



# *IN* BRIEF

FALL 2014

NEWSLETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

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IN BRIEF is published three times a year by Skokie School District 68.

Have a question or a comment? Want more information? Visit [www.Skokie68.org](http://www.Skokie68.org) or call the district office at (847) 676-9000.

## District ready for new tests using Common Core standards

**L**ike every school district in Illinois and many others across the country, District 68 will begin using the new PARCC assessments this school year to evaluate student performance starting in 3rd grade.

PARCC—the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers—is a consortium of 19 states including Illinois that have developed a set of standardized tests to measure whether students are academically on track to be successful after high school. (Much more information, including an FAQ, is available at <http://www.parcconline.org>.)

The new assessments are supposed to give teachers, schools, students and parents better information about how well students are learning and what kind of progress they are making toward college and careers. They are the latest step in a trend toward national learning standards.

“At this point there are still several aspects of PARCC that are unclear,” said Lisa Schwartz, District 68 assistant superintendent for instruction. “This new assessment is even more of a change than when we went from IGAP to ISAT in 1999. Since this will be the first year of the assessment we won’t have any benchmark data for comparison.”

PARCC is one of two state groups that have been working to develop assessments aligned to the Common Core State Stan-

dards (CCSS) through the federal Race to the Top program. (The other group is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.) CCSS will replace the learning standards that had been separately developed and used by individual states with new, uniform standards that apply more broadly. The Common Core Standards have been adopted by all but a handful of states.

The PARCC tests have been created in response to concerns voiced by educators, parents and employers who think standardized exams should do a better job of assessing students’ critical-thinking, problem-solving and communication skills. There have also been concerns about the variability of standards and assessment data from one state to another.

The PARCC assessments have been developed by the well-known testing firms Pearson and ETS. Initially they will cover English language arts/literacy and math for grades 3-11. It’s expected that a science component will be added, possibly in 2016-2017, now that Illinois has adopted the national Next Generation Science Standards (for more information see <http://www.nextgenscience.org>).

In Illinois, the PARCC tests replace the ISAT assessments that were administered once a year. District 68 will continue to track student progress by administering MAP

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# Welcome, new staff members

**Bradley Allen**, 1st grade teacher at Devonshire School, earned a bachelor's in elementary education from Roosevelt University. He was a teaching assistant at Devonshire for two years.

**Erin Christy**, kindergarten teacher at Devonshire, has a bachelor's from Bowling Green State University and a master's from Cleveland State University, both in early childhood education. She has been a kindergarten teaching assistant for two years at Devonshire and was a long-term substitute teacher there last year.

**Taylor Crowley**, kindergarten teacher at Jane Stenson School, graduated from Illinois State University with a bachelor's degree in elementary education. She has been a teaching assistant at Stenson for two years and filled in as a 1st grade teacher during a maternity leave last year.

**Sarah Dribin**, digital literacy/instructional technology teacher at Old Orchard Junior High, received a bachelor's from the University of Iowa and a master's in library and information science from Dominican University. She was the student technology supervisor at New Trier District 203 for the last three years and was a library media specialist with Chicago Public Schools.

**Laura Gabuzzi**, 6th grade language arts and social studies teacher at OOJH, graduated from Illinois State University with a bachelor's in education. She taught 7th and 8th grade language arts at Fremont Middle School in Mundelein for two-and-a-half years.

**Kimberly Hancock**, 1st grade teacher at Stenson, has a bachelor's from Eastern Illinois University and a master's in elementary education from National Louis University. She has worked at Stenson for five years as a one-to-one aide, kindergarten assistant and LMC assistant.

**Asiya Hussain**, ELL teacher at Highland School, has a bachelor's in elementary education from DePaul University and is working on her master's in ELL/bilingual education. She taught 4th grade at the Muslim Community Center Full Time School in Morton Grove for five years.

**Anna Johnson**, instructional technology specialist at Devonshire and Highland, received a bachelor's in elementary education from McPherson College, a master's in instructional leadership from the University of Illinois and a master's in technology in education from National Louis University. She was instructional technologist at Claremont Academy in Chicago for seven years and was a kindergarten teacher for seven years.

