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Dr. Glenn T. Schlichting,  
Superintendent of Schools

JULY/AUGUST 2015

# The Newsletter of LaGrange School District 105

# The Blackboard

www.d105.net

Countryside  
Hodgkins  
LaGrange

105

## AWARDS and RECOGNITIONS

### Academic Achievers

**ON** a Saturday morning in January, academically talented sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in the region took the ACT and/or SAT college entrance exams, and the Explore exam, through the Northwestern University Midwest Talent Search (NUMATS). Based on the results of these tests, the West Suburban Consortium for Academic Excellence (WSCAE) recognized local students who scored over 500 on the SAT or over 20 on the ACT. The ACT tests reading, math, science and English skills, while the SAT tests writing, math and reading.

This year, WSCAE recognized 21 Gurrie Middle School students for outstanding achievement on the college exams – a record number.

WSCAE honored these students and others from the region at a special awards ceremony at Hinsdale South High School on May 6. The award-winning Gurrie Jazz Ensemble played at the ceremony.

The students are: Seventh grade – *John Busker, Jack Henningfield, Sandra Kahn, Ava Leahy, Virginia Leahy, Steven O'Donohue, Ryan Pierpaoli, Joseph Prendergast, Mary Prystalski, Liam Rogan, Alessia Sarussi, Joe Springer, and Elizabeth Tabisz.*

Eighth grade – *Claire Chabria, Claire Cirrincione, Adela Garcia, Jaclyn Logan, Ava McLean, Benjamin Prystalski, Taylor Schmitt, and Gabriella Smith.*

### Jazz Ensemble Wins Top Honors at State

The very talented members of the Gurrie Middle School Jazz Ensemble

*Continues on p. 3*

## Did you KNOW...

- Students, staff, and parents gave District 105 the highest overall state rating on the 2015-16 *Illinois 5Essentials School Effectiveness Survey.*
- The District 105 Early Childhood Program earned the highest Gold Star rating from the state for the 2015-16 school year.
- A team from the Gurrie STEM Club placed second in the Midwest Regional Remotely Operated Underwater Vehicle (ROV) Competition on April 25.
- Thirty former District 105 students received award scholarships at the LTHS Seniors Honors Day Assembly on May 22. Two former District 105 students received top Divisional and Departmental Honors.
- At its June 22 meeting, the Board of Education approved an extension of the Teachers' Contract through the 2017-18 school year. The contract includes annual salary increases and a bonus structure tied to student performance and to student and parent survey responses.



*Hodgkins School Principal John Signatur and his family were among the many baseball fans who enjoyed the District 105 Foundation's Kane County Cougars Day in May. See story on page 4.*

Gurrie Middle School  
1001 S. Spring Avenue  
LaGrange, IL 60525  
(708) 482-2720  
Ed Hood, Principal

Hodgkins Elementary School  
6516 S. Kane Avenue  
Hodgkins, IL 60525  
(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

## Congratulations, RETIREES

The district is losing four dedicated teachers to well-deserved retirements. **Anita Celli** retired in January, while **Pat Langevin**, **Laurene McHatton**, and **Mary Beth Niziol** retired in June. Collectively, they have enriched the lives of District 105 students for 94 years! The entire District 105 community extends its appreciation and best wishes to these devoted educators.



**Anita Celli,**  
**Speech-Language Pathologist**

Mrs. Celli worked in District 105 for 35 years, in every school except Spring Avenue. She spent most of her career in the district helping students at Seventh Avenue School. Mrs. Celli retired earlier in the year.

**Patricia Langevin, Art Teacher**

Mrs. Patricia Langevin taught art at Seventh Avenue, Hodgkins, and Ideal schools for 25 years. She was an educator for 35 years. Prior to working in District 105, she taught at Forest Psychiatric Hospital School and was a director at a residential school for students with conduct disorders.



"I have enjoyed teaching my wonderful students here in District 105," Mrs. Langevin stated. "I believe that art is one of the languages of the world. We live in a visual society; much of what we interact with and learn from must be decoded visually. Education in the arts builds students' confidence through perseverance and problem solving. I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to assist in the visual and creative development of District 105 students."



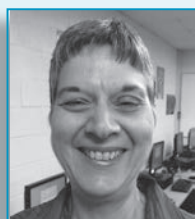
**Laurene McHatton,**  
**Speech-Language Pathologist**

For the past six years, Mrs. McHatton worked in the district, most recently serving Gurrie Middle School students, and earlier, students at Seventh Avenue and Spring Avenue schools. She was an educator for over 30 years.

"Having worked in other schools, I can truly state that District 105 is the finest in the area. All of the staff members are committed to helping students achieve their greatest potential. Parents are involved and reinforce students' skills at home. Thanks to everyone in District 105, I have become a better speech-language pathologist," Mrs. McHatton remarked.

