



## NYS Study Highlights District 30

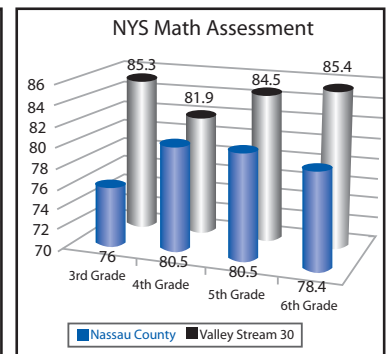
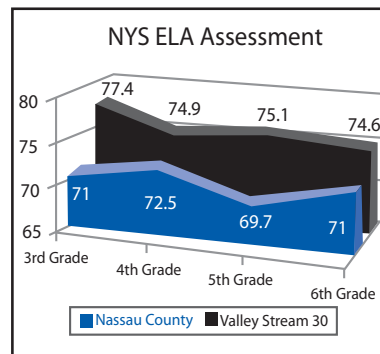
In 2004, the Education Department at the State University of Albany, in partnership with the Business Council of New York State and the New York State Education Department, formed the organization now known as **Know Your Schools ~ For NY Kids**. This organization works to make data about school performance and improvements accessible to all. As part of supporting this mission, they identify and study the practices of higher-performing schools, publishing case studies so the practices at these schools and districts can be shared by others to help them in their own improvement efforts.

District 30 is delighted to announce that Forest Road Elementary School, along with the school district as a whole, was featured in a recently published case study that highlighted schools where critical needs subgroups performed better than the same subgroups in similar schools. While the project is designed to only go into detail about one school in a district, the practices recognized in this case study are present throughout all of the Valley Stream 30 schools.

Congratulations are extended to all District staff members and students for receiving this recognition in honor of their hard work and successful efforts. To read the case study, visit the District's website [www.valleystream30.com](http://www.valleystream30.com) and click on the link on the homepage.

## District Assessment Results **EXCEED** County Average

The District continues to make progress in meeting the new higher assessment standards put in place by New York State. As noted in the chart below, on both last year's New York State English Language Arts and Math Assessments, Valley Stream 30, **districtwide**, exceeded the Nassau County schools average.



These results were not achieved overnight. Over the course of the past three years, the District has placed a key emphasis on early intervention in grades K-2. These efforts are paying off as recognized in the strong performance of last year's third graders, the first to benefit from this concentrated effort on building a strong foundation in primary literacy and numeracy. Additionally, the District's efforts in this area were nationally commended when District 30 was announced as the winner of the coveted 2010-11 Magna Award from the National School Boards Association.

While these past results are notable, the District continues to work to ensure its students' future success. As is done each year, this past summer and earlier this fall, District administrators and teachers analyzed the test results, as well as conducted individual student needs and instructional gap analyses, the results of which will be used to help guide continuous improvement.

## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR *Superintendent of Schools*

Dear Residents,

We are now well into the fall and the first half of the 2011-12 school year. Valley Stream 30 students and teachers are off to a strong start, building on the achievements and hard work accomplished last year; a year when our District's New York State ELA and math test results exceeded the Nassau County averages. On the 2010-11 assessments, I am proud to say that 100% of our fourth graders passed the New York State science test and more than 80% of our second graders demonstrated proficiency on the BOCES second-grade end-of-year assessment in the areas of ELA and math. Furthermore, 90% of kindergarten students met District benchmarks for proficiency in early reading skills.

Although these are outstanding results, there is still much work to do. We continue to strive to meet the new higher expectations of New York State and revise our curriculum expectations so that they are aligned with the new Common Core Standards that the State has adopted.

As we begin implementation of this new curriculum, you will notice certain shifts in our instructional program over the next couple of years. (Some of the language below is detailed directly from the State website,

[www.EngageNY.org](http://www.EngageNY.org).) For example, in ELA, your children will be reading a fuller balance of informational and literary texts. Science, social studies and the arts, in addition to fictional literature, will comprise the children's reading selections. Next year, 50% of the text that fifth- and sixth-grade students read in class will be non-fictional and informational in nature.

Another shift will require teachers to focus on instructional practices that keep classroom experiences deeply connected to the text on the page. Students will be expected to make evidenced-based conversational and written arguments that demonstrate they understand the text they read.

In writing, there will be a shift from personal narrative and other forms of independent writing to more persuasive writing that uses ideas, events, facts and arguments presented in texts read. There will be a focused study of academic vocabulary, with concentration on comprehension of commonly found words in grade level texts, such as discourse, generation, theory and principles. (For academic word lists parents can use to support their children's vocabulary development, visit the District website, [www.valleystream30.com](http://www.valleystream30.com).)

