

April 2005

**Ensuring** opportunities for learning, personal growth & social responsibility

# Middle School expansion to start

### Projects part of \$16 million renovation & construction referendum

Work will be starting soon at the O'Rourke Middle School on Phase Two of the district's fiveyear, \$16 million renovation and construction campaign, a campaign that BH-BL voters approved in October 2003. Several construction projects at O'Rourke are too large and complex to complete during the summer months and must get underway while classes are still in session. Much planning has been done on how to keep any disruption of school programs to a minimum.

#### Last summer's projects smaller

Phase One work in the construction campaign occurred last summer. Those projects cost \$1 million and involved replacing the High School library window wall, redesigning and repaving the Charlton Heights Elementary parking lot, several smaller projects at Charlton Heights, and roofing work at Stevens Elementary and the district office.

Phase Two projects are expected to cost \$8.1 million and take two years to complete. Most will take place at the Middle School. These include:

Reconstructing and expanding the cafetorium, stage, and kitchen area out the back of the building,

- Adding space to create a new, first-floor library media center on the front of the school,
- Converting the current library to four classrooms,
- Replacing the school's original 42-year-old boilers,
- Upgrading the building's electrical service and fire alarm system,
- Building two new classrooms on the western end of the 6th grade wing, and
- Renovating science labs, hallway ceilings, and some roofing.

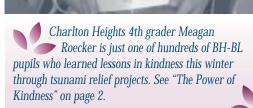
continued ▶ page 7

### 2005-06 Budget nearly complete

In developing the school budget in recent years, BH-BL administrators and Board of Education members have faced some pretty daunting challenges from new state mandates and the post 9/11 economic downturn. This winter our district saw more of the same, but we will benefit from the first on-time state budget in 21 years.

As this newsletter goes to press, the Board is considering a 2005-06 budget of \$44.7 million, which represents a spending increase of 8.7% and is expected to result in an average tax increase of 5.7%. The formal Board vote on the budget is

continued ▶ page 8



KINDNE

# Measuring Up The 2004 District Report Card

INSIDE: See the special section on pages 3-6.



# 2

# Pupils learn the power of kindness

f you think there's not much kids can do to help tsunami victims in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, you'd better think again. Pupils in all five Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake schools not only collected significant amounts of money for tsunami victims this winter but found some unique ways to send their good wishes overseas.

Stevens Elementary 5th graders made greeting cards to send to hospital patients in Sri Lanka with words of

encouragement and love in Sinhalese characters.

# A sampling of the Charlton Heights pupils' kind deeds

As described by themselves or their parent

Made a snack for her brother.

Cleaned up the basement.

Made breakfast for gramma.

Cleared the table.

I picked up my room without being asked.

Read to my grandpa.

Used a nice tone in talking with my sister.

Helped her brother find a show & tell item.

Helped carry the groceries.

Told mom & dad "I love you."

I washed the bathroom counter.

Gave my sister the non-burnt waffle.

Took care of her pets.

Tucked his sister into bed.

Gave mom a back massage.

Brought in the garbage can.

Shared her candy with her brother.

Helped clean the car.

Emptied the dishwasher.

I found the hamster so gramma could lie down.

Groups in every school came up with ways to raise money for tsunami relief. Over 200 Middle School pupils made burgundy and white pinon ribbons and sold them to family and friends, raising \$1,004 for **UNICEF.** The Pashley Student Council sponsored a coin drive that collected \$1,330 for UNICEF. The High School Student Government Organization has raised \$310 to date and has scheduled an April 26 Staff Talent Show to benefit tsunami victims. Stevens Elementary pupils are selling blue "Wave of Hope" wristbands, which they expect will generate \$1,500 for the Red Cross.

#### **Project Kindness**

Of all these projects, the students in Alison Donofrio's 4th grade class at the Charlton Heights Elementary School may have had the most fun with their fund-raiser: Project Kindness. After the tsunami, the students initially wanted to send clothes to Asia, but Ms. Donofrio suggested they research what was needed most. From the Red Cross website, students learned that desperately needed items included sleeping pads (\$2), mosquito netting (\$5), and waterproof tents for a family of five (\$175).

