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Dr. Mical reads to a Pre-K class at Robert Frost Elementary School.

Testing Our Teaching

During the past two years District 21 has begun developing into a Professional Learning Community by setting goals that emphasize collaborative teaming and continuing inquiry. "We expect to see this in all of our staff members," said Dr. Kate Hyland, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Learning. "Everything is aiming at increasing student achievement."

To measure student achievement, a committee looked at a number of assessment tools and has selected a test from the Northwest Evaluation Association called Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). "We need a test that is aligned with state standards and our District 21 curriculum," Hyland said. "The test needs to provide immediate feedback that teachers and parents can use. It needs to be flexible to individual needs and reflect each student's growth. The test also needs to be affordable and be well supported by the supplier."

"MAP fits nicely with our goals," said Hyland. "We tested a pilot in January and February in Cooper, Field and Frost. It is a fabulous tool. MAP will help us monitor our students' growth. It's not an old paper test where everyone in the room is taking the same test. MAP is a computer-based test, and it's adaptive. It will find the level where each student is learning, and keep asking questions till it determines the range where each student is performing. This will help us meet the needs of our top students as well as our remedial students."

"Teachers will get results for each child. We may find that a student just needs help in the area of geometry or spelling. This will be really valuable information for teachers to have."

Next year MAP will be used in all District schools. The tests will be given in fall and again in spring to measure growth.

A Letter from Dr. Gary Mical

Progress reports are a time-honored learning tool, and this is a progress report on District 21's goals to provide a learning environment for all students to become life-long learners and productive citizens.

Two projects that have been completed in the last year are:

1) Communicate our Professional Learning Community framework to parents and the community through the State of the Schools meetings and articles in the Author.

We are definitely on course in achieving District goals, projects and initiatives.

2) Select an instrument to assess every student's progress. See the adjoining article, "Testing Our Teaching."

The District is actively pursuing four initiatives to be completed within two to three years.

1. **Assessing School Climate.** Thanks to funding from the North Cook Regional Educational Service Center, we are piloting a parent/staff/student survey to find out what each group thinks about their school in Field, Whitman and Cooper Schools this May. Our 5th graders will be surveyed in the elementary schools, and 7th graders in the middle school, and all parents and staff will be surveyed in all three schools.

The resulting information will be presented to the District 21 Board Communication Committee, and shared with all building principals and staff so they can use it to develop their school improvement plans. We will assess the success of the survey to decide if it should be conducted in the other elementary and middle schools.

2. **Assessing Parental Involvement.** After meeting with individual PTO/As and building principals, we have identified successes and areas where improvement may be needed in the interaction between parents and schools. The report was presented to the Board on May 18.

3. **Preschool Evaluation.** We are in the process of evaluating our preschool program to determine its current effectiveness and community needs in the future. This should be completed next year.

4. **Technology Plan.** We are using our technology plan to guide future expenditures in both software and hardware.

These initiatives are part of our District Five-Year Plan. All members of the District 21 staff are accountable to our Board and our community to achieve this plan. The good news is that we are definitely on course in achieving these District goals, projects and initiatives.



(Left to right) Riley Principal Mrs. Carrie McCulley, Brina Wahout, Ms. Jamie Kalinowski, and Wal-Mart representatives celebrate Ms. Kalinowski's Teacher of the Year award.

Riley Teacher Named Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year

She provides an environment for all of her students to achieve academic excellence.

Riley Elementary Second Grade Teacher Jamie Kalinowski's school day received a welcome interruption in April when she was named Wal-Mart Local Teacher of the Year. Kalinowski was nominated by one of her students, Brina Wahout.



Brina wrote: "Mrs. Kalinowski really takes an interest in her students. She will stay after school to help children, and she even came to my play that was not at school. She also knows when the work is too easy for me.

Sometimes she will give me harder work so I don't get bored. I really like this, and it also makes me feel special. Mrs. K is the best teacher."

Wal-Mart accompanies the honor with a \$1,000 educational grant to the school. Riley Elementary

will now have the opportunity to apply for State Teacher of the Year, which would include a \$10,000 educational grant. State winners can then apply for National Teacher of the Year for a \$25,000 grant.

