

The Newsletter of LaGrange School District 105

The Blackboard

www.d105.net

Countryside
Hodgkins
LaGrange

105

District Office
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Dr. Glenn T. Schlichting,
Superintendent of Schools

July/August 2013

SPECIAL EVENTS Benefit Parents, Families

The Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) is a District 105 Board of Education initiative that began in January 2012. PIC is comprised of a dedicated group of District 105 parents, educators, Board of Education and community members who work together to provide networking opportunities, communication, education, and support to District 105 families. Deborah Madison Tyrrell, the district's director of student services, chairs the committee. This year PIC focused its efforts on parent education and communication. The committee sponsored three special events for District 105 parents and families.

The first event took place last fall at Gurrie Middle School, where educational consultant Lisa Marsicano spoke to parents about *Strategies for a Successful Homework Process*. "The presentation, that focused on students' executive functioning skills and strategies for parents to help their students at home, was very well attended," stated Ms. Tyrrell. After the presentation, parents participated in roundtable discussions facilitated by PIC members.



PHOTOS FROM TASTE OF 105. (Above) Attendees of all ages enjoyed the event. (L): Diners sampled cuisine from many different cultures. (R): The Patterson sisters are Irish dancers who were among the talented performers.

The second event, a presentation by District 105 social workers titled, *Information and Strategies to Prevent Bullying in Our Schools*, took place at Seventh Avenue School. The social workers taught parents several strategies to help them recognize the signs of bullying or being bullied, explained the processes the schools have in place to deal with bullying, and suggested ways that parents can provide support for their children at home. At the end of the night, parents engaged in a question and answer session.

The third event, *Taste of 105*, was a social event held at Ideal School that brought families and students from every District 105 school together to celebrate diverse cultures through food and music. Attendees brought their favorite dishes to share and volunteers performed ethnic music and dance numbers from many countries. More than 200 families attended this very successful event.

Live music and dance performances by District 105 staff, students, and family mem-

bers highlighted the evening. These included Polish, Irish and Latin bands, Irish dancers, and an Albanian song performed on accordion. The evening culminated when the Latin band played the Mexican classic "Cielito Lindo" and the audience joined in the chorus: "Ay, ay, ay, ay, canta y no llores!" Ms. Tyrrell commented: "The Taste of 105 was a spectacular event."



Next year's PIC events are being planned based on information gathered from parent surveys. The scheduled events include a presentation on school anxiety, a career festival, and a speaker on brain-based learning. PIC is also developing ways to help parents start support groups and is organizing parent representatives from each school to be part of the school improvement process.

"We are continuing to work on strengthening our parent/education partnerships to help students achieve their goals and follow their dreams," Ms. Tyrrell concluded.

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(708) 482-2720
Ed Hood, Principal

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John Signatur, Principal

Ideal Elementary School
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Steven Bahn, Principal

Seventh Avenue Elementary School
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(708) 482-2730
Erin Hall, Principal

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

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Meet Seventh Avenue School's NEW PRINCIPAL



Erin Hall

Due to the retirement of Principal Sherry Krzyzanski, Seventh Avenue School welcomed a new principal on July 1. After a rigorous search, the Board of

Education selected Mrs. Erin Hall as the school's new principal. Mrs. Hall is not only an accomplished educator, but grew up in LaGrange, which gives her a unique understanding of the community and of its educational values.

Mrs. Hall comes to Seventh Avenue School from Schaumburg District 54, where she served as assistant principal for the past three years, splitting her time between two elementary schools with over 1,000 students. One of the schools achieved Blue Ribbon status, a national recognition. Before her work in that district, she served as a special education teacher/inclusion facilitator in Glen Ellyn District 41 for 13 years, where she also completed her internship in administration.

After graduation from LaGrange Township High School, Mrs. Hall went on to achieve a degree in Elementary Education, with a minor in Special Education, from Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. Following that, she earned two Master's degrees from Northern Illinois University, one in Curriculum and Instruction, and the other in Education Administration.

In her previous school district, Mrs. Hall received training in the Common Core Standards, and will apply this learning to her new role in District 105.

