

DISTRICT OFFICE  
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Dr. Glenn T. Schlichting,  
Superintendent of Schools

JANUARY 2018

# The Newsletter of LaGrange School District 105

# The Blackboard

www.d105.net

Countryside  
Hodgkins  
LaGrange

105

## Making CONNECTIONS!

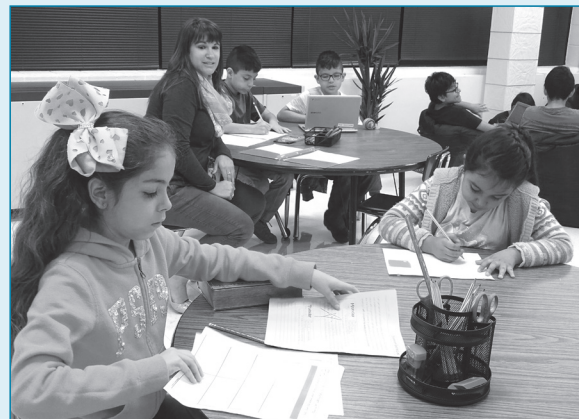
**D**istrict 105 now has a new after-school opportunity for all District 105 students and their families!

Connections Community Learning Center, located in Ideal School, opened on October 10 to provide a welcoming environment for families to learn, talk, and play. Open from 4:00 to 7:00 pm Tuesdays and Thursdays, teachers from throughout the district facilitate events and activities in the gym, library, and in classrooms. Students can work on homework, use laptops, play games, and socialize with friends and families in a safe, supervised, and fun environment. In addition, English and Spanish language classes for parents are held at the Center from 5:00 to 6:00 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

*Connections* also furthers a sense of community, since it brings together

diverse students and families from all of the district schools.

On the Connections Community Learning Center's opening night, Ideal Principal Timothy Sheldon explained, "We currently have capacity for up to 100 people a night. However, as interest and demand increase, we will look at expanding the center's staff to meet the community's needs. We are starting with three certified teachers and a coordinator to work within the different spaces in the school with our students and families. We are planning to introduce mentoring and tutoring for students, along with help from Lyons Township High School student volunteers, and with student volunteers from local colleges."



*Opening Night at Connections Community Learning Center brought students, families, and educators together to work and play.*

No tax dollars are being used to support the Center. This exciting opportunity is funded through the generous donations of local area businesses, including Vulcan Materials and Republic Bank. The center is closed on D105 school non-attendance days and on parent/teacher conference days.

## Did you KNOW...

- Former Gurrie Middle School student Max Ryser is a National Merit semi-finalist. He earned perfect scores on the PSAT and ACT assessments.
- The tax rate in District 105 is lower than more than 80% of the elementary school districts in Illinois.

The District 105 community takes great pride in the fact that staff members, administrators, and Board of Education members are frequently recruited to make regional and national presentations about best school districts' best educational practices:

- Spring Avenue Library Learning Center Director Joanna Marek recently presented *Primary Source Pairings with Award-winning Books* at the National American Association of School Librarians Conference.
- Board of Education President Dave Herndon and Superintendent Glenn Schlichting will present *Ensuring a Return on Your Strategic Plan Investment* at the Illinois Conference of School Board Members, Business Officials, and Administrators.
- Director of Curriculum and Instruction Kathryn Heeke, and kindergarten teachers Mary Pat Larocca, Celine Hill, and Joy Conrady presented *Teacher Agency: Building a Culture for Professional Learning* at the National Learning Forward Conference.
- Eighth Grade Math Teacher Susan Calder will present *Using Technology for Math Formative Assessments*, and District Math Specialist Kathleen Courtney will present *Geometry, Measurement, and Games for the Classroom* at the Metropolitan Math Club of Chicago Conference.

