

Parents = Partners

Education notes from Dr. Laurie Heinz

Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 • March 2015

Springing ahead...to our future

Could it be that spring is trying to finally make an appearance? I certainly hope so after the winter we have had! Here are some of the ways we are “springing ahead” in planning for the District’s future this month.

Got Strategic Plan? We do! Our Strategic Planning Steering Committee will be meeting again this month to review the 500+ (and counting!) survey results already received. If you have already completed your survey - many thanks! If not, what are you waiting for? We want to hear from you. The survey is brief - only four questions. Please share your valuable input with us so we can develop a strong and collaborative vision for 2020. [Follow this link to complete it now.](#)

Building on your input, the committee will be developing the plan. Come for a preview of the working draft with our strategic planning consultant Bob Ewy on Wednesday, April 15 at Emerson Middle School. Select the session that meets your schedule: 4:30 - 5:30 p.m. or 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

As you may recall, we have contracted with FGM Architects to conduct both an Illinois School Code requirement, called the 10-year Life-Safety Study, as well as prepare a new Master Facility Plan to address future needs. We invite your participation in helping us learn what you hope to see in your schools. Look for opportunities to be announced later this spring by your school principal.

Finally, I wanted to report that our students in grades 3-8 have been engaged this week in the mandatory Performance-Based Assessments (PBA) portion of the new PARCC tests. Students and teachers have done extremely well in rising to the challenges of the new format. My sincere thanks to all our families for sending your children to school rested, nourished...and with a fully charged Chromebook each day. As my newsletter says, thank you for being our partners in creating a successful environment for students to learn and thrive!

For Your Children,

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



Read Across America Day 2015

Did you know Dr. Seuss would have been 111 years old on March 2?

In honor of one of my favorite early literacy development authors, I had the absolute pleasure of reading to Ms. Breen's first graders at Roosevelt School this year.



School Board Candidate Forum: Monday, March 16 - 7:30 p.m. at Roosevelt School

District 64 residents will have an opportunity to cast their votes on Tuesday, April 7 for four open seats on our Board of Education. To learn more about the candidates, District 64 voters are invited to attend a public forum on Monday, March 16 from 7:30-9 p.m. at Roosevelt School (auditorium), 1001 S. Fairview, Park Ridge. This event is sponsored by the PTO/As, District 64 Elementary Learning Foundation, and the Park Ridge Education Association. Four candidates are running for three, 4-year terms seats, and one candidate is running unopposed for a 2-year term. Read more: [Board Election 2015 website.](#)

Remember to vote on Tuesday, April 7

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.

“I read it on the Internet, so it must be true!”

A Parent’s Guide to Information Literacy

Monday, March 23

With a blizzard of information available to students from a variety of online sources, parents are more likely than ever to hear their children say: *“I read it on the Internet, so it must be true!”* That’s why District 64 is offering a [parents’ guide to information literacy](#) that will help them give their children an “educational edge” at a Monday, March 23 Parent University session. The program will be held from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at Lincoln Middle School (Learning Resource Center), 200 S. Lincoln, Park Ridge.



Designed as an interactive workshop, the program will help parents learn: ► how to guide their student to discover if an information source is reliable; ► how to evaluate the credentials of the information provider; ► how to implement better search strategies; and, ► why we need to practice media literacy. District 64 believes these are critical skills for helping children grow into becoming responsible, informed and safe digital citizens. District 64 middle school Library Information Specialists Denise Reeder (Lincoln) and Dianne Olson (Emerson) will facilitate the program, which is free and open to all adult members of the community. Stay to attend the Board of Education meeting that follows at 7:30 p.m., too,



By popular demand: “The Organized Child - Part 2” **Thursday, April 9**



If your child needs to create a healthy study space, develop a study plan to break down assignments, or learn methods for test preparation, don’t miss this opportunity to learn even more about how to help your child succeed. Presented by the Lincoln Middle School PTO, [“The Organized Child - Part 2”](#) will be held on Thursday, April 9 from 7-8:30 p.m. at Lincoln Middle School (Gym), 200 S. Lincoln, Park Ridge. Speaker Dr. Georgia Bozeday, Director of Educational Services at the Rush NeuroBehavioral Center, returns to review some of the basics from her November 2014 presentation (Home Study Environment, Materials Management, and Using a Planner) and then will introduce two topics not

included in the first presentation but that have easy applicability at home: test preparation strategies and strategies for organizing tasks. Plenty of time will be devoted to questions and discussion throughout this lively and worthwhile evening. Don’t miss it!

Save these dates:

Monday, April 27 “Tech-cess” and the future/Chromebook 101 - Carpenter School

Monday, May 18 Preventing the “Summer Slide” - Emerson Middle School

Watch for further details to come!



