

### Harvest time!

Long Pond seventh-grader Nate Gatto shows off a pumpkin grown by the school's Earth club. The club focuses on raising awareness about ecological issues and promoting sustainable practices such as gardening, recycling, and tree planting. The club also grew sunflowers, tomatoes, cantaloupes, zucchini, cucumbers, and carrots.

## Reading scores skyrocket

**R**EADING achievement has soared at Florence M. Burd School, the result of a major revision to the English language arts program. Powered by a three-year state literacy grant first awarded in 2022, the effort has transformed how reading is taught and supported in grades K–4.

Grade-level teams, guided by Principal Nicole Dilkes and Jennifer Reynolds, director of curriculum and instruction, have collaborated with literacy experts from Rutgers University to reimagine reading instruction from the ground up.

A cornerstone of this work is the use of DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment), a comprehensive tool that tracks reading development.

The DIBELS data tells a remarkable story. Here are some highlights comparing achievement at the start of the 2023 school year and the end of 2025:

**Oral reading accuracy:** The combined percentage of students reading at and above grade level (proficient) more than doubled in first and second grades. First grade rose from 38% proficient to 77%; second grade rose from 44% to 85%.

**Letter naming:** Kindergarten students improved from 23% to 83% proficient; first grade from 35% to 87%.

**Correct letter sounds:** Kindergarten reached 98% proficiency; first grade climbed from 31% to 97%.

**Composite scores:** Kindergarten proficiency increased from 0% to 91%; first grade from 10% to 85%; and second grade from 2% to 69%.

The success reflects a coordinated effort that has included more phonics instruction, better use of data to pinpoint the needs of individual students, and strengthening supports

for struggling readers, among a host of other strategies.

As the initiative enters its final grant year, educators are emphasizing the improvement of reading skills at the upper elementary grades by enhancing intervention strategies. The focus is also on ensuring that the supports, training, and data use that have made such a marked improvement remain embedded in daily practice for years to come.

**Long Pond ELA scores**  
*see back page*

## Showcasing Long Pond clubs

**L**ONG Pond offers a wide range of curricular and extracurricular activities that encourage students to explore their interests and discover their passions.

In September, the school hosted an activity showcase one evening. Students and parents met directly with teachers and advisers to learn about each program's focus, meeting times, and upcoming projects.

Clubs at Long Pond include the art club, book club, chess club, Earth club, homework club, media club, music ensembles, TREP\$ (entrepreneurship), and peer leaders. Each offers a unique opportunity to learn new skills, make friends, and



*LPS school psychologist Kelly Edsall, Earth club co-adviser with art teacher Claire Serratelli, discusses the program*

get involved in the school community.

From creativity and leadership to teamwork and innovation, Long Pond's clubs help students find their place and shine beyond the classroom.

## Cyberbullying presentation delivers powerful message

**T**HINK before you click. That was the message conveyed to Long Pond students during a cyberbullying prevention presentation conducted by Sergeant Jason Garrigan and Detective David Perez from the Sussex County Prosecutor's Office. The officers spoke candidly about the lasting impact of cyberbullying, which they noted often happens without the offenders understanding the seriousness of their conduct.

The theme was clear: Online actions have real consequences. The officers explained that even behaviors that may seem harmless, such as liking or sharing a post, can contribute to bullying and have serious repercussions. They encouraged students to take an active role as upstanders rather than bystanders by taking screenshots of evidence, informing a trusted adult, reporting the bully's account, and supporting the victim.

To emphasize the seriousness of cyberbullying, Perez and Garrigan



*At LPS, officers from the Sussex County Prosecutor's Office speak about cyberbullying*

shared examples from actual investigations, including one in which more than 20 teens had their phones and tablets confiscated. The real-life stories captured students' attention and made the messages truly hit home.

# Welcome!

## New security officers join district

**T**WO retired policemen, each with decades of law enforcement experience, have joined the district to serve as security officers. Their addition marks the first time in district history that dedicated school security personnel have been in place.

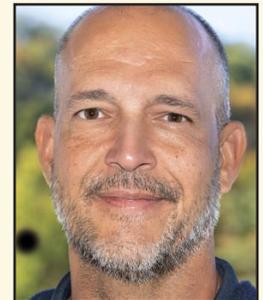


*Anthony Korn*

**Anthony Korn** and **Rob Tierney** bring to the district extensive backgrounds in public safety, crisis response, and community policing. Korn served as a police officer in the Borough of Maywood for 28 years; Tierney is a 20-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and a 20-year veteran of the Byram Township Police Department.

The officers assist administrators in refining emergency planning, conducting safety drills, interfacing with first-responders, and maintaining secure facilities.

Equally important, the officers' steady presence helps foster a safe and welcoming environment for students and staff.



*Rob Tierney*

According to Long Pond Principal Bryan Fleming, the officers have quickly become trusted members of the school community.

"They bring another level of oversight and preparedness to our daily routines," Fleming said. "What's really impressive is how naturally they connect with students. They offer guidance, reassurance, and overall just a calm presence that makes everyone feel more comfortable."

