

## A Message from the Board President

*Mr. Nick Fera*

Even as the schools have now emptied out and the year is complete, much effort goes into the summer months to wind down from the previous year and begin planning for the 2010-2011 school year.

This summer the Board of Education will be busy reviewing and analyzing information that impacts our strategic planning efforts. First, the Board Of Education has already started reviewing the results of our District 101 parent survey. More than 400 families responded to the survey. We sincerely appreciate the time everyone took to provide us with the feedback we need to help make better decisions about the future of education in Western Springs.

Early analysis of the data and comments suggests wide ranging views of many topics. In fact, in some cases there are complete polar opinions coming from the community about the effectiveness of certain initiatives, the level of emphasis placed on certain goals, or the understanding of certain programs in our District. While we expect there to be a range of "opinion" in the community, we also recognize that it means we won't please everyone. Thus, our goals are focused on our mission to make District 101 "a place where children thrive."

With that in mind, we take this information and try and synthesize those views into important topic areas that directly relate to our strategic planning efforts, and then discuss and/or make adjustments to our plans based on the feedback and our discussions. For instance, the adoption of Spanish at the elementary level is an example of feedback from a recent survey that initiated a change in the District. We haven't yet fully digested the current survey responses, but there is plenty of feedback around Social Emotional Learning and Student Testing that is likely to influence our focus and/or communication over the coming years. Stay tuned.

Another example of information the Board of Education will consider is the annual building reviews presented by each Principal. These reviews are very helpful in gauging the results at each building relative to their annual goals and the lessons learned in implementing these plans. This is key, objective feedback that helps the Board of Education better understand the activities at a building level and how our

strategic initiatives are making a difference in the education of all students. Together, this information helps present a 360-degree view of each building and the District by taking in feedback and data from the community, staff, administrators, as well as the results of student performance to guide the Board of Education in setting direction.

Beyond the analysis above, the Board of Education and the Superintendent will review the fiscal year budget in August and then finalize that in September. Regardless of the economic conditions, this is an important annual process that helps the Board of Education take a short and long term view of the financial needs in District 101.

With the heightened sense of interest in spending at a government level, both national and local, on the following pages of this newsletter Dr. Barnhart provides a "State of the District" view. In this he outlines not only our challenges as we see them over the coming years, but our relative stability in teaching and resources as compared to many districts around the nation. A delicate balance of financial restraint and educational investment has always been sought by this and previous Boards of Education. This approach has lead to a more stable financial picture for our District, and an ability to more ably weather the natural economic cycles that impact us all.

Finally, over the summer the District will continue to invest time in reviewing our policies and initiatives around Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Bullying. The past year has certainly brought many changes to how we define bullying, to how we handle bullying, to how the children actually follow the rules of "being respectful to their fellow students." It's clear that we as a District and a community still have a long way to go to eliminate bullying. The Board of Education is committed to working with administrators, staff, and parents to recognize this hurtful behavior, and eliminate it altogether.

These are just a few of the many issues that the Board of Education and administrative staff in District 101 will be discussing over the summer months. On behalf of all of the members of District 101's Board of Education, we hope you have a fun and safe summer break.

# Superintendent Report

*Dr. Brian Barnhart*

## State of District 101 Letter to the Western Springs Community

As you have followed the news of the past several months, it is impossible to be anything but inundated about the impact that the broader economy is having on school districts across the country and across Illinois. Nearly every day, there is another story in our area newspapers regarding budget cuts, budget shortfalls, impending teacher layoffs, cuts to student services, local and State taxes, and just about every other financial aspect of our schools.

The Board of Education and I have collectively felt that clear communication to our residents as to the status of District 101 in each of these areas is vital, and never more important than the present. While we had hoped to give a more definitive status-update and long-term outlook following the State's release of the FY 2011 education budget, we felt that this communication could wait no longer. Given that fact, I hope you will find the following information useful, clear, important, and comprehensive with regards to the most pertinent aspects of the state of District 101 today, both financially and qualitatively.

### *History*

The recent history of District 101 from a financial standpoint is important in knowing, more thoroughly, what the future holds for our schools and community. In April of 2003, the voters of our community approved, by a 2-to-1 margin, an Education Fund rate issue, which increased annual revenue from local taxes by a relatively-modest \$1.6 million. Prior to this election, a promise was made to the voters of Western Springs that no additional fund increases would be needed for a minimum of six years, with hopes that this duration could reach ten years. We are pleased to report that, just following our seven year anniversary of the passage of this referendum question, we look cautiously optimistically to the future in believing we will meet, and likely exceed, even the most positive of expectations for extending the life of these funds to, and beyond, that ten year window.

