

THE DISTRICT 21 Author



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District 21 Cabinet members, from left to right: Daniel Schuler, Asst. Supt. for Planning; Dr. Gary E. Mical, Superintendent; Kris Knudsen, Asst. Supt. for Human Resources; Rosemarie Meyer, Director of Bilingual and ESL Programs; Dr. Kate Hyland, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum and Learning; Gheorghe Trifon, Director of Operations; Lavonne Ellis, Asst. Supt. for Support Services

Letter from Dr. Gary Mical

District 21 Focuses on Teamwork

When we look at what makes a successful learning community, we see it is rooted in teams who work collaboratively to address student needs.

We are very pleased that our teachers' contract reflects agreement between the District Education Association and the District 21 Board of Education about the importance of teaming. This agreement provides for the opportunity for teachers to meet as teams.

What research shows and what our own experience confirms is that when teachers work cooperatively with a common goal and interest in student achievement, there is an increase in student learning. We believe the improvement in our ISAT test scores is a direct result of focusing our teamwork on student learning.

Let's take a look at the preliminary results of this year's ISAT tests.

- An increased percentage of students meet or exceed state standards in every sub-group in both reading and math.
- Our three schools, Cooper, Field and Frost, have all come off the state watch list.
- London Middle School, which did not make adequate yearly progress last year, did make adequate yearly progress this year.

- Holmes Middle School has seen a significant increase in math scores of Hispanic students over the past three years.

- Field, Frost and Whitman Schools were recognized by the State of Illinois for Academic Improvement Awards for increasing scores in excess of 7.5% per year.

- Kilmer, Longfellow, Poe, Riley, Tarkington and Twain Schools continue to score well above the state averages for both reading and math.

There is still work to do. District 21 is recommitting to the idea of teaming. The training we are providing our teachers in both the process and skills to be an effective team is creating a shared understanding across the district. We are clearer now about what we expect from our teams and what an effective team looks like.

We are pleased with the gains that are taking place in student learning. We will keep our teacher training focused on teaming. It is an ongoing process, and it is essential to the accomplishment of our District goals.

ISAT scores indicate an increased percentage of students meet or exceed state standards in every sub-group in both reading and math.



Learning Coaches will Focus on Teachers' Teaming Skills

One of the components of a professional learning community is collaborative teaming. Therefore, this year we will be recommitting to developing effective teams aimed at increasing student achievement.

"Our teams often work very well together. They get along. They help each other. They share tasks," said Dr. Kate Hyland, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Learning. "However, our challenge is to move our teams from a congenial stage to a more collaborative stage. We know from research and our own experiences that effective teams take

responsibility for all students in their grade level and consistently monitor student progress and growth."

By pooling their resources, experiences, and efforts, teams of teachers are far more effective in meeting the needs of the students. "Teachers are a wonderful resource and we want to encourage them to do the things they know are good for kids," said Dr. Hyland. "By committing to the effective teaming, teachers are modeling to their students the importance of working and learning together."



Top: Martin Hopkins, Principal, Holmes Middle School
Above left: Jose Celis, Assistant Principal, Holmes Middle School
Above right: Erin Stein, Assistant Principal, London Middle School

District 21 Welcomes New Team Members!

Cooper Middle School: Magaly Acosta, Samantha Albert, Kelly Brittan, Elizabeth Bruton, Rebecca Davidson, Stefani Dunn, Anna Jedraszczak, Stacey Konieczka, Julie Laxner, Dana Lucas, Beth Majewski, Tracy Nathan, Jacqueline Ott, Joe Schumacher, Erin Scholes, Katie Tantillo

Field School: Rachel Kolko, Julie Radetski

Frost School: Ellie Arnold, Kathleen Coyle, Carmina Martinez, Elizabeth Rauch, Tanya Sepulveda, Jenna Sorensen, Aida Vasquez

Hawthorne School: Sylvia Brea, Patricia Calendar

Holmes Middle School: Eden Becker, Jose Celis, Laura Gorman-Weege, Jessica Lovely, Dana Mitchell, Hilary Morris, Paul Moreno, Bennett Nelson, Marcela Rodriguez-Grossman, Lynn Swanson, Katherine Walz

Kilmer School: Margaret Ryan

London Middle School: Marcia Alvarez, Ashly

Aguayo, Christina Baron, Luis Bonilla, Sylvia Brea, Niles Engerman, John Fox, Meghan Gaynor, Paul Hartung, Lindsey Keller, Lisa Martin, Louie Myers, Andrew Pieper, Paul Rosencrans, Erica Sostrin, Brenda Theisen

Longfellow School: Sheri Bovino, Haydee Cannata, Jami Dervishian, Dyanne Wallner

Poe School: Tara Dehring, Gloria Jones, Meagan Laspisa, Shannon Owen, Jennifer Pistone, Marta Polka, Maureen Shayman, Rima Smolyanskaya

Riley School: Joy Horwitz

Tarkington School: Irina Bahamon, Gloria Hernandez, Margaret Ryan

Twain School: Maureen Barnes, Colleen Evens, Gloria Hernandez, Marta Polka, Michelle Salvetti, Nicole Socha

Whitman School: Alicia Alalu, Rachel Berkson, Kristin Isla, Pamela Rogers, Erin Schlenger

District Wide: Sandra Edelstein

Welcome to New Staff

Each new school year we welcome not only new students but also new staff into District 21.

