

The Newsletter of LaGrange School District 105

The Blackboard

www.d105.net

Countryside
Hodgkins
LaGrange

105

District Office
701 S. Seventh Avenue
LaGrange, IL 60525
(708) 482-2700

Dr. Glenn T. Schlichting,
Superintendent of Schools

December 2014/
January 2015

RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

District 105 Has Two National Blue Ribbon Schools!

Each year, the U.S. Department of Education recognizes the best public and private elementary, middle and high schools in the country through the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program. Using standards of excellence evidenced by student achievement measures and research-based indicators of school quality, the Department honors schools in which students either achieve very high learning standards (*Exemplary High Performing Schools*) or are making notable improvements in closing the achievement gap (*Exemplary Gap Closing Schools*). The 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.

Of the hundreds of thousands of schools in the country, only a few hundred are selected to receive this honor each year. On September 30, U.S. Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan announced that Spring Avenue and Seventh Avenue schools were among the 287 public and 50 private schools nationwide to receive the National Blue Ribbon Schools award. The district's two schools were recognized in the category of *Exemplary High Performing Schools*.

Regarding the 2014 Blue Ribbon Schools award recipients, Secretary Duncan stated:

These great schools are fulfilling the promise of American education – that all students, no matter their name or zip code, can flourish when schools provide safe, creative, and challenging learning environments. National Blue Ribbon Schools are models of consistent excellence and a resource for other schools and districts. We celebrate them for their tireless effort and boundless creativity in reaching and teaching every student.

In its 32-year history, the National Blue Ribbon Schools program has recognized only 7,900 of America's schools. In Illinois, just 13 public elementary schools, and 9 private schools earned the 2014

Blue Ribbon Schools award. **District 105 is the only Illinois school district to have more than one school achieve this recognition this year!**



The Department of Education asks the top education official in every state to nominate public schools for the National Blue Ribbon Schools award. (Private schools are nominated through the Council for American Private Education.) Nominated schools are then invited to complete a difficult application that asks for a narrative “snapshot” of the school, along with other detailed information that includes curriculum, parent/community involvement, teacher professional development, instructional methods,

Continues on p. 4

Did you KNOW..

- 42% of 2014 Gurrie graduates enrolled in Honors/Accelerated level English courses at Lyons Township High School in the fall; 39% of these graduates enrolled in Honors/Accelerated level math courses.
- Gurrie students dedicated more than 4,600 hours of service to the community last school year.
- District 105 consistently earns the highest Financial Rating from the State of Illinois.
- The District 105 social workers planned and organized a community resale event that was held on November 22 to benefit district families.
- Ideal School Kindergarten Teacher Mary Pat Larocca has been a featured presenter more than 20 times at the ASCD Kindergarten Conference, which is the nation's largest professional event for early childhood educators.

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



Amy Bates



Carol Feldner



Saule Grybauskas



Melissa Guilfoyle



Dana Halper



Eilidh Hall



Gail Heitz



Jessica Johnson



Timothy LaBud



Caroline McMahon



Elizabeth Maciel



Isela Mendez



Brad Meyers



Ellen Pape



Maggie Quinn



Martha Ramirez



Lindsey Soble



Emily Swiatek

The district welcomed 18 full- and part-time staff members at the beginning of the school year. Introducing:

District

Amy Bates, General Music Teacher

Miss Bates, who has five years of experience as an elementary music teacher and choir director, is working part time at Spring Avenue and Ideal Elementary schools. She has a Bachelor of Music Degree from Wheaton College, and a Master's in Music Education from Ithaca College.

"I am so excited to work with students in LaGrange. I have met so many wonderful and supportive colleagues and students, and this seems like a place where students can thrive and enjoy learning," said Miss Bates.

Melissa Guilfoyle, Orchestra

With 12 years of experience as an elementary, middle school and high school orchestra director, and experience as a violin teacher, Mrs. Guilfoyle is highly qualified to serve the district as the part-time orchestra director. She earned a Bachelor's in Music Education from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, a Master's in Music Education from Northern Illinois University, and a Master's in Educational Leadership from DePaul University. She is "very excited to be part of the District 105 staff and community."

