

# Parents = Partners

## Education notes from Dr. Laurie Heinz

Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 • January 2015



### Jefferson preschool class wreath hooks Shedd Aquarium award

"We may all be different fish, but in this school we swim together" is the touching motto that reeled in top honors in the Shedd Aquarium's recent wreath-cycle contest. Whether they created a seahorse, goldfish, snapping turtle or other underwater creature, students in Mrs. Georgette Demarinis' class at Jefferson School are learning to treat each classmate with respect and kindness. For their award, students will enjoy a field trip to visit the fish in person, courtesy of the Shedd!



### Calendar for 2015-16

The Board of Education at its December 15 meeting considered a [draft calendar for 2015-16](#), which was recommended by the District's Calendar Committee based on a [survey of families and staff](#) concerning alignment with the high schools. The calendar is scheduled to be considered for final adoption by the Board on January 26.

## 2015 sets a brisk pace!

2015 is off to a brisk start - weather-wise of course, but more importantly because of the many initiatives getting underway in the next few weeks. Here is a brief overview (you'll find more details about each item later in this newsletter):

► This January, all parents (along with all staff and our middle school students) will have an opportunity to take the Illinois State Board of Education **"5Essentials" survey**. The survey seeks input on the five key factors that research has shown can set the stage for successful schools. We will be emailing you a link to the survey after the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday; please take time to share your thoughts.

► District 64 is conducting a **self-study through the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC)**. Parents are invited to participate in small group discussions when the external team visits our schools on Wednesday, February 4. Please contact your Principal to participate.

► Do you have 2020 vision? Consider volunteering to serve on the **Strategic Planning Committee** to develop a new five-year plan that will guide us to the next decade. The committee will be convened next month; [please email me](#) as soon as possible if you would like to be considered.

For Your Children,

Dr. Laurie Heinz, Superintendent [lhein@ed64.org](mailto:lhein@ed64.org) 847-318-4300

### Saturday, January 24 ELF Fundraiser

We hope to see you at the annual fundraiser on Saturday, January 24 at Cafe La Cave.

Our [Elementary Learning Foundation](#) has a fun evening planned and the proceeds will go right back into our schools to support innovative learning! Purchase tickets online by this Thursday, January 22, to avoid higher, at-the-door pricing.



## 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.



### Exploring Google Apps for Education

#### Monday, January 26

Join us on Monday, January 26 from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at Jefferson School, 8200 Greendale, Niles, to talk about "Google Apps for Education." Google Apps for Education have become an integral part of District 64's Learning Ecosystem over the last few years. Students have been given the opportunity to use this powerful productivity tool in their learning environments. In this Parent University session, parents will see an overview of different Google Apps that are being utilized in classrooms across the District and the world. Participants will see various student examples and gain a deeper understanding of what learning is like in the 21st Century classroom. They will also receive a primer on the suite of apps: Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms, and many more useful tools for teaching and learning. This program is presented by District 64 Instructional Technology Coaches Carrie Bellen (Franklin) and Amanda Pelsor (Carpenter). 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!



### Parent Book Club on Emotionally Intelligent Parenting

#### Monday, February 2 & Tuesday, February 24 (come to one or both)

"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 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at Washington School (Learning Resource Center), 1500 Stewart, Park Ridge. 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. Chapters 1-5 will be the focus the first evening, with chapters 6-9 the focus on the second night. 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.



**Logon to Facebook to "like" our District and school fan pages:**



District 64 Park Ridge-Niles  
Carpenter Elementary School, Park Ridge-Niles  
Field Elementary School, Park Ridge-Niles  
Franklin Elementary School, Park Ridge-Niles  
Roosevelt Elementary School, Park Ridge-Niles  
Washington Elementary School, Park Ridge-Niles  
Emerson Middle School, Park Ridge-Niles  
Lincoln Middle School, Park Ridge-Niles  
Jefferson School, Park Ridge-Niles



# Out & About in Our Schools

## Lincoln's PE Department captures Blue Ribbon Award

The Board of Education at its December 15 meeting congratulated Lincoln Middle School's Physical Education (PE) Department for achieving a Blue Ribbon Award for its exemplary physical education programs and commitment to state and national standards from the Illinois Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (IAHPERD). Lincoln will serve as a model of excellence and inspiration to others seeking to develop outstanding PE programs for the next five years. Lincoln received its first Blue Ribbon in 2009. Emerson Middle School's PE department received the award in 2013. We congratulate both these schools for their outstanding programs!



