

Parents = Partners

Education notes from Dr. Laurie Heinz

Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 • November 2014



Homecoming for Staff was held on October 30. More than 50 retired staff members gathered over a self-funded breakfast at Emerson Middle School and enjoyed a musical treat from the Jazz Band under the direction of teacher Eric Bachmann. It was a great way to learn some of District 64's rich history and traditions from those who helped create it. Washington School Principal Stephanie Daly (left) joined me in greeting two Washington teachers sharing a staff photo from the 60's!

Attention Drivers: School Bus Safety Laws

Park Ridge and Niles Police remind all drivers:

If the STOP sign is extended from the side of the bus, STOP.

The sign indicates that students are getting on or off the bus and may be crossing the street. Police will ticket drivers who do not obey the sign. **We need your help to keep all kids safe as they load and unload buses.**

What do teachers do on Institute Day?

Although students will be enjoying time at home on Tuesday, November 4, our teachers will be busy at school on Institute Day learning new techniques and skills to continue their development as professional educators.

Re-designing learning in our 1:1 environment will be an overarching goal of the day for all staff. Meeting with colleagues in grade-level or subject area groups, teachers will be developing ways to apply technology to support differentiation of instruction and to help students develop the 4 C's of communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.

Another important focus will be our math curriculum. District 64 is in the second year of implementing a redesigned math curriculum based on Common Core State Standards and deploying corresponding new instructional materials at all grades. Middle school math teachers and our grades K-5 teachers will be thoroughly reviewing pacing guides developed by colleagues this summer, and focusing on differentiation and other best practices. Other teachers will be collaborating by grade level/subject areas to expand their knowledge and skills in targeted workshops.

Institute Day will be a very busy and productive day for our teachers!

For Your Children,

Dr. Laurie Heinz, Superintendent

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Keeping an eye on Senate Bill 16

District 64 is closely monitoring action in Springfield in an effort to shift funding from wealthier school districts to others with fewer local property tax resources supporting their schools. **IF** this legislation were to pass, District 64 is estimated to lose about \$2.3 million each year, which translates to 3/4 of our state funding. SB16 passed the state Senate in May. The bill has been under review by the state House; a vote was expected to occur after the November election, but is now not expected to happen in either the veto or lame-duck sessions. We are not sure if it will appear in the spring session, either. Since the political landscape continues to shift, I have asked Caryn Valadez from ED-RED to brief us at the November 17 Board of Education meeting. Please consider joining us for an informative update about this potentially critical issue.

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.



The Organized Child: Building Executive Functions

Tuesday, November 11

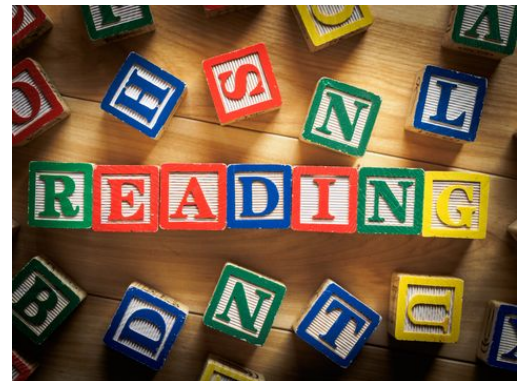
If homework is creating family stress, time management is a challenge for your student, or organization issues are getting in the way of your child being successful, then devoting 90 minutes to this program is a worthwhile investment for you. Funded by a grant from our Elementary Learning Foundation, [“The Organized Child”](#) will be held on Tuesday, November 11 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, will share current research from neuroscience to show the challenges children face in today’s digital world. She will offer practical strategies from the field of “executive function” to help parents guide their students at home, including tips on organization and time-management for their children. Executive function skills impact student performance across all subject areas in school.

Reading 101: How to help your child build great reading habits at home

Monday, November 17

Good readers are created through a strong partnership between school, home, and the community. Whether you have a reluctant reader, a child who devours books, or one that’s in between – you will learn tactics you can use and discover resources to help your child grow. [“Reading 101” for grades pre K - 8](#) will be held on Monday, November 17 from 6:30-7:30 p.m. at Franklin School (Library), 2401 Manor Lane, Park Ridge. The evening is open to all parents (grades pre K - 8) and community members! Stay for the District 64 Board of Education meeting immediately following, too. The session will be presented by Meghan Keefer, District 64 English Language Arts Curriculum Specialist, and Brittney Joyce, Washington School Library Information Specialist.



