

THE BLACKBOARD

The La Grange School District 105 Newsletter

Superintendent Dr. Brian Ganan's Message

Dear D105 Community,

Although I am only in my second year as Superintendent, it did not take me long to realize that it is the people of the D105 community that make the D105 Difference. As we head into the final stretch of the school year, I want to extend my deep gratitude for the support and appreciation that our community has shown to our staff and students as we partnered together during these most challenging times. While these past two years have been difficult for many of us, they have also been filled with opportunities for growth and celebration. As a District, we are excited to share some of our students' accomplishments in this newsletter.

I am so proud of our staff and students for all the hard work and resilience they have demonstrated throughout the year. I continue to be humbled as I help lead such a caring, dedicated, and committed group of educators and children. D105 is truly a special place, and I am honored to serve as Superintendent.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of The Blackboard.

With Gratitude,

Brian J. Ganan



Gurrie Middle School Students Participate in Extracurriculars

Students at Gurrie Middle School have been making up for lost time this year by participating in a variety of extracurricular activities.

"Students who participate in extracurriculars do better academically and socially, so it's great so many students are participating this year."

— Principal Ed Hood

Service

Gurrie continues to make a difference in the D105 community and beyond, completing 1,432 service hours so far this year. The service club, Every Monday Matters, led by Mrs. Kulaga, engaged in numerous projects this year, including work with Share Your Soles, Operation Care Package, Lincoln Park Community Shelter, Project CURE, and Adopt a Beach. The Gurrie

Activity Council's annual event, Project Linus, donated about 80 blankets to the Ronald McDonald House in Oak Lawn. During the Thanksgiving Food Drive, 8th graders collected about 300 bags of food and household items for the St. Francis Food Pantry. The club has more students this year than ever before, with over 60 active participants. "They are genuinely committed and understand how the projects are helping others and the environment," said Mrs. Kulaga.

Sports

Students engaged in a variety of sports at Gurrie, some setting new records for the school.

Cross Country coaches Jessica Decker, Steve Driscoll, Jen Kiley, and Lizzy Meidinger led the teams this year. The boys' team won the conference championship, and the girls' team won 3rd place. **The boys were IESA Sectional champs and were third in state. Patrick**

Gurrie Middle School, Cont'd

Collins, the highest finisher ever at Gurrie, won second in state.

Coaches Luis Rodriguez and Gabe Varela led the Wrestling team this year. The team members were IESA Regional Champs and had 17 IESA Sectional qualifiers. **There were five state qualifiers, and Patrick Collins won fourth in state. This was Gurrie's first time winning a regional.**

Coaches Eddie Alvarez and Joe Pontrelli led the Boys Basketball team this year. **The 7th graders were conference champions with a 12-2 record, and the 8th graders also did well with an 8-2 record.**

Coaches Tianna Rolfe and Sheila Helf led

the Girls Volleyball players this year. **They had a good season, with 7th grade getting an 11-1 record and playing in the championship. The 8th graders achieved a 9-3 record.**

Academics and Arts

Coach Sylwia Zalewska led the Math Team this year. **They won first place in the Nazareth math competition and second place at the Fenwick competition.**

In the performing arts, Mr. Grant Tabor and Mrs. Angela Deligiannis led the Band this year. Band members marched in Hodgkins' parade in August and in Countryside's St. Patrick's Day parade this March. The Concert Band and Jazz Band participated in several festivals throughout

the school year. Mr. Tabor said, "I am extremely proud of how willing and excited the students were about performing in our local communities."

Mr. Dan Valdez led the Orchestra and Mrs. Allison Cherry led the Choir. The Choir began again this school year with a small but mighty group of 7th and 8th grade students. Mrs. Cherry said, "I am most proud of their positive attitudes when it comes to trying new vocal techniques and repertoire."

The Underwater Robots club, with Jan Solano and Molly Kowynia as coaches, designed robots. Club members followed the "design, build, and test" process by testing out their creations in a pool then making changes to improve their designs.



