



**SOUTHERN WESTCHESTER BOCES**  
BOARD OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES



Office of Public Information  
450 Mamaroneck Avenue, Harrison, NY 10528

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[www.swboces.org](http://www.swboces.org)

## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SWBOCES School Library System awarded grant to fund library for use by incarcerated students**

American Association of School Libraries to provide \$5,000 at June 22 conference to expand collection at the Westchester County jail

HARRISON, N.Y.—Students in Southern Westchester BOCES' Sprain Brook Academy at the Westchester County jail will benefit from a newly expanded library, thanks to a grant from the American Association of School Libraries. The grant will be awarded to the SWBOCES School Library System at an event in the nation's capital June 22.

Sprain Brook Academy, in partnership with the Westchester County Department of Correction, provides education programming to 60-80 incarcerated students, leading to a high school diploma or equivalency credential. The \$5,000 Inspire Collection Development Grant "provides funds to extend, update, and diversify a school's book, online, subscription and/or software collections to improve student achievement," the AASL announcement states.

The grant was one of six awarded nationwide and the only one in New York State. The Academy is the only recipient operating in a correctional facility rather than a traditional



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or charter school. Grant winners will be honored at the 2019 American Library Association Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.

Melissa Iamónico, Supervisor of the School Library System, said the new funding will enable a sizable collection of soft-cover books and magazines. Currently, Academy students utilize library space in a back office where they do not have ready access to freely browse the collection. It is underutilized as well due to its currently small selection of titles.

“This is a tremendous opportunity to bring library resources to a unique cohort of students served by Southern Westchester BOCES. The School Library System is thankful to the AASL for recognizing this need, which is fully in keeping with our mission to meet the needs of all students for library resources,” Ms. Iamónico said

The School Library System is a consortium of member school libraries from the component districts of Southern Westchester BOCES. Its mission is to increase capacity in school libraries as well as to share best practices and ideas among member librarians.

With the support of the Department of Correction, Sprain Brook Academy Principal Dr. Michele Darby and Ms. Iamónico have identified a location within the facility where students will have ready access to books that will be engaging and of high interest. Plans are underway to expand the collection of 100 books, to organize them by genre, and to increase the collection size significantly, beginning with an initial order of 60 books. This is the first time in recent memory books have been ordered specifically for the intended audience rather than donated.

Books must be paperbacks for safety reasons, limiting their shelf life. For that reason, multiple copies of popular titles are being acquired. After initial acquisitions of \$1,000 in new titles this summer and again in the fall, monthly orders of \$500 each will follow from December through May.



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It is the hope that by improving the quality and condition of the library's collection, students will be eager to take more books back to their living quarters. Future acquisitions will add popular fiction and non-fiction titles along with a dedicated graphic novel collection, magazines and Spanish-language offerings.

"This opportunity means the world not only to our students, who will directly benefit, but also to the educators who strive daily to give their students the instruction and guidance they need to transform their lives and prepare them for positive and productive futures. Education is a key component of that transformation, and libraries are central to education," Dr Darby said.

Westchester Commissioner of Correction Joseph K. Spano stated, "For any offender, the ability to get lost in a great book while in custody cannot be overstated. It can help take a person's mind to a different place outside of our walls, or allow him or her to learn a new skill. We are very appreciative of the opportunity to expand our library collection, particularly with books that young people can access '24/7' in their housing area."

First Deputy Commissioner Louis A. Molina stated, "We recognize that when the young people in our care are in the community, they rely on digital content as a source of information. The ability to provide them with traditional books in addition to our existing digital library and educational tablets will support their educational journey, enhancing their reentry to their respective communities."

Added Claudia Murphy, Senior Director of Adult and Community Services at SWBOCES, "The administration of Southern Westchester BOCES and the Center for Adult & Community Services, which operates the Sprain Brook Academy in collaboration with our partners at the Department of Correction, are thankful to the AASL for supporting this important work. This grant will help ensure we meet our educational mission to serve all of our students."

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