

A Newsletter for the Winnetka Community of Learners

The Winnetka Public Schools

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District Stays Busy Year-Round With Summer Camps

Students and staff alike are embracing the new routines that accompany the start of a new school year. Where did those (not so) lazy days of summer go? Although you might expect the District's schools to be shuttered while local families vacation during the warmer months, it's just the opposite. The Winnetka Public Schools are bustling when school is not in session.

The District's own summer program, **Adventures in Learning**, saw a 12% increase from last year's enrollment, with nearly 670 students in attendance. The primary program, held at Hubbard Woods School, was home to 95 students, whose fun-filled days focused on art projects, outdoor experiences, reading, and math readiness activities.

The 571 older students enrolled in the General Program participated in 92 different classes in five areas: Sports, Essential Skill Development, Arts and Crafts, Performing Arts, and Just Plain Fun. Extended School Year services, which focus on core academics and other skill-building activities, were also made available this year.

Although Carleton Washburne School was the hub for most of these activities, Park District fields, Nielsen Tennis Center, and

the Skokie Lagoons all doubled as "classrooms" with The Skokie School even offering a high ropes course.

Hubbard Woods School and The Skokie School housed 450 Winnetka Park District campers from preschool through fourth grade in the **Happiness Is** and **Almost Anything Goes** programs. Winnetka's older students (grades seven through nine) served as Counselors-In-Training (CITs) for both camps.

TWIG (Together We Influence Growth) is a non-profit day camp that provides a traditional camp experience for children from both the suburbs and the city, where they are able to interact in a multi-cultural atmosphere of fun and learning. There were 128 TWIG campers at Greeley School in 2013, with just over half from the North Shore.

While more than 1,200 adventurers and campers were performing in plays, participating in sports, creating arts and crafts, and honing their academics, staff was busy preparing for the upcoming academic year. More than 80 teachers took part in an intensive four-day math

training to prepare for the introduction of the District's revised math curriculum, with others immersed in other content area curricular reviews.

Summer is an especially busy time for the District Office staff, Administration, Technology team, and Buildings and Grounds personnel. It is their hard work that ensures each school year starts smoothly and efficiently.



TWIG campers spent a day in Crow Island Woods. The Winnetka Historical Society gave tours of the Log House, and campers participated in a variety of outdoor activities, including archery.

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Board President Message



Welcome to the 2013-2014 school year at The Winnetka Public Schools!

The halls of the schools are filled with students meeting new people, making new friends, and applying their knowledge to an entirely different set of challenges. For parents, this is yet another milestone as their children re-engage after the summer break and begin returning home with stories of new programs, ideas, issues, and skills they are working to master. District staff were also excited to put new tools and techniques, gleaned from summer training and personal experience, into practice.

As excited as I am to start a new school year, it seems like only yesterday that I was reflecting on the achievements, successes, and transitions of last year. It is at moments like these when the benefits of having a forward-looking roadmap such as our Strategic Plan become even more apparent. The successes of 2012-2013 were important and meaningful. More significantly, they established a foundation for achieving even more in the year to come.

While we are decidedly looking forward in this issue of *Learners*, it's helpful to remind ourselves of the accomplishments that allow us to continue to scale the ladder of success. Changes to the Math, Fine Arts, World Language, and Language Arts curricula were approved last year leading to the next stages of development in their continued refinement and implementation. We continued our focus on the individual needs of our learners by enhancing our Differentiation Action Plan, and we laid the foundation for an innovative integration of new modes of technology engagement by approving a One-to-One Mobile Learning Initiative pilot that begins this year. We were also successful at introducing more technology at a Board level, using iPads for our Board materials, and launching an online Dashboard of key District performance metrics as well as real-time updates to Strategic Plan goals. These updates can be found at www.winnetka36.org.

Building on those successes, the District will initiate the curriculum review process for Science, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), and Kinetic Wellness/Health in 2013-2014. The English Language Arts faculty will prepare for a 2014-2015 launch, and the revised Math instructional materials were rolled out on the first day of school for grades K-5. Progress also continues on World Language, Fine Arts, and Social Studies curricula as they move forward in their review and implementation process. There is an excellent summary of the "lifecycle" of curricular changes in this issue on pages 4 and 5.



