

Challenge. Collaborate. Create!

THE 109 WAY

A publication of the sights, sounds, and news
from Deerfield Public Schools District 109



Fall 2024

www.dps109.org



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2nd in State!



Congratulations to Caruso 7th grader Chris B. for finishing second in the state at the IESA Boys Class 3A State Cross Country Meet in October!

Bringing That Special Someone to School

Two very special days are circled on the Kipling Elementary School calendar each year. On 'Special Someone Days,' each student is surprised with a school visit from an important person in their life. The event is a truly collaborative effort between Kipling staff and families.



A Note From The Superintendent

To the 109 community,

As we reflect on the fall months in District 109, I trust that you will be pleased and impressed with our collective work in the communities' schools. Our schools have come alive with the joy of learning as students immerse themselves in exciting opportunities both in and out of the classroom, many of which you will see captured in the pages of this magazine. From hands-on STEM projects to new literary discoveries, our students are growing in ways that ignite their curiosity and enthusiasm. Their energy reminds us of the importance of fostering a love of learning that will benefit them throughout their lives.

This fall, we also deepened our focus on supporting the well-being of our students and families. Recognizing the challenges that anxiety and the ever-evolving digital world can pose, we have launched a campaign to spark community conversations about this important topic. In collaboration with leaders from other public entities in our village, we are working collectively to brainstorm strategies that can benefit families.

Finally, I am excited about the progress we've made on our master facility plan as we continue to envision the future of our schools. This comprehensive effort ensures that our buildings remain welcoming, innovative spaces where teaching and learning can thrive. As we move into 2025, we look forward to engaging with you—our community—to gather input and share updates about this critical work. Thank you for being our partners in making District 109 a place where every student can succeed. We are grateful for your support and look forward to all we will achieve together in the months ahead.

Warm regards,

Michael V. Simeck
Superintendent of Schools



Mr. Simeck & Dr. Eileen Brett, principal of Wilmot, answer questions from curious kindergartners.



Mr. Simeck explains the process of baking a loaf of bread with the Shepard Baking Club.

Training for Their Dream Jobs

International Diplomats

This year, both Shepard and Caruso Middle Schools launched a new club: Junior Model United Nations! With guidance from Deerfield High School students, a comprehensive program was developed to introduce middle schoolers to Model UN procedures. Students enthusiastically

cally embraced the challenge, mastering the art of debate and addressing global issues from the perspectives of their assigned countries. They collaborated with peers from other districts to propose innovative solutions, which were presented and voted on during the competition.



Future Entrepreneurs



Kipling second graders concluded their social studies unit with an exciting hands-on project: creating mini-stores! They explored the world of commerce by visiting other classrooms to buy and sell their handmade items, gaining valuable real-world experience in commercial transactions.



Investigative Journalists

Caruso sixth graders had an incredible opportunity to hear from PJ Randhawa, a reporter from NBC 5 News in Chicago! She provided an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the world of journalism, emphasizing the importance of fact-checking every detail and telling stories from diverse perspectives.





Connecting with Our Community

The 109 Community Advisory Council

As a school district dedicated to serving our community, we strive to engage with as many stakeholders as possible. This year, we established a Community Advisory Council, which meets approximately every two months with the superintendent to provide valuable insights. The council helps District 109 assess which initiatives resonate with the community and explore different outreach strategies. Members include representatives from the Villages of Deerfield and Riverwoods, our local state representative, the Park District, the Police Department, District 113, the business community, retired teachers, former school board members, and various faith leaders.



August: Mr. Simeck, President Montgomery, and Mrs. Joyce at the Deerfield Farmers Market.



October: Engaging with the community at the Park District's Halloween Hoopla!



December: Connecting with community members at the Winter Market hosted at the Patty Turner Center.



District 109's Holiday Gift Drive a Huge Success!