Mrs. McHatton plans to use her professional skills to work with dementia patients, and continue to volunteer as a tutor for adult immigrants who are learning to speak, read, and write English.

Hopefully, that will leave her some time to spend on her favorite hobbies: reading, traveling, and enjoying time with her children and grandchildren.



**Mary Beth Niziol,**  
**English/Language Arts Teacher –**  
**Read 180**

For 28 years, Mrs. Mary Beth Niziol taught English language arts to District 105 students. For the past eight years, she was the English/language arts – Read 180 teacher at Gurrie

Middle School. She has been a teacher for 39 years.

"District 105 has been a wonderful place to work. It's like a family," Mrs. Niziol commented.

She plans to be a private tutor and also continue to help adults learn English through the Sisters of St. Joseph. She looks forward to traveling to see her four grandchildren, who live out of state. Mrs. Niziol will also continue to sing in the Tower Chorale and in her church choir.

### REGISTRATION for the 2015-2016 School Year

To make the registration process more convenient for families, the district is once again providing a mail-in registration option, which will also allow it to gain enrollment information earlier to improve school planning. Elementary students took this information home with their report cards, while kindergarten and seventh grade families received the information by mail.

For the second consecutive year, parents have the option to pay registration fees and load pre-paid meal accounts online with a credit card. But parents still also have the option to pay registration fees and add funds to their students' meal accounts by check or cash.

The district will also provide a Walk-in Registration option on **Tuesday, July 28, 4:00 -7:00 p.m.**, at Seventh Avenue School. More details were sent to parents.

The first day of school is **Monday, August 24.**

### Board of Education Election

At the Cook County Consolidated Election held on April 7, three District 105 Board of Education seats were up for election. Board of Education members serve a four-year term without pay, benefiting the community through their leadership of the district.

Voters elected incumbents **Virginia Kogen**, **Jan Reagan**, and **Larry Prystalski** to serve the district again. The other four members of the Board, whose terms were not up for election this year, are **David Herndon**, **Kristine Lonsway**, **Eileen Tucker** and **Robert Webb**.



# Rotary Club Honors **PRINCIPAL**

**ON** May 15, Gurrie Middle School Principal Ed Hood attended a meeting of the LaGrange Rotary Club. As a member, he often attends meetings. However, there was a surprise in store for Principal Hood that day. At the meeting, Rotary Club officials announced that he is the recipient of a very special distinction: the Paul Harris Fellow Award.



*Gurrie Middle School Principal Ed Hood.*

The Paul Harris Fellow Award is the highest honor a local Rotary Club can bestow on an individual, either inside or outside of the club. The accolade acknowledges "service above self," which that individual has offered to his/her community, nation, or the world.

Paul Harris was the founder of Rotary, and the award program was created to fund many Rotary Foundation initiatives. Members of the club must have collectively contributed \$1,000 to the Rotary Foundation for the privilege of recognizing an individual with this award. Award recipients have set an example for others by their service to the community. Their personal involvement makes the community a better place in which to live.

The LaGrange Rotary Club honored Principal Hood for his work with the EarlyAct™ Club.

For the past eight years, Gurrie students have participated in this service program that is sponsored by the Rotary Club. "Through the EarlyAct Club, Gurrie students have engaged in many local service projects, introducing them to the benefits of serving others in the community," stated Principal Hood.

EarlyAct provides students with the opportunity to gain an increased awareness of their community and of the world. It also engages students in character-building activities and prepares them for leadership roles to carry out projects that benefit local and global communities, and their school.

EarlyAct is closely tied to the mission of the Rotary, which includes being caring and helpful, and recognizing the dignity and worth of each individual.

"Our Rotary sponsor, Kathleen Rupert, has done a wonderful job connecting our students to local service projects," Principal Hood continued. "I am so proud of the work that the Gurrie students in EarlyAct have performed as they make a difference here in the local community and across the world."

"I am also deeply honored to be recognized as a Paul Harris Fellow. Gurrie has adopted the focus of 'We Make a Difference.' I am proud to accept this award on behalf of all of our students and staff who have and will continue to make a difference in our own communities and beyond."

Principal Hood's own actions personify the school's focus. As the principal of Gurrie Middle School for the past 10 years, he has made a positive difference in the lives of hundreds of students.

## AWARDS and RECOGNITIONS (Continued from page 1)

have a lot to be proud of! Under the accomplished instruction of Band Director Jerry Lowrey, the Jazz Ensemble earned the top rating in the Illinois Grade School Music Association (IGSMA) District 7 Jazz Competition in March. Because of this success, the band went on to the state finals in May, competing against the most accomplished school jazz bands in Illinois. The Gurrie Jazz Ensemble's performances of the jazz classics *All of Me*, *After Sunset*, and *Afro Blue* wowed the audience and judges alike.

