

## Proposal to Introduce Languages in Third Grade Examined by School Board

By SUSAN M. DYCKMAN  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - Veni. Vidi. Vici. Might Latin have a place in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school curriculum?

As the Board of Education prepares to introduce World Languages at the elementary level in preparation for state-mandated testing during the 2001-2002 school year, board members are discussing the possibility of teaching Latin.

During the October 21 board meeting, World Language Supervisor Helga Thomas answered questions about her existing proposal to introduce Spanish, French, Italian and German to third-grade students beginning next fall.

Each of the five elementary schools would be assigned a specific language (with Spanish at two schools). As stated, it would cost \$382,500 to implement the proposal in third through fifth grade from 2000-2003.

Students would have two opportunities to switch languages — once in fifth or sixth grade (depending upon where the exploratory language program is ultimately offered), and again in ninth grade.

Commenting on parents' "tremendous concerns" about different languages at different schools, Board Member Edward J. Saridaki, Jr. said, "I don't feel the proposal meets the needs of students and is the best solution for the district."

He indicated the state's World Language curriculum framework was promoting instruction of the classical languages, namely Latin.

District administrators had been under the impression Latin was not an acceptable option, because it is not considered a spoken language. The fourth-grade test is designed to measure student's verbal proficiency in a foreign language.

Mr. Saridaki offered examples of how students of Latin have been shown to score higher on SATs and other tests.

Board Member Jean McAllister agreed that Latin should not be set aside so quickly as a non-viable alternative. "It's integration with language arts, math and science is a natural. Latin is a better idea than a different language at each school."

In writing and in person, several parents expressed support for Latin, which they said, could positively affect the students' achievement in lan-

guage arts and reading. They were referring to students' poor showing on last spring's Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA), the results of which were mailed to parents last week.

Board Members Jessica Simpson and August Ruggiero, supported the different languages at different schools idea. "Language at that age should be fun," said Ms. Simpson. "A French school would be fun" for students, staff and parents. "It would enrich every child's experience."

Mr. Ruggiero called Ms. Thomas' proposal "sound." "Sometimes, it's an advantage to not give a choice," he said.

Board Member Richard M. Meade suggested the proposal be looked at for "cost, not just in dollars, but in time." He recommended taking "time to make sure we know what we're going to do" even if that means defaulting on the ESPAs for one year.

The proposal is scheduled to be voted on by the board in November. In commenting on students' recently-released ESPA scores, Scotch Plains resident Pat Leonard was "appalled" at the results in language arts.

Her comments followed a report on the district's summer efforts to prepare schools for Internet access. She said, "How to you expect students to operate computers and use the Internet if they can't read and write?"

Board President Theresa Larkin acknowledged the anxiety the test results caused parents and urged Mrs. Leonard to attend the Monday, November 15, board meeting where an analysis of ESPA results will be presented.

Mr. Meade was curious to hear if there was a correlation between students' ESPA performance and their scores on the Iowa standardized tests taking in first through third grades.

Though much criticism has been leveled at the ESPA itself, Mr. Saridaki said, "I don't want to be too quick to throw the test out. We need to be concerned with results. No matter how difficult it was, our students didn't do well enough."

He called for a re-examination of the district's delivery of its language arts program.

Board members and administrators sparred over the Quality Assurance Annual Report (QAAR) for 1998-1999. The report is submitted annually to the Union County Board

of Education with the results of site-based objectives for every school in the district.

While Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Dr. John R. Crews said the principals "had their reasons for doing what they did," those administrators were not at the meeting to explain them.

Mr. Meade stated, "I'm embarrassed to embrace the measurements in the report as a reflection of what we want of our children and our schools."

Discussion on the QAAR was tabled until the next meeting. There was no discussion on the concept of a fifth and sixth grade intermediate program. The next public discussion will take place at the Tuesday, November 23, meeting.

In other business, the board approved suggested revisions to Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School curriculum for 2000-2001 as presented by Principal Dr. David Heisey.

It was agreed that Algebra I would be offered as a standard and/or level zero course, depending upon the needs of students.

The board confirmed "Coffee and Conversation with the Board" will take place on Monday evening, November 1. At that time, the public is welcome to pose questions to board members about various education issues of general interest.

A special meeting of the board is scheduled for Tuesday, November 9, at 8 p.m. to hear facilities reports from The Thomas Group, the consulting group that was hired to conduct a feasibility study of the district's schools and assess their ability to handle a growing student enrollment, and ServiceMaster, which is the custodial, grounds and maintenance services management company.

By RUSS WATKINS  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Preservation of open space, direct election of the mayor, service awards, pension benefits and property acquisition are just some of the issues to be decided by area voters in next week's general election.

In Scotch Plains, voters will be asked to answer "yes" or "no" to the

## Several Union County Municipalities To Decide Candidate Races, Issues In Next Week's General Election

By KIM KINTER  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Residents of several Union County municipalities in the area surrounding Westfield will go to the polls on Tuesday, November 2, to decide the makeup of their governing bodies and the fate of some controversial local issues.

In Berkeley Heights, nestled in the hills between New Providence and Warren, township residents will fill two open seats on the Township Committee.

Republicans Susan E. Sabol, making her first run for elected office, and John D. Miller, who is seeking a second term, are vying with Independent Michael Chait for the two, three-year vacancies.

