



DISTRICT 57 REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR SUPERINTENDENT



Welcome to District 57's spring newsletter! We only have four more weeks of school -- and what a busy time it will be! Our buildings are always bustling, but there is A LOT going on at this time of year. Spring means many exciting opportunities for the students. This newsletter highlights some of those opportunities, such as how our schools are bringing critical STEM curriculum to life. Please take a few minutes to read the important information here. And remember that you can follow us on Facebook and Twitter (@dist57) to stay informed throughout the year.

You might have noticed a lot of news coverage about Common Core lately. This is partly because we are nearing the deadline for implementation of the new Illinois Learning Standards (the 2014-2015 school year). What does this mean for our students? They will have the benefit of learning from updated, enhanced curriculum and materials. Common Core presented school districts with an opportunity to make many improvements. Our staff members, under the leadership of Dr. Susan Woodrow, have spent the last couple of years doing just that. Their hard work has paid off -- we're right on target for implementation. We believe in the standards, and we are confident that our students will be better prepared because of them.

Our next challenge will be to revise our science curriculum so that it is in line with the national Next Generation Science Standards, which Illinois has adopted. The state also has adopted new physical education standards. We will follow our five-phase curriculum review process to determine where we need to make revisions. We are early in the process and do not expect changes to occur anytime soon.

We will, however, have some changes to our security procedures next school year, due to recommendations from the experts who conducted our security audit. We have worked with the principals and school secretaries to plan for these changes, and we expect to have them in place in the fall.

Thank you for supporting our staff members and schools throughout the year. We are fortunate to be part of such an involved, caring community. I hope you have a wonderful summer!



FIRST-RATE ENTERTAINMENT THIS SPRING!
 This spring, Fairview fifth graders presented "Freedom Bound" (above), while Lions Park fifth graders put on "Washington's Spies," which was written by music teacher Carolyn Story and her husband. Lincoln's annual musical was Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Cinderella." In addition, Westbrook first graders and the Chorus held concerts, and the Lincoln band, orchestra, choral and jazz programs performed inside and outside of school. All of the performances have been met with rave reviews!

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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 or on our social media channels.

STEM UPDATE

IN CONGRESS, REP. DUCKWORTH CALLS LINCOLN'S SCIENCE CHICKS 'THE FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY'

District 57 has received a lot of attention lately for the emphasis it is placing on the critical subjects of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM curriculum). This attention culminated on April 30 when Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth gave a speech on the floor of the House of Representatives about the Science Chicks from Lincoln Middle School.

This new club strives to get girls interested in STEM careers, which traditionally are more popular among males. Rep. Duckworth told her colleagues in Congress that the Lincoln students in the club "represent the future of our country... and the millions of girls who have the ability to achieve greatness in STEM fields."

Lincoln received a three-year grant from Shedd Aquarium to form Science Chicks and participate in an underwater robotics program. The club's 25 members met each week after school and used a kit provided by Shedd to design and build a remote operating vehicle (ROV) with an underwater camera for investigating aquatic environments. During a multi-school event on March 23 at the University of Illinois at



Members of Lincoln's new Science Chicks club, along with teachers Sue Milliken and Kathy Veglia, built a remote operating vehicle that they tested underwater during a multi-school event at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Chicago, the Science Chicks tested their vehicle underwater and discussed their design process with electrical engineers.

Sue Milliken, Lincoln science teacher and club leader, says the club's first year was a success. "It's impressive to see the girls so enthusiastic as they are learning leadership, design, construction, electrical wiring and teamwork. This is just another great opportunity for students in District 57 to shine."

Congresswoman Duckworth agrees. She asked Congress to "follow the example of the Science Chicks, and support STEM education in this country."

THE EARLIER THE BETTER: ENHANCING STEM ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNGER GRADES

District 57 is placing a major emphasis on the critical subjects of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM curriculum), to prepare students for the high-tech, high-skill global economy that eventually will employ them. This includes infusing more STEM lessons into the younger grades' curriculum.

Lincoln's technology integration coach, Michelle Russell, is piloting interactive-learning i-Pad apps with Mandy Reihart's first graders at Westbrook. One of the apps enables kids to build tangram puzzles and take part in critical-thinking activities, giving students an early start on building technology skills.