The band earned a near perfect score, a "superior" rating, and the highest score of all of the bands in the competition. For the first time in Gurrie's history, the Jazz Ensemble was awarded a gold plaque for a superior rating.

Congratulations to the members of the Gurrie Middle School Jazz Ensemble—  
**Saxophones:** Jonathan Brasse, Jacob Fuller, Jack Henningfield, Miguel Peralta, Filip Zivko;

**Trumpets:** Ryan Bonfiglio, Angelina Godinez, Garret Grubusich, Alexander Jumic;

**Trombones:** John Busker, Ava Leahy, Sean Rickman, Mersadie Smith;

**Rhythm Section:** Lauren Culver – piano, Bryan Galdun – bass, Alexander Leon – drums, Elena Leon – piano, Gabriella Smith – drums.

### School Citizens of the Year

Each year, District 105 students are recognized by the School Citizen of the Year (SCOTY) Awards that are sponsored by West 40, the educational service center for western Cook County school districts. Each school in the region has the opportunity to nominate one student for the award. The student must be a "role model for other students and a good school citizen." Based on this criteria, District 105 educators chose one SCOTY recipient from each of the district's five schools. West 40 recognized them, and all of the 2015 SCOTY award winners, at a ceremony in spring.

The District 105 School Citizens of the Year are – Gurrie: Patricia Alvarez; Hodgkins: Hazelle Orellana; Ideal: Daniel Babnigg; Seventh Avenue: Abigail Guerra; and Spring Avenue: Mary Callaghan.

### Basketball Team Excels

The eighth grade boys' basketball team worked extremely hard and showed improvement over last year. The team advanced to the Lyons Township Elementary School Athletic Conference (LTESAC) championship for the second year in a row, with 11 wins and 3 losses in the conference. The team had a 14 and 5 overall record and took second place in the Hodgkins' basketball tournament.

The seventh grade boys' basketball team also worked hard, finishing the season with an 8-5 regular season record, and a 10-7 overall record, and were the conference co-champions.

The teams were coached by Eddie Alvarez and Joe Pontrelli.

## UPDATE: District 105 Foundation

The District 105 Foundation was created three years ago to strengthen family and community relationships throughout the district. In addition to bringing families and other community members together, the Foundation raises funds to provide college scholarships each year to four high school seniors, who represent each of the district's four elementary schools.

### Foundation Awards Scholarships

At the Lyons Township Senior Honors Assembly on May 22, the District 105 Foundation awarded \$1500 renewable scholarships to four deserving graduating seniors. The second annual Foundation scholarships were awarded in memory of

Edward Olds III, District 105 superintendent from 1993 – 2002, and Jess Rufa, loving daughter of Judy and Chuck, proud graduate of District 105, Lyons Township High School, and DePaul Law School.

The 2015 District 105 Foundation scholarship recipients are **Emily Bastian**, (former Seventh Avenue School student), **Riley Carroll** (former Spring Avenue School student), **Maria Fernanda Flores** (former Hodgkins School student), and **Brittany Grosser-Basile** (former Ideal School student). These students excelled in academics, leadership, and service during

their elementary, middle, and high school years.

Because the scholarships renew each year, last year's recipients will also receive the award for the second time to use toward college expenses during their sophomore year.

### Kane County Cougars Day

The third annual Kane County Cougars Day was the biggest and best yet! Nearly 700 staff, students, parents, and community members enjoyed the game at the Fifth Third Bank

Ballpark in Geneva, and also enjoyed many special events that were planned by the Foundation and by the Cougars. Outstanding performances by the District

**SAVE THE DATE:** All community members are invited to attend the **Back to School Family Picnic and Movie Night** on Friday, September 18, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Hodgkins Park District building. There will be fun for all ages, with food, music and other entertainment, in addition to the movie, which will be shown on an outdoor screen, weather permitting. Visit the district website, [d105.net](http://d105.net), for further information as it becomes available.



(L) Susan Dixon, District 105 Foundation president, and (R) Marcela Ortiz, District 105 ELL coordinator, with the 2015 Foundation scholarship recipients (L to R) Emily Bastian, Riley Carroll, Maria Fernanda Flores, and Brittany Grosser-Basile.

105 Orchestra and Jazz Ensemble, and the District 105 Choir – that led the crowd in singing *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* during the seventh inning stretch – further enriched the day.

### Back to School Family Picnic and Movie Night

Last year, families and other community members welcomed the school year with a *Back to School Family Picnic and Movie Night*. The event was so successful that it will be repeated this year (see box above).

