First-class mathematicians

Lynn students excel in online program

By Paul Halloran

Ask Michael Cortez how many stickers he has earned in the First in Math program and the Breed Middle School seventh-grader doesn’t hesitate: 44,427.

If you think that sounds impressive, you are correct.

Cortez’ prolific proficiency in First in Math placed him No. 1 in the country among seventh-graders and No. 4 nationally overall (all grades), as of Dec. 21. As it turns out, he is not the only math superstar in Lynn Public Schools.

Derek Garcia Rodriguez was ranked third in the country among seventh graders and seventh overall. And Tracy Elementary was No. 3 in the nation among all schools participating in the program.

“I like to challenge myself to see how fast I can do the questions,” said Cortez, who spends 30-60 minutes daily working on First in Math, an online program designed to help students acquire, reinforce and retain essential math skills. Students can work on the program anytime they have Internet access.
**Superintendent’s retirement will end nine-year tenure**

Dr. Catherine C. Latham, who has served as superintendent of the Lynn Public Schools since 2009, plans to retire in July when her contract expires.

“I have been thinking for quite awhile that this would be my last contract,” said Latham, who signed a three-year extension in 2015. “The timing is right.”

Latham said she made the announcement in order to give new mayor and School Committee chairman Thomas M. McGee and the committee, which includes two other new members, ample time to conduct a search for her replacement.

Under Latham’s leadership, Lynn’s MCAS scores have steadily improved, placing the district at or near the top of urban districts throughout the state. Fine arts programs – art, music, drama – have expanded at all grade levels. Marshall Middle School, which opened in April 2016, has been designated a model school by the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Lynn’s student population has increased by about 20 percent to its current number of approximately 16,200 as of December 1.

The new Marshall Middle School has been designated a model school by the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Marshall now offers popular vocational classes to middle-school students. The plans for new schools in Lynn are complete and ready to go, should residents authorize spending on a building project.

Over the years we have secured funds and resources to support our ever-expanding fine arts programs, which are featured on pages 6-7 of this edition.

I am most grateful to have had the chance to shape, in some small part, the path of education in Lynn and the experiences and opportunities for Lynn students. I will miss working in the profession that I have loved for so long, and the people with whom I work, but I feel confident that the Lynn School Department is well positioned to support a smooth and efficient transition.

Dr. Catherine C. Latham is superintendent of schools.

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**Looking forward to moving forward — together**

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“I am certainly proud of what we have been able to accomplish,” Latham said, “none of which would have been possible without the outstanding administrators, teachers and students in our district.”

A lifelong Lynn resident, Latham is a graduate of Lynn English High School and Salem State College. She earned her master’s degree at Salem State and a doctorate in education at UMass Boston. She was a 2001 recipient of the Milken Family Foundation Educator Award for excellence in education.

Prior to being named superintendent, she served as deputy superintendent under Nick Kostan from 2006-09. From 2002-06, she served as school support specialist, working with leadership teams at each school to write school improvement plans. Latham taught math in Peabody and Lynn — at Breed Middle School and Lynn English — for more than 20 years. She served as math department chair at English before joining the district administration.

Latham and her husband, Howard, have three adult children, all of whom are products of Lynn Public Schools, and one grandchild.
TV talent in focus at Breed

By Paul Halloran

It’s 7:35 a.m. on a December Thursday at Breed Middle School. Students have settled into their homerooms ready to face another school day. In the TV studio, they are counting down the seconds to the start of the in-house newscast.

“Stand by for the bumper,” says Leo Ross, one of the half-dozen students working on the live production, referring to the words that appear on the screen just before the show goes live.

“Welcome to the Bobcat Broadcast. Thank you for joining us,” say the student anchors, Jaeel Beato and Emily Trieu, who proceed to provide a plethora of useful information over the next three minutes.

Beato and Trieu alternate in announcing the lunch menu, meeting times for after-school clubs, the sixth-grade history bee, and Popcorn Friday. Nancy Rodriguez, Jalyn Nguyen and Imanol Gomez work the cameras, while Nathaly Espinal and Ross man the control room. The production is crisp and professional.

Overseeing the broadcast is Sean Donahue, the first-year audio-visual communication teacher who also directs the TV club. Donahue came to Breed after six years working in Lynn cable television, including three as director of operations at LCTV.