“PARCC for Parents”

Last month’s Parent University attracted more than 75 parents to Washington School’s LRC for an [overview of the new PARCC assessments](#) in English Language Arts and Math for grades 3-8 that have replaced the ISATs. Parents also learned more about the online test format and had the opportunity to take an actual sample test on Chromebooks. The program was led by Dr. Lori Lopez, Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning.

Out & About in Our Schools

“High voltage” POWER event inspires 8th graders



T-shirts reinforce for students:
“YOU have the POWER to make your own decisions!”

More than 400 8th graders from our two middle schools joined together at Emerson after school on Friday, February 27 for District 64’s annual POWER workshop. Two inspiring motivational speakers encouraged the young teens to “live their best life ever.” Trained high school leaders met with small groups of students for collaboration and questioning, helping build the skills to develop healthy peer relationships, resist negative peer pressure, and promote responsible decision-making as they grow up. A fun, exciting slideshow capped off this positive, educational and uplifting event.



Every year, students tell us POWER was one of the best experiences of middle school!

Franklin emerges as “Battle of the Books” winner for 2014-15

Victory was very sweet for Franklin School, as it claimed first place this month after a 20-year effort to bring home the top prize in the annual “Battle of the Books” program sponsored by the Park Ridge Public Library.



Congratulations to Franklin’s victorious team, coached by Ms. Andrea Hetzke and Ms. Karin Lennon, and to the teams at Carpenter and Field schools that finished 2nd and 3rd!

Students in grades 4 and 5 formed in teams to represent their schools, reading as many of the 60 books on the “Battle” list as possible to prepare for weekly round-robin meets among the eight schools participating during the two-month competition. The teams with the highest cumulative scores from the meets held in January and February won the battle! The book list is compiled by the Library to represent a wide range of reading interests and abilities. Students can attend a “Battle Boot Camp” in the summer, and work with coaches (a District 64 Library Information Specialist, teacher/staff or parent) to prepare for the meets!

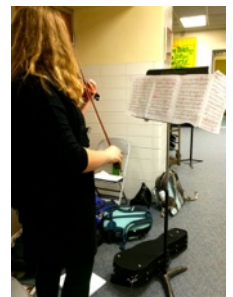
MUSICAL NOTES:

► Solo/ensemble recitals boost confidence and skills

Carrying on a proud, decades-long musical tradition in District 64, more than 250 student musicians participated in solo and ensemble performances on February 26 (band) and March 3 (string) at Lincoln Middle School. Top-level students are encouraged to perform a solo or participate in a small ensemble at a recital for family, friends, and an outside musician/educator, who offers specific verbal and written comments for musical improvement. Medals for gold and silver achievement are awarded. In addition to developing the skill of delivering your best performance when all eyes are on you, students also learn to take responsibility to make the music come alive, which ultimately benefits the entire band or orchestra, according to Brian Jacobi, curriculum specialist for Instrumental Music. *Bravo students and teachers!*

► Park Ridge Civic Orchestra conducts workshop

Orchestra students are looking forward to a two-hour, intensive workshop later this month led by conductor Victor Muenzer, Music Director of the Park Ridge Civic Orchestra. The workshop will feature in-depth rehearsals of both classical and popular repertoire, including Haydn’s Symphony No. 50 (finale); Silva’s The Code; and an orchestral version of Taylor Swift’s Shake it Off! Students from Emerson and Lincoln will gather together to take advantage of this unusual opportunity.



A student runs through her music one more time before stepping in front of her eager audience!

CURRICULUM CORNER: Next Generation Science Standards inspire grades K-8 curriculum review

District 64 has initiated a review of its science curriculum in response to the adoption of the [Next Generation Science Standards \(NGSS\)](#) in Illinois last year. The K-5 Science Curriculum Review Committee is undertaking a two-year review, which ultimately will lead to the adoption of a Next Generation Science Curriculum for students in grades K-8. In addition to curriculum and instruction in inquiry science, the committee will study best assessment practices as well as models of staff development for classroom teachers.

Here are the key ways the new standards differ from the past:



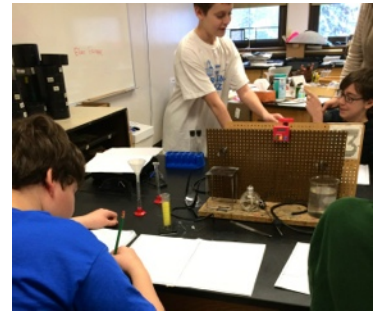
♦ Every Next Generation Science Standard has three dimensions: disciplinary core ideas (content), scientific and engineering practices, and cross-cutting concepts (e.g., patterns, causes and effect, systems and system models).

