



This expedition leads to learning

ELS model a success in Springfield

BY RICH FAHEY

An educational group that describes its methods as “holistic” and which aims to treat “the whole student” is continuing to expand its successful six-year partnership with Springfield Public Schools.

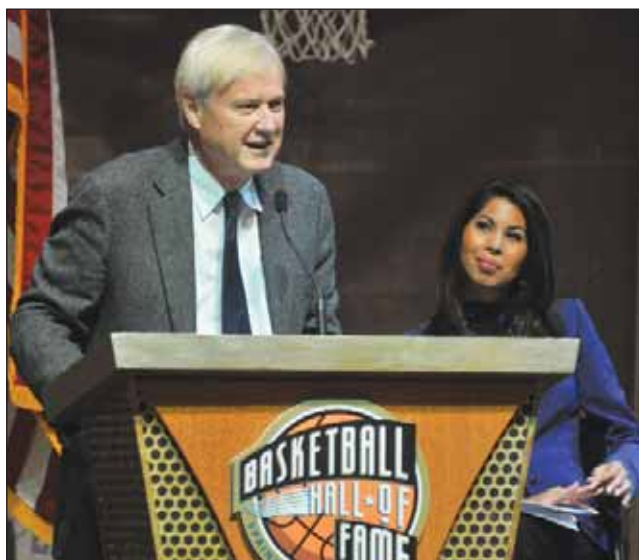
Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound (ELS) helped found the Grade 6-12 Renaissance School with the aid of a Gates Foundation grant. It has also worked with the Zanetti Montessori School, the Beal, Pottenger and Brookings schools, and the Duggan Middle School.

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Beal School arts enrichment first-graders, from left, Blake Perry, Patrick Murphy, Kofi Agyei-Yeboah, Trenton Hollis and Jordan Decoteau participate in the morning meeting.

Playing HARBALL with literacy

MSNBC's Chris Matthews addresses Springfield parents at the Basketball Hall of Fame.



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Closing the gap

NEA grant would be used to improve student achievement

BY RICH FAHEY

Everyone involved in Springfield Public Schools – parents, students, teachers – has something at stake in the effort to raise test scores, and to close the achievement gap for low-income and minority students.

The differences of opinion come when stakeholders are deciding on the best way to do it. The educators who are members of the Springfield Education Association think they can be part of the solution, and the SEA and its state

and national partners are putting their money and their resources where their mouths are.

The SEA and the Springfield Public Schools, using a \$50,000 planning grant from the National Education Association Foundation, are collaborating on a proposal to demonstrate how they will work together to raise test scores and close the achievement gap.

There is a lot at stake. Springfield is one of five districts competing for a \$1.25 million

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Creating a culture of excellence



Dr. Alan J. Ingram

If we are to create a culture of educational excellence here in Springfield, there ought to be a few things we can learn from the educational success and failures of one of the world's oldest civilizations — China.

That was my thought process when I decided to join 400

American educators representing 40 states for a trip to China, where we would spend eight days visiting schools, meeting with educational leaders and generally soaking up the culture.

The trip, which ran from June 22-30, was my first one to China and the up close view of this ancient civilization and its efforts to modernize its educational structure inspired and energized me for my work here in Springfield.

There were remarkable differences. Once Chinese students reach ninth grade, for example, they are required to pass a test in order to move up to the next levels of

education (high school and college). And public education does not equal a free education in China, where students at all grade levels are required to pay fees for materials, and tuition is required for students in grades nine and above.

And there were similarities. Like the United States, China struggles with issues of access to quality education for all and equity among schools, regardless of their location in a wealthy or indigent province.

In addition to learning what has and has not worked for the Chinese educational structure, I experienced a great awakening during my visit. I arrived in China steeped in my own misconceptions about the communist country. I expected the China displayed to the world decades ago, a closed society preoccupied only with itself. Instead, what I found was a culture that values globalization and diversity; an open society whose teachers become easily excited by the prospect of partnering with Springfield Public Schools to teach our students about their culture and learn more about ours; and a culture that recognizes the value of hard work.

No, this was not the China I thought I knew 10, 20, 30 years ago and I came to learn that

their transformation was not an accident but a deliberate goal toward progress. It reminded me very much of our vision of creating a culture of educational excellence here in Springfield. There is much work ahead of us, yet we will take time to celebrate our accomplishments along the way.

This season, we applaud the five schools that met the state's rigorous requirement for progress in both English Language Arts and Math on the 2009 MCAS. Those schools are: Van Sickle, Lincoln, Lynch, Kensington and Boland. The hard work and accomplishments of these schools should inspire all of us.

I learned a great deal during my trip to China and I saw a lot. But as the 10 days came and went, I found one idea swirling in my mind, day after day.

It's the thought I brought back home as we, as a community, execute the district's strategic plan: If China as a country can remake itself, then Springfield Public Schools can do the same.

Dr. Alan J. Ingram is superintendent of schools.

Super experience

Harvard intern gets an administrative education from Dr. Ingram

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

For six months, Harvard doctoral student Almudena Abeyta is walking in the shoes of Springfield Superintendent Dr. Alan J. Ingram, shadowing his every move. But Abeyta has made some remarkable footprints during her own career — touching the lives of children in

the public schools of Albuquerque (N.M.) and Boston, and orphanages in Mexico and Russia.

Abeyta, who was raised in New Mexico, earned her bachelor's degree in communication and journalism at the University of New Mexico. After a year of pursuing a career in the field of communications, she discovered her true calling as an educator.

"I was volunteering to teach Sunday school at the time, and I really enjoyed teaching," she said. "At that point in my



Almudena Abeyta

life, I also wanted to be a missionary and I traveled abroad, building orphanages. I was so touched. I knew it was my mission to be the voice and advocate for children who aren't as privileged, giving them the opportunity to

reach their full potential."

Motivated by that passion, Abeyta went on to teach at a private school in Santa Fe before joining the Albuquerque Public Schools for three years. She taught kindergarten and first grade.

"The little ones are full of joy," she said. "To take them from barely knowing how to hold a pencil or what an 'A' looks like and sounds like to reading is huge. That was probably the best part about teaching for me."

In 2004, Abeyta earned her master's in administration at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and was appointed principal of the McKay K-8 School in East Boston. She is currently in her second year as a doctoral student in Harvard's Urban Superintendents Program. The program is a rigorous course of study designed for educators to build upon their own experience through coursework, an internship and a dissertation. For her six-month internship, which began Aug. 6, Abeyta was assigned to Springfield.

"It's unique because you can be sent anywhere, from Texas to San Francisco," said Abeyta, who was thrilled not to have to uproot her family, which includes her husband and 10-year-old daughter, a student in Boston Public Schools. "I love being in the same state. The context is the same and there are so many similarities between Boston and Springfield."

Ingram, in his second year as superintendent, is serving as Abeyta's mentor, teacher and role model.

"During the first two months, it's the shadow phase — getting to know the climate, culture and daily life of the superintendent," said Abeyta. "Moving forward I'll be taking on assignments, focusing some of my attention on English Language Learners (ELL)."

She says the experience has been eye-opening so far.

"As a principal, you're only concerned about how things impact your school," she said. "As a superintendent, you're looking at everything system-wide. You have to think about how the decisions you make and the initiatives you roll out affect everyone."

At the completion of her internship in January, Abeyta will focus her attention on

her dissertation. She is tackling the topic of succession planning.

"In school districts, it's often a rotating carousel with good leaders getting moved," she said. "It's important to develop leadership from within. We need leaders to ask themselves 'Who am I raising up to take my place?'"

Upon successfully completing her dissertation, Abeyta hopes to pursue a position as a superintendent.

"I'll be a superintendent wherever I am needed," she said. "I don't want to limit myself to location. I'll go wherever doors open."

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It's important to develop leadership from within. We need leaders to ask themselves, 'Who am I raising up to take my place?'