Eilidh Hall, Advanced Academics Math Specialist

Miss Hall is helping advanced students at Seventh Avenue and Ideal schools further their math skills. She has six years of experience in education. She achieved a Bachelor's in Education from Eastern Illinois University, a Master's in Reading

and Literacy from Benedictine University, and a Master's in Educational Administration from the University of Illinois.

"I am very excited to work in this new math specialist role," Miss Hall stated. "District 105 has been very welcoming and I look forward to working with students, teachers, parents and administrators in the area of math."

Miss Hall was born and raised in Scotland and has lived in the U.S. for 13 years.

Gail Heitz, Advanced Academics Literacy Specialist

Mrs. Heitz is helping advanced students further literacy skills at Seventh Avenue and Ideal schools. She has worked in education for 11 years. She earned a BS in Elementary Education and English Literature from Vanderbilt University.

"Even in the short time that I have been here, I can tell that District 105 is a very special place. There is a level of enthusiasm and professionalism here that is exceptional. I am very excited to be a part of what this district is doing to benefit students," Mrs. Heitz remarked.

She recently moved to Chicago from Nashville.

Gurrie Middle School

Saule Grybauskas, English/Language Arts and Social Studies Teacher

In her first year as a teacher, Ms. Grybauskas is teaching English/language arts and social studies to seventh and eighth grade students. She earned a BA in English from Valparaiso University, and is one class away from earning a Master's degree from Lewis University.

"Everyone has been very welcoming. There is truly a community at Gurrie and I feel that I am a part of

the 'family.' The students are also fantastic and I love the district's diversity," Ms. Grybauskas stated.

Dana Halper, Middle School Exploratory Teacher – STEM

Mrs. Halper is helping middle school students explore STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). She earned a BS in Science Education from the University of Iowa, and an M.Ed. in Secondary Education from the University of St. Francis in Joliet.

"Working in the district has been a very exciting and welcoming experience. I have enjoyed meeting some of the parents. The wonderful Gurrie students are excited to be here and are involved in activities and leadership roles," Mrs. Halper informed.

Mrs. Halper is a newlywed. Her wedding was held in the summer.

Timothy LaBud, English/Language Arts Teacher

Mr. LaBud is a new teacher who is teaching English/language arts to Gurrie eighth-grade students. He earned a Bachelor's degree in English, with a minor in Secondary Education, from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He is "amazed with how supportive the members of District 105 are. It is great to be surrounded by such passionate and talented colleagues."

Maggie Quinn, Science and Health Education

Ms. Quinn has four years of experience in education. She earned a BS in Biological Science with Secondary and Middle Education endorsements from Illinois State University.

"I began my teaching career at Gurrie as a student teacher," Ms. Quinn explained. "My experience was so positive that I spent the next three years waiting for an opportunity to apply for an opening at the school. I am so excited to be back

in such a friendly and supportive environment."

Hodgkins School

Caroline McMahon, Third Grade Teacher

Ms. McMahon has two years of teaching experience. She earned a BS in French from Illinois Wesleyan University, with teacher certification for grades K-8.

"I am very excited to be working in this district. I am very familiar with the area because my father attended the LaGrange school district and I grew up in Hinsdale," Ms. McMahon explained. "I appreciate the diversity of the students and staff and I value the strong, collaborative relationships within this learning community. I look forward to working with and getting to know each student and his/her family more as the year progresses."

Martha Ramirez, ELL/Bilingual Teacher

Ms. Ramirez brings nine years of teaching experience to her position of ELL (English Language Learners)/bilingual teacher. She earned a BS in American Studies, Education, and a Master's in Education in Curriculum and Instruction, with a concentration in Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language, all from Dominican University. She commented, "It is a pleasure to join the District 105 family. I look forward to collaborating with other staff members to help our students achieve high levels of academic success."

