



**It's All About U**

# **Board Meeting Superintendent's Report**

**September 16, 2025**

*The mission of the Township of Union Public Schools (TUPS) is to  
empower and inspire Every Student, Every Day.*



# Presentation from the TUPS

Student Therapeutic Assistant Resource Team (S.T.A.R.T.)

Duteche Aine, LCSW - Manager of Clinical Services

Patricia Bridges, LPC- Mental Health Clinician

Dr. Yemisi Abiona, PHD, LCSW

Caroline Arreaga, LCSW

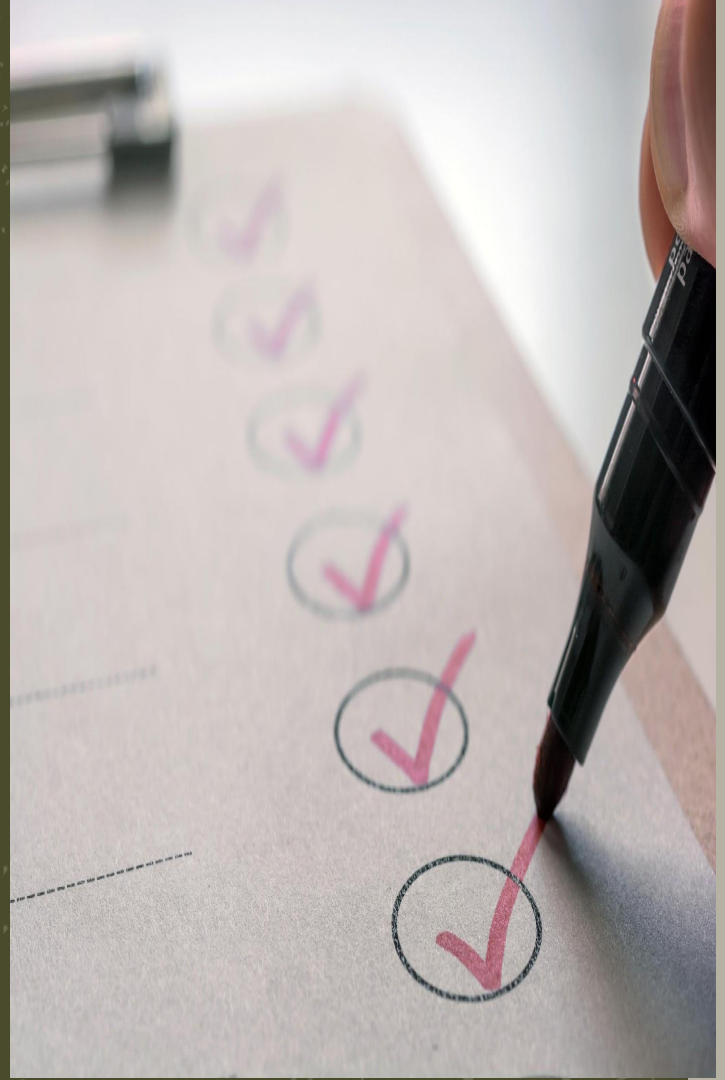
# S.T.A.R.T.

STUDENT THERAPEUTIC ASSISTANCE RESOURCE TEAM



# AGENDA

- INTRODUCTION
- PROGRAM OVERVIEW
- SERVICES PROVIDED
- HOW TO ACCESS SERVICES
- 24-25 HIGHLIGHTS
- WHAT'S NEXT





# S.T.A.R.T. OVERVIEW

We are a dedicated team of mental health professionals with years of experience assisting children and families with their needs.

## Mission Statement

To provide comprehensive and impactful mental health services that support the social and emotional well-being of our diverse student population.

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Foster emotional resilience among students.
- Provide access to mental health services/resources.
- Encourage a supportive school environment.

## KEY GOALS

- Improve student mental health outcomes.
- Increase awareness and reduce stigma.
- Collaborate with families and community partners.