Other first graders in Nancy Brooks' class are experimenting with blogging. The young students have learned how to log in to their classroom website, navigate their way to KidBlog, type and submit a post and reply to other posts. Students also access KidBlog from home and write about whatever interests them. Brooks says the students are

learning many technology lessons but also important reading, writing, vocabulary and typing skills.

Lions Park students had the opportunity to participate in a new STEM Club during recess from January through March. The club, formed by parent Emily McNally and run by PTA volunteers, utilized robotics building kits from Lego We Do Education. The kits were purchased, in part, using funds from the District 57 Education Foundation.

Also at Lions Park, three third-grade girls formed a junior FIRST Lego League (FLL) team, sponsored by Girl Scouts of America (through their Brownie troop). The team, called Tiny Tornadoes, was given the challenge of creating a model depicting a natural disaster, using only Legos and incorporating two working motors. The girls displayed their project at Girl Scout Stemapalooza and the Lions Park Science Fair. In April, they went to the FLL World Championship in St. Louis and presented the model to a



The Tiny Tornadoes FLL team with Principal Kris Gritzmacher.

panel of judges, along with 40 other junior-level teams, some from as far away as China.

These are just a few of many extracurricular and in-class STEM opportunities available to younger students, according to Elaine Aumiller, Ed.D., superintendent of schools. "The students really like these activities. What we like is that they are getting an early start in developing important skills that will serve them well in high school, college and beyond."

GIVING BACK

FROM SHAVING HEADS TO TURNING BAGS INTO BEDS, DISTRICT 57 COMMUNITY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

District 57 staff, students and families find many ways to make a difference for those who live in the community and far beyond. Here are some examples of projects that have taken place at the schools throughout the spring:

- Lions Park held a St. Baldrick's "FundRAZOR" during the Fun Fair in March, to raise money for lifesaving research that helps children diagnosed with cancer. Instructional assistant Philene Fotopoulos organized the event and even offered to have her head shaved as part of the fundraising effort. Students and other adults joined in and had their heads shaved as well. They raised \$3,202, far surpassing the \$1,800 goal.
- Fairview collected plastic bags so they could be made into portable, waterproof sleeping mats for the homeless. Parent Beth Novak suggested the idea, and Principal Dan Ophus helped coordinate it. The "plarn" (plastic yarn) mats are made by "crocheting" strips of bags. The goal was to collect enough for 25 mats (each requiring 500 bags). The students really came through, filling the collection bin many times over.
- Lincoln students collected more than 5,000 buttons (the thread and needle kind) in one month to contribute to a Holocaust exhibit sponsored by a synagogue in California. The goal is to have one button for every person lost in the Holocaust and display them in a large cylinder, as a lasting tribute. Language arts teacher Robin Brantman heard about the project and decided to get the students involved, partly to give more meaning to the Holocaust lessons taught in eighth-grade social studies.



Lions Park's Philene Fotopoulos organized a St. Baldrick's "FundRAZOR," and even had her head shaved, to raise money for childhood cancer research.



THANK YOU, EDUCATION FOUNDATION, FOR BRINGING HIGH-TECH TOOLS TO OUR SCHOOLS

Technology director Trevor Hope and Lions Park LRC director Patty Kennedy recently introduced students to the new Chromebooks that were purchased with funding from the Education Foundation. There are now enough Chromebooks to fill one cart each for Fairview and Lions Park. Previously, each school only had enough for half a class. The funding for the new computers came from the Evening for Education Gala, which also enabled the Foundation to fund many teachers' grant requests. Thank you to the Foundation for planning such a successful event and to the community members who generously support this worthy cause.



A BIG SHOUT-OUT TO OUR SPECIAL OLYMPICS HEROES!

District 57 athletes participated in the Special Olympics Spring Games on April 27 at Prospect High School. The District is proud of the student athletes and thanks their families, the volunteers and the many community members who came out to show support. Special recognition goes to Fairview instructional assistant Laura Gerber for coordinating this special day and making it possible for the students to be part of it.

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