

## MS Board of Ed. Introduces Online Writing Program

By GINA LEVINE-LEVY  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

**MOUNTAINSIDE** — The borough's board of education on Tuesday night heard presentations on both a new online writing-assessment program and the second phase of the fiscal year (FY) 2007-2008 school budget.

Assistant Principal and Curriculum Coordinator Thomas Conroy, along with fifth-grade Language Arts teacher Sharon Scanlon and three students, demonstrated the Criterion web-based writing program. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) developed criterion.

"It's almost like a Game Cube for writing," Mrs. Scanlon said.

Criterion, implemented three weeks ago in Grades 5 and 8 at Deerfield School, assesses students' writing in five general areas: grammar, usage, mechanics, style and organization.

Students are given a timeline in which to write assignments and scores are posted within minutes. Scores are generally based on a six-point rubric. The computer critiques the students' writing.

"It's a visual and it's immediate," Mrs. Scanlon said. "It's easier for them to understand." She said while it may take teachers a week to grade papers, the instant feedback motivates students to try harder.

Eighth grader Eric Whyte said, "It goes over and above on everything you've done wrong." He added, "You just want to do better the next time you type it in."

Criterion allows students to resubmit their work to improve scores.

"In effect, it's really like a one-on-one tutor," she said. "It will not fix the errors for them. It will prompt them what they need to do."

Mrs. Scanlon said it encourages students to keep working on their writing and improve scores. She said the online tool has helped students who struggle with writing.

"This (program) is very forgiving," she said. "They know it's not their final grade."

"I have not yet had a student who hasn't made some progress," Mrs. Scanlon said. "My students have made great strides in their writing."

She said the computer assesses more "harshly" than teachers. And, she added, students cannot argue back against the computer.

Fifth grader Rebecca Cristino said, "You get to see what (the program) has graded a little quicker and your hand doesn't start to hurt" from writing.

Students use school laptops for their writing assessments. Mrs. Scanlon said students enjoy writing on the laptops more than traditional pen and paper.

Chief School Administrator (CSA) Richard O'Malley said, "We try to invest in technology for the sole purpose of teaching and learning."

He added, "Technology is a wonderful thing as long as it's not just handing out laptops to the kids."

Deerfield School Principal Robert Burkhardt said, "It's giving them the direction they need to go on... there's a renewed interest in writing." He added, "It's certainly something we're excited about."

Following the Criterion presentation, Mr. O'Malley presented the special-education portion of the FY 2007-2008 school budget. That portion accounts for 19 percent of the annual budget, or \$2.64 million. He said government aid covers 2 percent of those costs.

The proposed budget accounts for 73 students, 16 of whom receive out-of-district placement. Total out-of-district costs for those 16 students are \$1,097,978.

He said the average cost of services for out-of-district placement is \$68,623, compared with \$10,771 for in-district placement.

The proposed cost of salary and benefits for special education is \$1.5 million, while the proposed cost of supplies, equipment, testing, materials and training is \$42,000.

"Educating these students is very important to what we do," Mr. O'Malley said. He said several in- and out-of-district special-education students placed in advanced placement on this year's state standardized tests. "We want to continue the success these students are having."

Residents will vote on the budget during the school election on Tuesday, April 17, from 2 to 9 pm, at Deerfield School, Community Presbyterian Church and Mountainside Borough Hall.

## WF BOE

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be factored into the budget.

"We have experienced a significant increase in the disabled population in recent years," Mr. Kozlik responded. For this reason, he said, paraprofessionals are needed in the special-education program.

"We have looked at the paraprofessionals very carefully. Mr. Foley and I have worked on this. He is sort of holding my feet to the fire in this regard. And I think that is a healthy way to do it," he said.

Mr. Foley said, "Even with the changes we have made in special education, we are having trouble controlling costs. But there are students with significant disabilities. It is not the kind of thing where you can say, 'we're not doing this anymore.'"