Ideal School

Elizabeth Maciel, Bilingual Speech-Language Pathologist

Ms. Maciel attended Saint Xavier University, where she earned a BA and an MA in Communication Sciences and Disorders. She has one

Full-day KINDERGARTEN is Studied

District 105 offers students a partial-day kindergarten program. Currently, the Board of Education is exploring the option of full-day kindergarten. To undertake this study, the district has created a kindergarten committee comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators from all District 105 school communities. This exploratory committee is examining research reflecting the benefits and challenges associated with full-day kindergarten, exploring a variety of full-day kindergarten program models currently in place in other districts, and examining the feedback from a community survey. With this information, the committee will make a recommendation to the Board of Education regarding full-day kindergarten. If the Board of Education decides to offer a full-day kindergarten option, per Illinois state requirements, a half-day kindergarten option will also be available to District 105 families.

Some of the survey results were:

Parent Community – 76% strongly support full-day kindergarten; 10% somewhat support it; 9% do not support it; 5% are not sure.

Staff Community – 78% strongly support full-day kindergarten; 17% somewhat support it; 5% do not support it; 0% are not sure.

GIFTED PROGRAM Renewal

The district's gifted program has been completely renewed. Following the Board of Education's approval of the Gifted Program Renewal Committee's recommendations, the district's new English/language arts (ELA) and math specialists are hard at work. For ELA, this marks the first year the district is using a flexible, push-in model of learning aligned to classroom goals and grade-level Common Core ELA standards. The three new ELA specialists in the Advanced Academics Department have been working with both students and teachers in grades 3-6 to model best practices, team teach, as well as provide materials and enrich learning.

An additional K-4 math specialist was hired. There are now two K-4 math specialists, one at Spring Avenue and Hodgkins, and one at Seventh Avenue and Ideal. They are fostering students' math talents.

The new gifted program model is flexible in nature. As students complete unit study pre-tests, teachers determine which students need enrichment and advancement because they are demonstrating mastery of the unit's learning standards. Unit by unit, the needs of students will change, and therefore, the high achieving students with whom the specialists are working with can and will change also.

Foundation News

The District 105 Foundation sponsored a Back-to-School Family Night at Hodgkins Park District on Friday, September 12. Despite a storm that moved the event inside, over 500 community members watched the movie *Frozen*, heard music by *The Saracens Band*, and enjoyed food from Q BBQ, LaGrange.

The Foundation is planning to bring the community together again for the third annual District 105 Kane County Cougars Baseball Game on Sunday, May 3, 2015.

The District 105 Foundation was formed in 2013 to strengthen family and community relationships throughout the district. These gatherings provide an opportunity for the community to enjoy spending time together, as students and families benefit from developing trusting relationships across elementary school attendance areas.



The Foundation's event gave families an opportunity to relax and have fun together.

The Foundation also raises funds to give scholarships to four deserving Lyons Township High School seniors who graduated from the district's four elementary schools. The first scholarships were awarded last spring.

If you are looking for a worthy organization for charitable giving, or are planning to make a donation to honor someone as a gift or a memorial, please consider the District 105 Foundation. Donations can be sent to Susan Dixon's attention at the District 105 Office, or make contri-

butions online at the district website www.d105.org.

Parent Involvement at HODGKINS SCHOOL

All District 105 schools work strategically and systematically through the school improvement process each year to meet their ambitious goals for continuous student growth and for students to be college and career ready.

As a new support to the school improvement process, Hodgkins School is undertaking an exciting pilot program parent initiative that aims to discover new ways for parents to get even more engaged and involved in education.

"The charge of our parent pilot initiative is to seek new ways that parents can work in collaboration with Hodgkins School to help students achieve and make progress at higher levels. We are asking ourselves, 'How can we adjust what we're already doing well to make a bigger impact for our students, and further strengthen home/school partner-

ships?'" stated John Signatur, principal of Hodgkins School.

Hodgkins School recently formed an *Action Team for Partnerships* (ATP), comprised of parents, teachers, and community members, who will work together on the initiative this year. The next step for the team will be setting parent involvement goals and writing action plans to implement those goals in support of the school's improvement efforts. Team members have already received some specialized training.

