

In this issue...

University partners strengthen ELL program —page 2

Schools offer healthy food options —page 3

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 or call the district office at (847) 676-9000.

District's next superintendent has the ingredients for success

When Jim Garwood graduated from college, he took a few years to figure out what he wanted to do in life. Having worked in restaurants during high school and college and trained with top chefs, he landed a job as executive chef at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. Serendipitously, he got to talking with a bilingual teacher from Cicero, who invited him to her classroom to put on a baking demonstration.

The experience changed his life. He met his future wife, who was working as a teacher's aide. And teaching and interacting with the students convinced him to become an educator. "I knew that day what I wanted to do," Garwood said. He got his teaching certification, took a job as a bilingual teacher himself, and began moving up the administrative ladder.

Now Dr. James Garwood is about to become the next superintendent of District 68. The Board of Education announced its unanimous selection of Garwood to succeed outgoing Supt. Frances McTague at the Jan. 21 board meeting.

Board President Una McGeough said, "Jim Garwood's experience with diverse students was one of his distinguishing features. He worked for several years as a bilingual teacher and has been serving at various levels of administration in a district with sig-

nificant student diversity. These experiences have given him a deep appreciation for, and wisdom about, a district like ours."

Garwood was a German major in college and picked up other languages while study-

ing in Europe. He and his wife, Ilena, speak English and Spanish with their three children at home.

"I believe a diverse world is a richer place, so I love Skokie's diversity," Garwood said. Coming from a district with 20 schools, he also likes the size of District 68.

"With fewer buildings, teachers, and administrators, you have a

chance to form real relationships that help you do the superintendent's job more effectively."

"I just had a chance to tour the school buildings and I'm so impressed with the staff," Garwood added. "I see positive things going on instructionally from teachers who have passion for what they're doing."

According to McGeough, Garwood has excellent listening, communication, and problem-solving skills, "and he is committed to a culture of collaboration, which our district embraces."

Garwood also has spearheaded technology initiatives and is well-versed in the challenges of launching new technology. Other areas of expertise include STEM education,



Dr. James Garwood

Continued on back page

University partners strengthen ELL program

In Skokie, with its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, it's safe to say that at some point every teacher in District 68 will teach students who speak little or no English.

With that in mind, the district has partnered with two local universities—National Louis University (NLU) and Loyola University Chicago (LUC)—to help teachers work with English language learners.

“District 68 was approached by both universities and we welcomed involvement in order to get as many of our staff members endorsed in ELL as possible,” said Laurie Heinz, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

District 68 began its partnership with NLU in 2011-2012 when it joined the Multilingual Schools Network, which also includes Niles Township districts 69, 72, 73½ and 219, as well as the ELL Parent Center. NLU is using a five-year, \$1.75 million federal grant to enhance teacher proficiency by offering the Illinois ESL (English as a Second Language) endorsement free to educators in the network.

The grant focuses mainly on STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and math). “Skokie is way, way out in front in terms of its attention and responsiveness on the education of ELLs, and adding this STEM piece just strengthens its position,” said Kristin Lems, co-director of the NLU program.

The two-year program consists of six graduate-level courses focused on ELL instruction. The end result is a formal certification.

About 20 District 68 teachers have participated so far. The first group, or cohort, graduated last year and the second will finish this year. Next year, the third cohort will finish and a fourth will begin.

Seventh-grade math teacher Margot Hughes said she has taught numerous ELL students over the years. Hughes said, “The skills and knowledge that I have gained directly benefit me as a teacher and, as a result, benefit my students.”

Hughes said she has learned about different models for ELL instruction and how to implement standards-based instruction and assessment to support ELL students.

Allison Sobotka, a K-5 instructional technology specialist in her first year of the NLU classes, said the biggest takeaway so far for her has been a new

awareness of ELL concepts. “Now when I go into a classroom I stop, pause and ask myself whether I can include some new strategy in what I’m doing,” she said. For example, she is more conscious of the importance of visual cues when she’s demonstrating how to use a piece of equipment.

Districts in the network also share information and ideas and provide professional development. “By networking these districts that have similar populations, we’ve formed a productive partnership,” said Supt. Frances McTague.

The second partnership is with Chicagoland Partners for English Language Learners (CPELL), funded through a federal grant to the LUC School of Education. Other CPELL members include the Office of Catholic Schools in Chicago as well as districts in Skokie, Vernon Hills, Buffalo Grove, Highland Park, and Lincolnshire.

Teachers who participate in the CPELL program can earn an ESL endorsement or a full-fledged master’s degree that includes the endorsement. The program is not free, but Loyola offers half-off tuition.

District 68 joined CPELL in 2012-2013, and two groups of five teachers each have participated so far.

Megan Byrne, a first-grade teacher at Jane Stenson School, will finish her master’s in May. Byrne said, “With the demographics of Skokie rapidly changing, the Loyola program was a chance for me to improve my teaching and learn strategies to help me better meet the needs of the ELL population.”

Byrne said she has learned strategies to use not only with ELL students but with all her students. She also has learned the importance of making parents feel welcome in the classroom and school and encouraging them to embrace their native culture.

The CPELL program also provides professional development for teachers that is tailored to the individual districts, and helps partner schools develop systems of support for ELL students and families.

In addition, CPELL offers programming for parents. Last fall, they offered a parent education workshop in the district based on ELL parent feedback from a needs assessment survey. The workshop focused on developing and maintaining the native language at home, as this is a key ingredient for second language acquisition and overall learning.