Some of the students working on the broadcast have taken his class, while others have not. All of them are getting invaluable experience in the medium.

“We expose them to the different jobs available in the industry,” Donahue says. “There’s more to it than the camera and people on the air.”

Students who take Donahue’s class — about 115 per quarter — learn about writing, directing, filming, producing, technology, record keeping and, yes, appearing on the air.

“By the end of the quarter, they are able to identify the basic elements of field and studio production,” says Donahue, who knows better than most how helpful the practical experience can be.

“I got my start in TV media at Pickering and I worked with Mr. (Phil) Terenzoni at Classical,” he says. “All the work I did in TV media allowed me to get into college (Framingham State) and make a career out of it.”

The students who work on the newscasts — which run every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday — appreciate the opportunity to experience the different facets of the TV industry.

“I like how we are able to project our voices,” says Beato, who appears to have a bright future on the anchor desk. “That will help us in our future plans.”

Ross prefers to be on the other side of the camera. “I like the technology and working the camera,” the director-in-training says.

Trieu, Beato’s partner on the anchor desk, says she enjoys the teamwork that goes into the broadcasts: “Everybody participates and we all work together.”

Beato and Trieu close the broadcast with a weather report and then it’s a wrap.

All the news that’s fit to post

While The Educator is the official newspaper of Lynn Public Schools, more than half of the district’s elementary schools are publishing digital newspapers or newsletters.

Students are using iPads, laptops and desktop computers to write stories and take photos. Faculty advisers edit the stories and design the electronic publications, according to Shannon Bansfield, LPS director of instructional technology.

The publications include the “Aborn Owlet,” “Callahan Eagle Eye,” “Cobbet Chronicles,” “Connery Chronicle,” “Drewicz Dolphin’s Digest,” “Ford Falcon,” “Harrington Highlights,” “Ingalls Rocket,” “Shoemaker Shark” and “Tracy Tribune.”

Students who work on the newspapers typically meet weekly or bi-weekly, Bansfield said. They cover school plays, sporting events and other events. This year, the district offered a Microsoft 365 course for faculty advisers.

Bansfield said Ingalls started a digital newspaper two years ago. Callahan, Cobbet and Drewicz came online last year and a half-dozen more schools added publications this year.
By Paul Halloran

The next time you bite into that delicious hot dog or enjoy a box of popcorn at a North Shore Navigators game at Fraser Field, know that some Lynn Tech students had something to do with it.

Under the direction of electrical teachers Richard Wall and Ron Hennessey, 17 Tech juniors spent two days installing wiring and a dozen outlets in a new concession stand behind the stands on the Western Avenue side.

Wall said the students wired double-gang outlets in several locations in the new wooden stand, which measures 42 feet wide by 12 feet deep. The outlets will be used to power refrigerators, drink machines, popcorn makers and other equipment.

The students will return in March to finish the project.

Navigators General Manager Bill Terlecky said the teams needed an all-purpose concession stand for games with large crowds. “On certain nights, the setup we had was inadequate,” Terlecky said.

Wall said the students gained valuable hands-on experience, under trying weather conditions. “It answered a lot of questions they had,” he said.

“They’ve been learning about wiring in the classroom and shop. They really enjoyed getting the chance to do it.”

The students spent about 11 hours over two days, working in sub-freezing weather. “They learned when you stay busy you stay warm,” Wall said.

Terlecky said having the Tech students do the work “fits in with our mission to be involved with the community.” The stand was built by Big A Construction and supplies were bought at Concord Electric Supply in Lynn.

“We were thrilled to have the kids down here,” Terlecky said. “These are the kids that contractors will need down the road.”

The new concession stand will make its debut on Navigators Opening Night June 2.

By Meaghan Casey

Each year, only 3.5 percent of applicants are admitted to Harvard Medical School, making it an elusive dream for thousands. Fortunately, Lynn English High School students Tallia Dudley and Kristie Jean-Francois earned their right to spend 10 days at the prestigious medical school, gaining exposure to a wide range of topics in medicine, science and public health.

