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Dr. Glenn T. Schlichting,
Superintendent of Schools

April/May 2014

The Newsletter of LaGrange School District 105

The Blackboard

www.d105.net

Countryside
Hodgkins
LaGrange

105

Parent, Student, and Staff SURVEYS

Last school year, District 105 students, parents, and staff participated in the Illinois *5Essentials Survey*, which was administered for the first time throughout the state. The *5Essentials Survey* gathered feedback from participants in five areas that research has shown to be critical to school and district success: Ambitious Instruction, Effective Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Supportive Learning Environment, and Family Involvement. The district and all five schools received the highest state ratings on these surveys.

This school year, the choice was made to return to using District 105 surveys, which have been administered to students, parents, and staff since 2005. These surveys provide the district and schools with very specific feedback about the effectiveness of the district's practices. The results are reported publicly and *if* feedback is incorporated into all of the district's improvement planning processes. The surveys will be administered during the week of April 28. Parents will have the option of completing paper or online versions of the survey.

Did you KNOW...

■ District 105 earns high national rankings in student achievement and progress on nationally norm-referenced math and reading assessments. The 2013-14 fall and winter results are up again from previous years.

■ District 105 student enrollment has increased 32% since 2005.

■ District 105 and all five schools received the highest overall rating from students, staff, and parents on the Illinois' 2013 *5Essentials* surveys.

■ The District 105 Board of Education is fiscally responsible. Even with increasing enrollment and reductions in state and federal funding for mandated programs, District 105 operational expenses in 2012-13 were 2% less than 2011-12.

■ Enrollment in the District 105 Band and Orchestra Programs has increased more than 50% in the last three years. Participation in music strongly correlates with academic success, as 93% of students in the District 93 music program were named to the Academic Honor Roll.



STUDENTS IN THE DISTRICT'S MUSIC PROGRAM ARE ACHIEVING BOTH MUSICAL AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS. Read all about it on page 3.

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
Erin Hall, Principal

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

Resale Event HELPS FAMILIES

On the afternoon of Saturday, December 7, 2013, at Ideal School, the district held its very first resale event for district families. The purpose of the sale was to provide all district families with the opportunity to purchase quality, gently used items at very affordable prices. The district's social workers came up with the concept for the event.

District 105 families and staff donated items for the sale. The response was tremendous. "We received tons of gently used items, too many to count. There was clothing for infants, children and adults, many household items, books, and toys. We even received a beautiful toddler bed, and a TV with a built-in DVD player," said School Social Worker Gail Weiland.

"We all agreed that the primary goal was not to make money," she continued. "We knew that, with the holidays coming, it would be difficult for many families to afford gifts and other items. It also provided us with an opportunity to be environmentally conscious by recycling and reusing."

Over several weeks, the district social workers carefully evaluated the donations to assure that items were in good condition and appropriate for the sale. Items that were not were donated to local charitable organizations.

On the afternoon before the sale, volunteers helped set up the items. Many teachers and paraprofessionals were among the volunteers. The school custodians went above and beyond to assist, finding space for the volunteers to store and sort items, and bringing extra tables from another district school. Ideal Principal Steven Bahn was present to make sure that the volunteers had everything they needed for the sale to proceed smoothly.

Toward the end of the sale, Ideal Administrative Assistant Marbella Martinez drove to an apartment complex in Hodgkins to alert families to the sale and confirm they had transportation to the school. Because of her efforts, many more families were able to benefit from the event, and even received reduced prices during the last hour.

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Making a DIFFERENCE

Service to others continues to be a primary focus at Gurrie Middle School. This year, students are striving to reach a goal of 4,000 service hours. As of the end of the first half of the school year, students had already reached 2,858 hours, well on their way to meeting, or beating, their goal!

Students are active in a huge variety of service projects. Some examples include: making more than 75 blankets — as part of the school's Linus Project — that were donated to patients at the Oak Lawn Ronald McDonald House; helping to prepare meals at the Lincoln Park Community Shelter; participating in events that recognize the contribution of U.S. soldiers, including *Wreaths Across America* and *Operation Care Package*; leaf raking for local senior citizens; and clean-ups at Bemis Woods and at Chicago beaches.

