

[Haga clic aquí para ver en español](#)



SPECIAL EDITION

June 25, 2021

CONGRATULATIONS, STUDENTS!

Graduations, Moving-Up Ceremonies Celebrate Achievement and Success

HAPPINESS, PRIDE AND EXCITEMENT filled the air this week as the City School District of New Rochelle academic year came to a close. Challenges, hardships and uncertainties brought by the pandemic took a back seat to joyous graduation and moving-up ceremonies. These events celebrated students' milestone achievements and reflected the collective efforts of our dedicated teachers, staff, administrators, Board of Education and the support of families and community members.

New Rochelle High School and Albert Leonard and Isaac E. Young middle schools held graduations on Thursday, while elementary schools staged moving-up ceremonies over the past few weeks. We are pleased to share an overview of these events and congratulate all! **Scroll down to read about every event!**

New Rochelle High School



New Rochelle High School concluded the 2020-21 school year with a graduation ceremony for over 675 students in the Class of 2021.

For the first time, graduation was split into two ceremonies, due to

COVID-19 protocols. The first graduation was at 10 a.m., followed by an identical ceremony at 1:30 p.m. The events took place under sunny skies on an NRHS athletic field, with the twin lakes serving as a scenic backdrop.



Festivities began with faculty members wearing black gowns, leading the procession of graduates onto the field. Several speakers addressed the joyous crowd.

Dr. Alex Marrero, Interim Superintendent, said he was thrilled to experience graduation in person with the students and challenged them to “transform our lives in the future.”

Interim NRHS Principal Steven Goldberg called living through the pandemic “a defining time in our lives” and urged the graduates to make the world a better place. “As you leave this beautiful school in this supportive and nurturing community, know that we have prepared you well to become informed global citizens who are ready for robust civic involvement to fight for a world free of racism and bigotry in all forms of hatred.”

Board of Education President Rachel Relkin provided words of motivation. “You all have dreams,” she said. “It is time to take advantage of all this world has to offer.” She also spoke of the students’ journey through the New Rochelle school system and the importance of their shared experiences and the memories made.

Students also offered words of encouragement and gratitude. Salutatorian Talia Hughes thanked all who helped and supported her throughout her schooling and wished her classmates “good luck out there in the whole wide world.” Valedictorian Daniel Long spoke about the opportunity for continuous self-improvement, noting that graduation is “not an end point, but a step that enables the learning process to continue.”

Class of 2021 President Hafsah Zia challenged her classmates to ponder: “What experiences will you create for yourself? Who will you turn to in times of need? Where will you find enlightenment?” She encouraged graduates to count their blessings, “laugh a little longer” and be kind to others.

After the speeches, anticipation and excitement filled the air as graduates’ names were called and degrees were conferred. The Leonard Talner Memorial Award was presented at the afternoon ceremony to Jared Barajas, who received \$100 and a trophy.

Last week, the high school held awards ceremonies honoring academic achievement, athletic achievement and extracurricular achievement. All three ceremonies can be found on the district’s [YouTube page](#). Photos of the graduation ceremonies can be found on the [City School District of New Rochelle Facebook page](#)

Huguenot Academy

Among those included in the NRHS graduation ceremonies were four students from Huguenot Academy, relocated to the high school from a community-based location this year.

Previously known as the Alternative Campus High School, the program provides an option for students whose success is powered by a small, supportive, educational setting.



Students were recognized for their successes related to personal and academic growth, overcoming obstacles and being kind and caring. Huguenot student Aasia Hay called graduation “a breath of fresh air and almost unreal.” She said her high school experience got off to a bad start, but “with the help of God himself, family, and not lastly, Huguenot Academy, I made it and I couldn’t be more proud of myself.”

Andrea Schwach, director of the program, said, “We are incredibly proud of each of our graduates and look forward to seeing what they accomplish in the future.” The program typically serves about 80 students a year; COVID impacted both enrollment and the number of graduates in 2020-21.

Pictured from left: Aasia Hay, Jermaine Holiday, Jayachere Johnson, Matthew Mrijaj.