Jose Celis brings a bilingual perspective to the Assistant Principal position at Holmes Middle School. This is a priority identified by Holmes parents, students, and staff. He has a rich background in middle school curriculum and a reputation for understanding what middle school students need. "His high energy and positive thinking impressed the interview team of parents, teachers and students," said Kris Knudsen, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources.

"I really enjoy watching students learn and develop," Celis said. "One of the things that interested me about Holmes is the diversity of the population. I am looking forward to working with the community and all the students of the school to bridge the gaps that can occur when people of different cultures come together. The culture of District 21 and Holmes Middle School make this a great place to be, and I'm excited to be a part of the team."

Martin Hopkins, new Principal at Holmes Middle School, is a product of District 21 and has spent his professional life here. "We surveyed teachers, and parents and came up with a profile for the new principal," said Knudsen. "After interviewing many candidates, Martin was chosen as most qualified and best fitting the profile. He not only knows our history, but has a great vision for what is to come."

"I love the kids," Hopkins said. "Middle school embodies the best of both elementary and high school characteristics. You can deal with the students at a more mature level, but they are not afraid to be kids."

"Tom Torchello has been an incredible mentor, both as a teacher and administrator," Hopkins said. "I hope to continue the good work he has begun in the school and the community. District 21 supports its teachers and administrators, and we have a strong, supportive parent community. Many of our parents work two jobs and are busy trying to provide a stable family life, but they take the time to come to the school for activities that involve their kids. Studies show that when parents are involved, students do better. We are working to promote the connection between home and school."

Erin Stein, formerly the Dean at Cooper Middle School, will be Assistant Principal at London Middle School. "We did extensive interviews of other candidates," said Knudsen. "With her strong curriculum base, knowledge of the culture of District 21 and familiarity with middle school philosophy, Erin rose as the top candidate."

"I've always worked in middle schools," said Stein. "Middle school students are starting the path to adulthood. It can be challenging, and I feel I am someone the students can come to for anything they need, including social and emotional issues. They need a secure social and emotional base to succeed in academics."

"I'm looking forward to learning about London Middle School and working with the staff here," said Stein. "I loved working on evaluating and designing curriculum as a teacher, and I'm excited to work with curriculum in my role as assistant principal."

Please help us welcome these three individuals to their new roles in District 21.

Bilingual Program Takes New Focus

Rosemarie Meyer, Director of Bilingual/ESL Programs

District 21 Bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) team has rewritten the K-8 ESL curriculum this summer with a focus on English language skills that students need to understand for science and math. These changes are a response to recommendations that the English Language Learning (ELL) Restructuring Team made to the Board of Education last spring.

"We've also developed new middle school exploratories for English Language Learners," said Rosemarie Meyer, Director of Bilingual and ESL Programs. Middle school students have a block of 120 minutes each day for non-core classes including gym, music, speech, drama, foreign language and technology. "We've developed a series of exploratory classes that target their specific language needs."

Another part of the restructuring is a new teaching position, which is being phased-in at four schools this fall. Whitman, Field and Twain Elementary Schools and Holmes Middle School

will each add English Language Learning teachers. The new ELL teacher will give students experience speaking English to an additional person during a clearly defined time each day.

"This teacher will add consistency across the classes to make sure we are delivering the same English language instruction to all our students," Meyer said. "And while the ELL teacher is in the classroom, the bilingual teacher will be able to work with students in small groups or one at a time. Our goal is to increase student achievement in both language and academic skills."

"District 21 has one of the older and one of the largest Bilingual/ESL programs in the state. We have a list of 24 languages. This restructuring has always been a joint effort of the bilingual, ESL and general education teachers and administrators, and that is a strength of our district. All educators have taken ownership of our second language learners' success," said Meyer.

Community Service Education Program Expands

Gregg Crocker, Director of Community Service Education Program

The two programs begun last year by the Community Service Education Program, directed by Gregg Crocker, will be expanded this year based on feedback from the community.