Since the passage of this rate increase locally, State funds to District 101 have been cut drastically, from a high of nearly \$1.8 million in fiscal year 2005 to just under one million dollars in fiscal 2009. Also since 2003, overall financial and student performance data have improved, while subjective ratings have also noted the strong partnership and mutual support which exists between the residents of our Village and School District 101. Consider:

- Since 2003, District 101 has been ranked in the top fifteen school districts in the State every year (out of nearly 800 districts), and in the top ten performing districts in five of those seven years, with a 2006 ranking of number four in the State.

- In FY 2009, when District 101 was ranked as the ninth highest performing district in the State, our average per pupil spending (the generally-agreed measure of the relative cost to educate a student) was 15.6% below that of the average district in the State and 30.1% below the spending of the other nine districts that made of the top ten (as ranked by SchoolSearch, Inc.).
- Since 2003, District 101 has received the Illinois State Board of Education's highest rating (Commended) for fiscal management (source: ISBE Annual Financial Profile).
- In 2010, Moody's upgraded District 101's financial rating from A1 to Aa2.
- Since 2003, School District 101 has not run a single operational-deficit in any fiscal year.
- Since the passage of the 2003 referendum, nearly \$10 million in building renovations have been completed, as proposed in our planning meetings prior to the ballot question.
- The Equalized Assessed Value (measure of property wealth) in the Village of Western Springs has grown from \$236 million in 2002 to nearly \$600 million in 2010, growth of nearly 254%. District 101's ability to access that growth in local tax revenue is limited by the Consumer Price Index annually, which has ranged from .1% to 4.1% over this same period.
- Funding sources to District 101 vary, year-to-year, but in FY 2009, we received nearly 91% of all funds from local sources, 8% from State sources, and less than 1% from Federal sources.

### *The Next Five Years*

While District 101 has consistently watched the community's financial resources closely, as indicated by our annual ranking in the bottom third of statewide Districts' per pupil expenditures, significant work has already been put forth to assure that the appropriate balance between quality student services and fiscal responsibility continues into the future.

### *Facilities*

Facility needs in support of the educational process are an on-going topic of study, projection, and analysis across the District by the Board of Education. Although there are presently two "larger" classes in the system right now which require accommodations in space (additional classroom) or personnel (teaching assistants for larger class sizes), for the most part it appears that our present facility capacity will appropriately meet the needs of the classes of our community in the foreseeable future. Smaller entering kindergarten classes for the past three consecutive years (student enrollment totals below 160 students for the entering kindergarten classes in 2008-2010) support long-term demographic and enrollment studies contracted by the Township which project flat- to slightly-declining enrollment in the District for the next decade.

While space issues associated with providing appropriate small-group instruction, fine arts instruction, etc. continue to be considered, these future enrollment projections provide the community a level of security that our present four buildings and present boundary configuration should remain constant for the foreseeable future. As well, this fact provides the community assurances that significant costs associated with building expansions/additions are unlikely in the near future.

### **Financial Forecasts – Next Five Years**

While the status of State support of our schools continues to be an uncertain issue at best, even moving into the upcoming school year, multi-year financial projections show that the District will have fund balances in place which should allow us to weather anticipated cuts in these revenues. For the 2010-11 school year, we are budgeting for a 20% reduction in General State Aid – a figure that could fall or even possibly climb substantially, given certain initiatives still alive in the State Legislature.

While the State revenue shortfall provides a major unknown that will require careful navigation locally, another issue which is a bit more of a “known” provides another key planning issue moving into next year. Our collective bargaining agreement with the Western Springs Education Association – our local teachers’ union – expires at the end of the 2010-11 school year. Negotiations for a new agreement will begin in early-winter, with hopes for an appropriate and balanced agreement between the Board and teachers. We have a long-standing positive and professional relationship, and understand the importance of coming to an agreement which is both fair to our excellent teachers, yet cognizant of and responsible to present budgetary realities.

