

Parents = Partners

Education notes from Dr. Laurie Heinz

Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 • December 2014

'Tis the Season

The holidays are a great time to relax and connect with friends and family. Having two weeks off also allows for extra time to enjoy a few good books! Research is clear that time spent reading is one of the best ways to continue to grow as a reader. Additionally, exploring different genres helps build background knowledge and keeps a healthy literacy diet with a balance of fiction and non-fiction. Over the break, consider arranging a visit for your child to our outstanding public libraries in Park Ridge and Niles to sample the rich adventures that reading has to offer!

For Your Children,

Dr. Laurie Heinz, Superintendent lhein@pd64.org 847-318-4300



A gingerbread doorway to Roosevelt School's Learning Resource Center made the entrance inviting and fun this month!



Standing-Up 4 Public Education

District 64 joined other Illinois districts to thank the seven extraordinary members of our School Board for standing up for public education. Seven Franklin School Cub Scouts presented certificates of appreciation to the Board when it met there during our Monday, November 17 meeting. Board Vice President Scott Zimmerman is congratulated by the scouts; also honored were: Anthony Borrelli, President; Vicki Lee, Secretary; Dan Collins; John Heyde; Bob Johnson; and, Dathan Paterno. Contact the Board via e-mail [through our website](#).

Update on our school calendar for 2015-16

District 64's Calendar Committee will be reviewing the results of its recently completed online survey of families and staff before making a recommendation regarding the 2015-16 calendar to the Board of Education for discussion at the upcoming December 15 meeting. As you know, District 207 is adjusting its calendar beginning in August 2015 to allow high school students to complete first semester exams before Winter Break. Thank you to all who participated in the survey, which provided information about your top priorities. We will continue to keep you informed about options presented for the Board's consideration. Our hope is for a calendar to be in place in early 2015, so that families and staff may plan ahead for the upcoming school year.

Parent University: expand your learning

We believe that when parents and schools learn together -- everyone learns more! This year, we are presenting a [series of evenings](#) tailor-made for parents and community members to extend their own learning. Many of the events will be held in advance of Board of Education meetings, to provide additional opportunities for parents and community members to stay for the meeting and learn more about District 64 initiatives and educational issues.



Internet Safety in the 21st Century:

Guiding our children toward good digital citizenship

Monday, December 15

Join us on Monday, December 15 from 6:30-7:30 p.m. at Jefferson School, 8200

Greendale, Niles, to talk about [“Internet Safety in the 21st Century: How to be a good Digital Citizen!”](#) Learn about the District’s Internet Safety curriculum and how to talk to your child about being safe on the Internet. We’ll “tour” some basic social networking sites, and point out the safety/privacy settings available to users and parents. This session will also provide guidance in monitoring your child’s personal social media activities and setting up expectations for your child about his/her Web presence. Bring your questions -- and share strategies and ideas to help your peers! This program is geared for parents of students in grades 3-8, and is presented by



District 64 Instructional Technology Coaches Beth Andert (Field) and Kara Pottinger (Emerson).

Save the Date! Monday, January 26

Exploring Google Apps for Education

The program will be held at 6:30 p.m. at Jefferson School; details to come soon!

Coming in early 2015! Parent Book Club on Emotionally Intelligent Parenting

“Emotionally Intelligent Parenting: How to Raise a Self-Disciplined, Responsible, Socially Skilled Child” by Elias, Tobias, and Friedlander will be the basis for parent discussion facilitated by District 64 staff over two evenings in late January-February. Plan on coming to one or both sessions to: learn how to communicate so your children will THINK; apply the five principles of emotional intelligence to successful parenting; address everyday parenting issues, such as self-control, homework, bedtimes, getting out of the house in the morning, car rides, dishonesty, social issues, and school situations; and, help your child develop independence and make better (emotionally intelligent) choices. Parents do not need to have attended the earlier Parent University program on this subject, which was made possible through an ELF grant. The book is available for purchase online as an inexpensive paperback or ebook. *Club details to come soon!*



School Closing Guidelines

District 64 coordinates decision-making with other Maine Township school districts. Superintendents of Districts 62, 63, 64 and 207 typically make contact the day before any severe weather is forecast, and then again in the early morning hours of the school day. More information about how we decide to close school is [available here](#).

When a decision is made to cancel school, District 64 uses an automated phone system to call parents and staff. **The phone call is typically made before 6:30 a.m. using the phone information connected with your child’s student record.** Please keep your phone contact information current by notifying the school office if your numbers change.

