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Barrows listed in top 100 schools

By **Melissa Russell**/ Correspondent

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Reading's Alice M. Barrows is one of the Boston area's top 100 elementary schools, according to the September issue of Boston Magazine.

The magazine rated 652 elementary schools in Boston and its suburbs, looking at MCAS scores, absentee rates, suspensions, student/faculty ratios, the percentage of teachers actually licensed in the discipline they teach, the percentage of teachers rated as highly qualified, average teacher salaries, per-pupil spending and other factors.

The focus was on which area schools are "meeting today's challenges with imaginative solutions," according to the article.

Barrows ranked 87 on the list, which included schools in such communities as Newton, Brookline, Wayland, and Winchester.

Barrows principal Karen Callan said while she was thrilled Barrows had been specifically cited, there was statistically no difference between her school and other Reading elementary schools.

"I think all of our schools should have been on the list," she said.

School Committee Chairman Robert Spadafora said the key to Barrows' success was the school's relatively small size.

"When you have a small population the teachers know each other better, the students know each other better. You have a small community. And a small community, in my opinion, is one of the keys to success."

Getting to know you

It was "getting-to-know-you" time at the Coolidge Middle School Monday night, as School Committee members and Reading public school administrators formally welcomed 45 new teachers into the district.

During the reception, principals from each school introduced their newest faculty members, giving detailed summaries of each new teacher's background, experience, and hobbies, which, in one case, include taking special needs children to Disney World during summer vacation.

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"I wonder how other schools let people like this get away from them," Committee member Harvey "Pete" Dahl said.






Members of the board welcomed the new teachers, recommending they make good use of teacher mentors and of parent volunteers, part of "the Reading communities' commitment to education," according to board member Elaine Webb.

"You picked an exciting year to join the Reading faculty," said committee member John Carpenter. "We are very proud of our faculty, and we have high expectations."

In other business, Superintendent Patrick Schettini briefed the committee on the Department of Education's adequate yearly progress report on MCAS results, as required by the No Child Left Behind legislation. While all schools in the district showed the required progression towards proficiency, one special needs subgroup at Parker Middle School did not demonstrate the required progress in math. Schettini presented a 14-item action plan to the board in order to address the subgroup's progress.

Additionally, the committee approved two field trips for the coming year for Reading Memorial High School students. One outing is an evening at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City for a performance of Rigoletto in December; the other is a trip to Poland scheduled for next summer. Students will visit Warsaw, Gdansk, Krakow, and the Auschwitz concentration camp sites. Dr. Jeffrey Ryan will lead both trips.

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