

## Students in Tarrytown Learn Lessons from New Tappan Zee

Janie Rosman Thursday, 31 October 2013 20:13

Middle school students fascinated by the river activity outside their windows are in for a pleasant surprise — the New NY Bridge is coming to their classrooms. Three weeks into his new role as superintendent of the Tarrytown UFSD (July 1), Dr. Christopher Clouet joined more than 20 educators on a Thruway Authority tug boat to learn about the project and upcoming construction activities.

Teachers, local district consultants, and officials from the Hudson River Museum met with Public Outreach Administrators Andrew O'Rourke, Assistant Project Manager Daniel Marcy, and Chris Stokes of Stokes Creative Group, part of Tappan Zee Constructors, LLC, this summer to find ways to bring the project to local schools. These extensive discussions resulted in a five-year New NY Bridge Educational Outreach Program, presented for the first time last month to the Board of Education. "The first year's theme is Discovery and Environmental Stewardship," special project advisor Brian Conybeare told board members.

Using the real-time monitors, he explained, and the recent oyster-harvesting program and three-month dredging period, "students can study ecology, environmental monitoring, geotech investigations, safety, and equipment."

Subsequent themes for the five-year learning plan developed by TZC and the Thruway Authority are:

- Year 2: A Solid Foundation (2014-2015)
- Year 3: Many Working Together (2015-2016)
- Year 4: Bridge Rising (2016-2017)
- Year 5: Bridging the Future—Class of 2018! (2017-2018)

The summer meetings gave teachers from Westchester time to meet their Rockland counterparts and formulate ways to share educational units that will allow their classes to parallel problem-solve, then compare and contrast solutions via Smart Board. "The kids today asked questions and were intrigued by the project," Conybeare said, after speaking to students at Cottage Lane Elementary School in Blauvelt. "We plan to bring experts into the classroom to discuss various aspects of it."

For middle school art teacher Andrea Harrison, the bridge project is an inspiring theme for her intergenerational program — that connects students with neighborhood senior citizens — as a metaphor to 'bridge the gap' between generations, and to join different communities.

Working in small groups, and in pairs, Harrison's eighth-grade students will brainstorm and look at themes that connect in the same manner, "for every definition of what is a bridge," she said. "I saw it (the bridge project) as a springboard for new ideas, since it's not only a physical structure."

Math students can study census data to see growth of commerce, industry, population, peak travel times, or use data from the FEIS or the monitors installed earlier this year. High school seniors interested in science, or geology, or even graphics, can explore career fields through the school's Individualized Senior Experience program.

"It's a way to keep students moving ahead and engaged," explained High School Guidance Counselor Michael Kelly. "The goal is for students to work on real-time challenges with a mentor," while at the same time exploring career paths.

Since they're in school most of the day, Kelly said, the program offers flexible hours, depending upon their interests. "One former student was interested in animals, and she spent time with a veterinarian, whose office was open Saturdays," he said.

Last month, the first of several EarthCam® construction cameras was installed, and is accessible at the New NY Bridge (<http://www.newnybridge.com>) under Construction Cameras. It offers panoramic and marina views of the bridge, updated every 15 minutes, current project information and an interactive archive calendar.

"Our vision is to take the students along with us, as Tappan Zee Constructors, LLC (TZC) builds this significant project," Stokes said. "We are excited to have the opportunity to involve the local students in the project."

Eighth-graders looking at river from their windows now "will be able to look at the bridge when it opens in the fall of 2018, and know they were educationally part of the process," Harrison said.

TZC's Public Involvement Plan (outreach) includes institutes of higher education, like Manhattan College in Riverdale, and programs like the Hudson River Museum's Arts in the afternoon program.

"There was lots of enthusiasm from those who attended his (Conybeare's) October 9 presentation," Museum Director of Education Jennifer Patton, EdD said. It augmented the museum's current exhibit, Modernism and the Transformation of New York's Rivers 1900-1940, which opened in October and runs through mid-January 2014.

On October 30, project officials held the first college forum with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Cornell University, and the University of Buffalo.

