

# FCS Insights

Newsletter of the MS Ed in Family & Consumer Sciences Program  
Department of Family, Nutrition, & Exercise Sciences



## Welcome... It's our first issue!

Welcome to the Inaugural Issue of the FCS Insights Newsletter!

I am thrilled to introduce the first issue of our newsletter, FCS Insights, a platform dedicated to sharing the knowledge and experiences of our MS Ed students at Queens College. Our contributors are not only students but also working educators who bring a wealth of practical experience and innovative ideas to our program and their classrooms. In this newsletter, you will find a variety of articles that delve into classroom learning, instructional strategies, and new educational ideas. Our students will share what's happening in their classrooms, providing a glimpse into their daily teaching practices and the learning environments they create. They will also make connections between their research in our program and their classroom experiences, offering insights into the application of educational theories and practices.

*Why does Family & Consumer Sciences matter?*

Today, the skills taught in Family & Consumer Sciences are more crucial than ever. Our program equips teachers to be content experts and provides them with the pedagogical knowledge to teach using best practices and diverse instructional strategies. We also prepare our students for the technological requirements that teachers face in today's classrooms. By emphasizing practical knowledge and critical thinking, FCS education empowers students to make informed decisions that positively impact their personal lives and communities.

I hope you find this newsletter informative and inspiring. Thank you for joining us on this journey of learning and growth.

Fernanda Armoza, Ms Ed, MBA  
Program Director  
fernanda.armoza@qc.cuny.edu

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# Spreading the word about FCS: Initiatives to educate and inspire

## What are the FACTS about FACS?

How many times have you had a conversation that goes something like this: "OMG you're a teacher? That's awesome, what do you teach?" "I teach Family and Consumer Science!" "What is that?" If this sounds like something you have experienced, it's time to spread the word about what Family and Consumer Science is.

Too often, FACS is overlooked or misunderstood. Some still think it's just about "home ec" from decades ago, without recognizing the financial literacy, technology, leadership, and career-readiness skills we actually teach. That's why marketing and advertising your FACS program isn't just a good idea, it's absolutely essential. It not only helps increase enrollment, secure funding, build community partnerships, but also ensure the future of FACS education. Family and Consumer Science is one of the most practical, hands-on subjects students can take. We teach real-life skills from managing money, cooking healthy meals, building relationships, to preparing for careers. Us FACS educators know that, but unfortunately it's not as common knowledge as the fact that an ELA teacher will teach you about metaphors vs similes. If we don't actively promote our programs, people won't realize how valuable they are. If you're not already promoting your program, now is the time to start. Let's talk about five reasons why marketing matters and how you can get the word out in a way that's fun, effective, and totally doable.

### 1. Increase Enrollment and Program Growth

Many students and parents are unaware of what FACS offers. Highlighting real-world skills like financial literacy, nutrition, child development, and career readiness can attract more students. Strong enrollment helps secure funding and ensures the program continues to be offered. Having strong enrollment can also lead to expanding the program to appeal to student interest. We have the unique flexibility in our curriculum to really engage with student curiosity.

### 2. Combat Misconceptions About FACS

Unfortunately, so many people still view FACS as just "cooking and sewing." Consistent marketing and sharing your students' work can completely shift the focus of FACS from archaic preconceived notions to leadership, financial literacy, technology integration, and career prep.

### 3. Promote Student Success & Achievements

Make an Instagram account! Put a bulletin board outside of your room! Whatever it is, students love feeling appreciated. We have the luxury of having so many tangible projects to showcase student achievement. Highlighting student work in newsletters, social media, and school events seriously boosts confidence and drives creative student aspiration.

### 4. Showcase Relevance & Career Pathways

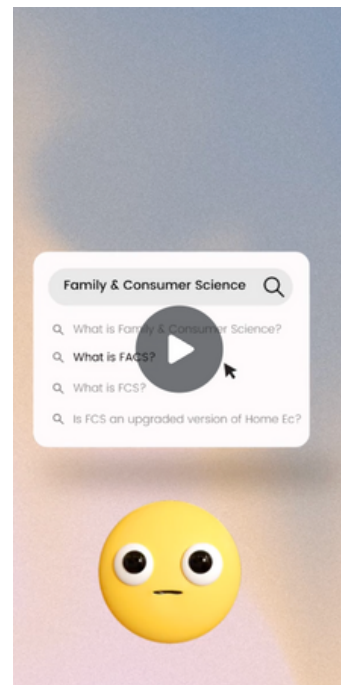
FACS courses prepare students for careers in education, hospitality, fashion, human services, and more. Marketing your program can help students and parents see how FCS skills translate into jobs and lifelong success.

