

Cook County School District No. 104

60th St & 74th Ave
Summit, IL 60501

Phone: (708)458-0505

Internet: www.sd104.us

Fax: (708)458-0532

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Kevin C. Cronin

"Mixed Blessings"

We are all looking forward to the opening of the new soccer stadium and home of the Chicago Fire Soccer Team. All of us have watched the site that was formerly occupied by the 3M Company and the Consolidated Trucking Terminal change over the past year and a half. This new stadium will be a nice asset to our communities.

Unfortunately, however, assets come at a price. The new soccer stadium has received tax exempt status, i.e. which means that the real estate taxes that our school district received will no longer be collected. The decision to apply for tax exempt status was made by the Village of Bridgeview. That decision, which was upheld, will cost our school district several hundred thousand dollars per year---EVERY YEAR. This is a significant loss to our district. If you were to try to put this in perspective that could translate to one less teacher per grade in the district. That means that class sizes could increase with an almost immediate negative impact on the learning gains of all of our students.

Tax breaks or tax incentives have been used successfully to stimulate the growth of industrial or commercial endeavors that are usually

filled with some short-term benefits for village governments and sometimes long-term benefits for the other taxing districts, such as the public schools, parks, libraries, etc. The dilemma comes in when these options of village governments are used to excess.

A school district cannot prevent a village government from giving a tax break to a company or corporation. As many of you are aware, the school districts are the biggest portions of everyone's tax bill, so it is no surprise that these tax breaks result in the greatest amount of "LOST DOLLARS" to the school districts.



Our school district has been on the losing end of several of these tax breaks over the past five to ten years. Large companies and corporations also file tax objections, assessment objections and protests. These decisions will always negatively impact our school district resulting in less revenue being collected when our costs, like yours at home, continue to rise. When these decisions are upheld the school district almost always loses in tax dollars that are seldom, if ever, collected.

We ask all of our parents and community members to remain vigilant when tax breaks are to be considered for large companies and corporations. We are not against all tax breaks. District 104 has supported some of these endeavors that have been requested. If a case can be made for the benefit of our students then we will speak out in favor of these initiatives. We do find it difficult, however, to justify the loss of several hundred thousand dollars every year for twenty soccer games when our mission is to serve 1,700 Pre-K through Eighth Grade stu-

dents for 180 days per year. Do you think this is right?

GRAVES SCHOOL

By: Mrs. Hope Durkin

It is hard to believe it is already 2006. These past four and a half months have literally flown by! I am still adjusting to my new position with its new responsibilities and am very thankful for an understanding and supportive faculty, staff and superintendent. I have some pretty big shoes to fill in following Mrs. Oakes' lead.



Our Ice Cream Social on Curriculum Night seemed to be a big hit with faculty, students and parents. The teachers enjoyed getting to meet the parents informally after their classroom presentations. We hope all parents in attendance went home well informed as to their child's/children's daily schedule, classroom procedures, grading policy, expectations, and at least one way to help their child/children at home with homework, test preparation, reviewing Math facts and/or vocabulary. The Book Fair was very successful, so much so that we are looking for a larger display area and increased assistance.

In hopes of increasing pride in being chosen Student-of-the-Month, we held a T-shirt design contest promoting good behavior and good

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grades. Students in Mrs. Nystrom's class turned in the winning design. Each month the students named Student-of-the-Month are allowed to wear the T-shirt in place of or over their uniform shirt on the day their names are announced. We are proud of all of our winners!

This year we have also continued our Character Education Program. Mrs. Brixie, our Social Worker, is in charge of this program. Our program began with a presentation by Jerry Jacoby, "Real Character Is No Accident." Along with some of our teachers, a new character trait is introduced and in some cases reviewed each month, by means of a short skit, play or video. The teachers are given handouts to use in the classroom to reinforce the trait and teachers and staff are encouraged to nominate a student for his/her good example by completing a "treasure card" and placing it in our treasure chest. Every two weeks those students who have been nominated are acknowledged over the intercom and receive a certificate, pencil and book. Their names are also displayed on our Character board in the hallway.

