

WHAT IS THE LINK Mission? The LINK or The Longmeadow Information Network for Kids mission is to work toward improving and strengthening communication about school issues among the Town of Longmeadow elected and appointed representatives, School Committee, the PTO/PAC leadership and the entire Longmeadow community.

Volume IV, Issue No. 1 September/October 2003

THE LINK LETTER

(The Longmeadow Information Network for Kids)

This issue covers three School Committee Meetings (September 22nd, October 14th and October 27th, 2003)

HIGHLIGHTS

Transition Planning and Superintendent

Search-The School Committee is being guided by a professional search consultant. The development of a mission statement is part of the process. At the 10/27 School Committee meeting, it was decided to add another School Committee member and a member of the Appropriations Board to the Search Committee. The School committee members are Carol Daigle, Jen Shapiro and Laura Bertelli. The search committee also has two teachers (one chosen by LEA and the other by lottery) and two parents, one senior citizen, one school administrator and one town official.

New England Association of Schools Visit

regarding LHS accreditation : This visit included 15 recommendations suggested by NEASC, most of which were funding and resource related. Longmeadow is still on warning status and has a 2 year interim report due in January 2004. The faculty at the High School will be writing these reports. The report must contain a plan for future funding. The School Committee will invite Appropriations and Capital Planning to join the Accreditation Follow-Up Team to discuss the report which must be filed. The efforts of ACT will also be integrated into the plan.

Parent Report Cards- The data has all been entered from the Parent Report Cards filled out in the Spring 2003. The data show continuous improvement in most areas over the last 3 years. The lowest area of expressed satisfaction was in the building cleanliness and attractiveness. Only 58.1% think their schools are clean and attractive.

Meet and Greet – The School Committee is looking into the feasibility of hosting one or two “meet & greet” sessions a year to be available to hear citizens concerns.

Sharing Town Services- There was a proposal to share town services (Buildings and Grounds) between schools and the town. After discussion,

consensus is that this will cut costs for all departments and improve the quality of services.

Blueberry/Wolf Swamp Renovations: The maintenance crew did the site work for the playscapes which saved the town money. The traffic has increased at both schools due to redistricting and the new construction. The town asked the School Committee to fund a Traffic Flow Study from the Capital Construction Plan. This was not approved. The Committee did approve \$12,400 in landscaping. Originally over \$1.2 million was budgeted for the contingencies which may arise. The project is nearly finished and only \$391,893 of that contingency fund has been spent. The lease for the portable classroom at Blueberry was terminated as of June 30, 2003.

School Activity Waiver Form: The language of the form was revised to make it more clear to parents as to what their rights are regarding their children’s participation in extra-curricular activities and volunteer activities. Parents are being asked to hold the Town and School Department harmless for any personal injury or property damage caused during these activities. New forms have been distributed.

Class Size Report: The School Committee voted to approve those High School classes that had under 10 students enrolled. It was noted that there were just five such classes to approve, while at the other end of the spectrum, there was concern voiced for the number of classes at the middle schools and high school that have over 30 students enrolled. With the exception of P.E. classes, a large number of these large classes are Honors and Advanced Placement classes.

High School Parking Issues: Parking is first come, first serve. There are 236 spaces available. 188 spaces have been reserved which has generated \$15,000 in income. There have been reports of some vandalism. There is no one available to patrol the lot, but the teachers with classrooms facing the lot keep an eye out.

Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative Propose adding a Middle School Program for Children with Autism at Glenbrook: Richard Labrie, Executive Director of the Collaborative presented a request to add new construction in the front of the Glenbrook Middle School where the flagpole currently stands. This would consist of two classrooms for an extremely successful program based on the TEACH program developed by the Univ. of NC which has been highly effective. A program exists in Agawam for elementary students, but the Collaborative is lacking such a program for middle school age students. Because no program exists, out of system placements must be made, which is costly to Longmeadow. The program would begin with 4 students and could hold up to 8 students. The principal of Glenbrook would oversee the faculty. The construction would cost approximately \$300,000, which would be financed by the Collaborative for 10 to 20 years with a tax exempt note. The Collaborative would pay \$1,200 per year to the facility for the use of heat and electricity. Richard Labrie states that existing Glenbrook space is not appropriate for the special needs of these students. A motion to accept this plan was made and approved. It will go to other boards in town for review.

Financing Curriculum Materials: Mr. Labrie mentioned the benefits of bulk buying and financing through the Collaborative. The town of Southwick is financing new curriculum materials by buying now and financing through the Collaborative over three years. Longmeadow could bundle with other towns by buying from the same publisher. There was a comment that we don't want other towns to influence our buying needs. There was a consensus to explore this idea.

Capital Plan: The School Committee approved the FY05 Capital Plan with 15 items on the plan arranged by Mr. Nembirkow and Dr. McGarry.

Excerpts from Dr. McGarry's Report on MCAS

- In the ranking of school systems, Longmeadow Public Schools ranked fifteenth in the state.
- In English, in comparison to 2002, our percent of students reaching the level of Proficient or Advanced went up 7% in grade 4 and 4% in grade 10, but down 9% in grade 3 and 4% in grade 7. A

number of districts went down at grade 3, but we need to look at both of our declines carefully. We have just this year started to replace our twelve year old reading series, and our teachers think that the new series is better aligned with current research and state standards. In math, the percent of students achieving Prof. or Adv. increased 3% in grade 4, 11% in grade 8, and 5% in grade 10. Achievement declined only in grade 6 – by 4%.

- In math, girls outperformed boys in grades 6 and 10; boys outperformed girls in grades 4 and 8.
- In English, we find something different: girls outperformed boys at every grade. Gender differences should be random from year to year and subject to subject. Nationally, girls are outperforming boys on all achievement tests.

Excerpts from Dr. McGarry's Report on SAT Scores and AP Scores from the class of 2003:

- 99% of seniors took the SAT's, Nat'l Avg. is 48%
- The combined scores increased by 29 points to 1138. Nat'l scores increased to 1026 and Mass. Scores increased to 1038.
- Girls scores increased 12 points in verbal and 15 points in math.
- Boys scores increased 3 points in verbal and 15 points in math.
- 173 students participated in AP testing. 86% of AP scores were 3 or above. 27% were 5.

TOWN MEETING Tuesday November 18, 2003, 7:30 p.m. LHS

The warrant articles being voted on can be found on the website www.longmeadow.org

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

ORGANIZATION: Our organization is made up of four co-chairpersons and a team of individual school representatives. This year's co-chairpersons are: Jeanne Lachiusa(567-3826), Kate Pappas(567-1714), Karolyn Ryan(567-2325) and Marcie Kearing(567-9843). This years' individual school reps. are: Center School: Maura Devlin, Faith Wint and Stephany Morehardt, Blueberry Hill School: Susan Oxx and , Lynn Gervais-Jones, Wolf Swamp School: Mary Ellen Brown and Charlene Metcalf, Glenbrook Middle School: Janine McVay and Chris Nault, Williams Middle School: Maria O'Reilly and Maura Thor.