



Literacy Night held

THE recent Literacy Night at Florence M. Burd School celebrated the success of a three-year, grant-funded literacy initiative that led to dramatic gains in reading and writing skills. The event also encouraged parents to continue fostering in their children a love of reading.

The special evening featured literacy games led by teacher volunteers, a visit from the Sussex County bookmobile, and prizes such as books and word games.

The revision of English language arts at FMB has involved several major components. These include expanded phonics instruction, enhanced teaching strategies to support struggling readers, curriculum revisions, new literacy screening tools, and increased use of student data to identify individual strengths and learning needs.

The success of the program recently led the New Jersey Department of Education to invite Principal Nicole Dilkes and Jennifer Reynolds, director of curriculum and instruction, to present at a workshop.



'Matilda Jr.' takes the LPS stage

STUDENTS at Long Pond School recently presented "Matilda Jr.," a musical based on Roald Dahl's popular children's novel, "Matilda." The story tells the tale of a brilliant, book-loving girl who discovers she has magical powers.

More than 30 students in cast and crew worked for three months

to bring the production to life. Cassidy Bailey starred as Matilda. Other performers included Ruby Farrell, Nolan Apgar, Hannah Matthes, Noah Bagaub, Olivia Yokaitis, and Lucy Black.

The show was directed by teacher Ryan Zuccheri and Andrew Renaldo.

Three LPS students honored

THREE Long Pond School students were recently recognized by professional organizations.

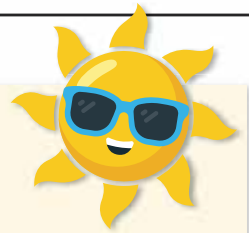
Amelia Perry was chosen as the district's best all-around student and honored by the Sussex County Superintendents Roundtable, an association of the county's school superintendents.

The Sussex County School Counselors Association honored **Esmeralda Baizabal** 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.

Abbey Johnson Villalobos was recognized by the Sussex County School Boards Association as an Unsung Hero. The awards are presented annually to students who make their schools better with their warm personalities, empathy, and concern for others.





Nathan Grenewicz, Owen Bezold, and Nolan Apgar show off their winning solar car

LPS shines in solar car competition

Students from Long Pond School captured the championship title at the Junior Solar Sprints, a hands-on STEM competition that challenges students to design, build and race solar-powered cars.

The winning team of Nolan Apgar, Owen Bezold and Nathan Grenewicz outperformed middle school teams from all of Sussex,

Warren, and Morris counties, as well as parts of Essex, Union and Passaic counties. The students took home the speed award and the overall championship trophy, which recognizes not only race performance but also engineering, craftsmanship, and the use of upcycled materials.

Science teacher Dave Petersen served as the team's adviser and coach.

a trip to the moon

THE crew members aboard Artemis II weren't the only ones to take a trip to the moon in April. Long Pond School seventh-graders made the voyage too. The students visited the Buehler Challenger and Science Center in Paramus and participated in a simulated lunar mission.

Working in teams as astronauts and mission control specialists, students completed a variety of tasks while navigating the challenges of space travel. As part of the immersive hands-on experience, the young explorers evaluated potential moon base locations, launched a

remotely operated probe to gather data, monitored life support systems, and responded to emergencies as they arose.

"By stepping into the roles of scientists, engineers, and astronauts, the seventh-graders gained a genuine understanding of the teamwork and specialized skills needed for space exploration," said science teacher Kristin VanBenschoten.

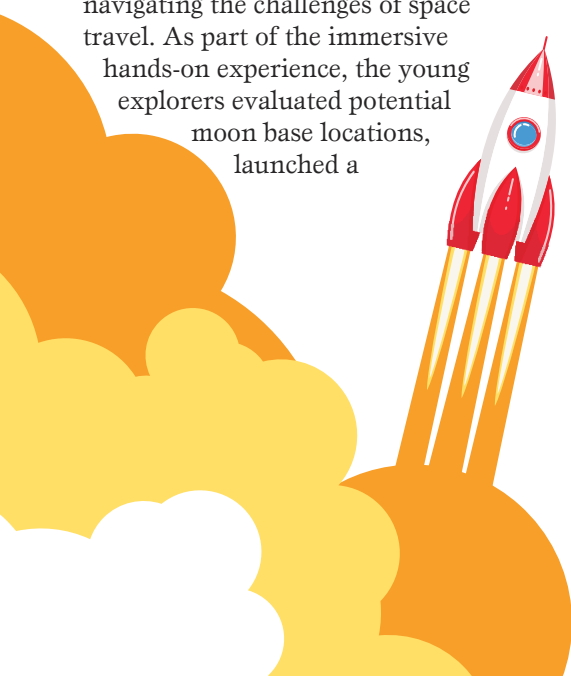
The experience challenged students to consider important real-world questions facing future space exploration: What do humans need to successfully live on the moon? How can astronauts sustain their physical and mental well-being during long-term missions? What obstacles must be overcome to establish safe lunar habitats?

The Buehler experience directly supported the seventh grade science



Top, Olivia Yokaitis works in mission control; above, Nolan Apgar operates a robotic arm

curriculum and aligned with Next Generation Science Standards focused on Earth and space science, engineering practices, and inquiry-based learning.