We continue to promote the "Arts" by arranging for the children to see touring companies performing at our school. In September, the Windy City Players performed "Tom Sawyer" and in December the Roberts Marionettes performed "The Land of Oz". We have also had various agencies come to speak to the children on specific topics; in September the Sheriff's Department came to talk about "Bike Safety" to grades K-3. In November, the Outreach Program of Health World, in conjunction with our designated Project Decide curriculum, came to speak to the Fourth Grade about "Choices and Consequences" and to the Third Grade about "Accepting Yourself and Others".



Our Family Activity Nights continue to provide an outlet for school families to come together for a night of fun. In October, Jerry Jacoby presented a family concert which included audience participation—both students and parents—and reinforced good character traits. Everyone in attendance had a great time and we especially enjoyed the newly formed Beatle group consist-

ing of Jerry Jacoby and three of our dads! In early November we had Anna Stange come and present a two hour workshop that included plaster mask-making and a program of songs from and about Mexico. The masks turned out beautifully! The student and parent "volunteers" for this project deserve a round of applause for their bravery! The December activity was movie night, where parents and students viewed "The Polar Express" on a big screen.

In mid December we took an all school field trip to see Disney's latest release, "The Chronicles of Narnia, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," a fantasy where children who get into the fantasy world of Narnia must time and again test their bravery and capacity for belief in order to come to the aid of others and to learn more about themselves. We hope everyone enjoyed it.

Our annual Christmas Concert was held on Friday, December 16th, at 9:00 a.m. All were invited to attend. Christmas vacation began at 2:45, December 16th. School resumed Monday, January 2, 2006.

On behalf of the staff, faculty, Mr. Olavarri and me, we wish you health and happiness in the New Year!

DIFFERENTIATION

I was first introduced to "differentiation" when I attended a Gifted Institute eight years ago. It was my first year teaching in District 104 and I had expressed an interest in teaching either After-School Reading or Gifted, not knowing what either really involved. Being assigned to the After-School Gifted Program I was required to attend a Gifted Institute and to take a graduate level course in "giftedness", in order to be a verified gifted teacher. Since that initiation, the more I hear about "giftedness" and read about it, the more I am convinced it could be the key to meeting the needs of individual students in the normal classroom.

Today's classrooms represent diverse learners; students have different learning needs, strengths, styles, interests and preferences. "One size fits all" instruction does not address the needs of many students. Increasing the variety in teaching, learning and assessment in order to reach more students and respond to their preferences, styles, interests, and strengths, is the goal of differentiation. It requires a change in the way of thinking about teaching and learning. It provides high levels of challenge, and active engagement in rigorous, relevant and significant learning. It acknowledges what students already know and can do. It recognizes that students do not all need to do the same work in the same way. It results in differenti-

ated or tiered assignments to better respond to students' specific learning needs. It uses flexible instructional grouping, a form of grouping for instruction, pacing, and curriculum that allows for movement of students between and among the groups based on their progress and needs. It creates a respectful environment where the importance and value of all students' work is affirmed. It creates fair and equitable processes for evaluating student learning and assigning grades.

An important aspect of successful differentiation is staff development, an on-going plan for training. Effective staff development includes in-service training that provides both ongoing instruction in technique and follow-up activity that facilitates the application of new knowledge and skills in the classroom. It isn't a curriculum that requires the purchase of supplies. It's a way of thinking about teaching and about the diversity of students. It is a collection of strategies that enable the teacher to better address and manage the variety of learning needs in the classroom.

WALKER SCHOOL

By: Mrs. Angel Gronkowski

Walker is having another wonderful school year! The students are busy learning and the teachers are always looking for new and innovative ways to present the curriculum.



We again would like to thank the Bedford Park Fire Department for the fire safety assembly they presented during the month of October. In May, our students will take their yearly field trip to the firehouse and review more fire safety tips. In October we discussed anti-drug subjects during Red Ribbon Week. Our third and fourth graders took a field trip to the Robert Crown Center. We also had Dave and Jody singing and dancing with their anti-drug message. In February, Miss Illinois will be here to speak to the students about making good choices. Visit the school district website to view all of the pictures.

We believe the educational process is ever-changing and our mission is to promote and to instill the love of learning and to create life-long learners.

The students put on an outstanding Holiday Assembly on December 8. Many parents and grandparents came out to see the yearly program. Again, visit the website to view the pictures.

We want to thank the PTC for the wonderful programs they have provided for our students so far. The Affy Tapple sales were a huge success. The pumpkin decorating was fun for all the students and staff. We would also like to thank Mrs. Paul for donating all of the pumpkins.