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  
Timothy Sheldon, 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  
Brian Lawson, Principal

The District 105 Educational Foundation held two very successful events in the fall. At the first, the annual Back-to-School Night, about 500 students and family members came to Gurrie Middle School on September 15 to celebrate the new school year. It was a great way for the school community to come together for a night of food and fun and to socialize. Participants watched the movie "Moana" outdoors on a giant screen, were entertained by magician Frankie Ace and by "the Balloon



*The Foundation's Back-to-School Night kicked off the new school year. Magician "Frankie Ace" captivated students and adults alike.*

Guy," and enjoyed music presented by "DJ for a Night" fine arts coordinator/music teacher JoEllyn Moroney. Delicious food from Q-BBQ was available, along with the opportunity to purchase tickets to *Grand Jam*, the Foundation's first ever fundraising event, and to purchase raffle tickets for a Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

Over 200 attendees came to the Foundation's *Grand Jam* at the Illinois Harley-Davidson dealership in Countryside on the evening of Saturday, October 14, to show their support for District 105 and enjoy a terrific night out.

While enjoying food from La Buona Vita, and drinks, participants heard live music by Howl at the Moon Dueling Pianos,

had their pictures taken on the motorcycle that was the *Grand Jam's* raffle prize, got airbrushed tattoos, checked out all the cool new and vintage motorcycles, and even had the chance to take a simulated motorcycle ride. The announcement of the winner of the motorcycle raffle was a highlight of the night.

The District 105 Foundation members are grateful to the *Grand Jam's* generous Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze donors and contributing sponsors, all of the attendees, and to everyone who purchased raffle tickets. A huge "thank you" also goes out to the hardworking event-planning committee and volunteers who made the event a great success.

Each year, the Foundation's focus is to award scholarships to five graduating LT students – former District 105 students – who are in need of support to pursue a college education. The *Grand Jam* raised over \$20,000, which will be used to continue to support the Foundation's 18 scholarship recipients (their scholarships can be renewed annually), in addition to the next five recipients who will be named in May 2018. A milestone: the Foundation's first scholarship recipients will be graduating from college this spring, a proud accomplishment for the Foundation and for the D105 family!



*Over 200 attendees enjoyed the Grand Jam, the Foundation's very first fundraising event*

### District 105 Information Available on SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

From elementary schools to colleges, social media is empowering students, parents and teachers to share information in exciting ways and is building a new sense of community. District 105 is joining the social media scene to share "OUR STORY!" All parents are being asked to follow district information on one or more of the following social media sites. Community members are also invited to visit! Here's how to log in:

**Facebook** — La Grange District 105

**Twitter** — LaGrange105 or @dist105

**Instagram** — lagrange105

### D105 Superintendent IS HONORED

Dr. Glenn Schlichting, superintendent, has been named the *West Cook Division Superintendent of Distinction 2017*. The Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) will honor him, and the other divisional award recipients, at a luncheon in Springfield in April 2018.

Dr. Schlichting was nominated for this prestigious award by his peers based on his exemplary leadership in learning, communication, professionalism and community involvement. As a result of this nomination, Dr. Schlichting will also be considered for the *State Superintendent of the Year Award* in fall 2018.



# INTRODUCING NEW TEACHERS

## District/ Multi-School



**Rich Kogen, Sixth Grade  
Advanced Math Teacher**

Mr. Kogen, who has 15 years of teaching experience in the Chicago Public Schools is working part-time in the district's Accelerated Academics Program. He has taught middle school science, middle school math, was a lead mathematics teacher, and wrote for the *English Learner's Success Forum*. He achieved a BA from Loyola University, and an M.Ed. from the University of Illinois, Chicago. He is currently pursuing his Doctorate in Mathematics Education from the University of Illinois, Chicago. Mr. Kogen is proud to have three children attending D105 schools.



**Tyler Piekarski, PE  
Teacher/Paraprofessional**

Mr. Piekarski is teaching PE at Ideal School, and also working at Seventh Avenue School as a paraprofessional.

This is his first year as a teacher. He graduated from North Central College, Naperville, with a Bachelor's degree in Sports Management, and also earned a Bachelor's in Exercise Science from Trinity Christian College, Chicago. Mr. Piekarski loves baseball and rooting for "his" St. Louis Cardinals.



