

Board of Education Highlights

February 8, 2006 – Washington Elementary School

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Catalani referenced the series of articles that appeared in the Daily Herald Feb. 5-7 regarding the various ways school districts structure their bond sales. Because District 200 appeared in a chart that accompanied one of the articles, he clarified the District's bond sale procedures since 2000 as follows:

Thanks to the Daily Herald for its series on bond sales that appeared February 5-7. Unfortunately, I believe the chart that ran on February 7 did not correctly convey the circumstances that impact District 200's bonded indebtedness. The chart failed to indicate how much money was authorized by the community and how much the District actually received. In all of our issues we never exceeded the amount authorized by and/or promised to our community. For example, we ran a referendum in 2003 asking for \$72 million to expand our high schools. We received \$72 million. Any premiums the District received were used to discount the principle amount of bonds issued and to pay the costs associated with the bond sale. Premiums did not impact our ability to access the lowest interest rates available at the time. In addition, we clearly communicated the impact the bonds would have on our tax rate and said in all of our presentations and written materials that we intended to extend the bond retirement schedule in order to take advantage of historically low interest rates, a practice known as backloading. In doing that we reduced the projected tax rate increase by one third. Since the article was critical of capital appreciation bonds and zero coupon bonds, our taxpayers should know we have not sold either type of these bonds. Finally, I'd like to remind readers that since September 2003 the District has saved taxpayers nearly \$5 million in interest costs by refinancing existing debt at lower interest rates. . This is a complicated topic, but I feel compelled to assure residents that since I came to District 200 in 1999 we have honored our commitment to taxpayers and have never sold or collected more money than we asked the community to support.

Residents interested in learning more about school finance should attend a League of Women Voters sponsored meeting at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, February 16 at the Community Center. City Manager Don Rose and Dr. Catalani will present the local perspective on this topic. Ralph Matire, executive director of the Center for Budget and Tax Accountability, will also participate in the panel discussion.

A public hearing on the Board's intent to seek an extension to a waiver that allows students to attend school on Lincoln's Birthday and observe the President's Day holiday instead will be held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, February 15 in the Board Room of the School Service Center. Public hearings on waiver requests to be held at a time other than a regularly scheduled Board Meeting. The Board will act to formally request the waiver extension at its March 8 meeting.

Dr. Catalani said it has come to his attention that the reported \$4.6 million in maintenance costs for Hubble Middle School over the last six years include energy costs as well as fees for maintenance and capital improvements. Although the energy costs at Hubble are significantly higher than at the other three middle schools, these costs should be subtracted from the total we have spent on maintenance since 1999, bringing the number to \$2.7 million.

More than 180 district middle school students participated Feb. 8 in a Career Day hosted by the Wheaton Chamber Education Committee in partnership with IIT. Students from Franklin, Monroe, Hubble, and Wheaton Christian Grammar School talked with many career presenters to learn more about careers available to them when they complete their education. The Chamber sponsors this event to help students better understand the ever-changing work world, the realistic aspects of a variety of jobs, and the skills needed to "make it" in the workplace. Expenses for this event are supported by career grant funds.

Alison Stelatello, a seventh grader at Edison Middle School, was awarded the Gold Key for drawing, the highest award in the regional Scholastic Art competition last month. Alison's drawing will continue on to the national competition in New York with judging results announced in June. Edison was one of 30 schools and District 200's only school to compete in the 2006 regional Scholastic Art competition that is open to students in grades 7-12.

The Board took the following action:

- Approved renewed high school curriculum in percussion ensemble/studies, wind ensemble, junior varsity women's chorale/treble chorus, men's chorale, French 2 & 3, German 2, Spanish 2 & 3, and Communication Studies.
- Approved a resolution seeking an extension of time from the Illinois Commerce Commission on the Monroe Overpass project. The extension will allow the Wheaton Park District time to secure additional funding for the project.
- Approved the purchase of a new sound system to be used during Board of Education meetings.
- Approved an intergovernmental agreement with DuPage County to give the county a 10 X 652-foot parcel of land along Geneva Road outside the fence line at the Wheaton North High School field. The land is needed to add a stoplight at Geneva Road and Morse Street.
- Approved bids for electronic signboards at each high school.
- Reviewed the proposed student fee schedule for 2006-07. The fees will be adopted at the March 8 meeting after public review. The recommendation raises the technology fee to cover supplies for the increased number of computers, printers, and computer

users. The elementary registration fee is also proposed to increase \$2.00 to cover the costs of classroom calculators. The proposed fee schedule is attached.

Next Regular Meeting:

March 8 at Jefferson Preschool