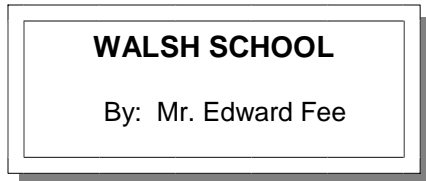


We had a wonderful SOXtober at Walker. We listened to the Sox's theme songs during lunchtime and had several Sox days. When they won the World Series, the PTC officers came and served vanilla ice cream with black and white sprinkles. They also made a Sox button for everyone to wear. Walker congratulates the World Series Champion White Sox team.

We look forward to all of the classroom parties the PTC will sponsor. We thank them for all the school assemblies they have sponsored for us. They will view the Pro Kids Assembly and The Oz Puppets.

The Student Council has also been very busy. They held a food drive in November. All the food was donated to the Summit Food Pantry. They also decorated a Christmas tree with new mittens. All of the mittens were donated to a local church.

We are looking forward to our Field Day, 4th Grade Luncheon, Kindergarten Celebration and the entire classroom end of the year activities. Thanks to all of the wonderful parents that help make all these activities possible.



Outstanding Achievement and Honor Roll

Congratulations go to the following students who have been given Outstanding Achievement and Honor Roll status for their 1st Quarter Report Cards.

Grade 2: Bryan Hernandez, Karolina Krzak, Kylie Petersen, Abigail Pinon, Gytis Simonaitis, Erica Barajas, Kyle Cross, Francisco Hernandez, Alison Gardner, Savoy Powell, David Rosales, Eduardo Farfan, Leah Johnson, Isaias Marquez, Saul Morales, and Angelica Cortez.

Grade 3: Emir Asani, Marco Cervantes, Dionna Petrizzo, Munther Saadeh, Vendim Dardovski, Gabriel Calderon, Noel Chavez, Emilio Palacios, and Andres Ramirez.

Grade 4: Yilda Acosta, Jesus Cortez, Emily Lopez, Jose Rosas, Rimsha Aslam, Gustavo Calvillo, Kyle Dusk, Graciela Garcia, Leonel Garcia, Brandon Giacobbe, Justin Hollis, Sal Incandella, Guillermo Islas, Gabriel Marcelo, Ana Samaniego, Agnes Szcapaniak, Stephanie Velazquez, Lidia Olguin, Edwin Benitez, Guadalupe Castro, Missael DeLaTorre, Julie Gardner, D'Ken Jones, Alex Kamieniarczyk, Jazzmine Lucas, Athziri Martinez, Amanda Mercado, Selena Montesdeoca, Krista Adams, Ruben Andraca, Daisy Duenas, Edgar Huerta, Darius Jiles, Emani Sanders, Natalia Small, Tony Zizzo, Nimrah Ashraf, Lizette Cruz, Eric DeLaTorre, Maria Farfan, Yair Gonzalez, Augustas Grikenas, Jocelyne Lopez, Raul Macias, Amadeus Morales, Perla Nava, Gerald Regep, John Silva, and Nataki Whitten-Jackson.

Student of the Month

More congratulations go to the following students who have been chosen Student of the Month at Walsh School. This honor has been given to these students by their classroom teachers based upon the following characteristics:

- Demonstrates conscientious effort to do his/her best.
- Commits random acts of kindness.
- Makes an effort to consistently show self-control.

- Is open to compromise.
- Offers a helping hand to others.
- Respects staff and other students.
- Exhibits responsibility in all areas.

September:

- AERO Danny Kaleta
- Kdg Joseph Mlinarcik, Gladys Acosta, Breanna Giebudowski
- Gr. 1 Yurithza Rosas, Giselle Catano, Karen Garcia
- Gr. 2 Karolina Krzak, Erica Barajas, Saul Morales
- Gr. 3 Jake Duplessis, Noel Chavez
- Gr. 4 Yilda Acosta, Selena Montesdeoca, Lizette Cruz

October:

- AERO Julian Villagrana
- Kdg Vianni Bustos, Lauren Gardner, Lilia Cortez
- Gr. 1 Yareli Cortez, Fausto Leyva, Samuel Marquez
- Gr. 2 Jocelyn Albor, Francisco Hernandez, Ceasar Silva
- Gr. 3 Diana Idrogo, Gabriel Claderon
- Gr. 4 Jose Rosas, D'Ken Jones, Maria Farfan

ISAT/IMAGE Testing

In mid-March of each school year, many of School District 104's students take one of the two standardized tests administered by the State of Illinois: either the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) or the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE). ISAT and IMAGE are statewide measures of student performance and are reflected in state report cards issued in the fall. Each test forms the basis for a school's adequate yearly progress under the federal No Child Left Behind act, are factors in School District 104's accountability policy, and are indicators of individual student learning.

