



Herricks Dateline

FALL 2019

HERRICKS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BOND PROJECT PROGRESS

PHASE III BRINGS MORE IMPROVEMENTS

Herricks continues to forge ahead in the districtwide capital projects that comprise the 2016 bond referendum and 2019-20 budget for new and improved facilities. Numerous initiatives were executed over the summer and brought exciting upgrades to the start of the new school year. Phase III of the bond is underway and steps are being taken to begin Phase IV.

Parking lots were resurfaced at Center Street and Searingtown schools and the Shelter Rock Academy. New lockers were installed at the middle and high schools and new library furnishings for Denton are expected to arrive later this month. High school students are enjoying their newly completed courtyard (pictured, right), and some science classes are making use of a brand-new lab (pictured above). Mechanical ventilation work is underway at the elementary schools, high

school and Shelter Rock Academy, and electrical upgrades at the high school were completed ahead of schedule.

Another exciting announcement is a feature in American School & University magazine spotlighting the new Herricks High School cafeteria. Completed in the summer of 2018 and unveiled last fall, the modern, café-style dining area was identified as an outstanding design. Steve Walsh of BBS Architects presented Superintendent of Schools Dr. Fino Celano and members of the Board with a commemorative plaque displaying the article at the September 26 Board of Education meeting.

Looking forward to next summer, the high school window-curtain wall on the



two story wing and cafeteria courtyard, and new fitness center are on the horizon, as are localized window and bathroom replacements districtwide.

“We are thrilled at how these projects are coming along,” Dr. Celano said. “The new facilities really encompass a 21st-century learning environment. Enjoying new and modern facilities has become a hallmark of the Herricks experience for our students, faculty and community members.”

Flexible Seating Suits Each Student's Learning Style

As instruction and curriculum evolve in 21st-century classrooms, it comes naturally that physical components of the learning environment follow suit. Flexible seating is making its way through the district, with new, specially designed furniture in every building. A broad assortment of progressive chairs and desks fit the wide range of learning styles that are our Herricks success stories.

Flexible seating is expanding nationally as well as regionally. The State of California Education Department noted in the article, "Flexible Learning Environments," that "children have a developmental need for movement, and flexible school furniture allows students to shift position, rock, rotate, and roll."

While some Herricks teachers began introducing flexible seating earlier on, the start of the 2019-20 school year brought a districtwide embrace of the concept. Items including floor desks, standing desks, stability ball chairs, stools, bean bag seats, benches and other similar furniture were acquired over the summer and assembled for opening day. As differentiated instruction often gives students opportunities for choice in terms of assignments, books, etc., flexible seating does so kinesthetically. Students make their selection based on their own learning styles, needs and preferences.

As part of this year's new-teacher orientation, veteran teacher Michele Petrone led a workshop about flexible seating for the incoming staff members. During the first few weeks of school, teachers discussed the new furniture with their classes and explained how to use

it appropriately. They emphasized the consistent goal of improving learning and engagement. Students experimented with different options to ascertain the seating styles that work best for them. While some opt for the traditional desk and chair, others benefit from standing, engaging their core and legs, or sitting at a different angle. Teachers continue to convey to students that the options are intended to enhance their academic performance and alertness.

Teachers have observed that the new desks and chairs help prevent restlessness, hence lessening distractions. The changing landscape of the classroom also ties in with the district's mindfulness and social-emotional learning endeavors, as it encourages students to be self-aware and attentive to what helps them learn and what does not.

Herricks High School English teacher Jessica Lagnado shared positive feedback about flexible seating at the secondary level. She noted that standing desks, which include swing bars, allow students to "rock back" into focus, while pod stations enhance their ability to collaborate and communicate with one another.

One of Center Street School's pioneers in flexible seating is teacher Karen Maiello, who phased it in gradually. She had always allowed students to stand or sit however they pleased at their desks, so long as it was safe, and was further inspired by the Responsive Classroom program's practice of not assigning initial seats.

"In this way the children see the whole classroom as theirs," Ms. Maiello said. "So, my first step was to do that with traditional seating. The students did not have an assigned seat and they switched seats during the school day."

She eventually brought in some items that allowed students to have some alternative seats, and ideas grew and spread from there.

Searingtown Elementary School student Sreya Sanyal prefers a stool and high desk.

"I think I pay attention and do good work in that spot," she said. She noted that flexible seating "gives kids an opportunity to sit where they want – desks and chairs might not work for them. If they don't like a spot or find it distracting, the next day they can change."

"When kids aren't confined to traditional seats or seating arrangements, their focus turns to the task at hand rather than their comfort level," Ms. Lagnado said. "It's been wonderful watching our students make different choices about where they want to work each day, and the fact that they are always moving about the room fosters relationships with their peers that might not otherwise occur."

"Our classroom design and pedagogy demonstrate our commitment to differentiated instruction and the 21st century competencies of collaboration, creativity, communication and problem solving," Superintendent of Schools Dr. Fino Celano said.

"Flexible seating creates and fosters a warm and welcoming environment where students begin to develop autonomy of themselves and their learning. Flexible seating helps to facilitate the important conversation around 'how do I learn best?' Through this process, students learn to think metacognitively and begin to understand who they are as a learner. When students take ownership of their own learning they are more willing to think creatively, work collaboratively and take risks."

– Searingtown teacher Melissa Blady

CENTER STREET



DENTON AVENUE



SEARINGTOWN



HERRICKS UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
999B Herricks Road
New Hyde Park, NY 11040

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Superintendent of Schools

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NATIONAL MERIT RECOGNITIONS

Herricks High School has again topped the charts with high numbers of National Merit semifinalists and commended students. Seniors have earned a total of 37 recognitions in the 65th annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

Congratulations to Nicole Chen, Jenna Chin, Gloria Kang, Rohan Khanderia, Christopher Lum, Daniel Min, Michael Paciullo, Shreya Patel and Rahul Singhal (top right) for achieving the prestigious semifinalist distinction, and to commended students Kristen Aloysius, Derek Chen, Ashley Chopra, Mamerto J. Gamboa, Colin Hwang, Xavier Jiang, Greshma John, Jason Jong, Minji Kang, Timothy Lai, Jonathan X. Lee, Jonathan K. Leung, Jared R. Martin, Nicholas W. Newsome, Karina Ng, Jocelyn Park, Swara Y. Patel, Christopher M. Piccirillo, Kathryn E. Ritchie, Manan Shah, Benjamin Shim, Aditya K. Sunar, Mary Tsahas, Jesse Wang and Kaitlyn R. Yoo (bottom right).

These designations were bestowed upon students based on their 2018 Preliminary SAT scores. Honorees placed among the top 50,000 of more than 1.5 million students who entered the competition by taking the exam, which serves as the National Merit Scholarship qualifying test.

