

DEAR DISTRICT 39 COMMUNITY,

The safety of D39 students and staff remains our top priority. With school tragedies becoming all too frequent, we have again partnered with the Wilmette Police and Fire Departments to identify areas for improvements in school security; you can read more on page 3.

I am happy to report that Kindergarten Enrichment was revisited this year as we explored alternatives for providing a fee-based optional program. You can read more about this on page 3, and I expect a Board decision in June.

We had some great news in March that McKenzie second grade teacher Gwen Faulkner had received a Golden Apple award! She was surprised with the news by the Golden Apple team arriving in her classroom followed by a parade through the school. We are very proud of Gwen's accomplishments!

District 39 loses two key administrators to retirement at the end of this year. I know we will all miss Dr. Denise Thrasher (Student Services) and Gail Buscemi (Business Manager). I am grateful for their years of service and wish them both all the best in their next adventures. You can meet the internal interim administrators who will fill these important roles on page 2.

We are speeding along toward the end of another school year, and I know everyone is ready for a break in routine. As I approach my last year in D39, I must say it is bittersweet. The Board is progressing on the search for the next Superintendent, and you have an update on page 2. Our website will always have the latest developments.

Your partner in education,



Raymond E. Lechner, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39



McKenzie teacher Gwen Faulkner gets her Golden Apple surprise



The Highcrest Wire Choir performs at Romona School's Blue Ribbon celebration earlier this year



Dr. Lechner congratulates WJHS students receiving recognition for academic or athletic accomplishments

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

With two retirements in the District office this year - Dr. Denise Thrasher, Administrator for Student & Special Services and Gail Buscemi, Business Manager - two interim appointments for 2018-19 were announced; Dr. Romy DeCristofaro (right) will assume responsibility for student services and Ellen Crispino (left) will head up the business office.

Dr. DeCristofaro has worked in special education for 15 years. She came to Wilmette as a Learning Behavior Specialist at Central School, and was soon promoted to Special Education Coordinator. She currently serves as D39's Assistant Director of Student & Special Services. She earned two masters' degrees from Northern Illinois University, in Special Education and in Educational Leadership. In 2016, Dr. DeCristofaro earned a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from University of Illinois at Chicago.

Ellen Crispino has served as Controller in District 39 for the last four years. She is responsible for accounting operations and financial reporting, and has streamlined many of the District's business functions. She has also played a key role in developing and managing the District's annual budgets. Prior to coming to Wilmette, Ellen had more than 13 years of experience as a Controller for several technology companies. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Washington University in St. Louis and an MBA from Boston University. She recently received her Chief School Business Official Endorsement from Northern Illinois University in conjunction with the Illinois Association of School Business Officials.



REFLECTIONS: HONORING STAFF



The District held its annual Reflections gathering at Michigan Shores on May 9th. A record turnout of more than 250, including 70 past retirees, came to celebrate this year's honorees. There were 19 retirees this year, each highlighted in a video and with personal remarks from their administrator. In addition, one 25 year employee was honored, along with 23 staffers celebrating 15 years in D39 (pictured above) and 27 reaching their five year anniversary.



Principal Kelly Jackson shares stories from retiree Aleece Ginsburg's years as a Learning Behavior Specialist at WJHS

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

With the retirement of Superintendent Dr. Ray Lechner occurring at the end of the 2018-19 school year, the Board of Education has begun a search for the next leader of District 39. After issuing a Request for Proposals, three search firms were considered, and the Board selected SCHOOL EXEC CONNECT. A timeline for the process has been established and will include surveys of parents and staff as well as focus groups. The search team will be led by Dr. Harry Rossi and Dr. Gary Zabilka. The Board anticipates announcing a new superintendent in December or January. There is a spot on the District's homepage where the Board will post updates on the Superintendent Search as they are available.