Beginning on March 13, 2006, the ISAT will be given to students in grades three through eight in the subject areas of reading and mathematics, and in the subject area of science for students in grades four and seven. These ISAT assessments measure individual student achievement relative to the Illinois Learning Standards and are one measure of student learning. The state also uses the results to report student achievement to the public.

Similarly, the IMAGE will be given to qualifying students in grades three to eight in the areas of reading and mathematics beginning on the same date. These IMAGE tests measure the

progress of students with limited English proficiency (LEP) in attaining English-language reading skills needed to achieve the Illinois Learning Standards. IMAGE tests are administered to LEP students who have been in either a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) or Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) program for less than three years.

The ISAT and IMAGE are valuable assessments. In addition to measuring how well District 104 and its schools are implementing the Illinois Learning Standards, they are also crucial for students, teachers, and parents to have a sense of how students are performing on an individual level. The results of these tests are then used to identify strengths and weaknesses in the District and schools' curriculum, which are then used to develop District and school improvement plans.

**WHARTON
5th GRADE CENTER**

By: Mrs. Sharon McGuire

In the midst of learning, the students at Wharton 5th Grade Center will also be exposed to a variety of new skills through several special presentations. Our students will participate in a school health program offered by the Chicago Bears. The First & Goal School Program: How to Score a Touchdown for a Healthy Life was created by Staley Da Bear, the Chicago Bears team's official mascot. This program is to educate our youth about the benefits of living a healthy life. Staley and his MC will jumpstart the desire of Wharton students to begin living a smarter and healthier life by combining education and comedy into a high energy show!

*Enjoy
Good Health*

Students will learn the 4-

downs to scoring a healthy touchdown in the game of life. Those 4-downs are the following: eat healthy, drink plenty of water, get proper rest, and be physically active. The objective of the program is to encourage the students to take Staley's 12 Week Fitness Challenge. For 12 weeks, students will chart their progress on their way to living a healthier life by following the 4 downs. Every student who completes the challenge will get a prize but there will also be a Grand Prize given to a select number of students. Everyone who completes the 12 week challenge will have their name put in a Grand

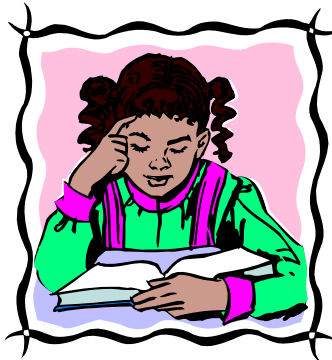
Prize Drawing. If a student's name is selected he/she will win:

- 2 tickets to a Chicago Bears Home Football Game
- 1 VIP parking pass to the same game
- 1 Staley Plush Doll
- A 10 minute on field tour before the game begins
- An autograph football from some Chicago Bears players
- And a \$100 Bill from Staley himself!

The school with the most students completing the 12 Week Challenge will get a trophy. Here's hoping that a student from Wharton will be the Grand Prize Winner and our school will have the honor of receiving the trophy.

Wharton students will also have a speaker from Richard A. Devine Cook County State's Attorney's office who will present a program entitled "Choose Not to Lose." This program centers around not using drugs. In conjunction with our drug program, our students will visit Robert Crown Center and view "Drugs - Choice or Chance." This program covers drug use and abuse, their effects and why people use drugs. Students will become aware of how advertising, media and peer pressure can affect their decisions about drugs. There will also be a discussion about prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs, alcohol, tobacco, etc.

And just before our students become 6th graders, they will have the opportunity to view the Michael and Linda Program offered at the Robert Crown Center. These two separate programs sensitively address issues centering on puberty.



