

# THE LYNN EDUCATOR

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## FROM CLASSICAL to the STATEHOUSE

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

In 1993, David A. Morales was lighting up the stage at Lynn Classical with his rendition of teen idol Conrad Birdie in "Bye Bye Birdie." He was making his presence known on the football field as well.

Today, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is his stage; the Statehouse his new arena.

Morales serves as senior advisor to Gov. Deval L. Patrick, specializing in policy and strategic planning. He

Lynn's David Morales, above left, is a senior advisor to Gov. Deval L. Patrick.

PHOTO  
COURTESY OF  
GOVERNOR'S  
OFFICE

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## Smooth transition

### Classical freshmen find a home in Fecteau-Leary building

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Classical High School opened the school year with two buildings, united as one school.

More than 250 students entered the school's new Freshman Academy, located in the Fecteau-Leary Building on North Common Street. The former home of Classical, the site was already equipped with a gymnasium, cafeteria, auditorium, guidance offices, art rooms and a TV

studio. City workers spent the summer months transforming the space in preparation for the students.

"The city departments all worked together to ensure it was as well-equipped and clean as can be when we walked in," said Classical vice principal Judi Taylor, who is based at the

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Foreign language teacher Sean Elbousty works with Classical freshmen Rosie Rosario, left and Carol Valle.

## LYNN EDUCATOR

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Edward J. Clancy Jr.

## Lynn schools give us reason to celebrate

As we head into this special time of year, it is fitting that we take pause and reflect on the blessings for which we have to be thankful. In the City of Lynn, the students, teachers and administrators who make our school system run, certainly fall into that category.

There is plenty of good news to celebrate in our schools, as you will read on the pages of this publication. Whether it be Marshall

Middle School's amazing turnaround, the national recognition Classical and English high schools have received from U.S. News and World Report, or the seamless transition Classical freshmen and teachers have made to a temporary new home, great things are happening in Lynn Public Schools.

Our students and staff face challenges every day that may or may not be peculiar to an urban school system. But thanks to a

spirit of resiliency and determination among all stakeholders, the job of providing all our students with the opportunity to receive a quality education is getting done every day.

I wish you and yours a happy and restful holiday season.

*Edward J. "Chip" Clancy Jr. is mayor of Lynn.*

## Plenty of positive developments in our schools



Nicholas P. Kostan

The first few months of school have brought about some changes to the Lynn Public Schools and have presented an especially busy opening for students and staff. Three new principals have been named to lead the Marshall, Pickering and Lynn Woods schools.

As you will read on pages 6-7, Dr. Richard Cowdell has spearheaded an effort at the

Marshall Middle School to create an atmosphere of success and has made great strides in a very short period of time. Volunteers from General Electric participated in a cooperative effort during the summer with the city and school department staff to beautify the grounds and interior of the aging school. Congratulations should go to the GE volunteers and school staff who have provided a much improved climate for learning at Marshall. Dr. Cowdell's enthusiasm for his new position has earned him the respect of all, including Sgt. Major

Oswald, who directs the Junior ROTC program at English High School and has initiated a similar program at Marshall Middle School which has been a positive influence on students.

Mr. Robert Murphy, former vice principal at Revere High School, has taken over the reins at Pickering Middle School. Bob is also a former history teacher at Classical High School and he is often seen greeting students and parents on Conomo Avenue before and after school. Bob also brings great talent to a key administrative position in the City.

Ellen Fritz, a former school curriculum specialist, has replaced Vin Spirito, a longtime elementary school principal who has since been elected to serve on the Lynn School Committee. Mrs. Fritz brings a wealth of knowledge to her new position as Principal of the Lynn Woods School.

Construction at Classical High School was to begin in mid-December and continue for 18-24 months as planned. Classical's Freshman Academy, which opened in September on North Common Street to house the ninth-grade class, has

enjoyed enormous success during the first months of occupancy. Congratulations to all at Classical who have worked diligently to insure that both campus sites have served our students well during this period of construction at the main campus on O'Callaghan Way.

Congratulations are also in order to English and Classical, which have received the Bronze Tier Award from U.S. News and World Report as two of the outstanding high schools in the U.S. English, Classical and Manchester-Essex Regional High School were the only high schools in Essex County to be recognized. It is an honor for two Lynn high schools to be recognized for excellence by a national publication. Students and staff at Lynn English and Lynn Classical are to be commended for their efforts. It is no secret that graduates of English and Classical continue to be admitted to the finest colleges and universities in the country. It is encouraging to see both schools saluted for their accomplishments and is certainly a credit to our school system and our city.

*Nicholas P. Kostan is superintendent of schools.*

## Surfing Smartz

## Students schooled in using the Internet properly

BY RICH FAHEY

The road to Internet safety for kids is paved with good intentions.

What to do? Parental controls? Blocking of sites? Peeking over your kids' shoulders?

Educators have the same concerns when it comes to Internet access for children at school.

The Lynn schools have found an ally in their Internet safety cause in NetSmarzKids.org, a colorful, interactive site, according to Pamela D. Perretti, technology coordinator at the Callahan elementary school.

Perretti said the site has become part of the schools' technology curriculum for the past two years.

A companion site, www.NetSmarz.org, has information for parents, caregivers, educators, government officials, law enforcement, and youth organizations that want to learn more about the Internet and the possible dangers to children online.

Netsmartzkids addresses such issues as cyber bullying, meeting people on-line, the correct use of e-mail, etc., with games and contests. Parents and kids can go to the NetSmarzKids site directly from the Callahan School Web site. NetSmarzKids also includes no outside links, as another measure of security.

Callahan students in grades 2-5 also take an Internet safety

pledge. In addition, the schools' policies on use of the Net are sent home in September to be reviewed and signed by parents and guardians.

A former reading teacher and a veteran of 30 years in the Lynn schools, Perretti has a master's degree in technology instruction; this is her fourth year teaching in the technology area. The schools' teaching in the area has been formalized in recent years and now follows structures and guidelines set up by the state Department of Education (DOE).

Perretti instructs students in areas such as Microsoft Office and Word, and kids graduate to Power Point presentations in Grades 4 and 5.

"The old middle school diorama has been replaced by a Power Point presentation that packs some punch," said Perretti.

She said she has done an informal survey of her students and found that about 70 percent have Internet access at home. For those who don't have it at home, the good news is that there are several other options available besides the schools, such as the library, and after-school programs such as the Boys & Girls Club and the Gregg Neighborhood House.

At Callahan, the former audio-visual room became the computer lab, with 27 machines. The school's PTO provides software to keep the program humming along and all students in Grades K-5 get 40 minutes of technology instruction a week;



Callahan School tech coordinator Pamela Perretti watches as third-grader Lauren Sodabanh works during computer class.

in addition, students in Grades 3, 4 and 5 do Web-based prep work for the MCAS.

