Andover
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT newsletter
March 2026



State test results are best in county

Andover's overall NJSLA passing rates are highest in both English and math

DATA recently released by the New Jersey Department of Education shows that a higher percentage of Andover students pass English language arts and math exams than their peers anywhere in Sussex County.

Each spring, elementary and middle school students in grades 3-8 complete the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments – standardized exams that measure progress toward meeting state learning standards. In the most recent results, Andover's overall percentages of students meeting expectations (considered passing) combined with those exceeding expectations led the county in both ELA and math.

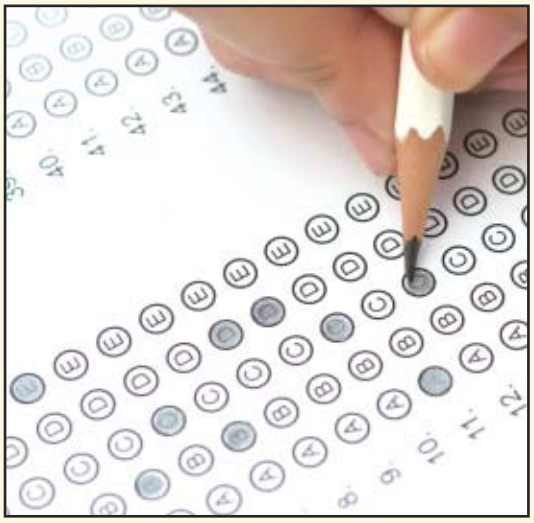
> **"The entire school community should be proud. The achievement speaks to the quality of our entire educational program..."**
>
> **John Fritzky**
> *Superintendent*

"The entire school community should be proud," said John Fritzky, superintendent of schools. "The achievement speaks to the quality of our entire educational program – teachers, instructional support staff, paraprofessionals, and our counselors who keep kids focused and ready to learn. And, of course, our hard-working students and their parents."

This spring, New Jersey will begin adaptive versions of state exams. Adaptive assessments adjust question difficulty based on how a student responds to previous questions.

The new exams are intended to deliver results that more accurately indicate a student's level of learning and help teachers more easily identify strengths and learning gaps.

This change will affect both the NJSLA and the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessments which are administered to high school students.





Additional pre-K class

This year, the district expanded its early childhood program by adding another pre-K section at Florence M. Burd School, increasing the total to five classes. The majority of funding for the pre-K program is provided by the state.

***Left,** pre-K teacher Mary Kasper delivers a lesson on letter sounds*

Powerful lessons on caring



AT Florence M. Burd School, interventionist Lauren Huffman and the second grade team have made supporting the Sparta Community Food Pantry more than just community outreach. The food drives shine the light on real-life problems such as poverty, childhood hunger, and food insecurity.

"These are life issues that exist in every community," said Huffman. "We want students to see that they can be hands-on problem-solvers and active community members – that even at 7 or 8 years old, they can make a difference. At the same time, they're learning the importance of empathy and compassion."

The experience began in the classroom. To build understanding, teachers read three age-appropriate storybooks with students: "Saturday at the Food Pantry," "Maddie's Fridge," and "Those Shoes." Through relatable characters and realistic situations, the second-graders explored themes of poverty, food insecurity, and kindness. (Copies of the books were purchased through a grant from the Andover Regional Education Foundation.)

Students then put their learning into action. In the fall, they organized a Thanksgiving food drive and visited the pantry to stock shelves and learn about the services it provides to local families. In December, they designed holiday placemats for pantry clients. In February, they assembled more than 200 Valentine's Day snack bags filled with hot cocoa mix, raisins, fruit gummies, and puffed rice bars.

The powerful instructional approach that connects classroom instruction with meaningful civic engagement is called service learning. Research shows that this type of instruction not only strengthens social-emotional skills such as empathy and collaboration, but also supports academic growth, critical thinking, and even emotional regulation.

> ***"We want students to see that they can be hands-on problem-solvers..."***
>
> **Lauren Huffman**
> *Interventionist*

Huffman is in the early planning stage of possibly expanding the model this spring with a third grade trip to the Culver Brook Nature Preserve. The visit would deepen students' understanding of ecosystems and the biological traits of plants and animals – key elements of the third grade science curriculum. The experience would also introduce key concepts explored more fully in fourth grade, including the structures of plants and animals that support survival, growth, and behavior.



***Above,** second-graders visit the Sparta Food Pantry; **right,** a second-grader packs a snack bag*

News Briefs

Andover honorees of the year

The Teacher of the Year and Educational Services Professional of the Year have been selected at Florence M. Burd School and Long Pond School. The honorees at FMB are special education teacher Nicole Smith and paraprofessional/office assistant Audrey D'Angelo; at LPS, math teacher Jenny March and social worker Paige Ortega.

They were honored by the board of education at its January meeting.

Student artwork published

Artwork from Long Pond students Cora Figueiredo and Pierce Stout was recently published in Rise, a magazine for Sussex County middle school and high school students. Their work featured anti-drug messages.

Rise is a biannual publication from The Center for Prevention and Counseling, a Newton-based organization dedicated to drug abuse prevention and emotional wellness.

D&D club begins



Florence M. Burd School recently started a Dungeons and Dragons club. FMB's newest club, still in its infancy, was formed in response to growing student interest in sci-fi and fantasy, spurred by the final season of "Stranger Things."