Some of our students will participate in Scholastic Book Clubs Classrooms Care - Reading is Giving 2005. For every 100 books a student reads, Scholastic Book Club will donate 100 books in the student's honor to children in need, including those effected by Hurricane Katrina. Parents encourage your child to read and reach his/her goal so that they can give the gift of reading to others.

Our students will continue to be busy learning for the balance of the school year.

A Day in the Life of an Assistant Principal

By: Rodolfo V. Olavarri

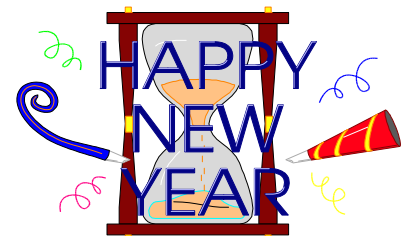
"Although the role of the assistant principal is one of the least researched and least discussed topics in educational leadership ... but the importance of the position in the day-to-day operation of the school site." D. Weller.

Rodolfo V. Olavarri is an Assistant Principal at Heritage Middle School and Graves Elementary. He has a busy day each day...a varied day...a tiring day, but he is always up and ready for the next one and whatever it may bring and as Mr. Lewis would say "Give me your best shot" is his motto. Here is how he describes his working day:

"My duties as a middle school assistant principal can be very challenging, yet I find it one of the most gratifying tasks I've ever taken on. The hours are long and well spent. I find myself often at a loss of time due to the amount of energy that's required to help students through this important time of their lives.

My typical day begins visiting our breakfast monitors and making sure they do not need anything, follows with morning bus duty, bus number 6(Blue) to Wharton school and my daily check-in of our Fifth Grade Center students. Once everyone is on their way to their particular school and no child is left behind, I return calls to parents, usually regarding a concern they would like attended to. From that point, I try to handle any discipline concerns, do classroom walk-ins, and get ready for lunch duty. This cycle usually repeats until dismissal of school, at which time I do the afternoon bus duty with the assistance of my colleagues.

Other administrative duties include supervising staff and daily tasks, going to district meetings, translating, having teacher or parent conferences, and more. There is truly never enough time in the day, but we somehow manage to make it work. I'm delighted to be here serving the community and working with such dedicated educators."

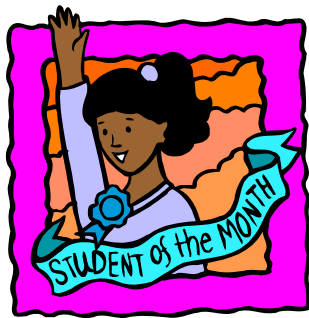


HERITAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL

By: Mr. Dennis Lewis

Heritage Middle School has been and will continue to be quite busy in the coming months. Even though we have just reached the mid-way point of the second quarter of school, we have many important details that still need to be dealt with. Some of these details will be stated later in this article.

The first quarter of school ended on October 21st. Heritage Middle School parents received report cards at the parent-teacher conferences on Nov. 9th. Parents received good news for the most part. Of our 489 students, 181 of them achieved academic honors for the quarter. That represents 37% of our student population. 13 middle school students maintained straight A's for the quarter. 75 seventh grade students, 50% of all seventh graders, achieved academic honors. 411 of our students, 84% of all students, passed every single subject. Congratulations to all of our honor roll students as well as all the students that passed every subject for the first quarter of school. 78 students did receive failing grades, but 42 of those students only failed one subject. 20 students failed two subjects. 16 students failed more than two subjects. Those 16 students equal 4% of our overall population. The most frequently failed subject was language arts.



Heritage Middle School staff have selected and recognized students of the month for September, October, and November so far this school year. This award is named in honor of Mr. Armidor Colavecchi, retired teacher from District 104. Monthly winners are eligible for the student of the year award presented in the springtime. As of this date, over 90 middle school students have been recognized as students of the month this school year. Eight students have been honored more than once. And one outstanding student has been recognized for three consecutive months. Congratulations to all of our students of the month.

A new program at Heritage Middle School this year is the after school math homework club. All students are invited, but students that are struggling in math are strongly encouraged to attend. The club meets on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00-4:00 p.m. Staff members from Heritage as well as Argo High School honor roll students are present to help students with math problems, concepts, and homework. If you are interested in this program, please contact Mr. Conlon, Mr. Lewis, or Mr. Olavarri at 458-7590.

