

THE DISTRICT 21 Author



Enhancing Community Partnership through Dialog

The Newsletter of School District 21

Fall 2008

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Letter from Dr. Gary Mical

Last Chance to Attend Our State of the Schools Event

Each fall, District 21 invites all parents and the entire community to attend our State of the Schools events. I instituted these forums when I came to the district seven years ago to provide information for the referendum that was being considered. They have evolved into an annual opportunity for the community to learn about School District 21.

Two meetings have already taken place, where we invited parents of Holmes' and London's middle school and their feeder schools to that site for their convenience. I want to note that while we use the middle schools as anchors, all parents and other community members are welcome at these meetings.

Each State of the Schools event begins with a video presentation that highlights some of the good things about District 21. At these sessions, parents learned more

about our Professional Learning Community, academic performance and a brief overview of finances.

Breakout sessions followed. (See list on page 8) Parents choose among user-friendly presentations by staff members who give them a better understanding of areas they are most interested in, as well as a chance to ask questions.

Each State of the Schools event includes performances by student music groups. It's an interesting and informative evening, and we always have good parent participation. Be sure to join us at our last session at Cooper Middle School on December 3 at 6:45 p.m. to learn more about District 21.

State of the Schools Events Calendar

**Last Date to Attend:
December 3**

Cooper Middle School (with feeder schools Kilmer, Longfellow & Poe)

Open to the Community



Back Row (L-R): Rich Rosen, Phil Pritzker, Dr. Gary Mical (Superintendent), Bill Harrison (President), Arlen S. Gould (Vice-President)
 Front Row (L-R): Staci Allan, Pamela Becker Dean (Secretary), Kathy Edmonds

School Board Member Day

November 15, 2008 has been designed as School Board Members Day in Illinois. Our Board members serve countless hours working to make public education the best it can be for every child. We are proud to introduce you to our Board of Education and hope you join us in offering them thanks for their commitment to the continuing success of our students now and in the future.

Our senior Board member, Phil Pritzker was elected in 1989 and has served as president from 1993-95 and 2001-03. He is the chair of the Illinois Association of School Boards North Cook Division and the chair of the Board Finance Com-

mittee. Mr. Pritzker has had five daughters graduate from District 21.

Following in seniority, Arlen S. Gould was elected in 1993. He served as president from 1995-99 and is currently the Board Vice President. He served as a member of the Discovery Learning Foundation, the Budget Development Committee and is currently on the Board Communications and Finance Committees. Mr. Gould has four children – all former district students.

Our current Board President, Bill Harrison, was elected in 2001. Along with overseeing all the Board Committees, Mr. Harrison is a member of the Board Policy Committee. His two sons are graduates of the district and are currently at Buffalo Grove High School. In his spare time, Mr. Harrison volunteers at Indian Trails Library as a chess instructor.

Pam Becker Dean was elected in 2002 and is currently serving her second term as Board Secretary. Ms. Dean is the chair of the Board Communication Committee and was a co-presenter along with staff at the 2007 Illinois Association of School Boards Annual Conference. Ms. Dean's son is a graduate of Cooper and now attends Buffalo Grove High School.

Elected in 2003, Kathy Edmonds serves as the district's NSSEO Board member liaison. This requires her to not only attend District 21 Board meetings, but those of NSSEO as well. Mrs. Edmonds is also the chair of the Board Policy Committee. Two of Mrs. Edmonds daughters have graduated from the district.

Rich Rosen became a Board member in 2005. Mr. Rosen previously served on the United Way Board and is currently a member of the Board Policy Committee and takes an active role as the Indian Trails Library and River Trails Park District liaison. His son graduated last year and is now at Wheeling High School.

Our newest Board member, Staci Allan, was elected in 2007. Mrs. Allan has dedicated much of her volunteer time coordinating the coat drive and fundraisers for the Katie Samsel Fund and Family Learning Program. She is the Village of Wheeling liaison, has served on the ELL Restructuring Committee, and is a member of the Board Communication Committee. Her three children attend district schools.