The 20 D&D club members first divided into teams that will compete against each other in the popular role-playing game. They then developed their characters and created figures to represent them.

School counselor Siobhan Eilbacher serves as adviser, with assistance from fourth grade teacher Rebecca Morrell.

Long Pond's WORLD CULTURAL Celebration Month

STUDENTS at Long Pond recently embarked on a global journey without ever leaving their classrooms.

To capitalize on the enthusiasm around the Winter Olympics, February was devoted to multicultural learning. In the classroom, there were social studies discussions on global awareness, art projects featuring national flags, and music lessons highlighting historically and culturally significant songs. Students also participated in spirit days, activities, trivia contests, and challenges with global themes.

> ***"There's been so much energy and genuine educational curiosity."***
>
> **Connor Mendes**
> *Teacher*

"Our staff, students, and whole community have completely embraced the month's emphasis on world cultures," said social studies teacher Connor Mendes, who helped plan the activities. "There's been so much energy and genuine educational curiosity."

The month of multicultural learning culminated February 27 with Around the World Cultural Celebrations Day. The afternoon event transformed classrooms into immersive cultural experiences. Students explored traditions, music, geography, and cuisine from four countries – one each from the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Teams of grade level teachers guided students through interactive learning stations about Costa Rica, Norway, South Africa, and Japan.

Classrooms were grouped by country. This made it easy for students to travel from station to station and fully immerse themselves in each nation's culture. Activities included building origami cranes while learning about Japanese traditions, participating in a percussion lesson inspired by Costa Rican music, and testing their knowledge with trivia games focused on Norwegian culture and geography.

The event concluded in the cafeteria where students sampled international foods contributed by families, staff members, and local businesses. The diverse menu provided a meaningful way for students to connect classroom learning with real-world cultural traditions.

The celebration was planned by the Schools to Watch leadership team (see back) to underscore diversity education and heighten global awareness. A cultural subcommittee organized the month of activities.



Anthony Mangels, Vincent Canniff, and Aubrey Kithcart, members of the new multicultural club, with world flags



Celebrating 90 and 100

EACH year, Florence M. Burd School celebrates the 90th and 100th days of school with activities that blend fun with kindness.

On the 90th day, students dressed in 1990s-themed outfits and lined up 90 cereal boxes they had collected. Then, they sent them tumbling in a domino chain.

For the 100th day, students dressed as centenarians (some with gray wigs and drawn wrinkles) and repeated the chain with 100 cereal boxes.

The food was donated to Benny's Bodega, an Augusta-based organization that supports individuals and families struggling to meet basic needs.

***Left,** 100 cereal boxes lined up and ready to topple*

LPS sets improvement framework

SCHOOL improvement is a never-ending process. Educators always strive to be the best they can be, to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of each student, and to provide enriching opportunities that help kids learn and grow.

Schools can chart their own improvement path or choose one of numerous frameworks as a guide. This year, Long Pond School has embraced the tenets of Schools to Watch, a program from a national organization dedicated to improving education and supports for middle school students.

> ***"The Schools To Watch process will help us reinforce what works well, while also mapping out areas where we can grow."***
>
> **Bryan Fleming**
> *Principal*

The Schools to Watch model identifies four key principles that high-performing middle schools should strive toward:

- **Academic excellence** – An educational program that fosters real-world skills and empowers students to be lifelong learners.
- **Developmental responsiveness** – Programs designed for the unique needs of early adolescents.
- **Social equity** – Ensuring every student receives quality instruction, appropriate supports, and a culture that values diversity and inclusion.
- **Organizational structures and processes** – Clear procedures, policies, and practices that cultivate and sustain excellence.

A Schools To Watch committee of faculty members was formed to guide the process. The teachers organized into four teams, one for each of the principles. The teams focus on strengthening existing programs and designing new initiatives. It's a structured approach for continuous improvement that helps educators reflect, innovate, and build on what is already effective.

"LPS is a small school that does so many big things for our students," said Principal Bryan Fleming. "The Schools To Watch process will help us reinforce what works well, while also mapping out areas where we can grow."

Long Pond intends to apply for the Schools To Watch recognition program in the future. It's a prestigious honor – only 17 New Jersey schools have been recognized in the program.

LPS plans to send delegations to visit nearby schools honored in the program to learn the initiatives that have led to their success. A group of teachers will also attend the New Jersey Association for Middle Level Education's annual conference later this month.

Of course, the real benefit of the Schools To Watch process isn't an award; it's ensuring that every student experiences a vibrant middle school that allows them to thrive and become well-rounded, responsible young adults.



Student council members Paige Garman and Gia Roque

The Souper Bowl!

The Long Pond School Student Council channeled the excitement preceding the Super Bowl and organized a food drive of soup and canned goods. Students and staff members donated more than 125 cans to the Sparta Community Food Pantry.

A bulletin board designed as a football field tracked the donations from each class. Maya Shah's fifth grade advisory group collected the most.

The activity was part of the Souper Bowl of Caring, a national movement from Tackle Hunger, a nonprofit that helps fight food insecurity through fundraising events that support local food charities.

Teacher Kristin VanBenschoten serves as student council adviser.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dr. Robert Koroski, *President*
Dr. Maria Dunbar, *Vice President*

Jane Byron
James Fetcho
Brian Hertenstein
Steven Minnick
William Porter
Kelsey Shalinsky
Margaret Widgren

John Fritzky, *Superintendent*

Michael Cravotta, editor • mkc@flight19media.com