Not every Lynn school has a technology coordinator; in many schools, librarians double up. Perretti said she communicates informally with those involved in technology instruction to keep up to date.

She feels her role as technology gatekeeper has become extremely important, given the role technology plays in any occupation students choose. "It's extremely rewarding to open up the world of the Internet to the kids while still watching out for their safety."

# Students take Pride in homework

Incentive program is working at Callahan School

BY SUSAN BYRNE

Pride Island is a special place for Callahan Elementary School students, a place everyone wants to visit by ship and, hopefully, stay for a long time.

Last year when Bernadette Stamm temporarily changed roles from teacher to acting principal, she was able to get a better understanding of issues confronting the whole school. One of those issues had to do with students not completing homework assignments. With 25 years' experience, Stamm created Pride Island, a homework reward program in its second year.

Each month a student's name is placed on a ship in his or her own classroom. Everybody is on the ship to start, but the idea is to stay on the ship throughout the month to be able to sail off to Pride Island. Children must complete their homework assignments to be able to stay on the ship. No homework and no excuse, means a student is off the ship.

"It is a way to honor the kids that really do their homework and to encourage other kids to do the same. It has become a successful program," Stamm said.

Although each classroom has a ship, Pride Island is depicted with a giant tree painted on the wall in the main hall by art teacher Rebecca Davidson.

At the end of each month, a child who is sailing off to Pride Island will have his or her name put on a creative cut-out, such as a bird,

baseball, person or even a hot-air balloon. Besides a name on the island for everyone to see in the

main lobby, students will receive stickers or stars each month.

"It has become a contest to see who can collect the most stickers," Stamm said. "Everyone has seemed to embrace it. The program is flexible, too. I believe a teacher who left Callahan uses it at another school, so it is really spreading."

At the end of last year, students who stayed on the island were invited to march on the field at a North Shore Spirit baseball game. Almost 200 students from Callahan attended.

Stamm is excited about the program and glad to see results. "The parents love it," she said. "Kids are coming home and saying 'I want to get on Pride Island.'" The kids are taking it to heart. We want them to feel proud and accomplished. We are trying to teach them to have pride in themselves, and, hopefully, it will lead to things besides homework. It's been an amazing addition to our school."

All aboard for Pride Island!

Callahan School students strive to get to Pride Island.

## Student's message in a bottle reaches Kentucky

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Traveling at least 1,200 miles, a Lynn student's letter in a bottle found its way into the hands of a Kentucky family.

On its most direct route, Kayla Trahan's bottle would have had to pass through nine states to reach its final destination of Wickliffe, Ky.

"It's amazing," said Kim Staples, second-grade teacher at the Julia F. Callahan School. "In all the years I've been doing this, we've never had this kind of response. I'm not sure how it even made its way to Kentucky."

Each year, Staples' students write letters about themselves, describing who they are, where they live and what they like, and place them into plastic bottles to be sent out. Staples has been aligning the project with a story from the Harcourt Trophies reading series, "Montigue on the High Seas." In the story, Montigue the mouse travels across the world in a bottle.

In May, Staples dropped 22 bottles off a lobster boat in Marblehead Harbor. Trahan received her response letter, dated Sept. 29, in her home mailbox.

"When we got the letter, my mom asked me, 'Do we know



Evelyn Rivera, left, and Kayla Trahan show off their return letters.

anyone from Kentucky?" said Trahan.

"I was so surprised," she said. "I never expected anything back. Then I figured it would be from a grown-up, but it was a little girl."

The girl, Kaitlin Ackley, is five years old. She lives on a farm and is educated at home by her mother. She has four siblings, including an older sister, Kayla. Trahan was amazed by the odds that the letter could travel from the hands of one Kayla to another.

A lifelong Lynn resident, Trahan found another unlikely common bond with her new pen pal.

"You said you like to go to farms," wrote Ackley. "You can come to my farm sometime. We have goats, chickens, rabbits, a dog, cats and a hamster."

"I love visiting and helping out on farms," said Trahan, who also enjoys math and Girls Scouts.

Trahan intends to pursue the communications, as does Ackley.

"Please write me back soon," wrote Ackley, signing the letter, "your new friend, Kaitlin. P.S. Next time I'll send you a picture of me."

In addition to Trahan, student Evelyn Rivera also received a card from a resident of Beverly Farms who had discovered her letter. The response arrived at the Callahan School this fall.

# We're No. 1!

## Fallon students show most MCAS improvement

By BILL BROTHERTON

There's a good reason why the students and teachers at Fallon Elementary School are smiling these days: the most-improved MCAS scores of any third-grade class in Massachusetts.

Fallon Principal Stanley "Lenny" Serwacki said statistics issued by the Mass. Department of Education showed the Fallon third-graders bettered their 2006 MCAS English Language Arts score by 43 percent. The numbers jumped from a Composite Performance Index rating of 76.3 percentage points to a whopping 92.2.

The CPI is a measure of the extent to which students progress toward proficiency in a given subject. The math scores also showed significant

improvement (78.8 to 86.7 percentage points). That's quite an achievement considering Fallon failed to reach its Adequate Yearly Progress criteria just three years ago.

Serwacki cites many reasons for the MCAS gains. Paramount was the effort shown by teacher Patricia Kenney, now retired, and her students.

"Patricia Kenney gave a wholehearted, remarkable effort," said Serwacki, who has spent 35 years in Lynn Public Schools and the last three as Fallon principal. "Even though she knew she was retiring, she took no sick days in her final two years here and stayed after class almost every day."

Also instrumental were voluntary after-school

English and math programs, plus added support and materials for teachers. An emphasis was given to test-taking strategies, selection of innovative workbooks and implementation of reading strategies, said Serwacki.

He added that teachers were given the time to go back over lessons and reinforce what was taught before.

"When the numbers came in, all of us here at the Fallon were very, very excited. We had more than met our target. At first we didn't realize just how well we had done, that our students had performed better than any other third graders in the state," said Serwacki.

"Now the challenge is to not only maintain what we've done, but to improve even more."



From left, Brianna Loudhon, Autumn Cataldo and Joie Donnelly try their hand at shaving during the Tin Cup Adventures pioneer workshop.

# Fallon students experience life in the 1800s

By BILL BROTHERTON

What a sight! Girls shaving their faces and boys panning for gold inside Fallon Elementary School. The students also combed sheep's wool, sifted flour and put wet clothes through the ringer after having washed them on an old-fashioned scrub board.

Tin Cup Adventures brought its pioneer life workshop to Lynn and the kids got a hands-on lesson on how families lived in the 1800s. "The kids absolutely loved it," said Stanley "Lenny" Serwacki, Fallon principal. "Everyone said it was fantastic."

Students Bridget Sweeney and Jas-Syran Kim agreed it was a blast, one of the best programs to ever visit the school. That's saying a lot, since "Benjamin Franklin" and "Abraham

Lincoln" — or at least actors playing the parts — have visited the school in the past and taught the kids about history.