"The ATP will meet monthly to monitor the implementation of our action plans," said Principal Signatur, "and to continue to evaluate how parents are and can be invaluable partners and assets. The parent involvement initiative is one way that we are collectively pursuing the district's mission to 'empower students to pursue their interests, talents, and dreams.'" **3**

District 105 Has Two National Blue Ribbon Schools! (Continued from page 1)



student assessment information – with five years of state achievement test results, how the school uses assessment information, demographic information, and more. The Department of Education reviews the applications and chooses the Blue Ribbon Schools.

On November 10 and 11, The Department of Education honored the 2014 Blue Ribbon Schools at a recognition ceremony in Washington, D.C. Representatives from

PHOTO: Spring Avenue School Principal Elizabeth Webb Peterman interacts with students.

the district attended the event. They heard speakers and met educators from other award-winning schools. Each of the schools was recognized with a plaque and a Blue Ribbon Schools flag.

The district greatly appreciates the support of the parents and community who demand an excellent education for the district’s children. Their high standards, caring, and concern for children are the roots of exceptional schools.

Comments from the District

David Herndon, Board of Education President:

The Board of Education congratulates the staffs of Seventh Avenue School and Spring Avenue School for their outstanding work that led to the Blue Ribbon Schools awards. To have two schools from a district our size win in the same year is uncommon. Our district culture and initiatives played a significant role in this achievement. Recognition must also go to the administrative team, and to former Board of Education members Jan Kinsley, Mark Smith, John Thomas, Barb Ignarski, Peg Peterson, and Barb Baldassarre. Years ago, they had a vision that we could be better, and laid the groundwork that allowed us to win these two awards.

Erin Hall, Seventh Avenue School Principal:

The Seventh Avenue community is honored to have achieved the 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools award. One reason Seventh Avenue is Blue Ribbon worthy is because all stakeholders are invested in ensuring both academic and social/emotional student success. We strive to be a high performing

school district that celebrates the importance of each individual student, so this truly feels like OUR Super Bowl moment. Students are proud of their school and of receiving this award. Some of the students comments include, ‘Winning the National Blue Ribbon Award feels wonderful because we actually had to earn it’; and ‘I feel really proud of our school because we work so hard. It is a really big award and only a few schools get it.’

Elizabeth Webb Peterman, Spring Avenue School Principal: *All staff, administrators, building managers, volunteers, first responders, and communities work very hard and collaboratively in District 105. We are committed to keeping a district perspective in mind at all times, sharing professional development, ideas and strategies, and staff and specialists to move students forward. Just like all of our schools, Spring Avenue takes that hard work and adds determination and dedication to meet each child where they are and help them grow from there. We collaborate and go back to the drawing board when strategies need refining. We work side by side*

with our families to create an atmosphere where students want to be, and want to learn. Thanks to our parents, the students come to school ready to learn, and the students add extra effort and care for this learning process.



Seventh Avenue Principal Erin Hall visits a classroom.

Teachers and staff encourage students daily and create environments for students to push themselves to learn as much as they can. Our motto is ‘Together We Can!’ We work to keep this alive all across the district!

SUMMER CONNECT Program

Throughout the country, summer learning regression is a well-known problem. To help minimize that regression, and to keep students engaged in learning, District 105 offers a “Summer CONNECT” program. This year, the program was revised from the previous coach-to-student model to one based on enrichment and variety. The revised program gave students the ability to experience a wide range of classes and to explore learning in a new way, by offering more than 150 unique learning explorations. Fifty teachers taught these explorations and over 1,500 students participated!

Teachers used their expertise to create lessons that aligned with the new Illinois State

Common Core Learning Standards. These unique classes included baseball card statistics, beginning orienteering, creating a budget for a do-it-yourself project, playing bridge, digital photography, the history of blues and hip hop, bugs, and reading with dogs, to name a few.

In addition, all five school libraries were open all summer. During that time, 1,146 students engaged in the Open Library program and checked out 4,577 books.

