

SUPERINTENDENT'S BLOG

ROCKAWAY BOROUGH SCHOOLS--OCTOBER 15, 2018



**8TH GRADERS TAKE
PART IN THIS
YEAR'S MURDER
MYSTERY**



"WHODUNIT?"

On Thursday, October 4th, eighth grade students under the guidance of Mrs. Cindy O'Brien participated in their first Authentic Performance Task of the year. The specific task was a Murder Mystery Lunch that linked the students' study of the mystery genre in literature to their summer read of *The Westing Game*. Through their studies, students learned the theory behind "solving a crime" and the skill set needed to do so in their short story readings, as well as in their study of the Agatha Christie novel, *And Then There Were None*. Using mystery genre characteristics, as well as the learned and applied notion of: means, motive, and opportunity, 8th graders prepared themselves to solve the targeted grade wide "whodunit" mystery.

Prior to the event, students were given invitations to the mystery party with character names, a bit of background on their individual character, and a suggestion for costume attire. The students were also given pre-game cards, where they had to complete certain tasks, and drop certain clues leading to the day of the party. Students had three rounds in which clues needed to be given and notes taken on every player involved (70 students in total). Using the information provided to them by other participants, students decided who had the means, motive, and opportunity to commit the crime at hand. To add to the day's event, staff and students coordinated efforts to provide lunch and snacks for all involved. As part of the task, students were required to write a paragraph in which they guessed the murderer, and provided support to justify their choice. The following day, they also wrote a reflection on what they learned from the event, and ways it can be improved for next year.

An authentic performance task is a means of authentically assessing a student's mastery of particular theory, and/or skill set in relation to a real world situation or task. The goal of creating authentic 21st century learners is the ability of the students to show how the skills learned within the four walls of the classroom can be applied in life.