"My favorite part was playing with the old toys," said Sweeney. "The Jacob's Ladder game. I loved it." Maybe parents didn't have to buy those iPods and Xboxes as holiday gifts after all, since this ancient toy is made of only wood and a ribbon.

Kim thought smearing shaving cream all over her face and "shaving" it off with a butter knife was tops. "I shaved like eight times," she said, smiling widely.

This journey back in time was made possible thanks to a donation by the Masons. The pioneer-living program featured six learning stations. The Gold Rush center let kids pan for gold (actually pyrite or fool's gold) and then weigh the fruits

of their labors on an authentic miner's scale. The Handcrafts center provided supplies so students could make a necklace from earth-toned beads (actually pasta). The Children's center featured such old toys as whimmy-diddle and the pecking chicken, plus a collection of schoolbooks from the 1800s.

There was also Ma and Pa's learning center, which taught that life in the 1800s was no day at the beach. Students pumped water from an old rain drum like Ma did, and then washed clothes in a pre-electricity washing machine. The Clothes center had a spiffy collection of wool underwear — and the kids thought the yarn friendship bracelets they made were itchy. Finally, the Kitchen center included flour sifters, coffee grinders and other items that were used long before Cuisinart and Mr. Coffee made things easier.

"Everyone had a fantastic time," said Serwacki.

# From Lynn to D.C.: Breeding ground for ambassadors

BY SUSAN BYRNE

Two area students were nominated and accepted to attend a People to People Student Ambassador leadership forum in Washington, D.C. In September, Danielle Gaudet and Brianna Maggio, students at the Breed Middle School in Lynn, joined 150 others from all around the country.

One of the highlights for the two sixth graders from Lynn was meeting Congressman John Tierney. According to Diane Gaudet, Danielle's mom who accompanied her on the trip, "When he was late in arriving to the meeting, Tierney apologized for the delay explaining that he had just been in Lynn, MA. The girls were so excited and exclaimed, that's where we're from!"

Besides meeting politicians and visiting famous landmarks, such as the Capitol, White House, Arlington Cemetery, the Holocaust Museum, Smithsonian Institute, Gettysburg, and Williamsburg, Gaudet and Maggio had to complete workbooks and attend evening discussions. Danielle Gaudet commented, "On the first day I started learning. There was no time to stop and relax. It was well-structured." Her mother added, "It was so much more than a sightseeing trip."

It is no surprise to Theresa Curtis, the girls' fifth grade teacher from Sewell-Anderson School, that Gaudet and Maggio were selected. She nominated them after receiving literature on the People to People

Ambassador program almost a year ago. Created by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956, the program provides the nation's leading educational experiences for students in grades 5-12 at home and overseas. According to the foundation's website, "Those who travel with People to People represent hope, courage, openness and a love of peace."

"I am so proud of the girls for following through because it was a big commitment. Both girls are so smart, very resourceful, good students and dedicated to their studies," commented Curtis. Principal Ridley at Breed Middle School is also impressed, "These are two lovely young ladies. We are very proud of them for being good students, and more importantly, good citizens. It really made the history books come alive for them."

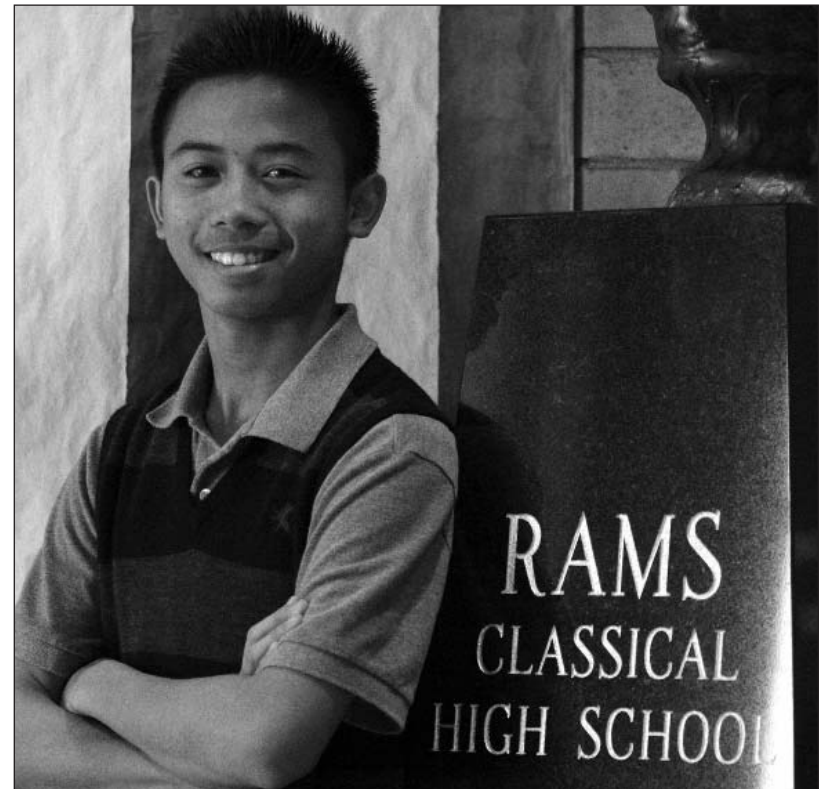
According to Noreen Maggio, Brianna's mother who also went on the trip, "If there was something to see in Washington, they saw it! Although I was a little leery at first about her going to Washington D.C., I was absolutely impressed with the program, especially the security."

Brianna Maggio agreed with her mom. "It was a lot of fun to meet so many kids from around the country. Many of us still stay in touch. We got to see things up close and personal which was very cool. It was all very inspiring."

The Gaudets and Maggios stopped by and visited Mrs. Curtis after their trip. "They came in raving about it. The girls were busy, very busy. They even brought me gifts," said Curtis.

Norreen Maggio talked about her former teacher, "It was very nice of her to nominate us and it was greatly appreciated."

For Brianna Maggio and Danielle Gaudet, this would be a special trip to remember for a long time.



Johnny Long is a jack of all trades at Classical.

## List of achievements is Long

### Classical senior class president is a leader in and out of school

BY SUSAN BYRNE

Lynn Classical senior Johnny Long is a student who does not waste a lot of time.

Whether it is continuing his education outside the halls of his high school or presiding over the senior class inside Lynn Classical, Long is making valuable contributions to his school and community.

Classical Principal Warren White said, "Johnny Long is an outstanding young man and citizen. If he has a fault, maybe it would be that he over extends himself." He certainly does, but it does not appear to be affecting Long or his accomplishments.

Last summer, Long was one of 50 students nationwide chosen to attend an economics workshop at Cornell University. His 11th-grade history and current economics teacher Mrs. Richardson recommended the program, which is organized by the Foundation to Teach Economics (FTE.) Long submitted an application describing his leadership qualities.