Our Board of Education encourages community input. Their email addresses are located on the district website at www.ccsd21.org.

*The constant refrain is,
 "We are doing well, but how
 do we make this better?"*



Letter from Bill Harrison, District 21 Board President

As a District 21 School Board member for almost seven years and Board President this past year, I continue to be impressed with the commitment for continuous improvement from a dedicated staff, many of whom either have or are working on advanced degrees.

We are also fortunate to have a supportive community that provides strong financial support, students engaged in social service projects, and seniors volunteering their time as tutors in the OASIS program. As a result of the foundation students receive in District 21, the high schools that our schools feed into are also having excellent results.

Although we are doing a good job, no one in any position is satisfied. We have instituted a cycle of program reviews, which have improved our science program, bilingual program and gifted opportunities. We also review the improvements to be sure we are achieving our goals in a cost effective manner. The constant refrain is, "We are doing well, but how do we make this better?"

As Board members, we are fortunate to get, and want to encourage, parent and community input. We believe in improvement, and we are open to your ideas. Our email addresses are located on the District website at www.ccsd21.org. Send us an email and give us your feedback.

Sincerely,
 Bill Harrison
 Board President



Field's Wall of Strength Teaches Many Lessons

Field Elementary School has become the first school in District 21 to have a climbing wall, thanks to generous donations from the families of a former student, John Paul Calandra, and former teachers, John and Cheryl Witucke.

"We are very excited about it," says Field Principal LaVonne Knapstein. "This climbing wall has been one of our physical education teacher's dreams. It is a District goal to keep our children physically fit. Children need particular support in building upper body strength, and a climbing wall will help them build that strength."

Knapstein expects all Field students to benefit. The school purchased safety bands for children who feel less comfortable on the climbing structure, which now covers one of the short walls of the gym.

"It's an elementary rock climbing wall," Knapstein says, "We are not sending children to the top of the room. They get to a certain point in height, and they then move along horizontally."

Field School chose a magnetic climbing wall on which teachers can place learning tools such as math problems, vocabulary and phonics lessons. This will make it possible to coordinate classroom topics with physical education.

"For example," says Knapstein, "third grade students studying multiplication could find 3×4 or 5×7 where they grab on, and then they have to climb to the answers. Or we could ask them to climb to all the algorithms of 15. Movement really gets your brain working towards learning."

The wall was installed during the summer, and we held a special unveiling ceremony so that the students will understand the history of how the wall came to be in their school. The wall has been named Field's Wall of Strength, and a banner is going to be created honoring the donors.

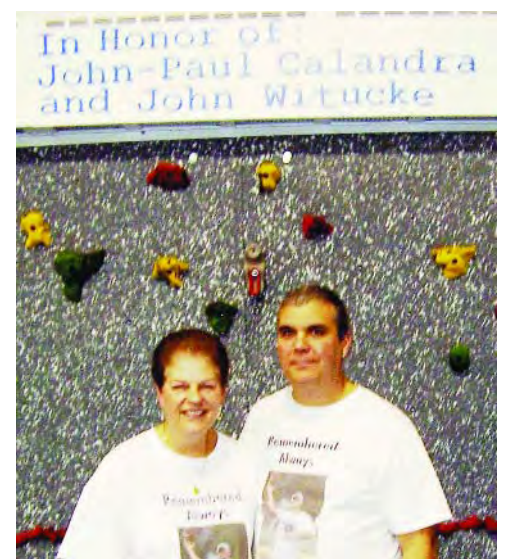
John Paul Calandra, a former Field student, died in a pedestrian accident. His parents still reside in the Field area and have established the Just Pass It Foundation in John Paul's memory. "His parents kindly donate to all the schools in Wheeling, District 21 and the Wheeling Park District," says Knapstein. "They were pleased to know that their donation would benefit all the children at the school, and they were happy to hear about the fitness focus as John Paul was involved in sports."