### 5. Engage the Community & Build Partnerships

Marketing creates opportunities for guest speakers, internships, and collaborations with local businesses. Incorporating facets of the real world can really encourage capturing student interest.

Strong community involvement enhances student learning and career connections. Click on my informational video to see an example!

**Erica Heffez**  
**South Side Middle School**



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## Spreading the word about FCS: Initiatives to educate and inspire



As a new Family and Consumer Science (FCS) teacher at Herricks High School, I am thrilled to bring my passion and expertise as a Holistic Nutritionist into the classroom. My goal is to inspire students and staff to embrace a healthier lifestyle—one that fosters well-being and empowers individuals to thrive.

One exciting initiative I have introduced is a series of Monthly Health Tips, which are recorded by the TV department and featured during the morning announcements.

These segments have been a fantastic way to share practical advice that supports healthier choices in daily life. The response has been overwhelmingly positive! Staff members have shared how they appreciate the insights and have started incorporating them into their routines. Students who have taken my class share that they love seeing me on the screen and students who haven't taken my class are now familiar with who I am and are interested in hopefully taking my class in the future. So far, our health tips have covered essential topics such as:

- ✓ The importance of hydration and simple ways to increase daily water intake
- ✓ Healthy snack ideas to fuel energy and focus
- ✓ Strategies to incorporate fiber and protein into every meal for better digestion and sustained energy
- ✓ And much more!

By bringing real-world applications into my teaching and promoting nutrition awareness, I hope to expand the FCS program at Herricks High School. This department plays a crucial role in equipping students with essential life skills, and I am committed to growing its impact within our school community.

**Jenia Yeshaya**  
**Herricks High School**

### 7th Grade Enrichment: A Flavorful Journey into Food Science and Creative cooking

In addition to teaching my FACS classes, at the beginning of the school year, I was given the opportunity to create an enrichment class. This unique program is available to the 7th graders in our school who have a study hall in their schedule and would like to take an additional Related Arts (Specials) class. The class I created is entitled "Food Science," and the students embark on an exciting and hands-on journey that blends food science, creative cooking, and friendly competition.

This enrichment invites students to explore the fascinating world of food, learning not only how to cook and bake but also the science behind the dishes they create. It's a perfect way to engage young minds in a fun and educational environment, where they can develop valuable skills that extend beyond the kitchen. The food science aspect of the enrichment program introduces students to the basic principles of cooking and baking, explaining how ingredients interact and why certain textures and flavors occur. Students experiment with common ingredients like flour, sugar, butter, and eggs, gaining an understanding of how they combine and react in different recipes. They learn how acids, bases, and heat influence food, such as how baking soda helps a cake rise or how sugar caramelizes when exposed to heat. Through demonstrations and hands-on cooking labs, students gain a deeper appreciation for the science behind their meals.

continued on next page...

# Classroom Spotlights

## 7th Grade Enrichment: A Flavorful Journey into Food Science and Creative continued...

Basic food decorating adds another layer of creativity to the program. Students are encouraged to use their artistic skills to make their dishes not just tasty but visually appealing. Whether it's decorating cupcakes with buttercream or crafting seasoned themed cake-pops, students explore different techniques and tools to enhance their culinary creations. This allows them to express their creativity while learning about presentation and design in food. The program also fosters a sense of friendly competition through cooking and baking challenges. Students participate in team-based competitions where they apply their new skills to create dishes that align with specific themes or ingredients. This element of the enrichment program encourages teamwork, problem-solving, and time management, as students work together to create delicious and well-executed dishes under pressure. The end goal of this course is to encourage the students to pursue their interests in cooking and develop their skills, whether in the kitchen or future endeavors that involve creativity, teamwork, and scientific thinking.

