

Hempstead Classroom Teachers Association



End of the Year & Retirement Celebration



Thursday, June 11, 2026

Coral House

70 Milburn Avenue
Baldwin, New York

2026 Honorees

Educators



Sony Alexandre
Robert Amoroso
Elyse Amos
Nancy Bayat
Ronda Brown-Walker
Beatriz Caban
Danielle Curiel-Gaffney
Joelle Day
Timothy Dolan
Joselin Guerrero-Lacrete
Betsy Leib
Cynthia Harty
Shari Hauser
Terry Higgs

Donald A. Jackson
Bonita Johnson
Alexis Jovel
Yudelka Lanfranco
Stephanie Lockhart-Turner
Stephen Lux
Adolfina Mena
Dora Norris
Beatrice Ortiz
Bridget Pratt
Beth-Ann Randazzo
Mirtha Sebelen
Dorian Segure
Jacqueline Tineo

Teaching Assistants

Alba Perez
Anthony Stewart

Administrators

Dr. Sheena Burke
O'Neil Glenn



PRESIDENT'S FAREWELL

Dear Retirees,

Tonight, we honor and celebrate your many years of dedicated service to the scholars, families, and staff of the Hempstead Public School District. Throughout your career, you have given your time, your knowledge, your patience, and your heart to this district and to the children of Hempstead. We know that educators who give their all do more than teach lessons. They leave pieces of their heart with every scholar they guide, every colleague they support, and every school community they help build. That is exactly what you have done and your work has made a difference in ways that can never be fully measured.

I would like to give special thanks to Danielle Curiel-Gaffney, former 1st Vice President, and Joelle Day, 2nd Vice President. During my tenure as President, you have both been by my side, day or night, through the challenges, the decisions, and the important work of our union. Your support, dedication, and friendship mean more to me and the membership than words can express, and I will truly miss having you both beside me.

On behalf of our Executive Board and the entire HCTA membership, I congratulate all of tonight's retirees. As you begin this new chapter in your lives, may you carry with you the pride of knowing that your work in Hempstead mattered, your service made a difference, and we are grateful for all that you have given. I pray your retirement brings you joy, good health, and the comfort of knowing that you have completed your assignment, and you have done so with excellence, grace, and purpose.

With love and appreciation,

Nicole J. Brown, President

Hempstead Classroom Teachers Association (HCTA)





PRESIDENT'S FAREWELL

Dear 2025-2026 Retirees,

Retirement marks the closing of one chapter and the beginning of another. It is a time to reflect on years of dedication, service, and the countless lives touched along the way. On behalf of the Hempstead Teaching Assistant Association, I extend my heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to our retirees. Throughout your careers, you have helped support, guide, and inspire generations of scholars while contributing to the success of our schools and community. Your commitment, professionalism, and unwavering dedication have made a lasting impact that will not be forgotten.

The work of a Teaching Assistant extends far beyond the classroom. It is found in the encouragement offered to a struggling student, the patience shown during challenging moments, and the genuine care demonstrated each day. These acts, both large and small, help shape the future and leave a legacy that endures long after retirement.

As you embark on this new journey, may you take pride in all that you have accomplished and embrace the opportunities that lie ahead. We hope your retirement is filled with joy, relaxation, good health, and precious time spent with family and friends.

Thank you for your years of service, your dedication to our scholars, and your support of HTAA. Your contributions have made a difference, and for that, we are truly grateful. Congratulations and best wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement.

In Unity,

Anita Williams, President

Hempstead Teaching Assistant Association (HTAA)

2025–2026 Retirees

Anthony Stewart

Alba Perez



PRESIDENT'S FAREWELL

As I reflect on this special occasion, I am reminded of why we are gathered here today—to celebrate careers dedicated to service, leadership, and the unwavering commitment to the scholars and families of the Hempstead School District.

To the members of the Hempstead School Administrators' Association, thank you for allowing me the privilege and honor of serving as your President. Your trust, support, and partnership have meant more than words can express. Together, we have navigated challenges, celebrated successes, and advocated for what is best for our schools and our members. Although I am retiring, please know that my commitment to supporting and uplifting others does not end here. I will always be available to offer guidance, encouragement, and support whenever needed.

To my fellow retirees, congratulations on reaching this remarkable milestone. Retirement is not the end of the journey—it is the beginning of a new chapter filled with opportunities, adventures, and well-deserved time to pursue the passions that bring you joy. Thank you for the countless contributions you have made throughout your careers. May this next phase of life bring you happiness, good health, and fulfillment.

Finally, to the entire Hempstead School District community, thank you for the memories, the friendships, and the opportunity to serve alongside so many dedicated individuals. Regardless of our title or position, each of us has played a vital role in shaping the lives, experiences, and futures of the scholars we serve. Together, we have each contributed in our own way to the growth and development of our scholars, and that work remains among the most meaningful responsibilities we can undertake.

*It has been an honor to be part of this extraordinary community.
God bless you all.*

*Dr. Sheena Burke, President
Hempstead Schools Administrators' Association (HSAA)
Tiger4Life*

Elyse Amos

My career in education began 38 years ago, spanning five decades. I am forever grateful for the support of my family, friends, staff, and students who empowered me to be a teacher of excellence and receive a New York State Teacher of Excellence Award. I have been blessed to teach thousands of students in both public and private schools. This year, my very first class is celebrating their 50th birthdays. Happy Birthday, beautiful beings!

Throughout my career, I served as a 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grade classroom teacher, science teacher, resource room teacher, AIS teacher, staff developer, professional developer, curriculum specialist, teacher mentor, TRACT teacher, and IB PYP Coach. My experiences have been vast, filled with both successes and challenges. No matter the circumstance, I worked to create learning environments that were inclusive, collaborative, and safe. Every student who entered my classroom was supported, academically challenged, and valued.