John Witucke taught at Field School from 1974 to 2002, when he retired. Cheryl Witucke taught at Field School from 1989 to 1999 and later became a co-coordinator of the Illinois State University Professional Development School from 2002 to 2005, when she retired. "John Witucke, who passed away a few years ago, was a physical education teacher here for many years, and he was well loved by children and staff," Knapstein says.

"He was a special man. His family was kind enough to include Field as a place where people could donate money to be used in his memory."

"We are very appreciative of these families for thinking of Field students and their welfare," Knapstein says. "We want to honor John and Cheryl Witucke and John Paul Calandra. It's a big deal, and we want our kids to understand that sometimes we are benefited by individuals we may not even know."

Field's Wall of Strength will provide lessons in fitness and academic skills as well as community service and generosity.



Mrs. and Mr. Calandra (top)
The Witucke family (above)





Letter to Parents from the Illinois State Superintendent of Education

July 23, 2008

Dear Parent:

As State Superintendent of Education, I felt it was important to make you aware of a change that occurred this past school year with respect to the annual state assessments for English Language Learning (ELL) students. Rather than taking the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE) state assessment, ELL students this year took one of Illinois' general state annual assessments with accommodations. ELL students in grades 3-8 took the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and ELL students in grade 11 took the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). Illinois was required to make this change rather late in the school year in order to comply with the federal government's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

As a result, school districts and their teachers did not have as much time to prepare ELL students for this spring's assessment. When you look at your school's and your district's 2008 school report card, you will see a difference in the performance of ELL students on this year's annual assessment performance results when compared with that of previous years. Any such drop in the performance of ELL students should not be viewed as a reflection on these students or their teachers. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has been a national leader in bilingual education for more than 30 years and our commitment to Bilingual Education and our ELL students remains as strong today as ever. ISBE is committed to ensuring that ALL students have the appropriate assessments to demonstrate what they have learned. ISBE will continue working with organizations and programs across Illinois and the nation to develop and implement appropriate state assessments for ALL students.

We surveyed teachers across the state to identify which accommodations worked best for our ELL students and to determine what adjustments should be implemented for the 2009 testing period. In consultation with national experts, ISBE is developing a Five-Year Assessment Plan for ELL students, which will include translations and modifications to eliminate unnecessary complex language, as well as additional visual and graphic support.

Again, thank you for your patience as we go through this time of transition and for your commitment to your child's education.

Thank you,
Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education



State Assessments: Math Performance Strong; Reading Performance Misrepresented

District 21 students performed extremely well on state math assessments in 2008. Across the district 84% of students met or exceeded state standards; this surpassed the state target of 62.5%. Additionally the district showed a strong performance by ELL (English Language Learning) students in math despite being tested in a language they are not yet proficient.

"The good news, concludes Janelle Hockett, Director of Curriculum and Achievement for District 21, "is that we had 10 out of 12 buildings who met Adequate Yearly Progress in math, and that shows our students were able to overcome the language barriers. District 21 students showed they understand math."

Because the U.S. Department of Education and Illinois State Board of Education did not agree on how to test English Language Learners (ELL) in 2008, ELL students in District 21 were not given a fair and valid test to measure their achievement in reading, math and science.

This means the Adequate Yearly Progress determination for 2008 does not really reflect the accomplishment of our students, teachers or schools. Inappropriate testing of students – not a downturn in actual performance – explains the decline in reading scores.

This distortion is serious enough that the State Superintendent of Education has written a letter to parents (text shown in sidebar at left) to explain the issue. He promises that testing for 2009 will be more fair and accurate.

Several other issues also contributed to the difference between our students' actual progress

and their recorded progress in 2008.

First, the method of categorizing students in subgroups caused an exaggerated picture of how many students did not meet requirements. The same child could be included in many subgroups and counted again and again. For example, a child who is counted in the White subgroup can also be counted in the low-income subgroup, the IEP or special education subgroup and the LEP or Limited English Proficiency subgroup.

