

LEARNERS

A Newsletter for the Winnetka Community of Learners



SPRING 2017

THE WINNETKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

www.winnetka36.org

A SHARED VISION TO GUIDE US FORWARD

The District's collaboratively developed Shared Vision exists to establish a standard of excellence and boldly energizes our school community to transcend the status quo. It provides direction for our decision-making and guidance for how we allocate our resources and prioritize our work. At its heart, our Vision is about intellectual inquiry, continual growth that challenges our limits, and a commitment to making a positive impact in the world.

The Winnetka Public Schools community empowers every student to flourish in an innovative, experiential environment. We support and challenge all learners to actively engage in continual growth and achievement to make a meaningful difference in the world.



Images on this page (from top): Skokie students collaborate on a science experiment. Greeley students explore robotics. Kindergarten students engage in play-based learning.



MEET DANIEL RYAN & BARRY RODGERS

The 2016-2017 school year involved key leadership shifts in the D36 Central Office team. In summer 2016, Daniel Ryan became Assistant Superintendent of Professional Learning and Human Resources and Barry Rodgers assumed the role of Director of Innovation, Teaching and Learning. Rodgers and Ryan have both worked to propel the District's Shared Vision forward in their respective roles, supporting and challenging students and staff to reach their fullest potential.

Ryan's responsibilities include overseeing the Human Resources needs of District staff members, partnering with the Winnetka Education Association on developing the Winnetka University platform – a robust professional learning platform for staff, facilitating staff evaluations, and executing a strategic leadership development plan for recruiting and retaining high-quality candidates for District positions.

Ryan's early career has its roots in D36; he taught at Hubbard Woods School before serving in leadership roles at institutions including Principal at Baker Demonstration School and Associate Dean at National-Louis University's College of Education. In 2011, he returned to D36 as Principal of Hubbard Woods School before transitioning to his new role. "I work with my colleagues to shape our Institute Days, New Staff Training, conferences, and other professional learning around progressive educational practices," Ryan explains. "Our Shared Vision includes 'empowering every student to flourish in an innovative, experiential environment...' The work I do in this new role is deeply connected to the Vision that we are all striving to accomplish so that our students can continue to grow."

Barry Rodgers and Daniel Ryan have both worked to propel the District's Shared Vision forward in their respective roles, supporting and challenging students and staff to reach their fullest potential.

As Director of Innovation, Teaching and Learning, Rodgers oversees the Curriculum Department and provides leadership for instruction throughout the District. This includes the collaborative development and fostering of student-centered educational practices, professional learning, and assessment. In his position, Rodgers ensures that staff have the necessary tools to support student growth and achievement, noting that, "Innovation is driven in our community by fostering a supportive culture of continuous improvement."

Prior to joining the District, Rodgers was Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Instruction, Technology, and Assessment at Lake Forest Schools District 67 and 115 as well as Principal of Lake Forest High School. He was also a Founder and Principal of Northside College Prep High School. Rodgers says he became an administrator in D36 because, "I was inspired by the District's ambitious plans to harness the best of progressive education and 21st century education. The opportunity to work with smart and thoughtful people to create a model of 'progressive education 2.0' drew me to Winnetka and it is what drives my efforts on a daily basis. Together, we are building a model of 'what is possible' in public education."



Images on this page: Daniel Ryan, Assistant Superintendent of Professional Learning and Human Resources. Barry Rodgers, Director of Innovation, Teaching and Learning.

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Trisha Kocanda, Ed.D.
Superintendent



I am proud to report that in The Winnetka Public Schools, our Shared Vision is propelling us forward in a spirit of continuous growth and innovation. Substantial progress has been made in the four goal areas on which the District focused in 2016-2017:

1. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
2. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
3. FISCAL MANAGEMENT & FACILITY DESIGN
4. REACHING ALL LEARNERS

See infographic below for highlights on what has been accomplished

We continue to set District goals to monitor student performance so that the growth and achievement for ALL learners remains at the forefront of our progressive work. In addition, newly revised reading curriculum has been implemented this year throughout all grades. We are striving to ensure our special education services and intervention programs are of the highest quality and clearly articulated.

