

Board of Education Highlights

October 22, 2003 – Sandburg Elementary School

Good News

- In 1991 Sandburg Elementary School was the first school in DuPage County to earn the Earth Day flag through the DuPage County Environmental Education Program. On October 21, Sandburg received its second flag for the school's work in recycling and environmental education.
- Lisa York, school psychologist, was recognized as President of the Illinois School Psychology Association and Communications Chair of the National Association of School Psychologists. During School Psychology Awareness Week in November, District 200 psychologists will be giving each school a resource book with handouts designed to help parents help their child with a variety of school and health related issues.

The Board took the following action:

- Approved the second set of bids for the high school construction and renovation projects. The outdoor work will prepare both high school sites for the construction of additions in the spring and includes such things as site utility and electrical work, retaining walls for storm water basins, paving and concrete work. The bids, totaling \$3.2 million, were slightly under budget.
- Approved the extension of property, casualty and liability insurance with Indiana Insurance Company. This year's premium increased 9 percent, a relatively small increase compared to last year's increase of 46 percent.
- Posted for public review revised curricula for elementary vocal music; middle school music; and high school band, orchestra, vocal music, music unlimited and music theory. The curricula will be on display in the Wheaton, Warrenville, Winfield and Carol Stream public libraries until November 21.

Tax Levy Public Hearing

The Board scheduled a public hearing on the proposed 2003 tax levy at 7:30 p.m. November 12 at Lincoln Elementary School. The Board is requesting an increase of 9.08 percent, recognizing the tax cap will limit the amount of new revenue to about 3.5 percent. The Board levies at the higher rate in order to take advantage of any unexpected growth in equalized assessed valuation. Illinois school districts must adopt their tax levy no later than December, months before the District's equalized assessed valuation (EAV) is released in April. That is why school districts must make a 'best guess' in their levy request, basing it on historical factors such as previous increases in EAV. Since 1995 the actual levy increase has ranged from a high of 5.11 percent in 1997 to a low of 2.74 percent last year.

Annual Testing Report

District 200 students continued their strong performance on state achievement tests last year, scoring an average of 21 percent higher than the state average on the 18 tests. Dr. Margo Sorrick, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, discussed how the District's school improvement efforts are showing results.

In the 18 areas tested on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test and the Prairie State Achievement Exam, scores increased from last year on 12 tests, remained the same on 2, and dropped slightly on 4. Most notable were increases in the high school scores, where the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards increased in all five areas tested.

Dr. Sorrick described the improvement process used by the District and individual schools, noting that both have stepped up efforts to be sure that all students are getting the support they need to meet or exceed the state's learning standards. For example, she noted that elementary teachers received training last year to help them instruct students in the three writing styles—expository, narrative and persuasive--tested on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). This year's writing scores increased 9 percent at the third grade and five percent at the fifth grade.

This year District goals are aimed at improving student achievement in reading, writing and math by at least three percent. Each goal includes a rationale for the goal selection and how it will be measured; the activities, timeline and the individuals responsible; and the resources needed to implement the activities. Individual schools identified their improvement goals based on an analysis of their students' test scores.

Dr. Sorrick also discussed the impact of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation on District 200. At the core of NCLB is the expectation that all students will meet or exceed the learning standards in their state in reading and math by 2014. Between now and then, schools and school districts must make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward that goal. In the state of Illinois progress is measured by layering student performance on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) for students in third, fifth and eighth grades; the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) for high school juniors; the Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA) for children with individual education plans; and the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE) for students with limited English proficiency. Layered on top of the achievement scores are attendance rates at the elementary and middle schools, graduation rates at the high schools, and the percentage of students who are tested.

It is no longer sufficient to look at student scores in the aggregate, however. Annual progress must be made by subgroups, as well. NCLB identifies the subgroups as low-income students, students who have limited English proficiency, those who have an individual education plan, and five ethnic group designations.

The impact of this formula places nearly 1,700 Illinois schools in jeopardy of not making AYP. If a school doesn't make AYP for two consecutive years, the school is placed on a warning list and if it receives Title I funds, it must offer all students school choice. The list of Illinois schools not making AYP has not been released, but is expected within the next several days.

Next meeting:

November 12 at Lincoln Elementary School