Almudena Abeyta
Doctoral intern to Superintendent Dr. Alan Ingram

Gaining by giving

Duggan students help the homeless

BY JESSICA BENSON

It started with a simple theme: home.

By the end of the school year, however, the theme had taken the group of seventh-graders on a journey that opened their eyes to the poverty around them — and showed them how they could make a difference in the lives of others.

“They really got the idea that there is something every single person can do,” said Anne Kelleher, their teacher at Duggan Middle School.

The Duggan students were hailed for their work last year with the city’s homeless. At Thanksgiving, they bagged up food for needy families. Then they served lunch to a group of teen mothers living in a shelter. Finally, they gave out dinners to the homeless, getting to know some of them in the process.

The project was the brainchild of Kelleher, an English teacher who had started with the idea of exploring what “home” means to her students, through



Jaslee DelValle and Natalie Velez serve food to the needy at the Loaves & Fishes Kitchen in Springfield.



Shandaliz Santa, Michael Dones and Raven Durant ask for donations to buy socks for the homeless.

various books she had chosen on the subject. That led to discussions about homelessness, which in turn prompted them to find ways to help.

“It really took off and had a life of its own,” Kelleher said. “It was very eye-opening.”

The 12- and 13-year-olds first volunteered at the Open Pantry last Thanksgiving. Candace Larger, program director for the pantry, recalls how much the pantry needed the assistance in packaging the groceries they had collected during their Thanksgiving food drive.

“It was a life-saver,” she said.

The students formed an assembly line, putting the food into baskets which were then handed out to families and individuals for the Thanksgiving holiday. They put together a total of 300 packages of food.

Larger said the students were polite and professional.

the interviews, plus footage of them volunteering. The video was played for their parents and the entire student body.

According to Kelleher, it was the perfect example of how expeditionary learning can really work. The point of the teaching principle is to get students to learn by doing. And she did it while still meeting all of the state teaching standards.

“I’m doing what English teachers do all the time, but I’m doing it through a lens that keeps students engaged,” she said.

This year, Kelleher is working in her new position at Duggan, assisting students who are reading below their grade level. But her lessons on homelessness continue, as she, her fellow teachers and even some of her students, continue to volunteer at organizations helping the city’s needy.

“The kids really got the point that they can help,” she said. “It really changed everyone.”

“They were a great bunch of kids,” she said. “They were a joy to work with.”

In the months that followed, once a week Kelleher would take 12 students at a time to the basement of a church, where they would serve lunch to the homeless. At first, students had preconceived notions about homeless people. Then, they started talking to the individuals they were helping. Eventually, they would videotape interviews with their new friends.

“Some of the kids made connections and realized, ‘This could be anyone I know,’” Kelleher said. “It was powerful.”

At the end of the school year, the students put together a video featuring

Bridges lead students to ‘common ground’

BY JESSICA BENSON

Standing in a circle, they are singled out by the things that make them unique, such as their brown hair or their African-American background — or even the fact that they like reading comic books.

But looking around, the students participating in the Bridges program quickly realize that they are not really unique after all. Other classmates have brown hair, are African-American, or enjoy comic books.

Muneer Panjwani, the Bridges program director, calls the game “common ground.”

The game is one of several the students participate in over the course of the two-day Bridges workshop, a program offered free to area public schools.

For the last 10 years, the program has been available to work with students grappling with racism, sexism or bullying issues. Offered by the National Conference for Community and Justice,

Bridges has made an impact on countless students in schools in western Massachusetts and Connecticut, said Panjwani.

“We’ve seen huge progress,” he said. “It really does have a big impact.”

However, the program hasn’t reached as many schools in Springfield as Panjwani would like. That’s why, starting this year, he is trying to expand Bridges throughout the district.

Just a few weeks ago, Panjwani gave a presentation to the school system about the program. He’s working hard to get the word out about Bridges, in the hopes that teachers and principals will be intrigued enough to try it.

Schools that have participated report an ongoing openness in their buildings, Panjwani said.

In one school, nearly all students were part of a day of silence to raise awareness about the effects of prejudice and bullying. Other schools have gone on to host mix-it-up-at-lunch days, where students are encouraged to get to know classmates outside of their own social circles by eating lunch with new people.

These ongoing efforts are largely the work of the students, who are the driving force at every Bridges workshop, according to Panjwani. During the workshop, adults from the

school are present, but they are forced onto the sidelines. The students are encouraged to talk through issues on their own.

Only about two dozen students are chosen for each session, picked with care by their schools. Teachers are told to pick students from many

different groups. Every workshop so far has featured students from a wide range of backgrounds, Panjwani said.

Once picked, the students are brought to a location away from their school, such as a town hall or other venue. That way, they are not distracted by other students or ringing bells.

“We want to make sure the dialogue is honest and open,” Panjwani said, “so we just take them away from that. There’s less distraction and more honest discussion.”

During the workshop, students talk about issues such as racism, then are put through a series of exercises, such as the circle game, which are meant to be eye-opening.

Finally, students brainstorm ideas for things they can do to combat prejudice in their school.

Since many of the workshop sessions are run in the spring, there is still time for schools to register. For more information, contact Panjwani at 860-683-1039 or mpanjwani@nccjtwma.org.

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We’ve seen huge progress. (Bridges) really does have a big impact ... We want to make sure the dialogue is honest and open.

Muneer Panjwani
Bridges Program Director

Recovery offers students second chance

BY JESSICA BENSON

Nicole Granger started drinking when she was 12. At 13, she was sneaking out of the house, driving around late at night, and dating older boys. By 16, she was in rehab.

Though her future looked bleak just a few years ago, Granger, 20, is full of promise today. She works full-time as a certified nursing assistant while attending nursing school. In another year or two she hopes to earn an associate's degree and become a registered nurse.

More importantly, she is now clean and sober.

Granger gives much of the credit for her current success to the Recovery School, where she earned her high school diploma in 2008.

"Without that school, I never would have graduated," she said. "And I never would have stayed sober with what I was going through."

More than just a school, Recovery is meant to support teenagers who are struggling with addictions to alcohol and drugs. It is one of several alternative S.A.F.E., or Springfield Academy for Excellence, schools in the city, but the only one specializing in addiction recovery.

"We're a place of hope for a lot of kids," said assistant principal Mike Ellis.

Opened four years ago with a grant from the state Department of Public Health, the Recovery School has become a national model, and it serves more African-American and Latino students than any other such school in the country.

Though most recovery schools require a 90-day period of sobriety before students can enroll, in Springfield that requirement is waived, mostly due to the lack of affordable

treatment facilities nearby. As long as the students agree they have a problem and are ready to do something about it, they can attend the Recovery School.

Though the school cannot provide medical treatment, it can offer support and counseling. The school also gives students urine tests to assess whether they are, in fact, getting sober.

Some students' problems go deeper than addiction. Many students get clean, only to realize they have underlying mental illnesses, including schizophrenia, bipolar disease and even post-traumatic stress disorder from childhood abuse.

Even while dealing with these daunting problems, the school must still meet state academic standards, since it is a fully accredited high school.

At the moment, the school is being funded by the \$2.5 million DPH grant, supplemented by tuition from neighboring communities with students attending the school. The grant was intended to pay for the first five years of the Recovery School, one of three such schools in the state, with the school district picking up the tab after that. But administrators are now looking into other state and federal grants to help fund the school beyond the five-year mark.

At the same time, Ellis is trying to boost enrollment. This year, about 25 students are in the program, taking up only half of the available seats. Last year, 56 students attended.

A recovering addict himself, Ellis had long felt that something more should be done to assist young drug users. He was growing weary of seeing so many students sober up, only to fall back into their old, destructive habits. When he heard about the grant for Springfield to open the Recovery School, he jumped at the chance to be a part of it.

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We're a place
of hope for a
lot of kids.