Armed with this knowledge, the students set out to raise \$500 with "Kindness Coupons" and their schoolmates' help. Charlton Heights pupils gave the coupons to family members and friends and performed kind deeds for them in hope that the kindness recipient would donate some spare change that the child could deposit in his or her classroom "Kindness Jar" along with the completed coupon. The goal, says Ms. Donofrio, was that "our children will see that even the smallest efforts can make meaningful changes in the lives of others." Each of Ms. Donofrio's students took responsibility for the daily counting of money from one classroom.

By the end of the one-week campaign, the school's Project Kindness bulletin board was covered with hundreds of completed yellow coupons. Most coupons were returned with coins or a few dollars, but some parents and grandparents donated more, especially on the fifth and final day of the campaign, when the students were astonished to learn that altogether their acts of kindness raised \$1,815 for the American Red Cross International Response Fund.

# District wins safety award

Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake has received a School Safety Excellence Award from the Utica National Insurance Group. For 2005, BH-BL received the highest level award, titanium level with honors, and is one of only 10 districts in the state to also receive a \$500 award.

The award not only translates into lower premiums on our liability insurance policy, it demonstrates that the district has taken a comprehensive approach to safety that extends all the way from Board of Education policies on student travel to checking for broken tree limbs near playgrounds.

Criteria for the award include: safety policies and procedures, transportation in the district, foreign and domestic travel, sexual misconduct liability, phys. ed. and athletic safety, indoor air quality, safety committees, technology class safety, use of facilities by outside groups, construction projects, use of outside contractors, fire safety, chemical safety, vandalism, and fiscal liability.

# Measuring Up

The 2004 District Report Card

A Summary & Explanation of Data in the New York State School Report Cards

#### **Elementary & Middle School Exams** Results for: 2001-02 2002-03 2003-04 Students Scoring Below At or Above Below At or Above Below At or Above State State State State State State Standard Standard Standard Standard Standard Standard Grade 4 English BH-BL 19% 19% 20% 80% 81% 81% Similar schools 23% 78% 22% 78% 23% 77% 62% 36% 38% 63% State average 38% 64% Grade 4 Math BH-BL 13% 87% 8% 93% 5% 95% Similar schools 15% 85% 9% 91% 8% 92% State average 32% 68% 22% 79% 21% 79% **Grade 5 Social Studies BH-BL** 99% 9% 91% 9% 92% Grade 8 English BH-BL 27% 73% 39% 61% 38% 62% Similar schools 38% 61% 38% 61% 37% 63% State average 44% 54% 52% 47% 56% 45% Grade 8 Math BH-BL 29% 27% 73% 71% 18% 82% Similar schools 25% 35% 65% 29% 71% 76% State average 53% 48% 49% 51% 43% 58% **Grade 8 Social Studies BH-BL** 10% 90% 23% 77% 29% 71% **Grade 8 Science** BH-BL 4% 96% 6% 94% 8% 92% Similar schools 7% 93% 8% 92% 10% 90% 23% 76% 27% 73% 30% 70% State average

## New York State 4th, 5th & 8th Grade Exams



The charts on this page summarize data from the New York State School Report Cards on state exams required for all elementary and middle school pupils. Data is rounded to the nearest whole percent and includes all children, both general education and special education pupils.

Ideally, schools would like to have 100% of their children scoring at or above the state standard, which is the right-hand number in each set of numbers in the chart on the left. But a few pupils' disabilities are such that they will never reach the state standard on these exams.

The New York State School Report Cards demonstrate that, in almost every instance, BH-BL pupils continue to outperform pupils in similar schools in English, math, and science. (See page 4 for a definition of similar schools.) Unfortunately the state provides no comparative data on the social studies exams.

Since success on five Regents exams is now required for high school graduation, teachers use pupils' exam scores in earlier grades as checkpoints to help identify students who may need extra help to meet graduation requirements. This extra help can take various forms, from being assigned to extra sessions in a school resource room, to working with teachers after school in formal or informal programs, attending summer school, or being placed in classes that cover basic subject matter at a slower pace.