Dudley and Jean-Francois were accepted into the Health Professions Recruitment & Exposure Program (HPREP), an enrichment program aimed at recruiting high school students from the Boston area, particularly those from underserved and underrepresented backgrounds, into science and medicine. Its mission is to promote knowledge, critical thinking and excitement about science while building students’ confidence in their ability to succeed in these fields. It is offered at no cost to participants thanks to generous sponsors.

As two of approximately 50 students in the program, Dudley and Jean-Francois have spent their Saturdays (from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) at Harvard’s Longwood Medical Area campus. The first of the 10 sessions kicked off on Nov. 4, and the program will conclude on Feb. 10.

“It’s very fun, and it exposes you to a lot of the different medical and science careers,” said Dudley, a sophomore. “I’ve always enjoyed science, so the idea of being able to apply that and help people makes me determined to be part of the medical field.”

Jean-Francois, a junior, hopes to be a cardiologist. She spent six years of her childhood in Haiti, seeing how cardiac issues were widespread, and awareness and prevention weren’t as prevalent as in the U.S. When she does eventually earn her medical degree, she plans to return to Haiti in a volunteer role.

“I think HPREP opens a door for me, college- and career-wise,” said Jean-Francois, who plans to apply to the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, New York University and Boston University. “It also helps me figure out what I want to do now, rather than wasting my time in different pathways later, and prep me for that.”

Through a hands-on biology and health curriculum, HPREP has included lectures on microbiology, genetics, DNA isolation, vital signs, scientific reasoning, mental health, cancer, the nervous system and more. The final sessions will include discussions on public health, diversity and disparities in healthcare, human organs and science communication. Participants are also connected with mentors and have the opportunity to meet with them individually for about two hours each session.

“Having a mentor is awesome,” said Jean-Francois. “They’re there to guide you, even when you’re applying to other programs. Mine is studying cancer, so it’s really interesting to learn about what he’s doing.”

Dudley has been paired with a biochemist. “That’s what I want to be, so it’s amazing to have her as a mentor,” she said.

In addition to the lectures and mentoring sessions, the program’s interactive workshops have placed students in real-time scenarios. During the fourth session, they spent the day working on a simulated patient.

“We had to take it step-by-step, communicating with the patient and with each other and using the process of elimination,” said Dudley. “It was really exciting to have such a life-like experience. It’s high stress, but it’s amazing to see how you can work under pressure.”

“That was one of my favorite parts,” said Jean-Francois. “We learned how important the vital signs are when you’re diagnosing someone, and you have to maintain focus. You can’t let the beeping of the machines overwhelm you.”

HPREP also includes a career fair to expose students to different health careers and pathways. Lauren Mezzetti, head of the Lynn English science department, says it is a wonderful experience for Dudley and Jean-Francois. They follow in the footsteps of English graduate Elizabeth Rozon and senior Gabriella Patterson, who both attended last year.

“Our science department likes to inspire our students to enter careers in the STEM field and feel that’s where the most opportunities for employment will be when they graduate,” said Mezzetti.

Jean-Francois, who is in her second year at English, feels well prepared for her future thanks to her high school foundation.

“The opportunities and the classes that you can pick are awesome,” said Jean-Francois, who is taking forensic investigation and honors chemistry this year. Next year, she plans to take anatomy and honors physics.
Students TAP into vocational education

By Paul Halloran

Vocational education in Lynn is no longer limited to students at Lynn Tech.

Two dozen students from Lynn Classical and Lynn English received certificates Dec. 20 in a ceremony in the Tiger’s Den at Tech, acknowledging their participation in the district’s first Technical Afterschool Program (TAP).

TAP was offered for the first time this year and designed to give students from Classical, English and Fecteau-Leary the opportunity to gain employable skills in a particular discipline. There were two course offerings, Adobe Photoshop and culinary arts, and the students who successfully completed them earned industry-recognized certifications.

“We wanted to give them skills to become employable in certain areas,” said Tech guidance counselor Brian O’Connell, who coordinated the program.

Starting in October, students were taken by bus to Tech two days a week for 10 weeks. The classes lasted 3½ hours and included dinner.

“It takes effort to get on that bus and continue a long day,” Superintendent of Schools Dr. Catherine C. Latham told students at the certification ceremony. “We’re very proud of you. You’ve put in that extra effort and made your lives even better.”