What has happened so far this school year? Well, here we go. School began on August 23rd with a half day of school. Even though August was a short month, we found time for student assemblies, girl's basketball tryouts, and staff met with their student-advocacy groups for the first time. September was the start of the school-wide fundraiser to raise money to cover the cost of team shirts. As a result, team shirts only cost \$3.00 each. **We still have shirts available for purchase.** September also included the curriculum night program, first quarter progress reports, the NJHS Back to School Dance, fall pictures, the start of the after school math homework club, the girl's basketball parent-night program, our first spirit day activity, and the start of girl's basketball games. October continued with many girl's basketball games, the first PTO meeting of the year, boy's basketball tryouts, the end of the first quarter of school, and the NJHS Halloween Dance. November included the famous eighth grade graduation cap and gown measurements, picture retake day, an eighth grade field trip to Iron Oaks, parent-teacher conferences, the end of the girl's basketball season, the boy's basketball parent night program, boy's basketball games, and second quarter progress reports. Also, many, many lessons have been taught each and every day to your children, our students, by the dedicated staff members of Heritage Middle School.

There are some important events scheduled for January involving the eighth grade students and parents. Argo High School counselors will be at Heritage on January 9th to speak with the various homeroom students about the high school registration process. Argo High School will be hosting their annual parent night program on January 11th. We would encourage all eighth grade students and parents to attend. Argo High School counselors will return to Heritage on January 12th and 13th to register the eighth graders for classes for the 2006-2007 school year. Parents are invited to attend the registration process. Information will be sent home in advance of the registration dates. Argo High School has cancelled the annual Step Up Program, so students will not be participating in that activity this school year.

Upcoming events at Heritage include the girl's volleyball parent night program on January 19th, an NJHS Movie Day on January 20th, a student-teacher volleyball game on February 3rd, a PTO meeting on February 15th, the NJHS Valentine's Dance on February 17th and boy's volleyball tryouts on February 20th. Please remember to attend parent-teacher conferences on February 9th from 1:00-3:00 and 4:30-7:30 p.m. Please don't hesitate to contact the Heritage Middle School office at 458-7590 if you have any questions or concerns.

FIFTH YEAR AS A MIDDLE SCHOOL HOW WE HAVE CHANGED



Five years have really gone by quickly. I cannot believe that this is the fifth year of the middle school approach. Time does fly by when you are having fun, and trust me, being around students and working with students is fun most of the time.

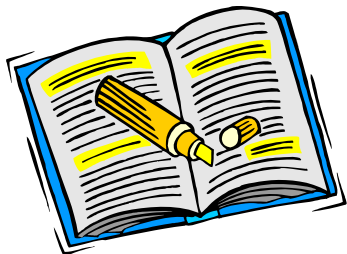


How have we changed? I decided to compare the academic information from the first quarter of 2000, the final year of Graves Junior High, and the academic information from the first quarter of 2005, the fifth year of Heritage Middle School. The student enrollment is a huge difference. In November of 2000 we had 284 students. In November of 2005 we had 489 students. That is a difference of 205 students. In November of 2000 we only had seventh and eighth graders. In November of 2005 we had sixth, seventh, and eighth graders.

More students are achieving academic honors presently, though the percentage of students is similar. In November of 2000 we had 99 students achieve academic honors, 65 seventh graders and 34 eighth graders. That equaled 35% of our student population. In November of

2005 we had 181 students achieve academic honors, 53 sixth graders, 75 seventh graders, and 53 eighth graders. That equaled 37% of our student population. 9 students achieved Straight A's in 2000 while 13 achieved Straight A's in 2005. 37 students achieved AB honors in 2000 while 53 students did so in 2005. 53 students achieved B honors in 2000 while 115 students achieved B honors in 2005.

The comparisons of students with failing grades are interesting. In November of 2000 we had 100 students fail one or more subjects. That was 35% of our student population. In November of 2005, 78 of our students failed one or more subjects. That was 16% of our student population. In November of 2000 58 of our failing students failed two or more subjects, 20% of our student population. In November of 2005 36 of our failing students failed two or more subjects. That was less than 8% of our student population. The most frequently failed subject in November of 2000 was mathematics, with 58 students, 20%, failing for the first quarter of school. The most frequently failed subject in November of 2005 was language arts, with 32 students, 6.5%, failing for the first quarter of school. As far as mathematics, 24 students, 5%, failed for the first quarter of school, 2005. Of interest, 16 students, 6%, failed physical education/health in 2000 while 3 students, less than 1%, failed physical education/health in 2005.