In other business, the BOE discussed, but did not vote on, the proposed 2007-2008-school calendar. Up for discussion were some dates that would conflict with the Berkeley Heights school calendar.

The calendar, which includes 185 days for students, proposes to begin school on Wednesday, September 5, and end Wednesday, June 25.

The Berkeley Heights district would begin school on Monday, September 10, due to construction, and end Tuesday, June 24. Mountainside high-school students attend Governor Livingston High School in Berkeley Heights.

The Mountainside district would also have a mid-winter break the week of Monday through Friday, February 18 to 22, while Berkeley Heights would have off Friday, February 15, and Monday, February 18, only.

The BOE will vote on the calendar at its next meeting in two weeks.

Board President John Perrin encouraged residents to contact Mr. O'Malley with feedback at [romalley@mountainsideschools.org](mailto:romalley@mountainsideschools.org) or by calling (908) 232-3232.

The BOE approved several resolutions, including one to "execute a School Policy and Regulation Consulting Agreement with Strauss Esmay Associates (SEA), L.L.P. at a cost of \$8,500." SEA will help the district revise and maintain its existing policy manual. The revision process is expected to take about a year.

Mr. O'Malley called the undertaking a "big commitment of the board."

"It adds another level of structure to the Mountainside school district," Mr. Perrin said.

In other news, the BOE approved the hiring of boys baseball coach Michael Tehan. And board Vice President Marybeth Schaumburg said negotiations have begun with the Mountainside Education Association (MEA) for new employee contracts. The current three-year contract expires in June.

"We're moving forward," said Mrs. Schaumburg. "We definitely have some work ahead of us."

Negotiations are done in closed-session. There are four more meeting dates scheduled.

Mrs. Schaumburg also encouraged Mountainside residents who have children attending Governor Livingston High School next year to attend the next Berkeley Heights BOE meeting on Thursday, February 22, at 8 p.m. in the multi-purpose room of Columbia Middle School.

Governor Livingston Principal Greg Meissner will present the school's new "rotating" schedule.

The next BOE meeting is Tuesday, February 27, at 7:30 p.m. in the Beechwood School Media Center.

## MS Council Tables Resolution For Police SUV Purchase

By TED RITTER  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

**MOUNTAINSIDE** — Acting Mayor Keith Turner and the borough council on Tuesday night put on hold a resolution that authorizes the purchase of a new police sport-utility vehicle (SUV).

Borough Administrator and Police Chief James Debbie said the proposed purchase of the police SUV would enable the transfer of a standard Ford police cruiser — with about 50,000 miles on the odometer and a 100,000-mile extended warranty — to the department of public works (DPW).

Mr. Debbie said the DPW is currently using a small Kia that was confiscated by police in connection with a drug investigation. He indicated that public works staff "really shouldn't be using" this vehicle because of its size and lack of heavy-duty or safety features.

During the governing body's discussion of both the proposed ordinance and the related authorization for spending capital-improvement funds, Councilman Paul Mirabelli said, "I think we really need to look further at both of these."

Mr. Mirabelli pointed to "concerns" about the ongoing process to "prioritize" the DPW budget "and see how we're going to handle everything (that is requested)."

Mr. Debbie said standard police cars are purchased through the police department's budget, but he noted SUVs "fall outside of the [budget] cap" and, therefore, can be funded differently.

Mr. Debbie added that it is still possible the police SUV — a Dodge Durango that would cost the borough about \$20,400 — could be purchased "in the police budget" instead of using capital-improvement funds.

Borough officials plan to discuss the issue further during a meeting of the council's police committee, and then reconsider it at the governing body's regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, February 20.

