



DISTRICT 57 REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR SUPERINTENDENT



Welcome to the fall/winter 2018 issue of our District 57 newsletter! It has been an exciting and busy first few months of the school year, especially the past few weeks. Our calendars have been full of impressive music performances, and the schools have been taking part in community service projects. For example, Fairview once again held its Giving Tree gift collection, while Lions Park planned its annual toy drive (started 20 years ago by teacher Julie Vowinkel, who continues to run the program in her retirement!). Lincoln had its Student Council Food Drive and Winter Wear Drive, and Westbrook collected toiletry items and winter coats and gear for families in need. I'm proud of students, families and staff for taking part in these kind endeavors. See #D57givesback on Facebook and Twitter for many examples of our community's generosity.

The Mount Prospect Fire Department visited Lincoln and Lions Park and picked up items collected in the food and toy drives, then made deliveries so these items could reach residents in need. We appreciate this help, as well as the support our schools receive from our community partners all year long.

In other news, District 57 will have an important election this spring, when voters will elect School Board members to fill three open seats. Candidates are currently filing their petitions. Please learn about those who are running for School Board, and mark election day on your calendar – Tuesday, April 2, 2019. We are so thankful to everyone who considers serving our community in this very important way.

This newsletter will give you an overview of District finances, construction projects, the TIF, downtown development and curriculum changes, as well as exciting news from the schools. There's a lot going on. Thanks for staying informed and for supporting your students and the schools, especially during these busy weeks leading into Winter Break. Happy holidays, District 57 families!

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FREE FAMILY FUN THIS FALL BROUGHT TO YOU BY YOUR LOCAL PTO

Fairview families enjoyed the annual Boo Bash on Oct. 26, with Halloween festivities that included dancing to a professional DJ. Boo Bash was one of several events planned by the PTOs at all four schools throughout the fall. District 57 thanks the many parent and staff volunteers who bring our communities together for enriching family activities. (Photo by Chris Trezise, District 57.)

SCHOOL YEAR TO START/END A WEEK LATER NEXT YEAR

In the school calendar survey given this fall, nearly 70 percent of respondents indicated a preference for starting and ending next school year one week later. So school will start on **Aug. 21, 2019**, and end on **June 2, 2020** (assuming no emergency days are used). The District will still schedule the same winter and spring breaks as Prospect High School, as requested in the previous survey. The School Board is expected to vote on the full 2019/2020 calendar in January.

Due to the recent snow day, the last day of this school year has been moved to May 28 (assuming no other emergency days are used).

FINANCIAL UPDATE

FOR FIRST TIME IN YEARS, DISTRICT 57 HAS BALANCED BUDGET, HEALTHY RESERVES AND FUNDING FOR URGENT NEEDS

District 57 is operating with its first balanced budget in several years and is no longer dipping into emergency reserves to fund operations, thanks to additional revenue from the tax referendum that passed last March. This needed funding has resulted in a budget surplus of approximately \$2.5 million that is being used to maintain staffing and programs this year. The 2018-2019 budget, which the School Board passed in September, also includes \$4 million that has been set aside for building projects that will begin this summer, to address deferred maintenance and overcrowding (see separate story, this page).

The District traditionally has been underfunded and has worked hard to keep per-pupil spending very low, repeatedly cutting expenses and tapping into reserves (emergency funds). This had become a challenge, given the number of cuts already made and concerns about depleting the reserves. But now the District can address urgent needs and increase the reserves, which are expected to surpass \$12 million. That's above the 30 percent target set by the Board.

"Now that we're receiving the funding our schools have long needed, our budget is balanced, reserves are healthy, and we have resources to fund our top priorities," says Elaine Aumiller, Ed.D., superintendent of schools. "We can provide the high-quality education that the community expects, while also being fiscally responsible."

The District continues to engage in long-term planning, to ensure funds are applied in the most effective and efficient manner. This includes analyzing enrollment projections, which Aumiller presented to the Board this fall. Highlights include:

- Current enrollment is 2,229, the culmination of a steady five-year increase that should stabilize next year. But growth is expected to pick up again over the next five years, with an overall increase of 93 students.
- Fairview should remain at capacity through next year, while Lions Park will continue to have unused space.
- Lincoln is full but should have adequate space for the next three years. Then projections indicate serious space issues, with enrollments exceeding 800 and the possible need to double up classrooms.
- Westbrook is expected to remain steady at about 430 in kindergarten and first grade and 90 in preschool.

