

Since joining D41 in July, I have been getting to know staff members, parents, students, community members, local businesspeople and my colleagues in neighboring districts. I've also been familiarizing myself with where we've been, what's worked well for children, and what choices we have for continued improvement.



One of the most rewarding things for me is beginning to get to know the community—its traditions (like the Chamber Steak Fry and the Park District Art Fair), its landmarks (like the Glen Ellyn water trough and Stacy's Tavern Museum), its recreation facilities (like the Prairie Path and Churchill Woods), its civic groups (like Rotary and the League of Women Voters) and most of all, its residents, who have been welcoming, friendly and helpful.

I'm excited about the year ahead and am looking forward to working together to provide "exceptional learning in a respectful and supportive environment."

District 41 is a K-8 district serving students in parts of Carol Stream, Glendale Heights, Glen Ellyn, Lombard and Wheaton.

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from Superintendent Dr. Ann K. Riebock

STARTING WITH A VISION FOR EXCELLENCE

Speaking as a new member of District 41, it's a special pleasure to welcome new staff members and to reflect on our goals as we begin our work together. While the District has not added any new positions, due to retirements, turnover and reassignments, more than 30 new staff members have joined us this year. In addition to new teachers and support staff, about half of the administrative leadership is new as well. Our induction process helps all new staff members start the year with productive connections to their colleagues and with a personal and practical vision for excellence in their work. They also participate in continuous improvement training which focuses on systemic and measurable improvement that supports the success of the whole district.

BOUNDARIES WILL BE UNDER REVIEW

Why talk about boundaries? To make sure we are making the best use of the space that we have in a way that equitably serves our students. Enrollment growth in the District has been uneven, with high growth at Abraham Lincoln and Churchill, and more stable enrollment at Benjamin Franklin and Forest Glen. This year, District 41 plans to analyze current boundaries and examine various scenarios of adjusting these boundaries for the 2007-2008 school year. It's important to understand that we are talking about the attendance-area boundaries that define the area each elementary school serves; this is distinct from district boundaries, which define the geographic scope of the whole district and which are not under the control of the district. No decisions about boundaries have been made, no proposals have been discussed at this time and no changes will occur this year. This matter will be discussed publicly and any decisions will be made with the help of a citizens' advisory committee. Please watch for more information in future Updates, Board Highlights, E-News and on www.d41.org.

FACILITY PLANNING

By housing about 15% of our enrollment (570 students) in 26 portable classrooms, we've been able to keep our class sizes reasonable. However, portables are not a long-term solution. Our libraries, halls, gyms and bathrooms are crowded, and we are approaching maximum capacity in terms of scheduling music, art, gym, and special services

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and programs. You can expect to see long-range facility plans grow out of our financial planning process and linked to our overall plan to improve student learning.

ASSESSMENT FOR BETTER LEARNING

All Illinois school districts have received *preliminary* Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) results. We have reviewed and corrected our data and are waiting for final results from the state. The school report cards that the state issues later in the fall communicate the results in comparison to results statewide. We look at the ISAT data for meaningful trends as well as to identify specific instructional needs. We also look for opportunities to improve curricular alignment with state academic standards. It's natural to want to compare the 2006 ISAT results with those of 2005, but because the test content and norms were changed, comparing the two years is a bit like apples to oranges. It will be more enlightening to compare District 41's results with those of peer districts. ISAT and other state tests are required assessments; we are also placing increased emphasis on "local" assessments that we consistently deliver and grade across the district. These local assessments give teachers what they need—timely feedback about learning they can use to adjust their instruction so each of their students learns better.

PRE-K AT RISK PROGRAM HELPS CHILDREN SUCCEED

A week before school began, we learned we received another \$60,000 grant to open a fourth half-day Pre-Kindergarten At Risk section, eliminating the waiting list. Research shows that high-quality preschool programs provide lasting benefits to children (and to communities) throughout school and beyond; children who have quality early learning experiences are more likely to graduate from high school and less likely to need more expensive interventions later on. This program targets students age 3-5 who are eligible for early intervention to help make sure that they succeed in school. It is staffed by certified teachers and aides and includes social work and parent education components that help equip families to support academic success at home. We have two half-day sessions at Benjamin Franklin, and two at Churchill. In total, this program serves approximately 80 students and requires two classrooms.

RESOURCE CENTER NOW AT LINCOLN

The Glen Ellyn Resource Center's after-school program has moved from its former location in a church to Abraham Lincoln School. The center, staffed mostly by volunteers, serves about 80 eligible D41 students. Most of these students are English Language Learners; among them are our African students whose families escaped violence in their homeland through the US State Department's help. Many of these students have never attended school before and may never have held a pencil much less tackled academics. Children arrive at the Resource Center after school, wash their hands, have a nutritious snack and get down to work; the little ones work on academic skills in guided groups while the older children do their homework with adult help. The second hour is an extension and enrichment of academics with a focus on literacy. Since many of the participants attend Lincoln, having the Center housed there eliminates time lost in transit and strengthens school connections, being easily accessible to parents and staff members who may want to volunteer or visit.

PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY

D41 has a tradition of involving the community in meaningful ways. In addition to an amazing amount of volunteerism in our schools, community members have served on short-term committees interviewing job candidates, participating in facility planning, and serving on a number of task forces. We are examining the roles that standing community advisory groups might play in our District, such as providing advice and counsel on our financial planning and helping us be more transparent by educating community members on the unique complexities of school funding. Involving community members in this way will build trust and strengthen our community connections overall. The idea of developing one or more standing community advisory bodies is in the planning stages and more information will be available through our regular communication channels.