"I thought the course would be helpful in learning leadership and teaching. I met interesting kids from all across the country. It was definitely a great experience."

As senior class president, one of Long's responsibilities is to lead assemblies. His principal was impressed with his emceeing talents at the Veteran's Day assembly honoring several local veterans. "The students gave a standing ovation, and it was a

very moving ceremony," White said. "Johnny did a nice job introducing the speakers and leading the whole assembly."

Long's other duties as president include organizing fundraisers to lower the costs of the prom and senior week. "Papa Gino's gave a portion of their proceeds one month, and this month Saugus Iron Works is donating to us. We are also adopting kids to buy presents for this upcoming Christmas."

"We are big into community service. Johnny takes that a step further," White said.

"I volunteer to read to kids at the Community Health School in downtown Lynn and through the Key Club, I serve food at My Brother's Table," Long said.

Hard to believe, but Long still manages to find time to participate on the cross country and track teams at Classical. He broke the senior cross-country record for the school at the Northeastern Conference meet. He was most proud, however, that "our team won the MIAA sportsmanship award."

In addition to all his school activities and responsibilities, Long is working hard at two jobs. He is an associate at CVS and a manager at McDonald's.

Long will certainly have a lengthy college application highlighting his accomplishments at Lynn Classical and throughout the local community. With an eye on business and perhaps a future in teaching math, Long is hoping to attend Babson or Northeastern.



Breed students Brianna Maggio, left, and Danielle Gaudet were chosen to attend the People to People student ambassador leadership forum in September.

PHOTO  
COURTESY  
OF THE  
DAILY ITEM

# Marshall Plan is working



Above, Nicole Olivio, left, and Karina Ross. At right, new security cameras were installed at Marshall Middle School.



Above, mural painters, from left, Stephanie Prak, Ashley Belair and Erica Chavez admire their work.



At right, Principal Dr. Rich Cowdell consults with adjustment counselor Bob Zollo.

## Middle School makes an amazing turnaround

By MEAGHAN CASEY

When he walked through the brand-new doors of Marshall Middle School this fall, Dr. Richard Cowdell set two goals: to re-establish a sense of trust and pride in the school among students, teachers and parents and to raise MCAS scores.

So far, so good.

"We had a burst of support from the entire Marshall community," said Cowdell. "It's been an excellent response and it still looks as though people are retaining a positive attitude. The vast majority really wants to see the school succeed."

Cowdell, who has been an educator in the Lynn Public Schools for 20 years, is in his first year as principal. He began his career as a special education teacher at Harrington Elementary. He taught for five years and then went on to serve as an adjustment counselor and school psychologist. For the past four years, he served as chief school adjustment counselor for the city.

"My interest in administration had been building," said Cowdell. "I completed my doctorate in educational leadership a couple years ago and when two positions opened up at the same time, I decided this was the opportunity."

In addition to new leadership, students and faculty members were welcomed back to Marshall with facility improvements and renovations. During the summer, volunteers from GE, the school department and the Lynn Department of Public Works worked tirelessly to paint classrooms and hallways and beautify the school grounds.

"It was great to see the public and private sectors working side-by-side," said Cowdell. "It was really a joint effort to spruce things up."

The laborers put in brand new sod, shrubs and flowers, painted the flag pole and replaced the front door to the building. They also replaced broken windows, renovated the first-floor classrooms and gutted two old storage rooms in the gym to create locker rooms for the students. Marshall's physical education teachers also built a new exercise room with seven fitness machines for students to use. Another group of Marshall teachers painted the back hallway on a Saturday.

"That's just a testament of the investment and dedication of the staff here, that they're willing to come in on their own time to help make this a better place," said Cowdell.

Students also played a role in the improvements, working throughout the summer with GE volunteers and Marshall's art teacher to paint a brightly colored mural in the school's front hall. A new mural is in progress in the back hall.

"The appearance really lifted everyone's spirits," said Cowdell. "If it's a nice place, people are happier to be here during the day. Aesthetic changes really go a long way."

In addition to looking better, the school is also safer thanks to a new state-of-the-art security system developed by GE Security. The system features video cameras, inside and out, and new identification systems for teachers and students.

"It's really been a help in terms of preventing vandalism and providing exterior security," said Cowdell. "It's also more convenient for teachers with the new in/out card access."

Cowdell hopes the physical transformations are running parallel to academic ones. In September, the school initiated its first parent organization to help parents become more actively involved in their children's education. The meetings, running every six weeks, involve guest speakers and workshops. Deputy Superintendent Dr. Catherine Latham spoke at the last meeting on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and what Marshall needs to accomplish this year.

"My hope is that it's going to be an active organization," said Cowdell. "We're trying to educate parents to help us with the teaching side of things. We're showing them how they can get on to the district's Web site, using the links to practice MCAS questions with their kids and to understand the scoring rubric. Ultimately, we want them involved, working to get the kids focused on improvement."

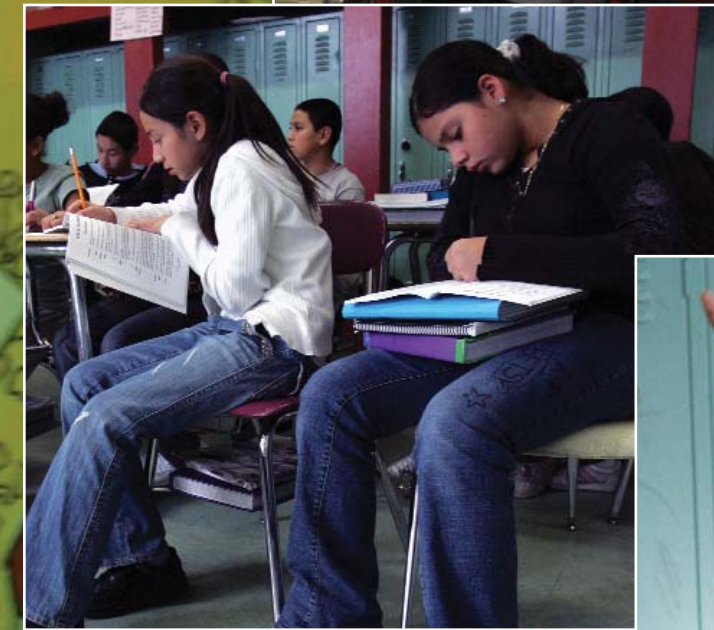
Cowdell is enthused by the overall response, not only from parents, but from the teachers.

"This staff is excellent, young and energetic," he said. "Their commitment to the Marshall is inspiring. They've proven they're here to stay and make it work."

A lifelong Lynn resident, Cowdell earned his bachelor's degree in elementary education and his master's in counseling, both from Salem State College. He completed his doctorate in 2005 at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. His wife, Irene, is a reading coach at Ingalls Elementary School and their two daughters are students in the Lynn Public Schools. Kelsey is a senior at Lynn Classical and Sarah is in eighth grade at Pickering Middle School.



