

CONNECTIONS



MEETING THE NEEDS
OF THE WHOLE CHILD

PARK RIDGE-NILES SCHOOL DISTRICT 64

www.d64.org

WINTER 2007

DISTRICT
64

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LISTENING POST

Our goal is to respond
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School District 64
Listening Post
164 S. Prospect Ave.
Park Ridge, IL 60068

Coming in
March

CONNECTIONS –
Special Edition

Referendum Q & A

First referendum in 10 years will ask community to maintain quality education

For the first time since the construction of Emerson Middle School, District 64 voters will be asked to provide additional funds to maintain the quality of local schools. The District 64 Board of Education voted unanimously in January to place a referendum for a 44-cent rate increase on the April 17 ballot.

“The Board believes we have reached a tipping point where the quality of the education being offered in District 64 schools – which are so highly valued by the members of this community – will be jeopardized unless additional funding is provided,” according to Board President Chris Mollet. “We believe local residents want Park Ridge-Niles schools to remain competitive with neighboring communities.” In reaching its decision, the Board noted the impact on students of the \$12.2 million cumulative total of cuts to educational programs and services made previously.

“We believe the District has acted responsibly to cut expenditures, tightly control spending, and even borrow money short-term to live as long as possible under the State tax cap that limits the annual growth in revenues,” Mollet noted. The cap limits revenue growth each year to the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is less.

District enrollment has climbed by 650 students since the last referendum, an increase of almost 18%. “The tax

cap, though, does not provide for strong enrollment growth, or costs that rise faster than inflation – such as healthcare and energy – as experienced throughout the nation in the last decade,” Mollet noted. “In the end, the Board concluded that we cannot responsibly wait any longer to present this critical need to the community.”

Further cuts ahead

The District has operated with deficits in four of the last five fiscal years. Looking ahead, the deficits are expected to grow each year, and will quickly exhaust the District’s dwindling Operating Fund balance.

In February, the Board authorized a minimum of \$1 million in new expenditure cuts for the upcoming school year to avoid deficit spending and balance the 2007-08 budget. “These additional reductions will impact

the education of every student in this District,” according to Superintendent Sally Pryor.

Class sizes in all grades will be increased, programs for students and support services will be reduced, and only the most essential Life Safety maintenance projects and technology needs will be addressed. The final 2007-08 budget will be formally adopted in September. The Board has stated it will adjust the draft budget based on the community’s willingness to provide additional funds to maintain educational quality and programs on April 17.



Recent “64 Forums” offered informal give-and-take on the District’s financial outlook. (RIGHT) The Dyer Family talked with Jim Wuerffel (R), Director of Buildings & Grounds.



Community voices heard through “64 Forums,” survey

More than 450 Park Ridge-Niles community members turned out to talk about the future of local schools at three “64 Forums” in January sponsored by the Community Finance Committee (CFC). “Participants responded very positively to the informal format of the drop-in open houses, which allowed people to move at their own pace and interact one-on-one

with CFC volunteers, administrators and Board of Education members,” Superintendent Sally Pryor reported to the Board. More than 130 comments were received initially.

Dr. Pryor also reported that District 64 residents continue to have extremely high expectations of their schools. In a new phone survey of 300 residents, nine in 10 respondents agreed that “people in my area expect the quality of their public schools to be better than that of surrounding communities.” Residents also gave high priority to

keeping computers and other educational technology up-to-date, eliminating deficit spending, keeping teacher salaries competitive, and restoring cuts made to student services.

CFC to continue activities

This high level of community involvement in support of local schools will continue, as the Board of Education unanimously reaffirmed the CFC’s status as a standing committee. Additional volunteers will be recruited this spring.

