



Spotlight on Education

PRIDE IN OUR SCHOOLS

Conrady Junior High

To achieve the proper balance in life, students need some down time. Students find that in a number of fun and creative ways. There are gym classes, assemblies, lunch periods, passing periods and special occasions throughout the year like Jersey Day or Hat Day. Students get to show their creative side and team spirit by dressing in whatever kind of jersey or hat they like. Our students show everyday just how bright and creative they are.



Dorn School

Students in Mrs. Sladek's first-grade class learned about bats. Not the wooden Louisville Slugger variety that baseball players swing, but rather the winged, nocturnal type of which horror movies are made. Students learned various facts about bats, including some species can eat more than 600 insects per hour; the largest bat, the Flying Fox Bat, has a wingspan covering more than six feet while the Bumblebee Bat is the smallest bat with a wingspan of only five inches.



Glen Oaks School

Fifth graders Faris Muaref (left) and Kuba Szczepanik use keyboarding shortcuts for copying and pasting while formatting a Reading Inventory of books and topics they enjoy. The Reading Inventory is a list of fiction books and non-fiction topics the students want to learn more about. Students reference this list using their Chromebooks while selecting the books in the media center. Since students do not use a mouse with the Chromebooks, they also access this list of books and topics to practice their formatting skills. Students across the district have raved about the Chromebooks.



Oak Ridge School

Sebastian Burzynski spends time with Technology Instruction Coordinator Sean Joyce working on computer coding during an after school class. Students in fourth and fifth grades spend two hours each week (for six weeks) using higher-level thinking skills to write programs they then use to create their own computer games. The after-school coding class is free, but students that are selected must score above the 50th percentile in reading and math. Coding allows students to create their own versions of computer games.



Sorrick School

Sorrick students took a trip to the Children's Farm in Palos Park where they had a chance to pet animals, enjoy a hayride and pick their own pumpkin to take home. Sorrick School also held a fundraiser at Culver's where scores of families showed up for dinner and to help raise money for the school.



Conrady Junior High

Conrady played host to one of two joint town hall meetings last month in which nearly 1,000 people attended and voiced their concerns over Senate Bill 16. The bill would remove \$4 million annually from our district's budget and millions more from neighboring districts while putting an even greater burden on local taxpayers to fund public education. Please contact your state rep and ask them to postpone voting on SB 16 until a more equitable solution is found.



OAK RIDGE SENDS ANTI-BULLYING MESSAGE WITH BALLOONS LAUNCH.

Oak Ridge students culminated a week of anti-bullying activities by releasing more than 700 orange balloons into the bright blue sky. In a show of "unity," students made a pledge against bullying and learned that they should "never bully" while also learning about how to "keep from being bullied." Principal Beth Reich gathered her young charges onto the school's blacktop where they all read the pledge they made before launching the balloons. On Reich's signal, students let go of their balloons, which began heading toward Downtown Chicago. Two years ago, one of the balloons was found in North Carolina. Assistant Principal Kristin Reingruber set up a website to track the flight of the balloons. Each of the balloons contained both the anti-bullying pledge and the district's website address. People who find the balloons are encouraged to visit the district's website and indicate how far the balloon had traveled. Way to Go Mustangs!



INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE, ONE CHILD AT A TIME

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CHALK



TALK

FALL 2014 EDITION

Where Excellence Matters

In District 117, we believe "excellence is the result of caring more than others think wise; risking more than others think safe; dreaming more than others think is practical and expecting more than others think is possible."