In order to be considered for TAP, students could not have been absent more than six times in the previous quarter. Students in the program were limited to two absences over the 10 weeks.

With one session in the books, the reviews are overwhelmingly positive.

“It was amazing,” O’Connell said. “I’m surprised at how well the kids handled it. A shop becomes a cohesive unit and the kids really took to it.”

O’Connell said it is gratifying for Tech to share its resources.

“There’s a huge opportunity at Tech,” he said. “We wanted to figure out how we can offer it to students in other schools.”

Classical junior Andrew Comeau said he “learned a lot” in the Photoshop course, which was taught by Beth Mercaldi. “Each lesson focused on something different,” Comeau said. “We got to know each other and helped each other out.”

English senior Liana Kim loves to cook, but she was unsure if she wanted to pursue a culinary career until she took the TAP course. Not only did she enjoy the course, she has applied to a handful of culinary colleges and been accepted at two, including Johnson & Wales.

“I wanted to see if working in a commercial kitchen was the right fit,” Kim said. “You can’t tell what kind of experience it will be until you do it. Working in a commercial kitchen you have to communicate. I loved it.”

The second session of TAP will start after February vacation. O’Connell said the plan is to offer three courses – culinary arts and two others — with the capacity to accommodate approximately 50 students.

“You can’t become a chef in 10 weeks, but you can get enough skills to move forward,” O’Connell said. “We want to give kids that opportunity.”

The students who successfully completed the first TAP courses were, from Classical: Koralis Acevedo, Isabel Alvarez, Jolleeny Ciriac, Andrew Comeau, Sondos Dabash, Ahiwana Elyse, Robinson Escalante, Andrew Escalante, Cristina Lemus, Han Ly, Mariah Medina, Noor Muhammad, Thao Nguyen, Zaynab Okirim, Leakhana Prom, Evelyn Rivera, Adriana Ruiz and Sabrina Thorng; from English, Mariana Caminero, Victor Hernandez, Oliver Jimenez, Liana Kim and Carina Lara; from Tech, David Medina.

The first students to complete the Technical Afterschool Program received their certificates in a ceremony at Lynn Tech.

Photos: BOB ROCHE

Fecteau-Leary students lend a hand to church

By Meaghan Casey

When Rev. Robert Murray, pastor of the Salem Catholic Collaborative, needed someone to lend a skilled hand, students from Fecteau-Leary Junior/ Senior High School answered the call.

Accompanied by carpentry teachers Angelo Meimeteas and Lloyd St. Pierre, a rotating group of 5-7 students worked at Immaculate Conception on Hawthorne Boulevard during the two weeks leading up to Christmas, creating a handicap-accessible entrance to the restrooms.

“This was the first step in making the lower level of the church accessible to all,” said Rev. Murray, a family friend of principal Maura Durgin-Scully. “The kids have been wonderful. This is a great example of people using their skills and abilities to help others.”

The students will return to the church to complete the finish work, which includes staining the handrails. Meimeteas was thrilled that the students had the opportunity to complete a project like this one.

“In school, you can learn the material, but whenever we can go to an actual job site, it’s an amazing lesson for them,” said Meimeteas. “They’re putting the tools to use and since it’s never a perfect world out there, they’re practicing teamwork and problem solving.”

But Meimeteas says the lessons learned were greater than just carpentry ones.

“It’s been amazing to see how good the kids felt doing this,” he said.

Meimeteas, a former general contractor, says there are currently about 25 students enrolled in the carpentry program at Fecteau-Leary, with others taking classes through the school’s exploratory program.

“It’s a trade where you can never go wrong,” he said. “You’ll never go hungry. Even in your own home, you’ll always find work.”

The culinary arts course was beneficial for Liana Kim.

PHOTOS: BOB ROCHE

Jakob Hill, Rafy Vargas and Haidar Bedawi work on the railing at Immaculate Conception in Salem.

PHOTO: BOB ROCHE
Spotlight shines on Lynn students

The auditoriums were alive with the sound of music this winter, as concerts and musical productions gave students the opportunity to display their artistic talents. More than 30 events were held throughout the schools.