Mike Ellis
Assistant Principal

PRINCIPAL PROFILES



White Street School principal Deb Lantaigne with fourth graders, from left, Destiny Wary, Tracey Nguyen, Jaida Guzman, Destinee Stokes, and Jeanermy Hernandez.

Principal brings her principles to White Street

BY BILL ABRAMSON

Deborah Lantaigne was born and grew up in Springfield. She still lives in the city and has always wanted to be part of the educational process there. Timing took her on a circuitous route to her goal.

"I had wanted to be a teacher forever, but in the mid-1970s, the market was flooded with teachers and colleges were job-oriented and steered me away from doing it," she explained. Thus, a social worker was created.

While working in the medical social work field, Lantaigne married, had children and, when the kids were small, she did some substitute teaching. A small inheritance from an aunt and encouragement from her husband sent Lantaigne back to school for her master's degree in education.

At an older age than her first-year teaching contemporaries, she began her public school career 19 years ago. That journey has taken her to the principal's office at White Street School after five years as principal at the Frederick Harris School.

White Street School is in a 100-year-old building and has been labeled by the

state as "chronically underperforming," a term Lantaigne dislikes.

"I am not a savior, nor do they need saving," she said of her new assignment and the staff she is working with. "(Superintendent of Schools) Dr. (Alan) Ingram was very professional with me. He outlined what the challenges were and what he thought I had for skills that matched those challenges.

"I love what I do and love the kids. This is a huge change for me. The school has a high poverty rate and has two different, much older buildings that are separated. It's a building that historically had not had a good reputation. The staff and I are working very hard at White Street to make some changes and improve the culture and the performance of students at the school."

The first order of business was a partial facelift for the building. New tile floors were installed in seven of the nine classrooms in the main building. Painting, landscaping and plumbing improvements were made.



Deborah Lantaigne

The new principal met with her staff and did an environmental design workshop, freshening up and changing the classrooms that may have been cluttered. She also wanted to work on the "feel" the school had.

"There is a feeling you have when you walk into a building and I want a good feeling in this building," Lantaigne said. "It should be welcoming with a learning buzz going on and people are engaged and proud of their work. I want people to walk into this school and feel the love of learning present."

Lantaigne was one of the first members of the LEAD program, a leadership training program for administrators funded by a grant from the Wallace Foundation. She was appointed assistant principal at the Gerena Community School in July 2003 and, after six months, was named to finish the year at Harris School as principal.

PRINCIPAL PROFILES

HEALING POWER

Brookings principal creates a culture of success

BY RICH FAHEY

Turning around the culture of a school is a lot like turning around a battleship; it has to be done in degrees.

When Terry Powe became principal of the Elias Brookings Expeditionary Learning Museum Magnet School in February 2008, she encountered the same problems any principal has entering a new school, multiplied by several times because she was coming in at mid-year and didn't know the students or teachers.

"The culture of the school was toxic," said Powe, who had been a literacy and reading supervisor at the district office. "Students were angry. Teachers were angry. The school needed healing. There were scenes right out of the movie 'Lean on Me,'" she said. "I can remember a day when there were 21 teachers absent."

Now Powe is being credited with turning around the culture of the school in the 21 months since she arrived.

Job 1 was to build up trust between herself, the staff and students. She walked the halls to get to know students. She interviewed staff members to try to get a gauge on how students felt about teachers, and vice versa.

The next step was to embrace the principles of Expeditionary Learning, a national non-profit organization that partners with schools to improve student achievement, build student character, enhance teacher practices, and instill a positive school culture.



Brookings School Principal Terry Powe with students from left, Xavier Jaynes, Naomi Chandler-Thomas, Rodney Mayfields Jr. and Octavia Lowe.

The school instilled the "Brookings Way" of doing things and embedded Expeditionary Learning into its curriculum.

Powe also tried to upgrade the look the school by painting classrooms and using magnet school funds to create a gallery space to exhibit student works. She engaged in team building and installed Thomas Mazza as her assistant principal.

The Brookings School, which was K-8 but

is now K-5, partners with the Springfield Museums at the Quadrangle, which is actually five world-class museums: the Michele & Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts., the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum, the Springfield Science Museum, the Connecticut Valley Historical Museum and the Museum of Springfield History.

"The museums are an extension of our classrooms," said Powe. "They're open to our

students on Mondays, and they can explore the exhibits and learn from the staff. Some of the students become junior docents."

Brookings faces the same — or in some cases, greater — demographic challenges as other Springfield Public Schools with 92 percent of students listed as low-income and 23 percent not listing English as their primary language.

Adjustment counselor Gianna Allentuck said the physical changes in the school — the main office, classrooms, library — have led to attitudinal changes among students. "The kids are taking more pride in their school," said Allentuck. "It sends the message she (Powe) cares about us and about the building."

Cathy Varanka, an instructional leadership specialist and a teacher for 26 years, said she wasn't sure at first how Powe's approach would work, but that her lack of ego is one of the keys to her success.

A native of Columbus, Ohio, Powe graduated from Taconic High School in Pittsfield before earning a bachelor's degree from Springfield College and a master's in education from UMass.

Powe and her husband, Maurice, an attorney, have walked the walk when it comes to helping children. Besides raising three children of their own, they have housed three teens from New York and New Jersey and another from Connecticut as part of the A Better Chance program, which aids academically talented students of color.

Nothing fishy about Nycz taking over as Commerce principal

BY BILL ABRAMSON

It may not be for everyone, but being a school principal fits Paul Nycz just fine.

After 3½ years as assistant principal at Putnam Voc-Tech was followed by six years as assistant principal at Central High School, Nycz was selected to become principal at Commerce High School in early July.

Born and raised in Springfield, Nycz graduated from Cathedral in 1972 and American International College in 1977. His professional career took a detour upon graduation.

"I went to Cape Cod for the summer and stayed 13 years," Nycz explained. He had a variety of jobs, but most of his time was spent in the fishing industry. He started driving a truck to deliver fish to restaurants, packed fish and would go down to the pier at night to help unload the boats and load the trailers for the Chatham Seafood Co-operative.

When the co-op failed, Nycz decided to drive cross country, but ran out of money in Florida, leading to a job at a hotel in Kissimmee. He flew to Chatham for a friend's wedding and the owners of Chatham Fish & Lobster offered him a job running their new retail store.

After moving to Hyannis, he sold fish wholesale to restaurants and eventually decided he wanted something



Commerce High Principal Paul Nycz goes over paperwork with Maria V. Reyes.

different than 70-80 hours a week of hard, physical work. He returned to Springfield and got his master's degree and teaching certificate at AIC.

Nycz did a pre-practicum in special education and one in history. While finishing his Certificate in Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS) in special education, he had education courses

left to take and the personnel director in Springfield, who had hired him as a special education teacher, suggested administration. His second CAGS was in school administration.

"I've been in the Springfield district my whole educational career," Nycz said. "I love being in administration. It's definitely for me. My personality is that I like to see things and make progress."

At Central, Nycz was the scheduler and likened it to putting together a very challenging jigsaw puzzle. It was challenging and something he liked doing.

His long-term goal is to make the High School of Commerce the No. 1 choice of students in the city.

"I'm a good listener and I'm smart enough to know I don't have all the answers," Nycz said. "I don't mind going to people closer to the trenches and pulling their thoughts and ideas together to come up with the best solution. I'm pretty organized and work with people in a collaborative fashion. I'm not a dictator."



Paul Nycz

SPOTLIGHT ON SCI-TECH

Strength in numbers



Sci-Tech finance teacher Susan Schack presents a lesson.

Sci-Tech split into four small academies

BY RICH FAHEY

Career academies have become more and more popular as school districts have moved to meet the demands of a 21st century economy that demands workers with highly-developed technological skills.

