



SUNSET RIDGE

School District 29 Board Newsletter

www.sunsetridge29.net

February 2014

Cultivating a learning community that engages the hearts and minds of students, one child at a time



Dear Sunset Ridge Community Member,

The origins of public education in the United States date back to 17th century colonial America, when schools focused on the socialization of students. The era of progressive education in the 19th century pushed public schools to teach both content knowledge and life skills. John Dewey

posited, "...To prepare [*the student*] for the future life means to give him command of himself; it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities." Looking to the future, the literature on 21st century learning suggests that schools need to address not only the core subject areas but also critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving, life, and technology skills.

Certainly, public schools today provide more than "reading, writing, and arithmetic, taught to the tune of a hickory stick," as my grandfather used to say. In fact, public schools are now mandated to provide instruction and programming in a variety of non-traditional areas such as self-management, social awareness, mental health, human development, sex education, decision-making, and technology. The degree to which these 'nonacademic' aspects of instructional programming exist in a given public school varies greatly across the country.

In District 29, we consider it both a legal and ethical obligation to address the wide variety of educational needs of our students, and build a foundation for them to become productive global citizens of the 21st century. As reflected in our District mission statement, we are committed to developing the hearts and minds of our students and addressing the whole child.

This issue of the *School Board Newsletter* provides a window into some of the many District activities designed to promote the whole child. I hope you enjoy this snapshot, albeit incomplete, of the great opportunities that make District 29 such a special place.

Sincerely,

Ed Stange, Ph.D.

Superintendent of Schools

Crafting a Legacy: A Model for Student Leadership

When Dr. Carey, Sunset Ridge principal, asked for eighth grade volunteers to participate in a Principal's Advisory Council, over a third of the class signed on. Four students represent the class on Student Council. Eighth graders regularly volunteer in lower grade classrooms, the Learning Center, on Safety Patrol, and as section leaders in band, orchestra and choir. They have grown with skill and confidence into the role of facilitators for the activities of their intergrade Communities.

During their final year in District 29, the class of 2014 has truly assumed the mantle of school leaders. They are building the legacy they have been defining for themselves beginning in sixth grade.

Consistent with the District goal of enhancing school climate, social worker Marti von Kluck and the team of sixth grade teachers in 2011 developed a social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum focusing on goal setting, cooperation and interpersonal relationships. Students were encouraged to think about their

Continued on page 5

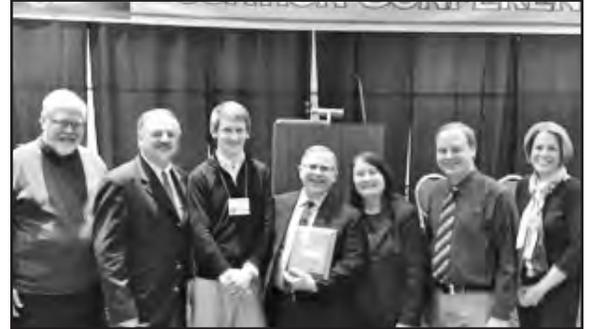


A Middlefork student makes a snow angel on a (relatively) balmy day. Frigid temperatures closed schools throughout the Midwest in January.



Hats Off

Don Golden, Sunset Ridge Band, was awarded the 2014 Mary Hoffman Award of Excellence in music education from the Illinois Music Education Association. The award was presented at the IMEA All-State Conference in January. Mr. Golden was selected to receive this honor for demonstrating “the characteristics of an outstanding music educator” and continued excellence in teaching. Mr. Golden is now in his 14th year at Sunset Ridge. *Right:* Mr. Golden and his wife Val, at center, with colleagues who nominated him for the award.



Mindy Golub, Grade Six Language Art and Social Studies, participated in the 2013 Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Teachers' Program. Ms. Golub was selected from among many applicants for this intensive summer experience. She has used the knowledge, reflections and perceptions gained during the program to help restructure our middle school Holocaust curriculum.

Fifteen District 29 teachers were recognized as outstanding educators of 2013 by the Alliance for Early Childhood. Parents and other educators can honor a teacher for making a difference in the lives of students with a donation to the Teacher Tribute program. The Alliance for Early Childhood is a local community organization that supports the healthy growth and development of children.

