The Best and Brightest

There are many reasons why I am so proud to serve as Superintendent of Champaign Unit 4 Schools. Recent recognitions received by several of our faculty, staff, and community members remind us all that we have some of the best and brightest in the profession serving our students. It is my pleasure to highlight these accomplishments.

Science has always been one of the more difficult teaching positions to successfully fill as so often those who excel in that field of study pursue other career fields. Recently, the Illinois Science Teachers Association (ISTA) named three Champaign teachers in their annual awards. Liz Dabrowski, a third grade teacher at Booker T. Washington STEM Academy, and Brandon Rutherford, a third grade gifted teacher at Garden Hills Elementary School, were named two of ISTA’s New Teachers of the Year. Elizabeth Slifer, a fourth grade teacher at Carrie Busey received the ISTA Outstanding Teacher of Science Award. These awards recognize teachers for excellence in facilitating science learning in their classrooms. It is incredible to know that our students are taught by professionals who are honored by their colleagues as being the best.

More Champaign Unit 4 Schools faculty, staff and community members were honored at this year’s Those Who Excel banquet. This annual recognition from the Illinois State Board of Education honors individuals for their outstanding service to students. The honorees from Unit #4 included:

- Alyssa Mayer, teacher at Booker T. Washington STEM Academy, won the Classroom Teacher Award of Recognition.
- Janet Khachaturian, Centennial High School parent and volunteer, won the Community Volunteer Award of Merit.
- Becky Restad, Attendance Secretary at Garden Hills Elementary School, won the Educational Service Personnel Award of Merit.
- The Champaign Schools Magnet Team, a group of administrators and teachers from the District’s three magnet elementary schools, won the Team Award of Recognition.
- Mi’Chelle Frazer, teacher at Booker T. Washington STEM Academy, won the Early Career Educator Award of Excellence.
- Kathy Hughes, Speech/Language Pathologist at Franklin Middle School, won the Student Support Personnel Award of Recognition.

It is important to note that these individuals were nominated by their colleagues, which speaks volumes to the high level of collegiality and respect shared among our faculty and staff, their support of each other, and their desire to honor great work. Additional honors were recently received by Cheryl Camacho, Interim Principal at Garden Hills, and Sheldon Turner, Operation Hope Coordinator. Both were named to the 40 Under 40 list by the Central Illinois Business Magazine, with Sheldon Turner being honored as Man of the Year. This award recognizes young professionals for their achievements in their careers, leadership ability, and dedication to community service.

I could go on and on highlighting the accomplishments of my Champaign Unit 4 Schools colleagues and these awards are only some of the things illustrating the dedication of our faculty, staff and volunteers. The most important work done in Unit 4 is the day to day interaction with our students and our community should be very proud of those who have made the decision to work in Champaign Unit 4 Schools. Public education and the teaching profession are under continuous scrutiny with increased expectations for higher performance. As Superintendent, I am very fortunate to work with such outstanding professionals and know the Champaign community is very proud of this level of excellence.

In memory of Paula Gaddis, Wendy Huckstadt, and Sandra Lentz.

Dr. Judy Wiegand
Superintendent

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Dr. Judy Wiegand, Superintendent
Board of Education: Laurie Bonnett, President; Jamar Brown, Vice President; Helen Savelay, Secretary; Lynn Stuckey, Parliamentarian; Kristine Chalifoux, Member; Kerris Lee, Member; Scott MacAdam, Member
Kenwood’s New Tech Focus Brings Computing Home

Kenwood Elementary School recently hosted a “Demystifying the Computer” workshop series for parents as part of a new school-wide technology focus. The series, which took place over the school’s fall intersession, gave parents the chance to work with Professor Dr. Martin Wolske and his students from the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS). Participants took apart and reassembled a computer, learned about software, and ultimately took home a personal computer—all free of charge, courtesy of GSLIS.

“We are looking for ways to infuse technology into the classroom, but we also know that access at home is imperative to our students’ digital literacy,” said Superintendent Dr. Judy Wiegand. “This collaboration with the University of Illinois and Kenwood is one way that we’re looking to build that capacity for students at the elementary school level. Connecting the experts in our community with students and families is a recipe for our collective success in the future.”

Kenwood has adopted a new school mission this school year: Technology and Literacy for the Community (TLC). The school is the first elementary school in the District to bring the Etoys computer programming software to the classroom as part of a collaboration with Illini For Kids, the University of Illinois Office for Mathematics, Science, Technology, and Engineering (MSTE) and the University of Illinois College of Education. The program has also been adopted at the District’s three middle schools. Kenwood teachers were trained over the summer on how to use Etoys and developed strategies to use when introducing students to computer programming concepts at a young age.

Kenwood’s building will undergo renovation during the 2014-2015 school year that will update the building’s technology infrastructure, in addition to updated classroom spaces, a new gymnasium, a secured front entrance, and updated administrative spaces.