I was an HPS educator for 29 years and four months. For more than one-third of those years, I worked without receiving a raise—not even a penny. We punch in every morning, every afternoon, and many evenings as well. To many within HPS, that number may mean nothing. To me, it had value. I encourage everyone to visit [SeeThroughNY](#) and compare how fellow Long Island public school teachers are valued.

I worked in two elementary schools within HPS. One was M.G. Rhodes School, where everyone was heard, supported, and valued. Staff, parents, and students were family, even under the poorest working conditions. The conditions did not define us—the people did. After M.G. Rhodes was condemned, I was transferred to Fulton School, now David Paterson School. Across my 29 years plus at HPS, I worked in two elementary schools under 20 building administrators, eight superintendents, and countless AO administrators. One AO administrator recently asked me what my “Hempstead legacy” would be. I had never heard that phrase before. My legacy is not for me to define. It belongs to the thousands of students whose lives I was fortunate enough to teach.

To my students: Thank you for allowing me to inspire, challenge, and empower you during the months we shared together. Harness the skills and global minded attributes to help make the world a better place.

To HPS: Model what you expect teachers to teach.

To my colleagues: Know your value, take action, focus on “control versus concern,” and continue being the incredible educators you are. My final day at work will stay with me forever. You made me cry, smile, laugh, feel valued, and reminded me what education is truly about.

To my fellow retirees: Congratulations. May this next chapter bring health, peace, and happiness.

To my family: Now my time can be shared unconditionally.

To all: Celebrate more.



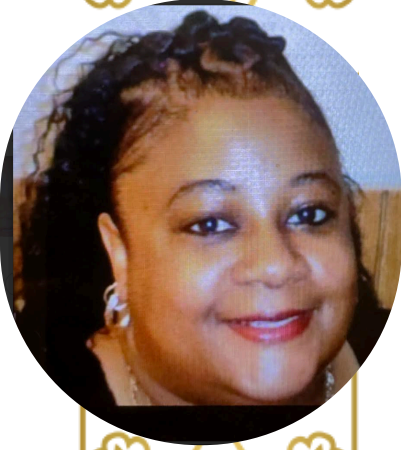


Nancy Bayat, Ed.D.

Beginning in Brooklyn, then Queens, and eventually within Hempstead Public Schools, I've been fortunate to work with students of all ages who come from varying backgrounds and have diverse interests. It's been my honor to teach creative young learners who bring their own perspectives and experiences to the classroom, driving instruction to places I never could have imagined.

Teaching talented kids while studying disciplines such as art, history, and early childhood literacy and language was a true gift. The purpose built through collaborative engagements with my students and colleagues has given me an invaluable part of who I am.

Ronda J. Brown-Walker



With a heart full of gratitude, I give all honor and glory to God, who has ordered my steps and sustained me throughout every season of my life. For 41 years, I have been truly blessed to serve in education with passion, purpose, and unwavering dedication.

As I prepare to retire, I am filled with bittersweet emotions. I began my journey at Jackson Annex as a student and later returned as an educator, making it a true full-circle experience. Along the way, I became a proud graduate of the HPS system, shaped by the very community I would later have the honor to serve.

I earned my bachelor's degree from Buffalo State College, completing a dual major in regular education and special education, and later received my master's degree in special education from Hofstra University. While at Buffalo State College, I pledged Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated in the fall of 1982. This esteemed sisterhood has profoundly influenced my personal and professional growth, strengthened my leadership abilities, fostered lifelong relationships, and inspired a deep commitment to service and community.

My personal journey began at Jackson Annex in the second grade, where I befriended a classmate who once sent me a note asking, "Do you like me, yes or no?" Years later, that friendship blossomed into marriage. Together, we have raised four wonderful sons—Nelson Jr., Ryan, Ryell, and Ryaire. We now take immense pride and joy in our three lovely grandchildren, Zara, Zavier, and Rylee.

The experience of working in the district for two years as a regular and permanent substitute ignited my passion for education and prepared me for the next 39 years between Jackson Annex and Rhodes Academy Schools. I proudly contributed to numerous school committees and activities, served as Union Representative, and dedicated many years to supporting students through various after-school programs.

What a remarkable journey it has been—one filled with growth, commitment, and deep understanding. I will always cherish the countless memories shared with the students I've taught, the families I've connected with, and the colleagues who have become like family. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have touched so many lives in ways that will endure for a lifetime. I take great pride in dedicating my time, energy, and heart to a profession that I truly love.

"Let the beauty of what you love be what you do." —Rumi



Beatriz Caban

For the past two decades Beatriz Caban was an educator who stepped far beyond the traditional boundaries of teaching. As a fully bilingual ENL high school teacher, she didn't just teach English; she built a sanctuary for the most vulnerable students entering the doors of Hempstead High School. Ms. Caban established the Intensive Literacy Program for our high school's SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education).

Her classroom welcomed adolescents who arrived with only 1st-to-3rd-grade literacy skills in their native language—and in many cases, children who had never spent a single day inside a school building. With unwavering patience, deep diagnostic expertise, and bilingual fluency, she accomplished what many thought impossible. She met these students exactly where they were, transforming raw determination into foundational literacy and academic confidence. To her students, she was never just a teacher. She understood that a child cannot learn to read or write while carrying the crushing weight of survival. Working with youth enduring severe PTSD, trauma, and deep systemic challenges, she assumed the roles of advocate, protector, counselor, and anchor. Additionally, she created a culturally responsive environment where trauma was met with healing, fear was met with safety, and gaps in formal education were bridged with boundless love and dignity. She taught her students how to navigate a new world while fiercely validating their pasts. Ms. Caban has had the privilege of teaching every level and grade at the high school with success and passion.

