



East Longmeadow Public Schools

"Our mission in the East Longmeadow Public Schools is to promote Achievement and Accountability in all endeavors as we educate today for the challenges of tomorrow."



SPOTLIGHT ON YOUR SCHOOLS

Volume 3, Issue 2

SPRING, 2005

Building A New Long Range District Strategic Plan

East Longmeadow Public Schools recently finished their first 5-year strategic plan. The school district is now formulating a new strategic plan for the next 5 years of action.

This year, the School Committee began collecting information from staff, parents, and local business owners regarding our schools. Internal and external analyses are both important to the outcome of a new strategic plan. Strategic planning is a voluntary commitment to generate rational decisions about the future - before the future either forces decisions or renders any

decisions irrelevant. Strategic planning is about planning for the future, and acting in the present.

The School Committee and superintendent of schools are using a business technique called SWOT. This stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Together, communication data gathered around these four topics tell the School Committee what works, what needs help, what new ideas to consider and what problems are keeping the district from progressing forward. The SWOT theory was developed in the 1980's and has been used

by businesses in developing strategic business plans.

The School Committee plans on hosting more open forums regarding the development of their new strategic plan this fall. If you would like to offer your views regarding the SWOT analysis process (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), feel free to write them down and send them to the Superintendent's Office, 180 Maple Street. We will be glad to include them in our database of feedback

National Speaker On Adolescent Crises Visits ELPS



A Message From Your School Committee Chair:

The school year is nearly complete. It has been very successful and once again the students, parents, teachers, staff and administration should be proud of their accomplishments. From the successes of MCAS, to managing with difficult student-teacher ratio class configurations and building space issues, to concerns regarding the budget for the upcoming fiscal year, the school district has continued to thrive.

Recently, we had a change in the School Committee membership. With the departure of Ms. Gina Szykaruk, who we thank for her efforts, work and leadership over the past three years, we welcome Ms. Angela Thorpe to the Committee. We also welcome back Mr. Dan Manley and Mr. Bob Mazziarello from their successful election campaigns.

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On March 15th the East Longmeadow Public schools in partnership with the Board of Selectmen and the Appropriations Committee welcomed Maria Trozzi, a national speaker and author on student suicide and adolescent crises. She spent the day working with members of our district Crisis Teams and also meeting with parents on students' experience with disruption and loss in their lives. Ms. Trozzi is an assistant professor in the department of Pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine and Director of the Good Grief Program at Boston Medical Center. She recently appeared on Good Morning America, Larry King Live and the Early Show and is a national authority on working with children and teenagers. She has worked with communities all over the nation including Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado and most recently in Chechnya, Russia after the elementary school terrorist massacre. She is the author of *Talking with Children about Loss: Words,*

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Strategies, and Wisdom to Help Children Cope with Death, Divorce, and Other Difficult Times (New York: Penguin Putnam).

In a daylong workshop with teachers, counselors, nurses and administrators and also during an evening meeting at the High School for parents and adults only, Ms. Trozzi talked about the kinds of losses that adolescents experience: the death of a parent or aunt or grandfather, the loss of friendships in the emotional rough and tumble of adolescent change, family moves and relocations, homesickness, divorce and the death of the nuclear family, chronic or life-threatening illness of a parent or sibling, dislocation and disappointment over college dreams frustrated. She discussed the number and ways that loss interferes with our stu-

dents' emotional and academic lives. She explained that their performance may suffer, they may act out, they may indulge in risky or inappropriate behavior, and they may turn inward in self-destructive ways.

The East Longmeadow Public Schools believes that our shared goal as parents and educators must always be to help children through the crises of their lives, to help them grieve while they also move on, and to learn good problem-solving. We want them to learn resilience in the face of loss, and we also believe that good modeling and good coaching – some of our most important work– make a difference in our students' lives.

Bus Registration Process Changed For The 2005-6 School Year

The annual letters for school bus transportation for the 2005-2006 school year will be mailed out to all parents soon. This year there has been a change in the school committee policy that significantly changes this process.

Because of increased student rider-ship and the need to develop routes in August, all students who wish to utilize this service (both free and for fee) must register. The new policy reads as follows:

Registration will close on August 1st. Registration will reopen during the first week of October. Late registrants, after October 1, will be added only if:

- (1) seating is available,
- (2) re-routing is not required, and
- (3) pre-payment is received in full.



Also new this year is the East Longmeadow School Transportation Web Page. You may access this web page at www.eastlongmeadow.org under the "District Documents" heading. At this web site, you will find information in regards to the registration process, the school committee policy, kindergarten stops, etc.

For those families that choose the optional transportation (fee for services), the on-line payment options includes MasterCard and Visa payments as well as the electronic debit to checking account.. This link can be found at www.eastlongmeadow.org – click on School Online Payments. It is also available at the Transportation Web Page mentioned above.