The projections do not include enrollment estimates for new housing developments that are planned or under consideration (see separate story, next page).



WALK FOR WESTBROOK'S WHOPPING RESULTS WILL HELP BUY NEW SWINGS

Walk for Westbrook on Oct. 3 soared past its goal, raising \$24,642. In addition to funding the PTO budget, some of the money will help District 57 buy a new bank of swings to better serve the growing school. The PTOs from this year and last contributed as part of their Play it Forward Campaign. (Photo by Caleb Enfield, District 57.)

CONSTRUCTION COUNTDOWN

The District is seeking bids for several building projects to take place next summer, including a potential Fairview expansion. The projects are part of plans to begin addressing overcrowding and years of deferred maintenance, using \$4 million in referendum funds that have been set aside in the 2018-2019 budget (with any additional required funds coming out of the next budget).

The School Board will accept construction bids at its Jan. 24 meeting. Once the projects and costs are finalized, the District will begin hiring contractors. Work could start in the spring, with most construction taking place over the summer and completed by the start of school.

Prior to the passage of the referendum, the District had budgeted \$750,000 annually for building projects. Many needs were ignored due to lack of funds. The projects being considered for 2019 are the most urgent priorities in the long-term Master Facilities Plan:

- Fairview – Add four classrooms and storage space off the gym and increase seating in the multipurpose room/cafeteria by removing the stage and a storage area. Estimated cost is \$3.5 million. With Fairview at capacity and enrollment expected to grow even more, the new classrooms enable the option of adding sections and reducing class sizes.
- Lions Park – Replace the outdated fire sprinkler system, at an estimated cost of \$250,000. Fairview sprinklers were replaced last summer. Rebuild the majority of the parking lot to eliminate structural issues and minimize flooding, at an estimated cost of \$260,000, some of which could come from the TIF.
- Lincoln – Rebuild the service delivery ramp and crumbling retaining walls, an area that frequently floods. Estimated cost is \$270,000. Replace duct work for the HVAC system and repair rotted wood and aluminum window sills, at an estimated cost of \$25,000.
- Westbrook – Add a bank of six swings on the playground, to better meet needs created by expanding enrollment. Estimated cost is \$20,000, some of which will be shared by the Westbrook PTO (see photo caption).
- Administration Building – Replace HVAC system, which is original to the 1960s building and frequently malfunctions. Estimated cost is \$70,000.

TIF, DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AND D57 FUTURE NEEDS: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

As the District engages in long-term planning to ensure the schools can meet the needs of the future, there has been discussion about the Village of Mount Prospect's new Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district, as well as the potential impact of new housing development that is planned or under consideration. Adam Parisi, District 57's assistant superintendent of finance and operations, has answers to questions that have been asked.

1. What is a TIF, and how does the new Prospect and Main TIF affect District 57?

Local governments create TIFs to funnel newly generated property tax revenue into a special account that is reserved for projects that spur development in a designated area – in this case, the Mount Prospect downtown. Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) within the TIF is frozen, and tax revenue collected as a result of an increase in property values goes into the TIF instead of to the taxing bodies, such as District 57.

That money can be used for things like new businesses tax breaks, redevelopment costs and aesthetic improvements. A 1985 TIF would have expired in 2006 but was extended. It was then closed early and in 2016 replaced by the new TIF, which is scheduled to last 23 years. The TIF encompasses the Northwest Highway corridor from Mount Prospect Road west to Central.

2. How can the TIF benefit our schools?

School districts want to be in vibrant communities with attractive, useful downtowns that attract families who use the schools. Many towns need help attracting developers and improving their downtowns. That's where TIF funds come in. Many experts also believe TIFs can increase surrounding property values, create a stronger and broader tax base, spur development outside the TIF and create jobs.