1. Connery Elementary School students showed off their instrumental talents.
2. Lynn Classical High School’s Glee Club entertained audience members at the Lynn Museum.
3. From left: Anzyo Zikandia as the Ghost of Christmas Past, Madison Dubourg as Rick Wilkins, Darren Tiburcio as Festejng and Kenneth Boulout.
4. Elementary students acted out a scene in Classical’s production of “A Christmas Carol.”
5. Lincoln-Thompson Elementary School students sang holiday carols.
6. Washington STEM students’ talents were in focus at the holiday concert.
Students excel in online math program

**Math from page 1**

“The idea is when you do something consistently, you get better at it,” said Shirley Albert-Benedict, Lynn Public Schools math curriculum director. “It’s like shooting a basketball.”

That would make Cortez, who has autism, a modern-day Larry Bird. In order to earn a sticker, you have to answer three questions correctly, meaning that heading into the Christmas vacation Cortez had successfully answered more than 133,000 questions this school year.

“Math has been my No. 1 subject since third grade,” said Cortez, noting that it is no coincidence that is the year he started using First in Math. “I used to be terrible in math. First in Math helped a lot.”

Cortez and Rodriguez have developed a friendly rivalry that saw Rodriguez lead the district last year with more than 53,000 stickers. Cortez jumped out to the lead this year and said he is determined to stay there. “I’m trying to beat him this year,” he said.

Tracy School students, especially the fifth-grade classes, have also rung up some impressive numbers in First in Math. Last year, Tracy was one of the first schools in the country to reach 1,000,000 stickers. On the heels of that effort, Tracy was the No. 1-ranked school in Massachusetts heading into the Christmas break, with Cobbet checking in at No. 3 and Breed at No. 4.

“Our fifth-grade teachers – Jen Nordyke, Bessie Broufas, Erin Schwartz and Marianne Merawi — have really embraced First in Math,” said Tracy Principal Pattye Griffin. “They use it as a reinforcement for what students are learning throughout the year.”

Nordyke’s class was the top team in the city, with the other Tracy fifth grades not far behind.

“To be one of the top schools in the state shows the kids are working very hard at improving their skills and applying them,” Griffin said. “They see math as fun – not as a chore.”

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**The language of learning**

**By Meaghan Casey**

When Irena Karasik reflects back on her career, it is somewhat surprising that two-thirds of her 41 years in the classroom have been spent in Lynn.

Karasik immigrated to the U.S. from Russia in 1987. She would have left seven years earlier had it not been for the “refusenik” or “refusal” — an unofficial term for individuals, typically Jewish, who were denied permission to emigrate by the authorities of the former Soviet Union.

“We didn’t feel like there was space for us and our culture here,” said Karasik.

With their sights set on Boston, Karasik, her husband and their two sons (who were 7 and 12 at the time) made the voyage to Massachusetts.

“We knew Boston was an educated area with many universities, so we wanted to be here,” said Karasik. “The North Shore was more affordable, so we settled in Lynn.”

Karasik, who now lives in Swampscott, started teaching at a private school in Marblehead, where there were a number of English as Second Language (ESL) students from Russia.

“I never thought a teaching career would be open to me here, since English isn’t my native language,” said Karasik, who had taught at the high school level in Russia.

In 1992, she was hired by Lynn Public Schools as an ESL teacher at Connery Elementary School, which at the time had an influx of about 30 Russian students every year. While teaching, she also earned her master’s degree, even though she already held a master’s from a university in Russia.

“I wanted to properly go through all the courses here in America and learn the curriculum styles,” she said.

From Connery, Karasik moved to Cobbet Elementary School, where she has spent the last 19 years. She initially maintained her role as an ESL teacher, working with students speaking Spanish and Chinese as well.

“Irena was the only ESL teacher back then and now I have six,” said Cobbet School Principal Sue Garrity. “They’re trained in sheltered English instruction, so instead of pulling ESL students out, ESL teachers are in the classroom.

As the number of Russian immigrants coming to Lynn slowly diminished, Karasik transitioned to the third-grade classroom. She has taught third grade for the past 13 years.

“I was initially afraid because I had never been a classroom teacher here before,” said Karasik. “For example, I loved math, but going back to those subjects after 20 years was different and difficult. As was teaching U.S. history versus Russian history.”

But it’s a decision she has absolutely no regrets about making.