50's Sock Hop Celebrates 50th Anniversary at Mapleshade School

One of the nicest occasions in the long history of Mapleshade School took place recently in the form of a 50's Sock Hop. The Sock Hop was one of the events created to celebrate Mapleshade's 50 years as a school. The program, which involved students, parents and staff, provided a welcome relief from the long, harsh winter and the academic pressures of the school year. It illustrated that while Mapleshade may be the oldest school in town that it still retains a youthful spirit. Everyone that participated appeared to have a wonderful time.

The Mapleshade staff added to the festive celebration by dressing in period costume. Many of the female staff dressed in "poodle skirts" which they made themselves under the direction of head seamstress, Marianne McCauley. Slicked back hair, t-shirts and leather jackets were the apparel preferred by their male counterparts.

The Mapleshade P.T.O. outdid themselves by decorating the cafeteria and lobby with fifties memorabilia as well as photos and newspaper articles from the Ma-

pleshade archives. The P.T.O. also offered a wonderful assortment of refreshments in the school gymnasium that provided relief to tired dancers. Jennifer Dutko (P.T.O. Treasurer) made the many pairs of fuzzy dice and the chains of 45's (small records...you say what's a record?) that were displayed around the school.

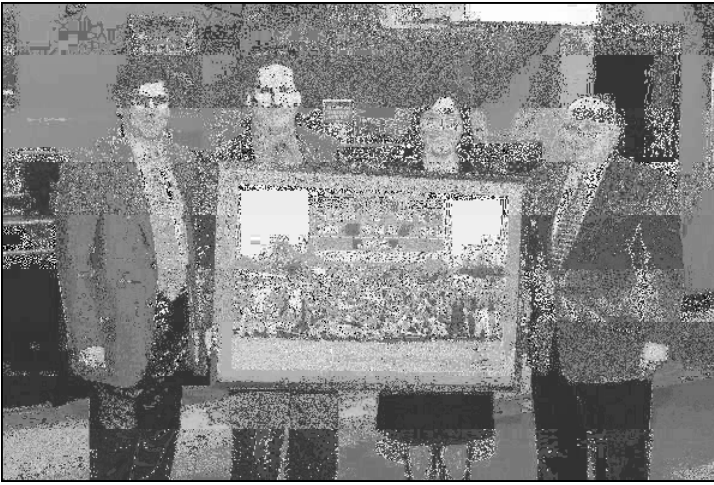
Many of the boys and girls came dressed in their best 50's outfits. The student's creativity and good behavior were on display throughout the evening.

A special thank you goes out to Mr. John Laviolette, DJ extraordinaire, whose selections of music could not have been better. Mr. Laviolette worked his professional magic to make sure that there was lots of crowd participation. There were many sore feet attesting to his success.

Mr. Tony Bordoni added the icing to the cake by parking his two beautifully restored '57 Chevy's on either side of the entrance to the school. This really set the tone for the evening.

It was indeed a great night for Mapleshade.





PeoplesBank Donation to ELHS Acknowledged

Richard Freccero, Principal of East Longmeadow High School and Robert Mazzariello, of the East Longmeadow School Committee, recently presented a framed photograph of the East Longmeadow High School Football Team to PeoplesBank Assistant Vice President John Downs and Assistant Manager Nicole Stuart, both of the Bank's new East Longmeadow Office. The gift was a thank you and acknowledgement of PeoplesBank's \$35,000 sponsorship of a new scoreboard for the East Longmeadow High School Football Field. The PeoplesBank, donation paid for the purchase, installation and training expenses for the new scoreboard. The photo was taken after the Spartans' Thanksgiving game victory and was presented to PeoplesBank at their new office in East Longmeadow.

Last fall's annual Thanksgiving Day football game also served as the dedication of the brand new, state-of-the art scoreboard. It was rededicated to the memory of the late James Welch, a tireless community activist and supporter of the High School. This contribution is one of several that PeoplesBank has made since arriving in East Longmeadow in October 2004. The bank has funded a traffic study, and is financially supporting the Friends of the Norcross House, the 4th of July Parade and the East Longmeadow Rotary Club summer concert series.

The East Longmeadow Public Schools is grateful to PeoplesBank for their generous financial support. The new scoreboard, will not only be used by the high school but also by other town recreational programs.

Birchland Park Gifted and Talented Program Celebrates Excellence

Proving their versatility in many areas, Birchland Park Gifted and Talented Program students competed with over 20,000 students securing a space in the National School Scrabble Tournament held in Boston in April. The team of Maddie Ball and Jon

Stack faced over 92 teams from across the nation, played 6 tournament rounds, and placed 29th overall. After competing in their very first tournament, they now rank 29th in the nation.

Not to be outdone in the creative use of words, Liza Munk was honored at an awards ceremony at the State House in Boston for her *Letters About Literature* submission. Sponsored by the Massachusetts Center for the Book, the Calderwood Writing Initiative, the Library of Congress, and Target Corporation, Liza's letter to author Mitch Albom was a winner!



