

the author

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



SUPERINTENDENT

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Community members,

Welcome to the Spring 2015 edition of *The Author*. Our District's schools, as you may know, are named after famous writers. While the name of this newsletter reflects the tradition of each school's identity, it also recognizes the stories of our students and the importance of those stories in their development. Storytelling is a powerful tool in helping students make connections, gain empathy and understanding of others, and explain a point of view. I hope that *The Author* will serve as a reminder to all of us to share our stories with those we care about and encourage others to tell their stories as well.

As we have done in the past, you will receive an edition of *The Author* in the fall and spring. These newsletters will include the latest news from Community Consolidated School District 21 and provide you with a glimpse into our story: the growth and progress of our students, our journey in becoming a Professional Learning Community, our dedication to preparing all students for success, and our commitment to fiscal responsibility.

As always, you can find the most up-to-date information about the District on our website (www.ccsd21.org) and you are more than welcome to call (847-537-8270) or email (district21@ccsd21.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

What We Believe

In School District 21, we seek to prepare all students for success throughout their lives.

We believe that student success is measured through academic as well as social and emotional growth rather than one test score.

We believe that learning should be focused on significant concepts and skills for application in a variety of real settings.

Inside...



Read about the experiences of CCSD21 students using modern tools to enhance their learning.

Education Leaders Rally Around Vision 20/20

School districts across Illinois are voicing support for Vision 20/20, a collaborative endeavor by education leaders, including school board members, superintendents, business officials and principals associations, to strengthen public education for all students.

The Vision is based on four pillars:

- Highly Effective Educators
- 21st Century Learning
- Shared Accountability
- Equitable and Adequate Funding

Together, these pillars serve as the key priorities that education advocates use to help guide elected officials in writing legislation that impacts students and schools. The initiative calls on the Governor, state legislators, local politicians, and public education supporters to rally together on behalf of all children.

This winter, the CCSD21 Board of Education passed a resolution in support of Vision 20/20 and efforts to improve educational opportunities for all students.

To add your name as a supporter of Vision 20/20, visit illinoisvision2020.org/online-petition.



Legislative Update

Aligned with the Vision 20/20 mission, CCSD21 is monitoring the following topics as the Illinois Senate and House progress through the spring legislative session:

- **EDUCATION FUNDING REFORM:** Education funding reform negotiations have continued this spring, resulting in Senate Bill 1, replacing Senate Bill 16 from last year. The legislation would change the way that education funding is distributed to school districts across the state. CCSD21 believes that any new funding solution should be evidence-based and provide both equitable and adequate funding to all districts.
- **CURRICULUM:** While some instructional and assessment requirements are issued at the federal level, others are adopted by the state legislature. CCSD21, its Board of Education, and supporters of Vision 20/20 advocate for increased local control so districts can make choices locally that will best support their students.
- **LICENSURE:** Illinois should allow and streamline educator reciprocity agreements with other states in order to attract the best quality teachers and administrators. Currently, an out-of-state teacher without an Illinois teaching license cannot teach in our state, even if he or she has completed the same or more rigorous requirements.



Modern tools enhance learning

Community Consolidated School District 21 serves nearly 7,000 students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The oldest of these students - the District's middle schoolers - were born in the early 2000s. They have never known life without cell phones, laptops, and the Internet.

In School District 21, each middle school student has his or her own Chromebook laptop. The device provides students and classes with opportunities to learn about and participate in events beyond the classroom's walls and create real products for real audiences.

"On group projects, everyone can work on the same thing at the same time," said James Cardaris, eighth grader at Cooper Middle School.

"Any changes that we make to a document are automatically saved," said Hannah Sternberg, eighth grader at London Middle School. "I love using Google Draw. I made a collage book and even had it printed and bound."

Access to the world's information is always available, but critical thinking skills and a passion for lifelong learning are as important as ever. School District 21 strives to make these connections and opportunities available for all students.

Carlos

London Middle School

"All of our tools are right there and it's easier to show our depth of thought. We're neater and better organized, and we don't have to be in one place to work together."



Shannon

Holmes Middle School

"We worked with students from London on a project. It was great to get input from other students you've never worked with before."



Jasmine

London Middle School

"We worked more efficiently as a group doing our research and we could post articles and videos on our website which couldn't be done before."



Carly

Cooper Middle School

"Having the Chromebooks makes it easier to communicate with teachers and classmates. We always have all of our resources available."



Brian

Holmes Middle School

"We can find information quicker and easier and check that it's accurate by finding it in more than one place."





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Areas of Focus

INCLUSIONARY PRACTICES

All students learn in an environment with their peers that engages and challenges them.

AUTHENTIC LEARNING

All students learn the curriculum by collaborating with their peers to solve real problems with real products that serve real audiences.