In Springfield, the School of Science and Technology, which focuses on the highly technical STEM fields – science, technology, engineering and mathematics – has been organized into four academies that concentrate on four areas: biomedical, biotechnology and forensics; engineering; finance; and information technology, film and media.

The drive to establish the academies at Sci-Tech began with a \$10.1 million federal magnet schools grant in 2007.

Career academies must meet standards to ensure that students who graduate have viable skills, and Sci-Tech's information technology and finance academies have been recognized by the National Academy Foundation, which means they meet a set of national standards. Sci-Tech received the designation in early July.

The mission of the National Academy Foundation (NAF) is to sustain a national network of career academies to support the development of America's youth toward personal and professional success in high school, in higher education, and throughout their careers.

According to the NAF, more than 90 percent of NAF Academy students graduate from high school, compared to 50 percent in

the urban areas where most NAF academies exist; four out of five graduates pursue college or other post-secondary education. Sci-Tech Principal Ira Brown and Assistant Principal Mary Kay Brown said the NAF designation came after more than a year of planning.

"It was a very rigorous process," Ira Brown said.

In April 2008, the NAF asked the school to answer a series of questions, prior to a

visit to the school by foundation members in May, when foundation members spent the day talking with teachers, department chairmen, district personnel, and the school's partners in business and post-secondary education.

After an evaluation, the NAF agreed to accept the school pending a probationary year of planning. The school had to show how it would effectively integrate academy themes into school curricula, and that it met

requirements in staffing and scheduling. School spaces had to be designed to meet academy standards.

The school had to establish an advisory board with 35 members including its post-secondary partners at area universities, business partners from STEM-related industries, and community organizations such as the Hampden County Regional Employment Board and the Chamber of Commerce. A series of sub-committees within the board was assigned to handle specific tasks.

"We had to show there was a network of people ready to support us and that we could sustain that support," said Mary Kay Brown.

Partnerships are an important part of the process. Seventeen teachers – 15 from Sci-Tech and two from Putnam – and some central office administrators underwent 20 hours of intense training in information technology at MassMutual, and those teachers later made a presentation to other teachers to pass on some of what they learned.

All Sci-Tech students, no matter what academy they are in, are taught the same core curricula. The difference comes in the approach a teacher takes to a subject.

"A math teacher might find a way to use data from the financial industry to make a point," said Mary Kay Brown.

Teachers meet twice a week to talk about how to integrate their respective themes into the subject matter.



Sci-Tech students Carlos Palacio and Katisha Crespo listen attentively in class.

SPOTLIGHT ON SCI-TECH



Ricky Methu plays the bass guitar.



From left, Jeremy Turgeon, Zack Homuth and Elvine Vega practice their trumpet playing.



Amy Johnson plays the xylophone.

Banding together to make music

Sci-Tech bands continue to grow

BY RICH FAHEY

Gary Bernece exudes positive energy, which he transfers to the 220 students taking band courses at Sci-Tech High School.

Bernece, 26, has seen the number of band students grow more than 10-fold from the 20 students he had when he first came to the school in January 2007. He has organized three symphonic bands, as well as a concert band, jazz ensemble and percussion ensemble for talented and advanced students.

Bernece's career at the school began inauspiciously. One music teacher had resigned before the school year began and two others resigned during the school year. When he arrived, Bernece was the third teacher many of the students had in one year.

"About 98 percent of the students have had no musical training when they get here," said Bernece, a New Jersey native and UMass Amherst graduate now pursuing a master's degree at UMass.

Those same students also had no instruments, and in most cases no resources to them. Bernece's first order of business was helping to organize a grassroots effort to find the money to buy instruments for the students. More than \$30,000 has been raised to buy quality used instruments, and others have been donated.

The newcomers in the symphonic bands can work to move up to the concert band or one of the ensembles.

"We have band students who are taking leadership positions at the school and recruiting other students to come into the program," said Bernece.

At times, some people have asked him



Gary Bernece teaches a band class.

why students aren't playing at football games or organizing a marching band. "I want to put my students in a situation to be successful, and that kind of program wouldn't be appropriate for them," he said.

As a graduate of a marching band, he said most students in such bands are graduates of private lessons, or of music programs at the elementary and middle-school level who are

grounded enough in the music to be able to add precision marching routines into the mix.

"We would have to build back programs at the elementary and middle schools to be able to get to that level someday," he said.

Bernece was studying business management and economics at UMass until he found he was passionate about teaching, especially in an urban setting.

The Sci-Tech program has scheduled two events this year for the public. The Winterfest concert will be held on Dec. 17 at 7 p.m. at the Chestnut Middle School, and the ArtsAlive program is set for May 20, also at 7 p.m. at the Chestnut Middle School.

Bernece said his students' efforts have exceeded his expectations and reinforced his belief that every student should be able to participate in a music program, if they choose to.



Sci-Tech band members practice under the direction of music teacher Gary Bernece.

Balliet



The new building for the Balliet Elementary School is at the former Sacred Heart School on Rosewell Street.



Monica Claiborne-Lambert reads to her fourth-grade class.



The gymnasium at the new Balliet facility.



Zanetti Montessori pre-school and kindergarten students, from left, Markus Johnson, Kyhara Figueroa, Ny'shaun Pitts, Aryana Ali, Saniya Hatcher, Catherine Thompson and Madison Maloney sit in front of a mural that was brought from the old facility.

Two schools get a new home

Balliet and Zanetti students enjoy learning in new environment

By RICH FAHEY

When a school closes its doors, there are usually tears of sadness. But when the 83-year-old Thomas J. Balliet Elementary School on Seymour Avenue and the 103-year-old Alfred G. Zanetti Montessori School on Howard Street closed their doors last June, Balliet Principal Gwen Page called it a time for "jubilation" and said the closings were "exciting, and a long time coming."

That's because the two schools have reopened in newer buildings in new locations: Balliet at the former Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School on Rosewell Street, and Zanetti at the former Our Lady of Hope School on

Armory Street.

In late June, the Springfield Finance Control Board, in one of its final acts, purchased the two schools from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield for \$7.8 million.

That left only two months to move the Balliet and Zanetti schools to their new locations, as \$5 million in renovations to the two former Catholic schools were also ongoing.

Both Page and Zanetti Principal Sarah Andrew are now both happily ensconced in their new homes, and they both paid tribute to the staffs of their respective schools for the work they did in getting into the schools early and setting up their classrooms.

"The teachers were unbelievable; they got in as soon as they could," said Andrew, who was on medical leave for much of the summer, making things that much tougher. "They've been working crazily, even on weekends. It's really wonderful to see how they've responded."

"The teachers came in at the beginning of August on their own time and they've done an outstanding job putting their rooms together," said Page. "It looks like they've been here all summer."

A major upgrade is a cafeteria that will allow students to eat there instead of their classrooms, and bathrooms that are cleaner and more up-to-date than those in the old building.

"The bathrooms are a huge plus," said Andrew. "Everything matters when you're talking about educating small children."

Capacity has been reduced slightly,



Balliet students enjoy an activity in the lower auditorium of the new facility.

from 510 in the old building to between 460-470 in the new location, but Zanetti remains a pre-kindergarten-8 school. It was thought earlier that the Zanetti might have to eliminate its sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grades in order to fit the school into its new

headquarters at 474 Armory St.

Just after the opening of school, Page shook her head at what had been accomplished at Balliet in a short amount of time.

"A week ago, it looked impossible," she said. "But by the time school

opened, we were in very good shape."

She described the students as "in awe" of their new surroundings. For the first time, Page was able to have an assembly with all students present.

Amenities include a cafeteria that allows two seatings for lunch and some social time for students, a library that is double the size, and a gym where squeals of delight can be heard as phys ed teacher Pat St. Laurent puts students through their paces.

For the first time, the school's science teacher has her own room instead of moving from room to room with her materials on a cart. There is also a dedicated area for meeting with parents.