Also, two of our schools, were not able to demonstrate growth from 2007 to 2008 because students were given different tests each year. This technicality denied Holmes and Whitman access to the Safe Harbor provision. Safe Harbor gives schools credit for the academic growth of their student population.

These determinations are not accurate, says Hockett, "Because they are measured differently each year. To see real data trends, you have to compare the same information for at least four years. The Illinois State Board of Education keeps changing what tests we are measured by."

Aside from the content areas, the state uses a separate test, ACCESS, to monitor how well ELL students are learning English, and by this standard ELL students in District 21 have continually performed well. District 21 met Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives from 2004 to 2007 as calculated by the Illinois State Board of Education. In 2008 ELL students also met language proficiency targets set by the state.

"This is a credit to our students and their desire to achieve," says Rosemarie Meyer, Assistant Superintendent for Bilingual and ESL Programs.



Two Local Businesses Donate Supplies

Our thanks to Cusi in Lincolnshire (left) and Baird and Warner in Buffalo Grove (above) for their donation of school supplies this year. We are very grateful for the generosity of the employees and management of these two organizations for thinking of the children in School District 21.

District 21's Financial Outlook Is Cautiously Optimistic

"The main financial message for this year is that District 21 continues to have a balanced budget," says Daniel B. Schuler, Assistant Superintendent for Planning.

The estimated operating revenues of \$87.592 million will fund program costs of \$86,534 million, providing an estimated operating surplus of \$1.156 million. "The surplus is a good thing," Schuler says. "It will help us as we approach what we foresee as operating deficits in the future. We project that by 2011-2012, we will face an operating deficit of just over half a million dollars. The good news is that we also project that we will save enough surplus to take care of that first deficit. The following year, it will grow to just under \$2 million, which will require some tough choices."

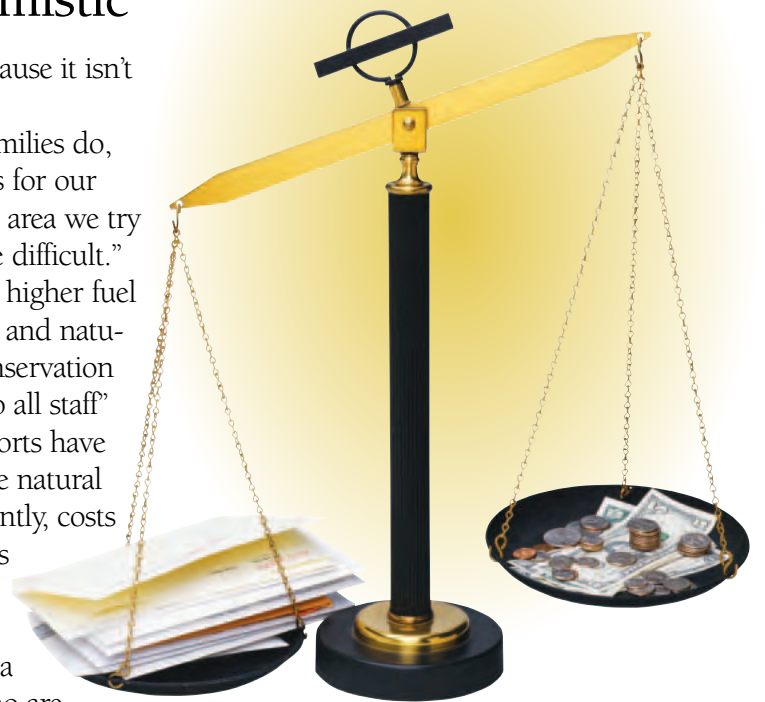
The District faces the same economic challenges that families in the community face. "There is certainly a slowdown in the market, and properties aren't necessarily appreciating as fast as they once did," says Schuler. "The positive thing is that we have a balance between residential and commercial property in our district.

