

THE BLACKBOARD

THE LA GRANGE SCHOOL DISTRICT 105 NEWSLETTER

DISTRICT OFFICE: 701 SOUTH SEVENTH AVENUE LA GRANGE, ILLINOIS 60525 708.482.2700 WWW.D105.NET

Letter from the Superintendent

Dear D105 Community,

It is hard to believe that we are already nearing the close of the 2022-2023 school year. Each year, I find myself reflecting on how deeply grateful I am to serve our district.

As a staff, we remain committed to fulfilling the promise of our mission statement: Empowering students to make a difference in our world by assisting them to be self-directed, passionate, lifelong learners. This newsletter provides some of the many examples of this mission coming to fruition. I am so proud of our students and staff for all they have accomplished this school year.

I am honored to team with outstanding educators who share a passion for supporting students as they strive to meet challenging goals in a caring, supportive, and fun learning environment. One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is visiting schools and seeing the smiling faces of our students as they are highly engaged in the learning process. This is yet another example of the D105 Difference.

As we celebrate some wonderful student and staff achievements via this newsletter, it is also important to recognize that D105 remains committed to continuous improvement. As parents and community members, I thank you for your support and partnership as we consistently strive to enhance our work with and for your child(ren).

This year, we have three incredibly talented educators retiring from D105. I want to thank Mrs. Mona Johnson, Dr. Julie McGovern, and Mrs. Cathy Nestlinger for their years of excellent service to the D105 community. You have each left a child-centered, caring, and confidence-building legacy that will continue to guide our work.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of The Blackboard.

With Gratitude, Dr. Brian J. Ganan

D105 Connection Center Helps Families Thrive



The D105 Connection Center opened in the fall after a two-year hiatus during the pandemic. The program has found new energy and life under the leadership of Director of English Learners, Dr. Socorro Mendoza, and Connection Center Coordinator, Marbella Marinez.

Mendoza and Marinez have focused their efforts on bringing families together to share in each other's expertise, talents, and passions. They have created a space where kids from all D105 communities can interact with each other in a way they may not have the chance to otherwise.

Mendoza wants parents to know that all this fun isn't just for the kids! The Connection Center invites parents to not only take part in the adult classes offered but to teach them as well. Some of the most well-attended activities this year have been the adult craft classes taught by D105 parents, proving the Connection

Center motto that "We are all teachers and learners".

The Connection Center Team has worked hard to pack the calendar with a diverse list of classes and activities. This year, students have had the opportunity to enjoy themebased arts and crafts, a maker space where students have time and materials to be creative, guided open gym, computer science classes, cooking classes, and homework club supervised by a certified teacher to support students as needed. They also offer Rosetta Stone classes for parents who would like to learn English or Spanish.

Ultimately, Mendoza and Marinez hope to create a space that reflects what the D105 difference really is; A space where the community can come to meet new people, learn new things, and share what they are passionate about.

















Gurrie at Your Service

Gurrie has spent this year continuing its mission to empower students to make a difference in the world by inspiring them to be self-directed, passionate, lifelong learners. One of the many ways that Gurrie students make a difference is by setting yearly service hour goals. Each year, 8th-grade classes set a goal to provide service that equals their graduation year. That means this year's graduating class has set a goal of 2,023 hours!

Students have the opportunity to complete these hours by reaching out to members of their community independently or through school-sponsored clubs like the Early Act Club and Every Monday Matters. These clubs host car washes to support the D105 Foundation, make fleece blankets to donate to Ronald McDonald House in Oak Lawn, participate in beach cleanup days through the Alliance for the Great Lake's Adopt a



The Every Monday Matters Club removing invasive species from Bemis Woods in October

Beach Program, help remove invasive species in Bemis Woods, and so much more.

Since 2010, Gurrie students have completed close to 39,000 hours of service to their own communities and beyond. These programs continue to help shape the lives and world views of D105 middle schoolers and help prepare them to be well-rounded high school students (and eventually adults) with a strong sense of purpose.



2023 SCOTY Awards

West40 hosted the 2023 SCOTY Awards in the West Leyden High School Auditorium in March. The ceremony honored 131 students from the West Cook County region. The SCOTY (School Citizen of the Year) Award recognizes students chosen by their schools as good school citizens and models for others to emulate. Educators are asked to nominate students with positive attitudes, a willingness to help others,

leadership skills, and a strong work ethic.

