

Parents = Partners

Education notes from Dr. Laurie Heinz

Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 • February 2015

Valentine greetings to all

How delighted I am to share with you this wonderful mural (*shown below*) from Field School students and staff. It perfectly depicts who we are as a District -- that by making a personal commitment to working together -- we can achieve more for our students through this partnership.

In this effort, I am pleased to report that two important initiatives are now underway that will help our schools and District work together more effectively and with a clear focus on our goals. During the first week of February, we successfully hosted a 29-member team from the **Consortium for Educational Change (CEC)** on a three-day visit to our schools. And capping off that extremely busy week, we gathered together on Saturday for the launch of our **Strategic Planning Steering Committee** to begin work on developing a new five-year plan to help us develop our 2020 Vision. I thank all those parents and staff who so generously contributed their valuable time to participate in this critical work. *Please see a fuller description of these activities later in this newsletter.*

My valentine to District 64 parents and staff this year is one of sincere thanks and gratitude. With this willingness to put our hands and hearts together, our District has a bright future indeed.

For Your Children,

Dr. Laurie Heinz, Superintendent lheinz@d64.org 847-318-4300



Lincoln Middle School celebrates its "birthday" every February 12, the day of Abraham Lincoln's birth. The school builds up to the occasion with a week of spirit days, such as "Dress like Abe Day", and special homeroom

visits from the Lion mascot. It's great to see Lincoln students getting caught up in celebration of a school that's been serving the community for 87 years!

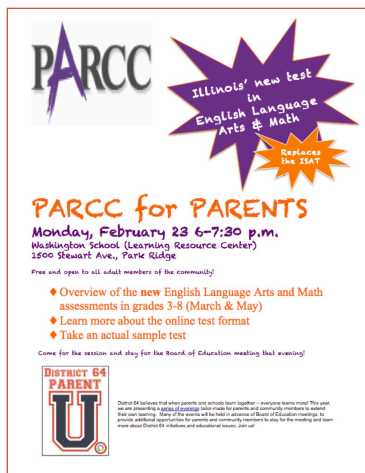


The Lincoln Lion visits Mr. Hammond and Mrs. Janicki's homeroom.



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.



PARCC for Parents

Monday, February 23

With the testing landscape for students changing across Illinois this spring as the state shifts from the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) to a new type of online assessments, called PARCC, District 64 invites parents and adult community members to a Parent University evening on Monday, February 23 to learn about this new environment. “PARCC for Parents” will be held from 6-7:30 p.m. at Washington School (Learning Resource Center), 1500 Stewart, Park Ridge. District 64 will present an overview of the new English Language Arts and Math assessments in grades 3-8, which will be given in March and May this year. Parents will learn more about the online test format, and will also have the opportunity to take an actual sample test.

It is open to all adult members of the community, and is timed so that you may stay to attend the Board of Education meeting that follows! ► **FURTHER OPPORTUNITY:** On Monday, March 2 at 7:00 p.m. at Washington School, 1500 Stewart, Park Ridge, Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning Lori Lopez will provide an overview of the PARCC assessment; parents will have the opportunity to participate in a sample test. The presentation will take place in advance of the scheduled school PTO meeting, however *parents from all schools are welcome to attend the PARCC presentation.*

Parent Book Club on Emotionally Intelligent Parenting

Tuesday, February 24

“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 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Washington School (Learning Resource Center), 1500 Stewart, Park Ridge. Plan on coming 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. The program will be facilitated by District 64 Curriculum Specialist Camille Derwin and Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning Lori Lopez.



