

# THE TATTOO

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## The slippery process of closing school

By ERIC SIMMONS  
The Tattoo

Whenever snowflakes fall, kids watch the weather reports and pray fervently for a snow day.

Most students don't know everything that goes into calling off school.

"I think they look at the weather the night before, but hold out into the morning to see if it will clear up," said Nicole Dube, a sophomore at Bristol Eastern High School.

"They probably have to look at the weather patterns to see where it is going to hit," said freshman Amber Brown.

Sophomore Krystle Kozuch said, "I don't know, I think they should just close it."

But declaring a snow day is a complicated process.

Roads have to be checked, people have to be called, deadlines have to be met, and weather forecasts need to be reliable, or a bogus decision might be made.

It all starts at 3 or 4 a.m. when Vincent Bartucca, the supervisor of buildings and grounds for the Bristol school district, heads out to check the city's roads.

Areas such as Witches Rock Road, Wolcott Street, Willis Street, Peacedale Street, and other sloping roads are checked first, according to Superintendent Michael Wasta.

Bartucca gets back to Wasta by 5 a.m., when a conference call is made between Bristol and officials from surrounding towns, to get their input on road conditions and decisions.

Wasta also keeps his eye on media outlet forecasts, to help make his decision. Wasta contacts the Bartucca by 5:15 a.m., the superintendent said, and he tries to have a final decision by



Joe Keo / The Tattoo

5:30.

Once the decision is made, a phone chain begins with four to five people on the district staff.

"One person on the chain is responsible for calling the media outlets to tell them what the Bristol public schools is doing," said Wasta.

The chain then reaches all faculty

and staff of the public schools in Bristol.

Rather than physically checking the roads himself, Wasta said he relies completely on information from others to make his decisions.

Delays run along the same lines as closings, except some new factors are taken into consideration.

"A major issue with a delay is timing," said Wasta.

Bristol schools must clear all parking lots and about 30 miles of public sidewalk before opening school each day, Wasta said.

Bristol used to have three types of delays, Wasta said, a one-hour delay, a 90-minute delay, and a two-hour delay.

Wasta said that people became confused over the different delays, so the district switched to just a 90-minute delay, closing completely, or keeping school open and on time.

A couple of weeks ago Bristol closed for a "wind chill day."

"The wind chill day was interesting, because it was the first time that we have ever done that before," said Wasta. "The wind chill readings were up to 30 below that morning."

In Bristol, 65 to 75 percent of students take the bus and 30 to 35 percent walk, which is dangerous in a severe wind chill.

Wasta said such low wind chill temperatures can give exposed skin frostbite in just 10 minutes.

"So we called the superintendents in states such as Maine and Wisconsin and asked them what their policies on wind chills was," said Wasta. "Those are places that deal with this quite often."

He found out that wind chills that are at least 25 to 30 below zero will close school, Wasta said. Based on that and other information, he said, school was closed that day.

Occasionally, even the best forecasts fail.

"We are pretty good at our decisions, but we do make mistakes," Wasta said.

"Sometimes we have a really bad snowstorm forecasted, so we close school early, and nothing comes."

"You do have to remember that this is New England, and the weather is always changing, so it's hard to get it perfect 100 percent of the time," said Wasta.

Whether or not they know all the work that goes into canceling school, most students are just hoping for that extra hour of sleep.

## Divorce yourself from insipid 'Newlyweds'

By ERIN FOSTER  
The Tattoo

The hit show *Newlyweds* seems to be sweeping the nation. If you haven't heard about this "true-life" series on MTV featuring Nick Lachey and Jessica Simpson, you're not missing out on much. The show lacks any real intelligence, but Simpson's stupidity is quite amusing.

In one episode she and Lachey go to a carnival where he tries his luck at a basketball toss game. He doesn't win, but the vendor decides to give Simpson a platypus so she can remember the event.

### On the tube

She's never heard of such an animal and spends the rest of the day calling it a platy-ma-pus. As the show continues, the couple attempts to overcome many obstacles such as camping and parasailing.

No matter what is going on, the situation becomes a huge ordeal thanks to Simpson. She seems to be the next Tarzan, but in her case, she was raised by French poodles. She is the reason blondes have a bad reputation. All in all this show has no real story line, or really anything comical or even entertaining.

