



Parents = Partners

Education Notes from Dr. Laurie Heinz

September-October 2015

New school year, new opportunities for students

Time sure is flying by as we settle into another productive year of teaching and learning! While I know summer went quickly with our new calendar aligned to District 207's, I hope you and your family have created a steady rhythm for the new school year. It is always satisfying to have staff and students back in school and fully engaged. With almost 4,400 students enrolled, things are buzzing in D64!

The beautiful Pickwick Theater hosted our opening Institute Day where all 700+ employees celebrated accolades of 2014-15, previewed the new 2020 Vision Strategic Plan, and learned about the importance of a "growth" vs. a "fixed" mindset to continually improve our practices and learning goals for all.

Speaking of growth, I am proud to announce that our students exceeded their Math MAP growth goals last year! Please look at detailed information about our MAP testing later in this report. Staff and students did an excellent job exceeding growth targets.

This year marks some exciting areas of focus. We have launched our 2020 Vision Strategic Plan; we will begin prioritizing and implementing facility improvements based on the Master Facilities Plan we developed last year with our new architecture firm; I've launched a [Superintendent Community Relations Council](#) to hear how we are doing from the larger community's perspective; and we will be engaging in collective bargaining with our teaching staff in 2016, to name just a few.

I continue to look for new ways to communicate with families and members of the community. Watch for the new District 64 Annual Report to be mailed to your home later this month. I hope it helps every household within our District become better informed about all that we are working to achieve as a District. Twitter is another new way for me to connect. These short bursts spotlight exciting learning moments taking place in District 64. It also allows staff to join in the conversation to share, grow and learn together. Follow me [@DrLaurieHeinz](#) and our information stream: #EngageD64.

The Board of Education meets at least one Monday a month to conduct Board business in a public setting. Please consider [attending a meeting at a school near you](#) to hear these important conversations about our schools. Opportunities for public comment are offered at every meeting, too.

For Your Children,

Dr. Laurie Heinz, Superintendent lheinz@d64.org 847-318-4300 [@DrLaurieHeinz](#)



An abundant fall harvest!

Roosevelt students harvested about 16 bags of fresh vegetables and herbs, which they donated to the Maine Township Food Pantry. This was a collective effort from students, PTO parents, and families to grow the produce from seeds and maintain the garden over the summer.



Parent University: Expand your learning

We believe that when parents and schools learn together -- everyone learns more! Back by popular demand, [District 64 Parent University](#) returns for a second year offering a series of free evening events tailor-made for parents and adult community members to extend their own learning. Bookmark this page and find out more! Come and bring a friend or neighbor!

Tuesday, October 13

Raising Safe & Smart Digital Citizens:

Internet Safety in the 21st Century

Come explore how we can better guide our children to become safe and smart digital citizens. "Internet Safety in the 21st Century" is the focus for the Tuesday, October 13 Parent University evening from 7:00-8:00 pm at Emerson Middle School (Learning Resource Center), 8101 N. Cumberland, Niles. This free program is geared towards parents of students in grades 3-8. Come learn about District 64's Internet Safety curriculum and how you can discuss with your child aspects of 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 also will provide guidance in monitoring your child's personal media activities and setting up guidelines on Web presence. Bring your questions and share strategies and ideas. District 64 Instructional Technology Coaches Kara Pottinger (Emerson) and Beth Rihtar (Field) will facilitate the interactive program.



Student test results delayed

District 64 students in grades 3-8 took new state-wide assessments in reading and math for the first time during two sessions in March and May. These new PARCC assessments replaced the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) as Illinois' official statewide assessment.



We will be sharing our results and individual student performance as soon as they become available from the state. Scores are not expected until later this fall. In future years, they will be available much earlier and will be more helpful in shaping our instruction for students.

Here's what we know at this time:

- ◆ The rigor of the PARCC assessment exceeded that of the ISAT. It also measured different skills, such as students' critical thinking, problem solving, and writing, which are necessary for students to succeed in high school and beyond.
- ◆ The State Board released some preliminary statewide results. Due to the shift to the Common Core State Standards and the increased rigor of the assessment, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards statewide has decreased.
- ◆ These initial scores will create a new baseline from which the state will move forward.
- ◆ This year's PARCC exam results cannot be compared to test scores from ISAT assessments.
- ◆ For more information about the preliminary statewide results, visit: <http://www.isbe.net/news/2015/sept16.htm>

Out & About in Our Schools

Roosevelt readers capture summer trophy

Roosevelt School had the largest percentage of students -- more than 60% -- from any school participating in the Park Ridge Public Library's summer "Reading to the Rhythm" program. Participation has increased significantly over the past three summers, too!