In a town that has gained a recent reputation for in-fighting and controversy — some have jokingly dubbed it "Bickering Heights" — Mr. Chait has been running on the platform that he won't play politics.

A 22-year resident of Berkeley Heights who works for an investment firm, Mr. Chait is listed as one of the trustees of the Berkeley Heights Taxpayers Association, a group formed more than a year ago in response to what some residents thought was a particularly high tax increase in 1998.

Mr. Chait, who has been going door-to-door to meet residents and talk about his ideas, said he first became interested in running for the Township Committee because he was unhappy with what was happening locally.

Among his goals, if elected, are to see the return of a full-time administrator to the township. Berkeley Heights has been without an administrator for almost two years, since

the position was eliminated and the duties divided among several departments. Officials described the move as a cost cutting measure.

An administrator is essential, he said, for the township to seek grants and maintain a well-run community.

Ms. Sabol, who has lived in the community for four years, is the director of a marketing company in Berkeley Heights. She said she has been interested in getting involved in local government since she bought her first home in the township.

She has been a member of various committees, but now feels that there "are a lot of good issues that need strong decisions."

Mr. Miller, the manager of various wood lots in Hunterdon County, takes credit for helping to institute a five-year fiscal plan for the township. He also said that he is all for "good manners and civility" at public meetings.

As Liaison to several groups, among them the local senior citizens, Mr. Miller said that he has heard numerous complaints about the conduct of local officials at meetings. He believes that conduct at meetings has changed for the better recently.

Of the two issues to be decided by Berkeley Heights voters, one would allow the township to purchase property on both sides of Stanford Drive, east of Snyder Avenue, and turn it into public park land.

The property is now owned by a developer who wants to build a 259-unit townhouse complex there. While the site plan for the complex was approved by the local Planning Board, the project has been put on hold due to recently-discovered contamination caused by asbestos and petroleum

materials. If purchased, the township would have to buy the property back from the developer.

Voters also will be able to decide whether the township police chief should get a pay increase that will bring his 1999 salary to \$103,000.

Nearly a year ago, the Township Committee voted in favor of the pay raise for the police chief, but took away some other benefits he was receiving and paid him one fee for his salary only.

The chief previously was receiving \$87,618, including various benefits such as clothing allowance and holiday pay.

In response, the Taxpayers Association gathered signatures protesting the pay increase. The signatures were deemed flawed by the township attorney, and the Taxpayers Association then filed a lawsuit, asking that the issue be voted on by the public. A Superior Court judge subsequently ruled in the Association's favor, which resulted in the issue being put before voters in November.

In Garwood, where officials have been working hard to rebuild the erstwhile heavily industrial town, two incumbent Democrats face two Republicans for two seats on the Borough Council.

Democrats Paul DeVenuto and William Schadewald, 3rd face Republican challengers Pat Quattrocchi and Michael O'Donnell. Democrats have the majority on the six-member council. Democratic Mayor Michael Crincola is not up for re-election.

Mr. Schadewald, who operates Mr. B's grooming and pet supply business on North Avenue, is running for a second term, while Mr. DeVenuto,

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## Ballot Questions Zero In on Local Issues Impacting Scotch Plains and Fanwood

following questions:  
**Open Space Recreation Trust Fund:**

The question reads: "Shall the Township of Scotch Plains consider establishing a Municipal Open Space Recreation Trust Fund to be used exclusively for the purposes of acquiring, developing, maintaining and administering land for preservation as open space in order to protect drinking water sources, provide recreation or assist in the acquisition of same or the administration of programs serving the same purposes within the Township of Scotch Plains to be funded at a rate not to exceed \$.02 per \$100 of total municipal real property valuation."

A "yes" vote will establish a new

municipal tax to be used only for acquiring, developing and maintaining open space. Township officials say revenue generated by the tax cannot be used for any other purpose and will go primarily toward local baseball fields and parks.

If approved, the new tax will generate \$187,000 each year for the next 10 years, for a total of almost \$2 million. After 10 years, the tax will expire unless voters approve an extension.

At \$.02 per every hundred dollars of assessed property value, the average homeowner in Scotch Plains can expect to pay \$23 in additional taxes each year for the next 10 years if the resolution is approved. The average assessed value of a house in Scotch Plains is \$116,000.

**Direct Election of the Mayor:**

The question reads: "Shall the Charter of Scotch Plains adopt, governed by the Council-Manager form of government, be amended under that plan to provide for the election of the Mayor directly by the voters of the Municipality?"

Approval of this question means that voters in Scotch Plains will directly elect their mayor to a four-year term beginning in the next election cycle. Currently, members of the Township Council appoint the mayor. The question does not give the mayor any additional powers or change the township's form of government.

In Fanwood, voters will register their opinions on two ballot questions:

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# Matt ALBANO

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- ✓ Working to preserve the character of Westfield on Planning Board and Tree Preservation Commission
- ✓ Supported the Common Cause Ordinance
- ✓ Pushing to solve the downtown parking problem

- ✓ Supported Sunday hours for Westfield Memorial Library
- ✓ Spearheaded passage of the Exterior Property Maintenance Ordinance
- ✓ Successfully obtained state DOT funds for paving Westfield's most deteriorated roads
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