Save the date: Monday, March 23 - Information Literacy

Library Information Specialists Dianne Olson (Emerson) and Denise Reeder (Lincoln) will present this program at Lincoln Middle School, 200 S. Lincoln, Park Ridge, as part of the Parent University. *Watch for further details to come!*

Out & About in Our Schools

Spelling Bee winner is first-ever repeat champion in battle of nerves vs. knowledge

Catherine Sernel, grade 6, Lincoln Middle School, captured the top spot in District 64's recent spelling bee, the first student to become a repeat winner. The championship word, "clementine," earned her a first place finish on the 22nd round. Catherine later moved on to area competition, finishing tied for 7th in the North Cook region. In the District 64 bee, Emerson Middle School grade 8 student Owen Mech finished second, while Lincoln's Zoe Berthold, grade 7, placed third. This year's bee also featured the introduction of oral vocabulary rounds. At every 5th round (rounds 5, 10, 15, and 20) participants had to select the correct definition of a given word. The pronouncer read a word aloud followed by a vocabulary question and two options (A) and (B) for the student to consider before choosing. Spelling bees were held at all seven schools in January, with the top three spellers from each school earning an invitation to the District competition held at Field. Overall, 268 students participated in the bees, which are offered as an extracurricular activity for students in grades 3-8. [Read more on our website.](#)



Catherine Sernel, Owen Mech and Zoe Berthold



The egg drop was one of five events at the Olympiad.

Science Olympiad's popularity soars!

Now in its 29th consecutive year, District 64's Science Olympiad stretched the ingenuity of 334 students in grades 3-5, up by 40% in just two years. This year's competition on February 7 – the biggest in recent memory – again included more girls (177) than boys (157). Working with volunteer parents as coaches, students organized into teams were busy for months preparing and practicing to meet the unique challenges that test their skills in science and technology in fun ways. At the Olympiad, students worked in teams representing their home elementary schools in five different events: aerodynamics, egg drop, mystery box, rubber band catapult, and structures. Each event is co-sponsored by District 64 and one of the elementary school PTO/As. [See gold, silver and bronze medal winners and a gallery of photos here.](#)

Institute Day activities focus on "best practices"

On Friday, February 6, all District 64 staff participated in professional development activities. Professional Development days are opportunities for teacher teams to learn more about "best practices" in their subject areas. For many teams, activities focused on the integration of technology to support student learning and on developing instructional strategies to support the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Other themes included differentiation, student engagement, and supporting struggling students with positive behavior choices.



Grades K-2 math teachers had an opportunity to work together to review pacing guides, and learn engaging and effective practices for instruction addressing the new math CCSS.

Highlights from my January “Walk & Talks”

Despite the unexpected challenges presented by last month’s severe weather, students were active participants in their learning. Here are my highlights:

❖ **Jefferson** - Students in a speech therapy session were diligently working on saying target sounds in short sentences. In another classroom, students were learning about dinosaurs.



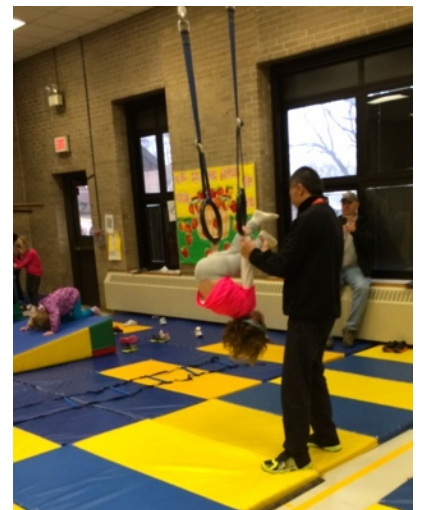
Lincoln students enjoyed the interactive presentation!

❖ **Emerson** - Emerson's 8th grade Wolverines team went on a field trip to Feed My Starving Children, as part of the civil behavior program. In a two-hour period, the team of students, teachers and parents bagged over 25,000 lunches, which will feed 70 children for an entire year!

❖ **Lincoln** - The Google Roadshow made a stop at Lincoln on January 23 for an interactive Internet safety presentation. Students had the chance to take part in demonstrations about thinking before you share online, staying positive online, and the importance of privacy settings. State Senator Dan Kotowski joined students in the "Protect Your Stuff" segment, focusing on strong passwords and security. We are thankful for an opportunity to hear from our friends at Google on such important digital citizenship lessons. Read more safety tips at the [Official Google Roadshow Site](#).