To learn more about Gurrie students' service activities this year, and to view more photos, visit the district website www.d105.net. Click on the Gurrie Middle School page and follow the links.

THROUGHOUT THE SEASONS, GURRIE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE. (From top to bottom:) Raking leaves for senior citizens; cleaning up a Chicago beach; preparing meals at the Lincoln Park Community Shelter.



STUDENTS BENEFIT Musically, Academically, from District 105's GROWING MUSIC PROGRAM

The District 105 music program is thriving. Enrollment has increased 52% since 2011. In Band membership alone, participation has risen from 130 students to over 200. This reflects very similar increases in District 105 Orchestra enrollment and Choir participation. Currently, 936 students in grades three through eight are enrolled in the music program, and 410 (44%) of those students are also enrolled in an extra-curricular Performing Arts group! This participation and growth reflect the strong support of all members of the district community, including parents and administrators; the district's emphasis on the importance of the arts in education; a rich music curriculum; and dedicated students and teachers.

Studies confirm that music education has a profound impact on the development of well-rounded students. There is a powerful, positive correlation between music participation and academic performance. Researchers have suggested that "music should be considered as fundamental to the curriculum as mathematics and reading," and that "music can influence learning in core subjects as well as contribute to the attainment of core goals in learning."

The district's engaging and rigorous music curriculum promotes musicality, responsibility, discipline, outreach, and academic excellence. Students' participation in many diverse performances, including local and regional

competitions, benefits, festivals, and school concerts gives them valuable developmental experiences. This combination of a rigorous curriculum, high standards, and engaging activities has a profound impact on students. *As of January 31, 2014, 93% of Concert Band and Orchestra students in District 105 were named to the Academic Honor Roll!*

The district offers 14 music groups. These are:

Orchestra Ensembles —

- Beginner Orchestra
- Intermediate Orchestra
- Concert Orchestra
- Chamber Orchestra
- Advanced Chamber Orchestra

Band Groups —

- Cadet Band
- Symphonic Band
- Concert Band
- Jazz Ensemble I
- Jazz Ensemble II (Spring 2014)
- Percussion Ensemble
- Brass Choir (Fall 2014)

Vocal Groups —

- Elementary Choir
- Gurrie Choir

The Jazz Band has added evening practices because the students' desire to improve and develop as musicians requires more direct and targeted time. These musicians have embraced the change and taken greater ownership of their practice and efforts, and they continue to improve and develop.

Beginning in third grade, vocal and instrumental music is offered to all students. Orchestra begins in the third grade, Band begins in the fourth, and Choir, the fifth. Recently, an Orchestra co-director and Band co-director were added to the staff to aid and further expand these popular programs.

Parent Involvement Committee Presents CAREER FESTIVAL

The Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) will present the district's first **Career Festival** at Gurrie Middle School on Wednesday, April 23, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. All fifth- through eighth-grade students and their parents are invited.

The purpose of the event is to help students make connections between their current education and their future career choices. Speakers include career counseling and entrepreneurial experts from JVS Chicago, a non-denominational charitable organization that provides educational and vocational counseling, job placement, vocational rehabilitation and skill training services.

Attendees will learn how to choose careers that match their interests and skills, cost-effective strategies for attending college, and entrepreneurial career ideas.

Also, in a trade show style format, representatives from numerous career fields will share their knowledge of career and work options with attendees, and provide information on the education and interests needed to successfully pursue those careers. The career representatives will be District 105 parents and other community members.

Transportation for parents who need it, and childcare, are provided at no cost for the event. Parents will receive fliers announcing the Career Festival in their student's weekly correspondence envelope.

The Parent Involvement Committee sponsors parent education events on several evenings throughout the school year. The topics focus on parents' interests and needs, based on their input. This year, the PIC held a presentation on school anxiety in October, and in March, another on understanding how children learn.



MAKING BEAUTIFUL MUSIC:

Participation in the district's music program has increased 52% in three years. There is a strong correlation between music education and academic achievement, witnessed by the fact that 93% of district students in Band and Orchestra are on the Academic Honor Roll.