♦ Currently, most state and district standards separate these dimensions for both instruction and assessment. Integrating rigorous content and application as presented in the NGSS, however, reflects how science and engineering are actually practiced in the real world.

♦ Science concepts build coherently across grades K-12, with students exploring concepts with increasing depth as they move from grade to grade.

♦ Engineering design is elevated to the same level as scientific inquiry in instruction at all grade levels.

We look forward to sharing more about these innovative changes ahead for our students.



Lincoln students in Mr. Hulting's 8th grade science class enter data during the "sludge" test.

February "Walk & Talks" - 100 days & counting!

My visits to schools this month brought me into contact with students deeply invested in their learning, as we passed the official 100-day mark in our school year! Here are some of the highlights:

❖ **Jefferson** - Even our very youngest students had an amazing opportunity to participate in a service learning project by making "Safe & Sound" bags to donate to children being assisted through the WINGS shelter. Students collected toiletries, a stuffed animal, coloring book/crayons, and a book for each bag; each classroom also made a knotted blanket for every child. Over several weeks, classroom activities enriched student learning through counting, early math concepts of more versus less, graphing, sorting, describing object functions, and identifying what was missing. Students expanded their social emotional learning by focusing on the concepts of helping people in need, ways to help each other, and



Jefferson students and Principal Leslye Lapping (*right*) proudly displayed their "Safe & Sound" bags. Families joined in at Winter Night Out to help students decorate them with handprints before a WINGS representative (*left*) accepted the donation earlier this month.



As a culminating activity in 8th grade FACS, Emerson students make pizza and invite members of the faculty to dine with them. The pizza was delicious!

how we feel when we help other people. Helping others was the theme of the storybooks teachers read at circle and library times, too.

❖ **Emerson** - In Ms. Baty's class (*right*), students used their Chromebooks and worked with partners to research the solar system. Students in Ms. Navez's class created technology presentations to talks to classmates about books they enjoyed reading independently.



Assistant Principal Tim Benka reviews students' research.

❖ **Lincoln** - Students were improving their proficiency in music at Ms. Nardi's keyboarding class. Science was on the mind of 8th graders immersed in the sludge test (*see a photo with the science curriculum news above*).



Carpenter kindergartners in Ms. Hoffman's class celebrate their first 100 days of school!

❖ **Carpenter** - The Student Council under the sponsorship of Ms. Smee organized a drive to support a local community organization. Students raised \$350 for Harbour, which provides shelter and transitional housing for homeless youth.

❖ **Field** - Students were working on problem solving in math and identifying facts they know, making sure they had a clear understanding of what they needed to find out and ensuring they knew how to develop a plan to solve the problem. Students in Mrs. Chalberg's class were busy writing about a special day.

❖ **Franklin** - Students in Mrs. Schuetz's 2nd grade class are delighted when it's their turn for their class pet, a 3-foot-tall teddy bear named Mr. Brownie, to visit for a weekend. Students take photos and add to an online journal about his adventures! Brownie made weekend visits home with Assistant Principal Lech and with Principal Walsh recently, too.

❖ **Roosevelt** - Coding Club has more than 80 students enrolled in two sections for boys and one for girls! The students are looking forward to visiting Google's offices in downtown Chicago on a field trip next month to see the professional world of working with computers.

❖ **Washington** - A visit in early March from author Amy Krouse Rosenthal helped inspire K-5 students' own love of words and the clever word play she incorporates in her popular books. Students also enjoyed getting her autograph!



Keyboarders practice their skills at Lincoln.



Sponsored by Instructional Technology Coach Caroline Schaab, the lunch time Coding Club is open to Roosevelt's 3rd-5th graders.

District Happenings

Students' art creations showcased at Library exhibit

► March is Youth Art Month in Illinois

From bright-eyed ceramic owls and colorful paintings of endangered species to delicate relief prints, pen and ink drawings and intricate weaving, [artworks created by 24 students](#) from District 64 are now on display at the Park Ridge Public Library in celebration of Youth Art Month in March. The exhibit showcases students' creativity in using a broad spectrum of materials and tools in producing their art, and illustrates how students' skills expand as they advance through the art curriculum. District 64 art teachers selected student works in grades 1-8 that best captured the creative challenge presented in each project. Sponsored by the Illinois Art Education Association (IAEA), Youth Art Month showcases the growth of students' creativity and visual communication skills through their original art. We thank the Library for its support of our young artists!



5Essentials school climate survey deadline extended to Friday, March 20

Offered to all parents across Illinois, please take a few minutes to complete the [5 Essentials Survey \(5E\)](#) if you have not already done so. The higher the rate of parent responses, the more meaningful the information will be about the five "essential" areas that research has shown lead to successful schools: effective leaders, collaborative teachers, involved families, a supportive environment, and ambitious instruction. We encourage you to participate!



