

THE LINK LETTER

(The Longmeadow Information Network for Kids)

Volume I, Issue No. 2

November/December 2000

Dear Reader:

The LINK's mission is to work toward improving and strengthening communication about school issues among the Town of Longmeadow elected and appointed representatives, School Committee, PTO and PAC leadership and the Longmeadow community. This goal will be accomplished by organizing and disseminating information related to the academic, physical infrastructure, and other needs of the Longmeadow Public Schools in a timely, concise and objective way.

We encourage you to share this information with your school community as you see fit. Whether distributing copies of this letter by mail or pouch, discussing its contents at your regular meetings or otherwise disseminating the information, it is our hope that by keeping our community informed, involved and actively engaged we will enhance the quality of education in Longmeadow.

The LINK Newsletter will focus in on some of the key school issues that may be of interest to our readership. For more information about topics covered or to provide suggestions or comments, please contact:

Melinda Cropsey 567-8019 cropsey@mediaone.net Ellen McKenna 567-1119 efmhome@aol.com
Robin Rabideau 567-2091 rabideaurobin@aol.com Janine McVay 567-6993 janinemcvay@aol.com

The information contained in this newsletter represents the view of The LINK. Official highlights of the School Committee meetings are found on the town website at www.longmeadow.org.

School Budget. We will all need to be aware of school budget issues this spring. The School Committee has reached out to the PTO and PAC leadership requesting to be included on their meeting agendas for the purpose of informing the school community about the budget and budget issues early on in the process. If you are interested in more information about the school budget this is an ideal opportunity to participate in the discussion. The school budget will be discussed in more detail in the January issue of The LINK.

Building Needs of the Schools.

- The official ranking list for all of the State Approved School Building Assistance Grant Applications ranked **Blueberry Hill School #124 and Wolf Swamp Road School #139**. Renovations are not expected to begin until September 2004.
- The **Longmeadow High School Building Needs Task Force**, newly formed to address the long-range needs of the high school, held its first tour of Longmeadow High School on 12/2/00 and of Amherst Regional High School (renovated 2 years ago) on 12/9/00. LHS students on the **LHS Student Advisory Council** reported to School Committee that the following improvements are needed at the high school: Heating (some classes too cold or too hot), Technology (not enough computers and printers for student use), more classes need to be added to curriculum, more smoke detectors needed, and lockers, water fountains, and ceiling tiles are broken.
- On December 4, the School Committee met to discuss the 2001 Capital Plan and the roofs at Blueberry Hill, Wolf Swamp Road, and Longmeadow High Schools. The Committee submitted to the Capital Planning Committee a **revised 2001 Capital Plan** which reprioritized the first year of the Capital Plan as follows:
 - #3 – ‘Bleacher Retrofit LHS Main Field’ would become #5
 - #4 – ‘Create a High School Administrative Office in Main Entrance’ would become #6
 - #5 – ‘Annual Steam Piping and Trap Repair’ would become #3
 - #6 – ‘High School Boiler Retrofit’ would become #4

The Capital Planning Committee was supportive of these requests and indicated the possibility of bonding for these repairs in the next fiscal year.

MCAS 2000. At the 11/27/00 School Committee meeting Dr. McGarry, Superintendent, presented his first observations on the 2000 MCAS scores. This report is available from any principal. In general, the district results for the year 2000 show an overall improvement of approximately 7% over the 1999 results. The Boston Globe

ranks Longmeadow's overall scores as the 12th highest and 5th most improved in the state. At the 12/11/00 School Committee meeting the six principals along with the curriculum coordinators for English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies presented their first reactions to the MCAS results. Work towards further improvement will continue.

MCAS 2001 testing schedule:

3 rd Grade:	April 9 th – 13 th	5 th , 6 th Grades:	May 14 th – May 25 th
4 th , 7 th , 8 th , 10 th Grades:	April 11 th (makeup day May 10 th) (English Language/Arts portion only)	4 th , 7 th , 8 th , 10 th Grades:	May 14 th – May 25 th (Remainder of exam)

District Learning Team and the Long-Range Plan. The District Learning Team (DLT) is comprised of all the principals, volunteer parents, teachers, administrators, students and community representatives. This group, who meets 3 hours once a month, researches and presents recommendations to the Superintendent (Dr. McGarry) and to the School Committee on a wide range of school related issues. The DLT has no decision-making role, but their work often provides the basis upon which the Superintendent and School Committee make important decisions. DLT participants have different experiences and backgrounds, ensuring that a wide range of perspectives is brought to bear on their recommendations.

One of the major accomplishments of the DLT has been to develop the ***Long-Range Plan*** for the Longmeadow Public Schools. The Long Range Plan is a four-year plan that focuses on improvements in the following areas: Educating All Students, Time and Learning, Staff Support and Training, Curriculum, Physical Facilities, Academic Achievement, Health and Wellness, Parent/Community Participation, and Technology. Carol Daigle of the School Committee is writing a series of articles for the Longmeadow News that explores aspects of the Long-Range Plan in depth. The first of these articles appeared in the 1/18/01 edition.

Annual Town Census: Remember to fill out and return your annual town census form. Census information is used to try to predict entering class sizes for the next year and planning for the number of teachers needed.

Other selected topics discussed at the November and December School Committee Meetings included:

School Committee meetings now begin at 7:00 PM. LCTV can now televise the meetings for a full 2 hours.

MASSEXCELLENCE/Baldrige National Quality Program- Longmeadow educators are evaluating feasibility of joining this group of business leaders and educators who are partners in promoting performance excellence based on the Baldrige criteria for education excellence.

Wolf Swamp Road School Improvement Plan: School Committee approved Revisions to Objectives #1 and #4.

Unit G Agreement: Addition of the "Fair Share" language in the Longmeadow Educational Association Unit G Agreement, previously approved by the Union, was approved by School Committee, effective September 2000.

Kindergarten Entrance Age: The Committee discussed changing the age-cutoff for children entering kindergarten (currently must be age 5 by December 31st to enroll). Committee will allow the DLT to review information available on issues related to age cutoff for entrance to kindergarten and to submit a recommendation to the administration.

Planning for Upcoming Major Staff Transitions: There will be a sizeable retirement of both teaching and administrative staff in the near future (10-12 retirements of teachers per year over the next 3 years at least). Recommendations are proposed to prepare for major staff transitions in the areas of policy and procedures, negotiated agreements, personnel, recruitment, and staffing.

Selection of Special Education Director: Selection process for choosing a permanent Special Education Director was discussed. Members of the Committee met with the Special Education Parent Advisory Council on December 6th to discuss selection process. A committee will be formed to carry out the selection.

New Stipend Positions: Dr. McGarry ready to hire for positions negotiated by the School Committee and the Longmeadow Education Association to allow for continuing improvement. Positions to be posted in January are Data Consultant, Parent Education Consultant, Survey Consultant, Improvement Consultant, Individual School Webmaster, District Webmaster.