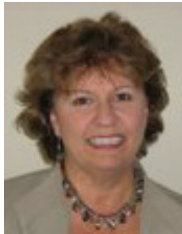




DISTRICT 57 REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR SUPERINTENDENT



Welcome to the first District 57 Report of the 2013-14 school year. We publish this online newsletter periodically to inform the community about issues that affect our school district and to share exciting news coming out of the schools. This issue addresses some of the innovative curriculum and programs that are making it possible for our students to grow and succeed.

We have many tools for measuring student progress. One is the District and School Report Card, which was released Oct. 31 by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). We are very proud of District 57's performance. We also are pleased with our students' growth, when comparing ISAT data from the past couple years. This is a measure that we have not had in the past, and it is very meaningful to us because it shows that District 57 students are improving year to year, with growth that surpasses the state average.

The Report Card is a useful tool for parents and community members who want to see a snapshot of our District. This year, the ISBE has redesigned the Report Card to make it more user friendly and provide a more complete picture. You can access the full report at <http://illinoisreportcard.com/>.

Administrators and teachers have been aligning curriculum with the new Common Core State Standards. These efforts helped fuel students' strong performance on last year's ISAT. We thank the teachers and their students for their hard work, and the parents for the important role they play. There is a solid partnership between District 57 staff and parents, and the students greatly benefit from it.

We believe District 57's strong performance will continue, thanks, in part, to the many ways our schools are supporting students and enhancing their education.

Read on to learn about:

- the Catching Fire reading program,
- clubs that foster 21st-Century skills,
- enhanced math support and
- the development of new curriculum that meets Common Core standards.



DISTRICT 57 GOES BACK TO SCHOOL
Lincoln students were all smiles as they celebrated the start of a new school year at a pep rally. District 57 welcomed more than 2,100 students back to school this year.

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Follow Mount Prospect School District 57 on Facebook.

It's a great way to be "in the know" about many of the exciting things happening in our schools!

To save resources, we are not printing this publication. Please help spread the word by asking your friends and neighbors to check it out at www.d57.org.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

FINANCES STABLE, BUT CHALLENGES COULD BE ON THE HORIZON

District 57's financial situation has stabilized over the past couple years as a result of spending cuts and the careful allocation of limited resources. There still could be economic challenges in the District's future, but for now, finances are stable.

District 57 is in the process of negotiating a new contract with the Mount Prospect Education Association. Both parties recently agreed to reconvene negotiations under the direction of a mediator from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. It is the District's hope that an agreement that is in the best interest of all stakeholders will be reached soon.

When an agreement is finalized, the District will likely need to amend the fiscal 2014 budget, which was adopted in September. According to the current budget, projected revenues are \$24.4 million, while projected expenditures are \$24.6 million. This results in projected deficit spending of about \$200,000, which comes out of the fund balances in the reserves. District 57's fund balances are at approximately 60 percent — i.e. there is enough to pay for 60 percent of operating expenses for the year, if necessary. The District has a goal of maintaining between 30 to 50 percent fund balances, so current levels are satisfactory.

As in the past, this year's budget includes \$750,000 for capital projects that keep the school buildings safe and up to date. Projects are determined by the Master Facility Plan, which is updated regularly to prioritize the work that is required.

While District 57's economic landscape is now stable, Illinois school districts continue to face many hurdles, including tax objections, unfunded mandates, diminishing General State Aid and anticipated pension reform -- all of which affect District 57 as well.

"Due to continued cost-containment measures, our District is positioned to withstand the impact that could result from any pension reform that comes out of Springfield, as well as other difficulties," says Elaine Aumiller, Ed.D., superintendent of schools. "But we will continue to be careful about spending decisions and maintain our role as a responsible steward of taxpayer resources, as there still are many challenges that could come our way."

District 57's budget can be found at <http://d57.org/administrative-departments/budget>.

PTA'S FIRST-EVER WALK FOR WESTBROOK A HUGE SUCCESS

At Walk for Westbrook on Oct. 4, students and staff circled the school grounds while families and community members cheered them on. Walkers made their way through the Hula Hop, Bubble Trail and Alligator Alley, to name a few of the adventures. The students raised more than \$17,000 in pledges, far surpassing their fund-raising goal. The money will be used to help PTA provide assemblies, special events and learning tools. Photos by Dana Foley.



CURRICULUM REVIEW

DISTRICT ROLLING OUT NEW MATERIALS AND NEW WAY OF TEACHING TO MEET COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

District 57 is in the process of incorporating the new Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics. The standards, which were adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education, better equip students with the skills and knowledge they will need to be successful in the competitive 21st-Century global economy.

Administrators and teachers worked last school year and over the summer to develop new curriculum and align existing curriculum to the standards. This school year, some teachers are implementing materials that already have been tested and approved, some are piloting new materials to determine if they will be adopted, and some are using existing materials but in new ways that conform with Common Core.

"All of the learning that's taking place this year meets the more rigorous standards of Common Core," says Dr. Susan Woodrow, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. "And we're on track for full implementation by the 2014-2015 deadline."

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Middle school teachers are using new Prentice Hall materials, which were tested and approved last year. In K through 5, some teachers are piloting a National Geographic text that they believe will meet Common Core requirements. In December, they will decide whether to recommend the materials for full implementation next school year.

MATHEMATICS: Some Lincoln math teachers are piloting Glencoe Math, while others are piloting Big Ideas Math. Some younger grades are piloting Go Math or Math in Focus. Decisions about which math programs to pursue will be made by the end of the school year, with training taking place over the summer so that full implementation can take place by next school year.