**Courtney Keenan**, 8th grade language arts teacher at OOJH, graduated from Illinois Wesleyan University with a bachelor's in education. She has been a long-term substitute in language arts at area junior highs for the past year.

**Brian Kulaga**, special education teacher at Stenson, has a bachelor's in education from Illinois State University. He has worked as a camp counselor for children with special needs and did

student teaching as an emotional disabilities teacher in Aurora.

**Jessica Lustyk**, physical education teacher at OOJH, has a bachelor's degree from North Central College. For two years she was a PE teaching assistant at Westfield Middle School in Bloomingdale and has been a substitute teacher in Woodridge and Darien schools for four years.

**Devin Ramey**, kindergarten teacher at Highland, graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a bachelor's in education. He has been a kindergarten teaching assistant for two years at Highland, where he also was a long-term substitute teacher.

**Stephanie Saint Martin**, art teacher at OOJH, has a bachelor's from Illinois State University. She did student teaching at Parkside Junior High School in Normal, Ill., and interned at Jan Brandt Gallery in Bloomington.

**Eleanor Schook**, LMC director at OOJH, has a bachelor's from the University of Wisconsin and a master's in library and information science from Dominican University. She spent five years as an associate editor for McGraw-Hill Companies and Pearson Scott Foresman before seeking her library science degree. She was a library media specialist with Chicago Public Schools.

**Jigna Shah**, ELL preschool teacher at the Early Childhood Center, has a bachelor's in early childhood education from National Louis University and is working toward an ESL endorsement. She was lead teacher at Banner Preschool in Wilmette for two years.

**Kelly Thompson**, special education teacher at OOJH, earned a bachelor's from Northeastern Illinois University in special education. She student-taught at OOJH last year.

**Mark Toliuisis**, elementary band director, has bachelor's degrees in music and organizational communication from Western Michigan University and a master's in applied music pedagogy from Northeastern Illinois University. He was assistant band director of Glenbrook South High School for three years. He taught private trumpet and group brass lessons to Chicago Public Schools students in grades 4-8 at Merit School of Music.

**Shelby Wagner**, general music teacher at Highland, has a bachelor's in music education from Wheaton College. She was a long-term substitute music teacher in Woodstock last year.



*Front (left to right): Jigna Shah, Shelby Wagner, Taylor Crowley, Erin Christy, Courtney Keenan, Stephanie Saint Martin, Asiya Hussain, Elly Schook; rear: Devin Ramey, Anna Johnson, Mark Toliuisis, Brian Kulaga, Bradley Allen, Sarah Dribin, Jessica Lustyk, Kelly Thompson, Laura Gabuzzi, James Garwood.*

# Two new administrators join team

District 68 welcomes two new members to the administrative team.

Lisa Schwartz is assistant superintendent for instruction. She takes over for Laurie Heinz, now superintendent in Park Ridge District 64.

Schwartz comes to District 68 after four years in Oak Park District 97, where she was curriculum director. She spent 12 years in the Chicago Public Schools as a teacher and administrator.



Lisa Schwartz

Schwartz said she is excited about joining a “pretty amazing group of people” in her new job. While living in Oak Park makes for a hefty commute, she said she agrees with others who are willing to travel long distances to work in

District 68 because of the high quality of its schools, staff and focus on high-quality education.

Since starting July 1, she said, “I’ve felt so welcomed. The administrative staff, all of the teachers I’ve met—everyone has made me feel at home.”

Evaluation of curriculum is a never-ending process for most districts. Because Illinois adopted the Common Core State Standards for math and language arts in 2010, the district has focused much attention since then on those areas. The state has adopted the Next Generation Science Standards, with plans to implement them by 2016-2017, so Schwartz believes the district will focus more on science. She also will look closely at student writing.

Schwartz has a B.A. from Michigan State University and an M.A. from DePaul University; her administrative certificate is from Concordia University.