Internet Safety in the 21st Century: How to be a good digital citizen 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).

Out & About in Our Schools

Coming up soon: parent survey on 2015-16 school calendar changes

District 64 is continuing to closely monitor changes in the District 207 calendar beginning in August 2015. The primary reason for its change is to allow high school students to complete first semester exams before Winter Break. To gather input about your top priorities for aligning District 64 to this revised calendar, we will be surveying parents and staff later this month. **Please watch for a link via email;** only one response per household is requested. We will use this information in a consultative manner as our internal Calendar Committee develops options to present to the District 64 Board for the 2015-16 school year and beyond.

Parent-Teacher Conferences - More Important Than You Think

While the middle schools have already wrapped their Fall conferences, conferences at the elementary schools will be continuing in November. Parent-Teacher Conferences are an important way in which parents and teachers communicate regarding the academic, social and behavioral progress individual students are making in school. Teachers work hard to prepare information that illustrates areas of strength as well as growth areas for each child. Data, work samples, and anecdotal observations are shared to create a complete picture of how each child is progressing and how parents can reinforce and support learning at home. Since elementary school conferences are only 15 minutes in length, if parents have anything they'd like to address, I recommend emailing that information to the teacher in advance so they will be prepared to answer your question(s). Please keep in mind that some topics may not be able to be addressed in a PTC and an additional conversation may need to be scheduled with the teacher.

2014 School Report Cards

The annual Illinois School Report Card provides communities with information about public schools across Illinois. The Illinois Report Cards for District 64 and each of our District 64 schools are now available at illinoisreportcard.com. For parents' convenience, school principals will be emailing a link to the "at a glance" report for your school. In addition to information about student characteristics and performance, the Illinois Report Card displays information about school programs, school learning conditions, student academic growth, and school performance trends. The Illinois State Board of Education reformatted the School Report Card for 2014 to include reporting on principal turnover as well as teacher retention, since both data points impact student achievement. In addition, schools are required to conduct a survey of learning conditions once every two years. District 64 participated in 2013, therefore the 5Essentials results graphic on ISBE's 2014 report is blank. District 64 will be conducting its next 5Essentials survey in 2015, and will email parents the survey link in January! Please take time to complete the survey about the supportive learning environment at your school.



Chromebook packaging inspires art for 3rd graders

Roosevelt's 3rd graders are learning about the Native American tribes of the Pacific Northwest, and have combined learning from their social studies and art class to create these fantastic totem poles. The Chromebook packaging materials (second from left) have been the inspiration for the totems with their light brown color, intricate 3-dimensional shapes, and ability to be vertically freestanding. The third grade classes have been painting the totems in bright primary and secondary colored temperas as well as adding details with white and black. The extra 3-dimensional parts are cut out and assembled from brown construction paper.

Red Ribbon Week unfurls a positive message

Once again, District 64 students participated in Red Ribbon Week at all schools at the end of October. Both the Park Ridge and Niles Police Departments partnered with us and helped teach children the importance of making healthy choices. Here are some of the activities students participated in:

★**Carpenter** celebrated with different themes each day that connected with their PAWS civil behavior and Carpenter mascot. The overall theme was “These Paws Don't Touch Drugs;” one day's special focus was “PAWS for Dreams, not Drugs,” which included students wearing their pjs's to school!

★At **Emerson**, the entire school participated in a variety of activities and events such as: dress-up days, guest speakers, and fun activities at lunch in support of a drug free America, as well as making wise choices.

★The **Field** Student Council spearheaded school-wide activities including creative door decorating and theme days, such as “Wear Neon Colors - Life Is Bright When You Are Drug-Free” Sports Day and Halloween costumes for “Say ‘Boo’ to Drugs” day.

★**Franklin** students made announcements or did skits on the PA to broadcast their daily theme during morning announcements and educate students about the importance of healthy living without drugs. Among the daily themes were Thursday's “I ‘Mustache’ You Not to Do Drugs,” with students wearing mustaches to school!