In addition to her teaching duties, Beatriz Caban took on a wide range of other responsibilities including being a translator for the district, working on Saturdays in the AIS Program, as well as working in the Newcomer's After School Program. Because of her expertise working with Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education, she also facilitated specialized workshops for staff. Furthermore, Ms. Caban served as a Building Union Representative for five years and always stopped what she was doing to answer a colleague's question; she also served as a Mentor Teacher for new teachers and as a Cooperating teacher supervising student teachers during their practicum.

Beatriz and her husband Orlando of 38 years will now enjoy retirement in Florida and New York while visiting their children Ernesto and Shelby and their families. Beatriz will be able to spend time with her granddaughters, Grace and Sofia and grand puppies Myla and Charlie. In her leisure time, Beatriz enjoys gardening, collecting shells on the beach, exercising, reading, and travelling. She plans on taking art classes as well as learning how to surf.

After 20 years of tireless service to the Hempstead Union Free School District, she leaves behind a legacy that cannot be measured by test scores alone. It is measured in the lives she saved, the voices she unlocked, and the generational trajectories she fundamentally altered. As she begins this next well-deserved chapter, her colleagues, her students, and the entire Hempstead community stand in awe of a career defined by absolute devotion, radical empathy, and transformative impact.



Danielle Curiel-Gaffney

After 36 years in education, including 23 years in the Hempstead School District, I am grateful to retire from a career that has been both meaningful and rewarding. As a special education teacher, I had the privilege of working with incredible students who taught me as much as I taught them. Watching their growth, celebrating their successes, and supporting them through challenges has been one of the greatest honors of my life.

The relationships I built with students, families, and colleagues are memories I will always cherish. In addition to my work in the classroom, I was proud to serve as First Vice President of the Hempstead Classroom Teachers Union. Advocating for my fellow educators and helping to support the teaching community within the district was a job I never took lightly. I leave this chapter with a full heart, grateful for the friendships, experiences, and lessons these 36 years have given me. Being part of the Hempstead school community has truly been a privilege.

Joelle Day

Thirty years in the classroom:

A journey of my growth, purpose, and service

I did not set out to become a teacher. My early career and dream were accounting and finance. I aspired to be in the banking industry and making power moves as a black minority woman. In fact, my first job in that industry was at Bank of Boston which is now Bank of America as a Commercial Loan Specialist. However, wanting a family and knowing the need to be available for my family soon had me change the trajectory of my future. Therefore, I thought about my father as a guidance counselor and how he was home when my sisters, brothers and I were home. This knowledge and experience helped guide me in making my decision to become an educator.

My thirty-year journey in education has been defined by growth, resilience, and deep commitment to my students and even my colleagues when I served as the Subject Matter Specialist. Each chapter of my career shapes not only the educator I became, but also the person I am today at the end of my journey. From my first year of teaching 4th grade at Milton Olive Middle School in Wyandanch, to my formative years as an elementary teacher at Fulton Elementary (David Paterson) in Hempstead and ultimately to twenty-four meaningful years as an ENL teacher at Hempstead High School, my path reflects a lifelong dedication to learning, equity and student success.

I began my teaching career in Wyandanch as a fourth-grade teacher, full of enthusiasm, determination, and nervousness. That year was foundational even though I had the opportunity to teach students in Freeport and Uniondale. I learned that teaching requires more than lesson plans and textbooks. It required patience, adaptability, and genuine care for each child in my classroom. My students faced many challenges that required me to create a safe, engaging environment where they could thrive. Wyandanch taught me how to manage my classroom and develop relationships with families.



My second year led me to Hempstead, where I served as an elementary teacher for 5 years. Those years allowed me to deepen my instructional skills and grow as an educator. Then, I went to Hempstead High School for the most significant chapter of my career when I became an ENL teacher for twenty-four years. This role allowed me to combine my passion for teaching with advocacy for multilingual learners as a teacher and as the Subject Matter Specialist. In this role, I had the opportunity to be a part of decision making and supervising teachers. I became not only a teacher, but a supporter, mentor, and advocate. I focused on helping students develop their language proficiency in English while supporting their native languages and cultural identities.

As I reflect on my thirty years in education, I feel immense pride and gratitude. Each school, role and group of students contributed to my growth as an educator. Teaching has been more than a profession for me, it has been a calling, I can honestly say thank you to the Wyandanch and Hempstead Community for giving me the opportunity to serve their children by allowing me to be an integral part of their school districts.



Timothy Dolan



I come from a Theatrical family, but I didn't always love the Theater. In fact, I turned away from it after High School. But the Theater has a way of getting its claws in on you and not letting go! It started with my parents, who had met in graduate School. They put me in a Summer Stock production when I was 10 years old. They were both from New York but had moved to Boston where they started a Professional Theater. I watched my Father and Mother work together on productions for several years. I was first in a production that my Father directed when I was 10 years-old. I had other interests.

I went to college for History/Asian Studies and spent over a year living in Taiwan. I had my first Teaching experience in Taiwan. After college I worked in small Community Theaters in and around Boston before moving to New York. I struggled quite a bit but had some success. I worked in Off and Off-off Broadway Theaters and did quite a lot of Regional and Children's Theater. I also got to do some background work in movies and was actually a stand-in for both Michael J. Fox and Woody Allen. When my wife Darlene and I decided to get married I went back to school for Teaching. The best move I ever made. Over the years, I've taught English, History, Work Based literacy, and Adult Ed. I've also worked as a technology administrator for Nassau BOCES. But I kept performing on Long Island in several different theaters.