Several noteworthy decisions made by our School Board in 2016-2017 involve our entire community (see page 4 for more details). The decisions that likely have the most widespread impact on our community as a whole include the following:

In December 2016, \$10+ million of bonds were refinanced, amounting to a tax savings of over \$700,000. In March 2017, the Board approved the abatement of \$30 million in reserves to refund callable debt on June 1, 2017, and eliminate future property taxes of approximately \$39 million previously scheduled to pay principal and interest on the \$30 million of refunded debt.

This spring, a Master Facility Plan was initiated, the District's first in over 20 years. This plan will inform decision-making on balancing enrollment, addressing the needs of aging facilities in a fiscally responsible manner, and ensuring our students continue to have access to innovative learning environments. Please check your mailbox over the summer for further information that will be shared on how you can be involved in this process.

On behalf of the District, we look forward to collaborating with you on the Master Facility Plan and other important initiatives.

As we conclude this school year, I would like to congratulate our 2017 graduates. We wish each of you the best as you begin your high school journey and trust that you will continue to make a meaningful difference in the world. Additionally, we are incredibly excited to welcome our community's youngest learners to Kindergarten in D36 in the fall. Enjoy a safe and relaxing summer!

4 GOALS 2016-2017



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



FISCAL MANAGEMENT AND FACILITY DESIGN



REACHING ALL LEARNERS

OVER 850 COMMUNITY MEMBERS



ATTENDED WINNETKA PARENTS INSTITUTE EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

\$30 MILLION WILL BE RETURNED TO TAXPAYERS FROM D36 FUND BALANCE



D36 STAFF ENGAGED IN OVER

1,000 HOURS

OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN 2016-2017



STEAM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARTS & MATH) ENVIRONMENTS EXPANDED TO

ALL 5 DISTRICT SCHOOLS

BOARD PRESIDENT MESSAGE

It has been a privilege to serve this community, specifically as School Board President since 2014. Thank you to my fellow Board Members, and welcome to new Members Nat Roberts, Steve Cirulis, and Scott Conine. At the end of my tenure on the Board, I am reflecting back on the many initiatives of the 2016-2017 school year. In spring 2016, the School Board approved the expansion of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) environments to all District schools, resulting in innovative opportunities for student growth and increased collaboration between educators. Students are using these spaces to tinker with robotics, explore physics concepts, learn coding, experiment with film-making, and more...all while developing confidence and preparedness for future careers in an array of fields.

Planning is underway for the implementation of Extended Day Kindergarten in 2017-2018 (also approved by the Board in spring 2016). The District looks forward to welcoming our youngest learners to this robust new program in the fall. Our students will benefit from enriched curriculum, allowing for more time to develop important skills, and teachers will have increased time to address students' needs.

Phase II of the Enrollment Balancing Project will address future enrollment and long-term facilities needs.



Kendra Wallace
Board President
2014-2017

A primary focus for nearly the past year was Phase I of the Enrollment Balancing Project (see below). Phase II, which begins this spring, addresses future enrollment and long-term facilities needs. To provide a framework for Phase II, the School Board approved the creation of a Master Facility Plan, the District's first such plan in over 20 years. An important problem-solving opportunity lies before us, and I encourage our community to remain engaged in the discussions regarding balancing our enrollment and wisely utilizing our facilities. I am confident that in Winnetka, we do not settle for the status quo or choose the easy path; we make decisions based on what is best for our children.

Finally, know that our Shared Vision is coming to life daily in our schools. On behalf of the Board, thank you for the important role you play in supporting our community of learners as we embody our Vision. Rest assured that your support and dedication to our school community extends well beyond our classrooms and is truly making a difference in the world.