NBC's Today Show spotlights Lincoln teacher

The Today Show "Cool School" series Readers gather to celebrate -- in the library, of course! invites viewers to share creative learning experiences from their local schools. Lincoln 6th grade teacher Chris Francis was recently nominated by a parent and featured for an activity his social studies students undertake during their Renaissance unit. He has students tape paper to the bottom of their desks and lay on the floor to sketch, so they understand what Michelangelo went through to paint the Sistine Chapel. [Watch the video here](#). A wonderful example of how innovative teaching inspires students to higher levels of engagement and learning!

MUSICAL NOTES

► A Halloween concert tradition continues! Our middle school musicians will be playing on stage, side-by-side with the Park Ridge Civic Orchestra at the [October 28 opening night concert at the Pickwick](#)! This year, our students will join the professionals for *Batman: the Dark Knight*. We are delighted students will again have this unique opportunity, thanks to the close cooperation of our music teachers and PRCO! ► Our 8th grade band students had an opportunity to rehearse with the Maine South Band on a recent evening excursion. The high school hosts were welcoming and supportive, and shared stories about the work, fun, and the sense of family they experience as band members. We hope many of our D64 musicians will be inspired to continue developing their musical skills in high school and beyond.



TECH TALK

We are so proud of how effectively our teachers are integrating Chromebooks into daily instruction and students in grades 3-8 are using their new learning tool to improve and personalize their education. As we move into our second year experiencing our 1:1 learning ecosystem, we know this type of 21st century learning will continue to inspire our students to discover, learn, achieve, and care. The [second edition of our 1:1 Learning Initiative Student-Parent Handbook](#) was released recently. It's been updated to reflect experiences during our first year of implementation, including changes to the per incident charge to better reflect the degree of damage to the device. The handbook covers all the essentials that students and parents/guardians need to efficiently navigate through the year. We recommend that you bookmark it, so you can consult it as questions arise. Thank you for your partnership in successfully bringing the benefits of this powerful learning tool to our students!

“Walk & Talk” visits find eager students and energized teachers

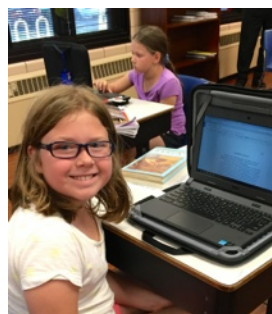
My “Walk and Talk” visits in the first month of school were a delight, allowing me to enjoy the eager faces and energized teachers as they started a new year fresh with possibilities. Here are my highlights:



Carpenter - Kindergartners enthusiastically worked on learning the months of the year through song and movement.

Field - The school welcomed a new principal and assistant principal, as well as a new theme this year: “Why Fit in When You Can Stand Out.” Staff and students are focusing on what makes them stand out and honoring those differences. This theme is part of a larger umbrella of Field diversity this year. The “Why Fit In” mural students created shines in the halls of Field School.

Franklin - Students in the Channels of Challenge (C of C) program selected a book to read independently, used their Chromebooks to write a summary of the book they read, and will share their writing with their classmates. I was impressed by the ownership students took over the many different steps within the project.



Roosevelt - Chorus members participated at the Patriot Day commemoration at Park Ridge City Hall to dedicate a new memorial to the heroes of 9-11.

Washington - Music students enjoyed taking turns playing instruments and singing along.



Emerson - Students in Mr. Keating’s room were learning about forces in motion. Students were focused on learning how to measure distance and time, while also knowing how to calculate speed. The coffee cup cars were put to the test during an in-class experiment!

Lincoln - The “Linc N. Lion” mascot contest is an opportunity for students to design a new logo. This year’s winning design based on student voting was created by 8th grader Caleb Annis. Linc will be displayed all over the Lincoln community promoting school spirit, events, and positive behavior, as part of the school’s ROARS behavior expectations.





Jefferson - The school welcomed a new principal this year, and continues to be a building full of warm smiles and child-centered activity for our youngest learners. I enjoyed watching students work on their listening skills during a listen and find activity. In another classroom, students worked with sensory putty to make shapes.