Both schools had some last-minute work that needed to be done, including wiring for the Internet, but education has proceeded, full speed ahead.

"Everyone is settling in," said Andrew. "They really like it here."

Zanetti



The new building for the Zanetti Montessori School is at the former Our Lady of Hope School on Armory Street.



Paraprofessional Alba Martinez works with student Daniel Griffen at Zanetti.



The gymnasium at the new Zanetti facility.



Am-B-Care there for SPS

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Am-B-Care Ambulance Service may be in the business of helping patients, but it's also in the business of helping Springfield's students.

The company, one of the region's fastest growing ambulance service and patient transportation providers in Metro-West, Central and Western Massachusetts, moved its corporate headquarters from Auburn to Springfield in December 2008. In doing so, it made it its mission to establish community roots by launching Kicking In for Springfield Schools (KISS). The goal of KISS is to raise money to supplement school budgets and support athletics, the arts and other quality programs.

"These kids literally are our future and it's imperative they have all of the help they can," said Frank McNeil, chief executive officer of Am-B-Care. "It's our responsibility to provide them with the extracurricular activities to keep them involved and active outside of the classroom and to grow as individuals."

"We need to be supportive and offer them outlets that are stress-free, keeping them off the streets," said Barbara Garde, a former city

councilor who now serves as Am-B-Care's vice president of marketing and development. "The goal is to surround them with constructive, positive people who will help prepare them for life outside of and after school."

The KISS board, consisting of community members and elected officials, will work to entertain proposals from Springfield Public Schools principals and teachers to ensure funding is directed to the most urgent needs. Funds from the inaugural KISS summer festival, held in July, went towards middle school sports programs.

More than \$7,500 was raised at the event, which kicked off with a softball tournament at Forest Park. At Riverfront Park, festivities included face painting, roller derby and acrobatic exhibitions, clowns, fire-eaters, merchant tents, local vendors, food and live music. Danny Klein, a founding member of the Boston-based J. Geils Band, performed with his new band Danny Klein's Full House. Am-B-Care served as the event organizer. Other sponsors included PC Tech Service; Baystate Health; Big Y; Inn Place Hotel; Palmer Paving Corp.; PH Productions; WAQY, Rock 102; WGGB-TV; and The Republican.

McNeil hopes to expand fundraising efforts in the future, holding more KISS events at individual schools. Am-B-Care also recently announced a scholarship, which will be awarded to two Springfield Public Schools students for Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training.

ALUMNI PROFILE



The Posner Family: Stephen, Maureen, Mike, Liza and Aaron.

Analyze this

Springfield schools prepared Posner well for Wall Street

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Goldman Sachs financial analyst Aaron Posner may have traded in the "City of Homes" for the "City that Never Sleeps," but he'll forever be appreciative of his Springfield roots.

"The diversity I experienced growing up is something that not everyone's exposed to," said Posner. "That shaped me in a lot of ways and prepared me for real life, especially in the workplace. The ability to relate well to everyone is so important."

Born and raised in Springfield, Posner is the oldest of three children, all of whom are products of Springfield Public Schools. His mother, Maureen, is a teacher at Sumner Avenue Elementary School, and his father, Stephen, is an associate professor of sport management and the men's gymnastics coach at Springfield College.

Posner graduated in the top five percent of his class at Central High School in 2003. He was a member of the soccer and tennis teams, National Honor Society and Key Club.

"Central was a great experience and provided a wide range of activities, AP and honors courses," said Posner. "Our teachers drilled home the importance of being able to write well, and challenged us to apply ourselves and work through problems. I was well prepared."

From Central, Posner enrolled in the Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University. He played Div. I soccer as a freshman and sophomore, and played club soccer his final two years. He also served as a teaching assistant during the second semester of his freshman year for a course entitled Teaching College Learning Strategies.

Posner declared his major in finance during his junior year, after ruling out architecture. A course at Central had originally piqued his interest and prompted him to look at Syracuse for its School of Architecture, but, in the end, business was the



Aaron Posner

better fit. He completed an internship at MassMutual Financial Group the summer before his senior year, working in the capital markets group.

"I worked directly with the CFO and the treasurer," he said. "It was a great opportunity; I learned a ton just in a few months there."

He received the offer from Goldman Sachs in the fall of his senior year.

"I applied to financial planning and banking institutions across the board," said Posner. "It's hard

to say no to a company like Goldman."

A second-year analyst based at the company's Jersey City (N.J.) office, Posner now calls the Upper East Side of Manhattan his home.

"I enjoy the challenges that arise all the time," he said. "When I was hired, everyone was on top of the world. A year and a half later, we were in a recession. I've been able to see the whole cycle."

He's also been able to see the power of his role as a liaison between the bankers and traders.

"Opening up the paper, I might see a reference to a report that we wrote, influencing how people invest their money," he said. "It's interesting to see how what you do in your daily role affects others."

Posner has plans to attend graduate school and is considering a career in investment management or trading. He would ultimately like to become an entrepreneur.

ALUMNI PROFILE

Taking the Central route to college

2009 grads Farnham and Andrekus settle in at Yale, BC

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Central High School, “the home of scholars and champions,” certainly helped to mold a few champions in the class of 2009.

Carolyn Farnham, who graduated No. 3 in her class, is attending Yale University, and Sarah Andrekus, ranked fourth in the class, is attending Boston College.

“Springfield has some of the most dedicated teachers and guidance counselors who give everything they have to help students succeed, and who pushed and inspired me to constantly work harder,” said Farnham. “Without the aid of so many fantastic teachers and counselors, I highly doubt I would be where I am today.”

Farnham, a lifelong Springfield resident, is the first in her family to attend an Ivy League school.

“Yale was a far-off dream, an impossible goal,” she said. “My mother was the first in her family to go to college, and I’m the first to go to an Ivy.”

Yale received a record 25,925 applications for the class of 2013, an increase of 13.6 percent in one year. Thus, the admittance rate fell from 8.3 to 7.5 percent, making

the selection process one of the most competitive in the school’s history. Farnham was one of 1,951 students to earn admission. Once she received the acceptance letter, the decision was an easy one.

“I chose Yale because I fell in love with it,” she said. “Yale has innumerable resources, a beautiful campus, and professors and deans who are passionate about and dedicated to their students and subject matters.”

Currently, Farnham is studying a range of subjects, including poetry, Italian, logic and the ethics of war. She is considering careers in government or publishing, but is still pursuing all options. She is grateful that her educational background in Springfield has prepared her for

the college-level workload.

“Springfield gives students opportunities that many other school systems do not,” said Farnham. “I was able to learn Chinese in both middle and high school and was even able to travel to China my sophomore year. And the AP programs are incredible.”

Farnham took advantage of four AP courses at Central. She participated in field hockey during her freshman year, as well as drama, National Honor Society, and National Art Honor Society. She also founded a Christian Club, was active with volunteer work and fundraising and discovered an interest in sculpture and ceramics.

Andrekus also took advantage of every

opportunity she could at Central. She was a member of the soccer, swim and tennis teams, as well as National Honor Society, National Art Honor Society, Key Club and the band. She served as band president and captain of the tennis team during her senior year. She was also on the teen board of the Ronald McDonald House of Springfield.

“There was a lot of juggling, but you just need to stay on top of everything that you need to get done,”

she said. “It was a great experience, and it introduced me to so many new people.”

At BC, Andrekus is living by that same philosophy and trying to stay as active as possible. She is a member of the BC marching band and plans to join the pep band, play intramural soccer and become involved in other clubs and activities.

For the class of 2013, there were nearly 30,000 applications for 2,250 places. Andrekus credits Springfield Public Schools with helping make her dream of going to BC a reality.

“The education was phenomenal,” said Andrekus, who took five AP courses at Central.

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Springfield has some of the most dedicated teachers and guidance counselors who give everything they have to help students succeed.