During my career as a teacher my experience teaching Theater at Hempstead High School has been my favorite. It hasn't always been an easy situation, students not showing up or not putting in the work, but in the end they have never disappointed me.

As Dorothy says in The Wiz, "I'll miss you most of all." I have enjoyed my time here and will continue to visit for the upcoming productions, if you let me.

-Tim

Joselin Guerrero-Lacrete



When she looks back at her life, Joselin Lacrete knows she lived with joy every episode of it. Joselin was born in the Dominican Republic more than 5 decades ago, but it feels as if just yesterday she arrived in New York City, graduated from J. F. Kennedy High School, and obtained a Mathematics degree from City College of New York in Manhattan. When she thought she had found the love of her life (mathematics), she met the real love of her life (Steven). Shortly after she married him, they had 3 amazing children.

After living in Brooklyn and teaching in the city for a few years, Joselin moved to Long Island to conclude the American Dream of raising a family in a house with a good school district, a real driveway, a backyard with a lawn, a new car, and a teaching job.

The Hempstead School District welcomed her with open arms as a Bilingual Math Teacher at the high school. After commuting from Dix Hills to Hempstead for almost 20 years, helping hundreds of students transition into American culture and improve their English fluency as well as Mathematical analytical thinking skills, it is time to say goodbye to the Hempstead Family and start packing for Florida where the sunshine, ocean beaches, and tropical weather await her!

Joselin would like to thank God, her family, and Hempstead for all their support through all these years!!!

Cynthia Harty



Cynthia Harty, a native of Queens, earned her Bachelor of Science in Biology from SUNY Oneonta. She began her professional career in advertising in New York City before deciding to return to graduate school to pursue speech-language pathology. She went on to receive her Master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology from Queens College.

At the start of her new career, Cynthia worked as a speech-language pathologist (SLP) in private special education preschool programs. From 1993 to 1998, she worked as an SLP at the Francis of Paola Preschool in Brooklyn, where she was promoted to Supervisor. It was there that she met her close friend and fellow SLP, Veronica, who would later encourage her to apply to the Hempstead School District.

After getting married in 1994 and then moving to Long Island, Cynthia began working for Nassau BOCES in 1998. In 2003, at Veronica's suggestion, she applied for a position in the Hempstead School District and began working that February at Franklin Elementary School. Over the past 23 years, Cynthia has dedicated herself to the Hempstead School District, working at Franklin Elementary, Marshall Kindergarten, the Early Childhood Center (ECC), David Paterson School, Alverta B. Gray Schultz Middle School, and Front Street School—eventually returning to where she began. Now known as Joseph A. McNeil (“JAM”), Franklin Elementary is where her career comes full circle, making her journey especially meaningful.

For more than a decade, Cynthia has truly enjoyed being part of the JAM family. She has built lasting relationships with teachers, administrators, and staff, and remains deeply grateful for their support through both joyful and challenging times. Among her proudest accomplishments are the lasting connections she has maintained with her students. Seeing her students improve their communication skills and eventually earn the title “Speech Grads” was the most rewarding achievement of all.

Many former students, now adults, continue to reach out just to say hello. Recently, a retired Hempstead teacher shared that he had met a former JAM student who spoke fondly of Mrs. Harty—affectionately known as “Ms. Speech”—and hoped to return to JAM to visit her. In addition to her work in Hempstead, Cynthia has worked as an adjunct professor at the Molloy University Speech and Language Clinic. She also supervised graduate speech interns at JAM, including one who is now employed by the Hempstead School District as an SLP.

Although it is bittersweet to say goodbye, Cynthia is looking forward to the next chapter of her life—beginning with a trip to Italy. Ciao!

Shari Hauser

Growing up, I always knew I wanted to be a Special Education teacher. Both of my parents were teachers. I remember going to work with my mom and helping my dad grade English papers. My father, a high school English teacher in Levittown, and my mother, a Special Education teacher, and Educational Evaluator in Brooklyn. They are now enjoying life in Florida.

I started my teaching career working for the DOE working for District 75. I spent 4 years there working with students with autism. I was then hired by Hempstead Public Schools on September 5, 1990. It has been a heck of an educational journey since then. To say the least, I made my way around Hempstead. I've worked in many buildings in Hempstead including; The Early Childhood Center, Marguerite Golden Rhodes School (Rhodes Academy), Ludlum School, (Barack Obama Elementary), Fulton /David Patterson School, Jackson Annex and last but not least, Prospect. Ending my time here with kindergarten was the perfect way to say goodbye. Watching kindergarten students grow from September – June is beyond rewarding.

These 26 years have passed in the blink of an eye, and I am proud that I had the opportunity to teach in Hempstead. It is now time to say goodbye. I am saying goodbye to 26 years of students, and endless lesson plans and IEPs. As my own children who are now, 20 and 24 were growing up they would say, “mom, you are always doing lesson plans and talking about your students”. I cried a few times thinking that I am leaving. I am not fully ready, but I know it is time.

There is a whole new kind of life ahead, starting off in sunny Florida as a snowbird being a full-time dog mom. I am looking forward to the new experiences, traveling with family and seeing places we never saw. Thank you, Hempstead schools, for an amazing 26 years.





Terry Higgs

Ms. Terry Higgs graduated early from Freeport High School in 1982. She quickly enrolled in Nassau Community College, where she received her associate degree in liberal arts in May 1984. In September of that same year, Terry was accepted to Wagner College on Staten Island. This was such a fun and exciting time to enjoy campus life and be a part of an organization called Black Concerns. Black Concerns addressed many of the current issues students face today as well as helping incoming freshmen get settled, show love and unity towards all people, and network. At Wagner, she studied Elementary Education and graduated in May 1986.