In other business, the council approved two resolutions for inclusion on next week's regular council meeting agenda. The first authorizes Union County to apply for a special deer-management permit from the state for the 2007 deer-reduction program — a deer hunt to be administered by the county in March — in the Watchung Reservation. The program is part of an annual deer-popu-



TAKING THE OATH...Garwood Mayor Dennis McCarthy swore in two new police officers at the borough council meeting on Tuesday night. Inset left, Mayor McCarthy, right, swears in Lieutenant James Pipala, with the lieutenant's wife, Karen, at his side. Above right, Mayor McCarthy swears in Sergeant Thomas Mericle as the sergeant's wife, Jenna, looks on.

## Garwood Council Swears In Two New Police Officers

By KATHY MARQUES  
Specially written for The Westfield Leader

**GARWOOD** — Borough Mayor Dennis McCarthy on Tuesday night swore in two new police officers, Lieutenant James Pipala and Sergeant Thomas Mericle.

The mayor also congratulated resident Anne Leonard on being named as a 2007 Woman of Excellence for lifetime achievement by the Union County Commission of the Status of Women. The commission will hold an awards ceremony at the Westwood Restaurant in Garwood on Friday, March 23, at 6:30 p.m. Those interested in purchasing tickets can contact Borough Clerk Christina Ariemma at (908) 789-0710.

The governing body passed an ordinance restricting parking Monday through Friday from 7 to 9 a.m. on Center Street between North and South Avenues. In the past, multiple residents expressed concerns that parking in this area impeded traffic to the nearby school on Second Avenue.

Councilman Keith Sluka, chairman of the council's recreation committee, spoke about multiple events the committee is working on. "There will be a ladies ceramic night at the Little League on March 7 at 7 p.m.," he said. Mr. Sluka also spoke about a first-time ski and tubing trip to Hidden Valley in Vernon, which will be held on Saturday, March 24. A bus will depart Washington School at 3:30 p.m.

"The trip costs \$40 to ski and tube and \$20 if you want to go for the camaraderie. Skiing seems to be the next generation of sports, and we want to expand horizons into other sports events," Mr. Sluka said. The trip is open only to Garwood residents.

Council President Charles

lacion-reduction plan first adopted by the county's Board of Chosen Freeholders in 1995.

The second resolution authorizes a \$14,495 grant agreement with the county's Department of Human Services Division of Planning "to provide educational services for substance-abuse prevention" in the borough through the end of this year. The grant, which officials said is the same amount as last year, requires a 25-percent match from the borough totaling about \$3,600.

Also Tuesday night, the governing body discussed plans to honor Governor Livingston High School in Berkeley Heights varsity basketball standout Thomas Amalfi. The borough plans to present Thomas — who has scored more than 1,110 points in his high-school career — with a resolution of commendation for breaking the school's record (set more than 40 years ago) for basketball points scored.

## WF Board of Adjustment

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nance to preserve the look and feel of the neighborhood," Board Chairman William Heinbokel said.

Dennis Rodriguez of 808 Grant Avenue received approval to extend and convert an existing carport to a one-car garage and to construct an addition onto the rear of the house. Mr. Rodriguez had reduced original measurements of 4.75 feet to 2.5 feet, reducing the lot's coverage to 21 percent and gaining the board's approval.

"[The] applicant has done a good-natured effort," Mr. Heinbokel said. Brian and Martiza Bulger of 615 Ardsleigh Drive received approval for their application to construct a one-story addition to their home. Mr. Bulger's proposal to convert the existing one-car garage to a two-car garage would be re-addressed at the next meeting, should the applicant rework his plans to comply with town building codes.

The board approved two Westfield homeowners who requested variances to construct porches. Mr. and Mrs. David Ferry of 105 Golf Edge were approved to replace their existing porch in need of repairs with a new uncovered front porch to remain consistent with surrounding homes.

"Right now we [are] more the exception than the rule," Mr. Ferry said. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Forgash of 1325 Prospect Street received ap-

provision of methamphetamine," authorities said.

Officials executed search warrants at both men's residences, where 5,000 bottles of bogus Stackler 2 with Ephedra were confiscated, along with labeling equipment. Detectives also found approxi-

mately \$63,000 in cash, two handguns, hollow-nose ammunition and 30 pills of Ecstasy at Huerta's residence, as well as 100 other pills for which he had no prescription.