Our academic program has changed since 2000. We have switched from a traditional junior high schedule to block scheduling. We have added fine arts, exploratory math, exploratory reading, and additional higher level mathematics classes to our curriculum. We have added an advisory component, a student-advocate program, and a buddy program for students new to the District. Students in each particular grade follow their own schedule, and thus, avoid contact with one another for the most part. For example, in 2000 we had one lunch period for all the students. Now we have three lunch periods, one per grade. Teachers also have a daily team planning time that is utilized for lesson planning, school improvement, student advocacy, and the all important teacher assistance team concept. The team planning concept was not part of the 2000 schedule.

Student safety is always a concern. I believe the students at Heritage Middle School are provided

a safe and secure environment. In 2000 we relied heavily on lunchroom monitors for supervision at lunchtime, and staff before and after school. In 2005 we have specific teachers, aides, and even lunchroom monitors that have daily supervision duties before school, at lunchtime, and after school. We have the staff performing the same duties every day. This consistency does make it easier to monitor and ultimately provides us with a safer school site. Doors are kept secure during the day, and all visitors must enter through the office doors. Buzzers have also been added to all the doors in recent time. And we always conduct our required safety drills with the students.

Heritage Middle School has gone through changes each and every year, usually a change in the schedule. I do believe that there are many positive aspects of the middle school approach. It was always my hope that some day we would be a model middle school that others would want to emulate. If we continue to make progress that can be achieved.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

By: Mrs. Patricia Derrig
Special Education Director

Early Intervention Services

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday and that everyone was able to spend quality time with family and friends. I also hope every one is rested and ready for the months ahead. Winter is most definitely here!

Due to the number of young families residing in our community, I thought I would take this opportunity to discuss the Early Intervention Service process. Early Intervention Services are available in our community for infants and toddlers under the age of three who have a "developmental delay, a high probability of developmental delay, or who are at risk of having a developmental delay". A developmental delay is a delay in one or more of the following areas of childhood development: cognitive; physical, including vision and hearing; speech and language; psychosocial development; or adaptive behavior - self-help skills. Delays are identified through a number of diagnostic procedures.

Child and Family Connections # 12 is a program operating under the auspices of the Illinois Department of Human Services. CFC #12 provides services for children residing in south Cook County. Referrals for services can be made to CFC by parents, doctors, hospitals, or any indi-

vidual who is concerned about a child's development. Once a referral is made, a service coordinator is assigned to the family to begin the screening process. This process will determine whether the child is eligible for services. The screening usually involves diagnostic testing to determine whether there is an impairment, interviews with family members, and observations of the child. If a child is found eligible, the CFC develops an Individualized Family Service Plan for that child. They are responsible at this point for monitoring all services included in the Service Plan. The following services are available for eligible children:

- Speech Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Developmental Therapy
- Health Services
- Social Work
- Nursing
- Nutrition
- Psychology
- Audiology
- Vision Services
- Assistive Technology Services
- Transportation
- Medical Diagnostics
- Family Training and Support
- Service Coordination.
- Transition services, which occur when the child turns three.

If you would like to learn more about Early Intervention or if you would like to make a referral, please contact Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago, Child and Family Connections at 1-800-597-7798.

The A.E.R.O. Special Education Cooperative, in conjunction with Blue Cap Parent Infant Center and Child and Family Connections, will be conducting an infant-toddler screening on Friday, February 24th, 2006 from 9:30-12:30 P.M. To make an appointment for a screening, please contact Maureen McCormack at 708-496-3330 x 248.

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LAP)

By: Jon Baricovich
Program Manager

ACCESS

The changing landscape of the field of Bilingual Education has traditionally been fiercely contested within the national arena of educational debate.

