

Hempstead Classroom Teachers Association



END OF THE YEAR  
&  
RETIREMENT CELEBRATION

Thursday, June 12, 2025  
7:00 pm

The Inn at New Hyde Park  
214 Jericho Turnpike  
New Hyde Park, New York



## PROGRAM

### PLEDGE/GREETINGS

Nicole Brown - HCTA President

### PRESENTATION OF HONOREES

Nicole Brown- HCTA President  
Anita Williams- HTAA President

### CLOSING REMARKS

Alexis Jovel- Social  
Committee Chairperson

## 2025 HONOREES

Yvette Adams-Estes  
Carmen Alvarez-Holmes  
Gail Battle  
Gary Battle  
Genell Bradley  
Dr. Elfrida Bonner  
Darryl Burgess  
William Cherry  
Maria Crowley  
Claudy Dorestant  
Marisol Donnangelo  
Aziz Elmrini  
Jean Gonzalez  
Dawn Granville  
Karen Guevara  
Michael Higgins

Soh Young Lee-Segredo  
DeShaun Lewter  
Kimberly Lurry Pace  
Dana Lyons  
Desirée F. Maurice  
Hal Miller  
Robyn Outlaw  
Patricia Ortmann  
Beverly Robinson  
Xiomara Roman  
Kim Sanders  
Dearl Topping  
Ronald Tillman  
Mariam Trice  
Claudia Vaca  
Caroline Vollmer

Airleen Fernandez Santiago - *Teaching Assistant*  
Florene Faye Toliver - *Teaching Assistant*



Good evening, beloved retirees, family, friends, and colleagues,

It is my honor to share this special moment with you. This evening not only marks the end of the 2024–2025 school year, but more importantly, it allows us to honor 32 remarkable educators. They are not just retirees. They are the pillars of strength and steady hands that have supported our students and the Hempstead Public School District. With love and purpose, they poured decades of their lives into teaching, mentoring, and shaping generations of scholars. Tonight, we celebrate their service with pride and gratitude.

To our retirees: Thank you for showing up every day, not just with lesson plans or paperwork, but with love, grit, and a purpose that ran deeper than your job description. You did not come to Hempstead for just a paycheck. You came to inspire, motivate, protect, and guide. Your classrooms and offices became sanctuaries for students and staff alike. In every space you touched, you planted seeds of hope and excellence that will continue to grow for generations to come.

On a personal note, thank you for standing with the union. Whether you wore your union shirt or shared your ideas, you helped strengthen our collective voice. I am truly grateful for your support throughout my presidency. Representing educators like you has been one of the greatest honors of my life.

Now, it is your time—time to wake up when you're ready, sleep when you want, travel the world, or do absolutely nothing at all. You have earned every ounce of peace this next chapter of life brings. I pray that your retirement is filled with good health and everything that brings you happiness.

On behalf of the Executive Board and members of the Hempstead Classroom Teachers Association, thank you for being the heart of our schools. You are cherished, and your presence will be deeply missed.

With all my heart,  
Nicole J. Brown, President



## YVETTE ADAMS-ESTES

After decades of remarkable service to students, families, and educators across New York City and Long Island, Mrs. Yvette Adams-Estes is retiring, leaving behind an extraordinary legacy rooted in compassion, dedication, and excellence. A consummate professional, loving wife, devoted mother, and proud grandmother, Mrs. Adams-Estes has dedicated her life to enriching communities through education, mentorship, and service.

For more than 34 years, Mrs. Adams-Estes has worked across multiple boroughs of New York City and Nassau County, guiding thousands of children on their academic journeys. Her career began in the classroom, where she nurtured young minds as a teacher at the Hunter College Child Care Center, Boys and Girls Harbor, PS 58X Community School, and Public School 249. She ultimately worked the last 26 years in the Hempstead Union Free School District (HPS).

As a teacher within HPS she has taught grades 1-6 and has worked with students with disabilities and English-Language Learners. Mrs. Adams-Estes has never backed down from a challenge and has consistently worked to provide each student that she served with a high quality education. During her tenure with HPS she organized school-wide trips, assemblies, fundraisers, and morale-building activities for staff. She also shared her talents through demonstration lessons and parent workshops, embodying her belief in the power of community collaboration. Additionally, she built strong and positive relationships with staff members that have been extremely meaningful and long-lasting. It is these relationships that have shaped who Mrs. Adams-Estes is an educator today.

Her leadership extended far beyond the classroom. Over the past four years, she facilitated professional development centered on the NYSUT rubric,

## YVETTE ADAMS-ESTES

supporting teachers in preparing for both informal and formal observations. She also served as a TRACT Instructor for Math, English Language Arts, and Science.

In 2007, she founded Amazing Journeys, Inc., a visionary initiative focused on comprehensive educational services and youth development. As Founder and Director, she led staff and fiscal management, curriculum development, and professional development workshops for educators. Her leadership in this space demonstrated her lifelong commitment to expanding opportunities for all children and ensuring every child's journey was, indeed, amazing.

Mrs. Adams-Estes is a proud graduate of Hunter College, where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Health Education. She later received her Master's Degree in Urban and Multicultural Education from the College of Mount Saint Vincent and earned her Administration and Supervision Certificate from the College of New Rochelle.

Beyond her impressive professional achievements, Mrs. Adams-Estes is a woman of great personal strength and warmth. She credits her career and legacy to her mother, Gloria Jean Adams, whose unwavering love, inspiration, and support have guided her every step of the way. Mrs. Adams-Estes proudly acknowledges that she owes everything to her mother's enduring strength and encouragement.

Mrs. Adams-Estes has been married to her loving husband, Kirk L. Sr., for 38 years. Together, they have raised three wonderful children, Latoya, Krystle, and Kirk Jr. They are proud grandparents of three grandchildren, Kori, Christian, and Ayana. She took on the great honor of raising her niece, Gloria Monet. Her extended family includes her siblings and a host of nieces and nephews who have also been touched by her wisdom, humor, and nurturing spirit.

Whether composing the school song at the Franklin School or guiding new educators through professional development, Mrs. Adams-Estes has always led with heart, purpose, and an unyielding belief in the potential of every child. As she embarks on her next chapter, her legacy will continue to shine brightly through the lives she has touched and the communities she has transformed.



## CARMEN ALVAREZ-HOLMES

Carmen Alvarez-Holmes was born in Mineola to Puerto Rican parents. She grew up in Far Rockaway, Queens. She was the oldest of two. Her younger brother Angel lives in Lajas, Puerto Rico. Summers were spent at Rockaway Beach or in Puerto Rico with her grandparents. After graduating from high school, she was accepted to SUNY @ Stony Brook. She, her parents, and brother moved to Selden, Long Island, so that she would be closer to school. She attended Stony Brook University and graduated with a BA in Hispanic language and Literature.

Soon after, she met her husband, Ellis B. Holmes III, an alumnus of Hempstead Public Schools. He was a Music Teacher/Band Director in Hempstead for 19 years. She began to work for Health and Hospitals Corporation at Elmhurst Hospital as an Assistant Systems Analyst and moved to Ozone Park. They were married after dating for 3 and a half years. After a year, they moved to NYC, where she started working for Gouverneur Hospital DNTC as the Assistant Director of Behavioral Health.

After 5 years of marriage, they were blessed with their twins, Alessandra and Ellis Holmes IV. She continued to work and soon oversaw not just the day-to-day operations of Behavioral Health but also Ophthalmology. The birth of their third child, Angel Holmes, ended her 16 years with Health and Hospital Corporation. Fourteen months after the birth of Angel, they welcomed their fourth and last child, Eviana Holmes.

With 4 children at home, she returned to Stony Brook University and received her MA in TESOL (Teach English to Speakers of Other Languages). She worked

# CARMEN ALVAREZ- HOLMES

in various positions as an ENL or World Language until she found her forever home in Hempstead Public Schools at ABGS Middle School.

Her pride and joy are her four children and their accomplishments:

Alessandra Holmes, music teacher @ Joseph McNeil Elementary School, her twin brother Ellis B. Holmes IV, NYC Police Officer & Air Force National Guard, Angel S. Holmes, Sr. Airmen in the Air Force, Eviana N. Holmes, Calvin Klein Assistant Store Manager.

She thanks God for the wonderful friendships made along the way and really getting to know and love her Hempstead family. She will miss working with them but looks forward to this new and wonderful next chapter of her life. She will be dividing her time between Puerto Rico and Long Island.