Board of Education Meetings

Hendee Educational Service Center (ESC)
164 S. Prospect Ave.
Park Ridge
(847) 318-4300

Start time, agendas, reports & minutes:
www.d64.org

March
12 (ESC)

April
2 (ESC)
23 (ESC)

May
14 (Lincoln)
29 (Emerson)

June
11 (ESC)
25 (ESC)

MATERIALS FROM "64 FORUMS" & PHONE SURVEY:
WWW.D64.ORG

Seniors exchange tax bill for school assignments

About 50 local residents now are participating in District 64's unique Tax Exchange program that allows seniors (age 55 and over) to earn income up to the amount of their District 64 tax bill. The program has grown steadily since its inception about 10 years ago to involve seniors in a "win-win" partnership with local schools and children.

Seniors specify the days and hours they are available to work and are matched to requests in the schools and District office for extra "hands," such as teacher's helpers, greeters, and office assistants. For more information, consult "Senior Tax Exchange Program" on the District 64 Web site or call 847-318-4304.



One of the longest serving members of the Tax Exchange corps is Ray Sawusch, who works on early literacy skills with Washington School kindergartners. He also regularly greets visitors to Lincoln Middle School.

"Worlds of Wonder" promises summer fun and learning

Worlds of Wonder A tempting assortment of both enrichment and skill-building classes will provide creative fun and stimulating challenges this summer for students completing grades K-3 at Franklin School and grades 4-7 at Emerson School. Two, three-week sessions will be offered: Tuesday, June 12 – Friday, June 29 and Monday, July 2 – Friday, July 20 (no class on July 4). Two 90-minute classes will be conducted each morning. Bus service is available for either class. A shuttle bus to camps is provided by the Park Ridge Recreation & Park District.

Course brochures are available at District 64 and school offices, or on the Web site at www.d64.org. Registration opens March 1.

Educating the "whole child" is community's hallmark

During the many "State of the District" briefings with community groups this fall, we often talked about the Strategic Plan goal of "meeting the needs of the whole child." It's a powerful commitment and one that sets this District distinctly apart from others.

This goal actually has its origins more than a decade ago when the Board of Education, community members, school administrators and teachers began a dialogue about whether test scores alone gave an accurate picture of what a District 64 education was providing students. We considered ground-breaking research and engaged in considerable debate about the broader meaning of American education and how to measure our goals. This unique initiative was even profiled along the way by *The New York Times*.

Nurtured by successive school boards, the District 64 community has worked together steadily to more specifically define and build support for what educating the whole child entails. Next year, we expect to fully implement the Educational Ends program – the public statements of what it means to be educated here, reflecting the specific knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes toward learning that our community expects its students to achieve. We have developed Ends statements and most assessments for every academic area and also for critical thinking and problem solving, social and emotional growth, and other skills that are crucial in creating a well-rounded citizen.

I'm proud of the commitment our community has made to develop new ways to think about the goals of American education for the 21st Century and measure how well our students are achieving those goals. After more than a decade of community effort, "meeting the needs of the whole child" truly has become a hallmark of education here in District 64.



Dr. Pryor congratulates District 64 Spelling Bee winner Brian Johnson, a Field School 5th grader, who edged out runner-up Melissa Walek, a Roosevelt 4th grader, with the word "boutique" at the third annual extracurricular event for grades 3-8. He moved to Chicago regional competition in the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

"ASK DR. P"

Q. What is "differentiated" instruction?

A. In differentiated instruction, "one size does not fit all." That's because in any classroom, students have a wide variety of interests, skill levels and learning styles. "Differentiation" refers to a process that teachers use to plan and deliver instruction based on that variety. Differentiated instruction, however, does not equate to "individualized" instruction where there is a different plan of instruction for each student in the class. Teachers can meet students' needs by differentiating how they group children for instruction, or the content or pace. Teachers also can differentiate the types of assignments students use to practice and apply their learning – for example, a book report could be assigned as a video or a poster, instead of a written review. Teachers can select different assessments to measure student learning, too. District 64 teachers are very skilled and creative in differentiating instruction to better meet students' needs.

Sally Pryor

District 64 employees donate \$ 9,300 to Park Ridge Community Fund

Kate Kerin (right), Executive Director, extends her thanks to District 64 employees who participated in the annual community drive. She congratulated Jane Everett (left) and Pat Kisielius who led the site campaign at Field School, which tallied the highest total among District 64's buildings. The campaign is another way District 64 employees contribute to the life of the Park Ridge-Niles community.