Grade 4 Science Exam						
Percent Scoring	At or Above t	he State-Desi	gnated Level			
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04 *			
BH-BL	91%	89%	96%			
Similar schools	89%	89%	95%			
State average	69%	70%	79%			

<sup>\*</sup> A new exam was introduced in 2003-04, so data is not directly comparable to earlier years.

# Measuring Up

# The 2004 District Report Card



A Regents diploma is now the goal for ALL high school pupils. Students must pass five Regents exams (English, Math A, Global History, U.S. History plus one science exam) with a 65 or higher to receive a Regents diploma.

Starting with the Class of 2004, students who wish to earn an Advanced Regents diploma or a diploma with a BH-BL Merit seal must pass eight Regents exams: the five above plus a foreign language exam, a second math, and a second science exam. Students can take these exams several times if necessary to pass them.

To help schools learn how well their pupils are doing compared to other schools and compared to the previous year's pupils, the State Education Department now presents English and math Regents results based on a student's "cohort." (See below.) A cohort is a group of pupils who entered grade 9 together in a specific fall. The goal is that a higher percentage of pupils will be successful on these challenging exams with each passing year.

I						
High School A	chiever	nent aft	er Four	Years of	f Instruc	ction
	1998 (	Cohort	1999	Cohort	2000	Cohort
	(~Class	of 2002)	(~Class	of 2003)	(~Class	of 2004)
Students Scoring a	Higher	85 or Higher (Mastery)	65 or Higher (Passing)	85 or Higher (Mastery)	65 or Higher (Passing)	85 or Higher (Mastery)
Regents Englis	sh exan	n				
BH-BL	87%	38%	87%	38%	90%	46%
Similar schools	88%	33%	87%	44%	88%	44%
State average	76%	24%	73%	32%	78%	34%
Any Regents N	/lath ex	am				
BH-BL	78%	35%	82%	48%	90%	41%
Similar schools	87%	50%	86%	51%	83%	42%
State average	73%	38%	71%	38%	70%	33%

riigii School i	regenta L	vailio	
BH-BL pupils	passing wi	th a 65 or	higher
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
English	88%	88%	95%
Math A	79%	82%	96%
Math 3	89%	85%	_
Math B	_	_	90%
Global History	92%	89%	86%
U.S. History	85%	94%	94%
Earth Science	94%	95%	97%
Biology	97%	94%	95%
Chemistry	80%	81%	78%
Physics	92%	99%	92%
French	89%	98%	98%
German	97%	97%	97%
Spanish	100%	100%	98%

High School Regents Exams

BH-BL students consistently outperform state averages and perform as well or better than students in similar schools. An increasing number of our students are passing these key Regents exams, and a high percentage of pupils not only pass but demonstrate mastery on these exams by scoring an 85 or better.

#### What are "similar schools"?

Since socioeconomic factors influence school performance, the State Education Department uses "similar schools" categories to group schools that:

- Teach the same grades,
- Have the same poverty rate as measured by pupils in the free lunch program, and
- Have the same "need-to-resource-capacity" index, a complex measurement of wealth and demographics.

The five BH-BL schools are judged to have "low" participation in the free lunch program and "average" need-to-resource-capacity, and are compared to the 224 elementary schools, 65 middle schools, and 85 high schools statewide that share these characteristics. Locally these include schools in the Scotia-Glenville and Shenendehowa districts.



### **Graduation Data**

Starting with the Class of 2000, New York State graduation requirements have risen a bit higher each year. Since then students have had to pass at least one additional Regents exam each year or have had to achieve a higher exam passing score in order to earn a Regents diploma. This means that one must be cautious when comparing Regents diploma rates from one year to the next — the diplomas are not quite the same.

The good news is that most BH-BL pupils are earning a Regents diploma, despite the higher graduation standards. In fact, more than half of our students go beyond the Regents diploma to pass the additional courses and Regents exams needed also to earn a Merit seal on their diploma.