North Palos District 117 is in jeopardy of losing \$4 million annually under a bill that passed the Illinois Senate and is awaiting a vote in the Illinois House of Representatives. Called the School Funding Reform Act (Senate Bill 16), the legislation would dramatically reduce state funding to NPD117. Although the State of Illinois is constitutionally required to shoulder the "primary responsibility" for financing public education, the truth is that District 117 receives 76 percent of its funding from you, our local taxpayers, and only 18 percent from the State of Illinois. The remaining funding comes from the federal government. SB 16 would shift even more of the burden of public school financing to local taxpayers as virtually all State funds received by NPD117 would be eliminated. We are urging the NPD117 community to contact our local legislators by phone, letter, or e-mail. Specific legislative contact information can be found on the District 117 website at www.npd117.net by clicking on the District 117 yellow menu bar and then going to "District Legislators." District 117 currently spends \$1,000 per student less than the State average and \$1,500 per student less than many other school districts in the South Cook Region. While we serve a high percentage of at-risk students, we can boast high student achievement among all our students. We've continually received the Illinois State Board of Education 'Academic Excellence Award' and 'Financial

Recognition Award. The district has also received the 'Lincoln Bronze Award,' the 'Circle of Excellence Award' the 'National Blue Ribbon Award', and the National Distinguished Title I Award. We take seriously our mission to educate all our students and appreciate the trust you bestow on us to be good stewards of your hard-earned tax dollars. We want to continue providing the high-quality education that has become synonymous with NPD117.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS



NOVEMBER 24. 8 AM. Half Day Inservice. Students attend in the AM - Parent/teacher conferences in the PM.

NOVEMBER 25. 8:30 AM.-11:45 AM Parent/teacher conferences. NO SCHOOL.

NOVEMBER 27. HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

DECEMBER 3. TEAM Day - Early Dismissal.

DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 4. NO SCHOOL. WINTER BREAK.

JANUARY 5. NO SCHOOL Institute Day.

JANUARY 9. Report cards distributed.

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Superintendent's Corner

DR. JEANNIE STACHOWIAK

The State of Illinois is proposing to change how it funds education to make it more equitable and fair. However, that proposal, known as Senate Bill 16, would result in middle-class communities like ours taking the brunt of the hit from the proposed changes. Middle-class communities can't afford these large de-facto property tax increases. They are already over-burdened. We, as a district, can't afford to have the level of education our children receive - and to which we work hard to provide - reduced. To that end, we have been working tirelessly to communicate with you just how crucial it is to contact your state representative or state senator and tell them to hold off on voting on SB 16 until another, more equitable piece of legislation is ironed out. We co-hosted two Joint Town Hall Meetings recently that were well-attended by numerous stake-



holders from communities including Orland Park and Tinley Park, Worth and Palos Hills and Hickory Hills. We all have a stake in this. Passage of SB 16 would shift \$4 million annually away from District 117's budget. Collectively, the bill would shift a total of \$23 million away from our local districts. We've worked hard to create a culture in this district where everyone plays a part in our success. And yes, we've enjoyed our share of success, but we aren't finished. With your continued support, we believe we can achieve even greater success. Thank you.

Administrator Updates

NEWS IN REVIEW

Erich Grauke Director of Technology



In an effort to make things more convenient for students and parents, we are offering an online payment system for lunches. Called "Meals Plus," the program will begin in January at Conrady and in the other schools shortly thereafter. This program has been in the works for some time now and we are excited about being able to

offer this program to you. Using the existing registration fee payment system, parents can add money to their child's lunch account while also viewing the purchase history on that account. Students will be issued an ID card that can be swiped rather than paying with cash. Parents can log into the payment website and view what their students have purchased as well as replenishing account balances. The payment system can also be set up to alert parents via email when card balances are getting low. The process should be more convenient for students, parents and staff and will speed up the cafeteria checkout lanes by reducing the number of cash transactions. This new process is a collaborative effort between technology and business.