If you're looking for a quality sitcom, *Newlyweds* is not for you, but if you are looking for half-witted entertainment, then you've hit the jackpot on this one.

## 'Mona Lisa' brings a smile

By AMANDA SHOPE  
The Tattoo

If you think "Mona Lisa Smile" is going to be just your average "chick flick," then you are very wrong.

Though the film mostly attracted women to the theater, by the time it ended, they were ready to bring their husbands, sons or boyfriends back to see it with them.

This movie shows the strain on young women attending all-girl colleges half a century ago and the ups and downs of their lives and looming marriages.

The story is set at the prestigious Wellesley College campus, located in New England, during the fall of 1953.

### At the movies

Teacher Katherine Watson, played by Julia Roberts, leaves from California and travels to Wellesley in order to teach art history. When she arrives, she expects students to want to learn about art, but gets a big surprise when most of the students have already finished the entire textbook and syllabus.

She learns later that most of the students who attend there have been taught that getting married and starting a family is more important than furthering their education.

Naturally, Ms. Watson, who is unmarried, begins to try to show her students that life goes beyond marriage, and that learning is important.

She soon runs into trouble from her co-workers and even a student, Betty Warren, and the new teacher begins to wonder if she will receive an invitation to teach at Wellesley again in the following year - and if she would even want the job again.

There are many twists and turns to the plot, many of them marriage-oriented, that makes the film a must-see for those of us who enjoy seeing a few marriages, mistakes, divorces and even the occasional new love.

Although I can't tell you the ending, I can almost guarantee that "Mona Lisa Smile" is a movie that even the men of America will enjoy and want to see over and over again.

So catch "Mona Lisa Smile," in theaters now, and enjoy the 117 minutes of love, lust and life lessons.

## Teacher's days are numbered

By ERIC SIMMONS  
The Tattoo

Bristol accounting teacher Richard Ladisky is counting down the days to retirement.

After teaching 36 years at both city public high schools, he has accomplished a lot.

Teaching students about accounting, talking about his interests, and throwing in little jokes along the way, Ladisky created an enjoyable classroom environment.

He doesn't teach strictly by the book, but finds real-life examples to illustrate his points, including daily Dilbert cartoons.

Ladisky, a down-to-earth guy who teaches at both Bristol Central and Bristol Eastern high schools, loves accounting.

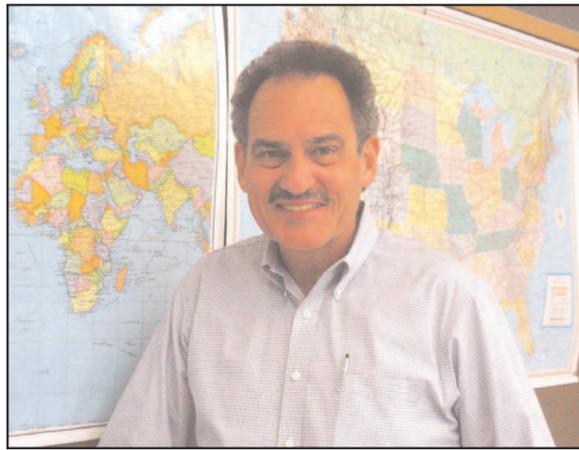
"Accounting is the backbone of the business world," Ladisky said.

"Most jobs need some accounting training in the business world."

Ladisky isn't only interested in accounting.

He also serves as the city's director of emergency management, a part-time job planning for natural disasters, and he teaches photography for Bristol's adult education program.

But he's made his biggest



Eric Simmons / The Tattoo

Bristol Eastern High School accounting teacher Richard Ladisky loves to travel and can't wait until his retirement so he can make use of his maps.

mark teaching thousands of students about accounting over the decades.

Ladisky takes a different approach from most teachers.

While most teachers get right to business when the bell rings, and stick close to the subject, Ladisky brings in Dilbert cartoons and news clippings every day to spur discussion.

"It's a nice way to introduce students to issues not in the

books," Ladisky said.

He said that he searches for cartoons that are relevant to the class.