“Hands-on, minds-on” approach to science fosters curiosity

Whether it’s raising tadpoles in the classroom or viewing the night sky inside the Starlab planetarium, studying science in District 64 means using real materials to seek answers to scientific questions, according to Tony Clissem, Curriculum Specialist and Science Department Chair. That’s because the District is committed to a “hands-on, minds-on” philosophy of science education. A newly updated curriculum reflects more than three years of study by a Curriculum Review Committee of teachers. It’s the first complete review since the District’s 6th grade was shifted to the middle schools almost a decade ago.

The curriculum is balanced among three major strands – life, physical and earth-space sciences. “But some topics have been shifted between grades to make sure we’re teaching the right content at the right time to better integrate with state standards at each grade level,” Clissem noted. The curriculum now provides a “scaffolding of knowledge and skills” as students move forward.

“OUR GOAL IS TO FOSTER CHILDREN’S NATURAL CURIOSITY THROUGH QUESTIONING AND HANDS-ON DISCOVERY BASED ON REAL-LIFE OBSERVATIONS. AS STUDENTS MATURE, THEY ALSO BUILD ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN PROBLEM SOLVING, AND CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL THINKING.”

— TONY CLISSEM, Curriculum Specialist and Science Department Chair

A key update was aimed at the District’s youngest students. A new “Anytime Science” kindergarten curriculum features 30 lessons with activities that can be readily integrated with curriculum themes through the year. In primary grades, units were streamlined and also provide more connections with other subject areas. “The biggest changes are in grades 4-6,” Clissem noted. The electricity unit was moved to 4th grade, and a new unit on simple machines that allows students to focus on technological solutions to problems now adds depth to the physical science strand. Next year, an updated optics unit will be added to 5th grade.

At the middle school, one science strand is assigned to each grade. Earth-space sciences, forensics and a new unit on buoyancy are the focus of grade 6, while grade 7 studies life science. The capstone for 8th graders is the lab-based introductory physical science curriculum. It features a final “sludge test” in which students use their accumulated knowledge and lab skills to identify the various components of an unknown solution. Electives at grades 7 and 8 in marine biology and exploring the physical world, which includes bottle rocket design, offer extra challenges.

The District used the Illinois Textbook Loan Program to purchase smaller, supplemental texts on specific themes, such as the link between science and technology. These new materials offer middle school students on-line access and more interactive activities, and also offer teachers resource materials to help differentiate instruction to better meet student needs.

The revamped curriculum offers several other enhancements. Students at all grade levels now have more opportunities to read and write about science topics. In addition, students will receive more thorough training on science safety, which is now embedded in the curriculum and included in the District’s new Educational Ends assessments. Teachers, too, have benefited from professional development workshops based on the new curriculum content.

“Technology also continues to be an important tool to expand classroom walls,” Clissem added. 5th grade students, for example, regularly use a Web interface to manipulate an electron microscope at the University of Illinois in Champaign to observe the features of bugs while interacting with scientists 200 miles away.



Kindergartners in Ms. New’s Field School morning class make predictions, and then observe and record what happens when they mix primary colors.



To study the properties of static electricity, 4th grade students of Ms. Jones at Franklin School experience a charge from a Van de Graaff generator, which makes a student’s hair lift.



Dry ice is used to observe changes in states of matter by Emerson School grade 8 students in Ms. Murges’ class. The District is investing \$26,000 to update Introductory Physical Science texts.

Students post gains on all State tests

District 64 student performance on the spring 2006 Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) surpassed previous levels, according to Larry Sorensen, Director of Technology Planning and Assessments. In math, 90% of all students at each grade level (3-8) reached the “meets or exceeds” category for the first time; the overall District average was 93.2%. In reading, 88.7% of District 64 students (grades 3-8) scored in the “meets or exceeds” category; in science (grades 4 & 7), 93% of students achieved that mark. ISATs are included on the annual State-compiled Report Card.

