

Noteworthy



Music teacher Amanda Woolley works with first-graders at Lincoln Elementary School. Woolley was selected as a winner of the 2009 Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Award. **Story, Page 5.**

Crosse roads lead to YMCA

BY RICH FAHEY

Not all lessons are learned in the classroom.

For David Crosse at the High School of Commerce, the last three months have proven that.

Crosse, a 19-year-old second-year senior, found himself increasingly uncomfortable and unhappy with his situation. Enter Commerce's school-to-work program and the Springfield YMCA.

Crosse has undergone a personal transformation during his internship at the YMCA, a change Commerce school-to-work counselor Polly Ingraham labeled "remarkable."

"In my time doing this job I've never seen a young man go through such a marked positive change," said Ingraham, who presides over and creates internships for Commerce students. "I'm grateful to the YMCA for providing the opportunity."

YMCA Executive Director James Morton has seen the same type of sea



David Crosse

See CROSSE Page 12

Embracing their heritage

Latino students at Forest Park learn Spanish language and culture

BY RICH FAHEY

They are middle-school students whose names suggest they are of Latino heritage.

Sometimes other students approach them, assuming they must speak Spanish.

Many times, they don't.

Springfield Public Schools has begun

a program at the Forest Park Middle School to teach the Spanish language and culture to middle-school students of Latino heritage who don't speak the language.

"It can create a lot of issues," said Carmen Felix-Fournier, head of the district's Foreign Language department. "Oftentimes it's assumed they know the

language, and it's not the case. They might be third-generation immigrants who were born here."

A recent study done of Hispanics in Southern California bears out her point. About 35 percent of second-generation immigrants speak Spanish fluently. By

See LATINO HERITAGE Page 12



Forest Park student Fransheska Galarza listens during class.

Building the foundation of success in Springfield



Dr. Alan J. Ingram

As I reflect on the first 10 months of my superintendence in Springfield, my thoughts are drawn to the value of a strong supporting cast, whose contributions have been enormous. As a team, we have put in long hours and engaged in some very hard work. As a leader, I have relied heavily on lessons learned throughout my journey to this long-awaited career aspiration. I've summarized some notes from my journal in an effort to share with you these tenets that apply to all of us.

Plan ahead

There are no magic formulas for success. Whether your goals are rooted in career aspirations, family objectives, financial investments or personal health and wellness, the most important first step is thinking ahead and preparing a road map to help you achieve those goals. I would encourage you to think big, set realistic objectives, anticipate the unexpected, evaluate your progress, stay focused and follow through.

Cultivate a winning attitude

We need only to look around or study history to see that the world is full of people who have triumphed in the face of adversity. At times, we all face challenges that may cause us to question our capabilities in handling the task at hand. I've learned it's important in those instances to "visualize past successes" in order to immobilize self-doubt or fear of failure. Equally important is the necessity to turn a deaf ear on naysayers. Society is full of pessimistic individuals and we shouldn't allow ourselves to be unduly influenced by the thoughts and beliefs of others.

Promote growth and development

Study, learn and read. I've never met a successful person who was satisfied with the status quo. In today's rapidly changing world, it's important to continually seek opportunities to grow personally and professionally. Keep in mind, what's new today will be old tomorrow; stay current. While formal education is a priceless investment, not all life experiences or valuable lessons come from an academic setting. In some instances, we overlook the obvious. Every profession or specialty brings a chance to meet others who have tackled tough jobs, unique assignments or other obstacles in life. Find a mentor or someone you're comfortable with and establish a relationship that allows you to benefit from their knowledge, wisdom, and experience.

Make reading a habit. A book I recently finished that I'd highly recommend is *Quiet Strength* by Tony Dungy.

Avoid fatal flaws

Throughout my career, I've made it a habit to study leaders. More than once, such study has brought to mind the adage: "In every life, a little rain must fall." Through my readings, I have tried to learn not only from the success of some of our most extraordinary leaders, but also from their mistakes. Although not all inclusive, there are a few fatal flaws common among them, which are worthy of mention and a strong word of caution.

First, do not feed misguided loyalties. It's important to make sure you work to build a reputation based on your own talents and abilities; and not on the position, rank, or friendship of others.

Second, beware of breeches of integrity — you're always on parade.

Third, don't become so preoccupied with your next assignment or job, that you neglect your responsibilities of the day.

Fourth, there is a fine line between assertiveness and aggressiveness — comprehend the difference and take personal responsibility for your future.

Finally, ensure you attend to the needs of your family; with competing priorities, it's easy to lose

sight of what's really important.

Potpourri

Throughout my career, I've had the pleasure of working with many talented government employees, educators and business leaders who shared notable qualities.

Most of them developed a passion for their profession along with a strong work ethic; candidly communicated expectations to help subordinates realize their full potential; recognized and rewarded excellence; understood that accountability, responsibility and compassion were not incompatible; found a balance in their lives emotionally, physically and spiritually; and all found ways to support their communities as volunteers in local organizations or charitable events.

In realizing the fulfillment of my appointment as superintendent of Springfield Public Schools, I'm smart enough to know I could not have reached this point without the benefit of so many people along the way. I've always felt a compelling need to give something back. If what I've shared here is of benefit in some small way to just one person, then it was well worth the effort.

Dr. Alan J. Ingram is superintendent of schools.

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DeBerry eyes longer school day

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

For students and staff at William N. DeBerry Elementary School, school bells may be ringing a bit earlier — and later — in the coming years.

The school has applied for one of the Commonwealth's Expanded Learning Time (ELT) grants for 2009-10. The premise of ELT is to lengthen school days by 30 percent. Benefits include additional time for core academic subjects; expanded learning blocks to allow teachers time to teach through hands-on, interactive projects; more opportunities for teachers to collaborate during the school day; and the integration of engaging activities.

"It would provide more time to work on academic instruction and more time for collaborative projects and enrichment activities," said Principal Mary Worthy. "The whole idea is to maximize student achievement through all of these avenues."

Based on surveys and polls of DeBerry teachers, parents and students, most are in favor of the extended hours.



DeBerry Elementary School teacher Lesley Mutcherson works with student Alaysia Blake.

"The majority of staff are on board and want to participate," said Karen Collins, co-facilitator of the ELT planning process at DeBerry.

If approved, DeBerry would be the first Springfield public school to be awarded an ELT grant. The school's plan includes extending its hours of 8:50 a.m.-3:30 p.m. to 7:55 a.m.-4:20 p.m. The majority of DeBerry's student population lives in the surrounding community

and walks to school.

DeBerry's ELT team has contacted a number of community organizations to launch enrichment programs, including JELUPA Productions, Inc., the Springfield Museum, Young Audiences of Massachusetts and the Community Music School of Springfield. Currently, the school offers academic after-school programs, staffed by DeBerry teachers, as well as off-site community programs. A long-standing partnership with Springfield College pairs college students with DeBerry students in grades 3-5 for a weekly mentoring and college preparatory program.

"With the additional time, we hope to form and establish more long-term partnerships with different organizations," said Worthy.

"We want to be able to expose students to different experiences and create a broader base of activities for them," said DeBerry teacher Elaine Sgueglia, co-facilitator of the planning process. "They should be both fun and educational."

Attention!

Air Force JROTC program a success in Springfield Public Schools

By JESSICA BENSON

This spring, young Air Force officers-in-training gathered to display their impeccable uniforms and skills in carrying flags, marching and spinning rifles.

The drill team from Central High School's Air Force JROTC program traveled to Washington, D.C., to compete in the annual Air Force JROTC drill team championships. About 35 Central students participated. The armed color guard came in third in the nation.

Underclassmen who have never been to the competition were especially excited, said Col. Thomas Cleland, one of four instructors in the JROTC program at Central.

"We were competing against the best teams in the country," Cleland said. "It's the best of the best."

The Central team is no stranger to the competition, since the school's JROTC program is among the oldest and most established Air Force JROTC programs in the country. When the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps was launched in 1966, Central was one of only 20 sites nationwide. Today, there are 860 around the world, but only about a dozen of those original sites are still active. Central is one of them, currently boasting more than 300 participants.

Springfield is actually home to two Air Force JROTC programs, as well as other JROTCs dedicated to other branches of the service. A second Air



Putnam High School Air Force JROTC drill team members, from left, Jesus Rodriguez, Unit Commander Destiny Abrew and Stephanie Peters.

Force program at Putnam Vocational Technical High School was formed several years ago.

Instructor Sgt. Ron Manseau was happy with the Putnam team's performance this season. "It went very well, very much improved over last year," he said.

Being on the drill team is no easy task. The season is long, running from September until April. Students are expected to attend practices after school, just as if they were playing a sport. "It takes a lot of work,"

Cleland said. "The kids realize it. They work hard."

Cleland said the trip to the nationals is a nice reward for all the dedication the students show to the team. However, it is not free. Students are expected to raise money to put toward the cost of the trip.

Cleland is also quick to note that the drill team is just one small part of a much larger program.

Through extracurricular activities such as the drill team, in addition to elective classes taught by certified instructors, the JROTC aims to teach students good citizenship and

leadership abilities. However, Cleland and Manseau both emphasized they are not trying to convince students to enlist in the military upon graduation.

"Our job is not to be recruiters," Manseau said. "Our job is to build better citizens."

"We're teachers first," added Cleland.