## GAIL BATTLE

Gail Battle has been an exceptional educator for forty-two years and is known for her high expectations, progressive student performance, and utmost professionalism. Throughout this time, her greatest joy has been building connections with students and truly engaging them in learning. Capturing students' uniqueness and cultivating their creative abilities have been central to her effectiveness. She believes in a student-centered approach to learning in a structured, encouraging, and positive environment. Spend a day in her classroom and you will see students working in groups, discussing ideas, and learning from each other. Her classroom not only prepares students academically, it also promotes life-long skills such as presentation, etiquette, and pride.

Who Gail is today is because of her upbringing, education, and experiences of yesterday. She was raised by a powerful mother who exuded and instilled values, morals, and respect. It was her mother's strength that continuously influences Gail's life. Receiving her bachelor's degree from St. Paul's College (Virginia), and her master's degree from Hofstra University (New York) fed her desire to learn. The desire to teach was fostered by her three-year experience at Hempstead's Head Start program. It was there that grew her passion to develop young minds. She moved onto Hempstead Public School district to further enrich children's lives.

Ms. Battle's thirty-nine-year tenure in Hempstead Public Schools provided her with many opportunities. She taught at various schools in the district and on different grade levels, including the PACE Class (Program for Academic Challenges and Enrichment). She began at Prospect, but sadly after its closure,

# GAIL BATTLE

she was moved to M.G. Rhodes. After experiencing another school closure, she was moved from Rhodes to Joseph A. McNeil (formerly Franklin) and will finish her tenure there. In these different schools, she chaired or served on numerous committees: School-Based Planning Team, SCEP Team, Applied Learning, Kwanzaa, and a host of others.

Gail was also the advisor of several After-School Clubs, such as, Student Government Association, the Student Leadership Club, and others. In addition, she taught in the Afterschool Academic Intervention Services Program.

Ms. Battle's outstanding work ethic and dedication to students helped her earn several awards. She has received awards for high percentages of students passing and progressing on the New York State Assessments; an Academic Leadership Award for her instrumental success in helping the students at Prospect School achieve significant growth in English Language Arts; a Community Trail Blazer Award for being an inspiration and positive role model to the children of the Hempstead Community; the Above and Beyond Award for going far beyond the call of duty for students of the Hempstead School District; the Franklin Elementary School Women's History Month Recognition Award for her dedication and devotion to the students of Franklin School. Ms. Battle also received a citation and award from both the Village and Town of Hempstead in recognition of her dedication and exemplary service to the community.

This school year feels bittersweet as it marks the end of a long fulfilling chapter of her life. She is fortunate to have been surrounded by incredible colleagues, mentors, family, and friends who supported her every step of the way. She has undoubtedly left an indelible mark on the lives of students, their families, and fellow teachers. She is extremely grateful for the wonderful years of experience afforded by the Hempstead Public School District.



## GARY BATTLE

Gary Battle is an accomplished educator, coach, and community leader with a lifelong dedication to youth development, education, and athletics. He earned his bachelor's degree from St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Virginia, and a master's degree from Cambridge College in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Mr. Battle began his educational career at Roosevelt High School as an in-school suspension teacher, where he served for several years before joining Hempstead Public Schools in 1998. As the Attendance Teacher at Hempstead High School, he supervised a committed team responsible for monitoring attendance for over 1,900 students. During his tenure, Mr. Battle introduced an innovative scholarship chip system requiring students to scan ID badges upon entry. The system enhanced building security flagged students under suspension and tracked real-time attendance. It remains in use at both High School and Middle School today.

He was later appointed District Attendance Teacher by Superintendent Susan Johnson due to his expertise in attendance and registration. In this new position he worked as assistant to Mr. James Clark, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel. In this expanded role, he also oversaw residency verification for the following charter schools Academy Charter School (Hempstead Campus), Academy Charter School (Uniondale Campus), Academy Charter School (Wyandanch Campus) Evergreen Charter School and Roosevelt Children Academy.

Mr. Battle has served as coach of the Hempstead High School Girls' tennis team for over 25 years. His coaching was never just about winning matches—it was

# GARY BATTLE

about building character, teaching resilience, teamwork and helping young people discover their strength. He has conducted tennis clinics for children and adults throughout Long Island, Queens, Virginia, and Georgia. He credits much of his tennis success to tennis professional Dr. Emily Moore.

In addition to his educational and athletic pursuits, Mr. Battle is deeply involved in faith-based and civic organizations. He serves as President of the Brotherhood and Chairman of the Deacon Board at the Refuge Church of Christ in Freeport, New York, under the leadership of Dr. Phyllis Carter, where the late Bishop R.H. Carter is also the founder. Mr. Battle was also the founder of the Christian campus ministry, Willing Workers for Christ.

Mr. Battle has received numerous accolades, including Man of the Year, Father of the Year, Photographer of the Year, Tennis Coach of the Year, and the prestigious Arthur Ashe Multicultural Enhancement Award. He is a proud member of the United States Tennis Association, American Tennis Association, National Action Network, and Sisters in the Struggle / Breakfast of Champions, this organization mentor's young girls and boys, providing them with guidance, support, and positive role models to help build confidence, leadership skills, and a strong sense of community. Mr. Battle served as chairman for nineteen years for this organization. Dr. Seretta C. McKnight, Founder.

Finally, Mr. Battle served as the Hempstead School District photographer.



## GENELL BRADLEY

Genell Bradley's life is a testament to the power of love, hard work, and a commitment to personal and professional growth. A devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and successful educator, Genell has balanced her family life with a remarkable career, building a legacy of service, love, and lifelong learning.

Genell married her high school sweetheart, Dexter Bradley, a union that has withstood the test of time. Their love story has spanned over three decades, lasting an impressive 33 years. Together, they built a strong family foundation, blessed with two children: Genisha Bradley, a licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW), and Dexter Bradley Jr., a Certified Nurse. Their children have followed in their parents' footsteps, dedicated to helping others and contributing positively to society. Genell's greatest joys now come from her two adorable grandchildren, Aleena Brooke and Nailah, who bring light and laughter into her life.

Genell's academic journey reflects her dedication to personal and professional growth. She graduated from Adelphi University in 1997 with a Master of Science degree, solidifying her foundation in education and administration. Her thirst for knowledge didn't stop there; in 2001, she graduated from the College of New Rochelle with both School District Administrator and School Administration and Supervision certificates. These credentials not only demonstrate her commitment to lifelong learning but also her passion for nurturing the minds of future generations.

Genell Bradley is an experienced educator with a longstanding career in the field of special education and classroom teaching. Starting her career with the New York City Department of Education in 1988, Genell worked as a family

# GENELL BRADLEY

worker/paraprofessional at PS 384 in Brooklyn, before transitioning to a special education teacher at Public School 191 from 1993 to 1998.

In 1998, Genell moved to Long Island to continue her work in education, where she became an integral part of the Hempstead Public Schools community. Over the course of her 27-year tenure at Hempstead Public Schools, she has held various teaching positions, including Sixth Grade Teacher, Math Academic Intervention Services Provider, Third Grade Teacher, and Fifth Grade Teacher. She has taught at Joseph A. McNeil AKA Franklin School and Jackson Main, positively impacting the lives of students across grade levels.

Genell has also been deeply involved in the Hempstead Classroom Teachers Association, where she dedicated 25 years of service as a Building Representative, TRACT Center Liaison, Community Outreach Chairperson, Professional Council, and Graduate Course Coordinator. Her leadership and commitment to student development extended beyond the classroom. As student government facilitator, Genell coordinated numerous student programs such as Career Day, Student of the Month, pictures with Santa, Easter egg hunt, and school dances, for the enjoyment of all students. Through her Herculean efforts, Genell provided a sense of community and student leadership. With a passion for education and a deep commitment to student success, Genell continues to inspire and support both her students and colleagues. Her work reflects a legacy of dedication, service, and advocacy within the educational community.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Genell is a woman of diverse interests who knows how to enjoy life. She loves to travel, exploring new places and experiencing different cultures, broadening her perspective of the world. Music also plays a significant role in her life, as she enjoys listening to various genres that help her unwind and connect with others. Additionally, Genell has a deep passion for athletics, especially track and field events, which she enjoys watching and supporting. Whether cheering on athletes or participating herself, her love for sports is a testament to her active and vibrant lifestyle. Wink, Wink Genell traveled with her husband throughout the U.S.A to watch the METS play in various stadiums.