“I love the third grade,” she said. “They’re at an age and a level where you’re teaching them to think differently. They become thinkers.”

“In grades K-2 they’re learning how to read, but by grade 3, they’re expected to read to learn,” said Garrity. “Irena is so dedicated. She’s here early and stays late, and the kids want to stay with her. She has that vision for them to achieve and she makes it happen.”

Karasik will retire at the end of this year, but she will hold on to the memories she accumulated over the past four decades.

“When you teach children, you’re opening their minds and opening the world to them,” she said. “When you see stars in their eyes, you feel the most incredible satisfaction.”

During her teenage years, Karasik had toyed with the idea of pursuing a career in writing or acting, but she ultimately followed in her mother’s footsteps.

“I always looked up to her and tried to reach her height,” said Karasik. “She was a teacher of English and she gave me the love of my life with this job.”

In her retirement, Karasik plans to travel and enjoy more concerts and museum exhibits. She also hopes to work as a docent at the Peabody Essex Museum, where she has currently served as a liaison, bringing Cobbet students there three times a year.

“I’ve already promised I’ll come back to visit and maybe teach the students about art,” she said. “I still want to do something in the schools. I’ll miss the contact with the kids. We all give and get energy from each other, but as much as I can give, I just get so much back from my students.”

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**PHOTOS: BOB ROCHE**
Mota-vated for math mastery
Classical student aces MCAS

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

While we often encourage students to strive for improvement rather than perfection, Lynn Classical High School student Jose Mota managed to achieve both.

Mota earned a perfect score of 280 on the math MCAS last spring. A top score of 280 is uncommon in English Language Arts and even rarer in math. It was a thrill for Mota, who also tested well on the ELA exam with a score of 262. He had flirted with perfection in the past, coming just two questions shy of a top score in biology in 2016, scoring 276.

Statewide, 79 percent of 10th-graders who took what is now being called the “legacy” MCAS in 2017 scored proficient or higher in math, and 91 percent scored proficient or higher in English. Although students in grades 3–8 took the next-generation MCAS — an updated version of the test that was given for the first time in the spring of 2017 — the new version won’t be introduced to high school students until the spring of 2019.

In addition to Mota, eight other Classical students scored 272 or higher in math. Stephen Ong and Ivan Melara Pleitez each scored 278. Mota, Ong and Melara Pleitez are part of a unique group of 10 honors students who were selected in middle school for an accelerated pathway in math. At Breed Middle School, they took honors pre-algebra in grade 7 and then algebra for two consecutive periods in grade 8.

“The idea was for them to get here and take honors geometry, honors algebra II and honors pre-calculus their first two years, with the intent of getting them in AP calculus their junior year,” said Dr. Mark Johnston, Classical’s math department head.

“I noticed as sophomores, the group was very advanced,” said Samria Ghili, who teaches pre-calculus and AP calculus. “They came in with a very strong background.”

Mota, in particular, put in the extra effort to succeed in Ghili’s class.

“He was playing football last year too, but he would still come by after school if he didn’t understand something completely,” said Ghili.

Including Mota, Ong and Melara Pleitez, there are a total of eight juniors enrolled in AP calculus this year. Others include Andy Ma, Darwin Roeun and Jennifer Tineo, who each scored 272 in math. As the first cohort to move through the pathway, the group seems to be paving the way for success. Johnston says 38 sophomores in the second cohort are on track to take AP calculus next year, which means the school will offer two sections of the class for the first time. As seniors, members of the first cohort will have the opportunity to take AP statistics.

“It’s wonderful, because we’re able to challenge these students and give them more opportunities to take AP classes,” said Principal Gene Constantino.

Even though math might be his strongest subject, Mota says his favorite is actually science. He is taking AP chemistry this year and hopes to pursue a career in the life sciences. Mota, whose parents immigrated to the U.S. from Guatemala, will be a first-generation college student and is already eyeing the University of Connecticut and Tufts University.

Outside of the classroom, Mota runs track and is active in the school’s peer tutoring program, assisting an average of 12 to 15 students throughout the course of the year.

“Jose is one of my all-stars,” said guidance counselor Christopher Hayward, who runs the tutoring program. “I cannot say enough about what an awesome kid he is.”