(Pictured from left to right) Gurrie's Santiago Garcia, Hodgkins' Xcaret Nogueda-Nunez, Spring Avenue's Jackson Tapalla, Ideal's Evelyn Mendoza, and Seventh Avenue's Emily Enright were each selected as leaders in their schools and the D105 community by their school principals and staff members.





IMSA Fusion Offers New Perspective on STEM

The district was thrilled to bring back the elementary IMSA (Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy) Fusion program this year. Seventh Avenue 5th Grade teachers Samantha Beilke and Sharon Stagaman facilitated two separate modules for interested 4th and 5th graders, one in the fall and one in the spring. Students were asked to write a letter or essay, make a video or slide presentation, or create a poster explaining why they wanted to join. A lottery system was then used to select the 20 lucky applicants who were accepted.

The first module started in November and focused on "Organized Sound: STEM in Music". Students met after school on Mondays to explore how science, technology, engineering, and math are utilized and inherent to the art of music. The goal was for students to develop a basic understanding of the physics

of sound and apply it to the engineering and development of sound technology and instrumentation.

The Spring module, "Engineering: Design and Build", wrapped up on May 1st and focused on investigative engineering. Student-led teams conceptualized, built, tested, and acquired knowledge while becoming familiar with the engineering design process. Beilke and Stagaman used an open-ended inquiry approach to help foster student creativity. Students designed zip lines, discovered the best ways to package their favorite snacks to prevent damage, and more while developing the habits of innovators. The program is a student favorite and an exciting way to see how STEM applies to the world around us.

FUNdations at Hodgkins

At the October D105 Board of Education Meeting, kindergarten teacher Joy Conrady and EL teacher Krystal Schmidt gave a demonstration on what the Wilson Fundations Curriculum looks like at Hodgkins School. Conrady and Schmidt gave an abbreviated version of the lessons that the K-2 team, which also includes first grade teacher Crystal Farkaschek and second grade teacher Wendy Carter, have been working hard to master and implement in their classrooms.

Fundations is a Board of Education approved curriculum from Wilson, an Orton-Gillingham structured literacy approach, and is being used across the district alongside the existing core reading curriculum to enhance reading fluency and comprehension, phonics, writing, and vocabulary. It is a visual and multi-sensory approach that really digs



into the science behind the code of reading. Students work with their puppet owl friends, Mama Echo and Baby Echo, to practice letter sounds, handwriting, and more during the 30minute lessons. The fun and interactive lessons have been excellent for retention. Fundations has been a great way to support students as they prepare to make the transition from learning to read to reading to learn.

Awards

and Service

Staff Retirements

Honored Retirees:

Lisa Carson Juliana De La Cruz Mona Johnson Julie McGovern Cathy Nestlinger Vollie Pearson III Diane Worazek

25 Years Service: **Christine Eck** Kathryn Heeke

20 Years Service:

Carolyn Buchanan Angie Bukowiecki Karol Lindgren Jill Ruelas

15 Years Service:

Luke Arneson Rudy Beezhold Shannon Beezhold Tara Eiternick Jane Falvey Laurel Gallagher Joanna Marek Nicolette Panice Natalie Gebhart Jen Pigman Michael Yena

10 years:

Araceli Almeida **Amy Brown** Fernando Gonzalez Erin Hall **Eric Jones** Aimee Keillor Maria Lopez Jennifer Mindy **Emily Wiegand**

Ronald McDonald Care Mobile

One of the most important roles of our School Nurses is to ensure all students have been seen by Health Care Professionals and are up to date with the required immunizations. By law, students who don't meet the health requirements must be excluded from school each year on October 15th until the requirements are met. The D105 School Nurses work extremely hard to assist families in accessing health care, including connecting families to resources, facilitating appointments, and breaking down barriers to health care such as transportation. We are proud to announce that D105 is now partnering with the Advocate Children's Hospital Ronald McDonald Care Mobile to provide health services to students without insurance or those who participate in Medicare. The Care Mobile offers free and easy access to health screenings, school or sports physicals, and immunizations for local communities. D105 held its

first onsite Care Mobile clinic on April 11th at Ideal. The clinic provided eight students with physicals, immunizations, and treatments. The Advocate team will also connect these families to follow-up care and other medical resources. The Care Mobile will visit summer school on July 27th, 2023, at Seventh Avenue School and again at **Gurrie Middle School on August** 15th, 2023.