That makes our tax base stronger because it isn't reliant on one particular component.

"We also feel the same pressures families do, as the costs of medical insurance rises for our employees," Schuler says. "This is an area we try to maintain cost control, but it can be difficult."

The District is also contending with higher fuel prices, and higher costs for electricity and natural gas. "We carry the message of conservation of resources through every meeting to all staff" says Schuler. "These conservation efforts have three positive effects. First, we reduce natural resource consumption and, consequently, costs expenses; and secondly, in the process of reducing natural resource consumption, the District have has a positive effect on the environment as a whole. Secondly Finally, students who are learning in an environment that focuses on energy conservation are gaining good skills for the future."

The District prides itself in being fiscally responsible by making the best financial choices that have a positive impact on students





Community Consolidated School District 21

Serving parts of Wheeling, Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Mt. Prospect, Northbrook & Prospect Heights, Illinois

Preparing All Students for Success

The purpose of District 21 schools is to provide a learning environment for all students to become life long learners and productive citizens.

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Dr. Gary E. Mical
Superintendent

[Board of Education Information](#)

Next Board Meeting:
November 20, 2008
7.30 PM
Administration Center

[2008-2009 Meetings](#)

December 18, 2008
January 15, 2009
February 19, 2009
March 19, 2009
April 16, 2009
May 21, 2009
June 18, 2009

District 21 Students Perform Well on State Tests

Despite drastic and inappropriate changes made to the Illinois student assessment system during the middle of the 2007-2008 school year, District 21 students performed very well on the 2008 Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT). Last year, the statewide assessment system was altered when the Illinois State Board of Education failed to negotiate an acceptable solution for testing English Language Learners (ELL) with the U.S. Department of Education. The end result was that all English Language Learners were administered the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) in March, the general statewide assessment designed for students who are proficient in English. Even with a large number of English Language Learners in District 21 taking tests that really measured English proficiency versus reading or math knowledge and skills, results were good in Reading and excellent in Mathematics. [More...](#)

>> [How Adequate Yearly Progress is Measured](#)

State of the Schools 2008-2009

Each fall, District 21 hosts its annual State of the Schools meetings. There are three meetings – one at each of the middle schools. Parents and community members are invited to attend... [More...](#)

State of the Schools



Communicating with the Community

10 District 21 Buildings Earn Energy Star Distinction



Less than three years ago, School District 21 partnered with Energy Education, Inc. to implement an energy conservation program throughout the District. Our conservation program has led to a 25% reduction in our overall energy consumption. This has reduced our electric usage by over 5,000,000 kilowatt hours and our gas usage by almost 300,000 therms. That correlates to a cost avoidance, or savings, of over \$870,000. [More...](#)

Intergovernmental Cooperation Award with Wheeling Park District

Based on the work of developing and implementing the Family Learning Program, both districts were awarded third place from over 100 entries in the Intergovernmental Cooperation Award from the Illinois Association of Park

Upcoming Events

- 11.11 Veteran's Day--No School
- 11.13 [State of the Schools](#) - London Middle School
- 11.20 Board of Education Meeting - Administration Center

- [2008-2009 School Year Calendar](#)
- [2008-2009 ABCDE Day Calendar](#)

The District 21 Author



Current & Back Issues

[Interested in joining our team?](#)



District Launches Updated Website

Log onto <http://www.ccsd21.org>, and you will see that District 21's website has been refreshed. "We tried to craft a website designed around the needs of different users," says Dr. Jason Klein, District 21 Technology Director.

The new website is designed to help students, parents and staff. "We did some homework," Dr. Klein says. That included collecting data on who was using the website, where they were from, what kind of computers and browsers they were using, how long they spent on each page and what they were searching for. Dr. Klein also used online surveys and collected several hundred responses. Last spring, he gathered more information by meeting with nine different parent groups, which included many people who work with communications technology. "We took advantage of all that input."