Proponents of different educational models have offered discourse on the best way to educate the sizeable linguistically diverse student population across the country. The greatest shake-up in the field of education has undoubtedly been the emergence of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which puts the burden of demonstrating educational results on individual school districts. The accountability measures introduced by NCLB have finally been interpreted and implemented in the areas of Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language. These new measures are far reaching and will make a decided impact in the way we educate students who are learning English as a second language. Under NCLB, school districts throughout the country will be held accountable for the instructional programs they provide to English Language Learners (ELL's). NCLB mandates that every district receiving federal Title III funding demonstrate progress toward English language proficiency and academic achievement within the ELL student population. Annual measures of achievement in these areas are calculated and reported based on the results of various standardized assessments. Districts failing to meet minimum requirements will face federal sanctions, including program restructuring, implementation of mandatory tutoring programs and withholding of funding.

The ACCESS test will measure both social and academic language proficiency and is anchored in the newly adopted English Language Proficiency standards developed by the WIDA consortium. It will measure not only basic communication skills, but also academic language in the core subject areas of language arts, science, mathematics and the social sciences. It is designed to provide a more accurate picture of how districts are preparing their ELL students for entry into rigorous, academically challenging mainstream classrooms. It will also provide more reliable data for the State to determine accountability measures as mandated by NCLB.

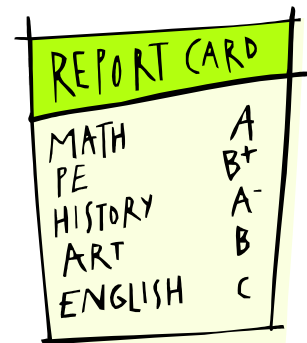
Over the past five years, the District has made the education of the ELL student population a major focal point of its educational philosophy. Each of the District schools has seen a drastic increase in the educational opportunities available for this very unique sector of the student population. New staff, resources and instructional programs have been introduced to ensure that the ELL student population is provided with a linguistically enriched, culturally sensitive and academically rigorous curriculum. The ACCESS for ELL's represents a wonderful opportunity for the District to demonstrate the fine work in which the Language Assistance Program staff as well as the ELL student population have been engaged during this recent period of transition.

Further information will be provided at each school at a later date, including exact testing days and which students will be participating in the ACCESS for ELL's. As this new testing requirement is a State mandate under NCLB, all costs incurred will be borne by the State and not by the district. Results of the ACCESS for ELL's will be reported and made available in the fall of the 2006-2007 school year. Any questions regarding the ACCESS for ELL's or any other issues involving instructional programs for ELL's should be directed to the Language Assistance Program Office at 458-0506.

which was devised in 2000, and to determine if changes need to be made. We hope to include in the revised math curriculum guide the descriptors that coincide with the State standards and earmark certain assessments at each grade level that all students will take. By doing this teachers will have a better idea as to which students need more practice on specific skills that they will be tested on the ISAT.

The Survey Says...

We have sent out a survey to the staff to get their input on our present math series to see the strengths, weaknesses and decide if it is really necessary to purchase a new math series.



Other areas of concern that the DCC are addressing are the report cards and a library curriculum guide. There has been some discussion regarding the report cards being standard-based. This seems to be the current trend in school districts to take the State Standard Goals and Objectives, which students will be tested on the ISAT, and match them to their report cards giving parents an idea as to how their child is progressing in meeting the goals and objectives. This of course will take time to research and see how other districts are implementing a standard-based report card.

Although we presently have a library curriculum, it is out-dated and needs to be revised taking into account the different means that students can now presently research material using technology and the Internet.

However, our top priority will be first to revise the math curriculum guide and then look into updating our report cards and the library curriculum

COMING IN OUR NEXT EDITION

The ESL/Bilingual 3rd Annual Fun Fair. Please look for our flyer requesting your assistance.



This academic school year, the Illinois State Board of Education has required that all public school districts in the state administer a secured and standardized English language proficiency assessment. The WIDA consortium, an educational think tank represented by Illinois and nine other states across the country, has developed the ACCESS for ELL's English language proficiency assessment. The ACCESS for ELL's test will be administered to all ELL's in the state of Illinois in February 2006. ELL's are those students who are exposed to a language other than English in the home and have been identified as deficient in some area of English. All told, the ELL student population across District 104 continues to comprise nearly 30% of the total population (roughly 475 students in the five district schools).

THE CURRICULUM CONNECTION

By: David Dudiak
Coordinator of Instructional Programs & Special Projects

The District Curriculum Council's (DCC) main focus is math since it is up for review this school year. We have formed a math committee to look at our present math curriculum guide,