ALITTLE RESPECTFUL SPOT IDEAL SCHOOL EDITION



Ideal Gets Social & Emotional

Responsive Classroom in an evidence-based, student-centered approach D105 schools use to support students socially and academically.

Ideal students took charge during the December D105 Board of Education meeting. They led the board in a Morning Meeting which includes a greeting, share, activity and message for the day. They led a rock-paperscissors-entourage activity during the board meeting.

These activities are examples of the Responsive Classroom approach that the district has implemented across all schools. Morning Meetings are one of the many ways Responsive Classroom works to build community within D105 classrooms and schools. They allow students to connect with

each other and learn from friends in their classrooms. It is an excellent way for teachers and students to work together to set the tone for the day.

As part of RC, Ideal has also spent time this year focusing on respect. Teachers and students spent time thinking about what respect looks, sounds, and feels like. Together, they read the book A Little Respectful Spot, which talks about how respecting someone's personal space, property, or feelings tells people you care about them and yourself too. Inspired by the message, students created A Little Respectful Spot: Ideal Edition, which now lives in the library for all to enjoy!

Gurrie Middle School WE Nake a Differer IMEA Honor Festival Participants: (from left to right)

IMEA Honor Festival Participants: (from left to right) Evan Nunez- Garcia, Peter Kutlich, Ainsley Litser, and Carrie Riopell



D105 Music Matters

Music Programs Back in Full Swing Band and Orchestra had record recruitments this year! D105 music teachers are excited to see their programs grow in the community with 70 new Band students and 80 new Orchestra students.

Chicago Symphony Field Trip
In February, the D105 Music Parents
Association sponsored an opportunity
for the intermediate band and
orchestra students to attend a Chicago
Symphony Orchestra School Concert.
The concert took students on a musical
journey through cherished classical
works, film score favorites, and pieces
by Mead Composer-in-Residence
Jessie Montgomery. The program
focused on the idea that, although life
has many challenges, we all have the
potential to find our own way.

Live Music is Back

Gurrie students celebrated the return of live music events this Fall. They were thrilled to host the LTHS Freshman and Sophomore Choirs for a live performance in the gym.

IMEA District One Honor Festival

The D105 Music Program was proud to have four students participate in the Illinois Music Educators Association District One Honor Festival on November 5th this year. Carrie Riopell represented the Choir, and Peter Kutlich, Ainsley Litster, and Evan Nunez-Garcia represented the Band. These students submitted auditions and were ranked high among hundreds of other students from our surrounding area. At the festival, they had the opportunity to work with nationally renowned clinicians and conductors.

LT Solo and Ensemble Festival

Rand and Orchestra Members

Band and Orchestra Members participated in the annual Lyons Township Solo and Ensemble Festival in March. An impressive 35 students prepared and performed solos for a judge at the LTHS South Campus.

Keeping Students Cyber Safe

In early March, D105 hosted parent and student presentations from nationally recognized High Technology Cyber Crimes Specialist Detective Richard Wistocki. Detective Wistocki spoke to 6th-8th grade students about the importance of cyber safety and responsible activity. That evening, Gurrie hosted a

separate presentation for any adults who wished to attend. Wistocki presented to the crowd on how an online predator works, the dangers of making "friends" online, how to teach kids to be good cyber citizens, how cell phone applications can be dangerous, the risks of sharing inappropriate pictures, how

cyberbullying affects each one of us and more. With cyber security becoming more important and more complicated every day, parents and teachers seemed grateful to have the opportunity to hear some expert advice, with one 6th grade parent stating, "This guy is fantastic. I learned a lot today."



Dr. Jennifer Rosinia presents "The Anatomy of a Meltdown" to preschool staff and parents



Parent Cafés Support Preschool Families

Throughout the school year, the D105 Preschool Program has hosted monthly parent participation events. These events cover various topics, from a presentation on "Conscious Discipline", to "Make and Take" workshops where parents come into the classroom to assemble learning activity kits that they can use at home.

Preschool and Student Services
Coordinator Kim Luther has put an
emphasis on making sure Parent Cafes
are as accessible as possible. Each
event had a Spanish translator present,
and dinner and childcare were provided
for two evening presentations.
These events also provide an
opportunity to bring in outside experts.