As a former middle school principal, Dr. Klein puts computer technology into a broad-based educational context. "My biggest interest," he explains, "is working with students and teachers, and the focus of the website is how it performs for people who work in our District and those whom we are serving."

Dr. Klein is working to make the website accessible to as many District 21 families as

possible. "Internet access is not universal in our district," he says. "We plan to expand our language resources soon because we know from surveys that even some families with internet access haven't gone to the website because the information is not accessible to them. We want to empower people to be part of the process with us and achieve our learning goals as a group."

The website is still growing and will be adding services as time and resources allow. Dr. Klein continues studying responses from users. Every page of the website has a link for feedback.

The new website was launched the day before school started. "We borrowed a little trick from the big technology companies," Dr. Klein says. "We did the change-over live while the entire staff was assembled in the gym. When they got back to their own schools, the new website was available to them. That helped the school year get off to a good start. There are a lot of resources that staff members rely on that link off the main homepage. Staff will be able to work together across schools and also off-site when they are away from school. They will have their work at their fingertips regardless of where they are as long as they have a computer and a good connection."

The new School District 21 website is full of helpful, easy-to-find information. The section quoted below is just one example. We invite you to explore the new website, and to comment on what you find-or don't find-there. Just use the "Contact" page!

Support Services

School District 21 offers a full continuum of services to children with special needs. These services range from modifications in curriculum and instructional strategies within the regular classroom to consultations from specific experts, resource settings for students to focus on specific knowledge and skills, district-wide self-contained programs, special day schools, and residential placements.

In meeting the requirements of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), we continue to embrace and support inclusive instructional practices. These practices are designed to provide special education services within the context of the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible.

This means that students with special needs will have membership in a general education classroom and will receive appropriate recommended individualized educational services with general educators, parents and special educators working as a collaborative team. If a student's needs cannot be met with support at his/her neighborhood school, the educational team will determine an appropriate, least restrictive service delivery option that best addresses his/her current needs.

A continuum of special education services is available to support the education of children with disabilities. Services are provided for students who qualify under one or more of the following eligibility categories.

On its own and through participation within the Northwest Suburban Special Education Organization (NSSEO) and the Low Incidence Cooperative Agreement (LICA), School District 21 offers services for students in the following areas:

- Speech/language impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Other health impairment
- Autism
- Mental retardation
- Emotional disturbance
- Hearing impairment
- Deafness
- Orthopedic impairment
- Visual impairment
- Blindness
- Traumatic brain injury
- Multiple disabilities

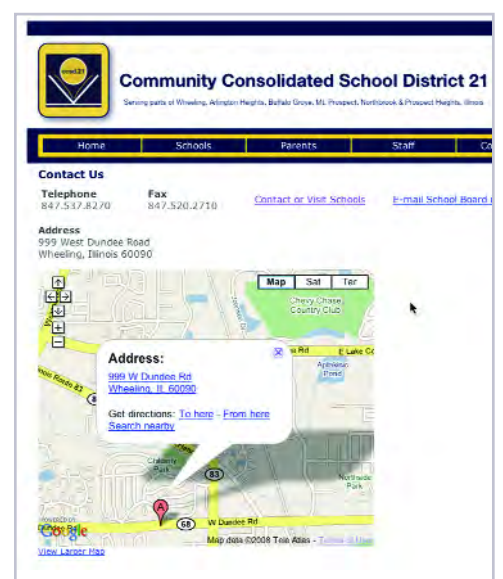
Social work, psychological services, speech/language therapy, occupational and physical therapy, and adaptive physical education are some of related services provided as individual student needs deem appropriate. Supports may include, as necessary, adaptations, modifications, related service interaction, support teacher services, regular teacher instruction, peer modeling and supports, and district support team consultation.