❖ **Carpenter** - Parents enjoyed visiting PE classes to see their students in action! Students demonstrated their skills rotating through multiple stations, including rings, balance beams and tumbling.

❖ **Field** - “Got Greatness? Field School does!” is a whole school initiative based on the Nurtured Heart approach to social emotional development. This year Field is recognizing and celebrating the "Qualities of Greatness" in its students.



Teacher Harley Tom assists a student on the rings during a parent observation day at Carpenter.



Field staff in their “Got Greatness?” T-shirts; the back of the shirt, of course, responds: “Field School does!”



Students created their own “Got Greatness” T-shirts, too!

❖ **Franklin** - Grade 3 students from Ms. Sutter’s class helped their grade 1 “book buddies” in Ms. Fulara’s room to create a Dr. Seuss-style A-B-C book for the entire class to enjoy.



Franklin reading buddies creating an A-B-C page.



❖ **Roosevelt** - (at left) Students in Ms. Kaplan's third grade created "floats" illustrating all aspects of their chosen books, such as plot, character and summary, and shared them with the class.

❖ **Washington** - (at right) 5th graders walked to the nearby Park Ridge Senior Center to attend a writing workshop with local author Becky Pratt on January 30.



TECH TALK: Chromebook home program to expand for grades 3-5

To ensure that all students have the tools for their learning at their disposal and to better support 21st century classrooms, all students in grades 3-5 will be bringing their Chromebooks to and from schools beginning in 2015-16. Principals and teachers are developing a plan to support students and families in this endeavor, moving students forward in their responsibility as digital citizens. Currently, 85% of students in grades 3-5 Districtwide are participating in the optional program this year. A required \$30 Chromebook Maintenance Fee has been approved for 2015-16 for all students in grades 3-8. A keyboarding curriculum also is being developed for implementation in the upcoming school year.



As part of District 64's 21st century classroom, teachers and students work with a variety of technology through the day, as shown here at Carpenter.

District Happenings

2015-16 school year calendar set

► *The school year has been shifted slightly to begin a few days earlier -- and end a few days earlier -- than in the past. This will help keep District 64 in closer alignment with the high schools.*

The Board of Education at the January 26 meeting adopted the 2015-16 school year calendar. The calendar was recommended by the District 64 Calendar Committee, based on a survey of families and staff this fall concerning alignment with the high schools. Here are the key dates:

- First Day of School for Students - Tuesday, August 18, 2015
- Thanksgiving Recess - Begin Monday, November 23, 2015 - Return Monday, November 30, 2015
- Winter Recess - Begin Monday, December 21, 2015 - Return Monday, January 4, 2016
- Spring Recess - Begin Friday, March 25, 2016 - Return Monday, April 4, 2016
- Last Day of School for Students - Thursday, June 2, 2016

A more detailed view of the calendar may be [seen on our website](#).



Health Services offers wealth of health tips

► *Measles update added*

District 64's Health Services department offers a wide range of information in its efforts to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for all students and staff. In addition to required health forms and contact information, you will also find current information on a wide range of communicable illnesses, as well as nutrition, fitness and safety advice. [Visit the website often to stay informed!](#)

5Essentials school climate survey still open

► *Please complete the survey soon - we are aiming for 75% participation*

If you have not already done so, please set aside just a few minutes to complete the [5 Essentials Survey \(5E\)](#) offered to all parents in Illinois. The 5E survey will provide our schools with helpful information on five areas that research has shown lead to successful schools: Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, Involved Families, Supportive Environment, and Ambitious Instruction. For the results to be meaningful, though, we will need a high rate of parent responses - so don't delay in sharing your thoughts.

More than 1,000 voices heard during CEC visit

The Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) conducted an Overview System Assessment in February. Thanks to all the parents, staff and students who participated in small group sessions. In all, the 29-member CEC team spoke to 1,000 stakeholders while conducting their external audit of how our District is doing in the key areas of learning, collaboration, and results. The CEC findings will be shared with the Board of Education and posted publicly to the website later this spring. These valuable insights also will be used to inform the Strategic Planning process.