Mila Panos and Isabella Bravos



Locker decorations honoring Mrs. (Duffy) Jeske

Seventh Avenue Students Take the Lead

This is Seventh Avenue's third year of the Student "Ambassaleaders" Team. This student leadership team expands upon the core principle of "active participation of students" as part of the school improvement process. A diverse group of student leaders plays important leadership roles as school improvement partners. The group follows Seventh Avenue's **"Three B's": Be Respectful, Be Safe, Be Here & Ready.**

"Having students own and lead activities with their peers creates a different experience than adult-led activities would."

— Principal Erin Hall

meetings "everyone has great ideas to share." All of the students actively participate in the group by suggesting and planning school-wide events, completing service learning, and acting as Ambassaleaders during school functions and night events at Seventh Avenue. The students also welcome students new to the school to help them understand school-wide expectations, including the 3 B's.

In just two months, students have already led several events.

Last year, students weren't able to participate, but now that extracurricular activities are back, students were asking Principal Erin Hall when the group could start up again. Students filled out applications this year and the team began meeting in February.

"The students are excited and bring lots of great energy to the activities. Students are more likely to want to participate in these social emotional learning activities when they see their peers leading them," said Principal Hall.

Two 6th grade students, Mila Panos and Isabella Bravos, lead the team meetings. Panos said what she loves most about the leadership team is "seeing people's faces when they just won an award," and Bravos said she loves how during team

They are currently raising materials and money for Always & Forever Midwest Animal Sanctuary, a place where unadopted pets can live in peace. During March, the students made shamrocks and passed them out so Seventh Avenue students could have a way to honor the memory of Mary Elizabeth (Duffy) Jeske, a beloved teacher who passed away in February. Her favorite holiday was St. Patrick's Day. In April, students put positive quotes on bathrooms, mirrors, and lockers to encourage good behavior and compassion for others.

Seventh Avenue is fortunate to have such a great group of students wanting to lead their school. "Next year, we plan to include 4th through 6th grade, so more students can experience leadership," said Principal Hall.

Committed Teachers and a Strong Community Make Hodgkins Elementary School a Success

Hodgkins Elementary celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2021. Over the past century, Hodgkins Elementary has progressed by staying true to its core values: inclusive teaching practices and individual attention for all students. In 2020, Hodgkins Elementary became a Blue Ribbon School. Principal Emily Crement said that the families, staff, and students are proud of this achievement.

Hodgkins Elementary School students have found success because of the "D105 Difference"

— a strong community and committed staff. Whether students are writing class books, caring for their classroom pet, or gaining scientific knowledge through hands-on lessons like the owl pellet dissection, they always know they are part of a community of learners.

The Blue Ribbon Award that the school won in 2020 was for Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing. "Progress toward closing this gap," said Dr. Crement, "was a result of the relationships teachers build in their classrooms." Dr. Crement,

"Students love their teachers and I think that says a lot about the professionalism and the commitment and the passion of the people who work here."
—Principal Emily Crement

who came to the district in 2018, noticed right away what was making a difference at Hodgkins Elementary — the love the students had for their classroom teachers. Because of the trusting relationship students have with their teachers, many of them improve their skills quickly.

To celebrate Hodgkins Elementary School's 100th Anniversary in February, students created a mural and traveled 100 years into the past to visit Thomas Edison's inventions and play games children would

have played in 1921. The local community has pitched in to make it a special year. Vulcan Materials, for example, made a donation that helped Hodgkins Elementary purchase small playhouses decorated to look like community locations.

One thing is certain: Hodgkins Elementary wouldn't be what it is today without the community contributions that make it special, like the bench a grandfather built around a tree or the staff that once went to Hodgkins and have returned to work there, like Mrs. Bev Millsap, an administrative



Kindergarteners in new playhouse

assistant, who has grandchildren attending the school. Mrs. Millsap said that she couldn't imagine living anywhere else and that "Hodgkins Elementary is a comfortable, safe environment."

Even though some things have changed over the course of the three generations of her family's attendance, Mrs. Millsap said that the strong community always willing to pitch in where help is needed is one thing that has remained the same.

