

Annual Report 2006
Williamsburg School Department

School Council: Efforts this year included serving as the Title I Parent Advisory Committee, Review Committee for District Wellness Protocols, Advisory work to the Special Education Parent Advisory Committee, and finally the revision of the School Improvement Plan. Membership included; Kate Dollard, Parent (2nd Year of 3 year term), Lorrie Cote, Parent (3rd Year of 3 year term), Lisa Peloquin, Teacher (2nd Year of 2 year term), Karen Schweitzer, Teacher (2nd Year of 2 Year term), David Sprague, Adjustment Councilor (2nd Year of 2 year term), Jeff Gelbard, School Committee Liaison (Appointed by the school Committee 1 year term), Vacancy - Community Member, Alfred Venne Principal

Parent/Community School Involvement

Science Night/Spaghetti Dinner: On March 24 Over 250 people were seated for dinner as grade 6 students worked as Servers. Science demonstrations and many hands on activities provided for focused science learning through out the event. David Sprague the school adjustment counselor was joined by a number of student drummers to add an entertainment element to the evening. Finally 12 lucky people walked away with theme baskets created by the PTO. The funds raised will help to support efforts to improve the outdoor school spaces used by the students.

Playground update – Under the able leadership of Donna Gingras, the PTO completed its' final phase of a 3 year fundraising effort for the purpose of updating some aspects of our school playground equipment. During the month of October the PTO received a check in the amount of \$5000 from Florence Savings Bank, \$2000 from the Brassworks reuse committee. In all the PTO is raised nearly \$30,000. The PTO playground subcommittee under the direction of parents Paul Wetzel and Julie Elias successfully installed the major portion of the highly anticipated playground update at the Helen E. James School Playground. In all about 50 – 60 people participated in the installation process that included everything from digging holes, putting equipment together to the final spreading of over 100yards of bark mulch. The Playground unofficially opened at 1:30 PM Weds. Nov. 22. Formal dedications will occur at a later time.

The Williamsburg Cultural Arts Committee (CAC) coordinated the offering of a 4-session workshop for students during the month of January 2006. The event sponsored by CAC volunteer helped raise over \$1,400. The funds raised will be used to help sponsor the CAC sponsored "Arts Adventure Day". The workshops include "Digital Photo Fun", "Jump Up/Jump Down", "Drama Time" and Recycled Arts". Over 40 children participated in this workshop series. Most significant is the fact that the CAC volunteers create Arts events that in turn help sponsor more significant arts events for the school population. The CAC instructors for this event were, Cynthia Porier, Jeff Bliss, Victoria Loud and Natalie Sowell. The CAC successfully sponsored the second annual Arts Adventure Day on Monday, March 13th. The day welcomed artists from our own parent community, the local college community and the community at large to who shared their special talents with our students. Each class experienced three different art forms (dance, theatre, visual art, music) throughout the morning, culminating in a special performance for the Dunphy School students by "5-Alone," an acappella group from PVPA.

James School Mural Project: For three years Fertile Ground has raised funds for a collaborative partnership with Nuestras Raices, a community development organization in Holyoke, in which youth leaders, trained in gardening and farming, share their knowledge of agriculture and Puerto Rico with James School children and families during garden work days. They are paid for their work with James School children, which also includes corresponding with Kindergarten children in Spanish as pen pals, sharing recipes, and hosting a field trip to the Nuestras Raices community center, gardens, urban farm, organic bakery, and traditional Puerto Rican Cafe in Holyoke. These youth helped build the garden and sprinkler system at the James School.

On Saturday March 25 there was an enormous turn out of kids, parents and teachers that managed to draw the mural image on large panels in record time, while having fun together. Many cooked delicious healthy food for the potluck. In addition neighboring businesses made contributions including The Williamsburg Market for juice, Evolution (in Florence) for vegetarian chili, Rugg Lumber, for the panel boards and primer. This project is made possible with funds from the New England Grassroots Environment Fund, The Haymarket People's Fund, Art Angels, and the Community Foundation of Western MA.

The James School children and their teachers developed the mural through drawings and collage. It was designed and laid out by the Nuestras Raices youth, and painted on panels in art class during the spring by the K - 3rd graders using kid friendly paint. The mural panels were mounted on the empty wall space near the rear exit of the James School building during the annual Nuestras Raices community garden day in late May.

Facility Updates

Lighting update – The energy audit was completed over the summer. Prism Consulting successfully arranged the updating of 75 lighting fixtures over the Thanksgiving Day weekend. The update included the Anne T. Dunphy School gymnasium, the main hallways, the east side classrooms and bathrooms. A number of lights and all the exits signs were updated at the Helen E. James Building.

Reserve Fund Grant: The district was notified that \$19,000 was allocated to the Williamsburg School District as part “Pot Hole” grant funds. Facility work completed with these emergency funds included; Re-installation of the warped PK floor, the replacement of all James School lead-bearing drinking fountains, and the disconnection of all classroom drinking water feeds of the Anne T. Dunphy School – installations of non-lead bearing water feeds to two new fountains and the kitchen.

Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) conducted a school building Need Survey in Williamsburg during the first week of December 2005 as part of a statewide data collection process. Each school building was assessed is now part of the State baseline of school facility information. The MSBA is beginning to accept applications for major facility upgrade July 1, 2007. The process begins with a “Statement of Interest” The town Selectboard and School Committee submitted a joint “Statement of Interest” to the MSBA in December 2006.

School Department Staff Changes

New Staff/Changes

Ryan McKnight: Serves as a part time afternoon custodian.

Renee Harvey: She was released from her Paraprofessional Instructional position and hired as the School Department Food Service Director.

Staff no longer with the School System

Roberta Ruggerio; Williamsburg Food Service Director for over ten years left the service of the Williamsburg Public Schools this year.

Nancy Forster: Served over 5 years as a Special Education Support staff person and substitute teacher left the service of the Williamsburg Public Schools this year.

Donna Mimitz: Served over 5 years as a Preschool teaching assistant, substitute teacher, and crossing guard left the service of the Williamsburg Public Schools this year.

John Marti: Served over 5 years as a Custodian of the Helen E. James School left the service of the Williamsburg Public Schools this year.

Tom Neilson: Served as Spanish Language Teacher left the service of the Williamsburg Public Schools this year.

Susan Smith: Grade 3 teacher has taken a professional leave of absence from teaching during the 2006/07 school year

Program Events

School Musical: Friday April 7, 2006 Martha Cycz directed a wonderful school musical "Dance to the Beat" – A World of Rhythms and Dances. 14 musical performances that included every student from every class demonstrated some of the many rhythms and dances that make up today's music. The continents of Europe, South America, Africa, Southeast Asia and North America were represented during the show. Music came to life through drumming, dance, violin, guitar, piano, dulcimer, and most certainly voice. All had many wonderful performances.

Simple Machines Day: Monday April 10, 2006. Parents Sue Froehlich and Paul Wetzel working with grade 1, 2 and 4 teachers pulled together a day of hands on science. Pulleys, inclined planes, wheelbarrows and rollers made heavy work simple through simple machines. All grade 1, 2 and 4 students were engaged for over 2 hours in real life demonstrations of simple machines. It is no coincidence that this aspect of physics and engineering is part of both the grade 1-2 and grade 4-science curriculum.

Bonnie's Program: Enrollment is up this year over last with daily attendance averaging around 10 students. In all over 20 different children are served. In addition the childcare component of the program Kung Fu is being offered on Tuesday afternoons in the Gymnasium. Bonnie's program is projecting daily attendance during parent teacher conference 1/2 days of nearly 20 children.

Respectfully Submitted

Alfred J. Venne
Principal