Principal Tony Murray joins PE teachers (L/R) Ron Cacini, Kristie Janicki, Bob Barker, Dale Haase, and Linna Cohen, along with IAHPERD representative Maureen Fournier to celebrate their award.

## December "Walk & Talks" highlight teaching and learning, along with holiday traditions

The month of December moved by so quickly with only three weeks of school before Winter Recess. My "Walk and Talks" brought me to many classrooms where I saw students deeply engaged in diverse projects, while also introducing me to some of our schools' holiday traditions. Here are my highlights:

- ❖ **Carpenter** - Carpenter's gym was transformed into a Science Museum! The students learned about 3D printing, building an arch, pulley power, structures building, Newton's cradle, and programmable robots to name just a few.
- ❖ **Field** - Kid-friendly learning targets were posted in classrooms to help ensure



Field students rocked the gym at their holiday sing!

students understood what they were expected to know and be able to do. During PE class, children were actively engaged in a tumbling unit where vocabulary was being reinforced through doing.

- ❖ **Franklin** - Second grade students were working on holiday books for their families. Children wrote, revised, edited and illustrated their own stories. Fact Power was in the air! *Xtra Math* fact practice was in full swing on Chromebooks before break.

- ❖ **Roosevelt** - (pictured at left) Student singers, pianists and string players performed individual preludes before a festive holiday sing. Such talent at RO!

- ❖ **Washington** - On the Friday before Winter Recess, there was a teacher swap where teachers rotated into different rooms to read to different classrooms. Staff and students enjoyed the chance to spend time in other classrooms and with other grade levels.

- ❖ **Emerson** - Emerson held their annual Holiday Assembly. The Symphonic Band performed holiday songs and was accompanied by Vocal Power; Interstate 56, their student band, also performed. The main focus



Carpenter's gym was transformed into a Science Museum!



of the assembly was on reinforcing Emerson's SOARS behavior matrix, which was done through a student video, teachers' performance of the *12 Days of SOARS*, and awarding a student with two Chicago Bulls tickets. The student's name was pulled from a jar filled with the names of all students who have received a SOARS ticket for demonstrating appropriate behaviors in school. The program ended with students from every country represented at Emerson wishing the school Holiday Greetings in their native language, while the Emerson chorus sang the Peace Song.

- ❖ **Lincoln** - Students were taking notes using their Chromebooks during their Ancient China unit. In math, students experienced a flipped lesson where they reviewed the lesson online at home and practiced their learning in the classroom while their teacher rotated and provided guidance and support.
- ❖ **Jefferson** - During integrated OT/PT, students were busy making play dough and forming letters and shapes with it. During choice time, students worked on letter identification and in or out activities to reinforce these concepts.

## MUSICAL NOTES

### Grant to fund master classes with professional musicians; visit from Australian band students

► I am pleased to announce that the Park Ridge Cultural Arts Council and the Illinois Arts Council have awarded us a \$1,000 grant. The funding will allow Park Ridge Civic Orchestra to send professional musicians to the schools to conduct mentoring sessions and master classes with the students in the Emerson and Lincoln bands and orchestras during their regular class times. We are grateful for this support!

► Last year, Emerson band students had the wonderful opportunity to work with an Australian composer, Jodie Blackshaw. Because the experience was so positive, Ms. Blackshaw recommended Emerson's Concert and Cadet bands to work with the Eltham High School Symphonic Band from Australia, who are touring throughout the United States. On December 16, our band students had a wonderful learning opportunity by playing with this band. The students listened to and rehearsed with these exceptional musicians, making it "an inspirational musical and cultural experience," according to teacher Jamie Hestad. As a token of gratitude for visiting Emerson, the Eltham band gave Emerson a print of a piece of artwork created by a student at their school. We are very thankful to have had this wonderful event.



Notice the giant instrument at the left? It's a contrabass clarinet played by the Australian students!