# SERVICES PROVIDED

## S.T.A.R.T. OFFERS IMPACTFUL AND EFFECTIVE SERVICES INCLUDING:

- Short-term individual counseling for students dealing with problems impacting their daily functioning.
- Small group counseling sessions for students who benefit from direct mentor support including coping skills conducted in safe and controlled settings.
- Social skills training for students who would benefit from support with learning and practicing social skills and conflict-resolution.

# HOW TO ACCESS SERVICES

## SELF-REFERRAL :

Students interested in receiving counseling services can speak to their teachers or school counselor to request referral.

## TEACHER/STAFF/PARENT REFERRAL :

Teachers or staff members seeking counseling for a student can speak to the school counselor to request a referral.

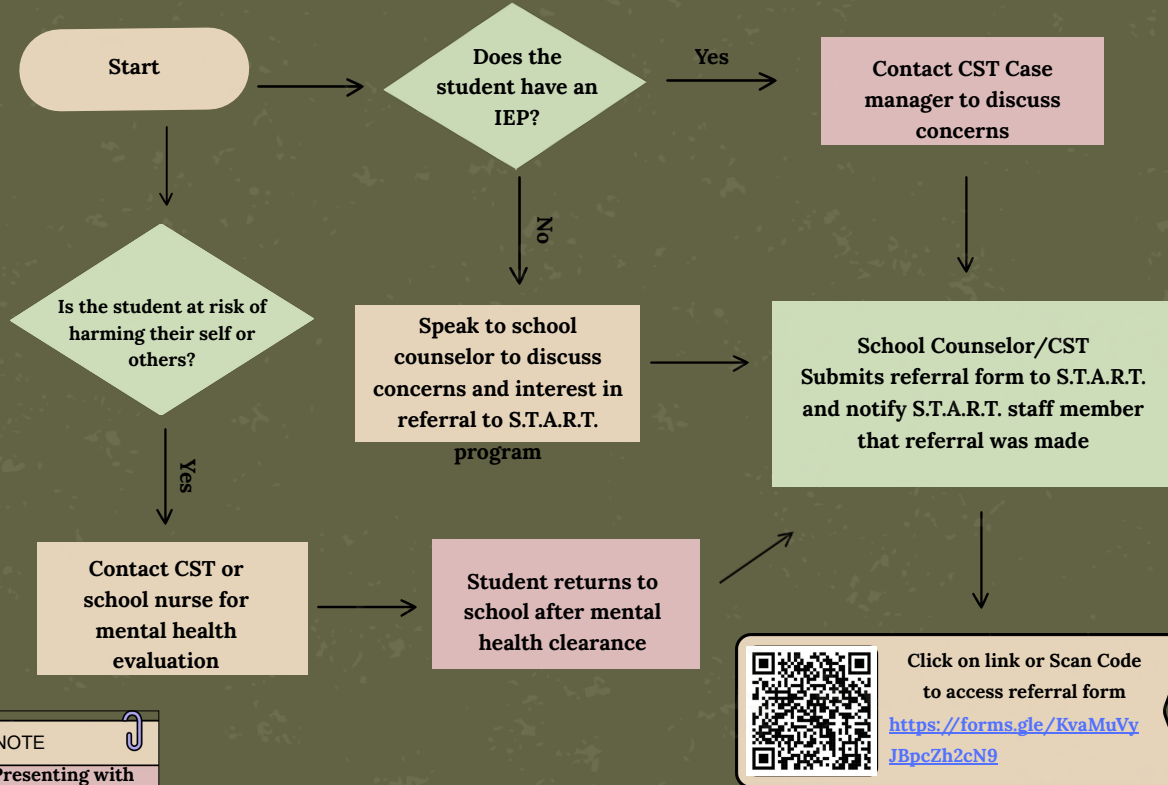
## SCHOOL COUNSELOR/CHILD STUDY TEAM :

Submit referral form to S.T.A.R.T.

# STUDENT THERAPEUTIC ASSISTANCE RESOURCE TEAM (S.T.A.R.T.)

## REFERRAL FLOWCHART

Student presents with emotional challenges that are impacting their academic/daily functioning



### NOTE

Students Presenting with Substance use concerns please notify SAC counselor or School Administration



Click on link or Scan Code to access referral form

<https://forms.gle/KvaMuVyJBpcZh2cN9>



Questions/Additional information:  
[daine@twpunionschools.org](mailto:daine@twpunionschools.org)

# 24-25 HIGHLIGHTS



Served over 240 students.