Today, fund balances for the end of the 2010 fiscal year should approximate fifty per cent of our annual operating budget – a ratio that is recommended for school districts, as intra-year balances drop dramatically over the course of the year due to the periodic influxes of funds associated with local real estate taxes. Over the course of the next five years, financial planning which is consistent with that put in place early in the decade, has the District whittling fund balances to approximately 35% of total operating budget – an operating threshold which then places a referendum question into consideration.

A key operating factor underlying all of this planning is control of the expenditure side of our budget. As an example, the projected FY 2011 budget will be approximately 3% less than the just-completed FY 2010 budget. Spending controls are a primary focus of the Board moving forward, as it has been for many years.

### **Services to Students**

While Board and administrative team members are obviously looking closely at every budget line within our control, there is a commitment at every level to assure that student learning and social-emotional needs continue to be our first and primary focus. While “belt-tightening” might be the best way to describe the fiscal management underway, these measures will not involve service reduction for students. While teacher layoffs and cuts have become the “norm” across our area and State, teacher workforce numbers in District 101 will be nearly identical in 2010-11 as they were in 2009-10. Teacher assistants - key personnel for students with special needs and larger classroom environments – continue to be in place, and other qualitative aspects of our delivery system which directly impact students will remain in place. Finally, policies and procedures associated with class size will be consistent with changes made in these areas back in 2003. It is our hope – and belief – that the work being done today to assure that our budget is consistent with the broader economic climate will deliver no discernable differences from past years for students in their everyday experiences moving forward.

### **Summary**

It is always a challenge for a Board of Education to balance the needs of our students from an academic and social-emotional standpoint with the supporting, yet sometimes conflicting, needs of the broader community from a fiscal management perspective. However, from a broad and objective set of criteria, we believe that District 101 continues to meet these multiple benchmarks in a positive way. Objectively, our students continue to perform as well as nearly any student group across the State, at a substantially lower cost for local taxpayers than costs from other high- and mid-level performing communities. Our fiscal-management rating, from the State Board of Education and Moody’s, is strong and looks to be so for the foreseeable future. Finally, as other school districts and communities are being forced to make dramatic changes to the educational experience for their students, we believe next year – and the next several years – should be very familiar, similar, and positive for our students, parents, and families.

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## **McClure Junior High Nominated for National Blue Ribbon Schools Award**

McClure Junior High School has been nominated by the Illinois State Board of Education for the nation’s most prestigious education award, the National Blue Ribbon School Award.

Annually, less than 400 schools across the United States are nominated for and receive this award, which recognizes schools for students’ academic performance and schoolwide educational environment in support of this performance, over a multi-year period.

This year, McClure was one of only sixteen public and private schools to be nominated from the State of Illinois to receive this award. As a result, teachers and administrators from the school submitted a battery of information regarding programming, professional development, student performance, and other issues impacting our junior high students. This information was presented to the national selection committee in March, with all nominated schools scheduled to be informed of the final Blue Ribbon winners for 2010 some time in September.

It is quite an honor simply to be one of the 400 or so schools nationally nominated each year for this award. So, while we await word in September of the final list of Blue Ribbon schools, a big congratulations to the students, staff, administration, and parents who make up (and have made up) the outstanding school community of McClure!

## Student Recognitions

District 101 students continue to shine in a multitude of academic and extracurricular endeavors.

- Eighteen McClure seventh-graders scored 500 or above on the SAT and were recognized for their achievements at the Midwest Academic Talent Search Awards in LaGrange the first week of May. These eighteen students met this high-level of achievement on thirty-two separate SAT sub-tests in the areas of reading, mathematics, and writing. Congratulations!
- Twenty-nine students were recognized by the Board of Education in May for their outstanding work in writing and inclusion in the District 101 Writing Anthology for 2009-10.
- District 101 math teams shone brightly at the April Math Olympiad, as the Grade 4/5 Team placed first, the Grade 6 Team placed second, and the Grade 7/8 Team tied for first place in the team portion of the competition.
- This year's McClure Musical, *Bugsy Malone*, was a resounding success, featuring more than 180 McClure students. This year's production can be added to a list of first-class productions that annually include a great number of talented students.
- Finally, on June 2, District 101 said thank you and good-luck to the Class of 2010. This group of 176 students exited in style at the McClure graduation ceremony held at the Lyons Township High School Field house. Ninety-one members of the Class of 2010 (52%) were recognized for achieving the prestigious Presidential Academic Scholar status – an award generally received by less than 10% of students nationally. Good luck, graduates!