While our area is home to many outstanding philanthropic organizations, we must also recognize that some families in our community could use extra support during the holidays. For the fifth consecutive year, families and community members have demonstrated remarkable generosity, purchasing hundreds of gifts to support District 109's Holiday Gift Drive. This initiative, which began in 2020, expanded Wilmot Elementary School's

long-running "Operation Snowflake" into a districtwide effort focused solely on benefiting DPS 109 families. It has become a true "labor of love" for Wilmot Principal Dr. Eileen Brett, who oversees the collection and sorting efforts at her school.

The drive is a monumental team effort, and we extend our deepest gratitude to Dr. Brett, Assistant Principal Beane, Mrs. Chroman, Ms. Ford, and the hundreds of individuals who

have contributed gifts and volunteered their time over the years!



Boxes consume the front hallway of Wilmot Elementary during the sorting process.



Above: The Caruso and Shepard principals address families during a discussion night in October.

Working Together on a Cause

Children today share many similarities with previous generations, yet they are also navigating a world that is vastly different. In late summer, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory on the mental health and well-being of parents nationwide.

This fall, we have encouraged families across District 109 to read *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt. The book examines the significant rise in mental health challenges among today's youth, which Haidt attributes to the "great rewiring" of childhood – largely driven by the widespread adoption of smartphones and social media.

“Our kids can do so much more than we let them. Our culture of fear has kept this truth from us. They are like racehorses stuck in the stable.”

– Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation*

Between July and September, over 200 people attended evening discussion groups held at our schools. These gatherings provided families interested in the book and its themes an opportunity to come together and discuss ways to instill confidence in their children while reducing their dependence on technology.



Above: Parents and district staff members came together for community discussion events this fall to brainstorm ways to foster independence in kids.

To meet substantial community demand, we also donated several copies of the book to the Deerfield Public Library and established little lending libraries at several of our schools.

In late October, we hosted a screening of the documentary *Chasing Childhood*, a film that “explores how free play and independence have all but disappeared from kids’ lives, replaced by relentless perfectionism.”



Above: Mr. Simeck presents donated books to Amy Falasz-Peterson, Director of the Deerfield Public Library.

The four recommendations from the book are:

- **No smartphones before high school**
- **No social media before age 16**
- **Phone-free schools**
- **More independence, free play and responsibility in the real world**

As we move into the spring, we plan to continue the conversation by hosting additional school-based events. We are also exploring programs such as the “Let Grow Project,” which encourages tasks and projects that children can complete at home to boost their independence.



Above: District 109 principals and assistant principals attend the *Chasing Childhood* screening.

A Special Birthday Celebration for a Longtime Teacher

Shepard Middle School welcomed a very special guest this fall as former students, friends, and family gathered to celebrate “Coach” Tony Kambich’s



Above: Student journalists from SMS News conduct a sit-down interview with Mr. Kambich.

90th birthday in the building where he worked for decades. Tony, a cherished physical education teacher in District 109 starting in the 1960s, left an indelible mark on generations of students.

The birthday celebration, organized by several of Mr. Kambich’s former students, featured heartfelt remarks from Superintendent Simeck, Deerfield Mayor Dan Shapiro, and others. “We’re in our 70s now, but the lessons Coach Kambich taught us have stayed with us all these years,” said Randy Berning, one of Tony’s former students. “He instilled in us an early appreciation for the benefits of



exercise, both physically and mentally. For some of us, his encouragement went even further, inspiring us to achieve more than we ever thought possible.”

What’s Good in 109!



Each month during the school year, students have the opportunity to showcase something they are working on to our Board of Education in a segment we call What’s Good in 109! Pictured above, students who helped organize the South Park election highlighted above attended the next board meeting to present their vision. Pictured below: four enthusiastic Wilmot kindergartners participated in a Q&A with their



principal and the superintendent, bringing some tough questions for the board!



Before We Were Spartans...

