

The Newsletter of LaGrange School District 105

The Blackboard

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Countryside
Hodgkins
LaGrange

105

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Dr. Glenn T. Schlichting,
Superintendent of Schools

January 2014

RAISING THE BAR: New Learning Standards Impact State's 2013 Test Scores

Illinois is one of 47 states implementing new learning targets known as the *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) for students in kindergarten through grade twelve. These standards are more rigorous and robust than the previous Illinois Learning Standards and their mastery is intended to better prepare students for success in college and careers. They are designed as year-by-year guidelines that define the minimum level of skills and content that students must master at each grade level. Illinois school districts must align their curricula to the Common Core State Standards by the 2014-2015 school year.

To assure that students master these rigorous reading, writing, language, and mathematics standards and are ready to enter high school equipped for success, District 105 administrators and teachers are working with the Common Core Institute to align curriculum and instruction.

The Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) is the current assessment taken by Illinois school students that measures academic progress. In consideration of the new CCSS, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) reviewed ISAT performance level expectations for students in grades 3-8 and determined that they were too low and did not give an accurate picture of a student's ability to succeed in college and the workforce. Therefore, in order to prepare students for the new, more rigorous CCSS, ISBE raised the 2013 math and English/language arts ISAT performance expectations for elementary and middle school students. The 2013 ISAT was administered in the spring and the results were published in the fall.

This adjustment of the ISAT performance expectations raised the academic bar for all Illinois students, who had to demonstrate greater proficiency to reach the threshold of "meets" or "exceeds" on the 2013 ISAT assessment. **As a result, school districts throughout the state experienced a downward shift in student rankings on the 2013 ISAT assessments compared to previous years.** This shift was significant. In 2012, as a state, 82% of students met or exceeded expectations on math and reading standards combined, compared to 59% meeting or exceeding expectations on the 2013 ISAT. To further illustrate this shift, 2012 ISAT results showed 87% of District 105 students meeting or exceeding standards in combined reading and math. With the adjusted performance expectations for the 2013 ISAT, only 66% of District 105 students met or exceeded standards. These new performance expectations have brought the 2013 ISAT student results in line with those typically seen on the more rigorous MAP assessment that District 105 has administered to its students over the last seven years.

"It is important to note that these new performance expectations do not mean that our students know less than they did before or are less capable than they were in previous years. Instead, going forward, ISBE is simply expecting more of students in order to demonstrate progress toward college and career readiness standards," explained Kathryn Heeke, the district's director of curriculum and instruction.

The revised ISAT performance expectations are part of the state's transition to a new state-mandated assessment that students will take beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. At that time, the ISAT will be replaced with a new assessment created by, and named for, the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers* (PARCC). The PARCC assessment will align with the new Common Core State Standards and provide information to ensure students are



These Spring Avenue students, like students throughout the district, are preparing to meet the goals of the new Common Core State Standards.

mastering the appropriate skills and content benchmarks for college and careers.

No matter the assessment tool required by the state, District 105 will continue to provide the best possible educational opportunities for all students.

For additional information on the Common Core State Standards and on PARCC testing, visit: www.isbe.net/common_core/ and www.parcconline.org.

State Testing: A Look Ahead

- ◆ The final ISAT will be administered in spring 2014; 100% of the test will be Common Core aligned. The higher cut scores will again apply.
- ◆ In the 2014-2015 school year, The ISAT will be replaced by the PARCC assessment that will consist of multiple choice and open-ended questions based on the Common Core learning standards. The subject areas tested will be English/language arts and math. It is anticipated that students in grades 3 through 12 will take these online assessments four times every school year. Students throughout the country, in 47 states, will take the same assessment for the first time.
- ◆ PARCC will provide students, educators, policymakers and the public with the tools needed to identify whether students are on track for postsecondary success and, critically, where gaps may exist and how they can be addressed well before students enter college or the workforce.