## District 101 Staff

With the completion of the 2009-10 school year, the Board wants to thank the wonderful District 101 staff for another great year. The teachers, administrators, aides, office staff, and custodians of District 101 have all worked together to provide the children of the District the best possible education. We extend our thanks to them for their work on behalf of the Western Springs community.

## Thank You

A special thank you to the following groups for their extra efforts this past school year:

- The Western Springs Foundation for Educational Excellence for their continued support of our students with nearly \$50,000 in grant awards this year to supplement the educational experiences of our students from kindergarten through eighth grade.
- Village True Value Hardware and owner Linda Johnson for their donations in support of the Field Park outdoor education and planting day.

## Open Enrollment

While priority to attend an elementary school in District 101 is given to students residing in neighborhood attendance areas, all parents wishing to request placement in either of District 101's other two elementary schools have this opportunity via the Board of Education's Open Enrollment Policy (#5015).

Parents interested in making such a request should do so in writing to the Superintendent's Office, generally prior to the end of the school year preceding the request. Factors that will be involved in consideration of such a request include the resultant impact on class size, classroom dynamic, and impact on individual students involved. Parents are usually notified of this decision by August 1 annually.

## Special Education and Homeless Services

Students age 3 through 14 who have special education needs that impact their learning are eligible for services from School District 101. If you have questions or concerns about services, please contact Noreen Florek, Special Education Coordinator, at 708-485-2281. Children ages 0 to 3 who have special needs are eligible for early intervention services through local agencies. For additional information, contact Child and Family Connections at 1-888-566-8228. If you, or someone you know, is in need of information regarding the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Programs, please contact Noreen Florek at 708-485-2281.

## Standards Based Report Cards to be Piloted in District 101!

The District 101 Report Card Committee consisting of teachers and administrators have been meeting the past two years to develop new District 101 grade-level and subject area report cards.

Over the past three years teachers and administrators have been creating and revising essential learning targets for each subject area at each grade level. These targets have been created using the Illinois Learning Standards as a resource AND using both concepts and skills we believe students in Western Springs need to master in each grade level and subject area by the time they graduate from McClure. The targets have been distributed to parents the past two years via grade level brochures. The next step in this work has been, and continues to be, creating new assessments and aligning existing assessments to these essential learning targets. This alignment of assessments will indicate whether a student has learned the concepts and skills (essential learning targets) that they have been taught.

Report card grades will be given in two areas, one for academic performance and one for academic behaviors. Examples of academic behaviors are: completing homework or projects on time, participating in class discussions, effort, and interaction and cooperation with classmates. This is not an exhaustive list. These two grades will be indicated on the report card for each of the four nine week grading periods.

Some grade levels and subject areas will pilot report cards second semester this year. The grade levels piloting will be determined in the fall. Once that decision has been made, parents will be notified and additional information will be sent home prior to implementing a new report card second semester.

After report cards have been piloted, the committee will be surveying parents to obtain their thoughts and suggestions for revisions prior to implementing the new report cards throughout the entire district. We look forward to this process and are excited about a new reporting system for students and parents.

# Innovative Uses of Technology in District 101

## Field Park School, Jennifer Rieck and Vickie Antonsen



Thanks to the generosity of WSFEE, learning is taking place in new ways in first grade classrooms at Field Park. A grant written by first grade teacher, Jennifer Rieck and Technology Integration Specialist, Vickie Antonsen, provided six

iPod touch devices to be used to enhance and extend learning in first grade. With an abundance of help from Matt Ryan, IT Support Manager, the teachers learned to purchase apps from the iTunes store, sync the touches and use the devices with students.

The iPod touches are used in numerous ways throughout the classroom day. The students begin by using them during the class's calendar and weather time. The devices are then again used every day during center time. Each iPod touch has a series of reading and math applications that can be differentiated to meet each child's needs. The applications provide reinforcement on math and reading lessons and give a way for students to practice our concepts. With the help of microphones and speakers, students have been able to record their own reading and make goals to improve their fluency. The iPod touches are also used as a whole class as well. By putting it under the document camera, the screen can be displayed on the Starboard. The teacher and students can manipulate the applications so it is not only a reinforcement tool, but also a resource to enhance instruction.