Collaborated with external agencies (Mobile Response, Perform Care, Trinitas Hospital).



Connected students with apprenticeship opportunities.



Liaison between Parents, Teachers, and School.



Support in decreasing school avoidant behavior.

# WHAT'S NEXT?

Enhancing our school-based mental health program for better student outcomes and support services.

- Meditation Group for Students and Staff
  - Parent group
  - Social skills group
  - Mental Health Fair
- Classroom Interventions





# WHAT DID YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THE S.T.A.R.T. PROGRAM?

“It's a safe space.”

“It's a good way for me to calm down during all the stress of school.”

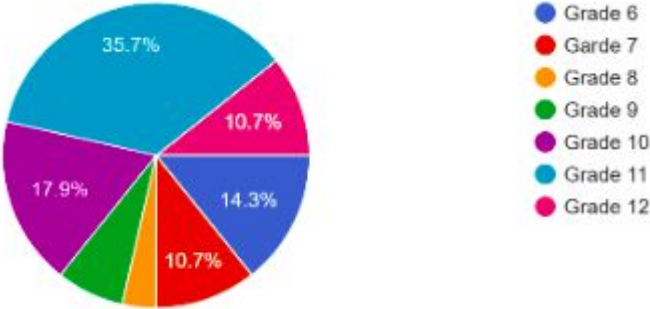
“It gave me an outlet I didn't feel like I had before to express my feelings. With that came understanding and a lot of realizations she made clear to me about myself. I like the baby steps and the fact she feels like a wise friend rather than a weird doctor who asks too many questions.”

“Experience in being able to talk about my problems in a group.”

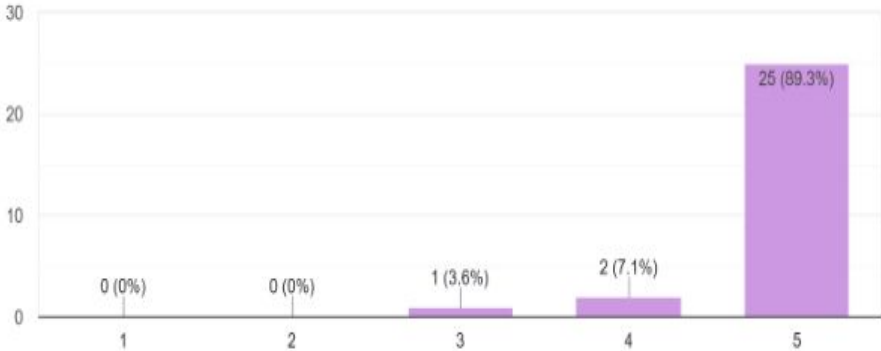
“The program is helping me grow as a person and see things in a different way.”

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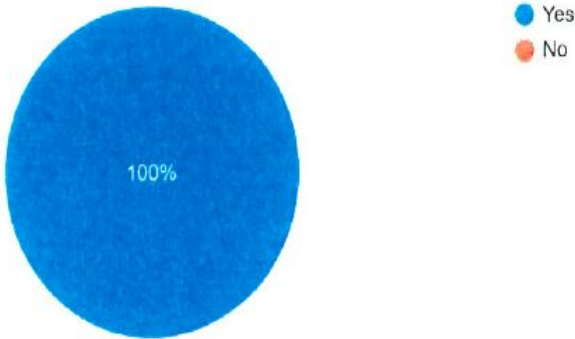
Grades Surveyed:



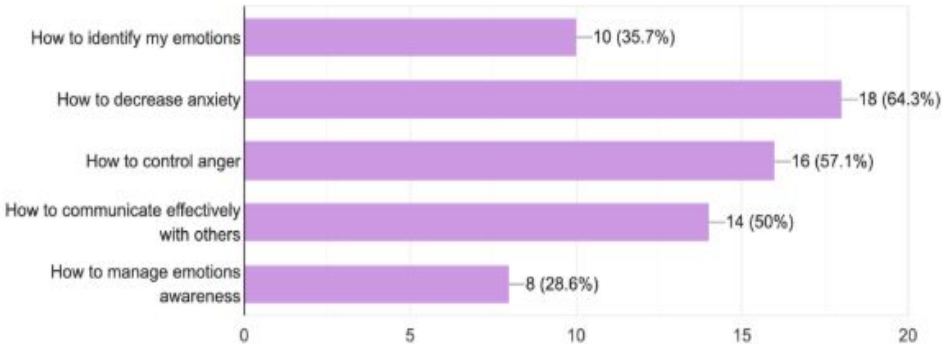
How did you like your therapist?



Do you feel that sessions were helpful for you?



What are some of the coping skills you learned?







# Presentation Year at a Glance 2024-2025

Carla Vicari  
Aracely DiGirolamo

## YEAR AT A GLANCE 2024-2025

"Transition Planning" was our main goal this year



### TASKS TO ACHIEVE OUR GOAL

- Tabled at the Eighth Grade Night at Union HS
- Provided to the District Administration multiple resources about Transition Planning, Student-Directed IEP, Self-Advocacy, Guardianship, and its Alternatives, among others
- Participated in the "Lunchtime Town Hall and Learning Event about Transition Services", hosted by the Township of Union Public Schools Special Services Department.
- Maintained closed communication with the Special Services Director to exchange updates about the department initiatives and actions towards the goal, as well as the group efforts to support those actions.
- Union SEPAG developed a Google Classroom with different and important resources about Transition Planning, which has been shared with the Special Services Department and available to the school community.



### SEPAG PARENT LEADERS ATTENDED PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Parent Leaders attended the:

- Disability Rights New Jersey- Classroom to Careers: Transition Services and VR Conference at Rutgers Law Center, and also
- SPAN Transition to Adult Life Youth Empowerment Summit at Mercer County College.



### UNION SEPAG'S RECOGNITION

Last year, Union SEPAG Co-Chairs, Carla Vicari and Aracely DiGirolamo received the first "Debbie Esposito Parent Leadership Award" given by SPAN during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual NJ-SSEAC Special Education Celebration.

This past May, the Union SEPAG Co-Chairs were invited to participate as panelists together with the Chairs of SEPAG Old Bridge and Maplewood-South Orange during the New Jersey Special Education Annual Summit Sponsored by Public Consulting Group and the NJ Principals and Supervisors Association Foundation for Educational Administration. The topic that was presented was "From Barriers to Bridges: Partnering with the SEPAG in Your District Parent Panel."

## YEAR AT A GLANCE 2024-2025

### Union Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG)

Our mission is to serve as a **collaborative** and **supportive platform** between students, parents, guardians, school personnel, and the Union community for ensuring high-quality special education programs and the inclusion of children with disabilities, which leads to the maximization of their potential, through **learning, sharing of best practices, awareness, and advocacy**. Our ultimate aim is for all children with disabilities to live active and enriching lives. This year's at-a-glance report provides an overview of our work during the 2024-2025 school year, our 7<sup>th</sup> year as a group.



### BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT PRESENTATIONS +PTA MEETING PARTICIPATION

The SEPAG Introductory Video was presented at BTS Night in all 10 schools in the district.

SEPAG participated in some schools' PTA meetings and could invite parents to learn more about the group and how they could be part of it.



### PARTICIPATION IN STATE LEVEL SEPAGS ROUNDTABLES

SPAN holds several roundtables throughout the year where SEPAGs share initiatives, best practices, and technical assistance is provided.



### MEETINGS WITH THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

SEPAG parent leaders participated in formal meetings with the Special Services Director and supervisors to provide parent input and recommendations previously shared by SEPAG members on systemic issues



### COLLABORATION WITH OTHER DISTRICT SEPAGS

A collaboration with other SEPAGs allowed us to offer more professional speakers' presentations to our members and consolidate cooperation among the groups.