Grurie Middle School
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Ed Hood, Principal

Hodgkins Elementary School
6516 S. Kane Avenue
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(708) 482-2740
John Signatur, Principal

Ideal Elementary School
9901 W. 58th Street
Countryside, IL 60525
(708) 482-2750
Steven Bahn, Principal

Seventh Avenue Elementary School
701 S. Seventh Avenue
LaGrange, IL 60525
(708) 482-2730
Erin Hall, Principal

Spring Avenue Elementary School
1001 S. Spring Avenue
LaGrange, IL 60525
(708) 482-2710
Elizabeth Webb Peterman, Principal

PILOT PROGRAMS Underway

Three pilot programs are currently taking place in the district. In the first, Ideal School K-3 students are benefitting from the STEP program that assesses students' literacy development and provides teachers with tools for improvement. In the second, at Gurrie Middle School, students are using *Chromebooks* as a tool to enhance learning. In the third pilot program, a parent initiative with the state of Illinois aims to improve parent involvement in their children's education.

STEP LITERACY ASSESSMENT

The University of Chicago created *The Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress* (STEP™) program, a powerful set of literacy training models and tools used in 21 states. Ideal School teachers are receiving professional development support in the use and analysis of STEP through the University of Chicago's *UChicago Impact*, a not-for-profit organization that helps educators improve teaching, learning, and leadership nationwide.

The STEP assessment gives teachers specific information to identify precisely what each student has learned and what they need to know, and determines their exact reading level. According to the University of Chicago, the benefits of the STEP program are:

- Accessible formative assessment data on all pre-K-3 students, allowing teachers to provide targeted instruction to accelerate students' reading.
- Early identification of students who need extra supports in reading.
- Clear intervention strategies attached to each "STEP" on the assessment so that teachers and principals know how to improve student progress.
- Training and supports for teachers in literacy instruction.
- A data management system that informs teachers and school leaders about the strengths and weaknesses of students in literacy at the district, school, grade, classroom, and individual student levels.

Ideal School K-3 students took the first set of STEP assessments in fall. Aided by the University of Chicago, district educators analyzed data from the assessments, and best practices literacy strategies were implemented to support K-3 readers.

CHROMEBOOKS: AN EXCITING LEARNING TOOL

At Gurrie Middle School, students are piloting Chromebooks, laptop computers that run the Google Chrome cloud-based operating system and web browser. The devices can only be used

while connected to the Internet and support applications that are found on the web, rather than traditional applications that reside on the computer. Chromebooks are lightweight, fast, secure, and extremely affordable. They start up in seconds and can access thousands of educational Apps.

Students in Steven Driscoll and Julie McGovern's English/language arts classes are using Chromebooks every day. Throughout the year, other Gurrie students and classes will have the opportunity to use the computers. The goal is to implement Chromebooks 1:1 throughout seventh and eighth grade.

Mrs. McGovern stated: "Students are using the Chromebooks to work collaboratively on Google Docs, create Quick Response codes, use Google Forms to complete warm-ups for class, and blog. We have not used paper at all this year! The instant access to information, the ability to access the Google sites I created for my classroom via any computer (they visit these sites every morning), and the large amount of engaging web tools have transformed my teaching in such a way that I never want to go back to being without Chromebooks."

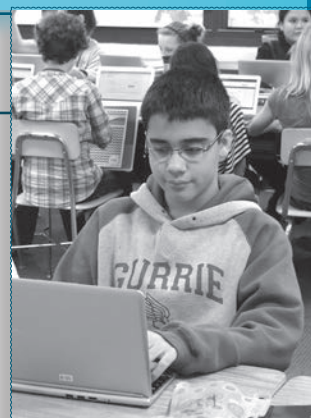
And Mr. Driscoll remarked: "Students are using the Chromebooks for a variety of purposes including document sharing, vocabulary and grammar extensions, and, most recently, for group collaboration in preparing for debates. For the debates, groups of four to five students worked simultaneously on a shared document, which allowed them to view the revision process, edit the group document from home, as well as have group discussions during the debate to prepare rebuttals and final statements. The Chromebooks allow students to communicate, collaborate, and practice twenty-first century skills in the classroom, while being engaged and connected to learning."