In March, preschool parents were invited to attend a presentation on "Expanding Language in the Home" given by two Speech/Language Pathologists. The most recent event was a collaboration between D105, LADSE, and Start Net Region 2. Dr. Jennifer Rosinia presented "The Anatomy of a Meltdown" in the Gurrie gymnasium to over 70 parents and staff members from D105 and surrounding districts served by LADSE.

With the excellent level of participation this year, the Preschool Program is excited to continue to host Parent Cafes in the 2023/2024 school year!



In Loving Memory

On September 28th, Seventh Avenue hosted a dedication ceremony for the new outdoor learning space and stained glass window to honor the memory of Mrs. Mary Elizabeth (Duffy) Jeske. Members of Mrs. Jeske's family gathered with district families and staff members to share memories and celebrate the life of the beloved Kindergarten teacher.

The Seventh Avenue staff designed the stunning stained glass window with personal touches that represent Mary Elizabeth. A bright and happy sun wearing Mrs. Jeske's signature shades, piano keys that bring to mind the music and fun that filled her classroom each day, and a Duffy Bear that is sure to remind former students of the day they finally got their turn with the fuzzy traveling friend, are just some of the treasures that now live in the window of the classroom she called home for most of her 17 years at Seventh Avenue.

In the space just outside the classroom door is a beautiful outdoor learning space complete with hopscotch tiles, a patio area, and a cozy bench next to a "Little Free Library" for readers of all ages to enjoy. A fitting memorial for a teacher who gave the gift of reading to so many students.



Seventh Avenue students enjoying some sunshine in the new outdoor learning space.

A Strong Foundation

The District 105 (D105) Foundation has been hard at work this year. The Foundation is a not-for-profit organization led by D105 residents. D105 staff members serve as liaisons between the Foundation leadership and the District. We thank the following members of the D105 Foundation leadership team:

- Amy Carroll, President
- Michelle Luburic, Secretary
- Eric Storz, Treasurer
- John Finn, Board Member
- Erill Hill, Board Member
- Bill Holder, Board Member
- Andrea Hornickle, Board Member
- Mike Buttron, Board Member
- Scott Musillami, Board Member
- Mark Smith, Board Member
- Elias Lopez, Board Member

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- Riley Carroll, Board Member

The following D105 staff serve as liaisons:
Brian Ganan, Superintendent
Ed Hood, Principal of Gurrie Middle School
Eilidh Hall, Principal of Ideal Elementary School
Socorro Mendoza, Director of English Learners
Svetlana Popovic, Principal of Hodgkins School

Empowering students to pursue their interests, talents, and dreams, strengthening family and community relationships, and providing college scholarships to D105 students are the guiding principles for the Foundation.

Along with other family-friendly events (such as an August 26, 2023, outing to a Windy City Thunderbolts baseball game), the Foundation is preparing for its annual D105 Dash fundraiser. This race is the primary fundraiser

for the organization. The Dash will take place at 9:00 a.m. on June 11, 2023. The run begins at Countryside Park. Registration information will be posted on the Foundation website (www.d105foundation.net) and Facebook (ww.facebook.com/D105Foundation). We hope to see you there!

The Foundation recently awarded their annual scholarships to current LT seniors and former D105 students. Each year, the Foundation awards one former student from each of our four elementary schools with a \$1,500 (up to \$6,000 total) per year college scholarship. Students submit an essay to the Foundation's Scholarship Committee as part of the qualifying process. Congratulations to former D105 students and 2023 Scholarship recipients Grace Sneed, Samantha Shanahan, Olivia Guerra, and Jeanne Mardegan!

The Foundation thanks all students who submitted an essay and wishes all seniors the best as they embark on their college/ career journey.





Top: Erin Hill, Susan Calder, and Steve Hill serve up a hot beverage and a cool treat at the D105 Back to School Night Bottom: Gurrie student volunteers work the hotdog/hamburger stand



Seventh Avenue first grade teacher and fitness guru Alyssa Orosz leads a workout for this year's Dollars for Scholars Fitness Event.

The District that Plays Together Stays **Together**



Having after-school programs back has been the highlight of the year for many D105 students and staff members. One such activity is the district-wide Intramural Program.

More than sixty 5th and 6th graders participated in this year's Volleyball and Basketball Intramural.