Shepard Junior High School teams were nicknamed the Rams! Pictured on the left are Coach Kambich and the 1964 sub-urban champion Shepard Rams football team. Randy Berning, mentioned above, was a wide receiver and wore #2.

Practicing Democracy

The 2024 presidential election offered a wonderful learning opportunity for students. Both of our middle schools held student-run mock elections, where students handed out ballots, directed peers to individual voting booths, submitted votes into a ballot box, and proudly handed out the eagerly anticipated “I Voted” stickers.

South Park Elementary students participated in their own election, voting to decide which philanthropy would receive their support. As part of the experience, students practiced essential voting etiquette: waiting patiently in line, respecting the privacy of others’ choices, and refraining from discussing their votes. To make the event even more special, they chose from three custom “I Voted” stickers, each creatively designed by 3rd, 4th, and 5th-grade students.



DPS 109 Students Win Global Title!

DPS 109 continued its long tradition of success in the Destination Imagination competition as a group of Walden 5th graders (now Shepard 6th graders) were named Global Champions! The team, known as the “Obnoxiously Corny Ducks,” earned their title in the Service Learning category.



Their project involved partnering with CATCH (Community Action Together for Children’s Health) to raise funds to create and distribute “calm kits” to Walden students, helping them manage stress. The team secured first place out of 47 teams representing six countries! In addition to their victory, the team

also received a DaVinci Award for their innovative presentation, which used weather-themed special effects to illustrate complex emotions as a character traveled through a fantasy setting. One judge praised the team, writing: “The



Above: The winning Destination Imagination team and their coaches were honored at a Village of Deerfield Board of Trustees meeting.

team took adventurous risks and meticulously choreographed their movements to ensure we were immersed in their world and part of the destination of support and care.”



DPS 109 has a proud history of involvement and success in Destination Imagination. Since 2008, DPS 109 teams have earned 8 global titles, 6 second-place finishes, and 3 third-place finishes.

Planning For The Future

Over the past two school years, DPS 109 has been engaged in a master facility planning process to evaluate both the short- and long-term needs of our schools. Our goal is to ensure that our facilities provide the best possible educational environments for our community. With buildings constructed between the 1940s and 1960s, it’s essential to make decisions that are both practical and forward-thinking.

As shown in the graphic on the right, DPS 109 has already made significant progress in updating and renovating spaces in our middle schools. Both schools now feature new science labs, modernized library spaces, and will soon benefit from expanded fine arts and physical education facilities.

As we move forward and focus on our elementary schools, there will be important discussions with the community about the best path forward—whether through renovations or the replacement of elementary buildings.

To stay informed and involved, visit our dedicated Master Facility Plan webpage at dps109.org. Click “Master Facility Plan” at the top of the homepage to follow along with updates and next steps.

Investing in Our Schools

2015-2016: New MS Science Labs

2018: Renovated Libraries

2019: New MS Cafeterias

2022: Caruso Auditorium Renovation

2025: Expansion of Fine Arts & PE Space at Shepard



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The DPS109 Board of Education

Listed from left to right:

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Mrs. Kate Joyce
Mrs. Kelly Jakymiw, Secretary
Mrs. Sari Montgomery, President
Mr. Ryan Kuo, Vice President
Mrs. Rosie Bonar
Mr. Andrew Morrison

Kindergarten Sign-Up Starts in January!

Starting kindergarten is a BIG DEAL! Visit dps109.org and navigate to "Registration & Residency" to begin gathering the necessary documents and filling out your application.

Then, join us on Friday, January 31, at the District Office to complete your registration and capture a photo op, along with a keepsake, for your new kindergartner!



Caruso Middle School
1801 Montgomery Road



Shepard Middle School
440 Grove Avenue



Kipling Elementary School
700 Kipling Place



South Park Elementary School
1421 Hackberry Road



Walden Elementary School
630 Essex Court



Wilmot Elementary School
795 Wilmot Road



Early Learners
1421 Hackberry Road

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