In the 21st century workplace, technology is being used to collaborate on projects from virtual offices, and to communicate with businesses and individuals across the globe. Technology is facilitating the creation of new art forms and innovative products. Providing students with similar experiences and opportunities as part of their school career is critical for their future success.

As part of a new technology initiative, every sixth grade student in Prodell Middle School has been issued a Chromebook for use at home and in school. Chromebooks use the latest Google education software. This software, called G Suite, creates a learning environment in which students can access their projects from any device and collaborate with other students on the same project at the same time. Teachers can assign projects, give feedback to students, and utilize interactive learning experiences to support learning.

The District has provided G Suite accounts for all students and staff. These accounts are a collection of free productivity tools to help students and teachers interact seamlessly and securely. These web-based applications consist of storage space, documents, spreadsheets, presentation tools, calendars, website creation applications and a “Virtual Classroom.” These classrooms are a blended learning platform that facilitate the creation of assignments in a personalized, secure and paperless environment. Students access them to not only retrieve work, but also submit assignments. Teachers can monitor the progress of each student’s assignment and post announcements in the classroom; where students in that particular class can correspond with one another. The platform also enhances the home-to-school connection, as instructors are able to invite parents to view announcements. “Chromebooks, in conjunction with G Suite, provide our students with digital tools that foster collaboration and communication,” said Peter Esposito, District Director of Technology. Over the past year, in order to prepare for the new 1:1 program, the District has provided G Suite training to its staff in the use of Google Classroom.

To facilitate choosing a device, the District reviewed an island-wide survey of school districts that currently have a 1:1 program, consulted with Districts with successful programs, and reviewed the functionality of each device. Demonstration models were tested by instructional staff for utility, and tested on the District’s information technology infrastructure before the district finally selected the Lenovo N23 Yoga Touchscreen Chromebook. This Chromebook was selected for its versatility to function as a laptop or a touch screen tablet, its ability to meet curriculum expectations and its durability.

Students were excited as the devices were being handed out this fall. As students have had time with the devices they have become more fluent on collaborating together on digital projects, communicating with their teachers on their progress and using the G Suite applications as a tool to assist learning.
Those courses include such academic areas as United States history, statistics and biology. For a complete listing of the students with the chance to enroll in college-level courses while still in High School and receive college credit, advanced their performance on national AP exams. The District’s Advanced Placement program is just another avenue to provide As a result of their scholastic dedication and performance, 33 current Shoreham-Wading River High School students applied toward a degree at any State University of New York school or may be transferable to other dual majors, minors and/or study abroad. The credits earned through the Excelsior Program can be applied toward a degree at any State University of New York or may be transferable to other colleges and universities. In addition to this unique opportunity, the District also partners with SUNY Farmingdale to offer college credit for additional high school courses.

Awards of Honor and Distinction

As a result of their scholastic dedication and performance, 33 current Shoreham-Wading River High School students and 42 members of the Class of 2017 have been honored by the Board as Advanced Placement Scholars. The designation was given in recognition of each student’s demonstration of exceptional college-level achievement through their performance on national AP exams. The District’s Advanced Placement program is just another avenue to provide students with the chance to enroll in college-level courses while still in High School and receive college credit, advanced placement, or both. As a result, the District currently offers 18 Advanced Placement course options at the High School. Those courses include such academic areas as United States history, statistics and biology. For a complete listing of the students named AP Scholars and for more information about the different levels of honor, please visit the District’s website.

Innovative Targeted Support

Identifying where students need support or enrichment is an ongoing priority of our District. This year, after reviewing several digital products to facilitate that important work, the District has chosen to implement a diagnostic tool to support personalized learning in English Language Arts and math instruction. These two research-based, adaptive computer assessments use advanced technology to provide a customized evaluation of each student, and to gauge growth and performance over their K-12 career. For English Language Arts, the District is using i-Ready in all grades and, in math, it is being utilized for kindergartners through second grade. Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces, known as ALEKS, is being used for grades three through 12. The i-Ready program adapts to each student, providing easier or harder questions depending on their answers to previous questions, and helps teachers identify and understand causes behind any difficulty the student may have with the material. ALEKS uses periodic “knowledge checks” to identify strengths and weaknesses in math and creates an individualized learning path for each student. The District has chosen two factors that help teachers to tailor instruction to benefit the student. The information obtained will help teachers and parents identify topics that may need additional targeted support for remediation or enrichment. Both programs include computer assisted instruction options that can be created to align to the needs of individual students. Two workshops have been provided for parents to provide an overview of both programs and our instructional staff have received training on the administration and use of these innovative tools. Throughout the school year, instructional staff will receive ongoing support in best practices for using them to support student learning. After each diagnostic, given to a student, will occur a report on how their students are progressing. For more information on these two programs and to access the parent presentations, please visit our website. 

"These results are a tremendous source of pride for our High School and District,” said Principal Frank Pugliese. “To have so many achieve this status is a testament to the caliber of students we have in the Shoreham-Wading River community and the strong educational program provided in our schools.”

Supporting Students, Realizing Results

"Beginning a college transcript while still in High School by taking these challenging courses is a wonderful experience for our students that not only sets them apart when applying to college, but also gives them a significant advantage when enrolled,” said Superintendent of Schools Gerardo Poole.

Shoreham-Wading River is among a small, but significant group of Suffolk County School Districts that implemented the AP Capstone program last year, with students enrolled in the foundation course, AP Seminar. Those students have returned this school year to complete the second course of the program, AP Research. The new cohort of AP Capstone students include 23 students enrolled in the AP Seminar for the year and the year prior, who advanced in their research work.