D36 LAUNCHES MASTER FACILITY PLAN IN CONJUNCTION WITH PHASE II OF THE ENROLLMENT BALANCING PROJECT

The D36 School Board began the Enrollment Balancing Project (EBP) in summer 2016 to address imbalanced attendance patterns at the three District 36 elementary schools, forecast enrollment trends, and identify anticipated future space needs. A two phase process was recommended in order to immediately address the current enrollment imbalance (Phase I) and identify solutions to support the long-term needs of the District (Phase II).

For details visit: www.winnetka36.org

Phase II, initiated in spring 2017, includes the development of a Master Facility Plan (the District's first in over 20 years) to address long-term facility needs associated with aging infrastructure, educational programming, enrollment trends, and financial planning. Over the next few months, the District will share more information on opportunities to collaborate on determining creative solutions that meet the needs of our current and future students.

Phase I Recap: Phase I began in summer 2016, and was guided by a School Board Advisory Committee of staff, parents, and community members charged with determining a short-term solution to provide immediate overcrowding relief at Crow Island School. Phase I culminated in January 2017, with the District 36 Board approving the Advisory Committee's recommendation that all Crow Island Kindergarten students attend another District school. This Phase I solution provides immediate enrollment relief to Crow Island School and utilizes available classroom space at Greeley and Hubbard Woods Schools.

SCHOOL BUDGET

The District's budget is a planning document that provides the financial framework to support The Winnetka Public Schools' goal of providing students with a high-caliber education, while serving as responsible financial stewards. Developing and monitoring the District's budget is a year-round activity, incorporating an array of logistical, legal, and regulatory mandates. Revenue is generated primarily from local property tax dollars, while expenses are determined by programmatic needs.

The School Board and staff are diligent about careful stewardship of these funds and work to deliver educational programs and maintain District buildings as efficiently as possible. This may result in surpluses or positive ending fund balances. When savings are realized, funds are held in reserve for future educational needs. A reserve can extend the time between referenda, ensure cash flow when tax payments are not received in a timely fashion, and may be used for unexpected expenses or reduction in revenue sources as currently contemplated by State legislative proposals.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

The Board recognizes its obligations to taxpayers in fulfilling its stewardship of District finances and related reserves. In response to this commitment, over the past few years the Board has returned in excess of \$4 million to taxpayers through a rebate or rollback of property taxes. In December 2016, \$10+ million of bonds were refinanced for a tax savings of over \$700,000. In March 2017, the Board approved the abatement of \$30 million in reserves to refund callable debt on June 1, 2017, and eliminate future property taxes of approximately \$39 million previously scheduled to pay principal and interest on the \$30 million of refunded debt.

This is the culmination of the Board's plan with the community, developed in 2013. Concurrent with this refunding, the Board has embarked on developing a long-term facility Master Facility Plan as part of Phase II of the Enrollment Balancing Project. Community engagement will be an important element of this process.

