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Dr. Glenn T. Schlichting,
Superintendent of Schools

July/August 2014

The Newsletter of LaGrange School District 105

The Blackboard

www.d105.net

Countryside
Hodgkins
LaGrange

105

Summer Learning Through **CONNECT**

Research shows that over the summer months, students can lose anywhere from one to three months of learning! To address this learning loss, and keep students on track, District 105 has offered the CONNECT program over the last three summers. Programming has evolved over the years, with any changes always based on an analysis of student data, and how to best serve students and families over the summer. This year, to better accommodate students' academic needs, there are no longer teacher coaches and grade level workbooks. Instead, exciting new learning opportunities and resources are available at each of the five district schools from June 16 – August 7. The new CONNECT program includes these exciting learning opportunities:

CONNECT Learning Explorations

CONNECT Learning Explorations are one-hour group sessions available at the primary, intermediate, and middle school levels. These learning sessions are teacher-created, content-focused learning opportunities taking place during Open Library times at each school. Each learning session offers either a Literacy/interdisciplinary focus

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Did you **KNOW...**

- District 105 teacher and administrative salaries are linked to student performance. 105 Students significantly outperform students from similar districts throughout the country.
- Seventh Avenue and Spring Avenue Elementary Schools were among the 16 Illinois schools nominated for the 2013-14 National Blue Ribbon Award.
- Twenty-six former students earned college scholarship awards at the LT Senior Honors Assembly on May 23. Two former students earned top LT Departmental Awards.

On the spring District 105 survey:

- 95% of parents agree that their child's teachers have high expectations for his/her performance.
- 94% of parents agree their child is appropriately challenged in school.
- 95% of parents agree their child likes going to school.
- 96% of 3rd - 8th grade students report their school is a good place to learn.



District 105 Foundation President Susan Dixon and Superintendent Glenn Schlichting awarded the Foundation's first scholarships to former students who graduated in June from LT. The students (L to R), and the District 105 schools they attended, are Kyle Charlier (Ideal), Olivia Knack (Hodgkins), Alyssa Laatz (Spring), and Andrea Pardo (Seventh Avenue). Read more about the scholarship, and the District 105 Foundation, in the [Message from the Superintendent](#) on page 5.

Grurie 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

Three dedicated educators have retired. Collectively, they contributed 71 years of service to the children and families of District 105. Congratulations and best wishes to **Fran Colby, James J. Svehla, and Deborah Madison Tyrrell.**



Fran Colby, Gurrie Middle School, Eighth Grade English/Language Arts Teacher, 30 Years

Mrs. Colby, who spent her entire career at Gurrie, taught many diverse areas and subjects, including French, typing, drama, communication skills, speech, and seventh- and eighth-grade English. She also served as an eighth-grade teacher team leader.

“District 105 is a great place to work. I got to know district teachers and many families over the years. I have also valued and enjoyed the diversity of our families. I am very proud of the way our students, who come from many different backgrounds, come together and work effectively,” Mrs. Colby remarked.

Travel is on the horizon for Mrs. Colby and her husband, who will visit the U.S. in their motor home, see their children who live “near and far,” and travel abroad. She plans to read, sew, volunteer, and return to Gurrie as a substitute teacher. She also hopes to see her former students around town and learn about their current endeavors.



James J. Svehla, Gurrie Middle School Math and Technology (STEM) Teacher, 34 Years

Mr. Svehla knows Gurrie Middle School and the community extremely well.

His roots here go very deep. He was born and raised in LaGrange, and graduated from Lyons Township High School.

During his 34 years at Gurrie, he also taught typing, study skills, and computers, was the yearbook sponsor, and coached girls’ basketball and boys’ softball.

“I love the diversity and energy of the students, the friendliness of the com-

munity, and the excellent district resources. I will always remember countless smiles, a lot of laughter, and many, many good times,” Mr. Svehla stated.

He plans to spend time with his two children and grandchildren, and participate in a number of hobbies and activities, including traveling, fishing, photography, cooking, gardening, and fantasy sports. But he doesn’t have to think about keeping busy. Mr. Svehla’s wife told him not to worry; she’ll have retirement all planned out for him!



