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Dr. Glenn T. Schlichting,
Superintendent of Schools

April/May 2015

The Newsletter of LaGrange School District 105

The Blackboard

www.d105.net

Countryside
Hodgkins
LaGrange

105

Did you KNOW...

- **District 105 students made significantly better fall to winter progress on this year's mid-term MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) reading and math assessments than they made in previous years. The district-wide winter reading achievement was the highest since the district started administering a mid-year MAP assessment.**
- **The District 105 English Language Learners program received the highest rating from the state based on students' performance on the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMA0), which measure English language acquisition and academic performance.**
- **Ideal School fifth grade student Lana Zivko received the BP Top Young Scientist Award at the Brookfield Zoo Science Fair on February 26 for her project entitled, "Visualizing Sound Waves Using a Tuning Fork."**
- **The Gurrie Middle School seventh and eighth grade team won first place in the Math Olympiad Competition hosted by Gurrie Middle School on February 28. Teams from 16 area schools competed in this event.**
- **Gurrie contestants took eight top awards in the West 40 Speech and Drama Festival involving 13 other school districts on February 28.**
- **The District 105 Jazz Band earned the Top Rating in the Illinois Grade School Music Association District 7 Jazz Contest on March 8. The Jazz Band will compete in the state contest on May 2.**
- **The compensation of District 105 teachers and administrators is tied to student performance.**

Full-day Kindergarten Begins in Fall

AT the start of the 2015-2016 school year, District 105 will initiate a full-day kindergarten program. In December, the Board of Education approved the full-day kindergarten option based upon the research and recommendations of the district's kindergarten exploratory committee that was comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators from all of the district's school communities. This decision was also made in response to a community survey that supported a full-day kindergarten program.

Currently, the district has a half-day kindergarten program. That will continue to be an option, per state law, in the future. The intention is to offer full-day and half-day kindergarten in each neighborhood elementary school.

A Kindergarten Planning Committee consisting of teachers and the district's director of curriculum and instruction began meeting in December 2014 and will continue to meet through June. The Planning Committee began by framing out the imperatives of a full- and half-day schedule. From there, the group worked to develop a model of full-day and half-day kindergarten programming that addresses the academic, social, emotional, and physical developmental needs of all of the district's kindergarten students.

To explain the program and the process that led to its creation, the district held parent forums on February 17 and 25.

The full-day morning schedule is consistent with current programming. However, 30 minutes are added to accommodate physical education. This will be a daily addition for all kindergarten students, whether attending half- or full-day.

Kindergarten registration in the district took place on March 12. During registration, parents chose to enroll their children in either the full-day or half-day program.

Here is the district's new full-day kindergarten daily schedule at a glance:

Morning, 8:30 am to 11:45 am –

- *Morning assembly/arrival routines*, 15 minutes
- *Morning meeting*, 20 minutes
- *Literacy*, 60 minutes
- *PE*, 30 minutes
- *Math*, 30 minutes
- *Active Discovery Centers*, 30 minutes
- *AM departure*, 10 minutes

Afternoon, 11:45 am to 3:00 pm –

- *Lunch*, 35 minutes (flexible schedule)
- *Science/Social Studies/Art/Music*
Science/Social Studies, 3 times a week, 40 minutes
Art, 1 time a week, 40 minutes
Music, 1 time a week, 40 minutes
- *Literacy*, 45 minutes
- *Math*, 30 minutes
- *Active Discovery Centers*, 30 minutes
- *Departure routines*, 15 minutes.

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

Hodgkins Elementary School
6516 S. Kane Avenue
Hodgkins, IL 60525
(708) 482-2740
John Signatur, Principal

Ideal Elementary School
9901 W. 58th Street
Countryside, IL 60525
(708) 482-2750
Steven Bahn, Principal

Seventh Avenue Elementary School
701 S. Seventh Avenue
LaGrange, IL 60525
(708) 482-2730
Erin Hall, Principal

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

District Goals UPDATE

District 105 academic performance is updated quarterly on the dashboard posted on the district website, d105.net. The district dashboard contains long range district goals, annual improvement targets, historical data trends, and comparisons with benchmark districts.

Detailed information about the district's progress toward improvement targets is presented to the Board of Education nine times throughout the year. These presentations are posted on the website under *Current Topics*.

