



The Liberty Ledger

DECEMBER 2024

ISSUE 38

Board of Education Overview: November 13, 2024

By: Isabela Salinas Cavagnaro

It is extremely important that the community of West Orange is able to understand and be informed about the issues facing their area. This will allow the entire community to aid in efforts to benefit their community, attend events that support the town, and overall, allow for people to be informed residents of West Orange.

The Board of Education meetings are open to the entire community, and are a great way to learn about issues, events, etc. in West Orange. This column serves as a resource to impart the information from the BOE meeting to any student who is interested who could not come to the meeting.

Important Information and Upcoming Events:

- On Friday, November 15th and Saturday the 16th, there will be a performance of the Fall play at West Orange High School, a murder mystery play based on the board game of Clue.
- The Tennis Courts behind the high school have been reopened! The new and improved courts are now available again for the use of the community.

Topics Discussed:

First off, the introduction of Team

WOW (West Orange Way) took place. DEAI initiatives have been diminished in many areas in the country, and this team's goal is focused on DEAI and being an exemplary model for other districts in this regard. The team includes ambassadors from each of the schools in the district, the elementary, middle and high schools.



The Team Wow hopes to advance the districts efforts in DEAI by using and working with these building based committees to advance DEAI initiatives, support culture-sponsored practices (that professional development, committees, consultants, etc. will be focused on achieving), and they hope to do this regardless of what is happening around the world with DEAI. The district values all students equally regardless of their background, perspectives, etc., and want to exemplify this in their DEAI efforts.

The team will attempt to create a sense of belonging for the students, and an inclusive framework or pathway that represents the town's rich diversity. They want an environment where anyone can walk into any WO building and feel that they belong and are valued. They will spend 18 months deliberately working for all things DEAI together.

They hope that their work pushes every school to align and measure what represents the diversity of West Orange in their classrooms through work/effort being done that recognizes the diversity, which will be beneficial for the students and staff overall.

One of the main topics in the BOE meeting was interpreting the results of the district's scores in ELA and Math in the NJSLA 2024 Spring Assessment.

Looking at the data, there are different points in which the district is doing better overall than the state on average (in regards to having more students meeting/exceeding expectations). The ELA scores were relatively good, and overall they demonstrated sufficient progress that the district is looking for in its students. However, a main takeaway from the data is that there is need for improvement in the 6-8 grade levels.

It was argued that the change from an 80-minute math period in elementary school to a 55-minute math period in middle school is a factor in the decline of the student's proficiency when they reach middle school when using these reports, which can have a greater impact on Math subject areas.

The i-Ready system that is specifically for Math has proven to be most effective when utilized during a class period, and due to the shorter class time in middle school, students have less time for this in middle school. Also, overall, there are higher standards when transitioning to middle school for the test scores on this assessment, further contributing to this decline statistically.



There was also great speculation as to whether or not new systems/programs should be put into place in order to change the learning environment, specifically in math classrooms, in a manner that is better for each student's progress. The answer provided was that through observing the classrooms, using the action plan, and overall, changing the goals/foci of the district's education accordingly progress should be shown for the students.



There are many things being offered however, in an attempt to raise these scores. In addition to academic-intervention, extra-help programs, among other programs that allow for students to learn in the best way for them individually, the i-Ready system has proved a key resource for any student struggling in any math area. The implementation of the i-Ready system allows for students to progress in the areas that they need specifically, and also allows for parents to learn areas that they are weaker in so that they can seek additional help accordingly if they like.

Not only this, the parent/guardian can learn the same topics in order to help their child themselves using the provided resources/videos in the i-Ready portal that they have access to as well. Taking this information into consideration, it is important that all students remember that there are numerous ways in which to seek help on areas/topics of mathematics that they are struggling in, and that these can be essential to helping not only their test scores, but their overall understanding of the subject.

Students, please take this information into account and utilize the vast amount of opportunities/resources available to help you accordingly!

The Five People You Meet in Heaven: Was it worth the Work?

By: Hayley Smiley and Anya Hughes

Disclaimer: The beginning part of this article is opinionated and should not be taken to heart. The actual review is mostly unbiased.