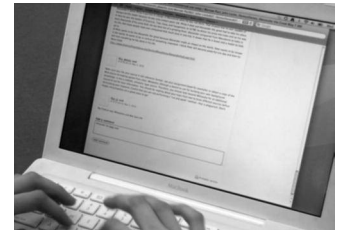
One of the most important attributes of the iPod Touches by far is the ability to motivate all students. The students love to use them and are eager to participate in the activities. The first grade students have taken great care of the devices and have shown the utmost respect and responsibility for them. The students continue to try their very best with them and are excited to enhance their skills in this fun and interactive way.



## McClure Jr. High School, Paula Wolski and Beth Tortorello

Web 2.0 tools are the present and the future in the area of technology. Students must master vital 21st century skills to survive in the world beyond the classroom. They must be able to: research using the Internet, assess information, work collaboratively, communicate effectively, and think critically and creatively. Students in Mrs. Wolski's seventh grade advanced language arts class are using a wiki to have class

discussions regarding the book, *Ender's Game*. We are using the site PBworks, which is a web based software that allows students to share, create, and edit documents through a wiki. A wiki, by definition, is a website that allows collaborative editing of its content and structure by users. Our class wiki is private, which means only people who are invited can see our wiki. We are using our class wiki to have meaningful discussions while learning appropriate and safe social networking skills. To further utilize the wiki students are able to ask each other for help in other subject areas.



To begin the meaningful discussions, Mrs. Wolski will post a question that students need to answer by a given date. Each question posted develops research skills, citing sources, and paraphrasing. Example of one question posted is, *“Finish reading chapters 7-9. Choose one of the above to research. Write a minimum of 8-10 sentences about your topic. Make a connection or a prediction regarding its relevance to the novel (minimum of three sentences). Set your response up by listing parts 1 & 2 of your response separately. Make sure to include the citation information at the bottom of your response.”*

Emma responded by, *“Alexander the Great lived from 356 to 323 B.C. He was the Greek king of Macedon. The empire he created in his short life was one of the largest in ancient history. Using his large army, Alexander conquered many civilizations, including, Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, and Bactria. His conquests lasted ten years. Eventually, Alexander attempted to invade India, but had to turn back do to the near-mutiny of his troops. Alexander died in Babylon in 323 B.C. due to and overdoes in the medicine Hellebore, deadly in large doses. His legend lives on, though, even today. Many military leaders compare themselves to him, and study Alexander's battle strategies.*

*I predict that in the next few chapters, Ender will be seen (by the IF) as "the next Alexander." Ender has the perfect blend of character traits: intelligent, clever, quick-witted, and ruthless, to be an amazing military commander, just as Alexander was. It is essential that Ender must hone his skills as a leader if he or the IF can ever hope he will command an army against the buggers, defeat them, and save the human race. Also, after Alexander died and his reign ended, his empire broke into civil war. This could mean that if Ender dies or does not become a commander, the buggers will wipe out the human race. That is why the IF believes it is essential that Ender is able to remain extraordinary and finish battle school.”*



in greater detail because more people are reading their comments/discussion points.

In a “regular” class discussion, students can only discuss with those sitting in the room. Now, students are enjoying classroom discussions with others from different class periods. The collaboration taking place is

# Western Springs District 101 Calendar of Events

## JULY

- 19 Board of Education Meeting – 7:00 pm  
Field Park Gymnasium

## AUGUST

- 2-13 Summer Band and Orchestra Camp  
10 Forest Hills Early Registration 3:00 to 5:00 pm  
12 McClure Registration – 5:00 to 8:00 pm  
16 McClure Registration – 6:00 to 8:00 pm  
16 Board of Education Meeting – 7:00 pm  
Field Park Gymnasium  
17 Field Park New Family (6:30 pm) and  
Returning Family (7:30 pm) Registration Night  
18 Laidlaw Kindergarten Curriculum Night –  
6:30 to 7:30 pm  
18 McClure Athletic Physicals – 2:30 pm (boys)  
and 3:30 pm (girls)

- 19 Laidlaw Sign-up Night – 5:30 to 8:00 pm  
19 Forest Hills Registration Night – 6-8:00 pm  
19-20 Opening Teacher Institute Days  
23 First Day of School – 11:40 (elem) and 11:52  
(McClure) Dismissal  
24 McClure Sixth-Grade Parent Meeting – 7:00 pm  
25 McClure Seventh-Grade Parent Meeting –  
7:00 pm  
26 McClure Eighth-Grade Parent Meeting – 7:30 pm

### DISTRICT 101 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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