Albert Leonard Middle School



Clockwise from top left: The vehicle procession during the drive-by; Principal John Barnes; faculty members offer congratulations.

For the nearly 400 eighth-graders at Albert Leonard Middle School, Thursday's Transition Ceremony was a celebration of the hard work and academic success achieved by the graduating Class of 2021. The atmosphere was one of a party, with cheerful music blasting in the air to culminate the 2020-21 school year.

Student Council President Luca Lazarini spoke about students' hard work during a unique school year: "This year, there were ups and downs, and each of us faced some sort of unique struggle. But we each stayed strong. I am beyond proud of all of my fellow graduates."

A parade of cars, decorated with balloons and messages painted on their windows congratulating their graduates, dropped off honorees at the front entrance of the school. The families then kept pace in their vehicles while students excitedly walked around the entrance circle.

Midway through, they were greeted by Principal John Barnes, who personalized introductions for each graduate as they received their diplomas. Each displayed smiles of joy, posing for photos as loved ones cheered from cars.

At the conclusion of their journey in front of the school, graduates were cheered on by faculty members. To conclude their walk of glory, they received academic awards, highlighting their success during their years at Albert Leonard.

"Our Class of 2021 is a very special group of students," Barnes said. "This year has been anything but traditional, and yet, our scholars have shown great resilience, flexibility and commitment. Today is a day to choose joy. Celebrate and look to the future and all that awaits you."

A ceremony video can be found [here](#).

Isaac E. Young Middle School



Above: Faculty congratulate students.

Above: Graduates await their diplomas.
Center: Principal Dr. Tawanda Robinson
welcomes students, families and guests.



Isaac E. Young Middle School's 324 graduates were full of pride and joy as they celebrated the culmination of their middle school days Thursday.

Graduates marched down an aisle adorned with white and green balloons as Pomp and Circumstance echoed in the air. Students, who were beaming with pride as they sat in front of friends and families, were called to stand next to Principal Dr. Tawanda Robinson and had their accomplishments read by Robinson before receiving their diplomas.

Faculty members were in full force, displaying congratulatory signs as they cheered on the graduates. These teachers were given the recognition they deserved by the graduating class. "Our teachers set the blueprint for our success," said Valedictorian Octavia Liku. "Our teachers want to see us succeed, and they are the reason why a lot of us are here today. They are a big reason for why I'm here today."

The nine smaller ceremonies provided an intimate setting, allowing each graduate to receive applause. The smaller ceremonies were to comply with COVID protocols and allow the spotlight to shine on individual graduates.

"It is important to understand that this is only the beginning," said Salutatorian Lauren Bryan. "As we move on to the next chapter of our lives, continue striving to be the best version of yourself. Preserve when times get rough. Give yourselves a pat on the back because we finally did it!"

Robinson offered words of wisdom, featured in a graduation [video](#). "I encourage you to look to all of the possibilities ahead of you. Regardless of where you land, it is the opportunity for new beginnings and the start of a new chapter of your story. What lies ahead of you has yet to be written. I encourage you to write the best story ever."

Elementary Schools

Barnard



Columbus



Davis



Jefferson

Trinity

Ward



Henry Barnard Early Childhood Center

Barnard honored 89 students moving up from second grade. On Tuesday, festivities included a Zoom with families, featuring speeches by Principal Nicolas Cracco and Board of Education member Julia Muggia Ochs, as well as a display of student artwork. Yearbook signings followed, as did sports activities and cupcakes sponsored by the PTA. Wednesday's celebration included a parade and photos with families under balloons supplied by the PTA.

"Our teachers, faculty and staff worked alongside and in partnership with our students and their families during this unprecedented year," Cracco said. "Through those partnerships, and with a focus on the whole child, we have seen incredible gains in our students' academic abilities. We are so proud of what our entire community has achieved and we know we will continue to achieve greatness together as we embark on a new year." For second-grader Camila Senteno, it was a year of learning – and building relationships: "I liked that I started to make new friends on Zoom, but then when I was in school, I made more friends."