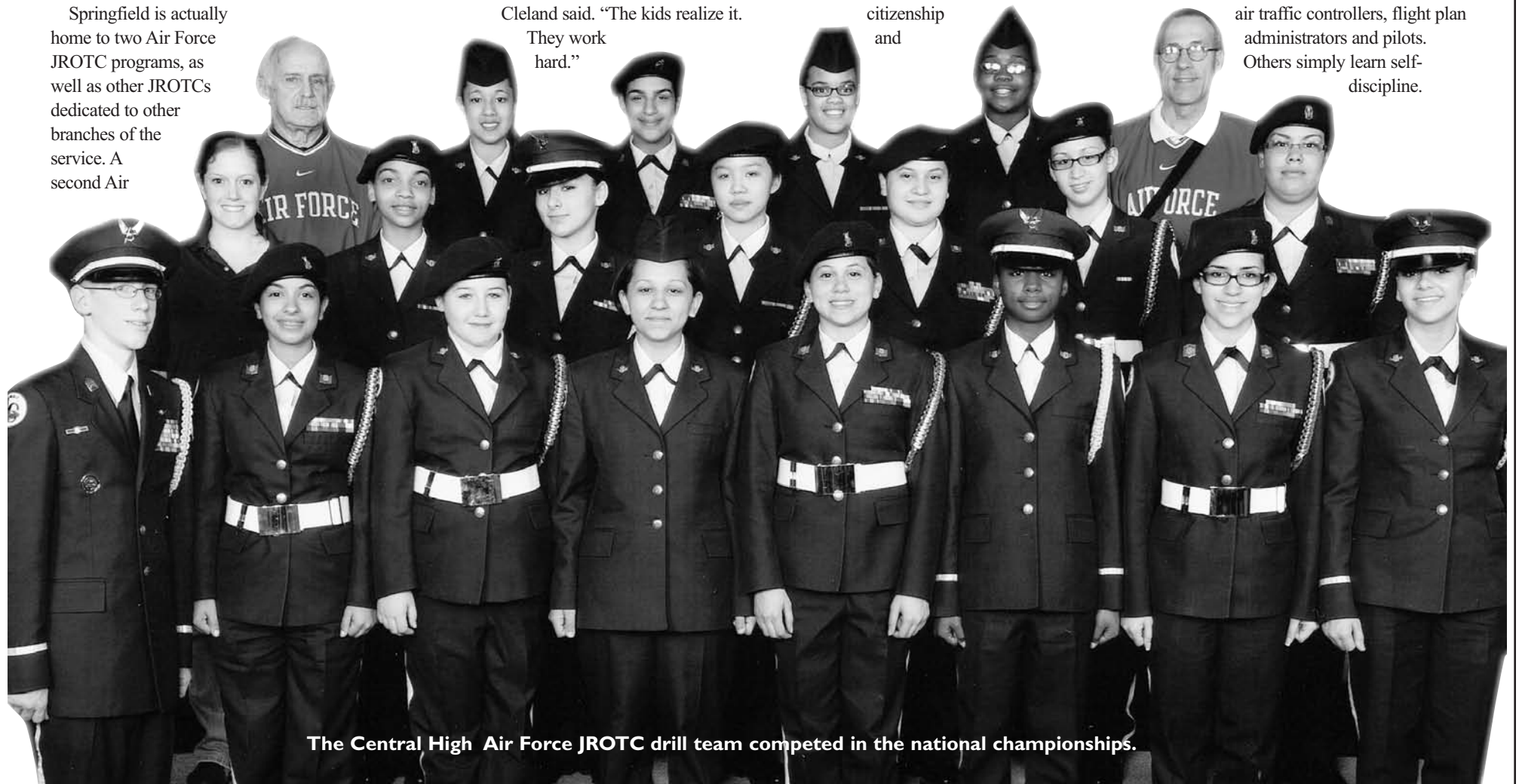
Of course, basic military skills still do become part of the curriculum. Once a week, on Wednesdays, students wear their uniforms, conforming to the same standards as members of the Air Force.

Classroom instruction covers basic life skills, such as going on job interviews or calculating credit card interest rates. Advanced classes get into more complicated aerospace science topics, including the history of aviation and space technology.

Instructors realize that some students will take to the program better than others.

Only half of the students who take the course their freshman year return as sophomores. Even fewer make it all the way to senior year. "It's not for everybody," Manseau said.

Yet, the students who do thrive in the program end up gaining untold benefits. Some are able to take advantage of generous scholarships and go on to become air traffic controllers, flight plan administrators and pilots. Others simply learn self-discipline.



The Central High Air Force JROTC drill team competed in the national championships.

SPRINGFIELD PARTNERS



Putnam students, from left, Annie Lee, Janeika Cardona and Yazmarie Quinones study chromosomes during a biology class at Baystate Medical Center.

Positive partnership

Baystate Medical Center offers home for Putnam classes

BY RICH FAHEY

It is a partnership forged by both necessity and good will.

With enrollment at Putnam Vocational High School growing and space scarce, the school needed a home for its allied health program, transformed from what was the school's nursing program.

Enter Baystate Medical Center, which already hires some Putnam graduates and has a vested interest in making sure those students are as prepared as possible when they enter the work force.

Putnam students now take health science classes at Baystate at its 140 High St. facility, in the third year of a partnership that has already proven beneficial for both sides.

"Years ago, students in career and technical education schools saw a clear line drawn between academic and vocational skills," said Peter Blain, manager of the community health planning department at Baystate Medical Center. "Now we are putting out the word that academic skills are vocational skills."

That means an added emphasis on courses that will allow students to transfer more seamlessly into health care professional careers and the secondary education needed for most jobs. The push for career and

technical education schools such as Putnam is part of a statewide and nationwide effort to upgrade the academic portion of the education, an effort that has already borne fruit at many vocational schools in terms of higher graduation rates and MCAS scores.

In the Putnam-Baystate partnership, the emphasis is on hands-on and lab work in the courses being offered, with an eye towards advanced placement and college-level work.

"If students go into allied health in college, that freshman year they'll be looking at college-level anatomy, biology, physiology," said Blain. "We're looking to both broaden their employable skills and



Putnam student Ashley Ballester listens during a biology class at Baystate Medical Center.

prepare them for post-secondary programs."

The number of jobs in the health care industry requiring at least some post-secondary education continues to grow, said Blain, to the point where virtually every position requires some additional training or education.

Blain works closely with Baystate's human resources department to determine the educational requirements for jobs at the hospital so he can update Putnam students on what is required of them. He said he has already seen a lot of growth in the students since the program started.

"We were already hiring some students from the program, but that hiring has increased since this partnership started," he said, adding that between 30 and 50 Putnam students take courses at Baystate either during or outside the school day.

Putnam students have responded in many cases by attempting to take two science courses in both their junior and senior years, but in some cases there were not enough available openings. Blain said the effort shows students recognize the need for the courses.

"It's a good problem to have," he said. "They want to learn and we want to help them."

Physics First!

SPS receives \$330,000 to improve instruction

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Grasping Newton's first law of motion and Einstein's theory of relativity were just some of the new challenges ninth-grade students in Springfield Public Schools were tasked with this year – but the students weren't the only ones doing their physics homework.

In partnership with the American International College, SPS launched a new Physics First!

program that provides teachers with content and instructional support. The teachers completed an intensive two-week summer institute, designed to help them prepare for state certification in

physics and for teaching the newly required ninth-grade conceptual physics course. Monthly follow-up training sessions have continued throughout the academic year.

The new physics course replaces the long-standing physical science requirement for ninth-graders, in efforts to provide students with a stronger foundation and more of a choice in fulfilling the MCAS science requirement, which came into effect for the class of 2010. There are four separate science exams — biology, chemistry, physics, technology/engineering — and students must pass one in either ninth or 10th grade.

"There's a national movement right now around physics," said Ronald St. Amand, SPS director of science. "It's more concrete than biology or chemistry. Students can't see molecules, but they can look at what they experience in their daily lives – forces of motion, heat – and start building scientific knowledge."

Physics First! was made possible through the Improving Teacher Quality State Grant Program, which is funded through the No Child Left Behind Act.

The Mass. Department of Higher Education awarded \$1,259,374 to support five continuing projects and 11 new projects in 2008-09. The Physics First! project will receive a total of \$330,000 in funding over three years. Two additional summer institute sessions have already been scheduled.

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There's a national movement right now around physics. It's more concrete than biology or chemistry.

Ronald St. Amand
SPS Director of Science

TEACHER PROFILE



Harmony in her classroom

Teacher shares her passion for music with elementary students

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Amanda Woolley has had music on the mind since she was 7. Today, the 22-year-old award-winning teacher is spreading her passion for rhythm and harmony to students at the Dorman and Lincoln elementary schools.

"Music has always been a huge part of my life," said Woolley, who grew up in Point Pleasant, N.J. "My parents wanted to provide me with the opportunity to take lessons, so I started with piano and then picked up flute in the elementary school band."

Woolley went on to participate in various ensembles including marching band, symphony band, concert band, hoop band, flute choir, chamber choir and vocal jazz. She became the



Amanda Woolley

accepted a position in Springfield Public Schools.

"When I interviewed, I found my principals – Shannon Collins and Diane Gagnon – to be the most excited about and supportive of developing their music programs, and I was looking for a school culture in which a beginning music program could thrive and grow," said Woolley. "They have been wonderfully supportive from the moment I first met them all the way to today."

Launching a new music program at the Dorman and Lincoln schools has been both challenging and rewarding.