Deborah Madison Tyrrell, District-wide, Director of Student Services, 7 Years

Ms. Tyrrell grew up in LaGrange and in Western Springs. Coming to the district seven years ago took her full circle back to her roots.

In District 105, she served as the Director of Student Services. She also chaired a variety of committees and led the district’s *Least Restrictive Environment* initiative.

Ms. Tyrrell knew early on in her career that she wanted to become a Special Education administrator and has held positions in teaching and administration at several regional and county Special Education agencies, as well as in schools.

“District 105 is the culminating highlight of my career. I came to the district to continue improving programs and services for students and to make integral connections for students, teachers, and parents. We have established a strong student services team, and I have established many close relationships in the district. I am proud of the systems and programs that were developed during my tenure to better serve our students and families,” Ms. Tyrrell said.

Ms. Tyrrell plans to continue teaching classes to pre-service and graduate level teachers at Benedictine University. She looks forward to spending quality time with her family and new grandchildren, writing, traveling, and discovering new bicycle trails.

CHANGES to Registration

For the first time, the district provided a mail-in option for registration for the next school year to make the process more convenient for families, and to gain enrollment information earlier to improve planning. The information was sent home with elementary students’ report cards, and mailed to the homes of seventh grade students.

All parents were encouraged to complete the registration packet and mail or return it to the home school by June 27, 2014.

Along with that change, there is now an option to pay registration fees and load prepaid meal accounts online with a credit card. Parents will still have the option to pay registration fees and add funds to their students’ meal accounts by check or cash.

The district will also provide a **Walk-in Registration option on Tuesday, July 29, 4:00 -7:00 pm, at Seventh Avenue School.** More details were sent to parents.

Students Recognized in Northwestern University Midwest Talent Search

Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students throughout the region spent a Saturday morning in January taking either the SAT or ACT college admission tests through the Northwestern University Midwest Talent Search.

The West Suburban Consortium for Academic Excellence recognized 12 District 105 students for their scores of either 500 on the SAT, or over 20 on the ACT. The students, *Makaela Faldani, Jack Henningfield, Tihana Karlovic, Ava McLean, Andrew Pierpaoli, Ryan Pierpaoli, Ben Prystalski, Liam Rogan, Reno Sarussi, Grace Stuewe, Daniel Torres, and Alvaro Villalobos* were recognized for their high scores at an awards ceremony in May.

1:1 CHROMEBOOK PILOT is a Success

This year, Gurrie Middle School students in several English/Language Arts classes piloted *Chromebooks, laptop computers that run the Google Chrome cloud-based operating system and web browser. Each student had a computer in class, hence the “1:1” pilot.* The devices can only be used while connected to the Internet and support applications that are found on the web, rather than traditional applications that reside on the computer. Chromebooks are lightweight, fast, secure, and extremely affordable. They start up in seconds and can access thousands of educational Apps.

Toward the end of the year, data from the classes that used Chromebooks was analyzed, students who had the Chromebooks were surveyed, and the findings were impressive.

Students who used Chromebooks in class were more engaged in their studies, and more excited about learning. Students rated their experiences with Chromebooks very highly. An increase in student engagement over the previous year, when Chromebooks were not used, was seen in every category surveyed. Additionally, 99% of students surveyed said they looked forward to coming to class and using their

Chromebooks, and 93% said that sometimes they get so interested in their work they do not want to stop. Chromebooks also brought slightly improved grades.

Based on the success of the program, Gurrie Middle School Principal Ed Hood recommended to the Board of Education that the program should not only continue, but expand during the 2014-2015 school year. The Board recently approved his recommendations, which call for a cart with computers in almost every middle school classroom so that students have access to the Chromebooks throughout the school day. For the year 2015-2016, a recommendation to allow students to take home the laptops for homework and further learning was approved. (Students surveyed reported that 9% did not have wireless access at home, and 14% did not have a laptop at home to work with.)

“We have had tremendous, positive feedback from students and from parents,” reported Principal Hood. “We are seeing students with an increased focus on their work, greater collaboration among students, and students who are so engaged in their work that they lose track of time!”

Students Visit University

It is never too early for students to begin thinking about college and careers. The district held a Career Festival in April (see page 4), and in May, eighth grade students had a unique opportunity to visit Loyola University in Chicago.

