

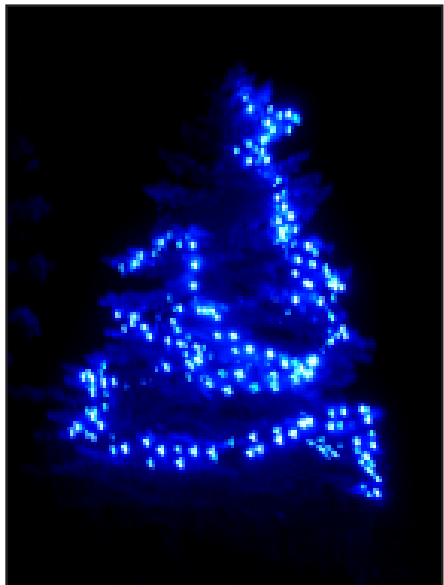
Happy Holidays!

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Christmas wishes

A few weeks ago, elementary school students in the OA district were asked to submit their Christmas wishes. They could be for family, friends, for the world, or for themselves. Several classes submitted their wishes. For a sampling of what we received, see **Page 4**.



Tom Cole

OFA jazz musicians impress at NYSSMA

On December 6 the Owego Free Academy Jazz Band, conducted by Daniel Fabricius, traveled to Rochester to perform at the 73rd Annual Winter Conference of the New York State School Music Association.

The 19-member band performed at the Riverside Convention Center and received many rave reviews and an enthusiastic standing ovation at

Tickets for OA musical "Grease"

The OFA musical "Grease" is scheduled for January 30 and 31, and February 1, with Friday and Saturday evening shows (7:30) and a Sunday afternoon performance (2:30). You can order tickets by using our on-line printable ticket form, which can be found on the front page of the **OA Web site: www.oacsd.org**.

the conclusion of its show.

Although the band had numerous honors in the past and is noted for its fine performances, it was an exceptional honor for the band to be

selected to perform for the NYSSMA Conference event.

The band had applied to be selected last spring by sub-

— See **Jazz Page 2**



My Ethics, My Codes of Life
Rachel Soott period 5

Ethics vary with circumstances, and culture. In my own life, ethics play a major role. When I had, or just my own, ethics include being honest, compassionate, and looking out for everyone.

I have been told repeatedly that I trust people too easily, but I find that when I put my faith and trust in people when others would not dare to, they would hope that people would put that same faith in me. Trust investment you put in people; if you build enough trust in them honest, they will do the same in you. I value honesty so much have of myself. I will put honesty before the risk of humiliation before anything less worthy of the Gospel truth. Even in belief do not come off cold and heartless. Compassion and honesty each is put into every situation. I admire those who trust and Compassion is the greatest form of love humans have. Webster's Dictionary compassion means a feeling of sympathy. My definition of compassion is forgiving, loving, helping others. I have this theory that if one person can go out then it will start a chain reaction of the same. People kindness can go.

It wasn't until recently that I learned that the impressions can be deceitful of what kind of person had just met someone, and you speak with them in conversations. They come off as a harsh, cruel, and your judgment based on just these three encounters ever ask them what their goal in life is, what kind of experience love, did they experience hurt, did appearance? Until you know them and not just their type, them. You have not looked for their beauty, their good eyes. Look hard enough and you will always find it. If you don't walk away from those three impressions, I am sure that my codes of life may be very different. Now that trust, compassion, and beauty will not make this life a better one to live? My codes may be different, but test them for yourself, and see the kind of people around you. You just may start a chain reaction.

OA accepts Rachel's Challenge



Pictured are OAMS students who signed a banner, accepting Rachel's Challenge shortly after Participating in the program on December 8.

Stephen P. Jensen



Read Rachel's essay, in full, on www.rachelschallenge.com, or access the site's link from the OA site at www.oacsd.org.



