



# Levittown LEADER

## SCHOOL COUNSELING DEPARTMENT:

# *Paving the Way for Student Success*

Walk inside the office of a school counselor within the district and you will notice a warm smile and a helping hand. From the first anxious day of school until the tearful last one, school counselors play a significant role in the lives of students and fully embrace the district's motto, "Success for Every Student."

Sixth-graders are introduced to the school counseling department once they enter middle school. With elementary school behind them, this transformation into a middle school student with various courses, bell schedules and new peers can be intimidating. Counselors help smooth the transition from one grade level to the next, as eighth-graders face the same challenge moving into high school and beyond.

"Counselors are acutely aware of the extraordinary manner in which each individual changes from year to year," said Mark Curtiss, Division Avenue High School guidance chairperson. "The counselors' role is to work closely with the students to assure that they are equipped, both

socially and academically, to handle the rigors of each subsequent grade level and beyond."

To enrich each student's school experience, school counselors are tasked with creating schedules and discussing concerns or changes with students and families. They provide an abundance of support when situations between peers arise or when personal and family issues pop up that may interfere with a student's ability to do well in school. School counselors also conduct group and individual counseling sessions for those working on study skills, social skills, stress, anxiety management, school avoidance and bullying. This helps students know that they are not alone and will help them grow into stronger students and individuals.

Development of a strong character is at the forefront of a counselor's work in the Levittown Schools. This includes seminars on fostering empathy, kindness and the maintenance of a positive learning environment in our schools. The prevention of cyberbullying is also



*The Division Avenue High School and MacArthur High School guidance department. Pictured from back left: Chairperson Elizabeth Hammer, Patricia Mirando, Cormac Conaghan, Colleen Lang, Stacy Phillips, Jeanne Bernard, Elizabeth Shapiro, Nikki McNerney and chairperson Mark Curtiss. Front row from left: Sharlene Defendini, Elizabeth Thompson and Lynn Castellano.*

an important part of their work. From advising clubs to educational programs, school counselors build better students and individuals.

"Our middle school counselors strive to promote a positive school environment, and our hope is that students observe us as positive role models and members of a wonderful team that works together to support them," said Maura O'Sullivan, middle school guidance chairperson. "Positivity is contagious and our hope is that the more students we can reach with these programs and activities, the more likely it is that the positivity will spread."

Time flies once you enter the high school. Before tossing that cap into the air, students must carefully evaluate their course selections, maintain their grades and search for the right fit post-high school. It can be overwhelming for any teenager, but high school counselors work with students and their families

individually, discussing their grades, postgraduation plans, college choices and the admission processes to find what fits a student best.

"Through these personalized meetings, strong home and school communication is established and allows the counselor to be aware of individual student needs and circumstances," said MacArthur High School guidance chairperson Elizabeth Hammer. "Counselors also follow up multiple times throughout senior year to assist with the process by reviewing applications and providing feedback on activity sheets and essays."

There is no doubt that school counselors wear many hats during the year, but their ultimate goal is to be an advocate for students. Growing up can be difficult – socially, emotionally and academically – but with a school counselor by your side, you are in great hands for #SuccessAtLPS and beyond.



*The Jonas E. Salk Middle School and Wisdom Lane Middle School guidance department. Pictured from left: Michelle Steward, John Caulfield, Michelle Lyons, Meghann Hodge, chairperson Maura O'Sullivan, Christine Elder and Dominic Campagna. (Not pictured: Barbara Loveland)*

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### LEVITTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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# SCHOOL COUNSELING DEPARTMENT: *What Should You Know*

## Sixth Grade

- Orientation is held for incoming students and parents in May and at the start of each school year to welcome them to middle school. Counselors explain their roles and the scheduling process.
- Sixth-graders get acclimated to their new buildings with the Middle School 101 program. During the seven-week push-in program, counselors facilitate topics such as organization, time management, study skills, goal setting, empathy and bullying prevention to help with the middle school transition.
- In January, school counselors invite parents to an informational meeting for their sixth-graders. These meetings inform parents of schedules and the curriculum for students entering seventh grade.