### "Celebrity" baggers at ELF Whole Foods Benefit Day

Principals Jim Morrison (Emerson), Dan Walsh (Franklin) and Brett Baldur (Carpenter) joined me in helping to bag shoppers' purchases after school at a special 5% benefit day at Whole Foods in Park Ridge on January 13. Although arranged with very short notice, the day was hugely successful and surpassed the store's own projections -- ELF will be receiving a donation of \$3,321.95! Thanks to everyone who was able to turn their "to do" grocery lists into "can do" dollars to support innovative learning. Thank you, Whole Foods, for making this opportunity available to ELF!

### TECH TALK: "Hour of Code" challenges students

Students across District 64 had an opportunity to join with millions of other students world-wide to participate in "Hour of Code" optional activities in December. Coding is defined as writing instructions for devices, applications and programs to carry out tasks for you. Creating an app, game or website are all made possible by coding. Coding is a critical thinking opportunity that has direct connection to math, science, and ELA standards. The District's implementation of a 1:1 Chromebook initiative in grades 3-8 this year meant that all students had a device to access the Internet and



explore the coding practice offered by the District's Instructional Technology Coaches at each building.

For example, at Lincoln (*pictured at right*), students worked on coding projects during lunch recess or during an after school session. They were provided access to a variety of websites to learn either block or script coding. Options were offered for beginner, intermediate and challenge levels, so all students could enjoy an opportunity to work at a level they felt comfortable with.



## New PARCC assessments will replace ISATs on spring calendar

Starting this school year, all Illinois public schools will administer new assessments created through the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). These online assessments are fully aligned to the new Common Core Standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math and are designed to make sure each student is not only prepared for the next grade level, but also on track for postsecondary success. The PARCC system places a greater emphasis on academic rigor, critical thinking, problem solving and college and career readiness for all students than did our previous ISAT assessment. The PARCC assessments replace both the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) for students in grades 3 - 8 and the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) at the high school level. Students in grades 3-8 will take the PARCC in both ELA and math.

Students will participate in two types of PARCC assessments this spring -- Performance-Based Assessments and End-of-Year Assessments:

- The **Performance-Based Assessments** will be administered in March. For these assessments, students will apply their knowledge to a complex problem and produce a product. In ELA, students will complete a research simulation task and a task focused on analyzing literature. In Math, students will be asked to solve problems involving the key knowledge and skills for their grade level.
- The **End-of-Year Assessments** will be administered in May. The results will be combined with the Performance-Based Assessment results to produce a student's summative assessment score. The End-of-Year Assessments will focus on reading and comprehending complex texts in ELA/Literacy. In Math, the End-of-Year Assessments will focus on demonstrating conceptual understanding of the grade-level standards.

Results from the combined assessments will be mailed home once results have been released from PARCC. While all Illinois schools are required to take the PARCC assessment, there is a level of uncertainty regarding the baseline assessment results. Each year that our students take the assessment, we will have a more complete picture of achievement and growth.

► **SAVE THE DATE:** On Monday, March 2 at 7:00 p.m. at Washington School, 1500 Stewart, Park Ridge, Dr. Lori Lopez, Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning, will provide an overview of the PARCC assessment and parents will have the opportunity to participate in a sample test. The presentation will take place in advance of the scheduled PTO meeting, however **parents from all schools are welcome to attend the PARCC presentation.** Additional presentations will be planned for this spring.



### CONGRATULATIONS!

Franklin second grade teacher Natalie Schuetz (*right*) received this charming poster from her proud students along with congratulations from Board of Education members during the December 15 meeting. Mrs. Schuetz was officially recognized for earning 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.

# District Happenings

## 5Essentials school climate survey: look for your email link next week!

► *District 64 encourages all parents to complete the survey beginning January 20 through January 30; parents will be sent the survey link via email.*



This month, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) will begin administering its 5 Essentials Survey (5E). District 64 parents, staff, and our middle school students will be asked to complete the survey. You may be familiar with the survey, as District 64 previously participated in 2013. The 5E survey provides school districts with detailed data on the inner workings of their schools by asking questions in five leading areas for school improvement. These are the five “essentials” ISBE research has identified as key components for school success: *Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, Involved Families, Supportive Environment*, and *Ambitious Instruction*.

## Self-assessment team will talk with parents, staff, students on Wednesday, February 4 at all schools

► *Look for information from your school Principal about opportunities to give feedback to the team during its visit to your school on Wednesday, February 4.*

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 is comprised of members of CEC districts and schools who have been involved in a system assessment in their own school or district. The visit will be conducted February 3-5, with Wednesday dedicated to visits of all eight schools!