Genell Bradley's life is a beautiful reflection of dedication to family, career, and personal passions. She has built a lasting legacy through her love for her family, friends, her academic achievements, and her contributions to education. As a wife, mother, grandmother, and professional, Genell continues to inspire those around her with her commitment to growth, her love for life, and her unwavering support for the people she holds dear.



## DR. ELFRIDA BONNER

I was raised in Brooklyn, New York. As a young person, I always had a fondest for libraries and museums. I read a great deal and enjoyed reading about the world and other cultures. In my senior year at Brooklyn Technical High School, I decided that I wanted to be a therapist, like Sigmund Freud. I majored in psychology as an undergraduate and went to graduate schools and eventually obtained a doctoral degree from Adelphi University. In 2002, I came to Hempstead School District. I worked in central office and in multiple schools. I really enjoyed working with the families and students. Of all the jobs/positions I have held in my career, working in Hempstead High School has been the most fulfilling. I have been allowed to see students mature both emotionally and academically. But, most fulfilling, is when I am in the community and see former students working and thriving as young adults.

Thank you, Hempstead School District!



## DARRYL BURGESS

### True Tiger4Life by Darryl Burgess

I came into the Hempstead School District as a teaching assistant in 1994, after graduating from LIU CW Post with a BA degree in History. I started at Prospect School, where I started a Black History Club, and was later transferred to the ABGS Middle School in 1996 as a Social Studies teacher. I spent the next several years at Franklin School (1997-2002). In 2003, I was assigned to teach at Hempstead High School (2003-2014). While teaching, I also coached the ABGS Middle School boys' basketball team to an undefeated season. The following year, I went back to ABGS to coach the boys' team and teach Social Studies. In 2018, I returned to Hempstead High to finish my 30-year career this year in 2025. Not only did I teach at these schools, but I also graduated from them: Hempstead High School (1986), Middle School (1982), and Franklin (1980).



## WILLIAM CHERRY

After College, I worked as a volunteer coach with the Hempstead Youth League lacrosse. After 11 years of service to the Village of Hempstead, I had the opportunity to start coaching at Hempstead High School. My first District job was Varsity Head Lacrosse Coach in 1991. The following year, I became the Middle School assistant Football coach and the Varsity Wrestling coach. I worked nights and coached in the afternoons until I was injured at work and was told by the AD, Mr. McClellan, that I needed to come into the District to have a full-time coaching career. So, I enrolled in Hofstra University School of Education and received my Master of Science in Physical Education. I started teaching in 2000 after a few years as a substitute teacher in PE for the District. It was hard work but fruitful. I have been the Head Coach of four sports at Hempstead High School and have taught in elementary, middle, and the High School in my tenure as a Hempstead teacher. I am a member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., a Prince Hall Mason, and a Noble of the Mystic Shrine. I am a proud Hempstead graduate of the Class of '76 and a true Tiger for life.



## MARIA CROWLEY

My teaching career began in September 1990 at the Shield Institute in Flushing, Queens. I was hired by Hempstead Public Schools on November 5, 1992. It's been a heck of an educational journey since then. I've worked in many buildings in Hempstead, including Franklin School (McNeil), Early Childhood Center, Marguerite Golden Rhodes School (Rhodes Academy), Ludlum School (Barack Obama Elementary) and last but not least, the Special Education Department. I have worked alongside wonderful educators throughout the years. I have been inspired by many colleagues and principals.

These 35 years have passed in the blink of an eye, and I am proud to say that I am thankful for the opportunity Hempstead has afforded me, but it is time to say goodbye. Goodbyes can be sad, and I would much rather say hello. Hello to a new adventure full of surprises. There is nothing to regret with a job well done. Now let's enjoy the party!



~There is a whole new kind of life ahead, full of new experiences just waiting to happen. ~



## MARISOL DONNANGELO

Marisol Donnangelo is a dedicated educator with a passion for nurturing young minds. She holds a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Long Island University and a Bachelor's Degree in Education N-6 from SUNY Old Westbury. To ensure her teaching methods and knowledge remain up-to-date, Marisol frequently participated in online courses offered by various universities.

Marisol has been a cornerstone of Barack Obama Elementary School in Hempstead, New York, where she has taught students from first to sixth grade for over thirty years. Her longstanding commitment to education is evident through her active participation in multiple school committees and organizing numerous parent meetings.

Beyond her duties in the classroom, Marisol extends her educational impact to the community. She volunteered at her local church as a catechist, teaching and guiding children in their faith journey from grades two through eight. Her dedication to education also led her to work as a tutor for children of migrant farm workers, ensuring they receive the academic assistance they needed.

Marisol's commitment to helping others started early. As a preteen, she volunteered at a religious summer camp, where she read to children and performed skits, fostering a love for storytelling and performance.

In her personal life, Marisol enjoys a variety of hobbies. She loves listening to music and dancing, reading, and spending time in the great outdoors. Camping trips with her spouse Richard, their two children Phillip and Isabella, and the family pet Doxi are cherished family activities that bring them closer together.

While she is excited about the adventures and surprises that retirement will bring, she will always cherish the memories created, the friends she has made, and the opportunities that Hempstead has offered her.



## AZIZ ELMRINI

Dr. Aziz Elmrini is a distinguished mathematics educator with over 25 years of experience teaching mathematics at both the secondary and university levels.

Dr. Elmrini holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics and computer science from New York Institute of Technology, multiple master's degrees in Secondary Education and Teaching from New York University and Stony Brook University, and a Doctor of Education (EdD) in Educational, Instructional, and Curriculum Supervision from St. John's University.

In addition to his extensive academic career, Dr. Elmrini has a background in law enforcement, having worked as a New York Police Officer for several years before fully dedicating himself to education.



## Elizabeth Lisa Lauanders 🌟

**BIRTH** 14 May 1981  
Manhattan, New York County, New York, USA

**DEATH** 4 Nov 1987 (aged 6)  
Manhattan, New York County, New York, USA

## JEAN GONZALEZ

In 1987, I read every article I could find about this investigation. I was just a young adult myself, but I couldn't shake the horror – the brutal death of a 6-year-old girl, tortured by the very people who were supposed to protect her. Her name was Lisa Steinberg, though to me and many others, she will always be simply “Lisa.”

What haunted me most wasn't just what happened behind closed doors. It was that Lisa went to school almost every day. She sat in a classroom, surrounded by adults who should have noticed. Her teacher even testified that Lisa often arrived smelling of urine, dirty, with matted hair. But no one stepped in. No one saved her.

Even as a child, I couldn't understand why no one helped her. I couldn't stop thinking about her for years. I knew, deep in my soul, that I wanted to be someone who would never turn away. Someone who would notice. Someone who would act.

At first, I thought the answer was to become a police officer. When I shared that plan with my mother and explained why, she looked at me and said, “If you want to help children, become a teacher.” And so, I did.

Now, 30 years later, I look back on a career spent exactly where I needed to be. I have helped hundreds of children, not just academically, but emotionally. Whether they needed support, guidance, or just a little extra love, I was there. I am grateful I never had to rescue a “Lisa.” But for 30 years, I have protected and advocated for children every single day. I have watched them grow, learn, and feel safe in my classroom. That is my legacy.

And I leave this profession fulfilled, knowing that Lisa's story, though tragic, gave me purpose. And that purpose became my life's work.

Jean Gonzalez, Teacher



## DAWN GRANVILLE

Dawn Granville has been an educator for 30 years with prior work experience outside the district. As an employee of the Hempstead Public Schools for 22 years, working in the High School for 17 years and the Alverta B. Gray Schultz Middle School for 5 years. It is a blessing to work with a variety of educators, counselors, psychologists, social workers, etc., in the district. As a proud HCTA member and a prior HCTA union representative gave me further insights into the inner workings of administration and the board of education.

During my time within the Hempstead School district, I have taught in such capacities as Self-Contained, Resource Room, Life Skills, Inclusion-Living Environment, English, Individuals and Society. As well as an Adjunct Professor of Sociology through the Syracuse University Project Advance program to elite high school Juniors and Seniors students. My Life Skills students showcased their learning with my team by providing breakfast to teachers and staff, taking orders, and exchanging money. I will always be proud of them for that time. Additionally, I am one of two educators in the district to earn the NYS Work-Based Learning Coordinator certification years ago. I have also instructed in the after-school programs, which have included the Alternate Individual Schooling and the Homework Help programs, and Summer School. Lastly, as Chair of the Beautification committee at Alverta B. Gray Schultz Middle school, I hope that the teachers and staff enjoy the updated teachers lounge, that I, and the committee worked so diligently in creating a “calming space”. For, well, you know - “those days”.