Gurrie Middle School Principal Ed Hood further explained, "The Chromebook initiative is designed to improve our students' access to technology. We chose Chromebooks for their quick start-up times, long battery life, faster processing speeds, and ease of use. Overall, this pilot program supports the district's core mission of 'empowering students to pursue their interests, talents and dreams,' and reflects the district motto: 'today's learners are tomorrow's leaders.' So far, the response from students and teachers has been very positive."

PARENT INITIATIVE WITH STATE OF ILLINOIS

District 105 has established an association with the *Parent and Educator Partnership* (PEP), a focus area of the *Illinois Statewide Technical Assistance Collaborative* (ISTAC) that is funded by the Illinois State Board of Education. This partnership will work in conjunction with the district's Parent Involvement Initiative. The goal is to develop sustainable programming for the district's parent initiative by improving meaningful parent participation in their children's education, and by developing, equipping, and supporting parent leadership.

This year, a pilot program will be explored at Hodgkins School. The objective will be to develop a School-Based Action Team for Partnerships that will create a systematic approach to further parent involvement and participation in their children's education. Leadership opportunities for parents to enhance school/community relations will also be developed.



Gurrie students are piloting Chromebooks.

Summer CONNECT Program

Research focused on academic skill regression states that over the summer months students can lose anywhere from one to three months of learning! Several years ago, the district completed a comprehensive study examining multiple years of student data. Consistent with national studies on summer regression, the findings showed that District 105 students regress over the summer as well. This regression is seen across all 105 schools and all socio-economic levels. In an attempt to address the reality of summer regression, the district created the Summer CONNECT program to keep students involved in learning over the summer.

The 2013 Summer CONNECT program was refined based on data collected from the previous year's program. Several levels of support were offered, from very structured, to unstructured, to meet students and families' needs. A total of 455 students participated in the program. Data is currently being analyzed and the results will determine any necessary revisions to next year's summer learning program.

School Assemblies, Meetings, Build Community, Focus on Goals



1. An Ideal School monthly meeting; 2. Seventh Avenue students earned a celebration for reaching monthly goals and decorated pumpkins; 3. Participants at a Hodgkins School monthly meeting.

All-school assemblies and daily meetings help the district's elementary schools build community and set and meet specific school goals.

Hodgkins School

Hodgkins School hosts an all-school meeting once each month throughout the school year to bring the entire school community together for a positive and celebratory common experience. "It is one of the many ways our school builds and strengthens a strong sense of community and purpose," stated Hodgkins Principal John Signatur.

Each month, a different grade level takes responsibility for planning and leading the all-school meeting where students take a leadership role. The meetings are structured in the format of the school's Morning Meetings, which are held in classrooms each day.

Students and teachers guide the entire school through a unique, all-school Morning Meeting consisting of four basic components:

- 1) Greeting – where all members of the school community are recognized and welcomed;
- 2) Sharing – students from the host grade level highlight some of their recent learning experiences;
- 3) A lively and engaging activity that reinforces the sense of a cohesive community working together to help each other learn and grow;
- 4) A message to the school community from the host grade level, which is projected on a screen for everyone to read and follow.

"It is a really powerful experience to have students celebrate with each other and affirm the simple and yet remarkable accomplishments that happen throughout the school each day," Principal Signatur remarked. "The entire meeting lasts 20 to 30 minutes and is a joyful and fun-filled way to celebrate and support our school."

Ideal School

Ideal School holds monthly meetings with the same basic structure as Hodgkins. "These meetings originated about three years ago. Their primary purpose is to celebrate the great things happening at our school and positively build school community," explained Ideal School Principal Steven Bahn.

Last year, the school's yearlong theme was *We are a Mosaic, We are Ideal School*. Principal Bahn pointed out,

"The purpose was to celebrate our great diversity and all of the school's cultures." Specific countries were highlighted during the monthly meetings. This year, the school theme is *Experience the Wonders of Learning*. "This theme is tied to our implementation of the new Common Core State Standards and how the school will implement the various genres related to the new English language arts standards," Principal Bahn concluded.

