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## A new chapter

Departing EHS principal reflects on ceremonies, transitions

By CATHERINE BAUM  
Staff Writer

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Thursday, June 11, 2009

EASTHAMPTON - He's seen sunny graduations.

And then, Jeffrey Sealander, Easthampton High School's principal, has seen drizzly graduations, like the year he held an umbrella over former physical education teacher Rick James as he gave his commencement address.

He won't forget the graduation with a downpour mid-ceremony that had organizers, graduates and guests scurrying inside the school, where they grabbed towels from the kitchen to dry off chairs.

And he likely won't forget last week's graduation, either, for it was his last one.

Sealander, himself a 1970 graduation of EHS, is retiring after 35 years of service in the city's public schools.

Transition time

Heading into commencement last week, Sealander did what he usually does: He talked with students about their plans for next year, in preparation for their graduation.

They were full of anticipation about what the next year will bring. Some are sad about leaving the friends and classmates they've known since kindergarten.

Sealander encouraged them to look ahead and "do good things," he said. "It's all about the next chapter, and that's what life's transitions are all about."

In the days before last week's ceremony, Sealander reflected on ceremonies past.

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KEVIN GUTTING

At Easthampton High School, Principal Jeffrey Sealander participates in his final graduation ceremony last week.

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The one with the downpour was probably "the most memorable," said Sealander, 56. The ceremonies have been held inside the gym for the past 10 years to avoid such weather pitfalls, he noted.

And while each graduation is unique, Sealander said there is also consistency.

"This must be my 17th graduation and every one's a little bit different but they are very similar in terms of the students' excitement," he said. "It's wonderful to see a class of students moving on."

The Easthampton native kicked off his career in education as a social studies teacher at the high school and middle school before he became assistant principal, athletic director and then principal of the high school. He helped form the high school's first football team in 1998, as well as a block schedule that eliminated daily study halls, enabling students to partake in more elective classes.

This school year has been busy, too. Grant applications, a shift in administration with interim Assistant Principal Tom Baird and the high school renovation project have kept Sealander on his toes.

Sealander wrapped up his year, and his career, watching 137 students graduate Friday.

"I'm going to miss this," he said.

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