

Will Bristol Eastern pass the test?

By **JOE KEO AND MIKE NGUYEN**
The Tattoo

Ten years have passed. It's now judgment day for Bristol Eastern High School.

An inspection team from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges is at the school this week to determine if Eastern's crucial accreditation will remain in place - and school officials have been doing all they can to convince the visitors that everything's going great.

For weeks, students have seen custodians and electricians working in the hallways fixing the lights and repositioning televisions and trophies, trying to spiff up appearances.

"It's stupid," said student Ashley Perondine. "They change the school for that week."

But appearances don't matter much in the process, according to Principal V. Everett Lyons.

"Cosmetic stuff doesn't really get you accredited," Lyons said. "Teachers aren't planning any whoop-de-doo activity. It doesn't really do anything to put on a show."

But, Lyons added, "Obviously, if company is coming, you dress up a little bit."

During the school's first accreditation inspection in a decade, outside experts are reviewing everything from Eastern's mission statement to the class work done by students.

"Teachers aren't planning any whoop-de-doo activity." - Principal V. Everett Lyons

"The stakes are high," said John Harris, who heads the steering committee at Eastern that's been preparing for the inspection.

"It's not acceptable to not be accredited," Harris said. "It would be a very serious indictment" of the school if that happened, he said.

Lyons said the students realize the impact of an accreditation.

Without it, said Harris, "Students who graduate would have a hard time getting into college."

But neither Harris nor Lyons said they are worried that the school could

get a thumbs-down from the experts.

"We are very well prepared," said Lawrence Hochman, a veteran guidance counselor at the school and another member of the steering committee.

"I think we're going to do very well," Lyons said.

Hochman said the accreditation effort is more of an overall improvement process at Eastern and it will have a positive effect for students in the long run.

On Sunday, school officials held a catered reception for the accreditors and the students they will "shadow" today. Men in suits and women in skirts and dresses roamed and chatted in the school's cafeteria, nibbling on fancy hors d'oeuvres that differed greatly from the usual fries and burgers of the ordinary school lunch menu.

The school's jazz band, directed by Brian Kelly, played invigorating music to keep the cheery mood of the evening alive.

"The food is good," said John Voss, a member of the visiting committee who seemed happy to be at the school.

"So far, so good," said his fellow committee member Gary Gula.

On Sunday afternoon, the visitors appeared free of stress and any worries of the work ahead, munching on exquisite desserts and scrumptious appetizers. There's no telling, though, what sort of mood they'll be in after a few days giving Eastern a close-up look.

This week, inspectors are shadowing some students to see what actually happens in the classroom. As part of a 1999 change in assessment protocol, they'll also be required to stay in a classroom for a full period.

The inspection team of 16 educators from across Connecticut will study the school's instruction, curriculum, student assistance programs and more.

They will meet with faculty, talk with students, eat lunch in the cafeteria, visit classes, speak with parents and pore over documentation provided by school administrators.

"They'll actually eat the food," Lyons said.

In an online account of what happens during inspections, Pamela Gray-Bennett, director of the Commission on Public Secondary Schools, a part of the regional group, said, "Team members observe the students' learning experiences, note the practices that teachers use related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment and evaluate the adequacy of

the facility and resources for learning."

Beginning Tuesday, team members will begin to write up their assessment report in response to the school's own "self-study" report, to eventually submit to the accreditation board to be voted on. In addition to the two years of preparation, Bristol Eastern will have to wait until the end of the summer for the accreditation process to end, when the report and recommendations are finally released.

Lyons said the report will contain "commendations" and "recommendations."

But the mostly unstated worry is that it could also include some bad news.

The inspectors will look at seven areas within the school, including its curriculum, leadership and resources, and rate each of them on a 4-point scale. In each category, the school can be rated either exemplary, acceptable, limited or deficient, according to Harris.

A deficient score "would be a very strong statement that something needs to be done," he said.

Harris said, though, that Eastern is shooting for more than just an acceptable rating.

"It's not a question of being above the minimum," he said. "If you have things that are good about the school, then it should be recognized."

Generally, the inspectors' report "triggers a follow-up effort to convert recommendations into an agenda for change and improvement. Schools that are committed to the process find that it works," according to a statement on the association's web site by Jacob Ludes III, the group's director.

Although Lyons is confident that the school will be accredited, it probably won't be a flawless effort.

"We have some problems in staffing," Lyons said, referring to the growing class sizes and teacher shortages. He predicted that the school might get a recommendation for that by the committee.