Police charged Datwani with theft by deception, trademark counter-

feiting and money laundering. Huerta, in addition to those allegations, faces charges of possession of a controlled dangerous substance, possession with intent to distribute a controlled dangerous substance and possession of a firearm, along with weapons possession during controlled dangerous substances offenses.

## Diet-Pill Ring Bust

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## WF Recreation Commission

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maintaining the board-of-education athletic fields. He said the recreation commission would work with the town council and BOE to prioritize improvement projects on the recreation schedule.

"We are a victim of our success. With the good programs and improved facilities comes higher use, and with higher use comes crowds and over-use," Mr. Palatucci said, noting that maintenance of facilities then "becomes a real issue."

He said the department has done "a lot of work" on town facilities, including improvements to Memorial Pool, the addition of turf and lights at Houlihan and Sid Fay fields, the in-

stallation of playground equipment at town parks and improvements to the town's tennis courts.

"(These) are examples of our efforts to keep up with the demands by the community, but there are so many more," he said. "I think what we want to do is look at all those needs in a comprehensive way."

Mr. Palatucci said he plans to meet with the various sports organizations "to kind of hear from them what their needs are and how we are servicing them."

He said his goal this year is to improve accessibility and communication with town residents. "The commission and the town offer a lot of programs and by the more information people have, the more user-friendly we become," he said.

He said residents are often unaware that information on recreation department program offerings, including registration forms, is available on the department's webpage at [westfieldnj.gov/recreation](http://westfieldnj.gov/recreation).

"So, I just want to encourage folks to take advantage of all that," he said.

A seasonal newsletter, *The Rec Room*, is mailed to residents. "There is just a wealth of activities going on. The more people know about it, the more they will take advantage of it," he said.

In terms of sharing services with other municipalities, Mr. Palatucci said he is "always open to new ideas to consider that" but stressed the current recreation staffing "is pretty lean and mean." He said only one additional staff member, the deputy director, has been added in past six or more years.

"Shared services is always a good idea — that way you can pool resources and reduce cost. It makes perfect sense," he said.

Before his interview, Mr. Palatucci videotaped a segment with *The Leader*. That interview can be viewed online at [goleader.com/video](http://goleader.com/video).

## POLICE BLOTTER

**Westfield**  
Wednesday, February 7, Jeffrey Decca, 51, of Hillsborough was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on west North Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated (DWI). He was processed and released to a responsible adult.

Wednesday, February 7, Famous Rivera, 31, of Plainfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop in the 100 block of Windsor Avenue for an outstanding warrant out of Plainfield in the amount of \$250.

Wednesday, February 7, Theodore Giandana, 42, of Scotch Plains was arrested and charged with DWI following a motor vehicle stop on west Dudley Avenue. He was processed and released to a responsible adult.

Wednesday, February 7, Valerie Roper, 21, of Maplewood was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on Springfield Avenue for an outstanding warrant out of Irvington in the amount of \$120.

Thursday, February 8, Thomas Nilla, Jr., 38, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with DWI after a motor vehicle stop on Rahway Avenue. He was processed and released to a responsible adult.

Thursday, February 9, Nicole H. Black, 29, of Westfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on Central Avenue for outstanding warrants out of Union for \$150 and one out of Weehawken for \$150.

Thursday, February 9, Martin A. Diaz, 27, was arrested on three ACS (Automated Complaint System) warrants issued by the Elizabeth City Court following a motor vehicle stop. According to police, the vehicle was confiscated for being unregistered and

displaying fictitious plates.

Thursday, February 9, Tyler Greenfield, 18, and Thomas Texier, 18, both of Westfield, were arrested after a field investigation and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, underage possession of alcohol, possession of a prohibited weapon (switchblade) and entering a public park after hours. They were processed and released to a responsible adult.