In March, District Curriculum Director Kathryn Heeke presented results from winter math and reading assessments. Key points from the presentation included:

- District 105 students made significantly better fall to winter progress on this year's mid-term MAP reading and math assessments than they made in previous years. The District 105 students rank high nationally on the academic progress they make each year.
- The district-wide winter reading achievement score was the highest since the district began administering a mid-year MAP assessment.
- Math achievement was consistent with results from the last three years.
- District 105 students continue to outperform students from similar districts in math and reading achievement and progress.
- The achievement gap in math and reading persists between students who live in poverty and those who do not.

STEM in ACTION

STEM is an acronym for the interdisciplinary academic disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Maintaining a citizenry that is well versed in the STEM fields is a key portion of the country's public education agenda. The U.S. Department of Education's website states that today, only 16% of students are proficient in math and interested in a STEM career. President Obama has articulated a clear priority for STEM education with the goal of the U.S. moving "from the middle to the top of the path" in math in ten years. The federal government's Committee on STEM Education, through new and repurposed funds, is facilitating a national strategy to improve STEM education.

In District 105, students are pursuing STEM education through a wide variety of learning opportunities. Here are a few of the unique ways students are engaging in STEM:

Learning Computer Code

District 105 students are learning to code, and they are loving it! Coding makes the creation of computer software, apps, and websites possible. Browsers, operating systems, Facebook – are all designed with code.

Kelly Rogan, a District 105 parent, works for Microsoft. In December, she and many other volunteers from Microsoft visited Spring Avenue School to present "An Hour



Grurie students in the new Underwater Robotics Club are putting hands-on STEM skills to use.

of Code" during *Code Week*. They spent a day-and-a-half with students in kindergarten through sixth grade exploring the basics of computer programming. The Microsoft volunteers spoke to students about how they use computer programming in their daily jobs, which the students found interesting and exciting. Ever since the "Hour of Code," Spring Avenue School teachers and students have continued to explore coding learning opportunities on the website code.org.

"Our students were absolutely thrilled and many have begun practicing code on their own at home," stated Spring Avenue School Principal Elizabeth Webb. "We continue to have students participate in technology clubs and coding clubs at school."

Because of the success of the program and the generosity of the Microsoft volunteers, all of the other district schools are looking forward to providing "Hour of Code" programming instruction through Microsoft.

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PARCC Testing Begins

After several intensive years of preparation for the state's new Common Core learning standards, which included aligning classroom instruction to the new standards and extensive teacher professional development, for the first time students are being assessed by the state to determine their success in meeting the standards. The PARCC (*Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers*) tests in math and English language arts/literacy are designed to give schools, parents, teachers and students better information about whether students are on track in their learning and for success after high school. Students in grades three through eight are being tested. PARCC replaces the previous ISAT state testing.

PARCC testing has two components. The first, the *Performance Based Assessment* (PBA) began March 2 and continued through March 27. This test is administered after 75% of the annual grade level content is taught. The second, the *End of Year Assessment* (EOY) will take place during the window of April 22 - May 22. This test is administered when approximately 90% of the year's content has been taught. The district will have those full windows of time to administer the tests.

However, each school is creating its own test schedules to best meet the needs of students and the school's technology requirements. Students in grades three to five are taking the paper version of the tests. Sixth- through eighth-grade students are taking the test online.

The district will analyze the test results and use data from the results to further improve learning.

Parent Involvement Committee YEAR IN REVIEW

The district's Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), created in 2012, continues to provide informative presentations on timely topics for parents, and sponsor social events for families. Throughout the year, the PIC held a series of meetings and one major social event.

Early in the school year, the first presentation, *Erin's Law and Body Rights Safety*, told parents about child abuse prevention and the new child abuse curriculum that is being implemented in all Illinois schools by law. Pillars Community Resource, and Director of Student Services Maureen Kidd, made the presentation. To learn more, visit the district website at d105.net, click on "Student Services" in the left column, then select, "Erin's Law Implementation."

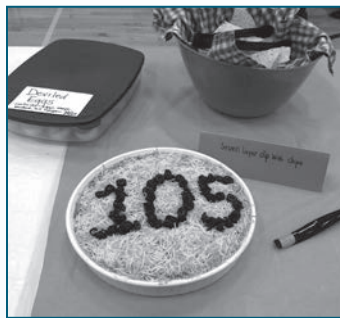
In early fall, Adam Shames spoke to parents about *Inspiring Creativity and Ingenuity at Home*. He is a creativity expert, organizational consultant, facilitator and speaker who specializes in innovation, teambuilding and community events. Learn more on his website creativity.net.

In November, the PIC supported a presentation on *Cyberbullying*. Although not sponsored by the group, the PIC provided childcare and transportation to and from the event for families who wanted to attend and needed these services.