The After-school Program begun at Frost, was expanded to Kilmer, Riley and Tarkington schools, where students stay after school two hours: an hour of one-on-one tutoring (provided by the community, including area high schools, Harper Community College and churches) and an hour of recreation. "We hope to expand into one or more additional schools," said Crocker. "Cooper Middle School is also adding additional tutoring during the school day, and they are seeking community volunteers."

The Parents as Leaders Program last year at Field, Frost, Tarkington, Twain and Whitman schools offered parents evening classes in English, parenting, computer and other skills while their children participated in recreational programs provided by the Wheeling Park District. "We plan to expand the parent program to Holmes Middle School on Saturday mornings and to London Middle School in the evenings," Crocker said.

"We feel that successful students lead to a stronger community. Another way District 21 can

support our community is to give the students, parents and community at large more access to school facilities and resources beyond the school day," said Crocker. "We are looking at ways to open the buildings so more people are using our resources."

"We are also looking for ways to bring more community resources into the classroom," Crocker continued. One example is a partnership in which 24 advanced Spanish students from Deerfield High School will tutor Whitman School students whose primary language is Spanish. This is a win-win. Our kids will get individual help in reading and math, and the high school kids will get experience in practical Spanish "conversation." The program goal is to raise the achievement of our District 21 students while they transition to English.

This year, the middle schools will be targeted for further enrichment and recreational programs like Saturday programs, field trips and expansion of before- and after-school intramural programs. Crocker concluded, "Because these programs do cost money, we are going to pursue grants that will help support them for the long term."



Playgrounds Updated

Daniel Schuler, Assistant Superintendent for Planning

This fall, District 21 is renovating playgrounds at Frost, Kilmer, Poe, Tarkington, Twain and Whitman Elementary Schools. The playgrounds, which have, in most cases, been put in place by PTO/A's with the space and funds available at each site, will be renovated to remove older equipment and create new safety fall zones.

“Our primary focus is to remove the base material and the foundations, which are currently made of railroad ties. These have weathered and need to be replaced before they become hazardous. The new foundations will be concrete

curbing and a modern base material,” Schuler said. “We are also replacing some equipment, which has reached its life expectancy.”

The district is working with two vendors, based on a District study of the needs of the playgrounds and on the individual circumstances and environment of each school.

“We expect the work to take no more than three weeks at each site,” Schuler said. “We hope the community will appreciate the playground updates, and the children will have a good time.”

Just Pass It Foundation Contributes to Holmes Middle School

District 21 thanks the family of former student John-Paul Calandra for a donation of \$2,000 from the Just Pass It Foundation. The foundation has been created in honor of John-Paul, who died at age 24 last September when he was struck by a car while leaving a Chicago Bears game at Soldier Field.

The donation was made at the July 20 Board of Education meeting and will be used for the Industrial Tech Program at Holmes Middle School.

“The Tech Lab was a good choice,” said John-Paul’s father, Ron Calandra. “My son was learning to be a contractor.”

“We are happy to participate in any efforts that will support the Foundation,” said District 21 Superintendent Dr. Gary Mical, “and we appreciate the help to our school district from the Calandra family.”

The Foundation’s name reflects John-Paul’s competitive spirit. His father explained that the 1999 graduate of Wheeling High School was an outstanding athlete who played football and basketball all four years. He urged his basketball squad to pass him the ball so they would win the game. Now the Foundation will pass on all the help they can to Wheeling youth.

“We have lived in Wheeling for 30 years. We want to help the kids in Wheeling through the Park District, the High School District and Elementary District 21, and we are going to continue helping them as long as we can,” Calandra said.

Those who wish to contribute to the Just Pass It Foundation can send checks to: Just Pass It Foundation, P.O. Box 133, Wheeling IL 60090-0133. Calandra said all donated funds will be channeled into projects that help Wheeling’s youngsters.



John-Paul Calandra

District Plans Response to Possible Flu Pandemic

Lavonne Ellis, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services

“We are all hearing about a potential influenza pandemic. There have been instances of flu in the past, but researchers are finding new strains, such as the avian flu, and right now there are no natural human immunities and no vaccines,” said Lavonne Ellis, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services.

District 21 is taking a three-pronged approach to preparation: Communication, Precaution and Response.

Communication:

District 21 is in contact with the Illinois State Board of Education and the Cook County Board of Health. Last spring, the District received information and a check list to help prepare for the effects of a flu pandemic from the United States Department of Health and Human Services. “We have been in touch with the Illinois State Board of Education Pandemic Flu Task Force. This fall, we will meet with our local government agencies to review our District disaster plan,” said Ellis.

Precaution:

Precautions involve good infection-control practices such as hand washing, covering the mouth while coughing, cleaning commonly-used surfaces, and the close monitoring of student illness. The District will be sending home information on this to all our families.