**Whitney Schwenker,  
Band Teacher**

Mrs. Schwenker is working part-time as the band teacher for grades four, five and six at Seventh Avenue, Spring, Ideal, and

Hodgkins schools. She has six years of experience that includes working as an assistant band director, grades 7-12, and as a band/general music teacher. She earned a Bachelor's of Music in Music Education from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. Mrs. Schwenker is very excited to have just one more summer of coursework before she earns a Master's in Music Education from VanderCook College of Music, Chicago.

## Gurrie Middle School



**Molly Kowynia,  
Resource Teacher**

Mrs. Kowynia has 13 years of experience in education as a middle school Learning and Behavior Specialist (LBSI) teacher.

She earned BS degrees in Elementary Education and Special Education from Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, and a Master's in Educational Leadership from the University of St. Francis, Joliet. She was recognized in 2017 with the Plainfield District 202 CAPE (Coordination of Administration and Parent groups for Educational efficiency) Award as the Indian Trail Middle School Teacher of the Year.

**Lauren Vogg,  
Culinary Arts Teacher**

Ms. Vogg is working part time, teaching culinary arts to seventh- and eighth-grade students. Although this is her first full-time teaching position, she was a long-term substitute teacher for LT, Grayslake High School, and Barrington High School. She has a BS in Family and Consumer Sciences from Illinois State University, Normal. Her family was raised in the area, and her mother and grandfather attended LT. She is excited to be teaching in D105!



## Seventh Avenue School



**Evariste LeDuc,  
ELL Teacher**

Mr. LeDuc has eleven years of teaching experience, seven years as a third-grade teacher, and four years as a fifth-grade teacher. He earned a BS in Education from the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, and an MA in Mathematics Education from Western Governors University, Salt Lake City.

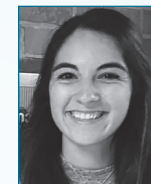
**Britta Hill,  
First Grade Teacher**

Ms. Hill came to the district with four years of teaching experience as a kindergarten and first grade teacher. She earned a BS in Elementary Education, an MS in Curriculum and Instruction, and an ESL endorsement from the University



of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. She is a Hinsdale native and is very happy to return to the area where her family still lives. Running is her passion, and she recently completed her first half marathon. She served as a coach for Girls on the Run, a program that helps girls build character and find success through running and exercise.

## Spring Avenue School



**Gianna Carlini,  
Second Grade Teacher**

Miss Carlini is a first-year teacher, who graduated from Ball State University, Indiana, with

a Bachelor's degree in Elementary and Special Education. While a student at Ball State, she was honored with their "Outstanding Future Educator Award." She was one of only five students from a class of 350 to receive that honor.

**Bonnie McAuley,  
Sixth Grade Teacher**

Ms. McAuley has 14 years of teaching experience as a first, third, fifth and sixth grade teacher, curriculum coordinator and as an instructional learning coach. She earned a BS in Sociology from the University of Illinois, Chicago, and an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from National Louis University, Chicago. Ms. McAuley learned Spanish as an adult and spent eight years teaching in Central and South America. She initially was a *Teach for America* teacher who worked in the Chicago Public Schools for three years. Ms. McAuley was one of only four women to complete the Jungle Man Marathon in Costa Rica. A certified yoga teacher, she is also the mother of two young boys.



**Elizabeth Thomas,  
Fifth Grade Teacher**

Miss Thomas is a first-year teacher, whose prior experience includes student teaching at local schools. She earned a BA in Communication, History minor, from the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign. Miss Thomas grew up in LaGrange and is an LT graduate. Prior to becoming a teacher, she worked in digital marketing.



## Assessing Students' Performance for CONTINUED GROWTH

**A**lthough the performance of District 105 students on the Illinois PARCC assessment was higher than 90% of students in suburban school districts with similar student demographics, the overall District 105 results and trends are lower than anticipated. District 105 administrators have not placed an emphasis on PARCC results, because these results cannot be used for continuous educational improvement in the same way that other indicators of student, school, and district success are. Foremost, the state does not provide districts with the PARCC results until six months after the tests are taken, a lag that makes it impossible to use assessment information to capture student growth and make adaptations for students' learning needs. For that reason, District 105 educators use, and place greater confidence in, these measures of student performance:

- **High School Placement.** The level of courses at Lyons Township High School (LT) for which Gurrie Middle School students qualify is closely monitored. The percentage of Gurrie students from last year's graduating class who were scheduled into LT's Advanced and Honors classes was the second highest among any Gurrie graduating class since 2003, the year the tracking began —  
Honors/Accelerated English:  
Class of 2017 (56%); Class of 2003 (33%)  
Honors/Accelerated Math:  
Class of 2017 (55%); Class of 2003 (27%)  
Honors/Accelerated Science:  
Class of 2017 (42%); Class of 2003 (34%)
- **High School Persistence/Success.** District 105 administrators measure the success of former District 105 students in their currently scheduled LT classes. Last year, the percentage of former District 105 students earning As or Bs in accelerated and honors classes at LT was the highest of any year since the district began monitoring that data 10 years ago.
- **High School Freshmen Surveys.** In a 2016-17 survey administered to LT freshmen, former students rated their middle school experience and preparation for LT higher than the collective average of students in the township's other middle schools.

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## District Partners With Community Group on STEM Initiative

### Overview of the STEM Advisory Council

Education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) is fast becoming critical for building skills that D105 students need to prepare for the future. The National Science Foundation estimates that 80% of jobs created in this decade will require math and science skills. The 20 fastest growing professions require significant math and science ability. To succeed in this new information-based, data-driven and technological society, students must develop STEM capabilities to higher levels than in the past.

To address this growing need, the LaGrange STEM Advisory Council was formed in February 2017 as an advocacy resource for school districts and for the community on STEM-related matters. By forming a single group to span the K- thru 12 school cycle of the community's students, the Council can take a broader view in developing activities that will cultivate a natural progression of student STEM-related skills supporting a trajectory of self-determination, identity, and achievement.

Kathryn Heeke, District 105's director of Curriculum and Instruction explained, "The STEM Advisory Council is working to build a culture within our township for the kids who are fascinated with and passionate about STEM so they may see a future in a STEM field, find their outlet, build their excitement, and ultimately flourish. A primary goal of the Council is to connect resources such as parents, volunteers, educators, administrators, professionals and enthusiasts to expand the possibilities for, and support of, our children's STEM development. The STEM Advisory Council is working to define the vision, values and goals to produce a unified

movement within our community to give children more opportunities and involvement in STEM education, and ultimately, provide them with the foundation for career opportunities."

Here is one way that D105 is preparing students for what's next in a changing world:

### District 105 Computer Coding Club

- District 105 is partnering with the STEM Advisory Council this year to offer students a Computer Coding Club held at the District 105 Connections Community Center in Ideal School.
- This Coding Club is open to students from kindergarten through eighth grade.
- The students are using a program called Code.Org to learn how to code.
- Consistent with one of the Council's goals, the district has connected with LT students, who are working with District 105 staff to support the Coding Club facilitation.
- These LT seniors are coding enthusiasts and active participants in STEM clubs at Lyons Township High School who plan to study computer science and engineering post high school.
- There are currently 35 K - eighth grade students in the Coding Club.
- The club is held once a week, with hour-long classes. Classes are by grade level, with one class for K-second grade students, and another for third- through eighth-grade students.

*The Blackboard*



# DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM

D105 formed a District Leadership Team last school year to broaden our process for establishing and monitoring our district-wide improvement efforts. The team of 15 members is comprised of certified and support staff, administrators, parents, and a Board of Education member. The team invited members of the district community — 39 in all — to participate in a District Leadership Retreat in June 2017. The retreat participants used the District 105 Strategic Plan long-range goals as the foundation for its planning. The participants studied year-end results and long-range data trends, a report about current district practices and initiatives, and a district SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

The participants then developed an action plan with seven focus areas designed to meet our expectations for student achievement and progress to exceed last year's historically high levels. The focus areas are consistent with our Strategic Plan and are generally consistent with the priorities we have had in the district. Our retreat purpose was to be very intentional about these areas to improve alignment, understanding, and communication about our work together. We also wanted to reduce the feelings of too many initiatives and to prevent the unrelated addition of initiatives.