In early 2015, the PIC held a parent forum on the Common Core learning standards and on the new PARCC Common Core assessment. To learn more about the Common Core and how District 105 has prepared for it, go to d105.net, click on "Parents/Guardians" in the left column, and then select "PARCC/Common Core."

On March 24, the *Taste of 105* brought families from every District 105 school together to celebrate the community's diverse cultures. Held at Gurrie Middle School, families brought their favorite ethnic dishes to share and volunteers performed music and dance numbers from different regions. Face painting, balloon animals, Mehndi (henna hand designs), and temporary tattoos added to the fun. It was a great opportunity for families to socialize with each other and with district educators.

"The Parent Involvement Committee actively looks for ways to support District 105 parents," explained Ms. Maureen Kidd. "This has included providing website resources on parent concerns, bringing in speakers to address areas of interest, and establishing a parent resource library with books on many child development and parenting topics. The committee also seeks to provide events to celebrate the strengths of District 105, including diversity, and a commitment to our students' college and career readiness. Next year, the PIC will present a Career Fest for families that will give students the opportunity to learn about career choices, and allow parents to share with students stories of the paths that led to their careers."



PHOTOS: THE TASTE OF 105, SPONSORED BY THE PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE, celebrated District 105's diversity with food, music, and dance. Many families brought food representative of their cultural heritage to share.

Children also enjoyed face painting, balloon animals, and other activities.

Families had the opportunity to socialize with other families and with District 105 staff. The well-attended event was a great success!



BILINGUAL KINDERGARTEN to be Offered

District 105 currently has a bilingual self-contained preschool classroom and will be adding a full-day transitional bilingual kindergarten classroom beginning in the fall. Teaching will be in Spanish and in English. The classroom will serve the entire district and will be held at one of the district's elementary schools, TBD. Students will be identified through a home language survey, language acquisition assessment, pre-school teacher referral, and other criteria. The purpose is to ensure that students do not fall behind in content areas such as math, science, and social studies while they are learning English.

The full-day bilingual kindergarten schedule will mirror the standard kindergarten with several differences. In the morning, literacy, math, and whole group instruction will be taught in Spanish. In the afternoon, English as a Second Language (ESL) content will be based on the social studies and science curriculum and students will have opportunities for social interaction in English/Spanish. The district will not offer a half-day bilingual kindergarten program. Instead, students enrolled in the standard half-day kindergarten program who need ESL support will receive it.

District 105 has a Transitional Bilingual Education Program (TBE) at Hodgkins and Ideal schools, and a Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) at Gurrie, Seventh Avenue, and Spring Avenue schools. In the TBE program, bilingual teachers use the student's native language (Spanish) to support instruction. In the TPI program, a certified teacher with an ESL endorsement provides students with English as a Second Language support. These programs are administered in several ways, through co-teaching, pull-out, or push-in services.

"Research strongly supports bilingual programming," said English Language Learners Coordinator Marcela Ortiz. "We will continue to provide our students with the help they need to succeed based on the best bilingual education."

ONLINE Survey

District 105 recently administered a state-required parent, student, and staff survey entitled *5Essentials: Organizing Schools for Improvement*. This short survey focuses on five important areas that affect school success: leadership, collaboration, family involvement, school environment, and instruction. The results will be presented to the Board of Education and posted on the district website when they are released by the state.

KANE COUNTY COUGARS DAY

SAVE THE DATE: DISTRICT 105

The District 105 Foundation will host its third annual **District 105 Kane County Cougars Day** on **Sunday, May 3**, at the



Cougars' stadium in Geneva. This event brings families from the district's five schools, other community members, and District 105 staff together for an exciting day at the ballpark. The Cougars will also have special activities for the District 105 attendees.

Order forms will be sent home with students in the spring. They will also be available in the school offices and online at the district website d105.net.

Kelly Lenti in the district office can also be contacted for orders at klenti@d105.net. The ticket price is only \$7.00 per person.

The District 105 Educational Foundation was established in 2013 with the goal of strengthening family and community relationships throughout the district. It raises funds to provide college scholarships to high school seniors from each of the district's four elementary school attendance areas. The Foundation awarded its first scholarships in May 2014. This spring, the Foundation will award eight scholarships – four renewals and four new scholarships – to former students who need support to pursue a college education.

Ticket information for the Kane County Cougars Day will be posted on the district website: d105.net. Information on how to donate to the District 105 Foundation is also posted on the site.

