

# The Newsletter of LaGrange School District 105

# The Blackboard

www.d105.net

**District 105  
Central Office**  
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*Dr. Glenn T. Schlichting,  
Superintendent of Schools*

Countryside  
Hodgkins  
LaGrange

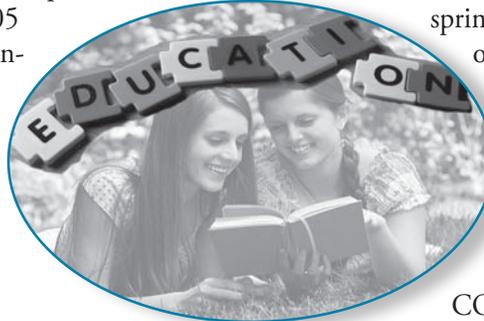
105

May 2012

## CONNECTING and Improving Summer Learning

**T**his summer, students will once again benefit from the district's Summer Reading and Math CONNECT Program. Implemented last year, the program paired students with a District 105 educator who facilitated individual learning activities to keep students involved with math and reading throughout the summer. The response to the CONNECT Program was very impressive, with 448 kindergarten through eighth grade students and 38 district educators participating.

"The district initiated this program in response to data we gathered about the significant impact that summer skills regression has on our student achievement," explained Kathryn Heeke, the district's director of curriculum and instruction. "Each summer, District 105 students, on average, lose



math and reading achievement ground to their national peers. This is evidenced by our students' math and reading results that are consistently lower in the fall than they were the previous spring. Achievement regression occurs for students of all ability levels in all five of our District 105 schools. This regression causes a loss of precious instructional time in the fall as teachers delay the introduction of new concepts and skills because they must help students regain their previous achievement levels."

Survey evaluations from the 2011 Summer CONNECT Program were very positive. Over 90% of the parents and teachers who participated in the program believed it was beneficial to students. District educators studied data from fall 2011 student assessments to learn if the CONNECT Program impacted students' math and reading regression. "Students who fully participated in the CONNECT

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### Highlights/Changes to the 2012 Summer CONNECT Program Are:

- All students will read on average, thirty minutes a day, seven days a week.
- All students will participate in math activities on average thirty minutes a day, seven days a week.
- The program lasts nine weeks, from June 11 – August 10. Coaches will meet with their students face-to-face at least five times over the nine-

week period. Four other connections with students will be made via phone, e-mail, or regular postal mail.

- The new structured math program, IXL Math. Students can access this online program from home. Teachers (coaches) can monitor student progress remotely to offer feedback and instruction.
- The reading portion of the program will consist of the coach helping the student select "just right" books based on the student's interest and

reading level. Coaches will provide comprehension- and fluency-related activities during the face-to-face visits and through the other communication methods.

- Every District 105 elementary school library will be open one day a week for students to check out books, meet with their coach, access IXL Math online, etc.

The CONNECT Program expenses are being offset by reductions in the district's traditional summer school program.

**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  
*Sherry Krzyzanski, Principal*

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

## New MASTER TEACHER

National Board Certification, or “Master Teacher” status, is a very prestigious, advanced teaching credential. Teachers who achieve it meet rigorous standards through intensive study, expert evaluation, self-assessment, and peer review. This certification is awarded upon successful completion of a rigorous voluntary assessment program. It is available nationwide for most pre K–12 teachers.

The certification process focuses on the teacher’s classroom instruction and is ultimately designed to benefit students. With only about 30% of National Board candidates achieving success on their first attempt, the certification process can take up to three years.

The percentage of Nationally Board Certified Teachers in District 105 places the district among the leaders in Illinois. The district now has 12 Master Teachers.

In November of last year, Casimira Gorman, who teaches fourth grade at Ideal School, learned that she had achieved National Board Certification. She first submitted the requirements in April 2010 and resubmitted portions in April 2011.

Mrs. Gorman pursued National Board Certification because she believed the process gave her the greatest opportunity



Master Teacher Casimira Gorman at work with students.

for growth as an educator. She found the process overwhelming, because she had to dissect everything she said not only in her classroom and with students, but also throughout the district and with her students’ families. “I was constantly analyzing and reflecting upon my teaching methods and professional responsibilities/interactions,” Mrs. Gorman stated, “then repeating the process when necessary. This alone was difficult and time consuming.”