National program makes impact on OFA, middle school students

Matt Wood was a newcomer to Owego Apalachin Middle School in the fall of 2007. He'd just moved to the OA from Ithaca. He was a stranger and admits he was clueless when it came to reading his new middle school's schedule.

"I knew no one. Then someone just came up to me and asked if I needed any

help," said Wood, now 13 and an eighth-grader here. "He came up to me because I must have looked confused, and he helped me figure out my schedule. I had no clue. Today, we're best friends."

That someone was OAMS eighth-grader Robbie Roberts, 14.

— See **Rachel Page 3**

Jazz Continued from Page 1

mitting a CD recording of several pieces played during the 2007-08 school year, according to Fabricius.

The selection process started with a panel listening to all submitted recordings to narrow down the possible performers," said Fabricius.

"This is done before the selection committee knows anything about the groups.

"Eventually just eight groups are selected to perform during the four concert hours scheduled as part of the four-day conference."

The OFA group received the invitation to perform in June and had planned/rehearsed for this event since September.

In Rochester the OFA group played Duke Ellington's *Caravan* (as played by the Alan Baylock Jazz Orchestra), *Groove Merchant* (as played by the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orches-



Stephen P. Jensen

tra), and *Second Chances* (as played by Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band).

OFA senior Deanna

Lemmon performed with the All-State Symphonic Band and was also a featured soloist on soprano saxophone for the OFA

Jazz Band performance.

Other soloists featured in the OFA Jazz Band were Jimmy Kapuscinski (tenor sax), Bryant

Barnhart (trumpet), Alex Delaney (piano), Kit Burdick (bass), and Patrick Linehan (drums).

The OFA jazz band is: Deanna Lemmon (alto and soprano saxophones); Zach Mandeville (alto saxophone and flute); Jimmy Kapuscinski (tenor saxophone and clarinet); Jessica Hernandez (tenor saxophone and bass clarinet); Amy Czuhanych (baritone saxophone and bass clarinet); David Swenton (trumpet); Bryant Barnhart (trumpet); Mike Steidle (trumpet); Jimmy Campbell (trumpet); Jessie Shrauger (trombone); Eric Chang (trombone); Kathy Smith (trombone); James Mead (trombone); Alex Delaney (piano); Ryan Earle White (guitar); Kit Burdick (bass); Haley Vasilopoulos (vibes); Patrick Linehan (drums/percussion); and, Sterling Payne (drums/percussion).

Notes

Art exhibit Jan. 2

Owego Free Academy art students will participate in the Art '09 exhibition of area high school students' art work. The opening reception will be held 3 to 9 p.m. January 2, 2009, at the Cooperative Gallery, 213 State Street, Binghamton.

Gallery hours are 3 to 6 p.m. Fridays, noon to 4 p.m. Saturdays and noon to 3 p.m. Sundays. The exhibit will be on display January 2 through January 18.

The opening reception is part of First Friday activities in downtown Binghamton.

Field hockey clinic

An indoor field hockey clinic for girls will be offered for students in grades 3 through 5 from 3 to 5 p.m. Saturday, January 24, 2009, at the Owego Boys & Girls Club gym.

Emily Crawford, Owego Free Academy varsity field hockey coach, will run the clinic. Equipment will be provided. Athletes must wear sneakers and the least restrictive clothing in order to run.

Sign up at the Boys & Girls Club or by calling Crawford at 237-4767, or by e-mailing Crawford at fhsb36@aol.com.

Athlete/GPA honors

Every fall varsity sports team at Owego Free Academy qualified for the NYSPHSAA Scholar/Athlete Team Award, based on each team's composite grade-point average.

"This is quite an accomplishment and one we should all be proud of," said



Provided

Poster winner

At the Lions Club District Fall Conference in Geneva in November, Owego Apalachin Middle School student Helen Hildebeitel (pictured in the front row, at right) had her Peace Poster selected as the winner in the second level of competition. Her poster has now moved to the national level of competition. OAMS art teacher Sue Anderson is also pictured, third from the left.