Here’s to a safe winter ahead!

Out & About in Our Schools



Carpenter School teacher Sue Douglass named "Classroom Hero"

Sue Douglass, a veteran third grade teacher at Carpenter, received the Symetra ["Heroes in the Classroom" award](#) during a surprise all-school assembly on December 3. She is one of only 16 educators selected for the 2014 Chicagoland area program that recognizes the passion and dedication of teachers; other co-sponsors are the Chicago Bears and Gallagher Benefit Services. At the assembly, Bears Chairman George McCaskey presented Mrs. Douglass with a customized jersey, commemorative football, and tickets to the December 4 Bears home game where she will be acknowledged during



Principal Balduf joins Mrs. Douglass with her delighted third graders!



Mrs. Douglass wears her new customized Bears jersey alongside owner McCaskey.

an on-field presentation.

Carpenter School also received a \$1,000 donation for instructional materials.

In nominating her for the award, Principal Brett Balduf noted her "positive and upbeat attitude" sustained over nearly 20 years as an excellent educator. He also noted the high impact instructional strategies she uses to apply education to real life, such as her famous "Douglass Stories" that link something her students are learning to a humorous and engaging lesson from her family life.

"Walk & Talk" visits spotlight teaching and learning

One of my main goals as a new Superintendent is to learn about our District through being present in our schools and the community. As I conducted my "Walk and Talks" this month, I enjoyed seeing:

★ **Carpenter** - students working on a science experiment that required them to build switches. Students were excited when their connections made the light turn on! Afterwards, they wrote about their learning in their Science Notebooks. In another classroom, students were creating live broadcasts as a culminating activity on an immigration unit.

★ **Field** - students participating in yoga during PE class. Students worked with partners to practice making letters. In Art, students created Day of the Dead projects. Projects truly captured the essence of the holiday.

★ **Franklin** - students busy using their Chromebooks to reinforce geography skills and check understanding of key vocabulary words. Students in specials were practicing vocabulary words with their Spanish teacher.

★ **Roosevelt** - (as pictured at right) students participating in an entire day of Veterans Day activities. It was a humbling and inspiring experience to be part of such a time-honored Roosevelt tradition. I also enjoyed watching groups of students working on reading during their literacy block. So many books - so little time!



★ **Washington** - (as pictured at right) second grade students enjoying an overview session with a docent from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in preparation for their field trip to the CSO.

★ **Emerson** - sixth graders working on cartouche name plates during their study of Egypt.

★ **Lincoln** - students in the Lincoln Broadcast Club interviewed me about the potential calendar changes for the 2015-16 school year. I was impressed with the level of preparation and knowledge the students demonstrated throughout my interview.

★ **Jefferson** - students engaging in circle time fun using SMART Board technology to reinforce number sense. The room was rocking with song and dance! Students in another classroom also showed independence working in their work stations.



Star Struck! Emerson's grade 7 and 8 Vocal Power students spent an incredible day at the Treehouse Records Recording Studio in Lakeview, reports teacher Terry Broeker. The owner, Emerson alumni Matt Gieser, and Sound Engineer, Lincoln alum Barrett Guzaldo, taught the students about the equipment used for analog recording. Each student then had an opportunity to wear a headset and sing into the microphone. The alumni connection made all the difference!



Technology Update: Student Email

As we continue to work towards creating a 21st Century Learning environment in our schools, student email is a valuable communication tool. Students at our two middle schools now will have an opportunity to be granted access to a District-issued student email account. The email system the District is deploying will be Gmail as part of the Google Apps for Education suite. This system is a domain-restricted email system for school districts. This means that Email messages from student accounts can only be sent within the d64.org /studentsd64.org domain and not outside of the District's network. The District is using several communication tools -- including Google Apps for Education, blogs, wikis, and Edmodo -- to promote collaboration among students and staff. Student email allows students to use the features of these resources more efficiently and effectively.

Musical all-stars perform

A dozen District 64 middle school students were [selected to perform](#) at two Illinois Music Educators Association (ILMEA) regional events: a District Festival and a Jazz Festival. These events are a tremendous opportunity for our top band and orchestra students to perform with talented students from other schools.