Ultimately she found the certification process to be worthwhile. “It taught me what it truly means to reflect upon your practice as an educator. In the past, recognizing what I needed to do to improve as a teacher was a reactive process. Now my ability to proactively know how to present content in a variety of ways and to varying learning styles has improved

immensely. It also reiterated the importance of making strong connections with students and families, and to understand each student’s strengths and challenges.”

Despite the difficulty of the certification process, Mrs. Gorman highly recommends it to other educators. “The process can be intimidating because a teacher must convey everything he/she is as an educator in writing or on video, and this is certainly challenging. However, if one approaches the National Board Certification process with integrity, that teacher will grow and improve as an educator.”

### **The District 105 Master Teachers and Their Schools:**

**Angie Bukowiecki**  
Seventh Avenue School

**Elizabeth Charlton**  
Spring Avenue School

**Christine Eck**  
Spring Avenue School

**Julie Folliard**  
Spring Avenue School

**Casimira Gorman**  
Ideal Elementary School

**Julie McGovern**  
Gurrie Middle School

**Leesa McHugh**  
Hodgkins School

**Mary Beth Niziol**  
Gurrie Middle School

**Marcella Ortiz**  
Hodgkins School

**Robin Petrak**  
Seventh Avenue School

**John Signatur**  
Hodgkins School

**Amy Synowiec**  
Gurrie Middle School

## Parent Involvement Committee

The District Parent Involvement Committee is a Board of Education initiative. The committee is comprised of District 105 parents, educators and community members who are working together to provide networking opportunities, communication, education, and support to District 105 parents and families. The committee held its first meeting in January 2012 and is meeting once a month in the Gurrie Library.

Deborah Tyrrell, District 105’s Director of Student Services is the committee chairperson. The 15 members include including two Board of Education representatives, a principal, and parent and teacher representatives from all five schools.

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## Three LT NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARS are Gurrie Graduates

An important indicator of the district's success is the performance of former Gurrie Middle School students at Lyons Township High School (LT). District 105 educators work closely with LT staff and administrators to articulate and align curriculum, instruction, assessment, and programming so that Gurrie students are well-prepared for their high school careers. District 105 closely monitors the types of high school courses that former Gurrie students take at LT and their ongoing performance in these courses.

The District 105 community is very proud of **Benjamin Krueger, Nora McCarty** and **Paul Saramadis**, Gurrie Middle School graduates who are now LT seniors. The three were among nine LT students recognized as 2012 National Merit Scholars at a ceremony at the high school on February 28, 2012. The National Merit® Scholarship Program honors individual students who show exceptional academic ability and potential for success in rigorous college studies.

Benjamin, Nora, and Paul are in elite company. Approximately 1.5 million seniors across the country, in 22,000 high schools, met the rigorous criteria to apply for National Merit Recognition. Of these students, only 16,000 nationwide were recognized as 2012 National Merit Scholars.

Gurrie graduates comprise about 12% of the Lyons Township High School Class of 2012.



## State Recognizes School for EXCELLENCE

The State of Illinois has once again recognized Spring Avenue School with the Academic Excellence Award. It is among only 438 Illinois Schools to receive the award in 2011, the current award year. The award recognizes schools that have sustained very high academic performance over at least three years. Some of these schools receive national recognitions placing them among the nation's most outstanding.

To earn an Academic Excellence Award in elementary and middle schools, at least 90% of the students must meet or exceed state learning standards in both reading and mathematics for at least three consecutive years. All Academic Excellence schools achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the past two years, a requirement of the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation. Schools that receive Academic Excellence Awards tend to remain on the Honor Roll year after year.



Over the past five years, all five of the district schools have been recognized by the State of Illinois for their achievements.

## District Goals, Benchmarks

District goals and benchmarks are reported in the district Dashboard, which can be viewed at [www.d105.net](http://www.d105.net). The district Dashboard contains the district goals, historical data, and the 2011-2012 targets. It also indicates the status toward reaching goals in either green, yellow, or red, with red marking an area of concern. The information is presented to the Board of Education on a quarterly basis to provide straightforward information about the progress the district is making toward reaching its goals.

In February, District Curriculum Director Kathryn Heeke presented positive results to the Board of Education regarding winter data in the areas of student achievement and progress in math and reading. The data indicates that District 105 students at all grade levels are achieving well above national averages in math and reading, and are either exceeding or maintaining their scores from the winter before. The majority of students are also reaching the district's annual progress targets in reading and math.

Each District 105 school also has its own school dashboard that reports on the school goals. These dashboards are accessed online on each school's home page.

