



THE JAMESTOWN PRESS

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U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 5
Jamestown, RI

www.JamestownPress.com

Volume 19, Issue 43

A weekly newspaper serving Conanicut Island

Thursday, February 8, 2007

Test scores for island schools reflect high-performing rigor

By Michaela Kennedy

The New England Common Assessment Program this week released its results of the elementary and middle school statewide testing last fall, and Jamestown School students achieved scores well above the statewide average.

According to a news release from the state Department of Education, test scores in reading and mathematics have improved statewide, with 62 percent of students achieving proficiency in reading, and 53 percent of students achieving proficiency in mathematics.

Writing was the only test category to suffer a loss of 5 percentage points, down to 46 percent proficiency.

Jamestown schools achieved a 78 percent proficiency in reading, 71 percent in mathematics, and 63 percent — grades 5 and 8 only — in writing. All scores reflect Lawn and Melrose Avenue schools' high performing status last year in the state as well as nationally.

The NECAP is the result of collaboration between New Hampshire, Vermont and Rhode Island to create a set of assessments for

grades 3 through 8 to meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The NCLB says that all students must be proficient in reading and math by 2014.

Reports based on the NECAP tests provide information to schools and districts to better serve the academic needs of students and to evaluate and improve curriculum and instruction. The NECAP Student Report gives information about individual student performance for schools and parents or guardians.

According to the Guide to Us-

ing the NECAP Reports, parents and guardians are encouraged to contact the student's school for more information on his or her overall achievement after reviewing the student report.

A law mandating personal literacy plans for struggling readers in kindergarten through grade 3 passed in 2002 and went into effect in 2004, when it was also extended to grades 4 and 5. According to the Providence Journal earlier this week, about \$13 million in state aid flowed to schools last year for literacy aid, enabling

districts to hire additional reading teachers and literacy coaches, offer special training to faculty, and buy reading materials.

Jamestown School Principal Kathleen Almanzor noted that the schools have an assessment committee, with members from the School Improvement Team, to do an in-depth study of the NECAP results. A School Report Night, where the school will present the findings from the NECAP tests, will be announced for an evening

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Council interviews solicitor candidates

By Dotti Farrington

The Town Council last week interviewed seven individual lawyers or groups of lawyers who want to take over the consortium of attorneys serving as the Jamestown town solicitors for the last four years.

Three applying for only part of the work were not interviewed. Town Solicitor J. William W. Harsch, a principal applicant, was unable to keep his interview appointment because of a sudden seasonal illness.

The interviews were conducted last week on Thursday and Saturday. The councilors wanted to conduct the interviews in executive session, but several months ago in a legal advisory on open meetings and public access Harsch ruled that contractors, including professionals in several categories, were not town employees and therefore not entitled to closed meetings as provided for town personnel.

The councilors wanted to discuss the interviews and make their decision about appointments in executive session at their special meeting of the Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners Monday, but they were advised by Town Administrator Bruce Keiser that notice of the session and appointment as agenda items were not provided in time for that meeting. Even if posted as an agenda item, Harsch's 2006 ruling and explanation of the state Open Meeting Act seemed to suggest that it could not be done legally in executive session, Keiser said.

The councilors talked about developing a point system for scoring the applicants, and said they might re-interview one or more because in other situations they had found

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Ice hockey island-style

Islanders of all ages took to the ice Sunday on this north end pond for an informal hockey game. Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten



Learning from hot air

Eighth-grade science teacher Jim Kaczynski releases a student-made balloon filled with hot air last week at the Lawn Avenue School. Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten

Student assistance program seeks share of federal funding

By Sam Bari

Rhode Island will receive \$2.5 million in federal funds annually for the next three years, and it is questionable whether Jamestown will receive a portion of those funds, according to Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force Coordinator Laura Hosley.

"That money is going to 14 task forces around the state with the worst statistics. We don't know how much, if any, is going to benefit us," she added.

"It is crucial that we get more funding in order for our program to survive," she continued. "The problem is, our program is working. We have the statistics to prove it. Consequently, we don't appear to be in need because our stats are good."

According to Hosley, substance abuse prevention is invisible. When it works, nobody knows, because nothing appears to change.

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Water plant construction could begin this summer

By Dotti Farrington

No residents attended the public hearing Monday on the environmental impacts of the new \$3.5 million municipal water treatment plant to be built next to the existing plant on North Main Road, just north of the Great Creek.

The hearing was conducted in barely 20 minutes at a special meeting of the Town Council sitting as the Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners. Councilors also met an hour before the hear-

ing for an executive session on unspecified litigation and resumed the closed session after the hearing.

The price tag for the plant, to be completed by the end of 2008 if there are no further delays, is \$1 million more than projected in 2004, when it was defined and later approved as part of a \$6.2 million bond issue that included construction a second water storage tower

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