

# Students Focus on Communication During Speech and Language Awareness Week



Students across Valley Stream District 30 celebrated Speech and Language Awareness Week from May 17-21. This was the first year that the district recognized the special week which is part of Better Speech and Hearing Month. Each day students from Clear Stream Avenue, Forest Road and Shaw Avenue elementary schools learned about the important role of a speech therapist and explored the significance of verbal communication and personal interaction through engaging activities and lessons.

In collaboration with Director of Special Services Dr. Nicole Schimpf and building principals, Valley Stream District 30's speech-language pathologists Sharon Benyaminy, Rae Costa, Kristin Princiotta and Jennifer Reilly led the week by designing the curriculum and assisting teachers in the classroom with the activities. This gave students the opportunity to get to know the speech-language pathologists better and learn about their important role in the school community.

During the students' social-emotional learning periods, classes utilized their technological devices to participate in virtual Speech and Language Awareness Week activities through student-friendly PowerPoints. Students in grades K-2 explored parts of the body that individuals use to talk, learned how to make different speech sounds, sign the ABCs and practice whole body listening. Students in grades 3-6 followed suit while also learning about the importance of strong communication skills in different careers, practicing how to sign their own names and discovering that some individuals use technology to communicate with others.

According to the four speech-language pathologists, "effective communication is very important for success both within the classroom setting as well as in the 'real world' community." Their role is to be a support system for all students in their development of effective communication skills so they can be successful.

"We hope that the students enjoyed the activities that we planned," they said. "Perhaps some of them will consider speech pathology as a future career! We also hope that this week helped students develop empathy for others who may struggle with communication."

The district plans to make Speech and Language Awareness Week an annual celebration for all students.