“It is extremely beneficial for our students to visit a university, talk with current faculty and students, and experience the campus’s physical layout. Current research shows the importance of students beginning to think about and explore college and careers in middle school,” stated Gurrie Middle School Principal Ed Hood. “The trip was designed to support our district mission to have our

students ready to pursue college and career opportunities when they enter high school. The Loyola visit provided students with insight into what they can expect from a college experience.” Before the trip, students completed a career inventory and used it as a basis for discussion and questions regarding higher education and career paths.

On May 13, over 150 Gurrie eighth grade students traveled to the university. They toured the campus in small groups, each led by a Loyola student guide. They visited typical classrooms, technology facilities, the library, science labs, and athletic fields. The students spoke with Loyola staff, students,

and faculty about college life and how it will prepare them for careers. They also learned about fields of study and course offerings. They had lunch in a campus cafeteria.

“This trip does not endorse one university over another,” Principal Hood explained. “Loyola was enthusiastic and willing to work with us to provide this opportunity, one of many that will help our students reach out and see what options exist for them after a successful high school experience.”

The Loyola visit created a positive dialogue about higher education that continued long after the trip concluded.



Gurrie eighth grade students and Gurrie staff members who accompanied them gathered for a group photo during their visit to Loyola University.

Parent Involvement Committee Presents CAREER FESTIVAL

The Parent Involvement Committee held the district's first Career Festival on the evening of April 23 for students and their families. They came to Gurrie Middle School to



hear informative presentations by experts on *Which Career is Right for You?* and, *Do You Dream of Starting Your Own Business?*

After the presentations, families had the opportunity to visit many display tables throughout the gym. At each table, they could learn about a specific career from a professional in their field.

PHOTOS: During the district's first Career Festival, families met with professionals in their fields (above) and heard presentations on career planning (right).

Careers for every interest were represented, including science, technology, education, medicine, marketing, business, realty, law enforcement, finance, photography, sales, beauty, and architecture.

Students received a career assessment handout to help determine their strengths and interests, and the types of fields that might be a good fit. The handout also included information on current salaries and on the fastest growing professions.

The Career Festival was very well attended. Students and parents learned that it is never too early to plan for the future.



UPDATES to GIFTED PROGRAMS

Over the past two years, as directed by the District 105 Board of Education, a *Gifted Programming Renewal Committee*, comprised of teachers, administrators, and parents from across the district, met to research best instructional practices for meeting the learning needs of the district's highest achieving students. This committee examined Gifted Education research, consulted with an outside expert, explored the advanced English/Language Arts (ELA) and Math programming available in districts around the Lyons Township area, analyzed District 105 student progress data, and examined program survey feedback from parents and staff. Here are the results of their efforts:

Mathematics Update

In spring 2013, after a year of research at the committee level, the Board of Education approved the addition of a district-wide kindergarten through fourth-grade math instructional specialist. Over the course of the 2013-2014 school year, the math specialist provided support for teachers through co-planning, co-teaching, modeling lessons, as well as professional development around the Common Core Standards math instructional practices. Parent and staff feedback was positive, indicating that the addition of the math specialist helped teachers to better meet the needs of the highest math achievers by providing instruction that is more rigorous for all students.

Changes to SAIL

The Board of Education recently approved the recommendation of the district's Gifted Programming Renewal Committee to change the current SAIL (Gifted Education) program for high achieving English/Language Arts (ELA) students in grades 4-6 in the fall.

The committee spent one year examining the strengths and the weaknesses of the program, focusing on student performance data, and survey feedback results from parents and staff. Surveys indicated that both parents and staff were pleased with the quality of resources available through the SAIL program; however, the lack of integration between those resources and daily grade level instructional goals was cited as something that could be improved.

SAIL, which was a fixed program that pulled students out of the classroom twice a week, will now be a flexible instructional model supported by new ELA instructional specialists. This model, aligned to grade level instructional goals, will allow the instructional specialists, in conjunction with third-through sixth-grade classroom teachers, to design specific materials, strategies, lessons, activities, and resources to support the highest ELA achievers. They will work directly with teachers to co-plan, co-teach, provide resources, and model instructional strategies within the daily classroom environment for the ELA students.