The state's "safety net" of allowing pupils to graduate with only a Local diploma was scheduled to disappear with the class of 2005, but that deadline has been extended until the class of 2009. For

"Cohort"	Graduation	Rate
----------	------------	------

A new state calculation that measures how many pupils who entered high school in the fall of 1998 and 1999 actually graduated in four years with either a Local or a Regents diploma — as opposed to dropping out, receiving an IEP certificate, or remaining in school for another year or more to complete their requirements.

	1998 Cohort	1999 Cohort	
BH-BL High School	94%	93%	
Similar schools	91%	88%	
All NY public schools	77%	76%	

SAT Sco	res:	Verk	oal	Math		
Class of:	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
BH-BL	534	538	543	545	549	558
NY State	494	496	497	506	510	510
Nation	504	507	508	516	519	518

BH-BL Graduation Breakdown						
Class of:	2002	2003	2004			
Total graduates	227	250	275			
Regents with Merit seal*	58%	60%	56%			
Regents diplomas total	83%	70%	72%			
Local diplomas only	16%	30%	28%			
Post-Graduation Plans						
Four-year college	64%	60%	53%			
Two-year college	<u>27%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>33%</u>			
Total to higher education	91%	92%	86%			

<sup>\*</sup> For a BH-BL Merit diploma, students must pass all Regents diploma requirements plus additional courses and exams.

special education pupils, the Local diploma option has been extended until 2013.

Regents Diploma Rate Comparisons					
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04		
BH-BL High School	83%	70%	<b>72</b> %		
Saratoga County average	65%	63%	71%		
Schenectady County average	62%	63%	68%		
Suburban Council average	76%	74%	76%		
All NY public schools	56%	56%	57%		

High School "Non-Completion" Rates					
A new state calculation that includes both dropouts & pupils leaving school to enter a GED program.					
2001-02 2002-03 2003-04					
BH-BL High School	0.3%	1.0%	1.5%		
Saratoga County average	1.5%	2.2%	3.3%		
Schenectady County average	4.4%	3.2%	4.0%		
Suburban Council average	1.2%	1.8%	2.0%		
All NY public schools	7.3%	6.5%	5.8%		

### State & Federal "No Child Left Behind" Standards

The NY State Education Department also reports how well each school district has met performance standards based on federal NCLB laws. These standards rise a bit each year because students are expected to be making "adequate yearly progress" toward the long range goal of a perfect score by the year 2014.

For the 2003-04 school year, BH-BL pupils failed to make adequate yearly progress in three instances. In 4th grade English and high school English, our special

education pupils' group score was below the standard. In 8th grade math, our special education pupils' score was almost twice as high as the standard, but only 92% of these pupils took the test rather than the required 95%.

On these same three exams and all other NCLB requirements, BH-BL pupils as a whole exceeded the standard.

Copies of the State School Report Cards for BH-BL can be found at www.emsc. nysed.gov/ repcrd2004/ under Saratoga County.



# Measuring Up Domographic

# The 2004 District Report Card

### Demographic, Class Size & Cost Data

Demographic Data			
Racial/ethnic distribution	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
American Indian, Asian, or Pacific Islander	1.2%	1.0%	1.0%
Black	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%
Hispanic	0.5%	0.3%	0.3%
White	97.3%	97.7%	97.7%
Limited English Proficiency	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%

Average Class Sizes	;		
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Kindergarten	19	19	22
Grades K - 5	22	22	22
Grade 8: English	24	21	21
Math	24	21	27
Science	25	25	25
Social studies	28	23	25
Grade 10: English	21	21	23
Math	23	22	26
Science	23	24	22
Social studies	23	23	24

Enrollment			
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Charlton Heights Elem.	474	460	476
Pashley Elementary	470	478	486
Stevens Elementary	536	537	535
O'Rourke Middle School	808	826	824
BH-BL High School	<u>1,054</u>	<u>1,112</u>	<u>1,126</u>
Total BH-BL District	3,342	3,413	3,447