### The district goals are:

1. ***Students will achieve high academic standards.***
2. ***Students attend school in a safe and supportive learning environment.***
3. ***District 105 excels as an organization.***
4. ***District 105 excels in its business operations.***
5. ***District 105 builds a connected learning community.***

## Students are ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS

Nearly 100 Gurrie Middle School students are determined to improve their environment by reducing energy consumption, recycling, creating a sustainable organic garden, and by educating other students, teachers, and the community about sustainable lifestyles.

These concerned students are members of the **Gurrie Green Team**. The team is an outgrowth of a spring 2011 eighth grade initiative in which students researched and were able to implement sustainable projects for the school's new construction. Their efforts resulted in the installation of organic carpet and the use of low Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) paint, items generously donated by Siemens Industry Inc., design and engineering provider for the district's recent construction project.

Under the direction of Green Team co-sponsors English teacher Steve Driscoll and Science teacher Matthew Eigel, students formulated plans for an organic, sustainable garden in the school's new outdoor courtyard, an area created by the school's recent construction project. Under Steve Driscoll's mentorship, Green Team members created a business plan for the garden and presented it to the Board of Education. In November, students went to work in the courtyard, using heavy landscape blocks to build four raised garden beds and a path of brick pavers, hauling 19 tons of stone and gravel in the process. A grant from Siemens supplied

the materials. The company also connected the students to a team of Northwestern University student volunteers who offered their advice via teleconferences. Lyons Township High School sophomore and Gurrie graduate Natalie Ruffner returned to her former school to help with the project. Gurrie students benefited from the expertise of Green Team co-sponsor Matt Eigler, who had owned a landscape company.

In early spring, students began growing vegetable seeds indoors and then planted



*Green Team members, including these students, constructed, planted and maintained a garden under the direction of team co-sponsors Matthew Eigel (L) and Steve Driscoll.*

the vegetables in the garden. They also composted cafeteria leftovers to use as organic fertilizer. Students will use the produce and plants for fundraising and as donations to local food pantries. Science classes are incorporating garden activities into the curriculum for hands-on learning.

Field trips are also broadening the Green Team's knowledge of conservation and

sustainability. The team visited Chicago's Irene C. Hernandez School for the Advancement of Science, a recently constructed building designed to achieve a silver rating under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for Schools rating system. They also attended the Green Festival at Navy Pier, the nation's premier sustainability event.

In addition to the garden, other Green Team initiatives include:

**Watts-Dogs:** Using Kill-A-Watt energy gauges, students are recording the energy usage in each piece of technology within the school, and then comparing last year's baseline energy usage and costs with usage after implementation of energy-efficient behavior modifications. The goal is to reduce energy consumption, saving the district money in energy costs.

**Paper Retriever:** Through the Abitibi Paper Retriever® free paper removal service, the Green Team is properly recycling all paper within the district, as well as within the community. The main goals are proper recycling and reducing waste removal costs, as the majority of recyclables are paper products.

Through the Green Team, students are learning to respect the environment and are realizing that their work can make a tangible difference in the world.

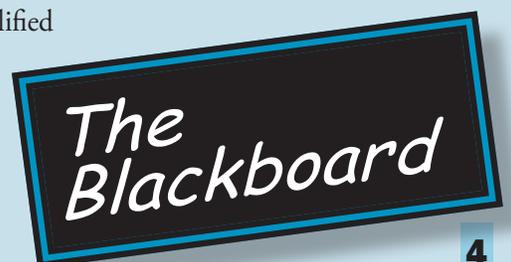
## Athletes Achieve

Tigers are terrific! Gurrie athletic teams had a very successful year. The seventh grade Tigers basketball team won the Lyons Township Elementary School Athletic Conference. During the regular season, the team scored with ten wins and five losses. The team's coaches are Ed Alvarez and Joe Pontrelli.

The seventh and eighth grade wrestling team had a great second season. The school formed the wrestling team during the 2010-2011 school year. Luke Arneson and Jake Brewer are the team's coaches. Nine of the team's eighteen wrestlers qualified for the sectional tournament at the end of the season: Mac Casella,

TJ Casella, Brendan Finley, Matt Georges, Brandon Herman, Jeremiah Hill, Francisco Rivera, Jeremiah Presley and Daniel Varela.

Mac Casella also qualified for the Illinois Elementary School Association state finals. He finished with two wins and two losses.