A brief description of each of the seven focus areas that are guiding our district actions during the 2017-18 school year follows. The detailed action plans are posted on the District 105 website, [www.d105.net](http://www.d105.net), under the District-Strategic Plan tabs.

**Focus Area One: Continue collaborative efforts of grade level/departmental teams to design and implement high quality instructional plans.** These plans include rigorous learning standards, best instructional practices, clear parent communication, and student goal setting.

**Focus Area Two: Ensure that all learners are growing academically, socially, and emotionally through high-quality systems of support.** The district is working to improve the systemic support for students who are not meeting or who are exceeding learning standards.

**Focus Area Three: Promote and develop all parents as active partners in their child's education.** Work in this area has focused on clear and consistent communication with parents about student progress toward learning standards, and increased parent involvement in school and district level decision-making processes.

**Focus Area Four: Engage the community as active partners in district continuous improvement.** The highlight of this area is the initiation of the *Connections Community Center* to

support student and family learning during the evening hours. The Center is entirely funded with federal grants and donations from Vulcan Materials and Republic Bank — no local taxpayer funds are used.

**Focus Area Five: Cultivate a work environment that enhances and sustains high morale and satisfaction for a diverse staff.** With the new early release schedule on every Wednesday this year, teachers have more professional time to continue to improve the consistency and rigor of our instructional units.

**Focus Area Six: Continue to support and celebrate new programs and services as well as identify future programing and service needs.** The district continuously evaluates the impact of its investments in new programs and resources on student learning. The district has recently invested in several before- and after-school STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math) learning opportunities.

**Focus Area Seven: Ensure that facilities plans include a commitment to safety and security as well as assurances that learning spaces enhance both teaching and learning.** The Board of Education has completed a long-range student enrollment study to ensure that our school facilities continue to be equipped to support best educational practices.

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## DISTRICT 105 BOARD OF EDUCATION

David Herndon,  
*President*

Kristine Lonsway,  
*Vice President*

Virginia Kogen,  
*Secretary*

Elyse Hoffenberg

Larry Prystalski

Jan Reagan

Eileen Tucker

*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.*

## Parent Information Committee PROVIDES SUPPORT

D105's Parent Information Committee (PIC) is once again providing parents with presentations on relevant, and sometimes difficult, parenting topics. In the fall, the PIC presented "Elyssa's Mission – Recognizing When Your Teen Needs Help: ACT to Prevent Suicide." Because suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people ages 15-24, and the suicide rate among girls ages 10-14 has tripled in 18 years, this was extremely relevant information for parents on a painful topic.

The presentation also focused on an important program that D105 is providing to sixth- through eighth-grade students, the "SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention Program."

PIC is planning additional programs for parents throughout the school year. It also welcomes and encourages ideas from parents on topics for future presentations. Parents can contact Maureen Kidd, director of student services, with their ideas. She can be reached at (708) 482-2700.

## Assessing Students' Performance for CONTINUED GROWTH (Continued from page 4)

- **Five Essentials/District Surveys.** Students gave the district very high ratings in all areas, including the quality of instruction, student learning opportunities and support, and school climate.
- **Measures of Academic Progress (MAP).** Students performed at historically high levels on the 2016-17 MAP test. The district ranked at approximately the 90th percentile nationally for student spring-to-spring progress in math and reading. The district ranked above the 80th percentile nationally for math and reading achievement. MAP results are available on the same day the assessment is administered, which allows the results to be used to set learning goals with students, and adapt instruction to their needs. Also, LT uses MAP results to determine freshman course scheduling.

"Our success in so many areas in the 2016-17 school year does not minimize our desire for our students to perform their best on all assessments, including PARCC. We are improving PARCC testing schedules, routines, and communication to help our students demonstrate their best learning on this assessment. We are being careful not to sacrifice the depth and rigor of our regular classroom instruction for short-term test preparation," stated Kathryn Heeke, director of curriculum and assessment. Educating the students' academic, social, and educational development at a high level is a priority at ALL of the district schools.

PARCC results can be viewed on the District 105 website, [www.d105.net](http://www.d105.net), in the School Board Tab under "School Board Presentations."