Helping kids conquer math

ANDOVER is on a mission to help students conquer math. New lesson strategies, activities, and approaches have been introduced following teacher training with renowned New Jersey educator Nancy Schultz of Conquer Mathematics.

This year, teachers in grades 3–8 attended a series of workshops at Schultz’s Pompton Plains office to explore her instructional philosophy and classroom practices.

Conquer Mathematics helps students understand math at a deep, conceptual level rather than simply memorizing procedures to reach the correct answer. Emphasis is placed on the early phases of the three-stage math instructional model, which takes kids from concrete/tactile then pictorial/drawing then finally abstract/symbolic.

Through the use of manipulatives such as blocks, tiles, and puzzles, students are able to physically explore mathematical ideas and better understand the “why” behind the math,

not just the “how.” It is an approach that FMB fourth grade teacher Danielle Owusu has long supported and made central to her instruction.

“**Sometimes you can actually see the moment when it clicks for them.**”

Danielle Owusu
Teacher

“I find that kids are only able to grasp concepts when they touch things, when they can move things, touch them,” said Owusu, who spent most of her career teaching middle school math. “I make them discover the connections on their own. Sometimes you can actually see the moment when it clicks for them.”

Over the course of three to five visits, teachers worked with Schultz in grade-level groups to take deep dives into state math standards and learn hands-on instructional activities tied to those concepts. It might be using tiles to calculate area or disks to build understanding of place value.

That hands-on exploration helps



students bridge the gap between understanding mathematical concepts and solving numerical problems.

“Nancy is amazing,” said Owusu. “She knows so much, and really understands what students need and how to reach them.”

Earth Day activities at FMB



Teacher Justin Iazzetti weighs a bucket of food waste as part of his audit of FMB’s recycling efforts

EARTH Day at FMB highlighted the school’s commitment to recycling and sustainability.

As part of the celebration, Earth Club adviser Justin Iazzetti reviewed the school’s recycling and composting efforts. The program has produced impressive results since its inception several

years ago. Each week, students help convert between 500 and 1,000 pounds of food waste into 50 to 100 pounds of nutrient-rich compost.

Iazzetti, a special education teacher, also worked with Beth Skoldberg’s fourth-graders and Melinda DuCharme’s kindergartners on a special project. The classes created “seed bombs” – disks made of recycled paper embedded with wildflower seeds.

In May, FMB received its recertification from Sustainable Jersey, an organization that supports sustainability initiatives of schools and communities.



District eyes move of 4th gr. to LPS

THE district is exploring the possibility of housing fourth grade at Long Pond School rather than Florence M. Burd School, beginning as early as 2027-28. Two parent meetings were recently held to gather input.

The possible move comes under consideration due to the lack of instructional space at FMB. While the district's expanding preschool program has successfully strengthened early vocabulary, math, and social-emotional skills, it has brought FMB to full capacity.

An independent demographic study projects enrollment to continue to

increase over the next several years, rising to a peak of 541 students in 2029-30. (That's an increase of nearly 80 students from 2021-22.) As a result, the FMB space challenges can only intensify.

To manage current space limitations, instructional and support areas have already been combined or repurposed:

- Art and music share a space
- The technology office is located inside the library
- Speech therapists share a room
- The special education teacher and

gifted & talented teacher share a room

- Two academic interventionists share a space
- Spanish and health teachers travel between classrooms with carts of supplies because they do not have dedicated rooms

During the meetings, parents discussed both the potential benefits and concerns surrounding the move.

The board of education is not expected to make a decision on fourth grade housing until next school year.

Flag Day celebrations

FLAG Day celebrations at FMB and LPS this June will engender a spirit of patriotism and national pride – unofficial early birthday parties for the country which turns 250 next month.

The celebrations will bring together the school community, town officials, and local organizations. The idea for the collaborative flag celebrations came from resident Rocky Rich and was shared with the district through Mayor Tom Walsh. Two decades ago Rich, a Marine veteran, arranged the donation of the 30 foot-long American flag on display at LPS. This year, he donated 100 flags for use on school property and small flags for every student.

Planning is still

underway; however, the celebration at LPS will include a rededication of the school's flag.

"It'll be great to see a show of respect for the flag and the love of country," said Walsh. "We've always had great relationships with the school district, and we're trying to work together more and build real synergy."

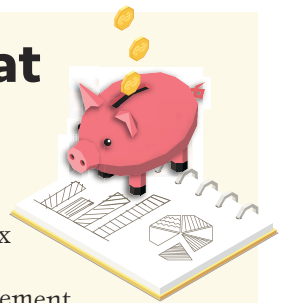
Invitations to participate in the ceremonies have been extended to the fire department, police department, scouting troops, and veterans.

Budget at 2% cap

THE 2026-27 budget meets the state tax levy cap of 2%, a significant achievement amid rising operational costs.

Like school districts across New Jersey, Andover faced sharp increases this year, including a roughly 34% rise in healthcare. By changing insurance carriers, the district was able to mitigate that rise while keeping the same level of care for employees. Combined with other cost-saving measures that do not affect the quality of instruction, the district has been able to hold the line on spending while preserving programs and services.

Assessed valuation changes mean tax rates will be affected differently in the borough and township. For the average home in Andover Borough, taxes are projected to decrease by \$76 per year. For the average home in Andover Township, taxes are projected to increase by approximately \$36 per year.



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