## Tenth Grade

- As students enter their second year of high school, involvement and academics continue to play a large role in each student's growth. The following are important for a positive sophomore experience:
- With the help of their counselor, students will speak about the option to take the October PSAT and review their results in December.
  - Explore career options by completing a career interest inventory on Naviance.com and familiarizing themselves with the site.
  - To prepare for the college process, students register for SAT Subject Tests.
  - If enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, preparing for the exams held in May.
  - Begin visiting college campuses to get a better idea of programs, scholarships and more.

## Twelfth Grade

- In the final stretch of high school, seniors meet with their counselor to review their graduation status and transcript. They are also encouraged to do the following to prepare for post-high school life:
- Register for the SAT/Subject Tests and ACT.
  - Confirm they are registered for Naviance.
  - Ask their counselors and teachers for letters of recommendation.
  - Attend college application workshops and prepare applications.
  - Attend Financial Aid Night and if required, file a College Scholarship Service Profile.
  - Keep an open mind while attending college fairs and open houses.
  - Apply to colleges and scholarships while staying on top of acceptances, rejections and waitlist notices.
  - MOST IMPORTANTLY: Avoid senioritis!

## Seventh Grade

- Parents are invited to an informational meeting for their seventh-graders. These meetings include a personalized review of the scheduling process.
- Students explore future career options. Halfway through the school year, school counselors work with seventh-graders to complete a career survey and research careers that are identified by the survey as well as discuss areas of interest for the students.
- Seventh-graders have the opportunity to become a peer tutor, helping their fellow classmates grow and succeed. This partnership, facilitated by the counselors, promotes the development of empathy, self-confidence, interpersonal skills and more.

## Ninth Grade

- In their first year of high school, students are encouraged to be active participants in their school. In the *Freshmen: Meet Your Counselor* program, students begin to develop a relationship with their counselor that will last through their High School careers. The following items are stressed:
- The importance of student involvement in clubs, activities, sports and volunteer programs throughout the community.
  - Self-Advocacy skills.
  - Full understanding of the National Collegiate Athletic Association requirements for students who wish to pursue athletics in college.
  - Development of an activity sheet for college which represents student accomplishments. This will be edited and refined throughout the student's time in high school.
  - MOST IMPORTANTLY: That students and parents become active participants in the scheduling process.

## Eleventh Grade

- One step closer to graduation, junior year is a critical time for students to look at their options after high school. The following are items to keep in mind as students approach the finish line of their high school careers:
- Registering for the PSAT and exploring prep courses for the SAT.
  - Once ready, registering for the SAT/Subject Tests and ACT.
  - Attend their high school's College Planning Night in February. Both students and their families are encouraged to attend to hear about important information about the college process.
  - Fully utilize the website Naviance.com to search for colleges.
  - Continue to visit college campuses in the spring when classes are in session, tour campuses and set up interviews.
  - If a student is enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, preparing for the exams held in May.
  - Begin brainstorming and organizing their college essay.
  - Student-athletes look into registering with the NCAA if they plan on playing Division I or Division II college sports.

## Eighth Grade

- School counselors meet with parents and their eighth-graders in January and February to discuss and plan their student's ninth-grade schedule. Counselors also review the graduation requirements, Regents exams and college and career opportunities.
- Beginning in the spring, high school students visit the middle school to conduct small group assemblies for eighth-graders. The high schoolers discuss ways to be successful in high school and answer questions.
- Eighth-graders participate in a three to five-week program to introduce college and what is required and involved in the college planning process.
- Eighth-graders have the opportunity to become a peer tutor during the year to assist students in need and become a junior leader. Junior leaders are eighth-graders who embrace positive actions in the school and get involved in numerous corresponding activities. They also play a large role in the district's Levittown Educators Against Destructive Decisions Week by promoting positive decisions and behaviors.