Part of the thinking behind the AP Capstone program, and the District is seeing the benefits of the academic and intellectual experience it provides for students. AP Seminar provides students the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills by exploring issues of interest such as innovation, sustainability and technology. They learn to work collaboratively with peers on a team project and presentation, must complete an individual research paper and presentation, and have the opportunity to take four additional AP exams. The requirements for AP Research, the capstone of the AP Capstone Diploma, are similar and build on the AP Seminar. Students must design and plan a research-based investigation on a chosen subject. Colleges and universities have high interest in this new AP program as it aligns well with authentic college experience. The work in this course is more self-driven and culminates with an academic paper, presentation and oral presentation. Students in the program this year have demonstrated enhanced research experience has improved their research, writing and speaking skills which has helped them with with other college level high school courses. Students who earn a proficient score on each of the coursework will receive theAP Capstone certificate. Students who accomplish this and also score proficient on four additional AP exams, earn the distinguished AP Capstone Diploma.

"Capping’ the High School Experience

"Capping the High School Experience" was one of the topics that was discussed at the Rochester Convention Center in diocese, from Nov. 30th through Dec. 3rd. Selected to perform are Jack Flatley (voice), Alexandra Meli (soprano), and Justin Stuart (voice) as an alternate. Additionally, eight students from the District were selected as All-County musicians. They are Brett Cellar (tuba), Jack Flatley (voice), Juliana Kohlus (bassoon), Kerry Mantzi (piano), Amanda Mal (flute), Ryan Nowak (voice), Justin Stuart (voice), and Christopher Wypgonik (tenor trombone). They will perform at a concert at Niagara High School on Friday, Nov. 17th. The rigorous process for selecting All-State and All-County musicians includes teacher recommendations, audition scores at the NYSSMA solo evaluation festival during the prior spring, and participation in other performing organizations.
Dear Community Members,

Amazing things are happening in the Shoreham-Wading River Central School District! As this newsletter highlights, our schools and community continue to provide students with opportunities to excel. A few examples include:

- The completion of major bond projects at our elementary schools has created a sense of renewal and revitalization in teaching and learning.
- Innovative social emotional programming is enhancing our students’ mental health, self-esteem and interpersonal relationships.
- Connecting our students to the world through a 1:1 Chromebook initiative, is preparing students with the ability to function and thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.
- Providing students with concurrent collegiate programming opportunities is creating a springboard for their collegiate success.
- Our student musicians are continuing to be recognized at the County and State level.

In addition to the educational advancements that we have made, the District has also maintained a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility. As a result of two significant financial savings that were finalized this fall, the Board of Education is pleased to announce that the District has approved a motion to reduce the tax levy originally proposed last May without impacting programs or initiatives. This reduction, which will bring the levy increase down to 1.6% instead of the 4.7% originally presented, will represent a significant savings for our community residents.

There were two factors that prompted the Board of Education to lower the planned tax levy. One was a significant savings of over $768,000 on interest payments on the bond payment. The lowered interest payment was a result of prudent financial practices that led to the District being awarded a rare AA bond rating and a lower than anticipated Bond interest payment. This will result in a savings of over $5 million over the life of the bond. The second factor was the finalization of the revised LIPA PILOT payment of $852,000 which was an unknown until late October. The District had been pursuing and requesting finalization of that payment for many months. These two factors allowed the District to recalculate the tax levy for the 2017-2018 school year and still continue to provide a robust education that meets the needs of all students.

Excellent schools and educational programs require strong support from the communities they serve. Our District is grateful to receive parent and community support through their contributions to the activities of our students, attendance at school functions, and participation in school planning committees.

Sincerely,
Gerard W. Poole, Superintendent of Schools

This year, District students in grades K-5 are building a stronger social-emotional and mental health foundation with the help of the evidence-based “Empowering Minds” mindfulness program and the District’s new School Psychologist, Madeleine Everhart. This new program is designed to empower students to develop positive self-esteem, healthy relationships and stress management skills. Increasing numbers of research studies support the potential benefits of mindfulness practices for students’ mental health, academic performance, social skills and managing stress.

Empowering Minds is a cooperative learning program. Working together as a classroom community, students identify their feelings and learn how to manage their responses. They take responsibility for their actions and gain practical skills they will use throughout their lives. The Empowering Minds program includes lessons on healthy ways to deal with problems, self-esteem, positive choices and friendships, as well as concrete strategies such as breathing exercises, reflection, and classroom community conversations that students can use to deal with troubling emotions. Through the program’s activities, students are encouraged to recognize and express their emotions in positive ways. Students learn, in age appropriate ways, the importance of possessing and utilizing positive character traits such as self-control, persistence and reflection.

In a recent role-playing activity with third-graders at Wading River Elementary School, Ms. Everhart led the students in the strategy of turning the accusatory statement of “You make me angry” into a reconciliatory statement such as “I am feeling upset by what happened.” This strategy was well-received by students and is designed to empower them to handle conflicts peacefully.

Through her work in classrooms, Ms. Everhart is also helping all teachers utilize these strategies with students. Supplemental information for teachers and parents can be found on a website that Ms. Everhart created; www.empoweringmindsswr.weebly.com. The website provides resources such as curriculum objectives, supporting literature, links to practice materials and motivational activities such as role-playing and hands-on engagement opportunities.
As part of the community-approved bond project, the District completed a number of exciting new construction projects this summer and early fall. District students were thrilled to begin school in these new vibrant learning environments. This work included the addition of four classroom spaces at both Miller Avenue and Wading River Schools, as well as the installation of new parking lots, flooring and updates to those buildings’ gas, septic and electrical systems. Additionally, a new cafeteria and kitchen were installed at Wading River School and a new track and partial roof replacements were completed at the Middle School.