For detailed information about how the new standards will affect students in particular grades, go to Parent Guides to Common Core Curriculum on the District 57 web site: http://www.d57.org/parent_guide_common_core. Parents who want to know if their children are working with pilot materials this year should contact the teacher.

SCHOOLS ADD MATH SUPPORT TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR CHALLENGING LESSONS

District 57 is providing additional math support for students, in response to Common Core's stronger focus on math concepts and skills. As the new learning standards roll out, math lessons will become increasingly challenging, with each skill taught until students master it.

The schools added staff members to provide structured math support this year. In addition, the elementary schools are using supplemental tools to reinforce what students are learning in the classroom. At Lions Park, for example, teachers are using IXL, a web site that provides math practice that is aligned to state standards. Students access the site to work on multiplication and division skills, reinforce concepts, study for a test or preview a concept before it is taught in the classroom.

According to Lions Park math support teacher Natalie Meilinger, teachers like IXL because they can access reports to gauge student and class performance. Students like it because it gives them

instant results, as well as an explanation if an answer is incorrect. Even students at Westbrook are using IXL.

Meilinger says an advantage of the site is that it focuses only on math problems and does not include games. She says the repetition helps students master their math facts and skills being taught in class, which is critical to success. Some Lions Park classes also are using a web program called XtraMath for additional fact practice.

At Fairview, some teachers use IXL and XtraMath. But all classrooms have implemented Rocket Math, a paper-and-pencil, worksheet-based curriculum that takes 10 minutes a day. Rocket Math has an individualized approach, with students taking a pre-test and having a goal assigned to them. They then practice with partners and take tests, gradually moving up toward their goal. Kim Visser, Fairview math support teacher, says the constant repetition and practice are beneficial as students face more challenging math content.



MAKING MUSIC TOGETHER
Music teacher Carolyn Story (far right) hosted Lions Park's Bring a Guest to Music Day in September. This popular annual event is full of fun and learning for second graders and their special guests.

SCHOOL NEWS

SCHOOLS 'IGNITE A PASSION FOR READING' WITH NEW PROGRAMS

Last year, reading and literacy expert Dr. Steven Layne talked to District 57 staff members about building a school community that is wholeheartedly committed to literacy and fostering a lifetime love of reading. This year, the schools have launched programs to accomplish that goal and ignite a passion for reading among students.

Fairview and Lions Park developed the Catching Fire Committee last spring, to plan exciting reading opportunities throughout the year. There are designated Stop, Drop and Read times and all-school reading assemblies to keep students motivated. Staff members also pick books to read to groups of students during Read Arounds. The books are displayed in the LRC, and students can sign up for the one that interests them.

In addition, staff members at all four schools display their Hot Reads, or books they love. At Lincoln, they make posters to promote their favorite books,

which are available for checkout at the Lincoln library and Mt. Prospect Public Library. Westbrook promoted Hot Reads at a kickoff assembly last month. Staff members shared their favorite picture books, and one staff member was picked to read to all the students.

"We plan to have several Hot Read assemblies throughout the year to showcase more books," says Kelly Schneider, first-grade teacher. "This program helps promote quality book choices and shows the students that everyone is a reader."

Patty Kennedy, Learning Resource Center director for Fairview and Lions Park, agrees that the message for students is: "Whether it's the principal, teachers, students, bus drivers or custodial staff, we all love to read."



Fairview students read in the LRC. The schools have launched several programs this year to get students more excited about books. Photo by Sara Peterson, District 57.

And by sharing their love of books with students, staff members are helping to "build lifetime readers." These activities also will help students meet the new Common Core State Standards, which involve a greater focus on reading, writing and vocabulary skills.

JOURNALISM AND COMPUTER CLUBS HELP PREPARE FAIRVIEW STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE

Fairview has launched two student clubs this year that teach and promote creativity, technology, problem solving, communication, collaboration and other 21st-Century skills. Journalism Club and Scratch Computer Programming Club enable third, fourth and fifth graders to create online projects that are accessible to their classmates.

Journalism Club publishes The Falcon News, Fairview's first online newspaper created by students. Club members work together to write stories for the monthly publication, such as an interview with principal Dan Ophus and a survey about what kids like to do at recess. The students also brainstorm ideas, edit copy and work with club leader Cheryl Schubmehl, a third-grade teacher, to publish the newspaper. It can be found at http://fairview.d57.org/?page_id=2508.

The weekly club builds the students' confidence and teaches them "life-long writing skills," according to Schubmehl. "This is accomplished in an environment that allows them to express themselves and their creative ideas outside of the classroom. I believe that

when students are excited and are able to choose their topics and writing pieces, we can reduce some barriers for those who struggle with writing in the first place."

Scratch Computer Programming Club, which meets weekly and is led by special education teacher Patrick Black, uses the Scratch coding language, created by MIT, to teach kids how to develop interactive games, animations and stories. Club members started by creating simple movement animations. Their projects can be found under "Student Projects" on the club's web site, located at <https://sites.google.com/a/d57.org/fv-scratchprogrammingclub/reference>. Black and his students can use the site to comment on each other's projects and leave feedback or suggestions.

"What I love is that the goal for our first project was for students to move the 'Sprite' left, right, up and down, and all the students did it in different ways," Black says. "This emphasized problem solving and that there are multiple ways to achieve the same goal."

THANKS FOR HELPING TO SHAPE THE DISTRICT'S FUTURE!

Thank you to all community members who participated in the District 57 survey in October. The District was pleased that so many people took time to share their feedback. Final results of the survey will be reported at the Nov. 21 School Board meeting and available on the District web site.