problems, think for themselves, and engage in higher order thinking skills.

Academic instruction is only part of our job as a school. The school's culture should also provide experiences that cultivate and foster children's ability to make responsible decisions, serve their

community, and develop an understanding and appreciation for the world around them. In addition to strong academic programs, Ridge Street offers students an opportunity to serve their school and the larger community.

Student Council is one of the ways that students can serve their school and increase their understanding of how committees work together for a common good. Our student council is comprised of 4th and 5th graders. They serve our school by working together to initiate, plan, and imple-

ment a variety of school spirit and service projects. Kids Who Care which is run by our PTA, operates under the belief that kids should have an understanding of the world around them by becoming involved in projects that meet the civic and social needs of the children and families of our local communities. Another opportunity for students to serve is through Green Key. Green Key has a long standing tradition here at BMP Ridge Street School. In fact, it turns 40 this year. Students who participate in Green Key provide a valuable service to our school by being teachers' helpers (4th and 5th graders), Recycling Rangers (3rd grade), Recess Patrol (3rd, 4th, 5th graders), and the Lost and Found group (3rd, 4th, 5th). They are also learning the value of working as a member of the team.

As we journey through this school year, our school wide goals will be focused on creating experiences that encourage children to make responsible decisions, demonstrate respect and courtesy, and deepen cognition and leadership preparing each of them for the future.

**Deborah Weisel, Principal**  
**Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street School**

## Differentiated Instruction 101

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students in this group were “experts” on the previous weather unit and some of the students from each group will come with the most prior knowledge for the upcoming unit on Plate Tectonics. Being an expert on a topic when a new unit begins has nothing to do with what grade you are getting in science.

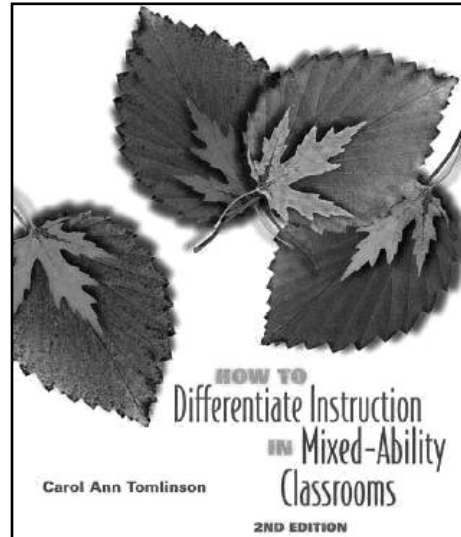
After the groups share what they know about the topic with one another and the teacher, the class gets seated to begin with some full group instruction which serves to create interest in the topic and provide a preview of some of the learning that will take place.

After this whole group instruction, the students visit learning stations that have been set up in the classroom to introduce some basic terms in genetics. They have 10 minutes to visit and complete two of the quick hands on activities at the stations that include a range of tasks of varying difficulty.

As the period winds down, the teacher asks students to answer a question on an exit card to determine how well he or she understood the material presented in this introductory lesson. She explains that at the end of their study on genetics, all students will take the same test, but there will be a choice of action projects of varying complexity which will include options that appeal to students with verbal, mathematical, artistic or musical strengths. The unit will culminate with students sharing the projects which ranged from an interview with the geneticist mom to an artistic representation of Gregor Mendel’s pea plants. The students leave looking forward to class the next day to learn more about this topic, and the teacher leaves with a good understanding of where students are in their understanding of the topic as the unit begins so that she can plan accordingly.

Like many initiatives in education, Differentiated Instruction can be misun-

derstood, so it is helpful to define what it is not. Differentiated instruction is not about teachers making multiple lesson plans for students of different ability levels. It does not come in kits, is not a “program” and is not the “individualized



instruction’ of the 1970’s. It does not entail a greater or lesser quantity of work for students of different ability levels. Rather, it is a philosophy of teaching and learning that shakes things up in the classroom so that students have options for taking in information, making sense of ideas, and expressing what has been learned. It is a belief system that can be described as ‘responsive’ teaching rather than one-size-fits all instruction. Sometimes it is compared to the one room schoolhouse which recognized that there were times when the teacher needed to work with the whole class, with smaller groups, and with individual students. At its core, differentiated instruction is an acknowledgement that students bring a wide range of experiences, learning styles and ability levels to the classroom and that strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners and challenge and motivate all students is essential.

It is also true that sometimes edu-

cational initiatives come and go like the flavor of the month, bogged down by the weight of their own jargon and perceived need for all to be ‘on board’ before getting started. The ones that work despite long names with many letters do so because they are simply good instructional practices that make sense. Professional Learning Communities are all about teachers working together and focusing on learning. Response to Intervention focuses upon the importance of supporting struggling students in the classroom before recommending placement in special programs. Differentiated Instruction provides means of helping all students get what they need to grow and succeed. There is nothing faddish about that.