Robin Bell, Grade Two
Rachel Berkhof, Grade One
Shelby Cavnar, Spanish
Elaine Dekin, Kindergarten
Mindy Golub, Grade Six
Lynn Horne, Art
Dawn Meziere, Grade Six
Linda Polak, Library and Information Services

Barbara Rosenberg, Grade One
Susan Stonequist, Mathematics
JoAnn Tennenbaum, Grade Four
Steve Timko, Physical Education
Andrew Toniolo, Music
Melinda Zibart, Grade Eight
Robin Zogby, Grade Four

Geography Bee participants included: **Connor Koy**, Grade 4 (1st place), **Matt Cacioppo**, Grade 8 (2nd place), **John Papas Dennerline**, Grade 8 (3rd place), **Jack Mosele**, Grade 8, **Joe Murnane**, Grade 7, **Emily Otto**, Grade 4, **Erika Truong**, Grade 4, **Rachel Truong**, Grade 5, **Jacqueline Turner**, Grade 6, and **Ethan Yee**, Grade 8. Connor moves on to the regional level, in which he competes by written exam.



Spelling Bee participants, (*at left*) included: **Carson Koy**, Grade 8 (1st place), **Grace Jeon**, Grade 5 (2nd place), **Jimmy O'Meara**, Grade 7 (3rd place), **Becca Arneson**, Grade 3, **Daniel Cho**, Grade 4, **Natalie Deeb**, Grade 4, **Emery Engling**, Grade 5, **Erica Epstein**, Grade 4, **Leah Feldman**, Grade 3, **Caroline Kinsella**, Grade 3, **Greta Kropp**, Grade 6, **Max Lestina**, Grade 3, **Joey Macina**, Grade 4, **Jack Mosele**, Grade 8, **Maddux Peterson**, Grade 4, **Abbey Sawtell**, Grade 6, **Adin Simon**, Grade 3 and **Charlie Whittaker**, Grade 4. Carson represented the District at the regional level.

District Welcomes Jennifer Anderson, Director of Technology

Jennifer Anderson joined the District 29 administration as director of technology on December 1, 2013. No stranger to the North Shore, Ms. Anderson began her career in education technology at New Trier High School twelve years ago. More recently, she served as manager of instructional technology and webmaster for Skokie School District 68 and then director of technology in Lincolnwood School District 74.

As director of technology, Ms. Anderson is responsible for electronically supporting the 21st century learning environment of the District. With an academic background in education and technology, she is well suited to this task. “I am an educator with a strong working knowledge of technology,” she explained. “This dual perspective fosters best practice in technology that is driven by educational need.”

Ms. Anderson is a graduate of Juniata College in Pennsylvania,



Jen Anderson

earning a bachelor of arts in education and psychology, and North Park University, where she earned a master of arts in education. She is currently pursuing an Ed.D. in education technology management from Northcentral University in Prescott, Arizona. She expects to complete her doctorate in May of this year.

Ms. Anderson described her

approach as emphasizing people, planning and process. “I spent my first month developing relationships and absorbing information about District operations. I am now gathering data about the processes, projects and goals of various stakeholders in District 29.”

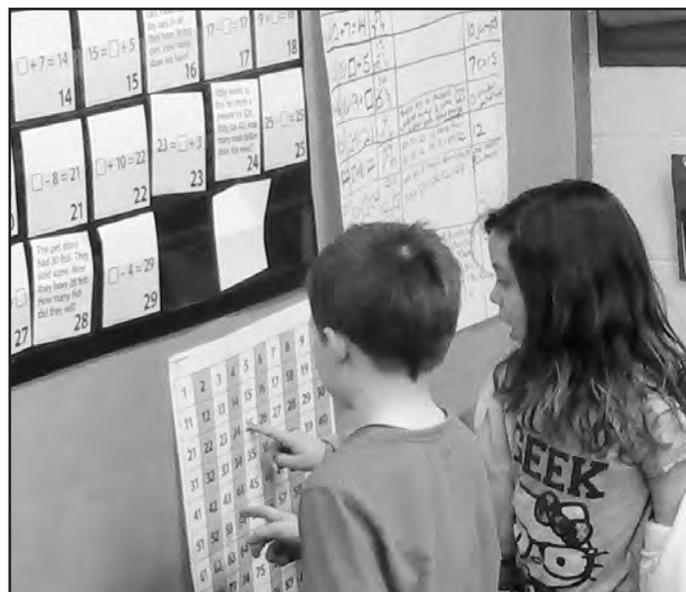
Upon completing the task of identifying the strengths, limitations, and challenges facing our schools, she will develop short- and long-term plans to guide District technology moving forward.