To prepare for this visit, District 64 has conducted 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 involved responding to key questions aligned to the effective practices and 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 at the end of the visit, with a written report following soon thereafter to identify the strengths and opportunities for improvement aligned to the implementation of the research-based effective practices. Our Strategic Planning Committee will directly benefit from this report, too. *I encourage you to take this unique opportunity to meet with the CEC team on their visit to your school!*

## Do you have 2020 vision?

### Consider volunteering for the Strategic Planning Committee

► *If you would like to be considered to serve on the committee, [please email me](#) as soon as possible but no later than Tuesday, January 20.*

With the conclusion of our current five-year Strategic Plan, District 64 is beginning work on a plan that will serve as a new roadmap to District 64's vision for 2020! District 64 is committed to using a community-driven strategic planning process, which will be guided by a Strategic Planning Committee. We are asking all parents to consider volunteering your name for consideration to be appointed to this important planning group.

The committee's main purpose will be to identify the most important challenges District 64 will need to address and how the District might go about planning for those challenges. The committee will be reviewing the results of the system assessment in its work, which will be guided by a highly experienced, outside facilitator. The group will meet together four times and also will have some homework: Saturday, February 7 from 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon; Thursday, March 26 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.; Thursday, April 16 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.; and

Thursday, May 21 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. District 64 is seeking a wide range of community stakeholders to serve on the planning committee. If selected to serve, committee members must be available to attend all four meetings.

The administrative team will work with me to assemble a diverse Strategic Planning Committee from the names of willing volunteers from our schools and community. We will have the difficult job of balancing the membership of the group to ensure a wide representation of stakeholders. Unfortunately, all who volunteer will not be selected to participate on the planning committee. However, all stakeholders will have several opportunities to contribute their ideas and vision through completing a survey or participating in a focus group. Thank you for considering this opportunity to serve District 64!

## Here's an easy way to stay "briefed" on Board of Education news

Park Ridge - Niles School District 64

## Board Briefs

District 64 prepares a brief summary of the key actions taken following each Board of Education meeting; [read the December 15 Board Briefs here](#). You can get these handy summaries emailed to you by [subscribing to the District 64 eNews](#). For those wanting more depth, all the Board meetings are recorded with the videos available via our website about 48 hours later. Every video is time-marked according to the agenda, so you can move exactly to any item you are interested in hearing more about. Visit the [Board of Education Meetings page](#) to select the meeting you'd like to view.

### New business chief named effective July 1



The Board of Education on December 15 approved the appointment of Luann Kolstad as Chief School Business Official (CSBO) effective July 1. Ms. Kolstad will replace Becky Allard, who is retiring from District 64. She was selected during a rigorous screening process, which began with a pool of 39 candidates. We believe Ms. Kolstad is clearly dedicated to channeling resources to provide the programs and services children need, while being both vigilant and creative in containing costs in other areas. Her track record also shows she understands how important it is to build relationships, work as a team, and communicate regularly about finances to all members of the community, which are attributes that we value highly in District 64 and will be emphasizing even more in future years. Ms. Kolstad is in her fifth year as Chief School Business Official (CSBO) of Prospect Heights School District 23. [Read more about her appointment.](#)

## On the Horizon...

### Kindergarten/new student registration is February 3 and 5

In person registration of kindergarten/new students will be conducted at the elementary schools on Tuesday, February 3 and Thursday, February 5 (all schools except Carpenter) from 4-7 p.m. Please encourage anyone you know who expects to enroll for next year to contact the school office immediately, so they may receive the enrollment form and instructions about in-person registration. Middle school transfer students should contact the school office to make an appointment. Further information is available on the [Registration page](#).



### Summer school moves to Franklin and Emerson in 2015

District 64's popular "Worlds of Wonder" summer enrichment program will be moving north this year! 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. Look for registration information next month.

## Calendar adjustment due to emergency days

*Just a reminder.....* Please note that **Monday, March 9** will be a regular day of student attendance. The Records Planning Day that had been tentatively scheduled for teachers has been cancelled, due to the days used earlier this month during the extreme cold weather.

Best wishes for a happy, healthy 2015!

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