"This reformatted model of instruction will align to classroom goals and grade level Common Core ELA standards," explained Kathryn Heeke, Director of Curriculum and Instruction. "Specialists and teachers will be able to adapt curriculum for students that need it, when they need it. Students will have the materials and instruction to meet their specific learning needs five days a week instead of only twice a week as provided by the former SAIL programming. We believe that the redesign of the SAIL program will be the best approach for meeting the varying needs of our highest achieving ELA students."

Advanced Reading – Gurrie Middle School

For the 2014-15 school year, students who were in the sixth grade SAIL program will be placed in advanced seventh grade reading at Gurrie. In addition, data and teacher recommendations for all sixth grade students will be evaluated to identify additional exiting sixth grade students who may qualify for this advanced programming. Beginning in the 2015-16 school year, formal identification into the advanced Gurrie ELA programming will occur for all exiting sixth grade students. Key criteria, including classroom performance, mastery of Common Core Standards, assessment data, along with parent and teacher input, will be examined for appropriate ELA placement at Gurrie.

District 105 Foundation News

In just a short time, the District 105 Foundation has accomplished much toward its mission to make a difference in the community by empowering students to pursue their interests, talents, and dreams. The Foundation's two main areas of focus are to strengthen family and community relationships throughout the diverse District 105 community and to provide scholarships to former students graduating from Lyons Township High School who are most in need of support to pursue a college education.

The Foundation brought the community together for the second annual Kane County Cougars game on May 4. The response was excellent as more than 620 staff, students, parents, and community members enjoyed the game and the many special events planned by the Foundation and the Kane County Cougars.

It is also planning a *Back to School Movie Night* on September 12 at Hodgkins Park. Again, we anticipate a great turnout from our community for this event, which will include food, family activities, and music, along with the featured movie.



The first of the Foundation's renewable \$1,500 college scholarships was awarded at the Lyons Township Senior Honors Assembly on

May 23 to four very deserving senior students who excelled in academics, leadership, and service during their elementary, middle, and high school years. The four recipients are **Kyle Charlier** (Countryside) attending Indiana University, **Olivia Knack** (Hodgkins) attending Elmhurst College, **Alyssa Laatz** (LaGrange) attending the College of DuPage, and **Andrea Pardo** (LaGrange) attending Augustana College. (See photo on page 1.)

In its first full year, the Foundation raised more than \$30,000 thanks to the generosity of our many sponsors, who are recognized in a booklet distributed throughout the community, and whose names are posted on our District 105 Foundation website.

If you are interested in learning more about the Foundation or becoming a sponsor, please visit our website at www.d105.net or contact us at klenti@d105.net.



PHOTOS: During the Foundation's Kane County Cougars game, visitors enjoyed performances by the district Band (above) and Orchestra (left).

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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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JULY/AUGUST 2014

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Summer Learning Through CONNECT (Continued from page 1)

or a Math/interdisciplinary focus. Students are invited to attend as many CONNECT Learning Exploration sessions as they wish throughout the summer, as their schedule allows. Certified staff across the district lead each CONNECT Exploration. Parents received a schedule of the CONNECT Learning Explorations in May.

Book Clubs at All Schools!

Librarians at each school are leading Book Clubs across different learning levels. Book Club selections can be checked out directly from the school libraries.

Continuation of IXL Online Math Program

Every District 105 student has an online account to *IXL Math*. Access continues over the summer months. IXL is a comprehensive math practice site with an unlimited number of math practice questions in hundreds of skills aligned to grade level standards. Since children access it from home, parents can see their children's progress.

Calendar of Math and Reading Activities

Over the summer, keeping students focused on math and literacy on a daily basis is critical to curb summer learning regression. In June, a calendar of literacy and math activities was posted for parents to view on the district website. A paper version of the calendar was also sent home to parents in late May. Throughout the summer, there will be activities for students in grades K through 8, targeted to their learning level.

All School Libraries Open Over the Summer

CONNECT Exploration and Book Clubs will be coordinated through Open Library sessions at each school building, from June 16 – August 7. Students can also check out books at any District 105 Library during any Open Library. Times are posted on the district website.

Additional information about the Summer Connect Program can be found on the district website: www.d105.net.

Enjoy Summer! Remember to read. The first day of school is Monday, August 25, an early dismissal day.

