

Bridges to learning

Elia hails LI effort to prep pupils for after high school

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State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia on Wednesday touted the work of Long Island education leaders as a statewide model for bridge-building, between prekindergarten through 12th grade and higher education.

The Superintendents-College Presidents Partnership, formed in 2001, is a work group of the Long Island Regional Advisory Council on Higher Education, a consortium of 15 colleges and universities. It brings together college presidents and school district superintendents from across the Island to discuss issues affecting teaching and learning across all academic levels.

"This is an incredible model for partnerships," Elia said at the group's regional fall forum, held on the LIU Post campus in Brookville. "This is a challenge; you guys have kind of broken the code here. But the reality is K-12 has traditionally been living in their own world, and higher ed really didn't want to let anyone else in. . . . We've got to realize that we can do so much more if we do it together."

The partnership is working to find solutions to better align secondary and postsecondary education, help students graduate from high school ready for college or the workforce, promote equity across the region and improve student attainment rates.

"There are issues in some cases where students are not ready and they have to take remedial courses in college. And what that does is [it] increases their debt on the outside because they're using up their financial aid," said LIU president Kimberly Cline, who co-chairs the partnership. "If we work in our own silos, we never help the student have the bridge to reach college and be able to be pre-



"You guys have kind of broken the code here," State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia said Wednesday in support of the Superintendents-College Presidents Partnership.

pared without having, in some cases, college readiness issues."

About 200 people attended the forum, including school district administrators, guidance counselors, math and writing teachers, college and university administrators, advisers and faculty. Work group leaders gave an update on efforts in the areas of guidance and counseling; writing and critical thinking; and math.

The work groups consisted of volunteer educators and administrators from more than 60 school districts and 13 higher education partners. Their findings stressed the need for more professional development and teacher training, as well as coordination of math, reading and writing pro-

grams in high school to meet college requirements.

Next fall, the partnership plans to pilot a 12th-grade math course in a few schools, said Timothy Eagen, Kings Park schools superintendent and partnership co-chairman.

Currently, the state requires three math courses in high school, and while some students take college-level math in their senior year, not all do. Students may fall behind in math, entering college unprepared and having to take remedial courses, which don't count toward graduation.

The 12th grade math class is designed to "prepare students to be successful in that freshman-year math course in college," Eagen said.

Along with academics, the partnership is looking into bet-

ter ways to help students and their families navigate college, and recently piloted a workshop in the Longwood district on education records and privacy.

The state Education Department has been working on collaborating with the State University of New York system to improve teacher preparation and professional development, and to align state standards to ensure students are college- and career-ready.

The work being done on Long Island is an example of ways to make progress in those areas, Elia said.

"To have this many higher ed institutions working with this many districts is something we are not seeing across the state," she said. "However, it's our goal."

Discharge of sewage spurs alert

BY DAVID M. SCHWARTZ
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Greenport's wastewater treatment plant discharged 100,000 gallons of partially treated sewage into the Long Island Sound late Monday night into early Tuesday, the second time this month the plant had failed during heavy precipitation events, officials said.

Suffolk County warned area residents to avoid contact with the water or fish. The county issued another health advisory on Nov. 16 for sewage discharge at Greenport's plant after a snowstorm.

Greenport's village administrator, Paul Pallas, said by Tuesday afternoon the wastewater treatment plant was operating normally.

He noted the discharge, which began at 11:30 p.m. on Monday according to a state alert, came during a period of heavy rain and high tide conditions. He said the treatment plant and personnel functioned properly, but there was too much material coming in.

"It was the sheer volume," he said. "The amount of material coming through the plant was more than could be fully processed."

The village is working with the state Department of Environmental Conservation and Suffolk County Department of Health to fix the problems, Pallas said. The village retained the firm J.R. Holzmacher, of Ronkonkoma, on Tuesday to investigate what went wrong, he said. There's no cost estimate for the contract yet, village officials said.

"The first time was looked at as an anomaly, more than anything else. When it happened the second time, clearly we needed to do an investigation," Pallas said Wednesday.

The county health advisory followed a New York alert of the discharge "laden with activated sludge particles. . . . Activated sludge could potentially contain pathogenic organisms."

The Suffolk County Health Department said residents and fishermen should avoid contact with waters from this portion of the Long Island Sound until conditions at the treatment facility improve.

The DEC said in a statement that it is "working with the village to investigate these incidents and will take appropriate enforcement action if violations are found."

The area around the wastewater treatment facility, off Inlet Pond County Park in Greenport, is closed to shellfishing at all times.