School Budget Cycle

JANUARY

Budget Calendar Developed

FEBRUARY

Preliminary Staffing Plan Presented

MARCH

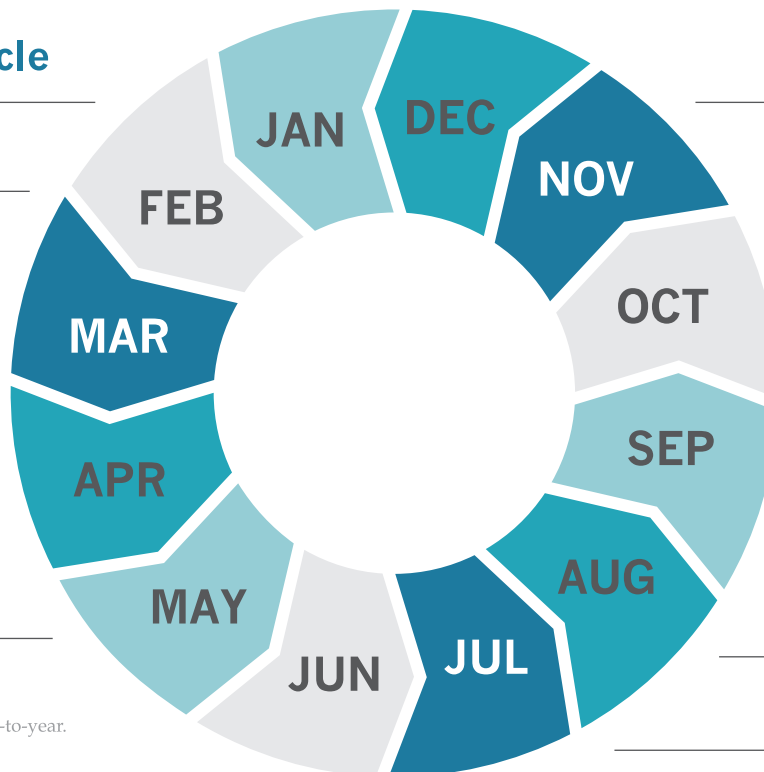
Staffing Plan Adopted

APRIL & MAY

Budget is Internally Developed and Refined

JUNE

Preliminary Budget Presented and Approved



JULY

Annual Financial Audit Performed

AUGUST

Tentative Budget Approved for Public Display & Hearing

SEPTEMBER

Budget Hearing and Vote

OCTOBER

Independent Financial Audit Completed

NOVEMBER

Preliminary Tax Levy Presented and Discussed

DECEMBER

Tax Levy Approved

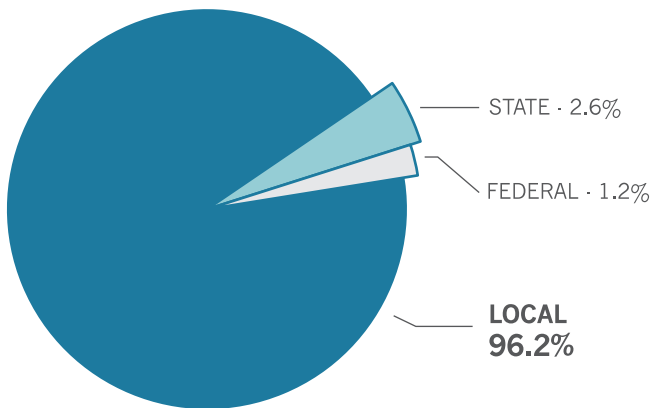
Note: Timing may vary slightly from year-to-year.

FISCAL YEAR 2017 FINANCIAL REPORT

Thanks to the support of taxpayers and the careful stewardship of the School Board and staff, District 36 is in a sound financial position. The District maintains a AAA Bond Rating from Standard & Poor's, and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) again bestowed its highest honor, "Financial Recognition" on The Winnetka Public Schools.

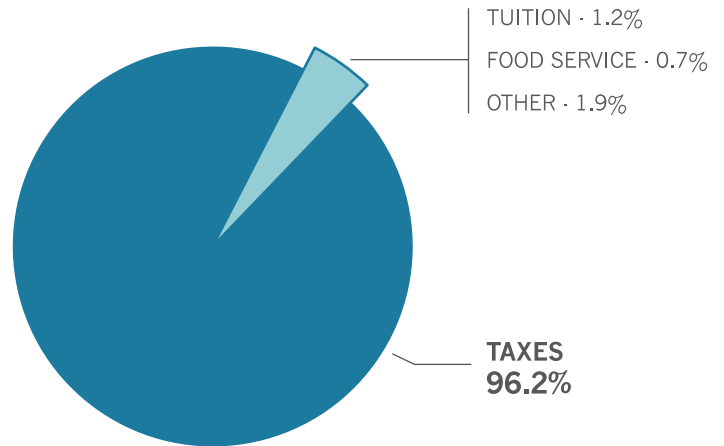
Revenue by Source (All Funds)

District 36 receives 96% of its funds from local sources. Federal and state revenues are less than 4% of the District's revenues. Despite the poor financial situation in the state of Illinois, District finances have remained stable. However, due to economic conditions in the state and federal governments, future availability of revenue from both entities is at risk. This includes the potential of a significant reduction in local property tax revenues due to proposals to freeze property taxes.