In math, teachers will significantly narrow and deepen the scope of how time and energy is spent in the math classroom. They will focus on concepts prioritized in the standards, providing students with a strong foundational knowledge and deep conceptual understanding. Students will be expected to transfer mathematical skills and understanding across concepts and grades. Learning within and across grades will be carefully connected so

that students can build new understanding onto foundations that are built in previous years. Fluency will be an important goal, as students will be expected to have speed and accuracy with simple calculations. Time at home and school will be structured so that students memorize, through repetition, core functions such as multiplication tables so that they are better able to understand and manipulate concepts that are more complex.

More than just how to get the answer, teachers will support students' ability to access concepts from a number of perspectives so that students are able to see math as more than a set of discrete procedures. Students will be expected to demonstrate deep conceptual understanding of core math concepts by applying them to new situations and should be able to write and speak about their understanding.

Students will be expected to use math in an application even when not prompted to do so. Teachers will present opportunities at all grade levels for students to apply math concepts in everyday situations and in other content areas, especially science.

Finally, there will be equal intensity between the work of practice and understanding in the classroom. Teachers will provide opportunities for students to practice "drills" while they also make use of those skills through extended application of math concepts.

Valley Stream 30 has already begun the work of preparing our school district to meet the challenges of the new Common Core curriculum. This past summer, our K-2 curriculum maps were redesigned so that our youngest students are already engaged in this new curriculum focus that, as per New York State requirement, is to be implemented in grades K-2 this school year and in 2012-13 for grades 3-6. Upper grade teachers, building and District administrators are in the process of attending conferences and participating in district-level workshops to prepare for curriculum changes to be implemented next fall, all as part of the Common Core adoption in grades 3-6.

We will keep you informed of the instructional changes throughout the year in building and district newsletters and during PTA and other parent and community meetings. For a comprehensive explanation of some of the instructional changes occurring in New York State, continue to check our website, [www.valleystream30.com](http://www.valleystream30.com), as well as visit [www.EngageNY.org](http://www.EngageNY.org). We look forward to another year of intellectual inquiry, growth and collaboration as we continue our partnership to ensure our students' progress in meeting 21st century learning challenges.

Sincerely,

Elaine Kanas, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

## A Quest for Education

The students enrolled in the District's Quest program are embarking on a wonderful journey into the past and present of the Valley Stream 30 community. Working with a media consultant and Director of Technology, Ryan Meloni, Quest teacher Ms. Epstein will be working with the Quest students throughout the school year on a documentary film project. Through the process of producing documentaries, students will be engaged in learning experiences that will involve them in complex, real-world projects. They will develop and apply project-based learning skills and knowledge through strategies that recognize how significant learning taps students' inherent drive to learn, to do important work, and their need to be taken seriously. Curricular outcomes can be identified up-front, but the outcomes of the student's learning process are neither predetermined nor fully predictable. This type of learning requires them to draw from many information sources and disciplines in order to solve problems and gain experiences through which they will learn to manage and allocate resources, such as time and materials.

To better acquaint parents with the program, an informational meeting for Quest parents will be held this fall. A special community Quest presentation is scheduled for the end of the year, at which time the students will present their completed documentaries to those in attendance.

### Interactive Tools for Learning

All District classrooms are now equipped with interactive whiteboards. The initiative to bring the interactive technology to the fingertips of students has been piloted by the District over the past several years and has been widely embraced by both students and teachers at all levels.

Teachers are finding the resources to be helpful in conducting whole-class teaching, which is a requirement of primary instructional strategies. Students are enjoying the clear visibility and easy access the boards give them and the added variety the boards bring to class lessons.

The District has found that the boards help to focus students' attention and increase their engagement in learning. Since the boards can serve as a multimedia portal, teachers have the ability to not only incorporate still images, but also moving images and sound into their lessons. When the interactive whiteboard is used in this way, it can address the needs of learners who find learning difficult through text-only means of learning.

Presently, a large number of teachers have the skills to use a wide range of interactive whiteboard facilities and, with additional training scheduled for this school year, teachers will increase the breadth and depth of their skills.



## Focusing on Future Curriculum Improvements

To ensure that the District meets its mission of preparing all students for academic success, the District's Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Council (CIAC) met last spring to create a set of goals for the 2011-12 school year. Through the process of looking at student assessments, existing curriculum and new expectations from the New York State Education Department, the committee developed a comprehensive list of goals aimed at continuing to raise the achievement of all students.