**Janis Gaglione**  
**Stroudsburg Area School District**



## Sewing for a purpose

As my 6th-grade students concluded their sewing unit, they took on an exciting challenge: creating projects for younger students. Their enthusiasm was truly remarkable! We teamed up with one of the elementary schools in our district.

A 3rd-grade class read the book *Dear Dragon*, which tells the tale of a student who forms a friendship with a dragon pen pal. The story offered valuable opportunities for them to connect with themes such as friendship, creativity, and empathy. Following their reading session, I provided the younger students with templates allowing them to design their dragons.

I then had my sixth graders bring these designs to life by making handmade stuffed animal versions of the 3rd grade dragons using their newly acquired sewing skills. It was truly amazing to watch these students dedicate themselves to a task for the happiness of other students. They also wrote very heartfelt letters to our new younger friends to accompany their new stuffies, adding depth to this cross-disciplinary initiative. Please enjoy the attached photos I captured during this project. Please let me know if you have any questions about this project.

**Erin Meyer**  
**Jonas E. Salk Middle School**





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# Classroom Spotlights

## First Year Experience

Teaching 6th-grade Family and Consumer Science, or FCS, has truly been one of the most rewarding and fulfilling experiences of my life. From the moment I started my journey in this role at the Corning Painted Post School District, I knew I had found something special—something that felt like much more than just a job. In fact, stepping into this position felt like stepping into my dream career, one that allows me to help students develop important life skills while also inspiring their creativity and curiosity.

Very early on in my new role, I had the exciting opportunity to design a unit focused on Consumerism, and it quickly became one of the most memorable and enjoyable parts of my teaching experience, not only for me but also for my students. As part of this unit, my students worked on a fun and interactive project that tasked them with designing, creating, and marketing their very own cereal boxes. They were encouraged to think carefully about specific target audiences and use their creativity to make their cereal concepts as appealing as possible.



Watching their ideas come to life during this project was truly amazing. Seeing how invested they were in each stage of the activity—from brainstorming ideas to designing unique packaging—brought me so much joy. It was unforgettable to witness their creativity and passion in action, and it reminded me of the incredible power that engaging, hands-on learning experiences have. Activities like this not only make learning exciting and enjoyable for students, but they also help them develop critical thinking skills, teamwork, and a deeper understanding of real-world concepts. Moments like these made it clear to me how impactful this kind of teaching can be in fostering meaningful growth and excitement for learning among young students.

**Allison Potter**  
**Corning Painted Post School District**

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# Classroom Spotlights

## Better-For-You Bagels



This is my first year teaching Family and Consumer Sciences, and one of the most engaging lessons I taught was in my high school Creative Cuisine class. The students had the opportunity to make bagels, a hands-on activity that was both fun and educational. In previous years, this time of the semester was typically spent with students taking notes and learning about essential nutrients. However, this year, I wanted to take a more interactive approach to tie our cooking lesson into the course material. As a certified teacher in physical education, health education, and family and consumer sciences, I am always looking for ways to make my lessons engaging and relevant to my students' lives while also sharing my passion for healthy living. With an upcoming observation scheduled, I thought it would be a great opportunity to combine cooking with learning about nutrition.

First, I introduced the concept of nutrition labels, teaching students how to read them and explaining the information they can find, such as serving size, calories, fats, and protein content. Afterward, students worked in their assigned cooking groups to make bagels.

### **Our recipe:**

**16 ounces of Greek yogurt**

**2 ½ cups of self-rising flour**

They divided and cut the dough so each group member would get at least one bagel (though there were often extras). The dough was molded into bagel shapes by rolling it into a ball and poking a hole in the center. The bagels were then boiled for 10 seconds on each side before being coated with an option of either everything bagel seasoning or cinnamon sugar, and then baked at 350 degrees for 20-25 minutes. While the bagels were baking, students followed a separate recipe to make their choice of chocolate chip or onion chive cream cheese.