"I was very surprised. They came in like a parade. I got goose bumps," Kalinowski said. "I had Brina read her nomination out loud, and that made it even more special."

This is Kalinowski's fifth year in District 21. She also did her student teaching in the District. Her Second Grade Team was presented with the district's Celebrating Excellence Award earlier this year. "She provides an environment for all of her students to achieve academic excellence," said Riley Principal, Carrie McCulley.

"Our District is very strong in professional development, which helps me be the teacher I am," said Kalinowski. "I take every opportunity I can to learn new things and bring them back to my classroom. My focus for the last two years has been on differentiation – to challenge each child to their limit. I find enrichment activities for kids who need more challenge. That's what Brina was talking about. That's my goal as a teacher: to be able to meet the needs of every student."



Holmes Robotics Team Goes to State

Congratulations to the Holmes LEGO Robotics team. They made it to the State Robotics Tournament for the seventh year in a row. To compete on the state level, the team first defeated 15 other area teams by presenting winning research projects, robotic design and programming skills.

Team members Arturo Sotelo, Manuel Gonzalez, Mayra Ocampo, and Jenna Schwartz worked from September to January to design and build a robot made of LEGO pieces, which the students downloaded with their programs through an infrared transmitter. For this year's theme, "Ocean Odyssey," they problem-solved issues relating to ocean health, biodiversity and productivity.

"The kids spend an hour and a half completely engaged and immersed," said Elaine Margaritis,

who coaches the Robotics Team. "While they are building the robot, they are building their vocabulary, thinking sequentially and logically. They have to learn how to work collaboratively because they depend on each other for progress."

"I love watching girls get involved," Margaritis continued. "When they see how alluring the programming and problem-solving and strategizing is, they become so engaged."

"We are very proud of the work and accomplishment of our LEGO Robotics Team," said Principal Tom Torchedlo. "Our students go on to Wheeling High School, and the Wheeling High School Robotics Team just won the national tournament in Atlanta. Many of those team members are graduates of Holmes Middle School."



"They have to learn how to work collaboratively because they depend on each other"



Holmes Alum Wins Coveted Orchestra Seat

In the competitive world of classical music, Holmes graduate Patrick Schleker was selected from over 200 musicians who auditioned this winter for the tympani seat of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. This is a dream job for a percussionist and a tribute to Patrick's talent, as well as the instruction he has received along the way.

"Pat graduated from Holmes in 1995," said Principal Tom Torchedlo. "Besides being an outstanding musician, he received our Tri-ship Award for excellence in scholarship, leadership and citizenship. He was a top student."

As timpanist, in a major orchestra, Pat expects to be busy.

"There is a tympani part in just about every work in the major repertoire. I'm really looking forward to playing with the Cincinnati Orchestra," said Pat. "I am so fortunate to win this seat right out of graduate school. You can look right back to my start. Sandy Thompson, who was the band director at Holmes then, really wanted me in her program. I got good direction from the beginning. I have had good teachers all through the process. I'm really looking forward to the coming years."





Celebrating Excellence

Spring, 2006



Each year, District 21 principals nominate someone who has enhanced their school's Professional Learning Community. As our staff focus on working together to prepare all our students for success, these individuals go above and beyond.

Karen Snell, 6th grade teacher at Cooper Middle School, focuses on school and district goals, the Illinois Learning Standards, and differentiating instruction for each child. In addition to outstanding teaching, Karen collaborates with teachers in and outside of her team to use the most effective instructional strategies to meet each student's need.

Mary Beth Michaels, 7th grade teacher at Holmes Middle School, is a skillful and knowledgeable Language Arts teacher, whose students learn academic and life skills they need to be independent learners and responsible citizens. She helped develop the school's improvement plan, and models working together to advance student learning.

Jan Robison, Math Resource teacher at London Middle School, provides leadership and mentoring to the math teachers. She facilitates math cluster meetings to help teachers to analyze the data they have collected, and offer suggestions to shape instruction. Her contributions are critical to the success of London's math program.

Lyn Nemeč, a teacher assistant for our Special Education Resource Support Program at Field Elementary School, is highly regarded by students and staff for her endless energy and commitment to the academic, social and emotional needs of each student. Lyn consistently steps up in times of need to create a climate where students feel safe.

