

Andover

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT *newsletter*

May 2025



Welcome!

Welcome to the first edition of our districtwide family newsletter!

Improving communication with our stakeholders has been one of my priorities since I joined Andover as superintendent in July. It's also a key goal in our district's long-range strategic plan developed with the input from the community, parents, staff, and board of education.

The introduction of this publication is just one of the ways we're helping you stay informed of important district news, student activities, and the many exciting initiatives happening across our schools. We want you to feel connected and proud of all we're accomplishing together.

Thank you for being a valued partner in all that we do.

John Fritzky
John Fritzky
Superintendent



Kindergartener Caleb Smith reads with third-grader Taylor Zayas

March reading madness

At Florence M. Burd School, 16 books squared off in the building's own version of March Madness. Students in all grades read books and voted for their favorites in each daily matchup. In the finals, "Finding Winnie" by Lindsay Mattick nudged out "Knight Owl" by Chris Denise for the win.

Budget provides for security officers, HVAC upgrades

THE Andover Board of Education approved a budget for 2025-26 that maintains class sizes, enhances building safety, and upgrades critical infrastructure – all while staying within the state's tax levy cap.

The budget, approved on April 30, includes the addition of security officers at both schools as well as heating, ventilation, and boiler system upgrades. To accommodate rising enrollment at the elementary level, the district will also add three teachers, one each in pre-K (grant-funded), first grade, and fourth grade. This measure keeps class sizes down and aligned with board policy.

The 2025-26 spending plan will cost the average home \$195 per year/\$16.25 per month.

"This is a lean, responsible budget," said John Fritzky, superintendent. "Unfortunately, we're feeling the pinch from escalating costs in areas we can't control."

Notable increases include an \$809,000

rise (23%) in tuition for students attending Newton High School (\$4,500 more per student) and a \$370,000 surge in health insurance and employee benefits.

Although the district is projected to receive more state aid in 25-26, it does little to offset the overwhelming loss of funding since 2018 when the state recalculated its aid formula. Under the previous formula, Andover would have received nearly \$5 million more in aid over that time.

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History comes to the stage

THE famous New York newsboy strike of 1899 recently came to the Long Pond School stage with the production of “Newsies.” The stage version of the popular 1992 Disney musical tells the tale of a group of New York City newsboys who team up against powerful publisher Joseph Pulitzer.

About 35 students in cast and crew rehearsed for three months to bring the production to life. The show was directed by Alex McCully, a local director, actor, and writer. Music teacher Ryan Zuccheri served as musical director. Art teacher Claire Serratelli coordinated props and scenery.

Three shows were presented the first weekend of April.



Green goals become everyday habits

FLORENCE M. Burd School students are doing their part for Planet Earth.

Recycling and environmental friendliness have become defining parts of the school’s culture – and nowhere is that more visible than in the cafeteria. Walk into the cafeteria at lunchtime and you’ll see it in action: students automatically sorting their trash and recyclables into separate bins for food scraps, deposit bottles, juice pouches, and resealable plastic bags.

After each lunch period, students add the collected food scraps to the school’s composter. Thanks to the power of nature, with a little technological nudge, nutrient-rich compost is produced in just two weeks, ready for use as fertilizer for the school grounds. The composter was funded through grants from the state and Thorlabs, a Newton-based scientific research and product development



Frank Salvatoriello feeds the composter

company.

Representatives from Andover Township’s Clean Communities Program visit several times a year to keep students fired up about how even small actions can lead to a cleaner, greener world.

County groups honor LPS students

TWO Long Pond eighth-graders were recently recognized by separate county organizations.



Aidan Nguyen was chosen as the district’s best all-around student and honored by the Sussex County Superintendents Roundtable, an association of the county’s 28 school superintendents. Aidan and the other county winners received awards at the association’s annual ceremony held this year at Perona Farms.

“Aidan is more than just well-rounded,” said Superintendent John Fritzky. “He’s an academically gifted young man who has an incredibly bright future ahead of him.”

Aidan is student council president, performed in the school musical, and plays the alto sax in band.

The Sussex County School Counselors Association honored **Avery Brennan** with a Middle School Caring Award. Presented to one student



from each of the county’s 20 middle schools, the award recognizes exceptional kindness, leadership, and community involvement.

“Avery’s kindness shines through in everything,” wrote one teacher in a nomination. “Always smiling and ready to lend a hand, she goes out of her way to support her classmates and brighten everyone’s day.”

Teachers cited several of Avery’s activities in their nominations, including her work as student council vice president in helping to run a food drive to benefit area families in need.

She accepted her certificate of achievement with the other county recipients in a ceremony at Sussex County Community College.

ELA test scores skyrocket at Burd

EDUCATORS at Florence M. Burd School are wrapping up the second year of a major revision of the English language arts program – an initiative that sent state test scores soaring in 2024. Compared to 2023, the percentage of students scoring **at or above grade level rose 41% in third grade and 55% in fourth grade** (the only elementary grades in which state testing is done in ELA). Internal monitoring also shows notable gains across all other grades.

When you look at the neighboring

districts, Burd ELA scores are even more impressive. In **Sussex County** in 2024, Burd had the **highest percentage of fourth-graders** scoring at or above grade level and the **second highest percentage of third-graders** scoring at or above grade level.