Teacher earns National Board Certification

District 64 is proud to announce that Franklin second grade teacher Natalie Schuetz has earned National Board Certification! This is a tremendous accomplishment and something we are very proud of

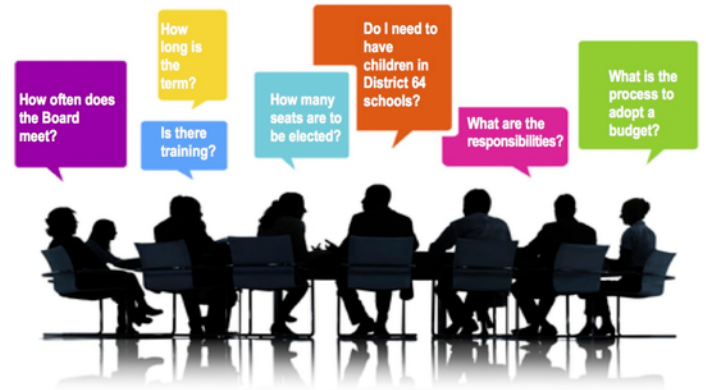
Mrs. Schuetz for pursuing. She joins Susan Glines, Emerson, Mike O'Malley, Field, and Linda Diekman, Roosevelt, in obtaining this advanced teaching credential. Similar to certification in fields such as medicine, National Board Certification is a rigorous, peer-reviewed process that ensures that Board-certified teachers have proven skills to advance student achievement. As part of this process, teachers must analyze their teaching context and students' needs, submit videos of their teaching, and provide student work samples that demonstrate growth and achievement. Dr. Lori Lopez, Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning, and I are looking into the possibility of starting a National Board Certification cohort group in District 64.

District Happenings

School Board candidates must file December 15-22

Nominating petitions due to Cook County Clerk

With the Board of Education elections ahead in April 2015, District 64 invites community members to consider contributing to your local public schools in this important way. District 64 voters will elect three, 4-year members and one, 2-year member. New this year, nominating petitions and other materials must be filed with the Cook County Clerk directly, not District 64. Find out more via our recent [“A-B-C’s of School Board Service” presentation](#) with links and filing tips, or on the District 64 website: [Board Election 2015 page](#).



Strategic Plan - Lend Us Your Voice

As you may recall, we are currently in the final year of our 5-year Strategic Plan. I am looking forward to partnering with staff and community members to set the District 64 Vision for 2020. We anticipate beginning work in early 2015.

The process for creating a long-range mission, vision, goals, strategies, and outcomes is called strategic planning. The plan focuses equally on the *what* (purpose, direction, goals) that is the responsibility of the steering committee to develop and the *how* (strategies and outcomes) that is the responsibility of District leaders to collaboratively develop. The purpose and primary value of strategic planning is its power to involve people in a process leading to new understandings and insights about what District 64 might confront in the future and how it should overcome such challenges.

The steps of our community-driven strategic planning process have been designed as a complete planning process. It identifies the major challenges the District will need to address over the next five years, what community and staff members identify as the most important skills and abilities students need to learn, and fiscal issues that will be a factor in reaching our desired goals. Based on identified priorities, strategic goals are developed. The strategic plan includes a strategy map that defines what strategies the District is going to use to achieve the mission, vision, goals, and outcomes; a balanced scorecard of leading and lagging measures or indicators to track progress; and finally, a deployment plan that specifies how the plan moves to action and is tracked throughout the five-year calendar.

Sound exciting and a bit daunting? It should! Creating a comprehensive road map is a massive undertaking, but one that will pay real dividends for years to come. Look for more information in coming weeks on opportunities to participate.



Lincoln Green Team offers new ReuseBooks recycling bin

Lincoln Middle School's student Green Team invites you to recycle your used books to keep old, worn out books out of landfills to **make our community greener!** Grade 7 Green Team members show how easy it is to use the new bin, located on the west side of the school (200 S. Lincoln Ave.), along Western Avenue near the parking lot. Books, workbooks, textbooks, CDs and DVDs in any condition are welcomed. The ReuseBooks organization will process and pay Lincoln's student Green Team for the donations; the team will use the funds to expand recycling in the lunchroom and the classrooms. The student team is excited to begin this new recycling initiative and invites everyone in the community to participate.

In other Green news: District 64 has been awarded a total of \$1,200 in grants for waste recycling and reduction initiatives at our schools from the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC).



New e-publication now available

In an email earlier this week, you should have received a link to view our brand new e-publication for District 64 – an annual [District 64 Financial Report](#) available exclusively online. Our new

report pulls together essential information about the District's financial health in one reader-friendly overview. It offers "at a glance" highlights for the previous year as well as the current budget, focusing primarily on our investments in student learning. In addition, it offers a review of revenues and expenses, and looks at the District's financial performance over time and projections for the future. Our vital partnerships with parents and Park Ridge-Niles community members also are highlighted. This e-report complements a broader Annual Report on the District's educational programs that will be published at the end of this school year. We hope parents and community members will find our first e-report helpful in staying updated about how local resources are being invested in our classrooms to support student learning. District 64 schools continue to make Park Ridge-Niles a great community for its residents!