Carol Steckling, a bilingual kindergarten teacher at Frost Elementary School, is committed to her students, Frost School, District 21, and her own personal and professional growth. Using best practices to focus on student learning, she is open to change, and is a go-to person for problem solving, brainstorming, and honest feedback.

LMC Team: Gail Forshall, Meghan Klein, Lani Vabulas and Pam Wuich at Kilmer Elementary School, have worked to modify the Gifted Program and also helped to get the Cougar Homework Club up and running by using communication, the collection of data, collaboration, reflection, and a focus on results to provide quality programming.

Winnie Baik, a 4th grade teacher at Longfellow Elementary School, is actively involved in enhancing the building and District educational community. She is the ELL representative, serves on the Enrichment team, presents workshops for parents and staff, and has supervised student groups such as Student Council and Van Gogh's Café.

Rita Brandt, 5th grade teacher at Poe Elementary School, looped with her students from fourth grade, is dedicated to her students and parents, and open to new ways to improve her instruction. She provides her students with opportunities to develop academic and life skills necessary for them to be successful and responsible students.

Holly Goldsmith, 4th grade teacher at Riley Elementary School, consistently extends herself beyond the classroom. Holly is involved in several committees, mentors student interns, collaborates with colleagues, sponsors student activities, prepares students for success, and engages in professional development to increase her knowledge and skills.

Vivian Ladowski, an assistant in one of the cross-categorical special education classrooms at Tarkington Elementary School, is a vital link between the educational program and the bilingual community. Vivian often translates for the school and PTA, helped to pass the referendum, and assisted with Gregg Crocker, the district Community Consultant's outreach to the community.

Rosa Kuhn and Pat Salvatini, staff members at Twain Elementary School, have helped build a successful parent program. Kuhn has built strong relationships with community agencies, served as a translator, facilitated meetings, and instructed parents in the use of technology. Salvatini has coordinating communication with the Wheeling Park District staff, found volunteers for evening classes, developed an enrollment system, encouraged attendance at classes, and organized Saturday field trips for families.

Cindy Snarski, a staff member at Whitman Elementary School, is dedicated to ensuring all students succeed. She actively pursues her own learning through committee work and study groups and willingly shares her learning with others. Cindy can always be counted on to make sound decisions, and to collaborate with parents and colleagues.

We would also like to recognize **Louise Resnick**, a 4th grade teacher from Field Elementary School, who received the Celebrating Excellence Award in January 2005. We inadvertently omitted her name from the list of recipients but would like to share her accomplishments. She has exhibited a shared focus of student learning and achievement. Her determination and patience evolved into a collaborative, dynamic team member.

We wish all recipients continued success in District 21.

*These individuals
go above and beyond.*



Cooper's Cross Country Girls State Champions – Boys 2nd in State

Clockwise, from Top
 Top 10 finishers Deanna Guyton and Olivia Jones round the final turn
 Mark Giannis, Eventual State Champion
 Erin Cleary, 5th Place
 Coaches Tim Thiessen and Laurie Morgenthal
 The Girls Cross Country Team at the Awards Ceremony after the race

The story of Cooper Middle School's Cross Country State Championship starts last year when the boy's team was the best in the State, and the girl's team came in second. This year the girl's team grabbed the gold, and the boy's team took second place. Both years, the teams have come home with more than trophies, they have learned about goal setting, hard work and sportsmanship.

"One of the neatest things is the respect our teams have shown for their competitors," said Cooper Principal Jason Klein. "They are out there cheering for the other teams. It's great that our kids can celebrate our successes and others' as well."

