



DISTRICT 57 REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR SUPERINTENDENT



It's an exciting time of year, as students and staff are focused on year-end projects, performances, assemblies, field trips, field days and eighth-grade graduation. I know these things keep parents quite busy as well, but I hope you'll find a few minutes to read our spring/summer newsletter, with important updates from the District and all four schools.

As you know, voters approved the tax referendum in the March election, which means we soon will receive additional funding to maintain current staffing and programming. We'll also be able to address building maintenance that we've had to ignore for too long.

Last fall, the District formed a Community Task Force to study the financial situation and make a recommendation about the referendum. Community members on the task force learned the issues, discussed solutions and, ultimately, recommended that the Board pursue a referendum. I thank everyone who was involved in that important process during those early days, as well as our Board members for giving even more thoughtful consideration to the issues before deciding to place the referendum on the ballot. In addition, I thank the administrative staff, particularly Adam Parisi, for making sure our stakeholders were well informed. And, finally, I thank the voters for getting involved, for making it to the polls and for making your wishes known. Please read the stories on Page 2 to learn about our next steps now that the referendum has passed.

On Page 3, you'll find a story about some creative approaches to staff development this year. District 57 is fortunate to have devoted staff members who take the time to learn and grow so they can bring new, innovative teaching strategies and ideas into their classrooms.

On Page 4, enjoy the photos of our District 57 community making a difference. All year long – and especially the last few months – the schools are busy with activities that demonstrate the value of being kind and giving, and accepting others. We're proud that students are learning lessons that will stay with them for years to come.

Students' last day of school is May 29, earlier than normal due to our new District calendar. Have a wonderful summer! We look forward to seeing students when school resumes on Aug. 14.

Dr. Elaine Aumiller
Superintendent of Schools, District 57

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LINCOLN ROBOTICS: WINNERS ON THE WORLDWIDE STAGE

The Gumball Machines, a Lincoln robotics team, celebrates a 17th-place finish in the category of robot performance at the World Robotics Championship, held April 25-28 in Detroit. Lincoln was up against more than 100 international teams, with students demonstrating their STEM knowledge by developing and presenting a solution to a real-world problem they identified. The Gumball Machines tackled the issue of agriculture water run-off entering the human water cycle. The team thanks science teacher/team mentor Kristen Kaage, the parent coaches, principal Paul Suminski and the District 57 Education Foundation for their support. Lincoln robotics teams have earned more than 34 regional, state and world awards since the program's inception in 2006.



SUCCESSFUL REFERENDUM WILL BRING NEEDED FUNDING, STARTING IN AUGUST

District 57 should begin to receive increased funding from property taxes this August, as a result of the referendum that passed on March 20. The funding enables the District to maintain current staffing levels, class sizes and programming, as well as address major deferred maintenance starting next summer.

The successful referendum ensures a more stable future for District 57, according to Elaine Aumiller, Ed.D., superintendent of schools. "Our schools have been underfunded for a long time, which forced us to draw down the reserves and prepare to make significant cuts that would have affected the quality of education we're able to provide," she says. "We can now move forward in a positive way and do what we do best – give our students the best possible preparation for the future."

The tax referendum passed with a final vote of 5,131 (70.29 percent) to 2,169 (29.71 percent). The passage enabled the School Board to recently approve a staffing plan

for next school year that mirrors this year's plan (i.e. no cuts). The Board also approved next year's student fees with no increases for curriculum, transportation, interscholastic sports or clubs. The next step is to revisit the long-range Master Facilities Plan and begin prioritizing maintenance projects at the four schools. (See separate story on this page.)

Aumiller thanks voters for attending the District's Community Forums and taking advantage of other opportunities to become informed about the challenges facing the District and the options on the table. She says she's also grateful to the parents and other community members who got involved in the process and worked to educate voters.

"Because of all of the information that was shared, voters had the facts they needed, and they chose to provide the funds that are required to place their school district in a much healthier financial position," she says.

DISTRICT DEVELOPING PRIORITIZED PLAN TO FIX THE BUILDINGS, USING REFERENDUM FUNDS

Administrators have started planning how funds from the referendum will be applied to deferred maintenance projects in the buildings, beginning in the summer of 2019. Using the District's Master Facility Plan as a guide, they are identifying the most urgent needs, giving highest priority to safety and security upgrades that have been put on hold in previous years due to lack of funds. Another top priority is addressing overcrowding, perhaps by providing additional instructional and storage space at Westbrook and Fairview. Administrators expect to have a prioritized list of projects ready to present to the School Board in the fall.