Spring Avenue Students Engage in Social Emotional Learning

Students at Spring Avenue are focused on kindness and compassion this year. The staff are following the "Fish Philosophy." Each week, they throw one of four pretend stuffed fish as a way to recognize an individual that represents one of the four tenets: "be there," "play," "make their day," or "choose your attitude." Students find out who receives the fish each week in the morning announcements.

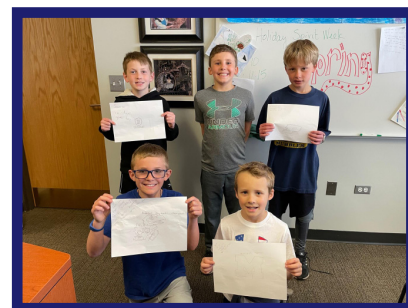
The 5th and 6th graders started their own way of showing kindness by passing Harold the Monkey or one of two little teddy bears to their peers. Ms. Emma Fornaro's 5th graders are starting their day by reflecting on kindness experienced the day before.

Fifth graders set a goal to have "10 days

of kindness" in a row in each of the classrooms. "Both classes finally reached this goal after a few months of trying! We have been working closely with the social work team to provide weekly lessons appropriate to 5th grade. We have noticed a change in the way that they treat each other with kindness and respect each day," said Ms. Gianna Coffey.

Meanwhile, Ms. Erin McGinnis' and Mrs. Amanda Dahlin's 3rd graders continue to plan Spirit Days. Ms. Margaret Melone's and Mrs. Lauren Fuller's 1st graders are enriching the school community by reading their work during morning kick-off announcements.

Fifth graders are combining kindness and academics by pairing up with their



Third graders planning Spirit Days

first-grade buddies. They meet online to practice their math facts "They've been a huge support in helping the first graders have weekly differentiated practice," First-grade teacher Mrs. Lauren Fuller said. In a recent session, students met face-to-face at "buddy recess."



Ideal Elementary Author Visit



Chris Grabenstein and J.J. Grabenstein

The children's author, Chris Grabenstein, made a virtual visit to Ideal Elementary School this February. Library Media Specialist Barb Hobe began coordinating this visit back in 2019. Chris Grabenstein is the author of over 40 books, including the books students received this year: *Mr. Lemoncello's Library*, *Shine!*, and *No More Naps*.

Mrs. Hobe has been a library media specialist at Ideal for six years. The PTO along with Vulcan contributed to purchase every student a book, and the author waived his fee for the guest appearance. Teachers read the books in classes, and Grabenstein tailored his approach to each class he visited through Zoom. In

the library, younger students created glyphs to answer a question about their reading interests. Fifth and sixth graders responded to a question from Gabenstein's book *Shine!* "Who do you want to be? And not when you grow up. Right here, right now."

During his visit, Grabenstein said that he had many "rejection years," and he explained that writing is a process, which ties in with what students are learning in language arts classes. "Students see that they too are writers and can make writing part of a career," said Mrs. Hobe.

"Author visits are so important because students see how reading and writing are connected."
— Library Media Specialist Barb Hobe

J.J. Grabenstein, Chris Grabenstein's wife and co-author of *Shine!*, joined the call. Students continue to check out Chris

Grabenstein's other books from the Ideal library, and in the Battle of the Books, two teams named themselves after him.

"Ideal Elementary is grateful for the support of the PTO and Vulcan for ensuring every student had a copy of one of Grabenstein's books," said Principal Eilidh Hall.

SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Facebook: LaGrange District 105
Twitter: LaGrange105 or @dist105
Instagram: lagrange105

Gurrie Middle School
1001 S. Spring Avenue
La Grange, IL 60525
708.482.2720
Ed Hood, Principal

Hodgkins Elementary School
6516 S. Kane Avenue
Hodgkins, IL 60525
708.482.2740
Emily Crement, Principal

Ideal Elementary School
9901 W. 58th Street
Countryside, IL 60525
708.482.2750
Eilidh Hall, Principal

Seventh Avenue Elementary School
701 S. Seventh Avenue
La Grange, IL 60525
Erin Hall, Principal

Spring Avenue Elementary School
1001 S. Spring Avenue
La Grange, IL 60525
708.482.2710
Amy Read, Principal