# DAWN GRANVILLE

I have earned my NYS Real Estate License formerly with Coldwell Banker as a precursor to retirement, as well as exploring other opportunities to maintain a vibrant lifestyle after retirement.

When I'm not exploring new opportunities, I will be enjoying gardening and making jewelry, audiobook listening, and bowling. I recently developed an interest in chess as well. Sorority life with Alpha Kappa Alpha TM keeps me busy in the communities of Suffolk and Nassau counties. Finally, spending time with the love of my life-my children, Khemet and Jordan, and a host of family and friends is always special. Looking forward to the next chapter. I will truly miss you all.



## MICHAEL HIGGINS

Michael A. Higgins was born on December 28, 1962, at the former Nassau County Medical Center in East Meadow, New York. He and his wife Bernadette, have been married for 30 years and have two children, Ayanna and Jabari. He credits a great deal of his appreciation for nature, diverse cultures, and interesting ideologies to spending the past 62 years living in Hempstead, Uniondale, Alabama, Brooklyn, and most importantly, on the family farm in Aiken, South Carolina. He attended elementary school in a small town called Edgefield where everyone looked out for one another, and possessing a solid work ethic and love of family and God was a staple. Michael graduated from Uniondale High School in 1981, where he was a standout student-athlete in football and track and field. He was fortunate enough to earn a track scholarship to Auburn University in Alabama. Despite an injury-shortened track career, he recovered and later went on to letter playing SEC football and secure a bachelor's degree in international business.

Upon returning to New York, Michael took a position fundraising and maintaining the Exploring Division of the Nassau County Council of the Boy Scouts of America. A few years later, he transitioned as Director of the Talent Search Initiative at the Boys and Girls Harbor in Harlem, where he found his calling while organizing college trips, after-school activities, and esteem-building experiences for middle and high school-aged students. Inspired by their spirit and his desire to see the underserved reach their potential, he returned to school to secure a master's degree in School Counseling. He did so at the College of New Rochelle in 1998, where he worked as the Coordinator for Student Retention and taught as an adjunct professor at its Rosa Parks Campus.

His final career move was made in 1998, when he invaded the halls of Hempstead High School and for the past 26 years, has been a Guidance Counselor for hundreds of Hempstead's greatest assets.

# MICHAEL HIGGINS

In addition to serving as an educator, Michael has spent 16 years coaching track and field at Hempstead and Baldwin High Schools, where his student athletes have won 8 state titles, 42-county individual and relay championships, 92 all-county honors, have broken over 30 school records and won a Nassau County team title last season. He is also a co-founder of the Long Island Elite Track and Field Club, which provides athletic training, life coaching, and facilitates community involvement for runners 8 years of age and older.

Mr. Higgins has always been a strong believer in volunteering in his community and giving back. Over the years he has committed time to Hempstead High School as a freelance photographer, served as a mediator for the Nassau County Family Courts, was a participant in the Big Brother/Big Sister Program, a literacy tutor for the Nassau Public Library System, the coordinator for the Central Harlem Partnership's Rights of Passage program, as well as a mentor for young boys in the Sons of David Young Men's program at St. Paul's Community Baptist Church. He forever contends that "You cannot ask others to give of themselves, unless you too are willing to lead by example".



## SOH YOUNG LEE-SEGREDO

Educator, Artist, Humanitarian, and Volunteer

" I can make a difference one day at a time!"

Soh Young Lee-Segredo was born in Seoul, S. Korea, and lived in Paraguay, Brazil, and Spain. She started in Newtown H.S. as a SIFE student at age 18. She is an educator, a multifaceted artist, a humanitarian, and a community activist. She has been teaching in Hempstead UFSD since 1998 as a monolingual and bilingual teacher and now works as Jackson Main School IB PYP Coach/Coordinator. She worked in private schools, Head Start Program, the Children's Museum of Manhattan, Freeport Public School, etc. prior to coming to the Hempstead UFSD. She coaches teachers and scholars with the IB PYP platform, embracing cultural, multilingual, and global mindfulness. She is also a director of the Jackson IB PYP World Chorus. Learning and Teaching continued, graduated from New Town H.S., Queens College, Bank Street College, Dowling College, SUNY Old Westbury and St. John's University and holds SDA, SBA, ESL and Bilingual Certification. She was selected as one of the 50 teachers from the National Endowment for Humanity and she studied the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama. Her passion showed in the early years of teaching, she received grants and led 5th grade students from Jackson Main School to Farm for the City Kids in Vermont along with her 7th grade son during Spring Recess. She was the New York State Association of Bilingual Education's Teacher of the Year in 2023. She has been collaborating with Arumdaun Korean Presbyterian Church in Bethpage and gives out 60 turkeys annually for 10 years, participated in the Village of Hempstead Christmas Tree/Menorah Lighting Celebration for more than 10 years, and during the COVID delivered food to 30 families in collaboration with the Long Island Council of Churches.

Soh Young Lee-Segredo supported the Village of Hempstead with the Mayor's Day Committee and provided topics for the essay contest. Her students participated and were the winners of the Earth Day Contest for several years at Kennedy Park. As a first Korean American recipient of the MLK Humanitarian Award in 2007, she served as Nassau County Human Rights Commissioner appointed by Executive Tom Suozzi from 2007-2009. She has been tirelessly working on bridging Korean culture and embracing multiculturalism with diverse communities locally and globally since 1978. She is a multifaceted performer, weaving many different cultures and has been performing since the age of five. She is a singer, storyteller, chef and MC. "Art is my life and through it I

# SOH YOUNG LEE-SEGREDO

protect my soul from negativity and challenges." The 'Soh Young Ensemble' is the p winner of the Artists' International Alliance and debuted in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, the winner of the KBS Korean Idol NY Competition in 2007, a winner of the Korean Folk Art International Competition. She was a guest singer singing anthems for the International Taekwondo Competition at Madison Square Garden at age 18, and at Premier of the Turkish movie Ayla in 2018 at School of Visual Art Theater.

She was the guest for Chinese Night, Korean Night, Greek Night, Turkish Night at Eisenhower Park Harry Chapin Theater. She serves as Suffolk County Asian American Advisory Board May Asian American Pacific Heritage Month Celebration Multicultural Committee and Korean representative of The Town of Hempstead AAPIHM Committee.

She was a NYC Presbytery Mission to Europe after 9.11 and led the Multicultural Peace Mission Choir along with Dr. Stanley Ralph and Hempstead High School Choir student was a part of the trip. She was invited to Israel and Turkey as she was serving as the Human Rights Commissioner of Nassau County.

She believes that 'in giving life is meaningful'. She is a life time member of the NAACP, (served as ACT So Chairperson) a member of Freeport/Roosevelt branch, and Vice President of Education Committee of Korean American Association of Queens, volunteer of Shanti Fund and founding president of Multicultural Council of NY established in 2012 and Asian Pacific American Council of Educators, Long Island established during COVID. She has been a Suffolk County Asian American Advisory Board May Asian American Pacific Island Heritage Month volunteer since its beginning. She serves as a Music Coordinator of the Hofstra University National Center for Suburban Studies Annual Celebration of Diversity.

She was recognized from Harlem branch NAACP, The Town of Hempstead, The Village of Hempstead, Nassau County, Senator Kevin Thomas, Suffolk County, the Hofstra University National Center for Suburban Studies, Hofstra for Hempstead/Hempstead for Hofstra and received Man of the Year Award from Korean American Association of Greater NY. She received the Social Justice Award from National Association of Multicultural Education. In October 2024, at You're Our Unity event, she received President Biden's LifeTime Achievement Award for her effort to dedicate in education, Arts and communities and volunteered over 4,500 hours in the US. On March 6, 2025 She was honored at the Village of Hempstead Women's History Month Celebration. On March 9, 2025, at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. At the Visionary Awards Gala she was honored with a NYS Resolution (J419) by Senator Kevin S. Parker.



## DESHAUN LEWTER

After a fulfilling career spanning over three decades, Ms. DeShaun Denise Johnson-Lewter bids farewell to Hempstead Public Schools after 32 consecutive years as a classroom teacher in various school districts. Her passion for teaching began at the age of four. She spent most of her life in school from two to five years old because her cousin was a New York City teacher. Hailing from Brooklyn, New York, and then moving to Louisburg, North Carolina, for the first four years of elementary school, which solidified her love and passion for teaching because her aunt and four cousins worked in various positions at Louisburg Elementary School.