Another benefit is that the Village included Lions Park School in the boundaries, which means TIF dollars can be used for expansion or improvements there (for example, possibly paying for part of the upcoming parking lot project). Enrollment does not currently justify an addition. But TIF funds could be used to add on if necessary, in 2021 or beyond. We will include this as a possibility in our long-term planning.

3. What is the Joint Review Board? How is District 57 involved?

The Joint Review Board includes representatives from the taxing bodies involved in the TIF. It meets annually to review the finances and potential or planned developments. I (Adam Parisi) represent District 57 on the board. We met in November and will meet again next year. For more information, visit the [Village's TIF Portal](#).

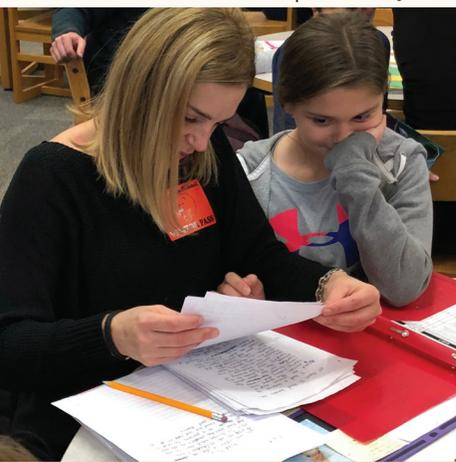
4. Why did High School District 214 sue Mount Prospect regarding the TIF? Does District 57 benefit from the settlement?

District 214 sued in 2017, indicating some sections of the new TIF were in the previous TIF. The lawsuit was settled last April, with the agreement that all taxing bodies in the TIF can now collect taxes from properties covered by the old TIF. So District 57 will receive some funding each year, starting with about \$18,000 in 2019-2020.

5. What housing developments are on the horizon? How could they affect enrollment?

Two developments currently under construction fall within District 57 boundaries: 20 West Northwest Highway (73 luxury apartments) and Park Terrace on North Elmhurst Avenue by the post office (12 townhomes), both of which are in the TIF. The Village has projected approximately four elementary students in the 20 West development and minimal/no students in Park Terrace. Projections are not guarantees. But we think with the potential Fairview expansion and space at the other schools, we can absorb some additional students. There are other developments under consideration, including Maple Street Lofts on East Prospect Avenue (luxury apartments and single-family rowhomes). Some have expressed concerns about traffic and enrollment implications. It's difficult to project at this early stage, but we're closely following the situation, and Dr. Aumiller and I have frequent discussions with Village officials to ensure District 57's interests are well represented.

Some residents have asked about charging developers impact fees to offset potential costs of added enrollment. Mount Prospect does not currently have an ordinance regarding impact fees.



INNOVATIVE NEW WRITING CURRICULUM COMING TO K THROUGH 8

Teachers representing kindergarten through eighth grade and special education are piloting two resources for a new writing curriculum that will be implemented districtwide next year. Both are innovative programs – Lucy Calkins Units of Study and Schoolwide Writing Fundamentals Units of Study – that are based on the writing workshop model, which gives students daily opportunities to write and have their work read by “authentic audiences,” i.e. their classmates.

Last year, a Writing Committee made up of teachers developed a “literacy belief statement” encompassing goals that matter to them as educators. The committee reviewed writing programs, selecting two that are consistent with the belief statement. Committee members are now piloting both in their classrooms and sharing feedback. By April, they will recommend one curriculum to the School Board. Cassie Black, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, says both programs are based on the premise that to be a good writer, you must have access to quality writing models. Students use mentor texts to study what good writers do. They also have a lot of choice in what they write, to keep them interested.

Black says students will benefit from having a new writing curriculum that is consistent across the District. “We believe it’s critical for students to continue to develop as writers all the way from kindergarten through eighth grade, so they can effectively communicate their thoughts and ideas in and out of school,” she says. “We’ve already seen progress. Students are invested in and excited about the process of writing.”

Lions Park fifth graders in Sara Murphy's class had a writing celebration for their parents and proudly shared work they completed as part of a pilot for new writing curriculum. (Photo by Sara Murphy, District 57.)