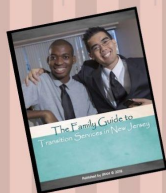
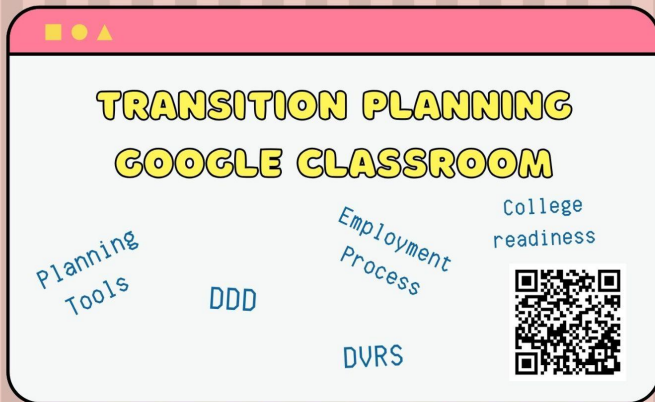
### MONTHLY MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS

Six meetings were held with a variety of topics and purposes:

- Township of Union Public Schools Special Services Dpt. Meet and Greet
- SEPAG Parent Input Meeting
- Transition Planning for Special Education Teens
- Transition from School to Adult Life
- Becoming Your Child's Best Advocate: IEP Tips for Parents Throughout the School Year
- Self-Nurture: Taking Care of Yourself as a Caregiver



# RESOURCES



## UNION SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY GROUP

### WHAT IS UNION SEPAG?

Our mission is to serve as a collaborative and supportive platform between students, parents, guardians, school personnel, and the Union community for ensuring high-quality special education programs and the inclusion of children with disabilities, that leads to the maximization of their potential; through learning, sharing of best practices, awareness, and advocacy. Our ultimate aim is for all children with disabilities to live active and enriching lives.

### HOW DOES UNION SEPAG HELP?

- Hosting monthly meetings where system-wide issues gathered by the group are shared and discussed, offering the opportunity to raise questions, voice concerns, and provide direct input to district and school leadership.
- Sharing resources and information about relevant programs and events in the community through the district website and Union SEPAG Facebook page.
- Providing educational events to inform and support parents as well as district staff

### HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

- Attend Union SEPAG meetings, sponsored events to provide feedback and discuss solutions on system-wide issues
- Volunteer to be a parent representative (liaison) regarding issues and concerns raised at your individual school
- Help foster partnership and collaboration with families, schools, and the community both locally and across districts

### WHO CAN BENEFIT?

- Parents/Guardians of students who receive services such as an individualized Educational Plan (IEP), a Section 504 accommodation plan, or an out-of-district placement.
- Parents/Guardians who may have concerns that their child might have a unique learning need that may include physical, emotional, and behavioral.
- Anyone who would like to gain an understanding of special education services, topics, and resources.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

EMAIL: [unionsepag@gmail.com](mailto:unionsepag@gmail.com)  
[https://www.twpunionschools.org/departments\\_and\\_services/special\\_services/union\\_sepag](https://www.twpunionschools.org/departments_and_services/special_services/union_sepag)  
 FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/UnionSEPAG>  
 INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/usepag07083/>  
 JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST: <https://forms.gle/nYXRQgX1ErJTxUMw8>

# Superintendent Update



TOWNSHIP OF UNION PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SAVE THE DATE

OPEN HOUSE  
2025-2026

Burnet - Monday, 9/15/25

Kawameeh - Wednesday, 9/17/25

Franklin - Thursday, 9/18/25

Connecticut Farms - Tuesday, 9/23/25

Washington - Wednesday, 9/24/25

Jefferson - Thursday, 9/25/25

Livingston - 9/29/25

Battle Hill - Tuesday, 9/30/25

Hannah Caldwell - Thursday, 10/2/25

Union High - Monday, 10/6/25



THE MISSION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF UNION PUBLIC SCHOOLS (TUPS) IS TO EMPOWER AND INSPIRE EVERY STUDENT, EVERY DAY.