In contrast to previous years when students were bussed to Gurrie, each D105 elementary school hosted a portion of the practice days this year. The change allowed participants to interact with their future Gurrie classmates and gave everyone a few weeks of "home court advantage". Coach Joe Pontrelli says that the traveling structure has also made it easier to promote the program and show students the variety of sports that will be available to them at Gurrie.

D105 Facilities Plan

D105 finalized a 10-year capital improvement plan in December with the district's architect, Arcon Associates. The plan adopted includes plumbing upgrades, electrical system upgrades, and roof replacement. Recent inspections found all four buildings to be in overall good shape; however, the infrastructure to support the buildings will need these upgrades over the next ten years.

The banner project of the 10-year plan is to air condition Spring, Gurrie, Ideal, and Hodgkins Schools. The improvements will be paid for with a combination of district funds, state grants, and federal grants. Planning is taking place to target this project for completion in the summer of 2024.

Spring 6th Graders Lead the Pack



New at Spring Avenue this year is the 6th great leadership group, "Lion's P.R.I.D.E.". The group was created as a result of three simple questions that were asked of Spring Ave 6th graders in the fall: What is special about Spring Ave? What can we Improve on as a school? What new projects or opportunities would you like to see at Spring Ave? After reviewing the answers, Ms. Read, Mrs. Skala, and the social work team selected four sixth grade students to be initial ambassadors for Lion's P.R.I.D.E.

Colin Cassidy, Bea Scouffas, Sydney Kail, and Jackson Tapalla met every

Monday during lunch and recess from November to January to discuss what they would like Spring Avenue to look like, sound like, and feel like. As a result, the acronym P.R.I.D.E. (Positive Respectful Individuals Demonstrating Empathy) was born. The group's goal is to bring together a group of 6th grade students to contribute to a positive school community, model expected behaviors for younger students, and act as champions of R.O.A.R (Respect, Ownership, Attitude, and Responsibility). Part of launching the group was asking the ambassadors to use this overall goal to create a list of "hopes and dreams" for the year. This list includes taking visitors and new students on school tours, researching and selecting a school-wide service project, organizing the PTO sponsored volunteer breakfast, and more.

One of the most important aspects of Lion's P.R.I.D.E is developing the social emotional skills of Spring Ave students. Creating the "Primary Pals" program is one of the many ways they hope to accomplish that goal. Sixth grade

students will be working with younger grades on cooperation, problem solving, and playing inclusively at recess. Spring Avenue Social Worker Gail Weiland says that "Primary Pals will help build leadership skills with our older students and increase social emotional skills across grade levels with respect to cooperation, conflict resolution, and empathy".

While Lion's P.R.I.D.E is still in it's infancy, this year's group of ambassadors have paved the way for countless future Spring Avenue sixth graders to "lead the pack".



Ambassadors brainstorm "hopes and dreams" for Lion's PRIDE

Gurrie Middle School 1001 S Spring Avenue La Grange, IL 60525

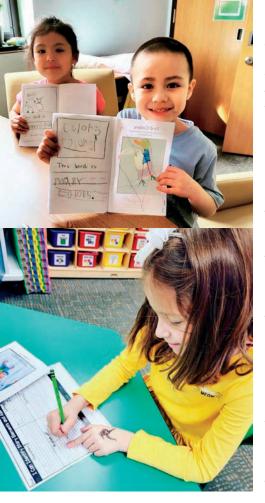
6516 S. Kane Avenue Hodgkins, IL 60525 708.482.2720 708.482.2740 Ed Hood, Principal Svetlana Popovic, Principal

Hodgkins Elementary School

Ideal Elementary School 9901 W 58th Street Countryside, IL 60525 708.482.2750 Eilidh Hall, Principal

Seventh Avenue Elementary School 701 S. Seventh Avenue La Grange, IL 60525 708.482.2730 Erin Hall, Principal

Spring Avenue Elementary School 1001 S Spring Avenue La Grange, IL 60525 708.482.2710 Amy Read, Principal



Seventh Avenue Readers as Writers

When you visit Seventh Avenue, you get a sense that literacy is alive in the building. Whether you visit a Morning Assembly where students and staff are engaging in their One Book One School reflections, stop by a classroom and see students in small groups reading with teachers and classmates, see a writing idea or topic for a student to borrow on a bulletin board, you get a sense that there is a strong commitment and love for reading and writing. Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Jacobs share that over the past few years, there has been a building commitment from staff and a focus to help students understand the connection between reading and writing. Seventh Avenue teachers often state, Readers ARE Writers! Over the past two years, and with the District addition of the Lucy Calkins Units of Study, students not only view themselves as strong readers, but now AUTHORS. Staff members celebrate their students by having them share their writing pieces and reader's responses during Morning Assembly and their writing block. This year the PTO provided each classroom with an "Author's Chair" so students would have an extra special place to share their drafts and final written pieces of work with classmates.