Our District 105 students continue to perform at increasingly higher levels. Their progress and achievement in math and reading is significantly better than students in districts throughout the country that are comparable in size and student demographics. Our students have also made significant gains in their preparation for success at Lyons Township High School. For example, over 40% of our current Gurrie eighth grade students are scheduled to take freshman honors and accelerated math and English courses next year. *The percentage of students taking freshman honors and accelerated classes in math and English has more than doubled over the last five years.* These tremendous gains reflect the improvements in our students' classroom performance and on their high school placement exam scores. These scores are higher than they have been in any year since this exam was administered to our eighth graders.

Even with these improvements, we have more to do to ensure our students are college and career ready. Within our school day and year we strive to make the most of our time with students by better aligning school and district improvement practices, setting clearer and more rigorous learning standards, implementing research-based instructional practices more consistently, increasing our differentiation for individual student needs, and using formative and summative data to drive our practices.

However, our work with students during the traditional school day and year is not enough to meet all of their educational needs. Recently, District 105 challenged the limitations of our school day and year by extending learning opportunities for students. Three extended learning programs that promise to accelerate the achievement of our students are:

### Extended Kindergarten

The district has an extended kindergarten program for students who need additional support to gain early literacy skills.

*This effort is grounded by the understanding that early intervention with students is a much better use of district resources than remediation in later years.* The program brings together students in the morning and afternoon kindergarten classes for an hour of instruction during the lunch hour. Our analysis of extended kindergarten program data shows that students make excellent progress during this program. More importantly, students are continuing their progress as they advance to first and second grades.

### Summer CONNECT

Last year the district funded a **CONNECT Summer School For All Program** with cost savings realized from changes to our traditional summer school program, which focused on remediation. The CONNECT Program was designed to address summer learning regression experienced by students of all achievement levels. *With students losing math and reading skills over the summer, teachers spend as much as a quarter of the school year reviewing material from the previous year.* CONNECT is a nine week program designed to keep students engaged in reading and math throughout the summer. Last summer, over 400 students participated in the CONNECT Program. Some very impressive achievement gains, especially in reading, were realized by the students who fully participated in the program.

### Reading and Math Intervention

*Over the past five years, district enrollment has increased a total of 22%.* Increased enrollment has expanded the need for student services, including remediation in math and reading. In February, the district began offering before and after school math and reading classes for students who need additional support. These extended learning classes reduce the need for additional staff during the school day and for students to be pulled out of their classroom for services during their regular instructional day. Over 150 students have already attended these extended learning classes.

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## District 105

### Board of Education

Mark Smith,  
President

David Herndon,  
Vice President

Eileen Tucker,  
Secretary

Virginia Kogen

Kristine Lonsway

Larry Prystalski

Jan Reagan

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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MAY 2012

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## CONNECTING and Improving Summer Learning

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Program had fall reading assessment results that were significantly better than those of students who only partially participated in the program or did not sign up for the program," Ms. Heeke stated. *In fact, overall average scores for students who fully participated in the program were higher on reading assessments in the fall than they were the previous spring!* The data did not indicate that participation in the CONNECT Program had a significant impact on math regression.

Working with the survey feedback and achievement results, the Summer CONNECT Committee redesigned and updated the program for summer 2012. The committee completely overhauled the math portion to add more consistent structure. With the success in reading, the changes to the reading portion are subtler, but reflect feedback from parents and staff.

## Parent Involvement Committee

(Continued from page 2)

The committee first reviewed and aligned the many resources and events that are already in place. These include F.A.S.T. district-wide education for families, Book Clubs at all of the schools, presentations for parents on topics such as Asberger Syndrome, English Language Learners Parent Initiatives at Hodgkins School, the Welch Packaging Partnership at Ideal School, Parent Resource Evenings, Curriculum Nights, Parent Resource Libraries at every school, Family Fun Nights, the Summer Connect Program, and many others.

The committee is in the process of developing goals to meet parental needs in the areas of education, communication and support. A kick-off event is being planned for fall 2012.

## Registration for the 2012 - 2013 School Year

District-wide registration will be held **Wednesday, August 1**, from **1:00 to 7:00 p.m.** *Registration for all schools will take place at Seventh Avenue School.* Student registration packets will be mailed home to families mid-July. Residency verification will be consistent with the requirements of Lyons Township High School. Parents must make copies of all documents for residency verification prior to coming to registration. **The first day of school for all students is Thursday, August 23.**

Have a fun, safe summer. Remember to keep learning!