"In some ways, we've had to make up for lost time with the older kids, but my goal is to create lessons that will take them

from where they are now and move them forward as fast as possible," she said. "You have to learn to cater to the different needs, weaknesses and strengths of your students, turning them into musical beings. It's exciting to see their energy and enthusiasm for music and movement and to be able to light that spark in their eyes."

That spark has certainly spread like wildfire at both schools. Nearly 120 third-, fourth- and fifth-graders at Lincoln joined the newly formed chorus, while another 90 joined at Dorman. Woolley was impressed by the turnout and stage presence amongst her students during school concerts. "They were like shining stars, not only rising to the occasion, but going above and beyond," she said.

In 2008, Woolley earned her bachelor's degree in music education at UMass and, following student-teaching experiences at Boland Elementary in Springfield and Frontier Regional School in South Deerfield,



Music teacher Amanda Woolley makes music with her students.

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In January, Woolley was named one of 28 recipients of the 2009 Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Award, which acknowledges their high degree of professionalism, subject knowledge, creativity, impact on students and support for colleagues.

"I was extremely flattered and humbled while at the same time extremely grateful for the recognition and encouragement of my colleagues," said Woolley, who earned the special distinction of Outstanding First Year Teacher. "I know that I still have an incredible amount to learn and that more experience will make me a stronger educator, but I am thankful that my passion for my work and enthusiasm about helping my students to become more musical and knowledgeable was recognized."

The district typically receives about 120 nominations for the Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Awards each year. More than 200 teachers have received the award since its inception in 2003. Winners this year receive cash awards totaling

\$16,800 (each receives \$500 for personal use and \$100 for classroom supplies), a YMCA membership and other gifts.

They will be recognized during a dinner and awards ceremony at the Log Cabin Restaurant in Holyoke on April 28.

Superintendent Dr. Alan J. Ingram said the award recipients represent the best of Springfield Public Schools and pointed out that there are many unsung heroes teaching in the district.

"At its very core, public education boils down to a teacher in a classroom and it's important to take time to recognize those who perform exceptionally well, to keep them and others encouraged and inspired," Ingram said. "We are grateful to our sponsors who recognize the value of great teachers."

Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Awards sponsors include the Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation, the Davis Foundation, MassMutual Financial Group, the YMCA of Greater Springfield and Southworth Paper Company of Agawam.

“
You have to learn to cater to the different needs, weaknesses and strengths of your students, turning them into musical beings.
”

Amanda Woolley

Strategic plan will serve as blueprint for our schools

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Alan J. Ingram has unveiled the framework of a strategic plan that will serve as a multi-year blueprint on how the district will perform and improve the educational opportunities for all of its students. The School Committee unanimously approved the draft of The Springfield Public Schools Vision, Mission,

Priorities, Goals and Values.

The priorities of the plan include: increasing attendance and graduation rates; safe schools; highly qualified staff at all levels; effective parent and community partnerships; equitable and efficient use of funding; accountable leadership at all levels; and responsive and multicultural communication.

These priorities were developed by the district's strategic planning team, consisting of staff members and community members, with the support of Partnership for Excellence, Inc. The team worked collaboratively in a major data-gathering process, which included an online poll soliciting more than 5,000 responses from the Springfield community.

The team took the results and aligned them with the vision and mission of the district to develop goals and measures for the district. The next steps will be to list specifics on how to reach the goals and ensure all of the district's decisions are aligned with the goals.

— MEAGHAN CASEY

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

At the heart of every student success story is the helping hand of a parent.

In Springfield, efforts to create a district-wide Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) are well underway in an attempt to bridge the gap between home and school.

“The goal is to disseminate information, increase parental involvement in the schools and promote individual PTO activity at each school,” said Patricia Spradley, chief parent and community engagement officer. “We want to keep lines of communication open and provide families with the tools we’re using in the classrooms to educate their children.”

The district-wide PTO will replace the former Springfield Parents Advisory Network (SPAN), which has been inactive for several years. A dozen parents and community members were recruited to spearhead the efforts and form the executive committee.

“It made sense to create a new organization, with a new purpose and new goals,” said Spradley. “We formed a team of invested community partners and parents to analyze what did and didn’t work in the past.”

Kevin Manley, who is president of the PTO at the Brunton Elementary School, where his daughter is a third-grader, is serving as interim vice president of the district-wide PTO.

“We know from studies that with increased parental involvement, test scores can improve and overall school performance can improve,” said Manley. “We want to stress that parents don’t necessarily have to

District-wide PTO connects home and school



Jennifer Metsch, right, and Doris Schuh of Step Up Springfield conduct a training for parents.

attend every meeting or be in the school building to be involved. It’s about sitting down with your children and reading a book or making sure their homework is done.”

Moving forward, the district-wide PTO will include two representatives from each school.

“We want to hear and have voices

of every school in the district present,” said Spradley. “We also want each individual PTO to align its goals with those of the district.”

New district-wide workshops such as “How to Really Help with Homework” or “10 Things All Kids Need: Skill-building” have been designed to inform parents about their

rights and responsibilities and to support them in becoming advocates for their children’s education.

The district’s “Lunch ‘n Learn” series, which kicked off in February, addresses issues such as student attendance, health and wellness, volunteering in Springfield Public Schools and workplace readiness. As

the workshop sessions progress, they will focus more on workforce and character development and linking parents and families with support agencies. Parents will also have the opportunity to earn college credits or enroll in adult literacy or English as a second language (ESL) classes.

“First, we need to address general, basic needs to get the attention and attendance of parents,” said Spradley. “The only way to do that is to work with businesses and community organizations to provide those basic skills. It really does take a village to raise a child.”

The workshops are held at the schools, community centers and the Springfield Public Library, and half are available in English and Spanish. They are supported by Step Up Springfield, a community-wide campaign to encourage parents, community-based organizations, the faith-based community, businesses and others to “step up” and be accountable for the education of Springfield’s children, not leaving it solely in the hands of teachers. Other partners, such as MassMutual, are allowing the district to host workshops in their offices.

Efforts to implement the new workshops and district-wide PTO complement the work of the SPS Office of Parent and Community Engagement, which opened in 2005. The office has formed its own parent information center and created positions for parent facilitators in elementary and middle schools throughout the district. The facilitators work specifically with parents, providing resources and tools to ensure that learning continues at home.

Parent Information Center is at your service

BY RICH FAHEY

In virtually every industry or workplace these days, customer service is the name of the game. Springfield Public Schools is no different.

The district is in the midst of reevaluating and revising the way it delivers services to parents, students and all stakeholders in the schools via the Parent Information Center (PIC). Improved customer service is one of the priorities of Superintendent Dr. Alan J. Ingram, according to Bill Fiore, senior administrator of the PIC.

As part of the initiative, the center underwent a self-study supported by the Broad Foundation that will result in some changes to the operation, including the way it is physically organized, some of the paperwork involved and where the center is located, currently at 22 Mulberry St. at the Milton Bradley School.

“There are some things we can do even better for all stakeholders in the Springfield schools,” said Fiore.

Many questions parents have can be answered just by dialing the center’s main number at 413-787-7276 and following the prompts. If they don’t find the answer there, they can talk to someone.

Among the center’s functions are serving as a clearinghouse for information on student registration, and the dissemination of



Service specialist Nilda Resto takes information from parent Rosa Sepulveda and her daughter, Zujeily Soto-Sepulveda, at the Parent Information Center.

information about Springfield schools to outsiders, government agencies and other school systems.

“We are the gateway to the Springfield Public Schools,” said Fiore.

Parents interested in registering students for Springfield Public

Schools come to the PIC, which gathers information about the students and their records from other schools. Fiore said the center also ensures special education students with individualized education plans (IEPs) are placed in the proper programs.

If a check of medical records finds a student’s immunizations are not up to date, nurses in the schools’ health service can administer them free of charge. Students are tested for English language skills to see if they should be placed in a sheltered English immersion class. The center can help parents and students identify school choices via the boundary system in place for grades K-8, and the possibilities of federal magnet school programs.

Fiore said the center is now reaching out to let parents know that kindergarten registration is underway, and that registration will also be held during the evening hours at several schools around the city.

“We also reach out to the preschools not affiliated with the city but whose students end up here to let them know about kindergarten registration,” he said.

The outreach effort includes newspaper stories, cable TV messages and getting the word out to community agencies.

The center also keeps regular hours all summer, Monday-Friday, from 8 a.m.-4 p.m., after July 4.



Central High School AP Art History students, from left, Ta'quawn Daniels, Anna Hinman, Amanda Putnam, Caitlin Delaney, Noemi Pizarro and Elisandra Pizarro pose with teacher Michelle Cloutier, front.

Art for history's sake at Central

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

In its inaugural year, Advanced Placement Art History is etching its mark at Central High School.

The course, made possible through Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) and a privately funded grant, is currently offered only at Central. Students examine major forms of artistic expression from the ancient world to the present. They learn to look and analyze works of art within their historical context, and to articulate what they see or experience in a meaningful way. For students to enroll, prerequisites include ninth-grade world history and college prep art history.

"It's important for them to have a working knowledge of world history to be able to put different pieces in context and analyze them in-depth," said visual arts teacher Michele Cloutier, who teaches the AP class. "It's PowerPoint driven. We discuss the slides, the artists, the stylistic pieces. It's a very intense, fast-paced course."