Tom Bryant, OFA interim athletic director. "In past years during the fall season, we have always had a number of teams qualify for this award, but never have we had all team qualify. Congratulations to

all of you."

Following are the grade-point averages for each fall sports team at OFA: boys cross country - 94.412; girls volleyball - 94.308; girls swimming/diving -

93.339; girls soccer - 93.261; golf - 93.162; girls tennis - 92.934; girls cross country - 92.783; football - 91.773; boys soccer - 91.381; and, field hockey - 90.913.

OA: No reportable pesticide applications Oct. 5 through Dec. 15

New York State Education Law section 409-H, effective July 1, 2001, requires all public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools to provide written notification to all persons in parental relation, faculty, and staff regarding the potential use of pesticides periodically throughout the school year.

No reportable pesticide applications took place from October 5, 2008 to December 15, 2008.

As a reminder, the Owego Apalachin Central School District is required to maintain a list of persons in parental relation, faculty, and staff who wish to receive 48-hour prior notification of certain pesticide applications. The following pesticide applications are not subject to prior notification requirements:

- ♦A school remains unoccupied for a continuous

72-hours following an application;

- ♦Anti-microbial products;
- ♦Nonvolatile rodenticides in tamper resistant bait stations in areas inaccessible to children;
- ♦Nonvolatile insecticidal baits in tamper resistant bait stations in areas inaccessible to children;
- ♦Silica gels and other nonvolatile ready-to-use pastes, foams, or gels in areas inaccessible to children;
- ♦Boric acid and disodium octaborate tetrahydrate;
- ♦The application of EPA designated biopesticides;
- ♦The application of EPA designated exempt materials under 40CFR152.25;
- ♦The use of aerosol products with a directed

spray in containers of 18 fluid ounces or less when used to protect individuals from an imminent threat from stinging and biting insects including venomous spiders, bees, wasps, and hornets.

In the event of an emergency application necessary to protect against an imminent threat to human health, a good faith effort will be made to supply written notification to those on the 48-hour prior notification list.

If you have not yet registered to receive 48-hour notification of pesticide applications that are scheduled to occur in your school, but would like to, please contact Tony Clark at OA: 75 Elm Street Owego N.Y. 13827, phone (607) 687-3044, Fax (607) 687-0190, e-mail clarkt@oacsd.org.

Rachel Continued from Page 1

"Matt was in my homeroom and I could see he was a new kid with no friends at all, so I thought, 'let's make a new friend today,'" Roberts said, about a half hour after watching the Rachel's Challenge presentation at the OA Theater on December 8. "The schedules were different from his school's, so I had to help him out. Then I introduced him to a whole bunch of other people that day. We're really good friends now. We hang out all the time."

The story of Wood and Roberts is a perfect example of Rachel's Challenge at work. Rachel's Challenge is a traveling program born from tragic circumstances.

Rachel Scott was the first student to be killed by classmates in the April 20, 1999, Columbine massacre that eventually took the lives of 13 people (12 students and one teacher) and injured many more. The program was started by Rachel's father, Darrell, and Rachel's step-mother, Sandy. Rachel was just 17 years old.

Not long before she was killed, Rachel Scott wrote an essay for school. In it, she challenged the reader on several occasions to show compassion at every turn, and to "start a chain reaction" of kindness. It wasn't until after his daughter's untimely death that Darrell Scott realized his daughter may have had some divine insight into her destiny.

After she was gone, Darrell Scott found writing on the back side of his daughter's dresser, within the shape of two hands. It read: "These hands belong to Rachel Joy Scott and will someday touch millions of people's hearts."

"Rachel Scott didn't write that when she was 18 years old, or 45 years old. She wrote that when she was 12," said Cody Hodges, who offered the Rachel's Challenge presentation three times at OA. He spoke with OFA students on the morning of December 8, followed by a talk with the OAMS students shortly after. That evening, he gave a 7 o'clock presentation to about 300 students, parents, educators and members of the community.

