

The Newsletter of LaGrange School District 105

The Blackboard

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Countryside
Hodgkins
LaGrange

105

District 105
Central Office
701 S. Seventh Avenue
LaGrange, IL 60525
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Dr. Glenn T. Schlichting,
Superintendent of Schools

July/August 2012

College Visit Helps Students **PREPARE** for Their **FUTURE**

District 105 is committed to helping students learn about and plan for college — even before they enter high school.

To achieve that goal, every Gurrie seventh grade student will have the opportunity to visit a college campus via a school field trip. The first college trip took place on May 16 when the seventh grade class boarded a bus from Gurrie to head to Loyola University's Lakeshore Campus on Sheridan Road in Chicago. When they arrived at Loyola, the students gathered in the auditorium to hear presentations by Dr. Dorothy Giroux, co-director for Teaching and Learning in the School of Education, and by Mary Alice Berg,

the assistant director of admissions.

The Loyola University representatives discussed admissions standards and requirements, college majors, career options, and campus life. Students asked them thoughtful questions about college. Gurrie students took campus tours led by Loyola students, visiting the library, a dormitory, academic buildings, classrooms, athletic and recreational facilities, and had lunch in a dining hall. They engaged in informal discussions with their tour guides. This was the first visit to a college campus for most of the students.

Gurrie Principal Ed Hood stated, "Developmentally, middle school

students are seeking their own identity and are especially receptive to exploring career and college options. We planned this trip to help our students build strong, positive images about the future and to see how education will play an important role in helping them achieve their goals. The students prepared for the trip by taking career and interest inventories organized by the staff, who also helped the students analyze their results. We will draw upon this campus experience to emphasize to students the importance of their success in eighth grade and their preparation for high school courses that align with their plans for the future."

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Gurrie seventh grade students journeyed to Loyola University to get a first-hand look at college and learn about higher education.

Gurrie Middle School
1001 S. Spring Avenue
LaGrange, IL 60525
(708) 482-2720
Ed Hood, Principal

Hodgkins Elementary School
6516 S. Kane Avenue
Hodgkins, IL 60525
(708) 482-2740
John Signatur, Principal

Ideal Elementary School
9901 W. 58th Street
Countryside, IL 60525
(708) 482-2750
Steven Bahn, Principal

Seventh Avenue Elementary School
701 S. Seventh Avenue
LaGrange, IL 60525
(708) 482-2730
Sherry Krzyzanski, Principal

Spring Avenue Elementary School
1001 S. Spring Avenue
LaGrange, IL 60525
(708) 482-2710
Elizabeth Webb Peterman, Principal

The District bid a fond farewell to eight dedicated staff members this year. Two retired earlier in the year: **Marv Eblo** was a night custodian who worked in the district for 18 years. He is enjoying spending more time with his family. **Dolores Wesolowski** first worked for the district as a hostess in the Gurrie cafeteria and became the cafeteria director in 1995. She worked in the district for 25 years. Working well past the “average” retirement age, she is an inspiration to all. These staff members retired on July 1:

District-wide

Dr. Kathy Stone, Director of Gifted Education



Dr. Stone was an integral part of District 105 for 33 years. She began as a first grade teacher at Spring Avenue School. She made gifted education presentations at national and international conferences, including presentations in Paris and in Prague, and her work for the district’s gifted program was described in a Japanese book about gifted education. Her son, now a successful business executive, attended Spring Avenue and Gurrie schools.

“I have watched District 105 grow into a national exemplar and a visionary district,” Dr. Stone remarked. “I am especially proud of the district’s continued commitment to my field of gifted education, as well as to applying differentiation of instruction to address the needs of all students. District 105 is a great place to raise a family and the district itself is a family for its staff. I love the kids and will miss them!”

