



DISTRICT 57 REPORT

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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR SUPERINTENDENT

WELCOME TO DISTRICT 57'S SPRING NEWSLETTER! I HOPE YOU'LL TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO READ THESE IMPORTANT UPDATES ON FINANCIAL AND CURRICULUM ISSUES THAT ARE AFFECTING OUR SCHOOLS TODAY.

District 57 has accomplished a lot this school year. We see this every day in the growth of our students. But we also see it in some recent honors the District has received:

- Fairview and Lions Park were named to the state's 2012 Honor Roll, in recognition of academic excellence.
- We recently learned that Standard & Poor's has affirmed our AA+ bond rating. And the Illinois State Board of Education once again ranked District 57 in its highest financial category among districts throughout the state. We had a nearly perfect score, while many other Illinois districts dropped to lower categories. We are proud that we are doing more with less, while maintaining test scores that rank among the best in the state. But we recognize that we face financial challenges that could change our course. (See financial update.)
- District 57 has been awarded grants as a result of projects aimed at improving energy efficiency. Improving efficiency makes our buildings a better long-term investment for the community, and the money saved can be redirected toward educating students.

I would like to use this newsletter to introduce District 57's Vision, Mission Statement and Core Values. The Board of Education and Administration have refined the focus of the Vision so that it clearly and succinctly states what we wish to achieve for the children of this community and the community at large. We have linked the Vision, Mission and Values so they can serve as a foundation of decision making. We believe these statements reflect what is most important to this community. So any time we are confronted with an issue, we can look to them for guidance.



Illinois State Superintendent of Education Christopher Koch (second from left) presents Academic Excellence Awards for Fairview and Lions Park to principals Kris Gritzmacher and Dan Ophus, School Board members Sann Knipple and Karen Nejd and Dr. Elaine Aumiller, superintendent.

A few months ago, we asked parents to share their thoughts about this District's beliefs and how it brings those beliefs to life. I thank the respondents for their input. Parents have been an important part of this process of establishing our Core Values.

The Vision, Mission and Core Values are listed at the end of this newsletter. We also will post them in each of the schools, as a daily reminder of what we stand for and how we work to achieve our goals.

Elaine Aumiller, Ed.D.
 Superintendent of Schools
 Mount Prospect School District 57

FINANCIAL UPDATE

FINANCES HEALTHY FOR NOW, BUT DISTRICT TAKING STEPS TO DEAL WITH DECLINING RESERVES AND ECONOMIC STRUGGLES

To prepare District 57 for potentially tough times ahead, administrators and School Board members once again are thinking about taking the school funding issue to voters. They are considering several options that would raise revenue, including asking voters to agree to a higher

limiting tax rate, seeking the ability to borrow more money or purchasing new bonds to use for operating expenses. A decision must be made by December if a question is to be placed on the ballot in March 2014. The School Board will discuss the options further in the fall.

District 57 currently is in a healthy financial position, as indicated by Standard & Poor's affirmation of the District's AA+ bond rating, as well as the recent high fiscal ranking from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The District spends its limited resources as smartly as possible and makes difficult decisions about spending cuts. As a result, District 57 received a nearly perfect financial score from the ISBE. But the District's economic future is fragile and likely will continue to be affected by tax objections, unfunded mandates, losses in General State Aid and federal funding,

and upcoming pension reform. It also is unclear how the Affordable Care Act will affect finances, but it appears there will be additional fees and taxes and some increases in plan costs. The District will address necessary changes in stages, in order to be prepared for upcoming deadlines.

"There are things we would like to do, like lowering class sizes and re-instating programs, but we cannot justify these actions until we have a better idea of what our financial future looks like."

Dr. Elaine Aumiller

Due to these challenges, the reserves are expected to drop from 50 percent this year to 30 percent by 2016. School districts strive to keep reserves between 30 and 50 percent. District 57 is not alone in facing declining reserves and economic struggles. Many districts dropped out of the highest ISBE category this year.

Elaine Aumiller, Ed.D., superintendent of schools, says District 57 was able to maintain its position because it is a

responsible steward of taxpayer dollars and takes a long-term view of finances. "There are things we would like to do, like lowering class sizes and re-instating programs," she says, "but we cannot justify these actions until we have a better idea of what our financial future looks like."