Carolyn Farnham
Yale University



Carolyn Farnham, who graduated third in her class at Central High, is a freshman at Yale University.



Sarah Andrekus, a freshman at Boston College, gives her Central High experience a big thumbs-up.

Springfield keeps its Promise to help kids pay for college

BY BILL ABRAMSON

For many students, college may not seem accessible, especially considering the cost of higher education. A new program in Springfield Public Schools is addressing that concern.

Beginning this school year, the Springfield Public Schools Promise will assist guidance counselors in helping more students find money for college. The program will have four financial aid advisors who will collaborate with guidance counselors in the high schools. They will raise awareness

about financial aid and college affordability, assist and guide students and families through the financial aid process, and secure financial aid and scholarships for underserved students.

“The Springfield Promise program will help kids with the financial aid piece,” said Yolanda Johnson, who is responsible for the guidance and adjustment counselors in the school district. “Many of them shouldn’t have to pay if they follow the forms. Kids are accruing unnecessary debt that they could have avoided.

“Our job is to prepare kids for post-

secondary life,” Johnson added. “In urban communities, the financial piece is a huge piece. It can’t be just, ‘I can’t afford it so it’s off the table.’ There is a huge information gap between what happens in suburban and urban communities. Some kids don’t have all the information to make good decisions.”

The partnership between the guidance counselors and the financial aid advisors is crucial to help kids and parents get through the maze of the application process. Counselors have to guide the students in making plans for their post-secondary years.

“We must start identifying who wants to

go to school and who wants to go to work,” Johnson said. “Those who want to go to school don’t always know what they want, so we have to help them solidify what it is they want to do. We must work with them in the financial aid process. Even kids who are undecided can get help to navigate the process. The financial aid advisors will provide a level of expertise.”

“The Promise program complements the collaborative piece of helping kids be successful after they leave high school,” Johnson said. “We have to increase the number of kids going to college.”



Pottenger School enrichment students Andre Gallant and Carina Fuentes show work from the previous year.

EL schools achieving their goals

In 2004, Expeditionary Learning Schools began partnering with the city of Springfield to improve student achievement in an elementary and a middle school.

The partnership expanded to include a total of five district schools by 2008-2009: two elementary schools with initial achievement scores at the district average; one middle school with initial achievement scores at the bottom of the district and state; one new 6-12 secondary district school which ELS designed; and one K-8 school with initial achievement scores at the bottom of the district and state.

ELS has focused particularly on reading and writing skills in each of these schools.

Four Springfield schools now have multi-year data that were analyzed for trends. Three of these schools show dramatic growth in English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency that far outpaces the district and state. Some of the highlights thus far:

The ELA proficiency rate at Alice B. Beal Elementary School rose 18 percentage points in four years, bringing the school's proficiency from the district average to the state average.

The Springfield Renaissance School, a grade 6-12 school designed and opened by ELS, which is available to all district students by lottery, outperformed the district in ELA by 18 percentage points in its first year of operation and 24 percentage points in its second year.

The proficiency rate in ELA at Duggan Middle School increased 22 percentage points in four years, bringing it from one of the lowest performing schools in the district and in the state, to even with the district average.

The proficiency rate in ELA at Mary O. Pottenger School rose 3 percentage points between 2004 and 2008; in contrast, the state proficiency average dropped one percentage point.

This expedition leads to learning

ELS: from Page 1

ELS Northeast Regional Director Ron Berger said district teachers and administrators have taken the group's teaching methods and instruction and run with them.

"We're delighted with the work and spirit of the Springfield teachers, and we're also very happy and proud with the positive data at the schools we've worked with," said Berger, pointing to test scores.

Nationally, ELS has had a string of similar success stories in urban school districts such as Rochester, N.Y., New York City, Washington, D.C., Denver and Baltimore.

ELS is a national, non-profit organization that opens new elementary, middle and college-oriented secondary schools, and partners with existing schools, to improve student achievement, build student character, enhance teacher practices and instill a positive school culture.

Learning is project-based, involving students in original research, often with the support of experts and professionals from the larger community.

ELS offers schools services such as on-site professional development, faculty workshops, in-class co-teaching and individual curriculum planning. Teachers can also attend 3-day workshops away from school.

The non-profit group's work with Springfield schools is funded by both federal magnet school grants and district funds. Berger said that the MassMutual Financial Group has also supported ELS' work with the Beal, Pottenger and Duggan schools.

Valerie Williams, principal of the Pottenger School, has been working with ELS for five years and says it has helped her teachers devise research-based projects and expeditions that bring the concepts being studied to life. For a fifth-grade unit

on the Revolutionary War, students journeyed to Boston to see the Freedom Trail and the site of the Boston Tea Party.

"It's very hands-on, interactive instruction," said Williams.

The school's annual Expedition Night in June — when student projects are highlighted — is very well-attended by students, teachers, and families, with more than 600 coming last school year.

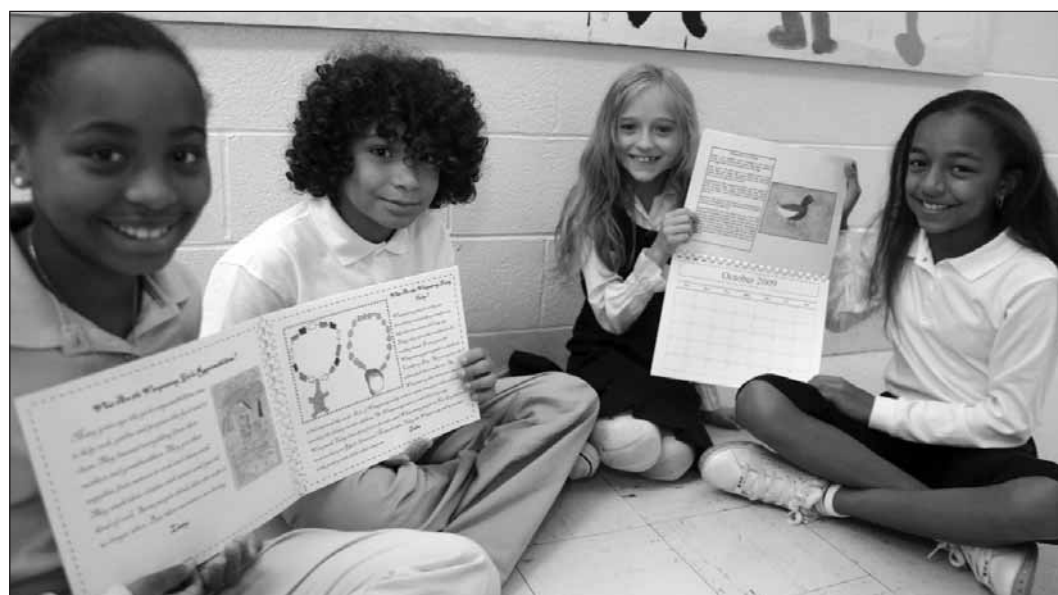
Principal Linda Fenlason of the Beal Elementary School said she has been working with ELS in her school for four years and the group's relationship with the school is in its seventh year. She said the program's instructors excel at integrating subject matter into "expeditions" and research projects. An ELS "school designer" once a month works with teachers in various ways, including helping out with planning for expeditions.

The designer will go with the teachers and students when they study animals at the Forest Park Zoo or to the Pratt Museum of Natural History in Amherst to study rocks and minerals.

"All of the field studies and expeditions are content-driven," said Fenlason, adding that the interactive element means the students tend to learn more. "There's a much bigger buy-in with these types of activities."

Berger said his group also believes strongly that reducing suspensions and truancy and boosting attendance and graduation rates are the keys to raising test scores. "We track the data carefully in those areas," he said.

He said the new code of character created by the staff, students and faculty as part of the ELS program plays a vital role. "Together, they help create the school's new vision for improvement."