SCHOOL SECURITY

As D39 continues to address school security, it partners with local law enforcement throughout the process. There is an in-depth look at each building, identifying areas for improvement. Next, priorities are carefully established and timelines are set. One important item that will be handled very soon is the entrance at Highcrest; construction this summer (see below) will provide a secure entrance, bringing Highcrest in line with the other five buildings. Additional safety improvements are being implemented across the District including security cameras, easier to use door locks, additional student and staff training, improved procedures for student arrival and dismissal, enhanced playground supervision, and tighter controls for visitors. School security is an ongoing concern, and District 39 remains committed to keeping students and staff safe.

SUMMER CONSTRUCTION



Summer construction this year will be Phase 1 of a multi-year plan for Highcrest Middle School to address space issues. With increased enrollment, Highcrest is short classrooms and small meeting spaces. The addition of four classrooms and a secure entry with updated offices will begin as soon as school is out for summer. The work will include offices for the principal and the nurse, a teachers' lounge, updating fire alarm and sprinkler systems, and large space air conditioning. The new entry and offices are scheduled for completion before school opens in August; the additional classrooms will be completed in December 2018.

KINDERGARTEN ENRICHMENT UPDATE

District 39 offers a half-day kindergarten program. Parents have consistently expressed a strong interest in a longer school day for kindergarteners, but action has been limited by space and funding constraints. Through this year's Strategic Plan, the District investigated new ways to provide a sustainable kindergarten enrichment program that would be fee-based and budget friendly. A space study indicated the need for additional classrooms at each elementary school, and two scenarios for kindergarten enrichment were developed - building classrooms or building modular units. Either option allows D39 to continue offering half day kindergarten, but adds a kindergarten enrichment opportunity for interested families. Surveys of parents (Early Childhood - 4th grade) indicated a willingness to pay tuition and a preference for building classrooms. Detailed reports were presented to the Board of Education in March, April, and May (available online under the Board tab). The Board will be discussing and voting on these options at its June 18th meeting.





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POSTAL PATRON LOCAL

DISTRICT 39 EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION UPDATE

We started 2018 with more than 200 participating in Trivia Night at the Masonic Lodge. Along with the traditional costume contest, raffle, and Heads or Tails game, this year had a photo booth, live auction, and spelling bee.



Trivia Night's Mad Men theme brought out some great costumes

WJHS Science Olympiad students displayed their learnings and creations at an Open House in February. Everyone was amazed with students' work and impressed with what Science Olympiad courses offer.

The Foundation hosted a new event in April with an interactive movie showing of the beloved film classic "The Princess Bride." Attendees slapped their foreheads each time "inconceivable" was uttered, ate a chocolate kiss when the protagonists finally kissed, etc. Plus, a costume contest brought out various interpretations of the classic characters. This event was made possible with the generous partnership of The Wilmette Theatre.

As part of Math In The Real World, Dan Malmel, D39 parent and Nielsen SVP/Sales Director US Media, spoke with WJHS

students in April about how he uses math in his job. He illustrated Nielsen's media ratings system and how it affects programming and advertising in TV, radio, movies, YouTube, and video games.

Three Gripp Grants were awarded this spring, totalling \$14,031. Overall the D39 Educational Foundation had a very robust year awarding nine grants for a total of \$25,164! At WJHS, Dr. Peter Ower was granted 24 moticams to enhance the 7th grade science curriculum. These special cameras are mounted to lab microscopes. Connie Clark, Highcrest related arts teacher, was awarded a grant to purchase Raspberry Pi coding boards for her Introduction to Computational Thinking classes. These provide differentiated instruction for students' varying coding skill levels. PASS39 parent advisory committee president, Betsy Crosswhite, was granted funds to purchase multi-sensory equipment for comprehensive needs classroom areas in all D39 schools. The elementary schools will each receive two bubble water tubes that help calm and re-center students through soothing sounds and soft lights. Highcrest and WJHS will each receive a back-lit LED marble wall panel to assist students in their efforts to calm themselves.

Please consider D39 Educational Foundation Teacher Appreciation Certificates as a way to thank a teacher. For \$39, the teacher will receive a special certificate acknowledging your gift as well as a brick on our website's virtual Wall of Honor. Visit www.d39foundation.org/make-donation/certificates/appreciation-certificates/

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We are interested in your ideas, feedback, and suggestions, whether or not you have children in our schools. Find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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