## Gerald R. Claps Career and Technical Students

- The list below applies to juniors and seniors who are enrolled in the career and technical programs. A unique part of GC Tech is the articulations with colleges and trade schools, allowing students to gain back tuition or free credits. The following are encouraged for a successful GC Tech experience:
- Participation in the College and Career Day Fair.
  - Taking note of push-in lessons with trade school representatives. This enlightens students on possible job opportunities and union options postcollege.
  - Exploring future educational options with Community College Day.
  - Parents or guardians can contact GC Tech faculty regarding trade opportunities and how these can benefit their student.
  - Working closely with outside workers such as electricians, police officers, emergency medical technicians and cosmetologists to gain real insight to help determine what career path to take.

# School Snapshots



Nicole Steiner, a sixth-grader at Jonas E. Salk Middle School, planted a tree outside of Lee Road Elementary School in memory of longtime music teacher Dr. Brian LaClair. Pictured from left: Curriculum Associate for Music Vincent D'Ulisse, MacArthur High School band director Joseph Romano, Nicole Steiner, her mother Monica Steiner, Lee Road Principal Anthony Goss, sister Cassidy Steiner and Dr. Brian LaClair's wife Elaine LaClair.



MacArthur High School senior Saajid Chowdhury was selected as a National Merit semifinalist in the 2019 National Merit Scholarship Program.



Summit Lane fourth-graders Luca Hafner (left), Kelsey Garcia (middle) and Jayden Serrano (right) learned the value of teamwork during a classroom STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) challenge called "Save Fred."

- The National Merit Scholarship Program recognized MacArthur High School senior Saajid Chowdhury as one of 16,000 National Merit semifinalists.
- The College Board recognized 237 students as Advanced Placement Scholars from both Division Avenue and MacArthur High Schools.
- The New York State School Music Association selected student-musicians Joanne Chun and Jacqueline Testamark from Division Avenue High School and Paul Giorlando from MacArthur High School to attend the 2018 NYSSMA Winter Conference in Rochester on Nov. 29-Dec. 2 and perform in the All-State ensembles. Alternates include Eileen Cha and Brandon Smith from Division and Lyle Greene and Joseph Novello from MacArthur.
- Culinary arts students at Gerald R. Claps Career and Technical Center in Chef Lauren Reganato's class explored the Levittown Memorial Education Center's greenhouse where they planted and picked fruits and vegetables for recipes.
- Upperclassmen at Division Avenue High School and MacArthur High School attended their respective high school's mini-college fair, where students met representatives from various colleges and universities.
- A total of six student musicians from Division Avenue High School and MacArthur High School were selected to perform in the Long Island String Festival Association Secondary Festival at Wisdom Lane Middle School. Students include senior Eileen Cha, freshman Isabelle Saint and sophomore Danielle Tear from Division Avenue High School and senior Saajid Chowdhury, freshman Eunice Lee and junior Valerie Thomas from MacArthur High School.
- Police science students at Gerald R. Claps Career and Technical Center learned about fire safety and the proper use of fire extinguishers with instructor Scott Downs.
- School counselors kicked off Middle School 101, a push-in program to help new sixth-graders adjust to Jonas E. Salk Middle School and Wisdom Lane Middle School.
- Jonas E. Salk Middle School sixth-grader Nicole Steiner planted a tree and donated a bench at Lee Road Elementary School in memory of beloved music teacher Dr. Brian LaClair.
- Fourth-graders at Summit Lane Elementary School in Christine Pase and Michelle Matos' class participated in a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) challenge called "Save Fred," in which students had to problem solve and collaborate.
- Second-graders at East Broadway Elementary School visited the Outdoor Learning Center where they learned about the difference between edible corn and holiday corn.
- Lee Road Elementary School officially opened its new Mindfulness Room, filled with calming objects.
- Fourth-graders at Gardiners Avenue Elementary School used uHandy, a mobile microscope on an iPad to see plants up close.
- Northside Elementary School second-graders in Ryan Shaw's class celebrated Johnny Appleseed's birthday with a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) activity in which they built a raft out of apples and tested to see if it would float.
- Abbey Lane Elementary School began piloting flexible seating options in two first-grade classrooms, giving students the ability to move with lessons and activities to increase concentration.