Six students enrolled in the full-year course this year, which has allowed for a dynamic, personalized classroom environment.

"Watching their excitement and enthusiasm grow has been so rewarding," said Cloutier. "It's wonderful to see their interest in and retention of the information."

For a final project, students have a choice between a research-driven assignment and a hands-on artistic creation. For option one, they would be tasked with the responsibilities of creating a museum exhibit and choosing 20 pieces that best exemplify a certain period or genre of artwork. They would be required to research different works and defend why each would fit as part of the collection. For the second option, they would be assigned to create a two-part series of paintings based on a particular artist or style.

AP story: more courses

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Advanced Placement (AP) courses are on the rise in Springfield, thanks to a boost from the Massachusetts Math and Science Initiative, an AP training and incentive program.

Following a highly competitive application process, the Commonwealth, in partnership with Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, secured one of the first-ever awarded grants from the National Math and Science Initiative, Inc. (NMSI) to establish the Massachusetts branch. Initial funding for NMSI came from ExxonMobil, Dell and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Massachusetts was one of seven states selected in 2007 to receive the grant, which provides up to \$13.2 million over six years to recruit, train and reward teachers of AP classes in math, science and English.

The goal of the grant is to increase student enrollment in AP courses, as well as to improve student performance as reflected by an increase in the number of qualifying scores (3, 4 or 5 on a 1-5 scale). The program provides extensive training for AP and Pre-AP teachers, establishes AP lead teachers, demands additional student

preparation and provides performance-based financial incentives for students and teachers.

Under the leadership of Morton Orlov, president of the AP Training and Incentive Program in Massachusetts, 10 high schools were selected through a competitive process to participate in the program during the 2008-2009 school year, with the goal of implementing the program in 100 high schools by 2013 through the integration of regional development centers.

"I came into this role with the appreciation

that so many people are so very capable, if given the right opportunities," said Orlov. "Our job is to expand those opportunities for as many students as possible."

Springfield was the only district to have two high schools receive the grant — Central and the Renaissance School.

Orlov said the second cohort will include 14 recipients, one of which is Springfield High School of

Science and Technology.

"Essential to the success of this program was the selection of appropriate districts and schools," said Orlov. "The process was a competitive one and from a pool of 70 candidates, we narrowed it down to 10. Springfield presented two very good candidates,

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Research shows that kids who participate fully in AP classes are better prepared for success in college.

Stephen Mahoney
Renaissance High principal

GLOBAL LEARNERS

Springfield's IB Programme expands

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Springfield Public Schools is cultivating world-class learners, equipped with the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world.

The district was the first in the state, nearly a decade ago, to offer an International Baccalaureate (IB) programme in a public school – the High School of Commerce. The first U.S. school to ever offer the IB programme and award the first IB degree was the United Nations International School, with campuses in Manhattan and Queens, N.Y.

The school was founded by a group of United

Nations parents wanting to provide an international education for their children, while preserving their diverse cultural heritages. Today, its tuition ranges from \$21,000-24,000 per year. In Springfield, the same high-quality education is available to all students, at no cost.

“President (Barack) Obama talks about wanting every child to have access to a world-class education, and we’ve got it,” said Linda Tammi, assistant principal on special assignment for IB. “Our IB schools meet standards that are recognized worldwide.”

The International Baccalaureate Organization was founded in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1968 as a non-profit educational foundation. The

programmes are designed to foster academic excellence and international awareness.

“Years ago, I observed the IB programme in Europe and it was just beginning to move into the public schools,” said SPS Chief Academic Officer Dr. Ann Southworth, who was an early advocate of IB. “I thought it was outstanding and would be a wonderful opportunity for Springfield. Today’s society is becoming more and more global, and we need to prepare students for colleges from around the world.”

The district received federal grant funding through the Magnet Schools Assistance program in 1998 to establish an IB programme at Commerce. The school was officially authorized as an IB diploma school in 2001, following intensive training. The Diploma Programme is a demanding two-year program that meets the needs of highly motivated juniors and seniors and leads to a qualification that is recognized by leading universities around the world.

“It’s like getting a second, internationally recognized diploma,” said Tammi.

At the completion of the program, students are assessed through oral exercises in language subjects, projects, student portfolios, class presentations, practical laboratory work, mathematical investigations and artistic performances. To ensure the greatest degree of objectivity and reliability, the students’ grades are then reevaluated by the IB Organization.

“It’s more than just one exam; it’s a portfolio of real-world assessments over the two years,” said Tammi. “It’s a very strong academic



Kensington Avenue Magnet School IB second-graders pose in front of the school with Principal Margaret Thompson and teacher Regina Fortune.

program, completely aligning curriculum and assessments. Our teachers are trained to teach and evaluate at the IB level, and that level is one of the best there is to prepare students for a very competitive world.”

“It’s rewarding watching the kids rise up to a level they probably didn’t think they could even attain,” said John Piponidis, assistant principal at Commerce. “And when they come back feeling good about their education and their level of preparedness for college, it cements all of the feelings we have about the program.”

Though IB began as a single programme for internationally mobile students preparing for college, it has since grown into three programmes for students age 3-19. There are currently more than 706,000 IB students at 2,595 schools in 134 countries. In Springfield, the programme expanded to Kensington Avenue Magnet School in 2006. The elementary school, which is

celebrating its 100-year anniversary this year, reinvented its approach to teaching and learning to incorporate an international focus into daily lessons.

“It’s unique that we have such an innovative program at a 100-year-old school,” said Gail Manuel, IB coordinator at Kensington.

The Primary Years Programme at Kensington is designed to foster the development of the

whole child and provide a framework of academic and life skills. Teachers are challenged to uncover the experiences that children bring with them, and use this as the foundation to help students make sense of what they learn and to understand its relevance in their world.

“The inquiry model is the best way for children to learn,” said Manuel. “The more curious they are, the more they tend to absorb what they’re learning and succeed. Our goal is to take questions they have about the world, and give them more responsibility for their learning. We’re developing a very well-rounded student.”

The most recent IB component in Springfield is the Middle Years Programme, which completes the K-12 pipeline. The programme will be offered to students at Van Sickle Middle School and ninth- and 10th-graders at Commerce next school year. Program authorization is pending.

“Since 2003, we’ve been working to bring the Middle Years Programme to the district,” said Van Sickle Principal Cheryl DeSpir. “Eighteen months ago, we were visited by the IB Organization, and we’ve been perfecting the 6-10 model ever since. It’s a big deal to be creating a seamless IB programme.”

The Middle Years Programme will better prepare students to enter the Diploma Programme, while also helping them develop the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills necessary to participate actively and responsibly in a changing world through community service and environmental and social learning.



Van Sickle Middle School IB Humanities teacher Jennifer Miller works with Davasia Smallwood, left, and Linoshka Santiago.



Van Sickle IB Humanities students, front to back, from left, Michaela Carter and Edgar Rivera, Jonathan Nneji and Donovan Narvaez and Davasia Smallwood.



Q & A

with Brianna Johnson
Commerce Class of 2008

Brianna Johnson is a 2008 graduate of the High School of Commerce. She earned 23 college credits through the International Baccalaureate Programme, enough to qualify as a sophomore in her first year at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She is currently majoring in marketing and plans to graduate in 2011.

Q. What were your expectations going into the IB Diploma Programme at Commerce?

A. When I first got into the IB programme, I expected to be challenged and to learn a lot academically in order to be well prepared for college, however I did not anticipate how much it would enrich my high school experience or have such a large effect on my life in college.

Q. How rigorous was the programme?

A. The programme was very rigorous. I would say that completing all of the work and preparing for the final round of tests was one of the biggest challenges I have ever encountered, but I can also say that the end result was definitely worth all of the work.

Q. What did you find most rewarding?

A. The things I find most rewarding are not only the sense of accomplishment I felt when I realized I had achieved the diploma, but the fact that the IB programme really made me a part of a community in high school and helped me create a special bond with other IB students because of all of the time we spent together and the challenges we faced.

Q. How did the experience prepare you for college and beyond?

A. My IB experience prepared me for college in so many ways. From the programme, I gained skills in public speaking, was able to find a style and a voice for writing, and was also given a sense of how important it is to think outside of the box and on a more global scale. I have used all of these tools in my college education so far and I know that I will use them in my future career.

Q. What was your reaction when you realized you had enough credits to enroll in college as a sophomore?

A. It was amazing to find out that I had all of those credits. I thought I would have a few credits and maybe get a semester ahead, but I was not expecting the advisor at orientation to tell me that they had actually accepted all of my credits and were giving me a whole year. I was extremely happy and after that I began to make plans to graduate early.

Q. What are your career goals?

A. After college, I plan to go to law school and then work in the entertainment industry as an entertainment lawyer or agent.



High School of Commerce seniors and IB English students, from left, Keenan Sands, Arlyana Dalce-Bowie and Jasmine Rivera.

Just what the doctor ordered

Sci-Tech grad off to NY for residency

By RICH FAHEY

When Sammy Ayala graduates from UMass Medical School on June 6, he will carry the hopes and dreams of many people onto the podium as he accepts his diploma.

Ayala, 26, will hold with him the memories of a father he lost suddenly just 10 days after starting medical school, and the support and love of a mother who has spent 20 years as a nurse.

He will also share the dreams and aspirations of other Latino students who may never have thought becoming a doctor was a possibility.