“There is much to do,” Ms. Anderson noted. “With the implementation of Common Core standards, education is increasingly technology based. For example, teachers are increasingly using iPads for communication with and among students and ‘flipped classroom’ lessons. I am excited about the opportunity to create a road map for technology that aligns with the vision, mission and goals of District 29.”

Middlefork Classes Pilot Number Corner

Middlefork students in all kindergarten and first grade classrooms and one section of second grade are piloting Number Corner, a skill-building program that revolves around the classroom calendar. Short daily lessons engage students in a variety of activities and games that reinforce basic skills and offer exposure to broader mathematical concepts. The program is based upon Common Core Standards and complements the existing math curriculum for each grade.

Shown at right: Students use a number grid to solve a numeric problem based on the day of the month. They also learned to solve story problems adding up to the same number and then apply the strategies they had used to problems with differing solutions.



Finance Update

At the Board of Education meeting on December 3rd, Susan Jones and Catrina Payne of Miller Cooper & Co., Ltd. presented the fiscal year (FY) 2013 Audited Annual Financial Report. Ms. Jones reported the District has earned an unqualified audit opinion, meaning the financial statements are fairly stated, and District 29 continues to be in sound and stable financial health. For the 10th straight year, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) awarded a Certificate of Financial Recognition to District 29 in honor of its commitment to financial excellence. This commendation, based on FY 2012 financial statements and the District's 2013 financial profile, represents ISBE's highest category of financial achievement. The complete Annual Financial Report is available on our website at: <http://www.sunsetridge29.net/Page/83>

At the December meeting the Board also conducted the annual hearing and approved the 2013 tax levy in the amount of \$12,595,000. Although

the levy represents a 2.91% increase over the previous year's total extension of \$12,238,975, the tax cap will limit the increase of the 2013 levy to the 2012 Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 1.7% plus the percentage of new construction to the total Equalized Assessed Value (EAV.) With new construction projected to be approximately \$2,000,000 or .44% of the total EAV, the District is anticipating the actual levy extension will be approximately 2.14%. (CPI of 1.7% + .44% = 2.14%)

At the Finance/Facilities Committee meeting on January 28 the Board of Education reviewed July through December financials and the state School Maintenance Grant. The District received a \$50,000 matching grant which will be used to refurbish the main lobby bathrooms and replace the carpeting in the Learning Center. As always, Tom Beerheide, director of business services, and the Board welcome your questions or comments.

PTO Ways and Means Funding Supports District Initiatives

Each year the PTO solicits proposals from teachers and administrators for items that do not fall within the regular school budget. At its December meeting the PTO membership approved six requests. We thank the PTO for its generosity and for the many ways the parents of the PTO support our schools.

- Math Common Core 2-Dimensional/
3-Dimensional Shapes (Kindergarten) \$1,732.74
- Noise Reduction Headphones (Third
Grade Classroom) 590.81
- Field Museum Field Trip (Third Grade) 782.00
- Parts to Build 1 Computer, 2 Laptops,
Robotics Starter Kit (Tech Club) 2,465.00
- 4-Unit Bass Rack (Orchestra) 690.00
- Camcorder & Tripod
(Music Department) 1,947.98
- Total cost of approved proposals \$8,208.53**



Members of the grades 6-7-8 tech club participated in a lunchtime meeting with Hour of Code presenter Bryan Myers. The club received a Ways and Means grant.

Legacy, continued from page 1

strengths and challenges as individuals and as a class, as well as how they wanted to be remembered when they graduate from Sunset Ridge. Reflection was a major component of the twice-weekly lessons, encouraging students to continually assess progress toward their stated goals.