Perfection spoken at English, too

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

A number of Lynn English High School students followed in the path of perfection, scoring a 280 on the spring 2017 MCAS.

Chrisneris Difo got the perfect score in English Language Arts, while Allen Gutierrez, Naedjayane Pierrissaint and Adamma Uzoma earned perfect scores in biology.

Difo, a junior, is currently taking AP English and credits the rigorous curriculum at English for helping to prepare her.

“I’ve definitely been prepared to read critically and to analyze what I’m reading,” said Difo, who is also enrolled in AP science courses and hopes to pursue a career in orthodontics or cosmetic surgery.

The biology test, administered to ninth-graders, covers biochemistry and cell biology, genetics, anatomy and physiology, ecology and evolution and biodiversity. Gutierrez, Pierrissaint and Uzoma were well prepared in Lauren Mezzetti’s biology class.

“All of my students were phenomenal last year,” said Mezzetti, who serves as the science department head. “They really worked hard and just loved learning, especially about biology. I would say they were like sponges, just absorbing as much information as they could in a 50-minute class, and they were such enthusiastic learners. I could say the same about my students this year. I think they’re hearing at home and on social media that opportunities for their future lie in the science, medicine and engineering fields.”

Pierrissaint, who hopes to become a pediatric surgeon one day, would certainly agree that science and medicine is in her future. As would Uzoma, who is also thinking about a career in medicine.

“I enjoy learning about life and how things work,” Uzoma said.

Gutierrez credited Mezzetti for encouraging a love of the sciences. “She’s a genuine, nice teacher,” he said. “We did a lot of hands-on lab work using a microscope. I remember one time looking at cheek cells, which was interesting. Science is just cool. It’s probably a career path I’d want to explore.”

Mezzetti said she likes to offer labs and activities that reinforce the content, as do most of the other science teachers at English.

“These opportunities offer the ‘ah ha’ moment for them which helps to make sense of the content,” she said. “As science teachers we are lucky because most students are fascinated by science and the world around them. They always bring inquisitive questions to their science teachers seeking answers to help them better understand the world around them, and that’s fun.”

While the perfect score was not new to Uzoma, who had previously earned 280 in ELA when she was in sixth grade at Pickering Middle School, it was exciting nonetheless.

“I was still pretty surprised when I got the results, but Mrs. Mezzetti is a very good teacher,” she said. “We learned a lot.”

Mezzetti was quick to bring the credit back to the students, but she shared in their excitement.

“As a group, last year’s freshman biology scores increased across the board,” she said. “It was extremely gratifying, but they did all the work. We hope the trend continues.”
Lynn Tech AP biology teacher Peter Brannen works with student Amanda Melo-Nieves on doing bacterial transformation using E. coli and plasmid DNA.

Lynn Tech students earned national recognition for their performance at the SkillsUSA Championships in Louisville, Ky., last spring. Not only was Tech one of 24 chapters nationwide to be recognized as a Model of Excellence, the Tech chapter earned the title of National Outstanding Chapter of Excellence for placing first in the category of developing leadership skills, while three students won the gold medal in the community service competition. Pictured are, from left, faculty adviser Jason McCuish, junior David Barrios, senior Erick Martinez and 2017 graduate Jose Najera.

"It’s the equivalent of the Olympics," McCuish said of the national competition sponsored by SkillsUSA, a national program to improve quality of the workforce through leadership and employability training. More than 335,000 students and advisors participated in SkillsUSA last year, including 75 at Tech.

Callahan School’s Parent and Me literacy group got off to a great start. Families of kindergarten students learned about the importance of read-alouds. Parents discovered that reading aloud can be exciting and engaging. The discussion centered on how to prepare kindergarten minds to be ready to understand read-alouds, how to check for comprehension during the story, and how to utilize re-telling strategies to help children dig deeper into texts. Families practiced these techniques together and loved how their children surprised them with unique insights into the books their parents read.

Callahan kindergarten students spent a week reading many different versions of “The Gingerbread Man.” After comparing stories and doing many different gingerbread-themed activities, the students invited their parents in to help them build gingerbread houses. This is the largest parent-engagement activity in kindergarten and this year didn’t disappoint. Students had someone to help them construct their houses. If there was not an adult available to come in, members of the student council were on hand to help. The student council members made these houses themselves when they were in kindergarten.