Ayala will begin his 4-year residency in the Jacobi/Montefiore Emergency Medical Residency Program, affiliated with the Albert Einstein Medical School, in the Bronx, N.Y., on July 1. It ends an exhausting process in which he applied to 20 medical facilities and

was interviewed by 14.

"It was my first choice," he said. "It serves a large Latino population and it's in New York City near my wife's family." Ayala will be married to Jaclyn Eiges of Brooklyn May 3.

According to his mother, Ayala showed interest in a medical career at a very young age.

"He questioned his pediatrician about how long it takes to become a doctor," Mary Ayala said. "I gave him my stethoscope when he was 2 and he went around listening to the heartbeat of the other children."

Ayala frequently asked his mother, who works in the obstetrics unit at Baystate Medical Center, questions about delivering babies.

Still, his dream of becoming



Sammy Ayala will graduate from UMass Medical School in June.

a doctor was almost derailed by the death of his father.

"He loved his father very much," said Mary Ayala, who also has three daughters and another son. "He was devastated. He took two weeks off from medical school. Life was wonderful and then one of the pillars of his life tumbled. In the end, our faith pulled us through."

He returned to school and earned honors that semester.

Ayala attended Duggan Middle School and Sci-Tech High in Springfield, where he graduated in 2000 after excelling in the sciences. He took pre-med courses as an undergrad at Brown University.

He sees his future role in emergency medicine as serving as an advocate for patients, no matter how troubled or downtrodden they might be. He admits he likes the fast pace of emergency medicine. "I'm a high-octane type and I tend to function better when I'm busy," he said.

Mindful of his Puerto Rican background, he also sees himself as an advocate for patients who might not speak English, or might not have health insurance.



Zanetti Montessori teacher Peter Scaramuzzo had a book request funded by the Springfield Alumni Gift Project.

Graduates give Former students raise money for schools

By RICH FAHEY

A teacher at Kiley Middle School needs \$384 to buy flash drives that would allow her students to save the projects they are working on.

A teacher at Liberty Elementary School is hoping for \$539 to fund math center materials for 54 fourth-graders.

There's a good chance those teachers will get their wishes fulfilled, thanks to the Springfield Public Schools Alumni Gift Project.

The project was started in June 2008 by alumni from the former Classical High School, and has helped Springfield teachers obtain more than \$35,000 for classroom projects. Now alumni from other Springfield schools are joining to continue the success of this community-wide program.

The program leverages its fundraising with 50 percent matching funds for many projects from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Larry Derosé said the idea sprang up from the 50th reunion of the Classical High Class of 1957. There was about \$1,000 in funds remaining after the banquet and alumni decided to make a gift to the Springfield schools. Appeals to other members of the class upped that amount to \$10,000. Matching funds from corporate and philanthropic groups doubled that and other funds were raised. In deciding how to administer the funds it was raising, the group turned to donorchoose.org, a non-profit online charity that matches donors with students

and classrooms in need.

Now, in a section of the Web site dedicated to the Springfield schools, teachers can list information on how much money they need to purchase something or fund a program, and donors can choose to contribute directly to that program. The donor receives photos and thank you notes after the materials are delivered to the classroom.

Among the projects funded was Art is Essential, which provided 160 sturdy art sketch books that allowed for an art program for students at a Springfield public Montessori school.

The group's goal is to raise enough money in the next year or two for an endowment that would allow the project to

be both permanent and self-sustaining.

"We're hoping many alumni will make even a small contribution in the name of their favorite teacher," said Derosé, one of seven members of the Classical Class of '57 who have helped coordinate the effort. He said he has been heartened that, despite the economy, the interest in philanthropic efforts has remained high.

"You can be amazed at what \$200 or \$400 can do," said Derosé. "From the letters we got from students at Commerce about a project there, you would have thought we built them a whole new classroom."

For more information or to make a donation, visit www.donorchoose.org/Springfield.

“

We're hoping many alumni will make even a small contribution in the name of their favorite teacher.

Larry Derosé
Classical Class of '57

Striving for success

Literacy grant has been a big hit in Springfield

BY JESSICA BENSON

It all started with a longshot. School officials knew the odds were against them when they applied for a highly competitive \$16.6 million grant to participate in the Striving Readers literacy program for high school students. But Springfield was indeed one of eight districts in the country selected for the grant, along with larger cities such as Chicago and Portland, Ore.

Four years later, the program — a five-year research study — has been going so well, advocates are now looking to keep it even after the grant runs out.

“We’ve seen good results,” said Ann Ferriter, the chief implementation officer for the grant. “We’re ready to take it to the next level.”

Over the course of the grant, Springfield, which shares the money with Chicopee, is placing select high school students in special literacy classes. Information about the students’ progress is sent to Brown University’s Education Alliance, where the data is analyzed to determine how effective the classes are.

Students are selected for the program in the ninth grade if they are reading well below grade level. The targeted students are then placed in one of three programs: a class called Read 180, a class called Xtreme Reading, or a control group that follows the regular curriculum.

Should students not improve in the control group after one year, they are moved to one of the other literacy classes.

Though some schools in Springfield had used the



Sci-Tech students, from left, Lawrence Kilpatrick, Shameek Higgs and Marylia Malave participate in Read 180.

Read 180 class before, Xtreme Reading was a new course for the district. The first classes were held in the fall of 2006. The year before, when applying for the grant, few believed they would actually land the money to participate in the study.

“We knew there would be just monumental competition,” Ferriter said.

As the grant writer, Matt Rigney was confident, yet he was still thrilled when he heard the news that Springfield was selected.

“It was a wonderful feeling,” Rigney recalled.

Teachers hired for the program were randomly assigned to one of the courses. They were trained extensively and are constantly monitored to ensure they are sticking strictly to the planned curriculum.

The ongoing mentoring and professional development has been one of the bonuses for the teachers, Ferriter said.

“You have to do every piece of the model,” Ferriter said. “It is very scripted.”

Read 180, the course which had been in the district before, works especially well for students who have a difficult time sitting still, according to Ferriter. The class, named for the number of hours of instruction students receive over the course of the school year, is broken up into 20-minute segments. One portion is spent in a traditional classroom lesson, another is spent on computers taking quizzes and using literacy-based software, while a third is used for curling up with a book of the student’s choice.

Rigney said the district can hold onto the other course, Xtreme Reading, after the grant ends, with no additional cost to the district. Read 180, on the other hand, will take some funding to pay for materials and technology.

Rigney is working on coming up with ways to continue the program without extra funding, but it will depend on how much support he can muster. “It needs 100 percent buy-in from teachers and principals,” he said.

And that will depend on how effective the courses are determined to be. Though the most comprehensive data won’t be available until after the study is complete and the analysis is finished, there is anecdotal evidence in support of the program. It seems to be working, based on what Ferriter and Rigney hear from students.



Read 180 students, from left, Josue Irizarry and Jose Ocasio work on computers at Sci-Tech.

Summer program aims to get students back on track

BY RICH FAHEY

This time, summer means a second chance.

Springfield Public Schools students in grades 5 and 8 who are deemed at risk of failing will be spending five weeks this summer in a mandatory transition program aimed at keeping them on track in middle and high school.

The schools recently mailed out letters to the families of students who are just getting by, alerting them they must attend the summer program as a condition for promotion.

“By now, students in grade 5 and grade 8 have gotten those letters,” said Mary Ellen Baron, senior administrator for extended

instructional time.

Baron said while some students may technically be passing, they may have gotten Ds or failed the MCAS, triggering alarms. Students who received letters are performing below average in their academic grades for ELA/Reading and Mathematics and are not meeting grade level standards based on MCAS scores below 220 in both subject areas.

Just getting a letter does not mean that a student will have to attend. District Formative Assessments (DFA) mid-year results (January-February) are reviewed to confirm that the student is still not meeting grade level standards. If the mid-year score on the DFA or

third and fourth marking period grades show substantial progress towards proficiency, the student will be removed from the summer school list.

“If they can bring their grades up, they won’t be on the list,” said Baron.

There is a lot at stake. Students who repeat a grade, according to research, are as much as 10 times more likely to drop out, and retention has become a last resort for most schools.

The Springfield School Committee passed

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These are students who in the past would have ordinarily been promoted but who were at great risk of failing.

Mary Ellen Baron

the current policy in February 2007.

“These are students who in the past would have ordinarily been promoted but who were at great risk of failing,” said Baron.

The summer sessions involve English language arts and math and run for four hours each weekday from June 29-July 31. Students in grade 8 attend at the

high schools they will be attending that fall.

Fifth-graders will attend at one of the seven elementary schools.

Latino students at Forest Park learn Spanish language and culture

LATINO HERITAGE: from Page 1

the third generation, only 17 percent speak Spanish fluently, and by the fourth generation, it drops to 5 percent.

Felix-Fournier said the program aims to combat the perception of some students that being bilingual is a bad thing. "It's a tremendous advantage," she said.

Research done at Brown University and the Centre for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C., claims that, among several other benefits, learning a second language at an early age:

- ◆ has a positive effect on intellectual growth;
- ◆ enriches and enhances a child's mental development;
- ◆ leaves students with more flexibility in thinking, greater sensitivity to language, and a better ear for listening; and
- ◆ improves a child's understanding of his/her native language.

About 60 Latino students at Forest Park are studying Spanish and an accompanying cultural component. "They are happy to be

there," said Felix-Fournier, who noted that discipline and behavior issues with the students have eased.