Interested in learning more about the Foundation or becoming a sponsor? Please visit [d105.net](http://d105.net), or contact [klenti@d105.net](mailto:klenti@d105.net).

## District 105 YEAR END RESULTS

District year-end achievement results were presented to the Board of Education at the board's June 22 meeting. Key findings from the presentation are provided below. The full presentation is available on the District 105 website [d105.net](http://d105.net).

■ 71% of students achieved their annual math progress targets on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing. This result is above recent district trends.

■ 62% of students achieved their annual reading progress targets on MAP.

■ 64% of students scored above the fiftieth percentile on the spring math portion of MAP. This outcome is slightly above recent district trends.

■ 63% of students scored above the fiftieth percentile on the spring reading portion of MAP. This percentage is slightly below recent district trends.

■ 53% of 2015 Gurrie Middle School graduates registered for accelerated/honors math courses at LTHS. This is above recent district trends.

■ 42% of 2015 Gurrie graduates registered for accelerated/honors LTHS English courses.

■ 32% of 2015 Gurrie graduates registered for accelerated/honors LTHS science courses. This percentage is above recent district trends.

*The Blackboard*



## Consortium of Educational Change (CEC) SCHOOL DISTRICT ASSESSMENT

A CEC Systems Assessment team of educators from high performing districts across the suburban area visited all five of our District 105 schools this year for two days to observe practices, examine evidence, and interview staff, administrators, parents, and students. Participation in the CEC Systems Assessment process reflects our district-wide commitments to:

- Continuous improvement
- Labor-management collaboration
- A systems approach to organizational excellence
- The belief that all children can learn at high levels
- The measurement and reporting of our results.

The CEC team compiled a report at the end of the process to identify school strengths and opportunities for improvement based on the Baldrige Excellence Criteria and the practices and results of the highest performing schools. District-wide findings from the reports are highlighted below. The full district CEC report can be found on the district website, [d105.net](http://d105.net).

### Opportunities for Improvement:

- The achievement gap persists for students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, have second language backgrounds, and receive special education services.
- There is a need to increase parent engagement in the learning process.
- The current state assessment system is undergoing change, which makes it difficult for the

district to have a clear path for a good assessment system.

### Strengths:

- There is a strong, dedicated staff committed to continuous improvement and focused on student needs and requirements.
- Students and parents have a high regard for school personnel.
- There are decision-making structures in place to allow for data review so staff can monitor and track their performance aligned to key indicators and measures.
- There is a strong commitment to social-emotional learning.

### DISTRICT 105 BOARD OF EDUCATION

David Herndon,  
*President*  
Kristine Lonsway,  
*Vice President*  
Eileen Tucker,  
*Secretary*  
Virginia Kogen  
Larry Prystalski  
Jan Reagan  
Robert Webb

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

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## 1:1 Computer Program **EXPANDS** to Sixth Grade

**I**N 2013, the 1:1 Chromebooks laptop computer program began at Gurrie Middle School. The first year, students used the laptops in certain classes. The program was so successful that it expanded during the 2014-2015 school year to provide every Gurrie student with access to a Chromebook in most of their classrooms throughout the school day.

Chromebooks are laptop computers that run the Google cloud-based operating

system and web browser. They can only be used while connected to the Internet and only support web applications. They are lightweight, fast, secure, and very affordable.

A survey of Gurrie students showed that students who used Chromebooks were more engaged in their studies and more excited about learning. An increase in student engagement was seen in every category surveyed.

The 1:1 program is expanding to include sixth grade students in the fall.

"We are excited to be expanding our 1:1 initiative into sixth grade classrooms district-wide next year," said Trish Murphy, the district's technology manager. "Based on the success of the 1:1 program at Gurrie, the program will expand to the elementary buildings, and it will be piloted in sixth grade. The devices will be available in all sixth grade classrooms at the start of the 2015-2016 school year. By selecting Chromebooks again

for the 1:1 initiative, students will have an easy-to-use device that starts up in as little as eight seconds and has a battery life that lasts the entire school day, which helps reduce technology barriers to learning. Similar to the Gurrie 1:1 program, the Chromebooks will be available all day, every day, in carts assigned to each of the sixth grade classrooms and will be integrated into all content areas. Leveraging these devices at Gurrie has increased engagement, collaboration and real world connections for our students. We anticipate realizing the same benefits with the sixth graders next year.

"The sixth grade staff will participate in professional development opportunities over the summer and throughout the next school year. These learning opportunities will focus on supporting staff with the 1:1 initiative, introducing new web-based tools, and exploring ways to deepen the implementation of tools such as Google Apps. Additionally, this initiative will increase access to technology district-wide and help all of our grade levels get closer to a 1:1 ratio."



*Every Gurrie Middle School student had access to a laptop this past school year. In the fall, the program will expand to sixth grade.*