TEACHER TEACHES TEACHERS:

Early Childhood Teacher is **ACCOMPLISHED PRESENTER**, Role Model

For the past 25 years, Ideal School Kindergarten Teacher Mary Pat Larocca has helped early childhood teachers from throughout the state learn to be their best. Each year, she presents at the annual *Illinois Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development* (Illinois ASCD) Conference. In addition, she presents professional development programs for kindergarten teachers in neighboring school districts and at diverse early childhood education conferences in Illinois and Wisconsin.



Miss Larocca is surrounded by happy kindergarten students.

Miss Larocca, who has taught in District 105 for 32 years, began attending the conference when it originated. At that time she was just starting her teaching career. She loved what the conference had to offer and always came away with great ideas she enthusiastically implemented in her classroom. One year, she realized that she could share her own ideas with other kindergarten teachers through the conference. She did, and has been doing it ever since!

“What inspires me to keep presenting are the teachers who e-mail me or tell me in person that they have enjoyed my presentations, are using the ideas I have shared, and are finding them to be valuable. Also, I am mentoring my colleague, Hodgkins School Kindergarten Teacher Joy Swanson. She asked if she could do a presentation with me and I could not say no to a protégé who wanted to try something new, and out of her comfort zone, even though I was planning to take a year off of presenting!” Miss Larocca explained.

Over the past 25 years, Miss Larocca has given many presentations on different subjects, all targeted to inspire and educate teachers. The topics have included teaching kindergarteners how to write, song and poem ideas, ideas with which to begin the school year, homework backpacks, and kindergarten keepsakes.

“My thirtieth year of teaching coincided with the thirtieth year of the conference,” Miss Larocca stated. “That year, my presentation was titled *My Top 30*. I spoke of the top 30 things I had learned as a kindergarten teacher, including learning and growing every year, to never stop learning, share your talents, and have fun! Last year, Joy Swanson and I presented *Get Your Mathematicians Humming... The Common Core is Coming*, which shared math strategies and ideas for meeting the requirements of the new Common Core State Standards.”

In early March, Miss Larocca and Miss Swanson once again presented at the Illinois ASCD Conference that was attended by about 1,500 early childhood education teachers from Illinois’ schools, and held at the Schaumburg Convention Center. Their presentation was titled *March Through May... Start Your Day the Common Core Way*. It taught the conference attendees ways

to meet the Common Core State Standards during “morning meeting” time, helping to make every classroom moment effective.

“Our district has always been extremely supportive of this conference. Many of our kindergarten and early childhood teachers attend, and I know that my principal, Steven Bahn, comes each year to support me. Last year, Miss Swanson’s principal, John Signatur, also attended. During last year’s conference many teachers told us how lucky we were to

have such supportive principals and to work in such a great district. And I also consider myself very lucky to work in this wonderful district of ours!” Miss Larocca emphasized.

KANE COUNTY COUGARS DAY

The District 105 Foundation will host its second annual **Kane County Cougars Day** at 1:00 p.m. Sunday, May 4, at the Cougars stadium in Geneva, IL. Last year, over 600 district families, staff, and community members attended the District 105 Kane County Cougars Day, the Foundation’s premiere event.

In addition to watching the Cougars play, participants will enjoy several special activities organized by the baseball team. The purpose of the event is not to raise money for the Foundation — tickets are provided at cost — but to bring families from the district’s five schools, and additional community members, together. However, event sponsorships are welcome.

The District 105 Foundation was formed last year. Its goal is to provide college scholarships to former students who are graduating high school. The first of these scholarships will be awarded in the spring, to one former student from each of the district’s elementary school communities, with over half of the scholarships awarded based on financial need. “With almost half of our District 105 students from low income backgrounds and more than half of our stu-

dents who would be the first in their families to graduate from college, our Foundation is focusing all of its fundraising efforts on awarding these scholarships,” stated Susan Dixon, Foundation president.

Ticket information for the Kane County Cougars Day will be posted on the district website: www.district105.net. Information on how to donate to the District 105 Foundation is also posted on the site.

SAVE THE DATE: DISTRICT 105



District 105 STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

District 105 Board of Education and community members, parents, staff, students, and administrators from all five of our school communities worked throughout the first half of the 2012-13 school year to update our District 105 Strategic Plan. The plan was formally adopted by the Board of Education on January 28, 2013. The Strategic Plan serves as a foundation for our continuous improvement by stating our priorities through long-range goals, and guiding our actions through critical strategies. The following is an update of the ongoing work aligned by our plan.