In seventh grade the Class of 2014 continued the focus on leadership through the advisory program. Teachers began the year introducing the Japanese proverb, “Fall down seven times, stand up eight,” and emphasizing responsibility to self and others. Students participated in a series of lessons developed by Dr. Carey and Mrs. von Kluck to practice these concepts. Comprehensive service learning underscored appreciation and respect for differences among people. Highlights of the experience included daylong visits to ethnic communities in Chicago and to Misericordia, during which students

worked alongside residents in various areas of their educational and vocational program.

During the second half of the year, representatives from each advisory began the process of crafting a class legacy statement, upon which everyone agreed: *“The unique, intelligent, determined class of 2014 vows to carve a path of greatness in order to create a more positive and respectful school environment for the entire SRS community.”*



A framed copy (*shown, left*) is displayed in the Learning Center.

The concepts of leadership, legacy, creating an inclusive environment for all, and service to others are reinforced in eighth grade through both the formal curriculum and advisories. As the class of 2014 enters its final semester at Sunset Ridge, the classes of 2015 and 2016 follow a similar sequence of learning for leadership and the examples of their 8th grade peers.



Choice reading is an important aspect of the curriculum at all grade levels, encouraging reading for pleasure as a lifelong pursuit. Six students in Ms. Schrader’s fourth grade class have taken the concept one step further and formed their own book club. They began with a novel called *Dear Aubrey*. The girls wrote their own weekly discussion questions and were joined by Ms. Schrader or Mrs. Polak, librarian, for the conversation. They enjoyed a “tea party” with Dr. Carey as a culminating event. The group recently began a second book.

Spanish Pen Pals Foster Global Friendships

Students in fourth and fifth grade Spanish classes began epistolary friendships with students in Mataro, Spain last October. The schools were introduced by Danny Rosenberg, a teacher at the school and the son of Middlefork teacher Barbara Rosenberg.

The students exchange letters in Spanish and English. The personal connections they are developing with children from another country allow our students to use the Spanish they have learned in a real world experience and to connect with Spanish speakers who are likewise practicing their English. Students will be able to gain genuine knowledge about a culture other than their own and foster friendships across the globe.

School Board Briefs:
A synopsis of highlights from recent meetings

Education Committee: The Gifted/Enrichment Action Committee held a working session at the November Education Committee meeting. Members discussed both the philosophical direction of the program and the logistical implications. The group will continue its work throughout the school year. The Education Committee was also updated on the Everyday Math/Number Corner math pilot, and the “Hour of Code” initiative.

Finances: The District has reviewed its procurement card program and made various adjustments to the number of cards and the amounts authorized for each. The Board approved a new policy, 430.08, *Operational Services-Use of Credit and Procurement Card* and revised policy 430.01 *Operational Services-Purchase Orders* after second readings.

A new lunchroom accounting program has been launched at both schools. The new system allows parents/guardians to monitor the lunchroom purchases of their student(s) and to make secure electronic payments to student lunch accounts. The Administration and PTO have worked together to address the challenges of the new system and have implemented corrective measures where appropriate. The board thanks PTO Treasurer Joe McInerney, Superintendent Ed Stange and Director of Business Services, Tom Beerheide for their work in getting the new system running.

Technology Director: The Board welcomed Jen Anderson as Technology Director. Ms. Anderson

began her work with the District on December 1. We are thrilled to have her join the District and wish her much success!

Special Gifts Theater: District 29 has begun a partnership with the Special Gifts Theater, a local non-profit organization which provides children and teens with a wide array of special needs the opportunity to experience the joy and enrichment of theater arts in an educationally and therapeutically based program. Special Gifts Theater utilizes the Sunset Ridge cafeteria two evenings a week. The board is delighted by this partnership opportunity.

Before/After School Programs: The board continues to monitor the number of students enrolled in the before and after school programs offered by the Northfield Park District to better determine future programming.

2014-2015 School District Calendar: The Board has approved the calendar for the 2014-2015 school year. The calendar was developed with consideration given

to the calendars of New Trier High School and the other sender schools. The calendar can be found on our website at: www.sunsetridge29.net/page/15.