Our district’s goal of incorporating differentiated instruction has brought teachers and administrators together as partners in the learning process. Across the district, we and our teachers are reading and discussing Carol Tomlinson’s book entitled *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed Ability Classrooms* as the initial framework for our exploration of differentiation strategies. Other resources, such as *Differentiated Instructional Strategies: One Size Doesn’t Fit All* by Gayle Gregory and Cindy Strickland’s *Exploring Differentiated Instruction* are already being used to find concrete strategies that can easily be implemented in our classrooms and will provide further reading for our professional community. Even though it is only November, it is already gratifying to see how teachers have been willing to try some new strategies and strengthen past practices that reflect the goals of differentiation in ways that are appropriate and meaningful for our students here in Blind Brook. We look forward to a year of continued exploration and implementation of the tenets of differentiated instruction that will enhance instruction for all of our students.

**Karen Bronson, Principal  
Blind Brook Middle School**

## The Joy of Accomplishment

“I did it!”

Those three words embody the thrill of accomplishment and pride in a job well-done. The unbridled joy that comes when students solve a complex problem overshadows whatever difficulties they face as they struggle to overcome obstacles to that achievement. Unfortunately, these moments are too infrequent in schools where students’ obsession to get an “A” on the assessment trumps their desire to learn the material and where they view effort as a sign of diminished capacity.

In competitive school districts like Blind Brook, well-meaning parents, too, play a role in preventing students from the sense of accomplishment that comes with deep learning. Parents sometimes expect their children to achieve without effort or struggle, and at the first sign of difficulty try to rescue their child by removing him or her from the situation. Our children learn that looking smart is what is important, and that if they have to work at something, they have somehow failed. At Blind Brook High School, many students are encouraged by their parents to register for Honors or Advanced Placement courses in order to build a strong resume for college, but when the material becomes challenging, those same students and families are looking for a way out of the course.

Stanford University Psychology Professor and researcher, Carol S. Dweck proposes developing a “growth mindset” of intelligence as one way to encourage students to value the effort that is required for real learning in schools. Dweck distinguishes two ways that people typically view intelligence: “fixed mindset” and “growth mindset,” and each of these stances leads to different attitudes toward learning (Dweck, 2010.)

People with what Dweck calls a “fixed mindset” believe that intelligence is an inborn trait that cannot be altered. Dweck and her researchers have found that students with a fixed mindset tend to avoid situations that challenge them and value looking smart above all else. Many students in Blind Brook refuse to take on academic risks because they fear failure or simply don’t believe that they should have to make the effort. These students believe that if you have the ability you shouldn’t have to work hard. Because academic struggle challenges their beliefs about themselves and their intelligence, students with a fixed mindset can become defensive when they don’t master material right away. They want teachers to simply tell them what they need to know for the test, and avoid puzzling through problems. Their sense of themselves is connected to their perception of their intelligence, and fear of poor performance can even lead to cheating in order to save face (Dweck, 2010.) Unfortunately, the desperation to look good and get A’s at any cost too often leads to compromising academic integrity in our high school.

Students with a “growth mindset”, on the other hand, believe that intelligence can be developed over time. These students see difficult problems as interesting challenges and recognize that it is only by wrestling with demanding tasks that they will learn. These students embrace academic risk-taking and are willing to take on learning tasks that do not have right or wrong answers, but rather require working through problems to find solutions (Dweck, 2010.)

Because twenty-first century learning emphasizes critical thinking and problem solving, it is vital to create a culture that fosters a

growth mindset. Teachers can build a growth mindset by providing complex learning tasks and supporting students as they work through them. Teachers should emphasize the process and methods that students use to get their answers as much as the answer itself. They should help students to understand that many problems have multiple solutions, and they should help students to value their mistakes as opportunities for growth and learning. In many classes at Blind Brook High School, teachers engage their students in real-life problem solving and praise the effort and strategies that students employ to construct knowledge. But we also see teachers succumbing to community pressure to get everyone to do well on the test, even if that isn’t the path to deepest learning.

In the early part of the twentieth century, education reformer John Dewey wrote, “Failure is instructive. The person who really thinks learns quite as much from his failures as from his successes.” We owe it to our children to provide them deep, rich learning experiences. We need to encourage them to take academic risks and to teach them what to do when their approach to a problem doesn’t produce the solution they seek. We must allow students to puzzle and grapple with complex tasks, for without overcoming obstacles, students will never experience the joy and sense of accomplishment that comes with working hard to master something once seen as difficult.