Her busy “retirement” includes educational research through her consulting firm, “INSTEAD International.” She will present her research on international test scores at the European Council for High Ability Conference in Munster,

Germany in fall. She is also involved with other educational research projects that have an international scope. Additionally, Dr. Stone is a published poet with a passion for the Matterhorn, a place she has visited many times. She will continue to write, travel internationally to visit schools with her husband, work with a therapy dog, read, play piano and guitar, bike ride, visit her son in Houston and spend some winter months in Hilton Head, South Carolina.

District Office

Denise Struve, Administrative Assistant for Superintendent/Board Operations



Mrs. Struve has a long association with District 105. Both of her sons attended school in the district. Prior to her employment with the district, she served as a Board of Education member for 10 years.

“Over the past 27 years I’ve seen a lot of people come and go. During my employment I’ve worked with three superintendents and four board presidents. It’s been a tremendous learning experience for which I’m truly grateful. Despite numerous changes over the years, one thing has remained constant — the district’s devotion to its mission and goals. I’ll miss many people, but I’m eager to begin this new phase of my life,” Mrs. Struve stated.

In 1998, she earned Educational Office Employee Certification through the National Association of Educational Office Professionals’ Professional Standards Program. She also achieved an Associate’s degree, with honors, from College of DuPage that year in Word Processing/Information Management.

With many interests, she will never be bored. Mrs. Struve looks forward to traveling, barbershop singing, gardening, reading, community involvement, volunteering

at a pet shelter, and potential part-time or seasonal employment.

Gurrie Middle School/Spring Avenue School Pam Kuharic, Art Teacher



Mrs. Pam Kuharic taught art to second- through eighth-grade students from Spring Avenue and Gurrie Middle schools. She worked for the district for 10 years.

“I have loved my job,” she remarked, “and I always say ‘I have the most fun job of all.’ I will miss all my colleagues and my students.”

Gurrie Middle School/Seventh Avenue School Gale Tlapa, Resource Teacher

Mrs. Tlapa is a graduate of Gurrie. Growing up in the community, she was the St. Cletus Pet Parade Queen and appeared in the classic baseball movie *A League of Their Own*.



She most recently was a resource teacher for seventh grade at Gurrie and fifth/sixth grades at Seventh Avenue School. She worked in the district for 20 years. She taught in the intermediate self-contained program from 1993 to 2010, was a key communicator to the LaGrange Area Department of Special Education from 1994 to 1995, and a girls’ volleyball, basketball and softball coach. She organized the PINK OUT for girls’ basketball and “Pack the Place Purple” for the Kelli O’Laughlin Memorial Fund. In addition, she coached softball, track and field, and swimming at Lyons Township High School. “I look forward to retirement, being with family and friends, traveling, and spending time at my cottage in Michigan,” Ms. Tlapa stated.

Spring Avenue School

Linda Battaglia, Kindergarten Teacher



Mrs. Battaglia, who worked in the district for 34 years, most recently served the district as a kindergarten teacher at Spring Avenue School. She started at Hodgkins School as a paraprofessional, then taught first grade for one year and was the Learning Center Director at Seventh Avenue School for two years.

“I have enjoyed the great families we have in the district and the many friends that I have made through teaching,” Mrs. Battaglia noted.

She is thankful and excited to begin the next stage of her life. Mrs. Battaglia plans to travel and “try all of the things I have never had the time to do!”

Rita Zale, First Grade Teacher

For the past 13 years, Mrs. Zale taught first grade at Spring Avenue School. She is very excited about retiring and plans to spend more time with her family and with other retired friends.



“I hope to stay active, play tennis, and travel to a variety of destinations throughout the year,” Mrs. Zale mentioned. “I will follow my dreams and take chances to discover new and interesting things. I will miss working with six-year-olds as they have brought so much fun and laughter into my world. When we recently talked about retirement in my classroom one of my students thought I was stepping out to buy ‘new tires!’ As I start this new chapter in my life I’m hearing the only trouble with retirement is that you never get a day off!”