Congratulations, RETIREES

Two dedicated educators from Seventh Avenue School recently retired.

The entire District 105 community extends

its appreciation and best wishes to **Principal Sherry Krzyzanski** and **Primary Resource Teacher Kathryn Owens**.

Seventh Avenue School benefitted from Mrs. Krzyzanski's leadership for the past 10 years. Before coming to Seventh Avenue School, she was a reading specialist, instructional coordinator and finally, an assistant principal in a Naperville school district. Mrs. Krzyzanski worked in education for 38 years.

"I have greatly enjoyed these past 10 years at Seventh Avenue," Mrs. Krzyzanski stated. "I have been fortunate to get to know so many warm and friendly families in our community and to watch their children grow as they move from grade to grade. I have learned much from the teachers in our district and from my administrative colleagues. This is a great place to grow and learn, whether you are a child, or an adult. Thank you for a



Sherry Krzyzanski



Kathryn Owens

wonderful 10 years!"

Mrs. Krzyzanski looks forward to having more time to work in her garden, travel, and

catch up on reading. She plans to take gardening classes at the Morton Arboretum and to enjoy long walks on the Arboretum's many paths. Once she relaxes a bit, she plans to volunteer, perhaps at an animal shelter.

For the past 15 years, Kathryn Owens served Seventh Avenue School as a primary resource teacher, the only position she held in the district. Mrs. Owens worked in education for a total of 28 years.

"I had a wonderful 15 years teaching at Seventh Avenue School and working with School District 105. I met so many kind and talented people and made many lifelong friends. I also had the pleasure of getting to know many great students and their families," Mrs. Owens remarked.

She plans on spending more time with family and friends, returning to some old interests and pursuing some new ones.

Being able to work at another district with a supportive superintendent and parents is very important to Mrs. Hall. After meeting with Superintendent Glenn Schlichting and spending time with the district's administrative team, she knew that District 105 works hard to make sure that every child excels.

Mrs. Hall and her husband, Chris, have three children. Currently, her hobbies consist of anything related to her children's hobbies, such as building with Legos, play-

ing with dolls, coloring, or playing basketball in their driveway.

**The first day of school
for grades 1 - 8 is
Thursday, August 22.**



Awards and Achievements

Education does not just take place in the classroom. Throughout the school year, District 105 students have many additional opportunities for learning. These events and activities broaden students' educational horizons and give them more opportunities for academic, social, and artistic growth, and are part of a well-rounded education. Here are just some of the many student achievements during the 2012-2013 school year:

Congratulations, Graduates!

Graduation took place on the evening of Wednesday, May 29, at LTHS south campus. The Class of 2013 had 140 graduates. A record 47% of the graduates are scheduled to take honors/accelerated courses at Lyons Township High School in both math and English in the fall. This continues the recent trend of more District 105 students entering advanced freshman courses than in previous years. When the district began tracking course enrollment data seven years ago, 30% of Gurrie students entered honors/accelerated mathematics and English courses.

This upward trend reflects the significant improvement eighth grade students have



made on the Explore Test, an instrument Lyons Township High School uses for course placement, which is a precursor to the ACT.

It also reflects strengthened partnerships among students, parents, staff, and the Lyons Township High School staff throughout the freshman course scheduling process.

Students Make a BIG Difference

At the end of the school year, Gurrie students had logged 3,580.25 hours of service to their communities and beyond, continuing their commitment to volunteerism. Over the past three years, Gurrie students have logged nearly 12,000 hours of volunteerism.

We Are the World

Two Gurrie seventh grade students earned top 25 recognition in the Junior Scholastic Mapman geography contest. The contest had over 5,000 entries! Congratulations to

Jordan Hoekstra and **Hannah Hoekstra**.



Academic Achievers

The West Suburban Consortium for Academic Excellence, a group of high-performing school districts that includes LaGrange District 105, recently honored eight District 105 students for their high SAT scores. Only academically talented students can participate in this program.