In September of 1986, she went to grad school at Hofstra University and received her dual master's degree in Elementary Education and Special Education in 1988. Terry traveled for a year and visited many places such as the Bahamas, Jamaica, Hawaii, the Carolinas, Washington, Georgia, and California to name a few. In 1989, Terry was hired as a permanent substitute teacher at Dodd Junior High School in Freeport for one year. In September 1990, she was hired by the Great Hempstead Public School System. She taught second grade her first year at Jackson Annex and the rest of her 35 years at David Paterson. The joy of teaching in Hempstead was a gift from God. Terry's love for all her students, parents, grandparents, and coworkers was evident in her demeanor. She truly believes in the African Proverb, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child".

Some of the most happiest and challenging times working in the district were being the head of clubs and committees such as The Drama Club, Homecoming Advisor for David Paterson (AKA Fulton), Dr. King Committee, Black History Committee Chair, Hispanic History Committee Chair, Sixth Grade Graduation Leader, Grade Level Leader, The District Committee to rename the Fulton School after the first Black Governor of New York, David Paterson Elementary School. Although, she never worked at Prospect school, she was chosen to be a part of the Ribbon Cutting ceremony and celebration to reopen the school. Working for The Hempstead Public School System was the best experience and Career one could ask for.

Terry's new journey and passions are brewing. She plans to enjoy each day that the good Lord grants me. Some of Terry's hobbies include swimming, reading different genres, playing board games, writing, and performing arts (acting). Terry is a faithful member of Zion Cathedral Church. She also enjoys spending time with her family and going to the Knicks games with her daughter, Akua Coston (sunshine of my life).

Most importantly, Terry always gives God the praise for the great things He has done, is doing, and will continue to do in her life.

Donald A. Jackson



Donald A. Jackson completed a double major in history and political science, focusing on developments in the third world societies, focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean. He then completed a master's degree in political science and history, with additional studies at the CUNY Centre in New York.

After leaving high school in Jamaica, West Indies, Mr. Jackson worked as a copy editor for a leading newspaper, the Daily Gleaner. He then migrated to the United States, where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees. Mr. Jackson continued his education at CUNY Graduate Centre in Manhattan. Mr. Jackson is a voracious reader of historical novels and political developments in third world societies.





BONITA BISHOP-JOHNSON ~ THE MUSICAL

ACT 1

SCENE 1 ~ Bonita graduated from Hempstead High School.

SCENE 2 ~ Bonita worked as a Teaching Assistant at Fulton School and Marshall School while attending college.

SCENE 3 ~ After graduating from Hofstra University, Bonita was offered and accepted a teaching position in the Wyandanch School District.

SCENE 4 ~ Bonita was finally able to get a teaching position in the Hempstead School District at Fulton School (which is now known as David Paterson). She began an after-school performing arts program.

SCENE 5 ~ Bonita transferred to the Hempstead Early Childhood Center. Bonita continues a performing arts program.

SCENE 6 ~ ECC becomes Front Street Elementary School. Bonita remains there as a teacher and begins the Empire Performing Arts Club.

SCENE 7 ~ Front Street is no more, and Bonita is transferred to Rhodes Academy of Humanities and the Arts where she continued to direct a flourishing performing arts program and also assisted in some of Hempstead High School's musical productions.

SCENE 8 ~ Bonita Bishop-Johnson retires from the Hempstead School District! She will always remember and love the children and the children's children that she has taught throughout the years.

ACT 2

Bonita continues to educate children but in a different capacity
and
She is doing whatever the hell she wants to do!

BOWS

Thank you to all (you know who you are) that have been supportive, appreciative, respectful, and kind.

Alexis Jovel

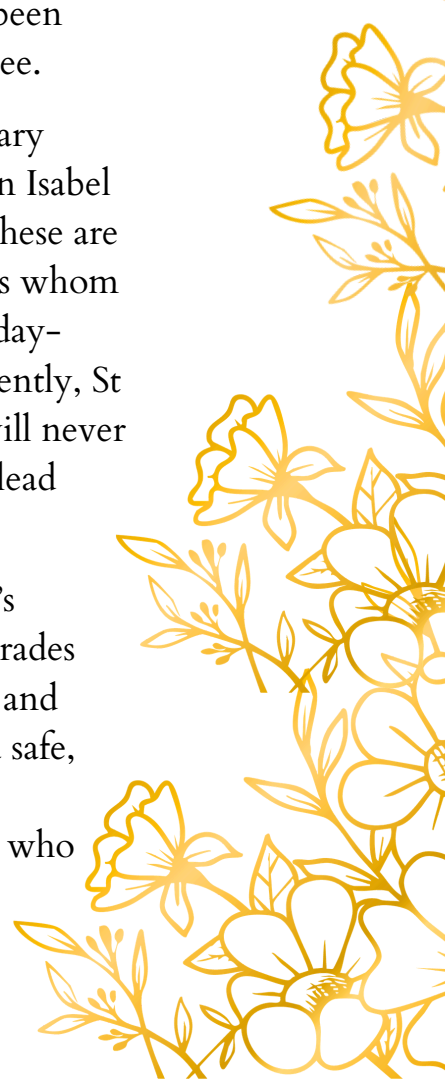
Alexis Jovel's remarkable 32-year journey with Hempstead Public Schools is a beautiful story that has come full circle. Her deep connection to the community began when she arrived as a 10-year-old immigrant, speaking no English and navigating a new world. Little did she know the school she attended would also be the same place where her teaching journey would begin.

Demonstrating an early passion for education and a deep desire to give back to the community that welcomed her, Alexis first walked through the district doors professionally as a teaching assistant. Her firsthand understanding of the immigrant experience quickly became her greatest strength, inspiring her to become a bilingual teacher.