Advisory Board channels input from local healthcare providers

Did you know that District 64 has a Medical Advisory Board that meets biannually? We find our advisory board to be of vital importance, because it affords District administrators, health personnel, and special education staff the opportunity to discuss relevant school and community health topics with local healthcare providers in various areas of practice. These forums help inform the development of sound District health policies and procedures. At our first meeting this year on November 19, we discussed communicable diseases, District health statistics, immunization requirements, standing orders for medications, and shared updates from the grade 5 Outdoor Education program and Wellness Council activities.

Facility Master Plan firm to be selected shortly

Over the last few weeks, a team of District and building administrators and two Board members participated in interviews with four talented architectural firms. The interviews went well and we have narrowed the finalists to FGM, BLDD, and Legat. These firms toured Roosevelt, Lincoln and Franklin to provide them with a brief view of our buildings. Based on the buildings they toured, they have been asked to submit a rendering of what the exterior of Roosevelt would look like with a secured entryway. The renderings will serve as part of our final selection process. At the December 15 regular Board meeting, we will ask for the authority to negotiate a contract with one preferred firm we expect to identify shortly.

Search for new business head is nearing end

District 64 is nearing the end of its search to select a new Chief School Business Official to replace Mrs. Becky Allard, who will be retiring in June. After a rigorous screening process, seven applicants were advanced for first round interviews from an original pool of 39. Two strong finalists emerged from round one interviews that set themselves apart from the pack. These finalists met with another interview team and participated in a third round of interviews with me this week. It is our hope to bring the final candidate to the Board of Education at our December meeting.



January 24 ELF Fund-Raiser

We hope to see you at the annual fund-raising event on Saturday, January 24 at Cafe La Cave. Our [Elementary Learning Foundation](#) has a tremendous evening planned and the proceeds will go right back into our schools to support innovative learning!

On the Horizon...

5 Essentials School Climate Survey coming in January

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) will again administer its Survey of Learning Conditions, called the Illinois 5 Essentials Survey (5E). The 5E survey provides school districts with detailed data on the inner

workings of their local education agency through asking questions in five leading areas for school improvement. District 64 previously participated in 2013. ISBE research has identified five essential components for school success:

- **Effective Leaders:** The principal works with teachers to implement a clear and strategic vision for school success.
- **Collaborative Teachers:** The staff is committed to the school, receives strong professional development, and works together to improve the school.
- **Involved Families:** The entire school staff builds strong relationships with families and communities to support learning.
- **Supportive Environment:** The school is safe and orderly. Teachers have high expectations for students. Students are supported by their teachers and peers.
- **Ambitious Instruction:** Classes are academically demanding and engage students by emphasizing the application of knowledge.

Staff, parents and middle school students will be asked to complete the survey. We anticipate that the survey window for parents will be open from January 20-30; parents will be sent the survey link.

Self-assessment study planned for February 3-5

District 64 is preparing to host a team from the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) to assist us in identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement aligned to the effective practices of the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) continuous improvement framework. The team that will visit District 64 will be composed of members of CEC districts and schools who have been involved in a system assessment in their own school or district. To prepare for the visit, District 64 now is conducting an organizational self-study and reflection of where we are in the implementation process of demonstrating use of the research-based effective practices. The self-study involves responding to key questions aligned to the effective practices and in a self-assessment of the implementation of those practices in every school and every classroom. In February, the CEC team will review the self-study and visit our schools to interview stakeholders and examine evidence provided in the self-study. An oral report is given following the visit followed by a written report that identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement aligned to the implementation of the research-based effective practices. Look for information from your school Principal in January about opportunities to give feedback to the team during its visit.

Register for kindergarten on February 3 & 5

District 64 is gathering the names of kindergarten/new students enrolling for the 2015-16 school year. Please encourage anyone you know who expects to enroll for next year to contact the school office, so they may receive the enrollment form and instructions about in-person registration.

Happy Holidays to all!

As a reminder, our schools will be closed for Winter Break December 22 - January 2.

*Thank you for your continued support of our amazing school district.
May you and your family have a lovely break.
Warmly, Dr. Laurie Heinz*