



ACHIEVING *Excellent* RESULTS IN CHALLENGING TIMES

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR SUPERINTENDENT



Welcome to District 57's online newsletter! We have developed this publication to give the community an overview of the District, share news coming out of our schools and address the financial situation.

As you know, District 57 is struggling financially, due to our comparatively low tax revenue base and the difficult economic climate. Like many other school districts, we have been forced to make sacrifices and tough decisions. We will likely see more of this if we are not able to raise revenue in the near future.

But I am pleased to report that in spite of the challenges, our schools, students and staffs have continued to accomplish a great deal. Impressive student performance and low per-student expenditures, which you will read about in this newsletter, indicate that District 57 has been able to successfully juggle its priorities. We believe that we are providing high value for the tax dollars the community sends to the District.

The Administration and School Board have committed to placing the District in a sound financial position, while maintaining the educational quality the community expects. We are thankful to work in a community that is supportive of its school district. As you read this newsletter, you will learn that while we face many challenges, good things are happening in our schools. There are many reasons to be proud of District 57 and the value it brings to this community.

Dr. Elaine Aumiller
Superintendent of Schools
Mount Prospect School District 57



D57 STUDENTS AND GRADUATES MAKE THE GRADE

District 57 recently received a 2011 SchoolSearch™ Bright A+™ Award of Excellence for high academic performance. It was quite an honor — only 59 school districts in Illinois received the award, out of 868. District 57 was recognized for falling within the top 5 percent for academic performance in the state, based on data from the 2010 Illinois School Report Card. This statewide report analyzes each district's reading and math scores on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT).

In District 57, an impressive 95 percent of students meet or exceed state standards on the ISAT, placing us in the top 2 percent of all schools in Illinois and ahead of comparable neighboring school districts in Arlington Heights, Prospect Heights, Wheeling and Schaumburg (based on March 2011 data).

In addition, data and surveys indicate that District 57 students, as a whole, are well

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In order to save resources, we are not printing this publication. It is posted on the District web site and is being distributed through various email channels. Please tell your friends and neighbors to go to www.d57.org to read this newsletter and learn about the many things happening in District 57.

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D57 STUDENTS AND GRADUATES MAKE THE GRADE

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prepared for high school. Our students once again have outperformed their peers on the EXPLORE high school placement test. **This year's Lincoln eighth graders taking the EXPLORE exam earned second highest composite score and top honors in English and math, among all of the middle schools feeding into District 214.**

Over the past 11 years, Lincoln has been one of the top three middle schools 87 percent of the time. In a recent survey of Lincoln students and parents, 90 percent of recent graduates and 80 percent of their parents felt that the transition to Prospect High School was a successful one.

District 57 graduates also are well represented in extracurricular activities at Prospect, such as athletics, performing arts and clubs, with many students taking on leadership roles. This is due to the preparation they receive in elementary and middle school, particularly in the respected and popular band, orchestra and choral programs.

District 57 students have many academic and extracurricular accomplishments. The community should be proud of how hard they work to excel, as well as the talented and devoted staff members who help get them where they need to be.



THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

Many things come together to make District 57 a positive asset to the community. This includes committed teachers and staff, the invaluable partnership with parents, top-notch curriculum and programs, and up-to-date facilities.

TEACHERS: District 57 teachers are experienced, highly qualified and dedicated to preparing students to succeed in a changing world. **The average tenure of District 57 teachers is almost 13 years, and more than 60 percent of them have master's degrees.** In addition, the school principals are strong educational leaders who bring insight and innovation to the District. We are fortunate to have dynamic leaders at our schools.

PARENTS: Of course, parents also play a significant role. District 57 parents place a strong value on learning and help prepare their children from a very young age. They then act as partners in their children's education once they reach school. They also are committed volunteers. District 57 is especially fortunate to have robust PTAs. Many of the programs that are valued supplements to the students' education, such as family math nights and the annual science fairs, are made possible through the tireless work of PTA volunteers and the funds they raise.

CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMS: District 57 provides a well-rounded curriculum that focuses on differentiated instruction so that each student's learning needs are met. The curriculum prepares students for high school, college and the work force in a competitive global economy. It does this by teaching them to think critically and by developing 21st-Century learning skills. **Technology is a major focus in District 57 classrooms, which have high-tech learning tools like iPads for kindergarteners. Ceiling-mounted digital LCD projectors are enabling the District to use dynamic online curriculum and multimedia, enhancing students' ability to explore and learn. The Education Foundation has partnered with the District to provide more than 30 projectors at Lincoln and Westbrook, and now the project is focusing on implementation at Fairview and Lions Park.**

To make better use of resources and better meet the needs of students at varying levels, the gifted program has been replaced with a new and broader structure for providing enrichment that targets all students' unique abilities. To help struggling students, the District has implemented Response to Intervention techniques, where research-based interventions help kids meet their learning goals. The District also makes it a priority to integrate children with special needs into classrooms of typical peers. This model is a highly respected best practice in the field of education. Integration begins in Circle of Friends, a preschool program that is in high demand throughout the community.

In District 57, it's not only about academic preparation. Students also have access to a wide range of high quality extracurricular activities that contribute to their well-rounded education. In addition to the music programs, activities such as Robotics Club, Chess Club, Fitness Club, student council, musicals and athletics keep the buildings bustling before and after school.

FACILITIES: The District has successfully addressed student housing needs. Renovations at Westbrook School for Young Learners are complete, and pre-K through first-grade students are taking advantage of all that school has to offer. This has eased crowding

at Fairview and Lions Park Schools. All District 57 buildings are well maintained and in good shape. Barring an emergency, there should be no major expenses associated with the school buildings for quite some time. However, resources must continue to be dedicated for ongoing routine maintenance schedules.

LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS



District 57 has achieved the results you have read about in this newsletter while spending \$3,200 less per student per year than the average of the five surrounding districts, and \$1,300 less than the state average. Among area school districts, District 57 has the lowest per pupil spending and the highest percentage of students meeting and exceeding state standards on the ISAT.

In addition, after several years of deficit spending, Administration and the School

Board finally achieved the important goal of having a balanced budget, unlike many neighboring school districts. They made sacrifices and tough decisions that have enabled District 57 to survive this storm, for now. This included cutting staff, increasing class sizes, restructuring programs, outsourcing services and raising student fees. These are changes that the District had hoped to avoid. **District leaders have tried to balance what's best for students with the need to be fiscally prudent and responsible. They will continue to do this, but the fact remains that additional funds are needed. Because so much already has been cut, it will be difficult to do more without a serious negative effect on students.** So until revenue can be raised, the District will be forced to use fund balances.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

District 57's financial challenges are brought on in large part by a comparatively low tax revenue base and the tough economic times. Unfortunately, District 57 will most likely not be able to ensure financial sustainability until revenue is raised.

The Administration has recommended seeking voter approval for a limiting tax rate referendum in April 2013. The Board of Education will make a decision on this next year. If a referendum is successful, the District will receive enough additional revenue to ensure a balanced operating budget and financial sustainability and allow District 57 to maintain and grow its excellent programs and services. A successful referendum also will mean that the District will not have to cut more staff and further raise class sizes, which would seriously hinder the ability to provide the quality education that has been provided for many years.

Good things continue to happen in District 57 schools, although the students and staff already are feeling the impact of the financial challenges. These schools cannot continue to be as successful as they have been without the support of the community. If the time does come to ask for a tax increase, it is District 57's hope that voters will remember that making an investment in the public school system is making an investment in the community they call home. Whether you are a parent with children enrolled in District 57 schools, a local business owner, an older resident or an empty nester, having a strong school district is beneficial to you. It's also important for the future. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders, and everyone has a vested interest in providing them with the educational resources they need to compete in a global workforce.

A CONNECTION WITH THE COMMUNITY

In the past few years, Mount Prospect has been recognized for being a community that residents can be proud to call home. District 57 schools figure heavily into this positive reputation, and the District takes its relationship with the community seriously. District 57 has developed partnerships with public and private local organizations such as the Mt. Prospect Park District, the Chamber of Commerce and Bosch Tool Corporation, as well as businesses that provide services to the District, such as Grand Prairie Transit. **Another important partnership is with the District 57 Education Foundation, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars from generous parents and community members over the past 13 years. This money is used to fund major projects such as the library at Westbrook School and the fitness center at Lincoln Middle School, as well as grant requests that are submitted by individual teachers.** These kinds of partnerships allow District 57 to provide more resources and opportunities for students than it would be able to provide on its own.



STRAIGHT FROM THE *Community*

“ I have three boys who attend District 57 schools. I am proud to say that we are in an award-winning district, as it gives us confidence that our children are being given what they need in order to be successful. The schools have helped us develop our children as independent lifelong learners through quality teaching. Together, District 57 and its families are helping to create a bright future for our world. ”

Lori Jensen

Parent of three current District 57 students



“ As a Mount Prospect Realtor for 22 years, I enjoy selling homes in District 57. The schools sell themselves through the Illinois State Report Card system, which is frequently used by young buyers.

Property values throughout this country have suffered over the last five years due to the mortgage meltdown, but recovery is around the corner. Communities that offer strong education/schools will lead the way in that recovery. ”

Tom Zander

District 57 resident,
managing broker and co-owner,
Picket Fence Realty of Mount Prospect

“ Mount Prospect was named the 'Best Place to Raise your Kids.' District 57 is an integral part of the community and was certainly considered in that selection process. The parents are highly supportive, involved and eager to maintain the high quality of education that District 57 delivers to its students. I have been able to observe the many accomplishments of the District through the years and have always been so proud that I have been a part of this school district and community. ”

Rosemary Grier

Parent of four District 57 graduates,
former District 57 teacher and three-term
School Board member

“ When we moved into the neighborhood our kids were small, and we didn't know anything about the school district. It turned out to be a pleasant surprise. We discovered that the schools were very family centered, with a lot of involved parents. You really get to know the other families, which pays off as your kids get older.

The music programs were great for our kids. When my son was at Lincoln, he was encouraged to join chorus, which is something a seventh-grade boy might not be inclined to gravitate toward. He ended up being in a lot of productions at Prospect, and he's in a singing group in college today. My daughter got her start playing trumpet in District 57, and today she plays professionally. Because of the music education she received at Lincoln and then at Prospect, she was able to attend excellent universities. Every step of the way, her music education that began in District 57 afforded her more opportunity than would otherwise have been available. ”

Linda Laurenz

Parent of three District 57 graduates

“ As a former parent, former staff member and forever supporter of D57, I am most grateful for the way our children/students grow up to be contributing members of our Mount Prospect community. Within the walls of learning, there is so much more going on, with Character Counts! and life lessons and learning about being a part of the bigger picture. There is something very special that happens. The children have a unique sense of ownership, an attachment almost, to this village, and especially to their home school. District 57 fosters genuine citizenship in young people. It doesn't get better than that. ”

Dawn Fletcher Collins

Parent of three District 57 graduates,
former District 57 employee and current executive
director of the Mount Prospect Chamber of Commerce