**This is a Save the Date**  
More information is shared from  
the schools through ParentSquare.

# Update from HR: Vincent Rettino



## Special Services

- BMS - ICR/OCR
- KMS - ICR/OCR
- UHS - ICR/OCR & ICR/OCR

## Other

- HCES - Kindergarten
- FES - RTI & 1st Grade Teacher
- BMS Leadership - interviewed at building level
- PRE-K - Relief Teacher

# Harassment, Intimidation, & Bullying (HIB)



## Incidents to Report

Reporting Period HIB August 27 - September 9th
No Incidents to Report

# TUPS Talking Points



## Branding:

Setting Standards Across All Touchpoints  
(Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Strategic Plan)

Enrollment: 2024 - 2025 Enrollment: 7791  
2025 - 2026 Enrollment: 7473

Lunch Applications: <https://www.tups.org/tupsfoodnutrition>  
Laura DiGeso [ldigeso@tups.org](mailto:ldigeso@tups.org) 908-851-6516

Staff Excellence: Professional Development: Adhering to Policy



# TUPS Attendance Initiative



## WE CARE ABOUT U! SHOW UP ALL DAY, EVERY DAY ATTENDANCE MATTERS!



Being in school every day helps students succeed

- ★ Students who attend regularly are more likely to read on grade level, graduate, and be prepared for college or a career.
- ★ Missing just 2 days a month can add up to 18+ days a year, that's nearly a month of learning lost!



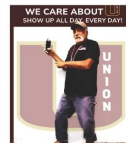
Stay in the loop with ParentSquare

- ★ Receive instant attendance alerts.
- ★ Access important updates, events, and school resources in one place.



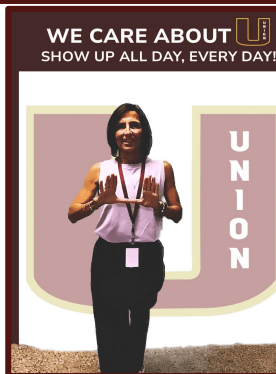
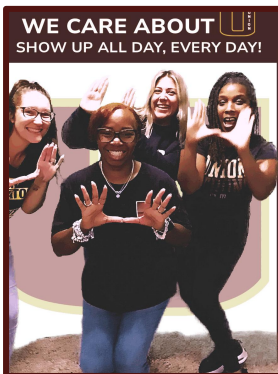
How parents and students can help:

- ★ Schedule appointments outside school hours.
- ★ Make school attendance a priority.
- ★ Notify the school immediately if your child must be absent.

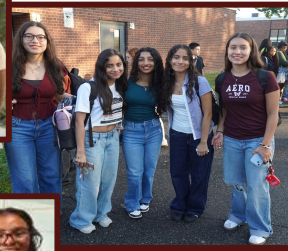
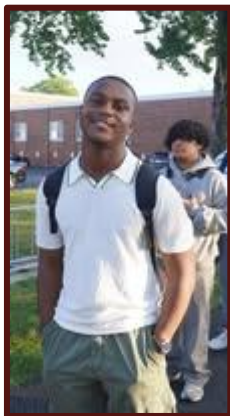


Empower and Inspire Every Student, Every Day.

September is Attendance Awareness Month!



# Opening Day 2025





# Events Around the U



September 15th -  
October 15th

Registration started  
Friday, September 12th  
notice was sent in  
ParentSquare

THE TOWNSHIP OF UNION PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROUDLY PRESENTS

## 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

FOR TUPS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

A FREE PROGRAM THAT GOES BEYOND HOMEWORK HELP!

OPEN TO 6<sup>TH</sup>, 7<sup>TH</sup>, AND 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENTS!

- Homework Assistance
- STEM & Enrichment
- Recreation Activities
- Daily Afternoon Snack

FREE FOR ALL STUDENTS  
(Program participation includes a daily snack)  
October 1, 2025 - May 29, 2026  
Mondays - Fridays  
(FULL DAYS OF SCHOOL ONLY)  
2:30PM - 5:30PM

Students eligible for regular bus service will also receive transportation home after the program.

Students may participate in other school clubs and still join 21<sup>st</sup> Century!  
Please note that students with full-time availability will be given priority.