Second graders (from left to right) Eliot Stoltz, Mila Maric, Xavier Gonzalez, Liam Frisbie, Callie Ruprecht, and Marcos Pinel Tellez performing in this year's Readers Theater

Behind the scenes, teachers are collaborating using district resources and Lucy Calkins Units of Study while reflecting on 7th Ave all-school reader's responses. This commitment by all stakeholders to ensure students continue to grow as both readers and writers is an area Seventh Avenue staff feel a sense of pride in!

Battle of the Books

It was a memorable Battle of the Books season this year for D105. Gurrie got things started with over 70 participants and 14 teams. Gurrie Library Media Specialist Jennifer Sutsser shared that the Battle was a huge success, and the level of excitement and energy around reading was exceptional. Team "Book Baddies" and team "Star Spangled Banner" came out on top and moved on to represent Gurrie at the Inter-School Battle against Park, Pleasantdale, Highlands, and McClure on March 21st.

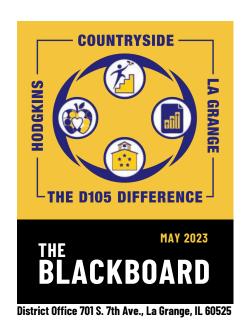
To kick off the elementary battle, each school hosted a Teacher Battle of the Books, where teachers were assigned the same books as the students and asked to team up and duke it out. The teams came in costume and brought their A-game while modeling good sportsmanship with hugs, high-fives, and hip-hip-hoorays for the winning teams.

For the elementary battles, 5th and 6th grade students across the district who wished to participate chose their teams, divided their book lists, and got to reading. All four schools saw an excellent turnout this year, with Ideal and Spring having 100% participation from their 5th and 6th graders.

The elementary Library Media Specialists reorganized the four winning teams from each school into new "super teams". Each "super team" had at least one representative from each school. The students did a fantastic job working with their new teams, so much so that there was a four-way tie for third place. The grand prize went to team "Math Class", but the overarching theme of this year's battles was that ALL readers are winners!







Gurrie Middle School Welcomes New Co-Principal

After an extensive interview process that included participation from: Gurrie Middle School staff, members of the Board of Education, district and building administration, and parents of students currently at Gurrie and our elementary schools, we are pleased to announce that Ms. Lorena Mendoza has been selected as the Co-Principal/Principal Designee for Gurrie Middle School. Ms. Mendoza will be partnering with Ed Hood during the 2023/2024 school year in preparation for a transition to Principal for the 2024/2025 school year.

Ms. Mendoza believes in leading with a shared vision to provide every student with equitable, rigorous instruction. As a first-generation college graduate from a Mexican immigrant family, she understands the impact of education on students, families, and communities. When students feel safe and have adult connections in school, they are better equipped to learn.



Ms. Mendoza earned a Chemical Engineering degree from Trine University in 1994. She started her career as a Manufacturing Engineer for General Motors. She received her Mathematics teaching certification through Northwestern University in 2003. She then began teaching at CPS, serving as Mathematics department chair until 2008. In 2008, she received her Master's in Educational Leadership from the American College of Education, and joined the Fenton High School staff where she taught mathematics and was an instructional coach for 12 years. Most recently, she has served as Assistant Principal at Tefft Middle School. In this role, she had the opportunity to help move instruction from teacher-centered to student-centered, helping to empower students to take ownership of their learning. Ms. Mendoza is currently working on her Educational Doctorate in Educational Leadership, and is honored to become part of the Gurrie Tigers community. She says she can already tell that Gurrie and D105's top priority is their students and families.

D105 Board of EducationElias Lopez, President
Dr. Robert Sherman, Vice President
Sheila Bryck, Secretary

Kelly Young Candice Mares Amy Flaherty Hartman Bryan White