DISTRICT 105 BOARD OF EDUCATION

David Herndon,
President

Kristine Lonsway,
Vice President

Eileen Tucker,
Secretary

Virginia Kogen

Larry Prystalski

Jan Reagan

Robert Webb

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



STEM in ACTION

(Continued from page 2)

Underwater Robotics Club

The Underwater Robotics Club, a new, extra-curricular offering at Gurrie Middle School, is off to a great start! This club is sponsored in part by the Shedd Aquarium and is taught by Dana Halper, middle school exploratory teacher – STEM. Twenty-three seventh- and eighth-grade students are making ROVs (Remotely Operated Vehicles). They are exploring the design and engineering processes, learning about buoyancy and how to make an underwater ROV “fly” in the water. Students are building the robots by themselves, even soldering wires and circuit boards.

The Shedd Aquarium initially provided materials for the club to make one ROV. There was so much interest that the club expanded to five teams, with each team building its own ROV. One of the teams’ robots will be selected to compete against ROVs made by other schools in the regional MATE (*Marine Advanced Technology Education*) Center competition. The club has expanded their meetings from once a week after school to twice a week to complete their projects in time for the competition.

“I am thrilled that our students have this opportunity. It is a great way to expand our STEM program,” Mrs. Halper commented.

Gurrie Middle School Principal Ed Hood stated, “The Underwater Robotics Club is providing students with a terrific hands-on collaborative team approach to learning. It is wonderful to see our students working together to problem solve, revamp and rethink when something does not work, learn circuitry, and share their ideas with other students. It is a great addition to our school, one that will surely grow in the years to come. Most importantly, the students are learning strategic life and career skills that will help them succeed in school and later. Mrs. Halper is making this experience unique and extremely meaningful for our students.”

To learn more about MATE and ROVs visit marinetech.org.

1:1 Chromebooks Program Enhances Education

During the previous school year, Gurrie Middle School students in several English/language arts classes piloted the use



Gurrie students use Chromebooks throughout the day to enhance learning.

of Chromebooks in a 1:1 program, meaning that each student had a laptop computer in class. These easy to use, fast starting laptop computers run the Google Chrome cloud-based operating system. The results of the pilot showed that students who used Chromebooks in class were more engaged in their studies and more excited about learning. An increase in student engagement was seen in every category surveyed. An overwhelming majority of students and parents had very positive feedback about the program.

Based on the success of the program, the Board of Education approved its expansion in the current school year.

Carts with Chromebooks are in nearly every Gurrie classroom, from PE to STEM, and from math to language arts. Students are now using Chromebooks daily across the entire curriculum. The amount of time Chromebooks are used in class varies with the content area. From writing, creating presentations, reading, researching, to tracking fitness results, reinforcing math skills, and taking tests, Chromebooks are helping redefine the way students learn.

“Students are excited to have the opportunity to use the Chromebooks to work collaboratively,” said Gurrie Middle School Principal Ed Hood, “and our teachers feel that the Chromebooks are a very important part of everyday instruction.”

Although Chromebooks are used everywhere, they are not replacing more traditional learning tools. “We are striking a balance between the use of electronic resources and the more traditional use of pen and paper,” Principal Hood emphasized.

Teachers are continuing to expand the ways that Chromebooks are used in their classrooms. They are receiving continuing professional development in the use of Chromebooks geared to their subject areas.

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Spring Avenue and Seventh Avenue Schools Were Both Recognized as 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education

Only 287 schools across the country received this high honor. In November, district representatives attended an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. Pictured with National Blue Ribbon Program Director Aba Kumi (middle, both photos) are (top photo) Spring Avenue School representatives Wendy Daly, second grade teacher, and Elizabeth Webb, principal; (bottom photo) Seventh Avenue School representatives Cathy Nestlinger, library media specialist, and Erin Hall, principal.



SPEECH AND DRAMA FESTIVAL

On Saturday, February 28, 11 Gurrie Middle School students competed against students from 13 other school districts in the annual West 40 Speech and Drama Festival held at Elmwood Park High School. Gurrie students demonstrated oratorical and dramatic skills in categories that included humorous duets, serious monologues, and humorous monologues. "The students worked very hard to memorize their parts and really wowed the judges!"

said Gurrie Middle School Resource Teacher Meredith Sayre.

At the end of the day, the Gurrie contestants won eight first-place ribbons and three second-place ribbons!

Congratulations to students:

Grace Berger,
Josie Berger,
Jourdan Biotic,
Erin Cosgrove,
Lauren Culver,
Amanda Dahms,
Mark DeWeese,
Ava McLean,
Ashley Patino,
Mary Prystalski,
and **Taylor Schmitt.**