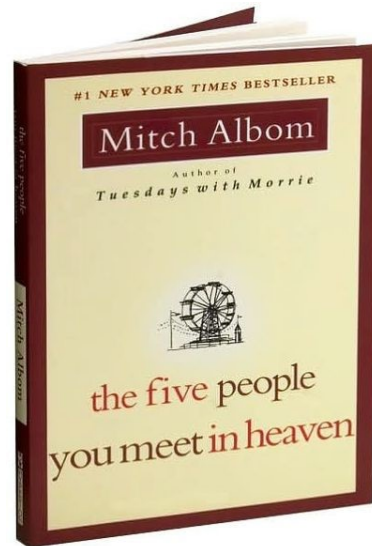
***IMPORTANT:** If you'd like to just know the rating already, you're in luck! You can skip all this yapping if you'd prefer. The star ratings for *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* are at the end of this Article, after the concluding statements. Otherwise, we'd really appreciate it if you read the whole thing! Enjoy the article.

Hayley Smiley

The 8th graders know exactly what I mean by The Five People. I'm referring to the book we were forced to read for ELA Class. To recap...

The Five People You Meet In Heaven, written by Mitch Albom, is a book about an old man working in maintenance at 'Ruby Pier' named Eddie, who is only really popular with kids. He dies on his 83rd birthday saving one of the little girls known as 'Amy or Annie'...he's got a bad memory, alright? Once he dies, he appears in Heaven, where the book's actual plot is revealed. Long story short, when someone dies, they meet five people who have affected them, and it goes both ways. These five people are supposed to give you advice and help you make sense of your time on Earth, in other words, your mortal life.

Personally, as someone who people like to ask questions to, I'd rather not do that, but it's not exactly up to the characters. So Eddie meets a bunch of people, some he



recognizes, some he doesn't, all of them important. In the end, he's had a lot of character development and he's happy. Yay! Everyone loves a good happy ending, but I personally think we did not need

to spend this many assignments on this rather short book.

When it comes to book analysis, especially for anything that's not entirely realistic fiction, it's good to look at not just the characters but the world building and the story, if you want a student, who cares about their studies, to learn about literature. This book is only about the characters, which is fine, but as an eighth grader, I feel like it wasn't engaging enough to do assignments on, at least not for me. I finished the book early and I enjoyed it, but I didn't get anything out of the questions we were given. Honestly, I read the book once and suddenly I could answer everything, I only felt the need to go back to the book once or twice.

Obviously I can't speak for everyone, but I feel as though we could have read something engaging, that pulls on our creative sides. Something that doesn't just focus on characters, but on world building and plotline, something that gets

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By: Hayley Smiley and Anya Hughes

us invested. A book that someone might read for enjoyment, because *The Five People You Meet In Heaven* just felt like any old school book that I'd rarely return to, especially because of all the work. Now, onto the unbiased analysis.

Anya Hughes

In terms of character analysis, the five people Eddie meets in Heaven each play a very important role in Eddie's life. In my opinion, that's what makes them so interesting, as we can see time and time again, when Eddie meets his next person, he doesn't see why they are important until after they explain the relationship between them and him, and then apply what happened to the rest of Eddie's life as a lesson to help "explain his yesterdays" here on Earth. I thought it was cool how we kind of got to grow with Eddie as he learned about important periods in his life, and how they helped to mold him into the person he was.

We get to learn these lessons with Eddie and apply them to our lives early on. This opened my eyes to realize the importance of my life, the value of human life, and human experience. However, as eye-opening as the book was, I wish we were able to learn more about the other characters in the story that I feel didn't get enough time for me to really "connect" with them throughout the book. I wanted to see more of the love between Eddie and Marguerite, especially after both the times Marguerite ended up in the hospital. I wanted to see more of Eddie's relationship with his family members later on in his life, specifically his mother and his brother, who played just as big of roles as Eddie's father did in Eddie's life.

I wanted to get to know them, and I feel like I didn't get to meet them well

enough throughout the course of the book.

Hayley Smiley

As for the book itself, as I mentioned before, it was character-focused, and although it may not have merited the amount of assignments we had for it, this book was done wonderfully.

I'm a picky reader. Without being forced to answer questions I didn't care

about, this book would've made me think long and hard about the way we perceive life. The way these characters ebb and flow in and out of each other's lives, the interconnectedness of all of their stories is powerful, and it gives the notion that you've never been alone. Every step, every thought, everything you do affects someone else in this world, and *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* may change with the flip of a switch.