Spring Avenue School

Spring Avenue School holds kickoff meetings each day, and all-school assemblies about twice every quarter. Subject matters may include *Read for the Record*, where teachers 'perform' a book, or mark a specific celebration. In November, the all-school assembly honored Veterans' Day. "We invited our relatives who are veterans to join us," Spring Avenue Principal Elizabeth Webb stated.

Seventh Avenue School

"We are setting monthly goals in the beginning of the month and celebrating at the end of the month. Our school meets every day for an assem-

bly that lasts about five minutes," Seventh Avenue School Principal Erin Hall explained.

All Seventh Avenue students kicked-off the school year with new expectations: *Be Respectful, Be Safe, Be Here and Be Ready*. The students were also introduced to a new system of voice level expectations across all school settings. These expectations were revisited during morning assemblies and in classroom meetings.

To help reinforce and motivate all students, a goal was set for the month of October and unveiled at a morning assembly: all students will leave morning assemblies twelve times from October 1 through October 25 with a voice level of zero. Students self-monitored their voice levels and worked together to achieve this goal. "Because the students met their goal, they earned a celebration! Parents donated pumpkins for each classroom to decorate. Students voted for their favorites, but all of the pumpkins and students were winners," Principal Hall emphasized.

Seventh Avenue students and staff are now working toward a new monthly goal.

Parent Involvement Committee EVENTS

On the evening of October 22, the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) held another successful event for parents. Dr. Diane Leamy, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, gave a presentation at Gurrie Middle School called *Taming the Tiger* that focused on anxiety in children and how it affects them at home and school. Dr. Leamy is in practice in the area and has spent 10 years as a school social worker. She presented in-depth information strategies parents can use to help their children overcome anxiety.

Parents engaged in a question and answer session after the presentation. PIC presentations will be posted on the District 105 website: www.d105.net.

Although the presentation was in English, Spanish-speaking parents heard an instant translation through the district's new listening system for the non-English-speaking audience. This enabled all parents to participate in the same presentation. Childcare was provided for the event.

Two more PIC events are scheduled for the school year. Speaker and university instructor Carol Dahlquist will present *Brain Based Learning* at Gurrie Middle School on Tuesday, January 28, 2014, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. A career fest for students in grades five through eight and their families will take place at Gurrie one evening in April 2014, the exact date to be determined. Guests will provide students with information about their professions. Community members who would like to participate should e-mail Ms. Deborah Tyrrell, dttyrrell@d105.net. More information will be posted on the district website.



In October, The Parent Involvement Committee sponsored a presentation for parents on anxiety in children.

Introducing NEW STAFF MEMBERS



(Top row, L to R): Kelly Ahern, Megan Boyle, Amy Brown, Colleen Cushing, Alissa Dalgaard, Kirsten Gillespie, Ana Green, Erin Hall. (Bottom Row, L to R): David Kohut, Jennifer Mindy, Shannon O'Malley, Shelby Raney, Megan Rush, Meredith Sayre, Emily S. Wiegand and Melissa Zinnecker.

District-wide

Shelby Raney, Certified School Nurse

Mrs. Raney has 14 years of experience as a school nurse, has worked as a community health nurse for 16 years, and as an American Diabetes Association Camp nurse. She earned a BS in Nursing and a Master's in Public Health from Northern Illinois University. "Everyone in District 105 has been very welcoming. Everyone works as a team to meet the needs of all students and to empower them to meet their full potential. I am excited to join the district in making a difference in our students' lives!" Mrs. Raney stated. She and her husband, who is a detective, have two cats they rescued from an animal shelter. The couple enjoys running, including marathons, and traveling.