She said she noticed the same thing when she taught Spanish to students of Latino heritage at Commerce High. "There was a lot of resistance at the beginning," she said. "As they learned, there was less."

The program at Forest Park also contains a cultural component. Because Latino students can hail from South America, the Caribbean, or Mexico, the cultural component is broad-based.

"It creates a sense of self-esteem," said Felix-Fournier. "We have to help them know who they are."

Another advantage is that students who begin their study of Spanish earlier can then advance to an AP course at the high school level.

Felix-Fournier is hoping to expand the program at the middle-school level.

"I am hoping other principals will observe the program at Forest Park and want to get involved," she said.



Forest Park Middle School Spanish heritage teacher Maria Lopez makes a point in her class.



David Crosse went to Washington to present a YMCA Congressional Champions Award to U.S. Rep. Richard Neal. At right is Springfield YMCA Executive Director James Morton.

Crosse roads lead to YMCA for Commerce student

CROSSE: from Page 1

change. He recently watched a confident Crosse deliver a 5-minute speech in the hearing room of the Senate Judiciary Committee at the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., before giving one of four 2009 YMCA Congressional Champions Award to U.S. Rep. Richard Neal, a 40-year member of the Springfield YMCA.

"Not bad for a 19-year-old giving his first public speech in front of about 100 people, including several Congressmen and their staffs," said Morton.

Crosse said he worked hard on his speech and wasn't really nervous before delivering it.

"I was excited, but not nervous, beforehand," he said. "Then about the time I got to my third flash card, I had a hot and cold flash and my knees started to wobble, but I kept my composure and finished the speech."

Crosse attributed his success to the communication skills he learned during discussions with many members at the YMCA.

"Some of them I talked to for 90 minutes or more and learned their life stories," he said. "I was probably distracting them from their workouts, but they didn't mind."

Among the YMCA members he has had a chance to learn from have been Neal, Hampden County Sheriff Michael J. Ashe Jr. and Henry M. Thomas III, president of the Urban League of Springfield.

"You never can tell who's going to come through the doors of the Y," he said. "It's a place where the members are loyal and have been there 30 years or more. And it's not just a gym for them. A lot of them come to socialize and visit friends."

Morton said the internship has been a win-win proposition. "It's been a wonderful

experience for David and us. You never know how these situations will work out. We opened the door, but David had to step through the door and take advantage of it. We were happy we could make the YMCA available as a resource."

Along the way, Crosse has earned YMCA certifications in first aid, CPR and strength and conditioning. Because the work he is doing counts as an elective subject, he keeps a journal about it. He interacts with Y members in the fitness center every day.

"After three months, I see a completely different young man," said Morton. "He walks taller, he's more engaging and approachable. He smiles easily and is considerably happier."

Ingraham said teachers and staff at Commerce have also noticed the difference in Crosse.

"When he returns, they recognize a whole new degree of maturity and responsibility, based on his work at the YMCA," said Ingraham. "He still has to meet the basic school requirements but this has allowed him to grow in a new way, exactly what he needed to move forward."

Crosse said that when he started at the YMCA in December, he thought he might want a career as a personal trainer or working in the fitness field. His goals have changed, however.

"I'd like to attend community college and study political science and economics," he said. "I'd like to get involved in the community, maybe volunteer somewhere."

He said he realizes he didn't always take advantage of opportunities in the past. "I didn't do things the right way. I had resources but I didn't make use of them. This experience has opened up doors to what's out there."

Cornerstones: reading, writing and thinking

By JESSICA BENSON

At first, Lynch Elementary School Principal Tara Christian Clark thought the Cornerstone Initiative was just another program promising to increase literacy among her students. She had her doubts it would work.

But, after almost two years with the initiative, Clark has become a believer.

"The major goal of Cornerstone is to read and write and think critically," she said. "I really believe Cornerstone is helping us achieve this."

Lynch is one of several schools to benefit from Cornerstone, which first came to Springfield seven years ago. The first two schools to join, Freedman and Harris elementary schools, are now at the point where they can help other schools such as Lynch take part in the initiative.

Harris Principal Deborah Lantaigne said she appreciates anything that can get her students to attain higher literacy standards.

"Any kind of support that makes things

better and helps strengthen teachers is always a good thing," she said.

In Springfield, the Cornerstone Initiative, funded by the New York Institute for Special Education, started out with just two schools so it could establish itself before spreading to all schools in the city.

Both of the original schools have now attained "foundation status," meaning they can continue the system without further assistance from Cornerstone. They are also able to serve as models for schools that are newer to Cornerstone.

The process begins with a review of the school, when experts from the institute go into the classroom and evaluate how the school teaches literacy. A list of goals and objectives is then put together to help the school improve its performance. Schools keep their own curriculum while making changes to teaching methods as recommended by the review.

One of the first changes made at the Lynch School was the creation of spaces for children

to sit comfortably and read books. All teachers established reading corners in their classrooms, said Clark, who added the process is also about making schools re-think the way they educate children.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Alan J. Ingram said the Cornerstone Initiative is an example of a model partnership. "Cornerstone has invested time and resources to help us address the literacy gap in a meaningful way," he said.

Willette Johnson, the area improvement officer for Zone 2, which includes the Lynch School, agrees that everyone in the school has to be on board with Cornerstone in order for it to work.

"The principal has to buy in; the teachers have to buy in," she said.

When they do, teachers receive many advantages from the program. Professional development is available, as is support from mentors placed directly in the schools by Cornerstone.

Johnson said the support from Cornerstone is what she likes the most about the initiative.

"That makes a big difference, because they don't have to wonder where they can get help," Johnson said. "They're working with the teachers, like coaches."

And now some of the teachers are able to act like coaches themselves. Starting two years ago, educators at the Harris School worked to help other schools in Springfield set up their own Cornerstone plans.

Now in her seventh year with Cornerstone, Lantaigne says she can see the difference in her students. They are very articulate when describing what they have read, showing they are learning to not only be able to read, but to understand what they are reading.

Clark says she's seeing the changes, too, even though her school has been doing it for less than two years. "There's more emphasis on writing here," she said. "Kids are really becoming true literary individuals."

Young Latino Artists EXHIBIT

The Young Latino Artists' exhibit highlighted artwork that was created by Springfield Public Schools high school art students of Latino heritage. The exhibit, which was held at the Amy H. Carberry Fine Arts Gallery at Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) from Feb. 6 through March 7, was part of a collaboration between SPS and STCC, which also coincided with the college's cultural heritage celebration that is held every February.

The exhibit, coordinated by Julie Jaron, SPS director of visual and performing arts, featured drawings, paintings, graphics and three-dimensional works of art. It was made possible in part by funding from the STCC Student Activities Center. A reception for the high school students was held in February.

The student artists who participated included: Esquel Arocho, Aaron Cabrera, William Duval, Joshuan Rosario, Jobanny Santana and Angel Santiago (Springfield Academy High School); Monica Diaz, Elisandra Pizzaro, Kristen Ramirez, Antonio Solivan, Carmello Solivan, Stephanie Valentin, Juan Vamilli and Tatiana Velez (Central High School); Juan Bruno, Lydia Coll, Manaury Esquide, Andre Gonzalez, Lopez Gustavo, Mejias Isamal, Hector Laboy, Jailene Lopez, Joselyne Matos, Ashley Paulus, Pedro Perez, Beatriz Rivera, Franchesly Rivera, Greysha Marie Rivera, Luis Rodriguez, Vernice Sanchez, Stephanie Santiago, Damaris Torres and Jonathan Valentin (Putnam Vocational Technical High School); Carmen Buttafuoco, Tiffany Lozada and Jasmine Rivera (High School of Commerce).



Artwork by Angel Santiago.



Visitors view the Young Latino Artists exhibit, comprised of work created by Springfield Public Schools students.



Elementary Schools

Balliet

The Hampden Bank Charitable Foundation donated \$25,000 to the Thomas M. Balliet Elementary School to purchase computers for each classroom for research, diagnostic assessment and the Accelerated Reading program.

DeBerry

On April 4, members of Springfield's faith-based community held a benefit gospel concert in support of the DeBerry Outdoor Classroom Project. The concert was spearheaded by Pastor J.P. Morgan of the Holy Trinity Church of God In Christ. CDs and DVDs of the performance are on sale at the school.

Ells

Margaret C. Ells School is working with the BEST Oral Health Program to ensure all Ells School children and families learn about oral health. The program includes full dental service at the school.

Freedman

In January, Freedman Elementary School presented a check for \$321 to support the food bank Open Pantry of Springfield. President Barack Obama inspired the Student Council to launch the fundraiser through his request for a renewed commitment to community service.

Freedman teacher Jean Duperre has been named a 2009 Yale Distinguished Music Educator. Dupre is one of 50 winners nationwide of the award, which recognizes teachers who transform the lives of students through their professional accomplishments, respect of peers and classroom experience.

Harris

Harris students raised \$2,005 to support Baystate Children's Hospital. The school held a grade-by-grade fundraising competition, which was won by the third grade.

Indian Orchard

Indian Orchard Elementary (IOE) School was scheduled to play its last basketball game on April 15 at Sumner Avenue School. IOE started an intracity basketball program four years ago to offer its fourth- and fifth-grade students an opportunity to develop good character values and improve their fundamental basketball skills.

Julie Piepho began a basketball program at IOE during prep time, where the fourth- and fifth-grade homerooms played each other. There was a tournament and the winners and runners-up received trophies for their accomplishments. This program is in its third year.