One major challenge faced by the CIAC this year was that NYS is requiring school districts to begin teaching to the newly implemented Common Core Standards even though students' proficiency levels will be determined based on the 2005 NYS Learning Standards. To help combat this issue, the CIAC worked to set goals that will allow District students to be successful on both sets of standards.

Below is an excerpt of the goals that are in place for this school year and the action plans that will be taken to support those goals. A complete list of the goals is available on the District website, [www.valleystream30.com](http://www.valleystream30.com).

#### Improve student performance in ELA as measured on District and State assessments.

- Articulate and implement a consistent guiding framework for handwriting instruction
- Expand the writing curriculum units in each grade to ensure that each grade has a personal narrative, informative and persuasive writing unit in accordance with the Common Core
- Establish writing benchmarks and rubrics for each writing unit
- Align K-2 ELA curriculum to Common Core Standards
- Develop an academic word list for each grade level in accordance with the Common Core
- Articulate and implement a consistent guiding framework for grammar instruction

#### Ensure successful continuation of math learning for all students.

- Align K-2 math curriculum with the Common Core
- Identify and implement evidence-based math interventions and progress-monitoring protocols

#### Provide students with a high quality, up-to-date, rigorous science education.

- Explore K-4 science curriculum program options
- Administer a pre- and post-science assessment in grade 4
- Implement a sustainability curriculum unit in grades K-1

#### Provide students with a high quality, up-to-date, rigorous social studies education.

- Utilize the integrated ELA-social studies curriculum as a framework and resource for social studies instruction in grades K-6

#### Maximize effectiveness of support programs to best meet the needs of students with specialized learning needs.

- Increase the effectiveness of co-teaching models in the District for special education and ESL

#### Ensure a learning/school environment that meets the needs of the whole child.

- Continue technology integration throughout the curriculum areas
- Assess current curriculum for the integration of technology
- Implement the strategies of 'Morning Meeting' routines in grades K-6



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## Closing Kindergarten Center Saves District \$350K

As a result of closing the Washington Avenue Kindergarten Center, Shaw and Clear Stream Avenue kindergarten students are being housed at Shaw Avenue this school year. A committee of parents, teachers and administrators from both schools who met last spring, continue to meet this year to ensure a continuing successful transition to this shared kindergarten program.

The merger of the two kindergarten programs has saved the District \$350,000. During these difficult financial times, this cost efficiency has enabled the District to continue with many other programs the community deemed key during last year's budget process. These included such items as a full instrumental lessons program, full-day kindergarten, and continued support of academic intervention and enrichment programs.

Given the already significant cost-savings benefit associated with closing the Kindergarten Center, the District is exploring the possibility of seeking a variance with the Village in order to rent the building. Renting the facility to an outside organization would bring in additional income to the District, thus creating additional funds to be used to offset costs during the budget planning process. Several early childhood programs have already expressed an interest in potentially renting the site.

## Students & Staff Remember

All three District 30 schools commemorated the tenth anniversary of 9/11. While the activities may have differed from building to building and sometimes classroom to classroom, all were united by the common theme of remembering the lives that were lost that day, as well as celebrating the wonderful country that is the United States of America.

At **Clear Stream Elementary School**, a moving tea light ceremony took place. Students placed tea lights onto a wall in the center of the stage as they entered the school's gymnasium. Each tea light represented a life that was lost on 9/11. Teachers, Richard Mansfield and Gina Lombardo, developed a video that illustrated and told the story of 9/11. The moving presentation educated students about the heroism that occurred on that day and the cohesive bond of patriotism that ensued on the days following. Additionally, former long-time principal, Robert Cohen, who was the principal on September 11, 2001, attended the ceremony to share his memories and emotions of that day.

At **Forest Road Elementary School**, children dressed in red, white and blue as a gesture of remembrance. Students in grades K-3 performed acts of kindness over the 9/11 weekend, which they shared together in school, demonstrating to each other how one person can make a difference in the lives of others. Students in grades 4-6 reflected and shared messages of hope for Forest Road, New York, the United States, and the world.

At **Shaw Avenue School**, the entire building took "The Pledge Against Hate," committing themselves to do their best to stop prejudice and to stop those who, because of hate, would hurt, harass, or violate the civil rights of anyone. Other activities included individual acts of kindness and the creation of a peace quilt by Ms. Queirolo's fifth-grade class. The quilt consisted of messages of remembrance and hope.