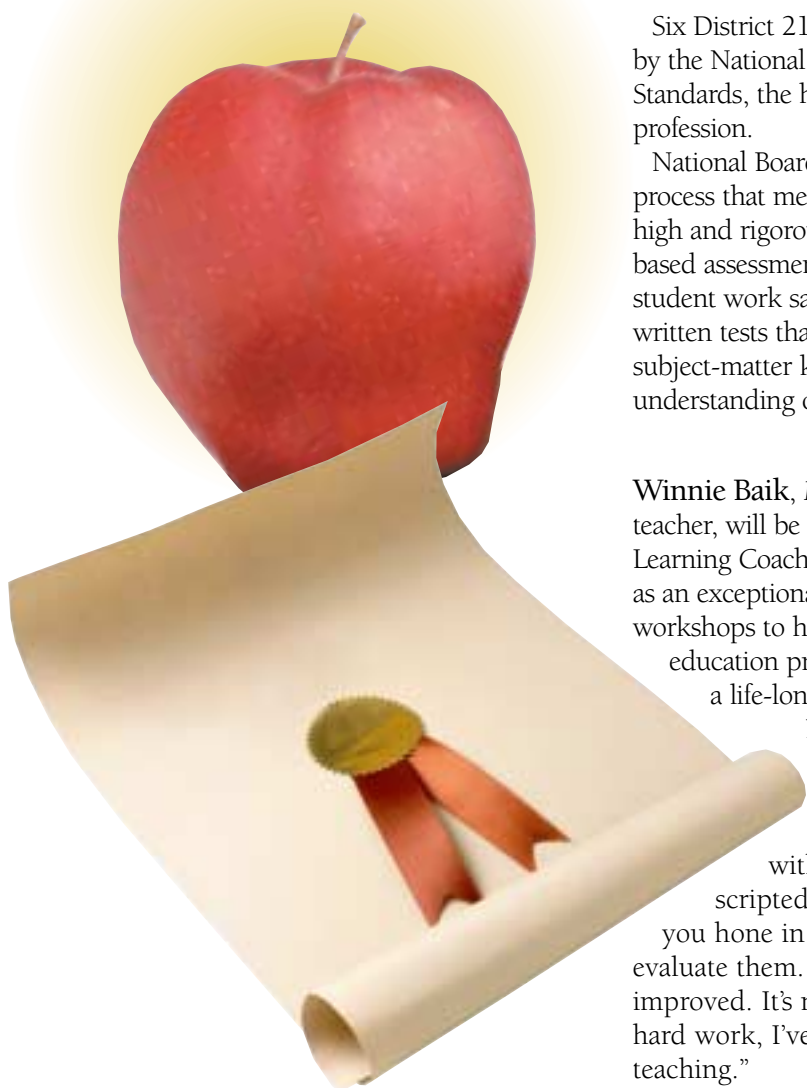
"Cooper's Cross Country Team truly supports each other," Klein continued. "Winning the state championship is really exciting, but it's equally important that they are good sports. It made their championships much more special because of how they handled themselves, particularly this season. They knew they were good teams, but

there was no swagger to their step. They ran their hardest, supported each other and their competitors. It's a testament to their coaches, their parents, and the kids themselves."

Laurie Morgenthal and Tim Thiessen co-coached both teams together. "We have a good program and good support from the elementary schools and the community," said Thiessen. "One of the great things about cross country is the family atmosphere. We practice together. We are a fraternity of runners. Running is a tough sport. Your body may say, 'It's time to give up,' and the mind is saying 'We have another half mile to go.' We want to cheer everyone from the first-place runner to the last person crossing the finish line. They are all working hard."

"We set team goals as well as goals with each student," Thiessen continued. "We want every goal to be challenging. Beyond that, we pride ourselves on our sportsmanship."

Six Teachers Achieve National Board Certification



Six District 21 teachers were certified this past year by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the highest credential in the teaching profession.

National Board Certification is a one- to three-year process that measures a teacher's practice against high and rigorous standards through performance-based assessments, including teaching portfolios, student work samples, videotapes, analysis and written tests that probe the depth of each teacher's subject-matter knowledge, and his or her understanding of how to teach those subjects.

Winnie Baik, *Longfellow Elementary School* 4th grade teacher, will be moving next year to become Learning Coach at Riley Elementary School. "As well as an exceptional teacher, she has presented workshops to her colleagues and presented parent education programs. She is a great model of being a life-long learner, and we'll miss her," said Longfellow Principal Debby Serbin. "Certification tests how quick you are on your feet as a teacher," said Baik. "When you are dealing with other people, nothing is ever scripted. The certification process helps you hone in on your skills and critically evaluate them. You see what areas can be improved. It's nice to know that after a year of hard work, I've grown and improved my teaching."

