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District maps out future with new strategic plan

The District 68 Board of Education has approved a new, long-range strategic plan, which succeeds an earlier one that was implemented in 2006. (Both plans are available at the district website, www.skokie68.org.)

“The new strategic plan builds directly on the accomplishments of the previous one,” said Board President Una McGeough. “That plan guided our actions and got us to a point where we can move ahead. We used it as a lens to look at what we’re doing and how we’re doing. We’ll use the new one in the same way.”

Superintendent Frances McTague noted, “We accomplished the objectives of that earlier plan and it’s nice to have been here long enough to see that happen. Now the new plan will shape district priorities moving forward. The incoming superintendent will have an excellent roadmap in place.”

A strategic plan committee held four meetings over a two-month period beginning last fall. With representation from parents, teachers, classified staff, administrators, Board members, Village of Skokie officials, and members of the community at large, the committee was “a real cross section of the community,” McGeough said. “There were parents with students in school now, others whose kids have graduated, and others whose kids aren’t even in school yet—talk about shaping the future!”

The planning process was facilitated by Donald Kachur, emeritus professor of Education at Illinois State University and former executive director of the Illinois Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. He has helped numerous school districts navigate the strategic

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“My own kids’ success in life will be based primarily on their ability to be patient, persistent problem solvers; to show empathy for the people in global, virtual spaces with whom they will interact and network on a regular basis; and to show the initiative and entrepreneurial thinking that will help them forge their own path as our traditional definitions of work and career continue to shift. That’s not to say that they might not need an understanding of differential equations and the Civil War. But that can’t be the only focus of our assessments any longer.”

Will Richardson
educator, author, 21st century learning guru

Welcome, new staff members

Jessica Andrie, math teacher at Old Orchard Junior High, graduated from Mount Union College in Ohio with a B.A. in education. She worked as a substitute teacher in Ohio, and was a part-time math teacher at OOJH from 2009-2011. Last school year she was a special education teaching assistant at the junior high.

Ann DiMaria, special education teacher at OOJH, has a bachelor's degree in fine arts from Illinois Wesleyan University and a master's in special education from Northeastern Illinois University. For the past four years she was a substitute teacher in area schools, including a stint last year as a long-term substitute special education teacher for District 68.

Meghan Hickey, general music teacher at OOJH, received her bachelor's degree in music education from the University of Illinois. She had been a long-term substitute teacher in general music for District 68.

Craig Hobson, school social worker at Jane Stenson, has a B.A. from Indiana University and a master's in social work from the University of Michigan. He had been a school social worker in the Chicago Public Schools since 2007.

Judy Hopf, kindergarten teacher at Devonshire, graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago with a bachelor's degree in elementary education. She has been an elementary teacher for six years at schools in Illinois and



New teachers (from left): Cheryl Wilson, Meghan Hickey, Ann DiMaria, Andrea Meighan, Meredith Schock, Stacey Nitka and Craig Hobson. Not pictured: Jessica Andrie and Judy Hopf.

Georgia. Last school year she was a special education teaching assistant at Devonshire.

Andrea Meighan, language arts teacher at OOJH, received a bachelor's degree in speech communication and an M.A. from Eastern Illinois University. Last school year she was a long-term substitute teacher in 8th grade language arts. She also was a part-time speech/drama teacher for one year at an Elgin middle school.

Stacey Nitka, school social worker at Devonshire, graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a B.S. and received a master's degree in social work from the University of Chicago. She was a school social worker at Steger School District 194 during the last two years.

Meredith Schock, school

psychologist at OOJH, received a bachelor's in psychology from Indiana University and a master's in psychology from National Louis University. She did her practicum in school psychology at OOJH and her internship at Glenbrook North High School.

Cheryl Wilson, school psychologist at Highland, has a bachelor's in psychology from the University of Illinois and a specialist in school psychology degree from Illinois State University. She is currently working on her Ed.D. in educational psychology at National Louis University. She has seven years of experience as a school psychologist with the Northern Suburban Special Education District and in Mt. Prospect School District 57.

Strategic plan

Continued from page 1

planning process.