Schools offer healthy food options

Ask students what they want for lunch and you'll hear a lot of requests for pizza, French fries, cookies, and pop. Brussels sprouts? Not so much. Recognizing the important role nutrition plays in learning, District 68 has been working with its foodservice partner, Arbor Management, to serve wholesome food students will eat.

The district is committed to nutritious meals and the health of students and staff, according to Devonshire School Principal Randy Needlman. "We've learned through working with Arbor that if we put healthy food options out there and make them look good, kids will eat them."

Arbor has contracted with District 68 for well over a decade. "They are very interested in working with us to support kids making healthy choices," Needlman said.

District 68 is participating in the HealthierUS School Challenge (HUSSC), which sets standards for food quality, physical activity, and nutrition education. HUSSC is part of First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" campaign to reduce obesity and "raise a generation of healthier kids."

The Let's Move campaign recommends that schools form a school health advisory council and an employee wellness committee, introduce nutrition education and PE in all grades, and plant school gardens—all of which are happening in District 68.

Because district schools provide free and reduced-cost meals to more than 50 percent of students via the National School Lunch Program, meals must meet federal standards. Lunches and breakfasts must offer whole grains, vegetables and fruits, reduce fat and sodium, and set sensible calorie limits.

"We started changing our menu options almost a year before the U.S. Department of Agriculture required the changes [in 2012]," said Ryan Berry, District 68 Director of Business Services.

"The district anticipated the need to move the menu in a healthier direction some time ago, so we were ahead of the curve," said Marv Barishman, who heads the Arbor foodservice team in the district.

Arbor welcomes suggestions from students, parents, and school staff. "We have a very active food advisory committee that spends a lot of time evalu-



Signs in the Old Orchard Junior High School cafeteria suggest healthy approaches to mealtime.

ating the foodservice program and that supports change and growth," Barishman said.

Arbor has modified recipes and developed new ones to get students to eat healthy. Parents and students have also expressed interest in ethnic dishes, vegetarian options, and poultry-based recipes.

Some new menu items have been suggested by the food advisory committee. Both the hummus and vegetable plate and the yogurt and fruit plate, for example, have been hits.

On any given day, about 1,100 of the district's 1,764 students eat lunch prepared by Arbor. While figures fluctuate, in one recent month 68 percent of those meals were free or reduced-cost.

District 68 also serves breakfast at school, and about 200 students take advantage of it daily. "We're trying to push breakfast, whether it's free, reduced, or full pay," Berry said. "We know the educational benefits of starting the day with a nutritious meal."

However, getting students to try new foods can take time. "If they've never seen something before, it's hard to get them to try it," Berry said. "But over the past two years, our numbers have increased."

Arbor also educates students about healthy eating with fact sheets and monthly newsletters and by creating games and food challenges. It surveys students and offers samplings of new menu items. And Barishman circulates through the schools.

"I ask the students how they like an item or how we can make their lunch better," he said. "I enjoy the interchange, and I'm always surprised when some of the younger students remember me and say hello."

IN BRIEF

SKOKIE SCHOOL DISTRICT 68
SKOKIE, ILLINOIS 60076
TELEPHONE: 847-676-9000
FAX: 847-676-9232
WWW.SKOKIE68.ORG

NON PROFIT
ORG.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Skokie, Illinois
Permit No. 55

District 68 Board of Education

Una McGeough
President

Amy Anson
Vice President

Katrina Bell-Jordan

Richard Berk

Todd Fingerman

Mark Weil

Darius Zakeri

Frances McTague
Superintendent

ECRWSS POSTAL CUSTOMER

Board of Education meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month in the Educational Service Center at 9440 Kenton Ave. You are invited to attend.

In Brief is written and produced by Complete Communications, Inc. Skokie, IL.

Superintendent

Continued from page 1

communications and public relations, and emergency/crisis management.

“I think he’ll be a great fit for the district,” said McTague, who is retiring June 30. “I wasn’t involved directly in the process, but the feedback I’ve gotten from the committee and the Board is that he’s thoughtful, soft-spoken, and has a lot of depth. He stood out.”

Garwood comes to District 68 from Palatine Community Consolidated School District 15, where he served as assistant superintendent of administrative services and deputy superintendent.

After starting as a bilingual elementary teacher, first in Cicero and then in Palatine, he served for three years as an assistant principal in Palatine and for five years as a principal at Orchard Place School in Des Plaines. He then returned to Palatine, where he has worked for the last eight years.

Garwood has a bachelor’s degree from the University of Illinois-Chicago, a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis on bilingual and ESL education from National Louis University, and a doctorate in educational leadership from Western Illinois University.

Garwood will officially become superintendent

on July 1, but he will start working in District 68 on May 27. He will use vacation time that he has accrued from District 15 to work with McTague during the transition.

“This allows him to sit in on administrative cabinet meetings, meet the staff, and get to know our parents,” McTague said. “This will give us time to go through the strategic plan and help him get immersed in the culture of the district.”

“I feel blessed to have close to five weeks with the outgoing superintendent,” Garwood said. “That’s not very common and I want to capitalize on that time.”

District 68 received 52 applications for the superintendent’s position. The search firm School Exec Connect screened all of the applicants, interviewed 20 and narrowed the field to six people who were interviewed by the Board. The Board chose two finalists who were interviewed by a committee of parents, administrators, teachers, and classified staff, and then once more by Board members.

“The selection process was thoughtful, rewarding, and all board members were deeply engaged. It was an inclusive process that also drew on community focus groups and a stakeholder survey,” McGeough said.

Added McTague, “This is probably the biggest decision the Board makes, and they did an outstanding job.”