Students stock up their lockers on the first day of the 2013-2014 school year at Carleton Washburne School.

Almost every pillar of the Strategic Plan has key milestones due this year, with an array of sub-goals that support the overarching initiatives being accomplished daily. A visual summary of key Strategic Planning goals for the 2013-2014 school year can be found on the back cover.

This year, the Board will engage in negotiations with certified and custodial staff, while also moving forward on finalizing recommendations for stabilizing and enhancing the fiscal operations of the District through the work of the Finance Subcommittee. From those deliberations, we will develop a more organic and coherent set of policies for managing fund balances, reserves, and incorporating historical and forecast data of key fiscal metrics into decisions that impact the entire community. We also will continue to explore ways in which to reduce or restructure debt in the District to the benefit of all, while maintaining our commitment to providing the highest quality progressive education for our students.

It sounds like a lot. It always does when starting a new year. When looking back on what we achieved just last year, though, I have every reason to believe that we will reach these goals and more as we continue to push ourselves, and our students, faculty, and staff, to deliver on our promise to the community. Please join us at our monthly Board meetings to learn more.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible and to facing the exciting new challenges that lay before us in the year to come.

My best,

Jon Kaplan
President

Superintendent's Message



Friday, August 23rd was an exciting day here at District 36. It was the day that we welcomed back all of our returning and new employees in a formal kickoff to the 2013–2014 school year. For staff, this day typically includes a half-day District program, followed by meetings and work in their respective schools and classrooms. For me, this year's District program was particularly memorable and poignant.

In preparation for this time, we solicited input from staff on topics of importance to them. It was clear that the staff wanted something engaging, interactive, and linked to some new – preferably technology-related – learning. To that end, we began the program with a fast-frame silent movie that, in the course of seven minutes, captured much of the District summer work, training, summer school, and more.

The segment of the film focusing on Crow Island School's floor project showed the Herculean effort involved in packing up an entire school, removing and replacing over 50,000 square feet of flooring, and moving it all back in, just days prior to school starting. The video also featured District math teachers participating in four days of intensive training over the summer, preparing them to implement the newly adopted District-wide math curriculum on the very first day of school. The film also highlighted the District's summer school, **Adventures in Learning**, which realized its largest enrollment in many years, with hundreds of students deeply engaged in active and experiential learning.

Our theme for the morning's program was, *"We Really Miss You When You're Gone"* (taking some artistic liberty with Anna Kendrick's "Cup" song lyrics). So, the next video consisted of clips submitted by staff, highlighting some of their summer activities. These included travel, classes, experiences reconnecting with the world, and time enjoying family and friends. In each of the vignettes, staff shared key learnings and powerful testaments of how these experiences would be brought back and incorporated into student learning and classroom instruction.

Technology figured prominently throughout the morning, including a cameo appearance by Siri, the iPhone goddess herself, who helped facilitate portions of the program and introduce new staff members. As many of you know, one of the major objectives of our Strategic Plan this year is to pilot a One-to-One Mobile Learning Initiative involving several classrooms across the District. To that end, teachers also attended two breakout sessions to better understand and harness the power

of technology for student learning in their classrooms. Topics of these sessions included real-life probability graphing; NASA augmented reality; using Google Drive to capture and organize student work; and creating art with "found" technology tools.

As I reflect back on this experience, I am reminded again and again of the many reasons I have been, and continue to be, impressed by the staff's commitment to our students and their families. It is evident in all we do that powerful personal and professional connections are being made that help our students grow and thrive in a dynamic and caring environment. Moreover, our staff's eagerness toward their own learning is contagious, and serves as a solid foundation for instilling this passion for knowledge and understanding in others.

I look forward to another wonderful year working alongside our amazing students, staff, parents, and community. So, with that: Welcome to the 2013–2014 school year! I am convinced it will be a year of continued learning, progress, and endless student success!