Beal School arts enrichment fourth-graders show projects they completed in third grade. From left, Zahra Tonge, Joe Sanchez, Lauren Casey and Alyssa Hibbert.



Solar power

STEM wins first place in solar car competition

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Whether you call them superstars or solar stars, STEM Middle Academy students are standing out among their peers.

For the first time, STEM students participated in the Junior Solar Sprint, a model solar car competition for middle-school students organized by the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association. Using materials such as aluminum cans, plastic bottles and cardboard, students took responsibility for the design, construction and performance of a vehicle powered by the sun's energy. They competed for awards in innovation, craftsmanship, technical merit and speed.

The goal of the program is to generate enthusiasm for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills – a concept on which STEM Academy was founded. The competition also helps improve students' understanding of scientific concepts and renewable-energy technologies, and encourages young people to consider technical careers at an early age.

"Sitting in your seat doing math problems is one thing, but watching an idea come to life is another," said STEM Academy Principal Andrea Lewis. "The students were able to feel a real connection with what they were learning. They saw what engineering really means, and where it begins. Hopefully, it left a lasting impression, planting seeds for a future career for some of them."

STEM sixth-graders met once a week as part of an after-school engineering club, organized by science teacher Kate Berti and instructional technology specialist Janice Kibbe. Four students qualified for the Junior Solar Sprint regional event, held on June 6 at Western New England College. They included: Kyree Bowens, William Lalikos, Kierstin Quigley and Matthew Savoie. Lalikos placed second overall and Savoie was awarded third place for design. Both qualified for the championship, which took place at Springfield's High School of Commerce on June 14. It was the culminating event for top winners of each of the 20 area events from the Northeast.



STEM Principal Andrea Lewis



STEM student Kierstin Quigley, center, gets ready to test her model solar car.

Summer camp opens door to Chinese language, culture

By RICH FAHEY

With Chinese language programs already established in Springfield high schools and middle schools, elementary-school students tried their hand at the language this summer in a three-week Chinese summer camp held in July at the Boland Elementary School.

Students experienced both the language and culture in a program open to all Springfield elementary students as well as students from neighboring towns and cities. The program was made possible by a \$74,000 grant from STARTALK, an initiative by the National Foreign Language Center to expand instruction in under-taught critical languages by funding new and existing programs throughout students' learning careers, from kindergarten through college.

The summer program attracted 82 students

— 72 from Springfield and the others from nine neighboring communities. They were immersed in Chinese culture, did simple martial-arts exercises and were given an introduction to a demanding language that has its own alphabet and written characters.

"What they learned was just amazing," said Carmen Felix-Fournier, the director of foreign languages for Springfield Public Schools.

Some of the students are bilingual and were actually embarking on a third language. Felix-Fournier said research shows that students learning a second language are actually using a part of the brain that makes it easier to learn yet another language.

Students — some as young as kindergarten — learned to recognize Chinese characters and numbers and write their names in the language.

"The younger children have no fear of it,"

said Felix-Fournier. "They're willing to try anything."

Two instructors from the school district's Chinese language program joined four outside instructors in teaching the program. Several high school Chinese students served as teaching assistants.

Students went to the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum in Springfield to see the Chinese pieces in the Ancient Treasures Gallery, and also went to Chinatown in Boston, where they visited a family shrine to observe the tradition of preserving and honoring ancestral memories. Administrators at the Boland School provided the students with breakfast and lunch. Even without transportation being offered, the attendance rate was still 95 percent.

Springfield has had a Chinese language and culture program in place since 1987. Students

can study the language at the four high schools and the Chestnut and Van Sickle middle schools

Felix-Fournier said parents of participating students were happy with the program, as were the evaluators from the STARTALK program who visited the school. She said the district is presently going through the process of applying again for a grant for next summer, when it is hoped the program will be expanded to include more students.

Maureen Moriarty said her third-grade son, Devon, 8, very much enjoyed the experience, especially the morning martial-arts exercises that helped the children learn their numbers.

"They made it fun for the kids with the role-playing and the other activities," said Moriarty, who said she would "absolutely" enroll her son again if the program returns next summer.

Elementary Schools

Brunton

This year, Brunton became the first school in Massachusetts to implement Kids Hope USA, a national mentoring program. The school joined forces with its business partner, Evangel Assembly, to bring the acclaimed program into its building. The process of pairing students with volunteer mentors from Evangel Assembly has begun and the mentorships will continue throughout the school year with the mentors and mentees meeting every week for one hour.

Glenwood, Talmadge and Washington

In a *Commonwealth Magazine* article this summer, Edward Moscovitch, chairman of the Bay State Reading Institute, wrote: "The three strongest elementary schools in the state are all regular schools in Springfield: the Talmadge, the Glenwood, and the Washington." Washington earned another distinction when third-grade students scored the highest percentage of Advanced or Proficient on the reading portion of 2009 MCAS.

Rebecca Johnson

This year marked the start of the Ballet Project at Rebecca Johnson School. The after-school ballet class features not only dance lessons for young girls, but also lessons in French.

Liberty

A big thank you goes out to Stop & Shop, which donated \$1,800 to help the school purchase math workbooks for kindergarten and first-grade students.

Lincoln

Instrumental music classes have been added this year. Students learn to play clarinet, trombone, saxophone, flute and percussion. The program has been music to the ears of administrators, who cite studies showing how musical instruction contributes to increased mathematical ability.

Washington

Washington Elementary School was recognized as one of the 21 finalists for the National Panasonic School Change Award at Teachers' College, Columbia University in New York City. Panasonic and the U.S. Department of Education present the award annually to schools across the nation who have achieved and maintained significant positive changes in their culture and academic performance.

Middle Schools

Forest Park

This fall, 120 Forest Park students will spend a day at Western New England College, where they will tour the campus, eat lunch in the dining hall and participate in team-building activities with the dean of the business school. The day-long event is part of the school's commitment to infuse character development and team-building into its curriculum.

High Schools

Commerce

On Oct. 9, International Baccalaureate students from The High School of Commerce teamed up with Springfield Technical Community



College (STCC) to explore the theme of compassion through art-work. The schools worked in partnership with Art21 Access, an international initiative to increase knowledge of contemporary art.

High School of Science and Technology

The Engineering Academy at the High School of Science and Technology started off the school year with an exciting, new hands-on curriculum called CareerPlus. The student-centered program combines multimedia computer-mediated instruction, hands-on lab experience, collaborative team work, open-ended problem solving, persuasive writing, and group presentations.

This year, students are studying Robotics and Automation, Environmental Technology, Architectural Design, and Transportation Technology. Next year Manufacturing Technology, Materials Science, Alternative Energy, and Digital Electronics will be added to the curriculum.

Twenty-three ninth grade students participated in a six-week Biomedical Science Camp at Springfield Technical Community College as part of the Health Cares Opportunities Programs (HCOP) initiative over the summer. Course work included assignments that integrated science and math; career-readiness skills; journalism; college campus visits; and job-shadowing at area health centers and hospitals. Their experience will

continue into next summer with year two of the camp.

Putnam Technical Vocational High

On Oct. 2, Putnam Vocational Technical High School hosted a delegation of education ministers from the Arab country Oman under a program of the United States International Visitor Leadership Program.

During their visit to the United States, the Oman educational officials examined the structure of educational guidance in the U.S. secondary school system; explored best practices in career counseling and educational guidance; and learned about university curricula for career counseling and educational guidance.

Districtwide

SPS orientation

Eighty-five new Springfield Public Schools educators attended a comprehensive two-day SPS orientation program last summer. The event, which took place at the High School of Science and Technology, included break-out sessions on the district's priorities, mission, and vision; instructional strategies; networking and professional development opportunities; and more. Experienced educators shared their experiences, new teachers mingled and all enjoyed a refreshing ice cream social on a hot summer day.