"Certification tests how quick you are on your feet as a teacher,"

Dr. Janet Beyersdorfer, *Riley Elementary School*, instructional technology specialist, teaches computers to all students at Riley and also teaches gifted and enrichment classes. She is technical support for the building and designed the school's

website, which just earned the Illinois Computing Educators Exemplary Website Award. Check it out at www.riley.d21.k12.il.us. Dr. Beyersdorfer is also a regular contributor to the Read Write Think website run by the International Reading Association at www.readwritethink.org.

"I like being out here on the edge," said Dr. Beyersdorfer. "But I want to emphasize that I work as a member of an outstanding team. All of us are deeply committed to encouraging electronic literacy. We are exploring the electronic component of reading, writing and math. That's what we are working on every day."

"It was a lot of hard work, but I learned so much about myself and how I teach."

Janelle Krennrich, *London Middle School*, physical education teacher, spent three years to achieve certification. "I decided to do it to prove that I could meet the highest standards set for teachers," Krennrich said. "Certification helps you look at all aspects of

your class to make sure you are teaching to each student's level so they are emotionally and physically safe and comfortable in your class."

Krennrich began the process with a four-part portfolio which examined all aspects of her teaching, including making videotapes of her work. "You review the tapes and have peers review them. That was eye-opening." She also improved her knowledge in a wide range of topics including teaching students with disabilities, legal issues and biomechanics while preparing for the written test, which includes 12 questions, with 30 minutes to answer each question.

Sylvia Smith, *Frost Elementary School*, 2nd and 3rd grade Polish bilingual teacher, loved the challenge of preparing for certification. "It was a way to reflect on everything I've been doing so far," said Smith, who has been teaching in District 21 for six years. "It was a lot of hard work, but I learned so much about myself and how I teach. It makes you focus on how each student really does learn differently."

"I work with students who need a lot of support," Smith continued. "One of the things I love about this district is that it is so diverse. I was born in Poland and came here when I was young. I love to see these students getting support as they deal with culture shock. Because of the certification process, I now plan every lesson to reach every student and am integrating different strategies to reach every one."

"One of the things I love about this district is that it is so diverse."

Nelson Tapias, *Frost Elementary School*, 4th and 5th grade Spanish bilingual teacher, has been committed to encouraging and teaching parents to be a part of Frost School. Tapias is working his way through a Masters Program, but found the certification process was also valuable. "You take what you are already doing and learn from that. It's a way to analyze and reflect on what you are doing now and grow from the experience."

Tapias teaches native Spanish speakers. "We use Spanish as a tool to build content and understanding that they can transfer to English," Tapias said. He chose to earn certification as a middle childhood specialist. "I'm already state certified to teach bilingual," he said. "This helped me understand where my students are supposed to be academically and socially."

"We use Spanish as a tool to build content and understanding that they can transfer to English"

Lisa Zimmerman, *Frost Elementary School*, 2nd and 3rd grade Spanish bilingual teacher, was also certified as a middle childhood specialist. "I learned a lot about setting goals for myself and my students. After going through certification, I have changed my lesson planning. Seeing myself teaching on videotape – what I look like, what I sound like, what kind of questions I ask and how the students respond – was very educational."

It took Zimmerman two years to achieve certification. "When I didn't get it the first year, I couldn't walk away. I felt I was close, and certification is a rigorous way of reminding you that you need instructional goals and a plan of action before you begin with the students. I walked away from this process by revising all my lesson plans. I feel my students are succeeding at so much more now. I can see the results."



The Parade Must Go On

The morning after Hurricane Katrina, Cooper Middle School Principal Jason Klein spoke to the student body to help them understand what was happening, and he invited interested eighth graders to join him for a meeting over lunch to discuss an appropriate response.

“The kids began brainstorming immediately,” said Klein. “We met on Tuesday. By Friday we knew we were going to do a walkathon with the proceeds going to the Red Cross, and we had a title, ‘The Parade Must Go On.’”

Teachers Jennifer Wong and Sara Hricik, sponsors of Cooper’s Community Service Organization stepped up and supported the students as about 20 eighth- and several seventh-graders gave up a month’s worth of lunch periods to plan. They contacted companies to solicit donations. They arranged for lighting equipment, a disc jockey and a band. They coordinated donations by local businesses.