Webster, below



Columbus Elementary School

Columbus' fifth-grade graduation for 143 students took place in three ceremonies through the morning Wednesday so families could celebrate but remain socially distanced. The festivities were held on the soccer field – the first time in memory that graduation was held outdoors. Assistant Principal Shelli Owens and the fifth-grade teachers meticulously planned an extraordinary event. Families were escorted to pre-assigned, color-coded seating pods by Columbus staff, and the tone of the events felt magical. Students stood before their families and sang a song they recorded with support from music teacher Dr. Christina Romano. Art teacher Leah Bernabei revealed to the families the 2021 Fifth Grade Legacy Mural, which soon will hang proudly at Columbus. It's a multicolored butterfly, created from 143 smaller butterflies crafted individually by fifth-graders. The inscription on the four-panel mural reads, "Your wings already exist; all you have to do is fly!" Families continued celebrations after each ceremony in Feeney Park.

George M. Davis Jr. Elementary School

Davis proudly sent off 109 fifth-grade graduates with a big party Wednesday. After a special student assembly on Tuesday, Davis students enjoyed a special video tribute with their families Wednesday morning. Graduates then made their way to the school for an exciting drive-through and campus party. With a DJ to entertain students and families, Davis graduates came through the circle one vehicle at a time. Teachers and staff loudly cheered, and each Davis "dolphin" received the spotlight on stage while receiving a diploma. The graduation theme was "Resilience," represented in the students' [rendition](#) of "Hall of Fame." "This graduation was such a fun and exciting day," said student Viviana Rizzetta. "I loved seeing all of the teachers there cheering us on. It was a day I will never forget!"

"This graduating class deserved something extra special," said Principal Anthony Bambrola. "Every Davis graduate had a special moment to enjoy with all of their family, as well as countless staff members who normally can't attend a graduation ceremony during the school day. Time paused for us all during the event, and the sense of community was palpable. We needed to all put things aside and come together to cheer our most important resource - our students."

Jefferson Elementary School

Jefferson reimaged its graduation festivities for its resilient and courageous fifth-graders; 103 are moving up. For the first time, ceremonies were outside. In another first, students spoke, sharing their love of Jefferson and their excitement for their upcoming years in middle school. Two guest speakers, Interim Superintendent Dr. Alex Marrero and Board of Education member Katie Castellano Minaya, energized students with speeches about leadership and career paths. Principal Kimmerly Nieves said that the pandemic had a silver lining in that it helped children develop their technology skills, and she noted that welcomes to attendees were offered in Italian, English and Spanish. "The graduation experience was more fun than I expected it to be because we got to walk in with our friends, and out with our friends," said Myeve Trinity McAlley. "I liked showing off the hard work that we put into this year, during the pandemic, to

graduate."

Trinity Elementary School

Trinity celebrated its annual Fifth Grade Graduation Ceremony with 139 graduates and families on Monday. Students and parents experienced a "Drive-Thru/Walk-Thru" ceremony filled with a "Hall of Fame" wall, decorated vehicles, a balloon tunnel, music, dancing and socially distanced spectators. Each graduate was announced and a photo opportunity with Principal Michael Hilderbrand and homeroom teachers took place on the "red carpet." "Our scholars have all endured so much darkness in this past year. I hope this was a bright light they will never forget," Hilderbrand said.

William B. Ward Elementary School

Ward celebrated its fifth-grade classes in seven ceremonies, with the assistance of the PTA and staff. Music teacher Robert Flanz provided entertainment on the guitar and keyboard. Students from each class gave a welcome speech and thanked teachers for guiding them through a challenging year. Principal Franco Miele, Assistant Principal Kimberly Peluso and homeroom teachers reflected on the year and wished students and families well before students took pictures with family and friends. The common message: "We did it, we worked together and persevered!" Student speakers were Nicholas DeRaffele, Kimberly Maya, Maci Zeman, Mia Damian Valencia, Leonardo Adams, Alina Rezvi, Nathan Hoffman, Sophia Artiles, Julyssa Herbert, Christopher Hernandez Navarro, Elijah Kyer, Gaia Victoria-Gonzalez, Laila DeVeaux and Brandon Pratt.