A LOOK AHEAD 2007-2008

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

School Opens
August 21, 2007

Winter Break
Begin:
December 24, 2007
Return:
January 7, 2008

Spring Break
Week of
March 24, 2008

School Closes
June 6, 2008

View calendar:
www.d64.org

NEW STUDENT REGISTRATION

BUS SERVICE

Register now for all grades

Details & forms:
“Student Registration”
“Bus Rules & Routes”
www.d64.org
847-318-4300

DISTRICT

64

CARPENTER SCHOOL

300 N. Hamlin Ave.
847-318-4370
Lynne Farmer, *Principal*

FIELD SCHOOL

707 N. Wisner Ave.
847-318-4385
Kathleen Creely, *Principal*

FRANKLIN SCHOOL

2401 Manor Lane
847-318-4390
Daniel Walsh, *Principal*

ROOSEVELT SCHOOL

1001 S. Fairview Ave.
847-318-4235
Mary Jane Cole, *Principal*

WASHINGTON SCHOOL

1500 Stewart Ave.
847-318-4360
Kim Nasshan, *Principal*

EMERSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

8101 N. Cumberland Ave.,
Niles
847-318-8110
Dr. Vicki Mogil, *Principal*

LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL

200 S. Lincoln Ave.
847-318-4215
James Blouch, *Principal*

JEFFERSON SCHOOL

8200 Greendale Ave., Niles
847-318-5427
Dr. Kathy Nelson,
Acting Principal

HONORING OUR HERITAGE

Our veterans inspire, educate students

They brought photographs, old uniforms, and most importantly, they brought their stories to share with Roosevelt School students on Veteran's Day. Working in small teams, 17 male and female veterans visited grade 2-5 classrooms to talk about their military service in both peacetime and in conflict, ranging from World War II to Afghanistan. The PTO hosted lunch for the veterans, who ate with Student Council members.



Roosevelt School grade 3 students in Ms. Finlay's room reviewed uniform equipment brought by I.D. Maramba (center) and observed by panelists (from L) Herb Zuegel, Dean Whitford and Ross Hurt.

COMMUNITY COOPERATION

Local healthcare experts volunteer as advisers

District 64 is fortunate to enjoy a unique, long-running partnership with local medical experts, according to School Nurse Sandra Larson, Facilitator for School Health Services. A diverse panel of six professionals, now chaired by family practitioner Tim McCurry, M.D., meets twice a year with District personnel to discuss current medical issues and innovations that may impact student healthcare. Topics have ranged widely, including the safety of students wearing casts to participate in recess, eating disorders, new immunizations, pandemic flu planning, and use of epipens to treat undiagnosed allergic reactions. "These physicians provide a significant service to the District, and we value their expertise," added Larson.

Schools win community grants

Arts Fund grants of \$2,100 will be used at Carpenter School for a mosaic now being created by students and for video production equipment. The grants were received from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; the Park Ridge Cultural Arts Council; and the following major contributors to the Park Ridge Cultural Arts Council: Northern Trust Bank and the City of Park Ridge.

Roosevelt and Washington Schools each received \$200 Waste Grants for recycling programs from the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County.

Park Ridge-Niles residents share career paths with 6th graders

More than 40 community members and parents shared "real world" job insights with Emerson 6th grade students at a Career Day capping this year's career education studies. Students explored the challenges of a typical day, the training and skills required, and the responsibilities of six different careers. Students selected from traditional professions, such as architect and engineer, to more unusual careers, such as chocolate maker and alpaca rancher.



Yoga instructor Bonnie Spiros demonstrated her specialty at Career Day.

CONNECTIONS

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Park Ridge, IL 60068
www.d64.org

Bernadette Tramm, *Editor*



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CONNECTIONS is published by the District 64 Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools to update residents about their community schools serving grades K-8.

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UNSCRAMBLE THE JARGON!
Education Finance Fact Book
www.d64.org
Short chapters provide brief overview.
Links to more details.
PLUS answers to frequently asked questions.
A unique resource made possible by an ongoing collaboration between the Community Finance Committee and District 64.