Ladisky also asks the students about their weekends and what they're doing, to keep the class interesting as students talk about their lives.

Ladisky also talks about his own life.

He said he loves dancing. "The nightclub two-step" is his favorite, Ladisky said, and

he dances at all of the clubs and dance halls he can with his "other half."

Ladisky sometimes even shows students home videos of his dance lessons. He also has his own dance floor in his basement to practice his moves on.

Students find it interesting to see a teacher's personal life rather than just the guy in the suit and tie that makes you read or solve math problems for 84 minutes every other day.

Ladisky tends to get right to the point and keeps the students attention by throwing in little wisecracks and jokes.

If someone does something weird, Ladisky will make a face or mumble, to get students laughing.

He said he loves to see people happy, laughing and having a good time.

Ladisky loves to travel. He talks often about going to the Maldives, located in Malaysia, as well Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, which houses the tallest skyscraper in the world.

Ladisky said he enjoys visiting places such as Bali, the Komodo Islands of Indonesia and Papua, New Guinea.

After he retires, Ladisky said, he intends to travel and he might teach dance classes on a cruise ship.

## Teen writers win national contests

Three journalists for *The Tattoo* captured top honors from the national Quill and Scroll contest for high school students.

The student journalists, all of whom attended Bristol Eastern High School, garnered top honors in the news, editorial cartoon, columns and reviews categories of the annual awards contest.

Eastern junior Katie Jordan earned Gold Keys for a Valentine's Day cartoon and for a column she wrote, "No religion means deeds, not beliefs, matter."

Mike Nguyen, who graduated last year and attends Boston University, snagged an award in the reviews category for a glowing piece he wrote about television's "American Idol."

In the news category, Eastern junior Joe Keo was honored for a story he wrote about the skate park issue in Bristol.

The three *Tattoo* writers were the only Connecticut high school students to emerge on top in the 2003 contest sponsored by the National Newspaper Association Foundation and the Quill and Scroll Society.

Nguyen and Jordan have each won Gold Keys in the past.

Keo recently earned an honorable mention in the features category of the Suburban Newspapers of America national contest for his piece, "Crashing in

Cambodia."

Keo's four-page story about his visit to his parent's homeland, which appeared in January 2003, also won top honors in the features category of last year's Scholastic Press Forum contest.

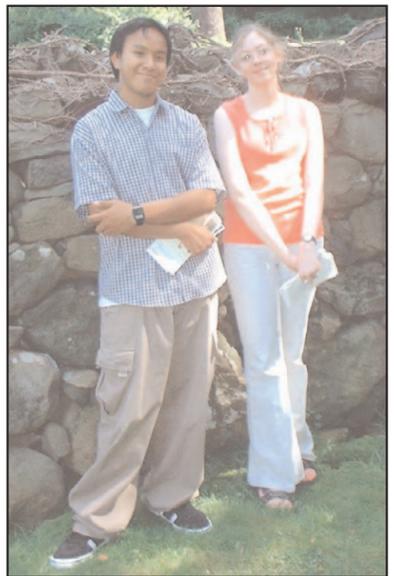
Since 1997, writers and cartoonists for *The Tattoo* have won 33 Gold Keys in the annual contest.

*The Tattoo* gives teen writers in Bristol and across the world the opportunity to learn more about journalism and find readers for their work. During the past decade, *The Tattoo*'s student reporters have interviewed poets and presidential contenders, talked with skateboard legend Tony Hawk, questioned Hollywood stars, soared over Bristol in balloons and more.

*The Tattoo* is not connected to any school, and welcomes all young writers, photographers and cartoonists.

It currently has students from both public high schools in Bristol and has in the past had local members who attended St. Paul Catholic High School, Terryville High School and Miss Porter's School in Farmington.

It also has writers who contribute from across the United States and around the world via the Internet, including Singapore, Pakistan, India, Ireland, England and Canada.



Tattoo photo

Joe Keo and Katie Jordan pause in the Sunken Garden at the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington last year after touring it for a series on art museums.

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The best teen journalism in America. For questions, comments or to join, contact advisors Steve Collins and Jackie Majerus at 523-9632.