It's interesting, when you think about it, how that works. *The Five People You Meet In Heaven* touch upon mental health, isolation and, to risk sounding like a broken record, connections. This can easily be applied in our lives. Have you spoken to everyone you care about today? Do you make sure to tell them you care? Throw a 'love you!' on the way out the door? Thank your bus driver as you finally make it home? We take every breath of air and every friend we make for granted until we can't anymore, and this book highlights that wonder-



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fully, as we follow Eddie in his mortal life of loss, and his afterlife of reunion. If we were to apply Eddie's story in our own lives, perhaps we'd remember to be just a little bit more grateful.

Anya Hughes

Looking at the plot of this novel, it made me so happy to read a book that was structured in such a way that it was not only easy for me to understand, but joyful to read. Over the years I've had to read many "book club" or "class" reading books, and often-times, I find that I did not enjoy reading the book.

One of the reasons this happens so often is because I don't like the way the book and the plot of the book is structured, as the book is usually hard to follow. However, with *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, Albom beautifully structured the book, introducing us and Eddie to each new person in a way that was purposeful, as each lesson would build upon previous ones as the story progressed. I also really appreciated the way Albom led the book up to the end of the story, allowing us to see how all the lessons Eddie learned combined to help us understand his purpose, as well as how and why he was able to fulfill it.

Hayley Smiley

Another good aspect of the writing here is the flashbacks, which often tend to be hit-or-miss when people use them in writing, but these flashbacks give a better perspective as to why an event happened to Eddie, or why he reacted the way he did. It's interesting to see how frequently Albom uses flashbacks, and this is also evident in his second book, *The Next Person You Meet in Heaven*.

Anya Hughes

Additionally, the structure of the book, including the structure of flashbacks, helped me to understand how and when I can and should apply what I've learned in my own life.

For example, Eddie learns certain things in certain moments in his life, and this timing of events and important lessons allowed for him to be the person that he came to be before he died, and even in his afterlife.

For example, while Eddie is in Heaven, he learns how to forgive people, and how to let go of hatred and anger. Even though he had to learn this lesson after he died, the fact that I was able to learn this lesson now means I can also apply this lesson early on. This is another reason why I loved this book!

At first, I didn't think I was going to like it, as I'd explained previously, it was hard for me to find a class reading book I actually liked, not only because of the structure, but because I got something important out of this book, as often times, when I read class books, they were uninteresting because I didn't learn anything or discern anything I thought was worth holding onto. I was happy to find this book I'd stumbled upon was different. I was able to enjoy the book and learn something new.

I believe it was important that this book was intertwined into our eighth grade English Language Arts curriculum as it might've been an opportunity for many kids who don't like class reading books to really enjoy something they were required to read for school.

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By: Hayley Smiley and Anya Hughes

Hayley Smiley and Anya Hughes

All in all, from an unbiased perspective, *The Five People You Meet In Heaven* was a wonderful story about love, loss, and the beauty of being connected, and of understanding, and it was a great read we're sure many were hesitant to pick up at first.

Final Ratings, out of 5 Stars - **Hayley Smiley**

Overall: I'd give it a 4.5. I enjoyed the book but I have a few unanswered questions and I wanted a bit more time with the other characters besides Eddie.

Getting into detail...

Plot: Solid 4, because again it was character focused and while that was cool I kind of wish the whole five people concept was expanded upon a bit more, I wonder if these five people change all the time or something.

Characters: 5, for sure! If they were anything less than this whole book would be somewhat of a waste, but I love how we get to see some of each character's story besides Eddie. It's incredible.

Structure: 4. It was relatively easy to follow and flowed rather but at first the flashbacks felt more than a little jarring. They evened out as it was realized that that was the point but it threw me off in the beginning.

Anya Hughes

Overall: I'd also give this book a 4.5. I really enjoyed the book because it was well structured, easy to follow, and beautifully written. However, I wish we could see more of the characters that Eddie met in Heaven, as well as how they interacted with him and others that were not mentioned or briefly men-

tioned in the book. I think this would make it easier for us to understand the characters and how and why they played the roles they did in Eddie's life based on who they were. This does not apply to all the people Eddie met, only a select few of them. For example, the Blue Man's and the Captain's background were explained really well, but I feel we could've seen more from other characters.

Plot: The plot was great! I definitely give it a 5. It was put together in a very purposeful manner, and therefore when I read it, as the book continued, everything "clicked" into place like puzzle pieces!