They selected a high-traffic route through the

neighborhood, made the signs by hand to save costs and organized supervisors along the route. Over 800 Cooper students and staff began the walk September 30 at 2:30. At 3:30 the walk was opened to the public, and elementary and high school students joined them. They kept walking till 6:30. Local officials attended along with volunteer parents and family members.

“Our motto was ‘BG to the Baiou.’ We aimed at a collective miles walked of the total of miles between Buffalo Grove and New Orleans, and we were successful.” Klein said. “And the walk raised \$16,000.”

Klein called the walkathon, “one of the neatest things I’ve ever been involved with because the kids took charge and put it together. They made a significant contribution, and they learned so much from the experience, including things that are directly connected to school content. This was a real home run.”



Clockwise from top
Students and Teachers walking
 A group of students who were influential in the planning and execution of the walk-a-thon
 Handmade signs like this one dotted the route
 The two advisors of the Cooper Community Service Organization, teachers Sara Hricik (L) and Jennifer Wong (R)
 At the start of the Walk-A-Thon, local leaders send students on their way. From Left, Arlen Gould (Board of Education), Greg Klatecki (President of Wheeling), Jason Klein (Principal at Cooper M.S.), and Sidney Mathias (State Representative in the Illinois General Assembly).



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District 21's Program Evaluation System Gets National Exposure

The four-phase process that District 21 has developed for evaluating its programs has been shared with other school districts around the state through the Joint Annual Conference of Illinois Associations of School Boards, School Administrators and School Business Officials last November and around the country through the American Association of School Administrators in San Diego, California, last February.

"Program Evaluation: A Template for Accountability," was presented by District Superintendent Dr. Gary Mical, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Learning Dr.

Kate Hyland, and District 21 Board Member, Phil Pritzker. They were well received at both conferences.

"Educators everywhere are looking to evaluate and improve their programs," said Hyland. "We have evaluated many of our programs and we shared our process. We collect data from administrators, principals, teachers and students. A design team of stakeholders analyzes the data and then writes recommendations. Programs in the district will be evaluated this way as part of a five-year cycle. For our presentation, we talked about specific past experiences, and we were very well received."

"It was truly a pleasure to be part of the presentation," said Phil Pritzker. "Program Evaluation is such an important aspect of what we are doing. Every program can potentially be improved. Program evaluation helps us harness our resources to make sure we are affecting kids in a positive way."

For more information about District 21, evaluation system, check it out at www.d21.k12.il.us/superintendent/prgrm_evl_prcss.html.

Program evaluation helps us harness our resources to make sure we are affecting kids in a positive way.

London MATHCOUNTS Team Scores at State Competition

The season for London Middle School's MATHCOUNTS Team began in September as students met once a week after school to work on challenging math problems with their sponsor, accelerated math teacher Jan

Robinson. MATHCOUNTS is a nation-wide competition organized by the National Society of Professional Engineers.

At the regional competition at Oakton Community College, London's team competed against 200 other students from 25 area teams, and London finished in second place. Five London students placed in the top 25 percent,

with Liz Zaretsky in eighth place.

Liz Zaretsky, Brian Gates, Matt Idzik, Jessica Peterson, and alternate Kenny Sabol matched their problem-solving skills against over 200 top Illinois middle school mathematicians at the state competition on March 4.

The students competed on three tests. The first test was the Sprint Round consisting of 30 problems from geometry to advanced algebra which they had to complete in 40 minutes – no calculators! The second exam was a Target Round in which students were given eight problems (two problems at a time) with only six minutes to solve each two-problem set. The third test was the Team Round where all four London competitors put their heads together to complete 10 challenging problems before the 20-minute buzzer.

Liz Zaretsky scored high enough on the Sprint and Target rounds to take 17th place and make it into the top 8% of students participating in the state competition. London's team came in 9th place out of 42 teams.

"We are very proud of the hard work and time these students put into preparing for this competition," said Robinson. "They grew as a team, and each one of them has earned the respect of their classmates, as well as their teammates. I'm looking forward to next year and another successful season."

They grew as a team, and each one of them has earned the respect of their classmates, as well as their teammates