Students with special needs who require support or specialized instruction for less than 50% of their day in order to access the curriculum receive a "resource" level of programming. These services may be provided within the regular education classroom or in a small group or on an individual basis outside of the classroom for short periods of time. Consultation is provided for staff working with the student. Services may be provided by a variety of professionals including related service providers.

Students requiring or needing support for more than 50% of their day in order to access the curriculum receive an "instructional" level of programming. These students attend their home school building and have membership in a regular education classroom while receiving appropriate services by both regular and special educators working as a collaborative team. This collaborative team has opportunities to discuss student needs and supports and work together in the general education classroom environment.

Students who need additional support above and beyond an instructional general education classroom experience may be considered for a more restrictive program or placement which may be referred to as a self-contained program. Students may be educated in a classroom setting that contains exclusively other disabled students. Students in a self-contained program might be provided with opportunities to interact with non-disabled peers during the school day based on individual student needs and team recommendation. Programmatic decisions are based on student goals, objectives, and educational needs.

Students with significant cognitive or medical challenges may be educated in a multi-needs classroom consistent with the components of cross-categorical programming. Students participating in this program might be engaged in a more functional curriculum, communication skill development and pre-vocational skills.



On the new District 21 website, you can find links to each district school's website, download past issues of *The Author*, and use a Google map to find your way to the District offices!



Board of Education
Bill Harrison, *President*
Arlen S. Gould, *Vice President*
Pamela Becker Dean, *Secretary*
Staci Allan
Kathy Edmonds
Phil Pritzker
Rich Rosen

School Administration

Dr. Gary E. Mical, *Superintendent*
Dr. Kate Hyland, *Asst. Supt./Curriculum & Learning*
Pat McAndrews, *Asst. Supt./Human Resources*
Rosemarie Meyer, *Asst. Supt./Bilingual & ESL Programs*
Dr. Candace Thompson, *Asst. Supt./Support Services*
Daniel Schuler, *Asst. Supt./Planning*

Dist. 21 Access Information

Superintendent's office
phone 847.537.8270
fax 847.520.2848
email district21@ccsd21.org
website www.ccsd21.org

Cooper Middle School
Field Elementary School
Frost Elementary School
Holmes Middle School
Kilmer Elementary School
London Middle School
Longfellow Elementary School
Poe Elementary School
Riley Elementary School
Tarkington Elementary School
Twain Elementary School
Whitman Elementary School
Hawthorne Early Childhood Center

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State of the Schools Break Out Sessions

Mythbusters: Truth and Consequences of NCLB

Come and learn about No Child Left Behind and how this legislation has impacted our students and district. Investigate the issues surrounding NCLB and discover what the newspaper headlines really mean.

Science Snapshot: A Glimpse into the World of Elementary Scientists

Why is the grass green? Why did my snowman melt? Why do I have to eat vegetables? Children are filled with questions. Join us to experience how teachers harness the inquisitive nature of students to help them learn key concepts in science.

Developing Your Child's Habits for Success in School, Life, and Work

As parents we have the unique responsibility for developing positive and long-lasting habits in our children. Learning to develop "intelligent" behaviors can significantly enhance existing gifts and talents. This session will explore the 10 habits of the mind that will contribute to your child's future success. Parenting strategies for each habit will be explored and discussed.

Developing Critical Thinkers

How can parents improve their child's thinking and reading skills? This session will engage parents in activities aimed at getting at higher levels of questioning and will provide parents with a tool to help enhance your child's natural inquisitiveness at home.

Helping Your Children Survive Bullying & Cyberbullying

The presentation will address the topic of bullying. Parents will learn the skills to recognize the signs that their children are possibly being bullied. Parents will also learn strategies to help their children deal with the situation and provide support. We will also address cyber-bullying and the steps parents can take to protect their children from this increasingly pervasive form of bullying.

Safe Surfing: Maximizing Your Family's Safety on the Internet

Learn about how you can best protect your children and your family from identity theft, bullying, and other cyber-crime by how you and your family use your computer as well as how your computer and Internet connection are set-up