The next day, we calculated the nutrients in the bagels by using the nutrition labels from the Greek yogurt and self-rising flour. We considered serving size, and then compared the nutrients in their homemade bagels to those found in a traditional store-bought bagel. The students were surprised to discover that their "better-for-you" bagels had higher protein and vitamin content, and lower levels of carbohydrates and fats. The students reflected on their experience by completing an exit ticket with questions like, "Which bagel would you want to consume in the future? Consider taste, cost, time, and nutrition. Explain your reasoning." They also compared the nutrition label they created for the "better-for-you" bagel with that of a traditional bagel, discussed possible modifications to make their bagels even healthier, and considered why it is important to read nutrition labels and how this skill can influence their food choices. It was fascinating to hear the students' thoughts on these questions. Many of them actually preferred our homemade bagels over traditional store-bought ones. I think this lesson showed them that nutrition education can be both important and fun. It also emphasized that enjoying your favorite foods doesn't mean sacrificing health—it is possible to make healthier versions of the foods you love.

**Jenna Messina**

**Wantagh High School**

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# Classroom Spotlights

## How AI Supported My Middle School Students in Their Cultural Fusion Recipe Designs

In my middle school classroom at Pocantico Hills Central School this Fall semester, my eighth graders embarked on an innovative culinary journey called "Enhancing Recipes Using AI Technology." The lesson plan invited students to explore their cultural heritage through food, leveraging AI to create unique fusion dishes. The aim was to foster cultural connections and culinary creativity while teaching practical technology and cooking skills. The ultimate goal of our project was to create a cookbook highlighting our students' cultural fusion recipes. This initiative aimed to celebrate diversity and inspire creativity and collaboration among our middle school students.

Using SchoolAI's Creative Spaces, students interacted with preset prompts that guided them through exploring the spices and herbs distinctive to their cultural cuisines. AI tools assisted students in determining precise measurements and selecting appropriate cooking techniques. This exploratory process deepened their understanding of diverse culinary traditions and allowed them to experiment confidently with flavors from around the world. One particularly rewarding experience was with a trio of students of Pakistani and British heritage who crafted an outstanding fusion dish: the Nihari Masala Shepherd's Pie. The students skillfully combined the rich, spicy flavors of Pakistani Nihari with the comforting, savory layers of a traditional British Shepherd's Pie. They utilized AI to perfect the balance of spices and to determine the optimal cooking time for the fusion pie. The result was a dish that beautifully represented their combined heritage and showcased the possibilities of culinary innovation.



The project culminated in a gallery event where the Art and FACS 8th grade classes unveiled their eighth-grade acrylic paintings and cultural cuisine recipes. Our school kitchen staff helped to serve the cultural recipes in appetizer form to parents, families, and guardians. This event was an unforgettable cultural celebration where students proudly shared their creations and the stories behind them. The evening was filled with curiosity and appreciation as diverse flavors and cultural narratives came together in a delicious and educational experience.



The cultural fusion recipe design project enhanced students' culinary skills and fostered a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity. Through the support of AI, students were empowered to explore and innovate, creating connections beyond the kitchen. These experiences reinforced the idea that technology, when used creatively, can be a powerful tool in education, bridging the gap between tradition and innovation.

The event was not just about tasting food; it was a celebration of cultural exchange and creativity. Each 8th grader was able to take home their own cookbook filled with memorable photos of their shared cooking experiences. The 'POCO 8th Grade Fusion Cuisine Cookbook' serves as a cherished memento of their journey in blending tradition with innovation, and it stands as a testament to the possibilities that arise when technology and creativity intersect in the classroom.

**Alyson Morilla**  
**Pocantico Hills CSD**

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# Bridging MS Ed Curriculum to the Classroom

## Fast Fashion: The Never-Ending Cycle

Fashion marketing is an essential subject beyond just selling clothes and branding; it educates students about the complexities of the fashion industry, consumer behavior, and the global impact of fashion production and consumption. As students learn about marketing strategies, they uncover the dark side of the fashion industry, particularly fast fashion, its contribution to environmental pollution, and its social and ethical consequences. Teaching fashion marketing in schools empowers students to make informed choices, understand their carbon footprint, and develop sustainable shopping habits. One crucial aspect of this education is dissecting the fashion industry store by store, examining different business models and their ethical implications. This knowledge encourages future consumers and industry professionals to rethink their relationship with fashion and advocate for sustainable practices. Fast fashion refers to the rapid production of inexpensive, trendy clothing that allows brands to cycle through styles at an accelerated pace. Companies like Shein, H&M, and Zara release new collections almost weekly, encouraging excessive consumerism. While this business model keeps fashion affordable and accessible, it has devastating consequences. Fast fashion production relies heavily on synthetic fabrics like polyester, which shed microplastics into oceans and pollute marine ecosystems. Additionally, the dyeing and processing of textiles contribute to water pollution, harming both wildlife and communities that rely on clean water sources. Since fast fashion encourages short-term use, millions of tons of clothing end up in landfills yearly. In many cases, these discarded garments are made of non-biodegradable materials, leading to long-term waste accumulation. Lastly, the low price tags of fast fashion items often come at the cost of poor working conditions in countries like Bangladesh, India, and China. Many garment workers are underpaid, work long hours, and face unsafe environments.