Three Named National Merit Commended Students

Three Unit 4 students have been named Commended Students in the 2013-2014 National Merit Scholarship Program, including one from Centennial High School and two from Central High School.

The Commended Students from Unit 4 include:
- Anleen Cao, Centennial
- Priya Jain, Central
- Frank Kelly, Central

Students are eligible for National Merit honors by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test in the fall of their junior year. About 34,000 high scorers on the PSAT receive Letters of Commendation in recognition of their outstanding academic promise.

Commended Students are named on the basis of a nationally applied Selection Index score that may vary from year to year and is typically below the level required for participants to be named Semifinalists in their respective states. Although Commended Students do not continue in the competition for National Merit Scholarships, some of these students do become candidates for Special Scholarships sponsored by corporations and businesses.

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Community Dedicates Renovated Westview Elementary School

Champaign Schools held a dedication ceremony at the newly renovated Westview Elementary School on October 22.

“It was a wonderful experience welcoming the public into the renovated Westview,” said Superintendent Dr. Judy Wiegand. “We have been able to do incredible work on some of our elementary schools thanks to support from the community.

“The school has been transformed from a sixty-year old facility into a true 21st Century learning environment for our students.”

Westview, which was originally built in 1950, underwent a $7.6 million expansion and renovation during the 2012-2013 school year and re-opened its doors to students in August. Features of the renovated school include a secured front entrance and new security system, separate gym/cafeteria, updated technology, improved ADA accessibility, and updated classrooms.

At the event, Principal Sean Morrison presented a video recorded by Westview’s student council highlighting features of the new building. Principal Morrison emphasized that the dedication honored Westview’s rich history while celebrating the future in a renovated school. He also recognized five former Westview principals who were in attendance at the dedication, as well as many alumni.

The Westview renovation project, as well as others taking place at Champaign’s elementary schools, have been funded through the county-wide 1% sales tax. The Promises Made, Promises Kept Committee, which is comprised of community members and District employees, ensures that the District uses the funds on school facilities as promised to the taxpayers.

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held, followed by student tours of the building and a reception featuring Curtis Orchard apple cider and donuts. Other speakers included Superintendent Dr. Judy Wiegand and Board President Laurie Bonnett. More than 180 attendees were present at the event.

Five former Westview principals, along with current Principal Sean Morrison attended the school dedication on October 22.

B.T. Washington Wins Architecture Award

Booker T. Washington STEM Academy has been named the winner of the 2013 James D. MacConnell Award at the Council of Educational Facility Planners International’s (CEFPI) Annual Conference and Expo. The MacConnell Award recognizes the importance of a comprehensive planning process resulting in educational facilities that meet multiple goals, while serving the needs of the community.

Booker T. Washington STEM Academy is a 60,300 square foot STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) magnet school serving students in grades K-5. The building is LEED Gold certified and was designed in partnership with Cannon Design and Bailey Edward Architects.
Video Highlights School Construction and Renovations with 1% Sales Tax

In an effort to provide information to the public about how the District has used funds from the county-wide 1% sales tax, the District has released a new video highlighting its new and renovated facilities.

The video highlights the work done at Garden Hills Elementary School, Booker T. Washington STEM Academy, Carrie Busey Elementary School, and Westview Elementary School, emphasizing the ways the spaces are impacting student learning. The District also highlights upcoming renovations to take place at Robeson, Bottenfield, and Kenwood elementary schools. This will be the first in a series of six videos highlighting each of the District’s goals this school year.

The Promises Made, Promises Kept Committee, which is comprised of community members and District employees, ensures that the District uses the funds on school facilities as promised to the taxpayers. The Promises Made, Promises Kept Committee meetings are open to the public, and meeting dates can be found on the District website. You can view the video on the District’s Vimeo page.

Watch the video: http://bit.ly/1aGtJI4

Central High School Town Hall
Panelists Discuss Possible Locations

Champaign Community Unit School District #4 Board of Education and Administration recently hosted a Town Hall Meeting to discuss the possible sites for a new Central High School.

The Town Hall Meeting featured a panel of volunteer community members who had an energetic discussion around this topic. Superintendent Dr. Judy Wiegand gave a brief introduction and overview of the work done so far in the Future Facilities process, as well as an overview of the current conditions of Central High School. Board of Education members were present, but did not run the meeting in order to encourage organic discussion amongst the panelists.

Attendees at the Town Hall submitted written questions to moderator Amanda Porterfield of WCIA 3 News and also via the District’s Facebook and Twitter accounts. Questions were selected based on relevancy to the discussion and the panel discussed as many community questions as possible during the allotted time.

A current list of possible locations can be found at http://futurefacilities.champaignschools.org.

View a recording of the Town Hall Meeting at the following link: http://bit.ly/1cegLJL

Thank you to our community panelists for their willingness to discuss this important community issue:

Alejandra Aguero, Patricia Avery, Imani Bazell, Byron Clark, Bruce Knight, Dan McCall, Angie Patton, Bob Porter, Phil Van Ness, Joe Williams