FAIR

Family Adventures in Reading (FAIR) is offered at the Liberty Branch Library, 773 Liberty St., on Saturdays at 1 p.m. through Nov. 21. John Porcino, a professional storyteller, will lead families and children age six and older in discussions about children's stories on topics such as fairness, courage, and dreams. Healthy

snacks will be provided. Families who attend regularly will receive a canvas book bag and free book. Register for this free program by visiting the Liberty Branch Library or calling 413-263-6849.

Springfield History Museum

During October and November, teachers involved in the Teaching American History program are participating in a series of book studies and lecture program that celebrates the grand opening of the Springfield History Museum and the Springfield Public Forum lecture series. In a partnership with the Five Colleges, the teachers will take part in five events that includes everything from book studies and lectures to group discussions with authors.

City Thinks

City Thinks, a collaboration of the Springfield Public Forum and the Springfield City Library, will analyze urban education through book- and film-discussion groups, panels, a student art essay contest, a mural project and other cultural and educational programming.

SPS Management Institute

Springfield Public Schools has launched a new program designed to increase managerial capacity and operational efficiency. The Springfield Public Schools Management Institute will provide senior leaders and managers with formal training and coaching as they work on specific operational projects that are directly tied to the district's top priorities. Beginning in November, managers will participate in an intensive six-month program, which includes both group and individual coaching. The program is delivered in partnership with the District Management Council and funded by the Wallace Foundation.

NEA grant would improve student achievement

GRANT: from Page 1

grants from the foundation that would allow it to bring its ideas to fruition.

"With Education Reform, the Legislature and the bureaucrats in the state Department of Education have long crafted policy," said Tim Collins, SEA president. "Our plan, for the first time, would give teachers and school-based administrators a legitimate voice at the table as architects of reform. It's time to try something different."

The SEA and the schools are in the middle of crafting their proposal, which must be submitted to the NEA by early December. SEA officials and other grant applicants met in Milwaukee in early October with NEA officials and officials from school districts just coming off their 5-year grants.

"We expect to get more specificity on what they expect in the final proposal," said Collins.

One aspect of the plan became apparent early in the process. "We need to secure parents as partners in this," said Collins, pointing to the



Central High School Principal Thaddeus Tokarz helps sophomore Sharon Bartels with her classwork.

Sacramento Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project as a model of family engagement.

The SEA has traveled to 31

schools to show teachers a DVD on the home visit program, which Collins said enjoyed broad support among teachers, with more than 90

percent saying it would be good for their school and more than 60 percent volunteering to be trained in it.

Just securing the planning grant was an arduous process, as 14,000 applications were vetted, and eight selected for the grants. The district had to raise \$25,000 in donations, but the time teachers and administrators have volunteered could be counted towards that total.

The \$1.25 million grants will be provided over a five-year period. They will be awarded in January, and money will begin flowing next September, when Collins said he hopes the district will be able to hit the ground running.

The district must secure matching funds, but Collins said being approved for the NEA grant tends to open doors at the country's largest foundations, such as the Ford, Carnegie and Gates foundations.

Collins said typically the state's educational bureaucracy and available resources have been tilted toward the eastern half of the state. He is hopeful that the NEA Foundation grant would allow the

district to "build capacity" by expanding relationships with schools such as UMass Amherst and Springfield College, and even establish an education foundation for the Pioneer Valley.

As part of the planning process, a "change coach" and "documenter" were hired; the latter is a graduate student from the UMass Amherst School of Public Policy.

The SEA has also engaged the services of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), specifically Nancy deProsse, the MTA liaison to Springfield.

DeProsse said the MTA has made available to the district the resources at the Center for Educational Policy and Practice in Boston for technical support, research and professional issues.

DeProsse was involved in writing the initial proposal to the NEA and is also serving as project manager for the planning grant period, coordinating three groups of teachers and administrators who are working together on the proposal, and preparing for a visit by members of the NEA Foundation.

SPRINGFIELD DIRECTORY SCHOOLS

Elementary Schools

- Balliet**
Gwen Page, Principal
52 Rosewell St., 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**
Martha Cahillane, Principal
50 Morison Terr., 01104
413-787-7527
- Glickman**
Martha Kelliher, Principal
120 Ashland Ave., 01119
413-750-2756
- Harris**
Shannon Collins, 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**
Jennifer Montano, 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**
John Doty, 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**
Deborah Lantaigne, Principal
300 White St., 01108
413-787-7543
- Brookings**
Terry Powe, Principal
Hancock St., 01105
413-787-7200
- Zanetti**
Sandra Andrew, Principal
474 Armory St., 01104
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**
Thaddeus Tokarz, Principal
1840 Roosevelt Ave., 01109
413-787-7085
- Commerce**
Paul Nycz, 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, Executive Officer
413-335-5127
Judy Vazquez, Principal
413-787-6999
- Springfield Academy K-5**
Lisa Pereira, Asst. 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**
Dwight Hall, 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**
Mary Ellen Brush, Asst. Principal
140A Wilbraham Ave., 01109
413-787-7285
- Springfield Student Attendance Resource Center**
William Cosgriff, Asst. Principal
140A Wilbraham Ave., 01109
413-552-6495

2009-10 SCHOOL CALENDAR

November

11	Wednesday	Schools closed – Veteran's Day
12	Thursday	Superintendent's Parent Roundtable Meeting
25	Wednesday	Schools closed – Thanksgiving vacation
30	Monday	Schools reopen

December

22	Tuesday	Last day before holiday vacation; dismissal covered by bulletin.
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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
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June

22	Tuesday	End of school year; dismissal covered by bulletin.
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***Note:** Calendar includes five days off for inclement weather. If fewer than five days are taken, calendar will be adjusted accordingly.*

Playing **HARDBALL** with literacy

MSNBC's Chris Matthews headlines Springfield summit

BY RICH FAHEY

A nationally known broadcaster with some local ties lent his name to a community event promoting literacy at the Basketball Hall of Fame Oct. 4.

Chris Matthews, the news anchor and commentator best known for his nightly show, "Hardball with Chris Matthews" on MSNBC, headlined the literacy summit *United in Hope. A community comes together.*

The event was sponsored by the Literacy Works Initiative of the Regional Employment Board (REB) of Hampden County, the Davis Foundation, Springfield Public Schools and WWLP Channel 22. The event was hosted by WWLP's Veronica Cintron.

Matthews, a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, facilitated a town-hall-style, interactive forum.

"Education is everything in this country," he said. "Getting ahead is all about education."

Among the 450 attendees were U.S. Rep. Richard E. Neal, Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, other city officials, school officials and representatives of the faith-based community.

Students from Brookings School read short essays about their hopes and dreams.

Matthews served as the top aide to late House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill before beginning his broadcasting career.

"He's been a big Boston guy since he worked with Tip and he knows how hard educators work," said Gianna Allentuck, an adjustment counselor at the Brookings School. "He

Dr. Alan J. Ingram speaks at the literacy summit.

also has a big heart and he's always working to help the underdog."

Allentuck was instrumental in getting Matthews to come to Springfield. She served as a nanny to his three children from 1993-96, and has maintained a relationship with his family.

On weekends Matthews hosts the syndicated NBC News-produced panel discussion program, The Chris Matthews Show, and he also makes frequent appearances on many NBC and MSNBC programs.

Maura Geary, literacy program manager for the REB, said the focus of the event was to build on the literacy programs already in existence and stress the importance of community engagement and volunteering.

The REB is involved because of the important role literacy and education play in building a better workforce.

One of the agency's strategic goals is "Increasing Basic Skills for a Quality Workforce," taking a leadership role in aligning adult-education programs and services to integrate literacy and work-readiness skills with workforce development, hopefully resulting in career directed employment opportunities leading to economic self-sufficiency.



"Hardball" host Chris Matthews, far right, met with students, faculty and parents at the literacy summit, hosted by Veronica Cintron of WWLP Channel 22, center.