By teaching fashion marketing, students gain insight into how brands create demand and manipulate consumer behavior to promote fast fashion. The major question is, does it change the student's mind in the end?

With this awareness, students can recognize marketing tactics and make more responsible purchasing decisions. One of the most shocking consequences of the fast fashion industry can be seen in Ghana, specifically in places like Accra's Kantamanto Market and the Agbogbloshie landfill. Western countries donate or discard massive amounts of clothing, and many of these garments end up in African countries under the guise of "charity."

However, much of the donated clothing is unsellable, leading to massive textile waste problems.

Weekly, Ghana receives millions of pounds of secondhand clothing from wealthier nations. An estimated 40% of these clothes are unsellable, leading to overflowing landfills and clogged waterways. The waste negatively impacts local economies and creates pollution, making it difficult for communities to manage the excess textiles. Teaching fashion marketing enables students to connect their consumption habits to global consequences.

My fashion marketing class focuses on helping students identify and support sustainable fashion brands, recognize greenwashing tactics, and adopt more environmentally friendly habits. Little changes in shopping behaviors can make a significant difference in reducing an individual's carbon footprint. Some practical steps include buying secondhand, investing in quality over quantity, upcycling, supporting sustainable brands, etc. By bringing environmental education into my classroom, my students not only learn about industry strategies but can also become advocates for sustainability in fashion. By dissecting the industry store by store, students develop critical thinking skills that allow them to recognize which brands align with their values. Rather than passive consumers, they become informed buyers who understand how marketing influences their purchasing decisions.

Teaching fashion marketing is about more than just business strategies—it is a powerful way to educate students about the ethical, social, and environmental consequences of the fashion industry. As my students learn how brands market their products, they also gain awareness of fast fashion's harmful effects, including its role in textile waste crises like those in Ghana. By understanding their carbon footprint and making small but impactful changes in their shopping habits, students can help drive a shift toward sustainability.

My students have learned that fashion marketing is not just about selling clothes—it's about shaping culture, influencing behavior, and ultimately, transforming the industry into a more ethical and sustainable system. These high school students realized that their shopping habits have global consequences, and they are empowered to take action. Through education, awareness, and responsible consumer choices, the future of fashion can be one that prioritizes sustainability, fair labor practices, and environmental responsibility. As an educator and a lover of all things fashion, this topic meant a lot to me. It is essential to help create the next generation of conscious consumers and industry leaders.

**Alessia Tocco**  
**West Islip Unified School District**

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# Bridging MS Ed Curriculum to the Classroom

## Recent Study Reveals Surprising Insights into Financial Literacy

A recent study on financial literacy has uncovered that during 2022 Americans' financial well being has been critically impacted. These findings highlight the decrease overall in financial literacy in the last seven years. The 2023 TIAA Institute-GFLEC Personal Finance Index ( P-Fin Index) is a study that provides important data about the state of American personal finances after 2022, a record breaking year for inflation. This study has found that overall Americans have a poor level of financial literacy which can lead to long term consequences. In general, higher financial literacy leads to higher financial wellbeing and vice versa.