Daniel Webster Magnet School

With students' family and friends in attendance, Webster recognized 111 fifth-graders across five Moving Up ceremonies. Each ceremony featured a [video](#) that began with congratulations from Board of Education member Katie Castellano Minaya. She praised students' achievements and the dedicated work and support of teachers and families during an unprecedented school year. The video also featured performances by Webster's orchestra, band and chorus, culminating in a rendition of "We Are Young," sung by every fifth-grade class. At the conclusion of each ceremony, a reception was held on the school's front lawn, allowing families to proudly celebrate with their graduates. Remarks by Principal Melissa Passarelli focused on how students were resilient when faced with the adversity of a global pandemic. They were encouraged to assume leadership roles that will allow them to make a difference in the world.

Project SEARCH



On Monday, eight students graduated from Project SEARCH, a school-to-work transition program for 18- to 21-year-olds with developmental disabilities. The program, a partnership between the District, Montefiore New Rochelle Hospital, the ACCES-VR vocational rehabilitation program and Ability Beyond, serves as an alternative to the last year of high school and provides training and education leading to employment.

"One of the most important work skills that I learned was to always be on time and to always look the part and be professional," said Project

Search graduate Rashaad Williams. His classmate, Derick Diaz, said he learned to write professional emails, make professional phone calls and "the importance of integrity."

For the past five years, between 80% and 100% of students have found jobs in the community, including at Dave & Buster's, Stew Leonard's, Stop & Shop, Home Depot, ABB Optical and Digiscribe.

Graduates, from left to right: Dylan Pryor, Jordan Berrios, Michael Lopez, Rashaad Williams, Linly Zheng, Derick Diaz, and Gabriel Rubio. Not shown: Matthew Banks.

More News to Know

Deadline Extended: Complete Survey on next NRHS Principal Through Tuesday

The City School District of New Rochelle has extended the deadline for the community to [share input](#) regarding desired characteristics and required leadership qualities in New Rochelle High School's next principal. A survey, at [nred.org](#), can now be completed through Tuesday, June 29. The principal's anticipated start date is in August. The Central Office Team, guided by incoming Superintendent Jonathan Raymond, is committed to finding a qualified administrator who embodies integrity, equity, inclusion and diversity.

The successful candidate will have:

- Experience as an administrator; secondary administrative experience preferred.
- Skills as a courageous and informed leader, able to engage all different voices and perspectives within the building and the community toward a unified vision.

- Superior communication skills, demonstrating accessibility and cultural competency in a large and complex school setting.
- Strong management skills and systems thinking coupled with the ability to build a team approach to leadership.
- A focus on decisions in the best interests of a diverse student body.
- A visible and accessible presence that portrays an effective role model for students and staff.

The hiring process:

- Interview committees will be facilitated by Central and School Administration. Students, staff, parents and community representatives, as well as the Board of Education, will participate.
- Questions and desired qualities for candidates are being developed based on skills needed and suggestions offered in survey responses.
- The position was posted on [olasjobs.org](https://www.olasjobs.org) and elsewhere.
- Resumes will be reviewed in early July. Interviews begin afterward. The process will be completed by July 31.

Applicants must apply at [olasjobs.org](https://www.olasjobs.org) by July 1.

NRHS Musical Featured on Apple Newsroom Website

Graduation week at New Rochelle High School is even sweeter for students who were part of this year's high school musical. Apple has posted a story in its [Newsroom](#), featuring and celebrating students, teachers and families who took part in "Is There Life After High School," produced this spring amid the challenges of the pandemic. When in-person learning was interrupted due to the pandemic, drama teacher Anthony Stirpe used iPhones, iPads and Mac computers to aid students in reinventing the annual musical. The process built opportunities for students to learn and connect in new ways. Unable to stage the play live, Stirpe turned NRHS's production of the Broadway musical into a months-long project that incorporated student actors, dancers, the school orchestra and even parents. "Is There Life After High School" is available online through June 27; donation is \$10. Tickets are available [here](#).