Above, Marshall Middle School Principal Dr. Rich Cowdell greets seventh-grader Ericson Rodrigues. At left, students take a quiz during class.



Above, Marshall Middle School students, from left, Dung Nguyen, Manuela Rosa and Joshua Thingdeth. At left, Marshall Middle School resource officer Larry Wentzel monitors activity with new security cameras.



Background photo: a student-painted mural is displayed in the hallway at Marshall.

# Chicago TV anchor's success story starts in Lynn

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

As a third-grader at Sewell-Anderson Elementary School, Larry Potash was a winner with words. When his work was selected by his fellow classmates as the best in a Halloween creative writing contest, it was a moment that stood out.

It was also a moment that happened to be a turning point in Potash's educational and career path, when he first discovered the joy of telling a story.

"It was really my first exposure to writing, for the fun of it," he said. "I think that's when my interest was piqued."

Potash, the co-anchor of the WGN Morning News in Chicago, was born and raised in Lynn, attending Sewell-Anderson, Breed Middle and Lynn English High.

"I remember the Lynn schools as being an extension of my home and part of the childhood memories I'm so fond of," he said. "I really enjoyed history in middle school and high school and that's one of the things that attracted me to news. It was certainly important for me down the road."

At Lynn English, Potash was active in the school newspaper and the basketball and baseball teams. When he graduated in 1985, he was voted most versatile in his high school yearbook.

"It turns out the job I do requires a great deal of versatility," he said. "We're juggling news and entertainment. I could be interviewing a U.S. senator in one segment and judging llama races in the next. It's that diverse."

Potash joined WGN in 1994. He came to Chicago from KOTV-TV in Tulsa, OK where he was a weekend anchor and political reporter. Prior to that, Potash worked at WFIE in Evansville, IN as morning anchor. He also reported and anchored for KLMG-TV in Longview, Texas.



Larry Potash

Potash has won five Emmy Awards, including three for Best Anchor. The Illinois Broadcasters Association honored Potash with two Silver Dome Awards for Best Anchor in Chicago, in 2006 and 2007.

On the air Monday-Friday from 5:30-9 a.m., Potash broadcasts with co-anchor Robin Baumgarten and weathercaster Paul Konrad. The trio has been together for more than a decade and has developed a chemistry and comfort level that is unmatched.

"It's a fun show, full of surprises and what's great is that the natural friendship you see on air is pretty real," Potash said.

Potash earned his bachelor's degree in mass communications at Emerson College. He says his experience growing up in the Boston news market was another source of inspiration for him.

The New England native now appreciates the parallels between his former home and new one.

"Chicago actually reminds me a little of Boston," he said. "It's a beautiful, clean and friendly city, with a rich culture. I miss Boston terribly, but this has been even better than what I could have hoped for."

Since 2003, Potash has also written a column for The Chicago Tribune RedEye. He writes on a variety of topics including science, history, religion and eccentric characters of Chicago.

Potash resides in Lake Forest, a suburb north of Chicago, with his wife of seven years, Lisa, and their daughter Kaylin. The couple is expecting their second child this month.



History teacher Denise Vinciarelli lectures on the book "A Civil Action" during class as Courtney Walters, left, and Desiree Peterson listen.

## Building barristers at Lynn Tech

BY BILL BROTHERTON

Thanks to an innovative course at Lynn Vocational Technical Institute, about 40 members of the senior class are learning that the law was written just for them.

Denise Vinciarelli, the fourth-year Tech history teacher who created the course, said, "I break everything down into what the law means to them. I like the kids to argue the point that the law is all about them, that the law is there to protect them. Kids today don't have a big respect for the law. In this population, most of their experience with the law has been negative. It's important that they know the most courageous thing they can do is to tell the truth."

"I want the kids to come away with a clear knowledge of what the Constitution is," she added, "what the Bill of Rights is; how great the Constitution is, and how no other country has one."

To help cement the matter, Tech art students painted the Constitution on a wall in Vinciarelli's classroom. "It's there. It's real. The students can see and touch the words."

Vinciarelli said she and students have lively discussions every class. "I wanted to step it up. I didn't want this class to be just another elective. It's for seniors only, and the kids have been really engaged."

Using the textbook "Street Law: A Course in Practical Law" as a starting point, Vinciarelli decided she and the kids could talk all day about the law but one thing was missing. "Lawyers. I had to bring in lawyers. Who better to talk about the law," she said.

And who better than F. Lee Bailey, the Waltham native and Lynn resident who has defended numerous high-profile clients such as O.J. Simpson, "Boston Strangler" Albert

DeSalvo and Patty Hearst in his illustrious career.

"Bailey came most willingly. He asked for nothing. He was direct and very down-to-earth. The students really enjoyed him," said Vinciarelli.

Bailey, who attracted as many teachers as students, did not focus on the controversial Simpson trial. Instead, he talked most about the case of Capt. Ernest Medina, the soldier accused in the Vietnam War's My Lai incident, and his gamble of having Medina take a polygraph test.

And he set Vinciarelli's heart racing when he brought up the issues of race, class and gender and what they mean during a trial. This is what the teacher focuses on during

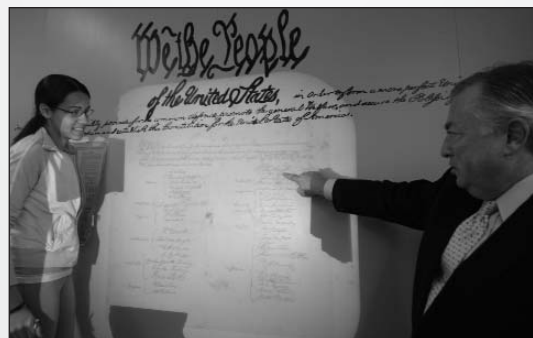
class, steering every discussion toward this.

Bailey was so effective, one student, Stefan Carter, a Tech junior, approached Vinciarelli later and said he was interested in a career as a criminal lawyer.

"The kids (who take the class) have better respect for the law now. They all knew 'You have the right to remain silent' but now they're aware that the Constitution and Bill of Rights were created for them," Vinciarelli said.

"A lot of people have contributed to this program's success," she added. "We have received incredible support from everyone. Our principal, Dr. (Brian) Coughlin, and vice principal, Miss (Caroline) Hall, have been unbelievable. They've given us carte blanche."

When Vinciarelli announced that Jan Schlichtmann would be a guest speaker in the class, Coughlin ordered 30 copies of Jonathan Harr's book "A Civil Action," which chronicles the case of how industrial pollution caused the deaths of children in Woburn. The class also watched the hit film, which stars John Travolta.



Principal Dr. Brian Coughlin talks to law student Barbara Gonzalez about the Declaration of Independence.