Returning to New York to attend Pilgrim Christian Academy and Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School, she graduated at the top of her class academically. A stellar basketball player in high school was recognized as Most Athletic and appeared in the newspaper several times. She also received an award for Most Valuable Player. She learned to type 75 words per minute in elementary school.

Later attended University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Kingsborough Community College, SUNY Old Westbury (graduating at the top of my class academically), also the first recipient of an Alumni award in 1994 and made an iconic speech at graduation, SUNY Stony Brook, and College of New Rochelle. DeShaun has obtained an Associate of Arts, Bachelor of Science in Education, Master of Arts, and an additional Master's in school administration.

# DESHAUN LEWTER

Her teaching career began in District 16 in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the same area where she was born and raised. Then later, working in the Roosevelt School District. Finally, landing a job in Hempstead. DeShaun also had other titles such as basketball coach and tutor. She has been a summer school teacher in the Roosevelt School District in Robotics, Legos, Scratch, Coding and Binary for the past two summers. DeShaun has always been competitive. Therefore, she strives for greatness and has high expectations for the 650-plus students that she has taught. Including the opportunities to teach many colleagues' children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. She mentored eight colleagues. She has been the lead teacher eleven times.

Beyond the classroom, she is the mother of four children affectionately known as Fab 4. Dr. Na'eemah is a Pharmacist. Her only son Kamal, is a Project Manager. Dr. Najah is a Dentist. Her twin, the future doctor, Tajah, has completed her third year in Medical School at Howard University. Her love and passion for teaching have been instilled in all of her children.

In retirement, DeShaun looks forward to traveling and spending time with her mother, Ms. Eunice Johnson, children, and future grandchildren. Aspiring to continue this journey of teaching as a supervisor because God is not through with her yet!! Thanks to the many friendships that she has made in Hempstead. Especially Charity Reado, her ace, fortress, and rock. As the introduction song states, "THIS GIRL IS ON FIRE!"

God, she owes you all the thanks, and can't wait to see where you will take her next! The sky is the limit!!!



## KIMBERLY LURRY PACE

After 25 years of unwavering dedication, love, and service, we celebrate the retirement of an extraordinary educator, a true Hempstead Tiger through and through Kimberly Lurry-Pace, aka Mrs.Lurry-Pace.

Born and raised in the Hempstead community, her journey began at Ludlum Elementary School, where the seeds of her passion for education were first planted. She played volleyball and basketball for Hempstead Middle School.

From a young age, she displayed a love for learning and a deep sense of connection to her community, qualities that would shape her entire career.

Her academic path took her through the very schools where she would one day inspire generations of students. After graduating from Hempstead High School, she pursued higher education at Molloy College and the College of New Rochelle, earning both her principal and superintendent licenses. Her commitment to lifelong learning and leadership development made her a role model not only to students but also to colleagues.

She began her professional journey in education by student-teaching at Franklin School. From day one, it was clear that teaching wasn't just a job for her—it was a calling. Known for her warm spirit, kind heart, and high expectations, she has always treated her students like family. One of her former students is now best friends with her daughter, a beautiful testament to the close-knit bonds she's fostered throughout the years.

# KIMBERLY LURRY PACE

Within the walls of her classroom, she created a safe haven where students could grow, dream, and achieve. And long after they've moved on, many still return to visit, seeking the same encouragement and wisdom she gave them so freely during their school years. Many of Mrs.Lurry-Pace's students have received full-ride scholarships at colleges and even attended universities such as Cornell University.

To her, the staff at her school are not just colleagues—they are family. She has shared countless laughs, challenges, and victories with them, always bringing light and positivity wherever she went. Her legacy is one of love, leadership, and the belief that every child has the power to succeed.

Though she is stepping away from the classroom, her presence will forever echo in the halls of Hempstead schools. Her impact is immeasurable, and her heart remains with the students, the staff, and the community she has given so much to.

She will always be a Hempstead Tiger—once a Tiger, always a Tiger.

With deepest gratitude and admiration, we thank Mrs.Lurry-Pace for 25 incredible years of service. Your legacy lives on in every life you've touched.



## DANA LYONS

Dana W. Lyons, born and raised in Roosevelt, NY, life has always been shaped by a love for family, learning, and travel. From a young age, she was blessed with the opportunity to experience summer road trips across the United States in a motorhome with her family, which instilled in her the values of perseverance, exploration, and the joy of discovering new places.

Dana's academic journey began with her attendance at private schools from kindergarten through high school, where she laid the foundation for a lifelong pursuit of knowledge. Her commitment to education continued when she attended Hampton University in Hampton, VA, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Communication Sciences and Disorders. It was during this time that Dana first discovered her passion for Speech and Language Pathology, which would shape the course of her career.

Following her undergraduate studies, Dana furthered her education with a Master's degree in Speech and Language Pathology, minor in Education from CW Post/Island University. Her career in education and speech therapy began in District 28Q in Queens, NY, where she worked for 10 years before transitioning to Hempstead Public Schools. There, Dana dedicated 26 years of service, positively impacting countless students at Barack Obama and Prospect Schools.

Never one to stop learning, Dana earned a Master's degree in School District Administrator and Supervisor from New Rochelle College, further broadening her expertise and reinforcing her commitment to both her students and her community.

# DANA LYONS

Throughout her career, Dana also provided private tutoring and worked as a Speech and Language Therapist, consistently offering her expertise to help children achieve their fullest potential. Her work was deeply influenced by her belief in the power of communication and the importance of fostering a supportive and encouraging environment for her students.

Dana's journey has been supported by her loving family, including her husband, Lionel Lyons, sons Brandon and Daniel Lyons, and her beloved "granddog," Krystal. Their encouragement and support have been a constant source of strength throughout her career.

As Dana transitions into retirement, she looks forward to spending more time doing the things she loves—reading, watching movies, walking on the beach, cooking, traveling, and shopping. With the opportunity to relax and enjoy the fruits of her hard work, Dana is excited to embrace this new chapter in her life.



## DESIRÉE F. MAURICE

One fateful day in the summer of 1997, I was on my way home from a networking opportunity in Roosevelt. I got lost, heading to the Southern State. I turned right off Greenwich Street into an empty parking lot with an open side door. I walked through the door, walked a few feet, turned right, and entered an office. I asked the man standing alone in there for directions to the highway. I wasn't far off; I should have turned left. "Where am I?" I said, "Hempstead, Hempstead Public Schools," he replied. "What's this office?" I asked. I was shocked to find out I was standing in the Personnel Office getting directions from the head of Human Resources. "Are you hiring?" I inquired. "Why are you a teacher? "Yes," Are you certified?" "Yes," "What's your certification?" "Early Childhood and Elementary Education." We're not hiring for elementary, but send me your resume. My silly response was, "But you're not hiring". "Send me your resume anyway." I guess it didn't hurt that I was dressed in a suit, and I quickly went to my car to retrieve my resume, which was printed on paper back then, and gladly handed it over.

That year, the closing of Marguerite G. Rhodes Elementary led to the restructuring of the district's elementary schools. I was called in for an interview. In September, I started my career at A.B.G.S. Middle School. During my 10 years there, my fondest memories included being part of a close-knit team of 6th-grade teachers, heading the Best Friends Program, a grant-funded initiative to prevent teenage pregnancy. I worked with the Nassau County District Attorney's office in this role and collaborated with the Girl Scouts of America. For several years, I served as the Dance Troupe Advisor. We performed within the district and the community at large. One year, my team of district-wide dancers performed at the nationally acclaimed McDonald's Gospelfest. I also had many opportunities to teach and work with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders after school and during Saturday enrichment programs.

# DESIREE MAURICE

In subsequent years, I served the district by teaching every grade from Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Hagedon, Marshall, Fulton (renamed David Paterson), Franklin (renamed James A. McNeil), Jackson Annex, and Rhodes Academy. I initiated the Veterans Day Committee at Rhodes Academy. For three consecutive years, distinguished Veterans came into the school and provided personal interactions framed within a unique theme. In turn, students and staff honored our Service Heroes with handmade gifts and performances in dance, music, and poetry. For many years, I served in several schools as the building Chairperson of the Health and Safety Committee and the Elementary Schools Chairperson of the Health and Safety Committee for the Hempstead Classroom Teachers Association.