Local Revenue by Type (All Funds)

Property taxes are the primary source (96%) of Local Revenue for The Winnetka Public Schools. Traditionally, property tax revenues have been a reliable source of revenue. Proposed legislation by the State to freeze property tax revenues, if passed, could result in significant reduction in future operational revenues and reserves.



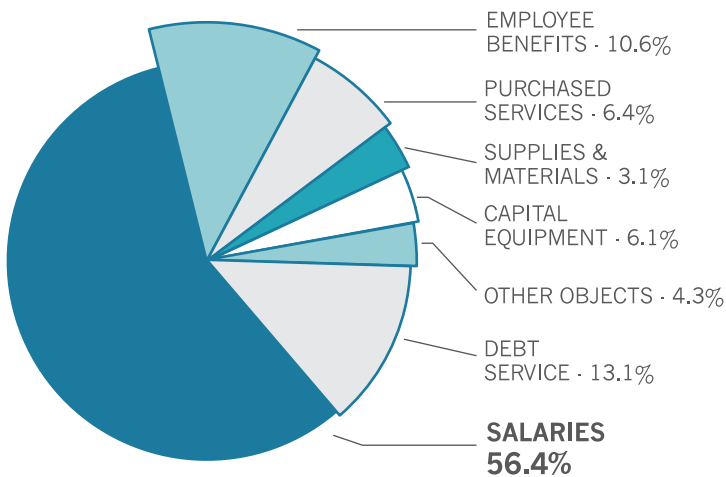
The Winnetka Public Schools Board approved the District's 2016 Tax Levy at its December 13, 2016, meeting. A property tax levy is an annual request to Cook County for the property tax revenue a school district needs to operate the district for the subsequent fiscal year.

In March 2017, the Board approved the elimination (through abatement) of future property taxes of \$39 million scheduled to pay \$30 million of bonds, approved for refunding on June 1, 2017. This fulfills a commitment the School Board made to the Winnetka community in 2013.

District 36 received the highest category from the ISBE in the areas of Fund Balance/Revenue Ratio, Expenditures/Revenue Ratio, Days Cash on Hand, and Short-Term Borrowing and maintains a AAA bond rating.

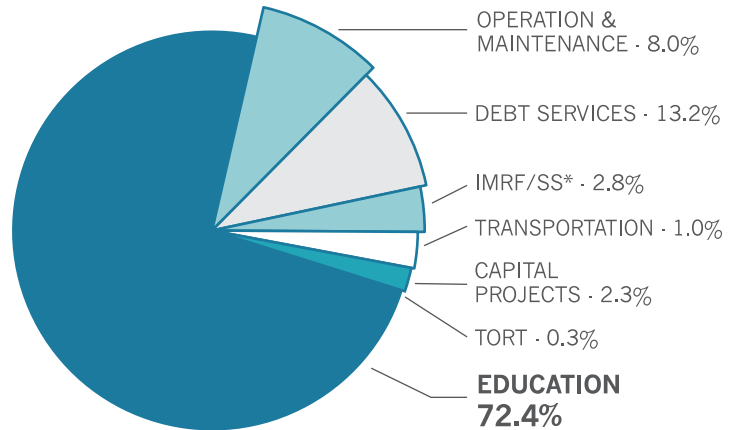
Expenditure by Object (All Funds)

When expenditures are considered by type they are referred to as objects. Education is a people-driven enterprise. Salaries and benefits, primarily of teachers, associates, custodians, and other staff—those who provide outstanding educational experiences for students—constitute the majority of this (67%) category.