"For now, we are focused on doing more with less and allocating resources in ways that are most beneficial to students."

WHAT A SPRING FOR FINE ARTS IN D57!

This spring has provided many opportunities for District 57 students to showcase their fine arts abilities. Lincoln presented "Annie," with more than 50 student cast members and crew (right). Fairview's fifth graders put on "Wonderland," while Lions Park fifth graders presented "The Adventure of the Barbary Queen." Westbrook first graders held their annual concert, and the Lincoln band, orchestra, choral and jazz programs had several opportunities to perform inside and outside of school. These and other performances have been met with rave reviews from parents, staff and students alike!



Photo by Bart Ruggiero, District 57.

CURRICULUM UPDATE

DISTRICT ADDS STAFF TO PROVIDE NEEDED SUPPORT FOR MATH AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

District 57's staffing plan for next school year takes a proactive approach to handling the added demands that are being placed on schools as a result of two major changes in education: the rollout of the new Illinois Learning Standards and the rise in the number of students who require special education services. The District has added three and a half full-time equivalent staff members for next year in order to make sure students have the support they need.

Fairview and Lions Park each will add a full-time staff member, while Westbrook will add a half-time position. These positions will be devoted to providing the additional mathematics support that will be necessary as the schools focus on the Common Core standards, which the state is requiring all districts to implement by 2015. The standards aim to better equip students with the skills and knowledge they will need in the future.

"While Common Core will increase the rigor of English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics curriculum, we anticipate the greatest need for added support in the area of math," says Susan Woodrow, Ed.D., assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. "Lessons will be deeper and more focused, as we attempt to teach each skill to mastery before students move to the next grade. It will be important to have a structured support system for K through 5 students who are struggling."

The staffing plan also adds a full-time special education position. The majority of that position will oversee an extended support room at Fairview, similar to the one already in place at Lions Park. Currently, students who require this level of service are bused to Lions Park. Adding the services at Fairview means that students can remain in their home schools, while the District can maintain reasonable class sizes and avoid transporting all students with this level of need to Lions Park.

A portion of the special education position will focus on providing assistive technology to students with disabilities district-wide. Assistive technology is a fast-growing area that enables students to use technology to enhance their learning or perform functions that would otherwise be difficult.



Students in Mrs. Brunty's first-grade class at Westbrook work on their math lessons. District 57 will add staff to provide additional math support next year, as the schools focus on the more rigorous Common Core learning standards. Photo by Linda Brown, District 57.

"We are seeing an increase in the number of students who require higher levels of support," says Elaine Aumiller, Ed.D., superintendent of schools. "So it's appropriate to add an extended support program at Fairview. It's also the right time to make sure we're using technology to help any student who can benefit from it."

Aumiller says the District is on schedule in its effort to update curriculum to meet the new Illinois Learning Standards. Staff members are piloting new ELA materials; new math materials will be piloted next school year.

"Many administrators and staff members are collaborating, as we prepare our schools for the new standards," Aumiller says. "I thank them for adding work on top of their already busy schedules. Their efforts will enhance the high-quality education that District 57 students receive."

For more information about Common Core and the new Illinois Learning Standards, check out the following web sites:

www.corestandards.org/the-standards

www.isbe.net/common_core/htmls/resources.htm

DISTRICT 57 MISSION/VISION/VALUES

MISSION STATEMENT

Preparing children to learn and succeed in a changing world.

VISION STATEMENT

As a critical community asset whose performance affects all area residents, Mount Prospect District 57 will continually build on its tradition of excellent performance, fiscal stewardship and community engagement to provide an exceptional educational experience for all young learners.

CORE VALUES

We Believe:

Students are the focus of an educational process that is valued and shared by the home, school, local business and community.

All learners' strengths should be discovered, encouraged and developed.

All students are capable of learning and are responsible and accountable for their academic performance and for their own behavior.

Our schools are dedicated to teaching students to be involved, active learners who work hard, solve problems critically and creatively, and communicate effectively.

All students, parents and staff members are treated with dignity and respect and are expected to treat others in the same manner.

Participation in the decision-making process by students, staff, parents and community members is valuable.

The District is a valuable asset owned by the community and must be fiscally responsible to the taxpayers in the community.



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