All Elementary Schools

Emily S. Wiegand, K-4 Math Specialist, Gifted

Sometime ago, Mrs. Wiegand worked in the district as an itinerant teacher, supporting a student at Spring Avenue School. When she had the opportunity to return she was excited to again work in a district she truly enjoyed. She has 17 years of teaching experience as an early childhood and primary grades classroom teacher, program coordinator, resource teacher, and itinerant teacher. Mrs. Wiegand achieved a BS in Education from Illinois State University and an MA in Mathematics Education from National Louis University. Married with two boys in college, she loves to organize and space plan areas in homes. She has a Bichon named Caribou and is a self-professed puzzle fanatic.

Gurrie Middle School

Meredith Sayre, Resource Teacher/Paraprofessional

Ms. Sayre is a part-time teacher who has six years of experience as a resource teacher. She earned a BS in Education from Bowling Green State University. "I am always excited to begin a new opportunity," Ms. Sayre remarked. "The District 105 teachers and staff have been extremely helpful and immediately made me feel like part of the team. I am happy to be working in such a strong district." She just began to compete in five-mile runs, most recently, in the Hot Chocolate 5K in Chicago.

Melissa Zinnecker, Science/Health Teacher

A new teacher, Ms. Zinnecker is working part-time teaching science and health. She achieved a BS in Chemistry from Bradley University, with endorse-

ments in physics, health, and middle school grades 6-8. A very outgoing individual, Ms. Zinnecker enjoys sports and any outdoor activity. She loves meeting people, and would like to get to know everyone in the district. She has a Vizsla puppy named Maci.

Ideal School

Megan Boyle, Third Grade Teacher

Miss Boyle has five years of teaching experience in grades K, one, and four. She earned a BA in Education from St. Mary's College, and an MA in Math Education from National Louis University.

"I am so lucky to be teaching in District 105!" Miss Boyle stated. "I have already learned so much from my wonderful teaching partner, new colleagues and administration team. The Ideal staff quickly welcomed me into their family and made me feel like a valued team member. It is great to have such talented and fun coworkers!" She enjoys watching Notre Dame football with her large family. Her dog, Rosie, helps keep her active with walks on the lakeshore and visits to dog parks.

Shannon O'Malley, Reading Specialist

In 10 years as an educator, Mrs. O'Malley has taught first, second and third grades and has been a reading interventionist. She has a BS in Early Childhood Education from the University of Dayton, and an MS in Reading from National Louis University. "My experience in District 105 has been extremely positive. There is a strong sense of community and a commitment to making educational choices that are in the best interests of children. There are strong, positive relationships among teachers and students, who are excited to come to school," Mrs. O'Malley asserted. She loves working with children, traveling, gardening, and being outdoors. Her two young daughters keep her on her toes.

Ideal and Spring Avenue Schools

Megan Rush, Speech/Language Pathologist

Miss Rush has four years of experience in her field with the Chicago Public Schools, and with the Southwest Cook County Cooperative Association for Special Education. She achieved a BA and an MS in Communication Science and Disorders from St. Xavier University. "I feel very fortunate to have this unique position in which I am able to specialize in early childhood development," Miss Rush said. Outside of school she works for a private company, providing home therapy for children from birth to

age three. Although she lives in Chicago, she does not mind the commute because she loves her job!

Alissa Dalgaard, Art Teacher

Mrs. Dalgaard is teaching part-time. She has seven years of experience teaching art to students in grades K-8. She attained a BA in Art Studio and Art Education from the University of Iowa. Mrs. Dalgaard is excited to be working in District 105. Along with teaching art, she is very interested in learning about, and teaching, science. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Agriculture from the University of Chicago.

David Kohut, Music Teacher

Mr. Kohut brings three years of experience to his work as a part-time music teacher. Previously, he was a high school orchestra director and K-5 general music teacher. "Working in District 105 is really great. The staff and administrators are very supportive," he stated. He earned a BA in Music Performance from Northern Illinois University, and a Master's in Music Education from VanderCook College of Music. This accomplished musician's recordings are available on iTunes and he is publishing a series of guitar method books.