District Happenings

2020 Vision Strategic Plan underway

The Board of Education has officially adopted our new strategic plan, and schools and District staff are hard at working implementing different aspects of our six Strategic Objectives. It is important to know that this plan will take five years to fully realize. ► [Interested in learning more about the 2020 Vision?](#) Watch a series of convenient video podcasts on the six objectives that will inspire our work in the areas of student learning, professional collaboration, facilities, and finance.



MAP scores show accelerated gains in math for 2014-15

District 64 uses the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments to view our students' achievement in reading and math each fall and spring. We review both status -- how our students' average RIT score compare to the average RIT of students in other schools, and growth -- are our students growing more or less than students in other schools from fall to spring. Here are the highlights of the [June 22 presentation](#) to the Board of Education. ► **Spring 2015 Math:** In terms of both status and growth for 2015, we have much to celebrate in math! We far surpassed our growth goals, moving from the 51st to the 84th percentile. This, in turn, led to an increase in status from the 87th to the 93rd percentile. Our highly accelerated math growth is likely due to several powerful actions, including an investment in new grades K-8 Common Core aligned math materials as well as professional development to support the implementation of the new standards and the use of high-impact instructional strategies. District 64 also added a math intervention class at the middle school level, and implemented an after-school tutoring program for at-risk math students through newly obtained Title I funding. ► **Spring 2015 Reading:** We maintained District status at the 94th percentile, slightly down from the 96th. District growth at the 73rd percentile is close to the upper quartile (top one-quarter), although it decreased from the 86th percentile. This decrease in our reading growth may be the result of our recent transition to the Common Core version of the MAP assessment. We are in the process of mapping our English Language Arts curriculum and creating pacing guides similar to what we have in math. This will enable us to look more closely at the skills we need to target. Despite the decrease, we continue to achieve growth at a percentile rank that is close to the upper quartile. Overall, our performance in reading continues to be competitive.

Trio of students selected as Ethical Leaders for 2015

Each year the District 64 Educational Learning Foundation (ELF) selects several outstanding 8th grade students to honor for their exemplary ethical leadership through the Judith L. Snow Award. ELF identifies students who lead with integrity, selflessness, dependability, a caring nature, and fairness, and who have the courage to live by these values, even when faced with peer pressure to do otherwise. For 2015, ELF selected a trio of students: Abby Flood and Ainsley Owen from Lincoln Middle School, and Sophia Post from Emerson. [Their accomplishments are truly impressive](#), and we couldn't be prouder of these outstanding young students. We wish them success as they enter high school!



Board of Education President Anthony Borrelli joined me in congratulating Ainsley Owen (Lincoln) and Sophia Post (Emerson); Lincoln winner Abby Flood was unable to attend the Board meeting.

Reach teachers via new direct phones, too!

Summer 2015 marked the transition to new phones across District 64. A Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) system was installed, replacing a badly antiquated and extremely limited phone network. Although email remains an effective way to reach your child's teacher, the new phones now offer another great communication tool between home and school. Based on need, I suggest you determine which communication method is better for you. ► Also this summer, Field School received a new roof and extensive exterior work. Thank you for your patience as the school underwent a second (and final!) consecutive summer of major construction activity. Kudos to the staff for pulling together to ensure a smooth first day for students, as improvements were being finished right up to the opening of school due to the shortened summer calendar this year.

Facilities projects for 2016 & 2017: "Safe, Warm and Dry"

Investigating, engaging with the community, researching, and exploring options -- these were the major activities this spring as District 64 teamed with FGM Architects and construction manager Nicholas & Associates to complete two important reports: an Illinois School Code requirement, called the 10-year Health Life Safety study; and a new Master Facilities Plan to identify and address specific needs at our schools. Together, they provide a comprehensive look at code requirements, the physical condition of the buildings, and educational needs for 21st century learning. The [Master Facilities Plan](#) was presented to the Board of Education on June 22.