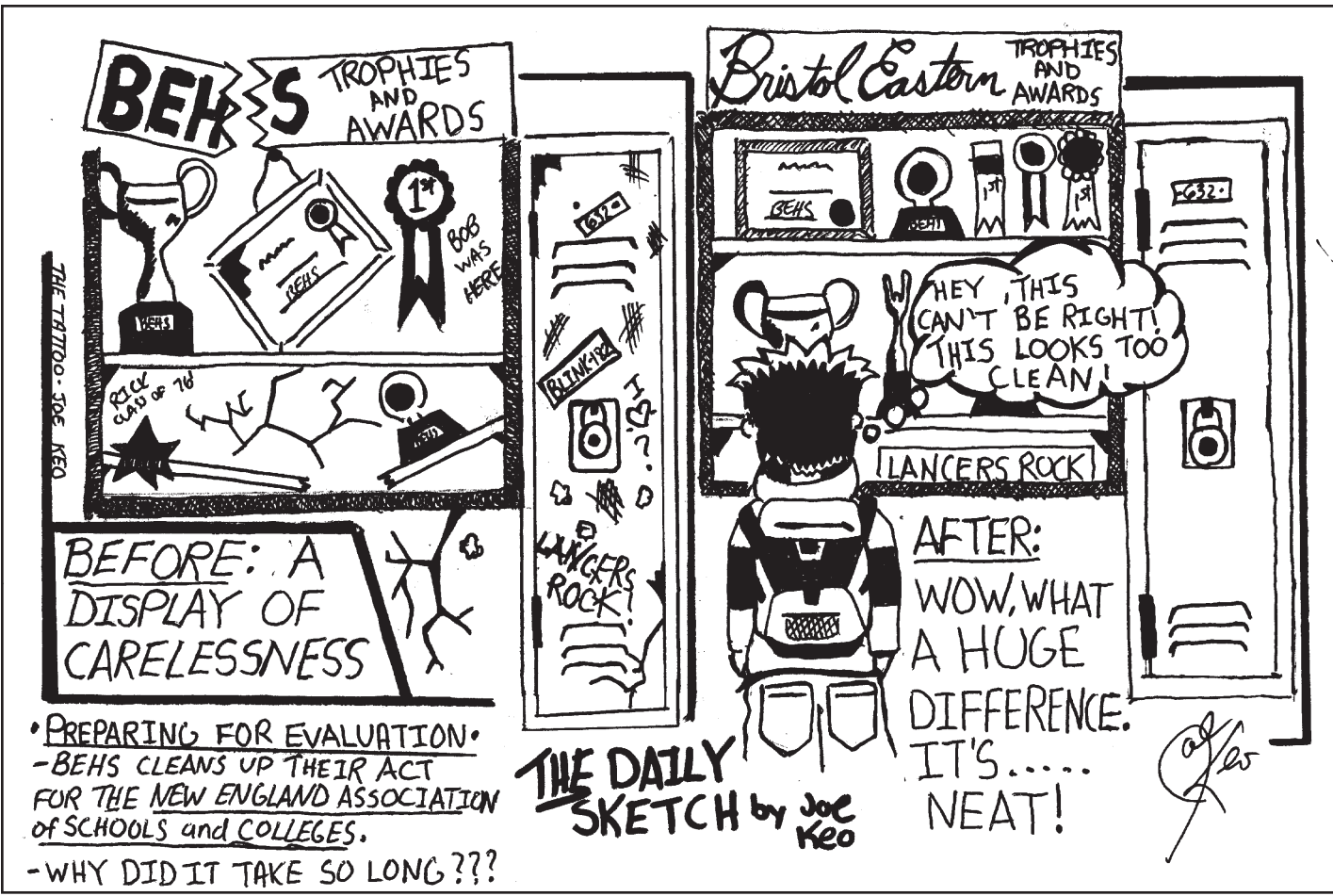
He's not worried about the students, however.

"They're a great bunch of kids," the principal said. He said he knows they'll "be themselves."

Tattoo writers Sam Yosafi, Katie Jordan, Sara Greene and Nicole Bernosky contributed to this story.



Accreditor Nicandra Perusi
Joe Keo / The Tattoo



Joe Keo / The Tattoo

Hypnotist mesmerizes teens

By **JACQUI MOREAU**
The Tattoo

You only graduate from high school once. You remember what you wore, who you were with, and everything you did that day for the rest of your life.

Every year, a dozen dedicated parents of Lewis Mills seniors run 'Project Graduation,' a year-long fundraising campaign that affords an unforgettable after-graduation party.

Sales of coupon books, Yankee Candles, and 'The Pampered Chef' culinary accessories have been the big fundraisers so far this year.

But no other fundraiser compares to the Dan LaRosa hypnotist show, which made a recent appearance at Lewis Mills.

Hypnotism bridges the subconscious and conscious

states of mind. In trance, the intellectual mind relaxes, and people are enabled and more willing to do as their nature dictates. People under hypnosis only act under their value system.

Participants often lack full awareness of their surroundings, and in this case, that they have an audience. Because they're not quite asleep, but not fully awake, they may act in ways that later make them feel embarrassed.

LaRosa entertains about 150 crowds each year. He travels distances ranging from as close his hometown of Middletown to Europe, where he will soon lighten-up United States troops abroad.

"We just want to have fun tonight," LaRosa told the audience, which nearly filled the Mills auditorium. When he asked for a show of hands as to how many people attended

last years' presentation, half of the crowd thrust their arms into the air. The audience was full of energy: they wanted to have fun that night, too.