Seventh Avenue School

Amy Brown, Fourth Grade Teacher

This is Mrs. Brown's second year in the district, but first year as a teacher. She student-taught at Seventh Avenue, served as a paraprofessional, assistant teacher, and as a program coordinator for the after-school math intervention program. She has a BS in Education from Trinity Christian College. "I am thrilled to be working in such a wonderful district. I am excited to be part of the Common Core implementation process," commented Mrs. Brown. She and her husband have three children and love to camp, a theme she has brought to her fourth grade class.

Colleen Cushing, Fourth Grade Teacher

Mrs. Cushing is enjoying working in "a very collaborative district that cares about the students and the staff." She has five years of teaching experience, and earned a BA in Communications from the University of Iowa and a Master's in Education from the American College of Education, with an English as a Second Language Endorsement. She enjoys competing in marathons and spending time with her husband and two young children.

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GOAL SETTING: A Message from Dr. Glenn Schlichting, Superintendent

Research consistently identifies goal setting as one of the most powerful ways for school systems to improve student performance. The greatest impact comes when goals are well-aligned throughout the entire school system – district, school, classroom, and student.

Through our District 105 Strategic Planning process completed last school year, we strengthened the alignment of our goal setting process. Our goal setting efforts start at the district level where we expect our district to rank in the top ten percent of all districts nationally in student achievement and in the progress our students make from the fall to spring.

Our five schools set goals for student achievement and progress that are aligned to district goals. The schools carefully analyze data to identify their students' learning needs and determine the best strategies to ensure students meet expectations for learning. The process results in a concise two-page school improvement plan that is posted on our school web pages along with the school dashboards that display the progress schools are making toward their goals.

This process gets closer to the student level as our school grade level

teams align their goals with district and school goals. Teachers analyze the unique needs of their students based on multiple sets of data and develop an improvement plan to help their students fully meet the district's high expectations for student achievement and progress.

Most importantly, our teachers work with each individual student to set goals for achievement and progress that are consistent with district, school, and grade level expectations. This critical process is best illustrated with an example. One of our third grade students is currently working with his teacher to set a goal and develop an action plan for improved reading achievement. They have reviewed data from his previous reading measures. Together, they identified his need to increase his vocabulary as key to improving his overall reading achievement. He is now developing a plan to increase the amount of his non-fiction reading and complete a web-based word study. Throughout the year, the teacher and student will monitor his implementation of the plan and his progress toward his reading goal based on his performance on classroom, state, and national measures. This process not only focuses the work of the student and teacher, it helps the student's parents understand his needs and identify what they can do to support the improvement plan at home.

District 105 Foundation UPDATE

The District 105 Foundation was recently formed to make a difference in the community by empowering the district's students to pursue their interests, talents, and dreams. The Foundation's fundraising focus is on awarding scholarships to former District 105 students graduating from Lyons Township High School who are most in need of support to pursue a college education. The Foundation will award the first four scholarships in the spring of 2014, one to a former student from each of the district's four elementary school communities.

The Foundation will also strive to strengthen family and community relationships throughout District 105. These efforts are off to a strong start. Last spring, more than 600 District 105 community members attended the Foundation's kick-off event, a Kane County Cougars baseball game. With all of the fun that was had last year, another large turnout is anticipated at

the District 105 Foundation's 2014 Kane County Cougars baseball game scheduled for May 4. The Foundation has also begun plans to involve the entire district community in a back-to-school event for the next school year.

Anyone who is looking for a worthy charity for regular giving, or is planning to make a donation in someone's name as a gift or a memorial, may want to consider the District 105 Foundation, a recognized State of Illinois Not-for-Profit Corporation. Contributions to the Foundation will help fund scholarships for deserving students.

Donations can be sent to:

The District 105 Foundation
701 S. Seventh Avenue
LaGrange, IL 60525
or contribute on-line at the District 105 Foundation tab at www.d105.net.

The Foundation would like to thank the individuals who have contributed to date and the following early corporate sponsors:

American Sportswear Inc.
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Franczek Radelet P.C.
Preferred Meals
State Bank of Countryside
Treble Clef, Inc.
West End Press, Inc.