It is fitting that the last school I am working at is the new Rhodes Academy. The closing of the old doors at Marguerite G. Rhodes led to the opening of new doors for me in Hempstead—an open door to new experiences as a novice teacher bloomed into an experienced educator, and an open door to new relationships as friends grew into family. The most precious gift of all, you know who you are. I LOVE EACH OF YOU DEARLY. As my time in Hempstead ends, I pray that life will repeat the best parts of the past for me.

In the words of  
Deon Kipping  
“Next”

“...There is no doubt that I am blessed  
I promised that this is not a flex  
But wait til you see what's next  
Wait til you see what's next  
God is not finished yet  
Wait til you see what's next...

And when I think He's done enough  
And He can't do no more  
Somehow He always calls my bluff,..  
I say, "The best is yet to come, the best is yet to come..."



## ROBYN OUTLAW

After a lifetime of dedication to education, I'm proud to reflect on my journey as an educator and community member. I'm a proud product of the Hempstead School District, a tradition shared by my father and brother. Growing up in this tight knit community laid the foundation for my passion for giving back, and it led me to a fulfilling career in education.

My career began as a 1st and 2nd-grade teacher at Allen A.M.E. Christian School, where I first found my love for guiding young minds. In 1997, I returned to my roots and began my work as a Library Media Specialist in the Hempstead School District, a role I continued with deep commitment for many years.

Beyond the classroom, I devoted myself to serving the students in other meaningful ways. For years, I had the privilege of being a chaperone for senior classes, ensuring that students had memorable and safe experiences during their final year. I also worked closely with Mrs. Patricia Brown, our dedicated social worker, to partner with local merchants who generously donated hundreds of dresses, tuxedos, shoes, and accessories to help students who were less fortunate.

Upon transferring to the high school, I hosted numerous programs in the media center, and one of the highlights was the annual spelling bee, which became a much-loved tradition in our school community.

As I retire, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible students, colleagues, and community members I've had the privilege to work with over the years.

My heart remains with the Hempstead Public schools, and I will forever cherish the relationships I've built and the lives I've been a part of along the way.



## PATRICIA ORTMANN

It is an honor to share a little bit of me with all of you.

My working career began in human resources 20 years before I became a teacher. I had the job of growing up by supporting the adults in the world to positively impact their performance at work. My career flourished leading me to head the human resources department for Coca Cola for 5 ½ years. During that time my drive to work shifted to my children and learning more about how I could be a great mom and instill all of the values that I had learned growing up. It became more about the future leaders. With my family's support, I took the plunge and became a teacher and a counselor. I arrived here at Hempstead and never left.

I came to Hempstead 20 years ago as a new teacher. I was hired by Principal Reginald Strouh and thank him for his energy and relentless faith in me as a contributor to the high school. I became fast friends with the business department teachers as well as Mr. Joe Blocker and Mr. Deon Boyd. Today, I have added to that friend group over and over and have so many wonderful memories about working with so many different people.

Over the years, I have had the friendship and support from my friends and colleagues and have given my heart and soul right back to all of the staff I have had the honor to work with. Most importantly, I have become a deeper and better person having served the students of the Hempstead School District.

As I retire in just a few short weeks, I can say that I have loved deeply and have been loved. I am honored to have worked with so many people like myself that have dedicated themselves to the families we serve. Only the best are selected to work among us. I thank the Lord for all the blessings that I have received over the years and all the whispers that have inspired me to do more.

I love you all!

Patti



## BEVERLY ROBINSON

Before entering the education arena, I worked at Random House Book Publishing, where I was a publicity director and had the luxury of working with such successful authors as Johnnie Cochran (whom I twice invited to the Hempstead District), Iyanla Vanzant, Jim Davis (Garfield) and Anne Rice. I learned so much about the industry that I decided to publish a book of my own, LeBron James: King of the Court, based on his high school years. I have also crafted a coming-of-age novel (not yet published) and have other ideas for future works. For years, I penned a column in the Community Journal, where I highlighted positive goings-on in the school community with a special focus on youth sports, for which HCTA presented me with a journalism award. Recently, I have had reflective articles published in Newsday. Before and during my time as a teacher, I volunteered with the PTSA and SEPTA and received several awards for that important work. I also volunteered with the Community Engagement Team CET, helmed by Patricia McNeill, which launched “Family Fun Day” at ABGS Middle School. I was also a volunteer on the Hempstead PAL board for several years.

I found my way to the education world in a roundabout fashion because I regularly volunteered at my sons’ school (M.G. Rhodes) PTA for over a decade, while supporting and encouraging their academic work at home and helping them prepare for Regents exams, unaware that the teaching seeds were slowly being planted.

I began 20 years ago in Hempstead School District as a temp in the PPS department before working as an assistant for Rebecca Skinner, the Director of Funded Programs, who, following long conversations about education, encouraged me to consider a teaching career. After taking a few education classes, I was headed along an independent pathway to a teaching profession.

# BEVERLY ROBINSON

Then one day, 15 years ago, Djuana Wilson changed the arc of my life's path when she told me that once I completed my Special Ed. & ELA certifications, there could be a job for me.

A world opened that has impacted me in numerous ways, for being a teacher has been one of the high points of my life. I have been blessed to collaborate with fine co-teachers, including Mr. Graziosi, Ms. Fox, and Ms. Leib. I have had the thrill of being on the LaCasa Academy team, where we got to implement new and exciting ventures; during that time, a grant we secured allowed us to reach out more directly to parents and the community. And I have been fortunate to work for and with such fine administrators as Hank Williams, Rowena Costa, and Ms. Skinner. I have been blessed to work with excellent teaching assistants, Ms. June Williams and Ms. Ramona Mayo. I have enjoyed working on special education teaching teams (special education teachers are indeed special!) and with my ELA department peers over the years. I enjoyed teaming up with Ms. Fox to work as Newsletter Club co-advisors. I have also worked in the Adult & Community Education department for over a decade and have enjoyed being on the Adult Ed team. For the past several years, on alternate Saturdays, I have taught Creative Writing to 7th & 8th graders at the Adelphi STEP/LPP program.

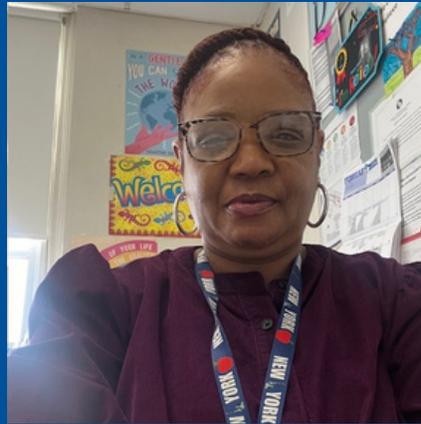
I received a community service commendation award from NY State Senator Kevin Thomas and a Long Island Herald teaching award citation. But the greatest blessing of all has been the students who have graced and enriched my life for the past 15 years. I hope I have had an impact on them, as well. I have learned so much from the students, some of whom have had immense challenges in their lives, but still they showed up to learn and grow. I loved introducing students to literature ranging from *A Long Walk to Water* to *Monster* and *The Outsiders* to *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, to *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, and *Pearl*. I know the literature resonated with many of them; some of them came to my room after class to enhance their reading or just to relax after a busy and sometimes hectic day at school. I also encouraged students to try out for a sport or join a club as a way of growing and expanding their social connections and a way to expand their horizons.

Several of my students have stayed in touch over the years. They let me know how their lives are going. They remember our classes, especially the ones with Mr. Graziosi. They ask me for advice and reference letters, and I freely dispense both. They have given me far more than I have given them. Thank you, Hempstead District, for giving me the gift of allowing me to teach. I will treasure that gift forever.



## XIOMARA ROMAN

Xiomara Roman graduated from Adelphi University with a Master of Arts in Education. She started her educational career in 1998, working for the NYC Department of Education. In 2005, she attended Bank Street College of Education and received her Master of Arts in Educational Leadership. She has worked for the Hempstead Union Free School District since 2002, serving the Bilingual population of students. It has been a rewarding career serving our children academically.



## KIM SANDERS

Ms. Kim Sanders is a native of the Addisleigh Park Community located in the St. Albans section of Queens, New York. She is a product of the New York City Public School system. Ms. Sanders graduated from Benjamin Cardozo High School with honors in English. In High School Ms. Sanders was a cheerleader and participated in Girls and Senior Chorus.