This project was funded in its entirety under Title IV, Part B of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Nita M. Lowey 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CLC) grant funds through a grant agreement with the New Jersey Department of Education.

Scoring Beyond Expectations

21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SPACE IS LIMITED!  
\*Registration does not guarantee enrollment.\*

UNION MIDDLE SCHOOL

KANAWAMAH MIDDLE SCHOOL



October 23rd  
5-9 pm

Saturday, October 4th

UNION HIGH SCHOOL  
**FOOTBALL ALUMNI DAY**

SATURDAY OCTOBER 4<sup>TH</sup>  
UNION VS RIDGE - GAME AT 2PM

GUIDED UHS TOUR 12:00 PM  
MEET A GYM ENTRANCE

MEET AND GREET AT 1:00 PM  
OUTFIELD OF BASEBALL FIELD  
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS

Halftime Introductions of Alumni in Attendance at the 50 Yard Line

Let us know you're coming

WELCOME TO THE U



**THOMAS WEAVER**

UNION HIGH SCHOOL  
SPECIAL EDUCATION



Empower and Inspire Every Student, Every Day.

Some of our  
new staff members who  
joined us for the  
New Staff training days.

2025-2026

WELCOME TO THE U



**TRUDI-ANN LAWRENCE**

CONNECTICUT FARMS  
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER



Empower and Inspire Every Student, Every Day.

WELCOME TO THE U



**LISA DOREN**

DISTRICT WIDE  
LEAVE REPLACEMENT SPEECH THERAPIST



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WELCOME TO THE U



**JAN ERIKSSON**

JEFFERSON SCHOOL  
LEAVE REPLACEMENT ESL TEACHER



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WELCOME TO THE U



**LANDON MCCARTNEY**

UNION HIGH SCHOOL  
LEAVE REPLACEMENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS



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WELCOME TO THE U



**EMMA CIESLINSKI**

WASHINGTON SCHOOL  
2<sup>ND</sup> GRADE TEACHER



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**JACQUELINE WHITLEY**

UNION HIGH SCHOOL  
SCHOOL NURSE



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**BRIANA LAVOURA**

WASHINGTON SCHOOL  
3<sup>RD</sup> GRADE TEACHER



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**KARI ALLEMAN**

WASHINGTON SCHOOL  
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER



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**PATRICIA VARONA**

KAWAMEEH MIDDLE SCHOOL  
WORLD LANGUAGE (SPANISH TEACHER)



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**LANA STOREY**

UNION HIGH SCHOOL  
LEAVE REPLACEMENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS



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**MAIREFRANCES  
PSOMAS-JACKLOSKI**

JEFFERSON SCHOOL  
LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER



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**TAYLOR MARTIN**

BURNET MIDDLE SCHOOL  
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER



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**AVA MANFRA**

CONNECTICUT FARMS  
2<sup>ND</sup> GRADE TEACHER



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**TATIANA DEL VALLE**

KAWAMEEH MIDDLE SCHOOL  
MATH TEACHER



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**SAMANTHA ARRIETA**

JEFFERSON SCHOOL  
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER



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**AMANDA CORREIA**

WASHINGTON SCHOOL  
KINDERGARTEN TEACHER



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**NICHOLAS DEVLIN**

BATTLE HILL SCHOOL  
LEAVE REPLACEMENT PHYSICAL EDUCATION



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**NAYLA GALEANO**

BURNET MIDDLE SCHOOL  
ESL TEACHER



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**ANGELA MARINO**

CONNECTICUT FARMS  
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER



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**KELLY FITZPATRICK**

KAWAMEEH MIDDLE SCHOOL  
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER



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**ANGELICA REDZINIAK**

BURNET MIDDLE SCHOOL  
MATH



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**VANESSA SOUSA**

CONNECTICUT FARMS  
LEAVE REPLACEMENT ESL TEACHER



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**Gabriella Cavallo**

BURNET MIDDLE SCHOOL  
MATH



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Our New Website: [tups.org](https://tups.org)

 Township of Union Public Schools

 TUPSchools