Enrollment Growth and the Budget

The District 105 student enrollment has grown by more than 30% over the last 10 years. Student growth has significantly outpaced projections from demographic and enrollment studies. At the same time, the district has received significant revenue reductions from the state, especially in mandated early childhood programming and in transportation.

In the face of enrollment growth and reductions in state revenue, District 105 has taken steps to limit our FY13 operating budget increase to between 1%-2% while remaining committed to excellent programming and services. These steps include:

- Developing short and long term enrollment policies to optimize the use of the instructional space.
- Utilizing personnel more efficiently, including reductions in district administrative staff.
- Reducing or eliminating programs and services that do not demonstrate a positive impact on students.
- Refraining from investing in new programs and services that are not required by federal or state mandates or are offset by reductions in other district expenses.

Graduation REPORT

On Friday June 1, District 105 held a graduation ceremony for the Gurrie Middle School Class of 2012. For the first time the ceremony was held in the Lyons Township South High School Field House. This new location provided the 141 graduates and their families with extra parking and more seating. It is also air conditioned.

Gurrie Principal Ed Hood stated that the class size is indicative of the district's growth. "Seven years ago, my first year in the district, we had 119 graduates. Since then Gurrie's student population has increased from 220 students to 280 students."

In past years the graduation ceremony took place in the Gurrie gymnasium, that could only accommodate four guests per each graduate. The Field House has more seating and the graduates were able to invite more guests.

"Holding the ceremony at LT is also another indicator for the students that they are stepping up and moving forward into high school," Principal Hood explained.



Several members of the Gurrie Green team prepare to plant vegetables in a raised garden. Students in the Green Team, the Gurrie environmental club, created the garden area in a courtyard of the school.

District 105 Approves NEW TEACHERS' CONTRACT

On Friday, June 1, the LaGrange District 105 Board of Education and the Teachers' Association signed a four-year teachers' contract that will allow the district to continue to live within its means while attracting and maintaining a high quality teaching staff. The contract became effective on July 1, 2012.

The contract, which begins in the 2012-13 school year and lasts through the 2015-16 school year, calls for annual increases in compensation of 2.9% for the first three years and 3.0% in 2015-16. For the first time teachers will be eligible to earn an annual bonus based on student performance and school environment data. The bonus will be 1% of salary in 2013-14 and 2014-15, and 1.25% in 2015-16. The contract also requires teachers to pay a greater percentage of their salaries toward health benefits. Other than these changes, the language and provisions of the new contract are generally consistent with the last agreement that expired at the end of the 2011-12 school year.

Throughout the contract negotiations process, the Board of Education and Teachers' Association were cognizant of the need to attract and retain an excellent teaching staff. Both sides strove to stay consistent with the district's long-term financial projections so the district can continue its outstanding programs, accommodate a growing enrollment, offer neighborhood schools, maintain small class sizes and safe and secure facilities **within the revenue restrictions of the tax caps (CPI) and without seeking a referendum.**

The exceptional work of District 105 teachers results in high academic achievement and progress. District 105 students significantly outperform students in suburban schools with comparable demographics throughout the country. In surveys, parents and students consistently indicate an extremely high satisfaction rate with the district's curriculum, instruction, and environment.

Superintendent Glenn Schlichting stated: "The new contract will help insure that the extraordinary progress we have made in the district will last and that the community can continue to take pride in its schools."

Awards and Achievements

Throughout the school year District 105 students of all ages engage in many activities and events outside of the classroom that bring new learning experiences, additional opportunities to excel, improve skills, and increase their knowledge. Here are just a few of the many student achievements during the 2011-2012 school year:

Serving the Community

Gurrie students continued their commitment to volunteerism. As of May 8, they had logged 3,116 hours of collective service to improve their community, the environment, and the world. In the past two years students and staff contributed over 7,200 hours (300 days!) of their time to volunteer efforts.