★**Lincoln** students signed a drug-free pledge and posted them to their lockers, and celebrated with daily spirit events to raise awareness.

★**Roosevelt** also did a daily theme; on Monday students wore hats to symbolize using our “thinking caps” to make good decisions.

★On twin day at **Washington**, students could dress as their friend to show their support to each other in making healthy choices.

Franklin's Literary Pumpkins!

Franklin School hosted its 6th annual Pumpkin Decorating Contest recently. Instead of carving pumpkins, families were encouraged to decorate a pumpkin based on their favorite book or book character.



Each family was encouraged to work together; we always hear wonderful feedback from both parents and students. This year Franklin received 70 entries - the most ever! The school's favorite was this arrangement of “Room on the Broom,” a British children's book by writer and playwright Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Axel Scheffler.

“Walk & Talk” visits spotlight teaching and learning

On a weekly basis, I visit schools and “Walk and Talk” with the staff, students and principals as I move through the buildings. Here are a few of the things I noticed in October:

★ **Emerson** - In science, students were using iPads to access a 3-D application to help learn about cell growth.

★ **Lincoln** - Lincoln musicians joined with a group from Emerson to perform with the Park Ridge Civic Orchestra at their October 29 season opener at the Pickwick Theatre.



What students are saying. . .

As I regularly conduct “Walk and Talk” visits in all of our schools, I am impressed by how frequently I see Chromebooks and iPads being used to enhance learning. I've seen technology being used across all content areas and grade levels. When I ask students to tell me how technology is helping their learning, they are very articulate in the types of responses they share. Students feel it helps make learning more fun (engagement), it allows them to work with partners (collaborative learning), and offers them greater speed in locating and accessing helpful resources for their research.

★ **Carpenter** - Students were focused on learning targets during physical education class. Learning targets help students understand what they are expected to know and be able to do.

★ **Field** - Grade 3 students were using a “flipped” learning model and using their Chromebooks to work with virtual manipulatives for math during tech time.

★ **Franklin** - Students were using SmartBoard technology to do a math vocabulary check-in to see if they were mastering new words found in math.

★ **Roosevelt** - First graders were practicing spelling using their iPads and working on vocabulary using Raz Kids software.

★ **Washington** - For social studies, grade 4 students were doing problem-solving as a group using their Smartboard to research transportation issues in the region before the Erie Canal was built.



Working with support from the Chicago Botanic Garden staff, **Jefferson School** students learned about bulbs as they each planted 3 in the courtyard. They are all so hard at work - it was a wonderful experience, made possible by a grant from our own District 64 Elementary Learning Foundation.

Technology Briefs

- The inaugural edition of the 1:1 Learning Student-Parent Handbook was emailed to all families last month. It features all the essentials students and parents/guardians need to efficiently navigate through the first year of this forward-looking initiative. The handbook can be accessed [via our Website](#).
- Plus -- if you missed the recent “Chromebook 101” Parent University event, the presentation -- along with responses to the Q&As from that evening -- are available on the [Parent University website page](#).
- Director of Innovation and Instructional Technology Mary Jane Warden shared a technology roll-out update with the Board at the [October 27 meeting](#).

Veterans Day Commemorations

With students in school on Tuesday, November 11, District 64 learners will have an opportunity to study the contributions of the men and women who have served our country through the years, and to gain a fuller understanding of what patriotism means. Veterans and active service personnel also visit several of our schools as honored guests. Here are only a few of the ways Veterans Day will be marked at our schools:

ROOSEVELT has a long-standing tradition of honoring veterans. The school holds an all-school assembly and veterans visit classrooms to talk about citizenship and service. The Roosevelt PTO provides breakfast and lunch for their honored guests. Roosevelt proudly welcomes 20-25 veterans each year! **CARPENTER’S** 3rd grade has a tradition of singing flag/patriotic songs and performing for the school in the front hallway before lunch. Students also incorporate learning around the Veterans Day topic in various ways, such as writing letters to veterans that they know and are identified by students or reading books about the different armed services. One classroom has families put the names of veterans they know on stars and then they link the stars and create graphs. **FRANKLIN** will hold a flag-raising ceremony in the morning involving the entire student body and parents, with the Park Ridge Police Color Guard and scouts assisting. The school will sing God Bless America and say the Pledge of Allegiance. Veterans speak to each grade level about their experiences in the armed forces.