Thirty Thousand Middle School Students participated in the Fourteenth Annual National Engineer's Week Future City Competition, designing, building, and presenting their ideas for a city set in the year 2200. Birchland Park Students Kyle Sears, Jonathan Stack, and Michelle Grohe were among the best. Winning the Regional Competition held in Boston in January, they defeated 24 entries from New England, to win the opportunity to represent the New England states at the National Competition in Washington D.C. in February. While in Washington, Kyle, Jon, and Michelle more than held their own by winning the prestigious Aerospace and Aerotechnology Award and placing 17th in the Nation.

Many other Gifted Talented Program Students have participated in national contests throughout the school year. One of the most unusual entries was an electronic journal and clay animation submitted to the National Space Day Competition by Marcella Maki, Suzanne Nichols, and Liz Pelletiere. Although not a national winner, this entry showed amazing critical and creative thinking prowess and is well-deserving of recognition.

Congratulations to all of the Birchland Park Gifted and Talented Program students who have made the 2004-05 school year one of the best yet!

Children Helping Children At Mountain View School

Mountain View students showed tremendous concern for the Indonesian Tsunami victims and felt the need to assist. Newspaper, television and internet reports showing the effects of this disaster touched the hearts of our students. Kevin Tang, a fifth grader, said, "Children in Asia should be helped the way we help our friends here."

Andreas Mejia, a classmate of Kevin's also felt very disturbed about what happened. He expressed deep empathy for the people and shared, "After this disastrous catastrophe, many people were left homeless and this is very sad."

Kayla Sirard, another student remarked, "These people are

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part of our world, and we should help them."

Lexi Mazza felt, "It was a terrible thing that happened; it was good to help others in need." Many students felt that something needed to be done right away. They were persuaded not only by their feelings and emotions, but by the fact that President Bush asked everyone in the country to help.

Students initiated various raffles to raise funds for the children of the Tsunami disaster. Prizes included an extra gym class, movie and popcorn in a classroom, an extra computer class and an additional recess. The winner of each raffle was able to involve their whole class in the activity.

The ingenuity, maturity and the enterprising fund raising efforts resulted in a \$3025.00 donation to the UNICEF Fund for children victims of the Tsunami. The students were very pleased with the help, participation and concern exhibited by the entire Mt. View community. They would like to thank everyone again for all their kindness and generosity.



First Graders Send Water Buffalo to Indonesia

This March the first grade classes at Meadow Brook School became involved in a program to help the survivors of the Indonesia tsunami disaster rebuild their land and their lives. Through an organization called Heifer International Read to Feed program, the students were able to send a total of 15 water buffalo to Indonesia.

The children in each of the eight first grades raised money by getting friends and family members to sponsor them for books they read. In conjunction with Dr. Suess's birthday and Read Across America, children read books at home and added them to their book list. At the end of the month, they collected the money from their sponsors and brought it to school. The total was \$3750, almost double the grade's goal. At the cost of \$250 a water buffalo, the students were able to purchase 15 water buffalo

to send to needy families in Indonesia.

As the children learned, money for food and supplies can only last so long, but a gift of livestock is a gift that keeps on giving. Unlike oxen, the water buffalo can survive in very hot climates. The water buffalo will give families milk to drink and sell at market. They will be able to breed their own water buffalo. These animals can plow the fields 6 times faster than man can alone and the tsunami stricken area is really in need of rebuilding. Not to mention, water buffalo manure is great fertilizer!

The children learned how animals can help people by providing them with food, clothing, and work. They learned that animals can bring in money for families providing them with things like houses and schooling.

This was an important and meaningful learning experience for the Meadow Brook students. Through the Read to Feed program, children in East Longmeadow were able to connect with children on the other side of the world and really make a difference in their lives. Our students' gift is greatly appreciated by the people of Indonesia. For more information on Heifer International or the Read to Feed program visit www.heifer.org or www.readtofeed.org.

(Continued from page 1) **School Committee Message:**

The Committee continues its efforts to secure a budget for our educational community. Your support has not gone unnoticed and we encourage your participation at the upcoming ballot vote for both the operational budget and also for the debt exclusion to finance the, much needed, twelve additional elementary classrooms. In closing, we wish to remain fiscally responsible to the taxpayer, but, of equal importance and mindful of the economic benefits that our students will someday offer to our society, we are also responsible for the education of our community's children, from the academic, to the emotional, and the social.

**Remember To Vote!
Override Ballot:
Tuesday, June 14, 2005**
All Precincts will vote at Birchland Park Middle School,
50 Hanward Hill

East Longmeadow Public Schools

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Mr. Jeff McEwen, Vice Chair
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Mr. Robert Mazzariello
Ms. Angela Thorpe

Questions or comments about our newsletter? Contact Chris Sullivan, newsletter editor:
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We're on the Web!
www.eastlongmeadow.org