Dweck, C. S. (2010) Even geniuses work hard. *Educational Leadership*, 68, 1, 16-20.

**Gina Healy, Principal  
Blind Brook High School**

## BB Students to Attend Advanced Driver Training



Photo/Harry Burg

**Current Blind Brook seniors Jacob Kupin, Brent Lavitt, and Scott Bass, who attended the InControl Advanced Driver Training Program last year as juniors, look into the InControl car before driving it.**

Twenty-three Blind Brook High School Juniors and Seniors will attend a full day trip to the InControl Advanced Driver Training Program in North Andover, Massachusetts on November 13, 2010. The PTA Project Prevention Drive Safe Committee, the Michael Blank Memorial Fund, and the Office of Pupil Services have once again teamed up to organize this invaluable, potentially life-saving trip. The trip is supported and partially funded by the Michael Blank Memorial Fund, a fund in the memory of a Blind Brook High School student who tragically passed away in December 2000 when driving too fast on King Street.

The training includes brief classroom sessions followed by demonstrations by trained drivers of skills necessary to handle a car in extreme scenarios. Each student then goes behind the wheel under the supervision of a trainer until they too can demonstrate the skills necessary to stop or turn the car while experiencing what a car feels like when taken to its limits. This unique, hands-on, intensive training gives Blind Brook young drivers the skills they will most need when faced with life-threatening driving situations.

**Harry Burg**  
Director of Pupil Services

## Athletics Update

This fall there has been a great deal of action both on and off the field from an interscholastic athletic perspective. Off the field, we were very fortunate to have Dennis O'Sullivan from the American Athletic Institute kick off our year at our August open house. This year's fall sport open house for parents, athletes, and coaches was very well attended. Mr. O'Sullivan presented a research based program on the impact of substance abuse on performance on the athletic field and in life. On a related topic, this fall our Board of Education approved an Athletic/Extracurricular Code of Conduct for our district. The Code of Conduct can be found online and will be introduced to our athletes prior to the winter sport season.

On the field, we have a tremendous number of athletes participating in our modified, JV, and varsity programs for both boys and girls. At this writing many of our varsity teams are poised to qualify for the Section One post season tournaments in their respective sports. This year in many programs we will be moving up from Class C to a larger school enrollment of Class B for post season play.

Finally over the Columbus Day weekend we had one of our most well attended Homecomings ever. There were tennis matches on Friday, and a football game Friday night. Saturday was a full day of soccer and volleyball from early afternoon until well into the evening hours. The homecoming weekend has become a true community event. This year we had another great demonstration of school spirit from our student body and their parents. In addition, each year we have greater participation from our Ridge Street/ Bruno M. Ponterio community, graduates, and parents of children who have graduated. All are welcome!

Keep an eye out for future community events such as Midnight Madness, Spirit Night, and our winter homecoming. We invite and encourage all members of the Blind Brook community to come out and cheer on our athletes.

## Go Blind Brook!

**James Spano**  
Director of Physical Education, Health, and Athletics

## New Course: Honors Shapers of the World

“Shapers” is an interdisciplinary humanities course taught by Mr. Jon Ambrosio along with Mrs. Gerri Caragliano. Students explore how individuals and their experiences have had a significant and sometimes everlasting impact on society. Students examine common threads which link such disciplines as history, philosophy, literature, science, art and music in the development of human civilization.

This course surveys literature, drama, and philosophy from the ancient to the modern world. Course readings include multicultural creation myths, Genesis, ancient Greek literature, Roman literature, British literature, and modern literature. The course focuses on individuals who have greatly influenced man’s searches for truth. The stories that have shaped the world have in many ways determined the fundamental questions human beings still ponder, such as: Who are we? Where did we come from? What do we value? What is the ultimate meaning of our lives? As we reflect upon great works of literature, we will examine how different cultures resolved these questions. In addition, we will make comparisons among world cultures and examine the profound impact of these founding writers and thinkers on our modern world. “Shapers of the World” will explore the various ways in which individuals can change the world.

“Shapers” also nurtures an enjoyment of art and helps students perceive its relation to a particular culture and time period. Some of the art studies can include, but will not be limited to: Classical Greek and Roman; Gothic; Renaissance; Northern Renaissance; High Renaissance;



Senior Victor Alves works on the art portion of his “Shapers” creation myth assignment.

Baroque; French and German; Spanish and English Classicism; Cubism; Expressionism; Dada; Surrealism; Abstract Expressionism; Op; Pop; and New Realism. Students will be incorporating their understanding of art into their projects. Ms. Meghan Petras and Ms. Susan Foss



BBHS Seniors Nicholas Rasch, Tessa Kajdi, and Amanda Tenenzapf hold up dolls they created as an art portion of a creation myth assignment for “Shapers.”

will be teaching the art components of the Shapers of the World course.