Expenditure by Fund

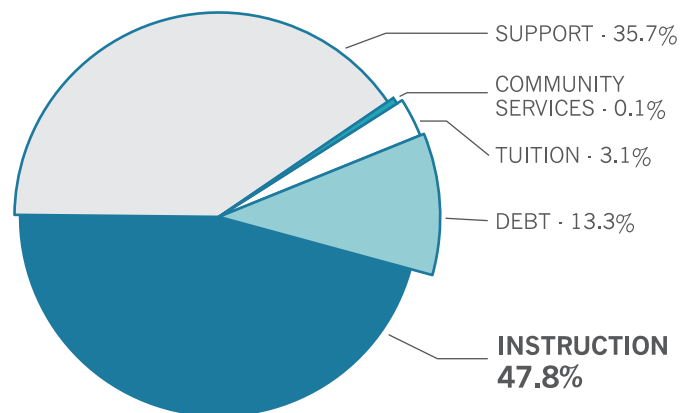
Per Illinois State Law, the District's budget is divided into categories, or funds. Each of these accounts has a specific purpose or function and funds are not fungible. Only limited types of transfers are permitted, and money in one fund cannot be used for expenses in another. For example, the District spent more than 15% of its local dollars on debt service and capital projects from these restricted funds which are not considered part of the District's Operating Funds.



* Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund and Social Security

Instruction Takes Priority

District Budget priorities are guided by the singular goal of providing the best possible education for the children of Winnetka, while remaining fiscally responsible. This priority is reflected by how much money is devoted to teaching and learning. The majority (84%) of the District's budget is spent on Instruction and Instructional support. An important component of Instructional support is providing a favorable and safe environment for children to learn. This is accomplished by having well-maintained facilities. In 2016 and over the next few years, increased expenditures have been planned for maintenance of District facilities. As part of a long-term Master Facility Plan that is underway, it is anticipated that the District will seek community support to make needed improvements to aging facilities.



Credit ratings are opinions about the ability of an entity, such as a corporation, state or city government, to meet its financial obligations. The Winnetka Public Schools continues to receive Standard & Poor's highest rating and is one of a relatively few Districts nationwide to be rated AAA.

The Winnetka Public Schools received a "Recognition" distinction from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). This represents the highest category of financial strength. District 36 received a score of 3.80 on a 4.0 scale for several consecutive years.

KINETIC WELLNESS: P.E. FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Kinetic Wellness (KW) in District 36 is a departure from the typical P.E. experience that comes to mind for most adults. A vital part of our students' Winnetka Experience, the program focuses on physical, social, and emotional wellness, and recently underwent a three year curriculum review. Components of health, fitness, and nutrition are infused throughout the curriculum, designed to provide an interconnected experience from elementary to middle school. As students progress through the KW program, they learn about drug and alcohol awareness, mental health, and concepts to help build a foundation for a lifetime of wellness, such as reading food labels and setting fitness goals. The whole-child approach to KW is intended to support every aspect of students' development. Longtime Carleton Washburne School KW teacher, Victor Cooper, says that the District's KW teachers strive to prepare students "to be fair, caring, trustworthy and leaders among their peers."

"Every day we are pushing the envelope to take our program to new and innovative levels."

Images on this page: Students enjoy a game of lacrosse at Washburne. A group of students relax while exploring yoga poses at Greeley.

Elementary school curriculum focuses on honing motor movement skills and learning basic rules for various sports with an emphasis on displaying good sportsmanship. During middle school, students' skills are expanded. Students are exposed to an array of fitness activities including:

Lacrosse, Archery, Bowling, Ultimate Frisbee, Yoga, Climbing, Pickleball, and High Ropes.

D36 students also enjoy traditions such as: **Field Day**, **The "Spooky Gym,"** an agility-building obstacle course at Crow Island and Hubbard Woods Schools, and **The "Ghost Dance"** at Greeley School, which allows students to learn dance fundamentals culminating in an all-school Halloween performance.