“Our mission as a district is to empower students to pursue their interests, talents, and dreams,” explained Kathryn Heeke, director of curriculum and instruction. “The Summer CONNECT explorations program

created the opportunity for students to explore, think, and learn through a variety of classes and topics. These experiences contribute to the model of life our students create. As we work to prepare these students for college, career, and citizenship readiness, we do so without knowing what actual types of jobs they will be doing, because in all likelihood, many of those jobs do not yet exist. So through many learning opportunities, we must teach them how to think critically and how to be responsible for their own learning. The CONNECT Program helps maintain the momentum of this learning for the entire year.”

A Message from Dr. Glenn Schlichting, Superintendent

With two District 105 schools recognized as Blue Ribbon Schools for 2014, we are very proud of how well this award reflects on the overall success of the district and the commitment to excellence in each of our five school communities. The student demographics in our schools are quite diverse. Nevertheless, our dedication to preparing students for college and career readiness is consistent across the district. Our students bring very different learning needs to our diverse school settings, **but all five of our schools earn top national rankings for the fall to spring achievement progress their students make each year.** This success of mov-

ing students forward, regardless of their achievement, language, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds, is our definition of High Performance in our District 105 schools.

We are very honored that Seventh Avenue and Spring Avenue Schools received this prestigious award. We are also very proud of the passionate work of our students, staff, parents, and community members in all five of our schools as they strive to do what 2011 National Superintendent of the Year Marc Johnson describes as, "getting better at getting better."

Senate Bill 16 SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM

The State of Illinois has been looking at ways to change education funding, which has remained unchanged since 1997. Senate Bill 16 (SB16) has come from that effort. If enacted into law, SB16 will make sweeping changes in how the state funds education and those changes will have a significantly negative impact on School District 105.

SB16 does not increase the level of state funding for education, but it changes the way in which the funds are distributed to local school districts. Generally, school districts with higher assessed property values will receive much less state funding while other districts in the State with lower assessed property values will receive much more State funding. As written, SB16 also provides a special cost benefit to the Chicago Public Schools. SB16 neither addresses the issue of an increase in unfunded obligations to school districts, nor the issue of the State not being able to meet its current obligations to fund education.

How will SB16 impact District 105?

Based on State Board of Education calculations, District 105 will lose 82% of its state funding, or just over \$1,000,000 per year. The Bill would be phased in over a four-year period with District 105 losing increasing percentages of its state funding in each of the first three years and a full \$1,000,000 reduction in state funding beginning in year four.

District 105 will be one of the districts most severely impacted by SB16. Already, local taxpayers provide more than 90% of the funding for our District 105 schools. Over the years, the state has reduced its share of funding for District 105 schools

while increasing unfunded obligations for programs and services.

The district has been fiscally responsible and lived within its means. Over the last five years, operational expenses have increased annually 2.3% while overall enrollment has increased by an average of 3.2%, and enrollment in required bilingual programs has more than doubled. During this same period, state and Federal regulations have caused significant increases in district costs in several areas including transportation, special education, and student testing. If SB16 passes, District 105 will have to reduce operational expenses in several areas to maintain a balanced budget.

DISTRICT 105 BOARD OF EDUCATION

David Herndon, *The public is invited to attend*
President
Kristine Lonsway, *board meetings –*
Vice President *generally held at*
Eileen Tucker, *Gurrie Library*
Secretary *Learning Center*
Virginia Kogen *on the fourth*
Larry Prystalski *Monday of*
Jan Reagan *each month,*
Robert Webb *7:30 PM.*

What Can Our Community Do?

Senate Bill 16 has already passed the State Senate. It is expected that SB16 will be voted on by the Illinois House of Representatives sometime following the fall election. If you are concerned about the impact of SB16 on the educational programming and taxpayers in District 105, please contact your state legislators and voice your opinion.

