

April 6, 2017

Dear District 57 families,

Spring has sprung and the end of this school year will be here before we know it. At this time I wanted to give you information on three Assistant Principal positions that the Board of Education has approved for next fall. These positions were eliminated at Fairview and Lions Park in 2005 as a result of budget cutting after several failed referenda. In light of our financial situation it's natural to wonder why we would add Assistant Principals now. The short answer is that it has become necessary to do so in order to sustain our high performing district in a time of both increasing state requirements and growing enrollment.

Last fall, due to a statewide shortage of school psychologists, we had two positions left unfilled. We replaced them temporarily with staff members who support student services and perform data analysis, intervention planning, and the coordination and facilitation of necessary problem solving meetings. Next year, one of these two job positions will be eliminated and the job responsibilities rolled into the new assistant principal positions. Due to the increased enrollment expected at Lincoln next year, this student services position will remain on the staffing plan. This current school year we also have had two psychologists supporting four schools, and we will continue to have those positions. The overall impact on the staffing plan in the area of student services is a net increase of one position. Lincoln already has an assistant principal in place.

In recent years we have seen a marked increase in English Language Learners entering our district. 160 children come to us from 34 different language backgrounds and it is our job to teach them to be fluent in English. This growing program requires both increased oversight and state-mandated reporting.

Reporting requirements and management of our early childhood program have risen to the point that additional administrative support is required at Westbrook. In the past this had been an assignment handled by one of our staff members who is no longer able to commit to this extra duty.

A few years ago the State of Illinois passed the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) which requires districts to adopt new, extensive teacher evaluations. This current year is the first year for implementation in D57 and the additional time required of our building principals to observe our teachers in the classroom, meet with them individually to provide feedback, prepare formal documentation and report to the state has placed an extraordinary workload on these highly valued administrators. It is our desire that the evaluation of our teaching staff be a collaborative process that supports their growth as professional educators. We just can't expect our principals to fulfill these responsibilities alone while still being responsible for the day-to-day management of their buildings.

Though any one of the above needs may not be enough to justify the addition of assistant principals, it's clear to the Board that when all of these areas of increasing need are considered together, Mr. Dan Ophus, Dr. Mary Gorr, our future Lions Park Principal and our entire teaching

staff need and deserve the added support in order to continue serving our students at the level you have come to expect.

In closing I'd like to congratulate Vicki Chung, Eileen Kowalczyk, Brian Maye & Gerry McCluskey who were elected to 4-year terms on the D57 Board of Education. They will be sworn in at a special meeting on May 1st. Thanks goes out to John Dyer & Gwynne Ryan who also invested much time and effort to run for election. I'm very optimistic about the future of D57 knowing that there are so many passionate and committed individuals who are willing to selflessly serve our district families. Two of those people-Karen Nejdil and Joe Leane will be leaving the board and we thank them for their many years of service!

Have a wonderful spring!

Sincerely,

Joe Sonnefeldt
President, D57 Board of Education