In service,

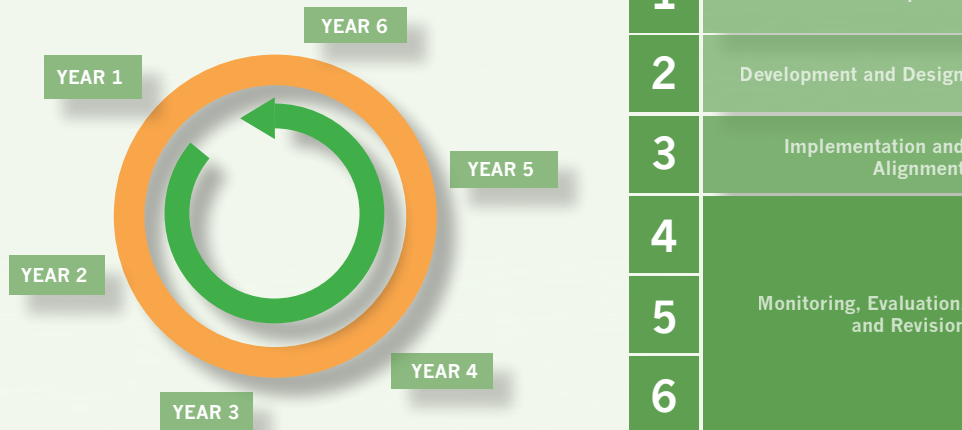
Dr. Thomas Hagerman
Superintendent



Students from Crow Island School reconnect with friends on the first day of school. Jungle gyms were introduced to Winnetka by Carleton Washburne who recognized that it is important to support the intellectual, emotional, and physical growth of children.

Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment in 2013–2014

Curriculum Review Cycle



All of the District's curricula are reviewed on a six-year cycle. Each year has clearly defined goals and products that incorporate new content area standards and current educational research on highly effectively teaching and learning practices that support student achievement.

The first year of the curriculum review cycle is devoted to research and development. This involves an audit of current practice, development of beliefs and a mission statement, a review of the content area learning standards, and best instructional practices.

Student learning progressions are also established from kindergarten through eighth grade. Moreover, overarching essential questions and understandings are created to anchor the curriculum and provide consistency and alignment as a child progresses from grade to grade.

The second year of the curriculum review cycle involves organizing the learning standards into units of study. Using the Understanding by Design (UbD) curriculum framework, careful attention is paid to the alignment of the learning standards to insure that there is a smooth transition from one grade to the next. Units are written to clearly identify KUDs (what students should know, understand, and be able to do) as a result of each learning experience.

The third year of the curriculum review cycle involves the implementation of the revised curriculum units in the classroom and, when appropriate, the introduction of new course materials. Teachers engage in professional development that allows an in-depth study of strategies and materials, as well as opportunities to collaborate in grade-level teams. As a result of these collaborations, teacher teams build techniques to further differentiate delivery of instruction to appropriately challenge all learners.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth year of the curriculum review cycle involves continuing evaluation of the revised curriculum to ensure consistency and alignment in its delivery, identify supplementary learning resources, and examine student performance outcomes in relation to the established learning goals of the curricular units.

During the 2013–2014 school year the District will initiate year one of the curriculum review process for Science, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and Kinetic Wellness/Health. English Language Arts will enter year two of the cycle in preparation for a 2014–2015 implementation. After a comprehensive review, the revised Math curriculum, which is aligned to the Common Core State Standards for Math (CCSS-M), will be implemented. The World Language team will continue to implement its program redesign this fall. Committees will report on progress towards the goals related to their particular curriculum throughout the year.

Year One: Research and Development

Science

The Science Curriculum Committee will utilize *A Framework for K-12 Science Education: Practices, Crosscutting Concepts, and Core Ideas* published by the National Research Council of the National Academies to delve into the components of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) as it relates to best



Students at Greeley School get comfortable with their surroundings and some new reading material on the first day of class.

Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment in 2013–2014 (cont.)

practices in science education. The framework's review of current research, with an eye on college and career readiness, is the foundation for the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The Framework and the NGSS will anchor the science curriculum development.

Kinetic Wellness/Health

The District's comprehensive Kinetic Wellness/Health Program provides daily, developmentally appropriate experiences designed to maintain physical fitness, develop team-building skills, and promote health and well-being. The Kinetic Wellness/Health team will examine new research in child and adolescent health and physical development to inform the review of their curriculum.

Social Emotional Learning

The Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Committee includes representatives from all five schools, all grade levels, and the Administrative team. Unlike content area reviews, this process will encompass all staff members who share responsibility for teaching this content.