Board of Education Recognizes Retirees, Departing Superintendent and Board Members

The dedication, hard work and significant contributions of retiring City School District of New Rochelle employees, Interim Superintendent Dr. Alex Marrero and Board of Education President Rachel Relkin and member Todd Kern were recognized at Tuesday's Board of Education meeting. The meeting opened with a beautiful rendition of "Rise Up," sung by NRHS graduating senior Kyle Johnson.

Many of the nearly 60 employees retiring were in attendance to receive certificates honoring their service, and the Board expressed its gratitude and well wishes. A [presentation](#) featuring the employees and their retirement plans was shown at the meeting; traveling and spending time with family were among the common themes. The longest-serving employee to retire, with 39 years, is New Rochelle High School science teacher Bruce Zeller.

The Board also recognized and thanked Marrero for his leadership of the District through a challenging year, citing his professionalism, integrity and unwavering commitment to students. Marrero has been named Superintendent of Denver's public schools. Jonathan Raymond has been appointed New Rochelle schools' Superintendent; he starts in July.

Two long-serving Board of Education members whose terms expire at the month's end were recognized for extraordinary volunteer service. Board President Relkin, with 10 years on the Board, and Kern, with five years, were commended for their tireless efforts on behalf of students and families and for exceptional community commitment to New Rochelle.

Congratulations, District Retirees, 2020 and 2021!

Administration: Anthony Bongo, assistant superintendent; Laura DiBuono, Sarah Lynch, Sheila Smith-Tyme.

Albert Leonard Middle School: Barbara Clark, Sharon DeGeorge, Joyce Gambardella, Maureen Martin.

Barnard Elementary: Maria Murakami, Candace Pinn, Jacqueline Samuels.

Columbus Elementary: Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn, Milagros Colon-Gugliotta.

Davis Elementary: Lucille Alfano, Cheryl Powers.

District-wide: Juan Mendez.

Grove Avenue: Richard DiBuono.

Isaac E. Young Middle School: Claudia Cassone, Alyssa Heller, Martha Rodriguez, Leslie Smith, Martin White.

Jefferson Elementary: Richard Bruno.

New Rochelle High School: Daniel Browne, Maryann Capossela, Barbara Cotturone, Leonard Dixon, Alan Gardner, Frances Grosso, David Herman, Robert Monteleone, Lynn Neidorf, Olinda Nunes, Mary Lynn Palucci, Ivanica Prorokovic, Neal Shultz, Karen Tucker, Mahalia Turner, Judith Weeks-Padgett, Rudolph Williams, Alexander Willis, Rhonda Young, Bruce Zeller.

Trinity Elementary: Diane Delgado, Paula Katz (also Davis and Webster), Alexandra Oppenheimer.

Ursuline School: Marie Bruno.

Ward Elementary: Patricia Anderson, Mary Lou Basso.

Webster Elementary: Antoinette Boncardo, Karen Brusati, Donna Conte, Cynthia Horton, Linda Johnson, Victor Minei, Margaret Parker.

Trinity Dedicates Garden in Memory of Ms. Emmy

Strawberries, mint, cilantro and more now grow at Trinity Elementary School in Ms. Emmy's Garden, a new patch of flora named for Emmy Falta, who the school lost to COVID-19 last year. Dedicated by the school community Thursday, the garden also features lavender in Falta's honor. The garden was created by Trinity teachers, students and staff with donations from the Trinity PTA and residents of the nearby Watermark Pointe. Cutting the ribbon, from left, are social worker Nelsie Febles, teaching assistant Maria Torres and monitor Claire O'Connell.



E-Newsletter Update

The City School District of New Rochelle is pleased to distribute this newsletter weekly during the academic year to highlight news, our students, teachers, staff, programs, services and activities. Additional issues will be provided as news warrants during July and August to keep our community informed. Enjoy a healthy, happy and safe summer!