Pupils Receiving Free Lunches				
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	
Charlton Heights Elem.	3.3%	2.9%	2.4%	
Pashley Elementary	6.4%	4.1%	5.1%	
Stevens Elementary	5.7%	6.5%	4.4%	
O'Rourke Middle School	2.5%	3.6%	3.0%	
BH-BL High School	2.0%	2.1%	2.2%	
Total BH-BL District	3.4%	3.5%	3.2%	
Total state	37.7%	35.8%	37.0%	

Total Expenditure per Pupil				
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	
BH-BL Central Schools	\$10,825	\$10,975	\$11,319	
Saratoga County average	\$10,839	\$11,540	\$11,462	
Sch'dy County average	\$10,585	\$10,988	\$12,464	
Suburban Council average	\$10,362	\$10,754	\$11,168	
All NY public schools	\$11,871	\$12,265	\$13,085	

### Other Measures of Success

There are many other ways to measure BH-BL students' success in preparing themselves for healthy and productive lives. For example, our schools are particularly proud that:

- BH-BL pupils and their parents take their education seriously. In fact, our high school pupils' average daily attendance rate rose from 95.0% to 95.7% in 2003-04, and average daily attendance was over 96% in the other four schools.
- During 2003-04, 67% of high school pupils participated in interscholastic sports. Also, 25 out of 28 interscholastic sports teams were named "Scholar Athlete" teams by the NY State Public High School Athletic Association for achieving team grade point averages of 90% or higher.
- Our students compete and excel in many subjects. For instance, in the 2004 NY State School Music Association competition, the high school Concert Band earned a Level 6 Gold with Distinction Award; the Symphony Orchestra, a Level 4 Gold; the Concert Choir, a Level 5 Gold; and the Chamber Strings, a Level 5 Silver.
- BH-BL High School students typically take more courses than they need to graduate. Most students take no study halls, and instead fill every block in their schedule with both required courses and electives that interest them.
- In 2003-04, we had a total of 277 high school enrollments in courses where students can earn college credit. This included 13 sections of Advanced Placement classes, plus foreign language and other classes where students earn SUNY "University in High School" college credits.
- Members of the BH-BL Class of 2004 earned scholarships & awards that totaled more than \$408,000 for the first year of college alone.



#### Middle School expansion

▶ continued from page 1

Phase Two also includes work this summer at the High School to replace the football bleachers and press box, renovate two bathrooms, finish replacing the auditorium seats, and replace the stage flooring.

#### **Projects starting this spring**

Among the first steps at the Middle School will be moving the existing microwave communications tower away from the construction area and bringing a larger water main (for fire protection) and power source to the building from Lakehill Road, hopefully in late April. Demolition and reconstruction of the enlarged kitchen, serving line area, main cafeteria, and stage will probably start in May and will continue until November, adding about 5,000 square feet of space in the process. While this is taking place, 7th and 8th grade lunch service will move into the back gym. (6th graders will continue to eat in their small separate cafeteria.)

School staff have made detailed plans for handling the loss of the cafetorium and partial loss of the back gym — spaces that are used for many activities by many groups. Students will still be able to buy hot and cold foods for lunch, but some food will be prepared off site and brought over. Areas under construction will be fenced or walled off to prevent safety problems or vandalism.

"Some dirt and disruption are inevitable " says Middle School principal Don Germain, "but the great new facilities we're getting will make it all worth while." His primary concerns during the two-year construction process are protecting the health and safety of students and staff, minimizing disruptions to school programs, and minimizing disruptions to community use of the school.

#### Projects in the fall and 2006

Two new classrooms on the west end of the 6th grade wing will be built this summer, so that construction of the new library media center can start in the early spring of 2006. This new facility will take the place of two existing first floor classrooms and offices along the front of the school. It will also involve building approximately 4,800 square feet of new space out toward Lakehill Road. Work on the new library is expected to continue until October 2006.

## "From Wilderness to Community" Local history book published

Did you know that a hundred years ago Burnt Hills students who wanted a diploma had to take the train to either Ballston Spa or Schenectady High School? In fact, that is one reason why residents built our first comprehensive school on Lakehill Road in 1916 — they wanted to provide a quality education right in the local community.