Characters: 4.5. I feel we could've gotten more from the characters, but the way each character's role in Eddie's life was explained was done perfectly. We were easily able to see how the characters and their interactions with Eddie helped him to learn an important lesson in his afterlife.

Structure: 5! I was glad I was able to read and follow the story with ease. It was much more enjoyable and intriguing to read than other "class" reading books I've read in the past. Additionally, I was glad to learn something important from the book that I could apply to my own life, as the theme and the lesson of the entire book were clear to see by the novel's end.

Hope you enjoyed this review, we hope to see you at our next! :)



West Orange High School Marching Band Visits Liberty Middle School

Article By: Anya Hughes Photography By: Sanvi Bhatnagar

Recently, Liberty Middle School received a special visit from West Orange's High School marching band and color guard! WOHS marching band is a community of talented young musicians from all around the campus, from freshmen to seniors, who have come together to enlighten the world with their symphonies, while WOHS color guard used the power of precise articulation, rhythm, and creativity to further enhance the brilliant performance.



The band has three instrumental sections, brass, woodwind, and percussion.

However, the color guard is composed of one body, with defined sections that participate in various moving parts of the presentation, adding visual attraction with dance, flags, rifles, and sabers.

The band has played a wide range of music, including classical, Broadway selections, American favorites, jazz, pop, TikTok songs, and many other kinds, tightly capturing the liking of the audience.

Over the years, WOHS marching band and color guard



have participated in countless varsity football games, parades, and competitions, making the crowd go wild, and winning trophies and awards left and right with their spectacular shows.

During their visit at Liberty, they did a wonderful job



demonstrating a snippet of their field performance, *The Gears of Time*, which won the New Jersey Marching Band Directors Association State Championships for Class AAAA, as well as a closing performance of Chappell Roan's hit song, *HOT TO GO!* The experience was thrilling just as it was inspiring, as the combination of music, art, and other visual elements brought the entirety of the school together to create a beautiful, joyous, and long-lasting memory for both the students and staff.

World Kindness Day

By: Isabela Salinas Cavagnaro

At Liberty Middle School, we celebrated World Kindness Day by decorating our sidewalks with positive and uplifting messages. World Kindness Day is all about promoting kindness through encouraging people of all ages to intentionally do kind actions.

However, there is a greater purpose to the day than just practicing kindness on one day of the year. The day started in the year 1988, and the World Kindness Movement is credited with the idea. Their main purpose is to promote kindness on this day, and then, hope that they can develop kind habits in people every day.

Kindness is important, and even everyday actions can brighten up someone else's day dramatically. Even small kind acts can be significant, being kind doesn't take sacrifice, cost, etc. So, be kind every day, it can be as simple as holding the door open for someone!



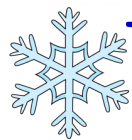
Liberty's Pep Rally

By: Myo Balines and Claire Dyer
Photography By: Sanvi Bhatnagar

On Friday, December 6th, we had our pep rally! Alysse Gomez kicked things off by singing the national anthem. Mr. Krayton was the announcer. The sports teams were introduced, and the cheerleaders cheered for our athletes. The cheerleaders performed an awesome routine with stunts! Loui the Lion walked around and gave out mini Loui plush toys. Selected students joined in the fun by playing games like 3-point shots, bouncy ball races, and musical chairs.

Go Liberty Lions!

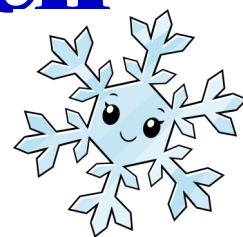




Winter Word Search

By: Keren Selassie

Search for the word below. Words can go in any direction.



S	P	L	H	P	S	S	X	B	R	D	W	Y	J	W	W	L	J	R	E
V	Y	H	M	K	N	Y	W	J	O	T	H	A	K	O	R	L	I	A	B
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D	E	L	S	S	N	O	W	D	A	Y	K	B	H	M	F	N	S	G	Y

Blizzard



Snowman

Cold



Flurries

Slushy

Snowflake

Frost

Mittens

December

Icicle



Gloves

Snow Day

Snow

Chilly



Snowball

February

Boots

Icy

Winter

Hot Chocolate



Sled

January

Cozy

Scarf

Wonderland

Skiing