# Program builds character, connection

**E**NCOURAGING good character is an important part of education. In fact, New Jersey was one of the first states to make character education a formal part of the school day. At Long

Pond School, a new advisory program is bringing that commitment to life in a hands-on, student-centered way.

Twice per month during PEP (Pupil Enrichment Period), each teacher leads a group of

same-grade students. The small group sizes, a dozen or less, allow teachers to meaningfully interact with kids, connecting every student with at least one trusted adult in the building.

The sessions focus on a theme of the month (e.g. traits such as respect, responsibility, and kindness) with lessons and activities designed to make these ideas tangible.

Each meeting begins with a short video or discussion prompt, and usually ends with a hands-on project of some sort. These range from team-building challenges to crafts. The activities turn discussion into discovery; doing makes the learning stick. The first project each group worked on was the creation of a unique flag representing its shared identity and goals.

“The kids like the idea of connection and making links with adults and peers,” said school counselor Bradley Heinke, who coordinates the program.

“They enjoy the chance to step outside the usual classroom routine and talk about how to treat people, how to handle challenges, and how to build a positive community.”

During October’s statewide Week of Respect, for example, groups discussed what respect means, watched the animated “Color My World With Kindness” video on YouTube, and reflected on how a single small act can have a much larger impact.

To make the program easy for staff to lead, Heinke provides ready-to-use materials. Each participating teacher picks up a folder from the faculty room on the morning of advisory day, complete with a lesson plan and any needed supplies.

With its blend of creativity, reflection, and connection, the advisory program is helping to strengthen Long Pond’s school climate and sense of community.



*The kids like the idea of connection and making links with adults and peers.*

**Bradley Heinke**  
LPS counselor



## New clubs begin at FMB

Third- and fourth-graders at Florence M. Burd School now have more ways to dive into their interests and discover new passions. This year, the school launched three new clubs – book club, newspaper club, and chess club. Each meets during recess. Club rosters rotate every trimester so that all interested students have a chance to participate.

Fourth-graders Eleanora Reynoso, **above**, and Toby McCorkle, **right**, play chess in FMB’s library/media center

# Leading The Charge at FMB

**F**OURTH-GRADERS at Florence M. Burd School are stepping up as leaders through a new group called Leading the Charge. Under the direction of Principal Nicole Dilkes, these 20 student volunteers lend their time and ideas to help make the school an even better place.

“I created this program because our fourth-graders were eager to contribute to the school,” said Dilkes. “At this age, they’re becoming more responsible and mature, and I wanted them to feel a sense of ownership

and pride in their school.”

The students have already taken on a variety of projects such as designing tee-shirts for field day and organizing the board games, puzzles, magnetic tiles, and art supplies on the indoor recess cart. They also walked the grounds to pick up litter and brainstormed new recess activities. They’ll also be helping with preschool and kindergarten orientation.

*Fourth-graders Faith Knippler and Lia Yanoso organize the games and puzzles on FMB’s recess cart*



## Long Pond ELA scores eclipse NJ averages

**T**EST scores recently released by the state education department show that Long Pond School students continue to score higher than the state averages in English language arts.

The chart at right shows the percentages of students in New Jersey and at LPS rated as proficient (both those meeting and those exceeding grade level expectations) on the annual New Jersey Student Learning Assessments, which are administered every spring.

Two LPS students earned perfect ELA scores: Amelia Perry and Aden Nguyen. FMB’s Lia Yanoso also earned a perfect score.

<b>NJSLA ELA Proficiency</b> <i>*meeting + exceeding grade expectations</i>		
	State Avg.	Long Pond
<b>Gr. 5</b>	52.8%	79.5%
<b>Gr. 6</b>	56.1%	60%
<b>Gr. 7</b>	57%	75.6%
<b>Gr. 8</b>	57%	89.5%

## Students earn rewards for good conduct

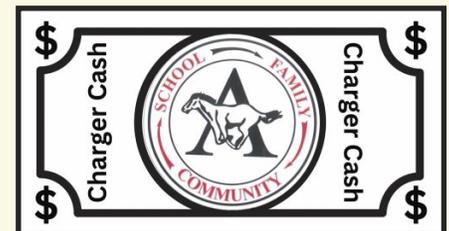
Long Pond School students are cashing in on their good behavior. The school has re-imagined its Charger Cash rewards program.

Any staff member in the building can award Charger Cash to students who exhibit a specific act of good conduct. The cash is submitted to school counselor Bradley Heinke and exchanged for a chance to win a snack from the cafeteria.

The school has also added a twist to the program that acknowledges the students in each grade who best represent the trait of the month. Teachers still nominate students and decide the

honorees, but rather than announce the Chargers of the Month over the PA system, they are awarded certificates in schoolwide assemblies.

An end-of-year breakfast is planned to recognize all the winners.



Student: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Staff: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Why: \_\_\_\_\_




## BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Dr. Robert Koroski**  
President

**Maria Dunbar**  
Vice President

**Jane Byron**  
**James Fetcho**

**Brian Hertenstein**  
**Steven Minnick**  
**William Porter**

**Lena Sciroppo**  
**Margaret Widgren**

**John Fritzky, Superintendent**