These students earned a score of 500 or higher on one or more sections of the SAT: Eighth graders **Iris Leahy**, **Leonard Prystalski** and **Jason Williams**; seventh graders **Amelia Brisk**, **Max Ryser** and **Reno Sarussi**; sixth graders **Tihana Karlovic** and **Devon Winchester**.

School Citizens of the Year

Each year West 40, the region's educational service center, sponsors the School Citizen of the Year (SCOTY) Awards. Every area school can select one student in grades 2 through 12 who is a "good school citizen and role model for other students." This year's District 105 SCOTY recipients are: Gurrie Middle School, **Julie Vock**; Hodgkins School, **Giovanna Lopez**; Ideal School, **Tihana Karlovic**; Seventh Avenue School, **Lance Esquivel**; and Spring Avenue School, **Sean McDermott**.



Student Authors

All K-8 students participated in the annual District Writing Festival. This year's work concentrated on non-fiction writing. Poetry, narrative, and opinion/persuasive pieces were also accepted and encouraged. About 20 adults scored the students work and chose the classroom winners. Every school in the district had four winners who were recog-

nized at a ceremony held at the LaGrange Public Library in May.

Alice in Wonderland, Jr.

Thirty-eight cast members and five crew members from grades 5 through 8 demonstrated their talents when they presented *Alice in Wonderland, Jr.*, in May. Students auditioned for roles in January, then practiced two to three days a week for four months. All of the cast members had singing parts. Their hard work culminated in two evening performances for family and community members, and a matinee performance for grades 5-8. The musical would not be possible without the dedication of many teachers and parents. Kudos to District 105 teachers **Jeffrey Wydra**, the musical's creative director; **Tracy Kay**, music director; **Alexa Wierenga**, stage manager; **Kelly Sabatini**, manager of the stage crew, and all of the dedicated parent volunteers.

Battle of the Books

The third annual District 105 Battle of the Books took place on April 5 at Gurrie Middle School. Over 150 fifth- through eighth-grade students participated. The program encourages ongoing reading and teamwork throughout the course of the year with



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CHANGES to Gifted Program

In the fall, Phase I of the implementation of a revised Gifted Education Program will begin, which will concentrate on the teaching of mathematics. This focus of Phase I of this revised program will be at the K-4 grade levels because the district currently does not have a formal accelerated math program for this group. The formal accelerated math classes now begin in fifth grade, continue through eighth grade, and are taught by classroom teachers.

A full-time teacher will be hired to work in the Gifted Department. That teacher's job will be to support the professional growth of elementary school math teachers by strengthening their understanding of math concepts, and of how students best learn and master math concepts. Elementary teachers will have co-teaching and "modeling" opportunities with this gifted education expert to help the teachers use best practices strategies that will support the highest achieving students in the classroom.

While Phase I of the revised Gifted Program centers on mathematics, Phase II will concentrate on Language Arts. During the 2013-2014 school year, members of the district's Gifted Program Renewal Committee will develop a plan for Language Arts gifted education.

Currently, the Language Arts portion of the Gifted Program, named SAIL (Scholarly Advancement in Learning), is a pullout program that serves students in grades 4 through 6. These students receive additional advanced work. Advanced classes then begin at the middle school level.

"The Renewal Committee will examine our current Language Arts gifted practices and determine the program's benefits and challenges. From there, we will design the best way to deliver services to our highest achieving students in the area of Language Arts," explained Kathryn Heeke, the district's director of curriculum and instruction.

Revamped EXPLORATORY PROGRAM Will Offer More Choices

Over two years ago, the district created a program committee to investigate the effectiveness of specific programs, including the Gurrie Middle School exploratory curricu-



Drawing will be one of the Visual Arts courses.

lum and courses. The results of the study showed that the exploratory program should be more deeply researched and recommendations made for growth and improvement. “Our new exploratory focus came from those recommendations,” stated Gurrie Middle School Principal Ed Hood.

The exploratory courses had been art, music, applied technology, and life skills. Each was offered for nine weeks and every student took all of these courses.