Twins Kathryn and Rebecca Leelman enjoy the after-school program at Brickett School.

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

At Brickett Elementary School, students and parents are proving that learning goes on long after the last school bell rings.

Thanks to funds from the Hardscrabble Education Foundation grant, Brickett initiated two after-school programs this year, focusing on math and literacy. Each is running twice a month through April.

The first, Brickett's Math Club, has attracted 108 students — nearly half of the school's total enrollment. Each month is dedicated to a certain strand of math. Using the Marilyn Burns Classroom Math Libraries, the program combines math content with children's literature.

According to Burns, a former classroom teacher and the founder of Math Solutions Professional Development, "children's books help students bring to mathematics the wonder they enjoy from reading."

Principal Debra Ruggiero has found the opposite to be true as well.

"For our math-oriented students, it's a chance to couple their love of math with good children's literature," Ruggiero said. "Hopefully, they can see the connection and develop an appreciation for both."

Each math lesson is designed to strengthen instructional strategies and to reinforce critical thinking, computation,

number sense and problem-solving skills. Hands-on activities and selections from the libraries — consisting of classic, contemporary and award-winning titles — support the lessons. The projects the students complete will be displayed in the spring at the school's Math Fair.

The second program, Family Literacy, focuses on reading comprehension strategies. Parents and their children learn a specific strategy and work together to practice.

"The main goal is to encourage parents to work with their children and see what they're doing," said teacher Anne O'Connell, one of four teachers involved.

"It's a mix of reading and hands-on activities, so it's non-threatening for them," said teacher Nancy Doherty. "They're having fun, but learning at the same time."

Thirty-one parents have participated, many of whom have more than one child in the program.

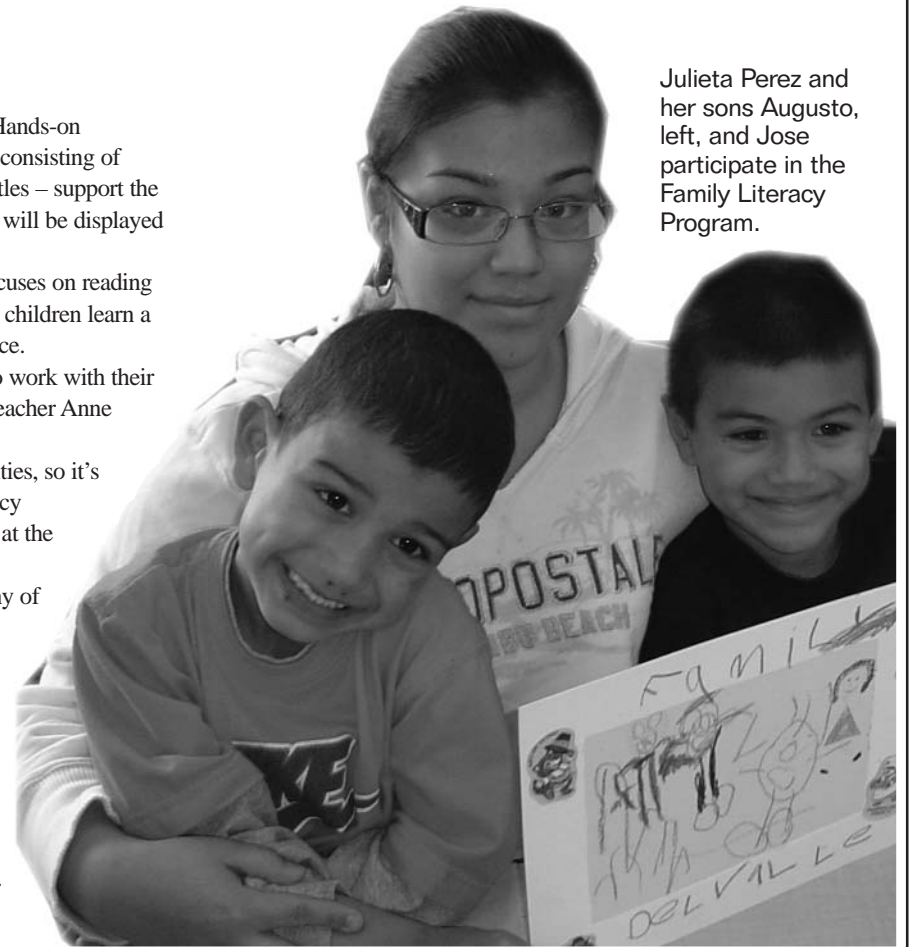
"We're thrilled," said O'Connell. "It's the first time we've really tried to get parents involved in a program like this."

The two programs and their materials are funded partially through the Hardscrabble grant. The 11 teachers involved receive stipends from Title I funds.

# Learning after the bell rings

## Brickett after-school programs a big hit

Julieta Perez and her sons Augusto, left, and Jose participate in the Family Literacy Program.



# Drastic changes lead to dramatic improvements at Ingalls

BY BILL BROTHERTON

The way of doing things at Ingalls Elementary has been turned upside down. And now the students' test scores and teachers' satisfaction have been turned right-side up. And smiles have replaced frowns.

"One year ago we made some pretty drastic changes," said Kimberlee Powers, Ingalls principal. "The focus is on big ideas and essential questions."

Ingalls' mission statement is: "To provide all students with powerful instructional experiences where they are acquiring a deep knowledge of essential curriculum and are learning from teachers who are masters of the content they teach."

The educators hope to achieve this by using many techniques.

"We adopted a middle-school model where teachers in grades 3-5 teach one subject, not all subjects," said Powers. "That's a biggie."

Student achievement is way up. MCAS scores in math jumped considerably — about 30 percentage points for Grade 3 — as did English Language Arts and science scores.

"It was not an overnight change for us. We spent last year and the year before planning for this. But, yes, we do things very, very differently now," said Powers, who is in her fourth year as Ingalls principal.

Initiatives used to raise student achievement include standards-based education, departmentalization in grades 3-5, curriculum mapping (deciding what will be taught), scheduling that supports "sacred learning blocks," lesson planning (instead of traditional



Fifth-graders, Brigitti Lorenzo, left, and DAmen Tobin-Ross listen during math class.

lesson-plan book), use of templates, curriculum teams, book talks and round-table discussions.

There has been a shift from strictly using textbooks. Grade 3 students get two uninterrupted hours of math and English/reading. The teachers and administrators worked together to develop lesson plan templates to frame learning. "This has improved students' achievement through teaching improvements," said Powers.

At the start of each class, students are given that day's agenda and objectives. For example: Today, students will be able to recognize new vocabulary and use correctly in reading and writing.

Curriculum teams were formed in math, English, science and social studies. Teachers meet regularly to discuss content and progress. Teachers have been reborn. Instead of preparing to teach a number of subjects each day, they can now focus on just one.

Curriculum teams offer support and encouragement, and everyone is held accountable.