“I was very impressed by the quality of representation that Dr. McTague pulled together as the strategic planning team. They took their work seriously and maintained near-perfect attendance through all four meetings,” Kachur said. “And there was strong and continuous cooperation and support throughout the whole process from the administration and Board. I have no doubt that this plan gives them excellent direction over the next four to five years.”

An essential part of the new plan involves building partnerships in the community. “We’re looking to harness the talents and resources we have right here in Skokie,” McTague said. “The schools can’t do it alone.”

The partnerships could be public or private. For example, students in summer school might do a forensics class with the police department, study finance or money management with a bank, or examine health issues with a local hospital.

“This is something we all think is important,” McGeough added. “We’ll look for ways to collaborate with people and organizations outside the schools to enrich learning and enrich the lives of our students and families. Our primary mission is

to educate children, of course, but the whole community benefits from good schools. The schools are woven into the fabric of the community.”

Raising student achievement is an important part of the new plan, just as it was in the last. However, the new plan incorporates new elements

“The illiterate of the future are not those who can’t read or write but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

Alvin Toffler
American writer and futurist

such as Common Core Standards and new types of assessments. “There’s a lot of new territory to explore,” McGeough said.

The Board has been interested in early childhood programming for some time, discussing it regularly at meetings. “So now it’s possible we’ll explore some kind of community preschool,” McGeough said. “We have a great model with the ELL Parent Center. That’s an example of what happens when you get that collaborative involvement. It’s a symbol of all that’s great about Skokie and we would love to see more. It’s all about trying to reach every student where they are and help them achieve.”

The District 68 Strategic Planning Committee

Amy Anson, Board of Education

Hilda Ayala, Community at large

David Beller, Board of Education

Katrina Bell-Jordan, Board of

Education

Richard Berk, Board of Education

Ryan Berry, Classified staff

Ruhul Chowdhury, Community at large

Meghan Espinoza, Parent

Matthew Golosinski, Community at large

Worth Gowell, Parent

Christina Heath, Teacher

Laurie Heinz, Administrator

Bryan Kelly, Teacher

Sharon Kenmotsu, Parent

Solomon Luskin, Community at large

Una McGeough, Board of Education

Jac McBride, Administrator

Frances McTague, Administrator

Maureen Murphy, Village of Skokie

Ronald Oberman, Classified staff

Sue O’Neil, Administrator

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Rose Schreier, Teacher

David Steiner, Community at large

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Ann Tennes, Village of Skokie

Matt Tomenillie, Teacher

Katie Varner, Teacher

Darius Zakeri, Board of Education

Irina Ziemann, Administrator

Erica Zuhr, Community at large

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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 search under way

After 15 years with District 68, Superintendent Frances McTague will be retiring June 30, 2014. As the Board of Education embarks on the process of selecting a new superintendent, Board President Una McGeough said they will be looking for someone with skills similar to those that McTague brought to the job.

“Dr. McTague has brought intelligence, thoughtfulness, and the ability to communicate with diverse audiences,” McGeough said. “We’ll be looking for all of that in the next superintendent.”

The board has contracted with School Exec Connect to conduct the search, already under way.

School Exec Connect is using a number of means to put together a profile of the type of person District 68 wants for a superintendent. From the district website, the firm conducted an online survey that asked stakeholders—parents, teachers, students, administrators, support staff, and members of the community at large—to answer questions about district strengths, challenges, goals, and the qualities they would like to see in the new superintendent. (The survey closed Oct.

4.)

Following discussions with the Board, School Exec Connect conducted focus groups in late September with small groups of teachers, classified staff, parents, administrators, and community members. “The point is to get all stakeholders involved and sharing ideas about their desired profile for the new superintendent,” McGeough said.

School Exec Connect will present its findings from the survey and focus groups at the regular Board meeting Oct. 22. From those findings the search firm will put together a profile of the “ideal” candidate.

School Exec Connect will screen candidates, choose five or six, and present their finalists to the Board at a closed session Nov. 12. In early December the Board, and later a search committee made up of parents, teachers, staff, and administrators, will conduct in-person interviews.

McGeough expects that the Board will announce its final selection in January 2014, and the new superintendent will take over July 1, 2014.