"I won't make you act like a chicken or a dog," LaRosa promised the two dozen volunteers that he called onto the stage. "I won't make you tell your deepest, darkest secrets, either."

La Rosa quickly weeded out those he considered resistant to hypnosis, leaving only about a dozen.

"I'm going to make you feel relaxed, like at a bus-stop," was one of the jumbled sentences the hypnotist spoke.

A series of tone changes, obscure words thrown into his sentences, and peculiar deep breathing into the microphone characterized his speech throughout the show.

Over the course of the night, a student usually seen

"mushing" at a rock concert was dancing ballet, a group of junior and sophomore boys stood out as they learned to luau, and a senior boy yelled at the audience in Chinese.

When asked if she was a believer, audience member and Lewis Mills senior Lauren Cables said, "Some people just fake it, but sometimes it's real."

Senior Catie Aylsworth said, "I think that you have to have the right mindset to really be hypnotized."

LaRosa's 22 years of experience was evident in the crowd's awestruck responses to the show.

The annual 'Project Graduation' Tag Sale, held at the Harwinton Fairgrounds, is expected to take place in early May.

Hopefully the fundraisers to come will be as successful as the hypnotist show.

The grass is greener... on the golf course

By **DANIELLE LETOURNEAU**
The Tattoo

Letters from the Bristol Water Department usually say something like: "Dear customer, Please conserve your water because at the time we are in a middle of a drought."

That means don't water your gardens, take shorter showers and try not to flush the toilet much.

And we're not supposed to use sprinklers either. But have you ever thought how much water the golf courses use? They water their lawns constantly so that they are green.

Yet you don't need to golf on green grass. It's just a luxury. If you are a golfer and you don't want to play on brown grass, then don't play!

The city's reservoirs are half empty and people are already talking about big summertime restrictions so that we don't run out of water for drinking, bathing and other necessities.

Why should stupid golf courses water their lawns when nobody else can? Everyone should have the same restrictions, including golf courses.

If things get worse and we run out of water, we're going to feel pretty stupid that we let the golf courses use so much of it so that people could putt on green grass.

So to make the future better and to lessen the chance of us losing all of our water, let's stop the golf courses from watering their lawns now.

What I say

Mets have new look and visions of Series

By **T.J. O'CONNOR**
The Tattoo

The off-season is a time for players to relax, improve their skills and get stronger.

For teams, though, it is a time to pick up new players - something that kept the New York Mets' front office busy this off-season.

The Mets signed a plethora of players.

Topping the list is fielding sensation Roberto Alomar, who came from Cleveland, where he was part of the best shortstop-second base pair in baseball.

Alomar takes Edgardo Alfonzo's position at second base this year. Alfonzo is now the Mets' starting third baseman.

A familiar name for New Englanders is Mo Vaughn, tapped to replace Todd Zeile at first base. Vaughn, the former Boston Red Sox slugger, came to the Mets after sitting out the 2001 season due to a torn bicep tendon.

In the Mets' third game of the year "Big Mo"

hit his 300th career homerun.

Vaughn will certainly hit with power, but a question remains: will he be able to hold his own defensively on the field?

On the ball

Another player brought in to boost New York's offense is former Milwaukee Brewer

Jeremy Burnitz. Burnitz started his career with the Mets in 1993. He has hit at least 28 homeruns for each of the past five seasons and has close to a .500 career slugging percentage.

With his power, he will protect Vaughn and Mike Piazza in the middle of the Mets' lineup.

New York also brought back Roger Cedeno to the squad. He played for the Mets in 1999.

Cedeno has lightning speed and has stolen 146 bases over the past three years. That's 48 more bases than the all-time stolen base leader Ricky Henderson has stolen in the past four years.

Everybody knows that pitching wins championships - including the Mets, who went out and signed three quality pitchers who will be in the starting rotation.

Lefty Shawn Estes will compliment Al Leiter, the Mets' ace. Former Colorado Rockies pitcher Pedro Astacio and the young star Jeff D'Amico were the other pickups.

In the past few years, New York has lost many good hurlers, including Mike Hampton, Rick Reed and Bobby Jones who left voids in the Mets' starting rotation.

The team finally has worthy replacements for them.

The roster is not totally dominated by newcomers, however.

The star of the team, Mike Piazza, is back and ready to put up great offensive numbers.

After a disappointing season last year, Alfonzo looks to recover offensively and get used to his new position at third base.

When Alomar left Cleveland, he left Omar Vizquel, his dear friend and probably the best shortstop in the game, behind.

In New York, he will play with veteran Met

Rey Ordonez, an excellent fielder. Mets' fans will see a lot of fancy plays turned between the two throughout the year.

So will the "New-Look" Mets live up to the expectations of fans and journalists?

They should be able to shine with one of the best defensive infields in baseball (Alfonzo, Alomar, Vaughn, and Ordonez), a lot of power in the lineup and quality pitching.

Perhaps there will be another "Subway Series" in October. And if there is, this time the Mets will have the players to match up with the mighty Bronx Bombers.



Mo Vaughn