► *Where are we now and how can our facilities better support the District's educational goals in the years ahead?* Based on the Board's direction, District 64 has worked over the summer and into fall to prioritize the Master Facilities Plan projects, beginning with a two-year plan for repairs and improvements to be undertaken during the summers of 2016 and 2017. The recommendations focus on the "envelope" of the schools to keep students and staff "safe, warm and dry." [A specific proposal for work in 2016 and 2017](#) was presented at the October 5 Board meeting. As a first step, the Board authorized preliminary design work for summer 2016 projects, so that more detailed plans, alternatives and cost estimates can be developed. In addition to identifying needs, the Board at the September 21 Committee-of-the-Whole meeting began considering alternatives for how facilities work could be financed, perhaps through spending down available fund balances (*see budget story below*), utilizing

bonds, or some combination. Further discussions are planned for the October 26 regular meeting and a newly added special meeting on November 5. [Meeting schedule is available here.](#)

Balanced budget for 2015-16, although future is uncertain

Capping a months-long review, District 64's Board of Education in September adopted a [final budget for 2015-16](#). The budget shows revenues of about \$73 million balanced against expenditures of just over \$70.1 million for the 2015-16 school year. The Operating Fund balance is expected to grow to about \$52 million or 74% by June 30. Looking at the future, the Board is reviewing long-range financial projections to gauge the impact of possible expenditures to fund facilities work, as well as a potential pension shift that the State of Illinois is contemplating. The next step in the annual financial cycle is the 2015 tax levy, with discussion beginning in October and ending with adoption in December. The District will publish its second annual Financial Report for 2015 later this fall - watch for a link to this award-winning e-publication!

Local seniors enjoy working with students and staff

About 40 senior community members gathered for the annual "back-to-school" orientation of our Senior Tax Exchange Program. The program allows retired District 64 residents age 55 and over to share their expertise with students and staff. The partnership enhances the District's educational program by bringing seniors and students together to share their knowledge and experiences, and also provides

senior citizens with property tax relief. Our volunteers do so much to enhance our schools and support the work we do with students. It's a pleasure to have so many dedicated volunteers in the District!



New staff, administrators on board for 2015-16

The District welcomed two dozen new full- or part-time certified staff members this year. Over the summer, we also selected two new administrators to join our leadership team. As you are out and about in our schools, please help me welcome all our new staff to the D64 family!

► At [Field School](#), alumna [Amanda Spsychalski](#) has been named Assistant Principal. Mrs. Spsychalski is a native of Park Ridge, and attended Field for grades K-6. She comes to District 64 from Oriole Park Elementary School in Chicago, where she taught grades 5 and 3 for eight years.



► Joining us at the District office is the new [Director of Facility Management Ron DeGeorge](#). Mr. DeGeorge comes to us with almost two decades of experience directing school district buildings and grounds operations at both the elementary and high school levels. Most recently, he served for 16 years as the facilities head in elementary Prospect Heights School District 23.

New communication tools win awards

Congratulations to District communicators who received three awards from the Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations

Association (INSRA) communications contest with judging provided

by communication professionals in eight states. Awards were garnered for: our completely redesigned, user-focused District 64 website; the all new [Financial Report 2014](#) e-publication; and a series of video podcasts on last year's quality audit. The podcasts explain how we are benchmarking ourselves against effective practices of other high performing districts in the areas of learning, collaboration and results in order to improve. [Watch them now, if you missed them earlier!](#)



On the Horizon. . .

“Use your head” bike helmet entries due October 16

District 64's Traffic Safety Committee is partnering with the Park Ridge Police to raise bicycle safety awareness as the school year gets underway. The first step is wearing a helmet, which is required for all District 64 students riding their bikes to school. Park Ridge Police are offering this “[Use Your Head, Wear a Helmet](#)” coloring contest for grades K-3 students to build good habits for young riders. Entries are due on October 16.



District 64 ELF events raise funds for innovation

District 64's Elementary Learning Foundation has two events on the horizon to raise funds to support innovative ideas that teachers have and award funds to make their ideas become building or classroom realities. ▶ Please consider participating at a [Potbelly fundraiser on October 21](#) from 4:30-7:30 p.m. when 25% of sales will

be designated for ELF! ▶ ELF has selected a Casino Royale theme for its annual fundraiser on Saturday,

January 30 at Cafe Le Cave. The “Elfs” are working hard to add a few new and fun surprises to the evening. It's a

great way to mingle with friends, meet new families and support a terrific cause! 100% of the money raised goes to fund grants to improve education right here in District 64. Mark your calendars - I'll see you there!



Best wishes for an awesome October!

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

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