More interesting facts about local history can be found in a brand new book co-authored by 11 community members and teachers. *From Wilderness to Community: The Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District* has been published with a grant from the BH-BL Education Foundation. Profits from the project will go back to the foundation to support other enrichment activities in the future.

The project was coordinated by Middle School teacher Rick Reynolds and former teacher Karen Kelley. They envision two primary audiences for the book: school children and local residents. BH-BL teachers plan to use it in social studies lessons, especially when children study one-room schools in grade 4 and local history in grade 7. "Making history come alive for kids is always one of our goals," says Mr. Reynolds. "Another goal is to help students understand and feel connected to their own community, which is why we study local history. This book will give students a new understanding of what life was like for earlier generations of kids right here."

The book is filled with photos and is dedicated to veteran BH-BL school board member and amateur historian Robert Speck, who has been collecting school district records and artifacts for more than 20 years. The Education Foundation was excited to pay for printing the book because "We saw it as a unique opportunity to enable students and teachers to hold real historical records in their hands and read about them in an interesting form at the same time," says foundation president Dorie McArthur.

The book is also for sale to the public for \$10. Information on where you can purchase it is posted on the district's website at <a href="https://www.bhbl.org">www.bhbl.org</a> and the foundation's website at <a href="https://library.bhbl.neric.org/edfoun/index.html">library.bhbl.neric.org/edfoun/index.html</a>.





is to help students understand and feel connected to their own community. ... This book will give students a new understanding of what life was like for earlier generations of kids right here.





Board of Education

Robert Speck, *President*Brian Bielecki
John Conine
Kathleen Frederick
Elizabeth Herkenham
Timothy Kelliher
Michael Wolf

50 Cypress Drive, Glenville, NY 12302 518/399-9141 518/399-1882 fax

#### www.bhbl.org

Jim Schultz, Superintendent

Christy Multer, Editor & photographer

Produced in cooperation with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service.

BURNT HILLS-BALLSTON LAKE CENTRAL SCHOOLS





Burnt Hills juniors Kyle Greenleaf (standing), Kay Smith and Brenden Dougherty were state champions in the "We the People" competition on the U.S. Constitution.

#### School budget nearly complete

▶ continued from page 1

April 12. The community vote on the budget, a bus purchase proposition, and three Board of Education seats will be held on May 17.

By far the biggest increase in the 2005-06 budget (\$1.1 million) is an abnormally large one-time increase in required payments to state retirement systems. Retirement benefits are not changing, just the way we must pay for them. In particular a new accounting standard means NY school districts must now budget for pension payments in the school year before the bill for those costs comes due.

Salaries for existing school staff are projected to grow by 2.1% or \$506,543. The Board of Education is also considering a number of part-time staffing increases, particularly to help with higher Middle School and High School enrollment and to meet No Child Left Behind mandates. Residents will receive a budget newsletter with more information on all these items around May 9.

# Three high school pupils win state competition on U.S. Constitution

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
BURNT HILLS, NY
PERMIT No. 15

If you have any questions about the separation of church and state, free speech, or unlawful search and seizure, the students in Karen Ferris-Fearnside's Advanced Placement American History class can probably help you out. The students have been honing their public speaking skills and studying issues related to the Constitution and Bill of Rights all year to prepare for the "We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution" competition in Albany on March 19.

Students in the AP class each prepared to give a speech and then answer extemporaneous questions from the judges related to one of the competition's six divisions. BH-BL, the only team from upstate NY at the contest, had to demonstrate their skills against eight downstate teams. The judges were looking for knowledge of both the history and modern applications of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

In the end, BH-BL pupils Brenden Dougherty, Kyle Greenleaf, and Kay Smith won their division, which focused on the freedom of religion. They had studied Supreme Court rulings that establish how the separation of church and state is to be carried out, and they gave speeches on the specific question of what kind of governmental aid, if any, church-related or faith-based institutions should receive.

Even thorough some BH-BL teams have won a division in the past, Brenden, Kyle and Kay were surprised by their win against the tough competition they faced from downstate teams.