Vice principal Stephen Dickerson said hard work by a lot of people helped to "right the ship."

This is a big, big ship and you can't turn it around overnight, you have to know what you're doing and where you're going. It's been a real team effort, and teachers have really rallied around this."

Communication-improvement efforts have also been extremely successful, no small feat since about 300 Ingalls students have English as a second language and many parents do not speak English at all, which had made it nearly impossible for teachers and parents to discuss what's best for the students.

Problem solved. Powers said students from Classical and English high schools — ROTC participants, in uniform — attend parent conferences to serve as translators, speaking Spanish, Khmer and Vietnamese.

A VIP program — Very Important Pupil — spotlights achievement and serves as positive reinforcement for jobs well done. Individual achievements, such as perfect attendance or not missing a homework assignment, are rewarded.

Superintendent Nick Kostan and his administrators have solidly backed Ingalls' efforts. Other Lynn schools are preparing to implement similar programs.

# Classical freshmen adjusting well to their new home

## FRESHMAN ACADEMY: from Page 1

Freshman Academy.

Designed to help ninth-graders make a successful transition from middle school to high school, while allowing for renovations to the O'Callaghan Way building, the Freshman Academy is proving to be a success. Students are benefiting from the smaller learning community and the specialized attention.

"It's small, so compared to other high schools where there might be 40 kids in a class, we're lucky," said freshman Shana Doucette. "The teachers are more one-on-one and are able to spend more time with us."

Many faculty members were eager to move to the satellite campus because of the small class sizes and opportunity to form stronger relationships with their students.

"It's a great blend of veteran teachers and enthusiastic new ones as well," said Taylor.

The academy offers a regular course load for students, including honors classes. Additionally, it features three different electives: computing for college, art, and TV production. The building features three computer labs and eight SMART

Boards, which are touch-sensitive interactive white boards. Teachers and students can write on the boards with electronic pens and can navigate Web sites or documents with the touch of a finger.

The academy's Freshman Success course is a pilot, helping students to adjust to the new expectations demanded of them. Focusing on core academics and study habits, the full-year course includes a quarter each of study skills, critical thinking, reading and math.

"These are skills that they'll need to carry out throughout their high school career and beyond," said Taylor. "Keeping ninth-graders separate from the upperclassmen and having the year to adjust after middle school is wonderful."

The students are not completely separated, however, from their peers on O'Callaghan Way. Buses run regularly after school to transport students for various clubs and activities. Students aren't shying away from involvement either. Freshman Richard Rodriguez plays both football and basketball and has no complaints about the travel.

"There are buses going over to the main campus every day after school, so it's fine," he said. "It wouldn't keep me away."

## Classical is a work in progress

Demolition of the freshman wing of Classical's O'Callaghan Way building kicked off this month.

Last February, the Lynn City Council approved a \$4 million bond authorization, which moved the rehabilitation of the Classical building forward. The bond funds were added to the \$8.3 million settlement the city received from the building's architect and engineer for the structural damage.

Phase one of the project, which involves removing all furniture and excess walls in the wing, is under way. The second phase is scheduled to start on Feb. 6 and run through next school year. The work could take 18-24 months in total.



Students Richard Rodriguez and Shana Doucette.



Above, Students in an Honors English class at Classical's Freshman Academy. At right, Riley McManus draws on a SMART Board.



# Classical alumnus Morales a senior advisor to governor

## MORALES: from Page 1

was appointed to the position in March.

"So far, it's truly rewarding to see how my advice is translated on a daily basis, and how it impacts people's lives," said Morales.

"It was a smart move, pursuing politics and not acting," he quipped.

Born in Puerto Rico, Morales moved to Lynn at age 12, entering Harrington Elementary School. From there, he attended Cobbett, Breed and Classical.

"It was great because it was such a diverse city," he said. "It was a whole new world — exciting, yet also

a challenge. When I arrived, I spent time in the bilingual program my first year. I had great teachers who looked out for me. The system was very good."

After earning his bachelor's degree in sociology from Bowdoin College in 1997, Morales returned to Lynn Classical as an ESL teacher. From there, he began to focus his mission on advocacy.

"It had always been in the back of my mind, how we can improve opportunities in Massachusetts' workforce and economy," said Morales.

He launched his political career in the late 1990s, serving as budget

analyst for the House of Representatives' Ways and Means committee. From 2000 to 2001, he served as an advisor on health care policy and state finance to then-Speaker of the House Thomas Finneran. In 2001, he became executive director of Prescription Advantage, the nation's first prescription drug insurance plan for seniors. He accepted a position in 2003 as senior advisor to then-Senate President Robert Travaglini.

"I've had the special opportunity and privilege at such an early age to be working with and advising some of state's most influential political leaders," he said. "It's been very

rewarding."

Dedicated to the community, Morales also serves as co-founder of the El Jolgorio de Massachusetts, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering leadership, civic engagement and educational attainment among Latino youth. He is also a co-founder of the Puerto Rican Cuatro Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to the growth and dissemination of traditional Puerto Rican music.

"At the end of the day, my family came here as immigrants," said Morales. "I consider myself American first, but I recognize there aren't that many of us Latinos as role

models. It's important for me to be an inspiration — not just to Latinos, but to everyone — to think outside the box and to strive for whatever you hope to accomplish."

Looking back at his accomplishments in the past decade, Morales said he never imagined to be where he is today.

"My career has been very unorthodox, and I never pictured this," said Morales. "It's been a very fun roller coaster to say the least."

Morales lives in Lynn, with his wife Samanda, a Dominican Republic native. The couple has been married for six years and has one son, Anthony, who is two.

# Bronze stars

## English, Classical gain national recognition

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Lynn English and Lynn Classical high schools were named among the leaders in the state and the nation, according to a *U.S. News and World Report* study ranking the top public high schools in the country.

The magazine ranked 18,790 public high schools in 40 states, using data from the 2005-2006 school year. Schools were judged on state test scores and proficiency levels, educational opportunities for all students and the amount of college preparation. English and Classical were two of 1,086 schools awarded the bronze medal

distinction.

“It’s a tremendous thing for the city to have two high schools recognized,” said Classical Principal Warren White. “It speaks volumes about the accomplishments of the students. We’re so proud of our kids, and our faculty and staff as well. Both of our schools have gone through accreditation in recent years and it’s all about instruction. In this profession, you don’t often get immediate gratification, so to be publicly acknowledged is very positive.”

“While we were honored and pleased at the recognition from U.S. News and World Report, we are not surprised, because we consistently attempt

to provide a climate for excellence,” said English Principal Andy Fila. “Our staff is dedicated and supportive, and all students are expected to perform at high standards. We try to live our mission statement, and we attempt to provide similar opportunities for all students.”

Classical and English were two of only three high schools in Essex County to make the list. Manchester-Essex Regional High School in Manchester-by-the-Sea was the third. Boston Latin School led the state rankings, coming in at No. 19 overall and receiving the gold medal. The study named Massachusetts the best in the country for public high school education.