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Nancy Battaglia is the new director of technology. She began as a classroom teacher and discovered “how interesting it is to integrate technology into instruction and how it engages students.” She comes to District 68 after nine years as technology director for District 201 in Westmont. She worked before that at New Trier High School District 203.

Battaglia said, “Our primary goal is to improve student learning and help teachers teach more efficiently and effectively.” She supervises a staff that includes a network manager, a student database

manager, two instructional technology specialists and a technology support specialist.

District 68 will be engaging in a 1:1 mobile technology pilot this year in which students and teachers will test two different Internet-enabled devices to determine which one best supports teaching and learning in the 21st century. Districtwide implementation will begin in the 2015-16 school year.



Nancy Battaglia

“I feel very fortunate to work in a district where technology is transforming learning,” Battaglia said. “District 68 already has a strong foundation and I look forward to working with our staff to build on this.”

Battaglia has a B.A. from St. Mary’s College in Indiana, a master’s degree in education from Northwestern University and a master’s in educational technology from DeVry University. Her administrative certificate is from Northern Illinois University.

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## School board candidates can file this fall

Three seats on District 68’s seven-member Board of Education will be filled in the April 7, 2015 election. The School Board Nominating Committee is convening in September to begin screening candidates who wish to be endorsed by the committee. Endorsement is not required to run.

Candidates do not have to declare a political party affiliation. A candidate must be at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, a registered voter, and a resident of the district for at least one year. Members are elected to four-year terms.

Candidates can begin circulating ballot petitions on Sept. 23. Completed petitions and other required forms must be filed between Dec. 15 and Dec. 22.

Because of recent changes to Illinois law, petitions and other forms for school board candidates should be obtained from the Cook County Clerk and must be filed with the County Clerk. The local office is 5600 W. Old Orchard Road, Skokie, IL 60077. Telephone is (847) 470-7233.

Additional information is available from the Cook County Clerk ([www.cookcountyclerk.com/ELECTIONS/](http://www.cookcountyclerk.com/ELECTIONS/)), the Illinois State Board of Elections (<http://www.elections.il.gov/>), and the Illinois Association of School Boards (<http://www.iasb.com/elections/>). Call (847) 676-9000 for details.

## IN BRIEF

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## \*ECRWSS\* POSTAL CUSTOMER

Board of Education meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month in the Educational Service Center at 9440 Kenton Ave. You are invited to attend.

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## Standardized testing

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(Measures of Academic Progress) assessments three times a year for the foreseeable future.

The PARCC exams are intended to be administered online, although districts can use paper-and-pencil versions. The exams will be scored in part by machine and in part by human beings, depending on the question. For example, it would be extremely difficult for machines to reliably score questions that require students to write an essay, and the new assessments call for substantial writing.

“PARCC has been encouraging all districts that can to go with the web-based tests,” Schwartz said. “They have an online ‘tech readiness’ tool that districts have been asked to complete many times to be sure they’re ready. And we are ready for it—there are more than enough devices and wireless capability to handle it in District 68.”

District 68 piloted the PARCC exams in spring 2014. From talking to people in District 68 and other districts, Schwartz concluded that the pilot went reasonably well. “One thing I have heard is that they (PARCC) were pretty responsive as issues arose,” Schwartz said.

In the first year, students will take two sets of PARCC assessments: performance-based assess-

ments, between March 9 and April 3, 2015; and end-of-year assessments, from April 27 to May 22, 2015. Those four-week windows are much longer than what schools were allowed for the ISATs, giving districts more flexibility in scheduling.

District officials can’t say at this point how long it will take to get results.

Teachers will be trained on how to administer the PARCC tests. “Our teachers are already providing rigorous, high-quality instruction that’s aligned to the Common Core,” Schwartz said. “PARCC should show us where we are in terms of meeting those standards. This will not require them to change the instruction they are providing.”

## Join Us at Fall Fest!

5–7 p.m.  
Wednesday, Sept. 17  
Old Orchard Junior  
High School  
9310 Kenton Ave.

For currently enrolled  
District 68 students  
and their families.