Hodges is a former star quarterback for the University of Texas A&M, was a member of the NFL franchise Tennessee



Stephen P. Jensen

Titans for one year, and followed that with a short arena football career.

Now he travels the country giving Rachel's Challenge presentations to school and community assemblies.

"Those 12 students at Columbine, they all woke up that day like it was any other day," Hodges told the OFA students and teachers assembled. "It was no different than the day before."

"I know what you're thinking," said Hodges, looking out into the OA Theater crowd. Some students stared. A few dabbed wet eyes. All paid rapt attention. "This could never happen. Not in Owego. This is a good school."

"Well I promise you, (the people of Columbine, Colorado) didn't think anything like that would ever happen there. Columbine was a good school. It's still a good school. It never should have happened," Hodges continued.

"Those two boys (the two who committed the murders, then committed suicide) were teased, they were bullied every day for years," he said. "No one stepped forward and said, 'Enough.'"

"I don't think it mattered who you were when you walked into this auditorium this morning," Hodges said. "But it matters who you are when you leave here today."

During his talk, Hodges went through five tenets of Rachel's Challenge. They are:

1. Look for the best in others.
2. Dare to dream.
3. Choose positive influences.
4. Kind words and acts of kindness yield huge results.
5. Start the chain reaction.

"Go home today and tell someone that means the world to you that you love them,"

Hodges said. "Take a stand against a wrong."

And repeating the words from a letter Rachel Scott wrote to her cousin, Hodges told the OA middle-schoolers, "Don't let your character change color with your environment. Find out who you are and let it stay its true color."

"These are the groups Rachel reached out to at school - the disabled, kids who were new at school, and those who were picked on or put down."

Hodges talked about how Rachel Scott, a diminutive girl, once stepped into the middle of a fight at Columbine High, between bullies and one disabled boy. The students were picking on the disabled student and Rachel put an end to it while others turned a blind eye.

"She broke up a fight between the bullies and a boy named Adam," Hodges said. "After Rachel's death, Adam revealed that Rachel saved his life that day, not because he was being bullied that day, but because he simply had had enough."

"He had planned to go home that afternoon and take his own life. He was so sick of being bullied and Rachel changed it all."

"Some of the people who were crying here this morning are the ones who needed to be crying," said Tom Westcott, OFA guidance counselor and an organizer for bringing Rachel's Challenge to Owego. "Whether they have been victims or bullies themselves, the message hit home for some."

"This is a well timed presentation for us," Westcott said. "The media would lead us to believe that everything's wonderful in the world at the holidays, but a lot of kids go through a lot of turmoil during this time of year. Something like this can help some people hit the re-set button, take stock of what's happening in their lives, and make positive changes."

Tyler Spadine, 17, is an OFA junior who took in the Rachel's Challenge morning presentation.

"Here in Owego, we have a lot of people who step up when they see people being bul-

lied," he said. "I can see where some schools would have problems. Every school's got them. But the majority of kids here lead by example, and it's one reason we don't see a big bullying problem here."

"This was a powerful assembly," said sophomore Kyle Seymour, 15. "I think a lot of kids in our school will be affected because that's the way they are. It's not that it's a huge problem here, but maybe for some kids it will make them think about how they should be treating others."

Senior Lindsay Schneider, 18, sighed deeply after the presentation.

"I think it'll make a really big impact here," she said. "I think there are choices people need to make, and I think some kids will really take the messages to heart."

"There's heckling here, within groups of friends," she said, "but Owego's really good compared to some schools. I've seen the teasing in some of my friends, though. They might be the brunt of a joke from the middle school level on up."

"It's interesting that things like (Columbine) can actually happen," said 13-year-old eighth grader Tom Beierle. "It's strange how

things like this can have such a huge impact on so many."

Beierle said he's witnessed bullying before, and that "Rachel's Challenge" may change his approach in those situations, from now on.