The following legislators serve residents in School District 105:

State Senators

Jacqueline "Jacqui" Collins, 16th District senatorcollins@sbcglobal.net
1155 W. 79th St., Chicago, IL 60620. (773) 224-2830

Steven M. Landek, 12th District senatorlandek@gmail.com
6215 79th St., Suite 1A, Burbank, IL 60459. (217) 782-0054

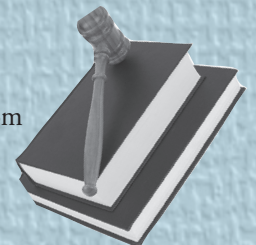
Christine Radogno, 41st District christine@senatorradogno.com
1011 State Street, Lemont, IL 60439. (630) 243-0800

State Representatives

Jim Durkin, 82nd District repdurkin@hotmail.com
915 W. 55th St., Suite 202, Western Springs, IL 60558, (708) 246-1104

Mary E. Flowers, 31st District flowersme@ilga.gov
2525 W. 79th St., Chicago, IL 60652. (773) 471-5200

Michael J. Zalewski, 23rd District repzalewski@gmail.com
1 Riverside Road, 3rd Floor, Riverside, IL 60546. (708) 442-6501



Introducing NEW STAFF (Continued from page 2)

year of experience as an educator. She stated, "This is an excellent district. There is so much support from individuals who genuinely care about education and the well-being of the students and families."

Isela S. Mendez,
ELL/Bilingual Teacher

Mrs. Mendez, who is beginning her tenth year as a teacher, loves her profession. She is working with second and fifth grade Ideal School students.

She achieved a BA with a major in Spanish and a minor in English Writing from Roosevelt University, and an M.Ed. from Roosevelt University. She also has additional certification in English as a Second Language Education, and in Bilingual Education, Spanish.

"Transitioning to District 105 has been a wonderful experience. I am beyond excited with the opportunity to collaborate with such a talented and dedicated group of educators on a daily basis. I look forward to contributing to the academic success of District 105 students for many years to come!" Mrs. Mendez commented.

Lindsey Soble,
Speech/Language Pathologist

Miss Soble attended the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and achieved a BS in Speech and Hearing Science, and an MA in Speech/Language Pathology. She has two years of teaching experience.

"I am very excited to be part of District 105! Everyone has been so kind in welcoming me to the district. I am delighted to be part of such a great group of educators. I am truly looking forward to this school year," Miss Soble remarked.

Emily Swiatek, Resource Teacher

Mrs. Swiatek, who has 10 years of teaching experience, is working part time as a resource teacher. She has a Bachelor's degree in Special Education from Illinois State University, and a Master's degree in Educational Leadership from Saint Xavier University.

"I am grateful to be a part of such a professional, positive, dynamic district! It has been wonderful getting to know the staff and students of District 105. I am thrilled to be part of the team," Mrs. Swiatek stated.

Seventh Avenue School

Ellen Pape, Reading Specialist

Miss Pape taught for three years prior to coming to Seventh Avenue School. She is also an assistant director for the Schaumburg Institute for Literacy Enrichment through Roosevelt University, a program of K-8 reading intervention and enrichment reading classes. Miss Pape earned a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and achieved a Master's in Language and Literacy from Roosevelt University. She is "very excited to begin her first year in District 105 and to get to know the community."

Spring Avenue School

Carol Feldner,
Speech-Language Pathologist

Mrs. Feldner has 14 years of experience as a speech-language pathologist. She has a BS in Psychology from Western Illinois University, with undergraduate course work in communicative disorders done at St. Xavier University, and an MHS in Communicative Disorders from Governors State University. Mrs. Feldner is working part time in the

district. She feels "very fortunate to be working in District 105, which has a wonderful sense of community."

Jessica Johnson,
Sixth Grade Teacher

Ms. Johnson is beginning her second year of teaching. She earned a BA in Elementary Education from Carthage College. Ms. Johnson is "so excited to be working in District 105. It is such a supportive environment and welcoming district. The focus is truly on the students and on their learning." She is bilingual and licensed to teach in bilingual classrooms.

Bradley Meyers,
Fifth Grade Math Teacher

Mr. Meyers is a part-time teacher, who has a year of experience in education. He has a BS in Inclusive Childhood Education from Houghton College, New York. Mr. Meyers is "honored to be working in such an exceptional school district that always puts students first, works collaboratively with an amazing support community, and fosters a positive environment of teamwork and lifelong learning among staff."