Alexis was born in El Salvador and was herself an early reader. She recalls learning to read from her Tío Daniel, who taught her to read when she was just 5 years old. She in turn taught her younger sister Margarita to read at 4 before she even entered school. She learned to advocate and stand up for those who couldn't from Mama Julia, who not knowing a word of English attended PTA and Board Meetings to represent her and her sister and made sure they received the education they deserved. Her passion for teaching and learning has been insatiable, leading her to earn countless credits beyond her master's degree.

Upon arrival in the United States, Alexis attended Washington Elementary School, where she was inspired by teachers like Xavier Morales, and then Isabel McMahon, who were her first ESL and bilingual teacher respectively. These are only two names but there are countless Hempstead educators and leaders whom she holds dear in her heart because they inspired her to be who she is today—Spitzli, Quiles, Rivera, Lopez, Mason, Grey, Panuto, Diaz, and most recently, St John. They taught her to advocate, teach and lead from the heart. She will never forget that one Fordham professor who said, “No matter your position, lead from where you are.”

For over 3 decades, Alexis has poured her heart and soul into the district's bilingual education program, teaching English language learners from grades Pre-K to 6th. Through her lessons she built a bridge of literacy, culture, and confidence for generations of students. Alexis provided her pupils with a safe, nurturing environment where their native language was celebrated as a superpower, and her classroom was the launchpad for countless children who saw themselves reflected in her success.



She has been a staunch advocate for bilingualism and plans to continue to fight so that students receive the services they deserve in order to thrive, and become successful in their chosen fields.

Beyond her profound impact on hundreds of Hempstead students, Alexis' proudest achievement remains her family. Throughout her devoted career, she successfully balanced her love for teaching and learning, and her unwavering love to her wonderful children, Julia, Milton and Bella, and her husband, Scott.

As Alexis steps into a well-deserved retirement, she leaves behind a legacy of advocacy, resilience, and empowerment that will resonate in the lives of her former students. She is forever grateful to Diane Brown and Dr. Christopher Scott, who believed in her and gave her the privilege of a lifetime, to teach the children of the Hempstead School District.





Yudelka Lanfranco

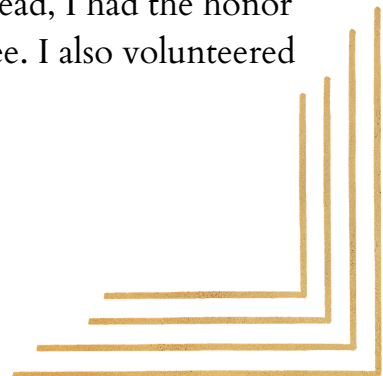
As I step into retirement, I find myself reflecting on a remarkable journey of thirty-three years in education: nine years in Hempstead, seven years in the Dominican Republic, and seventeen years in New York City. These years have been filled with growth, challenges, unforgettable memories, and countless experiences that have shaped the person I am today: a resilient and positive woman who never gave up on pursuing her dreams.

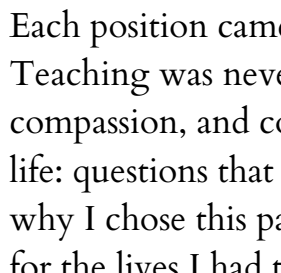
I was born in the Dominican Republic. My parents were my greatest heroes and inspirations. They taught me the value of responsibility, discipline, dedication, and love. My mother was a teacher, and my father was an accountant, so I grew up in a family that deeply valued education, hard work, and strong moral values.

I completed my undergraduate studies in the Dominican Republic, where I majored in Education as a Guidance Counselor. After getting married in 1986, I migrated to the United States. While learning English, I attended York College to complete my teaching credentials in New York.

Later, I pursued graduate studies at Brooklyn College, where I earned a Master of Science in Childhood Education with an extension in Bilingual Education. Through perseverance, motivation, preparation and effort, I achieved all my teaching certifications, including Early Childhood Education.

My professional journey in New York began with the Department of Education as a substitute teacher in Queens. Later, I worked at The Shield Institute as a teaching assistant for students with special needs, as well as a preschool teacher in an inclusive classroom. In addition, I served as a coach in the habilitation and transition program for adults with disabilities. In Long Island, I worked as a bilingual teacher in the Hempstead School District. During my years in Hempstead, I had the honor of serving as an interpreter and as a member of the Hispanic Heritage Committee. I also volunteered in many extracurricular activities at the schools.





Each position came with its own unique challenges, but it also brought immense fulfillment. Teaching was never just a profession for me; it was a calling filled with purpose, connection, compassion, and continuous learning. Every student brought something meaningful into my life: questions that challenged me, smiles that lifted my spirit, and moments that reminded me why I chose this path. I feel deeply grateful — not only for the years spent in the classroom, but for the lives I had the privilege to touch and for all the people I met along the way: supervisors, colleagues, friends, students, and their families. I will always remember the wonderful spiritual connection I had with my autistic students at The Shield Institute, as well as the strong bond of empathy I developed with my bilingual students in Hempstead. “I will always cherish them in my heart.”

As I close this chapter of my life, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my husband, my sons, my grandchildren, and my entire family for their endless love and support. Thank you for listening to my stories about students and school days, for encouraging me during difficult times, and for understanding the long hours I spent grading papers and preparing lesson plans. Your patience, love, and encouragement have meant everything to me.

Today, after postponing my retirement for two years, I understand that retirement is not an ending, but the beginning of a new chapter. As I am preparing to return to my native country, I hope to fulfill another lifelong dream: helping children in an orphanage. I look forward to embracing this new phase of life with the same curiosity, purpose, and love that guided me throughout my career.

Thank you to God, my angels, and everyone who has been part of my journey.