Ms. Sanders attended Elizabeth City State University in North Carolina, a renowned teacher's college within the network of historically black colleges and universities. During Ms. Sanders' college years, she pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated, which carved a framework for her continued leadership development and community service.

After receiving a bachelor's in early childhood education, she pursued her graduate studies with a master's in education from Queens College under the CUNY network system and taught kindergarten to day care students at the same time.

In her pursuit of higher education and postgraduate studies, Kim's career objective was to develop an understanding of how teachers can best prepare students to meet the challenges of the future. In her 36-year total dedication of service to children, she has served at many levels, from teaching Kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary students.

She has worked on various committees such as student council, after-school/extended day programs, as well as planning field trips for out-of-town state excursions to historic landmarks. Ms. Sanders believes education extends beyond the walls of the school building.

# KIM SANDERS

In her pursuit of higher education and postgraduate studies, Kim's career objective was to develop an understanding of how teachers can best prepare students to meet the challenges of the future.

Ms. Sanders spends summer and recess periods participating in various professional development workshops and educational institutes.

She has one son, Xavier, who has grown up visiting her school and knowing many of her co-workers as family.

They attend Amity Baptist Church, where Kim has been an active member for over 45 years of service.

Ms. Sanders believes that it is her role as an educator to promote a safe, nurturing environment where children can become independent thinkers and productive citizens of society. Ms. Sanders' philosophy is "Hard work begets great results".



## MARIAM TRICE

Many of you may know that I planned on retiring soon, but not this soon. I surprised myself with this one! I must say that I truly feel blessed to retire from Hempstead, where I have spent my teaching career for the last 30-plus years. The time has moved very quickly! I started in 1993 as a teaching assistant at Marguerite Golden Rhodes School, and I am retiring as an interventionist at Rhodes Academy, so it is a full circle for me.

Throughout my career, I have mainly taught 6<sup>th</sup> grade, but in my role as an interventionist for the past four years, I have discovered that I love working with the little ones in grades 1-2, and I wish I had more time to do so. I have also learned how effective intervention is and how much my students have gained from my explicit instruction. The numbers don't lie! However, there are times when I must return to the drawing board to find ways to be more creative in delivering my instruction, and sometimes I consult with my colleagues for suggestions, tips, and strategies to help my scholars grasp the skills and concepts.

As I retire, I reflect on various moments during my career, and I am thankful for the lessons I have learned – for the glows, and for the grows. I appreciate the guidance and support I have been given by my administrators, colleagues, HCTA (Hempstead Classroom Teachers Association), and staff throughout the district, and for the kindness I have been shown. I also appreciate the support given to me by the parents and students, some of whom I keep in contact with to this day. “It takes a village,” and I value the privilege of having had the opportunity to work with the Hempstead community, and I am grateful to them for pushing me to be greater.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and encouragement over the years. They have kept me motivated and strong. I would also like to acknowledge and give a special thanks to my beautiful daughter, Marcia, for her unconditional love and support, and for her fantastic ideas that I have transformed into some great lessons. She means the world to me! As I enter the next phase of my life, I look forward to exploring some of my other interests, hobbies, and goals. Thank you, Hempstead Public Schools, for taking a chance on me. It has been an incredible journey, and I thank God for it all!



## CLAUDIA VACA

As I step into retirement, I find myself reflecting on a journey of over thirty years teaching, 26 of those in Hempstead. These years have been filled with growth, challenges, and countless moments that have shaped who I am today.

I was born in Bogotá, Colombia into a family that valued hard work, education, and moral values. I pursued my undergraduate studies in Colombia, where I majored in modern languages: English and French. I migrated to the United States in 1989. I pursued my Graduate studies at Queens College, where I completed my master's degrees in Early Childhood Education, and Bilingual Education.

My professional career began in the DOE at an elementary school in Brooklyn, and then with the Hempstead School District where some of my roles and responsibilities included, bilingual teacher, grade level leader, interpreter, mentor, union building representative, and chair for the Hispanic Heritage Committee, and the One Hundred Days of School Committee. I also led the St Jude Hospital Mathaton for many years at David Paterson to raise funds for children with cancer. Each role brought its own set of challenges, but also immense satisfaction. Teaching was never just a profession for me. It was a journey of purpose, of connection, and of continuous learning – not only for my students, but for myself.

Each student brought unique experiences into my life: questions that challenged me, a smile that lifted me, or a spark that reminded me why I chose this path. I am filled with immense gratitude – not just for the years spent in the classroom, but for the lives I've had the privilege to be part of, and the people I met, my supervisors, my colleagues, my friends, and most of all “my work siblings”.

# CLAUDIA VACA

As I close this chapter, I want to thank my husband, my son, and my niece Lorena for their endless support, for listening to my stories about students and school days, and for picking up the pieces when I was tired or overwhelmed, for understanding when I stayed late grading papers or spent weekends planning lessons. Their love, patience, and encouragement have meant the world to me.

Retirement isn't an end; it's the beginning of a new chapter. I look forward to embracing this phase with the same spirit of curiosity and purpose that guided me throughout my career.

To everyone who has been a part of my journey, thank you.



## CAROLINE VOLLMER

Caroline Vollmer has served the Hempstead Public School district for 15 years as a FLES and ENL teacher at Joseph A. McNeil and Barack Obama Schools, and as a Spanish and French teacher at ABGS. She also taught English in the Adult Education Program for the past 6 years.

Before joining Hempstead, she taught high school in Ballston Spa, which is near Saratoga. Prior to her teaching career, she worked for the Union Bank of Switzerland in NYC as a customer service representative for correspondent banks in Paris and Geneva.

She earned a B.A. in Spanish and French from Colgate University, where she participated in two semesters abroad in Dijon, France and Granada, Spain. Additional educational credentials include an MBA from Pace University, and finally a Masters in Teaching from SUNY Stony Brook.

She is looking forward to the next chapter of her life; continuing in Adult Education, spending as much time as possible with her nieces and nephews, traveling and connecting with old friends.

She is very appreciative of the support of the HCTA over the years, and acknowledges her coworkers and fellow teachers who lifted her up when times were difficult.



## HEMPSTEAD CLASSROOM TEACHERS ASSOCIATION LOCAL #18035

175 Fulton Avenue Suite 501, Hempstead, NY 11550  
Office Manager: Cheryl Goodridge, Former HCTA Vice President  
President of the Hempstead Educators Retiree Association (HERA)  
Website: [Hempsteadteachers.org](http://Hempsteadteachers.org)  
FB: Hempstead Classroom Teachers  
Instagram: @hcta\_strong

### OFFICERS

Nicole Brown, President	Rhodes Academy
Danielle Curiel-Gaffney, 1st Vice President	Special Education Department
Joelle Day, 2nd Vice President	Hempstead High School
Veronica Jimenez, Recording Secretary	Special Education Department
Monifa Salako, Treasurer	ABGS Middle School

### BUILDING REPRESENTATIVES

#### Prospect Elementary School

Megan Hodish (PreK)

#### Joseph A. McNeil School

Michael Levine (Technology)

#### David Paterson Elementary

Keira Stroughn (Grade 2)

Claudia Vaca (Bilingual)

#### Barack Obama Elementary

Jean Gonzalez (Interventionist)

Cynthia Perez (Grade 3)

#### Jackson Main/Annex Elementary

Timothy Bishop (Grade 5)

Tomasina Minneci (Grade 5)

#### Hempstead High School

Dr. Ashton Bell (Sp. Ed)

Mitchell Roseman (Sp. Ed)

Nicole Zamor (English)

#### ABGS Middle School

Estaré Alston (History)

Michael Malatesta (Science)

#### Rhodes Academy

Amanda Galanoudis (Speech)

Joshua Thomas (Grade 6)

### COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Joelle Day

Stephanie Dubose

Lisa Byrd-Watkins

Desiree Maurice

Nicole Zamor

Genell Bradley

Daphne Pradella

Alexis Jovel

Wendy Oyebode

Amanda Galanoudis

Stephanie Lockhart-Turner

Kellie Wilson-McNeal

Membership/VOTE COPE

Grievance Chairperson

Community Outreach Chairperson

Health & Safety Chair for Elementary

Health & Safety Chair for Secondary

Graduate Course Coordinator

Scholarship Chairperson

Social Committee Chairperson

Parliamentarian

Communications

Hempstead Teacher Center

Mentor Coordinator

Hempstead High School

ABGS Middle School

Hempstead High School

Rhodes Academy

Hempstead High School

Jackson Main

Hempstead High School

Rhodes Academy

Hempstead High School

Rhodes Academy

David Paterson

Prospect School

*Special thanks to Alexis Jovel and the Social Committee  
for planning this momentous event.*

Dear 2024-2025 Retirees,

CONGRATULATIONS on your retirement!