Pippi twins!

District 64 third grade students got into the spirit of their recent visit to Maine South High School for a fine arts day, which included a live theatrical performance of the children's book, *Pippi Longstocking*. The lead student actress (*right*) greets a Washington student look-alike!

On the Horizon...

CEC audit findings to be shared this month

► Podcasts will be available on key focus areas

As you know, District 64 engaged the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement within District 64 through conducting an audit. This District-level process -- called a "System Overview Assessment" -- offers us an opportunity to benchmark ourselves against effective practices of other high performing districts in the areas of learning, collaboration and results. Special thanks to the almost 1,000 parents, staff and students who participated in small group sessions with the visiting team during their work here last month. The CEC findings will be shared with the Board of Education on March 23 and a series of podcasts are now being prepared to review the findings in each area. The results will immediately inform the work of our Strategic Plan Steering Committee, and will inspire many conversations going forward as the District focuses on continuous improvement.



Emerson students learn production skills at the digital media lab funded by a grant from the Elementary Learning Foundation. The lab was used recently to tape a series of podcasts on the CEC audit findings.

April is Healthy Living Month

► Bike helmet sale returns on April 22

District 64's Traffic Safety Committee will be co-sponsoring -- along with Advocate Lutheran General Hospital Trauma Services -- a [drop-in bike helmet sale and fitting](#) on Wednesday, April 22 from 4:00-6:30 p.m. at Carpenter School. Toddler, youth and adult sizes are \$11 per helmet, first come-first served. Trauma Services staff will custom-fit the new helmet to each child or adult. *As a reminder, District 64 policy requires students to wear helmets while riding and/or using bicycles, roller blades, scooters, skate boards and similar devices while going from home to school, while on school property, and while going from school to their first intended point of destination.* This is an easy way to protect all the riders in your family!

► Weekly activities at schools and in the community

Healthy Living Month is divided into four weekly themes, with lots of interesting activities and events planned at our schools and in the community. Here's the line-up for 2015:

★ Health and Nutrition Week: Tuesday, April 7 - Saturday, April 11

★ Neat to Use Your Feet Week: Monday, April 13 - Friday, April 17

★ Go Green Week: Monday, April 20 - Friday, April 24 (Earth Day April 22)

★ Screen-Free Week: Monday, April 27 - Friday, May 1



Look for the schedule in the March 26 school newsletters.

Re-verify residency for 2015-16 school year

District 64 is finalizing plans to conduct re-verification of residency for all families -- currently enrolled as well as new students -- as a requirement for attendance in the 2015-16 school year. The process will be conducted in April-May, with complete instructions about needed documents and a timeline announced after spring recess.



Donning a Hawaiian-themed tie for the Elementary Learning Foundation's Aloha Casino fundraiser in January, Mayor Schmidt was welcomed by ELF Chairman Carolyn Sitkiewicz.

Late Mayor was a friend of District 64

The untimely passing of Park Ridge Mayor David Schmidt means the loss of one of our strong supporters. Whether he was attending the recent Elementary Learning Foundation benefit (above), visiting classrooms to share his insights about community government, or inviting student musicians to City Council meetings (below), the Mayor was passionate about the importance of supporting quality schools in our community.



At the Mayor's invitation, Lincoln's Jazz Band brought the holiday spirit to the City Council in December!

Summer school resident priority tuition ends Friday, April 17

Online registration for District 64's popular "Worlds of Wonder" summer enrichment program is continuing, with priority given to any child who resides within District 64 and who enrolls on or before Friday, April 17. The tuition through April 17 is \$105 per class for one session; it will rise to \$125 thereafter. Course information and the registration link is 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 are offered: June 16-July 2 and July 6-22.



Search is underway for new Jefferson School Principal

District 64 has launched a search to find a new principal for Jefferson School to replace Leslye Lapping, who will be retiring effective June 30. During her five years as Principal, Ms. Lapping oversaw programs for our youngest special needs students as well as our extended day kindergarten. She also was instrumental in the transition of after school child care to the Park District's new Beyond the Bell program at the elementary schools, and oversaw the creation of a District 64 Early Childhood Diagnostic Team when the Maine Township Special Education Program (MTSEP) was dissolved. The District is screening more than 40 applications received for the post, with interviews to begin later this month. We hope to bring a highly qualified candidate to the Board for approval in April.

Have a safe & pleasant spring recess!

Remember, we will be in school on Friday, March 27 and will return to school on Tuesday, April 7.

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

Logon to Facebook to "like" our District and school fan pages!