District 105 Foundation Board Members:

Officers – Susan Dixon, President; Steve Jasinski, Vice President; Jeff Garcia, Secretary; Paul Guagenti, Treasurer. *Board members at large* – Amy Carroll, Bill Holder, Kathleen Keenan, Rose Marie Lopez, Tony Lopez, Scott Musillami, Jennifer Ostrowski, Carolyn Pann, Melody Salerno, and Mark Smith.

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The public is invited to attend board meetings – generally held at Gurrie Library Learning Center on the fourth Monday of each month, 7:30 PM.

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Introducing **NEW STAFF MEMBERS** (Continued from page 4)

Kirsten Gillespie, Primary Resource Teacher

Mrs. Gillespie has seven years of experience as a resource teacher, and as a special education teacher for early childhood and second grade. She achieved a Bachelor's in Psychology from Miami University, a Master's in Early Childhood Education from DePaul University, and a Behavior Specialist License from Roosevelt University. "I am excited to be a part of such a wonderful staff and community!" Mrs. Gillespie commented. "The support I have received at Seventh Avenue is overwhelming and heartwarming. I work with people who love what they do." Since she and her husband are both teachers, they were able to spend last summer completing home improvement projects. Mrs. Gillespie likes yoga, and running in short-distance races.

Ana Green, Fifth Grade Teacher

Before coming to District 105, Ms. Green taught third and fifth grade. She has two years of teaching experience. She achieved a Bachelor of Business Administration, with a double major in Marketing and Management Information Systems, from Ohio University, and a Master's of Education – Multi-Cultural Urban Educator Program – from DePaul University. "I am excited to be part of a progressive and culturally-diverse district that puts students first, promotes critical and inquiry-based thinking, and sets high expectations for teacher and student learning through collaborative measures,"

Ms. Green mentioned. She began her career in corporate America, but soon realized her passion was teaching children. She recently moved back to Chicago, where she previously lived for three years, from Denver. She is looking forward to her summer 2014 wedding, enjoys staying active, going to hockey games, reading, trying new restaurants, scrapbooking, and traveling.

Erin Hall, Principal

Last July, Erin Hall became Seventh Avenue School's new principal. She has over 16 years experience in education as an assistant principal and a special education teacher/inclusion facilitator. Mrs. Hall grew up in LaGrange and is a graduate of Lyons Township High School. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Ball State University, and two Master's from Northern Illinois University, one in Curriculum and Instruction and the other in Education Administration. She is enjoying her first year as principal and "working in a supportive district that works hard to make sure that every child excels." She and her husband have three children.

Spring Avenue School

Kelly Ahern, Sixth Grade Math Teacher and Paraprofessional

Last year, her first as an educator, Ms. Ahern team-taught sixth grade math and worked as a parapro-

fessional in grades one and six. She has a BA in Elementary Education from Concordia University. "It is an immense honor to work at an award-winning Honor Roll school district. Although I worked in the district last year, this is my first year as a teacher and I am absolutely thrilled to be working alongside such an amazing group of staff, students and parents." Ms. Ahern is very familiar with the area because she grew up in Burr Ridge. In 2011, she student taught third grade at Spring Avenue School. She is currently teaching sixth grade math to these same students.

Jennifer Mindy, Fourth Grade Teacher

Mrs. Mindy has twelve years of experience as a teacher – seven years as a classroom teacher and five as an enrichment specialist. She has a BS in Elementary Education from Northern Illinois University, a Master's in Gifted Education from Northeastern Illinois University, and a Type 75 Administrative Certificate from Lewis University. "The District 105 family is amazing. I am very impressed with each district member's level of professionalism and dedication. The families are supportive and involved in the school community. I am very happy to be part of an inspirational team whose main goal is to help children become lifelong learners!" Mrs. Mindy is a certified personal trainer, runs marathons, and participates in triathalons. She is married with two children.