School Citizens of the Year

West 40, the state's educational service center for school districts in west suburban Cook County, hosts the annual School Citizen of the Year Awards. Each school can choose one student in grades two through twelve who is a good school citizen and role model for other students. SCOTY recipients are compassionate, helpful, and lead by example. The 2012 School Citizens of the Year were recognized at an awards ceremony in March. Congratulations to the District 105 SCOTY Award winners: **Stephanie Barrett, grade eight, Gurrie Middle School; Daniela Nestra, grade six, Hodgkins School; Jacqueline Carillo, grade six, Ideal School; Grace Stuewe, grade six, Seventh Avenue School; and Claire Gertsmeier, grade six, Spring Avenue School.**

Battle of the Books

The second annual District 105 Battle of the Books took place on April 19 at Gurrie Middle School. Over 160 fifth- through eighth-grade students participated. The students partnered with each other to read books selected by the district librarians, and then competed in teams to answer questions about the books. Librarians from the LaGrange and Hodgkins public libraries moderated the event. Because each team consisted of students from different district schools and grades, the event was a truly unique experience. Students are already looking forward to next year's Battle!

Celebrating Writing

All K-8 students participate in the annual District Writing Festival, which recently celebrated its seventh year. Classroom winners are chosen, then their work is scored by nearly 20 adults. Each district school has four winners who are recognized at a ceremony held at the LaGrange Public Library in May. Spring School Principal Liz Webb Peterman stated, "I love that that parents, grandparents and neighbors come to see the



Students' literary knowledge was tested in the Battle of the Books.

students read. It is delightful to hear the students read their own pieces."

Math Team Competes

The District 105 Math Team continues to be strong, with over 80 students in grades two through eight participating. Students practice for about an hour every week after school from November through April.

In April, the students competed in the local Math Olympiad hosted by McClure Junior High School. In the team competition the fourth/fifth grade students achieved second place. Also in the team competition, for the second consecutive year, the seventh/eighth graders earned second place. Gurrie student **Jon Yeager** also achieved a second place in the individual contest for the seventh/eighth grade team.

Students Recognized for Academic Excellence

On May 2, the West Suburban Consortium for Academic Excellence recognized 13 Gurrie Middle School students for Academic Excellence. These students achieved a score of 500 or higher on one or more of the sections of the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) — reading, math, and/or writing — an exceptional accomplishment.

The West Suburban Consortium for Academic Excellence is composed of high-performing school districts in west suburban Cook County. Each year, qualifying students can participate in the program that offers above grade level testing for academically talented students.

Congratulations to: Eighth grade — **Colin Bailey, Mia Cabela, Elizabeth De Sae Silva, Anisa Godinez, Brandon Herman, Nicholas Rohan, Anna Schiferl, Abigail Yates and Jonathan Yeager.** Seventh grade — **Marina Auwerda, Iris Leahy, Leonard Prystalski, and Kathleen Westrick.**

Making Beautiful Music

The District 105 music department had an outstanding year. The Concert Band earned a superior rating at the High Note Festival at Six Flags Great America; more than 30 Concert Band students received superior ratings at the Lyons Township Solo and Ensemble Competition; and the

Gurrie Jazz Ensemble received outstanding ratings at the Illinois Grade School Music Association's Jazz Competition. In February, the Jazz Ensemble was the opening act for the prestigious Lyons Township High School Band. In the first annual Band-aid Concert, students in the music department raised more than \$1,300 for "Uniting Against Lung Cancer."

Gurrie students **Iris Leahy** and **Joanna Zienkiwicz** represented the school at the Illinois Music Educators Association Concert Band Festival held at Riverside-Brookfield High School.

Baritone saxophonist **Owen Watkins** earned the Louis Armstrong Jazz Award and saxophonist **Jon Yeager** was awarded the Quincy Jones Musicianship Award.