These initial goals for the new exploratory program were developed:

- Offer more options/choices to students in their exploratory programming
- Add a stand alone health curriculum that would be taught to all eighth graders
- Add a study skills/middle school skills transition course that would be taught to all seventh graders
- Integrate twenty-first century skills into all exploratory courses

The twenty-first century skills that the courses would help develop include fluency in solutions, information, collaboration, creativity, and media. Also, instead of each exploratory course lasting nine weeks, more choices could be offered if the program were divided into “Quints” or five seven-week-long courses.

These new categories and courses were proposed:

- *Performing Arts*, with classes in keyboards/recording technology, drama, voice, guitar, and percussion ensemble.

- *Visual Arts*, with classes in drawing, painting, ceramics, digital photography, and graphic design.
- *STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)*, with classes in alternative energy, engineering, transportation, architectural engineering, and computer-aided design.
- *Culinary Arts and Healthy Lifestyles*, with classes in the basics of cooking and nutrition, healthy lifestyles and nutrition, international foods and nutrition, U.S. regional foods and nutrition, and sewing.

Over the course of the school year, students will take four seven-week-long exploratory classes of their choice, one class from each of the four different subject areas. Additionally, all seventh grade students will take a Middle School Skills exploratory course that will help prepare them for success in middle school, and all eighth grade students will take a Health exploratory course that will help shape personal values and beliefs that support healthy behavior. Consumer education, including financial knowledge and behavior, will be included in the Health exploratory. With the required Middle School Skills or Health exploratories, Gurrie students will take a total of five exploratory courses per school year.

In February 2013, the school provided then-current seventh and eighth grade students with brief course descriptions of the new classes and conducted a survey. The survey results gave specific information about student interest in the proposed courses, feedback on the new structure — including time frames and student choice — and data on how many options to offer students.

The survey identified the students’ greatest areas of interest, which included:

- Guitar
- Keyboarding and Recording
- Alternative Energy

Why Offer Exploratories?

Exploratories provide young adolescents with experiences in areas beyond the core subjects, allowing them to learn new skills and try out new ways of thinking. They offer wide-ranging learning opportunities and experiences that they would not otherwise have. For many students, middle school may be their last opportunity to explore new subjects and interests. The mission of the Gurrie exploratory program is to create interests and encourage students to explore new ideas in order to foster self-knowledge as students discover their unique abilities, talents, and interests, thus preparing them for personal and professional success.

- Transportation Technology
- Ceramics
- Drawing
- Basic Foods and Nutrition
- Regional Foods

Students’ comments were overwhelmingly positive, and included: “LOVE the photography in art!” “The idea of choosing different classes is nice...choice is a good way to introduce students to electives at LT.” “Exploratories are supposed to be fun and awesome, and this new idea is going to make the next year AWESOME!”

Gurrie teachers and administrators have been hard at work since January developing the program and curriculum. Students and educators alike are looking forward to the implementation of the new exploratory curriculum in the fall.

DISTRICT 105 BOARD OF EDUCATION

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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.

A Message from Dr. Glenn Schlichting, Superintendent

District 105 Foundation Kicks-Off

Over 600 of our District 105 families, staff, and community members attended a Kane County Cougars baseball game on Sunday, May 5 at their stadium in Geneva, IL. The event was planned to bring all five of our school communities together as a kick-off for our District 105 Foundation. The Foundation, which we expect to be formally established as an organization by next fall, is being formed to:

- ❑ **Strengthen family and community relationships throughout District 105.** Our students and families benefit greatly from the trusting relationships formed across elementary school attendance areas. In recent years, the district has planned common field trips, activities, and intramural programs to bring students from all four of our elementary schools together before they attend Gurrie Middle School. The main purpose of the Kane County trip was to provide yet another opportunity to bring our students and families together.
- ❑ **Provide funding for an area(s) related to the District 105 Mission that cannot be funded by the School District 105 Board of Education.** The Foundation will focus on providing college scholarships to high school seniors in equal numbers from our four elementary school communities. The Foundation will promote our District 105 Mission to *Empower our Students to Pursue their Interests, Talents, and Dreams*. We anticipate that the first Foundation scholarships will be awarded in the spring of 2014. The Kane County Cougars event was not organized to raise funds from participants, as we provided tickets at cost. We will, however, seek sponsorships for this event from community partners to benefit the Foundation.