For much of the past decade, the District has spent \$750,000 per year on maintenance and capital improvements, a dollar figure that is far below the amount needed to adequately maintain the schools and make necessary upgrades, according to Adam Parisi, assistant superintendent of finance and operations. "That's why we now have a long list of needs," he says. "We know we can't accomplish everything at once, so we're developing a cost-effective plan that will get our buildings closer to where they need to be as quickly as possible."

Referendum funds will not be available for maintenance and capital improvements until next spring. This summer, the District is moving forward with its original plan to replace Fairview's fire sprinkler system, which has been in place since the school was constructed almost 25 years ago. The Lions Park sprinkler system will be replaced next summer. Other projects this summer address issues that were brought up in the Life Safety Audit in 2016, such as replacing the exterior doors at Fairview, Lions Park and Lincoln.



FAIRVIEW FIFTH GRADERS STAR IN MUSICAL WRITTEN JUST FOR THEM, ONE OF THREE IMPRESSIVE STAGE PRODUCTIONS THIS SPRING

It was a special night at Fairview on April 11, when the fifth graders, presented "Riding on the Oregon Trail," under the direction of music teacher Lisa Loeffler. The play was written specifically for the class by the writing team of Carolyn Story, who retired as Lions Park music teacher last year, and her husband Don. At the end of the play, Loeffler paid an emotional tribute to the Storys, who were in attendance and gave the students rave reviews. Loeffler then thanked the community for supporting the arts in District 57. Also this spring, Lincoln presented "Guys and Dolls" on April 20 and 21, and Lions Park presented "Best Little Theater in Town" on April 26.

BOOK CLUBS FOR TEACHERS: FINDING NEW WAYS TO UNLEASH STUDENT POTENTIAL

Westbrook staff participated in a book study this year that focused on finding creative ways to unleash students' potential and foster a "growth mindset" in the classroom. They read a book called "The Growth Mindset Coach," then met monthly to discuss ways to implement the new ideas in their daily teaching. The small-group discussions took place during staff meetings.

"The whole experience was a gift," says Dr. Mary Gorr, Westbrook principal. "It was amazing to see how people were weaving the lessons from our discussions into their interactions with students. It was also unifying, as we got to know each other better in our small groups."

Growth mindset is an idea developed 30 years ago that involves the understanding that the brain is malleable, and abilities and intelligence can be developed when students put extra time and effort into their learning. "The Growth Mindset Coach" breaks the concepts down month by month and provides practical ways to apply new teaching approaches.

Gorr says she received positive feedback about using a book study format for professional development. "We're all so busy that we don't take enough time to collaborate, grow together and challenge each other," she says. "The staff was really engaged in this process."

She says some parents reported that their children were saying things like, "I don't know this yet, but my brain is growing." This idea is supported by Growth Mindset. "This thinking could change the trajectory for students as they begin to encounter more demanding moments in school," according to Gorr.

There were also District-wide book studies being used for professional development this year, according to Cassie Black, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. Certified staff at all four schools chose from a list of books about teaching writing, then participated in small-group discussions about their books on the half days of school.



Lions Park music teacher Claire Reibel prepares students for the fifth-grade play. (Photo by Katie Kelly, District 57.)

LIONS PARK MUSIC TEACHER LANDS HER DREAM JOB IN THE DISTRICT WHERE SHE GOT HER MUSICAL START

When Lions Park's long-serving, beloved music teacher Carolyn Story announced her retirement last year, many wondered who could possibly fill her shoes. Little did they know that the person who would take her place would be a young teacher who had much of her early musical education in District 57 schools, and even had the opportunity, as a seventh grader, to learn from Story herself. Claire Reibel started as the Lions Park music teacher and adaptive music teacher for the SOAR program at the beginning of the school year. She also leads Chorus at the school and works with the fifth-grade band for Lions Park and Fairview. She had big shoes to fill, but students, parents and her colleagues say she's done a great job, as the end of her first year approaches.

Reibel, who grew up in Mount Prospect and attended Fairview, Lincoln and Prospect High School, graduated from Illinois State University in 2015, with a bachelor's in Music Education and K-12 Vocal and Instrumental Music. She says she has known since middle school that teaching music is her dream job. "I wanted to pass the gift of music on to as many children as possible," she says. "And I've adored returning to my hometown to do it."

In this interview, Reibel reflects on her first year as Lions Park music teacher and how she got to this point:

1. When/how did you become interested in music, and what role did District 57 play?
My interest in music was fostered at a young age. My musical mother signed my brother and me up for any joyful music experience she could find. The encouragement of D57's fine arts department solidified my love for music. As a Fairview third grader, I was lucky to play flute in the fifth-grade Band with Mr. Evan Canel and Mr. Greg Fudala. I was bitten by the ensemble bug! I also enjoyed Fairview Chorus. Fairview laid a fabulous foundation. At Lincoln, I cannot describe how greatly I was shaped as a musician by Mr. Fudala (Band), Mrs. Story (sixth-grade Celebration Singers and Choir) and Ms. Leslie Thomas (seventh- and eighth-grade Celebration Singers and Choir). Ms. Thomas gave me my first true musical lead in eighth grade as Marian the Librarian in "The Music Man!" By the time Prospect rolled around, I felt prepared and ecstatic to join the "big kids" and take advantage of every musical opportunity.