Melissa Murphy Assistant Supt. for Teaching and Learning



Grauke, 40, began his career as a sixth-grade social studies teacher. Three years later, he got his first real taste of working in technology as a library media specialist. A couple of years later, Grauke landed his first technology director position. He has served as director of technology in Fremont School District 79, a three-school district with 3,000 students and in the same position in Emmons School District 33, a one school district with 300 students. Grauke said one of his main challenges in his role as technology director is to ensure that technology is integrated successfully as part of the curriculum, which is one reason he works closely with Melissa Murphy, the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning. "We need to make sure that teachers integrate the technology in a way that students are continually learning," Grauke said. Chromebooks and other electronic devices are brought into the classroom to help students reach their full potential. "These (Chromebooks) are tools that allow for collaboration and deeper learning for these students," he said. "Computer time is ALL the time now. It used to be that students would leave their classrooms for "computer time. That's not the case anymore. Computers are used constantly in education." Grauke earned a Bachelor's Degree from Concordia University with a double major of English and History. His first Masters' Degree is from National Lewis University in Educational Technology and his second Masters' Degree is from Benedictine University in Educational Administration. When not at work, Grauke enjoys reading, traveling, hiking, fishing and operating an amateur radio station. He recently used his work in amateur radio to assist with the Chicago Marathon by creating a communications network to assist medical teams along the race course.

Conrady sixth- and seventh-graders had plenty of reasons to smile at the start of this school year. In addition to the new clothes and supplies that oftentimes accompany the start of a new school year, this select group of students received new Chromebooks. (A Chromebook is a laptop computer that operates on the Chrome OS operating system). Students received the laptops (to use at home and at school) as part of the District's Technology Initiative. This year was Phase 1 of the roll-out. Next year, all Conrady students will have their own Chromebooks. District 117 wanted to provide each student with his/her own device for a number of reasons. Chief among them was the fact that many of the curricular materials that are being purchased are digital. For example, the new math materials allow students to complete their homework online and submit it to the teacher immediately and receive instant feedback. A second reason for the move to digital was that the new language arts standards require students to research and write more. Both these tasks are easier to do using an electronic device and the internet. A final reason for the switch was to make it easier to give the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments. From some of the students' comments, the Chromebooks have been a big hit. Nicholas, a seventh grader, said: "I really like the fact that you don't have to carry textbooks anymore and less paper is used." Mario, another seventh grader, said, "(Chromebooks) are more convenient throughout the day and they help me with organization."



Faces of the District

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE



Glen Oaks and Oak Ridge Schools Raise Money in Friendly Competition; Conrady, Supt. Get Involved Too.

Students and staff at Oak Ridge and Glen Oaks schools engaged in some friendly competition while helping raise both money and awareness for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig's Disease), a fatal disease that affects the nerve cells, the motor neurons in the brain and spinal cord. The degeneration of these nerve cells leads to muscle weakness and paralysis. The schools challenged each other as part of the wildly popular "Ice Bucket Challenge," which raised more than \$100 million nationally to help fight the disease. The two schools raised more than \$6,000. Students and staff as well as their fearless leaders (Principals Reich and Grimm) got involved in the fundraiser, agreeing to have cold water poured over their heads as well. The 'challenge' caught on as Conrady Junior High School Band Director Sue Clemons and her young musicians dumped water on themselves and then challenged two nearby junior high school bands and the local high school band. Showing the old school spirit, Supt. Jeannie Stachowiak also took the challenge.



Conrady Holds Memorial For One Of Its Own

Conrady held a memorial in honor of longtime teacher's aide Barb Fionda, who passed away recently after a battle with cancer. District 117 staff fought back tears while sharing stories of a woman who was always there with a ready smile and words of encouragement. "Whatever she was asked to do she did and she did with a huge smile on her face," said Jackie Hausman. "She never complained and was always eager to help out. She always asked how we were doing and wanted to make sure we were OK. That was Barb." Lynn Vanderploeg said Barb "was always a shoulder to cry on." "I was going through some health issues with my husband and - even though Barb was dealing with her own issues - she made sure she was there for me. I will never forget that. I will never forget her." Mrs. Fionda spent eight years as a teacher's aide at Conrady where she worked in various capacities. Said Principal Andy Anderson: "Barb was an amazing person. She left us all way too soon."



"HOWL THROUGH THE HILLS" ★

North Palos District 117 and the City of Hickory Hills co-sponsored the annual "Howl Through The Hills 5K Walk/Run" where hundreds of people participated in the fundraiser to help the Hickory Hills Lions Club. More than 200 people actually ran/walked in the event, including Mayor Mike Howley (who finished in the top five) and several teachers, administrators and staff of District 117. Everyone had a great time for a great cause.