The response to the District 105 Kane County Cougars event was overwhelmingly positive. The Cougars provided several special activities to recognize and involve our District 105 participants. We look forward to scheduling another Cougars game next spring.

Through the District 105 Foundation, we will continue organizing events to bring our communities together and seeking sponsorships for these events to raise funds to support scholarships. For more information about our District 105 Foundation, please consult our District 105 website, www.d105.net.



The new District 105 Foundation kicked-off with a day of fun at the Kane County Cougars ballpark. Pictured are just a few of the 600+ people from District 105 who enjoyed the baseball game and other special activities.

Focus on Budget/Enrollment

The District 105 student enrollment has grown by more than 40% over the last 10 years. We expect our enrollment to increase 3%-4% for the coming year. As our enrollment has grown, we have received significant revenue reductions from the state, especially in mandated early childhood programming and transportation.

In the face of enrollment growth and reductions in state revenue, District 105 is taking steps to limit our FY14 operating budget increase to 2%-3% while remaining committed to excellent programming and services. These steps include:

- ❑ Developing short- and long-term enrollment policies to optimize the use of our instructional space
- ❑ Utilizing community classroom space for early childhood programs not bound by school attendance areas
- ❑ Utilizing personnel more efficiently, including reductions in district administrative staff
- ❑ Reducing or eliminating programs and services which 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.

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quality literature as its foundation.

To prepare for the event, the students first worked together on school-based teams to read books selected by the district librarians, and then competed with other teams from their school to answer questions about the books. The top two teams from each school came together for the District Battle of the Books, where eight new teams were created with representatives from each school and grade. This event is a unique and exciting way to celebrate reading.

Mathletes

The District 105 Math Team continues to be strong, with over 80 students in grades 2 through 8 participating. Starting in November and continuing through March, students meet for about an hour every week after school to develop problem-solving skills and expand their math knowledge. Students in grades two and three participate in the Continental Math League, while those in grades four through eight participate in the Math Olympiad for elementary and middle school. Both of these are

monthly competitions that students complete while at practice. This year students in grades 4-8 also participated in a Math Olympiad hosted by Gurrie Middle School.

Musicians Excel

The Gurrie Middle School Jazz Band placed second at the Illinois Grade School Music Association District Jazz Festival. The group then received an impressive fourth place showing at the State Festival.

The GMS Jazz Band also took top honors at the Lyons Township High School Jazz Band Day.

The District 105 Concert Band earned a superior score at the Illinois Grade School Music Association District VII Concert Festival.

Two students from the Concert Orchestra, **Camille Copp** and **Andrea Udziela**, represented District 105 at the Illinois Music Association's festival in November. Their top scores earned them a seat at the District One Festival where they performed with other top students in the state.

The Concert Band, Orchestra, and Middle School Choir each achieved a Superior ranking at the High Notes Festival hosted by Great America.

Band students who prepared music for the LTHS Solo and Ensemble Competition in November achieved more than 30 superior ratings, and Orchestra students earned over 40 superior ratings.

A new group, the District 105 Percussion Ensemble, was formed this year.

Eighth grader **Iris Leahy** was the first student in quite some time to be named to the District Honors Festival Band two years in a row. This year she performed with over 100 of the best musicians in the state at the Festival hosted by Oak Park-River Forest High School. She also received the district's 2012-2013 Quincy Jones Award for Outstanding Musicianship.

Eighth grader **Jason Williams** was awarded the district's 2012-2013 Louis Armstrong Jazz Award for Excellence in Jazz Performance.

The Elementary Choir ended the school year with 35 fifth- and sixth-grade members. The choir participated in three concerts.

The Gurrie Middle School Choir ended the year with 25 singers. Gurrie Choir presented three evening concerts and performed in five school assemblies for their peers and for elementary students.