2. What is it like to work with teachers who taught you in school?
It's a dream come true to come back to my home district and work with such fine music educators. They continue to mentor me and encourage my growth as a young teacher.

3. How do you like returning to your hometown to teach?
Mount Prospect holds a special place in my heart. There's a sense of community and support here. I was welcomed by such a friendly and helpful staff. But most importantly, I learned to land in a district that understands the importance of fine arts in a child's learning. Of course, it was completely intimidating following in the footsteps of Mrs. Story because she built an incredible music program over the years. But she's been so gracious in welcoming me and assisting me with questions I've had. I love bouncing thoughts off her and gleaning ideas from her fountain of knowledge.

4. Anything else you would like to share?
A big hearty THANK YOU to all who supported the referendum!

#D57GIVESBACK

LIONS PARK KNOTS OF LOVE BREAKS A RECORD, IN MEMORY OF STUDENT WHO INSPIRED A MOVEMENT

Lions Park Knots of Love was inspired by Lauren Graver, organized by the Lions Park staff members who loved her and made successful by the District 57 community and Mount Prospect friends who rallied around her. The third annual event, held March 16 at Prospect High School, had record-breaking results: supporters made 715 blankets for Advocate Children's Hospital Park Ridge. The effort was a tribute to Lauren, who passed away in December after a 2 1/2-year battle with cancer. The Graver family, along with Lions Park staff, delivered the blankets on April 25. They will be given to pediatric patients, bringing them comfort and smiles and making their stays in the hospital a little less scary – just as Lauren envisioned. (Photo by Debbie Pavlowski, District 57.)



BLACKHAWKS ASSEMBLY WITH STAR POWER RECOGNIZES FAIRVIEW'S YEAR OF GIVING FROM THE HEART

Fairview collected dog items for the Bryan and Amanda Bickell Foundation, which promotes positive awareness and rescue of pit bulls and other dogs that are victims of abuse and neglect. The drive culminated with an assembly featuring Bryan Bickell, a former Chicago Blackhawk, and his wife Amanda. They thanked students for their support, and Bryan talked about his battle with multiple sclerosis and how he's been able to persevere through challenges. This project was one of several in the PTO's new Fairview Cares program, which identified a different charity to support each month. Students, families and staff also participated in the Lemons of Love 5K, helped stock the school store at a low-income school in Round Lake, donated diapers for St. Paul's Breakfast with Babies program and collected new baby items for NICU patients, in support of a non-profit started by Fairview parents in memory of their infant daughter. PTO president Christy Happ says Fairview Cares will be looking for new charities to support next school year and that the PTO will ask students and families to suggest organizations that are important to them. (Photo by Brian Angell, District 57.)

WESTBROOK WELCOMES SPECIAL VISITOR WITH A POWERFUL MESSAGE

Lucy Meyer is a sought-after speaker and well-known champion for children with disabilities, and she's accustomed to meeting with world leaders – from the United Nations to President Obama. But on April 28, 18-year-old Meyer, who has cerebral palsy and is the spokesperson for UNICEF's partnership with Special Olympics, spent the afternoon with kindergarten students at Westbrook. She talked to them about tolerance, defying limits that people place on you, the importance of including others and using our words to encourage

not hurt. She asked the group to pledge to never use the "R word" when referring to someone with a disability. Students loved getting to know Meyer, who is also a five-time Special Olympics gold medal winner for swimming. Westbrook was proud to welcome her as a very special visitor.



SCHOOLS COME TOGETHER TO PROMOTE DISABILITY AWARENESS

The first District-wide Disability Awareness Week was held in April, with all four schools learning about different disabilities and participating in activities that stressed inclusion, acceptance and empathy. The special week kicked off on April 2, World Autism Day, and ended with a Friday spirit day. Students could wear "We All Fit Together" t-shirts that were sold as part of a fundraiser for Rettssyndrome.org. In the photo, students in the SOAR program at Lions Park proudly display the amount raised for Rett syndrome research and support. Also pictured (left to right) Lions Park staff members Denise Mortellaro, Katianne Olson, Sherri DeRicco, assistant principal Danielle Bielenda and principal Katie Kelly. (Photo by Mark Rusk, District 57.)