"I've seen lots of kids being messed with," he said, "and some of my friends have, too. There have been times where I've figured it's not my business. But this program makes you think about that more."

At lunch time at the middle school, sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders signed a huge poster hanging in the cafeteria. Across the top, it read, "I accept Rachel's Challenge." Some joked as they scribbled words, seemingly content to be out of their seats for a moment. Many students took their time and appeared to write on the banner, from their hearts.

"I think a lot of people want to accept the challenges after they saw what happened," said 11-year-old sixth-grader Andrew Whalen. "I've seen bullying, but rarely here. But I do think the program will help."

"I think it'll make a difference in the world," said Jacob Judson, also an 11-year-old sixth-grader. "It will help stop most of the bullying, but not all of it. Personally, it'll encourage me to follow the rules that my

teachers give me."

"I think it will help some people think before they're mean to others," said Zachary Church, 11, of the sixth grade.

Justine Seymour, 12, was moved by the short life of Rachel Scott.

"I couldn't believe how much she had done for everyone at her school," said the seventh-grader. "It's really sad what happened to her, but at the same time, the program is a great idea to encourage kids not to bully one another."

"I've never actually said anything I've seen bullying others because I didn't want to get involved," Seymour said, "but now I would probably go get a teacher to let them know, and to try to stop it."

"Here, there's not a lot of physical bullying," said 13-year-old seventh-grader Rachel Merrill, "but it's more verbal. I think Rachel's Challenge will help people think about it more."

Westcott said he thought the program hit its desired target.

"I thought it went well and our speaker, Cody Hodges, did an outstanding job of delivering the message of Rachel's Challenge," Westcott said.

"He had a way of connecting with the macho male population, encouraging not just the girls, but the boys to journal, to write down their thoughts and feelings. I think the fact that he was a successful college and professional athlete who found it important to devote his time and energy toward this message helped get the point across."

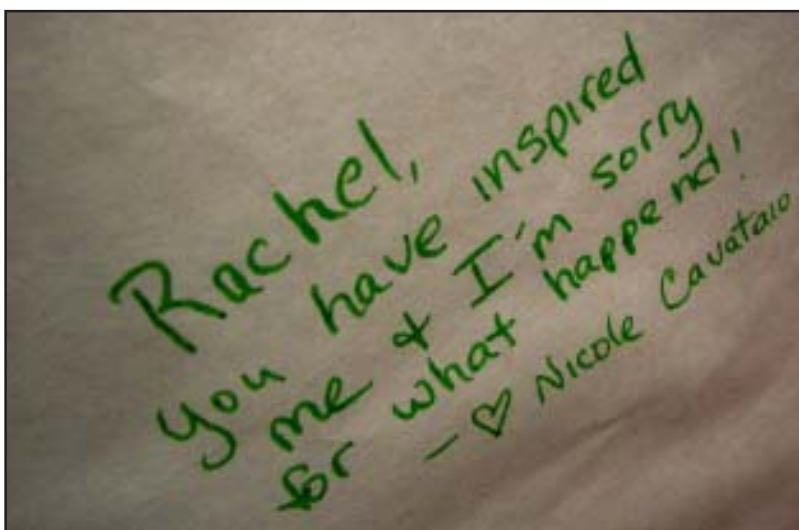
"Our program seems to have been well received, specifically on an emotional level," he said. "I have had many positive comments from students, staff, parents and other community members on the impact of the program and message."

"It really has compelled people to think not only with their heads, but with their hearts," Westcott said. "This way of thinking has a much more profound and sustained impact than other assembly programs. I believe that a program like this one gives OA the opportunity to become an even better place to learn and work."

Matt Wood, the boy who was brand new at OAMS in September 2007, said he learned a lot from "Rachel's Challenge," and from his friend Robbie Roberts' simple, kind gesture more than a year ago.