Friday, February 10, Scott Cornaccia, 25, of Westfield was arrested and charged with DWI after a motor vehicle stop on West Dudley Avenue. He was processed and released to a responsible adult.

Friday, February 10, Francisco Menendez, Jr., 20, of Union was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on Central Avenue for possession of less than 50 grams of marijuana.

**Scotch Plains**  
Monday, February 5, Shannon Harrison, 21, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with DWI following a motor vehicle stop. She was processed and released to a responsible adult.

Thursday, February 8, a resident of Newark Avenue reported that someone opened up two credit cards in her name.

Friday, February 9, a student at the Union County Vocational Technical Schools told police that someone removed cash from the pocket of her jacket while it was hanging on the back of her chair.

Friday, February 9, a storeowner on Park Avenue reported that someone shoplifted items valued at \$1,800 from his store.

Friday, February 9, an employee of the Township of Scotch Plains reported that someone drew graffiti on the wall of a township building.

Saturday, February 10, James Merlo, 27, of Berkeley Heights was arrested and charged with DWI after a motor vehicle stop. He was processed and released to a responsible adult.

**Fanwood**  
Tuesday, February 6, Kevin M. Coleman, 48, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with an outstanding no-bail warrant out of Union County. He was turned over to the Union County Sheriff's Department.

Wednesday, February 7, Shaniqua T. Briley, 24, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding Newark warrant after a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue. She posted bail and was released.

Saturday, February 10, Konstanti V. Kukoviakin, 34, of New Providence was arrested and charged with DWI after a motor vehicle stop. He was released to a responsible adult.

Monday, February 12, Emanuel N. Gregoriades, 21, of Union was arrested for outstanding warrants out of Cranford and Hillside after a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue. He posted bail and was released.

**Mountainside**  
Wednesday, February 7, Guilene Litus, 26, of Union was stopped for driving without a right taillight and later arrested and charged for driving with a suspended license. According to police, he was also charged with an outstanding Union warrant in the amount of \$500.

Friday, February 9, Renata E. Vieira, 23 of Newark was stopped for a motor vehicle violation on Lawrence Avenue and later arrested and charged with driving with a suspended license.

Friday, February 9, Ahmad C. Domino, 33, of Plainfield was stopped for running a red light on Route 22 and later arrested and charged with driving with a suspended license. According to police, he was also charged with outstanding warrants out of Newark and Irvington.

Saturday, February 10, Eddie Anglin, Jr., 21, of Hillside was stopped for an driving without a driver's side mirror and was later arrested and charged for driving with a suspended license. According to police, he was also charged with possession of less than 50 grams of marijuana.

Saturday, February 10, Rohan Phillips, 40, of Brooklyn, NY was stopped for a motor vehicle violation and was later arrested and charged with possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia. According to police, he was also charged with driving with a suspended license and outstanding warrants out of Plainfield, Union and New Brunswick totaling \$3,200. He was processed and released to the Plainfield Police Department without bail, police said.

## Meningitis

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Mr. Sherr said parents should still "look out for any symptoms that their child may present."

He said viral meningitis is "not something the health department readily steps in and takes action on." Berkeley Heights falls under the jurisdiction of the Rahway Health Department.

Rick Proctor, health officer for that department, also said there is "no reason to be concerned."

"At this point in time we don't see any cause for alarm," Mr. Proctor said. Mr. Proctor, a Union County freeholder, said, "This past week there has been a lot of meningitis kind of stuff that hasn't panned out."

But, he said, "If you're experiencing any kind of flu-like illness...then you have to seek medical care."

"If you're feeling sick, then see the doctor, just like any time," he said.

The CDC website is [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov). To contact the Berkeley Heights school district, call (908) 464-1718. The Mountainside school district can be reached at (908) 232-3232.

unleash the writer within.  
[goleader.com/tiw/contest](http://goleader.com/tiw/contest)