Johnson

The Japanese art form of origami, pyramid building in Egypt and the Ghanaian game of Jenga were a few of the activities highlighted at Rebecca M. Johnson School's multicultural math night in March.

Kensington

Kensington Magnet School is celebrating its 100th birthday, culminating with a ceremony at the school May 8. The centennial celebration got underway with a fine arts exhibit on March 27 at the Indian Orchard Artists Mill.

The special occasion will also be marked by a commemorative centennial brick fundraiser, which will allow alumni, community members and other education supporters to purchase a brick to be engraved with wording of their choice for \$50. The engraved bricks will be used to form a platform for the school's flagpole. Order forms will be available at the school May 8.

The event on May 8 will begin at 9:30



a.m. at the school, 31 Kensington Ave., and will include the burying of a time capsule, remarks from a 1930s alumni, student presentations and a barbeque

Lincoln

America's Foundation for Chess has recognized Lincoln student Chad Toussaint as a "First Mover." Each quarter, the foundation recognizes two students nationwide who are enrolled in chess programs at their schools and transfer lessons learned in chess to other subjects.

Pottenger

On June 3, students at the Mary O. Pottenger School will present Arts across the Curriculum Exhibition Night from 6-7 p.m. at the school. Students will share their art projects inspired by learning in math, science, social studies, reading and writing.

Talmadge

Talmadge Elementary School recently received four grants for the library media center. Grantors include: the Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation (LCEF); MassMutual; Links to Libraries; and Picturing America.

Middle Schools

Duggan

On May 1, Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier and acclaimed author from Sierra Leone, will address some sixth-grade English language arts students.

Kennedy

On April 4, Kennedy Middle School served breakfast and awarded certificates to approximately 100 students who participated in an eight-week after-school and Saturday MCAS preparation course and their parents. The school pitted homerooms against each other to see which could answer the most MCAS questions correctly.

Kiley

On April 7, Kiley Middle School "Seven Sea" students performed poetry on Ancient Greece and delivered public service announcements about drug prevention at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The group performed before an audience of 50 college students.

High Schools

Commerce

On March 26, the High School of Commerce held its annual Medical Careers Fair. Seniors in the medical academy displayed tri-fold boards and brochures, and played the role of the medical professions they researched and are pursuing. Each student had an oral and visual presentation for the many visitors to the fair, including faculty and staff, community members and more than 600 Commerce students.

On May 6, Commerce will host a career festival. Career opportunities will not be the only attraction during this full-day event. A live helicopter landing is planned, and students can also take part in dunking booths, golf games, a barbeque and more.

Susan V. Mason, a math instructional leadership specialist, is the recipient of the prestigious MATHWEST Award. The Association of Teachers of Mathematics in Western Massachusetts recognized Mason for her contributions to both the local school district and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Districtwide

Keep Springfield Beautiful

Students from several schools will volunteer for Keep Springfield Beautiful, a large-scale cleanup effort being planned for May 2. More than 3,500 volunteers will remove trash from dump sites and streets and graffiti from the city's 17 neighborhoods. To register a group of students from your school, contact Jenni Manfredi at 413-750-2000 ext. 1849.

Spelling bee

On March 5, 30 fourth- and fifth-grade students showcased their word skill in the first SPS Tri-School Spelling Bee, between Rebecca Johnson, Homer Street and William N. DeBerry schools. DeBerry's Jonathan Hayles won first place; Suraji Omuru of Rebecca Johnson came in second; and Jennette Gonzalez of DeBerry was third.

Business seminar for youth

Students age 7-15 are invited to attend the Massachusetts Latino Chamber of Commerce third annual Business Seminar for Youth April 21-25 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at 1655 Main St.

Mass. appeal: Abdul-Qaadir ends career as leading scorer

By Rich Fahey



Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir

For Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir of the New Leadership Charter School, playing Div. 1 college basketball next year for Memphis University might be a little bit of a letdown. After all, this year, as a senior at New Leadership, she: averaged 42 points a game in her fifth year as a varsity starter, giving her 3,070 points for her career, making her the first male or female in state high school history to score more than 3,000 points in a career and easily eclipsing Rebecca Lobo's state record of 2,710; was named the Gatorade Massachusetts High School Girls Basketball Player of the year for 2008-09, the fourth from Western Mass. to win the award and the second straight after Abdul-Qaadir's best friend, Felicia Barron, won the award at Central last year; is ranked No. 1 in her class.

The only downer for the 5-3 guard came when her New Leadership team lost, 78-57, to Sabis in the first round of the MIAA Division 3 Western Mass. tournament, despite Abdul-Qaadir's 51 points.

In addition to drawing the attention of the local and regional media, she was covered by Sports Illustrated and ESPN.



Zanetti Montessori Magnet School student Sabion Barnett, shown with teacher Mary VanLeeuwen, was misidentified in the Winter 2008 edition of *The Springfield Educator*.

Achievement comes first at Commonwealth Priority Schools

By Meaghan Casey

Springfield Public Schools is making student achievement a top priority at its 22 Commonwealth Priority Schools.

A Commonwealth Priority School, of which there are 204 statewide, is any school that has a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability status of "corrective action" or "restructuring" in English language arts (ELA) and/or mathematics. The district has received state funding to support the implementation of improvement plans and related strategies at these schools in order to improve student achievement.

To support the schools in a more unified and effective way, Superintendent Dr. Alan J. Ingram has created a District Instructional

Leadership Team, comprised of the chief schools officer, chief information and instructional technology officer, chief academic officer, area improvement officers, academic directors, professional development staff, chief grants manager, director of guidance and chief of pupil services.

"The team works collaboratively around curriculum and instruction and other programs and services provided to the schools," said Willette Johnson, area improvement officer, Zone 2. "We especially try to ensure that principals and teams in Commonwealth Priority Schools have all of the necessary resources they need to be successful."

Johnson says the most important steps on the road to improvement include: creating data-

driven school improvement plans; offering appropriate professional development opportunities for school leaders and staff; identifying best practices in instructional strategies; yielding data through assessments to ensure that students are being taught at their instructional level; unifying staff members to reach goals and work towards the vision; monitoring student achievement and implementing appropriate interventions to close learning gaps; and supporting strong, informed leadership.

The district has also committed to placing highly qualified instructional leadership specialists and teacher leaders in each of the Commonwealth Priority Schools to support ELA and math instructional areas. These leaders

facilitate professional development meetings, consultations with teachers, classroom demonstrations and modeling, and assessment. Commonwealth Priority Schools in Springfield include: Boland Elementary, Bowles Elementary, Brightwood Elementary, Brookings K-8, Brunton Elementary, Chestnut Accelerated Middle, High School of Commerce, Duggan Middle, Forest Park Middle Freedman Elementary, Gerena Community School, Harris Elementary, Homer Street Elementary, Kennedy Middle, Kiley Middle, Lincoln Elementary, Pottenger Elementary, Putnam Vocational Technical High, High School of Science and Technology, Springfield Academy for Excellence, Van Sickle Middle and White Street Elementary.

SPRINGFIELD DIRECTORY SCHOOLS

Elementary Schools

- Balliet**
Gwen Page, Principal
111 Seymour Ave., 01109
413-787-7446
- Beal**
Linda Fenlason, Principal
285 Tiffany St., 01108
413-787-7544
- Boland**
Thomas O'Brien Jr., Principal
426 Armory St., 01104
413-750-2511
- Bowles**
Luisa Rivera, Principal
24 Bowles Park, 01104
413-787-7334
- Brightwood**
Shalimar Colon, Principal
471 Plainfield St., 01107
413-787-7238
- Brunton**
Darcia Milner, Principal
1801 Parker St., 01128
413-787-7444
- DeBerry**
Mary Worthy, Principal
670 Union St., 01109
413-787-7582
- Dorman**
Shannon Collins, Principal
20 Lydia St., 01109
413-787-7554
- Dryden Memorial**
Ann Dryden, Principal
190 Surrey Rd., 01118
413-787-7248
- Ells**
Jose Irizarry, Principal
319 Cortland St., 01109
413-787-7345
- Freedman**
Gloria Williams, Principal
90 Cherokee Dr., 01109
413-787-7443
- Gerena**
Analida Munera, Principal
200 Birnie Ave., 01107
413-787-7320
- Glenwood**
Rhonda Stowell, Principal
50 Morison Ter., 01104
413-787-7527
- Glickman**
Martha Kelliher, Principal
120 Ashaland Ave., 01119
413-750-2756
- Harris**
Deborah Lantaigne, Principal
58 Hartford Terrace, 01118
413-787-7254
- Homer**
Linda Wilson, Principal
43 Homer St., 01109
413-787-7526