Students in grades five through eight gave exceptional performances in this year's musical, *Willy Wonka Jr*, held on May 17

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Additional Learning OPPORTUNITIES

In the winter of 2012 District 105 elementary schools began providing additional support for students who needed extra help in math and/or reading. These students received the extra support outside of their classrooms, either before or after school.

To improve math skills, teachers used *ALEKS* (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces), a web-based, individually targeted assessment and learning system. The *StoryTown Reading Series* (Harcourt Brace, publishers), and the *Scholastic System 44* foundational reading and phonics intervention technology program helped students further their reading skills.

These additional learning opportunities continued through the end of May. District educators are currently evaluating the program to determine its success. "We will examine student progress results over the weeks the program was delivered as well as analyze these students' year-end math and reading test results," director of curriculum and instruction Kathryn Heeke explained.

To help students maintain reading skills throughout the summer, the district opened the school libraries one day a week from June 11 through August 10. Students can check out books and use the computer lab at ANY of the school libraries.

The Summer Library schedule is —

Monday: Spring Avenue School, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m

Tuesday: Ideal School, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Wednesday: Gurrie Middle School, 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Thursday: Seventh Avenue School, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Communication Committee

A Communication Committee was formed by the District 105 School Board in January 2012 with a charge to develop a district communication plan to strengthen connections and communication throughout the entire district community. The Communication Committee worked with the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) to assist with the development of the plan. Last spring, NSPRA conducted a communication audit in District 105. As part of this process, NSPRA reviewed all of the communication strategies used by the district, including school and district websites, school and district newsletters, forums and meetings, reports and presentations, and newspaper articles. Also, the NSPRA interviewed several focus groups about improving district communication. These groups included students, former students, administrators and teachers from Lyons Township High School, senior citizens, current parents, former parents, parents with children in parochial schools, community members without children in District 105 schools, community officials and leaders, and business leaders.

This summer, the NSPRA will submit a report with recommendations for improving communication based on its review of the district's communication strategies and information gathered from the various focus groups. This report will be posted on the district website in the fall. The District 105 Communication Committee will convene in the fall to use NSPRA recommendations as a foundation for submitting an overall district communication plan to the School Board by January of 2013.

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District 105

Board of Education

Mark Smith, President	The public is invited to attend board meetings — generally held at Gurrie Library Learning Center on the fourth Monday of each month, 7:30 PM.
David Herndon, Vice President	
Eileen Tucker, Secretary	
Virginia Kogen	
Kristine Lonsway	
Larry Prystalski	
Jan Reagan	

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JULY/AUGUST 2012

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College Visit Helps Students Prepare for Their Future

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For many seventh graders the trip was among the highlights of the school year. “We hope that students went home and shared their excitement with their families. This college experience opens a door for parents to talk to their children about how the students’ success with family, school, and community will help prepare them to pursue their interests, talents, and dreams,” Principal Hood commented.



Gurrie students tour the Loyola University campus.

Awards and Achievements

(Continued from page 4)

Gurrie Athletes

These Gurrie Tiger teams were Conference Champions — seventh grade boys’ softball, seventh grade boys’ basketball, eighth grade girls’ softball, and seventh grade boys’ volleyball, which also won the Hodgkins’ Tournament. The boys’ seventh/eighth grade Cross Country Team won its second consecutive LT Conference Title. Three members of the Cross Country Teams, one boy and two girls, were the first Gurrie students to ever compete in the IESA Cross Country State Championship. Nine of the Wrestling Team’s 18 wrestlers qualified for the sectional tournament, with one wrestler also qualifying for the state finals.

and 18. Over 50 students actively participated in the performance.

The elementary choir was formed five years ago with just eight members. This year, there were 28 choir members who performed at three concerts.

The Gurrie choir performed at four concerts, sang at a student assembly, and had several additional performances, including a performance at the High Note Festival held at Six Flags Great America. The choir received the highest rating of “superior” at the festival each year for the past five years.



NEW SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS

The first day of school for all students is **Thursday, August 23.**
Welcome back to school!