Today, we take a moment to recognize not only your years of dedication but also the significant legacy you leave behind. Your commitment to nurturing young minds, supporting students, and strengthening our school community has been invaluable. The impact you've made is clear; it has inspired fellow colleagues, influenced countless lives, and enhanced our community in remarkable ways.

Retirement signifies both an end and a new beginning. Although you may be stepping away from teaching or wandering through school hallways, your influence will resonate for many years ahead. The guidance, wisdom, and kindness you have shared have enriched our schools as places where learning thrives and relationships flourish.

On behalf of HTAA, thank you for being a vital part of excellence, advocacy, and care within our school system. You've helped shape the future of Hempstead, and we are eternally grateful for that contribution. Wishing you happiness, good health, and well-deserved relaxation as you embark on this new phase of life. Truly, you've earned it. Best wishes on your next adventure.

In solidarity,  
Anita Williams, President  
Hempstead Teaching Assistants Association

*Ms. Florene Toliver (30 years)*

&

*Mrs. Airleen Fernandez Santiago (30 years)*



**“WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE”**



## AIRLEEN FERNANDEZ SANTIAGO

My name is Airleen Fernandez Santiago, and I am 61 years old. I was born on November 22nd, 1963. Before I continue telling you about myself, I would like to tell you about how special that date was. It was very special not only because I was born on that date and my birth brought happiness to my family but also because my family was sad after hearing terrible news. On that date the 35th President of the United States - John F. Kennedy was assassinated. It was mixed emotions that have continued in my family to this date.

I am the daughter of Jose and Elsa. I have four siblings, and I am the youngest among us. I grew up in Bayamon and I completed my studies and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico. I worked as a registered nurse in the neonatal intensive care unit for a year, and then I worked as a travel nurse for the WIC Program for three years.

I moved to New York in July 1993 to look for new job opportunities. As I eventually became the mother of five children, I decided to work in the school system so I could spend more time with my little ones. In 1995, I started to work in the Hempstead School District as a teaching assistant. Since I liked the field of education, I went back to school, and I added a Minor in Education to my degree. After passing my tests and fulfilling all the requirements, I became a Bilingual Science Teacher. I had the opportunity to work as a science teacher in middle and high school for five years. Unfortunately, I could not finish my master's degree in education, so I went back to my original position as a teaching assistant.

# AIRLEEN FERNANDEZ SANTIAGO

In 2006, I started to work in the Adult Education Program as a Literacy/ESL Teacher. I worked for nineteen years in the Adult Program. I worked in summer programs and after-school programs as well.

I also worked in a non-profit association named “Raices Latinoamericanas” as a volunteer. This organization helps the community in many ways. It gives scholarships to high school students, and it also donates food and toys to families in need, among other things. My experience with them was very rewarding.

I really enjoyed working with the students and staff in the Hempstead School District and with Raices Latinoamericanas. I hope I have left a profound and lasting impact on my students’ lives and my colleagues, too! I know for a fact that I am going to miss the students, coworkers, and all communities I served.

I am thankful for all the opportunities that God has given me to grow as a professional and as a person during the past 32 years in this awesome country. God has blessed me with a beautiful family and a circle of fantastic friends. I have traveled to seven countries and 19 states in the US. I feel privileged and truly blessed for my past and present time even with my ups and downs.

Now the relaxing time has arrived. It is the time to pursue other dreams! I consider myself an unquenchable learner, so I cannot wait for my retirement! I have a very long “things- to-do” list... I am so excited to learn a new language, to play an instrument & to write my first Spanish non-fiction book with my husband, Francisco Mario. But most of all, I would like to travel to wonderful places around the world. It is fascinating to learn new facts from other cultures, meet new people and store amazing memories from them.

Let’s see what God has in store for me and my family on my retirement!



## FLORENE FAYE TOLIVER

September 7, 1994 – June 30, 2025

There are many things in life that bring me great joy, satisfaction and appreciation. One being myfamily... The Tolivers from Roosevelt, New York. I am a proud mother of three beautiful, loving and caring adult children, Jamez Snow, Dajuan Toliver and Kimisha Wilson. I am even prouder of being a grandmother to five awesome grandchildren, Monae Snow, Jamez Snow, Jamir Snow, Cody Toliver and Calisee Toliver. My extended family, mother, three brothers, four sisters, nieces, nephews and in-laws, have always been supportive of my personal journey, life decisions and career choices.

Hempstead Union Free School District has brought great joy into my life as well. My career began at Prospect School in 1992 as a lunch monitor.

The late Archie Matthews, principal, and Sarah Allen, teacher, recommended me to join the school team. After advancing myself in higher education, I applied for a Teaching Assistant position at Prospect School in 1994 and worked under the leadership of Sally Thompson. The following year, I was transferred to M.G. Rhodes School where I spent a huge amount.

of time assisting in educating the students of Hempstead to reach their highest potential. After the closing of Rhodes in 2004, I was transferred to Fulton School, currently David Paterson School, and at one time or another, worked under the leadership of principals, the late Denise Cotton, Regina Armstrong, Gary Rush, Kesha Keller, and Lara Caines-Giralde.

# FLORENE FAYE TOLIVER

During my career in Hempstead, I befriended many colleagues that helped me to succeed. To name a few, the late Tyree Curry, the late Dr. David Washington, Francis Edmond and the late Artie Spitzli. Some years ago, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I was given the greatest support from my co-workers who took the time out of their busy schedules to come and see about me. Thank you to Brenda Banks, Lorna Barnes, Arti Spitzli, Minnie Wheeler and all of you who reached out to me at this very stressful time in my life. Since then, I have been an avid supporter of Breast Cancer Awareness and have organized and participated in the annual NYSUT Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk.

In my 31-year tenure in education, I have been active not only with the students, but also with my union, the Hempstead Teaching Assistants Association, the District and community. I have been on the union's Executive Board for 27 years under the leadership of the late Minnie Wheeler, Charlet King, and Anita Williams. I have served as a building representative, negotiating team member, leadership team member and Sunshine Chair for 23 years. I further supported my union by attending NYUT and AFT rallies and conferences and organize union celebrations.

I have served on several district-wide committees as well: Calendar, Hiring Committee, Hempstead Teacher Center (Tract), and Health and Safety-District. At David Paterson School, I served on the Homecoming Committee, School Based Planning Team, Black History Committee, Decorating Committee and am the Health and Safety Chairperson.

I feel a sense of accomplishment in my personal life and career. I gave it my utmost best every day. I am greatly honored and appreciative to have been a part of this thriving school community. Now it's time for me to head on to a new chapter...relaxation and adventures.



**"WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE"**

## **2024-2025 EXECUTIVE BOARD**

Anita Williams- *President*

Tiketa General- *1st Vice President*

Donnie Manuel- *2nd Vice President*

Laquana King (interim)- *Recording Secretary*

Erica Seymour- *Corresponding Secretary*

Lorna Barnes (retired)- *Treasurer*

Faye Toliver- *Sunshine/Hospitality*

Erica Seymour- *Community Outreach*

Laquana King- *District Policy*

### **BUILDING REPS**

ABGS: Marqueitta Tuitt  
Jackson School : Katiti Mays  
HHS: Lenroy Raffington

Barack Obama: Catherine Foskey  
Jackson Main: Stephanie Finney  
Prospect: Roheen Oats

David Paterson: Charles Neal  
Joseph A. McNeil: Laquana King  
RAHA: Candice Collins-Motley

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

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



**HEMPSTEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Victor J. Pratt- *President*

Jeffrey Spencer- *Vice President*

LaMont E. Johnson- *Trustee*

Dr. Joylette Williams- *Trustee*

Elise Nicholson-Dukes- *Trustee*

April Keys- *District Clerk*

**CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION**

Susan Johnson

*Interim Superintendent of Schools*

Gary Rush

*Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction*

Dr. Rodney Gilmore

*Associate Superintendent for Human Resources*

James Clark

*Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services*

Djuana Wilson

*Assistant Superintendent for Special Education & Direct Student Services*

Jamal Scott

*Assistant Superintendent for Business & Operations*