KW teacher Eric Chan, who teaches at the elementary and middle school levels, explains that throughout all activities, "We are child-centered and focus more on being honest and respectful than being the winner. We include everyone."

During the 2016-2017 school year, sixth through eighth grade students were able to goal set with the use of Polar heart rate monitors, thanks to a generous donation by The Winnetka Public Schools Foundation. By utilizing this technology, students are able to see how their activity level – both perceived and actual – impacts heart rate. This new resource offers an opportunity to encourage students to develop lifelong healthy habits, a goal of the KW program. Incorporating new resources and strategies into teaching and learning is paramount to the KW staff. "Every day we are pushing the envelope to take our program to new and innovative levels," says Mike Hynes, KW teacher at The Skokie School.



EXTENDED DAY KINDERGARTEN WILL LAUNCH THIS FALL

District 36 staff will welcome the community's youngest learners to the new Extended Day Kindergarten Program in 2017-2018. This program was approved by the School Board in spring 2016 after being under consideration for many years in Winnetka. D36 is proud to join 90% of other Districts statewide (including four other New Trier Township Districts) in offering an extended or full day program. Realtors throughout the area have indicated that an Extended Day Kindergarten Program is a key factor in attracting young families to settle in Winnetka.



Most notably, however, the decision to implement Extended Day Kindergarten is rooted in research on what is ideal for children. The Extended Day Kindergarten program will allow for additional time in the day to support deeper learning and growth in all aspects of children's development, supporting positive social interaction, problem-solving, creativity, confidence, sensory integration, attention, and self-regulation.

Throughout the year, all Kindergarteners will engage in several common units of study such as the *Butterfly Migration* and *Birds of Winnetka*. Classrooms will have a schedule that provides time for whole group gatherings, independent choice time, theme-based projects, nature play, literacy and math activities, and related-arts (Music, Art, Resource Center and Kinetic Wellness). In true Winnetka spirit, all of the Extended Day Kindergarten experiences are designed to promote community, joy, and a love of learning.

The new Extended Day Kindergarten program builds upon Winnetka's rich history of play-based experiential learning

Image at left: Students from Greeley School participate in the annual Kindergarten Butterfly Migration.

Hubbard Woods School Resource Center Director Todd Burleson named *School Library Journal* School Librarian of the Year

Congratulations, Mr. Burleson! This award, sponsored by Scholastic Library Publishing, honors K–12 school library professionals for outstanding achievement and the exemplary use of 21st-century tools to engage students toward fostering multiple literacies. "The District is proud of Mr. Burleson's leadership and values his innovative contributions to 21st century teaching and learning both in Winnetka and beyond," says Superintendent Kocanda.



THE WINNETKA EXPERIENCE

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

A commitment to Experiential Learning, *learning by doing*, sets our schools apart from others. A recent example of Experiential Learning in action is the November 2016 mascot election at Greeley School. Every four years, this school-wide tradition coincides with the national election, giving students a hands-on opportunity to learn about the democratic process by registering to vote, campaigning, hosting debates, holding a primary election, and selecting a new mascot (the Red Panda!) on Election Day.



Images above: Students participate in a debate during the Greeley mascot election in November. A student from Greeley School casts her ballot for their recent mascot election.

Image at right: Skokie sixth grade students George Baillos and Matthew Greenstein met with Illinois State Representative Robyn Gabel while advocating for technology in schools at TECH 2017.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

From student-led Town Hall meetings to students teaching teachers during Institute Days, leadership opportunities abound at D36. Insight shared by New Trier High School consistently demonstrates that D36 alumni are involved in leadership-related activities in high school.