Love and Peace,
Yudelka Lanfranco



Stephanie Lockhart-Turner

“A truly great teacher is hard to find, difficult to part with, and impossible to forget.”

These words perfectly capture the impact that Stephanie Lockhart-Turner has had on the hundreds of students, families, and colleagues whose lives she has touched throughout her thirty-year career in education.

Stephanie’s educational journey began right here in Hempstead as a preschool student at Prospect School. A proud product of the Hempstead Union Free School District, she graduated from Hempstead High School before pursuing her passion for teaching. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Morgan State University, proudly carrying the spirit of a Hempstead Tiger wherever she went. She later obtained her Master's Degree in Special Education from Adelphi University, further strengthening her commitment to serving all learners.

In 1996, Stephanie came full circle when she returned to the Hempstead Union Free School District as a teacher. A true “Tiger 4 Life,” she dedicated the next three decades to educating, nurturing, and inspiring generations of students. Throughout her tenure, education underwent tremendous transformation. Classrooms evolved, resources expanded, expectations shifted, and the needs of students and families changed dramatically. Yet through every challenge and change, Stephanie’s resilience, dedication, and unwavering commitment remained constant.

Beyond teaching academics, Stephanie became a mentor, role model, confidante, and advocate for her students. She embraced the responsibility of helping young people recognize their own potential and believe in their abilities. Her classroom was a place where students felt seen, supported, challenged, and valued.

Her influence extended well beyond her classroom walls. Stephanie devoted countless hours to supporting her school community and advancing educational excellence throughout the district. During her years of service, she proudly served as:

- Director of the Hempstead Teacher Center
- Co-Chairperson of the David Paterson School Health & Safety Team
- Member of the district’s Professional Council
- Member of the HCTA Executive and Building-Level Nomination Committees
- Member of the HCTA Grievance Committee



Colleagues admired her leadership, professionalism, and willingness to support others. Parents appreciated her dedication and care, while former students often returned years later to express gratitude for the lasting difference she made in their lives.

More than 600 students have had the privilege of learning from Mrs. Lockhart-Turner, and each carries a piece of her influence forward. To the teachers who remain, Stephanie leaves this message: continue to see the potential in every child, lead with your heart, and never underestimate the lasting impact of your work. The seeds you plant today may blossom for generations to come.

As Stephanie retires after thirty years of distinguished service, she leaves behind a legacy defined by compassion, perseverance, excellence, and an unwavering belief in the power of education. The lessons she taught extended far beyond academics. They were lessons in confidence, character, resilience, and hope.

As one chapter closes, another begins. Stephanie embraces retirement not as an ending, but as a commencement from one extraordinary journey and the inception of new purpose, new adventures, and new opportunities. She looks forward to spending more time with her husband, David, and their children, DJ, Josiah, and Anaiah, while enjoying the many blessings earned through a lifetime of service.





Stephen Lux

Prior to teaching, I graduated from the Culinary Institute of America, opened two hotels for the Marriot, served as a Sergeant in the New York Army National Guard, ran a Greenhouse Horticulture Therapy Program for AHRC while also working for the U.S.P.S. Then, I taught second and third grades in NYC for eight years.

Lastly, I have served as an ENL teacher at A.B.G.S. M.S. for 18 years in Hempstead. In addition to teaching Contextualized Literacy for the CNC Machinery and Manufacturing Course for the Adult Education Program, I'm proud to have been a District Mentor and an Instructional Coach for the Bilingual, ENL, World Languages, and Home Languages Department.



Adolfina Mena

Greetings, everyone! Some of you already know me, we have been colleagues in these secondary schools for over a dozen years, or we have crossed paths in our district meetings. I would like to share a little bit about myself and my immediate family.

I arrived as a teenager in this wonderful country during the warm March Spring season. I was born in El Salvador, Central America. I come from a large family; I have seven brothers and one sister. My mother—a very courageous woman—emigrated to New York in the 1960s under an employment contract. My siblings and I had the privilege and joy of coming to live and pursue our education in this country. Emigrating to the United States presented quite a challenge, as one had to learn a new language and adapt to a different culture. Upon arriving in New York, I completed the 9th grade at Benjamin Cardozo Junior High School, then my brother Roberto enrolled me in high school in Queens. Coincidentally, he is here with me tonight, along with my mother, Evelia; my sister, Marlene and my son Alejandro & his wife Aracely, they are all here to celebrate this momentous occasion.

Eventually, I graduated from high school and went on to pursue my higher education at Nassau Community College, followed by SUNY Old Westbury, before finally completing my graduate studies as an educator at Hofstra University, with a minor in Spanish and Latin American Literature.

My Personal Life

I am a mother of two children and a grandmother of five grandchildren; they are my greatest blessing. My eldest son holds a bachelor's degree in aviation administration with a minor in Professional Piloting. Alejandro is a biology teacher and holds a bachelor's degree in administration. He is also a staff member within the Hempstead School District; he has worked—and plans to work again this year—at the summer school program at our high school. Furthermore, he completed his student teaching internship under the guidance of my colleagues, Ms. Darien and Ms. Leibu.

My Childhood

Since the age of five, I knew that I wanted to become an educator. I remember playing make-believe as a teacher, and various adults would play along, pretending to be my students. I never once doubted that I would achieve my goal of becoming a teacher! I was inspired to do so by the example and dedication of some of my own teachers—but especially by the fact that my mother was also a teacher and proved to be my greatest role model.





Good evening,

I began my tenure in 2002 in the Hempstead School District at Franklin Elementary School, (currently named Joseph A. McNeil Elementary School) in the role of first grade teacher. I later served as a Pre-K teacher at both Marshall and Prospect Elementary Schools. Prior to this, I was employed as a Fifth-grade teacher in Queens, NY, District 29.