Long-range Goals

Progress toward our long-range goals is monitored closely and reported regularly at Board of Education meetings and through the district dashboard posted on our website www.d105.net. The district goals frame the important school and grade-level improvement processes.

- All students will demonstrate continuous growth and achieve college and career readiness standards.
- All students will attend school in a safe, supportive and healthy learning environment.
- District 105 will enhance learning partnerships by connecting schools, families and communities.
- District 105 will recruit, retain and develop a high quality, collaborative staff.
- District 105 will make effective and efficient use of its resources.

Critical Strategies

The critical strategies guide the actions we need to get improved results. Action plans have been developed for each of these critical strategies. The six actions follow, and are highlighted.

Provide Ambitious Instruction

- The district is in the second of a three-year plan to transition to the Common Core State Standards. The plan attends to revisions in curriculum, assessment, and instruction; communication with parents; and professional training and support.

Reduce Achievement Gap

- The district has developed a SMART GOAL Action Plan with targets for reducing the achievement gap by improving the achievement of students in poverty.
- The district will evaluate its practices to meet the needs of students in poverty based on a comprehensive study of educational “best practices” in the research literature (August 2014).

Ensure Early Learning Success

- The district will develop indicators for kindergarten readiness and use these indicators to guide early childhood programming (August 2014).
- The district will complete a comprehensive study about research-based “best practices” in early childhood, including the impact of present programming and the feasibility and potential impact of expanding pre-K programming and offering all-day kindergarten (ongoing).

Engage Families and Communities

- The district will collaborate with the Illinois Parent & Educator Partnership to pilot an action team for parent partnerships at Hodgkins School to improve parent support, communication, and involvement (August 2014).
- The district will research and develop additional parent involvement opportunities across the district (i.e., conferencing, parent access to data, Parent Universities).

Optimize Time, People, Space and Other Resources

- The district has leased early childhood classroom space in the community to provide flexibility to accommodate anticipated K-8 enrollment growth.
- The district will study the impact of summer programs (January 2014) and before- and after-school intervention programs (August 2014) on student learning. Programs will be revised to increase impact on student learning (ongoing).
- The district will review the school day and school year to optimize student and staff learning opportunities (ongoing).

Commit to Whole Child Education

- The district will study the impact of new exploratory programming at Gurrie Middle School (July 2014).
- The district will engage in a program renewal process to examine elementary level fine arts scheduling, programming, and curriculum. (2014-15 school year).

DISTRICT 105 BOARD OF EDUCATION

David Herndon,
President
Kristine Lonsway,
Vice President
Eileen Tucker,
Secretary
Virginia Kogen
Larry Prystalski
Jan Reagan
Robert Webb

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.

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Resale Event HELPS FAMILIES (Continued from page 2)

Some leftover items were kept for a future sale, and others were donated to a local charitable organization.

All of the proceeds raised at the sale were placed into a special District 105 fund that will be used to provide assistance for district families during times of crisis.

"This was one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had in District 105," Mrs. Weiland affirmed. "Although



Hundreds of items were donated to the district's December Resale Event.

we had all sorts of items, we held the event close to the holidays to provide a little bit of relief to families that might not otherwise be able to get much for their loved ones. People were surprised at how low our prices were. In fact, some people tried to give us more money, knowing that it would go to a good cause. It was

wonderful to see so many people excited about the great items they purchased. I want to extend a special thank you to Ideal Principal Steven Bahn for hosting the resale event at his school. It was truly a spectacular day!"



SCHOOL SAFETY COMPLIANCE



The new Illinois Firearm Concealed Carry Act [430 ILCS 66] was enacted to allow individuals with a special permit to carry a concealed firearm in public. The law provides a long list of locations where concealed carry is prohibited, including school buildings. As required by the law, property that prohibits firearms must post a sign approved by the Illinois State Police at each entrance. All entrance doors to every LaGrange District 105 school now have the prohibition signs posted according to the law, as the safety of children and the security of the buildings continue to be a priority.