The transformation in ELA has been powered by a three-year early literacy grant from the state. Driving the effort are teams from every grade level, supported by Principal Nicole Dilkes and Jennifer Reynolds, director of curriculum and instruction. The educators are collaborating with consultants from Rutgers to completely re-envision reading instruction.

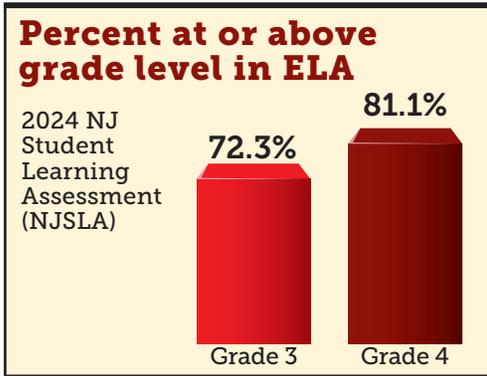
The work has included:

- Adding more **phonics** instruction
- Enhancing teaching strategies to **support struggling readers**
- Restructuring **the sequence of taught skills** so that they more effectively build on one another

- Designing more **active and engaging lessons**
- **Revising the curriculum** to further emphasize the most important reading skills
- Introducing new tests that can **pinpoint** the strengths and needs of each student
- **Monitoring progress** more frequently
- Increasing the use of **data** to guide instructional decisions

The initiative will continue throughout the summer and into 2025-26. The focus will be on examining and implementing best practices and new programs to work with students in small groups and individually.

Further curriculum revisions will also be made. The school goal is to have 80% of all students proficient in reading by the end of 2027.



Lights! Camera! Homeroom!

EVERY Friday, classroom whiteboards at Long Pond School light up with the latest episode of “Long Pond News,” a student-produced newscast.

In the pre-recorded videos, traditional school announcements about activities, events, and sports mix with feature stories and interviews with staff. Recent segments have included tips for

taking care of ChromeBooks and suggestions for doing well on tests. Graphics and video clips are edited in, adding some polish and pizzazz.

Teacher Tara Cotter guides the school’s multimedia club in all phases of production.

“I’m so proud of them,” she said. “I’m blown away by what they’ve done.”

The LPS news team includes eighth-graders Titus Dixon, Noah Moran, Jaeden Olivo, Noah Renaldo, Logan Sliker, Abraham Solomon, Jayden Stewart, and J.T. Toczynski.

Tori Caswell and Izzy Gabriel work on posters and hallways displays.



Meet our new school counselor

SIOBHAN Eilbacher is the new school counselor at Florence M. Burd School.

“I love working with elementary students because they have an innocence to them – this genuine desire to learn about themselves and the world,” she said. “I’m passionate about early intervention and the way those efforts can positively impact a child’s life.”

Eilbacher’s enthusiasm and advocacy have made an immediate impact.

“Siobhan brings such a warmth and spirit to the role,” said Nicole Dilkes, school principal. “Those qualities help her make deep connections with students.”

Eilbacher holds a bachelor’s in psychology and a master’s in school counseling.



All the news that's kid to print

FLORENCE M. Burd students are making headlines. Literally. The school launched its own newspaper this year. Filled with fun feature stories and interviews with staff members, the newspaper is sent out digitally to students and staff every four to six weeks.

The foray into journalism is an enrichment activity for the school's most talented young writers. The newspaper allows students to tap into past experiences, research subjects that interest them, and get to know staff members on a whole new level.

A recent issue discussed the

history of basketball, Disney World tips for spring-breakers, and suggestions on how to make and keep friends. An interview with the school's custodians, Kevin Decker and Dave Henderson, provided personal background and ups and downs of the job. (Fun: working with kids and riding the tractor; nasty: unpleasant cleanups.)

The young journalists meet with a faculty adviser once per week during their lunch period. At the sessions, they learn storytelling techniques and interview skills, and provide feedback on each other's articles.



Burd journalists Brooklyn Olivo and Rylee O'Sullivan at work



Helping those in need

STUDENTS at Florence M. Burd School recently learned important lessons about body safety from Belle Ward, prevention education coordinator at Ginnie's House. The Newton-based nonprofit provides therapy and family assistance to victims of child abuse.

To say thanks, the staff organized a collection of

snacks for Ginnie's House. Ward's visit was coordinated by health/PE teacher Jake DeAnda.

Above: Jennifer Reynolds, director of curriculum & instruction; Belle Ward from Ginnie's House; Superintendent John Fritzky; Principal Nicole Dilkes; and teacher Jake DeAnda

LEADing the way

FIFTH-GRADERS at Long Pond School recently concluded LEAD, the Law Enforcement Against Drugs and Violence program.

LEAD promotes positive attitudes, behaviors, and emotional regulation and also provides strategies to resist pressure to use drugs and alcohol. The proven program also fosters positive relationships between students and community police officers.

The 10-week-long curriculum, offered throughout the U.S., is popular in New Jersey schools. Officer Tom Walsh of the Andover Township Police Department taught the program at LPS.

"LEAD has become an important part of our students' growth, helping them make smart, confident choices both in and out of school," said Principal Bryan Fleming.



Officer Tom Walsh, LEAD instructor

"Officer Walsh brings real-world experience and a positive presence to our classrooms. The students not only learn critical life skills, they genuinely look forward to each lesson."

The fifth-graders received completion certificates in an awards ceremony.



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