In 2016-2017, there was an uptick in student involvement in technology-related leadership including:

Skokie School students submitted their film "Anyone Can Make Anything" to the 2017 Google GEG Chicagoland Filmfest and were named elementary grand prize winners

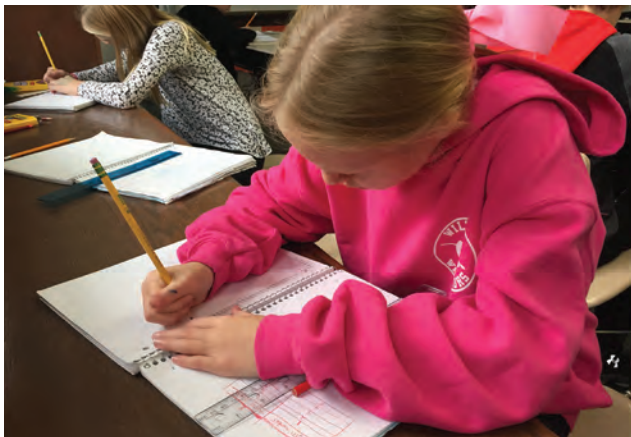
Washburne students shared presentations on technology at Illinois Computing Educators Conference (ICE) and engaged in Tech and Learning live in May 2017

Middle school students participated in Futures Unlimited, an opportunity for girls to explore STEAM-related careers

Students at The Skokie School presented to state officials at the Capitol Building in Springfield as part of TECH 2017 in May

According to Maureen Chertow Miller, Director of Technology, "These opportunities for students to lead and collaborate are representative of the District's commitment to fostering student voice and inspiring confidence in all learners."





Images above: Washburne eighth graders presented on littleBits at the NICE Minicon's Student Innovation Playground. A Skokie School student concentrates on a math activity. A Washburne student enthusiastically working on a design project as part of the FUSE program.



EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Collaborating with local and national educators enhances teaching and learning, resulting in new ideas and innovation and benefiting our entire school community. Longstanding partnerships include professional learning for teachers with Teachers College, Columbia University. Educators from Teachers College again visited our campus to offer Winnetka Parents Institute sessions in winter 2017. Thanks in part to The Winnetka Public Schools Foundation, our schools often welcome Artists-in-Residence to spend time diving into arts-related initiatives with students.

Recent partnerships in D36 include:

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY FUSE PROGRAM
 The CoLab at Carleton Washburne School was invited to partner with Northwestern University's FUSE program as part of a research study to determine the STEAM program's impact on student learning.

OAKTON COLLEGE ROBOTICS TEAM COLLABORATION
 Robotics students and their professor visited District schools in winter and spring 2017 to provide students hands-on experience controlling a robot and insight into designing and building robots for NASA's annual competition at the Kennedy Space Center.

MATH PROGRAM EVALUATION
 An extensive Math Program Evaluation was conducted Dr. Miriam Sherin (Northwestern University) and Mr. James Lynn (University of Illinois-Chicago) to evaluate the implementation of the District's math curriculum, which was implemented in fall 2003. Recommendations from these experts were embedded in the 2016-2017 District Improvement Plan for math.

Image at left: Skokie School fifth graders, Halsey Dillingham and Mandarin Wallace, were elementary grand prize winners at the 2017 Google GEG Chicagoland Filmfest.

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Nat Roberts
Member

www.winnetka36.org

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Instagram: [@winnetkapublicschools](https://instagram.com/winnetkapublicschools)

Youtube: [The Winnetka Public Schools](https://www.youtube.com/TheWinnetkaPublicSchools)

COMMUNITY VOICES:

How did your experience in D36 prepare you to grow and achieve?

“I especially appreciate the opportunities that my D36 teachers gave me to be creative in a classroom setting...I was really affected positively by this infusion of creativity into my education, and I believe I have carried that with me throughout my entire life. ”

Katie Chang (2009 graduate)
Northwestern University Class of 2017
Hollywood film actress



“I loved the manner in which the teachers would foster creativity as well as a balanced learning environment. My study habits were developed in these schools. Because of the way the schools created a working environment that paired structure and imagination, I discovered a lot of who I am and identify as today.”

Sam Shonfeld (2013 graduate),
New Trier High School Class of 2017
Founding member of Run BeCAUSE