Year Two: Development and Design

English Language Arts

The Language Arts Committee is in the process of finalizing the KUDs for writing units of study in grades K-8. The committee completed a revision of the District Literacy Framework and developed a K-8 writing scope and sequence that is horizontally and vertically aligned utilizing process writing. Columbia University's Teachers College Reading and Writing Project professional resources have supported the research and development of the writing units.

Year Three: Implementation and Alignment

Math

The Math Committee began their work in 2011–2012. The 25 team members worked with a consultant, surveyed parents, and updated the Board regularly throughout the review process. Their work was scheduled to coincide with the introduction of the Common Core State Standards–Mathematics (CCSS–M). In preparation for year three, when the revised math curriculum is introduced, teachers took part in either a four-day training workshop, or an online training course last summer. New K–5 instructional materials, *Investigations in Number, Data and Space*, will support the revised math curriculum in the District's three elementary schools. The materials selection process, including a pilot, for grades 6–8 is scheduled for this year.

World Language

After extensive research and community input, the World Language program shifted from an exploratory model to a proficiency model for language acquisition. As part of a multi-year program, the revised curriculum was phased in over two years and the program will now be entering into a year of implementation and alignment. The revised curriculum incorporates the five strands of the National Standards: Communication, Communities, Comparisons, Connections, and Cultures. World Language teachers engaged in extensive professional development so they can best utilize the Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) method.

Years Four, Five, & Six: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Revision

Fine Arts

The Fine Arts Department will implement cornerstone assessments this school year to measure the independent transfer of student learning within each of its disciplines. Students will engage in performance tasks that demonstrate the learning established in the curricular goals.

Social Studies

Social Studies is currently in year six of its review process, dedicated to monitoring, reviewing, and revising the curriculum. In preparation for the upcoming review, the District will review the process and progress related to the development of national standards for social studies.



Principal Daniel Ryan greets students on the first day of school at Hubbard Woods School.

Pilot for One-to-One Mobile Learning Initiative Set to Go Live



A student at The Skokie School records audio for an environmental inquiry project he created on the iPad.

The 2013–2014 school year brings an innovative pilot program to The Winnetka Public Schools. Introduction of the District’s One-to-One Mobile Learning Initiative will transform the classroom and the learning experience in profound new ways.

The foundation for the program was built from research and analysis, using input from community, parents, staff, and students to shape recommendations and construct key tenets of the Strategic Plan. Approved at the August 2013 Board meeting, the pilot will provide iPads to roughly 15% of the student population and a representative group of teachers, as the District begins the process of integrating essential twenty-first century digital skills into the regular school day.

An important Board caveat was that the program be introduced in a scalable manner with ample time to analyze, measure, and refine the objectives prior to universal implementation. As a result, a component of the first year of the pilot program will be measurement, observation, and information gathering. One set of standards, codified by the National Education Technology Standards for Students (NETS-S), provides a highly useful set of metrics for gauging student growth and program impact. The NETS-S categories that will be assessed include:

- *Creativity and Innovation*
- *Communication and Collaboration*
- *Research and Information Fluency*
- *Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making*
- *Digital Citizenship*
- *Technology Operations and Concepts*

Surveys will be administered throughout the first year to learn more about the way students are using their iPads to communicate, collaborate, create projects, stay organized, and participate as learners. Focus groups and

classroom observations will be used to gather additional information. These inputs will be used to refine strategies and tactics for subsequent phases of implementation.

At the core of the plan is the conviction that this new technology environment *complement*, not diminish, the progressive practices already in place. The iPads will facilitate hands-on, authentic learning experiences that will place the child at the center of his/her own learning. Some students will be able to take home the iPads and continue their learning at home using the same device, apps, and collaborative system used at school due to the device’s portability.

As importantly, integrating technology into the fabric of our daily teaching is essential for success in the twenty-first century. A recent survey found that more than 80% of school districts use, or plan to use, iPads over the next two years. And, within New Trier Township, all school districts offer some type of one-to-one technology option for students, with New Trier High School expanding their mobile learning program to include all students by the 2014–2015 school year. Finally, a recent Project RED report found that students in one-to-one programs “outperform across all education success measures” compared to students who have less access to technology.