We will also be looking at the history of music, taught by Mr. Howard Levy, its origins and progression through the centuries and the composers/musical artists that impacted social culture—which musical pieces have left an indelible mark on us? We will start with Gregorian Chant of the Middle Ages, work our way through the Renaissance, Bach and the Baroque, the Classical Period of Beethoven and Mozart, the Romantic Period, and finally through the musical evolution of the Twentieth Century and beyond, from Ragtime to Rock n’ Roll. These musical interludes will be injected into each appropriate time period we are covering in order to further students’ understanding of that society.

An interdisciplinary course is as it suggests—a course that involves the study and interconnectedness of many disciplines. Therefore, it is imperative that students employ equally intensive care and study through all facets of the course. It is only through this level of work a student will gain a flourishing comprehension of the materials.

**Jon Ambrosio**  
English Department Coordinator

## Student Lunch Lines Move Faster with LunchBytes

This year the Blind Brook School District has implemented a new point of sale program for the District's cafeterias that will make buying lunch quicker and easier for students. This new system, called NutriKids, automates the lunch buying process by allowing parents to place money on their children's accounts which the students can then access at the cafeteria lunch lines. Students access their accounts through either PIN numbers or ID cards based upon their grade level. This system was purchased and is totally subsidized by funding received from the District's percentage of cafeteria sales. As many parents have had questions about the new system, here are the answers to the most frequently asked questions:

**Q:** Does my child have to use the NutriKids system to purchase items at the cafeteria?

**A:** No, participation in the NutriKids program is not mandatory. The program is being provided as a service to parents who wish to use it. It is still possible for children to buy food in the cafeteria using cash.

**Q:** How can I put money on my child's account?

**A:** The first step is to go to the My NutriKids web site ([www.mynutrikids.com](http://www.mynutrikids.com)) and set up an account. You will need your children's student ID numbers in order to do this. Contact Colin Byrne for this information. Once your account is set up, you can then add money into individual children's accounts. There will be a charge of \$1.75 on every credit card deposit that is made to the system. Alternatively, deposits can be made in person at the cafeterias.

**Q:** How does my child buy food through the NutriKids system?

**A:** The way that students can access the money on their accounts varies depending upon which grade the student is in. Students who are in grades 6 through 12 have received an ID card with a bar code on it. These can be scanned in the cafeteria. Students in grades 2 through 5 have a PIN number which has been distributed to them through their teachers. They can enter this PIN number on a key pad in the cafeteria. Kindergarten and first grade students have bar coded cards that their teachers hold on to for safety purposes. These cards are given to the students at the start of lunch and then are collected at the end of lunch.

**Q:** Who should I contact if I have any problems or questions?

**A:** Technical problems, such as setting up an on-line account, should be directed to Colin Byrne. All other issues should be addressed to Patricia Dilluvio, the manager of food services for Blind Brook, or to the Business Office.

Additional information can be found on the District web site at the following link:

[http://www.blindbrook.org/district\\_info/district\\_information/facilities\\_services/food\\_services/nutrikids\\_info.shtml](http://www.blindbrook.org/district_info/district_information/facilities_services/food_services/nutrikids_info.shtml)

**Colin Byrne**  
Director of Technology



Here in the Blind Brook Middle/High School Cafeteria, students can use the new NutriKids system to buy their lunches.



Blind Brook-Rye Union Free School District  
390 North Ridge Street  
Rye Brook, New York 10573-1204  
(914) 937-3600  
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## STAFF

Faculty Advisor.....Rita Gianfrancesco  
Student Coordinator and Layout Editor.....Ali Dulman  
Student Photographer.....Michelle Goldstein  
Student Writers.....Alex Drechsler, Stephanie Hennings

### Fun Fact!

Did you know that  
Athletic Director James Spano  
was once Dean of Students at  
Blind Brook High School?

## Blind Brook Exchange Update

As of the 2010-2011 school year, the Blind Brook Exchange now has student involvement. The layout and design have been moved “in-house,” and are now done on Blind Brook premises. The Exchange has now been transformed into an educational and learning experience for students, presenting them with the opportunity to be involved with this important community publication. If any students are interested in joining our team, they can contact Ali Dulman at [allisondulman@yahoo.com](mailto:allisondulman@yahoo.com) or Rita Gianfrancesco at [rgianfrancesco@blindbrook.org](mailto:rgianfrancesco@blindbrook.org). Students from all of Blind Brook schools are welcome.

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