



THE BLACKBOARD

The Newsletter of La Grange School District 105

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

Hodgkins Elementary School Earns Prestigious Blue Ribbon Award

The U.S. Department of Education recently announced that Hodgkins Elementary School has earned the prestigious Blue Ribbon Award for 2020. Hodgkins Elementary was chosen as an Exemplary Achievement Gap School, highlighting its success in closing achievement gaps between student groups. The National Blue Ribbon Schools award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging content. Hodgkins Elementary Principal Dr. Emily Crement recently said, "I am so proud to accept this recognition on behalf of Hodgkins School in the year we will also be celebrating our 100-year anniversary. This award reflects this community's dedication to children, and its commitment to providing a high quality education for all students." This is the third Blue Ribbon Award given to District 105 schools.



Letter From Superintendent Brian Ganan

Dear D105 Community,

I am grateful for your support of our students and staff as we continue to navigate this pandemic. While these challenging times have made it more difficult to develop relationships, I am thankful for your efforts in helping us break down barriers to keep our sense of community. Finding time to reflect and celebrate seems more difficult this year than in a typical school year. However, it is more important than ever that we take the time to recognize these accomplishments. I hope you find the time to read this newsletter and learn more about the schools, students and staff that are at the heart of the D105 Difference.

With Gratitude,
Superintendent Brian Ganan

Ellis Island Tradition Continues at Spring Avenue

Spring Avenue's third graders have been taking part in an Ellis Island Simulation since 2002. The program started as a passion project of Ms. Erin McGinnis and Mrs. Nicole Manganello. Learning about Ellis Island was already in the curriculum for the grade, and the teachers wanted to go a step further and create an experience. While completing all of the interactive parts of the simulation, the students are learning Common Core Standards through non-fiction book studies, geography, learning about their own family culture, writing

letters from the point of view of their character, and more. "It is a great opportunity for our 3rd graders to learn about that time in our country's history and experience what it might have been like for their own family members," said Ms. McGinnis.

Each student is assigned an immigrant character and family. They pretend to be that character throughout the simulation. The students need to pass through the different stations: baggage claim, medical, testing and citizenship. In the end, they have the opportunity to raise their American flag high in front of the Statue of Liberty as a proud citizen.



The simulation experience moved from the classrooms to the lunchrooms with help from parents like Susan McMillan, Laura Brown and Susan Dixon. After years of making it as realistic as possible, Mrs. Amanda Dahlin and Ms. McGinnis invited the other schools to participate. Fifth graders were even asked to be inspectors, taking them back to enjoy the experience in a new way. Unfortunately, due to time and space constraints, they have recently gone back to just Spring Avenue completing the simulation. This year was especially unique with minimal interaction and inspectors. Some from the Administrative team, such as Superintendent Ganan, acted as inspectors.



7th Ave. Students Have Their Say and Stay Engaged

For most of the 2020-2021 school year, there have been three different student sections at each school; fully remote, hybrid “Blue” and hybrid “Gold.” Fully remote has engaged with their teachers online. Hybrid Blue and Gold groups were created because of a need to maintain six feet of distance. Each group was in the classroom a little over 2 days a week, and the rest of the time was spent learning online. Students at Seventh Avenue were interested in getting creative and decided to ask the staff to name these “Blue” and “Gold” groups, plus give them each a mascot. Principal Hall was excited about the idea and invited students to share their ideas each morning on the Edmodo group gathering platform or during classroom meetings. Students offered ideas like Blue Sharks, Blue Sky, Blue Birds, Golden French Fries, Gold Sunflower, Pot of Gold and Golden Huskies.

Principal Hall said, “Some of the most positive and impactful times I have observed over the years is watching students take active roles in decision making for our school community. These decisions are usually grounded in student survey data that give us more direction about school activities. This survey was just about having fun!” In the end, the students voted to call their learning groups/teams the Blue Sharks and the Golden Huskies. Principal Hall enjoys

addressing them as such. Fourth graders Rhaya Piagnarelli and Alex Weiss said, “It felt good to name each group because the colors were just boring.” They like calling each group by a name versus a color to create a sense of belonging. “It helped everyone fit in and feel better,” said 6th grader Adam Barrette.

In another effort to empower the students, the Seventh Avenue 6th graders get to choose and lead activities with the other grades around the book, *What does Peace Feel Like?*, by Vladimir Radunsky, throughout the springtime.



Virtual Author Visit Ties In With 7th Grade Science Curriculum

Gurrie Middle School Library Media Specialist, Jennifer Sutsser, recently coordinated a PTO sponsored virtual author visit from Kenneth Oppel. Oppel is the author of *Bloom*, a fictional title that describes a time when invasive species affect the planet, seen through the eyes of three young teens. The plant is described as “tall, black, spiky grass” that starts growing all over the world. The title is a great fit due to the current pandemic conditions and also because 7th graders learn about invasive species within their science curriculum.

Each year the 7th graders at Gurrie study invasive species of the Great Lakes Region as part of their Ecology curriculum. Along with studying animals like Asian Carp and Zebra Mussels, students learn about plants like Garlic Mustard, Honeysuckle and Buckthorn which are a real problem in area forest preserves. In years past, 7th graders have taken field trips to remove these plants from the Sagawau Environmental Education Center in Lemont and Bemis Woods Nature Preserve in Western Springs. “This is a great fit that brings the discussion full-circle,” said Matthew Eigel, 7th grade science teacher.



SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Facebook: La Grange District 105

Twitter: LaGrange105 or @dist105

Instagram: lagrange105



Ideal Elementary Garden Grant Brings New Life to Courtyard Space

Ideal Elementary in Countryside has received grant money from the Illinois Education Association Foundation and is in the process of planning and implementing a garden transformation in the school's courtyard space. This plan was moving along last year but was put on hold due to the shutdown in March 2020. Teachers Kimberly Folkening and Emily Swiatek submitted the grants and Folkening has been working with a landscape architect, John Magil of Civiltech Engineering, to draw up the plans based on ideas from several Ideal students. The Ideal PTO has also been an integral part of the process and has reached out to community partners in

Countryside for additional funding. This is a project which will connect and unite staff, students, parents, and community members in providing this outdoor "oasis." The hope is to create a space that will allow students to engage their senses as they utilize this multi-sensory garden in a multitude of ways, such as reading in the garden, taking a sensory break, practicing mindfulness or yoga, learning how to care for plants, and documenting the life cycle of a flower in a sketchbook. The project will continue through the spring and summer, and should be finished at the start of next school year.

Gurie Middle School
1001 S. Spring Avenue
La Grange, IL 60525
708.482.2720
Ed Hood, Principal

Hodgkins Elementary School
6516 S. Kane Avenue
Hodgkins, IL 60525
708.482.2740
Emily Crement, Principal

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
Brian Lawson, Principal

Combined K-1 and 1-2 Classrooms at Hodgkins Elementary, Result in Positive Connections



Hodgkins Elementary has two classrooms that are combined grade levels, to enhance students' learning interactions. These combined classrooms have kindergarteners and first graders working together, and first graders learning together with second graders. Principal Crement

explained more about the need to combine the classrooms. "Due to enrollment shifts related to the pandemic, we transitioned in late August to a multi-age model of instruction in three grade levels. Teaching multi-age is a different philosophy than single grade teaching, so this shift was no easy feat. It has been an incredible learning experience and there are lessons that can, and should, be applied to single-grade classrooms if and when we return to that model," she said.

Miss Wendy Carter is the teacher for the K-1 classroom and said, "Students in a multi-age classroom quickly come to understand that they are working on material that is just right for them, but may be different from what other students are learning. They learn to respect the learning journey of their classmates and understand that it might look different than their own."

Miss Crystal Farkaschek is the teacher for the 1-2 classroom and sees her students thriving. "The beauty of a multi-age classroom is being able to meet each student where they are at in order to best support their progression in content area skills. The multi-age approach encourages students to have agency in their learning through differentiated instruction and inquiry based learning," she said.





District Office 701 S. Seventh Ave. La Grange, IL 60525

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
Paid
Carol Stream, IL
Permit No. 50

Spring Avenue Welcomes New Principal

D105 is pleased to announce that Ms. Amy Read has been selected as the next principal of Spring Avenue to start in the 21-22 School Year. Ms. Read is a child-centered educator, known for her collaboration and communication with staff and parents, and her knowledge of and active leadership in teaching and learning. She is dedicated to doing what is in the best interest of children. She currently serves as principal of Herrick Middle School in Downers Grove. She previously served as principal of Butler Junior High School in Oak Brook, principal of Sandburg Middle School in Elmhurst, principal of Margaret Mead Junior High in Schaumburg and dean of students at Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire.

Ms. Read has a master's degree in educational leadership from Northeastern Illinois University, a master's degree in teaching from Simmons College and a bachelor's degree in manufacturing engineering technology from Bradley University. In 2015 and 2013, Read led Butler Jr. High and Sandburg Middle School to National Blue Ribbon recognition and was selected as a 2019 finalist for the distinguished Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Leadership. One of Read's previous superintendents said, "Ms. Read creates a culture of trust and partnership with her staff, which empowers them to take risks, to grow as leaders and educators and to collaborate with one another on what is best for students."



Staff Retirements and Service Awards This Year

Honored Retirees:

Jim Bernard
Ann Chase
Julie Folliard
Sulema Granados
Marilyn Kulak
James O'Connor
Jeannette Pedersen
Sandy Ruffner
Susan Weaver

25 Years Service:

Rita Valaisa

20 Years Service:

Nancy Jones
Erin McGinnis
Amy Synowiec
Shannon Tobin

15 Years Service:

Eric Bryant
Steve Driscoll
Johanna Enright
Barb Hobe
Robin Petrak
Jennie Podgorski
Gail Weiland

10 Years Service:

Christina Albreski
Susan Calder
Persis Dadepogu
Julie Dessauer
Mandy Kernagis
Jim McMahon
Deanna Przybylek
Sara Rioux
Mariko Yamamoto

DISTRICT 105 BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dave Herndon, President
Virginia Kogen, Vice President
Eileen Tucker, Secretary
Sheila Bryck
Elyse Hoffenberg
Elias Lopez
Kristine Lonsway

The public is invited to attend Board meetings in the 7th Avenue Gymnasium as space permits.