"It shocked me that people would go to those lengths at Columbine ... to kill people that way," Wood said, shaking his head.

"We're all the same people. Just because we're black or white or Asian, athletes or musicians or whatever, we're all human beings."



Elementary wishes for Christmas

Students from Apalachin and Owego elementary schools were invited to offer their Christmas wishes - for themselves, for family and friends, or for the entire world. Here are some of the responses we received.



From Mrs. Schierloh's 3rd Grade, OES

Angel Keppler - To have our world to be cleaner, so it will stay alive. Also, that the poor will get lots of food.

Joey Doty - I wish for world peace and that no one gets hurt.

Charles Brady - My Christmas wish is the whole world can give to other people.

Kaden Middleton - I wish astronauts can stop the meteor from hitting the Earth.

C.J. Hunt - I wish for my Dad to come home for Christmas. He lives in Florida.

Kathryn Cornett - What I want for Christmas is for my Mom to not be sick. I love her.

Morgan Terry - I wish that my best friend Sarah can come to my house and her family to have a good Christmas.

Cora Green - I wish that my family and friends have a good Christmas.

Brendan Smith - I wish every family has a caring holiday.

From Mr. Shambo's Kinderharten, OES

Aden - A new backpack.
Isaiah - That this school was a magical school.

Collin - A watch.
Kaitlyn - To see Hannah Montana.

Alfred - That I could play with my motorcycle.

Evan - A guitar.
Cory - I wish for new make-up for my Mom.

Kameron - A new Hess Truck.

Malaki - A bone for my puppy.

From Miss Goodwin's 4th Grade, AES

Erin Thalacker - I wish that everyone would have a Merry Christmas. I hope that all the soldiers in Iraq have a safe Christmas.

Dalton Tiefenthaler - I wish my cousin a safe journey all the way from Texas.

Luke Kemmerling - I wish my grandparents the very best Christmas.

Alexia Gillette - I hope the whole community has a safe and happy Christmas!

Corey Brown - I hope that all of the less fortunate families make it through and have a nice Christmas. I hope my sister makes it into the college she wants to.

Sergio de la Vega - I wish everybody in the whole wide world would understand the true meaning of Christmas and have a happy Christmas.

Elizabeth Guinta - I hope everybody that doesn't have a home can get one.

Gary King - I hope for a weird Christmas for my family.

Bella Coleman - I wish that all the people in the hospital have an enjoyable Christmas.

From Mrs. Monforte's 4th Grade, OES

Decker Ayers - I wish for a PSP, shoes, super bouncy ball, baseball glove, a puppy, and that global warming will stop.

Ethan Pryor - My Christmas wish is for every family in the world to have the best Christmas they've ever had.

Joey McCann - I wish for world peace, the war to stop, and for people to have a nice holiday.

Clayton Wolfe - I wish that the world would pollute less.

Rozalyn Morey - I wish for a toy. I wish for a good Christmas.

Lizzy Nowak - I wish my brother Zach has the best Christmas in Missouri.

Cole Paradies - I wish for everyone to be healthy and strong through there life.

From Mrs. Jones' 5th Grade, OES

Lindsay Haskell - I wish that there will be snow on Christmas day or to have it snowing. Also, to be with all my family on Christmas morning and to have all the rest of my family to get the presents that they all asked for.



Emma Renda - I want to have snow on Christmas day so it could look like a real Christmas.

Carry King - I wish my dad can come home for Christmas day.

Liam Elliker - I would like to see all my family members both on my mom's side and my dad's side. Also, I hope we will have more fun this year than last year. Another thing I would like is for it to snow on Christmas. Lastly, I would like all my relatives to get the things they wanted.

Andrew Matt - That my family has an amazing Christmas and is safe for the holidays. And also I want my Dad to be in no pain.

Cameron Sickler - That I get an Xbox 360 for Christmas and that my aunt doesn't crash into a snow bank again on her way back to Cortland.