The current school year will extend beyond the June 12 end date listed in the 2013-2014 calendar due to the use of snow days. The new end date will be determined at a future meeting.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. in the Sunset Ridge School Learning Center.

- February 11, 2014: Regular Board of Education
- March 11, 2014: Regular Board of Education
- March 25, 2014: Education Committee
- April 8, 2014: Regular Board of Education

Notes and official meeting minutes are posted on the web site at: www.sunsetridge29.net.

Attention 2010 Sunset Ridge Graduates

Applications for the

Dr. B. Scholarship

are now available on the District 29 website.

If you are a 2010 SRS alumnus, will graduate from any high school in 2014, and plan to attend college in the future, you are eligible to apply for this \$1500 award.

Selection is based upon a demonstrated commitment to scholarship and service, as were instilled by Dr. B. during his tenure.

All applications are due by March 27.

The recipient will be announced the first week of June.

District Tradition of Service Grows

The adage “it is better to give than to receive” is taught and practiced throughout the grades at Middlefork and Sunset Ridge Schools. Beginning in Kindergarten with classroom helpers, students learn that a community thrives on everyone doing their part to create a better environment. First graders do chores to raise money for charities in lieu of holiday gifts for their teachers. Second and third grade members of Dedicated Dolphins plan service projects throughout the year to benefit the school and local community. Intergrade Play Pods emphasize the greater good through activities such as helping clean the lunchroom and raising awareness of recycling. All grades at Middlefork provide monthly lunches for homeless people and gather gifts for families in need through the Districtwide Northwestern Settlement House (NWSH) project.

Fourth graders at Sunset Ridge accompany the many boxes of gifts to the Settlement House and



make holiday stockings of candy and toys (*shown, left*) for the children of the recipients. They also learn about the purpose of the Settlement House and its value to the community.

New this year, students in fifth grade participated in a day of service through Chicago Cares, an organization that coordinates engagement in meaningful service throughout Chicago. As one student commented after the experience, “I think we can make a difference one tiny step at a time by making one simple act of kindness, by donating our time, money, books, anything to help.”

As described in the Legacy article beginning on page 1, sixth grade is the beginning of a three-year focus on leadership within the school community and beyond. Each year, sixth grade students read to younger children at Middlefork and in the Chicago area. In addition to their upcoming

Misericordia service day and candy sale fundraiser, seventh grade advisories this year are volunteering during recess to shelve books in the Learning Center (*shown below*).



Eighth grade dedicated a day to service in early December. Historically, junior high students have collected money to shop for gifts for their assigned families at the NWSH. The class decided they wanted to do more for others on shopping day and approached the Volunteer Center for ideas.

The students ultimately chose seven craft projects to benefit area charities in time for the holidays. Projects ranged from no-sew blankets for the Night Ministry (*shown below*) to ABC books for the Stephen Foster Reading Center and dog toys for Orphans of the Storm. After a quick lunch, the day concluded with the shopping trip. Commenting on the day, Anna F. described, “Seeing our grade do all this and thinking someone is going to appreciate us for doing it, I felt really good about it.”





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- Doug Warshauer
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- Mary Frances Greene, Ed.D., Middlefork
Principal, Associate Superintendent, 881-9505
- Jen Anderson, Director of Technology
881-9450
- Tom Beerheide, Director of Business Services
881-9457
- Shelley Carey, Ed.D, Sunset Ridge Principal,
881-9472
- Emily Dunham, Director of Student Services,
881-9453

Marti von Kluck
Editor

District 29 website
www.sunsetridge29.net

KINDERGARTEN

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Students dressed in their holiday finest for the Kindergarten Winter Sing in December. Holiday concerts throughout the grade levels are beloved traditions at Middlefork and Sunset Ridge Schools.

Important reminder: Resident children who will be five years of age by September 1, 2014, should register for 2014-2015 kindergarten. If you have an eligible child whom you have not yet registered, please contact the Middlefork School office, 881-9500, as soon as possible. Early determination of enrollment figures is critical as the District plans for the new school year.