- Indian Orchard**
Deborah Beglane, Principal
95 Milton St., 01151
413-787-7255
- Johnson**
Francine Pina-Council, Principal
55 Catharine St., 01109
413-787-6687
- Kensington**
Margaret Thompson, Principal
31 Kensington Ave., 01108
413-787-7522
- Liberty**
John Doty, Principal
962 Carew St., 01104
413-787-7299
- Lincoln**
Diane Gagnon, Principal
732 Chestnut St., 01107
413-787-7314
- Lynch**
Tara Clark, Principal
315 No. Branch Pwky., 01119
413-787-7250
- Milton Bradley**
Beverly Brown, Principal
22 Mulberry St., 01105
413-787-7475
- Pottenger**
Valerie Williams, Principal
1435 Carew St., 01104
413-787-7266
- Sumner Avenue**
Lisa Babowski, Principal
45 Sumner Ave., 01108
413-787-7430
- Talmadge**
Elizabeth Crowley, Principal
1395 Allen St., 01118
413-787-7249
- Walsh**
Mary Ellen Petrucelli, Principal
50 Empress Ct., 01129
413-787-7448
- Warner**
Ann Stennet, Principal
493 Parker St., 01129
413-787-7258
- Washington**
Kathleen Sullivan, Principal
141 Washington St., 01108
413-787-7551
- White Street**
Geraldine Barrett, Principal
300 White St., 01108
413-787-7543
- Brookings**
Terry Powe, Principal
Hancock St., 01105
413-787-7200
- Zanetti**
Sandra Andrew, Principal
59 Howard St., 01105
413-787-7400

Middle Schools

- Chestnut**
Anthony Davila, Principal
355 Plainfield St., 01107
413-750-2333
- Duggan**
Jonathan Swan, Principal
1015 Wilbraham Rd., 01109
413-787-7410
- Forest Park**
Bonnie Osgood, Principal
46 Oakland St., 01108
413-787-7420
- Kennedy**
Bonnie Elliston, Principal
1385 Berkshire Ave., 01151
413-787-7510
- Kiley**
Kenneth Luce, Principal
180 Cooley St., 01128
413-787-7240
- STEM**
Andrea Lewis, Principal
60 Alton St., 01109
413-787-6750
- Van Sickle**
Cheryl DeSpirt, Principal
1170 Carew St., 01104
413-750-2887

High Schools

- Central**
Richard Stoddard, Principal
1840 Roosevelt Ave., 01109
413-787-7085
- Commerce**
Stephen Collins, Principal
415 State St., 01105
413-787-7220
- Putnam**
Kevin McCaskill, Principal
1300 State St., 01109
413-787-7424
- Renaissance**
Stephen Mahoney, Principal
1170 Carew St., 01104
413-750-2929
- Sci-Tech**
Ira Brown, Principal
1250 State St., 01109
413-750-2000

Alternative SAFE schools

- Springfield Academy for Excellence**
Alex Gillat, Principal
413-787-6990
- Springfield Academy K-5**
Daniel Moriarty, Assistant Principal
34 Nye St., 01104
413-886-5100

- Springfield Academy 6-8**
Rhonda Jacobs, Assistant Principal
118 Alden St., 01109
413-787-7261
- Springfield Academy 9-12**
Walter Welch, Assistant Principal
90 Berkshire St., 01151
413-787-7036
- Recovery 9-12**
Michael Ellis, Assistant Principal
334 Franklin St.,
413-750-2484

- Early College High School**
Susan Gallagher, Assistant Principal
Holyoke Community College
413-552-2176
- Gateway to College**
Denise Calderwood, Director
Holyoke Community College
413-552-2370
- SAFE Middle 6-8**
Nancy Ferriter, Assistant Principal
140A Wilbraham Ave., 01109
413-787-7284
- SAFE High School 9-12**
Dwight Hall, Principal
140A Wilbraham Ave., 01109
413-787-7285

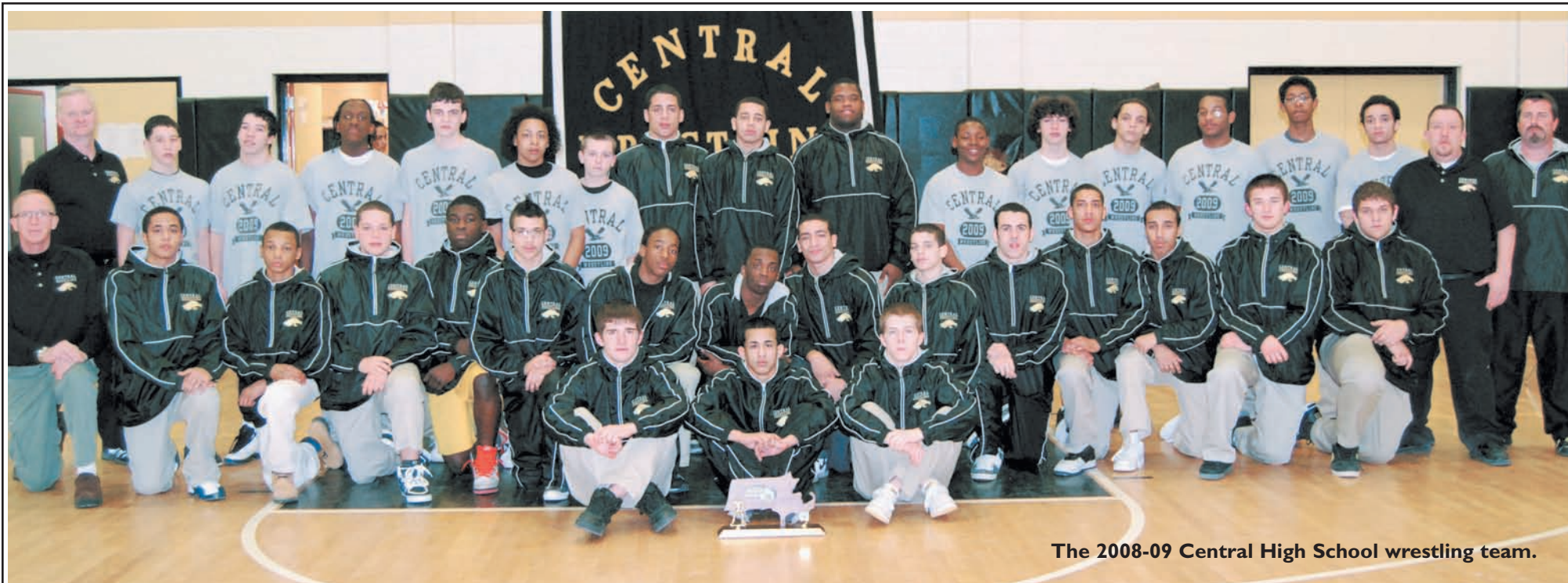
2009-10 SCHOOL CALENDAR

August		
24-27	Mon-Thurs	Teacher work days
28	Friday	Convocation
31	Monday	Schools begin - Grades 1-12
	Monday	Kindergarten screening begins
September		
4	Friday	Kindergarten screening ends
7	Monday	Schools closed –Labor Day
8	Tuesday	Kindergarten students begin
9	Wednesday	All pre-school students begin
October		
12	Monday	Schools closed –Columbus Day
November		
11	Wednesday	Schools closed –Veteran’s Day
25	Wednesday	Schools closed –Thanksgiving vacation
30	Monday	Schools reopen
December		
22	Tuesday	Last day before holiday vacation; dismissal covered by bulletin.
January		
4	Monday	Schools reopen
18	Monday	Schools closed –Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February		
15-19	Mon-Fri	Schools close for midwinter vacation
22	Monday	Schools reopen
April		
2	Friday	Schools closed – Good Friday
19-23	Mon-Fri	Schools close for spring vacation
26	Monday	Schools reopen
May		
31	Monday	Schools closed – Memorial Day
June		
22	Tuesday	End of school year; dismissal covered by bulletin.

Note: Calendar includes five days off for inclement weather. If fewer than five days are taken, calendar will be adjusted accordingly.

SPORTS

THE SPRINGFIELD EDUCATOR



The 2008-09 Central High School wrestling team.

Wrestling with success

Central High grapplers finish second in the state

BY RICH FAHEY

The Central High School wrestling team had handily defeated Framingham during the regular season, but in the final of the MIAA Div. 1 team tournament, beating the Flyers proved a bridge too far for the Golden Eagles.

Handicapped by the loss of three wrestlers who had beaten their Framingham opponents in the earlier match, Central lost, 29-20, in the rematch, falling just short of winning a state championship. Ruben Gonzalez broke his leg in the MIAA individual tournament and two other Central wrestlers were declared ineligible.

The Golden Eagles had won the Western Mass. Div. 1 title to advance to the state semifinals, where they beat Bridgewater-Raynham before losing to Framingham.

Central Coach Darby McLaughlin praised his wrestlers for a great season and said the experience gained by those

wrestlers who moved up to take the place of the other wrestlers will pay dividends next year.

"A lot of credit goes to the kids in the JV program who stepped up," said McLaughlin. "They'll all be coming back next year with experience in pressure situations under their belts."

This was the second time Central finished as state runner-up in the MIAA team tournament. In the four-year history of the tourney, the Golden Eagles have a 2006 state title to go along with their two second-place showings and a loss in the state

semifinals.

Daniel Salgado, Manny Ocasio-Ramos, Anthony Brooks, Jonathan Perez, Alex Ocasio and Josh Moore won their matches in the state final.

"Our wrestlers, especially our seniors, wrestled hard when they were competing individually and just as hard when they were wrestling for each other as a team," said McLaughlin, who completed his seventh season as the Central coach.

He said the work the team put in training, conditioning and

practicing went a long way towards achieving its success.

"You set a goal for yourself and then you work as hard as you can," said McLaughlin. "It makes us a better team when there's another wrestler breathing down your neck, trying to take your spot."

He said he expects Central to be back knocking on the door next season.

"You need some luck to win a championship — everything has to fall into place," he said. "We'll try again next year."

Central's Mike Ernst (in black), competed against Chris DeLuca, a state champion from Longmeadow.