Allan Bishop - My wish is that my dad will come back safely from California. Another wish is that my grandma will ward off her brain tumor.

Emily Merrill - I hope I get to stay with my grandparents' in Pittsford that I only see two or three times a year. One more thing is that I get to spend time with my great aunt Helen, who is 92.

From Mrs. Tracz's Kindergarten, OES

Jason Caldwell - That

(people) are nice.

Mykayla Carlson - A Christmas tree.

Julianna Hessberger - That I would have an angel on my tree.

Alice Huang - Good food.

Tyler Hurlburt - That my sister would talk to me when I talk to her instead of talking to other people.

Thomas Mendelis - That everyone could have food and be healthy.

Shahzeb Qureshi - A ring.

Joshua Snyder - That everyone would be safe.

From Mrs. Toal's Kindergarten, OES

Macey Gibson - An iDog.

Brandon Worzel - That we have a good dinner, Grandma comes and we might have macaroni and cheese.

Jason VanGorden - A telephone.

Leonardo Rodriguez - A Nintendo DS.

Emily Mantei - I wish for a swimming pool.

Danny Liberty - I wish for signs - a red light and a green light. A traffic light.

Rebecca Yost - A cell phone.

Naomi Claussen - Cake! Pink cake!

From Mrs. Kisloski's Kindergarten, AES

Summer - I would like to set the table for my family, sit on my Daddy's lap, and get love from my Momma.

Taylor - We all wish we had Guitar Hero. It's awesome!

Noah - I wish for John Deere toys for my whole family.

Rachel - I wish for a new milkshake maker for my family.

Kyle - I would get my Mom make-up cause that's a girlie thing.

Alyssa - I wish for a diamond necklace for my Mom because she loves diamonds.

Grace - I wish for lots of stuff for Gram and Pa and Aunt Cindy and Mary.

Students and Health

Graduation rates for students with disabilities

The New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) has initiated a Special Education Quality Assurance Focused Review in the Owego Apalachin Central School District during the 2008-09 school year.

The purpose of this IDEA Effective Instructional Practices Focused Review is to assess the district's compliance with selected federal and state laws and regulations governing the education of students with disabilities as well as its ability to meet key performance indicators identified by NYSED.

In particular, the review will focus on the graduation rate for students with disabilities.

The review will be conducted by VESID's Special Education Quality Assurance office and staff from the Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) and will include representatives from the school district.

The review will involve a review of school records of selected students with disabilities, classroom visitations and staff interviews.

In addition, several meetings of the Committee on Special Education will be observed. Further information may be ob-

tained by contacting VESID's Special Education Quality Assurance office in your region and/or by contacting your school district.

For more information:

Thomas E. Comerford, III, director of pupil personnel services, Owego Apalachin Schools, phone (607) 687-6226, fax (607) 687-6313, e-mail comerfordt@oacsd.org

Lauriel McCoy, professional development specialist - SETRC, Broome-Tioga BOCES, 435 Glenwood Road, Binghamton, N.Y. 13905, phone (607) 766-3783, fax (607) 763-3474, or e-mail McCoy@btboces.org

Reporting Body Mass Index

Legislation passed in 2007 amended Education Law Sections 903 and 904, effective April 1, 2007, to require that each student's health certificate or health appraisal include an assessment of Body Mass Index (BMI) and a determination of weight status category (based on BMI-for-age percentile).

Regulations of the Commissioner of Education require a health certificate or a health appraisal for each public school student at school entry, pre-kindergarten or kindergarten, and in grades 2, 4, 7 and 10.

As part of a required school health examination, a student is weighed and his/her

weight is measured. These numbers are used to calculate the student's body mass index, or BMI.

Each student's health examination is required to include BMI and determination of weight status.

However, if a parent requests that this information not be included as part of the aggregated summary report submitted to the State Health Department, then the student's information should be excluded.

If you would like to complete paperwork to exclude your child's information from the summary report, please contact your school nurse.