Harrington kindergarten students spent a week reading many different versions of “The Gingerbread Man.” After comparing stories and doing many different gingerbread-themed activities, the students invited their parents in to help them build gingerbread houses. This is the largest parent-engagement activity in kindergarten and this year didn’t disappoint. Students had someone to help them construct their houses. If there was not an adult available to come in, members of the student council were on hand to help. The student council members made these houses themselves when they were in kindergarten.
Cobbet

Cobbet held its annual multicultural holiday celebration just before the Christmas vacation. The event is organized by the Cobbet Family and Community Engagement team, a group of parents and teachers who work together to promote family engagement. There are more than 30 parents on the team. The holiday celebration included a pot-luck dinner, singing, dancing and raffles. Student Somnang Sor shows off his artwork.

Award-winning season

Lynn Classical, English and Tech enjoyed unprecedented success on the gridiron last fall, compiling a combined record of 29-5 and all qualifying for post-season play. Classical, led by first-year coach Brian Vaughan, went 8-3 and was co-champion of the Northeastern Conference Div. 2. English, NEC Div. 3 champion, finished 10-1 and advanced to the MIAA Div. 3 North final, losing to Tewksbury, 22-18. Tech won a school-record 11 games (11-1) and captured the Commonwealth Conference small title. The Tigers advanced to the MIAA Div. 8 North final, losing to Cathedral, and won the Massachusetts Vocational Athletic Directors Association small division title with a 50-22 victory over Nashoba Valley Regional.

Aborn

The Aborn Student Council collected $110 for the Daily Item/Salvation Army Santa Fund. The student council has been involved in several other projects this year, including sending coloring books, crayons, toys and playing cards to children in El Salvador; sending care packages to Gage McQuaid, an Aborn graduate who is currently stationed in Korea; and collecting money from staff for Jeans for Troops Day. The faculty adviser to the student council is first-grade teacher Donna Amico. Members include, front row, from left, Georgia Allaire, Ashra Odiase, Neiza Quinonez-Chicas; back row, Frederick Evans, Luke Phelps, Hassan Chalmus and Ava Acevedo.

Art teacher of the year

Superintendent Dr. Catherine C. Latham congratulates Simone Kivett, art teacher at Hood and Lincoln-Thomson schools, on her recognition as 2017 Elementary Art Teacher of the Year by the Massachusetts Art Education Association.
Pickering scores new lab

Innovation Lab opens with funding from Celtics, SNHU

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

When Celtics point guard Terry Rozier dropped by Pickering Middle School on Nov. 29, it wasn’t to shoot hoops or even step foot in the gym. He was there to help with the unveiling of the Pickering Innovation Lab, which is outfitted with 25 laptops, the latest computer-aided design (CAD) software and a 3D printer.

Pickering’s lab was the ninth technology lab installed in Greater Boston schools as part of the partnership between the Boston Celtics and Southern New Hampshire University. The goal is to expand students’ access to technology, enable schools to build computer-based curriculum for years to come and encourage students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.

“This is one of my favorite things that we do,” said Dave Hoffman, senior director of community engagement for the Celtics. “It’s an opportunity to leave a legacy behind for the students to be able to enjoy the latest cutting-edge technology, to help them grow as students and grow as people.”

What makes Pickering’s lab unique is that it is the first one to include CAD capabilities. Rozier and former Celtics guard Dana Barros were on hand while Pickering students dove into the software program and began designing houses, garages, cars and more.

“I can see, that after watching the students as they work on these computers, they’re inspired,” said Superintendent Catherine C. Latham.

The Innovation Lab will accompany the school’s renovated woodworking shop, which is being equipped with new machines and materials. The idea is that students will be able to design and then execute their concepts.

“You can tell in this class, you have to ask questions, because this stuff is tough,” said Rozier, who was impressed by the students’ natural curiosity and ingenuity.

“I would love to see some of these students become our future students,” said Gaynelle Swann, associate dean of academics at SNHU’s College of Engineering, Technology and Aeronautics. “But wherever they go, being able to influence their creativity, their innovation and their ability to not be afraid of technology is really what’s most rewarding in the work that we do.”