Wellness fund-raiser raises \$3,000 for healthy activities

The District 64 Wellness Council is pleased to announce a donation of just over \$3,000 to support healthy activities for students this year. The funds were raised during a Community Support Day held on March 17 at Whole Foods in Park Ridge. Whole Foods donated 5% of net sales that day to the District’s Wellness Council. We are most appreciative to Whole Foods for hosting the fund-raising event and for the strong community support of our efforts. The donation has been earmarked to support wellness activities in two areas:

\$1,800 has been used to assist in the purchase of the FitnessGram computer program that all students of District

64 will use to monitor their levels of "fitness" in the areas of Cardiovascular Endurance, Muscular Endurance, Muscular Strength, and Flexibility. **\$1,200** is being used by the Family & Consumer Science Department to offer a series of three, healthy cooking demonstrations for our middle school students by a local chef, who will demonstrate and work with students to prepare tasty, healthy meals and share information on how to check ingredients to know nutritional content and talk about why it's important to eat healthy foods.

District Happenings



School Board Members Day is Saturday, November 15

District 64 is joining with other Illinois districts on Saturday, November 15 to thank the seven members of our School Board for standing up for public education. Franklin School students will have the honor this year of presenting certificates of appreciation to the Board when it meets there on Monday, November 17. As elected representatives, Board members are the voice of the community and dedicate hundreds of hours each year to providing oversight for our District's 4,300 students and 600 staff members. From facilities and finance to curriculum and student achievement, Board members establish goals and monitor progress across a wide range of areas.

School Board Members Day is the special opportunity we have each year to thank these seven individuals for providing grassroots governance. We urge all members of our community to reach out to them: Anthony Borrelli, President; Scott Zimmerman, Vice President; Vicki Lee, Secretary; Dan Collins; John Heyde; Bob Johnson; and, Dathan Paterno. Contact the Board via e-mail [through our website](#).

Four Board seats to be elected in 2015

**Nominating petitions due
December 15-22 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. If you missed our October 28 "A-B-C's of School Board Service" coffee and conversation with current and former Board members, you can still [view the presentation](#) with links and filing tips, and find out more on the District 64 website: [Board Election 2015 page](#). 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.



"Tech Talk Week" 2014 Earns State Recognition

District 64 Tech Talk Week from March 2014 has received the highest honor -- the Golden Achievement Award -- from the Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association (INSPRA). INSPRA offers an opportunity each year for school districts to submit communications materials for competitive judging by a panel of public relations professionals from across the country. The Golden Achievement Award is a special

distinction, designed to recognize best practices in every aspect of an integrated public relations effort. It included a thorough review of the analysis; planning; execution/communication; and evaluation of the entire body of communications activities undertaken during the week. As you know, Tech Talk Week was a new style of parent education outreach never before undertaken in District 64.

On the Horizon. . .

Financial focus turns to 2014 tax levy

With the adoption of the 2014-15 budget completed at the end of September, the Board of Education has moved into the next phase of its financial cycle -- adoption of a tax levy. The Board heard a preliminary report at the October 27 meeting to prepare for adopting a tentative levy on November 17. A public hearing on the 2014 tax levy will be conducted at 7:15 p.m. on Monday, December 15 at Jefferson School, 8200 Greendale, Niles, prior to Board adoption during the regular meeting. [Current financial information](#) is available on our website.

Strategic Planning coming up soon

District 64 is in the fifth year of its 5-year Strategic Plan, and expects to begin a formal planning process that will engage parents, staff and community members in the effort to develop a new roadmap to guide the work of the District over the next five years. We will be reaching out to all stakeholders in the coming months so that your voice may help shape our 2020 vision!

Save the date - January 24 ELF fund-raiser

District 64's Elementary Learning Foundation will host its annual casino night fund-raiser to benefit innovative learning at our schools on January 24, 2015. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this fun evening -- invitations will be out soon.

Happy Thanksgiving to all!

As a reminder, our schools will be closed from November 24-28.
I wish all members of our District 64 community a safe and happy holiday!
Warmly, Dr. Laurie Heinz



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