### Elementary schools

#### Ford

Students at the Robert L. Ford K-8 School will get the experience of a life-time when they speak with crew members of Expedition 16, led by Peggy Whitson, the first woman to be in command of the International Space Station. During the 20-minute down-link, approximately 15-20 students will be able to ask questions to the astronauts. Questions will focus on living and working in space.

#### Ingalls

The Ingalls School Parent Book Club is kicking off in January.

#### Lincoln-Thomson

Imagine, preventative dentistry for children with no drills and no needles! The students are all smiles at Lincoln-Thomson thanks to a school-based prevention program offered to the Lynn Public Schools by the Forsyth Institute. This project will run through June 2012. Dental exams and dental care are scheduled twice each year and are provided by dentists and hygienists from the Forsyth Center for Evidence-Based Dentistry in Boston. The dental group comes to the school, sets up and examines the children, and gives them a dental cleaning, fluoride treatment, sealant and temporary fillings as needed. Children are also given a new toothbrush and toothpaste and are taught how to brush and clean their teeth. The ultimate goal of the Forsyth Institute is to increase access to care and improve oral health starting early in childhood.

#### Lynn Woods

Nicholas Westin, grade 4, designed a poster for Lynn Community



Connections Coalition that depicts his view of family life. He and his family were invited to attend a conference where his work served as the invitation. The poster was selected to be on display on the Wyoma Square billboard as part of a child-abuse-prevention campaign.

#### Sewell-Anderson

One morning in October, just as the dawn was breaking into a new day, a teacher arrived at school and noted the sound of metal hooks clanging on the school's flag pole. The custodian, Tim Oliver, was raising the American flag as he does every morning. The teacher thought to herself, "How sad it is to have the flag raised so unceremoniously each day." Approaching the school, however, her eye caught something special on the sidewalk of Ontario Street. There stood the crossing guard, Tom Cantrell, a retired Navy man, standing silently with his hat held over his heart as Oliver pulled the flag to its proper height. "Old Glory" was not raised unceremoniously after all.

#### Welcoming

The Welcoming Elementary students enjoy giving of themselves for their community-service projects. On Veterans Day, a group of students visited the veterans at the Lynn VA Clinic on Boston Street. The students and the veterans and staff at the clinic sang a variety of patriotic songs. In November, the fourth-graders made their monthly visit to see their friends

at the Baker Street Nursing Home. Students also went on a guided tour of the John F. Kennedy Museum and Library in Boston. The tour guide presented each student with an evidence-finding booklet. The students became biographers and began searching the museum for various facts and information concerning President John F. Kennedy and his family. Upon returning to school the students wrote essays about the fabulous learning experience.

### Middle schools

#### Marshall

Jim Wheeler, a seventh-grade teacher and Vietnam veteran, spoke at Marshall's Veteran's Day assembly. The school band played and the Lynn English High School ROTC performed.

### High schools

#### Classical

Classical was the only high school in Lynn to offer freshmen the Biology MCAS in the spring of 2007. Fifty out of 52 ninth-graders passed. Also in science news, teacher Jeff Grove sent a group of student to study at MIT last summer at an astrophysics workshop.

#### MAST

MAST School presented at the Mass. Department of Education's Alternative Education Conference, held at Holy Cross College. The goals of the conference were to provide training on classroom strategies for teachers in alternative education programs or schools; to showcase a range of models of alternative education; to offer training on topics important to the field of alternative education; and to provide an opportunity to network with colleagues around the state.

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#### Edward A. Sisson

John Morris, Principal  
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#### Tracy

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#### Washington Community Magnet

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### Middle schools

#### Breed

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#### Thurgood Marshall

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#### Pickering

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#### Lynn Alternative High

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#### Lynn English High

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#### Lynn Voc Tech Institute

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#### MAST

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#### Welcoming Alternative School

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#### Welcoming Middle

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## Bulldog bounce

Lynn English's Jeremy Subervi, left, outduels Nick Brown of Everett for a loose ball in the Elmo Benedetto Jamboree at Lynn Classical Dec. 7.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DAILY ITEM



Lynn fifth-grade students enjoyed their time in Nature's Classroom.

## Fifth-graders have time of their lives in Nature's Classroom

BY BILL BROTHERTON

Dozens of Lynn fifth-graders spent the last week of November outdoors with Dirty Dave, a white rat and no cell phones. And they were forced to eat magic mud and slime.

All say they had the time of their young lives.

Fifth-graders from Lynn Woods, Sisson, Aborn and Lincoln-Thomson elementary schools spent a glorious week at Camp Cody in Freedom, N.H. It's part of the Nature's Classroom program, which introduces youngsters to the great outdoors and in which there are several camps throughout New England.

By the way, Dirty Dave is a camp counselor, the rat was somebody's pet and the slime might have been edible but it sure didn't taste very good.

"Every student should have an opportunity to do this," said Ellen Fritz, Lynn Woods principal.

Jennie Hennessey, an Aborn School fourth-grade teacher who served as a chaperone, went to Nature's Classroom as a sixth-grader. She was thrilled to see a bridge that she and her campmates had made back then is still being used.

"The camp experience is great. And there's so much to do. On our first day, the kids weigh all the food that's wasted at meals. It was 14 pounds. On the last day, it was a half pound. Everyone works together. It's a beautiful thing."



From left, Victor Monya, Eric Whitcomb and Chet Patvary learn about fire.

"The kids got to see their teachers in another way. We stayed with them, in a cabin, in bunk beds!" said Dawn McDonough, a fifth-grade teacher at Sisson Elementary. "More importantly, the kids learned they can do things on their own. Mom and Dad were not there to help them

with every little thing. They carried their own luggage, and you could easily see the ones who over-packed."

Sean Morris, fifth-grade teacher at Lincoln-Thomson Elementary, said all electronics such as cell phones and laptops are prohibited, as are drinks and snacks from home. That means parents and kids can't communicate all week. Most of the adults agreed it was probably tougher for the parents than for the kids.

Marianne McGovern, whose daughter Lindsay attended this year, raved about the experience. "For many kids, this is their first time away from home and there can be no contact with a parent all week. That's tough. Plus, kids are teamed with kids from other schools, so they're not with their friends all the time. It's nice to see kids in a different environment," she said.

Bill Ekstrom, who joined his son Alex at camp, added, "but no one cried. No one said 'I want to go home.' Our cabin was one big slumber party."

Alex Ekstrom was impressed by the science fair, where several experiments were conducted at various stations. "They made electricity through a pickle," he said.

"I made a wallet entirely out of duct tape," said Nicholas Madden, producing the colorful creation from his pocket.

Morris, who attended Nature's Classroom twice as a Lynn youngster, said the students also got a lot out of the Underground Railroad exercise.