Strategic Planning underway; outreach to stakeholders begins soon

► *Steering Committee will create District 64's 2020 Vision*

District 64 launched Vision 2020 Strategic Planning this month. Planning consultant Robert Ewy engaged our 39-member Strategic Planning



Stakeholders from throughout the community worked together at the kick-off meeting, under the direction of Robert Ewy (below, standing at right).

Steering Committee to focus on local, state, national and international trends in education. Based on its work, the committee is now developing a survey for all stakeholders to contribute their ideas and vision. The stakeholder survey will be available online and in paper form next week. The survey will ask participants to help inform the committee in four areas:

- What are the greatest challenges or issues District 64 will face over the next 5 years?
- What are the most important skills and abilities students must master to be prepared for a successful future?
- What do you use to evaluate the quality of education in District 64?
- What are the financial priorities that District 64 should focus on over the next 5 years?

Look for a survey link to be emailed soon!



Teachers Tina Gomez (Emerson), Annamarie Donato (Emerson) and Patty Mayer (Roosevelt)

ELF benefit raises \$25,000

Our Educational Learning Foundation Aloha Casino Night last month was a night of great food, fun, and friends – topped off by competitive mobile bidding for fantastic auction items! Teachers (above) and administrators helped staff the event, which drew 300 community members to Cafe La Cave. More than \$25,000 was raised to directly fund innovative grants that benefit our students and community.

I was proud to help ELF Board members officially receive a check that night from Whole Foods for the recent benefit shopping day!



On the Horizon. . .



Summer school registration opens Monday, March 2; register online this year!

Registration for District 64's popular "Worlds of Wonder" summer enrichment program will be conducted online this year, offering convenient 24/7 accessibility and immediate confirmation on enrollment.

Printed course brochures will be distributed with students on Friday, February 20, and will be available [on the District 64 website](#). Franklin School will be the home for students completing grades K-3, while students completing grades 4-7 will attend classes at Emerson Middle School. Two sessions will be offered: June 16-July 2 and July 6-22.

All families will re-verify residency for 2015-16 school year

The Board of Education at its February 9 meeting authorized the District to conduct re-verification of residency for all families -- currently enrolled as well as new students -- as a requirement for 2015-16. District 64 is finalizing plans for this process, which will be conducted this spring. Additional instructions will be provided in coming weeks on the needed documents and timeline.

Further calendar adjustment due to emergency days

Please note that both **Monday, March 9** and **Wednesday, June 10** will be regular days of student attendance. Both Records Planning Days that had been tentatively scheduled for teachers have been cancelled, due to the days used for severe weather.



Field School's Sofia Sclafani created the winning publicity poster for the show!

Third grade to visit Maine South for a fine arts day

On Friday, February 20, District 64's entire third grade will be enjoying a fine arts day at Maine South High School. Students will participate in four fine arts workshops in art, music, drama/tech, and broadcasting. They will also experience the thrill of a live theatrical performance of the children's book, *Pippi Longstocking*, performed by Maine South students. What an exciting collaboration between our districts!

Eighth graders set for a "POWER-ful" experience

Eighth grade students will gather after school from 3-9 p.m. at Emerson Middle School on Friday, February 27 for District 64's annual POWER workshop. The POWER experience is designed to develop leadership skills and promote healthy choices. From motivational speakers to first-hand advice on what to expect in high school from trained high school leaders, POWER brings together middle school youth, community members, middle school staff, and high school leaders to develop trusting relationships and provide a framework for understanding one's self. The program also strives to teach

young people the skills needed to develop healthy peer relationships, resist negative peer pressure, and promote responsible decision-making. This is a positive, educational and uplifting event. Every year, our 8th graders tell us that POWER was one of the best things about their middle school experience.

Have a fantastic February!

*For Your Children,
Dr. Laurie Heinz, Superintendent*

Remember to logon to Facebook to "like" our District and school fan pages!