In Lincoln's new Computer Science Club, members explore digital storytelling and coding. Through Google's CS First curriculum, they learn how to bring stories to life on their computers by designing and sharing their own animations. They also explore how technology is used in the film and media industries. (Photo by Kate Sassatelli, District 57.)



Lincoln Student Council plans schoolwide events that include an annual Thanksgiving food drive, held in partnership with the Mount Prospect Fire Department. This year's drive collected 1,700 items, doubling 2017 totals. Firefighters helped Lincoln students and staff load the donations onto their trucks Nov. 16, then delivered the items to the local food pantry. (Photo by Jenny Kustra-Quinn, District 57.)

FINDING PASSIONS OR JUST HAVING FUN: STUDENTS ROUND OUT MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS WITH CLUBS, MUSIC AND SPORTS

Some students enter middle school fully immersed in their favorite activities and sports, while others haven't yet identified their passions. Either way, Lincoln has them covered. With more than 20 extracurricular opportunities for students to explore throughout the year, there's something for everyone.

"One of the exciting things about growing up is you get to discover what you like to do, what interests you and what you want to explore," says principal Paul Suminski. "That's why Lincoln offers so many chances for students to find and share common interests, and maybe even get involved in something that becomes a career pathway."

Extracurricular activities at Lincoln represent sports, arts, music, science, technology and more. There are longstanding clubs such as Student Council and Yearbook and newer offerings such as Garden Club, Science Chicks and Creative Writing Club. Fine arts opportunities are Celebration Singers, Chorus, Band, Jazz Band, Orchestra and the musical. The athletic teams include Basketball, Cross Country, Poms, Track and Field, Volleyball and Wrestling. Families pay an activity fee for extracurricular participation, currently \$140 for sports, \$60 for music programs and \$25 for other clubs.

Many students get their start in activities at Lincoln, then continue to enjoy them once they get to Prospect High School – perhaps even beyond that. Suminski says the extracurricular offerings are just another way that Lincoln prepares students for the next phase of their learning. Students can suggest new activities, as long as they find a staff member who is willing to act as sponsor and a group of kids who also are interested in the topic. This is how the new Ultimate Frisbee Club was born, perhaps in response to the popularity of the club at Prospect, and it was a favorite Lincoln offering this fall.

There were 1,124 participants in activities last school year. That includes many who were involved in multiple opportunities, but still pretty impressive for a school with enrollment of 765, according to Suminski. "I'm pleased we can serve the diverse interests of so many students and help them get to know each other a little better," he says. "We know that activities outside of school start ramping up at this age, but it's also important to have quality school-based options."

D57 AWARDS: EXEMPLARY COMMUNICATIONS AND EXCELLENCE IN SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE

District 57 won a 2018 Golden Achievement Award in Recognition of Exemplary Public Relations, given by the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA). The District was honored in the category of Community Outreach and Public Engagement Initiatives, for "Educating and Engaging the District 57 Community in Preparation for the Tax Referendum Vote." District 57 is "one of a select group of winners" and "a leader in school communication," according to NSPRA. "I am proud of this significant recognition, and I congratulate everyone who played a role in our District receiving it," says Elaine Aumiller, Ed.D., superintendent of schools.

In addition, the District 57 School Board earned the Illinois Association of School Boards' (IASB) 2018 School Board Governance Recognition designation. Only 24 districts in the state received this honor, which recognizes boards that "have engaged in activities and modeled behaviors that lead to excellence in local school governance in support of quality public education." The Board was honored at an IASB meeting on Oct. 24. In addition, Board members Jennifer Kobus, Eileen Kowalczyk and Joe Sonnefeldt achieved the status of IASB Master Board Member Level One, an honor that is given for time and effort devoted to IASB leadership activities and service to the public education community. "Our Board members work hard on behalf of our District and the community," Aumiller says. "We're thrilled to see them recognized for their contributions and the countless hours they volunteer."



School Board members (left to right) Dennis Composto, Vicki Chung and Eileen Kowalczyk and Board president Joe Sonnefeldt accepted the IASB honor at the organization's meeting on Oct. 24. They were accompanied by Dr. Elaine Aumiller. Board members not pictured: Jennifer Kobus, Gerald McCluskey and Brian Maye. (Photo courtesy of IASB.)