It has been a joy and a privilege to serve the Hempstead school community. I have been blessed to work alongside administrators, peers, and staff that were supportive, dedicated, appreciative, creative, and willing to share their expertise graciously.

In short, I would like to thank the entire community, administrators, teachers, parents, staff, and especially my students for being the vehicle that helped to make my chosen career the purposeful and fulfilling experience it has been!

Sincerely,

Ms. Dora Norris

Pre-K Teacher

Prospect Elementary School



Bridget Pratt

Bridget Pratt, a Hempstead native and child of God, credits God's grace and guidance for leading a life centered on faith, service, and learning. With a heart for helping others — especially children, the elderly, and underserved communities — Bridget has dedicated much of her life to uplifting and encouraging others.

After a 31-year career in technology as a web developer, designer, and programmer, Bridget transitioned into education through the Empire State after-school Program at Hempstead Public Schools, serving as Assistant Director and Project Coordinator. In that role, she helped oversee the district's after-school grant program, managed a multi-year, multimillion-dollar budget, and worked alongside staff and community partners to provide meaningful opportunities and enriching experiences for students. Even after entering the classroom as a Career and Technical Education teacher, Bridget continued supporting students through the program's summer camp and after-school dance initiatives.

As a middle school CTE teacher, Bridget encouraged students to think critically, solve problems creatively, and understand not only how technology works, but why it matters. Drawing from decades of industry experience, she emphasized hands-on learning, perseverance, collaboration, and confidence both inside and outside the classroom. Beyond education, Bridget has remained active in community service through the NAACP Hempstead branch, where for several years she has served as an Executive Committee member, Assistant Treasurer, and Treasurer.

As retirement begins, Bridget looks forward to continuing to serve the community and support children and students wherever opportunities arise. As a lifelong learner and educator at heart, she believes the desire to teach, encourage, and help others grow never truly retires.





Alba Perez

Celebrating the Retirement of Alba Perez

After an extraordinary career dedicated to serving children, families, and educators, Alba Perez retires with a legacy of compassion, commitment, and community service. For 27 years, Alba faithfully served as a Teaching Assistant in the Hempstead School District, where she provided invaluable support to teachers and helped countless students achieve success both academically and personally. Her patience, kindness, and unwavering dedication have left a lasting impact on generations of children and families.

In addition to her work in the classroom, Alba served for 27 years as a Youth Program Coordinator with the Hempstead Hispanic Civic Association, where she worked tirelessly to create opportunities for young people and support families throughout the community. As a bilingual educator fluent in both English and Spanish, she has been able to build meaningful relationships with diverse families and serve as a trusted bridge between home, school, and community.

Alba's dedication to lifelong learning and professional growth is reflected in her educational accomplishments. She earned her Bachelor's Degree from Guatemala and completed additional training and certifications in Nassau Community College. Throughout her career, she remained committed to expanding her knowledge and skills to better serve the students and families of Hempstead.

Beyond her professional achievements, Alba finds joy in knitting, crocheting, reading, and tending to her vegetable garden. She has generously shared both her talents and harvests with families in her after-school programs, embodying the spirit of service that has defined her life's work.

Family has always been at the center of Alba's journey. She is deeply grateful for the love and support of her husband, Luis Roberto, and her daughters, Martha and Lilly, who have stood beside her throughout her career. Alba is also a proud grandmother to Aliana and Lucas, and treasures the time spent creating memories with her family. Their encouragement, understanding, and unwavering support have been a source of strength and inspiration throughout her many years of service.

As she begins this well-deserved retirement, Alba leaves behind a remarkable legacy of dedication, generosity, and excellence. Her contributions to the Hempstead community will be remembered for years to come, and her impact will continue to be felt in the lives of the students, families, and colleagues she has touched.

Dr. Sheena Burke

29 Years of Faithful Service to the Hempstead School Community



Dr. Sheena Burke has dedicated more than 30 years to education, beginning her teaching career in 1993 with the New York City Department of Education, where she quickly learned that every day in education brings something new.

In 1997, Dr. Burke joined the Hempstead School District as a teacher at ABGS Middle School under the phenomenal leadership of Diane G. Brown, whose encouragement inspired her to pursue her administrative certification. Committed to lifelong learning and professional growth, Dr. Burke proudly earned her Doctorate in Education in May 2024, a milestone that reflected her belief that there is always more to learn and ways to grow as a leader.

Throughout her distinguished career, Dr. Burke served as a sixth-grade Subject Matter Specialist, Assistant Principal, and ultimately Principal of Jackson Annex and Rhodes Academy, becoming one of the few administrators with leadership experience across all three educational levels. She also proudly served as the dedicated President of the Hempstead School Administrators' Association (HSAA), advocating for colleagues, supporting educational leaders, and remaining steadfast in her commitment to fairness, professionalism, and service.

Known for leading with respect, fairness, and compassion, Dr. Burke consistently held high expectations while deeply loving and advocating for scholars. She strived for excellence to ensure every child received the very best educational experience possible and believed that strong schools are built through meaningful relationships and a shared commitment to children.

Concluding a 29-year career in Hempstead was not an easy decision. Retirement represents a meaningful transition, especially for someone who believes there is always something new to learn, improve, and try in education. Along the journey, Hempstead provided Dr. Burke with treasured memories, countless lessons, and long-lasting friendships that she will cherish for years to come.

Dr. Burke hopes her love for education, dedication to scholars, and leadership legacy will inspire others to continue the fight for excellence in education and always remember why we do what we do—to be the very best for our scholars. And while retirement may mean fewer meetings and headaches, the passion for education never truly retires.





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To unify and promote matters relating to the welfare, protection and education of all members.



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