### The following are some key findings from the study.

- One key takeaway from the study is that “ One quarter of employed adults decreased their retirement saving in 2022 because of inflation's impact on their finances.
- Another important finding reveals that “on average, U.S. adults correctly answered only 48% of the 28 index questions in 2023. –
- Perhaps the most surprising discovery is that financial literacy among women is consistently lower than men across ethnic groups.
- In addition, financial literacy is particularly low amongst Gen Z and Gen Y participants. Only 37% of Gen Z and 30% of Gen Y could correctly answer only up to seven of the 28 index questions.
- This study also assessed the knowledge in functional areas such as borrowing, saving, consuming, earning, go-to info sources, investing, insuring, and comprehending risk. The study found that across generations, comprehending risk is one area where functional knowledge stays consistently low.
- In Asian and White participants scored similarly, in that Asian participants 55% correctly answered and White participants scored 53% correctly answered. African American and Hispanic participants also scored similarly, although at a much lower rate than Asian and White participants. African Americans correctly answered 34% of the time and Hispanic participants correctly answered 38% of the time.

These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating financial literacy into Family and Consumer Sciences curricula. As educators, it is imperative to incorporate these skills into our curriculum so students can be prepared to make sound financial decisions in their young adult lives.

### To bring these insights into your classroom, consider :

- Incorporating activities that provide practice for your students in the functional areas-borrowing, saving, consuming, earning, go-to info sources, investing, insuring, and comprehending risk. Focus especially on comprehending risk as that is a weakness across the board.
- Emphasize the importance of planning for retirement and benefits of planning early
- Highlight short term and long term consequences of financial decisions ( For example taking money out of savings for a purchase now)

If you're looking to enhance your financial literacy curriculum, read “Financial well-being and literacy in a high-inflation environment :The 2023 TIAA Institute-GFLEC Personal Finance Index”. Together as FACS educators, we have the ability to arm our students with the skills they need to make strong financial decisions.

### References:

Yakoboski, P. J., Lusardi, A., & Hasler, A. (n.d.). *Financial well-being and literacy in a high-inflation ...* gflec.org. <https://gflec.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-P-Fin-Index-report-TIAA-Inst-and-GFLEC-Apr-2023.pdf>

**Jennifer Cheng**  
School of Mathematics, Science through  
Technology and the Arts



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## Scholarship News

### The Phyllis Harbach Memorial Scholarship for FCS Education

Phyllis A. Harbach (nee VanKleeck) grew up in Kearny, New Jersey, and earned her B.A. in Home Economics from Montclair State College in 1964. She dedicated nearly 20 years to teaching Home Economics at Wayne Hills High School. After marrying James Harbach, she moved to Glen Cove, New York, where she pursued her M.S. in Home Economics Education at Queens College, graduating in 1984.

Phyllis worked as an outreach teacher for Nassau County BOCES, presenting programs on various topics across the county. She also collaborated with the Epilepsy Foundation in Garden City, helping clients develop a bakery. In her memory, the Phyllis Harbach Memorial Scholarship has been established for MS Ed students in the Family & Consumer Science program at Queens College.

*Each Fall, current students in the MS Ed program will be eligible to apply for this financial scholarship.*



Phyllis A. Harbach

### 2025 Recipient Jenia Yeshaya



I am truly honored to be the recipient of the Phyllis Harbach Memorial Award—a recognition that means so much to me on both a personal and professional level. My journey with Queens College began 25 years ago when I earned my B.S. in Nutrition and Exercise Physiology. I loved my time as an undergraduate; the learning, the connections, and the inspiring environment so much that I found my way back years later, this time as a mother, to pursue a post-baccalaureate degree in Family and Consumer Science Education. Today, I am continuing my education as a master's student, balancing my studies with work and family life.

One of the things I appreciate most about this experience is the flexibility of the online program. As a working mom, it allows me to be present for my family while also growing professionally. It's not always easy to juggle everything but knowing that I can learn at my own pace makes a world of difference.

Receiving this scholarship has lifted a huge weight off my shoulders. It has not only relieved financial stress but has also fueled my motivation to push forward and excel as a new teacher. Most importantly, it has reinforced a belief that I hold close to my heart: you can succeed at any stage of life, no matter how busy or overwhelming it may seem. When you set your mind to something, you can accomplish anything—*energy goes where energy flows*. I am deeply grateful for this support and excited for what lies ahead.

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## MS Ed Highlights



### Commencement

Spring commencement will take place on Thursday, May 29 at 9 am on campus at Queens College.



### Apply for Graduation

Information on deadlines here



### Follow us!

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### About our MS Ed Program

- Fully Online & Asynchronous
- Leads to Professional Certification in NYS
- Open to out-of-state candidates
- 30 credits for certified FCS teachers