Response:

“We have District and Building Crisis Teams who have been in place for years and are prepared to respond,” Ellis said. During a pandemic, the District will cooperate with the local police, fire and health departments. “We are preparing a plan on how to run the District if many staff become ill. We will be looking at emergency administrative procedures, extracurricular activities, and even alternative instructional methods, if the schools had to be closed for a long period of time.”

“We don’t need to be on high alert, but we want to know our resources and have a plan in place,” said Ellis. “When we meet this fall, we will discuss how we can all work together to strike the right balance of being prepared without causing a scare.”

We want to know our resources and have a plan in place.

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 Rosemarie Meyer, *Director of Bilingual/ESL Programs*
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Cooper Middle School
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 Frost Elementary School
 Holmes Middle School
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 Longfellow Elementary School
 Poe Elementary School
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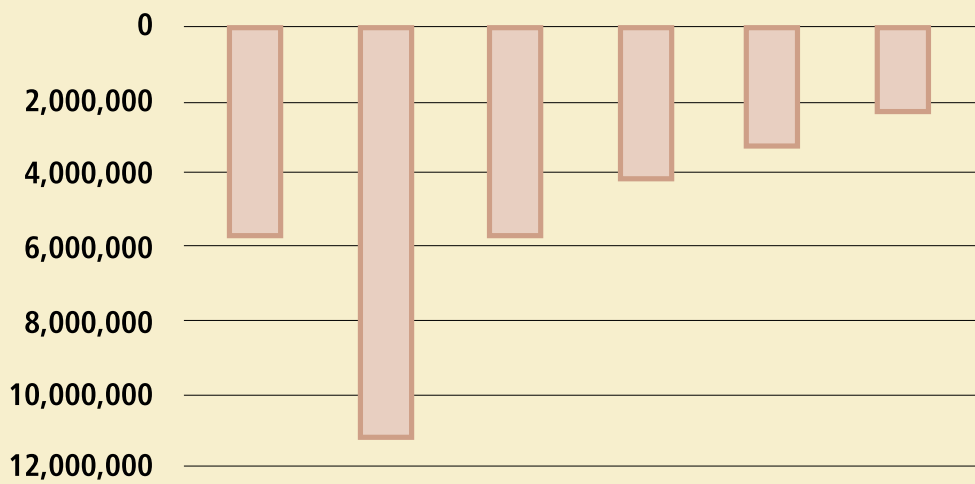
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A Balancing Act

Daniel Schuler, Assistant Superintendent for Planning

The District 21 Budget: Deficit Reduction Continues to be a Focus

Operating Fund Balances - FY2001-2002 Through FY2006-2007



Fiscal Year	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Combined Operating Funds	5,779,127	11,155,932	5,815,934	4,258,041	3,322,418	2,333,439

District 21 is maintaining its financial balance while incorporating many of its educational goals into the budget for 2006-2007. Some highlights include:

- The Bilingual Program Restructuring (see Bilingual Program Takes New Focus, page 2),
- The computerized assessment tool to monitor student progress,
- Increased computers in the classroom,
- Installation of new serving tables at all nine elementary buildings.

“These are all included in the balanced budget,” said Daniel Schuler, District 21 Assistant Superintendent for Planning. “The graph shows a trend of moving away from the deficit, which was at its largest in 2002-2003. In a tax-capped environment, the District could not generate revenues to a level to match increasing expenses. With community support of the referendum in 2003, we have seen the deficit start to go in a different direction. We are keeping an eye on the bottom line and beating the deficit down over time while incorporating the changes that need to be made.”



Mark Twain Kindergarteners Celebrate the Best of Wheeling

Visitors to the Wheeling Village Office have been enjoying a photo posted at the entrance titled “Young Children Prepare to Beautify the Community.” The eager children pictured with a tray of flowers, spade and gloves are students of Maria Valdez, a bilingual kindergarten teacher at Mark Twain Elementary School.

“This is part of our four seasons curriculum,” Valdez explained. “In the spring, we plant flowers. The children enjoy the real-life experience of planting the flowers and watching them grow. A few years ago we were joined by the Wheeling Garden Club to plant bulbs in front of the school.”

Valdez decided her photograph would make a great submission to the village photo contest, The Best of Wheeling: People, Community and Culture, sponsored by the Wheeling Human Rights Commission. Evidently, the Commission agreed and selected Valdez’s entry saying, “Your contribution celebrates the best of what Wheeling offers by its diversity of people, activities, establishments and opportunities.”

Valdez was presented with a check from the Human Rights Commission and a certificate from Village President Greg Klatecki. “I plan to use the money from the village to buy bulbs for the students to plant this fall,” Valdez said.

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