By implementing the pilot stage of the One-to-One Mobile Learning Initiative, The Winnetka Public Schools will maintain its commitment to progressive education using complementary resources that are tailored to our curricular philosophy. This first step will allow us to provide the foundation for a learning environment that will help to redefine progressive education for the twenty-first century, and provide our learners with vital tools necessary to be competitive and succeed in any setting as they move forward.



A Skokie School student puts the finishing touches on an electronic book she has created.

Anatomy of a School Budget

The Winnetka Public Schools District 36, which serves approximately 1,800 students in grades K–8, is funded primarily by local property taxes. The District is responsible for both providing students with a high-quality educational program that prepares them for the future, and with thoughtful stewardship of community tax dollars.

School budgets are planning documents designed to ensure that funds are available to meet the educational needs of District students. Staff continually works to deliver the educational programs as efficiently as possible. This may result in surpluses, or positive ending fund balances. When savings are realized, funds are held in reserve, not spent on discretionary items. A healthy budget reserve extends the time between referenda, ensures cash flow when tax payments are received late, and may be used for unexpected expenses. It is also one of the metrics considered when evaluating the financial health of the District.

Developing and monitoring the District’s budget is a year-round activity, incorporating an array of legal and regulatory mandates. Updates are presented monthly at open Board meetings, where there are multiple opportunities for public comment. In order for the Board to thoughtfully consider community input, comments, or feedback should be received before budget items are placed on the voting agenda. The agenda and budget materials are posted prior to meetings to ensure transparency and compliance with Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) policies.

The Budget Cycle

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
3	4	5		6	7		8	9		1	2

- 1 Tentative Levy Presented and Approved.
- 2 Tax Levy Adopted at Public Hearing.
- 3 Budget Calendar and Preliminary Staffing / Enrollment Report.
- 4 Staffing / Compensation Report.
- 5 Fee and Compensation Recommendations Adopted.
- 6 Draft Budget Prepared.
- 7 Budget refined to reflect updated Revenue and Expenditure projections and Board feedback. Tentative budget approved and placed on public display.
- 8 Budget updated and presented to the Board as a preview.
- 9 Budget approved at Public Hearing and filed with ISBE.

School Budgets Are Different

Public school districts have an obligation to meet the educational, social-emotional, and physical needs of all students. They are also required to fulfill state and federal mandates, which are frequently unfunded; and community expectations, which are reflected in Strategic Planning goals. Regulations designed to ensure sound educational and financial practices place constraints on the District that are quite different from those that businesses and individuals face when developing budgets.

These include the following:

Inconsistent Revenue Stream: Salaries and benefits represent over 65% of District expenditures and are paid both monthly and semi-monthly. The District receives most of its funding twice a year and payment dates are not consistent. Reserves allow the District to maintain cash flow without taking out costly short-term loans.

Expenses Not Tied To CPI: Tax levy increases are linked directly to CPI, yet the District’s largest expenses—salaries and benefits—often increase at a higher rate. Salaries are negotiated long before the CPI is calculated via negotiated, multi-year contracts. Although the District participates in a cooperative that aids in keeping rising insurance costs in check, health care costs are a national concern that cannot be completely controlled at the local level.

Funds Are Not Fungible: By law, the District is obligated to deposit revenues into one of eight funds, or accounts, with specific purposes: Education, Operations, Debt Service, Transportation, Life Safety, Retirement, Tort, and Working Cash. Only certain types of fund-to-fund transfers are permitted, and all transfers are subject to Board approval. Thus, although the District has a healthy reserve, the disbursement of those reserve dollars is limited, by law, to specific funds.

Debt Service: Debt service consumes over 11% of District operating expenses, and is a result of community-supported referenda dedicated to maintaining and upgrading our facilities. In comparison, costs directly related to instruction in our classrooms are just over 43% of our annual budget. In prior years, debt service was kept low by deferring maintenance on District buildings—a practice that is sustainable only in the short term. The Board and Administration are actively exploring options for early retirement of debt, or other ways in which to reduce the local tax burden, while still providing the operating fund balances required to maintain positive bond ratings, and guard against unanticipated expenses.

The first stages of the annual budget cycle for the 2014–2015 school year take place in November. Stay current on the budget cycle by attending Board meetings, or by visiting www.winnetka36.org/district/financial.



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2013–2014 Strategic Plan Goals At a Glance

